

Rainier Valley HERITAGE NEWS

Spring, 2020

Volume 29, Issue 1

RVHS 129th Annual Meeting on Zoom!
Saturday, June 20th, 10 am
Celebrating the Landscape Mastery of Kubota Garden



Kubota Garden's mountainside waterfall, designed by Fujitaro Kubota. Photo by Karen O'Brien



"Everything has spirit; rock and stones pulse with life," Fujitaro Kubota, trimming a pine at Seattle University, 1965.

Please join us for the 129th RVHS annual meeting celebrating the extraordinary life of Fujitaro Kubota. Experience a virtual tour of Kubota Garden with Don Brooks, former Head Gardener, followed by the inspiring film *Fujitaro Kubota and His Garden*, a telling story about Fujitaro's lifetime masterpiece, the 20-acre historical landmark park in Rainier Beach.

Email us for the Zoom link to attend:
office@rainiervalleyhistory.org

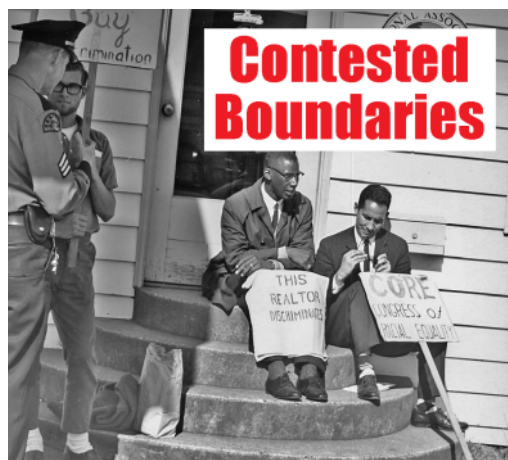


Photo credit: Fair housing protest, Seattle, 1964

Dismantling Racism Series: an online talk by David J. Jepsen, author of "Contested Boundaries: A New Pacific Northwest History."

May 27th, 6 pm - 7:30 pm, on Zoom
RSVP to: office@rainiervalleyhistory.org

Built around the theme of "exclusion," *Contested Boundaries* explores the movements of the peoples who inhabited or settled in the Pacific Northwest – Native Americans, African Americans, Asians, other minorities, women, unskilled workers and others.

Jepsen's talk will focus on the primary themes of exclusion, with particular focus on racial issues, and will include discussion of the disproportionate impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the black community. The talk will include a Q&A session for the community at the end.

Events Calendar

Dismantling Racism: A Forum for Southeast Seattle

"Contested Boundaries" with guest author David Jepsen
May 27th, 6 pm

email us for Zoom link at:
office@rainiervalleyhistory.org

RVHS 129th "Virtual" Annual Meeting

June 20th
10 am - 12 pm

email us for Zoom link at:
office@rainiervalleyhistory.org

This Old Kitchen June 3

(See page 9 for details).

Columbia City Farmers Market date TBD

Columbia City BeatWalk
Every 2nd Sunday
June - September 6 pm
RVHS Office

**Othello Park International
Festival & Rainier Valley
Heritage Festival**
August 9
12 - 6 pm
Location TBD

San Gennaro Festival
postponed to Sept., 2021

**8th Annual RVHS
Founder's Dinner**
cancelled for 2020

RVHS plans to re-open in Phase 3
3710 S. Ferdinand St.
phone: 206.723.1663
email: office@rainiervalleyhistory.org
website: rainiervalleyhistory.org

**Thank you to 4Culture
for supporting our
work!**



Gone too Soon, Steve Shulman

written by Steve's dear friends
Mary and John Charles

Born in Seattle, September 24, 1952, Steve Shulman passed away March 18, 2020, from complications of the COVID-19 virus.

A legend of the Leschi neighborhood and beyond and a friend to all, Steve was the co-owner of the beloved Leschi Market, founded and owned by the family since 1948.

