

## network

HUMANITIES

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San Francisco project uses stories to unite a divided neighborhood

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Suitcases embody Japanese-American internment experience

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Innovative training program teaches future community leaders the art of storytelling



## Using history and stories to help a splintered neighborhood find a unified voice

Communities Speak project in San Francisco involves 20 groups and scores of individuals

When you live in a neighborhood in California long enough, it's bound to change. Ask Maria Picar, a resident of the Ocean View section of San Francisco for most of her life. Once a predominantly African-American area, Ocean View has experienced an influx of immigrants over the past 25 years and, like California itself, has become incredibly diverse. "Now," says

Picar, "when I walk down the street I'm just as apt to see Asians or Latinos as African-Americans."

Picar, executive director of the Arts Connection, a local after-school performing-arts program, and owner of her own arts studio, is playing a major role in a CCH-funded Communities Speak project involving Ocean View and two adjoining neighborhoods in the southwest

*Two views of San Francisco's OMI neighborhood in 1910; the 1600 block of Ocean Avenue, where the Fruit Barn is now located (left), and a view down Capitol Avenue.*

corner of San Francisco, Merced Heights and Ingleside. Together the three urban neighborhoods, known collectively as OMI, make up one of the most diverse, and least-known, communities in the city.

Not far from Picar's house in Ocean View is another part of OMI, the upscale neighborhood of Ingleside Terraces. Here well-kept homes, some with sweeping Pacific Ocean views, fetch a million dollars or more in the red-hot San Francisco housing market, and many residents

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## OMI KIDS CREATE A VIDEO EXPLORING THEIR WORLD

Project involves learning about OMI history and contributions of current residents

The 13 OMI teenagers, all participants in a monthlong video camp as part of the I Am OMI project, thought they knew a lot about their neighborhood. That was before I Am OMI Project Director Woody LaBounty began showing them vintage photographs of the area and an old newsreel of Ocean Avenue in the 1920s.

It was news to them that a racetrack once stood in Ingleside Terraces, that the El Rey Theater, now a Pentecostal church, had been a popular movie palace and

*Lawrence Collins and Ronnita Hamlet practice their video skills during an OMI month-long video camp for teenagers. Photo/Amanda Herman*

that the heavily populated Ocean View area was once farmland. As they watched the old newsreel of Ocean Avenue they started shouting out places they recognized.

"The old photographs and newsreel made a big impression on the kids," says photographer and educator Amanda Herman, who directed the group. "It made them start thinking about what life was like before they were around."

The idea of the video camp was to give OMI kids an opportunity to learn more about their neighborhood and explore their own lives through the medium of video.

The kids, who attended the pro-

gram four days a week during the month of July of this year, learned how to use a video camera and conduct interviews before heading out into the neighborhood with their cameras and interview questions. Every day for two weeks they interviewed a different person, from Will Reno, local community

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# FALLING SHORT OF THE IDEAL, CALIFORNIA CONTINUES TO INSPIRE HOPE

By James Quay, Executive Director



Over the past few months I've been interviewing Californians about what "California" means to them. The quotation marks are meant to distinguish California, the real place, from California, the imagined idea. While my sample of 33 people isn't very large, the group is reasonably representative of the state's population. It includes scientists and artists, businesspeople and labor activists, educators and writers, with names you might recognize, such as Dolores Huerta, Maxine Hong Kingston and Gary Snyder, and names you might not, such as Pai Yang, Ken Seaton-Msemaji and Ray Gatchalian.

While I've been conducting my interviews, most of the country has been talking about California as

well. The size of the state's budget shortfall — \$38 billion — has attracted national attention, as has the campaign to recall the state's governor. The California we live in is taking a real beating.

Yet when my interviewees spoke about the reality of California, the common note they sounded was opportunity, despite power outages, budget cuts and turbulent elections. Many were in positions to know all too well how bad things were — community college presidents facing severe cutbacks, businesspeople facing depressed markets — but when asked to ponder the deeper meaning of the real California, my interviewees saw hope, not disappointment.

