



WINTER 2012

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BAINBRIDGE ISLAND JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

BIJAC News

A Year of History, Honor and Healing

By Clarence Moriwaki

The BIJAEMA was well represented at numerous events in 2012, beginning back in March and continuing with hosting informational booths that included the Japanese American Citizens League National Convention; Seattle Cherry Blossom Festival; Bellevue's Aki Matsuri; and our own Grand Old Fourth of July Celebration, sharing a booth generously sponsored by the American Legion.

Despite winter-like winds and rain on March 30th, more than 700 people turned out to mark the 70th Anniversary of the first of 120,000 Japanese Americans to be forcibly exiled from the west coast during World War II.



A wet but happy group in May at the Memorial Wall hosting several dozen Seattle 8th graders. The group included 17 actual survivors honored and remembered on the wall.

Called "A Day of History, Honor and Healing," the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial Association (BIJAEMA) hosted a series free, community-wide day of events to both commemorate this sad chapter in American history and to celebrate the unique legacy of this community, having stood by their Japanese American friends and neighbors and welcomed them home.

Reflecting the historic support that the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community (BIJAC) experienced, a dozen local community organizations and businesses co-sponsored and supported nine island-wide events and tours that highlighted the history and legacy of Japanese Americans.

The eventful day started with a morning film festival at the Historic Lynwood Theater, featuring numerous locally produced documentaries highlighting the history of Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans.

In the afternoon, a tour of the oldest continuously operating farm in western Washington was hosted by the Suyematsu and Bentryn Family Farms and the Only What We Can Carry Project, where visitors enjoyed

displays of just-discovered and rare WWII artifacts of Aiko Suyematsu, including his well-preserved Manzanar ID cards.

Following the farm tour was a presentation at Bainbridge Gardens by Donna Harui sharing the pioneer legacy of her family's iconic nursery, which also included daylong self-guided tours of the beautiful Harui Memorial Garden.

Late afternoon began with an open house of Sonoji Sakai Intermediate School with tours of the school's permanent historic Japanese American displays, followed by an evening screening of the award-winning documentary "Conscience and the Constitution" and an informative forum featuring film maker Frank Abe and incarceration survivors.

Throughout the day, people could visit at their leisure three other venues, with hundreds choosing to visit the BIJAEM, many of which were seeing the 276-foot long Memorial Wall—one foot for every Japanese American living on Bainbridge Island at the start of WWII—for the very first time.

The Bainbridge Island Historical Museum—which generously offered free admission the

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A YEAR... (from page 1)

entire day—experienced summertime-like crowds of visitors who appreciated the museum's award-winning exhibits.

The third all-day site was self-guided tours of the Bainbridge Public Library's Haiku Garden, built in 1997 as a gift from the BIJAC to the people of Bainbridge Island.

Providing a BIJAEMA keepsake that connected visitors in a personal way, artistic "passport tags" strung with rough twine were handed out at every event and tour. As people visited each site or tour, the tag was stamped below their name with the number of each location, a symbolic reminder of the numbered tags worn by Japanese Americans to match their luggage.

The cold spring gave way to record-breaking months of unseasonably pleasant rain-free weather, and perhaps it was that rare sunshine, or maybe it was participating at major community events, the word has gotten out about the BIJAEM with record breaking visitation and requests for guided tours growing every passing month.

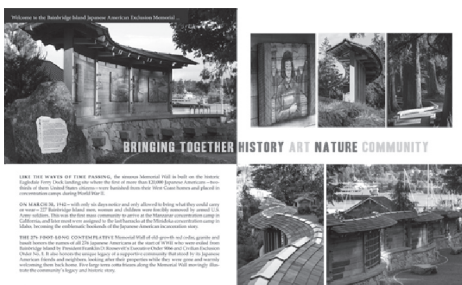
Ranging from fourth graders learning about the unconstitutional incarceration of Japanese Americans for the first time, to survivors and family members representing every one of the ten Japanese American concentration camps, BIJAEMA board members and Bainbridge Island Historical Museum docents have hosted hundreds of people who have journeyed to our island to visit the Memorial Wall and to personally experience walking in the footsteps of history. (See the article by BIJAEMA Vice-President Lilly Kodama highlighting some of the many tour groups this year)

At every one of these events—as well as for nearly every visitor to the BIJAEM site—people have taken home with them our new BIJAEM brochure (designed by Bainbridge Islander and long-time supporter Tracy Dunn) that movingly proclaims that the memorial is "Bringing Together History - Art - Nature - Community" illustrated by stunning, full color photographs of the gracefully curving Memorial Wall, images of the memorial site, and a brief narrative that describes the historical importance and significance of the project.

