



Nikkei Images

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Our Pioneer Issei Centenarians

Written by Toyo Takata



Mrs. Haru Kusumi celebrating her 100th birthday at the Momiji Seniors, Centre, Scarborough, Ontario assisted by her nephew, Gordon Nakamura - Photo by Nancy Mori

A rare occasion was joyously observed on January 24, 1999 at the Momiji Seniors Centre at Scarborough, Ontario. This was the birthday party for Haru Kusumi, a Momiji resident celebrating her one hundredth year. The happy event was shared with her relatives, residents of Momiji, former Victorians like herself and other friends.

Born in Hikone City, Shiga Prefecture, back in January, 1899 (32nd year of the Meiji reign), Haru Nakamura landed in Vancouver as teenager in 1915 to join her father. In 1918, she married Yasujiro Kusumi

of Wakayama prefecture, whom she joined in Victoria where her husband was then employed at the Ishida hotel. They remained in the B.C. capitol where they had a daughter, Asako, who passed away there as a young child, and a son, Yasutaka Dave. During World War II, they were sent to the Slocan, B.C. internment camp before resettling in Toronto.

Unfortunately, both Mrs. Kusumi's husband and son are now deceased-- the latter in 1987. This was the sad note at her birthday party, as she had no immediate family member to rejoice with her.

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With her reaching the century mark, Mrs. Kusumi became the ninth member of the "exclusive club" of Issei, all of whom are 100 years or more living in Toronto. The group consists of seven women and two men, the eldest of whom is a woman who is 105. Two other ladies are 103, while both men are 101.

In addition to these individuals, three more pioneer Issei women in Toronto will turn 100 during 1999. Another lives at Nipponia Home in Beamville, Ont. So, we may have as many as 12 Nikkei Centenarians in Ontario on January 1, in the year 2000. I have also checked out Japanese Canadian groups in Hamilton, London and Thunder Bay, Ont. without finding any centenarians in these centres.

Extending beyond Ontario, I called on my JC contacts in Montreal, Winnipeg, Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, Kelowna, Kamloops and the Lower Mainland. So far, there are three more,

all in the Vancouver area, who will be observing their 100th birthday in 1999.

However, except for Toronto, I cannot consider my research to be completed and intend to continue this pursuit across Canada to determine the true count of Nikkei Centenarians. With the approach of the new millennium, I believe that this project is very important, as it focuses on our vanishing JC community which has reached its peaks and valleys during the 20th century.

Next year, we will conclude this story by providing the names of pioneer Issei who have succeeded to the new millennium. In the meantime, we hope, with assistance of this publication's readers, JCNMAS members and our Nikkei across Canada that we will have an accurate listing of our 100-year olds as well as a list of their descendants. So far, there are at least two Centenarians who are great-great-grandmothers.



Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives at the Powell Street Festival (July 31-August 1)

Visit our display in the NNHC tent to learn about historical Japanese Canadian heroes. Name the only Asahi baseball star whose uniform still fits! What year did a Japanese Canadian first lobby for the vote? Who was the first Japanese Canadian cowboy? See if you can match the names to the faces! Be sure to tell us about your own heroes, and we'll add your comments to our display!

Stop by for a rest in the Buddhist Church to watch historical film footage of Japanese Canadians. While you're there, we will tell you what we do here at the museum and archives and how you can become involved.

While you're out enjoying the sun, why not tag along on a historical Walking Tour of old Powell Street? Learn about life in Vancouver's pre-war Japanese Canadian community. Sign up and assemble at the Powell Street Festival Information Booth.

Psssst!! Don't forget to try our chow mein - follow your nose to the JCNMAS food booth!

See you at the festival!



"CITIZEN KAYE"

by Susan Nishi

In recognition of "The Neighbourhood & Local Heroes" theme at this year's Powell Street Festival, we'd like to pay tribute to a community activist and sportsman who once played for the legendary Asahi baseball team.

About five years ago, some former team members enjoyed a reunion at the Powell Street Festival on their former ball diamond in Oppenheimer Park. One of those in attendance was Koichi Kaye Kaminishi, now 77 years of age, a competitive sportsman and active member of the Kamloops community.

