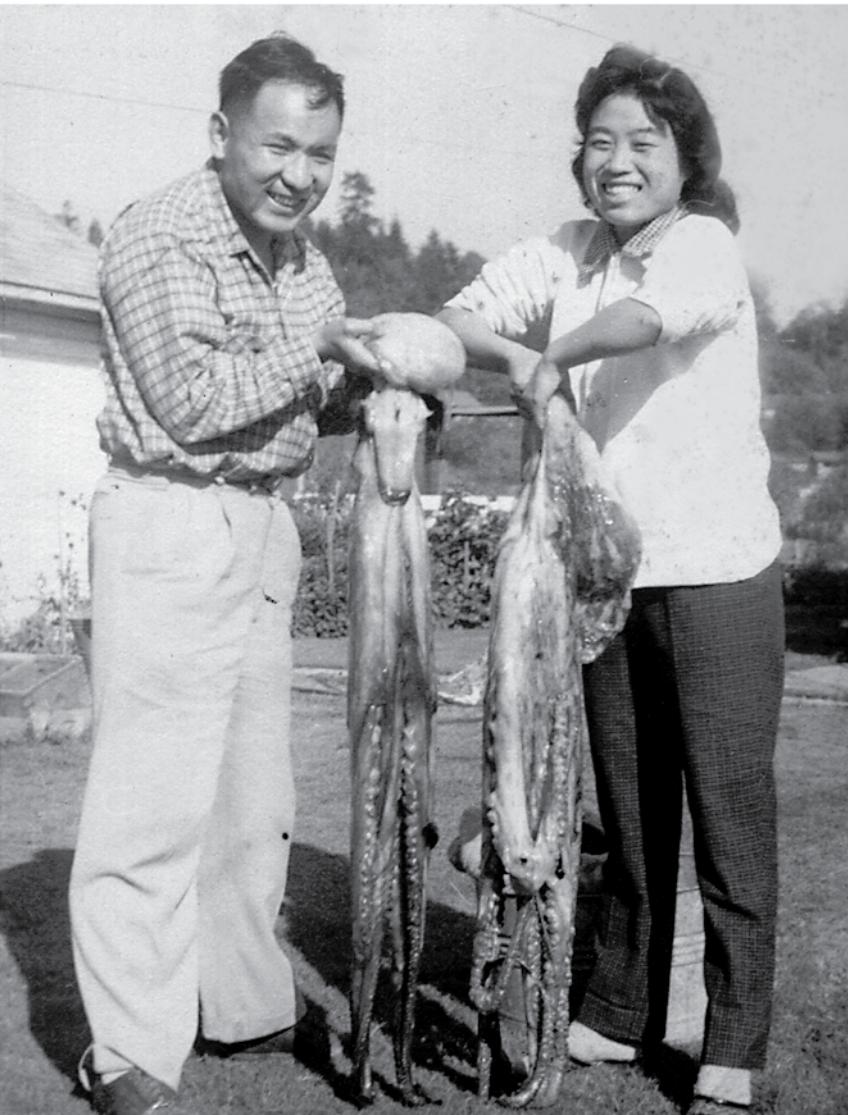


The Yamasaki Family



American Immigrants



The Nihira Family Story

If there was ever a family who was prepared for life in America, it would be the Nihira family. Kanzo Nihira was a man who spent many years in America, though he loved his life in Japan. Academically, he was exceptionally bright, remembered as the smartest child in the village where he grew up.

Details of his early life are sketchy, but he did live in Seattle for a time. His business was the selling of fishing line to Americans. Since this was before the invention of nylon, the finest fishing line in the world was made of silk, mostly produced in Japan. It was smaller, stronger and longer lasting than the braided cotton that was common in America. Kanzo made a

very tidy living selling this premium product to American fishermen.

He did return to Japan at some point to marry his wife and bring her back to America. They had two daughters while living in Seattle, first Mitzi, and then Phebe one year later. Mitzi actually started to speak English before the family left for the more familiar, family friendly environment of Tokyo.

After returning to Tokyo, they had two more children, Kazuo and Shoko. Kanzo kept selling fishing line to America while based in Tokyo, right up to the second world war. As you'd expect, selling Japanese fishing line in America was a bad business to be in.



