

## HOW AND WHY WE GET INVOLVED

We have principles of unity from which to work from and they were established when NCRR was founded in 1980. One of our main principles was that we would support other communities in their struggle for justice. This promise has been very important to all NCRR members. After September 11, I was really proud of NCRR for having sponsored a candlelight peace vigil in Little Tokyo. It was just two or three weeks after the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. We joined with the Muslim and Arab American communities to show solidarity and support with the hope that there would be no racial profiling. We wanted to let them know that we knew what it was like to be targeted because of the color of our skin. One of the key reasons I'm glad to be associated with NCRR is that we don't see the internment i.e. what happened to my parents and my family, as solely a Japanese American issue. It happened to the Japanese American community, but it was and is an issue of civil rights and liberties, and at some point, one of human rights! No one should have to suffer injustice at the hands of a government, especially, their own government!



**Kay Ochi, helps to present NCRR's "Fighting Spirit award" to Fred Okrand, Okrand, Legal Director Emeritus of the ACLU, was honored at the Day of Remembrance" Program in 2000. Okrand had defended the Japanese American community since 1942 and was most recently working on the cases of Japanese Latin Americans.**

Different issues come up, even to this day. What it takes for us to get involved is for someone to say that they want to work on that issue. That's how it occurs in NCRR.

Somebody says, "I'm going to take it up!" "I'm going to spearhead it," and if the rest of us believe in it, we will follow along. We are very democratic. For many, many years, we never had a president of our organization. Even today, we have co-chairs. Nobody really wants to be president and to be seen as "the leader." We do have to have some structure in order to keep the group moving along so we have co-chairs. We have three co-chairs right

now, Kathy, Richard and myself. We do have other officers like a Treasurer, who handles our finances and a Secretary, who works on our membership roster. As for meetings, there was a time when we were “squatters,” in the offices of the Little Tokyo Service Center but now we get together once a month at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo.

Kay Ochi (Oral History Project) (2001)