JAPANESE WAR BRIDES IN AMERICA

AN ORAL HISTORY

MIKI WARD CRAWFORD,
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This book is dedicated to all the Japanese War Brides;
Women who share their lives with us so we may learn.

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Contents

PROLOGUE

Research on Japanese American War Brides

The research on Japanese war brides has been ignored. No comprehensive books on them have been published, although several books on Japanese war brides have been published in Japan, Australia, and the United States.

The first book written about the Japanese war brides in the United States was *Issei, Nisei, War Bride, Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service,* by Dr. Evelyn Nakano Glenn in 1986. This book provides research on the Japanese American women in the United States, although its description of Japanese war brides was sketchy and limited. On Japanese war brides, *A Study of the Marital Stability of Japanese War Brides,* a monograph, and *Tsuchino: My Japanese War Bride,* a biography by the husband, were published in 1976 and 2005, respectively. I translated *Tsuchino* into Japanese, and it was published in 2009. In the 20th century, researchers often ignored the history of the Japanese Americans except for Japanese American internment during World War II.

—Katie Kaori Hayashi

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Acknowledgments

Though the term "Japanese war bride" is specific and aptly defines this group of women, it is important to note that many Japanese women find this term offensive due to the stigma it held in the past. However, the term "war bride" has been used to describe women from other countries without a negative connotation. Much thought has been given to a term less offensive that specifically identifies these women. Such a term has yet to be identified either by the women themselves or by the authors of this book. The use of the term "Japanese war brides" in this book does not have any connotative meaning—it is purely denotative, identifying these Japanese women as those who married foreign military men after World War II.

It is with great appreciation that we acknowledge those who were instrumental in helping the authors with their research. It is because of them that these stories are shared and that this book is possible. Thank you!

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INTRODUCTION

History That Affected the Lives of Japanese Women

Nobuko remembers leaving her home after the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Years later, her family attributes her father's death to that bombing. Harumi was taught that Americans were evil and devils. She saw homes burn and people die from B-29 bombings. Katsu shares her family's desperate search for her grandmother after a bombing attack on Yokohama. There are those who lost family members, such as Kinko, whose father was killed during the war. Ayako describes some of the effects of the "flash" from the atomic bomb and radiation poisoning in Hiroshima. Sadako's family home was confiscated by the government during the occupation of Japan and was given to an American family because it was a large house. Nearly all the women mention food shortages and hunger because of the war—a time of desperation and uncertainty.

How could Japanese women marry American military men who had just devastated and defeated their country? How were these couples able to form relationships when many had limited language skills? How could one leave her family and country and travel far away to a different culture under such difficult circumstances? Through these stories from the war brides, we can gain a better understanding of the dynamics of these relationships. However, to really understand a Japanese war bride's experience, one must have some knowledge about Japan and the events of the time that shaped these women. The conditions brought about by war, the occupation of Japan, and the changing culture were all factors in a war bride's experience.

UNDERSTANDING JAPAN

In 1931 Japan took control of Manchuria, an act that was condemned by the League of Nations in 1932. In 1937 the Japanese aggressively attacked China. Japan was seeking to gain new territory and resources for its small country, so it invaded Manchuria and China.[1] Japanese people considered Emperor Hirohito a deity and did not question his actions. This deference to imperial power is similar to the Christian's acceptance of God's will. Throughout history, religion has been a guiding force for numerous nationalities and a determinant of values and beliefs. Religion has been the basis for uniting people or dividing people and a contributing factor in wars. The Shinto belief that the Japanese race was pure and superior had become an important foundation of the Japanese culture. Japan is a small land in relation to her population, and its government had determined during this period that more territory and resources were needed for the crowded population. Because the Japanese people believed they were a superior race, invading other countries was not a moral issue, but rather a divine mission. (I should note here that we do not condone this belief, but merely wish to understand it.)

WOMEN'S ROLES AND THE WAR

The Japanese culture defined the role of a woman as subservient to her family, husband, and country. Women were little more than property or servants in the patriarchal society. The Japanese version of a Confucian saying, *Onna sangai ni ie nashi,* translated is "Women do not have a house (family) in the past, present, or future."[2] Women had little voice in the events that affected their lives as marriages were arranged, motherhood was a national destiny, and taking care of the husband's elderly parents became a wife's duty.

In support of the war women were discouraged from wearing makeup and getting hair permanents, as resources became scarce in 1939. By 1943 a cabinet directive issued guidelines and limits for new clothes. Many women wore the *monpe,* a style of baggy pants that was originally worn by women farmers.[3] Kimonos were seldom seen as the material was used to make *monpes* and baggy shirts. Also, as a necessity, kimonos were often traded to farmers for food.

Japan had been engaged in fighting since 1931 and thus her troops were spread throughout Southeast Asia. The attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 stretched the Japanese military even further. Resources were

dwindling, as was manpower. In 1941, there was a national registry system for men ages 16–40 and women 16–25 to support the war. At this time, only men were drafted to the factories as workers. After 1943, the Japanese government designated seventeen industries where women would replace men's positions in the factories. Young women from the countryside were recruited to the cities, where working conditions had deteriorated and were harsh. There they encountered hard physical labor, poor treatment, overcrowded living quarters, limited meals, and thus poor health. Japan became more desperate for support, and in 1944 the women's volunteer labor corps was established. Women began working in aircraft manufacturing and other crucial industries. Though traditionally a woman's role was in the home, the country's need for support brought nearly 4 million women to work for the war effort.[4]

Many women faced another role—head of household—because of the male casualties in the war. Hundreds of thousands of women became the heads of households and had to find ways to provide for their families. This was a change from the male-dominated society as women worked outside the home to become financial supporters. Many young women found work in cities and sent money home to help support their families, representing another break from the male-dominated family.[5]

WARTIME CONDITIONS

During the last year of the war, Japan's largest cities suffered from mass bombings: 58 percent of Yokohama, 56 percent of Kobe, 40 percent of Tokyo, and 35 percent of Osaka were destroyed. "Millions of homes and shops were incinerated."[6] The B-29 bombs were not the only reason that housing was destroyed. Homes and structures in the larger cities were built side by side, which was hazardous for entire sections of these cities during bombings. The Japanese deliberately destroyed some city homes in order to create fire breaks that could help protect other parts of the cities. In a letter about memories of the war written to the editor of *Asahi Shimbun,* a Japanese newspaper, Mieko Yashiro recalls how her home in Tokyo was to be destroyed in such a manner. She had no place to go and no way to transport her belongings, until a kind neighbor offered his oxcart and a trip to his family's home in Saitama. After traveling there, she soon lost her possessions to outrageous storage fees, burglars, and rats. She stated, "ordinary people were defeated by those on our own side."[7]

Despite the mounting destruction, the news of surrender did not surface until after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, where over 100,000 people died instantly. On August 9, 1945, the second atomic bomb killed another 40,000 in Nagasaki.[8] Tens of thousands of deaths occurred afterward from the toxic radiation of these bombings.

Near the end of the war, conditions were desperate. The average Japanese was barely getting 1,700 calories per day. White rice, a Japanese staple, became a rarity for many. Barley and potatoes became more common in the Japanese diet. The average weight of school children was smaller, birth rates declined, and newborn mortality rose. The lack of workers, tools, and fertilizer as well as adverse weather caused the harvest of 1945 to be nearly 40 percent of the normal yield. Thus, much of what was available was on the "black market," or *jiyu-ichba,* which translates to "free market."[9]

The populace first heard the emperor's voice over the radio when he announced the defeat of Japan on August 15, 1945. Consider the repercussions for the entire population when the people heard the announcement that their deity and country had lost the war. The Japanese speak of being in a state of *kyodatsu*—exhaustion and despair—and the demoralization that was felt by the masses.[10] Not only had they faced physical defeat through massive bombings, they also encountered psychological defeat—what the Japanese believed to be the truth about their race and their destiny was destroyed.

World War II lasted three years and eight months, but Japan had been fighting for fifteen years. By the end of this war approximately 9 million Japanese were homeless because of the massive bombings of cities. The post-war years also brought death from starvation, lack of sanitary conditions, and disease. On the other hand, the post-war years also ushered in a broad array of civil rights, including equality for women through the democratization of Japan's new constitution. Defeat in war and its subsequent hardships caused many Japanese to rethink the path that its government had taken. With the occupation of Allied forces and a new national constitution, change for Japan—and its women—was imminent.

THE OCCUPATION AND CHANGING CULTURE

Officially, "Occupied Japan" spanned from 1945 to 1952; however, some American military bases remain today because of the security treaty that prohibits Japan from having a military force. "The mood in

the reaction of the Japanese people toward the occupation went through the phases of fear, relief, gratitude, boredom, and finally a predictable but tolerable mild resentment."[11]

The occupation provided various working positions that brought many Japanese women in contact with American GIs. In the first year of the occupation, approximately 500,000 soldiers were stationed throughout Japan in every prefecture in order to control a population of about 70 million. This influx of soldiers provided many opportunities for Japanese women in various working positions as interpreters, waitresses, typists, office workers, and maids.[12] Many women were eager to gain employment as a means of support for their families, and the rate of pay by the American military was better than most could obtain elsewhere. The Japanese yen held little value. Legal market prices doubled by the end of 1945. Inflation was evident in the following years: 539 percent in 1946, 336 percent in 1947, 256 percent in 1948, and 127 percent in 1949. The cost for a *sho* of rice rose from 2.7 yen in 1946 to 62.3 yen in 1950.[13]

With Japanese women working in positions where they were in contact with military men, relationships were bound to blossom. There was an anti-fraternization policy; however, it was difficult to enforce because of the number of troops in occupied Japan, and because of the fact that the majority of the soldiers were young men. Due to war casualties, Japanese women outnumbered Japanese men. "According to the Japanese national census in 1947, the number of men between 20 and 29 years old was 5.77 million, while the number of women of the same age group was 6.78 million."[14] In *Michi's Memories: The Story of a Japanese War Bride,* Michi states that there was no prospect of marrying a Japanese man and it was her natural desire to have children.[15]

"Many women who could not find employment turned to prostitution as their only means of survival for themselves and their dependents. A woman registered as a prostitute forfeited any possibility of ever marrying a GI, for her record eliminated her as a candidate for marriage."[16] Thus, the notion that war brides were prostitutes is unlikely because the process for entry into the United States was stringent. Evidence of this process is noted in some of the women's stories in this book.

MARRIAGE AND LAWS

The process for marriage between American servicemen and Japanese women was intentionally made difficult in order to discourage these interracial relationships. There were numerous forms to complete;

Japanese documents had to be translated into English at the couple's expense; there was a thorough medical examination for the woman; and there was an investigation of the woman's family, which involved checking for Communism, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, or anything that would label her as an undesirable. The serviceman needed proof of American citizenship, single status, and proof that he would be able to support his new wife.[17] They would have to endure an interview by the military's chaplain, who was to persuade the couple that their marriage would be a mistake. Numerous signatures were required for the paperwork as it progressed through the proper channels. At any point, the paperwork could be delayed or denied.

Japanese women who were married to American servicemen during this early time could not immigrate to the United States because of the Immigration Exclusion Act of 1924, which specifically targeted Asians. Though there were two laws passed by Congress, one in 1945 and the other in 1946, that provided for the immigration of war brides, they applied to the women of other nationalities but not to the Japanese.[18]

Public Law 213 allowed spouses and those who married U.S. citizens within 30 days after the passage of the act on July 22, 1947, to be eligible for immigration to the United States. Thirty days was an extremely short amount of time for the massive amount of paperwork, for the investigation of the Japanese women, and for obtaining the necessary permission from the commanding officer. "Between 1500 and 2500 couples were expected to apply under this provision."[19] However, fewer than expected were able to receive the benefit of this law. Only fourteen women were admitted into the United States during 1947 and 298 immigrated in 1948.[20] Meanwhile, some servicemen who had returned to the States with honorable discharges or medical discharges were frustrated with the laws or lack thereof, so they petitioned their congressmen for relief from the 1924 Immigration Act, stating unusual circumstances or hardship. The 81st Congress (1949–1951) passed approximately 200 private bills in respect to racial exclusion.[21] This was a lengthy process; much of it was accomplished through letter writing to congressmen. However, this was the only recourse for servicemen who had returned to the States.

It was not until Public Law 717 passed in August 1950 that immigration for Japanese war brides was possible again. As before, there was a time restriction for the application, and permission had to be obtained by February 1951 (later extended to March 1952). This was during the Korean War (June 1950–July 1953) and many former occupiers of Japan had been sent to Korea, making it difficult for couples to apply for marriage and/or immigration.

The Immigration and Nationality Act was passed on June 27, 1952. This revoked the 1924 Act and provided the means for Japanese war brides to immigrate to the United States. Prior to 1952, approximately 819 Japanese war brides were admitted into the United States. During 1952, approximately 4,220 were able to immigrate.[22] However, it was not until 1965, when the quota system based on race was abolished, that Asian immigration was comparable to rates from other nations. This time frame, 1947–1965, is often used as an historical marker for the immigration of Japanese war brides.

The number of recognized Japanese-American marriages varies depending on the time frame under consideration and the authors. From the year 1947, when the first Japanese war bride entered the States, through 1965, there were 48,912 Japanese nationals classified as "Wives of Citizens" who immigrated to the United States.[23] It is difficult to determine the exact number of marriages as statistics would not include the marriages of servicemen such as Dr. Teresa Williams's father, who decided to reside in Japan with his wife and family. Nor would my parents be considered in this statistic since their marriage in Japan was not recognized when my mother arrived in the States in 1950. An accurate number of these marriages may never be revealed as figures range from 55,000 to 100,000.[24]

Japanese women married servicemen for various reasons. To some, the Americans became "conquering heroes" as they provided help to women and often their families as well. The American military did not despoil and plunder as was first expected by the Japanese. Instead, the military provided much-needed food when many in the nation were starving. The military provided jobs at good salaries that enabled many Japanese to survive the aftermath of war. The military organized the country into a democracy, which benefited the majority of its population.

Being in "close proximity" with U.S. servicemen was another factor for these marriages. Women worked in various positions such as office workers, housekeepers, waitresses, and canteen workers, which required interaction with the servicemen. Even though language skills were often limited, they were able to communicate well enough. A new social world was being constructed with them as co-constructors. The use of interpreters and gestures, and the acquisition of a few key words or phrases provided sufficient foundation upon which they could begin to build their relationships.

While interracial marriage was against Japanese tradition, the "nature versus nurture" argument is worth considering. According to statistics, these young Japanese women outnumbered Japanese men by

one million. The foreign soldiers were healthy, tall, and standing proudly in their crisp military uniforms. In comparison, the defeated Japanese soldiers wore uniforms that were tattered, and their spirits were often badly beaten. These foreigners were more attractive to the women in terms of survival of the fittest. Even though the Japanese culture nurtured the principle of pure bloodlines, the force of nature could not be ignored. These interracial couples were at the age when selecting a mate would be a natural priority. Our needs to love, to belong, and to procreate are strong biological factors. Some of these women who were interviewed were once pledged to marry Japanese men—a traditional arrangement made by their families. Yet, they *chose* to marry American men. "Love at first sight" is often an explanation given by one or both of the partners—again, a case for "nature versus nurture."

COMING TO THE UNITED STATES

In the *Saturday Evening Post,* Smith and Worden referred to the immigration of these war brides as "stepping into terra incognita—a country worse than unknown because their heads are full of misconceptions." These women relied on descriptions provided by the servicemen, some of whom were homesick or prone to exaggeration, and by movies that distorted life in the United States.[25]

Some Japanese women were fortunate to attend "bride's school," provided by American Red Cross volunteers, before they traveled to the United States. Information was provided on customs, monetary value, cooking, dining, and child care. Amazingly, by 1952 some 8,000 Japanese women had graduated from bride's schools.[26] Though this helped to prepare some women, others had to rely solely on their husbands for help with assimilating into their new culture.

They arrived in the United States from various parts of Japan; some traveled by ship, others by plane. Either way, the journey was not easy, as both modes took considerably longer than they do today. Women have talked about getting seasick or not being able to eat American food along the way. Some traveled alone, while others were fortunate enough to travel with their husbands. And some women had the extra duties of caring for small children and babies during this long trip. However they came, this initial trip was memorable to these women.

Some Japanese families accepted the interracial marriages while other families disowned their daughters. Transition into the American culture was difficult at best—these women left behind their families, language, foods, and traditions. Some of them found support in the United States,

while others felt isolation. Some women were fortunate to have good and lasting marriages, while others experienced hardships and divorce.

Their husbands' military status provided acceptance and aid in assimilation into the U.S. culture. It is interesting to note that "Japanese war brides soon became meaningful figures in the discourse on racial integration and cultural pluralism. As white Americans tried to negotiate the threat of black integration, and government programs tried in vain to resettle interned Japanese Americans, Japanese war brides provided at least one 'unofficial or obscure place' out of which the redemption of cultural pluralism, as an ideal that stabilized relations rather than disrupted them."[27] It is also interesting to note the lack of information about this group in American history given the large number who migrated to the States.

To say that there is a typical Japanese war bride experience would be stereotyping these women. They came from various parts of Japan. Those from the northern island of Hokkaido most likely did not experience bombings as only one city in that part of the country was targeted, while middle and southern parts of Japan were major bombing targets. They also came from varying social circumstances. Some families fared better during the war because of their socioeconomic status. Both of these factors influenced their war experiences.

They were all women with the strong will necessary to go against Japanese tradition, and with the great strength needed to persevere during their early years in the United States. It has been acknowledged that they became ambassadors to the United States because of their character and contributions. This book presents nineteen stories acquired from personal interviews. Collectively, the authors conducted more than 230 interviews and surveys regarding the Japanese war brides' experiences. There are numerous stories still untold that would help preserve this time in history. However, the only books that provide information about individual Japanese war brides in English to date are Shukert and Scibetta's *War Brides* (1988), Tamura's *Michi's Memories* (2003), and Forrester's *Tsuchino* (2005).

—Miki Ward Crawford

NOTES

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7. Frank Gibney, ed. *Senso: The Japanese Remember the Pacific War: Letter to the Editor of Asahi Shimbun* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 172.
8. Allinson.
9. John W. Dowers, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 116.
10. Dowers.
11. Morton, 191.
12. Keiko Tamura, *Michi's Memories: The Story of a Japanese War Bride* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, 2003).
13. Dowers, 115–116. A *sho* is 1.4 kilograms.
14. Tamura, 95.
15. *Michi's Memories*, written by Dr. Keiko Tamura, is about a war bride who married an Australian serviceman and is one of two books written in English about the Japanese war bride experience. The other is *Tsuchino: My Japanese War Bride,* written by Michael Forrester, a U.S. serviceman in the Air Force, who was stationed in Japan. *War Brides of World War II* features women from England, Australia, New Zealand, France, Italy, Germany, as well as Japan, and numerous other countries. It was written in 1988 by Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta.
16. Shukert and Scibetta, 190.
17. Janet Wentworth Smith and William L. Worden, "They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives," *Saturday Evening Post,* January 19, 1952.
18. Suenaga.
19. Shukert and Scibetta, 209.
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Part I

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Dr. Miki Ward Crawford. Courtesy of Dr. Miki Ward Crawford.

My interest in Japanese war brides evolved from the Veterans History Project, which is a mission to collect the oral histories of war veterans for preservation in the Library of Congress. As an advisor to Gamma Beta Phi, an honor society chapter on the Southern Campus of Ohio University, I took students to a national honor society convention in 2004, where the guest speaker was a veteran who spoke about the Veterans History Project, which is a part of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress. The speaker gave statistics on the many war veterans we lose each day and how quickly this population, with their various perspectives and stories, would be gone. The students from the Southern Campus were enthusiastic about the project, so they arranged for some local World War II veterans to visit the campus to be interviewed and videotaped in our Electronic Media Department. The tapes were then

sent to the Library of Congress for cataloging. The students honored these veterans with a special unveiling of the interviews on the Southern Campus later that year.

I became aware that there was another group along with the veterans whose stories would also be lost—the Japanese war brides. I thought about this because my mother is a Japanese war bride and I wondered if others knew about the struggles that she and my father faced in their union. There is limited information about Japanese war brides in English. My first springboard was Regina Lark's dissertation, *They Challenged Two Nations: Marriages Between Japanese Women and American GIs, 1945 to the Present* (1999). From this I was able to contact Mrs. Kazuko Umezu Stout, president of the Nikkei International Marriage Society, and attend the Honolulu convention with my mother in 2004. Mrs. Stout told us that some women do not like the term "war bride" due to the negative association of the past and they would not join the organization if it was named such. I often use that term, not out of disrespect, but because it is a more accurate identifier that does not hold bad connotations in English today. As one from Appalachia, I had a wonderful experience viewing the room full of women like my mother at the 2004 convention.

In August 2005, we visited Mike and Tsuchino Forrester in Seattle. Mike is the author of an interesting and heartwarming book entitled *Tsuchino: My Japanese War Bride*, which tells their life story. The Forresters arranged interviews at Seattle's Japanese Language School for my research, and they even drove us to individuals' homes for interviews. During this time in Seattle, Kazuko Umezu Stout invited us to dinner, where we were able to obtain two additional interviews. This was my start in the collection of the war brides' oral histories.

The next convention was in 2006 and was held in Seattle. It was during this time that Katie Hayashi suggested that she, Dr. Shizuko Suenaga, and I work together on a book containing our interviews with some of the Japanese war brides. Katie and Shizuko have both been active in research and interviews. Dr. Shizuko Suenaga's dissertation, *Good-Bye to Sayonara: The Reverse Assimilation of Japanese War Brides*, was another helpful resource for me in writing the chapter on history for this book. Katie's work on war brides has all been published in Japanese, which unfortunately I cannot read. However, she welcomed an opportunity to share her knowledge in English. It has been a pleasurable venture collaborating with Katie and Shizuko in preparing these stories for this book—to them I am grateful.

Some time after that meeting, the Nikkei International Marriage Society was disbanded due to Mrs. Stout's illness. Many women wanted to continue these gatherings, so in September 2008 some Japanese women met in Las Vegas for the first International Marriage and Friendship Club convention. Many of these women were former members of the Nikkei International Marriage Society. Tsuchino Forrester has graciously accepted the role of president to organize gatherings and provide communication, with help from Dr. Yasuo Onishi, through quarterly newsletters. This organization enabled the women to stay in contact with other women who have similar experiences and backgrounds. They were able to converse in their native language, sing songs from the past, and enjoy Japanese music and traditional dancing at the convention. As they did so, I watched them become young again in the camaraderie of others like themselves.

Having a mother who is a Japanese war bride has its advantages and disadvantages in terms of research. Though I can understand some Japanese words and know a bit about the culture, I have been extremely careful about respecting my elders and perhaps have been overly cautious about approaching women and questioning them during the interviews. However, it is because of my mother that many women are willing to be interviewed by me.

Since I do not speak Japanese, I feel that I cannot tell these stories in the first person. In order to relay their stories, my process has been to digitally record the interviews on DVD and MP3, take notes during the interviews, transcribe the recordings, and then write the stories from the transcriptions and notes, while frequently providing some of my perspectives. Though I could correct their English, I often quote these ladies verbatim. I feel that this helps the reader hear their stories in their voices, plus I find these voices as endearing as my mother's and feel that their language skills surpass mine, as I am only fluent in one language.

The purpose of my research has been to collect and preserve these oral histories for generations who want to know about the Japanese war bride experiences. When we consider that nearly 50,000 Japanese women immigrated to the States by 1965, we realize that there is quite a population of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren whose heritage lies in these stories. Each story is unique, yet there are some common threads that help us understand their situations and their ways of thinking. The locations of my interviews have varied; Mother and I traveled to Honolulu, Seattle, Los Angeles, Las Vegas,

El Paso, and Fayetteville and Jacksonville, North Carolina—anywhere I could find a contact. This has been a challenging yet rewarding experience for me. Mother and I have met many new friends during the past years as I continued to find women to interview.

It is important to acknowledge those who have contributed to my research in various ways. Ohio University Southern Campus, Dr. Haley Haugen and colleagues have been extremely supportive through funding and encouragement. Those who helped me along the way by introducing me to war brides include Kazuko Umezu Stout, Tsuchino and Michael Forrester, Hawaii Pacific Press, Betty Totoki, Yasuko Kelley, and Reverend Mitsuru Mukoyama. Then there are family members who have been encouraging: my husband, Ricky Crawford; my daughter, Candice Morris; my son, Richard Crawford; and, of course, my mother, Fumiko Ward. It has been a pleasure to work with Katie Kaori Hayashi and Dr. Shizuko Suenaga during the past three years. I am deeply grateful to all of you for making this possible.

I appreciate the support of the women who have been willing to share their time and their stories. It is through their participation that we are able to better understand the circumstances of that time and these relationships—it is part of our American history.

CHAPTER 1

My Mother's Story: It Took an Act of Congress

Fumiko Ward

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Louis Ward and Fumiko Tomita (1947). Courtesy of Fumiko Ward.

My mother's knowledge of her father's family was obtained from her sisters. As a descendant of a *samurai,* her grandfather owned nice farm land, which the oldest son gained, while her father, as the third son, and his second brother received an education. Mother never met her paternal grandparents; however, she saw pictures of their home in Miyagi prefecture, Honshu, close to Sendai, and describes it as a large home with huge columns on the front. Her memory of her maternal grandmother, who lived in Asahikawa, Hokkaido, which was three hours away by train, was that she was very strict. She does not remember her grandparents' names, just that she called them *Obaasan* and *Ojiisan* (grandmother and grandfather). Obaasan came from a business family

and Ojiisan was a handsome performer—a singer. It was in the middle of the night that Obaasan left home and ran away with him. Mother's younger sisters related this to her when they were adults.

My mother, Fumiko Tomita, was born in Nayoro, Hokkaido, the northern part of Japan, and is the second oldest of eight children. Her mother's name was Keyo Arie and her father was Sataro Tomita. Her father had a high position with the government railways, which she learned when her family moved from Wakkani to Sapporo. The Japanese term for this position is *kanri* and it is the equivalent to a government official. She was in the fifth grade during this move and recalls that people came to pack and unpack their possessions for this transition. There was a "good-bye" party and people lined up at the station to bid them farewell, she says. Since her father worked for the railroads, they had passes, which allowed them to go anywhere by train. She traveled great distances without fear of harm from others and says that this time was like a dream world where people were so nice to each other.

Another fond childhood memory is when she lived close to the ocean at Wakkani. She and her brother, Tamotsu, would go out early in the mornings to catch crabs along the shoreline. He would flip them up into her basket with his stick. Her mother would have boiling water waiting at home to cook these crabs for breakfast. There was only one road leading into town, and it was parallel with the ocean on one side and the steep hills on the other side. This was a time when horses pulled buggies or wagons as transportation. On their way to school, they would often ask a farmer if they could ride on the back of his wagon, which was carrying produce into town. They would eat their breakfast crabs, leaving the shells scattered along the road. For Fumi, this was a nostalgic time of peace and trust. Her delight in describing her "yester-years" is evident in her voice and eyes. She has wonderful memories of her brothers and sisters, but was closest to her older brother during that time because of his age and because of his help during her early adult years.

THE WAR YEARS

Fumi says she was lucky to be chosen to work in a bank during the war years when she was sixteen. She, like many others, did not actually finish school and graduate due to the war; however, she and the others did receive diplomas from their *jogakkou,* or girls' high school. The Japanese education system was a 6–3 format, meaning that the first six years were primary and mandatory while the next three years were optional and equivalent to high school, which required an optional fee.

College was attained by families with means, much like it was in the United States. Many of the girls were solicited to help in factories or even for construction work. Some of the women whom I have interviewed reported that they worked at construction sites and helped build airfields without the aid of essential tools. This work was physically and mentally taxing and they had to cope with lack of food and proper rest. Hakodate, which had a steel company, was the only town in Hokkaido that was bombed during the war. The women of Hokkaido fared better during wartime in comparison to women on the other islands of Japan.

The job at the bank lasted until the following February, when there was overtime at the bank for work that was comparable to today's audit. When this occurred the bank workers stayed until late in the evenings, and Fumi's parents disapproved of a young girl staying so late. After speaking with a neighbor who was a professor's wife, Fumi's mother helped her obtain a position at the nearby university. Fumi worked at the University of Hokkaido as an assistant to Professor Maikawa, a professor of biology who studied and grew roses. During the war he focused on plant hormones to help vegetables grow. The rose garden was turned into a potato patch—a more beneficial use of the soil. There were not many students at the university; Fumi remembers that there were some Chinese and Manchurian students. She recalls that although her home had numerous books, she had the good fortune to be able to read more classics from the university library and enjoyed the opportunity to discuss these with students.

It was at the University of Hokkaido that she heard over the radio the *Tennō Heika* (Emperor) announce the end of the war and the surrender of Japan. This was the first time that the public had heard the Emperor's voice. Although this was long ago, Fumi describes his voice as strange and sad. She recalls that everyone listening was crying. Since he was thought to be a deity in Japan and part of a dynasty, this announcement must have been a tremendous shock to the Japanese people. Emperor Showa (Hirohito) was number 124 in a long line of emperors, which had for centuries served as a source of tradition and structure for the country of Japan. Life as they knew it would no longer exist.

Fumi's parents wanted to send her and her sister, Setsuko, to the country as Japan became occupied by the U.S. military. Fumi was eighteen at this time and wanted to continue working at the university. Instead of the much-feared plunder and persecution, occupational forces brought restructuring and rebuilding to northern Japan, which, in turn, later created jobs for the Japanese people.

Fumi worked for the military at a PX in Sapporo when she was nineteen years old. PX stands for post exchange, which was a military commissary that supplied foods and various goods for the soldiers and their families. She remembers receiving a chocolate candy bar at work from a soldier when she first started working there. She was excited at the prospect of having the sugary treat, something that had not been available for years, but she could not enjoy it alone. She took it home for her mother to cut into ten small pieces for all in the family to enjoy. Fumi says that her mother began to cry because the war had deprived the younger children of many things, including sweets.

MEETING AND MARRIAGE TO LOUIS WARD

Fumi met Louis Ward, a corporal in the army, at the PX through a friend, Takeiko, and her boyfriend, Mansu-san (Mann), who was from California. Louis was the opposite of her—blond hair, blue eyes, and tall. Their first date was at a dance hall where most of the music was swing, which was popular at that time in the United States. Fumi begins to sing "Sentimental Journey" during this narrative to illustrate the type of music that she remembers. Going with another couple enabled the men and women to converse in their own languages. Conversation between the couple was a mixture of words and motions. They didn't dance on that first date, but just watched others and enjoyed the music. Fumi smiles, saying she was able to watch and learn the dance steps quickly. This was during the summer of 1946, when not many GIs and Japanese women socialized. The dance hall was a safe place for these couples and she describes Louis as a "real gentleman."

Every night at 5 p.m. Louis would wait outside the PX for Fumi. They would often get together with four or five other couples and go to Nakajima Park in Sapporo, where they would rent a rowboat for Sunday afternoon rides and enjoy picnics. Louis had learned some Japanese, but Fumi could not speak English, so they relied on his language skills at that time. It is interesting to note that he spoke feminine Japanese, as his conversations were basically with women. His word choices, tone, and inflections matched those of the women with whom he held conversations.

Louis had been in Sapporo almost a year before meeting Fumi. He worked as a corporal in the laundry in Sapporo, which enabled him to gain some Japanese language skills and the ability to converse. During

their courtship, Fumi became employed at the laundry doing office work and taking care of the payroll for forty-eight people. They dated for about a year, and then Louis was transferred to Hachinohe, so he asked Fumi to move there with him. Her older brother, Tamotsu, helped her make the trip to Hachinohe to join Louis. They were married there on October 12, 1947, by an American preacher with Mrs. Abe, the interpreter for the laundry, as witness and interpreter of the ceremony for Fumi. This likely was not a legal Japanese or American wedding, but a simple ceremony that justified their union for their sakes. American marriages at that time were not permissible and Japanese marriages were not recognized by the United States. However, for Louis and Fumi, this sealed their fate as they would recognize this date as their first wedding anniversary for the rest of their lives.

While in Hachinohe, Louis attained the rank of sergeant. His next assignment was at Matsuyama where he was master sergeant and worked for the military government (MG) monitoring the immigration of Koreans. He also took part in discussions with Japanese land owners in the redistribution of land, which was part of the restructuring of Japan. Again, Tamotsu was instrumental in helping his sister move to Matsiyama. The military service did not provide aid with transitions as their marriage was not recognized. Louis enjoyed his service in Japan and he reenlisted for six years to stay with Fumi. His goal was to remain in the service and perhaps even in Japan.

OBSTACLES FOR THE COUPLE

While in Hachinohe, Louis fell ill and was hospitalized for three months in Sendai with pneumonia. In February 1949, while stationed in Matsiyama, he was sent to a hospital in Osaka and was diagnosed with tuberculosis, an illness that was prevalent in the war-torn country. From there he was sent to the States for a radical surgery that was performed in a military hospital in Colorado. Surgery to remove part of the diseased lung was a common practice at that time; one-third of one lung was removed, leaving a huge scar and indentation on the right side of his upper back.

Fumi was pregnant during this time and recalls that the MG group was extremely kind and "looked after her" in Louis's stead. She describes this group as being close like family. On a Saturday evening, a dance party night, she went into labor; a jeep arrived about every ten to fifteen minutes to check on her birthing progress at a hospital in

Matsiyama. Erio (Eddie) was born that evening on June 4, 1949, and the dance party turned into a celebration for his birth. Eddie was given the Tomita name and had Japanese citizenship since their marriage was not recognized. Fumi explains that they did not obtain a legal marriage because Louis was in the hospital when the opportunity arose and was not able to complete the numerous tasks that needed to be accomplished before one could apply for marriage.

Back in the States while Louis was recuperating, he was given a medical discharge from the Army. This was unfortunate for him as he wanted to be a "lifer" in the service. He enjoyed living in Japan and had embraced all things Japanese. However, there was another dilemma: his wife and son were still in Japan, and bringing them to the United States would be complicated. It took months of correspondence to his congressman, M. G. Burnside in West Virginia, to gain their admission into the States. Private Law 594 was introduced by Congressman Burnside and approved by the 81st Congress on February 14, 1950. It specifically permitted Fumiko Tomita and Erio Tomita relief from the Immigration Act of 1924 and admittance as non-quota immigrants for permanent residence in the United States.[1] Even though this was a major step toward their reuniting, other paperwork and arrangements delayed travel until December 1950. While waiting for these arrangements, Fumi and Eddie resided with the Tomitas. Over this time the family grew so fond of Eddie that his grandparents wanted him to stay in Japan. It was a difficult parting—losing not only the oldest daughter, but also the *ichiban* (number one) grandson. It was later revealed that his grandmother, Obaasan, fell to the ground in despair after they left; could she have known that this would be the last time she would see her grandson?

On December 15, 1950, Fumi and Eddie left Sapporo by train to get to Tokyo's Haneda Airport. This portion of the travel took almost an entire day. From there they flew to Anchorage, Seattle, Chicago, and finally to Cincinnati, where Louis and his sister Ruth met them at the airport on December 16. Considering that Fumi could not speak English and traveled this distance unaccompanied and carrying an eighteen-month-old infant, she clearly acted out of bravery and love. Fumi could not take much with her, as she had to carry diapers for her son. Although he had recently been potty trained, to avoid risking any accidents she reverted to using the gauze diapers, which she disposed of along the way.

She recalls that a gentleman in a large cowboy hat helped her in one of the airports. He made the motions of washing his hands with a questioning look on his face. When Fumi nodded yes, he led her to

the ladies' restroom. There she was able to change Eddie's diaper and freshen themselves. When she came out, the man in the big cowboy hat was waiting. He read her ticket and took her to the next connection. She was most appreciative to find a helpful stranger in these circumstances and felt positive about coming to the States. In another airport the circumstances were much different. Little Eddie was happy to be able to walk around after sitting so long on the flights. Smiling, he picked up a gum wrapper from the floor and tried to give it to a dainty little girl. Fumi was horrified to see this beautiful little girl's face change as she called him "Jap." She began to wonder what kind of life Eddie would have in this country. Did she make a mistake by taking him away from Japan and a family who adored him?

LIFE IN APPALACHIA

Louis and Fumi were married on New Year's Eve, 1950, in Huntington, West Virginia. Someone was required to formally accept responsibility for Fumi and Eddie if this became necessary. Forrest Wells, Louis's brother-in-law, signed the papers. It was part of the stipulation to show that there was support for the new Asian immigrants. The marriage ceremony was a quick and simple one conducted at a preacher's home with Forrest and his wife, Jane, as witnesses.

Their new home was outside of Huntington, a modest house that Louis and family members had built beside his parents' home. Fumi reports that her initial thoughts about the United States and the new family were that they were "strange and different." The new house did not have running water or a bathroom, and the "outhouse" was a new experience for her. Water had to be pumped from a cistern that relied on rainwater. Fumi tells about "stealing" water while her mother-in-law took afternoon naps. Her mother-in-law was constantly telling her that they had to conserve water as the cistern was their only water source. Therefore, the in-laws were not accustomed to daily bathing. This was unthinkable for Fumi, so she would sneak out with a pail and a towel, using the towel to muffle the sound of the squeaks as she hand-pumped water for washing. It is interesting to note that they never ran out of water.

They had no neighbors as their home was out in the country and the only house around belonged to Louis's parents. Fumi says that the in-laws tried to be nice to her, but she could tell that they thought she was different. Their prior response to Louis's letters about his marriage to

her had been, "Think what your children will look like!" However, they welcomed Eddie—he was a beautiful baby and people often stopped to comment about him.

Public outings were difficult because the perspectives about the Japanese were derived from the war and propaganda. There was no Japanese population in Huntington, West Virginia. Fumi hesitantly recalls the name calling and rock throwing that occurred when they went into town. Some adults would turn their heads in disgust. However, she says that even though this was hurtful, she could understand; it was not long after the war had ended, and mental wounds were still fresh for many Americans. Experiences improved as time progressed, and she says that she always tried to smile and often received a smile in return.

I am their second child, born in September 1951 in a doctor's office outside Huntington and given the Japanese name Mikiko. Many of the Japanese female names end in "ko." At that time it was not a common practice for Amerasian children in the States to have Japanese names. Most parents were concerned about acceptance and assimilation into the American culture. However, my brother's name, Erio, is pronounced much like "Eddie-o" in Japanese and he was called Eddie using the English spelling. My name was shortened to Miki and sounds like Mickey, which is an English name. These were more acceptable in our society.

Fumi says that her mother knew the time of my birth and her sister revealed this date in one of her letters—Obaasan had felt the labor pains. While this may seem strange, distance was not a barrier to her mother's love and intuition. I was born nine months after Fumi's departure from Japan, and Obaasan was still feeling the loss of her oldest daughter.

Adjusting to a new culture and having a newborn were difficult. The family's sole income was from military disability and finances were tight. Because Louis was considered half disabled, his work options were limited. He opted to attend a junior business college instead of the local university as this would provide a faster route to an occupation, thus more quickly providing increased income for the family of four.

After he completed junior business college in 1954, Louis accepted the first job offered and moved his family across the river into South Point, the southern tip of Ohio. People there were friendly, and Fumi made friends with a few neighbors who helped her acclimate to the culture. She describes this time as happy. The new house had a kitchen, running water, a bathroom where she could take a bath, three bedrooms, and more privacy and independence for the family. The school

was close by and she could see Eddie on the playground at recess. She worried about his acceptance when he began school, but the community was accommodating and her fears were unfounded.

Fumi had been given the American name Suzie by the family when she first arrived in the United States because it was easier to pronounce. She didn't want an American name, especially when she learned that this had been the name of one of the family's cows. However, she tolerated it and relatives continue to call her Suzie; she finds it more endearing today. When they moved to South Point, she became known as Fumi to her new friends and neighbors; that's how she introduced herself.

It was a year after her arrival to the States before they learned that Japanese soy sauce could be ordered from a store in New York. As time passed, she met four other Japanese women in the area and found closer "oriental" markets in Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio. The women often shared what they had with each other and would plan get-togethers where they could enjoy their native meals and speak freely in their language.

Home life was a blend of cultures in cooking and decoration. Although Louis and Fumi spoke Japanese to each other, English was the primary language used with the family. Fumi thought that it was important for her children to assimilate into the American culture and was concerned that it may have confused us to learn both languages. The blending of cultures came in various forms. Meals would consist of fried chicken and mashed potatoes one day and tempura or sukiyaki the next. Silverware and chopsticks were both common eating utensils. Living room décor was a three-piece sectional couch with two paintings of Japanese women in beautiful kimonos hanging above it. The house had several Bibles and yet at certain times one could smell incense and observe the offerings displayed on the living room stereo cabinet in honor of deceased family members. Shoes were taken off at the door and a slight bowing was common during a greeting.

Social life was a blend as well, with her Japanese friends and American neighbors, often together at parties. New Year's Eve was a big event not only because it is perhaps the biggest celebration in the Japanese culture, but also because it was one of the wedding anniversaries for Louis and Fumi (the other was their Japanese marriage of October 12). A traditional *sukiyaki* meal was prepared on a Japanese-style table in front of guests at the home. Louis had constructed the table using a four by eight foot sheet of plywood with short, screw-on legs, which made it convenient to store until the next celebration. Guests would sit Japanese style on cushions around the table while

Fumi prepared the ingredients in an electric skillet on the table. Friends and neighbors would stop by to eat before going out to celebrate the coming of the new year and would often return afterward as the house was open all night. Some neighbors lingered after supper to help count down the time until New Year's. Music filled the house while Louis played an electric guitar and neighbors sang. The music varied from songs from the fifties to current country and western, and occasionally Fumi would sing a Japanese song as Louis accompanied her on guitar.

Louis took pride in being the family's sole provider, as driving a car and working outside the home were two things that he did not want his wife to do. Fumi did have a driving permit at one time, but that experience was enough to scare Louis from helping her acquire her driver's license. Fumi has limited vision in one eye, which could have created difficulty with depth perception and may have affected her driving skills. Besides, Louis thought that she had enough to do at home with two children and a husband. She did her housework during the day and in the late afternoon would put on fresh makeup, redo her hair, and fix dinner for his arrival home from work. He appreciated his wife's efforts.

Fumi and Eddie were in the United States on permanent visas. Fumi became a citizen during the bicentennial year, in July 1976, at an official ceremony that was held in Cincinnati. When Eddie was about to be drafted into the service during the Vietnam conflict, he enlisted for two years in the Army in 1970 to improve his options. He received orders for Vietnam. Because of his noncitizen status, he wanted to become a citizen before being deployed there. Many of his comrades were sent to Vietnam, but his orders were changed, most likely because of his noncitizen status. Three times while stationed at different locations, he requested help in obtaining his citizenship. In Germany, his company commander told him that he could wait until his rest and relaxation (R&R), buy a ticket to the United States, and apply there. He believed that the Army was not supportive in this effort and did not obtain his citizenship until much later—1990.

Louis Ward passed away in September 1995. It was his desire to be cremated, as this is the Japanese tradition and he knew this would be his wife's chosen course of action. When Fumi was asked if she would marry a serviceman and come to the United States once again, her reply was, "I love my husband, so I have to do over again I come to United States with him. So many nice things I have like children and friends. My life is most happiest time. A lot of things trouble, usually

forget them." Though Fumi believes that her children have been her greatest contribution to society, there is much more to consider. Fumi, and many women like her, have been able to bring two cultures together when the odds were heavily stacked against them. Unknowingly, they became ambassadors for Japan through their patience, kindness, and hard work as wives, homemakers, and citizens. The intermingling of their culture has affected the lives of the many Amerasian children and grandchildren.

Interviewer's Notes: I always knew that my parents had an unusual courtship and marriage, but did not understand this until later in my adult life. There was much that was not discussed during our childhood years, and I attribute this to my parents' desire for their children to assimilate into the American culture and to have positive attitudes. It is interesting to note that this interview focused more on the early years as this was what was foremost on my mother's mind. Perhaps it is because I lived a good portion of her life's story.

NOTE

1. For the year 1950, in which the bill allowing Fumi and Erio to immigrate was passed, the *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics (1947–1965)* lists only nine immigrants as Japanese nationals classified as "Wives of Citizens." Since Fumi's and Louis's marriage was not recognized, it is unlikely that Fumi is included in the number. This information was obtained through the Office of Immigration Statistics.

Yearbook of Immigration Statistics (1947–1965): Japanese Nationals Classified as "Wives of Citizens" Who Immigrated to the United States

1947: 19	1952: 4220	1957: 5003	1962: 2749
1948: 298	1953: 2042	1958: 5027	1963: 2771
1949: 463	1954: 2802	1959: 4568	1964: 2665
1950: 9	1955: 2843	1960: 3990	1965: 2372
1951: 125	1956: 3661	1961: 3285	

Total number of Japanese wives of citizens for 1947–1965: 48,912

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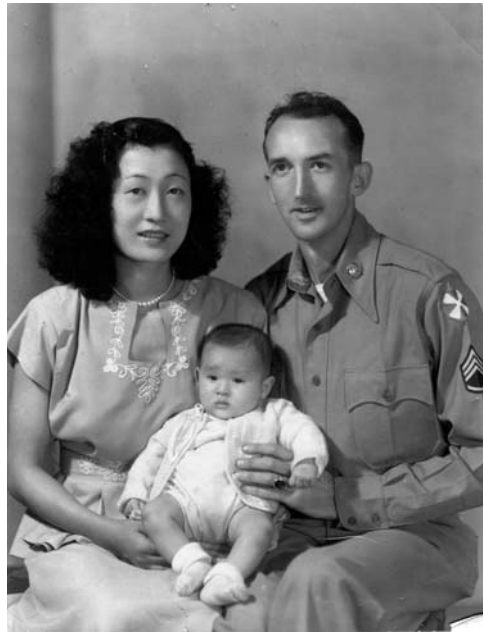
CHAPTER 2

Doris the Volunteer

Hisa Feragen

During our visit to Seattle in 2005, we were referred to Hisa as a potential interviewee. Mother and I made the trip for this visit without any idea who she was or how we would be received. Since we were unfamiliar with the area, we did not know how long it would take to find our way, thus Hisa only knew that we would be arriving sometime in the afternoon. Little did we know that this would begin a continuing friendship for my mother and Hisa.



Hisa, Bob, and baby June Feragen (1950). Courtesy of Hisa Feragen.

MEETING HISA FERAGEN

Hisa Tanaka was born in Furubira, Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan, and grew up in Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido prefecture. Her residence at the time of this interview was at a living care facility in Seattle where her room displayed a blend of two cultures—American furniture with touches of Japanese artwork and items in various places. Among those Japanese items were some rice bags, similar to beanbags, on Hisa's table. "I'm going to show you. When we were

little we did not spend money. We made ourselves," says Hisa, as she juggles the rice bags while singing in Japanese. Hisa exhibits excellent juggling skills and even walks while juggling like she did when she was a child. She says that many Japanese children were able to run while juggling as many as five rice bags. It is amazing to see the skills that Hisa still possesses.

Pointing to the table, Hisa says, "See the bamboo sticks there, may I have? In olden day we go in March. We go cut bamboo tree and make this." There are five or six quarter-inch wide bamboo sticks about seven or eight inches long. She manipulates the bamboo sticks over one hand, keeping rhythm by tapping them on the table. The object is to keep the numerous sticks together as these can easily slide apart in a novice's hand. Again, she sings a Japanese children's song, keeping her movements in rhythm, punctuating it by tapping the sticks on the table.

"So we never spend money to buy toys," explains Hisa. Fumi Ward, my mother, who has accompanied me to this interview, feels drawn to these childhood toys. She moves them with some awkwardness since she had not played with these for many years. The conversation switches back and forth between English and Japanese with much laughter as they play. It takes them back many decades. Hisa adds short tosses of the sticks while keeping the rhythm and the sticks together. Their talk reverts to times past and turns to what culture is available to them now—*bon odori*. This is a memorial celebration for Buddhists—a festival of respect and homage that takes place some time between July and August. It is a time when ancestors are welcomed back; a jubilant time of remembrance with music and outdoor dancing in colorful, traditional clothing. At the end of the celebration the ancestors are bid farewell until next year.[1] Hisa and Fumi speak other words that sound familiar to me such as *taiko* (Japanese drums) and *matsuri* (festival).

Suddenly Hisa changes to English, "I think that she is going to be alright, because for me, it took six months," she says, referring to the president of the Nikkei International Marriage Society, Kazuko Umezu Stout, who recently suffered a stroke. The Nikkei International Marriage Society is an organization for Japanese women who married military men during the occupation of Japan and afterward. Mrs. Umezu Stout has done much to bring these Japanese women together in a positive light. In 2004, Empress Michiko of Japan thanked Mrs. Stout for her leadership in this organization and stated that these Japanese women had become ambassadors in the United States.

Hisa continues, referring to her own experience, "I couldn't drive. I was in a wheelchair. I could not talk clearly. Now look here, one and a half years. Sometime I cannot say what I want, but almost 80% normal

now. I was really lucky. You know, I been thinking because God didn't take me, 'Doris, you have a lot of things to do in this world, you better go back to help people.' That's what I think." Hisa was eighty-five years old at the time of the interview.

MEETING AND MARRIAGE TO HER HUSBAND—ROBERT FERAGEN

Robert Feragen was a first sergeant in the Army. Hisa worked in a bank where American soldiers exchanged money for the Japanese yen. She says that he played the saxophone and clarinet in a band. One day when he came to exchange money, he invited her to bring a friend to a dance party where he would be playing—that's how they first met. After working at the bank for about five years, she quit to work at the PX[2] in Makomanai because the pay was much better. Robert stopped by the PX every day to shop and to see Hisa. This evolved into Robert visiting her home and having supper with her family in the evenings. There were four girls and three brothers, plus her mother and father at a big supper table. Hisa says that he enjoyed watching her family because he had lost his mother when he was ten years old. Although his father married right away, he did not have a happy family life, Hisa explains, and thus enjoyed being with her family. He would ride a truck from his base camp in Makomanai to her home in Sapporo. Robert would bring candy and a little food to give to the neighbors, especially the children. "Hi, Bob-san, Bob-san," the children would call out to him. Hisa claims that everybody in her neighborhood knew "Bob-san." Hisa describes him as a "real gentleman" with nice manners and says that her family loved him.

Although he spoke very little Japanese and she knew very little English, Hisa says, "When you love someone, you don't have to speak perfect language. Somehow you can go through." She reminisces about how they spent time together going dancing and taking trips to Nakajima Park, which is in Sapporo and was a popular place where couples often went for rowboat rides. They also enjoyed time at Zenibako, a beach in a nearby town.

Hisa's nickname, Doris, was given to her while she worked at the PX. The captain over the PX decided that it was too difficult to remember all the Japanese women's names, so they were given American names. This PX was a commissary for a camp at Makomanai, which was larger than the one at Sapporo. Officers were able to bring their families to Makomanai because there were living quarters, a school, and a chapel.

Hisa believes that having an American name made it easier for the officers' wives to address the employees at the PX. She comments that she met many nice American wives. After the war, many of the young Japanese women were eager to adopt some elements of the Western culture such as clothing, music, and dancing. So having an American name was not offensive to the many who worked for the American government.

When Robert received a telephone call from his father informing him that his favorite grandmother was dying, he told Hisa that he would be back in a couple of months and asked her to wait for him. Although Hisa agreed, neither she nor her family believed that he would return. "Once American soldiers go, they never come back to Japanese women," affirms Hisa. She decided to visit a friend in Iwamizawa, which was about a two-hour train ride away. One can only imagine how devastating Robert's departure was for her. Fortunately, she soon received a telegram from her mother declaring "Bob came back to Japan. Come home as soon as possible." Even though they had been a couple for approximately four years, she could not believe that he had returned to Japan and to her. They were married in 1950 in Kobe, Japan, at the Japanese Consul Office. The simple ceremony was in English, and with a Cheshire cat's smile, Hisa admits that she understood only part of it.

TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES

When they married, Bob was a base clerk at a large hospital in Japan. The Army provided a beautiful house with furnishings and even a housekeeper, whom Hisa says took care of everything, including caring for their infant daughter, June. When the Korean War began, Bob was ordered back to the United States. Hisa's passport was not ready, so she took June to her parents' home in Sapporo while they waited for their time to travel to the United States. June had her second birthday at her grandmother's house. Hisa recalls with a smile that her mother would often put June on her back to go see the "choo-choo train."

Travel to the United States in May 1952 was by ship and involved a two-week voyage. The ship left Yokohama, Japan, with Seattle, Washington, as the destination port. Several times Hisa reveals that she was scared. Not only was she scared, but she was also seasick. The ship was filled with brides, soldiers, and children. Most of these passengers were families and were able to stay together, while women with children, like Hisa, had living arrangements in a separate part of the ship.

In the evening, it was customary to dress for dinner and afterward there was dancing. Since Hisa's husband did not accompany her on the ship, she says that she mostly watched people dance, and she describes the evening as "lovely," even though she was seasick most of the time.

After arriving in Seattle, they rented a house for the first six months and then purchased the home, which is her residence today. Her husband was gone most of the time. He served eighteen months in Korea, sixteen months in Vietnam, and a total of twenty-five years in the military. His base was Ft. Lewis, Washington. During this time, there was no freeway so he would drive home for the weekends and remain on the base during the week. Hisa says it was a particularly difficult time without him. Bob had received orders for the Korean War. June was in the hospital with appendicitis, and when Jimmy was born it looked as if he had polio; his hands and neck were affected. Hisa was frightened and claims that she lost her mind during this time. While she was pregnant with Jimmy, a doctor had given her medicine to calm her, and she believes that this was the cause for Jimmy's condition. However, it was thought that perhaps she brought some disease from Japan, so they checked her thoroughly, but could find no evidence to support this. Since Bob was in Korea and Hisa could not drive, he left a green Chevrolet for the neighbors to use to take Hisa to the hospital and to go shopping. It took a year of treatment with a two- to three-month stay in the hospital for Jimmy to improve. When Hisa brought Jimmy home, she says that she exercised him and placed him in sunlight in an effort to help him heal.

EXPERIENCES WITH FAMILY AND LIFE IN THE STATES

When Hisa traveled to the United States, she feared how Bob's family would receive her.

"Oh it was wonderful," she says about their first meeting. On this trip, Jimmy was three years old and June was seven. Bob's father was the mayor of a town in Wisconsin and they owned a grocery store and a bakery. Hisa states, "He hugged me and kissed me and said I have a new daughter. He took me to bank, all his friends in town, he introduced me. I was so happy. But step-mother acting kind of funny. . . . Bob's two sisters, especially the older sister, they so good to me." Bob's older sister and her family came to visit each year and stayed with Hisa's family in Seattle. When asked about friends, Hisa explains the situation as it was then:

> Seattle have Japanese town, all Japanese together, right? Japanese they don't associate much with Americans. Also they hate the war bride when we came here, because when war start all people went to camp. Why Japanese girl married to the enemy? They not feel good that we married to enemy. Few years we had a tough time as war brides in Seattle with all *Issei* and *Nisei*[3] [first- and second-generation Japanese Americans]. But all war brides tried to help American people. Especially Kikkoman soy sauce, he really appreciate war brides because we invite American people, teach all family, husbands' family, show *sukiyaki*, *tempura*—how to make Japanese food, all neighbors. So they have sudden need, all business start growing because of Japanese war brides. . . . All Issei/Nisei nice. OK, hate at first, but it wasn't like that—Japanese people are Japanese people and we suppose to help each other. So we get along very good now, all Seattle people.

Hisa admits that she was scared at first about going out in public. The house that they bought was across the street from an acquaintance, who is still her friend. This woman had children the same age as Hisa's, so she invited June and Jimmy to a birthday party. Hisa says she thought that the woman checked on Hisa's housekeeping while delivering the party invitation. Hisa tried to keep everything on the outside and inside clean and neat and believes that this was beneficial to her acceptance in the neighborhood. "Then I start to say 'hi' and take a present or something I make. I take there and everybody start to be nice to me and I make friends. So fifty-five years we lived together, we still have house, all neighbor—our children, their children still good friends," explains Hisa.

FIRST RETURN TO JAPAN

It wasn't until sixteen years later that Hisa was able to visit Japan. It was difficult to save money on a sergeant's salary, but she did what she could, even commenting about the value of saving a dime. When Bob was sent to Vietnam, June, who was sixteen at that time, learned that he received extra pay. Hisa recalls these events:

> June said, "Mother, now you have money, let's go to Japan. You wait sixteen years. Before grandmother and grandfather die you have to go see your family." I said, "June, this is Daddy's money. I cannot touch." June insisted and I still can't say yes. So I telephoned Bob's

> father in Wisconsin and he said "Doris, you waited sixteen long years, go, go. If Bob is mad at you I will give you money and pay Bob back. Go, please go, you got to go." So I made up my mind. I took two kids and went back. Jimmy was eleven and June was sixteen. So I went to Japan. You know, I was so happy when I arrived at Tokyo airport. I kissed the ground. I was so happy I cried. Then I had to change airplane, then Sapporo's Chitose Airport. My family charter bus. Whole family and neighbors came to welcome. Airport people didn't even check my passport or nothing. They said "Go ahead and go." After sixteen years we nothing but cry, cry, cry. I was so happy. . . . We have huge, huge welcome party. I have the big album. I don't know how many hundred people showed up. My old bank friends, my neighbors, my family—everybody come. I so happy.

Hisa reminisces about seeing her sister after so many years and commented on how her face had changed. At this point Fumi says something in Japanese to Hisa referring to *Urashima Taro,* a children's story that is similar to a fairy tale.[4] Hisa begins telling this story about Urashima Taro, a fisherman, who saw some children tormenting a turtle with a stick. The fisherman tells the children not to be mean, saying that the turtle has a life and they should let him go. So the boys listen and let him go. The next day Urashima is fishing again and he hears a voice calling "Urashima-san, Urashima-san." He asks who is calling his name, and the turtle replies that yesterday Urashima saved his life. The turtle wants to take Urashima down into the ocean to a place called *Ryugu-jo,* where there is a beautiful castle. He tells Urashima that he can ride on his back. So they go down into the ocean to *Ryugu-jo* and to the magnificent castle where Otohime-san, an exquisite queen, resides. There are many beautiful fish, and all different kinds of fish. At this point in the story, Hisa begins singing a song to remember the details. As she sings in Japanese, she explains the different types of fish—*Tai* is red snapper, *Fugu* is blow fish, and *Tako* is octopus. Everybody welcomes Urashima and he has a wonderful time with all the fish and the beautiful queen. He enjoys drinking *sake* and spending time at *Ryugu-jo.* Then one day he becomes homesick and tells Otohime that he has had a wonderful time and thanks her, and says that it is time to go back to his family. Otohime gives Urashima a beautiful box to take back with him. He is anxious to open this beautiful box and does so immediately upon his return home. White smoke comes out of the box, turning his hair white—he is an old man. He did not realize how many years he had been down in the ocean.

(This story held memories for Hisa, as she had played the part of Urashima Taro at her school play. I was amazed to view the old sepia photo of the children in their costumes.)

"So, same thing—we stay so many years that we did not realize how many years. So much change, everybody get old just like Urashima. We didn't realize how old we get. That's why she says that we are Urashima Taro—everything different." Hisa begins singing the song again. Then she relates an incident that happened to her during her visit in Japan. A taxi driver did not understand where she wanted to go and asked where she was from. The direction that she had given him was *taeshaba,* a word no longer recognized in Japan. It had been replaced by the English word "station." The taxi driver asked her how many years she had been gone from Japan. Hisa reveals that this encounter was most embarrassing.

The use of the word "station" illustrates how the occupation has affected Japan. Hisa begins to talk about how the Japanese use English words in naming companies, on television, and in the newspapers. She once wrote to a Sapporo newspaper because she was saddened to see how much English was used in this newspaper. "We have Japanese beautiful language. . . . All my family, how they understand what this means? I said please go back to own language, Japanese language. . . . It's sad, we have beautiful customs, beautiful language, why try to make it disappear?" Hisa begins speaking to Fumi in Japanese; it was obvious that this truly concerned her. The Japanese word *nai* was spoken, revealing that she was seeking affirmation, a common practice among Japanese women. This exchange provided some insights to communication and aging—times change, words change, people change, and thus cultures change.

CURRENT EXPERIENCES AND LIFE

"When younger, I really loved this country because I have good friend, good neighbor, nice life with two wonderful kids. But now when children have own life and own family, my husband gone, so lonesome. Now I wish I didn't come to the United States sometime." When I inquire whether she misses the Japanese culture, Hisa replies, "No, because now I am an American citizen. Then I want to give back to this country, because when I come to the United States all neighbors, husband's friends and family so good to me. Nobody mean to me, so I am so appreciate this country—people. American people open house, so easy to make friends."

Hisa and Fumi converse in Japanese. Hisa says that her son-in-law had asked her to move into his home because everybody is happy when she is there. However, Hisa felt that she should not move in because when the family travels, which they often do, they would be more aware of leaving her behind and would worry about her. She thought that she should not interfere in their lives. "Besides," she explains, "between daughter and mother, they may once in a while fight, then feel so guilty. I can't do that."

I then ask Hisa if she had the chance to go back in time, would she still marry an American soldier. She reveals, "No. No, I stay in Japan. When the Army orders [came] 'You marry an American soldier, you got to go back to your husband.' [She is quoting an immigration officer] I said, 'No I don't want to go. I scared to go. Can I stay here with my daughter?' 'No way you can do that [officer].' So I have to come."

Hisa describes the time when she was younger as a happy time, but now that her children are gone, she feels old and alone. "Especially I have stroke. Scary—scared. If my husband even here and have cancer, he in the bed, someone to talk when have problem. Somebody to ask how to do this. Nobody to talk. If I have another stroke, what am I going to do? Especially night time, so scared." Hisa misses her husband, Robert Feragen, who peacefully passed away at Mount St. Vincent on September 29, 2001, at the age of eighty-five.

Hisa shares her thoughts:

> I married my husband, Bob Feragen, that's why I think I have two wonderful kids. You know another thing—I am so lucky God made my life come back. I think God tried to tell me something. "Doris, you did nice things so far, but you need to do more to give back to this America." Every little thing, something to this community. That's why I try to do best little things. So far I did almost twenty-nine years.

Hisa reveals that her mother lived an active life up to the age of 105, and she wants to follow in her footsteps.

She has been able to do this at Mount St. Vincent, a living care center, where she spends a lot of time in the sewing room. Hisa's neighbor brought her here years ago to volunteer at the center. There was a sewing machine that was 100 years old, which no one was using, sitting in the huge room. Hisa thought that she could use her sewing skills, which she learned in Japan, to help others. There were no needles, thread, or materials, so she had to get it all to start sewing. She began

working three days a week at the facility and continued sewing at home while Bob was at work. Then she asked if she could make and sell items to apartment residents and employees. Others began to volunteer, as well, with sewing and knitting, and at one time she reports that there were five helpers. Every year the facility had a Christmas bazaar and a spring bazaar, earning as much as $6,000 for Mount St. Vincent. She says that the volunteers gained many donations and they raised a significant amount of money with this sewing room. There are articles and pictures in several of the Mount St. Vincent newsletters featuring Doris and the fashion shows with acknowledgement of her volunteer work. A news article from the *West Seattle Herald* featured Doris as "Volunteer of the Month," referring to the nearly 1,000 hours that she provided each year at the living care center.[5]

As time passed, many of her helpers aged or passed on and Hisa has continued volunteering alone. She wants to keep busy and to help others like her friend, Uri, who is paralyzed on one side. Hisa created a soft cotton holder for Uri's arm and a special mitten to keep her hand warm. Hisa designed other comfortable items to help the aging residents with their ailments. She claims that she has learned much from the residents and from her own stroke. She learned that a daily activity such as washing is easier using baby wash cloths, so she purchased these for the residents when she returned to her volunteer work after her stroke. For hand exercising, she makes *azuki* rice bags in various sizes to fit patients' hands. Since aging skin can get easily irritated, she often uses soft cotton in her sewing to make the residents more comfortable. Her advice to others is, "Don't give up—try best as you can. God will help you."

Interviewer's note: At the end of our visit, Hisa walked with us to the car. We admired the magnificent evening view of the Seattle area from Mount St. Vincent's hillside. Hisa and Mother hugged, lingering to express their appreciation of meeting each other. It was difficult to leave after finding someone as open, giving, and caring, especially with the thought that this may be the last time we would see Hisa. As we drove slowly down the driveway, Hisa ran along the sidewalk keeping up with the car and smiling at us—a wonderful lasting impression!

Additional note: We had the fortune to visit Hisa in May 2008—she had moved back into her house. The two years between visits melted as soon as we saw her. She continues her volunteer work from her home, still sewing items for Mount St. Vincent. Hisa and Mother remain in contact through telephone calls and letters.

NOTES

1. *Eye Witness Travel Guides: Japan.* (New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2003), 39.
2. PX stands for post exchange and is a shopping place for military members and their families. The PX stocks food, cigarettes, clothing, and various other items for American needs.
3. Issei and Nisei are the first- and second-generation Japanese who live in the United States. During the war, they were taken to internment camps because they were Japanese. They lost their homes, land, possessions, and freedom during that time. Some even lost their sons, as many of them served in the United States military during World War II. When the Nisei resettlement program failed after the war, the frustrations of the Japanese Americans increased; such frustrations were foreshadowed by Japanese war brides who became more acceptable to society because of their military husbands. (Simpson, Caroline Chung)
4. Versions of this story can be found online by using *Urashima Taro* as keywords.
5. "VOLUNTEERS: Local services exist through work of community steward." *West Seattle Herald/White Center News.* April 24, 2004, 2.

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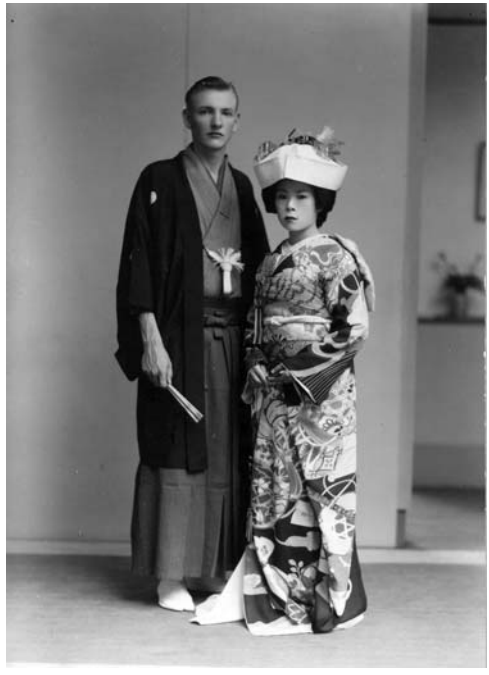
CHAPTER 3

How Lucky We Are

Miwako Cleve

I received an email from Miwako on March 2, 2006, stating that she had read about my research in the Nikkei International Marriage Society newsletter. She was interested in telling her story because many Japanese writers have emphasized the unsuccessful marriages of the Japanese war brides. Miwako and Robert Cleve have been happily married for fifty years. I met the Cleves at their home for this interview on June 8, 2006, and remain in awe of this story today.



Robert and Miwako Cleve in traditional Japanese wedding attire (1955). Courtesy of Miwako and Robert Cleve.

MEETING THE CLEVES

This interview took place at the Cleves' residence in North Hills, California, in a room at the back of the house, which was enclosed by glass. In their home, I noticed that Robert Cleve's paintings adorn the living room walls in bold brush strokes that have an Asian appeal to them. The backyard is landscaped in Japanese fashion with plants, rocks, a waterfall,

and pond containing colorful koi. This is a joint creation; the design was conceived by Miwako and the construction was completed by Robert. She has a vegetable garden at the side of the house, where they harvest tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and squash. They are a modest couple both from humble backgrounds—"a poor country girl" from Yamanashi-Ken, Japan, and a "country boy" from Greensboro, North Carolina—who have become a successful Olga fashion designer and a lecturing professor at California State University, Northridge (CSUN).

CHILDHOOD IN JAPAN

She says her name is Yasaki Miwako, which is typical for a Japanese person to provide the last name first. Miwako's hometown is in the Yamanashi Prefecture on the island of Honshu. She was born in 1931 and was the eldest daughter with two younger brothers.

Mount Fuji is close to Miwako's hometown, where the U.S. military was stationed during the occupation. She tells of a time when Japanese children stood along a fence clinching the wire and waiting for a GI to come along with a basket full of chewing gum, popcorn, and/or candy. Parents often sent children to collect candy. Everyone was hungry at that time, especially the children. She laughingly recalls that they ate the chewing gum because the concept of just chewing something was not familiar to them.

As with many young Japanese girls, an arranged marriage had been planned for Miwako when she reached the age of eighteen. She learned about this quite by accident during an argument with her brother. The children slept upstairs in the farmhouse and her brother let the information slip that this room would be all his the next year. He revealed that he had heard that she would be married in the following year. Miwako comments about her intended, "I went same town school, throw rocks, he pulled my hair, all kind of mean things. How could I marry him?" Her brother wanted her to leave home and offered help with suggestions on how this should be done. He even opened the bamboo bank that their father had made for the children to collect money for the New Year.[1] With her brother's help, Miwako left in the middle of the night with plans to go to an uncle's house in Tokyo. She was frightened and uncertain what train to take and selected the train to Nagoya instead of the train to Tokyo. When this train stopped, it was still nighttime; this was in 1948 when there were many homeless people because of the war. She had a small bundle of belongings and a policeman easily identified her as a runaway. Miwako showed the policeman her

address and begged him not to send her home. She told him that she had been trained as a police telephone operator in her hometown. Though this training was something that her mother had approved, her father thought that girls did not need to work nor did they need an education. Miwako's brother, however, had been promised an education and a trip to Paris.

The policeman was a middle-aged man with two daughters and offered to take her home where she could stay with his family. She considers herself very lucky as his family was nice to her and she roomed with his daughters. The policeman helped her get a position with the Japanese police force as a telephone operator. This job was in a large building where the 5th Air Force headquarters was located. Miwako gave all her earnings to the policeman's wife, who gave Miwako spending money and treated her like a daughter.

MEETING ROBERT CLEVE

During the Korean War, the hospital was located upstairs in the building where Miwako worked. It housed from 200 to 300 sick and wounded GIs. Her Japanese friend, a nurse, was extremely busy one day and asked Miwako to help. Miwako was uncertain, but when she learned that the help involved placing carnations at the soldiers' bedside, she agreed since this was something that she could easily do. This is how she met Robert Cleve in 1952. He was an electronics/communication technician in the U.S. Air Force, had come to Japan for rest and relaxation (R&R), and was hospitalized for a couple of days with a case of the flu. Bob said that seeing Miwako was love at first sight for him—he still remembers the first time that he saw her. Miwako didn't give it a second thought as she knew that he was on leave for R&R, and would depart soon. Little did she know that he would extend his service and take an assignment in Japan.

Another of Miwako's friends, a Japanese man who worked at the hospital and spoke English, became the translator for Miwako and Bob. This friend provided a drawing of a map for directions to Kyoto—their first get-together, since the term "date" was unknown at that time. Bob refers to their meetings as "hanging around together." Bob spoke little Japanese, so they often resorted to signing and making motions to communicate. With time, Bob learned the language so they could communicate better. Outings included going to movies, visiting the zoo in Nagoya, sightseeing at the Nagoya Castle, and just being together.

Japan was an exotic place for Bob, something totally different to a young man from Greensboro. He felt that there were many opposites in Japan, such as the way a book is opened from left to right. Reading was vertical instead of horizontal. With a wood saw, Americans cut on the push and Japanese cut on the pull. He was fascinated by this and other cultural differences; it was truly an adventure for this young man from North Carolina.

Miwako decided to join Bob in Tsuiki, where he was first stationed in Japan. Her male friend accompanied her during the trip. A few months later the base in Tsuiki was closed as the peace treaty was signed and many of the U.S. bases were either closed or turned over to the Japanese Self Defense Force. Bob was transferred to the unit's headquarters at Nagoya's Komaki Air Force Base and then to a small radar site near Nagoya. Miwako and Bob lived in a small apartment near the base. Bob explains that this was a common arrangement, perhaps a "trial marriage." Miwako confesses, "I don't know, maybe I hung up on him. I'm just a scared country girl. I trust him, for some reason I trust him." She traveled by train to Nagoya to be with Bob.

They wanted to marry in 1953, so Bob began the application for permission to marry. It was expected that they live together for a year. There was a long process of forms that had to be completed and it was clear that the intention was to discourage these interracial couples from getting married. They had the paperwork for the marriage ready in 1954. The first application forms that were submitted were simply filed in a cabinet without any action taken. These remained there for a year. Luckily, a new adjutant, who was the executive assistant to the commander, was assigned to Bob's unit and he decided to take some action on the applications, forwarding the paperwork to higher headquarters. This paperwork was over an inch thick with some Japanese documents that had been translated, including Miwako's family tree. To accomplish this, they had to find a translator at their own expense. Police went to Miwako's small hometown, which had around 500 residents, for a family background investigation that included checking for communism, tuberculosis, syphilis, and anything incriminating about her or her family. Miwako had to return to her hometown to obtain her birth record, or *kosekishouhon*,[2] and says that she will never forget how she was treated. Her first cousin threw rocks and yelled at her, "You not Yasaki (her family name). We're going to take it off birth certificate." She explains, "Family tree, take it off, very important family tree, you know. I'll never forget my first cousin said, 'Don't you ever come back!'" Miwako's father felt the same way, though her mother could

only cry over this situation. People in her hometown believed that Japanese girls who married Americans were either *panpan* girls or destined to be such.[3] *Panpan* was the term for prostitutes. Miwako says that her brother's response was, "You can do whatever you want to. Go ahead, but *never* come back to front door!"

The process for marriage did not go smoothly. Miwako confesses that it was insulting; she felt that she was being treated like a criminal. Bob tells the story about seeing the chaplain for a required signature, another step in obtaining permission to marry. "We were sitting in front of his desk and the guy leaned over, she was right there (referring to Miwako), and he says to me, 'Are you sure this is the kind of girl that you want to marry?' We were so insulted. We just took the form and said that I would have to get someone else to sign it and we walked out."

Finally, after many months, the approval for marriage came back. Only those who remained steadfast on their desire to marry, overcoming barriers and time, were able to accomplish their aspiration. Robert states that the military policy was the cause for many of the fatherless children left in Japan. He does not believe that it was willful abandonment by the men, but "the callous policy of both the Japanese and U.S. governments."

Their marriage had to be legalized by Japanese and U.S. law. Bob and Miwako acquired a Japanese marriage license and had a short civil ceremony in Nagoya. While obtaining the required stamp at the Japanese municipal office for the marriage license, Miwako recalls the Japanese man's remarks, "Ah, you marrying a Yankee, huh? Well, we don't need you—go." They also had to go to the U.S. Consulate in Nagoya for the U.S. civil ceremony. Afterward the consulate personnel helped them apply for Miwako's immigration visa. Bob thought that they received a lot of help from many people and a lot of resistance from many others. There was animosity from both Americans and Japanese. He recalls:

> A few days later, one of Miwako's friends, an American sergeant's wife who lived across the street from us suggested that we have a Japanese ceremony. So we went to a Shinto shrine and rented the costumes and were married a third time in a Japanese religious ceremony. The only people in the audience were the sergeant and his wife, but we did the whole thing; the sacrifice to the gods, drinking of the sake, the chant of the priest informing the gods of our union, etc. So, after being married no less than three times I guess it took, because we are still together after fifty-two years.

Bob would have continued his military service in Japan, but he says that there were limits to the amount of time one could be stationed in Japan. He was reluctant to return to the States as he enjoyed Japan. The monetary exchange was 360 yen to the dollar, which gave the GIs much spending power. Bob reflects that a movie ticket was about 50 yen and that one could buy just about anything with 100 yen. Also, he was concerned about the responsibility for Miwako in a different culture.

The U.S. Air Force extended Bob's assignment in Japan for the few months that it took to acquire Miwako's passport and visa. It was amazing that once they were married, they had full support of the Air Force. Bob claims that he never encountered any discrimination during the twenty years of his service and that Miwako was treated the same as any airman's wife.

IN THE STATES

In 1956, Miwako and Bob traveled by plane to Travis Air Force Base in California. It was a thirty-six-hour flight with a stop for refueling at Midway, a three-day stay in Hawaii, and then on to the States. Lincoln, Nebraska, was Bob's next assignment. Miwako met Bob's parents when he obtained his thirty-day leave, which was customary for a change of station. They traveled by plane and then bus to his hometown in Greensboro, North Carolina. Bob's mother and aunt met them at the bus station and Miwako describes this experience as welcoming—they were really nice. Since Bob and Miwako were staying for two weeks, the couple was given a wedding shower by Bob's mother. This was a new experience for Miwako, and seeing a Japanese woman was a new experience for the town's residents, as well. Bob's mother had placed their wedding announcement in the local newspaper before they were married in Japan, so many of the townspeople were curious. Soon the two-bedroom house was overflowing with people, a bed was covered with wedding presents, and Miwako was nervous in this unfamiliar situation. She couldn't read the names on the cards and didn't know the people; however, her mother-in-law and aunt took charge of the affair.

In the States the couple didn't have any "real problems" with discrimination; at least they did not let it affect them. But there was the problem with Miwako adjusting to American culture. Bob comments that it was as different for her as going to Japan was for him, although the support each had was very different. In occupied Japan, the military provided some of its own culture: food, clothing, language, and

customs. However, as immigrants, these Japanese women often lacked a support system and had to rely on husbands and, if they were lucky, the husband's family. American food, language, and culture were not things to which they were accustomed. Being solely dependent on a person of the opposite sex (husband) could make assimilation into a culture much more difficult.

Miwako encountered the "whites only" and "colored" water fountains while shopping downtown. She also saw the "white" lunch counters in the drug stores, which had soda fountains, a common practice in those days. The term "colored" was confusing—were "Orientals," whose race was often referred to as yellow, included in "colored"? Miwako relays another situation on the bus: "They lined up and the bus driver when black person come on [she gestures with her thumb pointing backward, meaning go to the back of the bus] I saw it. So when my time coming, I said I'm not black, I'm not white either. What you going to do? He'd look at me, and look at me, and he told me to sit right here next to him." Not only were some Japanese women confused about the racism in the southern states, but also many whites were as well.

It should be noted that their marriage at the American embassy was legal except for in states that had miscegenation laws. At that time, North Carolina was one of those states in which the Cleves' marriage was not legal. Though these laws date back in the United States to 1661, it was not until 1967 that the Supreme Court ruled Virginia's miscegenation laws unconstitutional; it was the last of the states with the miscegenation law. To remain lawful and protect military families, the military had a policy not to station those with interracial marriages in the South.

The decision for Bob to remain in the military was primarily because of its support with their interracial marriage. "Contrary to what most people think, the military is actually a pretty good place to have a family, to raise a family because of its support system." Bob served twenty years before he retired from the Air Force.

In 1957, Bob was sent to French Morocco and Miwako could not accompany him there because she did not have her citizenship. It was decided that Miwako had to go back to Greensboro to stay with her in-laws until she could join Bob. She says that Bob's mother and stepfather were extremely kind to her.

Viewing pictures of her at that time, one would think that she was a mere child, so slight was her frame. This was a problem that Miwako faced in the States—she was often mistaken for a child. Miwako says that there were times when she would cry because people did not treat

her as an adult. A door-to-door salesman asked to speak to her mother; while buying tickets for a movie she was thought to be a child instead of an adult; and in general, she was mistaken to be much younger than she actually was.

Bob and Miwako became parents in 1957 to their daughter, Candida. Miwako explains how cultural differences affected her recovery from childbirth. Her mother had told her that a woman should not sit in a bath for a month after childbirth, as this was the old Japanese custom. Miwako's doctor had prescribed that she soak in a warm bath every night, so Miwako put only her feet into the warm bath. A couple of weeks later she had difficulty walking. Bob spoke with her doctor and then encouraged her to sit in the bathtub. Miwako argued that her mother said not to get inside the bathtub. They are able to laugh about this cultural difference now.

They did not give their daughter a Japanese name, nor did they teach her to speak Japanese at home. Her parents believed that since she was born in the United States, she should be raised as an American. While Candida is proud of her Japanese heritage, she has no identity problems as she considers herself an American. Candida did take a year of Japanese language in college and has learned much about the Japanese history and culture.

OVERSEAS

In 1957, Miwako had to travel with her infant daughter to Casablanca by ship. It took nine days and she explains that she took a train from North Carolina to Brooklyn, New York, and then a ship to Casablanca. She didn't speak English well and was scared. The captain of the ship invited her to sit at his table. Miwako dined on a white tablecloth eating roast beef while other passengers ate hot dogs. She wasn't certain why the captain chose to look after her, but she was grateful. "He come and knock on the door. He probably lonesome. He a middle-aged guy. He picked up my daughter and carried her and go downstairs to mess hall. He did it for nine days for me. Bob waiting at Casablanca at that time and he brought my daughter, my baby and give to him. I can't even introduce." Miwako recalls as she laughed at her plight. Perhaps the captain was merely lonely and missed his own family. Whatever the reason, the Cleves were thankful for his kindness.

Miwako kept in touch with her mother by telephone once a week; however, her father still did not speak to her. The Cleves did return to Japan in 1960 when Bob was stationed in Misawa Air Force Base. By

that time, Candida was four years old. Miwako's mother and sister-in-law came to visit the *ichiban* (number one) granddaughter at Misawa. Candida only spoke English and was inquiring about things as they walked along the streets in Misawa. Miwako thought that the Japanese people looked down on her and her daughter because Candida spoke English. Miwako did not like living in that fishing town and thought that people were backward and biased. So Bob requested a transfer and was then ordered to go to Guam.

The Cleves visited Japan on R&R in 1967. During this time Miwako saw her father for the first time since her marriage and they reconciled the past differences. Her father and brother took Bob out for a drink as a welcoming gesture into the family. They did not speak English and he had forgotten most of his Japanese, so they sat quietly drinking in a bar. A Japanese woman tried to engage Bob in an English conversation, but he was not interested, so she left. When they returned home, Miwako and her father got into a fierce argument. Miwako's father told her that Bob did not like the girl that they had chosen for him and that their offer was rejected. That Japanese woman in the bar was a "gift" from Miwako's father, perhaps a display of good will toward Bob. By this time Miwako had become Americanized and was outraged by this offer. Bob explains, "Her father simply could not understand why Miwako was so upset, after all he was trying to be nice to her husband, even if he was a foreigner. Only in retrospect is this humorous. It was a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict of cultures at the time."

Schooling for Candida ranged from kindergarten in Misawa, to first grade in Guam, to schools in Pasadena with a mixture of races. She had no problems assimilating with others in school as there were diverse populations everywhere she attended. Candida completed high school in 1972 and then attended classes at UCLA, where her father was in graduate school. They had one car, so they traveled together, often walked on campus together, and usually met for lunch. Candida complained that she was not attracting boyfriends and said it was because others thought her father was her boyfriend. When they limited the time that they spent together on campus, Candida's social life improved. The family laughs about this now.

In 1964, they bought the house in North Hills, California, when Bob was earning $70 every two weeks. They had a second-hand car with a payment, as well, which left little money for other necessities. Bob was planning to get a second job when Miwako declared that she merely wanted to work. She didn't care whether it was a maid's job, she wanted to work. She saw an ad for a sewing machine operator for the Olga

Company and told Bob about it; she requested that he go with her. It was only about five minutes from their home. Bob waited in the car while Miwako went to get the application. She took it to Bob to complete, returned it inside, and then took a test that consisted of completing puzzles. Later Bob learned from the test examiner that Miwako was the only person to ever complete it before the time limit—quite an accomplishment.

Miwako was trained for six weeks on how to operate a sewing machine. She explains that the procedure involved sewing four small pieces of material together, which was awkward as the machine would shake, causing some of the pieces to fall. At home she made an apron with pockets to hold those pieces of material. The pay was determined by the amount of pieces that were completed, and soon others, including the management, were noticing her speed. They were surprised by her ingenuity and coordination. Miwako thought that the tasks were simple and never considered that she had talent. She was promoted to a designer sample maker.

The owner of the company had immigrated to the United States in 1940. He told Miwako that if she used her head and worked hard, she would have an opportunity to advance. Within a year that opportunity came and she was promoted to designer assistant. She told Bob that she wanted to go to design school. So she worked from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and attended West Valley Occupational Center in the evenings from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. The two-year program took four years to complete because she was working full-time. When Miwako earned her design certificate in 1979, she showed it to the owner of the company. He congratulated her and said that on Monday she could show him what she could do. Miwako became a designer and worked for thirty-three years with the Olga Company.

Miwako credits Bob and Candida for their help in establishing her career because they prepared dinners while she was working and going to school. She also thinks that Americans are good about helping each other, and often tells people that "if you don't know something, just ask." She learned a lot about designing that way.

It is Bob who proudly presents Miwako's professional portfolio, which is filled with designs. He says that Miwako doesn't like to talk about her success and adds that her designs made millions in sales. Her creations won two "Femmys" (fashion awards) for the Olga Company, which are equivalent to Emmys in the entertainment world and are highly prized by the fashion industry. Numerous pages of beautiful nightwear and

ensembles from the Olga Company's catalogs were carefully collected in this portfolio. Bob points out one design and says that a salesman credited this design as the financial support for his children's college. Her accomplishments also financed college for Candida and Bob's graduate degrees. Bob is clearly proud of his wife's achievements and reveals that she was sought by an industrial "headhunter," but maintained loyalty to the Olga Company. Even a ten-year contract offer at $100,000 per year did not lure her. However, Olga did provide a raise, making her the highest-paid designer in the company at that time. With a smile on her face, the humble Miwako says, "Not bad for a poor country girl, huh?"

Bob is a person who never finished high school but holds a Ph.D. In the Air Force, he completed a GED (General Education Development), which is a high school equivalent. Because he did not have his high school diploma, he started higher education at a community college and then transferred to a four-year college. He attended graduate school at UCLA, completing his master's in 1975 and his Ph.D. in ancient history in 1982. Even as a child, Bob was interested in history; his specialty is the ancient Roman Empire. Today, Bob teaches history at California State University Northridge.

The Cleves arranged for the Yasakis to visit them in California in 1980. Miwako's parents were astonished and enjoyed the two-week visit with their daughter and her husband. They were able to see that Bob and Miwako had made a successful life and marriage, and that their daughter had become a well-paid designer—something that would not have happened in Japan. Miwako's mother confided to Bob that Miwako had made the right choice to come to the United States. They had a complete reconciliation with Miwako's parents.

Bob comments that Miwako's adjustment to American culture has been amazing. Unlike many Japanese women, she has become completely content with American food. They enjoy Japanese food when Bob requests it and even then, Miwako often "Americanizes" the foods that she prepares. Some of the war brides continue to prepare two types of dinners in order for them and their husbands to enjoy the food to which they are each accustomed.

Bob and Miwako have been married fifty-two years at the time of these interviews and the family has added a new generation—two grandsons. While Miwako says that marriage is a give-and-take arrangement, Bob interprets it to mean that she gives the orders and he takes them. Then Bob adds, "Not really, but it requires work." Love and respect are apparent and one can sense the dependence that they have

on one another. An important aspect to this marriage is that they have always been "best friends." During the interviews there is playful, light bantering and humorous moments. It is a comfortable environment.

If she could choose her life's path again, would she marry a serviceman and come to the United States? Miwako pauses and then replies, "Oh yes!" as she looks at Bob with a smile. Bob counters that he was waiting for that answer and once again laughter fills the room.

A year later in a correspondence Bob wrote:

> What is truly amazing about all of this is that we are two such different—seemingly incompatible—people. I am an intellectual and spend much of my time dealing with matters of the mind; Miwako has very little interest in academic matters and lives in the world of practical experience. We come from completely different cultural backgrounds. If a marriage counselor had been asked to predict the outcome of our relationship, he would have said that the success of our marriage was impossible—no prospect that two such different and incompatible people could have a successful marriage. Yet, the very first time I saw Miwako's face I knew—don't ask me how I knew, because I cannot explain it. I don't even believe in love at first sight, but I knew and I have never stopped knowing for one moment. Our meeting of course was sheer chance—an American boy from Greensboro, North Carolina, and a Japanese girl from a farm village in rural Japan. It seems amazing that, as Carl Sagan wrote, "in the vastness of space and the immensity of time" we two found each other and then lived together for fifty-two years. How lucky we are.[4]

NOTES

1. New Year's is the most important holiday in Japan and is usually celebrated for several days. The following day is a shopping day when these savings could be spent on things desired.
2. *Kosekishouhon* is the official copy of the family register (http://www.mahou.org/Dict/?word=kosekishouhon+&d=All).
3. Japanese women who dated/married military were often thought to be prostitutes. However, it is unlikely that Americans could have married prostitutes because of the strict background checks required by the United States for marriage.
4. Correspondence from Dr. Robert Cleve dated June 20, 2007.

CHAPTER 4

From Hardships to RN

Katsu Hall

During a trip to Honolulu, I interviewed three Japanese women through arrangements made by Betty Totoki. At this time, Mother and I were interviewed by the Hawaii Pacific Press regarding my research. This publication is mostly in Japanese and has subscribers in the States. Katsu Hall read the article and contacted me, requesting that we visit for several days as there was much she wanted to share and to show us. She not only told her story, but also became our tour guide to the Franklin Mountains, Carlsbad Caverns, and White Sands, New Mexico. We had enlightening conversations during this time.

Katsu Watanabe, 1947. Courtesy of Katsu Hall.

MEETING KATSU HALL

Katsu Hall's advanced age and small frame may be deceptive; strength and determination, however, are written on her face. This is a woman who, at the age of eighty, visited China to "climb" the Himalayas. She

does her own yard work, grows a few garden plants, and travels often. She describes herself as "greedy" because of her desire to know and do everything that she possibly can. After spending time with her, I find the best word to describe her is "sage."

CHILDHOOD IN JAPAN

Katsu Watanabe was born and raised in Yokohama, a major seaport in Japan. She talks about happy memories before the war consumed their lives. Gathering flowers on the hillside to make flower necklaces, enjoying barbeques and picnics, and fishing with her older brother were some of the memories that she shared. She tells a story about going to the hot springs with her family. Visiting *onsens,* natural hot springs, is a national bathing pastime for Japanese people, as these hot springs are prevalent in that country. Japan is part of the "ring of fire," a large area that has volcanic potential, which creates these hot springs. Katsu's story is about her mother and a beautiful coral-colored, beaded ornament that she had fixed in her hair on the day that they visited the *onsen.* A monkey, which was caged in front of the springs, decided that he wanted the beads and grabbed her mother's hair. Katsu describes it as a screaming affair in which they had to call a guard and the manager. For an eight-year-old, this was a hilarious situation and a memorable one. As an adult she seems to relish reliving the tale.

She speaks fondly about her oldest brother, recalling a time when he took her fishing and caught an enormous fish. It was so large that they feared it would break the line, so he told Katsu to hold the pole while he dove into the water to catch it. She remembers that this was the "biggest task" for her at the age of eight, but she was able to do it. Her grandmother used to tell her and her sister that they were a samurai's daughters—they were meant to be strong. Katsu says that the fish must have been around 50 centimeters long. She cannot recall how they managed to take it home, but says that it was "most rewarding" not only due to its size, but also because this fed their family. This was a time when her brother was still at home; later, he and two other brothers would serve in the Japanese military.

Schooling was partly funded by parents, so there was "no nonsense" and all sixty of Katsu's classmates graduated sixth grade. Typically the girls were not sent to higher education though most of the boys were. Katsu was lucky to have eight years of education and says that she is grateful for this. Some children were unable to attend school because their families could not afford it.

She relays what it was like to be a child during the war:

> The war takes all the riches from your country and that means from your citizens. So, I didn't, but I know many adults donated gold teeth. Like metal things, anything metal we donated, so they can be used for parts of the war equipment. And, of course, food was scarce because of bombing. My mother and my father had to search for my grandmother when Yokohama was bombed. She couldn't walk much, so when the fire died down, my mother and my father went to look for her. My mother's brother's wife and son, they were in the fire and they escaped to the public bathroom, which was built with concrete and bricks. So the public bath wasn't burned. They were putting water on themselves so they wouldn't burn. That was by the river; I don't remember the name of the river. They found her (grandmother), daughter-in-law, and grandson. They came to visit to live with us for a little while until they found a rent house.

Yokohama, one of two major seaports in Japan at the time and a center for manufacturing, was a target for aircraft bombing. "Over six hundred American aircraft dropped more than seven million pounds of incendiary bombs on Yokohama in a morning raid on May 29, 1945." It was estimated that over 58 percent of Yokohama was destroyed during the war.[1]

During the summer after sixth grade, Katsu was sent to the country to help a man whose wife had died after childbirth. Katsu became the full-time babysitter, housekeeper, and cook for the man and his newborn. Although she had no choice in the matter, she said that this experience built her character. She compared herself to "Oshin," a poor girl who endured a similar situation in a popular story, and now the main character of a television program of the same name. *Oshin* was originally based on a collection of letters about a woman's hardships during the Meiji period. Oshin had to babysit while other children were attending school, so she would stand outside the classroom window with the baby on her back as she listened to the teacher. The story became a popular soap opera series in Japan, depicting many hardships in this woman's life.[2] Though Katsu's time with this family was only for the summer, this responsibility was an enormous one for a young girl. She does not know if her mother was compensated for her work.

During the war, one either went to school or to work, or was forced to go to labor camp. "I was fortunate to work in office work. There were many who worked like coolie carrying rocks and sand to build whatever.

These are all for military effort, these were male, female, young, and old who can stand up. Had to be forced work, no loafers," says Katsu. She worked for a tire company that manufactured small tires, which, she believes, were made for airplanes.[3]

Her second oldest brother was in China when the war escalated, and he was called to serve in the South Pacific. Katsu tells about this time, when the family received word that he had been killed north of Luzon in the Philippines. She pauses, reflecting, and then proceeds:

> My mother frantically looked for him sending me to fortune tellers. I was maybe twelve or thirteen. I was errand girl for the family because no male around to carry out the business, except for my father who was constantly working in the ship yard, like twenty-four hours sometimes. No nonsense with those workers, they were all effort to win the war, World War II. So, all the males were taken for war. My three older brothers were in the war. Only one youngest was about five years old when the war was going on. So women had to take over.

This was the case for many Japanese families; it was a major change from the traditional roles that women had held. "No words from anybody. Then my mother finally accepted that he died, and I think that the government started sending her some money for his service in the Japanese army," reflects Katsu.

MEETING HER HUSBAND—CECIL KELLEY

During the summer of 1951, Katsu was invited to dinner by a Japanese woman who was married to the superior of Corporal Cecil Kelley. It was at their home that Katsu and Cecil first met at a dinner arranged for the four of them. This was in a location called Area X, a site designated for American soldiers and their families. Cecil Kelley was working in transportation for the U.S. Army.

Katsu describes dating as "scary." Although she studied English for two years, communicating with Americans was "totally different." "My understanding of English was poor, plus expressing my feelings or opinions wasn't adequate enough to make them understand." Cecil did not speak any Japanese. However, like many other American-Japanese couples, the two were able to overcome the language barrier. They would often go swimming, as Yokohama was a major seaport.

They also frequently went to movies since many of these had subtitles. Company parties were another opportunity for getting together and socializing with other, similar couples.

Cecil would often visit Katsu's home, where she tried to cook American food for him. He was partly welcomed into the home by her family. "Not open-hearted reception. But then, Yokohama is seaport town, so Americans not really totally strange to them. Yokohama was first seaport to open to foreigners right after the *sakoku,* which was the closed-door policy of Japan in 1800s. When Commander Perry came it was still closed. I think that he's the one who opened Japanese mind to associate with foreign countries," says Katsu.

MARRIAGE AND MOVING TO THE STATES

She had heard too many stories about women who were left behind or the unwanted children born from these Japanese-American unions. She didn't want to go through that. She was hesitant and hid at her sister's home, which was outside of town. Cecil contacted the police to find her and told Katsu that if she did not marry him, he would go to Korea. At that time, she had heard that an entire military division was consumed by fire in the Korean War and she thought about that division. For her, it was turmoil to marry an American soldier—"you really don't know the other person."

They dated only a few months before they were married. The options for Japanese women to marry were limited because of the number of Japanese male casualties in the war. Katsu rationalized that marrying Cecil would mean one less mouth for her family to feed. This union was finally accepted by her family; they were married in September 1951 in a Japanese ceremony at a Shinto shrine in Yokohama with her parents in attendance. Katsu wore the traditional Japanese wedding gown and wig. They held an American wedding in November 1951 at the Consulate General's office in Yokohama. She was twenty-two and he was thirty-six years old.

They moved to the United States on August 30, 1952. Although most transfers were by boat, they traveled by plane because Cecil worked in transportation. The stops were generally Wake Island, Guam Island, Hawaii, then on to San Francisco. However, because of an engine burnout, they landed in Oakland before going to San Francisco. Katsu recalls:

> The airplanes in those days were four propellers. These really transported wounded from Japan to United States, but we were allowed. A few of us were allowed, to ride these planes and because one engine burned, they had to land in Oakland and we had to travel from Oakland to San Francisco. San Francisco was the place where he would be discharged and reenlisted in the Army. There's a four-year reenlistment policy like that. And then there was one more thing that I remember; when we landed in Oakland there was one Japanese lady, had one son, and her husband disappeared. So the Red Cross had to do something and the Red Cross sent her back to Japan with the child.

She never learned what had happened to the serviceman or the Japanese woman and child after that. "Oh, and another thing, the food, I wasn't used to. I couldn't eat hot dogs. Those were the four days we were in Oakland. I couldn't eat much American food. They were too greasy for me from the beginning. And then we got to San Francisco, and then found some Japanese food there." They traveled with their four-month-old daughter, whom many people wanted to see—they were curious to view a half-Asian child. Katsu says that she was proud of her daughter's appearance.

The Kelleys had three children: Aldene, who was born in May 1952; Susan, who was born in 1958; and Paul, who was born in 1961. Cecil selected the children's English names, and, like many other Amerasian children of that time, they did not learn to speak Japanese. It was important to Katsu that her children become "profitable citizens of the United States of America." She is proud of their occupations and the contributions that they make to society. Her oldest is employed by the state of Tennessee and works with computers, the second is a nurse, and the youngest is an engineer. Katsu claims that they are her reward.

Katsu does not speak much about her first husband or the early years of marriage. She had been married for sixteen years when they separated, and they finally became divorced after twenty-two years of marriage. Raising her children was extremely difficult during this time. She explains:

> Three times I was going to kill them. Who's going to bring the income? I wasn't trained to make anything. I thought maybe it's merciful to kill them, all three of them. The youngest was five and the oldest was maybe fifteen and the middle one was about eleven. No income, I was devastated, and I was going to kill myself. Well,

> that was a normal Japanese reaction to me. This is more honorable to them, to Japanese mind, to Japanese people. And then I thought about that three times, finish children first and then finish myself. That was 1964, somewhere along there. Then I repented. No, they must have a chance of some kind. It's a coward for me to finish their lives. They have a potential to become something. So I worked. At times I worked one full-time job and two part-time jobs, and then babysitting and sewing. That's when sewing became handy, working alterations, things like that. That's why I was glad that my mother taught me how to sew—bring me bread.

STARTING A NEW LIFE

Katsu says her neighbor, whom she met in church, became her "adopted mother." This woman was a nurse who helped Katsu become a nurse, which became her life vocation. At first, Katsu was apprehensive about going to vocational school in El Paso. She relates:

> English not easy subject, especially when it comes to medical words. I had to get GED, so I studied and I got GED. Then I had to go to Texas Employment Commission to take aptitude test and I passed it the second time. I didn't know what to expect, so I failed the first time because I was trying to be neat. No, they didn't want neatness; they wanted fast hand. So the next time I almost made a 100, because I knew what to expect. Then nursing school interviewed me and I passed everything. January 19, 1968, I started. Every day I was going to drop out, but I came in second [in her class]! Those were what the English call it "bloody year."

Katsu presents her graduation program as proof of her accomplishment—she became a nurse in 1969. It is a remarkable achievement for a person who not only had to master English and medical terms, but also was raising three children. She attributes much credit to her "adopted mother," who helped her with studies and the "many practical things of life."

As a nurse, Katsu was able to support her family with one job.

> When you have teenagers you have to devote your time as much as possible. But sometimes I worked overtime. I was working at Providence Hospital. I didn't have a vacation for eight years. I

> turned in all the two weeks' vacation to work, so I got double pay. Those were paid vacations, so I worked and got double pay. I worked overtime as much as possible. In those days, I was young, so I made noodles and homemade food. It was cheaper and children liked it. I look back and I don't know how I did it. Of course I was young and strong and I think I set an example for my kids by not giving up. I think children learn by looking at mother and father. So, I look back at how my mother raised eight children and I don't know. She raised them from nothing. There's value to it.

Katsu was the only Japanese nurse working at the hospital. She says that at first she was intimidated, but eventually gained confidence to stand her ground when necessary.

RETIREMENT YEARS

Although she has been retired for fifteen years, Katsu has much to keep her busy. Her house bears evidence of Japanese influence from the origami flowers and swans, to the cherry blossoms arranged in a vase and ornaments hanging on the wall. High on her kitchen wall is a picture of her siblings as adults. On the living room wall hangs a picture that displays her talents in *Bunka*—a form of Japanese embroidery. Properly known as *Bunka shishu,* it has been shortened to *Bunka* in English. This form of Japanese artwork originated around the turn of the twentieth century and resembles oil painting, although it is accomplished using a needle and rayon thread.[4] She calls it her "foolishness," but it is amazingly beautiful and seems to be a creative outlet for her. Bunka is tedious and time consuming, consisting of numerous stitches; but for her it is enjoyable. She has completed many pieces, including several scenes of Mt. Fuji, a couple of pieces containing kabuki dancers, three tigers, and others featuring scenery. The Bunka artwork in her living room is a 15 × 17 inch image of a *Maiko,* a young student of geisha. This is one of her smaller pieces. Others are larger, requiring a couple years for her to complete.

Another striking piece on her living room wall is a simple brushwork created during a performance that she attended in China. The word "dream" is written in *kanji* (Japanese writing system based on Chinese characters) as one character in black ink on white paper that is approximately 18 × 24 inches. Katsu does not know why the acrobatic performer chose her, as an audience member, to receive this. She

took the brushwork to Japan to have it properly mounted on a scroll and proudly displays it on her living room wall. It seems appropriate that this word "dream" was given to Katsu, as she is an adventurous person who dares to dream.

Katsu is a self-sufficient woman in many ways. Raising some vegetables (tomatoes, eggplants, green beans, and okra) and doing the yard work herself—even though she can afford to have this done for her—are things that she finds pleasure in doing. Re-covering her kitchen chairs with material in a southwestern pattern was a recent project that she accomplished. She didn't have the strength to do it all by herself, so she hired a girl to help her hold the chairs. With pride she says, "At my age, yes, I have covered these chairs." Katsu studies the Bible daily and keeps a journal in English as she says that it is now easier to write in English. She has wide interests and repeatedly claims that she is a "greedy person" because she wants to try so many things.

