

yuri-

here is the
obituary
for my father that
appeared in the Rafu

6 pages not including
~~all~~ cover sheet



Vince never wanted his death to be acknowledged with the sadness of a traditional funeral. His only request was that whatever service we held be upbeat and celebrational. We chose this site because he was born in Long Beach, loved the ocean and supported the arts.

Vince knew exactly which pieces of music represented things meaningful to him; happy years, good friends, places lived, great memories. He asked that his favorite songs be played, that Brion and a small live combo perform, and that at the end of the service, his friends gather, share their thoughts and release a cluster of balloons to the sky to symbolize the release of his spirit.

Please relax, enjoy the food, music and conversation and celebrate with us the life of Vincent Takashige Tajiri.

Thank you for joining us today,

Rose, Caryn, Brion, Rea, Tim
Sara, Megan and Vincent S.

Program, Sunday February 28, 1993

9:30 - Refreshments and Conversation

10:15 - Performance by Brion Tajiri and Friends

Dave Alasandri- Guitar

Paulina Filby- Vocals

Mike Flick - Bass

Brion Tajiri- Percussion

10:30- Speakers:

Jim Tajiri

Harry Honda

Yosh Nakada

Togo Tanaka

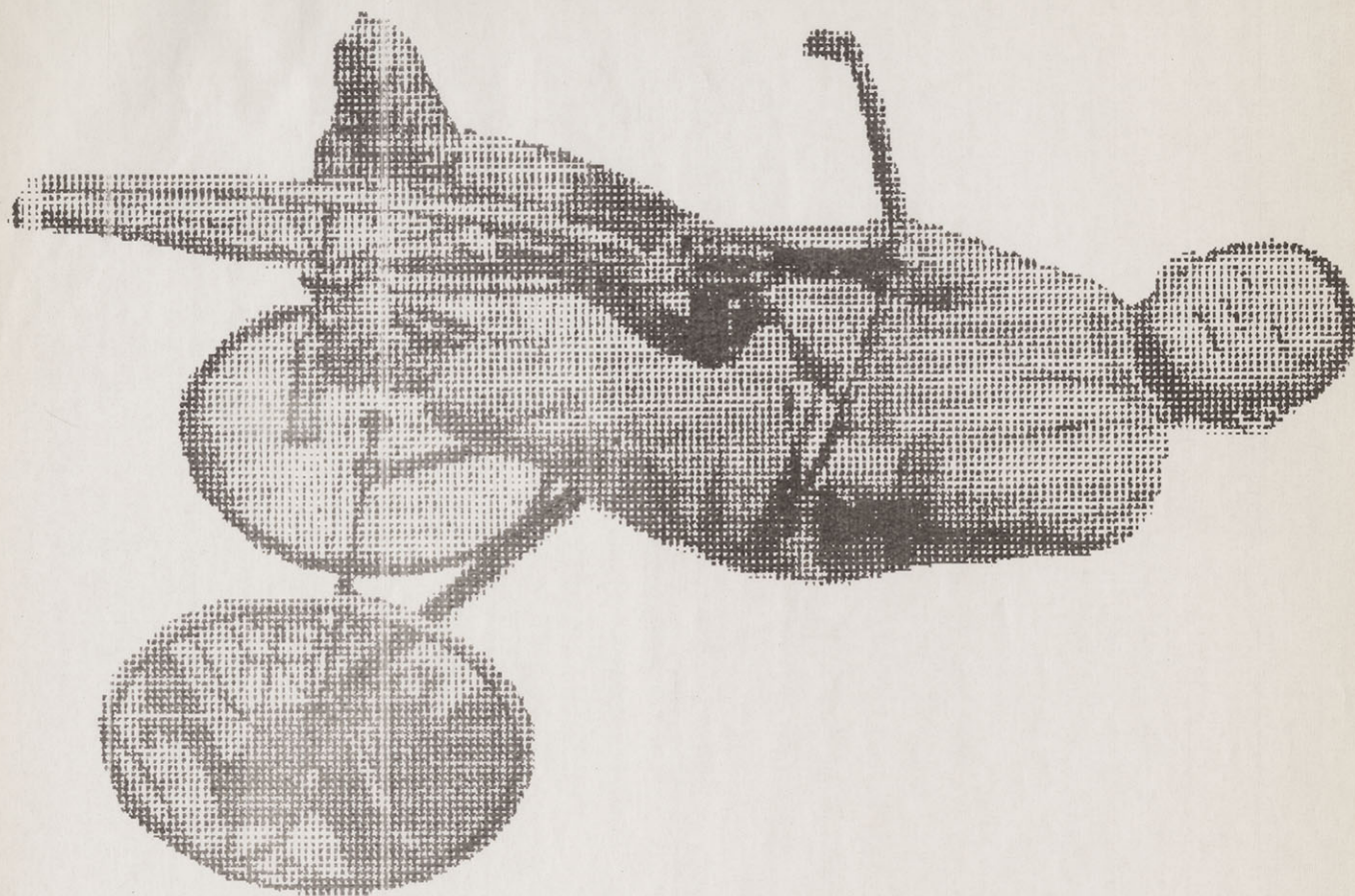
Steve Hatakeyama

11:00 Walk to beach and release of balloons



The Tajiri family thanks the Long Beach Museum of Art for the use this site. We would like to encourage our guests to patronize the museum before you leave in memory of Vincent's love of the arts.

Special Thanks to: Jacqueline Cabrera, The Hatakeyama Family, Carol Ann Klonardes, Harold Nelson, The Tajiri Family, Kaz Takeuchi, Janice Tanaka, Brion Tajiri and Friends, and Visual Communications.



Vincent
Takashige
Tajiri

May 15, 1919

February 7, 1993



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1993

The **RAFU SHIMPO**

LOS ANGELES JAPANESE DAILY NEWS

OBITUARY

Famed Nisei Photographer Vincent Tajiri Dies

The former photo editor of *Playboy* magazine passes away in Van Nuys. He was 73.

RAFU SHIMPO SPECIAL

VANNUYS.—Vincent Takashige Tajiri, a former photo editor of *Playboy* magazine, passed away on Sunday, Feb. 7 at Valley Presbyterian Hospital from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. He was 73 years old.

