



# NIKKEI IMAGES

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## Kendo in Canada, 1900-1950 by Joseph Svinth



Vancouver Kendo Club gathering to celebrate the promotion of Mr. Matsushita to "Master". (JCNM photo, 1940)

Kendo appeared on British Columbia's Lower Mainland during the early 1910s. For example, Kentaro Tsuzuki established a dojo called Yoki Kan at Steveston (a fishing community located near the mouth of the Fraser River) in 1913. Nineteen-year old Rintaro Hayashi became Steveston's head instructor in 1920. Seven years later Yuichi Akune became head instructor and he subsequently renamed the organization Yosei Kan, a name meaning "roper Upbringing Hall."

By 1940 there were at least six kendo dojo in British Columbia. These were at Vancouver, Steveston,

New Westminster, Sunbury, Whonnock, and Woodfibre. The kendo instructor at Vancouver and Woodfibre was Motoo Matsushita.

Although born in Vancouver around 1918, Matsushita attended high school in Japan. Therefore he was Kibei. While in Japan he earned *dan*

*Continued on page 2*

### Contents

Kendo in Canada, 1900-1950	1
Our Living Treasure: Thomas Kunito Shoyama	3
Tsuneharu Gonnami	4
Why <i>Hakujin</i> Can't Catch Sockeyes or a Japanese Canadian Fishing Legacy?	5
Home Again	6
Spirit of Steveston	8
Galiano Island Vice-Regal Visit	8
Speaking Notes for Mayne Island Japanese Garden Dedication Ceremony	9
The <b>NIPPON MARU</b> Visit	10
JCNM Members Vote YES on Merger	11
Still Lingers On: The 60th Anniversary of the Internment	12
My Experiences During the Second World War	18
Nikkei Week Festivities, 2002	20

## Announcements

Henry Shimizu's Exhibition  
Aug. 15 -Sep. 19, 2002  
JCNM

NIKKEI WEEK  
Sep. 14 - 22, 2002

\*Nikkei 125 Celebration Dinner

\*Obaasan's Garden

\*Talk on Tomekichi Homma

\*Japanese Fishermen's Dedication

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ranking in both judo and kendo, but preferred kendo. So when he returned to Canada in the late 1930s he immediately started a kendo club. The Vancouver classes met inside the judo school located on Powell Street. *"As a little girl on my way home from Japanese Language School I remember looking in the open door to see all the action,"* Jean Okazaki recalled in 1999.

The Steveston instructor was Yuichi Akune. An Issei, he was small and thin, but very strong. His students were of course mostly Nisei and Kibei, and included Masao Hayashi, Katashi ("Ken") Hibi, Yeikichi Matsumura, Makami Shiomi, and Moriharu Tanigami. Classes ran from October to March, and training took place at the Japanese Language School.

Equipment came directly from Japan. Steveston kendoka Yeikichi Matsumura, for example, recalled that his father had bought his armor while visiting Japan. The cost was about \$100, which was a lot of money during the Depression.

In those days holders of *kyu* grades did not receive certificates. Instead instructors simply told them what rank they held. Holders of *dan* grade, on the other hand, received certificates from Japan. Usually the instructors mailed their recommendations to the Dai Nippon Butokukai in Kyoto but sometimes visiting instructors awarded them. Such visitors included Sasaburo Takano (a physical educator and peer of Jigoro Kano who was arguably the most influential kendoka in Japan) in June 1938. Takano's son Hiromasu, a 7-dan, also visited British Columbia during late 1939 or early 1940.

Prewar Canadian *dan* holders were often excellent in competition (*shiai*). The first Canadian kendo tournament of which I am aware is the Yosei Kan

tournament held in Steveston on April 18, 1931. Documentation for this event includes a photo in the City of Richmond Archives. In Washington State, the first tournament of which I am aware is the Seattle Kendo Kai tournament of July 4, 1933. After that tournaments were reasonably regular affairs in both Washington and British Columbia.

Yeikichi Matsumura, who won a Hokubei Butokukai kendo tournament held in Seattle in November 1937, recalled that travel to Seattle was via the Great Northern Railway. The Canadian team had about ten members, and in Seattle it stayed at the Holland Hotel. During the competition Matsumura defeated nine other competitors, thus winning a prize cup awarded by the Consul General of Japan, Issaku Okamoto. Unfortunately during the internment of World War II that trophy was either lost or left behind.

By 1940 a typical season saw a Seattle Kendo Kai tournament in November, a Hokubei Butokukai tournament in late January (venues alternated between Seattle, Tacoma, and Gresham, Oregon), and a Steveston or Vancouver tournament in mid-February. If modern tournaments are any indication, then part of the competition involved each group trying to outdo the others in the quality of the food served to contestants and their parents.

*"Rules regarding contests yesterday did not seem as complicated as they are today,"* recalled George Izui, then a Seattle kendoka. In November 1937, Seattle held a tournament in which Tokichi Nakamura of California brought two of his kendoka. One of the competitors was Moriharu Tanigami of Steveston, who recalled, *"In the finals, I, a 3-dan, was challenged by a student of Mr. Nakamura for the championship and I won. For this*

*achievement I received a trophy donated by the Japanese Consul that was presented to me by Mr. Issaku Okamoto.*" Once the tournament was over and the trophies handed out, kendoka usually celebrated by going to a restaurant for dinner.

As in the United States, the Canadian government began relocating Japanese Canadian men almost immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor and by September 1942 even women and children had been relocated to concentration camps located in the Kootenays or Alberta. Although the US guarded its equivalent "relocation centers" with soldiers and barbed wire, the Canadians guarded what they termed "Inland Housing Centres" mostly with open space. But, while the American camps had fences they did include schools, electricity, and running water, amenities the Canadian camps didn't have until the summer of 1943. Nor did the Canadian government allow Japanese Canadian men to enlist in the Canadian military; instead they had to join the British Army. Finally Japanese Canadians were told that they must either relocate east of the Rockies or prepare for postwar repatriation to Japan. This caused severe disagreements within the Japanese Canadian community — those who chose to relocate were called dogs and those who chose to repatriate were called fools.

Anyway, while most Japanese Americans rejected kendo as a form of cultural nationalism during World War II, many Japanese Canadians embraced it. There was, for example, a kendo club at the internment camp located near Angler, Ontario as early as 1943. At its peak, the Angler camp housed about 760 men. The Angler kendo dojo was

known as Shoko Dojo, a name that essentially translated as "Mr. Matsushita's Lakeside Kendo Club." The reference was of course to its location, near Lake Superior, and to its head instructor, 25-year old Motoo Matsushita. Assistant instructors included 26-year old Ken Hibi, 23-year old Sakuzo Furukawa, and 42-year old Haruo Ichikawa. Equipment consisted of about a dozen sets of kendo armor and assorted *shinai* [bamboo practice weapons] that the Canadian YMCA arranged to have shipped to Angler from storage sites in British Columbia.

Learning to judge matches was important because the Shoko Dojo held two tournaments, one in August 1944 and another in August 1945. The Angler kendo club had maybe 50-60 members. Most had never done kendo before the war, but by the time they left three years later many were ranked 1-*dan*. Instructor Matsushita gave his own certificates to these people, as of course there was no access to the Japanese associations at the time.

Following his release from Angler in April 1946 Motoo Matsushita went to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. After a couple years there he accepted relocation to Japan. He opened a kendo school in Gumma Prefecture but it lost money and eventually he had to close it. Nevertheless he stayed with kendo and by the time of his death during the early 1990s he was ranked 7-*dan*. Ken Hibi decided not to teach kendo in his postwar home in Thunder Bay, Ontario, in large part because he couldn't afford the multiple sets of armor a class required. In 1999 Hibi was 82 years old. During the summer he played nine holes of golf several times a week and went walking almost every morning. His most

important hobby, though, was the rock garden in front of his house. It had a stone lantern and everything, and elicited many compliments from visitors. *"How do you do that?"* people asked him, knowing that he had had cataract surgery and other ailments associated with advanced age. *"Kendo"*, he replied: *"I took up the kendo and I tell myself because I did I must watch my conduct and behavior every day. I know I don't want to spoil my name or the name of my kendo club. Because of that people respect me. I think, I believe, that all this is due to my kendo. I got a lot of influence from my kendo."*

Canadian wartime kendo practice was not restricted solely to the internment camp at Angler. For example, the Japanese Canadian National Museum owns a photo showing members of the kendo club at Kaslo, British Columbia during 1944. Meanwhile at the Buddhist church in Raymond, Alberta, Moriharu Tanigami taught kendo to about forty students. Tanigami returned to Steveston after the Canadian government authorized Japanese Canadians to return to the coast in 1949, and he and Rintaro Hayashi almost immediately set about reorganizing what would become the Steveston Kendo Club. Club members joined with members of the Steveston Judo Club to organize permanent training areas, and in 1972 the City of Richmond, the Steveston Community Society, and the Japanese Canadian Community Association jointly financed a Martial Arts Centre. Offering judo, karate, aikido, and kendo, the Centre therefore played an important role in preserving Japanese Canadian culture into the twenty-first century. a

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## **Our Living Treasure: Thomas Kunito Shoyama by Midge Ayukawa**

It was a chance remark by Tommy Shoyama in mid-May that

alerted me to the fact that he had received yet another honour to add

to the long list of recognitions for his

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*Continued on page 4*



accomplishments and services. The latest honour was the naming of a meeting room in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria as the Tom Shoyama Room.