Katsu has also been involved for approximately thirty years with a Japanese women's group, which meets once a month to study *origami* (Japanese paper folding) and other forms of Japanese culture such as writing poetry using ink and brush. Sometimes they venture out to the Franklin Mountains or dine at the Vietnamese restaurant or various other restaurants in town. They are active in the community, demonstrating origami or Japanese dancing at schools and libraries. Katsu says that they often reminisce about times when they were children or growing up during the war years. She says that it is not the same to talk about these things with others who did not experience this. She provides this example. In May 1945, shoes were rationed. When Yokohama was bombed, she walked barefoot for miles on a railroad track because she had only one pair of shoes and carried these in her bosom to preserve them. Laughing, she explains that this is the reason she feels compelled to purchase nice shoes whenever she sees a striking pair today. And her Japanese friends understand this.

THE FINAL QUESTION

When asked if she could turn back time, would she marry an American GI again, Katsu responds:

> I think so. There's freedom in American society. . . . In any marriage you are marrying somebody you really don't know. And so, I don't think I can marry Japanese man. I'm too greedy, too

> aggressive, and outgoing; I'm not afraid of anything. So, I wouldn't fit what they would call typical Japanese wife's pattern because of the circumstances we were in because of the war. There was no man to take responsibility of the house. I was the oldest of the younger three. They gave me the responsibility of paying the bills and so forth. I don't think I would make too good a Japanese wife. Not when I call back many things, I don't think I would fit what they call the Japanese type of a good wife.

Katsu believes that American soldiers treated women better than the Japanese men did. "There is a freedom with American men. With Japanese soldiers, women walked behind while American soldiers opened the door for the women." Katsu thinks that she could no longer live in Japan as one who is not able to express individual thoughts or opinions. Japan is considered a collectivist society in comparison to the United States' individualistic society.

In 1948, Katsu worked for a transportation officer and his wife. He spoke some Japanese and she respected him as her "master," although she says that she worried about his drinking and driving. When he received a transfer to Kushu, she was asked to go with them and they traveled by train in the best accommodations. During this train ride she viewed Hiroshima and said that it looked like charcoal. She returned home when he was transferred back to the States, a short employment of only six months. Katsu recalls that, on the return journey home, her hair became matted with coal exhaust from the train—it wasn't a first-class return trip.

It was a surprise for her to see the officer and his wife many years later at the Beaumont Hospital in El Paso. Unfortunately, his wife died of liver failure a short time later. Even more surprising was his proposal to Katsu after his wife's passing. She says that she did not know what to do, so she rejected his proposal. She was divorced and not interested in marriage at the time. He was the top-ranking officer in transportation, which would have made her life more economically sound. "How interesting life turns," Katsu comments about life events.

Katsu has been married three times. She married the second time, to an artist whom she describes as a gentleman, when she was around fifty years old. Mr. Drew always opened the doors and cooled the car for her. She says that her second marriage was successful because there was not only love, but also respect—she refers to this as having human rights. They were married for sixteen years, until his death.

Although she never thought that she would marry again, especially at the age of seventy, Katsu married Mr. Hall. They became "companions" and she cared for him in his latter days. "Consider their comfort—consider their desires." She says that love is the little things that you do for one another. They had four years and three months together. Her advice to other women considering marriage is to ask, "Do you love him and do you respect him?"

It is her desire to give back to society and to help educate others. Katsu shares that she provided a scholarship to a young man who accompanied her to Japan in the fall of 2007; she believes that traveling is an education in itself. Previously she sent two young people to Israel. She knows that helping others brings satisfaction and enrichment to her life. "With this type of attitude, we can enjoy life!"

NOTES

1. Gary D. Allinson, *Japan's Postwar History.* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 47.
2. Katsu Hall and Fumi Ward provided some information about *Oshin.* Additional information was located on *Wikipedia* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oshin).
3. ". . . the government designated seventeen industries in which women workers should replace men on a noncompulsory basis, declaring that the most suitable women for this duty were those who had completed school, those whose schooling could be deferred, those who could be transferred from nonessential industries, and other single women age fourteen and older" (p. 73). Though the Japanese government did not actually enforce the law for women to work, those who did not were criticized as being *yukan josie* (women of leisure) or *hikokumin* (unpatriotic) (p. 73). More details about Japanese women in factory work can be found in Thomas R. H. Havens, "Women and War in Japan, 1937–45." *Women and Women's Issues in Post World War II Japan.* Ed. Edward R. Beauchamp. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.), 73.
4. *Wikipedia.* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bunka_shishu

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CHAPTER 5

From Nagasaki to North Carolina

Nobuko Howard

I contacted Rev. Mitsuru Mukoyama, a preacher in Jacksonville, North Carolina, and he helped arrange interviews with ten women in July 2007, including Nobuko Howard. This interview took place at the New River Baptist Association in Jacksonville on July 29. Mother and I visited again in December to attend the Christmas Cantata, which was completely in Japanese. I met with Nobuko again and gained more information for her story.

Nobuko and Johnnie Howard. Courtesy of Nobuko Howard.

Nobuko Machida was eight years old when the atomic bomb was dropped over Nagasaki. She has vivid memories of that time and the events that followed:

> My home clock stopped, the house goes like this and house goes like that [she moves her hands to and fro]. After they drop bomb you can see first it was like this [as she points to the window], a

> beautiful day. Like lightning at the moment it dropped and more strong like that. And it's going to hit your eyes and in a few minutes you going to be black eyes. You could not see—that strong of light. Then after that, a real wind blow, so house go like this [once again she moves her hands in a sway]. So my home clock stopped at three minutes after eleven in the morning. So that's how we know about. Maybe my clock about three minutes late or it's fast. They bombed Nagasaki ninth of August, then fifteenth of August they stopped the war. For about one week we don't hardly have anything, no food—nothing.

Nobuko describes her family as not poor, but not quite middle-class either. Her father worked for Japanese transportation in a management position. They had a good living before the war and the atomic bomb; then they had nothing to eat. They obtained water by placing buckets on the mountainside in the morning to catch the drips and they retrieved these buckets at night. This was all that they had to drink. She continues to tell about the aftermath of the bombing: "They say we have to move out of town. Americans come over and kill us, which that's not true, but everybody spread people to people."

Nobuko claims that her family walked approximately fifty miles to her grandparents' home in Shimabara. They traveled with a cart carrying their possessions, her mother, and baby brother. Her father pulled the cart over the dirt road while she and her siblings pushed. There they stayed with her grandparents until they heard that it was safe to return to Nagasaki.

"I can't remember what day, but in September they say come home and start school. Americans won't do anything that they be good. So we come back to hometown; another fifty miles we walk back." Nobuko shares her experience of seeing the Americans for the first time: "Oh my goodness, when we come I see first time American people. We never see blond hair, blue eyes. We see nothing but black hair, brown eyes. Oh, I get so nervous and everything—scared, you know. The reason I get so scared, they covered from head to toe. They check for radiation [she makes a gu-gu-gu sound of the Geiger counter]." The soldiers were checking the area for radiation; however, the Japanese people did not understand the strange clothing or what the Americans were doing.

Nobuko says that the Americans brought food to the harbor, which saved many lives. "At that time we don't think or anything. What they give us, that's all we eat. We don't have that kind of mind." Many were

in a state of shock and fatigue, and experienced overwhelming feelings of helplessness. *Kyodatsu*[1] is the Japanese term for exhaustion and despair—the feeling that the masses experienced during this period. Despite their shock, the Japanese welcomed the supplies that they received from the American soldiers. Nobuko explains the type of foods provided:

> They give chunk of bacon, cut how many you need. They provide can of peaches, can of peanut butter, sugar, and for water we have to line up take a bucket [at the supply truck]. Rice—American rice, not Japanese rice, long rice. We don't know how to cook that one, nobody does. We tried to cook but don't know how to do. They have no heat, no electric, nothing, but we go to collect piece of wood, go through the neighborhood pick it up, start a fire, and start to cook something. . . . We got peanut butter, we don't know how to eat, but they show us. You know how to do? No bread [she mimics putting a spoon in a jar and eating it straight from the spoon].

Nobuko says that it took a long time to clean up the mess left by the bomb. "It was really, really terrible life at that time," she states with sadness in her voice. The Machidas' house was about four kilometers from the bomb site. Fortunately there was a mountain between their home and the bomb site. Still, their house was leaning severely, and it took the work of her father and several others to make it inhabitable again. Upon returning to the city, Japanese people helped each other repair what they could on their homes.

The school building was still standing; however, all the supplies were gone. She explains:

> A Marine officer come to our school and they want to try to be friends with us; said not to be scared of American people; we're not going to do anything. He bring his wife. They got a speech, then they say in English, some Marine come out to teach us English. So more time go by, take time and everybody think "Americans think same thing like we do," and get to know them a little bit. And soon we get to know they have to live in Nagasaki, all Marines and everybody. So we started a little bit in English like ABC they'd teach us.

In striving to return to the routine of life, the teachers took attendance and taught without books or writing materials. Nobuko recalls the school lunches, "Nothing but water—miso soup, don't even have miso, they put salt, then it got better and better every day. They gave rice. Of course that rice kind of American—long, not regular rice; then they give lots of bread, too, bread and soup."

Nobuko later quit school and started working, as did many other Japanese girls. "Everybody need money, everybody quit school. I went to work. . . . I give to my mother, just give to my mother so she can take care of kids. When I was working I didn't make any money for me, because I had to help my parents." Working at Sasebo Naval Base provided good pay at that time. Nobuko worked in a movie theater selling candy and popcorn. Later she went to a large naval base in Yokosuka. It was a better job with better pay, plus she learned the art of fine dining when she was trained to work in the officers' dining hall. She says that the training has served her well throughout the years, not only in proper serving and formal dining manners, but also in arranging menus.

Then Nobuko's father became critically ill. "My father he got a situation like white blood eat red blood. He going to get weaker and weaker, and so he passed away." Nobuko's mother requested that she move closer to home, so Nobuko inquired about positions at the Iwakuni military base. She applied for a typing position because she had typing skills. The serviceman in charge asked her to meet him later that evening. Young and naïve, she did as he requested and to her surprise, he asked her to be his girlfriend. When she declined, she did not get that job. However, she was able to obtain another position as a waitress in the E-Club.

MEETING JOHNNIE HOWARD

Nobuko says she met her husband when she was twenty-three years old and working on the Iwakuni Marine Corps Base, across the street from where Johnnie Howard lived. It was 1962 and she was a waitress at the E-Club, when he asked her for a date. He did not speak Japanese and she says that she spoke "broken English." "But we can communicate, you know. When you fall in love with somebody you can use your hands and dictionary and do okay." Johnnie was a sergeant in the Marine Corps. She describes him as shy, always smiling, and good-looking, and he was always waiting for her at the bus stop when she left

work. On the second date, he asked her to marry him. Although she thought this was "crazy" at the time, her response was that she would think about it.

They dated for a while and became better acquainted. Nobuko talks about going to the movies and to a show for the military troops—it wasn't Bob Hope, but it was a similar type of production. However, her fondest dating memories were of their visits to Iwakuni Castle. She speaks of the mountainside, the view from the top, and cherry blossoms; most impressive was the *Kintai-kyo* bridge, which translates to "brocade sash bridge." It is a five-arched bridge resembling a ribbon effect, which dates back to 1673 and was rebuilt in 1953 after being destroyed by a typhoon.[2] Nobuko shares that some summer nights they would watch a fisherman and his bird catch fish from the river. The bird had a ring around its neck that prevented it from eating the fish. As she relays these memories, there is joy in her voice and a sparkling, faraway look in her eyes.

For an American soldier, getting permission to marry a Japanese woman took months and often more than a year. This was a tactic used to discourage these interracial marriages. Even though the proper paperwork had been filed, Johnnie's commanding officer was not giving permission for the Marines to wed Japanese at that time. Johnnie suggested that they get what he called a "shotgun marriage," meaning that if she was pregnant, it would be easier to gain permission to wed, so this is what they did.

"I was already pregnant. We married October 22, 1963. I had my son in November. It's embarrassing, but at that time it take a long time and take about one year to get married." Because Nobuko was pregnant, they were able to obtain permission to wed, and were married in Fukuoka at the American embassy. This was a simple hand-raising ceremony for many couples who awaited their turn to enter a room for this brief rite.

When asked if Johnnie's family approved of the marriage, Nobuko replies that his parents were deceased and he was raised by his sister. Regarding her family's approval, Nobuko says:

> I can say no because my father died [due to the] atomic bomb. I was eight years old when they drop the bomb and I married him at twenty-four. That was a long time, so she (her mother) know I work at American place. I have a boyfriend, so my mother said, "I just can't help, if you be happy go ahead." She had no choice because I was too old—twenty-four. I know what I want to do.

It wasn't until after they were married that she took Johnnie home to meet her mother. At that time many people considered Japanese women

who dated Americans to be prostitutes and she did not want to bring shame to her family, so she brought home a husband instead of a boyfriend.

LIVING IN THE STATES

Nobuko traveled by plane to San Francisco with her husband and son on October 22, 1964. From there they flew to Kansas City then took a bus to Pittsburg, Kansas, which was Johnnie's hometown. On November 22, they moved to Jacksonville, North Carolina, where Johnnie was stationed, and the family has remained there since. It was important for the Howards' children to have a home, as many service families moved from base to base. Nobuko describes Jacksonville as cornfields and pine trees, nothing like it is today. There were very few Japanese brides in Jacksonville at that time, maybe four or five. The military commissary did not have rice or *shoyu* (soy sauce), which were staples of the Japanese diet. The American culture was very different and there were some difficulties adjusting. Nobuko recalls some name-calling during those early years, but she also recalls good friendships and help from Americans.

In 1966, Johnnie received orders to go to Vietnam. During his tour there, Nobuko had a vivid dream:

> I dreamed of him, you know. Sitting on a high mountain, my husband, I can see him down below and around him was fire. I screamed at him, "Get out of the fire! Get out of the fire!" Then I get up. That was about 3:00 in the morning. . . . About 3:30 in the morning I wake the next door lady and her husband in Vietnam, too. I said, "Charlotte, get up! I had a bad dream." So 3:30 in the morning she opened door she said, "What happened?" I said, "My husband he wounded, I dreamed like that. It seemed like it's real." I get so scared I started shaking about that dream. Eight o'clock in the morning, Marine Corp official car there at other street. So, lady there pointed at my house. I said, "Charlotte, you come with me because I don't know what's happened." My husband told me, "If I die three people come. If two people, don't worry about it." He said, "If three people come I'm dead." There were two people there. He [one of the Marines] said your husband was wounded at so and so time; and me and Charlotte we looked at each other. That dream came true.

Charlotte took care of Nobuko and her son that day. It was difficult not knowing what condition Johnnie was in, but in her dreams he had

been badly burned, as there was fire all around him. Nobuko explains what she later learned:

> A rocket hit [the building where he worked] and he was unconscious for about a week, he said. He got all over his body was burned everything was so black. He stayed at USS Sanctuary hospital ship. He stayed there about a few weeks. They bring him to Yokohama, Japan. They put him in an army base hospital. Of course my husband's arms were broken, he could not do nothing. When he called me at that time in 1967, a couple minutes cost about $100—boom, you know, not like today. I got a little bit of government check, but I could not spend for phone bill, so I went to the Red Cross.

Johnnie's records were lost in the bombing and his military pay ceased for a while, compounding their dire situation. Although the Red Cross was not able to help financially, Nobuko was thankful for a contact and the support that she received in this difficult time.

Since Jacksonville was their permanent home, Nobuko was often solely responsible for raising the children while her husband was stationed overseas. Nobuko confesses, "When my husband came back from Vietnam both arms broke and burned. I don't want to say to my husband, but I have to because I got to take care of family. 'Johnnie, if you going to die, buy me a house that way I can stay here and one day I going to pay off and I can raise my kids.' He said okay. We bought the house in 1967."

The Howards had two additional children—a daughter born in 1966 and another one in 1969. Their father gave the children American names. Nobuko laughs when she recalls trying to teach her children to speak Japanese. "I tried to teach my son Japanese. You know what he remembered? [She translates from Japanese] 'Give me money.' I look back a lot of times, my husband's not with me. I have to raise my kids. I try to speak Japanese, but they think it's so funny. Now they sorry, but at that time they know everything more than Mama." However, she proudly reveals that her son named his daughter Tori Nobuko after her. Nobuko also shares that she gave a Japanese dictionary to two of her grandchildren who live in Mississippi. She told them that the next time they call on the phone she wants to hear them speak some Japanese.

In 1970, Nobuko started her own house-cleaning service for the military base in Jacksonville. She contracted with Marines to clean houses when they departed and hired four to five people to clean while she handled the business end. This gave her flexibility and time to attend

to her children and earn extra money for the family. It became a profitable business that she managed for eighteen years.

RETURNING TO JAPAN

During her forty-three years in the States, Nobuko has been able to return to Japan five or six times, mostly in more recent years. She spent twenty years in the States before she first returned to Japan in 1983. In the earlier years, while raising children, it was a tremendous cost to travel abroad as it was a luxury. The cost of a round-trip ticket to Japan was about $3,000. "People today they don't believe that," Nobuko explains. "They think I talk big. Even telephone, when you call it costs about $100, so I could not talk to Japan. I told a friend of mine, if I want to go back to Japan I could buy furniture and stuff I needed at home. That's why we cannot go home, but today everything so easy to go over there." The cost for flights is more affordable today, and travel arrangements are easier to make; using credit cards also makes travel abroad more convenient.

It is evident that Nobuko sees the contrast between Nagasaki after the war and the Nagasaki of today, and this is a relief and a source of peace:

> Then I go back, houses on a hill you can see everything in Nagasaki. I sit out at night over there just thinking. I can sit down for one hour or couple of hours. My sister coming get me, she says, "What are you doing?" and I say, "To sit down, it's so peaceful, it's so beautiful." They have lights over there and a ship come in, and a ship they have all lights. Different view from here to my hometown [she refers to the Nagasaki that she left over forty years ago], so I just never get tired of watching it. It's so beautiful now and a lot of people don't know that.

A SURVIVOR

Nobuko now has a medical booklet for recording the examinations that the Japanese government provides for her on a regular basis. These exams have taken place in Japan and in the United States. Nobuko admits:

> My husband doesn't know for a long time that I am a survivor because I was scared to tell. We've been married forty-three years.

> After about twenty years later I told him. He just [she leans back with a look of complete surprise imitating his reaction]. As soon as Japanese government start contacting me, I have to let my husband know. So I told him, but he didn't say anything, but "I still love you don't worry about it," he say—just so simple. You know, that I've been keeping the secret for long time.

The softness of her voice and the smile on her face reveal her thoughts about Johnnie's acceptance. She explains:

> I just don't want nobody to know I'm a survivor. Right now, about the last ten years I say I got to tell my grandkids and everybody much as I can because there's not much survivors here now. I'm the only one from Nagasaki and two from Hiroshima so we got only three people here [meaning in Jacksonville, North Carolina]. I went to Nagasaki, they got a great, big map tracking how many survivors from what states. And when I went to Nagasaki City Hall they say, "We've got to find one from the East Coast." And I said, "Am I the only one?" He said "Yes, most are on the West Coast like Seattle and California, Los Angeles and Hawaii, most there—about a thousand people." But so many have died, I checked that almost ten years ago and since then many people die. Now I don't know how many people.

LOOKING BACK

I asked Nobuko if she could turn back time, would she marry and come to the United States again. Her response is mixed: "I think so, because love is so strong. If you love somebody, really you just don't care, you just going to jump on his arm. I think so. I'm so glad I come to the States, but now, no, I want to go back. I don't know why I married an American."

The mixed emotions may reveal that she is torn between families and cultures—a difficult situation. For many of these women, there seems to be a longing to return to their culture in their latter years. Perhaps it is because some of their cultural things are easier to attain now, such as food and Japanese television. Perhaps it is just more comfortable for them to be nostalgic now that the children are grown. And perhaps it is simply a natural desire to return to their roots—in a sense they have come full circle.

Nobuko Howard with her three children at the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, on June 24, 2006. *Bockscar* is the B-29 Superfortress that dropped the atomic bomb, *Fat Man*, over Nagasaki. Courtesy of Nobuko Howard.

When I asked her what she would like to share with others, Nobuko replies:

> At first I hate American people. That time passed by and I can't stay in old time. . . . And something bad memory stuff like that—then forget it. It's not that good to keep, you know. A lot of things come to me—good things. . . . I don't want to keep bad things. So that's why when they dropped the atomic bomb I don't want to tell nobody. That's a bad thing, but if I think right now I don't tell anybody, then no one knows my experience.

Nobuko has shared her war experiences at White Oak High School and Northside High. Though she once kept secret the fact that she is an atomic bomb survivor, she now believes that it is important for everyone to know about the devastation of such bombing. "I like to share my experience, good or bad. The war, no, and like bomb stuff they have to stop. The world is kill each other, you know. Good people make sad life, so many people kill."

In June 2006, thirteen members of Nobuko and Johnnie's family visited the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, to see the Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Bockscar." This was the airplane that dropped the atomic bomb, *Fat Man*, over Nagasaki—the bomb for which "Upwards of 80,000 humans vanished in the blink of an eye, with 140,000 dead by the end of the year."[3] Many thousands more died in later years from the radiation. This was the case with Nobuko's father. The Howards had pictures taken of their family, now three generations, standing in front of the plane. This was an historic moment for Nobuko and her family.

During visits with Nobuko, I saw the beautiful young woman that she was in pictures. I could only imagine the strength that she possessed in Japan while working away from home to help support the family. I was able to catch glimpses of her and Johnnie in the early years of their marriage through pictures. I also viewed the family pictures of them standing in front of the B-29, Bockscar. I met her fair-haired granddaughter, Alexis, who is fully Americanized. Much like the pioneer women of the west, Nobuko and women like her are truly an integral part of American history.

NOTES

1. John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 88–89.
2. *Eye Witness Travel Guides: Japan* (New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2003), 212.
3. Joe O'Donnell, *Japan 1945: A U.S. Marine's Photographs from Ground Zero* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), 78.

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CHAPTER 6

A Hiroshima Survivor's Love Story

Ayako Stevens

The first encounter with Ayako Stevens was in my hotel room in Jacksonville, North Carolina. She was an acquaintance of Teruko Bell, a close friend of my mother and a former resident in our area. Teruko now resides in the same state as Ayako—North Carolina. Ayako is also a friend of Rev. Mitsuru Mukoyama, who arranged several interviews for us in Jacksonville.

Ayako and Allan Stevens. Courtesy of Ayako and Allan Stevens.

Ayako preferred to meet us at the hotel and did not want our conversation to be video recorded. I could understand her reluctance, because she did not know me or my purpose. During this time, Ayako, Teruko, and Mother spoke a mixture of Japanese and English. As they visited and spoke in Japanese, I read letters from high school students who had heard Ayako's story during her visit to their class on January 11, 2005. She told them about the bombing of Hiroshima. Excerpts from those letters include: "I am your age [14] at the time that this happened"; "I now feel thankful

[after hearing your story]"; "You inspire me"; and "Our social studies text doesn't really explain about the burns and what people did after the bomb hit." It was evident through the students' writings, that they recognized the significance of this bit of history.

This initial meeting opened the door for a visit six months later, when I interviewed both Ayako and Allan Stevens on December 14, 2007.

VISITING AYAKO'S HOME

As is common with many Japanese women, Ayako had prepared food and green tea for our visit. Socializing is an important part of the culture—she demonstrates that she is a good host. Ayako is known for her cooking skills; one of her recipes was published in a Japanese magazine. She makes the best *futomaki* that I have ever eaten. *Futomaki* consists of a variety of items such as egg, *kanpyo* (dried gourd ribbons), pickled *daikon* (radish), and shiitake mushrooms, which are placed on a thin layer of rice that is spread on a sheet of *nori* (seaweed) and then rolled into a cylinder. It is cut to form round pieces that will fit into one's mouth so that the flavors of all the ingredients can be tasted together. The ingredients for *futomaki* can vary depending on preference.

AYAKO'S STORY

Ayako Yamamoto was born and raised in Hiroshima. During the morning of August 6, 1945, at the age of fourteen, she and a neighbor woman were gathering the wood from destroyed homes. Houses had been built closely together in cities, and this became a fire hazard during the bombings in the war. Therefore, some houses were demolished in order to create fire breaks. Ayako recalls that morning: "Eight o'clock in morning I was already there, me and next door lady pick up wood. Then hear siren, so that lady said that we better get out of here. Maybe five minutes later, maybe a little bit more afterward that canceled." They discussed going back for more wood, but decided to return home instead. As they hurried home, they stopped to rest under a big shade tree. It was there that they heard the B-29, saw the flash, and felt the immense heat in the air. "We see B-29. Same time, flash—real bright, bright flash. So then same time hot—very, very hot. I couldn't stand it, too hot." Their instinct was to find shelter in the nearby house. As they entered, they felt the vibration cracking the walls and decided that this was not a safe place, so they exited the

house. Outside there was an underground shelter where they sought refuge. Many Japanese had prepared these types of shelter for protection from the bombing.

> We go in underground. You know, I don't hear nothing, no noise nothing. In the hole already young lady, me and my next door lady, four people in hole. So, I say, "Oh, maybe it's finished." I tried to go out. They tried to stop me, but I want to look outside. House is still there, just inside is messed up. Anyway, I saw other side; all the way used to Hiroshima building. It's nothing. It's fire. And then smoke, mushroom like—that's bomb.

Ayako continued telling the events and what they did next.

> Then we start to go home. Other side pony was tied up. So I see pony was funny with half white and half was normal hair, but half is all nothing, kind of white to me—gray, kind of white. So, I didn't know. That pony is funny. That way I start to go home, and then last person I saw, lady on bicycle carrying big basket and coming this way. When I go home then, I didn't see, so I talk to lady [her companion], "Where that lady go?" I look around bicycle is rice paddy far away. That road is kind of shaped like hill, she lay on the grass. I said, "Already finished, you can come out." She lift face up. I saw her face is kind of [she pauses and makes downward motions with her hands to her own face]—monster. I didn't know why it happened.

As they continued toward home, they did not understand what had happened to the lady on the bicycle. They encountered broken glass from windows and doors on the road. "My goodness, I don't have shoes. I walk all the way home, no shoes." She recalls what happened to her shoes. "At first I walk into the next door house, automatic take off shoes, so that way get into hole then come out, go home, I don't have shoes. Good thing, I don't cut feet, nothing. No little cut—nothing." When Ayako reached her home, she saw her mother holding her baby sister and screaming. Her mother thought that Ayako was in the bombing area and was extremely upset at the thought of losing her number one daughter. It was amazing that she had returned without any injuries or cuts.

Ayako's father returned home from helping a neighbor move a boat. His legs and the back of his neck were burned.

> He have short pants, straw hat, long sleeve shirt. And straw hat have a little hole in the back. So he come home he said that little hole make me burn my neck. So that's when I find out. He have short pants, so he have both legs burn and one behind neck, straw hat have little hole. He say burn. I say, "How you burn, where?" I ask many questions—I don't know.

This is an emotional story and Ayako wipes her eyes as she continues. "That flash very, very hot, so that time people burn. That lady's face like monster. She like coming this way [she motions from the left going right] atomic bomb going this way. So, she have burned face. Horse just side, half body is white is burned. So, then I understand—that makes burn. That lady is burn, pony is burn—then I understand why burn. If I not under tree, I have burn too."

Ayako believes that she was spared from being burned during the atomic flash because she was under the shade and protection of that tree. "Yes, tree saved my life." This is the story that she shared at local schools and with the Jacksonville and Charlotte newspapers.[1]

During the first meeting with Ayako in my hotel room, she talked about the aftermath of the atomic bomb. Ayako told about her cousin who returned home from school on that day, too tired to bathe. A few days later he had something resembling purplish pimples on his face. He began to lose his hair, and his gums were rotting. Sixteen days later, he died from radiation poisoning.[2] Ayako was so grateful to have escaped the effects of the atomic bomb that she was compelled to help others. She was only fourteen years old when she brushed oil on their burns and gave water to injured people.

A few days later, she went to the nearby river and saw that it had become white with the bellies of fish that had been burned and had died from the flash. Some people used the river for washing clothes as the children played and bathed. She says they were badly burned due to the flash. Though some people used the floating fish as food, Ayako's mother would not allow her family to do so because she said they were burned like her father.[3]

A B-29 Superfortress, the Enola Gay, dropped the atomic bomb named "Little Boy" on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, at 8:15 a.m. This was the equivalent of 12,500 tons of TNT and it instantly vaporized more than 70,000 people.[4] Many others died later from the radiation. It was the first of two atomic bombs dropped on Japan.

MEETING ALLAN STEVENS

Iwakuni is a Marine Corps air base that is still in operation today. Ayako worked as a waitress in a restaurant-bar in Iwakuni, where Americans came to dine, drink, and dance. Allan Stevens was a private in the Marine Corps, who came in a couple of times a week. He couldn't speak Japanese, but she could speak "broken English." Surprisingly, he asked her to marry him. It was 1956. Ayako didn't know what to think about this unexpected proposal, especially since they did not know each other well.

At the start of their relationship, Allan was only nineteen and not of legal age for marriage. At that time, one had to be twenty-one years old to marry. However, Allan still pursued Ayako with thoughts of marriage. She says that there were no special "dates" with Allan. She had two sons from a previous marriage to a serviceman, which did not last long, so Ayako thought she was destined to raise her sons alone.[5] Still, Allan wanted to marry her and told her that the boys needed a father. When his tour was almost finished, he asked if she would marry him when he returned. Ayako replied, "If you come back, I marry you. I believe that God give me husband. So he did. He come back."

They dated for three years before she agreed to marry Allan. His time for his second tour in Japan was coming to an end. The paperwork for marriage usually took months, and sometimes a year, to be approved. Allan says the process involved getting background papers for Ayako—a *kosekishouhon* (official copy of the family register that had to be translated in English), a medical check, and a paper stating that Ayako was not a security risk or a communist. When Allan got the first papers back, Ayako then had to meet with the base chaplain. "He ask me really stupid questions. He asked me if he [Allan] looked like Tony Curtis. And then he asked me, 'You think Tony Curtis or this guy, which one you think is good looking?'"

Allan continues to describe the interview, "Chaplain told her, I don't think you can be happy. You're Japanese and you take a bath, hot bath every day. He's from Pennsylvania, he's a farm boy. They only take a bath every Saturday." There was no arguing or disagreeing with the people who needed to sign the crucial paperwork. They had to endure the lectures.

However, the process was hastened to a couple of months, instead of the possible year that many others encountered. Allan learned that if a soldier's service time was short, he could walk the paperwork through the proper channels, thus preventing the paperwork from lying on

someone's desk, or worse—being filed. This circumvented the system. Allan explains:

> When it was over and all the papers were ready, I was going home in about three weeks. What you do is—I was in Squadron, Squadron goes to Group, and then Wing and Wing approves and sends it back to Group, and Group sends it back to Squadron, then they give me permission to call the Consul and make an appointment to get married. They let me use the phone, that's all they did for me.

Allan explains that the process was deliberately long and tedious in the hopes that the young men would give up. "That was to protect the guys who didn't know what they were doing. I didn't learn that until I spent almost thirty years in the Marine Corps—they were trying to protect us. Then again, it was none of their business. I was over twenty-one years old, I could marry anybody in the States, but that was the way it was—the paperwork."

July 14, 1959, was their wedding day. Allan tells about traveling to the American Embassy at Fukuoka. "We went down by train to Iwakuni. It was almost hurricane weather. Have you seen *Sayonara*? You know, where Miyoshi Umeki and Red Buttons got married? [He refers to the 1957 movie.] They had witnesses and people, you know. When we went there, it wasn't even that romantic. Just like shipping over." It was the brief hand-raising ceremony, a routine ritual that signified marriage for both countries. Unlike the movie, during this ceremony no one was there to care if they were happy or not.

Allan presented the *kosekishouhon* and marriage certificate from the American embassy. Other documents such as the military forms, an English translation of the *kosekishouhon,* Ayako's medical papers, and her survivor's booklet are neatly kept in a folder. It is apparent that these are important documents to them. There is also a picture of the couple taken a few days after their embassy wedding. Allan refers to it as their wedding picture since none was taken at the time of marriage. They are a handsome couple—she is dressed in a light-colored suit and heels, and he is in a short-sleeved shirt and slacks.

Allan was well received by Ayako's family. The couple would visit the family's home on the weekends and his brother-in-law would provide a ride back to base afterward. Allan had to return to the States soon after they were married because his tour ended.

> Well, when we started out, the tour was fifteen months the first time. They wouldn't let you extend because the guys were trying to get married. I had to go home and then come back. . . . I came back to the States for six to eight months and got a squadron coming back to Atsugi, Japan, up around Tokyo. And when I came back, she and the kids moved outside of Yamato.

The boys were eight and nine years old at the time. Allan adopted them and they attended an American school, where they learned English. Their tour in Atsugi was extended six months because Ayako was pregnant with their third son and could not travel to the States.

IN THE STATES

The Stevens family traveled to the United States on October 18, 1961, by military aircraft. From San Francisco the family was traveling by train to Chicago and encountered a fire in the mountains, which delayed them. The boys were crying, so Ayako calmly talked to them as she changed and fed the baby. A lady sitting close by commented that she never saw a mother take such good care of her children. She told Ayako that she would have a happy life. This made Ayako feel better because she feared that the delay with the fire was a bad sign for her.[6]

From Chicago, they traveled to Allan's hometown of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. They visited there for a month before reporting to his next assignment in New River, North Carolina. Allan describes their new home in New River as a "rat-infested apartment." The nights there were frightening for Ayako. She could hear the rat traps snapping and some movement afterward until the creatures succumbed to their fate. Ayako said that she had to wear slippers when taking a shower—it was "awful." She had difficulty adjusting to the area, "I can't believe that when I came here—country, farm. I cry, cry. I want to go home." Allan further explains the situation, "In those days you step out of the car and it was just a jungle on both sides of the road. There were no houses in some places."

It took six months for them to obtain base housing, and then conditions improved immensely. She had another son born in 1963; their sons spanned the ages of newborn to two to eleven to thirteen. She relates that the older boys experienced the conflicts of having two nationalities. While living in Japan, their American race made them different; and then living in the United States, their Japanese race set

them apart. She relays what her boys said to her: "When we stay Japan, Japanese people say 'Yankee, go home.' Come America—'Japs.' Who am I?" They wondered which country was theirs.

Growing up with dual nationalities at *that* time presented some problems, because of the war. Ayako recalls some fights that the boys had with other neighborhood boys. She visited a neighbor and offered to tell the neighbor boys about the war in order to bring peace to the situation. At first the neighbor woman said that she could not understand Ayako's English. When Ayako offered to send her husband over to explain, the woman suddenly understood Ayako—it was resolved. She also encountered other discrimination in North Carolina, as she was confused about signs that stated "Whites Only."

As with other military families, Ayako was faced with rearing the children in Jacksonville while Allan was serving in Vietnam during 1966 and 1967. However, she said that her happy times were when the boys were playing sports in school. Perhaps seeing the boys engaged in high school sports affirmed that they had a place in the American culture. Or she could have been like most mothers and felt pride in her children's accomplishments.

Ayako had several jobs over the years as a seamstress, in a meat-packing company, and finally at Stanadyne, a company that made diesel carburetors for cars, from which she retired after thirteen years. At Stanadyne, she tested pumps and held various other positions. It was a good contribution to the family income for which Ayako proudly says, "That time not many men make that kind of money."

Another source of pride for Ayako and Allan is their sons. The oldest is retired from the Army and employed at a federal credit union. The second is an electrical contractor, and the third works in construction in Hawaii. Their fourth son lives close by working in Jacksonville, which is comforting to them.

VISITING JAPAN

It was twenty-six years before Ayako was able to visit Japan, in 1986. She says that the changes over these years made it impossible for her to find her former home there. It was during this first return that she obtained her medical booklet as a Hiroshima survivor. The Japanese government provides free medical care, monthly payments, and funeral expenses to atomic bomb survivors who are living in Japan.

For those living in other countries, the Japanese government may provide medical examinations by Japanese physicians and monthly payments. Each year, Ayako has a Japanese form notarized in order to confirm that she is still living and able to draw payments as a survivor.

Ayako has a brother who is three years older, a sister nine years younger, and another brother fourteen years younger. Her most recent visit to Japan was in November 2007 to see her younger brother, who has throat cancer. Although it is a long trip and becomes more difficult as she gets older, Ayako told her brother that she had "a very good time"—one of the best.

CONCLUSION

Service bases may have a population of Japanese war brides, which provides the opportunity to form support through clubs or organizations. In Jacksonville, women formed Kimono Kai, a group that was active in cultural dance and arts. Ayako voices fond memories of women from this group as she shows pictures of them. It is also a bit sad for her as she points to the ones who have since departed. After the teacher in the group passed away, they dispersed. Today, it is the New River Baptist Association and a Japanese preacher who bring some Japanese women together in Jacksonville. I was privileged to hear their Christmas Cantata in 2007, which was in Japanese and directed by Rev. Mitsuru Mukoyama. It was beautiful to hear these familiar carols and the Christmas story in Japanese and, yet, a bit endearing to hear an occasional English word during the program.

In concluding the interview, I asked Ayako, if she could turn back time, would she face the opportunities or challenges of coming to the United States again? Ayako did not hesitate with her answer. Although she had a "rough time" when she came to North Carolina, she would do this again. She also wanted to share a touching sentiment about her husband, Allan. If she had life to live over, she would be the first to fall in love with him. Apparently, he was first to fall in love with her in Japan, and she could not understand why he was so willing to marry her when they first met. Now she knows; it is a heartwarming testament that now, more than ever, she loves and appreciates this Marine who shares his life and culture with her. It appears that they were meant to be together.

NOTES

1. David Perlmutt, "They Survived Atomic Nightmare," *Charlotte Observer,* July 30, 2005; Roselee Papandrea, "That Big Tree Saved My Life," *Daily News,* August 7, 2005, p. 2A.
2. Papandrea, "That Big Tree Saved My Life."
3. Ibid.
4. Perlmutt, "They Survived Atomic Nightmare"; Papandrea, "That Big Tree Saved My Life."
5. Kawamoto, "Sen Sou Hanoyome in U.S.A," *Chūgoku Shimbun*, April 17, 1989, p. 14:3.
6. Ibid.

Part II

Katie Kaori Hayashi, M.A.

Katie Kaori Hayashi. Courtesy of Katie Kaori Hayashi.

My interest in Japanese war brides started when I was in Wisconsin. I was born in Japan and moved from Tokyo to Green Bay in 1979. The majority of the residents in the city were German-Americans and Polish-Americans. I was thrown into white American society.

The city that is famous for its football team, the Green Bay Packers, had only one Asian grocery store. I went to the store once a month for Japanese food such as short grain rice, soy sauce, and tofu. Most customers were Caucasians and Japanese students studying at the University of Wisconsin campus there. After the fall of Saigon, boat people from Vietnam joined them as customers.

The store was managed by a quiet Caucasian man in his forties. When he learned I was Japanese, he said his wife was Japanese. He also

said Hiroko, his wife, owned a Japanese restaurant in the city. Her restaurant, called Hiroko's, was one of the largest in the city.

I took an interest in her, but I was not nosy enough. Hiroko's husband tried to set up a meeting between me and Hiroko. However, in Green Bay I did not have a chance to see her. I sensed that she was not willing to meet with other Japanese. Hiroko's husband said he met her in Japan during the Korean War. When he spoke about his wife, he did not use the term "war bride." I was not aware of the term "war bride" at that time.

In 1981, I moved to Los Angeles and then majored in journalism at Santa Monica College. I started working for the college newspaper as a reporter. I also started writing a story for the *Pacific Citizen*, the organization newspaper for the Japanese-American Citizens' League. As a reporter for the ethnic newspaper, I was looking for news and articles on Japanese and Japanese-Americans.

A groundbreaking book on the Japanese war brides, *Hanayome no Amerika* (The Brides in America), was published in Japan in 1981. It sold well in Japan and at Japanese book stores in the United States.

In the book, author Tsuneo Enari pointed out the difficulties in interviewing the Japanese war brides. He also said that when he used the term "war bride" most of the war brides rejected him. While interviewing them, the author learned that "war bride" was a sensitive term. He pointed out that they still had scars associated with the expression. After recognizing their bitter experiences in Japan and the United States, he avoided using the term "war bride" in his book. After reading Enari's book, I learned that *sensou hanayome* was a sensitive term.

"It would be a good idea to introduce the lives of Japanese war brides to the readers of the *Pacific Citizen*," I thought as a reporter. After reading Enari's book, I wanted to know more about the lives of Japanese war brides.

However, in Los Angeles I did not have a chance to meet with any war brides. Most of my Japanese friends were students and the wives of Japanese businessmen. Moreover, most war brides were my mother's age, so I did not have a chance to get in touch with them.

In 1986 I talked to a Japanese journalist about my interest in Japanese war brides. "It is difficult to gain their trust," he said. He explained that the Japanese war brides had been negatively depicted by Japanese journalists, so they were unwilling to tell their stories to journalists. By speaking to him, I learned that they were the victims of the media.

Enari, the author of *Hanayome no Amerika*, had gotten to know the war brides because he had a relative who was a war bride in West Vir-

ginia. His relative helped him by introducing her friends to him. With her help, Enari was able to interview them and publish his first book. Although I lived in Los Angeles for seven years, nobody introduced me to war brides. Japanese war brides did not announce, "I am a war bride."

In 1988, I moved to Davis, California. I met a Japanese woman in her sixties. On the day I met her, she said, "I am not a war bride." She tried to get respect from me by saying this because she looked down on the war brides.

As I lived in the United States, I sensed frictions in the Japanese-American community. I learned that Japanese war brides were not respected in the Japanese-American community. Moreover, Japanese war brides were discouraged from getting involved in community activities.

In 1997, I joined the Nikkei International Marriage Society and started interviewing its members. Almost twenty years have passed since I first took an interest in them. While traveling with them in Japan, I interviewed several war brides, including Kazuko Umezu Stout (Society president), Kinko Kirkwood (vice president), and Yuki Martley (secretary), who are featured in this book. However, I was not able to gather enough information.

The membership of the Nikkei International Marriage Society started to grow as its activities were reported in the newspapers and magazines in both countries. As the membership increased, the organization gained momentum.

In October 2000, it held its third international convention in Torrance, California, near Los Angeles. I attended the convention and continued interviewing them. Japanese war brides living in the United States and Australia exchanged their experiences at the convention.

In May 2002, I published *Sensou Hanayome* (War Brides) with two researchers, Dr. Keiko Tamura and Fumiko Takatsu. I met Dr. Tamura, who authored *Michi's Memories*, at the second international convention in Aizu Wakamatsu in 1997. I met Takatsu, who wrote a master's thesis on Japanese war brides, at the third international convention in Torrance.

In May 2002, the organization held its fourth international convention in Beppu Fukuoka prefecture, Japan. At the same time, my book, *Sensou Hanayome* (War Brides), was published. In the book I introduced the activities of the Nikkei International Marriage Society and its members. After reading *Sensou Hanayome*, Harumi Wilkins, who is featured in this book, sent a letter to me. Since I was born in the same

city that her family came from, I wanted to keep her records. Harumi's father died when she was in elementary school. She had to work for her family as the eldest daughter. In spite of the hardships, she was cheerful and positive. Most of all, she loved the United States.

At the convention in Beppu, I met Toyoko Pier, Setsuko Amburn, and Nora Cubillos, who are featured in this book. During the convention trip, Nora was my roommate, and we stayed together in the hotels and inns of Osaka, Beppu, and Kumamoto for a week. In Kumamoto she was interviewed by a reporter for the *Mainichi Shimbun*, a national newspaper in Japan, and the feature article got first prize in the paper in June 2002.

After coming back to the United States, I talked over the phone with Nora, and I was informed that she had developed cancer and had surgery. I knew that she was a strong-willed woman. I visited Setsuko in Anacortes, Washington, and Toyoko in El Paso, Texas, in the fall of 2002. I also visited Toyoko in Wichita Falls in 2005.

In October 2003 the fourth international convention was held in Canberra, Australia. The Japanese ambassador, Kenzo Oshima, invited the war brides for tea at the Japanese embassy in Canberra. When they left Japan in the 1950s, they were sometimes ostracized and called traitors. However, more than fifty years later, they were regarded as guests at the Japanese embassy. The war brides who attended the convention felt that their lives had been rewarded.

When they visited the Australian War Memorial, the representatives of the Japanese war brides from the United States and Australia dedicated flowers to the soldiers who died in action for the country of Australia. The group traveled to Cowra, where Japanese prisoners of war were interned during World War II. On this trip, I had a chance to talk to Japanese war brides in Australia and found that the war brides there differed from the ones in the United States. In the fall of 2005, the society held its fifth international convention in Hawaii. It seemed that it was to be the last international convention for them because their average age was seventy-eight. I attended and met with the war brides again. After the convention, I published *Watashi wa Sensou Hanayome desu* (I Am a War Bride) in 2005. In this book, I introduced three Japanese war brides. The first woman married an Occupation army soldier, the second had married a serviceman during the Korean War, and the third was a war bride during the Vietnam War. By describing those three war brides from the different periods, I tried to describe the change in the social values of the Japanese women after World War II, delving into the lives and thoughts of Japanese war brides.

These three Japanese war brides were members of the Nikkei International Marriage Society. Without the organization, I would not have been able to find the group of Japanese war brides and write those two books.

In June 2006, I met Dr. Miki Ward Crawford and Dr. Shizuko Suenaga at the last convention, held in Seattle. Miki was a guest speaker at the convention and spoke about her mother in a slide presentation. I have read Shizuko's paper on Japanese war brides in the Japanese Association for Migration Studies. I asked them if they were interested in writing a book with me. They agreed to my proposal, and this project started rolling.

The Nikkei International Marriage Society ended its activities in June 2006. The organization improved the image of Japanese war brides in Japan and the United States. It also gave us a chance to leave a record of their accounts as the first book in English on Japanese war brides in the United States. We are proud of our book on the real lives of the Japanese war brides in the United States.

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CHAPTER 7

No Regrets in My Life

Toyoko Pier

A forty-five-minute radio program on Toyoko Pier was broadcast in May 2005 in her native prefecture in Japan. Toyoko, one of the few war brides from Toyama prefecture, was exclusively featured in the documentary.

Most Japanese war brides came from big cities like Tokyo and Yokohama because the General Headquarters (GHQ) had major offices in such cities. It is rare to find a war bride who was born and raised in a prefecture like Toyama, far away from the bigger cities.

Toyoko Pier and Richard Pier's family at Richard's house in Wichita Falls, Texas, in 2005. Courtesy of Katie Kaori Hayashi.

In the program, jazz and Western music heralded the arrival of the new era after World War II. Such bright music was prohibited during the war, because it was regarded as the music of the enemy Allies. However, after the war, it was introduced to the young Japanese and became the new trend. GHQ announced in the Japanese newspapers that it had come to Japan to "teach" democracy to the people of the authoritarian country

since the GHQ believed that the Japanese had not been taught democracy before the war.

On August 15, 1945, Emperor Hirohito announced the end of the war over the radio—the most modern device with which to disseminate news and information in the 1940s.

General Douglas MacArthur set foot on Japanese soil, at Atsugi Airport near the city of Tokyo on September 6, 1945. On September 15, 1945, GHQ settled at Daiichi Seimei Building, right across from the emperor's palace in downtown Tokyo. GHQ's mission was to disband the authoritarian system and "teach" democracy.

The Japanese welcomed the changes brought about by GHQ. Before the war, young couples, even those who were older than twenty (the official age regarded as an adult in Japan), needed parental approval for their marriages. Marriage was not a private matter, but a family matter. In most cases, parents found the husband or wife for their child. Elders frowned upon dating couples, who were regarded as delinquents.

However, with the dissemination of American democracy, young Japanese started thinking that the traditional customs and codes were obsolete; moreover, they believed that they were deceived by the authoritarian rules and regulations set by the elders.

Teenagers started dating at coffee shops or theaters. Young Japanese enjoyed dancing at the dance halls, and they were thrilled by American movies. With the arrival of the occupation army, they started understanding freedom, a new concept to the Japanese.

Without any reservations, young women started walking with American soldiers on the streets. They were regarded as rebels because of their fashion and makeup.

Toyoko Murakami, who was born before the war, was brought up with the traditional values and customs. However, she started to revere American culture and democracy as she was introduced to them by her boyfriend, Alison Pier.

She was supposed to live her life in a small town in Toyama prefecture, worshiping the mountain gods. In the winter, she was doomed to shovel snow as her mother and grandmother had done.

When Toyoko visited Tokyo, a forbidden city, the teenager was revitalized and energized by the vibrant city life. When she met a good-looking American soldier in uniform, her life changed dramatically. She decided to desert the fiancé her parents had selected for her when she was a child and to marry the unknown foreigner. As she was exposed to the city life in Tokyo and to the newly introduced American democracy, she felt short-changed by the Japanese way of life.

RADIO JOURNALIST FROM JAPAN

"Nothing was special about my life," Toyoko said. Indeed, she was not a heroine or well-known person. However, in March 2005 a radio journalist, Kazuya Kinoshita, traveled from Toyama City (Tateyama machi was Toyoko's hometown, which had been incorporated into Toyama City) to Wichita Falls, Texas, to interview her exclusively. It took five hours for him to reach Narita Airport from Toyama City. It took almost ten hours from Narita Airport (near Tokyo) to the airport in Los Angeles. From Los Angeles to Dallas, Texas, it took three hours. In Dallas, he got into an air shuttle and reached the tiny airport in Wichita Falls. It was one of the biggest challenges in the journalist's life.

When he heard about Toyoko from me, he took an interest in interviewing her. He thought she was rare among the women who were born in Toyama prefecture. He wanted to introduce Toyoko to the people in Toyama prefecture.

Shortly before the curfew of the nursing home in Wichita Falls in May 2005, Kinoshita and I finally arrived at Toyoko's new residence. As a journalist local to Toyama prefecture, he was interested in the people who were born there and lived abroad. Every Tuesday on his program, he introduced those people for five minutes. After hearing about Toyoko, he decided to make a special program about her.

"When I heard about Toyoko, I wanted to introduce her to the audience in Toyama prefecture," he said. He wanted to be the first journalist to introduce the war bride who was born in Toyama prefecture to the people there.

Since Kinoshita came from her native prefecture, Toyoko agreed to be in the program. When she started speaking into the microphone he brought with him from Japan, Kinoshita knew it was going to be a great program. "It was like a miracle," said Kinoshita. She vividly described her life in Toyama prefecture, Tokyo, New York, Georgia, New Mexico, Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, and Texas.

HOW IT STARTED

In December 2004, Kinoshita started contacting Toyoko through me. At that time, she lived in a four-bedroom house in El Paso, Texas. She agreed to be interviewed by Kinoshita. While talking with Toyoko over the telephone, I noticed Toyoko was losing her memory. Her son, Richard Pier, also was worried about her medical condition. He asked Toyoko to move to Wichita Falls, where he lived with his second wife.

In January 2005, Toyoko moved to an apartment that was a five-minute walk from Richard's house in Wichita Falls. As Richard got to know about her health condition, he noticed that Toyoko was not able to live independently. She needed insulin injections every day for diabetes. In April 2005, Toyoko agreed to live in the nursing home in Wichita Falls.

In October 2002, when I interviewed Toyoko, she said she did not want to live in a nursing home. "Last year in my neighborhood, a German war bride died alone," she had told me. "Nobody knew she was dead for one month," she added uneasily. "I do not want to be like her, so I asked my next door lady to come to have coffee every day," Toyoko said.

In the spring of 2005, Toyoko sold her house in El Paso along with her furniture and her personal belongings, although she told me that she wanted to finish her life in the house she bought with her husband. It seemed that she did not have a choice in 2005.

"Richi asked me to live close to him, so I decided to move to his town," she said. "I was worried about her health," said Richard. Richard was working at a local high school as a coach. "Since she did not have a choice, she left like a bird," said Sakai Branson, Toyoko's friend.

