



2013

Where everybody knows your name: growing up Japanese in Burlington, WA, 1920-1942

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**WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME:
Growing up Japanese in Burlington, WA, 1920-1942**

By

Alyssa Joy Vis

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Alyssa Joy Vis
November 25, 2013

**WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME:
Growing up Japanese in Burlington, WA, 1920-1942**

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts

by
Alyssa Joy Vis
December 2013

ABSTRACT

The 1920s and 1930s were a time of conflict for many people of Japanese ancestry who lived in the Pacific Northwest. They faced Alien Land Laws and Anti-Miscegenation Laws in many of the Pacific Northwest States. They found themselves limited in their school activities and in their career paths. This situation was remarkably similar up and down the coast, especially in areas where the Japanese settled in large communities. This paper presents a different story of the 1920s and 1930s. The town of Burlington, WA, located approximately half way between Seattle and the Canadian border, was home to two Japanese families, in addition to a small community in nearby Blanchard. Instead of facing the prejudice, discrimination and violence that many other Japanese Americans faced, these families found a way to integrate themselves into the community through church, school, and other activities. The story of Burlington demonstrates that even though racist attitudes existed in the area and were even espoused by the local newspaper editor, the people of Burlington were willing to live with and among the Japanese families until their internment and incarceration in June 1942.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: HUB CITY BEGINNINGS	7
MAGOTARO TOGO AKITA	10
KICHIRO “FRANK” TAKAGI.....	15
LOOKING FOR A PLACE IN THIS WORLD	17
CHAPTER TWO: AN ATTITUDE OF DISLIKE:	20
LOUIS FLOWERS AND THE <i>BURLINGTON JOURNAL</i>	20
DISTRUST AROUND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST.....	27
DISSONANCE IN BURLINGTON	30
CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNITY	34
THE CHURCH	35
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	37
THE CHILDREN: THE FRUITS OF EDUCATION.....	43
CHAPTER FOUR: GROWING UP <i>NISEI</i>	50
INVOLVEMENT WITH THE <i>NIKKEI</i> COMMUNITY	63
CHAPTER FIVE: A SIGN OF THE TIMES: HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND	68
CHAPTER SIX: THE WAR YEARS AND BEYOND	80
REFLECTIONS	85
CONCLUSION.....	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY	93

INTRODUCTION

For many people, where they lived helped determine their identity. Their home influenced what friends they had, what activities they participated in, even what careers they were encouraged to pursue. This was especially true for the Japanese immigrants and their *nisei* children. Their experiences were shaped not just by where they lived, but by the attitudes of their neighbors and co-habitants. For many Japanese-Americans in the Pacific Northwest, this resulted in a sense of being an outsider, as not being a part of the community. From the time the *nisei* left their Japanese dominated homes and entered the predominantly white American public schools, they had to work to negotiate their identity and determine where they fit into the larger community in which they found themselves

Community developed in a variety of ways, based on shared experiences, a shared religion, a common language. Even something as simple as a shared newspaper could create community. Although it was possible to physically move away from a formative community, it was not possible to completely escape its influence. Community membership was begun at birth—it tied people together and provided a shared history. And even though it was possible to shift from one community to another and even belong to more than one—all these communities influenced who an individual was and how that person responded to different events.¹

The Japanese American residents of Burlington belonged to a number of different communities. The first was the community of Burlington, those people living in and around the city of Burlington. Members generally shared a language (although they may have been literate in languages beyond the shared language), a religion, an education, a newspaper, a geographic location, and a way of life. For the many of the residents of Burlington, membership in this

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006), 141-153.

community was not defined solely by speaking the shared language or having a similar ethnic heritage (although some people did privilege one language or heritage over others.) Instead, membership was based on residence—Burlington eschewed a racially based community and instead created a geographically based community.² It was this dominant geographically based community that made Burlington unique. In many Pacific Northwest cities and towns, the residents excluded or ostracized the Japanese and Japanese-Americans living in their midst. In Burlington, the Japanese residents were accepted—they attended school and church with the rest of the Burlington community. They lived and worked alongside their white neighbors without violence and without obvious hatred. Even if prejudice existed, there was no evidence that it was acted on prior to World War II.

The Japanese American residents also belonged to the larger *nikkei* or Japanese American community. Their membership in the *nikkei* community was based on their ethnic heritage and the *nikkei* community itself was strongly shaped in response to the greater *hakujin* or white community that surrounded and frequently isolated it. While the *nikkei* community in many areas of the Pacific Northwest was sequestered by and from the *hakujin* community, in Burlington, the larger geographically based community embraced the local *nikkei* community, disallowing separation based on race. They understood that it was possible to belong to the *nikkei* community and the Burlington community, just as others could belong to the Swedish community and the Burlington community—participation in an ethnic community did not negate participation in the geographical community of Burlington.³

² Although those in town spoke the shared language of English, the Japanese were not the only ethnic group in the city. The most noticeable ethnic group was probably the large Scandinavian population. This group was so large and dominant that the Lutheran church published in the newspaper in which language the church service would be conducted that week.

³ A brief note on terminology and usage: Throughout the paper, some basic Japanese terms will be used and will be italicized. *Nikkei* refers to anyone of Japanese heritage in the United States. It is a broad term and is not based on the number of years in the country or generation. *Issei* refers to the first generation, those who emigrated from Japan.

Many books have been written about the experiences of the *nisei*. However, books like Bill Hosokawa's *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* and Jere Takahashi's *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* focus on urban *nisei* living in Japanese communities. In addition, much of their subject matter deals with incarceration and life after World War II. Even those books which focus on *nikkei* experiences in rural areas, including David Neiwert's *Strawberry Days: How Internment Destroyed a Japanese American Community* and Valerie Matsumoto's *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982*, discuss communities with a demographically significant Japanese population: Bellevue, Washington, and Cortez, California.⁴ In addition, in both these books, most of the discussion of life in the pre-World War II years focuses heavily on the experiences of the *issei* and not the *nisei*.

Instead of focusing on interment, incarceration and post-war experiences, I decided to focus on the pre-war years. Yuji Ichioka, the foremost scholar of Japanese American history and founder of the first Asian American studies center in the United States, had urged historians to spend more time on the interwar years. While the 1920s and 1930s have been typically viewed simply as an interlude between the major events of exclusion and incarceration, it was necessary to consider the lives and experiences of the *issei* and *nisei* in the interwar years, as their

Nisei are the second generation. They were born in the United States (or Canada) and have birthright citizenship. *Sansei* are the third generation and *yonsei* are the fourth generation. Although Japanese names are typically written last name followed by first name, to reduce confusion, all Japanese names will be written in the American fashion, for example, Magotaro Akita instead of Akita Magotaro. This will be done for all Japanese names. Finally, as the Japanese language does not distinguish upper and lowercase letters neither will I in regards to the usage of Japanese words. This means that capitalization is standard in English usage, such as in a title or the first word of a sentence, words like *issei*, *nisei*, and *nikkei* will remain lowercase. This is done so that they will not be given additional emphasis that they would not receive in Japanese. For more on this, see Andrea Geiger, *Subverting Exclusion: Transpacific Encounters with Race, Caste, and Borders, 1885-1928* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2011), xiii-xiv.

⁴ Other examples include: Thomas Heuterman, *The Burning Horse: Japanese-American Experience in the Yakima Valley, 1920-1942* (Cheney: Eastern Washington University Press, 1995) and Lauren Kessler, *Stubborn Twig: Three Generations in the Life of a Japanese American Family* (New York: Plume, 1993).

experiences during those years had a profound influence on the rest of their lives.⁵ The work of David Yoo and his book, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-1949*, falls into this time frame. Yoo's book describes how the *nisei* used their churches, their ethnic schools and the local press to understand and respond to the discrimination they were facing. Yoo's provides a much needed focus on the actions and attitudes of the *nisei* in the pre-war years—depicting them as actors in the story and not just bystanders. Although Yoo's work sets him apart from the much of the literature, he also relies heavily on information from cities with large enough *nikkei* populations to have a separate Japanese church, school and newspaper, something that Burlington was unable to support.⁶

Yuji Ichioka has also criticized this body of literature for privileging exemplary male individuals, something that he acknowledges that even he was guilty of in his book *The Issei*. However, from the publication of that book in 1988 until his death in 2002, he worked to shift the perspective from exemplary individuals to a broader focus on race, labor, and gender history.⁷ Since 1990, there have been many books that move beyond that storyline. In 1995, Tomoko Makabe's book *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada* was published. This book retells the stories of five different picture brides who came to Canada as brides to men they barely knew because it was the only way for women to immigrate to the United States or Canada.⁸

Another book that avoids the temptation to privilege the exemplary male is *Storied Lives: Japanese American Students and World War II* by Gary Okihiro. Okihiro focuses on the

⁵ Yuji Ichioka, "Introduction," in *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese American History*, ed. Gordon H. Chang and Eiichiro Azuma (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 3-4.

⁶ David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-1949* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

⁷ Eiichiro Azuma, "Yuji Ichioka and New Paradigms in Japanese American History," in *Before Internment*, xvii-xviii.

⁸ Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*, Trans. Kathleen Chisato Merken, (North York (Ontario): Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1995).

experience of *nisei* college students during World War II. He tells of the struggles of college-aged *nisei* students and how they were able to get permission to leave the internment camps and travel to Midwestern and East Coast colleges. He also recounts the struggles that they faced adapting to an unfamiliar life in a school where they were one of few, if not the only *nisei* enrolled.⁹

While these two books avoid privileging the male story, they also both minimize the family dynamic. Makabe is focused on the wives, while Okihiro is focused on the college-aged students. This thesis is an attempt to provide insight into another aspect of *nikkei* life in Pacific Northwest the 1920-1940s. By focusing on two ordinary, everyday families who settled in Burlington, Washington in the 1910s and 1920s, I am able to avoid both the desire to focus solely on the exceptional individual and also the trend to focus on those who live in larger Japanese communities, whether they be urban or rural. The two families in this thesis were chosen simply because they were the only two families who established long-term residence within the Burlington City limits. The families came from different areas of Japan and came to Burlington at different times. They had different professions—although both lived middle class lifestyles. Even though both families spoke the same language and shared the same culture, the reason I chose these two families was because they were the only two Japanese American families to appear on the census at least twice. Their longevity in the community is what made them unique.

In attempting to provide a narrative history, I relied heavily on the *Burlington Journal*, the weekly newspaper published in Burlington. Using a newspaper as a source can provide much insight into a community. The articles, advertisements, and editorials described what issues were

⁹ Gary Y. Okihiro, *Storied Lives: Japanese American Students and World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

designated as most important to the community. The social columns informed the readers about club meetings, social activities and out-of-town visitors. Articles recounted school and sports activities and gave the community a chance to honor the achievements of community members. However, it was also extremely limited in that the only information available was what the editor chose to print that week. Modern day readers cannot know if the opinions expressed in the editorials were those of the editor or the majority of the community members or if the businesses advertising were the options for a particular item. When using newspapers as a main source of information, it is necessary to remain open to the knowledge that a newspaper did not tell the whole story and that the purpose of a rural weekly newspaper was two-fold: share the news and make money. Yet even with that caveat, the rural newspaper remains an invaluable source of information, then and today.

When viewed through the lens of the *Burlington Journal*, with the help of high school yearbooks and personal memories, a story of the *nikkei* emerged that was different than the stories other historians were writing. In Burlington, a small group of Japanese Americans lived and worked and worshipped alongside of the white community. This is the story of growing up and living *nikkei* in Burlington. It is an attempt to provide a narrative history—to tell stories in ordinary language based on substantive research.¹⁰ To do what Yuji Ichioka had asked historians to do.

¹⁰ Yugi Ichioka, “A Historian by Happenstance,” in *Before Internment*, 295.

CHAPTER ONE: HUB CITY BEGINNINGS

Burlington, Washington was a small city located approximately equidistant between Seattle to the south and Vancouver, BC, to the north and was a major hub for train and bus transportation. It was officially plotted in 1890, although the first European settlers arrived in 1882 for the purpose of logging. According to the masthead of the July 3, 1914, the *Burlington Journal*, which was established in 1899, boasted a reading circle of 6000 people.¹¹ Although the number of subscriptions was not listed, the editor believed that approximately 6000 people in the communities of Burlington, Mount Vernon, Bellville, Allen, Alger, Bow and even Bellingham regularly read the *Journal*. By the late 1920s, the population of Burlington had reached 1500 people.¹² According to the 2010 Census, the population of Burlington City was listed as 8388, compared to the 80,000 people in Bellingham or the 30,000 in Mount Vernon, the nearest major town. Burlington was a small community, and the Skagit Valley, the region in Washington where it was located, had only a minor Japanese population in the years prior to World War II. According to a *Burlington Journal* article on June 5, 1942, the day after all the area Japanese were removed, approximately 100 Japanese gathered at the Great Northern depot for their journey to Tule Lake, California. They represented the entire *nikkei* population of Skagit, Whatcom, San Juan and Island counties.¹³

During the interwar years, Burlington was primarily an agricultural center with a blossoming berry industry which even merited the opening of a cannery in town. It also had a significant dairy, logging, and lumbering presence. It was a town filled with small, family owned businesses. Edith Watanabe, who grew up in Burlington, described it as a place where everyone knew everyone else in town by name. It was relatively prosperous, with most families owning a

¹¹ *Burlington Journal*. Friday, July 3, 1914, 1.

¹² Hartman, "History of Burlington Townsite" *Burlington Farm Journal*, March 16, 1967.

¹³ "All Japanese Evacuated" *Burlington Journal*, June 6, 1942, 1.

car and a radio. Kids hung out with their church groups and school friends and did not need money to have fun.¹⁴

The lives of the two Japanese American families who settled in Burlington, Magotaro and Matsu Akita and Kichiro and Kita Takagi can be examined through the lens of Burlington's weekly newspaper, the *Burlington Journal*. Studying their activities, their social interactions, and everything else the editors chose to print (or neglected to print) regarding the family and the community permits an analysis of their unique experience. Although their background was similar to many other Japanese American families, choosing to settle in a small rural community like Burlington, which lacked a noticeable *nikkei* presence, enabled them to avoid some of the problems that *issei* and *nisei* struggled with in areas which had large, visible or vocal Japanese communities, although it also removed the support system prevalent in larger Japanese American communities.¹⁵

Those people familiar with present-day Burlington might question the decision to limit my research to these two families. Why did I not include the most well-known Japanese American family in the area—the Sakuma family, a name that people in the area and across the country associate with their Burlington berry fields? Although the first Sakuma brother did arrive in 1935, he settled outside of the Burlington city limits. He was joined in subsequent years by his brothers as each one graduated from high school on Bainbridge Island and then made the trip to Burlington to help with the family farming expansion there. By the time of the internment and incarceration of the *nikkei* community, the Sakuma family had been in the valley less than six

¹⁴ Denshō Visual History Collection: Edith Watanabe Interview. November 4 1996, Seattle Washington, Stacy Sakamoto interviewer. Accessed May 30, 2013.

¹⁵ For example, they did not have the opportunity to attend Japanese Language Schools or join *kenjin-kai*, prefectural associations that provided community events and social and financial support. See Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1969), 152-164. See also Yuji Ichioka, "Dai Nisei Mondai: Changing Japanese Immigrant Conceptions of the Second-Generation Problem, 1902-1941," in *Before Internment*, 14-16.

years, living southwest of town near the Skagit River. As they were not residents of Burlington and relied heavily on their family on Bainbridge Island for supplies, they were not included in the discussion of long-term Burlington residents. They are most recognizable not because of their activities or influence before the war but because they returned to the area after the war. As *nisei*, they had the ability to purchase land, something the Alien Land Law prohibited both Kichiro Takagi and Magotaro Akita from doing.¹⁶

Therefore, although the Sakuma family now represents Burlington's most recognized *nikkei* residents, their story does not demonstrate the way the interactions between the Japanese-American and European-American residents of Burlington were different than those in many Pacific Northwest areas. The Sakuma brothers made a conscious choice to not participate in the Burlington community. Until the war, they maintained their connections to Bainbridge Island, choosing to rely on family members and other workers from Bainbridge Island or hiring the Swinomish from LaConner, instead of hiring local residents to pick their berries.¹⁷ In fact, the only mention of the Sakuma family in the *Burlington Journal* prior to the war is a brief blurb about the death of a child of one of their workers, a two-year-old boy from LaConner.¹⁸ Since Magotaro Akita frequently placed advertisements in the *Journal*, there was nothing stopping the Sakumas from doing the same. Instead, they made a decision to not seek local labor and instead rely primarily on family connections from Bainbridge Island.

¹⁶ Although they made no strong effort to be part of the Burlington community, the Sakuma family still managed to make friends and create loyalties. According to Don Mapes, when the Sakuma brothers realized that incarceration was imminent, they made arrangements with the Mapes family to harvest their crops and pay their taxes and any other costs in exchange for a percentage of the profits from the harvest. This enabled the Sakumas to retain possession of their land during World War II. When the restrictions on settlement were lifted in 1945, a Sakuma brother who was too short for military service was the first *nikkei* to return to Burlington. He continued to work on the family farm in Burlington and his brothers joined him as they were discharged from the army.

¹⁷ "About Us: Sakuma Brothers Family History," Sakuma Bros. Farm and Market, accessed June 16, 2013, <http://www.sakumamarketstand.com/about-sakuma-farms/>

¹⁸ "Indian Boy Dies," *Burlington Journal*, June 27, 1941, 1.

Due to their longevity and visibility in Burlington, the families of Magotaro Togo Akita and Kichiro “Frank” Takagi were the best suited for a longitudinal comparison of their interactions with the greater Burlington community and a discussion of what made Burlington different from other Pacific Northwest communities of the time, even though they were not the first Japanese in the area—as the Great Northern Railroad had employed Japanese laborers in their work gangs as early as 1900—nor the most remembered.¹⁹ No other individuals or families of Japanese descent in Burlington appeared in more than one pre-World War II census, demonstrating the uniqueness of their long-term settlement and permanence in the city. According to census data from the four enumerated districts that made up the city of Burlington in 1940, not only were the Akitas and Takagis the only Japanese families in the city, they were also the only residents who were not listed as white. They were joined in the region by a small Japanese community near Blanchard that worked in the oyster fields and farmed potatoes, and in 1935 by the succession of *nisei* Sakuma brothers who moved into the area north of Burlington from Bainbridge Island and began an extension of their family’s berry farm.

MAGOTARO TOGO AKITA

Like a large percentage of Japanese immigrants, Magotaro Akita was from Ōshima, Japan, part of Yamaguchi Prefecture, an island approximately 70 miles south of Tokyo. According to Yuji Ichioka, author of *The Issei*, Ōshima had experienced population growth in the 1800s, which caused many people to seek work off the island—initially in other parts of Japan or in Asia. In fact, the Japanese government called for Ōshima men to accept contract labor positions in Hawaii as early as 1884, demonstrating a drastic shift from the emigration policy of

¹⁹ *An Illustrated History of Skagit and Snohomish Counties: Their People, Their Commerce and their Resources* (Interstate Publishing Company, 1906), 169. There was included an anecdote which described how citizens of Mount Vernon requested that the Japanese laborers leave on June 25, 1900. The laborers left only to be replaced by a group of Japanese from Seattle a few days later. This group was not bothered.

the Tokugawa Shogunate who had ruled the country in the previous centuries.²⁰ This heritage of *dekasegi* labor—temporary migration with intent to return—caused Ōshima to be the district with the largest number of emigrant laborers in the 1880s.²¹ Although not part of the large initial group of emigrants from Ōshima, Togo Akita was raised with the tradition of *dekasegi* labor, and by the 1900s, the new favored destination of Ōshima residents was the United States.

Togo Akita was raised in what the Japanese government would classify as a *hi-imin* household. *Hi-imin* emigrants were those people the Meiji Government determined would successfully represent a capitalist, imperial, modern Japan to the rest of the world. *Hi-imin* were frequently students, merchants, clerks and professionals—men who were considered educated gentlemen who would emigrate for a few years and then return to Japan. By 1908, to be considered *hi-imin* and therefore eligible for emigration, a man had to have a least a middle-school education, financial means to emigrate and proof for Japanese emigration officials as to how time in the United States would be beneficial to both Japan and the United States.²²

In order to avoid problems like those faced by the Chinese, which resulted in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the Meiji Government placed restrictions on who would be allowed to emigrate—allowing only the emigration of those classified as *hi-imin*—and attempted to deny passports to citizens classified as *imin* or laborers. As a skilled craftsman, Togo's father was *hi-imin*, the type of man that Japanese leaders believed could successfully represent a capitalist, imperial, modern Japan in the rest of the world.²³

²⁰ Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides*, 40-42.

²¹ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 44-45.

²² Mitziko Sawada, "Culprits and Gentlemen: Meiji Japan's Restrictions of Emigrants to the United States, 1891-1909," *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 3 (1991): 342-358.

²³ Sawada, "Culprits," 341-345.