Never seeking recognition, Steve was always about helping others; a friend of everyone no matter their social status or background. Steve and the Leschi Market served as the heart of Seattle's Leschi community. Steve was well known throughout Seattle for his award-winning sausages, weekly hot prime rib, smoked Thanksgiving turkeys and award-winning wine department. Steve's generosity and loyal friendship will be missed by all who knew him.

Steve's Leschi Market served as a place of community camaraderie, a place that made you feel good when you were there. He gave generously to any organization asking for help. He supported local community



Steve Shulman and RVHS board member Mary Charles at Leschi Market

associations and clubs by organizing fundraising wine tastings, providing food to local senior centers' hot lunch programs, continuously making large food contributions to local food banks, and providing food, wine or funds to pet advocacy organizations, school fundraising events, girl scouts, local charity auctions and many others. Through the Leschi Market, Steve provided the first employment to countless teenagers of his neighborhood. And, he was not only a loyal friend of everyone who knew him, but also to his golden retrievers.

Steve kept the pulse of his community and knew about everything that was happening locally, willing to step up wherever help was needed. His counsel and advice were sought by those who

were homeless, city council members, police chiefs, legislators, mayors, and governors, as well as the many others who were fortunate enough to know him. He was both an informal as well as a formal community leader: co-founder of the Seattle Police Foundation, founder of the East Precinct Crime Prevention Coalition, past Chair of the 37th District Democrats, and founding board member of the Seattle Neighborhood Group.

In addition to Steve's extensive community service, he was a dedicated pillar for his immediate and extended family members. Steve never complained about the pressures he faced in managing his work, social, philanthropic, civic and family activities. He always had his sense of humor, quick wit, and joy of life no matter the challenges he faced.

Steve's close friends and family will miss the annual Seder dinners he and nephew Yousef hosted at his Seward Park home. His home cooked matzo ball soup, prime rib, salmon and cheesecake were perennial favorites.

The Leschi Market will continue Steve's legacy as a community market and community resource now managed and owned by his nephew, Yousef, along with the store's loyal staff. Steve considered and treated his employees at the store as family - his Leschi Market Family.



The Leschi Hotel had a long history in Leschi Park during its heyday of steamboat rides, boats to let, a dance pavilion, and casino in the late 1800s. Access to the park was by streetcar from downtown Seattle and by vessel in Lake Washington. The Johnson brothers established the hotel in 1896. Louis M. Johnson was the proprietor and most likely the man standing solo in this photograph. Johnson was a close friend with Captain John C. Anderson, president of the Anderson Steamboat Company. The two men saw each other almost daily for twenty years during the period when Lake Washington parks were "aquatic playgrounds." Capt. Anderson was quoted at Louis' funeral, "in a quiet and unobtrusive way, he always held out a helping hand to everyone." His early death at age 54, "caused keen sorrow in the lake communities."

This photo is being shared by Yousef Shulman, Steve Shulman's nephew and owner of Leschi Market. Steve was a long-time supporter of RVHS and is surely missed by us and the Rainier Valley community. Our sympathy to his family.

-Karen O'Brien

Honor Roll

Many thanks to our members and supporters who make our work possible! Below are those whose gifts we received between November 11, 2019 and April 30, 2020. Contact us with any corrections at: 206-723-1663 or office@rainiervalleyhistory.org.

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Treasurer's Annual Report 2019 Summary

INCOME:

Membership	\$ 2,660
Earned Income	\$ 2,103
Interest/Dividends	\$ 6,170
Donations	\$16,363
Grants	\$ 7,353
Outreach & Fundraising ..	\$34,761
INCOME TOTAL:	\$69,410

EXPENSES:

Facilities	\$ 9,523
Administration	\$ 3,839
Personnel	\$20,199
Communications	\$ 1,763
Collections	\$ 5,209
Merchandise	\$ 351
Outreach & Fundraising ...	\$ 7,806
EXPENSE TOTAL:	\$48,690

ENDOWMENT VALUE:

as of 12/31/19: \$301,529

LIFETIME MEMBERS

James Adderson
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Jody and Ed Zumwalt

The Fuel Dealer and the Midwife - Their American Dream

With two small old-school family photograph albums in hand, retired physician Peter Nikaitani arrived at our history office one afternoon in June of 2019. Peter represents third-generation Rainier Valley residents and second-generation Franklin High School graduates. He spoke of growing up living next door to his Nikaitani grandparents on 38th Avenue South, where they gathered hazelnuts in the fall and spotted quail and pheasants in nearby fields. The following essay was developed based on the family story that Peter shared and some of the priceless family photos he donated. Our many thanks to Peter.



