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The Japanese-American newspaper in Seattle:  
The role of the North American Post in the Seattle Nikkei community

By

Hitoshi Ogi

B.A. in law. Meiji University, 1993

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in Journalism

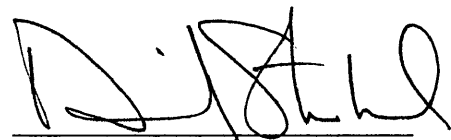
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1999

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The Japanese-American newspaper in Seattle: The role of the North American Post in the Seattle Nikkei community (pp. 92)

Director: Clemens Work



This project, composed of six chapters, highlights the *North American Post*, a Japanese-English newspaper in Seattle, which has been published since 1946. Through the analysis of the newspaper and interviews, I examine how the role of the Post has changed while a generational transition in the Seattle Nikkei community has occurred, and how it attempts to survive in the future.

Chapter I describes the early days of Japanese immigrants in Seattle. It is well known today that the first and second generation, Issei and Nisei, were exposed to a nationwide anti-Japanese movement in the beginning of this century, and were sent to internment camps during the World War II. Chapter II discusses the postwar era of the Seattle Nikkei community, and the history of the *North American Post*. The transition from Issei-Nisei era to Sansei society has influenced the roles that the Post has played.

In Chapter III, the interview stories of three journalists at the *North American Post* show their daily challenge to pursue recognition by Nikkei locals. Through archival research, Chapter IV describes the originality of the Post's news coverage about four issues – “Japan bashing,” Great Hanshin Earthquake, a gun death of a Japanese student in Louisiana, and a discussion of suffrage grant for overseas Japanese – which struck both Japanese and U.S. Nikkei society with strong impact.

Both Chapter V and VI are composed of interviews. Three Seattle Nikkei, who have supported the Post for many years, voice their opinions and predict the future of the newspaper in Chapter V. Chapter VI introduces four journalists who work for different ethnic newspapers. The interviews reveal how minority media find their roles for Nikkei, or Asian Americans in general, in different situations.

Finally, the future of the *North American Post* – its possibility for survival – is discussed in the conclusion, with opinions by the current editor of the Post.

## **Acknowledgement**

I appreciate the great cooperation of the people working for the *North American Post*. Without their help, I could not have completed this project. I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to talk with many Nikkei and Japanese journalists, as well as Seattle Japanese-American locals, directly or over the phone with kindness and hospitality. Charlie Hood provided me with a number of great suggestions at the beginning of my research.

I would also like to express my utmost gratitude to my committee members, Clem Work, Carol Van Valkenburg, and Philip West, who have always been supportive of my project.

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## Introduction

Nikkei, the Japanese immigrants and their descendants born and raised in a foreign country, are invisible in the mainstream of Japanese history. In my school days, I do not recall any topic about Nikkei being reviewed in a class. Despite my eagerness to learn about such forgotten people, my knowledge was very limited. Even if I knew the Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori is Nikkei, I was not familiar with the reason why Japanese have settled on the reverse side of the earth from Japan.

My Nikkei research is based on visits to three places; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Missoula, Montana; and Seattle.

In my first trip to Sao Paulo in January 1998, I was struck by the fact that the Japanese Brazilians, whose population in the city accounts for over a million, have more than a 90-year history of immigration.

I had an opportunity to visit a nursing home in suburb of Sao Paulo, and talked to four Issei. The life of immigration pioneers were bitter and challenging, but they could do nothing but establish their status in Brazil instead of looking back to their motherland. Because they left Japan at a young age, some interviewees had completely lost any connection with Japan. They have no memory, no friends, and no relatives in Japan though they still speak Japanese, and sometimes feel a deep nostalgia.

The second surprise is the history of Missoula, where I knew nothing about any commitment with Nikkei although I have spent two years here. It was beyond my

imagination that Fort Missoula, only 10 minutes distance from my apartment by car, was used for the detention camp for Issei immediately after the Pearl Harbor attack.

Seattle is the city where I have frequently visited, but I have overlooked the Nikkei community as long as I was just sightseeing. One phone call – to the editor of the *North American Post* – produced an opportunity for me to observe the record of the Nikkei history that the Post has made for over 50 years.

Then, I raised the questions that has been coherent throughout my research period – Why is it published, who reads it, what is its role for the Nikkei community, and how might it survive in the future?

The main goal of my thesis is to explore and illustrate the U.S. Japanese-American community and its media, which are rarely mentioned in mainstream Japanese history.

## Chapter I

### Japanese immigrants in the early age

*The United States of America: The country which has had the strongest impact on modern Japanese history*

The modern history of Japan in the last 150 years is strongly affected by the United States of America. Going back to the late 19th century, it was the United States that terminated Tokugawa Japan's 250 years of national isolation and through the use of military force opened the door for international relations. Known as the visit of the black ships, led by the U.S. military commander Commodore Perry in 1853 and 1854, the incident is seen as the dawn of Japan's modernization and the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, which ruled Japan between 1603 and 1868.

After the Meiji Emperor was restored to power and replaced the last of the Tokugawa shogun in 1868, the policy of the Japanese government was "Fukoku Kyohei," or "rich country and strong military." With the victory over the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan succeeded in raising its international status to be equal to the country of the West. However, as Japan expanded its territory – Taiwan in 1895, Korea in 1910, and Manchuria by 1931 – Japan became increasingly isolated from the West. Finally, Japan and the United States collided in the Pacific War. The war ended with the unconditional surrender by Japan. Millions of Asian civilians died during the Asia-Pacific War, and hundreds of thousands of Japanese people were killed in the

America's fire bombing of their cities, and the dropping of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japanese economy was severely destroyed.

The country which helped reconstruct Japan was also America. The birth of communist China and North Korea, backed by Soviet Union, threatened the United States that whole east Asia would be conquered by communism. To prevent Japan from becoming the next communist country, America let Japan return to the global society, allowed Japan to become independent by ratifying the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951. From then on, Japan has been under the U.S. protection in terms of economy as well as military strategy. Unlike South Korea, which battled with its separated neighbor, North Korea, and which a myriad of civilians were victimized, Japan never suffered from any tragedy as a result of East-West conflict. Japan achieved high economic growth, and consequently, became one of the economic superpowers in a few decades.

The partnership between America and Japan today stems not only from the national ties but also from individuals. Japanese is the largest non-immigration group to visit America for various purposes – for sightseeing, business or study. Though this trend has been remarkable in the last two decades, the history of Japanese immigrants is more than 100 years old. Its history has almost overlapped the entire modern relationship between the two countries.

While Japan and its people had been influenced by a dramatic change through the end of World War II, what was the history of Japanese immigrants in America, usually called Nikkei, in this foreign country? How did they establish their status and endure the

harsh anti-Japanese movement during the war? In this chapter, I would like to cover the period from the frontier Nikkei's lives until 1945, particularly in Seattle, one of the largest Japanese-American populated cities in the United States.

*Issei and Nisei: The pioneer of Japanese immigrants and their children*

The beginning of Japanese immigration to the United States is considered to be the 1880s although there were pioneers who had arrived in America previously. Japanese were welcomed by American employers for only one reason – as the substitute for Chinese, who supplied cheap labor.<sup>1</sup> Chinese, who had dominated the labor market of such industries as mining, railroad construction, or sawmills, dwindled with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited further Chinese immigration.

Consequently, Japanese replaced Chinese. The Japanese government legalized emigration in 1885, and there were American companies who welcomed the chance to import cheap labor, now that Chinese immigration was banned.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the number of Japanese immigrants drastically increased around the turn of the century because of the two factors mentioned above. While immigration accounts for only 148 Japanese in 1880s, the number increased to 2,039 in 1890, and 24,327 in 1900.<sup>3</sup>

There is no doubt that the cities of West Coast were the major ports for Japanese immigrants because of their geographical closeness to Japan. The pioneer Japanese immigrants, Issei, sailed to Seattle; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco; or Vancouver, Canada. The Issei population in the United States recorded its peak in 1908 when it

numbered 103,683.<sup>4</sup> They mostly took over jobs from which Chinese had been ousted, such as railroad construction, sawmills, logging, salmon canneries, or farming. Also, a large portion of them went across the Cascade Mountains to northern Idaho or Montana to seek jobs.<sup>5</sup>

A surge of Japanese immigrants to the United States, however, gradually created an anti-Japanese mood. In California, for example, a tireless, long-hour hard working by Japanese was the threat to Caucasian because they thought immigrants might become their strong competitor as a farm operator or business owner, no longer stay as an exploited laborer.<sup>6</sup> Issei and their family were verbally abused first, and then the discrimination escalated. They were excluded from restaurants, pools and beaches.

Such xenophobia blew up, not in the United States but in Vancouver in September 1907. More than 50 Japanese stores and homes were damaged by stone throwing, and mobs even attempted to set fire, though that failed. The direct cause of the riot was the rapid growth of Japanese immigrants, who sailed to Vancouver via Hawaii. During only six months in 1907, as many as 2,436 immigrants were allowed to land.<sup>7</sup> Local laborers feared the arrival of Japanese because immigrants could take their job.

To prevent widespread hate crimes against Japanese, the Japanese government voluntarily stopped issuing passport to America for working except to those who had already had relatives in America. This decision, called “Gentleman’s Agreement,” was confirmed between Japanese and the U.S. government in 1908.<sup>8</sup>

Despite efforts to soothe the situation, some Americans still maintained a feeling of hostility against Japanese, based on the racial argument that Japanese could not be

assimilated biologically. In this regard, assimilation meant biological absorption.<sup>9</sup> Another complaint by Americans was that Japanese took advantage of finding jobs while many American youths were sent to the World War I. Although the veterans returned, Japanese never left their positions, and Americans became jobless.<sup>10</sup> In Seattle, the city council, supported by anti-Japanese public opinion, attempted to squeeze Japanese out.<sup>11</sup> Instances of harassment such as refusal to sell goods, or even arson attempts, were often found in the Northwest region from 1910s to 1930s.<sup>12</sup>

Each state on the West Coast then proposed an anti-Japanese land laws. In Washington, its 1889 constitution already banned the sale of land to “aliens ineligible in citizenship” and only Asians were not qualified to become naturalized. In addition, the state legalized the Alien Land Law in 1921. It prohibited aliens from owning land or taking or holding title.<sup>13</sup> Under these circumstances, Issei had no choice but to ask their white peers, or their American-born children, Nisei, to register their lands on their behalf.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, immigration was completely banned with the introduction of the Immigration Act of 1924. After that year, no further Japanese immigration was considered legal, and the pioneer Issei and Nisei were exposed to the growing harsh discrimination blowing across the nation.

### *Japanese American community in Seattle: The dawn of Japanese-English community newspaper*

In 1891, Japanese immigrants who settled in Seattle started constructing Japan



town at the location which it is now the International District. The town prospered with many Japanese businesses, from restaurants to multipurpose businesses, such as Furuya Company, which provided services in real estate, construction, banking as well as Japanese product sales. The neighborhood continued growing in the 1920s and 30s despite rising anti-Asian sentiment and the anti-immigration laws.<sup>15</sup>

In Seattle, the history of community news media for the Nikkei began in 1901 with the publication of the first newspaper, *Shin Nippon*. However, it lasted only two years.<sup>16</sup> In 1902, the Nikkei spawned another community newspaper, *the North American Times (Hokubei Jiji)*, that had lasted until the outbreak of the Pacific War when almost all Nikkei media were banned throughout the nation. *The North American Times* is the predecessor of *the North American Post (Hokubei Houchi)*, which resumed publishing on June 5, 1946.<sup>17</sup>

*The North American Times* was the leading Seattle Nikkei community paper. At its peak, the circulation was between 7,000 and 8,000. This number exceeded that of its rivals, such as *Asahi Shimbun*, the major Japanese newspaper, or *the Great Northern Daily News (Taihoku Nippo)*, another Nikkei local paper in Seattle.<sup>18</sup>

While both the *North American Times* and the *Great Northern Daily News* were the Japanese-language newspapers in Seattle, the first English-language publication for Nisei started printing in the beginning of year 1928 — a weekly newspaper named *Japanese American Courier*. Led by the publisher, James Yoshinori Sakamoto, the *Courier* played a significant role in representing the Nisei's voices, and to shape the Japanese American Citizens League, though it never found financial success in its 14 1/2-

year history.<sup>19</sup>

### ***World War II and Executive Order 9066: internment camp experience***

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese military bombed Pearl Harbor, and the United States declared war on Japan the next day. This calamity threw the Nikkei into confusion and chaos.

In Seattle, Nikkei leaders were arrested immediately after the war's opening, and more than 100 were detained in jail.<sup>20</sup> More than 10 were sent to Fort Missoula, Montana on Dec. 8, 1941. By the mid-March 1942, 264 Seattle Issei were relocated to Fort Missoula.<sup>21</sup> The anti-Japanese campaign heated up as the war became serious, even against the Nisei, who held American nationality. Domestic media published or aired discriminatory comments against Nikkei, and even famous journalists such as Walter Lippman also attacked Japanese Americans.<sup>22</sup> In his articles, Lippmann advocated mass Japanese evacuation because he believed that the fact that no Issei and Nisei had committed any act of sabotage was a sign of their disloyalty against America.<sup>23</sup>

The turning point came on Feb. 19, 1942, when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. Under this order, the Secretary of War was authorized to exclude any or all persons from certain military areas. It was, however, aimed at removing Japanese aliens as well as the citizens of Japanese descent from the West Coast.<sup>24</sup>

The operation to relocate Nikkei began soon after the order was issued. In the Seattle region, Nikkei who had resided in Bainbridge Island in Puget Sound were the first group to be removed on March 30, 1942.<sup>25</sup>

Nikkei in Seattle were deported to one of the assembly centers located in Puyallup, Washington. According to *Nisei Daughter* by Monica Sone, “On the twenty-first of April, a Thursday, the general gave us the shattering news. ‘All the Seattle Japanese will be moved to Puyallup by May 1.’”<sup>26</sup> Then, depending on which county Nikkei lived, they were divided and sent to the different internment camps; Minidoka, Idaho; Tule Lake, California; or Heart Mountain, Wyoming.<sup>27</sup>

I will not describe the details of Nikkei’s experiences in the internment camps because this is not my main concern. However, I should mention the fact that not only Japanese-nationals Issei but also Nisei, American citizenship holders, were compelled to leave their residences to the internment camps surrounded by barbed wires and guarded by American soldiers with machine guns. Nikkei had no choice but to abandon their properties at home unconditionally while they left.

Unlike Issei or Kibei, who grew up in Japan and were educated there, Nisei were born and educated in America. But their loyalty for America was doubted, and the authorities considered that Nisei jeopardized the national security. Some government officials might have confused Nisei with Kibei.<sup>28</sup> But more importantly, the strength of the anti-Japanese atmosphere was expressed in this statement by a patriotic government officer: “Throw the whole kaboodle[sic] out. A Jap’s a Jap, no matter how you slice him. You can’t make an American out of little Jap Junior just by handing him an American birth certificate.”<sup>29</sup>

The tight internment orientation became looser a year later. In 1943, the War Relocation Authority gave some qualified Nikkei permission to access some inner U.S.

cities. Students who sought to study at colleges were also released, offered an opportunity to restart their study. From January in 1945, Japanese were finally allowed to return to the West Coast, but the anti-Japanese mood had not been lifted yet.<sup>30</sup>

The Pacific War ended on Aug. 15, 1945, with the unconditional surrender by Japan. Nikkei resettled in their hometown, and started rebuilding their own community. The postwar era is the next stage for those who survived the bitter Pacific War – the “major drama” of the early 1940s – and the bitter “minor drama” of anti-Japanese discrimination in American society.