In 1902, Magotaro, a twenty-year-old man, met the stringent Japanese emigration qualifications and made his way to the United States.²⁴ By the time of the 1910 census, he was working as a cook in a hotel owned by Harry and Lottie Taylor on Palouse Street in Wenatchee. Also working in the hotel was another Japanese cook named Gaknichi Nakamura and a dishwasher named Ganshiro Ishida. All three men had immigrated to the United States from Japan within the last ten years and all were listed as servants who were able to speak English.²⁵

By 1914, Magotaro was established in Burlington as the proprietor of the Lilly Studio, the town's sole professional photographer. On November 23, 1914, 32-year-old Togo married 22-year-old Matsu Kanagawa at the Japanese Baptist Church in Seattle.²⁶ Matsu was also from Togo's home island of Ōshima.²⁷ Due to the age difference (she would have been ten-years-old when Togo emigrated), the length of time that Togo had already been in the United States, and that fact that both Magotaro and Matsu came from the same home town, it was likely that Matsu came to the United States as a picture bride. According to Yuji Ichioka, prior to 1917, the American government did not recognize Japanese picture-bride marriages, so the couple had to be remarried in the United States in order to be considered legally married by the United States government.²⁸ Often these marriages would take place in hotel lobbies or at local churches within hours of the bride's disembarkment.

Having the marriage performed at the Japanese Baptist Church in Seattle, while Magotaro was an established attendee at the Methodist Episcopal (M. E.) Church in Burlington supports the hypothesis that Matsu arrived as a picture bride, as did the fact that the minister's

²⁴ "WW2 Japanese Relocation Camp Internee Records," Crafted Knowledge, accessed December 1, 2012, <http://www.japaneserelocation.org>.

²⁵ Bureau of the Census. *1910 United States Federal Census*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1910.

²⁶ While the King County Marriage Certificate lists Magotaro as from Ōshima, Japan, the Washington State Board of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics lists his residence as being Burlington.

²⁷ Information found on King County Marriage Certificate No. 45281.

²⁸ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 167.

wife was the female witness listed on their wedding certificate. Later news stories in the *Burlington Journal* indicate Togo did have connections with Seattle's *nikkei* community. Had there been an engagement period in which both Matsu and Magotaro were both in the country, they certainly could have found a different female witness.²⁹

The Japanese Baptist Church was well known for its support of the picture bride practice. The church's history described the interest the minister's wife had in the plight of picture brides and also her recognition of the need for a safe place for the remarriage to occur.³⁰ In addition, the fact that census reports indicated that Matsu arrived in the United States in 1914, that she signed her name in Japanese on the marriage license, and that the ship's register of the *Tamba Maru* listed her as married indicated that she was a newly arrived picture bride. When Louis Flowers announced the marriage of Magotaro and Matsu, he simply stated in the "Local and Personal" column that "M. Akita, of the Lilly Studio, returned from Seattle last Wednesday evening accompanied by his bride. Mr. and Mrs. Akita is [*sic*] receiving best wishes from a host of friends."³¹

In 1914, Flowers appeared to welcome the addition of Matsu Akita to the Burlington community and had no criticism or complaint about the picture bride practice which enable her to come as the bride of man she had not seen in over a decade. Flower's tolerant attitude did not last. His first overtly Anti-Japan editorial appeared on December 27, 1918 and was focused on skepticism of the Japanese envoy's desire for a just peace following the end of World War I. Subsequent editorials shifted the focus from the nation of Japan to problems with Japanese immigrants following the end of the war. By 1919 Flowers was referring to picture brides as a

²⁹ In 1921, Magotaro Akita was summoned to Seattle to attend the funeral of G. Nakazawa after his sudden death. "Town News Notes," *Burlington Journal*, January 28, 1921, 6.

³⁰ "History," Japanese Baptist Church of Seattle. <http://jbcseattle.org/history.html>.

³¹ "Local and Personal," *Burlington Journal*, Friday, November 27, 1914, 5.

way for Japan to illegally avoid the Gentleman's Agreement and by 1920 called picture brides an "immoral, un-American custom" and a "shameful disregard of the sacred marriage customs of this country."³² Flowers' shift in attitude was intriguing, as he made no comments about or picture brides in the years surrounding the Akita's marriage and no anti-Japanese editorials were printed until the end of the Great War.

Following their marriage in Seattle, the Akitas returned to Burlington. Togo continued his work as a photographer, while Matsu took care of the house and raised the children; the first arriving on September 24, 1915, when daughter Lilly was born.³³ Lilly was followed by Robert in 1916, Hiram in 1917, and Nancy Ann in 1926.³⁴ Shortly before Lilly's birth, the Akitas moved to a rented residence on Fairhaven Avenue in downtown Burlington, and Magotaro also moved his photography studio there.

The Akita family remained in their residence on Fairhaven Avenue until their internment and incarceration in June of 1942.³⁵ Togo continued to operate his photography studio, aided by his family, into the 1940s. In 1932, following the death of his oldest daughter Lilly, the name of the studio was changed from the Lilly Studio to Akita Studio. There is no evidence of the studio's continued operation following the implementation of the curfew in March of 1942, but there is also no evidence that it closed—no notices, no advertisements, no going out of business sales, no mention in any form in the *Burlington Journal* after May of 1941, long before the attack on Pearl Harbor even occurred.³⁶ In addition, according to the acknowledgements page of

³² "Evasive Schemes," *Burlington Journal*, November 7, 1919, 2. "Editorial," *Burlington Journal*, July 23, 1920, 2.

³³ "Local Gleanings," *Burlington Journal*, Friday, October 1, 1915, 5. "Rites Large for Burlington Girl," *Burlington Journal*, Friday, November 11, 1932, 1. The funeral article has her date of birth as September 26.

³⁴ A birth announcement for Hiram also appears in the *Burlington Journal* on January 11, 1918.

³⁵ In order to stay true to the meaning of the words, internment will be used for those who are not American citizens while incarceration will be used for those who are. Therefore, the *issei* were interned; the *nisei and sansei* were incarcerated.

³⁶ "\$20,000 Roller Skating Rink Opening Saturday," *Burlington Journal*, May 9, 1941, 1. Photos of the interior and exterior of the rink included with the article were taken by Akita Studio.

the 1941 *Tinas Coma*, the Burlington High School yearbook, a Mr. Miles was the photographer, instead of Akita Studio, who had been the photographer since the inception of the yearbook in 1923. The last public mention of or advertisement for Akita Studios was six months before Pearl Harbor.

KICHIRO “FRANK” TAKAGI

While Togo Akita settled in Burlington after a brief sojourn in Eastern Washington, the Takagi family lived in a few other places before settling in Burlington. Kichiro came from a farming family in Fukushima-ken, Japan. Located approximately 200 miles north of Tokyo on the island of Honshu, Fukushima was a region noted for its agriculture, and its residents were in demand for work on the Hawaiian sugar plantations and other agricultural projects. While laborers were considered *imin* by the Meiji government, which disallowed their immigration, an experienced farmer would not necessarily be viewed as a laborer, especially if he could portray himself as someone seeking further education or business contacts. Even though Kichiro came from a farming family, the family must have been successful because, according to daughter Edith, he was highly educated and worked as a high school principal while in Japan, proof that he could be classified as *hi-imin* and worthy of representing Japan, despite the fact that he came from a farming family.³⁷

Kichiro Takagi arrived in the United States in 1906. By 1912 he was a resident of Wapato, Washington, a member of the local *nikkei* community, and the proprietor of a laundry. On February 5 of that year, he traveled to Seattle to marry Kita Takagi. He was thirty-four at the time of the marriage; she was twenty-six.³⁸ Many of the same reasons to suspect that Matsu Nakamura Akita was a picture bride also apply to Kita Takagi. She arrived in the United States

³⁷ Edith Watanabe interview.

³⁸ King County Marriage Certificate #33854. Image available online at www.digitalarchives.wa.gov

the day before she got married, according to the crew and passenger list of the *Tamba Maru*. She also arrived from Fukushima-ken, and her signature is in Japanese on the marriage certificate, although later in life she was able to read and write English. On the ship's manifest, Kita was described as a married housewife, yet was married again the day after her arrival.³⁹ In addition, instead of waiting to return to Wapato, the Takagis were married in a Seattle church which neither of them lived near, where the minister's wife again served as the female witness. (In the Takagis' case, Hoshin Fujii, Minister of the Buddhist Church of Seattle, performed the ceremony.) The evidence suggests that Kita Takagi was also a picture bride.

Following their marriage, the Takagis settled among the *nikkei* community of Wapato in the Yakima Valley, where three of their five of their children were born: Harry in 1914, Michiko in 1916, and Miyoko in 1918. In 1920, the family was living in Seattle, where Kichiro was the proprietor of an apartment building. It was while they were living in Seattle that Edith was born in 1921.⁴⁰ By the time Calvin was born in June of 1927, the family lived in Burlington and in 1940 they were residing in a rented home in northeast Burlington.⁴¹ Frank operated a laundry and his salary of \$1500 that year indicated a middle-class lifestyle for the family. This enabled children to grow up in a comfortable home, listen to the radio, take music lessons, and anticipate earning a college education.⁴²

While living in Wapato, it would have been simple for the Takagi family to participate in the Japanese community. Thomas Heuterman, in his analysis of Wapato's Japanese Americans in

³⁹ Ancestry.com, "Seattle, Washington Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1957," in Ancestry.com at (accessed 15 March 2013). Original Source: Seattle, Washington. Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at Seattle, Washington, 1890-1957. Micropublication M1383. RG085, (Washington, D.C.: NARA). Ancestry.com, "Lists or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States," in Ancestry.com at (accessed 15 March 2013). Original Source: Seattle, Washington. Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at Seattle, Washington, 1890-1957. Micropublication M1383. RG085, (Washington, D.C.: NARA).

⁴⁰ Bureau of the Census. *1920 United States Federal Census*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1920.

⁴¹ "Hospital Notes," *Burlington Journal*, June 17, 1927, 1.

⁴² Edith Watanabe interview.

the 1920s and 1930s, noted *nikkei* involvement in Wapato clubs and schools and also the development of Japanese Methodist and Buddhist churches.⁴³ Although no longer surrounded by the large Japanese communities of Wapato and Seattle, the Takagi children still found ways to be involved in the Burlington community.

LOOKING FOR A PLACE IN THIS WORLD

For the Takagi family, the move to Burlington necessitated a shift in their social interactions. After living among the *nikkei* of Wapato and Seattle, Burlington represented a huge culture shock. In Burlington, there were no longer Japanese organizations, clubs, or churches of which to be members. Japanese friends were distant and seldom seen. Despite the struggles and isolation that all the family members must have felt, Burlington became their home. Just as Magotaro Akita filled a need in the community, so did Frank Takagi. This enabled them to find their place in their new world.

Instead of simply being unskilled laborers or truck farmers, Magotaro Akita and Kichiro Takagi had specialized skills that enabled them to eschew the sojourning or farming lifestyle of most Japanese immigrants and to instead thrive outside of the *nikkei* community. While many Japanese immigrants were farmers, leasing land for a short time period before moving on to a different location or laborers who moved frequently from job to job and place to place, both Takagi and Akita had backgrounds that enabled them to settle in one location. Both were better educated than most Japanese immigrants. Frank had served as a school principal in Japan, implying both high intelligence and a prior knowledge of English that would assist him.⁴⁴ Togo also was well educated. According to the 1940 census, when asked about his level of education, Togo indicated he had received two years of college education, possibly in one of the missionary

⁴³ Thomas Heuterman, “‘We have the Same Rights as Other Citizens’: Coverage of the Yakima Valley Japanese Americans in the ‘Missing Decades’ of the 1920s and 1930s,” *Journalism History*, 14, no. 4 (Winter 1987), 94-103.

⁴⁴ Edith Watanabe interview.

colleges in Japan, as he did not seek out a community with a Buddhist Temple like many Japanese immigrants did. It was also possible that Togo spent some of his first years in the United States working as a house boy, attending college at the same time. Even if he did not know English prior emigrating, Togo intentionally placed himself in situations where he would have to learn the language to survive.

In addition to being educated, both men also possessed a skill that would enable them to participate in, instead of compete with, the larger Burlington community. Akita was a highly proficient and respected photographer. In describing the photographs which were part of the display sent by the M. E. Church to the Panama Fair in San Francisco, the *Burlington Journal* reported, “the photographic work and the grouping which were done by the Lilly Studio are creditable in every particular.”⁴⁵ The Burlington High School class of 1915 group photo was taken at the Lilly Studio and was described by the *Journal* as “clean cut in outlines...an excellent photograph,” while the group photo of the class of 1921, displayed in the window at Crossley’s Jewelry Store a few stores down the street from the Lilly Studio, was “excellent photography, and has been commended as such by hundreds of observers who have admired the senior group this week.”⁴⁶ When the Queen of Rumania visited Burlington during her tour of the United States in 1926, it was Togo Akita who was asked to take her picture with the leading ladies of the town.⁴⁷

Takagi also developed a trade that was not viewed as competing with white businessmen. In fact, his was not the first Japanese family to operate a laundry in Burlington. In the early 1920s, a Japanese couple, Sojura and Hanyo Koike, operated the laundry in Burlington. Their

⁴⁵ “Burlington at Exposition: Local M. E. Church Sends Missionary Display to Panama Fair,” *Burlington Journal*, February 26, 1915, 1.

⁴⁶ “Local Gleanings,” *Burlington Journal*, June 4, 1915, 5. “Lilly Studio, Photographers,” *Burlington Journal*, May 27, 1921, 6.

⁴⁷ “Queen Marie’s Royal Party Spend Hour in City,” *Burlington Journal*, November 12, 1926, 1.

departure created a void that Frank and Kita Takagi were eager to fill. The Takagis arrived with previous experience in running a laundry. According to the 1917 *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Yakima County Directory*, Frank and Kita Takagi operated the Wapato Laundry.⁴⁸ They too filled a need in the community.

Since both families filled a desired niche in the community, the Takagi and the Akita families were not seen as competition—unlike the Japanese farmers in Wapato and Bellevue, Washington, or Hood River, Oregon. For example, in 1925, the Grange in Wapato listed specific objections to Japanese American farmers, including that Americans could not compete with them in farming and that the Japanese farmers would not cooperate with the white farmers in marketing.⁴⁹ In Hood River, Oregon, the Japanese were accepted until they started buying and leasing land and making their settlement permanent. At this point they were viewed as competition that had to be dealt with.⁵⁰ By 1920 in Bellevue, Washington, over half the *issei* residents were farmers. In Wapato, Hood River and Bellevue, the local communities blamed the Japanese farmers for keeping returning World War I veterans from finding work.⁵¹ Although similar complaints against the Japanese existed in Burlington, as the next chapter will show, Magotaro Akita and Frank Takagi were seen as exceptions to the objections.

⁴⁸ Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database online]. (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2011). Kara Kondo, "Japanese in Wapato," in *Wapato History and Heritage* (Wapato: Wapato History Committee, 1978), 19-20. Kondo states that the Takagi family operated a laundry in Wapato in the early 1900s, but does not list specific dates.

⁴⁹ Thomas Heuterman, *The Burning Horse*, 74.

⁵⁰ Lauren Kessler, *Stubborn Twig*, 66-69

⁵¹ David Neiwert, *Strawberry Days: How Internment Destroyed a Japanese American Community* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 50-55.

CHAPTER TWO: AN ATTITUDE OF DISLIKE:

LOUIS FLOWERS AND THE *BURLINGTON JOURNAL*

Although neither Takagi nor Akita were in business competition with the white community or faced overt prejudice from groups like the Grange, they still had to deal with an attitude of dislike and prejudice, specifically expressed by the editor of the *Burlington Journal*. On July 17, 1914, the *Journal* was purchased by Thomas Howe and editor Louis R. Flowers. According to an article announcing their purchase, their goal was “to publish a clean representative public journal.” They desired a newspaper that represented the ideas and beliefs of the Burlington residents. They believed that “a newspaper is an accurate index of a town...the *Journal* will be independent on all public or political questions...It will have an opinion on public questions and fearlessly express it.”⁵² Because so much emphasis was placed on being representative of the people and of being independent on public and political questions, Flowers must have felt limited by the previous ownership in what he had been allowed to print or the positions the *Journal* had taken on issues.

After purchasing the *Journal*, Louis Flowers continued working as editor and added the title of publisher from 1914 until his retirement in 1929. During this time, his staff consisted primarily of his wife and his son. From 1914-1929, the Flowers family almost single-handedly determined the content and tone of the paper.⁵³ Flowers and his staff focused much of their attention on agriculture. Not only was Burlington a farming community, but Flowers’ himself came from a farming family and even owned a 20 acre farm while editor. In addition, Flowers’

⁵² “Journal Changes Ownership,” *Burlington Journal*, July 17, 1914, 2.

⁵³ “Seattle Publisher Buys the Journal,” *Burlington Journal*, January 31, 1929, 2.

Republican Party leanings were visible in the candidates he chose to endorse and in his editorials, including a focus education, agriculture, and immigration.⁵⁴

In the years immediately after Flowers' promotion from editor to owner, the tone of the paper remained about the same, possibly due to the influence of co-owner Thomas Howe. When the *Journal* published an article from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* regarding the proposed Alien Land Law in October of 1914, race was never mentioned.⁵⁵ Even though California had passed a similar law the previous year, this article was the sole reference in the *Journal* to the initiative in the weeks leading up to the vote. Based on the number of articles and editorials, Flowers felt Burlington should be more concerned about prohibition than the proposed Alien Land Law. In January, 1915, the *Journal* published an article dealing with the new provisions of an immigration bill passed by the Senate. It stated the requirements simply and without taking a political stance. The new law required all immigrants over sixteen-years-old to be literate, unless they were older relatives of residents. It also disallowed "polygamists, negros [*sic*], vagrants, and those with tuberculosis."⁵⁶ Even in February of 1917, when referencing the Immigration Act of 1917 (also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act), which Congress had just passed by overriding President Wilson's veto, Editor Flowers did not speak derogatorily about Japan or the Japanese immigrants. Instead, he chose to report that although Japan objected to some of the language in the bill, the law as passed was thought to meet all their objections.⁵⁷

Before the tone of the paper became more anti-Japanese in 1918, Magotaro Akita worked hard to develop and grow his studio, frequently placing ads in the *Journal* and offering special

⁵⁴ Herbert Hunt and Floyd C. Kaylor, *Washington, West of the Cascades: Historical and Descriptive; the Explorers, the Indians, the Pioneers, the Modern*, (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917), 587-589. Many of his positions coincided with those in the 1920 Republican Party Platform.

⁵⁵ John T. Candon, "Joker in Alien Land Law," *Burlington Journal*, October 30, 1914, 2.

⁵⁶ "Features of Immigration Bill Passed by Senate," *Burlington Journal*, January 8, 1915, 1.

⁵⁷ "Editorial," *Burlington Journal*, February 9, 1917, 2.

offers, such as an advertisement in July of 1914 which offered special prices for children's photos or an advertisement published in April of 1917 to coincide with Better Baby Week which offered a free enlargement with every order of baby photos.⁵⁸ He was even able to hire an assistant in October, 1915, a friend, George Kobashi, who had been visiting him from Seattle and was also an experienced photographer.⁵⁹ He also placed a few ads during August and September of 1918, looking for 40-100 acres of farm land available for rent. This land was probably for another *issei* who lacked the English communication skills and accessibility to the Burlington community that Akita experienced.⁶⁰

The timbre of the paper began to change in late 1918, after the end of World War I; even still, most of the initial articles regarding problems with aliens were in reference to the defeated European nations, not the Japanese. One editorial from December 6 urged European aliens who refuse to support the United States government to be brought to justice. Flowers argued that the “unfriendly attitude of these enemy-aliens be brought to the attention of the state attorney general.”⁶¹ Any criticism of Japan was linked to its demands at Versailles—the desire to maintain control over the islands it took from Germany during the war. Flowers clearly felt that keeping that territory would be a direct violation of the self-determination of nations—a policy that was crucial to President Wilson at the Treaty of Versailles.⁶²

Japan's aggressive behavior in the wake of World War I seemed to be the inciting incident for Flowers' increasingly anti-Japan and anti-Japanese editorials. For example, an editorial on December 27, 1918 stated that Japan had a concealed desire to permanently possess

⁵⁸ *Burlington Journal*, July 3, 1914, 5. “Baby, Baby, Baby,” *Burlington Journal*, April 20, 1917, 3.

⁵⁹ “Here at Home,” *Burlington Journal*, October 22, 1915, 6.

⁶⁰ “Town News Notes,” *Burlington Journal*, August 16, 1918, 4.

⁶¹ “Editorial,” *Burlington Journal*, December 6, 1918, 2.

