

# Inspiring Story of NBA Pioneer Wataru Misaka Set for Spring Release

*“Wat Kept Playing: The Inspiring Story of Wataru Misaka and His Rise to the NBA” introduces children to a journey of breaking barriers and making history*

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, UNITED STATES, February 20, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Shadow Mountain Publishing](#), the team behind two decades of award-winning and New York Times bestselling books, today announced the release of “Wat Kept Playing: The Inspiring Story of Wataru Misaka and His Rise to the NBA.”

The fully illustrated hardcover children’s book tells the story of groundbreaking Japanese American basketball player Wataru “Wat” Misaka. Written by Emily Inouye Huey and illustrated by Kaye Kang, the book teaches Wat’s place in sports history as the first person of color to play in the Basketball Association of America, later renamed the National Basketball Association.



Emily Inouye Huey

While most Japanese Americans were forced into World War II internment camps, Misaka fought battles on the basketball court. After winning a high school state championship and serving two years in the U.S. Army, Misaka helped the University of Utah win the 1947 national title at New York City’s iconic Madison Square Garden. At just 5 feet 7 inches, Misaka was soon drafted by the New York Knicks and to this day remains one of the shortest ten players to ever play in the NBA.

Author Emily Inouye Huey believes there’s never been a better time for the world, especially children, to learn Misaka’s story. “We focus so much on divisions, and not enough on our shared humanity,” Huey said. “Wat’s life and accomplishments remind us that barriers like height and prejudice can be challenged. They show that extraordinary effort, determination, and heart can make the seemingly impossible possible. I believe that’s something we can all rally around.”

For Huey, this latest release represents much more than another professional milestone. “This book is personal for me because I admire [Misaka] as more than a player. I look up to him as a person,” she said. “I met him first when I was a child. He was an unassuming and gracious in-law who came to my family’s New Year’s parties. He told wonderful stories, but never about his basketball achievements! I didn’t know about his sports accomplishments until many years later.” Huey added that she didn’t hear the story from Misaka, but from others.

Later, when Huey’s own young son began playing basketball, he began hearing some of the same sentiments

Misaka heard for years. “My son is very short,” Huey said, “and he heard that basketball is only for tall people. I knew then it was time to write Wat’s story for my son, and for anyone else facing barriers to their dreams.”

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*Emily Inouye Huey*

Misaka passed away in 2019 and Huey is grateful to tell his story. “It’s such an honor to tell this story of a person I so admire, and whose family I respect so much, too,” Huey concluded. “Working with them and with the brilliant illustrator Kaye Kang has been a humbling experience. I just want Wat’s bigger-than-life drive and dreams to shine through. And I hope classrooms and families will have meaningful discussions about his life, legacy, and lessons.”

“Wat Kept Playing: The Inspiring Story of Wataru Misaka and His Rise to the NBA” will be released nationally on

March 5.

About Emily Inouye Huey:

Emily Inouye Huey is an author of historical books for children and teens. Her first novel, *Beneath the Wide Silk Sky*, has received several awards, including the Society for Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators’ Golden Kite Award and the Whitney Award for Youth Novel of the Year. Emily holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Lesley University and lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Wat Kept Playing: The Inspiring Story of Wataru Misaka and His Rise to the NBA

You can visit her at [emilyhuey.com](https://emilyhuey.com) or on Instagram at @emily\_inouye\_huey.

#### About Kaye Kang:

Kaye Kang is a Korean-born artist who likes to sketch outside and play with her cat, Gigi. She specializes in character design and visual development for the animation industry. Ever since she was a little kid, she has always been fascinated by fine art and how nature can be portrayed in the eyes of others. She enjoys observing and drawing everything from her life and sharing it with people. She lives in San Francisco, California.

#### About the Publisher:

Shadow Mountain is a general trade publisher of fiction and non-fiction. We're the publisher of the New York Times bestselling series Fablehaven and the sequel series Dragonwatch by Brandon Mull. We're also known for our Proper Romance® line of sweet romances. Non-fiction titles include cookbooks from popular bloggers Six Sisters' Stuff as well as the New York Times best-selling history book 7 Tipping Points that Saved the World. Finally, our best-selling fiction titles include Jason F. Wright's Christmas Jars—now a major motion picture, and the award-winning The Rent Collector by Camron Wright. We cultivate stories worth telling, questions worth exploring, and beauty worth sharing to improve the lives of families, children, and our society.

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