“The chilly and crisp morning air did not dampen the warm spirits of more than 250 people gathered on March 30, 2017 to witness the 75th Anniversary Commemoration Ceremony at the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial.”

So begins the narrative by BIJAC president Clarence Moriwaki, describing the culmination of months of planning and years of reflection on Executive Order 9066, the order enacted by President Franklin Roosevelt that would send 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry to incarceration camps during World War II. The first to go were the 275 residents of Bainbridge Island of Japanese heritage.

In the days and weeks leading up to February 19th, the day EO 9066 was signed, numerous Washington organizations ranging from the State Capitol, universities, and museums to religious and cultural groups held events in remembrance of the impact EO 9066 had on the Japanese American community. As reflected in the TV crews present at the Exclusion Memorial on March 30th, the media took notice. Earlier in the year, Bainbridge Cinemas hosted George Takei's Allegiance: The Broadway Musical on the Big Screen to benefit BIJAC. In the week leading up to the 75th Anniversary, Lori Matsukawa of KING 5 News broadcast a 4-part series, Prisoners in Their Own Land: Remembering the Internment of Japanese Americans 75 Years Later, featuring Bainbridge Island’s own Kay Nakao and Lilly Kodama.

Several survivors from the various war time concentration camps were in attendance, as well as a roster of notable speakers, including Governor Jay Inslee, Japanese Ambassador to the United States Kenichiro Sasae, Bainbridge Island Mayor Val Tollefson, and leaders of local cultural and religious groups. BIJAC and BJAEMA were greeted with an outpouring of logistical support from COBI, BIHM, BIMA, BI Parks and Recreation, Eagle Harbor Congregational Church, and others, making the Commemoration a true community event.
By: Bill Takemoto

My father Saichi Takemoto was born in 1885 on Oshima Island in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The island is about the size of Bainbridge and is the same island from which Bainbridge Island families, such as the Omotos and Nakatas, emigrated. As a young man, Saichi and his two older brothers left Japan to seek work in America. They initially pursued farm work in Hawaii. While the oldest brother stayed and put down roots in Hawaii, Saichi and the second oldest brother came to Seattle. At some point his older brother died in Seattle. After working various jobs, such as a dishwasher, houseboy and movie theater employee, Saichi acquired land on Bainbridge Island to start a strawberry farm. Eventually he wanted to settle down and take on a wife. Through a matchmaker from his village in Japan, he met and married Satsu Koyama, then brought her back to Bainbridge Island.

Some time before 1920, Satsu died. Saichi consulted the same matchmaker to find him another wife. The matchmaker arranged for him to marry Satsu’s younger sister, Yone, who was only 18 years old. In 1921 they returned to Bainbridge Island to begin a life of farming. From that union Victor was born in 1926, I was born in 1928, Roy in 1930, Fred in 1932, and Teruko, the only girl, in 1934, and Teruko, the only girl, in 1934, and Teruko, the only girl, in 1934. My father decided it was time to return to Bainbridge Island because it was strawberry planting season. Our family was the first family to return to Bainbridge Island. We found our home completely ransacked, windows broken and anything of value gone. The fields were overgrown. With the help of friends and also people we did not know, we were provided with some essentials and help to return the fields to farmable condition. My brothers and I worked on weekends and in the summer on the Moji farm run by Nick Bacis for extra income.

Saichi died on October 1972 at the age of 87. Yone died on January 2003 at the age of 100. She was probably the last of the original issei from the island to pass away. When Victor, the oldest sibling, returned from Manzanar, he enrolled at the University of Washington. After he graduated in 1949 he worked in the medical service area for 49 years and retired in 1998. Vic, his wife Lily, and three children, Vicki, Stanley, and Jon, all live in the Seattle area. After my graduation from high school I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in January of 1948. During my tour of duty in Tokyo, I met Nubuko and we were married in 1963. After I retired from the Air Force in 1968, I relocated to my current home in Kent, Washington. After retirement, I was hired by Boeing as an instructor in flight training. I worked for 24 years and retired in 1992. After our children finished high school Nubuko worked for United Airlines and retired in 1998. Our son Paul graduated from the University of Washington and is a homicide detective with the Seattle Police Department. He and his girlfriend, Kate, live in Seattle. Our daughter Susan graduated from Yale College and Georgetown Law Center. After working for twelve years as an attorney, she retired, and she and her husband, Dave, are raising three children. Roy also enlisted in the U.S. Air Force after graduating from high school. He met and wed Toshiko while stationed in Tokyo. After more than 25 years of service, he retired. Roy, along with his wife and two daughters, moved to Sun City, Arizona. There Roy worked in civil service until he was diagnosed with cancer. He passed away in September, 1991 at the age of 61. Toshiko still lives in Sun City West.

