

The tragedy of Tamaye Tsutsumida, a young Japanese American.

Sixty four years ago in 1942 when Japan was at war a charming and intelligent American girl from California was under house arrest in a Melbourne mansion with 20 Japanese facing her most difficult decision.

Tamaye Tsutsumida, aged 22, had to decide whether to return to her family of Japanese descent in the United States or sail to wartime Japan with her boss, the first Japanese minister – effectively ambassador – to Australia, Tatsuo Kawai, who was 30 years her senior.

Tamaye, Kawai's private secretary and hostess who lived in his *Carn Brea* mansion in suburban Auburn in Melbourne, decided so go with Kawai to wartime Japan, where she would work for the enemy. Her fateful decision led to tragedy and cost her life and she would never see the country she loved, the USA, again.

The story of Tamaye Tsutsumida's love and tragedy is told in a new history on Australia-Japan relations *Saving Australia, Curtin's secret peace with Japan*, by Bob Wurth, just published by Lothian Books.

During five years of research the author discovered in Japan the writings, photographs and exquisite poetry of Tatsuo Kawai at his classic coastal retreat at Manazuru in the Kanagawa prefecture south of Yokohama. The discovery began to unravel the intriguing relationship between Tamaye and the enigmatic Japanese diplomat who came to Australia as a strident expansionist and left 18 months later as a pacifist.

*Minister!
You call out to me, as only you do;
I could listen to your voice until the day that I die.*

Tatsuo Kawai was the official spokesman for Japan's foreign office in 1939. Sensing the approach of war in the Pacific, he established two nationalistic cram schools in Tokyo for *Nisei*, young Americans of Japanese descent. Tamaye Tsutsumida had not had a strong formal education but at the age of 19 she demonstrated a great knowledge of the Japanese and western classics, had strength of character and a sense of independence.

The whole farming town of Guadalupe came out to see her off to Japan. It was just like a big wedding, her family later said. Tamaye was only one of two young women selected for Kawai's training. She sailed to Japan looking like the American teenager that she was, her bobby sox visible below her long skirt as the ship pulled away from the country that she would never see again.

Tamaye instantly impressed the Japanese diplomat. When he was appointed Japan's first ever minister to Australia, as war clouds were gathering at the start of 1941, Kawai selected the young American to be his official hostess and private secretary. In

Japan and Australia Tamaye, slightly chubby in the face in her younger years, always was immaculately groomed with her hair permed, made up to the nines, and wearing the best of clothes. She felt good in Western and Eastern company.

Tamaye had been given a crash course in Japanese traditions and culture, including tea ceremonies and flower arranging. Often dressed in a kimono, Tamaye attended formal dinners given by Kawai for prominent Australians at *Carn Brea*. It was a large, modern house with a timber-panelled galleried ballroom at the rear. *Carn Brea*, which in recent years was restored, is set in park-like grounds with tennis courts.

Tamaye loved Australia, saying it was much like California. Apart from domestic staff and an older male clerk, Tamaye was the only diplomatic staffer from the Japanese legation to reside with Kawai at *Carn Brea*. Australians and even some of Kawai's staff thought Tamaye was the minister's wife. His loving wife Tomiko remained in Tokyo with their five children during the war. Both Tomiko and Tatsuo had been adopted by the same children parents in Japan and their marriage was arranged.

Tamaye Tsutsumida accompanied Kawai on a visit to dine at the home of John and Elsie Curtin at Cottesloe, Perth, in July 1941, just as Japanese troops were occupying southern Indochina. Curtin was then Australia's Opposition leader. Tatsuo Kawai and John Curtin were frequently were in discussion about ways of maintaining the peace between the two countries.

Kawai's writings indicated that he and Curtin had reached an agreement when Japan would "guarantee Australia's safety" in exchange for Japanese iron ore mining and exports from Yampi Sound in Western Australia. But as Japan pressed south, and sanctions and embargoes were applied by the West, the agreement was short lived.

Research in Japan, including an interview Kawai's last surviving diplomat colleague in wartime Australia, revealed that Kawai and his staff under house arrest were gathering intelligence against Australia and succeeded in getting it back to Japan in 1942 by a collaborator.

The Japanese at *Carn Brea* were to be sent back to Japan on a diplomatic exchange ship in August 1942 and the American consulate asked Tamaye what she planned to do. She agonised over the decision and as the sailing date approached, the American consulate asked for her US passport, which she reluctantly handed over.

The *Carn Brea* mansion had become a hot-bed of intrigue as pro-war staff fought against those who favored peace. Single staff members slept in bunks in the ballroom, while married couples had their own rooms.

In the end it was Kawai who persuaded Tamaye to join him on the protected exchange ship in sailing for Japan. There had been a passenger ship sailing for the US but Kawai convinced Tamaye that with Japanese submarines off the Australian coast, the voyage to America would be too dangerous. Tamaye is pictured on the Japanese passenger liner *Kamakura Maru* playing deck games with Kawai.

In Japan, Tamaye was employed as an interpreter for Japan's foreign office. But she refused other duties, including broadcasting in English to the United States. She survived the war only to contract tuberculosis, then rampant in Japan.