Thousands of copies of the brochure have already been distributed, and more are currently available at the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum; Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce; Marge Williams Memorial Center; Bainbridge Island Post Office BIJAEM display; Manzanar National Historic Site; Minidoka National Historic Site; Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles; Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Washington and Klondike Gold Rush Museum in Seattle; and, of course, the BIJAEM site.

In the brochure we highlight something new and exciting that has proven to movingly enhance visits to the BIJAEM site—a free, informative audio tour that can be downloaded to your personal mobile device. The mobile website features historic photos, personal interviews and narration from Bainbridge Island survivors and community leaders.

If you are not near one of these locations and would like a brochure, we will be happy to send one to you. Please contact us by mail: BIJAEMA, 221 Winslow Way West, Suite 306, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110; email: info@bainbridgемemorial.org; or telephone: 206-855-9038.



Hosting the JANM National Conference 2013

Bainbridge has a unique opportunity to host an Island tour during the Japanese American National Museum's fourth national conference to be held in Seattle July 4-7, 2013. The conference, Speaking Up! Democracy, Justice, Dignity, will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 which granted redress and reparations to Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II.

Speakers and participants will explore the historic and contemporary connections of the Japanese American experience to local, state and national histories. On the final day of the conference (July 7) participants will be offered a bus tour of historic sites on Bainbridge Island.

Representatives from the JANM met earlier this year with a core group from Bainbridge (dubbed TEAM 2013) to work out the details of the tour that will focus on significant sites in the history of the Island's Japanese Americans. The tour will include an orientation by Frank Kitamoto at Woodward Middle School, as well as visits to the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial, Blakely Harbor/Yama, Bainbridge Gardens, and Suyematsu Farm. Lunch will be served at Sakai Intermediate School. If you'd like to be part of TEAM 2013, and help make the tour a success, please contact us through our website, www.bijac.org.

For those who are interested in attending the Seattle conference, the JANM promises "a powerful, content-rich, and transformative slate of multiethnic, multigenerational speakers, presentations, and activities." More information can be found on the website (www.janm.org).

Located in Los Angeles, the Japanese American National Museum was established to promote understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience.

—Sallie Maron

Ready for a Pounding?

Looking for a sure cure for those cabin fever, wintertime blues? You're invited to join us and 1,500 of your closest friends at the 24th Annual Bainbridge Island Mochi Tsuki that takes place on Sunday, January 6, 2013, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at beautiful IslandWood, A School in the Woods, located at 4450 Blakely Avenue NE.

One of the nation's largest public mochi tsuki celebrations, the event is free and donations for mochi are welcome. Parking is very limited at the site and at nearby Blakely Elementary School; carpooling is strongly encouraged.

By popular demand, the acclaimed Seattle taiko drum group Kokon Taiko will offer three stirring performances, and to comply with fire safety laws, each of the three performances will be limited to 175 seats. Free tickets for each performance will be available on a first come, first served basis.

Models and renderings of the Bainbridge Island Japanese-American Exclusion Memorial "Nidoto Nai Yoni – Let It Not Happen Again" will be on display, along with the award-winning exhibit "Kodomo no Tameni – For the Sake of the Children," and free guided tours of the IslandWood campus will be available hosted by staff and volunteer docents.

Come help celebrate 2013 with us and offer wishes of good health, peace and prosperity!

—Clarence Moriwaki



Recent developments at the Minidoka National Historic Site include the placement of an original Mess Hall building and an original barrack back on the site of Block 22 where most folks from Bainbridge Island were housed.



Minidoka Pilgrimage 2013

Our pilgrimage to Minidoka last year is but a fond memory and we are moving on to Minidoka Pilgrimage 2013 to begin in late June. Those that have attended previous Minidoka Pilgrimages have observed the many changes that have taken place at the Minidoka National Historic Site. The most visible signs of progress and development of these are the reconstruction of the Honor Roll sign, the placement of an original Mess Hall building and an original barrack back on the site of Block 22.

