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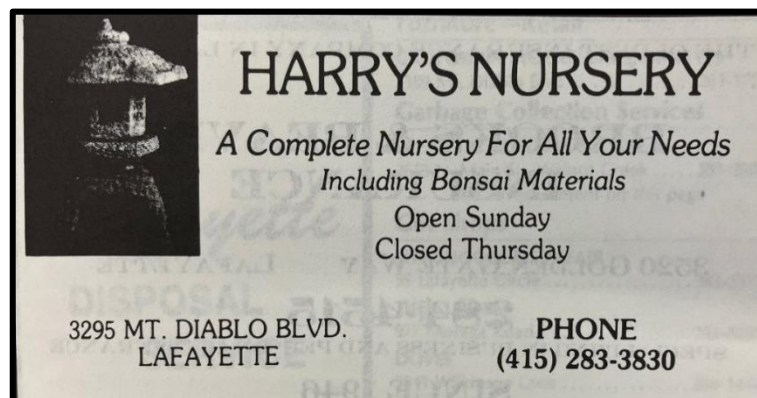
Located on the Lower Level of the Lafayette Library



CELEBRATING 175th+ YEARS OF LAFAYETTE HISTORY

HARRY IDE'S NURSERY

Harry and Shigeko Ide opened Harry's Nursery in October of 1950. It was one of the oldest continuously running businesses in Lafayette. The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce recognized 50 Years of Serving Lafayette in 2006. In March 2007, Garth Jacober took over Harry's under the new business name of Mt. Diablo Nursery and Garden. The Tail Haven Dog day care and boarding business is currently located on the site.



“Harry” Masatsuji Ide was born in Alamo, California, on Christmas Day, 1912 to Tameji and Ritsu Ide. He was the oldest son and second born of eight siblings. As was customary, he was brought back to Japan by ship by a baby broker, to be cared for by his parents when he was about 14 months old to be raised and schooled there. When he returned to Concord at age 13 speaking only Japanese, he lived with his uncle

Toshitaro Ide, who managed Shadelands Ranch acreage as foreman of Japanese laborers and ran a boarding home. They constantly disagreed so Harry would run away and stay with a friend in Los Angeles taking odd jobs. He was also a houseboy for a family in Berkeley.

Harry was a self-taught man, read constantly and enjoyed philosophy and learned

English. He graduated at age 23 from John H. Francis Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles in 1936 and was a member of the Chemistry Society and Ionian Society. From 1936-41 he held various jobs including gardening and landscaping. He was active in a group that advocated relinquishing Japanese citizenship. He would send money to his mother, brother and one sister still living in Japan and to his other sisters in Mexico City, and Brazil.

In December, 1941, in an arranged meeting, Toshitaro and his friend, Mr. Morodomi introduced Harry to their friend Mr. Ogata of Stockton who knew the Kajitas had a daughter of marrying age. Shigeko Kajita was called home from Sacramento where she was working at the Department of Motor Vehicles, to meet her potential marriage mate. They were engaged one month.

Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941, which brought the United States into World War II. After war was declared, Harry and Shigeko had to get permission, as persons of Japanese ancestry, to travel more than 50 miles from home to be married in Reno, Nevada on January 11, 1942. They came back to Concord for their reception at the uncle's boarding house. On February 19, 1942, Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt which ordered the relocation and internment of 120,000 citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry to ten Relocation Centers. Harry and Shigeko, as well as her family, had to dispose of all property and belongings except what they could fit into a large, government-issued laundry bag, and report to the Stockton Assembly Center. They were sent to Rohwer, Arkansas Concentration Camp and were transferred to Tule Lake Concentration Camp a month later.

Tokiko Serene was born November 22, 1943, and Sachimi Millicent was born October 3, 1945. During the war, Harry was sent to Crystal City Texas, a Justice Department Internment Camp, as an activist with dual citizenship who refused to sign the loyalty questionnaire because he was already an American citizen although a Kibei (born here, educated in Japan, child of an immigrant). While in the camp, he met a fellow who wanted to hire him as an editor of a newspaper in Hawaii when they were released. His American citizenship was taken away from him during the war and was finally restored in June 1968. From when he was released from camp in 1946, he had to register as an "illegal alien" until 1968.



