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2017: 75th Anniversary of the Japanese Canadian Internment

Nakatani family circa. 1939 in Kelowna before moving to Kaslo NNM2017.17.2.8.075a Adults L-R: Yasu Ichimatsru, Esumatsu. Children L - R: Mary Megmi, Ruth Midori.



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would you do it again.

nidoto nai yoni

you take my culture.

would you do it again.

nidoto nai yoni

let it not happen poem by jeff tanaka Page 23



Telegrams to Grand Forks, 1942 Back Cover

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Our Journey: Revisiting Tashme and New Denver After 70 Years – Part 2

by Micki Nakashima

As part of our 2017 commemorations of the 75th anniversary of Japanese Canadian internment, this is Part 2 of Micki Nakashima's story of her 2015 visit to former internment camps, along with her childhood recollections, in instalments. Part 1 is printed in Vol. 22 No. 1, and Part 3 will follow in Vol. 22 No 3.



New Denver after 63 years

It was with some trepidation that I anticipated a return to New Denver. I was unsure what my reactions would be after 63 years. On one hand, I was excited to see my childhood home, the lake, the town and the Orchard where I spent my most memorable years. On the other hand. I wondered what emotions would be evoked about the internment experience.

New Denver, initially named Eldorado, sprang up with the discovery of high-grade silver near Sandon in 1892.

Photos courtesy Micki Nakashima.

New Denver served as the governmental and residential centre for the mining districts in the Kootenays. With the decline of these mines, the town was all but deserted until 1942, when the influx of Japanese internees arrived.

New Denver is divided by Carpenter Creek. On the north side is the original town. On the south side is the Orchard, where the internment camp was built.

Our move to New Denver was by bus. It was very hot and smelly, and I felt nauseous. I was very glad to get off the bus when we stopped at a hall. I thought we had arrived in New Denver. Instead it turned out



to be a lunch stop in Slocan City. The welcoming From somewhere high in the tree near the path a young boy's voice yelled, "You want some cherries?" ladies served us lunch, wieners for me, and tea. Too soon we had to reboard the bus. Finally we arrived in He scampered down the tree and offered us some New Denver, only to have to climb onto a truck to be fruit. This was the first time I had seen a white boy transported to Nelson Ranch, our new home. with brown curly hair. Thereafter, whenever I walked down that path, I looked for him, but I never saw him **Short Stay at Nelson Ranch** again.

As we drove into New Denver from Sandon, I looked There was no indoor plumbing at the house. A communal water tap was a short distance away. One day we heard the cries of a cat from under the boards near the tap. Upon lifting one of the boards we found a grey striped kitten. We got milk for the kitten. Soon after the mother cat came by with a field mouse in her mouth. I made a pet of the kitten. The mother cat would not come near.

for Nelson Ranch, a 200-acre farm about one kilometre north of New Denver. About 10 families lived there. There were fruit trees and a large vegetable garden. Nelson Ranch is now a cemetery. Our house was large compared to the half-house in Tashme. It had a full basement, two bedrooms, and a spacious living area. Mother used one of the bedrooms as a classroom for Japanese language classes for the few children who lived here.

One evening we children were taken to the big house up the hill. Two elderly ladies greeted us and invited The following day, after we had settled in, Mother us in. I had never seen such a magnificent house with walked us down a steep hill to town. At the foot of the beautiful furnishings, painted walls, curtains on the hill we came upon a nice white house, not a shack.







windows, pictures on the walls, rugs on the floor. I knew only wooden benches and tables covered with oilcloths to prevent slivers, bare walls, and windows. I did not know why we were here. The two ladies chatted and bustled about. One lady wanted us to sing a song I did not know. Finally we were all given some candies. We said our thank yous and left, happy with our treats. This was my first Hallowe'en but I didn't know it at the time.

Mother was happy at Nelson Ranch. Unfortunately, our stay was short and we were once again uprooted and relocated, this time to the Orchard of New Denver.

New Denver Town Centre

Our first stop once we reached the village of New Denver was the Silvery Slocan Museum. I recognized it immediately as the Bank of Montreal, the only bank in New Denver back when we lived here. We popped into the Apple Tree Sandwich Shop for lunch. As I sat eating my tasty sandwich, it came to me that this shop used to be the post office. A short chat with the waitress confirmed that it had indeed been the post office as well as the barber shop. As soon as I heard that, I could clearly see the spinning white, red, and blue barber's pole.

Mother had a beautiful vegetable garden. To supplement her meagre income, she sold her vegetables to this grocery store, as well as selling them door to door. She took me along as translator. I remember one very kind couple who bought vegetables almost every week.

