

# PASSAGES

## SENATOR AKAKA HONORED

### Profiles of Courage

U.S. Daniel Akaka, Democrat of Hawaii was honored on May 15 by AIISF and The National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS) for his leadership in keeping alive several key episodes in the rich and sometimes obscure history of the Asian American community.

On this, his first visit to Angel Island, the Senator toured the site for a close-up view of America's Pacific gateway. Actors dressed in period costume interpreted the stories of typical Angel Island immigrants for the Senator and other guests gathered for the occasion. It was less than a year ago that Congress passed legislation, authored by Akaka, that enabled work to begin on a feasibility study regarding the development of a West Coast immigration museum including Angel Island. Also making his first visit to the Island was Rusty Areias, the newly appointed director of the California State Parks system. The two men pledged their support for the ongoing efforts to preserve and interpret the Immigration Station.

### Angel Island Immigration

**Station Foundation** is a non-profit organization whose primary goals are:

- a) to lead the effort to preserve, restore, and interpret Angel Island Immigration Station, a National Historic Landmark, as the Pacific gateway for U.S. immigration; and
- b) to promote educational activities that further the understanding of Pacific Rim immigration in American history.

KATHARINE YEE



*Senator Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii) pledged his support for the preservation and interpretation work at Angel Island.*

The ceremony honoring Senator Akaka also paid tribute to the Immigration Station's past. Chizu Iiyama recounted the story of her mother, a Japanese picture bride who was processed on the Island in 1914 (see story on p. 4). Also speaking was George Araki, the San Francisco State professor to whom Park Ranger Alexander Weiss first brought news of the poetry carved into the barrack walls. Both Araki and Weiss were recognized for their efforts in saving the Immigration Station from destruction in the early 1970s. In looking to the Island's future, AIISF president Felicia Lowe presented scrolls by calligrapher You Shan Tang to Senator Akaka and to AIISF past president Dan Quan for their present-day work in preserving the Immigration Station's past.

The afternoon program on Angel Island was part of a day-long event which began that morning at the Presidio and concluded in the evening with a banquet at the Radisson Miyako Hotel in Japantown.

AIISF and NJAHS staged the event in collaboration with the National Park Service/Golden Gate National Recreational Area, the Presidio Trust, Angel Island State Park, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the Angel Island Association, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## NATIONAL RECOGNITION CONTINUES

### America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places

On June 14, Angel Island Immigration Station was named on the 1999 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. As a recipient of this important designation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Immigration Station represents one of hundreds of historic sites within the 256-unit California State Park system that is suffering from years of neglect by the State. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting the irreplaceable.

"Angel Island Immigration Station is an example of how the tangible links with our past are threatened by chronic underfunding throughout the California State Park system," said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust. "As one of the most powerful reminders of the Asian-American immigration experience, the future of Angel Island Immigration Station must be secured for the education and enlightenment of generations to come."

This important designation has led to increased publicity for the plight of the Immigration Station, and it is hoped that increased funding from state and federal sources, as well as from the private sector, will follow.

*(Continued on pg. 2)*

### 11 MOST ENDANGERED



**NATIONAL TRUST**  
for HISTORIC PRESERVATION

## President's Message

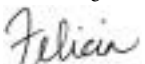
**B**ountiful is the word that jumps to mind when I reflect upon our recent successes. In June, Angel Island Immigration Station was officially acknowledged as part of the Millennium Council's "Save America's Treasures" program which is chaired by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. This news followed on the heels of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's press conference naming the Immigration Station, along with other California State Parks, as one of the "11 Most Endangered Historic Places" across the country.

These prestigious designations underscore the importance of Angel Island Immigration Station's rich history and the urgency to preserve the site. The media attention it generates goes a long way in bringing the story of Angel Island into the national consciousness and helps further the Foundation's work in educational outreach. We strive to reach communities near and far in order to rally the kind of support that is needed to realize future preservation plans.

