

“Ba-chan’s Story”

*Thoughts and recollections of a
Japanese Canadian growing up in Canada.*

by Yoshimi Susan Maikawa (nee: Yoshimi Suyama)

Excerpts and recollections presented at:
CHANGING JAPANESE IDENTITIES IN
MULTI-CULTURAL CANADA CONFERENCE

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Now, this permits me to pass on my stories to our grandchildren to understand and appreciate part of their heritage. Here it is, Alyssa, Brandon, Daniel, Joshua and Felix — ENJOY!

Chapter One

“Shi a wa se” to be Japanese Canadian

This is my view, a recollection of ongoing evolution, growth and maturity of the person I've become. An identity crisis was created starting from my birthplace, Cumberland, B.C. My self worth was challenged in a country I thought I called home. Over 60 years of life experience herded me from my parents' home to an animal stall in Hastings Park, forced evacuation to Lemon Creek detention camp, exiled to war torn Japan, and finally back to Canada. This left an indelible impression on me. The little girl they called Ochapei (chatter box) figured how to survive. My story begins with the woman known as Susan Maikawa, nee: Yoshimi Suyama.

I was born in Cumberland, B.C. in an isolated coal mine/lumbering Japanese community, one of the ten children reared by Issei parents, Hisakichi and Tei Suyama and very much influenced by the Japanese culture. To me as a child, there were no barriers among people. My childhood seemed very carefree while attending full day Public School and part time Japanese Language School. We were the minority, yet we mingled well, life appeared uncomplicated and there was the opportunity to grow in freedom. Up to age 9, the thought never occurred to me whether I was Japanese, Canadian or whoever.

Suddenly there was an interruption. Pearl Harbour was attacked and Canada was at war with Japan. In April 1942 we were all shunned and prohibited to attend public school. It was very annoying and shocking to see our family's only radio being confiscated. Using the powers of the War Measures Act all people of Japanese ancestry were evacuated from the coastal regions to the interior of B.C. We were herded to temporary holding quarters in animal stalls at Hastings Park, Vancouver before we were shipped out to detention ghost towns. Some stayed for up to 6 months, but even under these severe adverse situa-

tions, the Nisei high school graduates volunteered and prepared themselves to teach the children so they would not lose time from their schooling. The Issei's foremost goal was always about furthering their children's education, no matter what.

At 10 years old, I was very confused. I was born in Canada and I was told I am Canadian but since my parents came from Japan, was I also considered Japanese? I thought to myself, why are we being treated like this? I had overheard my parents talking to their friends about these very important concerns and situations but still being young, these issues were only momentary thoughts. I was still living as a fun loving child.

Our forced detention started at Slocan, living in a tent for two weeks (Jokingly, Mama recalls it as the best time of her life as she didn't have to cook and wash the floors). We then went on to Lemon Creek Internment Camp where we lived for a little over four years. Despite the isolation from the Canadian society, the Issei and the older Nisei generation firmly laid the groundwork for the future. At school the children were being prepared for the transition of assimilating back into the Canadian way of life once the war was over. Male members of the family, eighteen years old or over were sent to road camps or were forced to go to a prison camp at Angler, Ontario. Our family stayed together but sad to say, I did see signs of depression among some fathers who were unable to cope with all these social injustices. During my detention days (age 11 to 15) my identity had started to form. I can vividly remember Mama in tears and so hurt when my parents received a mere \$60 for their Cumberland house that the government had evicted them from and then auctioned off through the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property Act. I am certain that this was done to prevent people from returning home after the war. This was the first time I faced reality of how cruel humans are. Previously we had been looked down upon and treated like second class citizens but now the remaining rights had also been denied. I believed as did many others that the Canadian government was persecuting and discriminating against us simply because we were of Japanese decent. Germans and Italians were not treated like us. I had heard many stories of older generations having difficult times obtaining jobs that they were trained for after graduating from universities. I myself before and during detention had not experienced the discrimination the Issei and the older Nisei experienced as I always lived within a Japanese community. The only Occidental contacts I had were our dealing with the nearby General Stores but they were nice to us in a business sense. In this unprejudiced environment and with the strong influence of our elders, children generally led a happy life attending school, enjoying camp activities and of course obeying and honouring parents (oya ko ko). In detention we were all in the same boat and nobody was trying to exercise his or her rights as Canadians, but feeling as our Issei parents, saying "shikata ga nai", it can't be helped. The schoolteachers did not make waves either. They sacrificed their time and energy to keep the students disciplined and progressing in every way. I am indebted to their influence for laying down the earlier foundation in my development.

Looking back at the way people were referring to "shikata ga nai" I firmly believe that the older generation was wiser than they gave them credit for and this was the most

appropriate way of dealing with this difficult situation. Neither the general public nor the government of the day were experienced in such matters — we noticeably looked like the enemy so we must be the enemy — maybe even a spy. Fortunately the Western governments have learned a lot and human rights and social justice are foremost now in decision-making. All the wrong doings were caused by fear, insecurity, hate and discrimination and could this be compared to the present day equivalent to the term “ethnic cleansing”? To-day in Canada you are held accountable for your actions and social injustice will not be tolerated anymore. The Western Countries are now very careful and they try to do the right things. I myself feel “shikata ga nai” alone should no longer be used to describe what our parents were saying because the younger generations had been translating it just literally and using it negatively indicating that Issei were not vocal in raising their concerns. Perhaps a more positive and appropriate phrase to be added to it (which was understood) would be “gaman zu yoku akirame ta” which means together, it can’t be helped, tolerate, endure with inner strength, and don’t dwell on it as it was senseless to argue. Our elders held their dignity with faith and moved forward positively while encouraging rightful value in their children. Ever since discussions with Papa I have valued and practiced this tolerance and understanding approach for many situations.

When Japan surrendered in August 1945, some Issei parents strongly believed that Japan lost the war through a deadly weapon but was not defeated in a spiritual sense. After the war the Canadian government gave everyone a choice to remain in Canada and be moved inland or to return to Japan. My parents really had to weigh the pros and cons of these choices. The most prominent factors were, no savings left, no jobs and no house to go to. Their cultural roots were in Japan. There also was a language barrier and there were the many restrictions and limitations placed on the children’s choices of entering most professions. All these factors made a future in Canada look rather bleak so a painful decision was made to return to Japan. On the positive note, Papa would be able to see his aging mother and his eldest son who was stranded in Japan when he went to study at the age of 12. Although Mama firmly believed that it was wiser to remain in Canada because she thought the reckless war had brought great destruction to Japan, the final decision was Papa’s to go to Japan. The Canadian Government essentially encouraged the Japanese to make this decision because the passage was paid and extra food ration coupons for buying basic foods were provided. In hindsight, it leads me to believe that this choice of returning to Japan was the Government’s motive and plan for “ethnic cleansing”. I was underage at 15 and had no choice but to follow my parents. Being born Canadian, I was virtually being exiled but I did not think too much about how I would be treated in Japan. Deep inside, I had mixed feelings. It was sad to be leaving all our friends and my classmates. However, it was exhilarating thinking that I would be enrolling into Jyo Gakko. I had read books and seen films related to this all girls school and I was inspired.

This was the first time I left the country of my birth and my initial impression I felt when we sailed into Yokohama harbour by ship on October 15, 1946 was “Wow, what an

unique country, full of curiosities and uncertainties for sure.” It was far from what I had envisioned — this beautiful nation with graceful Mt. Fuji’s white peak reaching upward beyond the clouds. I was confused and somewhat unsettled by the contrast between the east and the west but we had landed and adventure awaited us. My brother, Kakuichiro met us at the harbour. We were surprised to learn that he had written to Papa and Mama through the Red Cross advising us not to return to Japan at this time but his letter never reached my parents so our life was about to begin. We were placed in a holding refugee camp at Kurihama. I thought to myself, “Oh, not again!” Meals were prepared for us but absolutely nothing tasted good, as it was a gooey mixture of something. However, I enjoyed seasonal sweet potatoes. Some less fortunate indigenous Japanese came with buckets to collect the left over food every day.

Our next move was to Uruzu, Fukuoka-ken, a farming community and we relied mainly on support from my brother, and two sisters who worked for the American Armed Forces. Our brother, Tokugi and sister, Wakiko regularly sent us delightful care packages of food and medicine from Canada and the penicillin probably saved my younger sister’s life when she became gravely ill. Food that we brought back from Canada was scarce and we shared them with our relatives and friends and in return we were provided with fresh vegetables and fruits. We were not so lucky when we encountered worms in our stomachs though!

When enrolling into the elementary school, I found out that I was registered as a Japanese citizen already, thus I had dual citizenship. Although I found myself in an all Japanese environment again as in Lemon Creek, I was considered different in my thoughts, the way I dressed, my mannerism, my speech, — everything about me. At school it was customary to remove your outdoor footwear when you enter. Although I did not sense outward discrimination towards me I began to notice “spit” in my leather shoes, which was very disturbing. To become accepted, the only alternative was to wear getta which were wooden sandals like what the others wore. Slowly as I tried to become more like them, my schoolmates started to accept me by the end of the semester.

When General Douglas MacArthur, commander of occupied Japan, ordered the Americanization of the Japanese educational system, I was truly disappointed that I would not be able to attend the all girls Jyo Gakko. While radical changes were being made to the educational system there were chaotic confusions, concerns and anger reflected in the students’ behaviour and protests against such reforms. War ravaged Japan’s number one priority was to rebuild a stronger, more meaningful and yet affordable education system. If the nation was to grow wealthy and strong, it was believed that it was important to raise the intellectual level of the masses. Eventually the reforms were accepted to a degree and the schools became an interesting blend of the new world and the old world with traditional fine arts still retained.

By the time I reached Sr. High School, I had adjusted quite well to my schooling. The indigenous students and teachers labeled us as “hi ki age sha” meaning uprooted from other countries or repatriates. However, we were all compatible in the classroom setting.

