



# Nikkei Images

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**Editorial Committee:**

Beth Carter; Stanley Fukawa,  
Grace Hama, Frank Kamiya,  
Kaye Kishibe, Christine Kondo,  
Linda Reid, Edzard Teubert,  
Mitsuo Yesaki, Carl Yokota

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**NIKKEI PLACE**  
6688 Southoaks Crescent,  
Burnaby, B.C., V5E 4M7  
Canada  
tel: (604) 777-7000  
fax: (604) 777-7001  
jcnm@nikkeiplace.org  
www.jcnm.ca  
www.nikkeiimages.com

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*On the Cover*

## ***Koichiro Sanmiya at the Hollow Tree 1920***

by Laura Hough

(Photograph in JCNM collection 1994.41.028, Sanmiya Family fonds)

*Koichiro Sanmiya (1881-1931) had a strong interest in photography and even built a darkroom in his basement. He is posed (second from right) in front of the infamous hollow tree in Stanley Park, a photo opportunity that is still popular today with tourists and locals alike. He taught his children Mamoru and Tatsuo how to develop photographs and his wife Morio saved them in a family photograph album.*

*From the time that Koichiro Sanmiya arrived in Vancouver in 1907 from Sendai, Japan, he maintained a strong involvement with the Japanese Canadian community. Sanmiya was one of a group of leaders in the community who helped raise money to erect a War Memorial in Stanley Park, in commemoration of the Japanese Canadian soldiers who fought in World War I. The group successfully raised the required \$15,000 and the memorial was unveiled in the park on April 9, 1920.*

*Entrepreneurial in spirit, Sanmiya was involved with many businesses throughout his lifetime, including the Strand Restaurant, K. Sanmiya Co., and the Canada Daily Newspaper. He was given the only distillers license in British Columbia when he opened the Vancouver Malt & Sake Company, (which was later sold to Capilano Beers and then to Canadian Breweries). He was a sponsor of the Asahi baseball team, sat on the Board of Trustees for the Japanese Language School and was a member of Japanese Canadian society. Sanmiya also helped start the Nipponjin Kai (the Canadian Japanese Association, now known as the Japanese Canadian Association).*

*(Laura Hough was a Young Canada Works summer student at Japanese Canadian Museum.)*

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## Discovering the Collections by Beth Carter, Director-Curator

It has been such a pleasure to discover the wonderful collections of the Japanese Canadian National Museum. Since I started at the museum in July we have been organizing the collections and preparing for our new storage system, generously funded through the Museums Assistance Program of Canadian Heritage. It is a slow process - but each day I feel that I have an insight into a few more items.

Each photograph, journal, map or artifact has its own story to tell.

The collections of the Japanese Canadian National Museum truly represent the wealth of history for the *issei* and *nissei* in Canada. Through our collections, I am learning

about early fishing communities on Vancouver Island, strawberry farms in the Fraser Valley and the many internment camps in the interior. The early days of Powell Street are represented through tools and equipment used by many businesses in the area. And of course, we have important memorabilia and documentation on the famed Asahi baseball team, who played such a significant role in early Vancouver. The museum is also honoured to be the caretaker of papers, letters and other holdings related to the long struggle for redress. There are so many artifacts and archival materials that reflect the amazing resilience of the Japanese Canadian community

through the years. Thank you to the many community members who have donated their precious collections and memories so that they can be accessible to all Canadians.

NIKKEI IMAGES helps us share those stories. Since 1996, a dedicated group of volunteers has gathered information and oral histories related to the Japanese Canadian experience for inclusion in this publication. It is a wonderful complement to the exhibits we produce. In the near future, we will be updating the design and format, but the content will continue to provide insights into the heart of the community. ❁

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## Twice was Nice: A Royal Japanese Experience by Carl Yokota

What was I thinking? It was 10:51 a.m., Friday, July 10, 2009 and in just over an hour we would be shuttled to the Richmond Olympic Oval to hopefully get a good glimpse of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan. The Olympic Oval is the site of the 2010 Winter Olympics speed skating venue and was one of the key stops for the Japanese royal couple as part of their 12-day, cross-Canada trip to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan-Canada diplomatic relations and help foster and strengthen mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries and their people. The visit also marked 56 years since the then 19-year old Crown Prince Akihito first visited Canada on his way to England for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. This was Empress Michiko's first trip to Canada, and as well the year 2009 celebrates the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Emperor Akihito's accession to the throne and the couple's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary which was celebrated



*Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko acknowledging crowd at the Richmond Olympic Oval. (C. Yokota photo, 2009)*

this past April. Their trip began on July 3 when they arrived in Ottawa for the start of their Eastern Canadian portion of their trip. With stops in Ottawa and Toronto, their Canadian tour would continue on to Victoria and Vancouver before they return home to Japan stopping en route in Hawaii.

Before I left home, however, I quickly checked the BC Ferries schedule and arranged for my overnight hotel accommodations in Victoria. I believe I was getting caught up in the Japanese royal excitement!

The formal City of Richmond invitations had arrived a week prior

and both my Mom and I felt very fortunate to have received them and looked forward to seeing the Japanese royal couple live and in person. What a once-in-a lifetime thrill it would be for even in Japan the average citizen there, rarely if at all, ever get the chance to personally see them. With their ages 75 and 74 years respectively, questions over the Emperor's possible health concerns, and limited trips overseas, it would appear this might be the one and only time we'll ever get to see them. Let's truly hope not!

Upon arrival at the Steveston Community Centre parking lot, we were delighted to see so many familiar faces from the Steveston Japanese community already there. People had arrived early to take advantage of the free shuttle service provided by the City of Richmond on a first come, first ride basis. When it came time to board the mini-shuttles, everyone patiently lined up and had their names checked off a master list of invitees. One by one, everyone climbed on board their assigned shuttles and settled in for the short 10 minute ride to the Richmond Olympic Oval. The first group of four vehicles departed shortly after 12:00 noon. Another group followed a bit later. As we were being driven to the Oval, there was some light chatter and a detectable sense of anticipation on the part of the seniors. They were really looking forward to what would be a very memorable event both for them and the City of Richmond. We were delivered directly in front of the Oval site where we were directed by volunteers to a long row of VIP bleachers set up by the City Of Richmond. A number of prime seats were also available on a first-come basis along the front walkway area where the Japanese Imperial monarchs would pass by heading

towards the Oval entrance. Although the front, roped-off area seats offered prime viewing, most people chose to sit up in the bleachers which offered a higher vantage point as well as a slight breeze. With still over 2 1/2 hours before Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko would arrive and the temperature hovering in the mid-20 degrees C, it was assured to be a long, hot wait. Fortunately, volunteers passed out glasses of water and some large golf umbrellas for those individuals feeling a bit parched and needing cover from the sun. While we waited, several kimono-clad young women from the Tatsumi Japanese Dance group distributed souvenir little flags of British Columbia, Canada and Japan to the crowd. Nearing the arrival of the very special Japanese visitors, the Steveston Tera *Taiko* drummers performed for the audience followed by key introductory remarks by Malcolm Campbell, Mayor of the City of Richmond and a First Nations elder dressed in ceremonial clothes.

At 3:00 pm., under the rumble of a motorcycle-escort, the black vehicle motorcade finally arrived at the Richmond Olympic Oval site. Emperor

Akihito and Empress Michiko had just arrived from Toronto on board their Japan Airlines Boeing 747 government aircraft. Actually, two identical aircraft were flown into YVR, each with their distinctive Japanese red sun symbol or *Hinomaru* on their tails. The Imperial Japanese couple had just spent the first seven days of their 12-day visit in the Ottawa and Toronto area. Met by local, provincial, federal and host First Nations leaders, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko were warmly greeted by the many onlookers with loud applause, friendly cheers and the waving of the little flags. Emperor Akihito, shorter in stature than I imagined, appeared in a grey double-breasted suit while Empress Michiko looked very fashionable in her striped white dress with aubergine-colored accents, black jacket, a small chain-handled black handbag and a very dainty saucer-shaped white hat gently adorned on her grey-coiffed head. Shepherded by a heavy security presence and a large entourage of officials, the Royal highnesses were first directed to the front waterfront plaza where a First Nations Witness ceremony was performed on



*Empress Michiko and Emperor Akihito interacting with the many crowds. (C. Yokota photo, 2009)*

their behalf. Then deliberately the Emperor and Empress made their way towards the Japanese-Canadian seniors who had been waiting for hours to get to glimpse of them, stopping frequently to chat with a number of them. For those in the bleachers, especially for the Japanese-Canadian seniors like my mom and her friends, who grew up in the small fishing village of Mio (*Amerika-mura*) in Wakayama, those all too brief moments were especially special ones. In years past, the Emperor of Japan was considered a *kami* or god so to actually have an opportunity see him in such a public setting was a very rare and unheard of thing. But there they were standing and waving their little flags as the Emperor and Empress passed by. Several times during their walk the Emperor and Empress, looking very relaxed, stopped and politely waved back to the large bleacher crowd.