Because Mother received workers compensation, we were required to purchase our own school supplies. Other children were provided with scribblers, pencils, erasers, and the like. One day when I needed a scribbler, Mother sent me off with 25 cents. I bought the scribbler for 10 cents. On the way home



I had to walk right past the gasoline station, which the prettiest doll I had ever seen. A friend of Mother's caught me staring at it and urged me to ask for it for was situated near the bridge over Carpenter Creek. That gasoline station carried comic books, ice cream, Christmas. I didn't. He urged me again and again, and candies. My very, very favourite was MacIntosh and each time I would not. I knew Mother could not toffee. As I walked by I succumbed to temptation and afford to buy toys. We always had a Christmas tree with lights. Ed and I would chop down a tree and pull bought the very, very favourite MacIntosh toffee for five cents. When Mother asked me for the change I it home on a sled. Mother made some special food, but gave her 10 cents without a word. Mother asked me there were no Christmas presents. One Christmas, for the rest of the change. I told her the scribbler cost Ed bought me a comic book. I was thrilled-my first 15 cents. Mother said, "This scribbler costs only 10 Christmas gift. Years later, when I was about 12 years cents. Where is the five cents?" At that I reached into old and living in Vancouver, there was a Christmas present under the tree for me. On Christmas morning my coat pocket and produced the half-eaten very, very favourite MacIntosh toffee. Mother never said a word, I opened the present excitedly. It was a doll very but I will never forget the look of disappointment on much like the doll I had stared at in the window of the her face. The very, very favorite MacIntosh toffee did hardware store when I was seven years old. Mother not taste so sweet after that, and it was no longer my knew and never forgot. very, very favorite.

When I was about seven years I longed for a dollAlthough Mother was a Buddhist, she sent us to theWhen I was about seven years I longed for a dollPresbyterian Church for Sunday school. This gorgeouswith eyelashes that blinked. It was on display in thestained-glass window was in the Knox Church. I used tohardware store at Christmas time. I thought it wasstained at it during sermons. I enjoyed seeing the sunlight





In 1947, when I was in second grade, the school in the Orchard was closed and we all attended school in town with the town's children. My second grade teacher, Miss Elder, and I did not start off on the right foot. She had the children print our names on slips of paper. She collected the paper and as she called each name we were to respond "Present, Miss Elder." I listened for my name to be called. She called one name several times, and no one answered. Miss Elder grew visibly angry. We all knew that that person was in the room. Suddenly I felt a poke in the back and the girl behind said, "It's you." My name is Miyoko, the first syllable pronounced as me. I had never heard it pronounced My-oko and did not recognize it as my name the way Miss Elder pronounced it. She and I did not get along for the remainder of the year.

brighten the colours. The minute I saw it in the Silvery Slocan Museum, where it is now kept, I was struck at how memorable it was. The Knox Church has since been converted to the Knox Hall.

Mrs. Hansen, the minister's wife, ran a Saturday club for us girls in the basement of the church. Mrs. Hansen taught us many crafts. I struggled to learn how to knit. She invited me to her house one day after school where she patiently taught me. It is a craft that I enjoy to this day. She also took us on picnics on a beach in town. For several years the Japanese were not allowed to swim at this beach.

One Christmas there was a surprise for us children. A missionary, Miss Ridgeway, from Vancouver had brought us children toys from the good people of Vancouver. As we did not have many toys, we were all excited and could hardly contain ourselves. We stood around the table where all the toys were spread out. We were instructed to raise our hand when the toy we wanted was held up. I spotted a toy cash register. It dinged and the cash drawer popped open. I was not interested in any other toy. I waited patiently for the cash register. Finally, it was held up. I put my hand

up with a pounding heart. It went to a boy. I was disappointed and decided that I'd better just put my hand up for every toy thereafter. I received the very last toy, a dustpan. Someone had to be last, but I found it very difficult to thank Miss Ridgeway for such generosity and kindness.

The Orchard

Japanese men were assigned by the B.C. Security Commission to construct 275 shacks in the area south of Carpenter Creek known as the Orchard. Almost 1,500 Japanese were relocated here. A tuberculosis sanatorium was also built to house 100 patients from Hastings Park.

We lived at #62 Main Street. It was close to the lake and the open field. We lived across the road from the Iwase family, who had seven daughters. Aiko (Claire) was a year younger than me, and Yoriko (Vicki) was a year older. Harue (Harriet) was the same age as Jane, and Kay was the same age as my sister Kay. Next door were the Satos, and two houses down were the Tamuras. Chiyo Tamura was a year younger than I. They were our friends.

I started grade one in a school in the Orchard. Many of the teachers were high school graduates with no teacher training. Miss Arikado was my teacher. I liked her. She taught me to read. In 1947, when I was in second grade, the school in the Orchard was closed and we all attended school in town with the town's children. My second grade teacher, Miss Elder, and I did not start off on the right foot. She had the children print our names on slips of paper. She collected the paper and as she called each name we were to respond "Present, Miss Elder." I listened for my name to be called. She called one name several times, and no one answered. Miss Elder grew visibly angry. We all knew that that person was in the room. Suddenly I felt a poke in the back and the girl behind said, "It's you." My name is Miyoko, the first syllable pronounced as me. I had never heard it pronounced My-oko and did not recognize it as my name the way Miss Elder pronounced it. She and I did not get along for the remainder of the year.

