

PRESS RELEASE

July 23, 1990

"OTHER FACES, OTHER LIVES - ASIAN AMERICANS IN IDAHO"

Although the population of Idaho was once one-fourth Chinese, the story of Asians in Idaho is an often neglected part of the history of the state. To bring this colorful story to life, a unique organization of Asian Americans has traveled the state to produce a one hour video based on interviews with Asian American families of Japanese, Chinese and Filipino ancestry.

The video, entitled, "Other Faces, Other Lives - Asian Americans in Idaho" was produced by Alan Lifton, a Communications professor at the University of Idaho. The video project was sponsored by the Palouse Asian American Association (PAAA) of Moscow, Idaho, and Pullman, Washington with the assistance of a grant from the Ethnic Heritage Committee of the Idaho Centennial Commission. The PAAA is the only organization in the state to include a membership of all Asian groups as well as non Asians.

"In a way we were finding out about our own history," said Lily Wai, a Chinese American who was the project administrator of the PAAA committee that supervised the production of the video documentary. Other members of the committee were Jeff Mio of Pullman, Washington, a Japanese American; Loreca Stauber of Genesee, Idaho, a Filipino American; and Joann Muneta of Moscow, Idaho, whose husband is a Japanese American.

The families interviewed were asked how they or their families came to Idaho and what they found, whether they had faced any discrimination or prejudice; how they raised their children; what changes they have seen regarding Asians in Idaho; and how they felt about intermarriages.

"We found interesting similarities and differences among the various nationalities," explained Wai. "All of the groups had experienced the pains of prejudice and the problems of adjusting to a new culture, but all now felt that they were at home in Idaho and wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

Most poignant of the stories regarding discrimination was that of the Japanese Americans during World War II. Even though they were born in the United States, many Japanese Americans faced problems ranging from being sent to internment camps in other states to losing jobs and friends.

The Lew family of Moscow, Idaho was included among those interviewed. Marie Lew, 80 years old, who was born in China, was the first Asian to graduate from the University

of Idaho. Mrs. Lew came to the United States in 1916, but she and her husband could not become a citizen until 1945.

Japanese American families interviewed included Mary Kasai and Richard Suenaga and their son Hugh; Sanaye and Paul Okamura, all of Pocatello; and Seichi Hayashida of Nampa. Several Boise area Filipino American families were part of the program including Roger & Sharon Vega, Pablo & Jeannette Baldazo, Rev. & Mrs. Juan Callao, Ted & Ludee Vermaas, Ruben Manubay and his son Troy.

"We feel this program is excellent supplementary teaching and viewing material for schools as well as the general public," said Wai. Copies of the tape are being made available to public television and cable networks throughout the state of Idaho, and major libraries. Anyone interested in viewing the video should go to your local library to check its availability. One hundred copies will be distributed free of charge. Additional tapes can also be ordered from Lily Wai at the University of Idaho Library, Moscow, Idaho 83843. The cost for the tape is \$15 which includes packaging and shipping.

Idaho Centennial Commission, Ethnic Heritage  
Committee &  
Palouse Asian American Association  
Members in charge of the project:  
Joann Muneta, 203 S. Howard, Moscow, Idaho  
Lily Wai, 472 Ridge Rd., Moscow, ID 83843  
Phone: 208-885-6344 or 208-882-0506

*Lily Wai*