



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

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NEWS RELEASE
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61st California State Nisei VFW Reunion

The 61st California State Nisei VFW Reunion chose the Sands Regency Hotel in Reno, Nevada for their venue. Nearly 200 veterans, spouses, widows, friends and family gathered there to, once again, honor those who served our country. Northern California Nisei VFW posts sponsored this event. Co-chairs Loren Ishii and Jim Suzuki managed the event and coordinated everything from greeting the guests and being VIP escorts, to providing a great hospitality room.

Bartender, Val Soto kept everyone “hydrated” while his helpers, Harry Wadahara and Herb Tanaka, prepared a delicious array of Japanese dishes and made sure the room always had food. The Sacramento VFW post kept everyone entertained with ukulele and hula performances. Although the attendance was lower than expected this year, spirits were soaring high. Bill Omoto kept registration moving smoothly.

Sunday’s influx of visitors arriving by plane, train, bus and car from all over California kicked-off the event. Keynote speaker, Terry Shima arrived from Washington, DC while Harry Wadahara traveled from Oahu.

It has been a tough year for all of the posts. Attendance declined due to lack of transportation, weather, and poor health conditions. Despite these hurdles, this year’s reunion crowd continued the tradition of fun and fellowship. Most of the Nisei VFW posts were represented including: Post 1629 Monterey – Jim Suzuki, Post 1961 Gardena – Paul Bannai, Post 3670 Kazuo Masuda – Norio Uyematsu, Post 4140 San Fernando Valley – Frank Tanaka, Post 5869 Hanford – Patrick Ford, Post 8985 Sacramento – Kent Nakashima, Post 9879, San Francisco – Glenn Akagi, Post 9938 – and Post 9970 San Jose – Robert Getubig and past State Commander, Henry Wadahara. Other special guests included current California State Commander -- Dennis Wells, Commander and Chief -- Richard Eubanks, Womens Auxillary President -- Judy Jones, Chaplain -- Shirley Calvert, Incoming Cootie Grand Commander -- Glenn Wilson and Jim Rowoldt Department Quartermaster/Adjutant.

Monday continued the fun with a slot tournament. Hospitality was filled with ongoing sushi, sashimi, arare and homemade baked goods provided by the women of the various posts. Professional photographer, Tom Graves captured Monday evening's banquet attendees by systematically posing each post's members together. Each seat had a good luck frog "kaeru" given in memory of Dick Kisue (former commander of Hanford VFW Post). Margaret Omoto handed out handmade leis. Terry Shima, Executive Director of the Japanese American Veterans Association (JAVA) addressed the audience as the keynote speaker. Shima talked about the Bushido spirit that was instilled in Nisei veterans and how that impacted and defined their service. Shima also discussed the Congressional Gold Medal and the significance of the highest civilian medal bestowed on a military unit. He also stressed that JAVA appreciated this link with California VFW veterans posts and this opportunity to address them. The night ended with more fun in hospitality while some decided to "donate" funds back to the local economy.

The three day event concluded on Tuesday morning with the "Sayonara Breakfast" and Memorial Day service; a moment of silence honored post participants that had passed away this past year. Although some VFW members and comrades in arms have left us now, we are comforted with the knowledge they have been reunited with good friends waiting for them on the other side.

As we parted our ways, we said our farewells and hugs were given to those we hoped to see at the next reunion. The 2012 62nd California State Nisei Veterans of Foreign Wars Reunion will be held in Reno, Nevada – tentatively set May 20-22, 2012. Mark your calendars and we hope to see you there!

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