⁶² “Editorial,” *Burlington Journal*, December 27, 1918, 2.

the islands seized from Germany during the war.⁶³ From this editorial, Flowers quickly moved to a position based on a combination of racism and a fear of Japanese expansion to the Pacific Coast. For example, an editorial on April 4, 1919, stated that Japan could not be a charter member of the League of Nations and have an equal voice to the United States because then the United States would be unable to enforce the immigration restrictions it wished. He continued that the white race was the dominant race and therefore only the opinion of the white race mattered.⁶⁴ In July, he stated that he doubted the YMCA's statement that the Japanese immigrants would be assimilated. He elaborated that the United States had never assimilated Mongolians before and that miscegenation had and would only cause problems and unhappy marriages.⁶⁵ In October 1919, he accused the Japanese of using picture brides to "feloniously secure citizenship for a forthcoming generation on the Pacific Coast" and cautioned against the "Alien Oriental occupancy of the Pacific Coast." In November, he stated that picture brides were a passport scheme to illegally avoid the Gentlemen's Agreement.⁶⁶

Although Flowers' attitude appeared to be a shift from his pre-1918 concerns, it also reflected the attitudes of his contemporaries, specifically the attitude of Miller Freeman's *Seattle Star* newspaper. Freeman used the power of the *Seattle Star* to disseminate his own beliefs. Through articles and editorials, Freeman called for the abolishment of the Japanese Language Schools and the deportation of the Japanese. He stated that the Japanese were morally inferior and must be stopped before they took over everywhere.⁶⁷ Flowers's editorials in the *Burlington Journal* echoed Miller Freeman's position. Flowers promoted the idea of white supremacy,

⁶³ "Editorial," *Burlington Journal*, December 27, 1918, 2.

⁶⁴ "Racial Problem," *Burlington Journal*, April 4, 1919, 2.

⁶⁵ "Racial Barriers," *Burlington Journal*, July 14, 1919, 2.

⁶⁶ "Oriental Cunning," *Burlington Journal*, October 17, 1919, 2, "Evasive Schemes," *Burlington Journal*, November 7, 1919, 2.

⁶⁷ Neiwert, *Strawberry Days*, 54-61.

argued the dangers of miscegenation, and opposed the leasing of Skagit Valley farmland to Orientals, as that would prevent returning servicemen from getting leases.⁶⁸

Throughout the early 1920s and culminating with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which virtually prohibited all Japanese from immigrating to the United States, Flowers grew even more vehemently anti-Japan and anti-Japanese immigrants. An editorial on June 25, 1920, called Japanese immigrants “crafty, unscrupulous Orientals...a growing menace that threatens serious trouble.”⁶⁹ On February 18, 1920, Flowers refers to Japanese immigrants as, “a nonassimiable racial evil...a race characterized by adroit cunning, diplomatic side-stepping, and shameful disregard of ‘gentlemen’s agreements’ proposed verbally and disregarded in spirit.”⁷⁰ Although Flowers may have begun his Anti-Japanese editorials based on a concern for the prospects of returning World War I soldiers, the focus shifted quickly to one of racism and white supremacy.

In 1921, Flowers wrote, “the American citizen who employs a non-assimiable alien while American service men are in dire need belong to the most despicable species of ingrates.”⁷¹ By May of 1923, Flowers discussed the “constant covert practice of Oriental cunning and duplicity...the picture bride ruse; the steady stream of Japanese pouring into the country under the deceptive guise of student privilege, and cunningly escaping the immigration laws barring Asiatic invasion.”⁷² On January 4, 1924, he wrote that the Japanese immigrant behavior provides “evidence of contempt and disrespect for the laws of this country, which entitles them neither to respect nor sympathy and utterly disqualifies them for American citizenship.”⁷³ Flowers used the

⁶⁸ “Racial Problems,” 2, “Racial Barriers,” 2, “The American Legion Barrage,” *Burlington Journal*, March 11, 1921, 2.

⁶⁹ “The Coast’s Racial Menace,” *Burlington Journal*, June 25, 1920, 2.

⁷⁰ “Misalliance,” *Burlington Journal*, February 18, 1921, 2.

⁷¹ “Editorial,” *Burlington Journal*, August 19, 1921, 2.

⁷² “Immigration Problem,” *Burlington Journal*, May 25, 1923, 2.

⁷³ “Orientals Spurn Alien Land Laws,” *Burlington Journal*, January 4, 1924, 2.

paper to openly advocate against Japanese immigrants. From 1919-1921, Flowers published approximately one anti-Japan or anti-Japanese editorial each month. The editorials decreased in 1922 and then increased again around the discussion of the Immigration Act of 1924. Flowers' concerns mirrored those of newspaper men elsewhere and yet during these time periods, he continued to publish news of the Akita family without any apparent racist insinuations. Although he adhered to the racist attitude of many of his contemporaries, including Miller Freeman and V.S. McClatchy, and freely disseminated those attitudes with his newspaper, Flowers never once applied those racist attitudes in print to the *nikkei* residents of the Burlington area.

V. S. McClatchy, a California newspaper man and leader of the anti-Japanese campaign on the Pacific Coast testified before the Senate regarding the then pending Immigration Act of 1924 and the need to keep the Japanese out of the country. He also wrote a letter to the editor and distributed it to West Coast newspapers, including the *Burlington Journal*. Flowers rarely printed letters to the editor, even though he frequently requested that people write them. In the letter, McClatchy bemoaned the current racial problems in the Pacific Northwest. He stated that the only feasible solutions to that problem included: cancelling the gentleman's agreement, excluding picture brides, excluding Japanese immigrants, legalizing that Asiatics would never be allowed citizenship—regardless of place of birth, and bringing in Chinese to replace the Japanese laborers, and then sending them back to China when they were no longer needed.⁷⁴ Anti-Japanese attitudes were so strong that activists like McClatchy had determined that it would be better to bring Chinese laborers back to the United States and instead exclude the Japanese. These same Chinese laborers who had been blamed for low wages, declining economic conditions and the threat to white racial purity and were excluded in 1882 by the Chinese

⁷⁴ V. S. McClatchy "One Hundred Per Cent American Citizens Demand 100 Per Cent Immigration Law," *Burlington Journal*, September 19, 1919, 2.

Exclusion Act became a favored solution. Chinese immigrants were being promoted as solutions to the same problems they were accused of causing forty years earlier.

Flowers continued to advocate against continuing Japanese immigration to the United States during the early 1920s. During this time there was no clear response from the people of Burlington. Flowers seldom published letters to the editor and also rarely used additional contributors. However, since there were also local papers in Sedro Woolley, La Conner, and Mount Vernon, not to mention the larger papers in Bellingham and Seattle that many people also subscribed to, residents could have chosen to stop receiving the *Journal* if they vehemently disapproved of what Flowers was saying. Although circulation numbers are not available, by looking at the advertisements present in the *Journal* during these years, companies continued to purchase space, including the Lilly Studio. If proprietors continued purchasing advertisements, circulation must have remained high enough to merit their continued patronage.

In addition to being outspoken against Japanese immigrants, Flowers was also passionately against the actions of the nation of Japan. He believed that it was Japan's responsibility to restrict immigration in order to remove the threat of future international trouble.⁷⁵ Flowers even accused Japan of running a smuggling ring to bring stowaway Japanese into the United States.⁷⁶ Finally, he asks the question, "How can this nation enter into international conference with a nation [Japan], that so shamefully violates sacred international agreements, at the same time hypocritically professes and reiterates again and again its enduring friendship for America. Lying diplomacy is the curse for civilization."⁷⁷ Although editorials in the same vein continue until the passage of immigration restrictions, Flowers never referred to the *nikkei* residents with a similar attitude. Nowhere in the paper did he accuse Magotaro Akita

⁷⁵ "Editorial," *The Burlington Journal*, August 8, 1919, 2

⁷⁶ "Editorial," *The Burlington Journal*, December 2, 1920, 2.

⁷⁷ "Lying Diplomacy," *The Burlington Journal*, September 2, 1921, 2.

of dishonesty or deceit. He never called Matsu Akita a stowaway or expressed concern that the Akita children, and later the Shimadas, Maekawas and Takagis were part of an attempt to take over the West Coast or had maintained loyalty to Japan.

The anti-Japanese rhetoric died down after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which was designed to reduce immigration and effectively prohibited the immigration of aliens ineligible for citizenship. Japan, for example, was allowed a total of 100 immigrants each year. With the threat of Japanese immigration effectively ended, the anti-Japanese attitudes decreased in influence and anti-Japanese editorials ceased. In fact, Louis Flowers' final anti-Japanese editorial, "Crafty Orientals," was published on October 3, 1924. No additional anti-Japanese editorials appeared between October 1924 and January 1929, when Flowers finalized the sale of the *Journal* to Mr. Knowles Blair. Anti-Japanese sentiment reappeared briefly with the Manchurian Incident, but did not come back into focus until the Sino-Japanese War. By that time, Flowers had retired and a new editor was in charge of the *Journal*.

DISTRUST AROUND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Even though the people of Burlington were not protesting against specific actions of local Japanese residents, the attitude of editor Flowers promoted in and by the *Journal* indicated that Burlington did have similarities to other communities in the Pacific Northwest, both in the United States and Canada. In Wapato, Washington, whites claimed that the *issei* were monopolizing the land and that the fertile soil should be in the hands of white Americans, a sentiment that only strengthened after World War I.⁷⁸ In Idaho, Japanese farmers faced an Alien Land Law, an anti-miscegenation law, and a governor who refused to allow additional Japanese

⁷⁸ Gail M. Nomura, "Becoming 'Local' Japanese: *Issei* Adaptive Strategies on the Yakama Indian Reservation, 1906-1923," in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 48-57.

to settle in his state in the weeks prior to the internment and incarceration on the Pacific Coast.⁷⁹ In British Columbia's Fraser Valley, the Japanese were viewed as a threat to white Protestant customs and beliefs, as well as driving white Vancouver farmers out of business. In response, the *issei* faced an increasing vocal demand for a provincial Alien Land Law.⁸⁰

The anti-Japanese sentiment that Louis Flowers expressed existed across the Pacific Northwest. What was unique in Burlington was the lack of visible follow-through in response to those opinions. While Flowers was outspoken against Japanese-Americans, there was no evidence in the *Journal* that he or anyone else ever acted on those sentiments. For example, one of the areas of Washington most affected by the anti-Japanese sentiment was the town of Wapato, the former home of the Takagi family. The *Wapato Independent* was staunchly anti-Japanese and printed numerous articles encouraging the exclusion of Japanese; in essence the *Independent* supported the American Legion and the Grange in their attempts to rid the area of the "Oriental menace." Together the Grange and the American Legion worked to stop the leasing of Yakama reservation land to the Japanese and to force them to leave the area after their current leases expired. They worked to try to convince the region, the state, and the nation of the danger the Japanese presence posed, ultimately agitating strongly for the Immigration Act of 1924.⁸¹ Although Flowers publically opposed the lease of Skagit farmland to the Japanese, neither the American Legion nor the Grange ever organized public meetings or placed ads in the *Journal* to convince people to not lease their land.

In the Oregon town of Hood River, the situation was even worse than in Wapato. Here, the visible *nikkei* community came under intense pressure and physical attack. In 1919, the Hood

⁷⁹ Robert C. Sims, "The 'Free Zone' *Nikkei*: Japanese Americans in Idaho and Eastern Oregon in World War II," in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest*, 237-241.

⁸⁰ Michiko Midge Ayukawa, *Hiroshima Immigrants in Canada, 1891-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 70-72.

⁸¹ Thomas Heuterman, *The Burning Horse*, 53-70.

River Anti-Asiatic Association was formed, even though Japanese made up only 4% of the population. The Japanese American residents faced unfriendly attitudes, derogatory letters to the editor and even physical attacks on their property. The situation only became worse as the Japanese settlers began purchasing land prior to the passage of Oregon's Alien Land Law.⁸² Although similar attitudes were again present in the *Burlington Journal*, no Anti-Asiatic Association was formed and there were no reports of physical attacks or printed letters to the editor. The feelings were comparable, but in Burlington there were no coinciding actions.

Throughout the early 1900s and lasting until the passage of the Immigration Act in 1924, the *issei* continued to lose the rights and privileges enjoyed by Americans of European descent. The California Alien Land Law denied *issei* in California the privilege of owning land and later amendments disallowed long leases and holding land in the name of their citizen children. The Ozawa case in 1922 finally and completely removed any hope of being allowed naturalization, thereby denying them any semblance of political power. Anti-miscegenation laws in California, Arizona, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah banned the Japanese and other Asians from marrying whites, while other laws prohibited white women from working with Japanese men.⁸³ A proposed amendment to the United States Constitution advocated retroactively limiting citizenship to those whose parents were eligible for naturalization, and in British Columbia, even citizens of Japanese ancestry were denied the right to vote based on their race, effectively limiting their employment options as well.⁸⁴

⁸² Lauren Kessler, *Stubborn Twig*, 65-72.

⁸³ Although anti-miscegenation bills were proposed in Washington State during this time, none became law. The only anti-miscegenation law ever in effect in Washington was repealed prior to Washington becoming a state.

⁸⁴ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976), 139-145, 157-158.

DISSONANCE IN BURLINGTON

Although the *Burlington Journal* displayed many of the same attitudes as other areas of the Pacific Northwest in the 1910s and 1920s, there were no anti-Asiatic leagues being formed, no physical violence, no businesses established to drive the Akitas out of town nor public calls to take business to the photographer in Mount Vernon or another nearby city. In fact, although Flowers was incredibly outspoken against Japan and Japanese immigration, he never spoke out against Akita or the other Japanese families that lived in the region. In addition, Lilly Studio continued to place advertisements in the *Journal*. Located near a grocery store, a jeweler, a barber and a lunch shop in the downtown shopping district, Akita could have limited his advertisements to window signs and word of mouth. Instead, he chose to advertise in the *Journal*.

While speaking out frequently against the Japanese-Americans, Flowers made the decision to almost completely ignore the Klan activity in the area. In 1923 and 1924, the Ku Klux Klan had a significant presence in the Pacific Northwest, including in the Skagit Valley. Klan activity was particularly strong in Sedro Woolley, the next town upriver from Burlington.⁸⁵ Although there was clear Klan activity in the region, their only appearance in the *Burlington Journal* was a March 30, 1923 article about a Klan meeting which was held at the Oddfellows Hall. Other than that edition, neither the Klan nor their positions appear in the *Journal*. Flowers did not publically promulgate anti-black racism nor defend against it, in contrast to his clear anti-Japanese positions.

Even though Flowers' position was anti-Japanese, Akita was treated in the *Journal* like other citizens. When he came down with the influenza, it was mentioned along with his

⁸⁵ "Ku Klux Klan Invades Local Church, Klansmen Give Money," *Sedro-Woolley Courier Times*, 11 September, 1924.

prognosis for recovery.⁸⁶ The *Journal* printed when he made a trip to Seattle and praised his photographic work, describing it in various articles as clear, clean-cut, and excellent.⁸⁷ The *Journal* even agreed to partner with the Lilly Studio to help provide the photography and printing for the Burlington High School Annual.⁸⁸ And when the Great Kanto Earthquake struck Japan in 1923, with its epicenter under Akita's home island of Ōshima, it merited front page attention. Both the article and the accompanying editorial that week expressed sympathy and regret for what had happened and within three weeks of the earthquake, Burlington's Red Cross had already exceeded its quota of donations for the relief work in Japan, yet were still soliciting more. People were encouraged to drop off donations at Crossley's Jewelry Store, next door to the Lilly Studio.⁸⁹

Even though Flowers was clearly anti-Japanese, it appears that his prejudice did not extend to the Akita family. The Akitas might have been Japanese, but they were not a danger like all the other new immigrants coming to the United States. Even though Matsu Akita was a picture bride, something Flowers spoke out against frequently, he never had anything bad to say about her, before or after her marriage. And, by 1925, Magotaro Akita was appearing with other city businessmen in the Town News Notes and similar columns. For example, on September 4, 1925, he printed that "M. Akita, photographer of this city has succeeded this season in raising some fine specimens of cantaloupes in his splendid garden behind his photography parlor. The cantaloupes have ripened well and are of good flavor. Mr. Akita has thus demonstrated the fact

⁸⁶ "Town News Notes," *Burlington Journal*, February 13, 1920, 6.

⁸⁷ "Town News Notes," *Burlington Journal*, January 28, 1921, 6 and "Lilly Studio, Photographers," *Burlington Journal*, May 27, 1921, 6.

⁸⁸ "Burlington High School Steam Annual Progressing," *Burlington Journal*, January 19, 1923, 5.

⁸⁹ "Akita Fears Island Home Submerged in Awful Japan Disaster—72 Miles from Tokyo," *Burlington Journal*, September 7, 1923, 1, "Island Empire of the Orient, Stricken," *Burlington Journal*, September 7, 1923, 2, and "Contributions for Japanese Received at Local Red Cross," *Burlington Journal*, September 28, 1923, 1.

that melons can be added to the list of products of the Skagit Valley.”⁹⁰ This article serves no purpose politically and is not an advertisement. It simply provided basic community news, just like was provided for many other community members. So, although there were community members, like Louis Flowers, who held anti-Japanese opinions, those opinions did not seem to influence their interactions with the Akita and later Takagi families. Instead, they were viewed as contributing members to Burlington.

The town people’s acceptance of the Akita and Takagi families can also be viewed in light of their socio-economic status. In towns with large *nikkei* populations, like Wapato and Hood River, the majority of the *nikkei* were farmers, frequently struggling to make ends meet. Those who were businessmen served primarily the *nikkei* community and typically lived among them. In comparison, both the Akitas and Takagis were businessmen who served the mainstream Burlington society. According to the 1940 Census, Frank Takagi’s income in 1939 was \$1500. This income was higher than that of a truck driver, railroad worker or a cannery worker, but less than the town physician, the school principal, and the postmaster. Frank’s income placed him in the same socio-economic class as the local teachers, ministers and salesmen. Magotaro Akita, like many other sole proprietors, did not report a yearly income. However, like the Takagi children, the Akitas were able to graduate from high school and attend college, participate in sports, school activities and music lessons, making it possible to classify the Akita family as middle class as well.

Due to their middle class lifestyle, the Akita and Takagi families were able to participate in Burlington life. Although the children helped in the laundry and photography studio, there was still plenty of time for fun. Many farming families did not have that luxury. Even in nearby Blanchard, some of the Shimada and Maekawa sons left school early to work and the daughters

⁹⁰ “Locals,” *Burlington Journal*, September 4, 1925, 6.

participated in fewer school activities. The frequency with which the Takagi and Akita children participated in the community indicates not only their acceptance, but also hints at one of the reasons for that acceptance—their middle class lifestyle created the opportunity for shared experiences.

CHAPTER THREE: COMMUNITY

Instead of remaining isolated or on the outskirts of society, both the Akita and Takagi families worked hard to integrate themselves into the Burlington community. The downtown location of Magotaro Akita's photography studio put him in constant contact with business and community leaders. In addition, the children of both families attended the local public school and participated in a variety of activities with their peers. Valerie Matsumoto, in her book *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese-American Community in California, 1919-1982*, described education as a way to level the playing field. Not only did the educational achievements of the *nisei* reflect favorably on their family, the *nikkei* community, and Japan, an education was a way for the *nisei* to become culturally American.⁹¹ Finally, and possibly the most influentially, both the Akita and Takagi families were members of the Methodist Episcopal church and regularly participated in church activities. Bill Hosokawa, in his book *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*, stated that once in the United States, Japanese families were quickly exposed to Christianity. He said that many Japanese immigrants joined churches because they provided social, economic, educational and Americanizing functions. The churches in major cities like San Francisco and Seattle would provide a minister to facilitate marriages, a place to live for men who had just arrived, and even English Language classes for those who wished to learn.⁹² The major difference between the churches in the Seattle and San Francisco and the church the Akita and Takagi family joined in Burlington was that the churches in Seattle and San Francisco were frequently segregated.

⁹¹ Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 64-72.

⁹² Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 126-132.

THE CHURCH

Unlike Japanese Americans who lived in areas with a large *nikkei* population, the Takagis and Akitas did not have a separate Japanese Church to attend. Instead, they worshiped alongside and among the white community.⁹³ This shared worship and the participation in church activities helped the Takagis and Akitas to further participate in the Burlington community. The Takagi girls were active in the Junior League, an organization of women committed to developing the potential of women and improving communities, while the children of both families attended Sunday school.⁹⁴ Miyoko Takagi even attended the mid-winter Epworth League Institute with seven other young women and the minister.⁹⁵ The Epworth League was a Methodist association for young adults who desired to build young adult ministry programs within their churches.⁹⁶ In later years, the Takagi girls and Nancy Akita were members of the Crusader Club, which was a religious club open to young adults, both male and female. The Crusaders traditionally met on Thursday evenings, but occasionally met for church services or other Sunday evening activities as well. Many of the members of the club were also members of the various Sunday school classes of the young women while they were growing up.⁹⁷ For the Akitas, involvement in the church began even before Lilly's birth. In 1915, Magotaro Akita helped create the missionary display that was sent to the Panama Fair, and in 1916 he gave a demonstration of Japanese writing to the Baptist young people while one of the leaders wore a dress of Mrs. Akita's, which she had made out of silk spun from worms her mother had raised.⁹⁸

⁹³ Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 127.

⁹⁴ "Mission and Vision," The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc., accessed November 17, 2013, www.ajli.org.