During the 2012 pilgrimage we were allowed to enter and examine the Mess Hall and barrack that had undergone much needed cleaning and retrofitting. These buildings will be the cornerstones for the planned rebuilding of the entire Block 22 complex. Pilgrimage participants were able to take both guided and self-guided tours along a 1.6 mile loop that was completed before our 2012 visit. Along this 1.6 mile loop, visitors are able to identify specific areas of interest with signs (called waysides) that described the significance of what the visitor is viewing. At several locations, there are audio units available that explain what is being viewed. The completion of a section of barbed wire fence line also adds a profound sense of confinement and incarceration.

I would like to share with you some of the updates that I received from Wendy Janssen, Superintendent, Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument and Minidoka National Historic Site (NHS). This is what we can look forward to for the 2013 Minidoka Pilgrimage. Many of the changes and upgrades described, will be not be as noticeable to those who visit Minidoka NHS, however they will be just as important to the overall appearance and experience of Minidoka for

the future. The National Park Service historic preservation crew from Grand Teton National park finished preservation work on the fire station and mess hall doors and windows. The crew also reconstructed the three bay doors to the fire station so they look as they did during the camp years.

Interpretive signage has been added along the trail (including additional audio units) and the maintenance crew from Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument and Minidoka NHS have been busy doing much needed preservation work on the root cellar and building foundations this summer and fall.

Planning also continues with Hanako Wakatsuki (Friends of Minidoka, board President) and Boise State University staff on the guard-tower reconstruction project. The BSU students will be learning about Minidoka history and historic preservation principles this semester, then will focus on design in the spring, with construction beginning next summer.

The planning and organizing committee for the civil liberties symposium has announced that the theme for the 2013 symposium will be "First Generations" and the activities will include discussion on Issei and immigration.

As you can see, the hard work continues at the Minidoka NHS and we invite you to join us for the 2013 tour. Next year's Minidoka Pilgrimage will take place on June 20-23, 2013. Mark your calendars and we hope to see you there. For more information about next Pilgrimage, please visit our website, minidokapilgrimage.org.

*—Keith Yamaguchi
Co-chair, Minidoka Pilgrimage Committee*

*Word of Mouth
from
Frank Kitamoto*



• I welcome our two new BIJAC board members, Ron Coglon and Vivian Esteban.

Ron is already a member of the Memorial Board and Vivian has been working on a "Map Project" showing where all the residents of Japanese descent lived on Bainbridge Island prior to WWII—a cooperative project between the Historical Museum and BIJAC.

The Museum is also working on a project at the former "Yama" and "Nagaya" sites at Port Blakely.

• Once again, it amazes me how a few busy people can accomplish so much. It is true if you need something to be done, give it to someone who is already busy and it will get done. Our programs and projects succeed only because we have the support of many people outside of our Japanese American population.

• Our annual Mochi Tsuki celebration at IslandWood is again quickly approaching—Sunday, January 6th. If you have previously volunteered to help, we look forward to you doing so again. If you haven't but wish to do so, we welcome your help. You can contact Lilly Kodama at 206-842-2226, or Joyce Nishimura at 206-842-5951, or learn more from our website at www.bijack.org.

• I'm grateful to the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum for having their volunteers be docents at our Memorial Wall. If you wish to become a docent you can contact Lilly Kodama.

• I hope you as a present or past Bainbridge Islander or as a friend will join us at our every-other-year Reunion Picnic at Battle Point Park. This year it will be on Saturday, August 3rd. We'll all put our food together (it's BYOB—bring your own bento) and share with friends, new and old.

• I am grateful for having had the opportunity to present my PowerPoint presentation, "Making a Difference, Putting Human Back into Human Rights, Lessons from the Past to Help Us Make Choices in the Future" to class rooms and civic groups. It's a history of the Americans of Japanese descent on Bainbridge Island from the pioneer years, through removal and incarceration and return, given through photos and oral history quotes. Interested? You can contact me at 206-842-4774 or through our website.



• We are eagerly awaiting the release of the documentary film "Honor & Sacrifice" by Lucy Ostrander and Don Sellers of Stourwater Pictures.

The 27-minute film is basically the story of Roy Matsumoto who, from behind barbed wire in the U.S. concentration camps, joined Merrill's Marauders and fought behind Japanese lines in Burma and became one of the most highly decorated Nisei soldiers in WWII.

The project is expected to be completed by April 30 next year, Roy's 100th birthday.

Put Pen to Paper for Minidoka

Over the last three years, the Friends of Minidoka (FoM) has been fighting the building of an 8,000-head Confined Animal Feedlot Operation (CAFO) just 1.2 miles from Minidoka. It has been a long and hard-fought battle.