We benefited from the wisdom and ideas voiced by a group of Bay Area community leaders at a visioning workshop AIISF hosted with California State Parks and the National Park Service at Angel Island. We explored the question of how the site might best serve the communities they represented and how we can work together. One positive outcome is a preliminary meeting set with The Association of Chinese Teachers.

In addition, AIISF board members participated in the 6th annual Chinese American Conference held in San Diego as well as the National Park Service's symposium to study the feasibility of developing a West Coast immigration center that would be linked to Angel Island. All the while, board members keep on track with other essential tasks such as prioritizing the architectural work which needs to be done on site and identifying potential resources to pay for the work!

It's been intense . . . and intensely satisfying. It's a joy to be associated with such a hard-working board and our partners at the National Park Service and California State Parks. I want to extend a special thanks to Daniel Quan, past board president and consultant Kathy Lim Ko for exquisitely meeting all the extra demands of the summer. As fall approaches, we look to widening our circle of friends and supporters. Together, we will make it happen.

Warm regards,  
  
 Felicia Lowe



JAMES SOBREDO

Continued national recognition for the Immigration Station brings a greater sense of urgency to the planning for the site. Above, Larry White records the ideas generated at the West Coast immigration museum symposium in July.



The Immigration Station pier, shown in this photo c. 1920, was dismantled in the 1960s to discourage vandals from visiting the abandoned site. Whether or not it should be rebuilt is one of the questions being considered in preservation and restoration planning.

(Continued from pg. 1)

Other sites listed this year include: "The Corner of Main and Main," nationwide; the Richard H. Allen Memorial Auditorium, Sitka, Alaska; Country Estates of River Road, Louisville, Kentucky; Four National Historic Landmark Hospitals, New York state; Hulett Ore Unloaders, Cleveland, Ohio; Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; Pullman Administration Building and Factory Complex, Chicago, Illinois; San Diego's Arts & Warehouse District, San Diego, California; Traveler's Rest, Lolo, Montana; and the West Side of Downtown Baltimore, Baltimore, Maryland.

Students and teachers can learn more about Angel Island Immigration Station and the other 10 sites on the list via an on-line study guide created by the History Channel at [www.historychannel.com/classroom](http://www.historychannel.com/classroom). "America's Most Endangered 1999" will be featured on *History Channel Classroom* this fall for teachers to tape and use in their classrooms.

### Save America's Treasures

Angel Island Immigration Station has been honored as an Official Project of Save America's Treasures.

Save America's Treasures is a public-private partnership between the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation dedicated to the celebration and preservation of the nation's irreplaceable historic and cultural legacy. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is honorary chair of The Millennium Committee to Save America's Treasures. The Committee is affiliated with the White House Millennium Council. For more information about the Save America's Treasures program, visit the Website at [www.saveamericastreasures.org](http://www.saveamericastreasures.org).

Designation as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places and as an Official Project of Save America's Treasures are the latest in a number of honors bestowed upon the landmark. The Immigration Station won the prestigious National Historic Landmark designation from the National Park Service in 1997, and is also currently the subject of a Congressionally approved feasibility study into the possibility of establishing a West Coast immigration museum on par with Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York.

## PASSAGES

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 Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

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## In the News

### Community Symposium

Community leaders gathered on Angel Island in June to discuss the relevance and impact of the Immigration Station on the local community. A diverse group of participants brought to the table their varied interests, from education to immigrant rights. Together they explored ways the site could serve their needs and confirmed ideas surrounding key messages and themes that had been discussed in the March visioning symposium. Most importantly, the community symposium enabled AIISF to strengthen existing partnerships and to form new ones—an essential task for the important work that lies ahead.

KATHARINE YEE



Angel Island Park Superintendent Nicholas Franco gives community leaders a site tour during the June Nicholas community visioning symposium.