I volunteered and assisted in conversational and written English lessons for the indigenous students and they in turn, helped me with the classroom routines, work ethics, and to understand their customs and language. I was pleased to be accepted and respected by my fellow students and teachers. This was an important time for building personal relationships. A deep impact still remains from a small token of kindness of bringing a simple day to day delight. My “sweet potato” friend, Shibashi-san, who lived on a farm knew that I liked certain foods and she would sometimes surprise me with special purple skinned sweet potatoes. They were so delicious that I was very thankful. These potatoes were the best tasting “ama imo” I have ever eaten!

As time went on I took the opportunity when it arose to act as an interpreter to an officer, Lt. Cowan, from the nearby Tsuiki American Airbase. He came to our school and spoke about American life and why the Armed Forces were occupying Japan and their role at the Airbase to combat the North Korean communist enemy. Since then, doors opened to work for the Armed Forces in various capacities interpreting and translating. Some awakening and helpful experiences learned were through interviewing non-communist indigenous potential employees and also acting as an unbiased observer-participant to ease conflict tensions between the indigenous and American staff. Over time and through my subtle encouragements, better rapport and communication skills were developed and the office ran more efficiently. The Armed Forces treated Nisei well and gave the same living accommodations and privileges as the American civilians had and always teased me as a Canuck in a friendly manner.

Through Papa’s urging, I attended night school at Kita Kyushu Tanki Daigaku, majoring in Arts and Teaching. Here I met my lifelong friend Terry Oka, a Japanese-American who returned to Japan from China (now living in Hawaii), and we both ended up in the early childhood studies as we found out later in life. Upon graduation, I was employed at Camp Kokura Headquarters with the Maintenance Division doing interpreting and secretarial work. When the peace treaty was signed in the early 50’s, at the opportune time, the once obedient Japanese indigenous staff showed their resentment by rebelling vocally against the American treatment of them. This was yet another example of “shikata ga nai” I witnessed. The Armed Forces were starting to face reduction in forces and down sizing of jobs were imminent. The atmosphere was getting gloomy and definitely job-wise it was very uncertain and bleak. Gradually the American Nisei civilians started to go back to their homeland.

In the early 50’s my older brother, Kunio and my two older sisters, Masayo and Meiko ventured back to Canada despite what my parents kept saying to us “Wait until you all graduate with proper education.” In 1955 at age 23, I also decided to return to Canada. Did I leave Japan through careful thinking? I was always sitting on the fence and with the eventuality of the American Forces leaving, I could not imagine myself fitting into the reality of life in Japan. My deep childhood memories and dreams of a life in Canada lured me back home. Things were looking bright for us in Canada. Since 1949 the Canadian

government had allowed us to vote. Early 1955 at the Uruzu Government Office I renounced my Japanese citizenship as it was mandatory for those returning. No longer holding dual citizenship, I happily headed home towards Toronto.

Once in Ontario, I was not impressed with the flatness of the terrain compared to B.C. and Japan. But my family, former Cumberland and Lemon Creek friends were extremely kind to me which made me feel welcome. I resided with Wakiko and Kiheiji Kiyonaga, then lived with Tokugi and Dorothy Suyama, until I got married to Frank Maikawa. I am truly grateful to them for helping me obtain employment and the encouragements to further my education. There was something I liked about Frank so I was the one who did the proposing! I'm not saying what it was — it's my secret — ha, ha. Changing the subject — I worked at Bell Canada, later at University of Toronto School of Social Work and then attended Teachers College.

Frank and I moved to Belleville, Ontario where Frank enjoyed a fulfilling career at Nortel for 38 years, involved in various electronics engineering design work and later as manager of Customer Technical Assistance Service. I became a busy mother of a daughter, Theresa and 3 sons, Ian, Alan and Gord but managed to attend day school at Loyalist College and successfully completed the Early Childhood Education Programme. In 1971 I was fortunate enough to be able to take my daughter and return to Japan. Papa suddenly passed away several months before my visit. I deeply regret not having seen Papa since 1955 when I left Japan 16 years earlier. I just wanted to have one more nice cup of tea with him! When we returned to Canada, Mama came with us. Mama was not really satisfied with a landed immigrant status so she eventually memorized her citizenship oath to become a Canadian. She had a happy contented life and lived until she was almost 93.

As for employments, I worked for the Ministry of Social Service Day Nursery School and Hasting County Board of Education's Special Educational Institutes helping children with learning disabilities (hearing/mental/physical) in the elementary panel. Although I retired 5 years ago I still enjoy volunteering a few days a week at the Beaver Valley Community School in Thornbury nearby, where Frank and I live. I chose to be an Early Childhood Educator since I believe that you must start to instill the proper sense of values at the earliest stages of growth, teaching the youngsters to practice self discipline, self esteem and honesty. A lesson I try to pass on is one that I have learned well during my life, that is, decisions we make whether right or wrong have a consequence which must be faced and will become our destiny. I reflect on the most difficult decision my parents had to make after the war and the way our family had to deal with the consequences. This was indeed one of the major turning points in my life and it has deeply influenced my thinking. You can therefore understand my desire to be a good role model for the students and to plant a good seed with a sense of humour. There is more to education than the 3 R's — "reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic". Our goal as educators is to send our young people into the world with a value system of tolerance and understanding, free from jealousy and discrimination. It is a tremendous privilege to be associated with others in the

educational system and to promote and instill these values from different cultural perspectives. Fortunately, Frank was brought up with the same values as mine so we were in tune bringing up our four children and they all grew up into fine adults. We see it reflected in our grandchildren who give us great joy. In 1989 and again in 1993 it was an honour for me to be able to participate and interpret for the Hasting County School Board of Education when a 24 member Japanese Educators from Japan visited us to observe the Canadian School methods of teaching. They in turn pointed out their views of teaching. The feeling of acceptance and togetherness on both sides were most heart-warming experience. At the appreciation evening, hosted by the Japanese educators, mutual gratitude and friendship were established spontaneously between everyone capping off a very memorable week. A recognition letter from Ronald Denyes, Director of Education, thanking me for being an excellent ambassador for the Board made all my efforts worthwhile. I found life very interesting and fascinating – from Sunday school teaching to interpreting for Japanese business people, from teaching night school of Ikebana, to give lessons in Japanese language to Canadian business people, from instructing teachers who were going to Japan to teach English and helping Canadian exchange students returning from Japan to retain their newly acquired Japanese language.

When I think as to who had the most profound impact on me in who I am today, I would say that it was my parents with their sacrificial labour, love and guidance. I have added an attachment to this paper, my parent's old fashion sense of values that I embrace and practice. I also recognize the influence of the Cumberland and ghost town teachers, Canadian educators, along with the Japanese male dominated teachers and professors. They were good role models, showing how to maintain peace in one's heart under adverse circumstances, acknowledging that life brings calamities as well as good favourable things, embracing life with optimism and enthusiasm, encouraging us to become well educated excelling in our professions and reminding us to bring joy into one's life each day.

There have been many turning points and influences in my life of 60 plus years but one of the most dramatic occurrences happened on September 22, 1988. Thanks, in large part, to the perseverance of the wise older generation Nisei and activist Sansei to obtain equality and justice, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney paved the way and showed the world that what was done to the Japanese Canadians was wrong. He issued a Canadian Government Apology Certificate in writing with his signature to each of us (my personal apology letter was received dated January 22, 1990). I respect him for that and since then I was finally proud to call myself Canadian — not just a Canadian, but a “shi a wa se” (fortunate, lucky) Japanese Canadian. Me, the little girl they called Ochapei, had not only figured out how to survive, but turned hardships into strengths. I felt very fortunate to have contributed and enhanced the quality life of Canadians by sharing my Japanese ancestral heritage background as Canada progresses positively towards multi-culturalism. It is my sincere hope that I will still be able to serve faithfully as a devoted caretaker to enrich and provide a base to reflect upon, a path to peace and harmony in the present Canadian society and for future generations.

Some of My Parents' Old Fashion Sense of Values

I still embrace and try to practice these values:

ai sa tsu — welcome, greetings

ai suru — to love

ari gato — thank you

aya maru — to say I'm sorry

chika ra zu yoku — be strong, give all you've got

do ryo ku — to do your very best

en ryo — to restrain, to be humble, to hesitate

gaman — to endure with inner strength, don't give up easily

gan baru — don't give up, put in effort, perseverance

gochi so sama — thank you for the delicious meal I just ate

ita da ki masu — thank you for the food I'm about to eat

ite ma i ri masu — I am leaving or going to (school) now — see you later

ite iratsu-shai — have a nice day

kan byo suru — to nurse the sick

kan sha su ru — show gratitude, show admiration

kan shin — to admire with respect

ki cho men — neatness, tidiness

ku fu — to think through, look for best possible solution or method

mei wa ku — not to be a burden

men do miru — to look after someone's personal needs

mon ku yu wa nai — don't make excuses

na ka yo ku — to get along with others, be friendly

netsu shin — earnest, well receive

oka e ri na sai — welcome back — glad you're home

on ga e shi — obligation, return favour

ota ga i — mutual understanding, cooperation

oya ko ko — honour your parents

ripa na — great value, excellent, superior

sei to na — honourable

seki nin — responsible

shi-ka ri — reliable, strong

shi matsu suru — use wisely, thriftiness

shin bo zuyo i — put effort, work diligently

shin setsu — kindness, consideration

sho ji ki — honest

son kei — respectful

ta dai ma — I am home now

tasuke a u — to help one another

yo ro ko bu — to be happy, rejoice

Chapter Two

Recollection of My Past

The following are further recollections of my life from early Cumberland days to when I came home in 1955 to Canada from Japan and subsequent revisit to Japan in 1971. From then onward is another chapter of my life assimilating into the Canadian way of life in a small United Empire Loyalist city called Belleville, in Ontario that I will probably write about in the future.