When Kinoshita met Toyoko, it seemed to be the last chance to interview her because of her age and failing health. "I was lucky," said Kinoshita. The radio journalist was planning to enter the program in a competition in Japan, noting that a program on a war bride from Aomori prefecture had won the first prize almost ten years ago. He was sure that people in Japan were interested in Japanese war brides in the United States. However, for most journalists, it was difficult to introduce the life of the war brides in the United States, he added.

After the war brides crossed the Pacific Ocean around 1960, people in Japan did not have a chance to hear about their lives in the United States until a photojournalist, Tsuneo Enari, published *Hanayome no America* (The Brides in America). In the book, Enari avoided using the term *sensou hanayome* (war brides) because of its negative connotation. In the book, he expressed his bitter experiences because of the use of the term.

To interview the war brides in the United States, journalists in Japan had to come to the United States as Enari did. It seemed to be an expensive, time-consuming project. Moreover, it was difficult for the Japanese journalists to find war brides abroad. In Enari's book, he pointed out that he was sometimes rejected when he called them and used the term *sensou hanayome.*

Kinoshita's program told about how Toyoko was brought up in Toyama prefecture, where she met an American soldier, and what her life in the United States was like. Toyoko is not a public figure, but Kinoshita thought it was important to make a special program about her.

MISUNDERSTOOD BY RELATIVES

In May 2002 a television journalist from Toyama prefecture tried to make a one-hour program about Toyoko when he learned that Toyoko was back in the area, visiting her brother in Tateyama machi after attending the Nikkei International Marriage Society's convention in Beppu, Japan.

The journalist called her at her brother's house. She accepted his offer and wanted to be on television. However, after a couple of days she changed her mind, saying, "My relatives in Toyama prefecture had a meeting, and they asked me not to be on TV."

Toyoko was staying at her brother's house and asked her brother if the television crew could come to his house. Toyoko's relatives in the Toyama area got together and tried to persuade her not to be on television. "Nothing is wrong with being a war bride, and I am not ashamed of being a war bride," said the frustrated Toyoko. However, her relatives had a different opinion, and they did not want to be identified as her relatives.

Soon after World War II, war brides were regarded as traitors. People in Japan would not accept the women who married a former enemy. Moreover, some of the war brides were known as prostitutes. As a result, people did not respect war brides as a group. Most war brides tended to shun the public eye because of their distorted image. Within the Japanese community in the United States, they were sometimes despised.

However, Toyoko was proud. "Nothing is wrong with being a war bride, so I have nothing to hide," Toyoko said.

War brides have gained respect in recent years as pioneers who stood up to the challenges of international marriage. However, like Toyoko, they still have to fight against discrimination. A relative thought that if the television program had been run, some people might have thought that Toyoko was a traitor and a former prostitute. Her family members thought they had to hide Toyoko's past. Her marriage to an American soldier was not accepted by her relatives.

Alison, her husband, was tall and good-looking. When she met him, she thought, "He is just my type." She was less than 5 feet but preferred a tall man. Alison was 6 feet 2 inches. Not only was she attracted to his physical features, but she also liked his personality. "He was so thoughtful too," she said. Before and even after their marriage, he sent a lot of sweet letters to her.

"Whenever he was away on a business trip, he sent me a letter caring about me and our children," she said. She thought Alison was a sweet guy. Since Japanese men were not outspoken with women and did not show them much affection, Toyoko appreciated Alison's American manners. She treasured these letters. Whenever she moved in her marriage, she packed them in the box first.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Toyoko was born on February 1, 1933, the eldest of six children, in Tateyama machi (Toyama City now), Toyama prefecture. She is proud of her birthplace because her town is close to Mt. Tateyama.

The mountain is 3,003 meters, and one of the highest mountains in Japan. Mt. Fuji, the highest mountain in Japan, is 3,776 meters. Mt. Tateyama was worshiped as a holy mountain by the local people. It was believed that a god lived in the mountain, so they enshrined the god. Toyoko believed that she was protected by mountain spirits.

"I like Mt. Tateyama. I am proud of my hometown, Tateyama machi. Many Americans know about Tokyo, Yokohama, or Kyoto, but they do not know much about my hometown," she said. "I would like to tell them how good my hometown is and how beautiful Mt. Tateyama is." Even after living in the United States, she still feels close to her hometown.

In Tateyama machi, she lived in a small house that was handed down from the mother to the daughter for several generations. It was her family's tradition for the eldest daughter to succeed the house and the family name, Murakami. Her grandmother and her mother were the eldest daughters of the Murakami family. When her mother was a child, the grandmother chose a fiancé for her, and the young boy was supposed to marry into the Murakami family as Toyoko's husband.

Her grandmother was the fifth matrilineal family head, and her mother was supposed to be the sixth matrilineal head. Since Toyoko was the eldest daughter, she was supposed to be the seventh matrilineal head in the Murakami family.

"It was taken as granted for me to marry the local boy," she said. "I did not have a choice as a girl. My mother and grandmother and great grandmother married like this, and they kept the house and the family name," she added. Toyoko thought she would finish her life in her hometown like her grandmother. "I thought I was destined to live like this," she said.

However, she did not marry her fiancé. As a result, she did not succeed her family name and house like her female ancestors. Instead, she married an American soldier from New York. In the United States, she moved at least seven times, whenever her husband was transferred. It was a big change compared with the life of her mother and grandmother.

Her life was geared into a different direction, which led to another world, when she asked her uncle, Tokuji Watanabe, to take her to Tokyo. Watanabe was adopted by a businessman in Tokyo and lived there. He often came back to Tateyama machi to meet his family and old friends, including Toyoko's mother. In 1953, Uncle Watanabe was looking for a young girl who could work at his friend's restaurant. "I would like to work there, and I would like to go to Tokyo," Toyoko said. She was nineteen years old, and she was just waiting for her destiny.

AMERICAN SOLDIER FROM NEW YORK

It seemed to be a small adventure for her to live and work in Tokyo before her marriage. While working as a waitress in Shibuya, Tokyo, she made a few friends. One of them, Misao Watanabe, suggested, "Why don't you work with me at the bar on weekdays?"

Misao had been helping at the bar that was owned by her relative. "You can make money," she said. Toyoko thought it might be a good idea. The life in Tokyo was attractive.

An American army group was stationed in Roppongi, in downtown Tokyo. Roppongi had changed with the arrival of the occupation troops and had become a popular spot in Tokyo for young people. Roppongi is still known today as a posh and stylish area in Tokyo. When President Jimmy Carter visited Japan in 1979, he enjoyed eating at a restaurant in Roppongi.

On weekdays, Toyoko started working at the stand bar with Misao. Most customers were American soldiers because the stand was located

close to the army camp. She served beer and hamburgers to American soldiers and spoke no English. However, she quickly picked up some words while working.

"I knew that I had to go back to my hometown soon for my marriage, so I wanted to enjoy my single life," she said. On her twentieth birthday (February 1, 1953), she was supposed to go back to her parents' home to marry her fiancé.

On that day, her fiancé, dressed in a traditional kimono for the wedding ceremony, was waiting for her at her house in Tateyama machi. However, her twentieth birthday was the day when she moved outside her family's control. On that day, she ignored the family promise and did not go back to her hometown.

After experiencing the city life, she wanted to stay in Tokyo. "It was fun for me to live in Tokyo," she said. The war-torn Tokyo was being revived with a Western touch. She made young friends, including American soldiers, in Tokyo.

One of them was Alison, an American soldier who often dropped by the bar after work. He was quiet and looked gentle. One day, he asked her to go out with him. The 5-foot Toyoko said "Yes." She liked tall men, and he was tall enough.

Alison and Toyoko started dating. They went to movies and restaurants for dinner. Whenever she was exposed to the American life, she was attracted to it. American culture was different from the Japanese. Toyoko thought Alison was a good man. He was not demonstrative like other Americans, but he also was not reticent like Japanese men. Toyoko liked him because of his sincerity.

He was also generous. Whenever they went out, he paid for everything. He bought everything she wanted. Because of the strength of the American dollar, American soldiers appealed to Japanese women. At that time, one dollar was equivalent to 360 yen; in 2007, one dollar was equivalent to 120 yen. "I do not like a stingy man," Toyoko said.

Before World War II, a pure bloodline was highly valued in Japan. As a result, interracial marriage was not acceptable to many families. When Toyoko said she wanted to marry an American soldier, all of her family members in Tateyama machi were astonished. She was the first person in her family to enter into an interracial marriage. She might have been the first in Tateyama machi, as well.

Her father was angry and shocked. He had gone to Manchuria as a Japanese soldier during World War II and would not accept her marriage to a former enemy solder.

IMMIGRATION LAW AND INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE

Persons ineligible for citizenship (Japanese and other Asians) were not permitted to enter the United States after the passage of the 1924 Asian Exclusion Act.

As early as September 1945, GHQ was concerned about international marriage in Japan. Because of the federal law, an American serviceman who married a Japanese woman was not allowed to bring his wife to the United States. Moreover, some states in the United States prohibited miscegenation by law. These laws were originally aimed at blacks but were also applied to Asians. Because of the federal and state laws, marriages of American servicemen to Japanese women were regarded as trouble.

The first ceremonial wedding for an international couple occurred in March 1946, and it was reported by the Associated Press. On May 31, 1946, the Records of GHQ Supreme Commander for the Allied Power unofficially accepted servicemen's marriages to Japanese women. They said that American servicemen who wanted to marry Japanese women should abide by the Japanese civil code to establish the legality of their marriage.

Though the marriages of the American servicemen were questioned, young Americans found Japanese girls and married them. When a marriage application was submitted, GHQ tried to transfer the American soldier to another country, especially one who was Caucasian. Some were transferred to the battlefield in Korea, and others were sent back to the United States.

Because of the legal problems, it was estimated that about 100,000 Japanese women were left behind like Cho-Cho san in Puccini's opera "Madame Butterfly." When Japanese parents tried to dissuade their daughters from marriage, they used the story of Cho-Cho san." Many parents thought that for temporary convenience, American servicemen lived together with the Japanese girls, like Lieutenant Pinkerton did in the opera. Indeed, there were some who were not serious and used the American laws as an excuse.

Because of the legal barrier and the insincerity of many servicemen, their Japanese lovers or live-in girlfriends were often left stranded. In order to solve the dilemma, President Truman passed the Alien Wife Bill (Public Law 213) in 1947. After the passage of the federal law, Japanese women were able to get the legal status as wives in the United States.

On June 25, 1950, war broke out in Korea. Many of the U.S. combat soldiers stationed in Japan were sent to Korea. In 1953, when Toyoko met Alison, the Korean War was in progress, and it was not certain when the war was going to end.

Since Alison was an accountant officer in Tokyo, he continued working in the same office in Tokyo. Toyoko was afraid that he would be sent to the battlefield in Korea. "I was scared, and I prayed for him not to be sent to Korea," Toyoko recalled.

On July 27, 1953, the Korean War suddenly ended. "I was relieved because the war ended," said Toyoko.

After taking over control of Japan, GHQ encouraged the Japanese to see American movies to disseminate American culture. During the war, the slogan "Americans and English are devils and demons" was widely disseminated. Soon after the war, the rumor spread that "all the men are castrated, and all the women are raped after the arrival of the Allied Forces." GHQ had to show that the Allied Forces were not devils, but caring people.

In March 1954, Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio visited Japan for their honeymoon. Movies such as *Don't Bother to Knock* and *Niagara* were shown and became big hits in Japan. Once the well-known movie stars stepped into Japan, the Japanese media hounded them. The honeymooners were open-minded. Their friendliness and frankness left a good impression on the Japanese. During the war, Japanese were taught that Americans were devils. However, as they were introduced to Americans, they started accepting the former enemies.

The Treaty of San Francisco between the Allied Powers and Japan was officially signed on September 8, 1951, and it went into effect on April 28, 1952. Since Japan had become an independent country, American soldiers, including Alison, were supposed to be sent back to the United States. However the Korean War started in 1950, and the United States became involved in the war and started sending soldiers.

After the end of the war, American soldiers were sent back to the United States. Alison told Toyoko that he would soon be transferred to the United States and asked Toyoko to go with him. In May 1954, their marriage permit was granted by the U.S. Army. The two rushed to the American embassy in downtown Tokyo. Alison and Toyoko finally became husband and wife with joy. Because of the short notice, no relatives from either side attended their wedding ceremony.

After the marriage oath at the American embassy, they took their wedding picture at their house. Toyoko wore a traditional kimono, and Alison wore his military uniform. The picture became her treasure.

Two months after their marriage, the young couple headed for Toyama prefecture. Alison knew that he would be transferred soon, so he wanted to report their marriage to Toyoko's family in Tateyama machi for Toyoko's sake.

TO HER HOMETOWN

By train, they left Tokyo in the morning and arrived at her house in Tateyama machi at night. It was the first and last family reunion for Toyoko and Alison.

Toyoko's grandmother, the matrilineal head in her family threw a party for them, inviting the neighbors. Most of the guests had never seen Americans before. "Toyoko brought a big American as a husband," they said. The average height of Japanese men was 5 feet 3 inches, so Alison was a foot taller than them.

It was a Japanese custom to take off one's shoes at the entrance hall. When they saw Alison's shoes at the entrance, they were amazed at their size. When they saw Alison, they were surprised at his stature. They thought Americans were huge. During the war Americans were well fed while the Japanese were severely starved, they noted.

Toyoko's grandmother appreciated his visit. "He is a nice man because he came to the remote area all the way to say 'Hello' to us," she said. She had been worried because she heard many Japanese women were left behind by American soldiers.

Alison and Toyoko's father were left in the living room while the women started cooking. Her father did not speak at all to Alison. He spoke no English, and Alison's Japanese was limited. Her father continued drinking sake. After too much drinking, he fell into a deep sleep. Alison did not feel comfortable, but he tried to be nice for Toyoko's sake.

The young couple had to cope with the same problems other interracial couples did. They had to overcome the cultural differences.

Although her father did not positively accept their marriage, her grandmother, who was the most powerful person in the matrilineal family, did. They became one of the rare couples whose marriage was accepted. However, Toyoko and Alison felt some pressure from Toyoko's father.

During World War II, for him most of the direct enemies were Chinese and Russians in the battlefield in Manchuria. However, Americans were also their enemies. During the war they were taught that the

English and Americans were devils and beasts. Her father said, "I am sorry for my comrades in Manchuria because my daughter married the former enemy." He cried. He felt he had to apologize to his comrades who lost their lives in the battles.

TO THE UNITED STATES

After the 1953 truce in Korea, many American soldiers were sent back to the United States. Toyoko expected to see Alison's family in New York. Toyoko lived with Alison more than a year, but she realized that she did not know much about his background and family. Because of the language barrier, they were not able to communicate well.

In the spring of 1955, Toyoko and Alison entered the United States as husband and wife. In this year 2,843 Japanese women entered the United States as war brides. After the passage of the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, Japanese war brides were no longer ineligible for citizenship and were able to set foot on American soil as the wives of Americans. After the thirteen-day trip by ship, Toyoko and Alison landed in Seattle on the West Coast. They headed for New York, where his mother, Hazel Pier, lived. Toyoko became nervous as she neared New York. She was not certain if his mother would accept Toyoko, a Japanese woman, as his wife.

At Hazel's apartment, Toyoko met Hazel's second husband. After being informed of Alison's marriage, his mother remarried almost at the same time. "She must be relieved because her youngest child, Alison, finally got married," Toyoko recalled.

At her apartment, she met Alison's brothers and sisters one after another. Alison was the youngest of seven children. His father died within two weeks after his birth. Toyoko was relieved because she received no objections from his family.

"Everyone in his family accepted our marriage," Toyoko said. "They were nice and thoughtful." Since his brothers and sisters were brought up in an orphanage, they knew how to be kind to others. From the ages of two to sixteen years old, Alison grew up at the orphanage in New York.

Hazel made a living as a nurse. During the Thanksgiving holiday, she took seven children and two orphans to her house and fed them a holiday dinner. "When I heard the story, I thought she must be a warm-hearted person," Toyoko said. Hazel was a working single mother, so she was not financially wealthy, but she extended her hands to children in need.

His mother had difficulty pronouncing Toyoko's name. Whenever Hazel tried to pronounce "Toyoko," it sounded like "Tokyo" to Toyoko. "No, my name is not Tokyo, but Toyoko," she repeated. "From today on, I am going to call you Terry," Hazel finally said. Toyoko liked her American name. With her American nickname, she started her American life.

Because Alison signed up for the army again, the young couple headed to Augusta, Georgia. Hazel threw a party for them, inviting forty friends and relatives to her apartment. "It was a nice time for me," Toyoko said.

Hazel and her second husband visited Alison and Toyoko a few times in Augusta, saying, "I like to spend time with Toyoko." Hazel tried to teach American cooking and table setting to Toyoko. "I learned many things from her," Toyoko said.

Within six months of their arrival in Georgia, Alison was transferred to Arizona. In the span of one year, Toyoko had lived in New York, Georgia, and Arizona. Life in the United States was quite different for Toyoko.

TOYOKO BECOMES A MOTHER

In 1956 their first child, Stanley, was born, and in 1958 their second child, Richard, was born. Within six months of Richard's birth, Alison was transferred to Hawaii. In Hawaii, Toyoko applied for American citizenship. She did not hesitate to become an American citizen. "My husband and my children are Americans, so I would like to live with them in America as a citizen," she said.

He was again transferred, and they moved to New Mexico, Alaska, and Arizona. In Arizona, she sat in her son's classroom and learned English with his classmates. She learned English for the first time at school. She also worked at the lunch cafeteria, making desserts for the children.

In 1977 Alison retired from the army and started working as a manager at an Arby's in El Paso. In August 1979 he gave her a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary present. It was an airline ticket to Japan. It would be Toyoko's second visit to Japan since she left in 1954.

On August 13, while in Japan she received an international call from Richard. "Dad died," he said. She was flabbergasted and rushed to the international airport, Narita, in Japan. After arriving at her home in El Paso, she conducted the funeral for her husband. "I did not cry," she said.

After Alison's death, Toyoko lived with Richard, a high school student. When he turned eighteen years old, Richard left Toyoko's house. For the first time, she lived alone at her house in El Paso. Since she received a military pension, she did not have to worry about money. She went back to her home in Tateyama machi every three years. Her brother there welcomed his Americanized sister.

In the spring of 2005, Toyoko moved from El Paso to Wichita Falls. She was not able to live independently because of her diabetes. At least twice she collapsed because of insulin overdose in El Paso. She also lost consciousness while she was driving a car, and did not have much confidence in her driving.

In May 2005, Richard decided to send her to a nursing home in Wichita Falls. She was born as the eldest daughter in the matriarchal family, and she was supposed to be surrounded by her family members in Japan. However, she wound up living in a nursing home alone. "I had no regrets in my life," Toyoko said.

CHAPTER 8

Life's Reward

Harumi Wilkins

Harumi Wilkins and her six grandchildren, Mark, Sam, Kaylyn, Steven, Ross, and Luke (from left to right). Courtesy of Harumi Wilkins.

On September 28, 2007, Harumi Wilkins's nephew, James Dindes, got married at forty-seven years old in Las Vegas. He is a pilot for United Airlines. Harumi was invited to the wedding with her two daughters. It was the first marriage for James, who was born in

Massachusetts to Harumi's sister, Shinobu Dindes. Shinobu met her American husband through Harumi when she visited Harumi at Yokota Air Force Base in Japan in the 1960s.

Shinobu, who lived in Omaha, Nebraska, flew to the wedding with her other son, Tim Dindes. Harumi's relatives from Tokyo, Pennsylvania, and Nebraska got together for the wedding. Harumi had a nice time with her sisters and brothers.

"It was a memorable reunion," said Harumi. "I felt happy after all the hardships in my life."

Harumi thought that it might be the last time for her to get together with her relatives. It took about thirteen hours for her brother to get there from Tokyo.

After the wedding, Harumi's brothers from Tokyo visited her house in Bulger, Pennsylvania. They flew together and had a busy but nice time at her house. After her brothers went back to Tokyo, Harumi's life returned to normal.

The seventy-two-year-old Harumi has lived in the United States for forty-two years. More than ten years ago, a Japanese-American journalist in Pennsylvania said she would like to write a story about Japanese war brides that included Harumi. Harumi rejected the proposal. Her memories were double-edged with joy and sorrow. She did not want to disclose her divorce in public.

A few years ago, she read my book *Sensou Hanayome* (War Brides). She realized that there were not many years left for her since she was a diabetic. She wanted to leave a record of her life, and she sent letters to me. Without Harumi's action, her story would have never been told and recorded. She is one of many brave women who challenged the difficulties in life.

CHILDHOOD IN HOKKAIDO, SOUTH SAKHALIN, ICHIKAWA, AND TAKAOKA

Harumi, an American citizen, has lived in three countries: Russia (South Sakhalin), Japan, and the United States of America. She thinks that her life has been enriched by living in three countries.

She was born on March 31, 1935, to Yoshimatsu and Toshiko Asai, as the eldest daughter of seven children, in Fukagawa machi, Hokkaido prefecture. They named her Harumi, which means "spring beauty." The Chinese character *haru* means "spring," and *mi* means "beauty" in Japanese.

Her parents registered her birth at the city of Takaoka, where their family record was registered. "If I am asked where I come from, I would say Takaoka," she said, even though she was actually born in Hokkaido prefecture.

In the year she was born, Germany repealed the Versailles Treaty, and Italy invaded Ethiopia. In Europe, nationalistic sentiments had risen. Two years after she was born, Japan's army invaded Manchuria. In the late 1930s, nationalism had also heightened in Asia.

In Hokkaido prefecture, she lived in Sapporo, Obihiro and Otaru because of her father's job. When she was four years old, her father was transferred to Nayoshi in South Sakhalin. South Sakhalin was governed by Japan until August 11, 1945, when the Soviet Union invaded and took over the territory, breaking the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact of 1941.

In 1905 Japan and Russia signed the Treaty of Portsmouth after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905. The treaty stipulated that the southern part of the island below a latitude of 50 degrees north belonged to Japan, and the northern part of the island belonged to Russia. When Harumi's family moved to South Sakhalin, she met other races: Russians, Ukrainians, and Koreans. It was the beginning of a life surrounded by foreigners. Before World War II, Japanese brought Koreans to South Sakhalin and forced them to work in the coal mine pits. At the coal mines, Japanese supervised Korean workers.

"My father was one of the Japanese supervisors," Harumi said. Japanese were well dressed and lived in well-built houses on the hill. However, Koreans lived in shacks at the foot of the hill. The level of life differed between the two races. Harumi was told not to speak to Koreans by her parents.

Her father worked at the Nayoshi coal mine, which began operating in 1934 as one of twenty-one Japanese coal mines in South Sakhalin. Since coal was a precious resource, especially before the war, the Japanese government encouraged mining in South Sakhalin after its acquisition.

Because of the cold winter, most Japanese did not want to work at South Sakhalin, so the Japanese took Koreans there as cheap laborers. In 1910, Japan annexed Korea, and 700,000 Koreans were taken to the mines and factories in Japan, including to South Sakhalin.

As a child, Harumi did not think much about the racial tensions. "I was too small, so I do not remember many things there," she said. "What I remember in Sakhalin was the cold winter. I remember we put the coal in the coal stove for warmth." Stoves were placed in the rooms and kitchen at her house.

Hokkaido was also known for its cold winter to Honshu islanders. However, the coldness of Sakhalin was beyond Harumi's expectations. When her dog died in the middle of the night outside, it was frozen stiff by morning. In the winter, the river was frozen, and horse carriages ran on the iced river.

In South Sakhalin, three languages—Japanese, Russian, and Korean—were spoken. Harumi was raised in the multilingual community. Inside her house, she spoke Japanese with her parents and siblings. Since her family lived in the company housing, she easily found Japanese friends there and spoke Japanese with them. Her parents said, "Japanese are racially superior, so be proud of being Japanese." Through her life she displayed a pioneering spirit that grew from a strong racial pride.

Her father was paid well for working at the coal mine. "My father bought a lot of nice kimonos for me, and I have a lot of nice memories when I was a kid," she said. She cherished the nice memories of her childhood.

FATHER'S DEATH

Her father felt threatened working in South Sakhalin as Japan's invasion of Manchuria progressed. He was worried about his family being surrounded by other races—Russians, Koreans, and Chinese. As anti-Japanese sentiment intensified, he thought of going back to the mainland. He finally decided to go to Takaoka, where his wife's mother lived.

Harumi's father was the second son of the Saida family and grew up in Tonami City, Toyama prefecture. As a young man, he wanted to get a good education and put himself through college. However, he gave up his studies because of financial difficulties. While he was working in Tokyo, his marriage to Toshiko Asai was arranged. He married into the Asai family as an adopted child since Toshiko was the eldest daughter of the family.

After he returned with his family to Takaoka, he soon found a job in Tokyo, so he moved his family to Ichikawa, Chiba prefecture. On December 8, 1941, Japan declared war. Harumi started going to the elementary school, but classes were often canceled because of the air raids during the war. On March 10, 1944, an American B-29 aerial bombing severely damaged the downtown area in Tokyo, and 100,000 civilians died in the flames. Ichikawa was close to downtown Tokyo, so she was scared.

"I saw many houses were burnt down because of the aerial attack, and many people were dying before my eyes," she said about her wartime experience. "Since I have a photographic memory, I can still clearly remember it."

Because of that experience, she still does not like fireworks. When she saw the colorful fireworks, she remembered the days of the bombing by B-29s. "It was like a nightmare," she said. In the midst of the

American aerial attacks, her father was drafted into the Japanese navy. "It was a surprise to my family because he was thirty-five," said Harumi. When the war started in 1941, young men in their twenties were drafted. As the war progressed, even middle-aged men in their thirties and forties were drafted.

Her father was dispatched to the naval hospital in Maizuru, Kyoto prefecture. It was a relief for her family that he was not sent to the battlefield in Asia. "In the navy, my father was soon promoted to an officer because he had attended a university for a short time," said Harumi. She was always proud of her father.

Harumi's family saw her father off at the naval hospital in Maizuru, and her mother and seven children got on the train and went to her hometown, Takaoka.

Takaoka was the second largest city in Toyama prefecture and was founded in 1609. Harumi found that it was snowy in winter like Hokkaido and South Sakhalin. It was famous for its bronze wares and for the bells and statues of Buddhist temples. The city had one of the three largest Buddha statues. In 2009 the city celebrated its 400th anniversary. In Takaoka, Harumi's grandfather had died, and her grandmother was making a living by sewing kimonos and bedclothes.

Soon after they arrived in Takaoka, on August 2, 1945, an American aerial bombing hit the capital of Toyama prefecture, which had arms factories. In Takaoka, the U.S. airplanes dropped leaflets announcing that Takaoka would be one of the next bombing targets. The city was not safe anymore. Harumi and her brothers and sisters were sent to the country.

During the war, there was not enough food for the family. The seven children, including Harumi, were always hungry. Not only was Harumi's family affected, but many Japanese did not have enough food because young men were drafted, and as a result the rice paddies were not cultivated.

On August 15, 1945, the war ended. Harumi's family waited for her father to come back. Since the beginning of the war, 2.3 million Japanese soldiers had died, but her father was discharged and came back to his family. "We were relieved when he came back," she said. Since her friends' fathers had died in the battlefield, she thought she was lucky.

Her father found a job at the port in Fushiki, which is now incorporated into Takaoka City. He soon discovered that he was suffering from a chest disease. He sometimes coughed up blood. Then he was hospitalized. Not only was he ill, but he also was severely depressed. "I guess he felt he was a failure," she said. After the war, he could not provide

financial help or emotional support. A sad incident befell Harumi and her family.

When she got home from the elementary school one day, her grandmother, Mitsui, told her to go to the hospital immediately. Her grandmother explained nothing, so Harumi felt uneasy but rushed to the hospital. When she entered the ward, she was informed of her father's death. "His eyes were not closed, so I felt some fear," she said. She still remembers her father's death face, she added.

"My father committed suicide," she said. She was twelve years old. "It was difficult for me to take."

Her younger brothers and sisters were too young to understand their father's death. For Harumi and her siblings, it was a difficult thing to swallow. "I felt sorry because it was difficult for them to deal with the death," she said.

Her father was not alone. After the war, many Japanese committed suicide. On August 15, 1945, the day the war ended, the Japanese who surrounded the Imperial Palace, where the Emperor lived, committed suicide. A newspaper article reported that the strong bloody smell reached Atagoyama, a hill near Shinagawa. Some were not able to accept the defeat in the war.

In Japan, from 1947 to 1958, suicides became an epidemic. So many things had changed, and many people were not able to keep up with the rapid changes. Harumi regarded her father as one of those people.

Harumi attributed two incidents to her father's death: his disease and his financial difficulties. During the war, he bought stocks in Manchuria. After the war, Manchuria disappeared from the world map, and his stocks became worthless. The rapid changes in financial policies affected many Japanese, including her father.

To control the soaring inflation, on February 17, 1947, the government ordered individuals and companies in Japan to deposit all of their money beyond five yen into the banks. On March 1, 1946, the government prohibited people from withdrawing more than 300 yen for a family head and 100 yen for each family member per month.

Because of the new financial policies, most Japanese did not have enough cash on hand. The government then moved the denomination downward. Facing the financial changes, her father lost hope and chose to die.

IN TOKYO, FIRST JOB

"Do you remember the Japanese television program *Oshin*?" Harumi asked me. *Oshin* was one of the most famous Japanese television

programs in Japan. It was broadcast from 1983 to 1984, and the average television rating was 52.6 percent in Japan. The program was an unprecedented hit and was broadcast in sixty-three countries, including the United States.

The program depicted the life of a Japanese woman who was born to a poor family in 1901. Oshin, the heroine, was sent to work for her family as a babysitter at the age of six. Before World War II, young boys and girls were forced to work for their families.

During the Meiji era (1868–1912), Japanese were encouraged to have many children to make their country rich. However, most did not have the financial means to feed children. Then the eldest children were bound out as apprentices or babysitters, especially before the war. Oshin's childhood reminded Harumi of her younger days. For her family, Harumi did small chores for neighbors such as cleaning and babysitting.

"My mother insisted that I leave home for the family when I completed junior high school," she said. At fifteen, Harumi was forced to help her family as Oshin and other girls did before the war. Little Harumi sacrificed herself for her family.

Harumi's mother graduated from *jogakkou* (girls' high school), but Harumi had to give up her high school education for her family. "I do not have any regrets for not finishing high school," she said. "Many good things would come later in life from the choices I made."

Her mother sent her to Tokyo to work as a domestic helper. In Tokyo, things were not good for her. "I was beaten, mistreated, and starved," she said.

Her first job was to do housework for a toy wholesaler's family in Kuramae, Tokyo. She was forced to work twelve hours a day for 365 days. In return, she was provided a place to sleep, three small meals a day and some used clothes once a year. Harumi wrote letters to her mother and asked for help. She did not hear from her mother at all. "I felt lonely," she confessed. She cried and felt deserted by her mother.

Then she found letters from her mother in the ashes of the burning trash at the toy wholesaler's house. "I was outraged and depressed," she said. Harumi thought she was not treated right by the toy wholesaler's family, so she decided to run away.

Harumi asked for help from her aunt in Tokyo. "I want to go back to Takaoka," she said to her aunt, who helped Harumi to get on the train to Takaoka. The fifteen-year-old Harumi returned to her house and told her mother that she did not want to leave again. But her mother lacked financial means, so she ordered her to get a paying job as soon as possible for

the family. She was again sent to the same toy wholesaler's family in Tokyo. This was the day she swore to be independent.

"I felt I no longer had a place in my mother's house," she recalled. Her mother was not the mother she used to be. She cried. She stayed at the toy wholesaler's house for more than two years, and she felt that life was harsh for her.

"My sister asked me not to work as a maid," she recalled. Her sister thought it was not a decent job, but young Harumi did not have a choice. She did not have another place to live. In Tokyo, she worked hard, although she was not treated well. She thought that she was being taken advantage of and was still not getting paid.

When she was seventeen years old, she finally found her first paying job. It was meaningful for her, but she found that she was not able to pay the rent. She asked the toy wholesaler's family in Kuramae if she could stay at the family's house. The family agreed and asked her to work as a maid at night. After working eight hours at the office, she worked as a maid at night for room and board. Every night before going to bed, she was exhausted.

A change finally came. Harumi learned of a better-paying job from her co-worker. Her co-worker told her about working at the British embassy in Tokyo. Harumi was surprised at the amount of money the embassy employees were paid. Harumi was making 4,000 yen (11 dollars) a month without room and board, but the maid at the embassy made 11,000 yen (30 dollars) with room and board.

She thought she could get paid well if she worked as a maid at a foreigner's house. Highly motivated, she went to an employment agency. She found a lot of good-paying jobs there, but she was not qualified. She was not able to speak English, and she did not have much experience as a maid for foreigners.

"I took the only job that was available for me at that time," she said. She started working for a wealthy Chinese family. "I learned so many things during this job, especially Chinese cooking," she said. She also learned Chinese customs and traditions.

"However, they did not treat me well and they were mean to me," she said. The wife was bedridden, and Harumi had to take care of her. She complained a lot to the people around her.

"One day, the Chinese minister, the head of the family, tried to assault me," she said. She was a virgin, and she barely escaped, pushing him hard. The next day, she packed her things and left the house.

Again, she went back to the employment agency. "I found one of the best jobs I ever had in my life," she said. She started working for a

wealthy French family. "I remember the day when they picked me up at the employment agency," she said. They drove a marvelous classic Jaguar. They said it was a rare special model.

Harumi first worked as a dishwasher and was soon promoted to maid and eventually to nanny. "They treated me very well, and I enjoyed working there," she said. "They once threw a lavish party, and it was one I had never seen in my life."

The head of the French family was a commercial buyer. The family threw many parties for the business. The family had nine maids, two chefs, two chauffeurs, and one nanny. One of the servants was a graduate of Gakushuin University, which was open only to noble and wealthy people before World War II. Another maid was fluent in English. The servants were treated well by the family, and they had their own living quarters away from the main house.

However in six months, the French family decided to lay off the servants. "I had to leave," she said. She did get a great reference from the family, which made it easy for her to find her next job. Whenever her employers were transferred to another country, they wrote a nice reference. Those letters helped her to find the next job.

For the next few years, she worked for a few wealthy foreign businessmen and their families. "I was able to learn Western cooking and Western manners while working as a maid," she said. It was a good opportunity for her. She worked for Japanese, Chinese, French, Jewish, Belgian, and American households. "When I worked at a Japanese house, they mistreated me," she said. "However, at foreigners' houses, they were nice and kind, and I was well paid." She preferred working for foreigners.

The last family she worked for was an American military family. Since she was paid well, she was able to send a good sum of money to her mother in Takaoka. With the money, her mother was able to raise her children. As the eldest daughter, she helped her family as Oshin did. She did not regret her life, because her siblings thanked her a lot for her contribution.

Harumi heard that the payment at American camps was good. While working for the American military family, she took an English class at night and a typing class on the weekends. "I made enough money to pay the tuition for typing and English classes," she said. "At that year, I started thinking about my life." At twenty years old, she started gearing up for her future.

In 1958 she applied for a job at Yokota Air Force Base. She was hired as a research clerk in a warehouse. She located and obtained equipment

for the supply squadron. "It was a great job," she said. The pay was good, and so was the housing. She lived in a nice house occupied by the U.S. Army as an American camp employee. The rent was cheap, and she was able to save money for herself. "I started to think about my future," she said, and she bought a piece of land to build her own house.

Moreover, she was also able to send more money to her mother. Her mother and siblings were grateful for her sacrifices and support over the years. She found many other eldest daughters who worked on U.S. military bases to support their families. Her mother and siblings eventually moved to Tokyo to be close to Harumi, the breadwinner in her family.

After the war, there were not many eligible bachelors in Japan. Young women had a hard time finding husbands, and many young Japanese women were left unmarried. The presence of young American soldiers raised the Japanese women's spirits, and they enjoyed the attention from the opposite sex. In U.S. camps, many Japanese women married American soldiers.

"Since I liked foreigners, I did not hesitate to go out with Americans," she said. She was attracted to their friendly, helpful, and positive attitudes. She met Clarence James Wilkins in 1962 at the U.S. camp. They started going out together.

On May 28, 1963, at Yokota Air Force Base, Harumi married "Jim," who was from a small town in southwestern Pennsylvania. He joined the U.S. Air Force when he was twenty-eight years old. Neither Harumi's family nor Jim's family objected to their marriage. They lived in a base house, and Harumi quit her work. She was twenty-eight years old.

In April 1964 their first daughter, Cheryl (Sherry), was born at the hospital at Tachikawa Air Base. It was not common for Japanese women to give birth at a hospital at that time.

In October 1965, Jim was transferred to the United States. The three moved to Warner Robins, Georgia, near Atlanta. Jim worked as a mechanic at Warner Robins Air Force Base in the home of Warner Robins Air Logistics Center in Georgia.

"I was impressed by the vast land of the United States," she said. In Japan, Hokkaido, her birthplace, is known for its vast land. However, she was impressed by the faraway American horizon.

They stayed in Georgia for two years. Their second daughter, Marian, was born there. In 1969, Jim was transferred to Jamaica. Since Harumi did not want to keep moving her family, she asked Jim to quit his job. Jim and Harumi moved back to his hometown near Pittsburgh.

The four seasons of Pittsburgh reminded her of the ones in Japan. "Pittsburgh is a beautiful city with kind people," she said. She liked the flowers in spring and colorful leaves in autumn. She also liked the neighbors, and she did not face any racial discrimination. "Americans were friendly and warm-hearted people," she said.

In 1969, the couple bought a house in Bulger. Jim was an ideal husband and father. Jim did not smoke or drink, and gave her his entire paycheck. He worked hard for his family. "Life was good, and for the first time in my life, I felt at peace," she said. With two children, she lived as a happy wife for almost ten years.

Then something sad happened. Jim became distant to her. He started coming home late and went out more often. Harumi felt he acted strangely. When she asked him, he said he had had an affair with his brother's wife. "It was so horrible to have an affair with a family member," she said. She had never heard of such a thing. "I was in shock," she said.

Jim came from a big family, like Harumi. Jim's family and his brother's family had a big quarrel. Harumi felt uncomfortable. "I was not happy to get involved in the quarrel," she said, but she was dragged into it. "We fought constantly," she said.

They tried to find a solution. Jim moved in and out of their house more than seven times in four years. Her daughters were disturbed, and all of their friends and neighbors were not happy anymore.

"I was not independent after my marriage," she said. Her neighbors worried about Harumi. With a neighbor's help, she learned how to drive. She had many jobs at one time, which included seamstress, waitress, cook, and school custodian. She also applied for American citizenship and gained it on May 1, 1974.

On June 1, 1979, their divorce was finalized. She kept the American family name, Wilkins, for her daughters. She received full custody of their daughters and some child support. She also got the house, and he moved out.

After the divorce, he continued sending child support for their children. It was not enough, so she continued working at the school. "My job as a cook in a public school was good for me because I could go to school with my girls and come home with them," she said. The job eventually led to a full-time job. She worked for twenty-one years at the local school district as a cook and custodian.

After her divorce, her ex-husband married three times, and now lives with his fourth wife. His wife is seriously ill, so he has to take

care of her. He lives nearby, but Harumi will not talk to him. Harumi is suffering from diabetes, but she can be independent.

HER LIFE IN PENNSYLVANIA

Harumi has lived in the same house in Bulger since 1969. She lives alone, but she is not lonely because her two daughters and six grandchildren live nearby. Her daughters have nice families.

Cheryl (Sherry) is a registered nurse. She is married and lives with her husband, Rick Kerny, and their children: Ross, 19; Sam, 17; and Kaylyn, 12. Rick is a pilot with U.S. Airways.

Marian is an elementary school teacher. She is married and lives with her husband, Tim Ayres, and their three children: Steven, 10; Mark, 5; and Luke 2. Tim works at the municipal city bus company.

As a grandmother, Harumi helps Marian. Three times a week, she babysits Marian's three children. She has two daughters and six grandchildren. Her daughters have nice families. Harumi said that she did not want to get married again for her daughters' sake.

Ten years ago, she retired from her work. Since she worked many years, she has enough money to support herself. She also receives a pension check on a regular basis. She enjoys her retirement life, mostly spending her time in her gardens and visiting her boyfriend.

Three years ago, she met John Boni. "It is fun to talk with John," she said. She and John, who is eight years older, started spending time together at night. John does not like going out, so mostly they spend time in his house. She visits him twice a week. He was a carpenter, so he repairs her house whenever she needs help. "John is handy, and he helps me a lot," she said.

He came to the United States with his Italian parents when he was a boy. Italian immigrants were not respected in the United States, so he had a hard time as a new immigrant.

They like to spend time watching television in his house. They also like to grow flowers and vegetables together. Harumi cooks fresh vegetables, grown from her garden.

Harumi joined the International Marriage Society several years ago and enjoys reading its newsletter. When she reads it, she feels that she is not alone in the United States. Through the newsletter, she became friends with Misa Johnson, who lives in the same state, and talks with her over the telephone. She also enjoys telephone conversations with her sister, Shinobu, who lives in Omaha.

She had a lot of hardships while growing up in Japan. After her move to the United States, she again encountered a lot of hardships. Harumi said, "I like the United States more than Japan, and I feel peaceful in this country," she said.

"It's a wonderful country that has given me so many opportunities," she said. "Americans have blessed me with love, friendship, and kindness that I will never forget."

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CHAPTER 9

Samurai Granddaughter

Setsuko Amburn

"I am a samurai descendant," Setsuko Amburn said with pride. Her grandfather on her father's side was a samurai in the Matsuyama clan, and her grandmother on her mother's side was a daughter of *hatamoto* (a retainer to a shogun). Setsuko was raised to live with samurai spirit. "My family registry showed I am *shizoku* (samurai descendant) and I am proud of my family origin," she said.

Setsuko and Joe Amburn's commemorative picture after their marriage ceremony at the American Consulate General in Tokyo in 1953. Courtesy of Setsuko Amburn.

Setsuko had two brothers, who enlisted in the Japanese military during World War II. Her elder brother, Kikuo Kamei, was a first lieutenant (he was promoted to captain posthumously) in the navy. He was first assigned to work on Kiso, the Emperor's battleship. Then he served on the Hiei, Yamato, and Sendai battleships.

On November 3, 1943, the battleship Sendai was attacked by 500 American combat planes and sunk near Solomon Islands. Her brother died at twenty-three years old in the Battle of Bougainville. Forty-two out of seventy-six of his naval academy classmates died during the war. Setsuko's younger brother, Toshio Kamei, was drafted and ready to fight against the U.S. Army in Okinawa, Japan.

Americans were enemies for Setsuko and her family. When Setsuko talked about her decision to marry an American soldier, Joe Amburn, her mother did not approve. Her eldest son was killed by the attack of the U.S. Air Force, and she worried about the Madame Butterfly story.

"In Sapporo, some American soldiers seduced Japanese women, dumped them and went back to the United States of America, so my mother though that Joe might be one of them," Setsuko explained. "My mother was afraid that I would be dumped by him." The story of Madame Butterfly was talked about by most Japanese after World War II.

In spite of her mother's opposition, in 1953 Setsuko went with Joe to the American Consulate General in Tokyo and got married. Nobody from either family came to the wedding ceremony. Two witnesses arranged by the consulate general's office attended the ceremony. "I am going to be a happy wife," she swore to herself. She tried to be a good wife throughout her life, and Joe loved her throughout his life.

After receiving the marriage certificate in English, the husband and wife went to the Nakano ward office in Tokyo to hand in the registration of marriage to authorize their marriage in Japan, as well. They became husband and wife in both countries.

After the marriage ceremony in Tokyo, the newlywed couple returned to Sendai by U.S. airplane. In Sendai, Setsuko's brother, his superiors, and their friends threw a sukiyaki party for them. She wore a kimono that was given to her by her mother. Her mother did not attend the wedding reception, but she sent a kimono from Sapporo to celebrate her marriage.

For Setsuko, the only person who sided with her was her younger brother, Toshio. "She is twenty-seven years old, and she is mature enough, and she can marry without your approval," Toshio had told his mother.

Before the war, parental approval was needed for marriage because marriage was a family matter. However, the Japanese government was influenced by the Occupation army and changed the Japanese law and custom.

It might have been the last chance for Setsuko to marry. She was twenty-eight years old. During the war, many eligible Japanese bachelors in their twenties and thirties died. Women in their twenties had a slim chance of marriage. When the war ended, many women thought there were no eligible bachelors and that they were destined

to be single. Since interracial marriage was almost nonexistent before World War II, Setsuko had never thought about having an American husband. Then Setsuko met Joe Amburn.

SUPPORTING HER FAMILY

Setsuko was born in 1924 to Yoshitake and Kayo Kamei in Kitami City, Hokkaido, Japan. As a child she was patriotic, believing in the living god, Emperor Hirohito. Most Japanese, including Setsuko, believed that Japan was a country of gods.

Her parents wanted a good education for their children. In search of better educational opportunities, they moved from Kitami to Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido, when Setsuko was about thirteen years old. After graduating from Hokkaido Sapporo Girls High School, she worked as a clerk in the mining permit office in Sapporo.

The office where she had worked from 1941 through 1945 was disbanded soon after the end of the war. Her father was bedridden, and her mother tried to make a living by teaching flower arrangement. Setsuko and her unmarried sisters started looking for jobs to chip in.

Because of the war, the farm land was devastated, and not enough food was distributed by the government. People in Japan were starving. On October 4, 1945, the U.S. Occupation forces took over Hokkaido to reestablish the country, and the American soldiers poured into Sapporo. Two years later, the U.S. Occupation forces set up Camp Crawford, ten miles from Sapporo.

"Why don't you work at the army camp because the payment is good," said her brother, Toshio, who was a student and was also working as a boiler man for the officers of the Occupation forces.

The U.S. camp offered good-paying jobs to women. The pay was twice as much as the local jobs in Sapporo. From 1948 to 1952, Setsuko worked as a housemaid at five houses for American families in Sapporo.

"You are samurai descendant, so I do not want you to work as a housemaid," Setsuko's mother said. Her mother thought it was a menial job. Setsuko persuaded her mother, saying, "The war was over, and we had to change as our country changed."

Setsuko started working for American families. "It was a good experience because I learned American cooking, table setting, housecleaning, and English," she said. "Joe likes my American cooking," she

added. "Joe says if I were not a good cook in American cooking, he would have not married me." He does not like Japanese food. He puts gravy over white rice when Setsuko serves rice.

In Setsuko's house in Anacortes, Washington, her kitchen is neat and tidy. In the morning, Joe helps Setsuko with breakfast. Setsuko is happy because Joe is a thoughtful husband. "He really became a good man, and I can give him 10 out of 10," she said.

In the dining room of her house in Anacortes, she has a complete dinner set and silverware. She sometimes treats guests in a formal setting with American food. She learned the American lifestyle while working as a housemaid. "It was educational for me to work for American families because I learned a lot of things from Americans including the language," she recalled.

"When I started working at an American house, I did not understand English," she said. "I wanted to learn English, but I did not have a chance. I was surprised at the affluence of American families in the camp."

ANTIFRATERNITY RULES IN THE AMERICAN CAMP

While working for Americans, she lived in the dormitory in Camp Crawford with other Japanese women. The dormitory in the camp had strict antifraternity rules and regulations.

"When I stepped in the dormitory on the first day, I noticed a big sign written in Japanese ink," she recalled. The sign said if you talk to an American soldier, you will be handed over to the Japanese police. "We Japanese women were ordered not to speak to American soldiers," Setsuko said. "Since I was not interested in men, including American men, I did not care about it." To her, Americans and the English were still devils, as she was taught during the war. To her surprise, Setsuko found that American soldiers were nice to Japanese girls. "They were so friendly, and they said 'Hello' to us whenever we met them in the camp," Setsuko recalled.

As the Korean War started, more and more young soldiers were sent to Japan from the United States. Young men who were looking for social opportunities with women sometimes visited brothels and ended up contracting venereal diseases. It became a big issue in the camp. To discourage the men from going to brothels, the antifraternity rules were loosened. The authorities thought that young soldiers needed recreation and relaxation, so they held a dance party every weekend.

One of Setsuko's two roommates in the dormitory asked her to go with her to the dance. Setsuko hesitated because she was not interested in going to dances. "You can learn English," said her roommate. Setsuko decided to go to the party because she wanted to improve her English.

At the dance, she talked with several Americans, and she noticed that they were nice and courteous. She could see they were not "devils and beasts," as she and other Japanese were told during the war.

"It was fun to talk to American men," she said. She thought American young men were cheerful and naïve. She started taking an interest in going to the dances and talking to Americans in English.

At the dances, she met a young man and fell in love with him. However, he went back to Florida when his tour ended. He never came back. She sent a letter to his mother in Florida, and Setsuko received a letter from her saying that he got married in the United States.

SHE MET HIM

During the Korean War, the American soldiers in Camp Crawford were transferred to Camp Hachinohe or Camp Sendai on Honshu Island. Setsuko decided to move to Sendai for work. At Camp Sendai, she applied for telephone switchboard operator, a professional job.

While working in Camp Crawford, her English was getting better. She thought she could work as an English operator. The pay was better than that of a housemaid. The pay in the camp was also better than the pay outside the camp. She was paid 15,000 yen in the camp, and the same job paid 7,000 yen outside the camp.

Her American boss was not able to pronounce Japanese names. The boss gave her an American name, Betty.

In Sendai, Setsuko again lived in a dormitory on the camp. Her roommate, who was dating an American soldier, set up a date for Setsuko in the spring of 1952. "It started as a blind date," she said. "My roommate said a surgeon was waiting for me at the gate."

When she first met Joe, she did not think that it would develop into a romantic relationship. He was 5 feet 9 inches and 120 pounds. He had a moustache like Clark Gable's. When she saw his moustache, she thought that his affectations were annoying. Setsuko was a small woman. Her height was 4 feet 11 inches and her weight was ninety pounds.

On the second date, Joe had shaved off his moustache because she had told him on their first date that she did not like it. He was doing his best to make a good impression on Setsuko. However, she thought that he was not her type.

Joe was born in December 1931, in Duck Town, Tennessee, to Charles Rufus and Cora Roslee Amburn. His grandfather was German-Scottish, and his grandmother was German-Irish. "His eyes were so blue, and his skin was so fair," said Setsuko. He looked good, but he often misbehaved.

"I can give him 100 points right now, but at that time I could give him only 30 points out of 100 points," she said. He drank a lot, liked to gamble and sometimes lied to Setsuko. He was a harmless drunk. He often fell asleep after drinking, but he was quick to get in fights at the bars.

In his hometown, he was a delinquent. His mother thought he would end up in jail, so she decided to enlist him in the army at the age of sixteen. Growing up in Knoxville, Tennessee, he had a difficult boyhood. His father, who worked at a copper mine, was gassed during World War I and was an invalid for many years because of black lung. He died at forty years old, when Joe was nine. His younger sister, Georgia, was just a baby.

His mother worked at a factory and became the breadwinner for the family. Young Joe had to take responsibility as the only man in his family. As a boy, he was finally crushed by all the responsibilities. He dropped out of school in the eighth grade, and married and got divorced at a young age in his hometown. He was constantly fighting with other boys in his town. Joe told Setsuko that all the boys he ran around with ended up in the state penitentiary. When his mother sent him to the army, she hoped that he would be trained to behave well.

SAYONARA

In December 1952, Joe's enlistment ended. He was discharged from the army, and he returned to his hometown in Tennessee. Setsuko thought it would be the end of their relationship. "He would never go back to Japan," she thought. She heard a lot of sad stories of Japanese women deserted by American soldiers, and she thought that she might be one of them.

