



NEWS RELEASE for Immediate Release

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Bainbridge History Museum Awards LOCAL HISTORY HEROES *at their Annual Meeting on February 10, 2024*

The Bainbridge History Museum honors and recognizes those individuals, businesses, and organizations that have made significant and lasting contributions to the fulfillment of the Museum's mission to "preserve and share the stories of Bainbridge Island to promote a greater understanding of our community and the world in which we live."

The program was initiated in 2017 and since that time awards have been bestowed on 24 individuals, businesses, or organizations. This year's recipients are Joel Sackett and Felix Narte Sr.

Joel Sackett



Resident photographer and author Joel Sackett was the first recipient of the *Island Treasure Award* in 2000. The award recognized Joel as a "historian of images . . . creating a visual record of life on Bainbridge Island." Joel's photographs provide a visual story of the Island, of people, places, professions, landscapes, lifestyles, and relationships. His books document people and culture as well, and his most recent publication, *Dave's Brain Box*, celebrates the life of Dave Ullin, a beloved character who lived alone on a boat in Eagle Harbor for many years, and known for helping those in need and contributing to the Island community.

Joel has lived on the Island for 34 years, along with his wife, Michiko; son, Daniel; and daughter YuriAna. Most recently, his large-format photographs were exhibited in the Museum's Helen L. Bucey Gallery for a full year; it beautifully featured various champion and heritage trees throughout the Island.

There is no doubt that Joel's work and generosity over the years, and most recently with the Museum, have been of tremendous benefit in enhancing our understanding of the Bainbridge community. "Joel is always a pleasure to be around. He loves this community and has forgone a lucrative career to stay on Bainbridge Island to focus on community-based projects. He is such a

gift to this community; he is a historian, artist, and documentarian,” said Amber Buell, Executive Director.

Felix Narte, Sr.

In honoring the late Felix Narte, Sr., we tell a story about a friend helping friends to build a community. In turn, we promote a greater understanding of our community, the Bainbridge History Museum’s mission.

In 1924, when he was 18 years old, Felix boarded a ship from his homeland in the Philippines during a financial depression and headed to Hawaii, where he worked in the sugar cane and pineapple plantations.



The Kitamoto Family, with Felix Narte, Sr., on the right.

He then traveled to Seattle and found work on the Hayashida strawberry fields on the Island. He met the Kitamoto family and worked their farm, forming a kind of partnership during the years before World War II. According to Lilly Kitamoto Kodama, he was “like an uncle to the family.”

When World War II began, Felix and his cousin, Elaulio Aquino, agreed to move into the Kitamoto home and work the farm, thus allowing the farm to stay in the family name. This was during tense times with a lot of hysteria on the Island. It took courage for Felix to help the Kitamotos, who were interned at Minidoka in Idaho. There, the family was forced to hand-wash their clothing, so Felix delivered their washing machine to them, traveling over 11 hours and 669 miles, using the farm’s pickup. And he made other trips there, even though it was a very long drive. In August of 1945, he drove the Kitamoto family’s big Buick to Minidoka, and the six in the family piled in on a hot August day and made the drive back to Bainbridge Island.

In 1948, Felix returned to the Philippines to visit his family and was surprised that the family had chosen a wife for him. She wasn’t “forced on him,” it was just a “suggestion,” according to his granddaughter Angela. Felix’s wife Cion would be the second Filipina woman on the Island. At that time, the U.S. did not allow single Filipina women to emigrate to the U.S.

Felix continued to work the strawberry and raspberry fields while taking annual summer trips to a cannery in Alaska, where he was a foreman. He was also an excellent electrician, working at Winslow and Bremerton shipyards, along with Todd and Lockheed.

Because of Felix, at war’s end in 1945 the Kitamotos had a home and farmland when they returned. In gratitude, the family gave him part of their property, where he built a home in 1946. Today, Lilly Kitamoto Kodama still lives on the family farm in Fletcher Bay. And Felix Jr. lives in the house his father built. This community has had the great good fortune to have the Kitamoto and Narte families here on the Island.

The Bainbridge History Museum is dedicated to preserving and sharing the diverse history of Bainbridge Island. Through exhibits, educational programs, and community events, the Museum strives to engage visitors in an exploration of the island's past, present, and future.