

Michiko Sakamoto

By Clementine Gripman Whistler and Leah Gross

Michiko Sakamoto was born in 1927 on Vashon Island, WA. She was born to Jazu and Katsu Sakamoto, along with her older brother, Sammy Sakamoto. The Sakamoto parents immigrated from Japan in 1907. During their time on Vashon, her family supported themselves off chicken farming and later berry farming. The Sakamoto's lived in Ellisport, then moved to Quartermaster Harbor in 1940⁴. Her brother, Sammy, began his education on Vashon Island, and later finished highschool in Central Utah Relocation Center¹. Before internment, Michiko was diagnosed with Down Syndrome, which would explain her incomplete school record, differing from her brother². Besides a brief mention of her being teased in school included in Sammy's letter, there is no record of her education.

Unfortunately, Michiko passed away at age 15 on May 15th, 1942, just one day before government officials forcibly removed Japanese-American island residents². Michiko Sakamoto was buried in the Vashon Island Cemetery. It is unknown who was around for or when exactly she was buried, due to residents being taken to internment camps soon after her passing⁵.

When her family was removed from Vashon, they were taken to Pinedale Assembly Center and then moved to Tule Lake Internment Camp in California¹. Her family never returned to the island, but her brother Sam is still alive and is living in California².



Family Portrait

Sam Sakamoto Draft Card



Michiko's gravestone in Vashon Cemetery

Sources:

- ¹"Home: Library of Congress." The Library of Congress. Accessed February 7, 2022. <https://loc.gov/>.
- ²Sakamoto, Sam. Letter to Mike. "SAM Sakamoto's Memories ." Soqual , California, September 10, 2020.
- ³Ancestry.com. U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.
- ⁴"The Japanese Presence Project." Japanese Presence Project, December 29, 2015. https://www.vashonhistory.com/japanese_presence_main_2.html#.
- ⁵Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.