

## Lesson 6: The Return Home: The Decade That Followed

### Kaz Ishimitsu Oral History Excerpts

Interviewed on September 17, 1993 by Sumi Hayashi and Cory de Leon for the International District Oral History Project.

#### *Excerpt 1*

**Cory de Leon:** How did your father start his business after the war without any tools?

**Kaz Ishimitsu:** Tough, it was very difficult. The best he could do was to buy the tools from the Tashiros, but the Tashiros had difficulty getting skill saws and stuff, you know. They just wouldn't sell them, so, most of the places won't sell to him. So he went...Abe Aronson of Aronson Hardware is the one that sold him a skill saw.

**Sumi Hayashi:** They wouldn't...

**Kaz Ishimitsu:** Oh, a lot of places didn't. Remember, it's just right after the war and they thought we were the dirty guys all along. That's the way...if you look at the newspaper prints, you wouldn't blame the public for thinking that way. The news media is a powerful instrument.

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#### *Excerpt 2*

**Sumi Hayashi:** And where did your family go when they came back from Minidoka?

**Kaz Ishimitsu:** Right back here, but we had no place to live. We stayed at the Renton Highlands, but the quarters were so small. As I recall the Escibosas gave me a job as a houseboy and I moved down into the Madison Park area and I tended the furnace, babysat, washed dishes.

**Sumi Hayashi:** Escibosa?

**Kaz Ishimitsu:** Yeah, Escibosa. Hector and Ann Escibosa. Mr. Escibosa was the General Manager of Frederick & Nelson then he became president of I. Magnin but because he lived such a stressful life, he died early of a heart attack. Their kids were small. Mrs. Escibosa asked me to stay but I had to keep going. I was gonna go to college and I needed a bit more money. Otherwise, I couldn't make it through. It's costly to go to school. They didn't have government loan programs then.

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#### *Excerpt 3*

**Sumi Hayashi:** Do you remember what year your dad started the business?

**Kaz Ishimitsu:** Thanks to my brother, Sad, he was able to start the business back right after the war in a sense. Right after the war my mom appealed to him and I remember I had to write the letter. I had to do the calling. We had to get out of those camps and my Pop was not capable of returning back and starting because of the language barrier primarily. He could work, but coming

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back here doing things it would be tough because the Japanese people as a whole didn't have the money, see? They took everything away from you in the first place. Most of the Asians were, I would say they were brainwashed too by the press.

**Cory de Leon:** In what way?

**Kaz Ishimitsu:** Oh, because they were enemy Asians. We were enemies. The Japanese were enemies. If you went down there to that Wing Luke Museum display, you saw the headlines all the time. That was a constant thing. You were bombarded by this hate campaign. Dr. Gunther at the University of Washington Psychology Department was the head of propaganda. He did a real good job, excellent. He knew how to rile the people up to make them move except there was a negative end. He had to create hate. Like I said before, hate and love are two very strong emotions.