After a short tour inside the Richmond Olympic Oval meeting with 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic officials and Canadian National Speed Skating team members, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko reappeared outside the front entrance plaza. Upon exiting, The Imperial couple was entertained by the Richmond Youth Honour Choir who sang, 'Field of Spirit,' a song previously written for the Choir for the Olympic Oval's opening ceremonies much to the delight of the Imperial visitors and onlookers. The Royal couple was then presented with souvenir 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games pins by local Richmond youth hockey players before being escorted to their awaiting limousine. As they drove off, Emperor Akihito and Em-

press Michiko gave final departing waves to the many well wishers who reciprocated in kind with shouts of 'sayonara.' The motorcade returned to the Vancouver International Airport from where they flew to Victoria for a two night stay at the invitation of the



*A warm welcome awaits the Royal Couple in Victoria. (C. Yokota photo, 2009)*

Lt. Governor of British Columbia, Steven Point and his wife, at Government House. They would return to Vancouver where their schedule would take them to the Vancouver Japanese Language School, the University of British Columbia, and Nikkei Place in Burnaby as well as attend other official functions before flying to Hawaii for a 3-night stop-over enroute back home.

It was a long, hot afternoon at the Oval, but I am certain everyone who attended really got to experience something very extraordinary and memorable - a true once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. And for those lucky folks who had a few moments

to chat and shake hands with the Emperor and Empress it must have been a very special treat. But now, I had to quickly catch a return shuttle back to Steveston to start the second part of my little Japanese royal odyssey but this time in the city of Victoria.

Within two hours of my returning home from the Richmond Olympic Oval, I was on board the 7:00 p.m. BC Ferries vessel, ***SPIRIT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA***, bound for Victoria. In looking back, the vessel name summed up perfectly the kind of welcome that the Emperor and Empress received during their stay in British Columbia. Cruising through the Gulf Islands, I wondered to myself if I was sane? All I knew at the time was that here was a perfect opportunity to visit the lovely provincial capital with all its charm and see in person how Victoria would react to the visit of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. Sometimes the best vacations and memorable moments are done on the spur-of-the-moment such as this.

It was only a day earlier that I had learned through a press release put out by the Premier of British Columbia's office that on Saturday, July 11, 2009 their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko were scheduled to have a private audience with the Premier, signing of the official visitor's guest book in the Lower Rotunda, followed with an escort out the main entrance of the BC Parliament buildings and subsequent stroll down the front lawn walkway. I went to bed that night buoyed by the thought that I had yet another chance to see the Emperor and Empress of Japan again.

I got up early the next morning finding a complimentary Times Colo-





*Yokoso Victoria - Glen Robertson (on scooter), Carl Yokota (to Glen's left) and kids with their special welcome sign. (G. Robertson photo, 2009)*

nist newspaper tucked under my hotel room door with its front page headline of *Yokoso* (printed in Japanese *hiragana*). The weather was sunny and perfect for a special celebration. I made my way down to the BC Parliament buildings on Belleville Street and arrived shortly before 9:00 a.m. but perplexed to find hardly anyone there. Unlike my experience at the Richmond Olympic Oval, it appeared I would have my pick of prime, non-reserved sightlines. Apart from myself, there was only a scattering of security personnel, a pool television camera operator and a gentleman on a red electric scooter. On several occasions as we waited behind our blue-roped off area, small groups of tourists strolled by and inquired what event was taking place. I learned later that these visitors were off a large passenger cruise ship returning from Alaska and had docked earlier in the morning at the Ogden Point terminal. They were in for a special unexpected treat! As the scheduled arrival time neared, the crowd in front of the Parliament buildings and along Belleville

Street had ballooned considerably with reports of well over a thousand fans, onlookers and visitors.

At approximately 10:35 a.m., the Emperor and Empress' motorcade drove up the main front driveway of the BC Parliament buildings and we got the first glimpse of them as they exited their limousine and were quickly escorted through the west annex entrance followed by an entourage of people. My spot was right behind a blue-roped off area right at the foot of the Parliament building front steps. To my left was a group of young kids and their parents who also had come out early with their colorful *Yokoso* Victoria banner (written in Japanese *katana*) made for Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko earlier that morning. Immediately to my right was stationed the gentleman on the red scooter, Glen Robertson, a retired pastor who had come out much earlier than I that morning to get a up-close and personal view of the Japanese monarchs. He was even recognized and greeted by one of the plains clothes RCMP security detail

from their previous encounter with one another when Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent and youngest son of Queen Elizabeth II, visited Government House in May of 2009. The pastor and I passed the time waiting for the Imperial pair to reappear in public by practicing Japanese greetings such as *Yokoso* Victoria and *Ohaiyo Gozaimasu Hajimemashite* and exchanging tidbits of Japanese-Canadian and City of Victoria information. We all had a fun time as we waited for Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko to reappear.

At approximately 11:00 a.m., their Imperial Highness' appeared at the Main Entrance doorway escorted by Premier Campbell and his wife, Nancy. The Emperor and Empress both smiled and waved warmly to the large crowd out front and the people in response gave spontaneous rounds of applause and loud friendly cheers and vigorously waved their little BC, Canadian and Japanese flags distributed earlier to the crowd. I managed to scoop my 'trifecta' of all three flags and did my share of waving them too but somehow they got lost in the crowd shuffle later. Emperor Akihito wore a dark-colored, double-breasted suit and Empress Michiko was attired in a delicate pink-colored kimono with silver-colored *obi*. They gingerly descended the steep front steps with the Emperor holding the Empress' arm in support. All the while the awaiting media photographers kept behind lines, mostly from Japan, snapped photos at a torrid rate. At the first landing, they were introduced to local dignitaries including the Mayor of Victoria, Dean Fortin, who received them on behalf of the citizens of Victoria. A bit later on, Mayor Fortin had some fun with the kids next to me practicing his

pronunciations of *Yokoso* Victoria. Newly elected BC Legislative Liberal member, Naomi Yamamoto of North Vancouver, Minister of State for Inter-governmental Affairs, the first *Nikkei* elected to Victoria and BC provincial politics was also in attendance and helped escort the couple down the front walkway.

As the Emperor and Empress made their way down to the foot of the steps, the crowd went crazy. People starting waving their little flags, shouts of *konnichiwa* were expressed, and shrieks of joy were demonstrated. This drew the attention of the Royal couple to the neighbouring children with their *Yokoso* Victoria sign. Empress Michiko looking in their direction seemed quite taken by the kind gesture of the kids. That was quite the moment. The kids really did themselves, as well as Victoria, proud that day. The Royal couple seemed genuinely touched by the children's' expression of welcome so much so that the Emperor personally looked in our direction and offered a heartfelt, soft spoken, '*Domo Arigato.*' Boy, I started to get some tingly feelings at that moment. As the Emperor and Empress turned to continue their walk, the now unrestrained media pounced in even closer and blocked our excellent sightlines.

Surrounded by close security and an entourage, the Royal pair slowly made their way down the front walkway to their awaiting motorcade stopping frequently to speak and shake hands with the assembled crowd. Along their walk, they were even offered gifts of flowers from a few of the onlookers which they gladly

accepted. It appeared that the current H1N1 flu epidemic had no ill effects on how Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko conducted themselves in public settings such as this for they truly appeared relaxed and enjoyed interacting with the people.

As the Royal couple concluded their walk, two neatly dressed children presented bouquets of flowers



*Empress Michiko enjoying her walk. (C. Yokota photo, 2009)*

to them after which both Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko took time to thank and chat with them. I'm sure those two youngsters won't forget that moment for a long time to come! As they climbed into their awaiting vehicle, the crowd with their cameras snapping away gave them a warm send off with applause and

shouts of 'bye' and '*sayonara.*' As their motorcade pulled away from the curb, the Emperor and Empress waved one last time to the throng of people now lining Belleville Street through their open car windows. As the crowd dispersed and I took one last look at the scene on the front lawn of the BC Parliament buildings, I felt relieved and satisfied with the morning's events. Things had turned out better than I could have imagined. From the BC Parliament buildings the Japanese royal couple was driven back to Government House to attend a welcoming luncheon hosted by the Lt. Governor of BC and the Premier of BC., followed by an afternoon meeting with members of Victoria's Japanese-Canadian community. The following morning, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko's schedule took them for a visit to the Institute of Ocean Sciences in North Saanich where they were greeted by Institute personnel and shown some of the projects worked on by the scientists. The Emperor, himself a marine biologist, is said to have taken a keen interest in their work. Unfortunately, I had to leave for home after my visit to the BC Parliament buildings catching the 3:00 pm ferry ride back home.