## Chapter I

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<sup>1</sup> Hosokawa, B. *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*, William Morrow and Company, Inc., New York, 1969, p.41-42

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47-48

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42

<sup>4</sup> Ito, K. *Issei: A history of Japanese immigrants in North America*, Executive Committee for Publication for *Issei: A history of Japanese immigrants in North America*, Seattle, 1973, p.4

<sup>5</sup> Takami, D. A. *Divided Destiny*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1998, p.16-18

<sup>6</sup> Hosowaka, *Nisei*, p.60-63

<sup>7</sup> Ito, *Issei*, p.101-107

<sup>8</sup> Hosokawa, *Nisei*, p.92

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83-84

<sup>10</sup> Ito, *Issei*, p.124

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.125-128

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157-158

<sup>14</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.24

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25-26

<sup>16</sup> Tamura, N., Shiramizu, S. (1986). *The early age of the Japanese newspapers in America*, Keiso Shobo, Tokyo, p.24 (in Japanese)

<sup>17</sup> "50 years with the community," *The North American Post*, Aug. 8, 1996, Vol.51(No.92)

<sup>18</sup> Ito, *Issei*, p.729

<sup>19</sup> Hosokawa, *Nisei*, p.182

<sup>20</sup> Ito, *Issei*, p.928

<sup>21</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.42

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43

<sup>23</sup> Hosokawa, *Nisei*, p.277-278

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.283

<sup>25</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.47

<sup>26</sup> Sone, M. *Nisei Daughter*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1979, p.166

<sup>27</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.50

<sup>28</sup> Hosokawa, *Nisei*, p.296

<sup>29</sup> Sone, *Nisei Daughter*, p.158

<sup>30</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.75

## Chapter II

### The Postwar Seattle Nikkei community and the North American Post

#### *Hostility against returning Nikkei*

When internees returned to Seattle after the war, an unwelcome mood was still everywhere. Because Nikkei were forced to abandon their property when they left for the internment camps, some of them had no home to return to, and found temporary residence at such places as the Seattle Buddhist Church or the Japanese Language School.<sup>1</sup>

Nikkei, particularly Issei, were also exposed to the intentional racial discrimination of employment in the late 1940s. In addition, Nikkei farmers were harassed by the local farmers who prevented them from returning to their land. They sometimes campaigned to boycott Nikkei products.<sup>2</sup>

In Seattle, Japanese population decreased from a high of 7,000 in 1940 to 5,800 in 1950.<sup>3</sup> Churches played a significant role in reuniting the community and regaining social ties among Nikkei.<sup>4</sup> *The North American Post (Hokubei Houchi)* was started during such a hard time when Nikkei fought discrimination and tried to re-establish their social position.

#### *The newspaper for a community bulletin board*

According to an article titled, “*Hanseiki no ayumi (A course of half century)*” in the 50 anniversary edition of the *North American Post* on August 8, 1996, the first issue

was published on June 5, 1946. Sumio Arima, the last editor-in-chief of the *North American Times*, changed its title from “Times” to “Post” because he hoped the revived newspaper would be used as a vehicle for a community bulletin board.<sup>5</sup>

Originally a weekly publication, the Post became the daily paper in 1949. Its prosperous age started in early 1950s, thanks to the passage of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act of 1952, which opened the door for Issei to become naturalized. The Nikkei community in Seattle accepted many Nikkei returnees from Japan.<sup>6</sup>

When the Post celebrated its kickoff, the Nikkei community in Seattle started their battle to terminate a variety of anti-Japanese regulations, which still annoyed and vexed Japanese Americans. One of the organizations which played an important role in solving the racial problems was the Japanese American Citizens League Seattle Chapter. In addition to the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act of 1952, the Seattle JACL campaigned to eliminate the Washington State Alien Land Law. Previously, three lawsuits against California’s alien land law in the late 40s had established it as unconstitutional.<sup>7</sup> Through legal measures the Chapter finally succeeded in striking down the law in 1966.<sup>8</sup>

The *North American Post* committed itself to this issue. According to its 50th anniversary edition, the Post encouraged readers to cast a ballot for abolishing the alien land law, and using graphics explained how to vote.<sup>9</sup>

It was also the 1960s that the new third Nikkei generation, Sansei, became adult and began to participate in civic affairs. It was the time of the civil rights movements, and

many Sansei joined other racial groups to fight for human rights. The Seattle JACL, which had its first Sansei president in 1966, “assumed a broader activist stance.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Sansei – A more Americanized generation**

Unlike Issei, who grew up in Japan, spoke Japanese, and resided mostly with their Japanese peers, Sansei were much more exposed to American society. Even younger Nisei showed disaffiliation from the Nikkei community. They received higher American education and occupation, and thus connected with the American society rather than their home community: they had less involvement with Japanese-American organizations, had more American, not Nikkei, friends.<sup>11</sup>

Sociologically, Sansei seem to be more Americanized. In a study comparing three Nikkei generations that was conducted by Darrel Montero in 1963, for example, one of the data shows that in regard to the ethnicity of a respondent’s closest friend, only 26 percent of Sansei answered that their closest friends were Japanese Americans compared with Nisei, whose response to the same question was 47 percent.<sup>12</sup> Also, 67 percent of Sansei respondents live among other ethnic groups, mostly Caucasian. Another example is about Buddhism, which is widely accepted by Issei. According to Montero’s research, however, the percentage of Buddhist Sansei is only 24 percents, a huge drop from 65 percent of Issei Buddhist rate.<sup>13</sup>

Montero cited Christie Kiefer, saying that “Nisei are quick to emphasize their Americanness both among themselves and when dealing with the larger society,” and “Sansei grew up in a family and community where the value of assimilation into



American culture was not seriously questioned, where group identity carried a strong mainstream-American flavor.”<sup>14</sup>

But it is not true that Sansei simply and easily become Americanized. Rather, they struggled with social blocks that hindered them from entering the mainstream. Although the economic status of Japanese American had been raised, “Sansei still wondered whether they could participated fully in the social and economic life of the larger society.”<sup>15</sup>

In Montero’s research, about 23 percent of Sansei respondents felt that their Japanese-Americanness prevented them from making social progress, though most Sansei answered that some progress had been made due to the struggle against discrimination.<sup>16</sup> Despite their economic position and social reputation as a “model minority,” Nikkei still did not enjoy complete equality with whites. According to the report, “Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women” by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1978, Japanese Americans who were in the age group from 25 to 29 showed a higher rate of college education completion than the majority males, but Nikkei earned \$14,253 compared with majority peer’s \$15,165.<sup>17</sup>

Sansei, who were reaching adulthood but were still young, then started battling against such social injustice. The civil rights movements of 1960s and 1970s prompted the Sansei, who sought to overcome the racial inequality,<sup>18</sup> and the issue consequently produced a generation gap between Nisei and Sansei. One Sansei activist, Fred Ichiyama, criticized the Niseis’ individual strategy of promoting the personal economic position, but not for everyone else. For example, Nisei attempted to overcome racial problems simply

by hard work, but Ichiyama concluded this strategy produced a negative result.<sup>19</sup> He also thinks that because Nisei kept silent about their war experience such as the internment, Sansei “often lost a sense of their family history and ethnic identity.”<sup>20</sup>

Similar criticism was made by another Sansei, Linda Miyano. While she was involved with the anti-discrimination movements, she believed Nisei were “cowards” because they had not resisted anything.<sup>21</sup> Although Miyano was later aware that Nisei confronted the sharp racism that they could not even oppose, she, at a time, did not understand why Nisei even volunteered to serve in the army or committed any help for America.<sup>22</sup>

Sansei in Seattle were as active against the racial injustice as their peers in other U.S. cities. Seattle JACL joined other groups who were fighting for human rights.<sup>23</sup> The involvement of civil rights acquisition was also an opportunity for Sansei to discover their ethnic heritage as Japanese Americans, and broadly, as Asian Americans.<sup>24</sup> One example is the first Japanese Cultural Festival at the Seattle Center in 1969, organized by Seattle JACL.<sup>25</sup> Sansei intentionally explored their cultural legacy by learning taiko drum or Japanese language.<sup>26</sup> To acknowledge the Asian-American identity, it was remarkable progress that the University of Washington and Washington State University created an Asian American studies curriculum. Seattle was the place where a neighborhood of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos shared their daily lives and attended the same school.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Seattle Nikkei in 1970s and 80s: Is Japanese newspaper in Seattle dying?***

In the last three decades, there are two major issues that are widely

commemorated in Nikkei history in Seattle – the victory of the redress claim for the internment during WWII, and the founding of Seattle Keiro nursing home for older Issei.

Executive Order 9066, which compelled a myriad of Issei and Nisei to undergo the tough internment camp experience, was still constituted in the early 1970s. Seattle JACL, supported by the Washington state governor and a state supreme court justice, appealed to the U.S. government to nullify the order. In 1976, President Ford signed an order eliminating EO 9066.<sup>28</sup>

The Keiro nursing home was built in 1976. Supported by the Seattle Nikkei community, Seattle Keiro was the first large-size nursing home entirely for the Japanese-American elderly.<sup>29</sup> The project was led by JACL then-president Tomio Moriguchi, the future chairman of the *North American Post*.<sup>30</sup>

While the Nikkei community celebrated their triumphs in several civic activities, their own media, the *North American Post*, was encountering its own turning point. On Jan. 5, 1973, *The Seattle Times* published an article titled, “Japanese newspaper here is ‘dying.’” Based on an interview with the then-editor of the Post, Takami Hibiya, the story highlighted the Post’s financial and management struggles. The article cited Hibiya as saying, “This is a dying business... Almost all publications like this are having hard times,” but he also stressed the paper should exist to offer a service to the community.<sup>31</sup>

The story pointed out that market expansion was difficult because “only first-generation Japanese can be considered as customers.” In the early 70s, most Issei were between ages 75 to 90. Editor Hibiya admitted the paper sometimes suffered deficits, and the publisher privately owed the debt. Unlike in the paper’s early age, customers were

dispersed to such places as Bellevue, Tacoma, or British Columbia. The story concluded the good early days were gone.<sup>32</sup>

The ethnic map in Seattle became more diverse due to the gain of Asian immigration. According to the Census of Population in 1960, the Japanese-American population in Seattle was 10,958, doubled when including Chinese and Filipinos. But this gap became closer in 1970 – 13,872 Japanese, 7,434 Chinese, and 7,361 Filipinos. This tendency became more remarkable in 1980, and finally, both ethnic groups exceeded their numbers over Japanese in 1990. (See Chart 1, 2 and 3)<sup>33</sup>

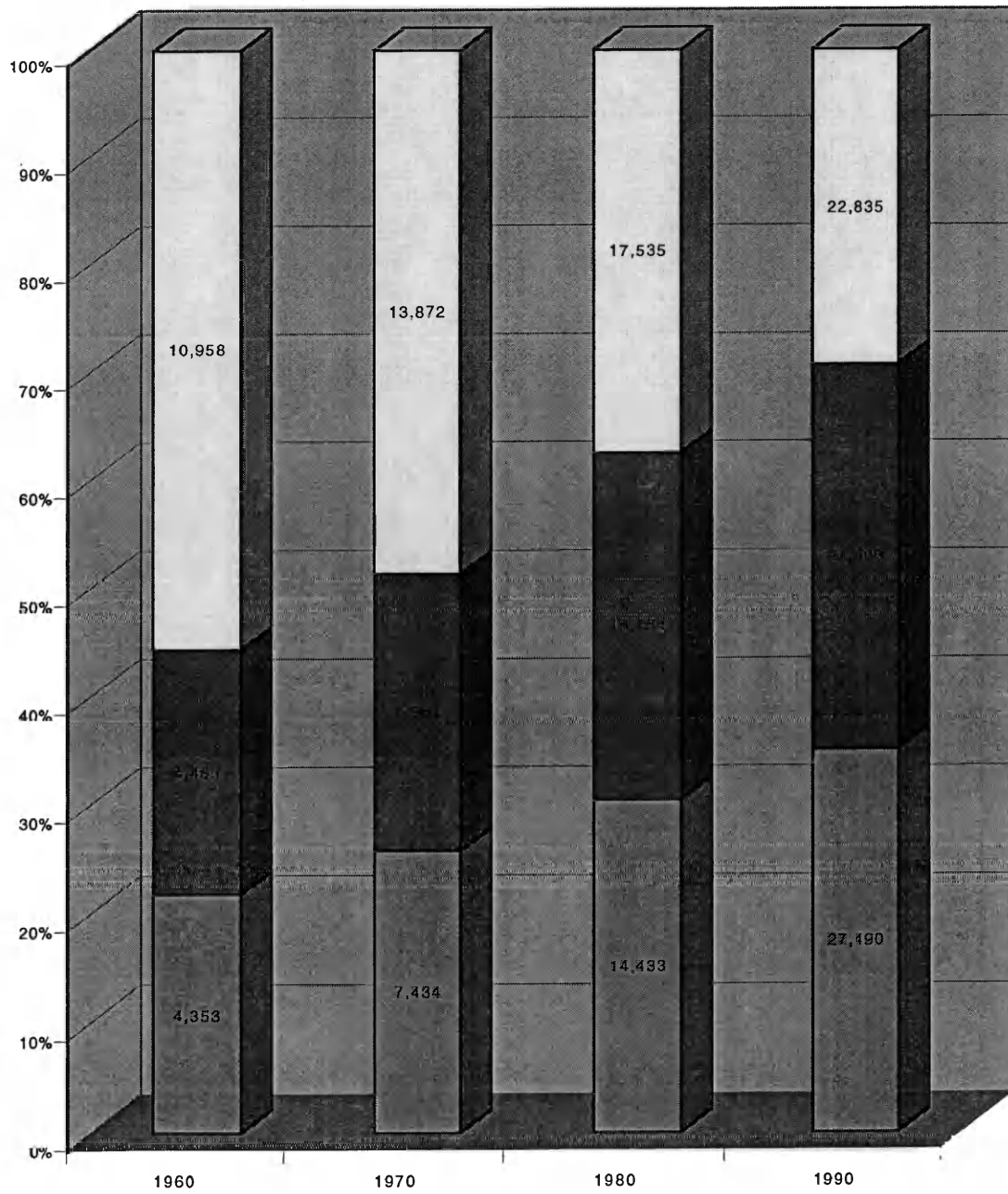
Following the trend of growing ethnic diversities, the first Asian-American newspaper in Seattle, *International Examiner*, was founded in 1974. The Examiner, published in English, covered Asian Americans, including Nikkei community news. In early '80s, another Seattle Asian-American paper, *Northwest Asian Weekly*, started printing. While the *North American Post* maintained its Japanese-language style, the English-reading Asian Americans, including Sansei, seemed to appreciate the new English-written community papers.

