

Biographical Portrait

FUJIKAZU NAKAGAWA

JAPANESE LUMBERMAN (1920–1988)

By World Forestry Center

As a lumberman and a leader of the Japanese lumber business, throughout his lifetime Fujikazu Nakagawa disseminated the virtues of lumber, its necessity, as well as the form the distribution system should take. A pioneer in such important areas as the development of the lumber market, to which he addressed his considerable planning and executive powers, he also took upon himself the task of acting as liaison between government organizations and private businesses to realize measures by which to revitalize the lumber business as well as maintain and improve forestland.

He was born on January 30, 1920, the eldest son of Sue and Keizaburo Nakagawa, in Gobo City, Wakayama Prefecture. Following his graduation in March 1940 from the forestry program at National Mie High School of Agriculture and Forestry, he enrolled in April of the same year in the Economics and Business Department at Kansai University, Osaka. With the approach of World War II, however, the graduation of all juniors was forwarded a year and Nakagawa joined the field artillery corps of the Japanese army. Assigned to domestic duty, he held the rank of first lieutenant when the war came to an end.

After the war, he was unable to resume his family business, as the supply and use of lumber, which had been under government control during the war, had not yet been deregulated.

Instead, he worked as supervisor of a horse breeding association for a year. In January 1947, when the supply of lumber was at last deregulated and private individuals could procure it, he established the Nakagawa Lumber Company in Osaka.

The present branch of the Nakagawa family dates back to 1661, when Zengoro (born 1637) moved to Wakayama Prefecture from Togawa, Chiba Prefecture. The

family's business name of "Togawaya" dates back more than 300 years. Until the time of Fujikura, the sixth descendant, the Nakagawa family acted as guild master of the wax business under special orders from the feudal lord of the area. However, with the introduction of electrical lighting, the family turned from wax to lumber and forestry. Nakagawa was the eighth descendant of this distinguished line.

In January 1953, the company was reorganized to become Nakagawa Lumber Company, with Nakagawa as its president. Under his management, the company expanded to become a comprehensive wholesale dealer of both domestic and imported lumber. In 1970, Aoikenso Company, a firm dealing in the processing and sales of lumber for interior use as well as functioning as a design and construction contractor, was established. In 1981, Nakagawa Inc. was established to undertake the wholesale of lumber, plywood, and new construction materials. The following year, Nakagawa Silver Service, a company dealing in the manufacture and sales of wooden interior and exterior merchandise, was established. Nakagawa was named chairperson of these respective companies, and under his directorship the companies were enlarged and expanded.

In 1946, Fujikazu Nakagawa married Teruko Hinomoto of Osaka. Their eldest son, Katsuhiko (born 1948), is



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president of Nakagawa Lumber Company; his second son, Hiroshi (born 1950), is the vice president; his third son, Akisaburo (born 1952), is an independent designer of furniture. All are actively involved in the lumber business.

Nakagawa's contributions to society and the lumber industry were as diverse as they were far-ranging. One of his major contributions to the local lumber business world was with Osaka Young Managers' Lumber Council, which was established in 1958; Nakagawa was nominated as its first acting vice president. From 1960 to 1962, in the capacity of chairman, he promoted seminars and field trips, and at the Lumber Festival, he demonstrated his creativity and executive talents by organizing a fleet of 150 trucks in a grand promotional demonstration of lumber. Furthermore, he produced an 8mm film entitled *The History of Lumber in Osaka*, as well as organized and taught for a year the first seminar to be held for newly hired employees. That the lumber council holds a central position in the Japan Lumber Federation and is regarded as a leader within this nationwide organization is due largely to the enthusiasm with which Nakagawa fulfilled his responsibilities in guiding the council.

Following his retirement from the council, he was instrumental in establishing the Japan Alumni Association of Lumber Men, and as permanent manager, he assisted in the streamlining of information exchange and formulation of the industry's guiding principles.

Nakagawa was also known for his many contributions to the Osaka Lumber Industry Complex Cooperative Organization, "the Complex." Established in 1962, its purpose was to consolidate the secondary and tertiary lumber-processing industries, which deal in items such as plywood, construction materials, and lumber, to cope with the rapidly developing lumber industry in Osaka.

As its vice executive director, he worked energetically to procure land for the relocation and construction of industries. At the same time, his civic-mindedness led to his involvement in various activities geared toward the welfare of employees and residents of the Complex. They included the dissemination of a system whereby employees could purchase their own homes. For this purpose, he championed the construction of residential areas and established the Soeikai, a

mutual help organization for residents.

In the Complex, he also proved to be a tireless contributor. Not only was he instrumental in constructing a cooperative storage house and a cooperative factory for independent businesses, but he also organized a volunteer corps of firefighters as well as a busing system for organization members.

In recognition of his many contributions, he was named executive director of the Complex in 1981. Here, too, he demonstrated his far-sighted and progressive outlook by establishing new areas of businesses, such as a forklift repair cooperative.

In 1985, a friendship agreement was signed between the Complex and the World Forestry Center in Portland, Oregon, and in commemoration of the event, he established "Woodream Osaka" at the Complex. Modeled after the World Forestry Center, it was the first center of its kind in Japan, geared toward the dissemination of information regarding lumber and its uses; it demonstrates Nakagawa's open-minded and cosmopolitan outlook.

