



SENIOR MOMENTS *By Phil Shigekuni*

My Truly Enlightened View on the Comfort Women

Editor's note: The column entitled "My Truly Enlightened View on the Comfort Women," which appeared in the June 7 print edition of this publication, contained incorrect citations and a photo that was published without the owner's permission. The revised version of the column will appear online shortly, with corrections of factual errors. We sincerely express our apology — both to our readers and to the party misattributed in the column. As noted, the opinion is solely that of the writer, who takes full responsibility.

Shortly before our pilgrimage to Manzanar this year, I met a professor who has written a book on Japanese American redress. She reads and speaks both English and Japanese. She was introduced to us by Akemi Kikumura Yano, my wife's sister. We were able to become acquainted with her, as well as hearing her views concerning current issues between the U.S. and Japan.

The professor asked me if I knew that the idea of two million yen (approximately \$20,000) "atonement" money out of the five million yen (additional three million yen [approximately \$30,000] for medical and welfare support in the case of Korea and Taiwan) as well as the letter of apology by the prime minister that was handed in person to each individual "comfort woman" who agreed to receive it came from the precedent set by Japanese American redress (\$20,000) and a letter by President George H.W. Bush.

When I said I didn't know that, she said, "I will send you some reliable links and factual information.

Initially, the court decided in favor of the women, but this decision was overturned on appeal. Park's book is not available in the U.S.

I applaud the courage shown by Park Yu-ha in writing her book. I cannot help but put her courage on par with an American woman with a similar last name: Rosa Parks. To learn more about Park Yu-ha, I refer you to the following link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/world/asia/korean-comfort-women-park-yu-ha-japan.html?r=0>

When I told our aforementioned scholar that our JACL chapter had taken a stand three years ago in support of the Comfort Women Monument that was erected in Glendale, she said she always wanted to visit the monument in Glendale. To summarize the court case on the monument: A couple of Shin Issei from Japan felt the monument should not be there and filed a suit to have it removed. Their claim was denied, so they appealed the decision. Having this appeal denied, they appealed to the Supreme Court.

When this final appeal was denied, a gathering took place at the monument on Women's Day this year. Phyllis Kim, the main force behind the resistance, along with other prominent people, gathered to celebrate the court's decision.

The main speaker was former Rep. Mike Honda, the author of HR 121 in 2007, calling on the Japanese government to make a clear and definite apology to the comfort women for the harm to them brought about by the government's actions in promoting the comfort women during WWII.

Prime ministers have made statements at 10-year intervals, beginning in 1995, the 50-year anniversary of the end of WWII. However

of the Japanese military. They had been involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations, and recruitment of the comfort women had been conducted by private recruiters who acted in response to the mentioned facts."

On the other hand, Park Yu-ha was criticized in Korea for writing in her 2013 book that her research led her to conclude that the "Korean collaborators" as well as "private Japanese recruiters" were a major source of providing women for the comfort stations. It does not seem likely, or necessary, to me, that the military would have to physically force the women into the comfort stations.

A document I found interesting was written by a Japanese American non-commissioned officer by the name of Alex Yorichi. In 1944, he interviewed two madams who ran a comfort station in Burma. He says in his report that many of the women in the station were working in factories in Japan and responded to ads offering work in Burma bandaging wounds, or some other routine tasks. When they arrived in Burma, they were forced to work in the comfort stations. They were not physically coerced, but to be recruited by these means seems to me to be no less criminal.

The following is a statement by Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida made at the joint Japan-South Korean conference on Dec. 28, 2015: "The issue of comfort women, with an involvement of the Japanese military authorities at that time was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large number of women, and the government of Japan is painfully aware of responsibilities from this perspective. Prime Minister Abe expresses anew his most

redress (\$20,000) and a letter by President George H.W. Bush.

When I said I didn't know that, she said, "I will send you some reliable links and factual information. Why don't you read them? Don't listen to anybody. Just make judgments for yourself."

The links included the website of the Asian Women's Fund, the Japanese government's statement, a report by university professors, Information about a Korean scholar, Park Yu-ha, etc. After reading these I came to reach my own opinions for which I take full responsibility.

A main bone of contention was that the money offered was not acceptable to the comfort women because it came from private donations, and not from the government. The Korean "advisors" to the women, we have been told, advised the women to refuse the money because it came from private donations, rather than from the government. Yet, if the documents are to be believed, 90% of the Women's Fund came from the government, and only 10% from private donations.

The advisors, reportedly, used undue influence on the elderly women to not accept the money while many of these elderly women passed away, one after another. The 61 who did accept the money were harassed. If it is indeed true, that as needy as they were, these women were deprived of the money they deserved, it places an onus on those who advised them. These advisors, it would seem, would have placed their political goals over the welfare of these women.

Park Yu-ha was sued by nine comfort women for what they claimed was defamation. If convicted, Park faced three years in prison.

women during WWII.

Prime ministers have made statements at 10-year intervals, beginning in 1995, the 50-year anniversary of the end of WWII. However, none of the prime ministers made any mention of Imperial Japan's military's role in fostering the comfort women. Honda's resolution called for an apology from the prime minister, and to include in the apology the role of the military in establishing the comfort women.

In August of 1993, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono, after his study of the history of the comfort women and listening to their stories, concluded. "The government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will. At times, administrative/military personnel took part in the recruitments."

Then at a United Nations conference in September of 2015, Shinzuke Sugiyama, deputy minister of foreign affairs, in response to someone in the audience, said, "The government of Japan has admitted that the comfort stations were established in response to the request

dignity of large number of women, and the government of Japan is painfully aware of responsibilities from this perspective. Prime Minister Abe expresses anew his most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent such experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women."

With this he declared the issue resolved, finally and irreversibly.

I remain strongly in favor of the monument in Glendale. I accept the evidence Park Yu-ha presents, which would seem to indicate that the role of the government in coercing the women to be comfort women is not as significant as many have charged.

Yet, the monument serves to remind us of sexual slavery, which continues to exist in this country and the rest of the world today..

Phil Shigekuni writes from San Fernando Valley and can be contacted at pshig2000@verizon.net. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of The Rafu Shimpō.

OBITUARIES

Rosie Shizuko Nakano

Funeral service for Rosie Shizuko Nakano, 93-year-old Los Angeles-born resident of Chevy Chase, MD who passed away on June 11, 2017 in Irvine, Calif., will be held on Saturday, June 17, at 10:30 a.m. at Union Church of Los Angeles, 401 E. 3rd St., Los Angeles, CA 90013.

She is survived by her daughters, Amy (Paul) Bihl, Mary (Lee) Rising and Ida (Denny) Nakano-Minami;

www.fukuimortuary.com (213) 626-0441

Hisaye "Nancy" Takasugi

Hisaye "Nancy" Takasugi, 100-year-old, Ventura, Calif.-born Nisei, passed away on June 8, 2017 in Glendale. There will be no services.

She is predeceased by her husband, Takeshi "Tek" Takasugi, and is survived by her son, Harvey Jun Takasugi; sister-in-law, Misao Yoko-