For someone who never followed the Japanese Royal family closely prior to the start of their 12-day Canadian tour, my quick introduction to them in a whirlwind and fortunate series of events was, to say the least, a very memorable and meaningful one - a true once-in-a-lifetime experience to savour. For me, twice was nice! ❀

## Classic WW II Recipe for Stretching Soy Sauce in Canada

by Stan Fukawa

I am a soy sauce addict who thinks it impossible to enjoy Japanese treats such as sushi or pickled vegetables or Western foods such as steaks or pan fried potatoes without a bit of soy sauce. I know that many Nikkei share my condition and that there was a great anxiety felt by many of us at the thought of running out during the Second World War when we were interned in communities far away from a source of this most divine condiment. While perusing my mother's hand-written recipe book, I came across the following recipe for stretching one's last quart of *shoyu*. It was, like Italian Plum *Umeboshi*, one of the many things we had to do in order to maintain our food enjoyment under trying circumstances. It wasn't Kikkoman but it was the best we could do at the time.

### Ingredients:

White sugar – 2 cups

Table salt – 1 ½ cups (if from a sack, 1 cup)

Hot water – 1 gallon

*Shoyu* – 1 quart

*Ajinomoto* – 4 teaspoons (more is better)

Put one cup of sugar in a hot pan, heated to almost smoking. Fry the sugar until it becomes like molten syrup.

Add one cup of boiling water. Mix well. Add the rest of the hot water slowly. Make sure there are no lumps. Add the other cup of sugar and the salt. Bring to a boil and cook for ten minutes. Add *ajinomoto*. When mixture boils, remove from stove.

Taste the result. Those who

prefer a saltier taste should add more salt.

A cast iron pot or a cast iron fry pan with a thick base will prevent the sugar from burning.

The recipe in my mother's Japanese script does not mention when to add the soy sauce. Perhaps it doesn't matter. Perhaps it was added at the end, after cooling. Fortunately, we don't need to try our hand at it. In an age when there are almost as many *sushi* restaurants in Greater Vancouver as Chinese restaurants, we can just go down to our neighbourhood grocery store to pick up as much Japanese soy sauce as we want. What's shocking is that the demand became so great in North America that Kikkoman has been brewing it in the U.S. since 1972. ❀



*Shoyu shipment to Tashme, BC from Japan by the Red Cross, January 1944. (JCNM 1995.109.1.5, Kazuta Collection)*



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## **Japanese Canadian Fishermen's Assn. Constitutions**

### **A summary and introduction to the series of complete documents by Stan Fukawa.**

Nikkei Images plans to make available at [www.nikkeiimages.com](http://www.nikkeiimages.com), translations from the Japanese of the major Japanese Canadian Fishermen's associations' constitutions. We have printed to date, the following:

1. Dantai (Steveston Japanese Fishermen's Assn.) Constitution, 1897- in Nikkei Images, Fall 2008. Pp. 14-15.
2. Dantai Constitution, 1900 - in Nikkei Images, Spring 2009, pp. 10-14
3. Ucluelet Fishermen's , 1941 - in Nikkei Images, Summer, 2009 - pp. 4-11

The other constitutions in the series will be available online soon at [www.nikkeiimages.com](http://www.nikkeiimages.com)., including the following;

4. Skeena Fishermen's Association, 1931
5. Dantai Constitution, 1934
6. Ucluelet Fishermen's Co-op, 1941

The plan for the last three constitutions is to not print them in the hardcopy Nikkei Images but to provide them online only.

### **Summary on the Dantai Constitution, 1897**

This is a very brief document, consisting of 11 articles. Articles 1-3 and 10-11 outline the comprehensive goals of the Dantai, the need for solidarity, the rights and of members to revise the constitution, annual elections and one-year term of office.

The more interesting part of the constitution (6 of 11 articles) sets out the method for creating a reserve fund (each member paid a dollar to the Dantai) and received benefits from the fund including treatment for disease, and should they die, burial and a grave marker; assistance when members face a calamity like a fire; and the provision of a fully staffed hospital.

### **Summary on the Dantai Constitution, 1900**

The 1900 Constitution has 80 articles - over 7 times as many as its predecessor. The first article clearly identifies the aim of removing 'abuses against the Japanese...in the salmon fishery.' This refers to the attacks by white and native fishermen and their attempts to ban Japanese fishermen from the Fraser.

Five articles remind the member to obey fishery regulations and to be loyal to the cannery with which he is affiliated. It is a duty of members to rescue each other, especially out in the fishing ground. Bosses of fishermen are told to be wary of their 'boys' who might purchase fishing gear from the Dantai and put it on the boss's tab, and then abscond.

The duties of the President, Vice-President and Manager are outlined, with translation services for the fishermen who are not conversant in English defined as an important of the Manager's job. As befits a large organization, the membership is organized at a group level and has intermediate committee chairs who are elected by their members and represent their interests.

Fishermen were mostly young, single men without roots in the new country. Should a Dantai member die while out fishing, the Dantai commits itself to paying for funeral expenses, the grave marker and notification of family in Japan - provided that these expenses were incurred after notification of the Dantai. The responsibility for locating a corpse due to drowning was assigned to those who lived with the deceased - meaning "boys" who lived in the same bunk-house and their boss. When the victim has no house-mates, the Dantai pays for retrieval.

To protect 'boys' from bosses who might take advantage of them, the constitution outlines the

percentage of the catch that should be paid to the boss at the end of the season (1.5%) and warns the bosses that they will not be allowed to require their boys to provide unpaid housework duties. The Dantai states in the constitution that bosses have to pay their boys for such work. The appearance of such rules indicates such abuses must have been common.

The membership list has to be kept up-to-date in order to ascertain who is eligible for member services and has to include the names of all family members. Those who work on behalf of the Dantai and are a credit to it, including the most successful fisherman were recognized and rewarded; those who discredited the Dantai were expelled. The Dantai also engaged in dispute settlement among members.

In a fishery which relied on nets and not hooks, the cutting of nets, the stealing of nets, the finding and not reporting of found nets - these were all serious offences and noted as such in the Constitution.

### **Summary on the Ucluelet Fishermen's Co-op Constitution, 1941**

There was some fishing for salmon on the West Coast of Vancouver Island before the Japanese became involved, but it was the Japanese who developed the fishery. Catches on the Fraser River in the first decades of the Twentieth Century were exceedingly poor during the 3 non-dominant cycle years and good during the one dominant cycle year because of over-fishing and the Hells Gate slide. A few Japanese gillnet fishermen looking for more lucrative fisheries went to the West Coast and trolled for spring salmon. Conditions on the West Coast were more dangerous due to the open waters and winds. It was, after all, known as the Graveyard of the Pacific, with many ocean-going vessels sunk in the perilous seas.

For those willing to take the risks and to learn what had to be done to catch salmon there, it was quite lucrative and a small community of Japanese Canadian fishermen crossed over Vancouver Island to relocate there in the face of the government's program to squeeze Japanese out of the west coast fishery. By 1941, the constitution first set out in 1926, was expanded to 60 articles. Because there were strict limits on the number of licenses and a residence requirement, there was little turnover and the fishermen's co-op was simultaneously the Ucluelet Fishing Company Ltd. which bought and sold fish from members and non-members.

One unusual aspect of the constitution is the amount of space allocated to rescues at sea and the compensation paid by the co-op for members who suffer losses due to their being involved in such efforts. This was defined as a percentage of the average catch achieved by members - the co-op paying two-thirds of the average catch to the rescuer, the victim paying the other one-third.

### **Summary on the Skeena Fishermen's Association Constitution, 1931**

This constitution consists of 37 articles, most of them similar to those in the other constitutions.

During the summer fishing season, the office of the Skeena Fishermen was in Port Essington, a town that no longer exists. Emergency meetings in the off-season were allowed to be held in Vancouver because most fishermen left the Skeena for drier and warmer climes and larger population centres at the end of the fishing season.

The Skeena Fishermen's Association stipulated that non-Japanese in the fishery were welcome to join. However, non-fishermen could only become Associate Members who could speak at meetings but had no vote.

In view of the government policy to reduce the number of Japanese licenses (although this point is not mentioned), there is the mention of the need to ally with fishermen in general for the advancement of association members. There is also mention of the membership fee being variable with the possibility of increases as the need arose.

Japanese fishermen had already, in fact, organized on a province-wide level to raise funds for judicial challenges against rulings that naturalized Japanese Canadians did not have the same rights as other Canadian



citizens, either native-born or naturalized. Victory in the Canadian courts and at the subsequent appeal to the Privy Council did not drastically improve the rights of Japanese fishermen as the Canadian parliament granted the Minister of Fisheries absolute discretion in the granting of fishing licences. The reductions of licences stopped but the numbers of licences were not allowed to return to their former levels.