After he left Japan, she thought about him. When he drank, he sometimes got involved in useless fights in Sendai. He did not like fighting, but he got involved. She worried about him. "I simply cared about him, and I wanted to make sure he was okay in the United States," she said.

Setsuko sent a five-page letter to his mother in Tennessee, asking her to "train" him and take good care of him. After reading Setsuko's letter, Joe's mother sensed that Setsuko would be an ideal wife for Joe.

Within a couple of months after sending the letter, Setsuko received a call from Joe, who had just arrived in Yokohama, Japan. He had reenlisted in the army and gotten himself assigned to Sendai. Setsuko and Joe started dating again in Sendai. "We loved each other, so we decided to get married," she said.

In May 1953, Joe was transferred to Sapporo, where her mother lived. Setsuko's mother started looking for a house for them; however, it seemed to be difficult to rent a house. "I do not want to rent out a house to an American soldier," a landlord said. Setsuko and her mother grew tired of rejection from the Japanese landlords.

When Setsuko was walking with him in Sapporo, a Japanese man called her a *panpan,* which means "whore" in English. Joe got angry and tried to hit him. Setsuko asked him not to, even though she was shocked and offended by the remark. In the 1950s, many Japanese did not respect the women who were with American soldiers. They simply regarded them as prostitutes.

Setsuko had some difficulty living in Japan as the wife of an American soldier. She was tired of being discriminated against in Japan. She dreamed about a new life in the United States.

For their first Christmas, they invited Setsuko's family and people from Joe's military unit to dinner. Setsuko's mother brought a Christmas tree to celebrate the first memorable event for them. She felt that her mother accepted their marriage.

On January 1, 1954, they celebrated the first New Year, the most important holiday in Japan, at her mother's house in Sapporo. She wore a kimono given to her by her mother.

On May 13, 1954, their daughter, Cora Kayo Amburn, was born. Cora is Joe's mother's name, and Kayo is Setsuko's mother's name. Both families celebrated their daughter's birth. It was one of their happiest memories.

"Joe said he did not like kids, but he became a good father and changed her diaper and even ironed it," Setsuko said. After their marriage, as their life settled, he started changing. Setsuko felt that she really "trained" her husband.

TO THE UNITED STATES

With their baby, Setsuko and Joe decided to go to America. She was excited with the new life in the United States. To most Japanese, America was a dream country with wealth and modernization. She was tired of being harassed by bigots in Japan.

Joe's tour of duty ended at the close of 1954, so Joe, Setsuko, and Cora left Camp Crawford to start their life in the United States. Their ship arrived in San Francisco on December 30, 1954. Joe's eldest sister, Edith, and Joe's mother, Cora, were waiting for them. They had driven from Tennessee to California to pick them up. The five of them headed to her house in Tennessee, and the trip took a few days. Setsuko felt she was welcomed by his family.

His mother, Cora, was so happy because Joe married Setsuko, as she had wanted.

Joe's relatives and friends in Tennessee also welcomed Setsuko. Most of Joe's relatives and friends were white. "His mother and sisters were nice to me, so I tried to be nice to Joe," she said. "I tried to be nice to Joe more to repay them. They did not discriminate against me because of my nationality and race." In Japan, Joe was not accepted because of his nationality and race, and Setsuko and Joe had been discriminated against as a mixed couple by some bigots. They were excited in their new life in the United States.

After his thirty-day leave was over, the three left for his new assignment at Fort Niagara, New York, in January 1955. Six months later, Joe was assigned to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, and he went to the Signal Corps School to get promoted in the army. Then he was transferred to Darmstadt in West Germany in 1956.

While he was in West Germany, Setsuko and Cora went to his mother's house because housing was not provided for them by the military. At that time, she decided to become an American citizen. On January 16, 1956, she passed the test and became an American citizen. She felt secure to live in the United States.

In 1959, Joe was reassigned to Fort Monmouth, and they moved to Long Branch in New Jersey. As her life started settling down, she felt

homesick. She told herself, "I would not regret my decision because I have a good husband and a lovely child."

TO TOKYO

Setsuko sometimes said to Joe that she missed her family in Japan. Joe thought it would be nice for Setsuko if he could be reassigned somewhere in Japan. His request to be reassigned to Japan was denied, but he did not give up. He took his family to Washington, D.C., to speak with his senator from Tennessee. When the family arrived in Washington, D.C., Joe discovered the senator had passed away.

But his staff worked for them, contacting the Pentagon, and Joe got his assignment to a small camp in the outskirts of Tokyo. The family arrived in Japan in the summer of 1961 and lived in Grant Heights, an Air Force base with housing for military families, for four years.

She was able to meet with her mother and relatives in Japan. "I was happy because I could live in Japan again and see my family," Setsuko recalled. During the stay, she felt the strong value of the American dollar: One dollar was equal to 365 yen.

In 1964, the family returned to the United States as Joe was once again assigned to Fort Monmouth. Setsuko and Joe both worked, saving their money to buy a house. Joe was deployed to Vietnam in 1966. Setsuko put aside the extra combat pay Joe had earned. When Joe returned home, they had enough money to buy a house. Joe worried about being killed in combat in Vietnam, so he bought life insurance and made Setsuko the sole recipient.

In 1968, they purchased a house in Oceanport, just a half-mile from the back gate of Fort Monmouth. When their daughter went to school in 1969, Setsuko started working at a sewing factory in town. Every day she sewed clothes in the dusty factory, but she wanted to help pay the mortgage.

Joe and Setsuko invited Joe's mother to come for a visit. She stayed for three months and seemed to enjoy seeing Joe's life with Setsuko. Soon after she returned to Tennessee, Joe's mother passed away at the age of sixty-two. Setsuko said," I think she was relieved to see how we lived, and we had no regrets because we had treated her nicely."

After his mother's death, Joe kept asking Setsuko to invite her mother to New Jersey. Joe said he would like to show Setsuko's mother that they had a good life. Setsuko thanked Joe. "I really appreciated his warmheartedness." They sent an airline ticket to Setsuko's mother in

Japan. Setsuko's mother was seventy-nine years old and had never flown on an airplane, so the trip was quite an adventure. When Setsuko's mother arrived, she said, "I brought sake because Joe-san likes sake." Joe treated Setsuko's mother kindly. During her five-week stay in New Jersey, she truly accepted Joe as her son-in-law.

Setsuko will never forget November 4, 1979. On that day, Iranians occupied the American embassy in Tehran. Setsuko's daughter, Cora, and her husband, Mark Lijek, were working in the embassy during the takeover. Mark and Cora actually were able to escape from the embassy during the takeover along with three other people, but this was not reported. Setsuko and Joe believed they were hostages.

Setsuko's suffering was reported in Japanese newspapers in Japan. In January 1980, Mark, Cora, and three American diplomats left Tehran undercover and under the escort of the CIA. The plan was not revealed until the hostages in the embassy were released. On January 20, 1980, the U.S. government brought them back to the United States, and they had a joyous family reunion.

TO THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

In 1997, Joe and Setsuko moved to Anacortes, Washington, where their daughter's family lived. In Anacortes, they bought a brand-new house in a quiet residential area.

When she first moved to this area, she was not able to find any Japanese people. Most of the residents were Caucasian. "I wanted to speak Japanese, and I wanted to have Japanese-speaking friends," she said. In order to find Japanese-speaking friends, she joined the Nikkei International Marriage Society and Shakunage Kai in Oak Harbor, Washington, and the Nikkei International Marriage Society in Elm, Washington.

Their daughter, Cora, asked Joe and Setsuko to join the Anacortes Sister Cities Association, which Cora belonged to. Anacortes has four sister cities in various countries including Nikaho (then Kisakata), Japan. Joe and Setsuko joined because of the sister city in Japan. Setsuko and Joe have hosted Japanese visitors from Nikaho and have also visited Nikaho along with others from Anacortes. Setsuko's granddaughter also participated in a student exchange with Nikaho, a program that Cora coordinates. Setsuko likes to share her Japanese culture with Americans and to help Japanese people learn about the

United States. Every year in early March, Setsuko displays her *hina* dolls (Girls Festival dolls) and invites people to come to see them at her house.

On March 10, 2003, Joe and Setsuko celebrated their fiftieth anniversary with their family and friends. "I am very happy now," she said. She does not have to worry about money; her husband is a wonderful, gentle person; her daughter is grown up; and she has nice grandchildren.

Setsuko and Joe attended the convention held by the Nikkei International Marriage Society in 2002, made many friends and shared their experiences. When the convention was held in Seattle in 2006, she spoke about Shakunage Kai. She enjoys her life. She proudly said, "I am a war bride, and I am not ashamed of myself because I am a war bride."

Setsuko has lived in the United States for more than fifty years. She speaks English well, but she loves speaking with her friends in Japanese. When she speaks Japanese, she can be Setsuko. In the United States, she always has to ask who she is.

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CHAPTER 10

My Love Story

Yuki Martley

In the autumn of 1950, Yuki Martley was invited to a dance party by her friend Keiko Wakita. Yuki became friends with Keiko, who married an American soldier, at a dressmaking school in Yokohama.

In Japan, young women were expected to learn sewing, tea ceremony, and flower arrangement before their marriage. Yuki went to a well-known dressmaking school in Yokohama. For the school she moved from her parents' house in Nagano prefecture to Yokohama, an energetic town with foreigners, in Kanagawa prefecture. Yokohama, a port of entry for foreigners, was opened to foreigners in the nineteenth century. Since then it has boasted an international culture.

Yuki Martley at the second convention of Nikkei International Marriage Society at Aizu Wakamatsu, Japan, in 1997. Courtesy of Katie Kaori Hayashi.

When Yuki moved to Yokohama, she was surprised because the city was westernized and influenced by American soldiers who were stationed in the army camps nearby after World War II. Young Yuki felt

that Yokohama differed from her hometown. "I am a county girl, and I was impressed by many things in Yokohama," she said. The life in the city excited her. There were many foreigners. "I saw many American soldiers while walking down the street," she said. American soldiers looked attractive to many Japanese because of the mighty American dollar.

The Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, and American soldiers were sent to Japan, from which they were dispatched to the battlefield in Korea. As Yuki got acquainted with Keiko, Yuki became interested in American life.

"When I was invited to the dance party, I was surely interested in going to the party," Yuki said. "Everything seemed to be gorgeous," she thought. At the Christmas party, they had a real fir tree; only noble or wealthy people decorated the Christmas tree on Christmas in Japan.

At Keiko's house, Yuki was introduced to more that ten American soldiers and their families. Among them, she met a handsome man, John Martley. "It was *hitome bore* (love at first sight) for me," she said. She cherished her memory. "It was also *hitome bore* for him." John and Yuki were immediately attracted to each other.

Jazz and swing music blared at the party, and the two danced to the music. During the war, jazz was prohibited, but after the war, young Japanese enjoyed jazz as the symbol of the democratic country. The party was informal, and it was fun for Yuki. Even though they were not able to speak to each other, they enjoyed one another. After World War II, dancing became popular among the youth in Japan, and it served as a nonverbal communication tool for the young couples.

Keiko's life made a strong impression on Yuki. During and after the war, there was not enough food for most Japanese. However, at Keiko's house, Yuki saw a lot of food she had never seen before. After the war, many Japanese almost starved, and the government controlled the food ration. At the Christmas party, Keiko cooked turkey, and Japanese were not accustomed to eating turkey. Yuki thought it was a feast.

Yuki noticed that American men were gentlemen because of their "ladies first" manners. When a woman tried to sit down, the American men would pull the chair out and push it in for her. When a woman at the table stood up, all the men around her stood up. "Japanese men are chauvinistic even now, but American men treated women as if they served ladies," she said. "It was new and refreshing, and I was deeply impressed by American culture."

John was transferred from Lewis Army Base in Tacoma, Washington, to Yokohama, ten days before the party at Keiko's house. Keiko's husband and John were stationed at the same army base in Tacoma. Since they were friends, John was invited to the party.

John was a newcomer to Japan, and Yuki was a newcomer to American culture. They started taking an interest in each other's culture. At the end of the party, John asked Yuki to see her again. Yuki thought that she was like Cinderella meeting Prince Charming at a ball.

"After the war, Japanese were depressed, and the level of life was low," she recalled. Many buildings in Tokyo and Yokohama were destroyed, and many factories were not fully functioning yet. People had a hard time getting good-quality materials. "I was sewing clothes for my homework, and I noticed the material was not good quality," she said. She was taken aback by Keiko's affluence. She had nylon stockings, which were quite expensive. Most Japanese had never seen nylon stockings before the U.S. Army arrived in Japan. Looking at the difference in the standards of living between the two countries, the winner of the war and the loser were obvious.

In order to communicate with each other, Yuki and John needed an interpreter. Yuki did not speak English, and John did not speak Japanese. "I should have studied English in school," she said, regretfully. During the war, English was banned at schools as the enemy language. As a result, she did not have a chance to study English at school.

However, she needed English to communicate with her Prince Charming. Yuki started taking an English class at a private language school at night. During the day, she was busy as a dressmaking school student. She had energy and hope after meeting John.

However, learning English sometimes discouraged her. "It was difficult for me to distinguish 'chicken' from 'kitchen' and 'bear' from 'pear' by ear," she said. She was not used to American pronunciation. She had never heard native English in her hometown.

After the first meeting at Keiko's house, Yuki and John returned there for coffee and had a good time. Keiko and her husband acted as interpreters for Yuki and John. John invited Yuki, Keiko, and her husband for dinner, and the foursome, who were all in their twenties, did many things together. As Yuki got to know John, she noticed that he was a good person and thoughtful.

When Yuki walked down the street, she heard jazz a lot. Dance became popular in the culture among youth. Television was not introduced yet, so radio was one of the most popular resources for the young. Among the Western music, Yuki liked tango, which she liked to dance to. Yuki sensed that a new era had come.

After getting to know each other, they challenged themselves to see each other without interpreters. They went to the movies and dinner together. "It was fun, and we often visited the NCO (noncommissioned officers) club," she said. At the club, she drank Coca-Cola for the first time, which became popular in Japan in the 1970s.

Yuki was convinced that John was a good person. "I just fell in love with him at first sight, and I liked him more as I dated him," she said. He was shy, but he treated her like a princess. He demonstrated American manners, which was refreshing for her.

LOVE LETTERS FROM KOREA

Six months after they met, John was ordered to go to Korea. It reminded her of an old, sad experience. During World War II, Yuki saw her first love, a Japanese boy, go to the battlefield in Manchuria, and he died. She was depressed.

"Many young Japanese men were sent to Manchuria and died," she said. After experiencing the bitter farewell with the first love, she had to see off her new love to the battlefield. "I loved John more than the first love, and I had to see off the man I loved again for war," she said. She thought it was her destiny.

Even though he lived in Korea and she lived in Japan, they continued keeping in touch with each other. Letters were exchanged across two countries. Every week, John sent a letter to her. Yuki asked Keiko to translate his letters, and to translate her letters to him to English. Keiko again served as cupid for them.

One day, a surprise letter was sent to Yuki. In the letter, John proposed to Yuki. When she read the letter, she was amazed. She was overjoyed, but she did not know what to say. Yuki asked Keiko what she should write in her letter. "It's your decision," Keiko answered. Yuki thought about it again and again. She was sure she was in love with John, but she knew that she had to overcome many things because of his nationality. His country was Japan's former enemy.

Yuki finally decided to jump into a new world—international marriage. The word *kokusai kekko* (international marriage) was inserted into the Japanese dictionary in 1952 because it became popular in Japan as more and more Japanese women married American soldiers.

The biggest obstacle for their marriage seemed to be her father, who lived in Nagano prefecture. "He was an old-fashioned man," she said. Before World War II, arranged marriage was common in Japan, and parents still decided their children's marriages even after the war. As

soon as her father received a letter from Yuki for marriage permission, he sent a letter saying, "Come back immediately to my home in Nagano." Yuki went back to Nagano during the New Year vacation.

Her father would not approve her marriage, saying that the United States was far away from Japan. He was not sure if he could meet his daughter again in life after her marriage. In the 1950s, it took two weeks to go to the United States by ship. Her father became angry because she persistently asked him to accept an American as her bridegroom. In order to settle the father-daughter argument, her grandmother tried to work as a mediator.

Yuki's mother died when she was seven years old. Her father remarried, and Yuki had two half-sisters and three half-brothers. Her stepmother removed herself from the situation and did not say a word about Yuki's marriage. Yuki's grandmother sided with Yuki and tried to persuade Yuki's father. However, he persisted in his position.

"If you married a local man in Nagano, I could come and help you anytime," he told Yuki. If she married John, she was supposed to live in the United States of America. He was worried about her life in the former enemy country after her marriage. Since he wanted her to live in Japan, he continued refusing her marriage. He said that as a father, he wanted to help and protect his daughter.

The neighbors in her hometown spoke ill of her planned marriage when they heard about her decision. They criticized Yuki, which disturbed her. America was a former enemy country. "In my hometown, some fought against American soldiers and died during the war, so they would not accept my marriage," she said.

They even said that John's parents, who were Americans, would not accept a Japanese wife, who was born and raised in the former enemy country. They said mockingly, "Within a year, she would be deserted." The neighbors criticized not only Yuki, but also her family members. Her half-sister was abused and treated badly in school by bullies. In spite of all the bad circumstances, she continued asking her father, assuring him, "Do not worry about me because I will be a happy bride."

MARRIAGE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE KOREAN WAR

One year after his marriage proposal, John came back to Japan from Korea for the marriage ceremony. John and Yuki spoke their vows at the American consulate general in Yokohama on July 9, 1952. After a two-day honeymoon in Yokohama, John had to go back to Korea because he was given only a five-day vacation for marriage.

After their marriage, John was sent back to Japan. Yuki and John finally started living in Yokohama as husband and wife. After living in Yokohama for a year, he was ordered to move to the U.S. Army base in Texas. Yuki was a little bit worried because she was informed that it was common for people to discriminate against other races in Southern states. "I was young and positive, so I stirred my energy to overcome any hardships," she recalled.

With her husband, she left for the United States on March 8, 1953. In Yokohama her parents, her uncle, her landlady, and her friends saw her off at the airport. On a rare snowy day in March, Yuki and John flew from Yokohama to Sacramento via a Pan American charter jet.

It was her first experience flying. Since the plane was chartered by the American army, it was packed with American soldiers and their families. "I was excited," she said. They landed in Sacramento, the capital of the state of California. In Sacramento, it was already spring, and it was warmer than Yokohama. "I felt America was big," she said, seeing the vast fields and large river from the airplane window.

In Sacramento, she realized that America was not as civilized as she expected. There were not many tall buildings, and the city had many trees. After staying at a motel in Sacramento, they took the train to Missouri, his hometown, because John wanted to introduce Yuki to his parents before going to Texas, his new job site.

His parents were farmers and had a cattle ranch in a small town in Missouri. John always said nice things about his parents, so Yuki believed his words. However, she was still worried. "I was a little bit nervous because I was not sure if his parents would accept me," she said. In Japan, anti-American sentiments still existed, and her parents and neighbors were not favorable toward her marriage. She felt uneasy meeting with his parents and was scared of being rejected by them.

However, John had always told her that they would accept Yuki as a family member because they were warmhearted. When a taxi stopped at his parents' house, his mother ran out of the house. They had been waiting for John and Yuki to arrive.

They warmly welcomed Yuki as John had told her they would. Their neighbors, relatives, and friends visited their house to meet John's wife. She was relieved because they were nice people. Even a local newspaper featured her story, a Japanese war bride story. It was rare for Japanese war brides to come to the small town in Missouri.

When his mother introduced her to her neighbors, she used the words "our new daughter from Japan." Yuki was filled with warm feelings and thanked his mother. "She is so nice, and I swore that I would

like to be a good daughter-in-law," Yuki said. "I was happy because his family accepted me even though I came from Japan, a former enemy country."

John was born in October 1917. He was the eldest and had four brothers and one sister. In his family, all five sons joined the army, so they were praised in town because of their loyalty to the country. Out of the five, one got injured in Okinawa, Japan. Another who lived in St. Louis came to see them and congratulated them on their marriage.

When informed that John had married a Japanese woman, his mother told her husband that she could accept a Japanese daughter-in-law because she was the lady his son had chosen. "However, I do not know what my neighbors will say about his wife and what do you think about it?" she asked her husband. "Our son chose that woman as his bride," he said. "Do not worry about what neighbors say about his marriage."

In Missouri, there was not a typical Asian population, and most of the people had never seen a Japanese person. Many of the people in the state were discriminatory toward non-Caucasians. In addition, anti-Japanese sentiments were still common in the state. During the war, anti-Japanese movies were broadcast in the town.

While staying at their house, Yuki learned American cooking and helpful hints from her mother-in-law. She had to live as a housewife in the United States, so his mother tried to teach her many things.

LIFE IN TEXAS AND FRANCE

Yuki and John headed for Texarkana, on the border of Texas and Arkansas. The city was 500 miles from his parents' house in Missouri, and they drove to the new job site, Red River Base. The city was known for its southern charm and Wild West spirit, but Yuki again was worried about anti-Japanese sentiments because the state of Texas had discriminatory laws against non-Caucasians.

Twenty miles away from Red River Base, the young couple rented an apartment. She started her American life in Texas. In spite of her worries, she was not discriminated against because of her racial origin. "People were friendly and nice, even to strangers," she said. In the small town, they went to movies and dances. John asked her to join the women's club in the military camp, and she did.

After three years, John was ordered to work in France. "It was more than a dream for me to live in France," she said. The women's club gave

her a suitcase as a farewell gift. When she started living in Texas, she worked as a private ambassador, demonstrating Japanese flower arrangements, cooking, and origami.

She then lived in her dream country, France, for three years. France had established itself as the center of movies, fashion, and cooking. In Japan, many people adored French movies and fashionable clothes.

After John's French assignment, they moved back to the United States and lived in New Mexico. After living there for three years, in 1964 he was transferred to Korea again. Yuki decided to live in Japan since she was not allowed to live in Korea with John by military order.

When she left Japan in 1953, she and her parents thought that they would never see each other again. However, unexpectedly, she was able to meet with her parents again, and she could live in her father's house. She thought it was "a gift from the heavens." On January 3, 1964, Yuki arrived in Yokohama as an American citizen. She noticed that Japan had changed a lot in twelve years. She was not able to find the war-torn buildings anymore.

It was the year of the summer Olympics in Tokyo. In August, foreigners visited Japan, and Japan showed it had recovered from the war. Yuki visited her cousins in Tokyo and Chiba, and she went to Nagano to see her father and stepmother. They welcomed Yuki because it was a surprise for them, too.

Everything seemed to be good in Japan, but a sad incident suddenly struck Yuki. At a hospital in Nagano, she was diagnosed with cancer. She was flabbergasted and called John in Korea. He made an appointment at an army hospital in Sagamihara, Japan, for her and went to Japan to go to the hospital with her. After getting the doctor's advice, she decided to have surgery at the army hospital in Hawaii. John supported the idea.

After staying with her for a week in Japan, John went back to Korea. In October, she went to Hawaii, where she underwent several tests and waited alone for surgery. December 15, 1964, was the day for her surgery. The eight-hour operation was a success. She saw an American flag from the hospital window. She thought that she was lucky because she was able to receive good care at the American hospital. She was thankful to be an American. Though cancer is a deadly disease, she thought that she could be saved because she was able to receive the best medical care at the American hospital.

After the surgery, she heard that many people in the hospital were praying for the success of her surgery. "I was impressed because people whom I did not know prayed for me," she said. Her doctor in Hawaii,

who was attending a conference in Japan, immediately came back to Hawaii for the surgery. "I was also impressed that the doctor conducted the whole surgery alone without any substitute doctors for eight hours," she said. She thought that she was given a new life by the prayer and dedication of those people. She swore that she would dedicate her life to the people in the United States.

In 1965, John was transferred to the camp in Zama, Japan, so Yuki and John started living together again. They rented an army house in Sagamihara because it was close to the Zama Army Base. After staying in Japan for three years, John was transferred to Boise, Idaho. After living there for one year, John was transferred to Vietnam. John lived in Vietnam, and Yuki lived in Japan for two years. John was then ordered to be transferred to Cambodia, but he decided to retire. He had served in the army for twenty years.

John and Yuki started looking for a place to live. After talking with their friends, they decided to live in Tacoma, Washington. After living in a rental house for one year, John and Yuki bought a house in Tacoma in 1970. Her friend told her that she had found a nice house for her. When Yuki and John saw the house, they liked it and decided to buy it.

Tacoma has a beautiful mountain like Mt. Fuji, and it was named Tacoma Fuji by the Japanese. Since Japanese farmers immigrated there in the early 1920s, the city produced many Japanese fruits and vegetables. The weather was good except for the winter rain. The four seasons reminded them of Japan.

In June 1971, Yuki's stepmother in Nagano died at fifty-eight years old. On January 6, 1983, her father died in Nagano at eighty-two years old. She missed her parents, and she felt that her ties to Japan were severed by their deaths.

In 1985, John was hospitalized several times, and his health condition did not look good. In April 1987, he was hospitalized, and he died in June 1987, at sixty-eight years old. She felt alone. In America, he had supported and helped her; she had lost the most important person in her life.

At his funeral, the Japanese war brides and neighbors in the Tacoma area helped and supported her. She felt she was not alone. "I could continue to live in this country," she said. She decided that she would not go back to Japan and decided to live as an American in the United States.

In 1988, the Nikkei International Marriage Society was founded. She joined it as a charter member and became the secretary for the organization.

In 2002, she was chosen as the president of Tampopo no Kai, an organization for the war brides in Tacoma and Seattle area. She has been working as a bridge between Japan and the United States just as she promised to do at the army hospital in Hawaii in 1964. "I have been volunteered as a kitchen helper at a Japanese senior retirement center for thirty years to return a favor to the United States as I swore at the army hospital in Hawaii," she said.

CHAPTER 11

Gift from Heaven

Nora Cubillos

"I have experienced a lot of hardships after my marriage, but I feel rewarded," Nora Cubillos said. She explained that the hard experiences made her grow as a person and enriched her life. Nora is happy as a mother because she is proud of her daughter, June. "I was a proud mother when I heard that my daughter entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a highly competitive university in the world," she said.

Nora Cubillos's sword dance performance at the convention of Nikkei International Marriage Society in 2002. Courtesy of Katie Kaori Hayashi.

Issei, the first generation of Japanese Americans who entered the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, dedicated their lives to giving good educations to their children, known as Nisei. When Issei were in Japan, it was expensive to go to high school and universities. At the turn of the century, most of them entered the United States with an elementary school–level education. They worked hard, saved money and sent their children to colleges. When their children got into highly competitive

universities in the United States, the parents felt rewarded and proud of their children's academic success. Like the Issei parents, Japanese war brides who entered the United States in the 1950s dedicated their lives to sending their children to good schools. Nora was one of them.

During the war, most Japanese war brides did not attend school. They were deprived of their educational opportunities because of the war. In addition, it was not common for women to go to college in Japan before the war. Nora went to a high school in Tokyo, but her education was interrupted by the war.

After the war brides entered the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, they worked hard, saved money, and sent their children to good schools. Nora was proud of her daughter's success, as other war brides were.

"My daughter was always a good student in school," she said. "I am proud of being the mother of my daughter," she added. For Nora, her daughter was a gift in return for her difficult experiences as a wife. She confessed that she was not happy as a wife. "I stayed in my marriage for my daughter," she said. She said she was mentally tormented by her husband. She said her husband demanded she speak perfect English. "It was difficult for me to speak English like Americans," said Nora.

Soon after her marriage to Genaro Cubillos, her husband insisted that she be a perfect American wife and mother. Genaro was a Mexican-American, and he wanted their daughter, the third generation of Americans, to be a good American who spoke good English. "I do not speak good English, and I do not know American culture well," she said. "I was not educated in this country." However, soon after her marriage, he started to "train" her to become what he thought she should be.

Almost every night after his work, he tried to teach her English and correct her Japanese accent. "It was agony, and I lost my hair in a small circle because of too much stress," she said. "It was so stressful, and I tried to get a divorce from my husband." She once packed her clothes in a bag, but she did not leave her house. "I tried to escape from my marriage numerous times, but I noticed I did not have a place to go," she said. "I stayed in my marriage only for my daughter."

"My daughter knew that I wanted to get a divorce, and she also knew that I stayed in my marriage for my daughter," she said. After June entered MIT, she told Nora, "If you would like to get a divorce, you can do so because I am now old enough." Her daughter knew that Nora stayed home to raise her.

As a girl, June was a high academic achiever in school. Both Nora and Genaro set a goal for their daughter to enter a good university. As they expected, she was accepted by MIT in biology for undergraduate work

and by Northeastern University for graduate work in environmental engineering. When she graduated with her master's degree, Nora and Genaro felt that their goal was attained, and they were proud of their daughter.

After June's graduation, she found a job in Massachusetts and decided to live there. In 1996, Nora and Genaro moved from Los Angeles, California, to Lakeville, Massachusetts. It was a big decision for Nora to leave Los Angeles, which boasted a large population of Japanese and Japanese-Americans. She felt she would be uprooted because she would miss a lot of Japanese food and cultural events. However, for them it was important to live close to their daughter—their precious child—and her family.

Now, Nora lives as an American retiree. She did not want to go to retirement facilities. As long as she is physically independent, she said she would like to live at her house in Massachusetts. She now believes that America is her country.

CHAUVINISTIC COUNTRY

On March 27, 1929, Shigeko (Nora's first name in Japanese) Mori was born to Tatsuzou and Teru Mori in Fukuoka prefecture. She was their sixth child. When she was a child, two of her elder sisters and one elder brother died. When she came of age, only she and her two brothers survived out of six children. She and only one brother are alive now, because one brother died at forty-three years old.

After the Meiji era (1868–1912), Japan encouraged its people to bear many children. However, the health and sanitary conditions were not good enough, so many children died young. After the victory of the Japan-Sino war of 1889, Japan vowed to enrich its country and increase its armaments. In the 1930s, when Nora was a child, Japan invaded Manchuria. The Japanese government encouraged the people to have many children so that they could serve the country.

As a girl, Nora did not like Japanese society because of its chauvinistic nature. She did not understand why men were more respected than women. She complained to her mother because her brothers had more freedom than she did. Her father, the head of the family, was highly respected. Her mother took a subordinate role in the family. Nora was ordered to respect her father and brothers simply because they were men.

When World War II started in December 1941, Nora was in the sixth grade. Recalling her life, she now thinks that she was deprived of educational opportunities because of the war. Her parents lived in

Fukuoka prefecture, but she went to a high school in Tokyo. After the war started, the classes were interrupted. The students were sent to factories to work. They were asked to work for free for the country.

During the war, English was prohibited from being taught as it was the enemy language. She wishes that she could have gotten a better education. "I was not given an educational opportunity because of the war," she said. She went to Tokyo to study. She attended a high school, Otsuma Jogakkou, in Tokyo with a private scholarship. After her graduation from the high school in Tokyo, she moved back to Fukuoka and started living with her parents.

Since she wanted to be financially independent, she found a job at the prefecture office. In Fukuoka, she worked at the juvenile department of the Fukuoka prefecture government. She also wanted to acquire skills to get a good job. She went to a driving school and was the second woman to get a driver's license in Fukuoka prefecture. It was not common for women to get driver's licenses at that time. "I might be the first female taxi driver in Fukuoka," she said with a laugh. She relished the challenge of new things when she was young.

MEETING BY ACCIDENT

On Saturdays, she took a sewing class. If she had not taken the class, she would not have met her husband. Nora said she did not like to talk about how she met her American husband. "Nobody believes my story because it happed just by accident," she said.

Nora met him on the streets of Fukuoka in the summer of 1955. Genaro was driving a car, looking for a tire factory on a Saturday. After her Saturday sewing class, Nora was walking down the street to go home. Genaro passed by Nora. He soon backed up his car and asked for directions to the Fuji tire company. "He smiled, and I smiled back," she said. Nora got into his car and took him to the Fuji tire company. After finishing his business, he offered to give her a ride to her house. "I did not want to let him know where I lived, so I got out of his car near my house, saying goodbye," she said. Nora thought that she would never see him again.

A surprise hit her. A few days later, Nora found him at the iron gate of her office. "What are you doing?" she asked. "I am waiting for you," he answered. She remembered that on her way to home, they drove by the building where she worked. She pointed out the building and said, "I work here."

Genaro wanted to see her again, but he did not know her telephone number and address. He thought if he waited for her at the gate of the office, he could see her again. After their marriage, Nora asked him several times why he waited for her at the gate. He always answered, "I do not know."

After their surprise meeting, Nora started seeing Genaro. She did not want to have an intimate relationship with him because he would go back to the United States someday. "I knew he would go back to the United States, and many Japanese women were left behind by American soldiers," she said. She heard many sad stories of the women who were left behind by American soldiers, and she did not want to be one of the girls. She thought it was a shame.

After the Korean War, many American soldiers were stationed in Ashiya Air Force Base in Fukuoka prefecture. Ashiya Airport was built in 1942 and became available to the Japanese air force in 1945. In 1945, after the end of the war, it was taken over by the U.S. Air Force. In June 1950 the Korean War started, and it was used as a U.S. Air Force base. In 1960 the base was closed. Between 1950 and 1960, many young American soldiers were sent to Fukuoka prefecture. Some servicemen married Japanese women, who were then called war brides in Japan.

A Japanese short novel, *Kokuchi no E* (Black Picture), by Seicho Matsumoto, describes the anti-American sentiment in the Fukuoka prefecture during the Korean War. The Japanese did not like the American servicemen who stayed in Fukuoka prefecture. Near Ashiya Air Base, there were many bars and unofficial brothels for the American servicemen. Some of the women who dated American servicemen were not respected because of their manners, language, and clothes.

Some soldiers died in the war, and others were sent back to the United States with very little notice. Intentionally or unintentionally, many women were left behind in Japan. Japanese men did not want to date or marry the women who had dated Americans.

Nora had never thought she would marry an American. She did not respect American soldiers or Japanese women who dated American servicemen. "While walking on the street, I was chased by American men," she said. "I simply ignored them." She did not like Caucasians. "Since he is Mexican-American; his hair was black, and his eyes were brown; I did not feel uneasy," she said. Because of his physical features, she started accepting Genaro.

In Japan, it was still common for a father to find a bridegroom for his daughter in the 1950s and 1960s. It was not respectable for a young woman to go out with boys and hunt for a husband. Such

a girl was labeled a delinquent by older people. "I did not want to be one of the miserable women left behind by American soldiers," she said. "It was a disgrace not only to me, but also to my family to be deserted by an American serviceman." Genaro became serious, but she was not. She refused to have an intimate relationship several times. One day, Nora received a call from an officer of the city hall. "An American soldier came to the city hall," he said. "In order to marry you, he wanted to get your family registration record."

Although the city worker refused to give him the record, the American was persistent, so he gave the record to the American. Nora was astonished, and she did not understand what was going on. It was Genaro. "It was simply his decision, and it was not my decision at all," she said. However, she was forced to marry Genaro because of the incident.

Genaro was ordered to go back to the United States, so he decided to take her there as his bride, and he wanted to accelerate the marriage process. Nora finally made the decision to marry. However, all of her family members disagreed. Her brothers said, "If you are going to marry an American, I am going to disown you." Her brothers thought that it was disgraceful for their sister to marry an American, a former enemy.

However, her father changed his mind, saying, "She is twenty-six years old, and she is old enough to make a decision." Her father asked the family members to accept her decision. Since her father, the head of the family, made the request, the family members came to accept her decision. "It was quite difficult to marry an American," she explained. "Japanese women at my age who tried to marry American men had a hard time, and those women were not socially respected."

On August 10, 1955, Genaro and Nora got married at the consular office of the United States in Fukuoka. "No wedding dress," she said. No family members attended the ceremony. After the ceremony, one uncle from her father's side and one uncle from her mother's side came to her house. A small reception was held. She realized that her marriage was not welcomed by her relatives.

When Genaro applied for marriage to a Japanese woman, his bosses tried to discourage him. However, he did not listen to their advice. "Once he made a decision, nobody challenged it," she said. His bosses gave up and finally issued a marriage permit. Within one year, she regretted her marriage. After the marriage, he wanted her to be a

perfect wife. At this time, she did not know that it would be the beginning of her hardships.

AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

In October 1955, three months after their marriage, the newlywed couple arrived in San Francisco. The ship was packed with American families. Most wives, including the Japanese war brides, seemed to be excited. Nora was disheartened because she did not want to leave Japan. She was in a dilemma. "Since my family did not approve of my marriage in a positive way, I did not want to live in Japan," she said. Since she married an American, she wanted to live in the United States like an American.

On January 29, 1957, she became an American citizen. However, her life in the United States was not easy.

After her marriage, her husband expected her to speak perfect English, and acquire Western manners. After she became pregnant, he requested more and more, including that she be a perfect mother.

In 1958, she gave birth to June in Tachikawa, Tokyo, at twenty-nine years old. She and her husband bought a house in 1964. One dollar was equal to 360 yen, so her life was affluent compared with those of most Japanese. Nora had a Japanese maid at her house. "The babysitter was hired by the Japanese government, and she was regarded as a government employee," she said. The monthly payment for the babysitter was 9,000 yen, which amounted to 25 dollars. "It was not big money," she said. "It was a nice time for me." She tried to get a divorce. However, she would not go back to her parents' house. Even though life was hard for her, "I have never thought about going back to Japan," she said. "If I go back to Japan as a loser, it will hurt my pride."

She said that she still felt alienated. She believed she was discriminated against in this country. When she and her baby flew on an airplane, they were totally ignored. "If my husband had been with us, we would have been treated with more respect," she said.

In 1964, they bought a house for $700 in Tachikawa, in the Tachikawa camp. They lived there for four years. They sold it for $1,400 in 1969.

In 1967, her father in Fukuoka died. She was in Tachikawa, Japan, with her husband and daughter. She attended the funeral alone.

In 1969, she came back to the United States of America. Her husband was transferred to North Air Force Base. It was a one-and-a-half-hour trip from Little Tokyo in Los Angeles. "His job was an administrative job, and he retired there," she said.

In 1975, she went back to Japan and took care of her dying mother at the hospital in Fukuoka. She felt that she fulfilled her duty and obligation.

In 1986, they moved to Alhambra near Little Tokyo. In 1996, they moved to Massachusetts.

"I would like to attend the Nikkei Internal Marriage Association that will be held in Beppu, Japan," she told her husband.

"I do not want you to be friends with war brides," her husband said. "I do not like war brides because they are not nice."

"I just want to take a look at the meeting to see what they were," she said. She called the president of the association, Kazuko Umezu Stout, in 2002. At the convention she met other Japanese war brides living in the United States and Australia.

She started recalling her life as a war bride. "I have overcome a lot of hardships, and I learned a lot through those experiences. I have been helped by many people, and I am having the happiest time now," she said. "I like America because this is the country of freedom."

After her parents died, Nora stopped visiting her brother. However, she visited the family grave whenever she went to Japan. In the family grave, her parents, her three brothers, and one sister rest. Her family religion is Zen Buddhism. "I visit the grave because my ancestors and parents are in the grave," she said. After her cancer surgery, she does not think there are many years left for her, but she thinks she lived a good life, and is thankful to America.

CHAPTER 12

Fight Prejudice

Kazuko Umezu Stout

Carl and Kazuko Umezu Stout at the group trip after the fourth convention of Nikkei International Marriage Society at Beppu, Japan, in 2002. Courtesy of Katie Kaori Hayashi.

Kazuko Umezu Stout, the first president of the Nikkei International Marriage Society, who led the group from 1988 to 2007, entered the United States as the wife of an American soldier. With a lack of

knowledge of English and Western culture, she moved to the United States, a former enemy nation of her native country.

She worked at a chicken farm and raised three children in the state of Washington, where her husband decided to settle. "I am one of the happy Japanese war brides, but it seems that people do not want to see happy war brides," she said. "They assumed war brides who married former enemies should not be happy." Kazuko said that she has had a wonderful life in the United States with her husband and children. However, she sometimes has felt lonely. She lived in the small town of Yelm, a one-hour drive from Seattle. It was difficult for her to find a Japanese friend in her neighborhood at first.

Kazuko emphasized that one of the most difficult things she experienced in the United States was loneliness. She loved talking and exchanging letters with other war brides. She founded the Nikkei International Marriage Society to provide a forum for Japanese war brides. "I used to write four or five letters to the members," she said. She ran some of the letters in the newsletter.

As she exchanged letters with the war brides, she found out that she was not alone in the United States. Many of the war brides lived in remote areas like Kazuko and missed their native culture and language. They felt isolated in the United States. In order to unite those war brides, she established the society in 1988.

NIKKEI INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE SOCIETY

After the first convention of the Nikkei International Marriage Society in 1988, Kazuko noticed that the Japanese war brides wanted to share their feelings and experiences in Japanese. When she became homesick, she wanted to talk with her friends in Japanese. She knows how important it is to speak and exchange opinions and ideas in Japanese.

Since Kazuko noticed that many of the women wanted friendship, she included the word *shimboku* (friendship) in the name of the association. As the membership grew to 500, she tried to direct the association as follows:

1. Change the stereotype of Japanese war brides. (In Japan, especially soon after World War II, the Japanese women who spent time with American soldiers were seen as prostitutes. The "promiscuous relationship" between American soldiers and Japanese women was well publicized in the United States and Japan. After the war, some women lost shelter, almost starved to death, and made a living as

prostitutes for foreign soldiers. Some were desperate, but in the war-torn country, not all the Japanese women who spent time with American soldiers were prostitutes. Many Japanese women who married American soldiers were tormented by the image of the war brides, especially in Japan.)

2. Gain respect from the Japanese both in Japan and United States. (Japanese war brides were regarded as traitors, especially so soon after World War II because they married former enemies—American and Australian soldiers. As a result, they were not respected in the Japanese community.)
3. Leave the records of the Japanese war brides and publish books both in Japanese and English. (She co-authored two books in Japanese in Japan, and she tried to inform the people of the Japanese war brides in the United States and Australia.)
4. Unite the war brides in the United States through the newsletter. (In the newsletter, war brides exchange opinions and feelings and solidify their ties.)
5. Be a liaison between Japanese and Americans. (The Japanese war brides regard themselves as private ambassadors to foster the understanding between the Japanese and Americans and between the Japanese and Australians.)

With those five aims, she dedicated herself to the association for eighteen years.

At the first convention, held in Olympia, Washington, more than 300 war brides attended. She was pleased with the result. "It was quite a success," she said. Kazuko thought that she was destined to achieve the five missions of the Nikkei International Marriage Society.

BORN IN A SMALL VILLAGE

For Kazuko, who was born in 1932 in a small village (presently absorbed in Nagai City) in Yamagata prefecture in Japan, the United States seemed to be an enormous and awesome country. She could never have dreamed that she would one day live in the United States.

During World War II, Kazuko showed interest in learning English. She said to her father, "I would like to learn English." It was a mystery to her family, including herself, why she said so. Her family in Yamagata prefecture has talked about it for more than fifty years. It was a surprise to her family because Japan had been fighting against the United States. English was regarded as an enemy language, and high schools in Japan

stopped teaching English as a second language. There was no need to learn the enemy language especially in a prefecture that Americans did not live in. Nobody in her family imagined that about ten years later, she would marry an American and move to the United States, and English would be her primary language. In Japan, interracial marriage with Americans was rare, even before World War II. There was no reason for her to want to learn English as a child.

Little Kazuko was tired of the village life, and she did not want to finish her life there. She swore she would get out and live a life different from the people there. However, it seemed to be a mere dream.

After graduating from junior high school, she worked at a village office as a clerk. She was not satisfied with her life because it was too ordinary. More than half of her classmates were working in the big cities. She asked her father if she could go to Tokyo for work. She wanted to go to a new place and start a life that would be different from her current one. Her uncle on her mother's side always said, "Kazuko would not finish her life in this village."

In her book *Sensou Hanayome Gojyunen o Kataru* (Fifty Years as War Brides), Kazuko recalled that she was a determined child. As a teenage girl, she was interested in boys, but she did not want to go out with local boys. If she had gotten married to a local boy, she would have had to have a life in her village. She was looking for something different.

SHE MET AN AMERICAN SOLDIER

In 1951, with much ambition, the nineteen-year-old girl moved to Kanagawa prefecture near Tokyo, where her father found her a job as a clerk at a bus company (Zushi Kotsu Kaisha), which was in Zushi, near Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture. During World War II, Yokohama was totally devastated and became a ghost town. After American troops took over Yokohama and nearby cities, including Zushi, the area started picking up.

While working at the bus company, she became friends with a Japanese girl who worked at the ammunition department of the American camp. The friend tried to match Kazuko with an American bachelor. Kazuko, her friend, and an American soldier went to a movie, *Gone with the Wind*. That soldier was Kazuko's future husband, Carl Stout. "She was so beautiful," Carl said. She looked naïve and different from other women he had associated with. He wanted to see her again.

Kazuko was impressed by the American movie, which was quite different from the Japanese movies. In addition to the movie, she was attracted to Carl. "His hair was darker than most Japanese, and his eyes were green. He was like a movie star," she said.

When the war broke out in Korea on June 25, 1950, American soldiers were sent to Japan, a U.S. allied country. Carl was one of them. The twenty-seven-year-old Carl did not have any intention of getting married in Japan. He had been supporting his family by sending money to his parents in Springfield, Illinois. Kazuko was nineteen, and most Japanese girls married around twenty years of age at the time. While dating, he noticed Kazuko was serious, but he showed no intention of marriage to her. "I am almost broke, so I cannot give you an easy life for several years after marriage," he told her. It seemed that there were no bright hopes for the couple because he was sending money to his parents in the United States. Since he had been supporting his parents since the age of fifteen, he was not able to afford a new family. However, he wanted to see her again, and noticed that she was attracted to him. Her English was limited, and his Japanese was limited. However, the couple continued seeing and tried to communicate with each other, dating in Yokohama, Kamakura and Zushi.

MARRIAGE DECISION

In the fall of 1952, Carl's father died, and his mother remarried. After her second marriage, Carl did not have to send money to support his mother. He decided to spend money for himself and Kazuko. Carl started thinking about living with Kazuko with the intention of marriage. When they went to Kamakura, he proposed to her, and they started living together.

In order to get a marriage approval from her parents and relatives in Yamagata prefecture, Kazuko went to her village, nine hours from Tokyo by train. Kazuko said she was "strained." She did not think that they would approve of her marriage proposal. All the relatives on Kazuko's side in the village came to Kazuko's father's house. Her father asked for their approval of Kazuko's marriage to the American soldier. At that time, marriage was still regarded as a family matter, especially in the rural areas. Most war brides were disowned when they married American soldiers. However, Kazuko became one of the happy brides who was not disowned by her family.

In April, 1953, they applied for a marriage certificate from the Army in Yokohama. They expected it would take a year for them to get the

approval for the marriage because the Army was reluctant to issue a marriage certificate if the proposed spouse was Japanese. After the application was submitted to the Army, Carl wanted to live together with Kazuko and asked her to join him.

She decided to live with Carl. In her book *Umi o Watatta Sensou Hanayome* (The War Brides Who Crossed the Pacific Ocean), she said it was "a big decision" for her. At that time, Japanese women who lived with American soldiers were called "only" (the English word had been adopted into Japanese). "Only" in Japanese meant a woman who had an intimate relationship with only one foreign partner—as distinct from *panpan,* a woman who had sex with numerous partners for money. At that time, women who lived with men before marriage were not respected even if they intended to marry in the future. The two rented a small house in Zushi. She was hurt because she was called "only" by local Japanese. Many people looked down on her because they would not accept the Japanese women who lived with former enemy soldiers. Most Japanese war brides, including Kazuko, had to face hardships because of prejudice in Japan.

Although she was living with Carl, Kazuko was still not sure if she could get married to him. The Army rejected many marriage proposals, and American soldiers sometimes were sent to Korea or sent back to the United States. The Korean War started in 1950, and many soldiers had been sent to Korea. Carl might be sent to Korea, where he could get injured or killed. Everything was uncertain for Kazuko.

On July 27, 1953, the Korean War ended, and Kazuko was relieved because he did not have to be sent to the battlefield. American soldiers, including Carl, started going back to the United States. Good news suddenly came to Carl and Kazuko. Carl told Kazuko that a senator from Illinois would visit Japan, and he would work hard for the boy from Illinois to get a marriage permit.

On November 18, 1953, they had a small wedding ceremony at the American consulate in Yokohama. No relatives attended the ceremony. Kazuko did not understand what the church pastor told her in English, but she said, "Yes" when he asked her if she would take Carl as her husband.

In April 1954, the five-month-pregnant Kazuko left for the United States with her husband. Kazuko's parents and relatives came to Yokohama to say good-bye to Kazuko and Carl. It took two weeks to get to the United States from Japan by ship. Everybody thought it was not possible for them all to meet again. Carl said, "I will bring Kazuko

back in three years." However, her parents doubted this. Most of them, including Kazuko, thought it might be a final farewell because of the distance and expensive travel fees.

Carl and Kazuko landed in San Francisco after twelve days. It was a bustling city for Kazuko and Carl, who were both raised in small villages. Kazuko followed him like a child. If she had gotten lost in the unfamiliar country, she would not know what to do. She did not even know where she was. She had to depend heavily on Carl.

They got on the Greyhound bus and headed for Springfield, Illinois, where his mother and sister lived. They first visited Carl's sister's house. His sister and her husband welcomed them with their three children. Kazuko was nervous, and she tried to give a good impression. They were nice and kind to Kazuko, and they understood that she came from a different country. She was surprised at the house his sister lived in. The house did not have water faucets. They used well water for cooking, washing, and taking a bath. Kazuko was raised in a small village, but most houses in her village had the public water services. She realized that America was not as modernized as she had expected.

The young couple bought a car and headed for Fort Knox, Kentucky. When they rented a room, they were almost broke, and they ate only potatoes before Carl received his paycheck. They had spent all their money during their travels.

In three years, Carl sent Kazuko and their baby back to Japan as he promised. He went to Korea, leaving Kazuko and her baby in Japan. The American dollar was mighty, and Kazuko felt she had become one of the *nouveau riche*. Everybody in her village showed respect to her. She felt that she was living a different life from the village people.

Carl and Kazuko returned to the United States together to make a home in January 1960. Carl started working at Fort Lewis Camp in Tacoma, Washington. Kazuko spent her life as a wife, mother, and worker. As her children grew up she started looking for something to do to make the situation of Japanese war brides known. She was also looking for something that she could become devoted to. This turned out to be the formation of an international marriage society for Japanese war brides.

While living in the United States, she was discriminated against by the Japanese and Japanese-Americans because she was a war bride. She asked herself whether the term *senso hanayome* (war bride) was a derogatory term or not. She would be angry if somebody said, "You are a war bride," but she was a war bride. She could not change that fact.

Kazuko said, "One incident changed my thinking totally." It was an encounter with Japanese Princess Michiko in Tokyo. In May 1984, she attended the convention of the association of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad held in Tokyo, Japan. She was invited to a small tea party held by Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko. Princess Michiko told her, "You must have had a hard life in a foreign country where the language and culture was quite different from the Japanese ones." The princess treated her as a contributor to the international liaison.

She had thought that she was discriminated against by the Japanese and Japanese-Americans because she was a war bride. She thought that she had been despised because she was a war bride. Princess Michiko knew that she was a war bride, but she did not look down on Kazuko.

"It was a surprising incident for me," she said. After this experience with the princess, she realized that nothing was wrong with being a war bride and took pride in being one.

From that day forward, Kazuo was a changed woman. She felt that she should not be ashamed of herself. Princess Michiko treated her as a private ambassador in the international friendship and thought that war brides made important contributions to the international friendship.

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JAPANESE WAR BRIDES

In the late 1980s, in the *Hokubei Houchi*, a bilingual newspaper for Japanese and Japanese-Americans in Washington, Kazuko found a small article that said a group of Japanese war brides set foot on American soil on January 4, 1948. She decided to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of war brides in the United States.