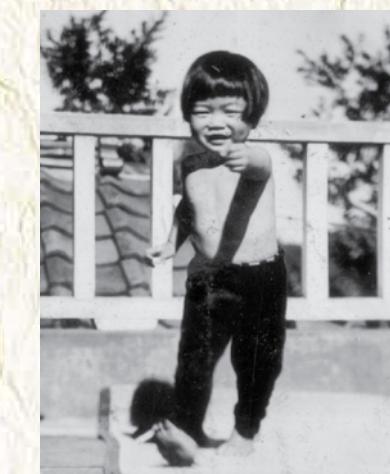
Shoko sits behind her mom and dad, Tomi and Kanzo Nihira



Shoko and her brother Kazuo were very close during early childhood since their other siblings were significantly older

Living in Tokyo during the bombings of World War II wasn't easy; there were shortages of everything including food and then there was the danger of being firebombed. So the family moved out of Tokyo and just south to Kanagawa prefecture. After the war was over,

Kanzo determined that a family with three young daughters would be safer farther out in the countryside since American soldiers began occupying the more urban parts of Japan. So the family moved farther from the city and into Ibaraki prefecture.



Growing Up in Tokyo

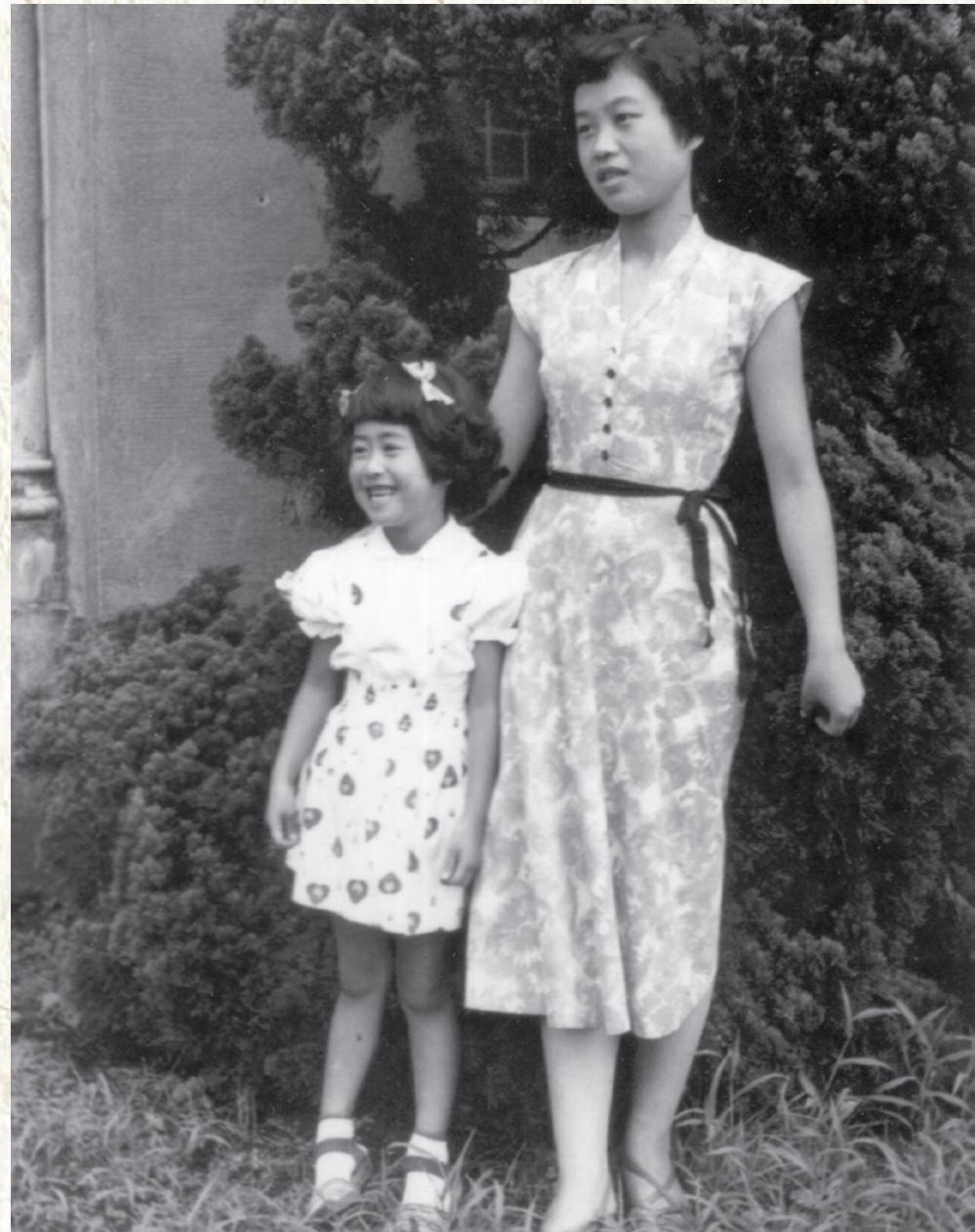


High school yearbook photo

The family moved back to Tokyo when Shoko was 15 years old. She remembers having lots of fun in the city; going with friends to play in Ginza, the hippest, most glamorous spot in the city.



