

Konman-Matsukawa Family Papers

**1910-1995
(bulk 1940-1955)**

5.2 linear feet

**Japanese American Service Committee Legacy Center
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**Prepared by Deborah Mieko Burns, Archivist
2002**

Overview of the Collection

- Creator:** Matsukawa, Kazuyo Jane Konman, 1914-1996
- Title:** Konman-Matsukawa Family Papers
- Dates:** 1910-1995 (bulk 1940-1955)
- Abstract:** The Konman-Matsukawa family papers include a family history, letters, diaries, yearbooks, receipts, licenses, identification cards, certificates, diplomas, passports, report cards, Bibles, books, photographs (black & white and color), photographic negatives, legal documents (marriage, birth, and death certificates; military discharge papers; and a divorce filing), newspaper clippings, a U.S. Army uniform from World War II, and objects (pins, medals, a name plate, coins, eyeglasses, a lock of hair, and a dried umbilical chord). The materials date from 1910 to 1995 with the bulk dating from 1940 to 1955. Approximately 5% of the collection is written in Japanese language and has been processed with English translations. Kazuyo "Jane" Konman Matsukawa collected these materials from her family members throughout her life (1914-1996). The collection contains related materials from her father, Kuro Konman; her siblings, Eiko "Vicky" Konman and Hideo "Jack" Konman; and her husband, Kenjiro "Henry" Matsukawa, and his family. The collection documents the forced removal of the Konman family from Los Angeles to a U.S. internment camp at Rohwer Relocation Center near McGehee, Arkansas. It also documents Kazuyo's resettlement and long-time residence in Chicago after internment camp in letters and photographs.
- Quantity:** 5.2 linear feet (10 boxes)
- Accession:** 1999.001

Acknowledgements

The JASC Legacy Center acquired this collection in 1999 through the generosity of Hideo “Jack” Konman and Gary Yamashiroya.

The JASC Legacy Center gratefully acknowledges the Chicago Japanese American Council, Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Chicago, McDonald’s Corporation’s Diversity Initiatives Program, National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), and the Woods Fund of Chicago for generously supporting the preservation, processing, and care of this collection.

Deborah Mieko Burns, JASC Archivist, processed this collection in 2001-2002.

Provenance

Kazuyo “Jane” Konman Matsukawa collected these materials from her family members throughout her life (1914-1996). Upon her death, Gary Yamashiroya purchased her home and all of its contents at 1337 W. Foster in Chicago. He generously donated the collection to the JASC Legacy Center with the approval of Hideo “Jack” Konman in 1999.

Access and Restrictions

This collection is open without restrictions except for the newspaper-clipping scrapbook (Box 3, Folder 12), which may not be handled by researchers. A photocopy of this scrapbook is available for use (Box 4, Folder 1). Records will be administered in accordance with the *JASC Legacy Center Access & Use Guidelines* provided to all researchers. Researchers assume full responsibility for following libel, privacy, and copyright laws as they may apply to use of this collection.

The preferred citation for this collection is: [Item name]. Konman-Matsukawa Family Papers. Japanese American Service Committee Legacy Center, Chicago, Illinois.

There are two container lists (one sorted numerically by box and folder numbers and one sorted chronologically by date) available upon request. Please contact archives@jasc-chicago.org or (773) 275-0097 x224.

Family Biography

Kazuyo “Jane” Konman Matsukawa (July 11, 1914-1996) was born in Seattle, Washington and was named Kazuyo Konman. She was the oldest daughter of **Kuro Konman** (February 3, 1879-March 14, 1945) and **Haruye Watanabe Konman** (ca. 1897-1924). Her father held various occupations including farm laborer, shampooer, food peddler, fireman, and Buddhist minister/priest. Her mother was a homemaker. Her parents married in Okayama, Japan on September 22, 1912.¹ Haruye Konman sued Kuro Konman for divorce on July 27, 1924 in Tacoma, Washington claiming that he physically abused her and refused to provide for her financially even though he owned an unspecified business. They did not own any property.² The status of the divorce was unclear when Haruye died later in 1924.³ Kuro Konman did not remarry. Kazuyo had two siblings, **Eiko “Vicky” Konman** (May 17, 1918-February 13, 1948) and **Hideo “Jack” Konman** (March 6, 1921-).

The family lived the state of Washington and then relocated to Los Angeles, California some time before 1930. In the “Konman Family Constitution” (Box 1, Folder 6), Kuro states that being a single parent was difficult, but he refused to “give up” his children. He relied on Kazuyo to undertake much of the domestic labor such as childcare and housework.