On the front page of the January 24, 2002 issue of *The RING*—The University of Victoria's Community Newspaper is a photo of Tom holding "a photo of himself taken during his days as an advisor to former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau." (See *NIKKEI IMAGES*, July 1997, Vol. 2, No.3.) To quote further from *The RING*: "Appropriately, Shoyama's photo will face Trudeau's portrait across the meeting room's table."

"Shoyama was honoured for his work as a former faculty member of the school and his life of public service, including positions as Canada's deputy minister of finance and special advisor to the Privy Council on economic aspects of the

constitution."

"During the Jan. 17 meeting room naming ceremony, speakers recalled that while Trudeau sported the roses in his lapel, it was Shoyama who grew them. The horticulture-loving economist was born in Kamloops in 1916. Between 1939 and 1945, Shoyama worked as editor and publisher of a civil rights weekly newspaper, described as a "lifeline" for Japanese Canadians in internment camps, and served briefly in the intelligence corps of the Canadian army. Following the end of the Second World War, he began his public service career with the Saskatchewan government in 1946."

"Shoyama also holds the Order of Canada, the Order of the Sacred Treasure from the government of Japan, and a 1999 honorary degree from UVic."

One of the speakers noted that, "in Ottawa he [Tom] was famed

for the habit of sitting silently through meetings until they approached their close, and then offering the few lines that shaped the outcome. People usually didn't bother continuing the debate after Shoyama had said his lines." He also described Shoyama as "un petit garde Kamloops, son of a Japanese immigrant, who was unceremoniously escorted out of British Columbia by the RCMP, and forty years later, having served in his country's army at war, having served at the very peaks of his country's public service, returned home wearing the highest honours his country can bestow upon a loyal citizen." He referred to Tom as "a Living National Treasure." To this most apt tribute, we Japanese Canadians can merely nod our heads in complete agreement, in awe, and with pride. a

## Tsuneharu Gonnami, by Mitsuo Yesaki



Tsuneharu Gonnami (Stan Fukawa photo, 2002)

Tsuneharu Gonnami, a native of Hikone City, Shiga Prefecture, graduated in 1962 from the Japan Library School of Keio University in Tokyo. He worked for the Technical Library of the Meidensha Electric Manufacturing Company Research Library in Tokyo from 1962 to 1969 before his immigration to Canada.

Gonnami met many Japanese Canadians in Japan after World War II as many repatriates were originally from Shiga Prefecture. Their stories about Canada piqued his interest to immigrate to Toronto in September 1969. He applied for employment with the Asian Libraries of the Universities of Toronto and British Columbia. The Asian Library of UBC accepted and sent him an airline ticket and he commenced working in October 1969. During his long tenure with the Asian Library, Gonnami participated on several

significant collection and preservation projects undertaken by the Library.

In the autumn of 1970, Basil Stuart-Stubbs (Head Librarian, UBC), John Howes (Professor of Japanese Studies, UBC), Tsuneharu Gonnami and Mitsuru Shimpo (Professor of Sociology, University of Waterloo) met with Tsutae Sato, the former principal of the Vancouver Japanese School. Sato suggested a systematic survey be conducted to collect historical documents and published books about Japanese Canadians. Stuart-Stubbs appointed Gonnami as liaison between the UBC Library and the Japanese community. He was responsible for gathering material in British Columbia and the other provinces, except Ontario. Shimpo collected material in Ontario and sent it to UBC. The Japanese Canadian Collection is housed in the Special Collections Division of the

Main Library and consists of 41 linear feet of unpublished documents, 240 published books, 8 periodicals, 850 photographs, 2 films, 140 photographs and 134 audiotapes.

Gonnami assisted in a program initiated by the UBC Library in 1987 to preserve journals, unpublished documents and monographs on microfilm. The first project involved the microfilming of the *TAIRIKU NIPPO* (68 reels), a Japanese language newspaper published from 1908 to 1941. A generous donation by Mr. and Mrs. Naomichi Nishimura of Hikone Public Library to the UBC Library provided funds for the master microfilm of this newspaper. Other newspaper projects included

microfilming the 1941 issues of the *KANADA SHINBUN* and *NIKKAN MINSHU* on two reels in 1994 and the 1938-1948 issues of *THE NEW CANADIAN* (4 reels) in 1999. The entire Japanese Canadian Collection was microfilmed onto 19 reels in 1996.

A joint publication project between the UBC Library and the Fuji Publishing Company of Tokyo for preserving important Japanese Canadian historical books began in 1994. Gonnami was appointed as editor and translator for Series II. Volume 1 to 5 of Series I and Volume 6 to 10 of Series II were published in 1995 and 2000, respectively. The officials of the Fuji Publishing

Company presented two sets of the *Kanada Iminshi Shiryo* to the Asian Library on December 5, 2000. The Company also donated a complete set of these volumes to The Japanese Canadian National Museum. An English supplement, comprised of tables of contents in English and a translated version of *Kanada to Nihonjin*, was published in February 2001.

Mr. Toshiro Ozawa, Consul-General of Japan gave the keynote speech "*Japan's Visions for the Asia-Pacific*" at a retirement reception held for Tsuneharu Gonnami on May 31, 2002 at the Institute of Asian Research, UBC. Gonnami presented a lecture titled "*The Japanese Collections at UBC Libraries*". a

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## Why *Hakujin* Can't Catch Sockeye or a Japanese Canadian Fishing Legacy? by Paul Kariya

During the late 1960's on the fishing docks of Ucluelet it was pretty well common knowledge that the Japanese Canadian trollers would load up their boats with sockeye while the non-Japanese Canadian fishermen could hardly catch one or two incidental sockeye. At its worst, the Nikkei boats unloading at the BC Packers camp, "Retriever II" or the Ucluelet Fishing Company would have 200 – 300 sockeye per day while the non-Nikkei vessels might have 2 – 3 sockeye. In a previous era this type of disparity might have led to riots and discriminatory retaliation. Was there something racial or cultural in this? What was going on?

At its peak (and there were probably 2 peaks, pre and post World War 2), Japanese Canadians dominated the West Coast fishing industry. Their influence touched all aspects of the fishing enterprise from boat building, gear design, fishing, fish transport, to processing. Large and colourful communities existed in places like Steveston, Ucluelet,

Tofino, Prince Rupert, Port Edward and elsewhere. These were full featured places with schools, stores, churches and various clubs and associations. Pre-war, despite the restrictive and discriminatory actions of governments to limit the Japanese Canadian influence it still pervaded. Finally (and some commentators would say fishing was the catalyst), in 1942 the federal Cabinet of the day took drastic action under the War Measures Act to dispossess and remove all Japanese Canadians from the coast. This action solved the competitive disadvantage problem that many non-Japanese Canadian fishermen felt they had been under.

Boats gone, homes gone, people gone; West Coast fishing following the war years was very different from what it had been. Many fishing company executives lobbied the federal government to permit Japanese Canadians to return to the coast to fish and work in the canneries. Bizarre, but fishing might in part have been a political impetus

to get the Nikkei back on the coast of British Columbia. During the second peak, the dominance of the Nikkei fleet was not as huge as during the pre-war period, but none-the-less it was just as significant.

Today most of the fish canneries of the coast are gone – fish processing is concentrated in Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Ucluelet (for hake). Commercial salmon fisheries are a remnant of what they were only a decade ago. There are now only a handful of Japanese Canadian fishermen who have endured and continue to make a living from the sea. But nobody can take away the legacy that the Japanese Canadian fishermen have left on the West Coast fishery and probably the making of Canadian history. The old-timers (Nikkei and non-Nikkei) can pick out the stylistic influences of Japanese Canadian boat builders (many who also fished). Atagi, Kishi, Nakade, Taguchi and many others produced vessels with unique

sea-kindliness or flare. Similarly, the impacts on gear design and fishing technique are significant but largely undocumented and untold. Consider the early development of the beam trawl shrimp and prawn industry. Indeed, in the 1980's when the Vancouver Canadians baseball team needed annual net maintenance on its large nets to protect fans from foul balls at Nat Bailey Stadium, they turned to an all Nikkei former fishermen crew for help!

