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Japanese Vernaculars - Lists

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The Vernaculars

by J.K. Yamamoto

8/85
A few years ago, I worked on the staff of the now defunct Nikkei Sentinel, which was jointly published by Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization in L.A. and Japanese Community Progressive Alliance in San Francisco. It was unique in that it had staff in both cities and dealt with issues in both English and Japanese.

But like other short-lived community publications, the Nikkei folded due to a variety of problems, some organizational and some financial (despite having an all-volunteer staff, including people who hand-wrote the Japanese section). It was a lesson in the difficulty of maintaining an ethnic newspaper.

So, bearing in mind that a list of community newspapers needs to be updated periodically as papers come and go, here is an overview of places where you are likely to find Nikkei news.

Only L.A. and S.F. have two JA dailies each: Rafu Shimpo and Kashu Mainichi down here and Hokubei Mainichi and Nichibei Times up there. Naturally there is some overlapping of coverage, but there are distinct differences as well. Readers in both cities definitely have a choice.

Elsewhere in the U.S. are New York Nichibei, Rocky Mountain Jiho (published in Denver), Utah Nippo, Chicago Shimpo, and Hawaii Hochi. For Japanese Canadian readers, there are New Canadian and Canada Times.

Each of these papers is bilingual, but the English side contains Nikkei community news plus news of Japan while the Japanese side provides general coverage—world, national, state and local—to Japanese-speaking readers who are unable to read all-English newspapers. Rather than being mirror images of each other, the English and Japanese sides are

separate entities with separate readerships.

That makes Pacific Citizen one of only three all-English Japanese American papers, the other two being Hawaii Herald and the L.A.-based Tozai Times. The Herald, which comes out twice a month, and the newly established Tozai, which comes out once a month, are both feature-oriented and are aimed at their respective local readerships.

The one distinction that PC can claim as its own is that it is still the only Japanese American newspaper intended for a nationwide audience. Although we have an editorial staff of two and only a handful of correspondents outside L.A. (not counting columnists, who do not report the news), we are somehow able to do our job with some degree of success.

Because we are based in L.A., some may think of us as an L.A. paper. But if the mail we get is any indication, PC is most appreciated by people living in areas that do not have any other JA publication—areas well removed from Southern California.

If you'll allow me a moment of personal bias, my favorites among fellow JA papers are (in no particular order) Rafu, Hokubei, N.Y. Nichibei, the Herald, and the Tozai.

A roundup like this would not be complete without mentioning other papers that try to cover a variety of Asian American issues, including those of the Nikkei community. In San Francisco, there are East West, which is English on one side and Chinese on the other, and Asian Week, which is all English with a Chinese American emphasis.

The only other English/Chinese paper I'm aware of is Sampan in Boston, which deals almost exclusively with local issues. For some reason, L.A. does not seem to have an English-language Chinese American paper, even though there is a need for one.

The English section of the mostly Korean-language Korea Times in L.A. does an admirable job of covering pan-Asian issues in addition to those which are of special interest to Korean Americans.

Pacific Ties, published at UCLA, is (to my knowledge) the only Asian American student paper that comes out on a regular basis. Along with UCLA's other minority papers, it is being threatened with absorption into one all-purpose special interest paper (see story on page 1).

And in Seattle, the all-English International Examiner, like the International District in which it is located, covers the broad spectrum of Asian American communities.

Another Seattle publication, Asian Family Affair, folded earlier this year. Some might list it along with the above papers, but because it was typed on a typewriter rather than typeset, I'm not sure it qualified as a newspaper. (Even without the equipment, I'm sure the staff was no less dedicated.)

This sampling shows that there is no shortage of Asian American news to cover; the only question is how many people want to read about it.

The fate that befell Nikkei and Family Affair, and the precarious position of Pacific Ties, demonstrate another fact: an ethnic Asian newspaper—including PC—cannot be taken for granted.

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hang in law offices, apartments,

still going strong

and Yonsei realize their cultural background," she explained.

Koshiro Torii, former chair of Nisei Week and chair of the Little Tokyo Business Association, said this festival helps to bridge the gap between Japanese Americans and Japanese businessmen because Japanese companies financially support the festival.

Joyce Wakano Chinn, general manager of the 1985 Nisei Week and a school teacher, said the festival depends on donations, so the financial problem is the biggest concern.

Also working for Nisei Week this year are Anne Chiba, Patrick Takahashi and Amy Yamashiro.

The festival starts at 6 p.m. on August 7 with a traditional Shinto purification ceremony at JACCC. At 8 a.m. on August 11, a 5-kilometer run starts at the Japanese Village Plaza fire tower.

At 3 p.m. on August 11, the Grand Parade, which includes Japanese dances, taiko drums, floats and marching bands, will feature kabuki actor Ichikawa Danjuro XII, astronaut Ellison Onizuka, and actor George Takei of "Star Trek."

For further information, call (213) 687-7193.

biggest fundraiser of the year.

Others choose to provide information and recruit members. Some groups are political; others are health-oriented, such as the American Red Cross. The San Jose Police Dept. comes recruiting for possible applicants for the South Bay force.

Kenny Kanzaki says he enjoys the outreach the Street Fair has. "It's great to see people from our own community and other Asian communities, like Sacramento and Los Angeles, and even as far away as Washington, D.C. We get tourists, the black community nearby, and the entertainers draw other segments. It's a good mix."

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for special screening at the XII International Congress of Gerontology July 15 at the Rockefeller Center.

Ishizuka and Nakamura were awarded a National Media Award from the Retirement Research Institute in Chicago for "Fools' Dance" last May. Nakamura was recently named a recipient of the first Steve Tatsukawa Memorial Award for his contributions to Asian American media.

The film, a dramatic comedy of the influence a mysterious man, played by Mako, has on the lives of the staff and residents of

broadcast on PBS stations soon.

James A. Davis, chair of the audio-visual program of the international convention, said, "After reviewing over 120 films, we extended special invitations to those we felt were of outstanding quality and would be of greatest interest and value to Congress participants. We are proud to present 'Fools' Dance' to this prestigious international audience."

Emiko Omori's film on aging and retirement made for JACL was also one of the films selected to be shown at this prestigious Congress.



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