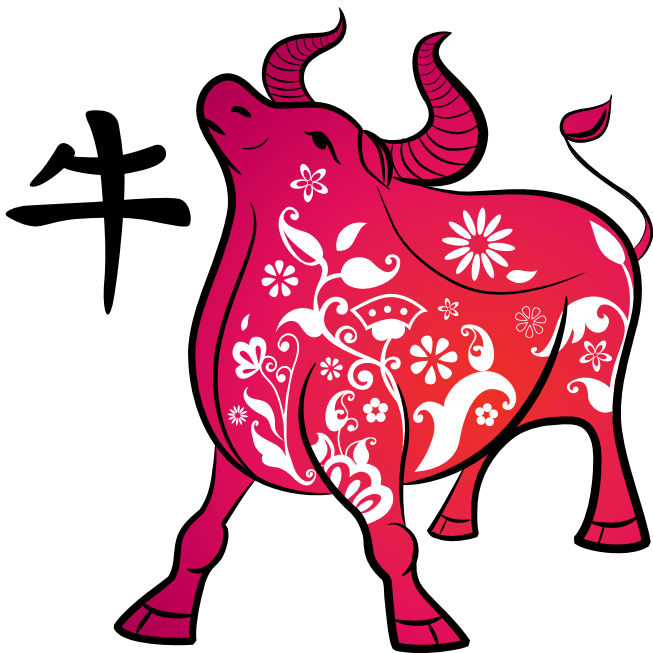


Born in the Year of the Ox

Setting aside a difficult time and enjoying, to the fullest, being Canadian senior citizens *by Sue Kai, Scarborough*



In 1990, more than 20 years ago, we became senior citizens. At the ripe old age of 65, most of us had retired and started to receive our old-age pension and various senior discounts.

Flash back to 1942, 70 years ago, when 22,000 Japanese-Canadians were forcibly removed from their homes along the Pacific Coast of British Columbia, due to the War Measures Act. Families like mine were separated; women and children were sent to internment camps in the interior of British Columbia, others to sugar beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba, men to camps

in northern British Columbia and Ontario, and so on. It was a period of utter chaos and upheaval when our lives were uprooted.

Since that ordeal, Japanese-Canadians have settled in various cities and towns across Canada, mainly in the Toronto and Vancouver areas, and live comfortable lives. I have lived in Toronto since 1946. I was married in 1948 to Sam Kai and we have two sons and five grandchildren.

Back to 1990: A group of friends in Toronto came up with the idea of having a get-together for those born in 1925.

In other words, everyone was 65 years old, or would soon be 65—first-time senior citizens.

Under the leadership of Kay Fujiwara, assisted by George Tsushima, our initial get-together was held at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto on July 15, 1990. The reunion was named Ushi-Doshi Birthday Bash. Ushi-Doshi in Japanese means people born in the Year of the Ox, according to the lunar calendar. Those born in the Year of the Ox could also have been born in the years 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997 and 2009.

Ox people are articulate and eloquent, but speak sparingly unless they are driven to anger.

They can be stubborn and are reticent to admit or accept defeat. They are industrious, private and are extremely skilled with handwork. They are physically and mentally alert. The third and last phase of Ox people's lives will be the best...if they live long enough to experience it.

The first Ushi-Doshi Birthday Bash attracted 76 people age 65, plus family and friends. A lively group, many who were grandparents, took over the stage with renditions of tap dancing, karaoke singing, mimicry, skits and Japanese Odori dancing in full costume.

The people attending were Canadians of Japanese descent who had been 16 or 17 years





old at the time of evacuation during the Second World War. For some of us, it was the first time in a long time seeing old friends. Some came from as far away as British Columbia and the United States. It was a bittersweet reunion, full of nostalgia and good and sad memories.

Since then, every five years we've had another reunion in Toronto, which brings us to five so far, organized by a committee headed by Kay Fujiwara and Ruby Fukumoto. A group picture was taken at each reunion. Attendance has decreased over the years, but the

Ushi-Doshi gang is still quite active.

We will be celebrating our 90th birthdays in the year 2015, only three years away to becoming nonagenarians.

I am one of the Ushi-Doshi survivors. We're only 87 years young, still time to enjoy our Canada. ■

Above: The second Ushi-Doshi Birthday Bash in 1995; Sue is in the first row, second from left, wearing a white blazer over a blue dress. Below, from right: Sue looking sharp on Halloween last year; the Ushi-Doshi gang performing a skit in 1990; Sue and Sam on their wedding day in 1948.

