



□ By Miya Iwataki

Wish List

I wish that we could redo the recent November 7th elections. It is beyond me how people could have voted against some of the important environmental issues, or against alcohol taxes that would have gone into alcohol prevention and treatment programs.

In particular, I think that people really didn't understand the potential negative impact Propositions 140 and 131 would have on our everyday lives. With term limitations for state legislators, who will have the longevity and ultimately the clout in Sacramento? The state department bureaucrats and the Sacramento lobbyists, that's who.

While our *elected* representatives come and go, the bureaucrats and lobbyists will be here to stay. They have no accountability to us, either. At least we can remove, threaten to remove or not elect politicians. Also, it may have a heavy impact on the legislative staff who are mostly handpicked by the legislators. The majority of the staff who are people of color in Sacramento have less than five years seniority. These are the people who will have the hardest time holding on to their jobs, cutting back our access even more.

I won't even talk about the governor's race. And as of this writing, the State Attorney General race is still undecided. If we end up with Wilson *and* Lungren, we can look forward to more bad times. And now the Democratic Party officials are pointing fingers of blame at each other. Isn't it kind of late for that?

The good thing would be if people would learn from this experience. Try some new things like putting more energy into GOTV (Get Out The Vote) activities instead of just putting everything into high priced fund raisers and negative television ads.

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I wish that everyone eligible for Redress were still with us. All of us have lost grandparents and other loved ones during the course of our fight for reparations. But in October, NCCR (National Coalition for Redress/Reparations) lost Tom Shiroishi, the first person in our inner core to pass away. And it hurt.

Tom was a robust, earthy Nisei truck driver who never missed a meeting unless he was on

the road. He was a staunch and committed fighter for Redress, who demanded that "the Nisei get off their fannies and do something" about Redress.

If we had an NCCR Statewide Steering Committee meeting or some other "marathon" meeting, Tom and his wife Toki would show up with *onigiri* and Toki's great chicken *tatsuta-age* or some other goodies.

Tom and Toki were fiercely committed to Redress, and very devoted to the organization. After our bill passed the House of Representatives, the Nisei in NCCR wanted to organize a thank you party for the Sansei members! Toki actually went door-to-door trying to raise money for the appreciation party (which had door prizes and other practical party favors).

Tom Shiroishi was the emcee that evening. He had a great sense of fun, although somewhat off-color, we found. I'll never forget his opening joke:

"What do Dukakis and a kotex have in common?
They both irritate a Bush"

Of course, this was a while back.

I'll never forget the shocked looks on the faces of some of the Nisei ladies after his joke. "What's wrong?" Tom innocently wanted to know.

As a truck driver, he had plenty of time to monitor the radio. He would keep us informed of racist radio talk shows. It seems that many Nisei are awake during the hours of Ray Bream's racist tirades and his favorite guest, Lillian Baker.

One thing that really made Tom stand out was his writing. He wrote the most profound, articulate and passionate articles and Letters to the Editor. I often thought that he should have been a writer, or we should have encouraged him to do writing in whatever spare time he had.

I guess everyone in camp had special qualities and a special story. And Tom Shiroishi is now one of the many who have now passed on.

But how I wish he had been able to receive that check and the apology...for those were the ultimate symbols of the victory he had played such an important part in winning for all of us.

GAMBARE, TOM SHIROISHI! □