CUMBERLAND, B.C. 1931 - 1942

LABOUR OF LOVE

Mama's Garden — Mama would get up early in the morning around 5 – 6 a.m. She worked in a leased lot from a community friend, 15 minutes away from home. Mainly she planted vegetables for our family's needs for the year.

As for Papa, he was satisfied with a small selected area of the garden. He planted choice vegetables and flowers very neatly and precisely, just enough to take pride and enjoy.

Mama's Cooking — My favourite was tempura, fresh fish grounded with carrots and gobo (burdock) mixed, then deep-fried. On New Years Day, some tasty food such as manju, kanten, yokan, jumbo shrimps, Asian bologna, sushi, sashimi, seki han, umami, etc. were decoratively arranged on huge trays for our family and friends to enjoy.

“Oi shi” (delicious) root beers were bottled one after another using a manual gadget for capping. These were stored in the basement cellar and as these aged the caps would pop off. The root beer tasted good but it made us red! She always preserved B.C. matsutake (mushrooms) that were prized by everybody. She also made shoyu, sake and shochu. I still remember going to Mrs. Okuda's with Mama to borrow tools required to steam the

special rice. They made their own koji mould which is essential to ferment the rice.

Laundry and Cleaning — In our house, the wooden floors were always kept clean. Mama washed our clothes by hand using a scrub board in a galvanized tub. On rainy days she hung her laundry behind the warm stove where there were rows and rows of clothes lines against the wall.

Wakiko Nesan — While she worked at the Genge's Dairy Farm as a domestic help, she designed and sewed most of our clothing using the same material for Meiko, Juneko and myself. She was also good in baking. Once she made my favorite chocolate pudding for my birthday, which was a big thing for me.

Masayo — One day, Masayo and I walked to a Cumberland store to buy a pair shoes for me. Usually, I had a difficult time finding a pair to fit properly. A pair of black patent leather buckled shoes caught my eyes. I was so happy to purchase the new shoes that I admired and the fit was just perfect.

Tokugi — He would periodically go to the Chinese town (1/2 mile) to buy “yaki buta” (BBQ pork). We could hardly wait to taste the yummy pork.



1960 — Mama and Papa.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Hair Cuts — We were reluctant to get our hair cuts. However we were happy to receive one to five cents from Mama for co-operating. With this money we hurried to Iwasa or Nakano stores to buy a bag of candies. My favourite was a bear shaped red hard candy with chocolate coating for only a penny.

Transportation — Only few families owned cars. Transportation for us was by foot and we walked miles and miles to get to our destination such as to Public School, lakes, woods, visiting circus, May Day Sports Day events, etc. On our way to school, we either walked on the railway tracks or on the dusty gravel road and we would stop to gather yellow May Flowers.

In the Woods — There were Aka bana (red flowers), Shiro bana (white flowers), Violets, Lady slippers and others to pick and excitedly, we took them home. We picked edible berries such as Salmon berries, Huckle berries, Milk berries and Black berries. To our delight, our mothers made the most delicious jams and jellies.

CUMBERLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL

Miss C. Richardson — She was my grade one and two teacher. I considered her being very strict. One morning it was my turn to read orally to the class. While reading I wanted to blow my nose and started to feel uncomfortable, but didn't know what to do. Unable

to express my own concern, speaking Japanese only at home and frightened, I suffered needlessly. To my disappointment my oral reading was marked as poor. The discomfort I had experienced was quite an ordeal. However, given a second chance to try again, my reading improved considerably.

Miss May B. Bridge — She was my grade three teacher. I slipped and fell outside during my lunchtime and scraped my knee, which bled quite badly. At that time Miss Bridge came out the door and saw me hurt. She took action immediately and guided me to the school dispensary to nurse my wound. Her softly spoken voice in a caring way made me feel much better. Her kindness will be well remembered.

Miss Edna Gear — My grade four teacher from England. We listened attentively since she was quite a disciplinarian. Through her teachings I learned to strive for excellence and did my utmost best. I have learned to complete my tasks and become responsible in whatever I did. I am thankful for her great teaching.

Mr. Apps — The principal. He was highly organized and had a stern look. I remember him giving straps to some students who had conducted themselves with unacceptable behaviour.

Classmates — In our classroom the majority were Caucasians and few Japanese Canadians. The classroom atmosphere was pleasant. My friends were June Brown, Doris Tobacco, May High and Catherine Mann. The boys used to tease us, especially the girls who wore home knitted sweaters with drawstrings around the yolk with large pon pons at the tip. One particular boy named Earl always came along and swung the pon pons with his hand and gave the girls a quick kiss teasingly and ran off.

Classroom Setting — Each student had an attached desk and seat with an inkwell on the right top corner of the desk and sat in rows (class size was 25-30). Ray MacLean sat on the first seat and I sat on the last seat. Every morning we took turns and stamped everyone's work when it was done correctly. One morning my hands were really cold and when I accidentally stamped Ray's workbook it got very messy. The next day when it was his turn, he deliberately smudged my work sheet just to get even and smiled. Boys will be boys.

Japanese Language School — Oda sensei was highly respected by her students and by the Japanese community. She was devoted and taught the students diligently. It was challenging to be able to study both languages and cultures. During Chigo, we dressed in nihon gi (Japanese kimono) and attended the ceremonial function. This was one of the special events related to Japanese culture.

Union Day – Sports Events — There were many races to compete such as sack race, spoon and egg race, wheel barrel race, scrambled shoes, tug a war and relays. It was fun to participate in those races. On May 1st and May 24th Queen Victoria Day's Celebration, the Maypole dances were held at the fair ground. Being one of the participants, I thought the dance was neat and colourful, especially since we performed well. On the stage, my sister Masayo did tap dancing with a group and also as a solo. It was pure enjoyment just to watch and listen to the sound and the rhythmic taps.

Recreation — We created our own fun by playing hide and go seek, skipping (holding both ends of the rope to do French, Dutch and Peppers), played marbles with bonkers, singing and making rhyming words. Knitting was popular among the girls and the boys made neat things from the birch bark (mini boats, books, picture frames for photos and broaches). They enjoyed woodcarving to pass their leisure time.

On Halloween night, we played tricks. Once we were scolded for triggering the alarm system, pretending it was a real fire. After the rounds of trick or treat, we made a huge bon fire at the playground. We stayed up until the wee hours in the morning and had wonderful times.

Community Caring — Our friends, including my two sisters Meiko and Juneko were playing in the woods, picking flowers and berries. We were totally involved in our own discoveries and when we decided to go home before it became too dark, we suddenly realized that Fusako was not around us. We searched and called her name but there was no answer. Although, our panics were not subsided we managed to go back and inform her family. Immediately, her family and friends gathered to search for our missing friend. She was found safely at the near by Chinese town. (Apparently she had gone the opposite direction.) How relieved we all felt! The concern and caring for others in this community was so great!

At the Lake — Some hot summer days we walked quite a distance to Comox Lake, carrying our bento (lunch). It was apparent that our parents expected us to stay outdoors for most of the day. At the lake we learned how to swim, dive and summersault under the water. We also took swimming lessons at Royston Beach. Although Comox Lake water was more refreshing, we enjoyed the outings with friends more at Royston Beach especially, the “Black Jack” chewing gum we bought as treats.

Awareness of Nature — Today, I still enjoy and appreciate the perception of nature and its beauty and what I explored outdoors as a child.

Winter — What great fun to be sleighing with groups of friends, sliding downhill near our house. We used corrugated paper box and often created our own recreational activities with whatever materials that were available to us.

Fads — We walked a mile to a downtown Cumberland store in order to purchase a waxed make-believe dark red shaped lips, just to show that we were grown ups with bright lipstick on.

Nakauchi Family — We were good friends, visiting one another quite frequently. They had a mini orchard and one tree which stood out was the wase a pu ru. This early ripe red apple had a crunchy sound as you bit into it and made anyone's mouth watery.

Anpi-san's Tofu — Mr. Anpi lived alone in a house. He made and sold tasty tofu and tempura age (deep fried bean curd). Quite often, I had an errand to go and buy his prepared food. The aroma in the air was good enough to pause and inhale while Mr. Anpi toiled at his task. He was also an expert guide into the woods to pick matsutake (mushrooms). My brothers, Toke and Kun-chan with their peers were Anpi-san's companions. I still remember, once they got lost in the woods and came home very late.

Community Resources — There were Bing cherries, purple plums and a variety of apples growing within the community and we shared these delicious fruits with other families.

Mr. Iwasa, frequently brought us a bucket of apples from his orchard and my family was very thankful. When Mr. & Mrs. Iwasa's son, Tatsumi-san was married to Takako Saisho I was asked to be one of their flower girls. The other girl, named Mariko was a relative of the groom. I was rather shy being a non-relative, however I was glad to be asked. The wedding ceremony and the reception went well. The flower girl's dress was so pretty I cherished my dress for a long, long time. When Mr. & Mrs. Iwasa celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in Toronto, Ontario (at present they live in Vancouver, B.C.) it was one of the happiest celebration of togetherness and fellowships.



Cumberland 1936 — Toke (top left clockwise), Kunio, Meiko and me.



Cumberland 1937 — Me at 6 years of age (left) and Juneko 4 years old.



Cumberland, October 1938 — Takako Saisho married Tatsumi Iwasa in Cumberland, October 1938. Bride's maid was Kazuko Iwasa. Me at 7 on left and Mariko Iwasa were flower girls.



Cumberland 1938. — Chigo, I was 7 years old (left) and Meiko 9 years old (right of me). Extreme right is my friend Gloria Uyenaka (formerly Yoshiko Nakauchi).



Cumberland 1940 — Masayo (left) and me.



Cumberland 1941 — Wakiko (left) and Tetsuko Kiyonaga.



