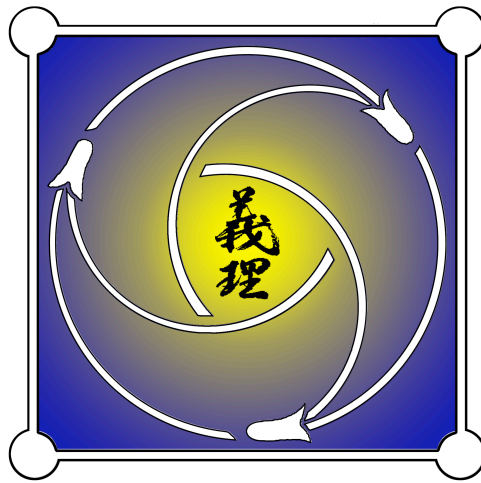


Dedication

Dedicated to our forebears, who laid a solid foundation for us their descendants, to those in the larger community who gave and continue to give respect and support to the Japanese American community in Sonoma County, and, finally, to all our children.



Kodomo No Tame Ni
For the sake of the children

Acknowledgments

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Lucy Kishaba
Founder of the Project

Participants/Interviewees

Mr. Tom Barlow	Ms. Carol Kawase	Mr. Tom Perry
Mrs. Barbara Bertoli	Mr. George Kawase	Mrs. Alice Matsumoto Shimazu
Mr. Ludford Elvy	Mr. Haruo Kawase	Mr. Hideo Shimizu
Dr. Tetsuro Fujii	Mrs. Mary Masuoka Lee	Mrs. Sawame Furuta Shimizu
Mrs. Rose Taniguchi Fujii	Ms. Amber Lee	Mr. Martin Shimizu
Mr. Dennis Fujita	Mrs. Makiko Masuoka Leong	Mrs. Dorothy Otani Shimizu
Mr. Joe Furusho	Mrs. Marlene Miyano Masada	Mr. Bruce Shimizu
Mr. Min Furuta	Mr. Frank Masuoka	Mr. Harry Sugiyama
Mrs. Ileen Fujihara Furuta	Mrs. Virginia Matsuyama Masuoka	Mrs. Alyce Yamasaki Sugiyama
Mrs. Sara Gerboth	Mrs. Yuka Matoba	Ms. Norma Sugiyama
Mr. George Hamamoto	Ms. Judy Louie Matoba	Mr. Arthur Sugiyama
Mr. Corey Hayashi	Mr. Sam Miyano	Mrs. Matsumi Mukaida Sugiyama
Mrs. Cynthia Miyano Hayashi	Mrs. Clara Yamaguchi Miyano	Mrs. Isako Sugiyama Yoshimura
Reverend Carol Himaka	Mr. Steve Miyano	Mrs. Ayami Taniguchi
Mr. George Ikegami	Mr. Tom Mukaida	Mrs. Shigeko Taniguchi
Mr. Kanematsu Ikegami	Mr. Jim Murakami	Mrs. Anna Matsuyama Towata
Mr. Thomas Ikegami	Mrs. Margarette Masuoka Murakami	Mr. Jim Yamakawa
Mrs. Alice Kawase Inouye	Mr. Min Matsuda	Mrs. Judy Louie Yamamoto
Mr. Pat Irish	Mrs. Mary Kai Nakagawa	Mrs. Maru Kichuchi Yamakawa
Mr. Curly Ishizu	Mrs. Lily Fujihara Okamoto	Mr. Yehiel Yisrael
Mr. Tak Kameoka	Mrs. Masako Dorothe Ono	Mrs. Shigeno Yokoyama
Mrs. Alice Morita Kashiwagi	Mrs. Hatsue Kawase Otani	

Supporters

Mr. Michael Bryant	Mr. Robert Fuchigami	Mr. Nathan Douglas Kitada
Mr. Tim Chiu	Reverend Carol Himaka	Dr. Kent Matsuda
Ms. Frances Clark	Ms. Rina Hirai	Ms. Sylvia Ramirez
Mr. Robert Coleman-Senghor	Ms. Barbara Ismond	Mr. Matt Thomas
Mrs. Michi Duda	Mrs. Debbie Jilka	Ms. Elaine Yamaguch
Mrs. Ann Gabel	Mrs. Lucy Kishaba	

Organizational Support

California Civil Liberties Public Education Program

Enman No Tomo

Enmanji Buddhist Temple

Sonoma County Japanese American Citizens League

Landmarks Commission, Sonoma County

National Japanese American Historical Society

Committee Members

Michael Bryant

Nancy Davlin

Cynthia Hayashi

Jodi Hottel

Alice Kashiwagi

Jim Murakami

Marie Sugiyama, Chair

Phyllis Tajii

Advisory Committee

Robert Fuchigami

Rina Hirai

Jean Ishibashi

Mei Nakano

Gaye LeBaron

Consultant

Matt Thomas

And Many More...

Thank You!

Table of Contents

<i>Dedication</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>viii</i>
Background	viii
Process	ix
<i>Editorial Notes</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>TOM BARLOW INTERVIEW</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>FUJIHARA (OKAMOTO & FURUTA) INTERVIEW</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>DR. TETSURO AND ROSE FUJII INTERVIEW</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>AYAMI TANIGUCHI & ROSE FUJII INTERVIEW</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>ROSE FUJII INTERVIEW</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>DENNIS FUJITA INTERVIEW</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>JOE FURUSHO INTERVIEW</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>GERBOTH, BERTOLI & ELVY INTERVIEW</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>GEORGE HAMAMOTO INTERVIEW</i>	<i>94</i>
History Of The Enmanji Temple	108
Personal Statement	109
<i>REVEREND CAROL HIMAKA & SARA GERBOTH INTERVIEW</i>	<i>110</i>
<i>IKEGAMI FAMILY INTERVIEW</i>	<i>118</i>
A Century In America	120
The Family Background of Thomas Ikegami	120
Foreword	120
<i>PAT IRISH INTERVIEW</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>SAKAI “CURLY” ISHIZU INTERVIEW</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>TAK KAMEOKA INTERVIEW</i>	<i>139</i>
<i>ALICE MORITA KASHIWAGI INTERVIEW</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>KAWASE FAMILY INTERVIEW</i>	<i>154</i>
<i>THREE ELDERS INTERVIEW</i>	<i>181</i>
<i>GEORGE HAMAMOTO INTERVIEW</i>	<i>182</i>
<i>SAM MIYANO INTERVIEW</i>	<i>185</i>
<i>MARTIN & DOROTHY SHIMIZU INTERVIEW</i>	<i>188</i>

HAMAMOTO, ONO, & MURAKAMI INTERVIEW	194
MASUOKA FAMILY INTERVIEW	199
YUKA MATOBA INTERVIEW	222
Class Paper written by Judy Louie Yamamoto, granddaughter of Yuka Matoba	223
JACL Oral History Project Interview	232
MINORU MATSUDA INTERVIEW	240
First Interview – April 2, 1992	240
Second Interview – May 6, 1992	248
HISTORY OF THE ENMANJI TEMPLE	253
The Altar	253
SAM MIYANO INTERVIEW PART I	255
SAM MIYANO INTERVIEW PART II	266
CLARA MIYANO INTERVIEW	276
SAM MIYANO & MARLENE MASADA INTERVIEW	285
MIYANO FAMILY INTERVIEW PART I	321
MIYANO FAMILY INTERVIEW PART II	333
TOM MUKAIDA INTERVIEW	337
MURAKAMI FAMILY INTERVIEW	365
Part I: Margarette Murakami	365
MURAKAMI FAMILY INTERVIEW	381
Part II: Jim Murakami	381
TOM PERRY INTERVIEW	394
Addendum	401
ALICE SHIMAZU INTERVIEW	403
SHIMIZU FAMILY INTERVIEW	408
Early Life Of Hideo Shimizu	409
Early Life Of Sawame Shimizu	409
Hideo And Sawame Prior To The War	409
Shimizu Family During The War	410
After The War	411
The Younger Generation	411
Editorial Comment by Phyllis Tajii, Summarizer and Committee Member	412
MARTIN & DOROTHY SHIMIZU INTERVIEW	464
ALYCE SUGIYAMA INTERVIEW	476

<i>HARRY SUGIYAMA INTERVIEW</i>	483
<i>SUGIYAMA & YOSHIMURA FAMILY INTERVIEW</i>	493
<i>AYAMI TANIGUCHI INTERVIEW</i>	516
Life in Japan	517
1924	518
Life before Pearl Harbor	518
World War II	518
Resettlement	518
Recent Years	519
<i>SHIGEKO TANIGUCHI INTERVIEW</i>	520
<i>JIM & MARY YAMAKAWA INTERVIEW</i>	533
Introduction	533
<i>YEHIEL YISRAEL INTERVIEW</i>	540

Preface

Giri (pronounced *ghi rhi*) is a term used to describe a mode of behavior which Japanese immigrants (Issei) practiced and instilled in their children. (Nisei, or second generation) *Giri* may be briefly defined as a sense of justice, duty, obligation and honor, equivalent to an ethical code. In practice it requires the equal return of favors and kindnesses given and creates an ongoing balance of give-and-take in human relationships that has a binding effect on a community.

Giri, often manifesting itself in the immigrants' characteristics of honesty, loyalty to friends and fairness in their relationships with others, drew the admiration and respect of many in the larger community in Sonoma County and motivated the more socially conscious among them to come to the aid of the Japanese American community during World War II. When all Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes and ordered into remote, isolated desert camps, these members spoke out vigorously against this flagrant violation of human and civil rights, putting themselves at risk with the authorities and subjecting themselves to ostracism by their friends and neighbors. This Oral History Project acknowledges with profound gratitude the support provided by these courageous members of the larger community.

The principle of *Giri* is inherent in the interviews and individual narratives obtained from the Issei, Nisei, their descendants, and members of the larger community and gathered here. *Giri* is the spirit at the heart of this project.

Background

A little-known aspect of the WWII Japanese American experience here in Sonoma County is the significant support provided by members of the larger community. The personal friendships and respect developed before the war led many in the community to act in support of Japanese Americans during the war years. This unique experience demonstrates how Japanese Americans in Sonoma County were able to diminish the alienation and mistreatment that was typical in other communities at the time and reduce the suffering and loss associated with ignorance and hatred.

This project documents these relationships by gathering oral histories of both Japanese American and non-Japanese American individuals who lived in Sonoma County before, during and after the war. The project also gathers archival information from families about early Japanese settlers, including photographs, letters and other personal information to provide background and historical context for a curriculum-based multimedia program and Web site. Transcripts of the oral history interviews and supporting documents are distributed to institutions and organizations for research and archival purposes and shared in public forums. This project creates a legacy of remembrance and explores cross-cultural links between different ethnicities, generations and communities in Northern California.

Residents and citizens of Japanese ancestry have lived in Sonoma County since the 1880's. Before WWII most Japanese Americans engaged in agriculture such as apple, poultry and truck farming – a few were involved in commercial businesses as well. Although relatively isolated by language and culture, Japanese Americans formed relationships with members of the community who were not of Japanese ancestry through

interactions with neighbors, commercial activities, and participation in civic and educational activities.

Before the forced removal of Japanese Americans from their homes in 1942, many ranchers and neighbors had admired them for their work habits and actions and had forged friendships with them. Many of these neighbors took it upon themselves to protect the empty Japanese American homes from vandalism during the internees' absence, to harvest their crops, and to keep farms and businesses productive. When Japanese Americans were finally permitted to return to California in 1945, some were thus able to move back into homes they had left years before and to reclaim former jobs. Neighbors and friends even helped protect returning Japanese Americans from harassment at the hands of hooligans by standing guard outside their homes.

Most Japanese American children attended public schools prior to the war and earned the respect of their teachers because they were good, hard-working students. Many earned admiration due to their excellence in sports. One Sebastopol athlete earned a pole vault record that lasted well into the 1980's; others received recognition in baseball and other sports. When the Enmanji Buddhist Temple was vandalized, Caucasian friends of Japanese American teens organized and guarded the temple to protect it from further damage. After the war, Japanese American children were welcomed back to the schools by teachers and neighbors who knew and admired their families.

Before WWII, Japanese American businessmen earned the respect of their colleagues and clients because of the manner in which they conducted business and their participation in civic activities. The Japanese American community regularly sponsored or participated in community events covered by the local press, such as the 1939 Armistice Day parade when the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) carried a huge American flag. These relationships paved the way for Japanese Americans to move into new opportunities after the war and ensured their place in the Sonoma County community.

Process

"I thought that I'd find the same or familiar stories, but instead I found that each story was unique," was a sentiment echoed by committee members who helped realize this project. In respecting each participant's story as told, including language, tone, experiences, views and contexts, committee members recognized the beauty of individual responses to common historical, social and economic forces that enlightened the journey of this project.

Lucy Kishaba, founder of the Oral History Project, recognized early on the need to document and preserve these unique stories. She began the process of gathering individual recollections and preserving the voices of Japanese Americans in Sonoma County who, for over a century, participated in and built community in such areas as Healdsburg, Petaluma, and Sebastopol. Through Lucy's determined leadership and the guidance of the Sonoma County JACL, a committee of regular and advisory members was formed. Current committee members are Michael Bryant, Nancy Davlin, Cynthia Hayashi, Jodi Hottel, Alice Kashiwagi, Jim Murakami, Phyllis Tajii, and Marie Sugiyama, Committee Chair. Their passion, energy, time, skills and commitment to family and community made this project possible. Advisory member Rina Hirai provided legal expertise, Mei Nakano did research and wrote revisions to the introduction, and other

advisory members gladly contributed when needed. The committee was most fortunate to have the guidance of Dr. Jean Ishibashi, whose lifelong passion and commitment to the process of developing oral histories, inspired, challenged and enlightened all associated with the project. The California Civil Liberties Public Education Program (CCLPEP), the Landmarks Commission of Sonoma County and Sonoma County JACL provided fiscal support to the project. In addition, Professor Robert Coleman-Senghor generously donated documented footage of research he conducted with the Japanese American community around the agricultural history of Sonoma County, and Nathan Douglas Kitada donated videotapes of preliminary interviews with Enmanji community participants.

Committee members made it a priority to interview longtime community residents. During the course of the project some have passed away. The committee feels especially fortunate and deeply grateful to have received and shared their stories.

In each of the stories *Giri* is demonstrated in diverse ways – across lines of privilege, ethnicity, gender, generations and religious practice. This cycle of giving back is also reflected in the step-by-step process of documenting the stories: telling, listening, writing, recording, editing, proofing and formatting. Those who consented to share their stories mentioned others whose stories were then documented, and that cycle continues. These stories are the start of many more to come. In the next phase of the project, a Web site, a curriculum-based multimedia program and teacher training are being developed.

The purpose of the project is to preserve and document the history and contributions of both Japanese American families and the many people who supported them. It is the profound hope of this committee that this project, with its hitherto untold stories, will add to the knowledge and understanding of future generations as they become the decision makers and storytellers for their communities.

Sonoma County JACL
Oral History Project

Editorial Notes

The original narrator or family members jointly reviewed and revised their interviews with committee members. Every effort has been made to maintain the integrity of the original story. Despite this accountability, inaccuracies may still exist. In addition to documenting more oral histories, needed corrections will be made in a second edition.

The committee attempted to preserve the original voice of the narrator in order to provide a more accurate and informative rendering of the oral histories—their stories and our stories. The dialects, local expressions and style of the storytellers are provided to reflect the personality of the narrator. In some cases language was changed for reader clarity and therefore may be inconsistent with the original narration. In some cases, ellipses were used where the narration was inaudible or where the speaker trailed off or in from the previous speaker. Words or phrases which appear in brackets were inserted for clarity and were not transcribed from the original source materials.

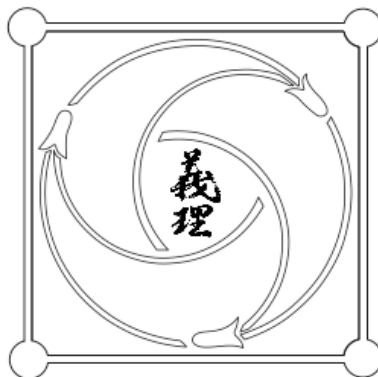
In some interviews, reference is made to the loyalty questionnaire that internees were asked to sign. When interviewees refer to “No, No” or “Yes, Yes”, they are making reference to the two most troublesome questions, numbers 27 & 28. They read as follows:

- 27:** [For men] Are you willing to serve in the Armed forces of the United States on combat duty whenever ordered? [For women and Issei] If the opportunity presents itself and you are found qualified, would you be willing to volunteer for the Army Nurse Corps of the WAC?
- 28:** Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?

Answering these questions was not a simple matter for anyone. Each person had to consider his or her circumstances and answer in accord with his or her conscience.

We hope that future generations will watch and listen to the narrators tell their stories by logging on to our Web site (www.sonomacojacl.org) and downloading selected video excerpts from the collection. We also provide PDF (portable document format) versions of the interviews that are printable for research purposes there.

May we all learn with and from each other through our stories.



TOM BARLOW INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Tom Barlow
Date: April 3, 2003
Place: The Barlow Company, 200 Morris Street, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Marie Sugiyama
Summary: Marie Sugiyama
Transcription: Transcribed by Marie Sugiyama from audio source material

Interview Summary

Tom Barlow is a long time resident of Sebastopol. He is the owner of The Barlow Company in Sebastopol, which currently processes Barlow's Apple Juice and Barlow's Apple Sauce.

He relates stories of the Japanese Americans who have worked for him and those from whom he bought apples. Though Japanese property owners did not lose their property, there were instances where they came back and found equipment missing and their property in poor condition. While at Analy High School, Tom had a very close Japanese American friend that he "hung around with". Unfortunately, he lost touch with him as his friend relocated to Pennsylvania.

Tom was a member of the *Lost Battalion*, a military unit that was rescued by the 442nd Infantry Regiment. He talks of his experiences in the military and how it was a very difficult time in his life.

The Japanese Americans have earned Tom's respect through their hard work and honesty. At the moment he has no Japanese Americans working for him as "they have gone on to better things or gone to the happy hunting ground."

Transcript of Interview

JACL: What do you remember about Japanese Americans in Sonoma County?
Tom: Frank Masuoka. He stayed on this side of the war. He was a translator of some sort.
JACL: He was in the MIS [Military Intelligence Service]. We interviewed him.
Tom: Did he come out an officer? He worked down here for a little bit and he decided he wanted to go back in, and they wouldn't let him go in as an officer.
JACL: I didn't realize that.
Tom: I've often thought about that. I didn't know what to do about it.
JACL: We did interview him recently, but he didn't mention that.
Tom: I haven't seen him in a long time, but when he worked here he was a fine boy. We've had boys who worked here—George Kimura, George Kikuchi, after he

was through at Taylors, and Everett Fujihara. Everett was here for a long time. He'd open the place up and close it.

JACL: He was a great football player at Analy.

Tom: Is that right? I didn't realize that.

JACL: I think it was in the late 40's. They went to Hawaii. They had a championship football team at Analy.

Tom: I didn't know that. He came in just after that, I guess. He was here to open the place up and to close the place. He was so honest. It was wonderful. George Kimura, he was with us for quite a few years. He was an honest and a very fine boy, and his wife and his kids were very nice people.

JACL: They are great.

Tom: Oh yes, I always thought so. Except the only time they weren't very good was when I would go to the Teriyaki. He had to win.

JACL: So you would win over there. What did you play?

Tom: Dice.

JACL: I think Fred and Jim Yokoyama used to work at the dice table also.

Tom: Oh, they were younger. They came in later. Those were great days.

JACL: You went to school with a lot of the Japanese Americans, didn't you?

Tom: Now these guys were too young.

JACL: They were after WWII.

Tom: They came in right after. It was like the Kikuchi father. For some reason, I don't know what the deal was. He came down and said that he had an orchard and wanted to sell apples. It was one of the worst orchards I ever saw. He came in with some of the nicest apples you ever saw. George worked here. That was George Kikuchi's father.

JACL: It was George's brother, Leo, who died in WWII with the 442nd. The Sebastopol community really helped to build the Memorial Hall, too.

Tom: No, I don't know about that. I was pretty young when they put that in. [referring to the Buddhist Church.] They gave me a pistol to go and guard the waterworks. I remember, that was about the time that church being brought over. How that all happened, I don't know. We must not have been at war yet but were worried about something.

JACL: They brought the church over from the World's Fair in Chicago. It was in an exhibit there. When they brought it over, it was built without nails.

Tom: Is that correct? And a priest came with it. After that, they used some out of the city, I guess. I don't know, but I went to a couple of things there. I never had anything bad to say about this deal. There was no reason to.

JACL: You provided jobs for people. Sonoma County was one of the places where very few people lost their property.

Tom: There were a few people, however, that were not supportive.

JACL: Oh yes, we do realize that there were people who were not in favor of the Japanese returning.

Tom: There were people who took over the land, and when they came back, Where's my tractor? Where's my disk? Nobody took care of my orchard. They got "gypped". Excuse me! You'll have me in jail at some point. I didn't see one Japanese person that I could criticize.

JACL: Did you go to high school with a lot of the older Japanese Americans? There were quite a few at the high school then, weren't there?

Tom: Yes, there was one little boy. He and I were very close. I can't remember his name now. When he left, he was about my age. Then when the war was over and they were released, he went to Pennsylvania or some place like that and became a dentist. The only time I heard about him was when he came to a school get-together. I wasn't here. He was small.

JACL: Was he a Hiura? Does that sound familiar? Many members of that family became dentists.

Tom: As you go out of town, there was a service station right as you make the turn. If you go this way, you go to Taylor's. You've got a tire company there now. Well, that's where the house was. It was a big yellow house, I think, in my mind.

JACL: My sister may know who that was.

Tom: He and I were very close. He'd come and stay at the place all night. We'd run around together. I often wondered if he came back here again because only one time, he asked for me but I wasn't here. So anyway, he hasn't been to any more school reunions. He is back east in Pennsylvania. He must be in his 70's.

JACL: How old are you now?

Tom: 78, very close to 79. I'm 79 in February.

JACL: My brother is Harry is 79 and my older brother, Art, is 83. You might have been a freshman when he graduated. He was a baseball player.

Tom: Probably he was a little ahead. Okay, you want to try the hard one?

JACL: Yes.

Tom: I was a forward observer and was surrounded by German soldiers. I had to shoot so many young German soldiers. Unfortunately, it was shoot or be shot. I was fortunate to have escaped. I was part of the *Lost Battalion* that was rescued by the 442nd. It was a difficult time.

The Japanese came and brought their families, like the Furusho's father and mother. They farmed until the kids were ready to take over. They made it here. I don't know whether they liked it or not. They were used to other things, but the boys and girls all changed. Very few of the people around here were problems. I don't think I could name one. If I did, it would be a big guess. They all worked here.

JACL: My family came back to Healdsburg. We were fortunate to go to the Frost Ranch, and the people there were very accepting. We went to a small school. I'm the youngest of eight. The teacher, Mrs. Schaefer, had all of us except my oldest sister, Isako.

Tom: You had brothers and sisters?

JACL: I had 7 brothers and sisters.

Tom: Your dad was busy.

JACL: Yes, he was; so was mom. We were fortunate that all the students knew our family. Their families had grown up with our family, so it was not as difficult. I imagine in places like San Francisco and the urban areas, it was more difficult. They couldn't find places to live or jobs.

Tom: Well, people that really didn't know you didn't know any better. It's as simple as that. They weren't used to you. It was like when I went into the Army. They shipped me down to Texas. When we would get time off and go to this little town of Tyler, Texas, the local yokels would be walking down the street, and a black man or woman would be walking up. They would shove them right off the sidewalk. Why they did that, I don't know. I could hardly stand that because I always thought people earned what they got. When they earn it and don't get it, it's bad. Anyway, I think they've calmed down a little about that now in Texas. To me, that was the worst thing I ever saw.

JACL: Were most of the soldiers in the *Lost Battalion* Texans?

Tom: There were still a few Texans left. They were being funneled with us. We came to them in Italy. They tried to drop us off in Africa. Africa was when the French were just coming on our side. They turned us around and sent us to Italy. We got in there and that was pretty tough fighting. I was just a regular then until they found out I had taken these other classes. So I got to be a forward observer. There was sometimes two of you or sometimes one of you.

JACL: What you did is to go ahead?

Tom: You hide and (*makes gunshot noises*) and tell them what you see and throw some hot stuff at them. You see, you got them or they got you.

JACL: That's right, unfortunately.

Tom: That's what it is, the war. The "good Lord" let me go.

JACL: The problem is that the soldiers are not the leaders who started it all. They are just the regular citizens.

Tom: You have to realize all of the 442nd were volunteers.

JACL: They were the first volunteers.

Tom: I wanted to join another branch, but I couldn't. I had a farmer's deal, and when I did that, the guys put me in the Army Corps. They took me in the Army, and that was it. It wasn't the smartest thing to do.

JACL: I know that Frank Masuoka said that he tried to volunteer several times, but they wouldn't take him at the beginning.

Tom: I think he stayed on the coast, and he was an interpreter.

JACL: He was an interpreter. But when the war first broke out, he tried to volunteer but they wouldn't take him. Then they discovered they needed some people who spoke Japanese to go to the Pacific.

Tom: I didn't know he spoke Japanese that well, but he did. What really gripes me...it's none of my business, but it was a gyp. He got to be a first lieutenant, second lieutenant or captain, I thought. He came out and he got a job here.

This job was nothing compared to being an officer. He decided to go to the city to see what he could do. The next thing I knew he wanted to re-enlist. He was only a sergeant. I thought he was worth more than that. But he did it, and that was that. It's his life, but it was a gyp.

JACL: That's a shame.

Tom: That's why you have to have one of these things once in a while to tell them who you are.

JACL: They gave him all those commendations for what he did, but he didn't get rewarded.

Tom: He could have retired and had so much more coming in if he had been an officer. He was married.

JACL: He married a girl from Sonoma, and they have four children, I believe. Three girls and a son. His wife is part Japanese; her mother was German. Her mother convinced the administration in Merced Assembly Center that the two children should stay with her in Sonoma. They stayed with her in Sonoma during the war, which was very unusual.

JACL: Now you gave jobs to all these people after the war- George Kimura, George Kikuchi and Everett Fujihara.

Tom: Well, I was also mixed in with them growing up. On Calder Avenue was where I lived. When I was brought in from the country, those people were there. I raced against them at school. I sat and watched when Pete was pole vaulting and outdoing everybody in the county.

JACL: He was a great athlete.

Tom: He no more than got in there, and he was killed.

JACL: They were good students also. I saw a yearbook, and I think there were about 50 in the Japanese American Club.

Tom: I don't remember a club, but there were a few in my class. The older ones were very athletic, and they could outrun anybody. The gals, they were always dressed very nicely and they never said a word.

JACL: Shy.

Tom: Well, I guess that was the way it was.

- JACL: I think it was in 1941 when that picture was taken and there were quite a few Japanese Americans. It was when the first large group of Niseis came along. The immigrant parents had their children and they were about the same age.
- Tom: I went through a bunch of old stuff. Here's some of the boys that made it. (*shows picture*) These two made it. This man is a buyer for one of the big places in San Francisco. This is Tom Furusho. I guess that's all I have.
- JACL: This is George in a picture at your office.
- Tom: Who else is here? A lady should be here. I never knew much about the names.
- JACL: You bought the apples from all the farmers here.
- Tom: The Furushos and I did an awful lot of business.
- JACL: He had the cold storage plant?
- Tom: No, that was Taylor. That's where George Kikuchi drove a lift truck before he came down here. It was a packinghouse. The co-op decided to split, and I was not in a co-op. Joe was the one that got them going in their field. It worked out. That's how I got mixed up with the Furushos. They were in their prime at that time. I bought an awful lot of apples from them. They put them in bins up there. They didn't have a truck to run them. I was first with the bins. The men didn't know how to do it. Furusho did. So he drove it. The guys all got mad. It worked out.
- JACL: Was the cannery here?
- Tom: That was later than when some of the Japanese boys worked here. They worked until they quit. They must have gotten by. They didn't have to fight their way through. Everett was very honest and closed this place down every night. He was here every morning. He knew where every can was, which was kind of necessary. A lot of people took a few home.
- JACL: Did you know Mr. Hamaoka?
- Tom: That name sounds familiar.
- JACL: That's Everett's brother-in-law. He was married to Susie, Everett's sister.
- Tom: The sister he lives with is a different girl, isn't she?
- JACL: That is Edna.
- Tom: They are living together now.
- JACL: Susie was the oldest sister, and was married to Sadao Hamaoka who worked for the Hotles.
- Tom: I didn't know much about the Hotles, but I think I was a relative to one of them. The house on Calder Avenue was a Hotle house at one time, and that's where a relation was born. I never could get along with the Hotle who was the rancher with apples, but the other part of the Hotles I had to get along with. They were relatives, my mother's relatives—Meeker.
- JACL: Do they have anything to do with Camp Meeker?

- Tom:** Yes, my grandfather's father started Camp Meeker.
- JACL:** So your family's been in Sonoma County for many, many years.
- Tom:** I'm part Indian. That's what they tell me. My grandmother Barlow went back on one of these things.
- JACL:** Oh, a genealogy study.
- Tom:** One of the pioneers married Kathy, and they had two children in Kentucky. She died and he married an Indian girl. They had some children. My grandmother, she was a fine woman and all that, but she couldn't stand to know whether we were part Indian or not. She told them, "Don't look anymore. I don't want to hear about it." In those days there was a lot of that going on. What the hell, I owned property over there in Weitchpec. The Indians are all friendly. They haven't scalped me yet.
- JACL:** You were one of the great supporters of the Japanese Americans when they came back.
- Tom:** I don't know about that deal. But they worked here because they worked. It wasn't because I loved them. I can't remember their names, but the father ran one of the old time peelers and she trimmed. I had quite a few people in here. I have pictures of who they are, but I'm too old. This thing here (*indicates book*) I put out of my mind. When I got out, they gave me this. I don't look at this one very often.
- JACL:** That part of your life was very difficult..
- Tom:** The thing is, these boys, they lost quite a few too. It wasn't easy. They were inside of a controlled deal. They got some lousy deals. They did it, though.
- JACL:** They did it because they felt they were Americans, and they wanted to contribute.
- Tom:** Well, they had to. They had to prove "this is my home".
- JACL:** They really did because their mothers and fathers could not become citizens of the United States.
- Tom:** They couldn't?
- JACL:** No, they were not allowed to become naturalized as American citizens until 1952. That law went into effect in 1922.
- Tom:** That's amazing. One of the hardest times for the Japanese people since they were here was when Japan came over and bombed Pearl Harbor. It must have just killed the ones that were trying to make it here. They would have been shot over there and not accepted here.
- JACL:** They arrested the leaders and took them away.
- Tom:** What can you do? There was no one there for them at all.
- JACL:** There are still many people that did not know that happened, in the Midwest and the East Coast.

Tom: Around here there were so many people that I knew. I thought, gee, this is a lousy deal. Even after the war was over, it was a lousy deal. They came home to their orchards or their fields. It was taken care of while they were gone. They were taken care of—their equipment was all sold or gone or run down. We had one guy on the top of the hill, I couldn't believe what he did. He cleaned up on a lot of good men by stealing their stuff.

JACL: On the other hand, they didn't lose their property. In the Central Valley they could not get their property back. They took it and auctioned it because the taxes were not paid. They lost all of their property.

Tom: You know, it's amazing, too, because in the valley and here the Japanese knew how to work. They did a good job as farmers. Of course, the next generation wanted to get the hell off the farms.

JACL: What is interesting is a statistic I read—forty percent of the truck farming before WWII was either managed or worked by the Japanese. I think a lot of it was political. There was too much competition. That was one of the reasons there was a push to remove them.

Tom: It was an unfair deal.

JACL: In southern and central California their property was gone. They could never get it back.

Tom: So it wasn't as bad as I thought here.

JACL: In Sonoma County, they may have taken their equipment, but their land was still here.

Tom: Well, that's over with, I hope. Now it's the Mexican people. I don't have one Japanese working here anymore. They all went on to better things with their children or went to the happy hunting ground. Now it's the Mexican people. They are very fine people, most of them. There are some beauts. They had to fight for their lives.

JACL: Their background is a little different, too.

Tom: It sure is. The ones that are good are good. They are good mechanics, for one thing. They catch on fast, so I'm happy with that.

JACL: I have worked with the Mexican people. They are like anyone else. You have the ones that do well, and the others who, unfortunately, make the newspaper.

Tom: There is nothing here that is in the high bracket. You hear about the jobs that are all down here. Now, when there are not too many jobs, it is pretty difficult.

JACL: There are some in Santa Rosa who have done well in business.

Tom: Those guys in the tortilla business are doing quite well.

JACL: They are also doing well in the restaurant business.

Tom: Yes, there are a lot of them.

JACL: I taught at Montgomery High School, and the owner of Old Mexico's children went to Montgomery. Their restaurants are doing very well.

- Tom:** He had to have a lot of guts to start that business.
- JACL:** He has three restaurants now. His daughter runs the one here in Sebastopol. They've done very well. I understand Mr. Irish was a great supporter of the Japanese people.
- Tom:** He lived so long, and he was acceptable to a lot of people—kicking the top of the door. If you couldn't do it and I couldn't because I was too short. He'd make me read this, "gentle modest little maid, sweet epitome of May, love me, love me now..." in front of the class. Jeez, I'd get so mad. He made it tough.
- JACL:** In this day and age some of the things he did would not be acceptable, but he did do a lot for the Japanese American students. He was very supportive.
- Tom:** I never saw one of them Japanese Americans having to say that poem.
- JACL:** Many of the teachers were supportive. George Corson, the coach.
- Tom:** I don't know what happened to him.
- JACL:** I think he went to San Rafael and he passed away down there. I met him at one of the area sports meetings before he passed away.
- Tom:** There was the man who coached football and quit. He got a boat and disappeared in Alaska. He was a real nice guy.
- JACL:** Barney Evans was my brother's baseball coach.
- Tom:** We had some nice teachers up there. Then, just before I got out, a lot of the young teachers started coming in. They were pretty nice. We understood them better. They seemed older. They were, like, 21 or 22. We thought, well, they were pretty good. A lot of them were good looking little gals. *(laughter)* We were just starting to grow up.
- JACL:** Was Miss Lorraine there?
- Tom:** Yes, she taught me Spanish. She put up with everything. My good friend and I had Spanish together and we would have our lunch in class. She went along with it.
- JACL:** There was Miss Weseen.
- Tom:** That gal taught me more about mathematics than anybody that ever tried.
- JACL:** She was wonderful. She knew what was happening in the classroom, and she took care of it right away. I remember taking geometry from her. She knew her math.
- Tom:** Weseen and Lorraine, they had good jobs for those days.
- JACL:** I don't think I have any more questions.
- Tom:** Don't catch what I have. In the last six months, I can't remember things.
- JACL:** As you get older, you also have more to remember. Thank you for taking the time to give us your stories.

End of Interview

FUJIHARA (OKAMOTO & FURUTA) INTERVIEW

Persons interviewed: Lily Fujihara Okamoto, Ileen Fujihara Furuta, Min Furuta
Date: 1/18/03
Place: Furuta residence, Santa Rosa, CA
Interviewer: Nancy Davlin, daughter of Lily Okamoto
Summary: Nancy Davlin
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on April 2, 2003 from audiotape source material.

Interview Summary

This interview was conducted with two sisters from the Fujihara family and the husband of one of the sisters. Since Mr. Furuta has difficulty hearing, most of the interview was conducted with the two sisters. Lily Okamoto is the elder of the two sisters, whose family was involved in the harvesting of hops in Sonoma County before Pearl Harbor. Since there were four children in the family of six and they were limited to carrying one box to camp, many of their personal belongings were left in the barn of one of their employers. Most of their personal belongings were not recovered after they returned from camp.

One memorable incident from Merced Assembly Center was when they were playing catch and the ball went over the barbed wire fence. They could see the ball through the fence and could almost reach it, but as they tried to get it, they realized that guns were now pointed at them. The teenagers couldn't even retrieve their ball within their sight. Ileen was also supposed to graduate from high school in June 1942 but was evacuated in May, so even though she had finished all her high school requirements, she couldn't participate in her graduation exercises. The sisters both left camp early to work in the Midwest since they were not allowed to return to the West Coast until after the war was over.

Min was drafted from Amache Camp and served in the 442nd in Italy. He was injured from a bomb, but he was saved from further injury by a wooden amulet his mother gave him for protection. He received a medal for his efforts.

Transcript of Interview

- JACL:** Let's start with life before WWII. What was your family life like, what did your parents do, where did you go to school, etc.? Go ahead.
- Lily:** Okay. I'm the oldest in the family and there were me and my sisters, Ileen and Molly, and our brother, Harry. We were born and raised in Sonoma County. I was born in Healdsburg. Do I have to give you my age? (*No*)
- Ileen:** The rest of us were born in Santa Rosa, and we all lived in Sonoma County until the war. And what we did before? What was family life like? Well, we were going

to school, you know, grammar school and high school. We didn't do much for entertainment.

Lily: Actually, we were a bunch of farmers, I guess, we used to work in the hops in the spring, in springtime from February till July, I think it was, and then from July till November we were in the apple business, working in the apple dryer.

JACL: So you worked after school?

Lily: Well, yeah. After school we were busy with the hops, though.

Ileen: We worked out in the fields after school and then after dinner, we had to do our homework.

Lily: No television those days. A dull life.

Ileen: So what did we do for entertainment? We didn't.

JACL: You guys didn't go to that Nippon school?

Lily: Well, they had it but I, we, couldn't go until I started driving. When I got my driver's license when I was 16, then I did go, yeah, but only for a couple of years.

Ileen: We didn't learn anything; it was more of a social group.

Lily: But yeah, my mom and dad were from Japan, and they couldn't read or understand English and we were able to... We were able to learn Japanese, speak Japanese. So we had a speaking knowledge but not enough to call it Japanese language, but we knew, understood, Japanese. And as far as socializing with Caucasian friends...

Ileen: Well, we didn't have time to socialize in those days. Our usual day was going to school, come home, work in the fields and then do your homework.

JACL: So back in the old days did you socialize much with the other Japanese in the community or you really didn't have much time?

Ileen: Well, as we were growing up we didn't do much socializing, but if we did, it was just with a... we only had a small Japanese group we used to do things with them but that was very...

Lily: They were family friends; they would come in, stay for breakfast, stay for lunch, stay for dinner. *(They both chuckle)*

Ileen: They would just drop in, not call, you know. In those days you don't call, "I'm coming over" or "Are you free today?" or something. It was just one of those family things. If they had time, they come over.

JACL: Did you ever go to the Japanese baseball games?

Lily: Yeah, Sakura no games; we used to enjoy that one.

Ileen: Sakura baseball team used to play every Saturday or Sunday. But then we used to have Japanese movies.

Lily: Yeah, that we enjoyed because it was a family affair that we all went, and in the end we had to carry all the people that were asleep.

- Ileen:** We used to only have them about a couple times a year, and we used to go as a family and then at the end of the evening, my brother would fall asleep and then Molly and then I would, so the rest of them would have to carry us out to the car. Our big outing, you know.
- Lily:** We thought that was something.
- Ileen:** But what did we talk about at dinner? What *did* we talk about? I don't know.
- JACL:** Too long ago, huh?
- Ileen:** We talked about, you know, our parents expected us to do well in school...I mean they emphasized that, all the Japanese... you go to school, you can't just sit around all day; you've got to try to excel.
- JACL:** How old were you guys when Pearl Harbor happened?
- Lily:** I just turned... I was 18 when Pearl Harbor was attacked.
- Ileen:** I was 16,17 years old. I was still going to school, you know.
- JACL:** What were you doing that Sunday?
- Ileen:** We were at Japanese school. We had it every Sunday morning. And so then they came and said, "Did you hear about this?"
- Lily:** And we said, "Oh, no. It can't be." Then we turned on the radio. In those days we didn't have television; it was all radio. And it was a shock.
- Ileen:** Yeah, it was. But as far as the rest of the school and how they treated us? I don't know; we didn't confront them. We just stayed in our little group, so we felt like, especially during evacuation, you felt like a criminal. We didn't do anything wrong, but you were still classified as a what-you-call-it?
- JACL:** So how did you feel about not graduating from your local high school?
- Ileen:** Oh, I felt real bad because it was only about a month to go, you know, and I had already completed all my classes and everything, and just the idea of graduating as a group... I knew they were going to give me my diploma in the mail, but that was not the same thing.
- JACL:** So you had to get your diploma in the camp?
- Ileen:** Yeah, I think they mailed it to me several months later.
- Lily:** Yeah, she's a 1942 grad. I was a '41 grad. So, I guess Pearl Harbor happened after I graduated so that I got my full education, but Ileen's the one that missed out. But it was kind of a scary, scary feeling because you don't know what people are going to do to you. They looked at you and said, "You killed my cousin" or somebody and acted like we actually did. And actually we did not, but because we are Japanese they thought that...
- Ileen:** So we sort of stayed in our little group, and of course we had curfew so we had to be home.
- Lily:** We were here right after school.
- Ileen:** We went right home and didn't leave the house because we were so afraid.

- JACL:** So actually maybe being evacuated was partially a good thing because you were protected? Going to camp as a group might have been okay because you didn't have to worry about anyone throwing rocks at you or anything.
- Lily:** See, we didn't know what to expect. That's what kind of scared more people than anything else was the idea that we don't know what to expect. All we knew is we had to leave with just what you could carry. So we were one of those people that didn't have a home, so we didn't have all those nice things that we had to worry about.
- JACL:** What about all your pictures?
- Ileen:** They were all left; we couldn't take anything. We only had a wooden box, a crate they gave you to put your things in. We didn't know where we were going or what, so we didn't know how much clothes to take. Of course in this little box for the six of us, we couldn't put too many things in it. And then we didn't know about bedding, whether you had to take your own blankets, sheets and stuff, pillows.
- JACL:** Could you bring any extras besides the box?
- Ileen:** No, and each person only brought a couple of change of clothes because, you know, you couldn't put too much in, and of course they had told us, no camera, radios, knives, or any weapons. They only gave us ten days or so to get ready to leave. So we had this car, and we had to practically give it away to our neighbor. And the rest of the things we put in boxes and put it in the old barn. Unfortunately, when we got back, there was nothing there.
- JACL:** So no one really watched over the property?
- Ileen:** No, it was just the boss's old barn. Our hop people. It wasn't secure at all. When we got back, there was nothing there, no dishes, no nothing. If we had old pictures they were...
- JACL:** Scattered?
- Ileen:** Yeah. So that was the bad thing about the camp because when we came back, we had to start all over again. And then, you know, our parents were older then. It was harder for them to get established after being away, and then you start from the bottom up with older kids.
- JACL:** That's true. It's harder not speaking English.
- Ileen:** Yeah. But you know, we survived, but it was really... I wouldn't want to have to go through it again.
- JACL:** Do you remember how you got to the train station?
- Ileen:** To the train, or how did we get there?
- Lily:** We took a bus when we got to Merced.
- Ileen:** No, but how did we get to the train? Someone must have driven us there because we didn't really have a car.
- Lily:** Must have been the boss who must have taken us because I don't remember.

JACL: So you went to Merced Assembly Center?

Ileen: We got to Merced on the train.

Lily: No, didn't we go on the bus to Merced? I don't remember. The thing I remember... when we got to Merced I said oh, my gosh, it smells of that animal stuff because there were stables back there.

Ileen: But it wasn't as bad as later I found out about, you know, Tanforan, where they had the actual horse stalls. Yeah. It was hot, and **dusty**. (*Both in unison*)

Lily: Oh yes, and no privacy. Ileen mentioned something about one of the worst things you had to get used to was the fact that they didn't have any stalls for our toilet.

Ileen: There was open space, and you just had to sit there.

Lily: And we're not used to that because we're all private people.

JACL: How about a curtain? Couldn't you hold up a curtain or something?

Ileen: Well, afterwards, they put up a partition, but at the beginning you had to wait till there was nobody around. We'd say, "Oh, there's nobody there, okay, we're safe." But that was terrible.

JACL: Kind of degrading too. They were not ready for you anyway.

Ileen: And then the barracks in Merced Assembly Center, they had put these, you know... I wouldn't say they were sturdy, the walls, but the tops were open.

Lily: And you could hear people way on the other side of the room when they were talking. That's how private it was.

Ileen: You couldn't say anything without saying it to six rooms, and you could hear from one end to the other.

Lily: You could hear it cause it was all open on top.

JACL: And then you took a train to Amache.

Ileen: Oh, that was terrible! I mean, it was the first time we traveled on a train for so long. I didn't realize your legs get sore. Of course we stopped in Utah somewhere and they said okay, you can move around and stretch your legs. But even then, when we got to Colorado, your legs were so weak, and you couldn't even stand.

JACL: Sounds like you couldn't walk around in the train?

Ileen: No, and then we got to Colorado, got on the bus from the train to the camp. It was a dust storm; we couldn't see anything. It was just so hot where they took us.

JACL: Did you guys know where you were going?

Lily: No, that was the scary part. I remember on the train they had the curtains down so we couldn't see where we were going. Yeah, the curtains were all drawn; they were black.

JACL: You couldn't look out?

Ileen: No. They didn't want you to. I think when we were in Utah where we were for miles around and you couldn't see any house, then you could; but before then, then you couldn't even see where you were in California.

JACL: How did you settle into the camp, and what did you guys do?

Ileen: After a while, then they offered employment. You could work in the kitchen in the mess hall. We did that for a while.

Lily: Yeah, what it is is we all were supposed to be working anyway, so we decided to work in the mess hall.

Ileen: Yeah, for \$16.

Lily: No, \$12!

Ileen: Oh, was it for \$12?

Lily: We were working for \$12 a **month**. (*In unison*)

JACL: That was pretty good. Tak got \$18 for an electrician.

Ileen: Doctors.

JACL: Electricians. \$12 was probably pretty good for mess hall. (*Chuckle*)

Lily: Yeah, I guess we can't complain. We worked for \$12.

Ileen: Yeah, and then we worked there, we just had to what-you-call-it during the mealtime, you know, the tables and the cleaning.

Lily: We didn't have to do the dishes. Someone else must have done that.

Ileen: We had dishwashers. We had to serve and cleanup afterwards the mess hall. It was only three times a day. So that wasn't bad.

Lily: That wasn't bad. Yeah. The bad thing was that we didn't get any discipline. See, we had a younger brother that just turned, what? Fourteen or something, that age where he needed control, but we never had the family closeness.

Ileen: Yeah, cause we didn't eat together. After your meals, you could do whatever you want.

JACL: You didn't have your family sitting together eating your meals?

Lily: No, we didn't eat together. They ate with their friends, so we ate with our friends.

Ileen: Yeah, it was real controlled. But we all turned out fine. (*They laugh*) I guess in those days, there were no drugs or no delinquencies or anything like that because it is amazing what can happen. You know, the parents didn't have any control over their kids; I mean, they couldn't.

JACL: Oh well, there wasn't any weapons or anything.

Lily: But it did feel like a concentration camp. We couldn't leave the camp. And we'd go outside, and you'd see these barracks with the guys with the guns. They were ready to shoot.

Ileen: Yeah, 'cause the first time we were in Merced Assembly Center, and we were playing catch. And the ball went over this barbed wire fence, and it was right there and I was going to reach for it and the guy up there in the tower, he points the gun at me. And I thought, I can't even get the ball. 'Cause that's all I needed, one of those sticks to get it; but he was getting ready to shoot. Yeah, for a ball.

Lily: It was intimidating. Yeah, because it is a concentration camp.

Ileen: But once we got to Colorado, and after a while they got relaxed with their restrictions so they would... you could even go to the town, which was not much. But it was just the idea that you could get out of camp. Once I went to Lamar, which is another small town, *(they laugh)* like Graton or something and I said, Oh boy! But ah, so they relaxed the rules; so they weren't as strict. And then after that, then they said okay, now you can go off to work, 'cause they needed a lot of farm laborers. So a lot of the guys went off to work in the sugar beets and vegetables and stuff.

JACL: Did Auntie Molly work on the newspaper?

Ileen: No, she didn't work on the newspaper. She worked in the office, and after we worked in the mess hall for a while, then we got a job for \$16 a month, working in the office.

JACL: You guys got a raise, huh?

Ileen: Yeah. Well, it was a better class of work; we weren't waitresses anymore. So we had to walk down to the administration building to work in the office. So we all worked in the office. You worked in one, and I worked in another, and Molly was across the hall.

JACL: You can't remember any more stories you want to tell? What did Grandma and Grandpa do?

Ileen: For \$12 a month, they were in charge of the latrine and the bathrooms and the washroom. They had to clean that up every day, and I said oh, how could they have done that? But they both did it.

JACL: Not very glamorous.

Ileen: Oh, I know I wouldn't. I would've worked in the kitchen or something.

JACL: Somebody had to do it.

Ileen: Yeah. And afterwards, they said that we could go outside the camp to work. You went first to Minneapolis. And then I went a year or so later.

JACL: And what did you do?

Ileen: I was just a domestic.

JACL: You both went to a cold place.

- Ileen:** Well, you didn't have much choice. You went to Chicago, which is also cold. A lot of people with families went to New Jersey, to the Seabrook Farms or Pennsylvania. And you know you couldn't come to the West Coast because that was still closed. But it was just to get out of camp and do something and earn a little bit more money but not much.
- JACL:** Did Uncle Harry graduate from high school in the camp?
- Ileen:** No, it was after we got out. See, they closed the camp in '46. They, our folks, and Molly and Harry went to Denver or Kingsburg to work on a farm. But then Harry went to Denver to go to high school. He graduated from East High School in Denver in '46.
- JACL:** When did you guys all come back over here?
- Ileen:** It was in '46, December of '46?
- Lily:** I thought it was '45 that the camps closed. Did the camps close in '45?
- JACL:** You're asking me?
- Lily:** No, I think the camps closed in '45. I think then that the family was able to come back to California.
- Ileen:** That was in '46. No, it must have been in '46 because then we went to Colorado after...
- Lily:** We went to Colorado after Minneapolis, and we worked on the farm. And I threw my back out because, boy, I was not used to that heavy work.
- JACL:** What kind of farm was it?
- Lily:** Sugar beets, truck farming, cucumber. Sugar beets is the one that you crawl a long line and you thin it, weed it.
- Ileen:** You think you are finished with a row, and then you look up and can't see the end of the row. That was backbreaking work. We were there for a while, and then we moved to California.
- JACL:** Why did you come back to Sonoma County?
- Ileen:** Because you couldn't be working on the truck farm all the time. That truck farming, it's just too hard on us. So then Lily came back first because the boss needed someone to take care of the hops, then we came back in December of '46, and then we had to start all over again. Started from the bottom again, you know.
- JACL:** So you went back to the hops.
- Ileen:** Yeah, we did.
- JACL:** When did Grandpa retire from that?
- Ileen:** No we didn't harvest, we just did the raising of the hops, growing them, and then someone came to harvest.
- Lily:** Actually, the hops went out of Sonoma County. That's when everybody quit. 'Cause the hops business went out. I don't remember when it went out.

Ileen: I don't either, but it was when people stopped using hops for beer. Then we came to Gardner Ave., and my dad and my mom had chickens. We raised them for eggs. We had done that when we were small. Oh, that's every day. You have to clean it, and you can't leave the place 'cause you gather eggs every day and feed the chickens.

JACL: Yeah, let's talk about resettling after the war.

Ileen: Reselling?

JACL: Resettling.

Ileen: Resettling. Oh, after we got back, you know, it was mostly the hops; so then we went to ...let's see that was '46. In '47 I went to San Francisco to find a job, and I worked in an insurance company. Then in 1950 we got married and came back here and then started work here. First I worked for the county, and then I got a state job and I was working for the state till I retired. Exciting, huh? (*They giggle*)

JACL: So did you guys get involved with the Japanese community after the war or was it very active?

Ileen: Well, I don't think we were very active 'cause we didn't have time to; when you are growing up and then you are trying to get established, you don't have time. I guess we don't make time for other activities. But we just were so busy surviving.

JACL: So did you guys express any of your camp experiences with your kids?

Ileen: No, they were not interested. It's like when I finally tried to talk to Min about his experiences. For the longest time, we wouldn't. I guess the experience was too traumatic. We wouldn't want to talk about it. Finally, today it's like, will you tell me where you were? See now, our kids weren't very interested in that, but then Heather (*her granddaughter*), when she went to Cal, she wanted to know about it because she wanted to do a report on it. So then I gave her all the things that I had on Amache, and she took it and then she kept it and she never gave it back. At least she was interested.

Lily: That's true. I guess it was kind of an experience that we didn't want to talk about it. And so we didn't really talk about it to our kids, but I know the third generation, like Greg's (*her grandson*) age, they wonder what we did in camp, why we went to camp and how we were treated and all that stuff, so they're more interested. So it's too bad that we didn't talk about it.

Ileen: You know, we felt like a criminal and when you're a convict, you don't want to talk about what you did to get in. And we didn't do anything.

Lily: It does kind of get to you when you think about this loyalty stuff. You know, the 442nd boys, they really went all out even though their parents were in, like a concentration camp. It is a concentration camp; we were limited as far as our activities were concerned.

Ileen: Okay, I want to tell you about Min and his army life. Let's see, in 1943, he was first inducted into the Army, but then they sent him back to camp until June 1st

1944 and then they called everybody back and they sent him to Camp Shelby in Mississippi for basic training. Then after that, after basic training, they went to New York and then went on the Queen Mary to Glasgow, Scotland and took a train to Southampton, England and were shipped by boat to Le Havre, France, where they joined the 442nd group for Bryers at the battalion. And then with the 442nd they went to Nice, up the maritime Alps in Italy, they went to this other place, and then he was injured in April of '45 in Italy and then was shipped to Leborg, Italy and then flew to Naples, Algeria, Casablanca and then went to Azores, Bermuda, and then went to Florida and was there for a week or so. And then he went to a hospital in Memphis, Tennessee and then took a train from Memphis to Camp Carson, Colorado, and then he was discharged, October '45.

JACL: So how did he get injured?

Ileen: He was on this ridge in Italy, part of the Alps, and he was where all these exploding things were coming over the hill and there was this bomb that went off next to him. Everybody thought he was gone. He was bloody all over, and he says he had to walk in; he had to walk all the way back to the medic station. No one came to help him, you know, and he stumbled back to the station. He had shrapnel that went through here (*his torso*) and his arms and one point, his hip hurt so bad but it didn't break his skin because he had a wallet, and in his wallet he had a wooden thing that his mom gave him to protect him.

JACL: It probably saved him.

Ileen: Yeah. That's what you call an amulet to protect him, and it really did.

JACL: Otherwise his hip might have been shattered.

Ileen: He said, oh yes, it hurt. I guess it didn't break skin, but I guess the muscle.

Lily: It was amazing when you think about it; that little thing that you heard about it that she gave to him for protection, and it really did help. (*To Ileen*) You got all that information? That's pretty good.

JACL: So was he with the 442nd?

Ileen: 442nd Infantry.

JACL: Was he with them for the *Lost Battalion*?

Ileen: No, he joined them after they finished it.

JACL: So was he in with Ed Ohki and those guys?

Ileen: I think they were in different companies or different battalions. You know, he's got this book. He knew the other guys like Tom Morikawa, but you know if you're not in the same group, you don't get together.

JACL: Does he ever go to any of the reunions?

Ileen: No, not like Ed Ohki. Boy, he went to every one. He was really into it.

Lily: Too bad that you couldn't get his story, 'cause he was a really colorful person. At least you got that much info. That's pretty good. He was drafted rather than volunteered?

- Ileen: Yeah, I guess in 1943, he was drafted; then they didn't call him until they got this unit set up of all Japanese.
- JACL: That's strange.
- Ileen: Yeah, they wanted it that way. They were sending them off to the war, and they would be the first ones to get killed. Sure enough, then they had the *Lost Battalion*, and they lost more people. That's why they went then, to replace the people who were killed.
- JACL: Did you have to sign a loyalty oath?
- Ileen: I don't know if we did or just the guys. It must have been all of us who must have done it.
- Lily: Yeah, 'cause we were in there; we were not a "No No persons".
- Ileen: Yeah, but how did they know we were not "No No's", unless we had to sign it?
- Lily: Yeah, but we're not the "No No" people". "No No's" were definitely against America.
- Ileen: So they shipped all those over to Tule Lake and got all those out of camp because they did not want the influence. Yeah, you're right. Okay, that's about it.
- JACL: Do you have any comments or anything you'd like to tell your grandkids about?
- Ileen: Knowing what I know now, if the government would tell me you have to go, leave your home and be evacuated for no reason at all just because of your race, I would fight it because I think we would have grounds to.
- Lily: I think at that time we were too much of a quiet American. We were really afraid. I don't know why.
- Ileen: Well, because we were younger and our parents were Japanese, and they didn't want to make waves and they said okay, we'll go.
- Lily: Actually, right now, though, we should have fought it.
- Ileen: I think at the time we didn't have Nisei older people to guide us, to say, okay, we don't have to do this, you know. We didn't want to cause any problems, so okay, just meekly follow along. No, I wouldn't let my grandkids have to go through that without putting some kind of a fight or protest.
- Lily: I don't think they will, either. I don't think our grandkids will go meekly like we did. I think they'll stand up for their rights.
- Ileen: Would you? If you were told to go?
- JACL: I'm sorry this isn't my interview. *(laughter)*
- Ileen: I just want your opinion. If you were told you have ten days, now get ready, get your affairs ready and leave. Be prepared to leave for however long and go somewhere.

JACL: I think there would be more protests. Nowadays with more mixed marriages would add a complication. My kids think they're global people, not just Japanese or Japanese American people. So, anything else you want to say?

JACL: How do you guys feel about redress and reparations?

Ileen: I think it's a good thing that, you know, they acknowledge that they did something wrong. But it came too late for the people who really suffered, our parents. They had to go through a lot. We were just kids, school kids, so we just followed along, but my parents had to really struggle to start all over again and come back here and so my dad didn't know that the United States acknowledged their mistake. Mom knew that they were working on it.

JACL: The apology was after she left.

Ileen: Yeah. You know, the Isseis were the ones that really had a hard time.

End of Interview

DR. TETSURO AND ROSE FUJII INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Dr. Tetsuro and Rose Fujii
Date: August 2000
Place: Ayami Taniguchi residence, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Robert Coleman-Senghor
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on January 23-24, 2003 from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

Dr. Tetsuro and Rose Fujii are interviewed. They first met in the Crystal City internment camp and then again years later after camp, while Tetsuro was attending U.C. Berkeley and Rose was living in San Francisco. After camp, Tetsuro's parents lived briefly in Fresno and Berkeley before moving to Hawaii to work as a Buddhist minister. During the summers as a college student, Tetsuro worked in the tomato fields in Fresno and the apple orchards in Sebastopol, and he opened his practice in Sebastopol upon becoming a doctor. Rose's father and uncle were honored as Grand Marshals of the Apple Blossom Festival of Sebastopol in the 1950's.

The Fujiis spoke of their experiences in Crystal City and Poston Relocation Camps. Prior to internment, when he was sixteen, both of Tetsuro's parents were taken at the same time by the FBI, leaving him, an only child, suddenly under the unofficial guardianship of a friend. Tetsuro was also befriended by the Okamura family from Monterey in the Poston Camp, before being reunited with his parents in Crystal City.

Tetsuro describes his father, a Buddhist minister and schoolteacher, as a classic scholar, pursuing his studies at Kyoto University, Fresno State and USC, eventually receiving a Ph.D. The first part of the interview ends with additional comments on life in the Crystal City Camp.

Transcript of Interview

Robert: This is a story of two people from two different places. Your wife has talked about how people who never knew each other, even relatives, suddenly under the impetus of this evacuation, and the irony is that families were exploded but families were also brought together. Well, one of the things that happened was that you were brought together with this lady sitting next to you and have spent a lot of years together. Going on 55 years?

Rose: Yes, we just celebrated our 50th in June.

Robert: That's a lot of years, and you met her under these circumstances in the Crystal City area. What was that like?

- Dr. Fujii** Gee, I didn't really have that much to do with it at all during camp days. I was already graduated from high school and she was still going to high school. I got to say hello to her, not much more than that, till we got out of camp. What happened was when my parents and I got out of camp, we boarded a train and they got off in Fresno. I went on to Berkeley to attend U.C. Soon after that, all of the people formerly in Crystal City, when they were in San Francisco, would congregate at this little corner grocery store/fountain owned by one of the people who was in camp. So that's where I saw her again. She was going to school in San Francisco and we started going together.
- Robert:** But both of you were in Crystal City. So you suddenly looked up and saw this young girl which you had met in Crystal City had grown into this attractive woman.
- Dr. Fujii** Yeah, I guess so. It was accidental. It wasn't till we were out of camp that we took notice of each other, really.
- Robert:** There you were at Cal. How was that post war experience like, really?
- Dr. Fujii** Oh gee, I had never been north of Fresno till we got out of camp. When I got off in Berkeley, I stayed at a hostel. I applied for jobs, room and board jobs. This was 1946. So I did find a job as a houseboy for my room and board up in the hills of Berkeley. I used to clamber up and down to school. I tell you, it was so lonesome. I remember, I knew someone starting the same year living right in Berkeley. He was a San Francisco boy living with close friends of the family. I had his phone number and I remember calling in the middle of the week and saying, "How about coming down so I can sleep with you tonight?" It was really a lonesome time. But I got acclimated pretty quickly.
- Robert:** And then, of course, it made it a lot easier that you had this young woman across the Bay.
- Dr. Fujii** Well, I didn't really. I don't know how long afterwards that we started going together, probably a year or so later, huh? *(He looks at her)*
- Robert:** So you met her in '47?
- Dr. Fujii** I saw her from time to time before, in '46.
- Robert:** And you were married in 1950?
- Dr. Fujii** 1950. Yes, got engaged in '49, I think. Oh no, no, no.
- Rose:** 1950 in February. We got engaged in February and got married in June.
- Dr. Fujii** Yes, I had completed my first year of med school before we got married, yes.
- Robert:** When did you meet her parents?
- Dr. Fujii** I knew her parents from before. In camp I used to see her mom once in a while.
- Robert:** And when did you first come up to Sebastopol to take a look at this place?
- Dr. Fujii** Shortly after we were engaged.

Rose: I guess it was a year before we got engaged because in the summer time you came.

Dr. Fujii Oh yes, oh yes, before we got engaged, I came up here.

Robert: You came up here and helped out?

Dr. Fujii Oh yes, after we were going around together, during the summer months, I used to come down here and work in the orchard.

Robert: What was that like? You were a med student coming up in the summer time; it was probably better than being lonely in the hills of Berkeley.

Dr. Fujii Oh, I only did that for a year or probably less than a year. After a few months there, my folks came on up to Berkeley, and they stuck around for a year and a half before going to Hawaii. My father was a Buddhist minister and they worked in a church in Honolulu. I had a room and board place right up on University Avenue. So I had it easy then.

Robert: So the summers, what were the summers like up here?

Dr. Fujii Oh gee, it was fine. Worked pretty hard but nothing out of the ordinary.

Robert: What was it like in terms of the perspective of the apple industry seen from the perspective of a small farm?

Dr. Fujii Oh, I didn't know the inner workings of how to run a farm. I drove the orchard truck, collecting the picked apples and taking them to the dryer that the folks ran. I used to truck in the dried apples to town and unloaded them there. But I really didn't know too much about the inner workings.

Robert: Would you say that the way of working on a farm, would you say it was a sudden eye opener for you in terms of the difficulty?

Dr. Fujii Oh no. After my freshman year in Berkeley, the first summer, I went down to Fresno to work on the farms down there. And that was really hard. I remember the first time I went down to Fresno. I picked tomatoes in the first week in July. We picked both vine tomatoes and the ones that climb up on stakes. You know, it was hot and sultry. Oh, I don't know which was worse. You know, the ones on stakes were irrigated at the end of the day, and when we went to work in the morning it was still wet in the middle. We had to straddle it and then pick tomatoes too. That was tough. So compared to apples it was a lot tougher working in the valley than it was up here. It's nice up here.

Robert: So you did this for a number of years.

Dr. Fujii I worked maybe a couple of years, yes.

Robert: What was the feeling of...an interesting thing that I've discovered is that there is sense of a closeness in each Japanese American community. You were kind of an outsider. What was that like?

Dr. Fujii Gee, I didn't feel like an outsider. After all, I was born and raised here in California. After finishing my internship, I was a resident at the old Sonoma County Hospital in Santa Rosa. My wife and two children and I lived with her

parents in Sebastopol. I spent about 18 months in the U.S. Army, stationed in Korea, after my residency. My family remained with her folks during that time. We reunited in 1957, and I opened my practice here.

Robert: So you opened your practice in Sebastopol. How long did you have your practice in Sebastopol?

Dr. Fujii 41 years.

Robert: What was that like coming back and being a doctor to the community?

Dr. Fujii You know, I was a resident for a year at the old Sonoma County Hospital; it's called Sutter now. By the time I finished my residency, I knew quite a few people here. I went to church here and so I was not a total stranger, at least within the Japanese American community.

Robert: So what about the reception that you got here? You were a professional; you were a doctor.

Dr. Fujii I believe you mean other than the Japanese American community. I was very well-accepted. Before I opened my practice I went around and spoke to as many of the doctors in practice as I could. As a matter of fact, there were only about five of them practicing in town when I came in. So I saw every single one of them. They were all very nice to me. They helped me a lot to get my practice established, as a matter of fact.

Robert: So you didn't come across any...

Dr. Fujii Oh, no discrimination at all. I wouldn't be surprised if some of them leaned over backwards to help me.

Robert: You said you forgot to tell me something. What was it?

Rose: Oh about my father and my uncle were ah...

Dr. Fujii They were Grand Marshals of the Apple Blossom Festival Parade.

Robert: In which year?

Dr. Fujii Gosh, when was that? I don't remember.

Robert: Was it postwar?

Rose: After we got back... we were married already.

Dr. Fujii We were married. In the 50's.

Rose: That was a nice honor.

Robert: So that was a kind of awareness in the community that there was an acceptance. Was that the way it was felt, or was it, these are just Grand Marshals? Or did that symbolize something for the community?

Dr. Fujii I don't know.

Rose: They were one of the older group of apple growers that carried on their business here.

Robert: So the community actually, in an interesting way, was honoring them not so much for their Japanese Americans but because they actually helped develop the apple growing business here, which is even better in one way because there is a sense of these are people that are part of us here. There is a celebration going on and we honor them.

Dr. Fujii The fact that they were of Japanese ancestry may have colored them a little bit. *(They laugh)*

Robert: And it certainly would not have been lost on the audience watching the parade that here are people who had been part of something that was larger, as far as the community is concerned, in the evacuation itself. As I look at these issues and all these ways, these moments, you and your practice, not that people had gotten beyond, but that you were going about the business of being the professional that you were, and you left the other things fall to people that wanted be stay behind. Is that the... stay behind in terms of their attitude... I'm going on. I'm going to follow up on my practice. I'm not going to think about it. How was that, in the sense of thinking about your experience?

Dr. Fujii Gee, I never thought about any of those things; I just carried about my business.

Robert: You know, one of the difficult things is that, when I read various accounts, some people want to represent this as something which was shattering. But the more I come into contact with members of this community, they looked at that, they confronted, they survived it and were going on with their lives. And that doesn't mean forgetting. It just means having a larger sense of self. What do you...?

Dr. Fujii You know, coming from pre-war southern California, the situation was entirely different. Gee, I don't think... you know, when I think of all the things we went through, I think the good things far outweigh the bad things that happened. You know, I'm in a unique position too. All of us are different, of course. But my parents never had any real property. So when they were picked up and incarcerated, they didn't have to get rid of things right away. They had their belongings but nothing really belonged to them, so it wasn't that difficult a transition like some of these people, you know. Just the fact that as a race we went through all of this was just absolutely terrible. It was horrific. But individually, I think a lot of us were teenagers and had already graduated high school. As a teenager, I had a lot of fun. What teenager wouldn't? My parents were both taken and I was all by myself, nobody telling me what to do. I think life for a lot of us young people was enjoyable. So many people seem to think that all of the things they went through were real bad. All that seems to be told by so many people. You don't hear about the good things so much. Everything is overshadowed by this horrific thing that the government did. But individually, I think for a lot of us, life was pretty darn good and enjoyable.

Robert: Dr. Fujii, actually, that is the story that's emerging. I think my colleagues who have been part of this statement would tell you that when you ask members of this community questions about what happened to your property, some of it

was sold and lost. But there are stories like the people that protected the Enmanji Temple. There are stories about people who watched over in Petaluma, the farms. People who left their tractors and the farmers who used that tractor paid them fair market value for the use of it during the war. Some people lost their crops but, some people were able to sell their crops and the people who harvested the crop shared a particular part of the profit as if they had been engaged in it. They got a certain percentage of it because they worked it through to May. Others lost it entirely. But the one thing that comes through is that there were ties to the Portuguese, the Germans, the Hispanics in this community, the Swedes in this community, etc. There was a deep feeling of community, both around the church and around community as a whole. I think you are right. There was a very individualized experience for individuals as well as for communities. And what comes across is that, in this case, there might have been at a national level for instance, the harshness of let's say of Tule Lake or Manzanar. It was different for the people who went to Amache. In many instances we just can't say we will paint it all with one brush. We have to look close at the individual experience. Is that your sense?

Dr. Fujii Oh yeah. I think that Crystal City was a camp where living conditions were much better than the other relocation camps.

Robert: What made it better?

Dr. Fujii The camp was much smaller and less compact. The people lived closer, less like a herd of cattle. I think the educational things were better, huh? (*he turns to Rose*) in Crystal City. I think more people were together in Crystal City. I was in Poston, just for a couple of months or so. But, you know, my experiences are unique too. Both my parents were picked up by the FBI. So the first three months I was by myself under the care of a guardian, who was an elderly bachelor in his 60's or so. So when I went into Poston Relocation Camp with the group from central California, I stayed in the bachelor's quarters, and that bachelor's quarters was about half of one of those huge big huts they had. Anyway I was the only teenager among bachelors who were, oh, probably in their 40's or 50's. But again, it was a real adventure. There was a wonderful family from Monterey who happened to live in the same building. This family consisted of, I think, something like six children, and the mother took pity on me. She took me under her wings and told me to move in with her family. So I lived with her for the next couple of months before I joined my parents. She really treated me well.

Robert: Tell me about the... were you there when your parents were taken away?

Dr. Fujii Oh gee, you know, we were living in Venice. Do you know where that is?

Robert: Yes, in Southern California.

Dr. Fujii We were only about three and a half miles from the beach. When the war broke out my dad was listening to the radio, and he was hearing about all the Buddhist ministers and Japanese schoolteachers being picked up by the FBI. He thought that if we moved inland a little further we would be left alone, so we did that. We stayed at this bachelor person's place whom my parents knew

very well. One weekend, there were two other ex-Japanese schoolteachers visiting. They were brothers-in-law who happened to be living three miles away from our place. One was teaching Japanese school in Hollywood and the other one in Venice, at the same school as my parents. They were sitting around talking about how lucky they were that they hadn't been picked up by the FBI. Just minutes later, two black limousines pull up, and it was the FBI. And they were given a few hours to get packing before they were taken to the Fresno County Jail. Both my parents were taken at that time.

Robert: Your mom was taken too?

Dr. Fujii Yes, my mom was taken. She'd taught school, too.

Robert: Did anyone say what's going to happen?

Dr. Fujii Nobody knew what was going on. Could you imagine? I visited them at the Fresno County Jail. My mom, too, was behind bars. I mean, no idea what was going to happen to her. For all she knew, she would be taken out and shot. Another thing I remember is after they were taken, this guardian and I were visiting that family where those other two schoolteachers were living. During that time my mother had talked them into taking her back to our place under the excuse that she'd forgotten something. She tried to stall them until we got home hoping to see me. Finally, they started to go back, and just about the time that we were coming home for dinner. I was driving and my guardian said, "I think that was your mother." I think she caught sight of us too and we both stopped the cars, and I remember getting off the cars and talking to each other for a while at the side of the road before parting. And that was the last time I saw her until we met at Crystal City.

Robert: So all this concern on one level for the welfare of children, and here they take away both parents and they leave you to fend for yourself at sixteen.

Dr. Fujii Gee, I've often wondered if that can be done legally now? To leave a minor all by himself. There's no chance. He wasn't my legal guardian, just happened to be an acquaintance who was asked to take care of me, you know.

Robert: And this woman who took you underneath her wings? What was her name?

Dr. Fujii Oh, her name was Okumura... lived in Monterey.

Robert: Tell me about her because we want to make sure that we keep her in your memory forever, in the memory of people forever.

Dr. Fujii Gee, I remember her for all of the nice things she did for me. You know, I used to run around with her older son who was a couple of years older than I. We used to wander around the camp late at night, and we'd come back without bothering to change. We'd just flop onto the cots and sleep and wake up in the morning, wash up and go to the mess hall and eat. Sometimes we'd oversleep, and she would bring us biscuits from the mess hall. Wonderful lady. I remember her much more than I do her husband. Some people have big hearts, huh?

Robert: Yeah. Did you ever see her again?

Dr. Fujii I've never seen her since.

Robert: Did you know where he was from?

Dr. Fujii Monterey. Her son, the one I was running around with, was a big time athlete in Monterey High School. He held a scoring record for the basketball league in Monterey. Yeah, Blu.

Rose: That's why people called him Blu.

Dr. Fujii I used to talk about him so much 'cause I saw him play basketball in camp too, and he was a great ballplayer. I used to talk about him a lot that they nicknamed me Blu because I talked about him so much.

Rose: He was known as Blues Fujii.

Robert: Just because you admired this son. It's wonderful. So this lady, Ms... Ah, what was her name again?

Dr. Fujii Okumura.

Robert: Okumura. Took care of you until you went off to Crystal City.

Dr. Fujii I think I was only in Poston for perhaps three months before I joined my folks. Yeah.

Robert: What was it like to be the son of a Buddhist minister in Venice, California in the 1940's?

Dr. Fujii You know, my dad, although he was a Buddhist minister, he did not always work at that. Perhaps half the time he worked as just a schoolteacher. But he was no different than any other. But he was a classic scholar. He reminded me of a Chinese scholar. His interest was primarily reading and writing, just reading and reading, constantly. That was his joy. He was from a family of nine kids, and he was the only male. In Japan, you know, it is very important to carry on the family name. And so he told his parents that if they would give him an education, he would give up his inheritance. He just wanted an education, and so what happened was they brought a husband for the oldest daughter to carry on the name and my father eventually came to the United States. He got his degree at Kyoto University, I think. He went to Fresno State and got his baccalaureate there and a masters at USC. While at USC, he was working for his Ph.D., and he was told that the only thing he was lacking was a thesis when the war broke out. After the war, he completed his thesis and presented it. They told him at that point that he lacked other requirements. He felt that it was unfair of them, and he sent all his work to Kyoto University. And years later...Ha! Remember that day? *(He turns to Rose)* We had already settled here; we had children He must have been in his seventies then, and he came knocking on my door late at night. He had just received a telegram from Kyoto University telling him that he had received his PH.D. and wanted to let me know right away.

Robert: It's a wonderful story. And USC has still not granted him his Ph.D.?

Dr. Fujii Oh, no. The committee that was evaluating him in Kyoto kept breaking up because of deaths and illnesses. That was the explanation for a delay of years before they acted. Unusual.

Robert: Have you ever tried to get your dad the Ph.D.?

Dr. Fujii From USC? No. I never have.

Robert: It might still be possible.

Dr. Fujii Well, at the time, I don't even know if at the time they even evaluated his thesis. I don't even know where the thesis is.

Robert: The papers would still be on file. They would have to be.

Dr. Fujii It was on philosophy and religion.

Robert: What years did he go? (*He reaches for a paper*) This is aproject.

Dr. Fujii To USC? It had to be just before the war broke out, so in '41 he must have been going there. When he went to USC, he didn't take full courses. He couldn't. you know. He was working, so I think he went there over several years time, part time. I don't know how long. We moved to Venice from Fresno in 1931, I believe. So sometime between the years of '31 and '41, he attended USC.

Robert: So he wrote his dissertation, and this dissertation was written in English?

Dr. Fujii Yes, but it was written in camp, completed in camp. And when he got out of camp, he presented it, and they told him he was lacking this and that. Unusual?

Robert: It's a more impressive than ever story. So he completed his Ph.D., the writing of it...

Dr. Fujii In camp. Unusual?

Robert: Very unusual. It reminds me of one of the great German scholars who did, while in prison in a Nazi camp, completed his theoretical work and in just scraps of documents. There's something of the same thing as your father. The ability, you know, he doesn't have an internet... what is he doing... was there a library? What this man must have done! Did you ever read his dissertation?

Dr. Fujii No, too deep for me. The stuff he wrote in his writings to the local newsletter and stuff was too deep for me to understand.

Robert: Do you have the paper? Did he ever give you the letter that he got from Kyoto?

Dr. Fujii No, he might have shown me the telegram. But I don't have it. He was so darn happy; he was so happy.

Robert: What year was that?

Dr. Fujii Gosh, I don't remember what year that was.

Robert: Was it in the 50's? 60's?

Dr. Fujii It was before practice, '57, yes, late fifties.

- Robert:** These are so fascinating bits of... The thing about a doctorate dissertation is that it does not just belong to a university, it is a universal document that you should have access to it from any university in the world.
- Dr. Fujii** You know what? I don't even know if USC ever accepted that thesis or not.
- Robert:** They don't have to accept it. But if you ever advanced a candidacy, they would have a record. That's why you can go back and get transcripts as an undergraduate from Berkeley, right? So they've got to have a record of his transcript. These are the little things that tease me to no end. I'd love to do something like this. I went out and found some documents on Dubois that people in Germany...Your father's story is absolutely fascinating, to write a doctorate dissertation in camp. What a triumph!
- Dr. Fujii** I think most of it was written in pre-war, though. Most of it was completed. So most of the finishing touches were in camp.
- Robert:** To be involved at all in that work in camp is to be quite triumphant. Your father died in which year?
- Dr. Fujii** What year was that? (*He turns to Rose*)
- Rose:** It was 13 years, last year.
- Robert:** So in '87.
- Dr. Fujii** He was 94. My mother was 95, speaking of longevity.
- Robert:** So, your father, did he continue in the ministry or did he retire from the ministry?
- Dr. Fujii** He retired in... before '57. In the early 50's he retired. See, he was in Hawaii, then retired, then came to live here.
- Robert:** So he lived here?
- Dr. Fujii** Yeah, he lived in the house next door. Incidentally, her father built that house. Her father, her uncle, they did that whole thing including wiring, plumbing. The only thing done on that house by a contractor was the stuccoing and the concrete work. Amazing. In this house too, the foundation, the walls, most of the roof was put up by her dad. And he came over here at age sixteen. Can you believe that?
- Rose:** No English.
- Dr. Fujii** No English. I don't know where he picked up all these skills. He was wonderful with his hands.
- Rose:** From books. He liked to do these things.
- Dr. Fujii** You know my mother-in-law's house? That was built entirely by him, and I guess his nephews helped him with the electrical wiring, some of the plumbing.
- Rose:** See, before the war they were going to build that house and then the war broke out, so they had to return all the material. And after they got back, they built that house.

- Dr. Fujii** I remember working on that house. I did some of the stuccoing on that house.
- Robert:** So, now you look back at the experiences... basically these have been a part of your life and they have not just been negative parts of your life.
- Dr. Fujii** Sure, most of the good parts of my life. Really. I had never been up here. I'd be living in Southern California. Could you believe that? I'd hate to be down there. But I would have never settled in Northern California. I'd have gone to UCLA, probably. Gee, I wouldn't have met her, huh? *(They laugh)*
- Rose:** For being left alone at sixteen, he turned out pretty good. *(She laughs)*
- Robert:** He turned out wonderful. I really do want to thank you both for all your help. Such a wonderful interview because there are things... I thought I was going to get the part of your story of meeting her, and I get the story of his father. I'm going to look a little bit more into that. That seems to be of interest, and it should be one of the stories that we tell as part of, not only of survival, but part of the ongoing in survival.
- Rose:** He was also the spokesman in Crystal City.
- Dr. Fujii** Yeah, he did it for about two or three terms. Huh? Yeah, in pre-war you didn't find too many first generation Japanese that was educated here in the states with a degree in the states from a college.
- Robert:** So he came here, in one sense, as a destitute student?
- Dr. Fujii** Yeah, I guess you could say that. One of the stories he told me was that he used to work in the grape industry to get extra money to go to school. After the season, after he was paid and went to a community bathhouse, when he came out he found out that his entire wages for the season had been stolen. Did you hear that one? *(He turns to her)*
- Robert:** That obviously didn't stop him.
- Rose:** In Crystal City he was *(she points to him)* the milkman for us.
- Dr. Fujii** That's another thing. In Crystal City, you know, we delivered ice to the individual places and milk. The niceties that you didn't see. We cooked in our own individual apartment-like complex. More intimate family life.
- Rose:** We had a whole high school and we couldn't go to any dances 'cause they didn't allow any dances in that camp, and we had a big argument about that.
- Dr. Fujii** Big deal. You know, there were Germans and Italians at that camp. What was it? There were a total of 1,000 Germans and Italians, including kids and all. We played softball against their team. We belonged to the same Ping-Pong tournament.,
- Robert:** Crystal City is identified as primarily a Japanese camp?
- Dr. Fujii** It's primarily known as that, huh. Nobody seems to mention that there were Italians and Germans. But we weren't integrated that much. I really didn't mix that much. Certainly the first generation didn't at all. They lived in a certain part of camp, but it wasn't separated by a fence nor anything.

Robert: It was like the wartime housing projects, where they had whites here, Mexicans here and African Americans here and others, always in particular blocks or sections. Was that the kind of way? But the positive part about it was that you were able to maintain the family unit because you had cooking facilities and I understand shower facilities were...

Dr. Fujii Oh, we had all that. In a relocation camp, of course, they had community bath houses and toilets and showers and a mess hall.

Robert: Yeah, those devastating toilet barracks. We had twenty toilets in a row. I can imagine how it was for Japanese American women because I remember how it was for us in the military.

End of Interview

AYAMI TANIGUCHI & ROSE FUJII INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Ayami Taniguchi & Rose Fujii
Date: August 2000
Place: Ayami Taniguchi residence, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Rose Fujii directed by Robert Coleman-Senghor
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on January 13, 2003
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

Mrs. Rose Fujii and her mother, Mrs. Ayami Taniguchi, reminisce about living and working on the apple ranch. They then recall memories surrounding Pearl Harbor, traveling to Merced Assembly Center and Amache Relocation Camp, and life in Amache. They remember Rose's father, who was taken from the family before relocation and sent to San Francisco, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Lordsburg, Texas, before rejoining them in Crystal City, Texas.

Rose Fujii talks of life as a child growing up on the apple ranch, playing and working in the orchard and around the house. For most of her high school years she attended high school in camp, returning to Sebastopol to attend Analy High School for only the last few months. Rose Fujii remembers that when her father was taken by the FBI, she could not understand why they had to also confiscate her treasured pictures of the Golden Gate Bridge she had cut out of a magazine. When the family left for camp, several non-Japanese friends looked after their possessions and property, taking good care of it.

Transcript of Interview

Robert: You want to let the stories flow because there is a lot of things that you do not know. There are things that I know that I did not know as a child, but I don't know the circumstances around it. Your parents were doing farming, were they not? Well, there is a world of difference. At this time could you recall the schools that you went to?

(In this first part of the interview, Rose is translating her mother's words from Japanese.)

Ayami *(Speaks in Japanese.)*

Rose: *(Translating)* And I remember Mama had always *onigiri*, something for us to eat after school.

Ayami *(Speaks in Japanese.)*

Rose: Yes, we did quite a lot of work, used the ladder to pick apples. I remember after school learning how to drive an orchard truck. I remember they loaded the [lug]

boxes, and then I remember papa was saying, "You got to do it this way or that way." It was funny. I still remember mama was working so hard, wake up early in the morning, make breakfast for everybody. We had workers then. And then go up to the dryer to take all the dried apples off of the trays, made lunch too.

Robert: You are doing quite well. And the stories...what about those workers, were they Mexican workers or Japanese American summer kids?

Ayami: (*Speaks in Japanese.*)

Rose: All Japanese.

Robert: Hold it. Hold it. I want you to look at each other, not turn to look at me.

(*Rose/Ayami speak Japanese.*)

Rose: Yes, she cooked all the meals and worked in the dryer. I remember that time when we came back from the camp and we saw the greyhound dog, and I remember we had asked Mr. Hart to take care of the dog.

Ayami: (*Speaks in Japanese.*)

Rose: Yes, and he was smiling. He was really cute, and we really appreciated that everything turned out okay.

Robert: Ask her how it was in the week leading to and up to December 7th.

(*Rose/Ayami speak Japanese.*)

Rose: I remember my papa took us to Japanese school and then after that we heard over the news that Pearl Harbor was attacked. Then we decided, I wonder what's going to happen next. Then the next day Uncle Miake got taken.

(*Ayami speaks Japanese.*)

Rose: I remember walking home from school and then I saw the two black cars here, and then I thought, oh, oh. But we didn't have any bad feelings except one time during school, when a student said, "Oh, I read your uncle got caught. Are all those Japs going to get caught?" Oh, I did not like that too well, but I kept quiet.

(*Rose/Ayami speak Japanese.*)

Rose: But it was okay and we got by somehow. And then when we were told to go to Merced Assembly Center. We went there but we had all the shades closed on the train. They didn't want us to see that. And then on the way going to Amache, it was the same way too. It was good that you (*mother*) were healthy that time because you had been sick before.

(*Rose/Ayami speak Japanese.*)

Rose: Anyway, I, all the time, remember that greyhound dog.

Robert: Was it in Amache the first time you saw snow?

Rose: I prefer the snow over that dust.

Robert: Why don't you two talk about those stories? What were the weather conditions? How was it like to wash clothes? What about privacy for women?

Rose: I remember washing clothes. I'd get up early in the morning because the first one that got there got done quicker than the others. And I'd set the alarm and get up quickly and go. (*Turns to mother, "You remember?" and smiles, "Yes."*) But in Amache the weather there was so changeable. It was cold and I was in school, and with my girlfriend, we went to watch some kind of sporting event. And I remember I just got dizzy and felt that the cold was too extreme. We had a Japanese bath here and it was too hot, and I fainted over there, too.

(Rose/Ayami speak Japanese.)

Ayami: *(In English)* I think that's all.

Robert: One last question. Along this line, what about your dad during the camp? Your father?

(Rose/Ayami speak Japanese.) Words spoken in English: We were separated for how long, how many months? Since March 2nd, father was sent to San Francisco, Santa Fe, New Mexico, then to Lordsburg, Texas. The final place was the family reunion camp in Crystal City, Texas.

Rose: And so it was a harrowing time for him, too. He was a sports nut just like all of us. He was playing baseball and he hurt himself. He fell in one of those little holes and twisted his ankle. He loved the sports, and not only did he do that but he did a lot of carving, wood carving. He liked to do things with his hands, like he built this house. He helped us build our house. Oh yes, during apple time you know how they have a lot of the wood that they cut down and he was on the last piece of log with his saw and he chopped off his finger. Oh yes, it was very bad.

(Rose/Ayami speak Japanese.)

Robert: Well, thank you. Thank your mom. You are still on.

Before you were the wife of Dr. Fujii, you were a young girl in Sebastopol. What was it like being in Sebastopol?

Rose: You know, we didn't do too much. I mean, I did not do too much because we had a lot of work around the house, apple dryer and other things and went to school and came back to work. Unlike the present day youngsters, we didn't belong to any clubs or go to any, you know, like Little League or something like that. It was very quiet, I think. I used to play house with my sister. Out in the orchard, we used to set up apple boxes and pretend like we were in school and have playful games. Another time was when the weeds were really tall, we used to lean down on them and make rooms and pretend like the weeds were rooms. That was fun.

Robert: So there you are in this world that is very farm life. You told me once that you learned to drive a tractor, or was it a tractor or a truck?

Rose: Oh yes, a truck. My dad taught me that. He needed someone to drive it so they could load on the apples. In those days it's not the big bins. They had the regular lug boxes. They would load up and I would have to drive a little bit and

then stop and let them load. I remember I used to go chugging along and then dad said, "No, you're not supposed to do it that way," and he'd correct me.

Robert: In the course of the year, what did the year look like? Starting with spring, were you involved in pruning or anything of that sort?

Rose: I did not do any pruning but cleared away the brush after the apples came out; it was just in the apple harvest that I helped.

Robert: It must have looked gorgeous here in the hillside, here in the springtime. Will you describe that for me?

Rose: Oh, it was especially nice when the blossoms were coming out. And in full bloom it was pretty also, but I liked it when it was just about to bloom. It was very nice.

Robert: Was there any time in your growing up that you became aware of yourself, not only as American but Japanese, or was it always a part of what you were Japanese American? You born in San Francisco or in Sebastopol?

Rose: In Sebastopol.

Robert: At ah...?

Rose: In a home.

Robert: In a home? Here at this home?

Rose: No, it was my uncle's place. And I'm lucky I'm alive. I left and came back. It was...

Robert: So was it a difficult birth for your mother?

Rose: Yes. It was either her or me.

Robert: So both of you survived it. That was something of a situation for women on the farms, having children. So often they had the difficulty of bearing children with so very few medical facilities available to them. Was that the case? So there you were running around as a young girl through the hills and helping around the house when you had time. What were some of the chores that you had with your mom and around the house?

Rose: Clean the house, wash dishes. In those days I liked to iron. And any time I'd get a wrinkle, I'd get the iron out, and now I'm relieved that I don't have to iron.

Robert: So there was ironing and as you got older, you started taking greater responsibilities around the house. So what was it like as you were finally getting ready looking forward to go into high school?

Rose: Well, going to high school, we were in camp.

Robert: So you never got to go to high school at all at Anal?

Rose: My sister and I came out early and we stayed with my aunt and uncle for a few months, and then my mother and father came out. So for three months I went to Anal.

Robert: So, let me get this straight. Your time, you were not in high school at all here at Analay. You weren't in the freshman class right here at Analay? You went directly from grammar school to high school in the camp. What was that like?

Rose: The schools were excellent. They had good teachers. The competition was very fierce.

Robert: Were these white teachers or Japanese American teachers?

Rose: There were some Japanese teachers but mostly white.

Robert: And how did they respond to you in the camp?

Rose: Great. I thought we were treated very well.

Robert: So let's go back to the day you were leaving here. What was that day like when you had to pack up and go?

Rose: Oh well, that was extremely hard because my mom was not feeling too well and my dad was gone, you know, since March 2nd. He had been picked up by the FBI. Until then, since my uncle got taken earlier, the next day after Pearl Harbor, my dad went around helping people. We had a good friend who was about to give birth and he helped on that too, making sure that she was okay. She was left alone because her husband was taken. Yes, also her husband was taken at the same time as my uncle. He said his time must be coming soon so he wanted to get all those things in order.

Robert: So your dad literally prepared the family for the eventuality that he would also be taken away. He had the foresight to see that that would happen to him.

Rose: Yes, and so he had told my mom about doing certain things and so...

Robert: Where were you when he was taken away? Do you remember the cars coming?

Rose: Oh yes, I remember going to grammar school and then, you know, my uncle was taken when people were being picked up. And I said, "Gee, I wonder when my dad is going to be picked up," and we knew when we saw the two black cars here. We knew that they were going to arrest him and maybe take him, and they did take him. He was taken to the Santa Rosa jail and he was in with a drunk. They said, "Oh no, that's all he will need is toothpaste and a toothbrush."

Robert: So he left here virtually with just a little bag. Did he have time to put on a suit or change his clothes?

Rose: I don't remember about that part.

Robert: Do you remember anything about your father's face, the way he looked?

Rose: Well, he had a very worried look. You could tell that he's worried. He didn't know what the future was going to be for him, as well as the family.

Robert: So there was your mom suddenly with two children in her hands and a farm and no man to help her. What was that like? What did you do?

Rose: Oh, I remember we had just so much that we could take with us. Well, I am what you call a pack rat. I like to keep memories and things, like the Golden

Gate Bridge and I remember taking pictures of those, and when the FBI came they took all my pictures. And I didn't like that.

Robert: They took your pictures; they took your camera.

Rose: No, not the camera, the pictures of the bridge and something else. And I said, why do you have to... I didn't ask them then.

Robert: But you questioned it to yourself.

Rose: But they took it, and I never got it back.

Robert: What else did they take?

Rose: I don't know, but because it was so dear to me I remember those pictures of the bridge. I thought it was pretty so I took it. I mean, I didn't take the picture. I took it from a magazine. I just cut it out. It wasn't even my photos.

Robert: So the times then... your dad's away, your mom's struggling. Were there friends in the neighborhood who came over to help because you had, basically, trees to tend to still.

Rose: Oh, yes, we had this one person who used to work for us, and he came to help us, Japanese American fellow. And he has since passed on, but he helped us pack up things. We couldn't take very much. We asked a friend if he would store our things, and he gladly took them.

Robert: This was a Caucasian?

Rose: A Caucasian, yes.

Robert: What... do you remember his name?

Rose: His name was Mr. Finn.

Robert: And he held on to your property.

Rose: The people that held on to our property were Mr. Hart and Mr. Hotle, and they're the ones who took care of the ranch also and took care of our dog.

Robert: Did they write to you while you were at camp?

Rose: I don't remember. I don't remember that.

Robert: But they took care of the property.

Rose: They took care of it very well, and when we got back it was all very nice.

Robert: That's great. 'Cause that did not happen to everyone.

Rose: I know some people lost their belongings. But as I said, Mr. Finn gave us back our household goods.

Robert: So I want to get some sense of this. Here you are and other members of your community. Here we are in this cool climate. How was it like to move to the Central Valley? How was it like to you?

Rose: Well, it was an experience. You know, at our age it was like an adventure. We did not worry what was going to happen to us later or anything. We just

thought that it was part of the evacuation that we had to go through, so we didn't complain.

Robert: That ride from Merced Assembly Center to Granada was probably the longest train ride you ever had. What was that like?

Rose: Well, we had all the blinds down and we didn't know where we were going, and it was kind of an empty feeling, you know.

Robert: Were you scared?

Rose: Yes, we were partly scared, anxious.

Robert: Let's stop here and maybe we can pick another time to continue.

End of Interview

ROSE FUJII INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Ayami Taniguchi & Rose Fujii
Date: August 2000
Place: Ayami Taniguchi residence, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Robert Coleman-Senghor
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on January 22, 2003
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

Mrs. Rose Fujii looks through an early family album, explaining the background of the pictures. There are pictures of an apple dryer, Pleasant Hill School, and pictures of Japan, as Rose remembers life in the Japanese classroom while attending school there for several months. Among places visited were Hiroshima and Yayemachi, as Rose recalls other times there.

After the war, Rose recounts life in San Francisco while going to college. Amongst the photos is one taken a day before the evacuation at a farewell party. A Caucasian neighbor, Mr. Hotle, gave a farewell party for several Japanese American families, his good friends, who had to leave for camp the next day. Looking at pictures taken in Amache brought back memories of mochi tsuki, basketball teams such as the Goldies, and social organizations such as the Junioresettes. Rose ends by reflecting on the internment experience.

Transcript of Interview

(Man and woman sitting on sofa looking at a photo album.)

Robert: I was very pleased to see this photo. This is of you at two years old, isn't it?

Rose: Yes, it is. I haven't gone through this album for a long time.

Robert: These are your mom and dad's orchards or was it somewhere else? Do you recall?

Rose: No, that was around here.

Robert: Around here, which is right off of the Bloomfield. Is that the oldest photo you have of yourself, or are there earlier ones?

Rose: No, I have this book which is called *Here, There and Everywhere*. It's one of the oldest ones.

Robert: Did you put this album together within the last few years?

Rose: No, a long time.

Robert: A long time. So you've been involved in the collection of the family photos.

Rose: I like to collect, as you can see.

Robert: And what it will prove is that that's a very valuable kind of thing to do. Here's a photo of you and four girls. They all seem to be a part of the Japanese American community.

Rose: (*She points to a picture.*) She is a distant cousin of mine, and the other is one of my good friends.

Robert: Is she still living?

Rose: Yes, she is in Sacramento.

Robert: What's her name?

Rose: Mieko Akutagawa.

Robert: She graduated, didn't she, from Analy High School, did she not?

Rose: Yes, I guess so. These are long old family friends.

Robert: Oh, this is the family car. Great! Looks like a 1935 Packard or something.

Rose: Yes, we always had fun. All of us together, we all gathered at a certain place. And you can see the dryer in the back.

Robert: But this is within the surrounding area here in Sebastopol. It's very interesting that you can distinguish the dryer houses, and it had a very specific kind of character.

Rose: Oh yes, 'cause we had an apple dryer too, till it was torn down about five years ago.

Robert: Oh, this looks like a school picture.

Rose: (*She chuckles*) Oh, yes. Here I am. I still remember when we were dancing the minuet. Yes, it was fun. In those days we did these things. Nowadays everything is all bought.

Robert: And you made the costumes too?

Rose: Yes, everything.

Robert: Here, it not only appears to be, but you are in fact just a member of the community at the school. It's a grammar school. And this is Pleasant Hill School? Is that still a school, the old school building?

Rose: It's not a regular public school; it's run by another organization.

Robert: But the building still exists?

Rose: Yes. And then opposite that is the new school, called the Twin Hills School.

Robert: Uh-huh, I saw it. It's quite an attractive school. (*Rose turns the page*) Here you are in Hawaii.

Rose: In Hawaii, yes. We took a trip to Japan with my mom. She had surgery over there. And so, my mom, my sister and I accompanied her.

- Robert:** Your mom told us about that in the interview we had of her. She couldn't find a doctor that could speak Japanese. So you decided to go to Japan.
- Rose:** She had many surgeries before.
- Robert:** It's hard to imagine... you see this woman, now, she's 91.
- Rose:** She's 91. She's been healthy.
- Robert:** So the surgeries were obviously a success; she's still here. It's wonderful.
- Rose:** These are the friends we met on the boat.
- Robert:** So there are other Japanese families, returning to Japan, both returning and visiting Japan.
- Rose:** Yes.
- Robert:** I was looking through this to begin with, and there is a photo of you and your parents in Japan. Is this the one?
- Rose:** But that is not my dad. He stayed behind.
- Robert:** But this is you and your mom.
- Rose:** My sister, my mom, and this is a cousin, I think, and this is me and this is his wife.
- Robert:** And these are the reindeer... was this a temple?
- Rose:** I don't know where that was, maybe Miyajima, I think.
- Robert:** But it certainly is winter. There is no doubt about that.
- Rose:** But I like that photo, too.
- Robert:** What was your experience like in Japan, do you recall?
- Rose:** I went to school there for six months, and that was an experience.
- Robert:** How was that?
- Rose:** Oh, everything was. We did the timetables as we were marching into classroom, and there was never a waste of time. We cleaned the classrooms and all that, and we got to meet new friends. It was a different experience but enlightening.
- Robert:** You know, I saw an article about a year ago. It is still part of the tradition in elementary school, where children clean the classroom.
- Rose:** Yes, and we didn't begrudge it at all. This is my teacher over there in Japan.
- Robert:** So she appears to be in traditional dress.
- Rose:** Yes.
- Robert:** Was this a village or a small city?
- Rose:** Yes, in Hiroshima.
- Robert:** Oh, in Hiroshima.

Rose: But not in the city, in just a suburb. I remember she invited me skiing, and I don't know how to ski and she said, "I'll teach you."

Robert: Who is this gentleman, mounted on his horse?

Rose: That's my uncle.

Robert: He looks like an English gentleman riding there.

Rose: This is Yayemachi, that's the name of the little town.

Robert: Quite distinguished. Wonderful photo. And what were your relatives in Japan? Were they merchants? Do you remember?

Rose: Regular farmers.

Robert: Regular farmer. Well, if he was a regular farmer, that sure breaks my idea of a peasant farmer. He is there in his little bob cap, and his riding pants and his riding coat. He looks quite distinguished. That's wonderful. That's a wonderful photo. And there you are on the horse. But you look more like the Western American girl. Was that your first experience with horses?

Rose: I think so.

Robert: Did you come back home and want one?

Rose: No, then on our honeymoon, we had a horse, *Pancho*. I still remember that horse started running away. I was frightened, so I said enough of that. (*She laughs.*)

Robert: Is that your dad?

Rose: No, he's another teacher. This is a friend.

Robert: So, what was the school made up of, mainly male teachers or female teachers?

Rose: No, there was variety.

Robert: A variety, so it was mixed. I turned to this page and immediately this face leaped out to me. It is powerful but gentle, spiritually reachable. Is this your grandfather?

Rose: Yes, this is my mother's father.

Robert: Did you ever get to meet him?

Rose: Just that short time that we were in Japan.

Robert: Do you know anything about him?

Rose: No, not too much.

Robert: Whoever he was, his spirit leaps out across time.

Rose: I remember attending my other grandfather's place in Japan, and it was in the winter and we had to walk through the snow to get to his place.

Robert: The snow is deep obviously, the way you describe it.

Rose: Oh yes, it was very deep, but it was nice.

Robert: Was it the mountains behind Hiroshima?

Rose: Yes. So, that was an experience.

Robert: This is a photo of the San Francisco Exposition, and this is the Japanese pagoda. What was that like, going down to the exposition, do you remember?

Rose: It was an exciting time, but I don't remember it that clearly.

Robert: The hope of world peace literally a year and a half before the war breaks out. This is again you and your family. This is your sister. Your sister died some years ago.

Rose: In 1988. She died of cancer.

Robert: Did she leave a large family?

Rose: No, she just had three children.

Robert: Boys, girls?

Rose: Two girls and a boy.

Robert: Did she have a professional life?

Rose: She used to work for the Housing Authority.

Robert: Was that a postwar position that she acquired?

Rose: Yes.

Robert: So, she must have had no considerable training before, like yourself, a graduate of high school?

Rose: She went to sewing school, and we both went to business college.

Robert: That's around here in the area?

Rose: No, that was San Francisco.

Robert: In San Francisco. Well, how was that? Did you have to drive down to San Francisco?

Rose: Actually, I lived in this home and did housework. They called us house girls or something. We lived in this beautiful home.

Robert: What part of San Francisco?

Rose: Oh, Lake Street.

Robert: That's in what area?

Rose: Richmond.

Robert: Richmond area, that's right down by the Presidio. In fact it's the last street before you go into the Presidio.

Rose: Yes, through friends I got this job and went to business college from there.

Robert: Was this with a Japanese family or a Caucasian family?

Rose: A Caucasian family.

Robert: So you were a housemaid, and then you went to school? In the evening or...?

Rose: No, it was during the day.

Robert: So you actually held down two jobs?

Rose: Well, it was a nice place to stay, and we knew the family.

Robert: So, that was your first experience in really city life. What was that like?

Rose: Well, I kind've learned how to drive there, so that was quite an experience.

Robert: There are two things, one is to make a left turn in LA, to truly be a developed human being. The other is if you can change gears on a hill in San Francisco. You truly had a triumph of life.

Rose: Oh, I remember going up those hills.

Robert: Where is this here?

Rose: This is out on the beach over there, in Doran Park or something... anyway, by Bodega Bay.

Robert: Not that many people were out there at all.

Rose: No. We just picked our spot. This is our friend. I remember we were all together.

Robert: These are all wonderful photos. I notice you have some Caucasian friends that you have in this book. They were obviously important people in your life at this time. Here's Liz Park and here is Mary. Is this woman Liz Park still living?

Rose: I have no idea.

Robert: Do you remember, during the time during evacuation, anything about her response to evacuation?

Rose: No, I can't remember.

Robert: There are a number of episodes in which Caucasian friends came, they helped. Some even, in certain instances, ended up visiting people in camp. I heard a story of someone who would actually come once every six months all the way to Amache. There were, of course, people from Los Angeles who came once a month to visit families. Some people did not buy into the internment at all; they really resisted it. There's the story in San Diego about a teacher who wrote her students while they were interned. She is a very important person in the history of Japanese Americans in California because of her work. Because of her attitude and she fought constantly for the civil rights of her students and of course their families, and the Japanese Americans. Now this is a wonderful collection of all your friends, your buddies, they all look like suave 1940's youth. Who is this handsome guy?

Rose: Another friend, Ono.

Robert: Well, the Ono clan had some good-looking males.

Rose: These are Dorothe's in-laws. Yes, those were the old days.

- Robert:** Here it is. What's his name here?
- Rose:** Mukaida.
- Robert:** Was this the Pete Mukaida, or Peter Mukaida, who fell in the 442nd?
- Rose:** No, that was Pete Masuoka.
- Robert:** And this is Edna?
- Rose:** Hagihara.
- Robert:** Let's see here, Tad Ono and Mieko?
- Rose:** Akutagawa.
- Robert:** Jack, well he looks... he looks [brass?] just ah...? And this is Hagihara?
- Rose:** Yes, Hagihara.
- Robert:** And this is Nancy?
- Rose:** Yes, Nancy Mukaida.
- Robert:** These are all wonderful, Ms. Snell, that must...
- Rose:** Yes Ms. Snell, she's a schoolteacher.
- Robert:** From this time.
- Robert:** Is this you or your sister.
- Rose:** My sister.
- Robert:** Who is this?
- Rose:** That's ah... she was in the back there too, Matsumi. We called her Murr.
- Robert:** Boy, she is dressed in traditional dress there. And this is Julia?
- Rose:** At that time it was Reverend Miyamura's daughter. She was my good friend.
- Robert:** There you are with your sister.
- Rose:** My sister.
- Robert:** Did your dad like to drive? I notice that each time I look around there seems to be a new car in the garage in all these photos. Was he a mechanic of some sort?
- Rose:** No, just a farmer.
- Robert:** He loved new cars. This all looks very good. Is this another friend of yours?
- Rose:** My sister.
- Robert:** These photos are just really an interesting part of the family, of your history. This is an interesting photo.
- Rose:** This is of Gold Ridge School, which was down that way.
- Robert:** And this is when you were in which grade?
- Rose:** This is probably around the seventh grade or so, and this is our teacher.
- Robert:** And that's you at the end. You were tall. You were very tall and who is this?

Rose: He was a classmate.

Robert: Boy, he's long and thin and tall. (*They turn the page.*) This is a wonderful picture. This is your dad, mom. Your mom... I was surprised when I saw this photo for the first time. I always imagined she had been a thin woman all of her life, but she wasn't. She had quite a full face. Your dad and your mom and your sister... and there you are in doily lace.

Rose: She was two years older than me.

Robert: She had already made the change. She was a teenager then. That's great. And this is you?

Rose: Oh gosh! Yes. And this is Dorothe Ono.

Robert: Oh, Dorothe. Yes, that very distinguished face that she has. The thing that strikes me is, (*He points to a picture.*) "This is the last day before evacuation 1942."

Rose: Yes, I wrote that.

Robert: Looks like your friends gathered to take photos with the consciousness that you would be going away. And here it is.

Rose: Yes. This is Dorothe's mother with friends of hers, a contractor and his wife, so Mr. Lungsberg built part of this house too.

Robert: So, he built part of the house, but he was friends with the family.

Rose: Yes.

Robert: And this is Jack Shimizu.

Rose: No, Tosh, that's Pat's husband.

Robert: Is this the gentleman that we might go interview?

Rose: No, he passed away, and this is my aunt.

Robert: You know your mother had the broadest smile then as she has now.

Rose: It's good to look through all these olden times.

Robert: Is this ah...?

Rose: Dorothe.

Robert: Dorothe and her brother?

Robert: No, her husband.

Robert: Oh, this is ah...

Rose: Kan, Kanemi.

Robert: Kanemi. You know, I'm still impressed by his record. He held the best record for 30 years here.

Rose: At Analy.

- Robert:** Well, not only at Analy, for the entire region. He held it for years; he had the best record, went to the state meet. Well, there you are in the springtime. It's springtime, the blossoms are on the trees.
- Rose:** I hated to take pictures.
- Robert:** You take them so well, I don't know why you hated to take them. Yes. But all these photos are just in the springtime. The irony there is that the blossoms are on the trees, the fruits coming in, and you're preparing for evacuation.
- Rose:** Yes.
- Robert:** But your father was still tending the orchards right up to the last days when he was taken away.
- Rose:** He was taken away in March, and this is all after that.
- Robert:** So your mother is there, trying to hold the family together and...
- Rose:** At the same time we had to pack.
- Robert:** Pack and at the same time tend to the farm. How did that go? Did friends and family come in and helped?
- Rose:** But not too many, but some friends came to help, to get ready for evacuation because they themselves had to pack too.
- Robert:** I'm struck by this photo. It's an interesting collection of almost 15 people.
- Rose:** Yes, I think that's the very last photo.
- Robert:** There's 18 people here in this photo. Did these people, did they ever come together again, or after the war did some of these people, did they end up being dispersed?
- Rose:** Yes, dispersed.
- Robert:** And here, it looks like the local buddies for you.
- Rose:** Cousins.
- Robert:** And they live in the area also?
- Rose:** Yes. This is our family here. See, Mr. Hotle, they used to have a ranch over here, and they held this farewell party for us. It was very nice.
- Robert:** This was a farewell party before the evacuation.
- Rose:** Yes, and we thought it was very, very nice.
- Robert:** Mr. Hotle, he was non... he was Japanese?
- Rose:** No, no, he is Caucasian. He and his wife and daughter were very instrumental in making sure that everybody was comfortable. Yes. They did a lot.
- Robert:** So, here was a family... saw what was happening to you, who wanted to convey their regard for you and they did this by holding a party?

- Rose:** Farewell party. Yes. So they gathered the people that were close to them. So, here's one family here, and here's another family and my cousins. So, that was very nice. I remember that. I remember that and all the shots we had to have.
- Robert:** So, you had to line up for shots.
- Rose:** Oh, yes, and that was terrible. We had to get typhoid shots, you know. I guess in those days it was more... I don't know how they affected us 'cause we couldn't move our arms for many days. We had to get, I think, about three shots.
- Robert:** It was like going into the army.
- Rose:** Yes. But we had to do what we had to do.
- Robert:** These are some photos of you in Hawaii, aren't they, or are they family?
- Rose:** I had lots of cousins in Hawaii.
- Robert:** And here you are in Amache. Are these photos that you got later on, or are these photos that you took yourself, 'cause...?
- Rose:** I don't know how I got these. I think somebody took them and gave a copy to us.
- Robert:** And here you are in September of '42 in the camp, and already it appears like some of the young men have volunteered or were already in the military. Who is this? Who is this young man over here, this photo here? Do you recognize it? There seems to be some names.
- Rose:** Kiyoshi... I don't know.
- Robert:** 'Cause it is very clear that they are now very much part of the war effort, already in '42.
- Rose:** And here we are with all their caps.
- Robert:** Yes. Well, there they are. They've been in for a while; they've got sergeant stripes on them, corporal stripes. These are men who early in the stage must have been in the military, is that the case?
- Rose:** I'm not sure.
- Robert:** You know, it's always interesting to go back and try to remember the names of people who were part of your life. You put them in your scrapbook, and all of a sudden there is time and distance. Look at this fellow. He's just smiling right at you.
- Rose:** Oh, I said, "Oh, I'll never forget their names." But you know you do. You have to write it in the back or some place.
- Robert:** I thought for a moment that this was your husband.
- Rose:** No. He's the one that used to work for us and helped us with evacuation. There they got married. This is the Japanese *mochi tsuki* – pounding rice to make *mochi* for New Year celebration.
- Robert:** So, they tried to hold on to some of their traditions within the camp as a way of surviving the camp.

Rose: This is the friend in the Army.

Robert: Did he manage to survive the war, do you know?

Rose: Yes. He got injured, I think, but he survived.

Robert: Well, there's no doubt about it, this is snow.

Rose: And he is the one that we took care of. He came from Japan and was in either my mother or my father's town, and he came over and stayed with us for a long time. And then I helped him learn the English language.

Robert: So he came from Japan just as the war was getting under way or prior to the war?

Rose: Prior to the war.

Robert: So, here he was. Was he coming to work or was he just visiting, or...?

Rose: Well, he wanted to stay here in the United States, so the first thing you have to do is learn English, and so...

Robert: Sunao?

Rose: Sunao. And so he evacuated too.

Robert: Torakawa. So, he became a part of your family through the evacuation. Interesting collection. Oh, I think, I've seen this. There's you. This is the basketball team. What did you call yourselves?

Rose: That's a different team. But we're *Goldies*. But this is another. Maybe you've seen the school annual?

Robert: No, this was in Amache. Well, there you're in Amache. This is a dust storm.

Rose: Well, you know it wasn't that bad for us. I guess it's because we expected it. So why complain about something that you know is going to happen?

Robert: But even if you don't have a complaint about it. You know, sometimes we don't. For instance, my mother... I tried to get a picture of my mother. My mother was a riveter. And she said, "Oh boy, that's gone. I don't want to think about that stuff. We just had to work." I said, "Mom I just want to know what it was like. First of all, women did not work as welders and Black women certainly did not get jobs as welders. And here you are... you not only got a job as welder, but you were the last woman, the last African American, including males, to lose your job as a welder. So you must have been a pretty good welder." One day I sat down with her to talk to me about what it was like. Some of us still don't have an idea.

What was a sandstorm like? What was it like for you in an everyday way?

Rose: I don't remember that much. I remember going to school.

Robert: Well, you were going to graduate in '46 from Analay, so you came back and graduated.

Rose: Yes, from Crystal City, Texas, I came back because I wanted to get a diploma from Analay.

Robert: These are all pictures of people trying to survive in that world. And sometimes you look at these photos, and they're dressed like young ladies right in the middle of the city.

Rose: And I met these for the first time, and they are distant relatives I did not know I had.

Robert: So the camp became a place where you actually ended up meeting relatives you had never met before, and then you truly formed strong bonds with. And what are they called?

Rose: Kais.

Robert: I've never seen that last name.

Rose: Kai is the last name, K-A-I. See, these are all at Crystal City.

Robert: Grace Yamaguchi of Turlock.

Rose: You know her through Clara.

Robert: We just interviewed her. This is a wonderful photo of her. She's a young woman. She looks about 19 or even younger.

Rose: We were in the same club over there. These are all friends.

Robert: These are all your basketball friends? This appears to be outside of the camp.

Rose: No, this is inside. And this was the name of our organization, the Junioresettes, and these were the two advisors.

Robert: What did the Junioresettes do?

Rose: Oh, it was just to get together, just friends meeting and trying to do things.

Robert: So, some of the community ways of doing things that were already established were just transferred to the camp and people organized themselves around those community patterns. I notice there were strong Japanese community clubs, there were societies for the young. And they just simply took those ideas and they brought them to the camp, and it was a way of creating a social life. Now, this is not in the camp?

Rose: No, we were just going to Crystal City, Texas, to join my father, who had been taken away earlier and we're leaving Amache in June.

Robert: 1943.

Rose: 1943. So we were in Camp Amache until then. And then these girls came down and said goodbye.

Robert: So, from June 1943... so you just spent really a year at Amache. Then you went to Crystal City. Was there a camp there or did you just end up in that town?

Rose: No, no, it was a camp.

Robert: So, you actually stayed in the camp the whole time, but you were allowed to go out?

Rose: No, we could not go out.

Robert: So, how did you get into this...

Rose: No, this is outside the camp, this is Amache, in Granada, they came to bid us farewell...

Robert: Oh, so this is in Granada? So this is at the train just leaving for Granada?

Rose: Not for Granada, leaving from Granada.

Robert: Well, that's the first time I've seen a photograph of that particular moment. It's just really a train station, an old fashion western town train station.

Rose: And then from here on are...

Robert: Photographs of the family in the post war years.

Rose: And here's Grace again and Mary Oda. These are all friends of ours that we met at Amache.

Robert: Now, talk to me about this photograph. This is an interesting one. Here is an Anglo male teacher. He appears to be so. Is that the case? And this was your... a school photograph.

Rose: I don't know the grade there. This is junior high.

Robert: It looks like if... if you're in both of these, it must be two separate years. You come back in '46. So this would have to be '43, if it's at Granada, and two different semesters.

Robert: Are you able to find yourself here in these photos?

Rose: Yes, I'm in one of these, but I'll have to look carefully. Now these are my classmates in 1946 at Analy.

Robert: I like that photo of you. *Analy Graduate of '46*. How was it coming back?

Rose: It was fine. But, you know, we were much more advanced in school than over here. Especially, I took up shorthand. In the book, we were way, way ahead.

Robert: So another irony of these evacuations was that you ended up in a very intense educational experience that gave you an advantage over the people who were trained here at Analy.

Rose: We had very fierce competition in camp.

Robert: Ironically, some of the best minds in the Japanese American community, young minds would gather into one place.

Rose: But we didn't take it that way. We just had to go to school and do our thing. But we had good teachers.

Robert: This looks like a photo of a home in the postwar years?

Rose: I don't know whose home that is.

Robert: Well, this looks like a photo in Los Angeles, the ubiquitous palm trees.

Rose: Yes, that looks familiar. But these are all post.

Robert: When are we going to run across a picture of that guy who is your husband? Oh, there he is. Let me see that handsome fellow. Oh, my!

Rose: He is studying at Berkeley.

Robert: Yes, with a pullover, in the fashion. And so you met him in...?

Rose: In Crystal City, Texas.

Robert: He was obviously through high school. And had been literally taken away from his own advancement on his own degree by the internment. And here he is studying still.

Robert: Here you are in Berkeley in 1947. That's where your husband is studying. How was it like to come to this big university and be part of that life in the postwar years?

Rose: Well, we returned in '46 and I went to Analy for just three months and graduated, and after that went to San Francisco for business college and he was in Berkeley and then we got kind've together there.

Robert: This is at the bottom of the Campanile.