FoM performed an air-quality study, which showed that the smell of the cattle and feces would blow directly through Minidoka. Though the pollution was not over the legal limit, that standard was not designed for a national park that protects historic assets or hosts millions of visitors. Can you imagine walking through Minidoka, learning about our American history and smelling a strong stench of manure and urine?

In addition to the air quality issues, there are possible water and soil contaminants that could damage the historical artifacts and site features at Minidoka. Wendy Janssen, Superintendent at Minidoka, is working on studies that will collect data on these concerns as well.

The Friends of Minidoka is part of a coalition to stop the CAFO. Other coalition members include: Idaho Concerned Area Residents for the Environment, Idaho Rural Council, and the Dimond and Sloan families (Minidoka's neighbors).

In 2011, our lawyers went to court to request that the CAFO permitting process be reevaluated. Despite the coalition's belief that there are good grounds to revoke the permit, Judge Elgee of Jerome County rendered a verdict siding with the CAFO owners. In September, the coalition filed a notice to appeal his decision. Earlier this year, we had a hearing with the Idaho Supreme Court for that appeal. In July, the verdict was passed down and FoM found out that we lost.

Although there is no further legal option for Friends of Minidoka, the National Park Service and the U.S. Government have opportunities to continue further. We just need to get their attention for Minidoka. And you can help us do it.

You can help by writing to the National Park Service Director, Secretary of Interior Salazar and your Congress Members. Addresses and a sample letter are available at www.minidoka.org.

When Minidoka was made a National Park, the government made a commitment to protect it. Please help put pressure on our leaders to preserve Minidoka.

—Emily Hanako Momohara

What It Was Was Football

My name is Vern Nakata and on August 13, 2012 I was asked to talk to the Bainbridge High School Football teams (at their football camp) about their involvement representing the Bainbridge Island Community. In my high school years I did not actually play football. But, I helped manage the 1972 BHS Varsity Football Team (as the so-called "water boy"). My family is one of the pioneering Bainbridge Island families, so I did come to the camp with lots of stories of family members and friends that did play football and were involved with the Bainbridge Island Community.

One of the stories that I wanted to pass along was that of my brother Don, who did play football, baseball and basketball. Going back in time... in 1942 my brother Don, seven years old at the time, was interned, along with his family, at the



BHS footballer Don Nakata

Internment Camp Manzanar, where along with 10,000 other persons of Japanese descent they stayed for three years. After internment camp his family (Dad, Mom and two other brothers) stayed with the Hansen Family of Mosses Lake, Washington before returning to Bainbridge.

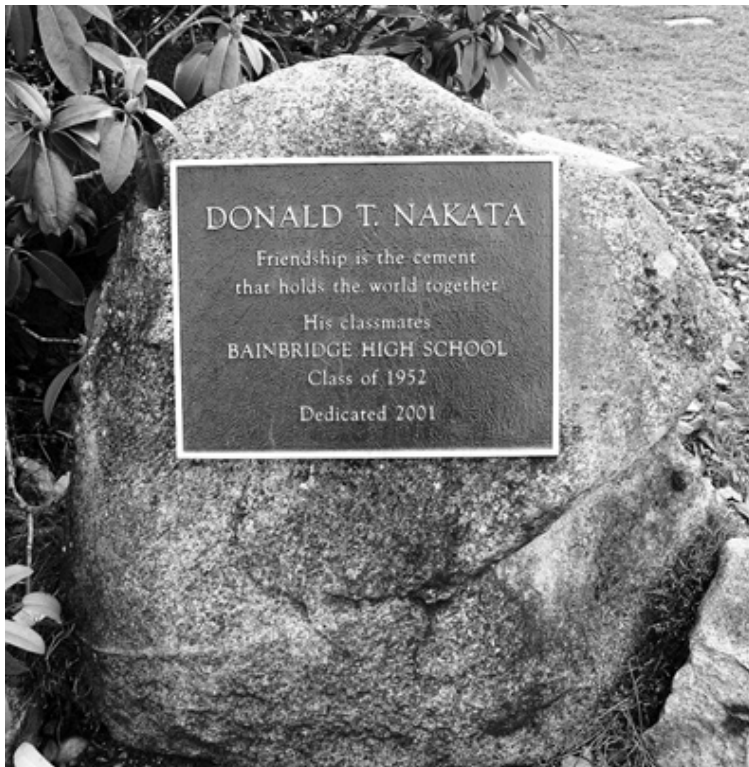
My brother Don was about eleven years old when he returned to the Bainbridge Island School District, assimilating back into grade school. Acting a little shy, and probably a little scared, Don was approached by a classmate. That classmate, Jerry Johnson, offered Don a stick of gum. This act of kindness by Jerry was the start of a lifelong friendship which lasted for half a century.

