

## Chapter 7

# Family Formations

### The First Japan Brats: What Was It Like?

One can only imagine how daunting the prospect of moving to Japan must have seemed to many American service families in the immediate wake of World War II. Not only were these families (particularly those who hadn't traveled abroad previously) leaving familiar faces, places, and ways of life (that they likely struggled to keep whole during the duration of the War), but they were departing for the decimated lands of the enemy.

As discussed previously in Chapter 2, dependent families sailing on long journeys to Japan, Germany, and other war-torn countries were truly facing the unknown in late 1946. There were only hastily assembled quarters, provisions, and commandeered school settings awaiting; not the American-style comforts that were available even a year later.



**Tokyo area shantytown**—aftermath of World War II.

(Everett Collection Historical/Alamy Stock Photo).

As the first waves of American service families received orders to ship out from the U.S. west coast during the late 1940s, what was going through their heads? What were their thoughts, feelings, fears, and hopes? The War was still fresh in everyone's minds, and no one was

quite sure how the Japanese would treat incoming American families. What would this fraught experience have been like for a typical American military family?

The following thought experiment explores this question, based on sources of research:

## **Uprooting from Everything You Knew to Live and School In...Japan?**

*Engage, if you will, in an imaginary exercise. Journey back in time to the Summer of 1947. You are a typical American teenager, indulging in favorite pastimes and a national climate of relative peace and prosperity, after many years of both brutal, total war and economic scarcity. Your family is finally whole again. Then, out of the blue, your father makes a surprise announcement: He has decided to re-enlist in the U.S. Army in response to President Truman's springtime declaration to contain a growing global threat to fragile post-war peace, posed by the Soviet Union.*

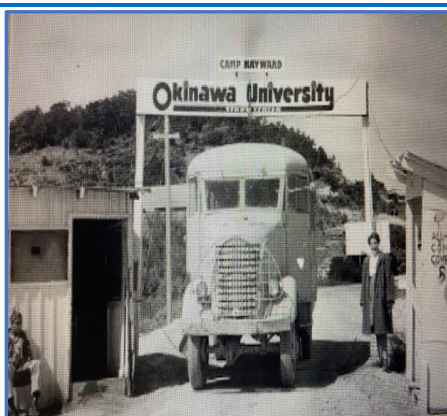
*You learn over a contentious family dinner that he has already received duty orders; he is due to ship off to Japan in a matter of weeks. Japan! Our most recent enemy from the War. Even more surprising is his announcement that we—his family—are due to join him in Japan once we have our affairs in order! For how long? He isn't sure...or maybe he can't say? It could be ALL of next school year, or longer! What about my friends? My social life? Are you kidding me? We finally get our father back from the War after several years away, and he's already leaving again? Just a couple years after the end of World War II? And this time, he's taking us WITH him? To the land of our enemy? Is this crazy or what?!?*

*Your little brother and sister don't seem to mind the news, but they don't have as much to lose. Mom doesn't seem too thrilled either, but she is trying to keep a stiff upper lip. When I overhear her talking about the move with dad, she's mainly worried about our safety, and about our basic needs. Won't the Japanese be angry with us? Didn't we bomb the heck out of their country? Why are families being asked to come, anyway? And where will we go to school? Won't the kids fall behind? Japan is so far away! What will we eat? Will there be good medical care? What about housing? And what are we going to do with this house? Are you SURE this is a good idea? So many questions!*

*Dad tries his best to calm mother. He explains that Japan has been determined to be a prime location with respect to containing the*

*expanding communist threat, and that close to half a million American and British troops have already disarmed and demilitarized the Japanese, under the capable command of General Douglas MacArthur. He has heard that the Japanese are already taking to Americans, because they are seeing that we're there to help them rebuild their country in a democratic way. And as an Army supply officer, he knows just how much support the U.S. government and military are prepared to provide to not only the Japanese, but the Americans who are moving there to make a difference. In fact, he has heard that some base housing should already be available for our family by the time we arrive by ship in August.*

*When dad mentions the ship ride over to Japan, my ears perk up. What, more than a week at sea on a giant military transport vessel? And we get to travel to and set sail from San Francisco? And maybe we get to visit the Grand Canyon and our cousins in Los Angeles on the way? That all sounds like fun! Maybe, just maybe, this whole Japan thing won't be so bad after all!*



**Okinawa University School-Camp Hayward, 1946;** 1st class of students shown above right. (Both photos courtesy of Kubasaki Alumni Association).

The first American DoDEA (Department of Defense Education Activity) schools opened in the Fall of 1946 in three locations: Camp Hayward Okinawa, Johnson Air Base Tokyo, and Yokohama Army Base. Only a few dozen dependents enrolled, mostly elementary age. Facilities were basic, sometimes only bare walls and single roofs. Extracurriculars were minimal if they existed at all. Teachers were recruited from

dependent pools already present, as there was no time for a professional recruiting process. There was just...school.

The following chapters explore and present the experiences of the military families who made the long journey to Japan, including these first waves of remarkable dependents.

This chapter shares stories of how U.S. military families in Japan came to be from the perspectives of the dependent children. How did these children end up living in Japan? What were the backgrounds of their parents? And what was it like for the very first military families who traveled to Japan to live? These personal recollections answer such questions with candor, insight, feeling, and humor.

One way to understand and appreciate overseas military dependent families (with a focus on the parents) is to compare them to the general population. Drawing from a variety of sources, including an in-depth survey of military dependents (see the Research Findings chapter in Volume 3 for references and detail), here is some background information:

- Only 1 out of 3,863 U.S. children today attend a DoDEA school in Japan.
- Parents of dependents who have lived in Japan are less likely to have grown up in the same town together as their civilian counterparts and moved much more often.
- Parents of such dependents are a bit more likely to come from rural areas or towns less than 50,000 in population than from large suburbs or the cities.
- The great majority of ‘Japan Brat’ parents were raised under more humble financial circumstances compared to the average American, per dependent survey results.
- The racial-ethnic composition of ‘Japan Brat’ fathers is similar to that of the general U.S. population; such dependent mothers—on the other hand—tend to be far more racially and ethnically diverse, per survey results.

**The upshot?** Brat families coming to Japan have been headed by adults who tended to be more adventurous than your typical set of American parents. Conversely, the culture shock felt by these sets of parents might have been more pronounced than by those who hailed from more diverse metropolitan areas; the first Japanese they encountered may have been the first Asian people they had ever seen in person.

## The First Yokohama High School Senior Class

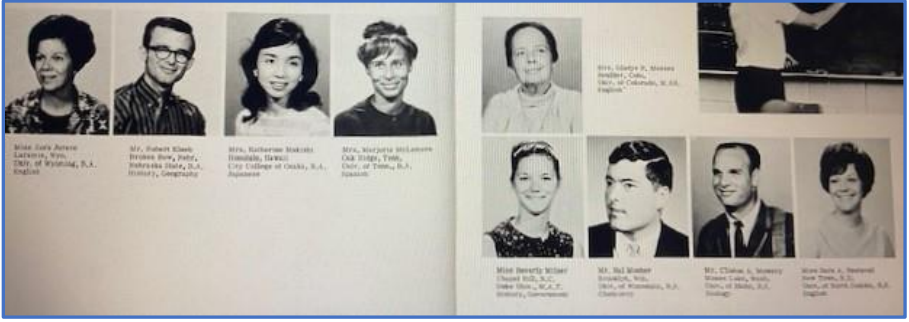
On September 15, 1947, the senior class of '48 gathered together for the first time. We started out with 20 students, but by the beginning of the second semester the count was 31, having both lost and gained a number of people.

Our activities got under way with the election of Class Officers. "Biff" Barnes was chosen President, Frances Hagan, Vice-President, and Jim Hyatt, Secretary-Treasurer. The representatives to the Student Council were Sharon O'Hanlon and Tony Craver. Not ones to let the grass grow under our feet, we started the year out right by submitting the winning name for the school paper "Yo-Hi-Echo". At Christmas we were rewarded with a party at the "Neet-Nac" (Teen Club).

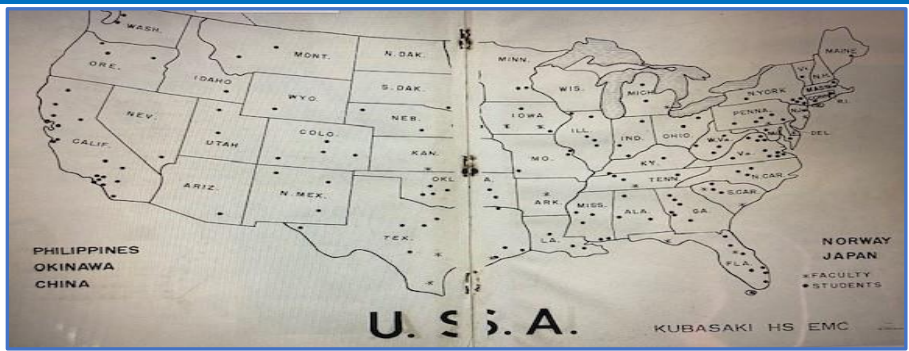
Having found school life in Japan much different from that in the States, we became used to drinking fountains that erupted in our faces with the least warning; desks that fell apart with the slightest touch and Japanese Maids who felt it their duty to polish the doorknobs during class. And what about the Juniors, who thought that inter-class cooperation wasn't what it ought to be and almost ended up with a Civil War on their hands?

But now, as we, the first graduating class of Yokohama American High School, bid "Sayonara" to our teachers and friends, pleasant memories of our days at "Yo-Hi" will remain with us wherever we go. (**Note:** Essay taken from the 1947-48 yearbook).





**Teachers** also provide a tremendous amount of geographic diversity at DoDEA schools. This random selection of nine Kubasaki High School teachers from the 1968-69 yearbook hail from nine different states: WY; NB; HI; TN; CO; NC; WI; ID and, SD.



**Origin map** of Okinawa American High students and teachers (dots; from '52-53 yearbook).



**Left: Main Street, Matthews, North Carolina**, where the author's father grew up from 1933-51. **Right: Yokosuka Naval Base, 1964.** Author's father and mother in the back. Newly wedded aunt in kimono holding author's hand. Two very different worlds.

## Japan Brats: Family Formation Stories

Japan Brat parents met and built lives together in storybook ways. Here are some stories that illustrate the remarkably diverse ways U.S. military families came to be in Japan.

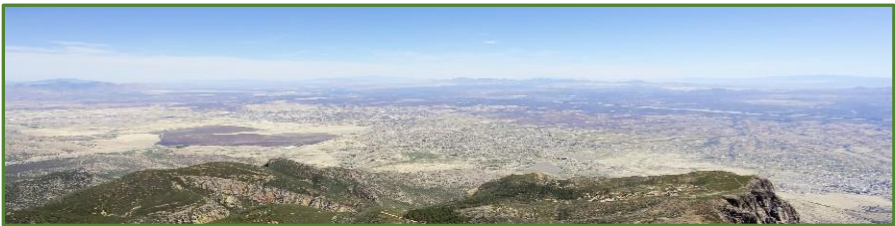
### Bruce Aichang

My mother is Korean, and my father is part Hawaiian, part Chinese. He saw the bombing of Pearl Harbor with his own eyes when he was growing up with his family in Oahu. My mother was born in Japan, even though her birth certificate says: "South Korea". Her parents moved her and themselves to Korea just before the Korean War started. Those were tough times for my mother and her parents. They never liked to talk about those days at all.



I was born in Hawaii. My earliest memories as a brat are from living in South Korea during the late 70s & early 80s. I still remember the assassination of the South Korean president (Park Chung-hee) in 1979. I entered my first DoD school there through half of 2nd grade; then we moved to Northern Virginia when I was 7 years old. Dad's specialty was personnel-related, on Army matters worldwide. In 1984, he got transferred to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, 15 miles north of the Mexican border. It's an important intelligence center that monitors communications from Central & South America. We lived there for 3 and a half years, through my freshman year.

I didn't like it there. A podunk place an hour's drive southeast from Tucson, and half an hour from the wild west town of Tombstone. There was hardly anything to do; it's just 20,000 people living in the middle of nowhere with only the U.S. Army around. I was itching to get the hell out. So, I was happy when Dad got orders to transfer to Japan. He went ahead in January of 1988, and we followed in June.



**Panoramic view** of Fort Huachuca & Arizona town of Sierra Vista.

(Derrick Neill, Dreamstime).

## Warren Arakawa

My family's story begins in Hawaii. My great great grandfather came from Japan to work on a sugar plantation on the island of Maui before the turn of the century. He was around 18 years of age. When all the sugarcane was harvested and his contract was up, he managed to stay behind in Hawaii and marry a local gal.



And so, he became one of the fortunate ones who managed to stay and raise a family in Hawaii. They ended up with 14 children, and by then there was no way he was going to be deported. The kids all ended up working in the fields too, and the story is that he used to wait at the front door and collect their monthly paychecks when they came home. That way, he was able to support a large family.

My dad made it to Okinawa as a civilian contractor. As the youngest of 11—where all of his older brothers had served in the military and two had been killed during World War II—he was told he was ineligible for active-duty service. So, he got a job at Pearl Harbor at the end of that War, then managed to get transferred to Okinawa. After a 28-year career in the Civil Service, he ended up returning to Hawaii. He came from a very decorated family. We ended up living in the Mercy Housing area in Okinawa. From the beginning, I began to build close bonds with the neighborhood kids.



**Left:** Warren's forebears were among the first waves of Japanese to migrate to Hawaii in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. **Right:** Warren in elementary school, Okinawa, seated 2<sup>nd</sup> row, center.

(Left photo credit: hawaiihistory.org. Right: Warren Arakawa).



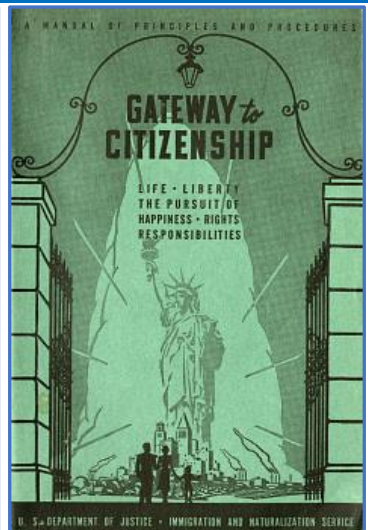
## Kimi Blake

My dad grew up in Pueblo, Colorado. It was a small town back then. He enlisted in the military and then he was off to Japan, where he met my mother in 1951. She was working as a tailor and made him his very first suit. He found her very attractive and proposed. It took a year for the request to be approved and processed. After getting married in '52, dad brought mom to the States.



Mom later told me she thought the citizenship test she had to take wasn't very fair. It was grueling, and she resented the fact that she had to learn and remember many things that people who had lived their whole lives in the U.S. didn't have to know.

I was born in 1956 in Aurora, CO. After three years, we moved to Fairbanks, Alaska, and then back to Pueblo CO for a year. Mom lived in the States for 12 years before returning to Japan, which was sad because she was treated very badly here. Lots of prejudice. Some of it from my dad's family in Colorado. It was sad because she didn't feel comfortable speaking or teaching Japanese to or around them. Therefore, we children didn't learn our mother's language or culture very much growing up. Just a few phrases here and there.



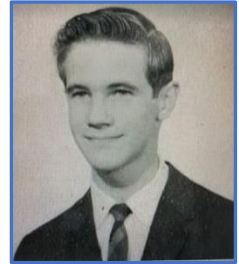
**Kimi Blake** (nee Diane Jones) shown with her sisters. **Right:** Guide to U.S. Citizenship-1948.

Dad served two tours in Japan thereafter. We moved to Fussa in 1964 (where Yokota AFB is located) and stayed for four years. Then we returned stateside to Travis AFB in Fairfield CA for just a year (1968-69), then it was back to Japan where I attended Johnson HS, which unfortunately closed down just before my Senior Year.