No doubt this is due to the immigrants' experience being so deep in the California soul. Many of my interviewees could speak firsthand of the opportunities California meant for them, and most of the rest could remember what California meant to their parents or grandparents. California hope is a hope unalloyed by experience. It is the hope of the immigrant, fired by stories of El Norte or Gum San or El Dorado.

When I realized that hope was emerging as a common theme in the interviews, I added a final question, asking my interview subjects to respond to my California version of what Samuel Huntington said about America: "Critics say that California is a lie because its reality falls so far short of its ideals, but California is not a lie; it is a disappointment. But it can be a disappointment only because it is also a hope."

I anticipated that natives would answer differently from immigrants, that the experience of living in California would diminish the hope and raise the disappointment felt by natives. I was wrong. What I found was that California hope is certainly tempered by the experience of living here, but most are unwilling to confess to disappointment. "I understand Southern California to be a ruined paradise," writer D.J. Waldie told me. "And as a consequence of its being ruined, our home, we've made it our home by the process of ruining it."

The imagined California is a word that keeps hope alive, and I was reassured that so many find

the real thing worthy of hope as well.

Walking through the Burbank Airport in mid-September, I ran into two friends who work on public issues in Sacramento. After commiserating with them about the condition of the state's budget and political realm, I asked them to predict what would happen to the state next. They told me that things were so bad that it might make real change possible, and as an example they handed me material being circulated by one state legislator, a 12-step recovery program for the state. Whatever the details, the impulse behind the plan is another manifestation of California hope. And I know that legislator is not alone. Even in these difficult times — especially in these difficult times — Californians are at work improving their state. They're Californians. They cannot be but hopeful.

"When my ancestors came to find the Gold Mountain," Maxine Hong Kingston told me, "they did not literally find a mountain of gold, but they did find gold. They found the reality of California, and they loved it. They kept coming back and stayed and continue to build that reality."

James Quay

## Former board member Lloyd Dennis dies

It is with deep sorrow that we report the death of Lloyd Dennis at his home in Redondo Beach. He died on Sept. 16 after a five-year battle with cancer. He was 67.

"I was lucky enough to meet Lloyd when I joined the Council in 1983," said CCH Executive Director James Quay. "He felt strongly that corporations should be good citizens in their communities, and he set a powerful example with his own active engagement in community affairs. He loved the Council and its commitment to the public good. He showed me how

you could get good things done with efficiency and grace. Lloyd was always sending his friends articles, recommending good books, and making connections between people. He will be deeply missed."

Dennis was senior vice president and director of public affairs at First Interstate Bank of California when he joined the CCH board in 1982. During his four-year term, he served as treasurer and chaired the committee that planned various statewide activities celebrating CCH's 10th anniversary in 1985.

Dennis subsequently served as executive director of public affairs at the Department of Water and Power in Los Angeles. There he was largely responsible for developing programs to help citizens save water during a seven-year drought. He then founded his own public affairs consulting firm, Dennis & Associates. He was invited to rejoin the board in 1997 and retired last March.

Born in 1936, Dennis grew up in Massachusetts and graduated from Boston University School of Communications in 1958 and later

earned an M.A. from the School of International Service at American University in Washington, D.C. He was a journalist with the *New York Times* and the *Congressional Quarterly* and a speechwriter and public information officer for three secretaries of the U.S. Treasury during the Johnson and Nixon administrations. He held leadership posts with many organizations, including the Coro Foundation, the Los Angeles Educational Partnership and the California Business Roundtable.