Rose: And he had done some correspondence courses, I think.

Robert: During the internment or after?

Rose: Was it after? I'm not too sure what months he went.

Robert: So you stayed in Berkeley, how many years?

Rose: I didn't stay in Berkeley. I was in San Francisco, and he used to come and visit me.

Robert: Here are people coming to Sebastopol.

Rose: They came to visit us. That's one thing about going to camp, you met people from all over, from up and down the state and out of state. So that was one nice thing.

Robert: So, here you have this complex picture that, on the one hand, internment experience displaced people, but on the other hand, it brought them together.

Rose: That's why when they have Amache reunions, Crystal City reunions, it was good to see the people. Of course, we all have to have nametags, 'cause it's hard to remember everybody.

Robert: Age changes some things. You know, this is a wonderful family volume. Oh, USC/Cal game, that should be quite exciting! And where's your husband? Where's Tets? You expect him to be there? It looks like Strawberry Lake or Lake Temescal. So again, this is in Berkeley, the physics building, and here's Hawaii. This is a wonderful volume, the kind of thing that needs to be really, truly preserved and shared over time. Looking back over all those years, you've got a great grandchild on the way. What do you say to that great grandchild about the experience? What do you want them to hear? Across a hundred years, what would you want them to hear about that experience?

Rose: Well, it was an interesting life, and like in anything there are hard times, but to appreciate the good times you have to go through the hard times, I think. There were happy times, and you learn to respect a lot of people because they are all trying to help you.

Robert: What do you think about looking back as a citizen of the United States, from that perspective? Your children might say, you know, my great-grandmother suffered a lot for this country. There was no reason for them to be taken away. What do you say to them?

Rose: Well, we didn't argue. We just went along with what we were told we had to do. So we just went through that path. But I think nowadays, they would not do that; they would probably put up a fight.

Robert: Do you have any reason to believe what accounted for the lack of resistance or the acceptance of that experience, at least the first stages?

Rose: I think I was too young to understand those things. Probably the older folks were confused and wondering what the future would hold for them, whether they would be able to come back to resume their normal lives or not. I think it was harder on them. They had families to think about.

Robert: They had families to think about. It's a good thing to (*unintelligible*) as a single male of 20 or 25, but it's another thing to be a parent with a family trying to figure out, "How am I going to feed and clothe these children under these circumstances? How am I going to protect them?" So, thank you very much. This was a wonderful interview, despite the fact that you said that you do not do well in an interview. It was a wonderful interview.

Rose: Thank you.

End of Interview

DENNIS FUJITA INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: Dennis Fujita
Date: March 7, 2003
Place: Santa Rosa Junior College
Interviewer: Jean Ishibashi
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez from audiotape source material

Introduction

The following summary includes descriptions of documents which Dennis Fujita offered in his interview. The documents tell the stories of the relationship between the Fujita family and the larger communities within Sonoma County, particularly Petaluma.

For example, his grandfather's relationship with the justice system is reflected in his legal appeal to the Superior Court of Sonoma County in 1928, which ruled:

"Children born in California of Japanese parentage are citizens of the United States and California and are entitled to the same rights of property, real and personal, as other citizens, irrespective of the racial descent."

— Page Smith, *Democracy on Trial*, 1995

Transcript of Interview

JACL: We're here today and it's Friday, and it's March 7th. We have the privilege of having Dennis Fujita who still carries with him his father's story, a long-time resident of Sonoma County, particularly Petaluma. Dennis, can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what you do?

Dennis: I've been a chemistry instructor at Santa Rosa Jr. College since 1971, and I've enjoyed every minute of it. My father was born in Salinas, California. At the time, his parents were working on the Spreckles Ranch. I believe my grandmother was a household domestic of some sort, and I'm not sure what my grandfather's duties were, some other work around the ranch. They moved to Petaluma and by 1920 were in the process of trying to purchase some land. They had been involved in the egg business on leased property, realized that they could make a living despite the tremendous competition of other chicken raisers and egg producers. And they eventually found a piece of land on Ely Road, which is just north of Petaluma, between Petaluma and Pengrove, and my grandfather had the outrageous idea of purchasing that property. Of course, the Alien Land Act did not permit him to do this. But he set up a trust, and with the aid of some very smart legal advice, he managed to purchase the land in the name his U.S. citizen children, and that included my father as the eldest son

plus three of my father's siblings. My father didn't stay in the egg business very long. It was very hard, very dirty business, and I think his health suffered for the rest of his life from working in the dusty environment. But he had a very mechanical knack about him. He learned how to do plumbing and carpentry and electrical work at an early age. I guess that was quite normal, growing up on a ranch. But he found a job that I think suited him very well, and that was to become a salesman and repair-person for the Electrolux Vacuum Cleaner Company. He sold and serviced Electroluxes for 35-40 years, all the way up to his death at age 71. In his later years, he wasn't intent on selling very many vacuum cleaners and stopped going door to door because that activity was becoming rather difficult in 1980. People would not readily open their doors to a salesperson then as they might have a few years before. But he had a steady group of faithful customers who were returning to buy a second vacuum cleaner or a third, and they really enjoyed the service that he provided.

JACL: Did he provide that service prior to WW II?

Dennis: Yes, he became an Electrolux salesman in 1936, so that was what he was doing prior to the outbreak of the war.

JACL: And did he work primarily in Petaluma for those five years?

Dennis: Yes, the way it was set up to avoid some unfriendly competition was each salesman was given a district, and they respected one another's customers and service areas quite well. If a potential customer from Santa Rosa or Sonoma were to contact my father, selling a vacuum cleaner to them would be okay. But my father could not spend his evenings knocking on doors initiating contacts up and down Mendocino Avenue in Santa Rosa.

JACL: Did he have stories of him knocking on doors, "Oh I met this family, they treated me well, or they didn't treat me well?"

Dennis: Well, my father attended public schools in the Petaluma area from an early age. I can't recall the exact age that he was when they moved from Salinas, but I know he went to Waugh School, which is an elementary school, and he graduated from Petaluma High School. The stories that he occasionally told suggest that he might have been a very popular fellow. He was very gregarious. He liked to get into trouble a lot, perhaps by talking too much or playing pranks, but not to the point that the staff or the teachers thought he was a disciplinary problem; they just thought he was a character. So he had no trouble going out to the community at large. He had many customers throughout the area. I know that selling door to door was hard. So he, of course, he got home sometimes very disappointed and sometimes very joyous because he made a sale or got a new customer. It was normal for him to try to sell vacuums after people returned home from their day jobs, so we wouldn't see him after dinner until nine o'clock or ten o'clock. After many years of very hard work, he could then sort of sit back and regular customers would seek him out to service the equipment they had purchased from him or to buy new machines.

JACL: Was there a difference how people treated him from Petaluma prior to World War II and after World War II when he returned with family from Colorado?

Dennis: Yes, of course there were people who still harbored a lot of resentment and didn't feel that he belonged back in the community, but then others welcomed him back.

JACL: Yes. Do you remember any of the most wonderful stories that he had to share and what might have been more difficult stories?

Dennis: Can we stop for a second?

At this point both the interviewer and Dennis Fujita shared stories of their fathers recalling the toll the hardships placed not only on their fathers but also their families.

End of Interview

JOE FURUSHO INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Joe Furusho. Also present, Keiko Furusho, his daughter-in-law
Date: December 6, 2001
Place: Joe Furusho residence, Sebastopol, CA
Summary: Jodi Hottel
Interviewer: Lucy Kishaba
Transcription: Transcribed by Frances Clark from audiotape source material

Interview Summary

Joe Furusho was born in Sebastopol, CA on September 3, 1916 on the Hotle Ranch, where his father worked. He was raised as a Christian and went to a Japanese Sunday school in Santa Rosa. During the Depression, he quit going to high school in order to work to help keep their property. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, his brother was already in the Army, but Joe continued farming until evacuation. He says that he never experienced much prejudice, and that Caucasians always helped him, both in Sonoma County and in camp.

At the Merced Assembly Center, he worked as a patrolman, so he saw a lot while walking around the camp. He relates that his father actually liked being in camp because he got to play cards. Joe and his bride were the first couple to be married at Amache on October 14, 1942. At one point in Amache, Joe was doing work that others refused to do because of the low pay. He soon was leaving camp to work but returned in the evening to be with his family. An official told him he should get a loan to buy a farm in Colorado. With the help of references from people back in Sonoma County, he was able to lease a farm for two years. During his last season, he employed German officers from a prisoner of war camp nearby. He would have liked to stay there, but his parents wanted to return to Sonoma County.

In the years following camp, he was a member of the Nichiren Church in San Francisco and later a member of the Enmanji Buddhist Temple. He feels that his biggest accomplishment was in the apple business. He was an apple farmer and businessman, employing many people for many years. With his brother, he owned and operated Furusho Bros. Farms and Furusho Bros. Packing Company. It was a major business in Sebastopol for over 50 years. He also served for several years on the board of Lincoln National Bank in Santa Rosa and San Rafael, the California Apple Advisory Board, Memorial Hospital Foundation of Santa Rosa, and the Sonoma County Grand Jury (1968-69).

His biggest disappointment was being interned. Joe thinks that the redress came too late to really help. He did get to have dinner with President Gerald Ford, an important memory. Joe says that everything comes down to money. If the Japanese American population had had money, things might have been different. He thinks that things will be different for his grandchildren because they're more educated and Americanized. He is

proud of his late wife, one son, two daughters and three grandsons. They are all outstanding Japanese American citizens.

Interview Transcript

JACL: Joe, I am going to ask you some questions, and then we'll be done. So, were you born in Sonoma County?

Joe: Yes.

JACL: You were born in Sonoma County...

Joe: In Sebastopol.

JACL: In Sebastopol...uh-huh.

Joe: Hotle Ranch.

JACL: Where is that? How do you spell that? H-O-T-L-E Ranch. In Sebastopol.

Joe: September 3, 1916.

JACL: Is it still a ranch today, or... Yes? Are there pictures of it?

Joe: I don't think so.

JACL: The area, huh?

Joe: Oh, Bob Burdo's place. Over there by their place.

JACL: Okay. So, we know where it is... so we might even get pictures of it today. Beautiful... (*refers to photo*)

Joe: That is Bob Burdo's place.

JACL: It would be great if we could have pictures of it, and then we could have one from now...

Keiko: I don't know if the place where he was born is there...

Joe: Excuse me, is that the one with...?

JACL: Yes.

Joe: The house is not there any longer. There is some over here... in the apple lands, but that is really not it no more.

JACL: No.

Joe: Actually, Bob is still there at his grandmother's place. They had the grandson not too long ago.

JACL: So these people have land that you are farming...

Joe: No, no, no, no. That's where I was born.

JACL: Oh, I see. So what did your father do?

Joe: Worked on the farm there. I think they had some berries. I remember I was too small then. 1916. Mrs.Hotle, the mother of the owner, told me that the doctor

handed me over to the lady that owns the whole farm, Mrs. Hotle. Bob lives there now. You know him.

JACL: Yes.

Joe: He works in their house.

JACL: Oh, I see.

Joe: I've known her since she was a little girl. Anyway, so...

JACL: How many brothers and sisters...?

Joe: Who?

JACL: You.

Joe: I had two brothers and three sisters. One brother and one sister died at birth.

JACL: Girls?

Joe: I only got two left... no, one left.

JACL: One sister is left.

Keiko: One sister is left.

Joe: And she is in Auburn.

JACL: What was it like growing up here, in Sebastopol?

Joe: Good.

JACL: Good... Tell me, what does that mean?

Joe: They did everything for me.

JACL: Who did?

Joe: The people, the Caucasian people... financially. Even I built this house. It's a big house.

JACL: But when you were growing up...?

Joe: They were good to me.

JACL: Did you have any hardship when you were growing up?

Joe: Yes, in 1929 and '30 there was a Depression then, and I had to quit high school and my dad was asking a neighbor, could you loan me two dollars to buy a sack of rice?

JACL: Uh-huh.

Joe: And I was in high school. I went for two months to high school, so I never went to school after that.

JACL: Uh-huh. What year was it when you...?

Joe: 1930.

JACL: What year were you in high school?

Joe: 1930.

JACL: I mean what year were you in high school? Freshman? Junior?

Joe: First two years... I didn't go to school too much. I was in the same grade. There was a Depression, if you remember?

JACL: Okay, let's go back to when you were growing up. Let's see, you left school to help out with the farm. So, what kind of work did you do?

Joe: Oh, any kind of job I could get. My dad had one thing, a tractor, you know. All up in the hills, everybody had mostly all horses to plow and cultivate, but the white folks too, you know. So, they all plowed on level ways with their horses, and then the other part of work, they had to go up and down the hills, see. Well, I took that job and plowed for everybody. I was so busy, I was working... in fact, I didn't have a license at that time. I was making what everybody else was making, maybe \$1.50 a day I was clearing, after I paid for the gas...

JACL: Excuse me. Were you the oldest?

Joe: My sister was, and then my brother. I was in between them.

JACL: I see, okay.

Joe: My sister was four years older than I was.

JACL: I see, and then your brother.

Joe: Yeah.

JACL: I see. So you were the eldest son.

Joe: Yes. That's right. My father had another older son...

JACL: But he died.

Joe: Yeah.

JACL: Did your parents tell you to go to work or was it just expected, or...

Joe: I went to work.

JACL: It was expected.

Joe: Yeah. A lot of people... were always going to school... you were supposed to go. My dad, afterwards called me, in Japanese... you know what he used to call me?

JACL: What?

(Reply missing)

JACL: Oh?

Joe: Because everybody else all went to school, and they all went to high school.

JACL: Was this your father who said to quit school?

Joe: No.

JACL: You did it on your own... Oh.

(Break in the dialogue.)

- JACL: When you were growing up, what was important that your parents taught you? You know, what kinds of things, like...
- Joe: To get along with everybody.
- JACL: Was that like something that your parents taught you? To get along with everybody?
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: What else did they teach you?
- Joe: I've got to tell you one thing. I grew up as a Christian. You know, when I was little.
- JACL: Uh-huh. So your parents went to the Christian Church?
- Joe: I went to Sunday school, Christian Sunday school.
- JACL: Did they send you, or you just went on your own?
- Joe: No, I went on my own. When I was small, my dad was living in Santa Rosa, see, and Mom raised us as Christians, and we had to go, you know, play with the children. All of those wealthy people, you know, they had daughters and sons, and they went to Sunday school in Santa Rosa. The Japanese had Sunday school in Santa Rosa. They used to clue me in, and I got my idea to go be a Christian. So, I went to Sunday school. Things like, "If you lie, tell them that you lied. What could you do?" Oh, they taught me a lot of things, so my neighbors were Christians and they taught...
- JACL: Many of these were Caucasian? So, your contact with Caucasians was very cordial.
- Joe: All big...all big people. Not just working people... they owned a lot of property. Like the Grace brothers, they had a lot of property where all of the Japanese worked.
- JACL: Did your Caucasian friends come to your house (*Keiko emphasized that this was a cabin.*) to play?
- (Response missing)
- JACL: Okay, before you get into that... Let's get back to when you were growing up. So you had Caucasian and Japanese friends?
- Joe: Oh, yeah.
- JACL: Played sports? Were there other activities that you participated in?
- Joe: I was in baseball and football.
- JACL: This was before you started to work?
- Joe: No, I was working... I didn't go... So while they were in school, I would do my work.
- JACL: Yes, so during school hours, that's when you were doing your work?

Joe: Grammar school, 1st through 8th grade. I went to first grade at the Lewis School in Santa Rosa and the 2nd grade at Pleasant Hill School in Sebastopol.

JACL: Then, when you got into high school, that's when you had to quit.

Joe: Yes, I went for two months and then quit.

JACL: Then after that, were you still able to go and participate in sports and other activities...? Uh-huh, so you maintained friendships. So, did you encounter any prejudice?

Joe: Never did.

JACL: Okay, let's get back to that later. Okay, we want to do this kind of chronologically, you know... when you were growing up. So, did you think you were being paid fairly when you were working?

Joe: Oh yeah...

JACL: Just as much as your Caucasian neighbors? You thought you were treated equally?

Joe: Yes. More than equally.

JACL: Must be your personality.

Joe: Even in the concentration camp we got along.

JACL: How was it when you heard about Pearl Harbor? Where were you?

Joe: Working here.

JACL: You heard that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor? How did that make you feel?

Joe: It wasn't right.

JACL: You were 25 when the war broke out, huh? So what happened to your family after the war broke out?

Joe: My brother volunteered in January for the service.

JACL: So your brother went to the service. And your parents, of course, were not citizens at that time...

Joe: No.

JACL: Your brother was in the 442nd. Is that Yae's husband? Yeah. Let's just go back a little bit now. Did your parents own property or did they buy property in your name?

Joe: They bought it in my name and my sister's name. My father bought it in 1929, I don't know how. He bought it and put up the money... I think it was three thousand dollars to buy this property. And there was no money coming in, and so that is why I really went to work.

JACL: Oh, I see to help...

Joe: Save that place.

- JACL: Oh, that was your main reason for going to work. Okay, so the war happened. Your brother went off to volunteer for the 442nd, and then what happened to you?
- Joe: I was still farming. They didn't take no farm workers.
- JACL: Were you deferred then?
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: Oh, so you did go to camp?
- Joe: Oh, yeah.
- JACL: You and your parents and sisters? Did you go to Amache?
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: Amache.
- Joe: At first, when I was doing nothing... I went up and said, "Could you let me go in the service?" I wasn't married yet. I was engaged, but I wasn't married and I thought I could do something. So I said, "Could you take me in the service?" But they wouldn't take me in the service.
- JACL: Why?
- Joe: I don't know. None of us could go in—Japanese. So I said, "What do you want me to do? Do you just want to keep me locked up in here?" "Well, why don't you go out and farm?" And I says, "How can we farm since they took our money away from us?" So they said, "Why don't you go down to the camp bank and see if they will let you have...?"
- JACL: This was the officials of the camp who suggested this to you?
- Joe: Right. It was Army people.
- JACL: Army people or people who were running the camp?
- Joe: I didn't know, but the main man that told me to go to the bank and see if they would loan me money to farm. So I went down there, and I asked them. You know, I didn't expect they would, but they gave me a line of credit for fifty thousand dollars.
- JACL: Before you get into that... When you were told to go to camp, you were still living in Sebastopol, and the government said you had to go to camp.
- Joe: Amache.
- JACL: Yes, and so how did that make you feel?
- Joe: Not good.
- JACL: Not good.
- Joe: I am a citizen. But the people around me all helped me.
- JACL: Oh, they did. The people all around you... Now, who are these people?
- Joe: The Avilas. (*Referring to John and Rose Avila / John and Marie Avila*)

- JACL: In what ways... tell me some of the ways that they helped you.
- Joe: Well, they said, let us take care of your furniture and... and I sold my tractor and stuff...
- JACL: Farm equipment.
- Joe: And they took care of it like their own, and I knew them good. They all had horses.
- JACL: So what happened to this property that your parents bought?
- Joe: Well, they were going to take it away from us. So I was farming in Colorado, and I made enough money to come back and pay for the whole thing.
- JACL: What happened to your property here in Sebastopol? Did someone take care of it?
- Joe: Yeah, but Mr. Edwards took care of the farm equipment, and he kept all of the money.
- JACL: Of the Sebastopol property?
- Joe: Yeah... Judge Thompson... He was a District Court of Appeals judge. He and my dad use to laugh... they were friends. That is how it happened. The Grace brothers... they are the ones that had all kinds of money. They lived in Santa Rosa.
- JACL: Yes. Did your property stay intact? Did somebody take it over or...?
- Joe: They were farming it, but they didn't pay no rent or nothing.
- JACL: Yes. Okay. So who did that property belong to?
- Joe: Thompson held the mortgage. He was promoted to Sacramento.
- JACL: So he took over...
- Joe: He was the boss.
- JACL: When you left Sebastopol, he took over the land?
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: How did that happen?
- Joe: We owed them tons of money...
- JACL: Oh, I see... because Judge Thompson held the mortgage. I see. In a sense then, you lost the property.
- Joe: No, I didn't lose it.
- JACL: Okay, so then you went to camp. How did your parents feel about this, going to camp, leaving their home and...
- Joe: My dad enjoyed it, I think.
- JACL: Oh, he did!
- Joe: You know how?

JACL: How?

Joe: He used to go play cards every day and everything and they told me, "You better pick your father up," because I was farming over there, you see, on forty acres. I was farming in Colorado. And, you know, the FBI says, "You ought to take your father out of Amache. You've got a home and everything here," and so I asked him to come out. So my mother was listening, see, and she says, "They aren't going to get him out until the last guy because he's having all kind of fun."

JACL: This was a vacation that he never had. (*Laughs*)

Joe: No. Then he could drink his beer every night.

JACL: So, how long did you live in camp?

Joe: Two years. The other two years I lived on the farm. I was working all over.

JACL: Even when you were in camp you were working?

Joe: I went to Kansas. I worked over there picking cane. I never did stay in camp. I was in and out. I worked about four to five months in camp.

(*Question missing*)

Joe: The employment office had 19 girls, college girls translating Japanese to Isseis.

JACL: In camp?

Joe: Yes. Everybody had to do this. Even to work in the kitchen, and everything had to go through there. Anyway, so I got a job there.

JACL: So you were in camp for only four to five months?

Joe: Not very much... yeah, you're right. Then I worked in there... and these girls were all educated girls. They were all nice girls. I was translatin' in Japanese, you know, because the Nisei was different than all of these girls, and the Nisei didn't understand them. You know, the girls couldn't understand Issei workers from the farm. So I was translating it all... so Nodella heard and says, "Do you want to transcribe as the girls?" So the girls signed the paper, and they still can't get the same price as us. They have more education than us, and they can't get the same price.

JACL: You are talking about salary?

Joe: Yes, per hour. So they called me into the employment office, and then the girl came in and, "You can't get the same as us. Look at this papers. You got nothin', no education, nothin'. If he is going to get 16, we ought to get 19 per month." So you know what he told those three girls that came in that morning? He says, "You know what I'm going to do? He's going to be your next boss to me. When I'm not here, he's your boss." He gave me a car to drive to Lamar to get the letters mailed, and he says that when I'm not here, he's the boss and I'm going to give you 19 dollars a month.

JACL: So, we're talking while you were still there in the camp.

Joe: Yes, I was just starting over there.

JACL: So, how did you get along with those other people in camp and with your co-workers?

Joe: They were not jealous. They did not make enough. If the lady was still living in Petaluma, she would tell you everything because she knew me. She was a receptionist. She was working in there, you know. Then, she told me that morning that I was going to get fired, and then anyway, then they started doing this school up there so I couldn't work.

JACL: This was in camp?

Joe: Yes, for everybody... so they needed 50 more people to build it because they had Mexican workers and colored people, you know. So... you better go up there. I'm going to put you there. They needed labor and that, so he gave me a job for 75 cents an hour because that was what the other people were getting who was working from outside. They weren't Japanese...

JACL: This is a school in camp.

Joe: That they contracted, yes.

JACL: And the governor allowed you...

Joe: There were fifty of us...

JACL: Fifty of you that were also...

Joe: No, I had got this labor guy... the labor boss to go down there for me... so we started off at 75 cents an hour. That was a lot of money.

JACL: There were fifty of you that did this from the camp?

Joe: Now I've got to tell you a little bit more on that. Then, we were working there, and I guess not even a week. They wanted all the Japanese off of there. If they didn't get that job through... so only two of us were left behind... so I was working there, and they raised him and me up to one dollar an hour.

JACL: So out of the fifty, two of you were left. Then, did you get any repercussions from that? I mean, did Japanese people say, "Well, how come you got to...?"

Joe: Stay, huh? Oh, I've got to tell you a little more of that now. They raised my wages up there to a dollar an hour.

JACL: Who?

Joe: The Japanese! And all of the other 50 or 48, they were Japanese. They laid them all off—they wouldn't let them work.

JACL: Because...

Joe: I guess it was prejudice or whatever. The people there wanted them, but it was the Japanese in camp who didn't want them. There were what, ten thousand people there? They can't be getting that kind of wages, 75 cents an hour.

JACL: Because they were only making twelve dollars a month.

Joe: Yeah. So then everybody had to quit.

JACL: Oh. Uh-huh. So were you ostracized? Did people kind of...?

Joe: Oh, yeah. Just like you said. You can't blame them. I can see that myself.

JACL: So they were prejudiced against... the Japanese in camp were prejudiced against you because you had worked on that project. So it was counter-prejudice. In other words, the prejudice was not Caucasians against you, but it was Japanese against you who discriminated.

Joe: Yes. All at once I'm telling the truth.

JACL: How did that make you feel? How did it make you feel inside, to be prejudiced by your own people?

Joe: Oh, I can't blame them.

JACL: You don't blame them?

Joe: Because I am the same as them. So, two of us... honestly, I think we left in a month. Then we really had to, you know, get out. But I had made a few dollars anyway, where the other people had made nothing.

JACL: You don't feel resentment or hatred against the Japanese?

Joe: It's not their fault. You can't blame them because the difference then was that we were trying to help, to get more wages.

JACL: That was what you were thinking...

Joe: Then afterwards they need farm workers, you know. Then I went to go work on the farms...

JACL: Outside.

Joe: Outside. Near the camp, only four to five miles away, and they were harvesting broomcorn and everything, you know, and I was helping. And what happened there too... it happened that I was harvesting this broomcorn and stuff, and there were four other Japanese with me, you know. We lived in the boss's house, and he put the other four guys upstairs and put me with their own family, and that was the oddest thing. They didn't have no... they had a kitchen and they dragged a wash tub into the kitchen and make you take a bath, you know. They had three girls, you know, young girls and they were all young and the boys were young, and I could see through the knotholes that the girls were looking at me taking a bath. I got some pictures of that... (*Laughs*)

JACL: Yes, you've got your albums.

Joe: Yeah, but they are not in that...

(*Question missing*)

Joe: Yes, I guess there is that. I think my wife has it. But anyway, what happened was... that was the best. I had to go out three or four miles to D-camp sometimes, early in the night. I had to go up there to the water trough. I had to go up there and wash myself with that cool water, but it was not the boss that made me do it. Those girls... I hated having them peeping through.

JACL: Where was this at?

Joe: In Granada, Colorado.

JACL: In camp.

Joe: But I was getting 75 cents an hour at their house.

JACL: So you were working outside the camp and then coming home at night...

Joe: No, I stayed over there that's what I was telling you about...

JACL: Okay. So tell me how it was. Let's go back to camp now. Tell me how it was when you were working on that project, building the school... that people in camp, the Japanese people, did not like that. So what did you do in your free time?

Joe: Oh, we used to go out of the camp and get a job and work.

JACL: No, no, you did your work during the day. What did you do in the evening?

Joe: In camp?

JACL: Yes, when you were in camp.

Joe: I didn't work very long over there. While I was there in Merced, I was on the police force. So I used to work nights a lot of times.

JACL: How was that?

Joe: You were put in a room. You know, those chicken houses? And they were, I guess, 12 x 10 or something. Say you and us three all got married. They would put six cots in there to sleep. They didn't have no curtains or nothing and we seen 'em. Say you and her and I got married, and you are staying in the middle and I stay in another...

JACL: This was in camp?

Joe: Yeah. This was what marriage was. They were young couples.

JACL: This was outside the camp?

Joe: In camp.

JACL: Oh, in camp, yeah.

Joe: Say three of us got married... married people, and they stuck six people in that one room. Just like that one room there.

JACL: Three young married couples in one room. What has that got to do with your police job? You said you worked as a policeman patrolling.

Joe: Yes. The second day I was there.

JACL: So you worked as a policeman?

Joe: You can ask Paul Otani if you want to. Him and I were on the police force.

JACL: Yes. So you worked as a police officer, patrolman.

- Joe: In Merced, there were six thousand people here. So anyway we walked and there would be people in the horse stalls and people in the chicken houses and they had windows grayed out and they would be open to try to get some light to come in. So that was the worst thing they ever did to the young girls and stuff. They got married and there were three couples in one room.
- JACL: Were you one of them?
- Joe: No, no, I wasn't married then. I got married in Colorado.
- JACL: But then you had seen...
- Joe: No, I would have to get in there. I was the patrolman.
- JACL: This was in Amache camp. But you were married in Amache.
- Joe: No, I wasn't. I was married in Lamar, Colorado.
- JACL: Outside camp? Were you married in camp?
- Joe: Yes. We were the first couple to be married.
- JACL: So what are you talking about?
- Joe: I am talking about in Merced.
- JACL: Oh, your family's camp.
- Joe: Yes, my family's camp. In Merced. I'm sorry.
- JACL: So, when you left here, you went to Merced and then to Amache. Okay...
- Joe: Yes, I'm sorry.
- JACL: So, was it in Merced that you were the police officer, security guard?
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: And that is when you were walking around all night. And this is where you saw that couples had to be two or three couples in one room?
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: So did you talk to these couples? Did they say anything to you?
- Joe: No.
- Keiko: He wasn't supposed to see them.
(All laugh)
- Joe: You're right.
- JACL: I'm just trying to clarify what you said. So what was your job like when you were a security officer besides... when you were a security guard?
- Joe: We worked nights. It was just May, June, July. It was the hot time of the year and all of the elderly ladies didn't have no clothes, and they showered... standing right in front of that shower, taking their turns taking a shower and it was so hot that they just didn't have nothing on...
- JACL: This was at Merced?

Joe: Yes.

JACL: So every time you talk about at night, patrolling, it was at Merced?

Joe: Yes. And even daytime because all day long they were taking showers. But you can't blame them. I was hot too.

JACL: You stayed there how long?

Joe: Three months, I think.

JACL: And then you went to...

Joe: Colorado.

JACL: And then you were in Amache how long? How long were you in Amache?

Joe: Me? Not too long. I went out after that.

JACL: So your four or five months was in Merced. And then in Amache you were there only about a month, and then you went to work outside on the farms?

Joe: Yes.

JACL: Okay. And you were the first couple to be married in Amache?

Keiko: In Lamar.

JACL: In Lamar, oh? I thought you were the first one...

Keiko: That's what she told you?

JACL: You weren't the first one. And, Bob did write all about Amache. So this school you were talking about that you were building, was this in Merced then?

Joe: No, Amache.

JACL: Oh, that was in Amache. The school where the fifty Japanese worked, this was in Amache?

Joe: Yeah. Amache. Nobody went to school...

JACL: Where?

Joe: Merced.

JACL: In Merced, nobody went to school... there was no school?

Joe: It was vacation time.

JACL: I see, yeah. We had school where I went.

Joe: When you were in camp?

JACL: Yes, this was in Santa Anita Assembly Center. Yes, this was assembly center. It was a horse track.

Joe: While we were in Merced, you were there? We heard people were sleeping in those horse stalls.

JACL: Yes. What did you parents think of that?

Joe: I stayed in the same room that they did.

JACL: In a horse stall?

Joe: No, no. In Camp 40.

JACL: You were with them...

Joe: In the same room.

JACL: Was it a horse stall?

Joe: No, no.

JACL: You were in the barracks.

Joe: Yes.

JACL: So you were one of the lucky ones.

Joe: Yes.

JACL: So, then, how was it living in Merced Assembly Center?

Joe: Well, I didn't get treated rough like everybody else did.

JACL: Did your sisters work too, in camp?

Joe: I didn't see them working. We were not too long together.

JACL: How did your parents feel? You said your father enjoyed it.

Joe: That was in Amache.

JACL: How about your mother? She did not like it. How did they feel when they had to leave Sebastopol?

Joe: Bad.

JACL: Tell me more. I mean, bad and...

Joe: Well, they took everything away. They cried.

JACL: Buckets of tears, huh?

Joe: They really gave Nisei a bad time. We had a bad time too.

JACL: Your father, your parents, inside, did they harbor resentment against the government?

Joe: Yes, they were against the government.

JACL: For having to do this...

Joe: I don't know. They were against Japan too. They were against it because...

JACL: Because of the war...

Joe: Yes, they shouldn't have started a war like that, going to kill all of those white people. How many people died in Washington, D.C., ones for this war that is starting now? How many people died?

Keiko: The paper said over 5,000 people.

JACL: Okay, let's go back to...You were in Granada. You went to the bank to see if you could lease some land, and so the references obtained from people that knew you in Sonoma County. And they gave good references, and so you were able to lease 640 acres, which you farmed in Granada. And you did that for how long?

Joe: Two years.

JACL: Meanwhile, you had gotten married. When did you get married? What year was it when you got married?

Joe: The same year that we went to camp.

Keiko: October 14, 1942.

JACL: So you were married, and you were the first couple to be married in Amache. Ah... and then Joyce, your eldest daughter, is one of the first babies born in camp?

Joe: Yes, one of the first.

Keiko: A lot of people were pregnant when they got there.

JACL: Oh yes. Yes. So, how was it to be a newlywed in camp? How old was Joyce when you went out of camp? Was she only a few months old?

Joe: Who, me?

JACL: No, when you went out of camp? They didn't go with you, did they?

Joe: They stayed in camp.

JACL: Yes, so how old was the baby when you left camp?

Keiko: She was still a baby then.

Joe: Oh yes, I think she could walk, but she was only about two or one years old when we were here in Sonoma County.

JACL: Oh, I see. So your wife stayed in camp while you went out to work?

Joe: The last year she came to where I was working.

JACL: How did you feel about leaving your wife in camp while you went outside? You were just newlywed.

Joe: I was going home all the time. I had a car, see.

JACL: Every day?

Joe: Pretty near every night.

JACL: Oh, you did. At first you did come home.

Joe: Oh, yes.

JACL: Oh, okay. So that was before you able to lease the land.

Joe: No, I leased it, but I went back and forth.

Keiko: Amache is in Granada. That is where he lived, Amache.

JACL: Oh, so you just lived at home, in camp.

- Joe: There were a lot of times when I went to camp, a lot of nights too. You know what I mean. I went home to see the family.
- JACL: So you lived both places, on the place that you were farming and in Amache?
- Joe: Yes, you are right.
- JACL: I am just clarifying.
- Joe: No, I tell you wrong...
- JACL: I am just clarifying what you said so people can understand. So you lived both at home and in camp and also on the farm, and you did this for two years.
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: Then what happened?
- Joe: After two years... that was before, no, right after camp, I didn't farm on my own. I was working on the farm. I didn't work in camp.
- JACL: You were in camp from...
- Joe: 1942 and... and I am not farming. I worked here and there. You know, at the camp I was working too. Every day I had a job I went to work.
- JACL: So, you did this for how long?
- Joe: In and out of the camp... all since the camp was there and then back in 1944.
- JACL: Back to where?
- Joe: Sebastopol. Did the war end in 1944?
- JACL: No, the war ended in 1945.
- Joe: I was back in 1946, then.
- JACL: For two years of that you were working on your own farm? A leased farm? But before that, you were working on different farms all around?
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: And at that time, you did not come home every day?
- Joe: Not every day.
- JACL: Every now and then you came home?
- Joe: Yes.
- JACL: That was okay with your wife?
- Joe: She was taking care of my folks too, you know.
- JACL: Oh, she was looking after your family. What was life like on the farm outside of Granada?
- Joe: Okay.
- JACL: Okay. Did you have any problems?

Joe: There were no problems. I'll tell you why. I had three new tractors, all of the equipment from all of the people who were coming out of the Depression, you know, and they couldn't buy all of that equipment. I had a combine... two combines, you know, and I lent all of that to the farmers around there and I never charged them. They did a lot of stuff for me, too. When harvest time come, they would come and help me, and when I would want to go pay them, huh, I caught hell. They didn't want to take no money from me. I wanted to pay them, you know. So I got way ahead. [At the editing session Joe said he did a lot of good deeds for others. He also mentioned that labor is one of the highest things in any business]

JACL: You got along well with your co-workers.

Joe: Oh, yeah. You know, I had German prisoners working for me.

JACL: Really?

Joe: Yes, I had twenty of them working.

JACL: How?

Joe: They had a deal. Holly, that town next to Colorado there? They were in Kansas. Anyway, they had camp.

JACL: Not far from Granada?

Joe: No, close. They would come and work. I didn't have no low-down people.

JACL: Oh, the prisoners were all officers?

Joe: Yes, I had all officers. And they really did me good.

JACL: So, did you pay the prisoners?

Joe: Oh, yeah.

JACL: You did? Where did they live?

Joe: They lived in camp.

JACL: They came every day from the German prison camp?

Joe: Yes, I would go after them.

JACL: Oh, I see, and then you paid them?

Joe: Yes.

JACL: And that was for one year?

Joe: Yes, one season, the last season I was there. But, anyway, they really helped me. They were all professional people, so they did a lot of work. And everyone else said, "How are you getting all of that done?"

JACL: Did other farmers have German prisoners too? How were you able to do this? How did you obtain that help?

Joe: I went to the bank where I had a good friend. They all got all of this set up for me. If it wasn't for friends, you wouldn't have nothing. I saw one farmer went broke. You can't blame them either. I mean, you know... But they all came and

asked me, "How are you doing this?", you know. All of these people helped me. Even over there they all helped. The way I got the help, all of the equipment and stuff I had, I would loan it to them. I didn't charge them, when they needed it.

JACL: How did you get along with the German prisoners?

Joe: Real good. Everybody said they couldn't figure that out either. Then every day, I would buy a carton of cigarettes and give them to them all. Every day. Not just once, but every day. I would ride to town just to get a cool water or something to drink besides what they had to eat. You know, everything came out so good, you know, and everyone couldn't figure it out.

JACL: So you left camp in 1946 to come back to Sebastopol?

Joe: Yes.

JACL: What kind of arrangements did you make to plan to come back to Sebastopol?

Joe: Well, I made money, and I owed that money for our property. Twenty thousand dollars, you know.

JACL: Which property?

Joe: The one I went back to, which was taken away from us.

JACL: In Sebastopol.

Joe: I had enough money to pay cash to come back onto the property.

JACL: So you took care of that, what you owed?

Joe: Yes, and we came back.

JACL: And you were able to come back to the property that you had left?

Joe: Yes.

JACL: Why didn't you stay in Colorado?

Joe: I wanted to. It's a good thing you brought that up. But my folks wanted to come back. I wasn't going to stay there... just what you said now. You know, I had it all set up.

JACL: But they wanted to come back, so...

Joe: I came back. Otherwise, I would have been over there now.

JACL: How did that make you feel?

Joe: Coming back here? Well, I guess... to satisfy your parents.

JACL: That's what you call *oyako koko*.

Joe: Yeah. That's the right word. Really. That's what I did. You can ask anybody. I paid this property off with what I made over there. Just what I said I was really, really working. I came back and I started farming again, and the bank loaned me all kinds of money because I wanted to do everything. Then you can't do nothing without no money. Even walking down the street you get caught.

JACL: In all of the years that you have been living in Sonoma County and associated with all of these different people, did you participate much in the governing of the Nisei community? I mean...

Joe: Not too much... Anywhere I can to help. Just like that big Enmanji Memorial Hall down here, you know. I helped plan that. That was not chicken feed... big money to have that thing built. They wanted to build it, and they didn't have no money, so I...

JACL: Helped them out financially.

Joe: Yeah... to get it going.

JACL: Are you a member of Enmanji?

Joe: Yes, and another church in San Francisco.

JACL: Uh-huh. So your upbringing as a youngster and as a teenager was in the Christian church?

Joe: Yes.

JACL: But in your adulthood you then became a member of Enmanji?

Joe: Yes, and then the other church in San Francisco, Nichiren. I will prove that to you. I was never out of this church, not one time.

JACL: So did that other church fill an important spot in your life? Is church important to you?

Joe: No.

JACL: I'm just talking about "church", all of your different churches.

Joe: No, they are all the same. You know why?

JACL: Why?

Joe: There is only one God. I don't care what you say. I don't care what you do. There is only one God for all of us.

JACL: Have you talked about... other than talking me today... have you talked to your children?

Joe: Yes.

JACL: Everything that we have talked about today, have you told this to your children?

Joe: Not like this.

Keiko: Yes, many, many times, especially certain parts.

JACL: So this is all familiar then? This is good that you have shared your life experience with your children.

Joe: That is why I'm here.

JACL: What do you feel that you have accomplished in your life? When you look back on your life, today, what is the thing that comes to your mind most that you

have achieved? Something that you feel proud of that you have accomplished in your lifetime?

Joe: Apple growers is everything.

JACL: What do you mean, everything?

Joe: Well, you see the apple growers, they got me all up here where I am now. That packinghouse that I bought grew. The stocks were ten dollars, but then that grew to be twenty dollars. And then the first year I run it, I got back up to 21 dollars.

JACL: So your participation with the apple growers and your dealings with them has been one of the...

Joe: Top, for me.

JACL: Yes. What are some of your disappointments?

Joe: In camp?

JACL: No, when you look back on your life, are there any disappointments?

Joe: Oh, that they put us in camp? That is one of the biggest disappointments.

JACL: So, when we got redress? How did you feel about that?

Joe: It was nothing, not for that many years...

JACL: You feel that the government had to do that.

Joe: Yes. Twenty thousand dollars.

JACL: You felt that that was the right thing to do.

Joe: Yes. That was a lot of people, though. If they had given it to us right then, when we came out of camp, it would have done real good, but in 1990 they gave us that money...

JACL: And for your parents it was too late.

Joe: Yes, for them it was too late. That is how I look at it, and then it would have helped the Nisei. They should have given it to them right out of camp; then it would have been all right. I am not talking about myself; I am talking about Nisei.

JACL: Yes, because of the losses that they had to suffer.

Joe: Yes, I think that 90% of all of the Isseis lost everything that they had. If they were here, they would be so wealthy now it wouldn't be funny.

JACL: So looking at what is happening today and what happened to us, do you think it could happen again, you know, that the war...?

Joe: With the Japanese or other people?

JACL: Well, now we are at war with Afghanistan. The Arabs are being discriminated against, prejudiced against, very similar to what happened to us. So what do

you think about that? You know, you said some of their experience is the experience that we had? How do you feel about it?

Joe: You know what it is? I'll give you the right answer. Money. Everybody is out there for money. I don't care what you say. Whatever you do. You can say anything you want. It's all money that is doing all of this stuff.

JACL: How do you think the Arab Americans, the Arabs who are citizens of this country, like the Japanese who were citizens of this country... How do you think that they feel today, the Arab citizens?

Joe: You mean like we are right now? How do we feel?

JACL: Such as...

Joe: I mean we were put into camp, and are they doing that to them now?

JACL: Do you think it could happen? Again?

Joe: I don't think that they should. But they've got money too, though.

JACL: Who is "they"?

Joe: The countries...you know. The Japanese that were over here didn't have that kind of big money.

JACL: Oh, you think Arab Americans do have money...

Joe: Oh, yes.

JACL: Do you think they should be put into camps just as we were?

Joe: I don't think so. I think they had one internment experience already.

JACL: You mean the government has...

Joe: The governments did know what they were doing, both countries together. How come Japan got so strong? Give me that answer. They were one of the strongest countries after the war. They didn't have nothing before. Look how wealthy, with all the cars... all this came after.

JACL: Joe, looking back on your life, and then now looking at today... and you have grandchildren, what would you tell your grandchildren today?

Joe: What I went through?

JACL: About what you went through.

Joe: It could be the same. You don't know.

JACL: What advice would you give your grandchildren?

Joe: To do what is right, and you'll get up there.

JACL: Get up there?

Joe: That's how I look at it. I started from the bottom and look where I got to now, you know?

JACL: Yes. Are there any other lessons that you would like for them to learn or to value, that you would like for them to feel important about? So if you saw your

grandchildren now and tell them your life has been like this... “Now I want you to do...”

Joe: Nothing.

JACL: How would you like them to live life?

Joe: We’re never like our parents because they are educated and they can do... you know. Our parents didn’t have... just to get them started without no properties or nothing. They were just starting in, and they threw them in camp.

JACL: What would you like your grandchildren to learn from it? You were put into camp because... you know, today we know that a lot of the reason for being put into camp is because of hatred, ignorance... people didn’t know what Japanese people are like, that our civil rights were taken away. We were citizens of this country, and yet they still put us in camp. We don’t have that kind of sense for our grandchildren. So what can our grandchildren do to prevent this from happening again? We don’t want this to happen again. We don’t want it to happen to them.

Joe: I don’t think it will happen to them. They are all educated.

JACL: Educated... in what way?

Joe: In the way of schools. They all speak English, and there are a lot of people working for the government, and before there were probably no people in that government.

JACL: Not only... communities made up of different groups, black, white. We all come from different economic status, you know, we have bankers here and we have (*not able to decipher*) here. So what do you want to tell our children?

Joe: I don’t think we’ll have camps or nothing else no more.

JACL: Because they should know better?

Joe: No, because they are educated, you know.

JACL: Uh-huh... because of education. Hopefully, they will not be ignorant. Is there anything else you want to tell them?

Joe: No, I have been treated good, so it is pretty hard to stay mad. I didn’t even go to school, and I could be a vice president of Lincoln Bank. I went out to dinner with President Ford.

JACL: You did?

Joe: Yeah, and I was kind of hanging back against the wall, and there were about 400 people there so someone brought the President right up to me. I was the first man to shake his hand.

JACL: That was a proud moment.

Joe: Yeah. When I ate, I was about this far away from him. It was a great honor.

End of Interview

GERBOTH, BERTOLI & ELVY INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Sara Garrison Gerboth, Barbara Wright Bertoli, & Ludford Elvy
Date: January 4, 2003
Place: Enmanji Temple Stage, Sebastopol, CA
Summary: Jodi Hottel
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on February 17-19, 2003 from DVD source material.

Interview Summary

The interviewer asks each person to tell about their association with Japanese American friends, any backlash or prejudice they witnessed, and whether or not their teachers were supportive of the Japanese American community. A further question involved whether or not they discuss this episode of U.S. and Sonoma County history with their children. Finally, the interviewer asks each person to give his or her opinion about why a greater number of Japanese Americans returned to Sonoma County after internment than in many other communities.

Sara Gerboth

Sara grew up in Sebastopol and went to Pleasant Hill Elementary School. During her high school when she was attending the Congregational church, she and her future husband learned of arson attempts on the Enmanji Buddhist Temple. Seven or eight teens decided to guard the temple at night to prevent further arson. Their parents only allowed them to do so on weekends, but no further arson occurred. Sara says that their action was more about making a statement than actual guarding.

When Japanese Americans began to return from camp, their minister took in two girls. The church reacted negatively, and two years later he had to leave the church. She recalls teachers encouraging students to write to friends in internment camp, offering postage and other forms of help. Sara's husband was a teacher at Analy High School for many years, as well as a principal at El Molino. Sara herself is a retired R.N. She has talked to her children about her experiences with Japanese Americans. Also, she thinks that having visited Japanese homes influenced the way she decorates her own home.

She thinks that many Japanese Americans returned to Sonoma County because Italians in particular, but many others as well, looked after the property of the evacuees. Sara's mother was a pacifist, but she remembers that her father resented the economic competition represented by Japanese Americans. Sara feels that her attitude was more influenced by the church than her home.

Barbara Bertoli

Barbara was also raised in Sebastopol. Beginning in grammar school, she became friends with Margarette Murakami. She was young and didn't understand why Margarette was suddenly taken away. They wrote to each other but had a hard time understanding each other's letters because they had been censored. She can't understand what information they thought an 11 year old would be sending. At some point, her dad wanted her to stop writing because of pressure from friends and neighbors. It was one of the few times she did something of which her father disapproved, but Barbara continued to write to Margarette with the help of teachers and a friend, to whose address the mail was sent.

She also talked to her children about her relationship with Margarette and the events of WWII. In particular, she has a grandson who is eager to learn more. She thinks that many Japanese Americans returned to Sebastopol because it's a small, rural community, and people were closer to the Japanese community to begin with. She remembers that she had uncles who expressed prejudice, but she's glad because it was in contrast to them that she decided that their attitude wasn't right.

Ludford Elvy

Ludford is a second generation Sebastopolian. He was in high school when the Japanese Americans suddenly disappeared. He recalls how teachers made a point of calling the roll in class with malice aforethought to point out how many didn't answer. Before that, Ludford and a group of 5 friends, all of whom were Japanese Americans, would typically gather under a walnut tree, crack walnuts, and "shoot the breeze". A special friend was Kenichi Akutagawa. Lud treasures the yearbook he sent to Ken in camp to get signed by classmates. It made a big impression on him that at graduation ceremonies, the Japanese American students would bow to show respect to their teachers.

Ludford joined the Navy because he didn't want to be in a position of direct combat. While in the Navy, he heard lots of prejudiced comments. He doesn't think that people from other parts of the U.S. were very aware of the camps like people on the West Coast were. His sister also had Japanese American friends, and Lud is not proud of the fact that he didn't keep up contact with his friends. His family was a generous, open one. They didn't see the Japanese as different. He feels that a diverse community enhances life.

Transcript of Interview

- JACL:** I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the three of you for coming to help preserve the history of our Japanese American community in Sonoma County, and we appreciate your giving your time to tell us your story. We'd like to start with introductions, and we will start with Sara.
- Sara:** Hello, I'm Sara [Garrison Gerboth]. I grew up here in Sebastopol and went to Pleasant Hill School here. One day quite suddenly, it seemed suddenly to me, many of my friends disappeared, and it left a hole in my heart that never went away. That's why I'm so interested in this project. I'm a retired R.N. and still remain here.

JACL: Thank you, Sara. Barbara?

Barbara: Hi. I'm Barbara Wright Bertoli, born and raised in Sebastopol. Grew up in a community that was much different than it is today, one that I'm proud to have raised my family in. I grew up with a lot of very fine people. I had the pleasure of starting school with a very close friend Margarette Masuoka Murakami and of coming in contact with a lot of nice experiences through the years. I now live in Santa Rosa but still very much in tune with what goes on in the Sebastopol Japanese American community.

Lud: Hi. I'm Ludford Elvy, second generation Sebastopolian, obviously born and raised here. And, echoing what Sara said, I grew up through grammar school with some Japanese, and then I, too, had the same shock, which I'll tell more about later, when all of a sudden a vast chunk of our best students in high school disappeared.

JACL: Now what I would like each of you to do is, if you could, tell us a little bit of your association with the Japanese Americans and a few of the stories that you remember about your Japanese American friends. We'll start with Barbara.

Barbara: As I mentioned earlier I grew up here in Sebastopol, became a close friend with Margarette at a very early age in grammar school. We went through grammar school together and just had a very nice relationship and obviously still do to this day. We did not fully understand what was going on in World War II. And we certainly did not understand why our Japanese American friends were taken away. I was pretty young, pretty naïve and had difficulty in understanding the reasons that they were pulled out of their homes and we would not be seeing them for some time. I did communicate with Margarette on a steady basis when she was interned and had trouble reading her mail that was sent to me because it was censored. That also was very difficult to understand because I couldn't quite figure out how she could be sending me war secrets. And when I wrote back to her, some of mine were censored as well, and she probably had the same difficulty in understanding why mine were censored because why would an eleven year old kid living in Sebastopol be able to send to her information that would somehow win or lose the war. And Margarette and I both realize today that we would give anything had we kept those letters.

But my dad at some point in time decided that maybe this wasn't the best thing to be doing. Some of his neighbors, some of his friends said, "You know, do you really want your daughter to continue to write to a Japanese American?" And my dad finally decided that no, maybe I shouldn't do it any longer. So what I did was to go to a friend's house that was by the grammar school, received Margarette's mail at that address and wrote to Margarette from that address. To this day I'm glad that my dad never found out or I probably would have been in big trouble. Or maybe he did know and just didn't let on, but I was really glad that I kept that communication up because for me it was a very good thing to do. I felt right about doing it. I felt I was doing nothing wrong, and I felt that I needed to keep in touch with a very close friend. We still are very close friends and are one of three that continually do our high school

reunion's committee work together. And I've had an excellent relationship with a number of other Japanese Americans in my community. You know, we didn't look upon the Japanese folks in those days as being anything different, or special or unusual. They were just friends. They were very good friends or not very good friends, whatever the case might be. And that's pretty much how I feel to this day. But I do treasure Margarette's and my relationship and I'm very, very happy I made a decision that my dad didn't approve of. And probably one of the few times that I did something he didn't want me to do. Thank you.

JACL: Lud.

Lud: Yeah, I guess one of my most powerful memories was a Monday, I think it was, that I went back to high school... I'll fill in the details later. And I think with malice aforethought, the teachers called roll in every class, and a lot of people didn't answer. It took us a while to realize why. They all had Japanese names. And all of us felt we had been kicked in the stomach. I say all of... I talked to a few people, and that was the feeling, you know, what has happened here. To back up, I said I was born and raised in Sebastopol, went through first three years, kindergarten too, first four years of school with Japanese people around. Learned from them, learned they had better manners than most of us. Then in my fourth or fifth grade Mother taught at a little country school, and I had to go along. Came back, and I was kind of out of the loop. Most of the class had been together since kindergarten. By the time I got to the eighth grade, I began to get readjusted, and I am very glad.

It's been a great contribution to my life that a group of Japanese included me amongst their friends. There was Hiroshi Kubochi, Ken Sugawara, Kenichi Akutagawa, I think it's pronounced now, and Roy Nagai and William Ikegami. The five of us, six, myself included, frequently would gather under a walnut tree in the old grammar school, find and gather black walnuts. We each had our own favorite hammer and anvil—two rocks, crack walnuts and shot the breeze. One impression that lasted was one person came off with a very simple, common four-letter word, nothing you couldn't tell your mother. But peer pressure! The rest descended upon that person and said, "We don't use language like that." And I said, "Wow, that's great." Another kind of contribution the Japanese made to us and to me was high school graduation—when a Japanese student received his diploma or her diploma, they bowed. Just a very short, quick bow. The audience would react with a little giggle. And then after four or five episodes of that, we all got the idea that these people really appreciated what they got from their teachers. A lot more appreciation took place then. To run a little more with Kenichi, in freshman year before he was relocated, or whatever you want to call it, we had a unique way of eating bag lunches, and we never sat down. We roamed, talking; we migrated from one seated group to another. And we had some good gut level, heart to heart talks that way. For now I will stop and turn this over to...

JACL: Sara.

Sara: I wish I had been as faithful as Barbara. When my friends were first relocated I wrote faithfully. Then I became kinda more interested in my own teenage life and what was happening in my life, and at the time the letters got fewer and fewer and finally stopped. I'm really sorry about that. I feel bad about that, still. But in high school I began going to the youth group at the Congregational church, and my future husband also did. And that was when the news came that there had been attempts to burn down the temple right next door here. And gasoline had been poured on the temple and the matches lit, but fortunately it was put out before damage was done. But we were very upset about that, and we thought this is a terrible thing that has happened and we wanted to do something about it. Particularly, my husband was the leader in that... in our youth group. And we talked about it, about how terrible it was and what could we do about it, and so decided that we needed to guard the temple so that attempts couldn't be successful. We talked it over with our minister, and he was very supportive. I might say that our parents and I think many in the community were not supportive of that, but we decided that it needed to be done and the youth group agreed with that. So we came down to the temple, and I can remember we were not a very large group, I would say probably seven or eight, something like. But we stood around the temple holding hands and couldn't get all the way around, but we stretched around and said prayers in the hope that the temple could be preserved and that it would not be destroyed. And we agreed to have watch groups that came out. We couldn't come on school nights; our parents wouldn't let us. But we would come out on weekends, and we had two-hour watches where two of us stayed and watched over the temple. And this wasn't a very long time; it was a matter of a few months, I would say. But it was very important to us. We felt that we wanted to do something. It was more like a statement rather than an actual guarding. I don't know if it was because of that or not, but fortunately, the temple was preserved. Although, the place the one time when it did catch fire, I think there are still timbers over there that have been preserved that show that.

JACL: Now, did you have any backlash for having Japanese American friends, like at school? Were there any problems with others in community?

Sara: The community... it's hard to say "the community" because it's certainly not everyone, but there are those who were opposed to that, that did not want the Japanese to come back. In fact, our minister took in two Japanese American girls to live in his home because they came back before their parents. And the community and the church, I'm unhappy to say, was not in favor of that, and he took a lot of flack about that. And in fact, two years later he had to leave because of the pressure and the bad feelings over that thing that he did.

JACL: Was that in '45?

Sara: That was in '45, yeah.

Barbara: I'm quite sure that there were some bad feelings in the community. My dad and I, being an only child, my dad and I did a lot of things throughout our area of Petaluma Avenue, North Main Street area. And we did what we was considered to be the security people to go around in the evening to make sure

that everybody had their shades pulled tight and no lights would show out on the streets. And so we went around to different areas in Sebastopol and would caution people, you know, you have some light showing or whatever. And that's when we would pick up the negative feeling. But in all honesty, I don't think there was a great deal of bad feelings about the Japanese people from the community of Sebastopol, but bear in mind at that time it was a very small town. It still is, but very small. Plus, there were a lot of very fine Japanese families that we knew and a lot of young people, Japanese Americans, that were in the service of the United States, and as we know, a number of them that did not come back. So I think that because of the fact that it was a small, closely-knit community, we knew and respected a lot of Japanese American families. We had a lot of Japanese American friends. And we liked most all of the Japanese families we knew. There just wasn't a negative feeling about them. So I'm sure there were some bad feelings, and I look back and I can recall one or two comments that I heard that didn't sound particularly good to me as a child. But I don't think there were serious problems with most of the community in Sebastopol.

Lud: About the only negative things I experienced... there were three. I had a paper route and a headquarters for all the paperboys was a particular drug store in town. And the soda jerk, which shall remain nameless, before the Japanese were evacuated, would see one walking by the store, and because her son was in the service, she had made some, to my mind, stupid comment, "Oh it's open season on those."

And I thought... oh, it just didn't sit well. I heard one person, when I asked why the Japanese were evacuated, "Oh, well, some of them had short wave radios." So did a lot of people have short wave radios. I have a computer. Does that mean I am communicating with Iraq or something? I wanted more proof that there was anything wrong. And the other tiny thing was, I mentioned already, the camping. The school I went to up there in the Cazadero area and on the particular ranch we stayed was one to which I returned with a Boy Scout friend, and we camped out for several days on the ranch. We had the free run of 800 acres and enjoyed ourselves. We had contact with the outside world. Our mail was forwarded to us, and a letter from Kenichi came to me but mother had taken a precaution, fearing the people we were staying with would not understand what was going on, she put the entire the letter in a different envelope and mailed it to me. One of those letters I still have around, and I wish I could find it. Those are the only three negatives that I remember. Of course I ran into a lot more in the Navy. But there again, I found myself in a unique position. I could not drum up hatred for anybody. In fact, my reason for joining the Navy, if I may make an aside here, was that I could not face the person whose life I might be taking or whose body I might be injuring.

JACL: Were there teachers... you were going to high school when the internment happened. Were there teachers that were supportive at Analay, or coaches?

Lud: I couldn't answer that, truthfully. But I'm going to guess that if memory serves, there was a special reason they called roll on the day that there were no more

Japanese in our classes. I think that with malice aforethought, it was to call our attention to the fact that people that were not just like us were no longer there. I taught a few years, and I wouldn't put it past any faculty to do that sort of thing to prove a point. And then, if I may digress a bit, on the contact thing, I have before me a couple of yearbooks, the 1942 one, and the other one, too. I haven't looked at them for a very long time. I sent one to Kenichi at the... I forgot the name of it, the relocation camp.

JACL: Merced Assembly Center or Amache?

Lud: I guess it was Amache, I don't know. Or was it the one up near Oregon? Well, it matters not. I sent him the yearbook with the instructions, "Pass it around, read, and anybody who feels so moved, sign it. I'd appreciate it." So I do have to my knowledge, the only yearbook with some Japanese signatures in them. I'm very proud of the persons who felt free to sign it. It makes it special.

Sara: Just a comment about teachers. I remember in Pleasant Hill School, the elementary school where I was when the Japanese were taken away, the teachers had us write. They provided the time and the materials to write once a week. It was very much encouraged to keep in touch with the Japanese Americans that were relocated, and they encouraged us to continue that after we graduated. So it was very much supported by the teachers in that school.

Barbara: I'll add to that, too. I went to Sebastopol Elementary, and we had a number of teachers that said if any of you people are corresponding to Japanese Americans and want some help with it, we will be happy to lend our help, meaning they would do postage for us if we didn't have the means of providing postage. They also said they would mail them for us. I explained to my teacher that I had had a little difficulty with my dad not being favorably impressed to continue this correspondence with Margarette. And the teachers said if you feel okay about it, we will be happy to help you out in that regard too. We are not purposefully asking you to defy your parents in any way, but if you feel comfortable about it and need some help, we would be happy to provide that, as well. I would say that all the teachers I came in contact with in elementary school here in Sebastopol were very supportive and encouraged me to continue writing to Margarette. And I'm glad they did. I think I would have done it anyway. I would like to believe I would have.

JACL: Your husband, Sara, was a principal at Analy High School?

Sara: No, he was principal at El Molino, part of the Analy district.

JACL: El Molino... but he did teach at Analy?

Sara: Analy High School for many years.

JACL: Sara's husband Jack, taught at Analy High School. Is that correct?

Sara: That's correct, yes.

JACL: Now, what was his experience with the Japanese American students that were there when he was involved teaching at Analy?

Sara: You know, I don't remember any particular experiences that he had. My feeling about it is that they were just other students. They weren't Japanese American and others. To him, there were the students that he had. He didn't start teaching till 1957 so...

JACL: So they had integrated into the society by that time?

Sara: Yes, I think that's true.

JACL: How is the... in the younger generation of your family... were they... are they aware of what happened in World War II, and how did they become aware of them? Was it something that you had communicated with them, or did they learn it through school, or did they have Japanese American friends in school who said that my parents had gone to camp?

Sara: I communicated a lot about it to my children, and they are aware of it in that way. I think that what they found out among their friends was that they didn't talk about it much. They heard more from me than they heard from their friends. I think that it was not taboo exactly, but it was something they didn't really discuss a lot.

Barbara: I think that's probably the same. I did spend quit a bit of time talking to my children about my relationship with Margarette and my feeling about Sebastopol and the number of Japanese American families that were here then. It was a pretty large number of people. We just were people that knew each other and knew that there were a lot of Japanese American ranchers that owned ranches and worked in the apple industry. In talking to my children about that and about my early days, I explained that there were a number of Japanese Americans living here and about my relationship with Margarette. But more importantly, I think I wanted my kids to be aware of the fact that this was not a distinguished item in my history that I felt was real significant. It was just something that happened and so I wanted them to hear it from me rather than to hear it from someone else that might give a distorted picture of it. But I do have, I must say, a grandson now that is eating it up like crazy, and he wants to know anything and everything that the book says, what I say, what his dad says, what anyone else says. So I'm grateful for this opportunity because I am hoping that I can come up with some more information that didn't have before out of my recollections. After all, I was only eleven or twelve years old through this, and God only knows, my memory is not good as it used to be. But I think it's excited me to reflect upon these things because of my grandson's interest, and I think it will be exciting to pass any information I come out of this gathering with and make him more aware of what did happen. Because he's hearing some information that I don't recall at all, and I'm not liking some of the things I hear. So I would like to have him and his generation at least know the facts as I know them and preserve it for him. Because I think this is very important for this generation. They have no contact with anything that happened during WW II, or prior to WW II, or a long time after WW II. So I think it would be very good to have this come about and preserve it for these young people growing up. Thank you.

Lud: I don't have very much to add to that. For me a lot of what happened was just a natural way of life. My sister, my oldest sister had Japanese friends, it was just part of the family, part of what we did. In seeing these yearbooks I have a very strong regret. I did not do... there's nothing I can do about this, but I did not do a very faithful job of keeping in touch with say, Ken Akutagawa. He sort of trailed off, and out of sight, out of mind. I'm not happy about that. I've met his brother on a couple of occasions. Here he's still living around town, and I just feel that for the natural instincts and so forth, I could have extended it a lot better and been more of a healthy Sebastopolian, as far as extending the friendship and loyalty. One thing I do want to comment. I taught for quite a while at various schools, and perhaps it was a prejudice, but I found that the Japanese students were a notch above the others. They were more cooperative and tended to work a little harder than most students. They were easier to teach and fun to teach. If it was a prejudice, it was a prejudice. If it was a fact, it's a fact. But most of them had very good culture. In high school there was one westernized Japanese person who was ostracized by the rest. He smoked, he swore and he was just not one of them, and we recognized it as such, that the rest were top of the line students and an honor to be around. When I see young Japanese children that are westernized I think, "Oh, darn. Something has been lost. Or at least they are outwardly westernized."

Sara: When I was growing up, at Pleasant Hill School, I had the opportunity to be in a number of Japanese homes, the Fujiharas, the Kikuchis, and the Moritas. I think that must have affected me profoundly because my taste now, if you go in my home, you can see the very strong Japanese influence in... just in decorating. I went in those homes, I liked what I saw, and when I became an adult and was able to have what I wanted, that is what I reproduced and what I liked. There was a profound artistic influence that I have felt from my childhood association with the Japanese in my community.

JACL: Let's see, after the war, many Japanese Americans rather than returning to their hometown chose to relocate to other areas. However, we found that in Sonoma County a larger percentage of families chose to return back here, where they grew up. And so I was wondering if, just reflecting on this, why do you think they might have chosen to come back rather than just relocate in other areas like many other families did?

Sara: I'll start out. I think people here respected and valued the Japanese portion that had been taken away, and many of the ones that were left behind, who stayed here, looked after their property and the interests of the Japanese that had been taken away. And I think that had an influence on it. I don't think it was just Italians, but a lot of the Italian families did look after the properties and the orchards and farms of the Japanese that were away and turned it back to them when they came back. And I think that wasn't true in all communities. But I think it was more prevalent here, I am proud to say. There were many terrible things done that you hear stories about. People that just devastated the properties, that sold them, or didn't take care of them. I think that the taking care was more prevalent here than in some other places.

Barbara: I'll add to that. I agree with what Sara had said in that regard. And I think I can go a step further by saying that part of it was because we knew these folks and appreciated their contributions to the community as a whole, but because we were part of a little, small country town, kind of a rural community, so to speak. And I think people in rural, small communities have a tendency to be a little kinder, a little nicer to their neighbors. I lived real close to a Japanese family out on Occidental Road. They ran an apple dryer out there. And when they went off I didn't know them, except to know that they happened to be a Japanese family. And I cried because I thought, hey we're losing good neighbors. Even though we didn't know each other well, we knew that they were going away, and that was very sad. And they were some of the fortunate people that came back to their home because other neighbors took care of their property and preserved it, protected it, and welcomed them home. By the time they came back, I had moved into town with my folks, so I wasn't out in the country any longer. But I still knew Margarete, of course, and had that contact. But I think because it was a small, more rural, more community-oriented or whatever we might want to call it, more respectful of each other, that this is perhaps one of the main reasons that, by and large, the Japanese were welcomed back. And I'm glad that I grew up in that community for that reason.

Lud: I don't think I can add to that, except that I value very much the contribution that was made by a diverse community that Sebastopol was and, to a degree, still is. I, the part of me that I call me, has been enhanced greatly by that, and I'm very happy about it.

JACL: You had mentioned before that you were in the military. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Lud: Right out of high school I avoided the draft by volunteering for the Navy. And to little, small-town me, even though my folks had moved to Santa Rosa, it was shocksville. I learned to keep my mouth shut about the fact that the Japanese were human beings because that was not acceptable. I learned first hand what it was like to live in fairly close proximity with people from other states of the union and I developed a strong prejudice I have to look out for. As I said before, my reason for joining the Navy was the fact that I had been trained, learned... whatever... not to be comfortable with or embrace violence. If there was a fight on the campus in grammar school, I went the other way. I didn't flock to it or join a group to see what was going on. And it did not appeal to me one bit to mutilate or kill another human being, so the Navy was the best I could do at the time. Now I might be a conscientious objector. But at the time I figured, okay at least I won't see the human being that I'm doing in. I might even be below decks on the ship, so that I can live with. Fortunately, excuse me, fortunately for me, about the time I was getting intensive training to go out in the fleet, the war ended most horrendously, but it ended and I did not see active duty, for which I am greatly thankful. Yes, you have a question?

JACL: Were the military personnel from other parts of the country aware of the Japanese American internment?

Lud: I don't remember anything specifically coming that way. When I was in boot camp [San Diego], the platoon leaders we had were from Texas, and they wouldn't know about things like that. They had their very narrow views of some things. Which I do too, but it was a shock to see other people and their own views. I don't think that they were aware of the impact they had on people, we who were native to this area... on us who were... anyway, correct my grammar. *(They laugh)*

JACL: Based on your very supportive sentiment towards Japanese Americans, it seems like your parents would have had the same sentiment. You seemed quite young when you were going through this. Do you recall any family discussions about it or even when relatives came over and hearing opposing views?

Lud: It was by induction. I don't ever remember either of my parents saying, "This race, this group should be treated thus and so." It was just what we did. My mother was very generous. During the Depression, if a hobo came up to our door, he could count on being fed, even invited in, and sat at our table. One refused, I remember, so we opened a window and set out a card table out at the front porch and passed food to him. Mother never passed a hitchhiker. She picked him up. We just kind of grew up with that kind of openness. And, like I said, my sister, oldest sister, had several Japanese friends and talked glowingly about them. It was just part of who we were. We did this. And during the Depression, we did not know we were poor. We just enjoyed life and we were happy.

JACL: Did you have other experiences?

Sara: My sisters, as well, had Japanese friends. My mother was a pacifist. My father resented the Japanese in the community because they were economic; I don't know what you say... I guess, rivals, I guess you would say. He was a farmer, and he resented the Japanese families because he said the whole family works down to the very youngest one and so that's unfair competition. I heard that all the time. He was angry about that. But neither my parents nor my husband's parents went to the church that we both went to as young people. I think we formed our ideas about that a great deal from the church influence. I didn't hear unprejudiced views at home. But I learned that in the church where I grew up at, which is the same church I'm still in now, and I'm grateful for that because I feel that's the true view.

Barbara: Regarding families and their feelings about Japanese during this period, I had a couple of uncles that were real rogues, and I remember them coming to the house from time to time and making comments about Japanese and their attitude about them. You know, I'm kind of glad that happened. At the time, I didn't sympathize with them. I didn't think it was right. But I'm kind of glad that I had that in my family because I think I learned at an early age to rise above that. And I think sometimes you have to hear some negative things in your family or in your community and realize that that's not for you. So even though I was... what, ten or eleven, as I said earlier, I think it was good that I heard that from some family members who I did love and respect but didn't

like their attitudes and didn't like what they said. So early in life, perhaps this happened for a reason, and I thought, hey, that's not right. That's not for me. I don't think they're being fair, so I'm not going to be that way. And I think it was a good learning experience. Something that maybe didn't happened for that reason, but that's what I came away with.

JACL: We'd like to thank you very much for sharing your story. We really appreciate your coming, and it will be wonderful for our future generations to hear about the support that you have given to the Japanese American community and also your generosity in coming to speak with us.

Barbara: Thank you for asking us.

Lud: Yes, I think the support was definitely a two-way street. I was helped immensely by the contribution of the Japanese people and culture, and if by accident I return some, that's fine. And I appreciate your remark about the negatives. The negative comments are something that we build on and enrich ourselves from it. I never heard such intense prejudice until I got into the Navy and heard comments, which I will not go into here. But, anyway, I'm glad that the contribution of the Japanese put me above that.

The whole group is followed outside temple grounds by the camera. JACL is heard asking Sara to recall physically how they protected the temple.

End of Interview

GEORGE HAMAMOTO INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: George Hamamoto
Date: October 12, 2002
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewers: Nancy Davlin, Jean Ishibashi, Alice Kashiwagi & Marie Sugiyama
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on December 16-20, 2002 from DVD source material

Interview Summary

George Hamamoto was the oldest of six children, attending Sebastopol Grammar School and Analy High School. His family owned a grocery store in Sebastopol, and his mother made the tofu that was delivered to customers. George remembers pre-World War II days when the Japanese Hall in Sebastopol occasionally showed Japanese movies, and the menfolk were entertained by the Sakura Baseball team on their days off. Mr. Hamamoto provided an interesting history to the Enmanji Temple (the transcript appears at the end of his interview). Originally built by the Manchurian Railroad for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, the Enmanji Temple arrived in Sebastopol in 1934, after a successful fund raising effort by the community. George remembers life in school before the war, making friends with both Japanese and Caucasians.

George remembers the hectic days just after Pearl Harbor when his father was taken away by the FBI, and the events of that day when, at the age of 18, he found himself head of the household. He recalls a list known as the "Black Dragon Society", which the authorities may have used to target individuals. When the order of evacuation came about, George's family sold all of their store inventory at a fraction of their cost and parted with cherished personal belongings, a sacrifice both economical and emotional. He reflects on feelings at the time of evacuation, recounts how his family travelled to the Merced Assembly Center, and how his uncle was arrested and detained on the eve they had to leave for camp. George describes the facilities of the Merced Assembly Center, reaction to new food, and how the residents started educational and cultural classes. He describes the trip to the Amache Internment Camp, remembers playing for the Arrows, a basketball team, and working on the *Amache Pioneer* newspaper. George also reflects on the loyalty questions asked all people of Japanese descent at that time, and adjustment to camp life.

In 1943, George was granted permission to work out of camp for the Broadmoor Hotel Golf Course in Colorado Springs and recalls his treatment while there. He worked there until 1945, at which time his parents also left camp and worked in Colorado for a few months before deciding to return to Napa, California, where his uncle owned property. His family worked in the grape fields and prune orchards before deciding to start another store. George recounts how his parents met a dear Caucasian friend in Sebastopol for the first time since being evacuated, and of the difficulties in purchasing a new store in Santa

Rosa. Once in Santa Rosa, George worked at the Diamond Meat Market before settling in the insurance business. He remembers the first years in the business and his years of community service, including originating the Family Service Agency and serving for the Parks and Recreation for the City of Santa Rosa.

George describes his immediate family today, discusses the philosophy that helped him through some of the most difficult times, feelings about redress, the effect of WWII on his life, how he'd react to an evacuation order if it happened now, and his advice for the younger generation. He reflects on the contributions of the Issei, and in particular, the Issei women. George concludes with several incidences that occurred with members of the U.S. military, at the Broadmoor Hotel, in a restaurant called the Tavern, and of his experience with his sudden change in draft eligibility after December 7th.

George's Personal Statement (included at the end of the interview with his History of Enmanji Temple) expresses the pride he feels for the way his father responded to judicial questioning in Texas after he was taken from his family by the FBI.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: First we'd like to discuss your life before World War II. So you want to go into what kind of work your family did?

George: Okay. My mother and father operated a Japanese grocery store in Sebastopol, California, at 123 Petaluma Avenue, here in town. I was the oldest of six children, three boys and three girls. Mother and Dad operated the store until the war started. During the time that I was growing up there, I attended the Sebastopol Grammar School and eventually to Analy High School, graduating in 1941. My dad delivered groceries to the working families in and around Sonoma County. My mother made tofu very early in the morning so it could be ready to be delivered by 9 o'clock every morning. The store was open from 9 to 9 every day, seven days a week. This is how we grew up, a lot of hard work for my mother. I think that with six children, we all helped each other in growing up.

JACL: So, do you have any recollections, or stories you have about your family life, what you did for recreation back then?

George: Well, as far as a recreation goes before the war, the first generation people, about twice a year or three times a year, this person would bring Japanese movies and hold the movies for the community at the Japanese Hall in Sebastopol. They were usually two-nighters, Friday night and Saturday night. And when those movies came, most of those movies were paid for by donation by the families. And all the movies were Japanese, naturally, samurais and others. But at the very beginning, when I was very young, they were all silent movies. They had to be shown with a *Benshi* [Narrator], which is a person who puts in the words for all the characters in the movie- men, women and child characters. It was amazing, but that's what he was for. You no longer find these people. But before the war there was quite a number of them that would tour California. That was part of the recreation. Another part of the recreation was that we were fortunate enough to have enough fellows who played high school ball too, who formed the *Sakura* baseball team. That was a very, very well-

known baseball team in Northern California. Every time the *Sakuras* played, the whole community turned out. When the whole community turns out, it's not husband and wife. The husbands came. The wives stayed home to take care of the family, do the washing and everything else. They didn't have a day off. I think a tribute should be paid to the first generation women for the part that they played in this history of Japanese history in Sebastopol, California. When I say that, I'm saying it because the women folks bore the children, cooked, washed and fed the men and worked alongside of them while they were out in the fields. And when Sunday came and the men went out to see the ball game, the women stayed home and did more washing, and taking care of the children. So they were really the backbone of the family, I think.

JACL: So was there a general Japanese community organization, you mentioned Nippon Hall?

George: Yeah, the *Kenjinkai* [an organization comprised of immigrants from the same prefecture in Japan], and eventually the church here came into focus. I remember in 1934 the Enmanji Temple that we have here was given to the Sonoma County community. The temple was originally built by the Manchurian Railroad for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, and when it was first built, it was built without any nails. It was all fitted. And it was taken to the Chicago World's Fair, and it was put together and erected there. And then when the World's Fair was over, the Manchurian Railroad suddenly realized it would be an extra expense for them to tear it down and bring it someplace, so they gave it as a donation to the Buddhist Churches of America here in San Francisco. And San Francisco awarded it to the Enmanji Temple here. And we were very fortunate, but my recollection of that was that the community had to raise, at that time, an enormous amount of money, like \$10,000, to have an architect, a Japanese architect, go back to Chicago and dismantle the building and bring it back here and erect it just where it is now in 1934. And at that time, there were no nails, no nails in that building. There are some today. But it is still the original architecture, and it's the only one of its kind in the United States, as far as I know.

JACL: Yeah, that's pretty amazing. How did you feel about school and your classmates? Did you hang around mostly Japanese or Caucasians?

George: In grammar school it was mostly the Japanese kids hung around together by themselves. We had some Caucasians friends, but not that many at that time. I remember many times bringing lunches to the school and we would put them into the anteroom and when I went to get it, my lunch was stolen many, many times. So, those were the times. In those days that things were hard. One time I was invited to a friend's house, David Swain's house. His father was a banker. I was invited to his place and he took me to his own room and everything, and it really amazed me because we never heard of having your own room. But that was my only recollection there. After graduating from... Oh, one other thing I'd like to say is that I was one of the first young children that was allowed to go to school at age five. I went into kindergarten at that time, the first time for that situation, and then when I graduated grammar school and went into high

school we were the first group of youngsters 16 and 17 years old. No, 13-14 years old to be going into [Analy] Union High School as a freshman because when I was a freshman in high school the seniors were 22 years old. That was an age discrepancy because kids were going to school much later, but ours were the first of the beginning of early youngsters coming into school at age 5.

JACL: How would you describe your teenage years at home? Is there something special that really stands out?

George: The what years?

JACL: Teenage years.

George: Teenage years, I guess, I remember mostly in high school, freshman. Our whole family worked together at the store and I used to make deliveries 'cause I could drive. But as I was growing up, I had two good Japanese friends and we grew up together. When we were in high school, I think we had about half a dozen Caucasians friends that were very, very close to us that we hung around with. Don't remember much. One thing that is very vivid, which I didn't see. But when the World War II broke out, my sister was attending, I had graduated in '41 and in 1942, the war broke out and it was pretty hard on the Japanese people, even the... even the people going to school. But can you imagine, three or four Chinese students came with a yellow banner around their shoulder saying, "I am a Chinese American." And when the other students saw that, they went out there and made them take it off. But that's how things were.

JACL: So when you have your old class reunions, do you actually see some of your old classmates?

George: Well, I hadn't attended a class reunion, but last year was the 60th class reunion, so I decided I better go because I'm getting up there in age. And out of 180 some odd members of our class, I think there was about 61 that attended. A lot of them couldn't make it. You know, age factor, they live too far away. But I was able to attend and meet as many people as I could remember from our class. It was a good reunion.

JACL: Can I just follow up with just one question? Your friendship with the [Hakujin] students, what do you think made you friends? Because was there prejudice and discrimination in Sonoma County at that time, and why were you close friends, 'cause you said close friends?

George: As we got into high school, I didn't recognize discrimination that much, but the friendships that we acquired were because we played basketball. We had a common call there, and so during the four years that we were together we developed a very strong friendship.

JACL: When World War II was declared, did they drift away from you because their family, the community didn't want them to associate with you?

George: No, it was pretty hectic. It was pretty hectic when Pearl Harbor started and then not too long after that... ah, you see when I was a teenager, when Pearl Harbor struck, it was in December 7, 1941 and in January of 1942, my dad asked me not to go to school to the JC but to help at home. And I was working on a ranch

pruning trees, and the lady came down and told me, "You better go home. Your mother called," and when I went back to the house, I mean to the store, I found out that the FBI had taken my dad and a lot of other members of the community, the leaders. Suddenly, at age 18, I was the head of the family. Okay. And sad to say they went into everything. Now, in my room I had a crystal set 'cause I was a Boy Scout. They confiscated that saying it was a short wave radio. I had three silver dollars in my desk drawer that was taken; it was just taken that's all. They took all my dad's records and everything. I think in putting things together, I recall that there would visitors from Japan coming over to solicit for donations. One of them was the *Hemushakai* [Japanese charity organization] which was related to the army, I believe it was. And that list was obtained and a lot of people that had donated, they were eyeballed. But that list it became known as the Black Dragon Society. And so right after that, the next thing we hear was that we were going to be evacuated. At first, the community was going to try to evacuate themselves. But I couldn't fathom that at all. I said, "Where were we going to go to leave California. What are we going to do?" We went out and bought a cattle trailer. We fixed it out with new tires on there and everything. I just couldn't grasp, how we are going to load five children, my mother and my uncle into it and then go? And then the orders for evacuation came. And then when that order for evacuation came we had to start selling, and I remember vividly that we only got about 25% of our inventory cost back 'cause we had no place to leave things and that trailer that I bought, I turned it over to the so-called friend of ours that was in the gasoline station right next to our store. We were lucky to sell our 1936 Ford Sedan, and I turned the pink slip over to him and told him, I said, "Frank, mail it to me if you can sell it." I never heard from him. One of the reasons why is because his son was killed in the war.

JACL: Had you heard about the temple and how some *Hakujin* [Caucasian] high school students surrounded the temple to keep it from being vandalized here in Sebastopol? Did you hear that story?

George: No, I never heard that story.

JACL: You know, I remember those movies.

George: Do you? (*Big smile*)

JACL: Because we'd run up and down the hallway, and then we'd get in this huge trouble.

JACL: Okay. George, you know my part is going to be talking about World War II. You already kind of explained how you heard about World War II and about Pearl Harbor. How did you feel, when you heard about it?

George: Devastated. We just couldn't believe what happened. And ah... really upset with just what happened. We just couldn't grasp the whole picture.

JACL: Did you have any idea? Or did you think what would happen to you and your family?

George: No, at that point, everything was up in the air. We didn't know what to expect. My dad was gone and being head of the family. We went from there to when evacuation orders came. We went through the ordeal of trying to sell the inventory. About 25% of our cost was recovered; we practically gave it away. But everything we had... I used to be quite a fisherman. I had a lot of trout and bass tackle. I tried to sell it, but I just gave it away. A lot of sacrifices.

JACL: Were you conscious of your rights as a citizen when you were taken away from your home? Did that even occur to you that some of your rights were being taken away, or...?

George: Yes, but we just went along with the orders. My parents, as we grew up, taught us to accept what's in front of us and don't fight it. I think that was probably one of the things that helped us accept and go from there.

JACL: Describe your life in camp, the living conditions, the weather, which camp your family went to.

George: Well, we boarded a bus in Santa Rosa, I think, in May of 1942. We were told just to bring your clothing, nothing else. The evacuation orders came in 1942, and we went through the ordeal of trying to sell inventory in the store. We got about 25% of our cost out of that. We were told to be ready to board a train in Santa Rosa on a certain day in May and bring clothing only, nothing else, no flashlights, no axe, no saws, no knives or anything. I really remember that we had no way of getting to Santa Rosa from our store because, you know, we didn't know anybody, and "Hopper" Yamamoto came by and said, "Oh come on, a friend of mine is having a big truck, and we'll swing by and pick you guys up." And that was really a relief for me. I remember that very vividly. When we got to Santa Rosa to board the train, my uncle who was living with us, he had volunteered to store and document those things at the community hall, and he wasn't finished. So that night before evacuation he was there trying to finish, and he said he would meet us back at our store the next morning. Well, unbeknownst to us, when he was working there, the police broke down the door and took him to the Santa Rosa Sheriff's Department because there was a curfew, and they tried to say that he was breaking the curfew. He was indoors and what he was doing was documenting, you know. So the next morning when we were at the train station, I knew something had happened to my uncle, and so I turned to Mr. Henry Shimizu, who went down to the Sheriff's Department and they released Fred, my uncle, and he came and joined us. He had packed the night before. That was one of those things that they just took him and threw him in the slammer because he was violating the curfew law. Well, he was indoors I don't know what he was doing wrong. That's how touchy things were.

JACL: Can you describe your life in camp, the living conditions, the weather?

George: Okay. We boarded a train and went to Merced, where the assembly center was. To give you a picture of what Merced Assembly Center looked like. Take the Santa Rosa Fairgrounds, the whole fairgrounds, parking lot and everything. Put barbed wire fence completely around the whole. Put a guard, watch tower, every hundred feet. Inside where the parking area was they built army barracks in

there, and that's where the evacuees, the first evacuees, that's where we lived in these army barracks. Army barracks with single walls. There was about four sections to a barrack. They only had eight foot ceiling and then the ceiling above, the triangle above was open, so you could hear people talking from one end to the other. There was no privacy. They had mess halls and they had the community bathrooms. It was quite... oh, I'd like to tell you about the bathrooms. The bathrooms for the men's side were a length of about 20 feet and they had urinals, and they were not seat covers but they just had holes cut in there for the men to use. And above the toilets and everything was a great big water tank that was filling up and when the water tank filled up, it would turn over and splash and come down and rinse everything out. Okay. It's like... have you seen the Japanese garden, when water fills up and then it tilts over? That's what it was but on a big scale. (*He laughs*) The funny thing about this is that when the fellows knew the water tank was going to spill, everybody rose up because it washed out. And one of the funniest things was this man he rose up and his wallet fell out right into the hole and washed down to the back, and he had a mess trying to get it out. But that's how things were. One other story was that in Merced Assembly Center, you know, Japanese people didn't know how to eat mutton much. They brought in great big portions of lamb in these galvanized garbage cans, and they never touched them. They just took them out again. They never touched them. They just took them out again. The Japanese never ate mutton or lamb. They didn't know how. Immediately, in this camp they started classes for the kids. And they had for the first generation people they had art classes, carving classes and any kind of recreational thing. When I think that was the beginning of when our parents were able to relax and do things they wanted to do because they never were able to take vacations prior to that. We stayed in that camp until... from May until October, September, October of 1942 'cause they said the camp that we were going to go to was finally finished and it was in Colorado. And so our transportation was a day coach train from Merced to Colorado, and it took several days. And I remember people trying to stay clean because the coal from the train and all that came back throughout, and everybody got pretty grimy from all that coal dust. When we reached Amache, Colorado, the camp was not named at that time, but it was one mile from the town of Granada. So that was our permanent home for the time being. And again it was army barracks, but this time they had double walls instead of single walls. And each room contained a potbelly stove for coal, and there was a lot of coal outside in the coal bins that people could take, you know, to warm up their places. That was the only heat that we had.

JACL: In camp, George, what type of activities did you participate in? You know, any type of work or recreation?

George: Well, I remember we formed the Class A Basketball Team, a bunch of us fellows that hung around together. We called ourselves "The Arrows", and we played in the Class A Basketball League. It was an outdoor court and everything. And I worked for the camp newspaper office. I was called an artist 'cause I had to hand cut the titles of all the articles. Everything in those days was done by mimeograph. So when an article was typed up, the headline or the heading of

the article had to be hand printed in there 'cause it had to be heavier and bigger, so I was doing that. I remember the camp newspaper eventually became known as the "Amache Pioneer" newspaper. My sister worked there, my brother-in-law worked there. A lot of us in the Sonoma County area that ended up down there. But I remember the editor was Joseph McCullen; he was a Caucasian. And we saw all the newspapers from the West Coast and East Coast sent to our office. Nothing about the war was printed, just local news about the camp.

JACL: How did you feel about the loyalty questions #27 and 28?

George: Will you read those to me?

JACL: Question 27 was, "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered? And Question 28 is, "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor, to any other formal government or organization?"

George: On the first question, it was a loaded question because that meant instant front action. And when we read it there was quite a bit of discussions made on it. My answer at that time was, "Yes, only if I'm drafted like any American citizen," was my answer at that time. Question #2, loyalty question, I answered yes.

JACL: Were you or any of your relatives in the military service during World War II?

George: No, I was not. I eventually was drafted out of the Healdsburg Draft Board in 1943 and because of my hip, I was rejected as 4F. See, at that time I was the oldest, so none our family ended up in the service at that time. But eventually, my brother, two brothers went after we came back.

JACL: So George, during this WWII time, what would you say are your best memories and what are your worst memories of this time?

George: You mean in camp?

JACL: From Pearl Harbor to getting out of camp.

George: Gee, I don't recollect having a lot of great memories, but we just went along with the flow of the requirements that evacuation made on us. We adjusted to the camp life, both in Merced Assembly Center and Amache, Colorado. There was a period of time when half of the camp was made up of people from the agricultural area, which is Sonoma County and Walnut Grove and all that. The other half came from the Los Angeles area. So there was quite a period of time for adjusting for the two factors, okay, because it was the first time I ever encountered a yakusa [gang member] a Japanese gang member from LA, with a p-coat. They had Zoot Suits and long chains, you know. I think some of them carried a switch knife, which I don't know how they got. But there was an adjustment made there by the younger people, like my brother and my brother-in-law, 'cause I was older and they were four or five years younger, and so they had to make that adjustment. I think otherwise the older people, the Isseis and the Niseis, got along pretty well together.

JACL: Thank you.

JACL: Now George, when did you find out that you could leave camp, and what arrangements had to be made and what were your feelings at that time about leaving?

George: Well, in 1943 a lot of the fellows volunteered and went off to work at the Broadmoor Hotel Golf Course in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Before you could leave camp you had to be cleared by the FBI, your background and everything. Otherwise, nobody could leave. And I guess I was cleared, so I volunteered and left and went to work at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado in the later part of 1943, and I worked there in the kitchen and they gave us a room to stay in, in the hotel. And then eventually I got out of the kitchen and worked as a bus boy in The Tavern, which is a separate little restaurant downstairs in the Broadmoor Hotel. Colorado Springs had 300,000 or more GI's in that area; they had GI camps around there. But only the GI's that had money could afford to come to Colorado Springs, and you know, to have lunch or dinner or whatever they wanted to do there.

JACL: The rest of your family was still in camp?

George: The rest of my family was still in camp. And I worked in Colorado Springs until 1945, a couple of years. And my family, my mother and dad decide they were going to work at a ranch on the other side of Denver. So they went and moved out there in August, and they worked there for two or three months. And they decided they wanted to go back to California, and so they came to see me, and I floated a loan and they bought a car. And eventually I left the Broadmoor Hotel to go back to where my parents were on the ranch, and from there, we decided to come back. We were six kids, and my father, my mother and my uncle. And so three of us had to go back by train. We were fortunate enough to be able come back to California, to Napa, California, because my uncle owned property there. And so in October of 1945 we took off from the ranch on the other side of Denver and drove home to California in about three days. It was quite an ordeal, driving in the snow. I never saw any discrimination coming back there, but when I was in the Broadmoor Hotel, I used to get my haircut in the barbershop there in the hotel, and one day the barber was giving me a haircut and he said, "Hey, buddy," he says, "don't you know there's some barbershops in town?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Why don't you get it cut there from now on?" Just like that. And on our day off, we had one day off. We used to have one day off when we were working at the hotel. It was on a Sunday. So we would go in to town, buy whatever we needed, and go to the bakery and all that, and go see a couple of movies, and come home and that was our day off. And I remember the first time we went into this pastry shop, people were standing around and I waited in line and finally it was my turn. And someone walked just in front of me and they waited on them. They didn't say nothing. So these things went unnoticed. But I could pick them up because my antenna was really out there. I could pick up any kind of negative feeling, but that was all part of the evacuation.

JACL: Now after you got to your uncle's in Napa, what did your family do and how did they settle?

George: We were fortunate to have a place to go to back to and everybody went to work. I pruned trees in the wintertime; they went to prune grapes. I picked prunes and everything from October to May of 1946 and we came back in '45. And then my dad wanted to go back and start another store, so he went back with my mother to look at a place in Sebastopol and they couldn't find any there. Another incident there is that my folks, when they were walking in Sebastopol, they ran across a very dear friend who was selling cars, a man named Dan Charoni. When they met suddenly, you know, they just bumped into each. And when they met, Dan was so embarrassed he did not know what to say. And my parents, who were naturally friendly, stuck their hand out and talked to him. But it was that kind of a situation, even in those days. Eventually, they found this little place in Santa Rosa. So I remember vividly the... going to the real estate man and he said, "Okay, go to Sonoma County Guaranty, and when you do that go to Exchange Bank, and when you walk in to Exchange Bank as soon as you walk in there will be a fellow there behind the desk and he will set your loan up. We were only asking for \$1,500. And when I went to sign the papers for the title company, they demanded that I show my citizenship papers, and I said you got to be kidding. There was an Alien Land Law going on that they are trying to change, 'cause Alien Land Laws prevented any Orientals from owning property and I said, "I wouldn't try to buy no place if I weren't a citizen!" And he said, "I got to see it." So I used to carry my citizen, I mean my birth certificate. So I showed it to him under protest and signed the papers. I went out the door, went out to the Exchange Bank, walked in the door and just as I was turning left, the guy stood up and said, "I'm sorry, I can't do anything for you!" Just like that. So I turned around and went back, and my mother was able to get a loan from a banker she knew in Sebastopol and that's how we got our place. These incidents are infuriating as heck, but what are you going to do? I just took it, but I remember it.

JACL: Those incidents are hard to forget.

George: I had a chance to retaliate because I met the vice-president of the Exchange Bank many, many years later. And he said, "How come you don't have an account here?" And I said, "I'll tell you the reason why." And he said, "I got to look into this!" Although it's a thing of the past 'cause it happened so long ago. Them's facts.

JACL: Now, have you talked to your experiences to your children?

George: No. I plan to do this because it takes three or four hours, and I want to get my son and daughter-in-law and the two grandchildren together to sit down. Now I made a presentation with my granddaughter to her high school class, but not all the details, things that I'm talking about right now.

JACL: Now, after you got back and you settled, were you involved in the community as a whole, or are you still involved in the Japanese community?

George: When we first came back, my dad... we had to remodel this big garage and turn it into a store and everything, and I had wanted to go to the post office to take a test. But it just happened that it fell on a day that we were trying to move a lot of

things, and so I didn't go and I never got a chance again after that. But I eventually worked at a meat market, at Diamond Meat Market, a Chinese grocery store, meat market. And worked there from '46, '47, about two or three years, until 1950. And from there, I eventually went into the insurance business. Sold life insurance and a lot of casualty insurance. That's the way it was up to then.

JACL: Did you have help with your insurance business with the other people, the Caucasian community?

George: Well, I went to work with Tom Farrell, who was the general agent for the life insurance company, Lincoln National. In the casualty business, I called mostly on the Japanese families to do business, gradually extending to selling to the Caucasian people, yes.

JACL: Now, was Tom Farrell helpful in selling to the Caucasians?

George: Yes, very helpful. See, when I took a test to find out, you know, what would be the best for me, it showed that I should be a bookkeeper, an accountant, not in the selling field. So in order to better myself, I took a Dale Carnegie course. I even went to San Rafael and they were going to start one in Santa Rosa, so I waited till then. And Dale Carnegie Selling Course really helped me come out of my shell.

JACL: And I know that you were involved in the community. Can you give us an idea of some of the things you've done within the community?

George: Well, I was involved in originating the Family Service Agency, a counseling servicing agency for families having problems. I eventually served many, many years for the Park and Recreation for the City of Santa Rosa and got to know the City Manager, Ken Blackman, real well. And after, I don't know, 10, 12 years, I had to resign because I was too busy with a lot of other things going on. But I got involved with the church, JACL, somewhat, I was a member of the Life Underwriters Association. I was president for one year. That's about all I can remember.

JACL: Thank you, George.

JACL: Can you tell us a little bit about your own family, your own immediate family?

George: Oh, my family. My wife is Mary Yokoyama, and we've been married almost 50 years. We have one son, Ron. He was born in 1957. And I have two grandchildren. Kristen is age 20, she's going to be 20 in December, and Ryan just turned 16. My daughter-in-law is a blond Caucasian gal, very, very nice.

JACL: Earlier you mentioned that when you returned from camp, you went to stay with an uncle in Napa? Who took care of his ranch while you were in camp?

George: I think some neighbors. See everybody... before the war not too many families owned property. It was maybe half a dozen or less that owned ranches here in Sebastopol area. A lot of the Petaluma people owned their own ranches 'cause they were doing chicken ranch work. And so I don't recall anybody having to

sell out. Most everybody that had to leave had neighbors take care of their ranches.

JACL: I'm responsible for asking you about the recent years. What has helped you the most about the difficult times recently?

George: How recent?

JACL: Well, right after WWII. Well, that was not so recent. It was, what, 50 years at least. But who and what has helped you the most during the difficult times?

George: Well, I think that our parents taught us to accept things as they are and not to roil the waters, I guess that's what you'd call it. And this has helped me. Some were really disturbed by this situation. Some of them went as far as to not volunteer, and if they were asked to volunteer they said no. So they were called "No-No Boys", and they were put in a different camp by the government. But I think the fact that we were able to roll with the punches and accept things as they were and do the best we can with what we had, that really helped us. Because I've made a lot of talks to different organizations, and some of the questions they had was, "How could you stomach all this, all these years, without having a deep resentment or anything?" And I said, "Some of the ways we were brought up helped us get through this period." If every one of us kept this hatred and deep resentment inside of us all this years, we wouldn't be around. We'd be all dead from the strain and stress of holding that within ourselves. And so that is one of my reasons that we were able to survive up to now was the acceptance and rolling with the punches.

JACL: My parents felt the same way too. That's how I look at it. How do you feel about redress? That's when the Japanese Americans received payment for internment, I believe.

George: Oh, I see. Yeah. I don't know. I felt it was a token from our country for the ordeal that we went through. But I felt that it was a generous move by our government to help us a little bit,

JACL: If World War II had not occurred, George, in what way had your life been different?

George: I don't know whether it would have changed that much or not if it wasn't for the war. But we probably would have rolling along the same. But to me personally, I think that the war and the experience we went through and all the ordeal we went through and the testing of the loyalty of the Japanese Americans, everything, helped in assimilating us back into the community here and helped eliminate a lot of discrimination because of the ordeal. Well, we were really tested and we showed true grit by taking care of everything and handling everything that came down.

JACL: So if there was another evacuation order today, what would you do?

George: I'd be the first one up there to protest it. I wouldn't want nobody else to go through that. I have some people that I know from the other countries, and one of them was very explicit. He said, "I know you went through evacuation." And I talked to him about it, and he said, "Do you think they are going to take us and

put us in camp?” And I said, “Not as long as I’m here. Not as long as a lot of people that went through the ordeal [are here] will we let it happen again.”

JACL: What advice would you give the young people of today? This is the last question, by the way, just generally speaking.

George: I haven’t given it much thought, but I guess you have to continue as you are and be an honest, good citizen because they won’t be tested. We have been. They should cherish the position that they are in.

JACL: You mentioned some fine qualities of the Isseis. What do you think are the greatest contributions of the... oh, what were the greatest contributions of the Isseis?

George: My father was the first generation of Isseis, my mother was the second generation. The Isseis did the best they could with what they had. They worked hard day and night throughout various seasons of the year, and everything was centered around the family and they all urged us to get our education and so everybody worked together and worked around it. So you know that the first generation children at least graduated high school. And I think both men and women should be given a lot of credit for what they came through. But I think a special thing should be said about the Issei women. Here were hardy women, working side by side with their husbands, reared the children, fed the children, fed the husband, washed the clothes, everything. Worked seven days a week. They never had a day off. When it was baseball seasons, the husbands would go to the game on Sundays. The women stayed home. But they were the backbone of each family. And I’ve always felt that a special tribute should be paid to the Issei women for that fact. They always stayed in the background.

JACL: Didn’t complain much. What was your question Ish? [Jean Ishisbashi]

JACL: If you have any other comments, and you said you might have a story.

George: Oh, a couple of stories.

JACL: Okay two stories. And then we’ll have lunch, and then you can get warmed up.

George: When I was working in the Broadmoor Hotel, in the Tavern. And this was in the 1940... let’s see, three? The headwaiter came, ‘cause we were bus boys, we were cleaning tables. The headwaiter came and he said, “You see that booth over on the far side?” It was directly opposite the bar, and there was a guy sitting there with a couple of gals. He said, “Stay away from him ‘cause he hates Japs.” And I said, “What happened?” “He just recently, got released from the Santo Tomas Kabachuan Prison. He was a prisoner of war in the Philipines, and he was treated horribly.” So here he is sitting over there, and he could tell I was Oriental. And when I walked by, I could feel the heat of the hatred on my face. He came for about three or four nights and he ordered champagne cocktail, and every time he drank one, he’d break the stem off. And champagne cocktails were a dollar and a half; in those days that was a lot of money. And he didn’t last but three or four days, and I think that he eventually broke down. That was very, very vivid to me. Another time I’m cleaning tables, and here is a Colonel and his wife sitting there and so she beckons me over she says, “Son, what are you? Are

you Japanese?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm Japanese American." And I always hyphenated. And she said, "Do you speak any Japanese?" And I said, "A little bit." And she said, "Would you mind if my husband talked to you in Japanese? I'm dying to hear him; he just graduated from the Japanese Language School." And I said, "I'll try." And he started speaking to me in perfect, fluent Japanese. I was so embarrassed, I answered in English. And finally I got through the ordeal, and from that day on I vowed to myself that I would not let this happen to me again, and so I've been learning Japanese by picking it up, you know, when I used to go selling insurance in the old days to the first generation people. They used to snicker and laugh at me because of the mistakes I made, and whatever mistakes I made they would correct me and so I was able to learn enough to where I could speak enough Japanese to make conversation with the Isseis, explain insurance and whatever.

JACL: Thank you for those experiences, I could feel the heat from you when you told the stories, and it was courageous to go back there, knowing that he could at any time explode and perhaps attack you.

George: Yeah, but we didn't have to go close to him. But in a few days he stopped coming [had a nervous breakdown]. There was another incident. I'll tell you this one too... of a friend of mine. He was a bus boy too.

JACL: And then we can go to lunch.

George: Kenny Akutagawa was waiting on this table. And there was a colonel, captain and a lieutenant sitting at this table. And the captain, he's from the Pacific Theater and he called Kenny, "What are you?" and Kenny said, "I am an American." "But what are you?" and he said, "I am a Japanese American." And as soon as he said Japanese, he said, "I thought so," and he picked his drink up and was going to throw it right at his face, the captain, okay. But the colonel that was sitting in that table stopped him and said, "Wait a minute 'cause I was in the Pacific Theater." The colonel stops the captain and said, "Wait a minute. I was over there in the European area, and I know them and you drop that thing 'cause they proved themselves." And it was a terrible, terrible experience for Kenny. He almost passed out, the poor guy.

JACL: Thank you. And today when you identify yourself and say what are you, you answer Japanese American. They say, why can't you just be an American? Given that history, it's like you can't win. We have another question. Thank you very much.

JACL: Earlier you've given the story of when you got your draft card. Could you repeat the story again for the camera?

George: When I turned 18, which was in November 1941, I turned 18 in November 1941 and so I had to enlist, you know, sign-up for my draft. I was sent a Class A classification which meant I was eligible for the draft, so I was very happy and proud of it. The war happens December 7, chaotic things happen. And I don't know whether it was in January or February; the draft board sent me another draft card with 1-Y. And I looked down the list and 1-Y was Enemy Alien, and I just about died from this. But I didn't question. Things were very chaotic and

everything. Everyone calling us “Japs” and “Get out of here” and all that, and so I let it ride. And I kept it, but I’m sorry. I should have preserved it, but it eventually wore off. But eventually they gave me a Class A again ‘cause they wanted to drafted me. And so that’s the story, right there.

History Of The Enmanji Temple

The history of the temple started in 1933. The Manchurian Railroad Company had a temple built the traditional Japanese way, entirely mitred and without any nails, for the Chicago’s World’s Fair. After the fair, the temple was donated to the Buddhist Churches of America in San Francisco who awarded it to their Buddhist followers in the Sebastopol area. The Buddhist community in Sebastopol and the surrounding areas raised \$10,000 to have the temple disassembled and rebuilt, again without any nails, in the present location. It is the only temple of its kind in the United States. At the time the church was brought to Sebastopol, there were perhaps between four and five hundred of Japanese descent in the community. In Sebastopol, the business was mainly apple farming, with about six families owning apple ranches. In Petaluma and other areas, there were many chicken ranchers, perhaps between fifteen to twenty-five families raising chickens for eggs. The majority of the ranches were owned by first generation Japanese.

During the war, while all of the Japanese Americans were sent to the internment camps, the temple was boarded up and unused. During this time a group of people tried to burn it but fortunately did little damage. The temple remained intact, and the Japanese American community returned at the end of the war and began using the temple again.

At the time of the war, of those families who did not own property, many worked on various ranches in the area according to the season. Typically, those people who worked in the apple industry also worked growing hops to make beer. During the first part of the year until about July, families would raise hops. Then from July, they would work on the apple ranches and dehydrate apples. When that season ended around October or November, they would prune trees for several months before going back to the hops. Because of this seasonal work, many families moved several times a year to different ranches in Sonoma County.

Of those in the Japanese American community who owned property, after the war they were able to return to the property they had to leave behind during internment. Most of the families had Caucasian friends who looked after their property for them, helping to keep the property intact until their return. Unlike some communities where property was redistributed and difficult to regain after the war, most of the families from the Sonoma County area moved back. A rough estimate of those returning is between seventy to eighty percent. George Hamamoto’s family had a grocery business in Sebastopol at the start of the war. His father did not own the building and was taken away by the FBI because he was a community leader, leaving George, at eighteen, to be head of the household. When the evacuation notice came, trying to sell the inventory within a short period of time created a tremendous loss. Yet even though life in Sonoma County ended for them during the war, the Hamamoto family chose to return to the same area to start again.

Personal Statement

I am very proud of my father. Dad was taken by the FBI in January 1942, as were all the leaders of the Japanese community. I, suddenly at the age of 18, was the head of our family. Evacuation orders took us from Santa Rosa to Merced California Assembly Center in May 1942, and we were only in Merced about a week when my dad suddenly came to camp and joined us. I was interested in why he was released so early and Dad related this story:

Apparently, Dad was the first to be questioned by the judge at the Texas camp. He stood before the judge who said, "Mr. Hamamoto, what would you do if the Japanese army invaded the USA and was marching towards you?"

Dad was infuriated by this question and replied, "Your honor, I came to the USA at age 16 and have never been back. My wife is an American citizen. We have 6 children and because of them, I wanted to become a citizen. But your Alien Land Laws prevented Asians from buying property and your laws prevented Asians from becoming citizens. Judge, I'd have to fight for the only country I know! Japan. Damn you, what would you do?"

After a long pause, the judge said, "Mr. Hamamoto, I am very sorry. I would do exactly the same as you said." Dad was released to join us in Merced Assembly Center.

"I am proud of becoming a naturalized citizen when it was allowed"

- George Hamamoto

End of Interview

REVEREND CAROL HIMAKA & SARA GERBOTH INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: Reverend Carol Himaka and Sara Garrison Gerboth
Date: January 18, 2003
Place: Enmanji Buddhist Temple, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Jean Ishibashi & Matt Thomas
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on June 17, 2003
from DVD source material

Interview Summary

Reverend Carol Himaka and Mrs. Sara Gerboth offer a fascinating history of the Enmanji Buddhist Temple, and an inspiring story of courageous local teenagers, nonmembers of the temple, who came forward to protect it during World War II, when temple members were interned.

Carol Himaka, minister of the Enmanji Buddhist Temple in Sebastopol, explains the unique history of the temple, which was built for the 1932 Industrial World's Fair Manchurian Railroad Exhibition Hall. After the fair, the Sonoma County Buddhists purchased the current building, had it dismantled, then reassembled in 1934 in its present location. The temple is the only one in America with a roof structure representative of a Buddhist temple roof from the eleventh century, the same century when its founder, Shinran Shonin, lived in Japan. At the time of its dedication, Enmanji was the only building in America within its sect designated a temple, and because of the Japanese liking for a play on words, the characters in "Enmanji" also translates as 'so-no-ma-te-ra'.

During World War II, when the Japanese Americans were interned, the temple stood empty, and there was an attempt by vandals to destroy the building. However, a group of young people from the Community Church in town came to protect it, watching over it at night. There was no further vandalism, but a reminder of the earlier incident can still be seen in the form of burn and hatchet marks on the inside of the temple.

In 1945, Sara Gerboth was a member of the Congregational Church in Sebastopol, now called the Community Church. She recalls their minister telling the church youth group of the news that the nearby Enmanji Temple had been victim of an arsonist attempt. The small group of less than a dozen youth were very upset about the news and decided to try and guard it. She describes how they stood around the temple, dedicating themselves to the task of protecting it. Then, for several months on weekends, they took turns standing guard in two hour shifts throughout the night, and she remembers the sadness she felt in seeing the temple so neglected because its temple members were interned. The group's vigil continued until the Japanese American community began to return to the area.

Sara recalls opposition in town to the return of the Japanese from camp, and the anger their minister suffered when he housed two Japanese girls who had returned from camp before their parents. Of the vigil over the temple, she also describes how her minister was very supportive, how their parents were not happy about them being out alone at night, and her own feelings about being there. Sara recounts the group's commitment and principles that led them into action to protect the temple, and she remembers that because she had many Japanese friends while attending Pleasant Hill School and Springfield, it added another reason to protect the temple.

When the Japanese Americans returned to the area, Sara recalls them as being very quiet, not really talking about the time spent in camp or of their feelings on being back, choosing instead to have other conversations. Sara recounts more of the experience of "guarding the temple" and remembers some of the other teenagers who helped stand watch, in particular, Jack Gerboth, who later became her husband, and went on to be a teacher at Analay High School and principal of El Molino High School.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Introduce yourself.

Carol Hello, I am Carol Himaka. I am the Buddhist Minister of the Enmanji Buddhist Temple. The temple building here is very unique. It comes from the 1932 Industrial World's Fair. It was part of the Manchurian Railroad Exhibition Hall. After the fair closed the Sonoma County Buddhists got in touch with them and they happened to purchase part of the hall. So in 1933 it was disassembled and shipped over here by rail and then in 1934, we have pictures of them having reconstructed it with the aid of Japanese artists from San Francisco and they had a dedication on Hanamatsuri, which is in April, in 1934, and it has served as our main temple since then. It's a very unique temple because of the decoration but also because of the roof structure.

The roof structure is representative of Buddhist temple roof structures from the eleventh century, which is also the same century that our founder, Shinran Shonin is from, so it's the only temple with this roof in the country. And a special gift was also granted the Enmanji Temple, and that is the name *Enmanji* which was granted by the home temple in Kyoto. It's not so unusual now, but at that time in the 30's, it was the only temple given the character "ji", which identifies it as a Buddhist Temple. The words "enmanji" actually translates two ways—one is "fulfilled garden temple" and the other is "so-no-ma-te-ra" and because of the liking of the Japanese towards word play, that is how it came to be called "Enmanji", as a play on the word "Sonoma".

JACL: Thank you.

Carol: When the Japanese Americans were interned after 1942, the temple was left empty and I am not sure exactly when that happened, but there were attempts by people in the area to try to burn the temple down. And we were very lucky to have an interested and dedicated group of young people from the Community Church up the street who felt that it was very important to protect the church from that kind of vandalism, and I understand that they came in and protected

and did some watches at night. So we have them to thank for at least protecting this temple from that kind of vandalism. We do have some physical evidence, still, of the burning, as well as some of the hatchet marks that someone had tried to lay to some of the founding pillars.

JACL: So what was the story?

Sara: Well in 1945, my, he wasn't my husband yet, but my husband to be, and I were in the youth group in the Congregational Church, which is now the Community Church, which was on North Main Street. And the minister came one evening to our meeting to tell us the story about the attempts at burning down the Enmanji Temple. And we were very upset and concerned about this and decided, in fact, that we needed to do something about it. It was not a large group. There were probably about eight of us, and we decided that we would come out and try to guard it. So I can remember coming out here and, as I say, we were a small group, and forming a circle as far as we could reach, which wasn't very far, but forming a circle, a symbolic circle around the temple and dedicating ourselves to protecting it. Well, since we were a small group, we couldn't protect it 24 hours a day every day, and our parents wouldn't let us go out on school nights, so it was on weekends that we came, if I chose, and we stood guard and did two hours shifts all night on the weekend nights. And I can remember looking at the temple, and it had always been such a neat and beautiful place and when we came, there was chain link fence all the way around it and a big heavy chains on the door and padlocks hanging down and weeds growing up along the chain link fence, and it just made me feel so sad that this place was neglected because the people weren't here that ordinarily took care of it. But we came every weekend, in two hour shifts, for several months. This was just before the people returned and then I'm not sure of the time, but I think that it was about three months. And then they began coming back, and so then we didn't guard it anymore. And I don't know that we prevented it from being burn down because there were a lot of times when we weren't here, but the fact is, it didn't get burned down, so we felt successful in like we had done what we had set out to do.

JACL: Do you recall what year that was?

Sara: 1945. It was when the Japanese were beginning to come back, and there was a lot of hubbub in the town and opposition. They were not welcomed by many, and this was kind of an outgrowth of that feeling. And the minister in our church, in fact, took in two girls who came back before their parents did, and they lived with him for quite some time. And he took a lot of guff about that, and, in fact, many believe that his leaving the church the year after that still had to do with the bad feelings they had about his taking in the Japanese American girls.

JACL: What was his name?

Sara: Jim Center. He was the one that encouraged us. He would come by and see how we were doing. Even sometimes in the night, he would drive down and see if we were there and see how we were doing. He was very supportive.

JACL: What were some of the townspeople's reactions towards your guarding the temple?

Sara: Oh, they didn't like it. Our parents didn't like it either. Our parents weren't happy with our being out here in the night by ourselves. But we were pretty insistent and pretty convinced that this is what we needed to do, so they ended up letting us do it.

JACL: Were you afraid?

Sara: Yes! It was scary because we knew that people had been here trying to burn it down. It was obvious there were burn marks, so we didn't know if people would react against us and come and try to harm us and that was always on our minds, but fortunately nobody did.

JACL: So your prayers were answered.

Sara: Prayers were answered. Right.

JACL: Were there people who made comments because they were aware that you were doing this, at that time?

Sara: I don't recall that, no. But I know that there was reaction towards the church from some people, but they didn't react to us directly.

JACL: What month was it? Was it cold like tonight?

Sara: I remember it being cold, I don't recall really what month it was, but I remember we bundled up pretty good to come.

JACL: You said it was over a three month period of time?

Sara: I think so, yes, it was a three month period of time. You know, I have to admit that a lot of my memories are not real clear. I was fourteen, I was in love and I would have done a lot of things in order to go spend a couple of hours in the middle of the night with my true love, so it wasn't all altruistic, although there was certainly that element. And a lot of it, like trying to remember all the people that took part, I don't remember that. I don't remember those parts. I do remember how much we were convinced that this was what we had to do.

JACL: How many people total were there?

Sara: Maybe twelve, who took part in that, over the period of time.

JACL: Was Jack one of the leaders of the group?

Sara: He was, yes, he was. In fact, he was the leader in this particular project. He felt very strongly about it and was the youth that pushed it forward.

JACL: Would you advise children to do this today?

Sara: I probably would, but I would be afraid, as my parents were. I think all the parents were uneasy about it, but I think it was the right thing to do.

JACL: Why did you act on your conscience when so many other people didn't?

Sara: I don't know. I don't know why that is. I would just say it was the principles we were led in, in our youth group and particularly by our minister that to protect certain principles and other people's freedom was the important thing to do.

JACL: What are the principles?

Sara: I can't say. It's just that all people are important, all people are equal, and that people that are different from us are not any less. Rights shouldn't be less available to some groups than others, and that's what was happening.

JACL: So you were a Christian group but you were guarding the Buddhist Temple?

Sara: That's true. Yes, that was an important thing to us that even though it was a group that were different than we were and that they were entitled to their rights and to their property and to have it not be damaged.

JACL: You had friends who were Japanese?

Sara: Yes, I had many friends who were Japanese and who had been taken away and who had influenced me deeply, as far as friendship, fair play, honesty, and those kinds of things that had impressed me a lot.

JACL: Did this minister, did he routinely address the group and kind of leave an impression of what could we do, what should be done or was that an unusual situation?

Sara: No, he just told us about the story of what had happened and the group kind of took it from there. I think he was kind of startled by the strong reaction in the group, but he was just sharing this as the beginning of the group as something that had happened in our own community and our group just jumped on it and wanted to do something about it. And he supported that, but he didn't come up with the ideas. That was from the group itself.

JACL: Did many in the group also have friends who were Japanese Americans?

Sara: I don't really know that, but I would guess that to be true. Most of them were from around Sebastopol, and there were lots of Japanese Americans here.

JACL: Did you go to school preceding WW II with Japanese American students?

Sara: Yes, many. I went to Pleasant Hill School. Though I can't give a percentage, there very many.

JACL: Which school did you go to?

Sara: Pleasant Hill. There were many Japanese Americans that were taken away.

JACL: Do you recall the names of some of them?

Sara: Yes, Horitas, Moritas, Kikuchis, Fujiharas, Masuoka, Yasutakes, Furoshos.