*Cumberland 1941-42 — Suyama Kyodai.
(Back row left to right) Kunio, Masayo, Tokugi,
Meiko and Wakiko.
(front row left to right) Eiji, Masabiro, me and Juneko.*



Cumberland 1942 — my friend, Yobiko Nakauchi.



Cumberland 1942 — At age 10, just prior to being sent to Hastings Park.

HASTINGS PARK, B.C. (1942 - 6 MONTHS)

Hastings Park Temporary Holding Camp — All people of Japanese descent whether they were naturalized or even born in Canada were rounded up here to isolate us from the general population immediately after Pearl Harbour was attacked by Japan. Living conditions were cramped (one animal stall per family) and whoever contacted communicable diseases were sent to the quarantine section where I was held also. When Papa came to visit us, he brought some comic books to read and some treats for us. We jumped with glee to receive Christie's Ritz crackers and McCormick Arrow Root Baby Biscuits. They were so yummy! I consider these snacks to be the very best.

Day Passes — We needed day passes to go down town in Vancouver from our premises. Once in a while Mama and Papa took us to Powell Street in Vancouver to have dinner out

at Chinese restaurants. One time I was so exhausted I stayed in at the hotel room while others went on their shopping spree. I over slept and didn't hear the knocks upon their return as the door was locked from inside of the room. Later, they brought me Wonton soup with green peas. The delicious soup hit the right spot!

Laundry Day — Out in an open field, there were rows and rows of rope strung up for hanging wet clothes. We played around with our peers while the mothers were busy either washing or hanging their clothes. One time a girl had a bag of broken biscuits (these were common snacks in those days) so we had a make-believe mini picnic between the clothes lines and had fun.

Mess Hall # 1

Eating Habits — There was hardly anything good to eat to suit our appetite and nourish our growing stages. Sometimes, my younger sister, Juneko sat at the table with a fork in one hand and a knife in the other hand and stared at the food on the plate without touching or eating the food. We brought back two slices of bread and a cluster of butter back to the animal stall dwelling. Later in the evening when the kitchen was relatively quiet, we asked the staff if we could make some toast on top of the stove. The kitchen staff offered us okai yu (rice-porridge like) at times and we felt good. Okai yu was really meant for feeding the babies and the sick.

Vegetable Salad — When the cooks were mixing vegetables in a huge galvanized tub, what I saw, surely was not pleasing to my eyes. The taste of celery was unbearable and I still shy away from eating raw celery even today

Sunday Dinner — The Sunday special dinner was the only meal we looked forward to. They served us roast pork, thinly sliced with scrumptious gravy, mashed potatoes and seasonal vegetables. As an added bonus, we were happy to have one whole orange each for dessert.

SLOCAN, B.C. TEMPORARY HOLDING CAMP (1942 – 2 weeks)

Short Lived Tent Life — To pass the time, with my sisters and with some friends we would go walking in the fields and also explore around the farm lands. One day at a nearby orchard we picked mouth-watering apples without the owner's permission. Hurriedly, we packed the apples underneath our sweaters and rushed back to the tent. The scolding we had remains vivid in my mind, realizing and admitting of our wrong doings, we apologized.

Mess Hall #2

Tent Living — Inside the building there were several long tables and benches set up. As soon as we entered, we noticed big bulk cans of jams available here and there on each table. Nobody objected about the flavours as most of us loved it on the toast.

LEMON CREEK, B.C. (1942 – 1946)

Mess Hall #3

Lemon Creek, B.C. — Temporarily, until we became self-sufficient we ate at the mess hall. In an open concept kitchen, I watched the cooks making pancakes on the huge grill at breakfast time. The flipping and tossing of these flapjacks were quite impressive. The rhythmic motions created an appetizing effect, enough to satisfy my hungry tummy. One of my favourite meals was salmon steak either fried or baked with hot rice and boiled spinach.



School Life — A vivid impression of our first principal, Miss Irene Uchida still remains in my mind. She was so gentle and yet swiftly rang the school bell. Her vitality and enthusiasm had motivated the students with good spirits and we were always eager to begin our activities for the day.



Lemon Creek 1945 — Lemon Creek Public School

Teacher: Miss. Haruko Ito

Back left to right: Sumiko Inouye, Sachiko Usami, Sachiko Hasbimoto, Midori Ito, Hideko Nagano. 3rd row: Yukio Tsuji, Knobby Hirai, Michio Hamada, name unknown, Mamoru Watanabe, Minoru Obara, Kazuo Somiya. 2nd row: George Shibata, Sboji Katsumi, Paul Tokiwa, name unknown, Kuni Tsuchibashi, Allan Makino, Henry Shimizu, Yoshio Mochizuki. Front row: Fusako Doi, Rosabel Tsujuki, Yōbimi Suyama (me), Jean Kobayashi, Shizue Togawa, Nellie Yoshida, Akiko Suto, Yaeko Mori.

1945 – 1946 — I was elected as a class representative and became a member of the Student Council. Our teacher, Miss Nakauchi and our principal Miss Hatanaka guided us through with their patience and encouragements.

Miss Haruko Ito — She was one of my favourite grade seven teachers who taught us to be polite and be courteous at all times. Ten questions of mental arithmetic were practiced each morning. The students strived for 100% accuracy to earn merits and this system was beneficial for everyone.

Sports' Day — This event was as held each year on May 24th – Queen Victoria Day. The traditional May Queen and the runners-up were selected from grade eight students and the flower girls were chosen from the primary level. The majorette team performances were always popular and well received. As for the majorette's costumes, they were made from coloured crepe paper and it was suitably designed. The hair styling was neat as we used sturdy brown papers, cut into 12" long by 1/2" wide pieces, and section by section the damped long hairs were wrapped around with the papers, then tied at the ends. The results were most becoming to see the curls like sausage rolls.

Our Special School Concert — My brother, Kunio Suyama was the master of ceremony. The programme consisted of selected majorette teams, dramas, skits and others. The Harmonica Band presentation was delightful to listen to. It was a thrill to have so many talented students perform. With their abilities to organize the concert, it turned out to be a most enjoyable and a successful event for everyone.

Homework — I enjoyed poetry and memorizing poems. As soon as I got into bed, I would repeat the assigned poem over and over again until the lines were memorized



Lemon Creek 1945-46 — Yoshimi (front left) was elected to students council in public school.



Lemon Creek 1945 — Sharp looking during Sports Day as a Majorette.



Lemon Creek 1945 – Majorette Team: Me (front fourth from left) with Miss Mochizuki as May Queen (back centre). The following year my sister Meiko was the May Queen. Reunited with friend Aiko Hori (front first left) at the conference. She is now married and lives in Victoria.



Lemon Creek 1946 — Kunio Suyama M.C. at concert. Me second from left (majorette group).

perfectly. The next morning, if I correctly remembered each word, I knew then that I'll do fine at school. Some poetry examples I liked were Pioneers, The Tree, Maple, Lemon Creek School Song and In Flanders Field.

Familiar Nicknames — Were you one of them? The real funny names were: Chocolate, Sugar, Porky, Goofey, Sausage, Spud, Rusty, Tarzan, Fudge and Torchy. Outstanding students such as Shogo Kobayashi was referred to as a “Walking Encyclopedia”. George Nishimura as a “Walking Dictionary” and Michiko Ishii was a “Brain Child”. She was a member of the student council (1943-44) and was very actively involved in school life.

Recreational Activities — There were variety of ways to play this homemade game called PEG. The items you need were two short sticks about 5 inches and two long sticks approximately 14 inches in length. Two players will be 9-10 yards apart. On each side two holes were dug about 3 inches deep. From one end a player would lay the short stick in the hole partially sticking out and one would tap it up using the long stick and while the short stick was still up in the air, one had to hit the short stick with the long stick. Wherever the short stick dropped, the distance to the opposition's hole was measured with the long stick (number of counts of the stick length). Two players would take turns and the winner was determined by whoever had the least counts. As the game progressed, the short stick had to be tapped a number of times in mid air before being hit towards the opposing hole. This was one version of many and was a great game for eye-hand co-ordination.

Leisure Time — We ate a lower grade rice and had to spend hours to sort out the hi e (an undesirable particle) as premium products were not available.

Tatsue-san's visit — Tatsue Nakatsuka (former Sandon and New Denver teacher), who was married to my cousin, Yoshihiro Suyama came to visit us from New Denver. One day she joined our family to sort out a sack of rice. I remember Tatsue-san using a toothpick meticulously and picking out hi e very effectively. I was impressed. She also drew scenery pictures and signed my autograph book. Tat's artistic ability was much to be admired. When Frank and I got married in 1958 Tatsue-san made my going away dress with a matching reversible light coat and I was thrilled to wear both outfits, which were very stunning.

Cousin Yosh — His visit to our home was always enjoyable. Sometimes he strummed sentimental melodies and played his guitar happily for us.

Nakauchi Family — Nakauchi's lived on Fir Street and Suyama's lived on Holly Street. There was some distance to walk to visit Yoshiko Nakauchi (now Gloria Uyenaka) especially during her home schooling due to her illness. Sometimes Yoshiko's mother prepared us oishii Doukhobor kabocha (delicious squash) and I still remember the tasty treats. Mrs. Nakauchi always welcomed Meiko, June and I as part of her family. I valued her kindness and got along really well with her. She even came to watch Ian's and Alan's Papermate Hockey Tournament in Mississauga, Ontario. Mrs. Nakauchi was very supportive that way. I recall how happy she was when her first grandson Stanley was born to Hanae and Bill Isoki. I was also excited to visit regularly to see the sweet cute baby's growth.

Illness 1944-45 — At age 44 our Mama was diagnosed with cancer of her reproductive organ. Availability of medical assistance was limited, which meant she had to go to Lethbridge, Alberta for her treatments. Our sister Wakiko (Nesan) accompanied her by train. Urgent need of blood transfusion for Mama was required. Nesan's blood matched hers so immediately at the hospital she donated her blood to Mama, which saved Mama's life. Mama had many months of treatments and she had recovered miraculously. The Doctor told her that if the cancer doesn't recur within five years, she would be fine. The survival chance was promising and she lived a long happy life. Our beloved Mama passed away peacefully one month before she reached the age of 93 in a Toronto hospital.

