

Well-known engineer named to Order of BC

Burnaby's own Henry Wakabayashi earns the highest honour available to private citizens in the province

By Sylvia Yu
BURNABY NOW REPORTER

Henry Wakabayashi was shocked to find out he was one of 15 British Columbians to be honoured with the Order of BC, the province's highest award for outstanding achievement.

But one visit to his company Pacific Liaison and Associates' office will tell you why. Awards and large photographs of the Vancouver airport expansion adorn the mustard-hued walls of the stylish office, decorated with ice-glass, outdoorsy paintings and sculptures.

In his private office, large photos of his two daughters at varying ages hang on the wall, as well as a picture of he and his wife. Displayed on his desk are Father's Day cards from his daughters, who call him mentor, inspiration and "my true friend."

Wakabayashi's outstanding achievement is not just in his 30-year old company's impressive record of being able to handle projects with budgets of up to \$850 million, it also overflows into his family life. Burnaby resident Wakabayashi, 66, is devoted to his family and is an exceptional father to his two daughters.

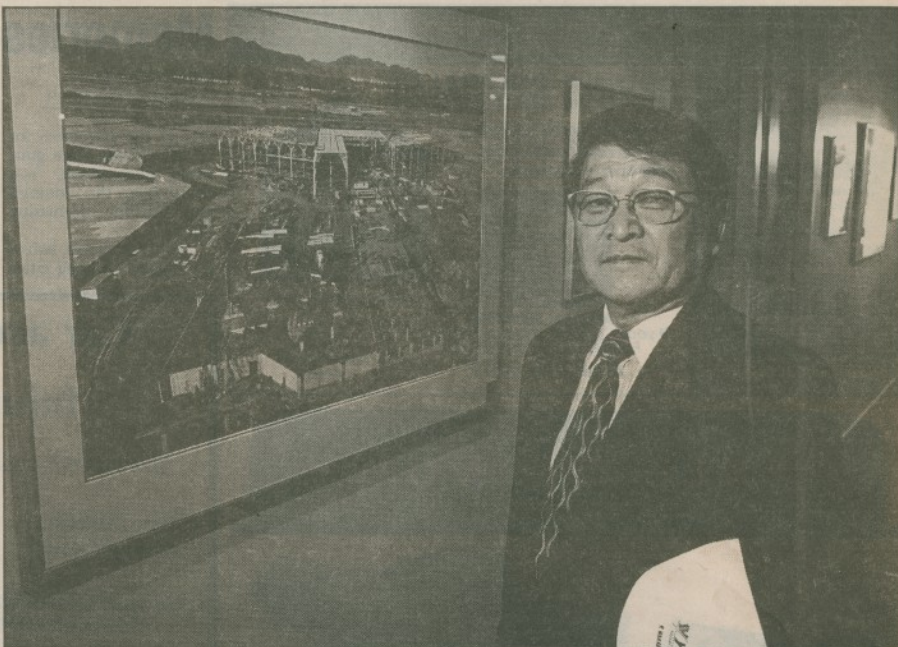
About 15 years ago, he took the LSAT law school requisite exam with his daughter to give her moral support. "We studied together after dinner and I would ask her questions that might be on the exam," said Wakabayashi.

"Wendy scored 95 percentile and I scored 65," he said beaming over his daughter's achievement.

He once aspired to become a lawyer, but opted instead for a chemical engineering degree from UBC in 1958. Jobs were scarce after graduation, so Wakabayashi had to sell Japanese products at the PNE. "That was the time Japan first started to bring in products and they were poor quality back then."

While working at the PNE, Wakabayashi met Hiro Minagawa, then a manager at Mitsubishi who later rose to senior vice-presidency.

Minagawa took Wakabayashi under his wing and



NOW PHOTO BY LARRY WRIGHT

Henry Wakabayashi was awarded the highest honour available to citizens of the province when he was inducted into the Order of BC this week. The well-known engineer has worked on dozens of the largest building and construction projects in BC, volunteers with many local charities and is a dedicated father and family man.

taught him "everything about business" and more.

"Minagawa asked me to work for six months and I ended up staying for nine years. He taught me how to dress, how to deal with people. He commented on my ties and shoes. One time he took me to Trader Vic's and told me to tip well and get acquainted with the servers. He also told me to stay in good hotels because other businessmen will relate the hotel to the kind of company you work for."

Through Minagawa, Wakabayashi has learned to lead his family and company by example, a philosophy that has earned him the credibility to have worked on mega-projects such as the \$160 million Vancouver airport expansion, the \$330 million Greater Vancouver Water District drinking water treatment program, the \$850 million first phase of SkyTrain and the \$22 million job of dismantling Expo 86.

Altogether, his company has handled \$6 billion in projects.

Wakabayashi has also been instrumental in building relations between Japan and Canada. His mentor

Minagawa is credited to fostering trade between the two countries though joint ventures such as pulp mills, mines and the export of steel and other commodities.

Wakabayashi's company hosts an annual golf charity called Advantage Society for Children with learning disabilities that this year raised \$30,000. His second daughter Beth works with special needs children and through her work, Wakabayashi got involved to make a difference.

Recently, he was a vice-chairperson of the Japanese Redress committee that requested reparations for the internment of Japanese during World War Two. Government funding came through for the National Nikkei Heritage Centre, a Japanese cultural centre and seniors home now on the site of the former Burnaby South secondary school.

Wakabayashi has personal ties to the NNHC. When he was seven years old, his own family was interned in Hastings Park in 1942, then relocated to Rosebery, in the Slocan Lake area. Wakabayashi was also involved in building the Momiji Garden at the entrance to the PNE. "The garden is one way to make people remember."

*"He taught me how to dress,
how to deal with people.
He commented on my ties and shoes."*

Henry Wakabayashi

SPEAKING ABOUT HIS MENTOR HIRO MINAGAWA