An Addition to the Family



A very cute Izumi with Shoko

Shoko's oldest sister had an unhappy first marriage that ended after the birth of a baby girl. Back in those days, single motherhood wasn't a viable option, so with great sadness and deliberation on the part of her mother, Izumi came to live with the Nihira family in Japan.

With the arrival of Izumi at the age of one and a half, Shoko was no longer the baby of the family. She effectively became the big sister in the family; most certainly a role model for her and eventually they became very close, forming an enduring friendship.



Shoko (left) and a coworker take a "glamour picture" just for fun

After high school, Shoko joined the work force
at a nearby insurance company.



When ice skating became the "in" thing to do, Shoko (center) and her friends give it a whirl

She made quite a few friends at work and
she had a lot of fun with them.



Shoko (center) learned to play the Koto as a teen and it remains a lifelong skill



Shoko (right) loved being outdoors

The Yamasakis arrive in America

山奇

Kumazo and Mitsuko Yamasaki first arrived in America on August 14, 1922 aboard the Arabia Maru. Kumazo was a robust 28 years old and Mitsuko was 18 years old.

As typical immigrants, they worked very hard to make their life in their new home. Mitsuko often worked three jobs at a time. Their English was very limited, but they managed to not just get by, but to thrive.

At the time, the Japanese immigrant community was thriving. Both Kumazo and Mitsuko were very active in the Japanese immigrant community. Mitsuko was an instructor at the local Japanese language school and both were members of the Tacoma Buddhist

Church which, at the time, was almost entirely composed of Japanese immigrants.

Eventually they started a family and in 1923, their first son Motoshi was born. He was quickly followed by Noboru in 1924.

Sometime in the 1930s, Kumazo and Mitsuko decided to move back to Japan to spend more time with their relatives in Japan. But they wouldn't stay in Japan for long—they had restless feet.

They moved back to America in 1933, during the middle of the worst economic times in the history of the United States, the Great Depression.



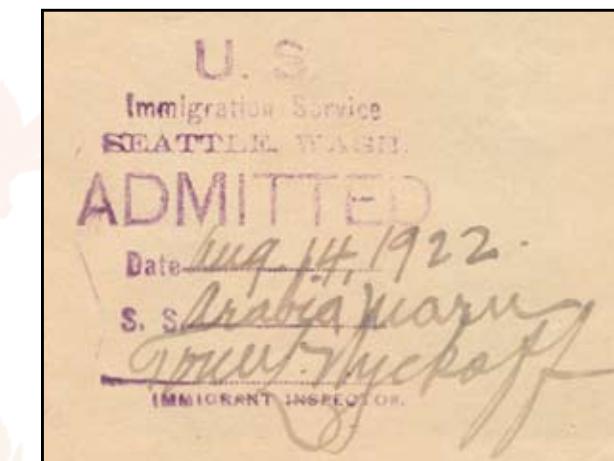
These are the photos in Mitsuko and Kumazo's Japanese passports. Mitsuko is 18 years old and Kumazo is 28 years old when they apply for their passports. They arrive in Seattle one month later.

TRANSLATION.
THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE GOVERNMENT
PASSPORT.

任該 No. 196021
憑旅行無阻如有緊要事即
U. S. A.
July 20. 1922
DESCRIPTION.
Domicile Ehime Ken.
Family relation Eldest son of ToraHichi head of a family
Age 28 years months.
Stature 5 feet 36 inches.
Particular features Whorls patterns on both of thumb
Loops on other.
Signature of the Bearer

This is the English language section of Kumazo's Japanese passport.

Kumazo's passport describes his family relations as
“Eldest son of ToraHichi - head of a family”
“Particular features” are descriptions of his fingerprints
“Whorls patterns on both of thumb - Loops on other”



These are the stamps for entry into the United States on Mitsuko's passport.

山奇

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

City or Town of Tacoma (No. 8805) So. 6. St.: Ward

Registration Dist. No. 1

FULL NAME OF CHILD Motoshi Yamasaki If child is not yet named make supplemental report, as directed.

