

Sarasota County >> *Paradise Reworked* • Making Nice to 'The Punisher'

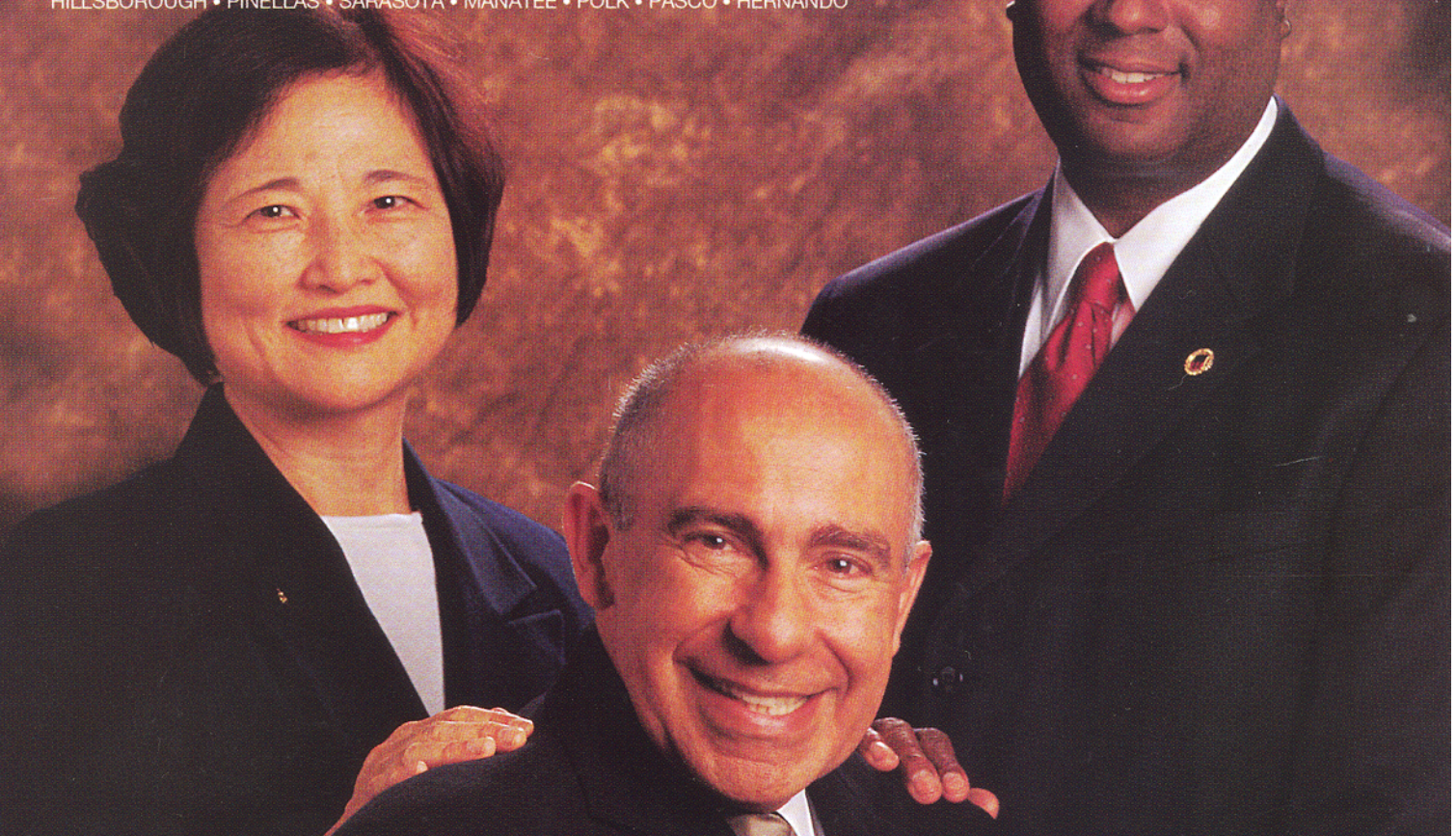
Tampa Bay's

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Business Report

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Diversity in Business

So, How *Are* We Doing?

