



MUSEUM AND INAUGURAL EXHIBITION OPENING

– September 22nd, 2000

A large crowd of spectators watched the official opening ceremonies outside the NATIONAL NIKKEI HERITAGE CENTRE under an ideal Vancouver Indian Summer day. After the Centre was officially opened, the crowds streamed into the grand foyer for the official openings of the JAPANESE CANADIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM and the INAUGURAL EXHIBITION.

Grace Eiko Thomson, Executive Director/Curator of Exhibition, emceed the opening ceremony. She introduced Frank Kamiya, the President of JCNM, special guests and guest speakers.

Special guests who were able to attend included Mayor Doug Drummond for the City of Burnaby; Ms. Keiko Miki, President of the National Association of Japanese Canadians; Dr. Henry Shimizu, Chair of the Japanese Canadian Redress Fund; Mr. Yuichi Kusumoto, the Consul General of Japan; Mr. Paul Winn of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. Ms. Miki and Mr. Winn presented checks to the Museum.

The introductory speeches were presented by Dr. Michael Ames, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia and Dr. Arthur Miki, Citizenship Judge and Past President of the National Association of



JCNM President Kamiya accepting check from Ms. Miki and Dr. Shimizu at the opening ceremonies. Dr. Ames seated at left. (David Yamamura photo, 2000)

Japanese Canadians.

Re-shaping Memory, Owning History: Through the Lens of Japanese Canadian Redress is the title of the inaugural exhibition. The redress theme is presented through over-size photographs and documents of the evacuation and the redress movement. Superimposed on these wall-sized scenes are other photographs of Japanese Canadian pioneers, pre-war communities,

evacuation camps and relocation sites. Quotations from various documents accent the photographic images. A modicum of cooking utensils used before the war by Japanese Canadians and travel bags carried during the evacuation are scattered throughout the exhibit. There are 3 folder stations with photographs and accompanying captions illustrating the Japanese Canadian experience. ●

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Mochitsuki
December 30, 2000
12:00 - 4:00 pm

Mochi and Kasunoko Sale
call JCNM at 777-8000
to place orders

JCNM Open House
February, 2001

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Editorial Board:
Stanley Fukawa, Grace Hama,
Frank Kamiya, Mitsuo Yesaki,
Carl Yokota

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NIKKEI PLACE
6688 Southoaks Crescent,
Burnaby, B.C., V5E 4M7
Canada
tel: (604) 777-8000
fax: (604) 777-7001
jcnmas@telus.net
www.jcnm.ca



Visitors at the Inaugural Exhibitions. (David Yamamura photo, 2000)

Comments Posted on Museum Bulletin Board

September 26, 2000

My mother was deported in 1946 and returned circa 1954-56. She burned all her documents circa 1980 pertaining to the war. She was so mad at being 12-13 and moving to the horse-sheds and put up in Lemon Creek and other places between 1942 and 1946.

This is why she and my Dad are anti-social about Nikkei Heritage Centre

-SHK

This excellant and pointed exhibit should always be on display - and elsewhere across Vancouver.

Theft in every way was what was perpetrated by the racist government.

-a white guy

-From a Taiwanese guy:
I like the exhibition because everything about Japanese immigrant in the past is educational.

It tells us what Japanese suffered in the past as they lived in Canada. Chinese have also suffered the same thing before. For example, they were treated badly. It is time for us to communicate with other cultural communities.

How about displaying first and second generations efforts and contribution to establish Japanese Canadians here in Canada, before the war. Without their effort, we wouldn't be here.

- unsigned

I came full circle from wishing I was not Japanese, to wishing I was a "true" Canadian, to realizing that I was. I now know that I am a Canadian. The redress movement and its success made sure that I would not forget that.

-(by Sansei) Daien Ide, Sept. 22, 2000



Once you dehumanize a group, there is nothing even a 'civilized' society will not think impermissible.

- unsigned

Sept. 23, 2000

Omedeto gozaimasu. Totemo tanoshikatta desu.

- Hans Van Egmond

Visitors browsing the inaugural exhibition on opening day. (David Yamamura photo, 2000)

History is not Irrevocable!

It is commonly believed that history is irrevocable. What happened in the past cannot be changed. I would like to suggest that, to the contrary, history can be changed.

Allow me to illustrate this by referring to my own history. I was born in Vancouver and lived in Burnaby during my early years. I remember, when I was about eight or nine years old, being driven past Hastings Park, and hearing some remarks about Japanese people being housed there.

Surprisingly, in retrospect, I heard little more about that event in the following 15 years of primary, secondary, and university education here in BC. It was only when I went on to graduate school at Harvard that I heard the rest of the story about the Hastings Park internment camp and forcible relocation. That was when a roommate told me about how hard his older brother in Seattle, Gordon Hirabayashi, struggled for redress from the US Government. The exile of Canadian citizens from this area was not part of my school education here in BC. It happened, in this place that was my home, but it was absent from my history. Why didn't I know about it? Why didn't I see what was happening?