As mentioned earlier, Don Nakata played football. His coach was Tom Paski. At one of the games Don was knocked unconscious. Our parents were summoned and Don was hauled away by ambulance to the hospital. He revived and nothing serious resulted, although the incident scared a lot of people—classmates, cheerleaders, players and fans at the game. (I'll come back to this story later.)

Don fit into the main stream American community of Bainbridge Island. He graduated from BHS, attended Seattle University, joined the army and later worked for his family businesses of Eagle Harbor Market and Town & Country Market. He married Ellen Nuruto of Honolulu, Hawaii. They had two daughters, Susan and Julie. Don managed the Poulsbo Mark-it Foods and eventually became the president and CEO of Town & Country/Central Markets and served on many business boards and community service organizations. Don tragically passed away on October 3, 2000 while vacationing in Louisiana with his wife Ellen. He was 66 years old and was looking forward to his retirement years.

At the memorial service for Don, Coach Paski got up to speak. He told the story of Don's football concussion, the story of "crying cheerleaders" And of our mother being summoned. The coach also told the story about her having apologized to him a few days later about "causing such an ordeal." That's the way Mother (and my brother) was. Not only looking after her immediate needs but, also for the needs of others (especially her family) as well as for the needs of the community supporting us.

—Vern Nakata



“Seven Ups” Exhibit at Sakai School

“The Seven Ups: Friends for Life” exhibit at the Sakai Intermediate School on Bainbridge Island celebrates the lifelong friendship of seven Island girls who became fast friends at Manzanar and Minidoka. The exhibit opened in March 2012.

“We seven saw each other every day because we were living in close quarters. So we walked to school together and to meals together. We didn’t eat with our families, but with our friends. Soon others began to call us ‘The Seven-Ups’ and the name stuck,” says Eiko Suyematsu Shibayama.



Photo: Joel Sackett

In their 80s now, the seven usually meet every year and come together for weddings, baptisms and reunions. They are EIKO Suyematsu (married name Shibayama), YAEKO “Yae” Sakai (Yoshihara), YURIKO “Yuri” Kojima, LILLIAN Sakuma (Aoyama), KIYOKO “Kiyo” or “Kay” Takayoshi (Sakuma), TOSHIKO “Toshi” Yukawa (Sunohara) and SALLY Yamashita (Okazaki).

Yae Sakai Yoshihara has kept her photograph albums and souvenirs of those days in the camps, recalling parties, choir, church and school behind barbed wire. These photos, party invitations, and class schedules on display could belong to any American teenage girl of the times, were it not for the background of tar-paper barracks. For the pre-teen students at Sakai, the exhibit presents two important stories: the historical internment story plus the remarkable story of true “best friends forever.”

The display was designed and created by graphic designer Tammy Fujihara. Support was provided by Sakai School’s photo display committee (Kay Sakai Nakao, Jo Vander Stoep, Nancy Rignel, Peg Chapman), and by Bainbridge Island Historical Museum (Katy Curtis, Rick Chandler, Vivian Esteban, Jennifer Hager, Joan Piper). Funding for the project was provided by Sakai PTO.

Interviews of the Seven Ups in preparation for the exhibit are on DVD in the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum’s collection of oral histories. The public is welcome to view the display in the main hallway of the Sakai Intermediate School. School hours are 8:00-3:00 pm. Phone (206)780-6500.

—Joan Piper



❀The Daikichi Omoto Family❀

In 1910, my father, Daikichi Omoto (October 3, 1873 - May 5, 1930), and his wife, Masa Kinoshita (1882 - 1970), together with two of Masa's brothers left Yamaguchi Prefecture in Japan for Seattle. My dad had been in the United States previously for several years, but returned to Japan to bring Masa back with him.

In Seattle, my parents worked for two years then moved to Bainbridge Island to farm. Other island families from Yamaguchi Prefecture were the Nakatas and the Takemotos. The prefectural identity created a bond that linked them together. Like other immigrants, my father came to this country to seek a better way of life, that is, to earn a living.

Setsuo Omoto was born in Seattle in August 1914. He was followed by Taketo in 1917, Kako (Kanee) in 1919, Masakatsu in 1921, and me in 1922.