On our 65th Anniversary of the founding of BIJAC, we are initiating an effort to record the history of the events and accomplishments of our community using the extensive files of Frank Kitamoto, our collective memories, and the vast library of information available on our website (www.bijac.org). Take a trip down memory lane and let us know if we have overlooked anything. We welcome additions and corrections to our work-in-progress.
In 2006-2007, an ambitious effort was undertaken to interview Bainbridge Island survivors of the WWII incarceration. The Oral History Project, which was produced by Stourwater Pictures of Bainbridge Island, resulted in a collection of first person narratives of the experience from Bainbridge Island to the concentration camps in Manzanar, CA and Minidoka, ID. Clips by topic can be viewed on the bijac.org website. Full DVDs are archived at the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum. The oral histories include:

- Brooks Andrews
- Michi Noritake
- Tomi Egashira
- Nobi Omoto
- Earl Hanson
- Sada Omoto
- Junko Harui
- Taketo Omoto
- Frank Kitamoto
- Eiko Shibayama
- Sally Kitano
- Yuki Takahashi
- Lilly Kodama
- Vic Takemoto
- Tats Kojima
- Iku Watanabe
- Hisa Matsuda
- Matsue Watanabe
- Kay Nakao
- Mary Woodward
- Sam Nakao
- Isao Yamashita
- Jerry Nakata
- Yae Yoshihara

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**
**2006-2007**

**MEMORIAL BENEFIT EVENTS**
1995—Snow Falling on Cedars, by David Guterson, event at Commodore
2006—Naomi’s Road, a Canadian Opera for the Children of War, Vancouver Opera production
2007—The Cats of Mirikitani, Film Premiere and Art Exhibition, Director Q&A and reception
2015—Snow Falling on Cedars, a Bainbridge Performing Arts theater production
2016—An American Dream, Seattle Opera
2016/17—George Takei’s Allegiance: the Broadway Musical on the Big Screen, hosted by Bainbridge

**COMMENORATION CEREMONIES**
March 30, 2002—60th Anniversary (granite marker)
March 30, 2007—65th Anniversary (Pritchard Park)
March 30, 2011—Names are on the Memorial Wall
March 30, 2012—70th Anniversary (BIJAEMA)
March 30, 2017—75th Anniversary (BIJAEMA)

**EDUCATION/PARTNERSHIPS**
“Only What We Can Carry,” Jon Garfunkel, annual educator delegation to Manzanar.
BISD Multicultural Advisory Council sponsors educational programs and launched the Frank Kitamoto Legacy Award for Inclusion, Civil Rights, & Social Justice.

**VIDEO DOCUMENTARIES AND PUBLICATIONS**
- Visible Target (1986), produced by Cris Anderson and John de Graaf
- After Silence (2003), produced by Foxglove Films, directed by Lois Shelton
- The Red Pines (2003), produced by IslandWood, directed by Franklin Odo
- Civil Liberties in a Time of War (2007), produced by Stourwater Pictures for OSP
- Fumiko Hayashida, the Woman Behind the Symbol (2009), produced by Stourwater Pictures
- History of the Sakai Family (2015), Snow Productions

Let It Not Happen Again

Nidoto Nai Yoni: Voices of the Past and Present

April 25, 1952
Bainbridge Island Japanese Community Club

March 10, 1942
Ferry Kohlken carries Bainbridge Island Japanese from their home

September 1997
Dedication of Haku No Niwa
Bi Public Library Garden

October 2004
Memorial Gate built at Winslow Post Office site

1984
Visible Target
public television documentary

1988
Kodomo No Tami Ni
Historical Photo Exhibit opens to the public

October 2005
Voices of Past and Present
Nidoto Nai Yoni conference at IslandWood

July 30, 2011
Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial opens to the public