A group of retired Japanese Canadian fishermen have been meeting bi-weekly for over a year to develop and implement a project to recognize and thank all Japanese Canadian fishermen. Phase 1 began with a thank you dinner in which all Japanese Canadian fishermen, their spouses, widows and widowers over the age of 60 met in Steveston and had a wonderful reunion in September 2001. People came from as far away as Toronto and Prince Rupert to attend. And despite the degradedness and infirmities that age brings, the celebration was joyous and the pride of these people evident.

Phase 2 is a monument to be unveiled on the Fraser River in Steveston on September 20, 2002, as part of Nikkei Heritage Week. The Japanese Canadian Fishermen's Committee will unveil a statue which pays tribute to the courage, perseverance and accomplishment of Japa-

nese Canadian fishermen. The formal ceremony will take place on a site located just east of the former Imperial Cannery and west of the Britannia Shipyards. Local Richmond artist, Junichiro Iwase has captured the strength, poise and will of the fishermen in a simple but powerful image.

Former Japanese Canadian fishermen and their spouses, current fishermen, special guests and dignitaries will gather on site to witness the unveiling.

Phase 3 will commence in the fall of 2002. The Japanese Canadian Fishermen's Committee wants to research and publish a photo-history of the development of the fishing industry and communities in British Columbia from the perspective of the contribution of Japanese Canadians. Subjects to be covered could include: where did the pioneer first generation come from in Japan, what are prefectural influences they brought, what were the new innovations vs. adaptations, what was everyday life like in the Japanese Canadian fishing community, the role of women, key people and key places, etc. There is much to be researched and interpreted that the Fishermen's Committee in partnership with the Japanese Canadian National Museum wishes to undertake.

Is it true that Hakujiin fishermen could not catch sockeye on troll gear? Yes, for a number of years, until the innovation that the Japanese Canadian fishermen had come up with had been shared and found its way into common usage, it looked like non-Japanese Canadians couldn't catch sockeye. The innovation was to troll near dead slow speed, with Red Hotspot flashers or Abe and Al Flashers with a huge pitch in them, towing short leaders with back mustad hooks with only a bit of red hoochie tied to them with red wool. The adaptations seemed simple, but were a mini-revolution to dogma that had pervaded the troll fleet for generations.

These commemorative projects are being undertaken by the Japanese Canadian Fishermen's Committee in partnership with the Japanese Canadian National Museum as part of the Japanese Canadian community's celebration of 125 years since the arrival of the first immigrant from Japan. Financial support has been received from a large number of Japanese Canadian fishermen, National Association of Japanese Canadians, Consulate General of Japan, Vancouver Japanese Gardeners Association, City of Richmond, CIBC, fishing companies and many community and business donors. a

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## Home Again by Carl Yokota

On Saturday, July 6, 2002, I accompanied my mother, Ayako, to attend the unveiling of the much-awaited Terminal Island Memorial Monument. It would be my mother's first visit to Terminal Island, California since her birth there nearly 77 years ago.

Two years ago, I first wrote about this pre-WWII Japanese enclave of nearly 3000 residents

south of Los Angeles. The majority of the men were immigrant Japanese fishermen and many of the women worked in the numerous fish canneries or raised their families. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, all of the Terminal Island residents were forcibly removed from their beloved Fish Harbor homes and sent off to interior relocation camps. When WWII ended, some of the

former residents returned only to find that their homes had all been destroyed and any semblance of Terminal Island's once bustling *furusato* was gone forever.

Over the years a tireless group of former Terminal Islanders have dedicated themselves to honor the self-sacrificing contributions of their *issei* parents and grandparents. The Terminal Island Memorial





*Ayako Yokota in front of the Terminal Island Memorial Monument. (Carl Yokota photo, 2002)*

Monument is the latest and most endearing of their many group-initiated projects. With sunny skies and the sound of seagulls in the background, an estimated 800 invited guests, family members and friends gathered at the Memorial site adjacent to the new Los Angeles County Fireboat Station No.111.

With Los Angeles' KABC 7 Eyewitness News' Rob Fukuzaki, whose own great grandfather was a Terminal Island fisherman, acting as master of ceremonies the two hour-long program included a *taiko* drum salute, speeches and attendance by local, city, port authority, state and out of town dignitaries. Also present were several television and newspaper reporters to record this memorable event. There was even a shinto purification rite and the ceremonial breaking of a *sake* barrel and *kampai* toast. Official ribbon-cutters included one of the few remaining Terminal Island Issei, 105-year old Mrs. Shie Shindo of Berkley, California. As the eager crowd of guests looked on, the executive committee members of the Terminal Islanders organization formally unveiled the Terminal Island Memorial Monument.

The Terminal Island Memorial Monument is comprised of several unique design elements. The most striking feature is a 17-foot high replica of an original Terminal Island temple *torii* straddling a raised and walled concrete platform. There is a walkway on each end leading the visitor up to the *torii* gate. Secured into the front of the arched wall are pre-WWII photos and accompanying written captions of Terminal Island life etched into black marble panels. In front of the wall, is a mini Japanese

Zen garden. To one end of the Monument is a bronze, life-like statue of two Japanese American fishermen, one crouched on his legs mending a net looking back towards Fish Harbor, while the other is standing and pulling in a net, looking out towards the sea. The physical features of the statue are very convincing right down to their facial features, muscular arms and fishing needle in one of their hands. Directly behind the bronze statue is a clear glass panel, etched with a Japanese poem and its English translation and a superimposed scene of old Fish Harbor. On the other side of the *torii*, and secured to the seawall are stainless steel panels inscribed with the names of pioneer Terminal Islanders and project donors. My mother's parents, Shigematsu and Koyo Ozaki as well as my grandfather's fishing boat, the **MIO MARU**, are on one of these panels. A time capsule containing some Terminal Island memorabilia was secured inside the base of the bronze statue, which is to be opened in 2042, 100 years after the original forced eviction off Terminal Island.

Near the conclusion of the

*Continued on page 8*



*Ayako Yokota, K. Stanley Yamashita, Yukio Tatsumi, Chiye Tatsumi and Dorothy Yamashita beside the bronze statue of two Japanese American fishermen. (Carl Yokota photo, 2002)*

dedication ceremony the crowd was pleasantly treated to several water-gun salutes by a City of Los Angeles fireboat, which had quietly positioned itself inside Fish Harbor. Afterwards, a luncheon was held at the Ports O' Call Restaurant in nearby San Pedro where over 200 people attended.

For all their hard work the Terminal Islanders led by club president Yukio Tatsumi and through the vision of the late Dr. Robert C. Ryono now have a lasting legacy for all to enjoy. This trip to Terminal Island especially for my mother was a very moving one. Prior to our

attending the ceremonies, she did not know any other former Terminal Islanders. But, not surprisingly, she was immediately and warmly welcomed back into their fold. Once a Terminal Islander always a Terminal Islander. She was finally home again. a

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## Spirit of Steveston by Carl Yokota

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, Canada Day celebrations at the 57<sup>th</sup> annual Steveston Salmon Festival were a smashing success. "Canada's biggest little birthday party" attracted a record crowd in excess of 50,000 visitors to this historic fishing community.

Overcast morning skies soon cleared, drawing thousands of enthusiastic and patriotic visitors to enjoy the over two-hour long, 100 entry-plus Steveston Salmon Festival parade as it made its way through the village of Steveston. This year's honorary Parade Marshall was Steveston resident, Lanky Mizuguchi. At the conclusion of the parade, everyone headed for the Steveston Community Centre site where a variety of unique and crowd-pleasing attractions were featured.

There was fun for the entire family: a Children's Festival, a Trade and Craft Fair, a Flower and Garden Show, Main Stage Musical Entertainment, a midway carnival, baseball games, and many different community food booths, including the always-popular Steveston Salmon Barbecue which sold out quickly.

Steveston's Japanese community was well represented through exhibits and activities held at the Steveston Martial Arts and



*Kotokane-kai members from Niitsu City giving a recital of Japanese folk and popular songs on their taisho kotos. (Carl Yokota photo, 2002)*

Japanese Canadian Cultural Centres. There were displays of model fishing boats, Japanese *bonsai*, *shodo* (calligraphy), *ikebana*, *origami*, pottery, traditional Japanese *ningyo* dolls, miniature Japanese paper dolls, bread dough flowers and handicrafts made by the Steveston's Japanese Senior's Club. Martial arts techniques for judo, kendo, aikido and karate were also demonstrated throughout the afternoon.