## The New Americans to air on PBS next spring

The Flores family, shown here at right, are among the refugees and new immigrants featured in *The New Americans*, a seven-hour documentary series partially funded by the Council to be broadcast on PBS in March 2004. Here the family visits with Grandfather Flores before leaving their ranch in Guanajato, Mexico, for their new home in Kansas, where Pedro Flores works in the meatpacking industry. In

addition to the Flores family, the series explores the stories of a woman from the Israeli-occupied West Bank who marries a first-generation Palestinian-American, a computer programmer from India who migrates to the San Francisco Bay Area to find work, two young, highly prized baseball prospects from the Dominican Republic and three Ogoni refugees from Nigeria.

Photo / Kartemquin/ITVS



# SUITCASES REVEAL JAPANESE INTERNMENT EXPERIENCE

David Sakai was a 25-year-old senior at San Jose State College when he heard the news over the radio. Just a few weeks before he had enlisted in the Army and his service was to begin after graduation that June. Now the U.S. government had ordered him to leave his home. He didn't know where he was going or what would become of him — and all he could take with him was what he could carry.

Born in San Juan Bautista, Sakai, now 86, lives with his wife, Ruth, in San Jose, Calif. They were among the 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry — two-thirds of them, like the Sakais, American citizens — who were forced from their homes, businesses and farms on the West Coast of California in the spring of 1942. Not yet acquainted, the Sakais met at the Santa Anita assembly center during the first phase of their detention, where they both were held before being moved to larger camps, David to Heart Mountain in Wyoming and Ruth to Rohwer in Arkansas.

Now, award-winning Bay Area artist Flo Oy Wong has created a multimedia exhibit exploring the internment experience of Sakai and five other Japanese Americans using the actual suitcases the internees took to camp. The year-long exhibit, *1942: Luggage From Home to Camp*, at the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, is being partially supported by the Council through its California Story Fund program, which so far has funded almost 50 story-based projects throughout the state.

Wong views suitcases as significant symbols of the internment. "For years, I have carried the World War II image of Japanese-American internees and their families with their crammed suitcases waiting to board trains for camp," she said during a speech at the exhibit's opening. "I thought about the emotional and psychological cramming of their lives when they were abruptly ripped from their everyday existence by the U.S. government."

Wong spent a year and a half on the project, planning, interviewing and creating her art. In addition to Sakai, she worked with Lola Tanaka



*Flo Oy Wong's installation, 1942: Luggage From Home to Camp, showcases the stories of six Japanese-Americans interned during World War II. The suitcases, including David Sakai's (left and below), are displayed in an exhibit barracks designed by Jim Yamaichi. Photo/ Jim Nagareda*

Abe, Elsie Mayeda Honda, Eiichi Edward Sakauye, Esau Shimizu and Misao Yamano Shiotsuka, gradually gaining their trust.

"They sat with me for hours, extracting bits and pieces of their past," she told museum guests at the opening reception. "They opened up their family albums, they went through boxes of camp-era objects. When I met with Dave and Ruth Sakai one day at their house, Dave said that I made his head hurt. He told me that in order to answer

## California Story Fund project to run through June 2004

my questions, he had to intimately review photos and documents he wanted to forget. Yet Dave and the other participants continued to work with me. They dug into their basements and garages. Some told me things they had never even told their children," she said.

Wong transformed the suitcases into individual works of art using archival photos, objects, mirrors, and text and phrases, some sewn in red thread. In Sakai's camp suitcase, which his family had purchased in Salinas, Wong placed a deck of Bee playing cards to represent Dave's memory of playing cards on the suitcase en route to Heart Mountain. She also installed a photograph of Sakai in a cap and gown with the words "senior 1942" sewn in red thread — because, Wong said, "Sakai would have graduated in 1942."

In other exhibition suitcases, Wong used objects that internees had

1942 Tule Lake barracks room. The room, exactly 20 by 20 feet, is furnished with 1942-era Army cots, a barrel-shaped cast-iron stove, an actual Tule Lake window, and a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Now, said Wong, "When visitors come into the exhibit, some people cry. They can't believe their eyes. They stay there and share their stories of their own experiences. They don't want to leave."