In one sense, of course, history cannot be changed. The past is locked into the past. In another sense, however, history is not irrevocable. (See Veronica Brady, *Can These Bones Live?* Annandale, NSW, Australia: The Federation Press, 1996)

We can recover what has been silenced or repressed, or "whited out". We can recall the stories of those improperly treated in their time, and whose mistreatment takes on a new meaning in our time.

Recognizing and admitting to the wrongs of the past permits us to interrogate the history of those wrongs, and the kind of power that was used, a power that still exists in our society. This questioning and recovery of our history thus can be liberating and celebratory, for it demands that we reassess our notions of humanity.

The Japanese Canadian National Museum has restored a part of Canadian history that our society repressed, a missing part of that history that implicates us all. It was part of my own personal history that I never knew, even though I was there. In doing this, the JCNM, and all those who worked to bring it about, are also redressing our sense of humanity. Canada has become a better place today, it is a good day to be a Canadian. I congratulate the Museum for that. *(Speech given by guest speaker Dr. Michael Ames) ♦*

JCNM AGM PRESIDENT'S REPORT by Frank H. Kamiya

As we enter the millennium year, the JCCA History Preservation Committee, originated by Frank Hanano in 1981, has now realized a large part of its vision. The Japanese

Canadian National Museum (JCNM) occupies 2868 sq. ft. of the new National Nikkei Heritage Centre (NNHC) in Burnaby. We have environmentally controlled space for

an exhibit area and video room (1290 sq. ft.), museum storage area (320 sq. ft.) and preparation and loading area (360 sq. ft.). We also have an archival

Continued on page 4

reference and office area (398 sq. ft) plus a museum shop (310 sq. ft). Over the past 19 years we have been custodians of your community collection and have provided archival services to the public with part time staff and with the assistance of trained volunteers. With the opening of our inaugural exhibition and move into our new museum, the Nikkei community has recently come forward with many artifacts and archival material, which we welcome. However to maintain this collection requires professional staff and to pay for these services as well as pay for operational costs, the JCNM must initiate a major fundraising campaign. Again we ask the community and their friends for help so that the board of directors, staff and dedicated volunteers can continue to serve the public across Canada and beyond.

In 1999 – 2000 the following six new directors brought enthusiasm and expertise to the board: Grace Hama, Librarian, Editorial Committee chair; Elmer Morishita, Facility Planner, Steering Committee member; Craig Ngai-Natsuhara, Lawyer, General Secretary, Advocacy chair; Bryan Negoro, Lawyer, Steering Committee member; Les Ohno, Controller, Treasurer; Lana Panko, Museum Curator. The following directors have resigned or have not sought another term: Yosh Kariatsumari, Dr. Karen Kobayashi, Lana Panko and David Yamaura. We thank the above four directors for their many years of dedicated service to JCNM and hope that they will continue to assist and support us in the future.

Last year has been a very difficult time for our professional staff as our limited operating funds enabled us to hire only part time staff as we prepared for our inaugural exhibition and moved into our new museum space. Reiko Tagami, our

Research Assistant and Education Assistant maintained the daily operations of the museum while Susan Sirovyak, Curator of Collections; Daien Ide, Researcher; Naomi Sawada, Researcher and Grace Eiko Thomson, Exhibit Curator; all worked extra hours on the inaugural exhibition without remuneration to meet the exhibit fabrication deadline. Grace Thomson had the added duty of executive director that kept her extremely busy. She has been instrumental in obtaining most of the grant monies that enabled us to fund the inaugural exhibition. On behalf of the board of directors I would like to express our great appreciation to all the staff for their commitment and dedication to the museum.

Many other volunteers have shared in the workload of the Museum and we appreciate their help. Masako Fukawa has accepted the challenge to be the volunteer Education Coordinator for the JCNM and her committee will be implementing the “Museum Education Program for Teachers and Students”. The Editorial Committee has increased the number and diversity of the articles in Nikkei Images during the past year. Kevin Fukawa is our volunteer webmaster and has single handedly created our very professional looking web site; please visit www:jcnm.ca. Craig Shikaze and the Steering Committee worked on the Memorandum of Understanding with the NNHC and he also assisted in the preparation of the JCNM business plan. The Museum Shop opened on time thanks mainly to Suzi Petersen’s hard work and talents and she outfitted the shop on a very small budget. We would also like to thank Duane Kamiya and to Ikea Canada for their generous donation for furnishing the Museum Shop. We also appreciate the volunteer speakers who have been

involved in our on-going lecture series and walking tours.