Pre-BIJAC
1890’s-1920’s
Village of Yama, home to Japanese Blakely Mill workers

Pre-BIJAC
March 30, 1942
Ferry Kohlken carries Bainbridge Island Japanese from their home

MOC TSUKI
Dec 1996—cancelled due to winter storm
Dec 1997—Island Center
Dec 2002—Filipino-American Hall
Dec 2003—Jan present—IslandWood

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Nidoto Nai Yoni: Voices of the Past and Present

October 16, 2005

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Let It Not Happen Again

Nidoto Nai Yoni: Voices of the Past and Present

October 16, 2005
I began the ceremony and welcomed all of our guests at precisely 11:00 a.m., the exact moment 75 years ago when the ferry Kachemak arrived at the Eagle Ridge Ferry Dock to begin this tragic chapter in American history, the forcible removal and exile of the first 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II.

On my wrist I wore a watch that belonged to Leonard Hayashida, the first Bainbridge Island baby born in the Manusimate paper mill, a reminder of his dedication to iconic Fumiko Nishibashi Hayashida. Before introducing each speaker and musical performance, I placed at Leonard’s watch a note announcing, imagining what was happening at that very moment to the 227 Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans on that fateful morning, I also wore the watch that my father — whose remains were incarnated in the Minidoka concentration camp — owned when he was born.

Reverence and Inspiration

Since the creation of the Exclusion Memorial itself may not have happened without the support and encouragement of the North Kitsap-Bainbridge Island Interfaith Council nearly 20 years ago, our first speaker was the current president of the council, Tiffany Weighall. Weighall spoke with passionate purpose, and she focused on a key element that was likely on the minds of everyone present: “Fear is a constant. Since the dawn of time a survival instinct. But out of Japanese and Native American heritage, we are a community that has been taking care of one another through difficult times and working to address the pain caused by our history. Today, we are gathered at the rear of the pavilion. “I want to welcome you and thank you for your courage, strength and the quiet dignity that you exhibit every day. I learn so much from you. Your example is stellar. Thank you.”

Weighall acknowledged the impact of her parent’s work, but she said their humble thoughts they were just doing the job of good journalism. “They had a newspaper, and they had an obligation.”

Bainbridge Island Mayor Val Tiefert, former board member of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial Association – who played an invaluable role for the association by creating its bylaws and other legal requirements — authored a proclamation to commemorate this historic day. She said Bainbridge Island and City Council proclaiming March 31, 2017 as “Nidoto Nai Yoni: Let It Not Happen Again Day” for the City of Bainbridge Island.

Kay Sakai Naka was 22 years old when she and her family were forcibly removed from Bainbridge Island. She related the chaos for her family leading up to March 30, 1942.

“We had a little time to get everything all squared away, and with all of the suspicion and wanting to prove we were all loyal Americans, my dad had to destroy anything that looked Japanese… I feel very badly. All of our prized family heirlooms were all destroyed and we lost them in the evacuation.”

Kay married her husband, Sam Naka, while in Minidoka, and after three and a half years, they were finally set free.

“We were lucky here on Bainbridge Island. More than half of us did come back, thanks in large part to many people, Mary’s parents, Walt and Milly Woodward, who always reminded everyone that we were their friends and neighbors. I’m not sure that the majority of people in the concentration camps were not welcome to return to where they came from. The war was for everyone, but I don’t want what happened to us to happen to anyone else, ever again.”

All 276 names of the Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans on the Memorial Wall were read by Ken Matsuda and Masako Gudery, followed by Emily Groff, the Bainbridge Island schools’ Choral Arts Program, singing “Don’t Fence Me In.” The two-hour ceremony closed with the Amabile Choir leading the entire audience singing “America the Beautiful.”

The Okazaki Family

Pauline Okazaki

Mary’s parents, Walt and Milly Woodward, who consistently opposed the unconstitutional actions of our government toward Japanese Americans during the Exclusion. She recalled the chaos for her family leading up to March 30, 1942.

She said as the crowd erupted with laughter.

“Thank you.”

Weighall acknowledged to the audience the impact of her parent’s work, but she said their humble thoughts they were just doing the job of good journalism. “They had a newspaper, and they had an obligation.”