It was very upsetting to have to finish out stateside. Dad retired to Fairfield in '73, and I only went to local Armijo HS for one semester before graduating and getting out.

### **Bob Bonn**

My dad is from Louisville, Kentucky. He dropped out of high school his senior year to join the Army in 1941. He was 17. He then got nominated to become an officer and hospital administrator. His schooling took place in Thomasville, a small town in southwest Georgia. That's where he met mom, at a dance. She was from a sharecropping family that had experienced a good deal of hardship. The next thing you know, they got married and dad was commissioned as a Lieutenant. Mom then got to leave the sharecropping life behind for Hawaii, where dad ran some hospitals. I was born there in 1947.



Dad got transferred to Haneda Airport, Tokyo in 1952, where he served as administrator for a staging hospital for Korean War casualties. That was our first tour in Japan.

### **Samille Harris Clark**

I come from a very well-educated family on both sides. My father graduated from Howard University and my mother finished high school, which was an accomplishment back in the day, considering they were born in 1911 and 1912, respectively. My father's father (who was born the year after slavery ended) also attended an HBCU (Historically Black College or University) in North Carolina, and his wife (my paternal grandmother) attended the District of Columbia Teacher's College.



My mother was very outspoken and wouldn't back down from anyone. She became a statistician, which was quite rare for a Black woman back in the day. My dad was a mathematician who enrolled

at Howard at age 16. They were quite the pair.

When my father got his draft notice for World War II in December of 1941, he was already thirty years old with five children to help support. My mother marched down to the draft board office to protest, saying she couldn't support five children by herself. He was drafted anyway, and mother made do. After the War ended, my father returned and bought a house for us in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington D.C., where a mixture of free men and former slaves lived together.

My first memories as a military dependent are of living at Fort Meade in Maryland. I was six years-old, it was the mid-1950s, and we lived in a red brick apartment inside the main gate. The officers lived right across from the enlisted, and Black, White, and Asian kids played together. It wasn't segregated like it was in civilian D.C.; everybody on post really cared about each other.

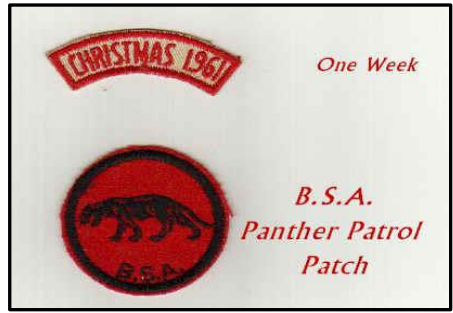
Regarding my time at Fort Meade, I would like to tell you a story about Tommy Brooks. Tommy lived upstairs above us, and his mother was a German immigrant. While living there, I had had surgery to correct something called 'Lazy Eye'. The surgeon at Fort Meade Hospital kindly wanted to address the problem for cosmetic reasons, so I wouldn't be ostracized. The surgery was fortunately a success, but I had to lay in bed for a long time with a patch over my repaired eye, to let things heal.

Well, Tommy found out what had happened to me, and he asked his mom if he could come down and gift me some of his trucks and two of the most beautiful German dolls you've ever seen. He wanted me to have them. So, down he came. And I'm still in love with Tommy to this day, although we've long since lost touch.

I'd like to emphasize how different life on post was compared to life outside. Whereas we would welcome White, Black, Filipino, and other Asian servicemen and families to our home for visits, just a few hundred yards away restaurants, public spaces, schools, and so forth were still heavily segregated. I mean, it was like night and day.

The Fall of my third grade, my father got re-assigned to Panama City. While that was being coordinated, we dependents moved to Philadelphia for a few months. I attended public school for a bit, and it was terrible. The other kids thought I talked funny, when I was actually an advanced reader (having started by age three), so I was

bullied a lot. Thankfully, we shipped off for Panama in December of 1955, leaving snow and ice for humid jungles and lots of mosquitos.



**Left: U.S. Army housing** carved out of the forest at Fort Kobbe, Panama, early 1960s. **Right: Boy Scout 'Panther Patrol' patch.** (Left: [www.kobbekids.com](http://www.kobbekids.com). Right: Jerry Maloney, kobbekids)

Panama was quite the experience. Not long after arriving at Fort Kobbe, we were driving through the gate and a black panther (jaguar) jumped right over our car! What a sight. I mean, there were a lot of big cats about, so we could never let dogs and house cats outside. However, our house—like others in the neighborhood—was built on stilts, so we had some protection against both tropical flooding and panther attacks.

Something else I became aware of even at my young age was colonialism. We were assigned servants like other American service families, even though our family was as poor as church mice. So, we had a maid and gardener, and they were Black like us. They had a young daughter about my age, so we all became like family. Now according to military protocol, they were supposed to enter our house through the back stairs, but our parents said, “No way. You’re entering through the front of the house like us.”

Anyhow, one day mom was sitting on our front steps, talking with Kelly the gardener while he was working. Next thing you know, a White sergeant comes driving by in his jeep, stops, and backs up. Then he gets out of his vehicle, walks over to my mother and—I still remember hearing him to this day—says, “You two should *not* be hobnobbing. You’re the help; you should not be hobnobbing on the job.” He assumed mom was a maid.

Well, that got my mother going. She gave him that look of hers and—being a good friend of the provost marshal in charge of the military

police—she was on the phone with the provost before the sergeant had gotten three blocks down the street. Within a week or so, that sergeant was shipped out.

Our family made many friends in Panama, and I loved living there. We had White friends, Black friends, it didn't matter. In 1958, dad got re-assigned back to the States, but we didn't want to leave. We loved living in Panama.

We moved to Fort Myer, a post in Northern Virginia. Dad was assigned to the Pentagon to apply his math skills for several departments, including the CIA I believe. There was a public school nearby, but my parents wanted better, so they drove me to nine miles across the Potomac to Georgetown Day School, where I went through the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Georgetown was expensive even then, but dad knew someone there and I received a tuition break.

Then dad bought a house off-base in South Arlington, and the plan was for me to transfer to Hoffman-Boston high school. But the educational standards at the time were not so good there, so my parents pushed to get me enrolled at Wakefield Public. At the time, mostly military kids attended Wakefield, but there was only one Black student. So, dad put on his spic and span dress uniform and personally registered me, without a problem.



**American Nazi Party members** counter-demonstrate at the Cherrydale Drug Fair in North Arlington, VA near where Samille lived, while civil rights protesters sit-in trying to gain service for African Americans, June 9, 1960 (*Washington Area Spark News*, photo by Wally McNamee).

I had a memorable birthday party soon after enrolling at Wakefield. A White friend of mine at school threw a party at his house for both of us, because it was his birthday too. So, both Black and White kids showed up, and somehow word got out. Before you knew it, local Nazis showed up at the party, armed with shotguns. Turns out they were only high school kids, but once I saw those fools sitting in their cars with guns, I just fainted dead away. An ambulance had to come for me. I mean, it was such a shock to my system.

I had to watch my health at Wakefield High, because I had a baby to care for. I had previously gotten pregnant at age 15 when attending Georgetown Day School in Washington D.C. My boyfriend and I were not allowed to get married because of our ages, so I carried my baby to term even though many people around me advised against it. My baby was born on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1963, and my whole class from Georgetown Day showed up at the hospital. Interestingly, I got married to the father of my baby many years later.

I thrived at Wakefield, with a lot of support from my parents. I was really looking forward to finishing there. I even took summer school classes to make sure I would graduate on time with my classmates. But then my father got orders to transfer to Japan during November of 1965 of my senior year, and off we went to Okinawa.

### **Shirley Colagrossi**

After Dad was wounded in the Pacific during WWII, our family moved from Nashville to Modesto, California. I was seven; my sister was four. After treatment at Hammond Hospital the Army assigned Dad there. My Mom, my younger sister, and I boarded the Southern Pacific train to California. It was 1943 and trains were filled with GIs heading east and west to and from war zones. I remember seeing hundreds of young men with their heads sticking out of train windows smiling and waving to us as our train passed in the opposite direction.



I saw little of Dad during my early childhood. We'd get letters from, "Somewhere in the Pacific." I have a telegram he sent to Mom during the war saying,

*"Don't worry honey. I'm making the world safe for the babies.  
Love, Your Jack."*

Moving to Modesto was a chance to get to know Dad. But when Hammond Hospital closed, Dad was assigned to Letterman Hospital in San Francisco's Presidio. He never liked us living on base, so we stayed in Modesto and Dad came home on some weekends. In late 1947 he left for Japan. I assumed we'd stay in Modesto. By then I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and settled in school, sports, and friends. Then Mom dropped the bomb. We'd sail to Japan in the fall; I'd start eighth grade in Yokohama. In my dramatic, teenage mind I believed my life was over. For the first time I felt the power the military had over not only my Dad, but on our whole family.

I had a million questions for Mom: How could we live in a country with people who had killed our soldiers, who had shot my Dad? Don't the Japanese hate us for dropping the atom bomb, for winning the war? I had seen the newsreels. What kind of game was this anyway? Of course, in the end I lost my argument, but I must say that the seeds were sown for my path of non-violence and conciliation.

At thirteen and living in Modesto, I had no exposure to actual Japanese people. Only once when I was eight or nine did I see a Japanese man walking down the street. A friend's parent was driving us to the movies and pointed him out. "Look, girls, there is a dirty, yellow Jap!" I

looked and thought, 'He doesn't look yellow to me.' Yet I was afraid of him. I didn't talk with my parents—even Mom—about this fear. In our family, my sister and I didn't approach Dad with unnecessary questions or opinions. Mom made it clear that we were not to bother Dad, that he was busy reading or resting, or had a lot on his mind. Bothering Dad was off-limits.



**Shirley's father and mother.**

### **Renaldo Crooks**

My father was from Trinidad and Tobago, located in the Caribbean near Venezuela. He grew up to become an electronics geek and earned his electrical license in Trinidad at the age of 19. After immigrating to the U.S., he joined the U.S. military and eventually became a chief master sergeant. His



specialty was precision electronics: the maintenance and repair of equipment critical to the military's mission. He met my mother at a church in South Carolina. She was a real home-grown South Carolina woman. I was born in Mobile, AL in 1957, but my earliest memories are of being stung by fire ants in Texas. I remember running into the house screaming my head off. Mom hauled me into the tub and rinsed me off good, but it didn't make the pain go away.

Then we moved to Alaska and while living there we experienced the Great Alaskan earthquake of 1964. This occurred during a period of high tension with the Russians (not long after the Cuban Missile Crisis), so when the quake hit, I ran up the stairs of our house yelling "the Russians are attacking, the Russians are attacking!". I remember dishes flying out of the cupboards while the whole house just shook back and forth.



**The original *Star Trek* cast.** Their spacecraft the *USS Enterprise* and much of the show's jargon was inspired by Naval vessels and history. Considered among the most progressive shows of its time, *Star Trek*'s ongoing mission to seek out strange new worlds and allies while advancing and defending Federation interests has many parallels with U.S. military life. (Photo: Alamy.com).

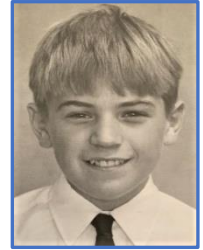
Next came a move to McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento in the mid-60s. That's where I took up the alto saxophone for the first time. That was a real fun place and time too. Innocent. I spent a lot of time catching bugs, collecting rocks, and playing with other kids. Dad got some quarters in the well-known Capehart Housing Area. Culture-



wise, I remember Star Trek coming out in 1966, with Captain Kirk chasing all those alien women. I really wanted to watch it, but my parents said, “No, too risqué!”

We moved to Misawa, Japan after our stay at McClellan AFB. It was my first time visiting a foreign country, and I loved the experience. We moved into an area where there was military housing on one side and Japanese on the other. This made it easy to make Japanese friends right away. Many of them already spoke some English and would translate basic words and phrases for me. I started absorbing their language like a sponge.

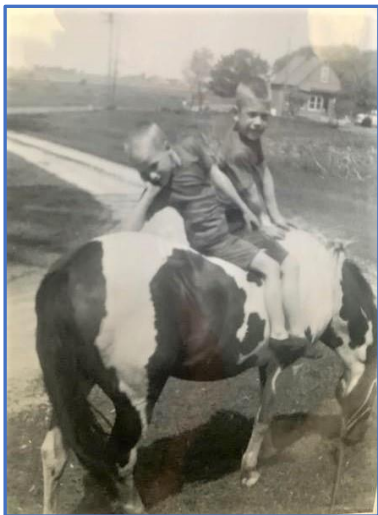
### **Mike Daum**



My mom and dad were childhood sweethearts who grew up in a small Midwest town in southern Wisconsin. Both my parents were state champion swimmers, which was pretty cool. Dad had an itch to get out and see the world, and he wanted to serve in the Korean War. So, he joined the Marine Corps, but too late to actually serve in Korea. Instead, he was eventually assigned to Hawaii. He came home on leave to Wisconsin to marry my mother and they spent their first year of marriage in Hawaii.

Mom shared a funny story about Dad’s time in Hawaii. He was with his amphibious vehicle friends, and they would get assigned all kinds of bizarre duties. Anyhow, he was in a meeting, and someone came in and asked, “Does anyone know anything about swimming pools?” And before you knew it, without even meaning to, Dad’s hand went up. The next thing you know, instead of serving in the mess hall, doing guard duty, or some other worst of the worst thing as a new recruit, his assignment became running a base swimming pool in paradise. Pretty nice.

After a while, dad decided to get out of the Marines, and he & mom moved back to Wisconsin. Dad got a job working for Bell Telephone, which was an excellent opportunity at the time. Then he built a house with my mom’s dad, who was a contractor. Then dad bought a farm from a relative’s family outside of town, and we moved onto the farm. That’s where I have my earliest childhood memories. Even while dad continued to work for the phone company, he did some farming on the side. So, I grew up with a lot of chickens and—eventually—200 mink, which fetched a lot for their pelts.



Anyhow, the Vietnam war was beginning to escalate, and my father having missed serving in Korea decided to re-enlist in the Marines. He spent 1967 in Vietnam and when he returned, I guess I became a “military brat” for the first time at age 9. Our first duty station was a brief tour in Quantico, Virginia, and when we got word to transfer to Japan, we didn’t have much time to prepare. At that time, I was 10 years old and in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and the only thing I knew about Japan were images of Mt. Fuji and a Buddha in my history book. I felt

special about going, though, because none of my friends had been there before. In March of 1969, off we went. (Above: **Mike-in front-and brother Charlie** on the farm in Wisconsin).

### **Vida (Javan) Denigan**

‘Military brat’ and ‘third culture kid’ are terms I never personally identified with. My parents met and got married in Japan, but both have family and ancestral ties in separate foreign countries. My father is Iranian and served as a member of Iran’s diplomatic corps, prior to the toppling of the Shah’s regime in 1979. My mother is bi-racial with both Japanese and British backgrounds. My maternal grandmother arrived from Britain during the pre-World War II years as a student in Tokyo. She met my grandfather—a descendent of the Tokugawa Shogunate—at a social event. Eventually they decided to get married.



When my father got a job working at the Japanese embassy in Tokyo in the early 1960s, he enrolled in Tokyo University. One day he saw a beautiful foreign woman on the train; luckily for him the community of foreigners in Japan at the time was small and close-knit, so when he inquired with a friend about who she was, he was able to arrange a meeting. The rest, as they say, was history.

I was born in Japan, and attended Seisin International Elementary School in Tokyo, before moving to Tehran and enrolling in an

international school there. Then we returned to Japan, where my parents received permission to enroll me in Sullivan’s Elementary School on Yokosuka Naval Base in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.



Vida’s maternal grandmother—**Ruby Larcock** (an Englishwoman)—sits 4<sup>th</sup> from left in the back. Ruby married Vida’s grandfather, a native Japanese. (Photos courtesy of Vida Javan Denigan).