Kimi, Yasuo and Kenjiro Nikaitani portrait taken at Jackson Studio in Seattle. Photo circa 1920s. RVHS Nikaitani Collection #2020.001.0007



Brighton School, Graduating Class, January 1930. RVHS #1997.106.0012

Photographer Frank Perkins took the above mid-year graduating class photo for Brighton School in Rainier Valley, with nine girls standing and eight boys sitting. Yasuo Nikaitani had attended the school on Holly Street for grades 1 through 8. He is the second boy from the left, in the light colored pants. At 15 years old, he was on his way to Franklin High School, the following month became a February Freshman Boy there. At some point, Yasuo became "Gus".

Today's Google Maps clocks the 0.4 miles from the Nikaitani home to Brighton School at eight minutes' walking time and requires crossing Martin Luther King Jr. Way South. For Gus, the new north-south thoroughfare had just been put through as Empire Way. A swamp at Graham Street and a waterfall on the hillside of Holly Park Drive are now long disappeared. Gus and his parents, Kenjiro and Kimi, had lived about a block south of Holly Street, at

the base of Beacon Hill, since about 1922. There were a scattering of other Japanese families living nearby.

Some things had been complicated. In March of 1921 the Alien Land Bill was signed by Washington's governor, which left the Nikaitanis unable to buy, own or lease land, as individuals or as majority stockholders in a company. The local Anti-Japanese League's sentiment that "the Japanese are unassimilable, and that this is a white man's country; that it is ours, that we are here, and that it is not possible for the two races to mix," had prevailed. Japanese immigrants, Issei, had been identified as aliens and denied the right to apply for U.S. citizenship. This Bill created further difficulty for the then approximately 7,500 Japanese living and doing business in Seattle, mostly concentrated in an area south of Yesler Street and to the west of 12th Avenue, in Japantown.

But the world did not stop

spinning. In 1924, a building permit was issued to Washington Wood & Coal Company for a \$2,000 frame residence at 6715 38th Avenue South. The fuel company had been incorporated in May of 1921 by three men: Japanese-born Taro Matsumura, a wood and coal dealer, English-born naturalized U.S. citizen J. Thomas Imeson, a railway machinist, and native-born U.S. citizen Ned Roney, a Seattle attorney. This arrangement satisfied the requirements of the recently enacted Bill in its allotment of shareholders. Kenjiro Nikaitani was one of the founding business partners (circa 1918) but not included in the incorporation. Whether or not young Gus, as an American born child, had been named legal owner of the family property (that is, two large lots in the Coffman Garden Tracts), it was Kenjiro who had the carpenter skills to build the family home.

Just two blocks away lived another Japanese family, Taro Matsumura



By 1930 Washington Wood & Coal Company's fuel yard was located at 9th Ave S and S Spokane St. Photo circa 1940s. RVHS Nikaitani Collection 2020.001.0013

with his wife Ai and their American born children. The two men, Kenjiro and Taro, operated the Washington Wood & Coal Company along with a third, Tsunetaro Yasunaga. The men shipped coal in by rail from local mines outside of Seattle for delivery with commercial trucks to customers within their own Japanese community. In addition to coal, they offered block and slab wood at \$7.50 a cord in 1925. During the Depression of the 1930s, the businessmen supplied the nearby Hooverville inhabitants

with fuel for their cooking and heating needs including clothes washing and bathing. There was also a subsidiary in Wapato, eastern Washington, serving the Japanese farming community there.

