



Meet Eiji Yoshikawa

WE ARE CANADA **Burnaby... a City of Immigrants**

By **Gary Wilson**

Almost all of us are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Other than our indigenous neighbours, we came from some other place in the world. But now here we all are, some of us recently arrived and others, several generations ago. And as we live in this community, it's essential that we have a sense of being neighbours and even friends with one another. To get there, it's important to hear each other's stories. That's the intent of "We are Canada." In this issue, we meet one of our neighbours ... in hopes of becoming friends.

If you were alive in 1980 and living in Canada, you undoubtedly would have caught the Terry Fox fever! This young man who dipped his artificial leg into the Atlantic Ocean and proceeded to launch a Marathon of Hope across the nation, inspired all of Canadians and raised more than 24 million dollars for cancer research.

While we all celebrated Terry's incredible spirit and achievement, thousands of miles away in Tokyo, Japan, another young man heard about Terry Fox. This young fellow aspired to make a remarkable difference like Terry Fox, and to become a champion of the underdog.

Eiji Yoshikawa had grown up in southern Japan playing baseball like so many youngsters in that country. When he completed high school, Eiji did as lots of his classmates, and headed off to university in Tokyo. While studying there, he became interested in boxing, and even started skipping many of his classes to train and box in one of the local gyms. Over time, he honed his skills and developed into a professional boxer.

It was around that same time that Terry Fox ran his Marathon of Hope. As Eiji learned more about the indomitable spirit that Terry possessed and his passion for those who were suffering

in silence, Eiji decided that he, too, would do all that he could to help others, particularly those who were less fortunate. After 4 years as a pro boxer, Eiji moved on to training boxers. He ran a gym in the middle of Tokyo and became highly invested in supporting boxers who had no resources and no backing ... young men who felt like they had no hope and no future.

Through the years, Eiji moved into the publishing and media industry, even creating a documentary, *Rumble in the Jungle*, that revealed the plight of boxers in the Philippines. These young men are overcoming great adversity and exploitation as they seek to become the next Manny Pacquiao. His support of these boxers knows no bounds, as he not only provides financial aid, but even travels to be the "corner man" in some of their matches.

In 2014, Eiji and his family moved to Canada and settled in Greater Vancouver. "What better place could there be in Canada?" he exclaims. "A place with no snow and also, the home of Terry Fox!" As a resident of Burnaby, Eiji has taken his boxing skills to a place none of us would ever imagine ... a seniors home! Two days a week, Eiji works in a program called Outfight Parkinson at the Kenko Wellness Lounge in the Nimi Nikkei Home in South Burnaby. Studies have shown that the training and activity of boxing is beneficial to those struggling with the debilitating effects of Parkinson's disease, and who better to help them than a former pro boxer?

As he patiently wraps the hands of these seniors and assists them punching the heavy bag, Eiji gets great joy from seeing their faces light up, knowing that they are embodying the intestinal fortitude of his hero, Terry Fox. And as just one of the millions of us who have immigrated to Canada, Eiji Yoshikawa is embodying that very same spirit right here in our city of Burnaby!

Gary Wilson is the Co-owner and Publisher of What's On! Burnaby. We welcome your comments via email (info@WhatsOnBurnaby.ca). If you have a suggestion of an outstanding immigrant to Burnaby that we could profile, please contact us.