Loving and caring advice from my parents – Simple Advice — These were Papa's quotations: After using any facilities (washroom, sinks, tools etc.) keep it clean and tidy for the next person to use. Always look for something good in others. Avoid temptation at meal time — when you want to have another extra bite — that's the time to quit (restrain yourself).

These were Mama's quotations: When you wake up in the morning — first thing to remember is to comb or brush your hair neatly. She had kept her long hair well groomed all the time. Complete your given task to the best of your ability. When someone praises or admires your workmanship, it shows that you are doing okay. If no one praises or say anything, you should be aware that your work needs improvement.

Decision Making — Our brother, Tokugi decided to stay in Canada and further his education in Toronto, Ontario. Our oldest sister, Wakiko was married to Kiheiji Kiyonaga and his family made a decision to remain in Canada.

Preparation to go back to Japan — Someone cautioned us to take bottled boiled water from Canada with us to Japan. In case of dekimono (skin infection), they advised us to apply Canadian water on the infected areas. Many people were affected from this dreadful plague. When our family noticed



Lemon Creek 1946 — Just before leaving for Japan.

any signs of infection coming on, we applied the boiled water. Somehow, this “grandmother’s remedy” prevented any serious infectious occurrences for us.

Issei’s deep sense of obligation to their mother country — When Japan surrendered in August 1945. Some Issei parents strongly believed stating “Buki ni wa ma ke ta ga, sei shin te ki ni wa ma ke zu” (Japan lost the war through a deadly weapon but was not defeated in a spiritual sense).

Off to Japan – October 1946 — We left Vancouver and headed towards Yokohama on an American ship named “Marine Falcon” (approximately 500 repatriates as we were called) and many American civilian dependants with families were on board. The vastness of Pacific Ocean seemed endless. When I saw another ship along the horizon, it appeared that the distant ship would never reach the flat surface of the ocean. While on the deck exploring what I might discover, a sudden wave of water came splashing at my face. The taste of salt water was like tears and it made me emotionally bottled up for several moments thinking about friends and the country I left behind. It took about ten days of traveling and unfortunately some passengers became really seasick. We all slept on bunk beds in crowded quarters and journeyed onwards with anticipations of the unknown.



Lemon Creek 1944 — Eiji and Masabiro.



Lemon Creek 1946 — Family photo. Missing was Kakuichiro (Japan) and Wakiko (Slocan).



Slocan 1945 — Wakiko’s wedding. Masayo was maid of honour.

SOME POEMS I STILL REMEMBER

LEMON CREEK SCHOOL SONG

(To the tune of Norte Dame University fighting song)

ON LEMON CREEK OUR FAME goes before,
'cause we're the school with esprit de corps,
Proud are we of White and Blue,
And reason we have you'll see it, too.

Nothing can daunt us; we are the kind
Who work together, we're of one mind.
Yes, our school is loyal, true,
Hurrah for the White and Blue!

*Lyrics written by
Molly Hirayama – teacher 1943*

PIONEERS

Give me the strength of the pioneer,
That irks me at the thought of a bond.
Give me a vision a path to clear,
That beckons me upward and on.

Spare me the shield of sheltered task,
Test me by struggle and strife.
The brawn and the courage are all I ask,
To conquer the glory of life.

Author unknown

MAPLE

Then hail to the broad leaf Maple,
With her fair and changeful dress.
A type of our youthful country
And its pride and loveliness.

Whether in Spring, Summer
or in dreary Fall,
Mid-nature's forest children.
She's the fairest of them all.

Author unknown

TREES

I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest,
against the earth's sweet flowing breast.

A tree that looks at God all day,
and lifts her leafy arms to pray;
a tree that may in summer wear
a nest of robins in her hair;
upon whose bosom snow has lain;
who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

By Joyce Kilmer, 1913

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

By John McCrae



Lemon Creek 1946 — Childhood friends since Cumberland days at Lemon Creek Bridge (left to right): Fusako, me, Nancy and Juneko.



Toronto 2001 — Still friends (left to right): Nancy, me, Fusako and Juneko.

JAPAN (1946 – 1955)

Uruzu, Fukuoka-ken — Upon reaching Uruzu at our grandmother's house on October 14, 1946, our parents, Masahiro, Eiji, Juneko and myself shared one room with Oba a san's consanguine family.

Comical Incidents with Oba a san (Papa's mother) — Oba a san was very healthy and had enough energy to work around the house although she was 89. She even prepared pails full of very thinly sliced sweet potatoes (kan ko ro) and dried them on straw mats to make snacks for us thinking that we would enjoy them. With the unfamiliar environment and



Japan 1946-49 — Papa and sister-in-law. We all lived in Papa's mother's house in 1 bedroom.



Japan 1947 — Public School Yatsuki Chugakko. I was older than the other students (third row, third from right). I looked like the teacher.

different culture we had much to learn and had to make adjustments to their way of living. I remember Papa being scolded for making a box to sit on over a hole in the floor that was a standard toilet in Japan those days. It was a nuisance for Oba a san to move the box whenever she used the toilet. Also, Papa was always reminded at the dinner table that he should not sit on a cherry can he brought back from Canada and show better manners by sitting Japanese style on the floor. I still laugh about these humorous incidents regarding mothers scolding her off spring no matter how old they got (Papa was 57) — and that's universal in any culture!

Family Reunion — At Uruzu on December 31st 1946 our family members were reunited for the first time. Kakuichro Nisan came home from Fukui-ken, Masayo from Yokosuka, Kunio from Kokura City and Meiko from Camp Hakata where she worked at the switchboard. Wakiko Nesan and Tokugi resided in Canada. This was indeed a happy time for everyone.

Nishi Takatsuka, Fukuoka-ken — On June 23rd, 1947 our parents bought a house for 530,000 yen (at that time, the conversion of Canadian dollar was 360 yen, so it was \$1,422 Cdn. When it was 1971 the conversion was 320 yen). We moved to Nishi Takatsuka from Uruzu. Our new residence was located by the river and was closer to Shiida Junior and Senior High Schools. A big arched bridge separated Takatsuka village and Shiida-machi town.

Yatsuki Chugakko (Jr. High School) — Several months before I was to graduate I became very ill and thought I would have to delay my further schooling. Luckily, the Junior High School Teachers reviewed my academic performances and stated that I would qualify to write an entrance exam to attend Senior High School. Being absent from school for a long time, feeling rather weak and approaching uncertainty, it wasn't easy to make the right move. However, through my parents and teachers' encouragements I decided to go through it. With Papa's fullest support he accompanied me by train (approx. 3/4 hour to Nakatsuka city school where the examination was held). I was happy that I was able to attend Senior high school and completed the schooling.

Juneko — She was admitted to Miabe Hospital on October 5th and few days later she had an operation (related to her previous illness at Uruzu). She recovered and was released on December 15th, 1947.

Shortage of Electricity — One day as I was ironing on the tatami floor using an old fashion heavy-duty electric iron that we brought back from Canada. The Inspectors came to check the electrical wiring and to introduce new usage of limited electricity. When I was told to stop ironing I unplugged the iron, but kept on ironing, thinking I should not waste the heat especially when it was still hot. The Inspector said I was *nama iki* (rude or smart Alec) for not being obedient. From that point, I learned to obey and show respect to the authorities no matter what.

Flood — Rainy season (*Tsu yu*) was always gloomy. During these heavy rainfalls most of the household items became moldy or rusty if not looked after properly. One day, the ocean's high tide water merged with an overflowing river near our residence. We saw the water seeping and trickling slowly into our house. We alerted everyone and immediately took necessary actions and headed towards the nearby temple that was built on a higher location. When the flood subsided we went back to the house. What a big mess, especially the red mud stains which covered about three feet high, all around the lower level of the dwelling. The labour of drying, cleaning and some repair works within the premises after the flood were just dreadful! Eventually, the damaged old bridge was replaced with a new and stronger bridge.

Typhoon — This is something else again (high wind and heavy rain combination). A disaster occurred where we lived in Uruzu. It was so severe that it knocked down our front entrance sliding glass doors. You can imagine the damage it had caused. When the typhoon settled, the weather became warmer. The after effect was a complete destruction of the rice paddies.

Low tech Nihon buro (Japanese Style bath) — The size of the baths were built for up to four people comfortably to soak in it up to your neck. The height was generally about three feet high and made out of wood with a metal base so that a fire like a campfire could be burned underneath. It was customary to scrub oneself clean, rinse yourself from head to toe, then step onto a floating platform that would sink to the bottom with your weight. Some platforms were set stationary at the bottom and it was there to prevent your feet from getting burned. The older generation liked the water to be so hot that one's skin would turn red in a short while. The tub was used for just soaking and relaxing and the whole family shared the water for the day so one was not allowed to use soap and scrub inside. I recall feeling dizzy whenever I stayed in too long but it sure felt good after a hard day's work and was much more sanitary than the present day so called hot tubs as the water was drained daily. It was the same type of tub at Cumberland and I still remember Papa scrubbing my back so hard that I felt that I didn't have any more skin left. My back was all red even before I got into the tub! Papa had a "car wash" line going with all the little ones scrubbed squeaky-clean one after another. Mama would sometimes sprinkle



Japan 1950 — With high school friends.



Japan 1950 — Outing with high school friends.

herbal medicine into the water to ease aches and pains. At Lemon Creek, the community shared a common large bathtub that was divided into two sections with two separate entrances separating the females, mothers, and the children from the males. It took a little while to adjust to the Western bath when I returned to Canada. It's a lot less work now but I still sometimes miss the Nihon buro.