While Japanese immigration to the United States had begun in earnest in the 1890s, Kenjiro Nikaitani arrived aboard the S.S. Minnesota in 1905. He left Kobe, Japan, before the treaty that officially ended the Russo-Japanese War was signed. It had been a victory for Japan. Railroad executive James Hill owned the steamship. He had connected the wheat fields of Minnesota to the port docks of Seattle via the Great Northern Railway. He had established trade across the Pacific Ocean by sending American cotton to Japan and bringing raw silk back for New York markets. Mr. Hill had in the past used Chinese labor but then began importing cheaper Japanese contract labor through the Oriental Trading Co. and many Japanese men first came to the U.S. as indentured laborers. However, the 1905 "Manifest of Alien Passengers....," lists Kenjiro

(continue on page 6)



The 1920s Nikaitani family home still stands on 38th Ave S. RVHS Nikaitani Collection #2020.001.0003

(The Fuel Dealer and the Midwife - Their American Dream continued from page 5)



Kimi Nikaitani photo submitted to the State Board of Medical Examiners, as part of her Midwifery License Application in 1917. Photo credit: Washington State Archives

Nikaidani [sic] as having paid his own passage, being in possession of \$66, and occupied as farmer.

Five years later, the 1910 U.S. Census for the Town of McMurray, in Skagit County, lists Kenjiro among other single Japanese men living in a bunkhouse in the woods, working as a sawmill laborer. Additional Japanese men are listed as railroad laborers. At the time, Pacific Coast sawmills were offering roughly \$1.80 to \$2.00 per day wage to Japanese laborers and demand was high. This was the heyday of Pacific Northwest cedar shake, shingle, lathe and lumber mills.

Sometime in 1913 Kenjiro left the United States for a return to Japan, presumably with a stash of sawmill earnings in hand. Whatever his intentions, he returned to Seattle in summer of 1914 accompanied by his

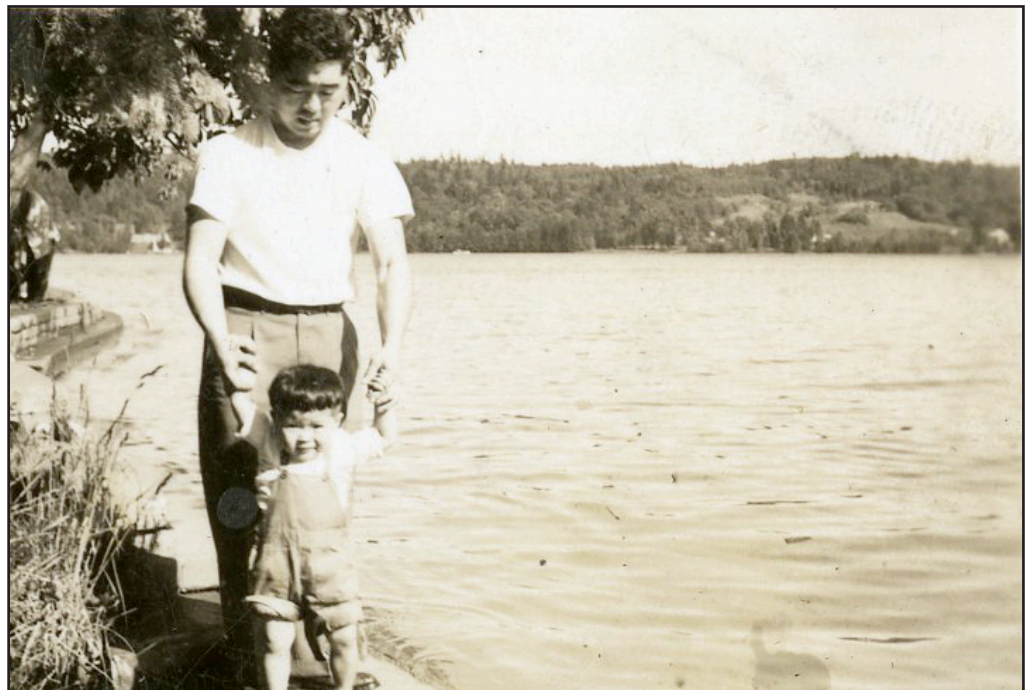
new wife Kimi. This was Kenjiro's first marriage, at age 35, and Kimi's second, at age 28. She had been widowed in Japan when her husband, a physician, had taken his own life. On the steamship manifest, Kenjiro's occupation is listed as carpenter and Kimi's as housewife. They were both from Nara prefecture, where the city of Nara was an imperial capital of Japan during the eighth century and Buddhism flourished. Mrs. Nikaitani's hometown is described as sitting "nestled between mountains covered with pine trees and bamboo along the Yoshino River."