The *North American Post* met financial difficulty in the early 1980s. While the Post originally published from Monday through Saturday, it became a business-day newspaper in 1964, and finally in 1981, went to three times a week. Despite such restructuring, the publisher suspended printing in August of the same year, due to accumulated red ink.<sup>34</sup>

It was the Seattle Nikkei which unanimously agreed to aid the Post financially because of the paper's important role in the community. The board members formed a

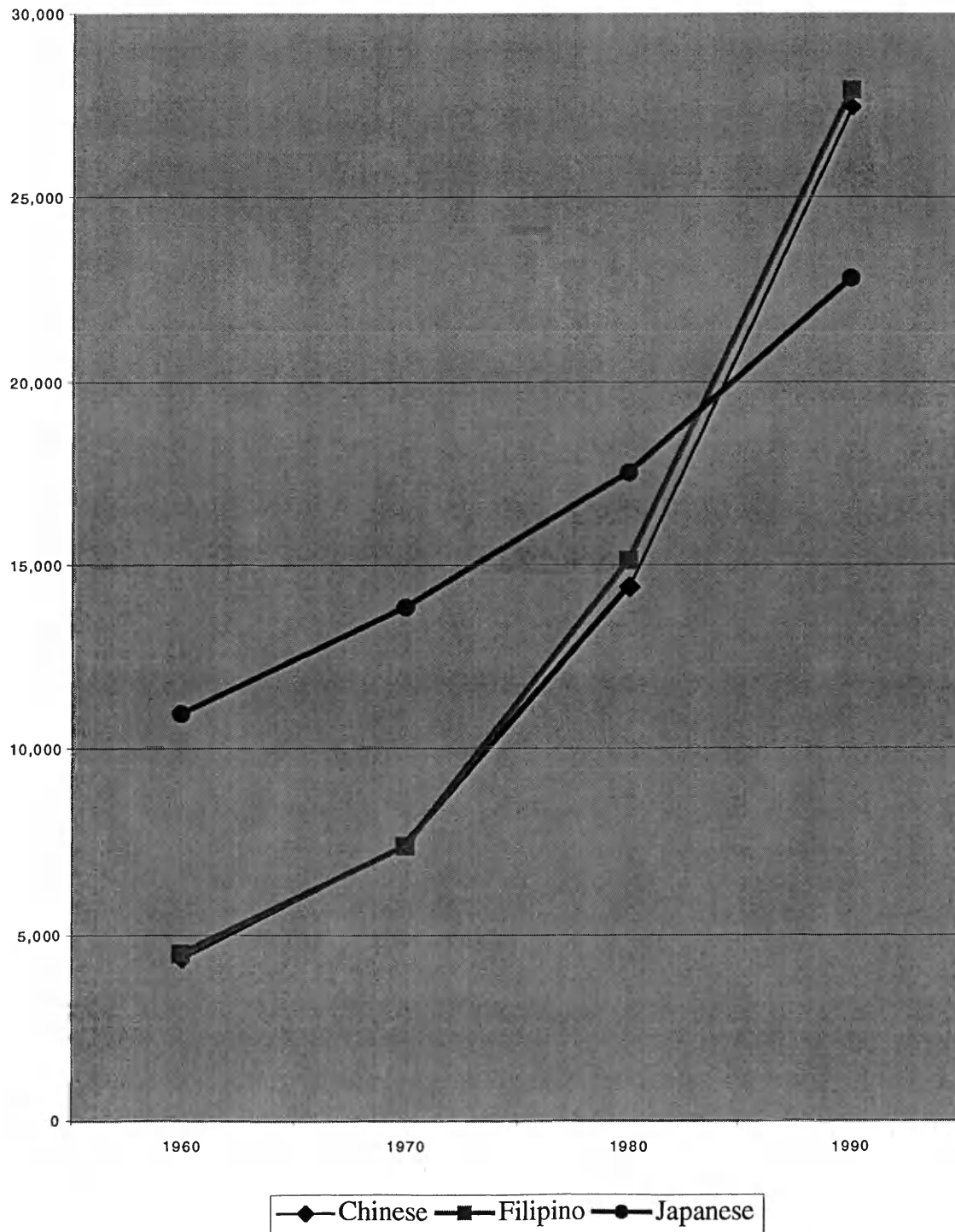
### Chart 1

Population of three Asian minority groups in Seattle  
(Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area)  
Chinese, Filipino and Japanese



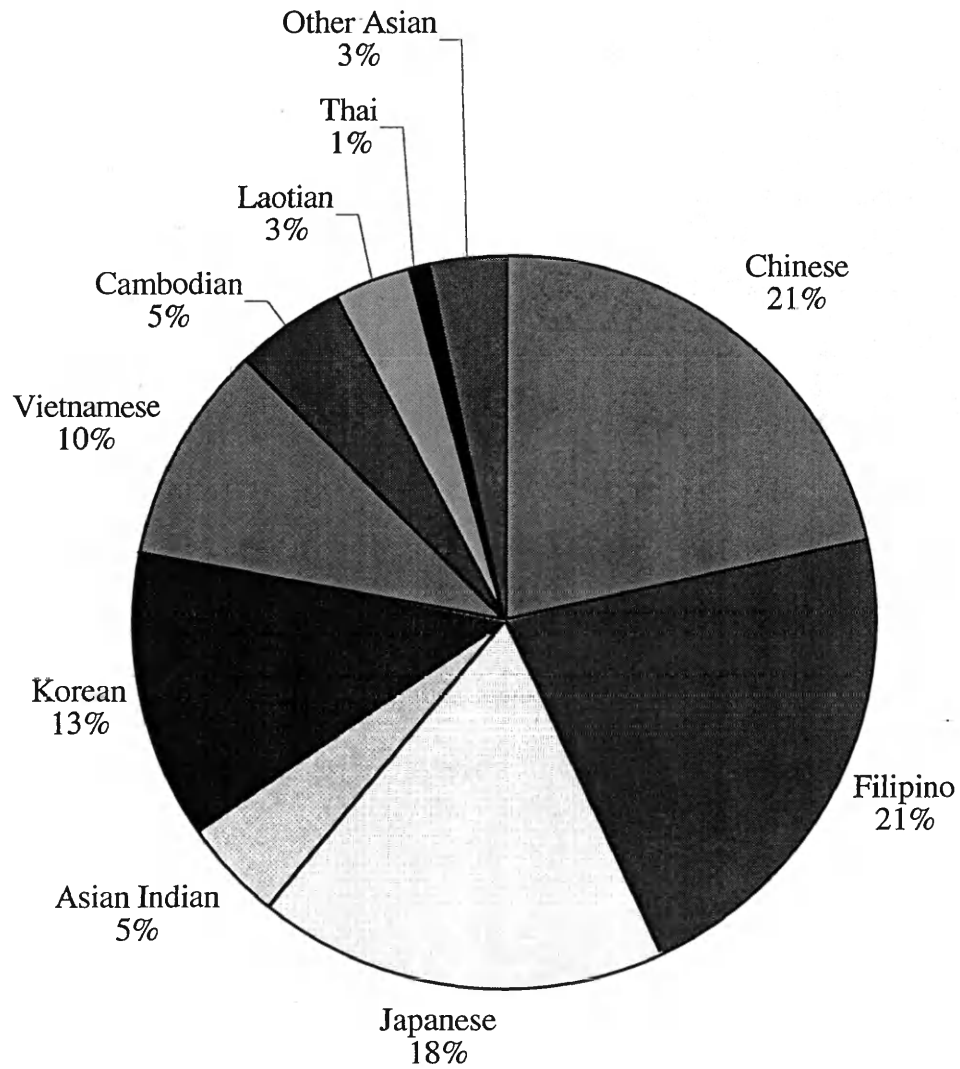
■ Chinese ■ Filipino □ Japanese

**Chart 2**  
**Comparison of population gain:**  
**Chinese, Filipino and Japanese**  
**Seattle (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area)**



**Chart 3**

**Population of Asian immigrant groups in 1990  
Seattle (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area)**



new corporation, the North American Post Publishing Inc., and the Post resumed printing with only two months absence.<sup>35</sup>

The redress movement was the most important issue for Nikkei throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The original idea for monetary reparations was proposed by Edison Uno, a lecturer of at San Francisco State University in 1970. Seattle JACL developed its own plan by 1974.<sup>36</sup>

In Seattle, several Nikkei organizations were formed, such as Japanese American Youth by college Sansei and Yonsei, forth generation, and Tomo-no-kai, a support group for widows and widowers. At Congress, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians was established in 1981 with support by such Nisei politicians as Senator Daniel Inouye in Hawaii, Senator Spark Matsunaga or congressman Norman Mineta in California.<sup>37</sup> The Commission was to discuss whether the government should redress internee Japanese. More than 160 people, including internees, testified before the Commission in Seattle. Finally the Commission concluded the internment was not justifiable due to “military necessary.”<sup>38</sup>

Several lawsuits were filed to claim compensation for unequal treatment accorded Nikkei plaintiffs. Gordon Hirabayashi, who intentionally challenged the Japanese curfew by exercising his rights as an U.S. citizen in 1942, had been found guilty of violating evacuation and curfew orders. The verdict was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1943, and Hirabayashi was imprisoned for two years.<sup>39</sup> The case, however, was reviewed in Seattle more than 40 years later. District Judge Donald S. Voorhees overturned the previous



judgment, and rejected the government's claim that it was impossible to single out the loyal Japanese from the disloyal in the tightly-knit racial group because of time constraints, and rejected this as a reason for evacuation.<sup>40</sup>

The redress issue finally ended in 1988 when Congress passed the \$1.25 billion Civil Liberties Act of 1988. One of the major victories that Nikkei won is that those who suffered internment were eligible to receive redress of \$20,000 per person if they were still living at the time of the judgment. A formal presidential apology was also sent to each survivor.<sup>41</sup>

Through the redress movement, the old Nikkei generation finally found an opportunity to speak out their wartime experience. At the beginning, Nisei criticized the redress proposal because they felt money could not compensate them for loss and suffering of 30 years past. In addition, they were reluctant to testify their terrible wartime memory and be exposed in public.<sup>42</sup> Gordon Hirabayashi linked Niseis' experience as rape, and said, "Somehow, like the other rape victims, you're the victim of it, but you feel degraded by it... And you feel ashamed. It takes you a while to come out and say I was done in and we shouldn't do it any more. You sort of want to keep it quiet."<sup>43</sup>

Thanks to the movement, however, Nisei could share their historical memory about internment camps with Sansei for the first time. As a result, the redress movement produced the opportunity for the old and young Japanese Americans to cooperate to accomplish one purpose, and the issue raised much more inclusive sense of community.<sup>44</sup> Their efforts were not merely to aim at moving from racial outsider to mainstream insider of American society. It is important that intragenerational conflict (among Nisei whether

to come out the wartime experience) and intergenerational collaboration (Nisei and Sansei) have arisen in response to changing historical circumstances in this movement.<sup>45</sup>

*New challenge: The Post in 1990s and to the next century*

The *North American Post* still encountered restructuring in the late '80s, but instead of keeping the status quo, the Post stepped forward to the new challenge. While Tomio Moriguchi took over the chairmanship in 1988, he requested the Post publish an English edition as one of his conditions.<sup>46</sup> *The Northwest Nikkei*, the first separated English issue of the Post, was born in May 1989. While *the Northwest Nikkei* offered news mainly for Nisei, Sansei, and Yonsei, the Japanese Post revived its prior role as an informative means to communicate with Japanese-language readers.<sup>47</sup>

In the '90s, the Post has aimed at being a more community-oriented newspaper. Instead of relying heavily on news releases from wire services, the Post has tried to gather as many original stories as the regular staff and contributors could write. In May 1997, *the Northwest Nikkei* was merged with the Friday edition of the Post, becoming a weekly. Despite anxiety over the attempt to mix Japanese pages with English in the same edition, the Post showed its desire to diversify its coverage – not only offering community news but also stories about Japan for those interested in the nation.<sup>48</sup>

## Chapter II

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<sup>1</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.75

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.75-76

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.78

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> “50 years with the community,” *The North American Post*

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Hosokawa, *Nisei*, p. 447-450

<sup>8</sup> Mochizuki, K., *History of The Seattle Chapter JACL*, from web site (<http://www.scn.org/civic/jacl>)

<sup>9</sup> “50 years with the community,” *The North American Post*

<sup>10</sup> Mochizuki, *History of The Seattle Chapter JACL*

<sup>11</sup> Montero, D. *Japanese Americans: Changing Patterns of Ethnic Affiliation Over Three Generations*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1980, p.41-58

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.41-58

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.62-63

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.59-61

<sup>15</sup> Takahashi, J. *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1997, p.156

<sup>16</sup> Montero, *Japanese Americans*, p.61

<sup>17</sup> Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei*, p.158

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.162

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.180-181

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.181

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.189

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Mochizuki, *History of The Seattle Chapter JACL*

<sup>24</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.79

<sup>25</sup> Mochizuki, *History of The Seattle Chapter JACL*

<sup>26</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.79

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Mochizuki, *History of The Seattle Chapter JACL*

<sup>29</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.82

<sup>30</sup> Mochizuki, *History of The Seattle Chapter JACL*

<sup>31</sup> “Japanese newspaper here is ‘dying’” by Peyton Whitely, *The Seattle Times*, Jan.5, 1973, p.A10.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> *U.S. Census of Population: Washington*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990

\*The reason why I cited only Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese at Chart 1 and Chart 2 is because those three are the only Asian groups that have appeared on the data since 1960 census.

<sup>34</sup> “50 years with the community,” *The North American Post*

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.82

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.83

<sup>38</sup> Mochizuki, *History of The Seattle Chapter JACL*

<sup>39</sup> “A different verdict” *Time*, Feb. 24, 1986, v127 p.26(1).

<sup>40</sup> “In re Hirabayashi” by Peter Irons, *The Nation*, March 1, 1986, v242 p.229(1).

<sup>41</sup> “A national apology” *Time*, Oct. 22, 1990, v136 n17 p.35(1).

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<sup>42</sup> Takami, *Divided Destiny*, p.82-83

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84

<sup>44</sup> Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei*, p.204-205

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Tomio Moriguchi, March 30, 1999

<sup>47</sup> "50 years with the community," *The North American Post*

<sup>48</sup> "Oasis" *The North American Post*, March 28, 1997

## Chapter III

### From the newsroom at the North American Post

#### **Akiko Kusunose, Japanese section editor**

Since its founding in 1946, the *North American Post* has called itself “the leading Japanese community newspaper in the Pacific Northwest.” The primary purpose of the Post was to provide news for Issei, who are comfortable using the Japanese language.

After more than five decades, the Nikkei community in Seattle has gone through a great transition – the core generation today are Isseis’ grandchildren, Sansei, or Sanseis’ children, Yonsei. In addition, a large number of Japanese nationals have crossed over the Pacific Ocean over the years. This phenomenon is, however, different from what had happened between the late 19th and the early 20th century. The most recent newcomers, so-called “Shin Issei,” have as their goals not immigration, but study, business, or marriage. The number of Shin Issei has been gaining year by year as Japan has succeeded in building its economic prosperity, and has maintained healthy diplomatic ties with the United States.

Akiko Kusunose is the current editor-in-chief of the Japanese section at the *North American Post*. She took over that position in 1988, three years after she began her career at the Post. She is a Shin Issei: She was born in Fukuoka, and obtained a law degree at Kyushu University. However, she has lived in the United States more than 20 years since she landed in Los Angeles.

### *Japanese-written newspaper still demanded in Seattle*

Kusunose emphasized that the *North American Post* is no longer a newspaper entirely for Nikkei, particularly for Issei, in Seattle. “The *North American Post* used to be too dependent on the Japanese-American community,” she said.

Although Kusunose does not deny the role of the paper for the Nikkei elderly, she stressed the paper’s mission will be maintained in the future, and “it won’t disappear because it is not the newspaper just for Issei.” Her predecessor was interviewed by *The Seattle Times* in Jan. 5, 1973. Takami Hibiya, a former editor, said such a small Japanese newspaper in America is a dying business and a dying media. But Kusunose disagreed: “(Hibiya) might consider that the Post was the paper only for the old generation, but it is not correct. Our paper would be printed as far as there are readers who prefer to read news in Japanese.”