A group of Japanese guests from the Kotokane-kai, a music school in Niitsu City, Japan, gave performances on the *Taisho Koto*, a modern version of the Japanese stringed *koto*. They played several

melodic songs including a nostalgic rendition of the late Kyu Sakamoto's 1961 hit song, *Ue o Muite Aruko* (better known as Sukiyaki in North America). The Steveston Buddhist Church volunteers also took part in traditional Japanese *obon* dances, and outside at the Japanese food booths eager and hungry festival visitors quickly queued up to sample favorites such as chow mein, *gyoza*, *sushi*, and *yakisoba*.

At dusk, spectators were treated to a fireworks show held at Garry Point Park. It was a colorful and appealing way to conclude Canada's 135<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations in Steveston. a

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## Galiano Island Vice-Regal Visit by Stan Fukawa

On May 28, two parties of Japanese Canadian visitors left Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal on the

Gulf Islands ferry bound for Galiano and Mayne Islands.

The smaller Galiano Island

group went to mark the visit of British Columbia Lieut. Governor, the Honourable Iona Campagnolo, to





*The Honourable Iona Campagnolo with Jim Tanaka, Mary Ohara, Eizo Hayashi, Moe Yesaki, Masami Hirano and Stan Fukawa at the restored charcoal pit kiln site on Galiano Island. (Stan Fukawa photo, 2002)*

the island of her birth and the site of the Japanese Charcoal Kiln reconstructed by Steve Nemtin. Steve's work has been described in previous issues of this newsletter, as has his research on the subject of Charcoal Pits. Nikkei Images publisher and B.C. fisheries historian, Moe Yesaki, claims that charcoal was important for about 15 years from around 1885 to 1908 when a high temperature fuel was required to solder the cans. Some Japanese fishermen made use of their charcoal-making expertise for additional income in the off-season. With advances in canning technology, charcoal was no longer needed and charcoal production was curtailed.

The Wakayama Kenjin Kai (hereafter WKK) was represented by the current president Eliza Hayashi, past-president Jim Tanaka, former president Masami Hirano and Mary

Ohara who was also born on Galiano Island. Past-president Jim Tanaka spoke on behalf of the WKK as it was under his leadership that the group had erected the bronze plaque marking the site. The particular style of the Galiano charcoal pit was identified as coming from Wakayama Prefecture and this was the impetus for the WKK to assist in preserving this relic of Japanese Canadian history. Also, in the very brief ceremony unveiling the notice board describing the kiln, Jim Tanaka paid tribute to the hard work and ingenuity of the Wakayama pioneers and their important contributions to the history and economy of the province.

The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, arrived at the kiln with her ceremonially attired aide-de-camp. The rest of us were still in our rain-gear but she was the picture of

elegance and impressive both in her graciousness and her down-to-earth approachability. In her speech, she explained that she was a child of nine when suddenly her Japanese Canadian class-mates were gone from the Prince Rupert school, followed a year later by the removal of her First Nations friends and school-mates to residential schools. She had not realized at the time the pain that her chums would be facing in their respective exiles.

She spoke of the injustices to Japanese Canadians who had proven their loyalty by volunteering for the Canadian forces during the First World War. She acknowledged the errors of the past and the better times that have allowed us to see the contributions that all the different groups have made to the development of our country. It was a short speech but one that showed both her first-hand knowledge and her sympathy for those who had suffered unfairly.

Allan Forget of the Galiano Club presented the Museum a videotape of interviews with Galiano old-timers recalling the early days of the community, including a five-minute segment with Mary Ohara on the Japanese settlement of 60 years ago. Many photos were taken, one of which appears here. Representing the Museum were Mitsuo (Moe) Yesaki, our publisher, and Stan Fukawa, your scribe. Our thanks to Steve Nemtin and Martha Miller for their kind hospitality and wonderful luncheon, and to the Galiano Society for their gracious afternoon tea. a

## **Speaking Notes for Mayne Island Japanese Garden Dedication Ceremony by Jenji Konishi**

Your Honour, the Honourable Iona Campagnola, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia; Members of the Mayne Island Parks and Recreation Commission; Mayne Island residents; Ladies and Gentle-

men:

On behalf of the Japanese Canadian families who resided on Mayne Island prior to April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942, I wish to thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality

extended to us on this special occasion.

We thank you for your warm friendship, you community spirit and leadership, which have been

*Continued on page 10*

demonstrated through the development and dedication of this beautiful garden. Your actions have provided a legacy of goodwill for the generations to follow.

What happened on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942? This was the day, 60 years ago, when Canadians of Japanese ancestry – 50 people from 11 families – were forcibly removed from Mayne Island, as were 21,000 other Japanese Canadians living within 100 miles of the BC coast. All these people forced from their homes were sent to the interior of British Columbia to internment centres or to camps east of the Rockies. All this occurred as a result of the bombing of Pearl Harbour by Japan on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

This action had terrible significance. We Canadians of Japanese ancestry were declared

enemy aliens, divested of all human rights and freedoms; properties were confiscated and sold without our permission for a fraction of their worth; and as mentioned before, we were forced to move from our homes.

We on Mayne Island were very fortunate indeed to have so many friends in the community who stuck by us and provided friendship and support, prior to, during and after World War II. This support was and still is very deeply appreciated. We are especially thankful to Marie Elliot, daughter of the late Fred and Margaret Bennett and for their family's support. Marie's book, *Mayne Island and the Outer Gulf Islands – A History*, was published in 1984 and related much about the Canadians of Japanese ancestry who resided there.

Today's events, the buffet

luncheon at the Lighthouse, the ceremony of the dedication of the Japanese Garden, and the memorable words of our Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Iona Campagnola, all serve to highlight the continuing friendship and the recognition that Justice came in our time, whatever rights or wrongs were done during World War II.

As guests and recipients of what Mayne Island Parks and Recreation Commission has done today, we Canadians of Japanese ancestry shall be forever thankful and grateful. a

*(This address was delivered by Dick Nakamura at the Japanese Garden Dedication Ceremony on Mayne Island on May 29, 2002. The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, unveiled the plaque dedicated to the Japanese residents of the island.)*

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## THE *NIPPON MARU* VISIT by Kelvin Higo



*NIPPON MARU* at moorage with all sails set for appreciative on-lookers. (Larry Maekawa photo, 2002)

The *NIPPON MARU* visited Steveston and was moored on the Fishing Pier at the foot of No. 3 Road from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of July.

Richmond Tall Ships Committee requested the Steveston Japanese Canadian Community Centre to become involved in the

hosting of the cadets and crew of the *NIPPON MARU* as the cadets wished to have a goodwill baseball game against members from the local community. Helping with the event were Kelvin Higo, Ross Sakai, Marty Tanaka, Julie Matsuyama and Kay Higo. Julie and Kay took care of the

food purchasing and preparation for the barbeque after the ball game. The Committee also approached Jim Tanaka of the Wakayama-Kenjin-Kai to host the crew and cadets and the Kenjin-Kai graciously offered to sponsor a luncheon.

The Captain and crew had many official visits to attend during their stay, including a Captain's Reception held on the ship on the evening of July 11<sup>th</sup>. However, Sunday was left free for the officers, crew and cadets to relax and take in the local sights.

Arrangements were made to have some tour guides take the cadets on a walking tour of Steveston. Mr. Toshio Murao, Mr. and Mrs. Mits Sakai, Mr. S. Morishita, Mrs. Frank Sakai and Mrs. Tabata enthusiastically volunteered. Cadets were first driven to the Britannia Historical Shipyards for a tour of the Kishi Boat Works and the adjacent shipyard. They were then taken to the Steveston Community Centre

where they disembarked on a walking tour of Steveston. The tour ended with a visit to the Gulf of Georgia National Museum where the cadets were hosted by the museum and taken on a tour of that facility.

Upon returning to the community centre, the cadets and officers were taken through the park to the Steveston Buddhist Church where they were feted to a delicious lunch hosted by the Kenjin-Kai. President Hayashi welcomed the invited guests including Mayor Malcolm Brodie and his wife, Councillor Harold Steves and various City staff.

After the luncheon, the cadets changed out of their uniforms to play baseball on two fields in Steveston Park. All members of the Steveston community teams were comprised of persons of Japanese ancestry. One team was comprised of girls, most of them from various teams in Richmond. The other team was made up of local males between the ages of 15 to 21 years. The cadets ranged in age from 20 to 23 years. Four mini games, each of four innings duration, were played to

accommodate the number of cadets wanting to play baseball. All games were enthusiastically watched by members of the community, many who were seniors watching their grandchildren play baseball for the very first time.