Kimi arrived in Seattle with highly marketable skills: a degree from the Furukawa Nurse and Midwife School located in Kobe. She registered that fall with Seattle's Midwives' Association, as one of 12 women who registered in 1914, some Japanese, some Europeans. By 1917, Washington state was one that passed midwife licensing laws with requirements Kimi could easily meet.

She completed her application, took an examination at Broadway High School and was granted a license to practice in July of that year. Licensed midwives could earn between \$20 and \$25 for prenatal and postnatal care along with the actual birth of the child. Despite Kimi's poor English language skills, she was able to succeed here, providing services to other Issei women.

The Nikaitanis were then living in Japantown, where Gus was born in 1915. Kimi's midwifery application had them at 705-1/2 King Street, in the East Kong Yick Building, now the Wing Luke Museum. The Seattle Buddhist temple, Nippon Kan Hall, Panama Hotel, Japanese language newspapers, bookstores, bathhouses, shoe repair shops, barbershops, pool halls, groceries, etc., were all within walking distance.

The move five miles south in the early 1920s was a big one. In Rainier Valley, Kimi had her chicken flocks



Yasuo "Gus" Nikaitani with his oldest son Peter at Seward Park, circa 1947. Likely photographer Amy Nikaitani. RVHS Nikaitani Collection #2020.001.0008

among the fruit trees to tend and Kenjiro had his strong Buddhist faith. Gus was playing baseball and tennis at Brighton Playfield and fishing in his spare time. Besides the Matsumuras, other Japanese families living nearby in 1930 included the Yamasaki and Okawa families on Holly Street, gardeners, the Kodamas on 40th Avenue South, florists, the Uminos on 42nd Avenue South, greenhouse gardeners, and the Wadas on Willow Street, gardeners. The Kubota Gardening Company had just increased their Renton Avenue property to 30 acres. To the north on Juneau Street the Nojis had established Columbia Greenhouse Co., sitting at the base of Beacon Hill.

Whether any Rainier Valley gardeners of Japanese descent were engaged in the early development of Rainier Valley's Seward Park, which began in earnest in the 1920s, is unknown. The planting there of the first Japanese cherry trees in



Peter Nikaitani at RVHS office, 2019. Photograph by Nancy Dulaney.

December 1929, the placement of the stone lantern in June 1931, and the installation of the torii marking the entrance in 1935 put Japanese cultural heritage on the map in Seattle's public parks. Whether the wildly-pink blossoming trees each spring brought to Kenjiro or Kimi's mind sentimental memories of their native Japan is left to our imaginations.

With that, we will leave you with

one of Peter's childhood recollections, his family's New Year's Eve tradition of making sticky rice cakes, mochi: "During the early part of the evening my mother and grandmother would cook the rice and when the rice was ready, then we dumped the rice into this pounding bowl, which was actually a tree trunk that had been hollowed out. We would pound, pound the rice, while my grandmother and mother would scoop the rice around to expose more rice for pounding until it became a paste. At that point then, the rice was removed and then we'd start forming little balls in flour for more permanent use. And then after that we'd have buckwheat noodles as a good luck symbol. We did that every New Year's Eve, sort of initiation, it was driven by my grandparents, my Nikaitani grandparents."

- Nancy Dulaney

Do you have a story to share?