Wong hopes that the exhibit enables visitors to feel internees' pain, but she also wants them to recognize their resiliency. "Each one has come out of the experience to live productive lives. These were citizens who were squashed, but they found ways to make contributions."

David Sakai went on to open his own accounting business in Logan, Utah, where he settled with his new bride. He received his college

carried. Inside Lola Tanaka Abe's suitcase, Wong placed a miniature violin because Abe played the violin in camp to make life more bearable.

In Eiichi Edward Sakauye's suitcase, Wong put 1942 copies of *Popular Mechanics* and *Reader's Digest* because Sakauye, who describes himself as mechanically inclined, wanted to keep up with the latest information.

To provide a realistic setting for the suitcases, museum director and curator Jimi Yamaichi re-created a

diploma in the mail while interned at Heart Mountain. The Sakais returned to San Jose in 1957 with their daughter, Patty.

*1942: Luggage From Home to Camp runs through June 30, 2004, at the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, 535 North Fifth St., San Jose. Admission is free. For information, call (408) 294-3138 or visit [www.jamsj.org](http://www.jamsj.org).*

See one internee's story, page 6

# GATHERING STORIES IN A NEGLECTED SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD

(continued from page 1)

hold down jobs with six-figure salaries. This neighborhood stands in stark contrast to working-class Ocean View and other OMI areas, where some 20 percent of residents lack a high school diploma and 7 percent experience hunger.

In the 1990s, a community planning committee identified a number of problems facing OMI, including changing demographics, an increasing number of at-risk youth and a lack of basic services. Underlying the committee's findings was the belief that OMI needed to speak with a unified voice and act collectively to solve its problems. The CCH project, called I Am OMI, is using history and story-sharing as a way to help OMI residents come together as a community to find that voice and address those problems.

## Many OMI groups working for change

Things are much better in OMI today than they used to be, according to Woody LaBounty, director of the I Am OMI project. In the 1980s and 1990s, OMI had a reputation for crack cocaine and violent crime. Those problems have diminished

*San Francisco Mayor P. H. McCarthy speaking at the dedication of the Sheridan School in San Francisco's Ocean View neighborhood in 1910. The school was torn down in 1975 and rebuilt.*

markedly today because of the dedication of people such as the late activist Lovie Lee Ward, who helped Ocean View residents reclaim a local park from drug dealers and garnered support to rebuild a run-down elementary school.

LaBounty, who heads the non-profit Western Neighborhoods Project, an organization working to preserve and record the history of San Francisco's western neighborhoods, can point to a number of other individuals and groups working to improve OMI — from block clubs and barbershop fraternities to political action committees and church groups.

"What we're doing with the OMI project is creating opportunities for the various OMI groups to come together," says LaBounty. "The organizations do great work, but they're more apt to focus on concerns in their own block rather than on those of the larger community, and they compete against each other for attention. The lack of unity hurts efforts to get better city services for OMI and solve other shared problems," he says.

"I want longtime residents to talk about what the neighborhood used to be like, how it's changed and their hopes for its future. And likewise I want newcomers to give their perspectives. Things have changed so rapidly that people don't know who their neighbors are anymore."

*Ocean Avenue in San Francisco's OMI neighborhood in 1922. The Inglewood Tea Room is now the Java on Ocean café.*



## Project to involve scores of residents and groups

The I Am OMI project is collecting stories from some 40-odd people in the community, including new immigrants and longtime residents. A longtime local historian, LaBounty particularly wants people to understand OMI's past.

"Many people probably don't know that OMI was an Italian, Irish and German area when it was established in the early 1900s, or that in the 1950s Ingleside was one of the few neighborhoods in the city that allowed homes to be sold to African-Americans or that a race-

track once occupied the site where Ingleside Terraces now stands.