⁹⁵ "Attend Institute," *Burlington Journal*, December 29, 1933.

⁹⁶ "Epworth League: An Association for Young Adults," <http://epworthleague.org>.

⁹⁷ Numerous mentions of the Crusaders are found in the society section of the *Burlington Journal*. One example from October 17, 1941, tells of a meeting held at the Takagi home at which Nancy Akita was elected treasurer.

⁹⁸ "Burlington at Exposition: Local M. E. Church Sends Missionary Display to Panama Fair," *Burlington Journal*, February 26, 1915, 1, and "Baptist Young People Program on Japan," *Burlington Journal*, April 28, 1916, 5.

Although the families, especially the children, were active in their church, the question could arise of if the families' church attendance was because of their faith or if it was a way to create a place for themselves in an otherwise white community or if it was a combination of the two. As *issei*, Togo and Matsu Akita and Frank and Kita Takagi were most likely raised with the teachings of Shinto. Although officially classified as a religion, Japanese State Shinto was more of a promotion of a Japanese way of life with the Emperor at the head, especially after the Meiji Restoration in 1868.⁹⁹ Because Shinto represented both a political ideology and the history of Japan, rather than strong religious beliefs, it was possible for Japanese to also follow other religions.¹⁰⁰ Both Buddhism and Christianity had a history of influence in Japan, and a number of Japanese converted to either Buddhism or Christianity while still living in Japan. Even more converted to Christianity during their time in the United States, as both San Francisco and Seattle offered a variety of Christian churches, many run by Japanese or Japanese missionaries and geared toward the Japanese immigrants, although both also supported a Buddhist Temple in later years.

Buddhism first came to Seattle in 1896, and when Reverend Hoshin Fujii took over the Seattle Buddhist Temple in 1908, there were congregations looking to build temples in places as discrete as Auburn, Vancouver, B.C., Spokane, and Yakima. By 1908, the Seattle Temple housed a dormitory for boys and played host to a local Japanese Language School. During his fourteen years as minister in Seattle, Reverend Fujii officiated at the weddings of over 700 "boat brides" or picture brides, including the wedding of Frank and Kita Takagi in 1912.¹⁰¹ It is unclear

⁹⁹ Peter Duus, *Modern Japan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 88.

¹⁰⁰ A history of ancient Japan based on the teachings of Shinto can be found in *The Kojiki: Records of Ancient Matters* trans. Basil Hall Chamberlain (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1981).

¹⁰¹ Ronald E. Magden, "Buddhism Comes to Seattle and King County," in Ronald E. Magden, *Mukashi Mukashi: Long, Long Ago: The First Century of the Seattle Buddhist Church* (Seattle: Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple, 2011).

why the Takagis chose to be married at the Buddhist church, but it is possible that either one or both were Buddhist at the time of their marriage, or it is possible that Frank simply had connections to the church through the Japanese community in Wapato, which was 75% Buddhist.¹⁰²

Married two years after the Takagis, Togo Akita also had the option of being married by Reverend Fujii at the Buddhist Church. Instead, Togo chose to be married at the Japanese Baptist Church. Reverend Okazaki was also very willing to officiate for the U.S. weddings of picture brides. Because Togo chose to be married in the Baptist church instead of the Buddhist church, it was likely that either he or his wife had converted to Christianity prior to their marriage. Since Togo had been living in the United States for more than a decade at the time of the wedding, he is the more likely candidate for conversion, especially since he had been living in a white community without the support of a Buddhist temple nearby. Because the Japanese Baptist church in Seattle was the largest Japanese church, it was logical for Togo to be married there, even though the family attended the Methodist church in Burlington and not the Baptist church. In addition, Akita's college level education and comparative fluency in English open the possibility of exposure to the Missionary colleges in Japan. His willingness to settle outside of a larger Japanese community in the United States can also infer a conversion, since he did not require the support of the Buddhist community which could only be found among other *issei*.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

One of the ways to provide evidence of Magotaro's role in the Burlington community was through his presence in the *Burlington Journal*. Although mentions of the other adults were rare, Magotaro and the children appeared frequently. The children, who had been born and raised

¹⁰² Heuterman, *The Burning Horse*, 84.

in the United States, had the easiest time interacting with the larger white community, and their acceptance into the Burlington community was easy to follow. Magotaro was intentional about his interactions as well, which was reflected in the myriad of ways he was mentioned in the *Journal*. The other adults did not appear to seek out the larger Burlington community to the extent that Magotaro did, and so there are fewer mentions of Matsu Akita and Frank and Kita Takagi.

Magotaro was a visible figure in the Burlington community. In fact, the 1931 *Tinas Coma* included a photograph of Magotaro carrying his camera captioned “Togo, the Cameraman” in a collage of candid photos.¹⁰³ Both Matsu Akita and Kita Takagi remained in the background. As housewives, their priorities were taking care of the home and the children. Neither belonged to the women’s social clubs and most of the M.E. women’s showers and other activities did not include a list of attendees, so it was not possible to determine if they attended. Although Frank’s job involved interacting with people at the laundry, he was not out in the community as much as Magotaro. Because of this, it was not surprising that there were fewer mentions of the Takagis and Matsu Akita. The sole individual reference to Kita Takagi was when she won a ribbon at the Burlington Garden Club’s annual flower show in 1939, but there are no other mention of her or Frank, except as the parents of one of their children, until a brief statement after the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹⁰⁴ Matsu Akita merited a few more mentions, although hers were also primarily related to her position in the family. She was mentioned as arriving as Magotaro’s bride and in the birth announcements of her children. She was also listed as an audience member at her children’s recitals and her brief illness was mentioned in 1928. She did earn personal attention when the Baptist Young People presented a program on Japan and used a dress she made as part

¹⁰³ *Tinas Coma*, 1931, 42.

¹⁰⁴ “23 Win Awards at Flower Show,” *Burlington Journal*, September 22, 1939, 4.

of their presentation.¹⁰⁵ Her only other mention was in regards to dinner guests she and Togo had on February 19, 1936. The article, found on the front page of that week's *Burlington Journal*, announced that Mr. and Mrs. Eme Tsukimoto of Japan were dinner guests and included that Mr. Tsukimoto, an oyster man here on a speaking tour of the United States, was a lifelong friend of Togo Akita.¹⁰⁶

The Tsukimotos were not the only visitors the Akita family hosted. In addition to gathering with local friends, the Akitas also entertained other guests, which merited the traditional notices placed in the *Journal* to report the visits of out-of-town guests. Magotaro was referred to as good friends with G. Nakazawa, a farmer in the area, and even traveled to Seattle for his funeral. His friend George Kobashi of Seattle had an extended visit with the family, during his visit he assisted in the photography studio as well. In 1922, H. Tomoka, a newspaper man from Tokyo, also stayed with the family.¹⁰⁷ Akita worked hard to maintain his friendships with other *issei* and also to stay active and involved in the Burlington community as an individual.

Togo Akita consistently put forth effort to remain a valued part of the Burlington community. He was a devoted supporter of Burlington High School athletics, even before his children were old enough to participate. In 1926, as the football team struggled, Akita decided to present the team with a good luck omen during an assembly on October 22. The omen was a large painting of a tiger's head which he had done. When asked about the significance of the tiger's head, Akita responded that "the tiger was the 'King of Beasts;' strong, courageous, brave and that our Tiger team must be one of strength." In the article, Mr. Akita was referred to as a

¹⁰⁵ "Baptist Young People Program on Japan," *Burlington Journal*, April 28, 1916, 5.

¹⁰⁶ "Visits from Japan," *Burlington Journal*, February 21, 1936, 1. For more information on the work of J. Emy Tsukimoto, see E. N. Steele, "The Immigrant Oyster (*Ostrea Gigas*) Now Known as The Pacific Oyster." Available at the Sea Grant Washington website, <http://wsg.washington.edu/communications/onlinepubs.html>

¹⁰⁷ "Burlington Notes," *Bellingham Herald*, January 12, 1922, 3.

“firm friend and staunch supporter of B. H. S.”¹⁰⁸ A miniature of this drawing was included on the first main page of the 1927 *Tinas Coma*. Alongside the miniature was the following description, “The students of B.H.S. wish to express our appreciation for the tiger picture given to us by Mr. Akita. The picture, which you see in miniature here, hangs in our auditorium as an inspiration for all Burlington students.”¹⁰⁹

Akita was also one of the speakers at that season’s football banquet, which was given to honor the Tigers, their fathers, coach, faculty and friends.¹¹⁰ The following season he gave a speech at the football banquet which compared the team’s efforts to trout fishing; training hard, having patience, and finally winning the last games of the season.¹¹¹ At the 1931 Burlington High School Annual Football Banquet, honoring the championship football team that year, Akita was one of the few men listed who gave words of inspiration and appreciation to the team. Of the over 100 people present at the banquet, only five were listed by name: American Legion Commander Albert Egbert, Dr. W. L. Jackson, Guy Norris (one of the leading and wealthiest citizens in the town), State Senator W. J. Knutzen, and Togo Akita.¹¹² He was also a participant in the 1937 banquet, presenting the team captain with an enlarged photo of himself in uniform.¹¹³

In addition to being a huge supporter of the football team, Akita also supported other activities at the school and in the community. He was praised by basketball Coach Mickelwait for his enthusiasm and gifts—a free picture for any boy who shot 100% from the free throw line in any game. He also presented the school with mounted photos of each member of the championship basketball team.¹¹⁴ He was frequently at the school to take photos of teams,

¹⁰⁸ “Blue and Gold,” *Burlington Journal*, November 5, 1926, 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Tinas Coma*, 1927, 5.

¹¹⁰ “Blue and Gold,” *Burlington Journal*, December 17, 1926, 3.

¹¹¹ “Burlington High School Football Team Entertained at Banquet,” *Burlington Journal*, December 2, 1927, 1.

¹¹² “Grid Banquet Honors Team,” *Burlington Journal*, November 27, 1931, 1.

¹¹³ “75 Attend Annual Banquet for Gridders,” *Burlington Journal*, December 10, 1937, 1.

¹¹⁴ “Basketball Championship Banner Awarded to Tigers,” *Burlington Journal*, March 24, 1933.

classes and other events. He provided Japanese records for the high school Girls Club to have an “Oriental” party, even sending to Seattle for them.¹¹⁵ Akita was credited with helping raise money from local businessmen to improve the city ball park, providing photo souvenirs for grade school students and for high school athletes, and stopping by the *Journal*’s office to show off fresh cantaloupes and also the first sweet potato grown in Burlington.¹¹⁶

From the time of his arrival in Burlington and continuing into the 1940s, Togo Akita was visible in the *Journal*. More significantly, his presence is only indicated by his race twice, once in reference to the Great Kanto Earthquake’s epicenter being under his home island, and once on December 12, 1941, in which the Akitas and Takagis expressed their thanks on behalf of the Japanese in the community for the kindness they received following the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹¹⁷ Even the stories of his visitors from Japan made no mention of Togo Akita’s Japanese roots, just his lifelong friendship with the visitors.

Akita was comfortable in the community, and the community appeared comfortable with him. This can be demonstrated with three different examples: a hike to Mazama, a swimming trip to Bayview, and a night-blooming cactus. The first example revolved around a four-day hiking trip to Mazama, near Mount Baker. On August 20, 1929, Akita joined with eleven other people on a four-day hike through Bear Creek and on to Mazama. Akita’s purpose in this hike was to simply take photos of this little-known country. The hikers included a married couple from Avon and a minister and his son and daughter from Bellingham. In a time when some Japanese Americans were facing anti-miscegenation laws and laws which prohibited white women and Japanese males from working together, Akita was on a four-day backpacking trip

¹¹⁵ “High School Oriental Party,” *Burlington Journal*, October 4, 1929, 8.

¹¹⁶ “Togo Clicks,” *Burlington Journal*, June 9, 1933, 1, and “All in a Week,” *Burlington Journal*, October 14, 1938, 1.

¹¹⁷ “Japanese Thankful,” *Burlington Journal*, December 12, 1941, 1.

with all whites, including females and a young girl. Clearly the rest of the group, including the girl's father, was not worried about Akita's presence.¹¹⁸

The second example involved a swimming trip to Bayview. On Sunday, July 7, 1929, Mr. Akita's car was hit by Frank Johnson of South Bellingham as Akita was crossing Pacific Highway. Akita was returning from a day of swimming at Bayview and was transporting both his own and his neighbor's children. There were no injuries and both men decided to pay for their own limited repairs.¹¹⁹ In 1929, the Akitas had no near Japanese neighbors, which meant the neighbor children he was transporting were white. The article also mentioned that it was only the children who were being transported. While Joseph Cheney was advocating for an "anti-Jap" law to protect white children in Wapato and Japanese in Vancouver were only allowed at the Crystal Pool on Tuesdays from 10:30 am to 12:30 so that they would not intermix with the white children, a Japanese man in Burlington was driving white children and Japanese children in the same car so they could all go swimming together under his sole supervision.¹²⁰

The final example occurred on the evening of August 19, 1940, when Akita was summoned to the home of Mrs. Addie Hungerford. She was the proud owner of an ancient night-blooming cereus cactus plant that only bloomed one night a year. That evening nine blooms were visible, so Togo was called in to photograph it.¹²¹ Togo was the local photographer, but there was a white photographer in Mount Vernon, and Akita Studios also developed film, so anyone could have taken photos. Mrs. Hungerford was comfortable enough with Akita to invite him into her home in the evening; he was also secure in his standing in the community that he was willing to go. That the article was focused on the blooming cereus cactus and not on the fact that Akita

¹¹⁸ "M. Akita to Take Photos of Mazama," *Burlington Journal*, August 23, 1929, 1.

¹¹⁹ "M. Akita in Hiway Crash," *Burlington Journal*, July 12, 1929, 1.

¹²⁰ Heuterman, *The Burning Horse*, 37 and Adachi, *The Enemy*, 172.

¹²¹ "All in a Week," *Burlington Journal*, August 23, 1940.

was present to photograph it was also significant, because it shows that these circumstances were not out of the ordinary. In fact, Akita was often mentioned as taking various photographs around town.

THE CHILDREN: THE FRUITS OF EDUCATION

While Magotaro Akita worked to negotiate his position in Burlington, his children found themselves encompassed in the larger Burlington community—an experience that was markedly different from many *nisei* in the Pacific Northwest. In *No-No Boy*, John Okada's protagonist Ichiro reflects the feelings of many *nisei* growing up with the specter of racism and prejudice, struggling to find their identity. Ichiro says:

When one is born in America and learning to love it more and more every day without thinking it, it is not an easy thing to discover suddenly that being American is a terribly incomplete thing if one's face is not white and one's parents are Japanese of the country Japan which attacked America... It's because we're American and because we're Japanese and sometimes the two don't mix. It's alright to be German and American or Italian and American or Russian and American but, as things turned out, it wasn't alright to be Japanese and American. You had to be one or the other.¹²²

Nisei in communities across the Pacific Northwest felt the pressures of their dual backgrounds drawing them apart. Forced to live up to the expectations and communal goals of their parents and yet also embrace the individuality advocated by the American schools they attended, *nisei* had to negotiate carefully between the two worlds. One of the ways many *nisei* worked to negotiate their surroundings was through academic excellence, something valued in both cultures. In Burlington, the Takagi and Akita children were no different. The children were expected to do well in school and encouraged to attend college, as in *nikkei* communities,

¹²² Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 54, 91.

education was seen as a way to both reflect positively back on their families and culture and also to fit into white society and have the opportunity for a better life.¹²³

From first grade through law school, the Takagi and Akita children repeatedly topped the school honor rolls. For example, in the third quarter of the 1932-1933 school year, Hiram and Robert Akita and Michiko and Miyoko Takagi were all on the honor roll. In addition, Hiram Akita was valedictorian for the Class of 1934, while his brother Robert was ranked seventh academically.¹²⁴ Lilly Akita appeared on the honor roll regularly before her death, and Harry Takagi was the class of 1930 salutatorian and presented a graduation address on “The Problem of Peace.” He went on to become an honor student at the University of Washington, where he earned a Law Degree, one of the thirty-two men who passed the Bar Examination in February of 1940.¹²⁵ After graduation from Burlington High School, Hiram, Miyoko, and Michiko all eventually attended the University of Washington, where Hiram was frequently seen on the honor roll. Michiko graduated after the fall quarter in 1938 with a Bachelor of Arts in Home Economics, while Miyoko graduated following the fall 1940 quarter with a Bachelor of Arts in Literature.¹²⁶

The younger children were also gifted academically. Edith and Calvin Takagi and Nancy Akita were fixtures on the high school honor roll while in attendance. Edith was one of the honor students asked to speak at her graduation in 1939, after which she too attended the University of

¹²³ Gary Y. Okihiro, *Storied Lives*, 4; Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 87; Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 37-41; and David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*, 17-37.

¹²⁴ “High Scholarship Roll,” *The Burlington Journal*, April 14, 1933, 1. “Akita leads class of ’34,” *Burlington Journal*, April 13, 1934, 1.

¹²⁵ “Large class will Graduate in June: June Walters and Harry Takagi Win Class Honors,” *Burlington Journal*, May 9, 1930, 1; “Burlington Boy Honor Student,” *Burlington Journal*, October 14, 1932, 1; and “Passes Bar Exam,” *Burlington Journal*, February 16, 1940, 4. This article is a reprint of one that appeared on February 14 in a Seattle Paper, “13 Seattle Men Pass Bar Test,” *Seattle Daily Times*, February 12, 1940, 2.

¹²⁶ “Two from Burlington on U.W. Honor Roll,” *Burlington Journal*, May 6, 1938, 8; “Two from Burlington Graduate from U.W.,” *Burlington Journal*, February 10, 1939, 1; and “Miyoko Takagi Awarded a B.A. Degree at University,” *Burlington Journal*, January 24, 1941, 1.

Washington.¹²⁷ Sophomore Nancy was initiated into the Honor Society and Calvin, only a freshman in 1941-1942, was repeatedly high on the honor roll, but both were forced to leave Burlington before earning any further honors.

In addition to being good students, the children also won academic honors and recognitions that went beyond simply appearing on the honor roll. In his senior year, Harry Takagi made front page news by scoring twenty-fifth of over 200,000 students who took the national Every Pupil English test.¹²⁸ The Every Pupil Scholarship Contest was offered by the Kansas State Teacher's College and was referred to as the largest scholarship test in the world. Students from 25 different states participated, totaling over 330,000 high school students. Students who were in the top 1% in each subject were proclaimed scholarship winners.¹²⁹ Burlington students participated in these tests in Physics, Algebra, Plane Geometry, the Constitution, American History, Latin, English, and Literature. During the two years that Burlington high school and grade school students participated in the scholarship contest, the only student to receive one of the scholarships was Harry Takagi.

In 1934, Hiram was part of a team of students who won fourth place among 50 schools at the American Chemical Society's test on April 21. The team was praised on the front page of the *Burlington Journal*.¹³⁰ Instead of including Hiram on the team, regardless of his abilities, many other communities would have refused to allow him to compete. *Nisei* students, who made up approximately 25% of the student population at Livingston High School in Merced, California in

¹²⁷ "B.H.S. Commencement Speakers Announced," *Burlington Journal*, May 12, 1939, 1, and "Last Year's BHS Graduates Find Various Fields of Activity," *Burlington Journal*, September 29, 1939, 4.

¹²⁸ "Harry Takagi Twenty-Fifth in National English Test," *Burlington Journal*, May 16, 1930, 1.

¹²⁹ "Local Hi Students Participate for College Scholarships," *Burlington Journal*, January 11, 1929, 1, and "More Exams Scheduled for April: Burlington Grade Students will take Kansas Test Next," *Burlington Journal*, March 29, 1929, 3.

¹³⁰ "Chem Students Win State Honor," *Burlington Journal*, May 12, 1933, 1.

the 1920s and 1930s, were frequently ignored and their achievements were overlooked.¹³¹

According to Bill Hosokawa, it was common for *nisei* students to be ignored. His book recounts stories of *nisei* being denied high school offices and participation in contests, frequently due to public outcries and societal pressure.¹³² In Burlington, it would have been easy to leave Hiram off the team, keeping him from winning awards and recognition, but the teachers, school and community did not agitate for that to happen. If they were worried about *nisei* students gaining local, state or national recognition, they could have worked to stop them from participating.

During her junior year in 1937, Edith Takagi was one of the students who entered the William C. Gorgas Memorial Institute Essay contest. Although she did not win, the article announcing Enid Lagerlund's victory also credited Edith Price and Edith Takagi with submitting exceptionally well-written papers.¹³³ This demonstrated another instance where Edith Takagi received recognition for her academic abilities which did not have to be given—it would have been simple to not allow her to submit a paper in the first place or to choose not to recognize her exceptional submission. While other communities were refusing to recognize the talents and abilities of *nisei* students, hiding them or finding ways to subsume them under the achievements of white students, in Burlington the achievements of the Takagi and Akita children were being celebrated.

