



**PROFILE OF A
BC NOTARY: KAMLOOPS**

**Seiko Ouchi:
Don't Fence
Me In!**

Shelley Marsh, daughter of Seiko and Penny Ouchi, interviewed her dad, then wrote this fine article. They had a lot of fun reminiscing and learning about each other and talking about the "olden days."

Born in 1942 to Japanese immigrant parents, Seiko was the 5th of 8 children.

He grew up on a farm 3 miles outside of Vernon. At the time, it felt like the middle of nowhere.

While Seiko adopted the hard work ethic of his parents and siblings, he fondly remembers his childhood as a carefree, almost idyllic time. When he wasn't working on the farm, his days were filled with exciting pursuits, including hunting pheasants, ducks, and partridge; dragracing tractors; and hanging out at Kalamalka and Okanagan lakes with his cousins.

With two older brothers to show him the ropes, he quickly learned how to drive both the tractor and the truck before he was old enough to see over the dashboard or reach the clutch and brake. Sitting on his brother's knee, Seiko would shift and steer.

Once he was big enough to stand on the seat and look over the dash, he graduated to driving the truck on his own while his older brothers loaded it. He had only a few minor mishaps, including driving a tractor through the neighbour's fence.



Time Out for Family: Brett, Graysen, Shelley, Chandler, Jenn, Jennifer, Brad, Seiko, and Penny

His brothers also encouraged him to play organized baseball and hockey, along with his cousins. Knowing that he and his cousins technically weren't allowed to drive, being under age, they spent many nights trekking, often in the bitter cold, to and from the arena to a vehicle left parked in a driveway of a family friend at the edge of town.

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A sawmill in Golden was Seiko's first stint of paid employment after high school. He and a friend commuted from Sicamous to Golden by jumping the freight trains. The job was short-lived because, once Fall came, it was too cold to stay in a tent and Seiko moved back to the farm.

Acting on the suggestion of a family friend, Seiko applied at a bank and was hired as a junior clerk. They must have really liked him because he remembers going to work with black eyes, bandages, and bruises; he was playing the equivalent of junior hockey at the time.

A wife, two sons, and several transfers and promotions later, Seiko set roots in Kamloops. John Harvey,

a Notary Public, was one of the first people Seiko met in the city.

After much cajoling over a few years, Harvey convinced Seiko to take the BC Notary course and take over the business. It was in the early 1980s and many people were experiencing difficult times financially. Interest rates had skyrocketed and the bank was constantly foreclosing on loans.

Seiko felt the time had come for change and looked forward to the freedom and independence of having his own business. After 21 years in banking, Seiko left his post as bank manager one day and opened shop as a BC Notary Public the next.



Together 24/7 and still smiling



Seiko with grandkids Chandler and Graysen. Granddaughter Tyanne is on Seiko's lap.

Still practising 25 years later, Seiko knows he made the right decision. The most satisfying aspect of his work, other than working with his wife Penny 24/7, is helping people acquire what is typically the biggest investment of their lives.

A wide clientele, including many clients who have been with him for years, demonstrates what Seiko believes is the most important aspect of being a Notary—maintaining the Tradition of Trust.

Giving back to the community is also a huge part of Seiko's belief system. He accomplishes this both through his business and in his personal life.

From high school athletes, to Girl Guides, to rodeo competitors, to



Seiko and Tyanne



With his grandkids Chandler and Graysen and stepson Brad

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) nursing students, to sports teams, Seiko and Penny complete and sign thousands of *pro bono* statutory declarations a year for Kamloops area youth.

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Seiko was a Kamloops Rotarian for many years before he moved on to other ventures. His various volunteer activities have included cooking at a local seniors' centre. He's also volunteered for the Special Olympics and the many athletic competitions that give Kamloops its claim-to-fame as the Tournament Capital of Canada.

He looks forward to being involved in the 2011 Games being held in Kamloops. And of course he's a longstanding, avid fan of Kamloops' junior hockey team, the Blazers.

But the volunteer pursuit closest to his heart has to be Judo. Seiko has been involved in Judo in one capacity or another for over 60 years. He currently has a 5th degree black belt and is an International Level Judo referee.

Starting as a wee Judoka, he eventually competed on a national level before turning to coaching. From coaching, he made the natural progression to refereeing and has officiated at the Junior and Senior

Worlds, Commonwealth Games, and Panamerican Championships. He has officiated and/or supervised at numerous Canadian Judo Championships.

He's stayed a little closer to home lately to spend more time with his growing family but is still involved as the Chairman of the Judo BC Referee Committee and mentor to up-and-coming referees.

He and Penny are also part of a core of principal organizers of the annual Kamloops Invitational Judo Tournament, which hosts upward of 600 competitors plus coaches and other officials from across Western Canada, USA, and Japan.

Retirement is definitely on the horizon and although no replacements have come knocking yet, Seiko hopes to have the opportunity to mentor a successor for his business in the near future.

He plans to remain in the community that has given him so much over the past 30 years. With his work ethic, he'll likely never stop dabbling in some pursuit or another. He does plan to use his retirement to spend more time on the most important part of his life—his family.

With 5 children and 7 grandchildren, the next chapter of Seiko's life will certainly be just as busy and full as his working life. ▲

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Sons Michael and Brett and their families were unavailable for the photos.