“It is not only one stream through the history of the Post. There is an argument about who needs the Post,” she added. At the time of the newspaper’s birth, its pages were full of Issei news, such as their whereabouts or even whether they were alive because they were the main readers, and thus the newspaper heavily relied on their subscriptions. However, it has faced the fact that they were aging and the Issei population has dwindled year after year. At one time the Post printed the Issei obituaries only, and nothing more valuable than that.

Kusunose attempted to ponder the concept of community from a different angle when she took over the editorship. “The reason why Issei needed this paper is that it was

easiest for them to think and read (stories) in Japanese language. Not only Issei, but also I am (fond of reading news in Japanese). So are (Japanese) students, businesspeople, and intermarried couple. Issei are, therefore, definitely not only our target.”

The news coverage is not necessarily and entirely about Japanese community. “If you expand the concept of community, you will also expand the news,” she said.

“Readers want news useful or necessary for living in Seattle, and delivered in Japanese language. It does not always have to report Nikkeis’ personal story, such as a memorial service schedule” in the Japanese community.

### ***Shin Issei – The potential reader of the Post***

Seattle has one of the highest Japanese populations in the United States. In addition to its long history of Japanese immigration, the city has several factors which attract Japanese newcomers – a variety of business opportunities, from Boeing or Microsoft to the Japanese food distributors or retailers, and good conditions for pursuing higher education thanks to the University of Washington and other universities. This tolerance and friendly mood toward Japanese in the city is due to its long-term good relationship.

The gain of Japanese nationals offered the *North American Post* an opportunity to develop a new reader market. Now, businesspeople, students, and intermarried couples are the major target of the *North American Post*.

Students or businesspeople are not permanent residents, and their demands for the Post are different from the Nikkei settlers.

Relatively high-ranking business officers, such as company branch managers, need to know the updated news of other Japanese businesses in Seattle. For example, when one company announces the replacement of a manager, other business people want to see a picture of the new manager. In addition, because personal ties are important for overseas Japanese businesspeople, they must check the community events organized by the local Japanese volunteer group whose members are composed of Japanese companies. Comments or essays by some Japanese officials are also important to read. The Post is the only source for news of Japanese business in Seattle today, and it provides profiles and photos of new managers at Japanese enterprises, for instance.

Students are a large potential new readership. "Students have less interests in the Japanese community, but some of them hope to remain in America (after graduation). They then would start reading (the Post) to look for available job," Kusunose said. In fact, the Post has hired those who responded to its own ads in the newspaper. The Japanese Consulate in Seattle took advantage of the Post to find Japanese job seekers, and one subscriber, a Japanese graduate at the University of Washington, applied for it, thanks to her regular reading of the Post.



### *Advantage and uniqueness of the Post*

Kusunose knows there are an increasing number of resources for Seattle residents to access news in the Japanese language. The satellite version of Japanese major newspapers, such as *Yomiuri Shimbun* or *Asahi Shimbun*, is available. People can enjoy TV channels that provide some Japanese programs, from news to drama. Books, magazines, and CDs are available at Uwajimaya, a Japanese goods retailer at the International District.

So, what is Post's advantage over those media? Kusunose regards it as a medium "to report what is going on in the community, or even if it is not community news, its coverage should provide useful information for readers' daily life. The Post also picks up readers' opinions and voices." Since she was placed in the position of editor-in-chief, Kusunose has made great efforts to gain more space for original news coverage, which now occupies half of the paper. Compared to the amount of Post's original news with wire-service releases in the paper, the ratio was at 1 to 9 in the past. To highlight community news, Kusunose tries to put staff stories on the front page, or at least a main photograph, instead of news from the wire service.

Another part of the Post's mission is to serve as a newspaper of record of Japanese community. Kusunose is sometimes determined to publish news of murder or bribery although some family members object, calling it sensational in such a small community.

“If there is at least one useful story for each reader, that’s fine because it is impossible to satisfy all different readers with different types of news. In other words, the newspaper does not cover news only for one certain type of readers,” she said. For readers from Issei to Japanese students, Kusunose has suggested to reporter that they “gather at least three different sorts of community news.”

### **Maya Wilhoit, Japanese section assistant editor**

Because of its small staff – three reporter-editors and one designer – the employees at a newsroom of the *North American Post* have to be responsible for several tasks. Even the editor has to go out and gather news, just as the regular reporters do.

Maya Wilhoit is titled assistant editor – she is in charge of selecting newsworthy stories from a wire service, and editing them. But she is also the Post’s regular reporter who covers feature stories and sports news. Through her experience as a reporter, she has interacted with both Japanese and Nikkei community in Seattle, how does she predict the future of the *North American Post*?

### ***To show readers the interesting stories in a community***

Maya Wilhoit generates story ideas that stem from her own interests. "I wonder if readers may be interested in the topic if I am interested in it," she said, and seeks stories based on what are interesting and useful topics that impress her.

Wilhoit is a Japanese native who flew to America with her husband in 1986. In her life in Japan, she had studied photography at a photo school in Tokyo, studied writing skills, and then found a job at a newsletter publication at Yokosuka naval base, about 30 miles west from Tokyo.

Wilhoit was hired as a full-time employee at the *North American Post* in 1993, and now she is an assistant editor for Japanese-language pages. In addition to taking care of the wire news, she works as a reporter in charge of the one-page section, "*Itte Mimashita*" (I went and experienced) in Friday edition.

*Itte Mimashita* is a feature-style story in which Wilhoit profiles local celebrities who have something to do with Japan. For example, she interviewed a Japanese female who succeeded in finding a job at a design company, or an American couple running a Japanese martial arts hall. Some interesting spots, such as a new restaurant, become a topic, too.

### ***Newspaper as a means of communication among Japanese in Seattle***

Wilhoit appreciates the *North American Post* as a vehicle "to gather small voices in order to make them large and effective." This idea stems from Wilhoit's personal experience of expressing her opinions when she read a story about Japanese education in Seattle. "I read an article by Mr. Kazuo Ito, a Japanese journalist, who claimed that the postwar Japanese settlers, such as war brides, have not provided enough Japanese-language education for their children, and thus, such education should be

maintained,” she said. As I agreed with him, I sent him a letter, and said, ‘I attempt to speak to my kids in Japanese.’”

The local feature page, *Itte Mimashita*, was what Wilhoit and her editor, Kusunose, came up with to stir readers’ curiosity about the community by spotlighting interesting figures, groups, and places.

In *Itte Mimashita*, Wilhoit attempts to strike readers curiosity with her own interests. In an article on a Japanese female who works for a designing company, for example, she emphasized how wonderful it was that young woman’s design was used for a logo of a major Japanese television station. “(While interviewing,) I was surprised at the fact that such a pretty, young lady in front of me survived in the tough American business world and did a great job,” she said.

As a sports reporter, she tries her best to cover the Mariners to create her original report. During the season, and when Japanese major leaguers such as Mac Suzuki are scheduled to play the game, she rushes to the Kingdome at the 2 p.m. practice time to obtain their comments. So far, she has succeeded in interviewing Shigetoshi Hasegawa of Anaheim Angels, and Hideki Irabu of New York Yankees besides Mac Suzuki.

Before a Japanese baseball player was in major league baseball, Wilhoit had no opportunity to write an original story, and instead, provided news of Japanese baseball games and sumo tournaments. Around the summer of 1997, the Post was determined to gain more circulation by supplying original articles. This decision was timely for the

sports reporter because at this time more Japanese baseball pitchers were signing contracts to play with the major league teams.

The *North American Post* also plays an important role in offering local news for Japanese who do not have good English skills. Such Japanese as Issei or war brides whose home is Seattle, need to know the news from obituaries to events in their local community.

But as the older Issei have been replaced by new English-language-oriented Nikkei, the Post has had to change itself, and now it is aiming at Shin Issei for readership.

Wilhoit thinks the news coverage does not always have to be aimed at the little Japanese-speaking community in Seattle. “In fact, the (Nikkei) community news only is boring. I myself am always looking to the direction of Japan, and watching Japanese TV drama or other programs whenever available.”

The news that Wilhoit attempts to find is something to do with Japan and America or Seattle. A good example is the report of Mac Suzuki, who debuted and realized his first major league victory last season, she said.

### ***Originality***

*The North American Post* tries to involve its readers. For instance, “Relay Essay” is the reader-participation-style page: the Post hands a baton – to write an essay – to Seattle Japanese one by one. “It is ideal if those who have written for the Relay Essay become the subscriber afterward,” Wilhoit said.

Another column, "*Garasu no tamate bako (A crystal jewelry box)*" is written by Etsuko Ichikawa, whom Wilhoit interviewed before. She was aware of Ichikawa's writing skills, and encouraged her to become a contributing writer.

To showcase originality has become more important than in the past because of the rival Japanese free papers, particularly a monthly *You You Club Magazine*, and the biweekly *Soy Source*. Wilhoit assumes that between 5,000 and 10,000 copies of each paper are available in downtown Seattle. Although they are created as a city guide paper and usually focus on entertainment, they are still Japanese papers who are tough competitors for advertising. Their impact is quite large for the Post, which relies purely on subscription and advertising income.

### ***In order to survive***

Wilhoit believes that it is difficult for the major Japanese media to find news of Japanese society in Seattle unless they take advantage of community news sources, such as the *North American Post*. While some media have their own correspondents, or make use of U.S. or Japanese wire services, their coverage consists primarily of such major news as politics, economics, or sensational crime reports, all of which must have some impact on Japanese society for the major media to cover it.

The importance of the Post in the future stems from its role as the only Seattle-based Japanese newspaper that covers original community news. But would too much local news limit readers' interests?

Wilhoit hopes to expand the area that the newspaper is able to cover despite the time, financial and human resources constraints. The Post has found contributors outside Seattle, and is attempting to achieve its expansion, slowly, but gradually.

Because of its community-based characteristics, the *North American Post* is able to follow small issues. Most of this daily community news is not covered by other Seattle media, but sometimes has a serious impact and provokes controversy. Wilhoit recalls that while no media reported the shooting of a Japanese schoolteacher, “maybe because such a trouble is not unusual,” the Post’s coverage amplified readers’ interest, and they sought to know what happened. “Some people gossiped who shot a teacher, saying probably a racist, or indiscriminate shooter,” she explained. As the shooting became a hot topic in the Japanese community, rival local newspapers became aware that it was not a incident to be ignored, and started reporting on it.

Coexistence with rivals in Seattle is the key for the *North American Post* to survive. Wilhoit hopes that the Seattle Japanese will watch local television news programs for the domestic news, and read the bilingual Post, which offers news of the Seattle Nikkei community and of Japan since those subjects are usually ignored by the Seattle media.

**Nui Tateyama, English section editor**

*The North American Post* has called itself, and has been known as the leading

Japanese-language newspaper in the Pacific Northwest. While the Post still fulfills this mission, it is no longer a Japanese-only newspaper.

Until 1989, the Post had never published a regular English edition but had occasionally printed a few English pages. *The Northwest Nikkei* originated in May 1989 as a monthly English-language separate edition of the Post. It then became the bimonthly paper, and finally in 1997, it was merged with the Friday edition of the Post, and English pages are today published weekly.

Since the birth of *the Northwest Nikkei*, several English editors have edited the English section. The current editor, Nui Tateyama, took over the position in March 1999.

It is difficult to maintain the English section and satisfy readers' needs for several reasons. First of all, the editor needs to pay great attention to the Nikkei readers, who generally want to read the Nikkei-related topics. Second, the English section cannot rely on news of Japan since few Nikkei are interested in what is going on today in Japan.<sup>1</sup> Third, the paper also cannot depend on domestic news to draw readers because there are many rival domestic papers, such as *The Seattle Times*, which have a better network of news coverage than the Post. Finally, and probably the hardest hurdle to jump, is a lack of human and financial resources.

To get over such hardships, Tateyama believes that the Post should be “70 percent for Nikkeis' demand, and 30 percent for something else to respond to a wide range of requests.” While she is well aware of the mission of paper as a sole Nikkei newspaper in



Seattle, she also understands it is necessary to reach a different market, such as the younger generation of Japanese or pro-Japanese Americans.

### ***For Nikkeis' needs***

“Our newspaper should not be entirely an information paper for Nikkei,” Tateyama said. Rather, she said, one of the paper’s primary roles is to educate younger Nikkei – to relate the topics of anti-Japanese movement early this century, which their parents and grandparents suffered. While the stories of internment camps have frequently been provided in the paper, she plans to focus on unknown people, such as internees from Bainbridge region, the first community in Seattle where Nikkei residents were compelled to leave for the camp. She wants to shed light on those who are almost forgotten, though they shared the same pain as other internment survivors did.

Tateyama said she was surprised how such history was ignored and dealt with as unimportant by American media. On the other hand, she is aware of the fact that 50 years later a number of Nikkei still want to read internment stories in the *North American Post*.

### ***Wide range of topics***

Tateyama estimates the Post’s circulation today is between 2,500 and 3,000, and the number of Nikkei subscribers has been dwindling. To develop the non-Nikkei readership, pro-Japanese people, for example, she thinks issues such as salmon migration and whether their survival is threatened would attract readers because it would influence

the fish business engage many Japanese. To attract female readers, the paper revived a section on Japanese cuisine and cooking.

Tateyama hopes to include as many contributing writers as possible. Because the Post represents Nikkei community, it should be the vehicle for delivering Nikkei's voices, and in this regard, those who know the community well should be in the front line and express their opinions through the paper, she believes.

### *The gap between Japanese and Japanese American*

“The major problem is the shortage of full-time journalist at my section. It prevents me from employing plans that I come up with,” said Tateyama, who, as the only English section employee, takes care of all duties almost by herself—reporting, editing, and photos. She, therefore, relies on outside reporters for the time being. Relying on stories written by American returnees from Japan, or local residents who have observed the Japanese-American community in Seattle for many years, the paper is able to cover a diversity of topics about Japan or Nikkei.<sup>2</sup>

Tateyama has to balance this with routine coverage. Though she wants to print a “variety of stories with different perspectives and angles,” she cannot deny the fact that “a number of Nikkei like to read the routine news,” and they pay no attention if stories are not interesting to them. Even some Nikkei care only about reading stories of internment camp history, she said.

Tateyama is studying Nikkei society to attract them to the *North American Post*. “I would like to create the paper that covers the identity of Japanese Americans,” she said. The Nikkei identity is complicated. Once she wrote a story about the taiko drum. She wrote that the sound of drum might remind Japanese people of their country while Nikkei might think about their ancestors’ homeland. After the story was published, she was told by a Nikkei reader that Nikkei never imagine Japan as their homeland. This is a big difference between Japanese and Nikkei because consider one’s homeland as very important.

Although she sometimes finds young Nikkei hanging out with other Nikkei peers, and that they are more interested in the Japanese culture than Japanese citizens, Tateyama finds most Nikkei call themselves American, never Japanese American. From this she assumes there is a Japanese-American culture, different from American or Japanese culture.

It makes her realize that she must better understand the complexity of the Seattle Nikkei community in addition to studying its individuals. Her American predecessor told her that the paper has to take advantage of the Nikkei community to gather news, but they may not be happy if their information does not show up in the paper immediately after they provide it. Particularly, Nikkei news sources pay close attention to the paper because they believe it is the chance for them to become a local hero or heroine if published.

And even more difficult matter is that Tateyama as yet cannot predict the characteristics of Yonsei and Gosei though she has gradually come to understand Sansei.

Since she hopes to get more feedback from the Nikkei readers, she is planning to collect their opinions and provide the pages as a vehicle of arguing several important issues for them.