Most Japanese pursued farming, but within a couple of years my father began working for island property owners. Dad worked for Anson S. Burwell, owner of Seattle Hardware, both at his home on Capitol Hill in Seattle and at his summer house in the old Hawley Dock area on the island and on Pleasant Beach.

Dad also stoked the coal-burning furnace in the stately home of Magdha Jones and her sister near Wing Point on Madrona Drive. He also chopped firewood, raked leaves, gardened, and did general yard work and home maintenance.

Mrs. Jones probably assisted us with the purchase our house on Madrona Drive, held in the names of the children. Alien immigrants like my mother were ineligible for home ownership, but Nisei, the second generation, were permitted to own property. Around this time, Dad began strawberry farming on a field near the Sakai farm. When he was hospitalized with a stomach ailment this pursuit was interrupted. His surgical and medical bills were likely paid, in part, by the Joneses and the Burwells.

Eventually, Mother and Dad elected to forgo further treatment. Dad called his children to his bedside and instructed each to write a note that stated, "Dad is going to the hospital and he might not return; I will be a good boy." Dad died on May 5, 1930. Within three months of my father's death, tragedy struck again. My sister Kanee disappeared during high tide at Hawley Dock, Wing Point. After a two-day search, her body was sighted by boaters. I was stricken with rheumatic fever and was bedridden and housebound for months.

As a widow with five children, Mother supported us by doing housework, and, with the other women, making boxes for transporting strawberries from the fields to the cannery for R. D. Bodle Company. My two older brothers worked as gardeners for various greenhouses, while Masakatsu and I helped with household chores. As a junior high school student I did chores for 10¢ an hour for Mrs. Stacy, Mrs. Tiffany, and Mrs. McLean at Wing Point. The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, brought uncertainty and anxiety to the

Japanese community. Unannounced, the FBI visited Japanese living on the island to look for contraband—knives, firearms, radios, and other suspicious items.

I was 19 years old, attending classes five days a week at the University of Washington on the mainland. One day as I prepared to board the ferry home, I was stopped by classmate George Freeman, a deckhand. Noting that I had no proof of citizenship or birth certificate, he refused to let me board. On March 30, 1942, all 227 people of Japanese ancestry on Bainbridge Island were forcibly rounded up and removed under the observation of military guards and hoards of curious people. Mr. Schmidtke and his wife, who owned the waterfront property across the street from our house, volunteered to live at the house to keep the property safe from unwelcome intruders and to care for our dog, Tech, and our cat.

We departed Eagle Dock for Seattle and ultimately were taken by train to Owens Valley Reception Center (later converted to a relocation center), in California. From there we were transported

by bus to Manzanar in the Mojave Desert. The place was dust-filled and hot.

All inhabitants of Bainbridge Island were housed in Block 3. Assigned identification numbers 36A (late father), 36B (mother), 36C (Mas), and 36D (me), we were led to a tar-paper-clad wooden barrack with straw-filled mattresses.

Setsuo and Taketo had been drafted into military service earlier—before Pearl Harbor—and were eventually stationed at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and at Camp Crowder, Missouri, respectively. Taketo was a surgical technician. Masakatsu would enter the army from the relocation center, serving in the 442nd regimental combat team.

Since our family was three, we shared cramped housing with the Widow Moritani and her three children. I worked as an orderly at Manzanar Hospital for minimal

compensation.

On February 1, 1943, the War Relocation Authority allowed residents to take permanent leave from the camps. Mas left for Chicago. Mother and I moved from Manzanar to Minidoka in Hunt, Idaho, to join others from the Northwest.

Within months I enrolled at Oberlin College in Ohio, perhaps having been admitted on the recommendation of the Burwells. College was interrupted by my draft into the armed forces and admission to the Japanese language school at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. Mother remained at Minidoka until Setsuo returned to the Island after his discharge in 1945 from service in Texas. After his discharge in 1945, Taketo also returned home. Mother reconnected with life on Bainbridge Island. Setsuo (d. 2004) became a self-employed gardener; Taketo (d. 2011) was employed by Boeing Aircraft and the City of Seattle; Mas (d. 1979) stayed in Chicago; I pursued graduate studies in the Midwest and taught Art History at Michigan State University. Setsuo married Yukiko Katayama and Taketo married Nobuko Sakai, both island women. The Omoto house on Madrona Drive has been in the family 96 years.