The team players enjoyed a short rest period after the spirited baseball games, and then were invited to a barbeque of hamburgers, hot dogs and watermelon. Afterwards it was noted that all the cadets were walking around the park with their heads looking down. Kay Higo inquired of the Captain whether anyone had lost something, whereupon the Captain chuckled and stated, "*No, the cadets are just picking up all the garbage!*"

Once the area was clean, the cadets all gathered before their hosts and sang a rousing version of "sailing, sailing". The hosts responded by singing "row, row, row your boat" and then to the surprise of everyone, the cadets and crew led by the captain shook hands of all the hosts for the enjoyable day that they had had. Almost every person participating in this community

event, especially those playing baseball expressed their thanks in being allowed to be part of this event. The cadets and crew especially appreciated the participation of the community in the celebrations of their visit.

The cadets noted the welcome they received from the local residents was such that when they were walking to Steveston or back to their ship, they never completed their walk without someone stopping to offer them a ride.

On Monday, one of the female ball players ran into a few of the cadets. The cadets immediately recognized her as the girl the pitcher had almost hit with one of his pitches during the game. The trio of cadets immediately bowed to the girl and expressed their apologies and they all had a good laugh over the incident. The girl then offered to take the trio shopping to Richmond Centre where they all had lunch together.

Everyone is excited of the prospect of the *NIPPON MARU* visiting Steveston again when the next Tall Ships event takes place. a

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## Japanese Canadian National Museum Members Vote YES on Merger by Stan Fukawa

On July 20, 2002, the JCNM held a Special General Meeting at the National Nikkei Heritage Centre to decide on a proposal to merge the Museum with the National Nikkei Heritage Centre Society (NNHCS). Craig Natsuhara served as Chair. Larry Okada, of Staley, Okada, Chandler and Scott, the JCNM auditors, counted the ballots. Of the 357 members eligible to vote, 245 or 69% participated, mostly by mail-in ballots with some ballots brought in by members to the meeting. Of those voting, 233 members or 95.1% voted for the merger.

Past President Frank

Kamiya, a long-standing and continuing leader of the Museum, expressed great satisfaction in both the percentage of members who participated in the voting and the overwhelming percentage of those who were in favour. "*This is a clear and strong mandate to go ahead,*" he said. The process had begun a year earlier with talks between the Merger Committees from the two societies. A beaming Mits Hayashi, President of the NNHCS and himself a JCNM member, congratulated the JCNM Board on having achieved the strong support of the membership in going forward to the next stage in the

development of the Museum as part of an integrated organization in combination with the NNHCS.

JCNM President Stan Fukawa raised his wineglass to lead the gathered party in a toast to the success of the yet-to-be-named society which will rise out of the merger process. He thanked all the people attending the meeting for their support as well as the many more who took the time to read the material and participate in the mail-in ballot.

The resolution that was passed by the membership includes:

(a) adoption of a new name

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*Continued on page 12*



for the merged organization such as “Japanese Canadian National Museum and Nikkei Heritage Centre” or similar mutually agreeable name which clearly expresses the concept of a Japanese Canadian national museum.

(b) retention by the merged organization of the national mandate of the JCNM and the original museum goals outlined in the JCNM Constitution.

(c) board of directors of the merged organization

is to be constituted for the first three years of half of the directors from each of the two groups, JCNM and NNHCS.

(d) merging together of the assets and liabilities of the JCNM and the NNHCS.

It is anticipated that the process for merger will go ahead fairly quickly and be completed within a few months. a

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## 2002 A.D. – 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Internment

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### Still Lingers On: The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Internment.

#### Part 2 “A Ganbare Family” by Tom I. Tagami

This is the second part of my account of my family’s forced removal from the West Coast of British Columbia during the Second World War. These are my memories of our stay in Hastings Park, and our subsequent move to Slocan City, an internment camp in the interior of British Columbia.

Hastings Park was not a comfortable place to be in, as a person never knew when you’d get a paper to sign with no choice given. I could name quite a few who sided with the British Columbia Security Commission in order to better their own position, but I will keep it confidential.

I spent close to three months in Hastings Park. There wasn’t a moment to relax. In the middle of our sleep, around 3:00 a.m., they would come around with a sprayer and spray us with disinfectant to prevent any serious sickness in the park. Other times they would demand that we show them our identification cards to see if we were legally in the park.

For breakfast we lined up outside, rain or shine, to get a serving of cold mush in a tin bowl and greasy bacon with a cold fried egg on a tin plate. It wasn’t very appetizing and most of it went in the garbage. The only thing that anybody wanted from the kitchen was a slice or two of buttered bread to fill their stomachs.

I was one of the janitors in the kitchen and one day they had a hunger strike due to the poor food. It kept six of us busy hauling garbage cans out to where a truck came to pick it up. Everybody complained but it didn’t do much good. They called the food by some fancy names, such as Salisbury steak or shepherd’s pie, but it was always plain old hamburger with chunks of vegetables cooked together. My brother and I were on the afternoon shift and the cooks always had some salmon or good meat put away for us, so it made up for the sloppy cans of garbage we had to wheel down a ramp.

One Saturday evening after we finished our work, I sat by the window looking across Hastings Park at a

dance hall called Happyland. The dance hall was just on the other side of the fence, where people were allowed to come and go freely. I watched a lively bunch of young people about my age – Caucasians – dancing to the popular music of Glenn Miller, such as *In the Mood*, *Moonlight Serenade*, and other songs. It was such a contrast to the miserable living conditions we were



*Slocan ice rink where we bunked and ate our meals on the tables set up on the dusty dirt floor. Goal net in background. Slocan, BC. (Tom I. Tagami photo, 1942)*



*Camp 5 crew at Passmore waiting for truck to take us home to Slocan, Friday after work. Back L-R: Yuki Maruya, Bernie Yokota, Mits Terakita, Tom I. Tagami. Front L-R: Bill Isoki, Joe Eguchi, Gen Nakahara. (Tom I. Tagami photo, ca. 1945)*

experiencing inside Hastings Park. It really hit me how unfair it was, that even though we were Canadian born, just because we were a visible minority, we were held in a barbed wire enclosure under guard. I was saddened at the thought that I was as Canadian as they were, but I was completely segregated from them.

By far the saddest part of Hastings Park was seeing women with three or four children and about a six-month old baby strapped to their backs, stuck in the smelly old live-stock buildings, trying to dry diapers in the rainy weather. Their husbands were stuck in the road camps in the Rockies, so the onus was on them to do things themselves. However, over time, Hastings Park was getting filled up. The authorities decided to recall the married men from the road camps, and sent them to ghost towns to help the carpenters build tar paper shacks and renovate the old hotels, so that the families in Hastings Park could be moved away from the coast.

Once approval came through for families to live together as a group in the internment camps, the BC

Security Commission needed loggers to cut wood and carpenters to build shacks to accommodate the people stuck in Hastings Park. My older brother and I decided to venture out to parts unknown and signed up with about three hundred married and single men to go to Slocan City. We left Vancouver on June 29, 1942 and arrived in Slocan City on a hot 100-degree day on July 1.

There was some kind of celebration going on, but we were anxious to get settled in before it got too late. They said we had to transport our own baggage about two blocks or so from the train station, where there was an old rickety skating rink. They had not built an office yet, so the supervisor came out from an old shack to meet us. With his hands behind his suspenders, all he said was, “*My name is Hartley and you take orders from me.*” We complained about having to carry our own baggage, and he replied, “*If you don’t do as I say, I’ll ship you all to prisoner of war camps,*” so we reluctantly trudged up the road with our baggage to the old skating rink.

There were already a few men staying there, and they had constructed a bunch of double-decker beds in pairs. This was a very old outdoor skating rink, with a galvanized tin roof and a dusty dirt floor. The wallboards were loose and flapping around, and some had fallen off. The bunk beds were set up in one end of the rink, in the middle were tables to eat at, and a kitchen took up the other end. The kitchen area was only partly walled, with the cooks making food on stoves practically in the open air, flies and all. Talk about unsanitary.

Somehow we got to our bunks and settled down for the night. My brother and I slept side by side on an upper bunk. The next morning he said he wasn’t feeling too well, so he stayed in bed. When we were

ready to go to work cutting cordwood, they told us to walk to work. We balked about it but finally decided to walk the half-mile or so. But when we came back for lunch, my brother was not in his bunk, and our friend said he went to see the nurse.