Tajiri was best known for his work for *Playboy*, the Chicago-based men's magazine founded by Hugh Hefner, which made its debut in December of 1953. Tajiri joined the publication in 1956 and remained there until 1973.

"He fought racism wherever it reared its head," said Togo Tanaka, former editor of *The Rafu Shimpō* English Section. Tajiri had worked at the Japanese American vernacular as its sports editor in the late 1930s.

"He was concerned how cartoons, especially in the print media, stereotyped . . . the Japanese," Tanaka recollected.

Tajiri was born in Long Beach on May 15, 1914 to Japanese immigrants involved in the Nikkei farming association.

He was among six children, including Larry, who went on to become editor of the *Nichibei* in San Francisco and *Pacific Citizen*, JACL house organ.

According to his daughter, Rea, Tajiri got his start in photography when Larry bought him a camera during his teen years.

Tajiri was drafted before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and became a staff sergeant with the famed 442nd Infantry during World War II. He married his wife, Rose, in 1943.

After the war, the couple relocated to Chicago, where Tajiri pursued different photographic assignments, including weddings and jobs for small magazines and the Photographer Association of America.

In 1955, while working on a gun magazine at Publisher Development Corporation in Chicago, Tajiri had apparently befriended Hugh Hefner. The Japanese American photographer joined *Playboy* as its photo

editor the following year.

"He was a man understood photography very well and understood photographers' need for creative energy and space," said Jeff Cohen, the current managing editor of *Playboy*, who was hired by Tajiri in 1967 as a photo assistant.

"He was an advocate of the photographer to be adventuresome and take chances," continued Cohen in a telephone interview from Chicago.

"He was a great man. He left a mark on the magazine; he was an unsung hero."

Another *Playboy* photographer hired by Tajiri, Pompeo Polzar, recalled that the Japanese American had taken him to a pizzeria on his first day of work.

"I come from Italy, and I never eat pizza before," said Polzar in a telephone interview. "He took some Chianti wine and filled my glass with the wine. He said, 'I pour for you, you pour for me.' I always remember that. In the same way, I work for him, he did good for me. He was a pioneer in the way for the magazine."