### Chapter III

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<sup>1</sup> The Post's main Nikkei readership is the old generation who experienced the WWII. In addition, Seattle Nikkei community is small. Because they have grown up in Seattle, America's local city, not in Japan, they request the Post to localize the news coverage, such as a report of Seattle Nikkei event or their past experience.

<sup>2</sup> The Post has to develop the young reader market. Because of its character, it is natural for the Post to pursue the news about Japan to appeal young people because it is true that in Seattle and Washington State, the interests in Japan, regardless of whether they are Japanese American or not, have been increasing.

## Chapter IV

### Original news report as a Nikkei vernacular media

One of the goals of the small *North American Post* is to do in-depth reports on the Settle Nikkei community, which other local media do not cover. Also, because of its bilingual style, the Post is able to attract both English and Japanese readers and to analyze a variety of issues from both American and Japanese angles.

The Post has observed and recorded a number of issues and incidents that happened in Japan or the United States since the paper's beginning. While Nikkei, regardless of whether they hold the U.S. citizenship, are interested in current domestic news, they also pay attention to news from Japan. This is because they, particularly Shin Issei, still maintain relationships with Japan – family ties, friendships, or probably have nostalgia for Japan.

In this chapter, I will address several issues that might have strong impact on Japanese Americans. Most of those topics are so important and influential for both Japan and America that they were widely printed by the U.S. domestic media.

#### 1. “Japan bashing” in the early 1990s

From the mid '80s to the early '90s, Japan enjoyed an extraordinary economic development, which only recently has been called “the bubble economy.” This phenomenon was characterized by the skyrocketing increase of land prices, which recorded yearly increases of 15 percent on average.<sup>1</sup> No investor believed that he would

see land values drop. Banks offered the real estate companies an overwhelming number of loans without confirming whether those companies had enough ability to pay back the debt.

Large manufacturing industries acquired high stock market returns, and benefited greatly from the bubble economy.<sup>2</sup> High-tech businesses had remarkable sales, but it stemmed from the huge exports to the U.S. market. The resulting trade conflict exploded around this time.

“Japan bashing” grew in America in the early ’90s when Japanese business was symbolized as the intruder into the U.S. industry. In contrast with the success of Japanese auto manufacturers, the Big Three automakers were facing serious management problems – layoffs, restructurings, and downsizing. Lee Iacocca, then chairman of Chrysler, criticized Japanese auto companies, saying they practiced unfair trade and his company suffered huge losses as a result. Consequently, many American jobs were lost.<sup>3</sup> In the United States, some angry Americans destroyed a Honda Civic, a scene that was televised in Japan as a typical example of anti-Japanese sentiment taken out on an auto product.<sup>4</sup>

A controversy erupted in Seattle in 1992 when the president of Japan’s Nintendo Co. Ltd. announced plans to purchase the major league baseball team, the Seattle Mariners, which was then suffering from financial woes. This offer met with strong resistance by the league, including Baseball Commissioner Fay Vincent, who claimed that only U.S. and Canadian investors could own major league teams.<sup>5</sup>

It was the late '80s when Japanese money overwhelmed several U.S. industries. In 1989, Japanese electronics giant Sony, which had already purchased CBS Records two years before, announced the buyout of Columbia Pictures Entertainment, and agreed to pay \$3.4 billion and acquired \$1.2 billion in debt.<sup>6</sup> It was the same year when Mitsubishi Estate Co. invested \$846 million to acquire 51 percent share of the Rockefeller Group, which owns the Rockefeller Center, an American landmark.<sup>7</sup> This trend continued in 1990. Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., one of Sony's rivals, decided to purchase MCA/Universal.<sup>8</sup>

The series of deals by Japanese investment brought Americans some negative images about Japan because such action was regarded as an invasion of American culture. Facing the flow of Japanese money into their homeland, Americans felt the vulnerability of their culture. U.S. news media and government foreign policy-makers warned of cultural domination by an external power.<sup>9</sup> It was under these circumstances that the proposed Mariners buyout fueled Americans' growing anti-Japanese mood.

*The North American Post* had picked up the topic of "Japan bashing" prior to the Mariner's issue. In a story about the 50th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, for example, President Bush expressed the remorse for the wartime internment of Japanese Americans. The Post's editorial, *Oasis* noted that JACL had campaigned for public awareness of the internment history in order not to make the anniversary a day of "Japan bashing." The column also noted that *The Daily*, the student newspaper at the University of Washington, said, "Rather than the Pearl Harbor attack, it is important do discuss that

fact that America took civil rights from U.S. citizens, Japanese American, by the executive order.”<sup>10</sup>

On Jan. 24, 1992, the Post, in a story by Kyodo News Service, released the first news that Nintendo planned to purchase the Mariners. The article quoted Seattle Japanese who worried that the plan might heat up feelings of “Japan bashing.” The newspaper then started covering this issue regularly. Kyodo cited a story from the *Wall Street Journal*, saying, “It is inevitable that the major league itself and the baseball fans will oppose (the buyout).”<sup>11</sup> Another story said, “According to the research conducted by Response Center in Philadelphia, 71 percent of Americans opposed (Nintendo’s plan).”<sup>12</sup> Another story said, “The official document was issued at the owners’ meeting to confirm that no corporation is qualified to own a major league baseball team unless it is either American or Canadian.”<sup>13</sup>

To critique this trend, Kazuo Ito, then the Post’s correspondent in Tokyo, wrote a column regarding the Mariners or Sony and Matsushita’s buyout of Hollywood industry. He stated, “A film industry, automobile, and baseball in America is a sanctuary that anybody from the different culture zone should not step into.”<sup>14</sup>

Through a series of negotiations, the buyout plan was finally accepted in June 1992. The official permission was reported on June 12, although the league controlled Nintendo not to participate in the management. *Oasis* that day said, “... as one of the local residents, I myself feel settled. I do not think it is the equal treatment that (the



league has Nintendo) invest money, but no opinion is allowed (on management).

However, I appreciate Nintendo's concession because the company was asked by the State of Washington, and (the purchase is) to express their pleasure for local community which support the American Nintendo."<sup>15</sup>

*Oasis* discussed this issue from a different angle. It introduced the local reaction, saying, "Thanks to the cultural and economic friendly relationship between Washington State and Japan until today, there was no anti-Japanese atmosphere."<sup>16</sup>

## **2. Great Hanshin Earthquake**

On Jan. 17, 1995, Kobe, a western city in Japan, was shaken by the largest earthquake in the postwar era, which destroyed the entire city and killed more than 5,500 people around the area.

*The North American Post* covered this calamity on Jan.18. Page four of this edition was entirely allocated for the report of victims' rescue.

More importantly, however, the Post showcased originality in its earthquake coverage. Since Kobe is the sister city of Seattle, the paper printed a message from the Seattle mayor, who expressed his deep sorrow for Kobe residents. The Post also called for readers' support for the earthquake victims, and listed organizations that accepted and delivered the relief funds.<sup>17</sup> For those who had any relatives or acquaintances in Kobe, the Post printed addresses and telephone numbers where they could confirm the whereabouts of people.

Beyond the community news media, the Post itself voluntarily functioned as a support organization for those who suffered from the disaster despite its geographical distance to Japan. Taking advantage of its name value among the Seattle Nikkei community, it widely called for financial aid, and the Post transferred the collected donation to the relief groups. This involvement was a part of Post's dedication to the Nikkei, who wanted to help but physically were so far away from Japan.

A week later, Editor Kusunose addressed the strengths and weaknesses of newspaper with linkage to the earthquake coverage. She cited the dilemma of the fact that the Post was always behind in reporting this catastrophe, but she said that although the Post was not speedy, its readers were able to read the news in the Japanese language. “(In Seattle) it is only *the North American Post* (that can) convey the news that the community needs to know, and (we) play a role to record community's reaction (to the issues) in Japanese language.”<sup>18</sup>

The Post printed four pages for the list of the victims' names on Jan. 27, and regularly conveyed this kind of information whenever available.

### **3. A gun death of a Japanese exchange student in Baton Rouge**

The tragedy of the gunshot killing of a Japanese exchange student, Yoshihiro Hattori, aroused a nationwide argument in Japan against the United States on the matter of gun control.

The shooting took place in Baton Rouge on Oct. 17, 1992. Hattori and his friend were invited to a Halloween party, but they could not find the correct address. They knocked at the house of Rodney Peairs, who tragically believed the two boys to be intruders. Peairs, who was holding a real gun, yelled, “Freeze!” at Hattori. Despite this warning, Hattori, who might have thought the gun was a toy because of the Halloween atmosphere, and who probably did not understand the meaning of the word “freeze,” was moving closer to Peairs. Scared, Peairs pulled the trigger. Hattori was killed.<sup>19</sup>

Yuzo Ozawa of *Chunichi Shimbun* predicted, “I think it will make very big headlines.”<sup>20</sup> The shooting was discussed in various Japanese media, some of which criticized American society. *Asahi Shimbun*, one of the leading Japanese newspapers, said that the more the investigation advanced, the more Japanese people regarded America as a country beyond comprehension because the United States never legislated any gun control restrictions even after Hattori’s death. It continued that America had encountered many tragic killings by shooting, including the assassination of President Kennedy, but had failed to restrict the purchase of firearms. It also pointed out that the Hattori case was hardly reported in America at first. Only after it became controversial in Japan, did the U.S. media began to cover it. It concluded that such a reporting process is the mirror of American society, which has lost the sense of danger about guns.<sup>21</sup>

Another Japanese newspaper, *The Japan Times*, introduced the tragedy in its editorial. The Times pointed out the shooting happened not in a high-crime big city area but in a quiet rural residential neighborhood, and because of it, Japanese might inquire, “... crime-weary Americans will not only possess firearms but also will not hesitate to

use them against innocent trespasser?” While the article said, “Because of the low crime rate at home Japanese abroad experience a false sense of security,” the story also introduced the statement of the Japanese consulate general of New Orleans: “Young Hattori’s death was ‘completely unprovoked, unjustified and unnecessary.’” It concluded, “Those are words for Mr. Peairs and other quick-on-the-trigger Americans to ponder and remember.”<sup>22</sup>

Things became more emotional in Japan when Peairs was acquitted on his manslaughter charge on the ground of a Louisiana state law that permits residents to defend themselves against intruders. The verdict “ignited a firestorm,” and one TV anchor criticized American society, saying, “Guns everywhere – it’s like a cancer.”<sup>23</sup>

After the verdict, *The Japan Times* printed an editorial sampler of Japanese major and local papers.<sup>24</sup> While the editorials basically requested the United State to consider stricter gun control, the tone of each newspaper was quite different. Some strong comments were: “The verdict is hardly acceptable,” (*Nishi Nihon Shimbun*) or, “A society where citizens must defend themselves by guns is sick.” (*Chunichi-Tokyo-Hokuriku Chunichi Syndicate*)

On the other hand, some newspapers called for constructive discussion: “(The Japanese) should not react emotionally to the incident and the verdict. But Americans should also rethink the role of guns in their society...” (*Hokkaido Shimbun*) or, “Gun control is purely a U.S. domestic problem. But we would like to ask our American friends to use this incident as the catalyst for gun control discussions.” (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*)

*The North American Post*, of course, had followed the issue from the beginning. The Post cited *The Washington Post*, saying this issue was reported widely in Japan because it confirmed in the minds of Japanese people the bad image of U.S. society they were already holding.<sup>25</sup> Beyond factual reports, the Japanese editor of the Post commented on the shooting: “While I think it is unbelievable that (Hattori) was shot just because he visited a wrong address, I also feel this kind of accident might happen. This is because I know the case in the Washington State that a boy was shot and killed because he put firecrackers in a mailbox. And I also know the numerical data of gun possession at high schools in New York.”<sup>26</sup>

The Post constantly reported on the lawsuit against Peairs. Also, the newspaper covered some local events in relation to Hattori’s shooting. One of the Post’s original reports is titled, “October 17 for Yoshi Day.”<sup>27</sup> The article reported on the exhibition of a quilt, which included the names of gun shooting victims in Seattle. The story also covered the press conference by Washington Cease-fire, a civic group who wanted more gun restrictions, and had submitted a proposed gun control law. They also announced a plan to plant 10,000 daffodil bulbs to commemorate Hattori and other shooting victims.

After this coverage, *The Seattle Times* reported the day when daffodil bulbs were planted by “more than 70 volunteers.” The story reminded readers of Hattori’s death, the well-known tragedy that was representing all shooting victims. The anti-gun civic groups appreciated the ceremony, and this event as a symbol of the push for gun control.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the factual reports, such as the news that Hattori’s civil suit for compensation was upheld by the court, the Post succeeded in localizing the shooting,

making it newsworthy even after a few years has passed. For example, the Post reported on the documentary film that focused on Hattori's death.<sup>29</sup> The newspaper also followed the planting of daffodil bulbs, on the fourth anniversary of the so-called "The day of remembrance."<sup>30</sup>

The coverage of Hattori's death is a good example of how the Post covered local Seattle news, which community readers are interested in.

#### **4. Suffrage for overseas Japanese**

For many years, until 1999, Japan has not allowed its overseas citizens the rights to vote in the national election. Nikkei newspapers around the world, including the *North American Post*, have supported non-resident Japanese attempts to establish suffrage.

In 1984, the Japanese government proposed to the Diet a plan to grant suffrage for Japanese abroad. Due to the dissolution of the House of Representatives, however, the proposal was abolished, and has never been revived.<sup>31</sup>

But the argument continued in Brazil where more than a million Nikkei live. The Union of Brazil Prefectural Association (*Burajiru Kenjinkai Rengo* in Japanese) petitioned the Japanese government to grant suffrage to Nikkei.<sup>32</sup> In Sao Paulo, there are about 100,000 Japanese citizens.<sup>33</sup>

The Post opined that unlike the government proposal of 1984, which excluded those who obtained permanent residence status abroad, the legislation should have no restrictions.<sup>34</sup> The paper then campaigned to collect readers' opinions by offering a questionnaire on page nine of the edition on Aug. 23, 1993. *Diario Nippaku* in Brazil,

*Nichigo Press* in Australia, *Chicago Shimpo*, and *Rocky Jiho* in Denver, Colorado, also developed such campaigns.

*The North American Post* reported on Oct. 2, 1996, that the Network for Overseas Voters (*Kaigai Yukensha Network* in Japanese), which has played a central role in this movement, was prepared to file a lawsuit against the Japanese government. The Network criticized the government because it did not have any schedule to legalize suffrage although the discussion had begun three years prior.