"I want longtime residents to talk about what the neighborhood used to be like, how it's changed and their hopes for its future. And likewise I want newcomers to give their perspectives. Things have changed so rapidly that people don't know who their neighbors are anymore," LaBounty says.

LaBounty is also focusing on stories of people who have made a difference in the neighborhood.

One of those is the Rev. Roland Gordon, of the Ingleside Presbyterian Church on Ocean Avenue, OMI's





*The sundial at Ingleside Terraces, San Francisco, 1913.*

main shopping thoroughfare. Gordon revitalized the church, recently selected as one of the top 300 Protestant ministries in the nation, and established a community center and a basketball league for kids. But perhaps his greatest achievement is the collage he created in the gymnasium at the Ingleside Community Center. Called the Great Cloud of Witness, the collage covers all four walls of the gym — from floor to ceiling — and is made up of thousands of cutouts of black civil rights and cultural heroes.

The Danish-born Peter Vaernet is another neighborhood icon. Vaernet teamed up with his neighbors to clean up Brooks Park in the Merced Heights section of OMI. Once a popular spot for pit bull fights and drug deals, Brooks Park has been transformed into a safe place for seniors and families.

LaBounty has involved more than 20 groups in the OMI project, including Maria Picar's Arts Connection and the OMI Business League, which has been working since 1996 to attract more businesses to the community. Among the more than 50 volunteers are Agnes Morton, who is identifying people to interview; Al Harris, who is publicizing the project; and Karen McCabe, an

independent filmmaker who is gathering local history. "The people in the community are the ones who are making the project happen," LaBounty says. "Even the local printer who produces our fliers is interested in what we're doing."

### Stories to become a play and radio drama

Story-collecting activities are already under way and will continue until 2005. LaBounty is conducting many interviews himself but is also enlisting help from volunteers.

The interviews are being posted on the Western Neighborhoods Project's website ([www.outsidelands.org](http://www.outsidelands.org)) and eventually will be made available to the local branches of the San Francisco Public Library. The project will also publish a booklet featuring selected excerpts from the interviews as well as a history of the area. The booklet will be distributed to more than 6,000 OMI residents free of charge.

The project is also sponsoring two digital video camps to involve the youth of OMI (see story, page one). The videos will be shown in local elementary school classrooms, at after-school programs and at OMI history days for groups and residents.

A highlight of the project will be a



*(left to right) Norita Gonzalez-Blum, Maria Picar and Florentina Mocanu-Schendel, all residents of OMI, are developing a play based on interviews collected during the OMI project. Photo/Susanna K.Bothe*

theater piece based on the collected interviews. Leading the theatrical effort will be longtime OMI resident Maria Picar, with help from Norita Gonzalez-Blum, Florentina Mocanu-Schendel, and writer Jason Rogers. The play will be adapted for radio and broadcast on a local radio station in September 2004.

LaBounty is working nonstop to pull all the pieces of the project together. But it appears to be a labor of love. "Of all the neighborhoods on the west side of San Francisco, OMI is the one most in

need of having its history told and shared," LaBounty says. "It's a lot of work, but if the project inspires just a few people to look at OMI differently, I'll feel that I have done something worthwhile."

*To find out more about the I Am OMI project, visit the Western Neighborhoods Project website at [www.outsidelands.org](http://www.outsidelands.org) or send e-mail to Woody LaBounty at [Woody@outsidelands.org](mailto:Woody@outsidelands.org).*

OMI historical photos courtesy of Greg Gaar and Western Neighborhoods Project.

## OMI Video Project (continued from page 1)

leader and barbershop owner, to Marilyn and Robert Katzman, owners of a 107-year-old firehouse on Broad Street.

"They would complain to me how crappy their neighborhood was, so I think they began appreciating it more when they talked to

Budding videographers Damarlea Martinez (left) and Nierrah Williams are all smiles before a recent screening of the video they made last summer with 11 other OMI kids as part of the I Am OMI project. Photo/Susanna K.Bothe

people who cared about it and were working to improve it," Herman says.