Our house was a two-room shack. These unpainted shacks had bare studs, no insulation, no wallpaper, no running water, no electricity. Newspaper or brown packing paper was used to cover the cracks in the walls to try to keep the cold wind out. On winter nights, frost formed on the inside of the windows. Mother would cover our heads while we slept. The living area had a big stove for cooking and a potbellied stove for heat, a wooden sink, a table, and benches. The wooden sink did not have any running water. Mother ran a hose from the communal tap in through the window into a barrow so we did not have to haul water in a bucket. There was an electrical light bulb hanging from the ceiling but there was no electricity. We used a kerosene lamp for light. Summer days were unbearably hot when the wood burning kitchen stove was on. Mother would bake

many loaves of bread at a time. By the time we Mother cut off the mouldy parts.

Slocan Lake played a major role in our lives. In the finished eating those loaves, the bread was hard and summer we swam almost every day. I learned to do the dog paddle here. We fished for minnows. My brother Ed and his friends fished for trout. They said The bedroom had three beds: one double bed where the best fishing spot was at the mouth of Carpenter Mother, Jane, and I slept; one single bed that Kay Creek. It was a treat when Ed brought a trout home. used; and a shelf bed that was attached to the wall Once Claire and I decided to row the boat to Carpenter across the foot of our bed. There was no room for Creek, without permission. The wind came up and Mr. anything else. Sato yelled at us to come in. He was angry with us.

Because Mother received workers compensation of One year Slocan Lake's water level rose so high it \$75 monthly, she was required to pay \$35 per month threatened to flood the sanitorium. Everyone able, for rent. even children, was asked to help sandbag the area. The outhouse was a short distance away from our My responsibility was to take the filled sandbags to house, although it felt far during the winter when we the men building the sandbag wall. After an afternoon had to trod through snow and freezing cold weather. of great effort, exhausted and dirty, we were happy The outhouse had three doors but they opened to to successfully contain the water and save the one area with three holes. It was not three separate sanitorium.

rooms. I used to wait until no one else was occupying The lake froze every year. We were constantly it before entering but I was in perpetual fear that the door would open to another user.

There was a public bathhouse for bathing. Females bathed on Tuesdays and Thursdays, males on Wednesdays and Fridays. I remember that Mother had a tub and washboard to wash clothes at home, so I'm not sure if the bathhouse was also used for laundry as in Tashme.



cautioned about going out too far to the centre of the lake where the ice was thinner and might not sustain our weight. One winter three boys did drown when they fell through the ice.

Unfortunately, on our road trip, due to the smoky haze we could not see across the lake. I remember how beautiful this lake and the mountains across the lake were. 🗮



JAPANESE PROBLEM – a performance

Courtesy of Universal Limited

Universal Limited is a theatre group previously known for creating a play that took place on a specially-built pedicab. In *Tour*, an audience of four people were pedaled around the city while actors revealed the secret history of a part of town—a history not usually presented in the theatre. *Tour* eventually travelled from Vancouver to Victoria and Toronto.

Now, in 2017, the company is turning its attention to a significant time and events very close to our thoughts – the 75th anniversary of the Japanese Canadian incarceration at Hastings Park. The company is making a piece of theatre that will be presented in one of the livestock stalls that once contained citizens, a stall that looks much the same as it did at the time.

Co-creator Yoshié Bancroft came up with the idea of *JAPANESE PROBLEM* when she toured Hastings Park with the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre (NNMCC). She was dismayed to see how few traces remained and wished there was a way to capture what had happened. "As a teen, I would go to the PNE without knowing the historical significance of Hastings Park," said Bancroft. "I began to wonder how many people go to the PNE without knowing that 8,000 Canadians were moved through the site during World War II. It's not a secret and yet it's not necessarily common knowledge, and that's a problem."

The co-creators have made many visits to what will be the performance space at the Livestock Building, which still smells of animals, still has straw underfoot, and still has traces of the open sewers that served as toilets for the people imprisoned there. They found the experience profound and unsettling. Said contributor Cecile Roslin, "The whole space is so vivid. The smell, the feces-smeared walls, the flapping of plastic on broken windows. I found it difficult to be there in such a profanely sacred space."



Bancroft added, "...it was eerie. Vast and empty of people, but knowing the history, suddenly you imagine families in the animal stalls, and all the references to cattle in the space feel somehow offensive and painful."

There is little in the space that articulates what went on there 75 years ago. Outside, a few signs guide visitors, but the former infirmary, where dozens died, is now masked in plastic and serves as a building space for film projects. Wide areas in the centre of the barn are used to store concession tables and machines, mothballed in the PNE's off-season.

In January 2017, the Landscapes of Injustice research project, a seven-year study of the dispossession of the Japanese Canadian community during the 1940s, held a panel discussion at Vancouver Public Library. Among the elders who shared their stories were Jean Kamimura and Mary Kitagawa. "Some of us are still hesitant to talk about our hardship and our years spent in recovery," said Jean Kamimura. "We did not expect what we encountered when we got there," said Mary Kitagawa. "What struck us first was the smell of urine and feces, and as we walked in we could feel the straw still on the floor.... Nothing was cleaned. We were assigned some metal bunk beds that had no mattress.... We were not fed, until the next morning.... We remained hungry most of the time.... My mother would take us outside to air our hair and skin from the smell of feces and urine."