Shiida Koto Gakko (Senior High School) — On June 10th, 1949 the students and staff from our school went to greet Emperor Hirohito at the Shiida Station, as the Emperor's train slowly passed by. We all bowed uniformly as required in silence and showed our respect to the Emperor.

Quote as published in *The Toronto Star*, January 3rd, 1985 —

“Emperor Hirohito’s birthday, April 29th will be 84 years old. Tenno Heika (son of heaven) told Japanese people they had lost the war in August 1945. Sweet Empress Nagako and Showa Emperor Hirohito – could they be the ones who were the focus of hatred for their nation’s enemies in the Pacific War? It seemed hardly possible, yet Hirohito’s reign has been a tumultuous and probably the most uniquely Japanese Institution there is.”



Japan 1950 — High School Shiida Kottogako. I'm behind the teacher.



*Japan 1950 — Playing dress-up in “Merchant of Venice”
Sbiida Sr. High School.*



Japan 1950 — Moved to Nishi Takatsuka. Everybody came home and got together. Missing were Kakuichiro (in Japan), Wakiko and Toke (in Canada).



*Japan 1951 — Interpreting for Lt. Cowan from
Tsuiki Air Base at Senior High School.*



Japan 1951 — Fellow students listening to my interpreting.

Music Appreciation — Mr. Miyazaki Sensei who repatriated from China after the war, conducted the music lessons. His teaching was interesting as he taught us how to appreciate and enjoy music.

Physical Education — Miss Yanagi Sensei was a dedicated local teacher. Her magnificent performances matched her eloquent way of teaching gymnastic routines. I was impressed with how she had set examples for the students to learn and practice.

Special Events — On Sports Day, the entire school population was divided into Five Houses (A, B, C, D, and E). Each house created its own theme, logo and decoration as this event was a challenge competition. The activities consisted of various races, gymnastic competition and games. After the exciting events the students dismantled everything and piled them in the center of the playground and had a huge bon fire. We had a ball!

School Play — On November 22nd, 1950 The Shakespeare story, “Merchant of Venice” was acted in English language only as this was part of the curriculum. Mr. Yamada Sensei instructed English lessons and directed our school play. Unfortunately, Yamada



Japan 1951



Japan 1953 — Left to right: Me, Meiko, Juneko and Masayo. Juneko and I at the Moji Station to see Meiko and Masayo off on their way to Canada.

Sensei was struck by an on coming train at Shiida Station. His tragic death was deeply felt by the students and the community.

Post Secondary School Entrance Exam Preparation — The test results were posted on our High School hall wall. The students worked and studied hard to avoid embarrassment by revealing poor marks. It is said that non-competitive atmosphere will make it easier for the students to graduate but does not prepare them for desirable and promising futures.

Nishi Takatsuka 1947 – 1952 — When we moved away from Uruzu into our new home in Takatsuka, I got to know Juneko, Eiji and Masahiro very well. In the evening sitting on the tatami floor (straw mat) around the Japanese styled lacquered table we did our homework together. I was in Sr. High School and the others were still in Jr. High School and Elementary School. While studying I was often the first one to fall asleep. Juneko was very studious and received her Doryoku sho (recognition certificate) — it was an honour. Eiji and Masahiro also won awards even though they didn't take their studies too seriously. At numerous times we heard about their excellent work not directly, but through friends or relatives and we were surprised and felt happy for them. Masahiro married a Japanese girl Emiko and they reside in Japan. I left Japan in April 1955 and several years later Juneko and Eiji chose to come back to Canada and both married Japanese Canadians.

Employment at Japan Central Exchange, Fukuoka-ken — Camp Jono located near Kokura City was a merchandise distribution center for the American Armed Forces. My friend Yuni-san who worked at the Coco Cola Bottling Plant sometimes brought me onigiri bento (delicious Japanese rice balls) from her home which we shared and enjoyed. Occasionally, I acted as an Interpreter among Japanese and American employees at the Coke Plant.

Ice Shipment to Korea — The Ice Plant was located in Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi-ken. Terry Oka (Yamamura) and myself volunteered as acting Interpreters at the Ice Plant during the Korean war. The products were shipped to the Korean front.

New Employment — Since JCE (Japan Central Exchange) was deactivated August 31st, 1953, on September 1st, 1953 I was hired at KGD (Kokura General Depot) as secretary



Japan 1953 — My good friend Terry Yamamura (now Oka) is presently living in Hawaii.



Japan 1952 — University life. Sports Day “That’ll Be the Day” theme parade. I was the Statue of Liberty.

in the Japanese Civilian Personnel Office. Our office manager was Mrs. Murakami, a Nisei graduate from Anchorage University. The Officer in Charge was Harold G. Henchen.

Kita Kyushu Daigaku Tanki Daigaku Bu – (College Life 1952 – 1954) — The majority of the students were mature male students. Both female and male students held their responsible employment during the day and commuted by train or by streetcar. The courses were designed equivalent to the day courses. The classes began from 6-10 p.m. Monday thru Friday and half day on Saturday morning. Faculty consisted of Foreign Languages such as English, French, Russian, German and others. The students majored in one language of his/her choice and the teachers’ training was optional.

Struggle For Life and Truth — These academic subjects were taught under the influence of male dominated professors who tried to give us a more clear and definite teaching and guidance. Through initiative and adaptation a high rate of proficiency was established within the school.

Recreational Activities — Undo Kai (Sports Day) was on October 26th, 1952 — the whole school population was divided into four teams. We selected a theme called “That’ll be the Day”. This was a joint effort involving everyone to participate creatively and be spirited for the entire event. The theme for the following year was “Social Justice”. We designed our costumes along with the accessories, played cards, and acted it out by marching around the playground to get the messages across to the spectators.

Hiking Excursions at Hiraodai — To hike at an unique mountain with beautiful scenery was indeed a great feeling! In the distance we viewed flocks of sheep all over the area. But in reality, the flocks of sheep were huge white rocks. Also, smaller rocks seen as one were clustered together among the wild plants and flowers.

At Kansei Daki, an exclusive waterfall surrounded by natural beauty, the view was spectacular and all our classmates enjoyed the outing together. At the end of our hike we found a place to drink fresh spring water, which really satisfied our thirst.

Graduation — As I graduated with teachers' training, receiving many congratulatory and best wishes from family and friends, was indeed a happy time but also a sad moment having to say *mina san sayonara* (farewell everyone) to my fellow graduates.

Shinsetsu na (caring) Oba-san and Oji-san — Teramoto Oba-san (aunt) and Oji-san (Uncle) of Kokura City always catered to my personal needs while I was working at Camp Kokura. I still remember, one of my favourite meals Oba-san served me was *gohan* (cooked rice) and *saba yaki* (broiled mackerel) with all the trimmings I liked.

Yoshikuni Family — They were our former Cumberland and Lemon Creek, B.C. friends who also lived at Kokura City. Frequently, Kazuo and his wife, Betty invited me to their home. I spent enjoyable times with their young children, especially decorating the Christmas tree and celebrating this special occasion like we did in Canada.

Employment — Upon graduation in 1954, I was employed at Camp Kokura Headquarter S-4 Section, Maintenance Division and earned my wages in Japanese Yen. The basic pay at that time was 15,930 Yen (\$44.25/week). The additional allowances such as medical and language allowance were granted and these extra allowances increased my total earnings overall.

Special Language Allowance — In order to receive language allowance, one applied to Fukuoka-ken (Prefecture) Government for Foreign Language. The Officer in charge from my office made the recommendation to the Government Foreign Language Allowance Office. When it was approved, I wrote an examination and later the Language Examination Committee evaluated it from the merit rating table to determine the percentage allowance depending on the test result.



Japan 1954 — Kita Kyu Shu University graduation.



Japan 1954 — Camp Kokura personnel office staff.



Japan 1954 — At work in Camp Kokura personnel office.

Friend's Wedding at Yukubashi, Fukuoka-ken — On May 29th, 1954 I attended Rosie Chizuko Tanaka's Japanese style wedding ceremony and reception. I was pleased to wear a traditional Japanese kimono as one of her attendants. Rosie and I met when I worked part time at the Tsuiki Air Base while still in Senior high school. She was born in Oakland, California, USA. She lived with her elderly mother. I value Rosie's friendship and we continue to correspond with each other.

Trip to Hiroshima, April 3, 1955 — It was a long train ride to Hiroshima from Fukuoka-ken. I visited the Doi family, formerly from Cumberland and Lemon Creek, B.C. Our friends Fusako, Takao and Manabu lived with their parents and they showed me Old Hiroshima and New Hiroshima. I was saddened to see the memorial



Japan 1954 — Friend Rosie Tanaka's marriage.

S - 4 Clerk Gets Commendation - To Depart For Canada

Miss Yoshimi Suyama, a secretary in Camp Kokura's S - 4 (Supply) office, has been awarded a letter of commendation for her work by Colonel H. Macomber, post commander.

Miss Suyama, a resident of Whittier, is leaving Japan April 17 on the liner President Cleveland to join her family in Toronto, Canada. She is a native of Unsubi and has been in Japan since 1949.

She began work in the Kokura area in 1952 with the Japan Central Exchange at Jomo. In September, 1953, she was transferred to the Japanese Personnel Office at Camp Kokura, and in March, 1954, she began her present duties.

Major Robert A. Berlin, the S-4 Officer of Camp Kokura, presents a letter of achievement to Miss Yoshimi Suyama, prior to her departure for Canada.

Photo by Whitbeck

Japan 1954 — News clipping.



Japan 1955 — Suyama and Takeshita families at farewell party.



Japan 1955 — S.S. President Cleveland, Honolulu, Hawaii. Yoko Asao, me and Mrs. Asao going home to Canada.

monument erected at Old Hiroshima that was dedicated to the victims of Atomic Bomb during the World War II.

