

History Comes Alive!



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Tales From the City Archives



by Michael E. Holland
City Archivist

Photos courtesy the Archives of the City of Los Angeles and Wikipedia

AFTER INTERNMENT; AND CELEBRATING TOM BRADLEY

A follow-up from last month's article on the City's involvement in Japanese internment camps; and an invitation to a lecture series about Tom Bradley.

This month's article is split into two parts for a very good reason.

Since the February *Alive!* was published with the Japanese internment story, new information has come to my attention that just couldn't be ignored and really deserved its own time. So I hope you will indulge me with a follow-up to what happened after the end of World War II and how the City tried to make amends.

There were 36 City employees of Japanese heritage who were released from their City positions in late January 1942. Fourteen had been employed by the Department of Water and Power. Seven were employees of the LAPD, while others worked for the Library, Building and Safety, Parks (now Recreation and Parks), Civil Service and the City's Health Dept.

The City approved a resolution that corresponded to similar actions by Los Angeles County, the State Legislature and a Congressional commission initiated by President Jimmy Carter in 1980. On July 21, 1981, as was recorded in Council file 81-3206, the Los Angeles City Council passed their resolution, which ended with the following:

"The City of Los Angeles hereby extends its apologies and regrets to those Japanese-American citizens who suffered hardships and inconveniences resulting from the United States government's actions in 1942, and in particular those citizens of Los Angeles whose lives were disrupted and burdened by the unfortunate relocation proceedings."

But the City went beyond lip service in its apology. There were reparations approved by the council to those who had worked for the City and had been removed. The internees or their next of kin who filed were allowed to receive \$5,000. Each of the 36 employees is represented by a file that includes photocopies of documents proving their claims or a statement about having to leave everything behind and therefore having no documents to submit. One file contained a copy of a marriage certificate issued by the Heart Mountain internment camp in Montana. Each file gives us a hint about who these people were and what happened upon their release.

Many of the newly released Japanese left Los Angeles for good. Several moved to Milwaukee, Wis., and Kirkland, Wash.,

among other American cities. But most remained in Southern California. One woman relocated to my hometown of Altadena. Several former internees came back to work at the City after being released from the internment camp.

One such returnee was Ernest T. Fukuda. He had submitted documents for his reparations that included a letter dated Feb. 14, 1945 from a former supervisor at the DWP. Fukuda had been employed as a draftsman beginning in 1928 and had become a Civil Engineer at the outbreak of the war. His loyalty as an American was not questioned by the letters preserved in CF 81-3206-54. One letter dated the following week from former supervisor A.C. Renner included the following:

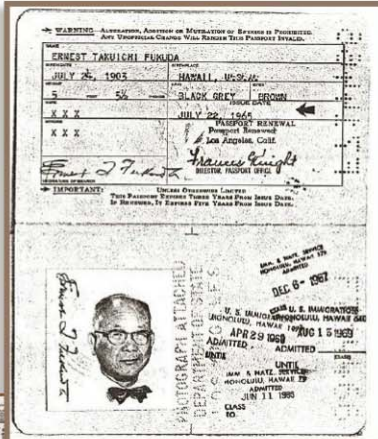
"[I] considered him an American in every sense of the word. He [Fukuda] was interested in his career as an engineer and tried his very best to live as an American... In closing, I repeat - I have always found him honest, efficient and a good American."

The file doesn't mention which camp he had sent to.

Fukuda was successful in returning to City employment. A DWP letter dated Aug. 5, 1946 reflected an increase in Fukuda's salary and level of retirement benefits. He retired from City service in 1967 and was living in Gardena at the time of his request from reparations in 1984.

As I was preparing this follow-up story, I sent a copy of the 36 names to an archivist at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in Little Tokyo. I got back a response that one of their former staff was on the list as requesting benefits for her mother. The museum has a permanent display on the camps, but the display is part of a major exhibition right now, and I hope you will take the time to go see it with any kids you know. The possibility of history repeating itself makes the exhibit timelier than ever. Information is on the museum's Website: <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/instructions-to-all/>

Finally, a correction to last month's story about the events leading up to internment: I had mistakenly identified the cafeteria owner as Clifton Clifford, when it should have been Clifford Clifton. I apologize for the error. ■



The passport of Ernest Fukuda, one of the 36 City employees who had been removed from work and interned during World War II. From the City Archives.



An internment camp marriage certificate

Tom Bradley



Mayor Tom Bradley

So much of the current Los Angeles that we know today came of age during Tom Bradley's years as mayor in City Hall. The physical presence of the light rail and subway lines are part of the legacy he started with the Blue Line opening in 1990. Many of the skyscrapers outlining the downtown sky came to be built during his tenure. His leadership in making the 1984 Olympic Games a reality continues to this day through the LA84 Foundation.

There are many people working for the City who were fortunate enough to have worked with, for, or perhaps, knew Tom Bradley. I cannot count myself among them, as I came to work for the archive in 2001 - after his death in 1998. His name has been invoked by candidates who worked for him at one time or another as a kind of anointing to be fit for office. There may be people in Los Angeles who can name Bradley as mayor but won't any of the other mayors before or after him.

Yet, until recently, no one was telling his story as mayor of the third largest city in America for 20 years. That was corrected when the documentary *Bridging the Divide: Tom Bradley and the Politics of Race* was completed and shown on PBS and at venues across the nation by the two women who made the film.

I will be curating the Marie Northrop lecture series at the Central Library's Mark Taper Auditorium on behalf of the Los Angeles City Historical Society (LACHS) for 2017. The theme is the centennial of the birth of Tom Bradley. We are launching the series at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 12, with a screening of *Bridging the Divide* to be followed by a panel discussion with the filmmakers Lyn Goldfarb and Alison Sotomayor, plus guests including Lorraine Bradley, daughter of Tom Bradley, and former City Council member Robert Farrell. The lecture is free to the public to attend. See the flyer at right or find the LACHS Website: www.lacityhistory.org ■

25th Annual Marie Northrop Lecture Series

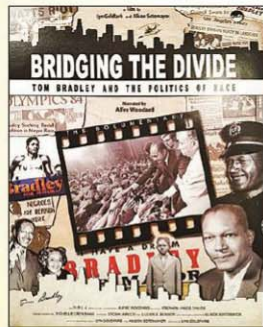
The Bradley Effect: A Tom Bradley Centennial

The 2017 series opens with a screening of the documentary

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: TOM BRADLEY AND THE POLITICS OF RACE

Sunday, March 12, 2017 2-4pm

A panel discussion will follow the screening, featuring Tom Bradley's daughter Lorraine Bradley, former Los Angeles Councilman Robert Farrell, and filmmakers Lyn Goldfarb and Alison Sotomayor.



Lorraine Bradley



Robert Farrell



Lyn Goldfarb



Alison Sotomayor

This lecture series is co-sponsored by Los Angeles City Historical Society and the History Department of the Richard J. Riordan Central Library. Lectures are held in the Mark Taper Auditorium, on the first floor of the Central Library, 630 W. 5th Street, Los Angeles. For any handicap accessibility accommodations, call the Library at (213) 228-7430 at least 72 hours prior to the event.

ADMITTANCE IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

The library garage is located on the east side of Flower Street, just south of 5th Street. Flower Street is one-way, south. Parking is \$1 after 1:00PM with a library card.