



Photo by Ray Lum

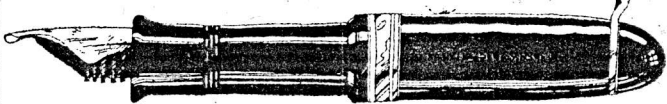
MEMORIAL SERVICE

FOR

AMY UNO ISHII

DECEMBER 11, 1920

JANUARY 21, 1981



Amy

1/26/81

Recently, while crossing a Little Tokyo street on my way to lunch, a voice called out my name and I looked around to see who it was. Amy Ishii, a Nisei woman who I have run into frequently during my seven years here at the Rafu waved and smiled at me from her car. I waved back, the light turned green and she drove on her way. I laughed to myself then, "Amy's always busy—heading someplace for some group, getting photocopies, taking pictures . . ." I couldn't know that just a few days later, I would be writing her obituary.

A lot of people couldn't handle Amy. She stood up and spoke out at meetings, whether they were Japanese American Citizens League meetings where she smelled something fishy going on, or meetings where there weren't any Japanese Americans at all.

We'd cross paths at a lot of unexpected places—in Gardena, at the criminal courts building covering a trial, in the Crenshaw area, on the Westside, all over. Once when a woman was arguing against the erection of a plaque at the former site of a World War II concentration camp for Japanese Americans, only Amy, out of a roomful of Nisei 442nd veterans and former camp inmates, spoke out and challenged her.

Amy traveled up and down the West Coast and throughout the rest of the nation with her tape recorder and slide projector in tow to give presentations to all sorts of groups on the history of Japanese America and about the wartime relocation and internment experience.

And, there was that time a couple of years ago. Mrs. Ishii came into the Rafu office. We sat down in the lunch room. "People just don't listen to me." She was frustrated to the point of tears over the fact that there wasn't much enthusiasm for a "Day of Remembrance" that was being organized for the day Roosevelt issued the infamous Executive Order 9066. It wasn't so much that she wasn't being allowed an the event. She was more upset that more people weren't get-involved.

Many still refer to Amy as "the sister of Edison Uno," the legendary Nisei civil libertarian. She deserves more.

You could see it in her eyes. She had a fine obsession, and there is no one who can take her place. We've suffered an important loss.

—DWIGHT CHUMAN