Sex of Child <u>Male</u>	Twin, Triplet or other? <u></u>	and	Number in order of birth <u>1</u>	Legitimate? <u>yes</u>	Date of Birth <u>1923</u> (Year)
FATHER			MOTHER		
Full Name <u>Kumazo Yamasaki</u>			Full Maiden Name <u>Mitsuko Yano</u>		
Residence <u>R.F.D. #2 Box 172 Tacoma</u>			Residence <u>R.F.D. #2 Box 172 Tacoma</u>		
Color <u>Japanese</u>	Age at last Birthday <u>29</u> (Years)		Color <u>Japanese</u>	Age at last Birthday <u>19</u> (Years)	
Birthplace (State or Country) <u>Japan</u>			Birthplace (State or Country) <u>Japan</u>		
Occupation <u>Farmer</u>			Occupation <u>Housewife</u>		
Number of child of this mother <u>1</u>			Number of children, this mother, now living <u>1</u>		

This is a copy of Motoshi's birth certificate from 1923 - reproduced on modern paper. Middle names were not used in Japanese society so many American born Japanese children had no middle names (not that there's much room to write a middle name in the form above).



Kumazo and Mitsuko are the couple at the far left.



Kumazo sits (on the right side) with his best friend, Sadamu Matsumoto.



Mitsuko is the school teacher for this class in the Japanese language school. She is in the dark dress at the far left.



Noboru and Motoshi in a photo dated April 2, 1929.



Noboru and Motoshi in traditional Japanese clothing.



From left to right, Motoshi, Noboru, Willie Matsumoto and Mitsuko pose for this picture.

Returning to America



Noboru and Motoshi are at the top row on either side of Mrs. Pettibone, the teacher. The photo is clearly dated May 8th, 1934.

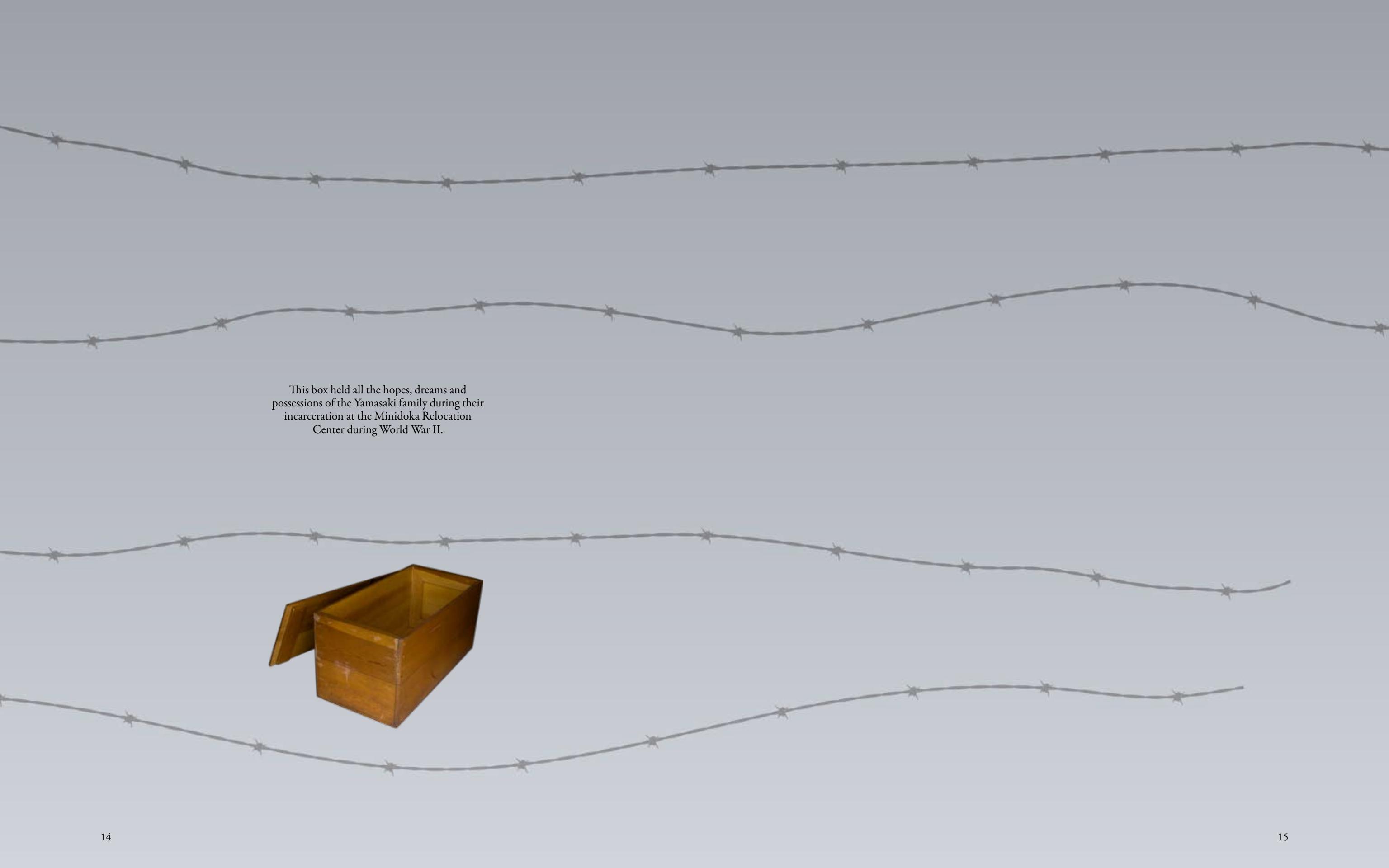
When they arrived in America in 1933, Motoshi and Noboru only spoke Japanese. So when they started attending the public school system, both boys started in the first grade together. Motoshi was 9 years old and Noboru was 8 years old at the time.