### **Summary on the Dantai Constitution, 1934**

The 1934 Dantai constitution consists of 41 articles and an extensive set of by-laws. The organization's members were Japanese Canadians and Japanese nationals living in the Steveston area. The only references to fishing are in the name of the organization--the Steveston Fishermen's Benevolent Association--and in the mention of the necessity to hold the mid-level councillors' meetings at times that do not conflict with the demands of the fishing season.

The matter of the mutual obligations of bosses and their 'boys' is not mentioned, because with the mechanization of fish boats it became too expensive for any individual to mechanize and maintain a fleet of boats. Consequently, fishermen purchased their own boats and thereby becoming independent and to retain a higher price for their catch.

The Dantai's community functions included the provision to all locals of a hospital and to the local Japanese community of a Japanese language school, and an office providing residents with assistance with the paperwork for the governments of Canada and Japan. Because of the hostility of the white majority against the Japanese, most Japanese registered their children's births, as well as deaths, marriages, divorces and adoptions with both governments. At the date of this constitution, the Dantai no longer dealt with such matters as sub-contractors to the Japanese consulate but on a fee-for-service basis and used the fees to supplement its income from the Japanese residents of Steveston and adjacent areas.

Due to the tension between the Japanese community and the mainly white majority, the Dantai included in the constitution (Article 36) the right to expel members who 'sullied the reputation of Japanese in general' or who deliberately engaged in conduct to the detriment of the community, through a two-thirds majority vote at an Extraordinary General Meeting called for the purpose. Such a punishment included the withdrawal of Dantai services. Members could be re-instated by writing a letter of repentance and a gaining a two-thirds vote at another Extraordinary General Meeting.

The last article, number 41, specifically mentions 'liaison with other organizations in order to help achieve the aims of the Dantai.' This is obviously a reference to province-wide organizations of Japanese Canadian fishermen and was not mentioned in the 1900 constitution although racial hostility was intense even then.

Because of the scope of the Dantai's services, the rights and obligations of membership were not limited to male fishermen as in the case of the Skeena Fishermen's Association. In fact, the benefits of membership such as the school and the hospital were only provided to families where both husband and wife were paid members. In the case of the school, the administration for this institution was delegated to the Parent-Teachers Association and the school was granted a lump-sum, the amount being set at the Dantai Annual General Meeting.

The hospital was managed by an administrator who was under the control of the Dantai president. The by-laws set the hours of operation and the fees for members and non-members, with non-members being charged as much as double for house-calls and hospitalization.

The Dantai was formed to benefit fishermen but as its services expanded, it became more of a community organization, serving not just fishermen but the entire Japanese community and even non-Japanese residents. ❀

# The Japanese Weapon in the Strawberry King Competition

by Stan Fukawa

Mission, BC, had a Strawberry Festival until 1953. There was the mandatory contest for Strawberry Queen which was the beauty contest that every community had in those days and which we still see even in our more feminist times.

The Strawberry King contest was not a parallel 'masculinity and muscle development' type of contest that you might have expected. It was a contest for whoever submitted the most beautiful crate of strawberries. In the Mission contest, the Japanese did astonishingly well.

The contests I remember were won by Japanese farmers, Kaemon Shikaze for a year and Jack Yoshioka for two years after that. The Strawberry Festival was discontinued at that point, probably showing that the heyday of the strawberry was long gone as a symbol of Mission. The Yoshioka family still has the trophy as Jack was the last recipient.

When I mentioned to my father that Japanese farmers seemed to have the best success in the King competition, he said that we Japanese had an innate advantage and would always win over white competitors. When I questioned him further, his analysis centred on the use of chopsticks in packing the baskets to make them look beautiful in the crate rather than the beauty of the berries produced. Anyone could grow enough beautiful berries to produce a crate, he said. The prize-winner had to create the most attractive-looking exhibit and this involved arrangement.

Strawberries, he reminded me, were too delicate to be handled with bare fingers. In order to do the best



*Strawberry King Kaemon Shikaze (in 1953 and 1954) with granddaughter Naomi enjoying the prize-winning strawberries. (Shikaze Family photo, ca. 1954)*

the least pressure. If you tried to pack them neatly with your fingers, you would inevitably bruise them and tear the skin. Chopsticks allowed packers to handle the berries very daintily even if they had the rough hands of a farmer.

The advantage was a cultural one, not a racial one. In our more multicultural times when most West Coast people know how to eat with chopsticks, the Japanese advantage in such a contest would no longer exist.

At least, it wouldn't exist once the secret was out. ❀

job of arranging the strawberries, chopsticks were the ideal instrument because you could handle them with



*Yoshioka family with Hideko carrying Kenny and Jack in back. Jack's father, Stan and Sam in front Jack Yoshioka was the Strawberry King in 1957 and 1958. (Yoshiaki Family photo, 1951)*



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## A Christmas Tale by Tom Sando

This is a bittersweet true story that I was told, of a young Japanese girl who lived in an internment camp during World War II, after publishing my book, *Wild Daisies in the Sand*.

"Miyo-chan, will you feed more wood into the stove," I heard my mother's shivering voice as I studied my homework at the kitchen table near the stove. My mother was busy decorating the Christmas tree in the living room.

Our first winter in New Denver, B.C. was extremely cold for our family. We were not accustomed to this very cold weather. It felt like the cold outside air penetrated right through our thin shelter.

At the beginning of the war in the Pacific in 1942, the Canadian government had relocated the Japanese Canadians living in the west coast to several abandoned mining towns in the interior of British Columbia. The hastily built housing (we called shacks) had no real insulation. The freshly cut lumber used to make our shacks were all cracked and buckled heavily in the cold wind. Some shacks had tarpaper covering the outside walls but it still didn't help much to prevent the cold and moisture from entering.

I noticed my mother stopping occasionally to rub her cold hands. The corner window by our Christmas tree was frozen solid in a thick sheet of ice. The only warm place in the entire house was right by the stove. I looked at the frost covered nail heads on the wallboard in the entrance. It seemed impossible for the warmth to reach entirely within the house.

Shortly after noon, Maehara-san, our neighbor brought us our Christmas tree. It was very tall and full of green branches. I don't know exactly what kind of tree it was but it

had very thick short needles.

Maeda-san was very kind to our family from the time we moved to New Denver five months ago. He must have felt sorry for our family of five: my mother, myself at ten years old and the eldest child, and my three younger brothers; six, four and one year old. At sixty years old, Maeda-san often found the time to bring us firewood.

My father was not with us. He had been arrested by the R.C.M.P. in



*Snowy New Denver, ca. 1944 (JCNM Izumi Collection)*

Vancouver for refusing to be taken from us and detained in a labour camp. He was now interned far away in the Angler concentration camp located in Ontario.

Maeda-san's two sons had been forcibly sent away to a labour camp near Banff. Talkative Mrs. Maeda often visited my mother and spoke about her sons. "It's awful that our families must be separated this way. I don't know if my boys will be home for Christmas," she would say tearfully.

Mrs. Maeda's sorrow made me feel very sad. I realized this Christmas would be lonesome without our father.

I recalled our last Christmas in Vancouver. It was a wonderfully warm Christmas together with our entire family. I remember going to the department store with my mother

and brothers for Christmas shopping. Santa Claus was always there to greet us kids. It was an exciting time to sit on Santa's lap, each of us taking our turn. When Santa asked what I wanted for Christmas, I remember answering, "I would like to have a doll who drinks milk and has a pair of tap dancing shoes."

The Christmas tree my father had brought us was not entirely as handsome as the one we had now, but filled with all kinds of colourful decorations we had bought from the store. The tree looked entirely beautiful in our living room, shining with miniature red and blue lights.

As far as I remember, there had always been Christmas stockings with our names and post cards from Santa hanging at the front of our tree. These were always the first things we opened on Christmas morning.

I still remember my last letter from Santa. "Dear Miyo, I am so pleased with your effort in your reading class at school. You captured 100 percent! You are also such a good girl at home. You are taking good care of your little brothers and always helping your mother. 'I'll give you a pair of roller-skates for Christmas. You should practice more roller-skating than tap dancing. From Santa.'" The letter was written in Japanese. My younger brothers and I understood some simple Japanese. Even though our formal schooling was in English, we spoke Japanese at home and attended a Japanese language school every Sunday.

A neighbouring English girl, my schoolmate, had once mentioned, "My letter from Santa is written in English." But at the time, I believed Santa could write in any language. I never thought it was strange. Even when the big kids at school told me:

"There's no such thing as Santa?" I still believed in Santa Claus.

In New Denver, it was my duty to write diaries in Japanese after school. Every morning before I went to school, my mother would make some correction on my writing and send it with her letter to my father in Angler.

