

Translation: Asahi Shinbun June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 by Yukari Tangena-Suzuki

## **Want To Meet After They Dealt with “Shame”**

Discrimination, bullying, but thoughts of their origin increase

### **Looking For My Father 1/3**

#### **69 years after the war for Dutch Nikkei Nisei\***

Dutch Nikkei Nisei are looking for their fathers. They are the war children who grew up in the strong anti-Japanese society with discrimination and bullying. I visited Holland to meet those Nisei in mature age who are desperate to look for their “Roots”

#### **“The Victims Torn By The War”**

#### **Met Father With The Help Of A Memo**

May 29<sup>th</sup>, in Sapporo. The man (61) who appeared in the meeting place looks like Hiroshi de Winter (68), nose, mouth, outline of the face, body shape, everything. They have the same father and this man is supposed to be a younger brother.

“Listen calmly! In fact you have an older brother” It was in 2011 when he heard it from his relative. “He is a Dutchman”. He looked back the moment when his mind went blank.

I also met Hiroshi in the Netherlands. In April, 1946 he was born in Java, Indonesia. His mother is Dutch and his father was working in the cotton industry.

According to the Dutch Government the Japanese army interned 40,000 prisoners of war and 90,000 civilians in concentration camps where more than 20,000 died from malnutrition, etc. Hiroshi was bullied as the child of Japanese.

His mother who never married and brought him up single handed, died in 1993 while thinking of his father. His address was written on a handwritten memo of his father which she kept. With this clue he could reach his brother.

In 2011 he went to Japan. His brother guided him to the rest home where he met his father for the first time. His father was suffering from dementia. Hiroshi embraced him and showed the picture of his father taken in Indonesia which his mother kept all these years. He looked very surprised and started crying.

However Hiroshi's case is a rare example where a father or a family member meets their Dutch child or family. The man said, "Maybe it is because of the feeling of 'shame'. But they are the victims separated by force in the war."

### **"Even Though He May Be a Bad Guy"**

#### **Anti Japan Feeling Faded and Look For His Father**

"Shame" is also the feelings to torment Nikkei Nisei. "I am the child of shame." Rob Sipkens living in the south of the Netherlands had been

bothered with this feeling all the time since he heard his “biological father” is Japanese, 25 years ago.

His mother’s family was living in Pekalongan, Java. His white grandfather was a prisoner of the war by the Japanese army and his grandmother and mother were forced to work at the army restaurants.

His mother was saved by his father when she was to be abused by a Kempei. But later he made her pregnant against her will. She said, “You were born when I was 19 years old. I did not let your father know about it”

Japanese are cruel bad people. In a society with very strong anti-Japanese feelings Mr. Sipkens used to agree the idea. Am I not the one, who must not exist in the world? He could not work after his mind lost its balance.

His turning point was in Autumn 2009. He spent 10 days in Japan. He was invited by a program of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs which invites Nikkei Nisei as victims of the war. He met kind Japanese who listened to his life story politely and eagerly. He could feel “it is not a shame to have inherited Japanese blood.”

In Japan he was spoken to in Japanese everywhere because he looks like a Japanese. It was a great feeling to be adapted in society and not to be treated as an alien. Now he is looking for his father enthusiastically. His father’s name is “Kawabata”. “Even though he may be a bad guy, I would love to meet him. That is my roots. My half anchor lies there.”

**\*Dutch Nikkei Nisei:** They were born from Dutch women whose country had colonialized Indonesia and Japanese civilians or army related personnel during the war, whose country occupied Indonesia in 1942. After the war most of the Japanese repatriated to Japan alone. When the independence war broke out in Indonesia many mothers and children went to the Netherlands. It is said there are 800 or some say 3000 Nisei in the Netherlands. In a community where very strong anti-Japanese feeling is common, mothers would not tell the truth to their children in many cases. That is why the real number is still unknown.