Notice how many children were wearing overalls in the photo above. Fife has always been an agricultural community. Houses were dotted every now and then but mostly it was

farm fields for as far as the eye can see. Even in the 1980s, the largest building in town was the Future Farmers of America barn right next to the freeway exit.

Motoshi and Noboru would henceforth always be in the same class throughout their public education. They were much older and larger than the other kids, so at least no one would make fun of them.

"It's got to be tough to enter the first grade at the age of 9 and not speak a word of English."



This box held all the hopes, dreams and possessions of the Yamasaki family during their incarceration at the Minidoka Relocation Center during World War II.

On to College

Both Noboru and Motoshi graduated from high school while in the Minidoka Internment camp. Before the end of the war, both boys received special dispensation from the US government and scholarships to attend college. Motoshi began his collegiate quest at William Jewell College in Kansas City. He recalls struggling with parts of the entrance examination. One question was to write down the Lord's Prayer—an answer that stumped a lifelong Buddhist.

Once the Military Police learned more about Motoshi's background, they grew concerned about his attendance. When Kumazo had lived in Japan, he served in the Japanese Imperial Army. He was deemed a security threat by the Military Police so Motoshi was

removed from William Jewell College. Motoshi recalled how much effort the staff at the college went through to allow him to finish his semester and help him find another college to attend. He remained grateful to the their kindness for the rest of his life

Through the efforts of the staff at William Jewell College, he continued his college education at Kansas City University. Noboru joined him here and they enjoyed their college years together. Noboru was the more athletic of the brothers but he still convinced Motoshi to try intramural basketball with him.

Motoshi graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry.



A photo of Motoshi taken at college



Motoshi and Noboru both attended Kansas City University at the same time



Motoshi and Noboru played intramural basketball while at Kansas City University

The Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission



Mitsuko, Kumazo, Noboru and Motoshi pause to take a picture as Motoshi is departing for Japan

In November 1946, President Harry S. Truman created the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) to undertake the long-term study of the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The ABCC had established a series of studies that would include research on radiation cataracts, leukemia and other cancers, survivors' aging and mortality rates, sex ratios of survivors' offspring, and genetics.

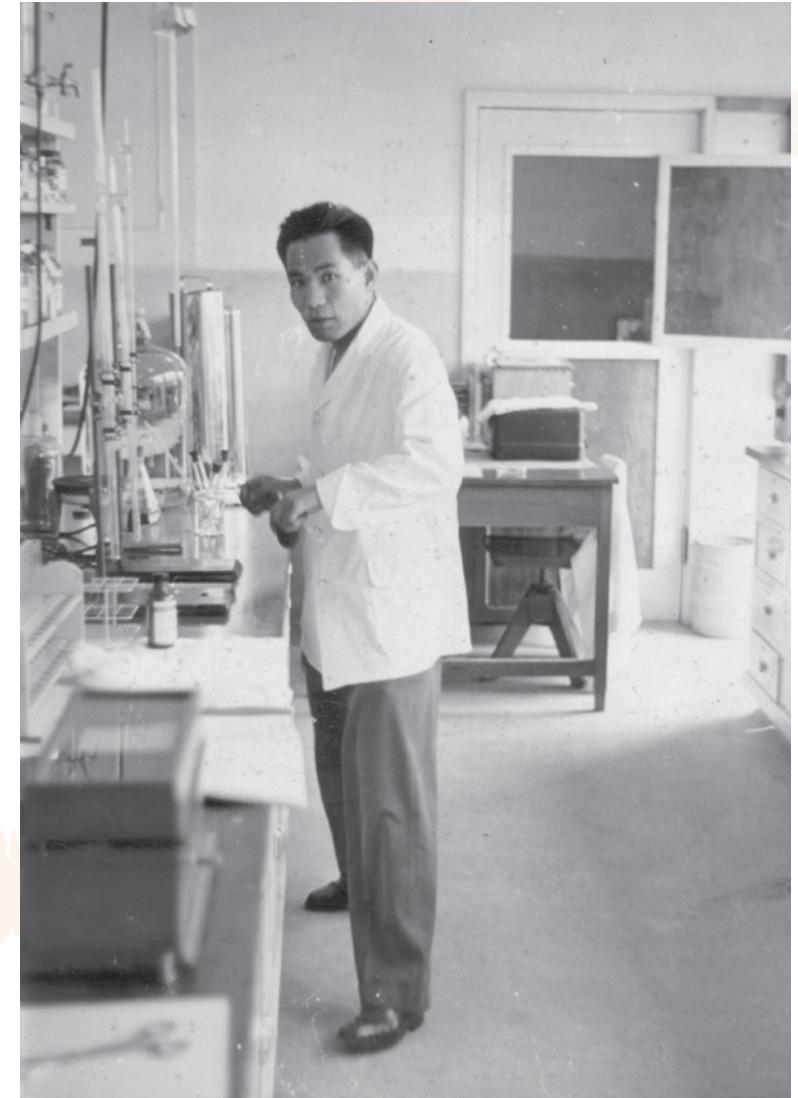
Fresh after getting his college degree in Chemistry, Motoshi is offered a job with the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission. His ability to speak Japanese and English give him unique qualifications for the job. But there's