My father wrote us often, at least once a week. His letters to my mother were always badly censored. But the letters he sent me were mostly intact. His letters to me were always filled with fatherly love, compassion and encouragement: "Miyo, papa is very pleased to hear that you are looking after your younger brothers and helping your mother. Your Japanese writing is improving. I love you very much." His letters were written in simple Japanese so I could understand. Every day I looked forward to receiving his letter.

One day, not long ago, while I was reading over his letter, I made a big discovery. I noticed that my father's handwriting was exactly like Santa's! I was so astonished over my discovery that I ran to my mom. She seemed to hesitate and looked at me for a moment; she smiled and admitted that it was my father that had written my letters from Santa. She made me promise that I would not mention this to my younger brothers.

Now I realized that there would be no more letters from Santa this Christmas! Even if I would ask my father to write, it would take more than two weeks for the letters to arrive. They would arrive too late for Christmas.

But I would never want to disappoint my younger brothers, who very much still believed in Santa. There was only one thing left for me to do. I would write the letters from Santa this Christmas.

I remember clearly that sunny morning in Vancouver when my father

had been taken away by three large R.C.M.P. officers. At the doorway, he put his gentle hand on my shoulder and said in a calm voice, "Miyo, you are now the big sister of the house. Once I am gone, I want you to look after your little brothers and help your dear mother." I was not about to let my father down! I resolved to do my best in caring for my younger brothers.

I waited until my brothers had gone to bed, then I started writing. It took me three nights of hard work under the dim candlelight to finish all three of Santa's letters. Every night the single candle (supplied to us daily) burned to a tiny flame at the bottom of the dish. It was a good thing that I remembered some of the letters I had received from Santa from previous years.

Christmas was only one day away. My mother and I had almost completed decorating the Christmas tree as best as we could. Then I noticed a very important thing was missing from the tree - our Christmas stockings! They had been an important part of our Christmas every year.

Almost everything we owned had been left behind when we were forced out of our home in Vancouver. We could only carry with us a small amount of personal belongings. I had two favorite dolls, a cute blue-eyed doll with a Princess Margaret's changing dress, and a Shirley Temple doll with real hair. I didn't want to leave them behind because I had had them since I was very little. I had packed my dolls very carefully into a small empty orange box to be shipped out with the remainder of our important things.

Once we arrived in New Denver, I looked through all the boxes we had brought, but I could not find my dolls. It was the saddest day of my life! I felt like I had lost something very

valuable and they would miss me as much as I missed them.

I don't know what had happened to our beautiful Christmas stockings with our names. Now I had to make new ones.

As I searched the house for materials to make our stockings, my mother suggested I use some of the leftover Christmas wrapping paper. She said the colourful paper would make nice stockings for us.

I cut oversized patterns out of cardboard and with these patterns, I cut out eight pieces from the wrapping paper and then glued them together to make four stockings. I waited until the glue to dry and my brothers to go to bed then I stuffed some candies and small toys in the stockings.

My mother called from our bedroom, "Miyo, it's getting late, you had better come to bed now." But I was still busy making our stockings. I found some more room inside the stockings so I decided to put in an apple and orange. That was a big mistake. The weight of the fruits was too much. The glue and thin paper gave way. Oh well, we would have to do without the fruit.

It was getting late. My mother started to worry and came out to help with the stockings.

It was almost 10:30 when I finally finished hanging our stockings and all of Santa's letters. I felt very satisfied and was glad that my job as a big sister was good. Now I could have a good night sleep!

Christmas morning without my father was very lonely. But as I watched my brothers digging into their Christmas stockings, and heard their joyful laughter, it lifted my spirits. I felt very happy for being their big sister. I glanced at one lone parcel left under the tree. That was for my father. With tearful eyes I wondered when he would be back home again. ❀



## Shoji Nishihata; Profile of a JCNM Volunteer by Linda Reid

Shoji Nishihata has been a weekly volunteer at the museum since 2004! He has worked under many different staff over the years, transcribing oral histories, filing news clippings, describing the collection, or filing and sorting. He has been a very loyal, dependable, and helpful volunteer. The Nishihata family has also donated many photos and other items to the museum as Shoji's father ran a sheet metal shop on Powell Street and took many photos of the activities around Powell Street in it's prime.

Shoji's grandfather Komajiro was the pioneer to Vancouver in 1901. He had left his home town of Echigawa-cho, Shiga ken when immigration was popular. Shoji's father, Saburo and twin uncle Jiro were born April 12, 1899 but remained in Echigawa-cho, to acquire middle school education in Japan. They lived with an aunt until they graduated and came to Canada together on August 21, 1914 on board the **CANADA MARU**. As the immigration laws had tightened, the boys were sponsored Komajiro Nishihata who lived at Big Bay in Prince Rupert, BC. Eventually by 1921, the family was living together near Port Moody, where Saburo was working at the Port Moody Sawmill. After Komajiro had made his fortune, most of the family returned to Japan. Shoji's father Saburo and his uncle Jiro remained in Canada.

Shoji's father Saburo worked as a houseboy for awhile in Vancouver after his family returned to Japan. After that, he took an apprenticeship at the Akiyama Hardware shop at 368 Powell Street.



*Shoji Nishihata in front of the family sheet metal shop on Powell Street. (Nishihata Family fonds, 1936)*

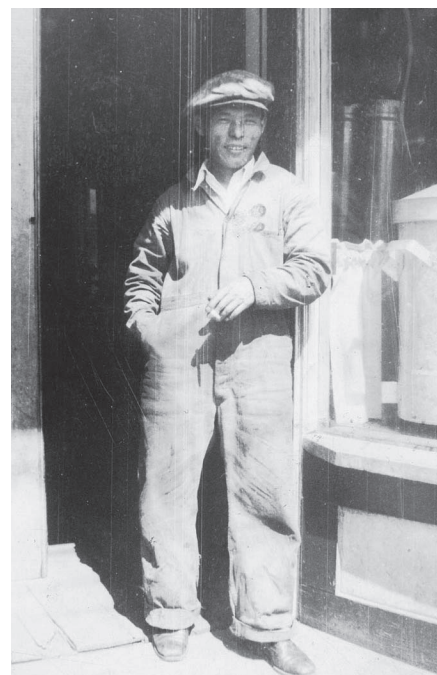
In the back of the Hardware store was a sheet metal shop. Eventually, his family arranged a marriage to Kishi Nishizawa on July 13, 1928 in Echigawa-cho and she came to Canada on August 25, 1928 to start a new life. At last, Saburo was able to open his own Nishihata Sheet Metal shop from 1935-1942 at 457 Powell street. Jiro sold gas to fishing boats and had a house near Chatham where the Canada Packers parking lot was in Steveston.

Shoji was born in 1933 in the upstairs of the Hardware store, where 2 or more families also lived.

His older brother Jesse Hideo Nishihata was born 1929, his sister Miyoko in 1931 and his youngest sister Sumi in 1935. They all attended Strathcona school and the Japanese United church to learn English. Shoji was 8 when the war broke out and was in grade 2. The growing family were just about to purchase a home but the money may have ended up being sown into a hem of Shoji's mother's skirt and taken to camp. The Nishihatas ended up

in Tashme and Shoji remembers goofing around until the school was set up later in the year and remembers his young teacher, Marie Kawamoto (now Katsuno). In 1946 with the move to "go east or go home", the Nishihatas moved to a sugar beet farm in Diamond City, Alberta, north of Lethbridge. They were only there one year as Saburo couldn't hack it and Shoji's brother Jesse complained all the time about life on a farm. Shoji helped on the farm, planting seeds in the spring, thinning plants, weeding, using a machete to top the beets and roots. Jesse had talked the parents out of going to Japan, and persuaded them to go to Montreal. They arrived in May of 1946 and went to school for one month.

Shoji graduated from high school in Montreal around 1950. He then went to McGill to become



*Saburo Nishihata in doorway of his sheet metal shop. (Nishihata Family Fonds, 1939)*



*Nishihata family portrait with Miyoko, Sumi, mother and Shoji in front and Jesse at back. (Nishihata Family fonds, ca. 1940)*

a Mechanical Engineer. He worked as a mechanical engineer for the Foundation of Canada Engineering Company until he transferred to Vancouver in 1979 or 1980. Shoji married Eve Miller in 1963 and has 3 boys, James, Paul and David, who are all married and now Shoji is a grandfather of 3 grand daughters.

Shoji's brother Jesse Hideo was the first Japanese Canadian documentary filmmaker. His sister, Sumi, was a music entrepreneur in London and with her husband Peter Jenner helped launch bands such as Pink Floyd, TRex, Ian Drury, Roy Harper, and the Clash.

