

<http://pauldorpat.com/seattle-now-and-then/seattle-now-then-the-ishii-family-farm>

### THE ISHII FAMILY FARM

**THEN:** The ca. 1935 view looks northwest towards West Seattle from the Ishii family farm. The west pier of the 14th Ave S. bascule bridge over the Duwamish Waterway to South Park can be found between what



Nancy Ishii identifies as the farm house topped by a giant cedar stump, center, and the barn, far left. Posing, R-L, are Nancy's grandfather Tadaichi Ishii, her aunts, Sally (Ishii) Tsuboi and Michi (Ishii) Hirata, her father, Nobi Ishii; grandmother, Hatsumi Ishii; uncle, Masao Ishii; and Hatsumi's dapper older son, Seichi Takeuchi. (Courtesy of the Wing Luke Museum)

**NOW:** Under construction, the new bridge to South Park tops more Ishii's collected for Jean's "repeat." They

are, standing in back: Brian Ishii, Miyoko Ishii, Masao Ishii, Linda Ishii, Hajime Hirata, Michi Hirata (in printed blouse), Marji Mar (in rear), Cathy Skinner, Sally Tsuboi; and front row: Kelly Liu, Nancy Ishii Martos, Joanne Ishii-Chan, Nobi Ishii, Natalie Chan.



Nancy Ishii (bottom row second from the left in Jean's "now") figures that this portrait of her family's farm beside the Duwamish River dates from 1934 or '35. Appearing in both the "now" and "then" are one uncle, Masao, two aunts, Michi and Sally, and her father, Nobi Ishii. In cap and tie, the about twelve-year-old Nobi stands at the center of the group of seven in the "then." About seventy-two years later he gets to sit – again at the center – in Jean's repeat. (We position them all in the captions.)

What seems like magic is what does NOT appear in either subject – the sprawling 1,776,000 square feet of Boeing Plant 2, nor any sign of the nearly 7000 B-17 bombers that were built there. The Flying Fortress factory's first 60,000 feet were covered in 1936, a year or so after the Japanese American farmers were

posed standing in their carrot patch by Henry Miyake of the International District's Takano Studio. Recently, the Wing Luke Museum called on the community to help identify the subjects in their Miyake collection, and many startling discoveries, like this one, followed.



Nancy, a friend, called for some help in "refining" the location of the farm.

With the help of aerial photographs (see below), the Duwamish Waterway bridge to South Park – seen in both subjects – and some fine tuning from Boeing historian Michael Lombardi, Boeing site server, Mike Prittie and Boeing communicator, Kathleen Spicer, we managed to confidently return some of the extended Ishii family to their farm for Jean's repeat. Imagine, if you will, Michael, Mike, Kathleen and I, all

huddled behind Jean and his camera on the asphalt tarmac that was once Boeing Plant 2, near its southwest corner, and in the Ishii carrot patch.

(Pictured: The other - west - side of the farm also reveals its vestige of what was once part of a different Duwamish habitat - the stump. Nancy Ishii also thanks the stump, which was "big enough to crawl into," for helping us locate the farm in other photographs. She notes, "The building on the right is where they washed the produce and bunched the onions." That's the family's Model T Ford - it is sometime in the 1930s).

The Ishii's rented their acres from Joe Desimone, the South Park Neapolitan immigrant farmer who was also the Pike Place Public Market's benevolent landlord. In 1940 with the Boeing factory sprawling towards the farm, Desimone helped the family keep their planted rows beside the Duwamish River, although relocated about one mile upstream. However, their kindly landlord could not, we know, keep them farming after the shock of Pearl Harbor.

The fate of the Ishii family and their farm during World War Two and after is an often distressing story, but still one with many happy moments and helpful lessons. If you like, you may follow more of this on [dorpatsherrardlomont.com](http://dorpatsherrardlomont.com), the blog noted each week at the bottom of this feature. This week both Nancy Ishii and I will elaborate. Just as likely, we will add an addendum later following more gathering of family photos.

The other - west - side of the farm also reveals its vestige of what was once part of a different Duwamish habitat - the stump. Nancy Ishii also thanks the stump, which was "big enough to crawl into," for helping us locate the farm in other photographs. She notes, "The building on the right is where they washed the produce and bunched the onions." That's the family's Model T Ford - it is sometime in the 1930s.



