



JSS NEWS

Official Newsletter of Japanese Social Services

President's Message: A Short History Of Lui-san's Life In Japan

By David Ikeda

As I reported in our most recent issue of JSS Online, Junko Lui our longtime treasurer, board member and volunteer had passed away on August 8, 2015. I wrote mostly about her work for our organization as well as other groups in the Toronto area. For this issue I would like to highlight some of her life in Japan, which always seemed to be a bit of mystery since she rarely talked in any detail about her life there.

Most of what I have heard was reported to our counsellor Mr. Takanori Kuge in conversation with Lui san's longtime friend Ms. Toyo Shibuya.

Lui san was born to Masuko and Kazuma Horii in Yukigaya, Ota-ku, Tokyo on March 3, 1943. The family soon moved to Chidori Machi in Tokyo where she remained until she left Japan in 1971.

In 1960, Lui san entered Waseda University where she

pursued a degree in Russian Literature. The sixties as you may know, was an exciting time as universities in central Japan became hotbeds for radical activity and political unrest.

Lui san had no interest in politics or radicalism. She joined a Fishing Club, which is where she met Shibuya san in her second year of study in 1962. Both women it turned out had little talent for fishing, however it was exciting for them since this was the first time both women wore blue-jeans.

After she graduated Waseda in 1964, Lui san had worked for a company in Japan for several years. In November, 1971, she decided to pursue a great adventure; going to the United States.

Lui san decided to go to Detroit for study but would stay and travel with Shibuya san who was based at the time in Seat-

tle. After an extensive vacation which culminated in a visit to the Grand Canyon, each went their separate ways. One of Shibuya san's enduring memories is of her looking out of her departing bus window at Lui san who was standing at another bus stop in the pouring snow alone, shivering and a little frightened. For now Lui san was truly on her own in America.

Unfortunately, Lui san could not find a school that matched her goal in Detroit, so she moved to Toronto instead where she got her degree in accounting and began working at the Bank of Tokyo.

Shibuya san and Lui san remained close throughout the intervening years. This past year, the Fishing Club got together for a reunion in the mountains to hunt river fish and gather mountain vegetables. Lui san was so enthusiastic and focused in her search that she became separated from the group and was lost for a period of time.

According to Shibuya san this same drive and enthusiasm fueled Lui san's interest in haiku. Surprisingly Lui san only became interested in haiku within the last five years. All of us who knew her assumed that she studied haiku throughout her entire life. However, Shibuya

san said she saw a dramatic improvement in Lui san's work and was so proud when her friend began to receive prizes for her creations in the past couple of years.

Those of us at JSS saw this same passion and enthusiasm which she brought to her work here. For she was not only a board member and volunteer but truly a friend especially to those with a long history with JSS. And what a great sense of humor!

From our counsellor Takanori Kuge: On July 30, she kindly gave me a ride to Pearson Airport, which for me was the last time I saw her. She started telling me that she'd been feeling that she was truly lucky and happy in a lot of ways, "In a sense, I do not have any regret, even if I were to die now," she said. I replied to her by cracking a joke, "You'll live forever or make it to at least 100. As the old saying goes, evil ones live longer than good ones." Lui san laughed, saying "You are right. You and I will live long time."

Alas she did not and was taken from us far too soon. But perhaps we can take comfort from her words that she had few if any regrets and lived a life full of interests, friends, family time and passion.

To her family, sincere condolences from all of us here at Japanese Social Services. She will be truly missed.

Counsellor's message on Aging Japanese in Canada

By Junko Mifune

The Japanese speaking community like all others in the GTA is aging. Many of the "New Immigrants" who came to Canada during the 1960s and 1970s are now senior citizens. As such they are facing many of the issues both physical and social confronted by many other Canadian seniors.

As a Japanese Social Services counsellor I have met several Japanese speaking seniors who are in their 70s and 80s. Seniors are often referred to JSS by concerned family members, neighbors, or other agencies who find themselves dealing with a senior community member who prefers communicating in Japanese, and was identified by those who contacted us that they are in need of assistance.

Even for healthy Japanese speaking seniors, basic living in Toronto can be quite a challenge. Our community is extremely small compared to other ethnic communities, and there are substantially limited resources both institutional

and social that are available or that are easily accessible on public transportation.

A further complication for our community is, if I may say, the Japanese mentality where we feel we don't need help and want to maintain our integrity. When we are young this is not such a problem since we can take public transportation or drive anywhere and may be physically and mentally active for a long time. We may have a social network of friends and family and children. And although we may not be rich we have access to funds and opportunities to work to make more.

However, when we get into our 70s, 80s or 90s things may change. Anything can happen. Friends and spouses may die. We may not have the social interaction we once had through work or other activities. Mobility or other health issues may arise. With little or no family here and with few people who speak Japanese, seniors can become easily isolated. And for those with little income, many available activities or services may become too costly.

So, many seniors stay at home alone and thus increase the isolation. For JSS, some of our clients have developed mental health issues as well. When we try to provide our support, it is often challenging for us since the person may have been isolated for so long and the mental health issues become exacerbated.

However, seniors, even those with mental health issues, have rights to make decisions about how and where they live unless it becomes a safety issue for the senior or others. It is our practice to maintain lines of communication so we can monitor the situation and hopefully make a breakthrough where the client will choose to accept help or even limited support or care.

As a preventative measure, JSS works very closely with other agencies like the Momiji Seniors' Centre, the Community Care Access Centre and other local agencies. JSS also provides several programs such as Konnichiwa, where volunteers make friendly visits to isolated individuals in the community. As well a Singing Club for seniors is held at our offices every Monday afternoon that is proving very popular. In this way some seniors in our community can maintain or even develop a social interaction and network.

It is very important for other agencies and Japanese community groups to also develop social networking programs for Japanese speaking seniors. A healthy diet and being physically active, being aware of fall prevention and the side effects of medications, as well as awareness of resources in the community are all important. But social networks are also vital for maintaining mental health as we age. Many of us Japanese in Canada have had little contact with the Japanese community in Toronto because

of annoyance with such thing as gossip.

However, as we age it seems that we, especially immigrants, find ourselves coming back to our own community voluntarily or involuntarily. We must all do our part to build on that so that we can prevent the isolation that currently plagues so many in our community.

There's a lot more information on the web. Check us out at: www.jss.ca and on Facebook (as Japanese Social Services)

Read the JSS blog at: www.jss.ca/blog

It is a great source of opinion and information written by experienced members, supporters and concerned persons.

JSS Annual Holiday Drive

JSS again asks for your support to help make some Japanese in Toronto or Japanese Canadian's holiday a little brighter this year. Non-perishable food toys and clothing can be dropped off at various bins at various community organizations till late December. Thanks and Happy Holidays!

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