Shoji retired in 2004. He first came into contact with the museum when his cousin, George Nishihata volunteered him to Ray Otsu to help create the *Nihon-machi* map in 2000. That map, currently hanging on the wall and for sale in the gift shop, is a popular item for historians, depicting the businesses and residences of the Powell street environs in 1941 when it was last inhabited by the Japanese community. Then Shane Foster asked Shoji to identify the scouts in the Tashme boy scout group of which Shoji was one. When Shoji's mother passed away in 2002, Shoji offered some of the family photo

albums to the museum. Some of the photos that have been popular are the King and Queen of England's visit in 1938 as well as the Parade on Powell Street around the same time.

Shoji is interested in family history, uses the family tree maker software program and has traced his family tree as far back as 1838 to his great grandfather. This has been a hobby for about 10 years. After retirement, having lots of time, he decided to contribute, to give back to the history of Japanese in Canada, and the community by volunteering at the museum. He also finds it interesting to continually learn more about the history through his volunteering at the museum.

We may see more of Shoji around the center and museum as he has moved into the Nikkei home with his wife Eve.

Thank you, Shoji, for your years of dedication to the museum and preserving the history of the Japanese Canadian pioneers of which you are a descendant. ❀



*Shoji Nishihata. (JCNM photo, 2008)*



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## **‘I Felt We Had Come a Long Way’ Mas Yamamoto shares his life story, from internment to watching his daughter become the first Japanese-Canadian elected to the provincial legislature. by Daniel Pi, Staff Reporter**

Sixty years and one day ago from that night, Mas Yamamoto and his fellow Japanese-Canadians didn’t have the right to vote.

Now his daughter Naomi, the newly minted politician, smiled for her supporters. They clapped and chanted her name.

From the sidelines, Mas stood with a smile on his face.

“My dad was born in Vancouver and it wasn’t until he was 22 he got to vote,” Naomi told the crowd that night, May 14, 2009. “Now he has a daughter in the provincial legislature. I think we’ve come a long way. That sounds pretty good, doesn’t it, Mas?”

The crowd roared.

Speech over, father and daughter toured the packed room at the Tantra Lounge while supporters continued to wave placards and chant “Naomi!”

In response to the cheers, Mas raised his arm, fist clenched.

While the politically savvy celebrated Naomi’s astounding rise from local entrepreneur to being the first Japanese-Canadian elected to the provincial legislature, Mas was quietly marking the closure of a dark time in his life and that of thousands of Japanese-Canadians who suffered internment during the Second World War.

Born in Vancouver in 1927 to a fishing family, Mas and his six siblings grew up in the Marpole area in south Vancouver.

His father died a year before the war broke out, leaving his mother to raise the family.

Mas remembers the patriotism when fighting first broke out in the European theatre. He was just 14. “When the European war started we thought of ourselves as Canadian,” Mas says.



**History Made** - In May 2009, Naomi Yamamoto and her father Mas celebrated her election win, making her the first Japanese-Canadian to be elected to the provincial legislature. It was a historical night for Naomi and closure for Mas who, 60 years earlier, was interned during the Second World War. (Daniel Pi photo, 2009)

While soldiers went off the war, Mas joined the students at Point Grey Junior High School in cadet training. Learning to march was one of the lessons he recalls.

People also supported the war effort buying stamps, he remembers.

While racism was something Mas experienced in the hallways at school growing up, it would rise to another level after Dec. 7, 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, initiating war on the Pacific.

The cadet training stopped suddenly one day when Mas and the dozen other Japanese-Canadian students at the Kerrisdale high school were called to the principal’s office.

“When the Japanese war started — bingo — they said you can’t take cadet training anymore,” Mas says. “Obviously we were kind of perplexed and wondering what was going on.”

The Japanese-Canadian students

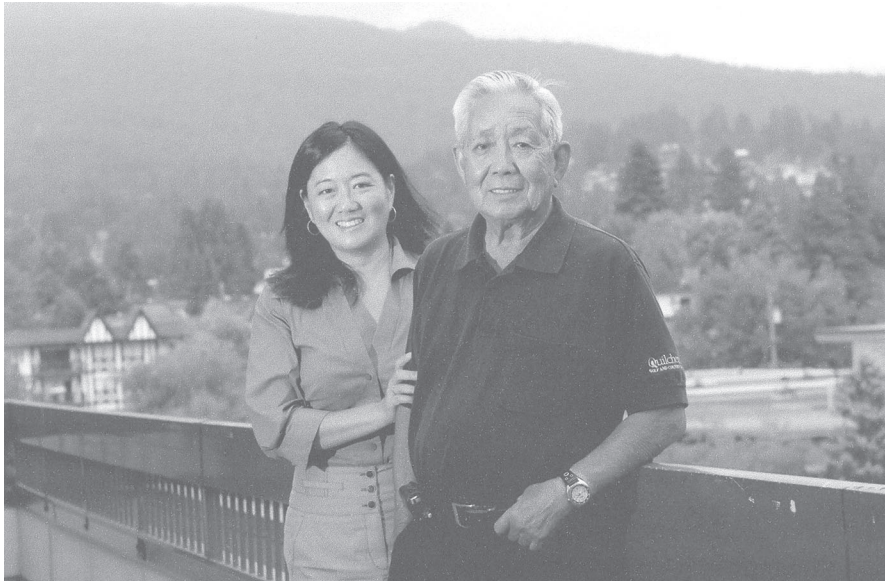
were given alternatives: go to the gym and shoot basketballs or go practice their typing in a classroom — Mas choose the latter, he needed work on his typing, he says.

Unknown to Mas at the time, tensions were rising between the Japanese-Canadians and their neighbours. Rumours that the Japanese-Canadians — who owned more than 1,000 fishing boats along the coast — would aid in an invasion fueled suspicions.

In response, in February 1942, the federal government passed the War Measures Act that started the mass movement and internship of the Japanese in B.C. “Before I knew it, I was moved. We were put into Hastings Park.”

At 14, Mas was separated from his family and moved into a dormitory at the exhibition grounds along with other children his age. The rest of his family went to a stall in the barn.

“It was a hastily cleaned,



**Step Forward** - Originally counted out in the nomination race for the North Vancouver-Lonsdale Liberal seat, Naomi Yamamoto pulled off an upset win over two high profile candidates, then beat long-time North Van District councillor Janice Harris on election night. Since her election win, the first-time MLA has also earned a cabinet position, a huge surprise for father Mas (pictured left), who says "Everything happened so quickly in a way it blows my mind away ... Maybe the Premier knows her more than I do."

Left: Daniel PI photo. Below: Submitted photo

temporary camp, a place where people were brought into for a couple months," Mas recalls. "It was terrible, there was no privacy." Yet despite the conditions, Mas and his friends still managed to pass the time as kids will. There was the time he and friends sent a ball of burning toilet paper sailing down a latrine trough, not sticking around to watch the reaction of unsuspecting people answering nature's call further down the line.

From the holding camp at Hastings Park, Mas and his family were moved by train inland into the Slocan Valley in the Kootenays. Kept together, they ended up at an internment camp at Lemon Creek. While the conditions at the camp were rudimentary — families were stuffed into wooden shacks and there was little to no organization — Mas still holds some fond memories of his childhood spent there.

Living in the spectacular Slocan Valley, the children got free reign to do as they pleased. There were endless days of baseball in the summer and ice hockey in the winter.

"I think there's something about the human spirit, it never gets down," Mas says, but added that his personal experience as a boy at Lemon Creek do not make the actions of the government



of the day justifiable.

Life in the camps wasn't easy, as families were often forced from their homes with few belongings expecting a swift return that never occurred.

More than 20,000 Japanese-Canadians had their property taken away and were uprooted. Post war the restrictions continued, resulting in nearly 4,000 Japanese-Canadians returning to war-stricken Japan to escape the harsh conditions imposed on them.

It was only in 1949 when the Japanese were again allowed to live anywhere in Canada. That same year they won the right to vote for the first time.

Despite all that Mas has endured, he holds very little resentment after all those years, his daughter says.

"We were quite aware of what had happened in the 1940s; Naomi says. "There was never a lot of bitterness; it was just explained what had happened!"

Naomi too didn't escape racism growing up on the North Shore, but those days she believes are past. Like her father, she doesn't carry grudges.

"I don't just reflect that I'm Canadian-Japanese," Naomi says. "I reflect that I'm a North Shore girl."

If anything, that's the lesson that Mas has passed on to his children — to leave the past behind and to grow



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up as Canadians first.

Watching his daughter become the first Japanese-Canadian to be elected to the provincial government, Mas couldn't help but see a conclusion to a part of his story.

"I felt good," Mas says. "I felt we had come a long way;

After the war, Mas faced the tougher tests in his life, he says.

Those years interned and without school left him on an uneven footing against his peers. He was in his early 20s, without a complete high school education.

Mas passed high school by correspondence while working, then started university. Despite getting married and beginning a family, he continued school, eventually receiving a PhD.

He worked 15 years as a research scientist before setting out into the photo

developing and printing business.

Life during those years was tough, both Mas and Naomi recall.

