

Masato Sakai

By Maxwell Delgado-Williams, Hanifa Khidr, and Jessica Levin

Masato 'Freddie' Sakai was born in Vashon Island on August 24, 1932 to Ensuku and Miyoka Sakai¹. Ensuku and Miyoka, who were first generation Japanese², had six children: Harry, Tillie, Sumi, Metcko, Masato and Mori³. Throughout Masato's childhood he assisted his family farming strawberries, peas and other vegetables on Vashon Island². On May 16, 1942, over 100 Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from Vashon Island³. Masato, at the age of nine, and the rest of Vashon's Japanese American community gathered at Ober Park and were taken to the ferry in army trucks³. After the Sakai family left Vashon, their farm was destroyed².



The Sakai family, on their farm, about 1935. From left, Teruko "Tillie" (Katsura), Metcko "Mets" (Nakamoto), Morimasa "Bobby," Miyoko (mother); Masato "Freddie," Ensuku (father); Sumiko "Sumi," and Masakatsu "Harry."

After a two day ride in rail cars, the Sakai family was detained at the Pine Lake Assembly Center in California³. The family was later moved to the Tule Lake Segregation Center in Newell, California². Tule Lake's armed military professionals, dull buildings, barbed wire fences and guard towers gave the place a concentration camp atmosphere². At Tule Lake, the Sakai family lived in two rooms in an old barracks building². Sumi, Masato's older sister, described the floors as "dusty from dirt seeping up between spaces in the floorboards." ² The room had no

window screens, toilets or a kitchen². Teens attended school during the day and could take Japanese language and history lessons during the evening².

After the Sakai family was released from internment in 1945, Matsato's parents were sent to Kill Hill for work, his sisters to Oakland and him and his brothers to other areas to farm². In the late 1940s, Harry, Masato's older brother, arranged for the family to move to Morgan Hill, California². In Morgan Hill Masato continued his education, graduating from Live Oak High School in 1950¹. Matsato served as a sergeant in the Korean war starting in 1951, when he was 19, until 1954. Afterwards, he worked for IBM and started a family business called SKS nursery¹. He continued to work for the family business in Gilroy, California for 20 years¹.



Masato (Freddie) Sakai in the Live Oak High School Yearbook of 1949.

Around 1958, Matsato married Margie Sakai (alive as of 2019)¹. They had 4 children together: Janis Warner, Kenneth Sakai, Steven Masato Sakai (deceased) and Ronald Sakai¹. Masato passed away on December 20, 2018¹.

1. "Freddie Masato Sakai Obituary (193 (2 - 2018) Mercury News." Legacy.com. San Jose Mercury News/San Mateo County Times, December 26, 2018. <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/mercurynews/name/freddie-sakai-obituary?id=14982208>.)

2. "Persistence Pays off - Morgan Hill Times: Morgan Hill, San Martin, CA." Morgan Hill Times | Morgan Hill, San Martin, CA. MORGAN HILL TIMES STAFF, December 20, 2019. <https://morganhilltimes.com/persistence-pays-off/>.)
3. "Japanese Presence Project." Vashon Maury Island Heritage Museum, n.d. Accessed February 7, 2022.)

Metcko Sakai

By Maxwell Delgado-Williams, Hanifa Khidr, and Jessica Levin

Metcko Sakai was born on Vashon Island on June 1st 1929. She grew up in a family of eight being the middle of three sisters. Throughout Metcko's childhood she assisted her family farming strawberries, peas and other vegetables on Vashon². On May 16, 1942, over 100 Japanese Americans were removed from Vashon Island³.

Metcko was 12 years old when her and her family were interned, she was extremely sad to be forced to leave the island, she describes the memory, and after a brief two month stay at Pinedale Assembly Center they were moved to Tule Lake Internment Camp in California. At Tule Lake, the Sakai family lived in two rooms in an old barracks building. Sumi described the floors as "dusty from dirt seeping up between spaces in the floorboards." The room had no window screens, toilets or a kitchen. The family had to hang sheets up in the room to try to provide some privacy. Tule lake had a 'concentration camp atmosphere' with armed military professionals, dull buildings, barbed wire fences and guard towers. Teens attended school during the day and could take Japanese language and history lessons during the evening. The peak population of Tule Lake was 18,789 people. Tule Lake became a segregation center which made it more strict. There were protests at Tule lake asking for better conditions.

After the Sakai family was released from Tule Lake in 1945, Metcko and her sister Sumi and Tilly moved to Oakland to become domestics and eventually settled in Morgan Hill, California where Metcko still lives to this day.