Throughout the year the JCNM has been involved in various fundraising activities. In December we had the Mochitsuki; in March the Plant and Manure sale; in August the Powell Street Festival food booth; in September the Internment Tour 2000 and the Nikkei Heritage Dance. I would like to acknowledge the following companies for their generous donations again this year: Sonray Sales, Kato Nurseries, Amano Foods, T. Amano Trading and K. Iwata Travel Service. Many other organizations and individuals have donated to specific events. We would like to thank Minnie Hattori for organizing the weekly dance lessons and the Nikkei Heritage Dance. We are very thankful for the hundreds of volunteers who have assisted us in the museum shop, office duties, museum fundraising events and programs. This community volunteer support has enabled JCNM to provide much needed additional funds for our operating expenses. We thank everyone, especially our spouses and families, for their continued assistance.

On September 22, 2000, the twelfth anniversary of the Redress settlement, the JCNM’s Inaugural Exhibition titled “Re-shaping Memory, Owning History: Through the Lens of Japanese Canadian Redress” was opened. It was a significant day for the Museum as we showcased the Japanese Canadian story to all visitors and as the exhibition travels across Canada and abroad others will be experiencing our unique history. With our exhibition opening and move into the NNHC, I would like to recognize two founding board members who were avid supporters of our Museum. The late Norm Tsuyuki had been very

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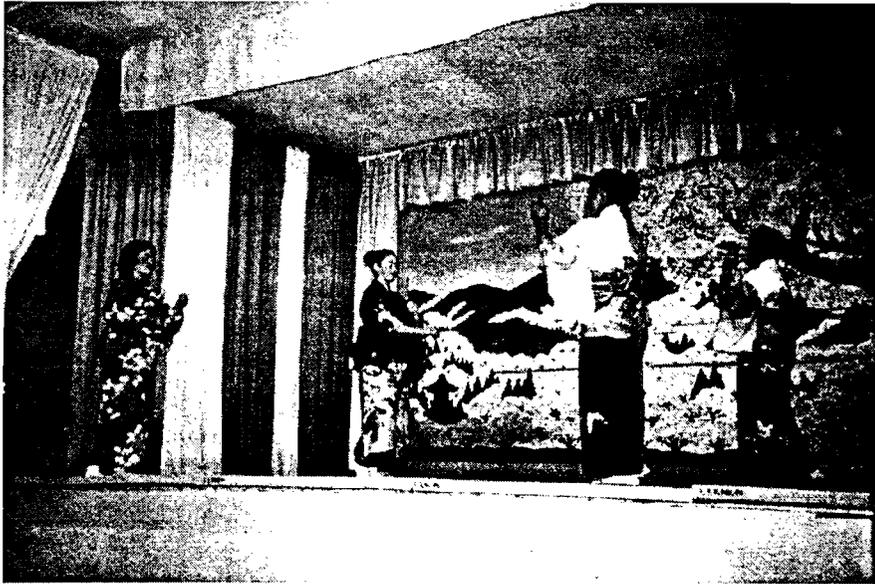
active preserving our heritage since the late 1980's. Secondly, Dr. Wesley Fujiwara joined us in the 1990's and was very active but due to his illness was not able to attend the opening. I'm sure both Norm & Wes would be very proud of our Museum.

This year I will be stepping down as president and I wish to thank

the board of directors, staff and volunteers for their support and sharing our vision for the JCNM. The coming year should be an exciting and challenging one for all of us as we welcome the new board of directors. I would like to encourage more collaboration with

other organizations and a closer relationship with the NNHC on programs and fundraising. Let us build on the enthusiasm the community presented at the NNHC & JCNM openings and work together to preserve our Heritage for the benefit of all Canadians. ❁

Internment Camp Tour by Midge Ayukawa



Dancers performing Japanese dance at Vernon. (Midge Ayukawa photo, 2000)

Sunday, September 17

Ron, our bus driver closed the bus door and we headed away from the Nikkei Centre within minutes of the prearranged hour. Naomi Shikaze, the tour conductor, introduced herself, Yoshin Tamaki of Iwata Travel, and myself, the historical guide, as we headed out of the city onto Highway #1. It was the start of a five-day bus-trip to the interior of British Columbia, the main focus being the internment camps where Japanese Canadians had been incarcerated during World War II. We were young adults, people in the prime productive years, and many retirees—nisei from across Canada and the United States, sansei, Caucasian spouses, and also a TV producer and his wife from Japan.

The first destination was the Vernon JC Community Centre for

lunch at 1:30, but Bob Iwata, anticipating our needs, provided a snack to be enjoyed at Merritt on the Coquihalla. Before we resumed our trip, it was decided that to be fair to everyone and to also encourage getting better acquainted, we would periodically shift seats—all to be regulated by Chuck Kubokawa of the JA contingent. Chuck, the leader of the Topaz group was the obvious choice—he was a live wire, and his size, if nothing else, precluded any argument! After each shift those near the front were encouraged to give a brief resume of their life. It was soon evident that there were many interwoven ties connecting us all.

At the Vernon JC Community Centre, (photos) the locals had obviously made a great effort to feed and entertain us. We even

participated in the *tanko-bushi* with the young dancers. After we enjoyed a Japanese lunch, decadent pastries, and locally grown fresh fruit, we left with a huge box of MacIntosh apples.