The children also received recognition for their achievements outside of the classroom through their participation in local and community competitions. Harry, Miyoko, Edith, and Nancy were all recognized for their participation in WCTU competitions. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was founded in 1874 by women who were concerned about the

¹³¹ Matsumoto, *Farming*, 75-76.

¹³² Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 168.

¹³³ "The B. H. S. Reporter Says..." *Burlington Journal*, December 17, 1937, 2, and "The B. H. S. Reporter Says..." *Burlington Journal*, January 28, 1938, 4.

problems alcohol was causing in their families and in society. As part of their effort to promote temperance and raise awareness, they sponsored written and declamatory competitions at the local, state and national level.¹³⁴ Harry received the award in the grade school category in 1926 for his essay on alcohol and tobacco. For his first place finish of over 400 essays submitted, Harry received a prize of \$2.50 and was also sent on to the state level, where he won second place overall, with a prize of \$3.00.¹³⁵

In 1931, although she did not win, Miyoko was one of the contestants at the WTCU Program held at the Methodist Church. In 1934, Edith won first prize in the seventh- and eighth-grade division of the county WCTU contest with an essay that later went on to win first prize out of hundreds of student submissions at the state WCTU contest. This achievement was highly celebrated in Burlington—it was written up on the front page of the *Burlington Journal* two weeks in a row. Edith was also presented an award by the WCTU county president at a school assembly in December.¹³⁶ Her achievements were celebrated by the community. For example, the November 23, 1934, edition of the *Burlington Journal's* "All in a Week column" included the following article:

Here's a Burlington girl who deserves a lot of credit and some bouquets she hasn't received yet—Edith Takagi. The young miss was recently awarded first prize in a state-wide W.C.T.U. essay contest for seventh and eighth grade students. Finishing first among hundreds of youngsters from scores of schools throughout the state is some honor. Congratulations, Edith!¹³⁷

¹³⁴ "Welcome to the WCTU," Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Last updated October 20, 2011, accessed December 1, 2012, <http://www.wctu.org>.

¹³⁵ "W. C. T. U. Awards Grade School Prizes," *Burlington Journal*, April 9, 1926, 1, and "W. C. T. U. Essays and Poster Contest Prize Winners," *Burlington Journal*, May 7, 1926, 1.

¹³⁶ "Girls Wins Silver Medal with Indian War Story," *Burlington Journal*, December 14, 1931, 1; "Burlington Essays Win County Honors," *Burlington Journal*, April 27, 1934, 1; "Wins first Prize," *Burlington Journal*, November 16, 1934, 1; "All in a Week," *Burlington Journal*, November 23, 1934, 1; and "Certificate Awarded Miss Takagi for Essay," *Burlington Journal*, December 21, 1934, 1.

¹³⁷ "All in a Week," *Burlington Journal*, November 23, 1934, 1.

Edith was honored for her accomplishment, the county president of the WCTU presented her an award at a school assembly, and the editor of the *Journal*, Archie Dingwall, wanted to make sure that the community recognized her achievement, without any need to emphasize or even mention her race.¹³⁸ She was simply a Burlington girl.

While Harry and Edith both received honors for their written submissions, Nancy was honored for her declamatory submission. In 1938, Nancy won the silver medal for the best reading of a temperance article at the local WCTU contest held at the Methodist Church on March 13. This accomplishment led to an invitation to present her reading at the Alpha Club meeting the following week. Her silver medal finish also provided her the opportunity to enter at the county level, where she was not only the youngest contestant at 11 years old but also won the gold medal. This achievement also merited front-page mention in the *Burlington Journal*.¹³⁹

In addition to participating in the WCTU competitions, the children also took part in other contests sponsored by the *Burlington Journal*. In 1936, Michiko Takagi was one of the winners of two free theater tickets for being one of the few people who correctly guessed all the proverbs in the *Journal* competition that summer. Her success in this competition required a broad knowledge of proverbs and also a higher than average understanding of the English language and how pieces of words fit together. Nancy enjoyed the winning feeling in 1933, when the bird house she and her father built won second place in the first and second grade division. For this accomplishment she received tickets to the Burlington High School play.¹⁴⁰

One final contest that also serves to demonstrate how the Akita and Takagi children were welcomed as members of the community was the 1929 contest to name the new Burlington

¹³⁸ "Certificate Awarded Miss Takagi for Essay," *Burlington Journal*, December 21, 1934, 1.

¹³⁹ "Nancy Ann Akita Wins Declamatory Contest," *Burlington Journal*, March 13, 1938, 1; "Alpha Club Meeting Enjoyed," *Burlington Journal*, March 25, 1938; and "Local Youngster Wins Gold Medal," *Burlington Journal*, September 30, 1938, 1.

¹⁴⁰ "Prizes for Bird Houses Awarded," *Burlington Journal*, May 5, 1933, 4.

Elementary school that had just been built. All grade school children were encouraged to submit their name suggestion and a one-sentence explanation to the *Burlington Journal*. The winning entry would be selected by a group of five community judges, a representative from the Alpha Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the City Council, the Oddfellows, and the Masons. Not only would the winner have the honor of naming the new school, the winner would also be the recipient of a \$6.00 prize. Over 200 entries were submitted and the winning name was Roosevelt, honoring former president Teddy Roosevelt. The top three finishers all suggested Roosevelt as the name, but the winner was chosen based on his reasoning. He suggested Roosevelt because “his life story is inspiring to the growing boys and girls.” The winner was Robert Akita.¹⁴¹ The April 19, 1929, edition which announced the winner of the contest also printed a photo of Robert Akita on the front page, pointing at the new grade school which he named.¹⁴² The following school year Togo Akita presented the school with a large framed photograph of Teddy Roosevelt for the school to display in honor of its namesake.¹⁴³ This was another situation where it could have been simple to avoid recognizing a *nisei*, Robert Akita. He was not the only student to submit the name Roosevelt for the school. The judges would have only had to select one of the other submissions to avoid presenting him with the prize money and recognition and no one would have questioned their decision. Instead, Robert was not only recognized as one of the top three submissions, he was named the winner, again demonstrating the difference between Burlington and many other communities.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ “Robert Akita Names School ‘Roosevelt’: Judges Select Japanese Student’s Entry for First,” *Burlington Journal*, April 19, 1929, 2.

¹⁴² “He Named It,” *Burlington Journal*, April 19, 1929, 1.

¹⁴³ “‘Togo’ Makes Gift,” *Burlington Journal*, May 16, 1930.

¹⁴⁴ See Michiko Midge Ayukawa, “Yasutaro Yamaga: Fraser Valley Berry Farmer, Community Leader, and Strategist,” in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest*, 71-94. This book selection includes the story of the “May Queen Affair” where the local white community protested the selection of a *nisei* May Queen. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston refers to experiencing similar prejudice after resettlement, where as a *nisei* she would not be chosen for honors simply due to her race in her book, *Farewell to Manzanar* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973).

CHAPTER FOUR: GROWING UP NISEI

In many *nikkei* communities, *nisei* were expected to act as a bridge between their *issei* parents and their Japanese heritage and the white community, especially after the end of immigration in 1924. In many circumstances, the parents spoke little to no English and had few interactions with the white community. *Nisei* were seen as responsible for dispelling any misunderstandings that might have led or would continue to lead to anti-Japanese movements.¹⁴⁵ Because they were Japanese by descent and American by birth and education, *nisei* were seen as the best available option to explain their culture and also Japan's foreign policy, especially after the Manchurian Incident and the Sino-Japanese War.¹⁴⁶

In Burlington, the Sino-Japanese War again brought the nation of Japan into the pages of the *Burlington Journal*. In numerous articles and editorials, the paper questioned Japan's motivation and expressed concern over the reaction of the rest of the world to Japan's aggressive behavior.¹⁴⁷ However, instead of pronouncing judgment against Japan, the editor used the *Journal* to inform and educate Burlington residents about the situation.

The editor, by this time a man named Archie Dingwall, was clearly concerned about the possibility of war with Japan and the global consequences of that war.¹⁴⁸ Dingwall took over the role of Editor and Publisher of the *Burlington Journal* on June 13, 1930 and replaced Knowles Blair, the Seattle publisher who had purchased the *Journal* in January 1929. Knowles had served as Editor and Publisher until Dingwall took the job. Dingwall was a native of Montana and a recent graduate of the University of Washington's Journalism school.¹⁴⁹ He was 21 years old at the time he became editor.

¹⁴⁵ Yuji Ichioka, "Kengakudan: The Origins of *Nisei* Study Tours of Japan," in *Before Internment*, 53.

¹⁴⁶ Yuji Ichioka, "Dai *Nisei* Mondai," 24-28.

¹⁴⁷ "There will be no War," *Burlington Journal*, February 26, 1932, 2, and *Burlington Journal*, May 20, 1932, 2.

¹⁴⁸ "The Truth about War," *Burlington Journal*, March 30, 1934, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Knowles Blair, "A Swan Song," *Burlington Journal*, June 13, 1930, 2.

In 1937, the Burlington Chamber of Commerce sponsored two different presentations on the Sino-Japanese War to be given on successive Tuesdays at Pat's Café at noon. The first week would consist of Japan's official version of the war, given by Kenji Ito, a Seattle Attorney, University of Washington graduate, and representative of the Japanese consulate. The following week Z. Ying Luh, the Chinese consul, would present China's official version of the war. In order to encourage attendance, the Chamber of Commerce was divided into two groups, both of which would earn points based on attendance. Both speakers also presented at the high school on their given weeks. These presentations were open to the public.¹⁵⁰ In Burlington, instead of simply siding with the Chinese, as much of the nation did, or requiring the *nisei* to attempt to defend the Japanese perspective on the war, city officials called in the experts and allowed each to explain their position—to the Chamber of Commerce, the high school, and the general public. Both Ito and Luh were also willing to take the time to answer questions after their presentations.¹⁵¹

After these presentations, the high school civics class also made a point of studying the history of China and Japan and students viewed movies from Japan and China during their noon movie time.¹⁵² Archie Dingwall and the leaders of Burlington appeared determined to not jump to conclusions about the actions of Japan, even if they were concerned about the repercussions. Finally, Dingwall set Burlington and the *Journal* apart by being intentional in his use of the word "jap." "Jap" was traditionally viewed as a three-letter epithet, a derogatory insult, something that

¹⁵⁰ "C. L. Plans 2 Big Programs: Japanese and Chinese Officials to Present Versions of War," *Burlington Journal*, November 12, 1937, 1.

¹⁵¹ "Japanese View of War Learned," *Burlington Journal*, November 19, 1937, 1, and "Chinese Viewpoint in War Described," *Burlington Journal*, November 26, 1937, 1.

¹⁵² "The BHS Reporter Says..." *Burlington Journal*, January 7, 1938, 1, and "The BHS Reporter Says..." *Burlington Journal*, February 4, 1938, 3.

would not be used in proper, respectable speech.¹⁵³ However, the word, and all its accompanying connotations were frequently used to refer to the Japanese Government, the people of Japan, and Japanese Americans. This derogatory term was used in polite conversation and in publications by people as high up as future President Franklin Roosevelt in his 1923 essay, “The Japs—A Habit of Mind.” The use of this dehumanizing term to apply to long-time American residents and even American citizens was common in many local newspapers and clearly had a detrimental psychological effect on the *nikkei* community.¹⁵⁴ In Burlington, however, editor Dingwall made certain to differentiate between the Japanese government and people of Japan, who he occasionally referred to as “japs” during the Sino-Japanese War and following, and Japanese Americans, whom he simply called Japanese.

For the Takagi and Akita children, instead of having to serve as a bridge between communities, or constantly trying to explain the actions of the Japanese government and military, they were able to simply grow up in an environment where their experiences were similar to those of their peers. They might have been asked questions about the situation in Japan, but they were not the only source of information. They were not the bridge between American society and Japanese actions; they were children. They went to school, played sports, took music lessons and were involved in Camp Fire Girls and Boy Scouts. They picked berries in the summer, played pranks on unsuspecting principals, and attended church and Sunday school. While many other *nisei* may have also participated in many of those rites of childhood, the atmosphere in Burlington was very different and resulted in a markedly different experience for the Takagis and Akitas as compared to *nisei* who grew up in areas with larger *nikkei* communities.

¹⁵³ Roger Daniels, “Words Do Matter: A Note on Inappropriate Terminology and the Incarceration of the Japanese Americans,” in *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest*, 196.

¹⁵⁴ Daniels, “Words Do Matter,” 195-196.

One of the easiest ways to get an idea of how the families were accepted into their community was to examine the ways in which the children participated in their school and community. Not only were the children involved in the community, but they also frequently earned, were chosen for, or elected to leadership positions, all of which were reported in the *Journal*, and without reference to their race.¹⁵⁵

While they all excelled academically, the Takagi and Akita children were more than just good students at school. They were also involved in a variety of activities. For example, according to the Burlington High School (BHS) yearbook for 1941-1942, the *Tinas Coma*, Nancy Akita was prominently mentioned in the sophomore class description as the editor of the *Blue and Gold*—the school newspaper. She also participated in tennis, the only inter-scholastic sport available to girls. She was part of the tumbling group, the Torch Club (for high scholastic honors), the Girls Athletic Association and on the staff of the *Tinas Coma*. Freshman Calvin Takagi was involved in band and played freshman basketball. He was also elected class president for the 1941-1942 school year. Edith Takagi was also involved in the Torch Club, even unanimously elected vice president her sophomore year, and also served as assistant editor of the *Blue and Gold* her junior year.¹⁵⁶

The older children also participated in school activities. Robert and Hiram were involved in the basketball program, while Hiram also wrote the weekly articles for the *Burlington Journal* for the 1931-1932 school year, and Robert was active in the band. Michiko, Miyoko, and Lilly all were members of the Glee Club, while Michiko was also part of the Torch Club.¹⁵⁷ Harry was

¹⁵⁵ The one exception was when Robert successfully named Roosevelt Elementary in 1929. In the article reporting his win, he was described as a Japanese student.

¹⁵⁶ “At the High School,” *Burlington Journal*, May 28, 1937, 1; “The B.H.S. Reporter Says...,” *Burlington Journal*, September 10, 1937, 1; and “Calvin Takagi Elected Freshman Class Prexy,” *Burlington Journal*, September 12, 1941, 1.

¹⁵⁷ “Annual High School Vodril Plays to Near Capacity House Friday,” *Burlington Journal*, November 11, 1932, 4, and “49 Graduate from B.H.S.” *Burlington Journal*, June 2, 1933, 1.

the sports editor of the *Blue and Gold* and frequently had articles appear in the *Burlington Journal* as well.¹⁵⁸ He was also nominated to serve in the position of secretary-treasurer for the student body his senior year, although he did not win the election.¹⁵⁹ In addition to high academic achievements, all the children found ways to be active and involved in their school community, which celebrated their accomplishments alongside the other children in the community.

The children's involvement was not limited to school, further showing their acceptance in the Burlington community. Michiko, Miyoko, Edith, and Nancy were all active in the Crusaders. The Takagis were occasional hosts of the society meetings, and Michiko served as secretary-treasurer. The following year, Nancy was elected treasurer.¹⁶⁰ Although Michiko's involvement ended with her marriage in November of 1941, the other three young women continued their participation, even after Pearl Harbor. An article printed in the February 13, 1942, *Journal* mentioned that week's meeting had been held at the home of Miyoko Takagi.¹⁶¹

In addition to her involvement with the Crusaders, Nancy was also a member of the Camp Fire Girls. The Camp Fire Girls were founded in 1910 as a service organization for girls following the creation of the Boy Scouts. The Camp Fire Girls prided itself on being the first interracial organization for girls in the United States.¹⁶² In Burlington, the girls in Nancy Akita's grade formed their Wetomachick Group with Mrs. Logia Hardin and Mrs. Swanson as their sponsors. The girls held progressive dinners, Valentines, Halloween and Christmas parties, and

¹⁵⁸ "Blue and Gold Staff," *Burlington Journal*, May 17, 1929, 6.

¹⁵⁹ "Four Prominent Juniors in Student 'Prexy' Race," *Burlington Journal*, May 17, 1929, 3.

¹⁶⁰ "Crusaders to Attend Special Meetings," *Burlington Journal*, March 28, 1941; "Crusaders Elect New Officers," *Burlington Journal*, October 17, 1941, 2; and "Crusaders Honor Miss Hauge," *Burlington Journal*, July 11, 1941, 4.

¹⁶¹ "Miss Takagi Hostess to Crusaders," *Burlington Journal*, February 13, 1942, 2.

¹⁶² "Welcome to Camp Fire," Camp Fire, accessed December 1, 2012, <http://campfireusa.org>.

bicycle trips, in addition to their regular meetings.¹⁶³ Although the group had adult sponsors, they also elected leadership from within the group. Her sophomore year, Nancy Akita was elected secretary.¹⁶⁴ She also was listed as in attendance at the Christmas party held December 22, 1941, at Georgia Crossley's home. Three weeks after the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, Nancy was still accepted as a member of the Camp Fire Girls.

Nancy was not the only Akita daughter to take part in the Camp Fire Girls. Lilly Akita was a member of the Nardi Group, which had Mrs. James Wallace as their sponsor. In addition to being a member of the group, Lilly also held leadership positions. She was elected scribe in March of 1929 and secretary in September 1929.¹⁶⁵ As a Camp Fire Girl, Lilly attended social gatherings and participated in a variety of activities, including a weekend camping trip to Lake Samish. Lilly, like Nancy, was the only *nisei* in her group, yet this did not limit their participation nor their ability to hold leadership roles.¹⁶⁶

Nancy Akita also made occasional guest appearances at the adult society meetings. After the Alpha Club conducted its necessary business each week, it always had some form of entertainment. In February of 1938, Nancy was part of a sextet of grade school girls who sang several numbers. She also sang two duets with Georgia Crossley at the Music and Art Club meeting in 1940 as part of a larger Music and Art program.¹⁶⁷ In addition, she presented the reading that won her a gold medal from the WCTU at an Alpha Club meeting in March of 1938.

¹⁶³ "Campfire Girls Enjoy Progressive Dinner," *Burlington Journal*, September 27, 1940, 4; "Campfire Girls Enjoy Party," *Burlington Journal*, December 13, 1940, 5; "Bicycle Trip and Party Enjoyed," *Burlington Journal*, February 14, 1941, 4; "Campfire Girls Enjoy Party," *Burlington Journal*, November 7, 1941, 4; and "Campfire Girls Enjoy Party," *Burlington Journal*, December 26, 1941, 3.

¹⁶⁴ "Campfire Girls Hold Meeting," *Burlington Journal*, September 26, 1941, 4.

¹⁶⁵ "Camp Fire Girls Elect Officers," *Burlington Journal*, March 29, 1929, 1, and "Officers Elected by Camp Fire Girls," *Burlington Journal*, September 6, 1929, 2.

¹⁶⁶ "Events in the Social Realm," *Burlington Journal*, May 10, 1929, 6.

¹⁶⁷ "Alpha Club Meets at Church," *Burlington Journal*, February 11, 1938, 3; "Alpha Club Meets Friday," *Burlington Journal*, February 25, 1938, 2; and "Club Enjoys Music and Art Program," *Burlington Journal*, March 22, 1940.

The majority of the social clubs and organizations in Burlington were made up of women. Clubs like the Willing Workers, Music and Art Club, WCTU and the various Ladies Aid Societies met in the early evening, a time of day when housewives and young women who still attended school could participate. Since most upper- and middle-class married women did not work outside of the home, they had the time to participate in a number of clubs. The men's clubs were less numerous but also attracted public attention. Groups like the American Legion and the Oddfellows merited frequent mention in the *Journal*, but were not open to boys or young men.