JACL: Did you know Peter? Masuoka?

Sara: No.

JACL: But did you know his sister?

Sara: Who was that?

JACL: Peter's sister?

Sara: Peter?

Sara: Masuoka?

JACL: Margarette?

Sara: Yes, I did not know her then. I know her now. And then I went to Springhill for a while, and I knew Wakayamas and several others whose names I don't recall right now. But they made a first impression on me. A fine, wonderful people, and it just seemed unbelievable that one day they were just gone. And when this came up, it was kind of an opportunity to kind of give back some of what they had given me when I was growing up.

JACL: What did they say once they had returned?

Sara: My recollection is that they didn't say very much, very quiet. And wanted to be back but were just kind of in the background. They didn't really talk very much about it, at all. We just went on with other conversations but not conversations about being in camp, or what it was like to be back or any of those things. It was just like it never, not mentioned.

JACL: How long do you think it took before anyone realized that you folks had been here guarding the temple?

Sara: I don't know. I don't know. The first thing I knew about it was when Ann, our new associate minister, brought it up and asked me about it. And that was the beginning of as far as I'm concerned any talk about it, which was just a few years ago.

JACL: How many of you were boys and how many of you were girls who were members of that club?

Sara: I would say probably about 50/50. Yes.

JACL: Were you all about 14? What was the age?

Sara: It was high school age. Anybody in high school could attend that group.

JACL: Did you discuss if anyone did attempt to vandalize while you were on vigil, what you would do?

Sara: It seems to me, now that you bring that up, I hadn't thought about that, but it seems to me we had police whistles and were supposed to blow our police whistles. And I don't know what would happened then, but I think we would blow the police whistles and someone around would call the police. I think it was the plan.

JACL: Did the police support you?

Sara: I don't know. We never had to call them, so I don't know. (*She chuckles*)

JACL: But did they ever drive by or come talk to you?

Sara: I don't remember that.

JACL: Did any of the parents ever come down to help you?

Sara: No, not that I recall.

JACL: Just, they consented?

Sara: Yeah. Uh-huh.

JACL: How did you get down to the church? Were you driven by people in the group, the boys in the group, or did your parents bring you or friends?

Sara: I don't know about other people, but I was driven by Jack. He came and picked me up and he brought me down. (*She chuckles*)

JACL: How old was Jack at the time?

Sara: Sixteen. I'm not sure how the other people got here.

JACL: Do you recall any of the others, their names?

Sara: I don't. I recall some that aren't here anymore, and a couple that have passed away, and one who lives now in Redding. But there isn't anybody here. I had wished that there were people still around that I could talk to about it, but I couldn't really recall any people who are still here.

JACL: Do you mind telling us of some of the people who are no longer here?

Sara: Clayton Boughman was one. Bob Marks is the one who lives in Redding. I'm trying to think, and Peggy Marks was in that group too. Peggy Marks has passed away since then. That's really all I recall. The MacKenzies weren't here yet; they were still in Guerneville at that time. So I don't really have a good recollection. And, I guess Ann Williams was in that group.

JACL: Do they have, still have children in the area?

Sara: Ann does, yeah. Oh, and Dave Williams was in it too. He lives in Hawaii. I can't think of others who had children here.

JACL: Did you have one shift a night, and how was the shift, was it cold?

Sara: It was cold and we walked around. We'd walk... we'd start in one place, and walk around, and meet each other at the other side, and say hi, and walk, you know, just sort of patrol, back and forth, and it was cold. I remember that.

JACL: Was it every night?

Sara: Sometimes we did it twice on the weekend, but not during the week.

JACL: Did you have emergency supplies, like food, flashlights?

Sara: (*She motions no with her head*) We had flashlights.

JACL: Did you have to go to the restroom and what did you do?

Sara: (*She makes a face as if to say, "Who knows?"*) I don't remember. It was only a two hour shift. (*She laughs*) I don't remember that being a problem.

JACL: Was it basically only in the evenings?

Sara: Yes, we started at... it seems like we started at dark, whatever that was. And then went into 6 in the morning.

JACL: Any other questions?

JACL: I just want to say that we certainly thank you for taking a stand at that age to protect this nice temple. Were certainly glad that it is still here, and we thank you for taking the effort.

Sara: Oh, I'm so glad we did it. Thank you.

JACL: Jack eventually became the principal of Analy High School. Is that correct?

Sara: He was principal at El Molino. He taught at Analy High School for many years, and he was vice principal at El Molino for five years, and then principal for five years, and then he went back to Analy. He decided that teaching was his best thing and he went back to teaching at Analy.

JACL: What subjects did he teach?

Sara: He taught Social Studies and American Democracy, U.S. History.

JACL: Very appropriate.

JACL: Did he discuss the vigils that you guys did with his classes?

Sara: Not that I'm aware of, no.

JACL: Didn't he also take Junior Achievement to Russia, or the Soviet Union, at the time?

Sara: Yes. Junior Achievement was a way of teaching young people about capitalism, how you have a business and make money. He went to Moscow two years to try to teach them how to do that, and it was pretty much... it didn't work. (*She laughs*)

JACL: Once again, we really appreciate your coming in and taking the time and the effort to telling us your stories, and as Nancy said, we in the Japanese American community really appreciate what you, as a young person and those with you, did for us and we were able to come back to a community that we felt was very supportive and helped us to begin our lives again.

Sara: I'm happy to be here, and I'm very grateful to the Japanese American community and what they contributed to the community and what they contributed to me. Thank you.

End of Interview

IKEGAMI FAMILY INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: George Ikegami, Thomas Ikegami, & Kanematsu Ikegami
Date: Information gathered November, 1982
Interviewer: Lucy Kishaba
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Jean Ishibashi on June 27, 2003 from source material provided by the Ikegami family.

Introduction

When Lucy Kishaba approached the Ikegami family to participate in this oral history project, they responded by provided excerpts from a summary written by their son for a college assignment. In addition, they provided their family tree and a written response by the elder Ikegami, who was still living at the time of their son's work, on their family history which we include here. This information was originally handed down in oral form to the Ikegami descendants. Because of the language differences of most first generation immigrants to this country, a "pidgin" or a combination of Japanese and English, what was commonly referred to as "broken English," was the primary means of communication. This richness of languages and cultures, or what was commonly referred to as non-standard English, is reflected in the elder Ikegami's notes to his grandson which follows the written report. This report, originating from conversations, storytelling, and later documentation among family members, provides a view of the Issei generation and their role in the Japanese American and larger communities of Sonoma County as farm workers, and later, as farmers. The Ikegami stories also provide a glimpse into the Nisei generation who participated in the integrated Sebastopol schools, frequently excelling in various activities.

In addition, the addendum following the summary testifies to the fluidity of stories and to oral history as a complex dynamic. This fluid dynamic demonstrates the need to include a diversity of viewpoints in order to provide a fuller and more accurate account of historic truths.

Summary

Kanematsu (Roy) Ikegami born: January 21, 1904
Isano (Mito) Ikegami born: May 18, 1910
George Ikegami born: March 20, 1934

Around 1900, Kanematsu Ikegami's father left Japan to work for three years on a sugar plantation in Hawaii; in exchange, he was allowed to immigrate to the United States. When his father was established enough in America to send for his family, Kanematsu, who was fifteen, and his brother came on the steamer ship "Shunyo Maru". The family lived in a run-down cabin provided for farm workers, the interior containing only a

broken wood stove. When Kanematsu first arrived, he was able to attend school for about a year. Kanematsu, as a 14 or 15 year old, was placed in a class with first graders who were much younger but fluent in English. Despite his lack of formal education, Kanematsu was an avid reader and noted for his collection of novels. He was also engaged in bonsai and woodcarving, reflecting his artistic talents. He had to quit school in order to help the family. The family worked mostly in the hop fields and apple orchards, moving as the crops demanded.

In 1929, Kanematsu returned to Japan to meet his fiancé, Isano Mito, an arrangement made between their two families. Her father had a successful career as electrical engineer and president of a power plant. Isano was born in Kawaii, Hawaii, educated in Japan, schooled in flower arranging and tea ceremony, and accustomed to the niceties. This was demonstrated in her choice of quality goods she bought for her family at Rosenberg's Department Store. Though Kanematsu and Isano decided in Japan they wanted to marry, it would not be until a year later that they were finally able. Although born an American citizen, if Isano married in Japan, she would lose her citizenship, so they married in Santa Rosa in January 1930, after Isano first obtained her citizenship papers in Hawaii.

Originally Buddhists, Kanematsu and Isano converted to the Church of World Messianity, a sect of Shintoism based in Japan. During World War II, the Ikegami family was sent to Amache Internment Camp in Colorado. It was on the trip to camp that their son, Ken, who was two years old at the time, came down with measles. The Ikegami's were unable to find a doctor on the train, and Ken subsequently developed encephalitis, affecting his mental development. Although limited in ability, Ken learned to do many things with the help of his mother, and today, with day help, lives an independent life in Sebastopol.

George Sumio Ikegami was born in Sebastopol, living his entire childhood in Sonoma County, with the exception of World War II, when the family was interned at Amache Relocation Center in Granada, Colorado. The early cabins provided by the farmers did not have hot water or indoor bathrooms. As George grew up, he helped pick tomatoes, apples, hops, and grapes. He attended Starr Elementary School in Windsor, a one room school house. In high school George got an athletic "letter" in track and participated in all of the usual teenage social activities. George attended Santa Rosa Junior College after high school. After the Korean War, he joined the Army and was stationed at Fort Lewis in Tacoma, Washington. After George left for military service and his father started a gardening service in Sebastopol, the family was able to establish a permanent residence and bought their first house. Ken, George's brother, accompanied their father on his gardening jobs. After the service, George pursued a major in electrical engineering, like his maternal grandfather, at the University of Washington, while working at Boeing. [Fran Ikegami, George's wife, noted that her husband worked full time and could not participate in college activities because he was working. She noted that it was only after their children went to college that he experienced student activities with them]

Note: When the summary based on Thomas Ikegami's college report was reviewed during the co-editing process, a few factual errors were corrected by George and Frances Ikegami. Therefore, some facts in the summary differ from those in Thomas Ikegami's paper, which follows.

Genealogy Chart

Thomas Y. Ikegami B: March 15, 1964 Brother: Peter M. Ikegami B: February 26, 1962 Sister: Laura I. Ikegami B: May 24, 1966	Father: George S. Ikegami B: March 20, 1934 M: August 28, 1960 D:	Grandfather: Kanematsu Ikegami B: January 21, 1904 M: January 1930 D: May 12, 1995
		Grandmother: Isano (Mito) Ikegami B: May 18, 1910 M: January 1930 D: September 11, 1979
		Grandfather: [??? Kitamoto] B: February 25, 1904?? M: June, 1926 D: July ?, ???
	Mother: Frances (Kitamoto) Ikegami B: November 1, 1936 M: August 28, 1960 D:	Grandmother: Shigeko (Mishinaka) Kitamoto B: June 6, 1906 M: June, 1926 D:

Thomas Ikegami, First Year Paper Excerpts, Wakeforest University, N.C., 1982

A Century In America

The Family Background of Thomas Ikegami

Foreword

When compiling a family history one must realize that it would take several months, in most cases years, of intense research to produce a complete and accurate account. Due to this fact and to the nature of this project, it would be impossible for me to provide a complete and justifiable account of my family history. These restrictions, however, should not undermine the value of this paper. It focuses on the values and ideas that my family and I, myself, feel are important. The information for this story was gathered September and November of 1982. Every detail mentioned in this history is, to the best of my ability, told in truth; all of the material and sources used in this paper are well-documented and available in the back of this text. In the event that anyone should desire additional information about the family, the original letters have been attached. The door has been left open for elaboration, perhaps for a family member to continue.

The following is the story of a Japanese American family and of its experiences in twentieth century America. Its purpose is to show how one particular family formed its roots in the United States and to touch on its values and traditions. Portrayed in this story are two families—the Kitamoto and Ikegami families – of similar backgrounds that became one. It is a family which has lived through extremely difficult times, but through hard

work and a strong desire has reached economic stability. It is a story that begins in the days of the horse and buggy and concludes with the launching of the space shuttle Columbia, a story that could not have been told without the cooperation of the family members.

George's father, Kanematsu Ikegami, came to America from Hiroshima, Japan in 1911 at the age of 18. His father had moved to Hawaii around 1900 on a three year contract to work for a sugar plantation. After his contract was over, he was allowed to immigrate to the United States. (This was the most common method used by Japanese desiring to come to the U.S.) Once he was established on the mainland, he sent for his family in Japan. Kanematsu and his brother entered the United States aboard the Shunyo Maru, a Japanese steamship, on their fourteen day voyage to San Francisco. The fare was less than \$50. When they arrived in California, they did not have their own home to live in. Instead, they lived on an old rundown farm camp belonging to the land owner. Inside the small cabins, there were no appliances or furniture, just a broken wood stove.

When Kanematsu came to the United States, modern technology was just starting to arrive on the west coast. Most of the traveling was still done by horse and buggy, and there were no radios and very few telephones. He went to school for about a year, but had to drop out in order to help his family earn money. Life was difficult. Everybody had to work, including women and children. The family moved from farm to farm depending on which crop was in season. Usually, it was the hop fields in the spring and the apple orchards in the fall and winter. Families then had to be close knit units in order to stick together. Family members had to help each other out if they were to survive. From 1920-1930 they worked for a wage of approximately 25 cents per hour.

In 1929, Kanematsu returned to Hiroshima to meet his fiancé, Isano Mito. Kanematsu and Isano had never met before; their engagement had been arranged by their parents. Her father was an electrical engineer and president of a power plant until he retired at age 45 to become a college professor. He was also a very good friend of Kanematsu's father. Although they were pre-engaged, the decision of marriage was left to them.

Isano Mito was born in Kauai, Hawaii but was sent back to Japan at an early age to get a Japanese education. After high school she stayed at home to learn flower arranging and tea service, two very important tasks for a Japanese housewife. She was a very beautiful woman and a fashionable lady. She liked only the best things— preferring quality to quantity and would save her money until she could afford what she wanted. It must have been an adjustment for her to marry a stranger and come to a strange new country where she had to work to survive. Her wedding ceremony had to be postponed because of a legal matter. Even though she was born in Hawaii, she would lose her American citizenship if they were married in Japan. Since they planned to reside in California, the wedding had to take place in the United States. The couple was separated for a short time while Isano was in Hawaii getting legal proof of her U.S. citizenship in court. After this was done, Kanematsu picked her up in Hawaii and brought her to California. A year later they were married in Santa Rosa.

Religion was very important to Kanematsu and Isano. Originally Buddhists, they converted to the Church of World Messianity, a relatively new sect of Shintoism. The church was based in Japan but had churches all over the world— South America, Thailand, New York, Canada, Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco. Most of the members

were Oriental but the church had thousands of blacks, Hispanics, and Caucasians in its congregation. In 1983 the church will be holding its 100th anniversary celebration at the home church in Japan. Over one million people from as far away as Australia and Brazil are expected to attend the centennial service.

The second World War also had a lasting effect on the Ikegami family. They were on their way to a relocation camp in Colorado when their son Ken who was less than a year old caught the measles on the train. They searched all over for a doctor but could not find one. Ken came down with encephalitis and became mentally retarded. It took the family a long time to forgive the government for this. Although she was protective of her son, Isano taught Ken to do many things around the house as a child, and because of this Ken can now live a normal life.

George Sumio Ikegami was born in a hospital on March 20, 1934 in Sebastopol, California. He spent his entire childhood in Sonoma County, an area just northwest of San Francisco, migrating from farm to farm with his parents. The only exception was when the family was moved to the Amache Relocation Center in Granada, Colorado during the war. At each farm a house with no hot water or indoor bathroom was provided for them. They made their own bath which they heated with firewood. While his parents worked, George used to play in the car with his younger brother Ken or explored along the creek. When he got older he began to work in the field picking tomatoes, apples, hops and grapes. He also attended classes at Starr Elementary School, a one room school house in Windsor. There was only one teacher and about thirty students, three in George's class. When it came time for his graduation, twelve elementary schools got together and had a combined ceremony.

When George was a teenager, Kanematsu, or Roy as he was now called in America, decided to quit farming and start a gardening service in Sebastopol. With this move the family lifestyle underwent a change. There was no longer the hassle of moving from place to place. Before, Isano worked whenever she could but once Roy started gardening, she stayed at home. The move from a one room school house to a high school with about 1500 students was quite a change for George. In high school he participated and lettered in track. In those days whenever someone lettered in a varsity sport he was "initiated into the club". This usually meant shaving their heads, hazing, and getting swatted with leather straps. School spirit was strong, and everybody went to all the football games and school dances. Drive in restaurants were the evening meeting places and sneaking into the movies was a weekly event. There was never really any doubt where George would go after his high school graduation. He, and all his friends, attended Santa Rosa Junior College, then a branch of the University of California system. They all just thought of SRJC as an extension of high school. After junior college, George enlisted in the Army and was stationed in Tacoma, Washington. It was not until he joined the service that George saw his first television program. While he was at Fort Lewis, many of his friends were in the Korean War. When his two-year term was over, he enrolled in the University of Washington to study electrical engineering. He was a full time student at the U of W during the day, and worked 40 hours a week for Boeing at night.

End of Interview

PAT IRISH INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: Pat Irish – also present, Rose Otani, Alice Kashiwagi's sister
Date: 5/8/2002
Place: Irish residence, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Alice Kashiwagi
Summary: Phyllis Tajii and Alice Kashiwagi
Transcription: Transcribed by Alice Kashiwagi from audiotape source material

Interview Summary

Mr. Irish, interviewed in May, 2002, was to turn 100 years old in July, 2002. During the war, he was a teacher at Analy High School in Sebastopol, California. Despite his years at the time of the interview, what came through in the conversation was the picture of a man who believed in equality and in judging each person on his or her own merits, refusing to stereotype or generalize a group as a whole.

On one occasion, Mr. Irish was on a bus with other teachers and overheard one of them comment that Mr. Irish thought "that the [Japanese] are as good as we are." In response to that statement, made in the context of the internment, Mr. Irish replied that he, "would not be able to judge if a person was loyal to the government just by looking at them." Besides Mr. Irish, Mr. Dolan Evans and Mr. Barney Evans supported the Japanese Americans in the community. In explaining his reasoning against condemning a group of people as a whole, Mr. Irish felt that some Japanese would be dumber than he and some brighter, some better and some worse. If asked if every person born in Japan or who had different facial features were more honest or less honest, he'd say he wouldn't know every person in the group in order to make that judgment.

Mr. Irish was raised by his mother after his father left when he was eight years old. His father worked for the railroad, and even though well-liked by the men he worked with, Mr. Irish does not seem to have pleasant memories of his father and does not feel he really knew him. The early years were in Sausalito, and later, growing up in Sebastopol, Mr. Irish remembers a man his mother worked with by the name of Cass, who almost became like a father to him. Mr. Irish attended the University of Arizona, where the climate was better, because he had tuberculosis at the time. While there, he was put in charge of the dormitory.

During the war, Alice Kashiwagi remembers her mother saying that Mr. Irish, who was her chemistry teacher, along with two other teachers came out to her house to offer their help. Mr. Irish does not recall that, but when asked why he would help the Japanese people at the time, he replied, "Because they needed it." He had kept some letters and pictures of the Japanese American experience during the war because he felt some people get a "disease" called "bigotism". Due to his support of the Japanese community, some of the Caucasian community were tough on him.

End of Interview

SAKAI "CURLY" ISHIZU INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Sakai "Curly" Ishizu
Date: August, 2000
Place: Curly Ishizu residence, Petaluma, CA
Interviewer: Robert Coleman-Senghor
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

Sakai Ishizu, or Curly, as most people know him, has been a Sonoma County resident since 1946. He and his wife raised four sons, with one, at the time of this interview, living in Japan. Around 1906, Curly's father immigrated from Yamaguchi-ken, near Hiroshima, Japan, and worked in San Francisco and Watsonville before moving to Merced County, where Curly was born. Merced County's once wild landscape became known as a farming community when grapes, vegetables, peaches, apricots, and almonds started to flourish. Curly's parents bought property there. Curly attended Livingston High School and remembers fishing, swimming and playing with neighbors. Besides Japanese, Curly remembers Caucasian, Portugese, German, and Mennonites in the area, all coexisting well together. Curly's family worked in the fields, hiring Caucasians and Filipinos when needed, and Curly remembers his mother working especially hard. His family attended a Christian church, and Curly recalls more of his life on the farm. When orders to evacuate came, Curly's family had 60 acres of grapes and fruit orchards, which his father sold for only a fraction of its value.

Curly remembers the day of December 7th, and the months following until evacuation. He recalls his family's house, the process of having to leave for camp, and impressions of camp. While in camp in Merced Assembly Center, Curly volunteered to work outside in the sugar beet fields of Montana for two months. Soon after returning from Montana, his family was sent to Amache, and Curly recalls the conditions there. His own experience was different than many because he lived in a barrack with a group of friends rather than with his family. While in Amache, Curly took the opportunity to leave camp for a job in Chicago, and he recounts experiences while living there. After a couple of years in Chicago, still during the war, he was drafted into the military, reporting to Camp Leonard, Missouri. From an all-Japanese squad, he was sent to Sheppard Field, Texas, to join the Air Force. He was then sent to Wisconsin before being shipped to Belgium, and arriving just as the war ended, he served in postwar Europe.

When Curly returned from military service, he found his family had moved from Amache to Fresno and was staying with a cousin. Soon after, his father decided to move to Petaluma to buy a chicken ranch, a decision based on information from a friend his father had made in camp. The entire family helped with the chicken business. Later, Curly decided to sell the ranch and pursue another career, which ended with retirement from a

Sonoma County job. He ends the interview with his hopes and wishes for future generations and his views on the internment experience.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Can you tell me something about yourself, your name, your family?

Curly: Well, okay. I'm Sakai Ishizu. They call me Curly, though. I picked up that name in Chicago, during the war time. My family is my wife and I have four sons. I've been here since 1946, not in this original house, the house down below, and later on we built this house in 1971.

JACL: The house right down below here near Marshalls? Did you built that house?

Curly: No. That house must be over a hundred years old.

JACL: Did it come through purchase or did it come to you through family?

Curly: Through purchase. After the war, my father got to know some people from Petaluma. And he wanted to get into chickens. So we decided to come up here and this fellow helped us find this property, and that house was on it. And that house, as far as I'm concerned, has been added on three or four times.

JACL: Families changing size and all of that.

Curly: Yeah, I guess so. We were big, too.

JACL: And accommodate this expansive family. I saw the family photograph.

Curly: I have ten grandchildren now. I have four sons, I have three daughters-in-law. The oldest one still lives with us and he works in Vacaville. The next one, he lives in Japan.

JACL: What's his name?

Curly: His name is Wesley Ishizu and his wife's name is Denise. They've been living in Japan now, going on 15 years. And he works with the U.S. Navy as a civil engineer. Originally he was supposed to work there two years with the possibility of staying on two more years, and they asked them to stay and he stayed. Well, after that they keep asking him to stay all the time, and he has been there 15 years. And just the other day he said, you know, they want me to stay some more.

JACL: And he really wants to stay?

Curly: Oh yeah, he loves it there. Everybody there treats him so well. He has officer privileges, buys out of the commissary. The Japanese people are very good to him.

JACL: Did he ever make a journey back to the hometown or prefecture that your parents came from?

Curly: Yes.

JACL: And where is that exactly?

- Curly:** Yamaguchi-Ken, that's really close to Hiroshima, yes. One year we decided to take a trip up there and we did run into our relatives. One of our granddaughters, the oldest one, Christina, she is 16 years old. So she is very interested in the family genealogy.
- JACL:** That's great, so she might be of some assistance to us. So your parents came from this prefecture. Do you know anything about the background of their leaving, circumstances surrounding their departure?
- Curly:** I really don't know.
- JACL:** So your father is a Japanese who came over here and was naturalized? Or is he a Nisei?
- Curly:** No, he's an Issei and he came over here, and for a long time they were not able to be naturalized till, I think it was in 1952, when it finally opened up and that he became a naturalized citizen.
- JACL:** What year did he come over?
- Curly:** I presume around 1906.
- JACL:** And you had how many brothers and sisters yourself?
- Curly:** I had two sisters. And they are living south of Fresno.
- JACL:** So he came over here in 1906. He must have been a young man. Did he come to Hawaii or did he come directly to the United States?
- Curly:** I think he came directly to the United States, and he worked a little in San Francisco and then to Watsonville.
- JACL:** So his first experience was as an urban experience.
- Curly:** I would imagine so. I don't know what he was doing, maybe a houseboy or such.
- JACL:** Did he ever have an Angel Island experience?
- Curly:** No, he never did tell me about that.
- JACL:** So there we are in the Fresno area. Tell me something about that area. Tell us, was it north of Fresno, south of Fresno, in Fresno?
- Curly:** You mean where I was born? Yeah, I was born in Cressy, California, which is in Merced County. In that area, they put in grapes and they had vegetables and they eventually put in peaches, apricots, almonds and it became a real farming community around Cressy, Livingston, Cortez, all that area.
- JACL:** Give me a picture of what it was like.
- Curly:** I remember details of my experience as a farm laborer as a small boy. I remember working for a number of Japanese Americans, what I took to be Japanese Americans, and now I know that most of them were, of course, Issei.
- JACL:** What was that community like? What was work like?

- Curly:** Work was mostly working in the vineyards and orchards. My folks bought 20 acres of property. Everybody around there owned property. It was kind of set up by this newspaper man in San Francisco. He started the company—it was the the Yamoto Colony in the Livingston area. At that time, the Japanese could not own property.
- JACL:** So you leased it.
- Curly:** Well, through certain ways they formed a company or something; they had to own it one way or the other. That's how they got started down there. But then we all got educated. I went through high school.
- JACL:** You went to Merced High School or Livingston?
- Curly:** Livingston High School. Then after that, the war started and we got stuck in concentration camp.
- JACL:** Let's go back to this period. I still want to see you as a kid, running around those fields. I don't think you ran around too much if your dad needed you to work for him.
- Curly:** Well, you know, when you have your vineyard or orchard you don't have to work that hard. Certain times you are very busy, but there are certain times when you have lax time. We had fun going fishing, swimming in the beaches, this and that. We didn't go to town very much. We had neighbors; we'd go play with neighbors.
- JACL:** So this was a colony. Are we speaking about the Japanese, or are we talking about Italians or Indians? The Sikhs and Hindus were farming also in that area.
- Curly:** At the time when we bought property, we had American neighbors and Portuguese neighbors and that's about it as far as I know. German families and there were some Mennonites around in the area. We all got along real well.
- JACL:** There is a picture in John Ford's "Grapes of Wrath," which describes the "Okies" coming into California. Did you have any contact as a child with that population?
- Curly:** No, well, we were there, but I don't think we were involved with that group.
- JACL:** When you did your harvest, for instance, there's a lot of pruning, of course, to do in an orchard, and it's very difficult if you don't have a large family to do it or if you have neighbors. So you have to hire. Do you remember who your dad hired or how he handled that task of pruning? Who he hired?
- Curly:** Yes, he hired. There were lots of Caucasians that were willing to work in the fields at that time. We did hire those people and there was a group of Filipinos. They were very good workers. They were willing to get down and do the work. We did a lot of the work ourselves, and my mother... I really felt feel sorry for my mother. She went out and worked with my dad and us and then she has to come home and cook meals and wash clothes and everything. In those days, men folks had a habit of just flopping down and not helping.

- JACL:** You know, that comes across as an important story that has emerged in our accounts. Virtually every one of the men that we have spoken to has made a point about the way that the Japanese woman was the backbone of the family. Although the fathers were out there working hard, it was the mothers who really were the ones who labored.
- Curly:** I think they instilled the things that the kids should know. They instilled in us that we should be seen and not heard, things like that...
- JACL:** Can you describe your mother?
- Curly:** Oh, she was... I don't know. I'm having a hard time remembering things, anyway.
- JACL:** We all do. Let's see if we can get it. These things need to come out. Was she a woman who was a good cook? You know, sometimes someone may not be a good cook. You know.
- Curly:** She was all right. She did real well. And then, I am sorry to say, in those days, we didn't have any electricity or gas, so we had to use kerosene stoves that she cooked off of. And then just like for washing clothes, she had to go outside and start a fire under a wash tub and keep the water warm and there were no washing machines so they had to use scrub boards, you know. So it must have been a hard life. But, you know, as a kid you don't know much anyway.
- JACL:** There's mom there, really working away. How did she dress? Do you have an image of her?
- Curly:** Oh, she dressed just regular, whatever. She never had good clothes that I can think of.
- JACL:** Sometimes there are those pictures of traditional ways of farm women, and I've spoken to others, where their mother's actually dressed the way they did in Japan. They came to America, and they used some of the same ways of dressing. That's an important part of the picture of her. So in looking at this, was she Buddhist or Christian?
- Curly:** I don't know what her original religion was. We had a Methodist church and we all went to that, so we were brought up as Christians.
- JACL:** That was an important moment for your parents, then. They were perhaps Christian. Christianity in Japan has a long history from the 15th century; there were Catholics and later on Protestants. So your parents are involved in this work. What about their social life?
- Curly:** The social life was the church. Every Sunday there was church and then going to your neighbors. Actually, they did not mingle very much with other races. Mostly, I would say, like clannish, even certain towns and everything...
- JACL:** That's a traditional kind of thing even with European groups. Did your mother, father speak English?
- Curly:** My mother was... oh, she got along. But my father was very poor.

JACL: So your mother was the one that had to deal with the business community. Did you see those encounters like going to the store? Did she take you to school?

Curly: We walked to school, maybe a couple of miles.

JACL: Sounds as if you had a very insular life, centered around the family, centered around church, around the working community, is that the picture? So you were involved in school, how were you as a student?

Curly: Very poor. I didn't want to study. I was too lazy. I still am; I'm a very lazy person.

JACL: Now, how can a farmer be lazy? It's very hard for a farmer to be lazy. So now we're looking at the fact that you're 15, 16. You were born in what year?

Curly: 1921.

JACL: So you're born in 1921, and you're looking at the fact that in 1936 you were 15 years old. So you are really coming into manhood now. What does that look like in the middle of the Great Depression? Tell us about that world. Some people say that farmers were not touched like city folks were. Was that the case?

Curly: Well, I don't know. I guess the farmer had things to eat. I know my mother, she used to plant her vegetables, things like that, and then some grapes or something like that. I have heard that people in the cities were having a hard time.

JACL: So your mother not only did the washing, she not only worked on feeding the children and getting them ready, but she also worked in the field, right? And in addition to that she maintained a truck garden?

Curly: Well, she would bring in fifty, sixty dollars each summer. And then certain type of grasses, we could eat.

JACL: Really? What grasses?

Curly: Well, I don't know the names. But you could go out in the early spring and cut some grasses and eat like it were spinach or something. I think some of the mustards.

JACL: Yeah, some of the mustards you could, 'cause I've done that myself.

Curly: That's how they lived, and then they raised chickens.

JACL: So that was where... in the raising of chickens, that was the first... was it a large group of chickens that they raised?

Curly: No, it was just a few chickens.

JACL: But that was your first experience with chickens, as it were. Tell me about a bad event or an interesting event you had when you were dealing with some of these things. Do you remember anything?

Curly: I just can't recall anything right now. Not right now.

JACL: Oh, there you are at 15, what is the most salient memory? What are the memories that sort of stay there? Was there a flood or a particular hot summer, or...?

Curly: I really can't recall, except that we were out in the fields working. That's about it.

JACL: What was graduation day like?

Curly: You mean high school?

JACL: High school graduation. Was that a big event for the family?

Curly: Not really. I don't think the Japanese at that time celebrated, to tell you the truth. We just went up there and got our diploma. It's not what it is now. Nowadays, they overblow everything. That's my two cents.

JACL: Well, here you are, let's imagine, coming into the year, let's say 1940 to '41. Do you remember anything about those years? About things happening, ideas people talked about, issues of going into a war with Japan or conflicts in the government with Japan? And here you are; you are an American citizen and you've been identified with this particular population, this nation. Do you have any memories about that?

Curly: Well, after graduating high school, I stayed out and then my dad said, "Well, you better start thinking about J.C." And I was thinking about going to J.C and the war started, and since the war started we were more or less restricted. We couldn't hardly travel; we couldn't hardly do anything. All we did was, we just stayed on the place, and eventually we got orders to move out. My father said, "Well, we're going to sell out." So we did sell out. We just practically gave the place up. That's how it was.

JACL: What details do you remember when you sold out and you practically gave the place away, to give your children an idea?

Curly: We had 60 acres of property—grapes and almonds, apricots and peaches and other things. We had to get out of there in the middle of May. Until then, we took care of the property, all the pruning and everything. And all they had to do was irrigate and then harvest it. Well, people knew we had to get out and it was very hard to get any kind of money. We had 60 acres and I think the old man sold everything for about \$4,000, which was pennies on the dollar in those days. I guess the people, whoever did it, they came up smelling like roses.

JACL: So the day December 7th.

Curly: I remember it very well. I love to hunt. So December 7 early in the morning I went pheasant hunting, and I went back of Livingston somewhere to shoot pheasants and I didn't see anybody. And around noon I came into the town of Livingston and I stopped at the restaurant to eat. When I went into the restaurant, the radio was on, something about Pearl Harbor and this and that. I said what the heck is this all about? Pretty soon I find out that Japan had struck Pearl Harbor. And here I had a shot gun in the back of my car, so I just had a

small sandwich or something and snuck in my car and snuck away. (He chuckles)

JACL: Do you remember the people in the restaurant responding to you?

Curly: They didn't say anything; they didn't do anything.

JACL: Did anything happen subsequent to that event, do you recall?

Curly: No, nothing ever happened. People over there were real nice. Actually, I have never had what you call discrimination there. Once I got in the service, yes, I had lots of discrimination.

JACL: We'll talk about that. You know, the interesting thing that is emerging, the claim that the relocation was for your own protection. What's emerging is in a lot of communities, the people in the communities knew you, knew you as hard workers, the Japanese immigrants as hard workers and as trustworthy people that paid their bill, etc. There you are now between the 7th of December and the 15th of May. What were those months like?

Curly: We went to the Merced Assembly Center. We had to take two trips. We took the family and baggage there and we came back again, and we noticed we needed some gas and noticed someone had helped themselves to it.

JACL: So you came back to your property and there was someone already there on your property?

Curly: No, we don't know who. We didn't see anybody there.

JACL: But someone had already taken your gas. There you are. How far is Livingston from Merced Assembly Center? I want to get to the story to see what happened when you were so close...

(Break)

JACL: Tell me something. We were at that barn that we were so excited about. Tell me about the circumstances of your living. You were near Mr. Tameoka and the comparison between your house and his. Tell me something about the place you lived in.

Curly: When my father first bought the place, I wasn't there. I was born later.

JACL: This was in Livingston?

Curly: No, in Cressy.

JACL: When he bought the place, there was a big barn. Alongside there was open land, and we had hay in the middle and we lived in the far end. I still kind of remember a little of it.

JACL: What do you remember most of it?

Curly: It was one big barn, and we did the cooking in the stove and we were sleeping in the far end. Then eventually, my father built a home. All it was, was one by twelves stuck together, more of a shack, because the majority of people at that time were poor. We were very poor. That's about it.

JACL: So there you are getting ready for camp now, not getting ready but being told to get away.

Curly: Yep, we were told to get ready. Get out! Get out of California! We had people higher up arguing and everything. I don't know what it was; they just wanted us out. It was not only in California, but even in Washington, some of those very powerful people wanted us out. There were some people that questioned it, but their voice was very small. But anyway we got out, and we got to camp and that was it.

JACL: What was it like as you watched these other people coming? Were you first in the camp or some of the later ones in the camp?

Curly: We were about the second group or so.

JACL: Describe that for me 'cause you're nineteen or twenty years old...

Curly: Twenty years old.

JACL: And you're coming into this situation, and you are looking at these people. Some of them are people from the coast who have never experienced heat like you're accustomed to. What do you remember of that?

Curly: I don't remember too much about that, except that people were coming. At that time I wasn't serious. All I was interested was what the future was to be.

JACL: Here's a question I have for you. Was there anyone in the camp, in terms of administrative person, a guard or a person in the camp, that you knew lived in the Livingston or in Merced area?

Curly: I don't recall. I know some of the people were working in administration and everything. Considering that I was a very bashful person, I didn't get out much.

JACL: So what was it like for you in those few weeks of camp, not in Amache but in...?

Curly: You mean in Merced?

JACL: Merced Assembly Center, yeah.

Curly: Well, it was an experience that you just follow other people like sheep as long as they fed you and had a place to sleep. That's the main thing.

JACL: Did you have any thoughts yourself of looking around. I mean, you end up volunteering for the United States Army, going to the 442nd.

Curly: No. I did not get in the 442nd. I eventually ended up in the Air Force.

JACL: And what was your function in the Air Force?

Curly: Grease monkey.

JACL: The irony. They take you off, they evacuate you and now they have you working on aircraft.

Curly: Well, after all, this is our country. Ee can't go back. We can't go back to Japan. We were born here; this is our country.

JACL: Give me some sense of the routine of that first camp, of Merced Assembly Center, that you remember, the things you did. You said you were a very bashful person, you stayed to yourself, but there were also routines, ways of surviving the very boredom, even of the camp?

Curly: You had friends and you visit friends, and some of the things like the bathroom were very, well, embarrassing. It's a hole cut in a board with a metal trough underneath with water used to wash it.

JACL: Basic field latrine.

Curly: And the only thing I can recall is it rained, when it did rain, that place was, my god, the dirt got all sticky and, my god, tracked it everywhere. I guess they had a wooden floor, I can't recall.

JACL: So they keep you in the camp until August or September or November?

Curly: To tell you the truth, there was a bulletin board or something...

JACL: So there was this adobe?

Curly: Yeah, we were talking about it when we left. Prior to that there was a notice that they wanted people to work in sugar beets in Montana, so I volunteered and I went to Montana to work in the sugar beets. And I went there for two months and then I decided I've had it. So I came back, but before I came back, the Holly Sugar managers said you should be [helping the] war effort by staying in the sugar beet [fields]. After working there for two months, I made about \$20.

JACL: So you were underpaid, basically. The thing I'm trying to get at is that as a farmer, you knew what the price labor should have been.

Curly: Well, it's one of those things. It was an experience. Well, they fed us and they put us up.

JACL: That's good. That's nice of them. They fed you and got your labor at \$10 a month. That's very kind of them. But you must have had a Caucasian to talk about how you were treated.

Curly: We were treated pretty fair. Just working in the sugar beets.

JACL: It's squat labor, short handle hoe labor.

Curly: And that was during the spring and the mosquitos were so thick. Oh, my god.

JACL: This was your first time out of California?

Curly: I would say yes. And it was an experience and I met a good friend. We worked together and I'm sorry to say that in the 1955 flood in Yuba City, he drowned. That's the sad part of my life.

JACL: So one of ironies is that you met one of your best friends in your life. This trip back then down to Montana, it was your second train ride.

Curly: Well, actually the first train ride. We went there in a train and got back in a train. Right after we came back the first contingent was going to Amache, and when we arrived, there was dust bowl and nothing was set up.

JACL: Do you remember some details about that dust bowl?

Curly: Well, all I know, it was hot and the mess hall was dusty and their toilets were plugging up. That's about all I know.

JACL: But you're used to the heat in the Valley. But there is something different from that eastern Colorado heat?

Curly: It didn't have the [clouds] to keep the sun from coming in.

JACL: And then the sandstorm, describe the sandstorm

Curly: If the wind blows, there are sandstorms and you can't see too far and dust is everywhere, but you live through it.

JACL: You still had to live through the sandstorms of July, August and September. And how was the winter?

Curly: One round pot belly stove in each room.

JACL: Nothing. No trees to keep the wind from getting to you?

Curly: No, that place was bad. It was sage brush. That's about it.

JACL: Did you ever go into Granada?

Curly: Yes, we went into Granada. Some of the people might have gone more than I did.

JACL: What was your experience?

Curly: I don't remember too much about it.

JACL: Now comes the time when there is a discussion of just daily camp life. What was it like?

Curly: Just the routine, get up in the morning, go to breakfast, go to work, go to the mess hall for something to eat and go work a little more. Then in the evening there might be something to do or go out with your friends. I was a little different. I went there and I stayed with a group of people, friends of mine, and we all lived in the same place and we more or less stayed with each other.

JACL: What happening with your mom and dad at this time?

Curly: They were up in another barrack.

JACL: So you are actually separated from your family. So how was that? This was the first time that you were separated from your family?

Curly: Except the time that I went to Montana.

JACL: You were living the life of a bachelor; you are separated from your family. How did that feel?

Curly: As far as I know, it was okay.

JACL: It gave you more freedom.

Curly: I guess it did, yes.

JACL: What was your Dad's response to it?

- Curly:** He didn't have too much to say. And Mom, she was busy working in the mess hall. I think she, too, had it a lot easier when she was interned and working in the mess hall. She had more free time.
- JACL:** Is there anything memorable about the camp, an episode, that you can say, this happened on this day?
- Curly:** Not really, it was all routine.
- JACL:** Well, being called into the Army was not routine. How was that like?
- Curly:** Well, it's one of those things, that you get called. You know, the Japanese, at that time and or even maybe now, they're not the type to resist. If you were told to do something, you did it. It's not like modern society; nowadays, anything you do, you always have opposition. In those days you didn't question. If you were called, you got called.
- JACL:** I guess what I am getting at is that, on one hand, here you are in the camp. You are an American citizen, and they are calling you from the camp. And the response has been different for certain people. They wanted to serve the country but with the condition that my parents and I be let go from the camp. Did you have any thoughts of that kind at all?
- Curly:** No, not really.
- JACL:** So now you leave camp. Did you get your orders? Do you remember the day when you finally got your physical? Did you go to Denver to get your physical?
- Curly:** No, I actually, I went out of camp around May or so. They had a job opening in Chicago. So I went out with a friend and we went to Chicago to look into that job. The job was pot washing at the YMCA. So we got there, we went and looked at it and said, "Hey, this is not for us," and we walked out.
- JACL:** And you walked out and into the Army.
- Curly:** No, we stayed there a few years, a couple of years, working for somebody else when we got the Army notice.
- JACL:** So you're really in the city for the first time; this was a big city. Tell me about this.
- Curly:** I was lost. A friend of mine is very experienced. He is a man-about-town, and he dragged me along. That's how I got along.
- JACL:** Were there any women in you life?
- Curly:** No one.
- JACL:** By the way, when did you get married?
- Curly:** 1956.
- JACL:** You were just about to mention being a bachelor there, the Chicago scene. Tell me something memorable about living in Chicago.
- Curly:** Well, I tell you, after we didn't want the job washing pots, we went around looking for a job and we went to the Curtis Candy Factory and met the vice

president of something, and he was really nice to us and said, "Come on, let's get in my car. I will show you Chicago." And he drove us around Chicago and we went by a place called Lawson's YMCA, and we said this looks like a nice place to stay. And he showed us around town and when we got back to the factory, he said, "I'm sorry, but we are a defense factory. We cannot hire you."

JACL: So you mean he did not realize it himself?

Curly: I don't know. Oh, he must have known before he took us, but he was good enough to show us Chicago. And we stayed there for a while and spent some real cold days in Chicago. And in the summer it is hot and muggy.

JACL: Winter in Chicago can be tough. Did you go to the baseball games at Wrigley Field?

Curly: Oh, you don't know how many times I've gone there. It was reasonable in those days. All you had to do was catch a streetcar. My friend was a baseball fan and a sports fan.

JACL: Did you come across any anti-Japanese feelings?

Curly: Over there, very little. No, people were good towards us, real good.

JACL: Two American guys off on the town, doing the American thing in summer, watching baseball.

Curly: Well, you can say an American fellow, but we can never change our face. Our features give us away. We are Orientals, you know. Just like your nationality, I mean, there is no way of getting away from it.

JACL: So, at a ticket counter or at a store, you're met with a particular, if not hostility, it's a feeling.

Curly: No, I didn't have any of that. We used to go bowling and we never had any problems. We did have a problem once. A friend of mine throws a ball too hard and pins were jumping all over the place and the manager came over and he said, "You are throwing the ball too hard."

JACL: That was the extent of your problems in Chicago. Now you are from Chicago, and do you go into the military? What year was this?

Curly: Jeez, I don't know '43, '44.

JACL: You got to look at your exit papers there, discharge papers. Did you get a notice to report or did you just report yourself?

Curly: We did get a notice to report. We went to Camp Leonard, Missouri for induction and then they didn't take us right away. They waited a couple of months before they took us because of us being Orientals.

JACL: So you ended up with a Japanese squad, is that what you're saying?

Curly: Originally, yes. I ended up in Camp Blanding, Florida. And from there they shipped me over to Sheppard Field, Texas, and I was in the Air Force and finally they sent me to Wisconsin. And from there, overseas.

JACL: You were overseas, to where?

Curly: I went to Belgium. By the time I got there, the war was over.

JACL: So you really ended up in Belgium in the post-years.

Curly: Yes.

JACL: And you stayed there how many...?

Curly: No, from there I went up to Wiesbaden.

JACL: Or down to Wiesbaden. So you were stationed in Wiesbaden. How long were you stationed there?

Curly: About a year.

JACL: And you went into Frankfurt?

Curly: Oh, yes.

JACL: And how was that in the postwar years? What did that feel like to you?

Curly: I think Frankfurt was pretty well bombed. But the U.S. Army had a USO there and we used to go there. And we went to Heidelberg which is...

JACL: South, about 50 miles south of Wiesbaden.

Curly: At that time the bridges were bombed, but the town was spared.

JACL: They decided not to bomb the town. They just felt so strong about it. So postwar years, you come back to a world that many Japanese Americans now are going back to their homes, and where are you?

Curly: We don't have any place to go.

JACL: That's what I'm saying.

Curly: So my dad and them they came back, and they stayed south of Fresno at my cousin's house. And I came back from Europe and I stayed there for a few weeks, and then my dad says, "We're going to go to Petaluma and buy a chicken ranch." And that's where I am today.

JACL: That's quite a move now, in some ways, to go from Fresno to Petaluma.

Curly: It was, but my father knew this gentlemen that he met at the camp and evidently he talked to him or something.

JACL: Do you remember the man's name?

Curly: Yes, Mr. Kawaoka.

JACL: Oh, Mr. Kawaoka.

Curly: His sons and I get along really well and we still do. One of them lives down the road.

JACL: So now you're in the area, and what is it like chicken farming in postwar Petaluma?

Curly: I guess everybody was doing chicken ranching. It was a family operation, you know. People had 5,000-10,000 chickens, and we all made a good living. They had a coop over here and the living here is pretty good. In fact, evidently, from

what I understand, we did a lot better than people in Sebastopol. They had harder times. But things have changed. During the years that followed, big people moved in.

JACL: So did you go through a transition from poultry farming to another kind of farming?

Curly: No, what I did was I finally sold out the chicken farming. I went broke and I went to work. I went to work as a grease monkey, a mechanic. I worked for a feed company at first and then there was an opening at the county, the same type of job, and I applied for it and then I finished off there.

JACL: And now you're retired.

Curly: Yeah, and I think that was the best move I ever made. Now I get my welfare check every month.

JACL: That's your retirement; that's not a welfare check.

Curly: It's welfare to me, and man, it's wonderful.

JACL: Looking back over this life of yours, your experiences, tell what you want your grandchildren, children of grandchildren, tell me what you want them to think about?

Curly: Well, I don't know. I really want my grandchildren to be responsible citizens and respected. After all, this is their country too. We are about the world's leader as far as being a country in this world. I think that's about all I can hope for.

JACL: What should they take away from their internment experience? The question is, should it be something that we should memorialize, we call it. Justice Steven Bryer, Supreme Court, said there were three civil right cases in the history of the United States, three great failures. One was the Dred Scott Case of the 1850's, another was Plessy Vs. Fergusson that created the separate but equal case and the other was the Korematsu case, which denied Japanese American Citizens their rights as citizens. So here is this very important case, and you, as the Japanese American, embody that breach of civil rights, embody that breach of the promise to you as an American. How do you look at it?

Curly: All I can say is that I hope this memory will stay on with all our future kids of what happened. We just hope that it never happens again because I think everybody has equal rights to everything. I don't care what color or race you are or what religion more or less you are, we are all people in this world. That's why we were put on this earth, to be equals. Some people are more aggressive than others and they'll try to capitalize on it. But really, we are all equal and I would like that none of this is forgotten. Remember all the people so things like this do not happen again.

JACL: I want to thank you very much for this interview.

End of Interview

TAK KAMEOKA INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: Tak Kameoka
 Date: July 27, 2002
 Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
 Interviewers: Phyllis Tajii, Cynthia Hayashi, Marie Sugiyama & Alice Kashiwagi
 Summary: Alice Kashiwagi
 Transcription: Transcribed from DVD and VHS source material

Interview Summary

Tak Kameoka traveled with his mother, who was in a leg cast, his wife and child to Amache, CO. Tak settled into camp life where he worked as an electrician. After the war and upon his return to Sonoma County, he and his family stayed at the Hamamoto residence in Napa.

After a six-month period of searching, he found the property where he presently resides: 1041 Middle Two Rock Road. Little discrimination was felt by the returning evacuees in Petaluma. A certain feed dealer treated the Japanese egg farmers well. After December 7, 1942, cameras were confiscated from all Japanese Americans. Tak did purchase a camera through a mail order house, so he has a pictorial record of camp life.

His advice to young people:

“Be brave and stand up for your rights. Don’t be silent like us.”

Transcript of Interview

(First interviewer, Phyllis Tajii)

JACL: I’m going to ask questions about your experiences before World War II, and in general what are your memories of your family life as you were growing up?

Tak: Well, my family life is complicated... I think you interviewers forget to ask because my experience before the world war started is very complicated in the sense that whether you desire to hear it or not... My life starts here at 13, when I had to move from Japan to California by myself to stay with my uncles where they are farming in Salinas Valley where the cousins, 8 cousins and I live together and go to school.

JACL: When you came over here from Japan to live with your uncles, what kind of work did you do?

Tak: What do you mean?

JACL: Did you come here to go to school?

Tak: Yeah.

JACL: Did you work as well?

Tak: Well at thirteen, I helped to farm with eight cousins. The only thing I can remember is that I had a pretty good experience with my family... because with my aunt being kind to me and treated me like a son so I had a good experience away from home. That... as far as going to school together with my cousins and after school we have to farm together with my cousins. I experienced a good life. Are there any other questions?

JACL: When you were going to school, were there many other Japanese or Japanese Americans with you?

Tak: Oh, yes, there were a lot of friends, and I was one of the Taks... three Taks, and we were in the same class and we were called "Three Taks". Had a good experience with school as well as family. My aunt was a Christian and they were, especially my aunt, were very religious and I was very happy with the family. I believe that was the influence of my aunt, which made me who I am. In 1938, my mother came from Japan and then we had to move from the Salinas area to another area where we did the farming. And that was just before the war and I was doing well with the farming, and in 1940 I got married and was doing well in farming and the war came.

JACL: And now, did you say your mother came over to America?

Tak: Yes, in 1938.

JACL: And did your father stay in Japan?

Tak: My father died when I was five, so I don't know my father.

JACL: And did you move up here before the war?

Tak: We... I moved to the Point Reyes area in 1938 with my mother and worked for my wife's uncle and then I... it was 1938 until 1940, I raised peas... those days there were peas. And when the war started, then I didn't know what to do. But we were... before the evacuation, I had to plow the fields and get ready for that year's crop.

JACL: And you moved up here. Did you make friends with other Japanese or Japanese Americans?

Tak: Well, I did have a few friends in the Santa Rosa area. That's why before the evacuation we had to move out of that critical area before February 28, so we had to move to Santa Rosa where my friends stayed.

JACL: So you moved to Santa Rosa to be near your friends?

Tak: Yes, we moved to Santa Rosa and lived in the garage. During the year it was raining, the water was coming up to the floor, and we had quite an experience but we had a place to stay.

JACL: Well, going back to when you were growing up in Salinas, do you remember having Caucasian friends as well as Japanese Americans?

Tak: Well, uh, no I don't remember having any Caucasian friends... no.

JACL: And did you attend Japanese language school?

Tak: No, I didn't attend any Japanese school.

JACL: And when you were growing up, did you have any thought about whether you were considered a Japanese, a Japanese American or...

Tak: Well, we were considered Japanese at that time, at that age, we were Japanese, that's it, until later... later days we were thinking Japanese American, we realize Japanese American, but at that time we were kids.

(Second interviewer, Cynthia Hayashi. First question missing.)

Tak: As a matter of fact, I've seen on the coast one time, there was a ship that was torpedoed or it was damaged and hear on the news that it was attacked by the Japanese submarine. And I've seen the plane from the Hamilton Air Force base flying over us toward the ocean... several times as we're in a state of shock and disturbed, but we just cling to the radio for all the information we could get.

JACL: And when you heard the information that you were going to be relocated and you would have to go to camp, you and your family, how did you prepare? What were some of the specific memories you have of preparing and getting ready to leave for camp?

Tak: Well, by the time of the evacuation, as a matter of fact, we waited for February, March, April... Oh about three months just waiting for that order to move. Until then we were a little concerned about moving. Some people moved to the east. I had it in mind that I thought maybe would have to move, but where? I kept one of the trucks to move our stuff with... that is when I have to move to someplace but I don't know anybody back east, so I just settled down with the family where I stayed and waited for the next move.

JACL: And which camp did you go to, Tak?

Tak: We went to Amache Internment Camp, Colorado.

JACL: And what was that like? What did it look like or what did you do there?

Tak: Well, until we got there, the one thing I had was my mother was in crutches with a broken left leg. It happened the year before, and she had it in cast. And I had a child just about a year old and my wife did not understand English, and we went on a train trip to camp. At least for my family, it was more or less a time to settle down in the camp.

JACL: And so were the living conditions any good? Was it during the winter when the weather was really bad?

Tak: Yes, the weather was something that we never experienced in California. It was cold and the first time we see snow.

JACL: And when you had your meals there, was the food good?

Tak: Well, we were accustomed to the countryside, so as far as the food is concerned, it's good. It was just the condition that we have to get up and get in line to get the food and the other things; it was something different.

- JACL: How many do you think were eating together? How many were in the line?
- Tak: Well, I had four of them... four of us.
- JACL: And in the whole mess hall, how many people do you think?
- Tak: Well, my mother was crippled with a broken leg, so we... my wife had to take food from the mess hall to my mother.
- JACL: So did you work there, Tak, at Amache, or did you join the military?
- Tak: No, I worked as an electrician at the camp and fixed up all the blown fuses and whatever necessary.
- JACL: Was this a paid position?
- Tak: Oh, yeah.
- JACL: How much did you get for the day?
- Tak: Eighteen dollars a month. Yeah, well, that was top price... Yeah. *(laughs)*
- JACL: And did you learn that or you had the skill previously?
- Tak: My work? Well, at home when I was in Point Reyes, I was taking up radio. As a matter of fact, with radio skills I took up a home course in radio, so as far as electricity, I was an expert. *(laughs)*
- JACL: During the span between that wartime and you were being relocated and you were in Amache, what do you think were your best experiences and what do you think were probably your worst or most memorable experiences during that time?
- Tak: Well, while in the camp, one thing, you got to eat. You have to work. To work as an electrician, course, doesn't mean that you are making money, but it was okay. It was quite an experience to be an electrician in camp and work. And at that time I thought it was a good deal except when I get out... when I do get out... what I don't know about what is going to come... there is the East thing, where many people went. [He expresses apprehensions about what would happen when released from camp.]
- JACL: Well, while you were there in camp, did you stay in contact with any of your friends?
- Tak: No, I had no contact. When I came back in 1945, we were out by ourselves, so when I came out to Napa to one friend's place [G. Hamamoto] where I looked around to find a place to farm and make a living. So that was a time that was the worst to look around for a place to live. But fortunately we had a friend who gave us a place to stay and work for them while we were looking around for a place to live.
- JACL: And how many of you were leaving when you left the camp? You went in there with mom, your baby and your wife.
- Tak: How many what?
- JACL: Did you have more children when you were in camp?

- Tak:** Yeah, we had one addition, second daughter, so we were five instead of four.
(*laughs*)
- JACL:** Excellent. Okay. Thank you, Tak.
(*Third interviewer, Marie Sugiyama*)
- JACL:** Tak, we're going to talk a little bit about what happened after you left camp, and so we'll talk about those instances. Anything that you have to say about after camp will be really helpful to us. When did you leave camp?
- Tak:** I think it was August of 1945...yeah.
- JACL:** And where did you go?
- Tak:** We went to Napa where my friends had a place to stay and help out on the place.
- JACL:** What were their names?
- Tak:** Jusan Hamamoto. He used to have a dryer, so we moved to there... yeah.
- JACL:** I think they still have that property over there.
- Tak:** Yes, they do, but I don't know how they're doing.
- JACL:** Now when you were there, how did you happen to find another place to work and to live?
- Tak:** On the weekend, we drove to Petaluma, Santa Rosa. There was one place cheap enough, but the location wasn't that good. So we stayed at Napa for almost six months before I finally located the present place.
- JACL:** And where did you finally settle down in Petaluma?
- Tak:** Its address is 1041 Middle Two Rock Road, which is a place I stayed for the last almost sixty years... yeah.
- JACL:** Did you do farming there?
- Tak:** Yes, we went right into farming.
- JACL:** What kind of farming?
- Tak:** Truck farming.
- JACL:** Yes, you grow some great vegetables. We benefit from them at Enman No Tomo. How were you treated when you left camp? Did you feel that there was prejudice?
- Tak:** As far as I could recall, we never get up against discrimination. I don't have an experience facing such discrimination, so [I've] been lucky. I think Petaluma area, we didn't have any kind of discrimination.
- JACL:** The Petaluma area had quite a few Japanese, and so the community was quite friendly.
- Tak:** Yes, I believe that that was it, because a lot of families had chicken farms which they started, and they had help from a particular feed dealer who had helped

them start in on their chicken farm. So, I think Petaluma area, the people were very lucky.

JACL: Now, are you involved in the Japanese community now?

Tak: Yes, now I've been helping the church and JACL and such, but before I had to work and make a living so at that time there was no way I was getting away from home, So yes, we've been helping out.

JACL: When you came to the United States, you were a Japanese citizen. Is that correct?

Tak: Oh, yes, I was born here. I was born in Watsonville.

JACL: Oh, you were born here and then you went to Japan?

Tak: Yes, when I was about five until about thirteen.

JACL: So you bought your property after you came back from Amache?

Tak: Camp... yes.

JACL: And your children, how old are your children and how many children do you have, Tak?

Tak: I have six children; they have all attended Petaluma schools.

JACL: And what are they doing now?

Tak: They're doing their stuff. They're making their own living. Only one at home, but they're doing all right.

JACL: And did they go on to college?

Tak: All of them... had to send to college, except one, a son. He was ready to be drafted, so he joined the Navy. He got his education in the service, and he's doing very well.

JACL: What is he doing now?

Tak: He's a top architect for a machine company.

JACL: And I understand your daughter has Muffin Street?

Tak: Yes, she went to college, too, you know, (*laughs*) but she is doing well on the muffin shop. I think they're doing okay. And one daughter, well, as a matter of fact, two of my daughters are registered nurses. The oldest one lives in Kansas City. She's more or less retired, and the second daughter is a nurse... she's doing nursing.

JACL: Did your wife come from Japan? Is that correct?

Tak: She was born here. She was born in Watsonville.

JACL: Oh, I see...

Tak: Yeah, she was born here and was back in Japan, until she came back again.

JACL: Okay, now we're going to switch interviewers.

(Fourth interviewer, Alice Kashiwagi)

- JACL: Tak, for so long I've heard of you taking a lot of pictures during the war years. Is that true?
- Tak: (*Laughs*)
- JACL: Can you tell us about that, or would you rather not talk about it?
- Tak: Well, since you asked, I am not supposed to have a camera then, in those days.
- JACL: But we're all so thankful that you did because you have a record.
- Tak: Yeah, me and George, a friend of mine, worked in a radio shop.
- JACL: This was in Amache Camp?
- Tak: That was in Amache. He's a great, great friend [Okimoto-san]. I worked in the radio shop too, and besides that, I took pictures.
- JACL: So you have pictures of your daughters when they were young?
- Tak: Oh, yes.
- JACL: That's one part of my life that I regret because I don't have any baby pictures.
- Tak: Well, you were young then.
- JACL: I was very young, but I don't have any pictures for myself like youngsters do nowadays. And how did you get that camera?
- Tak: Camera... we bought it through the mail.
- JACL: Is that right?
- Tak: Oh yeah, oh yeah, it's amazing.
- JACL: How did it get through security?
- Tak: Yeah.
- JACL: Well, good for perseverance and good for you. I like that spirit.
- JACL: How do you feel about redress?
- Tak: Well, redress, as far as getting the money, it's fine. I don't know how others feel. It's good in a way, but I don't feel... really...
- JACL: It certainly didn't make up for all that you lost, right?
- Tak: No, not the experience that we had. It doesn't make up with money.
- JACL: So your last question, Tak, is what advice would you give young people today? Because of these experiences that you have had in the past, and we have a lot of young people coming up, what advice would you have?
- Tak: Well, they could talk. Speak up. Not like us more or less quiet down. So speak your own piece, otherwise you would be like us and go through this whole kind of experience. So be brave, speak up and say your piece.
- JACL: Thank you, Tak. Thank you very much for sharing your stories with us.
- Tak, do you talk to your children about your experiences there in Amache Camp?

Tak: Well, when they ask. Other than that, then I just don't say anything.

JACL: Do you find it difficult to talk about it, or not?

Tak: Well, it's experience that... I'm not the type to brag or anything, but it didn't feel necessary to speak out... like right now. (*laughs*)

JACL: You were wonderful. Yes, we really appreciate your speaking to us. Thank you.

End of Interview

ALICE MORITA KASHIWAGI INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: Alice Morita Kashiwagi
Date: February 22, 2003
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewers: Phyllis Tajii, Nancy Davlin, & Jim Murakami
Summary: Alice Morita Kashiwagi
Transcription: Transcribed by Alice Kashiwagi on March 12, 2003 from VHS videotape and DVD source material

Interview Summary

Alice Morita Kashiwagi is a Sansei [third generation Japanese American] born and raised in Sebastopol, CA. Her father, Kichizo Morita and mother, Kikue Kikuchi Morita bought land in 1937/38 on Sanders Road. Along with Kichizo's mother, Umeno Morita, they cleared the land and planted an apple orchard.

It was to this orchard that the family returned after being interned in Amache, CO. Alice recognizes and admires the perseverance and intestinal fortitude of her pioneer parents and grandmother. Alice recalls that the apple orchard was cared for by Florenzio Lorenzo and his family. They lived in the family house which was built in 1937/38 by Kichizo Morita. Many acts of kindness were bestowed on the Morita family by the Lorenzo family. Upon their return to Sebastopol, three teachers from Analy High School came to the home to offer their help. However, a vigilante committee threatened the family to leave before dawn.

Following the war, Alice recalls happy days at local schools where many awards were received. Foremost was a citizenship award from the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her younger sister was awarded the DAR Citizenship Honor a year later.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Tell us a little about yourself.

Alice: My name is Alice Morita Kashiwagi. I was born in 1938 which makes me 65 in just a few days. Just recently I received my Medicare Card. I was just totally shocked when I received that Medicare Card. I was born right here in Sebastopol. I attended Pleasant Hill Elementary School right on the corner of Watertrough and Elphick Roads all the way from first grade to 8th grade. Went on to Analy High School, on to Santa Rosa Junior College then to San Francisco State University. I got both my B.A. and my M.A. there in Education. Taught for 31 years, ten of those years were at Candlestick Cove School in the San Francisco Unified School District and 21 years right here in Sebastopol at my favorite school, Apple Blossom School in the Twin Hills School District.

I have 3 lovely children. They are all young adults right now. One of our children is interested in our oral history and she presently holds two part time jobs, one with the MIS, Military Intelligence Service as a web site designer and the other with NJAHS, National Japanese American Historical Society. Both groups are compiling oral histories as well.

JACL: Would you like to tell us about your parents?

Alice: Yes, I would love to. My dad, Kichizo Morita, came here to the U.S. at Angel Island in 1917. He came all by himself at the age of 14 years and 9 months. His parents reentered the U.S. five years later. I consider my father a genius. He was such a talented individual. He attended a photography school in New York, way back when, probably in the early 1920's. He became a professional photographer and returned to California and opened his own studio in Salinas, close to the town of Watsonville. Between the time that my sister, Rose, was born in Watsonville and the time that I was born here in Sebastopol, my parents moved to a home on Elphick Road.

In 1937, they bought approximately 23 acres of land south of the Kikuchi Ranch on Sanders Road. Of course, that land was bought in my mother's name because my dad, being an alien, could not own property. It was a good thing that they bought that property at that time. After the war, that is the property that we returned to. Earlier, I said that my dad was quite a genius because he built the home on Sanders Road; the home was 900 square feet. He built it without any formal carpentry training; everything was done by himself. He was extremely clever in what he could do.

Because the war broke out, they did not live in the house for very long. In fact, my sister told me last night that the home was almost a brand new home, just several months old, when we had to leave. And when we left, the property was taken care of by our neighbors.

My dad did not continue as a photographer. By the time he moved to Sebastopol, he had five children, with another on the way, and he just felt that farming was a better profession to raise children. They had a place to live, a place to work and food was always plentiful. He and my grandmother always enjoyed planting vegetables and working in the fields. He never lost his interest in photography. He always took so many pictures of our family and our get-togethers. He always had that interest in photography.

When the property was bought by my mom and dad, the property had to be cleared so I understand that my mom, dad, and grandmother cleared the land, and they had little equipment at that time. Much of the work was done by hand without any machinery. All the eucalyptus trees were cleared from the property and they worked planting rows upon rows of apple trees, and because apple trees do not produce fruit for the first seven years, they planted rows of boysenberries and youngberries between the rows of apple trees. Berries produce the very first year, so that was the source of income for the family until the apple trees began to bear fruit. To supplement our income we went out to work in other orchards throughout the town of Sebastopol. So our family was

well-known as a hardworking family. Well, we did what we were told to do and that is how we functioned during those years.

Besides building his own home, my dad built a packing shed to eliminate the middle man... he wanted to pocket more of the income... We packed our own fruit and my brother, Roy, shipped the apples to markets in San Francisco and Oakland. As I told you earlier, my dad was quite ingenious in what he did. Because our family had grown, he built an addition to the 900 square foot house that he had built earlier. He extended the house to an additional 1,200 square feet. He added on four bedrooms, a living room and a bathroom. He laid the hardwood floors himself and applied all the tiles in the bathroom, both on the walls and the floor. And to this day, there is not a single tile that has come loose. He was quite a craftsman. He loved America, and he loved doing what he could do with the resources that he had.

When my daughter graduated from elementary school from the 8th grade, she received many honors. My mom and dad both came to the graduation, and I can still remember to this day that he insisted that a picture be taken of her in front of the United States flag. It was just his way of showing that America was good to us. He enjoyed being here and was grateful for being able to do the kinds of things that he accomplished.

My mother worked as hard, as my dad did. She was busy six days a week in the orchard. On the 7th day, she was busy doing the laundry. Remember, in those early days the laundry was hung out to dry, which always took extra time. Ironing was a laborious process too. She was always busy supporting the children, and her husband in many ways. I can't ever remember her taking time off for herself as we do today.

JACL: Before your family left for camp, did the teachers say anything?

Alice: I had three sisters at Pleasant Hill Elementary School, and according to my sister, Dorothy, who I interviewed not too long ago, she said my sisters, Helen, Dorothy and Ruth and my cousin, Harlene Kikuchi, were called into a room off the main classroom. Mrs. Brown, whose picture you see here, took them into the little anteroom and gave them each a hug and a necklace. Ruth received a red necklace, Helen a white and Dorothy a blue one. Harlene received one as well. My sister said she specifically remembers that. I remember after we returned from Amache Camp, Colorado, a gentleman in a soldier's uniform came into our classroom. Mrs. Brown looked up and exclaimed that person's name, then ran over to give him a hug. That gentleman was a relative who had been in the Army in the European front. It was so wonderful that he returned to her intact. She was so excited about him coming home. I was excited for her, too, it made me very happy. It was so good to know that she treated us with utmost kindness in the classroom, and here she had a relative who was battling in the war.

JACL: What do you remember about Amache Internment Camp?

Alice: There's not a whole lot that I remember about camp because I was just four years old. What I have learned about camp I have read about in books from our

extensive JACL library and listening to all the oral history interviews in the hall here. There are just a few things that I remember about camp. I remember that my mother, Kikue Morita, use to walk me to the playground, and I can recall my mother and I walking home from the playground. I can recall playing in the snow. I don't remember waiting in line to have meals in the mess hall, nor do I remember waiting in line to go to the restroom. Any of those unpleasant memories... I don't have those unpleasant memories at all. I just don't remember much of anything there.

JACL: Alice, can I ask you a question? You were four years old when the camps closed. What were your feelings about leaving the only home that you knew and were being kicked out of camp, so to speak, because they closed those camps?

Alice: You know, Jim, I don't recall even leaving camp. I'm sure my parents were really, really happy to come back. They must have been very excited about knowing that they could return here to Sebastopol, but the only thing I remember is that ride on the train. I remember coming home through New Mexico because when we came to a stop, the vendors came to the windows and sold things off their trays. I do have a handkerchief that I bought through the open window.

JACL: Well, there is a reason for that question. May Otani Yamaoka said that when she left camp she cried because it was the only home that she knew. And she was sad because she was leaving.

Alice: I don't even remember the room I slept in. I've learned that the rooms were 20X20 and very crowded. The beds were lined up side by side with little room to walk through. Can you imagine living in such an arrangement for 3 years?

The beds were very uncomfortable. I do remember one thing, though. My mother had gone to the mess hall to collect all our meals. We ate all our meals, or most of them, in our bedrooms. We weren't allowed to go to the mess hall to eat, probably because they wanted to keep us together as a family unit. I do remember my mother getting very emotional at one of the meals. Amongst the food were apples from Sebastopol. I'm sure this brought many memories of her orchard back in Sebastopol.

JACL: I can remember your dad because we lived on the same block as your family. I really admired him; he was a very tall man. I didn't realize that his training was in photography. I always thought that he was a plumber because he always carried around a big pipe wrench, and I'd never seen a pipe wrench before.

Alice: Yes, he was a very talented individual. He had a sister living in Japan, so in essence he was an only child here in America. I suppose that explains why he had ten children. He wanted the company of brothers and sisters. We also teased him that the reason he had so many children is that he wanted a ready work force for the orchard. We worked from dawn to dusk. We did all the work that many of the workers are doing in the fields now. We carried ten foot ladders, 40 pound boxes of apples, and maybe that is why my upper body strength is quite strong.

JACL: I'm glad you mentioned Mrs. Brown because she was my teacher when I went to Pleasant Hill School. This was way before your days there.

Alice: Yes, she was quite a gem.

JACL: What happened when you returned home?

Alice: I have heard that our family was one of the first families to return to Sebastopol. Our house was taken care of by a family, the Lorenzos. Mr. Lorenzo's name was Florenzio and his wife's name was Julia. I don't know how it came about that they began living in the house that my dad built, but somehow my Dad in all his resourcefulness got them to come to live in our home. Mr. Lorenzo was originally from Spain. They lived in our house for three years, took care of it, they had four children, three of the children still live in this area. Mr. and Mrs. Lorenzo passed on several years ago. When we had returned home, Mr. Lorenzo met us wherever we disembarked, and in the car were bags of groceries for our family. Also, there was a dog called Spotty. Apparently when our family left for Amache Camp, we had left our family dog with the Lorenzos because pets were not allowed to go to the camps, and our dog had died while we were away. Mr. Lorenzo replaced the dog with Spotty, and Spotty was our family pet for many, many years.

That very day that we returned, a car drove up in our driveway and there were three gentlemen in the car. I say gentlemen, but maybe I should use a different term. Three people were in the car. They came out of their car, knocked on the door just as Mr. Lorenzo was leaving. My mother must have sensed that something was going wrong so she called for Mr. Lorenzo to return. But he kept right on walking to his car and left. Well, it turned out that these three men were a self-styled vigilante group, and they were there to tell us to leave and to leave by midnight. Of course, my mom and dad were very distraught. They told us to keep our street clothes on and not change into our pajamas in case we had to leave in the middle of the night. My dad had no car, had no chance to buy a car, so he walked from home on Sanders Road to the town of Sebastopol, which is about five miles away. He reported this incident to the police [or Sheriff's Dept.] and we were afforded protection around our home. The sheriff was reported to have said in a newspaper article that he is not a Japanese lover but he has the duty to maintain law and order, therefore, he was providing that service, and that was the end of the article.

Mr. Lorenzo came back the next day to inquire about us. He said the reason he did not come back when my mother called him was because he had been threatened by those men in the car. He came back the next day to find out how we were. Another example of caring individuals. I had mentioned earlier that my dad had walked into town and that is about five miles, so he really was quite brave. He was exposing himself to a lot on his walk into town, but there wasn't anything that he wouldn't do for his family. He was a great father.

JACL: Can you think of others who helped your family?

Alice: When I returned, I was in elementary school. My sisters reentered Pleasant Hill School. There were three gentlemen who came out to the house one afternoon.

I'm sure immediately my mother and dad became very petrified not knowing why they were there. Well, as it turned out they were teachers from Analy High School. A.J. Allen was a biology teacher. Mr. Pat Irish, was a chemistry teacher and Mr. Bernard Evans was an industrial/agricultural teacher. The three of them came to the front door and spoke to my mom and dad and told them that if for any reason they needed help of any kind to be sure to let them know and they would be most willing to help in any way they could. For our oral history project, I did interview Mr. Irish, and it just so happened that it was six months before he turned 100 years old. First of all, I thanked him for being so kind to us and he said, "Oh, no, you don't need to thank me for anything." I said, "Well, you were exposing yourself to a lot of hatred from people in the greater community. Why did you stick your neck out?" Mr. Irish said, "Well, it was just the right thing to do. Now, I'm not a hero, but it was just the right thing to do!" Three months later, Mr. Irish died, three months shy of 100 years of age.

JACL: Why do you think that your parents did not talk about the internment?

Alice: It probably was very hard for them at the very beginning. It was a very unpleasant experience, and we have a tendency not to talk about unpleasant things. That was one reason. The second reason was as a youngster, and even in high school, I didn't even think about the internment. I wish I had now because as an adult I have a lot of questions I would like to ask my parents. I gleaned a lot of information from reading, but it would have been nice to get it first hand from my parents. And thirdly, they were just people who wanted to move on. My dad worked very, very hard. I sometimes liken it to divorce situations where if you continually add salt into the wound, over and over again, you're perpetuating a negative environment, and in this negative environment nothing gets accomplished and they were people who wanted to move on, they wanted to forge ahead. I think that they thought of just letting bygones be bygones and moving forward. In many cases, I think that was one of the reasons why they didn't want to talk about it. I could be very naïve about this situation because I don't know what they actually went through emotionally. They must have gone through a lot in this situation.

JACL: Did you experience racism in Sebastopol when you were growing up?

Alice: No, not really. My family was very well-respected here. We were known... especially since we went around picking up fruit and picking fruit, we were known as a hard working family. So when farmers needed help, we were one of the first families contacted for our labor.

I was very well-respected in elementary school, high school. I'm sure that if things were directed at me I would have hated it, but I loved going to school every day. I also was very active in student government, was president of G.A.A., which is the Girls Athletic Association, and also president of Girls League, which is an organization for all the girls at the high school level. I'm sure that if they didn't care for me, they would not have elected me into such a position.

I, as a youngster, did not experience racism growing up in Sebastopol. When I was in high school, I was awarded the highest citizenship award by the

Daughters of the American Revolution. I felt very honored to get that award as a senior and even more so when I had heard that DAR was very anti-Japanese American during the war, and if a group such as DAR is able to forgive and forget, I feel that we can do the same. Just a year later the same honor was bestowed on my younger sister, Carol. I just have had a very fine life here in Sebastopol. I like living here. The people in the greater community are very caring about one another. And we have some very good programs going on here in Sebastopol and I just feel like a very rich person. For many years, it was rural Sebastopol but it is no longer rural. It is a great place to live.

End of Interview

KAWASE FAMILY INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Harue "Alice" Kawase Inouye, Haruo "Harry" Kawase, Takayuki "George" Kawase, & Hatsue "Auntie Hachan" Kawase Otani

Date: January 8, 2003

Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA

Interviewers: Carol Kawase & Marie Sugiyama

Summary: Jodi Hottel

Transcription: Transcribed by Jodi Hottel from February to March, 2003 from DVD source material.

Interview Summary

Carol, a Sansei, interviews four members of the Nisei generation in the Kawase family. From oldest to youngest, they are: her aunt, Hatsue Kawase Otani; her father, Haruo "Harry" Kawase; her aunt, Harue "Alice" Kawase Inouye; and her uncle, Takayuki "George" Kawase. They talk about their lives, beginning with their early years in San Benito County, their early schooling in Cotati, and life on the ranch, which was purchased just one year before the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Each member of the family describes how Pearl Harbor affected their lives, what it was like to be evacuated to Merced Assembly Center and then Amache Internment Camp. They describe the varied kinds of work they did in camp and about the death of their father while in camp. They also tell about what happened to each of them after they left camp as they returned to Sonoma County or went elsewhere for work. Finally, they give their opinions about redress and words of advice to future generations.

Transcript of Interview

Carol: So we're going to start with *Bachan* [grandmother], my grandmother, who was born on January 19, 1892 in Hiroshima, and her name was Yasu Ono and she was one of six children. Is that correct? One of six?

Harry: That's correct.

Carol: She married Grandpa, Kichitaro Kawase, in Japan, and he was 13 years her senior.

Carol: So Grandpa came first to the U.S. in 1900, and then Grandma joined him in 1918. Grandpa paid for her to come over first class because he wanted to make sure she was treated fairly. The years 1915-1920 were the years of the "Yellow Peril" campaign initiated by the Hearst newspapers. Grandma was 26 when she came over. So my first question is who remembers which immigration station Grandpa came through?

Harry: No.

- Carol:** You don't? Okay, and do you know whether or not Grandpa came by himself or with somebody else? Did he come with another family member?
- George:** Not to my knowledge.
- Carol:** So when Grandma came over and she and Grandpa lived in San Benito County, what did Grandma and Grandpa do for work?
- Harry:** As for work they lived at the seed farm which was Ferry Morse, and they took care of the seeds, and various seeds that Ferry Morse raised, like flowers and vegetables. That's where he worked.
- Carol:** Okay. And how long did he do that? From the very beginning? Is it something that he had to..?
- Harry:** Five years or so.
- Carol:** Okay. There were five children, and Auntie Hachan was born first, so Auntie Hachan, do you want to tell what year you were born and where, what town?
- Hatsue:** Let's see now. I was born in San Juan Bautista in 1921.
- Carol:** And Dad was born second.
- Harry:** I was born in San Juan Bautista in 1922.
- Carol:** Okay. And then Auntie Alice, you were born third...
- Alice:** I was born in San Juan Bautista in 1923.
- Carol:** Okay, let's see, the fourth was Auntie Kay? And what year was she born?
- Alice:** She was born three years later, 1926.
- Carol:** In San Juan?
- Alice:** Uh-uh, no, she was born in Hollister.
- Carol:** In Hollister? Okay. So that means that Uncle Taka was the youngest.
- George:** I was born in 1929 in San Juan Bautista.
- Carol:** Okay. Do any of you remember whether or not Grandpa and Grandma kept in contact with their family in Japan? Or did any of the family in Japan come to visit you in San Juan? Do you remember any of that?
- Harry:** No.
- Carol:** I know most of the family still keeps in touch with Grandma's side of the family [Ono] in Hiroshima, but I wasn't sure whether or not Grandma remained in contact with her family during the early years in San Benito County. Her siblings are Kenji, Tomiko [died when she was in her 20's], Hisako, Kiyoshi [younger brother], and another brother who left the family and never returned. Do you remember what school you went to?
- Harry:** I went to San Juan Elementary School.
- Carol:** Do you remember your best friend? Did you have a best friend?
- Harry:** No. I never had a best friend. (*smiles*)

Carol: Okay. Did you have any *hakujin* [Caucasian], friends?

Harry: Uh, no.

Carol: Okay, and Auntie Alice?

Alice: I went to San Juan Elementary School.

Carol: Did you have a best friend?

Alice: They were mostly Japanese people, Japanese students then. Didn't have a best friend.

Carol: No? Okay. So how about you, Auntie Hachan?

Hatsue: I went to San Juan Grammar School.

Carol: Did you have any friends?

Hatsue: Japanese friends.

Carol: Mostly Japanese friends?

Hatsue: I have Japanese friends that I used to correspond with.

Carol: And how about you, Uncle Taka?

George: I was only one year old at that time (*laughs*).

Carol: Okay.

George: At the time we're talking about I was only one year old, so I don't remember anything at all.

Carol: Okay. The next question is did you have any hobbies or did you find that you had to work with Grandpa and Grandma?

Harry: I had to work with them.

Carol: Do you remember what you had to do?

Harry: We had to take care at home and had lots of chores that we had to do at home.

Carol: Okay. And how about you, Auntie Alice? Did you have any hobbies or did you do anything fun with your friends, or did you have to work too?

Alice: Well, we worked, but when we moved to Salinas I remember we worked in the strawberry field. School was across the street so we worked from five o'clock picking strawberries. That's what I remember. (*laughs*)

Carol: And did you get paid for it or was it just fun?

Alice: Oh no, we didn't get paid for it.

Carol: And did you find it was fun or hard work?

Alice: It was hard work because I was in the second or third grade.

Carol: Yeah... And how about you, Auntie Hachan? Did you have any hobbies or if you had fun, or what kind of work were you doing, chores?

Hatsue: During the time we were on the strawberry ranch, you're talking about?

Carol: Whenever. During that early time period.

Hatsue: Early days?

Carol: 'Cause you were the oldest.

Hatsue: We helped on the strawberry ranch.

Carol: Did you have to do a lot of babysitting with the other kids?

Hatsue: No.

Carol: No?

Hatsue: I don't remember it as hard work. (*smiles*)

Carol: Okay. Do any of you remember if you were invited to hakujin family homes, or did you pretty much stick with whatever the community was?

Harry: I remember we were invited... I don't remember their first name... I remember their last name was Cooney. [on Petaluma Hill Rd.]) They used to invite us.

Carol: The whole family or just...?

Harry: Just the children, the kids.

Carol: And did they treat you to a special treat or..?

Harry: Oh, they did, oh yeah. They really took care of us.

Carol: Do you remember that? Do any of you remember going over to the Cooneys?

Alice: She used to bake a lemon pie every so often and bring it over.

Carol: Okay. So that's nice. And during that early times, do you ever remember being teased for being Japanese? Do you remember any specific incident where it just really sticks in your mind? 'Cause I remember when I was younger the kids in junior high would always tease me for being Chinese, and it always used to bother me to try to figure out how to correct that and tell them that I was Japanese. And I always ended up kind of just keeping my mouth shut because I just knew that it was going to be a real hassle to try to explain it. So do you ever remember any of that when you were little? No harassment or teasing from the other kids?

Alice: I know when we moved to Cotati, a Russian girl blamed me for cutting her dress with a scissors, but I wasn't accused of it. I wasn't blamed for it by the teacher.

Carol: And do you know why she blamed you?

Alice: I think maybe she was against the Japanese because of the war with Russia.

Carol: Oh... Interesting. Did Grandpa or Grandma volunteer in anything, or wasn't there a community center in San Benito County? You can't remember any of that? Uncle Taka?

George: Well, during that period I was too young to remember anything. We're talking in terms of 1930, actually, it was 1932 that we came to Cotati. I was still about three years old, two years old at that time.

Carol: Okay, so in 1932 when the family moved to Sonoma County, then did Grandpa and Grandma rent a place or did they immediately buy the ranch?

Harry: When we came to Sonoma, they started the seed farm. He had 100 acres. Walter Rohnert started the seed farm for us.

Carol: Was that in Cotati?

Harry: That was in Cotati, yes.

Carol: So during that time then, in 1932, you would have been probably around ten years old, and Auntie Hachan would have been around eleven, and Auntie Alice would have been around nine, and Auntie Kay would have been like six, and Uncle Taka would have been about like he said, three. So where was that 100 acres? Was that in Cotati or Rohnert Park?

Alice: The 100 acres was on Petaluma Hill Road. Mr. Cooney leased the property to Rohnert Seed Company, and that's how we got started.

Carol: Okay, and do you remember, Auntie Alice, what school you went to because you would have been nine?

Alice: We walked three miles to Cotati Elementary School. The streets and fields were white with heavy frost. Auntie Kay started first grade, so on frosty mornings she would cry so Hatsue would take her gloves off and rub her hands so she'd stop crying.

Carol: And you'd all walk together?

Alice: Yes, until we got bicycles.

Carol: Do you remember that, Dad, walking three miles?

Harry: We walked three miles every day, rain or shine, we were there walking three miles to school.

Carol: Did you like school?

Harry: No. (*laughs*)

Carol: You didn't have a best subject?

Harry: No.

Carol: Why didn't you like school? Was it too hard or was the teacher too mean?

Harry: I don't know. I had a hard time learning, and that was probably why I didn't like it.

Carol: Okay, and Auntie Hachan, did you like school? Did you remember your teachers or anything fun in school?

Hatsue: Anything fun in school? No, we just did whatever the other children did.

Carol: Did you think that you were a good student?

Hatsue: Average, I guess.

Carol: So now, Uncle Taka, did you remember going to Cotati Elementary School?

George: Yes, I remember that, but I think primarily among the Nisei the problem had been that our parents didn't understand English, and all the homework that we brought home was all in English. So we didn't get any backing from them, any support. We had to get our education on our own, so that's what I think made it difficult for us.

Carol: So did you all have to help each other, or did you have friends that helped you?

George: When you're out in the sticks for three miles, you're on your own. *(laughs)*

Carol: Yeah. Okay, and do you remember any of your best friends from that time period that you hung out with? Or was it pretty much work, and school, and chores?

Harry: It was pretty much work, school, and chores.

Carol: So you didn't have friends that you did stuff with?

Harry: No.

Carol: Now, was the church here at that time period, or was there another community hall somewhere? Who remembers if there was another church? Auntie Hachan, do you remember if the church was here?

Hatsue: I don't think the church was here. There used to be a community hall where all the Japanese got together to see movies, but I don't remember the church.

Carol: And what else did they do besides movies?

Hatsue: Oh, the community hall, it was just for the movies that I know of.

Carol: Do you remember what kind of movies?

Hatsue: Japanese movies.

Carol: Okay. Now, do you have any other memories you remember from your childhood? Did anybody have any memories?

Alice: I have a hakujin, [Caucasian], friend. Her name is Valentina Garzolli. [Mrs. Mager] We had lunch together most days through grammar school, and junior high, and high school. I still keep in touch with her.

Carol: Oh yeah? And she lives where now?

Alice: She lives in Petaluma.

Carol: Oh. Wow! Good. So now in the 40's, Auntie Hachan, were you the first person to get married in the family?

Hatsue: Ummm.

Carol: Okay. So, do you remember the date and where you met Uncle Paul?

Hatsue: Well, I was working for him candling eggs. And I must have been 19... I don't remember now.

Carol: And how long did you work there?

Hatsue: Oh, a year or so.

- Carol:** And did he take you out to anywhere fun or nice, or did you just decide to get married?
- Hatsue:** That's about it. That was just before the war.
- Carol:** Yeah. Okay, and then Auntie Alice, did you get married before the war or after the war?
- Alice:** I got married after the war—1950 in San Francisco.
- Carol:** Ah. Now tell me a little bit about when was the ranch purchased? Dad, do you remember when?
- Harry:** The ranch was purchased in 1940.
- Carol:** Okay. And can you tell them where the ranch was exactly, and how many acres it was, and who was living around the ranch?
- Harry:** The ranch was in Highland Avenue [Cotati] and there was a lane called Lau Lane and that's where the ranch was. And let's see...
- Carol:** Wasn't there like 13 acres?
- Harry:** Oh yeah, it was about twelve acres there.
- Carol:** Do you remember any of the neighbors?
- Harry:** Rich was our neighbor... gee, I can't remember the rest.
- Carol:** Was the deed placed in your name or was it placed in Grandpa's name? Because at some point in time there was the California Alien Land Law where immigrants couldn't own land, so Grandpa was not a citizen, right, of the United States.
- Harry:** So how this started is that before he purchased the property he used Jim Otani's name. He would purchase the property, and as the years went by it was shifted over to my sister. And then from there, I took over.
- Carol:** So that was how you got around the law to own it.
- Harry:** That's right.
- Carol:** Okay. So you only had the property about a year or so. Do you remember where you were on December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was bombed? Auntie Alice, do you remember where you were?
- Alice:** I graduated Petaluma High School in 1941, and then I went to work for her [Hachan] husband's sister's restaurant as a waitress in Sacramento. And when the Pearl Harbor hit, a German customer told me, "I know just how you feel because that's how I felt in the First World War." So that's what I remember about Pearl Harbor.
- Carol:** And did you kind of have to leave and go home or were you at work?
- Alice:** I left Sacramento, and then we relocated from Cotati, took a train in Santa Rosa to Merced Assembly Center.

- Carol:** Okay. And Dad, do you remember where you were when they had the bombing of Pearl Harbor? Were you on the ranch working? How did you hear about the bombing of Pearl Harbor? Was it through the radio or did somebody tell you? Did you have phone then? Did somebody call you and tell you?
- Harry:** Probably through the radio. We listened to it.
- Carol:** Okay, and do you remember what you felt or were you worried?
- Harry:** No, we weren't worried about it. We just went on and took care of the ranch. There wasn't much you could do about it—being worried about it.
- Carol:** And Auntie Hachan, do you remember where you were when they had the bombing of Pearl Harbor?
- Hatsue:** Yeah, I was home.
- Carol:** Working. And do you remember what you were thinking about, or were you worried?
- Hatsue:** It was kind of scary, but, you know, there wasn't much we could do.
- Carol:** Okay. So now, Uncle Taka, how old were you when they had the bombing of Pearl Harbor?
- George:** I was about about twelve at the time, and it was kind of interesting, in fact. I was in sixth grade at the time, and Friday everyone was, you know, "Invasions" and "Japanese". Everybody describes the problem. Monday morning we got segregated. It was like they just cut a line off, and Caucasians are over here and the Japanese are over there. There was about four or five of us all in a group. That was it. I myself didn't even know about it until I got to school that there was a bombing. And it was Pearl Harbor being bombed, and it was bombed by the Japanese. It was a rude awakening when I got to school. *(laughs)*
- Carol:** Okay, so at around that time, Auntie Hachan, you would have been about 20, and Dad would have been around 19, and Auntie Alice, you were 18, and Uncle Taka, said that you were 12, and Auntie Kay would have been about 16?
- It's my understanding in March of 1942 after they signed Executive Order 9066, that's when they started the first evacuation of Bainbridge Island in Washington. So that was March, and it's my understanding that Sonoma County didn't get evacuated until May. So I wanted to know how in a month's time, or a month and a half's time, how you got ready to take care of the ranch, and deal with what to pack, and all of the other things that you have to think about when you don't even know when you were coming back. So, Dad, wasn't Grandpa more prepared than most people? 'Cause he already had a lot of things already taken care of, and it wasn't quite such a hardship for the Kawase family, correct?
- Harry:** All the equipment, we had a dairyman store it for us, and the poultry that we had, we sold it. And the cars and trucks, we had a chance to sell it, but we didn't get much for it.
- Carol:** You don't remember how much? So you had one car and one truck?

- Harry:** We had a tractor, car, and a pickup.
- Carol:** And all the furniture in the house? Did that stay in the house?
- Harry:** I don't remember what we did with it. I know we had to destroy records. A lot of furniture, we threw away. We figured why let the other people enjoy it. So, you know, we destroyed it.
- Carol:** So, who took over the house while you were gone?
- Harry:** A Chinese family took over.
- Carol:** Do you remember the name?
- Harry:** No.
- Carol:** So, Auntie Alice, you came back from Sacramento?
- Alice:** Yes, uh-huh.
- Carol:** And you helped everybody, Grandma and Grandpa, pack up, and do you remember if it was particularly hard, or do you remember what you were trying to figure out what to put in, or...
- Alice:** Well, we were only allowed one suitcase, so that was not hard to pack. I don't remember too much, but all I remember is my father had a bonfire. And he burned the books and his [judo-no] certificate.
- Carol:** Okay. And Auntie Hachan, you had your own home, right, on... where is it that you lived?
- Hatsue:** Redwood Highway.
- Carol:** Right. And what did you remember you had to do with your... wasn't it the egg candling business? Did you have somebody take over that?
- Hatsue:** Yeah, we had a family take over the ranch.
- Carol:** Was it a Caucasian family?
- Hatsue:** Yes.
- Carol:** And what did you do with all the stuff in the house and all of the business?
- Hatsue:** We put it all in one room and locked it hoping that they don't get into it. You know, like some of the bedframes, mattresses and blankets. When we got back, it was still okay.
- Carol:** Do you remember the name of the family that took over the house or the ranch?
- Hatsue:** Their name was Anderson.
- Carol:** And was it a family, a husband and wife?
- Hatsue:** It was a family, but I think the father probably passed away, and the son took over.
- Carol:** Is the family still around here? Do you know?
- Hatsue:** I don't know. We don't correspond with them.

- Carol:** And so, Uncle Taka, what do you remember because you were what six or seven? No, thirteen... I'm sorry... thirteen?
- George:** No, I don't remember very much about it other than the fact that when we relocated we went into the assembly center in Merced, and we were there for about what, six months?
- Carol:** What do you remember when you first got there? Well, wait. First of all, how did you get there? Do you remember how you got there?
- George:** That I don't remember. But I guess it was in autumn by the time... the assembly center closed up because of the fact that everybody there was moving to Amache, Colorado.
- Carol:** So you don't remember when you first got there any...
- George:** Nothing in particular.
- Carol:** Nothing in particular?
- George:** Nothing in particular other than the fact that it was nice and clean. It was just framing, and they had tarpaper on the outside and a type of wall with some insulation. And it was put up just temporarily.
- Carol:** But it was a nicer environment than some of the other people who had to go to Tanforan and Santa Anita. So you were lucky.
- George:** Well, it was cleaner than the horse stalls at Santa Ana.
- Carol:** Yeah. Does anybody remember how Grandpa and Grandma were? Were they depressed, or were they worried, or did they get angry? Does anybody remember what Grandpa and Grandma were going through? Don't remember any specifics?
- Harry:** I don't think he was angry. He wanted to stay and take care of the ranch. And we were saying that don't do anything anymore, you haven't got a chance to stay. Whatever he planted, he stayed till the end, and then he had to let it go.
- Carol:** So you don't know what happened to all the stuff that he planted? Did the Chinese family harvest it?
- Harry:** No, no. We don't know that.
- Carol:** So, did you have any money to take with you? Did you have money in the bank that you had to withdraw to take with you? Do you remember any of that?
- Harry:** We didn't have much, no. We had very little to keep it going. 'cause we started the ranch within the year, I think.
- Carol:** That's right.
- Harry:** We had to borrow, and even at that, it was all in the ranch. All the expenses were in the ranch. So we couldn't take anything with us.
- Carol:** So, if you had to borrow money to get the ranch started since it was only a year since you'd purchased it, do you remember what the banks did? Did the banks hound you guys for return on the loan, or do you remember?

- Harry:** A lot of it, we tried to get a loan, but we worked on it ourselves.
- Carol:** Is that because you probably couldn't get a loan?
- Harry:** It's possible, yes. I don't remember.
- Carol:** You don't remember that. Okay. So, do you remember how you got to Merced, by bus, by train?
- Harry:** Bus.
- Alice:** Train (*smiles*) from Santa Rosa.
- Carol:** Auntie Alice, you remember getting on the train?
- Alice:** Oh yes, I remember getting on the train, and then the train took us to Merced. And I don't know if it was a rainy day or what, but I remember the rainy days in Merced. Between the barracks it was very muddy.
- Carol:** When you took the train did they request that you close the shades down so that you couldn't see out?
- Alice:** I don't remember that.
- Carol:** You don't remember that. Okay, so you stayed in Merced for six months, then you were transported to Amache Camp. Do you remember how you got to Amache, on the train too? Did you take a train, or was it by truck or bus?
- Harry:** We took the train.
- Carol:** And do you remember having to keep the..?
- Harry:** In the desert the train stopped, and we had to get off and stretch a little bit. That's what I remember.
- Carol:** Was it hot?
- Harry:** No, it wasn't too hot.
- Carol:** And do you remember what your first impressions were when you got there?
- Harry:** No.
- Carol:** Did they ask you to stuff your own mattresses? Do you remember which barrack that you had to go to?
- Harry:** Yeah, well, 12F was our block number, and that's it. [address was 12F, 1-B according to WRA record] All of us took care of our luggage and stayed there.
- Carol:** So there were how many people in the one room? Was it one room?
- Harry:** Just one room, yes. Six of us.
- Carol:** Do you remember what was in the barrack when you got there?
- Alice:** Scorpions were running around, and it was very windy, sandy, and night, as I remember it.
- Carol:** Do you remember the food?
- Alice:** I don't remember eating, no.

- Carol:** Do you remember the food, Dad?
- Harry:** No, I don't remember food at all.
- Carol:** You don't? How about you, Auntie Hachan, Uncle Taka? Do you remember what the food was like, or do you remember anything about Amache Camp?
- George:** I can remember Amache as far as we had apple butter to put on our toast and what have you. And that was a dark brown preserve.
- Carol:** And did you guys all eat together, or did you split up and have fun and run around and do what you want to?
- George:** Well, we more or less by age group got together with the rest of the Japanese kids, and the parents would eat by themselves with their age group. As far as the train ride to Amache, it was kind of interesting, when, like my brother was talking about, the stop in the middle of the Nevada desert, they asked us to get out and stretch. All you saw was sagebrush for miles and miles, and then you had armed guards on both sides of the train.
- Carol:** Yeah, it's like where would you even possibly run to before they gunned you down, huh?
- George:** Well, there's no place to run to.
- Carol:** Does anybody remember outside friends, either *hakujin* friends, other like Mexican friends or Chinese friends, that sent you stuff or came to visit you?
- George:** No, we didn't have anyone come to visit us either in Merced or in Amache. We had Japanese friends come over to visit, but other than that, none of the people from this general area in California came to visit us.
- Carol:** Did they correspond?
- George:** No. No correspondence at all.
- Carol:** So you didn't know what was going on at home 'cause nobody sent you a letter saying, "Oh everything is fine." So you didn't know what was going on with the ranch, right?
- George:** Right.
- Carol:** So, in camp, do you remember if you participated in any of the activities there? Did they have like baseball, or did that happen after?
- George:** I went to judo classes for about a year while we were there. And that was about it. I didn't participate in baseball or anything like that.
- Carol:** And then you had to go to school?
- George:** Well, school was just a normal school. I did my junior high school there in Amache.
- Carol:** And do you feel that you got a good education, or did you feel that it was just kind of bare basic, or...?

George: Well, it was basic education that we got, and I guess that's all I can say about the schooling that we had in camp. It was the Japanese, well I guess those that had the schooling background that was doing the teaching.

Carol: Right. So now, Auntie Hachan, isn't it my understanding that Kenny was born in camp?

Hatsue: Yeah, he was born in camp.

Carol: Was it shortly thereafter? Or was it a while? Had you been in camp a while before he was born? Do you remember what year he was born? I hope so.

Hatsue: (*Laughs*) My memory is out. [birth of son was January 19, 1943]

Carol: Well, do you remember whether or not it was easy or particularly hard to have a baby in camp?

Hatsue: Well, they treated the patients fine.

Carol: Yeah. Was there a doctor that came, or was it mostly the nurses.

Hatsue: Doctors and nurses were there.

Carol: Were they there every day, or did they only come like once a week?

Hatsue: No, I think they were there all day every day.

Carol: Was it a Japanese doctor or a Caucasian doctor?

Hatsue: Japanese doctor.

Carol: Uh-huh. Do you remember, Auntie Alice, what you did in camp because you didn't go to school in camp, right?

Alice: No, I didn't.

Carol: So, what did you do?

Alice: I worked in the mess hall in 12F, and then I went to the property office and was a typist there. And then I went to the hospital as a nurse's aid, and what was memorable was that I worked as a scrub nurse in surgery. The operations were very interesting.

Carol: Wow. Did you get paid for that?

Alice: Yes. We got paid sixteen dollars a month.

Carol: What did you do with your money?

Alice: Saved it. (*laughs*)

Carol: And so, isn't it also my understanding that Grandpa got sick when he was at camp?

Alice: Oh yes, uh-huh. While I was in Colorado Springs and Denver, he had cancer of the stomach. So I had to come back, and we were all with him when he died.

Carol: So it was fast, then?

Alice: It was fast. After the operation, Dr. Uyeyama said, "He'll live a year", and he lived exactly a year.

- Carol:** So, Dad, in Amache did you stay in camp, or didn't you get to go outside of camp to work? Or did you stay in camp and work?
- Harry:** I stayed in camp to work, and I drove a coal truck and worked in the mess hall and stayed with the silk screen.
- Carol:** What else did you do in camp? Didn't you do, like woodworking?
- Harry:** No.
- Carol:** Because you used to make, like little wooden bird pins, and you had a woodburning..
- Harry:** It was a hobby for myself, not for the school or anything like that.
- Carol:** Uh-huh. And did you make sixteen dollars a month too?
- Harry:** Right.
- Carol:** What did you do with your money?
- Harry:** Oh, I bought a nice watch. *(laughs)*
- Carol:** Oh yeah?
- Harry:** Uh-huh. I made sure I can get up in time. *(smiles)*
- Carol:** And did you order that through the Sears catalogue?
- Harry:** Yes, I did.
- Carol:** Yeah. That's how you got a lot of things, right, was through ordering it through the Sears catalogue. Do you guys remember having to answer the Loyalty Questionnaire? Do you remember? Did Grandpa die before or after the questionnaire?
- Alice:** It was after the questionnaire. Right after he died we left camp.
- Carol:** Oh, okay. So, do you remember the questionnaire?
- Alice:** No, I don't.
- Carol:** Do you remember the questionnaire?
- Harry:** No, I don't.
- Carol:** Do you remember the questionnaire?
- George:** No.
- Carol:** You don't remember answering the questions on the questionnaire?
- Hatsue:** No.
- Carol:** So, now, Dad, were you drafted, 'cause weren't you draftable age for the military service?
- Harry:** I worked in the farm. My dad didn't like me to go to the army, so I worked in the farm. And then worked in Denver candling eggs. And all that was sort of hard work, so I said to myself I think Broadmoor Hotel would be a nicer place to work. So from there the government says, well, I guess you'll have to join the

Army. So I took a physical, and while I was taking the physical the war ended. So I was free.

Carol: Hmm. But you were too young, right? *(to George)*

George: Yes. The thing that I remember about the camp was that they had a lot of farming to do. They produced chickens and various food things to raise on the farm that supported the camp. And toward the end there I worked as a [swamper]. And I couldn't get over the materials or the produce that was sent into the camp. The potatoes were rotten. And I can remember a semi load of celery came in, and water was coming out the back of the truck. And literally, the two front rows or the ones that were accessible at the door were beautiful celery, but beyond that it was completely gone. And I was thinking that if it wasn't for those farms that the Japanese were working on that supported the people, I think the Japanese would have been in sad shape as far as food was concerned. [because somebody was getting paid off for sending in poor merchandise]

Carol: Okay, Auntie Hachan, what was your best memory of being in camp?

Hatsue: Oh, in camp.

Carol: Did you have a... particularly fun?

Hatsue: No, nothing particularly fun.

Carol: No, and what was your worst memory in camp?

Hatsue: Worst... I guess not much.

Carol: Well, I might come back to you. How about you, Uncle Taka, do you have a best memory of camp?

George: Well, we used to go swimming on the lake. There was a lake next to the camp that was about, oh, a mile away. And we used to go fishing there. But other than that, there wasn't too much for us to do. We went to a movie every now and then. But beyond that, as far as money was concerned, we didn't have very much.

Carol: Do you have a worst memory?

George: No, nothing in particular bad. My only thought was about the way the food was sent to the camps. In one case, we were sent out to [Granada] to unload a freight car, and in that freight car there was only one pallet and about a dozen bars of lard and oh, there must have been about five or six cubes of butter, and that was it in the entire freight car and they sent a truck out there to unload it. *(laughs)*

Carol: So, Dad, did you have a best memory of camp?

Harry: Bad memory?

Carol: Your best memory.

Harry: Oh, my best memory. Well, my best memory was working for the silk screen. We had a good time. We made thousands of posters for the navy and the army. And I can't remember the teacher's name, but she used to take a break and we'd

be out of camp and along the river, have our picnic and we'd come back and work on the silkscreen. And those who wanted to go to Chicago, she set it up so that we can go and learn more about silkscreen. And I was one of them that said that I'm capable of taking this commercial artist. So she told me, "I'll set it up so you can go." And because of my dad being sick, I couldn't go.

Carol: And so what was your worst memory?

Harry: My worst memory?

Carol: Yeah.

Harry: Taking care of him.

Carol: Grandpa?

Harry: Uhum.

Carol: Yeah. Then how about you, Auntie Alice, what was your best memory in camp?

Alice: Being able to work in various fields. I would never have been able to work in a hospital outside of camp. It was very enjoyable for me to work in a hospital.

Carol: And what was your worst memory?

Alice: Losing my father in camp.

Carol: Ah. So when the war ended, do you remember who made arrangements? 'Cause Grandpa was gone, and Grandma was considered head of household, or dad, were you considered head of household? How did you make arrangements to come back after they closed the camp? You don't remember what date?

Harry: I don't remember the date, but a friend of ours told us to buy a car. So we bought a car, and we drove home.

Carol: Do you remember when you drove home whether or not it was easy to drive through all of the towns to get here from Colorado? Did you get harassed?

Alice: He let me drive through the desert and the salt fields of Utah. We stopped in Salt Lake City because we had car trouble, and then we stayed there until it was repaired and then drove on to the farm on Highland Avenue. He took over the family.

Carol: And so, do you remember what condition the farm was in when you got back?

Alice: I remember the house was very dirty, so we had to do a lot of cleanup.

Carol: And how about the rest of the ranch? Did you have chicken houses back then?

Harry: Let's see... we had three chicken houses, and when I came home, I worked out and got a loan and started.

Carol: Where did you get the loan from?

Harry: I got it from Sonoma Bank. And you know Mr. [Bryant]? He really helped me get this loan. We didn't have to ask for any collateral or nothing. He just said, "Whatever you need, just get yourself started."

Carol: And he was the president of the bank?

- Harry:** Right. When I came back from camp, I started this poultry ranch. I didn't have any money, so I went to, I think it was the Sonoma Bank. And Mr. Bryant, I talked to him, and he says, "Can I help you?" So I said, "I'd like to have about \$700 to get myself started." So he said, 'don't you worry. I'll have that amount in your account.' And he didn't ask for any collateral or nothing. He said, "If you ever need more, we'll help you." There was a time that I went into the bank, and I was going to put a few dollars in, and the clerk says, "It's closed now. I can't be bothered with it." And then Mr. Bryant heard that. He says, "Take care of him. I don't want you to close it." So overall, I did get help.
- Carol:** Do you happen to know why he was so helpful?
- Harry:** I don't know. No, I couldn't figure that out. He just was really helpful.
- Carol:** Do you remember anybody else who was helpful, like the feed people or where you got the chicks?
- Harry:** Yeah, Louie Hozz, he helped us on the feed ranch. And Mrs. Mortensen, she really helped on the chicks. There's a time that I couldn't pay the chicks bill and she waited quite a while [for payment]. I [eventually] asked, "Why did you wait so long?" and she said, "I usually [meditate] and take care of each family, and I can trust you." So that's how we started.
- Carol:** Now, I wanted to back up a little bit because there were a few things that we didn't get earlier. And one of the stories that was interesting that Auntie Alice had was about Auntie Kay and her award.
- Alice:** She graduated the ninth grade, and during graduation she was shocked that she won an award. And during the war, they took the award and took her name off.
- Carol:** So she lost the honor.
- Alice:** Yes, but she says she didn't care because she got it that night. (*laughs*)
- Carol:** And while we're talking about Auntie Kay, since Auntie Kay isn't here, do you remember anything in specifics that she would do?
- Alice:** Well, she says she remembers those cold mornings where she had to walk the three miles to Cotati Elementary School from Petaluma Hill Road.
- Carol:** Yeah, and how about in camp? Do you remember anything specific about...?
- Alice:** She says the most memorable thing was being all together with all the Japanese, all the Orientals in camp. She says that was really memorable. And working in camp. After she graduated, she worked as a lab technician, and then she took care of our father.
- Carol:** And then the other thing that we sort of, kind of, touched over was what Grandma did when she was in camp, and Grandpa before he got sick. Did they work, or do anything specific? Does anybody remember what Grandpa and Grandma did while in camp?
- Alice:** She worked on the farm in camp. They would ride on the truck and be taken to the farm to work on the field. That I remember.

- Carol:** Now, Auntie Hachan, now that you've had time to think about this, we wanted to come back to you and ask you, do you have a best memory of camp?
- Hatsue:** Best memory of camp...
- Carol:** Or a worst memory of camp?
- Hatsue:** The best memory? Everything's the same, you know, average. No worst memory.
- Carol:** No? Well, good.
- Hatsue:** After the war, the FBI people came to the house and wanted to know where my husband's brother was, and he had already passed on because of his illness. And they wanted to know where his remains were. So we had to tell them where he was at Chapel of the Chimes. And that was about it for that incident.
- Carol:** Were you worried?
- Hatsue:** No, I wasn't worried.
- Carol:** Were they mean when they came?
- Hatsue:** Oh, they were very... *(laughs)* very, like it was an important job for them.
- Carol:** And you thought it was funny because he had already passed away.
- Hatsue:** Well, they didn't ask me. They asked Paul.
- Carol:** Uh-huh. But they were spending all their energies on somebody who had already passed away.
- Hatsue:** Uh-huh.
- Carol:** Okay. Do you, Auntie Alice, remember any help that you got because were you still at the ranch too? Or did you move shortly thereafter, get married and move? What did you do when you got back?
- Alice:** We had to go out and look for work because no money was coming in. So my sister, Kay, and I went to San Francisco. We did domestic work, and then I went to Hazmore Sewing School. And after I graduated I worked at I. Magnin in Union Square. And then got married, raised four children, and retired from Wells Fargo Bank.
- Carol:** And what did you do for Wells Fargo Bank?
- Alice:** I worked in the area where all the mail comes in and customer service.
- Carol:** And was it hard for you to get all those jobs that you did?
- Alice:** No, it wasn't hard to get the jobs.
- Carol:** You don't remember being hassled, or..
- Alice:** No, no hassle.
- Carol:** Or getting paid less than you were expected to pay?
- Alice:** I never thought about that. *(laughs)*
- Carol:** And then, Uncle Taka, what do you remember when you got back? See, how old were you when you got out? You would have been ...

George: About sixteen.

Carol: Sixteen, yeah?

George: I finished my education as far as high school was concerned at Petaluma High School and did some gardening and tried servicing trucks. I was drafted and went and served in the Army in the Transportation Corps and then served as an oiler on an 85-foot Army vessel.

Carol: What year was that?

George: Oh, 1949-1951 period, and after that I went to look for a job. And well, since I had a diesel training, I tried to get a job at P.I.E., or Pacific [Inter]mountain Express, and they wouldn't talk to me. And I tried at the Marine Engineering Company that had these tugboats, and I couldn't get a job there. So I finally wound up working in the Defense Department and worked there for, oh, until 1984 when I retired.

Carol: So now, initially when you first went to go apply for those jobs, this was like in the late 40's, early 50's, did you feel that a lot of the reasons why you didn't get the job was more experience, or do you think left over, residual resentment from what happened in the war?

George: I think it was primarily all these places that I went to ask for work was union shops, and if you didn't belong to the union, you didn't get a job. Same thing goes for working in San Francisco. It's a union town. Just like I have a Chinese friend that was an electrician, and he tried to get into the union. And his friend was a Caucasian kid that was the son of the president of the union. And they asked the father if he could get into the union [?] , and he says, "No, you can't get in." [Union comments are not exclusive to Japanese.]

Carol: Because he was Chinese.

George: Yeah, because he was Oriental. And after about five, six years, he says, "Yeah, you can join, but your brother who has an electrical contracting job, or he runs contracting work in the shop, he says, "As long as he joins the union, you can get in." And then he was telling me that if his brother had joined the union, by the time they estimated a job, it would be so high that he wouldn't be able to get a job. So consequently, he worked in the sheet metal work at the shipyard. And then finally he went to the Civil Service Commission. He took the test. After the Civil Service provided you a number. So when you took the test, your name wasn't there, it was just a number. And that's the only way he went to work for the city.

Carol: So, Auntie Hachan, do you remember how you came back to your house on Old Redwood Highway? Did you come back in the car with everybody else, or did you come back separately?

Hatsue: No, I came back on the train.

Carol: With Uncle Paul and...

- Hatsue:** No, Uncle Paul drove to Sacramento, I think it was. And when I came to Sacramento in the train, then he came after me. And we rode home from his sister's place in Sacramento—rode home to Cotati.
- Carol:** And was the house still pretty much intact, and nothing had been disturbed?
- Hatsue:** Yes, it was.
- Carol:** And how did you get back on your feet starting the candling business? Do you remember anybody helping you?
- Hatsue:** Well, we just took over where we left. You know, these Anderson people?
- Carol:** Ummm.
- Hatsue:** They had the chickens on the farm, so we just took over.
- Carol:** So, everything was pretty much already set up, and they didn't mind passing it back to you? Was there a hassle with trying to take it back over?
- Hatsue:** No, no hassle.
- Carol:** Okay, good. Did you change the way you did things after camp just so that you feel like you fit in more? Because I know some families, they wouldn't associate with anything Japanese. You know, they always made American food, and they only bought GMC, or Chevrolet cars, or Fords. Did you change the way you did things just so that you could fit in?
- Hatsue:** No.
- Carol:** Did you make new Caucasian friends fairly easily afterwards, or did you kind of just stay within the community?
- Hatsue:** Stayed within the community.
- Carol:** How about you, Uncle Taka? Did you change the way you did things after the war just so that you could...?
- George:** No, not particularly. 'Cause the only thing that we could do was try to find a job, and that was kind of difficult 'cause I don't think there were very many Japanese that were in the union. Matter of fact, I don't think there were any. And that's why I said working at the shipyard, I was the first among the Japanese here who went to work in the Defense Department.
- Carol:** Right, because there probably would have been a lot of skepticism to have Japanese people start to work in anything that had to do with the government because of the whole incident of just what happened in internment and that fear of having Japanese people around in sensitive areas like that. So, do you remember any specific incident where you were being targeted after?
- George:** No, nothing in particular.
- Carol:** Did you have any particular friend or mentor that helped you get going, or did you just pretty much do it on your own?
- George:** I did it pretty much on my own [to get in] because otherwise there was no one there to even advise you.

Carol: Uhmm. So, Dad, did we change the way we lived just so we could fit in?

Harry: No, I don't think so.

Carol: You don't remember anything in specific that... 'cause we pretty much had... I remember all the Japanese food we still ate, and almost all of my friends were friends from around Lau Lane/Highland Avenue. They were all *hakujin* friends. And there were never any incidences, were there, on the ranch afterwards of anybody..?

Harry: Oh yes, there was a German fellow that lived on lower Highland Avenue. I happened to be in his ranch, and he was so upset that he said to, "Get off my ranch." I told him that, "You might have lost your son, but my wife's brother has gone too." And then we had a flag up there, and then he realized that we should be taken care of. So he was never mean to us.

Carol: After you pointed that out?

Harry: Uhmm. So as I went along to make a living, and I'd go to Harry's gas station to shop, just to buy bread. There was a fellow that said that, "You don't belong here in the United States." And instead of arguing, I left. So we had a [grudge] as the years went by.

Carol: Yeah. And Auntie Alice, do you feel that you've changed the way you lived so that you felt more at ease?

Alice: After the war I worked as a [domestic] for the Guittard Chocolate Company, and they were very nice people so I didn't have to change anything.

Carol: Plus, living in San Francisco, it was more of a cosmopolitan area so I think the people there were, don't you feel, more... or did you live in areas that were more ethnically [diverse]?

Alice: No.

Carol: You and Auntie Kay lived in an apartment in San Francisco?

Alice: No. We lived in a home and worked for that family. So we were treated well.

Carol: Uh-huh. And do you remember Auntie Kay changing anything?

Alice: No, she didn't change. No.

(break)

Alice: Valentina Garzoli is her maiden name—the lady that I kept in touch with all these years. Her name is Mrs. Mager right now, and she came to my mother's funeral when she passed away. Several months ago, she says she's going to stop by to visit again.

Carol: And did she tell you or support you in any way all through these years that you remember that specifically was special?

Alice: She was just friendly. That's about it.

Carol: Okay. Do you remember anybody else, Dad, that helped you besides the bank and some of the other people that...?

