



# JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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## PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

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**May 28, 2009**

### JACL MOURNS PASSING OF NISEI PIONEERS

**Washington, D.C.** -- The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) mourns the passing of Nisei pioneers who have given much to the Japanese American community. The Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans who were born in the United States) were instrumental in organizing the JACL in 1929. There were three recent deaths in the Washington, D.C. area of Nisei leaders.

Colonel Phil Ishio of Silver Spring, Maryland, is the founding president of the Japanese American Veterans Association (JAVA), which was established in 1992. Born in Berkeley, California, and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, Ishio went to Tokyo with his grandparents in 1939 after one year at the University of Utah. He completed two years of schooling and returned home in 1941 after receiving a warning from the American Embassy about worsening relationships between Japan and the United States. Drafted in 1941, he saw action on various fronts and was decorated with the Bronze Star and two unit citations. He was discharged from the Army in 1947 and joined the Central Intelligence Agency, remaining with that agency until his retirement in 1973, serving on assignments in Tokyo and Saigon. He continued to serve the Army as a reserve officer and attained the rank of Colonel.

Claire Minami died on May 24, at the age of 94, in Bethesda, Md., following a severe stroke. She was born in Sacramento, California, and was a graduate of Wilson Teachers College and possibly the first Asian American school teacher in the Washington, D.C. school system. She was also the first Asian American Worthy Matron in the Order of the Eastern Star, president of the D.C. chapter of the JACL, and a charter member of the Washington Toho Koto Society. She was interned at the Gila River Relocation Camp in Arizona and relocated to Washington, D.C. after the war, where she was a teacher and homemaker. She retired from teaching in the mid-1970s after 23 years. She is the grandmother of Kristine Minami, former JACL Washington D.C. Representative.

Harry Tanabe passed away unexpectedly on April 19, at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C. at the age of 86. He was born in Marysville, California, and was a resident of San Lorenzo, California. He served bravely in World War II with his specialty being counterintelligence. He received the American Theater Ribbon, the Victory Medal, the Army of Occupation (Japan) Medal, and the Purple Heart. He reached the rank of Warrant Officer Junior Grade. He was an active member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Golden Gate Nisei Memorial Post 9879. He attended National JACL Conventions for many years as a delegate for the Mount Eden Chapter.

National Executive Director of the JACL, Floyd Mori, said, "It is sad to see our older Nisei leaving us, but they will be remembered with fondness for the sacrifices they made to benefit all of us. We mourn the loss of all our JACL members who pass on."

Larry Oda, National President of the JACL, added: "The perseverance of the Nisei pioneers is a great example to us, and Japanese Americans today owe our successes to their leadership." #####