nothing that can qualify him for what he will see in the aftermath of the atomic bomb detonations in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Five years after the detonation of the atomic bombs, Motoshi sees a completely flattened Hiroshima. Patients covered with burn scars are typical patients. While taking research trips to the surrounding countryside, the team regularly finds old houses with roofs that are dangerously hot from radioactive fallout. These houses may have survived the blast, but these structures are slowly poisoning the occupants and thus, must be rebuilt.

We don't know exactly when Motoshi was in Japan, but we do know that some of

his work is being used today. Searching through the archives of the Radiation Effects Research Foundation, papers credited to M Yamasaki can be found. The RERF is a cooperative research organization funded by the US and Japanese governments whose primary purpose is to study the effects of radiation exposure following the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb detonations.



A photo of Motoshi while working in the laboratory at the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commision in Japan



Motoshi enjoyed his time in Japan



Immigrant parents hold onto old world tradition, and immigrant children latch onto modern ideas.

The combination of old world tradition, modern ideas and a strong work ethic is what makes immigrant families the heart of what made America great.



Kumazo and Noboru are pounding mochi the old fashioned way. The sweet rice was washed and soaked overnight, steamed for hours in wooden steam boxes over a wood fire and finally pounded by hand with wooden mallets until smooth. Noboru is wetting his

hands in water, then turning the steaming hot rice with his bare hands to ensure even pounding. Wearing gloves was not an option since the rice was unbelievably sticky and would stick to anything. Combined with the extreme heat, it's a bit like working with lava.

A Match Made in Seattle

With Motoshi living in America and Shoko living in Japan, it would seem unlikely that they would ever meet each other. Especially after World War II. But the fact that Kanzo Nihira once lived in Seattle plays a major role in our story.

Kanzo made many friends in Seattle, but most important to our story is a friend named Hideo Oikawa. It turns out that Mr. Oikawa eventually becomes a friend to the Yamasaki Family. He's quite impressed with the hard-working family and particularly with Motoshi. He tells Kumazo that he has a dear friend who has a daughter of marrying age in Japan. He gets Mitsuko writing letters to the Nihira

family suggesting that maybe their children can meet; perhaps a match can be made.

Shoko's parents ask her to take some pictures to send to a family in America. Being the dutiful daughter, she takes the pictures with no questions asked. These pictures get sent to the Yamasaki family and get the attention of Motoshi. He has some vacation time coming up so he schedules a three week trip to Japan to meet Shoko.

When Motoshi and Shoko first meet, they spend a lot of time together. Kanzo had warned his daughter that she shouldn't sit around watching movies—they should be talking together, learning about each other. There's no



Hideo Oikawa and his wife



A very traditional, very Japanese portrait



A more cosmopolitan portrait

time to waste since Motoshi's only in Japan for a very short time.

They spent many dates getting to know each other and there are certainly differences between them. Shoko notes that Motoshi speaks in a country style; a country twang compared to her Tokyo cosmopolitan accent. She notices that he seems optimistic as well as honest. He's certainly different from the other men from Tokyo that she has dated. In fact, since he's from the very agricultural area around Fife, he is most like a hardworking farmer except that he's also college educated.

In the end, the dates are fantastic because Motoshi and Shoko tie the knot. First meeting to married within 3 weeks! Their wedding ceremony is a traditional Shinto religious ceremony. Since the American government doesn't recognize the Shinto ceremony, they also get married by a justice of the peace at the American Embassy in Tokyo.