## BLOG EXTRAS

Below, a few more photos of the Ishii family at Boeing field; the first being a portrait of the Ishii elders who appeared in the original THEN:

Ishii's who appeared in the original "THEN" photo (L-R): Masao Ishii, Nobu

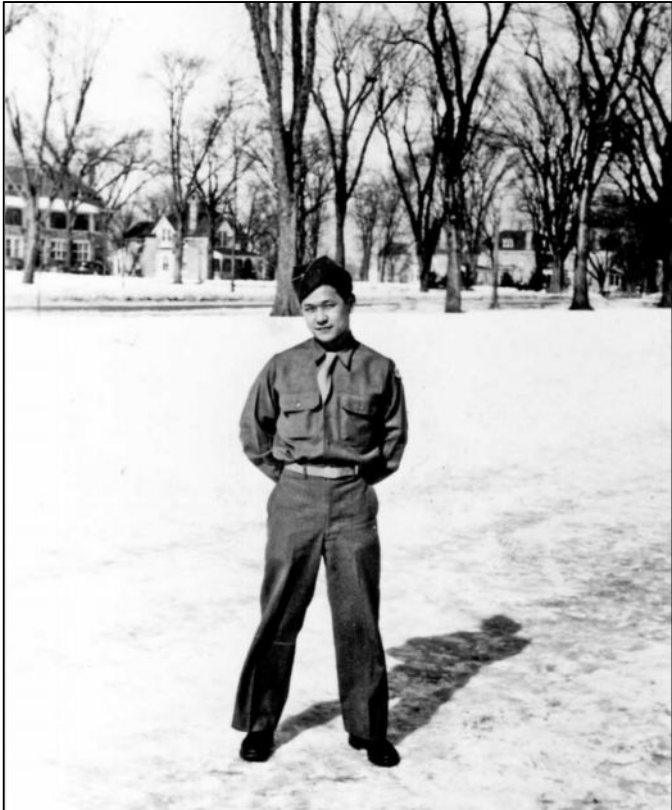
Ishii, Michi (Ishii) Hirata, and Sally (Ishii) Tsuboi



A detail of the 'Then' photo. Masao, his mother Hatsumi Ishii, Nobi, Michi and Sally



Nancy's grandparents, Hatsumi and Tadaichi Ishii posing in front of the original "I-90 Lake Washington Floating Bridge" soon after its was built in 1940.



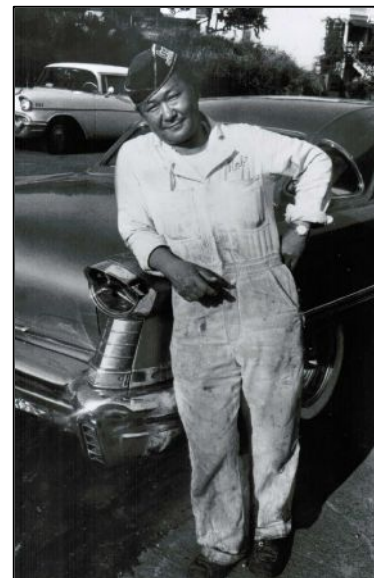
The handsome young Nobi was drafted into the army while his family was still incarcerated. Here is the buck private at Fort Snelling, in Minnesota.



Nancy Ishii writes, "My parents' Kimi and Nobi Ishii were married in the 1950's. My mother was an accomplished seamstress, and sewed her own wedding dress. She grew up in the International District on South Jackson Street behind her family's flower shop. Look for her in the Cherry Land Florist story that follows."



In 1949, Nobi opened H & I Auto Repair at 1209 E Fir in Seattle. I still remember the sweet smell of auto paint and Bondo dust, whenever I'd visit him at work. There was a constant stream of customers and friends to chat with and visit when he worked there. He retired in 1987.



As a boy, Nobi first learned car repair from Mr. Kobayashi - whenever he came to visit and fix their garden truck.

SEATTLE NOW & THEN: 12 November 2012

### CHERRY LAND FLORISTS

<http://pauldorpat.com/seattle-now-and-then/seattle-now-then-the-ishii-family-farm/>

(First appeared in *Pacific*, Feb. 2, 1992)

In the 1930s, the decade of the Great Depression, Cherry Land Florists grew from a small grocery store into one of the largest retail flower shops in the International District. These views were photographed in 1941.