We are collecting personal stories regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Rainier Valley's community. Please consider sharing your experiences with us by emailing Katharine at: office@rainiervalleyhistory.org. Stories can be arranged by video, phone message or email. If history repeats itself, 100 years from now there will be interest about how we fared during the pandemic! Looking back to the 1918 Spanish flu, here's a sample of what we found in our **Franklin High School Collection noting six weeks of school closure in 1918**. (School days were made up by extending hours and eliminating winter and spring break.)

- 1918 Monthly Tolo - Franklin students serve in WWI: "Our First Gold Stars will never return. Jessie Dodge was a member of the Twenty-third Infantry when he made the supreme sacrifice on the altar of freedom. Herl Lincoln was sent from France to Boston School of Technology to study. The school closed on account of the Spanish Influenza. He contracted pneumonia and died shortly before reaching Seattle. Colin Hyde died of the influenza in France."
- 1919 Tolo Sophomore class, "Every Sophomore can take pardonable pride in being a member of the liveliest class in Franklin ... we sustained the two influenza shutdowns in good humor and came back with a vengeance."
- 1918 Monthly Tolo - Athletics: "All indications point to a very successful season for Franklin next year. The flu, as well as the war, has departed from our midst." (8 starting football players were returning from WWI duty for the next season.) "We may confidently look forward to a successful year."
- 1918 Monthly Tolo - Girls' Club: "Postponed! It's been applied to a good many things lately, including the Christmas party."
- 1918 Monthly Tolo - Boys' Club: During the last month the Boys' Club activities have been seriously hindered by the Flu. As soon as the Flu ban is lifted, activities will take on their former spirit.
- Charlotte Dobbs, class of 1920 remembers: "a 28-day vacation - nearly one-sixth of the school year ordered closed because of the influenza epidemic. Even after school re-started, flu masks made of a specified number of layers of gauze were required on public conveyances. One fracas I vividly recall was a heavy-set shipyard worker forcibly ejected from his seat from the car for refusal to wear one!"

Remembering a Friend and RVHS Founding Board Member, Mark Hannum

In the fall of 1992, I hurried to an evening meeting in Columbia City to discuss the formation of a new historical society. Community activist, local historian and lifetime Columbia City resident, Buzz Anderson had placed an article in the newspaper describing his vision of expanding the work of the Columbia City Pioneers to include the entire Rainier Valley. He wanted volunteers to help with his vision. There were about twelve of us present that night. I fortunately sat down next to Mark Hannum. As the meeting progressed, I realized that his love of history and stories were similar to mine. We learned that both of us had grown up in different parts of the country but we loved our Rainier Valley homes. Both of our houses were over 100 years old and we already knew how to go to the archives to get the 1930s photos of them. Mark and I had been on the RVHS board ever since. His death on January 1st, 2020 left me bereft of a dear friend and the board and members of our community mourning the loss of a great community historian and loving person. Mark had suffered from a serious heart condition for years, but his gifts to Rainier Valley Historical Society and this community were many.

Mark was a great believer in friendship, loyalty and love for those close to him. He was born on November 12, 1961 in Sheridan, Wyoming to Virginia and Phillip Hannum. For



RVHS board members Mark Hannum, Joan Neville and Teresa Anderson at Heritage Festival 2009, Columbia City

the first six years of his life he was an only child. His father traveled for business and was frequently out of town. During those six years, he was very close to his Mom. She loved to cook and he sweetly followed her around. I asked his mom what he was like as a child. She responded "He was so outgoing and full of smiles! He loved to cook early on." Virginia went on to note that he was extremely creative. He tasted everything. He offered creative cooking ideas that varied from standard recipes. "But he was creative in so many other ways," she said.

In his sixth year his brother Dan was born. He loved his baby brother but someone else had entered his kingdom. Virginia said that her sons were as different as could be. Dan was thoughtful and reserved while Mark was outgoing and thinking in his sixth year that he wanted to be a chef, an actor or a King. According to his mom, Mark liked to practice setting the rules for his and Dan's respective activities. Dan loved his big brother and willingly followed.

