

## Chizuko Togami

By: Lorelei Fitterer, Leo Neidinger, and Eliza Pinckney

Chizuko “Gail” Togami was born on March 6th, 1931<sup>5</sup>. She grew up on Vashon Island in a family of 6 with 3 older brothers: Kazumi Togami, Takohiko Togami, and Daigo Don Togami<sup>5</sup>. Her parents, Yutaro Togami and Hideyo Togami were immigrants from Japan who worked on farms on the island<sup>1</sup>. Many Japanese Americans came to the US in search of new opportunities and to escape the declining agricultural economy in Japan<sup>7</sup>, and settled on the island to begin cultivating crops and raising livestock. The arid climate and access to mainland markets through the Mosquito Fleet allowed farming to become a profitable business on Vashon. In 1942, after the passage of executive order 9066, Chizuko and her family were removed from the island and taken to Tule Lake Relocation Center in California<sup>1</sup>. Chizuko was only 10 years old<sup>5</sup>.

Chizuko and her family arrived at the Tule Lake Relocation Center on July 20th, 1942 after being sent to the Pinedale Assembly Center first.<sup>1</sup> Tule Lake Relocation Center spanned 4,685 acres of terrain, with a majority being designated for farming.<sup>2</sup> There were barracks for living and a mess hall for eating.<sup>2</sup> In 1942, around 800 of the interned Japanese Americans were “employed” around the camp as laborers, cooks, and doctors, earning a negligible salary.<sup>4</sup> The Togami family was interned at Tule Lake until September 28th, 1943, when they were transferred to Minidoka concentration camp in Idaho<sup>1</sup>. Earlier that year, a questionnaire had been administered that assessed Japanese Americans’ level of loyalty to the United States. Minidoka had the second highest percentage of presumed loyalty based on answers to this survey, so it is likely that the Togami family was transferred to this ‘lower-risk’ facility as a result of their responses. The Togami family would spend the remaining two years of their time in internment at Minidoka. Chizuko attended Hunt High School there, where she participated in Student Council and Junior Red Cross Council.<sup>5</sup>

After being released from Minidoka internment camp on September 21, 1945, Chizuko moved to Spokane, where she attended Lewis and Clark High School. Soon after, she joined her brother Kazumi in Los Angeles, where she would meet and later marry Buddy Oba on October 9th, 1954. After marrying Buddy Oba she changed her name to Gail Chizuko Oba. In 1988, more than 40 years after executive order 9066 was put into action, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act: a statement which formally apologized for the internment and authorized a payment of \$20,000 to every living survivor. At this time Gail was still alive and would have received this reparation payment.

Gail passed away on May 1st, 2011, and is survived by her husband, Buddy, as well as their two daughters, Sandy and Terri.



- 1: Ancestry.com. *U.S., Final Accountability Rosters of Evacuees at Relocation Centers, 1942-1946* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013. Original data: Final accountability rosters of evacuees at relocation centers, 1944–1946. Microfilm publication M1965, 10 rolls. Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
- 2: Takei, Barbara. "Tule Lake." *Densho Encyclopedia*. 16 Oct 2020, 17:11 PDT. 9 Feb 2022, 10:49 <<https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tule%20Lake>>.
- 3: Niiya, Brian. "Minidoka." *Densho Encyclopedia*. 16 Dec 2021, 21:51 PST. 9 Feb 2022, 10:51 <<https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Minidoka>>.
- 4: Fagan, Shemia. "Oregon Secretary of State." State of Oregon: World War II - Behind the Fence: Life in the Internment Camp. Accessed February 9, 2022. <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/ww2/Pages/threats-fence.aspx>.
5. SC 14.01, Tom Hide Collection [https://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/sc014\\_1.htm](https://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/sc014_1.htm) at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <https://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>
6. Ancestry.com. *U.S., Final Accountability Rosters of Evacuees at Relocation Centers, 1942-1946* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.
7. ]Joy and Heartache: Vashon's 120 Year Japanese Legacy. Vashon, WA: Vashon Maury Island Heritage Museum, 2018.