### West Coast Immigration Museum Symposium

Historians, park and museum planners, interpretive specialists, activists and community leaders gathered at the Presidio in July for a two-day visioning symposium sponsored by the National Park Service. The job of those assembled was to discuss the idea of a West Coast immigration museum. The task was a challenging one, as at this early stage there are no limits to the scope of the discussion. Topics explored included the concept of immigration vs. migration, possible time ranges from first inhabitants to the most recent immigrants and migrants, and even the pros and cons of potential sites. Participants acknowledged that the July symposium marked the beginning of a concept that will acquire further definition through continued dialogue. However, all agreed that even as the notion of a West Coast immigration museum evolves, the work of preserving Angel Island should continue to move ahead.

### NARA Update

While the San Bruno branch of the National Archives will remain open, the designation of the Alien Files for NARA's permanent collection is still undecided. Please urge the National Archives to resolve the status of the "A" files immediately. Contact: John Carlin, U.S. Archivist  
National Archives & Records Administration  
8601 Adelphi Road, RM 4100  
College Park, MD 20740-6001  
or e-mail: space.plan@arch2.nara.gov  
cc: Congressman Tom Lantos  
400 El Camino Real Suite 820  
San Mateo, CA 94402

### Detainee Interview Project Receives Grant

Congratulations to Lydia Lum who received a \$2,500 grant from the City of Houston's Cultural Arts Council. The grant enables Lum to continue interviewing and photographing former detainees of Angel Island who are still living. A newspaper journalist, Lum has already interviewed more than 20 former Angel Islanders in California and Texas. Her interviews and photographs of detainees from the Houston area were on display along with AIISF's "Gateway to Gold Mountain" exhibit, which traveled to Houston in May of 1998. Lum is now trying to locate detainees in the Midwest and on the East Coast. She hopes to eventually publish a book based on her work. Excerpts of Lum's Angel Island interviews and photographs can be found on the worldwide web at [www.angel-island.com](http://www.angel-island.com).

JAMES SOBREDO



Participants in the West Coast immigration museum visioning symposium pose for a group picture on the steps of the Presidio Visitor's Center.

## Upcoming Events

### "Gateway" Exhibit to Spokane, WA (Oct. 1999)

The city of Spokane hosts "Gateway" for the month of October. The exhibit will be on display in the city's downtown public library.



JAMES SOBREDO

AIISF board member and past president Daniel Quan, pictured above, and current AIISF president Felicia Lowe, will be recognized by the Kearney Street Workshop for their efforts to preserve the Immigration Station.

### Kearney Street Workshop Benefit Evening

On Thursday, November 4, 1999, Kearney Street Workshop (KSW), the oldest existing multi-disciplinary Asian American arts organization, will host a benefit evening to support The Angel Island Project, which features the major exhibition "made in usa: Angel Island Shhh" by artist Flo Oy Wong, adjunct exhibitions, a catalog, workshops and symposia. "made in usa: Angel Island Shhh," premieres on site at the Angel Island Immigration Station in the year 2000, then travels to other cities. The fundraiser will feature a performance by Byron Yee, poetry and testimonial by Li Keng Wong, a former detainee.

KSW will also honor AIISF's Felicia Lowe and Dan Quan for their tireless efforts to establish the Immigration Station as a historical landmark and permanent museum. Former detainee Dale Ching, who as a docent has devoted many hours to inform the public about his experience, will also be honored. The Angel Island Project is dedicated to the late Paul Chow, AIISF's founder. The benefit will be held at City View Restaurant in San Francisco. Please call (415) 543-0520 for additional information.

# Family Album

## My Mother, a Picture Bride



*The peak of Japanese picture bride immigration was the decade between 1910 and 1920. This photo was taken at Angel Island during the same time period that Chizu Iiyama's mother passed through the Immigration Station in 1914.*

*Following are excerpts from remarks given by Chizu Iiyama at the Profiles of Courage event honoring Senator Daniel Akaka on May 15.*

My mother came to the United States in 1914 as a “picture bride” dressed in her pretty Japanese kimono and stayed one night at Angel Island. She was one of approximately 20,000 Japanese women who came over to the U.S. primarily between 1910 and 1920. It was in the latter year that Japan stopped the practice of sending over “picture brides” in response to anti-Japanese sentiments in America.

