

## **Mary Matsuda**

**By Maren MacLean and Max Profit**

In 1898 Heisuke Matsuda, Mary's father, first came to America to work as a laborer in Hawaii, Alaska, and Washington. In 1921 he went back to Japan before returning to the Seattle area a year later with his wife Mitsuno. By 1923 they had moved to Vashon and given birth to their son Yoneichi. On January 23, 1925, Mary was born.<sup>3</sup> She grew up on Vashon Island, living on her family's strawberry farm and attending the local school.<sup>4</sup> Her family was active in the local Methodist Church. Much of her free time was spent working on the farm as well as participating in girl scouts and the highschool honor society. Although she had this prestigious high-school career, she wouldn't receive her degree until she was 92.<sup>2</sup>

When Mary was 17, nearing the end of her junior year of highschool, on May 16th 1942, her family was forced to leave Vashon in compliance with executive order 9066.<sup>2</sup> The family traveled to Pinedale Assembly Station in Fresno, California and were then moved further to the Tule Lake Detention Center, located in Newell, California. Tule Lake was a flat treeless area of land in a dried up lake-bed. Like many Japanese internment camps, the conditions at Tule Lake were very poor, the winters were described as long and cold, and the summers hot and dry. The Matsuda family was later moved from Tule Lake further East to Heart Mountain after construction on it was completed.<sup>2</sup>

Heart Mountain was 740 acres of dusty, nonarable land; it had 650 buildings in total, 450 of these buildings being the barracks in which Mary and her family lived. In August of 1942, the camp had a hospital that could hold 150 people built, however the Japanese American doctors who worked at this clinic were payed almost eight times less than the white doctors at camp. On January 1st 1943 the camp reached its full capacity of 10,767 people.<sup>5</sup> Mary described the camp as having a gloomy and depressing atmosphere. <sup>2</sup>

In 1944 Yoneichi enlisted in the army's 442<sup>nd</sup> Nisei Regional Combat team and left the camp to train for combat in Italy and France. At the same time Mary left to work in a hospital in Clinton, Iowa. She had been accepted into the Cadet Nurses Corps. During this time the family farm was leased to Deputy Sheriff Finn Shattuck who failed to adequately care for the property.<sup>3</sup> This caused the Matsuda family to feel as though they were being taken advantage of as well as cheated of their assets. Finally in September of 1945 Heisuke and Mitsuno returned to Vashon and reclaimed their home and farm.

By 1947 the entire Matsuda family, now including Yonechi and Mary, had made their way back to the Seattle area. Yonechi, after finishing his military duties, worked on expanding the farm to around 50 acres while Mary found a job at Providence Hospital and later Group Health Cooperative.<sup>3</sup> In 1954 Mary's parents Heisuke and Mitsuno became U.S citizens and lived on their farm for the rest of their lives. On August 10th 1951, Mary married Charles Gruenwald, with whom she had three children; Martha, David, and Ray. Yonechi also married, having four children with his wife Marjorie Nakagwa.<sup>3</sup> He began working at Ingraham highschool in Seattle while continuing to care for the family farm on Vashon. Yonechi later remarried to Miyoko Mishi after his wife died of cancer. In 1971, Mary established the Consulting Nurse Service which became a national model for many health care providers today.

In September of 1985, Yonechi tragically passed away after suffering a heart attack a week earlier. His wife Miyoko decided to stay on the farm and continued keeping up with the property. During this time Mary's youngest son Ray began planting a large variety of trees across the 5 acre plot.<sup>3</sup> In 1990 Mary retired from her job at group health, beginning work on her two books.

In 2005, Mary published a memoir of her experiences at Pinedale Assembly Center, Tule Lake and Heart Mountain Internment Camp. Mary began work on her memoir in 1995, breaking decades of silence; the book was called “Looking Like the Enemy”.<sup>1</sup> Later that same year, the book was nominated for the “Best Books for Young Adults” award by the American Library Association. In 2011 Mary published a young-readers version of her book and it was used in many school districts around the country.<sup>6</sup>

At the Vashon Island High School graduation ceremony of 2017, Mary Matsuda finally received her high school diploma 75 years after she was forced to leave Vashon Island.

On February 11th 2021, Mary Matuda passed away at St. Joseph Residence to a non-covid related pneumonia. Mary left behind a legacy of determination and perseverance; and she is remembered as an accomplished nurse, writer, and mother.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Looking like the Enemy - Home.” Looking Like The Enemy - Home. Accessed February 8, 2022. <https://www.lookingliketheenemy.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd, Elizabeth. “Mary Matsuda Gruenewald, Lauded Author and Nurse, Dies at 96: Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber.” Vashon. Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber, February 25, 2021. <https://www.vashonbeachcomber.com/news/mary-matsuda-gruenewald-lauded-author-and-nurse-dies-at-96/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Japanese Presence Project.” Vashon Maury Island Heritage Museum, n.d. Accessed February 7, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Matsuda Gruenewald. Accessed February 9, 2022. [https://www.vashonhistory.com/videos/gruenewald/gruenewald\\_interview.html#:~:text=Mary%20Matsuda%20was%20a%201970s,when%20Pearl%20Harbor%20was%20attacked](https://www.vashonhistory.com/videos/gruenewald/gruenewald_interview.html#:~:text=Mary%20Matsuda%20was%20a%201970s,when%20Pearl%20Harbor%20was%20attacked).

<sup>5</sup> “Heart Mountain.” Heart Mountain I Densho Encyclopedia. Accessed February 9, 2022. <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Heart%20Mountain>.

<sup>6</sup> “Looking like the Enemy: My Story of Imprisonment in Japanese-American Internment Camps (Book).” Densho Resource Guide. Accessed February 9, 2022. [https://resourceguide.densho.org/Looking%20Like%20the%20Enemy%20My%20Story%20of%20Imprisonment%20in%20Japanese-American%20Internment%20Camps%20\(book\)/#:~:text=In%201941%2C%20sixteen%2Dyear%2D,farm%20on%20Vashon%20Island%2C%20Washington.](https://resourceguide.densho.org/Looking%20Like%20the%20Enemy%20My%20Story%20of%20Imprisonment%20in%20Japanese-American%20Internment%20Camps%20(book)/#:~:text=In%201941%2C%20sixteen%2Dyear%2D,farm%20on%20Vashon%20Island%2C%20Washington.)