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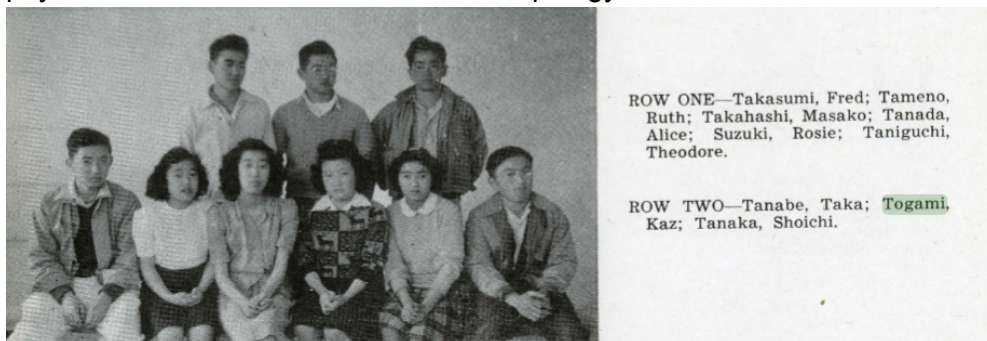
Kazumi Togami was born on October 24th, 1927<sup>6</sup>. He grew up on Vashon Island in a family of 6 with 2 older brothers: Takohiko Togami and Daigo Don Togami, as well as one younger sister: Chizuko Togami<sup>6</sup>. His parents, Yutaro Togami and Hideyo Togami were immigrants from Japan who worked on farms on the island<sup>1</sup>. Many Japanese Americans came to the US in search of new opportunities and to escape the declining agricultural economy in Japan<sup>7</sup>, and settled on the island to begin cultivating crops and raising livestock. The arid climate and access to mainland markets through the Mosquito Fleet allowed farming to become a profitable business

on Vashon.<sup>7</sup> Kazumi attended elementary school on the island and was in 6th grade when,<sup>6</sup> in 1942, after the passage of Executive Order 9066, Kazumi and his family were removed from the island and taken to Tule Lake Relocation Center in California<sup>1</sup>.

Kazumi and his family arrived at the Tule Lake Relocation Center on July 20th, 1942 after first being sent to the Pinedale Assembly Center.<sup>1</sup> Tule Lake Relocation Center spanned 4,685 acres of terrain, with a majority being designated for farming.<sup>2</sup> There were barracks for living and a mess hall for eating.<sup>2</sup> In 1942, around 800 of the interned Japanese Americans were “employed” around the camp as laborers, cooks, and doctors, earning a negligible salary.<sup>4</sup> The Togami family was interned at Tule Lake until September 28th, 1943, when they were transferred to Minidoka concentration camp in Idaho<sup>1</sup>. Earlier that year, a questionnaire had been administered that assessed Japanese Americans’ level of loyalty to the United States.<sup>2</sup> Minidoka had the second highest percentage of presumed loyalty based on answers to this survey, so it is likely that the Togami family was transferred to this ‘lower-risk’ facility as a result of their responses. Kazumi attended Hunt High School while interned at Minidoka, and participated in sports and Chess club.<sup>5</sup> There are school newspaper archives of Kazumi playing on the baseball team, setting a camp record in a barbell tournament, and taking part in “sports carnival” that took place in February of 1944.<sup>8</sup>

Kazumi was released from Minidoka on June 4th, 1945, when he was 18 years old. Upon his release, he went to Smith Prairie, Idaho.<sup>1</sup> It is unknown what Kazumi did while in Idaho or how long he stayed there. He enlisted in the army in October of 1950 and was discharged in July of 1952.<sup>9</sup> Kazumi moved to Los Angeles and was later joined by his younger sister, Chizuko. At 33, he married Misao Kuroko on July 1, 1961.

Kazumi Togami passed away on February 17th, 1984 in Los Angeles at the age of 57. Four years after his death, in 1988, more than 40 years after executive order 9066 was put into action, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act. This statement formally apologized for the internment and authorized a payment of \$20,000 to every living survivor. Since Kazumi had died before the Civil Liberties Act was passed, he was authorized no payment and never received an official apology for his internment.



1: Ancestry.com. *U.S., Final Accountability Rosters of Evacuees at Relocation Centers, 1942-1946* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

Original data: Final accountability rosters of evacuees at relocation centers, 1944–1946. Microfilm publication M1965, 10 rolls. Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

2: Takei, Barbara. "Tule Lake." *Densho Encyclopedia*. 16 Oct 2020, 17:11 PDT. 9 Feb 2022, 10:49 <<https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tule%20Lake>>.

3: Niiya, Brian. "Minidoka." *Densho Encyclopedia*. 16 Dec 2021, 21:51 PST. 9 Feb 2022, 10:51 <<https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Minidoka>>.

4: Fagan, Shemia. "Oregon Secretary of State." State of Oregon: World War II - Behind the Fence: Life in the Internment Camp. Accessed February 9, 2022. <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/ww2/Pages/threats-fence.aspx>.

5: SC 14.01, Tom Hide Collection [https://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/sc014\\_1.htm](https://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/sc014_1.htm) at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) <https://libraries.wsu.edu/masc>

6: Ancestry.com. *U.S., Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II, 1942-1946* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2005.

Original data: Japanese-American Internee Data File, 1942-1946 [Archival Database]; Records About Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II, 1988-1989; Records of the War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

7: *Joy and Heartache: Vashon's 120 Year Japanese Legacy*. Vashon, WA: Vashon Maury Island Heritage Museum, 2018.

8: "Japanese Presence Project." Vashon Maury Island Heritage Museum, n.d. Accessed February 7, 2022

9: Ancestry.com. *U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

Original data: *Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.