While this might have seemed like a curious school choice for parents like mine, Sullivan’s was a convenient location given our new home’s location in Kamakura City. I went on to attend Sullivan’s Elementary and Middle Schools, plus the first year of high school (9<sup>th</sup> grade) at Nile C. Kinnick on base, until my family moved to London for my 10<sup>th</sup> grade.



**Left:** Pre-school Vida with parents. **Right:** Vida with parents & younger sister during Japan days. (Photos: Courtesy of Vida Javan Denigan).

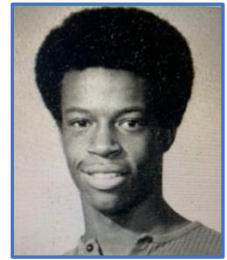
## **Cathy Deptula**

My dad dropped out of high school to take Basic Training as a combat engineer at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. He came in with the invasion forces against the Japanese in the Philippines during 1944-45. My mother served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and got her pilot's license so she could join the war effort. She served in Japan during the Occupation, where she met my father. They got married and I ended up being born in an Army hospital in Yokohama in 1954. My sister Diane is two years younger than I and was born in the nearby Naval Hospital. I became a so-called 'lifer', spending my entire childhood in Japan.



## **Lester "Geno" Finley**

My life began in Chicago with a civilian upbringing. My father was a police officer, and we lived on the west side surrounded by my grandparents. I attended a Catholic school where most of the students were Black. Later, we moved to the south side, where I encountered gang activity and got into fights at public school.



Tragically, my father passed away during this time, and my mother remarried a Navy man she knew since high school. At the age of 11, we left Chicago for Japan in the summer of 1970, where my life experience drastically changed.

## **Joseph Garrido**

I'm a proud Japan as well as Korean and stateside Brat. My mother is native Korean and my father Guamanian. My family story begins with my grandparents on both sides, who were beset by the horrors of war.



Unlike many Japanese hafu brats who have been able to trace their Japanese heritage through generations, it has been more difficult for Korean hafus like myself. This is because when the Japanese invaded and then annexed Korea in 1910, they tried their best to erase Korean culture and history. And so, while there are some stories and a few documents that suggest my Korean grandfather came from an upper-class family, no one knows for

sure. What we know is that he remembered his family having servants before being orphaned, and that he personally practiced customs common to families of nobility.

After my grandfather was orphaned, he was adopted by an uncle. Unfortunately, his uncle's wife disapproved of the adoption and tried to make my grandfather's life miserable. After a time, my grandfather couldn't take it anymore and ran away to the large port city of Incheon, where he became a street urchin. There, a kindly shoemaker took him in and taught him his trade. Over time, my grandfather became successful and took a wife—my natural grandmother. They started a family and my mother was born in 1942.



**Joey** (left) with mother & brothers Lee and Tom.

This entire time, of course, the Japanese were still in control of Korea, World War II had begun, and the tide was turning against the Japanese by the time mom was born. More and more Koreans were conscripted to either work in Japan on behalf of the Japanese war effort or to fight for them on the front lines. And so, one day when mom was still a baby, grandfather was ordered into a local Japanese precinct and then abruptly sent away to Japan (to work in the mines, as far as we know). He never even had a chance to come home first and tell his family what had happened.

My grandmother grew concerned over grandfather's disappearance and whereabouts and walked down to the appropriate Japanese civil affairs office. And that was the last time my mother's family ever saw my grandmother alive. Several hours later after a search, they found her lying face down in a shallow rice paddy.

Therefore, like her father before her, my mom was essentially orphaned. I mean, no one knew if her father was still alive. Fortunately, my mother and her brother were taken in by my grandfather's first wife's family, and they were treated decently (especially by their daughter—my mom's half-sister). However—soon after the War ended in 1945—the whole family received a shock when my grandfather unexpectedly returned from Japan. He

promptly took my mother and her brother back into his care, and then re-married. His new wife became the only person my mother remembers as her mother (as her natural mother died when she was but a baby).

And so, my mother grew up under difficult circumstances as grandfather struggled to rebuild a life for his family. Unlike Japan, which began to rebuild with American support soon after the War ended in '45, the Korean people got involved once again in another major conflict—the Korean War. Therefore, my mother was never able to advance beyond the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, because grandfather couldn't afford the financial cost that came with secondary education back then. So, mom went to work and began to show a talent for languages, and eventually managed to become a switchboard operator at Osan Air Base.

It was at Osan where she met my dad. But before I get to their meeting and my own eventual birth, a bit about my father's background. My dad was born into the Garrido family clan in Guam; a large family of 12 children. Like my mom, he was born into Japanese occupation not long after they invaded Guam, right after bombing Pearl Harbor. Like the rest of the Chamorro (Guamanian) people on the islands of Guam, my father's family suffered terribly. But as U.S. Nationals living within a U.S. Protectorate, they were hopeful of American rescue. However, when word got out that U.S. forces were soon to launch an invasion to take back Guam, Japanese soldiers began rounding up male leaders like my grandfather during the summer of 1944 to keep them from revolting.

They forced my father and hundreds of other locals (including even females and children) to follow them to a number of caves to supposedly do some mining and other duties. Once my grandfather and other prisoners entered the caves, however, the Japanese threw grenades in after them and killed them all. To this day, there's a memorial dedicated to my grandfather and his fellow people on a martyr's plaque at the entrance of the cave where he met his death.

My grandmother on my dad's side re-married another Garrido clan member (a first cousin of my father's), and unfortunately this fellow was just plain mean. A real SOB. He would often beat my father, as well as his own children. Once, he nearly killed my dad with a machete. So, as soon as my dad got old enough, he joined the U.S.

Air Force and left for Texas for basic training. Afterwards, he performed well enough on tests to first specialize in military personnel work, and later in data processing (which included learning how to operate a mainframe computer). After a few months, he was assigned to Osan Air Base in South Korea in 1960.

Once dad was stationed at Osan, he made a good friend named Eddie. One night, the two went to the Enlisted Club, where they spotted an attractive local Korean woman who happened to be my mom. They decided to make a wager as to who could be the first to win her heart and hand in marriage. The specific arrangement was, whoever the lucky winner was, he had to make his first-born son's middle name the first name of his buddy.



**Left: Joey** (above) with mother, early 1960s. **Right: Joey's mother** (far left) and father with Aunt & Cousin.

And so, that's how my middle name of Edward came to be. Once my mom and dad hit it off, mom got pregnant with me a few months later. During the pregnancy though—as was the case with many military families—dad got transferred. He got orders to ship off to Edwards Air Force Base in Southern California.

Meaning, he was in California when it came time for mom to give birth. To make things worse, even though my mom could speak some basic English, she had no real idea of what the nurses and doctors were saying when she finally made to the military hospital

in Seoul. Unable to bring her family due to security restrictions, mom had to go through labor and delivery without any loved ones around, and without understanding most of what was being said and done. She felt so lonely, she told me many years later.

And when she did give birth to me in September of 1962, she drew a blank when a nurse asked her for the name of the baby. Fortunately, just a short while later, a telegram arrived from my dad with the requested name: JOSEPH EDWARD GARRIDO. My mother had no idea what those words meant at the time.

When mom recovered and arranged her affairs, she said her familial goodbyes and boarded a U.S. military transport ship bound for San Diego. Unfortunately, the ship had some mechanical problems at sea, and had to detour to Yokohama, Japan. There, passengers disembarked to a holding area for a few days while transfer arrangements were made to another ship headed to San Francisco. However, being that my mom was of Korean heritage and not yet a U.S. citizen, Japanese officials would not let her and I off the ship. We were penned away until it was time to board the new vessel.

Thankfully, there was a kindly American lady who was assigned to our cabin, and she gave mom a great deal of support. She would take me around ship while mom struggled with seasickness. Mom always remembered her kindness. As for me, mom later shared that I was the easiest baby, maybe because I found the rolling motion of the ship to be soothing.

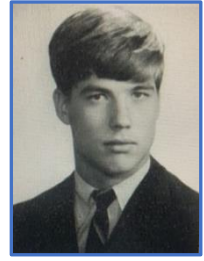
Once our ship sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge to Fort Mason, a typical crowd gathered at the pier to welcome incoming family members. From the deck far above, however, mom struggled to pick dad out of the crowd. After months of being apart, she wondered if she would even recognize him anymore.

Unable to really understand the disembarking procedure, mom and I ended up the last ones to leave ship and she felt lost. Someone helpfully shepherded us to the gate, and thank goodness, there was my dad. My mom still hardly knew him, and he hardly knew her. Struggling to communicate, dad directed us to a nearby Greyhound station, where we boarded a bus for the 365-mile trip to Edwards AFB in the Mojave Desert. That was the beginning of my life as a military brat.



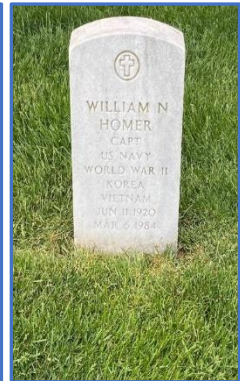
## Bill Homer

I am the proud son of a true war hero. Dad was a captain in the U.S. Navy. He served in three wars, and was awarded the Navy Cross for heroism, among many other medals. I didn't know he received the second highest honor until he passed away, because it wasn't in his nature to talk about his accomplishments. I was able to find old letters and press clippings that told the story.



In short, he swam from shore out to a burning ship, boarded and safely brought an injured officer to shore. The deck of the ship was so hot, it burned the flesh off his feet. Dad also saw other action during World War II and ended up in a hospital for close to a year in a full body cast, all before I was born. He went on to also serve with distinction in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Dad started in the Merchant Marines and attended a Merchant Marine academy in Philadelphia, PA, then getting his commission in the U.S. Navy at the start of World War II. That's when he met mom. He was in a coffee shop with a couple of friends while mother walked in with a couple of friends. The rest, as they say, is history.



**Bill's dad**—Captain William N.P. Homer, USN—served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Center photo is of his **dad, mom**, and **older sister**. Captain Homer is buried in Arlington Cemetery.

I was born at Quonset Naval Air Station in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. After that came duty station stops in Key West, FL; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Montgomery AL; and multiple stays in

Rhode Island (where dad took command of his first ship and squadron) and Virginia. I entered my high school years in Norfolk, VA, and after a few months moved to Virginia Beach, VA, where dad was the commanding officer of the Fleet Anti-Air Warfare Training Center at Dam Neck.

I was there for half of my freshman and sophomore years. Then we moved to Long Beach, CA where I finished my sophomore year. From there, Dad led a squadron of ships from Long Beach to Yokosuka, Japan, where I spent two summers and my 1968-69 junior year. I ended up attending five different high schools, which was a lot for even a Navy brat.

### **Janet Iwata-Bartelme (nee Nelson)**

I was born and raised in Yokohama. My father was from Iowa and was a lot older than my mother. He had been working for the U.S. Defense Contract Audit Agency in Japan when he met my mother, who was working at the Navy Exchange on base.



**Left:** Janet's **mother**. **Center:** Janet's **father**, during his later years. **Right:** **Janet** with her mother, mid-1960s.

My mother was different from other war brides in that she didn't marry to gain American citizenship. In fact, she retained her Japanese citizenship after getting married. The reason being, her mother came from a famous shogun (i.e. Japanese warlord) family in the Choshu area on the island of Shikoku. Therefore, even though some of my mother's cousins moved on to Hawaii to make a life, my mother remained in Japan, deeply rooted to her family's history.

At the time, dad as a federal employee could have taken the option to move us onto the base to live as a family. But he decided not to take that option until I was seven or eight years old. So, I spent the first years of my life living off-base.

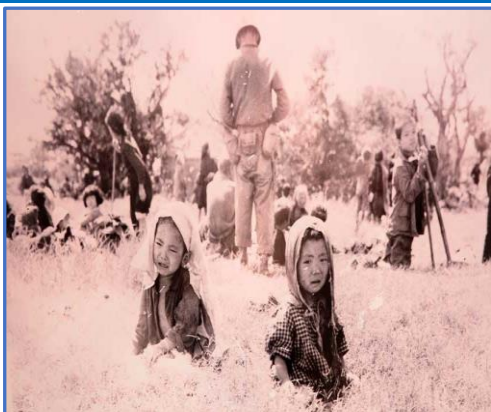
### Mary Prinz Jessee

I am half-American Caucasian, half-Okinawan. My Okinawan mother was a little girl during World War II and spent her early childhood years living in the caves. She survived the terrible violence because she stayed in a different part of the island, where not as many children died.



After the War, her family was very poor. So poor my mother said that she had to sell ice on the street. I think she meant popsicles/ice candy (in Japanese, ice means a “frozen treat”).

My dad was born and raised in New Jersey. He is blonde, blue-eyed, and they say he looked a lot like James Dean when he was younger. He was also much younger than my mom when they met in Okinawa. My father lied about his age to join the Navy when he was 17, so he never graduated and had to get his GED afterwards (and so, both parents were uneducated).



**Mary’s mother lived in the Okinawa caves** during the horrific Battle of Okinawa that lasted nearly three months. A majority of the over 200,000 who died were Okinawan civilians, many of them children. **Left: A U.S. marine** helps a woman out of a cave after the battle. (Photo: US Marine Corps Records). **Right: Okinawan children**—many orphaned—mill about at War’s end. (Photo: Japan-experience.com).

I think that was one reason she (my mother) ran the household, being older. My Okinawan grandmother loved my dad. In fact, I think she liked him better than mom. (I never met my Okinawan grandfather; he had died before I was born).

Dad really liked mom upon meeting her and really tried hard to woo her. He later told me that he just kept asking her to marry him again and again until she just got tired and annoyed of it all. He just wore her down until she finally said 'yes'. True love, right?

### **Buck Kelsey**

My Dad and Mom came from totally different backgrounds. Dad was from New Haven, Connecticut, a big city. Mom was born and raised on a small farm in central Nebraska. They met after World War II.



During WWII, dad had taken the train from New Haven all the way to Biloxi, Mississippi, for basic training and aircraft tech school. He could have opted out of the draft because he had a railroad job in New Haven; a job that was considered an essential function, but he opted to join the military instead. At the end of tech school, there was a note on the bulletin board that read, 'if you want to be a pilot, sign here'. So, he did, because that's what he really wanted to do. And he made the cut!

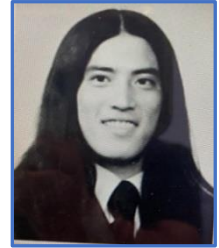
It was off to pilot training on the West Coast, then to Europe to fly P-47 Thunderbolts. After the War, he stayed in the Air Corps, but took a non-flying job during the downsizing. When a slot opened, he got back onto flying status. He was placed with a squadron which was soon transferred to Kearney AFB, Nebraska. That's where he ended up meeting mom, who was working in a secretarial position. They got married and 2 years later I was born.

Six months after my birth, my dad's unit got deployed to Korea. There he flew the P-51 Mustang fighter bomber and got shot down by ground fire. If you remember, the planes had those water-cooled engines, and a random bullet hit him in the radiator. He knew the engine was going to overheat and seize up, so he managed to fly out over the Sea of Japan and bailed out. He was quickly picked up out of the water by a US Navy destroyer. After that—maybe because he realized he'd almost gotten killed while starting a family—he

switched to maintenance officer. He was promoted to Major and later Lieutenant Colonel as we eventually shipped off to Tachikawa, Japan in 1958 for our next duty station.

### **Bobby Kiyan**

My mom is local Okinawan. She was born on the small island of Hamahiga, just off mainland Okinawa. My Japanese American dad was born in Hawaii. After World War II, he was part of a wave of immigrants from Hawaii who moved to Okinawa to work in civilian jobs. These jobs served as a kind of interface between U.S. military personnel and the local Okinawans, as immigrants like my dad became fluent in the ways of the locals.



And so, my dad met my mom in Okinawa, and they had seven children including myself. I was born and raised in Okinawa until 1973, when I moved stateside after graduation.