Kazuko founded the Nikkei International Marriage Society and held the convention on October 30, 1988, in honor of the fortieth anniversary.

Newspapers in both Japan and the United States, in both English and Japanese, featured the convention. After the convention, many Japanese war brides wanted to get together again. They asked Kazuko to arrange the second convention for Japanese war brides. Kazuko always said, "I am a mere housewife." The mission seemed to be too much of a burden for her. However, many other war brides started helping. "I am thankful to my friends because they have helped me so I can accomplish those events," she said. In May 1989, the first newsletter was sent out to members from her kitchen.

The newsletter progressed from once a year, to twice a year, then four times a year. It helped unite Japanese war brides all over the United States. They started talking about their lives in the United

States. In the first newsletter in May 1989, she announced the name of the association, the Nikkei International Marriage Society.

The main members were Kazuko Stout as president, Kinko Kirkwood (whose story is included in this book) as vice president, and Yuki Martley (whose story is also included in this book) as secretary. The newsletter announced the second convention would be held in autumn 1991. It also indicated that they were going to have a convention in Japan.

In 1991, she was informed of a documentary movie on Japanese war brides in Australia by Norwegian director Solrun Hoaas. The film, *Green Tea and Cherry Ripe,* had been shown in Tokyo. She sent a letter to the director, saying she would like the addresses of the Japanese war brides in her film. On February 14, 1991, Kazuko received a letter from a war bride, Chiaki Foster, in Australia. After exchanging a couple of letters, Kazuko visited Yaezakura no Kai in Melbourne, Australia. After her visit in Australia, the Japanese war brides in Australia joined the Nikkei International Marriage Society.

In May 1994, Kazuko organized a convention of the Nikkei International Marriage Society in Hawaii. Three hundred twenty war brides came to Hawaii from Australia. Kazuko presided over the society with strong leadership for eighteen years. It was her mission to bring war brides together in the world.

In January 2006, Kazuko suffered a stroke, and most members thought that she had been under too much pressure as president of the society. She was working to organize a convention in Seattle in May 2006.

In January 2007, the International Marriage Society decided to disband because nobody took over the presidency. Most Japanese war brides were in their seventies, and it became difficult to keep the organization going. Kazuko quietly accepted the fact and agreed to stop issuing the newsletter from her kitchen. Many Japanese war brides do not hesitate to say, "I am a war bride." This change was the product of Kazuko's devotion.

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Part III

Shizuko Suenaga, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of the Japanese Program at Seattle University

Dr. Shizuko Suenaga. Courtesy of Dr. Shizuko Suenaga.

My own personal journey to the United States from Japan, as a student, was quite different from the path of the intrepid women whom I met and came to know in the process of researching Japanese war brides. In many obvious ways the circumstances of my life and the constraints on me before I left Japan were different, as my elected path was to study, rather than heading into a marriage with an American man. Nevertheless, my deep interest in investigating the experience of Japanese post-war immigrants in the United States, especially that of the "war brides," grew out of my personal experiences. This interest results both from various circumstances in my life in Japan and from the situations, emotions, and events of my life after coming to the United States. Elements of the life experiences of these earlier immigrants echoed my own; as I became more self-aware about the patterns of my own experience in

the United States, I began to pursue the study of Japanese war brides. Beyond seeing how different all of our circumstances were, which was obvious from the beginning, I was impressed very often by the common perspectives and common elements that emerged in our paths.

It has been over twenty years since I first journeyed to the United States to study in 1983. I was initially drawn to study abroad by my curiosity about other people and other lands, and my desire to experience life in a different culture. Because I was young and not married, it seemed to me a good time to travel and experience the world a little bit. Despite my earnest (and naïve!) promise to return to Japan after one year's study in an American school, my decision to travel and study was a great shock to my parents. They felt puzzled, angered, and saddened by my intention and determination to go to the United States for study. It's hard for me to say now if they already feared or foresaw that I might not return as quickly as I promised, or that I might not return at all. They criticized my plans from a very significant perspective, claiming that I was making a dreadful mistake even to consider jeopardizing my existing hard-won job. At that time, I was an elementary school teacher, a prestigious position that I had obtained by means of competitive examinations. Even though I confidently argued to my parents that I would surely pass the examinations again when I came back from my year abroad, in truth I was not at all sure of this. I wanted to go, and I was focused only on this goal.

Looking back to the day of my flight to the United States, I can vividly recall my emotional state. I kept going over and over these doubts in my mind: Am I making as big a mistake as my parents say? Will I be safe in America, where the crime rate is said to be so high? I acted as if I had no worry or fear in front of my parents, who had never approved of my decision but lovingly accompanied me to the airport to see me off on my big journey. All the time, my mind was full of anxiety, because I was going to live in a foreign land that I had never been to before. I was looking out the window in the airplane and happened to see my parents, who were patiently waiting to watch my departure. Suddenly, streams of tears were running down my cheeks, which I was helpless to stop.

In America, beginning my sojourn in a different country for the first time, I soon began to feel anxiety and estrangement because of being foreign, speaking English with a strong accent, encountering puzzling cultural differences, and so forth. I often struggled with a sense of inadequacy in the academic setting because I could not speak or behave

appropriately in my new environment. Having imperfect and untested language skills was an ever-present source of frustration, and inevitably lowered my self-esteem; from time to time, I felt like I was an "idiot" when I couldn't communicate sufficiently to express my ideas or to explain my frustrations. Furthermore, evaluating those around me from my Japanese-based norms, I was often bewildered by the culture and thought that Americans did not seem to care much for other people.

Despite these challenging, if predictable, difficulties, my greatest experience of unhappiness came not from the considerable language struggles, but from an intense longing for the everyday foods I had eaten all my life! At that time, I was living in a college dormitory where the cafeteria served Western foods at all mealtimes. I soon lost my appetite; to some extent, eating "foreign" food became a torment for me in that period. Because we were not allowed to cook in the dormitory, familiar Japanese food was available only at restaurants. I wanted to eat out as frequently as possible, but the savings with which I was supporting myself were rather limited. In 1983 the exchange rate of dollar to yen was very disadvantageous for the Japanese; even hamburgers at McDonald's seemed expensive to me. Eating out at a Japanese restaurant was a luxury I could only occasionally manage.

Of course, not all aspects of my new experiences in the United States were uncomfortable. The relatively relaxed relationship between men and women in particular made a deeply positive impression on me; in Japanese daily life, a much greater degree of male dominance was taken for granted. Looking back to my early days in America, I remember my surprise when I saw the husband of my host family making sandwiches for the children while the wife was outside relaxing. Nowadays some progressive changes toward greater equality of men and women are taking place in Japan, but in those days, to see a husband cooking when the wife was available for domestic tasks would have been unthinkable in my family or any of my friends' families, at least when I was growing up. Having lived here for many years now and thus being exposed to the American way of life, I am no longer surprised to see men cooking, taking care of their children, or doing grocery shopping; today I happily take such scenes as a matter of course.

As you can guess, I stayed in America after that one year, and went on to graduate school. After several years living in America, I began to mull over my perceptions and experiences as a woman, as a foreigner, and as a Japanese, and I developed an interest in knowing the experiences and perceptions of others in a similar situation. I truly wondered

about the lives of the Japanese women who had come to live in this particular foreign land in a somewhat earlier time.

There have been two main groups of female Japanese immigrants to America: *Issei* (first generation) women, which refers to the broad wave of Japanese immigrants of the late 1800s, and the so-called war brides, many of whom arrived in the 1950s and early 1960s. Most of the *Issei* women came to Hawaii and to West Coast states as the wives of Japanese laborers. Although the *Issei* immigrants occupied the soil of a new society, that generation maintained a largely Japanese lifestyle. They lived in communities with other Japanese, spoke Japanese at home, and prepared meals according to their accustomed ways. It was their second-generation children, the *Nissei*, who eventually became more integrated into American society, took a wider variety of jobs, and moved into other areas of the country.

The immigration experience of the Japanese war brides, on the other hand, was dramatically different. These women immigrated over a half-century later as the wives of American servicemen who were not Japanese. Unlike the *Issei* women, the war bride immigrants had to immediately communicate in English both at home and in their communities, and prepare non-Japanese dishes regularly. The experience of being in a foreign country was not relieved at home by a shared experience or background with other family members, and for the most part, the war brides did not live in enclaves with large numbers of other Japanese families.

The more I thought about the lives of Japanese war brides, my *senpai* (seniors/superiors) who crossed the Pacific decades before me, the more I wanted to learn more about these women. I compared my experiences to theirs and wondered about many aspects of their lives: how their parents had reacted to the prospect of their marriage to non-Japanese, which would bring a separation of thousands of miles; how those women managed finding Japanese food in their day-to-day lives; how they communicated with their husbands, who probably spoke very little Japanese. I was also interested in discovering if their perspectives on gender roles had shifted over the years, after living in a very different society. This is one of the aspects of American culture that had made a big impact on me in a positive way, and I could not help being curious about how this earlier wave of women immigrants had experienced the differences.

This fellow feeling, admiration, and curiosity were what led me to research Japanese war brides for my dissertation. I knew that the research for a doctorate would involve extensive work, so I wanted to focus on a topic that held significant personal interest for me. Through

the help of Kazuko Umezu Stout, the former president of the *Nikkei Kokusai Kekkon Shimbokukai* (the Nikkei [Japanese ancestry] International Marriage Society, which is today called *Nikkei Kokusai Kekkon Tomonokai*, or Japanese International Marriage Friendship Club) in the state of Washington, I was able to gain access to my interview subjects. A six-page questionnaire, in Japanese, was sent to over 200 members of the association in September 1991 together with a letter explaining the focus and purpose of my research. Several kind and enthusiastic members who received the questionnaires offered to further distribute them to their war bride friends. Because of this, 75 more questionnaires were sent along with the same explanatory letter. Of these 275, I received responses from 74 women altogether, 25 of whom also consented to let me conduct in-depth interviews with them by telephone. These extensive telephone interviews were done in 1992, in Japanese, the native tongue of the war brides. With the help of these 25 women, I completed my dissertation in 1996.

For this book project I decided to conduct follow-up interviews because many years had passed and I wanted to update my data and explore what had changed in the experiences or perspectives of my subjects. By this time, I had moved to Washington State, from which most of my interview subjects live within driving distance, and I was able to conduct the interviews in person. I have now lived in the United States for more than twenty years and have a child born in this country, and my own experiences and perceptions have deepened from those of a newly arrived student. I was quite eager to renew my contact with these earlier immigrants!

Because such a long time had passed since our initial interviews, I encountered difficulties locating some of the women. Using the contact information I had from fifteen years ago I was able to find only six of these war brides, but of these, I was delighted that five women agreed to be interviewed again. The positive responses to my requests for in-person follow-up interviews came from Mary Shizuka Bottomley, Mitsu K. Connery, Setsuko Nishikiori Copeland, Kimiko K. Dardis, and Tamiko Platnick. I explained to them the possibility of our work leading to publication—their personal stories might appear in a book. All of these five were open and supportive of this prospect, and welcomed the idea.

Prior to our actual interview, I called each of them a few times to set up and confirm the appointment. Each call included an informal chat, which allowed us to begin on a friendly basis. With the exceptions of Tamiko Platnick, whom I had met in Hawaii at an annual convention of the Nikkei International Marriage Society, and Mitsu K. Connery,

who lives quite close to my house, I had never met the other women in person, although I had exchanged letters with some of them and been in touch with all of them several times over the phone in the period leading up to the earlier interviews. Therefore, visiting their homes to conduct these follow-up interviews was a long-awaited opportunity for me to finally see my subjects face to face and get to know them in person. As you will see, each woman welcomed me warmly when I visited her to conduct the interview, and once again opened up and shared her precious story with me.

In addition, Mr. Andrew Kirkwood Jr. and Mr. Carson A. Sine, widowers of two of the war brides, kindly agreed to the publication of my initial interviews with their late wives, Kinko Iimura Kirkwood and Sadako Marie Sine. Just like the other five women whom I mentioned above, I had interviewed Kinko and Sadako for my dissertation. I knew that Kinko had passed away some years ago, but I wanted to include her moving story in this book. Seeking permission, I called the Kirkwood residence in 2006, using the old mailing list that I had kept. Fortunately, Mr. Kirkwood was still living there, and I was able to talk to him about this book project. From this phone conversation, I learned something new—that Kinko had known she might not live very long after the time when I interviewed her in 1992. (I will give more detail about this later.) Because Mr. Kirkwood felt some hesitancy that Kinko's story might appear in a book, I sent him a letter further explaining the reason I wanted Kinko's story to be heard. In the end, he gave me permission to publish Kinko's interview data, which I collected from her seventeen years ago.

In the case of Sadako, I did not know ahead of time that she had passed away. I only learned of her death when I telephoned the Sine residence in 2006 and talked to Mr. Sine. It was rather difficult for me to explain our book project to him over the phone because he had a slight hearing problem. So I wrote him a letter, explaining our project in more detail and relating the impression I had when I interviewed his late wife, Sadako. I sent this letter along with the permission document needed for publishing her story. Mr. Sine returned the signed document and wrote me back, kindly agreeing to allow me to publish his wife's story. Despite his hearing difficulties, we have called each other several times since our initial contact. Each time he gave me kind words of encouragement to keep working on this project.

Altogether, I am able to publish the stories of seven of these Japanese war brides. I am truly thankful to these seven women who generously shared their precious stories with me and were willing to look

back to their early circumstances and the momentous decisions that changed their lives in ways they could not foresee, and also to examine how those lives had evolved, including frustrations, triumphs, and pragmatic adjustments to the new country. I feel privileged for the perspective and appreciation I have gained for the lives of these immigrants. Their stories represent a vital, vibrant, and very American thread of the history of this country. I hope that many people will enjoy the opportunity to wander through these stories of immigration and the lives of those who immigrated. They are a unique and invaluable part of our shared human history.

I am also grateful to Carol Moses, my longtime friend in this country, who to me is a writing genius. She helped me improve my work with editing suggestions and by giving me useful advice. I want to express my deep appreciation for the support of Seattle University, where I teach, in helping with my research costs. Tsuchino Forrester, the president of the Japanese International Marriage Friendship Club, helped me locate some of my subjects. Kazuko Umezu Stout originally helped me locate these interviewees when I was a graduate student. Kent and Emiko Johnson helped me to communicate with Mr. Sine. Yuko Makino, Kinko's sister, gave me additional permission to publish this book. Mr. Robert R. Dardis kindly signed the final permission form for his deceased wife, Kimiko. Dr. Makiko Deguchi, my friend, who is totally bilingual in Japanese and English, gave me useful suggestions. I am truly thankful to my professors, Drs. Jean Humez, Elaine Morse, Merry White, Ann Cordilia, Ann Froines, Cathy Manton, Paul S. Gray, Seymour Leventman, Lynda Lytle Holmstrom, and David A. Karp, who encouraged me to work on the topic of Japanese war brides when I was a graduate student. I also want to thank Keiji Mitsutomi, my husband, for his technical as well as psychological support. Finally, there would be no book without the collaboration of my co-authors, Katie Kaori Hayashi and Dr. Miki Ward Crawford. When the three of us met for the first time at the convention of the *Nikkei Kokusai Kekkon Shimbokukai*, in Seattle in 2006, it was Katie who initiated the project and suggested that we write a book together on Japanese war brides. Miki developed the project from there. Being the only English native speaker among us, Miki offered to write our book proposal and to seek a publisher for our work—and she did so. (I am thankful to the publisher, Praeger of ABC-CLIO, for accepting our book project.) Without the initiative, experience, and efforts of Katie and Miki, this book would not exist today. I am truly grateful to all the people who enabled this book to be realized.

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CHAPTER 13

Loving Deeply and Deeply Loved

Kinko Iimura Kirkwood

Kinko Iimura Kirkwood at one of the Tampopo no Kai annual get-togethers in the early 1990s. She is wearing their uniform *(happi)*. Courtesy of Yoko Makino.

Kinko Iimura Kirkwood was born in Tokyo in 1932. She married Andrew Kirkwood Jr. in 1952, and they moved to the United States in 1953. In 1999, Kinko passed away at the age of sixty-seven after battling leukemia. Kinko left behind Tampopo no Kai, an association for Japanese war brides in the Seattle-Tacoma area, for which she faithfully served as president until her death. Kinko had always wanted to help

establish an association that would function like a family for women who, like herself, had made choices that took them thousands of miles from their families in Japan. She thought it would be wonderful for members to enjoy activities together and help each other. Tampopo no Kai continues to thrive today, with over 300 members. To this day many members speak of her devotion to the association and her compassionate personality. "Kinko-*san* had a big heart and was a true leader" was what I heard repeatedly.

This narrative is based on my interview with Kinko in 1992. She did not share with me that she had leukemia. I later discovered that Kinko hadn't even told her husband Andrew until her last days, most likely because she wanted to shield him from worry.

GROWING UP WITH GREAT FREEDOM

Kinko grew up in a relatively liberal Japanese family, where she and her siblings were not overly restricted, by her mother's intention:

> My mother once told me that she decided to let us live freely because our father was a career military man and something could happen to him at any time. So she let us visit our friends even at night, and she would come and pick us up later in the evening. It was something unthinkable for children back then. Our grandparents lived right next to us. So when I asked my mother if I could stay overnight at their place, she would right away say, "Yes." Everything was like this, and we were allowed to do whatever we wanted to do. I was born as the eldest daughter and had two younger sisters and a younger brother. My mother was a housewife and stayed home. My father was killed in the war when I was twelve years old.

MEETING HUSBAND-TO-BE

Kinko met her future husband Andrew through a dance class when she and her friends decided to practice their English on the American men attending:

> We began talking to them in English, and my husband and I started to see each other. [Did you study English in school?] Yes, I was in my third year of high school when the war ended. You know, you

had to go to *Jogakkou* (women's high school) for five years in order to graduate. We were taught English intensively during the last two years even though we had never studied it during the war. So, we wanted to try out the English we learned in school.

English has a greater number of phonemes, or distinct sounds, than Japanese, and thus contains sounds new to native speakers of Japanese:

Andrew didn't understand my English when we started dating. The pronunciation we learned in school was quite different from real English. So, especially in the beginning, I would write things down on paper rather than say them because he understood me better that way. But over time, I was able to communicate in English better and I also learned how to understand native speakers. Even though my husband was able to understand my poor English, I continued to write things down when I came across others who didn't understand my English. I don't need to do that anymore, but I used to do this until fairly recently!

REACTIONS TO HER DECISION TO MARRY ANDREW

Kinko recalled the difficult year she spent garnering the consent of her family to marry, all of whom were initially opposed. Kinko started with her mother:

I made an argument that pointed to a weakness in my mother's life. My father was a lot older than my mother. . . . My mother's family was opposed to her marriage to him, but she married him despite their strong opposition. So I said to her, "How come I can't marry Andrew? You did the same thing back then as I am trying to do now. You got your way and were able to marry Father in the end." That was when my mother pointed out his race. She said that not only was he an American, he was black, and so she started mentioning his race and how could I throw away my education like that.

Not surprisingly for that period, Japanese women who chose to marry African-American men faced even greater opposition, and Kinko's situation was no different. When Kinko approached her

grandparents for approval, they responded disapprovingly, "Like mother, like daughter." Although in the end, her mother and her grandparents came around, it was not an easy process.

VISITING JAPAN EVERY TWO YEARS

Kinko explained how her frequent visits came about after her marriage:

> We first lived in San Francisco. In the beginning, I didn't have any friends there, and Andrew had irregular working hours—he would go out to work for two days and come home on the third day, and stay home the whole day—something like that. So it meant that I had to be alone in the apartment for two whole days. In those days, we had no TV, only a radio. Since we were in San Francisco, I could hear the sound from the steam whistles from the ships, and it made me completely homesick. I became so lonely that I wondered to myself why I came to San Francisco, and I even regretted that I ever came to America. So I would cry whenever Andrew came home on his third day. I probably repeated this three or four times. Then, Andrew said to me, "Save as much money as you can. When you saved enough to pay for one-way ticket to Japan, go back to Japan and stay there as long as you wish. If you change your mind and feel like coming back here, you can come back to me any time. I'm very sorry that I'm not making enough money [for you to be able to go back right now]." When I heard this, I deeply regretted how selfish I had been as a wife. After that, I did not cry when Andrew came home. And just as he suggested, I saved as much money as I could and visited Japan three years after I moved to the U.S. I could have flown back, but it was quite expensive, and so I went back by ship. It took twelve days to reach Japan from San Francisco.

Kinko said that Andrew was infuriated when he saw American men who did not take good care of their Japanese wives. He told Kinko that the men who married Japanese women had the responsibility of taking good care of their wives because they brought these women to a country so far away from Japan. He used to say that if the men could not take good care of their wives, that they had no business bringing them over here in the first place.

Housework—Kinko's Domain

Kinko struggled with cooking in her earlier days:

> I bought an American cookbook and prepared meals with the help of that book. Also, the woman who was my next-door neighbor was really kind and helpful. I would ask her what to do when I had to fix something new. Looking back on those days, I might have been annoying, but she was always kind and helpful to me. In the beginning, I wasn't able to bake a good cake. You know, you had to bake cakes from scratch because there were no cake mixes back then. My husband has a sweet tooth, so I was trying to bake a good cake. Whenever I baked one, he would say, "Yummy!" But somehow, I always ended up with a poor-looking one. So when I told him that I was sorry for making odd-shaped cakes, he would console me by saying, "You will get better at it soon." Then I decided to ask help from my neighbor, and I found that I was opening the oven door too often when I kept checking on the cake! Once I learned that you're not supposed to do that, I was finally able to bake a very good cake. Since then, I've become really good at it.

Kinko loved to cook and do chores around the house. Kinko reflected that this may have been the result of her pre-war education in Japan, that she believed housework was the woman's responsibility. However, once Kinko found out about her illness and realized that she may leave her husband alone, she tried to get Andrew to do more housework for his own sake. Still, she ended up doing most of the housework because she was so used to doing things that way:

> I used to do things like grocery shopping by myself. I may be different from young people today since I believed that housework was a woman's responsibility. Andrew was just like a Japanese husband and he couldn't even boil hot water. He didn't do any household chores. Until five or six years ago, when I returned to Japan, I would prepare one month's worth of meals for him ahead of time so that all he had to do was to take it out of the freezer, heat it up and eat. Today, he says that I don't have to go through that much trouble anymore, so I don't do it to that extent. Besides, I think that he would be in trouble if anything were to happen to me and he doesn't know what to do

> around the house. So I try to have him do things at home. When I am away, he seems to fix something for himself or eats out. Well, I said that he fixes something, but you know, it means that he heats up canned or frozen foods. That's about it. You know, I love to cook. Besides, I might still believe somewhere in my mind that women have to do the housework because I was educated in pre-war Japan. So, I tend to do everything around the house by myself. I'm still the same way to this day. So suppose he tries to get up to get a salad dressing from the refrigerator; I would stop him and do it myself. I guess I tend to do things like that. So it is also my fault that he can't do anything around the house. I'm the one who spoiled him. After all, I didn't like having men inside the kitchen. Also, I don't mind doing all the cooking by myself. I don't remember much from the past, but Andrew may have tried to help me out in the kitchen, but it could be that I didn't let him help me. [So he didn't do laundry or house cleaning?] No, he didn't. I've been doing all of that myself since the beginning of our marriage.

Even though Kinko did almost all the household chores by herself, Andrew did all of the yard work. Kinko said, "Inside the house is my work, and outside is his." While she vacuumed, for example, Andrew would clean the windows. "Andrew has been helpful from the beginning of our marriage," Kinko recalls.

HOUSEHOLD FINANCES

Like many of the Japanese war brides in the U.S., Kinko and Andrew followed the Japanese way of having the wife in charge of the household finances:

> From the very beginning, we employed the Japanese style. Andrew would hand over his salary and I managed the money, and wrote the checks. We continue to do it this way today, but now I try to have him do more. Our personal checks have both our names on it, as it is a joint account. According to the state law, you would be in trouble if your name was not on the check when your partner died. But still I take care of all the bills. He isn't good at balancing the checkbook and whenever I am away in Japan and come back, the accounting is out of balance. Even though he is

not good at keeping the balance, I try to have him take care of the bills these days because he will be in big trouble if something happened to me. He needs to learn.

ADVENTURESOME EARLY DAYS AND FRIENDSHIPS

When Kinko was young, she was out and about, enjoying different aspects of American life:

> I was able to make friends quickly even though I didn't have any when I first moved to San Francisco. . . . I liked walking around the city, . . . and one day, I saw a woman who looked Japanese, so I asked her, "Are you Japanese?" . . . We became friends. . . . One day we went to a very famous beautician who just opened a salon in San Francisco. Our American friend made an appointment for us, and we went there. We both got a hairdo, called "poodle cut"—very popular in those days! We were stunned to discover afterwards that the price was fifty dollars! We had only about half that. We had gone to the hair salon without thinking much about cost. My friend took off her diamond ring and asked the beautician to keep it until we bring over the remaining balance. But I guess that the beautician trusted us, so he said that there was no need to leave the ring. . . . We returned the following day to pay the rest. You know fifty dollars in those days was pretty big money—it would be the equivalent of about five hundred dollars today!

Kinko made friends with Americans easily from the beginning, but at the time of our interview, she had more Japanese friends. She felt closer to them and more at ease. She also felt that Japanese customs were a deep part of her: "No matter how many years you live in America, you don't lose your Japanese customs." She said that she never used a knife and a fork at home, and could not cook well without using her chopsticks.

TAMPOPO NO KAI—COMPANIONSHIP AND SUPPORT

In 1986, Tampopo no Kai (the Dandelion Association), a local group for Japanese wives of American men, was established, and Kinko served as president until her death in 1999. The association's policy

is to enjoy one's old age, have fun while healthy, and help each other in times of need. Kinko explained some of the activities that the members took part in:

> We try to get to know each other and deepen our knowledge and skills. For example, as one of our activities, I teach knitting at my house. Each participant pays one dollar to cover utility costs. We have fun together—we chat over tea and in the end produce something nice for our children and grandchildren. . . . There are more women who want to join us, but there is simply no room because nobody wants to leave.
>
> Every year we have a booth at the Cherry Blossom Festival in Seattle. We have origami demonstration workshops, mostly for American people. So I believe that we are helping the cultural exchange between America and Japan. Whenever our members get sick, we bring them home-cooked meals. Also, when there is a death in a member family, we go to the funeral even if we didn't know that person directly . . . to comfort the surviving family members.
>
> We provide a food service at a senior citizens' home every Wednesdays for Japanese women. We make Japanese foods for them. We've been doing it for about six years. It keeps us busy, but it's fun because these elderly women are all delighted by our service.

DISCRIMINATION—PAINFUL BUT INFREQUENT

Kinko said that just once did she experience discrimination for her husband's race:

> It was a long time ago in 1953. . . . I ran into an old Japanese high school friend from Tokyo. We both were so surprised to run into each other in America. We chatted over a cup of coffee and I learned that she was in the U.S. as an exchange student, and I told her that I came to the U.S. because I married an American. I . . . asked her to come to my house sometime soon. She called me about a week later . . . and I went to the bus stop to pick her up. I had fixed Japanese dishes at home for her. I brought her to my home and was preparing coffee while

> chatting with her. Although Andrew was at work, she saw his photograph . . . and asked about it. So I said, "That's my husband. He is out working now." . . . She suddenly said that she had to go home and didn't even take a sip of the coffee that I prepared, . . . saying, "I have things to do" and nothing else. So I was worried and thought that I may have said something which made her upset. After a few days, I received a letter from her. She wrote something like "I totally misjudged you. I couldn't believe that you, who graduated from the same school with us and received higher education, would end up marrying a low-class black man! I have no intention of ever associating with you again. I am going to remove your name from our school alumnae list." I was in total shock when I read this letter. . . . When I returned to Japan, I asked my mother about this person and my mother told me that this person also married an American and ended up living in the U.S. . . .
>
> I had never felt discriminated against in the U.S. until then. I had never felt discriminated against by white people or Japanese people because of my husband's skin color. So the incident with her makes me particularly bitter. She was the only one.

FOOD—COOKING FOR BOTH TASTES

Some war brides experienced difficulty finding Japanese food in the United States. Kinko, however, always felt that she was able to easily find Japanese food since she first set foot in the States. Because her husband preferred American cooking, Kinko prepared mostly American dishes in the beginning. She would just add simple Japanese dishes, such as *tsukemono* (pickles) and *sunomono* (vinegared vegetables) for herself.

Later, Kinko found herself cooking American dishes for her husband and Japanese dishes for herself:

> But, it's not that I made two completely different meals every day. Basically the basic food ingredients are the same, but I altered the preparation to suit our tastes. For example, Andrew is from the South and he likes beans. So, when I cook beans, I add ham and onions for him. But for myself, I add sugar and make sweet beans, in the Japanese style. . . .

I have heard similar stories from other Japanese war brides, where the women felt that preparing two meals was simple, practical, and satisfied both parties. Thus, it was a common eating style among the war bride families.

AMERICA AND JAPAN

Kinko saw *kiraku na tokoro* (an easygoing pace) as a benefit of living in America. She said, "I feel free here":

> I don't have to show off or worry about what other people think of me. I can be just myself. Compared to the U.S., Japanese culture is more uptight, you know. Even to go a few blocks from your house, you have to put on nice clothes in Japan. You have to be conscious of other peoples' eyes, so that you need to put on makeup and change into better clothes when you go out in public. But over here in America, you don't have to worry about those things at all. America is so easygoing and a very comfortable place to live.

Although Kinko could appreciate the convenience of public transportation and personal sense of safety in Japan, she did not want to live there. She felt it would be hard to maintain an American lifestyle in Japan, where land was limited and everything was expensive. Although she loved Japan and identified herself as Japanese, she no longer wished to live there.

AMERICANIZATION

Kinko felt she had become "Americanized" and more direct, and her mother noticed the change and scolded her for her lack of subtlety and tact when she spoke in Japanese. However, both of them gradually became accustomed to Kinko's "American" ways:

> Since I have been living in the U.S. for a long time, I think that I have changed over the years. People in Japan told me that the way I speak Japanese was a bit rough. I feel that I'm getting less and less elegant. . . . Now I tend to say, "Yes" and "No" very clearly. . . . Suppose you are offered a piece of cake at someone's house. If you are full, all you have to say is "No thank you" here in

America . . . but in Japan, even if you don't really want, you just have to eat it anyway. Some time ago . . . my brother's wife was cooking something that I didn't really care for, which I said. Then my mother scolded me and said that I was too straightforward. But nowadays my family in Japan understands me better as someone who has become Americanized over the years. So I can be direct to them today without their feeling resentful.

KINKO'S FINAL WORDS

Toward the end of the interview, Kinko used the sentence *Anata ni doushitemo itte okitai kotoga futatsu arunoyo* ("There are two things that I really want you to know about"). When I heard this, I remember feeling a little strange, because it sounded a bit like words in a will. I did not dwell on the sensation, and just continued with the interview. Yet the impression stayed with me.

I understood this later when Andrew told me that Kinko knew she had leukemia at the time of her interview. I now believe that Kinko felt she might not have much time left and thus wanted to leave important parts of her life story with me. Here is what she told me:

There are two things that I want you to know about. As I told you earlier, everyone in my family was opposed to our marriage in the beginning. But they all came to see us off at the seaport when we left. As I was just about to board, my mother said, "This is what you chose for your life. Even if something bad happens to you, you must not come home crying." To be honest, I felt disappointed, but I just said, "Yes" to her. After that, we both were crying.

Before I came to the U.S., I told my mother the U.S. address of my mother-in-law because we did not yet know where we would be living. When we arrived at my mother-in-law's house, I found a letter from my mother together with a package from Japan. In the letter, she wrote something like "I told you never to come back to Japan even if you had a difficult time in America. But I wasn't honest with you. I only said that to encourage you, since you were starting your new life in America. But the truth is: You can come back to us anytime if your life is difficult there. Don't try too hard. I'd be glad to pay for your return ticket anytime."

Another thing I want you to know is an incident when I went back to Japan for the first time. My mother came to see me at the port, and my husband, who was working in Korea at that time, also came to the port. So we all met there. Then she said to us, "Let's go home together." But I hesitated because I was afraid that my sister might have a difficult time socially and getting married if I came home with my husband. So I told her that we would stay at the hotel. Our neighbors had never seen Andrew—my family eventually supported me for marrying him, but I had never brought him home. The neighbors knew that I was married to an American, but didn't know that he was African-American. I was afraid of letting them know about my husband's race. That's why I told my mother that I wouldn't come home with him. Then she said to me, "What are you talking about? Are you going to stay in a hotel when you have a home here? That's crazy. I wouldn't accept a man as my son-in-law if he said he wouldn't marry your sister because of your marriage to Andrew. If a woman wouldn't marry my son because of your marriage, she isn't good enough for him. You are my daughter. Don't hold back; come and stay with us."

Thanks to my mother, I was able to come home with my husband. Both my sisters' husbands and brother's wife knew about my marriage. . . . Because they knew from the beginning, I didn't have to hide it. I am truly thankful to my mother's deep affection for me. I really appreciate that she understood me and my husband. Thanks to her, we were able to become close to the families of my sisters and brother. But, you know, among the women who married African-American men . . . there are others who still can't go back to Japan with their husbands or children to this day. On the contrary, I could even attend my sister's wedding in Japan. All my family members know that I have an African-American husband.

DEVOTION OF MOTHER AND HUSBAND

Kinko often talked about Tampopo no Kai, and praised Andrew's support for this association:

As I explained, my mother gave me so much. So . . . I wanted to do something good for other people, just like Mother had been to me. . . . My husband seems to understand why I'm dedicated to this association, so he has been very cooperative. For example,

> when a group of us planned a trip by coach, there were too many people. . . . Andrew felt sorry for those who couldn't go, so he rented a big station wagon and drove them in that car. Thanks to his kindness, everyone who wanted to go on a trip was able to make it.

Andrew, who helped Kinko run this association, gave me full support in publishing her story. I telephoned the Kirkwood residence in 2006, expecting the phone line to be disconnected because it had been over seven years since Kinko's death. I was happy to find that, instead, Andrew was still living in the same house with the same phone number as before. I felt that Kinko's story was meant to be heard when I received his permission to publish it.

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CHAPTER 14

An Energetic and Forward-Thinking Life

Mary Shizuka Bottomley

I visited Mary Shizuka Bottomley on June 14, 2007. It was a sunny day, but still a bit chilly in the morning. Mary met me at the front door, with a warm *Irasshai!* (Welcome!). Even though I had talked to her by phone a few times, it was our very first time to meet in person. On my side, I could not believe that this woman with the big smile was over eighty years old—eighty-two to be exact. She seemed to be a good bit younger.

Mary Shizuka Bottomley. An engagement picture of Mary taken in Japan in 1952 to be sent to her mother-in-law in America. Courtesy of Mary Shizuka Bottomley.

Mary was born in 1925, in Fukuoka prefecture, on the southern island of Kyushu, where I also am from. Her name then was Shizuka Iwata. Today, however, few people in her life call her by her original name of Shizuka. Shizuka was called "Mary" by the American employees when she began working at the military PX in Japan in 1946. Since that

time she has gone by "Mary," and her legal name today is Mary Shizuka Bottomley. She now feels more comfortable to be called Mary than Shizuka—so I always called her "Mary-*san*" when we spoke together in Japanese, appending the honorific *san*.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: A FOCUS ON INDEPENDENT CHOICES

Mary was born to a father whom she calls "a bit strange" because of the very unusual fact that he married five times. He was an entrepreneur and had tried several businesses before settling down in a printing business, which is run today by Mary's brother. Mary had two sisters and two brothers. Their mother was their father's third wife, but she passed away when Mary was seven years old. Even though Mary calls her father "strange," her deep love and respect for him was evident, and she had been strongly influenced by this interesting parent. She talked about how he encouraged her to get an education:

> My father was a kind of man who loved his children very much, and took a very good care of us. He was a little unusual for a man born in the Meiji era [1868–1912]. He used to tell us daughters, "Don't walk one step behind men; women need education as well as men." We were encouraged to continue into higher education, so my sisters and I all went on to *Jogakkou* (women's high school), which was a kind of an elite school in those days. When I graduated from *Jogakkou,* he told me, "Since I gave you education for you to be independent, you find your spouse by yourself. Life is short—find someone you can truly love and forgive each other."

Mary thinks that her upbringing made her straightforward, a relevant quality for American life. She recalled her childhood and talked about her father's philosophy when he disciplined her siblings and herself:

> When we were little, Dad would scold us all when only one of us did something bad. According to him, we all as siblings were responsible for each other. He allowed us to do whatever we wanted to do, but at the same time, he would tell us, "Don't do anything if you can't take responsibility." Since I grew up in a household like this, I became very straightforward. So I feel

more comfortable living in the U.S. than in Japan. Both of my older sisters didn't get married because there were not many eligible men available due to the war period. In those days, they would have had to marry men who were widowers with children if they wanted to get married. Dad knew that my sisters would have a difficult time if they got married to men in those circumstances. So I think that he just couldn't bear to marry off my sisters.

MEETING HUSBAND-TO-BE AT A DANCE

Mary had been working in a sales club in a PX for some years when she met her future husband, Walter Rex Bottomley, at a dance party. Walter was stationed at a U.S. base in Fukuoka prefecture because of the Korean War. There was a party held in Shikanoshima, in Fukuoka, which Mary attended with her friends. After the party, they were waiting for a bus to return to their dormitory in Kashii, located east of Fukuoka city. Walter was waiting for the same bus, and got on the bus with these women and got off at the same bus stop as they did. He offered to walk with them back to their dormitory, because it was dark at night. He asked Mary out for a movie the following day, which was a Sunday. They continued dating and became engaged on Christmas of 1952.

A CALM RESPONSE FROM HER FATHER

Mary told her father about her engagement on the following New Year's Day. Interestingly, Mary described this conversation to me with the word *houkoku shita* (reported to him), rather than *yurushite moratta* (received his permission) in regard to her marriage. Traditionally speaking, marriage is not considered to be the decision of an individual, but more of a family matter in Japan. Thus, even to this day, daughters and sons tend to ask their parents for permission concerning their marriages. In this sense, Mary must have been unusual because she simply reported to her father her decision to marry an American.

Mary's father did not oppose the engagement. According to Mary, he just remarked, "Oh, your fiancé is a soldier." Mary reflected on their interaction around her engagement:

> Dad seemed to intuitively know my husband-to-be was a sincere man since Walter didn't drink much, for example. People say that older people can tell who you are by just looking at you. So maybe Dad knew who he was. Besides, he used to tell me to find my husband by myself, and I did just as he told me to. So he didn't have much to complain about. Also, he knew me to be as stubborn like a stone. I may seem like an obedient daughter, but I'm the type of woman who would do what I want to do eventually, even if I were told not to. If I really want to do something, then I just do it no matter who tries to stop me! Dad knew my personality. So he must have felt that it would be impossible to stop me.

CHOOSING SPOUSES

Mary was quite confident in choosing Walter because she had known him for three years before deciding to marry him. In addition, she was already twenty-nine years old—mature enough to make her own decision. Thus, Mary said that she had no worry when she came to the United States and was positive that Walter would not leave her.

According to Mary, Walter had little interest in Japanese life—he did not like Japanese food or even the smell of soy sauce; he did not speak Japanese at all. When he married Mary, he told her, "I'm not marrying you because I like Japan. I'm marrying you because I love you as a person." Looking back to those days, she believed that he had fallen in love with her because she was not like typical Japanese at all. As evidence of her atypical nature, Mary told me that more than once, American friends whom she met in Japan asked her if she had already gone to the United States. Those Americans thought that she must have had the experience of living in the States because she was not like most Japanese they encountered, and was very straightforward in her nature.

MARY'S VIEWS ON AMERICA: MUCH GREATER OPPORTUNITY

Besides the fact that Mary fell in love with Walter, she also mentioned positive images she had of America. She first talked about the material wealth that America represented in those days: "I wanted to go to the U.S. Japan in those days was like a Third World country: food was scarce, and there was really nothing. Since I worked in the PX with Americans for six years, I had seen American goods and had come to

know what kind of clothes and shoes American women wore. I learned that America was such a wealthy country."

Asked if the wealth that America represented was the driving force for her to move to the United States, she denied this. She pointed out the wider opportunities that she saw while working at the PX as the predominant reason for her interest in coming to the States. Mary described the difference between the United States and Japan in terms of their treatment of women:

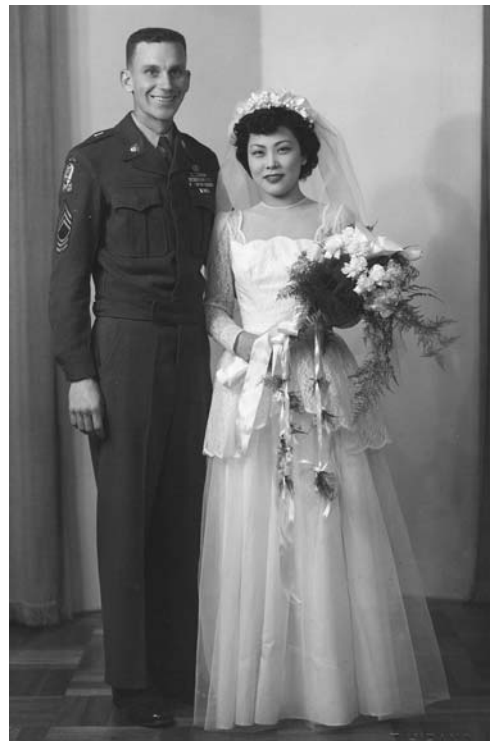
> I felt that I could have a fuller life as a woman if I lived in America. I don't know how to explain it, but you know, as people say in English, the sense of "who I am." I thought that I couldn't be who I really was in Japan. But in America I could be who I was because you can say things like, "I'm this way, so I'm going to do this" in this country, right? I had worked in the Yahata Steel Company before I took the job at the PX. I felt that I could never want to work for a Japanese company after my experience at the PX. In the PX, if you were capable, you were given a responsible type of work even if you were a woman. But in Japan, a woman was just an assistant to men and had to serve tea for them. I hated it. When I was working for the Yahata Steel Company, I argued with three men. I mean I had a big disagreement on three occasions. I couldn't bear the situation, and it was impossible for me to keep quiet about it. At the PX, on the other hand, my work was very much appreciated because I was good at calculations using an abacus. In those days, there were no calculators, so I was given an important job because I was good at calculations, even though my English wasn't very good.

LIFE IN AMERICA: NATURALIZATION PROCESS AND MOVING

Mary and Walter got married in February 1953 in Japan and moved to the United States the same year. It took eleven days to travel from Japan to the States by Navy ship back then. They settled in Kentucky, but within two years they were relocated to Germany. Before they moved to Germany, Mary had to be naturalized and become a U.S. citizen so that she would not be left behind if her husband left, in case of political emergency in Germany. Mary had to take various classes to pass the citizenship tests. "It was fun studying," Mary recalled fondly. She got to

meet with many people from many countries in the preparatory classes that she took. "I enjoyed studying English and American history with them."

Mary and Walter stayed in Germany for three and a half years and came back to Kentucky in 1959. This time while they were in Kentucky, Walter was sent to the Korean War zone for thirteen months, and Mary remained in Kentucky with their child, Danny, whom they had adopted in Germany.



Mary and Walter on their wedding day in Japan in February 1953. Courtesy of Mary Shizuka Bottomley.

HOUSEHOLD CHORES

Because Walter was busy working for the military, Mary did most of the house chores. Although Mary did all the cooking, she said that Walter was helpful at home—he would do dishes, go grocery shopping with her, and so forth. She recalled:

> Walter often helped me at home, such as doing dishes. But he just didn't cook, and cooking was the only chore that he didn't help me. Right after we moved to America, he bought a cookbook for me. So, I cooked American dishes using that book. Besides, I was working at the PX when I was in Japan, and I would sometimes do grocery shopping as part of my job on the military base. The American military base in Japan was just like an American place. I learned a lot about ordinary American lifestyle while working for PX. So I didn't have much problem adjusting to an American way from the beginning of my life in the U.S.

FAMILY FINANCING

According to Mary, American men who have Japanese wives tend to follow the Japanese custom: wives are in charge of money at home. Mary was no exception; she was the one who decided what to buy for their day-to-day household needs. However, whenever they had to purchase something major, she consulted with Walter. She explained: "Whenever we have to buy something expensive, I ask Walter because he won't make mistakes. I usually buy without checking the information on products. Walter, on the other hand, carefully checks the information and then makes a decision. So, he doesn't make mistakes in buying something expensive. Also, he listens to my opinions, too. He would give me a few choices, and we buy the one I like most."

BECOMING PARENTS—NOT A SMOOTH ROAD

Walter was not able to father a child, so he suggested that they adopt. Mary was not so interested in adoption, but he insisted. She thinks Walter was convinced that women want to have children. He persuaded her by saying that they would be more like a family once they had a child. They adopted a baby boy when they were living in Germany. She talked about parenting:

> My weight went down to eighty pounds in two weeks. I was thin in the first place, but became even thinner because it was so hard to take care of the baby. Since Walter was busy working, I was the one who mostly took care of our child. I did school stuff for him, too. For example, I participated in PTA activities from time to time when he got older. But Walter went to school for me whenever we were called on by his school because of our child's misbehavior. You know, I don't really feel so fond of children. But once you become a parent, you are responsible for your child. You have to do whatever you ought to do as a parent. It was a lot of work. But once a week when my husband had a day off, he took care of our child by himself and let me have some free time. He would tell me, "Why don't you go to Bingo or something?" on such occasions.

EDUCATION AND SHIFTING ROLES

Mary greatly enjoys education. When she turned fifty years old, she started going to a nearby community college. She wanted to learn English formally. According to Mary, Walter was very supportive when she told him that she wanted to go back to school. He welcomed her idea and even helped her study English by checking her grammar at home. Without his assistance, Mary doesn't think she would have been able to graduate. She continued to study for ten years and received two associate degrees.

Interestingly, the fact that Mary returned to school in mid-life seems to have affected their household roles. In the beginning of their married life, Mary was the one who mostly took care of the chores at home. When she went to school later on, however, Walter came to do a lot more at home as a result. Mary said:

> Because I have to be away from the house more often than my husband, house cleaning became Walter's job. He was a perfectionist type, so that he wouldn't use a mop, for example, but would polish the floors by hand with a cloth. I do the cooking, but he fixes his own breakfast and lunch. I want to eat Japanese food at least once a day. So I fix Japanese lunch if I'm home and I cook American dishes for dinner when we eat together. You know, I don't like to mix American and Japanese dishes for a meal! For example, I don't want to eat Japanese style rice with a steak. I would rather eat bread with a steak.
>
> As for doing dishes, that's Walter's job—it is pretty simple because all he does is to put them in the dishwasher. As for the laundry, I put dirty clothes in the machine and he does the rest. Since I'm often out somewhere and he is at home, he even folds my laundry for me. As you can tell, my husband is a hard-working person!

COMMUNICATION: AN OPTIMISTIC ATTITUDE GOES A LONG WAY

Mary was asked if she was able to communicate with American people, including her husband, when she came to America. Her responses revealed a humorous and upbeat perspective not only about communication, but life in general. In her words:

I was able to speak English okay and Walter mostly understood what I was saying. But when we had an argument, it was hard for me to explain myself clearly in English. At those times, sometimes strange English words came out of my mouth and we would both start to laugh.

You know, it wasn't a bad thing for me not to speak English so well. You have to think twice when you speak in English, although you don't even have to think at all when you speak Japanese. So, it means that you wouldn't say unnecessary things which might hurt other's feelings. As the result, you have less trouble, right?

Mary went on to talk about her views on marriage. Again, her resilience and optimism come through:

Marriage is something in which both of you must compromise wisely. Both of you need to respect each other. You know, there was a saying in Japan, *Mochitsu motaretsu* (you have to support your partner, but sometimes you have to be supported by your partner). I think that *mochitsu motaretsu* is very important in marriage. Also, you need to say "sorry" when you are at fault.

You know what I think? Everything depends on the way you see things. When you think of something as "boring," it becomes boring to you. So you should try not to think that way. I think that it is important to accept your limitations in life. Some people may be feeling that they are not happy. But others in the same situation may be feeling that their life is happy. When you think that you are happy, you are in fact happy. So, I try to think positively, you know.

TODAY: BUSY WITH ABUNDANT INTERESTS

Mary lives by herself in the house where she and Walter lived until his death in 2000. She is extremely active, and is busy every day. In fact, Mary was so busy that I had to wait almost three months for a time to meet with her. When I telephoned her in May to set up an interview date, she first said that her next free day would be sometime in September! However, she felt bad for me and squeezed me in a few months sooner. We met for the interview on June 14, 2007, at her home in Tacoma, Washington.

Mary not only looks much younger than her age, eighty-two, but is so active that even those who are much younger than her would have a hard time keeping up. For example, she plays golf three times a week, a practice she and Walter began some twenty-odd years ago, when he retired at the age of sixty-two. Although Walter is gone, she still plays golf regularly in a women's league. She used to walk the course on all three days, and in June 2007, she decided to ride an electric cart one day out of three—that means that she still walks twice a week playing golf! After a round of golf, she usually goes to the gym and works out with weights and does stretch exercises for another hour. In addition, Mary has been attending a line dance class on Mondays for about five years.

Mary is similarly persistent in pursuing her non-sports interests. She founded the Puget Sound *Sumie* Association in 1976, to practice Japanese traditional ink brush painting, and she has been painting *sumie* since 1971. Now Mary also teaches a *sumie* class on Saturdays. She has regular exhibitions of her *sumie* art work, and at the time of my interview, she had been working on her next exhibition, scheduled at a gallery in Tacoma for January 2008. She is also an accomplished calligrapher, which she has been practicing for decades. She teaches a calligraphy class for a group of American people once a month at a community center nearby. She has an art studio in her house, and its walls were graced with her impressive *sumie* and calligraphy work.

Mary's interests and talents also extend to *shigin*, Japanese traditional singing based on Chinese poems. She is certified to teach *shigin*, and has taught it in the past, but not surprisingly, finds herself too busy to teach it today. Still, she keeps up her practice, and goes back to Japan once a year with her *shigin* group to participate in an annual competition.

MOVING FORWARD

Mary did not return to Japan to visit for sixteen years after she moved to the United States. Did she miss her home country in that time? She replied rather philosophically:

> I didn't really miss Japan. In those days, there were so many things I had to learn living in America. Maybe I was really young, and that's why learning new things was fun for me. You know what I think? When you go to a new place, you need to adjust yourself to

> the air of the new land. I don't look back if looking back won't help. I don't like to complain. You have to go on with your life. You can't go back in your life—all you can do is to move forward.

Mary was asked to reflect: If you could start your life over, would you again marry an American GI and live in America?

> I'm not sure if I would marry an American GI, but I would definitely come to live in America. I love America. In America, I can say whatever I want to say, and I can do whatever I want to do. I don't have to hide my true feelings in this country. That's why it's so comfortable to live in America. But in Japan, I would be miserable because I couldn't be true to myself. I would be no good in Japan because I have too strong a personality for a Japanese woman. In fact, one of my friends in Japan once said to me, "It was a good thing that you chose to live in America. You would be too strong-minded to fit in Japanese society." I completely agree with her!

Mary's reflections on finding a comfortable fit for herself in America echoes the feelings of so many Japanese war brides whom I interviewed. I heard over and over how much more comfortable it was for a woman to live in the United States: she could be true to herself in America, but not in Japan; women could have a fuller life in America, but not in Japan, and so forth.

I am not sure whether those women who chose to marry American men and move abroad had strong personalities in the first place, or if they became strong as the result of living in the United States. It might be a mixture of the two elements. The answer remains to be seen through large-scale war bride research.