When I came back after work and all my bedding and belongings were gone, I asked what was wrong and was told that my brother had caught the mumps. Because we were bed partners, they had moved our stuff to an isolation shack. Just my luck! I had to stay there with him for three weeks, not allowed to go near anybody else. There was a family of three in there with us, as their young boy had also caught the mumps. At least we had company, but it was still a boring three weeks for me. To make matters worse, the shack was located beside an old mine mill building being renovated into small rooms for people to live in. On top of the daily construction noise next door was a big one-cylinder diesel engine going

*Continued on page 14*

*Tom I. Tagami high rigging a spar tree for the Passmore Lumber Co. (Tom I. Tagami photo, 1945)*



"Thump! Thump! Thump!" for 24 hours a day to keep the town supplied with electricity. It was only by the very end of the isolation period that we managed to grow accustomed to all the noise.

There had been lightning and thunder every day since we arrived in Slocan. During every cloudburst, the old tin roof on the rink would start leaking. Either we got cooked in there on the hot days, or everything became soaking wet when it rained. In the meantime we lived in the dilapidated rink and were busy cutting cordwood to have dry wood for winter. Everybody used woodstoves for heat and cooking, so there wasn't much wood left for winter, despite the amount we cut.

We were sent to cut wood on land owned by a man named Shook. He was a strange old man who had a piece of land between Popoff and Bayfarm, with timber on it. His shack was near the Slocan highway in a hollow near Bayfarm, and in the evening you could hear him playing a piano all by himself. It was kind of spooky walking by his house at night, as you could hear the piano music out in the middle of nowhere, and see him playing by lamplight.

One day when we were cutting wood about halfway up Shook's mountain, the bush foreman, a man named Bradner, said we weren't working hard enough. We were paid only 25 cents an hour and had to use that to pay for our keep, so we worked hard for every important cent. We were so angry at what Bradner had said, that we got together and decided to run him out of Slocan. The next morning we put our cross cut saws on the stump and broke the saw blades in half. We chopped rock with our axes, to dull and chip the edges. The Japanese foreman was frantic as we destroyed our tools, but we wouldn't listen to him. As soon as we saw Bradner, we



*Tom I. Tagami and older brother Ichiro in front of Tagami family's BC Security Commission shack, dressed up for Mr. Toyota's funeral in Slocan, BC. (Tom I. Tagami photo, ca. 1943)*

started chasing him down the road to the office. In the meantime, the carpenters were putting up shacks in Popoff, doing the best they could, and with little thanks, so they also decided to run their foreman out of Slocan. By coincidence the two crews were doing the two things at the same time and met at the Slocan highway at the same time and chased both of them out of town. They were both gone the next day. We were all young guys and fed up from being pushed around, so it didn't take much to get things going.

While in the isolation shack with my brother, I put in an application to obtain living quarters for our family of eleven. Dad and mom and the rest of the family arrived in Slocan on July 23, 1942, and we moved into the old mine building once the renovations were finished. It wasn't the best of places they offered us – a 10 x 12 foot room for us seven kids, plus my brother's wife and baby, to sleep in, and a 6 x 10 foot space that doubled as our family mess hall and dad and mom's sleeping space. There were ten or twelve families living in the same

building, and between all of us we had only one 4 x 5 foot stove to cook on, so we had to eat in different shifts. These rooms were also near the diesel engine, so we still had to listen to it thumping away all night. What we had to endure was not easy.

However, the old mine building that we lived in was much safer than some of the other buildings in Slocan City. For example, in the eleven or twelve old hotels in Slocan City, they had partitioned the rooms to make small family living quarters. The first people to arrive in Slocan, many of them from the Skeena River area, occupied most of the downtown buildings. Each floor housed about ten families, who shared one kitchen stove and ate in their own rooms. Each building had one wood-burning heater, with a brick chimney. This was connected to a ramshackle network of six-inch stovepipes on each of the three floors, which served to heat the rooms. It is a wonder that they never had a fire in any of the hotels. A crew of men cleaned the chimneys every day, as they only had wet wood to burn, and this gave off lots of creosote instead of heat. On top of that, when a new bunch of people moved into a building, someone always had bed bugs in their luggage, so the authorities were forever fumigating the hotels. No matter where you lived, there were no pleasant places.

We had put our names in for a 14 x 28 foot and a 14 x 20 foot house in Popoff, and were hoping to move in before it got too cold. Eleven of us were supposed to share the 10 x 20 foot, two-room house, and the three-room, 14 x 28-foot house, equally. But we let my older brother Ich and his family live in the small house, and the rest of us – eight altogether – crammed into the bigger house. It was winter by the time our houses were built, and the wood was cut from second growth trees about



eight inches in diameter, so they were pretty well frozen right through.

It was one of the worst winters in Slocan history. We moved into our house around the middle of November, and it was almost as cold inside the house as it was outside. We had a tin heater and a kitchen stove to heat the tarpaper shack. It took just as much wood to dry the wood in the oven as it did to keep it warm. The temperature was about 15 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit, so when we got up in the morning our blankets were covered with frost and the whole inside of the house was frosted up like the inside of a deep freezer. But we were lucky to have even a shack – lots of people spent that winter in army tents set up in Popoff and in the front of the rink, due to a housing shortage in the camps. It snowed about waist deep one night and the tents collapsed. Everyone had a rough winter to cope with. There were housing shortages in other ghost towns, too, so we all suffered the winter one way or the other.

By late 1943 or early 1944, most of the people were living in houses and had dry cordwood to burn. They built six two-storey apartments for single men and for families whose husbands were in prisoner of war camps. These apartment buildings were meant to house about 100 people each. They built two apartment buildings side by side in Popoff, but ended up using one of them as a school. The single men who lived in the other apartment building slept in 6 x 8 foot cubbyholes, and shared a stove and cooking area of about 4 x 6 foot. The wives and children of men who were in prisoner of war camps took up the rest of the cramped apartments.

We had to create our own entertainment, so about once a month a singing concert was held in the Odd Fellows' Hall. *Issei* would put on a

skit or *shibai*, and the hall would be packed. There was also a younger group of us in our late teens or early twenties. Somebody would say, "Let's have a dance," and regardless of what day of the week it was, we would all pitch in 25 cents each to rent the hall. We would also pay a few bucks to Tak Toyota, who brought his records and P.A. system.

By the fall of 1943 there was less work around the camps, so the single men were laid off and encouraged by the supervisors to go out east. Many men felt that they were being harassed to do so. Families like ours with lots of young men old enough to work were being pushed hard to go to sugar beet farms on the prairies. Many of the families from the Fraser Valley went directly to sugar beet farms as a family group. They had a rough time, working extremely hard and living in rickety shacks in farmers' fields, so they told the families who were still in BC not to come to the prairies.

The young men started leaving in groups, hoping to be allowed to work in Toronto or Montreal. By the summer of 1943 I was laid off too, so the supervisors,

especially Fred Aydon, were always after me to sign up to go East. He even had a sign on his desk that said, "*Go East Young Man*." I used to tell him it should be "*Go west young man*" instead of "*east*". But as long as you didn't sign any papers, they couldn't send you out.

Families were reluctantly going to sugar beet farms in order to stay together as a family unit. I used to tell them if we stuck together and didn't budge, the BC Security Commission couldn't do anything but keep us here. But you know the old Japanese saying, *Shikata ga nai* [it can't be helped]. People began to say, "I guess we'll go too." I used to tell them "*Ganbare* [perseverance] is the attitude." The farmers would look them over, and the families with the most able-bodied workers were picked first. When they got to their destinations, they found that there were many other families who had come from other ghost towns, all stuck on the prairies like a bunch of slaves. After the BC Security Commission got people out of the province, they didn't care about anyones' well being anymore.

Rev. G. Nakayama used to



*Saying goodbye to young men heading east. Photo taken in front of Taishodo drug store, Bayfarm, BC. (Tom I. Tagami photo, 1943)*

*Continued on page 16*

film the people working on the sugar beet farms, and then visit Slocan to show the films he had taken. We saw the awful conditions they had to put up with, and no one wanted to go east. But people had no choice – they could either go to the prairies or to northern Ontario, where the work was cutting four-foot pulp wood in snowy, minus 23 to 25 degrees (Fahrenheit) weather. The BC Security Commission had orders to get people out of BC, so if there was a request for a family out east, they would send anyone they could find. More people were sent out than there were jobs available, so the government had to set up a small manning pool in Ontario for temporary shelter until people found a place to go. The main objective was to get the Japanese out of BC.