Plus Three diverse individuals – all stars
on their own stages – share their stories.

by Jill Maunder

And Gene Patterson's changing South.

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tion's 'business development' of cooking methamphetamines. The terrorism program in Orlando is identifying subjects who have moved there, "much as 9-11 hijackers spent time in Florida," he says. Tampa has an active white-collar program, with agents investigating financial and telemarketing fraud, identity theft and healthcare fraud. They also keep tabs on an organized crime 'presence,' due to retirees from New York and Kansas City.

DOWN-TO-EARTH and diplomatic, Whitehead still seems very much the people person. Early on, as interim SAC, he displayed his affability to business people participating in the region's 'citizens' academy,' a public outreach initiative with 37 participants, from Hillsborough and Pinellas. "He seemed to be interested in what the people had to say, and seems interested in building partnerships with the community," says Rev. Gregory Robinson of Tampa's Faith Temple Baptist Church.

Businessman K.C. Craichy was impressed when Whitehead "showed up at the first meeting and stayed, beginning to end. I know a lot of leaders who would make a cameo appearance."

He also offered participants an inside look at FBI headquarters and its training academy, escorting 16 of them plus some of their family members to the Hoover Building as well as the FBI training academy in Virginia. "You could tell he was very respected by everyone we saw at the FBI headquarters," Craichy says of Whitehead. "The guy's the right guy for the job."

The Quiet Scientist

DR. AKIKO TANAKA LIKENS HER WORK as a virologist and her approach to science as a big cooking pot. "Put in a good idea and another good idea," she says. "That's the way I do the science."

As a young scientist, she couldn't fill the pot her way. "I didn't have a chance to say anything in Japan most of the time," Tanaka recalls. "Here, I have to create a great and unique soup!"

But what Tanaka does 'here' – meaning the laboratories of non-profit Tampa Bay Research Institute (TBRI) in St. Petersburg – is no laughing matter. The woman

described by friends as a good cook also is quite the good scientist. In years to come, pending the outcome of experiments to attack cancers and infectious diseases, she might be regarded as a great scientist. Move over, Dr. Salk; make room for Dr. Tanaka.

Co-founder of the biomedical institute in 1981 and president since 1995, Tanaka clearly is the heart and soul of the non-profit organization, whose mission is the study, cure and prevention of chronic and debilitating diseases. It operates with a yearly budget of \$1.5-million, half of it from grants of the National Institutes of Health and the other half from gifts. "This was her vision when she was growing up," says Dr. Guy Bradley, her colleague and a student lab assistant in TBRI's early years. "She got it done."



DR. AKIKO TANAKA

Tanaka was the brain behind its inception, although her role was not promoted. She stayed behind the scenes, as was the case for women in Japan. She is exceedingly humble, friends say. Tanaka, who works long days and all hours in the lab, lives near TBRI in a Feather Sound condo and is known as being frugal as well as a generous financial donor to TBRI.

In Japanese-accented English and a chirpy voice, the peppy Tanaka recounts how she talked her late colleague and co-founder, Dr. Meihan Nonoyama, as well as Showa University, her alma mater, into establishing such an institute in the U.S. Showa University built a 33,000-square-foot research facility on

Roosevelt Boulevard, which is leased for 120 years from the City of St. Petersburg. Five acres are reserved for expansion. Tanaka, you see, always has been an optimist as well as a patient planner. "Many things take that much time to bring about the result," she says.

SHE DOESN'T LIKE to talk about discrimination. The little that she will say is that discrimination can be "subtle, but I don't pay attention. Once you pay attention ..."

Her role in engineering the creation of TBRI wasn't her first coup. In 1971, she persuaded her father to pay for her one-way plane ticket to America so she could take a research assistant's job at the University of North Carolina, where she also earned her Ph.D. in medical science. It was a gutsy move; she spoke no English, although she could read and write it.