While the young women participated in the Crusaders, the Junior League and the Camp Fire Girls, the primary opportunity for young men to be involved in the community was through the Boy Scouts. On February 1, 1934, Boy Scout Troop 72 was organized at Lincoln Grade School. The Boy Scouts were led by Scoutmaster Karl Weber, a local first-grade teacher and two elected Boy Scout peer leaders, Kenneth Wright as senior patrol leader and Robert Akita as scribe. One of the first actions of the newly appointed Boy Scout troop was to respond to President Franklin Roosevelt's radio broadcast asking for help in collecting clothing and household furnishings for the poor by canvassing the city. In 1940 the Boy Scouts canvassed the city again, this time to help the city determine house numbers. In this group was Calvin Takagi, who had recently passed his tenderfoot test. He and fellow scout Jack Daniels were assigned to canvass Victoria and Oak Streets.¹⁶⁸

Although not involved with the Boy Scouts, Hiram Akita was visible in the community in other ways. As a student at Burlington High School, Hiram was responsible for the "High School Notes" column published in the *Burlington Journal*. After graduation, he returned to Burlington

¹⁶⁸ "Scout Troop is Organized Here," *Burlington Journal*, February 9, 1934; "Scout Name Patrol Leaders; 18 in Group," *Burlington Journal*, January 26, 1940, 1; "Parents See Work of Boy Scouts and Badges Awarded to 17 Lads," *Burlington Journal*, February 23, 1940, 1; and "Scouts will Canvass City," *Burlington Journal*, May 31, 1940, 1.

in the summers and covered the local community baseball league. In the summers of 1934 and 1935, articles bearing Hiram Akita's byline appeared on the front page of the *Journal*.¹⁶⁹ Robert also became visible in community media through his photographs, which appeared in the *Journal*, and also his role as a licensed shortwave radio broadcaster.¹⁷⁰

One thing that most of the Takagi and Akita children shared was an involvement in music—both at school in the band, orchestra and choral groups and at home through private lessons. As previously mentioned, Lilly Akita and Michiko and Miyoko Takagi were members of the Glee Club at Burlington High School.¹⁷¹ Miyoko also participated in the Glee Club at Mount Vernon Junior College and was highlighted as a previous BHS student when the college Glee Club performed at a high school assembly.¹⁷² Robert Akita played trombone in the band and orchestra and was so talented he was even sent early to a band and orchestra competition in Renton with one other student, Helen Griffith, to compete individually in solo events.¹⁷³ Burlington High School was the smallest of the over 20 schools that participated in the competition, some with bands and orchestras numbering 800 students, in comparison to the 25 who represented Burlington. Because of this, the *Journal* was proud of the “good” rating the band, orchestra and Robert received and of the “excellent” rating Helen Griffith received for her piano solo.¹⁷⁴ He also performed a solo at the spring band concert his senior year.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ “High School Notes,” *Burlington Journal*, November 13, 1931, 3; Hiram Akita, “Burlington and Anacortes to Scrap Sunday for Third,” *Burlington Journal*, June 1, 1934, 1; Hiram Akita, “Game with Sedro-Woolley Sunday has Title Bearing,” *Burlington Journal*, June 29, 1934, 1; Hiram Akita, “Locals Play at Coupeville,” *Burlington Journal*, June 7, 1935, 1; and Hiram Akita, “Win for Burlington Sunday would Clinch Play-off Spot,” *Burlington Journal*, June 28, 1935, 1.

¹⁷⁰ “All in a Week,” *Burlington Journal*, April 5, 1940, 1, and “7,000 Eat Burlington's Berry Sundae,” *Burlington Journal*, June 30, 1939, 1. The photo Robert took of the sundae was also published in the *Seattle Times*.

¹⁷¹ “Annual High School Vodril Plays to Near Capacity House Friday,” *Burlington Journal*, November 11, 1932, 4.

¹⁷² “At the High School,” *Burlington Journal*, May 7, 1937, 4.

¹⁷³ “Another Music Festival Coming,” *Burlington Journal*, March 24, 1933, and “Musicians from B.H.S. in Contest,” *Burlington Journal*, April 7, 1933, 1.

¹⁷⁴ “Local Orchestra, Band are ‘Good,’” *Burlington Journal*, April 14, 1933.

¹⁷⁵ “B. H. S. Band to Present Concert,” *Burlington Journal*, March 23, 1934, 1.

Edith Takagi was a member of the Lincoln School orchestra, attending special practices for those who were unable to stay after school to practice.¹⁷⁶ Edith played piano regularly in public, even accompanying Fred Burr's clarinet solo during her grade school graduation.¹⁷⁷ She also played the clarinet and performed publically on that instrument as well. For example, during the Health Program at the high school in February of 1937, she played a number of duets with Patty Morton, a saxophonist. These musical numbers served as interludes between the dancing, tumbling, stunts and wrestling exhibitions that made up the rest of the Health Day. She performed on the clarinet at the Mothers' Tea presented by the Girls Club, was one of three musical numbers included in the program, and also accompanied Lois Rasar's solo during an intermission at the high school play.¹⁷⁸

Calvin Takagi was the most influenced by music of all the children. According to his Japanese-American Internee Data File, upon incarceration, Calvin wanted to be a musician or a music teacher. One of the first merit badges he earned while participating in Boy Scouts was for music. This badge required an ability to perform music—to sing or play a musical instrument—and also a general knowledge of different instruments and how they work. It required knowledge of music history and the ability justify what constituted good music.¹⁷⁹ He played trumpet in the grade school and high school band. He was also part of a trumpet trio that performed at the Willing Workers Christmas Party Potluck at the Legion Hall in December of 1940.¹⁸⁰ In his freshman year, Calvin was one of the band members who performed at the Peace Arch

¹⁷⁶ "Special Orchestra Practice Arranged," *Burlington Journal*, September 22, 1933, 4.

¹⁷⁷ "60 Graders to Graduate," *Burlington Journal*, May 17, 1935, 1.

¹⁷⁸ "At the High School," *Burlington Journal*, March 5, 1937, 3; "The B. H. S. Reporter Says..." *Burlington Journal*, February 4, 1938, 3; and "Home Talent Play Tonight," *Burlington Journal*, October 14, 1938, 1.

¹⁷⁹ "Scouts in Upper Skagit Division," *Burlington Journal*, May 24, 1940, 1, and "Music," Boy Scouts of America, accessed June 17, 2013, www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-musc.aspx.

¹⁸⁰ "Enjoy Party at Legion Hall," *Burlington Journal*, December 27, 1940, 3.

Celebration in Blaine and participated in the Spring Band Concert on May 8, 1942.¹⁸¹ It is proof of the Takagi's acceptance into the Burlington community that Calvin was even able to participate in this concert in the first place.

On March 23, 1942, General John DeWitt implemented an 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew for all Japanese Americans. Although this curfew did not merit mention in the *Burlington Journal*, the Takagi family was clearly aware of it. Edith recalled that participating in this band concert would necessitate Calvin being out past the curfew, something that was not allowed, as the concert was not scheduled to start until 8:15 p.m. Although this was Edith's first recollection of the curfew affecting the Burlington *nisei*, Calvin was not the only *nisei* the curfew affected. For Michi Yasui, a senior at the University of Oregon, the curfew prevented her from attending her graduation. The Dean at the University contacted county, state, federal, and military officials in an attempted to get an exception to allow her to attend, but was denied.¹⁸²

In Burlington, instead of contacting numerous officials to attempt to get permission for Calvin's participation in the concert, the band director simply decided that he would pick up Calvin before the concert and drop him off afterwards, ensuring that Calvin would not be on the streets alone after curfew, even if he was out of the house.¹⁸³ Calvin attended the band concert, performed with the band, in a brass quintet, and in a trumpet duet. Most of the town was in attendance at the concert and those who were not could read about it in the *Burlington Journal*, including specific mention of Calvin's participation. If avoiding curfew was as simple as driving the car instead of walking, Calvin's attendance at the concert would not have been an issue, as the Takagi family owned a car. Clearly riding in a car to the concert did not negate the curfew.

¹⁸¹ "Peace Arch Fete Planned," *Burlington Journal*, September 19, 1941, 1, and "B.H.S. Spring Concert, 8th," *Burlington Journal*, May 1, 1942, 1.

¹⁸² Kessler, *Stubborn Twig*, 211-212.

¹⁸³ Edith Watanabe interview.

However, even with the entire town aware of Calvin's participation, no consequences were reported for his attendance. Even though the curfew was a federal law, and breaking it could result in serious repercussions, it was ultimately reliant upon the local officials deciding to enforce the law.¹⁸⁴ With Calvin playing in a quintet and a duet with Bob Norris, a member of one of the leading families in Burlington, it was obvious that the residents of Burlington did not feel the need to enforce the letter of the law regarding the curfew and were willing to find ways to get around it if needed.

In addition to participating in the school band and orchestra, many of the children also took piano lessons. Edith, Miyoko, and Calvin Takagi and Nancy Akita all took lessons from Mrs. Tucker. Edith recalls exchanging house cleaning for permission to practice on Mrs. Tucker's piano, and it is likely that Miyoko and Calvin did something similar. Mrs. Tucker was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church as well, so she was someone the families were very familiar with. In addition to attending the same church, her daughter Mary Esther participated in the Epworth League with Miyoko and they attended many of the same meetings and conferences and were even in the same Sunday school class. The opportunity to take piano lessons also indicated their middle-class lifestyle. Even though neither the Takagi nor Akita families were able to afford a piano, something many piano teachers could not afford, they were able to afford the lessons and found ways for the children to practice.¹⁸⁵

As they grew older, the four surviving daughters appeared with regularity in the society section of the newspaper. For instance, on Friday, November 2, 1934, an article in the society section discussed a Halloween party hosted by Michiko Takagi in the M. E. Church basement for

¹⁸⁴ Min Yasui was sentenced to one year in jail and \$5000 fine after convincing a police man to arrest him for violating the curfew in Hood River, Oregon. See Kessler, *Stubborn Twig*, 179-196, for his story.

¹⁸⁵ Many piano teachers advertised in the *Journal* and would frequently state that the lessons would be held at someone else's house or a church.

girls in her eighth grade Sunday school class. The girls, including Edith, played games and had donuts and cider. Other Sunday school classes had similar parties at different times and in different locations, but the M. E. Church basement was a highly sought after community location due to its size and convenience.¹⁸⁶ The daughters participated in these gatherings, even when one of them was not the teacher. In May of 1935, Mrs. Otto Anderson's class had a party, which Michiko Takagi attended, while Nancy was present at the dinner and gift exchange held by Mrs. Davis' Sunday school class near Christmas.¹⁸⁷

As children, they also participated in the normal childhood parties that accompanied living in a small community. Nancy Akita was a guest at Bonnie Jean Munro's thirteenth birthday party, held on Friday, October 13, 1939. The guests, all school friends of Bonnie Jean, dressed in Halloween costumes, played games and had refreshments.¹⁸⁸ This party was exclusive, with the focus being on the number thirteen—only twelve girls were invited to attend. Nancy did not have to be one of those invited, yet she was anyway. Edith Takagi was one of the guests at Elizabeth Benson's eleventh birthday party, and Hiram Akita attended the farewell party for Betty and Jean Stearns.¹⁸⁹ In addition to attending local parties, they also hosted them. On Saturday, June 13, 1936, the Takagis hosted a party for Calvin's ninth birthday. The guests played games and held races, and enjoyed a wonderful day. There was no mention of Calvin's ancestry or anything that would lead the reader to believe that anything other than normal birthday activities occurred with normal birthday food being served.¹⁹⁰ According to Valerie Matsumoto, in her book *Farming the Home Place*, the celebration of birthdays was not common

¹⁸⁶ "Miss Takagi Hostess to Sunday School Class," *Burlington Journal*, November 2, 1934, 2.

¹⁸⁷ "Sunday School Class Entertained," *Burlington Journal*, May 31, 1935, 2, and "Mrs. Davis Hostess to Sunday School Class," *Burlington Journal*, December 15, 1939, 4.

¹⁸⁸ "Friday the 13th Birthday Party," *Burlington Journal*, October 20, 1939, 3.

¹⁸⁹ "Honors Daughter on Birthday," *Burlington Journal*, March 11, 1932, 3, and "Locals," *Burlington Journal*, November 28, 1924, 6.

¹⁹⁰ "Party Honors Ninth Birthday," *Burlington Journal*, June 19, 1936, 4.

in Japanese communities. She states it was an unknown practice in Japan.¹⁹¹ That the Takagis chose to not only celebrate Calvin's birthday, but to do so with a public party demonstrated a willingness to participate in accepted community norms.

By the late 1930s, the Takagi family had three adult daughters at home. These young women took advantage of multiple opportunities to be involved in clubs and social activities. With many of the other local young adults, the Takagi daughters were members of the M. E. Junior League and the Crusaders. On February 13, 1933, Miyoko and Edith attended the M. E. Junior League Valentine Party with fifteen other young women. They enjoyed games and later refreshments. In 1935, Edith took over a leadership role in the Junior League when she was elected president. Her efforts and abilities were clearly well respected in the Junior League. This also demonstrated that she was not on the margins of the society, but was a fully participating member. Her presence was not simply tolerated, it was welcomed.¹⁹² When Michiko Takagi left Burlington in 1940 to work in Seattle following her college graduation, the Crusaders hosted a party in her honor, emphasizing her acceptance in the group.¹⁹³ With the oldest Takagi daughter living in Seattle, Miyoko took over leadership positions. In March of 1941 she was elected as secretary-treasurer of the Crusaders, with the Takagi home frequently the site of meetings and gatherings. Nancy Akita was also involved with the Crusaders. In October of 1941 she was elected treasurer, and the installation into office occurred the following week at a meeting held at the Takagi home.¹⁹⁴ The advent of war and the attack on Pearl Harbor did not prohibit Miyoko,

¹⁹¹ Valerie Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place*, 78.

¹⁹² "Junior League Elects," *Burlington Journal*, March 29, 1935, 1.

¹⁹³ "Party Honors Miss Takagi," *Burlington Journal*, September 13, 1940, 4.

¹⁹⁴ "Crusaders to attend Special Meetings," *Burlington Journal*, March 28, 1941, 3; "Crusaders Honor Miss Hauge," *Burlington Journal*, July 11, 1941, 4; "Miss Takagi has Crusaders," *Burlington Journal*, August 1, 1941, 3; and "Crusaders Elect New Officers," *Burlington Journal*, October 17, 1941, 2.

Edith or Nancy's from participating in the Crusaders. In February of 1942 the group also met at the Takagi home.¹⁹⁵

INVOLVEMENT WITH THE *NIKKEI* COMMUNITY

While clearly comfortable as part of the Burlington community, the Takagi family also worked to maintain ties with a larger *nikkei* community. This can be seen by an article printed in the society section on September 15, 1939. The article describes a party Michiko Takagi hosted in honor of sisters Edith and Miyoko and brother Harry who were leaving to resume studies at the University of Washington. Going away parties for students leaving for college were a normal occurrence, especially for students who were going to college in Seattle, as the distance was still prohibitive for frequent visits home. It was also common to list the attendees at a party, even if they were from out of town. The premise for the party, siblings going away to college, was a typical reason for a party, and the activities engaged in during the party—games and a buffet lunch—were representative of similar parties and gatherings. What made this party intriguing were the guests. While many of the parties hosted by Michiko were attended by local school and church friends, this party was attended by guests from out of town, some from as far away as Wapato. All were Japanese, and none were Akitas.¹⁹⁶

The presence of this society article is significant in that it was printed in the first place. Thomas Heuterman, examining the 1930s in Wapato, Washington, by way of the weekly *Wapato Independent*, noted that articles such as these, when Japanese gathered together for celebrations, were not reported in the *Independent*, although similar events were reported for white residents. The *Journal* not only reported this party, but also included an article describing Calvin Takagi's

¹⁹⁵ "Miss Takagi Hostess to Crusaders," *Burlington Journal*, February 13, 1942, 2.

¹⁹⁶ "Michiko Takagi Entertains For Sisters and Brother," *Burlington Journal*, September 22, 1939, 2; "Miss Takagi Hostess to Sunday School Class," *Burlington Journal*, November 2, 1934, 2; and "Party Honors Ninth Birthday," *Burlington Journal*, June 19, 1936, 4.

ninth birthday party. This was another occurrence that would not have been published in the Wapato newspaper, demonstrating the difference between how the Takagi and Akita families were received in Burlington and how Japanese families were treated by other white communities.¹⁹⁷

Although the Takagis appeared to be fully integrated into the larger Burlington community, they clearly maintained ties with a larger Japanese community as well. Edith recalled meeting Japanese families from Burlington and Arlington at Chuckanut for picnics two or three times each year.¹⁹⁸ In addition, the Takagi family lived in Wapato for a number of years and made occasional trips back to the community. The 1940 Census listed the children as residing in Wapato on April 1, 1935, except for Calvin, who was listed as living in Seattle, while their parents were still in Burlington. This date coincides with the approximate dates of spring break in the local school district, so it is possible that they had returned for a visit, as they were clearly living in Burlington in 1935. However, the veracity of the information provided by the census could also be suspect, as the pages are out of order, classifying Edith and Calvin as the children of a different, white couple. In addition, the last name Takagi is spelled as Takaji for most of the family and as Takazi for Edith and Calvin. Finally, Calvin's name is spelled Calion and he is listed as a daughter, born in 1922, who completed high school, none of which was correct. None of this, however, negates the fact that the Takagi family maintained contact with the *nikkei* community of Wapato.

The Takagi family, especially, maintained or created ties with the larger Japanese American community in Washington. This was facilitated by their residences in Wapato and in

¹⁹⁷ Heuterman, "We have the Same Rights," 100, and "Party Honors Ninth Birthday," *Burlington Journal*, June 19, 1936, 4.

¹⁹⁸ Edith Watanabe interview. The Burlington families mentioned were most likely the Maekawa families from Blanchard.

Seattle before settling in Burlington. All the children were part of Japanese American clubs while attending the University of Washington, which enabled them to create ties with the larger *nikkei* community. For example, Michiko's husband, William Maebori, was part of the Auburn Japanese community.

Michiko, who returned to Seattle to work in September of 1940, was engaged in June of 1941. A betrothal party hosted by a university friend, Miss Chiye Horiuchi, was attended by guests from Auburn, Seattle, Burlington, Blanchard and Bellingham. Miss Horiuchi also hosted a bridal shower for Michiko and their university friends. Her wedding attendants were all Japanese; some were new friends from Seattle, while others were old friends from the Burlington area.¹⁹⁹ Her wedding guests came from Bellingham, Burlington, Blanchard, Arlington, Conway, Seattle, and Portland, Oregon.

The Takagis were able to successfully negotiate between a larger Japanese community and their Burlington community. Although this could not have been easy for them, there is no evidence in the *Journal* that this created any problems. No mention was made of tension between the Japanese visitors and the white Burlington residents and there were never editorials or letters following their visits. The Takagis made a conscious choice to switch between the two communities, and it appeared that the white Burlington residents did not have a problem with that. Edith recalled gathering with other Japanese families two or three times a year for picnics, and also remembers the baked goods Mrs. Akita would make whenever the Takagis would visit them.²⁰⁰ It is unclear whether the Takagis made a conscious effort to separate the Burlington community from the Japanese community or if it was simply a matter of timing and convenience.

¹⁹⁹ "Party Honors Miss Takagi," *The Burlington Journal*, September 13, 1941, 4. "Michiko Takagi Announces Betrothal," *The Burlington Journal*, June 27, 1941, 4. "Crusaders Honor Miss Takagi," *The Burlington Journal*, November 21, 1941, 3. "Michiko Takagi Becomes Bride," *The Burlington Journal*, November 28, 1941, 3.

²⁰⁰ Edith Watanabe interview

While there is no evidence that they were forced to separate the two communities, the Takagis did maintain the separation, often not even including the Akita family in the gatherings of *nikkei* families, even though the adults were friends and frequently visited back and forth.

Looking again at the events surrounding Michiko's November 22, 1941, wedding provided another example of the way in which the Takagi family negotiated their membership in both the Burlington and Japanese communities. On November 12, 1941, the Methodist ladies gave a shower for Michiko. The shower, attended by over thirty church women, included gifts and refreshments, a program similar to what was done for other brides in the church. The Crusaders also hosted a party to honor Michiko's upcoming marriage. They had a potluck dinner, played games, and gave her a gift. This same article mentions another shower given in Seattle by Miss Chiye Horiuchi the day before. These three showers were attended by three different groups of people, with the only delineated overlap being Edith Takagi and Nancy Akita and then any young woman who was a member of both the M. E. Church and the Crusaders.²⁰¹

While the Takagis interacted with the *nikkei* community on a regular basis, there was little evidence that the Akita family interacted regularly with a larger Japanese American community beyond rare mentions of the Takagi family in town and the Maekawa family in Blanchard, although Hiram was a member of the Japanese Club at the University of Washington while he was a student. However, at least one major relationship did develop between the Akita and Maekawa families in 1940. On December 1, 1940, Hiram Akita married Helen Maekawa of Blanchard. Unlike Michiko's wedding, which drew much community attention, the marriage of Hiram and Helen, two local kids, went relatively unheralded. The only mention was a single paragraph in the society section of the December 27 edition. It simply stated that they were

²⁰¹ "Bridal Shower for Miss Takagi," *Burlington Journal*, November 14, 1941, 3, and "Crusaders honor Miss Takagi," *Burlington Journal*, November 21, 1941, 3.

married at the bride's home in Blanchard and will live in Blanchard. The editor made it clear that this was the first he had heard of the marriage, and had he known of it, he would have written sooner.²⁰² Their wedding was witnessed by Emma Maekawa, the bride's sister, and Fred Kasoka, most likely a college friend of Hiram's, since he was not from the Burlington area.²⁰³

It is unclear why there was not a bigger deal made out of Hiram and Helen's marriage, although the Akita family did not appear often in the society pages until Nancy was older. There were no mentions of a betrothal, simply an announcement of the marriage almost a month after it occurred. One possible explanation was that the marriage happened suddenly; leaving no time for proper notice (their son Jerry Shoichi Akita was born May 4, 1941). Another possible explanation was that while the Takagi family sought to announce their family occurrences in the paper, the Akitas did not. The Takagis appear numerous times, when they hosted Sunday school parties, birthday parties and other occasions, whereas the Akita family is mentioned only briefly with Hiram's marriage (and that was clearly not announced to the *Journal*). Unlike the Takagi family, who were able to announce the betrothal and marriage of Michiko and the betrothal of Edith, the Akita family only had the sudden marriage of Hiram to announce, and so it was difficult to determine if the Akita family chose to not make announcements, or if they simply did not have any announcements to make.