What were the after effect consequences like for the A-BombVictims (Hibaku sha)? Suffering facial and body disfigurements along with mental stress a victimized young girl from Hiroshima was hired at Camp Kokura General Depot. She struggled to maintain her composure. Although, she had endeavored to understand the reason why and what had happened, there was no way to hide her scarred face. In reality, some people found her face unbearably repulsive. In order to keep herself resolute and determined to go forward positively, her inner strength demonstrated that she was at peace. Her work ethics and contributions were outstanding.

Sitting on Top of the Fence — There is a saying “The grass looks greener on the other side”. Sometimes, I felt that I was sitting on top of the fence. When I fell on this side or that side there was always a deep connection between Japanese or Western cultures. Whatever the situation was, whether I stumbled and struggled or not, I always gathered my inner strength to face reality in good faith and dealt with it.



Japan 1955 — Visit to Hiroshima to see my childhood friend, Fusako Doi, her brothers Takao and Manabu.



Japan 1955 — Old Hiroshima monument dedicated to atomic bomb victims.

BACK TO CANADA (1955 —)

Our Cumberland friends — The Asao family also went back to Japan from Lemon Creek in 1946 and lived in Oita-ken. Since Mr. Asao, Charlie and Nancy had already gone back to Canada and got established first, the rest of the family decided to follow. When the opportunity arose, I decided to travel back together with Mrs. Asao, Yoko and Toru. Mrs. Asao always treated me like her own daughter and when it came time for my marriage to Frank, she designed and sewed my wedding gown, plus all the gowns for the bridal party. I was so fortunate and I'll always remember and be thankful for her love as my second mother. My brother, Kunio assisted me financially and helped arrange my ship passage, train fare and the hotel reservation package from Yokohama, Japan to Toronto, Ontario. On April 17th, 1955 we departed from Yokohama and boarded the American Ship S.S. President Cleveland and had a brief stop over at Honolulu, Hawaii on April 24th. The journey continued until we reached San Francisco, USA on April 29th.

S.S. President Cleveland — Once on board I was seasick for several days. The stewards brought my meals to the cabin bed but I hardly had any appetite. I noticed that I was sharing the same cabin with several young exchange students from the Philippines going to USA to study. The Canadian Customs on the ship made an announcement for all Canadians to report to the ship's office to declare all the merchandise we were carrying. Here, I met Miss Ruth Young, a missionary returning from China Inland Mission to Toronto. At the office, I was approached to act as an Interpreter to the Japanese passengers as required.

The next leg was on May 2nd from San Francisco to Chicago by train and we safely reached our final destination Toronto on May 5th, 1955.

Toronto, Ontario — Once Miss Ruth Young had settled in Toronto she had invited me to her Retired Inland China Mission Home on Avenue Road for many delicious meals and also to her cousin Hazel's home to hear her play piano. Ruth introduced me to the Knox Presbyterian Church on Spadina Avenue and I attended the church services regularly. With Rev. William Tyler officiating, Frank and I were married at the Knox Presbyterian Church on June 14th, 1958. (How I met Frank? When Taeko Ito and her sisters invited me to a B.B.Q. party I was introduced to Frank then.)



Canada 1993 — I interpreted for the Japanese educators and the Hastings County School Board of Education. Educators from Japan (Team #17) at Bayside Public School in Belleville.



Canada 1993 — Here at Harmony Public School also in Belleville.



Canada 1993 — Family's only picture with everybody in attendance. Kakuichiro and Masabiro were digitally added to make it complete. From left to right: Toke, Masayo, Juneko, Meiko, Eiji, myself, Wakiko, Kakuichiro, Kunio and Masabiro.

Employment in Toronto — I worked at the University of Toronto, Best Institute, in the Dept. of Physiology and Medical Research as a receptionist. Dr. Helen Weiss from Romania who had studied in U.S.A. and also at the McGill University worked in a Laboratory and we became good friends, laughed a lot, enjoyed each other's company along with her associates. Her husband is now retired but Helen still works as a family Physician in Toronto. They have two grown children and one grandson. Some friendships never die.

My Husband's Background — I met Fumio (Frank) after he graduated from College in Electronics Engineering and was just starting to work for De Haviland Aircraft. Later he worked for Federal Electric of New Jersey on a contractual basis on the DEW Line Project until he finally settled down to work for Northern Electric (Nortel) in Belleville. He was born in Vancouver in a Caucasian community suburb and went to Bridge River, which was a self-supporting internment camp during the war. Then, he went on to Vernon, B.C. for a short while and after the war headed out east to Toronto. His life was quite different from mine as Bridge River was the only time he ever lived in a Japanese community. He revealed to me that only in B.C. he had encountered humiliating discrimination. Since he was always the lone Oriental amongst the predominantly Caucasian playmates and schoolmates, and very offensive name-calling were frequently experienced. Even his adult neighbour insulted him and said, "I won't be able to remember your name Fumio, it's too foreign so, I'll



Toronto 1958 — Frank and I were married on June 14, 1958 at Knox Presbyterian Church Toronto, Ontario, Canada

call you Bobby from now on”. Frank was a very determined person who would not tolerate abuse, always trying to set things straight and had some tussles here and there. He had indicated to me that during the time he was unwanted by the country of his birth, it was the worst feeling he ever experienced in his life and was worse than being an orphan! Because of all the difficult trying times he experienced during his earlier life, I can see today that it has affected him as he cherishes being a Canadian and doesn't take his nationality for granted.



*Canada 1994 — Lemon Creek Reunion.
Background shows a photo of Lemon Creek.*



*Canada 1998 — Retirement June 10, 1998.
Philip Ainsworth – Director of Education (left), myself and
Ernie Parsons – Board Chairman presenting award.*



*Canada 1999 — Frank and I moved into this house on
Highview Crescent in Belleville on May 12 1962.
On June 15, 1999 we bid goodbye to our home.*



*Canada 1991 — Grizzly, the family pet cat, passed away
May 1999. Howard Abe's (Masayo's son) family was allergic
to him, so we adopted him. Grizzly lived an active 20 years.*



*Canada 2000 — Dinner party at 15 Manda Drive in Maple,
Ontario with the extended Suyama family.*



Canada 2001 — Ba-chan and Ji-chan with grandchildren.



*Canada 2001 — Maikawa extended family at Alan's wedding, August 18, 2001.
(Gerald and Sandy's family is not included).*



Canada 2002 — I still volunteer at Beaver Valley Community School.



Canada 2001 — Christmas 2001 at Maple home with the entire family. Front row left to right: Sandra, Joshua, Daniel, Brandon and Frank. Back row left to right: Henry, Alyssa, Ian, Hélène, Alan, Gordon and Theresa. I was taking the picture (as usual!).



Canada 2000 — Cumberland friends dining out - Moritas, Hamas, Uyenakas, Bandos, Maikawas. Fusako Hama was unable to attend.

RETURN VISIT TO JAPAN – 1971

July 15th, 1971 — My daughter Theresa (10 years old) and I flew from Toronto on Japan Air Line to Vancouver and met my friend Lillian Yoshihara formerly from Camp Jono, Kokura, Japan and flew to Alaska, then to Tokyo. My brother welcomed us at the Haneda Air Port. Theresa and I were happy to visit my brothers Kakuichio and Masahiro and their families. We arranged to meet Frank's Aunt Aiko and his cousin Junji at Hikone shi. Junji and his younger brother Hisashi drove us around and toured Kyoto city and visited many shrines, temples and other interesting places and we were very grateful for their kind hospitalities.

Bullet Train — Nisan arranged for Theresa and I to ride on the bullet train to Fukuoka-ken. Upon arrival at



Japan 1971 — Papa and Mama's ashes are at Nokotsu Do.



Japan 1970 — Last picture of Papa before his death. He passed away 3 months prior to my return trip to Japan. Mama, brother, Tokugi Suyama and my Toronto friend, Peggy Tanaka visiting. Tokugi met his parents 24 years later since separation in 1946.



Japan 1971 — Theresa, myself and Emi-chan paying our respects at Nokotsu Do.

Uruzu home, I couldn't make myself go inside feeling sad that Papa won't be there to greet us. However, I took a deep breath and went inside and was very happy to see Mama again looking so well.

Visiting relatives and friends at Uruzu and vicinities — One day with my cousin Shinko chan and Theresa, I went to visit my former senior high school. I was really surprised to meet Baba sensei, who taught us social studies and Yumino sensei, who taught us Japanese Language, all who were still actively teaching at the same school. It was great talking to both teachers and recalling the classmates of 1952.

The art of Japanese Floral Arrangements — With the post war gloom, IKEBANA — a symbol of peace — started to flourish in Japan and I had become interested and fascinated by it. IKEBANA had an important role in linking with other arts showing deep interest in artistic development and International artistic exchange. Mama asked Shinoda sensei to come to her house and teach IKEBANA to me. I was so pleased to take some valuable lessons from her. I've studied IKEBANA in Toronto since then through Kadoguchi sensei and obtained a Teacher's Certificate from "Kyoto Ikebana Ikenobo Society In Japan".

Preparation for Mama to Return to Canada — The necessary documents such as passport, medical records and her visa were obtained at the American Embassy in Hakata, Fukuoka-ken. Her house had to be emptied and rented out but her first obligation was to



Japan 1971 — Looking at monkeys with Machi in Beppu.



Japan 1971 — Dinner at Tsuruda's home. Machi's wife, Emiko-san and their daughter Kyoko.

see that Papa's Hatsu Obon (First year memorial service) was looked after. Between mid July and August 22nd 1971 her relatives and friends came to visit her and helped her with packing. When her departure time arrived, again many relatives and friends came to bid sayonara (bon voyage) to her and parted with mixed emotions. Once we arrived at the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo the Japanese official indicated that Mama might not be able to travel on the same flight with Theresa and I due to her medical record. I started to feel very uneasy about this situation and while I was explaining to Theresa in English about this matter, another staff (he was actually preparing to go back to England) heard our conversation and he began to talk to Theresa in a friendly manner. Immediately, the first official changed his attitude and positively processed Mama's health certificate and other necessary documents without further incidence and in good order. Luckily, Mama was able to take the same flight back with us.

