



## Takahashi, Saburo

*Born: 1919*

*Passed: 2008*

*Occupation: Engineer; Journalist*

*Takahashi, Saburo:* Saburo “Sam” Takahashi was born in Ibaraki, Japan, while his mother (Toyo) was visiting her family in 1919. When he was five months old, Toyo brought him home to Victoria, BC where the family (father Kosaburo and siblings Yukio, Masa, and Kenji) were residing, and where they lived until 1942. Saburo helped with the family’s dry cleaning business (Togo Dry Cleaning), which included a shop and a plant that serviced Victoria and the Lower Mainland. In 1936, Saburo enrolled in the general arts program at Victoria College, where he developed a strong appreciation for literature and a foundation that would fuel his passion for reading and thirst for knowledge in later years. After a couple of years at Victoria College, Saburo moved to Vancouver to begin studies in the Mechanical Engineering Program at UBC. As a UBC student, he lived in residence at Union College and led a very active student life. He took up boxing, was a member of the debating team and went on exchange programs with the University of Washington.

Saburo was a member of the Class of ’42, but his education was interrupted in April of that year by the Security Commission’s evacuation order. In the event that he was unable to return to Vancouver, he was given notice that he could write his final examination at another Canadian university. After a short stay in Hastings Park, the Takahashi family moved to Toronto while Saburo headed to Edmonton, where he planned on writing his fourth year exams at the University of Alberta. On his journey to Edmonton, Saburo was responsible for driving his father’s car to a family friend who offered to look after it for the duration of the war. While driving through the BC Interior, Saburo was stopped by a drunken RCMP officer and arrested on the spot for carrying a map.

He spent a night in jail, but was released the next day when his intentions were cleared. Following the incident, Saburo's father requested that he immediately join the family in Toronto. He arrived there in late summer 1942. Upon arrival, Saburo had hoped to write his exams at U of T; but as the war continued, the University of Toronto was not welcoming to Japanese students. After many unsuccessful attempts to gain admission, Saburo eventually completed his fourth year engineering studies, graduating from the University of Toronto in 1945. He became a member of the Professional Engineering Association of Ontario in 1946.

As a mechanical engineer, Saburo had a passion for aerospace projects and over his career, contributed to the design and development of a variety of military and civilian aircrafts while employed at Avro, Orenda, DeHavilland and McDonnell Douglas. He and wife Toshie (Hashimoto) were active volunteers at the Japanese Canadian United Church, the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre and the Nikkei Voice (a Japanese Canadian newspaper). They also dedicated many hours into the pioneering of what is now the Momiji HealthCare Society, an organization dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of Japanese Canadian seniors.

As a widower, Saburo lived at the Momiji Centre for thirteen years. He was alone but never lonely, living an active life surrounded, ironically, by friends he knew from British Columbia days. His collection of books and newspaper clippings were his worldly possessions, and he enjoyed engaging conversation with anyone who would listen to his stories of historical trivia or thoughts on current events. In addition to reading, Saburo loved to eat and had a particular soft spot for desserts. Before she passed away, Toshie had taught him how to make flaky pastry, which he mastered into apple pies and butter tarts. Saburo enjoyed entering his pies and tarts in the Markham Fair's baking contests, and won 1st prize for his apple pie and a few blue ribbons for his butter tarts. He took great pride in his red ribbon victory as his pie was judged best in class out of 16 pie entries made by women! Baking became his new occupation, and he took pleasure in donating his pies to bake sales and offering slices to friends at Momiji or wherever he was invited out. Saburo passed away just before Christmas 2008, two months shy of his ninetieth birthday.

Saburo would smile and chuckle whenever he heard Doris Day sing “Que Sera Sera.” It was a tune he could relate to. He accepted what he could not change and, like many of his classmates and friends, developed resilience to the situation that was forced upon him during the evacuation period. While it may have saddened him to see the devastation felt by his parents, he kept his thoughts to himself and never complained—for him, the absence of bitterness opened the door to a happy life. Saburo would have been proud and deeply honoured to receive this recognition from the University of British Columbia. ✦