Drawing on these and many other accounts of the time, the co-creators are building a piece that sources the past, but lives in the present. "Every survivor we interviewed has mentioned comparisons to our current world," said director Joanna Garfinkel. "Not one of us could have imagined, when we started on this project over a year ago, that we would have heard an administration mention the Japanese American incarceration as a positive example, as happened this year."

Reckoning with generational trauma, three of the contributors have personal and family connections to the Incarceration. Contributor Laura Fukumoto learned of her family's connection to Hastings Park only when she moved to Vancouver to go to UBC and her grandmother told her she had lived in the PNE barn for six months. "All of these things seem like weird coincidences, literally stumbling on facts of my family.... But we pick up those facts, and shape our lives around these [seemingly insignificant truths]."



Yoshié Bancroft



"We did not expect what we encountered when we got there. What struck us first was the smell of urine and feces, and as we walked in we could feel the straw still on the floor.... Nothing was cleaned. We were assigned some metal bunk beds that had no mattress.... We were not fed, until the next morning.... We remained hungry most of the time.... My mother would take us outside to air our hair and skin from the smell of feces and urine."

"As an activist and former refugee from Colombia, I was deeply moved to find a lot of parallels between the Japanese Canadians placed at 'internment camps' and the refugee claimants in Canada," said participant Sindy Angel. "Families were incarcerated ... not for committing a crime, but for being Japanese or of Japanese descendance. Now there are refugee claimants ... kept at immigration detention centers and/or jails, for months or even years, and not for committing a crime, but for 'reasons' such as not having a document that proves their identity."

JAPANESE PROBLEM will be accompanied by an original score. "For me the Lemon Creek Harmonica Band exemplifies a drive to retain spirit during traumatic times, while also representing the unique music which was evolving from the integration of Japanese and Canadian cultures and arts. These concepts, realized with a variety of live instruments and sound sources, will be at the core of the original musical score," said collaborator and composer Daniel Doerksen. JAPANESE PROBLEM will not offer a traditional theatre experience where the audience sits quietly, at a distance and in the dark. Instead, say the creators, by being performed in a small space, the play will have a simplicity and intimacy that will deeply affect audiences.

JAPANESE PROBLEM will open September 22 at Hastings Park and will be featured as part of the NNMCC Hastings Park 1942 exhibit opening September 30, 2017. Later in the year, it will also travel to the Historic Langham Centre in Kaslo.







Nakatani-Wakita: A Family Story Part 1

Note: This is the first part of a two-part account of the Nakatani family's history in Japan and Canada. Part 1 deals with the family's origins, arrival in Canada, and life in Grand Forks. Part 2 will appear in a future issue of Nikkei Images. See the back page to find out about the recent donation of Nakatani family letters, diaries, books, and photos to the Nikkei National Museum archives.



Onion fields at Grand Forks. NNM 2017.17.2.1.5.001

Esumatsu Nakatani was born in Mio Mura, Hidakagun, Honshu, Japan, on July 22, 1892, and passed away on December 19, 1983, at the age of 92. He was the seventh and youngest child born to Tobei and Michi Nakatani, and had five brothers and one sister. Other than the names of three of his brothers-Tatsumatsu, Inosuke, and Fukunosuke-little is known about Esumatsu's family. His mother passed away around 1910,

when Esumatsu was 18 years old, and the story is that she died in his arms. Nothing is known about his father's death.

Esumatsu had about four years of schooling, excelling in mathematics. He joined the Japanese Navy in 1912, at Kure, a city near Hiroshima. He initially served on the battleship Asama from May to December 1913, and then on the battleship Ibuki from 1914 through 1916. In the

summer of 1914, he was hospitalized at the Kure Navy Yasu's parents, along with her brother, Tsunejiro, and Hospital with an unknown illness. On August 24, 1914, his wife, Nobue, emigrated to join Yasu and Esumatsu in his ship engaged the Germans as part of World War 1925. Yasu's parents remained in the Kelowna area until

I. Unconfirmed family stories relate that his tours of duty took him near Australia and up to Russia. Esumatsu achieved the rank of First Officer. The date of his discharge from the navy is unknown.

Esumatsu married Yasu Wakita on June 2, 1919. Yasu was born on October 13, 1896, also in Mio Mura, and passed away in Vancouver on March 28, 1978, at 81. She was the older of two children born to Ichimatsu and Shige Wakita. Her brother, Tsunejiro, was born in 1898. Yasu graduated from Mio Mura Jinje High School in 1908. (Under the Japanese education system, "high school"



was actually senior elementary school.) She became a late 1939, when they moved to Grand Forks. Tsunejiro seamstress and worked making kimonos, but also dove and his family followed in 1943. for pearls and seaweed.