Together they put on plays in the backyard, helped mom in the kitchen and learned carpentry skills from their Dad. "Oh how Mark loved to act" Virginia commented. "He also had a great and beautiful baritone singing voice." Mark studied in Germany for a year and learned to speak the language well enough to play Stanley Kowalski in the play *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Mark often told me that he had a common Father/Son relationship. He frequently felt that his dad's standards were too high. His mom told me that his dad and he were so much alike with their constructions skills, eyes for beauty and a love of history, that their heads butted one another at times. His dad read books to his sons nightly and did the best he could. Mark told me early on that despite his dad's stressful expectations, he acquired his skills and strong work ethic from him. During his father's last years Mark spoke and visited his dad frequently. He told me that he was at peace because their last talks

(continued next page)

brought them closer. Forgiveness on both sides, understanding and love prevailed. Years before his illness, he told me that both their hearts had been mended.

It was this background and skill set he brought to his life in the Rainier Valley. During his time with RVHS Mark took oral histories, represented the Society at multiple community gatherings, helped with fundraising especially the Seed building and helped with the Society's many moves. He assisted Buzz Anderson and others in setting up our current office, and consistently contributed financial resources. He was a mediator in meetings that were stressful. While doing all this he bought and remodeled the 4857 Building (La Medusa) on Rainier Ave S. He remodeled many houses in the community. He was also a member of The Landmark Preservation Board, The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, The Mount Baker Club and other organizations. And let's not forget that he worked for Homestreet Bank as a mortgage broker for many years.

Mark was a man who kept his friends. He loved more than he hated. He was funny. He was sweet but not sugary. He had an edge. He always had dogs in his life. As a strong man he was unafraid to show empathy for others. He was tolerant and giving. He respected history. His multiple talents helped bring the memories and riches of the past into today's world. He is a man who will be missed. His deeds, creativity and kindness remain.


- Joan Neville, Founding RVHS Board Member



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What's new in the Archives

- Thank you to Kaarin Anderson for donating the original Chubby & Tubby Santa wooden sleigh with two reindeer from the Rainier Ave. store.
- Thank you to Peter Nikaitani for his oral history and family photographs for our digital collection.
- Thank you to Columbia Funeral Home for their donation of photographs, newspaper clippings, and marketing material about their annual Christmas display, and Rainier District baseball sponsorship to our digital collection.
- Thank you to the Rainier Chamber of Commerce and Rainier Chamber Foundation for donating photographs, plaques, posters, and program material.
- Thank you to Karen Kinney for donating original program files belonging to Dave Bockmann regarding Columbia City BeatWalk, Farmers Market, and for Columbia City Farmers Market memorabilia, posters and cloth shopping bags.
- Thank you to Judith Bentley for donating a copy of The Rainier Valley Citizen Annual, Dec. 25, 1915, RVHS newsletter 1994 and typescript notes on Columbia Co-operative Investment Co.



Kenjiro and Kimi Nikaitani, arrival in Seattle, circa 1914, donated by Peter Nikaitani



RAINIER VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS!

THIS OLD KITCHEN

A BI-WEEKLY COOKING SHOW USING OUR COLLECTION'S RECIPES

CHECK IT OUT ON YOUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL:
RVHS VIDEO

6.03.20

***This Old Kitchen
Premieres on our
YouTube Channel:
RVHS Video
June 3, 2020***

We have a new virtual series! RVHS Program and Archives Manager Katharine Anthony will prepare recipes from our cookbook collection and share the history of both the food and the recipe's owner in a bi-weekly series on YouTube, every other Wednesday.

The first episode will feature a simple and summery treat!



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You can opt-in to receive the Spring and Fall Heritage News by email - please let us know at: office@rainiervalleyhistory.org

Support Rainier Valley History

If you haven't joined Rainier Valley Historical Society or renewed your membership this year, we urge you to do so now.

RVHS is a 501(c)(3) organization, membership dues and donations are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Please clip and fill in this form and mail it to:

Rainier Valley Historical Society

PO Box 18143

Seattle, WA 98118

Donations, memberships and merchandise sales are also accepted on our website: www.rainiervalleyhistory.org.

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