- Harry:** I worked in various ranches, and they were really nice. They really helped me out.
- Carol:** This was after we sold the ranch that you're talking about, or is this...?
- Harry:** No, this was way before.
- Carol:** Way before, like...
- Harry:** Right after camp.
- Carol:** Uh-huh. And what kind of ranches were these?
- Harry:** These were all poultry ranches.
- Carol:** Poultry ranches? And they helped you with giving you advice, or you worked there?
- Harry:** While I'm working there, they [comfort] me. I didn't have to worry about anything. They really helped me out—to feel that I belonged in Sonoma County.
- Carol:** Uh-huh. And you can't remember their names?
- Harry:** No, no.
- Carol:** And these were all Caucasian poultry farmers too?
- Harry:** Right.
- Carol:** Moving on to the subject of redress and reparations, I don't know how in-tune you were to how redress came about and was a struggle for what, ten years before we got it? Do you have any thoughts about how you felt about redress? You look like you have an answer, Uncle Taka.
- George:** No, I don't, but I think the, what was it, Sanseis, that went to Washington, D.C. and put the redress subject all together. And I'd have to give them credit for bringing the whole subject up and having Ronald Reagan sign it. I guess it was Reagan that signed it.
- Carol:** Right.
- George:** Beyond that, it was nice that they managed to get it through, but I hope that something like this doesn't happen again. You know, the [part of] the relocation and all that.
- Carol:** Now, did you feel that the passage of redress helped you personally in any way? Like, do you feel justified that what they did was wrong, or did you feel better about the anger because of redress?
- George:** Well, the thing is that at the age of thirteen when I went into camp, I didn't have any feelings as to what was going on. I realized that there's a war going on, but as far as what's happening to me and why and all that, and feeling any animosity against it, I didn't have that because I was still in school. It would be different should I have started going to work and being uprooted and forced into camp. That part of it, I didn't have any feelings about that because I wasn't of age.

- Carol:** And how about you, Auntie Hachan? Do you feel that redress helped you feel better about yourself because it was proven to be the wrong thing to do? Or did you have any comments on the whole struggle? Did you feel that it was something that had to be done? 'Cause, you know, there were a lot of older Japanese Americans who didn't want to push. A lot of the Issei and Nisei didn't want to push for redress because that would bring that whole internment experience out in the open. And a lot of people were fearful that a lot of those old feelings would come back. Did you feel that way, or did you think that it was a good thing? Or did it make you feel better about who you are, or..?
- Hatsue:** Well, I really don't have much to say about it.
- Carol:** Redress? Okay. And Auntie Alice, did you follow the struggle for redress, or did you participate in helping to fight for redress, or did you...?
- Alice:** No, I didn't. I didn't help. I thought it was a good thing and changed the minds of many Americans. Redress was a good thing.
- Carol:** Because I think it's very important to note that the reason why President Bush now was very careful about how he addressed the Arabian Americans here in the United States was directly related to the history of the internment and redress. And so he knew that that whole experience, I think, helped formulate how he took care of when we had the 9/11 terrorist attacks. So, Dad, do you have any thoughts on redress because I remember you used to ask me all of these questions of why we were doing it and dredging up all of these bad...
- Harry:** As for myself, redress did help, you know, to keep the family going. That's all I can say about that.
- Carol:** Financially?
- Harry:** Financially, yes.
- Carol:** And did it also help you feel better about what the government had done was wrong, and that it wasn't just something that should be blamed.
- Harry:** No, I never felt that way. I felt that this is the way the war had been going on, and we had to go along with what the government asked us to do. And that's what we did.
- Carol:** Right or wrong.
- Harry:** Right or wrong, right.
- Carol:** And that's because it's very difficult for Niseis, I think, because you've got a lot of the Japanese cultural thoughts. But you're really American because you were born here. So that puts you in a very interesting segment of history. Whereas third generation on were pretty much considered American, and so we don't really harbor a lot of those cultural things. Or those cultural things don't really tell us how we... dictate how we live anymore. So, getting back to Marie Sugiyama's question, do you have any advice for young people? Auntie Alice, what do you hope for your grandkids?

- Alice:** Well, I hope they don't experience anything like we did and they have much more opportunity in the world today. So, I guess, study hard. (*laughs*)
- Carol:** That was a big thing. I remember Mom and Dad used to always tell me, "You got to study hard and get ahead because without education, you can't do much of anything."
- Alice:** That's true.
- Carol:** So, Dad, do you have any advice on what you'd like the younger generation to do about racism or..?
- Harry:** No, I think you're way ahead of us, so [couldn't hear-sound faint]
- Carol:** And how about you, Uncle Taka, do you have any advice or observations or wishes for the younger generation?
- George:** I think the main thing is live below your means, and this way you don't have to worry about tomorrow. Don't go and overspend because once you do that and you hit hard times, you won't have anything to lean back on. As far as relocation is concerned, I didn't realize that the Eskimos on the Aleutian Islands were moved out of there and relocated into salmon canneries in Juneau and Ketchikan and that area. And then the Japanese in South America were brought into the United States. That's one area that I didn't realize happened during the war.
- Carol:** So, education.
- George:** Yeah, mainly it's education and living below your means so you don't have to worry about tomorrow.
- Carol:** How about you, Auntie Hachan, do you have any advice for what you would like to see your grandkids accomplish?
- Hatsue:** Study hard. Work hard. And live a happy life.
- Carol:** Okay. Do any of you think that being that We've got the impending possible war with Iraq, do you feel similarities in what happened back then with what's going on now? Do you have any thoughts about that? Do you have any friends or acquaintances that are of Iraqi or Middle Eastern background that are subjected to prejudice right now?
- Alice:** No, I don't know of anyone.
- Carol:** How about you, Uncle Taka?
- George:** No, I don't.
- Carol:** No. Okay. The last question I have is, What do you think is the biggest contribution of the Nisei generation? So now we're getting really philosophical here.
- Alice:** I guess I should know, but I don't know.
- Carol:** Well, what do you think is the greatest thing that you personally have done as a Nisei, contributed to your community or your home?

Harry: Well, the only thing I could say is it took me a long time to take care of our parents, and I lived with that all the way through till they passed away. And that's what I done all of these years.

Carol: Uhhh... because nowadays we don't have a lot of younger people taking care of their elderly parents. They sort of, farm them out to nursing homes, and so that whole three generations or two generations living together doesn't happen as much.

Harry: Even in nursing homes, there's a lot of the younger generation don't even show up.

Carol: Uh-huh. How about you, Auntie Alice, do you have anything you think you've done the best contributing to either your family or your community? *(pause)* No? Well, you think about that. How about you, Uncle Taka?

George: Well, after I've retired, I've done volunteer work at the San Francisco Arboretum, and we have annual sales plus probably plant sales of every other week. And our volunteer work involves income for the arboretum of about \$85,000 a year.

Carol: Wow. So volunteering, then, is kind of like, you feel your biggest contribution in your life?

George: Yes, uhhh.

Carol: Well, that's good. That's a lot of money to bring in.

George: Well, it's a large group of people.

Carol: Yeah. And how about you, Auntie Hachan, do you feel that there's anything specific that you feel the most proud of, or that you've contributed as a...?

Hatsue: I don't think I have any. *(laughs)*

Carol: No contributions, you don't think? Keeping the family together?

Hatsue: Yeah. That's about it.

Carol: That's about it. Yeah. I think that's one of the most important things that I've noticed is the infrastructure of families is just totally disintegrating now because you have a lot of people who are divorced and blended families. And the whole sense of keeping the family together, I noticed, was really big when I was growing up. And keeping the community together and working together is really what I think is most important for the Japanese American community here was just being able to stick together and the traditions that were established, the *Bon Odoris* [Japanese dances], that we have, and the Teriyaki Bazaar, all the cultural stuff, sushi, *Mochi Tsuki*, [making rice dumplings]. I think the Issei and Nisei really were instrumental in making sure that those traditions were always available, and we hope that *Sanseis* [third generation], and *Yonseis* [fourth generation], will be able to carry on so that they will always be there.

So, with that, I want to thank you all for sitting here and giving me your thoughts about all that happened and filming it for posterity's sake, for people

like Holly and your great grandkids. It was, I think, a good experience. I hope you all felt it was a good experience. And that's it, I think, unless there was anything else.

(Question regarding celebrating holidays like New Years in camp)

Carol: Oh, that's a good question. Do you remember maintaining celebrations in camp?

Alice: No.

Carol: You weren't able to do that? New Years or any of the cultural stuff, Mochi Tsuki? You couldn't do that in camp?

Alice: I'm sure it went on, but I don't remember.

Carol: Doing that? Any other questions? Do you remember doing any of that in camp, maintaining culture, like New Years celebration or Christmas, or...?

Hatsue: We must have had Mochi Tsuki, because we had *mochi* [rice dumpling], in camp.

Carol: Yeah? But you don't remember doing that?

Hatsue: No.

George: No, I don't think the individual families did that. It was more or less at the mess hall, and I think those that were interested in participating were taking care of that.

Carol: So, did you continue those holiday practices right after camp? Did you have the money to do that, have New Years celebrations and Christmas?

Alice: I spent Christmas and New Year at the home of the Guittards taking care of their three children.

Carol: Do you remember any specific parties or anything that was particularly memorable after camp?

Harry: Not at camp.

Carol: After camp?

Harry: No, not after camp either. *(laughs)*

Carol: 'Cause there really wasn't very much money, right?

JACL: You know, I think the community, though, celebrated New Years and such, didn't they?

Carol: When was the church established here, this community hall?

JACL: I don't remember exactly what year. The church came in the 30's.

George: That came from the World's Fair in Chicago. I remember that because I had to march in the parade that celebrated this building.

JACL: And it's a very famous church because the building had no nails.

Carol: Oh yeah, that's right.

JACL: And I know your auntie over here she volunteers her time all the time for church functions. I see her at all of them, you know, *Mochi Tsuki* and sushi night, and so she's contributing, even if she doesn't think she is!

Carol: No, yeah, everybody in this particular hall, they all contribute a lot of time and energy to keep those things going. Yeah, most definitely. And they all do it without being harassed to come and help. So it's kind of like an internal clock. Yep, it's *Mochi Tsuki* time.

Okay. Are there any other questions out there?

JACL: Thank you very much. We really appreciate it.

End of Interview

THREE ELDERS INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Shigeno Yokoyama, Ayami Taniguchi, & Shigeko Taniguchi
Date: August 4, 2001
Place: Enmanji Buddhist Temple, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Cynthia Hayashi, Nathan Douglas Kitada recording
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on December 3, 2002
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

This short interview and the three that follow (with George Hamamoto, Sam Miyano, and Martin and Dorothy Shimizu), were conducted by Nathan Douglas Kitada, a student at Sonoma State University who videotaped preliminary interviews with Enmanji Temple community members for a planned documentary in 2001.

On the occasion of celebrating her 98th birthday at the Enmanji Memorial Hall, Mrs. Shigeno Yokoyama, two friends, and her daughter can only briefly stop for an interview before meeting their ride home. After Mrs. Yokoyama, Mrs. Shigeko Taniguchi, and Mrs. Ayami Taniguchi state their ages, all in the 90's, Mrs. Yokoyama seems to review one of the answers. Ann Ohki, Mrs. Yokoyama's daughter, translates and contributes.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Let's start with an introduction and you can say that it's your Mom's 98th birthday and how it feels to be living here that long...

Ann: (*Speaks to the women in Japanese then addresses Cynthia*) They've got people waiting for them.

JACL: Okay, then just an introduction. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Shigeki: Shigeko Taniguchi, 95 years old

Shigeno: I am 98, Shigeno Yokoyama.

Ayami: Ayami Taniguchi (*speaks Japanese*) 96

Shigeno: [I am] 97 (*speaks Japanese and then*) 98

Ann: I'm Ann Ohki and we are here celebrating my mother Shigeno Yokoyama's 98th birthday.

JACL: Thank you

Ann: There's people waiting for them. (*Shigeno raises her hands up in excitement*)

End of Interview

GEORGE HAMAMOTO INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: George Hamamoto – also present, Cynthia Hayashi
Date: August 4, 2001
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Nathan Douglas Kitada
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on December 2, 2002
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

In this, the second interview, conducted by Nathan Douglas Kitada, George Hamamoto talks about the Enmanji Buddhist Temple community members. When the Temple was moved to Sebastopol from the Chicago World's Fair (See, "History of the Enmanji Temple" on page 109.), the community raised the funds to have it relocated. At the time, there were perhaps four or five hundred people of Japanese descent in the area. Most of the Japanese American families were apple ranchers, chicken ranchers or migrant workers traveling to work the different crops in the area. During the war, the temple was boarded up and there was an incident of vandalism, but fortunately little damage was done and the temple survived.

During the war, of those in the Japanese American community who owned property, most had Caucasian friends to look after it, and the ranches remained intact for their return. Roughly estimating, George guesses as many as seventy to eighty percent of the families interned came back to relocate in this same area. George Hamamoto's family was one of those. His father was taken away early by the FBI, leaving eighteen year old George and the family to settle the family grocery business before leaving for the internment camp. His father did not own the building and the family suffered a tremendous loss trying to sell the inventory. However, even though life ended for the Hamamoto family in Sonoma County for the duration of the war, they returned to the area to rebuild their lives.

Transcript of Interview

Nathan: In the 1930's, how big was the congregation? How big was the Japanese American Community?

George: God, I'd have to guess, maybe 4 or 500 families, if that many. Not families, but a total of 4 or 500 hundred people.

Nathan: Most of the Japanese Americans, were they farmers?

George: Sebastopol was an apple farming community. Petaluma and scattered throughout Sonoma County there was a lot of chicken ranchers that raised eggs. There must have been a half dozen families that owned apple ranches and 15 to

20 or 25 Japanese families that owned chicken ranches. In those days, predominantly, the ranches were all owned by first generation Japanese.

Nathan: During the early 1940's, what happened to the temple during the internment?

George: Well, you know the internment came when everybody in Sonoma County had to leave, I think it was May 22 so the temple itself was boarded up and closed. I think the community was very fortunate in having it remain intact. I recall, there was some incident where they tried to burn it but they didn't do much damage. It remained intact until the Japanese people were able to come back here in the 1945's and on. When everybody returned, the community started up again and the Buddhist church started up again here.

Nathan: During the evacuation, you say many Japanese Americans owned apple ranches here?

George: Yes, there must have been a half dozen Japanese families, not Japanese Americans but Japanese first generation. Japanese Americans were second generation, they were born to *Isseis*, [first generation]. Same with the chicken ranches. There were a lot of other families but they were all working type people. They worked on the ranches in the apple industry. Then another season around this area was where they raised hops. Hops they used to make beer. It was kind of the seasonal thing for these families that didn't own property but they worked in the different seasons. They'd go to the hops, raise hops until about July. Then from July they'd move into the apple ranch and dehydrate apples and when that was over around October, November, then they would go into pruning trees for several months before they started back into hops and so the rotation. Quite a number of families moved several times a year to the different ranches in Sonoma County.

Nathan: Now the property owning *Issei*, *Nisei*... I know that my grandparents, they're from San Pedro, a fishing community and what they lost were their fishing boats, when they came back they didn't have anything in San Pedro and the apple farm owners...

George: Those that had property were able to come back to their apple ranches and their homes. The same with the chicken ranchers who owned their ranches and property. They were able to return. When they left for evacuation I think most everybody who had property had friends, Caucasian friends, who looked after their property for them. I think many people who left were hoping friends could raise enough money to pay the taxes and keep up the property for them.

Nathan: Okay, I think that is kind of unique. I know that in Los Angeles property was redistributed and it was really difficult to get property back after the war. Was the Japanese American community, post war, a smaller community or did most people move back to Sebastopol?

George: I'd say 80% must have moved back. Maybe 70 to 80%. I'm just guesstimating. Some families that lived in this area before the war that didn't move back here they moved to Sacramento, to places where marriages took place, and other contacts they made. My Dad had a Japanese grocery store here in Sebastopol.

He did not own the building and so when the war broke out he was taken by the FBI because he was one of the community leaders. So I became the head of the family at the age of 18. Then we got notices for evacuation and they gave us about two months to get ready to go and our store, we had a tremendous loss in that. We recovered about 25% of our inventory cost, okay, and we had to sell it because if we left it...

Nathan: Right, yeah

George: And that's where we stood. And uh... evacuation actually ended everything for us here until we got back. Okay?

Nathan: Thank you very much.

George: All right, all right. I wish you good luck in college, in your education.

Nathan: Thank you

End of Interview

SAM MIYANO INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Sam Miyano – also present, Dorothy Shimizu
Date: August 4, 2001
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Nathan Douglas Kitada
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on December 2, 2002
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

Sam Miyano grew up in Petaluma, California. During the war he was sent to the Merced Assembly Center and then to the Amache, Colorado internment camp. While his family was in the interment camp, their good friends, the Jensen's, moved into their house and looked after the ranch. Upon their return, the Miyano's found everything as they had left it, even the furniture was in the same place. Growing up, there were few Japanese Americans in school, so most of Sam's friends were Caucasian.

Reflecting back on the internment camp experience, Sam was twenty years old then, and of course did not welcome the evacuation order. Many of today's younger generation might question why more of a resistance wasn't made to the internment, but it was a different time back then. In the Japanese American community there was a strong sense of being a law abiding citizen, and coupled with the fact that there were fewer civil rights and many more barriers for members of the ethnic community, it was a very different social environment than now.

Transcript of Interview

Nathan: So I just talked with George about the History of the Temple.

Sam: Well, I'm not familiar with this temple.

Nathan: I was going to ask you how long have you been in Sebastopol?

Sam: Well, I'm from Petaluma, the next town over. I was born and raised there.

Nathan: You are Nisei?

Sam: What?

(Woman outside range of camera: "You're my neighbor.")

Sam: Yeah. *(smiles)*

Nathan: Most of the ranchers in Petaluma were apple ranchers?

Sam: And chicken ranchers.

Nathan: So you grew up in Petaluma then?

Sam: Yes.

Nathan: Were you a member of the Temple?

Sam: No, I'm a Methodist in Petaluma.

Nathan: What were your experiences... I'm going to jump to the 1930's, early 1940's. Most of the Japanese Americans from Sebastopol and Petaluma, where were they sent during Japanese American Internment?

Sam: We were first sent to Merced Assembly Center and then on to the Amache Internment Camp, Colorado.

Nathan: My family is from San Pedro, in LA. I know that my grandfather went up to Tule Lake. Most of the land, property and fishing boats, they never got it back. Cynthia was telling me that the Petaluma-Sebastopol area was unique in that a lot of the ranchers were able to get their property back after the war.

Sam: Well, when we were evacuated, our good friends the Jensons, they live a couple of miles from where we live, just took over our ranch. And when my brother, after the war, or before the war ended in 1945, they let a lot of them come back to Petaluma. The chicken business is unique. When we went out, nothing was changed. The Jensons moved in or their in-laws. When my brother came back, he just moved in. We didn't move any furniture. Nothing was changed.

Nathan: I was just surprised by the Caucasian's reactions. Why do you think it was so unique?

Sam: Well, that was the thing to do.

Dorothy: I think that in the country it is different than in the city. We've got friends and family.

Sam: You know, there is, how can I say, during my high school days there weren't too many Japanese in my class, 4 or 5. We had three high school grades, sophomore, junior and senior. That'd be 12-15 Japanese kids out of 500 or so. You ran around with mostly Caucasians. We've always been friends with Caucasians. What they say behind our backs, I never knew. But it turned out good.

Nathan: I guess there is a difference...

Dorothy: I think that in the county, being farmers, everybody's got to help each other and we didn't have much discrimination. We had Jewish, German and Italian. We had a lot of heavy discrimination of the German people and stuff. They weren't rude to us like the city people.

Nathan: What camp were you at?

Sam: Merced Assembly Center and Amache Internment Camp, Colorado.

Nathan: How old were you?

Sam: Twenty.

Nathan: How did you feel being sent to Amache camp?

Sam: Well, I didn't jump with joy. I'll tell you that. Back in the 30-40's, I guess you can say, our kids say, "Why didn't you put up a struggle?" or whatever. But, it's a different generation today. You know, we were, I guess, you can say White Americans at the time. Law abiding. We had a lot of people with kids that did want a higher education but at that time there were no jobs available for Nisei. Of course we were from a farm community and most of us we were going back into the farming business.

Nathan: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you for answering my questions. I'm sorry that this was so impromptu, that I don't have anything written down.

Sam: It's okay, Thank you.

End of Interview

MARTIN & DOROTHY SHIMIZU INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Martin & Dorothy Shimizu – also present, Cynthia Hayashi
Date: August 4, 2002
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Nathan Douglas Kitada
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on December 2, 2002
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

Martin and Dorothy are both Sansei (third generation). Both of Dorothy's parents were born in Hawaii, and Martin's father was born in Hawaii, and his mother was born in Santa Rosa. Martin was born and raised in Sonoma County. Dorothy was born in Watsonville, California, but moved to Sonoma County before World War II.

Martin and Dorothy were young adolescents when they were sent to camp. Both attended Japanese Language School in Petaluma on the weekends, had friends, most of whom were Caucasian, and lived in the country; Martin on a chicken ranch, and Dorothy on a farm that had young chickens and vegetable truck-farming.

When Dorothy's family had to leave for the internment camp, their neighbors took over their property, paying the money owed to the bank, renting their place out, harvesting the crops, and putting that money in the bank. There are other examples of this camaraderie between the Caucasians and the Japanese Americans in this community, and Dorothy feels it is due to the fact that in the country people have to depend on each other to get things done. Unlike the city, where there are so many people, it could be difficult to really know anyone and segregated groups can form. In the country, there is opportunity to get to know each other, have to rely on each other, to trust each other, and form a system of interdependence.

For Martin and Dorothy, at the age of twelve and thirteen, going to camp was an experience, but not always a bad experience. Surrounded by their family, not forced to make painful decisions or worry about the future, many enjoyable memories linger, such as, seeing so many other Japanese Americans in one place, riding for the first time in a train and bus, and in camp, watching movies outdoors and joining the Girl Scouts. A couple of scary incidences surrounding the camps took place when Martin was traveling on the train to camp and the train stopped on the Salt Flats. The internees were ordered to get off to stretch their legs, and were surrounded by armed soldiers. Dorothy recalls when she was in Merced, and was scared of the armed soldier in the tower watching them.

Not only did Dorothy's and Martin's families have friends and neighbors who took care of their property while they were interned, but Dorothy feels most of the Japanese American families in the area got their property back after the war. When families began returning

to the area, they also helped each other out by housing those without a home until they found a residence.

During the war, when the Buddhist temple was boarded up, some teenagers tried to vandalize it, chopping at the pillars with an ax and trying to burn it. Fortunately, they were not very successful, and a vigilante group of people helped to protect many properties in the area, including the temple. Martin feels one reason there was so much help from the non-Japanese community is because most of the Japanese families here were settled in one place, getting a chance to form a bond with their neighbors. Whereas, in some places like the Central Valley, most of the Japanese community were migrant workers, moving from place to place, and the non-Japanese community did not get a chance to know them.

Transcript of Interview

Nathan: Okay, Dorothy, and what is your name?

Martin: Martin Shimizu

Nathan: Are both of you Issei, [first generation] or Nisei, [second generation]?

Both: We're Sansei, [third generation].

Nathan: So am I.

Martin: Both her parents were born in Hawaii. My father was born in Hawaii and my mother was born in Santa Rosa.

Nathan: You grew up in the Petaluma area then?

Martin: Yeah, I was born and raised here.

Dorothy: I was born in Watsonville, but I came up when this Temple went up.

Nathan: Are you both members of the temple?

Both: Yes.

Nathan: George talked a little about the history of the temple. How it was brought over and assembled. Do you know anything about the history of the temple?

Dorothy: The people responsible for bringing it are all gone. They were the first generation, but the younger generations are here, the second, third, and now some fourth. His grandmother is the one who donated the incense burner.

Nathan: I haven't had the chance to see inside it. It looks very impressive.

Dorothy: Well, it is because it is the only real temple. All the rest of them are churches.

Nathan: Yeah, the one down in Palo Alto where I live is more of a church than a temple.

Dorothy: So you live in Palo Alto?

Nathan: Not Palo Alto, but 20 minutes away.

Dorothy: Are you a Buddhist too?

- Nathan:** No, but I teach at a Japanese cultural school. I teach drama there and I'm going to the Obon Festival tomorrow.
- Dorothy:** We do the Obon Festival here. We had it a couple of weeks ago.
- Nathan:** So, we'll go on to the Internment Camp experience in the 1940s. How old were you then?"
- Dorothy:** I was thirteen when I went to Camp on my birthday, May the 13. He was twelve.*[She motions to Martin and chuckles.]*
- Martin:** I was going on twelve.
- Nathan:** Did you know each other then?
- Dorothy:** Yes, we were going to Japanese School in Petaluma.
- Martin:** It was language school, just the weekends.
- Dorothy:** For a couple of hours, that's all. Learning... *(She laughs)*
- Nathan:** Did you have the same experience as Sam, most of your friends were Caucasians?
- Both:** *(Together they motion with their heads)* Yes.
- Nathan:** Your families, what line of business were they in?
- Martin:** Chickens. It was basically raising chickens for egg production.
- Dorothy:** We had just bought the farm. We had young chickens and vegetables-truck farming. We had a truck farm. We came from Watsonville, *(she points to Martin)* they were old timers.
- Nathan:** When did you purchase the farm?
- Dorothy:** We had just bought the farm in 1940. We had chickens and vegetables, truck farming.
- Nathan:** So in '42, when your received evacuation orders, and then during the internment, what happened to the farms? Did you have Caucasian friends that helped?
- Dorothy:** Our neighbors took over and paid the money we owed to the bank. They rented the place out. We had garlic and stuff and they harvested and put the money in the bank. So we were very fortunate, in the sense that they did that for us.
- Nathan:** You sort of mentioned it when we were interviewing Sam, but will you repeat why the camaraderie between Caucasians and Japanese Americans is different in other communities than in, say, San Pedro?
- Dorothy:** Well, in the country, we depend on each other. Like when you have a big farm and you have chickens to vaccinate and things. People help each other. It's just working together. In the city there are too many people. You don't get to *know* them. So like our neighbors too, my brothers were friends. He used to go help them gather eggs so they could play football. And so they got to be friends. So you get to be friends when you are little, you get to trust one another. We had

a lot of German, Jewish, and Portuguese friends and we were all mixed, you know, in the country here we don't have a bunch of Japanese here and a bunch of these and a bunch of that. We are all mixed together. We depend on each other. There is interdependence.

Nathan: My grandfather's experience in San Pedro was of a Japanese American island off the coast of Los Angeles.

Martin: I think it was almost like the Japanese had their own ghetto. Like the Italians had theirs and the Jews had theirs. And in a lot of the cities, the Japanese had their own, too.

Nathan: Which made the evacuation so much easier for the government. The way the community was situated.

Martin: It was all concentrated.

Dorothy: You'd be surprised, the FBI had everybody's name down.

Nathan: It's surprising. Where were you moved?

Martin: We went to Merced Assembly Center first and then to Amache Internment Camp.

Dorothy: Yeah.

Nathan: Dorothy, you were younger than Sam. He was 20. What do you remember of the camp experience?

Dorothy: Sam, he is a Nisei. He is at least ten years older than us.

Martin: For us kids it was an experience but a lot of the time it was not a bad experience. For a lot of the older generation, they had something to lose. We had nothing to lose. It was, 'Wow, we never saw so many people with black eyes and black hair before.'

Dorothy: I've been interviewed a few times by Sonoma State children and Sunday school children and I say to them, interviewing me is kind of funny 'cause I was only 13 and I had my mother and father with me. It wasn't scary. It was more like riding on trains for the first time and riding on the back of trucks and riding on buses. Something I was never able to do before. It was fun like. We used to go to the movies in the open outside, 'cause we didn't have a theater, and we had summer school and I was in the girl scouts.

Martin: I can think of only one scary experience. On our way to Camp from Merced to Amache we stopped in the Great Salt Lakes..

Dorothy: ... in the flats.

Martin: And they told us to get off and stretch our legs. And when we get off the train we're surrounded by soldiers with guns. And that's not a very nice experience.

Dorothy: When we were in Merced they had towers and at that time those soldiers had guns because they did not know Japanese and what they were going to do. They were scared themselves. So there were a few incidents, but not too many. At that time the government was powerful, when they said jump, everybody

jumped. It's not like it is now. People are independent. They weren't independent. They were small.

Nathan: It's just fascinating to hear the different stories. It seems like the camp experience depended on things like how old you were.

Dorothy: My father, in Sonoma County, had a seed farm and my dad and mom were running it. He went in as a cook. So then we had this security. My father was cooking at the camp and my mother was waiting at tables. Then the bell rings and we go to eat. It was like watching a Western movie when they are going *clank, clank, clank* (*she motions triangle ringing*).

Nathan: How was resituating yourselves back in the Petaluma area? Was it that difficult?

Martin: Actually we had a place to come back to because the Feed Co and friends managed the farm while we were away.

Dorothy: Us too. Our neighbors took care of it. Most landowners here in Sonoma County got their property back.

Dorothy: A lot of us were hostel families too. When you get out of camp and you have no place to go and no money, you've got to depend on somebody. We had our relatives and minister stay with us until he got situated. His wife was in the hospital. It took a while to get back in because everyone was trying to settle down themselves. The minister that left with us came back.

Nathan: How was the temple treated while you were away?

Martin: It was boarded up.

Dorothy: It was boarded up but some of the teen-agers got in and they took an ax. We have great big pillars on each side and they tried to chop it. But it was hard wood and they didn't do too good. They tried to burn the back end.

Martin: There was a fire once. I think that we were very fortunate here because there was like a vigilante group of people that looked after a lot of the properties in Sonoma County.

Dorothy: 'Cause there is always one or two that is going to do something.

Martin: I think that one of the biggest differences probably for us was that we didn't have that much in the way of migrant workers. So we didn't have that problem. I think that in a lot of places, the Japanese were migrant workers. And at that time they weren't homeowners. People didn't know who they were and they didn't get to know them. Then when the war broke out and a new group of laborers came in there was that animosity between racial groups, I guess. But we didn't have any. There was always instances but never anything like that.

Nathan: It sounds like the situation was a lot different here in Petaluma.

Martin: We always use to hear horror stories out there in the Central Valley...

Dorothy: There were machete fights! (*She giggles*)

Martin: Where we had people getting beat up or shot at.

Dorothy: Well, living in a boarding house, like I did. My brother and I would live with Filipinos, Mexicans and all different nationalities. We had a pretty good upbringing. It wasn't just Japanese. My father was pretty adamant when he'd say, "This is our country. Japan is nice for cultural things but this is our country." So we were lucky that we did not have that, you know, bad feelings.

Nathan: Well, thank you very much. I think we are done, unless you have something else to say.

Martin: [Looking at Dorothy for a response] I don't think so.

Martin helps Dorothy as she gets up. She is holding her cane and inhaler. Nathan then films shots of posters on walls and the outside architecture of the temple.

End of Interview

HAMAMOTO, ONO, & MURAKAMI INTERVIEW

Persons interviewed: George Hamamoto, Dorothe Masako Kobuke Ono, & Jim Murakami
Date: February 7, 2002
Place: Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, CA
Interviewer: Mei Nakano & Marie Sugiyama
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on March 12, 2003 from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

This interview was transcribed from the video *Living Voices* produced by Robert Coleman-Senghor and is a compilation of wartime memories regarding the Japanese American interment camp experience. Woven among the interviews of the Sonoma County Japanese American residents are pictures from archival footage of that era.

Among the memories of that time are those of a father being taken away by the FBI, and another father unfairly portrayed in the local newspaper as a dangerous gun owner. Suspicions by the government and community made life uneasy and brought about restrictions on travel. In preparation of the evacuation, possessions were stored, sold or given away. Memories of camp included drawn curtains on the train to camp, machine guns, sand storms, and bitterly cold weather. Adjustment to family life was difficult with the huge mess halls and lack of privacy in the barracks. Questions about loyalty to the United States at that time brought about mixed feelings because of the history of unfair laws preventing Japanese immigrants from becoming citizens and owning land, and the current state of incarceration. Executive Order No. 9066 that incarcerated so many Japanese Americans was finally rescinded by President Ford.

Transcript of Interview

(Couple walking down the street [Sebastopol] voice over, George Hamamoto)

George: My mother would make the soy bean cakes and have them ready by six or seven in the morning. And then my Dad would leave the store between eight or nine o'clock and take orders and deliver groceries. My mother opened the store at nine and kept it opened until nine at night.

(Caption: Sebastopol 1942. Footage of community gathering. Children playing with giant ball, while adults look on.)

George: I remember we always had a lot of food so the families could join us for lunch and dinner and it was kind of a gathering place and a treat for families coming to town. On the 23rd I became 18 years old and got my draft card, 1A

classification. Shortly after that, December 7, Pearl Harbor struck and things just went topsy turvey.

Jim: It was a very unpleasant experience. I still remember to this day things I shouldn't remember. Something like that to the end of my life. But being that I was fifteen at the time, a very sensitive age, I suppose that it always has stayed with me.

George: After I graduated, I thought about going to school, but my Dad asked me to stay and help out the family, 'cause things were really tough in those days. So I was off at a job pruning trees when Mrs. Taniguchi, who lived nearby, came down to the orchard and said, "You better go on home, your mom called and said come back home." So when I came home to the store I found out that my Dad had been taken by the FBI.

(Cut to old footage of police inspecting bags during, I believe, relocation. And then two women sitting in a garden)

Dorothe: Even though my father was shown in front of the *Press Democrat* as being one of the worst persons, confiscated guns and whatever they had and had my father's picture with the guns and things like that, my father never had a gun.

George: I was a Boy Scout at the time and I had a little crystal set. The crystal set was just powerful enough to pick up KSRO, which is 7 miles away. But you know, I had an antenna. Our store was under a big power line and we had a lot of static. I had wires around the top of my ceiling and when they came in they said that was a short wave radio.

Dorothe: I felt so sorry because I knew that he didn't want it to be that way it was shown. The way it was spoken of, but I think he had no recourse, because it was Pearl Harbor against the Japanese.

George: I don't know how many Japanese, first generation, were taken but most of the leaders were taken, I think, in all communities.

Jim: We didn't know whether they knew we were Chinese Americans or Japanese Americans. They just simply saw us as Asian. When you would go into a restaurant and fifty pairs of eyes were either riveted on you or overtly looking at you, it made you very self-conscious.

George: The only thing we could figure out was that because uncle Fred was born in Fresno. He was sent to Japan at age five because his parents died, and there he got an education in Japanese too. A person that is born here and then goes back to Japan to be educated is called a *Kibei*. Whereas my Dad was called, first generation, *Issei*. There was *Nisei* and *Sansei* which is third generation and we're into the *Yonsei* generation now. But my mother was born in San Francisco in 1905. I guess, I was one half, in between, but my uncle was discharged because of the fact that he had an education in Japan.

Jim: The first thing that happened was that we were all restricted to our homes. We were not allowed out after, I think, 8:00pm. This was universally true throughout the Japanese population.

- Dorothe:** We had to abide by curfew laws, not going further away than five miles, restricted to local gatherings, period.
- George:** And then I think it was April, notification came that the Japanese were going to be evacuated out of California and that we were given from April till May, I don't know what date it was, the 22nd or something and we had to take care of everything and just be at the Santa Rosa Train Depot to board a train.
- Dorothe:** We had to sell off whatever we could and what wasn't sold we gave it away.
- George:** We had a 1936 V8 that we practically gave away. The trailer, I couldn't sell, I left it with a supposedly friendly person. I signed it over to him, but I never heard from him after that and things like that. But I imagine that every family suffered financially on this evacuation.
- Jim:** The ironic part of it was that most of the people here in the country, their only means of transportation was a car. So they told us to be there at a certain time but they didn't provide for us how to get there. So when we sold our car, one of the conditions was that they give us a ride to the train depot.
- George:** And because we had the Nippon Hall by the Barlow Apple Sauce Company here in town, a lot of people who didn't have places to leave some of their belongings were stored then in the Hall. Fred was conscientious enough to go over there and categorize, put labels on and keep a record of it. And he was doing this the night before evacuation. He said that he had to go over there because he had to get all the records and he would stay there that night and come back in the morning and then join us and go with us to Santa Rosa. Well, he didn't show and we waited and waited and he never showed so when a friend of ours came to pick us up, we threw everything on the truck and he took us on to Santa Rosa. When we got there I was kind of concerned about Fred and I asked Mr. Shimizu, I said, you know, my uncle didn't come back and the last time I remember he was at the Hall. Well, what happened was, that night when the police saw the light in there they broke down the door and they arrested my uncle. I don't know if he was arrested or not but he was over at the Sonoma County jail in Santa Rosa. I think he spent the night there.
- Jim:** They allowed us to raise the curtains, I think, of the train when we were in the mountains but as we approached the cities we had to pull the curtains down. They wouldn't let us see, or look out through the windows.
- Mei:** That's what I remember, the shades being down. At some point we did stop to get out of the train. It was a desert looking place and some of the Issei ladies thought we were going to be killed, that's why they were letting us out. So that was scary.
- George:** And we got off the train, I think we boarded on buses and trucks and then taken into Merced Assembly Center.
- Jim:** They insisted on being within the barracks by a certain time and to insure that that would happen they had search lights at that assembly center. They would play the search lights across the camp as well as the machine guns being pointed in.

- Mei:** That must have been frightening for a child.
- Jim:** I think it was very frightening because that was the first time I had seen a machine gun from the barrel end.
- George:** There wasn't much privacy because although the barracks were separated by 8 foot high partitions, there was nothing covering the ceiling. You could hear one person yelling clear across from the other end of the barrack. So there wasn't much privacy.
- Jim:** We were coming from a much cooler coastal climate. Of course, we are all of a sudden thrown into the Central Valley and that was in May of that year of 1942 and it was just frightfully hot.
- Dorothe:** Amache, as much as I can remember was dust storms. We couldn't keep the sand out of the barracks. When it was a bad storm it was really unbearable.
- George:** I remember sleet, you know. Snow falling is not so bad. But sleet, it's ice. It's rain that changes into ice. I remember walking home one night from the camp, 'cause the newspaper office was about, say half mile, from where my barrack was and we worked late at night and we never got a ride. So we walked and that sleet just cuts right through you no matter what kind of clothes you have on. It was cold.
- Jim:** There was nothing to prevent us from going to other mess halls in other blocks. There was, I've forgotten the number of blocks that there were in this camp in Amache but there was nothing to stop us from going to another mess hall to have our meals. Even if you had your own meals within your own block, sitting with you would be your own contemporary friends rather than you as a family group. So you could see the family unit being broken apart by that simple act of not dining together.
- George:** The Japanese, our parents and everybody else, adjusted to the environment and they accepted the situation. What were they going to do? Stand around and wait all day? So they did the best they could with whatever they had.
- Mei:** How did they react to it?
- Jim:** I can't remember my Dad's reaction but I can remember very vividly, my mother's reaction and the first meal that we had after we got to the assembly center was a meal of cold cuts and bread. And I can still remember my mother with tears falling down her eyes because up to that time she had always prepared the evening meal and had prepared whatever she thought we'd like. That coupled with the fact that, she didn't know, we didn't know what would happen to us. I can imagine it was very emotionally disturbing to her.
- George:** I remember getting a questionnaire, that said, "Would you fight for your country?" And if you said, "No," out you go (*points with thumb*) you know, you're disloyal. If you said, "Yes," you're in the Army. It was kind of a loaded question to me so my answer at that time was, Yes, if drafted like any other normal American citizen.

Dorothe: And I didn't know why in Sebastopol, being a farmer, had anything to do with how Pearl Harbor came about.

George: In June, sometime, my Dad suddenly appears. He came to camp and I said, "Where did you come from Dad?" He said, "I got released." He was sent to camp, he got a ticket for the bus and that's how he came to the camp and everything. We were in awe because apparently he was the first one that was released. He got taken in February so he was detained about 4 months. I can recall a story that he told me. He was being interviewed by a judge in Texas and I guess they interviewed everybody to determine whether they could be released or not. The judge asked my Dad, "Mr. Hamamoto, What would you do if the Japanese Army invaded the United States and was marching towards you?" He thought about it and he really got mad. He really got mad and said, "Your Honor", he said, "I came here when I was sixteen years old and I've never been back to Japan. My wife was born in San Francisco and is an American citizen. My six children were born in this country. They're American citizens. As much as I've wanted to be a citizen of the United States, your laws prevented me from being a citizen and prevented me from owning land. With all that", he said, "God damn it, what the hell do you think I would do? What do you think I would do? I'd had to fight for the only country that I have. What would you do?" And he shouted, you know, and he said, Oh Boy, that's it, they're going to throw him in the clinker and throw away the key. The judge said, "Mr. Hamamoto, I'm very sorry, that was a very loaded question. But to answer your question to me, I would do exactly the same thing you told me you would do." And that's how he was released.

Still Footage of Ceremony and printed wording of Executive Order No. 9066.

Jim: One of those memorable events for me as president of the National JACL, was being in Washington D.C. to witness the rescission of EO No. 9066 by President Gerald Ford and I have a personally signed, original copy of that proclamation that he rescinded, EO 9066. The reason that was so important to the JACL, was because it was still on the books and it was still very much of a concern that we get that erased from the books so that it not be there any longer.

George: Well, when the war broke out, it kind of, you know, it kind of took my breadth away. We never had anything like this before.

Dorothe: You'll never know the answers, though, except it was a very hard time for a childhood, I would say.

End of Interview

MASUOKA FAMILY INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Frank Masuoka, Anna Matsuyama Towata, Virginia Matsuyama Masuoka, Makiko Leong, Mary Ann Lee, & Amber Lee

Date: March 15, 2003

Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA

Interviewers: Alice Kashiwagi and Marie Sugiyama

Summary: Phyllis Tajii

Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on April 8-12, 2003 from VHS videotape and DVD source materials

Interview Summary

Generations of the Masuoka family gathered for an interview of their experiences. Those interviewed were Frank Masuoka, his wife, Virginia Matsuyama Masuoka, daughters, Makiko Leong and Mary Ann Lee, granddaughter [Mary Ann's daughter], Amber Lee, and Virginia's sister, Anna Matsuyama Towada.

Frank was born in 1923 in Geyserville, California. His family worked in the hop fields in Alvarado and Santa Rosa, before moving to Sebastopol to work in the apple farming business. When World War II broke out, Frank had just graduated from Analy High School. Two brothers were already in the Army, and Frank tried to enlist as well, but was turned away for being of Japanese descent.

Frank's father had come to the United States in his late teens. Soon after the Earthquake of 1906, he returned to Japan to marry, and had a son, whom he had to leave in Japan when he decided to return to America. Frank and his siblings were born in the United States. When the war broke out, the brothers already in the Army remained in the Army. While in the internment camp, Frank and another brother also volunteered for the Army. Frank recalls an incident soon after Pearl Harbor when a local Japanese family received threats. When Frank's father informed the Sebastopol Chief of Police about it, the Chief made certain that no harm came to the family. While growing up in Sebastopol, Frank had not felt any animosity from any classmates. Frank, two of his siblings, and his parents were sent to the Merced Assembly Center, and then to Amache Internment Camp.

Frank qualified for the Army language school in Minnesota, while his brother, Peter, joined the 442nd. After training, Frank was sent to Hawaii, Saipan, the Philippines Islands, Okinawa and Korea. While in Okinawa, war with Japan ended, and Frank helped distribute leaflets by plane and announce it on the PA system to the Japanese Army. However, when the Japanese army did not come out, Frank and another Japanese American interpreter went alone, unarmed to find them. The two of them were able to meet with the commander of the Japanese unit and convince him that the war was over; a heroic action that resulted in the surrender of hundreds of Japanese soldiers, and earned Frank the Silver Star Medal. Members of Frank's family related stories of how his wartime

actions have affected them, and Frank related how both Japanese and American soldiers reacted to his presence in the military.

In December of 1945, Frank returned to Sebastopol from the military to find his parents running a temporary hostel, providing families returning from camp a place to live until they were able to return to their homes. Frank's family apple orchard was not cared for during the three years the family was away, and it took awhile for Frank's family to move back to their own home because the tenant was reluctant to leave, but once back, they resumed the task of repairing both the apple orchard and their home.

Frank's wife, Virginia, also had a unique story. She was born in Vineburg, California, near the town of Sonoma. She attended Sonoma Valley Grammar School and Sonoma Valley High School. At the time of Pearl Harbor, Virginia was ten years old. Her father was of Japanese descent, a professor of martial arts, instructing the San Francisco police, and her mother was Caucasian. When internment orders came, Virginia's mother was forced to send her children away to camp because they were half Japanese, while she stayed back to look after the farm. Three older siblings besides Virginia were evacuated. One of the brothers, Alvin, was just fourteen and recovering from pneumonia when he was sent to camp. It was a very bewildering time, and not understanding the reason for having to leave, Virginia found herself in a normal school day on Friday, and in camp on Monday.

While in camp, Virginia requested and received books from her teacher to keep up with her class back home, and with the help of letters from an attorney and the school principal, Virginia and Alvin were able to return home after a few weeks, while Virginia's older brother and sister had to remain in camp. Despite the attitude of some of the people in town, Virginia said she understood the true meaning of friendship the day she returned to school and her friends welcomed her back with delight. After Pearl Harbor, Virginia's father was given the option of being sent to camp or to continue to help with military training away from the West Coast. He chose to help his country and was sent to Colorado in 1942 to help train the Denver police. Virginia did not see her father until 1948.

At the time her parents married, California did not allow interracial marriage so they had to marry outside of the state, and Virginia's mother temporarily lost her American citizenship because of her marriage. Virginia remembers the circumstances of her marriage to Frank, as well as the social consequences her mother faced when she married her father.

Anna, Virginia's older sister, recounts that her bad experience with prejudice in school caused her to feign sickness in order to avoid school. It was puzzling to Anna to experience this attitude from classmates when her grandfather, who was German, loved her unequivocally. On the day of Pearl Harbor, Anna had to travel to San Francisco and she could feel the stares of everyone. Anna spent her honeymoon at Tanforan because she married three days before having to evacuate. Anna, her husband, and new in-laws were sent from Tanforan to Topaz, Utah, where Anna remembers the terrible sandstorms and bad food. She worked in camp and recounts some of the wages, cost of items, and facilities there. During the war, Anna periodically left camp to work on the outside. At one time she worked in a flower shop in Salt Lake City. Her husband then got a job outside of camp topping beets, and finally, they moved out to New York, living there and in Chicago, before returning to their home in Alameda after the war.

They received a warm welcome from the people in Alameda, but finding a job was difficult for Anna's husband, and Anna also experienced discrimination before being hired by the Navy in Oakland. Anna's husband found work at a flower shop, eventually buying it, which today, along with a second store, the family continues to own. In gratitude for his contributions, Towada Park was named for her husband in Alameda.

Transcript of Interview

- JACL:** We'd like to thank you so much for consenting to participate in the Sonoma County JACL Oral History Project. Your stories will be a legacy preserved for future generations. Now if you would introduce yourselves and tell us where you're from and any other particulars that you'd like to give to us, we'd really appreciate it. We'll start with Anna.
- Anna:** I'm Anna Towata and I'm from Alameda, California. I am formerly, Anna Matsuyama.
- Frank:** Same thing? Oh, my name is Frank Masuoka. Originally from Sebastopol but I live in San Francisco.
- Virginia:** My name is Virginia Matsuyama Masuoka. I was born in Vineburg, California, just outside of Sonoma.
- Makiko:** I'm Makiko Leong. I'm Frank and Ginger's 6th daughter, number 6 child and I live in San Mateo.
- Amber:** I'm Amber Lee, from Petaluma, California. [Mary Ann Lee's daughter].
- Mary A:** I'm Mary Ann Lee from Petaluma, I'm Frank and Ginger's number five daughter.
- JACL:** Frank, could you give a background of your family before WW II.
- Frank:** Before Pearl Harbor the family was in the farming business. Let's see, well, I had just graduated from high school in 1941, just before Pearl Harbor. At that time, I had two older brothers who were already drafted into the service. When they attacked Pearl Harbor, I [and] my friends from the school wanted to go volunteer for the services and we went to Santa Rosa Recruiting to volunteer. There were about three or four of us together, all of the others were Caucasian. We went through an experience. The recruiter said, "We can take all of you except... are you Asian or Japanese?" I said, "Yeah, what's wrong with that?" He said, "We can't take you because you're Japanese." And so my friend says, "We grew up together, went to grammar school, high school and you can't take him because he's Japanese?" And he said, "We got orders from the high command." So that was quite an experience for myself right after Pearl Harbor, that they wouldn't take me, although I had two brothers in the service, you know.
- Virginia:** They want to know about your life, family life before, where you were born, you know.
- Frank:** Okay, I was born in Geyserville, California. I was born in 1923. From there my family moved to El Verano, California, which is right near Sonoma, and the parents worked in the hop fields, and we stayed there in El Verano for about

three years and then the family moved to Santa Rosa and they continued to work in the hop fields. In the mid twenties, we moved into Sebastopol, and they went into working in apple farming. So I went to school in Sebastopol from grammar school and then Analy High School and then, of course, the war broke out in 1941.

JACL: What branch of the service were your brothers in?

Frank: They were both drafted into the Army.

JACL: How and when did your parents come to the United States?

Frank: My dad, he came over just after the Earthquake in 1906. And he, of course, all the first generation Japanese when they came over to the States they thought they would make a better living over here. Well, my dad was about 18-19 years old. He came over from Japan with his cousin. And they worked over in San Francisco for these rich families, doing housework and things like that for a couple of years. About three years later, my Dad went back to Japan and married my mother. While they were back in Japan, they had their first child and when they decided to come back to the United States, the grandmother wanted the child to stay in Japan; he was a boy. I never met him, but later on my brother met him when he was stationed over in Tokyo. And so they came back to the United States without [him]. They had to leave the son there. The reason why was the grandparents said, "If we keep him here and raise him here, you will come back." Well anyway, they [my parents] came back to the States. It was early in the century then and they came back [here]. Then my two older brothers were born in San Francisco in 1915 and 1916. From there they ended up in Sonoma County and started working in the hops fields and then ended up in Sebastopol. But of course, I had another brother that was killed with the 442nd [all Japanese American U.S. military battalion sent to European front]. I forget where he was born. And so up to the time of the evacuation, the parents worked in the apple farm.

JACL: How did you feel and where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor. What was your reaction at the time?

Frank: Oh, on Pearl Harbor Day, of course, we were living in Sebastopol, at the time. And my brother, Pete, and myself we were going to visit our friends in Graton, California. That's right near Sebastopol. It was a Sunday morning and we were going over to their place to visit them. We happened to have the car radio on, and we heard that Pearl Harbor was attacked. As soon as we heard that we were just in disbelief. And so we said, "We better get back home and tell the parents about this." So, we never did get to Graton, we came back to Sebastopol, and we asked the parents if they heard that yet. They didn't know about it. We told them. "Yeah, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor." They were really surprised. I told my parents, "I'm going to volunteer for the services just like my brothers," and that's when I went through the experience of not being taken [accepted].

JACL: Frank, you had mentioned that when you signed up for the service, you had two brothers who were already members of the Army, were they immediately discharged then?

Frank: No, my two older brothers who were drafted, they were drafted in 1940, before Pearl Harbor. And one was stationed back East and the other was here on the West Coast. Right after that I found out that they weren't discharged. There were a lot of Japanese who were drafted who happened to be what they referred to as *Kibei* [a person born in the United States who returns to Japan for education]. A lot of them were detained and some were discharged. But my brothers were not. They were transferred. The one who was in California was transferred to another Army camp in Illinois. My brother who was on the East coast, he was drafted when he was in New York. He stayed in New York and so they never were actually questioned about their loyalty. So when they formed the 442nd Combat Team, the brother that was already drafted went down to Camp Shelby and joined the 442nd. My brother who was in camp with me, he was unable to go to this military intelligence language school. Back when they came to recruit us in the relocation camp, well, he volunteered for the 442nd. Around January or February they formed the 442nd in Camp Shelby, so he went there and, of course, the other brother was transferred down there. The oldest brother stayed on the East coast with some unit there. They stayed all during the duration [of WWII], so there was no question about their loyalty. My oldest brother was involved in a lot of court hearings on some of the Nisei; they were *Kibei* who were put [on trial] and had hearing[s]. He attended a lot of those but he stayed in the States. My other brother was in the 442nd. I went to the language school when they came and drafted [recruited] me, and [I] volunteered in March.

JACL: How did your mother feel about having three sons in the Army at the same time. Isn't there a rule against that?

JACL: Also, give the names of your brothers

Frank: The names of my brothers. The oldest brother was Henry Masuoka and the other was Edward Masuoka and, of course, Peter, then myself and then my sister Margarette.

Virginia: How did Ma feel?

Frank: The two older brothers were already drafted and then when she found out that Japan attacked America, the United States, she didn't feel like, [the fact that I volunteered] I should not go in, like some of the parents felt, that [we] should not volunteer for the service and all that. But my father and mother never had any of that feeling.

JACL: How did you feel going into camp when your brothers were in the service?

Virginia: What was the question?

JACL: How did you feel about you and the family going into camp when the brothers were fighting for the U.S.?

Frank: Actually, when we found out we had to be evacuated from the West Coast, both the parents they felt it was for, more or less, [our] safety because they figured it would be a little bit safer, at least in the camp, where if you were outside there was [a] lot [or] some of the American people who were against the Japanese might harm them. In fact, there were some cases here, right after Pearl Harbor, a lot of threatening going on by some of the American people.

JACL: Could you tell us a little bit about some of those things [racial problems] that happened maybe at school? Was your family involved in any of that?

Frank: Well, right after Pearl Harbor, right here in Sebastopol, there was a case, in fact. We met a Mrs. Morita here. Her family was threatened. They were raising berries here in Sebastopol, I think. There was one of the American families in Sebastopol who threatened the parents that if they didn't leave Sebastopol that [they were] going to come up and burn down the house and all that. My dad was pretty well known by the Chief of Police here in Sebastopol. I can remember when he called the Chief of Police that this Morita family was threatened by this 'such and such' right here in Sebastopol. The Chief of Police came over and picked him up and went over to the Moritas and told them, "You don't have to worry." In fact, [he] went right over to this family who threatened the Moritas and [told them that] if anything happened, they'd know who to come and get.

JACL: Were there teachers at Analy that were very supportive?

Frank: I would say yes. Of course, I had already graduated, so I never got to talk to any of the teachers right after this happened. I really couldn't say. But as far as the students, the fellow classmates, they didn't feel prejudice against myself. I never had that feeling. In fact, they knew [we] grew up together, and they felt we were just as good as they were, so I never experienced anything like that until prior to the evacuation.

JACL: Did you go to the internment camp before you volunteered for the service, Frank?

Frank: Oh, myself, yeah. My folks, my sister Margarette, my brother Pete and myself had to evacuate from Sebastopol and we ended up in Merced Assembly Center, and we were there from April to September of '42. So we were there for a few months. During the time that I was in camp, I had always liked to drive. I used to drive a truck at the camp, hauling rations for the mess halls in Merced. Then in September we moved to Amache Internment Camp, Colorado. That was September '42 and I was there from September to December until the Army came to recruit for the language school. That's when I volunteered for the language school. Pete, who went to the 442nd, unfortunately, didn't pass the test, so he couldn't go with me to the language school. I volunteered in December of '42. So I was in Amache for three or four months. I went from Amache to the language school in Minnesota.

JACL: I understand you served in the Pacific theater, in the language school, can you tell us about that?

Frank: Well, after the six months in the language school, we never had any basic training while we were going to school, so then they shipped us up to Camp Shelby where the 442nd was formed but the class that I graduated with went as a special unit for special training. After that we were returned back to Minnesota, Fort Snelling, the main army camp post. We were there awaiting orders to go overseas. Then in November we got orders to go overseas, and they shipped us.

They formed a ten man language team, with the team leader and nine interpreters and translators. I went with a group of nine other men. We were shipped [and] assigned to a division in Hawaii. Our team was assigned to the 7th Infantry Division at that time. The divisions were organized into three regimental headquarters, three regiments in the division. Within the regiment you had your infantry battalion and your companies. Out of our ten men interpreters and translators you were assigned two interpreters to each regimental headquarters [or a total of six]. Then the balance of the four who were the team leader and the well-versed translators translated the reading and writing. So out of about twenty thousand troops in our division, we were only ten people among a whole division. That's how they assigned us to the unit. While we were in Hawaii, getting ready [and] training there, there was another infantry division, the 27th Infantry division. They got orders to go to the Mariannas, Saipan. They did not have any language team at the time, so they detached us from [our] division to the 27th. [They] assign[ed] us to the civil affairs division and so we went [with] the division to Saipan. In Saipan we were processing prisoners of war and civilians from June of '44. We were there for about four months, and after the island was secured, we process[ed] both civilians and POW's [prisoners of war].

Then we got orders to come back to Hawaii and rejoin the 7th Infantry Division. They were getting ready to be ship[p]ed out, too. Of course, we didn't know where. When [our] team came back from Saipan, from September until the first part of October they trained us. We had to go to special training like river crossing, etc. Then, next thing we knew we were put on a troop ship.

We were on the ship for twenty-some odd days. We didn't know where we were going to land until we got on the ship, and they brought out a map of the Philippines, and it happened to be the island of Leyte, part of Philippine Islands. And on October 20 of 1944, on D-Day, we went into the Philippines, in Leyte. From Leyte—I was there from October to March [when] we got orders to get back on the ship. Next thing I knew they brought out a map of Okinawa. That's where we would be heading and so nobody knew until that time, and we landed in Okinawa on April Fools Day of 1945. I was there from April of '45, until the day they dropped the atom bomb in August.

Of course, during that time, I experience[d] interrogating prisoners, Japanese soldiers that were captured. After the bombing of Hiroshima, our unit had an advanced company stationed near the southern part of Japan, picking up stragglers. They used myself and this other interpreter to talk using the PA system, trying to get them [Japanese] to come out. We didn't have too much

luck, Then after the dropping of the bomb, we dropped leaflets saying that “Your emperor has surrendered.” In fact, I was involved in dropping of the leaflets. I went up with the airplane dropping the leaflets up this coast that we had been patrolling. And so the very next day we went back out to this area, and we set up our PA system and tried to talk them out by saying, “We dropped the leaflets; you’ve probably seen them; we will give you [so long] to come out.” We didn’t have any results. So myself and this other interpreter, he says, “Well, why don’t we go and see if we can find them.” I told my buddy, “Hey, they surrendered. Why take the chance of getting shot?” He said, “No I’m going to go,” and I said, “Well, I won’t let you go by yourself. I’ll go with you.” And we ended up [going]. We didn’t take our weapons. We just took our canteen and took our helmet[s] off so that we’d look like Japanese soldiers. And then we said, “Okay.” We told our bodyguards who carried the PA system, “You guys just wait here. We’ll be back, we hope.” It was right near the coastal line so we had to go down to the trail, to the bottom, and when we got down to where the rocks were, all these Japanese soldiers came out from back, and point[ed] their rifles at us, and then we stopped. This one individual, one of the soldiers, came up to us and asked us if we were from one of their units because we were Japanese and were we prisoners and that we came down to talk to them or something. We said, “No, no. We are with the U.S. Army.” We explained to this one individual that my parents, our parents are from Japan and they came over and we were born and raised in America, and that’s why we’re here. We aren’t Japanese soldiers. “We are here to convince you that the emperor surrendered.” Anyway, this individual said, “It’s not for me to decide so I’ll take you to the officer in charge.” We had to go to this cave and go inside the cave. This soldier went to this one individual who was laying on the ground; he had a few soldiers sitting around him. He happened to be the regimental commander of this unit that was holding out. His staff officers and this person who talked to us explained everything to the commander—that [we’re] American soldiers and interpreters and that this leaflet was correct.

So after talking to this colonel and to each other—he was able to speak English as most of the Japanese officers, we finally convinced the colonel to come out. We explained, “If we can take one of your soldiers back to our CP, we might be able to pick up something in our communication system about the surrender and that would convince you.” The colonel said to this fellow that I talked to, “If you’re willing to go with them, you could go ahead.” We thought for sure that the colonel was going to hold one of us as a hostage until they brought him back. I told my buddy, “If he wants one of us you stay here, I’ll take the guy back, you know.” (*Laughter*) Fortunately, they didn’t ask for a hostage. Yamamoto, the kid from Hawaii, said, “Well, they’re not going to ask for a hostage so we’ll both take him and explain to him we’ll bring him back the next day, cause it’s late in the afternoon.” The colonel said, “Okay then, if he wants to go.” When we came back, the guard said “We were about ready to go look for you,” ‘cause we were gone for maybe a couple of hours. We went back to our CP area and check[ed in]. In the meantime, while we were explaining everything to the intelligence officer in charge, the communication section sent

a runner over to our tent and said that there was a broadcast in either Japanese or something. We went over to the communication section and [brought] this soldier. It just happened to be a radio broadcast from Japan about the Emperor surrendering, and so he was convinced that Japan did surrender due to this bombing in Hiroshima. So anyway, he was convinced and he says, "They will believe me." We talked to him after that and asked, "How many soldiers are down there?" He said, "There [were] quite a few, maybe two to three hundred, and I said, "Huh?" He said, "Oh yeah, they're all down there." We communicated with our division headquarters and contacted the transportation division to bring a convoy out and maybe pick [up] two to three hundred Japanese soldiers that [were] willing to surrender.

We made arrangements to meet him the following day. The very next day this convoy arrived at our CP, and the brigadier general, who had to see this to believe it, came. We ended up [back] at this area where we [first] brought this soldier out. We went back down and he reported to the colonel that he heard the broadcast and was convinced. That's when he gave the orders to his staff to tell them to notify all the soldiers to come out. We had to wait for maybe an hour before they came back and said that they [were] all ready to go. So when we came out of the cave, my god, they were lined up in about five or six abreast all the way up to the top of the hill. I could tell it was over two or three hundred. There were civilians also with the soldiers who did the cooking and stuff like that, too. The next day we went around trying to see if we could get more to come out, but apparently most of them had already come out when they surrendered. But that was about the extent of my experience over in Okinawa. That was in August, and then in September my division went to Korea as occupation forces to disarm the Japanese soldiers in Korea. And I stayed there in Korea processing people and then I came back to the States the night of December '45. That was my first tour during World War II.

JACL: Frank, do you know what happened to the Japanese soldiers that came out and surrendered?

Frank: Oh, see from there, the division had to take them back to the stockades; they had to process them all to be repatriated back to Japan. The same thing happened when we went to Korea to disarm the Japanese soldiers there. They were all intact, the unit in Korea, when the war ended. It happened to be a cavalry unit in Seoul, Korea, that my unit disarm[ed] at the main headquarters there. When we arrived in Korea, all the units [were] there [including] the cavalry unit. My job and the other division interpreters [was] to process the soldiers there and repatriate them back to Japan. A lot of the Japanese soldiers that we processed didn't want to go back to Japan. They preferred to stay in Korea because they were married to the Koreans there. But we had orders; we had no, what do you call it, 'say-so' to have them stay there. But that's what we did. We processed soldiers and after they're processed, they are put on a ship to be sent back to Japan.

JACL: If your daughters have questions, you are certainly welcome to ask your dad and then your granddaughter, Frank. If she has a question, you are certainly

welcome to ask your grandpa. And maybe you can give us your reaction to his story. How did you feel about it and were you aware of his story?

Makiko: I was aware of him going into the cave, but I wasn't aware of him going down to the sides and delivering the leaflets. To know that he was such a big part of going in and recovery... that was new to me.

Mary A: We, also, didn't realize there were as many people inside the cave. When we were younger and heard the stories, we didn't absorb it as well. Now that we're getting older the information is sinking in even more. It's just amazing to hear the stories. As we're growing older, we're understanding more. [We] know that our children are hearing the stories from our parents. And, I think, that part of the respect, of what we feel for patriotism is from our parents. We've heard the stories [before]; we're absorbing the stories now, and it's like understanding them as we grow older. We're fortunate because our children are hearing the stories, [too].

Makiko: Even mine, I have three children and am expecting another one. My oldest is eight and she doesn't ask many questions but my son, who is going to be seven, and into armies sees things. He'll see his hat that he wears and he'll say, "Grandpa was in the war, huh?" Or he'll see things on TV and he asks questions, so it makes me keep up with his history, or my parents history [like] having to tell [my children] what he's gone through. Even the story about him going into the cave, we told him but I don't think [my son] has an idea of what was going on at that time, the amount of people, for him to go in without weapons, without that much of a backup. He won't realize until he's older, like we are now. So it's interesting to hear the details [and what that meant to my grandpa and what it means now].

JACL: Did you have any comments, Amber, when you first heard the story?

Amber: I first heard the whole story when [my grandpa] came to my classroom last year and spoke to my history class about it. And after I heard that, I had the feeling of being proud of my grandpa. My friends, my classmates getting to hear it, they're like, "Man your grandpa... I give him props." That's what we all say when we want to give someone compliments about what they did and accomplished. And all my friends they couldn't believe [it] because they couldn't imagine themselves in that same situation. It makes me feel proud of my grandfather.

Virginia: Well, I see this almost 80 year old. He'll be 80 next month. As many times as I've heard him tell me this story, I [always] see this 80-year-old turn into this, maybe, 20-year-old enlisted man. And I get that feeling, you know, coming back, and I see him, and I always marvel at what he's been through and [his] attitude [that was shaped by all of this], and I'm very proud of him.

Mary A: I have a 22 year old in Colorado, and we were talking, about Iraq and I asked him, "Would you hesitate? Would you wait to sign up to go to war? And he has [replied] there is no hesitation [on his part]. I think that comes from growing up with his grandpa, hearing the stories. He's like, "No, I wouldn't [hesitate]." He says a lot of his friends are not sure. They weren't exposed to the stories

whereas we grew up exposed to the stories. Our parents started early telling us stories, so we're fortunate because a lot of the families don't talk about it. They just don't talk. Whereas with him, he was around [his grandpa]. He was intrigued. He would listen to his grandpa's stories. My other, Amber, and my younger son, he's thirteen, heard the stories. He says, "That's why, in this country, we have what we have because of men like my father and the women who supported the country. That's why we have what we have." They don't realize that... they haven't seen [family members taken] off to camp. Can you imagine being taken away to camps like my mom? When I was their age listening to the stories, I said, "I can't imagine being taken away from my mom and my dad." My mom, she's half Japanese and half German but because of the Japanese, she had to go to camp. And now where am I with my children? I can't imagine telling my children that because there's a war, you have to go away. How do you sit down and tell them, "You're going to have to go away [for...] 'cause [the authorities] couldn't give [a] time [period]; they didn't know how long. We are fortunate that our parents have shared their stories with us.

JACL: Would you be willing to read Frank's commendation?

Virginia: Award of the Silver Star Medal by direction of the President under the provisions of the Act of Congress, Technician Fourth Grade, Frank Y. Masuoka, Infantry United States Army for Gallantry in Action on Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands on 16th and 17th August 1945. Several hundred armed and fanatical Japanese officers and men remained in a strongly fortified area of rocks and chasms south of Hill 89. They were determined to use this for a final stand and all inducements used to force a surrender had failed. The Japanese had killed several American soldiers, an interpreter and a prisoner of war who attempted the mission. On August 16, 1945 Technician Masuoka volunteered his services accompanied by another technician. After proceeding another 75 yards they were surrounded by hostile soldiers who he knew would not hesitate to kill him if he failed to completely control the situation. Technician Masuoka's superior knowledge of Japanese psychology/language was quickly put to use, telling them that the Japanese government had surrendered so it was their duty as soldiers to lay down their arms. He offered them proof of their surrender, to take them to listen to the Japanese broadcast and then return the next day. Through his forcefulness and courage he induced one man to come with them, returning the next day, they surrendered approximately 600 men. Afterwards, Technician Masuoka and his comrade searched out other sections surrendering more Japanese soldiers. Technician Masuoka's gallant courage and devotion to duty reflected great credit upon himself in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service. (*Strong applause*)

JACL: Now Frank, you told us a story at Casa Grande about how they distinguished you from a Japanese soldier. What had to happen when you went out, and you wanted to make sure that when you came back that [they knew] you were actually an American soldier?

Frank: Oh, yeah. They just couldn't believe it. Some of the soldiers knew that there were Japanese that came to the United States, but some of them didn't know that. After I explained [it] to some of the prisoners that I interrogated, it made sense to them. You know in the process of interrogating them a lot of them were told that if they were ever captured that Americans would torture and kill them. All of that was propaganda. The prisoners that were captured realized that that wasn't true, that the Americans weren't that way. But we had some of them that just didn't want to talk. In fact, some of them wouldn't even give their name and serial number. So what we'd do, we'd process them, and then if we didn't have any results, we'd send them back to the division, and they would re-interrogate some of the prisoners. But to most of the Japanese prisoners, it made sense that if we were born in the United States and raised in the United States [and it was quite clear that if you were born in the United States] you would have your allegiance to the United States. Just like you'd have if you were born in Japan so your allegiance would be to the Emperor. I was born in the United States, and I have my allegiance to the United States, so most of them, they were pretty understanding.

JACL: When you went out on maneuvers and you went to interpret, how did they distinguish you from a Japanese soldier?

Frank: Of course we had on our regular American uniform and some of the prisoners, when we were in the process of interrogating would ask us whether we were captured Japanese soldiers and being told to interrogate them.

JACL: How did the American soldiers know that you were not a Japanese soldier?

Frank: We never wore the same uniform as other soldiers.

Virginia: But did your American soldiers know what to do, did they ever think you were possibly a Japanese soldier in disguise?

Frank: No, because I forgot to mention, when we were onboard ship before we made our initial landing [at Leyte] when they brought the maps out, all the troops were out on deck, and the ship officer in charge who was doing the landing briefing would say, "I want to explain that we have a couple who look like the Japanese, our enemy." And they introduced us. "Here they are. They are both just like you. They are our soldiers. They are gonna be our interpreters. They are going to do the interrogation. That's why we have them here. Don't take a shot at them." That's how he explained it. In Saipan, we had no problem landing there, but in Leyte, I landed with an infantry platoon. After the landing we set up a bivouac and this one GI came over with another guy and said, "Hey Frank," he says, "You almost got shot." And I asked, "Why?" "Yeah, this guy here thought you were one of the 'Jap' soldiers. It's a good thing I was there because he would have taken a shot at you." The regimental commander there, I don't know how he found out, assigned two bodyguards. They assigned two to myself and two to the other interpreter to be with us at all times. So from thereon after, from Leyte to Okinawa, I've always had two Caucasian GI soldiers as bodyguards, so that they wouldn't make the mistake to take us for Japanese soldiers. But that did happen.

Matt: Did those bodyguards have orders to kill you if you got captured by the Japanese? [Question by videographer Matt Thomas whose background is knowledgeable]

Frank: They never had anything like [that]. They never even thought about anything like that, no. There was no indication from all the GI's that I knew, in the headquarters that I was with, that there was [any] of that feeling that they'd want to shoot us, you know.

Matt: Actually they had issued orders to shoot you if the Japanese soldiers were to capture you.

Frank: There was? That's something I didn't know.

Makiko: I just feel that the soldiers he went over with had a lot of respect for him because he was going up against other Japanese as an interpreter for the United States. Even though they weren't Japanese Americans, they were Japanese knowing that he was working for the United States, and representing the United States as a Japanese American and doing what he was for them, they respected him more for that. Assigning two Caucasian soldiers to protect him was an honor for them to do that because he was going in to protect them and fight for them.

Matt: And the irony is that they did have orders to shoot him if he was captured.

Makiko: Exactly, knowing that that's what they had to do and not be able to tell him.

JACL: We'll take a little break.

(Interview continues)

Amber: I just wanted to know if my grandpa was ever scared during the war time?

Frank: In my experience, the only feeling I had was when we were in Okinawa, during the battle there. Our particular unit [was] pinned down for about four or five [hours] a day, we couldn't move forward. The reason why was their artillery units and their motor units had every mountain range zeroed in. During this one encounter—not a counter attack, they fired this artillery shell and our units were from the reverse side of the hill. They only fired like mornings and sometime in the evenings. Whenever they start[ed] firing, we'd leave our tent and go into the foxhole. The feeling was, are we going to get killed here? No, I didn't feel scared in the way of getting hit... You're going to get hit. After the firing seized, we'd go back into our tent. One particular day, they attacked in the morning. The firing emission lasted maybe 15 minutes and then it stopped. Then we went back to our tent. And here there is a big piece of an artillery shrapnel right through our tent, where we sleep you know, in these two man tents. A big chunk of shrapnel had come right through our tent, so if we were in the tent one of us could have been killed right then. My personal feeling of being scared might have been inside me but it never seemed to bother me. It's just like when we talked to the Japanese soldiers about the surrender, I didn't feel scared. In fact, when the Japanese soldiers came out like that and pointed their weapons at us, we just thought, 'well, hold on', you know? But as far as really being scared, through my experience in Saipan or in

the Philippines, it never dawned on me to really get scared. In fact, during the Leyte operation, our unit was moving forward and saw this one American GI who came to our unit and asked, "Where is the division?" He was one of the fellows with the infantry company. He said, "I don't want to go back there," he was that serious; "I don't want to die." We told him, "Yeah but you're leaving your own unit." That's, what do you call it, the term?

Makiko: You're deserting.

Frank: Yeah, "You're going to be a deserter and you'll go before a firing squad if you don't go back to your unit." And he said that he didn't care whatever happened, but he's not going back there. He was not going back.

Makiko: It was almost like your job. Your job at the time was to do that.

Frank: Of course, we were young, too. We were all "gung ho." Nothing seemed to bother us. As far as feeling scared, no, I never experienced that through all the campaigns I went through. That's my answer, "I never was scared."

JACL: Thank you. Now Ginger also has a unique story and her family as well. Can you tell us a little bit about your story, Ginger.

Virginia: I grew up in Sonoma, like I said, I was born in Vineburg, California. There was, you can say, a train stop and a grocery store, but that was it, and the hospital. But I went to Sonoma Valley Grammar school and Sonoma Valley High School. I was ten when the war broke out. We were playing tag football in the backyard of our farm and I remember my mother coming out and telling us that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Of course, at ten years old, I didn't know what was going on, but I looked up at my father's face, and he just put his arm on my shoulder and said, "This is so bad; this is sad." My brother was in the Army at that time. He was at Camp Roberts, California. [My mother] said, "Louis, you will have to go back to camp." "They said all military are to report back to their bases." And my dad, I don't think I ever saw my father out of this suit. He always had [on] the suit pants, suspenders, and the white shirt. My mother was scolding him at the same time for playing tag football in his good clothes, but I think we'd all come home from Sunday School, and my brother Louis went back to camp that evening. And my father had to go back to San Francisco where he had his studio. He was a professor of martial arts. He trained the San Francisco police at that time. And my sister Anna, was working in San Francisco at the time. She went to camp from Alameda. She will tell her story, but she was in Alameda. She married and then went to camp. So on Friday I was in grammar school, and on Monday morning I was in Camp Tanforan. I remember on Friday evening, my mother was getting some things ready. [Back] then, Saturday night for our family [was] the big night when we all got together. We grew up on a produce farm in Sonoma, California. Our big night was Saturday night. We got through with our chores, and then after dinner my brother would drive into town and get the *Chronicle*, and then we'd go down to the little grocery store at the Four Corners and get some ice cream and root beer and have root beer floats and read the paper. And [that night] I happened to look over and saw my mother crying. And I thought, "... Gee, my

Momma is reading a sad story.” She said, “You[‘ve] got to go to bed early tonight girl, you[‘ve] got to go see Anna tomorrow.” So, I went to bed and the next morning I saw this dress on my bed and a suitcase packed. And when I went to breakfast, my mother told me “You’re going to be going away with your brother this morning.” My brother George was attending Santa Rosa Jr. College. And she said, “You are going to go with him and you’re going to be staying in Camp Tanforan for a while with your sister Anna.” And I said, “What about Alvin?” “Well, he’s in the hospital.” I knew my brother was in the hospital with chronic pneumonia. She said, “You go with your brother George, and I’ll come see you.”

And I said, “How are we going to get there?” And she said, “We are going to take you this morning to the bus depot, and then you go by bus.” So we went to town and caught the bus. I remember driving from the farm in our old Ford V-8. I had two brothers named George; it gets kinda confusing. My mother was first married to a Swiss Italian, and they divorced. When George was about six or seven, she married my father. Her first son was named George, after her father, my mother’s father. I asked her years later, “How come you named two sons George?” She said, “When her brother was born, his name was George, and when he went to WWI, she thought she might never see him again. So when my brother was born, she gave him the name of George, also. So the second brother was nicknamed, “Boy.” If I refer to him sometimes as “Boy,” I’m referring to the second George.

I had the habit, whenever George would drive—he is 25 years older than me, I would sit behind and breathe down his neck and he used to tell me, “Sit back. I don’t like that.” Well I got in the camp that morning and I said, “George, where am I going?” and he said, “Well, Mama told you. You’re are going to Camp Tanforan with Anna.” And I was behind him and I kept saying, “George, when am I going to come back?” And he said, “Well you better be back in time to pick the beans, that’s all I can say.” So I said, “I’m going to come back in time to pick the beans.” And I got to camp with my brother, and he had to go to the administration office with the papers.

JACL: How old were you?

Virginia: I was ten. And then an M.P. came up to me and he said, “Little girl what are you doing here?” And I said, “I’m here with my brother. He went in the office down there.” And he asked, “Why do they want to bring you to a place like this?” And I said, “Oh, a place like this? What is it?” Then my brother came out with the papers, and he handed them to the MP, and the MP read the papers and he looked at me and said, “Damn, I got a sister your age, and I wouldn’t want this to happen to her.” And then he took us to where I could see my sister Anna waiting for us then. She said, “Come on. We’re going to go to lunch pretty soon.” So I said, “Oh, we are?” I kind of pictured it as a sit down family thing. We went over to the mess hall and was handed trays and silverware and things like that, and I said, “Boy, people eat fast around here. Why are they eating so fast?”

Apparently, there was a fire the night before. The chemical from some of the extinguishers had gotten on some of the food. Some of the people had had a reaction to it. So I said, "I don't know if I want to eat." We got situated in our, I think they called it an apartment. It was just one room, and there was a double bed on one side and then a single bed that was waiting for my brother, the one who had the pneumonia. They said he would be coming down in a couple of days. The next day, Monday, my sister took me to get our shots. That's always remained with me because I don't think I was ever afraid of shots before. But they just grab one arm and boom. And then I saw this old lady. She was so petite, and she just passed out. I asked, "Is that what you are supposed to do?" My sister grabbed me and she said, "No. No, you don't do that, not with me." So then we went to see the Towata family my sister married into, and they were so good to me.

That week my brother came down. He got off the bus and we saw him coming across the street. He was fourteen years old, and he was so thin! That first night, he coughed so much. I slept with my other brother. I said, "Alvin, stop coughing!" He said, "I can't." So I kept it up, and he [kept saying], "I can't." I apologized to him not too long ago for that because I realize at that time it was not a nice thing to say. He was so sick. I was happy that he was in camp. I felt secure being with another brother.

It was nice that Anna got me to go to Sunday school. There was an Albino Sunday school teacher there. She was so nice to me. She took me kind of under [her] wing, and I really enjoyed going to Sunday school. I had asked my teacher—I wrote to my mother if she would have Miss Cooper send me some books so that I could kind of keep up with class. And when I look back on it, she did a very brave thing. She sent me books through my mother. That, I really appreciated. She was quite an inspiration to me. Like I said, she could have gotten in a lot of trouble for doing that. But on Friday, like I said, I was in school, and on Monday morning I was in the Camp.

My mother went to town that Monday morning and spoke to the principal of our grammar school, Mr. Jessie Preswood, and asked him if he would write a recommendation, that, we as a ten year old and a fourteen year old, could come back home and be with her. And my father's attorney, Mr. Walsh, in San Francisco, also helped. Her reasoning with the U.S. government was, what could a ten-year-old and a fourteen-year-old do to a country that they had only been taught to love and respect? If there was ever a patriotic woman, it was my mother. We used to say that not only blue blood ran through her veins but red, white and blue. Through the help of our principal and her lawyer, we were allowed to return to my mother. We were in camp for just a few weeks and Sheriff Cutter came down and he said, "It's time. We're going to take you back to your mother." And we said "good-bye" to Anna. That was kind of the hard part. I just felt like, gee, I won't be seeing Anna and her family and my brother. "Boy" had to stay in the camp. He was older. I think [he] was 20 at the time. As we were being taken out to the car, I remember looking at everything and thinking for a fleeting moment, "Gee, maybe, I'm safer back here." And Sheriff

Cutter said, "Come on Virginia. We got to take you to your mother." That [comment] pulled me out [of that moment]. Then we drove home.

It was a very quiet trip home, I remember. And it was so good, once I got back to the farm. It was so good to be back with the animals and everything. The next day I went to school. I asked my mother [if] I could go a little early. Our grammar school was on the second floor. We usually climb up the stairs [after] you line up in the yard out in the back. The fifth grade classroom that I was in had two doors, one you go in and the other you exit, back down the stairs. I told my mom, "I want to surprise the class. I really do. So could I go to school early and go stand in the classroom, and then when they come in, I could surprise everyone. She said, "Okay, if you want." So my brother drove me to the school. We lived about a mile, maybe, from the school. I was standing in the classroom and I heard the bell ring and my heart was just pounding, and they started up the stairs and by the time they got halfway up the stairs, I panicked. I thought, "My gosh. What if they don't want me here?" I never thought of that earlier. And I said, "Oh my god," and I started to run out the back second door, and my girl friends, Rhoma and Jackie, happened to see me and said, "Mats, you're back." They gave me the nickname [for Matsuyama], and they said, "Mats is back," and instead of going in the front door, they came around and [started] grabbing [hugging] me. I told my children I didn't need a dictionary to define the word friendship. I lived it that day. And I still have these dear friends.

I went home that day, and that same day my mother asked me to go to town. I guess we lived about a half a mile out of town, and she asked, "Will you go to the drugstore and get something for me?" And I said, "Sure," and got on my bike and went up [there]. As I came out, there were two ladies talking right outside. I heard one say, "Oh my god, can you believe it? The Japs are back." Well, I got on that bike and I rode home. I had to tell my mom that the Japs were back. Finally—we lived right next to the high school in Sonoma, when I got to the high school, I said "Wait a minute. She was talking about me!" When I told my mom what the lady said, she [replied], "She told you the truth."

Friendship is something that I really treasured all through these years. It's something I really treasure.

JACL: What happened to your father during that time?

Virginia: My father was a martial arts instructor with the San Francisco police, and his studio was at 566 Fulton. He was given the option of taking his expertise to train the U.S. military or going to the "*relocation*" or internment camp. He loved this country. It was his country by choice, and his wife was American and his children. And so he made the decision to train the military. They moved him to Colorado, and he continued with his training of the police, the Denver police. We walked him out of the farm. We always walked him out to the gate of the farm, and the bus would come down Broadway there and pick him up. He told me, "You know, Ginger, you won't see Papa for a while but you always be proud of who you are, and you be proud of what you are. You make yourself good." I found some papers [later] folded into thirds from his

studio in Denver, Colorado. He had to fill out an enemy alien paper wherever he went—destination, time, and all of that. I didn't see my Dad from 1942 until 1948. When he was kind of feeling his way to coming back—I have some letters where his attorney said at one point, "No Frank, it's too early yet." And in 1948 he came back for "kind of a feeling" trip. He had designed the Yawara stick to take the place of the policeman's billy club. It's a small stick with a little device at each end. He was giving lessons with it, and he was doing so well, and then in October of 1949 my dad suffered a stroke.

We affectionately referred to my father, as "pubba". He didn't want to be called Dad, or Father. It was too formal. So he said, "Call me 'pubba' like your friends call their fathers." Well that was papa, but to my father it was "Pubba".

Let me go back to my mother and father's marriage. At that time, inter[racial] marriage wasn't accepted in California, so my mother and father went to Vancouver, Washington State. And they married there at the Congregational Church. And then in 1934, I found my mothers citizenship papers that she got back. She lost her citizenship when she married my father, and then she regained it back. The judge asked her that day, "You really love this country, don't you?" and she said that she did, and [he asked], "You want your citizenship back?" and she said, "Yes, I do," and he said, "You got it." She always would repeat that story to me. She was so proud of it.

When my husband and I married, being that we both had Japanese blood, we were the first on either side to have a church wedding. My father was going to take me down the aisle on December 10th of '49, and then he had his stroke in October. Well, at that time my father did not approve of my getting married so young. When he met Frank, he was kind of distant with him. I was still in high school. I was a senior in high school when we started dating. My father, he wanted me to finish school. But I was determined. I was going to go with Frank, and it kind of caused, not quite friction, but a little distance there. So one night, as Frank was going home, he called us aside and gave Frank quite the lecture, "I want my daughter to finish school" and this and that. So Frank asked him "Professor, may I ask you a question?" and he said, "Yes." "Can I still see your daughter?" And my father said, "No, you can't see her." So after my father had the stroke, Frank and I went to see him to tell him we were not going to change the wedding plans, and that my brother George was going to lead me down the aisle. My father had come out of his coma not too long before, asked me "Where's Frank?" and I said, "He's outside in the hall. Do you want to talk with him?" And he said, "Yes." And I went out to the hall, and I said, "Frank, you gotta go in. My father wants to see you." And he said, "What for? He can't do anything." So I said, "Just go talk to him." So he went in and he asked, "Frank, do you remember the night I talked to you?" And he said, "I will never forget that Professor." He said, "Okay. If there is anybody Ginger's going to marry, I want it to be you." And I couldn't believe it. I was standing outside the screen, and Frank said, "What did you say?" "You looked me in the eye when you asked me, and I liked that. You look at ground, that's it." I was so happy that my father understood why we were going on with the wedding plans. He didn't want us to change [them].

It [his absence] was a disappointment for me. But then, I was so proud to have my brother George take his place. And here we are. We are 53 years married, 6 children, and we'll be getting our 19th grandchild, and we have 8 great grandchildren. So I feel really blessed.

JACL: Did your mother have problems when she was married to a Japanese?

Virginia: I asked her about that. You know, she was German. She just told it as it was. And I said, "Mama, did you lose a lot of friends when you married Pubba?" She said [my mother was 45 when I was born], "I'll tell you what Girly, Georgiana, stay home for a while. No one wants the same steak to chew on every night." And she said that pretty soon, people started coming back for the produce and everything. If you just tell the people, they'll accept it, and they'll find someone else... She said "The people in the valley responded pretty good." I think it's a lot different growing up in a small town, ...are a lot different, people know you. I think the hardest part for her was losing her citizenship, but, of course, regaining it back meant the world to her.

JACL: Now Anna, would you like to tell us your story?

Anna: Well, when I was growing up, there was prejudice against the Japanese. There were only two Japanese families and they used to call me "Jap." And that's why I hated to go to school. I went to a reunion. This was about my 50th reunion. This boy came, the one that called me "Jap." He said the reason why he couldn't dance with me were his parents. He always wanted to dance with me but his parents said, "Don't go with the Japs." I was rather puzzled because my grandpa was a big German fellow, and his arms weren't big enough to hug all of us. He just loved us. Grandpa was a real typical German, and he just loved us. And so I was kind of puzzled. I wouldn't go to school in the third and fourth grades. I wouldn't go to school when they had geography and talked about the Japanese because I used to have my hair down to my hips, and the book said the Japanese had long hair, and they all stared at me, and I wouldn't go to school for days. And so I said, "I'm sick," and my mother got out the castor oil bottle. *(laughter)*

Anna: And so on the day of Pearl Harbor, I was with my father, at the radio. When we turned on the radio, he said, "Oh there's war." And I said, "No that's just a play." And we turned on another station. All the stations had something about the war. I said, "Oh Pubba, there's war; it is not a play." And so I had to go back to San Francisco. We went to San Francisco that night, and everyone was staring at us as if we started the war. Even the Chinese were staring at us. I guess they could tell the difference. That night we went to the train station, and they were rounding up all the soldiers. The service men were all in the bars. And they rounded up all these men, and out came my brother, too. I could see him on the train on the way when we pulled out. I could see my brother, and we were waving to him but they were all drunk. And they had to go back to where they were stationed.

JACL: Were you already married?

Anna: I got married three days before I went to Tanforan. That was our honeymoon. Tanforan was our honeymoon.

Makiko: She just told me last night. I was talking to my mom. She said Auntie Anna, she went on her honeymoon with her in-laws. And I said, "I went on my honeymoon with my in-laws." And she said, "Yeah, but you didn't have to sleep in the same room." And she said, "Oh yeah. We were all in the same room and just had separate beds, and all that was between us was a blanket and that was it."

Anna: People were in and around the relatives. Every time they moved, we could hear them, "Okay, okay, that's enough."

Makiko: But Uncle Johnny wasn't with you?

Anna: Oh yeah, he was with me all the time. And we went to camp Tanforan, and everyone was so friendly. I think there was one family with black children, and we were surprised. They had children that were half Japanese and half Black and they were in camp.

JACL: What were the conditions in camp, and did you go on to another camp after Tanforan?

Anna: We went to Topaz, Utah. I didn't like it there because of the sandstorms. Lightning and thunder were real close to the ground, and so I hid in the closet. My husband was [always] looking for me. It was terrible— sand, the barracks were all the same, except we had a pot belly stove. It was so sandy, I landed in someone else's home and this fellow came out and said, "Is there anything I can do for you?" And I said, "Oh, my gosh. I'm in the wrong place." That's how bad the sandstorms were. It was hectic. And the food was terrible. One night we heard we were going to have steak. We were eating. We were so hungry, and [then] one lady said, "I think this is horse meat," and no one could eat the rest of their dinner. And then [there was] mutton. The men were so hungry, they would eat the mutton and rush home to brush their teeth because the mutton fat stuck to their mouths.

JACL: You worked?

Anna: Yes, I worked in camp. My boss was getting \$19 and the next one [worker] was paid \$16 and another \$12 for their wages per month. And if we wanted anything, we had to order out of Sears and Montgomery Wards books. We really made them [rich] because when everybody got their wages, they would order. Well, sheets those days were \$3.25 a pair and stockings were maybe 25 cents a pair. So we did a lot of ordering through the catalogues.

JACL: Were the facilities , the restrooms, showers and such, centralized?

Anna: Well, the restrooms and the showers were all in the same place. But one night the lights went out, and we couldn't figure out what happened, and that's when everyone got real hungry. We didn't like the mess hall food, so we would make toast or something [else], and all the toasters shut off the lights.

JACL: Do you ladies have questions to ask of your mother and your aunt?

Makiko: How long were you in camp?

Anna: I was 25 when I got out of camp.

Makiko: But how long were you in for?

Anna: I'd say about a year, because we spent our honeymoon, our first year of marriage there, and our anniversary. I cried because we went to the mess hall for dinner, and then we went to another mess hall for a movie, and the movie broke down [after] about ten times, and we had to sit on the floor, and I cried, and I said, "That's no anniversary."

JACL: Where did you go after camp?

Anna: Well, we went out of camp several times. I worked at a flower shop in Salt Lake City, and my sister in-law and her husband worked at the nursery. I cried because it was Christmas time and they had to work overtime, and I was through at the flower shop by 5 and I had to go eat at the drugstore by myself. I just said, "What a Christmas!" It was just terrible! Then we went back into camp. Every time we left the camp, our friends would come, and they would give us a going away party. They'd give us gifts and cry. And so the next time we went out to pick sugar beets. My husband went out to pick sugar beets and they weren't used to it because they were all city boys. And the next morning they would smell on the bus, you know, [Absorbine] Junior. You know they rubbed it in [because] all their muscles hurt. They never worked so hard. And we went out and back to camp, and my mother-in-law said, "No more. You either stay here or you stay out of camp." They would pay your way out of camp. And my brother-in-law said that as long as they pay our way, let's go to New York. And so we went to New York where his two sisters were. We went to New York, and we worked our way back to Chicago. My brother-in-law got us an apartment there, and we paid \$11 a month. No, it was \$44; it was \$11 a week. And it was such a "big" apartment. Some of our friends said, "Why don't you build a second story there?" It was so "big" for \$11. And every night we had to pull down the bed to make it, and before we went to work, we had to put it up.

JACL: How did you feel after you came back and then, how did you feel about redress?

Anna: Well, everyone greeted us. Alameda was very friendly, and the people were very good to us. We had no car. The man who took care of our car was in an automobile wreck, and he never said anything about getting us a car when we came back. My husband bought a Chevrolet for \$600. That's all we had to buy a car. He said that we needed a car. So we put our money into the car. And then the [boys] couldn't get jobs, no place [would hire them] so they'd come over to our house and play cards. I went out and got a job. The first job I went for, the employment office called and they gave me a test. I passed the typing test, and they said, "We'll telephone you if you get this job." But they never called me. They weren't hiring Japanese. So I went back to the employment office and told them. They called the company and told them, "Don't call us

anymore for any jobs. She's an American citizen. You should have given her a job." But I received a job with the Navy in Oakland.

When I'd come home at night, the boys would come over. Oh, I don't know, there would be about ten of them; they'd play cards. Of course, they couldn't get job[s]. So this went on, and I couldn't stand hearing the chips all night long when I had to work the next morning. The next day I called my husband. I told him that he just had to get a job. He and his friends were sleeping during the daytime. He told his friends, "Don't answer the phone. I think that's Anna." So I come home and bawled them all out and told them, "This couldn't go on like this." So he got a job the next day at a flower shop. And he started work. He and his friend both got a job at this flower shop. This man liked them so much that he said he was going to quit and how about my husband taking over. So my husband took over the flower shop. The landlord said that he was going to sell but not right away. We became good friends with the landlord. And in his will he said that my husband had first option to buy this flower shop. We struggled, but we bought the flower shop, and we've had it ever since.

Virginia: I'm very proud of Anna because she now owns the two flower shops, one in Alameda and one in Oakland. Her son runs the one in Oakland, and at 86 she still goes down every day.

Anna: Everyday, I go down.

JACL: Now Frank and Ginger, how was your return?

Frank: When I got back in December of '45, I contacted the folks. My dad was running the Sebastopol Hostel to help the families that came back to California who lived in Sonoma County until they got situated back in their homes. They stayed at this hall in Sebastopol. They set up temporary quarters there. And my dad and mom took care of the people there until they were resituated back in their homes. So when I got home, we went to our home [house] in Sebastopol where this one family was staying during the whole duration, and we found that the orchard was never taken care of for the three years that we were gone. The trees were all in need of pruning, and stuff like that. The reason that they didn't take care of it was the husband, he worked at Mare Island Shipyard during the day and then he set up a shoe repair in one of the rooms in the house. So it took a little while before we could get him out. We had to get our lawyer to have them evicted. They gave him a 30-day-notice. They kept saying that they were still looking. But anyway, it was a little while before we were able to get them out and get into our home there. We had to do a lot of repairs on the house; we had to put a new roof on the house and then prune all the apple trees. So we were pretty busy there during the first year. So my dad closed the hostel there, after the people were situated. They closed the hostel and went back to the home there to take care of our house, and it took us a while to get everything straightened out there.

JACL: What were your father and mother's names?

Frank: Oh, Dad's name was Harry Ushitada Masuoka and Mother's name was Mary Chikayo Masuoka.

JACL: Now, do you have any questions or any comments?

Anna: Now about my husband, the Kiwanis Club wanted him to come in [join]. Then the Recreation Department asked him to come in [join]. He never did a lot of talking, but if they asked him a question, they liked his suggestions. So they named a park after him, in Alameda, after he passed away in 1992, they named a park, "Towata Park" [after him].

Mary A: Not so much a comment but a question, that I didn't get to ask my mom. I was kind of curious. Kind of a two-part question— of being ten years old and your first day there, what did you do daily?

Virginia: I'd follow Uncle "Boy" around until he was ready to tie me to the apartment. Then I'd go over and see Auntie Anna. I'd found [out] how to get there. I was so fascinated. I'd watch the Japanese, the men. They'd just sit there in the morning, and they'd be playing *Go* [*Japanese strategy game*]. I believe that's the game. And you come home in the evening and they're still there sitting there playing.

Mary A: But any activities?

Anna: The Issei [First Generation], really learned to relax.

Virginia: No, I don't recall any activities, I just went back and forth. And I recall her sister-in-law was a beautician. She used to braid my hair.

End of Interview

YUKA MATOBA INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Yuka Matoba
Date: Part I – Spring, 1981
Part II - March 17, 2002
Place: Yuka Matoba residence, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Part I - Judy Louie Yamamoto
Part II - Marie Sugiyama
Summary: Jodi Hottel
Transcription: Part I transcribed by Michi Duda from audiotape source material

Interview Summary

The interview with Yuka Matoba consists of two parts. The first part is a paper written by her granddaughter, Judy Louie Yamamoto, and is based on three interviews conducted in 1981. The second part is an interview conducted by the JACL Oral History Project in March of 2002, when Mrs. Matoba was 98 years old.

Yuka Matoba comes from a family of farmers in Japan. Her parents were Deika Mukuno and Tatsugiro Matoba. She was the oldest child, born on January 24, 1904 on a farm on Kyushu Island, Japan. The family was well to do and proud to be descendants of samurai.

Her husband Katsuzo's father passed away when Katsuzo was only six, and since his stepmother did not want him, he went on his own to Hawaii when he was 16. His travels also took him to Brazil for three years and the West Coast for seven years before he returned to Japan to marry Yuka. Even though it was an arranged marriage, they quickly grew to like each other. She recalls that her father owned mountainous land and cut trees down in order to send money to her in America. In 1924 at age 19, she and her husband came to America on one of the last ships to bring Japanese immigrants to America.

She was disappointed when she saw the small, rundown house they were to live in upon arriving in Santa Rosa. When her father sent the money, Mrs. Matoba's husband picked it up from her cousin in Sacramento and brought it home hidden in his boots. When she first arrived in Santa Rosa, they grew strawberries. Later, they cultivated apples and hops in Healdsburg. Eight children were born in Sonoma County before the war. Tragically, their first child died of a serious illness in 1928. A ninth child, Ann was born in March of 1942, and Yuka was worried that the government might separate her from her children because she was not a citizen.

During internment at Amache, people mistakenly thought they were rich because Mrs. Fenton, their Caucasian boss, sent them gifts from expensive department stores. Mrs. Matoba worked as a dishwasher in camp, and Katsuzo worked as a maintenance worker and then a mess hall cook. Twinkle was born in Amache on August 13, 1944, and Mrs.

Matoba tells how her daughter Tomiko wanted to name her after the song because the stars were so bright in Colorado.

When they returned to Healdsburg, they worked for an apple dryer. In the summer of 1947, Katsuzo fell and hit his chest on a large piece of wood. It never healed, and he got weaker and weaker. Their last child, Vickie, was born in 1948. A few years later, Katsuzo earned his U.S. citizenship. However, in 1956 Katsuzo died of cancer. After her husband's death, Yuka was able to buy a house because her husband had the foresight to provide for Mrs. Matoba's well being as well as that of her children. Mrs. Matoba continued to work for apple companies for 13 years, retiring at age 65. At the end of her paper, her granddaughter reflects on her relationship with her grandparents and how the interviews helped her to understand them better. Mrs. Matoba ends the JACL interview by telling about her children.

Part I

Class Paper written by Judy Louie Yamamoto, granddaughter of Yuka Matoba

Introduction

My paper will focus on the life of Yuka Matoba, my grandmother, with passages about Katsuzo Matoba, my grandfather, who is deceased. I have decided to include my grandfather's life because when my grandmother is gone she will take with her all of her knowledge, memories and their struggles.

The interviews took place in the spring of 1981 in Sebastopol, California. We did 3 different days of interviews with each interview period lasting from 3-4 hours. Twinkle Yagi helped interpret the Japanese into English because as a Sansei I do not know any Japanese, which I now regret because I cannot communicate with my grandmother.

My aunt, Twinkle, had told me that when she asked my grandmother questions for her own curiosity my grandmother would not want to tell her anything. When I first approached my grandmother and told her that I was going to interview her because I wanted to know what she had gone through and plus I needed it for a class paper she changed her views and opened up for me. Twinkle said that sometimes when my grandmother remembers things from the past she writes it down so that when she sees me she can tell me about it.

Summary of 3 Interviews

In the spring of 1902 Deiku Mukuno and Tatsugiro Matoba were married. Their marriage was arranged by their parents like many other Japanese marriages. They had a farm in the town of Yoshitomi-Cho, ward of Chikugo-Gun on the island of Kyushu Fukuka. On January 24, 1904 they had their first child, a girl, named Yuka.

Yuka's childhood was one of happiness and content. She did as she pleased and played with a few of the children who lived near by. Her father's farm was located on the outskirts of town so, she did not have many friends to play with. As Yuka grew up she had to help the maid watch her sister and brothers. Shima was the second oldest, she was born in 1908 and was 4 years younger than Yuka. Yoshio was born in 1910, Auro was

born in 1914 and Yasugi was the last to be born before Yuka left for her journey to America; Yasugi was born in 1918. Yuka was to never know that after she left home another brother, Masaru was to be born and then a younger sister who died when she was a baby.

Yuka had other duties besides babysitting like picking mulberry leaves every morning and evening so she could feed the silk worms. Yuka would help wipe down the tatami mats and pick flowers for her mother's flower arrangements. Yuka did not have to do any of the field work because there was always enough hired help.

Yuka says that she completed her education similar to high school here in America. She also continued her education and went on to more advanced studies. Yuka also went to classes, which taught flower arrangement, sewing and dancing. She liked to go to school and other church activities because she would be able to see her friends. Yuka also never thought of her future, she would let each day take on its own course. She never worried about being able to do things because her parents were able to let her do anything she wanted to do.

From Yuka's understanding wealth in Japan was determined by how much of the new crop you did not have to sell and by how worn the ladies kimonos were (amount of patches). Yuka's parents always had money or surplus rice stored up just in case they needed to sell it. The family also owned a mountain, which had pine trees. If the family had no more surplus rice they could always go to the mountain and cut down the trees to sell. The mountain was a 3 to 4 hour walk from their house. Yuka tells of how her mother would launder her kimonos and offer them to other families who were not as fortunate to have new kimonos.

Yuka remembers her mother as a strong but gentle woman who wore her long, black hair on top of her head with mother of pearl combs. She recalls how the pale green kimono made her mother's peachy cheeks stand out from her fair complexion. She describes her father as a medium built man with large brown eyes and tanned skin. Her father was liked by many of the town's people and hired workers. He was a fair and kind man that the people trusted and admired. He would always ride his horse around the farm to make sure that all things were running well.

When Yuka was about 14 years old she was asked by her aunt to help at a meeting that her uncle was going to have at his home. Her uncle, Tatsuo, her mother's older brother, was the town head and needed her to help serve refreshments. The house was large with a bamboo fence and in the front was a large fish pond filled with bright colored Koi. Yuka helped clean the house and prepare food the day before the meeting. The day of the meeting she helped serve the refreshments (tea). The meeting went smoothly and when all the guests left Yuka's aunt, Hiroko gave her a present for all of her help. The present was a pretty purple silk kimono with white designs. Yuka was delighted with the lovely kimono and she still reminisces about it deep in her heart.

At 17 years old Yuka was visited by a friend of the family who liked her. But Yuka's future husband had been picked and her friend only came over to visit with her and the family. She recalls him as a tall, slender, quite young man with a large grin which always made her want to smile. After she left Japan she never saw him or heard from him even to this day.

By an agreement that their father made with Yuka's uncle, Chomatsu, she would marry Katsuzo Matoba. Katsuzo is Yuka's first cousin and he was 14 years older than her. The marriage agreement was made when Yuka was very little and because he was the only child.

Katsuzo's paternal mother and Chomatsu got a divorce when he was very young. Chomatsu remarried as did his paternal mother. (Yuka remembers that when she went to America, Katsuzo would send presents to his paternal mother and his two stepbrothers and stepsister in Japan.)

Katsuzo's father passed away when he was only 6 years old. He stayed with his stepmother for a little while then he went to his grandparents' house to be raised. Katsuzo was not wanted by his stepmother and as he got older he did not get along with her. When he was 16 years old he left his grandparents' house to be on his own. He decided that year (1906) to go to Hawaii and make money. He left Japan with two other friends who also had stepmothers whom they also did not get along with. They went by ship and when they got to Hawaii they were not allowed off the ship to stay or work because they were said to be too young. So the three of them headed back for Japan. On the trip back Katsuzo got sick, and when the ship landed in Brazil he decided to stay and get better. His two friends also decided to stay in Brazil and work for awhile. Katsuzo stayed and worked in Brazil for 3 years then he decided to move on and do some traveling. He left Brazil filled with the knowledge of their culture and ability to speak Spanish [Portuguese?] but he left behind two very close friends who had decided to stay.

He then worked as a cabin boy on many different ships traveling to many different places for approximately four years. He then went back to Japan to apply for immigration papers to go to America. After waiting for his papers to be O.K.'d and processed he left for America and worked on the West Coast for 7 years. My grandmother does not know what my grandfather did or went through when he was in America those years. She never asked him, and he never told her about this part of his life.

At the end of the year in 1923, Katsuzo wrote back to Japan to Tatsugiro telling him that he would be coming back to Japan to marry Yuka and take her back to America with him. Yuka did not want to leave Japan but obeyed her father's wish and would go to America with Katsuzo. She had always listened and did what her father said to do, and she was not about to question his authority now.

Yuka had heard from people returning from Canada that America seemed to be a nice place to go to. These people returned from Canada with a lot of money that they had made working there. Yuka thought that she and Katsuzo would go to America long enough to make money and return home to Japan to live. Yuka never had any intentions on making her home in America.

Yuka went over her Aunt Hiroko's house to visit and to tell her that she would be leaving for America. Her aunt told her to do as the Americans did and not to do anything that would embarrass the mother country, Japan.

On May 14, 1924, Katsuzo arrived home. Yuka hardly recognized him because it had been so long ago since he was home getting his paper work ready for his trip to America. He arrived at the house wearing a western suit, which looked very impressive. He was

only 5 feet 1 inches, thin with large muscles, smooth tanned skin, except for his rough hands. He had a pleasant and friendly personality, which Yuka took to very fast.

They spent a few weeks getting to know each other, and what seemed to be an arranged marriage turned out not to be. They liked each other very much and knew that they would be happy together.

After they got married they went to Yokohama for 2 weeks. Yuka had to get blood tests run and her paper work filled out. She also got to do some shopping for clothes. She bought some western styled clothes to take with her. One item which she bought and still has is a silk short sleeve shirt. It is pale yellow with small glass beads stitched around the neckline. But, on the trip Yuka wore a flowered kimono instead of the new western clothes she had bought.

She had a lonely feeling as she left Japan because from the ship she could see the island from a far distance. They could not afford 1st class accommodations because Katsuzo wanted to pay and not use the 700 ng (Not yen but ng) that Yuka's father gave to her.

The ship's name was the "Persia Maru" and it was very crowded because this was one of the last ships from Japan able to bring in Japanese immigrants. She shared her room with many other Japanese women. They had either cots or bunks to sleep on. Yuka got her own cot in a corner by herself.

Yuka does not think back to the 15 day trip across the sea with very fond memories because she was seasick throughout the whole trip. Katsuzo paid a boy who was working on the ship extra money to take Yuka's food to her. She did not see Katsuzo because the only time they could see each other is in the dining rooms or out on the ship's deck.

On June 27, 1924, they arrived at Angel Island. (Thursday night) She waited all day to get checked through immigration. She was to be next after a Chinese lady. The Chinese lady had some problems because she was there a long time. Yuka did not get interviewed that Friday afternoon so she had to wait until Monday morning. Katsuzo was cleared quickly that Friday morning and when he found out that Yuka would have to wait all weekend, he left for Santa Rosa to work Saturday and Sunday. He came back on Monday morning to wait for Yuka to get through immigration. Yuka spent 3 days at the immigration station and she was very upset.

They stayed one day at the Hata's home in San Francisco. The Hata's ran a dry cleaners and had their living quarters in the back. Yuka thought that San Francisco was very noisy because of the street cars. It was a nice day and it was not foggy. When she saw the Americans, they looked so tall and fair skinned. They all wore suits and the women wore long dresses with their waist held in.

The next day they took a ferry from San Francisco's wharf to Sausalito. Then from Sausalito they took a train to Santa Rosa. When they reached Santa Rosa they were greeted and picked up by Mr. Coffey a large land owner. He took them to their house, which Katsuzo was leasing with the land to grow strawberries. When Yuka saw the little shack her heart sank. It had 2 bedrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. The house was not very nice compared to the Japanese homes. The house looked like it was going to fall apart any minute. It was very simply made with plank boards that were nailed together to

form the outer and inner walls. Inside the kitchen was a small wooden table with short benches on either side. There was a pot-bellied stove and a small fireplace.

The wallpaper in the bedroom was yellowing and the bare wooden floor was dull but clean. There was a single window with an old sheet as the curtain and a small dresser in the corner. The bed was made of black iron and seemed to be high off the ground. Yuka put away her clothing then went out into the kitchen to meet the Takeshitas.

The Takeshitas were an older couple using the spare room. They worked for Katsuzo during the strawberry season. Mrs. Takeshita was in her early 50's and Mr. Takeshita was in his late 50's. They had a married son who was in Sebastopol and whom they lived with when the strawberry season was over.

Mrs. Takeshita showed Yuka the screened off porch and told her about them having to cook the meals for the hired workers. Yuka was not too thrilled when she found out she had to cook and clean up for each meal and then work in the fields. But, she had come to America and she wanted to be a good wife for Katsuzo and make money.

In the afternoon another visitor dropped by to pay a visit to Yuka. Henry Brush and his daughter Jean stopped by to welcome her to America. Henry Brush was also a landowner and he had an apple dryer and grew prunes. Mr. Brush was not a farmer, he was a police officer and he leased out all of the land he owned. In the future there would be many times when Mr. Brush would call "K" (Katsuzo) to come and pick him up when he was drunk. "K" would also always go and find him when Mrs. Brush was worried and asked him to look for her husband.

On July 27, 1925 Asako Matoba was born. Yuka had to go help in the fields and also do cooking and housework as soon as she was up and around. On May 16, 1927, Mary was born. The two children were placed in a large crib under a shady tree with a large dog to watch them. If any strangers went by the children, the dog would start barking. Yuka could see the children as she drove a pickup truck in the berry field. She learned how to drive because Katsuzo said it looked funny for him to drive and her to load the berries on to the truck. This was the only time that Yuka would drive because she never got her driver's license.

Tragedy was to fall on Katsuzo and Yuka because Asako had gotten very sick and on July 23, 1928, and she passed away. During this time Yuka was pregnant with another child. This seemed like the right time to move [in order to] to work the apple dryer. Five years passed since Yuka first arrived to America and they had still not made their fortune to return to Japan. But now that she had had her children, she did not want to return to Japan. These children were Americans and it seemed like they should stay here and grow up. On January 15, 1929, Tomiko, a healthy baby girl, was born.

Katsuzo was a generous man and he always tried to help other families in need. While he was running the apple dryer owned by Mr. Brush, he found out that a family who was raising chickens went broke because some kind of disease wiped out the chickens. Katsuzo went to the Kimuras and asked them if they wanted to run the apple dryer. The Kimuras learned from him and took over. Yuka was furious because the apple dryer was an easier job and paid commission for each ton dried. Katsuzo explained to Yuka that it would be easy for him to find another job. And Katsuzo did find many seasonal jobs to keep the family fed.

On May 15, 1930, Katsuzo was a very proud father of a chubby baby boy named Katsuki. Haruko, a girl, was born on February 24, 1932 and then Haruki their second son was born on January 14, 1934. On November 10, 1935, Akio, was born in Sebastopol and on May 11, 1938, George their fourth son, was born in Healdsburg.

Up to this time the family moved with the crops. This is what a typical year was like:

December – February	Pruning trees in Santa Rosa
January	Pruning apple trees in Sebastopol
February – March	Prune vineyards in Santa Rosa and/or Fountain Grove
March - June	Raising hops in Santa Rosa or Sebastopol
July – December	Apple dryer in Santa Rosa or Sebastopol

In between the seasons Katsuzo would go gardening. But he did not like the gardening jobs too well because the ladies always told him what to do. He would go gardening in Calistoga, St. Helena, Santa Rosa and Healdsburg.

During these 17 years in America, Yuka had been receiving mail from home. She would only get one letter a year if she was lucky. But, when she did receive the letter, she was filled with joy. She would read the letters over and over until she had them memorized. She found out that she had a new baby brother and of having a younger sister who died of illness. Later she received a picture of one of her younger brothers who was old enough to join the Japanese Navy.

With the tension between Japan and America growing Yuka would often pray for a mutual understanding of their disagreements. She would hear on the radio of bad things happening to Japanese in other cities. She was grateful for the townspeople where they lived because nothing bad had occurred and the people were still nice to them.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Yuka was scared because she did not know how the Americans would react and treat them. During this time the family was in Healdsburg, and the community was still good to them. They were working for Mrs. Fenton, who was a widow, farming hops. They stayed in a little house on the Fenton ranch.

In February the Matobas had found out that in May they would have to report to the Merced Assembly Center. All the letters from Japan, including pictures, were burned as soon as they heard they had to leave. Katsuzo was informed that he would have to turn in any weapons. But instead he threw them away.

This news did not stop them from working in the fields. They still had to feed their family so they could not afford to quit working. It was harder and harder to work because they did not know what lay ahead for them.

On March 29, 1942, Ann Matoba was born. This made Yuka worry more because she did not know what would happen to her new baby girl. Terrible thoughts raced through her mind. She thought that the American government was going to send her and Katsuzo back to Japan because they were not American citizens and keep the children in America. She did not let anyone know about the frightening feelings she had because she did not want to worry them.

About the middle of May it was time to pack up whatever they could carry and take the train from Santa Rosa to Merced. Yuka and Katsuzo heard from friends that it would not be wise to take any valuables with them. So they put their rings, watch, watch chain, and other valuable things into a coffee can and left it in one room with all of their household items.

The family had packed up clothing, bedding materials, baby bottles and a pot. The only reason the pot was allowed was the fact that there was a baby. The family was ready to leave the house about 7:00 a.m. and Mrs. Fenton took them down to the train depot. About 10:00 a.m. they left on the train for Merced. The train ride was about 5 hours long and everything was quite well-organized throughout the whole day.

They arrived at the Merced Depot and were transferred by bus to the Merced Assembly Center (fairgrounds). They were all tired from the long train ride and the heat and dust of the fairgrounds did not help their morale. After sorting out their luggage the living quarters were assigned. The Matobas shared one barrack with 2 other families. The barrack was divided equally into 3 rooms partitioned off by thin wooden boards.

The Matobas lived at the Merced Assembly Center from May 16, 1942 to September 1942. The weather was so hot that Yuka had to run water under the baby's bed to keep her cool. The way the barracks were constructed did not help keep the hot air out of the rooms. The barracks were slapped up in a hurry and one could tell this by the workmanship. Thin boards were hammered together and formed the inner walls, on the outside of the barracks tarpaper was nailed on.

There was not much to do at Merced because the families would not have to stay there for a long period of time. There were some activities coordinated by the center's activities director for both the young and old. But for Yuka and Katsuzo much of the time was spent on getting to know who the neighbors were and the other people in the center. All of the children had a good time because they never seemed to run out of playmates.

As soon as everyone was just about settled down the center's director informed the people that they would be leaving soon to go to Amache. They left the Merced train depot and started their three-day trip to Colorado. The train went through the Feather River Valley, which was a nice change of view. The train trip was very uncomfortable and distressing even though the landscape was pretty.

Yuka remembers that whenever they were going to pass a troop train, the guards on their train would tell everyone to pull down their shades. This was to make sure that the soldiers would not express any of their hatred at the Japanese in the train by perhaps shooting into the train. No one was sure that this might happen, but the officers had this precautionary method to make sure it had little chance of happening.

On the train trip they were not allowed to get off the train at any of the stops. When they arrived at Granada, Colorado, Yuka was relieved to get out and walk around. They then took a bus ride to the War Relocation Center called Amache a few miles away. This was to be their new home for 3 years. This was one of the smallest camps able to hold up to 8,000.

Yuka describes the camp as a small barren town with rows of wooden barracks, which made a chill go down her back. The weather was hot and dry with a slight breeze that day.

The wind blew the sand across the surface of the cracked ground. There was a wire fence surrounding the whole camp with guard tower posts around the whole camp.

The Matobas were assigned a barrack with 2 other families, the Kawasakis from the state of Washington and the Otanis from Petaluma. Each family had 2 rooms within one large room. Before long all the families knew each other and spent their leisure hours talking to each other.

The older Matoba children were sent to school and the younger ones stayed home with mom. Katsuzo had a job working as a maintenance worker taking care of the latrines for 16 barracks. After one year of working as a maintenance worker he switched over to the mess hall working as a cook for the rest of his internment.

Yuka was a dishwasher for a few months before she gave birth to a baby girl. Tomiko, the second oldest wanted to name the girl Twinkle. She had always liked the poem about "Twinkle, twinkle little star" and she thought the stars looked so pretty and bright in Colorado and since the baby was born there the name fit the baby well. Twinkle was born on August 13, 1944.

While Yuka was a dishwasher, the Kawasakis watched Ann because the Kawasaki daughter-in-law also had a small baby. With so many children the family could use the extra money that she earned. Both Yuka and Katsuzo made \$16.00 a month. All of the money went towards the children's needs. Yuka and Katsuzo did without many items. Yuka would sew the clothes for the whole family and she would have to patch up hers and Katsuzo's work clothes. She would wash Katsuzo's work clothes each day so the next day he would have clean clothes for work.

Yuka was a very protective mother and would tell her children to stay around the barracks and not wander off around camp. When the children went to social activities, programs or dances Yuka stayed up until all of the children were home. She would also tell them to come straight home after school.

Yuka can still call to mind washing the laundry and hanging it up, only for a dust storm to come up and dirty all the freshly washed clothes. She then had to rewash it and wait until the dust storm blew over.

She does not remember too many terrible or alarming things while she was in camp. But she did recall a bachelor who lived in the barracks across the way being found outside of camp. They believed that he had committed suicide by hanging himself. Some of his friends knew that he was in a state of depression and had tried to help him. This incident happened when the announcement of being released had been broadcasted a few days before.