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CHAPTER 15

Learning from All of Life's Experiences

Setsuko Nishikiori Copeland

Setsuko Nishikiori Copeland called her Bonney Lake house in Washington state a *yamagoya* (mountain hut) because you have to drive uphill to reach it. I visited Setsuko on the sunny morning of May 17, 2007, to conduct a follow-up interview. I arrived at her house around 11 a.m., and when I parked my car in the spacious area in the backyard, I could see meticulously maintained trees and a vegetable garden.

Setsuko greeted me at the front door and took me inside. It was a cozy, well-cared-for place with old family photographs pleasantly displayed in the living room. Setsuko introduced her husband, Bill, who I learned was the gardener for the backyard.

Setsuko Nishikiori Copeland during one of the early dating days: Setsuko and Bill in the Tennoji Zoo in Osaka in 1951. Courtesy of Setsuko Nishikiori Copeland.

We started our interview right away, but soon decided to take a break for lunch. It was a little early to eat, but Setsuko had already prepared a number of homemade dishes for my visit. She served spaghetti with meatballs, a garden salad, an egg dish, and freshly baked French bread. Everything was very tasty, and I agree with Setsuko's daughters, who maintain that their mother could very well open a spaghetti restaurant.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: A LARGE FAMILY SHIFTED AROUND DURING THE WAR

Setsuko was born in 1933. There were seven children in her family, but two of them died when they were still small. Her father was running a taxi company in Osaka City at that time. However, because of war preparation, the Japanese Army forcefully bought out his company. Consequently, her father had a house built away from the city and they moved to Kawachi, Hanazono Osaka-fu. He worked as an executive of the military factory, which was built on his company site. However, he had financial difficulties after the war ended, and the factory had to be shut down by the U.S. government.

Setsuko's family was unusual in the sense that they seem to have adopted some Western practices: "We ate Western types of dishes with knives and forks. This custom was probably introduced by my grandfather, who associated with many foreigners where he worked in Hokkaido. My father once told me that he was embarrassed when his father made him wear a Western suit because everybody else was wearing a kimono in those days."

Setsuko's mother had never worked outside the home in her life, and had always been a housewife. In fact, none of the mothers Setsuko knew in those days had jobs outside of their homes. In this environment, Setsuko grew up feeling that "women are not supposed to work [outside the home] after they get married."

MEETING BILL: WORKING IN ONE ENVIRONMENT AND GOING AROUND IN ANOTHER

After the war ended, Setsuko, having been influenced by Hollywood movies, became attracted to ideas of America. After she finished high school, she started to learn English typing, conversation, and other practices, at her local YMCA. One of her teachers at the YMCA was

liberal in her thinking, and introduced Setsuko to a job in one of the American Occupation forces' camps. Setsuko was given a position in the Officer's Club. Bill Copeland, her future husband, was in charge of a transportation company whose motor pool was located next to the Officer's Club. Bill brought one of the officers to the club, and Setsuko and Bill met for the first time. One day she was walking outside her dormitory on her day off to go home, and heard someone call, "Suzy," her nickname—it was Bill, who happened to be in the area. They saw each other again, and began dating from that time.

Setsuko recalled uncomfortable experiences when she was going out with Bill:

> In Japan, sometimes I was treated rather coldly by other Japanese just because my boyfriend was an American GI. I'm a type of person who thinks and acts straightforwardly. I didn't feel that I had anything to be ashamed of. But when we go downtown in Shinsaibashi with Bill, some people called out embarrassing names to me which made me blush. There were women in many difficult situations in those days. Even though I wasn't one of them, I was treated like them, just because I was seen with an American.

In the postwar period of the Allied Occupation, there were Japanese women who received money from American GIs for their sexual services. As is often the case, women sex workers were on the receiving end of great social scorn and worse, and even more so perhaps in the postwar environment, due to the frustrations that the ordinary people of the conquered nation endured. Setsuko was a target for some of these emotions when she was "treated like them" when seen with Bill outside the American camp.

REACTION OF PARENTS

Setsuko and Bill lived together for two years prior to their marriage, unbeknownst to her parents. One day Setsuko's mother happened to discover the truth, and had a terrible shock. Setsuko, however, assuaged her mother's concerns by explaining that she and Bill would definitely marry in the future. After a while, her mother became more understanding and supportive of their relationship because she did see that he was a good man.

Setsuko's father learned about the extent of their relationship much later than his wife, who had kept it from him, probably in anticipation of his reaction. Setsuko described her father's discovery of her relationship with Bill, which occurred when his enlistment period had ended and he was temporarily back in the United States:

> After a little over a year after he had left Japan, I received a telegram from Bill, stating that he was coming to Japan to see me. I was delighted to receive this news. But, you know what? My father read it and was very angry about my dating an American. Although the rest of my family was supportive of our relationship, my father was strongly against it. He lectured me at length, and went on to say that Bill was just fooling around with me because he had been away from home and was lonely. Father was convinced that Bill was not serious about me. After listening to all that he had to say, for the first time in my life I talked back to my father. I told him that Bill was not the kind of man he described. Because I was so mortified, I declared to my father that I would never complain about my life in America, no matter what happened.
>
> The very next day, my father brought me two books—*The Tragedy of Mixed Marriage* and *The Tragedy of Mixed Children*. He pointed at those books and told me that these would be my fate if I married an American. I did read both books, which were composed of tragic accounts of Japanese wives who had been abandoned by their American husbands. I couldn't help crying when I read these heart-rending stories. However, I was still convinced that I could believe in Bill. Even those frightening stories couldn't sway my conviction.

Setsuko felt quite amazed that she had talked back to her father. In those days, daughters rarely challenged the father, who held the authority in the family. In her situation, however, Setsuko couldn't help opposing her father's words, to defend her relationship with Bill.

WAITING FOR BILL

Bill was obliged to return to the United States before he was able to marry Setsuko because his term of being stationed in Japan had ended. Before leaving, he had promised Setsuko that he would apply for a job

in Japan and come back in a few months. It seems that this waiting period was the hardest experience for Setsuko. When we spoke in 2007 for our follow-up interview, almost a half century after those days, she movingly referred to how difficult this waiting period had been for her. She said, "I could never forget that experience to this day." She went on to describe what happened after she received the telegram that Bill was on his way to Japan:

> I didn't hear from Bill again for almost for two months after I received the telegram. I felt completely morose as time went on, and I often wouldn't leave my room in those days. I had never doubted Bill before, but for the first time, I became skeptical about his promises and was even beginning to think that the telegram was his way of saying "goodbye" to me. It was New Year's Eve of 1954. My whole family was invited to celebrate at my sister's fiancé's home. I couldn't go and I cried myself to sleep. It was around six o'clock in the morning, and I was still in bed. I heard someone knocking on my window, calling out "Suzy!"—my American nickname. It was Bill! I screamed with joy. After we had time to talk, he explained that he had suddenly been transferred to Korea on his way to Japan. In Korea, he had to move here and there and was too busy to write me a letter. Bill requested a one-month break from his duty and came to see me in Japan. Although my father was opposed to our marriage, he allowed Bill to stay at our house for that month.

Setsuko and Bill married in January 1956. They had met when Setsuko was only seventeen, and they married when she was twenty-two.

THE EARLY DAYS IN AMERICA

The young couple arrived in the United States by ship later that year. They first lived in Kansas, where Setsuko felt quite lonely. For Setsuko, coming from a large and cosmopolitan city like Osaka, rural Kansas was an uncomfortable change. In the beginning, she cried a lot because she had to stay by herself in the house in a rural area when Bill went out to work. She did not have any Japanese friends around, and did not even know how to drive a car. "For the first time," she said, "I regretted that I had married and moved to the U.S." She was completely dependent on Bill because she did not know much about life in America.

Even though the Copelands were financially limited in the early part of their marriage, Setsuko said that the hardest part was not related to money. According to her, the greatest difficulty was having no other family members to rely on outside of Bill. "My parents and siblings were all in Japan, so I felt bad for my children. They grew up without knowing much about their Japanese grandparents. We frequently had to move, so my children didn't have much chance to get to know their American grandmother, either."

Although being so distant from her extended family was difficult, Setsuko finds something positive in this circumstance. She feels that she and Bill, and their small family, became very close-knit as a result. She was proud of their strong family bonds.

FINDING JAPANESE FOOD ABROAD

Despite the fact that Setsuko grew up in Japan consuming many more Western-style foods than the average person, she missed Japanese foods very much in the States. She could not even find her customary rice—the sticky short-grained type that Japanese households traditionally eat with all three meals. She described her hardship: "When we were living in Kansas, I was pregnant and wanted to eat Japanese food very much. I missed typical Japanese foods, such as rice balls, sushi, and even a simple food like steamed rice. There was rice in America too, but it was different. With the American rice, you couldn't make rice balls because the grain was too dry."

Setsuko found it even more challenging to locate Japanese foods when they were stationed in Germany. Setsuko's mother sent her Japanese foods from time to time.

When they moved from Germany to Colorado, and finally to the state of Washington, things looked up dramatically. Particularly since they moved to Washington, Setsuko has had easy access to Japanese groceries. Now they can eat a lot more Japanese foods than in their earlier days in America. Bill eats Japanese dishes, as well. However, he sometimes eats potatoes with meals while Setsuko eats rice.

WORK: NEW EXPERIENCES AND CULTURAL ADJUSTMENTS

At the time Setsuko grew up, she didn't have the experience of seeing mothers having jobs outside of their homes. According to Setsuko, even a term that is very common now, *tomokasegi*, meaning

"double-income couples," did not exist when she was a child, simply because very few married women were working outside of the home at that time. As a result, Setsuko had never imagined herself being employed in a workplace. She accepted the pattern that a husband was to work outside and that the wife has to stay home and take care of the family. However, in America, one day she read a newspaper article that caused a dramatic reversal in her perspective, and she became determined to work outside the home in order to earn some money herself:

> I read a story in the newspaper about the deaths of a Japanese mother and her two children. The woman's husband had died, and I think that they were too poor to heat the whole house. So she was burning charcoal just to warm up the bathroom, and she and both of her children died from carbon monoxide poisoning. When I read this article, I felt so sad that I couldn't help crying. Then the question popped into my head, "What would happen to us if my own husband passed away?"

Around the time that Setsuko read the article, the Copelands had just moved to New Jersey and the children were now all in school. Bill answered positively when Setsuko asked him if she could start working. She talked about how she landed a waitressing job first, which led her to a position as a sales clerk:

> I found that there was a saleswoman wanted ad at a department store. I sent in my resume, but I didn't hear from them for a long time. While I was waiting, I also found that the same department store was looking for a waitress. So I called the restaurant at the department store and told them that I had already sent in my resume when I applied for the sales position. They contacted me right away and asked me to come in for a job interview. They asked me to start work the very next day, and I did. I received a pair of white shoes from the restaurant for this job. You know what? When I received those shoes, I promised to myself that I would leave this job when those shoes wore out. Just about one year later, the shoes wore out, and I couldn't wear them anymore. So I quit the job as I had promised to myself.

> After leaving the position in the restaurant, I was contacted by the sales department, offered work as a saleslady in the men's section. When I had applied for that job the first time, I didn't even receive any response—they weren't interested in me at all. But they probably contacted me then because they had heard I worked very hard as a waitress. I'm Japanese, and thus a hard worker!

Setsuko was proud of her Japanese heritage, and she was probably right in her assumption that she was hired for the sales department because she had demonstrated her good work habits to the store in the previous position of waitress. While the family lived in New Jersey, Setsuko continued working as a sales clerk at the department store, and got another position with the same department store chain after they moved back to Washington.

Setsuko confessed that she was a bit worried about how she would do in her job at the beginning of her employment. However, her continued employment over the years increased her self-confidence. She said she learned through working that she could do anything she wanted if she tried hard enough. Even though she never imagined that she would be working after marriage when she was living in Japan, she was glad that she did indeed get work outside the home.

Setsuko went on to talk about a perplexing communication over a shared workplace task. She also related a very uncomfortable incident on the job, which resulted in an awkward confrontation, but which helped her continue to adjust her communication style in order to get along better in her adopted country:

> You know, Americans and Japanese are so different—people behave very differently. Japanese tend to be very modest, but you would be put down if you act the Japanese way in the U.S. For example, together with two of my co-workers, I did the window display of the department store. But in this case, I did almost all the work by myself, and the others only helped to carry some of the things. When my manager praised the display, I responded in the Japanese style, calling attention to the other two and saying, "With the help of these two, I was able to do it," although an American might have said something like, "I did it all by myself." Despite the fact that they had not in fact contributed much, they acted as if they had worked equally with me. Similar things have happened to me at other times on the job.

> There was a senior clerk who would bully new employees in the cosmetics section where I was working. I'm so Japanese that I treated her with respect, because she was older than me. Out of respect to her, I would ask her permission to take my lunch break every day. Then she started to treat me unfairly—she even made me wait until 3:30 for my lunch break. One day, some customers came to our section a few minutes before closing time. She told me to wait on those customers, which I did. Yet, she closed the register even though the customers were still waiting to pay. I told her to open it, and said, "The customer comes first." "Go home," she yelled at me. So I yelled back to her, saying "I don't work for you! I work for this store!" Since then, she began to treat me with more respect.

These confusing experiences taught Setsuko to be more direct and assertive than she would be in Japan. At the same time, she came to appreciate that America was truly a free country because "If you think that you are right, you could even disagree with your boss openly." Setsuko felt that this was something unthinkable in Japan and "you would get fired if you do the same in Japan."

COOKING: SOME CONTENTION, BUT SETTLING INTO A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT

Setsuko told me that Bill does not enjoy cooking, and was not much help in preparing American dishes. Luckily, Setsuko had learned how to cook American dishes when she was in Japan. Through her work at the Officers Club, she became close to an American couple, and the wife taught her how to cook some American dishes. She would also read the cooking directions on the packages and was able to prepare the American dishes her husband preferred.

When Setsuko started working in the department store after they moved to Washington, a new problem arose: Bill, who did not like to cook, started to complain about cooking. She explained:

> When I worked in the department store in New Jersey, my shift was nine to five, so, I had no problem making our evening meals. But after we moved to Washington, I sometimes had to work until nine in the evening. I was also asked to do overtime hours from time to time. Bill wasn't happy about me working a noon to

> nine o'clock shift, and we sometimes got to arguing about it. In the beginning, he would make hamburgers, warm up soup, or something like that. He would take turns fixing dinner with our daughters. But you know, he just doesn't like to cook. So we got into a fight over cooking. I told him that he would have to fix meals anyway, if I had died before him. Since this fight, he did the cooking without arguing. When it was his turn to cook, he would often make the dishes that I wouldn't fix, such as baked beans. I often prepare Japanese dishes, so he used the opportunity to make the dishes he didn't get to eat at home when I cooked. He even fixed spaghetti and saved some for me. On those occasions, I would, of course, thank him, but to be honest with you, his cooking was so bad that I couldn't really eat it.

These days, Bill does not cook much anymore, because Setsuko retired in 1991. She described his obvious relief in a humorous way: "Since my retirement, he sits in the kitchen at noon and waits for me to fix his lunch. He looks very happy because he doesn't have to cook anymore!"

However, Bill is not totally dependent on Setsuko for his meals—when she goes out, he prepares his own food. Setsuko feels proud of Bill and deprecates the attitude of Japanese men who completely depend on their wives:

> I belong to various social clubs, and I sometimes have to go out at night for club functions. On such occasions, Bill fixes his dinner himself, and I don't have to cook for him. But as you know, Japanese men just don't do anything at home, right? My father, for example, was a type of man who couldn't have survived without my mother. I think that men need to learn more about how to take care of chores around the house, including cooking. Otherwise, they will be in trouble if something happens to their wives.

MORE AT EASE WITH AMERICAN FRIENDS

Even though Setsuko currently has mostly Japanese friends through a Japanese karaoke club and a Japanese bowling league that she belongs to, she had both Japanese and American friends when I first interviewed her in 1992. She had some interesting observations about the

differences between her friendships with Japanese and Americans. She told me, "I felt more *kiraku* (at ease) with my American friends than Japanese." She explained:

> As you know, it is like a community when you associate with Japanese friends. Japanese can be nosy and picky. They may find out a trivial matter about you and make a big deal. Comparatively speaking, Americans are quite different. They don't form a community and are more individualistic than Japanese. Their friendships are totally based on their association with the individuals. So, you don't have to worry about how the "community" thinks about you. That's why I feel more at ease with American friends.

This perception is not unique to Setsuko; during my interviews with around thirty Japanese war brides, I have heard the view from time to time that it is more *kiraku* to be with American friends. However, Setsuko is probably the only one to describe the Japanese type of friendship association as "community."

I WOULD MARRY BILL

Setsuko was asked if she would again choose to marry Bill if she were to start her life over again. She responded affirmatively and elaborated with an endearing anecdote:

> Here is a funny story that I want to share with you. You know, Bill and I are now getting old. Both of us have started to have some medical problems. I told Bill, "Oh, we are both getting old and sick together. We'll go together." He was so happy to hear me say that. He said, "Yes!" with a delighted expression on his face. I continued, "But, when we do go, you go left, and I go right." (Laughs) Then, Bill said, "I go right, if you go right. If you go left, and I go left." So, I guess we would be together again. . . . You know, Japanese might say something negative about your husband because you are supposed to express modesty by downplaying qualities of your own family members when you are talking to others. But I'll be honest, and most definitely say that I would marry Bill again and come to live in America!

Bill was sitting in the same room with us when I asked Setsuko this question in Japanese. I then decided to ask him the same question in English. Looking him in the eye, I began, "If you were to start over your life, would you marry . . ." He immediately pointed his finger at Setsuko, and said in a clear and strong voice, "Her!"

Many Japanese women who have lived in the United States long enough would see a part of themselves in Setsuko's story. Most of us, including myself, learned to express ourselves more assertively, and came to realize that the Japanese way of showing modesty not only is misunderstood here in the United States, but also could put us in an awkward situation. Having gone through these confusing and awkward moments many times, Setsuko today wants to be understood clearly about her feelings for her husband and states, "I'll be honest, and most definitely say that I would marry Bill again."

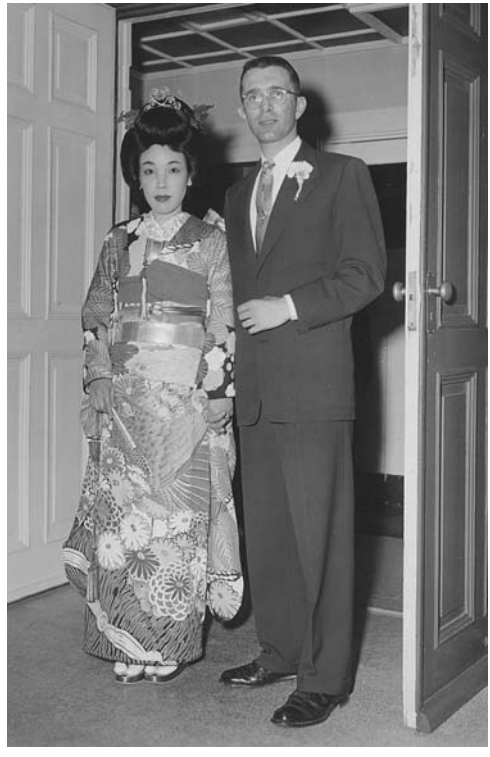
CHAPTER 16

Only Daughter Who Crossed the Pacific Ocean

Tamiko Platnick

I visited Tamiko Platnick for an interview at her home in the northern part of Seattle on April 26, 2007. It was a warm sunny day for April. Tamiko gave me good directions, but somehow I managed to get lost near her house. I called the house and got help from Allen, her husband, who answered because Tamiko was already outside, kindly trying to locate me.

When I arrived, they welcomed me to their nice condominium. Allen soon excused himself to watch a Seattle Mariners game, and I suspect to allow us to be alone during the interview. Inside their home, I noticed a number of Asian decorative items, which Tamiko explained were from Korea. She said, "We lived in Korea



Tamiko and Allen being married at the chapel in the Yokosuka American base on April 9, 1958. Courtesy of Tamiko Platnick.

for 11 years, and brought back most of our furniture when we returned to America. The U.S. military took care of the relocations, you know." We sat down at the kitchen table near a window to begin our interview.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: LIVING AND WORKING IN KOREA BEFORE THE WAR

Tamiko was born in Korea in 1929 to a Japanese family, the only daughter of five children. When Tamiko's mother was pregnant with her, the family moved to Korea, where her maternal grandfather was running a business. Tamiko's father worked in the business, which bought fish locally and sold them to the Japanese military. As Tamiko's father was quite busy and often away from home on business trips, her mother, a housewife, was in charge of Tamiko and her brothers.

Tamiko and her youngest brother moved back to the family's home in Hiroshima prefecture one year before she was supposed to graduate from *jogakkou* (women's high school). Tamiko was in some ways fortunate to return before the war ended. Many who attempted to return after Japan was defeated faced a grueling and dangerous process. Most of the returnees from Korea came home with nothing. Tamiko's parents, however, returned after the war, and managed to bring back various belongings, including even as bulky an item as Tamiko's Girls' Day Festival *Hina* doll set. Their good fortune was probably due to their return in a ship that her father owned. Making the effort to save Tamiko's doll set was a poignant token of their affection toward their only daughter.

Tamiko told me that she was an "A-bomb survivor." She said that shortly after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, she and some of her classmates were taken by train to the heart of Hiroshima City. There they assisted the doctors in tending to the radiation burn victims and other injured. Tamiko said that the girls helped clean up some of the contaminated areas. To this day, the Japanese government keeps close track of the health of "A-bomb survivors" worldwide.

MEETING HUSBAND-TO-BE—WORKING AND MOVING TO TOKYO

Tamiko graduated from *jogakkou* and went into business with a friend in the city of Kure, in Hiroshima prefecture. In Kure, not only were U.S. Occupation forces stationed there following the war, but also military

from Australia and Britain, as well. Tamiko recalled the atmosphere in those postwar days: "After graduation, I wanted to move somewhere far away from home and live by myself. But there was no way that my parents would allow it. So I decided to start a dressmaker business with my friend. We found a shop where the owner had to move away, and we bought her business."

There were so many foreigners stationed in Kure in those days! My grandfather worried about us girls at night, and he often came to stay overnight with us at the shop. Although the dressmaker shop was in Japan, we rarely had a Japanese customer back then. Our customers were mostly military family members from the Occupation camp in Kure.

Tamiko and her partner had a steady business, but one day they were notified to abandon the shop because the area was to be used for new road construction. Around that time, other friends whom she had met through sewing business had moved to Tokyo, and Tamiko thought that would suit her very well. Predictably, her parents were quite opposed to this idea, feeling it was time for her to get married and settle down. They began introducing her to prospective husbands, but Tamiko was not at all interested. Looking back, she said: "I wasn't really thinking about marriage, and going to Tokyo was a lot more appealing to me! Around that time, my youngest brother was heading to Tokyo to attend the university. Another younger brother had also moved to Tokyo after his marriage. My parents finally let me go, on the condition that I live with my brothers. If they hadn't been in Tokyo, I don't think that I could ever have left Kure!"

Living in Tokyo, Tamiko attended a get-together given by a sewing acquaintance from Kure, and there she met Allen Platnick, her future husband.

According to Tamiko, her English was not very good when she first met Allen. Although she had some basic knowledge from weekly English classes in high school, Tamiko rarely used English outside the classroom, and could not speak much. Surprisingly, she and Allen did not have much difficulty communicating. Tamiko explained: "Even though my English was not good, I was used to communicating with foreigners. You know, most of the customers in our tailor shop in Kure were foreigners. . . . Besides, we were using Japanese when we spoke! Allen had been sent to Japan by the Marines in order to study Japanese, so this was his official duty."

Allen, in fact, could even read and write Japanese when Tamiko first met him, making him quite an exception among the American spouses of the war brides. In almost every other case, family life was communicated in English. Allen was one of very few husbands who could speak Japanese.

REACTIONS TO MARRIAGE: ONLY TOKEN OPPOSITION

Contrary to what Tamiko imagined, her parents did not really oppose her decision to marry Allen, an American. Tamiko feels that her parents themselves were also used to interacting with foreigners in Kure. Also, as she was quite "rebellious" in those days, she suspected her parents were not very surprised to learn her intentions. When Tamiko was running the dressmaking shop with her friend, she had sometimes gone out at night with her friends. Although this would be far from "rebellious" for women nowadays, at that time her mother worried about the future of such a "delinquent" daughter.

Although Tamiko's parents did not try to prevent her marriage, at the same time they did not quite embrace the idea. They seemed to be rather reluctant. Allen wrote them a letter in Japanese, asking permission to marry Tamiko. He received no response, nor for a second such letter. Finally they responded to his third letter, and eventually came down to Tokyo to meet him. Tamiko remembered the first impressions:

> When we finally got together, my father saw that Allen was wearing a very old watch. My father offered to switch with his much better one because Allen's watch looked almost worn out. But Allen declined the offer and told Dad that he was attached to that old watch because he had been wearing it for a long time. As a result of their discussion, Dad later confided to me that he was convinced that Allen was a man he could truly trust.

Tamiko's mother was rather calm about the marriage, and Tamiko suspected that her mother had been concerned about her "delinquent" behavior, and probably thought that it would be better to get Tamiko married off before she became *kizumono* (defective; pejorative term used for women who were sexually active before marriage).

Tamiko further considered her parents' straitened finances as a contributing element in not opposing her marriage:

> I also think that my parents could not stop me from marrying an American because they themselves were having a hard time financially after we moved back to Japan from Korea. It was during the aftermath of war, and they were living with my grandparents. You know, Japan in those days was truly poor. So they probably thought that there was no reason to keep me home in Japan, where too many poor people lived. If they had been well-off, they might have tried to stop me from marrying Allen, though.

Finally, Tamiko suspected her strong personality as another factor in her parents' acceptance, or absence of strenuous objection. In her words: "They probably thought that it would be a waste of time trying to stop me because they knew me too well as my parents. I was the type of person who would succeed in doing it if it were really what I wanted to do."

Interestingly, Tamiko's self-evaluation of her character was a frequent chorus in my conversations with Japanese war brides. Among thirty women whom I've interviewed over time, quite a few had a similar view of the part that their own determined and independent nature played in going through with the marriage.

I WOULD SWIM THE PACIFIC OCEAN

When I met with Tamiko in 2007 for a follow-up interview, she became a little teary while telling me of a conversation between her father and Allen:

> I still do remember what my father said to Allen. It was after we got married, and we were about to leave for America. We were making our farewells, and he was wishing us happiness in marriage. Then Father said to him, "But if something happened and if you were to get divorced, I would think that it's Tamiko's fault, not yours."
>
> Well, I was sloppy and irresponsible, and my father knew me well. (Laughs) Father went on to say to Allen, "It is my fault to have raised such a daughter. So, if I don't have money to pay for her return ticket, I would swim the Pacific Ocean to get Tamiko myself." He indeed said this to Allen.

Even though Tamiko told me that her parents did not really try to stop her marriage, the tender quote above suggests that there were indeed strong emotions in facing the separation resulting from their only daughter's marriage to an American.

NO FUTURE IN JAPAN IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

In the questionnaire prior to the earlier interview, Tamiko had written, in response to the question "Why did you choose to come to America?" that she had no future in Japan. When I asked her to elaborate on this later, she explained:

> I went to *jogakkou,* for four years. After school, I didn't have anything that I particularly wanted to do. But I also didn't want to do *hanayome shugyou* (preparatory lessons to be a good wife). So I went back to school to learn sewing, even though sewing wasn't really the thing that I wanted to do. I had never studied something deeply enough to do it as a career. I felt that it was unlikely I'd be able to do something interesting in my life because I didn't have any specialty.
>
> I met Allen when I was in that frame of mind. In those postwar days, Japan was completely chaotic. I felt that my future was quite limited living in such a country. That's why I wrote "I had no future in Japan" in my questionnaire. I always wanted to go to America. I promised myself that I would go, no matter what. The images that I had of the U.S. were of a big country with big, beautiful houses, and wide streets. In fact, America seemed exactly the way I had imagined. You know, Japanese houses in those days were just like barracks. But I believed that the houses in America wouldn't be like those in Japan.

Tamiko's expectations in this area also echoed those of other war brides.

THE FIRST YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES: EXPECTATIONS, ADJUSTMENTS, THEN A TRIP HOME

Tamiko and Allen moved to the United States in 1960. Tamiko was very excited:

> When I first came here, I was so curious about everything. Whatever I saw, it was so unusual to me. Though my English was poor back then, I was full of curiosity and I was looking at everything. I thought that America was very different from Japan—it was so spacious; everyone I saw seemed wealthy; no matter where you go, the streets were clean; it wasn't crowded. It made a deep impression on me.

However, Tamiko soon felt lonely because she did not know anyone besides Allen where they were living in Arizona. She recalled how things unfolded:

> We bought a new three-bedroom house off the Air Force base in Arizona, for fifteen hundred dollars. But I felt lonely in the beginning of my new life there. It was far away from Japan, and I had no friends there. There is something that I remember to this day: I felt so lonely, but I told myself that this was my life that I had chosen. I guess I sent my mother a letter about my feelings at the time. Mother, who is eighty-six years old [in 1992], still says that she remembers that letter. In those days, I was young and selfish because I didn't really consider other people. I hadn't thought how my parents would feel if I left Japan. After I came to America and experienced some loneliness, I realized I had been selfish. Anyway, I told myself that this was the life that I had chosen for myself, and I would have to accept it, even if I felt lonely.

Tamiko had a strong sense of her own responsibility in moving her life to America. Because of this, she was ready to accept whatever happened. Her sense of autonomy was less typical of her cohort in Japan in those days. Many women married through *omiai* (arranged introductions), a situation in which their parents typically made the final decision. Tamiko's letter saying, "This is my life that I have chosen" made a deep impression on her mother, and stayed with her for many years.

Tamiko's first job in America was at the University of Arizona Liberal Arts Japanese Language Department under Dr. Bailey. She enjoyed helping the students properly pronounce Japanese words. Eventually, Tamiko made new friends and began to enjoy life in Arizona. She no longer felt so lonely.

After they lived for over three years in Arizona, Tamiko studied, took the test, and became a U.S. citizen. Next, Allen was sent to Okinawa by himself. During the year when Tamiko could not be with Allen in Okinawa, she stayed with her parents in Hiroshima prefecture. It was her first visit to Japan in three years. She felt full of joy to be back to Japan again, and said, "I felt that Japan was indeed a very good country."

After Allen completed his time with the Marines in Okinawa and later in Vietnam, he retired from active military duty. The two of them then did a lot of traveling in Japan and America. She told Allen that

she would like to live in Hawaii. He agreed. While in Hawaii, Allen got a job with the Department of Defense. For the next twenty-two years, they lived in Hawaii, Japan, Okinawa, and Korea. Tamiko says that it was a wonderful experience, and she made many lifelong friends during this time.

FAMILIAR FOODS

Tamiko talked about her struggle to locate Japanese foods when she moved to America:

> When we were living in Arizona, we had no access to Japanese foods. I brought some rice, *miso* (soybean) paste, and soy sauce from Japan. But we couldn't settle down for about two months because we were living here and there. So, the rice from Japan smelled a little bit stale—you know, Arizona is very hot. But eventually I was able to get some information on Japanese grocery stores in Elutes, Texas. Also, we sometimes went to Los Angeles to do grocery shopping. It was quite a long drive, but Allen must have felt sorry for me because he would take me there from time to time. He is a kind-hearted man. Despite these occasional trips, most of our meals were American dishes. I guess I was very young and flexible, so I didn't mind when I couldn't eat Japanese dishes for a while.

In her early days in the United States, Tamiko did not really know how to cook American dishes. Allen helped her with instructions and a cookbook. Some dishes she had never heard of before, but she gradually learned more.

Tamiko reflected on changes in her views on gender roles. When she immigrated to the United States, she believed that cooking was a woman's job, but thirty years later, she said that her views had changed:

> I did most of the cooking, and I'm the one to cook even today (1992). Allen doesn't really cook, but nowadays, there are pre-made meals such as TV dinners. So, he sometimes cooks using the microwave. You know, I never imagined men who would enter the kitchen and cook something when I first came to America. I thought that would be unnatural. So, in those days, I thought that cooking was something I had to do. However, over the years I have changed and trained

Allen to be more helpful around the house. It doesn't seem odd at all today to see men cooking in the kitchen. I rather welcome the idea now! Allen retired in 1988, and since then, he helps out a lot at home by doing dishes, cleaning the house, and so forth.

WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO MY HUSBAND: GETTING A SKILL

Allen and Tamiko adopted their daughter, Tamiko's niece, when they were living in Hawaii. While their daughter was still small, Tamiko decided to study to become a beautician. She felt that she should be able to be financially independent "in case something happens to my husband." Other Japanese war brides expressed similar feelings. Living in a foreign land with no one but her immediate family, the thought "What if something happens to my husband" must have crossed the minds of most Japanese war brides. Tamiko described how she managed to receive a certificate to become a beautician:

I decided to go to school in order to become a beautician. I wanted to be financially independent in case something happened to my husband. But you know, I had no qualifications, so I thought about becoming a beautician and started to go to school. Although Allen eventually became supportive, he wasn't happy about me going to school because we had a daughter to take care of. So, I asked my mother to come to America in order to help take care of our daughter, and she kindly agreed. She left my father in Japan and stayed with us for one year. Mother was so helpful to us—she would take our daughter to preschool, bring her home, and etc. While in Hawaii, my mother saw what a fine husband and father Allen was. She told me that it made her very happy.

Earning my certificate wasn't easy at all. Did you know that a beautician training includes a study of human anatomy? I thought I could almost become a nurse after that; you have to learn about the human body because you give massages to customers. After I received my certificate, I worked as a beautician for a while because I wanted to make use of my certificate and get experience working. You know, I was actually good, and was sometimes asked to work for a hair show—I enjoyed the work. But I stopped working when Allen was transferred overseas. Later on, I never went back to work as a beautician except the occasional haircut as a volunteer at the Japanese nursing home.

Although Tamiko worked as a beautician only for a short period, she seems to have felt more assurance by having the skill and the certificate.

FRIENDSHIPS

In her early years in America, Tamiko associated with American people. The Platnicks were living in Tucson, Arizona, where she rarely saw other Japanese. She confessed that whenever she saw another Japanese woman, she had wanted to make friends. She recalls those days:

> I made friends with my neighbors, such as the wife of our next door neighbor. Well, it was a casual friendship, and we were good friends for a while. When I first came to America, I wanted to make friends whenever I saw Japanese here. When I was living in Tucson, where you didn't see many Japanese, I met a Japanese waitress in a Chinese restaurant. I was so happy to see another Japanese person there. We became friends. Looking back, I guess I was mostly associating with people that I met through my husband. I didn't know anything about America, so I figured that I would be better off to stick with Allen. Although I was the only Japanese, his friends were nice to me.

Tamiko told me in 1992, living in the Seattle area, that she felt closer to Japanese than to Americans. Because she already had many Japanese friends then, she felt that she did not really need American friends. She was active in volunteer work, such as visiting the Japanese nursing home, with her Japanese friends.

IF YOU COULD START YOUR LIFE OVER . . .

Tamiko responded positively to the question, "Would you still marry an American and come to the United States if you could start your life over?" She added that she would be determined to study more seriously the next time around. As further explanation, Tamiko said:

> I have lived many years and met many people in my life. Looking back over all these years, I realize that you've got to be a wise person. In order to be wise, you have to study. [I asked her why study in America rather than Japan] There are too many people in

> Japan, and you don't have much chance there. Even if you were determined to try something in Japan, you would end up getting married in the end. That's about all your life is in Japan. But here in America, I believe that you could continue to work on your own even if you get married.

Tamiko seems to feel a difference between Japanese and American women in terms of career opportunities. She recognizes the difficulty that Japanese women still face today in balancing family life with workplace responsibilities. Compared with women in Japan, she feels that American women have a better chance to have both a family and a career. Thus, she would study hard and get further in the workplace in America the next time around.

THE *HINA* DOLL SET

Tamiko still has her lovely *Hina* Girls Festival doll set, given by her grandmother to celebrate Tamiko's birth, and miraculously brought back to Japan from Korea by her parents in the aftermath of Japan's defeat. Tamiko brought the precious *Hina* doll set with her to America and still has it today. In 1989, a year after the Platnicks moved to Seattle, Tamiko held a *Hina* doll party and invited about twenty other war brides. The Japanese women were delighted and impressed to see them—each of them saying, "This is my very first time to see *Hina* dolls in America!" Tamiko displays the complete Girls Festival doll set for her granddaughters each March 3, Girls' Day in Japan. The set betokens the special position of Tamiko, the beloved only daughter in her family.

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CHAPTER 17

Woman of Positive Thinking

Sadako Marie Sine

Sadako and Carson A. Sine enjoying a winter fair for American troops in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1957. Courtesy of Carson A. Sine.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: CHILDHOOD IN A WELL-TO-DO FAMILY

Sadako Marie Sine was born in 1925 in the affluent city of Ashiya in Hyogo prefecture, near Osaka in Japan. Generally speaking, it is difficult to tell one's social class in Japan by just knowing one's neighborhood. Cities and neighborhoods often have a wide range of social classes—a lawyer may live next door to a drycleaner, for example. Ashiya, however, is one of the few exceptions.

Sadako's word choices also suggested an upper-class upbringing. She used the *watakushi* rather than the more informal *watashi* for "I," speaking naturally during the interview even though, for most, the word may be too formal for daily conversation. Sadako told me about her family's business: "My family ran a shipping company, which my grandfather had started in the Meiji era, nineteenth century. The business prospered, and we lived in a big house bought by my grandfather. . . . My father took over the family business, but he passed away in 1936 at the age of sixty-three. I was eleven years old then. I was born to my parents when Father was rather old, you know."

Sadako mentioned age differences among her family members a few times during our interview. Her father was twelve years older than her mother, and her brother was eight years older than Sadako. Because of the gap, Sadako said that she and her brother did not have much in common when they were little, and did not even argue or fight often as siblings in the same household. However, Sadako and her brother became much closer in later years.

CHANGES AFTER THE WAR, ENCOUNTERS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sadako was a student at the *Kobe Jogakuin* (now the Kobe Women's University) at the end of World War II. The war and subsequent occupation resulted in many changes for Sadako and her family, and brought her in contact with Carson A. Sine, her future husband:

> Our house in Ashiya was confiscated by the government. It was a rule in those days that large houses had to be given up for American families. So, we had to do the same, and move our family into a small area in the house, even though it was our own home. When the government worker brought the American family to our house, I negotiated in English with them. I was young, and I felt interested in Americans. I had already learned to speak English before the war broke out. . . . Seeing me negotiating with the American family, the government employee asked me if I would agree to help them out at the Allied Occupation camp. But I couldn't decide if this would be good, so I went to seek the advice of my former English teacher. I discovered that the teacher herself was already working as an interpreter at the camp, and she asked me to join her there because the work would help me improve my

> English conversational skills. She suggested that I come and take a look at the work situation. When I took her advice and visited, the work seemed very interesting to me, and I accepted. That's how I came to work as a typist at the camp, where I met my husband.

At that time, Sadako was planning to study in the United States, a plan that spoke of great family resources during a period when many Japanese were struggling financially with day-to-day living.

Sadako also said that Japanese were not allowed to study in the United States in those days, but she heard she might have a chance to study abroad using her family business connections. She often consulted with Carson, whom she met through her work at the camp, for advice about arranging for her study. During these encounters, they deepened their acquaintance, and fell in love.

PURSUING EDUCATION

Sadako received the highest possible education for a woman in Japan in that time, even though she did not attend college. In pre-war Japan, women were not allowed to attend college, and women's school, called *senmonbu* (lit. "special department"), was the only option for further education, following graduation from *jogakkou* (women's high school), equivalent to high school today. Because of the war, students had to graduate after only two years in *senmonbu* rather than the usual three years. Sadako told me more about the constraints on women's education:

> Do you know that women were not allowed to enter four-year universities at that time? What discrimination! After the war, things became democratic in Japan. But you couldn't attend even such a liberal school like Waseda University before the war. You were allowed to audit courses, but you could never become a university student if you were a woman. There was a huge difference in educational opportunities for men and women in those days in Japan. So, I have to say that I received the highest possible education as a woman in Japan at that time.

Sadako reflected on the historical and cultural context of that period:

> As I said, women couldn't go any higher than *senmonbu*. It means maybe that the society was telling us women to marry right away. I'm envious of the women today! In my days in Japan, we couldn't even travel from Osaka to Tokyo by ourselves. It took about eight hours by train in those days, and women had to have a chaperone. You know the expression, *hako iri musume* (daughter in a box). A daughter is like a commodity in Japan, so that the idea is that she must not be "defective" (sexually active), you know.

MARRIAGE: GOING FORWARD IN THE FACE OF RESISTANCE

Sadako faced strong family opposition when she announced her intention to marry Carson. Not only her mother, but also her older brother, who assumed authority in her family after their father's death, was against the plan. Sadako's brother, however, had already married and was living with his wife some distance away in Nishinomiya. Sadako said, "I was somewhat free because I wasn't under his supervision."

Sadako, twenty-five years old at that time, decided that she was old enough to take a bold step. She left home and married Carson without her family's consent—an unusual action for a young woman to take even in present-day Japan. Happily, Sadako's mother came to support the marriage. She decided to meet with Carson for Sadako's sake, even though she had felt strongly opposed to the marriage. After she got to know her son-in-law, she became fond of him, and even said, "No matter what people say about him, I believe him."

Although Sadako decided to marry Carson despite her remaining family members' opposition, she reflects, "If my father had been alive at that time, I don't think I could have married my husband." She believed that her father would have stopped her, and she would have had no choice but to give up her plan to marry Carson. I have interviewed about thirty Japanese war brides, and among them, many of those whose fathers were no longer alive at the time of their marriages shared a similar view.

Sadako and Carson got married in 1950, and right after the marriage he was relocated to the United States. They moved that same year.

MOTHER'S DEATH AND GROWING CLOSER TO HER BROTHER

Six years later, while Sadako and Carson were living in Germany, Sadako's mother died. Sadako recalled learning the sad news:

> I learned of Mother's death through a letter from my brother. Until that moment, I had never imagined a day when Mom no longer existed. I guess children tend to see their parents as eternal, and I was the same way as any child. I cried for something like three days. I also called my brother in Japan. By the way, do you know how international phone calls worked in those days? It wasn't direct like nowadays, and you couldn't talk right away. You had to apply for a phone call, and then wait for almost the whole day while it was arranged. Finally I was able to talk to him by phone, and I said I was coming home right away to pay my respects. But he was very compassionate—he gently told me not to waste my money on the trip. Even if I were able to return right away, I wouldn't make it for the funeral—it was already over. He assured me that he would take care of everything, so not to worry.

Sadako's brother, who had been strongly opposed to her marriage, and had not accepted it even after the fact, began to show signs of changing attitude. After their mother's death, he seemed to accept her situation. He hired an estate specialist and gave Sadako her fair share of her inheritance, as he had promised. He also began sending her packages loaded with Japanese treats, and continued doing this every three months for more than thirty years. During my interview in 1992, Sadako spoke very fondly of her brother: "I love green tea, but the teas you find here are not as good as what are available in Japan, you know. So, he includes some very fine green tea in the package he sends me. He has been truly good to us all these years."

Although Sadako and her brother were not so close as children, because of their big age difference, they developed a warm and supportive relationship as adults.

EARLY YEARS IN AMERICA: RESOURCEFUL AND OPTIMISTIC

During the interview, I was quite impressed by Sadako's positive attitude. Having grown up in a well-off family, Sadako wanted to live in a nice place in the United States, as well. To manage this

financially, she began working within two weeks of her arrival. Additionally, she did not dwell on roadblocks she encountered while looking for an apartment:

> We first lived in Chicago. Since my husband's rank in the military was not high yet, money was tight. But I wanted a clean place because I was so used to a nice house. We took a look at various places for rent. I liked high-rise apartments because they were clean, but they were too expensive. Once in a while, we ran into a cheap, but neat apartment. But places like that, which had a very good deal, weren't open to us because I was Japanese! It was in 1950, and in those days if the landlord had to choose between Japanese or American, he would naturally take the American.
>
> When I was in Japan, I had never imagined that one day I could be discriminated against because of my race, though. Well, despite of racial discrimination, there were certainly clean apartments which would take you in, as long as you had the money.

Sadako's decision to work was mostly driven by the couple's limited financial resources. However, she also saw it as a good opportunity to learn about America:

> I didn't want to live in a dirty place, so I started to work the second week after we moved to Chicago. We were able to live in a good apartment this way. Besides, I figured that I could learn about America faster if I got a job here. I went to an employment agency and found myself a job. I think that Japanese in general have a good academic foundation—our English pronunciation may not be good, but we are able to read and write. Since I had a strong academic foundation, I found work right away. I was given a typing job at RCA Victor—a big company.

In talking about discrimination, Sadako looked back on the realities of the time: "As for renting a place, there was a racial discrimination, but there was no racial discrimination as to working. So, I could find a job right away. . . . Well, you know the job I got was a typing job. It wasn't such important work to begin with—people didn't mind whoever got this type of job. If I had been trying to get more important work, I may have encountered discrimination."

Sadako's work experience suggests a period of economic growth. She was given opportunities to study, with support from her employer:

> I had a really nice boss, and he asked me to go to school to learn how to use the office machine. In those days, the computer was not yet introduced. I wanted to learn everything available, and the company paid the tuition and let me go to school. I had to work in the office every day regularly, so I went to school three evenings from seven to nine. It was summer, and very hot in Chicago. In about six months I learned how to use the office machine. Then I got a promotion from a typist position to the accountant section. I was fortunate to have a good boss in this section, too. My new boss suggested I take extension courses in Accounting, offered at University of Chicago, and again paid for by the company.

Sadako had to pass up this opportunity because her husband was transferred to California. In fact, Carson was relocated every two to three years, and so Sadako had to change her job on the same schedule. Sadako didn't seem to mind these changes, and regarded them as "opportunities":

> My husband would be relocated every two to three years. But now I have come to think that it was a good experience for me—I learned to be flexible, and I also learned how to look for jobs. I became skillful at catching on quickly with new types of work. I also became good at getting along with people. Whenever you change your workplace, it means meeting new people. As a result, I think that I became more sociable and good at getting along with people. No matter where we went, I was able to find a job, even in Germany!

HOUSEWORK: LEARNING AND SHARING

Sadako grew up in a well-to-do family and had never done housework before marrying. She had to learn from the beginning, and she did everything together with her husband:

> As for cooking, my husband mainly took care of it because he was better at it. I had never cooked when I was in Japan since we had a maid in my house. But it was way beyond our reach to hire a maid in America, you know! I couldn't cook rice because in those days, there was no rice cooker available. So, I had to use a pot to cook rice, which was extremely difficult. I couldn't do it right, and

> my husband wasn't good at it, either. Anyway, whatever we had to do, both of us cooperated and did it together. Nowadays, I've become good at cooking, so I'm in charge of it now. But we still help each other—when I cook, he does the dishes. In almost everything, we cooperate—he does the vacuuming because the vacuum cleaner is so heavy for me. I do dusting instead. We have been cleaning our house together like this from the beginning of our marriage. When we clean the car, I wipe down the inside, and he washes the outside.

According to Sadako, she and Carson shared the housework so that they could spend more time together. Sadako felt very positive about this practice:

> We do things together because you can enjoy your time together afterwards. Working together, you can get it done faster. Some husbands don't do anything at home, but I don't like such men. In Japan, men might get scolded when they are in the kitchen because people say that the kitchen is the woman's domain. But things are different here in America, and I like the American way.

MANAGING FAMILY FINANCES: NOT SHARED

In Japan, it is typically the wife, not the husband, who manages the money and the household budget. My interviews found that most of the Japanese war brides followed this pattern, and thus they were in charge of money at home. Sadako was not an exception:

> As for the household finances, I'm in charge. As you know, it is normally the wife who manages the money at home in Japan. So we employed the Japanese way from the beginning of our marriage up to this day. I'm a woman, and I was born before the war, so I was forced to economize on everything. I'm better at managing money than my husband. He is a very good person, but doesn't really take care of money well. You can't let him run the budget, so I do everything related to our household finances. Whatever we earn goes directly into the bank, and I'm the only one who writes personal checks. Of course, it is a joint account and is in both our names. Otherwise, it will be a big problem if something were to happen to one of us. According to Probate law,

a surviving spouse can't withdraw money for one year if the account bears only the other spouse's name. That would be awful, so we have a joint account. But still, I'm the only one who writes checks and I'm also the one who makes decisions about investing our money.

Sadako joked about the benefits of women managing money: "You know what I think? I think that the Japanese style is better because women are good at paying attention to detail. As you know, the American economy is in the red. I suspect that the U.S. economy will get better if American men let women run the household budget. [Laughs] All they have to do is to depend on women for budgeting."

SHARING HOUSEWORK, AND TAKING TIME TOGETHER

Home life in Japan has naturally changed somewhat over time. But Japanese men, especially of Sadako's generation, tended to complain if their wives worked outside the home because they might spend less time on housework. In the interviews, I asked if her husband had complained about his wife's working:

He never did. Carson is the type of husband who says "Okay" to whatever his wife asks. I think that it is impossible for a wife to work if her husband doesn't do any chores. My husband had been truly helpful, and I really appreciate that. I also tried to find work that wouldn't interfere with our home life. I had to have evenings and weekends off because I wanted to be with him when he was off. I would look for only this kind of work because in this way, I would be working while he was working, and come home about the same time as my husband. In this way, married couples would be just fine. I don't think it's a good idea to get a job if it forces you to have less time together as a couple.

I felt sorry for Carson because when I was working, dinner wasn't ready when he came home. So, we used to eat out, probably twice a week or so, because I was tired from work and didn't feel like fixing a meal. This made Carson happy too, because it meant that he didn't have to do the dishes afterwards. He never asked me to quit working. Today he is glad I worked all those years because now we both receive our pension, retirement, etc. It would be miserable if you don't have much money in older age.

Again and again, I was impressed by the flexibility and warmth in Sadako and Carson's domestic arrangements. They considered each other, and had a supportive and caring marriage.

JAPAN/AMERICA: VALUES AND MARRIED LIFE

When asked to compare life in Japan and in the United States, Sadako felt that she enjoyed talking to Japanese friends more, but was more relaxed with her American friends:

> I find it more fun talking to Japanese friends than to Americans. But I feel more at ease associating with Americans than Japanese. As you know, Japanese tend to be very particular and to criticize you for small things, and people frequently say things like, "You are supposed to do this and that." Suppose your American friend's daughter gets married, you could give her something inexpensive—even a twenty-dollar gift is acceptable. But you can't do that with Japanese. I was once told to give about 50,000 yen [about $500] to my cousin's daughter, whom I had never met, as a wedding gift.

Sadako appreciated the greater level of personal freedom in the United States: "What I like about America is comfortableness. It is so easy to live here because people respect your privacy. My business is my business in America and people don't pry into the affairs of others, you know."

At the same time, she was aware of a more profound understanding from Japanese: "On the other hand, what I like about Japan is their deep understanding. Japanese tend to say few words, compared with Americans. Even though they don't really express their feelings and thoughts in words, I know that they do understand you deeply."

After many years of life and marriage in the United States, Sadako was so acculturated that she was amazed by the typical association patterns of Japanese married couples. Older married people in Japan may not do many activities together as a couple, a pattern that is accepted as a way of life. People of Sadako's generation in particular are not intimate in public and tend not to go out together socially. Reflecting on this, Sadako said: "Do you know that married couples don't really do things together in Japan? I don't get it because we do things together here, and Carson goes with me wherever I go. When I go back to Japan,

my friends often invite me out, but I feel awkward that they don't expect my husband to come with me—they only invite me, but not my husband."

