TRANSLATION

Japanese-Canadian Pioneer

THE VENERABLE EIKICHI KAGETSU[1)]

by Yoriki Iwasaki

As a timber producing nation, Canada ranks third in the world after U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. In Canada, the province of British Columbia (hereafter abbreviated as B. C.) in western Canada, ranks first in the country as a producer of coniferous trees. The bulk of its exports goes principally to Great Britain, U.S.A. and Japan.

In 1906 (39th year of Meiji) a Japanese youth sailed to Canada, landing at Vancouver. It was then that he made the firm resolution "My mission in life will be to produce timber and export it to Japan." Ultimately, after innumerable hardships, he became the leading timber entrepreneur in the Japanese and subsequently the Japanese-Canadian (Nikkeijin*) community.

This person about whom a brief biography is here presented is Mr. Eikichi Kagetsu (花月栄吉),President of Kagetsu & Co. Ltd. Mr. Kagetsu was born on September 5, 1883 (16th year of Meiji) in Wakayama-ken, Hidaka-gun, Yukawa-mura, Takara. He completed schooling at Yukawa Elementary School. In September 1904 (37th year of Meiji) with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, he was drafted initially as an army reserve. He served combat duty in various battles in the Manchuria area, including the major Mukden (Hōten) offensive. He was discharged on December 12, 1905 (38th year of Meiji). For his outstanding military service, he was decorated with the Eighth Order of Merit, Order of the White Paulownia Leaf (勲八等 白色桐葉章 — Kun-hatto, Hakushoku-Toyosho).

On June 22, 1906, Mr Kagetsu sailed for Canada on the S.S. Empress of China, landing at Vancouver. For about a year, he worked at a copper mine and at other jobs, but from 1907 he worked at logging camps. In December of the same year, he bought 160 acres of forest land at Sechelt, located north-west of Vancouver, and began an independent logging operation. With subsequent purchases of vast tracts of forest land, he firmly established his position in the logging business. Then in 1912 (1st year of Taisho), due to an economic recession his business failed, and Mr. Kagetsu hit the nadir of his career. He had married Toyo Nakamoto the previous year. But hardly before Toyo-san could savor their life as newlyweds, she had to endure the hardships that befell with the economic depression and bankruptcy.

After his business failure, he again became a laborer and worked at

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*Nikkeijin: literally, person of Japanese descent

1) This article appeared in The Continental Times (Toronto, Canada) January 1, 1976

various logging camps. In 1910*, the young couple took a trip to Japan. While in Japan, Mr. Kagetsu made inquiries as to what kind of timber was in demand. By the time he returned to Canada, he had come to the conclusion that split cedar logs should be the major item for export to Japan. Subsequently, he was successful in exporting 200,000 ft. of split cedar logs, from which were cut ceiling boards of excellent quality.

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In 1919, the B. C. Forestry Law was revised and as a consequence the Japanese were neither allowed to carry on logging operations in B. C. forests, nor even to be employed as a worker at such operations. Thereupon, with the cooperation of various logging business operators, a legal suit was filed in court. (Ultimately) TheBritish Supreme Court handed down a ruling in favour of the Japanese. Beginning in 1920, the proceedings stretched over a period of two years. The expenditures relating to the Supreme Court hearings were paid by the Japanese Government. Earlier expenses totalling some $9,047.00 were paid for from contributions by interested parties.

In 1923 (12th year of Taisho) with a capital of $120,000, Mr. Kagetsu bought 3,000 acres of forest land at Fanny Bay, Vancouver Island, and began logging operations there. This land was covered principally with Douglas fir, yielding timber of immense dimensions. For attaining maximum efficiency in transporting the timber from the woodlands to the waterfront, railroads were laid, and the latest model locomotives and flat cars were purchased. It is said that among the logging companies of the time, Mr. Kagetsu was the very first to use railroads for moving the timber out of the forest. When his logging operation was closed at the outbreak of World War II, there were approximately one hundred workers, Japanese and Caucasian ("hakujin").

BETWEEN 1923 - 24 PURCHASED PARCELS TOTALLING OVER 5,000 ACRES IF FANNY BAY

In November 1929 (4th year of Showa), he was awarded a Certificate of Commendation from the Japan Industrial Association (Nihon Sangyo Kyokai). The certificate states in part "Years ago he sailed to Vancouver, engaged in the forestry business; and enduring hardships, working assiduously, contributed to the development and progress of our national prosperity. Moreover, for many years he has devoted himself unsparingly to the guidance of his fellow countrymen and has served as their paragon. Accordingly, we hereby duly recognize his distinguished service and ensuing merit." This is signed by H.I. H. Prince Hiroyasu (博恭王), Honorary President, and by Nakaji Kajiwara (梶原仲治), President of the Japan Industrial Association. From the foregoing, it is evident that Mr. Kagetsu's activities in the business world were a source of much inspiration and encouragement to later immigrants. Moreover, it must also be remembered that, as described in the Certificate of Commendation, he left an impressive civic legacy, successively holding such positions as : President of the Canadian Japanese Association (Canada Nihonjin-kai); President of Vancouver Hompa Buddhist Church (本派佛教會 - Vancouver Hompa Bukkyo-kai); founder and Honorary President of the affiliated Hompa Middle School.