The hope finally came true in April 1998, when the House of Representatives passed legislation<sup>35</sup> that overseas Nikkei were qualified to vote in national-level elections.<sup>36</sup> The Post introduced the comment by the Japanese Consulate of Seattle, which estimated that between 13,000 and 14,000 Japanese lived in Washington, northern Idaho, and Montana.<sup>37</sup>

When the registration started in May 1999, the Post printed a photo on the front page showing the scene in which Nikkei community representatives registered with the Japanese Consul. <sup>38</sup>

## Chapter IV

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- <sup>1</sup> “Appraisal practice and Japan’s bubble economy,” by Isao Tsukamoto, *Appraisal Journal*, April, 1999, v67 i2 p.195(4).
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> “‘Japan-bashing’ may be factor in teen’s killing” by Kim Margolis, *Sun-Sentinel*, Aug. 23, 1992, p.1A.
- <sup>4</sup> “Bashing elicits anger, sorrow in Japan” by Colin Nickerson, *The Boston Globe*, Feb. 10, 1992, p.1.
- <sup>5</sup> “Anti-Japanese feelings erupt into fury of Americanism” by David Ivanovich, *Houston Chronicle*, Jan. 24, 1992, p.1.
- <sup>6</sup> “From walkman to showman: Sony pays \$3.4 billion for a Hollywood studio as a crowning touch in its strategy of combining entertainment with electronics” by Janice Castro, *Time*, Oct 9, 1989, v134 n15 p70(2).
- <sup>7</sup> “Sure, we’ll take Manhattan; a Japanese firm invests in a gem: Rockefeller Center” by John Greenwald, *Time*, Nov.13, 1989, v.134 n20 p83(1).
- <sup>8</sup> “Tokyo takes on Tinseltown; will a MCA-Matsushita deal change the entertainment industry?” by Mike Tharp and Jim Impoco, *U.S. News & World Report*, Oct.15, 1990, v109 n15 p81(2).
- <sup>9</sup> “Sayonara MCA” by Herbert I. Schiller, *The Nation*, Dec.31, 1990, v251 n23 p828(2).
- <sup>10</sup> “Oasis,” *The North American Post*, Dec. 6, 1991
- <sup>11</sup> *The North American Post*, Jan. 27, 1992
- <sup>12</sup> *The North American Post*, Feb. 5, 1992
- <sup>13</sup> *The North American Post*, Feb. 7, 1992
- <sup>14</sup> “Tokyo Report,” by Kazuo Ito, *The North American Post*, Feb. 12, 1992
- <sup>15</sup> “Oasis,” *The North American Post*, June 12, 1992
- <sup>16</sup> “Oasis,” *The North American Post*, Dec. 18, 1992
- <sup>17</sup> *The North American Post*, Jan. 20, 1995
- <sup>18</sup> “Oasis,” *The North American Post*, Jan. 27, 1995
- <sup>19</sup> “Death of a visitor: Yoshi Hattori died when he went to the wrong house for a party” by Joe Treen, *People* Nov. 16, 1992, v38 n20 p77(3).
- <sup>20</sup> “Order to ‘freeze’ may have confused exchange student” by Christopher Baughman and Andy Crawford, *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge, LA), Oct.19, 1992
- <sup>21</sup> “Juu ni nottorareta beikoku shakai (The U.S. society overwhelmed by guns)” editorial, *Asahi Shimbun*, Oct. 29, 1992
- <sup>22</sup> “A fatal American English lesson,” editorial, *The Japan Times*, Oct. 25, 1992
- <sup>23</sup> “They think we’re a land of sick shooters” by Mary Lord, *U.S. News & World Report*, June 7, 1993, v114 n22 p8(2).
- <sup>24</sup> “A senseless death should spark change (an editorial sampler),” *The Japan Times*, June 13, 1993, p.20.
- <sup>25</sup> *The North American Post*, Oct. 21, 1992, p.3.
- <sup>26</sup> Oasis, *The North American Post*, Oct. 30, 1992, p.1.
- <sup>27</sup> “October 17 for Yoshi Day,” *The North American Post*, Sep. 29, 1993, p.4
- <sup>28</sup> “Seeds of hope planted for tighter gun-control laws,” *The Seattle Times*, Oct. 18, 1993, p.B1
- <sup>29</sup> *The North American Post*, Apr. 18, 1997
- <sup>30</sup> *The North American Post*, Sep. 17, 1997
- <sup>31</sup> “Eijuuken hojisha no zaigai touhyo ni hairyo seyo (Consider the suffrage for the permanent residence status holders),” *Asahi Shimbun*, July 27, 1995, p.4.
- <sup>32</sup> *The North American Post*, Aug. 20, 1993
- <sup>33</sup> *The North American Post*, July 23, 1993
- <sup>34</sup> *The North American Post*, Aug. 20, 1993



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<sup>35</sup> According to the Japanese Consulate in Seattle, the ongoing institution describes that all Japanese nationality holders over 20 years old are qualified, and it also includes the overseas Japanese who acquire the permanent residence status in foreign country.

<sup>36</sup> *The North American Post*, Apr. 6, 1998

<sup>37</sup> *The North American Post*, Apr. 24, 1998

<sup>38</sup> *The North American Post*, May 3, 1999

## Chapter V

### Beyond the Issei newspaper

As mentioned in Chapter II, the *North American Post* was started for Issei. After more than 50 years, the Seattle Nikkei community has drastically changed.

More or less, however, it is the older Japanese Americans who have supported their community newspaper. Although Sansei or Yonsei seem to be too young to appreciate the importance of Nikkei news media, Nisei, who grew up with the Post, recognize the value of the community newspaper as a means to reflect their voices.

Also, the increase of Shin Issei, the Japanese-born temporary sojourners or permanent settlers in the last two decades, has influenced the Post, which used to be entirely written in Japanese. The Post has been required to respond their demands in the process of story selection.

In this chapter, I will examine how the Nikkei community and Shin Issei today consider the Post, and evaluate its role for them through three interviews.

#### **Tomio Moriguchi, chairman and CEO of the North American Post Co. Inc.**

Tomio Moriguchi took over the chairman position in 1988, basically because of a request by his predecessor. He has been one of the important leaders at the Seattle Nikkei community due to his active dedication to civic organizations. One of his most significant commitments was in 1972 when he was a president of Seattle Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, the branch of the most influential Nikkei association in

America. According to the history of Seattle JACL, he made great efforts to found a nursing home entirely for Nikkei elderly.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to his leadership, he is also known for his directorship of several businesses, including Uwajimaya, the biggest Japanese and Oriental food retailer in the Pacific Northwest.

Moriguchi's life-long commitment to the Seattle community has brought him a number of awards and recognition. Even the mayor of Seattle proclaimed Moriguchi's birthday, Apr. 16, to be Tomio Moriguchi Day in 1996.

### *Challenging of the Post today*

Despite the importance of its presentation among Japanese Americans in Seattle, Moriguchi admits the newspaper has been struggling with sales. "Sales are going down. (The Post) was always designed for Issei, and Issei are practically gone. And Shin Issei ... it was not designed for them." Regarding the English section on Friday, which is aimed at cultivating the market of English-reading Nikkei, he said, "It has not been as popular as we would like to have it."

Moriguchi is determined to restructure the newspaper business. There used to be 13 or 14 full-time employees at the Post, said Moriguchi, who could do nothing but slim down its number to eight. It was not only because of the loss of business, but the need to upgrade technology, such as to introduce computers and wire services.

In order to avoid downgrading quality, the Post hired a person who used to work for *Yomiuri Shimbun*, one of the major newspapers in Japan, and placed him in

management to take advantage of his experiences. Though the number of full-timer positions has dwindled, the paper has widely recruited contributors and part-timer reporters.

### *English section's importance*

Although the Post used to print its English articles irregularly, it did not see any economic success, because of the high cost of printing and the labor involved. The revival of the English section was the main condition when Moriguchi had when he agreed to become the chairman, because he represented Seattle Nikkei who read English but no Japanese.

However, Moriguchi knows that Nikkei cannot be a major target for the readership. "That's the challenge," to keep their interests in subscribing to the Post, he said. Instead, Shin Issei are the major target for the newspaper to gain in circulation. In fact, he regards the newspaper's role as to "provide news for Nikkei community, mainly people whose prominent language is Japanese."

The newspaper business is "day-to-day stuff," and Moriguchi would never terminate it unless the English section was to become the major cause of its losing huge amounts of money. He is aware of the important missions the paper has. The English section is a good vehicle to deliver interesting history or culture as well as to report Nikkei news that the mainstream media hardly cover.

*The news that Nikkei want to know*

Moriguchi himself is eager to know the current news in Japan since he has relatives, he owns businesses that relate to Japan, and he has traveled to Japan quite a few times. He personally is interested in the country, which is the world's second largest economic power, and preserves the old traditions.

But he is not sure whether the younger Nikkei have as keen an interest as Nisei have had. Thus, should the *North American Post* still print the results of sumo tournaments? Yes, Moriguchi answered. It is one of the ways of regularly showing the young generations the Japanese traditions. "It is an educational process, (to keep) cultural awareness and pride. Also American people expect them to understand these things," he said.

The potential reader would not always be Nikkei, as some non-Japanese are interested in Japanese traditions. Moriguchi knows Caucasians married to Japanese who are more interested in Japanese culture than the Japanese. But there are children of war brides who show no sense of curiosity about their cultural legacy. "My obligation is to provide information for those who are interested in it... If you are not interested in it, that's fine," he said.

Moriguchi considers the mission of his paper is to develop the interests in Japan that readers have. The mood for Japanese in the State of Washington is favorable, and the potential reader's market is probably not small. For example, he indicated Washington State has one of the highest percentages of students studying the Japanese language. Such a trend is based on the long history of exchange between Seattle and Kobe, as well as the

strong business relationship among corporations such as Boeing, Microsoft, or even a number of small merchants. Seattle people were very generous in aiding the Japanese at a time of the catastrophic Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, and the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995.

“We have to expand beyond the Japanese Americans,” Moriguchi said, envisioning the future of the Post. To cultivate the market, he said the paper should be diverse and interesting enough to have people pick it up.

### **Tetsuden Kashima, professor of the University of Washington**

When generations change in the Nikkei community, young people tend to assimilate into the mainstream society, rather than to affiliate and preserve their cultural heritage.

However, as the older Nikkei claim, the pride of their racial origin should not be forgotten. And the Nikkei community newspaper, the *North American Post* is a vehicle not only to convey news but also to show what youngsters have to know, such as Nikkei history in the United States.

Professor Tetsuden Kashima, whose field is American ethnic studies, claims the Nikkei community should realize how important it is to maintain their own media.

### ***Newspaper for younger Nikkei***

As a sociologist, Kashima analyzed the difference between Nisei, who experienced the anti-Japanese era, and Sansei in terms of freedom. During 1940s, Nikkei

had no choice but to be “stuck together” due to several restriction orders by the federal and state governments. The internment experience is the typical example that Nikkei were isolated from other races and were compelled to assemble in the Nikkei-oriented ghetto.

The Nikkei’s social position improved after WWII, particularly between the 1950s and ’60s. This is also the time when Sansei became the leading generation of the Nikkei community. In late ’60s, Sansei acquired equality and freedom in the U.S. society. The civil rights movement which, as Kashima mentioned, was “a worldwide phenomenon,” and student demonstrations against the Vietnam War aroused in Sansei the sense of liberty.

And in the last few decades, it is the trend among the younger Nikkei to disperse anywhere they want, to pursue better jobs and a better place to live. Consequently, Japan towns, originally built by Issei, have almost vanished.

Under this circumstance, is the Nikkei newspaper still necessary?

Kashima said the paper could bring Nikkei readers a sense of community regardless of their physical affiliation with the community. “Newspapers play an important role because they are able to be read no matter where Nikkei live,” he said.

While Sansei, Yonsei, and Gosei, fifth generation, are too young to understand how vital their own community paper is, Kashima predicts they will realize the importance once they reach a certain age.

### *The community newspaper as a part of Nikkeis' lives*

Despite receiving their education in America, Kashima believes Sansei still maintain Japanese values even if not consciously. Kashima calls Nisei the high culture group because they are actively and intentionally learning Japanese traditions, such as taiko drum or haiku poetry. Their enthusiasm toward the Japanese culture is visible. On the contrary, it is interesting that Sansei, who are more assimilated in the U.S. society, still maintain Japanese values. For example, he said Sansei unconsciously show the behavior of “Gaman,” the Japanese term of being patient, even though they are not familiar with what it exactly means.

For those who still keep the sense of Japaneseness, the role of a Nikkei community paper is to reinforce ethnic identity and pride. “(To read the newspaper) is as important as reading books,” Kashima said.

While Kashima pointed to the significance of disseminating up-to-date community news and useful information, he also expected that the newspaper would be able to offer readers opportunities to review the history of their Nikkei ancestors. The stories of Issei camps in Texas or North Dakota in the *North American Post* were unknown topics among Nikkei, and had never been reported in other local media before, he explained. There are undiscovered topics that are as important as the history of internment camps.

Kashima is also a board member of the *North American Post* – he has been in this position for 10 years – and he has witnessed the financial struggle of the newspaper.



“(The Post) is an economic venture, has never been a profit maker, but it’s very important to include the English portion,” he said.

The *Northwest Nikkei*, a separated English version of the Post published between 1989 and 1997, was “successful in terms of content,” Kashima said. He highly appreciated the commitment of the editor and Nikkei volunteer writers. But the financial constraints prevented the paper from maintaining the independent edition. It was merged with the Friday edition of the Post. Though it became a weekly edition, it is no longer an exclusively English paper.

Despite the financial problems, Kashima predicts that Nikkei community would support the Post if it encountered a serious managerial crisis. In fact, Nisei had helped the Post when the newspaper faced bankruptcy in the early '80s. “(Nikkei) people should keep it,” said Kashima, because the newspaper is not just a tool of the news deliverer, but it is the vehicle to bridge people in the Nikkei community. The Post is even a part of the Nikkei community, he said.

### **Ed Suguro, Wing Luke Asian Museum**

While Nisei are getting older, the American-educated Sansei are dominating the Nikkei society in this era. The *North American Post* was founded for Issei readers, but the paper has not vanished with the Issei. In order to survive, however, the paper always faced a problem – how to respond the demands of the changing Nikkei community.

Young Japanese Americans do not read Japanese. However, thanks to “Shin-Issei,” there is the constant demand for Japanese-language information. The Post offers the English pages every Friday, but it is not as large a portion as the Japanese pages.

Ed Suguro is one of the Nisei who is relatively pessimistic about the future of the *North American Post*. Suguro is a historic witness of the Nikkei community in Seattle. Born in 1935, he grew up in Bellevue and Seattle, and was held in the internment camp in Tule Lake, California, for three years. He is now working for the Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle as a volunteer. He was also a contributing reporter to the English section of the *North American Post* two years ago.

### *Nikkei community getting loose*

Suguro pointed out that the generation transition is one of the major reasons that the Nikkei community is disappearing. Sansei or Yonsei lose their interests in the community and move away from Seattle. Inter-marriage is another reason why the younger generations leave their community and settle in a new place.

“Sansei started to go into the mainstream,” he said. “Sansei have had more opportunities, including jobs, places to live.” In contrast, Nisei were “kind of stuck together” – they were in the same schools or churches, and lived in the same neighborhood because of the regulations that the government established against Nisei.

“For Nisei, Japanese culture was very much in the home,” he explained. Their parents, Issei, dined on Japanese food, and spoke no English. They also went to the Japanese language school with Nikkei-only surroundings.

But Sansei children did not have as much exposure to Japanese culture as their Nisei parents did. “Unless the (Nisei) parents are really interested in (the traditional culture), they don’t pass it on to the kids,” he said. Since the youngsters do not pursue lessons of Japanese culture, and their parents do not push them to learn, “you lose the culture,” he added. Though they may love to learn Japanese culture when they become adult, it is kind of late.

Suguro, however, considers this tendency as a natural phenomenon. “Everything keeps changing, and different from the previous generation,” he said. Assimilation or acculturation can be seen more among Sansei, who “dive into the melting pot” of American culture, he said.

### ***Generation and identity gap between Nisei and Sansei***

“I don’t think Sansei face (serious) discrimination,” and they are in the mainstream of American society, Suguro said. Though both Nisei and Sansei hold American citizenship, Sansei’s racial identity is very different. Because of the social factor, such as the freedom of residence or occupation, Suguro thinks Sansei regard themselves as ordinary Americans. But Nisei, who experienced the internment, and encountered the terrible racial discrimination despite their American nationality, suffered from “an identity crisis,” he said. Nisei were taught American values such as equal justice under the law at a school, but once they went home, the Issei parents persuaded them of the merit of the Japanese values. “You think, ‘Gee, I’m American, but I might not be,’ or you also think you are very Japanese-like person,” Suguro said.