On October 8, 1945, the Matobas were on their way back to Healdsburg. When they returned to get their belongings from the Fenton house, Mrs. Fenton told them that she had some workers move their things into the barn for storage. She had rented the extra house and did not want to leave their things in the house. Yuka looked all over for the coffee can and a large Japanese platter but these things were missing. Yuka is sure to this day that Mrs. Fenton did not take these things because she was rich and could buy anything she wanted.

The Matobas did get a job as soon as they returned, Mr. Frost hired them. They farmed hops, vineyards, tomatoes, and prunes. They did not have to move to find work any more because each of these crops grew at different times. While working with the hops in the summer of 1947, Katsuzo fell down and hit his chest on a large piece of wood. He kept going to the doctor's, but the doctor kept telling him that there was no treatment and that the bruise would heal, but it never did. Katsuzo went to a doctor in Santa Rosa but he said to follow the family doctor's advice. Each year Katsuzo's body would get weaker and weaker.

On April 8, 1948 their last child Vicki was born. They stayed and worked on the Frost farm until 1952. Their stay on the Frost ranch was 7 years long and many of their older children were off on their own or attending college away. The last year that they were on the Frost ranch, Katsuzo attended classes to become American citizen. Katsuzo had finished the classes and gotten his citizenship papers but Yuka dropped out because she said she was too busy with the children and she did not want to study.

Also, during this time Haruki and Akio wanted to join the Air Force but Yuka would not let them. But after a few days she gave in because she had heard that the other Japanese mothers let their sons join.

In 1952 Katsuzo had to retire because of his ill health. Katsuzo, Yuka, Kats, George, Ann, Twinkle and Vicki moved to a house on a farm in Healdsburg. They rented the house because they could not find a house that they wanted to buy.

Kats the oldest son was living at home to help the family out financially. Yuka was also working for an apple company. She did many different jobs, like sorting, cutting, peeling, etc., and of course, Katsuzo was also receiving Social Security Disability.

On October 11th, 1956, Katsuzo died of cancer. His death was the result of the fall that he had while working with the hops in 1947. Up until this time he had lost the ability to move his right arm. Yuka knew that his health was failing but she was crushed when he passed away because she did not think he was going to die so soon.

In 1957 Yuka bought a house in Sebastopol. She had always wanted a place where she would not have to leave and could call home. She wished that Katsuzo was still alive to see the house because in the back he could grow his strawberries. Katsuzo had always talked about getting a house with a little land so that he could have a small strawberry patch.

Yuka worked with the apple companies for 13 years. This kept her busy and let her see many of her new friends in the Sebastopol area. All of the children were attending school, so Yuka did not have to worry very much. Apple season lasted from the end of July to the middle of December. At the age of 65 years old she decided to retire.

She has gone to Japan twice to visit relatives and her daughter Twinkle who was in Japan for 5 years. She has visited Florida to see her daughter Ann and now she is planning to go to Hawaii as soon as Mary (my mother) gets the money together. Yuka seems content with the 13 grandchildren who always seem to be down at the house.

In February she was upset because Haruki had a heart attack and she was very worried about him. He is better now and it seemed like everything was going to be fine until April 29th, 1981, when her granddaughter Christine was in a bad car accident. Yuka has been

very quiet and spends her weekends at the hospital just hoping that Christine will get better.

As for the paper that I have completed, it has opened my eyes to the problems that my grandparents faced when they came over to America. Yuka, my grandmother, only came to America because she believed that they would make money and return to Japan. When she came to America, I see how difficult it was for her to work long and hard hours when she was not used to it. But she stayed and stuck it out; she did not give up and go back home.

She proved to be a strong-willed person to live under such poor conditions. She had to go through one of the worst ordeals that all Japanese went through, and she has no bitterness towards America. She has shown me that she loved her children and wanted them to be Americans, and that is why I think she stayed.

When she came to America she did not understand English and had to try to learn it and also the ways of the culture. I know that when we used to talk about how my grandpa was related to her she would always say that he was a distant cousin. I know now why she always told us this. In Japan it was acceptable to marry one's own cousin, but here in America they frown upon it.

Since my grandma retired she has more time to spend with the family. She seems to appreciate it when the whole family gets together. Her face just beams with happiness. She has such a marvelous time with my younger cousins. It is because she missed not getting to spend a lot of time with her children because she was always working.

I feel closer to my grandma than ever before and I can appreciate her more. I have never said to her that I love her nor has she ever told me that she loves me, but I know she does and I think she does know that I love her very much.

I used to get mad at her because she did not understand English too well and I realized that I was stupid because at least she can understand English but I can't even understand one word of Japanese. She speaks broken English to me and I can even speak a few words of Japanese back to her.

There are times when I see my grandma sitting in a chair just looking out into the garden. I ask her what she is thinking about and she replies in broken English, "I don't know", but she has this large grin after she says these words to me. She might be thinking about Grandpa and how he would have enjoyed the place that she has found to live her life out.

End of Part I

Part II

JACL Oral History Project Interview

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Which year of Meiji were you born?

Yuka: Meiji 38, I'm not sure, I don't remember well. [Her birthday is January 24, 1904]

JACL: What did your father and mother do in Japan?

- Yuka:** They were farmers.
- JACL:** Farmers?
- Yuka:** Yeah, they lived in a rural....
- JACL:** Were they growing rice and...?
- Yuka:** Yes.
- JACL:** And what else were they doing?
- Yuka:** They had a mountain. After I came to America, soon my father cut trees down and sold [them], and then sent me money. He sent me money saying that you might need money. He said, "Don't overwork."
- JACL:** I see. Did you have fruits trees or something on that mountain?
- Yuka:** No, fruit trees.
- JACL:** Okay. How many members of your family in Japan? How many brothers and sisters do you have in Japan?
- Yuka:** I have six brothers and sisters.
- JACL:** Are you the oldest child in your family?
- Yuka:** Yes, I was the oldest.
- JACL:** Did you take care of your brothers and sisters? Did you tend your brothers and sisters because you were oldest of them?
- Yuka:** No, I didn't do anything. We hired a woman for house cleaning and also she dropped and picked us up for school. So people behind our house said, "It would be safe if our children went to school and returned to school with the Matobas." My ancestor was a samurai... what I wanted to say I forgot.
- JACL:** How many years did you attend school?
- Yuka:** I attended only grammar school. In general, people did not go to school long in Japan in those days...
- JACL:** In those days...
- Yuka:** Yeah, I only learned flower arrangement and tea ceremony. The instructor came to my house and our back house people came and we together learned flower arrangement and tea ceremony in the hallway of our house. We didn't have much money, but we are descendants of samurai.
- JACL:** Ah, so there were many things in your house.
- Yuka:** Yeah.
- JACL:** That's interesting. What about when you came to the United States.
- Yuka:** When I came here my father cut down trees from a mountain and sent me money. [My] Cousin had lived in Sacramento, and my husband often went to Sacramento so he put the money in his boots and bring [the] money here.
- JACL:** Did you come to Santa Rosa from Japan?

- Yuka: Yes, we came to Santa Rosa directly from Japan.
- JACL: Was that at *Kai-san's place* [a local boarding house catering to Japanese immigrants] in Santa Rosa?
- Yuka: No, it was not Kai-san's place. It was in a rural area.
- JACL: I see.
- Yuka: We grew strawberries.
- JACL: Oh, strawberries. On these days did most housewives often visit Kai-san's place?
- Yuka: Yeah, yeah, they often visited Kai-san's place.
- JACL: Also did Akutagawa-san and Taniguchi-san visit there?
- Yuka: Yeah, if they had free time they often visited there for their pastime.
- JACL: When you came to the United State from Japan, did you stop in Hawaii or come here directly?
- Yuka: Yes, we stopped by Hawaii for a while.
- JACL: You stopped in Hawaii for a while then came to America.
- Yuka: Hai, hai. [Yes, yes].
- JACL: How did you get into marriage with your husband in Japan? Was it by an arranged marriage or did you know each other?
- Yuka: Oh, no. We are relatives and [our] parents had decided on it. We are relatives and besides we were next-door neighbors.
- JACL: Did you get married in Japan and then come to America?
- Yuka: Yeah.
- JACL: How old were you when you were married?
- Yuka: Nineteen years old.
- JACL: Nineteen.
- Yuka: I was young and I didn't know anything. (*laughs*). I hadn't cooked until then.
- JACL: So you learned the job. What kind of job did you do when you come to America?
- Yuka: We grew strawberries in Santa Rosa.
- Yuka: After we sold strawberries, my husband put money in his boots and brought it to Sacramento where our cousin lived.
- JACL: How did you feel when you came to America?
- Yuka: How did I feel.... I did not feel anything because I did not know anything.
- Yuka: People come here by airplane now, but we came by ship.
- JACL: Did it take one month?
- Yuka: Over two weeks.

JACL: Oh, two weeks.

Yuka: [My] Cousin in Sacramento died. His wife came here with Uchida-san and is still living. She came from Kumamoto. Our and her cabins were next door on the same ship.

JACL: Do you remember of the name of the ship?

Yuka: It was called the *Persia Maru*.

JACL: Did you want to get together with this Japanese community because they could not speak English?

Yuka: Yes.

JACL: Did Japanese get together at Kai-san's place and *Bochaya* [another Japanese boarding house]?

Yuka: Yes. We went to Kai-san's place and *Bochaya*. And Japanese went to Nagase-san's store for shopping.

JACL: Which store did you go?

Yuka: Hamamoto-san's in Sebastopol.

JACL: Was there a doctor's office?

Yuka: No, there wasn't any doctor's office.

JACL: Did you move around here and there?

Yuka: Yes, in those days we moved around by jobs. We worked for apples here and there and then for hops there... we moved around. So we were also in Healdsburg.

JACL: What year did you come to the United States?

Yuka: Nineteen....? I don't remember it. [It was 1924, the last year that picture brides came to America.]

JACL: Okay.

Yuka: Masuoka-san helped me to purchase a house here using my husband's insurance. Mr. McNealy in the government office helped us. My husband worked for the gardens of Mr. McNealy. My husband said, "Suppose you died earlier than me. I could work, but suppose I died earlier than you. You were not able to work because you had to take care of children." Therefore my husband insured himself for [a] very big amount.

JACL: I see.

Yuka: Masuoka-san told me the property here was on the market and I bought this house.

JACL: Were there trees or bushes here at that time?

Yuka: Yes, there were raspberries. After my husband died I used his insurance money and bought this place here because Masuoka-san said this was on the market.

- JACL: Was the Enmanji Temple there before you went to the Camp Amache?
- Yuka: No. Enmanji was built for the World Expo in Chicago and after the Expo it was brought here.
- JACL: What were you doing before you went to Amache?
- Yuka: We were cultivating apples and hops.
- JACL: Did other Japanese also cultivate apples and hops?
- Yuka: Yes, most Japanese were cultivating apples and hops.
- JACL: When were you ordered to move out?
- Yuka: We were ordered to move out when we were in Healdsburg.
- JACL: Oh, in Healdsburg.
- Yuka: We were at Mr. Fenton's place in Healdsburg. When we were in the camp, we received some things from San Francisco. Because Kent had already died, his wife had lots of money and she sent us some things from San Francisco. She was a Caucasian and a very nice person. So neighbors in the camp said the Matobas had a lot of money. We asked them, "Why did you think so?" They said, "You received some things from a few prestigious stores in San Francisco." We told them it was all sent to us from our boss's wife.
- JACL: Did some other Caucasians help when you moved to the camp?
- Yuka: No, only Mr. Fenton's wife helped us. We were at Mr. Fenton's place. She said she would also send money to us, but we did not need money in the camp. They fed us in the camp and...
- JACL: How did you feel when you got to the camp?
- Yuka: Well, I thought that we, all Japanese, got together and went to the camp. I thought that it's not so bad.
- JACL: What did you do in the camp?
- Yuka: I helped wash dishes.
- JACL: What block were you in, eleven?
- Yuka: Yes, I was in eleven. Otani-san was also in eleven.
- JACL: What kinds of things did you do in terms of recreation? Were there Japanese movies?
- Yuka: Yes.
- JACL: Did you do needlework?
- Yuka: I did needlework for children.
- JACL: Did you take flower arrangement lessons?
- Yuka: No.
- JACL: What do you remember most in the camp?

- Yuka:** I helped wash dishes. I had kids and I was busy raising kids.
- JACL:** Do you remember any other thing?
- Yuka:** Yeah, I remembered Kai-san in Petaluma who was in the same block.
- JACL:** Kai-san?
- Yuka:** Kai-san in Petaluma.
- JACL:** Oh, Kai-san in Petaluma. Do you remember when you came back from the camp? Did you go directly to California?
- Yuka:** We returned to Healdsburg but someone lived in our house. We stayed for a while at the Masuoka's place in Healdsburg.
- JACL:** Did you work with hops and prunes?
- Yuka:** We were in Healdsburg for a while on the Frost Farm, then came here. There were no hops when we returned here. Hops were infested with insects and there were no hops. There were no hops for few years.
- JACL:** Do you remember when you left Cross Way?
- Yuka:** There was an apple dryer near the Enmanji [Temple] and I walked to go there and worked. We didn't have this house at the time and there was a small house over there.
- JACL:** Can you recall if anyone was not very nice to you when you returned from the camp?
- Yuka:** Caucasians were not bad to us.
- JACL:** How were they before you went to the camp?
- Yuka:** They were no different before and after the camp.
- JACL:** Do you remember Tom Grace?
- Yuka:** Yes, I remember him.
- JACL:** Did you work with Tom Grace?
- Yuka:** When he was two years old or so he was there. We lived nearby. [They worked with his parents.]
- JACL:** Did you work at Henry Brush?
- Yuka:** Yes, I was working at his place
- JACL:** Did he have an apple dryer business?
- Yuka:** Yes, he did. Still there was a house there. It was a small house. At the time they didn't live in a big house like nowadays.
- JACL:** Do you remember Shimada-san?
- Yuka:** Yeah. Shimada-san was also growing strawberries.
- JACL:** Did you go to a hot spring?

Yuka: Yes, I went to a hot spring in Calistoga with Masuoka-san. We stayed overnight at [a] cabin and soaked in the hot spring.

JACL: When did your husband pass away?

Yuka: Many years ago... [1956]

JACL: Could you talk about all your children?

Yuka: Oldest is Kazuki and he died. The next is Mary and she also died. Then there was Tomiko [deceased], then Haruko. Haruko has been in and out of the hospital. Then Akio who is in Granite Bay and Masaru [George] lives in [the] San Jose area. And Haruko lives also in San Jose. After George, came Ann, then Twinkle followed by Vicki.

JACL: How many children did you have?

Yuka: Eleven children. Asakawa-san had only one child and the child died. They said, "It is good to have many children". Asakawa-san had passed away.

JACL: How many people are still alive?

Yuka: Not many are alive. Taniguchi-san and Yokoyama-san, that's all. Masuoka-san is not alive.

Yuka: I am one year older than Taniguchi-san so probably I am the oldest among those alive.

JACL: Are there any of your brothers or sisters in Japan?

Yuka: No, no one is alive. Only my nephew lives in Japan.

JACL: Have you visited Japan? When did you visit?

Yuka: I went to Japan with Tomiko-san, so many decades ago.

JACL: When you were in the camp what kind of food did you eat?

Yuka: There is no difference from now. There were rice and shoyu in the camp. In general, the food was good. Even [when] we were leaving the camp, they gave us rice and shoyu. They said that those foods were here and you did not need to buy them immediately.

JACL: When you returned from the camp, did you come by train?

Yuka: Yes, we returned by train. Everybody together returned home.

JACL: Where did you go to from Enmanji?

Yuka: We returned to a house, which was a small one. That was not this house.

JACL: Did you come back directly to Sebastopol?

Yuka: No, we returned to Healdsburg.

Yuka: Enmanji was not there. It was built at the World Exposition in Chicago, and after the Expo we paid [a] small [amount of] money to bring the temple to Sebastopol.

JACL: Was there Nippon Hall?

- Yuka:** Yes, we stayed one night at there.
- JACL:** As an immigrant, was that very hard for you when you first came here?
- Yuka:** Well, I don't remember.
- JACL:** Was it hard to do farmer's work?
- Yuka:** Yeah, I didn't do anything in Japan. I still remember when we received money from Japan we put money in boots and brought the money to Sacramento.
- JACL:** Didn't you bring money to a bank?
- Yuka:** We thought banks were not safe places and we didn't bring money to the banks.
- JACL:** Did they bring food around to you in those days?
- Yuka:** Nagase-san and Hamamoto-san brought around grocery, meats, grapes and we didn't need to go shopping. We left boxes for grapes and they filled it in. We paid grocery expenses once every month. We had mochitsuki at home for the New Year. Later we brought *usu* and other things to Enmanji and made mochi for the New Year.
- JACL:** Did you have a celebration for the New Year?
- Yuka:** Many Japanese got together for the New Year celebration. Men were visiting Japanese friends in the houses next to each other.

End of Interview

MINORU MATSUDA INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Minoru Matsuda
Date: April 2 and May 6, 1992
Place: Minoru Matsuda residence, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Arlene Houghton
Summary: Nancy Davlin
Transcription: Transcribed from written source material

Interview Summary

These interviews were conducted during an earlier study. Due to the extended illness and subsequent death of Mr. Matsuda in January, 2003, we were unable to update these interviews. Our heartfelt gratitude is extended to Mr. Matsuda's family for allowing us to utilize these interviews for our oral history project.

Mr. Matsuda was born in Windsor, but spent most of his life in Sebastopol. His knowledge of the history of the Japanese community as well as Buddhism was extensive and some of that is reflected in these interviews. He recollected memories of the different camps in Sebastopol during the depression and working in the apple orchards. He graduated from Analy High School when it was a wooden building that was later condemned.

He went to Amache in Colorado and later, when the restrictions were lessened, he was allowed to go to college in Colorado. He was grateful to be able to return to Sebastopol after the war, and believed that Sebastopol was a nice place to live with a lot of good friends. Directly following the Interviews is a transcript of the history of Enmanji Temple that Mr. Matsuda kindly provided for the Oral History Project.

Transcript of Interview

First Interview – April 2, 1992

JACL: Can you tell me your whole name, please?

Minoru: My name is Minoru Matsuda, 895 Matsuda Lane. Born January 7, 1915.

JACL: Your place of birth?

Minoru: I was born on a ranch out in Windsor.

JACL: When did you move here?

Minoru: We moved here in 1936, so that was about 56 years ago.

JACL: Were you married at that time?

Minoru: No, I wasn't. I just got out of school.

JACL: So you didn't go to school here, then?

Minoru: Yes, I did. I graduated from Analy [High School] in 1934.

JACL: And your occupation while you were here?

Minoru: Then, I was raising apples, and we also had an apple dryer.

JACL: Your family had one?

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: So you were part of the apple industry here. Do you know anything about your parents' names and places of birth?

Minoru: Yes, my father's name was Taichi Matsuda, and my mother's name was Tsune Matsuda. They were both born in Japan.

JACL: Do you know when they came here?

Minoru: My father came over around 1909 or 1910, and my mother came in 1914.

JACL: Just before you were born?

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: Did she come over to marry your father?

Minoru: They were married in Japan.

JACL: Do you have other brothers and sisters?

Minoru: I had one brother. He passed away about 1946, about 45 years ago. My mother is now 94 and so she is still living. But she is in bed most of the time now. [She has passed away as of the transcription of this tape].

JACL: And you had children too?

Minoru: Yes, I had three boys. They are 36, 35 and 32.

JACL: Do you know how the Japanese people came to be here in Sebastopol and how long ago? Do you know anything about the history of the community?

Minoru: I think they first came here about 1909 or 1910. They came as laborers. They worked in the hop yards and orchards and pruning trees in the wintertime, and I think that's about all. Mostly laboring work.

JACL: So that's what your father did?

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: Did he have his own ranch too?

Minoru: Well, no, he didn't have any. They came with very little money. In fact, only what they could carry on their backs, so they practically started rather new.

JACL: Were they only allowed to carry what they had on their backs?

Minoru: No, that's all they had.

JACL: So they came around 1910. Other Japanese people seemed to come around the same time too.

Minoru: Yes, and later too.

JACL: Did your father know anybody when he came here originally?

Minoru: I don't think so. He just happened to come here. He came through Hawaii and worked there for about a year and then he came here.

JACL: Did he tell you anything about working in Hawaii?

Minoru: Not very much.

JACL: Did he say how he liked it?

Minoru: I think he worked in the sugar plantation at that time.

JACL: Can you tell me a little about Buddhism? The Enmanji Temple is Buddhist, isn't it?

Minoru: Yes, Jodo Shinshu Buddhist.

JACL: And what are some of the beliefs? Can anybody go?

Minoru: Yes, they have services every Sunday and everyone is invited to attend. The religion itself, I guess they teach the truth for life, for what it is.

JACL: How would it be different from Christianity? My understanding of Christianity is that there is not very much cherishing of the earth or the natural world. It's almost as though Christians are supposed to be lords and masters over other animals and the earth. I understand that is not so in Buddhism?

Minoru: No, it isn't. We don't have such a thing as God in our religion. We have Buddha. But that stands for the truth and it's the true teaching. We don't believe in idols. Buddha is not an idol.

JACL: Is it more a sense of harmony between yourself and the earth?

Minoru: Yes, there is.

JACL: How are the church services held?

Minoru: Our minister speaks. His name is Reverend Shiro Nishii. And he speaks English the first part of the service, and he speaks Japanese the second part.

JACL: I have heard very briefly that Enmanji Temple was brought here piece by piece.

Minoru: Yes, there was an exhibit by the Manchurian Railway in 1933 at the Chicago World's Fair, and after the fair it was dismantled and brought over to Sebastopol.

JACL: By railway?

Minoru: Yes, by railway.

JACL: So the people in the community, did they save up money for the temple and have it shipped [here]?

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: And then who assembled it when it got here?

Minoru: I think they had one or two carpenters from Japan and then the people from around here volunteered to help them put it up.

JACL: So a lot of people from the community helped to put it up as well as saved money for it? Do you know who originally built it back in Chicago?

Minoru: No, I don't.

JACL: Was it built by Japanese people?

Minoru: I think it was, yes. It was brought over from Manchuria. And then they assembled it there.

JACL: Did anybody else in the community mind that it was brought here? Nowadays, if you build anything it has to look exactly like the rest of the town.

Minoru: No, I don't think they had that situation then.

JACL: So nobody objected to it. So it was always a part of the community right from the beginning. Can you tell me about some of the festivals or anything that are held there at the temple?

Minoru: Yes, we have three main services a year. The first one is in April. It's the birthday of Shakyamuni Buddha.

JACL: Can you describe what that is like?

Minoru: Yes, you have a shrine, a flower shrine in the front. We decorate it with all flowers and we have a statue of Buddha too. And it's in a small pond. It's sweet tea. It is said that when Buddha was born, rain fell from the heavens and we are allowed to get a dipper of that sweet tea and pour it on the statue when we go up to Osho Ko, which means to put your hands together and bow down. And then the next one is in July called Obon. It's the celebration to show our gratitude for our ancestors who have passed away. That's when we have the Obon dance in the summertime. That's held in the evening from about 7-10 PM and everyone is welcome. It's publicized. It's about a week or so after the barbecue. And the third one... [He couldn't think of this one, but will relate it later.]

JACL: As far as the birthday of Shakyamuni Buddha, so you know what the significance of the flowers on the shrine are? Because it's spring?

Minoru: In Buddha you have a lot of lotus flowers and the lotus come out of a dirty pond. It shows that even in dirty water, a beautiful flower like the lotus can come out of it.

JACL: If you can think of anything else like this to share with me, please do so at any time. Are there quite a few Japanese people living in the area around here, do you know?

Minoru: I guess right now there must be about 40-50 families around Sebastopol.

JACL: Are these the people who attend the weekly [services]?

Minoru: No, not too many attend. That's the trouble we have. Most of them are members. Of course, some of them are different religions too. But we have about 30-40 [who come], to our services right now.

JACL: Do you have people who come from outside Sebastopol also?

Minoru: Yes, we have people from Petaluma. We have mostly Petaluma people and some from Santa Rosa and Sebastopol.

JACL: So is this the only temple around?

Minoru: In Sonoma County.

JACL: Can you think of anything else about the temple that you would like to share with us? Are several people the caretakers, or do people take turns [taking care of the temple]?

Minoru: Every month, we have a committee that is supposed to take care of the grounds and the garden and all that.

JACL: So if I wanted to go down and take pictures of it, who would I get in touch with?

Minoru: You can ask our minister; he lives right there.

JACL: What was the original purpose for building the temple here? Was it mostly religious? Or was it for community-type things? It sounds like it was mostly religious.

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: It sounds like you have been around Sebastopol a long time too...

Minoru: Yes, I've been here all my life.

JACL: Would you like to share some things about Sebastopol? Do you remember anything about the Depression?

Minoru: Yes, I remember the camps. My father used to run an orchard next door to Handy's Camp. He had ten acres there. I think he must have run that place about seven to eight years altogether and they had some nice trees in those days, but now I notice they are mostly all gone.

JACL: So you remember when people were living at Handy's?

Minoru: Yes, I do, during the Depression and before too.

JACL: Were there a lot of people living there then?

Minoru: Yes, there was quite a camp there.

JACL: Were they mostly men?

Minoru: I think they were families.

JACL: So when people talk about the homeless today, it sounds like there were even more then?

Minoru: I guess they weren't considered homeless.

JACL: Were they in tents?

Minoru: Yes, tents.

JACL: So were they transient people, or were they considered "down on their luck"?

Minoru: Yes, I guess you would call it [that]. In Pellini's Camp also. They used to have many tents in there. But I guess people got to have more money, so they began

to have trailers and things like that. Not too many people live in tents now. I guess our standards came up a little bit.

JACL: How did people consider them? Some people today don't think very well about the homeless. It sounds like it wasn't like that.

Minoru: No, I guess it was a little different in those days.

JACL: Did people understand more, do you think?

Minoru: Yes, I think so, yes.

JACL: So how did the Depression affect your family?

Minoru: Oh, my father and my mother had a hard time too, feeding us. But we managed to get by. In those days we never had welfare or anything like that, so we all had to work pretty hard to keep up. Like us, after school, we had to come home and change clothes and help out doing the work.

JACL: So you didn't have any time to get into trouble?

Minoru: Yes, in a way I guess it was good.

JACL: What about during the Second World War?

Minoru: In the Second World War, we had to go to camp. We got evacuated from this coast area.

JACL: The whole family? This was before you were married?

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: Where did you go to?

Minoru: Well, we went through Merced. They had a fairground over there in Merced, and they had temporary barracks built there, and there were about 4,000 people during that time.

JACL: How did your father and mother feel about that?

Minoru: Well, they were pretty sad but there wasn't much we could do about it. We had to just stay together.

JACL: So your family was never separated?

Minoru: No, we weren't. We were all together.

JACL: Had they owned anything before they were put in the camps? Because I understand that people had their property taken away from them.

Minoru: We had this property when we left. We had this place here. This place had only that barn and a tank house. We built this house after we came back.

JACL: So the property wasn't taken?

Minoru: No, it wasn't. Now we had another place down by Bloomfield Road and Gravenstein Highway, down by Frank's Corner. We had two acres there. [That was his father's.]

JACL: But I had understood that property was taken away.

Minoru: No, it wasn't taken away, as long as you were able to make payments.

JACL: How were you able to do that?

Minoru: Well, we had this place rented out. And the other place also. We didn't get very much.

JACL: How old were you then?

Minoru: I was 27 when the war started.

JACL: And your brother died after the war?

Minoru: Yes, my brother passed away after the war. He got sick right after we came back, while we were building that other house.

JACL: Do you think that it had anything to do with being away in the camps that he got sick?

Minoru: Yes, in a way I guess he should have taken better care of himself, but he neglected to do so.

JACL: How did other people in the community feel about this forced evacuation? How did other people respond to that?

Minoru: We kind of all stuck together.

JACL: How about non-Japanese people in the community? Did you feel fear or support [from them]?

Minoru: They treated us pretty well. Maybe they didn't feel that within themselves, but they didn't show it. They were all supportive to us. We knew a lot of people for a long time, so they were pretty good to us. In wartime everybody gets all excited and does things they wouldn't ordinarily do.

JACL: So you went to Analay High School? Did you go there when it was a wooden building also?

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: What were your memories of Analay High School? You must have graduated outdoors under those trees also?

Minoru: Yes, we did. We had an outdoor graduation.

JACL: Did you have dances back then and proms?

Minoru: They did, I think, but I didn't go to it. The old building, they condemned it. I think it was in my senior year.

JACL: So you may have been one of the last years to graduate from there [the old building], then?

Minoru: I think so, yes. The building they have now was build in 1937 so I went to night school lots over there, taking farm shop and welding and things like that. And my wife went to English classes for three years over there when she got her citizenship.

JACL: So your wife was born in Japan?

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: How did you meet?

Minoru: I took a trip to Japan and we met over there.

JACL: After the war?

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: Were you thinking about staying over there?

Minoru: No, I didn't. I wanted to come back again.

JACL: So you went over to find a wife?

Minoru: Yes. (*Smile*)

JACL: What year did you get married?

Minoru: May of 1954.

JACL: And so this country was all new to her.

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: And what did she think of this country?

Minoru: She liked it over here. Over there in those days everything was scarce, see. And during wartime, they had a hard time finding things to eat too. They suffered quite a bit.

JACL: What was transportation like in Sebastopol in those days?

Minoru: I remember seeing some [horses and buggies], yes. And the Model T Fords. In fact, we used to have a Model T. We had a Model A and a V-8. When the war broke out we did have a Model A.

JACL: And did you ever take the trolley?

Minoru: The streetcar into Santa Rosa? Yes, when I went to Sunday school, I used to take it from Sebastopol to Santa Rosa. That was before the war and before the temple was here. I went from Sebastopol to Santa Rosa for a dime in those days. It went right down the center of 4th Street in Santa Rosa and we got off, I think it was 4th and D Street.

JACL: Is there anything else that you can think of regarding the historical society of the temple, the Japanese community or your own community that you would like to share?

Minoru: I think I am lucky to be in a place like Sebastopol. It really is a nice place. I really enjoy going to school and working and living here. The climate is good, and I think we are really fortunate to be in such a nice location.

JACL: And your occupation. You worked at the post office?

Minoru: Yes, I worked at the post office 23 years, 19 years as a window clerk, so I met a lot of people. It will be 10 years this month since I retired.

JACL: You wanted to share the third service?

Minoru: This third service is called Ho-onko memorial service. That service is in celebration of the passing of the founder of our Jodo Shinshu sect who died about 800 years ago.

JACL: What was his name?

Minoru: His name was Shinran Shonin.

JACL: And can you describe the ceremony?

Minoru: The ceremony is mostly a memorial service. The minister gives a sermon and then you all go up and shoko at the end. It's just like a regular service, only it's called a memorial service for that person.

Second Interview – May 6, 1992

Minoru: You asked me what does Buddhism teach. The fundamental teaching of Jodo Shinshu is the four noble truths and the eight noble paths. The first four noble truths. First is that life is suffering and second, the cause of suffering and third, the cessation of suffering. And the fourth is the path to the ending of suffering. And the eight noble paths. First is the right view, second is the right thought, third is the right speech, fourth is the right conduct, fifth is the right livelihood, sixth is the right effort, seventh is the right mindfulness, and eighth and the final one, is the right meditation. Those are the fundamental teachings of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

JACL: I explained to your sensei that I've meditated in the past, and he said he was very wary of American meditation. What's the difference between American and Buddhist meditation?

Minoru: American meditation, I think, you always ask God for something, like...

JACL: No, I'm not Christian. When I meditate, I try and just clear my mind of everything.

Minoru: Yes, that's right.

JACL: That's the right meditation?

Minoru: Yes, in Buddhism we meditate.

JACL: Do you think on something?

Minoru: No, we appreciate what we get and what we have and we give thanks. We don't really ask for something. We just say thank you for everything that we have.

JACL: I see. So it's different from prayer, not meditation. And I wanted to ask you, do you know the date when the Enmanji Temple was built here? I know it was 1933 in Manchuria, but when was it reconstructed here?

Minoru: It was in 1933, it was in the Chicago World's Fair and after that it was brought over here so that was, I think, sometime in 1934 that the temple was built here in Sebastopol.

JACL: And during the internment period, in World War II, what happened to the temple? I mean, I'm not talking about when it was trashed, but did somebody take care of it during that time?

Minoru: Yes. Right next to the temple there was a little gasoline station. It's not there anymore now. It's torn down, but the people that stayed there kind of watched over it for us. A couple of times, I think, they [some people from the area], tried to set fire to it and all that, and they were the ones that reported it [from the gasoline station].

JACL: Yes, I knew, I had read about that in the paper. It said the vandals torched the ceiling.

Minoru: Yes, they did.

JACL: Was that before you were sent away to the camps or after?

Minoru: No, that was after.

JACL: OKAY Because I also understand that some people from the Community Church came and formed a circle around the temple to protect it?

Minoru: I don't know about that. Yeah, it might have been, yes.

JACL: One of the people, did you ever hear of Jack Gerboth, who is a teacher at Analy High School? He was in a youth group at the time, and he was supposedly one of the people who was in a circle to protect it. I read in the articles from your sensei that there are temples all over the country and there are a lot in the Bay Area, and I'm wondering, do you have affiliations with them or any of the other people from other temples? Do you ever have meetings?

Minoru: Yes, we do. They have churches in this area called the Bay District Area and it involves our church and Alameda and Oakland and Southern Alameda County Church and San Francisco and San Mateo and I think that's about it.

JACL: So there are quite a few people?

Minoru: Yes, eight or nine churches.

JACL: Do you get together for meetings sometimes, maybe a couple of times a year?

Minoru: Yes, I think two or three times a year. And they have what they call a Bay District Conference once a year, usually in November.

JACL: You said that you don't have many people at this point who come to the temple. Are there any young people who come now? Is that a problem?

Minoru: Yes, there's quite a few young people. Not as many as we'd like to have, but there's quite a few now.

JACL: And your sensei also said there are Caucasians that go there too?

Minoru: Yes, I think we have three or four members.

JACL: And I got to go inside [the temple] and I saw the altar and that there were three levels. Can you tell me about the three levels? Do you know what they are?

Minoru: No, I don't.

JACL: Oh, one's a Buddha. I know that - Amida Buddha.

Minoru: Oh, you mean that picture in the back? The middle one is Amida Buddha, the right picture Shinran Shonin, and the picture on the left is Renyo Shonin.

JACL: And do you know what they represent?

Minoru: The one on the right, Shinran Shonin, he's the founder of our Jodo Shinshu sect. Buddhism has many sects, and our sect is called Jodo Shinshu.

JACL: And the left?

Minoru: Then on the left, I think he's one of the teachers of Shinran Shonin.

JACL: And I know that Amida Buddha means 'all light'.

Minoru: Yes, 'Infinite light'.

JACL: And if you don't mind, can I ask you some questions about your internment? Would you mind?

Minoru: No. Yes, it's all right.

JACL: You first went to Merced [Assembly Center], you said. Can you describe what it was like there?

Minoru: Oh, the buildings were just tar-papered buildings with no ceiling on the top. They had partitions. I think one barrack had about five or six partitions.

JACL: For a family?

Minoru: Yes, one for each family. Some rooms were a little larger than others for bigger families. The small rooms were for single persons and all that. I think that camp had about four thousand people.

JACL: And you said that was a stable at first and had been converted?

Minoru: No, ours wasn't a stable. That was another camp in Tanforan. I think it's a racetrack in South San Francisco isn't it? They had apartments in a horse stable. But ours were all new buildings, so we were pretty lucky that way.

JACL: How long were you there?

Minoru: We were there from May 15 or 16, 1942. We were evacuated and we stayed there until the first part of September. And from there we moved to Colorado. [Amache Relocation Center]

JACL: You said you were evacuated about a week from now. [Date of interview, May 6th]. Is there in the Japanese community any commemoration of that at the temple?

Minoru: No, we don't commemorate that.

JACL: Well, it wouldn't be commemorative but in a negative kind of way.

Minoru: No, we don't have any observance or anything like that.

JACL: When I spoke to your minister, it sounds like because of the Buddhist religion, it would follow that you wouldn't observe it at all. Is this right, do you think?

Minoru: Yes, I think so, yes.

JACL: Could I ask you, you were then relocated to the Amache Relocation Center near Lamar in the southeast corner of Colorado? Did you have to go by train there?

Minoru: Oh, yes. I think it took us three days to get there. I think three days and two nights. It was on a steam train and we made a lot of stops because we had to let the main train get by a lot of times. And by the time we got there, well the train went through a lot of tunnels too on the way to Colorado, and some people had their windows open, and the black soot would come inside and when we got there we were pretty black from the soot.

JACL: What did you think on the way from one camp to another? What were people thinking? Were they afraid?

Minoru: No, I don't think they were afraid. It was a kind of novelty, I guess, in a way. But it was sad also to be on a train like that and every once in a while the train would stop, but the guards outside the train were watching us to see that nobody left the train.

JACL: What was the date you were transferred? Do you know?

Minoru: From Merced to Amache, I don't recall the date exactly. I know it was around the first part of September.

JACL: Then how long did you stay there?

Minoru: We stayed there until 1945.

JACL: Three years?

Minoru: Yes, it would be three years, wouldn't it? Because the war ended in August 1945. Then people started coming back around about September or October 1945. I was going to school at that time so I came back about November 1945.

JACL: You were in college?

Minoru: Yes, at the University of Colorado.

JACL: So you were in the camp and you were allowed to go to college too?

Minoru: Oh, yes, well I think after about two years they let anybody out that they wanted to be. We were free to go out. In fact, they encouraged us to go out but a lot of people didn't know how it was outside. They would rather stay in with the family.

JACL: You did have radios though, right?

Minoru: Yes, they must have had at that time. I don't know. But we didn't have any radios.

JACL: So you didn't have news from outside?

Minoru: We had newspapers. But we never had radios though.

JACL: So, essentially, you could come and go as you wanted after a while, and you went to college.

Minoru: Yes. Well, after the second year, they wanted help in the farms and they asked for volunteers to go out to work in the sugar beets [\$16/wk.], and all that, and when the harvest was over, we came back to camp. But I think that after two to three years, well two years at least because we stayed there three years altogether, so I think about the second year they encouraged us to go out and be on our own. But like I say, not too many were very eager to go out.

JACL: Sure, the war hadn't ended yet.

Minoru: Yes, they knew how it was outside. But a lot of people didn't go through this. They relocated to the East.

JACL: Yes, I knew that. In fact, to the South too.

Minoru: Yes.

JACL: So how were people treating you in Colorado then?

Minoru: They treated us pretty good. They treated us all right.

JACL: What was the camp like? What did it look like?

Minoru: Those buildings were more permanent there. They had ceilings on it and they were a little better insulated than the barracks in Merced. And we had a pot-bellied coal stove in each unit. And some nights it got so cold we had to fill it all up and the darn stove would be red hot in the middle of the night.

JACL: But it sounds like the living conditions were a little bit better than in Merced?

Minoru: Yeah, they were better.

JACL: Did you see the film 'Farewell to Manzanar'? That was, of course, in the desert, so it was probably different.

Minoru: Yes, our camp was in the desert also.

JACL: Oh, it was?

Minoru: It was in the desert. There were lots of snakes and all that, but...

JACL: Could you do gardening there?

Minoru: Well, they had farms outside the camps so we could raise vegetables for our own use. We had farms out there and people went out to work out there...camp farms.

JACL: And I was curious because the last time we talked, you seemed so grateful to be in California and yet...if I had gone through what you went through, I think I would have been very angry and resentful. Do you think that it was the teachings of Buddhism that have helped you get through those periods?

Minoru: Oh, I think in a way, yes. In fact, before the war, I didn't go to church very much, but the fact of the war, I started being more interested in the church.

JACL: And in a newspaper article in the Sebastopol Times, it said you were almost thankful to be behind barbed wire, 'safer from anti-Asian sentiment that scorched Sebastopol and the rest of California'. Do you know what some of the negative feelings were in Sebastopol? I know that the temple was partly

destroyed. It said also that there were nightriders in the community up to 1944. Do you know anything about this?

Minoru: I think I just do recall the nightriders. I think one of the families that came back at the beginning right after the war, I think, a group of people went up and told them they weren't welcome back to Sebastopol. I think they were some of the people that were right here in town. But I didn't have anything like that come over to our place.

JACL: So you only know of one incident?

Minoru: Yes, I know of only one.

JACL: They were people from downtown you think?

Minoru: I think so, yes. That's what I heard, anyway. I didn't see them myself.

JACL: So you never experienced any of this hostility?

Minoru: No, I didn't. In fact, the people that we knew [Roger Thomas], they were our neighbors, they were glad to see us come back. Maybe they didn't [feel glad to have us back], but they didn't show it to us. When we came back, it was... we came back to a place on Gravenstein Highway. We used to own that place at Frank's Corner. We stayed there, I think, two or three months, and then we sold the place and moved up here, you see. There was no house here but there was a tank house and lived in that temporarily.

JACL: You didn't have any problems?

Minoru: No, we didn't have any problems.

JACL: Do you have anything that you would like to add for the people in Sonoma County or in Sebastopol?

Minoru: I'm glad to be back, and I think everyone treated us as well as they could, considering the situation. I'm grateful to be living here. I think Sebastopol is a nice place to live and all the friends that I have, they've been good to me also. I consider myself very fortunate to be here.

HISTORY OF THE ENMANJI TEMPLE

This structure was originally built by the Manchurian Railroad Company to be exhibited as the Manchurian Building at the Chicago World Fair in 1932.

When this building was brought here and rebuilt as the Buddhist Church, Chief Abbott Ohtani of Japan granted it the title "Temple". This is the only building in the United States with such a title. The name Enmanji stands for Sonoma Temple.

This building is a Kamakura-type structure, which symbolizes a part of the epoch-making culture of the Kamakura period [1180 – 1333].

The Altar

The figure of Amida Buddha of Infinite Compassion and Wisdom occupies the central position on the altar. In some churches and home shrines, instead of the statue, a scroll

bearing the Japanese characters NAMU AMIDA BUTSU, meaning “I place my faith in Amida Buddha”. or a picture of Amida is hung.

The Truth of the universe, absolute and inexpressible, is represented by the form of Amida Buddha before human eyes. Amida is standing with his right hand held up in a gesture of reassurance, dispelling the fears of mankind. His left hand is lowered in a gesture of conferring blessings on all. Instead of being seated in meditation, Amida Buddha is standing. This posture symbolizes his eternal activity of bringing enlightenment to all things.

Amida Buddha manifested himself in the person of Gautama, the historical Buddha, who was born in India 2,500 years ago. The term “Buddha” means the fully enlightened one.

The adherents of Buddhism do not worship the figure of Amida Buddha but bow their heads in reverence before the Wisdom and Compassion of Amida, which the statue symbolizes. Flowers, sweets, rice and candles are offered in praise of and thanksgiving for Amida’s eternal guidance. Incense is burned to symbolize the act of purification before worship. The gong is struck at intervals during the chant for punctuation.

End of Interview

SAM MIYANO INTERVIEW PART I

Persons Interviewed: Sam Miyano – also present, Clara Miyano
Date: August, 2000
Place: Miyano residence, Petaluma, CA
Interviewer: Robert Coleman-Senghor
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on January 29, 2003
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

Sam Miyano's mother, Tamino, and father, Ishitaro, were born in Hiroshima, Japan. His father was just a boy of thirteen when he arrived in Hawaii in the early 1890's. After a few years, he made his way to California, working in Salinas and further down the coast, before traveling north to Sebastopol, where he cleared land for orchards. Around 1912, he returned to Japan, married, and had a child, before he and his wife journeyed back to California and started a chicken ranch, purchasing property in Petaluma.

In 1941, Sam's father was a successful rancher when the FBI took him away within a day after Pearl Harbor. The family did not see him again until their internment at the Merced Assembly Center. Prior to leaving for camp, the family, including Sam, his mother, and his two brothers worked on the ranch. When they had to leave for camp, they turned the business over to their friends, the Harro Jensen family, with Harro's brother-in-law's family moving into the Miyano house. After the war, the Miyano's returned to their house finding it exactly the way they had left it, including Sam's jar of money left behind a door.

Besides the two brothers, Sam had three sisters, and he recalls other Japanese American families and friends in the area. Sam remembers his mother as "a jewel", his sister learning to cook and clean at an early age, and his older brother being a Boy Scout leader, belonging to the National Guard, and the JACL. Of his years at Petaluma High School, Sam remembers the sports he participated in, and anecdotes with his friends, both Japanese and Caucasian. He recalls the letters and presents received in camp from their Caucasian friends, and visits to the Merced Assembly Center from Sonoma County friends, talking to each other across the barbed wire. Sam remembers the evacuation and feelings surrounding it. His brother, who was in the military at the outbreak of war, was separated from his Pacific-bound division because of his Japanese ancestry, and was sent instead to Idaho, and then assigned to the 442nd.

Sam's oldest sister, who was born in Japan, did not come to America until she was fourteen, finally arriving in 1930. When Sam's father returned with his wife to America, they had left their young daughter in Japan, but later found it difficult to have her join them because of the Alien Exclusion Act, which became effective in 1924, after Sam's father had come back to the U.S. It was only after his father hired a lawyer, that his sister was able to come. Sam recounts the lives of his sisters both before and after the war, and

more of the evacuation experience, including that of one of his sisters and her husband who were living in Marysville at the time of the evacuation. Upon discovering that they were in the district destined for the Tule Lake camp, they moved across the road so they could go to Amache with the rest of the family.

Transcript of Interview

Robert: Mr. Miyano, one of the things that we would like you to do is to tell the unique history of the farming community of the North Bay. We believe that the story of Amache, the story of the camps, is more aptly told by going through a process by which you recover a unique history of this community to get a sense for the loss but also for the sense of triumph of the people of this community. There have been many accounts of the camps but there has not been an account of the camp experience of, really with respect to this community looking at their history of being in this area. I believe the first student for instance to graduate from Analy High School was in 1920. And that would suggest that there was a community of Japanese Americans both here in Petaluma and in Sebastopol, prior to that, at least ten years. When did your family first come to this area and where did they come from?

Sam: Well, my father, Ishitaro Miyano, and mother, Tamino Miyano, are both from Hiroshima and my father left Japan when he was 13 in the early 1890's. He landed in Hawaii, he was a water boy, [he] brought water and he was there maybe two years and then he came to San Francisco on a boat and he was in the Salinas area for a while, but leaving Japan at an early age he had no skill. His folks, I don't even know if they were farmers or not, I really don't. He went into manual labor, he cleared land. He used hoes. I've never done it myself. He went as far south as Santa Maria. And then he came north to the Sebastopol area, and he cleared land for orchards. In 1912-1913 period, he went back to Japan and got married and they had a child there. But life was still pretty tough over there so he and Mom came back to America. And they were in the Sebastopol area, like I said, he was clearing land and in 1918 he came to Payne Road and that's how he got into the poultry business. This was a poultry area. He was fairly successful enough that he bought [eight acres] right down the road here. This is Skillman Lane in Petaluma. Listening to the old folks, the parents bought a chicken house from Pane Road to Skillman Lane there and I don't know how they did it. We were fortunate. My father was fairly successful in his own right. When the war broke out, it was a Sunday morning, we were cutting kale or greens to feed the chickens with and I had the radio on and they announced that Pearl Harbor was being attacked by Japan. It was a shock. And that same day or maybe it was on the 8th, the FBI came and picked up my dad. He smoked at the time and I asked them if I could go buy some cigarettes for him. They said, "Yeah, go ahead." Well, we had a circle driveway, and one big black car [here] and a big black car [there], so there was no way you could go out and buy cigarettes. So they took him away and we didn't see him until later in the year, in '42 and he came back when we were still in Merced Assembly Center.

Robert: Before we go that far, this sounds like a hardworking and ambitious man, after all, coming as a thirteen year old and ending up before he's in his twenties owning land. That's not something that is easily done. Give us a portrait of your dad as a worker. You were working side by side, from time to time. You were eighteen years old when the war broke out.

Sam: We were three brothers and we all pulled our share of work. My mother took care of the brooder, the young chicks. That was a job in itself. She carried the grain, fed the chickens, cleaned out the chicken house and she raised them, boy we're going back about sixty years, until they were about pullet age.

Robert: Pullet is when they have lost their furriness and are now getting real feathers.

Sam: We were fortunate in the Petaluma area, we had a family named Jensen, Harro Jensen. In fact, he just passed away this year. And we, the unique farming in that we had poultry, and they lay eggs every day and we did not switch the business over until one week prior to that day in May, I don't know which it is. And we went out to the hen house and found each chicken as best we could. And we trusted them and they trusted us and we came to an agreement of x amount. And what we did was we stayed there until the morning of evacuation. And their family, not the Jensen's but Harro's wife's brother, they moved into our house. We didn't move furniture. We just moved out and they moved in. The kitchen table and everything just sat as it was. And we were fortunate, not everyone was that fortunate.

Robert: So you didn't have to sell furniture and it was still here when you came back?

Sam: It was all here. After high school or during high school, I used to have a little jar and when we would go to the movies and if I crack [change] a dollar and there'd be dimes, and I left that in back of the door, and when I came back there were 28 dollars or 30 dollars and it was still there.

Robert: That was a good piece of change in 1945.

Sam: Yes, they were real, in fact, Arnold, a son, and I used to go fishing together, and Harro, the father, used to go fishing with us.

Robert: Your father was obviously having enough success to support his wife and children.

Sam: There were three of us and three girls.

Robert: So there are six. That's a nice working family size.

Sam: We never had to hire [laborers].

Robert: So the daily life, the daily routine. There is a story, and I'm very interested and that is when the evacuation came, farmers, chicken farmers, had been so successful and had belonged to the poultry producer association that when they were beginning to leave the market they actually had an affect. Do you know much about that?

Sam: No I don't. There is only about, I can recall only one family that belonged to the poultry association. Most of us were independents. Maybe we should have, like

a lot of the valley community, they made their own coop, which is a smart way to farm, they leave the middleman out. No, most of us were individual farmers. I think of all the families that I can recall, only one belonged to the poultry group.

Robert: Give me some sense in way of a roll-call of the families that you can recall that were in the poultry business in the area. The friends that you had, the fathers, mothers, [what was it like].

Sam: Oh, the Sueoka family were, they were quite a bit older than me, the kids.

Robert: They had come to the area earlier.

Sam: Yeah, I think they were farming, I mean in the poultry business in 1907. Then I think the Matsumoto family, the Hirooka family, the Yoshioka family. They were all here. My father was rather relatively new. He started in 1918. The war had just ended on the November 11th in 1918, and he had a few good years. Like the Hirooka family, Johnny was one of my closest friends and we went to high school together and he was a good athlete.

Robert: Petaluma High School?

Sam: Yeah, he was a real good athlete. I tried to keep up with him. [They laugh together.] He was good. He went into the 442nd. His brother was a member of the 442nd. Like my brother too, he was an original 442nd. And in the Matsumoto family, they were about my age, they were very successful too. And did you interview [Mary Nakagawa?]

Robert: I am going to interview Mary Nakagawa. I just went to take a look at her home the other day, nicely laid on that hillside.

Sam: I think they, it must have been in 1925, they started their chicken business. But they were real hard workers. They just had the father, the mother and the daughter. I worked over there during the summer, through high school and [I would] go on weekends to clean the chicken house or whatever.

Robert: You didn't have enough work at home? [Laughs].

Sam: No, I had too much time to go work. We had a good upbringing. You were never idle. What else can I say?

Robert: I still want to get this picture of your dad. Was he a tall man relative to you? Was he stout?

Sam: He was stout, five foot eight.

Robert: That was a good size for a Japanese.

Sam: But really the driving force was my mother. I mean if he had a [rather you didn't see it]. (*They chuckle*)

Robert: Where was she from?

Sam: She was from the same locale, Hiroshima.

Robert: Tell me about her.

Sam: Oh, mom was a jewel. She worked hard on the ranch, and the job of taking care of the house fell on my sister, right above me. But it was a good combination. She [my sister], learned to cook early, Mom went out and did all the chores around the food and we did all the chores on the chicken farm. Even my sister today says, "Well, I had to learn how to cook standing on a chair." My folks didn't object, someone had to do the cooking. My brother Jim, he was very active in the community. We had a Boy Scout Troup and he was a Boy Scout Master.

Robert: Do you have any pictures of him from during that time?

Sam: Have we got a picture of him? I'm sure we have one.

Clara: I'm sure we do, I'd have to dig it out.

Robert: I'd love to have a picture of him. Because we can't think of anything more interesting; that here is someone who is an American doing the most American of things, which is being a scout master, being in the Scout right?

Sam: And he was in the National Guard. I don't know if they threw him out when the war started or not.

Robert: He served in the National Guard when he was, how much older than you was he?

Sam: Seven years. When we evacuated, he was 27, I was 20.

Robert: So he probably went in the National Guard when he was in his twenties, early twenties or teens.

Clara: Toward the end [he] wrote a book about it.

Sam: Oh yeah, I don't know where it is.

Robert: We'll see about getting that together. Your brother is a Scout Master, he is in the national guard, he is an athlete, active in the community. What organizations in the community was he active in?

Sam: Well, mostly, he didn't belong to any civic things, [he] mostly [liked] outdoors [activities]. He belonged to outdoor things. He belonged to a lot of, when the JACL first started, I remember him going out to Washington, I think.

Robert: There's a very good account in "Nisei" of the membership, the original membership of the JACL. There's a sixth chapter that describes the emergence of that group. That was quite a thing because they couldn't quite figure out what they wanted to do. They knew they had to do something. And one of the things, by the way, the first thing mayor leader, I think Masuka?, [Sam: Masuoka.] Masuoka basically said was that the first obligation that the JACL had was to get the story of Japanese, or Americans of Japanese ancestry, out to the public. So we are still doing that. It is important that we do that. This place, high school, what was high school like here.

Sam: Well, in my class I think there were five, maybe six Japanese kids.

Robert: And you graduated in what year?

Sam: What year? 1940.

Robert: That same year at Anal High School, there were sixteen Japanese Americans.

Sam: Yeah, they had more.

Robert: Did you have a Japanese Club?

Sam: No.

Robert: Correspondingly, they had a Japanese Club in Sebastopol. About 40-50 people belonged to it. So here you are in the school, were you just another guy on the block?

Sam: Just about it. Like I said about Johnny, he was President of the student body, I mean whether pink, black, yellow, or what.

Robert: That's something. Peter Masuoka, was president both semesters. He was quite a fellow too,

Sam: He was. I played against him in high school. I played with him in J.C. He was an athlete too.

Robert: What were your sports?

Sam: Football and Track.

Robert: Did you ah, *(He motions so-so with his hand. They chuckle)*. what did you run?

Sam: 100.

Robert: I always remember my time. I'm 60 now, but I remember my time that I turned a quarter mile, what did you turn?

Sam: in the 100? 10.2.

Robert: Hey that's a good time in the '30's.

Sam: There was always, in competition there's always someone under 10. 9.9 and 9.8.

Robert: Yeah, but still 10.2 was a good time in the '30's. And Dorothe Ono's husband...

Sam: Oh, Kanemi.

Robert: He was an outstanding pole vaulter.

Sam: He held that record for 30 years.

Robert: Well, as an athlete you got to travel around in the county. What was that like?

Sam: Well, you're one of the boys. I mean, I'm sure, there were people who, everybody doesn't like everybody. But we grew up with all Caucasian friends and I remember one night, after the war and we used to have black outs. And the fellows, the gang I hung around with, well it wasn't a bunch of us, there was 4 or 5 of us. And we were driving out one night, and they had a blackout. I was driving and two of my buddies were on the front fender. They were telling us which way to go and how to get there. And, I think, we saw the Sheriff and he said, "Get your butt out of there". We did things like that. We were close. [Mrs.

Roberto], I used to go around with her son and she used to write letters to me at camp and send me stuff and cake.

Robert: Do you still have those letters? Tell me about this lady.

Sam: No, I didn't keep any. She was of Italian descent. Her son Larry and I were in track together. She was broken up when the war broke out. She wrote to us or she wrote to me and sent fruit cake one Christmas. He was a plumber, he had his own plumbing business and then he moved to, wherever he moved to and we sort of lost contact with each other.

Robert: What was her name again?

Sam: Mrs. Roberto, Roberto Plumbing.

Robert: Did you have other people, like that, who wrote you at camp?

Sam: Yes there was this [Ken] Keller. That was Judge Keller's son, he use to come to the Camp and [visit].

Robert: Actually come and visit you at the Camp. That's a long trip.

Sam: Yeah, me and George Matsumoto. Oh, right here to Merced.

Robert: But that's still a long trip.

Sam: Yes it is and, oh in those days, you know, Model A's.

Robert: You had to cross the Delta, and go down on 33 and cut over on 99. That's a good day trip to go down on 99.

Sam: You don't set a record. And we weren't the only ones. In those days a lot of Caucasian friends used to come and visit their friends. Well, they couldn't come in. We were on this side and they were on that side.

Robert: Really, they weren't allowed to enter the Camp?

Sam: Not that I know of.

Robert: So you had to stand and talk to them across the barbed wire?

Sam: Uh-huh.

Robert: Describe that to me. Give me some sense of how visitations were handled. Did a person come and tell you that that person is visiting?

Sam: Well I don't know how others did it. But correspondence would be, "There on Tuesday the 13th" and whatever, and then we would shoot the bull.

Robert: Across the barbed wire between you. Was there a reason why they would not allow you to have contact with them?

Sam: Well I guess the same reason they had for not letting us out. They did have towers, machine gun towers all around. And like they always say it was for our protection, but the machine guns were pointed in, not out. That's a lot of protection. And Judge Keller, I think in those days they were appointed judge or whatever. He had an insurance business too and we had all, everything, our

ranch, all our vehicles, insured with him. There were a lot of Japanese families. The Matsumotos had everything insured with him.

Robert: Did you see the Keller's when you came back?

Sam: I did. [Darnell] I think that was the boy. I think he worked in auto parts. I think he passed away relatively young. I just lost track of him. And Judge Keller died.

Robert: Was this during the war or after the war?

Sam: Shortly after.

Robert: Did your family remain in a good relationship with this man?

Sam: Uh-huh.

Robert: Let's go back to the day that you got the word that you had to...

Sam: Evacuate.

Robert: Evacuate. What was that like?

Sam: Well, I was just asking some of my friends the other day. How they got from their home to Santa Rosa, 'cause I don't recall anybody sending a bus. I asked Rasmussen, Harry Rasmussen, a good friend of my brother. We sold him the pick-up. I think he was living in Healdsburg at the time. He was the one who came and brought us to Santa Rosa. To this day I don't recall them giving us transportation.

Robert: The experience was the same as what George Hamamoto speaks about. How they had to arrange with the person that they sold the truck to, they had to make part of the agreement that the purchase of the truck came with the delivery of the [trucks] former owner's family to the station.

Sam: Yes, but how naive the Nisei were to bend over backward to find a way to go to be in prison.

Robert: That's an interesting question don't you think? As an African American, I can tell you that I have a child who does not quite understand what it was like to be in the South. I was a Marine and I had to get off of a bus which came out of [Cuanico] and get onto a segregated bus where suddenly my green colored uniform and my sergeant stripes counted for nothing and I was told to get to the back of the bus. And now my son, he doesn't understand why I would do that. So you were their son. And you're a young man now and you're 18 years old. I mean, what were those feeling you had, looking at your parents, wondering why. Were you looking at other young men in the community and wondering why?

Sam: Well, we went with the flow. I mean, if they said you are going to leave on the 20th, we just found a way to go. I mean I didn't feel any, oh how can I put that? We were in high school. We were such a minority in school that you took part in whatever went on in school. We didn't have animosity against all people just because we were of Japanese descent. I didn't go around hating anyone who [was not Japanese].

Robert: But you don't need to when you have someone tell you that you're going to leave your home. Here you are your father struggled for this home. Came over here when he was thirteen years old. He's worked. He's managed to raise, with your mom, six children. You have a brother who is already in the military and what happened to him?

Sam: He was with the Sixty-First Division and that was on the Pacific Coast over here and they were going to ship him out to the Pacific. And he was with the outfit all the time until they got up to Fort Lewis, Washington. And then they went through the roll and they found a guy by the name of Miyano.

Robert: And he didn't sound Italian.

Sam: No. They sent him to Idaho. And all at once he went in. I still see this friend, good friend of ours [Dewey Looms?]. They went in there together and he went to the Pacific and my brother went to Idaho. And when they formed the 442nd he was assigned as a machine gunner. He went through mechanics school on his own before he went in the service. And then when he was in the service he went in to mechanics school, MOS is that correct?

Robert: Yes, MOS.

Sam: So he went to see the captain and they corrected [it], so he went into the motor pool. And yeah it was MOS. [I was in the artillery.]

Robert: Your brothers' names again are?

Sam: Jim and George.

Robert: And your sisters are?

Sam: Marlene and Lily. And my oldest sister, Gladys, was born in Japan.

Robert: So she had a Japanese name.

Sam: Yes. Now to her dying days she was bitter. 'Cause here we were over here, we had a good life, and she was left back there.

Robert: So she stayed when they came here?

Sam: Yes and then in 1924, they had the Exclusion Act.

Robert: That's right, when she was born, she's an alien.

Sam: She's an alien and besides [that], my parents could never be American citizens until the '40's or early 50's whatever.

Robert: And she wasn't a Kibei, that would have been American who went back to Japan.

Sam: She was 100% Issei. My father, bless his soul, hired a good lawyer and they had to pay a lot of money to get her to come over here. It's like any other thing.

Robert: When did she finally get over here?

Sam: She got here in 1930.

Robert: So she had to wait six years after the Act to get her to come over. And then from the United States point of view she was a Kibei.

Sam: She was 14 when they got her over here and she had to marry a businessman who had his own business.

Robert: Who was an American.

Sam: No, he was an Issei who had been here a zillion years, but like I said they couldn't become a citizen. She married when she was 17 and she had a nice family. They struggled quite a bit. When we evacuated we had a big house out here and when they came back they lived with my mother and father and they were here for a short time and then they went and moved back to San Francisco. He never did move back into the business. He had an import, export on dishes and what[not].

Robert: And they lost it all.

Sam: Yeah. Literally, he lost it.

Robert: And your other two sisters?

Sam: Lily, she's the baby. She was out of high school. She graduated in 1941.

Robert: She was the last graduating class. She actually graduated? Yes, '41 because the evacuation was in '42

Sam: She graduated. 'Cause a lot of them got their diploma by [he motions with his hand, by mail?] Lily, boy, she's a fun gal. She still meets all her girlfriends in Petaluma that she went to school with.

Robert: And what about your middle sister?

Sam: She married a peach farmer from Marysville.

Robert: A Japanese American?

Sam: Uh-huh. And when it was time to evacuate. Oh, I know, Marysville went, I think east of 99 they went to Tule Lake. They were going to go to Tule Lake. And when they found out about that they moved across the road. They knew we were going to go to Amache, so they joined us.

Robert: So they moved across the district so they could join you? That's a wonderful story. So this day comes, you're there, you get someone to take you down to the station, what was that like? Were you early, were you late?

Sam: No we're always prompt. I can still picture that movie, *Grapes of Wrath*, the old picture coming from Oklahoma. Well, that's the way we were in the back of a pickup. My mother, well my mother sat in the front. Or maybe my older sister, I don't know now. And we got out to Santa Rosa and like you said, we weren't the only ones. Everybody had their friends or whatever. And I never did see a bus there. What were they going to do if we didn't, you know, if we didn't go on our own?. They were real, they were pretty law abiding people. When they said this is black, it's black, you know, we just went with the status.

Robert: Certainly, the uncertainty of the status. The same thing for instance, for many Mexican Americans now, who are living here illegally or living here under naturalization. They don't dare to do anything that would no longer hold on to the possibility of their becoming American Citizens. So that was also part of the mix do you think? They do not want to violate their status in any way?

Sam: They are good workers, the Mexican people are very good workers. I mean, a few of them get in trouble but I guess that's in all races.

Robert: They have another appointment...

End of Interview

SAM MIYANO INTERVIEW PART II

Persons Interviewed: Sam Miyano
Date: August, 2000
Place: Miyano residence, Petaluma, CA
Interviewer: Robert Coleman-Senghor
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on January 29, 2003
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

While interned at Amache Camp, Sam Miyano was eligible to leave for work detail in the sugar beet and potato fields, and found that he and his family needed their cars they had left back home. Because no one of Japanese descent was allowed back in California, their Caucasian friends drove the Miyano's cars to the California-Nevada border, where Sam's sister and her husband met the friends and drove the cars the remainder of the way back to Amache. Sam describes both the car journey of his sister and husband, and journey by train from Merced Assembly Center to Amache.

While in camp, Sam married and was drafted into the all-Nisei army unit. Traveling to different parts of the country with the army, he remembers a waitress, upon hearing about the internment of Sam and the other Japanese American soldiers, said she had never heard about the internment, and could not believe the government would do such a thing. Another time, in Florida, Sam describes how the Nisei soldiers did not know where they belonged when they encountered the "Colored" and "White" signs. Toward the end of basic training, Sam received news that he was a new father, and shortly after that he learned that his mother was ill. He was allowed an emergency furlough to return to Amache to see his mother, but she died before his return. Upon reaching his army base again, he found his unit had already left for Italy. Sam was assigned to a new unit, and stationed in Fort Dix until he was sent to Europe about six months later. He landed in Le Havre, France, and arrived in Germany just as the war ended.

Sam's Nisei army outfit was the first one not ordered to join the 442nd, instead integrating with an all-Caucasian outfit. His duty in Europe was spent traveling to different cities doing occupational duty, guarding the prisoners of war until each was cleared. Sam recalls how his battery occupied a town, and reflects on the irony of life; how in Europe he was on the "outside", armed with a rifle, when two years earlier, he was on the inside of the camp, looking out at a soldier with a rifle. In another instance, again reminiscent of his own internment experience, he describes another role reversal. He was now part of the group ordering other people out of their homes, giving them only a couple of hours to evacuate, being allowed to take only what they could carry.

Sam was discharged from the army in July of 1946, after the Amache internment camp had closed down. He describes the journey home, meeting his wife, who had been living

with her mother in Turlock, and seeing his daughter, who was already eighteen months old. He recalls seeing old high school friends once back in Petaluma, and describes the activities of the Japanese American community in Sonoma County after the war, most of whom were Buddhist.

Sam recounts the experience of his father, who was taken by the FBI soon after Pearl Harbor, and sent to New Mexico before rejoining the family at Merced Assembly Center. He also explained how, upon returning from camp, his family acquired the chicken business back from their friends who had been operating it in their absence. Sam describes his start in the poultry business apart from his family, and the generations in his family who attended Wilson School in Petaluma, remarking on how the area “is a great place to raise children”. He comments that he has never heard any racial slurs directed at him, and ends with his vision of America becoming a true melting pot.

Transcript of Interview

Robert: There are some wonderful things that you’ve told us about. It seems clear to me that there were elements of the camp that were harsh yet at the same time it seems that these experiences broadened and enlarged your world. That’s the bitter irony of this. One of the things that you talked to me about is the way in which you came out of the camp and the way in which you came out of Amache. Could you tell me more about that? How you came out of Amache and what that meant for you coming out and going back?

Sam: Yes. The first time I left Amache was on a work detail. We were working for a farmer doing beets, sugar beets, and picking potatoes. And then in the meantime to have transportation I had my own car here in California and my sister and her husband came down to the state line and picked up the car. Our friend Vince Sjosten brought it up there and they drove it back to Amache. One for my brother and one for me.

Robert: Your relatives came to the state line, so you could go through Nevada, but you could not come to California. So these were Caucasian friends?

Sam: Oh yeah. There were no Japanese left here.

Robert: So these friends drove to the state line and you basically, came to the state line but you could not come into your state? How did, what did that feel like?

Sam: I did not come. My sister and her husband, and when I was talking to them, “What kind of experience did you have?” They said it wasn’t that bad. I think they had no problem getting gas, there were rations and everything. They stopped at a restaurant to eat. There were two cars, she had one and her husband was driving another. So to keep in contact, they had no radio, I mean they had a radio but no walkie-talkie or anything and they got lost in Denver. Eventually, I forget how it worked. Whether one stayed put and the other, ‘cause if two were looking for each other, you never find them. As long as one stays put you’ll find it. And then with the car, we went mostly in the farming area. My wife and I, or Clara at the time, yeah we were married in January. And then I got

drafted in '44 yeah we shipped in to Camp Blanding basic training. It was all Niseis training.

Robert: Can you tell me something about that trip across the country, of course, you went to Granada. This is one of the first times, actually, that you saw America as a young man. You were going from coast to coast.

Sam: Well, we left from Merced Assembly Center. Boy, well you know trying to recall something that happened 50-60 years ago. I think during the day on the train you could look out but when we came to a town I think we had to pull the shades down. Every train had the shades. And then at night time they would stop the train and let us go out walking. I can remember that, but there were always guards when they stopped the train in the desert. As if we would run away. Give me a break! And then when we got to Amache, it was desolate. But the advance crew. We were of the last crew to leave Merced Assembly Center. We were more of the Clean-up Crew. When we got there my family was there, my parents and sister.

Robert: So were you primarily, was it men and women or?

Sam: No, we were...

Robert: Mixed group.

Sam: Uh-huh. I thought I was in Amache a long, long time. So after working for the Post Office for so many years, I wrote how much time did I spend. We got credited for being in the army. Some of the smarter ones they had the government give us credit for camp time. Well, low and behold, I thought I was there for years. It was eleven months, which isn't that long 'cause it was open for 3 years, 4 years. I don't know. I got eleven months credit. We left the camp right away. There was a lot of students that left. We had the opportunity to leave. Then, when getting back to Camp Blanding. You know we were talking when you got your first pass, we'd go into town and we'd go to a restaurant. First thing you want to do is get away from army chow and eat cooked chow. It was good food. The waitress would come and ask us where we were from and we'd tell her Amache, Colorado, but we were in California and evacuated to Colorado. And, "No", she said, "What do you mean evacuated?" We were picked up and moved to Merced and to Amache, Colorado. And she said "Oh, no, I don't think America would do such a thing." Well, the publicity wasn't that much back East. I don't know, maybe America wanted to hide it. Of course, you can't hide a massive relocation of 110,120 thousand people. People didn't know, but we were treated right. Our first experience in the South, in Florida was going to the bathroom which, oh, before the bathroom it was the bus. We'd take a bus and would ask 'cause it said, [He motions overhead like reading a sign], if we were Colored and White and I said, "What are we?" and the bus driver said, "You don't sit in the back, you sit in the front with the whites." So we said "Okay" and we did. And when we went to the restaurant and in the restroom, once again it was [he motions] "Colored" and "Whites." And we were told, "You go into "White" side, you don't go into "Colored" side". You could feel for them. [You can't reach them.] 'cause we were evacuated because we were

of Japanese descent. Of course we were at war with Japan, which meant nothing for me as an American. I mean, there were people from, kids I went to school with, their parents mostly were, we were first generation or second generation 'cause my parents came from Japan. In the old days in the farming community there were a lot of Portuguese, Italians, Swede, Danes. A lot of the Italians and Portuguese were in the dairy business. A lot of the Japanese were in the poultry business. Now I lost my train of thought.

Robert: Oh no, your doing a wonderful business.

Sam: Getting back to Blanding, every chance we got we'd go out. I used to eat a lot. Which is a different story again. I went to a restaurant one day and me and another fellow. He went, wherever he went, restroom or whatever. And the waitress came up to order and I said I'll have a T-bone and a side order of chicken and she said, 'sir, you're ordering for your friend?', "No, I just want to get enough food in before I get back to the camp". We had little things going on which were interesting.

Robert: You were just as newly married man, and here you are away from your bride. How long had you been married when you were inducted?

Sam: January to July. Six months, roughly six months. And then, while in basic training, I got a telegram, well I didn't, the C.O., saying I was a father of a daughter. They don't give you the time off they just tell you you're a father. That was the first telegram I got, I think it was in December. And I think it was about two weeks, three weeks. Two weeks later when I got another telegram saying my mother passed away. The first telegram said my mother was ill and they used a word "about that long". So I asked the lieutenant and he, well, I'm sure he wasn't a doctor, so he really didn't know either. He said, "Well, as long as you're getting a telegram, well it can't be that serious". They gave me an emergency furlough right after basic. My mother had passed away before I got back to camp cause when I got off the train, one of my friends was there and he said, "I'm sorry to hear about your mother," and I said, "What's wrong with my mother?," and he said, "Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you already knew your mother had passed away," and I said, "No, I didn't know". So I was there for two weeks and we buried my mom, or we cremated her and my father had the ashes. And when I went back to Blanding, I thought I would meet up with all my buddies. But no way, they had already shipped out, and they were shipped to Italy and three of them were killed. And I always tell my wife and my friends, I think my mother knew that we were going to go overseas and she saved my life. I mean, I had to go see her. So we went to Fort Dix. We were there from January to May doing [the] regular army thing, waiting to be shipped overseas. I used to box a little bit. I boxed, because if you boxed you could get a furlough, a weekend pass. Well, they had over there that if you boxed on Tuesday night they give you a pass on Wednesday, but you had to be back on Monday, so you could box on Tuesday. So that was my duty. It was a good duty. Then we were shipped over sometime in May. It took about 14-16 days. We were in a big, big convoy. I mean, I'd never been on a convoy. It was big to me. It was about 500 ships all

around and the troop ships were in the middle. And as we got closer to Europe, one day they spotted a submarine and they dropped depth charge. I slept through the whole darn thing. It didn't bother me one bit. I didn't miss a meal either when we were going overseas. But it was a lot of fun, and that's when we landed in Le Havre, France. We landed sometime in May. From Le Havre we went into Germany, a staging area, and then we got our rifles. That was on May 6th, May 7th, and then on May 8th the war ended. We were the first outfit that did not go to meet up with the 442nd, I was looking forward to seeing my brother. We were the first outfit not to go, we were integrated with an all White outfit. So after that it was routine, occupational life. We'd go from one city to another doing occupational duty, mostly where they had prisoner of war camps, we'd guard, doing a lot of guard duty. So here I am on the outside with a rifle when a year earlier, a couple of years, I was on the inside looking out at a soldier with a rifle. That's how strange life is. I don't know, I guess, it was maybe eight months, ten months that's all we did was guard prisoners until they were all cleared and they were returned home if they had a home or wife.

Robert: So here you were, you say it was a reversal of situations Here you come from a situation where your parents are interned, your mother dies in internment camp. You are looking at a nation which is basically now an internment camp. People are being displaced so soldiers could have, American soldiers could have a place. You are telling me that, for instance, there was one moment when you had living quarters with a German. Could you tell us about [that] German families?

Sam: Yeah, well a lot of times when we occupied a town we'd go unannounced, we'd go to the better part or best part of town. Well, ours was just a battery, by battery it's not a company in the infantry.

Robert: About 180 men.

Sam: Right, and we'd take over trucks on both sides. And we'd announce we are taking over, you have two hours to leave your billets, I mean their homes would be our billets and they could only carry, the same experiences we had, well, whatever they can carry they could bring out. With assurances that we would not take or break anything and we didn't. If you took anything, then what would you do with it. Well, I'm sure some of the boys got souvenirs. They were civilians, so there were no weapons. It was a re-occurrence of my life of two years or three years, living in Germany, living on the opposite side, opposite way. Telling them they had a couple of hours to leave and we're going to take over.

Robert: Did you see many families packing their bags on the sidewalk or that kind of thing or when you came to those places were they already cleared out?

Sam: No they had to clear out.

Robert: So you actually saw them clearing out?

Sam: Yeah, and whatever they could carry, mostly it was personal cloths and the foodstuff. There weren't many young people 'cause all [the] young people, by

young, military age ones, were mostly all in the service. So, that's how my life in Germany was for that length of time.

Robert: So how was it coming back?

Sam: Coming back, we came back on point system, cause we were in no conflict. The married with family got priority. So I left, there were about eight or ten of us who were married. We left Germany in June, 'cause I was discharged in July.

Robert: '45?

Sam: '46. I went in July of '44 and got out in July of '46.

Robert: So you were gone for about two and a half years?

Sam: Yeah. Coming back, well, we landed in Fort Dix and then you get on the troop train again. And it took, I think, four days to get on a troop train to California. Camp Beale in Marysville, that's where we got our discharged. My brother, who was in the 442nd, he came to pick me up. 'cause Clara, the wife, was with her mother, in Turlock. And I just came home to my address I gave was Petaluma. I wasn't smart like some of the guys [who] got discharged in New York, they gave a Petaluma address and got a plane all the way. Well, I came home in a troupe train. The fastest way possible.

Robert: What was it like? You came by train all the way to Petaluma Station or Santa Rosa Station?

Sam: No, Marysville, California. That's where my brother picked me up and had my car. [I] Stayed with my parents and the next day I drove off to meet my wife at Turlock. I was a stranger to my daughter. She didn't know me from...

Robert: How old was your daughter?

Sam: She was born in '44, December of '44, so all of '45. Yeah, 18 months. She raised a lot of raucous there for a while, until she got used to me.

Robert: That was a fairly common experience for many soldiers coming back.

Sam: It was. You know the soldiers coming home and they haven't seen their, well I did see my child when she was born, two weeks old. But a lot of them didn't even have that.

Robert: And that was because your mother died that you had an opportunity to see your child. So your mother in a sense, did you a favor. You got to see your child and she saved you from joining the 442nd. It was one of the bloodiest times for the 442nd.

Sam: Yes, it was. I was shocked to even read that the artillery, the 522nd Field were one of the first ones to go into Dachau and release the Jewish prisoners. Or not, [Do] you call them prisoners or what do you call them?

Robert: They were concentration camp prisoners. Dachau was an extermination camp at that time.

Sam: That's what it was.

Robert: There is a story that was historically repressed. They actually removed the Japanese American soldiers and brought in white soldiers to photograph them. But the people that were liberated did not forget. Two years ago they had an anniversary celebration that honored those soldiers that were there on liberation. What was it like coming home to Petaluma? How did it feel, can you recall your own [psychology]?

Sam: Yes. I stopped with my high school friends. I stopped and saw three of them I guess, maybe four. We were still friends. Even though a lot of them went to the Pacific and fought. But when we got together, I mean, they didn't go because they wanted to go, it was their duty to go just as much as ours was to go to the European side. One of my real close friends, he just went into a bus depot one day and I stopped and hollered at him and said, "I'm off to some damn place." He just hollered back and said, "I'll see you in a few days." Why, I never saw him again. I think he was going to visit his girl friend or something and they got married. He worked for the telephone company, I think he was a lineman and they got shipped all over. And in all the class reunions we've had, we've always inquired, 'Where's Harvey?', and he was in the state of Washington and I think a couple of years ago, I heard that he'd passed away. I would have wanted to see him. But [c'est la vie].

Robert: Can you give a description of the Japanese community in the post-war years? Was it a community of Christians and Buddhist, and Methodists?

Sam: Well, in Petaluma, I think 90% were of Buddhist descent, I mean religion. My folks weren't members of the local church. By local, [I mean] Sebastopol. They belonged to one in San Francisco, but it was Buddhist. You know, like Christians, you got Methodists and such. I myself was not baptized Buddhist. I don't know, my folks didn't encourage me to be Buddhist or otherwise. And my wife's parents were Christian. Her grandparents, their whole line is Christianity from Japan. So when I went into the service I put down Christian. Then I was baptized in 1951 at our local church here. That's when my son was born and we both got baptized together. So it's going on almost 50 years now, 49 years.

Robert: So this community, what was it like? I'm still trying to get a picture of this community in the post-war years. You know the Japanese American community which was here in Petaluma?

Sam: Well, we were all in the poultry business and they had what we called Sunday School. We went and studied Japanese language, I think on Sundays. Well, I wasn't the best scholar. I'd went to eat my lunch or whatever. I guess, something inside, I guess I didn't study. But I wished I did, because I volunteered twice for the M.I.S., or military intelligence. But we had a lot of Nisei who were real good in Japanese. We had the Kibeis, that's American born going back to Japan to study, who really had no problem getting into the MIS or military intelligence. But like I said, I went twice and the captain, I don't know who the hell he was but he said, "Oh you make good cannon fodder, you can't even read your own name." And which I couldn't, in Japanese. And that's the way it was. Going back to Petaluma, I presume we had one Sunday school at one time and then

somehow or other they didn't get along and they broke away or something and then we had two community Sunday Schools. And then I heard they broke that up again, I won't swear by it but. And on New Year's and certain occasions we'd have New Year's parties and the community would congregate. They were drinking and had a good New Year's party. And my parents used to go visit their own friends and I don't think we had where the community would meet regularly, to the best of my knowledge.

Robert: If I recall, your papa died earlier.

Sam: He got picked up by the FBI early, in December of '42. And they sent him to, well, I really don't know where they sent him. He ended up in New Mexico. But I think he was in another camp and then they were segregated again. You know Japanese, how much they picked him up because he was a trader of the [Hiroshima kenginkai club] 'cause he was from Hiroshima. And then I think a lot of the leaders of the community were picked up and interned. There were four or five families of Petaluma, sent to Crystal City, Texas, Tule Lake, California and Albuquerque, New Mexico. They were there throughout the duration. I talked to a few of the kids. And they had like community, I don't know where they got their rations, but I thought I heard they cooked on their own.

Robert: So let me get this picture right. Your father was picked up shortly after December 7th and when did you see him next?

Sam: I saw him about August, I think it was August or September of '42. He was released when we were at Merced Assembly Center.

Robert: That's basically 10 months and he spent the war interned at Amache?

Sam: He did, yes. I think it didn't break the man but he was not the [same] person. He was always a big man, smiling, always happy like, but of course after he lost his wife and [after] being interned, there was not too much to laugh about.

Robert: When he returned, did he feel really displaced or did he come back to property?

Sam: Yes. Like I said, we had our vehicles over there, my brother-in-law took mine home and my brother had his car. And they drove across from Colorado back to Petaluma. No, I take that back, I think my brother left the first chance they opened up the Pacific coast and he was back, he got the ranch back. And again in reversed, remember we exchanged chicken, again in reverse. This time he was buying chicken back from the Jensen's.

Robert: Did the Jensen's give him a good price?

Sam: Yeah, prevailing price, everything at that time was prevailing.

Robert: Give me some sense of this, cause this is in your [heart], a pullet would have cost your dad when he had it before the war. What would it have cost your dad a pullet, say?

Sam: You have to buy a [sexed] chicken, the baby chicks, male or female, we didn't buy the males. But the little baby chicks were sexed, supposedly they were all

pullets. And we paid roughly fifty cents, depending on what hatchery you buy it from. Some were fifty, sixty. I was in the chicken business for, I don't know, under ten years. We would pay for baby chicks fifty cents and after they got through laying or whatever when we in fact when we sold out we got three cents a pound for a hen. And they don't go four they go by three pounds so we got maybe ten cents a piece. That's the way the chicken business was. Out of the maybe fifty farmers here, there's not a chicken farmer now at all.

Robert: The picture that I am trying to get, the economic picture is pre-war it was about 50 cents a piece for a little chick?

Sam: That's what we paid. Prewar, we would buy straight run. You would raise it for about eight weeks and we would sell the rooster [as] broilers. And with the income then you would have money to raise the rest of the flock. Pay for the chicks. It was a very ingenuous way of doing things. It was a very lucrative business before the war. In fact, I think in the Sonoma county area we had Japanese people in the poultry business and then we had a lot of Jewish people mainly in the meat [bird?] business. They would raise meat birds. Oh I don't know how many families of Jewish descent we had here but it was the chicken capital of the world at one time.

Robert: This portrait of your father coming back and reestablishing the business...

Sam: Well, as far as the business went when we evacuated, he was not running the ranch anyway, and in fact my older brother Jim took over when he was 20 or 21, because the Isseis could not own land in California. But their offspring, my brother being the oldest, they would have it under his name.

Robert: And there is also the question of language and transaction of business right?

Sam: Yes, as far as the Isseis were concerned they had it harder. Well I guess they did sign language and broken English. They did pretty well, I'm sure they were skinned a few times. But that's neither here nor there. But it still goes on today.

Robert: So what do you think happened to that business, that poultry business? Your father came back from the war and with you and your brother was trying to reestablish it?

Sam: Weather wise, Petaluma is perfect for the poultry business. But economically, you raise grain in the mid-west and you ship all that grain in to California and you pay for that. And then it got to be so you had to get big or get out. Myself, I was, I think, 25 when I started in the poultry business. My parents, my brother helped me out and we bought the place here and we got four chicken houses. I think I used family money to do that too. Anyway I got on my own, I didn't build everything in one shot.

Robert: You have given me a good portrait of your life here.

Sam: Speaking of being an old Petaluma man. I went to Wilson School and my three children went to Wilson School and my two grandsons went to Wilson School. And the other day I went to a class reunion, our sixtieth class reunion and I was talking to our neighbor, a good friend over here, and he said they had five

generations. I said, "Five generations!" "Yeah," he said, "My great grandfather, my grandfather, and his kids and his grandchildren. Five generations going to Wilson School." Yeah, like I was telling you it is a great place to raise children. I, myself, have never personally had anyone call me a "Jap" or any harsh words. I'm sure there were a lot of people that did call me a "Jap" in back of me, but I never had it happen to me [to my face]. That's the way it is.

Robert: In looking back and you want your children or your grandchildren to hear your voice because in another forty years you will no longer be here. What would you like to say to that generation that is not born yet?

Sam: Well, this is, I think it will happen. Remember we were talking about Hawaii being brown? I think America, the lower, not just the lower 48 [states], but from Alaska, the whole U.S., eventually, a hundred years, two hundred years, will be more on the brown color. Right here, right now the influx of South American and Mexico coming in to America, North America, people from Asia and then Africa. It's going to be a true melting pot. Our true Americans are still, I guess, hope they are getting out of the reservation. We don't have any real true Americans, because in America it's such a mix. They can't go around saying, "Well, I'm an American because your white, pink, yellow, or blue." I'm sure, even we have in our family now, out of our three children, two are married to Caucasians. Now, if they get married to Blacks or whatever, they're color appearance will change again and I think that in a hundred, two hundred years, it's all going to be brown. That's the way I think [it will be] and I hope that's the way, I hope my grandchildren think.

Robert: Thank you Mr. Miyano, for a wonderful interview.

End of Interview

CLARA MIYANO INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Clara Miyano
Date: August, 2000
Place: Miyano residence, Petaluma, CA
Interviewer: Robert Coleman-Senghor
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on January 28, 2003
from VHS videotape source material

Interview Summary

Clara Miyano, a long time resident of Petaluma, California, was born Clara Yamaguchi in Watsonville, California. From Watsonville, she moved with her family to Turlock, and graduated from Modesto Junior College. She was working for the County Office at the time of Pearl Harbor, and she remembers how she was told to work in a different location within the office because she was Japanese American. She and her family were sent to the Merced Assembly Center, where she worked in the camp office, and where she also met Sam Miyano, her future husband (who was from Petaluma). Her oldest brother was in the military, stationed at Fort Ord, Monterey, California, and when war broke out, was sent to Minneapolis, and then overseas, while his family was interned during the war.

Clara married Sam in camp, and she describes a bit of life in Amache Internment Camp, including work in the camp office, before she and Sam moved out to work in Boulder, Colorado. While in Boulder, Sam was drafted, so Clara and her girlfriend moved to Chicago to work. She recalls the difficulty of renting there because of being Japanese American. At the end of the war, Clara moved back to Turlock with her mother until Sam returned from the army. Although growing up in a farming family and community, Clara and most of her girlfriends attended college as well as taking piano lessons.

Clara feels a big influence in her life has been the Christian faith. Her parents were Christian, as were most of her friends. She remembers a great amount of volunteering in the church, from visiting jails to teaching Bible school. After the war, upon returning to the family farm in Turlock, Clara remembers feeling welcomed back by their friends.

Clara describes her large family of five brothers and four sisters, one of whom, at the age of four years old, left America to live in Fukui, Japan, going with their grandparents when they decided to return. She reflects on how the rest of a person's life can be affected if they live part of their childhood in Japan, as in the case of her sister. Clara reflects on her own life and does not feel discrimination because of her membership in the Methodist Church, where people of many nationalities and ethnic backgrounds associate and become friends, seeing past external appearances. She ends with her thoughts on the internment, refusing to let the experience hinder her, and speaks of her feelings of compassion for other groups of people who have deeply suffered from acts of discrimination.

Transcript of Interview

Robert: What I want to do is talk about Amache and how you met Sam [there]. What's your maiden name by the way?

Clara: Well, my maiden name is Yamaguchi and actually I was born in Watsonville and we moved to Turlock. Cortez is the town, not exactly a town, it's a village and we are mostly all [farmers] there.

Robert: Are you a member of the Yamaguchi's here in the Petaluma area?

Clara: There's no Yamaguchi's here, 'cause I'm the only one here. And the reason I'm here is because Sam is from Sonoma County, and Petaluma. When he returned from the Service I came here, but otherwise I worked in and graduated from junior college and worked at the County Office in Modesto, before the war. And then when evacuation time came I went to Merced and Sam went to Merced as well, so I met him there.

Robert: So you went to Modesto JC.

Clara: Uh-huh, Modesto Junior College and graduated.

Robert: Did you take clerical classes?

Clara: Business [classes] and I got an AA Degree and worked for the County Office for Mrs. [Agnew] who was a supervisor there.

Robert: How was it working in that office as the war broke out?

Clara: I was working upstairs with the group, and then when the war broke out I was told to go downstairs because I was Japanese American and there might be some [bad] feelings. So I worked downstairs in the office there, and then when the evacuation time came, we went to Merced Assembly Center and that's where I met Sam as well. I worked in the office at Merced Assembly Center as well.

Robert: Were both your parents alive at that time?

Clara: No, my father had passed away before evacuation.

Robert: And how old was your mother?

Clara: My mother must have been in her forties, I believe.

Robert: And your mother was left trying to hold the family together.

Clara: Well, actually my oldest brother was in the Service as well. He was in Monterey, in, I can't think of [the name]...

Robert: Fort Ord.

Clara: Fort Ord. And he was sent to, I believe, Minneapolis at that time,

Robert: So let me get this picture. Here you are, you have graduated from high school and then gone on to junior college, gotten your AA degree and were gainfully employed as a County official. Your oldest brother is serving in the military, located to Ford Ord and the war breaks out and...

Clara: Then he was sent out of Ford Ord because of being Japanese American, and I believe he went to Minneapolis.

Robert: Is your brother still alive?

Clara: No he passed away. He was in the service and then he went on to, I believe, to Europe or so and then he returned and he was farming.

Robert: Did he ever tell you about his feelings of being a soldier and being transferred? He is an American soldier, being treated as [an enemy alien].

Clara: Yes, well, so many were in the Service anyway, so I guess they're all buddies, all together. But then they returned and he did the farming as well. During the time when we were in Camp, well he was in the Service and then when we were in Amache Relocation Center and then I left Amache to go on to Boulder to work and then went on to Chicago to work in an office in Chicago.

Robert: There is a film called "Rabbit in the Moon" and one of the elements in this film is that a woman speaks about what it was like to be a young bride, about the difficulty of having an intimate relationship with her husband as a young bride, with all the people.

Clara: Well, I don't believe I was the only one. They were all married to Servicemen, anyways, so we were just busy doing our work.

Robert: What was it like, being a young bride in the camp?

Clara: Well, it wasn't really that different to being married [and living somewhere else], 'cause we were all so busy trying to do [our] job.

Robert: What was that busy-ness like, when you say you were busy?

Clara: So, we were busy with our work you know, 'cause I worked in the business office there, with a Mr. Myers, who was one of the top men. So, we were busy with our job and then next thing we got a job outside [the camp], so we relocated.

Robert: What was daily life for a woman relocated, a young woman?

Clara: Well, it didn't seem to be very different. I think when we went to Chicago when I went down to work in Chicago it was quite a difference because they didn't take Japanese American as renters, you know. So we had to be really careful wherever we went to rent, to make sure that they would let you rent the apartments. That was the most difficult part, I believe.

Robert: So you had a difficult time finding apartments to rent?

Clara: In Chicago to work in the office there, to show you the difference, my girlfriend was going to the University of Chicago and I would visit her and she would say it would be the same with her, she really had a hard time.

Robert: And she was a Chicago woman?

Clara: Uh-huh, she made her lifetime in Chicago, as well. The whole family evacuated to Chicago. And then after he got out of the service and they had said we could

return, we came back to California and I went back to Turlock to live, until Sam came back from the service and I worked in the office again.

Robert: Let's go back to the camp for a minute. I've heard from a lot of the women that the most difficult thing was keep your household in order. How were you able to maintain some sense of decorum and order?

Clara: Actually, I lived with the whole family so it wouldn't have made any difference. We all had so much to take care of and we all lived in the same circumstances, consequences so we just had the bed. That was about [it], you know. We didn't have any fancy furniture or anything.

Robert: And no privacy. What was that like?

Clara: That was true. You just learn to live very, you know, carefully. Specially [you] had to keep up your face so you don't get to look like a mess. I don't believe I spent that much time in the camp, anyway, 'cause I left as soon as I was able to leave.

Robert: Oh so you're pretty much like your husband. He thought that he spent a long time, but it was eleven months that he spent. What would you say was the time period, your husband had gone, did you follow him to Chicago?

Clara: No, I was in Boulder, because that's where he was at first and then he went into Service, and so my girlfriend and I were evacuated, not evacuated, moved to Chicago to work in the office.

Robert: You're in a special position because, unlike most of the Japanese-American population [those that were American citizens], you worked with documents. What were the typical text documents that you had to deal with that were important to the community?

Clara: Well I always worked outside. I worked in the office so the people I had to communicate with were people in the office. I didn't work in the kitchen or anything.

Robert: Oh yeah, that's what I'm saying. So you were handling documents. People would come to you for travel documents?

Clara: Oh different things. It was a job, that's about the [only] way you can look at it. You just did your job, it's the main thing.

Robert: I'm trying to get a portrait of the details of that job. I remember I was in the military. There were several documents that I remember. I remember my transfer documents. How I used to peruse them. I remember how difficult that was because you had to take them to the different offices. You had to make sure your platoon leader knew that your captain knew you had to take them to brigade headquarters. Had travel orders that would come done to you. What was it like for an average Japanese-American to get outside the camp?

Clara: Oh of, outside the campground. Actually, we didn't leave the campground, we had all kinds of runners, our job was in the offices, so we gave our job to the

runners to do all the other jobs to bring it the other offices. Amache Camp had all kinds of different offices, the hospital.

Robert: You were the Chief Administrative Officer. What was his name again?

Clara: Mr. Myers. Uh-huh, I worked with him.

Robert: He was the Associate Director. What was it like working with him?

Clara: Just like you work with anyone. Nothing exceptional. Like in Petaluma I worked for the school system. I've always worked in an office.

Robert: What was the typical kind of document that you dealt with? I know I'm asking you to reach back a little bit.

Clara: When you say document, I'm not quite sure I know what you mean?

Robert: If there was someone, like your husband, who wanted to travel outside the camp. Were you the one who would write up permission for him to travel?

Clara: Well, we would write it and he would have his man get the signature and send it out, yeah. Or leave Amache Camp or something like that, yeah. It was nothing really hush, hush.

Robert: Were people denied travel?

Clara: Well, it was according to their situation, of course you know.

Robert: Did you ever have the situation where someone came and wanted to travel and couldn't?

Clara: No, I don't believe so.

Robert: Was there a memorable thing that you had in the camp that dealt with your office, that you felt you had to share with your husband or someone else?

Clara: Well, he [my husband], wasn't in camp, you know, when I worked in the office, but not especially. I can't think of a thing at the moment.

Robert: Well let's talk about Chicago.

Clara: Oh yeah. Chicago was, I worked for a transportation company in Chicago. [I] Took the subway and went on to work, and you know.

Robert: Were you paid regular wages?.

Clara: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Robert: So your AA degree paid off in a strange kind of way?

Clara: Well, most of us were just workers, you know, yeah.

Robert: Some researchers have commented on the fact that the war years opened up opportunities for Japanese American women. Can you tell us a little bit of your impressions?

Clara: Very much so. Well, I didn't get the four year college degree but my girlfriends went on to universities and got the higher education and were able to be a nurse

and all that, so its according to what they did when they left camp and got higher degrees and they went on the way. So it did open up for the Niseis.

Robert: So, here you are, you come out of a family that's a farming family and you are a woman in that family and yet you end up with an AA in the '30's. What was the attitude in your family toward educating you as a woman?

Clara: Well, most of my girl friends they all went to college and we all took piano lessons and we played piano for our church. We all actually had a good background I would feel, 'cause we all played the piano and did [other] things, [we were] not just farmers that worked on the ranch.

Robert: What was your father's occupation?

Clara: My father was a farmer. My mother was home too.

Robert: And of course, she worked on the farm?

Clara: Yeah. I think most of our friend's parents were Christians. And I think that made a difference, 'cause we were Christian and we were taught to get ahead in this world. I was going to say that our church, now we did a lot of volunteering, we went to jail, you know like at that place in Sacramento, Pine Crest. And we used to go to the jail and sing Japanese Christian songs. We did a lot of volunteering in that order. We were taught to go to summer school, the Bible Summer School during the summer and very busy in that order.

Robert: So you see a very important distinction for women raised in Buddhist families and women raised in Christian families that opened up opportunities for women to get ahead in terms of getting an education?

Clara: Uh-huh and the Christians... get ahead in this world.

Robert: So this return to Turlock. What did that feel like?

Clara: Well, that was the only place I could return [to] because Sam was in the Service, you know. And so I came back and I worked in the office in Merced.

Robert: How were you received?

Clara: Just fine. Most of our acquaintances were Christians too, that's a difference. Their feelings are different. When we left our place, we left our piano with a Christian friend. Who we associate with makes a lot of difference. And there isn't discrimination so much, it makes a lot of difference

Robert: Did your parents get their property back?

Clara: Uh-huh. Well, my dad was gone already, because he passed away before evacuation.

Robert: So your mom came back to how many orchards?

Clara: Well, I can't tell you exactly. I think it was 20 acres.

Robert: Was it truck farming or orchard?

Clara: Truck farming.

Robert: Is that land still in the family or was it finally sold?

Clara: Well, they finally sold it. My mother's gone, my brother's gone. They are all gone.

Robert: So how large was your family?

Clara: Well, there was actually five brothers and four sisters, but one of my sisters went back to Japan with the grandparents and stayed there. And we had asked her to come back [to the U.S.], as my grandparents had passed away. But she felt that she did not want to come back to the United States because she didn't speak English fluently and she felt that she would be discriminated [against] by the family. And so she'd rather stay there. They owned a big property in Japan, anyway, my grandparents home so she stayed there

Robert: Your sister was American born?

Clara: And went back to Japan with my grandparents, who were living in Watsonville and they built a nice home in Japan and they lived there.

Robert: Did your parents go back on their own?

Clara: Not my parents, my grandparents.

Robert: Your grandparents, did they go back on their own or did they feel compelled by the war?

Clara: Oh no, they went back to Japan much, much before the war. Uh-huh and so they lived there.

Robert: And your sister went back with them?

Clara: With my grandparents and she was four years old.

Robert: And you come from the Hiroshima area?

Clara: Oh no, we're from [Fukui].

Robert: Fukui, well that's on the other side.

Clara: Right there by the water, a beautiful area. I've gone there to visit many a time. She felt, like I said before, that she did not want to come back to the United States 'cause she couldn't speak English fluently and she felt she might be discriminated [against]. And I believe this happened with many families 'cause that's happened to Sam's family too because his older sister came back to the United States and the sisters and brothers all speak English and she felt kind of [like] an outcast too.

Robert: Did she also go back before the war?

Clara: No, she was born in Japan. I feel that a lot of the older children that went back to Japan, it was very difficult for them to come back to the United States. They called them [Kibeis] and it was hard for those kids to get along with the family and which you don't realize this.

- Robert:** Here you are you are looking at 56 years of marriage, and you are looking back upon this time, really, from the point of view of women in the 1930's to have gone off to college, it puts you in a different class of women regardless of whether you are Japanese or not. Looking back upon a whole lifetime.
- Clara:** And I don't feel discriminated [against], I feel like I'm just one of anyone else. I belong to the Methodist Church here and I'm one of them. I don't feel like I'm Japanese or Chinese or whatever cause we have all nationalities at our Methodist Church. I think this is what's different from being discriminated [against]. I don't ever feel discriminated [against] because I've always lived with Caucasians.
- Robert:** So the church has always provided a bulwark against the feelings on the outside. It protected you. Is that what you're suggesting here?
- Clara:** I think it's who you communicate and associate with, which is the main thing.
- Robert:** And in your community, in your church community they see you as what?
- Clara:** Another Caucasian or whatever, it's who you are. It's not into nationality, it's who you are.
- Robert:** You're a Methodist, and more importantly you're a Christian, and it's around that idea that you have been able to organize your life all these years.
- Clara:** I feel that is really the truth. Who you associate with is really the thing. If your children associate with just certain kinds of people, and they don't associate with other people, it makes a lot of difference.
- Robert:** Well, here forty years from now, your grandchildren are approaching middle age and they are trying to tell the story to their children about your experience. What do you want to say to them about the internment experience and about the farming experience?
- Clara:** Well, I can't say I was a farmer.
- Robert:** The experience of living in a community of people that are farmers, but also of people that were professionals, 'cause you were a professional. What do you say to them when they look back at this period and they say, you know great grandma, she was interned. What do you want them to know?
- Clara:** I really can't think of too much about discriminations except we did have to evacuate and go to camp, it was quite an experience, but you try to forget about it and live your life, day to day, do the best that you can do. I don't think I could live my life thinking about discrimination.
- Robert:** What is the value then, of the historical record of the event. What do you think? I'm really asking your opinion.
- Clara:** Oh, the value of the evacuation is that what you are speaking of?
- Robert:** The value of remembering the evacuation. Should you forget it, should you remember it?

Clara: I really feel like it was just a big change and we had to leave. The hardest was for our parents, that they had to leave their home. For us younger people, the impact was much less than [it was on] our parents. We just felt we had to make the best of it, do the best of your life and get ahead.

Robert: So you say to your grandchildren, look at me, a woman that was doing what during this time?

Clara: It's something that you have gone through but you just want to forget about it. I don't feel like I want to just live with it, you know. We may talk about it, but it should not hinder your living situation.

Robert: I think that is a very profound way of thinking about it. You seem to suggest that forgetting is a kind of remembering. You remember it, but you don't let it stand as a barrier to your living.

Clara: Very much so. And I don't feel we are the only people that were discriminated against. There's all these different people that have had to go through suffering. I felt the Jewish people really had the hardest [suffering] to go through. I really feel sorry for what they had to do [go through].

Robert: In fact, what I hear you saying in the example that you said, here you are, 56 years of marriage, the reason that your grandchildren are going to be able to look back is because of this faith that kept you...[Tape cut]

End of Interview

SAM MIYANO & MARLENE MASADA INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Sam (Sabaro) Miyano & Marlene Miyano Masada
Date: January 21, 2001
Place: The Miyano residence, Petaluma, CA
Interviewer: Cynthia Miyano Hayashi
Summary: Phyllis Tajii and Cynthia Miyano Hayashi
Transcription: Transcribed by Cynthia Miyano Hayashi from audio source material

Interview Summary

Sam Miyano and Marlene Masada are siblings that have lived both their youth and adult lives in Sonoma County. Each has enjoyed a very rewarding life.

They were raised with strong family values that they passed on to their children. They enjoyed each other and laughed as children, and to this day are still very close as brother and sister, still laughing a lot together.

Sam and Marlene were both born in Penngrove, CA. Sam mentions that his father was the “midwife” at his birth. The family had a poultry ranch, so there was no time to play, only work and school as they were growing up. Their parents only spoke Japanese, but the Miyano siblings spoke English to each other. They attended Japanese language school but mostly remember playing there. Marlene recalls how independent her mother was, going by train to San Francisco by herself to shop. She was not much of a disciplinarian. She didn’t cook much, partly because she was vegetarian. Marlene says that she started cooking at age 3 or 4, standing on an apple box while her father told her what to do. Other memories they tell about are taking baths outdoors in the tub, skating, going to the State Fair in Sacramento, and the apple show in Sebastopol.

Marlene first heard about Pearl Harbor when a gas station refused to serve her and her husband. Sam heard about it on the radio while he was working on the ranch. The very next day the FBI came to take their father away. The family was relocated to Merced Assembly Center and Amache Relocation Camp. Marlene worked as a waitress at first but later had a job as a chauffeur. Sam drove a coal truck, and his father was a stoker for the coal stove. Their mother worked in the vegetable gardens. Eventually, the family had their own garden plot and a pet chipmunk.

After the war, Marlene didn’t return to Marysville because of vandalism. They both came to Sonoma County, where the Jensen family had looked after the Miyano ranch. In talking about the present day, both Marlene and Sam consider their kids and grandkids to be their biggest achievement.

Transcript of Interview

Cynthia: Aunt Marlene, where were you born?

Marlene: Penngrove, California.

Cynthia: And Dad?

Sam: Same thing—Penngrove, California.

Cynthia: Out in the country or in the city?

Sam: Penngrove is a rural town, I guess you'd say...

Marlene: Rural... Uh-huh. Still the same.

Cynthia: Were you born in the hospital, or...?

Sam: No, my father was the midwife.

Cynthia: Who remembered that? Were there other people there?

Marlene: Did someone tell you that?

Sam: It's on your birth certificate. Oh, you didn't have one.

Marlene: I didn't have one. Did it say that?

Sam: Yes, it was on your birth certificate.

Marlene: Oh...

Cynthia: What was your family's line of work?

Both: Poultry... chickens... eggs.

Marlene: A chicken ranch.

Cynthia: Your father and your mother?

Both: Oh, yes. It was a family operation... you ain't kidding—yeah.

Cynthia: And so, were there other hired people?

Marlene: No, just us.

Cynthia: How many siblings did you have? Auntie Marlene?

Marlene: Well, one died a month after birth so there were six.

Sam: Yeah, six.

Cynthia: What were their names?

Marlene: Toshia—was that her name?

Both: Toshia, Shigeo, Masami, Jilco, Saboro, and Misaye.

Cynthia: And one passed away—at birth?

Marlene: Well... a month later.

Cynthia: And, Auntie Marlene, where do you fall in the family?

Marlene: In the middle.

Cynthia: And Dad?

Sam: Right behind her.

Marlene: He is right behind. (*All laugh*) Right behind his sister?

Cynthia: Three years behind?

Marlene: Yeah.

Cynthia: What do you remember about family life, Aunt Marlene?

Marlene: You mean while we were in Penngrove?

Cynthia: Yes, while you were in Penngrove and then when you moved to Petaluma.

Marlene: Well, while we were in Penngrove... family life... I don't remember too much about that one... [I was] too young.

Sam: We were too young.

Cynthia: And then you moved to Skillman Lane? At what age?

Marlene: Yes, Skillman Lane—I think I was about six, probably. Somewhere in there.

Sam: Yeah, I was three.

Cynthia: And it was a big house?

Marlene: Yes.

Sam: Yeah—[it] had inside plumbing, which was unusual ...

Marlene: Yeah, at that time.

Cynthia: So was your family wealthy?

Marlene: Huh?

Cynthia: Was your family wealthy? You had a two-story house.

Both: (*Laughter together*) Yes. I would say, by the standards of those days, we were well off.

Cynthia: And your father had a driver's license?

Marlene: Oh, yes.

Sam: Yes, he drove a pick-up.

Marlene: That big truck...

Sam: I can remember the Dodge dogcatcher...with a cage.

Marlene: Yes, a cage.

Sam: He used to get feed... or go to town with that. And then he bought a Willys Knight in 1929, I think it was.

Cynthia: Did your mother drive?

Marlene: My mother? No... well, she drove the ton truck around the field– to gather eggs but only in first gear. First gear, that's all, but she didn't drive, no.

Cynthia: What did you do for entertainment?

Marlene: We entertained ourselves.

Sam: (*Laughs*) Yeah.

Cynthia: Did you get to go to the movies?

Marlene: Yeah, we got movies.

Cynthia: Play with friends?

Marlene: Play? That word, play? Huh-uh.

Cynthia: So did you just have to play with each other?

Sam: We worked!

Marlene: We worked most of the time.

Cynthia: What time did you wake up to work?

Marlene: What time did we work?

Sam: Oh, my father used to get up before five, every day. I used to get up in time to go to school.

Marlene: Yes, I used to get up earlier to go help him to get the mash and everything ready for the feed.

Cynthia: For the chickens?

Marlene: Yes, just to get praised because he always praised me because I'd get up and do it where the boys wouldn't do it.

Cynthia: And then, you'd get up before school and you'd walk to school?

Marlene: Yes. Well, Wilson School we walked.

Sam: Grammar school.

Marlene: Yeah, grammar school. Uh-huh.

Sam: But from ninth grade on, we brought the car.

Cynthia: Because you owned the car.

Marlene: Yeah.

Cynthia: Only the boys owned cars? Or the girls did too?

Marlene: No.

Sam: Well, I used to bring Mas to school.

Marlene: Well, Mas had it.

Cynthia: What do you think your family's expectations were?

Marlene: Of what?

- Cynthia:** What did your family expect of you as you were growing up, and what did they think you would do as you got older?
- Marlene:** As we got older?
- Cynthia:** Yes.
- Marlene:** Don't dishonor them. Don't embarrass them. That's about it.
- Sam:** That's the main thing. Don't embarrass the family.
- Marlene:** Yes, don't embarrass them.
- Cynthia:** And school? Did they emphasize school or not?
- Marlene:** No, I don't know about that.
- Sam:** No, I don't think they were... Like, when we raised our own kids, we expected the kids to go to college...
- Marlene:** Because we wanted life [to be] better for them...
- Sam:** Yeah.
- Marlene:** But I don't think they did.
- Sam:** Well, pre-war, Nisei...
- Marlene:** Can't...
- Sam:** Weren't getting any jobs, per se. There were very few people that worked in offices.
- Marlene:** Yeah, even if so and so's son had a university degree as a lawyer, he never got to practice. No one hired him because times weren't the same then as now.
- Sam:** I think for myself, I always planned to go back on the land.
- Cynthia:** Oh, to work on the land. Growing up, were you part of a Japantown?
- Sam:** No. No, we moved to Petaluma in 1925, and there is no Japantown in Petaluma.
- Marlene:** No. No Japantown.
- Cynthia:** Did you participate in temple, or church, or scouts, YWCA, YMCA? Picnics, local bands, sports?
- Marlene:** No.
- Sam:** I was a Boy Scout.
- Cynthia:** At what age?
- Sam:** Twelve. And my oldest brother was a scoutmaster.
- Cynthia:** For you?
- Sam:** Yes. George Fujiyama was a scoutmaster. And we used to, I think... On the Fourth of July we used to go to what we called 'Shinto Camp' on the Russian River on hot days.

- Marlene:** On the Russian River. That was a big deal.
- Sam:** Yeah. (*Laughs*)
- Cynthia:** Is that like a Boy Scout...
- Both:** No, no.
- Marlene:** There was like Hiroshima *Kenjinkai* [an organization comprised of immigrants from the same prefecture in Japan]... you know, like a club.
- Sam:** Was it all Hiroshimas?
- Marlene:** Most of them.
- Cynthia:** Did your parents speak Japanese at home?
- Sam:** That's all they spoke.
- Marlene:** What else?
- Cynthia:** So, you spoke Japanese with them?
- Marlene:** Well... A mixture. It's like, yeah, whatever we knew...
- Cynthia:** You could speak to them?
- Marlene:** Yeah.
- Cynthia:** And then did you speak English to each other?
- Marlene:** Yes, uh-huh.
- Cynthia:** And did they understand what you were talking about? If you were talking with each other?
- Sam:** I would say...
- Marlene:** I would think if we were talking slow they would... Yes. Then, we resorted to pig Latin... When we wanted to get away with it.
- Sam:** Yeah... (*Laughter*) But they always wanted us to speak Japanese at the table.
- Marlene:** Yes. At the table they used to say, "Don't speak English. Speak Japanese at the table."
- Sam:** That's so they could understand and get into family conversation.
- Cynthia:** Oh, otherwise they wouldn't know what you were talking about.
- Marlene:** Anyway, we always ate together.
- Sam:** Always.
- Cynthia:** All meals, breakfast and dinner...
- Marlene:** Oh yeah. Uh-huh. Not like today—you don't see them at the table.
- Cynthia:** Did you attend Japanese language school? And how did you feel about it?
- Marlene:** We went there to play.
- Sam:** (*Laughs*) Yes. Eat lunch.

Marlene: Yes, eat lunch and play.

Cynthia: Where was that?

Marlene: On Ely Road. On the railroad track—on Ely Road, right there behind that fruit stand.

Sam: It's gone now. It burnt [down] during the war.

Cynthia: How old were you when you started?

Marlene: First we went to... I don't know if you went...to this Christian one.

Sam: Yes. It was started with Mrs. Masuoka.

Marlene: Yes, Mrs. Masuoka. We went to the Christian one—the first one.

Cynthia: What did they teach you?

Marlene: You know, Margarette's mother...

Cynthia: Did they teach you to speak Japanese there?

Marlene: No. She taught us Christian things, like, you know...

Sam: I can still remember that first Christian song, "Jesus loves me."

Marlene: Yes, "Jesus loves me."

Sam: Yes, she taught us that.

Cynthia: You went on Saturdays or after school?

Marlene: Must have been Saturdays or Sundays—gee, that was so long ago. How did we get there?

Sam: Oh, it beats me. That's over 70 years ago.

Marlene: Yeah, I don't remember.

Cynthia: So, you went as a family—all of you...

Both: No. I remember him [Sam] and I. I don't remember the rest going.

Sam: No, the brothers wouldn't go.

Cynthia: Like Uncle Jimmy or Uncle Mas?

Both: No.

Cynthia: And Aunt Lily didn't go?

Sam: If she did, I don't remember. I really don't.

Marlene: No, I don't think so.

Cynthia: Did you take any Japanese cultural arts, like flower arrangement, judo, koto, kendo?

Marlene: Did you take Kendo?

Sam: Yes. I took Kendo for one year.

Cynthia: How old were you?

Sam: Thirteen or fourteen. Someplace in there.

Cynthia: Did you like it?

Sam: I guess it was the thing to do. Everybody...

Marlene: Everybody was doing it... Yeah. I didn't take it—my mother had this lady come from the city to tutor me in flower arrangement and sewing. A lot of good it did. I still didn't care for it. The other two, Lily and my older sister, went to sewing school, but I wouldn't go. So then she got the tutors to come down and try to teach me, and I still didn't care for it.

Cynthia: She was very progressive, wasn't she?

Marlene: Well, that way, I suppose she was... yes, she took the train every week to San Francisco.

Cynthia: Alone?

Marlene: Oh, yeah!

Cynthia: She'd go shopping?

Marlene: She'd go buy herself a record—you know these big records? She'd bring it home and she'd play it on the Victorola, and then she'd try to sing.

Cynthia: Was that entertainment?

Marlene: No, she used to love music. She used to love that type of stuff. Then she'd bring home a can of thin bread—she'd stop at... get those mashed cans, you know. She'd get a can of thin bread. She'd drag that home with her on the train. It must have been an all day thing, huh, on the train?

Sam: I guess so. But the first time I went with Mom to San Francisco I was thirteen. I put a cushion under my feet...

Marlene: I remember driving her and she'd go, "Faster! Faster!" We had the big car and she goes, "Faster! Faster!" She was always kind of speedy.

Cynthia: And a vegetarian?

Marlene: Yes. Very... Hardly ate.

Sam: I think in today's time, she would eat white breasts of the chicken. That was the most you'd ever see her eat.

Marlene: Well, you saw her eat that? We used to open a crab can... and then she'd eat one leg out of the can... white meat from the crab can. She had meat.

Cynthia: Was she a disciplinarian?

Marlene: No, she just didn't care for it.

Cynthia: So, how was discipline handled? Or did you guys ever get in trouble?

Marlene: (*Laughter*) Well, let me see... If you got one of her (*sound*)... you didn't have to do too much. Or if company was there, then she'd come near you and go (*sound*)... if you were doing something bad at the table or whatever.

Cynthia: So, she was more than the father.

Both: Yeah. I would say.

Cynthia: He was more on the quiet side?

Marlene: He was kind of, you know, easy going.

Cynthia: What schools did you go to, Aunt Marlene, and how did you feel about school?

Marlene: I went to Penngrove. I went to school on the hill there. I don't know what street that is—It's a church, even now. Then, I think when I moved... I think Penngrove School was being built, and then I moved over to Wilson. Then I got put back a grade, at Wilson. Because, you know, in those days, there was maybe five in a grade, and so then they would shove you... I don't know if my English was so bad that they thought, "Well, I'd better start her over."

Cynthia: Did you speak Japanese when you first started school?

Marlene: Gee, I don't remember.

Sam: Well, I probably spoke Japanese a little bit, but having older brothers and sisters, they spoke English, so it was easier for us when we went to school... to speak English.

Cynthia: What did you bring for lunch?

Marlene: Oh, I don't remember that... No, not at Penngrove. At Wilson, I remember...

Cynthia: Sandwiches?

Sam: Baloney sandwiches.

Marlene: Ba... loo... ney. Baloney.

Sam: Yeah, but during the Depression, that was ...

Marlene: It was nothing, a piece of big baloney—bologna, I guess you called it.

Sam: And one thing, in our time, there were Portuguese, Italian, Russian, and they all spoke their native tongue—so the parents themselves, there were quite a few that had education in America, like the Seminoffs, so they come to mind—he was Russian, I think... and they never came to PTA.