**Bobby** (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) **with siblings**. Right: The bridge to Hamahiga Island, where Bobby's mother grew up. The small isle is connected to the left to Miyagi Island, and both are close to and administered by Uruma City on the nearby Okinawa coast. (Photo 111882792 © Ziggymars Dreamstime).

My dad being civilian, we lived off base. We had a house in the Mercy housing area, and my long-time friends and I called ourselves the 'Mercy Boys'. I would say the neighborhood was pretty much Americanized. A lot of us went to school at Mercy Elementary in the neighborhood. Now in terms of local culture, I would say that our

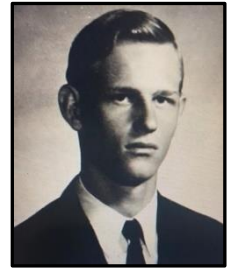
family distinguished ourselves more in terms of Okinawan food and other cultural ways than mainland Japanese, since neither of my parents are Japanese.

My mom learned to speak both the local Okinawan language (Uchinaaguchi) and Japanese. In fact, when she didn't want us kids to understand what she was saying, she would speak Okinawan. On my father's side, I think many of my friends and I who had Hawaiian/Polynesian fathers really took to those cultural ways, as we would often go vacation in Hawaii learn more of the customs. So, as we got older, we mostly blended and expressed Hawaiian and American cultural customs; not so much Japanese.

Now, that's not to say my parents or myself were anti-Japanese. I mean, for example, my parents would always root for the Japanese teams in the Olympics. And I would do the same for the Japanese team in the Little League World Series.

### **Bob Koudelka**

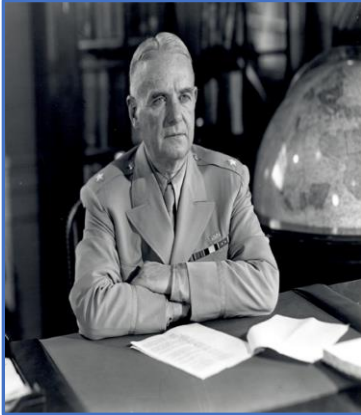
My mom and dad grew up during the great depression. Dad was born in Fairfield Ct, in a largely Danish community. Mom born in Montreal Canada and grew up in Sandwich, Massachusetts. Both grew up during difficult economic times and were raised only by their mothers.



Dad entered the service directly upon graduating from Central High School in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He was recruited off the school rifle team as an expert marksman. Testing showed dad had exceptional ability in math and computational problems, and he was promptly assigned to the Signal Corps. He was stationed at Fort Monmouth the day the Hindenburg went down, and the next day he was sent to the site to investigate the wreckage. I still have a piece of the metallic fiber skin he took from the site.

Signal, at that time, worked with various army intelligence units, and he became involved with that side of the business. During WWII he left for North Africa with mom (then pregnant with my older brother) staying behind in northern Virginia. From North Africa to Sicily and Italy and into Germany he worked with various units, attached at times to assist with OSS operations. He never spoke much about this until he was well into his 80s.

During this period, and throughout Dad's career (as he was away frequently) Mom was the glue that held our family together. She was a school teacher, artist, strong tennis player, and above all a loving & caring mother. Whom (as many brats know as our fathers were away for long periods) held the family together. Mom was a hero.



**Bob's dad worked with "Wild" Bill Donovan** (above left) for a time, in intelligence. Donovan directed the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) during World War II and is considered the founding father of the CIA<sup>288</sup>. He is the only person to have received all four of the United States' highest awards: The Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, and the National Security Medal. He also received the Silver Star and Purple Heart, and many other commendations during his service during World Wars I and II. **Above right** is a photo of General John Pershing awarding Distinguished Service Crosses towards the end of World War I in 1918 to, first, Brigadier General Douglas MacArthur (later Supreme Commander for Allied Powers in Japan), then Colonel George Leach, followed by Lieutenant Colonel William Donovan. During World War II, Donovan tried to discourage President Roosevelt from interning Japanese Americans, warning that such an action would address a problem that did not exist, do harm to loyal Americans, and provide the Japanese militarists with ammunition for their propaganda. (**Left:** U.S. National Archives. **Right:** U.S. Army).

When WWII was almost over, Dad was involved with tracking down German scientists, technical experts and equipment deemed valuable to the United States. In our garage there was a large crate with German markings on it that dad kept. It had originally contained experimental German communications equipment that utilized infrared light to transmit messages. He had carried it by donkey through the mountains back to the US.



**Bob's parents moved to West Berlin** from Ansbach, Germany in 1948, the year the **Berlin Airlift**<sup>289</sup> was launched by the Allies, led by the U.S. and Great Britain, with airlift support supplied by the then British Commonwealth nations of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Some 250,000 missions were flown from June of 1948 to the end of September 1949, supplying critically needed food and other material supplies to the 2 million West Berliners who were completely surrounded by Soviet-controlled land and forces in East Germany. (Berlin had been partitioned according to terms set forth by the Potsdam Agreement in 1945, after the surrender by the Nazis; the U.S., Great Britain, and France controlled parts of the city, while the Soviet Union controlled the others. In 1948, however, the Soviets attempted—by land blockade—to wrest full economic and political control of West and East Berlin), without ultimate success. (Airlift photo above left provided by Henry Ries/USAF via Wikimedia Commons images).

**When Bob's father worked as a cryptologist in West Berlin**—whose assignment was to crack Soviet security codes and signals—he was deemed a major security threat by the Soviets and eventually placed on an “execute if captured” list, while his family (including young Bob, who was born in West Berlin in 1951, thus gaining dual German citizenship) was placed on a “Black List”. Nevertheless, Bob's father still constantly traveled between West and East Berlin (always accompanied by another vehicle into & around East Berlin) for his work, in various uniforms. After the Koudelkas transferred back to the States in 1952, tensions continued between East and West, culminating in the Soviet/East German building of the **Berlin Wall**<sup>290</sup> in 1961. The most famous ‘checkpoint’ regulating highly restricted traffic between each side was **‘Checkpoint Charlie’**. (See 1961 Checkpoint Charlie **photo above** provided by Jan Saudek via Wikimedia Commons).



After the war ended, Dad was shipped back to the U.S. to prepare for the invasion of Japan. He was on board a ship with his unit when Japan surrendered. Rejoining mom and my new brother Harold Jr., he was stationed in Utah where my sister Marylou was born. Soon after that, our family was stationed to Ansbach, Germany, where Dad became a member of the ASA (the Army Security Agency).

Moving to Berlin in 1948, Dad worked as a cryptologist breaking Russian codes & signals. It was born here in 1951, having both a German Birth Certificate and a State Dept Certificate for US Citizen born overseas. During this period our family was placed on a "blacklist" by the Russians, and Dad on an "execute if captured" list.

Travel on the autobahn was always accompanied by another vehicle to prevent the Russians forcing cars off the road in the Russian held areas. It happened more than was talked about. Dad crossed into the Russian zone a lot and his closet held a variety of uniforms and ranks. Later in life, when I questioned him about this and asked him what rank he enjoyed most, he replied "Any senior sergeant or sergeant major's uniform".

I asked why and he said that the Russians at checkpoints hated officers, but respected high-ranking NCOs, so he found it easier to pass their lines that way or to do or get what he needed. In 1952 we returned to the States by ship. During the crossing I fell off a top bunk landing on the steel plate floor and was unconscious for several days. We ended up in Clinton, Massachusetts with Dad working at Fort Devens.

From Fort Devens, Dad was sent to Korea for the Korean War. There he worked for a time in the basement of the University of Seoul, where the ASA ran operations. I have pictures of him waiting for a plane to land at an airfield named K-6. He stayed in Korea until the end of the conflict, part of the retreat from the Yellow River, Christmas surprise attack. The ASA unit there got lucky and was evacuated quickly. Returning to Fort Devens, Dad worked there until retiring as a colonel.

Now a civilian and a top cryptologist, we moved to Arlington VA where Dad started working at Arlington Hall. Then in 1957 we moved to Howard County MD, to a small town called Clarksville. This was because Arlington Hall was deemed a bad location for secret operations due to the close proximity of newly built embassies

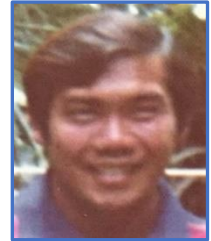
and foreign consulates. A secure site was needed. Fort Knox was selected, and notices sent out to the staff at Arlington Hall. A large percentage of who were now civilians, with families who had moved enough. About 80 percent submitted resignations for the move to Fort Knox., a closer site was needed. Fort George G. Meade in Anne Arundel County was selected, and the employees were satisfied.

This move to Fort Meade, and the building of the NSA (National Security Agency) led to the housing boom in various locations such as Clarksville, Bowie, Pasadena and Crofton MD. All easy DC/Fort Meade commutes. Plus, right down the road was the US Navy Officer's School, Annapolis, and a nice International Airport-Friendship. This was the start of the formal "No Such Agency" or NSA. As in, "Never Say Anything". I was there for the opening day of Operations Building, for Family Day.

I attended school in Clarksville in a huge brick building that, at the time, went K-12 in grades. I started first grade there and stayed through 9<sup>th</sup> grade. It was then that I was told we were moving to Japan. The year was 1966.

### **Richard Lee**

My dad was born in Hilo, Hawaii. His roots are Chinese with some Hawaiian, and a little bit of Portuguese included. My mom is Japanese, born and raised. So, I'm a mix. It's funny, though. If you ask my mother what my ethnic heritage is, she'll tell you Japanese. And that's understandable, especially if you spend some time in Hawaii. There, Japanese like to view themselves as kind of on top of the pecking order, as they do among Asians in general.



I think my mom is typical Japanese in her thinking. To give you an idea, when I was younger, I was in the sun all the time, getting tanned & dark. I remember my mom coming to me at one time and saying, "Richard, you're so dark. Don't tell anybody you're my son, because you don't look Japanese and my son." She was dead serious.

When my mom was saying and thinking things like that, I'd say that was her Japanese background talking. Because in Japan, the darkest skinned Japanese are and were the farmers, who worked out in the sun all day. The lighter your skin indicated your economic class, and

the women typically used umbrellas in the sun to keep their skin and radiant even as they got older. Many of my friends with Japanese mothers have similar stories; mothers who married American GIs. I've heard and learned that many Japanese women who married American servicemen were a bit younger than their husbands. How many of them, once they left Japan or Okinawa, ended up in parts of the United States that were probably the furthest place you could be related to Japan or Asia.



**Long before Lady Murasaki Shikibu wrote *The Tale of Genji*** (often referred to as the ‘World’s First Novel’<sup>291</sup>) in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, wherein the author often refers to white skin as a desirable aspect of feminine Japanese beauty, up to the current age where renowned Japanese *Geisha* entertainers still wear pure white makeup, white skin is prized in Japanese culture. However, as Richard mentions, such focus has often been the province of wealthier Japanese, as opposed to farmers (above right) and other workers who work long hours in the sun. Japanese from the more southern and generally warmer regions of Japan, including the islands of Kyushu, Shikoku, and—especially—Okinawa are naturally more prone to environmental and genetic factors that lend to darker skin on average. Bear in mind this Japanese cultural preference for whiteness<sup>292</sup> preceded the western notion of white racial supremacy by at least a thousand years, when various 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-century European and American leaders and influencers invented and began promoting the concept of white racial superiority in categorical terms.

**(Left:** *Tale of Genji* book cover by Tuttle Books, 2018. **Center:** 44830189 / Japanese Geisha © Jonasanpostudio|Dreamstime.com. **Right:** Elstner Hilton, 1914-1918 circa).

For an example, my mom had a very good friend who moved to her husband's hometown in Georgia deep in the South, and she was just lost (this was in the late 60s). She ended up starting a Chinese restaurant. Which was kind of a joke, because she didn't know how

to cook Chinese. She was Japanese. Anyway, many of them—because they were younger than their American husbands—lived quite a bit longer in unfamiliar places in America.

### Janet Koike Mata

My mom was a Japanese citizen, my father Japanese American. He was born in the U.S., and then he and his family were put into an internment camp during World War II. Grandfather was a kendo teacher in the Los Angeles area and was taken away to jail first. He refused to renounce the Japanese Emperor, so he was deemed a high security risk, as many Japanese dads were so considered.



**The Crystal City internment camp in Texas**, where Janet’s dad and his family were interned; **Right:** Sewing room at Crystal City, where German, Japanese, & Italian internees worked; roughly 10% of all interned individuals during World War II were of European descent. (**Photos:** German American Internee Coalition).

At the time, my dad had graduated high school and was enrolled at UCLA. He received government notice that he was attending school too far away from home, and so he had to drop out and return home. When he did, the rest of the family was taken away. They ended up reuniting with granddad at the Crystal City internment camp in remote Texas, about 110 miles southwest of San Antonio and 35 miles from the Mexican border.

After they were released, my grandfather was so angry about the

whole thing that he took the family back to Japan. That's where and how my dad ended up meeting my mom and eventually getting married. Dad ended up getting a job with the U.S. Military Sealift Command on the north pier in Yokohama. That's how I was able to go to school on base. And so, I grew up in Japan my entire childhood, before graduating and following my two brothers to college in Colorado.

When President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act into law on August 10<sup>th</sup> of 1988 that gave \$20,000 in reparations and a formal apology to survivors of the internment camps, my father had unfortunately passed away two months earlier, so my mother was unable to benefit from this.

My grandmother's (still alive at the time) check was split amongst us grandchildren, and was received in 1990, after President George H.W. Bush became President. We each ended up receiving a check along with a copy of Bush's accompanying letter (**at right**).

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation's resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,





**Left:** President Jimmy Carter signs Senate Bill 1647 into law in 1980 as co-sponsored by Senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga. The law created the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), which then built the Government’s case over the next several years for internment survivor redress. **Right:** In 1988 President Reagan signs the fruit of their efforts—the Civil Liberties Act of 1988—into law. (Left: Ron Ikejiri Collection, Densho Encyclopedia. Right: The National Archives, # 75856233).

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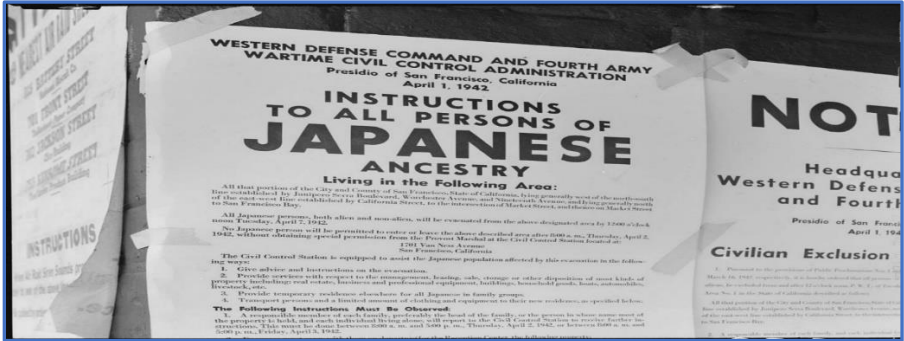
## Japanese Americans: From Internment to Serving Their Country

Shock. Fear. Confusion. Anger. Sadness. Bitterness. No one could objectively blame the estimated 120,000 Japanese residents of America (the great majority of whom were American citizens) for feeling such emotions on and after February 19, 1942<sup>293</sup>.

On that date, the President of the United States of America—who once famously proclaimed that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself” in the face of a crippling economic depression—gave into fear and tragically issued Executive Order 9066.

Thus did Franklin D. Roosevelt suspend the civil rights of tens of thousands of persons of Japanese descent for no other reasons (except in a handful of cases) than their racial and ancestral backgrounds. Thus did Roosevelt ultimately send tens of thousands—including children and the elderly and disabled (except

for the most severe cases)—to essentially concentration camps. For years. For many years until after World War II officially ended.