Most Japanese immigrant men had expected to make their fortunes and return to Japan. However, as time went on, many decided to remain in the U.S. and establish families. But there were very few Japanese women here. With anti-miscegenation laws against them, immigrant men turned to their relatives in Japan to set up marriage partners. The 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement between the U.S. and Japan allowed wives and families, including picture brides, to enter.

In reality, the picture bride concept was not so different from the Japanese practice of arranged marriages. In Japan, marriage was never an individual matter, but always a family affair. My mother tells this story about her own betrothal:

My mother and your father's mother were washing clothes at a river in Oita. In the ensuing conversation, your father's mother indicated that she had

received a letter from your father, wishing for a wife so that he could settle down and raise a family. My mother spoke about me (at that time I was teaching school and at 24 years old was considered “over the hill”) The two mothers got a go-between to look into the backgrounds of both families, and the wedding was on.

My mom spoke of the difficult two-week trip from Japan to San Francisco. The women all carried pictures of their prospective husbands and when the boat landed they anxiously tried to match the pictures with the men waiting at the dock. She recalls that she saw a young man skimming rocks on the bay, and she noted that this was her husband-to-be. “Different from the very beginning,” she said without indicating whether she thought this was a favorable trait.

She spoke of the excitement, and the shock of some women when they found the pictures they received had been taken when the men were years younger. She remembered two women on board who refused to leave the boat when they saw their prospective mates and insisted on returning to Japan. My mother said the men were honorable, and actually paid their passage back.

My mother came wearing her kimono and one of the first things my dad did was take her to a Japanese store to buy western clothes. It was an adaptation made by the Japanese to become part of America. My parents got married in San Francisco.

There are many stories the Issei women tell of their first experiences in the U.S. One woman was so intrigued by western clothes, especially a corset, that she wore it over her dress. The women also had difficulty walking in tight western shoes. The food was also so different—one friend tells about her mother who saw the yellow pats of butter, and loving Japanese candy, popped them into her mouth. Because people were looking, she managed to swallow them, but she has never eaten butter since.

However, there were many real problems these young women faced. Often, in order to entice a bride, a man exaggerated his financial situation. An owner of a small fruit stand took a picture of himself before a large grocery store. Other men sent pictures of themselves sitting in cars which did not belong to them... and so on.

We have many oral histories of Issei women and the tremendous hardships they faced. Many remembered Angel Island as their port of entry into this country. Despite the anxiety of landing in a foreign place, the experience of Japanese immigrants at Angel Island was much better than that of the Chinese. Most Japanese stayed on the island for only 24 hours.

Angel Island is an integral part of the history of Asian Americans, who like my mother, had the strength and courage to start a new life and establish families here that became the bedrock of future generations.

## Notes from Angel Island State Park

This year the Governor and the State Legislature have given \$157 million to State Parks to be spent over the next three years to begin to address the approximately \$1 billion backlog in deferred maintenance, a significant amount of which exists on Angel Island. The Island's share of the money will be put toward roofing and painting projects. Painting began this summer on the Visitor Center and the Immigration Barracks are scheduled to be painted in September. In keeping with its period of operation as an immigration station from 1910 to 1940, the color of the barracks will be restored to match the Hospital colors. The current paint color of the barracks dates to the WWII period.

The Island's deer population is holding stable on its own. Park officials continue to monitor the deer to insure the herd remains healthy. An aggressive campaign against the thistle and broom growing on the Island is currently underway as these species are choking out native plants.

Work on the East Garrison float is scheduled for this fall. The float is expected back in working order by December, enabling scheduled ferry docking to begin at East Garrison next summer.

