

HOME AGAIN



Japanese-American Farm Families Pick Up Peaceful, Industrious Lives

By DAVE JAMES

QUIET return to their pre-war way of life has been accomplished by many Japanese-American families who farm in the valleys of the Green and Puyallup Rivers.

Driving the highways through Kent and Auburn and over through Sumner to Fife, one sees many families working, knees down, in trim, weedless fields.

Enough are home now to revive the Puget Sound Vegetable Growers' Association, a coopera-



KAMEO KAJIMURA

He remembered Hiroshima

tive which has a warehouse beside the railroad tracks in Sumner.

Once this was a thriving market outlet for 80 Japanese and Caucasian vegetable growers. It had grown slowly but substantially since its founding in 1924.

Then war came, the Japanese were moved from their farms to relocation camps and the association collapsed. It is struggling back to its feet this year

with little more than a dozen members. Manager T. Sakahara, interned at Missoula, Mont., in war years, is back at his Fife home, laboring long hours to reknit the cooperative's tangled strands.

Working with Sakahara are Ray Kiyohara, 30 years old, of Auburn, field man, and Carl Yamamoto, 31, of 806 Seventh Ave. S., Seattle, a plant foreman. Both are American born; both were "sent east" during the war.

"I WAS born in Sumner and went through school there," said Kiyohara, friendly and direct. "I played a lot of football and could run like the wind. But today I couldn't run 50 feet. Look at my stomach!

"We feel perfectly at home again. It looked like heaven to us when we came back after being stuck out in that Idaho desert. Now the wife and I and two children live at Auburn. We've had no trouble.

"I've heard some people say they met with disapproval when they came back, but we haven't had that experience. All of my old friends are still my friends. I get along with everybody."

Yamamoto, born in Puyallup and married to a Sumner girl, Yoshiko Yonemura, has two daughters.

"We're settled again," he said. "Everything is all right now."

The older Japanese, quietly resigned to being pushed from their homes into relocation camps in the war days, are happy to work their fields and head their families.

"It wasn't so good for the children in the camps," said Kameo Kajimura, 49, whose creek-veined 20-acre vegetable farm on the Puyallup-Fife road is a picture of agricultural know-how.

"In the camps the children dis-



MRS. K. KAJIMURA and daughter, SANAYE
They plucked green onions

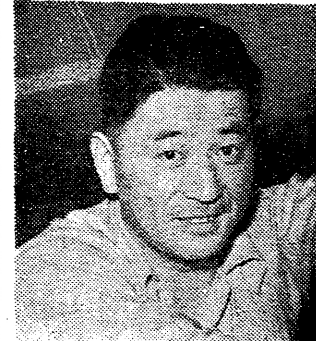
appeared for hours at a time and learned no-good habits. Even the little ones learned to smoke."

Kajimura's son Yoshiaki, 18, declined a cigarette.

"That is right Son," said the father. "You are yet too young."

Kajimura ships his produce through the Sumner cooperative.

"The farms ran down while we were away," he said. "We lost customers. My fields weren't fertilized. Where I had left rhubarb growing, I found quack grass. But after a year's work, the place looks better."



CARL YAMAMOTO (upper) and RAY KIYOHARA
They're co-op employes

THE Kajimuras remodeled their clean, white home only a month before being sent to the camp.

"We knew we would be moved, but we wanted to paint and paper, anyway," Kajimura said. "We came home to do the work all over."

The Kajimuras were pulling radishes and green onions for market. Helping the father were his wife and daughter, Sanaye,

21, and two sons, Saburo, 20, and Yoshiaki. Another son, Tsutomu, 24, was disking a plot of rich, solid silt for summer corn, and two other boys, Hiroshi, 15, and Tadashi, 10, were in school.

Nakano Unhei, 60, gray, whiskey and puffing a pipe, sat on a wheelbarrow and helped "peel" onions.

The Kajimuras get fresh crops of green onions from plants which last year grew too big for market. The onions were dried and replanted this



NAKANO UNHEI
Puffed his pipe peacefully

spring. Double and triple onions grew inside the parent bulb, which is stripped off before marketing.

Kajimura was born in Japan. He came to his country when he was 16 years old and has lived ever since in the farmlands between Kent and Tacoma. His father once lived in Pierce County but later returned to Japan.

"My father died during the war," Kajimura said. "We heard about him from others. My father lived in Hiroshima."