During the second two weeks of the program the kids took cameras home and documented their own lives. They filmed their homes, their families and their neighborhood. And some talked directly into the camera about their hopes and dreams for the future. One boy took the opportunity to interview his aunt and grandmother about his dead father. "He had never even mentioned his father before," says Herman, "and after he did the

filming, he began talking about him. I don't think he would have done that if it hadn't been for this program."

The video, complete with a music soundtrack and archival footage of OMI, was screened for parents, neighbors and friends this past August and was shown at an OMI history day in October. Elementary school kids will have a chance to see the video this fall.

Herman is currently conducting a second video camp with another group of OMI kids. That video will be screened at I Am OMI project

events next spring.

The video camps are being sponsored by the I Am OMI project in cooperation with the YMCA's Safe Haven Program at the Ocean View Recreation Center and the OMI Beacon Center.

*For information about the I Am OMI video camp, visit [www.outsidelands.org](http://www.outsidelands.org) or contact Amanda Herman at [amandahermanphoto@yahoo.com](mailto:amandahermanphoto@yahoo.com) or I Am OMI Project Director Woody LaBounty at [woody@outsidelands.org](mailto:woody@outsidelands.org).*

# USING STORIES TO BUILD THE NEXT GENERATION OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

## Participants in peer-training program learn how to become effective storytellers

Ask anyone in Bayview Hunters Point who to contact when you're in need and the name Albert Harrison comes up. Harrison knows what's going on in the neighborhood, one of the poorest and most troubled areas in San Francisco, and knows how to make things happen. A one-time drug dealer and addict, Harrison turned his life around in prison and now, in his mid-30s, works two jobs and helps former addicts lead productive lives.

Harrison may not currently consider himself a community leader, but he is well on his way to becoming one. Along with seven other Bayview Hunters Point residents, Harrison is participating in a unique 18-month peer-training program sponsored by TEAMS (Transformation Through Education and Mutual Support), an Oakland-based nonprofit organization that develops the capacity of low-income people to solve their own problems. Once a week, the eight people, all intimately familiar with the neighborhood, meet as a group for mutual support and training.

"What we want to do is build the leadership capacity of people in the community, so that they can become their own agents of change," says Henry Izumizaki, president of TEAMS and lead facilitator of the Bayview Hunters Point group.

With the TEAMS approach, participants themselves define the problems affecting their community, set their own goals, learn effective ways of collaborating with others, and support one another in achieving objectives. "The program makes learning a process of action and continual assessment," Izumizaki says.

As part of the capacity-building process, members of the group, all identified as emerging leaders, are learning the art of storytelling in addition to acquiring a variety of other skills. The storytelling component of the program, funded by CCH through its California Story Fund, gives participants an opportunity to shape their personal and community stories into compelling narratives.

"Stories are an important tool in building the kind of self-confidence that leadership requires, says Izumizaki. "If people understand their stories — who they are, what they have been through, how they have come to this point in their lives, who has been important to them, and what's unique about their experiences — it can be very powerful."

Verna Lim, oral historian and TEAMS consultant, is working with participants to help them unearth their stories and become more effective storytellers.

"We talk about what makes a story powerful, how to sequence a story for effect and how to tailor a story for different audiences," she says. "They're learning how to edit stories on the fly and how to avoid phrases that could undermine their authority."

Participants work individually with Lim to develop their stories and then present them to the group for feedback. "Everyone is learning from each other's stories, and making connections between their own experiences and those of others in the group. It's a step toward making connections in the larger world," Lim says.

Once members of the group have mastered the art of telling their own stories, they focus on ways to tell community stories. "It's when you make others see what you've seen, including the possibility of change in your own



Gina Townsel and Beverly Taylor are learning how to tailor stories for different audiences in an innovative peer-training program in San Francisco aimed at developing community leaders. Photo/Verna Lim

neighborhood, that real change begins," Lim says. "We're asking each other, What can the community learn from this story? And it's amazing how the story shifts in scope — from the personal to the political."