Our next stop was the Summerhill winery in Kelowna, an organic producer. We listened intently to the young guide, tasted their wines, and many of us bought some bottles. I wonder how many bottles never made it back to Vancouver!

Our first night was spent in Kelowna right next to a casino where some relaxed. Mas admitted losing \$100, but his wife Helen claimed that SHE won the same amount!

Monday, September 18

First stop was the Greenwood Museum. There we were given a warm welcome and the curators even listened to us as we protested that the KOKUHO rice bags were not suitable since that brand was a post-war one. There was a photo display of the filming of "Snow Falling on Cedars" that had been shot in Greenwood. Several people had notified their Greenwood friends in advance and enjoyed joyful reunions. Delicious *bento* boxes prepared by Greenwood Nikkei and friends were enjoyed at leisure by some, as others wandered around and spotted old building, which had signs noting their former use during the war years.

Our next destination was the Doukhobor Village and Museum in Castlegar. Before we arrived we

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shared our memories of the nearby Doukhobor community, to Doukhobors who had been so kind to the JCs and had been the source of many vegetables, sunflower seeds, and even saunas. I recalled how as a young girl in Lemon Creek, my friends and I had often walked along the railway tracks to Perry Siding, the nearby Doukhobor community, to pick cherries that never made it back home! My younger brother too according to a recent admission had, with his friends gone there also to get walnuts. Those nuts never reached home either! Some young people sang the Volga Boat Song, which they had learned, from the Doukhobors while relaxed in their saunas at a Lemon Creek concert.

At the Museum, some Doukhobors greeted us and explained their history, customs and crafts. It was all too short a stop since we had to go on to Nelson, to raid the bookstores and the craft shops, and have our supper before settling in at Ainsworth Hot Springs. Many of us spent hours basking in the waters before going to bed.

Tuesday, September 19

This was our fullest day, and our most meaningful since we visited all the former campsites in the area. The day before, we had prepared by viewing the video produced by Ted Shimizu, the second son of Rev. Kosaburo Shimizu, United Church minister. Rev. Shimizu had traveled from camp to camp during the war and filmed the people, the houses, and the activities.

The first stop was Kaslo, where, as soon as the doors of the bus were opened, Beth rushed off, located her former home, and even managed to have the present inhabitants allow her to go inside and look around. Hedy showed everyone the small room that her family had occupied in the Langham Building, now a museum. There were many photos depicting Rev. Shimizu and

his family. Tom Shoyama and his in Kaslo for years, addressed us, New Canadian cohorts who had through most of the war years published the only Nikkei newspaper in Kaslo. Later, we watched the video, Minoru, by Michael Fukushima, and Aya Higashi, who with her husband, Buck, have lived in Kaslo for years, addressed us.

From Kaslo, we went to Sandon, now only a vestige of its glorious past in the late 1890s as a mining boomtown. Over 900 Japanese had lived there in the old houses from the spring of 1942 to the late summer of 1944. A devastating flood in 1955 left only a few buildings standing, but lately there has been some restoration to attract tourists. A young man at the gift shop told us that the hydro in town was still generated by the original plant built over a century ago. We recalled that the JCs in Sandon, unlike most of us, had electricity. It was undoubtedly due to tourism but, Molly Brown's Brothel, had a prominent spot on the outskirts of the town. There was a great deal of hilarity as many posed in front of it. (Harry Honda modestly covered up the "el" of Brothel for HIS photo!)

The New Denver Kyowakai next feted us with lunch in Silverton. The zucchini *otsukemono* was a hit and the ever-enterprising Chuck asked Koko Kokubo for the recipe and later shared it to us. I'm certain that now no one will be turning down neighbours' offerings of giant zucchinis!

The New Denver Memorial Centre drew many tears and sighs. Yosh showed me a photo of himself in a class photo, others commented on the artifacts, while others walked down to the lake and reminisced. The JAs who had been incarcerated within barbed wire enclosures in the desert, appreciated the beauty of the spot, but they shuddered at the sight of the tent in the middle of the

exhibit. (Which, I admit is a bit harsher than reality since we slept on metal bunk beds, not on the ground.) All too soon, we were back on We met some people who had not been able to be accommodated on our bus trip so had made their own way to New Denver with their BC relations to coincide with the tour.

All too soon, we were back on the bus wheeling towards Slocan City. We marveled at our innocent trust in the drivers when we had stood on the backs of open trucks over the gravel road. At times it was one-way traffic, and at one point the truck seemed to squeeze through a huge hole in a rock. This time we were in Slocan in a twinkling of an eye. (According to an article written about ten years ago when the road was widened, the section closest to Slocan had been "a one kilometre single-lane cliffside road.") Slocan City and the nearby area was the most disappointing of all. It was difficult to find any vestige of the past. The old beach was no more—a sawmill occupied that formerly pristine spot. The old town that had been the hub for not only the JCs who lived in the old wooden buildings but also the shack-town communities of Bay Farm, Popoff, and Lemon Creek, had little left to help one recall the busy days in the forties. The boardwalks, the old hospital, the former Graham's store, the Greenlight, were all gone and it was impossible to even locate where they had been.