## Neil Thomsen, NARA Archivist, Retires

Word spread quickly via e-mail that archivist, Neil Thomsen was retiring from the National Archives and Records Administration after 12 years of dedicated service. Everyone expressed sadness, gratitude and appreciation for Neil's deep knowledge of the Chinese files. Given tiny leads, he would produce records that unraveled the mystery of our histories. AIISF president Felicia Lowe shares those sentiments along with a bit of panic. "I still have not found the records of my maternal grandfather. Could there be another person who can find 'the needle in the haystack?' It's hard to imagine." AIISF thanks Neil Thomsen for his dedication, humanity and the precious gift of knowledge.



Neil Thomsen helped many Chinese Americans reconnect to their past by assisting them in uncovering documents such as these immigration papers, located in the NARA files.

## Grants Received

The important work of AIISF cannot be accomplished without the support of numerous individuals and community foundations. The organizations below have contributed to AIISF this summer:

- Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund \$25,000 (planning and development)
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation \$5,000 (general operating)
- San Francisco Foundation \$25,000 (general operating)

A big thank you to AIISF Consultant Kathy Lim Ko for securing these grants.

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Allen M. & Leslie F. Toy  
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William & Joyce Mende Wong

### Legacy Friends

Kenneth & Pamela Fong  
Jennie A. Horn

### Landmark Friends

Stephen & Janis Fong, *in honor of Bill Fong*

### Memorial Donations

Kermit & Betty Gruberg, *in memory of Paul Chow*

### General Donations

Leo Kin Pang Chan  
Thomas & Eva Fong Foundation  
Walter Gwaltney  
Peter L. Stein, *in honor of Doris Grasshoff's birthday*  
Roberta & William Wong

AIISF is a non-profit organization fully qualified under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions (including Friends payments) are tax deductible to the maximum extent permitted by law. AIISF also has other special gift-giving programs for those wishing to make larger gifts or contributions. Please contact AIISF for more information.

## Commemorative T-Shirt

Proceeds from the sale of the commemorative t-shirt honoring Angel Island Immigration Station as a National Historic Landmark will go toward the docent training program for the Immigration Station. Please contact the Angel Island Association at (415) 435-3522 for more information.



*Wear a landmark! Specially designed for the Landmark event, these t-shirts are silkscreened in four colors and are 100% cotton. Available in adult sizes S, M, L, XL for \$12.00, and XXL for \$14.00 (plus sales tax and shipping).*

Would you like to plan a special visit to the Immigration Station? Please call AIA Volunteer Co-ordinator Ellen Loring at (415) 435-3522 and she will be happy to make the arrangements for your group.



Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation  
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San Francisco, CA 94147-2243

## Become a Friend

AIISF is now developing a "Friends of AIISF" program. Become a "Friend" and receive quarterly issues of our newsletter and/or exclusively designed items that show your support of Angel Island Immigration Station and its rich historical legacy.

### Student or Teacher Friend – \$25

- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year (Please enclose a current copy of your student or teacher I.D.)

### Basic Friend – \$50

- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year

### Heritage Friend – \$100

- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year
- Commemorative t-shirt

### Legacy Friend – \$200

- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year
- Commemorative t-shirt
- A choice between the book, ISLAND by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung **OR** the video "Carved in Silence" by Felicia Lowe

### Landmark Friend – \$250

- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year
- Commemorative t-shirt
- The book, ISLAND by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung **AND** the video "Carved in Silence" by Felicia Lowe

To become a Friend, send your name, address, and check to:

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Remember, if you are a Student or Teacher Friend, you must send a copy of your current student or teacher I.D.

If you are a Legacy Friend, please indicate if you are interested in the video or the book.

For those receiving t-shirts (Legacy, Heritage, & Landmark Friends), please indicate your shirt size of choice (adult small, medium, large, x-large, and xx-large). If you do not indicate a shirt-size, an x-large will be sent to you automatically.