In March of 1946, the war was over and Tule Lake Camp was closed. Harry and Shigeko and their two little girls were released in Seabrook Farms, New Jersey with \$20 and expected to get back to the West Coast to start a new life. Harry had worked at the Birdseye Factory, but got nauseous from the repetitive packaging line so the family headed back to California. They stayed with Shigeko's mother and father in Stockton where she had grown up until they were able to move to Concord and then to Walnut Creek where

Harry started a landscape business. On December 8, 1948 Patricia Yukimi was born, followed by Dawn Sumiyo on August 21, 1950.

In October 1950, with the help of Dr. and Mrs. Bernice Ellis and the support of his landscape customers, Harry opened the nursery, buying from Frank Ogawa and Neishi Brothers Wholesale Nurseries in Oakland. After about four years, under a lot of stress, long hours and economic strain, Harry contracted acute bronchitis and ended up in a Sanitorium in San Jose for six months, with Shigeko running the nursery and raising the four daughters.

With the moral support of the John Marchant and Russell Bruzzzone families, Harold Blum, Pauline Pantages and others, the Ides were able to make it through a difficult time. Many of the Lamorinda homes (and homes in Alamo, Danville and San Ramon) still have the landscaping that Harry designed free of charge to his customers for the cost of the plants. He would work after hours designing landscapes and delivering plants to his customers. In 1968, when he was more established and could leave the business in trusted hands, he bought acreage on Oakley, California, to start plants to supplement his stock with the potential of having a wholesale nursery. Unfortunately, when the help didn't show up to water, he lost everything twice, and gave up on the prospect.

When he could afford it, he hired gardeners like Walt Watanabe, Sam Nakao, and Jaime Gonzales and high school and college students like Mike Skurton, Garth Jacober, Tom Anderson, and Mark Lovelace to name a few. He would always try to find another job for his employees before he had to let them go. He would help the local gardeners like Henry Matsutani by referring clients to them.



He was a mentor to many. The Matsutani family and Jaime Gomez had their own landscaping businesses, Mike Skurton opened his own nursery in Windsor, California, and named his son Bert Harry after his boss. Tom Anderson has worked continuously in landscaping for nearly thirty years, and Garth Jacober took over the Harry's Nursery lease.

Education was stressed in the family and all of the girls attended the Lafayette public schools and finished college and universities. Harry and Shigeko donated to the schools the girls attended in Lafayette, to other various causes, and to the City of Lafayette for trees in the Plaza Park. Customers would not only ask for Harry's advice for plants and landscaping, but for his philosophies and personal advice on relationships, schools, and careers. He was known for his gentlemanly manners, always carrying plants to the car for ladies who came in alone and directed their safe exit back onto Mt. Diablo Blvd.

He had devoted customers and friends. One of his customers who worked for him asked him if he wanted to work for the FBI, but he declined. He was a devoted family man and husband. His only day off was spent with his family usually on an outing to the beach or fishing, his favorite pastime, at the Lafayette Reservoir, San Pablo Dam, or the Berkeley Marina.

Shigeko worked alongside Harry and watched the girls grow up. She would do the ordering for the gift shop in the back office that had served as the family's 800 square foot home for 12 years. She would plant seedlings, make bonsai to sell, and took up Ikebana, the art of Japanese flower arrangement in the 1970s. She was an accomplished professor of the Ikebobo Ikebana School of flower arrangement and taught lessons in her Lafayette home.

When Harry retired in 1982, he and Skigeko had worked tirelessly six days a week from 8 am to 6 pm for 32 years with a tradition of integrity, sincerity, hard work, service, quality and punctuality. Fortunately, Jiro and Saburo Nishimoto leased and managed the nursery, carrying on Harry's tradition and maintaining Harry's notable reputation, until their retirement in March 2007. Garth Jacober, Harry's former employee from 1977-79, leased Harry's Nursery, renamed it Mt. Diablo Nursery and Garden and ran it for eleven years.