Back in the 1939-1940 season, Kaminishi was a 16-year-old rookie who had taken over the "hot corner" as third baseman from Herbie Tanaka, who had just retired. This was the same year in which the Asahi won another Pacific Northwest Japanese Baseball Championship under the guidance of their charismatic coach, the late Roy Yamamura.

Kaminishi recalls those exciting, pre-war times in his written contribution, "A Proud Bench Warmer" in the book *Asahi: A Legend in Baseball*. "When I joined the Asahis as a rookie at Powell Grounds in 1939, one of my most unforgettable memories was when I made a first hit, the left-fielder made an error, giving me a chance to go all the way 'Home'. However, in my over-excitement and ecstasy I stumbled needlessly. This resulted in only a 2-base hit. I felt so embarrassed."

Last September, the Museum & Archives received an extraordinary gift from Kaminishi. He donated his uniform - both pants and shirt - apparently one of only two existing team jerseys.

As a teenager playing for the famous team, "wearing the Asahi

uniform for the first time made him so proud he was unable to sleep at night. When the Japanese were forced to evacuate, [most] of their belongings had to be left behind but Kaye held onto that Asahi uniform to this day." He was #11.

Kaminishi's love of baseball continued through the difficult war years, which he spent in East Lillooet. He organized an all-Japanese Canadian softball team in 1942 and challenged the local teams, but not without the support of an RCMP officer who demanded that Kaminishi's team be allowed to go into town to play games against the local teams. At the time, Japanese

Canadians needed a special permit to enter the town. Through baseball, the walls were gradually torn down between the internees and the locals. Said Kaminishi in a Vancouver Sun article, "After they started knowing us, the townspeople let us come in to do our shopping."

In 1947, when travel restrictions were lifted by the Canadian government, he moved to Kamloops, working at a fruit packing plant and later being employed by the Canadian Army Ammunition depot. He

married Flo Kobayashi in 1950, and they have a daughter and son, and a grandson, Kenny Shimokura.

These days, Kaminishi enjoys retired life after being in the motel business in Hope and Kamloops, and working as a clerk with B.C. Liquor for fifteen years. His love of competitive sports continues with table tennis and badminton. He was the winner of the Interior Table Tennis Championship in doubles and singles in 1952-1953. More recently though, he has focused on badminton, winning numerous awards. In 1995, in the 70-75



Kaye Kaminishi in his Asahi uniform visiting the Powell Street Festival in 1994

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JCNMAS NEWS AND EVENTS

Call for Materials

Do you have any historical materials relating to the Japanese Canadian experience?

The Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives (JCNMA) is seeking historical photographs, documents and objects for our artifact and archival collections. These historical materials will be used and displayed in JCNMA exhibitions, programs and reference services.

If you have any items you would like to donate or loan to the JCNMA, please call, write, fax or e-mail Susan or Minnie at:

Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society

511 East Broadway

Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1X4

Tel: (604)874-8090 Fax: (604)874-8164 e-mail: jcnmas@bc.sympatico.ca

Do not send original materials, but please let us know what you have.

Cannery Day '99

Sunday, August 1st
from 12:00 - 5:00 pm

The Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society and the Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives Society are pleased to announce the 1999 "Cannery Day" celebrations at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site on Sunday, August 1st, 1999. Each year Cannery Day highlights one cultural group's contributions to the West Coast fishing industry. This year's focus is the Japanese Canadian community.

This event involves the participation of the Steveston Buddhist Temple, The Steveston Judo & Kendo Clubs, The Richmond Museum/Britannia Heritage Shipyard, and many individuals from the Community.

Cannery Day will celebrate and provide insight into the history of the Japanese fishing community in Steveston through traditional Japanese music, food and tea sampling, Kendo & Judo demonstrations, special film showings, live street theatre, and activities for children such as Origami, and Gyoatoku Fish Printing. The exhibit "Unearthed from the Silence" will complement the day's activities and remain on exhibit until September 1999. In addition, an interactive map will be on display and will be presented to the community residents for their input.