Albert Harrison's story and those of the other participants will not stay just within the confines of the group. The personal stories will be videotaped — by the members of the group themselves — and also made into a booklet. Residents of Bayview Hunters Point will be able to obtain a copy of the booklet and view the video at a communitywide forum facilitated by the group members themselves.

The program doesn't end for the graduates after the 18-month training period. Each of them is required to recruit eight more Bayview Hunters Point residents to pass on everything he or she has learned, including the value of effective storytelling.

Says Lim, "It's all well and good to train eight people, but when that number grows exponentially — and many more people are trained to become effective leaders — then structural change can happen."

## Fields of Berries by David M. Sakai

**David Sakai is one of the six former internees interviewed for Flo Oy Wong's suitcase installation: 1942: Luggage from Home to Camp. This is his story.**

On December 7, 1941, my friends and I listened to the radio in shock. I was a senior at San Jose State College. When notice of the evacuation came, I worked for three days for the War Relocation Authority in the men's gymnasium at the college. Here, I helped as a translator for the non-English-speaking Issei during registration. I had six days to get ready. My destination was the Santa Anita Assembly Center.

I took two suitcases — a tan leather one my family had purchased in Salinas and a woven one bought in Yanai, Japan. I also had a small valise for toiletries, which I

put along with my clothes inside the leather suitcase. In the other, I packed my diaries, playing cards, postcards, letters, fountain pens, my family album, and a second album of my college friends.

On the train ride to Santa Anita, we passed by my parents' former berry farm in Salinas. From the train window, I could see the fields where we picked bush berries in my youth and where the Japanese hired hands from Salinas had toiled in the early 1930s. I could visualize my mother working in the fields with us, telling Japanese folk tales, and making jam with the berries we picked.

Upon my arrival at Santa Anita, I was depressed. I sat on my luggage in a horse stable thinking about my college education and wondering how I had ended up in

a detention center. Placing my suitcases under my cot, I promised myself that I would stay in contact with friends on the outside. To do this, I wrote at least four postcards a day. I also worked on the camouflage net project for the Army, and here I met my future wife, Ruth, who was one of the weavers.

When I was shipped to Heart Mountain, my friends and I played cards on the train, using suitcases for tables. After 12 days I left Heart Mountain to work in Weston, Idaho, where we were needed to top sugar beets and harvest potatoes.

In 1957, when I returned to San Jose with my wife, Ruth, and our daughter, Patricia, I still had my suitcases filled with remnants of camp life. As I carried them into our garage, I thought of the fields where



David Sakai

my mother and I picked berries and the stable where I wrote letters to my friends. And here, in a cabinet that I built, I stored them until I donated them to the Japanese American Museum of San Jose.

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## Who We Are

The mission of the California Council for the Humanities is to enrich California's cultural life and to strengthen communities through public use of the humanities.

The Council is an independent, not-for-profit state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities supported through a public-private partnership that includes funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, private foundations and corporations. The Council also receives essential support from individuals.

To learn more about the Council and how you can participate in its programs, please visit us online at [www.californiastories.org](http://www.californiastories.org).

## Staff

**San Francisco Office**  
312 Sutter Street, Suite 601  
San Francisco, CA 94108  
415/391.1474

**JIM QUAY**  
Executive Director

**RALPH LEWIN**  
Associate Executive Director

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Development Coordinator

**CARLOS TORRES**  
Operations Coordinator

**Los Angeles Office**  
315 W. Ninth Street, Suite 702  
Los Angeles, CA 90015  
213/623.5993

**FELICIA KELLEY**  
Senior Programs Manager

**CALEB KIM**  
Operations Assistant

**San Diego Office**  
921 25th Street  
San Diego, CA 92102  
619/232.4020

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