An early date to Kamakura



These are pictures from the Shinto wedding ceremony. It's pretty common for Japanese to not smile for pictures so the dour looks on the family and friends doesn't mean it was an unhappy event.

The Japanese Honeymoon

After they got married, Motoshi and Shoko took a short honeymoon around Japan. First they visited the resort city of Atami. It's a city on the East coast of Japan that is only a few

hours from Tokyo and it's famous as a weekend retreat for city folk.

Then they visited Western Japan including the island of Shikoku, where relatives of the Yamasaki family lived.





Shoko enjoys meeting the Yano Family from the town of Shitama, on the island of Shikoku



Shoko poses in front of Kiyomizudera temple in Kyoto



This shows a Japanese tradition where the friends and family hold ribbons with the newlywed couple and release the ribbons as the boat pulls away.

The American Reception

Motoshi returned from his vacation as a married man, but he did return alone. It was quite a surprise for his friends and relatives to discover that Motoshi had married a woman he had just met during his vacation.

Shoko stayed in Japan to quit her job and gather her possessions for her big move to America. She took three weeks before flying to America. Since she didn't speak any English,

she almost got off the plane at Portland. But she did make it to Seattle-Tacoma International airport for her new life in America.

The Yamasaki Family planned a wedding reception for the newlyweds at the New Yorker Restaurant in Tacoma. It was beautifully captured in glorious black and white by Motoshi's lifelong friend, Paul Newman.



Motoshi and Shoko make a beautiful couple and they are especially radiant at their reception at the New Yorker Restaurant in Tacoma, Washington.



Motoshi and Shoko are surrounded by Mitzi Yamane (Matron of Honor) and Noboru Yamasaki (Best Man)



A close family friend, Aki Yotsuuye, takes a picture of the newlyweds.
He will take many pictures of them over the next 50 years.



The Nihira sisters: Phebe, Shoko and Mitzi



A very happy couple

Welcome to Fife



The Yamasaki family did a lot of fishing and sometimes they brought home fresh caught octopus - a Japanese delicacy.



Motoshi is receiving an award for superior achievement from the Veterans Administration.

The Yamasaki family is a classic example of an immigrant family. They blended old world tradition with modern American living. During the day, Motoshi worked in the modern world of chemistry and health care. He worked at the Seattle Veterans Administration hospital where he worked on research and development of early prototypes of kidney dialysis machines. Motoshi would drive from his home in Fife to Seattle every day. He took Shoko to a school in Seattle where she learned the English language and they drove home together in the evening.

On weekends and evenings, the whole Yamasaki family would do things with an old world Japanese twist. Fishing was always loved by the boys, especially Noboru. In the photo at left, you see two large octopi being held by Motoshi and Shoko. Octopus is a Japanese delicacy and properly prepared, it's delicious (try it someday when you go eat sushi).

Shoko was raised in the city of Tokyo and it was quite a shock to discover that she was now expected to prepare freshly caught octopus. People who lived in Japanese cities bought their octopus prepared and packaged, similar to the way we currently buy beef in packages instead of slaughtering our own cows. Rural America was clearly different; the Yamasaki family even raised their own chickens in their own chicken coop. Chickens really do run around when their head gets cut off.

The immigrant life means learning to make everything from your old world culture for yourself since there is no established business community to make it for you. The Japanese community of Tacoma and Seattle grew their own Japanese vegetables, made their own Japanese delicacies and celebrated their traditions through their own hard work. It's no wonder immigrants have such a strong work ethic.



This is the Yamasaki family home around 1962. That's Mae on the front stairway.

Motoshi and Shoko lived in a large house in Fife, Washington with Motoshi's parents, Kumazo and Mitsuko. Children were naturally a part of the family plan.

In memory of

Motoshi Yamasaki

A Portrait of

Motoshi "Pete" Yamasaki

1923 - 2008



Son and Brother

Mitsuko, Kumazo, Noboru and Motoshi were a typical hardworking Nisei family in the Puyallup valley. In this picture, the whole Yamasaki family see Motoshi off to Japan for his job at the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission on August 13, 1948.



Husband



Chemist

"It truly was a pleasure to work with Pete not only as a co-worker but as a friend. I'll always remember that no matter how busy he was, he was always willing to offer a helping hand."

"Pete was a kindly man and a very knowledgeable chemist. I remember Pete's sense of humor ... [I have] nothing but fond memories of Pete."