—Sadayoshi Omoto



❀The Yonemitsu Family❀

My mom Sueko (Sue) Nishimori was born in Crystal Springs, Bainbridge Island, WA. She and her five siblings were born of immigrant parents from Japan. Her dad, Kirohachi Nishimori, immigrated in 1904 from Arai, Kumamoto, Japan to Tacoma, worked the lumber mill on Bainbridge Island, and bought his home in Winslow and five acres on which he grew strawberries and other crops. In 1915 he married Tsue Hamasaki from Kumamoto, Japan.

Mom went to Lincoln Elementary and Bainbridge High School. She was bilingual and they were expected to go to Japanese School to learn the traditions of Japan. She would enjoy swimming in the frigid Puget Sound. They got seaweed from the beach and dried it in the house. They practiced Buddhism although Mom also attended a Japanese Baptist church. 1942 was expected to be a good year to harvest strawberries and she was going to graduate from high school and hopefully go on to college. President Roosevelt's executive order ended that, and on March 30, 1942, they were among the 227 Japanese American citizens and Japanese nationals who left the island from the Eagle Lake Ferry dock, bound for Manzanar, a camp in the California desert. Prior to this, the FBI thought my grandfather would be a national security threat and in February of 1942 he was taken to a camp in Missoula, Montana. So the family was separated until he joined them in June of 1942. Fortunately my grandparents found someone to take care of the farm and land while they were gone. The Hyde family to whom they leased their land allowed them to store their belongings in the barn.

Bainbridge Island was a lot different back then. The Woodward's newspaper and many people in the community, were supportive of the Japanese American families who were being forcibly removed and who, especially as they knew they hadn't done anything wrong, felt like prisoners found guilty without proof. In her book "In Defense of Our Neighbors," Mary Woodward states that many of the families would hide or even destroy any of their things that came from Japan. They began using American names, stopped wearing Japanese clothes and going to Japanese school; that is why I do not know much of the Japanese language.

Growing up in a Japanese culture, respect for the government and authorities was very important. So when families were relocated they went peacefully.

Manzanar was in the desert and fenced, prison style, with barbed wire. Barracks were put up for the families to live in and there were watchtowers and soldiers with guns. The food provided by the government included three meals a day, but many in the camp came down with food born illnesses. The sand would blow into the rooms and get into everything. The weather was extreme with very high to freezing cold temperatures. There were no walls and no privacy. They had outhouses and at first no running water. Eventually they made the best of what they had.

In 1943 my mom left Manzanar and went to Chicago and worked as a domestic helper. "In Defense of our Neighbors" states that many

young people my mom's age were allowed to leave the camps to enlist in the army or to go to school or work as long as it wasn't on the west coast.

Dad was born in Los Angeles of immigrant parents. My grandfather's name, Frances Yonemitsu, was a produce buyer, and his wife was Alice Thomson who was also from Japan; she spoke English because her dad had come to Japan from England and was helping the Japanese with shipbuilding. Dad was the youngest of the four Yonemitsu children and all were also incarcerated at Manzanar. My dad went down early to construct buildings that the families would live in at the camp. Grandma Alice died in 1942 in the camp due to mouth cancer.

My dad, who served with the 442 Regimental Combat Team in Europe, ended up with post traumatic stress syndrome which would explain why he didn't talk about his war experiences. He went to Chicago for rehabilitation where he met my mom who was a nurses' aide at the time. They married in 1946 and had daughter Linda in 1947 and son David in 1951. They heard from my aunt that Boeing was hiring and that they could probably buy a house in Kent, Buying a home when you are Japanese American after the war years was a difficult thing due to racism.

When they came back to Washington, I was born in May in Renton and the family ended up living with the grandparents on Bainbridge Island. It sounded like it wasn't a pleasant situation as my mom and grandma would argue in Japanese. My sister said it was because grandma thought they were stealing her stuff but actually she would hide stuff and couldn't remember where she had placed it.

Eventually my parents ended up living in the Rainier Beach area of Seattle. Dad had a job in Seattle working as a Boeing machinist, eventually going to the Auburn plant. They moved to Kent and bought a home on East Hill. They had seven children in all; the last child had severe autism and was also deaf. The house was very small with one bathroom and only three bedrooms.

My mom worked cleaning dental offices and also worked at factories that produced clothes. Dad retired at 55 from Boeing after working 35 years. They eventually moved to Sedro Wooley.