We stopped the bus near the town cemetery and mused over a badly neglected fenced area where a wooden stake noted that in 1969, JC remains had been consolidated there. Hide meanwhile wandered off and miraculously found the only Nikkei in the environs, Sandy Sato! She told us that her mother had been from Kaslo, and her father from Greenwood. They had met in Vernon and had moved to Slocan to continue the Matsubayashi Soy Products. (Mr.

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Tour participants posing outside of Slocan (Midge Ayukawa photo, 2000)

Matsubayashi had started making *tofu* and *ageh* in Lemon Creek and after the camp had been closed he moved to Slocan, where he had canned *ageh* and shipped them across Canada.)

Sandy obligingly led the way in her pick-up truck. She showed us where Bay Farm had been and many recognized old landmarks. She pointed to the overgrown gravel road, which had been the former road to Popoff and Lemon Creek. Although some of us were eager to follow it, we thanked Sandy and had her direct us back to the main road.

Lemon Creek was the next stop. The new owner of Lemon Creek Lodge welcomed us and showed us some artifacts that had been located nearby. (The bulk of former LC is now fenced in and inaccessible.) Chieko and Rose, ex-LCers and I agreed that the site of the Lodge was approximately in the Elm Street area. Anderson's Hill was now overgrown with huge trees and hardly recognizable as the hill I used to roll down after a big snowfall. Yet the mountains nearby, where the sun set early and quickly cooled the hot summer days brought back nostalgic memories of baseball games in the field across the railroad tracks (now gone!)

Wednesday, September 20

We retraced much of the road that we had taken the day before, back past Slocan and New Denver. We located the site of Rosebery as we drove to Nakusp. As soon as the bus was stopped, Hide and Penny rushed off to meet old friends. By chance, we were parked adjacent to the Arrow Lakes News and when the reporters became aware that we were not foreign tourists but Nikkei on a sentimental journey, some of us were interviewed, and we were all given a copy of the September 14 issue. Names like, Roy Aoyama, Hiroshi Tanaka, Beverley Tamura, Elaine Nishimura, et al. in Stories from the Files section were noted.

Then on to Galena Bay to catch the ferry and some lunch at Revelstoke, where again, some Nikkei met with friends. We drove along the Trans-Canada highway but failed to locate where any of the nisei road camps had been. Our motel that night was conveniently located across from the Kamloops Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre.

Our evening at the Centre was the perfect closing event for our tour. Betty and Roy Inouye and many other enthusiastic members of the community had prepared a delicious meal, and entertainment with

Karaoke, Japanese dancing, and two performances by a young Japanese student, "Shige from Iwate." John and Clarence from our group did us proud with their songs. Of much interest was a history of the Kamloops JC community completed the night before and displayed on the wall. Many of us were quite impressed by the crafts and handiwork for sale and could not resist adding to our already overlade baggage. Chuck overjoyed with the strings of miniature paper cranes he had bought. He enthusiastically raved, "It's a steal!" But I am eager to know whether it arrived in Palo Alto without mishap!

Thursday, September 21

Defying rush-hour traffic, we all traipsed across the street for our breakfast at the JC Centre, and after a photo session were on the Coquihalla. We were given a choice – a leisurely lunch in Hope, or to get a snack to eat on the bus to Tashme. Hide was torn but opted to stay in Hope to meet an old friend. (Hide was like a sailor who had a gal in every port!) Those of us who went to Tashme heard Irene explain where the buildings had been. She showed us the window of the room in which she and her parents had lived. The building, now completely renovated was one of the few still there.

The Japanese TV producer, Mr. Goto and his wife were eager to see John Nihei who was living in a senior's home in Hope. (John Nihei was a labour leader in the pre-war community—much admired, and often much reviled—who, from the tender age of eighteen had been influential in the organization and continuance of the Japanese Camp and Mill Workers Union.) Naomi, ever the accommodating guide, saw to it that the visit was made without jeopardizing the schedule!

Then all too soon, the trip was

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over!

What can be said as I reminisce about that memorable trip? We are all richer for our experiences and the friendships we forged or rekindled. We were a motley crew, from all walks of life. Yosh was a young teenager in New Denver. He is now a retired professor of Modern Japanese Literature from the University of Indiana in Bloomington. Shirley, born on Mayne Island, had been a youngster in Lemon Creek and was now retired from teaching and living near Toronto. Her father had been “picked up” within hours following Pearl Harbor. Harry, a fisherman, had been an activist in 1942 and had been incarcerated in Angler. As soon as he was able to return to BC, he had spent several years fishing again. He could now relax and enjoy his children and grandchildren, satisfied that he had stood up for what he believed. His wife Hedy had been able to share her memories of her home in Kaslo with us. Harry’s brother Tad, had lived a few doors down from me in Lemon Creek, and his wife had lived in Rosebery. Tak, from Toronto, who had led the protest against the closing of Nipponia Home in Beamsville was also on the trip. He himself had been in the Okanagan from before the war, but his wife Kaz had lived in New Denver.

