

# MAY IS ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM) is celebrated in May to commemorate the history, culture and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. May was chosen to commemorate the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to America on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad (by many Chinese laborers) on May 10, 1869. In 1992, the official designation of May as APAHM was signed into law.



## ***A Special Tribute to Bell Masayuki Shimada***

Bell M. Shimada was born in Seattle, Washington, on January 17, 1922, to Japanese immigrant parents. He showed an early aptitude for math and science, but his later studies at the University of Washington School of Fisheries were interrupted by the forced internment of Japanese citizens and nationals during World War II. In May 1943 he was allowed to leave the camp to enlist in the U.S. Army, joining the famed 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team. Selected for his language and intelligence skills, Shimada served in Honolulu and Guam and (post-war) in Japan, eventually as a civilian fisheries biologist for the Allied Forces.

Finishing his MA Degree at UW in 1948, Shimada then returned to Honolulu and started work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Ocean Fishery Investigations (POFI) office under Oscar Elton Sette. Shimada served as a seagoing biologist, in charge of shipboard science watches and research.

In 1952 he was assigned to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, co-located with Scripps Institute of Oceanography and the USFWS Bureau of Fisheries in La Jolla, California. Shimada conducted tuna fishery research for which he is best known during his time with the IATT Commission and achieved national and international recognition when he began to publish his research on tuna spawning, distribution, and feeding patterns. In 1956 he completed his PhD Degree at UW's School of Fisheries. Shimada's combined work with both oceanographer Townsend Cromwell and fisheries scientist Oscar Elton Sette and other members of the POFI and IATT Commission teams led to some of the most productive insights on the distribution of tuna throughout the Pacific Ocean.

In 1958 research project plans called for Shimada and Cromwell to make one more cruise to Clarion Island (offshore of Baja, Mexico) on board the Scripps Institution research ship *Horizon*. Shimada was due to soon leave his position and begin as the first director of the USFWS Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Eastern Pacific Tuna Investigations office. Bell M. Shimada died in a plane crash at Guadalajara on June 2, 1958, at the young age of 36. NOAA's research ship *Bell M. Shimada* (R 227) is named in his honor. (His son Allen later became a fisheries scientist with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.)