IN 1941 ANOTHER 1000 ACRE OPERATION (R.R.) STARTED IN COWICHAN LAKE (VAN IS) JOINTLY WITH MITSUI CORP OF JAPAN THIS WAS ABORTIVE!

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* Year 1910 is perhaps incorrect, vide, previous paragraph. T.H.

Mr. Kagetsu was the personification of the bold, Japanese masculine figure, yet at the same time, there was also an unassuming facet to his personality. While chatting with his newly-hired office manager, he brought out his bank pass-book and quietly chuckled, "Well, I've finally been able to save this much!" According to that manager, Mr. Kagetsu had at the time $50,000 in savings.

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In 1921 (10th year of Taisho), he was elected Councillor (Sanjiin) of the Canadian Japanese Association, and in 1923, he was elected President of Canada Hompa Buddhist Church. In 1926 (1st year of Showa) he was again elected President of the Canadian Japanese Association, continuing in this position for five years. He then resigned the presidency and continued serving in the capacity of Councillor. In 1933 (8th year of Showa), he was again elected President of Canada Hompa Buddhist Church and the following year was reelected President of the Canadian Japanese Association, serving two years. In 1940* (15th year of Showa), he proposed the opening of a Middle School (Japanese Language) affiliated with the Canada Hompa Buddhist Church, and donated all necessary funds for its establishment. This school was well received by both the Buddhist and the general Japanese-Canadian community and it steadily grew in stature. Mr. Kagetsu felt gratified that he had played a small part in promoting the spiritual education of the Japanese-Canadian children. Meanwhile, in November 1940 (15th year Of Showa), on invitation from the Ministry of Overseas Affairs (Takumusho) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Gaimusho), he attended the 2600th Anniversary Celebration of the Japanese Empire, as official representative of the Overseas Japanese in Canada.

As a memento of the Japanese Imperial 2600th Anniversary Celebration, Mr. Kagetsu wrote a book titled "Canada and the Japanese". This book includes a general overview of Canada, its agriculture, fisheries, forestry and mining industries, and covers such topics as Japan-Canada trade; education (the education in Canada of children of Japanese ancestry); Vancouver, Steveston, Victoria (capital city of B. C.); early Japanese immigrants to Canada; and racial discrimination against the Japanese. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the book for Japanese-Canadians is the detailed accounts of anti-Japanese practices in agriculture, fisheries and the forestry industries, and the book serves to shed much light on the circumstances of that period. The book was published in 1940, and some excerpts as cited will indicate its contents.

In the chapter on "Fishing Localities and Japanese Fishermen", sub-heading, "Salmon Fishing in the Fraser Fiver" he states, "Around 1879-1880 (12th or 13th year of Meiji), among the earliest Japanese fishermen were a man nicknamed 'Sada of Kishu**' (紀州定) from Wakayama Prefecture, and Manzoji Nagano (永野万蔵二) from Nagasaki Prefecture, who engaged in salmon fishing in New Westminster. Then about 1885 (18th

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* Year 1940 is incorrect (T.H.)

**Kishu: is restrictive name for Wakayama-ken

year of Meiji), Ryubei Suzuki (鈴木 龍平) from Shizuoka Prefecture, Shigeyoshi Hayakawa (早川 重吉) from Kanagawa Prefecture, and Kyuzo Sawamura (沢村 九蔵) from Miye Prefecture, began salmon fishing in Steveston. The number of Japanese fishermen in the Fraser River area increased yearly and by 1888 (21st year of Meiji), there were 150 Japanese fishermen. Then in 1891 (24th year of Meiji), Shigeyoshi Hayakawa was the first to be granted a fishery licence."

From the chapter on "Japanese and the Timber Industry", the following is an excerpt: "The forestry industry is one of the three major industries which Japanese are engaged in and thus is of major concern. During World War I, when the forestry industry enjoyed its golden age, there were more than 2,300 Japanese working in timber operations; of this number, over seventy Japanese owned their individual 'camps' and employed many Japanese. It is estimated that the number of Japanese logging workers accounted for one quarter of the total B. C. logging labor force. Daily wages at the time ranged from a minimum of $3.00 per day to approximately $6.00 - $7.00 per day. There were two principal methods used in logging operations, namely, single-bolt felling* and log-cutting*. In the early stages, the Japanese almost monopolized the logging industry, but year by year, due to pressure brought to bear, the number gradually decreased to less than 1,000 or only one third of the peak total" (unquote; excerpting continues) "At present, the only Japanese with independent capability to purchase forest land and engage in the forestry business are three individuals, Eikichi Kagetsu (花月 栄吉), Komakichi Uyesugi (上杉 駒吉) and Kinji Takahashi (高橋 金次) plus Nisso Company (日曹 株式会社) and a few others so that the total number of logging enterprises is plus-minus ten.