In 1988 my parents received a total of \$40,000 by the government for having been placed in Manzanar because their civil rights were violated. I believe that is when they started to talk about the relocation. With that I believe there was healing. Unfortunately my dad is not around to go to the Gold Congressional Medal ceremony for the 442nd this fall and my mom is not around to see the finished Memorial wall on Bainbridge Island. One thing that I realize is that God makes all things good even in this situation. I am here today since my parents were able to meet each other only after the relocation to Manzanar. My grandfather would be happy to see that racial tolerance has improved in our country. Another good thing is that sushi can be found in stores all over this country.

—Kathy Anderson



Robert Yonemitsu

Photo by Dorteia Lange

BIJAC

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Vivian Hwang
Lilly Kodama
Hisa Matsudaira
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Clarence Moriwaki
Kay Nakao
Gary Sakuma
Keith Uyekawa



Editorial: Mac Davis • www.mcedit.com

If you wish to make changes in the address shown below, or to be removed from our mailing list, please let us know.

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BAINBRIDGE IS. WA
98110
PERMIT NO 6376

***We urge you all to attend our monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of the month.
Call or visit our website for time and location. There are no dues, the only obligation being an interest in Japanese
American history and heritage and a willingness to lend your support and interest to our ongoing projects.***

Build It and They Will Come

It may be trite, but nonetheless true. We did build it and they have and continue to come. The Memorial has been visited by many tour groups, organizations, students, teachers, families, and friends.

The Bainbridge Island Historical Museum's exhibit of Ansel Adams' portraits of Manzanar has attracted many visitors from almost every state in the Union. This in turn has led many to the Memorial. The museum has been an integral part of the guided tours. The museum has a comprehensive exhibit about the WWII era and the incarceration of our people and also the history of Bainbridge Island pioneers of Japanese ancestry, which include an exhibit of Yama, the Japanese village at the Port Blakely Mill. Their library has many books, oral histories, and people/subject files about Nikkei.

Here is a list of docent led tours which have taken place since the wall's completion:

Meadowdale Middle School, Edmonds School District – 92 students + teachers & parent chaperones ☆ Tops School, Seattle School District – 60 students + teachers & chaperones ☆ Mercer Island Alternative High School – 50 students + teacher & chaperones ☆ Seattle Urban Academy – 16 students + teacher ☆ Eton School, Bellevue School District – 16 students + 7 adults ☆ Seattle University graduate students from Japan – 25 students + advisor ☆ Soundview School, Lynwood, WA – 18 Fourth graders + teacher & chaperones ☆ Portland, OR, JACL Youth Group – 16 teens + 10 adults ☆ Hiroshima Kenjinkai – 40 people ☆ Chimacum Women's Group – 15 ☆ Seattle Japanese Garden Docents – 10 ☆ Tule Lake Superintendent & Staff + National Park Service people from Alaska, New Mexico, and Seattle ☆ Boy Scout Troop #237 from Tacoma – 18 ☆ Writers Group from San Francisco – 20 ☆ Nikkei Concerns – brought five separate groups of 25 each ☆ Kubota Garden Foundation Board Members

– 4 (resulted in an article about the memorial in their newsletter.) ☆ Washington State History teachers, Tahoma School District, Maple Valley, WA – 4 ☆ The Lilys – 6 women whose motto is Living Well in Later Years ☆ Cultural Anthropologist professor from Kyoto, Japan

We have been able to accommodate all requests for guided tours thanks to our volunteer docents, many who wear both museum and Memorial "hats." Guided tours may be arranged for individuals or any size group, large or as small. Minimum of three weeks notice indicating size of group, date, time, and duration of visit is requested. Contact Lilly Kodama lykodama@live.com or Katy Curtis outreach@bainbridgehistory.org.

—Lilly Kodama

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- **Mochi Tsuki** is January 6, Sunday at IslandWood
- March 30, Saturday—61st Anniversary of our removal from Bainbridge Island.
- **Cherry Blossom Festival** is April 25~28 at the Seattle Center.
- **Minidoka Pilgrimage and Civil Liberties Symposium**, June 19~23 in Twin Falls, Idaho.
- **National Japanese American Museum All Camps Conference** is July 3~7 at the Seattle Sheraton. On July 7, NJAM attendees are in make an all day visit to Bainbridge Island.
- **Reunion Picnic** on August 3, Saturday at Battle Point Park.
- **Bellevue Aki Matsuri** on September 6~7 at Bellevue College Gym.

If you are interested in participating or helping in these activities, please call Dr. Kitamoto (206) 842-4772 or visit our website www.bijac.org for further information.