Activities will take place on Sunday August 1st from 12:00 - 5:00 pm. The Cannery is located at 12138 Fourth Ave. Richmond, BC (Historic Steveston Village). For more information please call (604) 664-9009.

For further information about this event please contact:

Angela Kirkby, Marketing Coordinator Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society (604) 664-9031



The Courageous Story of Mrs. Hide Shimizu, Teacher

by Harold Steves (originally printed March 29, 1986 in "Steves' town")

Most people who went to Lord Byng School in Steveston in the 40s and 50s will affectionately remember Mrs. Elva Moreside who taught there for many years.

They will not be familiar, however, with Mrs. Hide Shimizu, who taught in Steveston with her friend Elva during the 30s. Hide lost her home, her job and her personal freedom when she was "relocated" during the Japanese Canadian relocation in 1942.

Lord Byng School students lost the opportunity of being taught by one of the two or three Canadians of Japanese descent permitted to teach in B.C. schools.

Hide received her teaching certificate in 1926 and began teaching in Steveston. Shortly the B.C. government made it illegal for any more Japanese Canadians to get teaching certificates.

During the war years, she put her teaching to good use. She immediately set up classes at the Forum at Exhibition Park. She later travelled from one relocation camp to another in the B.C. Interior, planning primary curriculum and training high school students to become teachers.

I met Hide for the first time last weekend. But for pre-war racial prejudice and World War II hysteria, she might well have been my teacher and neighbor.

Hide came out from Toronto to pay tribute to former NDP MP Grace MacInnis and her late husband Angus at a testimonial banquet Saturday night. On Sunday she attended services and renewed old friendships at the Steveston United Church, in which she had been active so many years before.

Speaking at the dinner sponsored by

the Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association, Hide recalled how Angus MacInnis had campaigned for voting rights for Japanese Canadians in the 30s. Time after time Angus, a CCF/NDP MP, stood up in Parliament facing cat-calls, laughter and outright hostility from fellow MPs, and anger from some of his electors, to support the Japanese Canadian cause.



Mrs. Hide Shimizu -- ca. 1930

In 1936 the Conservatives and Liberals combined to defeat a CCF motion to give Asians the right to vote, by 186 to 15. Angus urged the local Japanese Canadian community to send a delegation to Ottawa. Apparently some MPs had suggested that "they don't really want the franchise".

Hide Shimizu was part of that delegation. Hide recalls that the presentation for the franchise was well received. Some MPs said "They even speak excellent English."

Hearing Mrs. Shimizu speak, I couldn't help but think that she herself was an amazing Canadian. It was an age when thousands of hard-working Japanese Canadian farmers and fishermen who had survived the Depression were being used as scapegoats. It was an age when women had few rights. To be a woman from an ethnic minority, fighting for social justice, was doubly courageous.

Other speakers at the dinner told of the hardships of the war years. Expulsion was not something dreamed up after Pearl Harbor. Long before the war Ian MacKenzie, who was B.C.'s only Liberal cabinet minister and advisor to Prime Minister Mackenzie King on Japanese Canadians, was advocating expulsion of Japanese Canadians from B.C.

In 1942, the interned Japanese Canadians were told their properties would be held "in trust". Yet, within six weeks of the internment order, Mackenzie was making plans to take over 800 of their farms. He wrote of a "committee of white farmers and cannery men who know the properties intimately and have already brought in a number of farmers to take over some of the properties."

Hide Shimizu never returned to teach in Steveston after the war. However, in 1948 Japanese Canadians were finally given the right to vote in federal elections. In 1949 they were allowed to return to the coast. I remember the day well, when five Japanese Canadian students were

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*Mr. Thomas Kunito Shoyama;
Victoria --June 3, 1999*

My Hero: **Thomas Kunito Shoyama**

by Dr. Midge Ayukawa

Tommy Shoyama, the Canadian Nikkei "living treasure" received another honorary degree. This time from the University of Victoria, on June 2, 1999. Dr. Frank Robinson told me later that he had found it impossible to shorten his introduction because Tom had experienced and accomplished so much. Surmounting many obstacles as a non-Japanese-speaking Nisei, Tom was editor of the *New Canadian* and a Japanese Canadian community leader. He was economic advisor to Tommy Douglas, the first CCF Premier of Saskatchewan and was Douglas' right-hand man when the latter became national NDP leader. Later as a federal public servant, Tom rose to the pinnacle as Deputy Minister of Finance. After "retirement" in 1980, he joined the University of Victoria faculty, in the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies and the School

of Public Administration, while also serving as economic advisor to many countries and on boards of numerous Canadian and international companies.