In the Okanagan, Esumatsu and Yasu supported **Immigration to Canada** themselves by farming, mainly in Mission Creek, Esumatsu came to Canada in 1918, joining his brothers Okanagan Centre, Rutland, and Winfield. This was Tatsumatsu and Inosuke, who had arrived earlier. The during the Great Depression; farming provided only a three brothers became fishermen, working in Prince basic livelihood and life was hard. At one point, they Rupert and along the west coast of B.C. to Steveston. could not sell their produce and had to barter with other Yasu remained in Japan but joined Esumatsu four years farmers in order to survive. later, sailing on the Hikawa-Maru and arriving in 1923. Upon reuniting, Esumatsu and Yasu moved to Kelowna, where Yasu's cousin Nakata lived.

While living up north with his brothers, Esumatsu had gave birth to a daughter, Mary Megumi, followed by a developed a gambling problem. After moving to sister, Ruth Midori, on December 13, 1935. Esumatsu Kelowna, he and Yaso converted to Christianity under later recalled having nothing for Mary's first Christmas the auspices of Reverend Yoshioka of the United and walking 15 miles through the snow to get food for Church. Esumatsu stopped gambling, and he and Yasu their Christmas celebrations. became ardent Christians, with their lives revolving around the church. Later, Esumatsu wrote and published But although life was difficult, it was not without joy. The Nakatanis made many good friends through the church a book describing his relationship with God. (He asked two fellow Christians to write passages about him. One as well as through community events like picnics. The praised him as a good man. The other humorously wrote community wholeheartedly embraced them and their about his rigid beliefs. Esumatsu was honest enough to two daughters. Mary and Ruth learned how to do odori include this account in his book!) dancing. Esumatsu attended prayer meetings, studied



Japan

Grand Forks community photo album. The photo album contains family portraits of people who lived in Grand Forks. NNM 2017.17.2.1.66.001

Yasu had four pregnancies. One son, born in 1932, died three days after birth, and a second son, born in 1933, was stillborn. On February 16, 1934, Yasu successfully



the Bible, and did some lay preaching, activities that he continued throughout his life. Esumatsu and Yasu made lasting friendships with many other families, including the Tamakis, Hikichis, Shishidos, Kobayashis, Koyamas, Ikenouves, Takenakas, Nakatas, and Nasus, and their children and grandchildren continue to enjoy those relationships.

Grand Forks: 1939 to 1951

Because life was so difficult financially in the Okanagan, Esumatsu and Yasu decided to move to Grand Forks in October 1939. Yasu's brother and his family followed in 1943. Tsunejiro and Nobue had three sons, Ruichi, born in 1940, John Takeshi, born in 1942, and Akira, born in 1944

There were very few Japanese residents in Grand Forks in 1939. The only other family residing there was the Sugimoto family. Farming in Grand Forks was equally difficult. The Nakatanis produced onion seeds, flower seeds, tomatoes, potatoes, and other vegetables. When Mary and Ruth were six or seven years old, they started to help on the farm, weeding, bagging potatoes, getting rid of wire worms (tomato caterpillars), and irrigating. The work was hard and the weather was very hot, but they accepted their tasks and often made the work into a game to see who could finish weeding the row the fastest or who could find the most caterpillars.

Esumatsu contracted with a number of farmers to grow their crops. In exchange, he procured living guarters for his family and received a percentage of the profits from the sale of the produce. The houses provided were generally comfortable, but water needed to be handpumped from wells or carried from the river. There was no electricity. Refrigeration was provided by an icebox, and ice was stored in a shed in sawdust. The houses were lit by coal oil or kerosene lamps; the toilet facilities were outhouses; and heating came from belly stoves that burned wood, sawdust, or coal. The family bathed in a large aluminum tub with water boiled on the stove. There was always a race to have the first bath, as the water had to be shared with the entire family.

Later, a Japanese-style bathtub was built, and a number of family members could share the warmth of the bath.

The Nakatanis purchased food staples, but also grew a large vegetable garden. They canned peas, beans, carrots, and beets, and stored onions and potatoes in a root cellar. Dandelion leaves sometimes took



Young Esumatsu Nakatani, NNM 2017.17.2-8.002

the place of spinach. They gathered fiddleheads and either ate them fresh or dried them for later use. They raised chickens for eggs and canned the meat. At one point, they raised pigs and canned the meat. Esumatsu sometimes hunted for pheasants and deer.

Mary and Ruth started school in Grand Forks. This was their first introduction to the English language, but they both caught on quickly. Ruth benefitted from Mary's attendance at school a year earlier. Mary and Ruth recall their childhood with fondness. Their parents were very caring, taught them many Japanese children's songs, played karuta (a card game), and helped with their homework, but also expected them to help out around the home and in the fields.