"The children were poorer than church mice; Mas says.

"I remember we ate a lot of rice and stew; Naomi adds. "We never went on any big trips, just family camping trips!"

While the family grew up knowing the history of the internment, Naomi said that didn't define them. Instead, it was the example that hard work pays off that she took with her growing up.

"If you're prepared to work hard, you can accomplish anything; Naomi says. "If it takes hard work, I can do that"

An entrepreneur and active community member, Naomi's move into politics was a quiet one. But her rise since has been meteoric: a

surprise for dad.

"I didn't think she had much of a chance (at winning the nomination); Mas admits, but adding the biggest surprise was Naomi's appointment to the cabinet.

"Everything happened so quickly in a way it blows my mind away ... Maybe the Premier knows her more than I do!"

But beyond their family history, the Japanese internment, and the history that's been made with Naomi's election, Mas says moving forward, none of that matters. Naomi's next four years will depend on her.

"I'm just a father; Mas says. ❀

*Danial Pi is a staff reporter for the NORTH SHORE OUTLOOK and this article appeared on July 30, 2009.*

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## *Family History Series No. 11*

### **The Legacy of Nakamura Florist by Linda Kawamoto Reid**

Nakamura florist at 270 Powell Street was a family business that flourished by providing floral arrangements for the Japanese community. Whether it was Vancouver Buddhist Church occasions, weddings, funerals, private occasions, Nakamura florist was the place to go. The floral business originated from Genroku Nakamura's love and passion for horticulture. Genroku Nakamura from Fukui *ken*, was born in 1863 still in the time of the *samurai* (Keio year 1). As Japan became industrialized with the Meiji restoration from 1868, he would grow up in the era of encouragement from Emperor Meiji to explore new lands, gain knowledge and bring it back to Japan. He benefited from compulsory education and luckily, was educated to become a teacher at an agricultural school in Japan.

About the time immigration was

becoming popular, he married Riye Ishida from Kumagawa *mura*, Oniyu *gun*, Fukui *ken* and began to have a family. His first son Genmatsu was born in 1896, second son Gensaburo in 1899 and then first daughter Matsu in 1903. Sometime around 1902 or 1903 at age 37, Genroku decided to go abroad alone. Whether the dream of riches lured Genroku or whether he succumbed to the recruiters looking for laborers, he took a trip to Hawaii. He was like many other sojourners at the time, eager to earn quick money to fund the raising and fumigating of mulberry trees for his silk worm business. Within a short time he decided to immigrate to Canada.

On arrival in Victoria, Genroku made his way to Powell Street in Vancouver where he could be connected to a thriving Japanese community. He relied on Mr. Tomoda and Mr. Saegusa who lived on the

400 block of Powell Street to find him a job and worked as a laborer for a few years, saving money to set up his own business. He decided to operate his own business which he bought from Mr. Kato, cutting cedar logs for a shingle mill at Capilano, North Vancouver. Included in the deal was an expensive steam donkey machine to haul the logs one by one. Eventually he lost the machine and his business as he could not make a go of it.

While living on Powell Street he became active in helping to build the Buddhist Church in 1905. His next contract was to clear the forest at Trout Lake, hiring a number of workers from Fukui *ken*. As his business thrived, he called over his family, including his wife Riye 31, Genmatsu 14 and Matsu 7, accompanied by Shigeo Furukawa, aged 10. They all arrived on the

*Continued on page 20*





*Genroku Nakamura with workers from Fukui kenin working on the Trout Lake project. (Nakamura Family photo, 1910)*

**SADO MARU** on June 8, 1910. The second oldest son, Gensaburo aged 11, stayed in Fukui to finish his schooling.

While clearing the bush to create Trout Lake Park, Nakamura's company found a stream. They built a dyke to make a lake and cleared the west side of the lake, leaving a thick forest on the east side. On the west side they set up tents, making a camping ground that included an *ofuro*. In the summer of 1910, a forest fire broke out in the area, requiring all his laborers to fight the fire.

In the fall it rained a lot and the stream flooded. Matsu who was 10 at the time, remembers waking up one morning to find two feet of water in the tent and a big trout swimming around. It was a memorable moment for a young girl, new to this resource-rich country. Genroku's next contract was to clear land in Point Grey around 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Crown Street. Meanwhile, Mastu attended *Kokumin Gakko* on Alexander Street, remembering her first principal, Mr. Torao Tanaka, and her second one, Mr. Tashiro. Genroku and Riye had 4 more children between 1911 and 1918, one of whom was of Asahi Giant legend, Eiroku (Eddie) Nakamura.

Meanwhile second son Gensaburo joined the family sailing from Yokohama to Victoria on the **CHICAGO MARU** on June 7, 1918. He was sponsored by Genosuke

Nakamura, an oyster farmer in Burnaby. The same year Gensaburo arrived, his youngest brother Ginpachi was born in Burnaby. As his business flourished, Genroku bought two lots on Marine drive and four acres in Burnaby. He brought many rare irises and *bonsai* from Japan. He also invested in some property in Fort George (now called Prince George). It was at this time that he opened the Nakamura Florist on Powell Street in 1921. Unfortunately, he passed away of heart failure at the age of 59 in 1922 in Eburne, at the home of his son Genmatsu. Genroku had passed on quite a legacy to his family but unfortunately, the Depression hit after World War I and the estate was lost.

Genmatsu lived in Eburne on Simpson Road (now Bridgeport Road and No. 4 Rd) on a three-acre farm which he bought from Mr. Denshiro Inamoto for \$2,000 in 1920. He devoted one acre of his farm to the cultivation of daffodils, narcissus, peonies, lilies, irises, tulips and gladiola bulbs for the cut flower business. The other two acres were devoted to onions,

tomatoes, and other vegetables as well as 21 apple trees, 6 pear trees, and 2 cherry trees. Genmatsu made several improvements to his farm by expanding the house and building a packing shed, a garage, a hen house, 2 greenhouses, cold frames and woodsheds, to improve his cut flower and bulb business. Likely he provided the flowers for his mother Riye, to supply the florist shop on Powell Street.

Genmatsu entered into an arranged marriage with Tome Tanaka from Tsuruga, Fukui *ken* in 1924 and she arrived that same year. Hanae was born in 1925, Mariko in 1927, Misa in 1931 and finally a boy Teiji in 1935. Genmatsu and family lived in Eburne until March 29, 1942 when he like many other young, able-bodied men was sent to Gosnell Road camp. That would be the last time Genmatsu would see his prized bulbs, flowers, and collection of rare irises. Gosnell camp was located on the Yellowhead – Blue River Highway, an unfinished road project of the province. However, 6-inches of snow still remained on the ground in March and the bunkhouses



*Inside the Nakamura Florist Shop on Powell Street. Kimiko on the left and Riye Nakamura on the right. (Nakamurs Family photo, 1938)*

only had room for 100 men. There were about 900 men in total in 9 road camps on the highway.

Riye, who managed the florist shop at 308 Powell Street, would make a weekly trip to Eburne to select flowers for the shop. In 1935 as the business began to expand, she moved to 270 Powell Street, and second son Gensaburo became the bookkeeper/delivery person and his wife Kimiko (Kawamoto) helped with the floral arrangements. The family lived behind the florist shop and Gensaburo and Kimiko's daughter Tamiko attended Strathcona School and the Buddhist Church.

The 1930s depression did not seem to affect the Nakamura florist business, in fact it seemed to flourish and get busier. Perhaps this was because of an increase in population, as there were about 8,300 Japanese Canadians living in the Powell street area. Or perhaps, the business flourished because of its quality product, or perhaps because it was the only one on Powell Street. The Powell Street scene was thriving and an exciting place to be especially in the summer. Baseball fever caught everyone's attention. Eddie Nakamura, son of Genroku and brother of Genmatsu and Gensaburo, was the regular center fielder on the Asahi Giants legendary team. He joined the club in 1931 and became a regular player in 1933 and 1934, then again from 1938 to 1941. The team won many championships and was a great source of family pride, Eddie hit some long balls as an Asahi Giant and he was outgoing and well-liked. When the Nakamuras had time to see the games, it was joy to watch the team that kept winning league championships. In 1938 the Asahi won the Triple Championship (Burrard, Commercial and the Pacific Northwest Leagues) with



*Kayo Nakamura's funeral in front of the Japanese Buddhist Temple. From left; Riye, Gensaburo, Tome (with three children), Eddie, Ginpachi, Kimiko (and Tamiko), the Furukawas and the Watanabes. (Nakamura Family photo, 1932)*

Roy Yamamura as manager. In 1939 and 1940, they won the Burrard League Championship and from 1938 to 1941, they compiled 4 consecutive Pacific Northwest Championships. What an exciting time in *Nihonmachi*. The Asahis were known for their skill in bunting and stealing bases to win. They were shrewd players and a thrill to watch. In 1939 the team stole 248 bases for an average of close to 8 per game! Eddie had 22 hits that year for a batting average of .272, making him the 5<sup>th</sup> best in the team. And in 1940 he had 30 hits making him 4<sup>th</sup> on the team with average of .337. Baseball was an important cultural link for the Japanese to the broader community; easing ethnic discrimination, gaps between generations and the struggles of day to day life. Baseball was a passion for the Japanese community and the Asahi were well supported by the community. They always had great uniforms, trophies, perks from *Nihonmachi*, proud fathers of businesses on Powell Street would provide meeting places to rehash the game and celebrate their successes. Baseball brought much national pride to the community.