²⁰² "Announce Marriage of Local People," *Burlington Journal*, December 27, 1940, 3.

²⁰³ Whatcom Marriage Certificate #9809.

CHAPTER FIVE: A SIGN OF THE TIMES: HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND

As the nation seemed to be moving toward war, life continued in Burlington. On September 12, 1941, the *Burlington Journal* announced that Calvin Takagi had been elected freshman class president. On September 26 it announced that Nancy Akita had been elected Camp Fire Girls secretary and on October 17 that she had been elected Crusaders secretary. In November, Michiko's wedding was fast approaching and the *Burlington Journal* editions from November 14, 21, and 28 all made mention of her wedding.

For *nisei* across the Pacific Northwest, participation in school activities and the permission to serve in leadership roles depended on the community in which they resided. The Yasui children in Hood River, Oregon, spoke of having leadership roles in the school. Shu was valedictorian and voted "Best Boy." The Yasuis were the most financially successful *nikkei* in the community. They lived in a house in an upper-middle class white section of town, participated in music and dance lessons and scouts. However, they also said that they felt like outsiders. They were often the only *nisei* in the group or activity, as most members of the *nikkei* community of Hood River were farmers, lived in rural areas, and therefore attended different schools and did not have the time to participate in afterschool activities.²⁰⁴ It is possible that the Takagi and Akita children also felt like outsiders in Burlington, since they were typically the only *nisei* participants. However, even if this was the case, it did not stop them from participating in the activities.

In Cortez, California, a planned Japanese farming community, the *nisei* attended an integrated high school. Here *nisei* recall participating in different activities and no overt discrimination, yet they also recalled not being recognized for their achievements and emphasized the clear boundaries in their social relationships. They stated that most of their social

²⁰⁴ Kessler, *Stubborn Twig*, 157-161.

interaction occurred through church and that social relationships were typically organized by race.²⁰⁵

Bill Hosokawa, in his book *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*, speaks of how *nisei* were not allowed to hold high school offices or participate in contests. Although in some cases they were not specifically prohibited, societal pressure and public outcry kept them from participating in high school and associated activities. When John Aiso, a *nisei*, was elected student body president of Le Conte Junior High in Hollywood, CA, parents got involved. Upon his election, the students (with obvious help from parents) issued the following proclamation:

We students want an American president of the student body and consider it a serious matter, and a bad example, for any American boy or girl to submit passively and take no part in the effort to remove the boy from the presidency of the student body of our school. We stand for America and want no other but an American as our student body president... The reasons for recall are based upon those principles of freedom for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.²⁰⁶

In response, the principal of the school suspended the student government for the semester to avoid the issue. Hosokawa continued on to relate stories of *nisei* in Los Angeles who were not allowed to attend end-of-season swimming parties because they were not allowed in the pool, left behind on field trips for fear they might embarrass the host, and asked to not attend social gatherings.²⁰⁷

Most *nisei*, regardless of where they lived, primarily associated with their Japanese friends. Francis Nishimoto, a student in California's Central Valley, stated that she only associated with her Japanese American classmates and did not have any white friends at all. She also recalled that *nisei* students were not elected to student government positions or given access

²⁰⁵ Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place*, 75-80.

²⁰⁶ Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 167.

²⁰⁷ Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 166-168.

to other leadership roles.²⁰⁸ Throughout Gary Okihiro's book on the Student Relocation Committee and *nisei* college students during World War II, one common thread was the students were being told by the Student Relocation Committee to not gather in groups and only associate with each other. Instead of only socializing with other *nisei*, they needed to associate with the white students so they would not be viewed as a threat. Yet the *nisei* students were seemingly unable or unwilling to break from their small *nisei* groups and interact with the larger student population.²⁰⁹

While *nisei* experiences were based on location and the surrounding population, almost all *nisei* recalled some sort of prejudice or discrimination, whether it was overt or covert. They recalled that they were typically not allowed leadership roles or to socialize with rest of the school community. These stunted interactions and lack of opportunity elucidated a key manner in which the differences between much of the Pacific Northwest and the small rural community of Burlington can be depicted.

Although the Akitas and Takagis were the only two Japanese families who lived within the city limits of Burlington, in nearby Blanchard two other families with school-aged children resided—the Maekawa family and the Shimada family. These two families had twelve children total, ranging in age from six years older than Harry Takagi to two years younger than Calvin Takagi. For each Takagi and Akita child attending Burlington High School, there would have been other Japanese American students for them to associate with, although most of the Shimada sons did not complete high school and instead went to work on the family potato farm. Even though there were other *nisei* to associate with at school, there is no evidence that the *nisei* formed an exclusive clique. Although they were friends and were involved in some of the same

²⁰⁸ Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*, 161.

²⁰⁹ Okihiro, *Storied Lives*, 102-117.

activities like Glee Club, the Girls Athletic Association, the Torch and the Beta Club (an organization of lettermen who had accomplished something for their school and proved themselves to be sportsmen), most of their friends were from outside their ethnic community. For example, a photo in the 1931 *Tinas Coma* showed Kenzo Maekawa and three friends in a photo titled “All wrapped up in each other,” while another photo titled “Fish stories” showed Robert Akita and three friends indicating the “actual” size of the fish one of them caught.²¹⁰

Although the Akita and Takagi children clearly associated with and were accepted by the larger Burlington community, at least some maintained connections with these Japanese families. On December 1, 1940, Hiram Akita married Helen Maekawa of Blanchard at her home, and Mrs. Yoshii Maekawa was one of Michiko Takagi’s bridesmaids. These families were not strangers, yet there was no mention of them associating with each other in school or outside with the exception of shared school activities. Even gatherings that included both Takagi and Akita children did not include the Maekawas or Shimadas.

One reason for this could go back to church attendance. Both the Takagis and Akitas attended the same church. Typically the youth activities that were mentioned in the *Journal* were either church related or children’s parties. Since the Maekawas and Shimadas did not attend the M.E. Church, they would not be included in Sunday school parties or youth group gatherings. Frequently when parents held parties for their children, they invited their church friends. For example, when Hiram attended a farewell party for Betty and Jean Stearns, the attendees were all

²¹⁰ *Tinas Coma*, 1931, 11, 17. The *Tinas Coma* provides photos and membership lists for the different student activities. The 1930 edition lists Harry Takagi and Lilly Akita as members of the Torch Society. Both Harry Takagi and Kenzo Maekawa were members of the *Blue and Gold*, the Boys Club and the Beta Club. Lilly Akita and Michiko Takagi were both members of the Torch Society in 1931. Edith Takagi and Emma Maekawa both participated in the Glee Club in 1937 and Edith Takagi, Emma Maekawa and Mary Shimada were all members of the Girls Athletic Association.

from the M.E. church.²¹¹ For the Takagis and Akitas, church membership helped them associate without people outside the small *nikkei* community in Burlington.

Instead of spending their time only associating with the local *nikkei* community, the Akita and Takagi children lived lives full of activities and leadership responsibilities. Harry was the first of the group to attend high school in Burlington, beginning in the fall of 1926. That winter he appeared as part of the *Blue and Gold's* habit of making fun of freshmen in an article entitled, "Christmas is Coming." In this article, popular freshmen boys were made fun of by "reporting" what they had said to the rest of the school regarding Santa's habit of coming down the chimney at Christmas. According to the article, Shorty Finley was heard begging his sister for one of her stockings to hang, while Jimmy Scoles purchased a bottle of water in case Santa got thirsty. Harry Takagi was heard bewailing the fact that they did not have a fireplace, and Karl Weber asked a teacher what Santa brought her last year.²¹²

These boys were respected in town as high school students, and the *Journal* continued to speak well of them after graduation. Karl Weber's return to Burlington after college was mentioned frequently when his work as a first grade teacher and scout master for the local Boy Scout troop was printed.²¹³ The fact that Harry was included in this group was a sign of his acceptance by the other students. Although Harry was accepted by the other high school students, his primary focus was academic, not social. His other school involvement was with the *Blue and Gold*, the high school newspaper. By his junior year, he was the sports editor and

²¹¹ "Locals," *Burlington Journal*, November 28, 1924.

²¹² "Christmas is Coming," *Burlington Journal*, December 17, 1926, 3.

²¹³ "Parents See Work of Boy Scouts and Badges Awarded to 17 Lads," *Burlington Journal*, February 23, 1940.

routinely had his articles covering high school athletics printed not only in the *Blue and Gold* but also in the *Burlington Journal*.²¹⁴

Lilly Akita was involved with both the Girls Club and with Glee Club while in high school. However, her acceptance into the general Burlington society can be best seen through the community's response to her death. Lilly died on Monday, November 7, 1932 after a two-week illness at age 17. She was a senior in high school. Her death came as a shock to the community and the entire senior class was dismissed from school to attend her funeral. Any other student who wanted to attend was also excused. The pallbearers were all school friends of Lilly: Wayne Booth, Floyd and George Gosgow, Wayne Smith, Phillip Gannon and Ed Smith.²¹⁵

Lilly's obituary, comparable in size and content to that of another local high school senior girl who died from illness in 1938, can help illustrate the Akitas' position in Burlington. The obituary never mentioned that Lilly was of Japanese ancestry; it spoke of her as living in Burlington her whole life and of the work that she did in the community, both in her church's Sunday school and also in her father's photography studio. She was important enough in the community that the entire senior class was dismissed from school for her funeral and her white school friends served as pall bearers. The Akita family did not feel the need to bring in other Japanese families to be part of the ceremony, even though the Takagi, Maekawa, and Shimada families all had children close in age to Lilly. Lilly was simply a "well known and popular Burlington high school girl."²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Harry Takagi, "Tigers Tackle Concrete Here for First Game: Football Season Opens on Local Field Today," *Burlington Journal*, September 20, 1929, 1.

²¹⁵ "Rites Large for Burlington Girl," *Burlington Journal*, November 11, 1932, 1, and "Rites Thursday for Young Girl," *Burlington Journal*, December 23, 1938, 1. Betty Jean Austin also died during her senior year, although her illness had lasted over 6 months, whereas Lilly had only been ill for two weeks.

²¹⁶ "Rites Large for Burlington Girl."

When Yuki Yasui died in 1922 at age four in Hood River, Oregon, she was buried in the Japanese section of Idlewild cemetery. When her brother Kay died in 1931, he was also buried in the Japanese section of Idlewild cemetery.²¹⁷ Lilly Akita was buried in the Burlington City Cemetery, also known as Green Hills Memorial Cemetery, located on Gardner Road in Burlington. Green Hills Memorial Cemetery did not have a separate Japanese section. Instead, Lilly was buried between Mildred Garlick and members of the Hopkins and Lathrop families, her grave marker bearing the years of her life and an inscription reading “Our Beloved Daughter.”²¹⁸ Even in death, Lilly was welcomed into the greater Burlington community, instead of being segregated based on her ethnicity.

Michiko Takagi graduated from Burlington High School in 1933. During her time as a high school student, she was involved with the Glee Club and was also a member of the Torch Club, a club for students with high scholastic standing.²¹⁹ After graduation Michiko attended the junior college in Mount Vernon and later graduated from the University of Washington, where she earned a degree in from the College of Arts and Sciences in Home Economics. While at the University of Washington, she was a member of *Fuyo Kai*, a sorority for Japanese girls. Following her graduation in December of 1938, she remained at the University doing graduate work for the remainder of the school year.²²⁰

Both Hiram and Robert Akita were a grade below Michiko, even though they were a year and a half apart in age. In June of 1930, the same week that Harry gave his salutatory address on

²¹⁷ Kessler, *Stubborn Twig*, 82-83, 149-153.

²¹⁸ *Skagit County Cemetery Records: A Record of Burials and Tombstone Readings: Green Hills Memorial Cemetery 1900-1993 AKA Burlington City Cemetery, Maccabee Cemetery* (Conway, WA: Skagit Valley Genealogical Society, 1994).

²¹⁹ “49 Graduate from B.H.S.,” *Burlington Journal*, June 2, 1933, 1.

²²⁰ *Tyee* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1938), 283; “Many in College,” *Burlington Journal*, September 13, 1935, 4; “Two from Burlington Graduate from U. W.,” *Burlington Journal*, February 10, 1939, 1; and “2329 Get Diplomas at U. of W. Commencement,” *Seattle Daily Times*, June 11, 1939, 40.

“The Problem of Peace,” Robert spoke at the eighth grade graduation.²²¹ While in some communities *nisei* were not given recognition for their achievements, Burlington had *nisei* from two different families speaking at both the high school graduation and the eighth grade graduation the same year.

In high school, the brothers pursued various interests and activities. Hiram played on the second squad of the basketball team his junior year, while Robert was the team manager.²²² Robert continued to pursue his interest and talent in music by playing trombone in the band and orchestra and also made a rare appearance for the football team at center his senior year.²²³ Hiram was class valedictorian at 16-years-old, while Robert was not far behind academically. Hiram was also a star tennis player at Burlington High School, vying for both the singles and doubles positions. In addition to playing tennis, Hiram also regularly wrote articles for the *Burlington Journal*. His articles focused on athletics, in particular the local adult baseball league that occurred each the summer.²²⁴ When he returned from the University of Washington the following summer, Hiram again wrote articles on the baseball season for the *Journal*, with most of the articles appearing on the front page. His articles were also among the few which included a byline, just as Harry Takagi’s had done in years prior.²²⁵

While attending the University of Washington, Hiram did get involved in college life beyond academics—he played baseball. His freshman year he played second base and, according to the coach, his ability to cover ground fast was his chief asset. Hiram was one of the few

²²¹ “85 Graduated from Schools,” *Burlington Journal*, June 13, 1930, 1.

²²² “Skagit Basketball Champs,” *Burlington Journal*, March 10, 1930, page number?, and “Basketball Championship Banner Awarded to Tigers,” *Burlington Journal*, March 24, 1933.

²²³ “Musicians from B.H.S. in Contest,” *Burlington Journal*, April 7, 1933, 1, and “Tigers Meet Concrete 11,” *Burlington Journal*, September 15, 1933, 1.

²²⁴ “Tiger Net Aces Playing Bulldogs,” *Burlington Journal*, April 6, 1934, 1; “Akita Leads Class of ’34,” *Burlington Journal*, April 13, 1934, 1; and Hiram Akita, “Burlington Wins Two from Islanders; In Second Place,” *Burlington Journal*, May 18, 1934, 1.

²²⁵ Hiram Akita, “Burlington Boots Away 2 Games to Sedro-Woolley Here Sunday,” *Burlington Journal*, June 21, 1935, 1.

members of the team mentioned specifically in the yearbook page for Frosh Baseball.²²⁶ He was also involved with the Japanese Students Club and made repeated appearances on the honor roll. In the spring of 1940, he was also listed as a pledge to *Pi Mu Chi*, a pre-med fraternity.²²⁷ Hiram got married in December of 1940 and there was no announcement of him receiving a degree until he earned his BA in Economics and Provisional General Teaching Certificate in 1960 after his retirement.

After high school, Robert chose to not attend the University of Washington with his brother. Instead, he remained in the Burlington area and helped his father with the photography studio. His photos of the 7,000-serving berry sundae were published in the *Burlington Journal* and in the *Seattle Times*.²²⁸ He also pursued his interest in radio by becoming a licensed shortwave radio broadcaster, a skill he later used in Europe during his time with the 442nd Combat Team—enabling him to save his squad and earn a Bronze Star during the war.²²⁹

Miyoko Takagi followed a similar path as her elder sister Michiko. She participated in Glee Club and Girls Club and after her graduation from high school in 1935; she attended Junior College in Mount Vernon before transferring to the University of Washington.²³⁰ While at the University of Washington she also was a member of *Fuyo Kai*, which focused on better understanding of the highest ideals of Japan and America. She graduated in December of 1940 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Literature and returned home to Burlington. She remained in Burlington until her incarceration, at which time she put her college degree to use teaching English classes at the school in Tule Lake.²³¹

²²⁶ *Tyee*, 215.

²²⁷ “U. of W. Honoraries Announce Pledge,” *Seattle Daily Times*, May 15, 1940, 14.

²²⁸ “7,000 Eat Burlington’s Berry Sundae,” *Burlington Journal*, June 30, 1939, 1.

²²⁹ “All in a Week,” *Burlington Journal*, April 5, 1940, 1, and “Stg. Akita Awarded Bronze Star Medal,” *Burlington Journal*, September 7, 1945.

²³⁰ “Many in College,” *Burlington Journal*, September 13, 1935, 3.

²³¹ “162 Students Get Degrees,” *Seattle Daily Times*, January 19, 1941, 5, and Edith Watanabe interview.

Edith was highly involved in school and community activities. She was a good student who consistently appeared on the honor roll and was a chosen participant at her Commencement in 1939.²³² She frequently served in leadership positions, beginning even before high school with her election in seventh grade as Girls' Club leader for the coming school year. She was also unanimously elected Vice President of the Torch club her junior year.²³³ Edith was involved with the school yearbook, the *Tinas Coma*, as a staff member and was named editor of the *Blue and Gold* her senior year, after starting as a reporter and working her way up to Assistant Editor her junior year.²³⁴ She was involved in planning the annual party given by sophomore girls for the freshmen girls and earned membership in the Torch Society.²³⁵ She was also involved in athletics, participating in the County Play Day for girls, playing tennis and even earning a plaque for her athletic participation her senior year.²³⁶

Edith's leadership roles also provided her with some unique opportunities for a *nisei*. One of her responsibilities as a leader in the Torch Society her junior year was to plan the annual Torch banquet, which only members of the Torch Club could attend. That year, the banquet was being held at the American Legion Hall. The American Legion was the same organization that worked to drive off all Japanese farmers from Wapato. After World War II, the Legion removed the names of the sixteen local *nisei* men who had served in World War II from a plaque along the road leading into Hood River. They even spoke out against leasing land to the Japanese in the

²³² "B. H. S. Speakers Announced," *Burlington Journal*, May 12, 1939, 1.

²³³ "Seventh Graders Take Political Run at Grade School Election," *Burlington Journal*, September 29, 1933, 1, and "At the High School," *Burlington Journal*, May 28, 1937, 1.

²³⁴ "Editors of the *Tinas Coma* Announced," *Burlington Journal*, October 4, 1935, 1; "The BHS Reporter Says...", *Burlington Journal*, May 13, 1938, 4; and "The BHS Reporter Says...", *Burlington Journal*, September 10, 1937, 1.

²³⁵ "At the High School...", *Burlington Journal*, October 3, 1936, 1, and "At the High School...", *Burlington Journal*, October 30, 1936, 6.

²³⁶ "Students Given Special Awards," *Burlington Journal*, June 2, 1939, 1.

Skagit Valley after World War I, and now they were working on plans with a young *nisei* woman to use the meeting hall as the site of the Torch Banquet in Burlington.²³⁷

After graduation, Edith enrolled at the University of Washington, joining her older sister Miyoko. Like Michiko and Miyoko, Edith was a member of *Fuyo Kai*; however, she did not remain at the University of Washington beyond her freshman year. Citing homesickness as the reason, Edith enrolled the following fall at the Junior College in Mount Vernon. On the Tuesday following Pearl Harbor, a young *nisei* soldier who had been sent with his unit from Fort Lewis to Deception Pass to secure guns on Pass Island, decided to check out the town of Burlington while off duty. As he was walking through town, Mrs. Takagi saw him, asked if he spoke Japanese and then invited him to her home for dinner, where he met her two unmarried daughters, Miyoko and Edith. Three months later, in March of 1942, Edith announced her engagement to PFC Harvey Watanabe. No wedding date was set.²³⁸

Once the children left Burlington, their opportunities appeared to be limited. Although Hiram was able to participate on the baseball team, he was the only one to be involved in something outside of the Honor Roll or the Japanese Student Clubs. For young adults who had been involved in multiple activities in high school, the shift could be telling. It was possible that they all decided that they needed to focus on their academics instead of participating in different activities, but it was more likely that they did not have the same opportunities in Seattle as they did in Burlington. It is interesting to note that Michiko did participate in the Glee Club when she

²³⁷ Heuterman, *The Burning Horse*, 43, and Kessler, *Stubborn Twig*, 243. When the actions of the American Legion in Hood River were publicized nationally, the National American Legion headquarters forced them to restore the names. "The American Legion Barrage," *Burlington Journal*, March 11, 1921, 2.

²³⁸ "Edith Takagi Announces Betrothal," *Burlington Journal*, March 27, 1942, 3, and Denshō Visual History Collection: Harvey Watanabe Interview, November 4 1996, Seattle Washington, Stacy Sakamoto, Gary Otaka, and Marvin Uratsu, interviewers. Accessed December 1, 2012.

attended Mount Vernon Junior College, but did not participate in similar groups while at the University of Washington.²³⁹

²³⁹ “At the High School,” *Burlington Journal*, May 7, 1937. It is also possible that a larger talent pool at the University of Washington also played a role in their lack of participation in other activities.