JAPANESE-AMERICAN FARMERS IN THE WEST

The history of farming in the West is interwoven with that of Japanese-Americans. The first Japanese immigrants, or *Nikkei*, were predominantly young, unmarried men drawn to the West by railroad jobs because of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which, by the 1890s, had left a serious labor shortage in California. By the turn of the century, Japanese workers began leaving Hawaiian sugar plantations and moving to California to fill these labor voids and to seek new opportunities.

Upon arrival, the Japanese had few employment opportunities besides as laborers, but unlike being a servant or running a laundry, for example, farming was a respected trade in Japan, and compared to other trades, farming had higher earning potential. Nikkei farmers ably grew all manner of fruits, sugar beets, and vegetables here in the West; they took our fertile, volcanic and marine deposit-laden soils—similar to those of Japan—and they revolutionized strawberry farming.

By the 1910s, nearly two-thirds of all Nikkei on the West Coast worked on farms, tilling lands everywhere from abandoned gold mines in Placer County, California, to the undeveloped hillsides and rural outskirts of Portland, Oregon; in Los Angeles County, nearly 80% of strawberry farmers were Japanese. At the time it formed in 1917, the Central California Berry Grower Association (which became Naturipe Berry Growers in 1922) included a bylaw stipulating that half its board of directors were Japanese.

Then came Pearl Harbor, a day that would live in infamy, according to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He responded by creating his own day of infamy; on February 19, 1942, Roosevelt signed his Executive Order 9066. After peacefully cultivating the lands of Washington, Oregon, and California for three decades, American citizens of Japanese descent were unjustly rounded up and forced into concentration camps, sequestered inland where Roosevelt supposed they could pose no threat. In all, 112,000 Americans

living on the West Coast were incarcerated in ten relocation camps, two in California, the rest throughout the West and in Arkansas. They were kept there for the duration of World War II, their loyalty always in question. Some internees were allowed to farm during the war, however; because of an acute labor shortage, Amalgamated Sugar Company and state officials were able to convince Roosevelt to release farmers from Minidoka Camp in Idaho to work the sugar beet fields in Nyssa, Oregon.

After the unjust and illegal internment of Japanese-Americans during the war ended, Driscoll's invited the released prisoners to become sharecroppers in the company, but this sort of kindness was rare; some returned to find that their land had overgrown, that their belongings and equipment had been stolen. Those who did try to rebuild faced racism, arson, vandalism, and threats of violence from their white neighbors.

But some former incarcerated were able to reestablish their farms — family farms like Sakuma Brothers near Seattle, Mukai in Vashon Island, Kitazawa in San Jose, and Kiyokawa Family Orchard in Hood River are just a few of the many Japanese-American farmers and growers who started farming the West more than a century ago and are still active today.

There's a Japanese proverb that sums up the experience of Japanese-American farmers: *ame futte ji katamaru* (雨降って地固まる) — after the rain, earth hardens; or, adversity builds strength. The shameful actions of a desperate government can never be forgiven, but the Japanese farmers of the West are like bamboo: both flexible and strong, a symbol of resilience.

~~Excerpted from Sunset Magazine, March 2020 (Heather Arnst Anderson)

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE 2023

Welcome to our new members and to those who have recently renewed their membership or have made a donation:

Dan O'Leary	Mark Harrigan	Vicki Hopkins
Nancy Farley	David Ogden	Tyler Higgins
John Eznekier	Carol Ries & Phillip Tringale	Kevin Donovan
Lisa Whitehouse	Cooper Ogden	Margaret Franz
Molly Gleason	Diane Barbera	Marianne Monogle
Susan Mott	Sue Cross	Becky Jenkins
Janet Nadol	Janet Thomas	Carol Ward
The Meade Family	Linda & Dick Staaf	The Grimes Family
Caren Armstrong	Matt Rees	Andrew Parrott
Andree Hurst	Lynn Houser	

Thank you for your support of the Lafayette Historical Society.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Your membership is exceedingly important as it makes it possible for our organization to pay annual rent to the City of Lafayette for our space and be able to pay for our phone, insurance, and other needed supplies. Donations are always appreciated.



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LHS

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