Chieko, who had lived in Lemon Creek, had been “repatriated” in 1946. She was eager to show her husband, a former *Kamikaze* pilot (who obviously had not made that final flight!) her teenage stamping grounds. Hisako had been “stuck” in Japan during the Pacific War, had taught English at Tsuda College in Tokyo, had wanted to check out Lemon Creek where her family had been incarcerated. Min, as a young lad had worked for Tak Toyota, the almost legendary entrepreneur and

photographer in Slocan City. Min’s wife Lily, a retired nurse had also lived in Slocan. Eiko was returning for the first time to Slocan Valley where she had sentimental memories of her youth that she wanted to share with her daughter, Joanne. David and Bill had been young men in Popoff, and now wanted to show their wives who were born in Japan, the camp areas. Ted, from Rosebery also wanted to share his wartime experiences with his Kika-nisei wife. John and Yurika too were re-experiencing the wartime years spent in Kaslo, New Denver (John) and Lemon Creek (Yurika). Rose, who now lives at the Momiji in Toronto, had been back a number of times to visit her mother in New Denver after relocating to Montreal but she shared her memories of working in the BC Security Commission office in Lemon Creek with Kiyo who also lived at the Momiji. Kiyo’s mother had taught *ikebana* in Slocan and had even commuted to Lemon Creek. Hide and Penny had known each other in Slocan, had re-met in Toronto and married. Penny’s sister Bonnie had eloped with her husband Gene in Slocan. (We teens in Lemon Creek used to hear about such romantic tales and sigh!)

Some, like Haruo, Shizu, and Nobu, had not experienced the ghost towns since their families had chosen to go to sugar-beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba. They, at least were a bit more aware of the interior camps than the JAs who were on the tour. Stanley, from New York, kept the bus lively with his sharp comments but they belied his kindness with the octogenarian, philanthropist, Clarence, from California. Stan urged us all to attend the next PANA conference, which was going to be held in New York City next summer. Not only Clarence, but also Ernest, and Harry were active with the JACL, the American equivalent of

the JCCA and NAJC. Chizu, Ernest’s wife, is active in the Japanese Historical Society. She was quite a storyteller and once as she related the story of her brother “Harry Lee”, who had been a jazz saxophonist and played with Lionel Hampton in the forties. I realized that she was talking about H.L. Kitano, a leading anthropologist whose books I had studied for years. Norio Goto, from Japan showed us a video that he had made on the Asahi baseball team and offered us all a copy. Now I wonder what will be produced from the footage he took of this trip!

The “wags” on the bus were Mas and Chuck. One would have thought that Chuck’s Canadian wife, Beth (Kaslo, Bay Farm) would have simmered him down after all these years, but he kept us entertained with his tales, although Mas was not to be outdone. Mas’s Hawaiian born wife Helen however, often made some retorts, which temporarily stopped him in his tracks!

The presence of the sansei—Laureen, Nancy, and April, who along with April’s husband David, stayed together at the back of the bus so they could enjoy each other’s company and really holiday together was very heartwarming. They had little knowledge of the wartime experiences of their parents and grandparents but were eager to absorb as much as they could. The three cousins offered to put together a booklet on the bus trip. Nancy had a digital camera and notebook computer and took photos of us. We were asked to write short autobiographies and send them to April. I hope everyone did, so that we can all relive our trip time and again. Our thanks go to Bob Iwata for his expertise and generosity in planning the trip, and to Yoshin Tamaki for his thoughtful concern for all, and to Naomi for her energy and

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cool-headedness. Should we do it again? Of course! Many people have already made inquiries about when it will be repeated. (An aside to the

people on the bus—I got \$10 for the lotto ticket you gave me. Sorry, maybe next time I'll win a million

dollars and we can go on that world cruise. Perhaps you should check with Naomi, Yoshin and Ron about how they did.) ❀

A Cat's Tale by Sharon Slack



Sharon and sister with Old Lady Cat. (Sharon Slack photo, ca. 1946)

Mom just called her 'Old Lady Cat.' She moved in with us in 1945, when we moved into one of the houses on Celtic Island. She had probably belonged to one of the Japanese-Canadian families who had left in 1942. A black cat with white markings, she was the first pet for my sister and me. She was always with us kids, even though we once

trimmed her whiskers with our little toy scissors!

The watchman had a big springer spaniel named Dan, and sometimes when they passed our house, Old Lady Cat would be sleeping on the table in front of the kitchen window. Dan would quietly sneak up on her—but just as he got to the edge of the table, he would get a sudden smack on the nose!