Impact of World War II

The Nakatanis were living in Grand Forks when Canada declared war on Japan after Pearl Harbor. The impact of this event on Japanese Canadians is well documented. Families were interned in Hastings Park, then sent to



Right: Yasu and Esumatsu Nakatani. Left: Yasu's parents. NNM 2017.7.2.8.51a

relocation camps throughout B.C. During this time, many families contacted Esumatsu, who had acquired a reputation for being a sympathetic and helpful person as well as a devout Christian. He and Yasu began to receive dozens of letters and telegrams, asking for assistance in finding a place to live and work in Grand Forks. People would write, "I am a farmer. Is there any demand for farmers in the area?" Or, "I have experience managing finances. Can you find me work in that field?" Ultimately Esumatsu received some 50 letters and telegrams and helped about 343 Japanese people relocate to Grand Forks . He often negotiated with local farmers to hire or house the newcomers. Esumatsu's diaries, which are now part of the archive, detail his travels back and forth to Vancouver as well as his purchases and financial dealings in assisting the families he helped to relocate.

At the time, the Nakatanis were living on the Tjebbes farm, which was often the first place that relocated families stayed before moving to another farm. Among the farmers who hired Japanese Canadian families were



the Doans, Derfousoffs, Orsers, Sookochoffs, Chernoffs, Esouloffs, Diefenbakers, and Pennovers, in addition to the Tjebbes.

For Mary and Ruth, this was an exciting experience as they had never seen so many Japanese people in one place since moving from Kelowna. It was like having new friends over for a sleepover.

Esumatsu ordered Japanese staples such as rice from Vancouver and distributed it to the families. He and Yasu started making tofu and age using a grinding stone owned by one of the relocated families, and they were a constant source of advice and practical help for the families. In the true spirit of their newfound Christianity, they were generous with their supplies, which they shared willingly with others in need.

With the arrival of the Japanese families, a Japanese-Canadian Association was formed. The United Church sent Reverend and Mrs. Ogura to minister to the families and a sense of community developed. Children were introduced to Japanese culture through songs, dances, and language lessons. A community photo album was created, showing all the families who resided in Grand Forks.

Even though the Nakatani family had not been forcibly removed from the West Coast, all people of Japanese descent were subject to fingerprinting and restriction of travel. When Esumatsu wanted to go to Winnipeg, acting as a baishakunin to ask a young woman to move to Grand Forks to marry his nephew, he had to apply for a travel document.

Through their involvement with the United Church, Esumatsu and Yasu attended services, prayer meetings, and study sessions, held services in their home, and did lay preaching. They were respectful of the Buddhist beliefs of their friends and relatives, but often spoke to them of the value of becoming Christians. There was no Japanese United Church in Grand Forks when the family first arrived. They were befriended by a local farmer, Cy Pennoyer, who belonged to the Pentecostal Church. He took Mary and Ruth to Sunday school, and later he went to the homes of Japanese families to pick up other children to introduce them to the church, using a truck into which he built benches. Many families were converted to Christianity with this introduction to Cy Pennoyer's religion. As well, Reverend McWilliams, a United Church minister based near the Tashme





Identification card for Yasu Nakatani. NNM 2017-17-3-6-2a, 2017-17-3-6-2b

internment camp, visited Grand Forks periodically and became a mentor to Esumatsu.

The community at large was accepting of the Japanese families. The children were readily integrated into school and became part of May Day festivities, sporting events, and other community activities. While some Japanese may have felt discrimination and children were teased as "Japs," on the whole they were well received and respected. They were good citizens who accepted their lot in life without much rancour. Grand Forks could readily accept the differences, as it had many Doukhobour families who were already integrated into the community. Some of the Japanese Canadian families who owned businesses prior to their relocation were able to establish businesses in Grand Forks, such as a photography shop and a Chinese restaurant. Those who did not farm found employment at the local sawmill, in mining, or with the railroad company.

During this period, a number of Japanese Canadians contracted tuberculosis. The government built a sanatorium in New Denver to treat and house people with this disease. Those who became ill were sent

miles away from their loved ones to be cared for. To be separated from their families, after the suffering the relocation from their homes on the West Coast, was a traumatic event for many people.

Yasu's brother contracted tuberculosis, as did one of her nephews. Both were sent to New Denver. When Tsunejiro was sent to New Denver, his wife, Nubue, was pregnant; she gave birth to their third son, Akira, in 1944 while Tsunejiro was away. Nobue suffered from post-partum depression and had to be sent to Riverview Hospital in the Lower Mainland, as there was no psychiatric care available nearby. Esumatsu and Yasu took care of Tsunejiro and Nobue's three sons during their absence of about five years. Unfortunately, the son who was ill with tuberculosis died of the disease in his early twenties. Tsunejiro and Nobue later recovered from their illnesses and returned to Grand Forks, where they had a daughter, Akemi.

With the end of the war in 1945, Japanese Canadians were given the choice of returning to Japan or continuing to live in Canada. Of those who chose to stay in Canada, some opted to remain in Grand Forks, making it their permanent place of residence. Others moved east, particularly to Toronto, or returned to the West Coast.