CHAPTER SIX: THE WAR YEARS AND BEYOND

Nancy Akita's childhood mirrored that of many of her middle class peers. She did well in school, took swimming lessons at Lake Samish with the other Burlington youth and participated in school programs.²⁴⁰ Calvin Takagi participated in boy scouts, earned merit badges and also helped to canvass the city to organize house numbers.²⁴¹ In September of 1941, his freshman year, Calvin was elected class president and also appeared on the honor roll.²⁴² And then, in the middle of the school year, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

For those in Burlington, life continued much as before. Editor Archie Dingwall continued to differentiate between the treacherous "Japs" who attacked the United States and the local Japanese residents of Burlington. A front page of the *Burlington Journal* for December 12, 1941, includes a small article entitled, "Japanese Thankful." Speaking on behalf of the Takagi and Akita families, and all the other Japanese in the community, Frank Takagi expressed "thankfulness and appreciation for the kindnesses and expressions of thoughtfulness extended them by their many friends in the community."²⁴³ The following week a front page article addressed the "Jap" attack.²⁴⁴ This differentiation continued after the initial attack as well. On June 5, 1942, two front page articles again exposed this difference. The first article, "Want to Spot Jap Planes?" involved a request for volunteers to man observation posts. One column over and one article down was a second article, "All Japanese Evacuated." Even after the internment and incarceration of the local *nikkei* community, Dingwall made sure that people understood there was a difference between their enemies and the people of Japanese ancestry who had lived in their community for years and decades. Just as he did with the Sino-Japanese War and the

²⁴⁰ "27 from Burlington Pass Final Red Cross Swimming Examination," *Burlington Journal*, July 30, 1937, 1, and "Graders' Operetta Next Friday has South Sea Island Setting," *Burlington Journal*, March 1, 1940, 1.

²⁴¹ "Parents See Work of Boy Scouts and Badges Awarded to 17 Lads," *Burlington Journal*, February 23, 1940, 1, and "Scouts will Canvass City," *Burlington Journal*, May 31, 1940, 1.

²⁴² "Calvin Takagi Elected Freshman Class Prexy," *Burlington Journal*, September 12, 1941, 1.

²⁴³ "Japanese Thankful," *Burlington Journal*, December 12, 1941, 1.

²⁴⁴ "3 Local Boys Killed in Jap Attack," *Burlington Journal*, December 19, 1941.

anti-Japanese agitation of the late 1930s, Dingwall again made certain the readers understood the difference between the Japanese American residents of Burlington and the “Japs” from Japan who attacked the United States.

Even with the United States at war with Japan, the Takagi and Akita family members in Burlington maintained their active lifestyles. Nancy, a sophomore, was initiated into the Torch Society and continued to attend her Camp Fire Girl meetings. She received a journalistic award pin as a member of the staff of the *Blue and Gold* and was responsible for revising the P.T.A. style show, “Fun on a Budget.”²⁴⁵ Calvin continued to serve as class president and was an important member of the high school band. When asked about life in Burlington after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Edith Watanabe recalled that little by little prejudices did come out; she learned that certain stores did not want them shopping there, but she also said she discovered who her true friends were. Even though prejudices were made public in the months following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Edith said they simply adjusted so that they could continue their activities. If a store owner did not want them to shop in his store, they would go to a different one. One example of this involved both Edith and Miyoko. On December 8, 1941, Edith and Miyoko took the Greyhound bus to the college in Mount Vernon as usual. When they attempted to take the bus home, they were told that they were not allowed. Since they had no other way to get home, they began to walk. As they were walking someone stopped and picked them up, indignant that they were not allowed to ride the bus anymore. After that incident they continued to find rides with other people. Life did change for them in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor, yet they were still able to go to school and participate in activities.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ “Campfire Girls Enjoy Party,” *Burlington Journal*, December 26, 1941, 3; “B.H.S. Honor Society Initiates 12 Sophomores,” *Burlington Journal*, March 20, 1942, 1; “Paper Staff Receives Journalistic Award Pins,” *Burlington Journal*, April 24, 1942, 4; and “Style Show for P.T.A.” *Burlington Journal*, May 1, 1942, 1.

²⁴⁶ Edith Watanabe interview.

The member of the families most affected by the war prior to incarceration was probably Harry Takagi. During his years at the University of Washington, both as an undergraduate and also during law school, Harry was active in the Japanese Students Club, building relationships with the Seattle Japanese community. He also became active with the local branch of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). After passing the Bar Exam, Harry remained in Seattle and began practicing law in an office in Smith Tower, the oldest skyscraper in Seattle. When Congress passed the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, Harry Takagi was selected as one of the attorneys responsible for assisting men in filling out draft questionnaires.²⁴⁷

During his time as a lawyer, Harry also became a founding member of a number of corporations. In April of 1941, Takagi, Thomas Masuda, and Mamie Gregory created Dover Apartments, Inc. in Seattle to operate apartments. In October of the same year, the three incorporated the Gear-Pulling Equipment Company.²⁴⁸ In addition to Dover Apartments, Inc. and the Gear-Pulling Equipment Company, Takagi was also involved with Main Bowl, Inc., a combination bowling alley and soda fountain. In April of 1942, the executive board of Main Bowl, Inc. met at the King County Jail to reorganize the company, since President Thomas S. Masuda and Secretary-Treasurer C. T. Takahashi were both inmates, having been arrested the evening of December 7, 1941. Masuda had been arrested on charges of having acted as an agent for Japan without registering, while Takahashi was accused of attempting to ship gasoline storage tanks to Japan. At the time of their meeting, a real estate firm was running the bowling alley, as their assets had been frozen after their arrests in December. Harry Takagi was not arrested, but he resigned his position as a director at this time. News of the reorganization and

²⁴⁷ “Attorneys Selected to Aid Men Listed for Draft Duty,” *Seattle Daily Times*, November 10, 1940, 30.

²⁴⁸ “Incorporations,” *Seattle Daily Times*, April 10, 1941, 31, and “Incorporations,” *Seattle Daily Times*, October 22, 1941, 22.

the motive behind it reached communities as far away as Niagara Falls, New York, where an article appeared in the *Niagara Falls Gazette* describing the meeting.²⁴⁹ In January of 1942, Harry was drafted in the United States Army and served until November 29, 1945. He served as a staff sergeant in Italy and France with the 442nd Combat Team.²⁵⁰

While the lives of all *nikkei* were disrupted in some way by the attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent incarceration, Edith Takagi's story was also very unique. The attack on Pearl Harbor first brought her into contact with Harvey Watanabe, a young PFC from Visalia, CA, who had been drafted in November of 1940. Harvey initially held dual citizenship, as his parents had his birth registered with the Japanese Consulate so that he could inherit family property in Japan. In high school Harvey decided that he was an American and did not want to inherit property in Japan, so he had the property rights changed to a cousin in Japan who he had met during a trip there and renounced his Japanese citizenship. Although sent to defend Deception Pass immediately after the attack, he was soon evacuated from Fort Lewis with the rest of the *nisei* soldiers, being dropped off in alphabetical order a few at a time during the cross country train ride. Only days after Watanabe was dropped at the end of the line at Fort Hayes in Columbus, OH, the evacuation of Bainbridge Island began.²⁵¹

In June of 1942, Edith Takagi, along with the rest of the local *nikkei* community were sent to Tule Lake, California. Edith struggled to adapt to life at Tule Lake and was mentally unable to cope with the changes. Learning of her illness, Harvey worked hard, with the help of his Colonel and other staff officers, to get her released. In the end, the military agreed to sponsor her work release and Edith became just the second person released from Tule Lake on August

²⁴⁹ "Ralls May Head Bowling Firm," *Seattle Daily Times*, April 23, 1942, 5, and "A Closed Session," *Niagara Falls Gazette*, April 23, 1942, 16.

²⁵⁰ Alice Frein Johnson, "Ex-Seattle *Nisei* on V.A. Board," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 26, 1962, 5.

²⁵¹ Harvey Watanabe interview.

12, 1942. She had been there a little over two months. Once Edith arrived in Columbus, she and Harvey were able to get married. Their marriage even made the mainstream newspapers in Seattle, as both a human interest story and because Edith had once attended the University of Washington. On Monday, August 31, 1942, the *Seattle Daily Times* printed an article titled, “Wedding of Japanese Given U. S. Blessing.” According to the article, their permission to marry came directly from the Western Defense Command at San Francisco.²⁵²

During the war, Harvey worked for the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) for General MacArthur’s headquarters and spent the war in Australia, Manila and Japan. He never saw combat, but was away for the duration of the war and the following peace talks. He was also recalled for the Korean Conflict and again served with the intelligence department, interrogating prisoners.

Once Edith was released from the camp, married, and living first in Columbus and later Minnesota, she was able to sponsor Miyoko’s release from Tule Lake. Miyoko joined Edith in Minneapolis in January of 1943. By July of 1943, the rest of her immediate family had been released and was living in Emmett, Idaho. Michiko, who had been living in Seattle with her husband, was sent first to the Pinedale Assembly Center in July of 1942. From there they were transferred to Minidoka, where her son Stanley was born. In June 1943, her husband William received work release to Caldwell, Idaho. Michiko and Stanley joined him in August of 1944.

The Akita family was also sent directly to Tule Lake from Burlington. Robert was the first released on May 20, 1942, when he enlisted in the Army. From Tule Lake he was sent to Camp Shelby to join the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Magotaro, Matsu, and Nancy were all transferred to Central Utah in September 1943. Magotaro left Central Utah the following month

²⁵² “Wedding of Japanese Given U.S. Blessing,” *Seattle Daily Times*, August 31, 1942, 5, and Harvey Watanabe interview.

on work release and went to Rockford, Illinois. Nancy and Matsu joined him in November. Hiram had also been living in Seattle with his wife Helen and their son. They were sent to the Puyallup Assembly Center and then sent on to Tule Lake, where they arrived a week after the group from Burlington. Hiram was awarded work release in September of 1943 and made his way to Emmett, Idaho with his wife Helen, their son Jerry, and their daughter Barbara Kay, who had been born in Tule Lake.

After the war, Miyoko remained in Minnesota, Nancy married and settled in Hawaii, and Harry was appointed by the Senate to serve on the Veterans Administration board in Washington, D.C. Everyone else made their way back to the Pacific Northwest but settled in the Seattle area instead of returning to Burlington. When asked about the decision to settle in Seattle and not Burlington, Edith said that it had always been Harvey's dream to work in aeronautics and for Boeing. Once he was hired there, it was too far for him to commute. They both would have preferred settling in Burlington, but it was too logistically challenging.²⁵³

REFLECTIONS

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941, seventeen-year-old Daniel Inouye was at his home in Honolulu, preparing for church. Talking to Dan Rather in May 2012, he recounted going outside and looking toward Pearl Harbor and then looking up, "And all of a sudden three planes flew over us, grey with a red dot on the wings. I knew my life had changed."²⁵⁴ While Daniel Inouye may have known that his life had changed, for the Japanese living in Burlington, the realization was neither as drastic nor instantaneous.

While Japanese in Wapato ended their organized social activities, Nancy remained active in the

²⁵³ Edith Watanabe interview. *U.S. Final Accountability Rosters of Evacuees at Relocation Centers, 1942-1946*, (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2013).

²⁵⁴ "Dan Rather Remembers Pearl Harbor," accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_b2nP9_j8w.

Camp Fire Girls, Miyoko continued her work with the Crusaders, and Calvin remained president of the freshmen class. There is no evidence that any of the Japanese residents of Burlington were asked to step down from their leadership positions, let alone remove themselves from social clubs or school activities. The 1941-1942 *Tinas Coma* prominently featured both Calvin Takagi and Nancy Akita and did not minimize their involvement in the school, which would have been easy to do. In contrast, by January 16, 1942, in Canada, Japanese could not live within 100 miles of the coast and by February 28, 1942, they had dawn-to-dusk curfews.²⁵⁵

In 1996 the Denshō project was begun to preserve the testimonies of Japanese who were interned or incarcerated. From this initial goal it developed a mission to educate, preserve, collaborate and inspire action for social equality. The project included a discussion of the reasons for internment and also numerous resources for teachers and an archive of more than 700 interviews and over 11,000 historic documents which chronicles Japanese American experiences from the early 1900s through the 1980s.²⁵⁶

Edith Takagi Watanabe was interviewed in 1996 as part of the project. When asked about Burlington's response to Pearl Harbor, she stated that life carried on pretty much as normal. She mentioned one store would not allow them to shop there but did not recall any particular instances that hurt. She stated that community members would help them out when needed. She recalled that the first time she realized that life would change was when Calvin was told that he could not participate in the band concert because he would be out past curfew. Instead of allowing this to hinder Calvin's participation, the music director volunteered to transport Calvin and thereby avoiding being out after curfew. Edith remembers that her friends continued to be

²⁵⁵ Mona Oikawa, "Cartographies of Violence: Women, Memory, and the Subjects of 'Internment,'" *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 15(2000), 45.

²⁵⁶ Denshō: The Japanese American Legacy Project, <http://www.densho.org>.

her friends, unchanged by the outbreak of war.²⁵⁷ Over 50 years after the attack on Pearl Harbor, after her incarceration, Edith still wanted to emphasize how good her life was in Burlington. Those were the memories that stuck with her. She focused on the good times with friends, not the incidents of prejudice and hatred. People were prejudiced and she had to change her habits and routines because of those prejudices, yet what stood out to Edith 50 years later was the friendships and acceptance that she felt growing up in Burlington.

Even though Edith was able to recall not being allowed to ride the bus to college after December 8, she still considered the incident surrounding Calvin's band concert as the first time that she realized her life had changed. Since the curfew was not put into effect until March 27, 1942, the concert Edith referenced must have been the band concert held on May 8. Implying that her first realization that her life was going to change came five months after the attack on Pearl Harbor and less than a month before her family was incarcerated at Tule Lake, CA. For more than a month after the first families were removed from Bainbridge Island, something she would have been aware of due to her family's connections in the Seattle area and with the larger Japanese community, she still believed that life would continue as normal. Edith was not a naïve child. She was an intelligent, educated young lady, yet her experiences in Burlington enabled her to believe that because of where she lived, there was the possibility that the racism and hatred so prevalent along the rest of the Pacific Coast would not affect her.

For a while it appeared that Edith might be right. In December of 1941 and following, life in Burlington remained about the same. The *Burlington Journal* printed information about local defense, reported the hours of the Navy Recruitment Office in Bellingham, and announced the times and opponents for the upcoming Burlington High School basketball games. In Archie Dingwall's "All in a Week" column, the following was printed on December 12, 1941:

²⁵⁷ Edith Watanabe Interview.

Chins Up! and cheer up, folks!

Yes, we have a whale of a big job ahead—licking the powerful Axis nations of Japan, Germany and Italy. It will be a tough job and a long one, but meanwhile life must go on. The whole task will be easier, the sooner we all get ourselves in a near-to-normal groove.

Christmas is coming—and soon—and so is Santa Claus. The kiddies must not be deprived of the fun and thrill of Christmas.

Stay off the highways as much as possible, save gasoline, time, money and energy by doing your Christmas shopping in Burlington, where stores are loaded with appropriate gifts.

Business is going as usual in Burlington with nary a service missing. So chin up, heads up, and cheer up!²⁵⁸

Other than that brief piece, the only other mention of Japan or Japanese in the first issue of the *Journal* following the outbreak of war was another brief front page article entitled “Japanese Thankful.” Clearly the Takagis and Akitas recognized that the solidarity and community acceptance they were feeling was not representative of how most Japanese Americans were being treated elsewhere.²⁵⁹

In the weeks that followed, there were mentions of the war, including casualties, yet life seemed to continue as normal for the two Japanese families in Burlington. While the people of Japan and the Japanese government were clearly viewed as the enemy by the residents of Burlington, the Takagis and Akitas were seen as their neighbors and fellow residents of Burlington by most people, and not as Japanese. When Harry Takagi was drafted and inducted into the Army in January of 1942, he was referred to solely as a “well-known Burlington young man,” and when Edith announced her betrothal to Pvt. First Class Harvey Watanabe, twenty guests attended an afternoon tea at her parents’ house.²⁶⁰

On May 29, everything changed. The announcement came that all Japanese were to leave on Wednesday, June 3, 1942. Edith recalled trying to get their stuff together. Her father simply

²⁵⁸ “All in a Week,” *Burlington Journal*, December 12, 1941, 1.

²⁵⁹ “Japanese Thankful,” *Burlington Journal*, December 12, 1941, 1.

²⁶⁰ “Takagi in Army,” *Burlington Journal*, January 31, 1942, 1, and “Edith Takagi Announces Betrothal,” *Burlington Journal*, March 27, 1942, 3.

left the laundry equipment and house furnishings because no one wanted to buy it. They left their dog and their car with friends, not knowing if they would ever be able to return for them. She said the hardest part was saying “good-bye” to friends and not knowing if you would ever see them again.²⁶¹ Five days later, all the Japanese from Skagit, Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties were gathered at the Great Northern depot in Burlington, about 100 in total. Their baggage was loaded and at 1:00 pm they began their trip south to Tule Lake, California.

²⁶¹ Edith Watanabe interview.

CONCLUSION

In many cities this would be the end of the story, but not so in Burlington. The *Burlington Journal* published excerpts of letters on June 12 and June 19. These letters had been sent by Nancy Akita to her neighbor, Mrs. Rosa Bates Taylor, and by the Takagi family to their neighbors, Mrs. G. D. Pierson and Mrs. E. H. Garletts. Both of these letters, printed on the front page, told of their arrival in Tule Lake and what life was like for them. Nancy stated that it was much better than expected, while the Takagis said they were getting accustomed to the new climate, work and activities there. Nancy closed her letter with the comments that they were all homesick for “good old Burlington.”²⁶² Not only did both the Akita and Takagi families send letters back to white neighbors in Burlington, but these letters were also deemed important enough to the entire community to be shown to the editor of the newspaper and for him to decide to publish them for the community to hear. In addition, Harry Takagi’s name appeared on the Honor Roll of Burlington Men and Women in Service for the duration of the war. He was a Burlington man who fought and bled in Freedom’s Cause, regardless of his ethnicity.²⁶³

Due to the lack of a strong local Japanese community, the Akita and Takagi families participated in the larger community. As the town photographer, Togo was a visible presence in the community, and he strove to participate in and provide for Burlington. He donated his time and product to improve community life, and was well respected by the community leaders. Frank was not as visible of a personality, yet he also served the larger Burlington community. Through operating his laundry, he also came into daily contact with the people of Burlington. Both families attended the local church, and their children were active members as well. Being

²⁶² “All in a Week,” *Burlington Journal*, June 12, 1942, 1, and “All in a Week,” *Burlington Journal*, June 19, 1942.

²⁶³ “Honor Roll,” *Burlington Journal*, August 3, 1945, 3. The Honor Roll appeared frequently in the *Burlington Journal* throughout the course of the war and after.

involved in the church increased their contact with the community members, including the wives and children.

In the end, it was the children who most successfully carved a place in the community. Through their involvement with numerous school and community activities, they demonstrated that they were true members of the Burlington community. By September 1945 much had changed for the residents of Burlington. The biggest change was surrender in Europe and in Japan. By 1945, the Akitas had been transferred from Tule Lake to Central Utah, and were then released to Rockford, Illinois. Even though they no longer had family in Burlington nor were they considered by the War Relocation Project as being from Burlington, the Akita family was still important to the people of Burlington. On September 7, 1945, the *Burlington Journal* printed an article, "Sgt. Akita Awarded Bronze Star Medal." According to the article, he was awarded the medal for staying with his radio, his unit's only means of communication, during a German artillery barrage and being instrumental in the seizure of the battalion's objective. Even though Robert and his family had not lived in Burlington for over three years, the city still claimed Robert as their own. His citation read that his "courage and devotion to duty are commendable and in accordance with the traditions of the United States Army."²⁶⁴ The United States Army and Burlington were both proud to claim Robert Akita.

Edith Takagi recognized that her experiences were unique. Reflecting back on her life, on her story, and on its impact she said, "I can appreciate freedom. I don't think unless you have been under, lived under those conditions, you don't have an appreciation of freedom; being able to walk down the street, drive anywhere you want, go into a restaurant to eat, all of those things. So we shouldn't take our freedom lightly."²⁶⁵ Born in Seattle and raised in Burlington, Edith

²⁶⁴ "Sgt. Akita Awarded Bronze Star Medal," *Burlington Journal*, September 7, 1945.

²⁶⁵ Edith Watanabe interview.

experienced small town life and the big city during her time at the University of Washington. She was incarcerated based solely upon her ethnic heritage and had to get permission from the Western Defense Command to get married and then sent her husband off to war not once, but twice. Yet through all of this she remained committed to her friends, her family, and even the community where she grew up. After having had all her freedoms taken away, having experienced life in multiple cities, the childhood she desired for her children was one similar to her own, in Burlington.

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