**Photo:** National Archives Foundation.

Thus were 120,000 human beings sent to some of the most desolate areas in the U.S. with only the possessions they could carry. Meanwhile, tens of thousands lost their livelihoods and property as even—in some cases—formerly trusted neighbors, partners, and friends took away and stole their hard-earned possessions (conversely, there were thousands who benefited from kind, steadfast, and courageous individuals who maintained and defended the obligations and property of their incarcerated friends to the best of their ability).

To counter claims the U.S. was engaging in racist, discriminatory behavior towards Japanese Americans (since German and Italian Americans maintained their civil liberties for the most part during the War) Roosevelt overcame the objections of some of his advisors and allowed willing Japanese Americans the opportunity to join the war effort. Some 33,000 eventually did, with many more thousands re-enlisting or freshly joining the U.S. military to defend U.S. interests during the Korean, Cold, and Vietnam Wars.

The Army took the great majority of WWII recruits, as the Navy, Marines, and precursor to the Air Force refused to admit them. Most came from Hawaii (where Japanese Americans avoided incarceration), but thousands still came from the Camps, to serve with legendary distinction. These included members of the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion/442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team<sup>294</sup>; those who served in the Military Intelligence Service; and 142 women who volunteered for the Women’s Army Corp (WAC).



**The legendary 442<sup>nd</sup> regiment** in France, 1944. **Right:** Japanese Americans readied for internment at Santa Anita Racetrack, Arcadia California, 1942. **(Left:** U.S. Army Signal Corp., Public Domain. **Right:** Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain).

Formal recognition of the brave and distinguished service Japanese American provided on behalf of their country during World War II and beyond did not occur for more than forty years later, when President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. The Act also provided some measure of acceptance and redress for all of the Japanese Americans who were deprived of their rights and livelihoods during World War II.

Many Japanese American veterans and their children went on to serve the United States in Japan in both active duty and civil service capacities, as their progeny served as military-related dependents. A number of those brat stories are included in this book.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Lisa Matisoo-Smith**

My dad was Estonian and moved to the U.S. as a refugee at the age of thirteen. He and his family got out of Estonia during World War II, during the Soviet invasion of the Baltic States.

First, they stayed in Germany; then, right after the war, they migrated to the U.S. My dad received his green card soon afterwards.

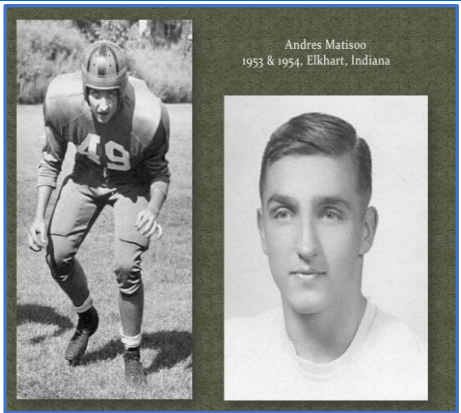




Next, Dad and his family needed a local American host sponsor. It ended up being a guy who managed a frozen vegetable company in Seabrook, New Jersey. Dad and his parents would pick vegetables in the field, working alongside Japanese Americans who had been interned during the war.

Next, Dad's family got sponsored by the Lutheran Church out of Indiana. That is where he ended up growing up and meeting my mom. After high school, dad entered and graduated from the ROTC program at Purdue University, and his first duty station ended up being Treasure Island Naval Base in San Francisco Bay.

After some career back-and-forth between military and civilian life, Dad re-committed to the Navy. We moved to Hawaii, where I was born. When we arrived in Japan, I was eight years old. My parents liked the experience so much that Dad kept extending his tour. I ended up spending all my teen years there, graduating in 1981.



**Lisa Matisoo-Smith's** parents' wedding day. **Right: Lisa's father** from his Indiana prep days. (Photos: Courtesy of Lisa Matisoo-Smith).

### Darryl McCall

I was born in Rhode Island in 1955. My dad was an enlisted electrician. My family moved to Washington DC, and then to San Diego when I was young. There was also a stop in Memphis, TN, where I was bussed to a segregated school even while a (white) school was just across the street. The story there is that—when my mother (who was light complected for an



African American woman) initially made inquiries about enrolling her children in this school—she was welcomed. But when she showed up with my darker-skinned siblings and myself for enrollment, we were turned away.

My time in Memphis as a child was challenging, because the local African American kids would make fun of my way of speaking. This was due to my having been raised during my formative early years in the Northeast as part of military communities. Looking back, I think this relentless teasing was a reason I later struggled in English and foreign language classes during my future schooling.

My parents, six siblings and I lived in San Diego for six years (my 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades), just off-base. We had neighbors next door (the dad in particular) who were racist and did not want blacks living next door. A daughter of this man eventually confided to me years later that she learned racism from her dad.

### **George Moore**

Shortly before my mother recently died, I spent four months at her home near Fairfield, CA to review and memorialize her life. There were questions I wanted to ask; questions I had wondered about for so long. Here was my last chance to ask those questions.



Mom grew up in Yokohama during World War II. She and her family had to endure all the Allied bombing there. There was a real shortage of food throughout the Yokohama and Tokyo areas, so her family sent her up to live with an uncle in the mountains nearby.

Her mind still sharp, she explained how after the War ended, she left home around the age of 16 to partner with a Japanese woman who had married an American serviceman. They became good friends. I think this friend might have been doing some ‘comfort’ work at the time and got mom a job working at a bar. There, mom eventually ended up meeting my dad, who was stationed on a battleship during the Korean War.

Their relationship started on a rough path as dad was your typical young sailor, hanging out with his shipmates, gambling, and living life to the fullest. Mom made it known that she had grown up in an

affluent family with samurai heritage and was not about to tolerate his behavior.



**George Moore** as a young child in the mid-1950s with mother, father, and relatives. **Right:** George's father—Chief Petty Officer Bennie Moore in Japan, 1960s. **(Photos:** George Moore).

Before the war my Japanese grandfather owned a large construction material company that imported granite and jade from Korea and China. The jade would adorn the interior of many offices in Tokyo and Yokohama. He lost his business during the war as a result of Allied bombings. He converted some of his manufacturing facilities that weren't destroyed to make Army combat belts and canteens.

Grandfather was a proud man and following the war took his pension and began growing Bonsai trees in his beautiful garden. His great grandfather's lineage was under the Saotome clan near Mount Nikko, the same town where Shogun Ieyasu, the great Shogun of the Tokugawa regime, was buried. The Saotome clan fought in a major battle with the Shogun when he was consolidating Japan's various daimyos. I only know this because when I attended the Japanese Naval War College during one of my tours after joining the Navy, my colleagues helped me do a search on my mother's maiden name.

We found a history about my family at a Buddhist temple in the Northwestern part of Japan. My grandmother on the other was from the country and my mom always characterized her as a country farm girl. My grandmother was a gentle soul with soft hands. My mom said it was because she never worked a day after meeting my grandfather. My mother and her brother and two sisters had maids

and never dressed themselves until the war. They were well dressed and pampered until the war.

So, my mom and dad ended up getting together. Next thing she got pregnant, I was born, and then dad got shipped out right away. Would he come back for us? Many GIs never returned. Mom didn't believe he would. But her friend reassured her that he would. So, mom waited, and dad eventually fulfilled his promise. Then they got married and four years later around 1958, we shipped off to the San Francisco Bay Area.



George's **grandparents** with mom & siblings. **Right:** George with sister **Marie**. (Photos: George Moore).

I was 5 years-old and my sister was 1 when we ventured over the Pacific Ocean to California. I remember the trip vividly. The ship's deep, blaring horn reverberated while clanging alarms rang out annoyingly. It was the signal for an abandon ship drill. Poor timing because the ship was still in the remnants of a typhoon, which two days earlier had caused the vessel to secure all activities, including dining and the revered nightly movie.

The only times I remember these showings being canceled were when the projector was being repaired or when the weather made it too dangerous for passengers to leave their staterooms. The enormous grey merchant marine ship, known as an MSTs, was crossing the Pacific with a cargo of military and civilian passengers returning from tours overseas.

## Marie Moore Kistner

I am George Moore's younger sister Marie, and I have a family formation story to tell: My husband's. His name is Glen Kistner, and he is technically not a "Japan brat", as he never lived in Japan. His Japanese mother's story is so compelling, that I wanted to share.



Glen's mother was born in 1936. She was only nine years old on August 9<sup>th</sup> of 1945. She was sweeping up hair in her parent's Nagasaki City barber shop on the ground floor of their establishment (they lived upstairs within the two-story building), when—at 11:02am Nagasaki time—everything turned orange.

As Glen's mother later recounted to Glen and me, one moment she was sweeping up hair within their prosperous shop, and the very next moment there was no building, no walls, and she was naked. Everything around was orange colored. She managed to stagger away with her family members, and she was entrusted to carry her little sister out in her arms.



**Left:** Photo by Cpl. Lynn P. Walker, U.S. Marines, of the **Nagasaki blast site** six weeks after detonation. **Right:** Photo by Yosuke Yamahata, of a partially incinerated boy, taken the day after the Nagasaki bomb blast. (Both photos via Wikimedia Commons Images, Public Domain).

They pushed towards the nearby hills, away from ground zero, which was located not far from their former barber shop. En route, they stepped over piles and piles of the dead, many with melted skin, melted bodies. As they did so, Glen's mother vividly remembers

‘seeing’ the spirits (*kami*) of the dead leaving their bodies. After a grueling effort, they finally reached a cave in the nearby hills, where they took shelter from the devastation. For weeks they huddled there, occasionally stealing rice from nearby fields to eat, until U.S. forces arrived to offer sustenance and other forms of support. Their lives were very hard afterwards, and she met Glen’s American father in Nagasaki years later in 1957.

### **Glen Nakamoto**

Before I arrived at Itazuke for the end of my high school years in 1967, my Japanese American father was a US Army careerist and we traveled to many places. I was born in Japan (as my father was part of the occupation forces working as a translator) and spent the first three years of my life there.



His marriage to my mother (native post-war Japanese) created quite a stir among her relatives (where they basically “disowned” her - at least, initially). We then moved to Hawaii, as my father was transferred to Ft. Shafter.

My second journey to Japan took place when I was seven years old, as my father was one of the early military advisors assigned to Vietnam (before the larger scale war broke out). My mother and I moved to Osaka so he could take his R&R in a closer locale. This also gave my mother a chance to re-connect with her family.

We lived with my aunt and uncle, who was the eldest brother to my mother (and the most outspoken against my parents’ marriage). By then, all was forgiven, and she was welcomed back. When my father took his R&R, he was warmly welcomed by her family.

While living in Japan (with no military base nearby), my parents wanted me to continue my education at an English-speaking school. I was enrolled at the Canadian Academy located in Kobe, Japan. As a sign of how times have changed, I was a seven-year-old commuting (by myself) two hours each way during rush-hour to go to school (walking to the bus stop, bus to subway station, subway to train station, train to Kobe, and then catching the school bus at the train station). If I missed the school bus, I had to take a taxi to school from the train station.

I did this commute for the entire second grade school year during the time my father was stationed in Saigon. When my son was seven years old, I couldn't even imagine sending him off on any public transportation (or flag down a taxi to go to school). However, my recollection (at the time) was that this was very "normal", and I also made a few friends (along the way) in my commute.



**Left: Glen with mother in Japan, 1952. Right: Glen's parents on a visit to Japan, 1961.** (Photos: Glen Nakamoto).

## Duke Nishimura

My dad was born in the U.S. His parents ran a wholesale food production company in the Oxnard, Los Angeles area. When they retired, they moved to Korea and set up a new business there. Around the time World War II started, my paternal grandparents decided to retire once more, this time to the island of Kyushu, Japan. Upon arriving in Japan, my dad and his older sister attended school in Japan during World War II as U.S. citizens.



Meanwhile, my mom was the daughter of a lawyer and one of the first class of six female dentists in Tokyo. They lived in a upper-class estate complete with a lake, ponds, acreage, that kind of thing. Her dad was working in China during World War II. There's a chapter in a book about him being a hero; he received the Japanese equivalent of a U.S. Medal of Honor for his conduct there. The story goes that their office was being run over by Chinese soldiers. He told his staff

to run for it while he remained to give them time to flee. In the skirmish, he used his pistol to repeatedly fight off the attackers, even while he was reportedly shot six times. In the end, he was using his saber at a crutch to remain upright as he fought to the end. There's a monument to him somewhere.

Meanwhile, while this was going on, my mother was approaching her 7-year birthday. In Japan, the ages of 3 and 7 are celebrated for girls, and 5 is celebrated for boys. The seventh birthday is especially important for girls because it represents the first step to adulthood, and because 7 is considered a lucky number in Japan. This birthday is known as 'Obitoki', or the first time you get to wear an obi (large sash) with your kimono.

However, with her father dying, there was no celebration for my mom's 7<sup>th</sup> birthday. And during the War, her family's fortunes drastically changed as wit with so many other wealthy Japanese. She watched with family from the hills as Allied bombers decimated Tokyo with napalm, including much of her neighborhood. After the war ended, much of her family's estate was taken, and they fell from elite to commoner status.



**Duke's father & mother** in Kumamoto, Japan, 1957. **Right:** Duke's father served as a Criminal Investigation Agent (CID) in the U.S. Army, including in Vietnam. (Photos: Duke Nishimura).

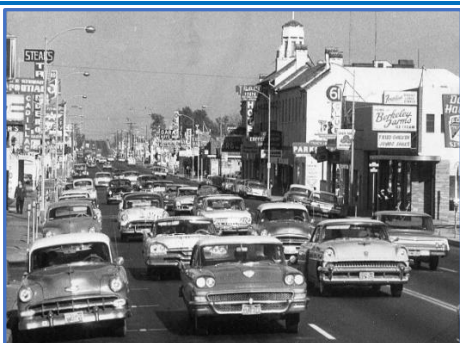
After my dad graduated from high school in Japan, he moved to Los Angeles at age 18 around 1949-50. He enrolled in college, but then was drafted into the military. Before long, he was stationed in Japan



with the Army Intelligence Service. There, he met my mom (who was working as a secretary in a nearby office) and they got married. Because mom was a Japanese national, dad had to leave his place in intelligence. He decided to join the military police and became an Army CID (Criminal Investigations Agent).

Dad and mom moved to Tacoma, Washington where both my brother and I were born. Then it was right back to Kyushu, Japan for a year while dad served in Korea. Then we moved to the Sagamihara housing area near Camp Zama until I was five years old, then to Fort Irwin Army Base in Southern California, near Death Valley.

I attended kindergarten at Fort Irwin (what is now known as the Desert Training Center) and mom later told me that my teacher told mom, “Duke is a very quiet kid”. And mom replied, “That’s because English isn’t his native language”. I also found out that my parents named me “Duke” because they wanted a short, easy first name to pair with “Nishimura”. Only after the fact did they learn they found my name in a dogs’ name book.



**For Duke’s mom**, life in the remote Mojave Desert duty station of Fort Irwin (left) and then the Central Valley town of Tracy in the 1960s was not easy. (Left photo: [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil); Right: [www.ttownmedia.com](http://www.ttownmedia.com)).

I was there until my 4<sup>th</sup> grade when we moved north to a small town named Tracy, located in the California Central Valley, east of San Francisco. I attended 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grades there. Life wasn’t easy for especially mom back then. She had to deal with a lot of prejudice. Most of her life, in fact. It didn’t help that her spoken English wasn’t very good. I mean, mom went from a life of relative royalty in Japan into the aftermath of a brutal war. From there she became an American war bride who didn’t fit into America very well.

She was very happy being an introvert. She joined the Wives Club and stuff like that, but that wasn't her thing. She made herself do it, however, and she did like the people. At least in Tracy, there were a couple of Japanese American farming families, who probably relocated after the internment camps. But putting an international Japanese person like my mom into places like Irwin and Tracy was maybe not the greatest idea. I think the U.S. military could have been more thoughtful regarding the placement of families like ours.