Esumatsu and Yasu stayed in Grand Forks, moving to the Sookochoff farm. They lived there until 1950, growing onion seeds, flower seeds, potatoes, and other crops. 💐



Certificate of Esumatsu Nakatani's service in the navy. The verso reads "Demobilization Certification from Navy 1917, School Certificate from Navy". NNM 2017.17.3.7.6a

Trans-Pacific Voyage : Kawabata Family's 125 Years – Part2

By Yusuke Tanaka

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"Rising Sun Worshippers" at the POW camp

Memories flash back to Rokii no yuwaku (Temptation of the Rockies), written by Chiyokichi Ariga (1952). Immediately after the breakout of war, 38 males were arrested. In March 1942, they were sent to the Kananaskis POW Camp in Seebe, Alberta, located near the scenic town of Banff. Soon 13 more men joined them, including Teiichi. At first, they all saw themselves as heroes but soon afterwards started to complain, "Something is odd." After becoming POWs, they were told, "You can earn \$1.00 a day while living in a first class hotel with delicious meals. On top of that, you will have the opportunity to play golf and enjoy a paradise-like lifestyle. After the end of the war (should Japan win), one could receive compensation money of 350,000 yen each." That was the rumour they initially believed in.



Entryway to Prisoner of War (POW) camp in Angler, Ontario, circa 1945. NNM 2001.4.4.5.13



Subsequently, all the detainees were transferred to the POW camp in Angler, Ontario. The total number of detainees eventually reached 786. The following year, niseis gradually left for eastern Canada to look for jobs. The number remaining in Angler was reduced to 350 by the time it closed in July 1946. They were divided largely into two groups. One group comprised isseis and kika (returned from Japan) niseis who believed that Japan would never be defeated. The second group included Canadian citizens who opposed the unjustified uprooting imposed by the government.

One of those in the first group was Teiichi Kawabata. So was the camp leader, Tokikazu Tanaka. On the other hand, despite belonging to the same issei group, Chiyokichi Ariga, a Japanese school principal and Christian minister, differentiated himself from the ultra-nationalists. Quoted in *Vancouver Asahi* by Norio Goto (Iwanami Publishing, 2010), Ariga said, after an early release from Angler, "Angler is a terrible place. All those remaining are men full of greed expecting only compensation money."

In response, letters flooded into Angler POW camp from many of the detainees' family members. At one point, Tokikazu Tanaka released a statement denying such circumstances. But the Ariga family did suffer a backlash. In August 1943, they were chosen to repatriate to Japan in exchange for Canadian POWs being held in Japan. While passing through Tashme, Chiyokichi Ariga answered questions about all that he had experienced in Angler. Instantly, someone yelled, "I'm gonna kill you, goddamn it!" In other words, the majority of them did not want to believe Japan was fighting a losing war. Even Tokikazu Tanaka wrote in a memorandum that Japan would surely win the war.



back to the Getting Kawabata family history, the mother and three children were sent to Slocan. George recalled the difficulties they faced. "There wasn't normal electricity in the internment camp so we had to make necessary items ourselves. We turned empty tin cans into portable lanterns with candles inside. For recreation, we carved skis out of wooden boards for use on nearby ski slopes, which were abundant in the mountains surrounding Slocan."

Pictured in George's fourth grade class picture in the aptly-named Pine Crescent School are children who

are now well-recognized figures in Canada, including novelist Joy Kogawa and geneticist David Suzuki. It must have been that harsh environment, surrounded by the abundance of Mother Nature, that stimulated these *niseis*' intelligence and challenging spirit.

In this connection, there's an amusing episode. When David Suzuki made a speech in Toronto about 10 years ago, Joy Kogawa also joined in. She told the audience, "When we were fourth graders, for reasons unknown, David suddenly slapped me in the face." David instantly responded, "I don't remember at all but excuse me, I am so sorry." The audience burst into laughter.

In June 1946, over 70 years ago, the Kawabata family, led by Teiichi, arrived in the former Japanese navy base Uraga, Kanagawa, on a repatriation ship. When they returned to Sei's birthplace in Osaka, relatives stared, silently asking, "What did you come back for?" In this uncomfortable atmosphere, the Kawabatas were sheltered in a shabbily built hut-like annex.

The two older sisters supported the family by working for the U.S. Occupational Forces at their facility annex.

Photo: Chiyokichi Ariga was released early from Angler, but eventually repatriated with his family to Japan. Ariga (pictured top right) with his wife, daughter Ruth, and George Suzuki at Jurong Camp, Singapore, circa 1943. NNM 2001.4.4.5.19



Teiichi Kawabata's wife and children were sent to Slocan before being repatriated as a family to Japan. Repatriation in Slocan City, circa 1946. NNM 1995.141.1.7

Teiichi offered his English-speaking services at one of the military base libraries. He was then already reaching the age of 60. Even though he had to start all over in his work life, he maintained that "the option of having repatriated to Japan was not a mistake."