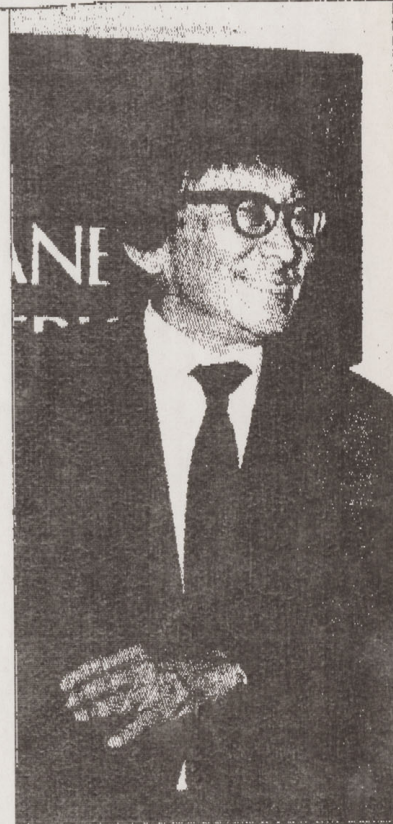
After retiring in 1973, Tajiri moved back to his birthplace, Southern California, and participated in

various Japanese community groups such as Visual Communications.

He also pursued his writing skills, winning the James Clavell Short Story Contest in 1986 for his fiction piece, "Bird Pines," which captured a Nikkei teen-ager's struggle with racism. He also contributed a story to *Rafu's* Holiday Issue in 1987, "Snapshots," a recollection of some World War II comrades who were killed in action.

"Faces and memories preserved and recalled by photographic images. Time suspended in silver chloride. Fragments from an eventful life, which, like vintage wine, should have been sipped and savored and not so greedily gulped. The sediments that remain are regrets that all those good and mean times, none had not paused long enough to know the others a little better," he wrote.

A memorial service is being planned for the end of the month. Funeral services will be announced in the newspaper.



VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

Vince Tajiri

Tajiri is survived by his wife, Rose; two daughters, Caryl Schleitwiler, an accounting clerk, and Rea Tajiri, a film and video maker; and a son, Brian Tajiri, a jazz percussionist.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1993

EULOGY

Hefner Gives Tribute to Tajiri

Hugh Hefner, the founder of *Playboy* magazine, issued a statement yesterday regarding the death of photographer Vincent Tajiri on Sunday.

"Vince Tajiri was not only a fine photographer, he was *Playboy* magazine's first photo editor, from 1955 until the early 1970s. And, he was not just a *Playboy* photographer, he was a valued friend, who had worked with me on another project before *Playboy* had even been published."

Hefner also noted that Tajiri was the first of only three photo editors who have served in that capacity since the magazine began in 1953.

VTY-tajiri---2-12-93:HH

I Knew Him as 'Taya'

By HARRY K. HONDA

RIP: Vincent Takashige Tajiri (1914-1993), Van Nuys, Feb. 7; Long Beach-born 442nd veteran, photojournalist, author; survived by wife Rose, 3 children Brion, Caryn Schleitwiler and Rea.

~~(Memorial service on Sunday, Feb. 28, place to be announced)~~

I knew us "Taya" (which I had assumed was his Japanese name until the obituary notice appeared last week). His first sports column was signed Taya Tajiri.

He was in the process of writing a biography on his "necsan (~~elder brother~~)" Larry and was collecting anecdotes and memorabilia. He often said: "It's my way of getting to know him better." The working title was "The Vagaries of a Spectator: A Personal Overview of Larry Tajiri." Larry's personal column was called "Vagaries" from prewar years in the Nisei press and his daily column as entertainment editor at the *Denver Post* was "Spectator."

When Vince ('38 L.A. Polytechnic High grad) was growing up as a teenager, Larry ('32 L.A. Poly grad) was often away from home, writing sports and editing the English sections at the *Kashu Mainichi* in Li'l Tokyo and at the *Nichi Bei* in Li'l Osaka (as San Francisco was dubbed by Nisei editors in the 1930s). When the war broke, Larry was working in New York City.

Maybe, one of the Sansei generation Tajiris will complete the task of writing The Tajiri Years. As Togo Tanaka said of Vince the other day, "He fought racism wherever it reared its head, especially in the print media."

