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## Family Roots Run Deep

By Sophie Braccini



Harry Ide with his wife Shigeko and their girls, from left: Dawn, Patricia, Sachimi and Tokiko in 1953 Photo provided

When Dawn Eames walks into the Farmyard Darlings boutique in the back of Mt. Diablo Nursery and Garden, through the displays of farm- and cowboy-inspired objects and repurposed furniture, she sees shadows of what was her first home - the wood frame and beams designed by her father, the large windows letting ample light into the minimalist Japanese-inspired 800-square-foot house.

"There was the kitchen," says Eames. "There, my parents' bedroom; there, the bedroom I shared with Patricia; and there, the one Sachimi and Tokiko shared."

This was the home that Harry and Shigeko Ide built for their family in 1950, in the back of their burgeoning garden center at 3295 Mt. Diablo Blvd. The nursery, now owned by Garth Jacober, will celebrate 65 years of continued activity on Oct. 23-25.

Eames, the youngest of four sisters, was born a few months before the family moved into the home. The Ide's first two children were born in very different circumstances: in the Japanese internment camps created in 1942 by Franklin Roosevelt's order 9066 that required all Americans of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast to be housed in detention camps for the duration of the war.

When Ide came back to the Bay Area as a young father, he worked as a gardener. "He always loved plants," says Eames, adding that her father always said that they should be treated as well as people. One of Ide's clients, Lafayette resident Bernice Ellis, decided to support his desire to set up his own business. Ide bought the piece of land next to the Lafayette Park Hotel where the nursery still sits, and later was able to build a home for his family. The Moraga resident inherited the land and buildings from her parents.

"Growing up, it was a little lonely here," says Eames. "There were only businesses around. Fortunately some girlfriends came here from time to time to play, roughing it in the supplies for the garden." Eames remembers how in the first years of the business, life was spent at the nursery 100 percent of the time, with both parents working seven days a week. "They were very hard working and very strict," she says. "They instilled in us values (such as) working hard at school, keeping up the family's reputation, and punctuality."

When Eames was 10, the family bought a house nearby, and her mother had the time to develop her own passion: Ikenobo Ikebana, flower arrangement in the purest Japanese form. She developed and taught this style of Ikebana until she died in 2009. She also transformed the Ide's house into a gift shop, which was taken over by the Farmyard Darlings in 2010.

"Harry's Nursery, now Mt. Diablo Nursery, is the oldest Chamber of Commerce member," says the Lafayette Chamber's executive director Jay Lifson. "Harry was always very supportive and was an asset to the community."

Ide's love of plants and garden design may have been inspired by his Japanese heritage, but he was quite aware of the natural landscape and plants of California. He trained many young people of all backgrounds in the nursery, including Jiro Mishimoto who took over the business when Ide retired in 1982, and Jacober, the present owner of Mt. Diablo Nursery, who got his first job there in the early '70s.

"That was my father's philosophy; that is still the same here today," says Eames. "Everyone who works in the nursery has to respect plants and be very knowledgeable." Eames' says her father used to see clients coming with plants that were very stressed; he would replace them, and keep the stressed ones, nursing them back to health.

Today, Jacober works in the nursery with a young man who knows most everything about plants, Matt Guziejka. They will be leading the Oct. 23-25 65th anniversary festivities, which will include a composting workshop, a container class, and a 20 percent discount on all the plants.

Eames will be there, bringing drinks and cookies to celebrate her heritage within the community.



Dawn Ide-Eames Photo Sophie Braccini

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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