

# Inherited Belongings Interview

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## The Buried Japanese Sword

**David (b. 1954) tells the story of his grandfather’s “wakizashi,” which he calls a “prized item.” He describes how his family buried it in 1942 and retrieved it after internment ended. He recalls bringing the small samurai sword to show-and-tell.**

**Excerpt from Landscapes of Injustice oral history interview with David Mitsui.**

DAVID MITSUI

Well, one item, prized item, that I have in my possession is my great great grandfather’s ... and it’s called a wakizashi. The wakizashi is the small samurai sword as opposed to the katana, which is the long battle sword, two handed battle sword. Yeah, wakizashi. When the family was told they had to move or be relocated, my dad and grandfather buried some valuables. The Japanese sword was one of them, the samurai sword. I’m not sure what other things were buried.

JOSHUA LABOVE

They buried this on ... their property?

DAVID MITSUI

Somewhere, my dad buried it somewhere and after the war he recovered it. Otherwise it would have been confiscated as a weapon. How he got that is an interesting story. My dad went to Japan in 1938. Apparently, and this is what he told me, he and a buddy had stolen a police car and driven it into a lake. As part of, I think his consequences, my grandfather sent him on a slow boat to Japan for a year [laughs] and he stayed with family over there. When he came back, the family had given him the wakizashi, and that’s how he got it. He had it at home for the longest time. I remember he would bring it out once in a while, I remember seeing it when I was in elementary school. In fact, I took it to elementary school one day as a show-and-tell.

JOSHUA LABOVE

Oh boy, that must have been a dangerous show-and-tell.

DAVID MISTUI

[Laughs] Well, the teacher was quite fascinated with it and she kept it in her desk thankfully [laughs]. But we think it was made sometime in the 17th century. How they make Japanese

swords, it's a family heirloom. Apparently it's not a priceless heirloom. My mom took it to one of those antique roadshow things where they get it assessed when it was in Hamilton. They said it was, you know there were a lot of them around and this wasn't really noteworthy other than being a family heirloom.