Nakagawa was also a leading figure in a nationwide organization whose central function was the development of a market for timber derived from the thinning of forestland. Beginning in 1970, Nakagawa was involved in the merchandising of such timber. Following postwar maturation of woods and forests in Japan, the need to find a use for such kinds of timber was an important issue that needed to be addressed by the nation's lumber industry. In the firm belief that there was a very real need to develop technologies to convert such timber into merchandise as well as to provide information regarding supply and demand, he called on individuals in the forestry business and lumbermen around the nation to assist in establishing the National Small Circumference Timber Supply and Demand Development Council. In April 1982, the council was established and Nakagawa was nominated to be its chairman.

The council has as its main function the organization of seminars and field trips to promote the development and supply and demand for such timber, and the procurement of materials, as well as to make available various related information. Since 1983, with the cooperation of the Forestry Agency, a nationwide symposium has been held annually. Meanwhile, in 1982, at the Total Housing Fair held at the Osaka International Trade Fair, he pioneered the

use of merchandise made from small-diameter wood with exhibits that included gates, doors, fences, and tables.

His activities in this area led to the establishment of the National Loghouse Promotion Association in 1986, of which he was named chairman. In parallel with his activities at the National Small Circumference Timber Supply and Demand Development Council, he organized a study group of people interested in loghouses from around the nation. Armed with the knowledge and expertise derived from this activity, he then organized a nationwide association to further expand the use of domestic small- and medium-diameter timber. Additionally, to supply loghouses that would satisfy customers' expectations, he was instrumental in ensuring thorough seasoning of timber and establishing loghouse design contests.

Meanwhile, as a private individual, he was a committee member of the Osaka West Rotary Club. He functioned with distinction as chairman of this club from 1984 to 1985. As committee chairman of the International Rotary Area Number 266 Yoneyama Scholarship Committee, he worked assiduously toward improving the lifestyle of overseas students in Japan. In this and many other ways, he demonstrated his commitment to community.

A keen researcher, Nakagawa had up-to-the minute information regarding the domestic and overseas lumber situation. In April 1955, he gave the first of many lectures on his lumber distribution theory at Mie University's Agriculture Department, his alma mater. This led to his becoming a lecturer at the university in May 1961. He continued in this position until September 1978, lecturing on his theories regarding lumber distribution and the lumber business.

A strong believer that the individual is the key figure in business management, he addressed himself to the grooming of future leaders. As his work prevented him from holding lectures during normal school hours, he gave intensive two-day courses, with the venue generally being at the university's experimental farm. He never missed a class; once, when the trains were halted during a strike, he drove the 100 kilometers to meet with his students.

He was also invited on several occasions to speak on the relationship between design and lumber by design specialist



COURTESY OF THE NAKAGAWA LUMBER COMPANY WEBSITE: WWW.WOOD.CO.JP/NAKAGAWA/OLD/OLD.HTM

The Nakagawa Lumber Company's lumberyard in action, circa 1955.

schools, and by the Osaka Regional Forestry Office to speak to officers undergoing training seminars on the current lumber market and its future. He also lectured on forestry and the lumber business and its future at agriculture and forestry departments, forestry unions, and forestry promotion conferences of prefectures around the nation.

In 1984, he compiled the essence of his lectures given at Mie University into a book entitled *What Is Lumber Distribution: Strategies for the Era of Domestic Lumber*. The book was highly acclaimed as being a practical guide for the future of lumber distribution in a changing Japan. In 1986, his second book, *Mokuhen Hyakuju (Hundred Trees with the "Tree" Radical)*, was published. The following year, he coauthored *Changes in Lumber Distribution*, and in 1990, his last publication, *How to Deepen Your Understanding of Lumber*, a book compiled with four other writers, was published.

Despite his busy schedule, Nakagawa was a man of culture, with an in-depth

appreciation of painting and sculpture, and adept at the traditional Japanese tea ceremony and Japanese dance. He was also musically talented; when a student in junior high, he had seriously contemplated a career in music and even undertook to study for the entrance examinations of a music school. The tone and range of his magnificent voice were a source of pleasure to many, while the songs he wrote were highly appreciated. "The Daiseikyo Song" was chosen as the official song of the Osaka Young Manager's Lumber Council.

As a second-year university student, Nakagawa was an excellent equestrian, winning the Governor's Award in the Jumping Contest at the Osaka Equestrian Meet and coming in first at the Modern Japan Pentathlon. He established the Osaka Equestrian Study Group in 1950, the forerunner of the Osaka Equestrian Association Foundation.

In recognition of Nakagawa's civic contributions, he was presented with the following:

- Industrial Medal of Merit, Osaka Prefectural Government, 1979
- Yellow Ribbon Medal, Government of Japan, 1983
- Medal of Merit, Japan Equestrian Federation, 1983
- Fifth Class Order of the Rising Sun (Sixth Rank), Government of Japan, 1988
- Medal of Merit, International Rotary Area No. 266 Conference, 1989 (a medal created solely in honor of Fujikatsu Nakagawa, and the only such medal to be awarded)

Fujikazu Nakagawa died on September 5, 1988, thus ending his 68 years of promoting the nation's forestry and lumber business. He was a devout Christian, and his tomb is inscribed with words from Job 14:7, "For there is hope of a tree." He was interred on a hill overlooking Woodream Osaka and his Gobo City hometown. □