Tom's accomplishments have been recognized by countless Canadian and international honours. His latest honorary degree gave the Victoria Nikkei an excuse to hold a party on July 3rd. True to form, he charmed us, one and all, with his wry sense of humour and his genuine interest in us mere mortals. We are indeed fortunate to have him serving as one of our JCNMAS National Advisors.

[For more information on Tom Shoyama, please read "Thomas Kunito Shoyama: Our Living Treasure" in the July 1997 Nikkei Images.]



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The Asahi baseball team -- 1940 - Back from left: Koei Mitsui, Kaye Kaminishi, George Yoshinaka, Roy Yamamura, Harold Nishihara.

Front from left: Tom Sawayama, Frank Shiraishi, George Shishido, Kaz Suga, Mike Maruno, Ken Kutsukake

age category, Kaminishi won a Silver Medal in Men's Doubles in the U.S. National All Senior Sports Classic in San Antonio,

Texas. This year, he received the Senior Sportsman of the Year Award, and received a plaque from the Kamloops Sports Council for achievement in badminton.

From "A Proud Bench Warmer" to community leader, Kaye Kaminishi is active in the Kamloops Japanese Seniors Club (Hyakunen Club), holding various positions on the executive for many years. He has been active with the Kamloops Buddhist Church since 1947, and two years ago, he received a Certificate of Appreciation after serving for over forty years on the executive board. In 1980, he was awarded the Certificate of Commendation from the Jodo Shinshu, Hongwanji-Ha, in Kyoto, Japan.

Kaminishi is also active with several other community organizations, notably the Kamloops Lions Club. In 1997, he received the Lion of the Year from Lions International, and, in the same year, was also awarded The Life Membership of the Lions Club of Canada.

This year, Kaminishi will be competing in badminton, in the 75-79 age group, at the 1999 Seniors Games in Elkford, B.C. We wish him (and the competition) the best of luck!

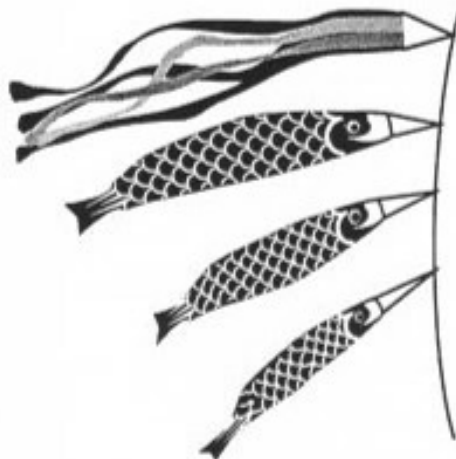
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duced to Mrs. Hunter's Grade 6 class. We soon became close friends. It was years later that I learned school principal Fred Aberdeen and Hide's fellow teachers had defied and order from the government and Richmond school board to segregate the returning Japanese Canadian children.

Now many years later our Japanese Canadian neighbours

are finally getting over the shock of what happened.

No longer accepting that "it was for our own good", they are aware of the great wrong that was perpetrated upon them. They are no longer afraid of further reprisals and want to make sure no other Canadians are going to be treated this way.





Thank you from the JCNMAS!

Donations to JCNMAS from June 1, 1999 to July 8, 1999

We gratefully acknowledge the receipt of financial donations from these individuals.

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Events Calendar

(July 31 and August 1)
Annual Powell Street Festival
- at Oppenheimer Park, Vancouver. Come enjoy the celebration! (see page 2)

(August 1)
Cannery Day '99 - Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historical Site. JCNMA is a partner in this event which features the Japanese Canadian fishing community in Steveston. (see page 4)

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