In this thriving climate, Gensaburo and Kimiko were able to buy a 2 ½ story house for \$1,400 at 347 East Cordova Street in 1940. This building is now known as St. Martha's Heritage Home. The home was built in the 1890s and in 1901 renovated by the Lamberts for the Royal Visit of the future King George V and Queen Mary. Agnes Lambert owned the house until 1937. The Nakamura family, including Riye, was able to leave the back of the florist shop and move into a bright, roomy, very comfortable house, after some renovations, in about May of 1940. A well deserved success, after almost 20 years of running a florist shop, was to own a bit of Vancouver.

Unfortunately, at the same time as everyone moved into the new house, Kimiko contracted TB and required hospitalization at the St. Joseph's Oriental Hospital. Perhaps it was the crowded living conditions, or the dampness of the flower shop, or the highly contagious nature of the disease, that Kimiko succumbed to the dreaded disease. In 1936, Dr. Shimotakahara had pleaded with the Japanese community to be tested for and educated about TB, as out



of 158 students tested in Vancouver, 56-percent were tested positive for TB! TB had been a scourge to the Nakamura family. It was to claim the lives of Riye's two youngest children, Kayo in 1932 at the age of 16 and Ginpachi in 1942 at the age of 24. Prior to 1940, TB was the leading cause of death in BC and TB nurses put their lives at risk to care for those stricken with this highly contagious disease. In 1945, fortunately for Kimiko, streptomycin was introduced which greatly facilitated the treatment of TB. In 1942 the St. Joseph's Oriental hospital run by Dr and Mrs. Shimotakahara was required by the BCSC to evacuate the mostly Japanese patients to Hastings Park Hospital. Kimiko and Ginpachi must have been moved in July of 1942 once Hastings Park Hospital was set up for patients. Soon after that, Ginpachi passed away in August of 1942.

Riye, Tamiko, Tome, the children and the Watanabes decided to go to Sandon together. They lived on the second floor of the old Palace Hotel. They had to share kitchen facilities and the *ofuro* on the first floor with maybe 15 other families. Gensaburo had left in February to go to Red Pass to work in a road camp. Luckily in August the BCSC let some of the 1,000 men in road camps rejoin their families, so Gensaburo met his mother in Sandon in time to get a travel pass to Vancouver to take care of the funeral arrangements for his youngest brother.

Kimiko was confined to Hastings Park until the New Denver Sanatorium was built and ready for patients in the spring of 1943. By the time Kimiko was reunited with her family, they had all moved from the isolated existence of Sandon to the Orchard in New Denver. They did not stay there long as the RCMP

was encouraging Japanese evacuees to sign up to go back to Japan or east of the Rockies. They sent Tamiko ahead to the Kawamoto family in Vernon so she could start school in 1945, and later that year Gensaburo and Kimiko also moved to Vernon.

Genmatsu and his family, Riye and the Watanabes moved back east; first to Niagara then to Vineland, Toronto, where they settled. Genmatsu, now 58 years old, had to start all over again. On October 22, 1948 he presented his claim to the Japanese Property Claims commission in Toronto, Ontario. His land was assessed at \$3,500 in 1942, but was sold by the custodian for \$982 in 1943. He may have received a small amount for his claim prior to 1950.

Nakamura Florist was liquidated to the office of the Custodian of Enemy property after 20 years of business in 1942. Perhaps it was time for Riye, now 72, to retire, as

she had the dispersal of her family to worry about. Gensaburo surrendered his heritage home to the custodian. Unlike others who received a small amount for their property, Gensaburo received a bill for the outstanding costs for the care of his wife Kimiko who was in the Sanitorium for a total of 5 years.

Gensaburo, Kimiko and Tamiko worked in the orchards of Vernon, Rutland, Oyama, Okanogan Center to save money. Tamiko worked as a companion/housekeeper/cook in her senior matric year and was referred to another family in Vancouver so she could go to Normal school in 1950 to train as a teacher. Her parents returned to Vancouver in 1952 and started a florist business in Dunbar, the Alma Florist. Kimiko was the proprietor of this business and had obviously learned a lot from her mother-in-law. Gensaburo was employed as a gardener and hired *kika nisei* (returning Japanese). He was also active with the Buddhist Church, the JCCA and kept the books for the florist business. When the shop was busy with funerals, he helped with deliveries.

The Nakamuras were active in the Japanese community and acted as *bishakunin* – go betweens to arrange meetings for marriage purposes. Kimiko would play organ in the Buddhist church while Gensaburo would chair proceedings. Kimiko was also a member of the *Fujinkai* and was always busy making *manju*. Riye had returned from Toronto to live with Kimiko and Gensaburo after she suffered a stroke in Toronto and passed away in 1967. Alma Florists which later became Dunbar Florists was a thriving business until Kimiko retired. Such is the legacy of Genroku Nakamura and his love of horticulture. ❀



*Alma Florist on Dunbar Street with Kimiko Nakamura on the left and unidentified person on the right. (Nakamura Family photo, 1955)*



## Hidden Treasures of the JCNM by Sean Riley



*Koichi Kaye Kaminishi at Oppenheimer Park. (B. Carter photo, 2009)*

In 1939, at the young age of 17, an eager Koichi (Kaye) Kaminishi joined the Asahi baseball club. From 1914-1941 the Asahi were one of Vancouver's most exciting baseball teams. Mr. Kaminishi explained that "even as a rookie and a bench warmer I felt proud in wearing the (Asahi) uniform." Although his career only lasted for two seasons, his memory and contribution to the Asahi club lives on through the number 11 uniform, which Mr. Kaminishi graciously donated to the Japanese Canadian National Museum in 1998.

The sweat-stained jersey and pants is 70 years old, but truly reflects the high-tempo, fast and hard working game play of the Asahi baseball team. Known for their intelligent batting strategy and speed around the bases, the Asahi countered the highly touted "power game" of heavy hitting players, exemplified through professional players like Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, by focusing on the "inside game" with great success. Winning ten Vancouver league city championship titles from 1914 to 1940, they demonstrated that their strategy of intelligent game play over muscle and power could prove triumphant

within Vancouver's "western" style of baseball. Accordingly, their skilled success, sportsmanship and teamwork quickly made the Asahi one of the most popular teams to watch in the city.

The JCNM hosts an annual memorial baseball game in honor of the Asahi. I will never forget this year's event, as I was fortunate enough to have been given the opportunity to play catch with Mr. Kaye Kaminishi before the game began. Mr. Kaminishi was also gracious enough to throw the first pitch to start off the game, showing a glimpse of his younger self. I was deeply honored to have played next to an Asahi great as well as some of the Asahi player's families.

This uniform in our collection at the Japanese Canadian National Museum provides a tangible reflection of the hard work, dedication and love of the sport that the Asahi baseball team brought to Vancouver.

For further information on the Asahi baseball club, visit our online exhibition at <http://virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Asahi/>. The JCNM also has some great Asahi memorabilia available for purchase in the museum store. ❀

*Sean Riley is currently a fourth*



*Kaye Kaminishi (left) with Sean Riley at annual Asahi memorial baseball game. (B. Carter photo, 2009)*



*Asahi Baseball Uniform, ca.1939 (JCNM Collection 1998.6.1a)*

*year History and English student at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada. As the Young Canada Works Collections Assistant, Sean helped to inventory the JCNM collection as well as respond to various inquiries and research requests.*



*Participants of the annual Asahi memorial baseball game. (B. Carter photo, 2009)*

*Ansel Adams, Calisthenics at Manzanar, ca. 1943.  
Image courtesy of the Library of Congress*



## TWO VIEWS

Photographs by Ansel Adams and Leonard Frank

January 16 - March 13, 2010

This compelling collection of photographs presents two views of internment and incarceration in the early 1940s. Ansel Adams photographed the resilience of Japanese Americans and aspects of their daily life in the Manzanar War Relocation Center in California. Leonard Frank was hired to record the removal of Canadians of Japanese descent from the BC Coast. His documentary photographs of the Hastings Park holding areas are both stark and shocking.

Japanese Canadian National Museum  
6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby, BC  
[www.jcnm.ca](http://www.jcnm.ca)