In terms of our household back then, my older brother and I grew up speaking English to our parents. Mom would respond in Japanese and my dad would speak maybe 75 percent English, 25 percent Japanese (as Japanese was his second language).

Regarding my mom's spoken English, the sad thing is that she wouldn't speak it much because she couldn't speak it perfectly. She couldn't risk shaming herself, which I think is a common fear amongst Japanese in general. It wasn't until my mom was over 80 years old that I finally told my mom, "Do you judge other people because they speak English with a French, British English, or other foreign accent? No? Because Japanese accents are just another accent". I wish I had told her that 50 years ago.



**Duke with brother Koji** at Fort Irwin. **Right:** Duke (far left, top row) and Koji (3<sup>rd</sup> from left) continued their swimming exploits from California to Camp Zama in the mid-1970s. (Photos: Duke Nishimura).

Fortunately, at Tracy the administrator of the local school system treated us very kindly. I think he was initially taken by my brother Koji and I because we were regularly setting area swim records when we were like 10 to 12 years old. Being Asian, we grew physically faster than most of the White kids around us and took advantage. In fact,

I think one of my individual or team records still stands over 50 years later.



**Duke went on to enjoy a distinguished scholastic career** at first Nile C. Kinnick High, then Zama High in Japan. He followed brother Koji to West Point, then embarked on a remarkable career in industrial medicine and applied biotechnology. His High-G Loss of Consciousness (G-LOC) training protocol and program is used in all US Air Force Fighter squadrons and by the US Naval Air Force; Duke developed the 'Corps-Fit' Industrial Medicine program and school for the largest military installation in the US; his clinically proven biotech solutions have improved chronic and recurrent spine care for over 250,000 patients in 24 countries; Duke has since served as President/CEO for several healthcare organizations while continuing his groundbreaking applied research work. He currently lives and teaches in Reno, Nevada with wife Rene' Marie Johnson (above **right**) while also occasionally serving as a local Ski Patrol volunteer. In the **center** photo above, Duke sits with his proud mother.

For my 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we moved back to Japan to Yokohama. There I attended Yokohama Middle School for 8<sup>th</sup> grade, then entered Yokohama High School ('Yo-Hi') for 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Then we moved to Camp Zama, where I attended Zama High School until graduation.

### **Ray Parrish**

My dad was 16 when he entered the Merchant Marine during World War II. It was 1944. A recruiter showed up where he was working for the Caterpillar company in Peoria, IL. There he was helping to turn out bulldozers for the military. He actually joined the company at age 14 in 1942, instead of going to high school. Dad refused to go to high school because he didn't want to hear the N-word anymore.



See, his own father was half-black and so his skin was darker than was acceptable to the local KKK back then during the 1930s-40s. Although Illinois is the state of Lincoln, slavery was allowed in the salt mines in Southern Illinois until the late 1870s. This was the area my grandfather moved to after World War I, when he and grandmother moved from the Appalachians to settle in Harrisburg.

Before long, the Klan came, but my grandmother—who is white—convinced them that grandfather's skin color was due to his Cherokee (he was half-native American), and not his African background. And because some of the local Klan served in World War I alongside members of the Cherokee Nation, they considered Native Americans as whites, and so left Grandfather alone. Over time, he earned the respect of his fellow miners because of his ability to navigate the mines, and for his steady nerves as a dynamiter.



When dad joined the Merchant Marines, he was relieved to be classified as white. He kept his hair shaved short, so no one would notice its natural waviness. March of 1944, Dad was off to work on quickly constructed “Liberty Ships” meant to ferry needed supplies to our troops and Allies in Europe. Come August of 1945, Dad's transport ship was ordered to take our troops for an invasion of the Japanese mainland.

(Ray's **father and mother** at left).

By the time they got to Hawaii to refuel, the A-bombs dropped on Hiroshima & Nagasaki, and Japan surrendered. Dad and his shipmates were overjoyed with the news. He said a lot of people got really drunk that night. His ship still sailed on to Japan, so Dad was one of the first Americans to see Tokyo after the fire bombings.

In 1946, Dad was an Army private wounded in the Philippines Huk rebellion. In 1947, he was an OSS undercover agent sent to several Army units in Korea and Japan, looking for communist infiltration. He transferred to the Air Force when it was created the same year. In 1974 he was medically retired as a Chief Master Sergeant.

My mom and dad met at Offut AFB in 1948. Mom was a lab technician drawing his blood and he fainted. Dad was the driver/mechanic chosen by General LeMay to be his driver/bodyguard. LeMay was authorized to have a married couple as staff with the wife being the cook and laundress. At that time, enlisted women were not allowed to marry.

So, mom and dad decided to get married. However, at that time, enlisted women were not allowed to do so while on active duty. So, they went all the way up the chain of command to President Truman to get the rule changed so mom could continue serving. The brass never bent the rule for them, so mom stepped down from active duty to get married. The base commander ended up giving mom away to dad as a colonel officiated.

### Gary Puffer

I lived in Japan from the ages of 13 to 15, from the grades of 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. I was behind school-wise because I was adopted from Korea by American parents, and I couldn't speak a word of English at adoption. I was born in Korea right before the Korean War ended during the summer of 1953. I lived with my Korean mother and grandmother until 1965, when they both passed away during a cholera epidemic. I also had a pair of uncles, but they both were killed in action while serving in the Tiger Division of the ROK Army. 최익환 is my Korean name.



**The Holt Adoption Program** where Gary was adopted by the Puffers in Korea in 1966. Gary became a naturalized U.S. citizen on 11/25/74, while attending Oklahoma State University.

Growing up in Korea, I didn't have a dad because he was likely an American military man who impregnated my mother and then just left without a thought. And, I didn't attend school in Korea, because mixed-blood children were not culturally acceptable. Therefore, I became an autodidact, or self-taught person.

After my mother and grandmother died, I was an orphan at age 12. Life was a challenge. There were days I went without food. But because so many others were in the same boat, I didn't dwell on it. I managed to find an orphanage located about 10 miles from the DMZ (the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea), managed by a Mr. Holt. I was there for a year before I left with my eventual parents—George and Bonnie Puffer.

I was lucky to be adopted at age 13 there, because most adoptees were age 5 or younger. I guess the orphanage director thought I had a lot of potential, because when my parents first came to visit, the director really encouraged them to get to know and consider me. My parents agreed and arranged to take me down to the US base in Seoul, which was the headquarters of the Eighth Army compound.

I spent two days with them in Seoul, where they bought me new clothes and treated me very well. Those were two of the best days of my life. That experience raised my hopes, and I had the thought that maybe they would sponsor and adopt me. But, I didn't hear anything afterwards from them for about six months. What I didn't realize at the time was that they were dealing with a lot of red tape regarding the adoption process. When they finally resolved things, they returned in October of 1966. Before I knew it, I was whisked away, got all my inoculations, and boarded a military C-130 to Japan. It all like a dream.

When I was adopted, I had a name change. When you're adopted, you're given a new one. My parents renamed me Gary Irving Puffer. So, my dad and I have the same initials; his name is George Irving. I didn't mind. I was just ecstatic to be wanted by somebody. I knew that this was going to be a new life, a new opportunity.

My American parents were both from Michigan. My dad was from Jackson, and my mother from Niles. Both are pretty small towns, I guess.

## Deb Rice

Most of my early childhood was spent in Hawaii. We lived there from before kindergarten until halfway through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, then we transferred to Nebraska for a year and a half, before returning to Hawaii for my 6<sup>th</sup> grade. After three more years in Hawaii, we moved near Vandenberg Air Force Base in California for the beginning of my high school years.



The whole time we were in Hawaii, dad was ostensibly stationed at Hickam Air Force Base. In reality, he was frequently out on missions in dangerous combat zones. As a combat photographer, he wasn't allowed to tell us where he was going, since that was classified information. Mom's first clue was that he wasn't home when supper was ready.

Within a few days she'd learn he was thousands of miles away, and she wouldn't know for how long. That wasn't easy for her, as mom was the first and only of her 6 siblings to leave Iowa. She was so lonely for her mother and her sisters who were frequently on outings together laughing and having a good time, especially during all holidays and birthdays. Mom was friendly and could always make friends, the problem was we moved so often that she would have to start over at a different location, over and over again.

My dad grew up the oldest of his 4 siblings in a very small rural town (over 90 percent White) a few hours away from where mom had lived. He had an interest in film because he worked at the town's movie theater as the projectionist. Through networking socially after work, he eventually met and began dating mom. When dad was drafted into the Army for the Korean war, the Army sent him to film school and dad became a combat photographer capturing still shots. He and mom kept in touch through writing letters.

Dad never talked much about his Korean War experiences. PTSD wasn't a "thing" back then, but he had it. Decades later when I was with him as he received an honor in Washington D.C. in 2018, I asked him why he never discussed Korea. His answer was that [he] "was young and saw too much, that it was not good". That's all I got.

After the Korean war, dad stayed in the Army to further his career in motion picture photography. Mom and dad married in 1955, and I was born 10 months later. In 1958, he transferred to the USAF

because he had heard the Air Force gave better family benefits. From 1963 to 1975 dad's frequent trips took a real toll on mom. None of her friends had husbands who traveled so frequently to Vietnam. Meaning, it was hard for them to relate to what she was going through all the time.

Dad's income fluctuated, depending on his flying status, and we moved at least 4 times during our first 5 years in Hawaii, off and then on base. I attended 3 different elementary schools. Interestingly, many of my teachers were Japanese. I lived among such a diverse culture off base and had a wide variety of friends. It was no problem for me to jump in and be friendly when moving to a new school and neighborhood. I remember one friend whose grandmother would give us seaweed-covered rice balls. I loved those! We all called her mama-san; it was nice to briefly have a surrogate grandma who asked about my day.



**Left: Deb's parents on their wedding day**, mid-1950s. **Right: Deb's father—SMSgt. Leland Thomas**—was a decorated combat motion cameraman for 21 years in the Air Force including service spent in Vietnam. (Photos: Deb Rice).

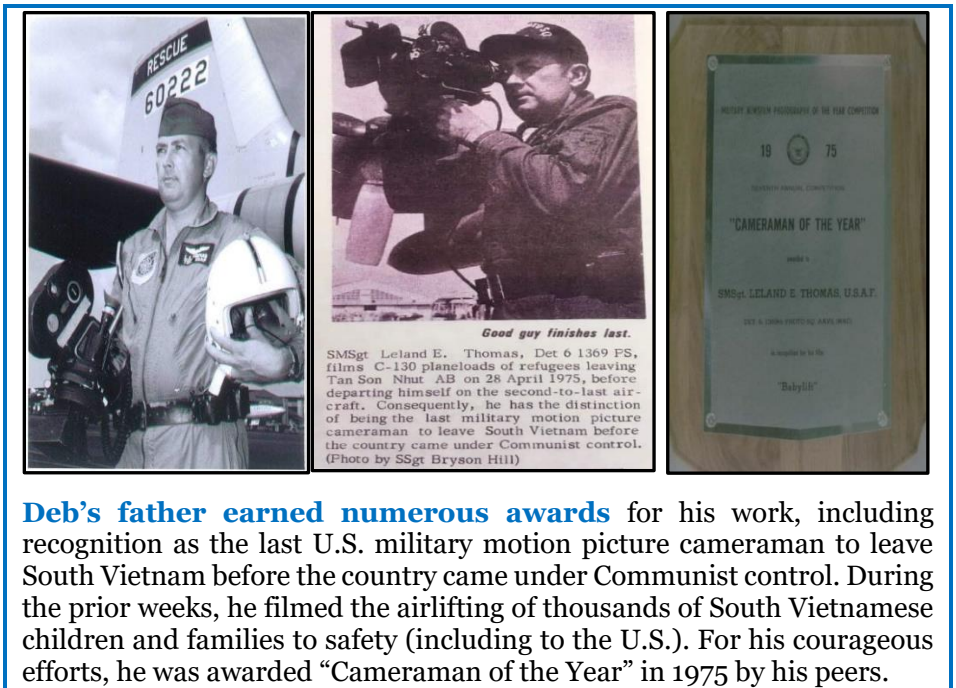
Mom would get depressed for long stretches. She loved dad, missed him, and had a lot on her plate when he was away. In the end, only her children could really understand her situation. As the oldest of four siblings, I understood early on that I had to step up and help whenever and wherever needed. I mean, when I was as young as six-years-old, daddy showed me how to manage household chores and responsibilities for when he was away.

That's because mom was preoccupied with caring for my two-year-old and twin newborn siblings. And so, while dad was away three to



seven months every year until the year after my high school graduation in Japan, I basically served as third parent in the household. When dad got transferred to Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska for additional training during my 4<sup>th</sup> grade, I experienced culture shock. Even though I looked a lot more like the kids in Nebraska than many of the ones in Hawaii, they were like aliens to me, and I'm sure I was like an alien to them. We were so very different.

The Nebraska kids had all grown up knowing each other their whole lives, in one area. They didn't understand my nomadic lifestyle, and seemed to act like they were better than me. I was no longer surrounded by a combination of military kids, Hawaiians, Samoans, and other mixes of locals, but with civilian-only White kids.



**Deb's father earned numerous awards** for his work, including recognition as the last U.S. military motion picture cameraman to leave South Vietnam before the country came under Communist control. During the prior weeks, he filmed the airlifting of thousands of South Vietnamese children and families to safety (including to the U.S.). For his courageous efforts, he was awarded "Cameraman of the Year" in 1975 by his peers.

The school curriculum was foreign to me as well, with "New Math" being taught. I felt clueless. When I would go to my high school graduate parents for help to figure things out, they more or less told me to handle problems on my own. I had adapted well in previous moves but this one shook my confidence a bit. I did my best and didn't give up.

A big plus to living in the Midwest was getting to visit grandparents and other family, including near same aged cousins who all lived in Iowa. All my cousins were interested in hearing about our travels and the boys enjoyed hearing how much dad was up in airplanes and other military aircraft, though he left it all very generic. Dad and mom really gave us a secure family base during those extended family visits to Iowa. It wasn't "our" home, but Iowa held people who always loved and cared about us, and still do.

When we moved back to Hawaii, it wasn't a smooth return. Our first year back, we lived in Waipahu, quite a distance from the base. We were among 64 military families in the neighborhood that awaited on-base housing to become available. In that higher crime area, mom and I experienced a reversal; I was more at home in Hawaii than Nebraska, while she had to deal with culture shock of her own.

We settled in a neighborhood close to some sugar cane fields and beyond our backyard was a canal where locals captured crayfish. One neighbor even cooked an entire pig on an open fire rotisserie as the pig squealed for quite some time before stopping as it continued to spin. Then there were the rooster fighting noises at times as a crowd gathered in a yard beyond the canal. With dad gone frequently to Vietnam, mom had a tougher time feeling at home in Waipahu as we awaited on-base housing to become available.

Having missed the last year and a half of the Hawaiian system, I missed out on how to read sheet music. Accordingly, I have an unpleasant memory of being called out and embarrassed by the band teacher for copying what the clarinetist next to me was doing.

I have always been proud of the ethnic and cultural diversity I grew up in during those formative years in Hawaii. However, upon my return from Nebraska, I now had a new social learning curve. I was the only White girl in my 6th grade class in Waipahu. There was a White boy and one Black girl, and the remaining classmates included Hawaiian, Samoan kids and other Asian mixes thereof.

That was fine with me; I was a tomboy and always got along with most of my classmates. Except on 'Kill Haole Day' in 6th grade, that is. That's the unofficial Hawaiian holiday where a certain percentage of the locals and their kids take out their long-held frustrations and even hatreds on White 'Haole' people like me. That day a couple of my closest friends just chose to ignore me. They were not rude,

bullying, or hurt me like some other White kids experienced during 7th and 8th grades; they were generalizing their behavior towards haoles in general instead of me in particular.