Kazuyo graduated from an unspecified high school in Los Angeles in 1932. Eiko graduated from Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles in June 1935. She started college at the University of California at Berkeley in the fall of 1935. The entire family may have moved from Los Angeles to Berkeley, California when Eiko entered college. Hideo attended high school in Berkeley, but did not graduate. In December 1937, their father, Kuro Konman, became ill. It appears that Eiko then had to quit college and the family returned to Los Angeles. In September 1940, Kuro had a debilitating stroke. After the stroke, he was partially paralyzed and unable to work. While Kazuyo cared for her father, Eiko worked as a salesperson at the Yamato (possibly an art and dry goods store) while Hideo held various jobs including auto mechanic, truck farm laborer, and crate builder.

¹ Kuro Konman was born in Okayama, Japan and probably immigrated to the United States between 1899 and 1908. In 1908, the “Gentlemen’s Agreement” between the United States and Japan restricted new immigrants from coming from Japan to the United States (but it left a loophole for returning immigrants or people married to a Japanese alien already residing in the United States). Presumably, Kuro Konman returned to Okayama, Japan to marry Haruye Watanabe and returned with her to Seattle, Washington in 1912. In 1912, Kuro Konman would not have been able to come into the United States as a new immigrant. For more information about laws affecting Japanese immigration to the United States, see *Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese Americans* by Frank F. Chuman (Del Mar, CA: Publisher’s Inc., 1976).

² In 1924, Japanese resident aliens could not own property in the state of Washington. For more information, see the Chuman book mentioned in the previous note.

³ The collection materials indicate that Haruye Konman died in 1924. However, in a conversation with Hideo Konman in 2002, he indicated that his mother may have remarried in Seattle, Washington after the divorce and had a second family. When Hideo visited Japan in 1975, his Japanese relatives told him that his mother eventually came back to Japan.

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On February 19, 1942 U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the forced removal and incarceration without due process of more than 120,000 U.S. citizens and legal aliens of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast to inland internment camps. On May 6, 1942 the U.S. government forcibly removed the Konman family from their home to the horse stalls of the Santa Anita Racetrack in Arcadia, California, a temporary holding area. On October 16, 1942 the U.S. government removed the family from the West Coast to Rohwer Relocation Center near McGehee, Arkansas, one of ten U.S. internment camps. The family lived there for two and a half years.

Forced removal halfway across the nation and incarceration in internment camp must have been extremely difficult for Kuro Konman and his family due to his disability. There was little privacy in camp with many families living in one barrack separated only by thin partitions. Internees had to walk to separate buildings to use the bathroom or to eat. These conditions must have put quite a strain on Kuro Konman and his family. One month before being released from internment camp, Kuro Konman died on March 14, 1945.

In 1944, Hideo Konman left the Rohwer Relocation Center for Chicago to work at the White Pines Golf Club. According to Hideo, Chicago was known as a good place for Japanese Americans to find jobs. While in Chicago, he was drafted into the military. He served in the U.S. Army from January 8, 1945 to November 28, 1945. He trained at Fort Knox, Kentucky and at the Military Intelligence Service⁴ at Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

Based on her successful employment by the U.S. War Relocation Authority in internment camp, Eiko secured a new job with the U.S. War Production Board, Civilian Production Administration in Chicago. In April 1945, Kazuyo and Eiko were authorized to leave Rohwer Relocation Center and move to Chicago. In the late 1940s, they lived at 1311 N. Wells and then at 155 W. Oak Street in Chicago. Based on the appeal of Kazuyo and Eiko to his commanding officer, Hideo was discharged from the Army and moved to Chicago at the end of 1945 to help support his sisters. Eiko then worked for the U.S. Office of Housing Expediter in Chicago from 1945 to 1947. Kazuyo worked for various employers including McClurg's, Ray Industries, and Schaffner's.

In February 1948, Eiko died of leukemia. In May 1948, Hideo moved to Kauai, Hawaii. Kazuyo married **Kenjiro "Henry" Matsukawa** (August 25, 1910-March 1, 1987) on July 9, 1949 in Herrin, Illinois. Early in their marriage, Kenjiro worked at various jobs including a hairdresser and an art repairman. He was a certified pilot as well. In July 1949, Hideo married a woman named Hilda Sano in Hawaii. Neither Kazuyo and Kenjiro nor Hideo and Hilda had children. Kazuyo was Kenjiro's second wife. He had been previously married in Japan through a matchmaker to a woman named Yukiko and they had a daughter named Reiko.

⁴ The Military Intelligence Service (MIS) Language School trained *nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans or the first generation born in the United States) in vital Japanese language skills. Members of the MIS used their translation and interpretation skills as a critical contribution to the war effort in the Pacific.