*The disease worsens
I fail to pay attention
to your changing tastes;
How I regret my neglect*

At first Tamaye made no move to return to the US. Her sister, Yasuko Yamamoto, arrived in Japan in 1946 and was employed for a year with American forces based at Yokohama. Tamaye was thrilled to see her younger sister, the first family member she had seen since leaving California in 1939. Yasuko said Tamaye's health didn't deteriorate for another year:

We would go down to the resort, as I used to call it, and sleep over the weekend. Tamaye said she was tired of the city life. She kind of relaxed there at Manazuru. We went for walks and read books but in those days we didn't do much. Tamaye spoke about Australia – such a beautiful place. But we talked mostly about family. Mr Kawai was there at Manazuru a couple of times and sometimes a few friends. He was very good to her then. He had a deep respect for her. I spoke with him and he was very interested to know about things in America. Mr Kawai...felt responsible for Tamaye having recruited her in the first place. When she became ill he felt even more responsible. Tamaye was very happy then. Come to think of it, I don't know why she didn't try to come back at the end of the war. I don't know why. Then it was too late.

Yasuko, who lives today in Tempe, Arizona, does not believe that Tamaye had a romantic relationship with Kawai. She says Kawai was more like a father. Another sister, Cherry Tsutsumida, of Arlington, Virginia, says that Tamaye was a girl of high morals but acknowledges that with war, anything might have been possible. The author found an old friend of Kawai's at Manazuru, Toshiro Takeuchi, a former world president of the YMCA and owner of the local hotel, who confirmed a romance:

She was much younger than Kawai-san. A beautiful, charming lady. In love? Yes, yes, I think so. And then she gets sick with TB...She likes to wear kimono style and she commands a beautiful American English. She's always ready to listen to Kawai-san. That's my impressions. Very courteous, lovely girl...very clear they loved each other although their age is so different. Like daughter. They love, they help each other and spend a very quite peaceful life here – together here in the Manazuru community. More like a paradise for them.

Takeuchi spoke fondly of Tamaye but also witnessed her declining health:

Getting weaker and weaker and knows she has no chance to be, well, recover. But until the end she looks fine and beautiful and Kawai-san, he loves her and looks after her. Well, that's more like a sad story.

There is a dark side of Manazuru. In failing health Tamaye Tsutsumida in 1949 shared the house at Manazuru with Colonel Masanobu Tsuji, a mass murderer of

American prisoners of war, among many thousands of others, including Chinese civilians at the fall of Singapore. The enigmatic character of Tatsuo Kawai emerged when he agreed to harbour Tsuji for six months in his Manazuru cottage. Tsuji wrote a book on his wartime exploits while at the retreat. In his writings he admitted that he was a war criminal, but this admission was only published after war crimes trials had been stopped by General MacArthur. Tsuji was never punished.

It is inconceivable that Kawai did not know the allegations against Tsuji while at Manazuru and would not have told Tamaye. Kawai's son Masumi, speaking of the late forties, recalled that he took food and medicine to Tamaye at Manazuru:

I didn't know it was Tsuji (laughs) and then I was joking with Tamaye-san (saying) when I was in the Army one of the most famous officers was Mr Tsuji. And then Tamaye-san (indicated by nodding the head) and I couldn't understand. It was Tsuji! Mr Tsuji was writing that book in Manazuru about his experiences during the wartime...His talk is very interesting.

Tamaye sent several photographs home to the US in 1951. In one she is standing, smiling outside the house at Manazuru, her hands behind her back wearing a button-up blouse, skirt, socks and clogs. She is no longer the chubby girl but a slender, lovely woman. Ironically, as her health deteriorated, Tamaye's real beauty emerged as she lost weight. In another photo, her long black hair is piled up under a scarf. The young woman who always prided herself on her grooming smiles with her arms wrapped around herself, self consciously modelling a short-sleeved dress sent from America: 'I really don't do these dresses justice because I wear them so 'sloppily'. I didn't realise how poorly groomed I was until I saw myself in the snapshots.' Tamaye's strength progressively deteriorated.

*Devotedly, neatly, wisely, reservedly,
your unyielding nature you keep inside*

*Pneumonia's intense pain
you continue to endure,
sweat beads on your brow,
as you humbly say,
'I don't cry'*

Tamaye Tsutsumida died in a Tokyo hospital on December 10, 1953, yearning to return to the United States, according to her family. Kawai was inconsolable.

*Now you have passed;
how empty it feels
the summer mikan in the garden
will bloom early this year*

*The flowers by the bedside
that made you so happy;
I put them in that vase
and stand them by your image*

*The image stands on its back,
looking over and protecting me
until the end of my time*

Kawai's son Masumi in an ode to his father wrote: "My father highly praised Tsutsumida's talent and seemed to deeply love this personality." Tamaye's failure to get permission to return to the US was a death sentence. Masumi Kawai recalled how he would visit occasionally and try to cheer her up:

I believe of course she wanted to see her parents, especially when she was staying alone at Manazuru. Some of her friends in the Heishikan [cram school] returned to the States after the war. I don't say she did not feel envious... She was the secretary of my father which might be the reason why the US refused her to come back. Tamaye did not tell me how she thought but I think she wanted to return to her family home.

The real reason why Tamaye Tsutsumida was refused permission to return to the United States only became clear only as author Bob Wurth submitted his final manuscript for publication. He received a formal immigration document from the US earlier this year which stated that Tamaye Tsutsumida, who resided with one Tatsuo Kawai at Manazuru, had 'expatriated herself from the United States' under a provision of the Nationality Act 'by recovering Japanese nationality on April 16, 1943.' Tamaye had thrown in her lot with the enemy in wartime Japan. What pressures on her, what love, agony and tragedy must she have endured in reaching such a momentous decision?

Saving Australia, Curtin's secret peace with Japan by Bob Wurth.

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