Marlene: No. None of them.

Cynthia: They didn't.

Sam: My parents never went to PTA. They couldn't understand.

Cynthia: Oh, because they were speaking English.

Sam: But they came if we had a class fair or something, they came.

Cynthia: And they felt welcome?

Sam: Yes.

Marlene: Oh yeah, you know, Wilson was always a smart country place.

Sam: Ralph____, the sponsors, I don't remember his parents ever... they spoke Portuguese.

Cynthia: How did you feel about school?

Sam: I liked it.

Marlene: Oh, it was friendly, you know. They were all friendly.

Sam: I liked it because we didn't have to work...

Marlene: Yeah, but the work was always there...

Sam: Yeah, come home and work.

Marlene: Yeah, it was waiting for us.

Cynthia: Who were your playmates? Were you invited to homes of Caucasian children?

Marlene: Well... we didn't have time to be going playing at Caucasian children's places...

Sam: In high school, I went around with all Caucasians. Well, except for Tom Chimaso and John _____. But then I recall going to Carnegies for dinner, and so I guess you can call them friends.

Marlene: He had it a little easier because by that time, he could fool around a little more. He played football and stuff, but we had to go home and work yet.

Cynthia: Every day?

Marlene: Yep! I never even saw a football game!

Cynthia: What time did you get out of school?

Marlene: Gee, what was it? Three? Four?

Sam: Yes, three.

Marlene: Yeah, you'd catch the bus and go home, and there it is—the chicken house. There it is waiting for me. So, we never had that...

Cynthia: How did you get home? By bus?

Both: Oh yeah... The horses were long past. (*Laughter*)

Cynthia: As a child, did you consider yourself Japanese? Japanese American? American?

Marlene: I don't know. I never gave it too much thought. No one ever said too much.

Sam: No. I knew we weren't the same as the Caucasians. We were Japanese. But I didn't think we would say we were Japanese Americans or Americans. We were just that... I don't think they stressed so much, especially in a rural area, about...

Cynthia: Yeah... not like you're in a city where there are groups of them. Nobody looked at you any different.

- Sam:** Yes. We didn't have any blacks in grammar school. I remember Ruby Miller, in junior high, or was she Indian? She was dark. We didn't know blacks.
- Marlene:** Well, she was just dark. The only closest we used to call "Black Portuguese."
- Sam:** Yes. *(Laughs)* That wasn't very nice.
- Marlene:** No, that's not very nice. We used to go play with the black Portuguese down there.
- Sam:** Yeah, you played with Tom...
- Cynthia:** What kind of dinner table conversation did you have? How were you seated?
- Marlene:** When we were kids? Well, we had our regular seats, not every day different people. Every day, in the same place.
- Sam:** Same place.
- Cynthia:** Did your father sit at the head? And mother at the other end, or how?
- Both:** No, she sat next to pop, yeah.
- Cynthia:** Was it by age? Dad, then mom...
- Sam:** Let's see, there used to be... this is the table. There was Mom, here, Pop sat at the head of the table, eldest son was here, Masami...
- Marlene:** Yeah, I remember sitting on the corner... where there was room.
- Sam:** Then, there was myself and Lily.
- Marlene:** My older sister was never there, so...
- Cynthia:** Who served?
- Marlene:** Who served?
- Cynthia:** Did the boys help serve or did they just sit?
- Marlene:** I don't think there was any serving. It was all there.
- Cynthia:** Oh, on the table?
- Marlene:** If there was tempura, two big platters of tempura on each end. And if there was sukiyaki, there was the sukiyaki burner in the middle, and everybody put their chop sticks in and went to town. My father would feed the charcoal and cook it and tell us to, "Eat. Eat."
- Cynthia:** So, you ate well.
- Sam:** Yes, we ate well. I can still remember using knives and forks at home at our table, you know. Not only chop sticks. We used knives and forks.
- Marlene:** It would revolt my mother because of the platters of the tempura and the meat, that she is vegetarian and she didn't like that, but she never cooked it, so...
- Cynthia:** Did she cook mainly Japanese food or did she try other recipes?

Marlene: If she cooked, I can hardly remember it. She didn't cook that much... she cooked beans and stuff like that.

Sam: She didn't like to cook.

Marlene: It was on me... I've been cooking since I was in Penngrove.

Cynthia: From how old?

Marlene: Three or four.

Cynthia: Three or four years old!

Marlene: On the apple box.

Cynthia: You started cooking for the whole family?

Marlene: Yeah. I would just step on the apple box, and then my father would tell me what to cook.

Cynthia: How would you know how?

Marlene: Well, he would teach me, and then when I got to Skillman Lane, it was old hat by then. So he'd say, "Today we'll have fish, salad..." And then he'd buy a lot of meat all the time. We'd have meat, or some blue ox, or we'd have fried chicken and you know. So, I was well-versed in that.

Sam: And then, when she had taken cooking in high school, we got cheese and macaroni.

Marlene: Yeah, they didn't like that.

Sam: My father and brothers liked cheese, but I never did eat cheese and macaroni...

Marlene: I took Home Economics in high school, and then come home and put it on them... And, they didn't care for it... and then the curtains that I put up. And my mother never did like [the] dark, so she tied the curtains in knots so the light would come in, you know, I'd drape it, you know the way I learned. So, she would put it in a knot and tie it up so sun would come in.

Cynthia: So, who did the dishes? Did you have to do the dishes even though you cooked, or did you take turns?

Marlene: Take turns...?

Sam: I didn't.

Marlene: Must have been me then. I don't remember. Must have been... yes, because I don't think my mother did.

Cynthia: Oh, so your mother didn't...

Marlene: No, as soon as she ate, she'd be out to the brooder house, chicken house or somewhere.

Cynthia: That's why she didn't cook because she had to keep working?

Sam: Yeah.

Marlene: Well... she didn't like the smell of all that stuff that we used to eat. Yeah, because other ladies had to do that and still cooked.

Cynthia: Now, last night we were talking about the Japanese bath because we remembered it.

Marlene: Oh... yes.

Cynthia: Did you guys have a Japanese bath?

Marlene: Yes.

Both: Furo.

Cynthia: Did your father use it first and then go down to the tepid water, or...?

Marlene: Oh, maybe he did?

Sam: I guess so.

Marlene: We'd all come out looking like lobsters. (*Laughter*)

Sam: It had to be hot.

Marlene: I had to go in last because I put too much water in... and make it cold.

Sam: Yes, with eight people in the bath...

Marlene: One time, I think maybe our bath was burnt out or something. We had to use... where you live now? O____s used to live there. Then, they had their chimney right next to the tub. So if you stood up wrong, you'd burn your butt. You know, you're not used to it, so I stood up and *chewww*! I burned my butt on the chimney. And I remember that we used to have to bathe up there because we had to bathe every day, whether you liked it or not.

Sam: *Every day.*

Marlene: We'd have to go bathe.

Sam: Hot, rain, cold...

Marlene: Sometimes we'd just say we did bathe already and go home.

Cynthia: At night?

Marlene: Yeah, at night. When we were at home, you know, on eight acres, it's scary. You go at 8 o'clock or so, it's dark, and you go in the bath. Lily and I used to go out—I think we were the last ones to go in and then we'd go in—and I always tried to talk to her, or keep her, so that she wouldn't think that I'm trying to hurry and get ahead of her because I wanted to get in that door before she did, because I was scared... so I'd run like heck, you know, and she said, "Gee, I remember how you used to shut that door on me." You know, you don't know what's out there.

Cynthia: What about your teenage years? What kind of problems or joys? Was dating allowed? Interracial dating? Did you think about racism or injustice? What were your relationships with your parents?

Marlene: Well, maybe you told them to go... did you say, "I'm going with so and so?"

Sam: Well, I asked Mom one time and that was the only time I asked.

Marlene: And she said...

Sam: No!

Cynthia: No? No dating, or no dating... interracially?

Sam: Interracially. But I used to go out with other teen girls.

Marlene: Not much.

Sam: No, not every day.

Cynthia: Did their parents care?

Sam: They didn't say anything. I would go up to their door, and they didn't say, "Get out of here."

Marlene: We did things on the sly.

Sam: In our teenage years, we didn't have that many Nisei--or Japanese--going to school in our area. Maybe there were a dozen... a dozen in high school at the same time?

Marlene: Yeah... at most.

Sam: At the most, yeah.

Marlene: I remember Lily and I used to go to Mirabel skating.

Sam: That's in Sebastopol.

Marlene: Then, we'd have to go after all our chores are done and everything is done. By the time we'd get to go there, the rest are ready to go home. *(Laughter)* The Sebastopol guys, they had been there from the beginning. So, Lily and I only got to stay maybe half-hour... Drive all the way up there.

Cynthia: Who drove?

Marlene: I did.

Marlene: And then... Of course, you know, we're not good at it, so if you don't have the skates that fit you good, then you get great big blisters on the back, and you dare not say that you've got blisters and your leg hurts because then they will say that you can't go anymore. So you have to hobble around and say, "Oh, it hurts, but I can't say it." Yeah...

Cynthia: So, did you have your own skates, or did you...

Marlene: Rent it. Sure, by the time we got there, you've got to take anything because we're the last ones there.

Cynthia: *(To Sam)* You never went skating?

Sam: I went one time and I fell down, and the next day I went to the hospital--remember my kidneys--I had kidney problems...

Marlene: Oh, yeah.

Sam: I had that for two weeks, so I never was interested in skating.

Marlene: It started from that skating?

Sam: Yeah. Well, it could have been started already, but when I fell down...

Marlene: I used to love to go because Alice Shimazu's husband, Tom, and then Pete Masuoka and Margarette's brother, they'd be waiting for me. Then we did a threesome. They'd just whirl... I don't skate very good, but they knew how to skate, so they used to take me around that ring. I used to enjoy that.

Cynthia: Was that, like, the biggest form of entertainment? Skating? Did you guys go to the fair, or...?

Marlene: Yeah. Fair? Yeah, we went to the State Fair.

Cynthia: Oh, in Sacramento?

Marlene: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We went to the State Fair.

Sam: We used to go to the apple shows in Sebastopol.

Marlene: Yeah... we'd go to that... uh-huh. And then we used to go to the Japanese shows—not that we liked it. It was just to go.

Cynthia: In Sebastopol?

Marlene: In Sebastopol. Sometimes, it was kind of fun, huh?

Sam: Yeah.

Marlene: And then my mother... oh yeah, my mother must have cooked, because they used to make lunches, nighttime dinner. Because if we ate at home, we'd never get there in time, so she'd make nighttime ____ [Japanese word] And then we'd be sitting and then my father would always say if the paper was rustling that someone is unwrapping their thing, and he'd say, "Don't look back. Who's rustling that paper? Don't look back."

Cynthia: (*Laughs*) To see what they are eating? Who did you talk to if you had problems? What made you happy? How would you describe your childhood, teenage years, in your home, at school and community?

Marlene: Who would I talk to if I had problems? I don't remember having to talk.

Sam: I don't think... you know, if you think about it, nobody had problems. Nobody stole.

Marlene: Nobody had problems. No one did bad things.

Sam: I know that sex education... there wasn't no such thing but parents [to learn from]. We didn't go one-on-one, but they wouldn't speak about sex education. We couldn't communicate, but... unless Mom used to talk to you about it...

Marlene: No. No. She never told me... (*Laughter*) Oh! When she was 30, she was already operated on. She never had it, so she doesn't realize that her daughters are suffering the same fate.

Cynthia: You mean she had a hysterectomy at 30?

Marlene: Um... hum.

Cynthia: So she had all of her kids by 30? How old was she when she got married, I wonder?

Marlene: I have no idea.

Sam: There was quite an age difference.

Marlene: Yes...

Sam: About 14 years difference between ... well, let's see, 14 years. My father was 44 and my mother was ... no, after Libby she had the hysterectomy.

Cynthia: There was 14 years difference?

Sam: Between husband and wife... yes.

Cynthia: Did you have a job outside school?

Sam: I did. I worked over at a chicken farm.

Marlene: Oh, you did? Every day?

Cynthia: How much did you get paid?

Sam: Twenty-five cents an hour. That was the going rate. Mom and Dad worked on the sheep farm for fifteen...

Cynthia: That was about the same rate that Caucasian people got paid?

Sam: I never worked on the sheep farm... I don't think there were any... Filipinos, yes.

Marlene: Yes, mostly Filipinos. That must have been the rate.

Cynthia: Auntie Marlene, you were talking about the "One Man's Family" show. What was that?

Marlene: On the radio, I think it was called "The Barber Family". But it used to be called "One Man's Family". You know... there was the mother and father and kids and they were always happy, and, you know, doing things, and I guess we were a little different from the rest of the people.

Cynthia: Because you weren't always doing things?

Marlene: No it's just how we used to interact... that they said... Oh, they just seemed to always be so happy. So we were known as "One Man's Family" or "The Barber Family".

Cynthia: Oh, that's nice. So, you guys were always happy... but each of you... A couple of you slept in each room together...

Marlene: Well, when we were younger... did you always sleep separate?

Sam: I never slept with anybody...

Marlene: Oh. Okay.

- Sam:** Upstairs... Oh, I did... I take it back. When Nissan came from Japan, Nissan and I had the middle room.
- Marlene:** You moved over? Well, I moved up there. Later... yeah.
- Sam:** You moved...? I think we were one of very few families...
- Marlene:** Who each had a room.
- Sam:** Yeah. Six kids. They all had their own room.
- Marlene:** Gladys and I used to sleep in our family room—you know, we'd change to the family room. We used to sleep together. I think there were two beds... and then you slept on one side, didn't you?
- Sam:** Gee, when did I get to graduate upstairs?
- Marlene:** I don't know, but there were two beds in there. So, then he went upstairs. Of course, my sister didn't stay very long—she went into the city, so... then did you go up in that room?
- Sam:** Yes.
- Marlene:** Oh.
- Cynthia:** So, you guys always got along well—all of you?
- Marlene:** Yes. Oh, yeah.
- Sam:** Yes.
- Marlene:** The only thing is I don't remember is my two older brothers, you know, interacting with us.
- Sam:** No.
- Marlene:** It was mostly us two and then Lily.
- Cynthia:** Because they were older?
- Marlene:** I don't know what it is...
- Cynthia:** You guys were pesky?
- Marlene:** No, I don't know. I think it was Mas. He was always out working somewhere, huh?
- Cynthia:** Was that Matsumoto's?
- Sam:** Yeah. He quit high school. In his junior year.
- Marlene:** I don't know... why he did that.
- Cynthia:** And your parents didn't care?
- Sam:** I guess not. I guess he was just determined to quit school and go to work.
- Marlene:** ...Go to work.
- Sam:** Then, after working at Matsumoto's for... I don't know how many years... not too long... 2-3 years, then he went to LA -diesel school.

- Marlene:** Yeah... He did go to a diesel school.
- Cynthia:** So, were the girls treated as equally as the boys?
- Marlene:** At home? Oh, yeah. They didn't get any special treatment.
- Cynthia:** Now, let's talk about World War II. How did you hear about World War II?
- Marlene:** For myself... I think... weren't we going to Petaluma that day?
- Cynthia:** Were you married?
- Marlene:** Yeah. We were going to Petaluma to visit my folks and then... were we in Stockton?
- Sam:** Sacramento.
- Marlene:** We were in Sacramento... we stopped at a gas station... and... did they refuse to sell us gas... Or?
- Sam:** Well, they don't serve...
- Marlene:** They don't serve us... and you know, we don't know that it happened, so we wonder why they don't come out...
- Cynthia:** And, they just said, "We won't give you gas?"
- Marlene:** We must have got gas—that's how I heard it, and then we proceeded on. We went to San Francisco and go through the Golden Gate to Petaluma, and I heard the news that Pearl Harbor...
- Cynthia:** Were you scared?
- Marlene:** No. It didn't really scare me... no.
- Cynthia:** How did you hear about World War II, Dad? Pearl Harbor?
- Sam:** As usual, I was working. (*Laughter*) I was picking cane in the morning.
- Cynthia:** Oh, on the ranch?
- Sam:** On the ranch... Yes.
- Cynthia:** And, how old were you?
- Sam:** Oh, I must have been seventeen—eighteen. I had the radio on and they said, "We interrupt this program" to say Pearl Harbor was bombed. But at first they didn't say it was Japanese—they didn't know, I guess, and then later they said it was Japan. And being an American, you still feel a funny feeling inside, being of Japanese descent.
- Marlene:** Yes.
- Cynthia:** What did your parents do? Did they say anything?
- Sam:** Well, my father didn't get to say too much because the next day—December 7th they bombed Pearl Harbor— the next morning we had two FBI agents at the house, on both driveways—circle drive. They put one car there and one car here—and it so happened that he was in the toilet.

Marlene: Yeah. I'll bet that was fast...

Sam: (*Chuckles*) So, after that the FBI man came—he smoked... Can I go down to the corner store and buy cigarettes? “Yeah, go ahead.” Well, if you don't move the car, I can't go get no cigarettes.

Cynthia: So, did you guys run out into the field burying kendos? Or was that just like on the TV when they showed that?

Sam: No, I buried my kendo and records.

Marlene: Yes, and records.

Sam: Then either my mother or my father used to get these Manchurian war things. I think we had a cousin or something was in that war, and we burned all of those. We buried my kendo stuff. It was stupid. It was nothing—called Black Dragon or something. Just a waste. I wish I had it now.

Cynthia: So you didn't have any fear—or your parents didn't have any. Did they have any idea what was going to happen to them?

Marlene: Well, my father... well, I wasn't home, but they tell me he couldn't tie his shoelaces because the FBI said, “Hurry up. Tie your shoelaces,” and he can't tie it.

Cynthia: Because he was too nervous.

Marlene: Too scared. Didn't know where he was going. The two guys must have had guns, huh?

Sam: Oh, yes.

Marlene: Were we going to be separated? Gosh! He doesn't know. Then he went to the immigration department in San Francisco. Next day they called me—they called me that day, and they told me to come down to go see him because I'm the one who could get a pass. I got a pass and went down to see him. They blow the whistle and then the group comes out. Here he comes out sobbing, and he's saying, “They stole my clothes.”

Cynthia: What did he have on?

Marlene: Well, underwear. Even later his clothes were not kept near him. You know, we had to keep buying him new things. I don't know who takes them. I think the guards...

Cynthia: Took his clothes?

Marlene: Oh, yeah... they take things. Yeah, who is he going to yell to? And then, the guard leaves—and he doesn't want to leave... so he has to leave... and then the next group comes out.

Cynthia: Did you talk to their families?

Marlene: Well, there weren't too many there because you couldn't have that many people come in—maybe one... one could come in and see him. So, each one

had maybe one to come in and see them. I remember going a couple of times until he was transferred into ...

Sam: I went one time. I took my mom. In those days, you could go five miles, and you had to be in the house by 8 o'clock at night.

Cynthia: Everybody, or just Japanese?

Both: Japanese, Japanese descent.

Marlene: You had to get a permit there... a pass to go.

Sam: So when I went to San Francisco, they said, "Where is your pass?" I said, "I don't have a pass because... I can't go five miles. How do you get a pass when the limit is five miles? They sort of scratched their heads, "Oh that is true." So they gave me a pass. But then, he didn't stay there too long...

Marlene: No.

Cynthia: How many days?

Marlene: Who?

Cynthia: Your father. How many days did he stay in San Francisco?

Sam: I really don't know.

Marlene: I don't have any idea, but did he tell you that all he gets is bread and water?

Sam: No... but he said in Santa Rosa, when they brought him...

Marlene: That's where he had bread and water?

Sam: Oh, yeah. And then, they burned the pan and they kick it under the gate.

Cynthia: Was it like a jail?

Marlene: Yes, it's a jail!

Cynthia: Was it like a county jail?

Sam: Yes, county jail.

Marlene: They were transferred to...

Cynthia: So, was he there with his friends? Other Japanese people?

Marlene: Well, oh, yeah, so-called "big-wigs", but he's not a "big-wig".

Sam: He was a treasurer for the Sonoma County Hiroshima...

Marlene: A club. The place where he was born...

Cynthia: So, if he is there, what is your mother doing?

Marlene: Home.

Sam: She was at home.

Cynthia: Still doing the eggs and the work or... trying to pack up things... or trying to get him out?

- Sam:** No. We didn't try... I mean, it would have been almost impossible to get him out... but when you think about it today, your civil rights were really...
- Marlene:** Really stepped on.
- Sam:** Yeah. You didn't have any rights.
- Marlene:** Today, you can't even say boo without, you know...
- Sam:** And the Nisei, even the better-educated ones, weren't trained, or they didn't know that much about civil rights.
- Cynthia:** How about the Caucasians? Did they try to help you? Or did they leave you alone? Or were they mean?
- Sam:** I would say that they were probably worried...
- Marlene:** For themselves...
- Sam:** Yes, for themselves. I mean, they don't know...
- Marlene:** They don't want to be mean to you, but they're worried about themselves. Can't be too friendly with...
- Sam:** ... be associated with the Japanese... But, the feed company used to sell us feed and stuff.
- Cynthia:** So, how long between when they bombed Pearl Harbor and when you had to go to camp?
- Sam:** Let's see. December 7th they bombed Pearl Harbor... May 17—it was May.
- Marlene:** Yours was May?
- Sam:** Yours too.
- Marlene:** No. I was in Marysville.
- Sam:** Didn't you evacuate in May?
- Marlene:** No. We volunteered to join your family in July. Yes, July.
- Sam:** Oh, that was when we were already in Merced.
- Marlene:** Yes.
- Cynthia:** So, who went to camp?
- Marlene:** Everybody... No, I didn't go to camp. No, I was married, so we didn't go until July.
- Cynthia:** So, Dad, in your family who was there? Who was left? Uncle Jimmy?
- Sam:** Uncle Jimmy and Jean, Lily and I and Mom—five of us.
- Cynthia:** Which assembly center—which camp?
- Marlene:** Merced.
- Sam:** Merced Assembly Center.
- Cynthia:** And which camp?

Sam: Well, that was the camp... if you want to call it “assembly center”. It was a camp too. We were there for four months. (*June, July, August, September, yes*) Four months, and then we were put on a train. The blinds were gone. We went to Amache, Colorado.

Cynthia: But when you left Petaluma, did a truck come or a school bus or...?

Sam: Well, this is the thing I still think, when I think about it, how naïve we can be. We had to ask our friends to bring us.

Marlene: You did?

Sam: Rasmussen, yes!

Marlene: You had to ask them to bring you... gee... you can’t have no way to go, so you missed the train.

Sam: Yes, but almost everybody had somebody bring them.

Cynthia: Like a Caucasian friend?

Marlene: You would think that they would have an army truck or something.

Sam: You would think so.

Cynthia: Were there guards there with guns and things?

Sam: I don’t recall seeing them, but they said there were.

Cynthia: So what did you bring?

Sam: Whatever you could carry.

Marlene: That is all you could have—whatever you could carry.

Cynthia: So, like two suitcases? So what would be in your suitcase, Auntie Marlene? Clothes? Or pots and pans?

Marlene: Let me see... No. We didn’t bring that kind of stuff.

Sam: We brought dishes. We didn’t know where we were going—but we never used them.

Cynthia: So, you brought dishes and...

Marlene: It was whatever you could carry!

Sam: But like anything else, some people—maybe they didn’t have suitcases, so they had them wrapped up, you know...

Cynthia: How were you dressed—nicely? Or did you have on suits, or...?

Sam: Yes.

Marlene: Yeah, a lot of them had Sunday meeting clothes.

Sam: A lot of them had suits on... we didn’t. We just wore Levis or just our work clothes.

Cynthia: How about your mother?

Sam: She dressed good.

Marlene: Well, not too dressy.

Sam: (*Chuckles*) Yeah, she always was working with the baby chicks and stuff, so...

Marlene: I remember when I went into camp, I remember wearing this blue dress and a straw hat, you know. It was not a working man's straw hat, a rimmed straw hat with a blue ribbon on it, and they said, "You'll soon take that off," you know. It was so hot! Yeah.

Cynthia: Now did you walk proudly out? Or were you sort of embarrassed as you guys got on these things, or did you think, "Where in the heck am I going?" or how did you feel?

Marlene: For myself, we took the Greyhound bus, so [we] didn't have to feel nothing.

Cynthia: Were only Japanese people on the Greyhound bus?

Marlene: No there was another couple that was on the bus... the rest were Caucasians. But they were on a special train so...

Cynthia: Oh, from Petaluma?

Sam: Yes, from Santa Rosa.

Cynthia: So Santa Rosa was picked up first?

Sam: No, we all went together from Sonoma County. But I don't know how they got to the railroad vehicle, but like I said, we asked the Rasmussens.

Cynthia: How did they feel?

Sam: Well, they were good friends...

Cynthia: Did they feel terrible, or did they... say they were sorry?

Sam: I'm sure they did...

Marlene: The Rasmussens that lived at Yamasakis?

Sam: Years ago... Hattie... And then what's-her-name, you know...

Marlene: The girl... she lived ... she lived down there.

Sam: Yeah. The grandma... Corey's good friend.

Marlene: She lived down there in South Petaluma, near that service station, that cheap service station...

Sam: Oh, man.

Marlene: Elaine...

Sam: Oh, what is her name?

Cynthia: Oh, the Brians.

Sam: Yeah. She was a Rasmussen. I don't think she remembers. I never asked her. Someday I will. At church, I'll say, "do you remember when... Hattie took us to the train depot?"

Marlene: But this is the first time I'm finding out that you guys had to ask somebody. That's a low cut.

Sam: Yeah, how naïve can we get?

Marlene: Yeah... "If you're not taking me, I ain't going."

Cynthia: Did people throw things at your houses or any of that? Or did you just kind of live life on until you had to leave? It was different maybe in the country?

Marlene: Well, it was different in different places. The only thing was you didn't light up the house and lift the shades up. No. You were quiet.

Cynthia: Did you have to sell your things off?

Sam: No, just the chickens and the livestock. Because, like... Arnold Jensen was the son... What was the father?... Harro.

Marlene: Yes... Harro.

Sam: Harro and Annie Jensen. They were real good... We hadn't known them until the feed company brought them over and said, "They're going to take over your place." We went out one night and Tom had all the chickens, and we came to a mutual understanding, agreement... and we stayed in our place, and say, we have to leave tomorrow morning. Tomorrow morning came. We moved out and the beds and everything still there... and they moved in. Nothing was touched. Nothing. I used to save coins in a little jar, about \$25-\$30. That was a lot of money, and when I came back, it was still behind the door. They didn't touch it. We were the fortunate ones—some places...

Marlene: We and Harcum.

Cynthia: Maybe because your family was accepted in the community?

Marlene: No, there was just good people.

Sam: Yeah, it just all depended on who took over.

Marlene: Yeah, some of them got robbed blind...

Sam: Like at Mom's place... they broke into the shed where they kept all—whatever, and they'd go through everything and take what they could...

Cynthia: So, now you are leaving to camp. Describe daily life in camp.

Marlene: Daily life in camp? Well...

Cynthia: How did it affect you and your family relationships? What problems?

Sam: Well, one thing that is outstanding in my mind... in Colorado. We had a mess hall. My mother used to go get the food every day, and we'd eat right in our unit. We were one of the very few families that did it...

Marlene: Yeah, we'd go get the rice, and then a lot of times they'd go down to the store down below, in Granada, there was a fish market there. And they would buy stuff there, and then my mother would get the vegetables from the farm and then we'd eat at home.

Cynthia: So, you all lived together in the same little house.

Marlene: I lived at the end and then they lived in the middle, but we ate together.

Cynthia: Did you have a little garden, or...?

Marlene: We had a garden in the back, and in the front we had a little chipmunk. And we made a cage for him, and the chipmunk would do all kinds of tricks. And in the back, I remember, he planted corn and stuff like that. I don't know if we ate it, but...

Cynthia: Huh? Like a little city?

Marlene: Yeah, we had a store.

Cynthia: Who cooked in the mess hall?

Sam: Just like the Army. You were assigned—you got paid.

Cynthia: Was there Army people?

Marlene: No, Japanese people. I think Harry Otani—he was the chief cook. So they used to say that we used to have the better food, with what supplies we had. I don't know if it was better food, but since my mother never ate what we ate at home, you think she was going to eat that food? All the more, she wasn't going to eat it.

Cynthia: Did you eat off of black plates? Or was it tin pans, or...?

Sam: I think it was one main plate. They'd put rice in...

Cynthia: So, now you're in camp. How did you feel about being put into camp because of your Japanese ancestry? Or did you even think about it? Did it just seem natural?

Sam: It wasn't natural.

Marlene: It wasn't natural.

Sam: Today, 2001, is a heckuva lot different than 1942. You're talking over 50 years.

Marlene: Yeah. You can't compare.

Sam: Things have changed. Just in history alone, the blacks had more... it was all segregated. Like, when we went to Florida, in the Army, I didn't know whether I was white or colored. We were colored in California because of being Japanese. Well, in Florida and being South, you don't get to go into the black one. You go with the white. And that was unusual... You know, we'd been discriminated against all that time, and then to go to the bathroom or hop on the bus, the blacks had to sit in the back and the whites sit in the front.

Cynthia: You mean in the Army?

Sam: No.

Marlene: Regular.

Cynthia: Oh, just regular, when you were in Florida.

Sam: No, all of the Southern states.

Marlene: All the Southern states were like that. Because I remember Mas said that he got on the bus, and he didn't know where to sit. He said he started to sit where the blacks were, and the bus driver said, "Get up here because you're not black."

Cynthia: So, you joined the Army, Dad? How come?

Marlene: Patriotic.

Sam: Yes. Well, the guys that I ran around with... "No-No" or "Yes-Yes".

Cynthia: "No-No"? The name of the group?

Sam: No, that one question you're going to ask me... "Were you loyal to your... would you be loyal to the United States?" and all that. Well, we had a good reason not to be loyal, maybe to put "No-No", maybe they would more... maybe they knew the civil rights, but I still believed in the United States. I would have gone, you know, gone to the Army,

Marlene: And you know my mother wasn't the kind that would say, "don't go."

Cynthia: She said, "Go"?

Marlene: She didn't say, "don't go." You live there, you're going to have to. She didn't like it, but...

Cynthia: But she did feel like...

Marlene: Yes. But then, once you're in camp... I was 22. So, I don't think I felt it like the older people. You know, where they had to give up so much.

Cynthia: Right.

Marlene: I didn't have nothing to give up!

Sam: Well, you guys had ten acres.

Marlene: Ten acres, yes.

Cynthia: But you were still young.

Marlene: Yes, and young yet, uh-huh. So you don't have that, like the old people, that say, "Gee, here we struggle all this time," and you know, they have lots to lose.

Cynthia: Did your parents feel bad about it? Do you think they felt worse in camp?

Marlene: Never talked to them about it. Never discussed camp stuff. Never.

Cynthia: Really? Before? After? During?

Sam: That's no different. We didn't discuss it with you kids.

Cynthia: Right.

- Marlene:** Never discussed it. Never did. They never asked and never told. Now, Gary still never asked, but Gregory did. I'd have to go, "Wait a minute, now. How was that? Let me see, Gregory."
- Cynthia:** So, was it never discussed because it was too hurtful? Or you didn't want to talk about it? It was in the past.
- Sam:** I think it was the shame myself.
- Marlene:** Yeah, I think it must have been shame.
- Cynthia:** Shame of the government?
- Marlene:** No, shame for yourself, too. What did you do?
- Sam:** Yes. Even today, you know, Nisei, we talk about the camp life, but we talk about the good things we did, I mean, the fun things we had, the football games and this and that. We didn't experience, at least I didn't, experience when they had a meeting of the agitators, I guess you'd say... you know, and then a lot of the camps they had to send the agitators to Tule Lake Internment Camp, and... they had the right to be agitators, when you think about it.
- Cynthia:** They were the outspoken ones that felt like there was injustice?
- Marlene:** Yes. They were the Jesse Jacksons. We were not like that... we were like, "Baa. Baa."
- Cynthia:** So, was each camp designated, like Amache was sort of the...?
- Marlene:** Where the nice people were...except you got some Zoot Suiters from LA. They kind of rattled the cages, but...
- Cynthia:** Was camp like a town, then? Was it like Petaluma? Where you had community things?
- Marlene:** Sort of.
- Cynthia:** Baseball games and basketball games? How did you communicate? Was there a radio station or newspaper?
- Marlene:** The camp newspaper, the *Pioneer*. You knew when the movies were. You knew when the talent night was, and you knew when the baseball thing was, to play baseball.
- Cynthia:** How many people were in Amache Internment Camp?
- Marlene:** Seven thousand and something.
- Cynthia:** Wow!
- Marlene:** That was the smallest camp.
- Sam:** Yeah. One of the smallest ones.
- Cynthia:** So, what were your worst experiences?
- Marlene:** In camp? Well, if you get down to the little petty, real nitty-gritty stuff... well, I guess dust storms were bad, and then when it's snowing and the icicles are

this long on your porch, and if you don't get out at the right time they'll stab you. Or you have to go to the bathroom at night, and you've got to get out of your little cold place and walk to the latrine. Those are inconveniences of life, but I don't know if that was the worst thing.

Cynthia: So, did each house have a sink where you could wash up and stuff?

Marlene: Oh, what kind of luxury is that? A sink?

Sam: They all went to the...

Marlene: ...the main bathroom, yeah.

Cynthia: So, would you go approximately the same time every day, so you kind of knew.

Sam: Well, a lot of people used to go early in the morning or late at night because during the day it was always busy. And I didn't see anybody ever took a bath... we all had showers, but no bathtubs? I don't think... I heard where one man was in the sink taking a...

Marlene: A bath? Ohh...

Sam: That must have been surprising.

Cynthia: You were young... It could have been kind of... you got to meet a lot of people... Kind of like a summer camp?

Marlene: Yeah. you're young. Yeah... Little kids had a lot of fun.

Sam: Even ourselves. I mean, we had so many friends than I would have ever met living in Petaluma, which is just a small community here of Japanese.

Marlene: Yeah, oh sure. I think families there had maybe eight to ten kids, and they had to move from work to work. I think it was a good thing for them. Not a good thing, but a shelter for 3-4 years.

Cynthia: Did everyone work in camp? Did they each have a job?

Marlene: They were supposed to.

Sam: If you wanted to get paid?

Cynthia: Then, if you didn't get paid, how did you...?

Marlene: No, you have to work. It's not that kind of hard work.

Sam: No, you didn't go sweat or anything.

Cynthia: What was your job?

Marlene: I did waitressing for awhile and then I did the garage, and then I went to motor pool. I got to chauffeur the bigwigs out of camp, all over.

Cynthia: You drove?

Marlene: Oh, yeah. I drove all the cars out... all over.

Cynthia: Did you wear a uniform?

Marlene: No. Just the way I was.

Cynthia: What was your job, Dad?

Sam: Driving a coal truck.

Cynthia: Did you always dump enough coal in front of your house?

Marlene: Uh-huh. He did.

Sam: It just happened. But we were getting top wages, \$19 same as a doctor. No, \$16.

Marlene: \$19 was a doctor.

Sam: No, when I first started, I wasn't a driver, I was loading the coal. That was \$19.

Cynthia: Per day? Week?

Both: Month.

Sam: That's when Sears and Montgomery Ward catalogue really came in handy.

Marlene: They ordered.

Cynthia: Now, were you taxed on that \$19 or was it tax-free?

Both: No.

Marlene: No, they didn't tax you. No.

Cynthia: Did your parents work?

Marlene: Oh, yeah. My father was a stoker. He had to keep the coal stove going. My mother used to go out and go to the vegetables.

Cynthia: So, do you think that they had fears that they would be there forever? Or they might be killed? Or do you think they just didn't think of that?

Marlene: Never discussed it.

Sam: I think the biggest fear was when they told them to go home. You see, we had property.

Marlene: Yes, somewhere to go.

Sam: But a lot of those people, they didn't have property.

Cynthia: So when did you leave camp? What was the date?

Sam: I don't know... I thought I was there for 3-4 years... 11 months that's all I was there.

Marlene: We left in May of 1945.

Sam: Three years.

Marlene: Of course, when we came home, our house had a big hole in it. And "No Japs Wanted" and all that stuff was there, so we didn't stay.

Cynthia: Was that in Marysville?

Marlene: Yes. We sold out and came back.

Cynthia: Did anyone live in your house, or was it empty?

Marlene: Yeah. They lived in it, a rich family named Spiro, a German. He took care of it. He wanted Tom Sumagi's dog. I took Tom Sumagi's dog home with us. The dog's name was Tiger. I think it was like a semi pit bull, a big one, you know. And then, we got reported. The school kids were scared to go by our place. That dog would come out... and then when we went to camp, well, he wanted it because it was such a good watchdog. So then he wrote us a letter in camp and he told us that the dog ran away. I think he shot it because it didn't take to him. When we were taking it home from Petaluma, we had to tie it so it wouldn't bite us in the neck because he was ferocious. Then he got used to us, and he was a real nice pet.

Cynthia: And you couldn't have pets in the camp?

Marlene: Oh, No.

Sam: Rattlesnakes.

Marlene: Rattlesnakes!

Sam: Yeah. People used to have them... in a cage.

Marlene: Uh-huh.

Cynthia: When you left camp. did you have a car to leave?

Marlene: Yes.

Cynthia: How did you have a car to leave, if you had to take the train there?

Marlene: Those two went after the car from camp.

Sam: Two weeks!

Marlene: Aren't we brave? Because during the war, we were in the train where the wounded soldiers were coming back... all bandaged up. And then they were throwing orange peels and oranges, at you know who...

Cynthia: At you guys?

Sam: Yes. Not the soldiers.

Marlene: Not the soldiers. The laborers. The soldiers were quiet. They were going to Letterman General.

Cynthia: And the others were throwing things at you?

Marlene: So we just had to be quiet and pretend that it was not aimed at you.

Cynthia: And then you got your car and then drove back?

Marlene: We stayed in Reno overnight and then we came back. You drove the old Trans Olds? I drove the Lincoln, I think. We may have exchanged. But then, in those days, the show girls would come out and I'd say, "Oh George, don't look. Gee, what are they?" So we never played or anything... We didn't know...

- Cynthia:** You just picked up the car and drove back. And then when you drove back to Amache, then you put everybody in the car? And then drove back to Petaluma?
- Sam:** I wasn't there, but the rest of the people.
- Marlene:** No, he wasn't there.
- Sam:** Just wasn't there anymore.
- Marlene:** How did Lincoln come home? You? How did Oldsmobile come back?
- Sam:** ...Lincoln, I drive your father, Gene, and Lily to take back to Petaluma.
- Marlene:** How many flat tires did you get?
- Sam:** One day, two flat tires, one beam broke. That's about it, but we had to use our extra one day to get the tire and the beam.
- Marlene:** Then he dropped them and he came back with Mary Kai. She was back there for something. He came back with her on the train, and then he brought the Oldsmobile and me and Gary home because the Oldsmobile was still in camp.
- Cynthia:** And then, when your mother died in camp, where was she buried?
- Marlene:** My father brought her home on his lap...
- Sam:** Cremated.
- Marlene:** Cremated.
- Sam:** He brought the ashes home.
- Cynthia:** They made her...
- Marlene:** No, he just carried her on his lap... she was cremated... and she was in a box.
- Cynthia:** And brought her back...
- Marlene:** Yes, so.
- Cynthia:** In terms of your children in the Japanese American community, did they learn to speak Japanese, would you say?
- Marlene:** Are you talking about our children?
- Cynthia:** Your children, now after resettlement.
- Marlene:** Read my lips...
- Cynthia:** Have you discussed the war experience with your children?
- Marlene:** No.
- Sam:** No.
- Cynthia:** Do you think you have passed down any of the so-called "Nisei traits"—inhibition, lack of spontaneity, difficulty articulating, push for education, sense of responsibility, working hard... to your children?
- Sam:** Oh, yes, I think that part we passed down... we learned from our parents.
- Marlene:** Oh, yes, that comes naturally...

- Sam:** Yeah, Chiyoko I think we passed down. It comes from our parents.
- Marlene:** That's due to the generations.
- Sam:** Do what the parents say. Don't steal. Don't...
- Cynthia:** ...embarrass the family.
- Marlene:** Don't embarrass the family... most of all. That was it.
- Cynthia:** Lack of spontaneity? Do you feel a part of the Japanese community today?
- Both:** Oh, yeah.
- Cynthia:** Do you think your children do?
- Marlene:** Well...
- Sam:** You guys do.
- Marlene:** No, not mine. They don't. They live in a community where there is nothing...
- Cynthia:** Your children don't...
- Marlene:** They're not in a community where there is...
- Sam:** But, they go to the Buddhist church there.
- Marlene:** Yes, the Buddhist church...they go.
- Sam:** They participate in the Teriyaki Feed.
- Marlene:** Yeah, that they do... yeah, the Buddhist church. They are doing something, yes. They have a few Japanese friends that they know, and they talk and Gary says their last name, just like you talk... I go what?
- Cynthia:** Do you think it is important that your children are a part of a Japanese American community?
- Sam:** Oh, I would say so.
- Marlene:** I guess, uh-huh.
- Sam:** They are exposed... going to high school and college, they are exposed to more non-Japanese than Japanese, so it is good that they are, you know, close to the Japanese community as they grow up, you know, on their own business, or otherwise. Because I don't think you should ever lose or feel ashamed that you're Japanese.
- Marlene:** No. You have to be proud.
- Cynthia:** Okay, the last part—we only have three or four more questions. Now that it is January 21, 2001, what do you think are the most important things that have happened to you in recent years?
- Sam:** Well, going back a few years... in fact, Petaluma was the Egg Capital of the World, and there isn't one Nisei or Sansei farmer in Petaluma.
- Cynthia:** Oh, really?

- Sam:** Hmm. That's true. And yet, when the war broke out, there were close to 35 families in the chicken business...
- Marlene:** They're not their own boss anymore.
- Sam:** Yes. Now they are all working out... well, most of the Nisei... in fact I can't think of any Nisei that's not retired. They are all retired.
- Marlene:** Yes.
- Cynthia:** The average age of the Petaluma Nisei is probably 70.
- Sam:** Yes, at least 70.
- Cynthia:** And most of them... do you feel uncomfortable?
- Sam:** Well, they all went into trades. A lot of them went into gardening. I don't know how they put aside, you know, but mostly if you're in a trade or if you're in a union, you have retirement, you have a fair income. If your property is paid off, you can live a pretty good life. Whereas the Sansei is a different story again... they should be putting away quite a bit, I hope.
- Cynthia:** Is your family living near you, Auntie Marlene?
- Marlene:** Yes. They live nearby.
- Cynthia:** And you, Mr. Miyano?
- Sam:** Oh, yes. Even San Jose is close in this modern age and transportation. It's only an hour and half away, so it is pretty close.
- Cynthia:** What do you think your biggest worry is? Do you have any?
- Sam:** Well, I think I worry about my four grandsons. You know, I'd like to see them get a good... In fact, I think out of the four grandsons, only one is in high school, the rest are in college or out of college.
- Cynthia:** Do you worry about them financially... mentally...?
- Marlene:** Well...
- Sam:** Hopefully, they get good jobs. I am sure they will. It's whatever they like. You know, if you're happy.
- Marlene:** Yes. You have to do whatever you like in life.
- Sam:** And I would say that is half of the battle, is if you have a job that you like. Most of the Niseis, we got a job because we were lucky to get a job, you know.
- Marlene:** You take what you got.
- Sam:** But the Sansei can pick and choose, which is great.
- Cynthia:** What is your biggest worry, Auntie Marlene?
- Marlene:** I don't think I worry about the grandkids that way. No use to worry about them, you know. They seem to...

Sam: But your grandkids are lucky because of the parents. I mean, they are both doctors, you know, and financially they don't flaunt anything, but, you know, financially they are... But there are a lot of Nisei or Sansei that don't have that luxury of not worrying about money. That is a big thing.

Cynthia: You think so... That there is a lot of Sansei that are financially hard up.

Sam: I would say so.

Cynthia: What makes you happy today? In recent years?

Marlene: Happy is a big word.

Cynthia: Enjoy. You know, what experiences, or...?

Marlene: Happy is like when you see family all get along and doing okay... that's happy.

Sam: Because, like, in my case, I mean... we have a tight family. Very tight.

Marlene: Yeah... tight... not that kind of tight.

Sam: (*Laughs*) No, not stingy.

Cynthia: Close.

Marlene: Yes, close-knit is a better phrase.

Sam: Yes, and I think that is one of the best things.

Marlene: Yeah, that is better than the money.

Cynthia: Do you think living in Sonoma County, before the war, being brought up here, affected you in your life or helped you during hard times? What did you learn from living in Sonoma County and going through all of your experiences in your lifetime?

Sam: Well, for myself, I just mentioned awhile back that there wasn't one Nisei or Sansei in the chicken business, which was great for us. I [never thought] in my wildest dreams... going to high school, I never went to college, that I would get a job in the outside world.

Marlene: You always wanted to be a chicken rancher?

Sam: No. Well, yeah, when it was prosperous.

Marlene: You did? Oh...

Sam: Well, the parents did well, you know, but I used to think, you know that guy sure got a good job, but I never thought that I could. I went to work at the post office, and I did well. I mean, I got to be a supervisor, and the security is there and that's the main thing. That's all Nisei looked for was security, and the security was there. You paid off the ranch or paid off the house. You got the three kids through college.

Cynthia: What do you think are the greatest contributions by the Nisei men and women?

Marlene: Contribution?

Sam: I'm reading the book by Tom Brokaw.

Cynthia: Yes.

Sam: He's got... now who were the Nisei in there? One was Lanetta Inouye? There was one from Santa Maria... where was that Matsumoto girl? Where did she live?

Marlene: Which Matsumoto girl?

Sam: Santa Maria? Anyway, his father started a store in 1907, and he was evacuated and through the Quakers he went to higher education and got a Master's and Doctorate and whatever. And what is he? A senator now, congressman? Anyway, he got to be something... And he sold his grandfather's store. The father had it and they had it, and they did real well. But I think all those in Washington, if it wasn't for them, I think their contribution they're giving back, for redress. I think that is terrific. And as far as the redress goes, they were 40 years too late. If they gave back \$20,000 in 1947, that was a lot of money. In 1989, \$20,000, you couldn't buy a car. There's one thing, you know.

Marlene: Auntie Marlene, what do you think your greatest achievements have been?

Sam: Reading.

Marlene: Reading. Yes.

Sam: Your life.

Marlene: Not anything spectacular. I can't think of any...

Sam: Well, you must have done something right. The kids... You know.

Marlene: Well, yeah.

Sam: And I think you learned from mom to give. You know... that's a great contribution.

Marlene: Yeah. Give. Don't take. Give.

Sam: To always give. I can still remember my father saying, *Ageru* "Give it away."

Marlene: Yeah. Give it away. He'd buy the vegetables and stuff, and you know, and then she'd give it to the poor people. And he'd say, "What happened to that? You've given it again?" She'd be bringing it to the Otanis, Harry Otani family, and she says, "Well, they're just starting in the chicken business, and they haven't got much." So whatever he bought that day, she'd make us go give it to them.

Cynthia: How nice.

Marlene: So actually, she was the giver. It looked like he was, but then it wasn't so.

Cynthia: What do you think your greatest achievements have been?

Sam: Oh, I don't know. The same

Marlene: Raising three wonderful kids.

Sam: Yes. The three kids. They never gave us...

Marlene: No grief.

Sam: Any big problem. I mean, as the youngest daughter, you ran into a car two or three times.

Cynthia: Yes, I'm a much better driver now. If you had to give advice to young people today, what would you tell them, Auntie Marlene?

Marlene: Oh, I wouldn't give advice to anybody. They'll have to learn by their own mistakes.

Sam: What is that Japanese word, *gambatte*?

Marlene: Yes, *gambatte*.

Sam: I think that would be... what does that mean?

Marlene: Some Japanese words you can't turn around. Hmm, *gambatte*... Don't give up, I guess. Don't give up.

Cynthia: Now we're nearing the end of the interview. Is there anything that you'd like to say?

Sam: I've been saying it.

Marlene: About?

Cynthia: Anything...about Sonoma County? Any personal wisdom that you'd like to share?

Marlene: No. No pearls of wisdom.

Cynthia: Thank you for sharing your story with us.

End of Interview

MIYANO FAMILY INTERVIEW PART I

Person Interviewed: Sam Miyano, Steven Miyano, Cynthia Hayashi, & Corey Miyano
Date: January, 2003
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewers: Jean Ishibashi, Alice Kashiwagi, Jim Murakami, Marie Sugiyama, & Phyllis Tajii
Summary: Jodi Hottel and Cynthia Hayashi
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on February 10, 2003 from DVD source material

Interview Summary

The Sam Miyano family has lived in Sonoma County for four generations. Three generations attended the same elementary, junior high, and high schools in Petaluma.

Sam is the patriarch at age 81. He taught the generations that followed to work hard, love your family, give back to the community, and always appreciate and be grateful for what you have.

In this interview, he tells about how good friends, the Jensens, took over the family's chicken ranch when they were relocated to Amache Internment Camp. After the war, the family was able to return and take the ranch back over. In camp, one of Sam's jobs was driving a truck that delivered coal. He recalls that one time he experienced prejudice when he was not allowed to eat in a restaurant in a town close to Amache camp. Unlike many families who ended up eating separately in the camp mess halls, the Miyano family ate their meals together in their barrack, which contributed to the closeness of the family, which continues to this day. From Sam's recollection, many Sonoma County families were in Blocks 11F or 12F. Sadly, Sam's mother died in camp at age 51.

Children, Cynthia and Steve, and grandson, Corey, talk about how they didn't really learn what "camp" meant until they learned about it in school and how they think they'd react if it had happened to them. Steve hypothesizes that part of *Niseis* [second generation] reluctance to discuss internment may be a generational trait and not just a Japanese American cultural trait. They end the interview by discussing similarities of family members in different generations.

Transcript of Interview

Sam: I'm Sam Miyano. I'm the father of Cynthia and Steve and the grandpa of Corey.
Steven: I'm Steven Miyano, the youngest child of Sam and Clara Miyano. My older sister, Cynthia, is here. I'm married to Janice, a beautiful woman. [We] have two

children. They are Phillip who is 21 and Sam who is 16, and we live in Campbell, California.

Cynthia: I'm Cynthia Miyano Hayashi, and the daughter of Sam, and the sister of Steven, and we have another older sister Sandy, that's deceased. And I have two children Mathew and Corey, and I have been married for 33 years tomorrow.

Corey: My name is Corey Miyano Hayashi. That's my grandfather over there, my uncle Steve. That's my mom, Cynthia. My dad, yeah, Mark. I got my undergrad at the University of Colorado, and now I'm a grad student at the University of Hawaii studying anthropology. And that's about it.

JACL: Now, Corey, do you have a few questions that you would like to ask of grandfather, your mother or your uncle?

Corey: Yeah, I would like to ask my grandfather some questions. The first one, I guess, is why did you decide to stay in Sonoma County, and I why were you attracted to it?

Sam: Well, you ask me why I love Sonoma County. Like I said, it's God's place here. It's close to the ocean, it's close to the mountains, close to the big cities and the climate is real... except some years it rains real hard, but the climate is perfect here.

Cynthia: And it's great fishing, right?

Sam: Real good fishing.

Cynthia: I think one of the things that's extraordinary about Sonoma County is we're four generations in Sonoma County and [have] lived on the same property for four generations. And I know for me, personally, we lived in all different spots after we were married. But when we decided to have children and we had our first son, Matthew, we chose to come back to Sonoma County because I wanted to raise my kids in the same environment that I was raised in. So we chose to come back to Sonoma County.

Corey: Yeah, I have lots of questions. I can just keep asking them. One of the things I want to know is, when you were living in the internment camp, what did you do with all your stuff? 'Cause I heard that you buried them out in the fields 'cause that's what my mom told me, or people watched over it or... I don't know.

Sam: When we were relocated to the Merced Assembly Center and Amache Camp in Colorado, we had a very unique situation where our good friend, Harro Jensen was his name. I go fishing with his son Arnold now. But what we did was we had about roughly 15,000 chickens; we just trusted each other. We counted the chickens, and they took over. They took our word for it, and we took their word. The unique part is when we moved out, all we brought was our suitcase, what we were allowed. And they moved in. We didn't move a thing. I mean, all the furniture and everything [was left] as is. And the beautiful part of it is when my brother came back first, he was the oldest brother, he just moved back in

again. Just like he was gone for three years, but it was really... Oh, and another thing. When the war broke out in Japan, they were confiscating our weapons. We had... being in sports, we had gone fishing and deer hunting and our coach at the high school took all our guns and kept them for us all through the war. That's pretty good.

JACL: What was his name, your coach at the high school?

Sam: His name was Cap Schuster. And when we came back, his son was teaching music in high school, and he used to invite us to all the musical things that went on at the high school.

Cynthia: One of the interesting things about living on the same property that my grandparents lived on, or my dad and grandparents lived on, was there was a tree on our front yard and we had a picture of the house and my son said, "Oh, where is the tree?" And it was a pine tree that came up and looked like an upside down elm. And when I was told the story that my grandparents and the family could only carry what they could take and my grandmother had a bonsai tree, and since she couldn't take it, she ran in the front yard and planted the tree. And so we always had that pine that was kind of odd shaped, and when the kids were younger then they always played on that tree, and they made a swing on it. So I just kind of thought of that.

Corey: (*Laughs*) Is that true? Okay, I guess another question that I have is what did you guys do with all your chickens? I mean, when Arnold Jensen moved in, was he... he just took over the whole ranch? He bought the chickens and so on, and he was collecting the money from the eggs or whatever. And when you guys got back, he sold all that back to you?

Sam: Yeah, when my brother came back from the internment, he just bought back the chickens. Well no they weren't the same chickens. Obviously, chickens don't go over three years. He came back and moved into the house. Arnold Jensen's uncle, they were the actual ones that lived in our house. Not the Jensen family but their uncle. And he got started in the chicken business from when he took over our place.

Steve: When you bought the chickens back, where did you get the money?

Sam: When we sold the chickens, we put the money in the bank.

JACL: My question is for Sam. Sam, when you were in the internment camp, did the Jensen's pay the taxes on your property? How was that arranged? Did the family pay?

Sam: I really can't remember, but I'm sure we were getting rent, and the taxes we took care of. I think that's how it went.

JACL: Because I had heard that the wages were, like, \$8 for unskilled laborers in camp a month, and up to \$19 for skilled laborers. And I was wondering how one could pay their taxes with that kind of salary?

- Sam:** That was a fallacy too, the wages. When I got my first job in camp, I drove [a] truck full of coal, which was one of the dirtiest jobs there. But we got \$19, the same as a doctor, and that was top pay.
- JACL:** Of course, that was very essential too, also, all that coal. All the families needed that coal.
- Sam:** Yes, delivered to each block. And without any doubt our block, as well, kept warm. And then when we drove the truck, we went out [of] the camp. We would stop at the drugstore or whatever. I might bring home some wine for our father. It's interesting, each job has its little idiosyncrasies or favors.
- Steve:** Did you face any discrimination in Colorado? When you came out of camp and you had to buy stuff at the store, did you have any problems there?
- Sam:** Did we face discrimination? Yes, we did. When we went out, we could get a pass and go to Lamar, the next big town. We went into a restaurant that said, "No Japs Allowed". Well, being hardheaded as I am, I went in there anyway. And they didn't serve you; they gave you a piece of paper that said they do not serve Japs. I went back there 30 years later. I went back to Lamar, and it's altogether different. Everyone is friendly, almost two-faced. How can you not want to serve Japs during peacetime? But we didn't go back to the same restaurant.
- Cynthia:** I know that when you were in camp and you didn't eat kind of like a family because you had a cafeteria. If you could kind of tell us what it was like to eat. And did that influence you on how you always made us eat together as a family? 'Cause it was a big one when we were growing up. 'Cause that was a biggie for me; I always made them come home and eat like a family when they were growing up. So was that influenced in any way by being in camp?
- Sam:** Well, in camp we had a mess hall. And my mother was the boss of the family. She would go to the mess hall and bring home enough food for my sister, myself, father and mother, and everyday we would eat at home. By home, it would be in the barrack. It was nice; it was family. Well, being 20 at the time, well, I would eat pretty damn fast and go out and play again.
- Steve:** When you were being interned, did all the people of Sonoma County and Petaluma, like Curly and Jim and Uncle Eddie, did they go to Amache as well? Were you allowed to bring the whole community to one location?
- Sam:** Well, Sonoma County, I think we were 11F, 12F. That was the barracks. We were 11F. Sebastopol, the majority were in 12F. But we made a lot of friends like Curly. He was from the Valley at the time. He was from Livingston, but he moved to Sonoma County after the war and that's how we met.
- Cynthia:** Dad since, you were only 20, what was it like when... 'cause I was told... didn't the FBI come and take away our grandfather? And was that a surprise to you? Did you know the FBI was coming, and did you guys scurry around to get rid of things 'cause the FBI was on its way? And where did they take him?

Sam: When the war broke out on December 7th, the morning of December 8th, the FBI was already on our property. We had a circle drive and they brought two cars. One blocked this one and one blocked this one. And I asked, "My father smokes, so can I run down to the corner store?" They said, "Yeah, go ahead", but they wouldn't move the car, and I wasn't going to walk a mile or two just to get the cigarettes. And then they took my dad to Santa Rosa. And later on he came to Merced, and he said they treated him just like dogs when he was in jail. They would kick the food into the cells. And I think Isseis who were in jail, they had a much, much rougher time than we did.

Cynthia: Did they think he was a spy? Did they choose him out 'cause they thought he was a spy for Japan? Or did the FBI come to all the Isseis?

Sam: My father was from Hiroshima. And in Sonoma County we had the *Hiroshima Kenjinkai* [an organization comprised of immigrants from the same prefecture in Japan], and he was a treasurer. And so they thought he was an officer in a group, and as far as I know, the Italians and the Germans had their own Italian and German Sons Hall. As far as I know, they didn't pick them up. I could be wrong. Of course, in Crystal City, Texas, where the so-called hard core Japanese were interned, there were Germans and Italians, but I don't know how and when they were picked up.

Steve: One of the things I am curious about is grandma and grandpa, your parents... explain a little bit about how they managed to make do during this time. I understand that as a young child it is a lot easier for you to adapt than an older Issei who is trying to make do and keep the family together. How was your father's attitude, did he go through changes?

Sam: Well, my father was a very mild man. He sort of rolled with the punches, and my mom was... I think the sad part of it was, I think it broke her heart. She passed away at age 51 in camp, and that's pretty young, 51. I'm already 81 and that's 30 more. But I take... they wanted... they were true to America 'cause I went into the military and I had an older brother, a second brother. He was already in the 442nd [Infantry Regiment] and she didn't object at all.

Cynthia: Your family was real strong when you were in the camp together, but when you were growing up were you real close? 'Cause that's always what you have taught us to be, a real close family. I try to instill in my boys to be a close family. How was it for you with your parents as Isseis? How did they make you close?

Sam: I think, our family always ate together. We learned to use chopsticks, but at least once a week we'd use a knife and fork and had dinner. We used to have roast and stuff. I thought it was a very unique thing because most of Japanese descent used chopsticks, which I still do everyday. But it was the closeness. We all had our chores to do on the ranch. Cleaning eggs was a big chore. We used to work till 8 o'clock at night cleaning eggs to ship out. Only 7 days a week. That's not too bad. (*He chuckles.*)

JACL: Cynthia, when did you first hear about the internment?

Cynthia: I think I heard about it when I was in high school. Someone... I think they were from Germany or [I don't remember] who it was. But I think someone came over to interview my parents about the camp. And I had always thought it meant church camp 'cause my girlfriends and I went to church camp. So I always thought it was something like that. I always heard them talking about it like something really fun. But I didn't know it was internment camp. What about you, Steven?

Steven: Honestly, I can't... I always remember hearing the word "camp" as well, in general conversations. But understanding what camp really was, my mom and dad, as was very typical, did not speak very much about it. I think I learned about it in high school.

JACL: Now that both of you know more about the internment camp, what do you feel about your granddad, what your dad went through? How would you react to it if you were told that you were going to an internment camp?

Steven: Well, you know, I do remember when I was younger asking dad, "How come you did that?" 'Cause being a Sansei and at the time being involved with the JACL, and this was back in the 60's when things were happening in the United States, you know. Being a little more radical in mind, I thought it was kind of amazing that everybody, the entire communities, all Japanese communities would just stand up and go.

When I was young, I just thought that, "Hey, why didn't you just say no, we're not going. This is our property, and this is the way it was done." But I'm very proud of my parents and actually all the Japanese that they were able to survive such a tragedy that occurred. For me, personally, I don't know exactly how I would have reacted if [it happened to me] being the age that I am. My grandmother passed away at my age, and she had to be at a camp at my age. I don't know if I would be strong enough to be able to do that. I really admire her.

JACL: What about Cynthia?

Cynthia: I, also, when I was younger used to think, oh, I would just stand in front of the place and just try to protect our place because I didn't want to go to camp when I learned what camp really was.

Being older, I think I still sort of feel that way, that I probably would have gone kicking and screaming. Because it would have been harder not just for me but thinking that my children were going into this place. I wouldn't be able to think that I could do it. I really do think I would go kicking and screaming.

I know that one of the things I used to ask my dad was about people that were prejudiced to him during the war and how he was treated during the war. And now we see them downtown, and how could he just say hello to them. And he would just say, "Well, you know, then is then and now is now, and you have to learn to move on with the times." I don't know if I really taught my kids about internment or anything, and that was one of the things we had talked about

before we started this video. And I don't know if it was because of internment or because we were raised... I know that we were acculturated and very lucky to be based in Petaluma, where we could be cheerleaders or whatever. I always felt bad that I didn't give my children more information on what it's like to be Japanese. Because they thought they were Mexican. (*Corey laughs, "I did."*)

Corey: What I was going to say was that I didn't hear anything about the internment camp until I read *Farewell to Manzanar*. And that was in the, I think, 7th or 8th grade. There was a teacher, Mrs. Kneeland, she wanted all of us to read the book. And I remember she took me aside and said, "You really should ask your grandparents about this. I think they were interned." "What do you mean, they were interned? This isn't LA. This couldn't happen." And I remember going home when I was reading the book, and talking to my grandmother. I went and talked to my grandmother, and she didn't really talk much about it till... I think we discussed it a lot. It was around the dinner table. It was like Sunday or something, and we were talking about getting paid back by the government for being interned and then that's when I realized this really did happen. But I had no idea what it was about until I read *Farewell to Manzanar*. I was shocked to find out, or maybe I just wasn't listening.

JACL: Right now, Corey, being Japanese American and knowing what your civil rights are, what would you have done?

Corey: I would have gone. I mean, I'm not like my mom or my Uncle Steve. I just think at the time... I don't know... at the time, even though it's unfair and it is a tragedy, I don't think I could just stand up and be the one guy who says this is unfair and these are my rights. I would have served. That's how I would kind of had my outlet. I would have done the exact same thing, just kind of gone with the flow.

JACL: I like your honesty. I do.

Cynthia: Dad, you mentioned that when you were growing up you used a knife and fork and you had roast beef and all that. Did you have, primarily... because I know we didn't, as Sanseis, have a lot of Asian friends or date Asian people? How did your parents feel about who came to the house and played with you, and did you welcome them or did they want you to go around other Japanese people?

Sam: As I was growing up I did have my Nisei friends, but the majority of my friends were Caucasians. We went out together, well, we played football together. And I think that I remember one time I asked my mom, "Well, I think I will marry a white gal," and she did not like that at all. Maybe they had their reasons. Our friends were, how can I say that, were good friends of mine. My parents would enjoy their company; they could come over. But they were not like Niseis; they weren't invited in the house, I don't know why. We had a nice home. As time went by, I remember one time a missionary from Japan came over, a *hakujin* or Caucasian, and I remember my mom said, "Here is a *hakujin*, that means a white person". and this missionary answered my mom in Japanese and that sort of put my mom down too.

Steve: What did my mom say when I brought home Janice?

Sam: There was no objections. You had good eyes; she's a good-looking gal. Oh no, mom was happy to have Jan in the family. It could have been worse. (*They laugh.*)

Cynthia: I have a question for my brother. I know that for me growing up in Petaluma, I loved it because I obviously came back. I did not feel really prejudiced. Do you think it influenced your life at all being Japanese American? When you were growing up could you say it influenced you good, bad or indifferent?

Steve: I don't know how it influenced me. I know that my entire life I always knew I was Japanese. It wasn't... I always knew I was different than my friends who were *hakujin* or Caucasians. But it was never negative. I think it was probably positive. I think we were instilled to be proud of being Japanese, and if anything... kind of sounds a little chauvinistic, but we felt real superior because we were Japanese Americans. (*He laughs.*) I think we carry that attitude a lot just because of the turmoil that our grandparents and our parents went through. I remember feeling very proud that I was Japanese. But it was never... I never faced any discrimination when I was in Petaluma nor in San Jose, none that I can recall. But I always knew I was Japanese.

Cynthia: I always knew that I was Japanese, and when my friends would say to me, "Oh, you're just like me." I used to think, "I'm not really like you because I don't think of you as just like me." I never thought of my Caucasian friends as Japanese, and they would say, "You're just like us; you are one of us." I know that I was aware of it but I think I was prouder to be a Miyano and be part of the Miyano family than to be Japanese. Japanese came as part of being in the Miyano family, but I think the pride I felt was more in my family, of being a Miyano, that it happened to be Japanese. But I don't know how it influenced Corey, or how you felt about it or if you knew.

Corey: Oh, I was very proud of being a Miyano. I'll show you. Even on my jacket, on my letterman jacket, instead of Hayashi I put Miyano just because we have history here. You go back three or four generations and we can say we've been here for a lot longer than you, so what gives you the right to say I'm an old timer or whatever. And the great thing about it is that a lot of my friends that I still keep in touch with from high school and [their] parents were in the same class as Dad, [it] is good to see when I go to their house and they have a big family reunion and I can say, "Yeah, you and my grandfather were friends," and they say, "Yeah, how's Sam doing? How's Clara doing?" It's great! I like that. So I take pride in my name. But as far as Japanese, it's a... that's a... the new generation. I don't think they really care too much about being segregated. It's just kinda... you are who you are, and that's how I always felt. I didn't really care about the Japanese, per se. I mean, of course, it's costing us, but it is more the name.

Cynthia: I think what Corey was saying about having generations in the same community made me feel stability, and maybe that's why I chose to raise my

kids here. Because when my older son was going to go to a friend's house, I called the parent's and they called me back. It happened to be Kenny Brian's, and I don't have the Miyano name. I have the Hayashi name. And finally, he's talking. His son must have said, "Oh, this boy is Japanese," or something along the way. And finally Kenny asked... he said, "You know, I have to ask you something," and I said, "What?" And he said, "Are you really a Miyano?" And I go, "Yeah, I really am." And he said, "Ha! I knew you were!" Because, you know, he said this boy was very nice or whatever and right away I thought it has to be a Miyano. And his son said, "Oh, you're just being prejudiced Dad!" And so I do take pride in that part.

Steve: And speaking about the Miyanos, I'm sure it's true for all the families that live in Sonoma County, and we joke about it frequently, now that we are getting smaller in numbers and being here in the Enmanji that I used to love coming here. My fondest recollections are going back to the days when the Isseis used to have the Japanese movie nights and coming here we used to know all the Japanese movies, except for the songwriters, we were cutting everybody up. We used to play. And then we would have community dinners here and the Miyanos, all the Miyanos, would show up. And we literally would have three tables, two or three tables of all the Miyanos and the Yokayamas over here, the Hamamotos and Yokayamas sat in groups and it was really fun. We had little clans, and it was really a point in pride.

Cynthia: I have a question, and it probably goes back to what my dad had said about being happy that Janice had come in, being my sister-in-law who I grew up with, as part of the family.

I often wondered if that made my kids feel different because they don't look the same as their cousins because they're *hapa* [Hawaiian term commonly used to describe an Asian Pacific Islander of mixed heritage.]. And so we were sort of the different ones in our family. I kinda just fell into marrying someone that was Japanese. So what does he think? Of marrying, is that an importance or non-importance?

Corey: Is that a real question? (*They laugh*) I don't really care who I marry. Quite honestly, I think my generation is a bit, like, new and they don't really care. I don't think there's as many ties to marry a Japanese or a *haoli* [Hawaiian term for Caucasian]. Whoever steals my heart, whoever I fall in love with, yeah. I don't really care, yeah.

Cynthia: Did you feel different being Japanese?

Corey: No, I don't feel different from Sam or Phil. I think it's probably the same. In Sonoma County, there's not too many 100% Japanese. There's another kid in my class, Frank Kobayashi, but we really didn't talk. He was into other things than I. But besides that, there's no difference. I don't feel different. But I wanted to ask... I guess, now in hindsight, now that everything is over, how does it make you feel? Now that we're really tight, like we spend Christmas together at

Tahoe for three days, four days. How do you feel now, now that it's almost all...? I don't know. All the hard stuff's behind you, I guess.

Sam: Well, when we spent the last Christmas together, it was just strictly family, my two children, four grandchildren, the wife and I. (*Cynthia murmurs something.*) Well, when I say children, I mean you, Steve, Jan and Mark. But I think it was so nice, the boys, grandsons, would go skiing during the day, and we'd play nickel-dime poker till midnight. And it was just so nice, just being family. You could feel it, you know. And food... we were all eating a lot, but the grandkids, the four boys, they take care of a lot of the food. They can really consume. I don't think my son Steve or my son-in-law Mark can even come close to keeping up with the grandboys. And another thing, when we got back from the Army, most of Niseis, the majority of them, we did not talk about camp. I don't know why. Oh, when we got together, we would talk about camp, this and that. But what the Sanseis learned was more from the schools, not from the Nisei parents, why...? 'cause we didn't talk about it. It was in the past, and I guess we should have. When the local high school asked if I would speak to the class, I said yes, it would be interesting. And I was telling them about our experience, and after the speech, one gal came up and gave me a big hug and she said she was so sorry. But I didn't look at it that way. We should've educated our children with more information, first hand information about the camp. I don't know, maybe other families did, but the ones I know, they didn't even talk about the camp.

Cynthia: In a way, I think, Dad, you did because you did not talk truly about camp, but as I got older I did hear the toilet stories. But one of the things I think you always told us, even when we were really young, was to get an education. 'cause you'd always go, "Get an education. Get an education 'cause it's something that people can never take away! They can take away your home, they can make you move to whatever, but they can never take away your education." And, I think that's the part of camp that I always remember, and I think that's kind of what I push to my kids. Because what you always said is that with an education people will want you, and it's something that can never be taken away.

Steve: I think that it has a lot to do with the generation that you grew up in. 'cause the more you hear, not only of the Japanese American experiences, but just reading things like the [The] *Greatest Generation* and seeing movies like Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, it was not a generation that went out and talked a lot about what you did, your accomplishments. You just went out and did it. And I think that was true for an entire generation, not just the Japanese American. Not because their experience was negative or positive, but I think it had a lot to do with that. I think that the Sansei generation were a little more vocal. It was just a generational type of thing. That's why you don't hear too much about it from our parents. And what I understand looking at this different programs about evacuation and things, that it was pretty universal. That it was not something to be discussed. It was something you did.

Cynthia: So do you think that it was something you were ashamed of that you didn't talk, or why didn't you talk about it? Why didn't you tell us?

Sam: I'm not the only one who didn't talk it up. I think most of our Nisei friends, they... maybe the shame. We just don't bring it up. And, like I said, we should have. I think the Isseis had it much, much harder than us Niseis because it was... well, some people were put away for three and a half years. All you had to do was get up in the morning and go eat, play. The younger Niseis, I guess, it was a way of life that camp for three and a half years. I don't know, they went to school, I know, but it was such a free life. You didn't get paid anything; you didn't have too much. But even then, the kids that went on, that were really students, they studied hard. Today there... well, the only one that I could think of now who's in the family is Gary Masada, who's the president of Chevron Research Company. And he broke the color line; there was no glass ceiling for him. He got to be the president. And I think that that's great.

Corey: So, I think before and after the camp life... Did you change that much or did you even change? Just before you went to camp and afterwards. How did that shape your life, that experience?

Sam: I don't think I was any different than any other. I got out when I was 20. And before the war I always knew I was going to be a chicken farmer, I mean a rancher. My father was; he was successful. So I figure that's not a bad life either. Of course, it is seven days a week. But I think it could have been a little easier on my parents if they took a little time off. Well, we used to do the chores, but I... never as a family. I can't remember to this day when as a family, all six kids and parents, eight, we all jumped in the car and went to a motel or hotel. I think our parents would turn in their graves if they thought we would do such a thing. I remember one year in 1937, that's when Matsumoto and my father, who were good friends, they bought a Packard. And he and my father, they went to Yosemite. And they went for three days, and I think my father probably talked about it as often as I could remember. "I had three days off."

JACL: And how old was he when he died?

Sam: I think 67. That's the only time away, except for the internment. But it was like that for everyone, all the Isseis. But prior to that before the war, I never heard local Japanese going on vacation. And through high school they used to talk about vacation, but we never... No such thing on a chicken ranch.

Cynthia: But on the chicken ranch, one picture I always remember, of you and uncle Jim and uncle Mas, you all had your motorcycles, 'cause you guys looked like the *Hell's Angels*. Was that something that was natural for kids or was it a luxury? I never really think of three Japanese on motorcycles in those days running around together. What was that like?

Sam: Well, we had three motorcycles, but I think we also had a boat. My father bought me an Oldsmobile 98. My brother had a Lincoln Zephyr. But my father was real kind-hearted. I think he would have been a real wealthy man if it wasn't for us three boys. Whatever we wanted, we got. I give him credit for that.

He just never complained. But we did our chores, too. But there weren't too many with motorcycles, boats, and cars. The chicken business was real prosperous in those days.

Cynthia: Did the boys have it easier than the girls? Did your father raise the girls any differently? 'cause Aunt Marlene always talks about all the work, moving the little box and how she had to cook when she was four years old.

Sam: Well, I wouldn't say he was more... towards the boys, the girls... I think my father was... well, my mother always took care of the baby chicks, so my sister Marlene, she did all the cooking. I guess in high school, you take Home Econ. and cooking and she made macaroni and cheese, no meat, macaroni and cheese. That was the first time I ate something with cheese; it was not in our diet. It was interesting! My father used to give Marlene and me about three or four dollars a week, which was a lot of money, and we got to go downtown and buy whatever we wanted. Of course, if Lily ever sees this, she'll say, "Where was I?" But he was nice; he was a gentleman.

Steven: For people in the community that don't know me... if anyone ever sees us that do not know our family... those that do, recognize that we have certain characteristics, certain personalities, Uncle Jim and Uncle George and Auntie Marlene and Auntie Lily. Can you explain to me how you think like your parents? Who was like Auntie Lily, and who was like Uncle Jimmie, and who were you like, since I never knew either of them, my grandparents?

Sam: Well, my father's physique was like the one I have now. He was considered a big man at the time, 5'7", 5'8", and weighed 160, 170. He was a big man, and my mother was, I would say, Auntie Marlene, she took after mom in stature. And Lily, she must have taken after grandpa.

Steven: Who was the funny one in the family?

Sam: Lily. If there is anyone who is always happy, that's Auntie Lily. She is always happy. She has her likes and dislikes, too, but she is always happy. She'll cut you down in a minute. *(They laugh.)*

JACL: I have a question. How do you feel about this experience today for you as a family?

Sam: I think it's great listening to our family being so close, and this brings us so much closer. Good for my grandson. Too bad the other three weren't here. It would be a good experience for them.

End of Interview

MIYANO FAMILY INTERVIEW PART II

Person Interviewed: Sam Miyano, Steven Miyano, Cynthia Hayashi, & Corey Miyano

Date: January, 2003

Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA

Interviewers: Jean Ishibashi, Alice Kashiwagi, Jim Murakami, Marie Sugiyama, & Phyllis Tajii

Summary: Jodi Hottel and Cynthia Hayashi

Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on February 10, 2003 from DVD source material

Interview Summary

The Sam Miyano family has lived in Sonoma County for four generations. Three generations attended the same elementary, junior high, and high schools in Petaluma.

Sam is the patriarch at age 81. He taught the generations that followed to work hard, love your family, give back to the community, and always appreciate and be grateful for what you have.

In the interview, Sam explains that he still goes fishing with Arnold Jensen, the son of the Jensen's, who took care of their chicken ranch during internment. He also tells about some other members of the local business community who supported Japanese Americans. Cynthia, Steve and Corey discuss the importance of further education in their family and what their careers are today. Sam's gets great pleasure from fishing, as is evident from his stories about the group that he fishes with every Wednesday. He ends by telling about his experiences in the military during World War II.

Transcript of Interview

Steve: How was this experience for us today? I really enjoyed it. My father alluded to the point that I wished my two boys would have been here tonight and my other nephew, Matt, as well as my sister, Sandy. Sandy would have been able to add, contribute a lot to this conversation. But it was fun. I think it was really a good experience. I hope someone can use this information in the future.

Cynthia: And I think for me also, it was a positive thing for all of us to be here. I think it's something that I always thought would be good maybe for my children's children, to be able to see how their ancestors lived and thoughts that we had from not just our immediate family, who I wish were here, but also the ones that are to come after us.

Corey: Yeah, it's nice to be able to talk because when we are playing poker and stuff we talk about fun stuff not about internment camp, that could have been fun

too, but more jolly, about food and stuff, and so to actually hear the stories is very interesting and nice.

JACL: I have a question for Sam. Going back to the war, how your ranch was looked after by Mr. Jensen. After the war, how much contact did your family have with him, after you came back?

Sam: Actually, we didn't go back and forth until his son, he was 16 at the time, we evacuated. I'm trying to remember how many years that we've been going fishing together, with Arnold Jensen, the son. I would almost say over 25 years. Because I'm retired 21 years, and I used to go fishing with him before that. We kept in touch, well, Arnold and I, we keep in touch. His parents passed away. His father passed away two years ago. We attended the funeral. Annie, the mother, she passed away... I can't recall, maybe 15 years ago. We do keep in touch with Arnold, I do. He has no sisters or brothers that I know of.

JACL: Did you hear of any other people in the community helping out Japanese Americans who had to go off, looking after their place, or taking care of their things?

Sam: A man by the name of Sam Nissan, he was manager of a feed company, Which was [Crowly] and later on... oh, I forget where I worked at, anyway. He gave jobs to a lot of the Nisei. Of course, he was smart, too. We worked harder too. And there was a feed salesman by the name of Joe [Perllini]. Okay, he was a salesman, but he was a real nice man. He felt for us, and any word that was spoken bad about the Japanese, he would speak up. But there were some business people who didn't want our business when we came back. But that's their loss, not ours.

JACL: I understand from what Cynthia said that you really valued education, you want all your sons to go to college. Could they kind of tell us their background and what they are doing now?

Steve: Yeah, growing up it was always understood that we would be going beyond high school, we would go to college and get a degree in something. I went to San Jose State and got a degree in teaching and have been a high school teacher for the last 26 years and enjoy it a lot. My older sister passed away. She went to college and she became a lab tech, and she ran her own office and then she became very successful at real estate. We all got our college degree. Cynthia can talk about hers.

Cynthia: It always amazed me when my Caucasian friends had a choice to go on to college or not, or some of them said they weren't going on to college because in our family it was just a natural thing. Education did not end at high school; you just knew that you were going on to college. So I always remember looking at my friends and saying, "What do you mean you aren't going on or that you have a choice not to?" I graduated from San Jose State and also got a teaching credential and a Masters at St. Mary's College and am presently an investment manager.

Corey: I knew from the history that we had to go to college. I think we would have been disowned if we wouldn't have gone. And everybody would have been ashamed of our family, too. You kind of want to represent that. So I went and got my undergrad from the University of Colorado, and now I'm presently in the University of Hawaii for the Masters. And my brother, he's kind of struggling along the way; he is finding his niche. Got his BA, so I'm proud of him.

JACL: So, basically, all these values have come through your mom and dad, is that clear, your grandfather and grandmother?

Corey: Yeah, I know my brother Matt and my cousins, Phil and Sam, really respect our grandparents. We don't talk about it 'cause that's kind of cheesy and whatever. I think deep down there is no doubt about it. We totally want to be like, take qualities from, our grandfather and our grandmother, including our parents, of course. I think it's more our grandparents' influence. Oh, I shouldn't say that. *(Laugh)*

Sam: Yeah, out of the twenty-one years that I have been retired I think the last, oh, ten or fifteen years were the most enjoyable Wednesdays I've experienced. Every Wednesday there's fishing and derby. Jim [Murakami] is here. He's won second place, second prize for the biggest fish. I think it was 21, 22. How big was your fish this year, Jim?

JACL: 22.

Sam: 22. And the biggest fish was caught by Ann Ohki. Not that she is a woman, but she is a good fisherman. In fact, that day she caught that, she got a 25, a 23 and a 13 or 15. We are allowed two, but we pass the rods around, you know. And Curley found a 21. Just a pound shorter than, Jim's. But we have sort of a clique that goes fishing on Wednesday, and it's most enjoyable. And after we get through fishing, after we get the boats loaded up and then we start telling boat stories and we talk for about an hour. I mean every Wednesday, the comradeship it's just so nice, as a group. I am very fortunate.

(Matt Thomas, videographer: What were your military experiences like?)

Sam: Military? Well, I volunteered for the MIS twice. I can't even read or write Japanese, but I still volunteered. And the last time I tried, the captain said, "You'll make good cannon fodder. You're going to the 442nd." Which was fine and after basic training, I got through my basic and that's when I got a phone call. Well, the captain called me in and said my mother passed away, and so I came back to camp and had a two-week extended furlough. And when I went back I thought I was going to go with the guys I trained with, but lo and behold they were shipped off to 442nd and I'm stuck with a new bunch, which I made a lot of new friends again. And I think we were in Camp Reed seven weeks, just waiting to be shipped over. And in the meantime I used to box. Took up boxing. I used to box on Monday nights but I had to report back with no duties, just come back on Monday night again to box. So I did that for quite a while. Then when we started on overseas the war was still on. We landed in the

Le Havre, France, and then we went to another little camp where they issued us our rifle and we were wondering how come we're in France and not in... I think that the 442nd was still in Italy. My brother was there, and on June 6th the war ended. That's when we went to the Grange, signed in a gun, cleaned them up. And we were the first group of Japanese Americans that did not go to the 442nd, and I'm sorry we didn't, I mean. But I always say my mother saved my life by passing away when she did because three of my friends passed away, well, died in action. Stayed in Germany for a year and a half. That's about it of my military experience.

Cynthia: Was Jim in combat? Your brother Jim, was he in combat?

Sam: George. He got his combat badge... I don't know, but he was in the motor pool. He was a mechanic. Jim never did go into the military. He was in the... what do you call those guys? Reserves, yeah. But he never did go in the military.

JACL: How did you feel being in the military and your mom and dad are behind bars?

Sam: Well, I really didn't think badly about it. It's a luck of the draw. I mean, if there was something you could do, great. But there was nothing you could do once you got in the military. If you disobeyed, they put you in the brig and they'll probably forget about us, too. But I think with the 442 and Japanese up bringing, they had instilled in us when we were kids, "do not bring shame to the family." And I think that's why the 442nd was so outstanding. they went above and beyond the call of duty.

JACL: We'd like to thank you for taking your time and coming to speak with us. We really appreciated it, and the stories were great. And if you think of any other things that sometime maybe we can get together again. Thank you so much. And we really appreciate your coming. Thank you so much.

End of Interview

TOM MUKAIDA INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Tom Mukaida – also present, Matsumi Sugiyama (sister), Art Sugiyama (brother-in-law), & Randy Peters (son-in-law)

Date: April 28, 2001

Place: Tom Mukaida residence, Sebastopol, CA

Interviewers: Marie Sugiyama & Anne Gabel

Transcription: Transcribed from VHS audiotape source material

Interview Summary

Tom Mukaida is a an 82-year old nisei who was born in Hawaii and immigrated to the mainland with his father at three months of age. His father, while in Hawaii, volunteered for the United States Army during World War I. Tom's father was given his citizenship as he was a member of the military service. Tom and his father were not detained at Angel Island after a visit to Japan because Mr. Mukaida was a citizen.

He was raised and attended elementary schools in the Sonoma County area, and is a graduate of Analy Union High School in Sebastopol. He was a member of the Japanese American Club that had approximately 50 members in a school of 400 students.

While interned in Amache Internment Camp, Colorado, Tom worked as a truck driver. During his travels throughout Colorado, the local citizens were helpful when there were problems; such as, flat tires, housing needs, etc. While working on a farm, one of the owners gave up his bed to Tom and his friends; and he slept in the kitchen on a cot. There were other instances where he and his fellow workers bathed in a creek and slept in their clothes.

On returning to California, the Mukaida Family worked for Tom Perry. Mrs. Perry was called a "jap lover" for supporting the Japanese in the area. Tom became a prominent apple rancher in Sebastopol and cites many examples of support from the citizens of Sebastopol, i.e., Don Lunceford, Jim and Don Williams, Fred Miller, the Perrys, Joe Cardoza, the Bank of America. He currently is semi-retired on his 30-acre vineyard.

He feels he has been very lucky in life. It appears to be due to his hard work and his integrity in his relationships with the community.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Which part of camp were you in?

Tom: We were in 12F. We stayed in the first barrack. We had two rooms, because we were a big family.

JACL: How big was your family?

Tom: There was my folks and six children, so one room wasn't enough. They assigned two rooms to us. The folks both worked in the mess hall in the beginning. I hauled staples to all of the mess halls. There were ten mess halls;

and I hauled rice, sugar and canned goods. After a while, I got tired; so we had a chance to go out and work. A lot of the time I was out of camp. When I was in camp, Tom Onomiya, went out permanently to Philadelphia and this fellow from Sonoma County, George Otani, he got to be the boss. He was a friend of mine. He assigned me to all of the big trucks, and I went all over Colorado. We tore down maybe about three or four old CCC camps up in the mountains.

JACL: What is a CCC camp?

Randy: Civilian Conservation Corps.

Tom: I think Roosevelt started that. We tore all the buildings down and brought the lumber back to camp. And sometimes we took Boy Scouts along just so they could go outside. They helped us tear down the buildings and all that. One time we went close to what is called the Mesa Verde National Forest where the cliff dwellers lived. They took us out there for one day and we saw the dwellings. At that time, Sonoma County and the people that came from Los Angeles didn't get along too good—even the kids. I remember one time they had a big fight, a bunch of young kids, like George, my brother, that age group, they were in the Boy Scouts. So, we took them all to the CCC camp, and then there were LA [Los Angeles, CA], kids too, so we had to let them sleep underneath the truck, all together, so they wouldn't get in a fight. *(laughter)*

I went all over. Gosh, one time I was working and out of the clear blue sky, this foreman says, "You've got to go to Boulder Colorado." There were some people in camp who volunteered to teach these Intelligence people Japanese at the University of Colorado. So, I had to take the baggage on the truck. I didn't even have time to change my clothes or anything. He said, "You haven't got time," so we just jumped in the truck and me and another fellow, I think his name was Ben Shimamura, drove all the way down there. We got to the college and one of the people that worked there found us a place to sleep overnight, and then we came home.

JACL Now, they were the MIS [Military Intelligence Service], those were the people who were in the language classes?

Tom: Yes, they were at Boulder, trying to learn Japanese. And then another time, I don't remember... do you remember Frank Tsuchiya? He had that fish market in Granada?

Art: Yes.

Tom: He wanted to buy a pick-up, so me and Tom Onomiya, we had to go haul something in Denver, so, no, it was Colorado Springs, no, it was Denver. He went with us to look for a truck. We found one and we were coming back and he blew a tire. So we had to stop and fix it, and oh, gosh, it was right in the dead of winter. It was so cold you could hardly hold onto a wrench. So, this Tom Onomiya, there was a wooden fence all along the highway there, so he just tore up all the fence and built a bonfire *(laughs)* to keep warm. And, another time when we were coming back, we had to stay overnight in Colorado Springs, and this Rue Uyeda; he went out there and was working in a

place near Colorado Springs. I stayed overnight with him, and he had his car. He had gotten his car from California, and he says, "You don't mind if I siphon a little gas out of the truck..." and I said, "Sure, go ahead," you know. Then in the morning, we got in the truck and the truck wouldn't start—he siphoned all the gas out! (*laughter*) I had to scrounge around to get gas for the truck. There was another time Harry, your brother, went with me.

JACL Yes.

Tom: We had a load of lumber on the truck, and we got back to around Rocky Ford, I think, and we had a flat tire. We had to stop at the service station, and you know, you'd think, being Japanese, people wouldn't help us, but gee, you know, everywhere we stopped, people were just as nice. This lady said, "We don't have anybody to help you, but if you want to use the stuff, help yourself." So, me and Harry, we took the tire off and fixed it ourselves.

Anne: You didn't encounter any racism or prejudice?

Tom: Only one time. All the time that I can remember in camp. Me and another friend, Kaz Ito, Remember him? I had to go haul a load of onions. They didn't have enough warehouse space in camp, so in this town of Lamar, they had rented a warehouse. I had to go out there to get a load of onions, and we had loaded up and we were coming back. There were a couple of kids walking on the sidewalk and they saw us. They said, (*Loud voice*) "And you smell just like em", (*laughter*) and that's all—they didn't say "Jap" or anything like that. But they knew we were Japanese, I guess. "You smell just like 'em". (*laughter*)

JACL: Now, how long were you in camp?

Tom: My folks stayed... Well, they left before the camp closed. The year before, my father had gone out to Fort Morgan to work. He went with Mr. Sugioka and several other people.

JACL Do you know what year that was?

Tom: The year before the camp closed.

JACL: When did the camp close? '46?

Tom: Yes, I think '46, so this was '45. Oh, I was in and out of camp. I worked as much as I could.

JACL: Did you drive trucks when you were out of camp?

Tom: I worked on farms.

JACL: Where?

Tom: One time I went out with Kanemi Ono to Las Animas.

JACL: How far away was that?

Tom: That wasn't too far from camp. And you wouldn't believe it. We did field work and never took a bath. They didn't have a bath. They had a little creek, you know. It was in March... cold! We'd just wash up in the creek after work, and sleep with our clothes on.

JACL: Did they have places for you to sleep?

Tom: Yeah.

JACL: They had a building? Was it one room or was it like a dormitory?

Tom: No, it was just the two of us. We slept in the boss's house in the bed.

JACL: Oh, yes?

Tom: And another time, I went out with Mas Matsumoto, George Masada, Akiyo Aburano and myself, I guess four of us. We went out to a place right on the Kansas border. We worked in the broom corn. It was scary in a way. We ran over rattlesnakes all the time, and no bath, we had to wash up outside where the water pump was, a tank with a windmill, you know. He had a little daughter. She was, maybe, about six or seven. They give us their bedroom and they made a cot for themselves in the kitchen, and [the] four of us slept in their bedroom. They were nice. You don't dare get sick out there. The nearest hospital was 40 miles away.

JACL: Do you remember what little town it was?

Tom: Oh, it wasn't a town. It was out in the country. Holly was the closest town, I think, and that was in Colorado.

JACL: So, all of those people were really nice, because they kept you in their homes and all that.

Tom: No, I never had any negative things happen to me. One time, I had to go to Las Animas. Me and Akiyo Aburano, we had to haul some heavy equipment. The county, they didn't have any equipment those counties, so they asked the camp if they could borrow their truck. They sent us out there to haul some tractors and stuff. We couldn't get back that night, and we couldn't find a hotel to stay in. I guess they didn't like Japanese. They never said anything, but they said they were "full up" or something. So, it was getting dark and we were walking on the sidewalk and a cop stopped us and says, "Don't you know, you guys, there is a curfew, and you're not supposed to be out after dark?" We said, "Well, we're trying to find a hotel to stay in and we can't find any," and so the cop says, "Well, there's one down the street, but if they won't let you in, why, come back to the jail, and we'll let you sleep in the jail." (*laughter*). But, they let us stay, so... and what, else happened?

JACL: What type of recreation did you have when you were in camp? Did you play sports?

Tom: Yeah. Baseball. and that's about it. I missed the big riot. They had a football game between Sonoma County and some LA team. You remember that one? They got in a big riot... a big fight.

Art: I don't think I was in camp then. I didn't stay very long.

Tom: Oh, yeah, they had a big fight. That was pretty early, though.

JACL: Art went out and worked, but I remember it, because my brother, Keiji, and my father used to go to all of those sports events. (*laughs*) Keiji said my father had a baseball bat.

Tom: Yeah, that night, luckily, Kaz Ito and I had to go haul some stuff to Lamar, and I just happened to be out of town that day, so we missed the fight. I got along good with the LA guys. The warehouse bunch were all LA people, and the foreman was from LA. He was a nice guy. He was originally from Hawaii, I think. A really nice guy and really good to me.

JACL: Well, Sonoma County sports teams had some volatile people. (*laughter*) So, your mom and dad worked at a mess hall?

Tom: Yeah, mess hall.

JACL: Were they cooks or did they just do general work?

Tom: They weren't cooks. They must have washed dishes or something. But we never went hungry, because they always brought leftovers home in bags.

JACL: What kind of food did they have?

Tom: Well surprisingly, it was just like we had at home. That was the only thing I worried about going to camp, you know, I said, "Oh, we'll never get to eat rice," but they had rice and I had a weakness for butter, and I said, "Oh, gosh I guess we'll never see butter," but we got to eat butter. And, then when I worked delivering all this food to all the mess halls, you always have leftovers, you know. I don't know how many quarts of milk I gave to a lot of the ladies in the block who had little children. We used to snatch baby food and give it to all the ladies.

JACL: Did they make *okazu* [a side dish, served with rice]?

Tom: Yeah, it was just like home. We ate pretty good.

JACL: Did they grow their own vegetables?

Tom: Yeah, they had a big farm. Did you [Art] work on the farm? You didn't work on the farm, huh?

Art: No, I worked at XY Ranch where all the cows were.

JACL: He was chased by a cow.

Tom: I hauled a lot of cows too.

Art: I worked with Yosh Asai. Him and I used to go around together. They didn't have too many mowers out there, and so we'd start at 6 o'clock and take the mower out and work all night and change shifts, you know. In the morning, about six o'clock, we'd come back to camp and the guard at the entrance, kind of looks at us, wondering what the heck we were doing.

JACL: Where did you work, Matsumi?

Matsumi: I worked in the mess hall. After I graduated, I worked in the welfare office.

Tom: You and Esther and Mary Yokohama?

Matsumi: Mary, and who else?

Tom: I've got a picture of her.

Matsumi: I wasn't a very good secretary. (*laughter*)

JACL: Was that when Mr. Mitani worked there?

Matsumi: Yes, Norma was his secretary.

JACL: My sister?

Matsumi: Yes.

Anne: Were you in high school?

Matsumi: Yes, I went to school.

Anne: How was the high school?

Matsumi: Oh, it was okay.

JACL: Were most of the teachers *nihonjins* [Japanese person] or *hakujins* [Caucasians]?

Matsumi: Yes, some were *hakujins*. The Spanish teacher was *hakujin*.

JACL: How long did you go to school?

Matsumi: For a year

JACL: Did they have school in Merced?

Matsumi: No.

Tom: No, we didn't stay long there.

JACL: Oh, yeah, it was summertime.

Tom: It was summertime.

JACL: That's right. Then, how did you get from Merced to Amache?

Tom: Train. They had all these old trains, you know, I guess for the soldiers. Speaking of soldiers, I had to go for an army physical in Denver when I was in camp, and we got on this train, and it was like a troop train. They were all soldiers, you know, and some of them, they knew we were Japanese. They started making remarks, you know. It's funny, a lady officer, I don't know whether she was a Navy person, she got up and chewed them out. Yeah, she said, "Don't you know these kids are going to get their Army physical?" After that, you know, there was always somebody that would stick up for us. I can't believe it.

JACL: Did you have to sign that form, you know, the two questions?

Tom: Follow the leader. "No, No. Yes, No." (*laughter*) You'd get drafted or something.

Tom: I've been lucky, you know, I remember we went to Denver one time. Remember that playground they had there? Like Marine Land? They had roller coasters and everything. They had games where you throw stuff, you know. I

don't know, I was just standing there watching one of those, like a bowling game, a little thing that you would throw out. There was a Caucasian soldier on furlough, I guess. He was watching, and he had won a lot of prizes, you know. All these Caucasian kids and everybody around, he gives it to me.

JACL: Oh, that was nice.

Tom: Yeah, I can't understand that.

JACL: Now, before you went to camp, what did your folks do and what did you do before you went to camp?

Tom: Well, 90% of the time we lived with our uncle and my aunt. Then, I guess, you might call our folks--we used to call the people from Oklahoma, fruit tramps--and that's what they did. They followed the fruit, more or less. I went to about 4 different grammar schools every year. I'd start out in Graton, then we went to Forestville. Then in the fall, my folks used to go to Watsonville, and work there. So I went to grammar school in Watsonville. I never got to stay in one grammar school for too long.

JACL: When did your folks come to the United States?

Tom: Well, they came to Hawaii first, and then it was during the war, first world war. An army recruiter came along and my father volunteered, so he was an American soldier in World War I. When the war was over, my uncle and aunt were in Sebastopol, so they talked them into coming over.

JACL: Were they married in Hawaii or were they married in Japan?

Tom: Japan. I was only 3 months old when they came from Hawaii.

JACL: So, you were born in Hawaii?

Tom: Yes.

JACL: Was their marriage arranged or did they know each other before they came to be married?

Tom: No.

JACL: They are from the same area, though, in Japan?

Tom: No. Different.

JACL: Where was your father from?

Tom: They are both from Hiroshima, but gosh, I don't know how many miles away.

Matsumi: You had to go by bus?

Tom: Yeah, you had to go by bus to go to my mother's place. It was a picture bride marriage.

JACL: But, they got married in Japan and then came over to work with Mr. Kobuke?

Tom: Yes.

JACL: What was he doing then?

- Tom:** He owned the dryer. And they worked in the dryer. And then, he was kind of a labor contractor. He had a crew in the wintertime. Then in the springtime, they all worked in the hops, and in the summertime worked in the dryer. He had a partner in Watsonville and so he would send my folks over to Watsonville.
- JACL:** How many were in your family?
- Tom:** Three sisters, two brothers... six of us kids. There were nine but two were stillborn. No eight... eight... eight. (*laughter*)
- Randy:** You went to grammar school? (*every one laughs*)
- JACL:** You were the oldest, and then...
- Tom:** She was next.
- JACL:** Matsumi?
- Tom:** There was one in between her and me, though. My father was pretty good, every two years he had a child. Yes, that one between her and me died, and the youngest one died.
- JACL:** And then, next was...
- Tom:** Kaz, George, then Nancy and Judy.
- JACL:** And they are still all in the area?
- Tom:** Yes.
- JACL:** When you went to school, how did you like school?
- Tom:** Okay, I guess.
- JACL:** Did you have a hard time, when you first started elementary school?
- Tom:** I went one year... my folks used to go in the hops, and then my uncle says, "No, don't take him. He could stay here." So, I used to stay with my uncle and my two cousins. So, one year I went to grammar school just to go. I wasn't in school. They took me with them and I just spent the day[s] in school for one year.
- JACL:** So, you learned English that way?
- Tom:** I guess. And then, I think I went to first grade two years. Then I missed one year because we went to Japan. In the spring I was in the 7th grade. They worked around Forestville, and we went to this little school called Lafayette. I was the only 7th grader—I'd better not say that, huh? Anyway, in those days they used to have what they called The Stanford Achievement Tests, and so this guy from the Superintendent of Schools comes to give the test. I did pretty good, and I was the only 7th grader, so he says, "Why don't you take the 8th grade test and if you pass it, we'll just pass you on to high school." And I beat all the 8th graders. So, I never went to 8th grade.
- JACL:** You learn something new every day.
- Tom:** If I say that, my kids will say, "And he skipped the 8th grade."

JACL: When you went back to Japan, was it hard or did you speak the language pretty well?

Tom: Oh, yeah.

JACL: Who did you stay with?

Tom: My grandparents. My father's, and I went to school [for] one year.

Anne: Did your parents speak English?

Tom: No. They didn't speak English.

Anne: Neither?

Tom: No.

JACL: Because your father was in the service, did they let him become an American Citizen or not?

Tom: I don't know. But I do know that when we came back, they didn't get their passport right. We were all ready to get on the boat, and they wouldn't let my mother and the rest of the kids come, so just me and my dad came first, and when we got off at San Francisco, and then I was a little kid yet, and they felt my father was sneaking me in or something, you know. So they separated us, and they interrogated us separately; that way, I guess they figured he couldn't coach me or anything. But then they finished with him, and then they brought me in. They thought I didn't know English, and they started asking me in Japanese, and heck, I just rattled off in English, and they said, "Oh, oh." Then they got fussy at my dad, and my dad took out his discharge papers, and showed them.

JACL: What did he do when he was in the service?

Tom: I think he just got in at the tail end of the war, yeah.

Tom: He told me that it was just like a party every night. It was all people like him, you know, that volunteered. Yeah, he said, "Oh party every night!" (*laughter*)

JACL: Now, when you came into San Francisco, did you have to go to Angel Island even if you had a passport?

Tom: We didn't. Because my father, when he whipped out that discharge, they said, "Oh, he's a citizen."

JACL: That was before, so I think when he was in the service, they gave him his citizenship. After that, they couldn't become citizens.

Tom: Actually, my mother should have had an alien registration card, when she went in camp, but before we left, I went to see this judge in Santa Rosa, Judge Geary, and he said, "Oh, no, no, she's a citizen if her husband was in the service," so we never got it and that caused her all kinds of problems. We had to do some fast talking, and we got by.

One time, before we left for Merced, my mother wanted to go see a doctor in San Francisco, and there was a curfew. We couldn't go. I think, it was five miles or whatever from home, and I told my mother, "We can't go because

there was a curfew.” Oh no, my father is a citizen and we can go. So we got to the bridge, and, boy, they just stopped us, and you know, there is a big room underneath where the toll place is. They drove us under there, and this highway patrol guy he was mean. He was nasty. You can ask Kaz, he’ll tell you. He didn’t know what to do with us. He was trying to think what to do with us, and so I say, “boy I was lucky that John L. DeWitt didn’t answer the phone; I said, “Why don’t you call the Presidio? They’ll probably know.” So, he did, and a young lieutenant answered the phone and chewed him out. He says, “He’s a citizen. You have no right to hold him.” So, this highway patrolmen says, “Yes sir, yes sir.” Then he hung up the phone and he got out and stopped the traffic, you know, and told us to go. Yeah, I’ve just been lucky that way.

JACL: Now, you went to several elementary schools. What about high school?

Tom: Oh, I went to Analy.

JACL: Were you involved in different clubs or sports?

Tom: Sports. I didn’t do anything else. Baseball. I played football and track.

JACL: What did you do in track?

Tom: I ran the dash.

JACL: Were you part of the Japanese-American Club?

Tom: Yeah, and Latin club. I think I belonged to that.

JACL: People at Analy were pretty good?

Tom: Oh, we had good teachers. In fact, Mr. Irish, a Junior English teacher, he taught in Hawaii at McKinley High School, so he really stuck up for us. Yeah, I remember one time in class, he said, “Incidentally,” there’s no such word as Jap.” He really got into the kids. Yeah, he really stuck up for us.

Anne: Is he Caucasian?

Tom: He’s still alive.

JACL: He must be 100?

Art He stuck his head in at the 50th Anniversary [reunion].

JACL: Did you go to church? Did your folks go to church and did they have different activities for the people? Did the Japanese and Japanese-American people kind of do things together?

Tom: Well, more or less. We didn’t mingle with the *hakujins* too much, in the old days. Although, when I was young, there was no Buddhist church, so my cousins and I, we all went to the Christian church. In fact, my uncle actually started the Buddhist church in Sebastopol. He was instrumental in getting the building. It was in a Japanese exhibit in the World’s Fair in Chicago, and he was instrumental in getting it.

Anne: Who is your uncle?

Tom: You don’t know Pat Shimizu?

- Anne:** Oh, yes.
- Tom:** Her dad, Mr. Kobuke, he was a big man in the old days.
- JACL:** Did you have any other problems when you went to high school? The students were pretty good?
- Tom:** Yes.
- JACL:** What happened when Pearl Harbor occurred? Were there changes in people?
- Tom:** No, I don't recall any. In fact, when they said we had to evacuate—in the beginning, they said we could take our cars, you know, and, so, oh gosh, we're going to have to buy a trailer or something to haul our stuff. So I bought a trailer from a friend of mine. He was in the service and his sister was home. She says, "Sure, you can have it," and so we made the deal, and I said, "Yeah, but your brother's not here to sign the pink slip over." She says, "That's no problem." She took it out and forged his name on the paper. *(laughter)*
- JACL:** So, were there other people who were helpful during that time?
- Tom:** Oh, yeah, a lot of my uncle's customers, farmers, that used to deliver apples to him. They were nice.
- JACL:** Were there some people who did special things?
- Tom:** Well, they took us to the train station.
- JACL:** Who took you to the train station?
- Tom:** A fellow by the name of Fred Miller.
- JACL:** Where did he live?
- Tom:** He lived on Ross Station Road.
- JACL:** Near Graton?
- Tom:** Uh-huh. Speaking of that, when I first came back, I got a chance to work in the cannery. Well, I worked in the dryer first, and then the manager, he also belonged to this big cannery. They had just started the cannery. It was a co-op. And, he asked me if I would go there. I was a mechanic then. He asked me if I would go work the night shift there because they didn't have a mechanic there. I said, "Sure," and about the second night, I was there, I saw this man walking toward me, and before the war he was my uncle's neighbor, and he was kind of "anti" [Japanese]. Well, he did business with my uncle, so you can't say he was "anti" but every second word he said, was "You Japs," this and, you know, he started walking towards me, and I said, "Oh, boy, am I going to get it now." I was kind of shaking, you know, and he comes over and shakes my hand. He says, "I never knew what good guys you were, good workers and all that," and more or less apologized to me. He was one of the worst ones, and I couldn't believe that. Remember Wally Winkler? His dad?
- Art:** He was the pitcher on my team, wasn't he?
- Tom:** Yeah, that's right.

- JACL: So, when you found out that you could only take so much, what types of things did you take with you when you had to go to Merced?
- Tom: Well, I guess, clothing, and stuff like that. We didn't take any household things.
- JACL: What happened to all of your household things?
- Tom: [They] Burned up. If we had put it in Nippon Hall, it would have been okay, but my uncle had a big warehouse, so we left it in there, and somebody burned it down.
- JACL: Now, the people who left their things in Nippon Hall, did they get those things back?
- Tom: Yeah, most of them did.
- JACL: I have heard different stories.
- Tom: I know. Somebody burned it [uncle's warehouse] down, because when I was working in the dryer after we came back, after the war, it was in a break time, and I was talking to some of the *hakujin* people, and this guy was talking to me, and he told me that somebody burned it down, but gee, I wanted to ask him who it was, but I thought I would get kind of nosy. I wished I did now because he knew who burned it down.
- JACL: Was it hard on your parents when they had to just pick up and move? Because they had a lot of children. How did they feel about moving?
- Tom: Well, I don't think... they didn't seem to worry about it, I guess. Just follow the leader. Everybody had to go.
- Randy: Were you used to moving and going around to the different jobs?
- Tom: Yeah, we moved around all the time anyway.
- JACL: How about your uncle?
- Tom: Well, he got taken about the second day after the war started. The FBI picked him up because he was prominent. So, he wasn't here.
- JACL: So, where did he stay during that time? How long was he gone?
- Tom: I think he went to Bismark, or something.
- JACL: North Dakota?
- Tom: Yeah, and, then he came to camp. in Amache.
- JACL: How long did they keep him there?
- Tom: Probably six months.
- JACL: Your aunt, Mrs. Kobuke, did she know where he was?
- Tom: Oh, yeah.
- JACL: They were able to write letters?
- Tom: Yes.

- JACL: Now, when you were in the camp, were there some people that you stayed in contact with—friends or anything like that?
- Tom: You mean on the outside?
- JACL: Yes, like from Sebastopol.
- Tom: No, not really.
- JACL: Everybody gathered at the church and Nippon Hall. What types of things did the Japanese community do before the war?
- Tom: Well, we were all the same. Everybody worked in the hops. Then, there were people like my uncle that owned their business, you know, but I think 90% of us, our parents were migrant workers, you know.
- JACL: What did they do for recreation, like on weekends, and things like that?
- Tom: I shouldn't say this, I guess. *(laughs)* They had a Chinatown in Sebastopol, and every weekend, you know, they'd get paid like on Saturday. They'd come into town and go to Chinatown and gamble and lose all their money. That was their recreation. Then, they had a ball team. But, Chinatown was very popular. I told my mother that [about gambling], one night, when we came back, "Best thing that ever happened," my mother says, "No more Chinatown."
- JACL: Did the women get together and do things, too, while the men were out gambling?
- Tom: Not very much.
- JACL: Did they stay home? They had to do the housework, huh?
- TOM: They worked harder than the men. They did their share of [the] man's work plus cook and take care of the house and everything, so they worked hard.
- JACL: How much did you get paid in those days?
- Tom: In those days, I picked up apples for 2 cents a sack wages. I remember when it was 12 cents an hour. When we left, I think it must have been about two bits an hour or something like that.
- JACL: But things were a little bit cheaper, too.
- Tom: Oh, yeah, bread was 7 cents.
- JACL: How did you get your groceries—food and things?
- Tom: In those days, Mr. Hamamoto and Mr. Nagase, they used to come around with their truck, and that's how our folks bought most of that. And they saved their lives, I guess, because in the wintertime, they carried most of the Japanese families all winter and then, in the springtime, when they made a little money, they went and paid them. I don't see how they could have made it.
- JACL: They had to have quite an inventory then.
- Tom: I remember one time, I guess they borrowed money from the bank, because one time Mr. Hamamoto came and had my dad co-sign a loan. Yeah, they carried a lot of families before the war.

JACL Did Mr. Nagase have a retail store, too.

Tom: Yeah. Now he lost out, because he didn't come back. But Mr. Hamamoto, everybody paid him more or less, even after the war. But Mr. Nagase didn't come back so he lost out.

JACL Yeah. I know, my sisters, they lived in San Francisco, so my sister, Anna, I think, paid ours.

Tom: Even the dentist. I remember, Dr. Hiura, he used to be the dentist in Sebastopol, and my dad came home one day and told us we had to leave. He went and paid the dentist and he came over and thanked us.

JACL: How did you feel as a Japanese American in a white community?

Tom: You know, I always played with a neighbor who was a *hakujin*. I always practically lived over there. The mother was a real good cook. I'll never forget that. Everything was home made and I still remember she used to make blackberry jam, and the kids, they used to hunt, and, oh, that lady could cook quail and stuff. I'll never forget that.

JACL What was their name?

TOM: Dahlbom.

JACL: And they lived in the Graton area?

Tom: They lived about a quarter of a mile away. I practically lived there—they were twin brothers and we were all in the same grade.

Matsumi: So, most of the teachers when you went to high school, or even in elementary school, they were pretty nice? I think one of the things is that the Japanese American students were pretty good students.

Tom: Yes, I think so, yes.

JACL: Discipline-wise they were pretty good, too.

Tom: And then my uncle, in those days, everything was volunteer, like if the school needed some repairs on the school grounds, my uncle would volunteer. When we left, they had a piano, and they donated the piano to the grammar school.

JACL: They were really good citizens.

Tom: Civic-minded. Yeah.

JACL: How did your life change when you went to Merced?

Tom: Well, that was the first time in my life I met a lot of people because I was kind of self-conscious. I never went out much. So, you got to meet a lot of people. In some ways, you know, I think that was a good thing that happened. Because before that, you never went out. You lived on the farm, you practically lived and died on the farm. After camp, people got used to working in the big cities and stuff like that, and I think in some ways it was a good thing.

JACL: It kind of made everybody integrate..

Tom: Yes. I'm still a country hick. I remember when I first came back, I got called for an army physical again so I had to go to San Francisco on the Greyhound Bus with a bunch of *hakujin* kids. Heck, I'd never been to the city much in my life, and I go there and I was lost, so I just followed the guys around. The physical didn't finish by lunch, so they gave us a ticket for, I don't remember, Foster's cafeteria?

Matsumi: Oh, yes.

Tom: So we had to get on the streetcar, so I got on the streetcar and followed the other guys. They said, "Change." And the conductor gave them change. So, I said, "Change," when I walked in. The conductor said, "Hey, put it in there," I didn't know I had to put the change in the thing and finally, we finished and there was one Italian boy. He wasn't going to come home because he worked in the City. I guess, he says, "Oh, boy, is that guy a hayseed," and, you know, that guy, he wasn't even coming back to Sonoma County and he walked me to the bus station on 7th Street, all the way to the bus station to be sure and put me on the right bus, and he wasn't even coming back. Now, why would he do that? It's amazing.

JACL: Yes, people are generally pretty good. Now was the physical at the Presidio? Where did you go for your physical?

Tom: There was a building on Market Street. I can't remember, but we went there.

JACL: Did you have friends who went into the service while you were in camp?

Tom: Some did.

JACL: Did you have quite a few friends who went into the service?

Tom: Yes, in fact, some of them were LA [Los Angeles, CA] kids. One of them, he was in the barracks and a stray bullet came in and he got killed.

JACL: Oh, my gosh.

Tom: But the last time I did pass, in San Francisco, but the war was over and they didn't take me. But in Colorado I could never pass the physical because I had one bad eye.

JACL: So, most of the fellows who went into the service, did they go in really late?

Tom: Most of them were volunteers. In fact, a recruiter came for that language school in Minneapolis. I couldn't read too good. They gave me a Japanese book to read and I couldn't read it good enough, so they said (*laughs*), "You don't qualify."

JACL: Did you have to go to Japanese school before camp?

Tom: Yes, I went to Japanese school every Sunday.

JACL: Oh, did you go in camp?

Tom: No, not in camp.

JACL: This was before you went to camp.

Tom: Yeah.

JACL: (*Laughs*) I went to Japanese school, too, but I didn't learn much. (*Both laugh*) I went to Japanese school to play softball! (*Lots of laughter*) Anyway, so did most of the kids go to Japanese school every Sunday?

Tom: Yes, every Sunday.

JACL: Was it at Nippon Hall?

Tom: Yes, Mr. Sugawara was the first teacher. Mrs. Masuoka was after that, and, I think, the Shigematsu sisters, who just came from Japan...

JACL: Now did most of the people get together and have picnics and things like that?

Tom: Every Fourth of July.

JACL: Every Fourth of July we used to get together as a community all the time.

Tom: We'd get together for Japanese movies, pretty regularly.

JACL: And then they had the baseball team, so everybody used to go to the baseball games.

Tom: Yeah. My uncle was the manager, so I got to go to all the ball games. (*laughs*)

JACL: Now, were there any coaches that were helpful when you were in school?

Tom: Well, yeah, Carlson, he liked Japanese kids, and in fact, he managed a Japanese ball team.

Tom: He just liked Japanese teams.

JACL: Yes, so the Sakura team, he managed it?

Tom: Yeah.

JACL: I didn't know that. What was his [Mr. Carlson] first name,?

Tom: Elmer. And then there was George Corson. He was a history teacher and baseball coach, and he liked Japanese kids. Barney Evans, he was good too.

JACL: There were a lot of people in the Japanese-American club?

Tom: There were over 50 Japanese kids at Analay.

JACL: At that time, probably, there weren't very many students at Analay?

Tom: There were around 400 kids in the whole school.

JACL: 50 Japanese Americans—so that was a good portion. Now, how did you get back to California, after camp?

Tom: Well, when we went to Fort Morgan, we made up our minds that we were going to stay there. But, in the wintertime there is no work because of snow, and luckily, I was able to... the owner said he raised cattle and had a big cattle ranch and he said I'll give you a job in the wintertime, but I only have one for you. For your family, no way. So, we decided to stay. Then, in the meantime, my father got a letter from Mr. Ito and he had come back to Sebastopol, and he was in business. He said, "An American farmer sure would like to have a

Japanese family come and work for them. We thought about you folks; so if you're interested, let me know." That was December, I think, so we said, "Yeah," and we wrote back and said we'd be interested and that we'll come back in the spring because I had a job in the winter. Then, I remember, it was around December we were eating supper or something, and all of a sudden we said, "Let's go back now!" We had decided to just leave everything and just go home. And it's funny, because I had just bought a car, luckily; but there was eight of us. So I told my mother, "I think, Matsumi and Nancy, they'd better take the train because there's not enough room in the car." They wouldn't go. (*Lots of laughter*). So we had to dump all of, whatever luggage we were going to haul in the car because there were eight of us, and we came back in the car. I think I got, I don't know, three or four flat tires. We threw the spare out and didn't have a spare so, every time I got a flat tire, I had to take it off, patch it up and pump it up. As you would know, you know, we crossed the California border on December 7th. We had to stop to get gas, and I said, (*sighing*), "Oh, boy!" But gee everybody was just nice. (*wistful sighs*). Yeah.

JACL: So, you came back to Perry's, right? Joe Perry's?

Tom: When we got to Sebastopol, it was getting dark, so we slept at Nippon Hall. It was a hostel or whatever. but we just stayed there overnight.

JACL: That was in '46?

Tom: '46.

JACL: So, did you come the northern route?

Tom: No we took the southern, because it was wintertime. We didn't hit any snow but, it was just as well because it was hard on the tires.

JACL: (*laughter*) You had a car full.

Tom: We drove straight through—never stopped.

Matsumi: Now, when you got back, the next day, you went to see Mr. Perry, is that what happened?

Tom: Yes, he already knew that we were coming. We lived in the cow barn for a couple of years. In those days the family pooled their money; in other words, nobody took theirs, you know. Everything goes in one pot so it built up, and so we were able to buy a house.