Vince also worked on the prewar English sections of the Japanese vernaculars, including a stint at the San Francisco *Nichi Bei* when the plant was hit by a disastrous fire and Vince had to scramble down some pipes from his third-floor room above the newspaper office. When Vince was drafted in early 1941, I took his place at the *Nichi Bei*.

The night of Pearl Harbor, Vince had finished with his company [18th Engineers at Camp Bonneville] on the firing range at Vancouver Barracks across the river from Portland and was then on guard at Portland air base. He served overseas with the 442nd, came back as a staff sergeant, got active with the Chicago Nisei Post and the Disabled American Veterans and studied photography under the Issei great, Harry Shigeta.

Bill Hosokawa was "greatly surprised to learn Vince had gone into photography. He, like his brother Larry, was a talented writer and I'm sure Vince would have become a great one," in a comment made this way. "All of us envied Vince his job [as picture editor] with *Playboy* magazine."

Since moving back to Southern California, Vince published his first book, a Rudolph Valentino biography for Bantam in 1977 [one of the best written of any Hollywood great, according to people in this business], was editorial director for four books for T.W. Crowell on contemporary photography, and produced two exhibits (evidence of one is in Little Tokyo—the super-size photographs of National Park scenes—which face the elevators and decorate the walls within the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center).

Eight years ago he purchased a PC, personal computer, to work on stories. "I didn't know how free and voluminous the words would flow," he beamed in trying to urge me to do likewise. I got one three years ago.

One of his prize stories, "The Bird Pines," that involved a true incident of racism the Nisei on the West Coast had encountered in the '30s, won the \$1,000 James Clavell Award in 1986 and lastly, *Through Innocent Eyes*, the artful reprint of writings and sketches by Poston school children of 1942-48, is a classic. Taya, we haven't heard the last about you, yet.

iguri:

the story I heard repeatedly
was that he jumped out the
second story window -
did a somersault -
and suffered a spinal
cable -

reese

did not
go overseas

ELKO, Nevada
CAFE - BAR - CASINO
SILVERADO

MAY 17 1968



By Bill Hosokawa

From the Frying Pan

THE SMELL OF MONEY—Chicago, Ill. The latest in the way of fashionable Japanese eating places in Chicago is the Benihana, holding forth at a fancy Gold Coast address and so popular on Saturday nights that customers the front end of her establishment might be that customers.

THE PLAYBOY MAN—One of our purposes in visiting Chicago was to pick up Vince Tajiri, picture editor of Playboy Magazine, and escort him down to Louisville, Ky., for a meeting of Sunday magazine editors. Vince has been described as the man most envied for his job because it involves inspecting so many girls with exciting contours. Vince reminded me, however, that Playboy's 30-odd photographers take a great many exceptional pictures of food and fashions, and that unclad playmates are only part of the job.

It was an interesting experience to watch the way Vince is introduced at a cocktail party. He is always identified, quite properly, as picture editor of Playboy, and one could almost predict the quips that were taking shape on the lips of the men he met. As for the women, their eyes would widen and sparkle as they beheld the man who passes judgment on the most photogenic of their sex, and they get that coy look, almost as if they—regardless of age—were passing before him to be evaluated professionally.

While this sort of reaction must give Tajiri a certain sense of power and importance, he is gracious and modest about it. At first, he said, it was just a bit exasperating to be made so much of, but now he has become accustomed to the fuss and is prepared for it. But I don't think anyone becomes quite bored with attention. Tajiri was associated with Playboy from its very origins but did not join the staff until two or three years after it was launched, which is a dozen years ago. No small part of its phenomenal success (its circulation now tops 5 million) can be laid to Vince's ability to take and select photographs and develop photographic ideas.

Feb. 12, 1993

Dear Rea,

Harry Honda sent me the sad news about your father. I recall meeting him for the first time in San Francisco, back before the war, when he was working with Larry at the Nichibei. Our paths crossed only infrequently, but I respected and admired Vince as one of the Nisei giants in his chosen field. I believe that if he had focused on writing earlier in his career, he would have attained equal eminence. I mourn his loss.

Please accept my condolences. I do not know how to reach your mother, so please let her know of my concern.