Traveling Time — From Haneda Airport on August 25th 1971 on the Jumbo Jet we were on schedule to Honolulu. From there we flew on Hawaiian Air Line to Hilo, Hawaii and visited Terry (Yamamura) and Robert Oka and their daughters Evelyn and Audrey. They showed us many interesting places like beautiful gardens with an abundance of tropical plants and fresh lava areas. Apparently, the volcano had irrupted two weeks earlier. We had a chance to soak our feet in the Pacific Ocean while the children swam.



Japan 1971 — Visit to Hikone. Background is the public school Frank's mother used to teach before coming to Canada.



Japan 1971 — Hiroshi-san, Junji Kawashima (Frank's cousins), Theresa, me and Aiko Nakamura (Frank's aunt).



Japan 1971 — Visiting former high school teachers at Nishi Kotto Gakko.



Japan 1971 — Ikebana lesson.

We had a wonderful visit with the Oka family. Our next flight was on United Airline from Hilo to Los Angeles and met Ayako san (former Japan friend) and Jack Yamashiro, of Hughes Aircraft who had been the liaison engineer for Satellite manufacturing at Northern Telecom, Belleville. It was exciting to see the famous Disney Land for a day and we all had a great time. The final flight was on Air Canada from Los Angeles and we reached Toronto safely on August 29th.

Japan 1971 — Quote from newspaper

“In this ever changing society, corruption from war to modern, highly industrialized nation, nothing is static. People are bustling and bustling here and there. Material culture such as electrical appliances, colour T.V., and automobiles are booming like nobody’s business. Moreover, as it is often true in human society, that too great a success became the cause of subsequent failure. Introduction of western culture was a confusion of values that occurred. In this process the danger that the social culture and spiritual unity of the country might be destroyed. Perhaps, their desire is not to let this happen. However, it was inevitable that the values of the west would come into conflict with those of the traditional cultural.”



Japan 1971 — Relatives to see Ba-chan (Suyama) off to Canada.



Japan 1971 — Farewell to Ba-chan (Suyama). Leaving for Belleville, Ontario, Canada.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a people, Canadians extend their sympathies to the millions of a society that values equality and justice for all regardless of race or ethnic origin.

During and after World War II, Canadian Japanese society, the majority of whom were citizens, suffered unprecedented injustices taken by the Government of Canada against their community.

Despite previous history committees of the time, the harsh treatment and imprisonment of Japanese Canadians during World War II and their deportation and expulsion following the war, were unjust. In retrospect, government policies of discrimination, detention, relocation and sale of private and community property, expulsion, deportation and restriction of movement, which continued after the war, were influenced by discriminatory attitudes. Japanese Canadians who were interned had their property liquidated and the proceeds of sale were used to pay for their own internment.

The acknowledgment of these injustices serves neither all Canadians nor the Japanese Canadians of the past nor present and that the principles of justice and equality in Canada are reaffirmed.

Therefore, the Government of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, does hereby:

- 1) acknowledge that the treatment of Japanese Canadians during and after World War II was unjust and violated principles of human rights as they are understood today;
- 2) stand as witness, as the full citizen that no person alive that such events will not happen again; and
- 3) recognize, with great respect, the courage and determination of Japanese Canadians who, despite great stress and hardship, served their communities and family in Canada and contributed so fully to the development of the Canadian nation.

RECONNAISSANCE

En tant que nation, les Canadiens se sont engagés à offrir une société qui respecte les principes d'égalité et de justice pour tous, indépendamment de leur origine ethnique ou raciale.

Pendant et après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, des Canadiens d'origine japonaise, citoyens de notre pays pour la plupart, ont subi un traitement injuste sous prétexte qu'ils étaient étrangers et ont subi des injustices contre leur communauté.

En dépit des commissions d'enquête japonaises, de la Commission royale d'enquête sur les Canadiens japonais et de la Commission royale sur les Canadiens japonais, ainsi que leur déportation et leur expulsion, les politiques de relégation, d'isolement, d'expulsion, de vente de biens personnels et communautaires, ainsi que d'expulsion, de déportation et de restriction des déplacements, qui ont été maintenues après la guerre, ont été influencées par des attitudes discriminatoires. Les Canadiens japonais internés ont vu leurs biens liquidés, le produit de la vente de leurs biens servant à payer leur propre internement.

En reconnaissant ces injustices, nous reconnaissons également à tous les Canadiens que ces événements ont été injustes et que les principes de justice et d'égalité.

En conséquence, le gouvernement du Canada, au nom de tous les Canadiens :

- 1) reconnaît que le traitement subi par les Canadiens japonais pendant et après la Seconde Guerre mondiale était injuste et constituait une violation des principes des droits de la personne, tels qu'ils sont compris aujourd'hui;
- 2) s'engage à être témoin que de tels événements ne se reproduisent plus jamais;
- 3) reconnaît, avec grand respect, le courage et la détermination des Canadiens japonais qui, malgré de grandes souffrances et de grandes difficultés, ont servi leur communauté et leur famille au Canada et ont contribué de façon si importante au développement de la nation canadienne.

1988-09-22 Ottawa, Le 22 septembre 1988

On September 22, 1988 the Government of Canada acknowledged the treatment of Japanese Canadians during and after the war as unjust and violated their human rights. Eligible individuals were granted a lump sum payment of \$21,000 as compensation for their loss and suffering. Sadly, individuals most deserving of this were long deceased.

Chapter Three

Home at Last

(August 26 to 28, 2002)

The following is a picture story of HOME AT LAST pilgrimage to Cumberland to find my roots after 60 years of absence. It was very emotional but a very happy ending.



In Victoria to tell my story.



Question period after my presentation. Next to me is Midge Ayukawa, the Oral History Panel chairperson - presenter, and Susumu Tabata, also a presenter.



“Home at Last” to Cumberland since 1942 when our family was rounded up and sent to a temporary holding detention center at Hastings Park, Vancouver before being sent to a detention camp in Lemon Creek, B.C.



I went swimming in the nice glacier waters at Comox Lake where I used to swim with my childhood friends and sisters all summer. I was just thrilled to be here again!



Since the Japanese weren't around anymore the Oriental Cemetery had been vandalized. After the end of the war, the Japanese Canadians went back, made a large round cement pad, gathered all the tombstones scattered around and placed them neatly in a circular ring which reminded me how some villages in Japan set up their cemeteries. Japanese Canadians from Victoria and Vancouver make yearly visits to look after the cemetery.



I found my uncle Giichiro Suyama's tombstone who was killed in a coal mine accident and I was able to pay my respects with some wild flowers found nearby. I took some pictures to send to my cousin, Akio Suyama in Japan.



I was also able to pay my respects when I found Mrs. Nakano and her son, Haruo's tombstone (My younger sister, Juneko's late mother-in-law). They used to live just next door to us.



Plaque commemorating the Chinese and Japanese workers was mounted on a Memorial Monument at the entrance to the cemetery.



Frank and I enjoyed the famous "Cumberland chow mien" at a Cumberland Chinese restaurant owned by a German Canadian lady.



The family's lot in #1 Japanese Town where the Suyama house once stood until around 1982. The Government auctioned it off for \$60 in 1942. Of interest was, #1 stood for the mine site location. Reno Bono, long time residence of Cumberland directed us to the town. There was also a #5 Japanese Town closer to the main town. Miners came from many parts of the world and settled in distinct ethnic towns (Japanese, Chinese, and Black towns). The Europeans lived in the main town. They also worked the mines separately. Derogatory names were labeled such as "Jap" Town and "Coon" Town. There are many mountains surrounding Cumberland and one of them is named "Jap" Mountain. The Japanese Canadians were going to Cumberland in November 2002 to rename the mountain, Nikkei Mountain. We hadn't heard that it was changed.



The Suyama family house was moved from its original location around 1982. It was located in a lot near Royston. The house was modified and transformed into a nicer home than I can remember so I was happy.



Cumberland people who helped find the house. A lady, Marilynne Anderson, from #5 J-Town called a man who used to live in #1 J-Town but now living in Courtney. He had a playmate that lived in the Suyama house so he remembered all the details inside and out when he spoke to me. John Kelly's playmate turned out to be my school principle's son who later went into the business of moving homes. Mr. Kelly drove us to the see the house.



I was hoping that my house wouldn't look like this worn out old shack that they were saving as a historic building in #5 J-Town.



Barbara Lemky, curator at the Cumberland Museum was very helpful in obtaining information and made us feel welcome. She is reading my stories.



My public school is on the right, since torn down was replaced by a museum and pioneer stores.



Japanese Language Schools, torn down now, existed in #1 and #5 mine sites. After Public School, I recall attending Japanese Language classes, even on Saturdays!



Picking black berries with Kevin Lewis of Cumberland and his friend, Julianne. I used to pick these giant wild berries with my childhood friends and our mothers made delicious jams and jellies for us to enjoy.



Saito's house is the only one remaining at #1 J-Town. Mama leased a plot of land from Saito's Ranch to grow vegetables for the family. David Kydd, a metal sculptor, and his family are the present occupants of the house. When I was a child, I thought that Mama had to travel quite a distance to the garden but actually it was only about 300 yards away. Even the huge baseball diamond I remembered was just a very small playground. I just could not believe it.



Frank and I stayed at Wellington House (owner - Shelagh Davis), a very beautiful English setting Bed and Breakfast. The only hotel in town was above a saloon and was not recommended.



In 1942 my family was rounded up and sent to Hastings Park, Vancouver and we were treated like jailbirds. Year 2002 – I am looking IN from the OUTSIDE this time around. What did I do wrong in 1942?