JACL: I remember going to your place when you guys used to live at Perry's. (*laughs*) We used to read the newspaper (*laughter*) on the wall. I used to stay overnight, and we used to sit there and read the newspaper (*laughs*).

Tom: Yeah, even before, they had cabins on the ranch for the workers; and you would go in and it was so run down, the first thing my mother did was take the newspaper or the LIFE MAGAZINE and wallpaper the whole inside with LIFE MAGAZINES and newspapers. That was what we did at Perry's.

JACL: How long did you stay at Perry's?

Tom: We stayed there, maybe about two years. It's funny... did you do housework at Bennett's?

Matsumi: Yeah

Tom: And they had two daughters, remember? They used to come over, and they wanted to sit in the outhouse. You know, the *hakujins*, they didn't want anyone to look for them, so they used to go in the outhouse.

JACL: They were across the street?

Tom: Yeah. They had a nursery. They were nice.

JACL: So, the people were pretty nice when you came back?

Tom: Oh, yes, Mrs. Perry, she took a beating. She stood up for us all during the war. They used to call her "Jap lover," but she was really nice. She really stuck up for us. And then, the owner of Weeks hardware; he stuck up for us. His name was Hod Weeks. And then, this Harry Fuller, one of the bank officials, he really stuck up for us.

JACL: Now, which bank?

Tom: Oh, that old one. What was it called? I can't remember the name—a local bank, Bank of Sonoma County, I think.

JACL: So there were quite a few people in Sebastopol who stuck up for the Japanese people?

Tom: Oh yeah, yeah.

JACL: Now, didn't they say that there was a Quaker group that guarded the church?

Tom: I don't know, but somebody tried to burn the church down, though.

JACL: I know. The axe marks are there.

TOM: Yeah. The old axe marks are there.

JACL: So, the students before you went were pretty good, huh? You had quite a few athletes, too.

Tom: Yes, the Japanese excelled in athletics and scholastics.

JACL: Now, did very many people lose their property in Sonoma County?

Tom: Well, I think most, like my uncle, he didn't. He just had a 99-year lease; but in the meantime, he had bought the ranch here before the war where they had the [apple] dryer they had leased.

JACL: Oh, yes. Now, it seems to me that there were neighbors or someone who took care of the property and paid the taxes for those people who weren't here. Did that happen?

Tom: Yeah, my uncle had a couple of neighbors.

JACL: Do you know who they were?

- Tom:** My uncle's friends? One of them was Don Lunceford. Who else? Jim and Don Williams and Fred Miller.
- JACL:** We're working on a video aimed towards people who were really helpful and supportive. It is going to be a community video about the people who were supportive of the Japanese Americans and the Japanese people and how they helped them out when they were gone.
- Tom:** Yeah, they were really nice.
- JACL:** Okay, Sonoma County was a small community and a farming community, so it seems like there weren't as many problems, as say, if you were in San Francisco.
- Tom:** Most of the *hakujin* farmers did business with the Japanese; because the Japanese, they practically ran all of the dehydrators in this apple community. So naturally, they had to sell to the Japanese. They got mad at my uncle the last year, though, he didn't pay them as he had made a bad business decision and couldn't pay the farmers.
- JACL:** Now, your uncle used to get people from San Francisco to work?
- Tom:** Yeah, working in the dehydrator. He was really prominent in the church. He knew all of the lay people in the church, and they wanted the YBA to come out in the summertime and work out in the country. So he used to get about 30 kids from the San Francisco Buddhist church YBA, to come every summer, and I used to go get them.
- Randy:** What is YBA?
- Tom:** Young Buddhist Association and some college kids. That's how Pat met Tosh Shimizu.
- JACL:** The basketball player. So, after you came back you started working for Mr. Perry and then you raised enough money to buy property?
- Tom:** When we bought the house in town, I was still single. When I got married, we rented a place; and then we got a little money. Then I was working for this fellow named Joe Cordoza, so I was telling my wife, "Boy, these farmers sure look like they are making money, and they look prosperous." So, I asked Mr. Cordoza [that] if he ever heard of a nice ranch for sale, to let me know and so he said "Why don't you buy my place?" I said, "Oh, Joe, I couldn't afford to buy your place." He was kind of a rough talker, but a nice guy (*emphasis*), and he says, "Well how do you know unless you come and talk to me?" And so, he said, "Why don't you come over Saturday?" So I went over Saturday and we made the deal. He said, "Give me a week to find a place to move to," (*laughter*) and so that following week or so, about Wednesday, he said, "Well, I found a place," and he moved out in the morning and we moved in that afternoon. He really gave me a break. We were there about 5 or 6 years.
- My wife's folks worked on this ranch, and then I got acquainted with the owner. They were pretty old, so he asked me if I would take care of his place for him, and so I said okay. I think I sharecropped for him for about six years.

Every time he wanted to talk to me, he said, "Come over for coffee," you know, and so I went over there and he said, "We want to retire; and if you want to buy the place, we'd sell it to you. We don't want to sell it; but if you want to buy it, we'll sell it to you." And so, I said, "Yeah, I guess I would be interested. I've got to see if I can get the money. So I'll go to the bank and see if I can borrow the money for the down payment." I went to the Bank of Sonoma County, and you couldn't even talk to them. They said, "No, we're not interested in long term loans. So I walked out the door and met a friend of mine on the sidewalk, Haven Best, do you remember him? He said, "What are you doing in the bank?" and I said, "Oh, I'm trying to borrow some money. I've got a chance to buy a ranch next to me," and so he said, "Why don't you go to the Bank of America? I just got a loan to build a house. So, I said, "Oh, yeah." I start walking off and he starts walking the other way, and then he turned around and he says, "Hey, now when you get there, don't talk to this one fellow there. He won't give you the loan." And so I said, "Okay." I walk in there and it was lunch time. He was the only loan officer there and so I said, "Oh, God, he's not going to give me the loan." Nicest guy I ever met! Isn't that funny? I told him what I wanted, and he made out the papers and everything and he said, "Oh, take another thousand." He gives me an extra thousand. Can you imagine that? Yeah, (*laughter*) and so we bought the place.

Randy: You were working swing shift at the cannery, too!

Tom: I worked nine years at the cannery—double shift. Yeah, eighteen hours a day from the middle of July until November. (*Laughs—shrug in his voice*), I had to pay the bills, you know, but I was young.

Anne: How did you meet your wife?

Tom: A couple by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Yokoyama, they introduced us and in those days that's what they did. You asked some friend. I was getting old. I was 32 when we got married. (*Everyone laughs*) Almost passed me by. It was kind of an arranged marriage, you know.

JACL: What year did you get married?

Tom: '53.

JACL: How many children?

Tom: Two. Two daughters.

JACL: And they are....

Tom: Robin is the older one, married to Randy here, and then Linda. She lives on the ranch—she lives on the other ranch.

JACL: How old are they now?

Randy: Robin, she's 46 or she'll be 46 in a couple of weeks.

Tom: Linda must be 42 or going to be 42. We've got this. (*indicating chart*)

JACL: Oh, yeah, you've got all that. You gave me part of it.

Tom Didn't I give it to you?

JACL: You gave me part of it.

Tom: It's all in there.

JACL: Did you find people different in different parts of the country? When you were in Colorado, did you find people any different from the people in California?

Tom: In the beginning. Well, you know, the station master over at Amache, Granada, you know. It was terrible there at the station. He told us that he had misgivings. He had never, I guess, associated with Japanese before, and then he said... maybe about a year later, he says, "You know, I never realized what nice people you are." There was a drugstore there. It was just a little town. One drugstore and I think there was a pool hall and maybe a saloon or something. That drugstore guy got to be a millionaire catering to the camp people. No competition, you know. *(laughter)*

JACL: Did you get good medical care in the camp?

Tom: Well, we had a hospital and a doctor.

JACL: Japanese doctor?

Tom: Yes. They had one dentist, he was from San Francisco. I never went to a dentist in camp, because everybody would say he was rough, you know. His name was Higaki, Dr. Higaki, and they used to call him "Butcher Higaki." *(Lots of laughter)* Oh, I'd better not say that. Oh, he was all right, but I've never liked dentists anyway, and I never went to a dentist.

JACL: So, all of the people in camp were the people that did things like the fire department and police?

Tom: Yes, they were all volunteer.

JACL: How did they arrange the administration at camp?

Tom Well, the heads of it were all civil service workers, you know. And they appointed people in the camp to be some of the primary ones. Mr. Koga, he was the Chief of Police.

JACL Was there any problem about people trying to leave camp?

Tom: No, I don't think so.

Randy: Was there any place to go? I mean, it looks like it's out in a remote part of Colorado.

JACL The boonies, right?

Randy: It's in the High desert.

JACL: It's still that way. We went to visit a couple of summers ago, and there is not much around.

Randy: Yeah, you can't take off walking somewhere, you know.

- Tom:** I was lucky. I drove trucks. I got to go all over Colorado. We stopped in a lot of these towns. They had Japanese families before the war, and they had stores and stuff. We would stop in. I worked for a Japanese farmer one summer in Rocky Ford.
- Randy:** So they didn't put the Japanese in camp that were in Colorado?
- Tom:** No, just California. They wanted us away from the coast. Oh, you could volunteer. You could move on your own anywhere away from the coast. I don't think too many people did, though, huh, ... went on their own?
- Art** We did.
- Tom** But you were in camp, though weren't you?
- Art:** Oh, you mean...
- JACL:** You mean leaving California.
- Tom:** I mean left here on your own. Not too many?
- Art:** My sister, Isako's husband's family.
- JACL:** But they were in Arizona and then they moved into Colorado. I think there were quite a few from Arizona that moved up to Colorado. Then they started working in Colorado and some of them had farms.
- Tom:** There may have been people who wanted to go, but they didn't have any money.
- JACL:** Did they pay you for doing things in camp?
- Tom:** I think there were three classes. The bottom was \$14, the middle was \$16 and if you worked in the office it was \$19. I got \$16 a month. But, you got three meals, medical and clothing.
- JACL:** What about rest rooms and showers and all that?
- Tom:** It was community.
- JACL:** How many people did they have in a block?
- Tom:** There were 12 barracks and I think there must have been five rooms in each barrack. So, anyway, there was 7,500 people at Amache.
- JACL:** So you had to go out to go to the restroom? Did they have a communal restroom in the middle?
- Tom:** Well, of course, there were five buildings and these two, a laundry room and a shower, and this (*pointing to pictures*) was the mess hall.
- JACL:** If you had to go to the bathroom at night, did they have chamber pots?
- Tom** I guess. I don't know. (*laughter*)
- JACL:** People just didn't go unless they had to? (*laughter*)
- Tom:** You know, it's funny. I shouldn't say this, but when I went to clean up the Turlock camp, you know; there was a levee next to this barrack—an irrigation

ditch. There was one barrack where the window was open, and there was a plank from the window to the levee and so I asked the guy, “Well, how come they have a plank going out to this levee?” and he said, “You know, this is a bachelors barrack,” and if you wanted to go bathroom, you just walked across the plank and went to the levee.”

JACL: Did you have any feelings about the guards that were guarding the camp?

Tom: You know, I never even noticed them. When we were out in Colorado to work, there were a lot of POWs working, too—German prisoners and Italian prisoners. It’s funny, we were working there, and they would come, you know. They always had a guard with them. I remember one time we were working and we turned around and this guard was sitting under a tree and was fast asleep. He was supposed to be guarding all of these people. *(laughter)* I remember his gun fell to the side on the ground, and one of the German prisoners picked it up, woke him up and said “Here’s your gun.” *(roars of laughter)*. The Italian prisoners, they got free reign. They used to go shopping in town, no guard, no nothing.

JACL: What kind of farm work did you do when you were in Fort Morgan?

Tom: In Fort Morgan, in the beginning, they had cabbage and onions and sugar beets.

JACL: So, when you came back from camp, did you feel differently?

Tom: Well, I felt kind of uneasy, but people were really nice.

JACL: Did you feel like you looked at things differently because you were in camp than if you hadn’t gone to camp?

Tom: No.

JACL: Most of the Japanese American people were kind of reserved, weren’t they?

Tom: Oh yeah, we never got in trouble. That’s one thing about Japanese kids, they never got into trouble—rarely.

JACL: Why do you think they tended to not get into trouble?

Tom: I guess... I think [because of] the parents, you know. One thing, I think the parents were strict in our time when we grew up. If we got out of line, boy, they straightened you out. *(Everyone joins in laughter and agreement)*. Not like it is now.

Randy: *(To Marie)* Well, you’ve seen it probably know as a teacher—how the kids have changed.

JACL: Oh, yes.

Tom: When I was going to grammar school, if you swore, the teacher would wash your mouth out with soap or whack you on the arm with a ruler.

Art: The teacher would give you heck; and then when you’d get home and they found out about it; you’d get heck from the parents.

Tom: You bet.

JACL: Did your parents value education?

Tom: I don't think they thought too much of it, because they were so poor they couldn't send me to school, anyway. I couldn't wait to get out of grammar school so I could go to work! *(laughter)*

Matsumi: So you could make some money?

JACL: Did any of you go on to college?

Randy: Kaz went to college.

Tom: Kaz, my brother, went on the GI bill. Yes.

JACL: Where did he go to school?

Tom: San Francisco State. That's why he thinks he's better than us. *(laughter)*

JACL: Tell me what the members of the family are doing.

Tom: All retired.

JACL: Yes, they're all retired, but what did they do when they came back from camp and started working? We'll start with Matsumi.

Matsumi: I didn't work. I got married.

Tom: She went to sewing school.

JACL: You went to sewing school, though, in San Francisco. And then Kaz?

Tom: We all worked on the farms picking hops and apples. Nancy and Judy, they were still going to high school.

JACL: So Kaz went to school and where did he work?

Tom: He is an accountant.

JACL: And, George?

Tom: He did this and that and he worked for the door factory until he retired.

JACL: Yes, in Cotati. And Nancy?

Tom: She worked for the Chamber of Commerce and the J.C [Santa Rosa Junior College].

JACL: And before that she worked for Petaluma City Schools as a secretary?

Tom: Yes.

JACL: And then, Judy?

Tom: Judy worked for the FHA, the Federal Government.

JACL: How many grandchildren do you have?

Tom: Two, just two.

JACL: So, how do you feel about your life, and how things have turned out for you?

- Tom:** Pretty good, I guess. I can't complain. Really, I've just been fortunate, I guess. The kids are good. My son-in-law is good. (*laughs*). If I had a son, he couldn't be any better.
- JACL:** Currently, you're retired, but you have to do all of this work. (*uproarious laughter*).
- Randy:** He's not retired.
- JACL:** So, you bought the apple ranch, and you had the apples, for how many years?
- Tom:** Gee, I started in '56 and quit in May '86, I guess.
- JACL:** And started a new career.
- Tom:** Yeah, thanks to Randy.
- JACL:** So, now you have how many acres of grapes?
- Tom:** 30 acres of grapes. You get more money in one year in grapes than ten years in the apples. But, apples didn't do too bad.
- Randy:** [They did] Very nicely. You raised a family, bought two ranches. You worked hard.
- Tom:** I have just been lucky, you know, when I bought the first ranch, this manager that I worked for, he really was nice to me, and gave me a heck of a deal. Then when I bought this place, we went to see an attorney to draw up the papers, you know; and him and his wife never even discussed it. When we went to the attorney to ask them something, they didn't know nothing. The wife was "the boss", so she says, "Tommy, make it the same as you had with Mr. Cordoza," so it was just a heck of a deal for me.
- JACL:** But you worked hard for it, that's true.
- Tom:** Yes, I worked hard, I guess I worked hard, but I enjoyed it.
- JACL:** Yes, but then, if they didn't feel like you were a person that would do things the right way and you would take care of the place and all that...
- Tom:** Yes, he said "I'll sell it to you because I know you and you're going to pay me."
- JACL:** Yes, right.
- Tom:** And then, this place here, they wouldn't sell unless I bought it. There was a neighbor that heard about it, and he wouldn't sell to him. My brother-in-law, he wanted to buy it; and he wouldn't sell it to him. So, I was lucky.
- Art:** Then, you got a son-in-law. (*laughter*)
- Tom:** Yes, thanks to him.
- JACL:** Have any of your children or grandchildren had any problems with people treating them badly?
- Tom:** I don't think so.
- Randy:** No, I've been with Robin since 1973. Of course, we're a mixed couple; and, you know, We've gone a few different places—South America. We never ran

into anything, at least overtly to see, like somebody would walk to the other side of the street or something, and say, "Geez, look at these guys," or something like that, you know. Not, that I've seen. But, I don't look for it either.

JACL: Yes, I think that makes a lot of difference, too.

Randy: I don't think of Tom as Japanese or me as white, or whatever, we're just Tom and Randy.

JACL: I worked in the schools for years, and I very seldom had a problem. I would walk by these kids and they would use a Chinese accent; (*mimics*). I would turn around and say, "You have the wrong accent," and I'd laugh with them and then leave.

Randy: That would defuse the situation.

JACL: Yes, there have been times when I traveled, though, it was real subtle; but as a whole, it wasn't a problem.

Anne: We had. When my kids were coming home from school, someone threw rocks at them; and I knew who it was and called the parents. I just wanted to talk to the parents and see if I could work it out. I was so shocked because I didn't expect anything. She said, "You're Japs, right? You're like..." and she used every derogatory word.

JACL: Oh, my goodness!

Anne: I was in shock. I couldn't believe that there was someone who would talk like that, because they didn't know me or anything.

JACL: You hadn't had too much problem before that? Where did you grow up?

Anne: Fowler and Fresno.

JACL: There were a lot of Japanese families there.

Anne: We had grapes, but we had[made] raisins. I think raisins are a lot harder work than wine grapes, because you have to dry them and put them in boxes.

Tom: You know, one thing, I was hauling apples one night and my truck broke down right on the skyway, you know. You wouldn't believe it, a *kokujin* [black person] man was the only one who helped me. Yeah, and afterwards, I was kind of put out with a Japanese guy. Yeah, a *kokujin* man was the only one that helped; but the Highway Patrol guys were real nice.

JACL: Do you talk about camp and things like that with your kids?

Tom: Not too often.

JACL: Do they ask?

Randy: He tells a lot of stories. (*All Laugh*)

Tom: They don't want to hear stories.

Randy: He tells a lot of stories, that's how you know.

- JACL:** Do you think your kids have taken after you in their attitudes, like you and Esther—your attitude about life?
- Tom:** I don't know. Times are different, though, they don't think like we do. And like, my grandkids, I asked Nicole one time, "Do you think you're Japanese?" She says, "No."
- Randy:** Yeah, I think they are just real open-minded.
- Tom:** Yeah.
- Randy:** He's a real open-minded person and not judgmental, too much.
- JACL:** Now do Josh and Nicole get involved in the community activities?
- Tom:** Nicole does. Josh is on the quiet side.
- JACL:** He likes to raise pigs?
- Randy:** He did [raise] pigs for awhile. He likes to work—be an equipment operator, work on the ranch, do things with the tractors and stuff, huh, Tom?
- Tom:** He's a good graphic artist and a good mechanic.
- Randy:** Yes, he's real mechanically inclined. He can pick up on things real quick.
- JACL:** How do they like school?
- Tom:** He's not what you would call a real scholar. Nicole is pretty smart, and Nicole, she likes to take charge.
- JACL:** She's more outgoing.
- Tom:** She went to summer camp one time; and then on the last day, you know, on the camp evaluation, I remember now, she says, "Nicole, now, she comes and right away she wants to take charge."
- JACL:** Yes she does, even when Matsumi used to babysit. She used to take charge.
- Tom:** And in church.
- JACL:** Do you have any other questions, Anne?
- Randy:** Did you guys have bands and dances and stuff at the camp?
- Tom:** Yeah.
- Randy:** I just wondered, when you were talking about recreation.
- Tom:** Oh yes, boy, everything.
- JACL:** They had movies and dances.
- Randy:** Yeah, he said movies and baseball games and stuff, but I just wondered if you had dances?
- Matsumi:** They had talent shows. They were good, huh?
- Tom:** Yeah, you take those LA guys—they were good.
- JACL:** Then, what about the ladies? What did the ladies do—the mothers—besides take care of the kids?

Matsumi: I think they had knitting.

JACL: Did they have classes?

Matsumi: I think so.

JACL: Yes, knitting and sewing. Oh, there were some people who used to do all of that art work, Mr. Ikegami, you know, they used to do all that carving.

Tom: Yes, they used to do carving and all that.

Anne: Did they have flower arranging? Did you learn that?

Matsumi: Not in camp, no; but after we came back.

JACL: Well, thanks so much. If we have further questions, we'll contact you. We appreciate your willingness to share your story with us and for our future generations.

End of Interview

MURAKAMI FAMILY INTERVIEW

Part I: Margarette Murakami

Person interviewed: Margarette Murakami
Date: October 12, 2002
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewers: Jean Ishibashi, Marie Sugiyama, Nancy Davlin,
& Alice Kashiwagi
Summary: Jodi Hottel
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez from December 12-14, 2002 from DVD source material

Interview Summary

Margarette Murakami was born in Sebastopol, the youngest child in a family with five brothers, one of whom remained in Japan with his grandparents. Margarette's parents were farmers, working in apples, hops, and truck farming. She went to Japanese language school, but most of her neighbors and friends were Caucasian. She was in grammar school when the news of Pearl Harbor broke and remembers how Chinese students wore signs saying, "I am Chinese." All four of her brothers served in the military, and one, Pete, died in France while serving in the 442nd.

Like many Sebastopol residents, Margarette went to Merced Assembly Center and then Amache Internment Camp, Colorado. She was at Amache when her brother died. She says that his death didn't become real until they had memorial services at the camp. While her parents were in camp, their landlord watched their property for them because they had recently purchased it. When Margarette returned, she was a sophomore in high school. Her friends and their families were supportive and made the return easier for her. She hasn't talked a great deal about the internment experience except for talking to students at Forestville School where she worked. She does tell about a moving conversation she had with a Holocaust survivor, though. Also, redress made it easier for people to bring up the subject.

Margarette tells about her blind date with Jim, her future husband. They both attended Santa Rosa Junior College. They have two children, Alan and Leslie, and four grandsons. She was introduced to Christianity in camp and joined the First Congregational Church after returning to Sebastopol. Her friends, Sara and Jack Gerboth were among the group from that church who helped keep watch over Enmanji Buddhist Temple to prevent further vandalism. Margarette says that Sebastopol is a unique in that the Buddhist temple and the JACL work together to form a supportive community.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: First of all, let's set-up the background, what brothers and sisters you had, your parents, and where you lived.

Margarette: Would you like me to say where I was born and raised?

JACL: Yes.

Margarette: Okay. I was born in Sebastopol. I grew up here until the time of internment. I went to school at Parkside Elementary. I had five brothers, one was in Japan and four here and I was the last one.

JACL: What did your parents do?

Margarette: Well, they did farming. They worked in the apples, and I think they worked on the hops. I know my Dad grew tomatoes, so I guess they did some truck farming in Sonoma.

JACL: What was your family life like, any childhood recollections that you want to tell us about?

Margarette: Well, I gave my family a scare when I was four years old. My brother, the brother above me, wanted to drive the old family truck. We were living out by Pleasant Hill. We had a ranch out there and this old truck, it had no sides or anything. And so the other older brother, Pete, was driving the truck and Frank wanted to drive and was trying to persuade Pete to let him drive. We were coming around the curve and I was sitting on the edge, and as we came around the curve, I fell. Fortunately, there was a bumper that I hit and then I hit the dirt as we came around. I couldn't remember too much of the detail. But anyway, next thing I knew I was standing in front of the truck. My Dad came up with a bucket of water. He thought the truck was on fire. So he came up and he saw me standing there. Then it dawned on them that I got hurt, and they rushed me to Palm Drive, the original Palm Drive Hospital. I had ended up with a broken collar bone and a broken jaw.

JACL: And your brothers never drove again.

Margarette: I was lucky because I hit the bumper. In those days they had that little shelf where you step down, and I hit that. If I didn't hit that, I would have went right under the wheel. They didn't realize how serious it was, until later. I went to the dentist because I had lost quite a few of my teeth, and so I couldn't eat. All I could do was drink liquids through a straw. I went to a dentist for I don't know how long, a couple of months anyway. They had me tied up like this, (*She motions around her jaw and head with both hands*) and I went to Dr. Sweetman. That's one thing I remember of my younger days.

JACL: Did you participate in any community activities when you were young, like Japanese language school?

Margarette: Yes, I went to Japanese school. And then my parents were *Nichiren* [Buddhist sect], and so they used to have their services at different homes. I remember this Caucasian man that was learning to become a minister, so he worked

with us children. I got quite a bit of background of the religion when I was growing up there.

JACL: Did you play with a lot Caucasian kids? Or since you had a lot of brothers, did you play with them?

Margarette: Well, my brothers were older. So I had Caucasian, or most of them were Caucasians... because at school there were, let's see, there was Charlie, and...The boys were all Japanese. I can't think of any girls. I think maybe Kimi Hamamoto? But I ended up, you know, playing around with kids my age, and so they were all Caucasians.

JACL: So you didn't have any, you know, discrimination at that age or anything?

Margarette: No, I didn't run into any of that. We were very close.

JACL: And you were just kids, you just played anyways.

Margarette: Right, we were just kids, you know, and so our neighbors, they were Caucasians. The only time I had contact was through *Nihon gakko* [Japanese Language School], on Sundays.

JACL: How about your high school years?

Margarette: The high school I didn't attend until after camp.

JACL: Is there any other recollections of your early childhood before camp that you want to relate?

Margarette: Well, I used to enjoy when we went to *Nihon gakko* [on Sundays. I wasn't too anxious to go. And so I think it was Reverend Yonemura, he loved baseball. The Japanese boys, they used to have a team, the Sakuras, I think they called them. And so *Sensei* [] used to let us get out early, and so we got to go see the baseball games.

JACL: So you got to go see the baseball games?

Margarette: Yeah, he'd say, "School's over!" So we'd go down to Analy High School. They used to play down there. So we'd all go down there and watch them play.

JACL: When you heard about Pearl Harbor, do you remember your reaction to it, and how did you first hear about it, who told you, was it in the news?

Margarette: We heard it over the radio. Actually, on Sundays my brothers they'd go down to get the Sunday paper. I think we were reading the Sunday paper. We always used to sit in the car and, you know, we'd read the funnies. Then one of my brothers came running out and told us about Pearl Harbor. And I mean, it didn't seem real, about a war and everything. But I do remember my parents being concerned before Pearl Harbor. They used to take the Japanese newspaper, and my Dad would tell my Mom, "Gee, it sure doesn't look good." And so I had an inkling, well you know, I hope nothing goes wrong. And when it did happen, it was a shock, I mean, none of us could believe it.

JACL: Do you remember how you felt when, you didn't believe it?

Margarette: Yeah, it didn't seem real.

JACL: It didn't seem real.

Margarette: Yeah, when we heard it on the radio. But then when I went back to school the next week, that's when it hit me. The first thing was I had some Chinese kids in our class, in grammar school...

JACL: How old were you then?

Margarette: Oh, I guess I was about eleven.

JACL: So you were still in elementary school?

Margarette: Yes. So what really hurt me was here this Chinese boy that I'd known. He had a big sign saying, "I am Chinese". And that really hit me. And I said, "Why is he doing that?" At that time, I couldn't understand his feelings, but as I grew older, you know, I could see why they did that. So the Chinese kids had these signs saying, "I am Chinese". But otherwise, I guess I was lucky because my friends, I don't think they realized and they never said anything in a negative way. I don't remember anyone calling me, you know, "You're a Jap" or anything like that. I guess I was one of the fortunate ones that didn't have to go through that.

JACL: Did you hear about the temple being vandalized?

Margarette: I heard about the fire.

JACL: You heard about the fire.

Margarette: But I didn't hear it until Reverend Carol Himaka told me about it. One day we're talking, and she says, "Oh, I guess you noticed that corner in the Enmanji," and I said "What corner." She said, "That corner. Oh, that's where the fire..." And then she said the young people from the Christian church heard about the vandalism, you know how they [the vandals]. tried to start the fire. After that, this young group decided that they were gonna keep watch over it so that wouldn't happen again. I didn't know that it was that church that I'd joined.

JACL: So the church group you joined was a Christian Church?

Margarette: Yes.

JACL: And there were both Caucasian and Japanese members?

Margarette: No, there wasn't any Japanese. When I joined there was one Chinese couple that belonged to that church. But there is a reason why I was pulled toward that church. Do you want me to share that now or later?

JACL: Maybe later 'cause that happened post World War II, is that right?

Margarette: Yes.

JACL: Okay. Thank you. I understand that you're [family is] unique in that all four of your brothers were drafted into the military during World War II.

Margarette: No, the older two, Hank and Ed, they were in the service already before Pearl Harbor, and the other two volunteered from the camps.

JACL: I see. Which camps?

Margarette: We went to Merced Assembly Center, and then we went to Colorado; Amache Internment Camp.

JACL: Do you recall, when you were about eleven or twelve at that time, how that affected you? Do you any memories of having to move and say good-bye to your friends?

Margarette: Yeah, I was in sixth grade, now this is to do with the school right? Cause I was thinking of something else.

JACL: Oh, please go ahead with what you were thinking of.

Margarette: Well, some of the feelings I had after Pearl Harbor, I think it was December 8th. We had this Japanese family that lived right next to us, the Akutagawas. Mrs. Akutagawa had just had her youngest boy, and her husband was out in the apple orchard and he was pruning. The FBI came and they picked him up and they wouldn't even let him go in the house to change his clothes. They took him right from the orchard and Mrs. Akutagawa came running over and told us what happened. And that's when I start beginning to think, "Oh, my gosh, what is happening here?" Here you know... our close neighbor... And I couldn't understand why Mr. Akutagawa is being picked up and things like that. Then my mother was worried maybe my dad would have to go. Fortunately, my Dad didn't have to go, because he wasn't that active in the Japanese organization. The next day my brother, the one that got killed, he was going to junior college, and so he went and brought clean clothes for Mr. Akutagawa. While he was at the county jail, he heard something about my dad. They were talking. I guess the FBI were talking about Harry, Harry Masuoka, that was his name. So my brother said, "That's my dad." and so then I guess he went off to school. In the meantime the FBI had come and my mother was ready for them 'cause they came and said they'd like to come in the house and so she said, "Well, you're not taking my husband. I've got two sons that are in the service." Fortunately she had just gotten pictures of my two brothers in uniform and she had them in the kitchen. She said, "See? Those are my two sons and they're in the service, and why should my husband turn against this country?" So I guess the FBI felt bad and they apologized, "Oh no, Mrs. Masuoka, we're not taking your husband. We just want to kind of check through." I guess they were looking for some pictures 'cause we had turned in the short wave radio and the shotgun that we had. They went upstairs and they found two pictures of my brother that went with his friend, his father was an engineer in Utah. So Hugh and Pete, they went to visit the father, I guess it was the Hoover Dam, and they took a picture of them standing there. And so the agent said, "We will have to take those." They took those and one shotgun shell, and that was it. That's all they could find, and so they left. When my brother got back from school, he said, "Well, did they take Dad or not?" I said, "No, they didn't." Those are the things that started happening and I began to wonder, "Gee, what's going to happen to us?"

JACL: That was amazing that your mom said, "Go away!"

Margarette: She was a very strong person. She told them, "You're not taking my husband."

JACL: Great. And your two brothers, was it the Army that they were serving in at the time?

Margarette: The older two?

JACL: Yes, the older two.

Margarette: Yes.

JACL: And were they serving on any fronts, where were they stationed?

Margarette: They were still stationed in the United States. One was in Illinois... I can't think of the camp. Camp Grant. And the other was in Missouri, Fort Leonard.

JACL: Did they serve on either the Pacific or the European front later?

Margarette: The second one, he was in Camp Grant. When they formed the 442nd, he went down there and he served with the 442nd. They sent him to Camp Shelby. And the other brother never did go to Camp Shelby until the occupation of Japan. Pete was in the 442nd; Frank was in the MIS [Military Intelligence Service].

JACL: You referred to one of your brothers that didn't make it back, who was killed?

Margarette: That was Pete. He was killed in France.

JACL: And you had another brother yet, who served.

Margarette: Well, the one in Japan, we never had any contact. He was born in Japan. And my parents left him with his grandparents, 'cause the grandparents were hoping to persuade them to come back, which I think it was very common in the old days. A lot of the older children stayed in Japan, and then got stuck over there during the war.

JACL: What were some of your memories about Colorado Springs and of being at camp?

Margarette: You mean Granada, Colorado. It was called the Camp Amache. Well, I have to tell you when I went to Merced Assembly Center. The only thing that really struck me was I looked and said, "Oh my God; they're all Japanese." We all looked alike, That was one of the first impressions I got. I said, "What are we doing here? They're all Japanese."

JACL: What was the composition, demographically, of Sebastopol at the time when you were eleven years old? Do you remember? What percent of them were Japanese?

Margarette: *(she looks around.... trying to answer)*

JACL: Most of your classmates, you mentioned, were *gaijin*, were Caucasians at the time.

Margarette: Yes, because I had only... (*seems to be thinking out loud trying to recall*) I think there were more Japanese families in Petaluma. We had very few families in Santa Rosa. We had a Japanese store in Sebastopol and Santa Rosa.

JACL: How did you travel to Granada, to the Amache Internment Camp?

Margarette: You mean from Merced?

JACL: Yes, from the assembly camp.

Margarette: Oh, we went by train.

JACL: Do you remember that trip at all?

Margarette: Ah, vaguely. I remember we had to pull the shades down. And they did let us get out. That's another thing that was an interesting experience because when they had this museum, these two Jewish gals, they got a grant, and they were working on the Holocaust. After they got done with that, they started working on the Japanese American evacuation, so we got to know these two gals pretty well. We were invited to the reception of the museum and they had pictures of the holocaust survivors. They had evacuation pictures that they had taken, and I just happened to look and I saw this one picture of this Jewish girl and she just looked like Anne Frank. I just stood there looking at it, and then this woman comes up behind me and she said, "That's me," and I turned around and it was this elderly Jewish lady. I said, "That's you?" I shared my feelings about her experience. Then she asked me if I was in camp. I said "Yes". I said our experience couldn't compare with what she went through. She said, "No, let me share something with you. You mentioned something about going from Merced to Amache on a train. She said, "When I was shipped out we were packed like sardines and you weren't that way, but emotionally you went through the same thing as I did." I thought that was so generous of her.

JACL: How did you feel when you finally arrived at the camp?

Margarette: At Amache?

JACL: Yes, at Amache camp.

Margarette: I remember, my brother Pete and a bunch of fellows had volunteered from Merced to help the people on the train. They went ahead, and they received the people that were coming in. So there was quite a bit of excitement there. Originally, we were scheduled to stay in this one particular block, which was way up on top. I guess it was 12F. We were just unpacking, or maybe, I guess we stayed there one night. The next day my dad said we are going down to 6H, which was on the other end, and I looked and I said, "How come we're moving?" What had happened was in 6H all these volunteer boys got into this one barrack, and they were having a good time down there. They were hitting the mess hall, you know, typical harmless things. They're all in their twenties. In fact, there were quite a few of the local boys, and the father of this one particular family came down and said to my dad, "You'll have to come down here and take the larger room because of the boys." He told my

dad what was happening. We went down there and most of the boys had to go back with their families. We ended up on the other end, closer to the hospital. In a way it was good because if I had stayed up in 12F, it would have still been the same people we knew in Sonoma County. I think there were only two families from Sonoma County in block 6A. I got to meet other friends, girls from different areas. So, that was a positive thing for me. I got to know more people.

JACL: How did your mother feel about your brothers serving in the military and you and she being the only women members of the family? Was she afraid of being left?

Margarette: Not really. It must have been very difficult for her, especially when the government said that the boys can go into the service. The government started to recruit boys for the MIS. And so the brother above me, Frank got in. And so he went out in the first batch. Then this other brother, Pete, he was assistant coach at the high school there at camp. He wanted to go in too, but he didn't get into the MIS. So he went in the second group of volunteers. So that must have been difficult for my mother to see her two younger boys go in too.

JACL: How did your parents respond to the loyalty oaths that were imposed?

Margarette: Well, they always felt that this was their adopted country. They wanted to become citizens, but they weren't able to. And especially with all their sons being in the service. This was their country. Like my dad told the younger one, 'cause he had to sign so he can go in. He said, "This is your country. Maybe they're not treating you right, but you need to defend it, you need to support it." That's one thing; they never said anything against this country.

JACL: What were your feelings about losing the one brother that you lost in the military service?

Margarette: At that age, I knew I lost him, but it didn't seem real until the camp started having memorial services. In fact, there were two, no three actually, that were killed from Sonoma County. And so they had their pictures at the services. In fact, I still have that picture. This local lady, Mrs. Nakamura, was one that painted then retouched it for the memorial service. That was the kind of the reminder that they were gone. In fact, Leo Kikuchi was first and then Joe Yasuda. Those were the three boys—Leo, Joe and Pete. After the war, when my brother's body... he was originally buried in Epinal, France. You know you had had a choice of either leaving them there or bringing them back, and my parents decided to bring him back. So then that connects with that church that I belong to now, and I'll talk about that later, cause that's after we came back.

JACL: If there were any stories that especially stayed with you from the camp days during World War II, do you remember anything that was particularly outstanding in your memory, whether it was a positive or a negative kind of memory? Was it school? Was it friends?

Margarette: Well, one thing we still talk about it at our reunions, a positive thing that happened to us at our age, we got to make friends from different areas and we still have contact with them. In fact, I've got two very close friends that right from the beginning we kept in touch. But I think the most... and it is not a positive it's a negative, and it's about when my brother was killed and the way we received the telegram. My dad was working in what we called Police Department. Chief Thomilson brought the telegram, and that was the only time that I heard my dad break down. I guess it was the middle of the night and I heard the sobbing; it woke me up. And I think it was the only time that I heard him cry. *(Her voice breaks down, and she cries and is given a hug.)* When my brother Pete volunteered, my mother had quite an experience. In fact, what was it I read? Oh, it was in Mei Nakano's book where she took an article out of the camp paper about our family, and I didn't even know until I read her book. I don't know how word got out, but the Paramount Studios sent out a reporter and took pictures of Pete. They took a picture of him with his junior college jacket packing, passing his clothes to my mom. In the background are my brother's pictures and a flag with three stars. It was shown in Chicago, where one of Pete's friends saw it in the newsreel. She wrote to Paramount Studios and got a copy of what they showed and sent it to my folks. My mother got pretty active in the Blue Stars Mother's Club. She became president of the club. They formed the Gold Star Mother's Club when the boys started getting killed. She was active in that too

JACL: Do you remember any stories that your mother told you that stand out about...?

Margarette: During camp?

JACL: Yeah. Do you remember because I'm sure she experienced camp differently than you as a child?

Margarette: Oh, you mean after they came back?

JACL: Yeah.

Margarette: No. You know, that's one thing. After we came back we had to start from scratch like every other family. I don't think they even had time to think about it because they never said anything. They were too busy getting back on their feet, so I never heard a negative or a positive remark. I know that one time they said this is kind of our way of doing our part for the war. And that was it. So I just assumed they were too busy making out a living.

JACL: What do you tell your children about camp? Do they ever ask, about the internment experience?

Margarette: Not really. Not until redress, when we're all working for the redress. And you know, we shared. They never came out and asked us how we felt about being in camp. It's the real younger ones that are asking these questions because now we are going out into the schools and sharing our experiences. What's interesting about that is the responses we get from the students. They are just shocked; they can't imagine this ever happening in this country.

JACL: I'm going to give you a break now, cause I think, there may be other questions. May I give you a hug? Thank you so much.

JACL: Oh have you ever talked to your children in regard to the camp?

Margarette: I can't think of any incident. They knew I had some friends from camp; they knew about the relationships I had. I guess I did not go into detail until I was asked to do a presentation in Forestville School where I was working.

JACL: I think that was typical of most of the Nisei that were in camp. I don't think they spoke a lot about it to their children. It seems like the next generation...

Margarette: Right.

JACL: They're the ones that tend to ask the questions.

Margarette: Yes 'cause, I know... (*She appears to be searching for words.*) I'm sorry. It just slipped my mind.

JACL: Is it about school?

Margarette: Well, ah... I guess I didn't get the impact until I was about the age when my parents went to camp. And oh, my gosh, you really appreciate what they did at the time. One day you just have to pick up everything, leave everything and just take what you can carry. That was the time I started sharing more with my children and sharing it at school too.

JACL: Did your parents ever talk about the insecurity of not knowing where they were going, and what was going to happen to them when they were taken away?

Margarette: I think they were too busy trying to figure out. Okay, what are they going to do with the things that they had and the time they had to do it. You know, one had to sell the car and get rid of it. They were kind of in a panic themselves, so I don't think they had much time themselves to be saying I feel this way or what. They were too busy 'cause I know my Dad was trying to get rid of things and my brothers were trying to sell the car. So it was kind of a turmoil they were going through.

JACL: They had to leave everything behind that they had collected during their lifetime, and that was probably really difficult for them.

Margarette: And also the only thing we felt really good about was that we were in the process of buying that place where we lived. They told the owner you know, "Gee, we really cannot go through in purchasing the home because we're leaving." He was good about saying "No, don't worry about it. I'll hang on to it, and when you come back you can buy the place." They said "We don't know if we'll come back or how long we're going to be gone." And the owner, Mr. Falch, lived in Mill Valley. He said "I'll come up and watch it, and I'll rent it out." and that's what he did. He found a renter, a large family that came in. The only unfortunate thing about that was that when we got back, the place was a mess. My mother had flowers planted and there was a lawn in front, and when we came back the inside, my gosh, it was just awful. They [the renters] were from North or South Dakota, and they had nothing when they

came except a teapot. That's all they carried. And so my dad probably felt sorry for them, so we left them our beds for them to sleep in and most of the furniture there. In fact, they were good about taking our dog and we had a few cats, so they said they would take care of them. And when we did get back the dog was still there but the poor dog was blind. But he lived three more years after we got back. He did remember us.

JACL: Now when did you find out that you would be able to come back to California and in what way?

Margarette: Well, my Dad was asked to come back to Sebastopol. It was a year before we came back, and anyway, he was accompanied by an FBI agent to come back to Sebastopol to feel out the atmosphere of this area. And so I guess he was gone a week, or less than a week. So he went with the FBI agent, and fortunately, he knew Chief Foster, the Chief of Police here in Sebastopol. Chief Foster went along with the agent and my dad, and they sought out some of the business people and got their feelings.

JACL: So where was your property?

Margarette: Over by the high school off of High School Road, East Hurlbut. That's where we were. So my dad told the people that we were planning to come back. After we got back it took us three months before they moved out.

JACL: So you had to rent or...?

Margarette: No, we were...again, my dad was asked to run a hostel at the old Nippon Hall to help the people that couldn't get into their homes. He ran that for three months until we were able to move in, and then somebody else took over.

JACL: So you all came back... was it '45 or '46?

Margarette: '46, I guess.

JACL: Did you meet any problems, or did your family have any problems with the people when they came back, in terms of negative feelings?

Margarette: Well, there were some scary incidents. We were fortunate because I know it was scary for my mom when we first went into the Nippon Hall. Fortunately, there were three high school teachers. Mr. Irish, Evans and... I don't know who the other person... there were three teachers. They came and helped my folks clean up that Nippon Hall and get it to a livable condition. They did get support from some of the people here.

JACL: Were you in high school when you came back?

Margarette: Well, yeah. I was just starting my sophomore year.

JACL: And how was your experience at school?

Margarette: Well, it was kind of scary, but fortunately the friends that we had in grammar school were supportive. In fact, our family doctor, Dr. Viera and his wife, they lived right near Analy High School. I was invited to go over to their house the first day of school and go with their daughter. Their daughter and I were in the same grade. So I went over there, and there were eight of my

former classmates there and they walked me over to the high school. And there were a bunch of other ones there. So it was kind of nice. I was the first Japanese American to come back. So that really... you know... I really appreciated that when Mrs. Viera invited me and we all walked together.

JACL: So all your friends that you knew previously, were still your friends and helped you make the transition?

Margarette: Right. Yeah. I was very fortunate, and they all supported me. And the principal, Mr. Overman, he was the principal that knew my brothers and most of the high school teachers all knew my brothers. So that all helped. And then Mr. Overman, I think it was a week later, there were a couple of more that came back, and they had an assembly and Mr. Overman talked to all the students there. I guess we were very fortunate 'cause we didn't have any scary incidents. Even at the hall. My dad made sure. He said, "I'm going to put my star, [placard signifying he lost his son in WWII] the star at the window." So we didn't have anything happen there.

JACL: So what were the names of the people who were instrumental in letting you keep the property though the years when you were gone? You said they were from Mill Valley, the family name?

Margarette: Oh yeah, the owner. Oh, I think it was Mr. Falk. It was a German name. But he was an engineer over there. He was a bachelor, and he had a really nice home there in Mill Valley. In fact, he had an artesian well right in his front yard. He didn't drive. He rode a bike from there, and he'd come by and check out the house.

JACL: Were there quite a few Japanese American students when you graduated from Analy?

Margarette: I think there were four. Let's see Ernie Ito... I think there were four of us.

JACL: And socially, what types of things were you able to do when you came back?

JACL: Were you involved in the Japanese community? Were there very many Japanese people when you came back?

Margarette: When Rev. Yonemura came back and Kimi, the oldest daughter, asked me if I could help out at Enmanji church. So I was helping there. Oh, we had dances, a bunch of us, the younger ones, we had dances at the Nippon Hall.

JACL: Now, when did you meet Jim, and tell us a little bit about your current family.

Margarette: Well, Jim and I met on a blind date. I knew his brother George from camp, and then we were in the same social group when we came back. And so this friend, well at that time all these famous bands would go to Rio Nido [and play] there. And so the young bunch that we belonged to... one of my girl friends, Molly, she wanted to go. The only way we could go out was on a double date and she wanted to see... I think it was Carmen Caballero. Well, he was in town and Molly wanted to go see him, and she had a date. Then her mother said you can't go on a single date; you have to go on a double. So it just happened that Jim, he was living in Philadelphia and then he was

drafted, so he was coming home. He had to come home before he went into the service, and so anyway, I went on a blind date with Jim. And so two years later when I was starting JC, he was there.

JACL: This is after he finished his service?

Margarette: Yes.

JACL: And your children?

Margarette: Well, we adopted. Let's see Alan... Well, I guess we were married about five years, and we weren't able to start a family. So we decide to adopt. We adopted Alan. In fact, the family doctor, Dr. Salmon, he suggested... he said, "Oh, why don't you look into adoption?" So we looked, and they didn't have anything locally here. So we had to go through the County of San Francisco, and we adopted Alan in San Francisco. Then we got Leslie through the San Francisco agency three years later. I guess San Francisco used to work together through the different agencies. And so we got Leslie in Oakland. They were both babies. Alan was five months, and Leslie was four months.

JACL: How old are they now and grandchildren?

Margarette: Alan is about forty. (*thinking*) He's forty-four. And he met Renee, his wife, at Davis, and they have two boys. Michael is thirteen and Mark is five, and Mark is adopted. Michael is their natural son, and Mark is adopted. And Leslie has two boys. Dan will be eighteen in April, and then R.T. is eleven.

JACL: And Leslie, she lives back East?

Margarette: Leslie lives in Springfield, Massachusetts.

JACL: Now, how did you happen to get involved in the church you had mentioned before?

Margarette: I was introduced to Christianity in camp. I was running around with girls from the Livingston area, which is a Christian community. So they got me going to Sunday school in camp. There was an incident that... I guess just something happened, and I think what really did it was a movie that I saw in one of the Sunday school classes. It was "King of Kings", about the life of Jesus, and I think that was my turning point there. When I came back again in high school, I started going around with this girl from the First Congregational Church at that time, and she invited me to go to Sunday school. I got asked to help in the Sunday school class, and then eventually I joined the church. One of the things that happened was when my brother's body was coming home. My dad wanted to have a memorial service before we had Pete buried in San Bruno. I asked the minister... '46, I guess I had started the church already. I explained to Rev. Senter that my father wanted to have a memorial service, and he said sure you're welcome to have it there. I don't know why... there is something about that church. The members are very friendly, a real comfortable feeling and a couple of members knew my brother Pete. So that was another thing that kept on drawing me, and so anyway I eventually joined the church. I did go to the different churches. I had a girlfriend that went to the Catholic church so I went with her, then I

went to the Baptist church and to the Methodist church and then I was helping at the Buddhist church too. But there was something about that church. In fact, even some of the new members at our church now said that was one of the reasons why they joined because of the friendliness. You're always welcome.

JACL: Now you mentioned that there were students there that had helped.

Margarette: That's right. They had what they called Pilgrim's Fellowship. It's a young group, you know. And when they heard about the burning, the vandalism at the Buddhist church, they decided okay, that would be it. They would keep watch over the church grounds and that was one of their projects, they did.

JACL: I know the Gerboths were part of that, Sara and...

Margarette: Sara and Jack Gerboth because I got to know them after I joined the fellowship too. Oh, I guess Bruce McKenzie. That McKenzie family, there were three boys and the oldest and the youngest became ministers.

JACL: Did they become ministers at a local church?

Margarette: No, Bruce.... I think... No, because Rod is up in Oregon. Bruce, I think he was in Colorado for a while. Well, he's retired now.

JACL: I'm going to ask you now about your involvement in the Japanese community, and then my part will be over.

(video restarted after she had begun speaking.)

Margarette: ...then it became...when the Congregation and the Presbyterian united, then it was called the United Church of Christ and then the congregation decided they wanted to be more community, so they called it the Community Church now.

JACL: And I know that you have been involved in JACL and many of the functions here at the hall, can tell us a little bit about that?

Margarette: Well, I think we are living in a unique community because we have been very fortunate the JACL and Enmanji Church have worked together. There are some communities they won't, that are completely separate. You know through our JACL experience, I have found the Buddhist church here, the Christian church there, and the JACL there. They are all separate. But here we all work together, there's a bond, it's like one big family. So it's very comfortable, like with me, to come over here. In my younger days when our parents were active you got to know the families, so you kind of look forward to seeing each other. It's not only work, but it is kind a social thing too. I feel very fortunate to be in this situation.

JACL: Yeah, I've always gotten that same feeling, that the community is very close.

Margarette: We share our faith too and we'd sit when the children were growing up, you know, we'd share... well, as long as you've got something of a religious background. You can just tell by the behavior of the children. I know I look forward to seeing Alice and Harry and, you know, the people that we don't

see at church. We look forward because of JACL. I think that's what's nice about JACL, everybody feels comfortable.

JACL: It kind of keeps you in touch with everybody in the community.

(new interviewer)

JACL: Mine is a very short one. We still have your husband to interview. It's been wonderful listening to you, Margarette. I just want you to keep this in mind as you're answering the questions. If there were an Arab American family living next to you and they were your neighbors and they were ordered to evacuate, what would you do, having been through the experience that you have? What would you do at this present moment?

Margarette: Gosh, you know, knowing what's in store for them, there's not much that you can do except to support them and offer your help, you know, whatever you can do to make it easier for them.

JACL: Do you think it could happen at this day and age?

Margarette: Anything can happen. But hopefully it will not.

JACL: How do you feel about redress?

Margarette: Well, I think it was a good thing because it made us feel a little bit more comfortable about sharing. I know I had this one experience with this Caucasian classmate. We get together twice a year and have lunch together. And before redress I had not seen her since the third grade. She had moved to Petaluma and then she had started coming to our luncheon. She never said anything about internment camp, but once the subject of redress started coming up she approached me and we started talking. She was a high school teacher. And I know every time we got together for lunch, she'd bring it up and we'd share, and up to that point she never talked about it. And then she did later tell me, "You know, I feel so much more comfortable asking you questions about your internment years now that the redress program has come out." And I think in that way most of us got comfortable regardless of whether we were in camp or were our Caucasian friends.

JACL: What do you think are the greatest contributions of the Issei [first generation Japanese immigrants]? Just in some of the character values or in their contributions.

Margarette: Well, I think it's what they brought from Japan, their cultural, the different terms that they used like *giri* [mode of behavior] would be something, like well... Anyway, a lot of things that compared to the Japanese, Japanese now and the Japanese Americans I think our parents taught us, like you always remember what your parents have done for you. One good one is *koraeru*, which means you hold it. Even, I think most of us, even with our spouses, it's better to keep your mouth closed because once it's out you can't.... ah. I remember my mother was telling me, you know, be awful careful of what you say because once it's out you can't take it back. So, think about it before you... I think that it's like count to ten. I think that type of thing and even like your memorial services. I was told that in Japan they do not do the, say, 49th

or 100th or one year. 'cause my sister-in-law, after her father died they wanted to do the 49th day in Japan, and they didn't know what she was talking about. They said we don't do things like that any more. And I think it's the old customs that they left for us.

JACL: We have two young people right here. What advice would you give to them?

Margarette: About?

JACL: What kind of advice, generally speaking.

Margarette: Yes, right. Honor your parents. Appreciate what they've gone through 'cause when you start going through it, then you really know, it comes to me it makes sense 'cause I've gone through it too. When I was raising my children, I'm saying the same things my mother taught me, and then when you hear it from your children, like when my daughter came back and said the same thing that I had told her you think, "Oh my gosh, that's what I told her!" The same thing [happened] with my son. 'Cause you don't really appreciate until you're going through it yourself. Then you say, "Oh gee, that's what dad meant or mom meant."

JACL: Well, Margarette, thank you so much, and thank you for bringing that platter of sushi. That was so delicious. Thank you.

Margarette: You're welcome.

End of Interview

MURAKAMI FAMILY INTERVIEW

Part II: Jim Murakami

Person interviewed: Jim Murakami
Date: October 12, 2002
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewers: Jean Ishibashi, Marie Sugiyama, Nancy Davlin,
& Alice Kashiwagi
Summary: Jodi Hottel
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on December 9, 2002
from DVD source material

Interview Summary

Jim Murakami's parents emigrated from Kyushu Island, Japan to Hawaii for three years and arrived in San Francisco just after the 1906 earthquake. His father grew vegetables, worked for the vineyard and hop industry, and ran an apple dryer in Sonoma County. He married Jim's mother, who was from Japan, by proxy through the picture bride system. They had four surviving children, two girls and two boys. Jim's early childhood was spent in a cabin located on the Imwalle Gardens truck farm property in Santa Rosa. Even though he was sent to Japanese school, he did not learn much Japanese and experienced a gap in communication with his parents, who did not understand much English. He recalls that when the news of Pearl Harbor broke, some student in the high school harassed him, and the teacher did nothing to stop it. However, while the family was interned at Amache camp, a Caucasian family oversaw their property, which was in his oldest sister's name, so that they were able to return to farm again after the war.

The biggest impact of internment was the breakdown of the family unit, which was particularly hard on Jim's mother. Jim graduated from the high school in camp but had a lot of catching up to do academically before he could attend college. He joined his sister who had left camp for Philadelphia. She really encouraged him to prepare for college, since she hadn't been able to do so herself. Jim was drafted toward the end of the war, went to CIC School, and was sent to Germany.

He and his wife, Margarette, started dating when they were both attending Santa Rosa Junior College. Over the years, Jim has been a community leader in civic and professional organizations because he felt it was important to have Japanese Americans visible. He also held prominent leadership positions in both the local and national JACL. Jim reminds us that history has a "nasty tendency to repeat itself", and that we need to promote understanding and education.

Transcript of Interview

Jim: My parents came from the southern island of Japan, Kyushu. My dad originally came to the Hawaiian Islands and worked off his ship passage in three years. After three years, there was an open window of immigration policy permitting those, who were in the Hawaiian Islands, to come to the mainland United States. So he arrived in San Francisco about a few days after the great earthquake in 1906. So his first employment was with, and I didn't know this, but there was an ironworks in Colorado. I suspect it was an iron mine. He worked there for about three or four years then came back to California. Like a lot of other Issei in Sonoma County, he went to Ukiah and was attempting to start a farm growing vegetables. It was a good growing area for vegetables, but unfortunately there was no demand for the produce due to the distance from the buying market. He then decided to come back to Sonoma County and began to work in the vineyards, and he was helping develop a vineyard in Guerneville. But for one reason or another, that vineyard didn't develop very well. I don't think it was Korbel and was probably some other vineyard up there. So after that he decided he'd better get into something that would pay a little bit more money because eventually he decided that he was going to return to Japan. Most Issei in the United States were so-called "birds of passage", in that they were going to make enough money in the United States and return to Japan and live like well-to-do people. But that didn't happen because in time they felt it was time to get married. He got married to my mother by the picture bride system. They got married in proxy. Somebody stood in for my father in Japan, and then they waited for the wife in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle or some other port. There are some amusing stories about that particular experience because sometimes these Issei would submit photographs of their handsome young friends and go through the marriage procedure, and then meet their wife at the port of entry. The wife would be looking around for the handsome young man in the photograph, and she'd be surprised, **really** surprised, that these were either older men or didn't resemble anybody in those pictures at all. So, anyway, that's how my mom and dad happened to meet. Then they came back to Sonoma County and then worked in the hop industry, raising the hops, and then after the hops would be just at the stage of maturing, then they would leave there and come to Sebastopol and run an apple dryer. Work in the apple industry for six months, then back to the hop fields. Back and forth they'd go every six months. That's somewhat in a nutshell my family background. They knew your grandparents very well, Nancy, [Davlin] because they were both from the same prefecture in Japan.

JACL: Okay...So, where do you come into the picture?

Jim: Where do I come in, in the picture? Well, after a time, the children start coming. They had five children. I had two older sisters; I had an older brother who died, I then came along and my younger brother. There were four of us that survived infancy, and we grew up either in Santa Rosa or Sebastopol. I went to Roseland School for roughly four months and I went to Pleasant Hill School for four months. Ultimately, I ended up graduating from Roseland Elementary in Santa

Rosa. I started Analy High School and spent roughly a year and about two months there before we evacuated or incarcerated.

JACL: So is there anything you want to talk about your family life or any experiences?

Jim: Well, actually, because we lived in the country there was a little bit different than Margarete my wife's experience in which she had a lot of Caucasian friends. I didn't have that many Caucasian friends because we were just neighborhood playmates. I grew up having not many neighbors around, so consequently, there wasn't that type of relationship that Margarete had that she earlier related to you this morning. There were a few, not many, that we knew. But we did not have many Caucasian friends. We mainly knew our family's acquaintances and their children and those Japanese Americans that we were going to Sunday school together at the old Nippon Hall in Sebastopol. That's it as far as my family background.

JACL: Did you go to some of the cultural things at the Nippon Hall, the movies and all that?

Jim: Well, we went to Japanese school at the [Nippon] Hall, but we didn't learn very much because what would happen was we'd start school early, about 11 o'clock, eating lunch together and then right after lunch all of us about my age, would disappear from Sunday Japanese language school and go off to watch the ball game at Analy High School. Consequently, we really didn't learn much educational Japanese. We learned Japanese from our parents who were of the Meiji Era and some of the customs and the language that they taught us are the "thee" and "thou" equivalency in the English language. A lot of the contemporary people from Japan are shocked that we speak a different language than they do, that is more formal and polite Japanese without the adoption of English or other languages or other nuances. It is a more polite Japanese than they speak in Japan right now. The modern Japanese have mixed in a lot of English terms; they've adapted their own pronunciation of English terms, mostly that, but other languages like German. The Japanese of Japan now is quite different from the Japanese we learned from our parents, and some of the customs are different.

JACL: Their cultural values are modernized too?

Jim: Yes, not as polite as we are accustomed to, knowing the Japanese that we had been taught, not entirely different but quite a bit different, and especially now.

JACL: When you were growing up, did you consider yourself Japanese, Japanese American, or did you even think about it?

Jim: I think I had more of a tendency to think of ourselves as American than Japanese because we didn't have anything to gauge ourselves as a norm. We knew none of their customs, nor did we know other languages than English. Except, when I started grammar school, I didn't know that much English, except for what my sisters taught me. So in the first grade, I really had a difficult time comprehending what they were trying to teach me because of my limited knowledge of English. But in time I had some pretty extensive catch-up work to

do in order to learn, but with my sisters' help, I did. Fortunately, I had those sisters ahead of me, and they could guide me and they taught me.

JACL: So, do you have any other childhood experiences that you want to relate?

Jim: About my growing up? No, not really. The only thing I want to say is that I was born in Santa Rosa in a three room cabin without any indoor plumbing or without indoor water, no electricity until later. In fact, the cabin was still there until about 15 years ago. They finally demolished the cabin, which was on the Imwalle Gardens. That's where I was born. Anyway that's where I grew up and started Roseland School, which was close by.

JACL: Are there any teachings your parents taught you that influenced you?

Jim: Well, I think what they taught me was to try to do your best, and they felt that because they couldn't have certain things, they sacrificed a lot of things to give to their offspring in order that the children would not have to experience what they were going through. They really worked hard to try to make a living, to feed the family and to try save a little money. They succeeded very well in instilling that sort of feeling in us to work very hard in whatever we do and hope that we will achieve success.

JACL: You certainly have done well.

(Jim drinks water)

JACL: Would you like more water?

Jim: No, I'm fine, Jean. Thank you.

JACL: I'm going to ask you questions about World War II. So we'll just start off with Pearl Harbor, how you heard about it and what were your feelings when you did finally hear about it.

Jim: I think we heard about Pearl Harbor on the radio. I heard my sisters talking about it. But I was 15 at the time, so it really didn't sink in to me really how serious that particular action was from the country of Japan, nor exactly what was going to happen. I had no feelings about it one way or the other at that age. We soon found out, however, and it didn't take long. Next day when I went back to high school, I was harassed by the other students, and to this day I'm somewhat resentful because the instructor or the teacher who was there didn't stop any of the harassment, and this occurred during the class.

JACL: Can you be more specific as far as the memories that stand out, as to what they did, the harassment?

Jim: It was physical assault. I recall there was only one student who said, "Leave him alone." But it really hurt both physically and mentally because I was at an age when I was very sensitive to that type of treatment.

JACL: How was your family affected, and were their neighbors, who said, "Leave him alone," as well?

Jim: Well, I didn't talk very much to my sisters about it, and they didn't ask me either. But I didn't go back to the high school after that day and consequently I

only spent roughly a little over a year in high school. I paid for not going back to school in subsequent years. My sisters had graduated high school by then. They were working as domestics. My parents didn't talk very much about it simply because there was a language barrier, in that I only understood English and a limited amount of Japanese. They primarily spoke Japanese and only understood a limited amount of English. They spoke only Japanese to me, and I only spoke a little bit and understood only a little bit of Japanese. Consequently, there was a serious communication problem, but we understood each other.

JACL: Did you notice from their facial expressions and body gestures and their actions how this affected them?

Jim: Not that I recall. I know they were concerned because they had heard through the grapevine that the FBI were coming around right after Pearl Harbor and investigating all of the Japanese families. I can recall digging a big hole in the back yard and burying a lot of things. I didn't mention that I that I had a half-brother in Japan at that time and he was in the Japanese Navy. He was sending photographs to my mother of him in a naval uniform on a battleship in China. So she really had to bury those things and a lot of other artifacts that she had around.

JACL: Did that include records and dolls? Were you Buddhist or Christian? I'm not sure.

Jim: Yes we were Buddhist. Only after I got married to Margarette did she convert me to Christianity. So at any rate, yes, there were a lot of artifacts that they had at that time that they buried.

JACL: Was there any property loss at time? Did you have to sell your property? Did they lose the property; your home, your land?

Jim: No our property... my sister, who was 21 or 22 at that time was able to buy a chicken ranch in her name. So fortunately, contrary to what George Hamamoto told you this morning, the very bank that refused him a loan, gave us a loan before the war, and we were able to buy that ranch. Maybe I'm getting a little bit ahead of you, but during the evacuation we were fortunate enough to have some very kind Caucasian friends who were willing to oversee the safety of our property and oversee the rental of the property. They then paid the bank from the rental money and paid down the mortgage while we were in camp. So it was a very unique experience, which are some of the episodes that we'd like record as part of the oral history of the Japanese Americans.

JACL: In the process of moving from your home to the evacuation, to the internment camps, do you have memories of that time?

Jim: Yes, I do. And I've often wondered about this. We had these notices posted around the county, saying you will report to the Santa Rosa Railroad Station at a certain time on a certain day, but it didn't say how we were supposed to get there. This was fine for the urban area in which there was public transportation, but in the country and in the rural areas there was not public transportation. So to this day I really don't know how we all got to the railroad station. And I think

if you ask a lot of people who went through the evacuation, they'll wonder the same thing since it was so long ago. You wonder how they got to the railroad station with all their baggage.

JACL: As you recall, your sister was a citizen and therefore could, in fact, get the loan from the bank and buy property.

Jim: My sister was a citizen, and so were the rest of us but our parents who were Issei couldn't buy land because of the Alien Land Law. So consequently she was able to arrange for a loan through this Caucasian friend who was able to work through the intricacies of financing and so forth.

JACL: Because she was a citizen and you were as well but she was older, did she feel any infringement upon her civil rights as a U.S. citizen being interned without a trial and any evidence?

Jim: You know, she might have, but she never indicated it to me, and I was the closest to her because she was the one that made me go to school when I got out of the Army because she didn't have the opportunity to go to college. Consequently, she really encouraged me and made me get through the University of California at Berkeley, 'cause she couldn't go to college.

JACL: During your stay in the camps, and that was, which camp was it?

Jim: Amache. It was in the southeastern corner of Colorado on the Kansas border, near the town of Granada, Colorado.

JACL: All right, and that was the camp that most people from Sonoma County went to?

Jim: All of the people in Sonoma County went there. And it was unique in that respect, in that we have a common experience in this community of all going through the same assembly center and through the same relocation center, which I call America's concentration camps.

JACL: How did your family answer the loyalty questions, and how did they respond to it? Do you remember your emotional and otherwise response to it?

Jim: It is interesting because I was 17 at the time that I was supposed to answer those questions. I had no idea of the seriousness and the ramifications of internment and the evacuation at that time. But I did answer the two questions and as a seventeen-year-old, I answered yes to 27 and yes to 28.

JACL: Do you recall while you were incarcerated or interned, what were your memories of that life, were there activities that stood out?

Jim: I recall a couple of things, one of which was the first meal that we had in the Merced Assembly Center and my mom going with us to the mess hall. That first meal was cold cuts. It was just a slab of bologna and a piece of bread and tea. I don't think we had any milk. But at any rate, it was the first meal that my mom didn't prepare for us. And she was sitting there with tears flowing down her eyes. And I couldn't understand why, but I suppose, as a mother and so forth you can probably understand her feeling of food for her children. The second thing that I remember most vividly about the camp was that it was the breakdown of the family units. We didn't necessarily have to eat together and so

consequently, as a teenager, if we didn't like what they were serving at our mess hall we'd go to another mess hall if they had something that we liked on the menu. Consequently, my mother felt the breakdown of the family unit, and so once a week she would go get the food at the mess hall and bring it back to the barrack room and make us eat together. She really felt badly about the fact that we were not sitting down at the table together as a family, consequently, not being a family again.

JACL: You had mentioned before about attending school and being harassed at school, were there any friends of yours who were outside of your immediate family? I remember you said your main activities were with your family members because you lived in a rural area, but do you remember any friendships outside of your family and perhaps outside of the Japanese American community?

Jim: There were a few, not many, and we were never really close to them. We were just acquaintances, you might say at the grammar school. Consequently, when the evacuation came along, we didn't know what their feelings were as to the reason why we weren't there. We had no way of knowing.

JACL: So therefore, resuming friendships may be a moot question for you because your family members and extended family members all went to the same camp. Is that right?

Jim: Yes.

JACL: Okay. And your mother continued to keep the family close.

Jim: She tried.

JACL: Yes, yes. You mentioned perhaps some memories that were hard on your mother especially because she had a conception of the family that was very tight. Do you recall any positive memories, besides going from mess hall to mess hall?

Jim: I think the positive aspect of the internment, if there was any, was the fact that we were able to learn a little bit more about the other areas that the Japanese Americans came from. For example, I didn't know where the community of Colusa was, where Marysville was, and other communities. I knew where Sacramento was because we went to visit there once. But other areas we knew nothing about. We were just plain country folk, that only knew one area.

JACL: Was there a memory that was especially harsh, that was the worst memory you have of camp?

Jim: I think the worst memory that we had was the loss of privacy in these camps, that the only privacy you had was when you came back to the barracks room. But aside from that, there was absolutely no privacy. For people who were from the country and being used to living as a family unit, I think it was extremely difficult in losing our privacy.

JACL: You were 17 years old, right, at that time?

Jim: I was 15.

JACL: Fifteen at the time. And you stayed in the camp for how long?

Jim: I graduated from the camp high school. They didn't start the camp school until the later part of 1942, so consequently I didn't go to high school for almost six months of my sophomore year. And then I spent roughly a year and a half before I graduated from the camp high school. I had no hope of ever going to college or continuing my education. We just simply went because they said, "You're going to school."

JACL: That was your recreational activity?

Jim: It was. It was.

JACL: How did you feel about some of your male friends, extended family members, being drafted. I understand you joined the military as well, were drafted. How did that happen?

Jim: My older sister found a job in Philadelphia. I graduated from high school in 1944, so I went to Philadelphia with my sister. I went to night school, tried to learn some of the subjects that I didn't have in the camp high school. The war was winding down in Europe, and it was in May or June of 1945 when I got my draft notice. I took my physical, and the war was over in Europe, and consequently they didn't induct me until 1946. So as Margarete mentioned, she went on a blind date with me just after I received my induction notice to report. I took my basic training in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. And we were all slated to go with the occupation forces to Japan, and all the rest of the training company left for Japan. Two of us got left behind. We were concerned that they'd send us through basic training all over again. Well, it turns out that we were supposed to go to Counter Intelligence School [CIC]. But there was a condition to going to the school. The Army said that being that the war is over and this is occupation duty in Japan, we want you to sign up for three more years. The other soldier was from Loomis, and his name was Suzuki. We talked about it and decided not to sign up for the CIC school. We both promptly got put on a ship to Germany. We ended up in occupation duty in Germany. Well it turns out they really wanted me to go to CIC school because I got sent to CIC school in Germany after I got there. But at any rate, that was the extent of my military service. I then came back to Santa Rosa and started Santa Rosa Junior College. I had to take quite a number of subjects that I didn't get in the camp high school or the schools in Philadelphia. I didn't have, for example, high school chemistry or high school physics, high school mathematics, or any language requirements.

JACL: What did you learn in camp school?

Jim: I learned English literature, a couple of other woodshop courses, P.E. That was about the extent of it. We were just passing time, so to speak.

JACL: Who were your teachers at the time? Do you remember?

Jim: We had some Caucasian teachers from the Midwest. We had some evacuee instructors who were full professors at some universities. We had a full professor of mathematics from Stanford University. His name was Dr. Terami, and he taught algebra. I can't remember very much of his course because we

didn't pay that much attention. His famous saying when we acted up was, "I have a lot of patience, but!" That would be the extent of his comments. I imagine it was very, very frustrating for him to be teaching that elementary level of mathematics when he was a full professor of mathematics at Stanford University.

JACL: Looking back at those years, what would you tell someone who is 14 and 16 years old or 12 about how you survived those internment years as a fifteen year old?

Jim: You know it is really hard to answer that question being that we were in almost a hopeless situation. We had no visions of going on with our future life. I guess we could have, but we just simply took the easy way out. I would think that if I were to counsel a young person, I would just simply tell him to try to do your best and be sure that you get a good education as a good basis for whatever you're going to do in your life. The basics are there at that age, but if you don't get those basics you are going to have a hard time later on in your life. That's all I can say to counsel young people.

JACL: Jim, coming back to the area, when did you learn that you were able to come back, what were you doing and how did you get back?

Jim: I think that it was the later part of 1945 that my sister had the opportunity to come back to California to start the farm over again. I was still in Philadelphia, but I was in the middle of night school course. Consequently, I couldn't come back with her at that time. So I missed a lot of the hostility of the area, against the Japanese Americans. I didn't come back to Santa Rosa until after I got my induction notice for the Army. I came back to California to help reestablish the farm until I got inducted into the Army.

JACL: Did they tell you any stories about anything that happened that you can recall?

Jim: No, except that there were a lot of people in the area who helped. We had a chicken ranch, so consequently there was a lot of people in the chicken industry such as the feed companies and so forth that helped and assisted the Japanese American farmers to get reestablished because it meant good business for them in the future. They did assist the Japanese Americans tremendously, extending credit. It made good business sense for them to assist the Japanese Americans, not only in Petaluma but in Sebastopol as well... and other areas, to get reestablished. They assisted the Japanese Americans tremendously.

JACL: Where was your property located?

Jim: The property was located halfway between Santa Rosa and Sebastopol on Sebastopol Road. It was between the two towns. It was borderline on the Analy High School District and the Santa Rosa High School District. Some of us went to Santa Rosa High School and others went to Analy.

JACL: So you had already completed high school in camp, and you went to Philadelphia and didn't come back with your family?

Jim: No. In fact, our family was split because they closed the camps in 1945, and my father and mother and brother and sister left the camp. They went to a friend

from Japan who had a farm in Fort Lupton, Colorado. They managed to come back to California when my sister from Philadelphia came back home.

JACL: So did they do farm work in Colorado?

Jim: Yes, they did farm work in Fort Lupton.

JACL: Were there quite a few other Japanese families?

Jim: I think so. The farm that they stayed in was an old family friend from Japan so consequently, they had a reunion of sorts.

JACL: Now the old family friend, were they on the West Coast and then chose to move in Colorado?

Jim: No, they were permanent Colorado residents of Japanese ancestry. There was quite a number of permanent Colorado residents of Japanese ancestry. In fact, Margarette's in-laws were in Las Animas, and they were permanent Colorado residents.

JACL: Let's go back to your blind date with Margarette and how you met.

Jim: Well, I don't remember very much of that blind date. Don't tell her I said that. I didn't meet with her until I returned from the Army and started Santa Rosa Junior College. She was enrolled there after she graduated from Analy High School. She constantly reminds me of that particular blind date, but to be perfectly honest with you I can't remember.

JACL: Have you discussed your war experiences with your children at all?

Jim: Only a couple of times, and I think that one of these times was when the United States was having problems with the country of Iran. Our son, Alan, was going to school at U. C. Davis, and he came back and was really shocked and concerned that they were talking about putting those of Iranian descent into camps. He came back and said, "You know, that's exactly what happened to you and Mom." It really shocked him that things like that would be happening in his lifetime. And it could happen again very easily.

JACL: Did you yourself have to deal with any negative feelings of the people around you or in your profession while you were going to college?

Jim: No, I really didn't. By the time I got back and started going to college it was 1948, and it was in between World War II and the Korean War. There were quite a number of social changes undergoing in the United States about then. I didn't experience that much negativity, and all of the experiences at the JC or UC, Berkeley were with Caucasian students who were from the North Coast area. I didn't experience any prejudicial actions except when I graduated from UC, Berkeley and I tried to get a job. Then I began to encounter discrimination. I had interviewed for an engineer's job with P.T.& T. I had the grades, I had the courses they wanted me to have when I applied for employment with P.T.& T. But as I being was interviewed they told me, "We can't hire you because of your Japanese ancestry, and We've just had a war with the country of your ancestors." I began to wonder then whether I was going to run into this type of thing in the future of my engineering career. Fortunately, I did not experience

any sort of negativity, unless it was done behind my back and I was not aware of such actions.

JACL: Subtle.

Jim: Yes.

JACL: Now, I know that you have been very active in the community. Could you tell us a few things? I know that you are very well respected in your profession.

Jim: I tried to get involved in the community as much as possible in order to establish my own engineering practice. It was good business practice to do that. I became a Rotary member, and I became the club president of the Rotary Club. I was on the Community Relations Committee of the City of Santa Rosa. I served in that capacity for approximately 10 years and was chairman of the committee. I was on the Board of Directors of the Luther Burbank Center of the Arts and was president of two engineering societies in Sonoma County. Consequently, I became known, and I was asked to chair community events. Even though it was not directly related to engineering, I felt it necessary to have a Japanese face out there, and I did what I had to do.

JACL: And you have also been very community-minded in the Japanese American community and nationally. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Jim: I started my JACL experience here locally through the urging of Frank Oda, and he encouraged me to do a lot of things related to JACL. I started out as chapter president of the local chapter, became district governor of the Northern California district about the same time as Norman Mineta was starting out in his political career. He and I were asked individually whether we wanted to be the district governor, and he declined because at that time he was going to be appointed to the planning commission of the city of San Jose. He declined on being district governor, so consequently, I got nominated and served as district governor. I served in that capacity for two years and stayed active in the district. I was encouraged to run for National Vice-President of JACL and served in that position for four years. Then the JACL asked me to serve as the National President of JACL. I was elected President-elect of national JACL. That meant that I had to serve four years, essentially, as National President, so I ended up spending a total of eight years with the National Board before I was able to fulfill my obligations and career with JACL. It was a very fulfilling experience for me because I met a lot of people throughout the country who were very active and very knowledgeable and did so much for the welfare of those of Japanese ancestry. I still see them now and then, and there are a lot of very interesting and capable people in JACL.

JACL: Do you think that your experience at camp was a motivating factor in attempting or doing well in any vocation that you wanted to go into?

Jim: I really don't know whether that camp experience had anything to do with it. I do know that I needed to do what I had to do because of that experience and I didn't want to see that happen again. I hope that whatever I did would help prevent that sort of thing from happening again. But like they say, the reality is

that we never learn from past experience. I have this feeling that it could happen again. History has a nasty tendency to repeat itself.

JACL: Okay, Jim. I'm done with this section.

JACL: I've heard all three of you mention the Nippon Hall, and I'm not too sure I know what it is, except that it was a building in downtown Sebastopol. I'd like to know who financed the funding for that building, and how did it come to be? Do you know the history of that?

Jim: I know a little of the history, probably George Hamamoto would have been the person to ask this question. I suspect it was a joint project of the prefectural organizations in the area, like the Kumamoto *Kenjinkai* [an organization comprised of immigrants from the same prefecture in Japan], the Hiroshima *Kenjinkai*, and some of the other *Kenjinkais* that were in existence prior to Pearl Harbor. I believe they got together to purchase the building and probably purchased it in the name of some of the older Nisei in the area because they couldn't purchase it themselves due to the Alien Land Law. The building itself was on McKinley Street. It's just below the Speas Vinegar Works, which is now a movie theater on McKinley Street. It was around three or four blocks east of McKinley Street from the theater. It was a community hall, just as this building we are presently in is a memorial hall. They received donations from outside of the Japanese community, and it was built in memory of the three soldiers who were in the 442nd Infantry Regiment who were killed in Europe, one of whom was Margarette's brother, Pete.

JACL: I heard that there were actual families living in that Nippon Hall. Is that true?

Jim: Yes, that is true because they had no place else to go when they got kicked out of camp. They closed the camps and said you can go back to where you came from when the evacuation was ordered. Some people didn't have any place to go since they did not own their own homes or farms. The WRA gave them a ticket to where they had originally been evacuated from. So that's how they ended up back in the Nippon Hall, because they had no homes or farms to go to.

JACL: So it ceased to exist, say, in the early 50's?

Jim: No, I think it ceased existing probably as a hostel, probably in the late 40's.

JACL: What effect did the redress movement have on you and your family?

Jim: I used to talk to Edison Uno, who was my redress chairman, when I was National President of JACL, he said, "You know, Jim, I don't care how much that they offer me, for I will not put a price on my loss of freedom. But the biggest advantage coming from the redress movement is going to be the educational aspect of it. They can never repay me for loss of my freedom." The redress movement had as its greatest value the educational aspect of redress. And we're still dealing with that, and we should continue to deal with that in the future. It is a tremendous educational tool.

JACL: What role do you think that the Japanese Americans should play in society?

Jim: Well, I think that what we can do is to try to promote understanding, and that understanding coming about because of the fact that we should not judge people collectively as a group, we judge them individually for what they are, and not collectively. That's the biggest lesson I think we can learn from whatever's happened to us. And we will try to prevent that from ever happening again, but as I say history has the nasty tendency to repeat itself.

JACL: And with that profound statement, we end this interview.

End of Interview

TOM PERRY INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Tom Perry
Date: March 15, 2003
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Alice Kashiwagi, Phyllis Tajii, & Jim Murakami
Transcription: Transcribed by Alice Kashiwagi from VHS videotape and audiotape source material

Interview Summary

Tom Perry was born and raised in Sebastopol, CA. Educated at Stanford University, he became a history teacher at Woodland High School. He is now retired and lives with his wife, Darlys, in Santa Rosa, CA. During the Ito family's incarceration at Amache Internment Camp in Granada, CO., Tom's parents, Joseph and Elizabeth Perry, were the caretakers of the Ito family orchard in Forestville and the guardians of the Johnny Ito orchard in Sebastopol. Elizabeth Perry wrote numerous letters to the Itos. During the interview, Tom referred often to her letters. The letters are a fabulous record of the ranch operations. Recognition of the 1942 graduates is also mentioned in the letters. Elizabeth's letters are true chronicles of life on the ranch. The letters to her are great chronicles of camp life.

In this account are also consequences of being Italian-American and German-American during that period in our history.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Hi, Tom, it's so nice of you to come and share your stories with us this afternoon. Your story is of particular interest because we haven't interviewed a relative of a group of people who helped Japanese American families during the internment and after the internment as well. So would you give us a brief history of yourself.

Tom: I was born in Sebastopol and grew up on my father's ranch right outside of town... 2 miles out of town on the way to Forestville. His father had bought the farm in 1898. My father was born there in 1903. My mother was born in 1903 near Occidental. My father's name was Joseph J. Perry and my mother's name was Elizabeth Morelli Perry. I went through schools here. You and I were classmates at Analy High. I went to Parkside in Sebastopol. My wife, Darlys, went to Forestville School. We met in high school. We have three granddaughters. Two nine year olds, one is our son's daughter who lives in San Francisco. The other nine year old and her five year old sister are the daughters of our daughter, Anne. They live on what is left of the old Perry place, just outside of town just across from Andy's fruit market.

JACL Who did your parents know in the Japanese-American community and do you know how they met?

Tom: I know that they had quite a number of friends because a lot of the apple growers knew each other, a lot of them belonged to the Sebastopol Apple Growers Union so there was connection that way. There were many dryers in the Sebastopol Area and quite a few were owned by Japanese people, including the Ito family who my family helped. Their ranch was in Forestville out on Covey Road where the El Molino High School is located now. That was the old Ito farm, and one of the two Ito boys, Frank, lived there with his father and mother and his son, Kaz. Frank's brother, Johnny, was working on our place before the war and, of course, was married to Sue. He ran the old dryer that my father had, that had been started by his father. It was back in the old days when they had those hand peelers, and I guess they couldn't put a lot of fruit through because of that. Anyway, I know that Johnny ran the dryer and he and Sue lived on our ranch there for awhile before the war and before they bought a place on Hurlbut Avenue. Their sons were Steve and Keith who was just a few months younger than me, and Keith was my first playmate. I have a number of pictures where we were toddlers together. And Keith and I went all through school together, through grammar school, high school. I was four years old when the war began, so I don't remember much of what was going on. I remember my mom talking about them being back in the camps. I knew about camping, that sounded like fun. So that was how much I knew back in those days when the war started and the internment situation took place. So there were then two segments of the Ito family, the grandparents who lived in Forestville and one grandson, Kazuo, who was a citizen and who lived on the ranch, too. His grandparents were not citizens so the ranch was in the name of Kazuo and his brother, Ted. There were two other brothers who were younger. Kaz graduated from Analay in 1941 and Ted would have graduated in '42. In May of '42 when the relocation took place, they were taken to Merced with the rest of the family and went in the camp there. So the high school students who were to graduate in '42 were gone and in some letters here that I have, my Mom talks about the graduation and all the names of the Japanese students who were to graduate were read and she said that people clapped and she said they acted like "human beings". In the letters she sounded cynical because at that time there was a lot of ill feeling about the Japanese. One story I heard was that grandpa, well, most of the prominent Japanese people within a day or two of Pearl Harbor were picked up and taken some place. One of them was Grandpa Ito. I'll explain more about that later.

JACL: How did you come about those letters you are referring too? Did you get a chance to read them?

Tom: The way I came about the letters is that these were all saved by my mother. She was in failing health and died at age 95 and the last couple of years she was shuffling things around and I found these letters in different places, in file drawers or folders or whatever was around the house. I spent a lot of time getting these together and putting them in chronological order. The reason why there are so many of them is because my mother became guardian of both Kaz

and Ted Ito. As their guardian she kept meticulous records. She was a bookkeeper, went to Sweets Business College in Santa Rosa. Her first job was in 1922 in the Bank of Sonoma County, here in Sebastopol. And so she had a lot of training in shorthand, bookkeeping and keeping records. So as guardian she had to keep good records of everything that was going on and had to appear before the court in Santa Rosa and justify a number of things as far as taking care of the Ito ranch. By the way, I might mention that they took care of the ranch in Forestville in 1943 and 1944 and, also, Johnny Ito's place on Hurlbut Ave. in, I think, the same years and maybe even into 1945. Again, these letters are records of my Mom's letters to Kaz Ito, who was the oldest of Frank's four boys. There were Kaz and Ted, who would have graduated in '42 except for being swept away, and there were Min and Sam. They were scattered a little bit because there wasn't enough room on the ranch in Forestville, so these letters are from Kaz and to Kaz. These letters blow my mind. There are 7 typewritten pages here with no space in between. It takes a long time to read them. Especially the ones that are carbon copies are hard to make out. She was just such a prolific writer. This is a diary from 1942 to 1945... I don't know how she had the time to write all this stuff. She talks about going to bed at 12:30 at night, 1 o'clock in the morning, 2 o'clock in the morning, after putting in a full days work and after all the family was in bed she would be up at the typewriter typing out these letters. It started in '42 and ended in '45 and there are other letters as well. That's how these letters came to be and there is a lot in them.

JACL: You do plan to keep them, don't you?

Tom: I either plan to keep them or share them with the Ito family or donate them to whatever you might set up here in the future. I might mention that when I read these I just can't believe all the work that she was putting into this. Talking about my mother's family, she was the driving force of the family. She was of Swiss-Italian extraction. Her parents were born in Switzerland. She was the oldest of six children. She kind of ran things, so she became the Morelli family leader. She told many stories about her father and the values her father instilled in her. One of the things was a high degree of work ethic. This was one of the things that to her was extremely important. She said her father told her that if you were a good worker, conscientious and honest, you would always have work. She felt very firmly that anyone who worked hard would be a success. She mentioned that when she was a child and first went to grammar school, her mother never learned to speak English very well. Her father spoke just fine and dealt in English in his business. She grew up on a winery. She talks about going to school, and this is when she spoke English all the time and she said a lot of times the neighbor kids would tease them and called them little Wops and Dagos. I think this instilled a spirit in her to always feel like she needed to excel because she needed to show people. In reflecting on this, maybe there is an analogy with the Japanese people. Because I think there is the pride that the people have. It's terrible that you have to prove yourself, but I think that gets instilled in a lot of people, and it makes them work harder and they become better for it. I really think she was. So part of the stories in the letters is just how conscientious she was in keeping records and wanting to tell the Ito family just

everything that was happening here. I know that in one of the letters she was saying, "I'm going on but I know that you want to know what is happening here in Sebastopol." So she told everything about what the thinning crew was doing, the pruning crew, and she would go into great detail, so there is such a voluminous stack of letters here. She really goes on and on and then some.

JACL Tom, because your parents stayed in contact with the Ito Family, did they have any problems in the community here in Sebastopol and if so, what were some of the problems?

Tom: I don't think she saw them as too much of a problem, although in the letters she talks about, and I always heard verbally what kinds of things went on at the time. My mom had the attitude that if anybody didn't like it, they could stuff it. And she would tell them that. She always figured that if anyone was that kind of person, she didn't care. She figured that what she was doing was the right thing to do, and these were friends, and the rest of the people, if they didn't like it, well, it was too bad. In the letters there are a number of places where she talks about the incidents that took place, like the fire at the church here that people spotted right away and put out. She told the Itos because they wanted to know back there and what attitudes people had here and what was going on. She talked to people in business capacities and they would ask her, "Why are you doing that? These people don't deserve that. They're Japs and you can't trust them." Just all kinds of crap like that and there are a number of times when she talks about it in the letters here. She told the Itos, "I don't care what they say, You're my friends and that's it"

JACL I wish that I knew your mother better when we were in high school. She sounds like an incredible woman.

Tom: By the way, my grandfather changed the family name from Pereira which is Portuguese to Perry. My father's parents came from the Azores Island. I'm glad they changed it because it is easier. When he was a kid somebody said to him, "you Portagee", in a derogatory way. On both sides of the family there was this attitude that we are just as good as anyone else and we will show them.

JACL: After the war, many Japanese-Americans relocated to other areas within the U.S. but the Japanese-Americans from Sonoma Co. returned to Sonoma County. Why do you think they wanted to return particularly to this place? Do you have any thoughts about that?

Tom: I think that as bad as the attitude was with the minority of people here, I think that for the most part, the Japanese had been in this community way, way back. In fact, talking with Ted Ito [Tom had visited Ted the day before in Sacramento] yesterday, he said that his great-grandfather helped put the Enmanji together when it was brought from the Chicago Exposition in the early 1900s. So what I am saying is that there was quite a long history of Japanese people here long before the war. I'm not sure when Grandpa Ito bought the ranch in Forestville, but it was way back before the war. And I think that there were enough people here who knew the Japanese and what good people they were that there wasn't as much anti-Japanese feeling as there might have been in other parts of the

country. Also, people like my folks who took care of ranches, made people feel that their home was here, and that their places were here and they were cared for.

JACL Speaking as your own person, what would you have done if this gross injustice of your civil rights happened to you?

Tom: I don't know what I would have done. I guess I would have been kicking and screaming, but it's kind of hard to place yourself back in those days. I know now that I would. I would fight to the death. I don't know what I would have done then. I think that a great injustice was done, there's no question about that. And I sometimes wonder why there wasn't more fight against what was being done. I know that a few people did and got into big trouble and were put into places like Tule Lake. The people were hard core resisters, or suspects, so to try to put it into perspective. Something I didn't know until recently, a cousin of mine named Lloyd Focha, who was a good friend of Kaz Ito, and who was a classmate at Analay, said there were other things that were done, too. We had an aunt, my father's sister, Ann Perry, who was married to a German guy from Northern Germany and they had a sheep ranch out at Tomales.

Lloyd tells me the story that he was working at his place, and I guess it was the FBI came out and interrogated him. And he had a couple of shot guns, and they took the guns and took the firing pins out of them. One other story is about my mother's sister who was married to a guy from Italy. His father came over from Italy, and I don't know whether he was a citizen or even if he came over legally, but because they were within five miles of the coast in Valley Ford, he had to move inland. He lived with my folks for a while. I don't know where he went after that. This kind of stuff was going on and, of course, none of us had to go to camps, to go camping! It was a tremendous injustice. I know my folks felt that way. I grew up feeling that way. Incidentally, I'm really glad to take part in this project because I feel that my parents would have been right here doing something like this. A few years ago, I got something in the mail from the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, and they were telling what they were doing. I knew that my folks would contribute to it, so I sent money in and have been a member ever since. They started the oral history project several years ago. I know that Norm Mineta spearheaded the project. I thought at the time that this is something that needed to be done, so I joined and contributed. Someday I'm going to get down to that museum, but when I heard that this project was going on, I thought that's great, because this needs to be done here. By the way, I'm a history major. I taught history. In fact I majored in Far Eastern History. I studied a lot about the history of Japan and I've been to Japan 3 times. I can't say much in Japanese except *Ashitamata-neh* [See you tomorrow]. Never did get into the Japanese language but I have always been interested. Maybe because Keith was my first playmate. I'm really glad to be able to take part in this.

JACL We want to thank you, Tom, for taking part in this and had we not talked at the Teriyaki Bazaar that day, this would never have come to be. Knowing how your parents helped a Japanese American family, if they were living today and they

were sitting right next to you, what would you personally like to tell them about what they did, about their character, about who they really were?

Tom: I told them a lot of times that they were good people to do what they did, so I don't think that it would be any different right now. I'm proud of what they did because it went against the stream at the time. I know that they were people who believed in certain things. This is what we do, and weren't afraid to act on it. I'm very proud of them. My father's nephew, Lloyd Focha, was in Kaz's class, in the class of '41. They were good friends. There was a Bob Herring and Edgar Herring and they lived down around Hessel and they were real good friends. In fact, when the Ito family was in Merced Assembly Center, Bob and Lloyd went down to visit them. Later Lloyd went into the service. Luckily he is still alive. He saw a lot of duty in the Pacific. So my mother's sisters all felt the same as my mother. I can't think of anyone in the family who questioned my parents' loyalty to their friends.

JACL Do you have anything else you would like to say about either the letters or this project?

Tom: Well, the letters are like a book. Again when I read the stuff that they did, it's unbelievable that they worked the hours that they did and put in the time that they did. In one year, they had only one Sunday off, and that was Easter Sunday! On August 7, 1944, she wrote, "Dad took the Mexicans to Suzie's, [Suzie and Johnny Ito's place] and started them out. I went to Forestville with the kids [high school kids] to pick up apples. There was a tremendous shortage of labor. There were Mexicans, Filipinos, Jamaicans who were brought in to pick up the slack. They were losing apples because there weren't people to work. Dad went up for the rest of the day. He drove home with 216 dryers [ground apples—those would be windfalls] on the chevy truck. I went up at 2 with the Chevy, helped the kids finish and drove the Studebaker home, [the Studebaker belonged to Grandma and Grandpa Ito]. Came home with 90 shippers, [shippers were handpicked apples] but the brake froze and stopped at Molino. It broke down and had to leave it. Dad got it started and brought it home when he came down. I took the kids home in the Buick and went to Suzie's. Came home after the T model and loaded some empties for Suzie and Johnny's place. Went down and scattered the empties and brought the Mexicans home with me. I went to the dryer to trim apples for the balance of the day. Then we ran the eliminator [sorted the apples by size] during the night." This gives you an idea of a typical day on the ranch.

JACL She certainly had a busy day with two children of her own, working in her own orchard and taking care of someone else's orchard.

Tom: I guess I felt a little neglected. I remember riding on the tractor with her. I did some work picking up the boxes. I didn't have much play time. I was 5, 6, 7...

JACL You mentioned Grandpa Ito being taken away. Do you remember the story?

Tom: This one is one that blows my mind in a way. Grandpa Ito didn't go to Amache camp with the rest of the family. There were five in the family who went there. There was Grandma and Johnny was taken some place else. I'm not sure where he went. He wasn't a United States citizen and Sue, who was a citizen born in

the Bay Area someplace, technically, owned the ranch. It was under her name. So Grandpa disappeared. So there was Grandma, Kaz, Sue, Steve and Keith, my good friend. So there were those five who first went to Merced Assembly Center, then to the camp in Lamar, actually Granada, in Colorado. So Grandpa Ito was accused of being a spy. He was sent first to Louisiana, then to New Mexico. He was accused of having maps in his place. Maps! If you have maps in your house you're obviously suspicious and he was accused of having \$40,000 sewn into his clothing. \$40,000 in those days would be about a million today. Not too likely, but this was the story. Supposedly he was convicted. So he wasn't able to join his family until 1944, when he joined the rest of the family in Amache. I'm not sure whether he was acquitted later. It was rumored this was the case, but for sure he was put away for some time for "committing the crime".

JACL Tom, I know being a teacher myself we have been criticized for neglecting to teach this part of U.S. History. How much of this did you teach when you taught History at Woodland High School?

Tom: Well, I have the stories to tell. I taught American Government, among other things, and the Constitution, and I know the Bill of Rights quite well. I know what the Fourth Amendment is about—Search and Seizure, and the Sixth Amendment has to do with The Rights of Trial. So when we talked about the Bill of Rights the kids would say "that's the old days". So it was necessary to talk about how important it is to have the Fourth Amendment and the part it plays in something like the Japanese experience, where these things were completely ignored at that time. It does make some interesting stories to tell about what happened. Every year my class would hear about it. I didn't dwell upon it a lot because it was just one part of our history, but there were definitely points to be made and I made some.

JACL Do you see that some of this is being repeated with the Arab-Americans?

Tom: Yes, I think it is. It's something that really bothers me. I sometimes think that we have some of the same leaders in Washington, D.C. that led to victory in Viet Nam. You know "victory"? (*Tom grimaces*) I think that in times like these, people tend to forget what we are all about and right now there are threats with illegal searches and seizures and getting people without indictments. I think it is really appalling what is going on. I just hope it doesn't get any worse than this because it is bad enough.

JACL You mentioned that your mother had guardianship?

Tom: The Forestville ranch was in their name, so my Mom had to appear before Judge Comstock and Judge Geary in Santa Rosa and they were very stringent about having the records produced. There is a lot in these letters about her appearing before the judge to talk about certain things. She was very concerned about the lease and in 1942, the Winkler Brothers ran the ranch in Forestville. When it came time to renew the lease, they, I wouldn't say that they were trying to take advantage of the Ito Family, but they weren't giving as good a deal as they could have and they were trying to use the equipment without paying rent. My mom put a stop to it. In fact, she wrote to Kaz and told him, "I don't think this is a

real good deal that the Winklers are giving you” So she said she was going to look for someone else to run the place and Kaz wrote back and said, “Well, could you run the place?” And so they went ahead and did it in 1943. Since Kaz was the older one, all the communication went to him. She [Mrs. Perry] was the guardian and as guardian had to appear in court, and she had Power of Attorney for Kaz. She signed checks, took care of the bank accounts, safe deposit box stuff, and she talks about going in and getting registration for the vehicles, setting up insurance, etc. All this kind of stuff was mind boggling. One of the things about this is that they were very strict if you were the guardian and that you had to adhere to the law. Plenty of times Kaz said, “We trust you, we know that you are going to do right. You make the decision on it”. And most of the time she would write and she would say, “Ask Grandpa”. And he would write to his Grandpa, either in Louisiana or New Mexico, because he knew that Grandpa would make the final decision.

There is an interesting thing in their letters about one little anecdote that I can think of. One Christmas they sent my folks \$35 for a Christmas present. Back then, when they were making \$17 a month, that was a lot. My mom told them that they didn’t have to do that kind of thing. Then she bought several things including a couple of savings bonds for Bob and me out of that \$35. The next year they sent \$100 and again my Mom wrote back and said, “I can’t accept this, it’s too much money, I don’t think it’s right”. So she sent it back. Kaz wrote to Grandpa, and Grandpa wrote back and told him to send it back to my mother. So they sent it back to my mother. This time she kept it and put it in the bank. She wrote back and told them, “If you need it, it’s there”. That’s the kind of relationship that they had. She would send packages to them. Grandma Ito liked persimmons. In fact, I can still remember as a five year old, the persimmon tree. I didn’t know what they were so I bit into one one day, and (*laughs*) thought this is not to eat. When they got ripe, Grandma Ito liked persimmons, so my mom would send them to her. Also apples and dried fruit. Of course, it was really appreciated. I remember one of the letters told about when they were in Merced, she shipped down a box of apples and Kaz said, “I grew up with these apples. We would even throw them from time to time, as kids, like baseballs.” He said, “I never realized how good they are and what a treat it was to have them”.

Jim: In our Oral History Project, we have uncovered more and more acts of kindness offered to us by the greater community through our darkest times. One of the dedications of the Oral History Project, is to recognize people such as your mother and father. So, thank you very much.

JACL I have a request. May we have pictures of your Mom and Dad that we can scan? You will definitely get the pictures back.

Tom: Yes, you can.

Addendum

“The Mukaida family is not mentioned in here. They became good friends of our family and moved on to our place right after the war. I would like to acknowledge that relationship.”

--Tom Perry, May 2003

End of Interview

ALICE SHIMAZU INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: Alice Shimazu
Date: March, 2003
Place: Shimazu Residence, Penngrove, CA
Interviewers: Marie Sugiyama
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Jodi Hottel on May 12, 2003 from hand-written source material.

Interview Summary

Waichi Matsumoto, Mrs. Shimazu's father

Mr. Matsumoto immigrated to Victoria, B.C. in 1900, at the age of seventeen. Within a year he moved to Sonoma County and worked at various jobs, including the apple dryer. He went back to Japan in 1914, and returned to California in 1915, a month after his marriage, sending for his wife a year later. At the encouragement of a friend he got into the poultry business in 1917, and settled in Petaluma, raising a family of five children. During the war, Mr. Matsumoto was interned in several places, including New Mexico and Texas. While interned he crafted various items, including wooden canes, flower vases, and folding chairs. He returned home to Petaluma in 1946.

Mr. Matsumoto was one of the community leaders helping to bring the Enmanji Temple to the area from the Chicago World's Fair in 1932. He became a naturalized citizen in 1954. In his early years he enjoyed watching the local car races, among other pastimes. The contrasts in poultry farming between then and now is very interesting. Prior to all of today's technology, it was very labor intensive and the chickens were even allowed to range during the day.

Chika Yamashita Matsumoto, Mrs. Shimazu's mother

Mrs. Matsumoto arrived in Sonoma County at the age of eighteen, a year after her marriage. She picked hops one season, and also worked at the apple dryer. While caring for her family, including five growing children, she also helped tend the family poultry business. During the war, she was sent to the Merced Assembly Center, Amache Relocation Center, and Crystal City, Texas, returning to Petaluma in 1946. She became a naturalized citizen in 1954, and participated in church and community organizations.

Alice Shimazu

Alice Shimazu was born Alice Midori Matsumoto in Petaluma, California. She married Tom Shimazu in 1949 at the Enmanji Temple and they had two children. Growing up on the poultry farm meant that everyone had chores. Values of hard work and responsibility were emphasized. In the 1930's, Mrs. Shimazu attended Japanese Language school and

Kendo classes. She went to Amache and Crystal City internment camps where she played baseball and basketball. Prior to the war, Mrs. Shimazu attended Petaluma elementary and high school, and has enjoyed the class reunions, even traveling to Castro Valley with a few classmates to celebrate a former teacher's birthday in 2001. She does not remember any incidents of racism while growing up in Petaluma. In the months following Pearl Harbor, her father was taken by the FBI. The rest of the family was sent to Merced Assembly Center and Amache Internment Camp before being able to reunite with her father in Crystal City, Texas. While interned, the Matsumoto family entrusted their property to the Larsen family. In camp, Mrs. Shimazu worked as a waitress in the mess hall.

Transcript of Interview

Waichi Matsumoto, Her Father

Waichi Matsumoto was born in Hiroshima, Japan on October 29, 1883.

He immigrated to Victoria, B.C. on June 6, 1900, when he was seventeen years old. For several months, he worked on a dairy farm. It was so cold in the winter that his shoes froze when he left them on the porch.

On April 1, 1901, he left Victoria to travel to San Francisco by boat for a fee of \$5.00. The following year there was a price war between trains and boats so there was no fee charge.

He arrived in Sonoma County on April 15, 1901. For a while he worked at picking hops, chopping wood, and picking grapes. In 1905 he began working in the apple business in Sebastopol, which continued for several years. The business partners in the apple dryer where he worked were a Chinese and two Japanese, and it made a profit. Later, his partners were two Japanese; they were also successful. Waichi's nickname was "dryer Matsan" as he did a fast job of cutting the apples and putting them on the tray to dry. He also worked at Oda's Dryer and Petersen Dairy in Roblar, CA. Older Issei in America advised him when looking for work to ask two questions: "You wanta boy?" and "How muchee pay?"

Waichi returned to Japan on November 19, 1914 to marry. He and Chika Yamashita were married on February 24, 1915 and left Japan on March 28th of the same year.

A friend, Mr. Sueoka, encouraged Waichi to get into the poultry business, so he moved to Petaluma around 1917 and settled on the Fujita property on Ely Rd. to raise leghorn chickens. A few years later, they moved to Corona Rd. and built a stucco house there in 1926. They raised approximately 15,000 leghorns in twelve separate hen houses. They also brooded approximately 4,500 baby chicks twice a year in five brooder houses as replacements.

In the early days on the farm, horses were used for various jobs. Kale and chicory were planted for consumption by the chickens. In the really early years, Waichi had to prepare morning mash for the chickens. Later, Golden Eagle Feed Milling Co., McNear, and a few other small businesses sold commercial feed. The chicken roosts had to be cleaned and sprayed weekly. Rice hulls were put in the nest where the hens laid eggs. The floors were covered with straw and shavings. Every morning the chickens were released from the hen

houses, and the doors were closed in the afternoon. Various mixed grains were fed to the chickens in the afternoon. Eggs were gathered twice a day, the mid-morning and the mid-afternoon. The eggs had to be cleaned by hand until an egg washer was invented. What a great help! Years later, chickens were raised in cages, and eventually larger companies took over the poultry business.

During the war between 1942-1946, Mr. Matsumoto was interned in several places: Sharp Park, CA; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Lordsburg, New Mexico; and Crystal City, Texas.

While interned he crafted many items, both practical and decorative. For instance, he made pens with toothbrush handles, different shaped wooden cranes, cigarette pack holders from mesh onion sacks, flower vases out of polished driftwood, larger decorative pieces of polished driftwood, and canvas seats for folding chairs.

He returned home to Petaluma in March of 1946. Located 38 miles north of San Francisco, Petaluma was known as the “egg basket of the world” throughout the 1940’s.

Mr. Matsumoto was one of the community leaders helping to bring the Manchurian building from the Chicago World’s Fair of 1932 to Sebastopol to be rebuilt as our community Enmanji Buddhist Temple.

Although the Issei had earlier been barred from becoming naturalized citizens and from owning or leasing land, Waichi became a naturalized citizen of the United States on November 11, 1954.

Waichi and Chika made a trip to Hiroshima to visit relatives and pay respect to deceased family members. They were there from September 15, 1955 through December 1st of the same year. While there, they met Mr. Yoshioka, a relative who lived in Penngrove prior to World War II.

In his early years, Waichi used to attend car races in Cotati with Shigeru Sueoka and his father. He really enjoyed new automobiles. He also loved wrestling and fishing for striped bass. Another pastime was working in his flower and vegetable garden. When he was over sixty years old, he still did a good job of felling a few cypress trees on the property of their Corona home.

Mr. Matsumoto was a member of the Enmanji Buddhist Temple and the Sonoma County J.A.C.L. He received an agricultural award, Kunsho, from the Japanese government.

He died on September 11, 1970, while still living at 960 Corona Rd. in Petaluma.

Chika Yamashita Matsumoto, Her Mother

Chika Yamashita was born in Hiroshima, Japan on November 21, 1897.

She and Waichi Matsumoto were married on February 24, 1915 in Japan. She arrived in Sonoma County on June 6, 1916 at the age of eighteen. They lived near the birches and the old Cinnabar School. She shopped at Willow Brook General Store, which was situated at the end of Corona Rd.

Marie Hayden’s parents operated the store. In those days, transportation was either by horse and buggy or train. She worked one season picking hops, which was hard labor to her. After that she worked in the apple dryer.

Her daughter, Marilyn Shizuko, and son, Masao, were both born while they lived on the Fujita property on Ely Road. Her son, George Kazumi, and daughters Alice Midori and Helen Fusaye were born at the home on Corona Rd.

During the time they operated the poultry farm, Chika helped in many ways, including raising the baby chicks, cutting the chicory and kale which were put in the cutter to be fed to the chickens, gathering, cleaning and grading the eggs, and packing them in cases which were sold to the egg dealer. She also did the cooking, baked cookies, made root beer, did laundry, mended clothes, and even gave the family members haircuts!

Chika was interned from 1942-46, first at the Merced Assembly Center, then the Amache Relocation Center, and then at Crystal City, Texas. Some of her activities in camp included flower making, flower arranging, knitting and crocheting. She returned to Petaluma in March of 1946 with Waichi, her husband, and Helen.

Chika became a naturalized U.S. citizen on Jun 21, 1954. She visited Japan with her husband from September 15, 1955 to December 1, 1955. Another milestone in their lives was the celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary in 1965.

She has enjoyed watching roller derby and wrestling on TV. She also enjoys gardening. Chika has been a member of Enmanji Buddhist Temple, Enmanji Fujin Kai, Enman No Tomo, and the Sonoma County J.A.C.L. She received redress compensation of \$20,000 in October of 1990.

Alice Matsumoto Shimazu

Alice Shimazu was born Alice Midori Matsumoto in Petaluma, California. She remembers certain things about her family life prior to World War II. Living on a poultry farm, everyone had chores to do. She was taught to keep out of trouble, that any misdeed would bring shame to the family. She was also taught only to buy what you really need and to save money for the future. She was told: Study hard! Be responsible!

Alice has participated in many sports. In the 1930's she participated in Kendo for sport and discipline. She played baseball at Amache, Colorado and basketball while at Crystal City, Texas.

In the prewar days in the 30's, she attended a Japanese language school on Ely Road near the railroad tracks in an old building, which no longer exists. She also attended Japanese language school in the mornings in Crystal City. She regrets not having studied seriously. At Amache she attended a flower arrangement class.

Alice went to Waugh Elementary School in Petaluma, Petaluma Junior and Senior Highs, and completed one semester at Santa Rosa Junior College. She has attended elementary and high school reunions and has enjoyed seeing her classmates. In fact, a few students helped one of their elementary school teachers, Claire Krauskopf, celebrate her 93rd birthday in Castro Valley in 2001, where she was living alone in an apartment.

Her parents were able to attend school activities and even provided a truck and driver to take students on a trip to Dillon Beach. She remembers her mother dressing her in a kimono so she could perform Japanese dances in special programs.

Alice doesn't recall any particular incidents of racism. In fact, her brothers and their friends used to call each other by slang racial names with no hard feelings during their school days.

The first time she heard the news about Pearl Harbor, she was at home and couldn't believe what she was hearing at first. But the radio just kept announcing it over and over. A couple of months later, her father was taken by the FBI to Sharp Park, San Francisco, New Mexico, and finally reunited with the family in Crystal City, Texas. At the time, her brother George was attending Armstrong Business College but returned home shortly after. Her brother Masao bought a house trailer in order to move the family to an unrestricted area. Before they could act, though, a curfew was enforced.

They ended up leaving by train for Merced Assembly Center on May 17, 1942, and from there to Amache, Colorado, and then to Crystal City, Texas. They entrusted their poultry farm to Jens, Ella and Jim Larsen of Petaluma.

In camp, Alice and most of her friends were assigned to be waitresses in the mess halls where those living in each block ate meals. Their duties were to serve water, tea and coffee, dry the dishes and utensils, and help small children during snack break.

She recalls one embarrassing moment while in Merced in 1942. One day, while she was working as a waitress drying the utensils, her friend decided to chase her with a fork. She ran out the back door of the mess hall, and lo and behold, there stood the Buddhist minister. She says, "Can you imagine his thoughts of me? I stopped attending Buddhist services in camp! My friend stayed inside and had a good laugh!"

End of Interview

SHIMIZU FAMILY INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Hideo (Henry) Shimizu, Sawame Shimizu, Martin Shimizu, Bruce Shimizu

Date: March 11, 1990

Place: Shimizu residence, Cotati, CA

Interviewer: Lisa Slater

Summary: Phyllis Tajii

Transcription: Transcribed by Frances Clark in December, 2002 from audiotape source material

Interview Summary

Hideo and Sawame, both Nisei [second generation], have lived in Sonoma County most of their lives as chicken ranchers. Compared to some other parts of the state, Hideo feels fortunate that Sonoma County does not have as much racial prejudice. Based on his experiences, and to show support for his country, Hideo was only twenty one years old when he started the *Loyalty League* [later to become the Japanese American Citizens League, JACL] in Sonoma County. Martin also felt fortunate growing up in Sonoma County when, immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, his teachers were quick to point out to his classmates that he was not responsible for the war.

Although Hideo voted to oppose the forced evacuation at the JACL meeting in the months following Pearl Harbor, the decision was made to cooperate. Even though he was opposed to internment, Hideo did not feel his individual dissent was strong enough to stand up to the U.S. government. At the time, many rumors were circulating, including the plan by the government to send all people of Japanese descent, including American citizens, to Japan if evacuation orders were not followed peaceably. Forced to accept what he viewed as the inevitable, Hideo sold his chickens and traveled to other Japanese American families in outlying areas, passing on information regarding government orders. Rather than viewing his actions as trying to help them, some of the families misinterpreted them as agreeing with the government, and even being an FBI informant.

Thanks to the helpfulness of friends in the community, the Shimizu ranch was taken care of during their stay in camp. While in camp, Hideo attended a JACL meeting in Salt Lake City. A vote was taken whether to recommend volunteering for the military. Since reports of the glowing record of the 442nd Infantry Regiment started to arrive, the U.S. government once again was welcoming Japanese American soldiers. Hideo voted against volunteerism, not because he did not support his country, but he felt it was again unequal treatment. He voiced a request to return all citizen rights, including the right to return to their homes, and to be treated equally, which meant, not just volunteering, but to be drafted as other Americans.

When internees were able to leave camp toward the end of the war, Hideo took his family to Pennsylvania to live for six months. Thinking that the animosity that caused their evacuation at the start of the war might still exist in California, his thought was that he

could offer an alternative place for Japanese Americans to live in Pennsylvania. Although everyone there was friendly to them, the harsh winter was not, and when word arrived that Sawame's mother was ill, they decided to move back to Sonoma County. The friend who looked after their property during the war also helped them get started in the chicken ranching business again.

Political and social awareness seems to have been passed down in the Shimizu family. As Martin grew up, he also became active in the JACL. During the time of the push for redress, many Japanese Americans were uncomfortable, fearing a racial backlash, but Martin felt the passage of the redress was important to establish the unconstitutionality of the internment. Likewise, his son also became involved in JACL, becoming aware of his Japanese American heritage as he became older, and becoming aware of a social responsibility to make informed decisions, not only affecting America, but the rest of the world. Not only did Hideo actively participate and try to make a positive difference in the world, but his son and grandson have also become socially aware, helping to reflect on the past and shape the future.

Generations: Hideo: nisei [2nd generation]
 Sawame: nisei
 Martin: sansei [3rd generation]
 Bruce: yonsei [4th generation]

Birth date and place: Hideo: 1905, Hawaii
 Sawame: 1912, Santa Rosa, CA
 Martin: 1930, Penngrove, CA

Marriage: Hideo and Sawame: 1929

Early Life Of Hideo Shimizu

Hideo's parents had come to Hawaii to work in the cane fields with the intention of moving back to Japan. However, when Hideo was a year and a half, they moved to the Central Valley in California. A lasting impression during the early years at school was the insensitivity of the teacher and classmates regarding the pronunciation of his name, which caused him to adopt the nickname of Henry. Later, when Hideo was in his late teen's, his family moved to Sonoma County to raise chickens, and with the exception of the war, has continued to live on the same property since 1926.

Early Life Of Sawame Shimizu

Sawame was born in Santa Rosa. From 1905 until 1914, her father owned a grocery store, and then did farm work. In 1928, her family moved to Concord, California to work in the apricot fields, but quickly returned to Sonoma County.

Hideo And Sawame Prior To The War

Hideo and Sawame were working in an apple dryer in Sonoma County at the time they married. Hideo was requested to oversee another apple dryer in Watsonville, but he did not want to leave without Sawame. Their stay in Watsonville lasted almost a year, at which time they moved back to Hideo's parent's house. Their first child, Martin, was born soon after returning in 1930. It was a full house for the young family because it also

included Hideo's mother and father, his brother, his two sisters, and two nephews. After Martin, five more children were born.

Shimizu Family During The War

Immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Martin was 11 or 12 years of age, and felt fortunate to have good teachers who were quick to point out to his classmates that he was not the enemy and was not responsible for the war. He did not think there would be anything like the mass detention that materialized a few months later. Though the atmosphere may have become more tense, they did not experience any violent animosity after the outbreak of the war, and their close friends did not change.

Hideo was active in the JACL at the time, so despite the two mile travel restriction imposed on Japanese Americans, he was allowed to travel outside the limit to inform other Japanese American families of government instructions.

Hideo remembers residents from the Central Valley attending the meeting urging cooperation because they were afraid for their safety due to the violence in their area. They felt the forced evacuation might afford them more protection. Even without the urging of the Central Valley representatives, the Japanese American community had a tradition of obeying any government order.

Major decisions were especially difficult at this time because all of the leaders of the Japanese American community had already been taken away by the government to remote places, with no communication, leaving the decision making to the younger generation. Sawame's father was one of the men taken away within days of Pearl Harbor. He was taken to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The families in the area were notified to report to designated areas to be relocated. When that time arrived, the Shimizu family made arrangements with Mr. Hozz to look after their property and secure tenants during their absence. Based on the treatment of the Japanese Americans, a German born friend of the Shimizu's sold his car thinking he might be subject to the same forced relocation. Shimizu neighbors came to the train station to see them off, and a friend of the family, Dr. Hutchinson, even traveled on the train with them to the Merced Assembly Center. They were at the Merced Assembly Center [the county fair grounds] approximately from May to September of 1942. They were only allowed to bring what they could carry, and Sawame had the additional worry because her youngest child was only thirteen months old. Memories of Merced included those of the military police, in charge of watching the camp, who would stop and pick some of the grapes surrounding the camp and give it to the children standing at the fence.

Being fairly young, going to camp was viewed as something of an adventure rather than a scary experience. However, the train ride from Merced to the internment camp in Colorado was particularly frightening. With the news of Hitler's extermination of the Jews on their minds, the American internees were ordered to board a train to their final destination. There was fear that the same fate as the Jews might await them, especially when the train stopped in the middle of desolate, flat countryside and they were ordered off the train to "stretch their legs", only to find machine gun toting soldiers standing outside.