Together with the GIs, Sadao chucked rare goodies like In the meantime, how did 11-year-old George, renamed chocolate and chewing gum from atop army vehicles Sadao, deal with this state of confusion? Though to local children who swarmed around, begging with having been admitted into grade 5, he had difficulty their arms stretched out. Ironically, it was only through understanding his Japanese studies at school, and mingling with the American GIs that Sadao's nisei was teased and bullied. As an insult he was called identity and his status as a shadow in Japanese society "Amerika-jin (American)" by his classmates. This led to emerged from the mist. his playing hooky from school. Instead he would sneak After marrying, his sisters returned to North America. into the U.S. army base. He secured lodging at the army barracks, which became the true "home" for this Sadao remained in Japan to pursue higher education as well as to financially support his aging parents alienated lad. who had no ability to make a living. No compensation The American GIs used Sadao as an interpreter. He money was received from anywhere!

The American GIs used Sadao as an interpreter. He also acted as the camp entrance-gate attendant. Sadao vividly remembered the time at Camp Sugimoto-cho when he guided GIs to a nearby red-light district and negotiated for them in Japanese. Another incident he remembered, even now shivering from goosebumps,



After finishing college, Sadao landed a lifelong position with Takeda Pharmaceuticals Industries, where he was a highly valued professional taking charge of the North American market. After a dignified career, he and his wife settled in Sapporo, where they are enjoying their retirement.

In April 1988, a group of people demonstrated in front of the Parliament Building in Ottawa to protest against the injustice committed in the past by the Canadian government. Among them were former classmates of George's at the internment camp. If George had remained in Canada, he surely would have joined the demonstration, waving a large banner declaring "Discrimination: Canada's FELONY!"

George said that he once heard a government official say, "Thanks to the government's internment camp policy, the Japanese Canadians were liberated from a ghetto community and lifestyle."

"Hell no, ridiculous!" George responded. "It was no one else but the Canadian government that 'triple-punched' the Japanese Canadian community. Confiscation of property, compulsory exclusion of Japanese Canadians into internment camps, and finally the blow of deportation were all crimes against humanity."

Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan* has been known as Ushinawareta Sokoku in Japan, which means "Lost Mother Land." But this title can also be applied to the life story of a young Canadian nisei like George Kawabata, who was sent away to Japan 70 years ago.



Former classmates of George Kawabata, including David Suzuki, demonstrate in front of the Parliament Building in Ottawa, circa 1988. NNM 2010.32.33

the first reading of this poem is dedicated to the first peoples of turtle island the second reading of this poem is dedicated to the peoples of the yanbaru the third reading of this poem is dedicated to the nikkei community

let it not happen

poem by jeff tanaka (for that which remains unresolved)

- nidoto nai yoni
- you incarcerate me.
- would you do it again.
- nidoto nai yoni
- you take my culture.
- would you do it again.
- nidoto nai yoni
- you kill my language.
- is it still dead.
- nidoto nai yoni
- how will i return.
- nidoto nai yoni
- you speak for me.
- will you ever learn.
- i speak for myself.

you break me from my god.



Telegrams to Grand Forks, 1942

Sk Ck 39 Nl Vancouver B C May 5th

E Nukataui Rt 1 Grand Forks B C

We leave here tonight expecting meet you in Greenwood tomorrow afternoon Sumokao Yamada already in there stop we hope further negotations in there misses I Nakataui staying Hasting park. M Nakataui.

By Kaitlin Findlay

This is a series of telegrams sent to Etsumatsu Nakatani.

Etsumatsu was a labourer and small farmer who moved to Grand Forks in 1939, having lived in Canada since 1918. He suddenly became vital to hundreds of Japanese Canadians when, in 1942, everyone of Japanese descent was forcibly exiled from the West Coast.

These telegrams, recently donated to the Nikkei National Museum, include a flurry of correspondence from May 1942. Many of them came from people who were incarcerated at the Hastings Park "relocation centre" where they lived in appalling conditions and constant uncertainty. These people contacted Etsumatsu, asking for help. He offered Grand Forks as a place of refuge amidst the chaos of the forced uprooting.

That May, Etsumatsu went to the telegram office, perhaps several times a day. The telegrams reveal snippets of his arrangements with friends and strangers who looked to Grand Forks as a refuge. They detail travel logistics and permission approvals, and reveal the complexity of life under the restrictions of the British Columbia Security Commission. The telegrams are chaotic: they include changed plans, miscommunications, and frustration. On May 11, one of Etsumatsu's brothers chastised him for not helping their third brother: "Why can't Inosuke Nakatani go to Grand Forks when other families get permission [,] why can't you help your own brother[?]"

In a single day, May 9, Etsumatsu confirmed details to move five families—at least 18 people—to Grand Forks. In total, he would help over 360 Japanese Canadians relocate to his hometown. Once they were settled, he continued to be a primary contact for these displaced Japanese Canadians, finding employment, securing homes, and ordering Japanese food for the small town.

The telegrams reveal how Japanese Canadians responded to the discriminatory measures of 1942. They show the resources and networks that people turned to in a time of state-created emergency. More specifically, they document the courage of Etsumatsu and his family in this time of shared uncertainty. Though not forcibly relocated himself, Etsumatsu faced the same uncertainty about his and his family's future in Canada. In spite of this, Etsumatsu extended his generosity in the midst of incredible hardship to help others.