My dad was transferred to Vandenberg Air Force Base near Santa Barbara, CA the summer before my freshman year of high school. Along with his Vietnam duties he was a part of the missile project work at Vandenberg. We lived in Vandenberg Village, and I attended Cabrillo High School through my junior year. near the base. I would say about one third to half of my classmates were military. So, in many ways it was an easy transition: The coastal weather, the school culture, the mix of White and Black students, sprinkled with a few students of other ethnic backgrounds.

In other ways, it was challenging. Our earlier moves between Nebraska and Hawaii put me behind as far as learning metrics and other studies in math went, and I just lost confidence. I didn't push myself to take any classes beyond the basic math and science requirement to graduate in California. I feared embarrassment and rejection. That was a real shame, because I was actually interested in science and psychology, and limited myself to a career mindset of being a secretary.

So, while many of my classmates already had ideas of what they wanted to do career-wise as freshman & sophomores, I was trying to figure out who I was and what I was good at. I was not excited when my dad said we would be moving in the summer of 1973. Little did I know my life would radically change during my senior year in Japan.

### **Wayne Sakai**

My story is about my parents. They were such cultural ambassadors. My dad and mom were both Japanese Americans from Hawaii. They both joined the U.S. Army/Navy, were assigned to Japan, and met there during the 1950s. Mom then retired, and dad switched to Civil Service as they remained in Japan to raise three children: Myself, younger brother Gerard, and younger sister Sandy. I am Yo-Hi, Class of 1971.



Dad worked in public works when I was younger, at the Negishi Grandstand on Yokohama Base. I think he served as a foreman and interpreter there, as he spoke Japanese and managed work and

relations between the base ‘Seebees’ (U.S. Naval construction personnel) and hired Japanese contractors. Later, he also served as an interpreter and liaison between base officers at Yokosuka Naval Base and local Japanese. Anyhow, sometime before I turned 10 years old, Dad and Mom decided to share the American Thanksgiving experience with his Japanese crew. Dad invited all the boys and their wives over to our home in Bayview for the holiday. The first year, though, very few wives showed up. Mom and Dad were not happy with this and stressed that the wives needed to be part of the celebration. “Next year, please bring your wives”, they told them.

The next year, the wives showed up. I remember the arrival scene. All the Japanese wives seemed kind of embarrassed upon arrival and covered their mouths (smiles) with their hands. I mean, when mom brought the 25-pound turkey out of the oven, they had never seen anything like it before. They couldn’t believe how big it was. And that’s how our annual Japanese-American Thanksgiving cultural exchange got started; it continued until Dad got transferred to Yokosuka Naval Base a few years later.

Another story: My dad befriended a co-worker named Russ Sherman. They became drinking buddies, and our families began spending a lot of time together. Russ’s wife was Kumu Hula Isabel Sherman (*kumu hula* is a designation of master hula dancer in Hawaii). Mrs. Sherman started a hula group in Yokohama that included many officer’s wives, our mom, my sister Sandy, and anyone else who was interested. A group of Japanese musicians in the area who were into Hawaiian music sought Auntie Isabel out. Our house at 330 Bayview began hosting live Hawaiian music and dancing regularly. These Japanese musicians became family and eventually joined our annual Thanksgiving celebration too.

Dad helped bring Hawaiian culture to the nearby Officer’s Club in our Bayside neighborhood as well. He and a bunch of his friends were involved with the Annual Luau. Pig in the imu, Dad tended the fire with his buddies the night before, burning wood on a bed of rocks all night. After they placed the pig into the imu, Dad would come home and go to bed. Next day, Dad would get up and he and mom would don their aloha attire, then head to the O-Club. These were large events with music and a floor show. While my siblings and I were out playing all day, the wives and husbands were having their own play time. Navy officers sure know how to party.



**Left: Wayne's parents. Center:** Wayne (left) with sister Sandy and brother Gerry at a Yo-Hi reunion in 2019. **Right:** Peggy Hayama posing during her debut jazz singing year of 1952 (Public Domain image). Born Shigeko Kotakari, Peggy became well known for both songs in Japanese, as well as covers and voice-overs for popular American films, including the Sound of Music.

Auntie Isabel became so well known for her hula dancing, a famous Japanese entertainer named Peggy Hayama sought her out. Peggy hosted a weekly TV show and brought our families onto the show: The Shermans and Sakais. I still have Peggy's autographed photo.

Dad was a member of the Japan-American Society of Yokohama from 1965-1978. When he retired, he and mom moved to Menifee, California, south of Riverside. Meanwhile, old friends Russ and Isabel Sherman were living on the Big Island in Hawaii. Dad and Russ had a conversation, and decided they needed to be in the same city with each other. Since mom and dad couldn't afford to move to Hawaii, Russ and Isabel sold their Hawaii home and bought a home within walking distance from my parents in Menifee, where Auntie Isabel started another hula group. That's a friendship for you.

### **Laura Stephens Schisler**

I was born in Yokohama in 1952. My father was a civilian contractor in the department of the U.S. Army Construction Agency of Japan (USACA), which General MacArthur created to handle U.S. base creation, maintenance, and expansion in Japan. Specifically, dad helped manage procurement operations at Yokohama Army Base, whereby hired



Japanese laborers were provided the equipment and materials they needed, according to a master labor contract agreed upon between American and Japanese authorities.



**Left: Hired Japanese laborers** sorting incoming building materials at Yokohama port for Yokohama Army Base construction in 1948, under the watch of U.S. Army Construction Agency officials. **Right:** Forge and blacksmith shop, Yokohama base depot, 1948. Laura's father managed procurement operations for sites such as this. (Both photos from Office of History, UQUACE).

My father went on to work for the USAPAJ in Japan until my high school graduation from Nile C. Kinnick High School ("Yo-Hi") in 1970, whereupon they moved to Texas after I enrolled at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, CO. Therefore, my life was different from most of my military brat peers. I was a U.S. military-affiliated 'lifer', whereas my classmates usually came and went every two to four years.



**Left: Laura's parents.** They were married on Halloween, 1951 in Yokohama. **Right:** Laura's birthplace: U.S. Army Hospital in downtown Yokohama, 1953. (**Right:** U.S. National Library of Medicine Archives).

I have an amazing story to share regarding my birth at the U.S. Army Hospital in downtown Yokohama. When my parents brought me home as a newborn, they threw a party for the doctors and nurses who were involved with my birth. Of course, I don't remember a thing, but I've been told it was quite the party. To enhance the occasion, my parents played some music on their phonograph. This included a popular tune named "Some Enchanted Evening" (from Rodgers and Hammerstein's smash 1949 musical, *South Pacific*): My dad's favorite song.



Okay, let's fast forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century across the Pacific Ocean in Pittsburgh, PA. I am chatting with my friend Jane, who is a dental hygienist friend. I occasionally share my stories of Japan with her, and during this evening I tell her about the party my parents threw for the doctors and nurses who delivered me.

Jane follows up with a phone call one evening in 2005. She told me about a patient in her eighties, who she had that day. She said the lady described herself as a former nurse. Being the friendly, chatty sort, Jane asked this woman about her nursing career. And the lady brightened and recalled that one of her favorite memories was of attending a party in Japan long ago; a party thrown by parents on behalf of herself and the rest of the medical team that handled their daughter's birth. Further, the lady recalled that, when she knocked on the door of the parents' apartment, the song "Some Enchanted Evening" was playing in the background.

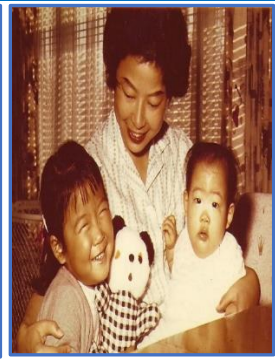
Jane's report gave me goosebumps. I couldn't believe it. I asked her, "What's this lady's name?" And she gave it to me. Next, I hurriedly checked my baby book because my mother documented everything. And sure enough, there was the nurse's name. Amazing. So, we contacted the local TV station where they tended to have segments on things like this. With their help, we arranged a meeting with the nurse at Jane's dental office. On the day, the producers sequestered the nurse and I in two different rooms while they displayed my baby book on TV while interviewing my husband, Gary. Then they brought the lady and I out before the live cameras to meet and chat. It was a really neat moment.

## Diana Seino

My father was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which was a very unusual birthplace for a Japanese American prior to World War II. My mom was born in Hiroshima, Japan, where the first atomic bomb was dropped. Dad was born in Grand Rapids because that's where his father happened to get sick while taking an international tour across the U.S.



My grandfather was a respected artist making his way from Paris to Japan. He convalesced for quite some time in Michigan, however, and ended up taking (as I recall) a mail order Japanese bride (my grandmother Kaoru Shimizu). Next thing you know, he settled down and took a job at the famous Stickley Brothers Furniture store. He ended up heading their decorative painting department for over twenty years. During a visit I paid to Grand Rapids last year, I noticed the city museum had dedicated a section to him.



**Grandfather James (left), a renowned artist** for Stickley Brothers in Grand Rapids, MI, where his work is commemorated in the city museum. Diana with father (**center**), a U.S. intelligence instructor. **Right:** Diana with mom and little sister Cynthia.

And so, my dad was born and raised in Grand Rapids. He said he didn't really experience any racism until he was in high school and asked a white girl out. Her parents said no, on account of his being Japanese American. On his high school graduation day, he and my uncle Bob managed to avoid getting sent to the Japanese internment camps in 1942 by enlisting in the army. The funny thing is, they tried to train dad to be a translator of Japanese, but my dad was horrible at languages! So, then he was sent to Europe to engage in airborne



in airborne and infantry combat.

After World War II ended, they sent dad to Japan, where he struggled with the Japanese language thing again. He ended up having to use a blonde-haired, blue-eyed translator in dealing with the native Japanese, which was kind of humiliating for him. Dad ended up staying in the military until the 1960s, retired just before attaining the rank of Colonel, and returned to contract with the U.S. Department of Defense as an instructor and administrator in military intelligence. He met mom while serving in Japan, and my elementary and middle school years were spent in Okinawa.

## Mike Skidmore

My dad was an Air Force Master Sergeant. He served as editor of the base newspaper at Tachikawa. He followed after his own dad, who was a writer as well. He served from 1958-62 at Tachi during my 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Dad then retired and we moved back to Topeka, Kansas, where I attended grades 6 through 10. After I entered high school, dad noticed a want ad posted in a civil service office for a writer/historian for (drum roll) Tachikawa Air Base! The ad was posted for a year without a response. He answered, re-enlisted and got the job! We went back in 1967 where I attended grades 11-12 at Yamato.



**Mike** (lower left) with family above in 1959. Mike's father **Chuck** (above, first row, center) with his renowned combat glider unit during World War II, in England, 1944. **Mike's book** on his father's glider pilot exploits can be found on Amazon (*Letters from Home and War*, et.al.).

Dad was previously an assault glider pilot during World War II. Dubbed “...the only aircraft built to crash”, by General William C. Westmoreland, gliders were risky to train on and fly in combat. Dad’s glider missions ferried troops and supplies crucially needed on the ground during operations in Europe<sup>295</sup>.

I wasn’t even aware of dad’s glider exploits until I was nine. Here’s how I found out: One afternoon at Tachi in 1960, I accompanied dad as he drove to the terminal to interview a well-known general who was arriving on base. We got there and I stood by a fence as dad listened to the general’s speech to the assembled party. When the general finished, he and his party got into some cars and drove off. Meanwhile, I watched as a pilot of the general’s plane walked past as dad was scribbling on his note pad. The pilot then caught himself and stepped backwards to speak. They probably spoke for 10-15 minutes before this captain shook hands with dad, and then gave dad a hard salute! I was really surprised.

When dad came over and we got into his car, I couldn’t wait to ask him what was on my mind. “Dad, that man is an officer and you’re not an officer; why did he salute you?” My dad smiled in response and said, “see these wings on my uniform?” I responded, “yes”. “Well, my wings have a ‘G’ in the middle, which means I was a ‘Glider Pilot’ during World War II. That captain knew this was special and wanted to thank me for my service.”

## **Paul Springer**

My parents were missionaries in Japan. They went over in 1949 and stayed until my father was 65 years old in 1989. He had entered a Navy college program near the end of World War II, but the War ended before he graduated. After that, he decided to answer a call from General MacArthur, who had asked for 10,000 Christian missionaries to come to Japan in 1946. This was during the aftermath of the defeat of Japan, when their Emperor—who was considered a God by many Japanese people—was defeated as well. So, MacArthur sensed there could be a spiritual void in Japan, and that Christian values could help fill that void.

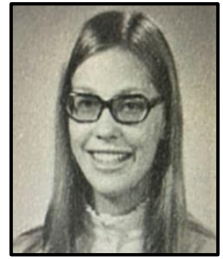


Therefore, dad went to a Bible school and got ordained as a minister and missionary. Then he married mom in '48, and they moved to Japan. Dad was 25 at that time. That’s how I ended up being born in

the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital in Tokyo in 1951. In fact, all three of my siblings and I were born in Japan. And so, growing up in Japan wasn't something that was strange and unnatural to me; I was born and raised there.

## Patricia StokkeMarsh

My father was a naval aviator and officer in the Navy. He was active military long before I was born, flying missions in the Pacific during World War II, as well as during the Berlin Airlift, where Allied flights kept Western Berliners supplied after the Soviets blockaded ground access into Western Germany from June of 1948 to May of 1949.



Towards the end of his long military career, he flew for the U.S. military air transport system, a service operated by the Air Force for the Department of Defense, and was based at Moffett Field, in the San Francisco Bay Area. From Moffett, he flew several trans-Pacific flights to Japan, including stops at Pacific airfields in Hawaii and Midway Island. One flight stands out, after I had already been born. It nearly cost him the lives of his 7 crew members, himself, and 76 passengers on board, including women and children.

### Storm Turns Japan-to-Midway Hop Into Thriller for Moffett Crew

A Moffett Field plane crew, unaware of what was ahead of them, set out on what it thought was to be just another hot and dusty routine leg from Japan to Midway Island.

Fachlauer's weather forecast was clear for more than the wooded time to make the flight. What neither the pilots nor the forecast knew was that a mass of storm clouds were forming somewhere over the Western Pacific and that the changing wind currents were directing them toward the island of Midway.

LT Cmdr. R. L. Stokke of Somoys, via aircraft communication, had in crew of seven men with the

load of 76 passengers — men, women and children — were honked to the station.

The first hint of bad weather came when the flight was at the halfway point of the flight, when the forecast changed to three miles visibility in rain.

Clouds Were Rare

When the Constellation was 300 miles out of Midway, approach control advised 600 feet ceiling, 15 miles of visibility in rain.

As the flight hovered over Midway it was evident the storm clouds had seen the race and completely covered the remote island.

The aircraft was cleared to descend to 5,000 feet. When it arrived over the Midway beacon, the approach control notified them that the field now had 200 feet obscured ceiling, visibility one-eighth mile to one-half mile in heavy thunder showers.

Stokke requested clearance to hold until the weather improved. Shortly thereafter the control tower advised that the weather was improving slightly and he could commence a ground approach. As the aircraft neared they missed the approach.

Another attempt was tried and wound off as the fuel dropped dangerously low.

During the ordeal the passengers were assured that everything

on the island except that Stokke had seen airplanes land three before, and had noticed that the island 20 miles away had been clear of the storm when he had flown near it approximately 1 1/2 hours before.

After a brief weather check with Midway on conditions at Kure, the Constellation veered toward the island as the last stem of hope. Everything went well, the landing was smooth with plenty of the 4,000-foot unimproved coral strip left to spare.

Coast Guard Welcome

LT (j.g.) John Muldoon, USCGC, and his crew of 11 enlisted men met the aircraft in front of the radio tower. The 76 passengers spent the night at Kure and enjoyed a meal of pork chops, beans and the trimmings — in shifts.