At about this time, we heard that if Japanese Canadians found work in logging or a sawmill within 50 miles of where they interned, they could stay in BC. My younger brother had turned eighteen, so he and I applied to work as fallers with Cady Lumber and Pole Company in Lemon Creek. There were quite a few Japanese from Lemon Creek camp already working for them. We had to hike up a mountain trail about five miles to our camp. This was much closer than going along logging roads by bus or truck. We found out that logging and sawmill workers were classified as an essential service during wartime, so we couldn't quit or be fired. We went to Nelson on February 7, 1944 to register with the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

Six or seven of us met the supervisors in Nelson and they took us up to the camp. It was cold, with lots of snow, and we slept in a tent with about fifteen others. The tent was heated by one 45-gallon drum stove. All we had were cheap leather boots with no caulk on the soles, so we almost froze our toes off. We had to stay up there for the week, but on the weekend we hiked home and had the shoemaker fix up rubber boots with caulk soles, and our feet were not so cold after that.

I worked at that job until July. Being used to working with logging machinery back home, whenever the operator was sick I used to take his place. Eventually he decided to quit, so I applied for the job, since I had been doing it part time already. But the Japanese foreman talked the camp boss into giving his brother the job. I was really angry with this, so I told the camp boss that I wanted to quit. He said that he couldn't fire me, because I was an essential service worker. So I lay around the camp, getting paid for doing nothing, until he found a way to let me go.

I went to the Unemployment Insurance office in Nelson and told them why I was laid off. Burns' Lumber Company, near Passmore, needed a faller, so I applied there. It was handier for me – there were about 50

Japanese working for them already, so on weekends the lumber company brought us home by truck, and picked us up again at the beginning of the week. I didn't have to hike the trail anymore. I didn't like falling and bucking, but I reluctantly stuck it out for six months, so that I could remain in BC. At that time my work partner decided to go to Japan, and a new logging foreman was hired from the coast. He started high lead logging, which is what I did at home, so I finally got a job that I liked and was familiar with.

The BC Security Commission stopped pushing us to go east for a while, but on February 14, 1945 they came up with a policy that offered us no alternative. We had to move east of the Rockies – get right out of BC – or we would be deported to Japan. These "choices" applied to everyone, regardless of whether we were Canadian born, naturalized Canadians, or Japanese nationals. If you didn't choose, you were classified as uncooperative, no longer allowed to work anywhere in BC, and subject to deportation. Talk about a tough

*Jirosaku and Koyoshi Tagami (Tom I. Tagami's parents) in front of Tagami family's BC Security Commission shack in Slocan, BC. (Tom I. Tagami photo, 1943)*



*Continued on page 10*

decision to make.

Gordon Burns, the owner of Burns' Lumber Company and the man I worked for, was a Liberal, and had quite a bit of pull in Victoria. One of his Japanese office staff told us that Burns had reminded the provincial government that his employees were classed as essential service workers. At the time, there was a big demand for lumber to be shipped overseas. If his Japanese workers were moved out of the province or deported, Burns said he would have to shut down half of his mills. This support came from an unexpected source, but it was good news to hear that our boss wanted to keep us in our jobs. Most of us refused to choose, and said that we would not leave BC. I came home to Slocan that weekend and my parents and siblings had also signed that they wished to remain in BC. I said if it came to a showdown and they decided to deport us, we could always change our minds at the last minute and agree to move east, so we took a chance and left it at that.

In the meantime, more than ten thousand of those living in the ghost towns had signed to be deported to Japan, as they had lost all they had in Canada. It didn't matter where they went, they would have to start over with nothing. As people moved east or were deported, the populations of the ghost towns were slowly dwindling. On August 6, 1945, when the Americans dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, some of those slated for deportation began to wonder if their relatives in Japan would still be alive or not. No one had any direct communication with Japan – we could only read what was in the newspapers – so the bombing really shook the internees. We didn't know what would happen next. Soon after, Japan surrendered to the United States, ending the Second World War.

At this time, Japanese Americans, who had also been removed from the west coast, were allowed to return to their homes and reclaim their property. Some moved east, but most returned to their old homes. We all had high hopes of the restrictions being lifted in Canada, too, but the Canadian government was determined to drive the Japanese out of BC permanently. The War Measures Act expired on January 1, 1946, but the Canadian government maintained its tight control over Japanese Canadians through Order-in-Council P.C. 8418, the National Transitional Powers Act. We were still unable to work, travel or relocate without the permission of the authorities.

Our family rented a two-bedroom house in Slocan and tried to support ourselves, but the BC Security Commission still had final say over our movements. By mid-1946, larger numbers of people started moving out east, to sugar beet farms or to Ontario or Quebec. The

young people who had gone to Toronto and Montreal to find jobs were slowly allowed to move into the suburbs and smaller towns. By late 1946, interior centres such as Slocan, Tashme and Lemon Creek were closed. The head office of the BC Security Commission was moved to New Denver, where they moved the older couples and the disabled, who were unable to survive on their own.

In the meantime they started selling the internment shacks for \$50 – \$75 each, a bargain price for the farmers in the Slocan Valley or Slocan City residents to purchase storage sheds or new houses. If we had known that we would continue to live in Slocan for as long as we did, we would have purchased a few of the shacks ourselves, as city lots cost next to nothing back then. They moved the shacks by dragging them on skids over the snow, towed by a truck. Some people in the Slocan Valley are still living in those old shacks. The unsold shacks left in Lemon Creek, Popoff and Bayfarm were cut into sections, loaded onto flatcars or trucks, and shipped to the prairies, where they were sold to farmers as grain sheds or storage buildings. They would pay you \$10 to cut a house up into sections.

On January 24, 1947, the deportation orders were cancelled. Organizations and individuals had been questioning the treatment of Japanese Canadians, especially those who were Canadian citizens. To us, this expression of public support seemed too little, too late. The BC Security Commission no longer pressured us to go out east, but still restricted our movements. Since our savings and the money from property sales had been used by the BC Security Commission to pay for our internment, we had no financial resources, so we had no choice but to stay in Slocan.

My brothers and I continued to work as loggers, earning 65 cents an hour. We stayed in the lumber camps, and paid room and board. Our dream was always to try and get jobs on the west coast where we used to live, maybe even move back to our hometown on Vancouver Island. We stuck it out in Slocan until the end of 1948, when it came time for our family to make a decision – should we stay where we were, or pack up everything and start all over again somewhere else? Our family had grown to 14, as my brother Ich and his wife Tomi had three more children while we were in Slocan. We had no savings, so we made the sad decision that it would be too hard to move a family of 14 across the province. We stayed in Slocan City and my brothers and I worked hard and saved our money, until we made enough to start our own lumber company. But that is another story. This concludes my memory and experiences of living under the clutches of the BC Security Commission. a



## My Experiences During the Second World War by Tamiko Haraga



*Tamiko Haraga in front of a general store in Greenwood.  
(Tamiko Haraga photo, 1942)*

It was the month of April 1942. I was busy at my store in Steveston, when one of my father's friend brought the news of our evacuation. All Japanese, naturalized citizens or Canadian born were to be moved 100 miles from the coast. I was sixteen years old at the time and was asking a great deal of questions. *"Why us? What did we do to deserve such punishment? I'm a Canadian born citizen."*

Canada has always been a racist country and BC was probably the most racist of the provinces. Racism toward Japanese in BC started back in 1884. The Japanese were a very industrious people. By 1900, there were about 5,000 in BC; most of who were living along the coast and a great many were engaged in fishing. They were good fishermen and it could be said that they dominated the fishing business. They spoke little or no English at that time. The reason for our evacuation was, should Japanese troops attempt to land here, the government was afraid of espionage by the Japanese in British Columbia.

In a few days we stored all our possessions in one of our friend's house for safekeeping. My father had a boat. It wasn't a big, fancy boat, but he owned it and earned a living with it. The boat was turned over to the

government as soon as war was declared with Japan. Each adult was allowed to take 150 pounds and each child 75 pounds of belongings with them. On April 20, 200 women and children and a handful of men set out for Greenwood, 360 miles away from the coast. At the CPR train station in Richmond, friends and relatives came to see us off. We exchanged *"Farewel., Take care. We shall meet again someday"*. Some had tears in their eyes. Some couldn't face the separations, left and went home to wait for their turn. The trip took eighteen hours because of frequent stops. Most of us got sick, because too many people were crowded onto the train. There were about 50 people in each car.

When we got to Greenwood, I was shocked to see only three operating stores, the rest were boarded up. Greenwood was once a boomtown in the early 1900s because of the Granby mine and smelter. It had a population of 6,000 people and twenty-eight hotels along Main Street and up the hillsides. It was a ghost town by 1940. The mayor of Greenwood in 1942 was McArthur, who had read in the newspapers about how the Japanese were going to be relocated from the coast. He read there were thousands in Hastings Park with few interior communities willing to accept them. McArthur felt that these hard-working people from the coast could put some life back into Greenwood. Here was a chance to help the war effort by taking the Japanese and improving the economic conditions of Greenwood. There certainly were a lot of empty rooms in town to rent. Old hotels, once some of the best, were in a state of disrepair, but some were still liveable, after a fashion. McArthur held a public meeting and 48 of the 50 residents voted to ask the government to send the Japanese to Greenwood.

