



Cincinnati Chapter

THE EASTWARD MOVE JAMES FURIYA

Nestled in the rolling hills of Indiana is the town of Versailles, population 1,500, situated 50 miles from Cincinnati, Ohio. The Furiya family has lived here for 24 years. This is the story of how they came to settle in Versailles.

My name is James Furiya. I was born June 19, 1923, in Sacramento, California. My father, Jinnosuke, had a jewelry store called the Furiya Jewelry Store. As a jeweler, he invented the watch-washing machine. I had two sisters and one brother, all older than me. My mother died when I was four years old and being the youngest, I was sent to Japan to be raised by my grandmother in Yamanashi-ken.

While in the third grade, I was adopted by the Shimura family and was given the name Ichiro Shimura. Mr. Shimura worked for the Civil Service and in 1937 we moved to China. At that time, Japan was already at war with China. I attended a Japanese high school in T'ien-ching where I also learned how to speak and write Chinese.

At that time, the Japanese army drafted 20-year olds but if you were a college student, you did not have to go into the army until you finished college. In 1943, I was in my third year at a college in Dairen, Manchuria, when the army started to draft all students except engineering students. I was studying business so I was drafted and stationed in Manchuria. Three divisions were moved to the South Pacific area but perhaps owing to some exposure to the Chinese language at college, I did not have to go but spent two years in Manchuria where I learned Russian.

In 1945 Russia attacked Manchuria but the war ended within one week. "Cease fire" came August 15, 1945, but word did not reach us so we fought until August 17 when we were forced to surrender. For three weeks we were not given any food so we shared what rations we had. We drank creek water which gave many of us Typhoid Fever.

The Russians sent us to Tanbov, a city 250 miles Southeast of Moscow. This trip of 5,000 miles took one month. We traveled in two-tiered cattle cars with no heat. Some men made pillows from blocks of ice. Guards with trained dogs in towers on top of the cars accompanied us. Since we were Japanese and the Russians knew we had no chance of escaping and being helped by the natives, we were allowed out of the cars

during the stops to stretch. I heard that German POWs, when they were being transported, were never allowed to leave the confines of the cars.

Tanbov was built to house German prisoners so the Japanese prisoners were moved to Kazan near the Volga River where I stayed for three years. We did all kinds of labor – cut wood, baled hay, helped state farms, constructed roads and highways. For three years we were allowed one dipper of soup three times a day. Once every two weeks we were allowed a small pan of water for bathing purposes. Although I knew Russian, I waited a whole year before using it as an interpreter to help people, I couldn't do it right away or they would think I was a spy.

On August 15, 1948, Russia sent us home to Japan. Some prisoners had been captives as long as four years. For three years I had dreamed of "umeboshi" (preserved plum) but oddly enough, when I finally put one in my mouth, it didn't taste quite as good as in my dreams.

In Japan I got a job with the Japan Tobacco Company, a monopoly bureau of the Japanese government. Since I had lost my American citizenship when the Japanese government drafted me, in 1950 I applied at the American embassy to regain my U.S. citizenship. I waited and waited for nine long years. In 1959 a friend of mine worked at the American Embassy said they may have changed the laws and urged me to apply again. I did so and within one week, I received my citizenship.

In February, 1959, I left Japan without knowing much English. I did have one skill which was sexing chickens, a skill much in demand by U.S. hatcherymen. Spring is when this work is done and the U.S. Chick Sexing Association gave me a territory in Michigan. Pullets are separated from cockerels. I was paid \$1.00 for every 100 chicks I handled and I could do between 8,000 and 10,000 per day by putting in long hours. They demanded 99.99% accuracy. When the season was over, I went to live in New York City for six months.

In the Spring of 1960, they gave me a territory in southern Indiana. Although the hatchery people were very kind and friendly to me, it was a lonely life without a family.

In 1961, friends and relatives arranged my marriage with Teruko Tabata who was working for the Mitsubishi Bank in Kanda, Tokyo. I knew Teruko but I wasn't sure she would like the life far removed from busy Tokyo so I sent her a roundtrip ticket in case she wanted to change her mind. At that time, I was boarding with Mrs. Mildred Cizek who agreed to be Teruko's sponsor. Teruko came as a tea ceremony teacher and decided to stay so we were married by the Justice of the Peace for \$5.00.

By 1964 the chick sexing business slowed down so I applied for a job at Cummins Engine Company in Columbus, Indiana. From 1965 to 1980 I worked two jobs – chick sexing in the morning and Cummins at night. In 1980 I quit chicken sexing altogether

We have now lived in Versailles for 24 years and raised three children. In June, Kevin graduated Purdue University and is working for General Dynamics in Ft. Worth, Texas. Alvin will graduate from Purdue this winter and already has a job lined up with ARA Food Services. Linda is in her junior year at Purdue.

My hobby is raising vegetables – mostly Japanese vegetables – such as eggplant, gobo, daikon, hakusai, and this year, I had success with Saitomo.

Working hard in the U.S. is truly rewarding in happiness for me and my family. On December 22, Teruko and I will be celebrating our Silver Wedding Anniversary. Our lives, I'm sure, will be a happy one surrounded by good friends in the United States and Japan.

Contentment in my present life lets me talk about my hardships experienced in China and Russia.

(8th in the series EASTWARD MOVE)