Early the next morning the weather had cleared and the 76 passengers departed to Kure aboard two search and rescue planes, and a Coast Guard C-119 while the Constellation slowly was being replenished with fuel from 18-gallon cans the Coast Guard plane brought over from Midway.

Crew members included Stokke, and Gardner Way, Somoys; J. R. Francis of Saratoga; T. P. Summyville; Airman Apprentice R. J. Hall, second flight attendant; Staff Sgt. and Airman Max Zalkin, first flight attendant; Moffett;

**LCDR Russell L. Stokke**  
**LT Paul R. Francis**  
**LT Haruo Kato**  
**Robert M. Amaral, ADC**

**News article detailing Patricia's father's harrowing flight in 1961**, where he and his crew managed to emergency land onto a tiny WWII landing strip left behind on a Pacific atoll, after dealing with a torrential downpour and nearly running out of fuel. Including crew members, 84 lives were saved. Four crew members, including Patricia's father (LCdr. Russell L. Stokke), were awarded the Air Force Commendation medal (see above right) for their heroics.

***As the Naval Aviation News reported in 1961:*** Departing Tachikawa Air Base on June 16 with a forecast of clear skies, Naval Aviator Russell L. Stokke and his crew guided their VR-7 *Super Constellation* aircraft towards Midway Island 2,500 miles away, for a needed fuel stop enroute to Hawaii. About halfway through the flight, however, Stokke and his crew encountered a freak storm, unexpectedly reducing visibility to only three miles. A pleasant flight turned into one fraught with risk. By the time the *Constellation* arrived at Midway Island in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean, heavy thundershowers forced Stokke to request a landing delay, which was granted by air traffic control below. During the next two hours, Stokke and his crew made four unsuccessful attempts at landing, due to ground control and piloting losing each other in the unrelenting weather. With fuel running dangerously low and the storm forecast to extend at least another couple of hours, Stokke had a fateful decision to make.

As later shared by Stokke and his crew members with a number of news outlets, Stokke recalled that pilots infrequently landed upon a tiny atoll named “Kure Island” about 50 miles away, in order to deliver supplies to a Coast Guard detachment in the area. So small and obscure that it was not even listed on many maps of this portion of the Pacific, Stokke knew there was a landing strip on the coral island. Stokke also remembered passing the island on the way to Midway and recalled that the brunt of the storm had yet to reach its rocky shores. Did the *Constellation* have enough fuel to reach Kure Island, even if it was possible to land his large plane there? Stokke decided he had to try.

Requesting a radar vector from Midway ground control, Stokke and his crew set off for Kure, without any flight information or approach aids with which to navigate and land. The *Constellation* managed to break through the dense clouds, however, with clear sight to Kure, as the storm moved right behind the beleaguered aircraft. After a short pass to assess landing conditions, Stokke brought the *Constellation* safely onto the Kure Island landing strip, just as pouring rain began pummeling the far end of the runway.

Effusive letters of commendation from top military brass reached Stokke and his brave crew in the days to come, but the one letter that likely meant the most to Stokke and his team was one signed by each of the 76 men, women, and children who were passengers on that eventful flight. Their simple message: *Thanks for saving our lives.*

Dad ended up retiring from the military before we moved to Japan. He wanted to keep on flying, however, but found out that if he joined a U.S. commercial airline, he'd have to start as co-pilot. Not interested in starting over, he learned that Japan Airlines was hiring foreign pilots. Reason being, there was a widespread shortage of Japanese pilots that lasted into the 1960s, due to so many perishing during World War II. And so, dad managed to get on with them. That's why we moved to Yokohama, Japan when I was ten years old.



**Patricia's father** (above), a Naval Aviator for the U.S. Army Air Corps during World II & the Berlin Airlift. One reason her father—Lt. Commander Russell L. Stokke—was hired by Japan Airlines is because so many Japanese pilots died during WWII, including some 2,800 'Kamikaze' flyers. (**Right** photo: BBC.org).

### Dorothy Thompson

My mom said she and my dad didn't really get acquainted until *after* my dad came back home from World War II. They both went all the way through the same high school in Richland Center, Wisconsin. It's a small town of 5000, a population that hasn't changed much in a century. Certainly, they saw each other. Certainly, their paths crossed.



After they got married in 1945, my dad reenlisted, and they went where he was stationed—to Kearney, Nebraska, to Anchorage, Alaska, and then to Denver, Colorado. My sister and I were born in

Denver while dad was stationed at Lowry Field. We lived there until I was about three years old. We shipped off to Japan thereafter.

Here are some stories from my parents: On Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> of 1941, my future father was asleep in Schofield Barracks on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. He woke suddenly to the sound of something unusual, ran out of the barracks and into a nearby pineapple field. The sounds were those of bombs exploding across the island, which was under attack by the Japanese. That was the extent of what he later shared with us.

It's not that he didn't discuss his military service. It's that he was selective. Food service was his area of expertise. His first work was as a pastry chef. By the time he retired, he headed food services for the base. Ask him about holiday dinner preparations, and he'd talk. Because the airmen were almost always far away from home, he and his staff put a lot of extra effort, time, and attention into holiday meals. It helped with morale, he said. So often was he at work early and late on holidays that we planned our own family celebrations around his long shifts.



**Left:** Dorothy Thompson's father Charles, a cook at Pearl Harbor, pre-Japanese attack, 1941. **Right:** Her father was assigned to a Marine regiment that came ashore at Savii, Samoa in 1942. His main job: 'Find steaks for the generals to eat'. (Photos: Courtesy of Dorothy Thompson).

When the subject of his wartime service came up, he had well-rehearsed answer. During World War II, he told me, "I mostly flew around the Pacific looking for steaks for the Generals to eat." I'm sure there was more to it than that. But that's what he was willing to

share with me. From mother, I heard a bit more. But if he heard us talking about things like that, he quickly changed the subject.

Once my mom said something that sounded significant. Mom and dad were talking about how small choices can have huge impacts. The part I heard was a snippet of “like those men that turned right instead of left and ended up on the Bataan Death March.” I didn’t know what Bataan Death March<sup>296</sup> meant but the words stuck in my mind. Once they noticed I was in earshot, the subject immediately changed. It was important to them to protect my sister and I from as many of the ugly realities of life as possible. Not long after, I looked up up the Bataan Death March in the library. After I figured out how to spell it correctly, I was able to read a gruesome synopsis.



**Left:** **Next it was on to Tuvalu** (formerly Ellis Islands), and the island of Nanumea, to provide whatever hot meals possible for the troops. **Right:** Dorothy’s father’s regiment was then ordered to the island of **Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands** (now part of the Nation of Kiribati), where especially bloody battles were waged<sup>297</sup>. Thereafter, it was on to **Guadalcanal**<sup>298</sup> in the Solomon Islands, then back to Hawaii. (**Photos** from U.S. National Archives, Public Domain).

Another time my dad mentioned that he’d contracted Dengue Fever in the Pacific and became critically ill.

My mother was more willing to share her World War II experiences. She worked at Badger Army Ammunitions Depot. She helped make bombs, I assume, but what she talked about were the colorful characters she met at work, fun on bus rides provided by mostly female workers, and the fact that there was a pronounced shortage of datable men in Richland Center, Wisconsin during the war.

Though she lived at home with her parents, she liked having her own money because it gave her a bit of independence. I still remember bits and pieces of our process of moving to Japan, even at the age of 3 in 1956. For one thing, I was assigned a dog tag, which I've kept to this day (by her maiden name of Dorothy Turner). I also learned the important word 'Orders'. I dimly knew they were written instructions that told us where to go and when. I also remember my mom showing me a big map of the world that showed me where we were going. I was so excited by it all; more than anyone in our family, I looked forward to traveling to this new place called Japan, and being reunited with my father, who had left earlier to find us housing in our home to be.

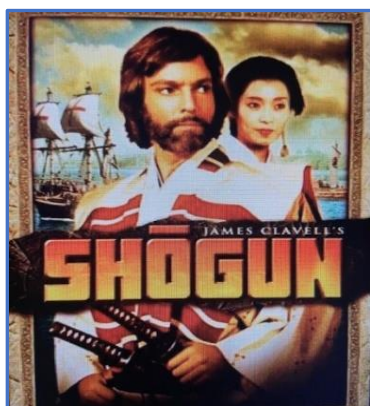


### **Jonathan Winslow**

I am not a military brat. When I was 16 and a sophomore, my father's company—known as Arthur Andersen at the time—decided to send him to Japan in 1981. My response was, "Oh, very funny. Ha ha." My parents insisted it was true, but I really didn't want to leave my life in Columbus, OH. I had a convertible, a girlfriend, things were good. We ended up in Japan for both my junior and senior years of high school.

My parents were going to be there for anywhere from three to five years. More, and the IRS will tax all or at least a big chunk of your foreign earned income without special exemption. So, five years is usually the longest stint for American civilian expats.

I grew up in a family that enjoyed traveling (but always by car!!). We started with a VW bus and then moved on to Ford and Dodge Vans and would drive everywhere. We'd drive to Florida every year to visit my dad's parents, and often to Colorado or Wyoming for backpacking trips. And as far as the trip to Japan went, my parents lived the corporate lifestyle. So, we all knew they were probably going to be living in Japan for like five years.





Prior to leaving for Japan, I didn't have much of an idea about Japan. Basically, whatever you would pick up from watching shows like *Shogun*. With this being the '80s, there was a lot of media talk about how Japan was going to take over America, and how it was a rising economic juggernaut. So, there was definitely curiosity on my part.

## Joe Yamada



My mom was born and raised in the Midwest. After graduating from college, she moved to California to start her teaching career. While she was there, she heard about the DoDDS (Department of Defense Dependent Schools) teaching opportunities overseas and applied for a teaching job. She was very excited about the possibility of teaching in Germany, Italy, or other parts of Europe, but ended up with her first assignment at Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan.



My mom first taught at Sullivan's Elementary School in the late 60s, then moved to Kinnick Middle School (Yokohama) in the early 70s. She then transferred to Richard E Byrd Elementary School (Negishi/Yokohama) where she taught 5th grade from the early 80s into the early 2000s, when she retired (the picture at left is from 1979 at Kinnick Middle School).

She met my Japanese dad through a coworker. He was working as an engineer at Hitachi back then. They hit it off and got married in 1969. At first, his salary-man long hours kept him away from us (including my older brother and younger sister), so he decided to start his own business to spend more time at home. Mom and Dad were unusual in that they flipped the usual gender roles of American husband/father and Japanese wife/mother. Although it was very unusual in the 60s, both sides of the family seemed okay with their cross-cultural marriage.

I was born at the Yokosuka Naval Hospital in 1975. As a DoD civilian family, we were allowed to live in the Negishi Housing area, which at that time was a part of the larger Yokohama Navy base. As a young child, I remember bits and pieces of the old Yokohama base with Area 1, Area 2, and Bayview which were all located in modern day

Honmoku, but most of my memories were of Negishi. Our house backed up to Negishi "Shinrin" Park, which was originally a horse racing complex with a huge grandstand. That area was later converted to a golf course before becoming a public park. I spent a lot of my early childhood playing at Negishi Park...climbing trees, playing baseball and soccer, and riding my bike. I went to school at Byrd Elementary in Negishi, and yes, I had my mom as a teacher at Byrd in the 5th grade. That was really weird.

### **Faith and Bill Young**

Our dad served as an intelligence officer in Yokosuka in the early 1950s during the occupation. So, of course, we don't know exactly what he did. Shortly before our mother died, she decided to share her life's story with us, including how she met our father.



To begin, her older sister was working for a family who ran a hotel in Kamakura. This wealthy family had lost a lot of their holdings after the war. This hotel was actually a large Japanese home that had been commandeered by SCAP (the Office of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers—General Douglas MacArthur) during the Allied Occupation, and thus was granted approval as a recreational facility for service members. In addition to lodging, the house had a dining room that served the gastronomical appetites of American military officers.

One of our mom's sister's friends managed operations at the hotel. Respectfully called "Okusama" by all employees, she also happened to be the second wife of the owner. It was not uncommon for upper echelon Japanese men at the time to have both a wife and a so-called 'second', or second wife. Second wives were of lower status than first wives, yet still accorded privileges and measures of respect commensurate with their social class. They usually lived in separate households and were allowed their own retinue of servants.

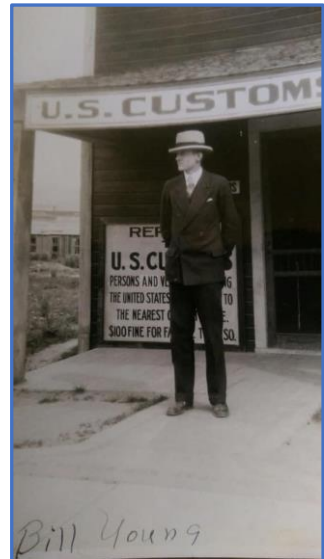
Unfortunately, the owner treated our mother's friend like crap. He basically used her for breeding, while nannies handled breastfeeding duties and pretty much everything else. She later told mom that we were the first children she had ever actually held in her arms.

Anyhow, mom's sister got mom a job there as a cashier in the dining room. One day mom was introduced to a commander. A commander who happened to be our future dad.

Dad was in intelligence during World War II and worked for SCAP right after the war ended. He met mother around 1951. By the time they got married, he had retired. That was a pre-condition for marriage, since U.S. officers weren't allowed to marry foreigners while serving in active-duty status. Just dating could get you heavily ostracized. So, they both had to wait awhile to get married.

There's a funny story regarding their courtship. Being in counterintelligence, it was dad's job to investigate Japanese and other foreigners who got close to American officers. So, he had to have other investigators follow mom around to perform their due diligence.

Well, it didn't take mother long to figure out that she was being followed. Before long, she went and confided in dad, "hey, I think I'm being followed around by some spies because of my being close to you. I think they're Russians." And things being what they were, he was unable to tell her they were his own guys.

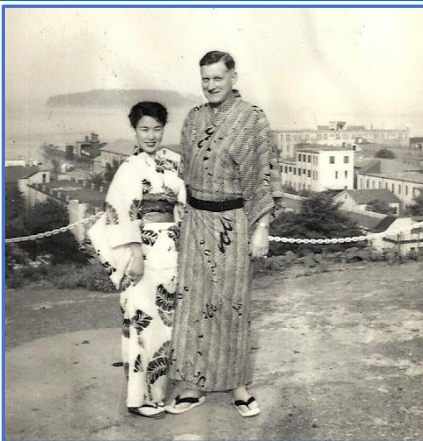


**Left: Faith and Bill's parents** at a Masonic function in Tokyo, 1960s. **Right: Their father**—a wartime intelligence officer. (Photos courtesy of Bill and Faith Young).

Humor aside, our father took a real career risk in courting our mother (as did other American or other Allied servicemen). For example, we've come across an old letter dad wrote to a friend and colleague. In it, we learned why he rather abruptly transferred out of Japan to Panama while dating mother, before returning upon retirement to marry her.

In the letter, he shared how some Admiral's wife really looked down upon fraternization with Japanese locals and conspired with a Chaplain to start targeting people who did, with the aim of getting them removed from the Navy. Dad got wind of this, figured he was one of the most senior officers under suspicion, and concluded there were crosshairs on his back. Therefore, he immediately applied for transfer out of Japan.

Cross-culturally speaking, our dad never really learned to speak Japanese. Yet, we think he had the right perspective. His job during World War II was to interrogate Japanese prisoners of war. And we learned that there were a couple who decided against committing ritual suicide after talking at length with dad. In fact, we visited one of them when we were really young. We thought he was some old Japanese guy, but he was actually the captain of a destroyer that had gone down during the war. [END].



**Left:** Faith and Bill's parents standing with Yokosuka Naval Base in the background. **Right:** Faith and Bill at an early age, at home in Kamakura, mid-1960s. (Photos: Faith and Bill Young)