Men and women tend to live in separate spheres in Japan, and Sadako's Japanese friends probably never imagined that her husband would appreciate their invitations.

Sadako passed away on January 16, 2002, at the age of seventy-six. When I called her house for this book project in fall of 2006, I spoke with Carson and learned of her death. I also discovered that Sadako went by the English name of "Marie" in her life in the United States. Carson fondly talked about "Marie" on the phone and gave me permission to publish her story, for which I am deeply grateful.

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CHAPTER 18

A Late Mover

Mitsu K. Connery

Mitsu K. Connery, standing in front of calligraphy art in her home in March 2008. Courtesy of Mitsu K. Connery.

Mitsu K. Connery's situation was unusual among war brides, in that she and her American husband first lived in Japan many years, and only later moved to the United States.

Mitsu was born in 1935 in Aomori prefecture, an agricultural area in the north of Japan, but grew up in Fukushima prefecture, a little to the south, and similarly an agricultural area. She and Frank, her

late husband, married in 1963, and lived in Japan until 1981. Most Japanese war brides moved to the United States during the 1950s and 1960s.

I first interviewed Mitsu over the phone in 1992. We met in 2007 for an update, and on this occasion, she invited me to her home. Mitsu now lives in a condominium within walking distance of the Factoria Mall in Bellevue, Washington. She moved there from a four-bedroom house after her husband died in 1992. Mitsu imagined it as a temporary move, but now finds her location just too convenient to leave—she can walk if she wants to shop or eat out; everything is right there near her apartment.

Mitsu's condominium apartment was neat and comfortable; she had framed art and calligraphy, a comfortable sofa facing a big window, and a small dining table near the kitchen. She served Japanese green tea and *kusa-mochi* (herbal rice cake), which she had made for me. The interview was conducted one sunny afternoon, and Mitsu was very articulate as usual. She was animated and eager to reflect on the journey her life had taken.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: AN OPEN-MINDED FAMILY

Mitsu was born in 1935, the youngest girl among nine siblings. Her father worked as a stationmaster, and her mother was a housewife. Mitsu did not have much to say about her mother, except that she married her father very young, at the age of fifteen, and that she did not have to work for other people as a subordinate because her husband held the position of stationmaster at the local railway station, a prestigious job in Japan. Mitsu, however, had many memories to recount of her father, whom she recalled as strict, yet open-minded:

> My father was brought up in a Buddhist temple, where his father was a priest. So, he was strict and told us kids to pray to Buddha before breakfast every day. He also made my mother follow every step of the *O-bon* summer ancestral grave ritual from A to Z completely! On the other hand, he was keen about new things and ideas, so that as a family we were somewhat liberal.
>
> As you know, it is a very common thing to keep girls at home so that the parents can keep an eye on them. But my father didn't object to my sister's plan when she told him she wanted to go to Korea as a factory worker to help the Japanese military during the

> war. He not only did not oppose the idea, but even suggested that she go work in a central area that was more lively and interesting, yet was farther away from our house. My oldest sister went to Manchuria to work, and the sixth one to Korea.

Mitsu's father was atypical in encouraging his daughters to work away from home. As the Japanese term *hakoiri musume* (boxed daughter) suggests, it was common to not allow unmarried daughters to be away from home. To some extent, this over-protective perspective is not unusual in Japan even today.

MITSU'S FUTURE HUSBAND: MUTUAL CARE

Mitsu told me of the sweet and mischievous first meeting with Frank Connery:

> I was working as a beautician at the American base PX. My coworker told me that there was an interesting American working nearby—and this happened to be my future husband! I have to tell you the story, though it may sound strange. In those days, our hair salon and the barber shop at the PX shared the same restroom area. When I was in the restroom, my husband happened to be there too. I had a glimpse of his face through a little opening in the door. At that moment, I somehow instinctively knew and said to myself, "Oh, he is the man whom I'll marry." That was the very first time I saw him. I don't know why, but I felt this way.

Later, Frank came to Mitsu and asked her to take care of his nails, and he began to make an appointment with her every other week. As they got to know each other, another incident made them closer: There was a strike at the PX, and Mitsu was told not to go out. She was at a loss because she had to go back to her house. Realizing her predicament, Frank kindly managed to get her out of the military camp by hiding her in a blanket!

Mitsu looked back on their early days of getting acquainted and also added that learning English was a possible factor in dating Frank: "My English was not good! As you know, you never learn how to really speak English in the Japanese school. . . . Frank and I communicated with a kind of baby talk of English and Japanese. I made an attempt to speak in English when we were together. To some extent, maybe I dated him because I wanted to learn English."

DATING: DISTANCE AND CONFIDENCE

Mitsu and Frank dated for six years before marrying, but for two of those years, Frank was away from Japan, and their only communication was through letters. While they were dating, Mitsu felt sure that her neighbors were speaking critically of her for dating an American. She maintains that she did not really care, and continued seeing Frank, explaining that "It must have been because of my youth." I asked Mitsu if she felt insecure in her situation while Frank was away. She responded that she didn't dwell on any concern about the relationship: "No, not really. If we had to break up, we would break up. I would think about what to do when the break-up became the reality. That's how I was thinking in those days. I wasn't really afraid of losing him."

This perspective represents an exceptionally secure, emotional stance. At that time in Japan, women who entered into relationships with American servicemen and subsequently were left, or chose to leave the relationship, rather than marrying were referred to as *kizumono,* or "defective goods." The prospect of a good marriage was lost for them, because women's chastity was one of the most crucial prerequisites in the norms of Japanese marriage at that time.

FAMILY REACTION TO MITSU'S MARRIAGE: LITTLE OPEN OPPOSITION

Unlike most war brides, Mitsu did not face much opposition. She recalls:

> My family didn't really oppose my marriage to an American. My mother just said to me, "I won't try to change your mind if it's something you have already decided." She respected my decision. Well, it may also be in part that with so many children, my mother didn't have time to worry too much about only one. [Laughs] My sisters had known all those years that I was dating an American, so they weren't against our marriage.

Mitsu did feel that some of her relatives might have not been so happy about her marriage. However, she suspects that they did not say anything because they knew she had a strong-minded character and was unlikely to listen to them once she made up her mind. Nevertheless, Mitsu seems to feel that despite her strong personality, she might not have been able to marry Frank if her father had been alive at that time.

She wonders what her father would have said to her: "Even though Father was liberal, I heard that his ancestors were from the Fujiwara family. So, he was proud of his family line because the Fujiwara is one of the oldest families in Japan and it is sort of an elite class. I have no idea what he would have said to me if he had been alive and found out that I, a Fujiwara descendant, was going to marry an American!"

Indeed, the Fujiwara clan is one of the oldest Japanese families, tracing back to the seventh century. Marriage in Japan is not solely a decision of what suits the individuals, but is also very much a family matter. Thus, it might have been very difficult for Mitsu to marry Frank if her father had been alive at the time of her marriage and had raised strong opposition.

HOUSEHOLD LIFE: WELCOME PARTICIPATION BY FRANK

When Mitsu and Frank finally married, he had already left the military and was working as a merchant seaman in Japan. He was often out on the boat, and was at home only around four months per year. Thus, Mitsu took care of most of the household chores. However, every summer they had an interesting arrangement, in which Mitsu was relieved of these responsibilities and spent a week with friends, while her husband and children stayed at home:

> My husband always took his vacation during our sons' summer vacation time. So, every summer for about a week, I would travel with my friends, because he stayed home with our children during the summer time.
>
> While I was away, I'm sure he cooked for them. When I told my sons that I was going to take a trip, so that they had to stay with Dad, they would say something like, "Here comes the beef soup days!" So, I guess he was feeding them with that kind of food.

It seems that Frank probably enjoyed the time alone at home with his children. He was able to do things that he usually could not and make up for his long absences from home.

MOVING TO THE UNITED STATES: BEST FOR THE CHILDREN

Mitsu and Frank were married in 1965, but did not choose to move to the United States until 1981. In contrast, most Japanese war brides moved to America within a few years of their marriage.

Mitsu and Frank, who were settled in Japan, decided to move to the United States for the sake of their oldest son. Mitsu told me how this came about:

> I have two sons. When oldest one started high school, he experienced discrimination, and ended up feeling reluctant to go to school. He had never felt discriminated against in elementary or middle school. When he went to high school, and encountered discrimination, he started to feel depressed. Even though he didn't say anything to me, I could tell there was something wrong, so I talked to one of his friends whom he'd been close to since middle school, "He is acting funny these days. Is there something going on at school?" His friend confided to me the truth that my son was being bullied in school. Then I asked my son if this was indeed so, and he answered in the affirmative.
>
> I found out that one of the Japanese teachers in high school had been being cruel to him. For example, when the teacher checked the students' homework, he would comment to my son something like, "You must not have done it because that's the kind of student you are." He even declared to my son in the beginning of his freshman year, "I have no obligation to educate someone like you." In a way, what the teacher said may have been correct. . . . According to Japanese law in those days, if a child was listed under the mother's family register, rather than the register of the father's family, the child was automatically viewed as a child of a single mother even if the mother was officially married. Because of this sort of assumption, we listed my son as belonging to my husband's family, and he had my husband's last name.
>
> But I want to point out this: I was working in Japan and paying taxes every year. My son went to a public high school in Kanagawa prefecture after passing the entrance examination, just like any other Japanese child. That teacher was probably of my generation and had lived through the war. I believe that was part of the reason that he had been hard on my son, whose father was American.

Mitsu did not say anything to the teacher because she was afraid to exacerbate the situation. She did not believe that speaking up would help. Her son became increasingly depressed and started to miss school. Observing his suffering, Mitsu felt that her son would be ruined if she did not do something to change the situation. Her

younger son had not yet faced a similar situation, and did not want to leave Japan, but Mitsu and Frank felt it was best to move to the United States.

SETTLING IN SEATTLE: ACCESS TO FAMILIAR COMFORTS

In deciding where to live in the United States, Frank felt it would be best to choose a location with a large number of Japanese. They considered Los Angeles and San Francisco, but were concerned that those big cities might have too many temptations for their sons. In the end, they picked Seattle. Mitsu described the appeal:

> My husband had visited Seattle before, so that he knew that there were many Japanese living in this area. It was before Mt. Helena [sic] erupted, and another mountain, Mt. Rainier, looked just like Mt. Fuji in Japan! I think that we made a good decision in going to a place where I never had to feel homesick for Japanese food. Since many Japanese live here, there is easy access to Japanese foods. My husband does eat Japanese dishes including sticky rice. He loves rice, maybe more than I do. I don't miss rice even when I haven't had any for some time. But he does—he is the one who will say, "I want to eat rice" after a while.

Their new home in the States offered many familiar comforts, and the Connery family settled in.

AFTER TEN YEARS IN AMERICA: FLEXIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE AND IN HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES AND FINANCES

I first talked with Mitsu in 1992, about ten years after she and her family moved to the United States. Mitsu was working as a beautician, a job she had previously held in Japan. She found her job through a newspaper ad and was hired on her first try.

Prior to the interview, Mitsu responded to a questionnaire, in which she wrote about her work, "I sometimes have to do some tasks that my co-workers were unwilling to do." She clarified:

> Let me give you some examples. My co-workers don't really want to wash towels, so the task is rotated. But even though we decided to take turns, some of them just didn't do it. Because I couldn't

> stand to see unwashed towels being piled up, I would sometimes help them, although they don't even thank me. Then, some of them even began to signal me to do the washing when there were lots of towels waiting to be washed.
>
> I can give you another example. You know, Japanese don't express emotions so openly, and I'm also a calm type of person. When we have an unpleasant customer who gets angry easily, they ask me to take care of her, saying that I wouldn't get upset.

Mitsu is a hard worker, and in these situations, some of her colleagues seem to have taken advantage of her diligence and calm nature. Mitsu responded to these imbalances at her workplace by learning to be more straightforward in this country. She explains how she is handling sensitive situations:

> I'll tell you this—I will help washing towels to some point. But after that I don't wash them and just tell whoever responsible to do the rest herself. It's the same way with difficult customers. I tell my co-workers that I'll take care of the customer this time, but someone else has to do it the next time. I think it took me a while to say things straightforwardly after I moved to this country. I say this kind of thing in a joking way, but firmly assert what I have to say. Well, it's very difficult to say stuff like this because people could get offended. That's why I try to say it in a humorous way.

Ten years after the Connerys moved to the United States, Mitsu and Frank are sharing household chores. Mitsu is still doing the majority of the chores, cooking and most of the dishes. But Frank also seems to be contributing quite a bit:

> At home, I do most of the cooking as well as doing dishes. I just can't let my husband do these because I don't feel comfortable about it. You know, some of the dishes which I brought from Japan are too precious to put in the dishwasher—they might get chipped. So I wash them by hand. But at least he does things like putting away his own dishes into the sink. Of course, that's his job.
>
> I do the housecleaning, too. But I don't like to clean the refrigerator or the stove. Oh, I especially hate to clean the refrigerator. So Frank cleans both for me. These are his jobs. He does

> the grocery shopping, too. I make a list of things we need and give it to him. . . . The yard work and car maintenance are his tasks as well. He seems to think that they are his responsibilities, so I have never done these.

When Mitsu and Frank were both working, their system was that they put their earnings in separate accounts. Mitsu firmly believes that she does not have to contribute to the household budget. She says, "From the beginning, I told him not to depend on me financially. If he did, I said to him, "You would lose your qualification as my husband." Frank accepted this arrangement, and all the household necessities including taxes are paid from his earnings. Mitsu says that he never complained about her not contributing to the household budget because she was not making much money in the first place.

Mitsu and Frank negotiated an arrangement that worked for them.

AMERICA AND JAPAN: MORE SPACE AND MORE PERSONAL FREEDOM IN THE MOVE

When I first conducted an interview over the phone in 1992, about ten years after Mitsu and her family moved to the United States, part of the interview asked Mitsu to compare America and Japan. Mitsu said that she felt physically more comfortable living in America than in Japan mainly because of living space here. At that time, she was living in a spacious four-bedroom, almost unheard of in Japan, where houses are much smaller in general. The population of Japan is about half that of the United States, but as a mountainous country, Japan has livable land space only about the size of Connecticut, one of the smaller states in America. Thus, the much greater population density results in much smaller houses compared to those in America.

In addition to physical comfort, Mitsu felt psychologically more comfortable living in the United States. She explained the complications of living where people paid more attention to one's activities:

> I feel like I have more freedom in America. You know, I love swimming. But when I was in Japan, it was rather troublesome to go swimming. I always pretended like I was going grocery shopping. I would carry a shopping bag with my bathing suit hidden in it, and tried to find a moment when nobody was around in my neighborhood, and drove away. On my way back home, I would

> actually shop at a store near the pool even though it wasn't necessary. I wanted to pretend that the reason I went out was because I had to buy some groceries.

As Mitsu was so cautious, I wondered if people did say things to her. She said:

> No, not particularly. But, if you often go out, people would start to say things like, "Aren't you going out often these days?" in Japan, you know. Those who said these things may have meant nothing. But I couldn't help wondering if they meant something negative about me. Well, I guess those of us who married non-Japanese may be more sensitive. I mean, we tend to be very careful thinking like, "I shouldn't be doing something different from others," "I don't want to be seen as different from other people," and etc. I just didn't want people to find any fault in myself.

On the other hand, in America, Mitsu felt that she did not have to worry about things like that. She felt it was easier to just enjoy life here: "Even though there are good points as well as weak points in both American and Japanese societies, I feel more comfortable living here in America overall."

IMPACT OF WAR: NO WINNERS

Mitsu told me a very poignant family story that took place years ago in Japan but became significant to their family with the current situation in Iraq. What Mitsu told me was unforgettable:

> This happened when my younger son, Tony, was in kindergarten in Japan and I believe that he was about five years old. One day, Tony came running home from his kindergarten. I was waiting for him outside the house, but he just passed right by me and hurriedly opened the door, "Bam!" He ran to his Dad and said, "Dad! Is it true that Japan and America fought in the war?" Frank calmly responded, "Yes, they did." "Who won the war?" Tony had to find out. But my husband explained, "You know what, Tony? Nobody wins in a war. Both sides are the losers. The war takes place and all the people involved get defeated. That's the reality."

> Tony did not believe what his father said to him. So, he questioned him, "No. That's not true. People kill people in the war, and one of the groups gets to win." Frank again told him, "After the fighting, nobody, you know, nobody wins. This is the truth." Tony stared at Frank's face and he probably recognized something very serious in his father's face. Tony didn't say anything further, and then went to his room. That was the end of the story. After that, no one in my family mentioned what Tony said on that day.

Years passed, and Tony is now a young adult of thirty-some years. Tony works with the U.S. military and was sent to Iraq. Mitsu told me about a conversation she had with Tony when he telephoned her from Iraq:

> Tony is not a soldier, but he was asked to patrol the streets in Iraq and to collect the bodies of Iraqi soldiers who were killed on the streets. He said to me, "Mom, they were probably no more than fourteen or fifteen years old. They were just kids. But, they were dead with their guns in hands. Looking at the faces of those children, who would have enjoyed their lives for years to come, I started to cry." He then went on to talk about the conversation he had when he was five. "When I asked Dad, 'Who won the war?' he said, 'Nobody wins the war.' I now think that what he told me was very true." "Did you still remember that?" I said with surprise. "Yes, I have remembered all these years, but I just didn't have the occasion to bring it up. But, witnessing the cruel reality here in Iraq, I believe that Dad was very right," he answered.

Mitsu later told me that Frank had this conversation with his son in Japanese. Frank, whose Japanese language skills were not that great, used all the knowledge he had in Japanese. He tried his best to answer his son's tough question in Japanese. Mitsu believes that is why Tony, who was merely five, remembered what his dad said to him all these years. This family, created in the aftermath of war, has a profound and abiding sense of the pain and loss of war.

MITSU IN 2007: ACTIVE AND ENJOYING LIFE

Mitsu worked as a beautician in Japan and the United States for almost fifty years, and retired in 2000 at the age of sixty-five. She still has a little volunteer work, doing haircuts for the residents at the

predominantly Asian-American Keiro nursing home in Seattle. She visits there typically twice a month and does haircuts for the people who are in need.

Mitsu is also busy doing what she enjoys—swimming, singing, and writing *senryuu* poems. For over thirty years, she has been swimming regularly. She loves swimming and tries to go three times a week for about forty-five minutes each time. She also belongs to a chorus, and practices singing twice a week. Her chorus is a Japanese women's group, and she enjoys the friendship there as well. *Senryuu,* an informal kind of haiku, is another love of hers. She attends monthly meetings of a *senryuu* group in Seattle, and even contributes via the Internet to a *senryuu* association in Japan. Mitsu feels that Japanese who live in the United States and who live in Japan have different perspectives in making *senryuu.* To learn a different perspective, Mitsu wants to belong to both *senryuu* groups.

IF YOU COULD START OVER . . . : HAPPY WITH THESE CHOICES

Mitsu was asked if she would marry Frank if she could start over in her life. Here is her response: "Yes, I would definitely marry him again if I could start over. I was able to respect and trust him as a person. He was fourteen years older than me, and he was like a nice American guy from the old days."

Mitsu was further asked if she would choose to live in the United States again:

> I think that I would live here again. I think that the life in America suits my personality better than in Japan. I'm very comfortable living in the U.S. I don't plan to live in Japan at all. As I told you, I had to hide the fact that I was swimming a few times a week in Japan. If my neighbors had found that out, I would have been considered a "delinquent wife." I had to avoid that. That's why I did my best to hide my visits to the pool. Japan today must be different from those days. Even if a housewife often goes swimming, it may be okay in Japan today. But you know, I still believe that Japan remains the same way, to some extent. Besides, you can't really express your opinions straightforwardly, right? Overall, I would be better off living in America than in Japan.

Indeed, Mitsu looked very comfortable and confident during the interview in 2007, twenty-six years after she moved to the United States. Although Mitsu and Frank originally settled in Japan, the same open thinking that brought them to that stage served them well in the move to the United States. Mitsu's independent character seemed to support her well in her marriage, and in the move.

I saw in Mitsu some common struggles that immigrants everywhere face, and some of the curiosity or open-mindedness that serves many immigrants well. I could completely sympathize with her desire to be in an area where there were other Japanese people and, where home foods were available, yet where she could enjoy the cultural differences that suited her so well.

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CHAPTER 19

An Unexpected Life That Led into a Long and Fruitful Path

Kimiko K. Dardis

Kimiko K. Dardis is deeply appreciative for the life she has lived, and views it as a miracle. When Kimiko was an infant, the physician predicted that she would probably live to be only seventeen or eighteen due to a problem with her heart. Happily, however, Kimiko has not only survived to her current age of seventy-eight years (in 2007), but has also given birth to five children. "I tell those who doubt if there is such a thing as a miracle in this world to come see me! I'm a living proof of the reality of miracles," Kimiko said enthusiastically.

Kimiko K. and Bob Dardis enjoying their first date in Japan in August 1953. Courtesy of Robert R. Dardis.

Kimiko and I have stayed in touch through letters, cards, and telephone conversations ever since the first phone interview in

1992. Seeing each other in person, however, did not happen until June 6, 2007, when I visited her to conduct a follow-up interview. It was a warm and lovely June day. Kimiko greeted me at the door, and I could sense that we were both feeling, "How exciting that we are finally able to meet in person after all these years!" She took me in and led me over to her dining table, where we sat down to start the interview.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: CHILD WITH A DEFECTIVE HEART IN A LARGE FAMILY

Kimiko was born in 1929 in Shizuoka prefecture, about 100 miles southwest of Tokyo, as the middle child of five. She had two brothers and two sisters, and her father owned a dairy farm. There were three or four big dairy farms in Shizuoka, and their family farm was one of them. Kimiko's mother did farm work as well as running the household. She would get up around one o'clock and work until six o'clock in the morning. She would then feed her children breakfast and get them off to school.

What set Kimiko apart from her siblings was being born with a bad heart condition. Her account of the ways that her parents reacted to the situation and the prediction of a short life for this child show very different approaches:

> My father decided to let me do whatever I wanted to—he gave me a great deal of freedom. Since he thought that I would die at a young age, he wanted to grant me my every wish. My mother, on the other hand, saw things quite differently from my father. She was very strict and made me do various chores around the house, such as taking care of my younger brother and sister, helping her do the usual housework, and things like that. Since I was able to do well in all those things, she seemed to come to the conclusion that she didn't have to be embarrassed about me. Well, she was a bit embarrassed about me in the beginning, because I was kind of handicapped, you know. Even though my heart wasn't perfectly healthy, she made me do the chores. I think what she made me do really helped me because I became independent by doing all those chores.

Looking back, Kimiko felt that she might not have come to America had her mother given her special treatment because of her heart condition. Because she had to do her household chores just like any other child, she felt that she became independent enough to later cross the Pacific Ocean.

MEETING HUSBAND-TO-BE: A KIND AND DETERMINED NEWCOMER

In her twenties, Kimiko was working as a typist in an American camp, Camp McGill, located southwest of Yokosuka, in Kanagawa prefecture, not far from Tokyo. There was a beautiful beach near the camp, and the beach area was designated for use by the Allied Occupation at that time. One day, she went swimming there and saw a man floating on a rubber mattress. She really wanted to try the mattress, so she asked him, "Can I try it?" Robert R. Dardis, her future husband, was happy to let Kimiko use the floating mattress. That is how Kimiko and Bob met for the first time. Bob was quite new to Japan then—Kimiko believes that it was only his eighth day there. They started to go out every Sunday after that, and he proposed to her eight months after their first encounter.

Kimiko, however, hesitated to accept his proposal. She explained her feelings about his proposal in a wonderful long letter on many aspects of her life, which she sent me after her follow-up interview:

> I had a few *omiai,* (an arranged introduction for marriage) when I was about twenty-two. But each time, I was told something like, "She is very nice, but. . ." No one wanted to marry me, due to my heart condition. So, when Bob proposed to me, I told him my medical situation honestly and straightforwardly. I told him that it would be better for him not to marry me. But he didn't think that my condition was so serious because I looked healthy and well. He went ahead to proceed with a marriage application for us.

In fact, Bob was again warned against marrying Kimiko by the doctor who gave her medical examination, which is the required first step in the marriage application. Bob was advised to think twice about his plan, because "she would be most likely bedridden within five years." However, Bob dismissed this warning and went ahead to marry Kimiko. He did not tell her about the other warnings he had received prior to their marriage; he only brought it up several years after they married, to try to persuade her to have surgery.

REACTIONS TO MARRIAGE: CONCERNS AT HOME, BUT AN UNEXPECTED SIMPLIFIED OFFICIAL PROCESS

Kimiko was the only war bride I spoke to who predicted that, had he been alive at the time, her father would have lent his support for her marriage to an American. Other women I interviewed, such as Mitsu

and Sadako, were quite uncertain if they would have succeeded in their intention to marry their husbands, if their fathers had been alive. Kimiko pointed out the interesting fact that her father himself had wanted to marry a British woman when he was younger:

> My father had already passed away when I met Bob. If he had been alive, I believe that he would have supported my decision to marry Bob. Father was a man who had a very global vision. He associated with a British banker when he was young. I heard that my father wanted to marry the daughter of the banker. In his case, he faced very strong opposition from his parents, and as you know, you just had to obey your parents in those days in Japan. So, my father had to abandon the idea of marrying a British woman, and instead accept marrying a Japanese woman whom his parents chose—that was my mother. So, I'm positive that my father would have supported my marriage to an American.

Kimiko's mother, however, was opposed to the marriage. She characterized her mother as "a type of person who was always concerned about what other people were thinking." Kimiko speculates that her mother was probably afraid that Kimiko would be mistaken for one of the women who were sexually involved with American GIs for money. In addition, her mother feared that she would not be able to have a normal married life because she had a heart condition. Kimiko's mother was also concerned that America was too far away for her to take care of Kimiko in case of emergency. The fact that one of Kimiko's aunts from her father's side had been a "picture bride" of a Japanese immigrant in the United States in an earlier generation made her mother worry even more. (The picture brides are the Japanese women who came to the United States in the nineteenth century to marry Japanese immigrants with whom they were acquainted only through pictures.) Kimiko explains: "The concepts that my mother had of America were all based on the situation of this aunt, so that Mother thought that she would never see me again once I had gone to America. Nowadays, you can go back and forth between the United States and Japan easily, but in those days, America was really far away. That's why my mother was opposed to our marriage."

Kimiko's mother eventually came to support the marriage, and even offered to send money to the United States for Kimiko to hire someone to help with the house cleaning, because she was worried about Kimiko's heart condition.

In addition to opposition from the families involved, neither American nor Japanese authorities welcomed marriages between American men and Japanese women. According to Kimiko, Japanese women had to go through in-depth investigations from both sides in order for the international marriage to be permitted. Looking back to those days, she elaborated:

> If you were a prostitute or a communist, by law you could not marry an American serviceperson. So, when an American reported to the military officials that he wanted to marry a Japanese woman, the military would investigate the woman to see just who she was. It was a tough investigation! You know, there are many people who have stereotypes and think that war brides had been prostitutes in Japan. But that was the furthest from the truth because of the tough scrutiny of the woman's background check. As I explained, Japanese war brides were checked by the American military as well as the Japanese police. If a woman was found to have been a prostitute, she was prohibited from marrying an American man. Some women who were not supposed to marry may have somehow managed to marry American G.I.s, but I believe that would have been only a very small number.

The U.S. Marine Corps group that Bob belonged to was especially known for their opposition and tough investigation. It was a common practice in his workplace that any GI who expressed intentions to marry a Japanese woman would be transferred to another base immediately. The Marine units went to great lengths to prevent their men from marrying Japanese.

However, Kimiko and Bob were an exception. Because she was already employed and known at the Marine camp and she had a good reputation, it took them only ten months to be able to marry. She discussed the fortunate results:

> I heard that Bob's boss made an inquiry about me to two of the Marines who knew me through work. They told him that I was "untouchable." His boss was very much satisfied with their responses and became supportive of our marriage. He even let Bob stay in Tokyo because of me, even though he was to have been transferred to Okinawa at that time. It took us just ten

months to finish all the paperwork and everything. We were really lucky to have been able to finish everything in ten months, because most couples had to wait for one to three years until they received permission.

EARLY DAYS IN AMERICA AND A TIME BACK IN JAPAN

Kimiko and Bob got married and moved to the United States in 1955, taking up residence in New Jersey. At that time, Bob had been discharged from the military and was working at a gas station. Kimiko was pregnant with their second child. Bob had hoped to become a pharmacist, but was not able to get a loan from the bank to go to college. For Kimiko, this situation in America seemed very ironic: "I think that America is a strange country in the sense that you can't borrow money from the bank if you have never borrowed money before. We had never gotten a loan before, so that the bank didn't lend us money. In those days, there weren't student loans yet. We just couldn't borrow money. Bob gave up the idea of becoming a pharmacist and decided to join the Air Force instead."

After Bob joined the Air Force, he was stationed in Massachusetts. At that time one of Bob's friends was being assigned to Japan, even though he very much did not want to go. Bob had received an assignment to go to Spain. Because Bob's friend wanted to go to Spain, Bob and his friend decided to ask the personnel officer to allow them to change assignments. Their request was approved, and Bob and Kimiko were able to go back to Japan in 1959.

COOKING ROLES AND FOOD CHOICES: SHARED AND APPRECIATED

Over the years, Kimiko has been the one who does most of the chores at home. However, unlike her cohorts in Japan, she does not need to prepare her husband's food for times when she will be out of the house. During the more than twenty years that Kimiko has been taking art courses, she goes out regularly. Bob takes care of his own meals when she is not at home. He has been supportive of Kimiko going to school.

Kimiko said that there were some war bride couples who would eat separate meals—Western dishes for the husbands and Japanese ones for the wives. However, Kimiko and Bob have never done that: "My husband and I eat exactly the same dishes from the beginning of our

marriage. He has been so used to eating Japanese dishes that he would miss steamed rice if we don't have it for several days. We have both Japanese and American meals—about fifty-fifty—because you get tired of eating just one or the other all the time!"

COMMUNICATION CRISIS: UNITED STATES VERSUS JAPAN

Kimiko and Bob experienced a crisis in their marriage around the time when their children had grown up and left home. This crisis seems to be rooted in the differences between American and Japanese communication styles: Americans tend to be more direct, whereas Japanese employ an indirect approach and to assume that others will understand their feelings from subtle things, or by being very sensitive. Their frustration arose from a lack of understanding of the other's behavior:

> I had been taking care of our children mostly over the years. I had been also playing the role of obedient wife for years. But now, I think that what I had been doing was not quite right. In this country, you can be misunderstood if you don't speak up. There was always a feeling in my mind that I was not doing anything productive for myself. Yet, Bob was confident that I had been satisfied all those years in the U.S., because I didn't express any complaints to him. As you know, American people are more straightforward compared with Japanese. For example, when you ask, "Can I help you?" people in this country typically respond saying, "If you want to." In other words, you do it only if you want to do. If you don't want to do, you don't have to do it. Helping others is a spontaneous act. They would understand even when you can't help them as long as you explain straightforwardly. However, you would be considered impudent if you were straightforward in Japan.
>
> I was typically Japanese in the sense that I wasn't straightforward at all; I was the so-called "beating around the bush" type. I was irritated by Bob sometimes because he didn't notice my feelings at all. I guess that my irritation reflects the difference between Japanese and American cultures. I was able to conceal my frustration for twenty-five years. But I couldn't take it anymore after our children left home and Bob and I started to live just by ourselves. We had more time alone with each other than before, and I realized that we didn't have much in

> common. A kind of inferior complex grew inside me because I felt like I'm nothing compared with Bob, who has accomplished so much. I felt more and more frustrated every day. . . . You know what? Over the years I was giving priority to the needs of my husband and children.

After twenty-five years of marriage, Kimiko finally decided to tell Bob the frustration that she had been feeling over the years. She felt that he did not take care of their children much and often went out with his male friends, leaving Kimiko to handle their five children. His reaction was, "Why didn't you say something? I thought you were happy!" He was, needless to say, very surprised by her confession after so many years.

Kimiko managed to overcome this crisis through her beliefs in Catholicism. Her religion helped her to see things with a different perspective.

BECOMING A CATHOLIC

Religion has played a big part in Kimiko's life. She strongly believes in Catholicism, and she found support through it for her efforts to solve her communication crisis with her husband. Kimiko had been a Buddhist in Japan, but converted to Catholicism initially because Bob was a member of that faith:

> There is a Japanese saying, "Once you marry, you follow your husband's steps," so I followed this precept. But I couldn't really believe in Catholicism in the beginning. I think I was somewhat critical of Catholicism since I had been a Buddhist and was influenced by Japanese traditional Shinto beliefs, as well. I considered changing back to Buddhism, but I decided to study Catholicism instead. I was originally interested in Baptism, so that I studied more deeply about Baptism and about Catholic theology. After having seriously studied these, I realized that I was happy being a Catholic. Since then, I'm a true Catholic, not because my husband is, but because I believe in Catholicism.

Kimiko gave a concrete example of why she liked the Catholic approach:

> In the Catholic religion, there is a saying, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself," but I didn't quite get it at first. I thought that it would be impossible to carry out that sort of belief in reality. In

> Japan for instance, if you see two pieces of cake on the table, one large and one small, you must automatically choose the small one for yourself. If you take the big one, and the next person had to take the small one because of what you did, then you would be criticized by people and look really bad. So, you have to ignore your true desire and take the small one. However, according to the Catholic thinking, it is different even though the result may be the same. In Catholic thinking, you think that you would be happy if you were to receive the big piece. But others would think the same way. If I really want others to be happy, then I do not do it because of what others may think, but rather because that is what makes me happy. In that way of thinking, one can gladly give up the big piece of cake.
>
> You can say the same thing about the condition of poverty. If you are poor, it means that you don't have enough means. When you don't have enough things, you have to figure out what to do. It is fortunate for you to be able to think many ways.

Reflecting on ideas that she found in the Catholic way of thinking, Kimiko had come to be more understanding toward her husband. Looking back at the way she misunderstood Bob, she even felt that she had been arrogant. She philosophically says today, "After all, it's quite difficult to change people. But, it does happen naturally when you yourself change. Then, people do change."

KIMIKO AS AN ARTIST: FINDING HER OWN EXPRESSION

Kimiko is an accomplished artist today. She has been taking art classes at a nearby community college for more than twenty years. In addition to the support she derives from her religious beliefs, Kimiko's finding something that she truly enjoys has also helped to improve her relationship with Bob. Around the time when she became worried that she and Bob had little in common, Kimiko had the opportunity to travel to Japan. She encountered one of her childhood friends during the trip and talked to him about her situation. He advised Kimiko to do something that she wanted to do for herself in her life:

> I thought about myself—was there something that I really wanted to do? Then, I realized that I had always wanted to learn art, so I told him that. "Then, you do it!" he said. That's how I

> began taking art classes at the Pierce County Community College. . . . You need to use your imagination to do artwork. That's the most interesting aspect of art and the one which made me keep going. It's too enjoyable to let it go at this point.

An unforeseen and felicitous consequence of Kimiko's taking art classes was that it made her feel more confident about herself in general. She used to find it very difficult to communicate in English, and people often misunderstood her, partly due to the fact that she mumbled and spoke too quietly. That cycle was reinforced by her tendency to speak in a small voice because she had little confidence in her English. However, this pattern changed dramatically after she started taking art courses at the community college:

> I was surrounded by all Americans and so I had to speak in English during the classes. At the same time, I gradually came to feel greater self-confidence because my art teacher often praised my drawings. As the result, I didn't feel embarrassed or intimidated anymore when I spoke English. I used to worry about what others would think about my English. I didn't say what I really wanted to say because I imagined people might laugh at me if my pronunciation was bad. But now, I do say what I want to say!

I THANK GOD FOR GIVING ME A DEFECTIVE HEART

I asked Kimiko if she would marry Bob again, if she were given the chance to start her life over. She immediately said, "Yes!" and added reflectively, "No one wanted to marry me in Japan, you know!" Although Kimiko had a few introductions to prospective husbands when she was a young woman in Japan, she had always been politely rejected. She explains why she was not seen as a good choice for marriage:

> Back then, marriage meant more like finding a laborer for the family. When the family needed an extra pair of hands, they would look for a wife for their son. She had to be strong and healthy enough to take care of her parents-in-law. Of course,

> she had to take care of her husband's needs, as well. She must bear his children for the family. So, what would you say? She was like a maid who could bear children for the family. But, in my case—"she won't be able to have children; it would be hard for her to have a married life; she won't live long." Then who would want to marry me? No one! I didn't have any of the qualifications, not even one, which you need in order to marry in Japan.

Kimiko, who must have experienced repeated heartache and bitterness in her life because of her challenges from her defective heart condition, says today, "It was a good thing that I was born with a bad heart." She goes on to say, "Thanks to my bad heart, I was able to meet the man who truly loved me." She believes that if she had been born with a healthy heart, she would have married a man whom her parents chose, just like most women in those days were doing. However, because of her health, her parents could not find such a husband, and this misfortune led her to Bob, who was sincere and loved Kimiko deeply enough to marry her despite the warnings from her doctor. "Today I feel like my heart was a blessing from God," she says.

Kimiko, who experienced what felt like a true crisis of communication in her marriage, now feels very strongly about the importance of conversation between spouses:

> Life doesn't go as the textbook says! We all grew up in different families, and each one's environment and way of life was different. So, the way of thinking may be different even between spouses, you know. That's why it's important to have conversation in everyday life. By talking and clarifying what each other is thinking, you can progress together as a married couple. If you don't make progress together, it's hard to stay together. Even a silly talk is something that I think it's important to have for the couple.

Kimiko later confided to me that she asked Bob the same question she was asked, "If you could start your life over again, would you marry your spouse again?" His clear-hearted answer was, "I would marry you again. I say this from the bottom of my heart."

Note: Kimiko passed away on May 2, 2009. I was fortunate enough to see her two days before. She was too weak to respond to me, but she seemed to understand what I was saying to her. I told her that this book would be published for certain sometime in 2009, and thanked her for everything she had done for me.

Kimiko passed away at the age of eighty, even though her life was predicted to end at the age of seventeen or eighteen. She was told that she would never be able to have children, but she was blessed with five children. Kimiko indeed made us believe that miracles can happen in life.

CONCLUSION

Japanese Women and the Allied Forces

Katie Kaori Hayashi

On August 15, 1945, World War II ended. The U.S. Occupation army arrived in the defeated country on September 6. The U.S. troops who landed in Yokohama, a port of entry, were astonished when they found a ghost town—the result of the American aerial attacks. The houses were burned down, and not a single soul was on the streets.

To govern the defeated country, the Occupation army moved to Tokyo, the capital of Japan. The army took over the building in front of the imperial palace, where Emperor Hirohito resided, and used it as its headquarters. The Occupation forces started reconstructing the defeated country, which was left in chaos and squalor. Downtown Tokyo was also destroyed, and American soldiers saw shelterless, ragged, and starving people at the stations and on the street.

With the arrival of the Occupation army, many Japanese feared ruthless subjugation. A dreadful rumor was widely spread: men would be killed and women would be raped by the soldiers. Even the national newspapers asked their readers to prepare for the looting, violence, and raping.

In the beginning of September, young women in the Tokyo and Yokohama areas evacuated to the rural areas. Women feared being raped by the foreign "beasts" and "devils." Parents shaved their daughters' heads and put dirt on their faces. The girls disguised themselves as boys as a means of protection. All the girls' high schools were closed down in Yokohama City, and young girls who did not evacuate to the countryside were confined in the houses. By military decree, any American found guilty of rape faced the death penalty; this measure was instituted by U.S. forces in order to maintain good relations with the general public in Japan. The Japanese government felt that it had to protect the women by providing organized brothels.

The Japanese believed that only low-level *geisha*, street girls, and prostitutes would become companions to the Americans. The organized brothels, which were organized under the name of the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA), were set up on August 26. The RAA was called *sei no bouhatei* (sex bulwark) and was created to curb the sexual exploits of the foreign soldiers.

In the autumn of 1945, American newspapers, including the *New York Times* (October 1, October 14, and October 28), disclosed the promiscuous relationships between American soldiers and Japanese women of the RAA. The American public were astonished at the news reports and critical of the Occupation army. On March 3, 1946, General Douglas MacArthur declared that he did not want his soldiers to have such relationships with Japanese women. On March 27, 1946, the brothels of the RAA were closed because of the increasing incidence of venereal diseases (27 percent in February 1946) among the soldiers and the criticism from the United States. It is believed that the prostitutes at the RAA became street girls. In August 1946, it was estimated that the number of street girls for foreign soldiers in the Tokyo area was around 15,000.

American soldiers took an interest in going out with Japanese girls. The Occupation army did not prohibit its soldiers from dating Japanese girls. Japanese girls found that the soldiers of the Occupation army were neither "beasts" nor "devils." Instead, they found that American soldiers were friendly and well behaved. Some of the nineteen interviewees in this book called their husbands gentlemen during their courtships. Japanese girls started going out with American soldiers and welcomed their friendly attitudes. Young soldiers of the Occupation army thought Japanese girls were shy, but sweet. As the couples got to know each other, some started living together before their marriage. As a result, some had children out of wedlock. Japanese parents, relatives, and neighbors frowned on such a lifestyle. Some soldiers sincerely wanted to get married to the Japanese women, but they were not able to do so.

In the beginning of the Occupation, the American army did not enforce the strict antifraternity law; however, it did not approve of such marriages either. The army did not want its servicemen to bring Japanese wives home because of American laws such as the 1924 anti–Asian immigration law, which excluded Japanese from entering the United States. Moreover, some states, especially Southern states, enforced laws prohibiting interracial marriage. The military observed the federal and state laws at first.

Young soldiers fervently protested the military policy, and some wrote letters to their newspapers exercising their right of freedom of speech as U.S. citizens. Unlike the British Commonwealth, which enforced the strict ban on fraternization among its Occupation forces, the American army gradually modified the regulations and permitted marriage. Although the young couples became husband and wife, the husband was not able to bring his wife to the United States until Congress changed the immigration law. One of the servicemen who faced this dilemma was Frederic H. Katz.

THE FIRST WAR BRIDE

The first Japanese war bride who got permission to marry was Kazue Nagai (her maiden name), according to the Japanese newspaper the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. Kazue and Frederic H. Katz were regarded as the first official married couple because they got permission from his superiors in the Occupation army. Before their marriage in 1946, some soldiers had ceremonial marriages at shrines without obtaining permission from the military.

As a result of the federal and state immigration laws, Japanese wives were left behind when their husbands were ordered back to the States. This changed with the enactment of the Soldier Brides Act (Public Law 213) of July 22, 1947.

Frederic met Kazue Nagai at a park in Yokohama by accident. Frederic said, *Ohayo gozaimasu* (Good morning) to Kazue. She answered, "How are you?" in English. Frederic asked Kazue if she spoke English, and she answered, "a little." They started talking in English, and their talk developed into dating.

Within a half year, Frederic asked her to marry him. When she took him to her house in Yokohama, her parents did not approve of their marriage because he was a former enemy. However, the young man and woman did not change their minds and got married, gathering at least twenty-seven letters from his superiors, including one from General Douglas MacArthur. Like Kazue, many of the interviewees in this book said that their parents disapproved of their marriage. It is also known that many of the war brides lost their fathers during the war, so they could not get parental approval.

From 1948 to 1964, 47,000 Japanese war brides entered the United States. During those years, American soldiers and their wives physically left Japan and went to the United States. The Japanese media was interested in writing follow-up stories about their lives in the United States,

but they did not have the means to do so until Tsuneo Enari published his book *Hanayome no Amerika* (The Brides in America) in 1981. As the author mentioned in his book, it was difficult for the Japanese journalists to find war brides in the United States because they continually moved around in the country with their husbands as a military family. Most journalists did not have a way to locate Japanese war brides. In Tsuneo Enari's case, his relative, a war bride, introduced him to her friends. In spite of the stated difficulty of interviewing Japanese war brides, we, the authors of this book, were lucky enough to interview them into their seventies and eighties. This seemed to be the last chance to write an oral history on them.

NINETEEN WAR BRIDES RECOUNT THEIR STORIES

In this book, nineteen Japanese war brides recount their stories in the United States. All of them were born before World War II and went through the war in Japan and Korea, which was annexed to Japan in 1910. Some of their fathers and brothers were killed in the war. Some of their houses were burned down by the U.S. aerial attacks. Moreover, two war brides were victims of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, and another was a victim in Nagasaki. Most of them had been taught that American and English soldiers were "devils" and "beasts." However, from the ruins of the devastated country, love stories flowered, and they pursued marriage with soldiers despite the anti-Japanese federal and state laws in the United States and the objections from their parents.

Some interviewees met their husbands at their workplaces. Since their fathers and brothers died during the war, young girls had to work to support themselves and their families. American camps provided good-paying jobs and they did not discriminate against women, unlike Japanese businesses. Young soldiers who were attracted to Japanese girls approached them in a straightforward way. At least two interviewees were proposed to on the first day they met their future husbands.

Some of the nineteen interviewees met their husbands at dance parties. After the war, Western music was reintroduced to Japanese youths. Young Japanese men and women enjoyed dancing.

As the Japanese girls were invited to the American homes, they marveled at the wealthy lifestyle of Americans. In Japan, food and commodities were rationed, and there was not enough food at the grocery stores, meat shops, and fish shops. The department stores did not display nice merchandise, but the PX sold an abundance of nice items.

Japanese women craved the nylon stockings and cosmetics that were sold at the PX. Some worked for American families and hired Japanese maids after they married American soldiers. If they married Americans, their lives were enormously improved. Especially shortly after the war, the American dollar was mighty because of the favorable exchange rate.

As the young couples got to know each other, they overcame the language and cultural barriers. Among the interviewees, most said that those barriers did not hinder their love. When the girls asked for marriage permission from their parents, most were rejected. First, the Japanese historically have prized a pure bloodline. Second, Americans were former enemies and their fathers, brothers, and neighbors were killed by the united Allied troops during the war. Third, a lot of women (it is said 100,000) were deserted by American soldiers after the Occupation because of the U.S. anti-Japanese laws; as a result, the Japanese thought American soldiers were irresponsible. Fourth, Japanese society did not accept mixed-race babies. Such babies were often abandoned at stations and other public places, which was recognized as a social problem in Japan. For those reasons, most interviewees in this book confessed to the difficulties of getting approval from their parents.

When the American soldiers sought permission for marriage, American laws, both federal and state, stood in their way. The officers and even the chaplains tried to separate the couples. Observing those human dramas, *Sayonara*, a love story set during the Korean War, starring Marlon Brando, was made in 1952. It was based on James Michener's novel, and it described the plight of an American Air Force pilot and his love. Another movie, *East Meets West*, depicted the life of a Japanese war bride who moved to northern California with her Caucasian husband.

During World War II, freedom of speech was suppressed in Japan, and the Japanese were taught to devote their lives to their country and Emperor Hirohito. However, after moving to the United States, the Japanese war brides felt happy because they liked the free spirit there. Most interviewees confessed that they appreciated the freedoms of the United States. All of them said they liked the United States as a place to live.

THE WAR BRIDES START SPEAKING UP

The term "war bride" is a neutral word in English. However, in Japanese, the term has a negative connotation because of the belief that most war brides were former prostitutes. During the U.S. Occupation, most

Japanese would not believe that ordinary women would become partners of the former enemies. Many war brides suffered from the false stereotype and rumor. As a result, they would not reveal that they met their husbands during the Occupation.

With the new marriage trend after the war, the direct translation of the English term "war bride" came to be used in Japan. In Japanese, "war" is *sensou*, and "bride" is *hanayome*. The term *sensou hanayome* became the Japanese term to describe a woman who married a foreign soldier of the Allied Army.

The term *sensou hanayome* was often used in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but the term was not picked up in the Japanese dictionaries. One reason was that the war brides disappeared when their husbands returned to their countries, mostly between 1948 and 1964. Another was that it was still regarded as a derogatory term in Japan. Japanese war brides who entered the United States after the war became part of the silent Japanese-Americans.

However, in 1988, the war brides in the United States set up their own organization, the Nikkei International Marriage Society, and started speaking up for themselves. In 1995, Japanese war brides in Australia joined them. They held conventions in the United States (Hawaii in 1995 and 2005, and Los Angeles in 2000), Japan (Aizu Wakamatsu in 1997 and Beppu in 2002), and Australia (Canberra in 2005) to establish that they were good citizens in both the United States and Australia. In June 2006, Kazuko Umezu Stout thought that the organization had fulfilled its original aim and disbanded it.

As society changes, marriage trends change. Dr. Itsuko Kamoto, an associate professor of Kyoto Women's University, was the first professor to specialize in international marriage in Japan. In her book *Kokusai Kekkon no Tanjo* (The Birth of International Marriage in Japan), she identified the first Japanese woman who married a foreigner in the Meiji era, when international marriage became officially permitted.

Before World War II, interracial marriage was not often practiced. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Japanese women married American and Australian soldiers, a trend that started with the arrival of Occupation army soldiers. In the 1980s, Japanese men started marrying Filipino, Chinese, and Korean women. Now, in the 2000s, one out of twenty marriages in Japan is regarded as an international marriage.

The history of international marriage began with the arrival of the Meiji era (1868–1912) in Japan. The Meiji government opened its doors wide, and foreigners started coming to Japan for business. However, the number of international marriages was low because many

Japanese wished to keep the bloodline pure. With the introduction of the war brides after World War II, international marriage began as a new marriage trend.

On June 26, 2006, I was invited by Dr. Kamoto to be a guest lecturer. While talking with the students at Kyoto Women's University about the Japanese war brides, I got the impression that young students were not informed of the hard experiences of the Japanese war brides.

Some students pointed out that the discrimination against the war brides was part of a racial problem in the United States. The war brides were discriminated against not only in the United States, but also in Japan. While talking with the students, I noticed that times had changed in fifty years.

One of Dr. Kamoto's students, Mami Kosaka, said in her report, "Nowadays many people get married to foreigners, and I can see the people who married foreigners on TV and in the newspapers. Around me, some people married foreigners and married happily. I assume the Japanese war brides have overcome many difficulties. Since they overcome many difficulties, international marriage has become accepted in Japan."

Soon after World War II, the Japanese war brides faced prejudice, and they were often called traitors and prostitutes in Japan. After they entered the United States, some were abandoned by their husbands, and others experienced bitter American discrimination. However, they overcame language and cultural barriers, and they did their best to adapt to American life. Being good wives, mothers, and workers, they set a good example as pioneers in international marriage for the Japanese women who followed in their footsteps in Japan as almost 50,000 out of the 350,000 war brides who immigrated to the United States during and after World War II. This is the first English-language book to record and preserve the joy and pain of the courageous Japanese women who crossed the Pacific Ocean after World War II.

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Katie Kaori Hayashi, M.A., is a Japanese author and journalist based in Davis, California. She earned her master's degree in mass communications from California State University, Northridge. Her articles have appeared in both American and Japanese newspapers and magazines, including the *Los Angeles Times,* the *Pacific Citizen,* the *Yomiuri Shimbun,* and the *Asahi Shimbun.* She has authored many books, including *History of The Rafu Shimpo* (1997), *Amerika no Onna Nihon no Onna* (American Women Japanese Women) (2000), *Sensou Hanayome* (War Brides) (2002), and *Watashi wa Sensou Hanayome desu* (I Am a War Bride) (2005). Her homepage is http://www.katiebooks.com

Shizuko Suenaga, Ph.D., was born and grew up in Saga, Japan. Out of curiosity, she came to the United States in 1983 and earned a bachelor's degree in women's studies and a master's in American civilization from the University of Massachusetts at Boston; and she earned a doctorate in sociology from Boston College. She is currently a senior lecturer on Japanese language and culture, and she heads the Japanese program at Seattle University. She lives in Issaquah, Washington, with her husband, daughter, and cat.