Ten years earlier Tameno Kobata, her husband John, and their eight children – six from her first and deceased husband, Teiji Habu – moved into the storefront at 905 Jackson St. The flowers, which at first were kept behind the fruits and vegetables, eventually took over, and the Kobatas' little food store became their Cherry Land.

The business was mostly the mother's doing – the father helped support the enterprise by working a second job as a waiter at the Seattle Tennis Club. The family lived in cramped and often chaotic quarters behind a partition in the rear of the store. A barrel with water heated on a wood stove by fuel scrounged from the neighborhood was the family bath, and the living quarters' few beds were shared with privacy provided only by blankets hung for partitions.

The oldest girls, Kako and Mary, soon became skilled flower arrangers, and the younger children helped de-thorn roses, fold corsage boxes and prepare ferns for wreaths – after they had completed their homework.

In the sidewalk scene (on top) Tameno Habu Kobata and her second son, John Habu, pose between the flower boxes. John, who left home in 1935 at the age of 14 to make his own way in Chicago, returned “amazed” in 1940 to find his family's flower shop flourishing. Within a year, with his help knocking away walls, Cherry Land expanded to the entire building.

After Pearl Harbor, the business instantly withered. The fear and hysteria of the early days of World War II brought internment for the Habu-Kobata family and 125,000 other Japanese Americans.



(Remembering now that this was composed in 1992.) Six of the surviving seven of Tameno Habu Kobata's children revisited the site of the family's flower shop, now spanned by the Interstate 5 freeway. They are, below and from the left, Kimi Ishii, Louise Sakuma, Mary Shinbo, Rose Harrell, Jack Nabu and John Habu. Two of the Tameno's 22 grandchildren are also included – Linda

Ishii, far left, and Nancy Ishii, kneeling. Nancy Ishii is responsible for researching the family history.

At war's end most of the family was back in Seattle. When their industrious mother, Tameno, died unexpectedly in 1948, sons John and Jack returned to Seattle for her funeral and stayed. In the years after her death Tameno's many children started a variety of local businesses, including three flower shops – among them a Cherry Land Two.

**John Masaru Kobata** was born in Kumamoto, Japan on July 15, 1903 and died May 1956. He arrived in Seattle, Washington as a young teenager and worked as a houseboy at Broadmore. Circa 1923, he married a widow, **Tameno Habu, who had 6 children, Steve, Sakayeko, John, Mary, Jack and Kimi Habu**, fulfilling a vow to Mr. Habu, who was very ill that he would care for his wife and children. Born from this marriage was **Louise (Akizuki), George I, Frank, Rose (Harrell) and George II**. In the early 1930's he started Cherryland Florist on 9th & Jackson which eventually became the entire block, and left the management of the store to his wife while working at the Seattle Tennis Club to supplement the income in order to feed all the children at home. Shortly afterwards, he quit the Seattle Tennis club and became a very successful businessman in the flower business. His dream was to open branch stores throughout Seattle and place each of the children in them to operate. He got only as far as opening a branch on 12th & Yesler. In 1942 he was arrested by the FBI and sent to an Isolation Center in Montana and released several years later to join his family in Minidoka, Idaho. During World War II, the 9th & Jackson store was razed to build



Western Gear Works and is today a huge Diamond parking lot. In 1945, he returned to Seattle from camp and resumed the flower shop at 12th & Yesler. Several years later, his wife Tameno died but he continued operating the store until he was too ill from cancer and turned it over to his daughter Louise. His life was very short but personified what many Issei's endured during that time, that lack of education, personal and financial resources could not prevail over perseverance, hard work

and dedication to family.

In the sidewalk scene Tameno Habu Kobata and her second son, John Habu, pose between the flower boxes. John, who left home in 1935 at the age of 14 to make his own way in Chicago, returned "amazed" in 1940 to find his family's flower shop flourishing. Within a year, with his help knocking away walls, Cherry



Land expanded to the entire building.

After Pearl Harbor, the business instantly withered. The fear and hysteria of the early days of World War II brought internment for the Habu-Kobata family and 125,000 other Japanese Americans.

At war's end most of the family was back in Seattle. When their industrious mother, Tameno, died unexpectedly in 1948, sons John and Jack returned to Seattle for her funeral and stayed. In the years after her death Tameno's many children started a variety of local businesses, including three flower shops – among them a Cherry Land Two.

\*More genealogy (Denny files) at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>