

VOLUNTEER EXTRAORDINAIRE

Miyoko Matsuda

Miyoko Matsuda has been a volunteer with the Heritage Museum since the mid-1990s, when she served a three-year term on the board and then became involved in cataloging the White Books in the museum's research room. During this time, the White Book catalogs grew from 30 binders filled with Vashon history to the 100 books we have today. The White Books, aka the museum's research catalog, came by the name because binders used to house the information are white. In addition to the White Books, the research room contains birth-death-marriage records, a photo collection in the black binders, and a library of books that are available for public view.

"Miyoko is such a lovely person," says Laurie Tucker, the VHM Collections chairperson. "She quietly goes about her work, week after week, maintaining an important body of information, and she has done an amazing job of cross-referencing and organizing."

Articles for the White Books come from many sources. Vashon locals and community organizations donate their historical information. Current information and articles from local sources such as the *Beachcomber*, *Loop*, and *Riptide* are also archived into the White Books.

"The challenge I have is trying to decide which articles will be of interest to researchers many years in the future," says Miyoko. Most people come to the research room to find information about a family member from an earlier generation or people connected to their surname and where they may have lived. Some have recently purchased property on the island and are interested in its history or need information about previous owners, she notes.

"I like organizing things, and that is probably because of my background as an elementary school teacher," Miyoko reflects. "Also, it was a good way for me to learn about the history of the island. After my husband died in 1985, I had a lot of time on my.... I was looking to see where I would enjoy volunteering for a community organization when my term as a trustee sparked my interest in heritage and the museum. Also, since the Matsuda family were longtime residents of the island from about 1929, I wanted to see if I could locate any materials related to them."

Miyoko Nishi was born in Steveston, near Vancouver, British Columbia, into a family of fishermen. When World War II began, the Nishi family's fishing boat was confiscated by the Canadian government and they were exiled from the coast into the interior of British Columbia, where they settled in a farming community. After the war, Japanese Canadians were not allowed to return to the coast until 1949, so Miyoko trained as a teacher and taught in British Columbia before moving to teach in Toronto, Ontario.

In 1977, after being introduced by a mutual friend, she married Yoneichi Matsuda, a widower from Vashon. Yoneichi had returned to Vashon after the war, a Bronze Star-decorated veteran of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and had married and fathered four daughters. His wife Marjorie died of cancer in 1973. When Yoneichi and Miyoko married four years later, Miyoko stepped in as mother to Yoneichi's four daughters. They grew strawberries and red currants on the Matsuda farm. Yoneichi taught at Ingraham High School in Seattle until he retired in June 1985. He looked forward to limited farming and traveling during retirement, but tragically, in September 1985, he experienced problems while driving his tractor, which resulted in a hospital stay for evaluation and treatment. While there, he suffered a massive heart attack and died several days later. Miyoko continued to farm, raising hay for many years. Eventually she sold the farm to the Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust, which now farms and caretakes the Historic Matsuda Farm.

Active in the Methodist Church, Miyoko is an avid quilter and a member of the Vashon Quilt Guild. She is also a respected and highly regarded member of the VHM collections team.

—Elsa Croonquist and Bruce Haulman