Father

"Our dad is someone who earns the respect of others by doing, not talking; someone who leads by example and always does the right thing at the right time for the right reason; someone who always gives their best because if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right; someone who does big things with a little skill, a can-do spirit and a neverending work ethic."

To see more pictures of Motoshi and Shoko, visit www.DebbieAndBrian.com/Anniversary

A Letter to My Father

Dear Dad,

It always happens. I always want to say something after it's too late. I think you already know how I feel, but I really wanted to write it all down. There is always the story of how good parenting, good advice and a positive outlook on life can lead your son to happiness and success. But the more interesting story is how good parenting is unappreciated and ignored before it all makes sense.

As I was a young child, you were sort of like Mr. Rogers on Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood: you always set a good example by being kind, always doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason. You always gave your best because if it was worth doing, it was worth doing right. You always stretched your skills a little bit every day – everything is a learning experience. And you always tried fixing something or making something new – how hard could it be?

You always told all your children that you wanted us to go to college. And you always wanted us to aspire to be nurses, doctors and engineers. And since you told us so many other things that were honest and true, we believed you. We never doubted we could do it because you told us we could.

I remember back to my childhood and you sure worked a lot. After putting in a full day at a day job, you came home and then worked at home. Mowing the lawn, fixing the house, volunteering at church were always on the Things To Do list. And the list went on and on. So I helped you. And every summer we painted the house, painted the garage, built the

rental house, built the garage for the rental, and then painted the house again in an endless cycle. I learned that to do big things, all you need is a little skill, a can-do spirit and a never ending work ethic. Eating dinner late was common because we weren't done with the job at hand.

Your philosophy seemed to be simple. Say little, always do what needed to be done, and be kind to everyone. No fanfare and no showing off. In comparison, it seemed that other dads drove cooler cars and they told funnier stories. I began to think you were as boring as Mr. Rogers.

You instilled in me the joy of making things with my hands. You taught me how to build projects with wood. College and Microsoft taught me to build complex pieces of software. Cooking school taught me how to make a gourmet meal. And I enter my new career in graphic design with the same joy of creation that I've had since the first time I picked up a hammer. My pride in doing a job well is the same whether it's cooking, parenting, design or development.

How can you tell that I'm your son? One day my dishwasher broke and I went to the store to replace it. They offered to install it for \$80. I immediately thought, "How hard could it be to install it? I'm sure my dad would install it himself." So after a day and half of labor, flooding my kitchen floor and spending \$80 on tools I finally installed it. At least I have the tools if I have to replace a dishwasher again.

I've read that the biggest fear for men in their late twenties is turning into their fathers. I had that fear. I feared making

conservative decisions like my father. I feared driving boring cars like my father. Most of all, I feared a receding hairline like my father.

So I did everything to try to break the mold. I bought a motorcycle. I learned windsurfing. I bought a cool car. My plan was going smoothly. I was my own man. I had broken the mold. I was the anti-father. Or so I thought.

When I had tendonitis and couldn't work for a month or two, it really gets you thinking about the big questions in life. What do you want in life? What is it that really matters? What's the next step in my life? Who's outside mowing my lawn? You and mom had come over to my house to take care of the yard and cook me a meal. A gesture that is both super kind and sort of embarrassing. I mean, what will my neighbors think about a sixty something father mowing the lawn for his thirty something son? I began to appreciate all the things you taught me about positive outlook and work ethic and being kind. But I especially appreciated the nice payback for all the years I mowed the lawn in Fife.

After the birth of my first son, I discovered how hard it is to be a good father. In the beginning I had a tough experience being a stay at home dad. But I later realized that you taught me everything I needed to know. Good parenting is setting a good example, being fair, setting high expectations, having a positive outlook on life and being kind to everyone.

As of now, I am so proud to be like my father: someone who earns the respect of others by doing, not talking; someone who leads by example and always does the right thing at the right time for the right reason; someone who always gives their best because if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right; someone who learns something new every day; someone who does big things with a little skill, a can do spirit and a never ending work ethic; someone who is proud of doing good work and revels in the joy of creation.

Even Mr. Rogers would be proud of you. He had three rules for life: Be Kind, Be Kind and Be Kind. I think you nailed all three.

Your loving son,
Brian

P.S: You may have heard that Mom was seen driving around Puyallup in a sporty convertible with a younger man. Don't worry though, that younger man was me. I still drive a cool car.



Read this photographic record of an immigrant family's journey to find the American dream.

The story starts in the depths of the Great Depression and continues into the 21st century. Using the fabulous black and white photography that was available to anybody with a camera and a darkroom, the Yamasaki family's adventure unwinds in this lightly narrated photographic history.

This is a short preview of this soon to be published book. See the website below for release details.

www.DebbieAndBrian.com/Book