

The Sasaki Family



50th wedding celebration at Hung Far Low in Portland for the Sasaki grandparents. Left to right: Ojiro (Art), Joyce, Art's mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Tsunetaro, Art Jr., Susanne, Nami.

BY LOYCE MARTINAZZI

After the last strawberries were plowed under, and work on the farm lessened, Art and Nami Sasaki began landscaping the spacious grounds around their home. The family had worked hard growing strawberries and grapes, and were well known for perfect produce and spotless fields. They loved working with the soil.

Ojiro Sasaki was born in 1909, the third child, in Portland, Oregon to Japanese immigrant parents who operated a laundry. Because he was the 2nd son, Art Sasaki, a "Nisei" or 2nd generation, was named Jiro, as was the Japanese custom. His elder brother was named Yoneichi, meaning First in "the land of rice." (America). The eldest child, a daughter, had been left in Japan.



Ojiro "Art" Sasaki cultivating his land with a horse.

Because he was born in Oregon, an O was added in front by his "Issei" parents. There was a kindly childless old man, Arthur Forrider(?) on the way to grade school, who asked if he had an American name, which he did not. Mr. Forrider told Ojiro to use his, which, when shortened to Art, stuck.

Art's parent's purchased (1909) an old hop farm on Boones Ferry Road in south Tualatin, and in 1914 the family moved to the acreage on which there was no house. The family lived in a hop dryer for several years and then built a small house where the family lived for many more years. Art attended Carlon school in the Mulloy area where a large bell hanging from the belfry (still

there) would call the local kids to hurry along to classes. Looking back to this time, Art recalled feeling no prejudice or exclusion at school, where Swiss, German and Polish immigrant's children classmates attended also. Other Japanese families and a Japanese labor camp (single men) moved to the area to farm and cut timber. As more Japanese came to the area, there were enough to establish a Japanese hall in Sherwood where they would gather for visiting and a pot luck.

Art attended the old Tualatin High School, graduating in 1927. He became an expert in Judo, attaining a 5th degree black belt and taught Judo in Portland and Hood River. In 1939 Art met Nami Matsushita, whose parents immigrated from Kobe, Japan, and settled in Wapato, Washington. Nami, her sibling sisters and brother, and widowed mother had moved to Portland and Nami graduated from Washington High School. The couple agreed to be married and a go-between from each family made the arrangements. After a honeymoon in San Francisco, the couple returned to live at the farm with Art's parents. According to Japanese custom, Nami's mother in law ruled over her daughter in law, but adored baby Susanne.

Then in 1941, war between the United States and Japan was declared. "As a result of that fateful event, our family, along with 110,000 Japanese-American citizens and alien Japanese

were forced by the United States government to leave our homes on the West Coast and live in internment centers farther inland," wrote Art in his later years. After three years the family returned to the farm which had been managed by a family named Michaels. Two children were born at the camp, Joyce and Art Jr. Most of the community welcomed back their old friends, but the local grocery store refused to sell them groceries, so they drove to a small store in Durham. Sometimes Frank Hanegan, who owned the service station at the corner of Nyberg and Boones Ferry and was mayor of Tualatin, would purchase groceries from the white store for the Sasaki family. In 1945 the mailman left a poster in all mailboxes on the Sherwood mail route, advertising a mass meeting in Sherwood "For Those Who Want Japs Off The Pacific Coast." Nami's daughter Joyce showed me the original and made me a copy.

Nami, who also wrote a story of her life, said she did not mind going to Minidoka because she felt threatened here at home. Also, she was not so much under the supervision of her mother in law. Art and Nami took care of his parents in old age, as is Japanese custom.

Many Tualatin kids learned the value and rewards of a consistent work ethic in the Sasaki berry fields. Daughter Joyce recalls that the first of each crop of Marshall strawberries would be carefully packed and sold on the Early Market on Portland's east side. Later pickings were taken to Portland Canning Company in Sherwood. The same applied to the harvest of grapes. (Tea Garden cannery in Beaverton.) Sasaki's produce was well known as being top quality. According to Joyce, her mom served rice at lunch and dinner, with a stir fry of whatever vegetables were ready from the garden, and a small amount of meat.

The 1953, the I-5 Freeway took 20 acres of land, dividing the property. With money from the sale of timber and property, the family built a gracious home, which still stands along Boones Ferry Road.

All three Sasaki children graduated from college, as education was important to the family. In their later years, Art and Nami enjoyed their many grandchildren.



Loyce Martinazzi was born and raised in Tualatin and is passionate about Tualatin History. She is currently Lecturer of the Winona Grange, Co-Founder of the Tualatin Historical Society and Co-Author of *Tualatin... From the Beginning*.



Art Jr., Joyce and Susanne all dressed up for Sunday School.



Nami Sasaki enjoying her Rhododendrons. Nami was skilled as a water witcher.



Nami picking Niagara Grapes.



Two little Sasaki Girls on daddy's running board.



Art Sasaki tending his garden.



Art & Nami's garden surrounding their gracious home. Often, people would stop in their driveway and take photos. Wade Rain Sprinkler and Irrigation produced their ads in the Sasaki flower garden.