In 1948, we were told that the houses were going to be demolished, so we moved half a block up Blenheim Street. Old Lady Cat wouldn't come with us—she kept going back to Celtic Island. The vet told us that he knew of a warehouse that wanted a cat to be a mouser and that's the last we knew of her.

I often wondered about her first family and what her real name was.

Recently, I met some of the Celtic Island people and asked if any of them knew Old Lady Cat. One lady, Phyllis Koyanagi said, "That was my cat. Her name was Chun!" So, after 58 years, Phyllis finally found out what happened to the cat she had to leave behind.

The author of the charming story above is the wife of Terry Slack, well-known to Museum Society members for his historic walking tour of the old Celtic Cannery area. Sharon's father, Fred Bain, was the pipefitter at the Celtic shipyard from about 1940 so that some of the pre-war Celtic Island and Deering Island Japanese Canadians may remember him. She has sent this story into the Portrait V2K Project on the internet, omitting Phyllis' name as requested by Phyllis. The attached photo shows Sharon and her sister and the cat (the dark object on the same level as the girls' heads) in front of their house, inhabited until 1942 by a Japanese family.

Sharon and Terry are active in the Southlands neighbourhood and were among the activists who were instrumental in obtaining two parks in the Celtic Cannery area, one on Deering Island and another on Celtic Island. "Celtic Island" is now well connected to the mainland. Terry and Sharon are very committed to preserving the history of this hitherto relatively unknown corner of Greater Vancouver.- (Stan Fukawa) ❀

It's a Small World by Larry Maekawa

In the early 1900s, a Spanish slang "You sabe?" meaning "Do you understand?" was commonly used along the Pacific Coast of United States and also in British Columbia. **Min Hara** recounts an anecdote pertaining to "You sabe?" in "**Terminal Island, An Island in Time: Collection of Personal Histories of Former Islanders**".

I am a Nisei, born in 1922 at Terminal Island, California. My

*father came to the west coast in 1895 as an immigrant hoping to become a permanent citizen. He helped lay the ties and rails of the Santa Fe Railways from Sacramento to Bakersfield. He came from a tiny fishing village, **Tahara, Wakayama-ken, Japan**. This village of **Tahara** has a sub-division called **Sabe**. While working for Santa Fe Railways about two hundred of the villagers were among this railroad gang, majority*

*being from **Tahara** and few from **Sabe**.*

*A foreman was showing one of my father's villagers how to drive in the spikes. Upon finishing his demonstration, he asked, "you sabe?" Not being able to fully understand English nor Spanish, my father's friend replied, "No! Me **Tahara**". This accidental pun made my father laugh so much he*

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repeatedly told it to us whenever we asked about the "old days".

Strange to say that roughly one thousand miles apart from Sacramento, California, a very similar humorous incident happened here in British Columbia. Before World War II there was a small fishing village on Sea Island, where Vancouver International Airport is now located. At the turn of the century, about fifty Japanese families lived there. The men were all

engaged in fishing and they fished for Vancouver Cannery, owned by Gus Millard, and the wives worked in the cannery. They built their own elementary school on cannery premises and hired two Caucasian teachers to instruct their children.

One early spring, men were getting their nets ready in the net house. There was a newcomer who came from **Kamitawara**, Wakayama-ken. This village is adjacent to the town called **Sabe**. Not

being familiar with handling of nets, a hakujin foreman was showing him how to hang lead line onto the net. When he finished his demonstration he asked, "You sabe?" With an astonished look, he replied, "No! me **Kamitawara**". And he was mumbling to himself, "How come that hakujin guy knows **Sabe**?" This accidental farce became the joke in the village of Vancouver Cannery.

So, "You sabe?" It's a Small World! ●

Oshogatsu: A Family Tradition - by Carl Yokota

For close to thirty years, our parents have quietly hosted a New Year's day or Oshogatsu dinner for neighbours, friends and family members. What originally began as a small get-together evolved over the years into a much anticipated annual celebration often lasting late into the evening. The main attraction was the opportunity to enjoy the many specially and lovingly prepared Japanese food dishes.

New Year's eve would be a very hectic time for Mom and Dad. They would invariably bring in the New Year in the kitchen preparing the myriad of traditional New Year's dishes or *osechi-ryori*, as well as many other food favorites. The folks would faithfully continue their food preparations well into the early hours of New Year's day.

Delicacies such as herring roe or *kazunoko*, black beans or *kuromame* in a sweet syrup, boiled assorted vegetables or *nishime*, small sardines cooked in soy sauce or *tazukuri*, freshly cooked prawns or *ebi*, sliced lotus root or *renkon*, steamed fish paste cakes or *kamaboko* would be neatly arranged and displayed in Mom's special crimson-colored, three-tiered Japanese lacquer box or *jubako*. This would serve as the center piece for the following night's dinner

offering. In addition, there would be two or three different kinds of *sushi* prepared, as well as overnight marinating of the chicken *teriyaki* and pre-cutting and dicing of ingredients for Mom's special chow mein.