***Will the Americanized Nikkei read a Japanese-English community paper?***

“Japanese-American newspapers are going out of business. Last year, one went out of business in Los Angeles. The future does not look very bright,” Suguro said.

The *North American Post* had printed no English pages since its major readers were Issei. Instead, Suguro said, English-oriented Nikkei found different English community newspapers, such as the *Northwest Times*, which had been published for several years immediately after the WWII. While the domestic papers, the *Seattle Times*, for instance, were also the news sources, he also enjoyed reading some newspapers published by other Asian journalists. The *Northwest Asian Weekly*, run by Chinese Americans, covered even the Nikkei community. “Most of the Nikkei that I know depend on the *Northwest Asian Weekly*,” he said.

Suguro said the Post does not represent the Seattle Nikkei community. For several milestone events for Nikkei, such as the foundation of Seattle Keiro nursing home or the redress movement by the internment camp victims, the Post’s coverage was after-the-fact news after everything had been done, not to push the issue.

***Pessimistic about the future***

Suguro knows that Post’s major problems stem from its financial hardships, and it seems the Nikkei community is not very supportive of the newspaper. “(The Post is) going to disappear,” he predicted, because it is not representing the community, cannot present the important issues, but only reports the routine community news. The fact that

there are no human and financial resources pushes him to come to this pessimistic perspective.

Is there any possibility that the Post will be able to survive?

One solution that Suguro proposed is reducing its printing frequency – to become a monthly or semi-monthly paper. The English editor also has to grab Nikkeis' attention. As a contributor, he has covered Japanese-American experiences, such as a story of lumber camp in Washington State where a number of Issei used to work. "(Nikkei) want to read the story of people, Nikkei history, or human interest story," he said. He also suggests that the Post "will have to tell everything about what is going on in a Nikkei community."

Suguro is, however, still afraid whether those solutions would work to prevent Sansei from losing their interests in reading community news. In fact, his nephew in Hawaii where a large Nikkei community exists never renewed the subscription to Hawaii's leading Nikkei newspaper, the *Hawaii Herald*. He is skeptical how much impact the *North American Post* could have on the Nikkei community in Seattle because it is printed in Japanese. More cooperation with Sansei and young reporters is needed to improve the situation, he said.

## Chapter V

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<sup>1</sup> Mochizuki, K., *History of The Seattle Chapter JACL*

## Chapter VI

### Challenge by the ethnic minority newspaper journalists

Historically, the West Coast has been a door for Asian immigrants to the United States. As they arrived and settled, they started a myriad of ethnic minority media to share necessary information. While some surviving media, such as the *North American Post*, provide news in both English and their native language today, others consider themselves as the vehicle not only for the certain specific minority cluster, but also for those who live in the same neighborhood regardless of its ethnicity. They call themselves Asian American, and are proud of representing not one group but Asians in general.

Today, Asian American, including Nikkei, journalists are showing their ability in many areas of news services – ethnic, local, or domestic media. In this chapter, I would like to highlight how Asian-American journalists foresee the future of minority newspapers through their experiences.

#### **Caroline Aoyagi, Editor of *Pacific Citizen***

The Japanese American Citizens League, formed in 1929, is the oldest organization for Nikkei in the United States. Since July 1997, Caroline Aoyagi has been the editor of *Pacific Citizen*, JACL's official newspaper that started at the same year of JACL foundation. Unlike privately-owned newspapers, *Pacific Citizen* is funded by JACL, and its business is fairly stable thanks to the financial support. Today, its circulation is between 24,000 and 26,000. While its major mission is to educate

community people with various issues such as civil rights, the paper also covers different topics, for instance, sports or entertainment. “*Pacific Citizen* is a national newspaper,” Aoyagi says, and widely covers current issues, community reports, and profile stories of Asian-American figures.

### ***News through Asian-American perspectives***

The advantage of an ethnic newspaper is to report “small Asian-American community” issues which “the mainstream papers don’t focus on,” she said. Although the English-speaking Asian Americans need domestic newspapers in their everyday life, Aoyagi pointed out the minority media are able to show their uniqueness by discussing issues from Asian-American points of view.

One example is the recent coverage of a Chinese scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory who allegedly committed espionage. The Asian-American community paid much attention to the issue, and due to Nikkei’s high demand for the coverage, *Pacific Citizen* has maintained its regular reporting. For instance, the newspaper introduced some voices of Asian-American leaders when Dr. Wen Ho Lee was ousted from the Los Alamos.<sup>1</sup> In one article, Dr. Yu-Chong Tai, associate professor and director of the California Institute of Technology’s micromachining lab, criticized media coverage and said, “(Lee has) been put into a bad situation because of the media, and this can mislead a lot of people to think that Dr. Lee is guilty.” Some other leaders worried whether this issue would increase anti-Asian hysteria.

Despite the enthusiasm that Aoyagi and *Pacific Citizen* hold, the paper has been concerned with attracting younger Nikkei readers who usually show apathy for the community issue. For those who do not pay attention to such stories, the *Pacific Citizen* is obliged to pursue its mission to educate them by introducing important issues for Nikkei. “They learn more about Japanese-American history (through our newspaper),” she said. To avoid losing their interest, the paper often puts some practical information such as scholarships for students, and as a result, they trust the *Pacific Citizen*, which blends different type of stories.

“We are unique,” said Aoyagi, because the *Pacific Citizen* just needs to concentrate on its obligation – education for the young Nikkei – thanks to its sponsor, JACL. While the paper is written entirely in English, Aoyagi appreciates the bilingual style of the *North American Post*. She encouraged the Post to “expand its English section” if financially affordable because it offers the Nikkei community a great value. “It is unfortunate if (a bilingual Nikkei newspaper becomes) all Japanese language. And the (Nikkei) community will be excluded” because Japanese Americans usually speak no Japanese, she said.

In the past 10 years, some Japanese-American newspapers have shut down due to their financial difficulty. Unfortunately, this phenomenon will continue striking Nikkei newspapers, Aoyagi predicted. “People do not read the paper but go to the Internet,” and it is the struggle for not only the Nikkei media but also the mainstream papers, she said. “(Nikkei newspapers) have to find a right way.”



### *To develop more community involvement*

To create an attractive newspaper, her motto is “to go out to the community, get involved with the community events.” She was aware of the difference between the national, and well-funded *Pacific Citizen* and the Post, a community, privately-run paper, but said that her newspaper has sponsored such local attractions as a basketball tournament or photo contest. This may be a good hint for the local involvement. *Pacific Citizen* also provides scholarships for young Nikkei.

“Japanese-American history is obviously important, but it’s (only) one element,” Aoyagi said. She appreciated the challenges to the English editor of the Post, who attempts to develop beyond-the-Nikkei-community story ideas, as well as to raise large number of Nikkei voices through writings by young Nikkei. Regardless of how much salary is paid, an ethnic community newspaper is “a great place to learn” for Japanese-American reporters, she believes. She is not pessimistic about recruiting younger generation because *Pacific Citizen* has had many inquiries from them, even for internship positions.

*Pacific Citizen* is able to cover a wide range of Asian-American issues thanks to its style as an English-written nationwide minority newspaper. Looking at some U.S. local areas, for instance Seattle, the Nikkei community has become smaller, and its population has been dropping. If the Post will maintain, or even expand its English section, one possibility is to access the field of Asian-Pacific American community news instead of narrowing the coverage only for the tiny Japanese-American community.

Older Nikkei appreciate their community vernaculars because they grew up with those media. “But younger Japanese-Americans don’t feel, ‘I need to read them,’” Aoyagi said. Their apathy toward the community is a major problem. Thus, they have to become aware that “to read our paper is only way to understand our community,” she said, and it is very important for their lives. While Aoyagi admits that hard work is a must for Nikkei newspapers to survive, she also hopes young generations will show their support for their own media.

**Assunta Ng, publisher of *the Northwest Asian Weekly / Seattle Chinese Post***

As the statistics of ethnic population shows, Japanese are no longer the largest minority Asian group in Seattle, as they used to be.<sup>2</sup> The International District, where the Japan Town was located in the early this century, is now the area for a variety of Asian immigrants, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese and some others.

Assunta Ng in 1982 founded the *Seattle Chinese Post*, a Chinese-language newspaper for the new immigrants. Ng then installed the English-version paper, *Northwest Asian Weekly*, the same year due to the requests by American-born Chinese. Unlike the *North American Post*, which attaches English pages to its Japanese edition each Friday, the *Weekly* is completely independent of its Chinese-language sister paper.

Because of the racial diversity, competition among ethnic newspaper is intense in Seattle. As far as Ng knows, there are at least five Asian-American English papers published by Chinese, Korean, Filipino or Vietnamese. And there is higher competition

among the Asian-language newspapers. Despite such rivalry, Ng is proud of her weekly English newspaper while other Chinese-American papers are printed less frequently.

***Keep the original style – the uniqueness of the Northwest Asian Weekly***

*Northwest Asian Weekly* concentrates on hard news coverage while most of Asian-American newspapers pursue feature-style soft news, which does not require tough time limits, Ng said. “You have to do something different to survive,” she said. Thus, the Weekly follows “the difficult hard news” such as lawsuits, crime reports, or court trials. One of the purposes to maintain this style is “to inform the community of the facts, help community learn from mistakes (such as racial discrimination), or what actually happened,” she said.

While Asian-American people are the main readers of the Weekly, “quite a few black people and Caucasians” also pick up the paper, Ng said. “(The hard news coverage) reflects what’s going on in a community, and tells a better picture,” and that is why the non-Asian-American also like to read the Weekly, Ng said.

Another main element of Weekly is the frequent coverage of the first Chinese-American governor of the state of Washington, Gary Locke. While the governor’s routine is an important news story to follow, the Weekly also highlights him from different angles. For example, Locke’s wife had a baby in March. To link this celebration with the Weekly’s story idea, the newspaper offered a baby photo contest, and it also introduced some stories about Chinese culture for babies, describing a part of Chinese cultural heritage.

The *Northwest Asian Weekly*, an English free paper whose circulation is 10,000, does not make money. “(But) there’s needs. It doesn’t make money, but (it doesn’t ) lose money, either,” said Ng. The Weekly’s financial position is partly underwritten by the pay-subscribed Seattle Chinese Post, and “the company generally makes money.”

### ***To represent the Asian Americans***

One of the biggest advantages for ethnic newspapers is their closeness with the community. It is natural, therefore, that the *North American Post*, for example, relies on Nikkei organizations, companies, or sometimes religious groups, to obtain interesting news.

*Northwest Asian Weekly* also takes advantage of its community-based style, but its area is not just a specific minority group, but Asian Americans in general.

“Mainstream newspapers copy our idea (when) we report first (about the Asian-American issue),” Ng said. One example that Ng recalls is the resignation of the director of the Vietnamese refugee center. While no mainstream media found their own sources, they quoted the Weekly’s stories. Ng takes it for granted about this phenomenon because she is proud of the Weekly as “the expert of the Asian-American community.”

The mainstream media are familiar with few Asian-American leaders, Ng said, and thus they use the same news sources repeatedly. Ng is supportive of them when they ask her to introduce other leaders. In fact, she said she receives such requests “all the time.”

Sometimes the Asian-American perspectives change what the mainstream papers report. The coverage was very different when the governor of Washington State appointed three members to the board of regents at the University of Washington – Chinese, Jewish and Caucasian. The local English papers, Ng said, covered both Jewish and Caucasian members well, but the introduction of the Chinese member was poor. In addition, they put too much emphasis on the suggestion that the Chinese member was appointed due to money donations made to the campaign when the rest of members also made financial contributions.

“The Chinese community became mad” about a series of mainstream papers’ reports, Ng said. The Weekly offered in-depth stories about the Chinese member to inform readers how dedicated he was to the community. The governor compared the Weekly’s well-prepared coverage to the rough report by the mainstream media, claiming editors of the local English papers needed to improve their performance on these sorts of issues.

Ng is critical of the recent news coverage of the Chinese scientist suspected as a spy. For example, when a House select committee submitted a report that showed Chinese espionage to obtain national security data, *The New York Times*, simultaneously describing the report, said, “But at least as important is a more careful approach on the part of the Clinton Administration to dealings with China. Beijing is worth cultivating as a diplomatic and commercial partner. But its potential threat to American national security should never be ignored or underestimated.”<sup>3</sup>

Ng is uncomfortable when China is involved in an issue, such as lobbying the government, because Chinese lobbying is widely reported while no other country's lobbying is news. Using the espionage issue as an example, Ng criticized the mainstream media as unfair, saying it seems to her the media stereotyped Chinese as spies.

***Tie-up with Asian-American community and people***

Ng has enhanced the role of *Northwest Asian Weekly* as a bridge between American and Asian-American society thanks to its English style. Thus, she believes it is not a good idea to focus only on one specific ethnic group because not enough things are going every day to make the paper sufficiently interesting.

The Weekly sometimes hosts community events, and as a result, this is a good opportunity to interact with local Asian-American residents, Ng said. Recently, the newspaper arranged dinner for five pairs of daughters and mothers – Japanese American, Korean American, African American, Native American and Hispanic – to report the parent-child relationship of each different race. In fact, one Korean paper and the *North American Post* visited the dinner to cover it.

Another active involvement of the Weekly is the recognition dinner in honor of young Asian-American students. The Weekly organized the event for those youngsters who support cross-cultural activities and other ethnic groups. One of the award winners is a Korean student who promoted mutual understanding between Koreans and Japanese. This student actively thrust himself into learning about Japan and its language, and even formed a student association aiming at more Korean-Japanese friendship.

As an award organizer, the Weekly widely called for 49 nominees from all over western Washington. The newspaper then printed profiles of all candidates from their communities. It was an effective way not only to inform readers who was nominated, but also to arouse their interests to read newspapers because the nominees might be their family, friends, or relatives.

It is a productive cycle: the Weekly prompts young Asian Americans to become interested in their local community through such events, youngsters are offered an opportunity to acquire awards or scholarships, and finally the Weekly develops a market of young readers.

On the other hand, Ng admits that people, particularly youngsters whom she called the “TV generation,” tend to read newspapers less and less. In addition, they seek information about issue of mainstream society than of community. “(There is) much you can’t do” to solve this problem but to create a better newspaper, Ng said. To maintain the quality, ethnic-paper reporters have to sacrifice more, keep up and be a part of community, she said. In other words, those journalists are required not only to cover the news but also thrust themselves into the community participation and involvement.

The Weekly is aiming at more localization although the Asian-American community has become widespread nationwide. Ng hopes the Weekly is used as a vehicle to connect local Asian-American residents.

**Yukari Bettencourt, editor of *Soy Source***

Unlike the Seattle Nikkei community, in which young generation population has decreased because they are dispersed nationwide, Shin Issei have shown a constant gain.

*Soy Source*, a Japanese-written biweekly free paper, started in April 1992. This newspaper is a major Japanese-language town paper in Seattle. Its circulation today is about 7,000, and it has attracted a wide range of readers who prefer to read stories in Japanese – mainly students, business people and their spouses, and Japanese-born permanent residents.

### ***Interesting and informative newspaper***

Yukari Bettencourt has worked for *Soy Source* since its beginning. “(Before *Soy Source*) there had been no Japanese-language free paper for Japanese residents in Seattle,” she said. It is the priority for *Soy Source* to become interesting and informative. To achieve this purpose, Bettencourt pays attention to selecting a variety of stories to respond to the needs of all different generation, gender, and occupation, instead of focusing on a certain type of readers.