## **Clock Is Ticking**

### **Wall for Father Search**

The search for fathers of Nikkei Nisei is becoming serious. Almost 70 years passed after the end of the war and most of the people who know about the period have passed away. Having been alarmed about it, Japanese researchers living in the Netherlands founded the Foundation for the People Affected by the War in the Pacific: with Japanese archives and contacts (S.O.O.). They also receive cooperation from a Japanese N.G.O. with results of searches for birth and parentage of the Philippine Nisei and from a law office that can take a copy of a person's family register. Until now about 40 fathers were found but many were already dead and half of them refused to meet their family and the Nisei could not even visit their fathers' graves. The rest of the Nisei cling to "their last hope" on S.O.O.

## **Explanation of the pictures:**

**The souvenirs from Japan** are his treasure. Hiroshi de Winter (left) is telling his wife, Nel about his memories of his father's country. In Roosendaal in the Netherlands

## **Words from Nikkei Nisei "who want to know about their fathers"**

Joyce Komdeur (67) My father was a military man called "Yamashita" in Malang, East Java. My mother died in 1985 without telling me anything about him. Even though he was a war criminal I want to know about him.

Edward Lehman (68) My father is "Makot Murakami" I heard that he worked for a tourist company after the war and died in 1977 in Osaka. I want to know what kind of person my mother loved so much.

Fred Augenstein (69) It is only last year I found that my father was a Japanese. According to my aunt my mother met my father, "Nakano" at the bar for the Japanese military in Tegal, Center Java.

Therese ter Heide (68) My Japanese name is Keiko. My two year older sister is Reiko. My father, "Tadashi Mori" was a policeman in Nganjuk, East Java. I want to have his picture.

Joke Stephan (67) My father, "Yamada" worked for railroad related job in Kridosono in Java. He was 10 years older than my mother and helped my mother's family by supporting their living.

Juul Kalfsbeek (69) I heard that my father was a Japanese in 2000. According to my aunt his name is “Yokoi” and he was an Officer in Jakarta. I heard that they were in a love relationship.

Frans Havermans (68) I grew up in an orphanage. I was always bullied and it is a miracle that I did not become a criminal. My father, “Watanabe” was managing the food in military facilities.

(Maki Okubo)

Translation: Asahi shinbun June 2nd, 2014 by Yukari Tangena-Suzuki

## **Mother Still Thinking About Him**

### **Looking For Father 2/3**

#### **69 years after the war for Dutch Nikkei Nisei (Japanese second generation)**

In Breda, in the south of the Netherlands. The father of Ron Meijer (68), Nikkei Nisei, is "Isamu Kuniba." He is her mother Truus (85)'s first love.

#### **Stopped to go to Japan??**

Truus was born in Indonesia, one of the Netherlands' colonies at that time. She has Dutch and Indonesian blood. After 1942 when Japan occupied the Dutch colony she met "Kuniba" in Makassar, Sulawesi. She was 16 years old.

He was 10 years older. He was in a white Marine uniform. When military came to gather laborers and women he hid her from them. He brings things to her house necessary for life and began to stay in their house. When she told him that she was pregnant he was very pleased. But soon after that, Japan lost the war. He asked Truus to "go to Japan together" but her mother did not allow it.

Saying "Please wait five years" he left.

Thinking back to that time Truus' eyes turned red. After Ron, their son, was born, she married to a Dutchman. He came back to Indonesia after he was bombed in Nagasaki where he was made to work as a captive of the Japanese military. The family moved to the Netherlands in 1950.

When Ron was 46 years old he suffered from an unidentified health trouble. His doctor asked if he has any psychological problem. He recalled that in the past his stepfather treated him extremely hard.

Maybe I am not his child?

When he asked his parents they told him that his biological father is Japanese. It was a great shock for him. "I am a child of Japanese who treated prisoners of war and civilian captives so cruelly."

In 1998 Ron was invited to Japan with his stepfather and others by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His stepfather spoke about the agony as a prisoner of war and the suffering from the atomic bomb in Nagasaki. One Japanese man came up to him and said, "Would you please forgive what my father's generation did to you?" and bowed to him. "I cannot forget but will forgive you," said the stepfather. Ron could understand why he was treated so harshly by him. It was because I was a child of Japanese. He, however, decided "I will forgive him just like my stepfather did" Three years later his stepfather passed away.