A New Year's staple, *mochi* would be made well in advance mainly because it is quite tedious and time-consuming to make. Years ago, as kids we used to help make the *mochi* by pounding a wooden mallet on freshly steamed sweet or glutinous rice. Nowadays, most homes have an electric *mochi*-making machine which helps speed things up considerably. Once the *mochi* dough is ready it would be gently shaped into small white mounds, dusted with a light coating of flour. The *mochi* would be later used in what we used to call *mochi*-soup or *ozoni*, as well as eaten on its own either toasted on a wire screen, wrapped in seaweed or *nori*, and dipped in a sweet mixture of soy sauce and sugar or honey. An important ritual is to also make an offering of the freshly made *mochi* in the form of *kagami-mochi* to the family shrine or *hotoke* accompanied with *sake* or as I have noted for many years Crown Royal whiskey. *Kagami-mochi* consists of a small *mochi* atop a larger *mochi* paddy, crowned with a piece of Japanese

mandarin orange or *nihon mikan*.

New Year's day or *Oshogatsu* would start off by Mom ensuring everyone partook in her special *ozoni* flavored with *miso*, sliced Japanese radish or *daikon*, *koimo*, shaved bonito flakes or *katsubushi*, and tiny, white fish called *shirasu*. And of course, there would be ample quantities of *mochi* with each bowl served of the delicious, thick soup. After getting our fill of the *ozoni*, the rest of the day would be spent in preparation of the evening dinner party. Special occasion plates and dishes, as well as dozens of Japanese tea cups would be cleaned and readied. A tradition unto itself, Dad would go to the garage and fetch his hand-crafted New Year's party table and assemble and set it up in the front living room. All the different food dishes would later be carefully set out on Dad's festively-covered table as well as on the dining room table. Just before the guests start to arrive, Dad would cut up the frozen tuna or *maguro* into *sashimi* slices and assist Mom in making her crowd-pleasing chow mein dish. Accompanying all this fantastic food, potfuls of Japanese green tea or *ocha*, coffee, and a small table-full of different alcoholic and softdrink beverages would be made available to the party

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celebrants.

As previously mentioned, the party usually lasts late into the evening. It is very unusual if anyone leaves the house without a doggybag filled with their favorite Japanese food favorites. Even still, there is enough food leftovers to last a good week. Long after all the guests have left, and all the dishes have been put in the dishwasher and cleaned, Mom

and Dad would finally be able to get their well-deserved rest, but temporarily. Over the next day or so, all the special plates, dishes, pots, and utensils will be carefully assembled and packed away for another year.

Sadly though, Dad passed away last year so our family *Oshogatsu* dinner party was a bit subdued, but not cancelled. His party

table was never retrieved from the garage and setup, and only a small gathering of friends and family got together to bring in the New Year. Hopefully, we can rally the family members to carry on our New Year's tradition and, once again make good use of a very special but integral part of the celebrations- Dad's custom New Year's table. ❁

Hashi Kai! Memories of the B.C. Security Commission Blankets

by Tom I. Tagami

In Hastings Park every person was given two heavy dark gray scratchy blankets. We were assigned to different buildings to sleep on double-decker metal spring bunks. On each bunk was a lumpy canvas bag filled with prickly straw as a mattress and a 5- inch diameter pillow also filled with straw. There were six or seven hundred other males aged 18 years and up. We did not know where we would be tomorrow.

When it came time to sleep we put one blanket on the mattress,

took off our clothes and got into bed, using one blanket to cover up. It was so scratchy (*hashi kai*)! We had to put our clothes back on to sleep.

A few months later we settled into a 14' x 28' tar paper shack in Slocan. We got our sheets and comforters out and once again used those scratchy gray blankets to cover the prickly straw mattress. Because the winter of 1942 was extremely cold in Slocan, we were issued even more blankets. Someone got the idea of making waist-length coats out of

the blankets. (Having come from the west coast we were otherwise unprepared for that first winter in the Slocan Valley). A simple coat pattern was made up and passed around. Most of the workers wore one and although they were appreciated when dry, once they got wet from the slushy snow or rain, they weighed a ton!

If anyone still has one of these "blanket coats", contact the Japanese Canadian National Museum. We hear it may be a cold winter! ❁

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Seeking an Answer by Tom I. Tagami

I have in my possession, a Japanese family stamp (*hanko*) that is more than one hundred years old. The red paste for the *hanko* is in a small container approximately 1 inch

round and ¼ inch deep. It is very possibly as old as the *hanko* itself. The red paste in the container is still usable and the *hanko* comes out like it was just made.

I am curious to know what the red paste is made of. If you have the answer, please call the Japanese Canadian National Museum at 777-8000. ●

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