“It is difficult” to examine this mission, but because Japanese community in Seattle is still small, this is the strategy to keep its 7,000 circulation.

Because of its free-paper style, advertising is the sole income source for the newspaper. “You cannot bring ads if the name (of the newspaper) is not known,” she said. The active involvement with local events helps *Soy Source* publicize its name. For example, the newspaper has organized a ski tour and cart racing, and through these events,



it is rewarded not only by having participants know about *Soy Source*, but also by interacting with community people, who may become interested in the newspaper.

*Soy Source* also placed a booth at the Seattle Cherry Blossom Festival in April, distributing quiz sheets about Japan to visitors. It was a good opportunity to communicate with American locals who might not know about *Soy Source*.

### ***For Japanese-language readers***

“I did not feel any necessity for English writing at first,” Bettencourt said. “(*Soy Source* was started) because no Japanese-written free paper was available in Seattle at that time.” But nowadays, Bettencourt has received requests from American spouses or Americans studying Japanese to include some English stories.

While it is under consideration to insert articles in English, she regards Seattle Japanese community as the priority market. Other Japanese-related residents, Nikkei in Seattle, are not potential readers simply because they cannot read Japanese. “Personally, I am interested in Nikkei community, and I was struck by the fact that I have little knowledge about their history or their struggle at the World War II era,” Bettencourt said. “But I also think that there is little exchange between Japanese and Nikkei in Seattle. It seems to me that there is a gap between the two clusters. Reporters at our newspaper are young, and Nikkei who are in the same age are Americanized, and do not care about Japanese newspaper.”

Bettencourt knows the *North American Post* has provided news for Nikkei, and this is not the role that *Soy Source* has to play because of its Japanese-only style. “There is little rivalry between us,” she said.

### *Seattle local topics*

To keep itself interesting and informative, *Soy Source*'s coverage is fairly diverse. In its March 10 edition, for example, there are topics from cellular phones or Academy Awards to a local restaurant guide and community event news. “The immediately-useful information should be local items. Thus, front page is usually for stories of Seattle,” she said.

When *Soy Source* featured online trading on its front page, it included an interview story with a trader in Bellevue. For a story on thrift shops, reporters covered what goods were available at each store, and introduced a list of shops around Seattle and the Eastside. “Most of our readers are Seattle locals, and our priority goal is to satisfy them,” the editor said. “We have to be aware of the importance of interacting readers, and I would like to create a newspaper that meets their demands.”

Bettencourt said the ethnic media are facing tough times. In Seattle, for instance, three more Japanese-language community magazines were founded after *Soy Source* had successfully overcome its early struggles. Competition among rivals is going to be harder in such a small city. “It is nothing to say that our newspaper is the oldest Japanese free paper in Seattle. We should keep motivated to produce a more interesting and informative (newspaper),” she said.

## Chapter VI

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<sup>1</sup> “Los Alamos firing draws concern of AA community,” by Martha Nakagawa, *Pacific Citizen*, Apr. 2-15, 1999, p.1 and 10

<sup>2</sup> See Chart 1, 2 and 3. (p. 22 – 24)

<sup>3</sup> “America’s stolen secrets,” editorial, *The New York Times*, May 26, 1999, p. A30

## Conclusions

Through this project, it became clear that there are problems that Nikkei newspapers, including *the North American Post*, have in common: the shortage of financial resources, a sales slump, and the lack of young Nikkei's interest in their community and media. No editor whom I have interviewed presented any immediate solution, and expressed optimism about the future of their own newspapers.

Under the circumstances, it is agreeable that Assunta Ng of the *Northwest Asian Weekly* articulated that there is not much the ethnic media can do except to produce an attractive newspaper. Considering interviews and researches, there are several keys that may improve the *North American Post*.

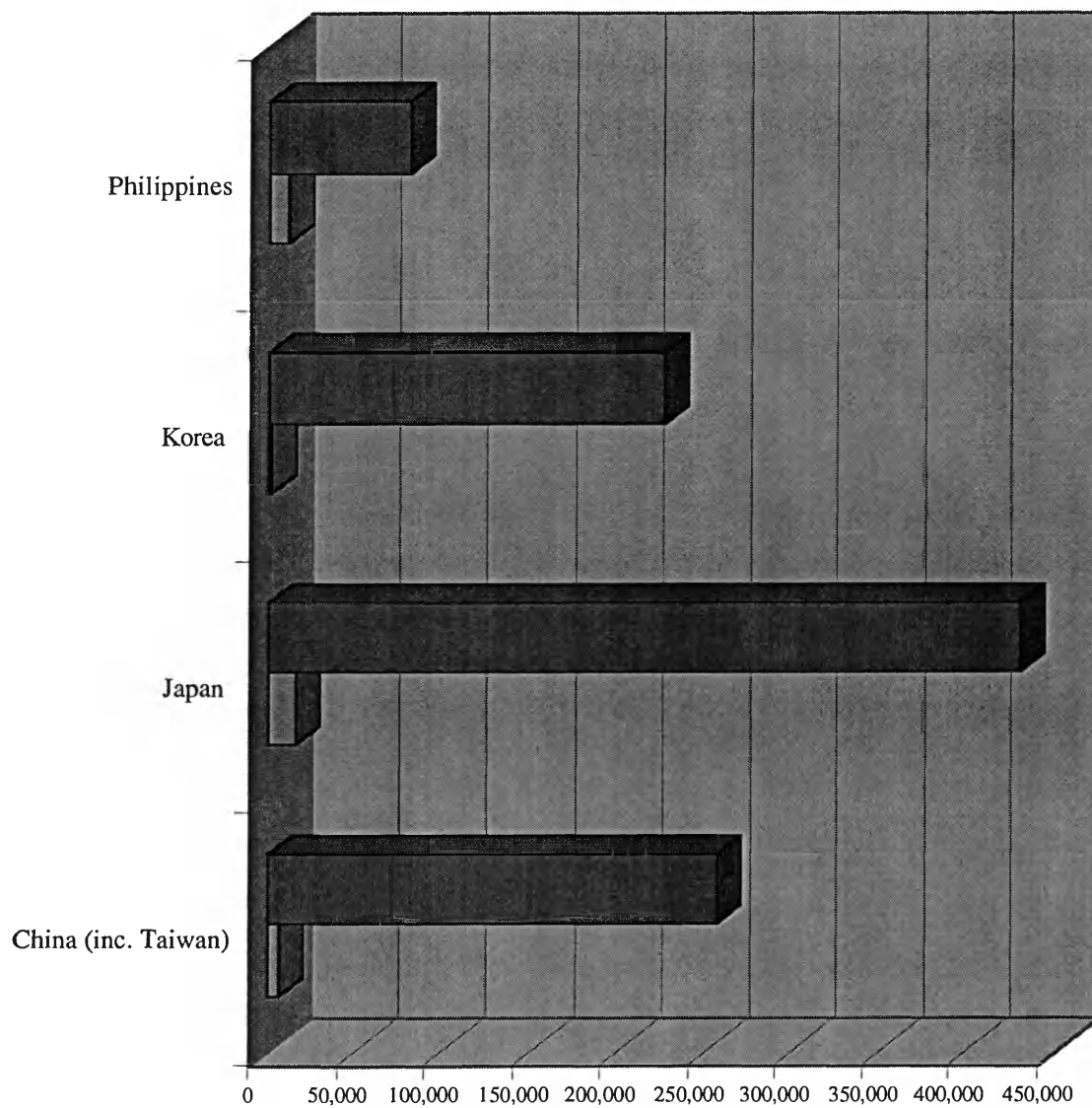
Principally, the Post has to reconfirm that it will maintain its Japanese-English bilingual style, and that each language section has a different type of readers – Japanese Americans and Shin Issei.

The recent trend of Asian-American population shows that Japanese today, unlike their counterparts in 1950s or 1960s, come to the United States as nonimmigrant sojourners, and its number overwhelms other Asian counterparts. (Chart 4 <sup>1</sup>) On the contrary, Japanese permanent settlers, who used to be the largest group, have been surpassed in number by Chinese, Koreans, or Filipinos. (Chart 5 <sup>2</sup>)

The Post's strategy of targeting the Shin Issei is on the right track. However, the Post should never relinquish its identity as the vehicle for Seattle Nikkei residents. Thus, they have to keep in mind both groups equally.

**Chart 4**

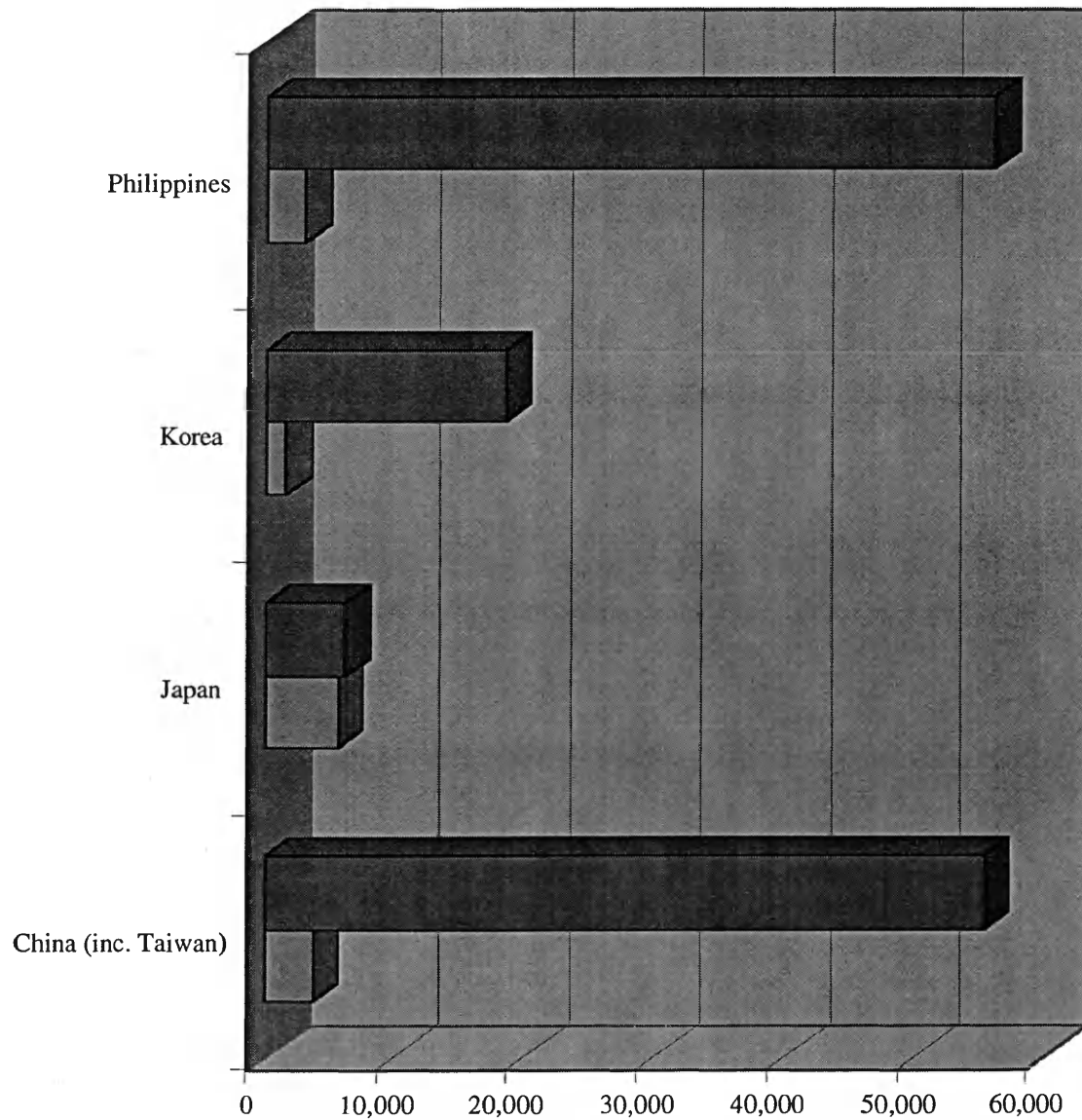
**Nonimmigrant admitted by selected class of admission  
and region and selected country of last residence  
in 1960 and 1996  
Four major Asian races  
(exc. Temporary visitors for pleasure)**



	China (inc. Taiwan)	Japan	Korea	Philippines
■ 1996	255,000	428,000	224,000	80,000
■ 1960	6,016	15,559	1,278	10,435

**Chart 5**

**Immigrants admitted by country or region of birth  
in 1960 and 1996  
Four major Asian races  
(exc. Temporary visitors for pleasure)**



	China (inc. Taiwan)	Japan	Korea	Philippines
■ 1996	55,129	6,011	18,185	55,876
□ 1960	3,681	5,471	1,504	2,934

As an ethnic minority newspaper, the priority for the Post is more active involvement with local Nikkei, and better understanding of its community. English Editor Nui Tateyama, who has supervised the Japanese section since July 1999, said she has started establishing a Nikkei network through participation in some meetings of Japanese American Citizens League. By repeated face-to-face interactions, Nikkei leaders often help her report Japanese-American issues. This strategy is on a right track, and in addition, the Post should organize its own events to publicize itself, and to attract Nikkeis' attentions. A good example is the *Northwest Asian Weekly*, which has hosted a recognition reception for honored Asian-American youths.

It is also vital for the Post to acquire young Nikkeis' support. The involvement of Sansei or Yonsei reporters is effective because they know the Nikkei community today, particularly what kind of topics they are seeking to read, and the Post is able to learn and reflect the young generation's perspectives.

Expansion from a Nikkei-only to an Asian-American newspaper is another choice to examine. Tateyama said the relationship between Seattle Nikkei and Chinese community is complicated because of their history. Chinese immigrants overwhelmed the International District when Japanese were relocated to the internment camps during World War II. Today Chinese are the leading Asian minority in terms of numbers. Some Nikkei complain that the District is also called Chinatown. Aside from such complexity, however, Tateyama is planning to create a connection with Asian-American newspapers, to put in Asian-American news in the near future.

Story selection is also a very important factor for a different Japanese-American generation. Nikkei history, such as about internment camps, are definitely the Post's responsibility to cover. Nevertheless, it is true that a different generation demands to read different type of articles, and young Nikkei are not always interested in the anti-Japanese history. Tateyama's efforts to attract the young and old readers are interesting – she has interviewed a group of youngsters by showing some Post's articles written by internment survivors. It is the good method to bridge the two generations.

It is a little easy to maintain Japanese-language readership, thanks to the constant increase of Shin Issei. But due to Japan's long-term economic setback, it was predictable that the population of students and overseas business people would slim down. It seems to have no problem with the style of Post's Japanese section because the newspaper has involved Seattle locals, and has very well showcased its originality. It would be great if the Post continued the challenge of developing different fields, such as business page and opinions.

All in all, just as editor Tateyama said, the Post would lose its impact if it failed to capture young Nikkeis' interest. Despite the larger portion of Japanese-language readership, the Post should never forget its value as the only Japanese-American community newspaper in the Pacific Northwest.

The quest by the *North American Post* continues. It is not easy to quickly solve their problems. Moreover, they have to compete with newspaper giants, the TV industry, and the Internet, which might swallow such a small community medium. Nonetheless, as long as all the Post's staff keep attempting to improve their newspaper, and as long as



Seattle Nikkei community people continue their supportive manner, the Post will never become a dying medium, or a dying business.

## Conclusions

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1960

*Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1996

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