

Tom Matsuoka



Bridge: Tom was a Nisei, second generation Japanese American, and leader in the Japanese American community. He was Kibei, meaning he was born in America, educated in Japan, then returned to the U.S. Because of his Japanese language skills, he was able to serve as a bridge between generations, the elders and the younger folks.



Diary: Tom was picked up by the FBI early morning after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They confiscated his diary. Leaders in the Japanese American community were targeted.

Tom was brought to the INS building. Though he was born on Maui, he did not have a birth certificate or proof of citizenship so he was moved and held at Fort Missoula, in Montana.



Sugar beet: Tom was later reunited with his family at the Pinedale Assembly Center, a detention facility in Fresno, CA. The family was later moved to an incarceration camp in Tule Lake, CA. He chose to move his family to Chinook, Montana, and work as sugar beet laborers in order to get out of camp. Several other families followed the Matsuoka's.



Rae Matsuoka Takekawa



Eagle: Rae was an older Sansei, or third generation Japanese American. She spoke English at home and felt American. When her father was taken away by the FBI, her mother loudly protested, saying they had the rights of American citizens.



Snowflake: Rae's family left camp and moved to Chinook, Montana, where it was snowing in September. Her family lived in makeshift farm labor housing, where they would wake up with ice on the walls.



Book: Rae was focused on school. She had the highest academic record in high school, but was told she was disqualified to serve as valedictorian of her class because she did not attend her school for the full four years. Though Rae overheard some teachers say they should disqualify her because she was a "Jap."

Tokio Hirokata



Produce Sign: Tok would take the ferry from Bellevue to Seattle to sell his produce at Pike Place Market.



Frog: In Japanese, frog is kaeru, which also means "to return." Tokio and his family were some of the few Japanese American families to return to Bellevue after the incarceration.



Flame: Tok returned to find his home arsoned. It was a common experience for those who returned to find their farms and homes vandalized.

Sumie Suguro Akizuki (Pinedale, Tule Lake)



Penny: Sumie's grandparents immigrated to the U.S., made money and returned to Japan to retire, leaving the remaining family members penniless.



Baton: Sumie learned to twirl her baton in Tule Lake. Her parents ordered a baton for her from the Sears Roebuck catalog. She remembered how twirling the baton brought her a lot of enjoyment.



Turtle: Also while incarcerated at Tule Lake, Sumie took care of her teacher's pet turtle while he was on vacation. She later met her teacher's son, who had kept the turtle shell, at a Tule Lake pilgrimage. He had attended the pilgrimage to meet his father's former students.

Toshio Ito



Fish Scales: Tosh recalled the days when the streams around his family's Midlakes home would be so abundant with salmon, he could use a pitchfork to catch them.



Star: Tosh served in the Army during World War II, in an integrated unit, and faced racism and discrimination.



Hands (PTA symbol): Tosh and his wife Aki returned home after the incarceration, committed to integrating their family into Bellevue life. No real estate agent would show them homes in Bellevue. They persisted, and were active in the PTA, later receiving an award for their service.



Wood (printed on the crane on the east wall): Japanese immigrants had to remove trees and stumps to make the land productive for farming.



Shin Matsuzawa



Japanese passport border pattern: Shin, an Issei, or first generation Japanese American, immigrated to the U.S. to live with her husband. Unfortunately, he returned to Japan for medical treatment, so she arrived and had to fend for herself for two years.



English Language Primer: Shin worked as a house maid, and attended night school to study English. She became one of the few Issei who could speak, read and write in English.



Yarrow flowers: represent Yarrow Point, the area where Shin and her family lived.



Kiyo Yabuki



Greenhouse: Kiyo's family ran Hunt's Point Nursery, near Medina and Bellevue, before and after World War II.



Purple Heart: While his family was incarcerated in Minidoka, Kiyo served in the 442nd Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army, an all Japanese American unit, in Italy and France. The 442nd was the most decorated unit in U.S. military history. Kiyo was hit by shrapnel and received a purple heart. He recalled bringing his military uniform to a dry cleaner and they refused service to him.



Postal Stamp: Kiyo was the first non-white postal worker hired to work at the Bellevue Post Office.

Kimitomo Muromoto



Holly: Kim Muromoto was working at a holly farm, making holiday wreaths when Pearl Harbor was attacked.



Strawberry: Kim's family was preparing to harvest strawberries when they were forcibly removed from their home in May 1942.



442 Symbol: Kim fought in the 442nd Infantry, a segregated unit. "We fought two wars -- the war against Germany and Japan, and the war against prejudice."

Mitsuko Hashiguchi



Safety Pin: Mitsuko and her husband were forcibly removed and incarcerated with their infant child during World War II.



Broken Window: Mitsuko and her husband Mutsu, returned to Bellevue to find their home and farm vandalized. It was filthy and their well was filled with garbage. Their belongings had been stolen. It took five years to restore their fields, and the farm never fully recovered.



Apron: Mitsuko left farm life and worked for the Bellevue School District in their food services department. She started as a dishwasher and worked her way up to management, overseeing 120 employees.