All the families were put in the hotels. The hotels did not have names, but were referred to by numbers. My family and nine other families were put in Number 5. Each family had one room. Small families had a room approximately 10-feet by 14-feet. Our room was larger, about 12-feet by 20-feet, because there were eight of us in the family. The hotels had a stove in the centre of the hall and a toilet and sink at two corners of the hall. Women had a difficult time cooking on the wood stoves, which were about 3-feet by 4-feet in size. Many people wanted to put little stoves in their rooms, but the government would not allow this because of fire hazards. Besides, with a family living in each room, there just was no space for a stove.

It was cold in Greenwood. The fall and winter of 1942 were the coldest in a long time. All the water pipes and toilets froze and we didn't have running water for about a week. There were times we had to drink boiled snow water. We lived in an old building with high ceilings.

The stove in the centre could not begin to heat the floor level. Many people woke up in the morning with frost everywhere: on the windows and on their blankets.

One Sunday morning my 8 year-old brother went to church. After the service, his right ear froze while he was walking home. The earmuffs he was wearing did not help in temperatures of minus 40-degrees Fahrenheit. He started crying so my mother rubbed his ear and in a few seconds his ear went limp like an elephant ear. All of a sudden he stopped crying. There was no feeling in his affected ear. He almost lost his ear, but with some treatment from the doctor he got better in a few days. We weren't prepared for the cold winter, so each of us had to buy warmer clothes.

When we first went to Greenwood, the people there didn't know what kind of people the Japanese were. They were very curious. When the first of us arrived, all the local residents came down to the station to see us, to see what kind of strange people we were. But they found out that we were quite similar to the white people in their way of living, their way of talking and behaviour, so we were able to communicate with each other quite nicely and there was no trouble. The mayor was especially good to us.

Most of us were on welfare during the first four months. We didn't have the money to feed ourselves because of the job situation. I hated the word welfare. We were like beggars. Every two weeks my sister and I took turns in obtaining the tickets. When it was my turn mother said, *"Now comb your hair and try to look neat. You have to see the Commissioner"*. Oh how I dreaded the thought of going down to see him. He was a mean-looking man with a big cigar in his mouth. He never smiled and just looked at

me to see whether I was clean and then handed me the tickets. We never called him by his name, only as the "Cigar Man".

The first two years were the hardest. There were only a few men and they had a hard time getting jobs. A few men did maintenance work around the town fixing up buildings for the newcomers, while others got work on the CPR section gangs. Men doing maintenance work for the government were paid 25-cents per hour. A few men worked for Midway sawmills, nine miles west of Greenwood. My father was one of the men hired by the sawmill that first winter. He earned 47-cents per hour, which was insufficient to raise a family of eight. He was one of the few men fortunate enough to be allowed to stay with his family because of medical reasons. He was stricken with arthritis in his right arm and shoulder just before the war. He was 50-years old when we were evacuated. Sawmill work is difficult for a 50-year old person, so he was hired as a cook in the second year.

In Greenwood, there was a school for the lower grades taught by the Catholic nuns, but there were no facilities for the upper grades until quite a few years later. The first year four girls were hired to work in the stores. There was close to 2,000 Japanese when all evacuees from the coast arrived. As there were insufficient jobs in Greenwood, many young girls went to work on Grand Forks farms, 27 miles to the east. I went to work for a Doukhobor family with my younger sister and a few of my friends. Doukhobors owned most of the farms in the Grand Forks area. They were nice, honest and hardworking people. We also had to work hard. The first year we started the season picking potatoes and tomatoes and by the middle of August we were operating the threshing machine. At the end of the

season, we returned to Greenwood with about \$35 for two months work. We worked on the farms for another two seasons.

At the end of the third year, my mother got a job for me. *"Any other job but that,"* I told my mother when she said the job was for a waitress. She replied *"You should consider yourself lucky to be working close to home and there are so many girls looking for any kind of work"*. Even though I did not enjoy the job, I worked days and nights for four years as a waitress. One day a Japanese American soldier came in for a meal and left me a 25-cent tip. This was a big tip as I was earning 59-cents per hour. He must have realized that I didn't enjoy this job and felt sorry for me.

In spite of all the hardships, we managed to have some entertainment. Every year we had concerts and Japanese movies. This man used to show them in Vancouver before the war, and he bought the machine and the films with him to Greenwood. They were old and scratched, and he used to do all the voices himself.

Most people thought the war with Japan would be over in a short time and that we would return to the coast. However, as the war dragged on, some people started to build their own homes and to move out of the old buildings. Others took the advice of the government and moved their families to the prairies and to Ontario. A few Japanese still remain in Greenwood.

In 1949 my husband and I came back to the coast to find my family possessions were gone. Whether they were looted or confiscated, we couldn't get answers from anyone. Before we were evacuated, I hid a picture behind a wall in our house. When we went to ask, the house had been renovated so the picture was gone. a

## Nikkei Week Festivities, 2002

Members of the Museum will be excited to hear that we are marking the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival in B.C. of Manzo Nagano, the first Japanese immigrant to Canada, by joining with other Nikkei organizations to stage celebrations of various kinds, as follows...

**Sept. 14:** Nikkei 125 Celebration Dinner with honoured guests, The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, Lieut. Governor of B.C.; the Rev. Paul Nagano, grandson of Manzo Nagano; and the Consul General of Japan, Toshiro Ozawa. Entertainment will include a dramatic piece written for the occasion by Craig Takeuchi and some songs appropriate to the theme of Nikkei history. Dinner will be catered by Dubrulle and feature salmon and baron of beef. Tickets are \$125 for two. Silent auction. Venue: National Nikkei Heritage Centre at 6 p.m.

**Sept. 16:** Showings of "Obaachan's Garden" at the Tinseltown Cinema in downtown Vancouver, co-sponsored with Tonari Gumi and the Greater Vancouver JCCA. Director/writer Linda Ohama will speak and answer questions at both showings with the matinee at 4 p.m. (\$15.) and 7 p.m. (\$20).

**Sept. 17:** The Greater Vancouver JCCA will have a session on storytelling, with Linda Ohama at the National Nikkei Heritage Centre at 7:30. Harry Aoki and musicians will reprise the last concert in 1942 on Powell Street.

**Sept. 18:** The Museum will present a talk on Tomekichi Homma and his fight for the franchise which was carried to London and the British Privy Council a century ago. The speaker is Andrea Geiger-Adams, a doctoral student at the University of Washington. Keay Homma, Tomekichi's son, will be on hand to say a few words about his father. National Nikkei Heritage Centre at 7:00 p.m.

**Sept. 19:** Internment Reunion Dinner and Dance – intended for those who are old enough to remember life in the internment camps. Tickets are \$50. Supper is a deluxe o-bento. Entertainment as well as dance music of the period. National Nikkei Heritage Centre at 6 p.m.

**Sept. 20:** At 2 p.m. in Steveston on the waterfront – the unveiling of a memorial statue of a Japanese fisherman – west of Murakami House and Britannia Shipyards, and east of Phoenix Pond. Look for signage on the day. The Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Iona Campagnolo will be in attendance.

**Sept. 20:** Taiko Concert with four local groups: Katari Taiko, Chibi Taiko, Tokidoki Taiko and Sawagi Taiko at the National Nikkei Heritage Centre at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15.

**Sept. 21 – 22:** Nikkei Festival 2002 with food booths, crafts, children's activities, stage performances, martial arts, beer garden, go and shogi, books, etc. 11 a.m. and on at the National Nikkei Heritage Centre. See the schedule in the Bulletin.

The Museum is bringing an exceptional teacher of *Kamishibai* from Japan at this time who will be performing and teaching at Greater Vancouver schools and at the Nikkei Week Festival. The Nagano clan will be represented by a group of twenty people who had booked their hotel rooms at the beginning of August for the occasion. They will share their knowledge of their illustrious ancestor who made his mark in a new country, which was only ten years old when he arrived.

For more information and to purchase tickets, Phone 604-777-7000; FAX 604-777-7001; or e-mail [info@nikkeiplace.org](mailto:info@nikkeiplace.org).

Memberships are a vital part of the Museum, and we welcome your interest and support. New and renewing members from the period May 4, 2002 – August 6, 2002.

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A list of donors for the May 4 to August 6, 2002 period could not be accessed due to staff changes.