### **Never Kept Secret Having aA Japanese Child**

Claudine Meijer (69) lives in a suburb of Rotterdam. Her father, "Yasushi Kooro" worked in Bondowoso, East Java. He helped her mother, Ottelien (88) -when she was to taken by an Indonesian Policeman under order of the Japanese army.

"Kooro" who was about 40 years old brought food to take care of her family. In 1944 Claudine was born. He named her "Masako" and held her in his arms. Then Japan lost the war. Although Ottelien wanted to



go to Japan with him he told her that he has his family in Japan. He left some jewelry for later need.

Five years later Ottelien married to a Dutchman. She did not make it a secret that her daughter is a child of a Japanese man. “Mr. Kooro saved me from becoming a comfort woman.”

The family moved to the Netherlands in 1961. Since 1970’s she has been looking for her father. “Masako’s” treasure is a golden bird shaped pendant with pearls which he left. She feels the warmth by wearing it even now.

(Maki Okubo)

Translation: Asahi shinbun June 3rd, 2014

## **Proud of Japanese Blood**

### **Looking For Father 3/3**

#### **69 years after the war for Dutch Nikkei Nisei\*(Japanese second generation)**

Oscar Ramos (41) living in Hoevelaken, in the center of the Netherlands won highest prize at the National Bonsai Contest. His mother, Antoinette (68) is Nikkei Nisei. On the shelves in his garden there are about 30 plantpots.

#### **The Sister I thought Was My Mother**

“My blood might have influenced. I simply started Bonsai because they look beautiful,” said Oscar. He was in elementary school when he found out that his grandfather was a Japanese. “Who is my grandpa? Why don’t you look for him?” He repeated to ask his mother.

Antoinette was born in Malang, East Jawa, Indonesia where the Netherlands occupied as a colony for a long period. When she was 7 her grandmother who was taking care of her told her that the person she was told to be her sister was actually her mother and her biological father was a Japanese man. She added that she must not tell anyone about this.

Grandparents treated her differently from other children. They never gave her a new clothes nor favorite foods. Whenever she does wrong they cursed her “Hey after all you are a Japanese!”

The family moved to the Netherlands in 1958. After her marriage she was blessed with three sons. Grandmother whom she had taken care of died in 1994. The thoughts “to look for my father for my sons who want to know their roots” raised in her mind.

The baptism certificate published soon after her birth shows that her father’s name is “Akasaka”. Relatives told her that he often brought foods and canned-foods for her family. He also taught them Aikido. But her mother said nothing but “I don’t know”. Without telling her a word about her father she passed away two years ago.

“It was very difficult childhood for me but I survived. It can be also my Japanese blood that I am very patient and have power to stick with various things. I am very proud of that” said both Antoinette and Oscar. Oscar added “I want to know where my DNA and interest come from”

### **Wanted To Meet Him**

Antonius Hoeke (69) living in a suburb of Amsterdam is one of few who found their fathers. In 1996 he was found with help of a Japanese but he passed away one year earlier. He told his wife that he had a son in Indonesia. Having heard of the story his oldest Japanese son agreed to meet Hoeke. But he also passed away suddenly before he would meet his brother. Afterwards because of other families not being so keen on meeting him his dream to meet his Japanese family broke in pieces.

In 1999 He visited Japan through the program of Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He stood in front of his father’s grave silently. “Dad, I wish I could have met you.” He cried thinking back of his hard youth in orphanage.

In 2002 he traveled Japan together with his wife and three years ago he took children and grandchildren altogether 8 members of the family to Japan.

Hoeke said “My country is clean and beautiful. People are kind and I think it is a good country.” But he still does not know what kind of person his father was. “It is not at all that I want his inheritance. If they do not want they do not have to communicate with me. I would only like to have his picture at least.”

Two of his children want to have tattoo of the family crest on their arms which were carved on their grandfather’s grave. “They must be wishing to have something carved connected to his roots” said Hoeke looking lonsome. “But I am still lucky one. There are still many who are looking for their fathers. I am really praying that they can find as many fathers as possible.”

(Maki Okubo)