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Kazuyo and Kenjiro Matsukawa lived at 1337 W. Foster Avenue for many years. They owned a building there and eventually purchased another building at 1508 W. Wilson Avenue in November 1958. They earned rental income from these properties.

Correspondents in Japan include **Hachiro and Haruko Konma**,⁵ Kuro Konman's nephew and his wife or Kazuyo, Eiko, and Hideo's cousin and cousin-in-law. For a Konma/Konman family tree, see Box 2, Folder 5.

⁵ In Japan, the family surname is written as "Konma." However, in the United States, the family always used "Konman."

Scope and Contents

The Konman-Matsukawa family papers include a family history, letters, diaries, yearbooks, receipts, licenses, identification cards, certificates, diplomas, passports, report cards, Bibles, books, photographs (black & white and color), photographic negatives, legal documents (marriage, birth, and death certificates; military discharge papers; and a divorce filing), newspaper clippings, a U.S. Army uniform from World War II, and objects (pins, medals, a name plate, coins, eyeglasses, a lock of hair, and a dried umbilical chord). The materials date from 1910 to 1995 with the bulk dating from 1940 to 1955. Approximately 5% of the collection is written in Japanese language and has been processed with English translations.

Kazuyo "Jane" Konman Matsukawa collected these materials from her family members throughout her life (1914-1996). The collection contains related materials from her father, Kuro Konman; her siblings, Eiko "Vicky" Konman and Hideo "Jack" Konman; and her husband, Kenjiro "Henry" Matsukawa, and his family.

The collection is organized first by individual and then roughly chronologically. The photographs, negatives, textiles, and objects (Boxes 6-10) are housed separately from the paper records.

The collection documents the forced removal of the Konman family from Los Angeles to a U.S. internment camp at Rohwer Relocation Center near McGehee, Arkansas. Kazuyo's sister, Eiko, documents the family's experiences of being held at Santa Anita Racetrack in Arcadia, California for five months and then evacuated from the West Coast to Arkansas in her 1942 diary. In this diary Eiko transcribes letters sent to a dear friend from whom she recently separated. She attempts to maintain normality and suppress her fear by writing jokes and puns, despite her father's disability and Kazuyo's precarious illness during their removal. The collection contains scarce photographs of life during internment camp.⁶ It also documents Kazuyo's resettlement and long-time residence in Chicago after internment camp in letters and photographs.

The Konman-Matsukawa Family Papers contain extremely rare and valuable written and photographic materials including a first-hand account of the evacuation of Japanese Americans from the West Coast and the conditions of everyday life while interned. In addition to the Eiko's 1942 diary (Box 3), highlights include Hideo's World War II uniform (Box 9), the Rohwer [Relocation] Center High School yearbook (Box 3), and rare photographs from inside internment camp (Boxes 6-7).

The difficulties and hardship that families like the Konman family faced before, during, and after World War II are subtly documented throughout this collection. In her 1941 diary (Box 3), Eiko wrote about the family's financial pressures after her father has a

⁶ Films and photographs of the internment camp experience are extremely rare because all cameras were considered contraband by the U.S. government. Internees were not allowed to keep cameras. When internment camps closed in 1945, the U.S. government did not enforce these restrictions as strictly as it did initially.

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stroke. She documented the growing tension between the United States and Japan and noticeably started using her Americanized name, Vicky. She also wrote about happy times as well like going to the movies and Hideo's birthday dinner. While a specific link between the evacuation and internment camp experiences and the loss of family members cannot be made explicitly, one wonders how much these devastating experiences exacerbated existing problems. Kazuyo, Eiko, and Hideo suffered the loss of their father one month before leaving internment camp. Then in 1948, Eiko died of leukemia and a few months later Hideo left Chicago for Hawaii leaving Kazuyo alone in Chicago. An explicit example is found in a letter dated November 17, 1949 (Box 1, Folder 19), Kenjiro's cousin described how his uncle's health problems began when he was thrown into "the stockades" at the start of World War II because he as a leader in the Japanese American community in Hawaii. He never recovered and died in 1949.

In her 1966 to 1969 diaries, Kazuyo described the complaints, demands, and problems they had with tenants and the general details of life (Boxes 1-2). She makes a rare comment about how Japanese Americans are perpetually considered "foreigners" in the United States in a December 27, 1977 letter to her cousins in Japan (Box 2).

This collection is open without restrictions except for the newspaper-clipping scrapbook (Box 3, Folder 12), which may not be handled by researchers. A photocopy of this scrapbook is available for use (Box 4, Folder 1). Photographs in Kenjiro's album (Boxes 6-7) were removed from the album because the pages were highly acidic. Information added by the person who processed the collection is found in brackets [XX].