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Under the heading "Japanese Farmers" he writes, "Of the various industries in Canada, it seemed initially that few Japanese were engaged in farming. In recent years, however, there has been a steady growth. And it is no wonder, for, in contrast to the increasing discriminatory practices in commerce, fisheries and the forestry business, there was no anti-Japanese discrimination in agriculture. Japanese farming in Canada began in 1908 (41st year of Meiji) when the Japanese Consul, Mr. Yada (矢田) was stationed in Vancouver. In September 1908, Consul Yada travelled through the three prairie provinces (specifically, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, all located east of the Rocky Mountains) and also covered the areas adjoining the Canadian Pacific Railways routes. After this thorough on-site tour of the Canadian agricultural industry, Mr. Yada recognized the long-range advantages of agriculture, and he was unstinting in his efforts to convince the Japanese-Canadian of this potential. As a result, there were gradually increasing numbers of Japanese-Canadians venturing out to the agricultural lands. However, in the early stages, they had little capital and little experience, confronted as they were with problems of such vast scope, so different from the small-scale farming practices in Japan. Just when frustration had plummetted morale to its lowest ebb, World War I broke out. And thanks to the concomitant soaring prices of grain, they barely escaped farming bankruptcy. Subsequently, the Japanese-

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* Both terms are literal translations; what are correct technical terms?

Canadian farmers regained their confidence, surmounted their difficulties and gradually established their own farms. Currently, there are over 160 Japanese farm owners in the Fraser valley, and the total number throughout Canada is estimated to be in excess of one thousand. They were especially successful in the area of large-scale fruit orchards, and greenhouse cultivation of vegetables. Gradually their reputation grew as they surpassed their Canadian (hakujin) counterparts in productivity." (end of quotation) From these pages can be gleaned the circumstances whereby the Japanese-Canadians broke into the agricultural industry despite numerous difficulties.

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During the days when Vancouver was the centre of flourishing activity for the Japanese in Canada, Mr. Kagetsu became the preeminent leader. This was during the so-called second era, the first era being the earlier 25-year period when significant numbers of Japanese had arrived in Canada. During this second 25-year period ending with World War II, Mr. Kagetsu won distinctive renown both as a businessman and as a philanthropist. In addition to operating his very successful logging company, Mr. Kagetsu also is credited with innumerable achievements in civic service. He served many years as President of the Canadian Japanese Association and of the Vancouver Hompa Buddhist Church, as well as working in various capacities to help the general Japanese-Canadian community. He gave generous support to cultural and educational activities and contributed to the economic welfare of the Japanese-Canadians. While he was President of the Canadian Japanese Association, an Imperial Grant was received from H. I. M. the Emperor of Japan, for the benefit of the Japanese living in Canada. Upon receiving the grant, Mr. Kagetsu organized the Canadian Japanese Saisei-kai*(済生會). This organization has helped Japanese-Canadians in financial need and it has also sent monetary donations to Japan for disaster relief. In summary, during the second era of Japanese-Canadian history, Mr. Kagetsu confronted anti-Japanese discrimination and in every area of activity was the outstanding leader. At the end of World War II, he moved to Toronto.

When he took up residence in Toronto, Mr. Kagetsu organized the Kotobuki-kai** (寿會) to promote fellowship and recreation for the Japanese-Canadian senior citizens, and served as President for many years. During his tenure, he organized the first post-war Pioneers' Travel Group to Japan and as group leader, visited Japan. Also, he reactivated the Saisei-kai which had existed in name only during the years of World War II. Despite the difficulties of the times, he had kept custody of its funds amounting to approximately $30,000.

Thus from 1906 when he landed in Vancouver, until his death[2] 62 years later, Mr. Kagetsu dedicated himself to his business pursuits and to civic philanthropy leaving a legacy of much distinguished service for the benefit of the Japanese-Canadian community.

(The above article appeared in "Profiles of Overseas Japanese in Action"*** published by the Japan Foreign Ministry, Department of Consular Affairs.)

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* Saisei: literally, social welfare

** Kotobuki: literally, longevity

*** "海外で活躍する日本人の姿" (Kaigai de Katsuyaku-suru Nihonjin no Sugata)

2) Jan. 27, 1967

MacInnis Collection
Vol. 54, file 24
MacInnis Correspondence with E. Kagetsu and Deep Bay Logging Co. Ltd.

(File deals with appeal claim for compensation for Japanese Canadian capitalist.) AW

- 5% of claim only initially awarded
- despite many appeals, Liberal government seems to have refused more than 5% settlement offer
- Correspondence lasts until June 1954! (What a blight on liberal democrats that 9 years after the war they still refused to pay Mr. Kagetsu anything near the money he had previously owned in commercial property.) AW

Imp. when refer to treatment of Japanese-Canadians

B-6

cc: file [1403 research file]

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