Once arriving at the internment camp, the barracks were not quite ready to inhabit. But they adjusted the best they could to the new life, and when opportunity presented itself, Hideo took the family to live just outside of camp to help run a poultry ranch, the Koen Ranch, to furnish eggs for the camp. They lived on the Koen Ranch for two years. There were several reasons he decided to live on the ranch; his children would be separated from the negative influence of idle minds of both children and adults, they would be removed from some internees who viewed Hideo negatively because of his actions before the war, and Sawame would be able to cook for her own family the way they liked, instead of relying on camp cooking.

But the majority at that JACL meeting in 1943 voted for volunteerism and Hideo was shunned for his contrary opinion. Sawame's brothers joined the army and were sent to Europe, and Hideo even wanted to join but was turned away because he was the sole support for his family.

Hideo was opposed to the internment, but did not feel his individual dissent was strong enough to stand up to the United States government. All sorts of rumors were circulating at that time about possible alternatives the government would take if the internees did not go peaceably. One rumor was that all people of Japanese descent, whether United States citizens or not, could be sent to Japan. That was one option many, especially those who knew only the U.S. as their home, did not want. With such a powerful authority as the U.S. government giving orders, most viewed their options as very limited and felt quite powerless. Going peaceably, as wrong as the internment seemed, was better than the other scenarios, including being sent to a country one did not know.

In camp, activities were organized. Schools, with teachers recruited from both within and outside the camp, were set up. Various cultural activities helped bring a familiar, welcome feeling to the isolated strange land.

After The War

On the way home to California from Pennsylvania, the car loaded with the family of eight and a trailer, the Shimizu's met kind strangers along the way. In Kentucky, a service station attendant searched all over town looking for tires for them, in very short supply at that time, until he finally found some, and in Texas a grocery store owner was extremely helpful.

Mr. Hozz, the friend who looked after their property while they were away, also helped them get started with chicken ranching again. The children returned to their old school, and on their return the principal warned the other children against racial prejudice, so the Shimizu children didn't have any problems.

The Younger Generation

As Martin grew up, he felt it was important to establish the unconstitutionality of the camps so that it would not happen again in this country.

In post World War II, little was revealed to generations who did not experience the internment camps. Parents, having learned to accept the detention and subsequent bombing of Hiroshima, never talked to their children about the camps. As a youngster, Hideo and Sawame's grandson, Bruce, used to play war games and used the term "Jap"

casually to label one of the teams as the enemy. It did not occur to him it was derogatory or that it actually referred to him, until his father overheard and pointed it out. Growing up, Bruce attended Japanese Language school, but had no interest in it. He stopped attending language school in early elementary school age, preferring other activities and wanting to be totally “American.” However, in the military later, while stationed in Hawaii, his lack of Japanese was embarrassingly apparent. Bruce went on to become active in the JACL, organizing a youth group trip to Japan, which sparked interest in learning the Japanese language.

With the growing Asian American Movement in the late 1960’s, and the growing awareness of what it was like to be a Japanese American, children started asking parents and grandparents about their experiences regarding the camp. It was always a bit of a curiosity to Bruce that his father went to school his entire life in Sonoma County except for a few years middle years in Colorado.

Martin said that if there are lessons to be learned from the camps, a few would be that people need to be educated to analyze the news past the headlines, and not just follow the crowd. He said that we have a social responsibility, because the decisions made in our country not only affect America, but affect the rest of the world, whether it affects environmental or social rights. In addition, he pointed out that there are dangers inherent in ignorance and intolerance, as evidenced in anti-Asian sentiments long before Pearl Harbor. Were it not for the more moderating voices during World War II, treatment of the Japanese Americans could have been much worse.

As parting words from the three generations of Shimizu’s, Hideo would say, “treat everyone as your equal”, Martin would say, “be fair”, and Bruce would say, “everyone has an obligation to exercise and safeguard our rights and to treat everyone equally.”

Editorial Comment by Phyllis Tajii, Summarizer and Committee Member

Long at odds, the two opposing sides of the Japanese American community answering the loyalty questions, may actually have more underlying similarities than outward differences. At the root of the opposing reactions of “no, no” and “yes, yes”, seemingly completely opposite, may actually be the same desire to be treated equally.

From a story of one man in the “no, no” group, his answer was a reaction to the unjust treatment from the American government. He was in the U.S. army at the time the war started and volunteered for duty. Not only was he rejected by the military, but was further insulted by having to go to the internment camps. He initially wanted to serve his country just as any other American, but instead, his feelings and his honor deeply wounded, he rejected the only government he had ever known.

A statement made by Hideo Shimizu was that he basically wanted to be treated as an equal American. He suffered the contempt of many Japanese Americans, because he traveled to inform families of the impending evacuation orders. Unable to separate the messenger from the message, many viewed him as an FBI informant. Far from being a government sympathizer, Hideo was only trying, in what he viewed as a powerless situation, to cope as best he could, and also help others as best he knew how. At the root of their differences, both Hideo and the “no, no” boy wanted to be treated as equal Americans, and it is only the difference in their reaction to the discrimination that caused

such a split. Both wanted to support their country at the very start of the war, but took different paths when the government treated them as the enemy.

Transcript of Interview

Bruce: I am Bruce Shimizu and I am 33.

Martin: I am Martin Shimizu and I am 59.

Sawame: I am Sawame Shimizu and I am 77.

Hideo: My legal name is Hideo Shimizu. You know, when I first started school the teacher asked me what my name was, and I wrote it down, and she says, "It's Hido, H-I-D-E-O, and the kids started to call me Fido. "Hi, Fido. Hi Fido", and that kind of got me. So I went home, talked to my [future] brother-in-law and he said, "Why don't you use Henry?" So I used Henry and started to go to school. My name Henry stuck with me all along. I am known as Henry, but legally, my name is Hideo Shimizu. But I am known as Henry Shimizu.

Lisa What would you like me to call you?

Hideo: You can call me Henry. (*Laughter*)

Lisa When did this happen, Henry? How old were you?

Hideo: I was 7 year old when I started to school.

Lisa And.. you were here? Or you were there?

Hideo: No.

Lisa You were in Japan?

Hideo: In a place called Dinuba, Solano County.

Lisa You were in Fresno? I couldn't imagine people having this problem with your name in Japan. You lived here, in Fresno, when you were 7 years old.

Hideo: Yes, I was born in Hawaii.

Lisa You were born in Hawaii?

Hideo: My mother brought me when I was a year and a half, and we landed in Fresno and I was there until I was 7 years old. When I went to school in Fresno, the teacher knew the name and they started to call me Hee-de-O. That was alright, but when I moved to Dinuba, the teacher over there never spoke with any Japanese, so she started to call me Fido.

Lisa Mmm. That must have hurt.

Hideo: And then the kids started to call me Fido, so that got my goat. I didn't want to go to that school any more, but since then I have changed to Henry. And, that name, Henry stuck with me through all of these years.

Lisa What year were you born?

Hideo: I was born in 1905.

Lisa And you were born in Hawaii.

Hideo: Yes, I was born in Hawaii.

Lisa Your parents came from Japan to Hawaii?

Hideo: Yes, they came to Hawaii and worked in the cane fields, and my father was advanced to one of the brakeman on one of those trains, and when he became a brakeman, my mother felt sorry for him, for taking such a dangerous job, so she just coaxed him to come to America and find some easier job. So, he came to America, landed in Fresno, and started working the farm. And, that is when my mother brought me..

Lisa But.. Do you know why they came to Hawaii in the first place?

Hideo: To make a few dollars, to earn money enough to buy property in Japan.

Lisa So, they were planning to go back.

Hideo: They were, planning to go back. In those days, almost everybody thought that they would go back. Because all of their friends were back in Japan. And, the only person that they might know are some of the relatives in America, already. And that is very few, you know.

Lisa How did they choose Fresno as a place to live.

Hideo: Uh... my mother had a cousin in Fresno, so they came over there.

Lisa Sawame, were you also born here , or in Japan, or in Hawaii, or where?

Sawame: I was born in Santa Rosa.

Lisa You were! (*Laughter*)

Sawame: 1912.

Lisa Not many people can say they were born in Santa Rosa, who live in this town.

Sawame: Uh-huh. There was a mid-wife house. It is not existing now. Because, back of the jail, at Third and D street, that is where the mid-wife house was. Third and D street on the corner and I think the city built a 3-tier parking garage there—I don't think it is there now.

Lisa Yeah it is [a parking garage].

Sawame: But, I had a nice time as I grew up. I played in the court house, in and out of the window. I knew every cop on the beat. We would go to say hello. We would go to Nickelodeon.

Lisa Where was that?

Sawame: On Fourth Street, near Sawyer's, right there. And, most of our delicatessen and bakeries were on Third Street and Main Street. The court house was right in front, but those days we used to call that Main Street, going out of Santa Rosa. That was on the corner of Third and Main Street, was where we used to go to the ice cream parlor.

Lisa Mmmm.

- Sawame:** Go get little mint and nickel ice cream. So, all of my friends remember. We called it Jack's place. It was an ice cream parlor.
- Lisa** What kind of little kid were you?
- Sawame:** Very bratty (*General laughter*).
- Lisa** I had this feeling—I don't know why, exactly.
- Sawame:** I didn't know this myself, but my uncle and my aunt, they didn't have children. So, they remember everything that I did, and they tell me that there was a carnival. The carnival was usually around the courthouse in those days, and every time it was carnival, we called it, they used to lock me up so that if I don't go over there, but they locked me up upstairs. I went out of the window of the bathroom, there was a balcony there, and come down the pole and then I went up to the Sunday school, and pick up my little red chair, Sunday School chair, took it to the carnival, and my uncle and everybody were looking for me, looked high and low for me. The carnival was on third street and we lived on Second Street and D street, 7, D Street, and I walked over there with my chair, I guess. He saw the people in a circle, and he wondered what was going on, and he looked and found me sitting right in the middle with my red chair and people didn't want to get in front of me, so they were hanging around the back side. That's what they told me...
- Lisa** That certainly describes....
- Sawame:** I didn't know that, but (*laughing*), my uncle told me that.
- Lisa** So, your uncle and your aunt and your parents....
- Sawame:** Yeah, my parents did tell me some things too,.. you know? I don't remember all of it, but one I remember is about that Sunday School chair.
- Lisa** Did they have other family here, too?
- Sawame:** I just have a brother, now. My folks are gone.
- Lisa** Yes, when you were a kid and you lived here with your uncle and your aunt and your parents, did they have more family in the area?
- Sawame:** Umm... my uncle and aunt, they went to Japan, but I don't know when. Maybe, around 1925, thereabouts, but my mother and father, we lived in Fountaingrove for about ten years, from 1918, during this terrible influenza, we lived in Fountaingrove, and, let's see now, we stayed there until.. Well, I grew up and went to school – walked to Lewis School every day. In 1928 we left there. And, then we moved to other parts of the country.
- Lisa** Where did you go?
- Sawame:** In 1928, we went to Concord in Contra Costa County
- Sawame:** My father had a cousin there. So, we moved there and stayed a bit, and then we were working, Concord has a lot of apricots and we were picking apricots.
- Lisa** So, did your parents do farm work, too, when they lived in Santa Rosa?

Sawame: Mostly. uh-huh. Before that, my father had a grocery in Santa Rosa until 1914. And, when there were three children, he gave up, because in those days, a lot of men who come from Japan were single men with no wives, and they lived in Sebastopol or Windsor or Healdsburg in, like a bunk house, and one man would cook for the whole clan, and my father would supply the food, whatever they order, and a lot of times the single men would take off. The train goes right through Healdsburg to Sausalito and they would get on the train and leave their food bill unpaid. So, he had as much as one time I saw his book. He had one of those big ledgers, and there was over \$10,000. In those days that's a big amount of money. So, he closed shop. He didn't want to do that business anymore. But, he came to Santa Rosa in 1901, and since then, as a young man, he had a hog farm, and then in 1905, I think, he started the grocery store. And during the earthquake, he said he remembered going all that distance to San Francisco in a buckboard

Lisa A buckboard! A wagon.

Sawame: A horse and wagon. Imagine, going to San Francisco on the old route through Mill Valley and Mount Tamalpais, around that area, to get a look.... Let's see my story is going...

Lisa That's okay...

Sawame: Uh-huh, to get some food for the people during the earthquake.

Lisa The people here?

Sawame: In Santa Rosa. So, he has to get a load of bread and they wouldn't let him come home until he spent one-half a day clearing the debris on the streets in San Francisco. That, he told us. I remember that.

Lisa That's interesting. Everybody got pressed into service...

Sawame: Uh-huh. He killed a lot of pigs that he had, to feed people, and he said the courthouse came down, so he said some of his money went to building the new courthouse. And, he had a friend—there was a hotel on the corner of Third and Main Street. They called it... the name was right here, but I forgot. Um... Grand Hotel. It was made of bricks, and he had a friend who was a cook at that hotel during the earthquake. He was under the bricks—all mashed. So he told us that, and then after that place was cleaned up, they called it the Grand Garage, that was there for awhile.

Lisa What a come-down. Okay, I am going to take a short-cut, since you have already been interviewed by somebody from Sonoma State [University], and ask if I can read the material. Do you have a draft copy? I don't need it right now, I just mean that I am going to hope to save a little time as we have a lot to get through. So, if I can have that to read, that would help me a lot. Would be that okay, at some point?

Sawame: This was interviewing the ladies from different countries, she wanted to know what we did, and then she interviewed a lady from... Spanish people or Filipino people...

Lisa All people who lived in Santa Rosa?

Sawame: Yes.

Lisa Well, that would probably give me information about your early life that I would like to have.

Sawame: Oh.

Lisa Okay, so that allows me to go forward a little bit, and ask how you guys met. When did you meet? How you got to know each other?

Hideo: That is what I thought you were going to ask. (*Laughter*)

Lisa Oh, you already know me, like through and through.

Hideo: Well, when I was starting high school, we were living in Tulare County, in the town of Cutler. My father had a 20 acre vineyard and my mother was raising about, oh, I guess, about one hundred chickens on one can of grain. And, she was getting about fifty to sixty eggs a day. And, a man from Petaluma came over there and asked my father if he would like to trade his vineyard for a poultry ranch in Petaluma. My father didn't know too much about poultry, so he didn't make up his mind. My mother made up the mind for him.

Lisa Sounds familiar...

Hideo: Because, with a hundred chickens laying 50 to 60 eggs a day on one pint can of grain. She started to figure out how many thousands of chickens. And we were told, that the place they wanted to trade was having about five thousand chickens. Then, my mother figured out that five thousand chicken should get about 2500 to 3000 eggs a day, on maybe ten cans of grain (*everyone laughs*). So, they decided to trade a 20 acre ranch over there with a ten acre poultry ranch in Petaluma.

Lisa Did they go and check it out first? I mean, did they visit it and check it out and do all of those good things? Did they go and see the ranch in Petaluma?

Hideo: They didn't come to see it. They just agreed. My mother made him agree. In 1923, we moved into Petaluma, and then we found out that just a few cans of grain wasn't feeding the 5000 chickens. And, then the cost of chickens was so high, that we gave it up and then bought the place in Cotati that was vacant – no houses, just open land. There was just a living house, this house here. [We] came to Cotati to build chicken houses, because this neighbor, the owner of the property told my father that he would build his chicken houses for him. So, my father agreed right off. Of course he was only 53 at that time. So, he agreed to almost anything that was agreeable with my mother. (*Laughter*).

Lisa I am not sure I get the connection between his age and doing that (*laughs*).

Hideo: They came over to Cotati and that was where we stayed.

Lisa Since your father was 53 years old which is, I am not sure how many years ago, you have been here?

Hideo: He died the next year. I was 19 at that time, so I took over.

- Lisa** Now, wait a minute, okay, it is time for a rebuttal.
- Hideo:** My mother was operating [it], but she couldn't speak a word of English, so she couldn't do any business. So, I had to take over.
- Martin:** He bought this place, when?
- Hideo:** When he was 46!
- Martin:** Then he didn't die the next year.
- Lisa** No, it can't, well, if he was 19.
- Martin:** My grandfather died when I was three.
- Sawame:** He was 54 when he died.
- Martin:** Well that was 1933.
- Lisa** (*Laughs*) I don't have my calculator with me.
- Sawame:** 1933.
- Martin:** Yes.
- Sawame:** No, you were 25
- Martin:** After they bought this place, grandfather was alive until 1933. He bought it in 1926, and he died in 1933.
- Sawame:** You (*Hideo*) were 27 when he died.
- Martin:** Yes, see I was three.
- Lisa** Well, you were born, anyway, so you were together.
- Sawame:** Uh-Huh. 1929.
- Lisa** So we skipped... How did you get to know each other?
- Sawame:** Well you were going so far back (*General laughter*). We were working in an apple dryer in 1926.
- Martin:** In Sebastopol.
- Lisa** What was it like? You know, when you say 1928, most people from the East, from cities, in 1928 they think about the depression, as it was in the cities. I don't know what it was like here.
- Sawame:** It was depression. We worked for 15 cents an hour, I think, yes, 15 cents an hour. And, we worked ten hours, and we paid, I think, 50 cents a day for our meals. We had room and board at the place. And, we worked at the dryer for ten hours..
- Lisa** And this was in Sonoma County, but you left Sonoma County...
- Sawame:** That was in 1928 and I came back.
- Lisa** By yourself or with your family?
- Sawame:** No, the whole family came back.

Lisa How come? Why?

Sawame: Why? Well, it was our root, I guess. We went out to do some other work, and my father wanted to come back. So, we came back, and then

Hideo: You worked in the apple dryer. That's where I was working, the apple dryer.

Lisa You saw her right off, right? (*Laughter*)

Sawame: No, I don't think so. I was only a kid.

Lisa A child bride. Here we go, okay, I want to hear all the dirt. You met each other working.

Hideo: Working together.

Lisa So, your families didn't introduce you.

Hideo: No.

Lisa (*To Sawame*) Or was it your idea?

Sawame: No, it was his idea.

Martin: I thought you had a *baishakunin* [go-between].

Sawame: No.

Martin: You didn't?

Sawame: Yes.

Martin: So there was an intermediary.

Sawame: Well, there was...

Hideo: Well, we had to choose a mediator. Actually, we were working for him. He was the boss of the apple dryer.

Sawame: It was a custom. Because in a Japanese family, years ago, the father and mother wanted to know if that family record was clear or had a good record. So, that was the main point for the go-between. Without the family [having to] go and search the other family's records, they had to the go-between find out if it is a nice family or a bad family.

Lisa I see. We have one too.

Sawame: You do?

Lisa Uh-huh? It has a different name, but it is the same.

Sawame: Ohhh... In 1929, the owner of the dryer got a place in Watsonville, and he wanted to send him over there to run the dryer, and he didn't want to leave me there because there was another guy...

Lisa (*Laughs*) Somehow I am not surprised...

Sawame: So, he says the only way that we can get together is to get married, and my father said "No" because I had an older sister. But, he didn't want to leave me here, so his father said, "better take her", and so that is how we got married. I was two months shy of 17..

Martin: And you were 24?

Sawame: He was 24.

Lisa Yes, he was 24 and you were two months shy of 17, and did you go to Watsonville together, then?

Sawame: Yes.

Lisa You got married and you left your family. Was that a normal age for you to be getting married, or was that a little early by your family's standards.

Hideo: We got married in Santa Rosa...

Martin: I don't think it was an early age. It was pretty acceptable.

Sawame: In Sebastopol, there were other families where a daughter got married at 16. But, [in one instance] she was much younger.

Martin: Customarily, I think, Japanese at that time, if the girl got into the mid-twenties, they were getting beyond the age of marriage.

Lisa I don't want to ask about the older sister.

Sawame: If the parents approve of the family, then even if the daughter is younger, they approve. Because this sixteen year old girl, the man she married was a widower, but he had a good business and could take good care of their daughter, so it was alright.

Lisa I am going to turn over the tape, because we are getting near the end of the side, and when we get back on the other side of the tape we will be talking about your life in Watsonville, and how you started having your family, okay?

(break)

Lisa How did you start the family?

Sawame: We only stayed one year.

Hideo: What?

Sawame: We only stayed one year and then we came back.

Hideo: Yeah.

Sawame: As we lived over there, people treated us as newlyweds. They wouldn't let me do anything. I didn't have to cook. There was a lady at the house where we had a room...

Hideo: No, we were purchasers of a ranch. I was going there because she couldn't speak English, and wanted me to speak English to do the business. And, after one year of living there [Watsonville], she was able to take over, so I came back to Sebastopol again.

Lisa Back to the apple dryer?

Hideo: Uh-huh. And, my partner took over the business over there.

Sawame: ...came back to the chicken ranch.

Hideo: I had to come back to the same work that I was doing before.

Lisa With your family?

Hideo: Uh-huh.

Sawame: We came home around October

Hideo: Something like that.

Sawame: And, December and January, I remember I was really sick. I was pregnant.

Lisa First time? Did we skip over a kid here? I am asking Martin...

Bruce: She was pregnant with him.

Lisa Okay, are you the eldest? Okay.

Sawame: Uh-huh. So, I was really sick. I could just smell the things that I hated then. I still could smell them...

Lisa I know what you mean.

Sawame: I couldn't eat anything for the longest time, but everybody said, "You have to eat, you have to eat." I was really sick. But, he was born two weeks before our anniversary, first anniversary. Just two weeks before. And then, my next one came within a year, and since then I was busy with the children and work. His mother and father lived with us, and he had a brother and two sisters living with us, and he had a nephew, two nephews, living here. My mother felt sorry for young me to take care of all of the food, but I managed because my mother said, "The family has a lot of brothers and sisters. You be good to them." And, that stuck to me. And, every time I go in to see her, she said, "Be good to the brothers and sisters." She never did tell me anything bad. She said, "You be good to them." And, I think it paid off. In those days, we respected elders, and so whatever his mother would say, if I don't agree, I don't talk back. I just let her talk and take it all in which was making me sick in here sometimes, but it paid off. We don't talk back to the elders, uh-huh. So, I found this out later when we evacuated and went to camp. We weren't living together. She had a sister that had another apartment, and we had one apartment ourselves, and she was telling the other ladies here, "My daughter-in-law is a good person." She was telling the other ladies and they would tell me. That is because I didn't fight with her, I guess. I didn't know that until we were in camp, but I wouldn't fight with her. She was a very domineering woman.

Martin: I was going to say that. My grandmother was really tough. (*Laughter*)

Sawame: And, I wouldn't win anyway (*general laughter*).

Lisa Probably that was a smart decision, I guess. So, you had how many children during this time?

Sawame: I had six children.

Lisa Six children!

Sawame: Just two boys and...

Lisa Who had time to fight?

Sawame: (*Laughs*) Well, now that I think back, I was busy, like Paula and Bruce. I didn't spend time with the children like they do. I couldn't. I was too busy with the work, so now after thinking it over, it just makes me sick. I feel that I could have given them a little bit more time and why didn't I? And, why was I short-tempered with them? And it makes me cry sometimes to think back.

Lisa Well, I don't know if it will make you feel any better, but Paula and Bruce are going to get short-tempered when they have two also. I promise. (*Laughter*). What do you remember about your early years and your extended family?

Hideo: Well.

Lisa Did they fight?

Martin: Not really, you know, I thought basically the family got along pretty well, because in a lot of ways it was like growing up in a period of adversity, you know. Because when I was growing up, we were still in the midst of a depression, you know, and all I can remember is, you work because you are on a farm. You take it for granted that that is what you are going to do, you know. And, then you start going to school, and so it is either you are working or you are going to school, but there are always the good times. But, the family is always close. I don't know that this house was always full of people.

Lisa Where did you go to school?

Martin: My elementary school was Penngrove, and then in my sixth grade, I think it was 1941, so I didn't actually finish sixth grade here, because I went to camp.

Lisa How old were you?

Martin: I was going on 12. We left here in the spring of 1942.

Lisa So, when you were in sixth grade...

Martin: You know, even in those days, you know even after the outbreak of the war, we were rather fortunate, I felt, because we didn't have the heavy racial prejudice that they had in other areas.

Lisa A number of people have told me that about the Sonoma County area. Were there a number of Japanese and Japanese American kids in Penngrove in the school?

Martin: Yes. Well, I think you could probably count them on one hand, but we weren't just alone. I think every school, you know in Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Petaluma, we all had a few Japanese students. Somehow, it is a little different in Sonoma County in some areas. We were not all what you would call "ghetto-ized." At that time, there were very few people living in the towns, [most Japanese families] were all out in the country. They all had farms. I don't think there were more than two or three families that lived in town. I think, in Santa Rosa, there were maybe, there couldn't have been more than four families living in Santa Rosa, in the city itself. But, they were all business people.

Lisa Did you belong to a cultural association? A Japanese group?

Martin: I think we had what you call Hiroshima *Kenjinkai* [an organization comprised of immigrants from the same prefecture in Japan]. People from the same locale would kind of get together.

Lisa Did you participate in something like that? Were you active in any cultural groups?

Martin: Well, it was like you would get together for New Year's parties, but those are the traditional things.

Sawame: I think, before we got married, he was trying to organize a young group. Like now, we have the Japanese American Citizens League. Before that, what was it?

Martin: American Loyalty.

Sawame: American Loyalty. He was trying to get [raise] morale.

Hideo: Before we left the valley, in those days, the labor over there – let's see, I think a carload of workers moved from Fresno to Atwater. Do you know where Atwater is?

Lisa Uh-huh.

Hideo: We went over there to work. When they got into Atwater, there was a group of farm laborers that was willing to chase them back. So, instead of unloading there, they went back to Fresno without work. And, so after learning that, I had quite a feeling against the workers. There was fighting in those days, you know. And down the valley you hear quite a bit of anti-Japanese activity. When we came to Sonoma County, everything was different. Everything was quiet. But, I always had that anti-Japanese feeling in my head. So, when they talked about Loyalty League over there, I thought we should have a Loyalty League started over here too. And, there were older civic groups in Sonoma County at that time, but they just didn't want to have anything to do with it. But, as soon as I turned 21, I started to talk about organizing the Japanese American, we called it, Loyalty League, in those days.

Lisa Okay, the Loyalty League was supposed to do what?

Hideo: Loyalty League is to be loyal to the Stars and Stripes.

Lisa How? How do you show it, or what kind of activities did you do. Did you get together and....

Hideo: We'd get together and talk about being loyal to the country, you now, do what the country says.

Lisa Okay, but it was different here than the valley. A number of people say that. I am going to have to ask Sawame when she comes back, what things were like for her, early on in Santa Rosa. But, I guess I should ask, what was it like for you in the years leading up to Pearl Harbor, as war became more and more of a possibility. Did you notice a change?

- Martin:** No, not during those years. I don't think there was any animosity until the very outbreak of the war.
- Hideo:** Even then there wasn't any animosity in Sonoma County.
- Martin:** It wasn't that, I guess, what you would call it, any overt activities. There might have been some name-calling and that kind of thing. It never got to what you call serious confrontation kind of thing.
- Lisa** Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor? Were you all together?
- Martin:** Yes, right here. Sunday morning, you know. And , you know it was like, shock, you know. Like, "What are they doing?" kind of a thing.
- Martin:** Yeah, being that we were born and raised here, we didn't have the duality thing. We didn't feel any loyalty to Japan, but, you know, you go to school, and they look at you like you're not a part of this country anymore.
- Lisa** Did you have any idea that people would see you that way, when you went to school the next day?
- Martin:** No, because we weren't raised that way. But, I was fortunate, though. Because when I was going to Penngrove School, I had very good teachers, and they were the first to point out that we were not responsible for starting the war, because they could see. They tried to tell the people that we're not, you know, it's not like we're part of them [the Japanese military].
- Lisa** What did you think would happen?
- Martin:** We had no idea. Oh, we thought that we would go through the war like everybody else... the ones that are eligible would go into the service, and then the rest of us would help in whatever work there was to do. We never had any inklings, that there would be mass detention.
- Lisa** Did you have a lot of non-Japanese American friends?
- Martin:** Well, what you call friends, are like our neighbors, you know, the kids that we went to school with, but there is always, maybe, a handful that you get close to more than anyone else.
- Lisa** And, in that handful, I am assuming that they were kind of a mixed group because they were kids who were...
- Martin:** Yes,
- Lisa** Did they change?
- Martin:** No.
- Lisa** So, they knew you.
- Martin:** Yes. And, it was I would say a multi-racial group. There were English kids, there were Jewish kids, our neighbor was German. Our neighbor across the way then was English, Scotch.
- Lisa** So your friends continued to feel the same way about you.

- Martin:** Yes, they never changed.
- Lisa** Did they talk to you about what was going on? Were they perplexed?
- Martin:** Well, at 11, 12 years of age, what do you know, really?
- Lisa** Not much. I have an 11 year old. (*All laugh*). But, of course, he thinks he knows everything which is pretty much why I asked. I figure at that age, people make very absolute pronouncements about things, and I was wondering... For example, you say there was a German kid. Was there a difference in the way the German kid got treated from the way you got treated.
- Martin:** I don't think so. Although my dad says when he was growing up—because he was a teenager during the first world war, the German kids really got it. There was a lot of racial discrimination there.
- Lisa** There were Italian families here too. I image that they had problems, too.
- Martin:** Yes, but I think what you do labor-wise... Unless it impacts on another particular group, I don't think you have this. You don't have this animosity.
- Lisa** Economical impacts?
- Martin:** Yes. It's the same way now. You know, there is so much Japan bashing going on. Unless you are competing very strongly for one particular thing, I don't think there is that animosity.
- Lisa** So, the first inkling that you had that things were going to change, was not even Pearl Harbor. You didn't expect anything to change.
- Martin:** Yes, we knew that things were going to change, but we didn't know to what extent.
- Lisa** What did you think would happen at that point?
- Martin:** Well, we knew the country was in war, we didn't think there was going to be... You know...
- Lisa** It would change for you along with everybody else...
- Martin:** Yes. We didn't think we were going to be excluded.
- Lisa** Okay, when did you have the first inkling that was going to happen?
- Martin:** Well, my dad was very active in the Japanese American Citizens League at that time, and he knew more beforehand because I think from the very outbreak of the war, they were rounding up all of these first generation civic leaders, church ministers, anyone that was an alien and that had anything to do with political... you know, any organization, really. And they were just taking them off to detention centers.
- Lisa** So, are you saying that not being *Nisei*, even though you were active you did not get rounded up at that time.
- Martin:** Well, don't think that there wasn't a lot of investigating, questioning, interrogation kind of situations. But, right away, we were on what they call a quarantine. You could only go...

- Sawame:** Two miles. Just to school or town to shop.
- Lisa** No matter what the time of day was? Not related to a curfew?
- Martin:** No.
- Sawame:** No. Huh uh...
- Lisa** Okay, so you knew something was going on.
- Martin:** Yes.
- Lisa** When did that happen, exactly. How soon after Pearl Harbor?
- Sawame:** Two months before the evacuation.
- Hideo:** Right after Pearl Harbor...
- Lisa** Who ordered it? How did you find out about it?
- Martin:** Well, it was part of the Western Defense Command.
- Lisa** Okay, so the Western Defense Command had published something? How were you told that you couldn't go out at night?
- Martin:** I think every family was notified.
- Lisa** Did you get a letter?
- Sawame:** What was that office that you ran around Sonoma, and Napa, all over, informing the...
- Martin:** There was the office of war mobilization or something like that. I don't know. We were getting brown-outs every so often.
- Lisa** Okay,
- Sawame:** For two whole months you ran around all over Marin County and you don't remember that?
- Martin:** Being that he was JACL Coordinator, he was allowed more leeway as far as his travel [in order] to let people know what to do.
- Lisa** To cooperate in spreading information. Was that it?
- Martin:** Yes.
- Hideo:** Well, there was talk about sending the Japanese back, you know. Well, they might send the Japanese back, but how about the citizens? They can't touch citizens, but there was talk about this sort of thing. So I had to go around and let the people know that it wasn't so.
- Lisa** That it would be okay?
- Sawame:** At this time, an order came from the government office, and he had to go around, notifying the people.
- Martin:** This was after the meeting in San Francisco, right?
- Hideo:** Well, that was after the meeting. The meeting was because there was talk about all this trouble, you know, "sending."

Lisa Was that right after Pear Harbor?

Hideo: Yes.

Lisa Okay.

Hideo: That's when we had the meeting down in San Francisco.

Lisa The JACL.

Hideo: Uh-huh, and I represented Sonoma County and went over there. Then, I was going to oppose all this stuff, you know.

Lisa What stuff?

Sawame: Evacuation.

Hideo: Evacuation.

Lisa They were already talking about evacuation at that meeting?

Hideo: They were talking about concentration of Japanese Americans in the camp, you know.

Lisa Do you remember when this meeting was, exactly? What month?

Hideo: No, I don't.

Martin: It was already into 1942, though, right?

Sawame: It was in '42.

Hideo: Yes.

Sawame: March or April.

Martin: Right after you got the orders?

Hideo: Yes.

Lisa You said it was March or April that you had the meeting in San Francisco?

Sawame: Yes.

Lisa Okay, because the Executive Order was in the middle of February.

Martin: February 19.

Lisa Yes, so right after that, the JACL met to try to figure out how to respond to it in some way...?

Sawame: There were people from the valley came, and they told him, please don't object to it, because we can't sleep in our beds, we have to go under our beds. Otherwise, people were shooting at them.

Lisa So the people who were really feeling the animosity felt that you shouldn't oppose the evacuation. And they really did feel it was for their own good?

Sawame: I guess so.

Hideo: Mmm.

Sawame: They were afraid.

- Lisa** The thing is that some people object to the term “evacuation.” at all. I notice that you use it.
- Sawame:** He objected to “evacuation,” but it didn’t do any good.
- Lisa** Okay.
- Martin:** Well, actually, the word “evacuation” is really a misnomer.
- Lisa** Well, that’s right. Some people like it, and some people don’t.
- Martin:** Yeah, the thing is, at that point [back] then, I don’t think they wanted to use the word, “concentration camp”.
- Lisa** They hardly want to use it now.
- Martin:** Yes. I think people have a different interpretation of what a concentration camp is. Although if you look it up in the dictionary, it doesn’t change anything, you know.
- Lisa** It doesn’t change how people feel about it.
- Martin:** It is still a detention center, no matter which way you look at it.
- Sawame:** These kids were small, even in camp. Well, we were in Merced [Assembly Center] at first. And, in Merced, there were grape vineyards around, and then the military police would go around in their Jeep. When our kids were standing along the fence looking at the grapes, they stopped and picked the grapes and gave it to the kids. So, you know, it wasn’t all bad (*she laughs*), but something you had to do.
- Bruce:** I remember a story, like Grams was saying that before the evacuation they were getting rumors from Europe about what the Nazis were doing. So, he said that when they boarded the trains to go to Merced, and even more so when they boarded the trains in Merced and were going off to who knows where...
- Sawame:** We were all wrecks.
- Lisa** So, did you have the sense that there might be something that they weren’t telling you?
- Martin:** You see, we had a rest stop. I think when we left California, the rest stop was out there in almost Salt Lake City, you know. It is nothing but like flat, nothing country. And they stopped the train, and they ordered you off.
- Sawame:** Like just [to] stretch your legs.
- Martin:** You know, you have a ring of soldiers out there with machine guns. What are you supposed to think?
- Lisa** I don’t know. What were they supposed to have the machine guns for?
- Sawame:** Yeah.
- Martin:** Yeah, they tell you to go out and stretch your legs, right.
- Lisa** That must have been very scary.
- Martin:** It is...

Bruce: So, like Gram was saying, when they left the station, you know, it was blackout, pull the shades down, so no one could see who you were...

Lisa Yeah that sounds real familiar, too.

Martin: In hindsight, for me, you know I have all of these images because of Hollywood and the Newsreels and things. I think, "Oh, my God." Back then when it was happening, I had no concept of what that was like.

Sawame: We heard the Germans tell of...

Martin: Hindsight is a great thing. People would tell you, why would you allow this to happen? 120,000 people...

Lisa I am not asking....

Martin: Mostly women and children, but what are you supposed to do?

Lisa I am not asking why you allowed [this] to happen, and certainly it is not something that I am even planning to ask. I am going to turn over the tape again in a second, but when I turn it back on, I want to go back before the evacuation to this period of time in between Pearl Harbor and evacuation and talk about that ... we'll get there, we'll get there.

Martin: There are a lot of gray areas there.

Lisa Right.

(End Tape #1-,Begin Tape #2

Sawame: We had to get ready to evacuate. We had to sell all of the chickens at that time, because he wouldn't be home [immediately]. He was running around three counties informing people of the new orders that came in, so we had to sell our chickens a little early. We had a German friend over here. He sold his car. He thought the Germans were going to be next. He sold his car and was running around on a bicycle. Mr. Niebach.

Martin: Well I think, personally, and business-wise, I think our biggest benefactor was...

Sawame: Germans.

Martin: No.

Sawame: The English.

Martin: No. Hozz

Sawame: Oh, the Jewish...

Martin: Jewish. He ran the feed company in Petaluma.

Lisa Is that H-a-a-f?

Martin: H-o-z-z. Louis Hozz. And, actually, he knew that we were going to leave. So, he took over more or less to oversee the property, you know, to get tenants, and so forth, while we were away.

- Sawame:** He had a good tenant for us, but he quit early. But, you know when other people came [like] Larson, you know, Swedish people, or whomever, he asked thirty-five dollar a month rent, and they didn't want to pay more than twenty-five dollar a month. Here, the whole place.
- Lisa** It is hard for me to tell whether that was fair or not, so I don't know what money was worth then. Can you tell me whether they did that because they felt they could get away with it, or....
- Sawame:** I think so.
- Martin:** Well, we learned, after the fact, you know, which was more or less in recent times, that people would tell us that almost all the people that leased or rented farms that were from the Japanese that were evacuated, did very well monetarily. Because their overhead wasn't there.
- Lisa** Okay...
- Sawame:** Sure, people with lots of big equipment on a farm. Those people...
- Martin:** But, you know, there is also the brighter side, that at least the property was still there.
- Lisa** Sure. Let's go back again... JACL decided, I guess they decided not to object, and not to contest the evacuation at that meeting.
- Hideo:** Yes, because I was going to oppose it, you know. And, we went there to San Francisco, but the people from the valley said, "Please don't oppose it." Because they said there is a group of people that are ready to pounce on them, jump on them, sitting over there, to get them out of their county, and they were asking the government for protection. And, this was supposed to be one of the ways of protecting us.
- Lisa** This is very interesting to me, because I didn't know that people actually asked the government for help. So, you decided not to, and you came back up here, and you told
- Hideo:** That is why I told people around here that the reason why I didn't oppose it at that meeting was because it was against [that] group's idea, if I oppose it.
- Martin:** Actually, I think you take, almost like a parallel, the black situation in the deep South. Asking for help from like your local Sheriff's Department. You know, when they are in league with the tormenting group, you know.
- Lisa** But, you didn't see it that way at the time.
- Martin:** No, because I think if you go back in all history, the Japanese are more or less, pretty tough on law and order. And, anytime you find figures in power, they are absolute. And, you can't... I don't think you could visualize that you ask the government for help, and it should be there.
- Bruce:** Of course, the alternative is, what do you do if you fight? They have an army. They have all the attorneys. There was hardly any attorneys in the Japanese American community, so there is no power.

- Martin:** Well, the leadership that was left, as far as the Japanese community, was, what, an age group of 21-30.
- Lisa** The leaders were already gone.
- Martin:** Yeah, the parents, the Nisei ones.
- Lisa** Where were they? Did you get to communicate with them?
- Martin:** I don't think so. They were more or less incommunicado. The families couldn't even communicate with them for a period of time, and they were in, like, Crystal City, Texas, New Mexico, down into that area.
- Sawame:** My father was sent to Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- Lisa** Did you get news from him?
- Sawame:** No.
- Lisa** Could you write to him?
- Sawame:** No. They didn't give us his address or anything. They came one night.. The little radio was the reason why they came, but since he was ... in Japan. You know, he was from Kumamoto Prefecture. And, the people looked up at [to] him because he had education and most of them are farmers. They looked up at him so that he would read their letters, write their letters, so he was more or less a leader in Santa Rosa for that Kumamoto group. His family is Hiroshima [*ken*]. You have heard of Hiroshima Prefecture.
- Lisa** Yes.
- Sawame:** My father is Kumamoto, next to Kagoshima. So, just on account of that, they took him, because he was just a leader among his people.
- Lisa** I know this is hindsight, again, but knowing that these people had been taken away, and that you hadn't been able to communicate with them, did that change your ideas of the kind of protection you were likely to get from the government, when you asked for it?
- Martin:** I don't think so. I don't think it ever entered ... I don't know, maybe it did to the older people... it may have. But then, I think he can look back to World War I when German aliens were limited. You couldn't be within 100 miles of the coast, that kind of situation.
- Lisa** This coast?
- Martin:** Either coast. We had a German prisoner-of-war camp in, was it Santa Rosa, or...?
- Bruce:** Windsor.
- Martin:** That was World War II, though.
- Bruce:** Oh, World War II, oh, okay.
- Sawame:** When we were in Gerard, Pennsylvania, they had a lot of those German prisoners working on a farm. You know what they were singing? " Don't fence

me in" (*laughs*). They were German prisoners. We were down in Gerard, Pennsylvania.

Lisa What were you doing in Gerard, Pennsylvania? I missed something here.

Martin: That was after....

Lisa Okay, Okay.

Martin: We'll get there.... (*Laughter*).

Lisa That's okay. Okay, so anyway, you didn't have the leadership that you would have had if these people were not taken away. You were making decisions the best you could, anyway.

Martin: Yes, I don't know, you would think... if you look back, it was a very difficult situation. You know, you have the government telling you what you have to do, this, this and this. And then you have to disseminate that information to your community, and then still there is this thing in the back of your mind, that is this right? Because anyone that has a high school education had taken Civics, and you know that the government cannot do this to a citizen... You know, there is also that due process.

Lisa Was there a lot of discussion of "is this right?"

Martin: Not with the government—I think it was like, you know, if it comes down to the government, you take it as gospel.

Lisa Well, I don't, but...

Martin: You know, since that time I think things have changed. But everything the government says you take with a grain of salt.

Lisa I don't believe in God, now.

Sawame: That's what he did to interpret the government orders to all of the Nisei people. And, Nisei people called him a snake.

Martin: After the meeting, and they realized that they were going to be leaving, to lessen the impact, he sold all of his chickens early, a couple of months before they knew that they were probably leaving, and then he just traveled around and told people to do the same, and ...

Sawame: He would explain the orders to people in different [areas] and they lived in isolated places, Healdsburg and Napa. He traveled to all of those places to inform them of the news, you know, the orders.

Martin: So he was called an FBI informant...

Lisa Well, I guess, economically, it would have worked out well if they had listened.

Martin: Uh-huh.

Sawame: We lost money in the two months that others were still selling eggs.

Lisa Well on the other hand, you were able to get better prices for what you did sell, and make better arrangements than the people who did it at the last minute, I think.

- Sawame:** Fifteen cents a chicken, I don't know.
- Lisa** Well, you know, there are all the stories about the people who sold their cattle for five cents. So, it is hard to tell.
- Sawame:** Yeah, that's true. But, we enjoyed the leisure of sitting around and sleeping as long as we... (*Laughter*)
- Lisa** You don't look like the type.
- Sawame:** Well, we had time to pack our things away that we don't need.
- Martin:** Well, you know, you can't go anyplace and you have no more work to do, basically.
- Lisa** You didn't stop going to school, did you?
- Martin:** No. We weren't that far out, distance wise, as far as school goes.
- Sawame:** We got a good principal that knew these kids, and when they came back, she warned all the children, "I don't want to hear any bad words," because they were here before, so these kids didn't have any trouble at all, because the principal of the school was real nice. She remembered us.
- Lisa** Well, that's interesting. Do you think that there is anything special that you can remember about her that would account for her being particularly fair-minded?
- Sawame:** Was that Mrs. Day? She married Mr. Day?
- Martin:** Yes, it was Miss Wineland. I think she was like a Civics teacher anyway, and she believed in the Constitution, you know, and no matter what transpires between countries, it shouldn't affect people like that.
- Lisa** Well, then the order came down to "evacuate." How did you find out? Was that also family by family? Did they ask the JACL to help tell people? Did you get a letter? Was something posted in the newspaper, that you had to leave? Do you remember?
- Martin:** Probably, it wasn't something that came about overnight. I think there was a period of time....
- Sawame:** It came out that you had to leave by a certain time.
- Martin:** Because, we had to go to Santa Rosa to get inoculations and that kind of stuff, you know, beforehand. And so, by then everything was in the mill.
- Lisa** Right, but there must have been something telling you to go [to] a train and to do something specific.
- Sawame:** At a certain time. The 18th.
- Bruce:** There were orders.
- Martin:** Yeah. I don't know whether you had... Did you have to around and tell people or was it published in the paper?
- Sawame:** I think you had to go around, because ...

Martin: There were still some families where they had people who couldn't speak English.

Sawame: The Marin people and Napa people were to go to the station on the 17th of May. And, we left on the 18th of May, from Santa Rosa. But, we were in after... let's see... we went to Merced and we were over there until September 22, something like that.

Martin: It was ironic, because the doctor that gave us our shots, was Dr. Mark Hutchinson, and his mother lived across the street from us. But we grew up more or less together. He said that he just couldn't believe it.

Sawame: He went on the train with us to Merced.

Lisa Well, he clearly didn't think it was for your protection.

Martin: Well, at that point, it is hard to tell what you really believed, you know.

Lisa Do you want to tell me anything else about the trip? You started talking about the train before.

Martin: Yeah, well, we boarded the train in Santa Rosa. You know, the tracks went right down next to the property. Our neighbors were out there, waving good-bye.

Sawame: This neighbor over here was a German, and she had a camera with her, and she wanted to take a picture of us on the train, and the MP came and took the film out.

Lisa Really, my goodness.

Sawame: So, after the train left, she remembered we were on Car #3, and she said that when the train came by in the back of our place, she said that Paper 3 fell off the train right there in back of our property. She wrote to me after that.

Lisa No kidding.

Sawame: So (*laughs*) when we go to Merced, it was a hot, hot place. You know how Merced is, hot! Everything was dusty, and there was a tar paper barracks with cement floor. The property was adobe, so when it rained, our shoes would have mud. There was no porch or anything, so would walk right into ... [our living quarters].

Martin: That was, the county fairgrounds.

Sawame: Yeah, the county fairgrounds. And, with all the children, I had to wash every day, like this. With the..

Lisa Washboard.

Sawame: Yeah. So, I would get up and go at 4 o'clock in the morning, because if I go at the regular time, there were only about six wash tubs that was available to the Marin and Sonoma people. And, with my six children, the little one was 13 months old, she had to be changed twice a day

Lisa At least...

Sawame: Yes, a lot of washing to do, so...

Lisa How much baggage were you allowed to bring with you to Merced?

Sawame: Just what we could carry.

Lisa That's not a lot of diapers.

(Martin and Hideo—,Laughter)

Sawame: That was my worst worry on the trip. To Merced it was alright, but from Merced to Colorado, it took awhile on the train. I shall never forget those days. We didn't have Pampers and couldn't carry too many diapers, so I tried to rinse on the train. The conductor wouldn't let me. That was my worst worry. And then, in between, she had...[to have milk]. We were in a Pullman, but they wouldn't give us any milk, so I talked to the doctor on the train that she needs milk. So, when we were, I don't know where we were, he stopped the train so that we could buy milk for her.

Martin: We stopped in Salt Lake City.

Sawame: Oh, wherever it was. The rest of the children were old enough to eat themselves, but she couldn't, she was only 13 months.

Martin: You know how it is for kids. It's an adventure..

Lisa Well, it was, sure. So you were in Granada?

Martin: Yes.

Lisa I am looking to see how long the trip was. I am just checking the map.

Martin: It took about three days, I think.

Lisa Wow. It was a long time for kids on a train. And, at that point, it was an adventure for you.

Martin: Yeah, you know, for young kids, it is an adventure.

Lisa Okay, so this is between Merced and Granada. Uh, so you went there in September, to Granada?

Sawame: Yes September, I think it was the 22nd.

Lisa Did they explain why they were moving you again, before you left?

Sawame: Well, Merced, we knew it was temporary, but where we were destined to go was Colorado. When we got there, they did send crews there early, and, well, they had to make twelve [barracks]. You've seen the picture...

Lisa Yeah.

Sawame: They had to make 12... How many barracks were there in each block?

Martin: Yeah, 12 barracks.

Sawame: So, we got there later than a lot of people, but still our facility wasn't quite ready. I wanted to wash her diapers, but there was no laundry room to wash

yet. When we got there, the shower – I think the toilet bowls were ready, but the not the shower. I think the mess hall was ready.

Martin: It was basically set up like a military installation.

Lisa Yeah. Well, guess who built it? It's not surprising.

Martin: Yeah, but they asked the "evacuees" to be the labor, also.

Sawame: My little girl couldn't eat the food that they served, you know. So, I had to ask for baby food. It took awhile before that came.

Lisa Well, you couldn't have been the only one with that problem. There must have been a lot of people.

Sawame: Mmm.

Lisa So, what did you do in the meantime?

Sawame: We fed her rice. Because the food that the cook made was – with just a lot of pepper, or chili or whatever.

Martin: Basically, I think they were GI menus.

Lisa Sure.

Martin: It's okay for teenagers and adults, but not for babies.

Sawame: When we first got to the mess hall, the tables were much lower than this, and then the benches were about that much from the floor. The carpenter in Colorado, Lamar, were ignorant about Japanese people. They thought they were small people. *(Both women laugh)*

Lisa Tried not to waste wood, huh?

Sawame: When in Sebastopol, the young boys, Ono boys, they are big. "They are not Japanese are they?" And, "Yes they are."

Lisa Japanese farm boys.

Sawame: So, they made the benches so low.

Lisa Oh, my goodness.

Sawame: It was good for the children.

Lisa Well, at least you didn't have to worry about high chairs. That's what I thought you were going to say, that there was no place for the little kids to sit.

Sawame: No, we didn't have to worry about that.

Lisa I think that someone had told me about that and I hadn't noticed it in the photographs.

Sawame: And then the carpenter said, "I notice that you have a lot of well educated people in this group of young boys." He said, "We didn't have any education, no more than high school" and he noticed that a lot of the young people were in college or college graduates. And he said, "I didn't know that Japanese were educated people."

Lisa These were Colorado carpenters? Local people?

Sawame: Yes.

Lisa They never met anybody who was Japanese before?

Sawame: I don't think so.

Martin: I don't think there was ever any in that area.

Lisa No, it must have been quite an education for them. So, at this point, you are still with the rest of the Sonoma and Marin people, is that right?

Sawame: Uh-huh.

Lisa Did you stay together as a Community? In a bloc?

Martin: Pretty much. Yes.

Sawame: Until we were given opportunity... when the Japanese 442nd [Infantry Regiment] was successful. Then, the order came that we could send our children to college—out of the camp.

Lisa Right.

Sawame: So, after that, we said, "We're not going to stay in camp too long." We wanted to find a place to go. That is one reason we found a place in Pennsylvania.

Martin: While we were in camp, they didn't stay inside the camp for the whole time. They moved to a ranch. It was a farm that was part of the area, and it was in an area that they called the Arkansas River Valley, you know, just a few miles off from the labor camp, I think, sugar beet camp in those days. Being that my dad ran a poultry ranch here, you know, they set up a poultry ranch out there for the camp, for fresh eggs.

Lisa They set up a poultry ranch?

Martin: Yes, for the camp.

Lisa Who set it up?

Sawame: He supervised. And the government bought the chickens, and all the helpers came to build the little hutches and stuff.

Lisa So, let me just clarify this. How long did you actually spend in Granada, in the camp?

Sawame: Until 1945. We were there '42 and we stayed until July of 1945.

Lisa But, you lived outside of the camp, how much of the time?

Sawame: Just out of the gates.

Hideo: Two years.

Lisa So at what point did they decide that you were no longer...

Sawame: Well we were still under the government.

- Martin:** Yes. See, the thing is, it wasn't too long after we got into camp, that they allowed the young men to go out to work in... like sugar fields in all the surrounding area, because they needed labor.
- Sawame:** Onion fields, and...
- Martin:** And we had money, because some of them even went back to Eastern Washington.
- Lisa** You're kidding. I thought they weren't allowed to go to the coasts.
- Martin:** Well, it wasn't the coast. But, there was still Eastern Washington. Because they had a lot of soldiers that they had to get out...
- Bruce:** There was an ulterior motive for Grandpa moving... going out to Koen Ranch. Right? He told me that the reason he wanted to go out to Koen Ranch was because of your political activity, because you went to camp, right?
- Hideo:** Well, the thing is, the reason why we went to Pennsylvania...
- Sawame:** The Koen Ranch!
- Bruce:** The Koen Ranch.
- Hideo:** Well...
- Sawame:** The children. There are lots of children, and they are idle all the time. And, he wanted to get away from idle people. And then there is grown-up idle people—you get what I mean?
- Lisa** Yeah, I do.
- Sawame:** So he wanted to separate them. So, he brought them out to Koen Ranch to be out of that camp.
- Lisa** Were you able to take care of what your kids were doing? And, supervise them the same way?
- Sawame:** I was very fortunate. My children were real good. I didn't have to tell them to come home before dark. By 8 o'clock, they were all in the barracks. They took good care of themselves, and I didn't have to tell them. He [Martin] was 12, and the other one was 10, and the girls, they stayed home. But when he was in camp, he and another boy, they would get up, 3 in the morning, to go... in those days, the stoves were all black, burning coal, and they would go and start the fire for the cooks in the mess hall.
- Martin:** That couldn't have been more than maybe the last six months that we were in camp.
- Sawame:** Yeah, well, still...
- Martin:** That was after we came back into camp from Koen Ranch. They closed the ranch, and we came back into camp. And, by this time, you know, the people that were able to, had already left camp, and little by little, they were losing manpower, so there was something for us to do.
- Lisa** I see.

- Sawame:** And, he was getting nineteen dollars a month as a foreman. I got sixteen dollars a month to raise the baby chicks, and these kids got twelve dollars a month?
- Martin:** Maybe.
- Sawame:** To help us. To do little chores around the place. They drove the tractor around, to take the feed around to all of the houses.
- Martin:** You know, it's the things that you do normally on a farm.
- Sawame:** Right. But they got paid. I think it was about 12 dollars.
- Lisa** In the camp or on the ranch, tell me ways in which your life was different. It is probably really obvious, but different than if you had stayed in California...
- Sawame:** That is quite different. He decided that if we go out, my children don't have to eat the food that somebody else cooked. If I cook, I make the food that they like. So, I did my own cooking, did my own baking, and the government paid us, I forgot what it was, so much for each person a day. I guess they gave me three dollars or something a day.
- Martin:** It was a regular government subsistence allowance, just like a soldier would get, I think.
- Sawame:** So, I was given a ration book. We had to use ration books to buy meat. Even Spam was rationed. So, I would buy a big chuck roast, and I would divide it into five days, the week. So that I know that I won't run out of meat. I didn't feed them very much meat. I would cut them up in small squares and brown them, and make gravy and put it over a vegetable and rice, or put it on the bread. I have to make sukiyaki, things like that, with very little meat. So, still, it was enough for us. We didn't need more. I don't know why we didn't eat more chicken. I don't remember.
- Martin:** You were probably sick of looking at them... *(General laughter)*
- Sawame:** Well, it was hard, but with that...
- Lisa** You probably would have been facing that if you lived here. I mean, I'm sure that the meat was rationed here, too.
- Sawame:** I think so.
- Martin:** Yeah. Things would have changed on that end.
- Sawame:** Another thing. We saved a little bit. Even on that, because the meat was cheap over in Colorado. You could get a big steak for yourself for about 85 cents in a restaurant. So, the meat was cheap. So, it didn't cost us too much to buy meat, and I used a lot of vegetable. So, I think we did alright. Anyway, we were buying E-bonds. Instead of having money with us, we bought bonds. So, we had quite a few saved up when we left camp.
- Lisa** You were pretty fortunate.
- Sawame:** Well, the government gave us three dollars a month for our clothing, but we didn't have to buy. Once that I had the wool clothes for them, I didn't have to

buy every month. And we all wore a heavy jacket, so that you don't have to buy it too often. Well, we just didn't splurge. There is nothing to splurge on.

Lisa (Laughs) Nothing to splurge on.

Sawame: The only thing is, I was able to buy sugar and bake cookies for them.

Lisa So, that was really a good reason. Food was a good reason to be out of camp. I probably could have predicted that. It is very important to my people, too.

Bruce: There was a point that I was trying to get grandpa to make earlier. He told me earlier that because he was one of the people that encouraged people to leave their homes and stuff, there were people who didn't like you in camp.

Sawame: Oh, they didn't like him.

Bruce: And, you didn't want to stay there because of getting others attention. And then, when they went to [camp], he was still involved, as a community leader in camp. In 1943, they had the meeting in Salt Lake City? The JACL had another meeting?

Hideo: Yes.

Lisa Do you want to tell me about that?

Bruce: Tell her about that meeting.

Hideo: Well, at the meeting, they were going to oppose young people going into the army. You know.

Lisa Oh?

Hideo: And, the government wanted volunteers for the army, and there were quite a few of us that opposed this volunteering stuff. Instead of being treated like any other American citizen and drafted—because other people were being drafted, I wanted our people to be drafted the same way—treated the same way. So, when we went to Salt Lake City to the meeting, I had to stand up on that right and oppose volunteering. And that is where, when I got back to camp, the people started to criticize me for [that].

Lisa For opposing volunteering?

Hideo: For what I stood for, you know. But, I said as long as our children are being American citizens, I want them to be treated like American citizens, and be drafted.

Lisa I am confused about what you felt. Because, they weren't being treated like the other citizens already, correct? They were in camp. There was already separation made.

Hideo: Well, I wanted them to be treated like the other citizens, anyway.

Lisa Right. You felt enough difference is enough? If they had been treated like citizens. they wouldn't have been in camp, from my point of view. So, they were treated separately from the other citizens. And, then at a certain point you felt enough difference from the other citizens is enough, or ...

- Hideo:** No, I just wanted to stand up for the citizen's rights, you know. And, if I wanted them to be treated like American citizens, I am still asking for a citizen's right of returning to our places, you know.
- Lisa** Right, which you had opposed to begin with anyway.
- Hideo:** So, that is why, they thought that I was going against our people's wishes.
- Lisa** Because, your people's wishes? To volunteer?
- Hideo:** Our people's wishes [were] to volunteer. Yes. If they want to go, let 'em go. If not, draft 'em. But, my point was drafting because volunteering is not the American way.
- Lisa** No, it is not supposed to be. Volunteering is supposed to be part of the American way. I know what you mean.
- Hideo:** That is why I had opposition in camp, because... people didn't like my way of thinking, it seems.
- Lisa** How did they show their opposition to what you said? Did they talk to you about it.
- Hideo:** They didn't talk to me about it, but they just ignored me.
- Sawame:** Young boys all surrounded him one night, and one of the fellows went back to the camp and got a beating.
- Lisa** After this meeting?
- Sawame:** Uh-huh.
- Hideo:** (*chuckles*)
- Sawame:** But, ...
- Hideo:** But, Army took it the way, my way, anyway, and they still had to draft him.
- Lisa** Was the camp generally a peaceful place? I mean, were there a lot of disagreements that were ...
- Sawame:** Amache was peaceful.
- Hideo:** Yes, a peaceful camp.
- Sawame:** Until... there were a little bit of [agitation] from a Los Angeles group. They were kind of aggressive.
- Hideo:** But they were aggressive in words, but not...
- Sawame:** Violent.
- Hideo:** Violent.
- Sawame:** Physically.
- Lisa** I know there was kind of like a police force within the camp. Japanese Americans. How did people feel about them? Did they...?
- Sawame:** They didn't give them any trouble.

- Lisa** No, they didn't. Okay.
- Martin:** Well, they always felt that you know you have to have someone to maintain a little semblance of order. (*Laughs*)
- Lisa** I see. So, just to go back, I need to understand whether you felt, given the war, or given the possible violence in the valley, it was an okay for the government to put citizens into the camp. I need to understand. You didn't feel it was okay for citizens to have to volunteer. You wanted them to be drafted, correct?
- Hideo:** Uh-huh.
- Lisa** Okay. When the government put the Japanese American citizens into the camps, did you feel that that was a right and appropriate thing for them to do to citizens.
- Hideo:** Well, I didn't think it was the right thing for the government to do, to put us in camp, but at the same time, it wasn't enough to oppose the government.
- Martin:** I think at that point, you have this feeling, that the only other alternative is to ship you back to Japan, lock, stock and barrel. And, why should anyone born here have to undergo such a thing.
- Sawame:** We didn't want that... (*laughs*).
- Martin:** Because, in those situations there are all sorts of rumors.
- Lisa** Except I think what is interesting in what you just said, Martin, is the limitation of the options. We either have this option or we have that option.. and there is nothing left.
- Martin:** Yes, we either go peacefully or else.
- Lisa** Or the other option is to be shipped off to a country which is not your country.
- Martin:** That's right.
- Lisa** And it is amazing to me, that it could have come down so clearly to only those two options. There just didn't seem to be any escape from that decision.
- Sawame:** There was one camp, up there at Tule Lake. Those people are the ones that said they wanted to go to Japan.
- Martin:** Well, that was another, like an assembly center, for dissidents.
- Lisa** There were many different reasons for people being there.
- Martin:** And a lot of times, people my age, they went because their parents told them to go. You know, because the parents may have had some place to go to Japan, but the kids had no place to go. But, if the parents are going to go, they have no choice.
- Lisa** Now, here is an interesting question. Most of the families that I talked to, have said that the parents discussed it with the children. They said, "what do you want to do?" And they abided by the children's wishes when they decided not to go.

- Sawame:** A lot of children, those days, like our family, they were too young to discuss with.
- Lisa** It wasn't even a question, because they were born here.
- Martin:** Well, I think at that point, the ones that talk about children, are families who had fathers older than my dad, and kids older than me.
- Lisa** Oh, sure.
- Martin:** Probably, high school or college kids.
- Lisa** Right. Someone told me there were also Nisei making the decisions. It was different for them. Okay. You know, some of the families that I have talked to have been Japanese Christian denominations and some are Buddhist, and I don't really know what your family...
- Martin:** We are Buddhist.
- Lisa** You are Buddhist. Was there any chance for any religious observance in camp?
- Hideo:** No.
- Lisa** Was that because people didn't really generally observe very much, or because it was forbidden? Or what?
- Martin:** They had churches in camp?
- Hideo:** Oh, yeah.
- Sawame:** Then, you didn't have to go if you didn't want to...
- Lisa** Of course not...
- Martin:** See, in the beginning, the Buddhist churches didn't have that many ministers, because they were almost all sent to the detention centers.
- Sawame:** They were down in Crystal City.
- Lisa** So it was difficult to get that kind of activity together. Did people eventually organize?
- Martin:** Well, I think that might have been one of the times when they had young people attending Christian churches because they were more readily available. And, I think they felt that the children had to have some religious training, you know?
- Lisa** What other kinds of activities did people organize in camp?
- Martin:** I think anything to take up the time.
- Sawame:** All kinds of things. Culture. They had all kinds of culture—flower arranging and some carving.
- Martin:** I think that was after the initial shock was over—when they got into a regular living routine, that they found they had this time to do something with.
- Lisa** Did you go to school regularly?
- Martin:** Well (*all laugh*). In Colorado we did. In Merced....

- Lisa** Well, that was the summer, anyway, pretty much.
- Martin:** Yes. They had these classes if you wished to attend. That was the situation in Merced, and we didn't have that many qualified teachers, you know. But, when we went to Colorado it was different. They had a regular school set up, and we had some pretty good teachers, I thought, you know. A lot of times, if you looked at their resumes, they were mostly from the Middle West. Probably never had any contact with Japanese before.
- Lisa** Oh, so they weren't from people inside the camp.
- Martin:** Well, yeah, they had both. They had both, but they had a lot of Caucasian teachers. It was a first time experience for them also.
- Lisa** How did you know that? I mean..
- Martin:** This was from talking with them later.
- Lisa** What did they say?
- Martin:** They really didn't know what to expect, because they never had any contact before. There weren't any Japanese in Oklahoma and Kansas and those areas, where most of these teachers came from. But, on the whole, they were pretty nice. I think some of them had connections with the American Friends Society. And, so it makes them, kind of like. special people.
- Lisa** Yeah, in what way?
- Martin:** They don't have this prejudice. I mean, they accept people as people.
- Lisa** You think that that comes from the teaching of the Friends?
- Martin:** Well, possibly, yeah, because that's the way they are. And, even from the very beginning, they have been very good with helping the Japanese, you know, resettlement and all of this kind of thing.
- Lisa** Okay, we are getting there. How did you know that you would be allowed to return to California? When did you start hearing about the end of the war? What did you hear? How did you get news about the war, altogether in camp?
- Martin:** Every so often you would hear. It would appear in the newspaper.
- Lisa** Did you get regular newspapers, or a camp newspaper?
- Martin:** They had a camp newspaper.
- Sawame:** Yeah, we had a camp newspaper.
- Bruce:** Did you get *Stars and Stripes*?
- Martin:** No. I think the big paper there was the *Denver Post*.
- Lisa** So, you got to see the *Denver Post*?
- Martin:** Yeah.
- Lisa** You didn't have radios, I understand. Okay.
- Bruce:** Grandma's brother was in Europe for a little while.

- Lisa** You got letters...
- Bruce:** I'm not sure, was uncle Min able to write when he was in Europe?
- Sawame:** No, he didn't write at all I don't think, but he was injured not soon after he went to Italy, He was injured.
- Lisa** He was in the 442nd?
- Sawame:** Yes, and my, well, that's the youngest brother. He lives in Santa Rosa. He was hit by shrapnel and he was in Paris for a long time, recuperating until he was ready to come home. But, my older brother was in Italy from the beginning to the end. And he enjoyed it. *(Everyone laughs)*
- Martin:** He liked that army life.
- Sawame:** He liked...
- Lisa** I'm really sorry. I like that impression of Tak.
- Sawame:** When we ask him to talk about the time when he was over there, you can't stop him talking.
- Lisa** Well, I wish he were here.
- Sawame:** *(Laughs)* He's in Saratoga. But there is a difference in the two boys. This one over here don't want to talk about it, and he didn't want to go to this war, and my father said, well, you are an American citizen. You have loyalty to your country, so you will go.
- Lisa** Were your parents and the other parts of your family also in Amache camp?
- Sawame:** My father and mother, here, and this one in Santa Rosa didn't want to go. The older brother went. The youngest one didn't want to go, and my father said you owe it to the country to go.
- Lisa** Was this conversation, was this in camp, or was this back...
- Both:** It was in camp.
- Sawame:** They were in camp already.
- Martin:** Yeah, they were drafted out of camp.
- Lisa** Do you remember the loyalty oath in camp for anybody who was going to possibly be drafted or volunteer?
- Sawame:** No.
- Martin:** Yeah, we had two questions.
- Lisa** Two questions?
- Sawame:** Oh "yes and no?"
- Martin:** A "yes-yes" and a "no-no" I think every camp had some of those...
- Lisa** Henry, what did you write, do you remember?
- Martin:** He was going to join the army and go into the MIS, and

Sawame: They didn't want him...

Hideo: No.

Sawame: He had too many children! (*laughs*)

Martin: At that time, Walter Tsukamoto was [the] Army recruiter in camp. He told my dad, "You've got a sick wife and six little kids, and he says "You've got to be kidding". He said, "What are they going to do if you leave?"

Lisa I don't have the exact wording of the two questions, here, I don't think.

Martin: It's like a double edged sword when you read it.

Lisa One of them was, would you swear not to have any allegiance to the emperor, and the other one, I can't remember.

Martin: Actually, they are very similar and your response either has to be completely "yes" or completely "no," I think. And, a lot of times, I think some of the younger guys were influenced by their fathers.

Sawame: They went to the federal prison.

Lisa Yes, did your father have to sign?

Martin: Yes, he did.

Lisa I am curious about what his answers were?

Martin: All males, I think, between the ages of 18 to whatever, had to ... [register].

Lisa Well, at any rate.

Martin: He must have signed "yes" because he was ready to go, you know.

Sawame: None of my family went to prison. They all went to war.

Bruce: Great alternative.

Martin: But then, you know, we had uncles that were born here, but they spent their major educational period in Japan, and their thinking was that. And one of them said he had a uniform on, but he had none of the benefits of a uniformed serviceman. They wound up repairing levees and stuff down south. He said, he thought he had to work harder than if they had gone to the regular army.

Lisa Were they even considered eligible to do the translation services?

Martin: I think if the questionnaire went otherwise, they probably would have, you know. But a lot of times when they were like 18 or 19, it is very difficult to say how you would respond to a question like that.

Lisa Right.

Martin: Because if you were born and raised here and at that time you probably had finished high school, I think your educational background [would imply] there wouldn't be any question.

Lisa Sure.

- Martin:** But if you were just born here, and raised in Japan, I think your answers would be different.
- Lisa** Well, I understand that if you were raised here, there was no right answer to one of those questions. That is why I am looking for exactly the way it was worded.
- Martin:** Yeah, because I think that most of...
- Lisa** Here it is! Yeah, one of them said, "Will you give up your Japanese citizenship?" which was a problem for the Issei, because they couldn't be American citizens, and the other one...
- Bruce:** Do you forswear allegiance to...
- Lisa** Even if you didn't have it [allegiance] to begin with, you were still admitting that you had it, in order to forswear it, that was the problem. So, the "no-no's" went to Tule Lake.
- Martin:** A lot of the "no-no's" went into Federal prison.
- Lisa** That's true, too.
- Martin:** Yeah. Montana, and..
- Sawame:** And Florida..
- Lisa** But your uncles, where did they go?
- Martin:** They didn't go into prison, I don't think
- Sawame:** Which uncle are you talking about?
- Martin:** Akira.
- Sawame:** No, he didn't go to prison. No.
- Martin:** He went into the army, but it was under special circumstances, like he was considered, you know.
- Lisa** That kitchen corps, or whatever.
- Martin:** He did all the CCC type of work.
- Lisa** So, eventually they said, "You're not a clear and present danger to the government anymore (*chuckles*), so you can go back to California." What had you been hearing about the progress of the war while you were in camp? At this point, did you know how the war was going in Europe and in the Pacific? Did you hear news from...?
- Sawame:** We had a radio.
- Lisa** (*Laughs*) You had a radio! You've got to say these things!
- Martin:** She didn't go straight back to California.
- Lisa** Oh, okay. So, you went from the ranch back to camp for awhile, and then you went to Pennsylvania. Is that right?
- Sawame:** Uh-huh.

- Martin:** This was in June or July of 1945. So, it was very near the end of the war.
- Sawame:** When the war was over, then we knew we were going to come home.
- Bruce:** I thought Grandpa said he didn't want to come home, and he told me he was intent on going to Pennsylvania...
- Sawame:** But the reason why he didn't want to come home, wasn't in a hurry to come home, because we had six children and if one of them should get sick, what am I going to do if the doctor refused to look after sick children? That was his main point, not wanting to rush back home.
- Lisa:** So, you heard things about what was going on in California that made you worry.
- Sawame:** We didn't hear too much about it, but.. we were feeling small, I think. You know, with all that, you don't feel so big.
- Lisa:** Yeah, I'm sure that's true.
- Sawame:** Just like putting you into a small closet for awhile (*laugh*). You can't think big.
- Martin:** We went to Pennsylvania, and he wanted to get settled there, so there would be a place for people coming out of camp to go to.
- Lisa:** Oh, really.
- Hideo:** If they come back to California, and have another uprising, you know, about the...
- Sawame:** Hate.
- Hideo:** Hate system. And, they start to criticize the government for sending the Japanese back into California, where are the people going to go? I thought maybe if I go East and find a place for the people, in case they are refused in California, that would be available in the East, you know. That is why we went to Pennsylvania, to be known over there.
- Lisa:** Which part of Pennsylvania was that again?
- Hideo:** Girard.
- Sawame:** We were about 12 miles South of Erie, Pennsylvania.
- Lisa:** Okay, that is not the Amish area?
- Sawame:** No, no, no, no... that's way up north.
- Lisa:** I was wondering how you picked Pennsylvania?
- Sawame:** Oh, there was a potato king over there and we went to work for this man on the potato ranch. From Girard, we could see the Lake Erie—pretty.
- Martin:** And bitterly cold (*laughs*).
- Sawame:** Yes, it was cold.

- Lisa** I don't know. I am going to try to figure out now, how you got back here, and what things were like. Did you meet any kind of prejudice while you were in Pennsylvania.
- Sawame:** Oh, no!
- Hideo:** No.
- Sawame:** They were nice to us. They wanted us to join the church. A Christian church would come. A Catholic church would come.
- Lisa** That's nice alright (*Laughter*)
- Sawame:** And, we lived about 20 minutes walk from the little burg where I would go to get my groceries. So, my youngest daughter and I would walk when the others are at work, you know. I would walk to get groceries, and on the way people would stop us and talk to us, and then later on they would say, "You people are so neat." (*Laughter*) They had never seen a person like us, they would tell us.
- Lisa** Because of what you look like, or the way you ate...?
- Sawame:** Well, I guess they hadn't seen Japanese people in that area. So we had nice neighbors...
- Hideo:** Yeah...
- Sawame:** There was a big Sacred Heart church next to us. That was what I didn't like, to have a high chimney, and we get all the coal (*Laughter*) and my laundry would get black.
- Lisa** I'm glad you're here now.
- Sawame:** That's about the only thing I didn't like about the area, that they burned coal, you know. We all did, but you have to bring your laundry wire in every time. When you are ready to hang it up, you string the line out again, because it would get black.
- Martin:** We worked for a potato farmer. And, he had property in Pennsylvania as well as, what they call upper New York State, and so I would be located from like Erie, Pennsylvania and then, I guess New York City, South would be Cleveland, and then going more east would be Pittsburgh. It was like a triangle area we [were] living in.
- Lisa** So, did you move around?
- Martin:** No, no we just lived in that one place, in Gerard. You know, were just like a stone's throw from Lake Erie.
- Lisa** I see.
- Martin:** But, I think one winter there convinced us that we're not going to stay there.
- Lisa** Okay, so you weren't there more than a year?
- Martin:** We were there about six months.
- Lisa** Okay, and then you came back.

Sawame: We got word that my mother was dying. So, we decided. As soon as we got ready to pack our things, we left, and we drove the southern route because it was January, I think it was January 6. It was pretty cold. And, he did all the driving because the kids didn't...

Martin: We didn't have a license yet. Not that we couldn't drive, you know. We drove trucks over in Colorado, but then we weren't licensed.

Sawame: We packed all of our belongings. We had a big thing shipped by Mayflower and had a trailer in back of our car. He bought a second-hand Lincoln Zephyr which had a lot of power, had 12 cylinders. So, with the big family and by the time he quit driving it was about 9-10 o'clock. and by then there was no motel. So, poor kids all slept in the car. He and the two boys sat in the front and I had the five of us [in back]. The bottom was all filled with pillow and comforters, so they were able to sleep and I had just a little bit in the corner (*laughs*).

Martin: I think the funniest thing on that trip was [as]we were driving back, and from Pennsylvania to Ohio, down into Kentucky, into the hill country, the tires went out. And here we're up in the hills of Kentucky, [and there] lies two brand new tires. You know, this was the early part of 1946. I don't think they even started making tires again, you know.

Sawame: He went running through that whole town looking for a tire.

Martin: The guy at the service station garage—I don't think he had ever seen a Japanese before, but he was so nice. He went all over town looking for those tires and he found it.

Sawame: But, when we went to the restroom, it was a hole in the seat... (*laughs*).

Martin: Yeah... it was a privy. (*All laugh*)

Lisa I get it—it was a back hills area.

Sawame: Uh-huh. When we came to Arkansas, it was a downpour rain, so he couldn't see the road, so we stayed right in the middle... A family, the children come home from school in a bus, and the father would come to pick them up to the road on a rowboat.

Lisa Funny.

Sawame: And the Mississippi river was so dirty. I remember that. And, when we came into Texas – I don't remember what I fed the children, you know. I would buy food and I would make sandwiches for them, and have oranges. They have to have orange and stuff, but when I stopped in Texas, I don't know what town it was. The owner of the store opened the door, came to greet us, and he was so nice. Then, I said, "How come?" Then later on I said, "Oh, the 442nd saved Texas."

Lisa That's right.

Sawame: So, after that—I didn't think about it when I was over there. He was so nice and after I bought the things, he came and opened the door for me and brought the things to the car, and then I bought some citrus orange from California. When

we came into the border [area], the border people, they had other orange. They stopped at the guard. Ours, they gave it back to us, because it was from California (*laughs*). So, I wish now I had a diary to write on that trip because I don't remember what I fed the children!

Lisa Or how you did the laundry? That's the other important question here.

Sawame: That's another thing. I don't remember!

Lisa It's okay. I mean it's clear that the trip was really important to you...

Sawame: It took 7 days...

Lisa Yeah. It must have been quite a seven days.

Sawame: My mother didn't die right off, but she did die, but it was in January.

Lisa After you got here.

Sawame: Uh-huh. I wish I could remember more.

Lisa So, after you guys settled with your family. Actually, what was it like coming back. What was it like coming back to school, Martin?

Martin: Well, a lot of the kids that I went to elementary school were in Petaluma High then, and a lot of the kids were the same, you now. Well, I don't know. I think like in any town there is always a few that are bigots, or whatever you want to call them. But, we never had any incidents within the town, you know.

Lisa So, you came back to your same town, and your land. Did you lose school time at all?

Martin: Not really. I mean, if I went on for higher education, maybe I might have. But, at that point I might have missed some. You know, my math isn't what it should be, you know.

Lisa Neither is mine!

Sawame: You told me that.

Martin: You could take Business Math, because you don't have algebra to go on to those things.

Sawame: When you were in Pennsylvania, you moved to a school in Pennsylvania, but you were doing good. I was happy.

Martin: Well, I did okay in English grammar. I mean, English Lit. I got to English Grammar and because I didn't turn my homework in, I flunked the course (*Laughter*).

I love literature, you know. Most people don't like English Literature, you know, but I didn't care for grammar. It is something that I... I never could get that structuring business.

Lisa It's funny, because you seem to have a really organized mind...

Martin: Oh... it's very disorganized, I think.

Lisa Well, I don't know.

- Martin:** But, school-wise, you know, I don't think we did as well as we could have.
- Lisa** I mean, not how well you did, but when you came back, you were with the same group of kids, the same grade level. You didn't have to repeat a year or anything?
- Martin:** Yeah.
- Lisa** Okay.
- Sawame:** I don't think he had too much trouble.
- Lisa** What was it like building up your business again, the farm.
- Sawame:** That's another thing we had this Mr. Hozz [Louis Hozz of Petaluma Milling Co.] to thank for. He had feed [and] was selling feed to us, until our chickens were ready to lay eggs. For us to get income, he helped us through all that, and I think he helped us as much as eighteen thousand. He never asked for a payment.
- Lisa** Now, I'm going to ask you something. You mentioned that he was Jewish. Did you or did anybody else that you know at the time relate the experience of the camps to the experience that the Jews were going through in Europe?
- Martin:** No, because it wasn't that well publicized.
- Lisa** No. Did you start hearing about it around the time that you came back?
- Martin:** No. Because he was a Russian Jew. And I think personally probably he felt that he might have had the persecution, but he never let on...
- Lisa** He never talked about it.
- Martin:** He's not the kind that would lean on someone's shoulders.
- Sawame:** He was a Russian Jew, but his wife was a German, the Missus was a German. They were real good to us.
- Martin:** People that have suffered through persecution, understand it and are more empathetic toward people that are, maybe not in the same situation, but very similar.
- Lisa** Right. As the news started coming from Europe about the camps, did you as a community talk about it at all?
- Martin:** No, I don't think so. But it was funny because my cousin was in the 522nd which was the field artillery for the 442nd and they were the first ones at Dachau...
- Lisa** Yeah.
- Martin:** And he says he couldn't believe what they saw there.
- Hideo:** Who was that?
- Martin:** Johnny.
- Lisa** Does he live here, too?

- Martin:** He lives in Yuba City. But he was raised here.
- Lisa** So, he came back and you had first-hand knowledge of what went on there.
- Martin:** But, there is a lot of things that they wouldn't talk about...
- Lisa** I'm not surprised. I'm going to ask you something else. I don't know whether people talked about this or whether you'll talk to me about it. How did you find out about Hiroshima. Did you talk about that?
- Martin:** Well, we were in Pennsylvania when that happened.
- Lisa** Right.
- Martin:** And it was like, well, for me personally, I have no ties there.
- Sawame:** I didn't care for Japan.
- Martin:** My dad has a sister and I have a cousin, or I had a cousin there, but they were a little bit out in the country, so apparently they weren't affected by it.
- Lisa** I just have no idea what the community here felt about our government having taken that action, at all.
- Martin:** I don't think they felt any what you would call outward animosity because of it.
- Sawame:** I think the Americans felt more than we did (*laughs*)
- Lisa** But you're the American public...
- Martin:** But, I think, if you look at Japan it has been a war-torn country for so long, like an annihilation of one clan against another clan. It's nothing new to them. So you get this feeling that whatever happens, you learn to accept it, and go on. That was one of the feelings of this detention, also, that a lot of the people just wanted to forget it and just go on with their lives. It's one of those things where the parents would never talk to the children about what they went through.
- Bruce:** No, because we used to see their yearbooks from camp, and they would just, you know, "We had Junior High yearbooks", so we would see their yearbooks and see all the faces and pick out auntie so-and-so and uncle so-and-so and see pictures of them playing baseball and doing crafts, and it never really sunk in that they are all Japanese kids and the teachers were Caucasian. And, they went to camp. And, the only thing we had ever heard about camp was that you go to summer camp and you have fun, and we always wondered, "How come we never get to go to camp?" You know... "You guys got to go to camp," and, you know. when you're little... You grow older and older, and I think the first incident where we realized that we were significantly different, [and] I think I was in third grade and we were playing in the yard and one of the kids said, "Let's play war and you be the "Jap."
- Lisa** Wow.
- Bruce:** And I said, "What's that?" and he says, "Well, you're the enemy, You're the "Jap". You know, and then Combat was on TV and we used to watch John

Wayne movies, and then it kind of sunk in. I remember my brother and I, we were really little, and we were out in the back playing and we were playing war and we did the same thing, like, Okay, you be the enemy, you be the “Jap”, and I’ll be the American, I’ll be the good guy. And my dad heard me and came out, and he got really mad. And we must have been like four or five, or six or something like that, but it never really sunk in because we never thought of them as the evil menacing villain like it’s shown on Hollywood movies. We just thought, we’re Americans, and these were the enemy, and this enemy happened to be called Japs”, and we didn’t know what they were. And, then it sunk in that the enemy is us, or presumed to be us.

Lisa How did it sink in? Martin, when you got angry, did you explain it to them, or what?

Martin: I think by that time, they knew.

Bruce: I just remember getting yelled at. We knew that we would never use that word again. We would never do that again, but then it happened later at school, because I knew at that time it was something bad, so when it happened to me at school, like my best friend called me that and I thought, “But I don’t want to be the Jap because that is bad. That’s not what I am. I am an American, too, you know.”

Lisa Did you tell him that you didn’t want to do it?

Bruce: Well, you know, you’re a little kid. Yeah, I said, “No, I’m not going to do that because my dad said we’re not supposed to do that.” To me that was same thing as, we were always taught never to call a black person a “nigger”. We were told never to use those words because they hurt people. And when my friend called me a “Jap”, I said, “No, don’t call me that because that is not nice.” That is when it first started becoming apparent.

Lisa So, you were objecting to using the term rather than being made the enemy.

Bruce: That’s right. You know, you don’t mind being the bad guy, because it is kind of fun, because you get to be bad and it’s okay. But then to be labeled something that terrible was unacceptable. But then, we still played cowboys and Indians. Sometimes you thought, well, the Indians are the good guys, too, because the cowboys are trying to steal their land, and the cowboys, you know, were here later.

Lisa Did you really think about cowboys and Indians that way when you were a kid?

Bruce: I always did because my elementary school teacher was an anthropologist, and she would tell us about the native Indians in California and how they were here first. Since I grew up Buddhist, my indoctrination to the missions was as a kind of “master/slave” relationship, and what the Western people did to the native Americans, so there always [was] kind of that, “Look what they did” [perspective]. So I always felt a kind of affinity toward Native Americans, because, you know, they were here first, and we should respect them for that, and it was their land that was taken.

Lisa What elementary school did you go to?

Bruce: Cotati. And, Mrs. Cornish was actually an archaeologist. She always brought in, you know, baskets and artifacts and arrowhead collections, and she told us about, you know, really grounded us and making us know that, "You're here now, but there were people here before who belonged here," so that was really good.

Lisa Did you go to Japanese cultural school?

Bruce: We went to Japanese language school, and it lasted probably to first or second grade because it was on Saturdays. And Saturdays we played baseball with our friends and our neighbors. You know we played out in the cow pasture. And, we'd say, "Well, we can't play baseball because we have to go to Japanese language school."

Lisa This sounds like a familiar problem.

Bruce: We never talked about Japan when I was little. It was just never mentioned because it wasn't good. Something about it was not good.

Lisa But you were still expected to go to Japanese language school.

Bruce: We fought it tooth and nail.

Lisa But it wasn't good, but learn the language?

Bruce: Supposedly, well, my mom and dad wanted us to be Japanese, I would imagine.

Martin: See, I went to Japanese language school for six years, about the same time that I went to elementary school. It seemed like it took up every weekend. *(laughter)* When I was growing up there was nothing else to do, you know, other than come home to go to work. So it was kind of an outlet. So, you go to school, what six-seven days a week, really. But, we never put that much emphasis in it, and with the outbreak of war, going to camp... forget everything. You don't want any connection with it.

Bruce: We were going to be 110% American kids.

Lisa Then why did you ask him to go to school?

Martin: Well, by the time they came along, it was already the middle 50s, and things were changing, you know, and I was involved with the Japanese American Citizens League. I wasn't really involved with the church that much then, but even when I went into the service [I was reminded]. You know, I was in the Air Force for four years and the Korean war, and I think in my second year I was stationed in Sacramento then and an opening came up for an air attaché job. And being that I was one of the few Japanese Americans here stationed in Sacramento, I got the call from the AG office, "How's your Japanese?" I said, "What Japanese?" and so a black guy got the job because he had been to Japan before, he had learned the language..

Lisa He was a GI.

Martin: Yeah. He had learned the language, to read it and write and speak it. So, from that point on, I thought, Mmm, I'd better rethink some of this stuff.

Lisa So, you just forced it on your kids...

Martin: But I never did learn the language myself. My only Japanese was what I could communicate with my grandmother, really.

Bruce: And then after we quit going in first or second grade, the only time we heard Japanese was when they were talking about it, and didn't want us to hear. *(Laughter)*

Well, my grandparents are Nisei. They all spoke English. My great grandparents, none of them were alive when we were growing up, so it was only the Issei people in the community that spoke Japanese to us, and we just would smile and nod and *(Sawame laughs)* get a word here or there, but my situation was similar to my Dad's when I was in the service. I went and got stationed in Hawaii, and there was a lot more Buddha Heads, you know Japanese people, and it was like a culture shock. I came from a predominately white area and moved to where there were lots of Asians, and I felt kind of out of place at first, and I would mispronounce my name. Here, I grew up and you pronounce the name Shi'-mi-zu, because it was easier for Westerners to speak, but I went to Hawaii, and I was corrected by a Caucasian guy who told me how to pronounce my last name... and I was really embarrassed.

And then I was on a ship and we were doing fishery patrols. I was in the Coast Guard, and I wanted to go on a boarding party to go onto foreign fishing boats and do inspections and things. So, they said, well, do you speak Japanese? And I said, "No, I understand Japanese." I've got a Japanese/English dictionary and I was studying it, and they called my bluff and said, "Let's go." They took me on a thing and they said, "Here, translate these phrases into Japanese" and I said, "Well, I can't do that, but I could ask for food..." *(Laughter)* They took me along anyway, because they were good sports. So all I did was talk to one of the Japanese fishery agents. We sat at a table drinking beer and talking and trying to communicate. He spoke some English, and I spoke very little Japanese. We let the captain of the ship talk with some other agent, so they got their business accomplished, and I just realized, you know, I don't speak any Japanese. Later, I went to work for the Japanese American Citizen's League, and someone said, "Hey, you know," one of my programs I wanted to do was take a group of kids to Japan.

Lisa You were working as a youth leader?

Bruce: Uh-huh. And this was a program I really wanted to do, take kids to Japan, show Sansei and Yonsei kids what Japan is like. So, I was setting this tour up, and I was trying to find somebody to lead it, and they said, "No, you have to take them because if you don't understand what it's like, how are you going to develop the program?" So, I took a group of kids over there, and I spoke hardly any Japanese, and we had a full-time guide. He took care of it, and so I kind of got that burden eased, but when I came back, my wife and I took a conversational Japanese class, but it was just so time consuming, and I knew

that I wasn't going to be going to Japan again soon, so I kind of let it fade... but, I still want to do it, especially with the activity in the Pacific rim, it only makes sense to be able to at least converse in Japanese.

Sawame: Now, you don't have to.

Bruce: Oh, yeah, but it makes it a lot easier....

Sawame: Now they are all speaking English.

Lisa: Think of some of this has started going the other way.

Bruce: Yeah.

Martin: (*chuckles*)

Sawame: It is better than trying to speak broken Japanese, because...

Bruce: But it's nice when you can at least let somebody else know that you respect them enough to speak their language.

Lisa: If it is anything like French speakers, they don't consider that a sign of respect. They don't want their language mangled.

Sawame: I don't know.

Bruce: That's true. The Japanese and French are very arrogant people.

Lisa: Yeah. Real similarities.

Sawame: If you speak English, you get better service, I hear.

Bruce: Possibly. Maybe once upon a time, but I don't know.

Lisa: They can identify a tourist, right off.

Bruce: Oh, they can tell by the way we walk and dress that we were Westerners.

Sawame: Ann Ohki, she said, "speak English, you will get better service".

Lisa: So, clearly something had happened which has made it okay to identify yourself as someone who is interested in Japanese again, after a period of time when it was not okay. Did you notice anything changing during the 50s or 60s.

Martin: Well, not personally, but you know, I think you could see it in a lot of other areas, maybe. It never really affected our lives.

Bruce: The thing that I noticed is, in the 60s, up until the 60's, mid-60's, just that label "Made in Japan" was an inferior thing. Once I realized that I was different, I always felt kind of inferior because "Made in Japan" [meant] oh, that's where they make junk, and everything associated with Japan—a defeated nation. They were the enemy in the war. It was always kind of a negative connotation. But, then as the Civil Rights Movement picked up in the late 60s and everybody was, you know, getting back to their roots. Ethnicity was becoming popular. Then Japan's industrial machine was taking off, and "Made in Japan" was no longer a negative thing, but it was a symbol of pride. We're taking this Asian pride thing, and it started becoming okay to even acknowledge that you were Japanese American or Asian, and then it just kept going and going. For some

of us in the beginning [we] would start to draw our pride from what Japan was doing. Then [we felt] “Well, we have our own culture that we need to find out about.” That is when a lot of us really started pumping our grandparents and parents for information about camp. They didn’t want to tell us about it, because they didn’t want [us] to be bitter or angry.

Lisa Is that why? Is that why you didn’t talk about it?

Bruce: That’s what they told us.

Lisa That you didn’t talk about camp because you didn’t want the kids to be bitter?

Sawame: Well, it wasn’t a happy story...

Lisa So you started getting interested.

Bruce: I had always been curious about, you know, once the connection was made that, you know, these yearbooks were from something other than, you know... “Well, you graduated from Petaluma High School, and you went to Pennngrove elementary school, but this is from Amache, Colorado? “How did this happen?” And then, that Van Johnson movie, the 442nd, you know, “Go for Broke”. I remember seeing that, and wondering “What’s going on here, there’s something that we’re missing” and I didn’t even know what the 442nd, what it was, and even when we were little we always looked for heroes. You know, my hero is John Wayne, and he is killing “gooks” left and right. But if we would have had that [information] when we were growing up, that would have gave us something to look up to, but we didn’t have it.

Lisa You mean you didn’t talk about the 442nd then, not just the camp.

Martin: Well, they knew that Uncle Min and Uncle Pat, and my cousin, John, were all members of the 442nd.

Bruce: We knew about the war...

Martin: You see, like Uncle Tak is in Saratoga. We don’t see him very often. And Johnny is up in Yuba City, we don’t see him very often. And, Uncle Min is in Santa Rosa, but he never did want to go. See, and besides, it wasn’t more than a week or a couple of weeks after he landed in Europe that he was wounded. So he didn’t have anything really that he wanted to talk about.

Bruce: And none of the other vets who are in the area talked about it either. And we didn’t know enough to ask questions.

Lisa You started asking questions, and, Martin, what did you tell him when he asked?

Martin: Well, whatever small remembrance was that we had. Because, you know, as a teenager we tend to remember the good times, and anything that isn’t, you tend to forget or try to forget, you know.

Lisa I guess.

Martin: So, like I was telling you before, you know, going to camp for us was kind of like an adventure. So I could step into the unknown.

- Lisa** Was there anything that you learned from the experience that you particularly wanted him to know. You were talking before about relating the experience to other kinds of oppression.
- Martin:** Well, I think that all we can hope for is that whatever we tell them, they can try not to let it happen again, to anyone. I think that was one of the big issues when redress came up, as to why? Because there were a lot of people that were asking the question, "Why would you want to bring it up, now?" I think a lot of people felt very comfortable with their lives at that point, and they didn't want this backlash situation, you know. Because you know if it develops, you can't get away from it. But, I think it was something that had to be told, as a matter of record, and I think the ones that probably pushed the most were looking at the constitutional part of it. Because it was completely unconstitutional, no matter how you look at it.
- Lisa** And it was important to you to get that straightened out in some way.
- Martin:** Yeah, during this period when the kids were growing up, I was, you know, active with the Citizens League and stuff and it was always in the forefront.
- Lisa** So, do you feel that you are different as a political, social, voting adult than you would have been if you had not had had the experience?
- Martin:** I think you could probably focus in on some issues more than others because of this, because you have first hand experiences from it.
- Lisa** What kind of issues do you focus in on?
- Martin:** Well, you know, I think a lot of times it has to do with a lot of appreciativeness of personal rights. And, sometimes, if you look at the way things are going, it seems it is going back to something like that again, very similar situations. Well, you know, like one big case in point was this Iranian situation. Like, even our Congressmen and Senators were talking about setting up camps again, you know, and a lot of times the people that are here, they have no connection with the government there. But, I don't know, you would think that from past experiences they would learn, but they never seem to.
- Lisa** Do you think there is some way or something that we can say, that you would like to say that will help them learn.
- Martin:** Well, I think one of the worst perpetrators of that thing was Senator S.I. Hayakawa.
- Lisa** I knew that was coming.
- Martin:** Yeah. To think that I even voted for him the first time around.
- Sawame:** He wasn't even around; he was in Canada.
- Martin:** He was in Chicago, but you know, he was not thinking. Sometimes you learn about some of the people that get elected to office in this country. They are not really qualified to do a lot of things, you know, and they just go whatever way the wind blows.

Lisa Yeah. It's amazing. What can we do, do you think? Remember, that we're talking to high school kids, now, to help people not just go the way the wind blows?

Martin: Well, I think, like anything else, I think they have to learn to analyze before they make decisions. You know, you can't just make split decisions on a lot of this. There is more to it than just the headlines. I think a lot of people get carried away by the headlines, and they don't see the whole story.

Lisa So, it is good to just pause, I guess.

Martin: Yeah, you know, because nothing happens overnight, and sometimes like anything else, if you have that night to think about it, you might not take that action, like you would have the day before.

Bruce: One of the definite disadvantages of modern media, is instantaneously, we get a lot of information quickly, but we don't have to read it. And when you don't read something, you don't really comprehend it. And, when they are presenting information in 15-30 second chunks, there is no depth, and it is really sad. You know, I listen to National Public Radio and try to understand more about the greater perspective, and a lot of it is because of what happened to Japanese Americans. Because the American population was only looking at things from a very narrow perspective, and they were able to make those kind of cruel judgments.

I don't consider myself so much an American Citizen as much as a World Citizen now. Because what our country does impacts so many other people, you know. It is not fair for us to think of just what's good for America. Because what is good for just America, is not necessarily what is good for everybody else. Having been involved in the JACL when the redress movement started, I jumped at the opportunity to go work for JACL because I knew that we were going to be moving into this [issue], so I left college and went to work for them, just to be involved in that based on a lot of what my grandfather did, from his stories, you know, giving up everything to go help the community, etc.

Somebody mentioned something to me the other day that struck home. In the late 70's and 80's, everybody was really self-indulged. Everything was, "What's good for me? What can I do to get my best job?" People are now looking at the 90's saying, "We have to repair the damage done in the last 10-15 years, and try to return to looking out for Society and the environment, etc." Public service, the good of the many, all those values that we kind of put on the back burner, or the majority of people put on the back burner for the past decade [were considered] frivolous eccentricities that we need not be concerned about because what is good for America is good for all of us. Now we are seeing the results of that mentality, acid rain, pollution and the erosion of civil rights. I was talking to this young lady, and she said, " You know, it's kind of unpopular, but I really want to get into public service," and I said, "God, you should never have to apologize for wanting to help your fellow man," That is one of those lessons, if we don't learn from the past, we are going to repeat

those things. I was real little when John Kennedy was assassinated but I remember it happening, and I wanted to know, when I got older, why it was so traumatic for the nation. And, I remember people just crying. I remember my elementary school teacher crying. At that age, the President of the United States, was like The Great Father, you know, and he was killed! Why was he killed...etc? And then over a period of time I learned what he was talking about, what his vision of America was, and how the world could be. I thought, "Well, yeah, a lot of things make so much sense, but why aren't we moving in that direction?" Then with redress, and with the Civil Rights movement, just understanding all that, it has had an effect on me. From that I know that I want to go back to school, and I want to develop affordable housing for people which we haven't been doing that for the past ten years, because that is not one of Reagan's priorities. It's interesting. People should not be afraid to care about their fellow man. Because, you know, we all came from a common ancestral background, if you believe in evolution.

Lisa I think I'm still allowed to discuss that.... (*General laughter*)

Bruce: I think a lot of people see, with our consumption of the petro-chemicals, and creating acid rain, it doesn't just affect America, it affects the whole world. We use so many natural resources that it affects everyone...

Lisa So, what are you going to tell all of your kids, not just your present kid, what are you going to tell your kids about the evacuation experience and the camps? What do you particularly want them to know?

Bruce: Tell them what ignorance and intolerance can really do. You know, how far it can snowball and it can get carried away, and it can do such damage before people can really realize what is happening. And once it has started, it is so hard to stop.

Sawame: How long Bruce is going to be?

Lisa Okay, we are going to be finishing up. So, you say, once it has started.

Bruce: Yeah, once you learn the history of it, knowing that it wasn't just the bombing of Pearl Harbor that initiated this whole evacuation movement. It started decades before with the intolerance of Chinese and then the anti-Asian sentiment, the "Yellow Peril" and that whole undercurrent of anti-Asian feelings. [It] just kind of culminated with the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the evacuation and, you know, it kind of scars me sometimes when I think about if there weren't organizations that spoke up against the evacuation and against these really terrible racist things, what could have happened? You know, the talk about sterilization, and talk about all of this other stuff, it was just talk initially, but if there weren't those moderating voices out there, it could have gotten much worse. And, you know, like my Dad was saying, in Iran, you could see that happening, and now with Japan becoming such an economic force, we are getting a lot of that anti-Japanese sentiment again.

Sawame: We have the same face, so we are included.

Lisa Uh-huh.

- Bruce:** So, you know, when I would travel around the country talking to kids, I would say, "It may not have happened to you, yet, but at some point in your life, you are going to be confronted with being "different" and it is going to be not "different" that you are "unique," but just different. It is going to be something that other people perceive as being bad or evil, or not good, and you are going to have to deal with that. Whether it is in school or in a job, racism is going to rear its ugly head and you are going to have to deal with it, and until you learn how to deal with it, or as soon as you realize that it is going to happen, you can prepare yourself, and just live with the illusion that this is America [where] everybody is created equal, etc., etc. It's fine on paper, but in practice, there are a lot of people who are very ignorant and intolerant. You know you don't have to go too far to see examples of it, but there are still lots of people who just want to believe, "It's not going to happen to me... It's not going to happen to me."
- Lisa** Well, this is a problem that lots of people are going to face in their lives, being different in some way. Whether it's being Japanese American, being obvious physically, or not. Everybody out there that you talk to who is in the majority population is potentially also a target.
- Martin:** Yes, it could be anything...
- Lisa** It could be anything. So, I am going to ask you all and start with elders here.. Is there anything that you want to say, knowing that you are speaking to high school kids, not Japanese American high school kids, but just all high school kids, about what they need to know about how to treat other people with respect and tolerance. Is there something that you want to say out of your experience to them? What do you want them to learn?
- Hideo:** Well, I don't know.
- Lisa** When you were raising your children, and you were teaching them how to treat other people, what did you feel was important to tell them?
- Sawame:** Well, race had lots to do with it, that's what I think.
- Hideo:** Well, I would say that "Treat other people as your equal".
- Lisa** That's a good start.
- Hideo:** So, if you think that that person is equal, then you've got no reason to discourage or argue, you know.
- Lisa** How about you, Martin?
- Sawame:** Don't want another
- Lisa** Another what?
- Martin:** You can tell them to think about it and be fair. That's all you can tell them, you know. Because for some people, no matter what you say, it's not going to change their attitude. They have to come up against it themselves before they realize what could happen. [For] a lot of these kids, these [racial] things, may

never happen to them, but there are other means, other things that could happen to them.

Sawame: Jealousy, huh?

Lisa Jealousy, yeah.

Sawame: You have a better house, or better job, or better car, you know. It all starts.

Martin: It is a tough world out there.

Lisa Did you tell him that? Did you listen?

Bruce: He told me when I went into the service, never to volunteer for anything. That's the way my life has always been. Because, you learn by example. My grandparents, they were always volunteering at church or doing something. My dad and mom were always volunteering to do something, and I think he probably meant (in the context of). 'don't volunteer for detail' where people get killed or something. But I don't know. He said "Don't" volunteer for anything."

Martin: Well, that's a familiar saying in the service,

Bruce: Like "break a leg."

Martin: "Don't ever volunteer for anything." But when it comes to your own community and stuff, you know, if you feel for it, you do it.

Bruce: You have an obligation just being. We have our rights, but along with rights come obligations, and you know, voting is one of them. Just knowing what your country stands for and upholding that, and if you do that, then you would have a lot more harmonious society. Like Grandpa said, "We're all equal, supposedly." As far as [how] the constitution looks at us, we are all equal, we have the same rights and privileges, and if we try to attain that, then our society will be a better one. The way we interact with other people and other nations would be better. It is hard because of greed, and as my grandma said, "Jealousy." They are all influencing factors. Emotions really sway what our perception of the truth is.

Lisa Well, I think that that is a good place for us to stop.

End of Interview

MARTIN & DOROTHY SHIMIZU INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Martin & Dorothy Shimizu
Date: June 22, 2003
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Cynthia Hayashi – also present, Jim Murakami
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia R. Ramirez June 20, 2003 from DVD source material

Interview Summary

Martin and Dorothy are both Sansei [third generation]. Except for the war years, Martin has lived in Sonoma County all of his life, and Dorothy for most of her life. Both grew up on ranches in the country and had many Caucasian friends.

Dorothy's family had good neighbors who looked after their property when they had to go to camp, taking care of their property and making payments to the bank, so that the property was in tact when they returned. Not only did Dorothy's and Martin's families have friends and neighbors who took care of their property while they were interned, but Dorothy feels most of the Japanese American families in the area got their property back after the war. There are other examples of this camaraderie between the Caucasians and the Japanese Americans in this community, and Dorothy feels it is due to the fact that in the country people have to depend on each other to get things done. Unlike the city, where there are so many people, it could be difficult to really know anyone and segregated groups can form. In the country, there is opportunity to get to know each other, have to rely on each other, to trust each other, and form a system of interdependence.

For Martin and Dorothy, at the age of twelve and thirteen, going to camp was an experience, and though scary at times, it was not always a bad experience. Surrounded by their family, not forced to make painful decisions or worry about the future, many enjoyable memories linger.

During the war, when the Buddhist temple was boarded up, some teenagers tried to vandalize it, chopping at the pillars with an ax and trying to burn it. Fortunately, they were not very successful, and a vigilante group of people helped to protect many properties in the area, including the temple. Martin feels one reason there was so much help from the non-Japanese community is because most of the Japanese families here were settled in one place, getting a chance to form a bond with their neighbors. Whereas, in some places like the Central Valley, most of the Japanese community were migrant workers, moving from place to place, and the non-Japanese community did not get a chance to know them.

Transcript of Interview

- JACL:** Thanks so much for agreeing to participate in the Sonoma County JACL Oral History Project. Your stories will be a legacy preserved for future generations and we really appreciate your coming and for taking the time to participate. So if you could introduce yourselves and a little bit of your background.
- Dorothy:** Well, I'm Dorothy Otani Shimizu and I've been here for 69 years and I met my husband, oh, We've known each other all our lives. What else do you want to know?
- Martin:** Martin Hisashi Shimizu and I was born right here in Cotati in 1930.
- JACL:** Alright, could you give us a little background of your family and how they came to the United States?
- Martin:** My father was born in Waipahu, Hawaii in 1905 and they emigrated to the United States to a place called Dinuba in the Central Valley but they never would tell us when but he told me that he grew up there as a teenager in a town called, it was Dinuba, in a place called Cutler. What was funny is that Granny Shimizu was always talking about a place called "Ka te ra" and we couldn't figure it out and then finally we found out it was Cutler. And then they came to Petaluma around 1917-1918, in that period. They traded a vineyard in Dinuba for a chicken ranch in Petaluma. And they moved to the Cotati place in the early 1920's and that's where I was born.
- Dorothy:** My grandfather and my grandmother came from Japan to Hawaii and my and my mother was born in Koloa. My Dad's family came to Hawaii also but I don't remember where he was born.
- Martin:** Pahala.
- Dorothy:** Pahala. And both of them were, you know, born in the United States, although my father went to Japan as a teenager, he was considered a *Kibei* [Japanese American educated in Japan]. He and his brother had to go back to Japan and when they got old enough he came back to America to make money because in Japan it was very hard. And when my dad was working at the, what is that Army base?
- Martin:** Schofield Barracks.
- Dorothy:** Schofield Barracks, he met my mother doing housework. And they got married and they brought all the sisters and brothers to America, the mainland. About five or six of them, children, my grandfather was killed, so they all came here. So our first connection was my uncle, my uncle was working on a seed farm, Sugioka, and so we had connections, we lived in Watsonville, what was that ranch? The seed farm was connected with them, the Waldo Rohnert Seed Farm.
- JACL:** Where Rancho Cotati is right now?
- Dorothy:** Where Rohnert Park is right now. In San Juan, they had a seed farm and they're connected and so we came out to the seed farm and mom did the

cooking. Dad went out to work. After that we bought a ranch in 1940 in Petaluma, chicken ranch and we stayed out there for a little bit and then the war broke out.

JACL: How many brothers and sisters did you have, Dorothy?

Dorothy: I have, I'm the oldest, and then Henry is the next one. He lives in Newark and then William is the third one, we are all one year apart, and he lives in Petaluma and then my sister, was born thirteen years later in camp. That's all we have.

JACL: Martin, how about your brothers and sisters?

Martin: I have one brother. They're all younger than I am and I have four sisters, they range in age from 71 to 60. My youngest sister was born just before we went to camp.

JACL: Now, right before Pearl Harbor, do you remember any of it, how old were you and what were the family feelings about that?

Martin: Well, we didn't go to church that morning, we were sitting around having breakfast and we heard the news over the radio. For us it was shocking because, at that point, my dad was involved with the Japanese American Citizens League. I think the FBI came and they had a lot of questions and because my grandfather had died early on, except for my grandmother, there were no Isseis in the house. We didn't have any internment for them at that point.

JACL: Was your father taken away or just interrogated?

Martin: My father? He wasn't taken away.

JACL: But they did come and interrogate him, or speak to him?

Martin: Yeah.

JACL: How about your family, Dorothy?

Dorothy: Well, I know my daddy, when they said that there was war we were all really upset and grandma came to live with us because she couldn't travel very far. She got a special permit to come from Salinas to Petaluma so we could go to the internment camp together. And my dad decided to become a cook so he read the *Boston Cookbook* and after school he would make "Manzanar Donut" because that was the first camp, in a big ole' frying pan. But, see I was only 13, so it was no big deal except we had to move and leave all our toys behind and our friends, but when you have parents, it's security, you know, so blind faith, took us through.

JACL: Now, both of your parents, both sets of your parents were very active in the Japanese community, before WW II, weren't they?

Dorothy: My father and mother were new to the community. We came in '30 was it...?

Martin: '33.

Dorothy: '33. But the old timers were real old timers so we always felt kind of held back. But after the war we were real involved with the temple. The minister, the temple was broken into so the minister had no place to live so he lived with us. But we were pretty lucky, we have a good community.

JACL: Martin?

Martin: Well, my dad was one of those that first organized the Japanese American Citizens League here in Sonoma County, back in 1934, I believe. And so, I think he was active off and on because he worked in, when I was growing up, he worked a lot in Sebastopol for the Kobuke family in their apple dryer. And then my mother was born in Santa Rosa in 1912, I believe. And her father, Ichizo Furuta came to the United States in the early 1900's and he and his older brother were here for quite a while. And I think Grandfather had many businesses off and on. At one time he had a hog farm in the Wilfred district and he lost that to cholera and at one point they owned a grocery store in Santa Rosa and somehow that went under. And then, my mom says she remembers growing up on the Fountain Road Property which was Baron Nagasawa's place and she remembers that all during Prohibition he would never sell any wine, so his winery was just full of bottles, how good a quality of wine it was, I'd never know. But my grandfather worked there for a few years. Then after the war, after we came back from camp, I think two of my uncles, worked at the winery for a while.

JACL: And that was quite the establishment, I think at that time, it was one of the biggest wineries in area at that time.

Martin: It was one of the few in Sonoma County.

JACL: Now what are your recollections of what happened after Pearl Harbor, going to camp?

Martin: Well, it was difficult to a point, I think, because you never knew what was going to happen and in the early part of 1942, we had to dispose of all the chickens because we had to prepare to move and at that point we had nothing to do. And because there was a curfew and travel restrictions, you couldn't go any place, the farthest you could go was into town. You have to figure that we were kids and in a way, it was an adventure. I think that in Sonoma County, we were relatively lucky, we had friends and neighbors that, on one side they were German and our neighbors across the street, they were English and I figured that if they weren't fighting, why should they be fighting us, you know. So they were always pretty good to us. They always kind of watched out for our property. The one that I figured most responsible was John Kelly, he later became an investment counselor, but during the war, he was one of those that, I guess you would call it a vigilante group that watched out for many Japanese properties, here in Sonoma County. And then another one that I recall was our feed mill operator, Louis Hozz, was a Russian Jew immigrant and he knew what discrimination was like, and he was very good to us, he took care of our property while we were away.

JACL: Dorothy, what do you recall?

Dorothy: When it was time for us to leave, like Martin said, we had to get rid of everything so we had no beds or anything, except a mattress, and our neighbors were the Feathersons, and he and his wife were very kind and every morning they would leave fresh milk in a jar on the fence and we would go out and get for us to drink. And so on the day that we were leaving Grandma and my two brothers and my mom and dad and my uncle, that lived with us, we all rode on the back of a flat bed to Santa Rosa to board a train to go to Merced Assembly Center and it was my birthday and so our German neighbor baked a cake. I forget what kind it was but, anyway, we ate it on the train. So anyway, it was kind of a real adventure because in those days if we got to go to town it was kind of big stuff, but we were going on a train and we went through all the ravines and mountains and over the salt flats, so it was exciting, I mean, we didn't know any better.

JACL: So were you in Merced first and then in Amache Internment Camp?

Dorothy: Merced first, Assembly Center and then we went to Colorado, to Granada, Amache, yeah Amache.

JACL: And what are your recollections?

Dorothy: Recollections of camp. I remember going to Granada to buy my mother tomato soup and oranges because she was pregnant and she was anemic. So we would come home half way home being the weather was warm in Colorado, and my paper bag would break and luckily we had a skirts on, so you know how the farmers put things on their aprons? That's how we got home with all the things and stuff. And well we went to, I begged my father to let me go to work, out on the farm, with my friends. I belonged to the Girl Scouts so we went out on the farm and we had a lot of fun out on the co-op ranch, we'd plant onions, pulled up onions and watched the *hakujin* [Caucasian] eat raw onions. The Japanese never ate raw onions then. So it was an adventure.

JACL: Martin?

Martin: I think it was either late in 1943 or early 1944. They asked my dad to operate a camp poultry farm down on the Koen ranch, which was down in the Arkansas Valley. So we stayed there for about a year and a half and operated the poultry ranch for the camp, producing eggs. I remember one week before Christmas, it was snowing and we had to go out to slaughter a lot of chickens for Christmas Dinner.

JACL: How did you feel about the conditions at Camp?

Martin: Well, early on it was no fun because it seemed like Amache was on top of a sand hill and every little wind brought sand into your building but as time went on you get, like anything else, you get used to, conditions and you survived.

JACL: How was the school, did you go to school in camp?

Martin: Some of the schools were in some of the barracks and later, I think in 1944, they built a new high school. Where we went there, I think the 9th grade and all of our teachers, I think, it was amazing because we had Caucasian instructors,

some were connected with the Quakers, and they were very good to us and I think they probably knew what our conditions were but they went about their work very professionally. I think we had Japanese instructors also, who were qualified teachers but a lot of them were not offered certificates at that point but they had the knowledge to teach.

Dorothy But I always thought it was very amazing, just imaging yourself going into a group of people that you don't know anything about. Because when we went to camp all the Colorado people thought that all the Japanese people had buck teeth and black rimmed glasses, you know like "Tojo". But they [the teachers] were very kind. When we were in Lamar, towards the end, we got to go out and we got to live with them for a couple of days. They were very backward they didn't have the modern [amenities] like in California. It was an education. They would tell us that in Colorado you have to shoo the animals in because when they have hail, it would kill them because they [the hailstones] were so large and we never had those things in California. But like I said it was an adventure. But I give the teachers a lot of credit.

JACL: Did you communicate with anyone in Sonoma County while you were in camp?

Dorothy: When we first went to camp, being that we were on the boarding camp, you know on the seed farm, there was a Filipino family by the railroad tracks, in [Wilfred] Joe Camilo and he used to come to visit us in Merced, bring us kids candy. And when we went to Amache my father wanted to build another airplane to keep the kids busy, so all the neighborhood kids in the block used to come to watch. So he built a model airplane and he sent home for silk cloths from the *chigo* [baby]. So Daddy wanted that to drape on the wings so the airplane could fly, so the people that rented the house they went in the box and got it and sent it to us and all the Isseis thought that the Americans were going to bomb us because they could here the airplane going up there and (*She makes plane noises and motions the plane going around overhead*). Yeah, the people, we didn't have any problems, our family, because even when we got home from camp all the neighbors brought butter and meat and vegetables and even baked cookies and put flowers on the table. So we were a lucky family.

JACL: And you owned the property?

Dorothy: Yeah, we just bought it. So then we had planted garlic and carrots and things and so they harvested and sold it and they put the money out for the property and they rented the house. So we were very fortunate in comparison with a lot of people.

JACL: And these people what were their names?

Dorothy: Andreissen, Mr. and Mrs. Andreissen. They passed away but they have a son, Junior, that lives in Reno, and a daughter, Betty that lives in, I think, Palo Alto or Redwood City, or someplace around there.

JACL: I think Sonoma County was fortunate in that way.

Dorothy: Yeah and the lady that baked me the birthday cake, well they were German. And she always used to tell us that they were ostracized too, so they used to tell us they knew what it was all about. So, but we had Portuguese and all different nationalities, so we could live together if we tried.

JACL: Did your family have communication with anybody from Petaluma?

Martin: Not that I can recall. I think my father had some communication because of the property, but other than that I don't think we had that much personal communication. Every so often we would send and receive letters from our neighbors but that was about it.

JACL: When you were in camp did you, what kind of recreation activities were there?

Martin: Well, you know, as kids you learn different things, so you play baseball and marbles, play with tops, that kind of thing.

JACL: Did your families do any kind of artwork, or anything like that?

Martin: (*Grins*) My family is basically, not very artistic. (*They all laugh*) I think our children got their artistic values from Dorothy's side of the family.

Dorothy: Yeah, I was interviewed by junior high school children in the Windsor area and they asked me what did you do? And you know your mind goes blank but I remember telling them we saved orange seed, apple seeds, any kind of seed, peach seeds, peach pits and my brother used to rub the seeds on the rocks to make rings and we used to thread the seeds for necklaces and what else did we do? Chase each other. So my mother used to always worry about us so before we went to camp, she bought a whole bunch of embroidery thread and stamps, transfers, then my father worked on the boys making airplanes and things, and dad did a lot of carving, wood carving and my mom did a lot of paper flowers. We had a teacher from Sebastopol, I think her name was Kai. Who was it that taught flower making? She was from Sonoma County. [Kai Kato] Anyway, momma used to do that.

JACL: And Martin what was your situation when your family decided to come back from Camp, did you come directly?

Martin: When I first left camp it was June of 1945, we went to a place called Gerard, Pennsylvania and we worked for a guy named Barney, he had several potato ranches in and around Erie, Pennsylvania and what they used to call upper New York State, which was half way to Buffalo. But from October it started to snow and I think that in January of 1946 my mother got a phone call from California saying that her mother was not very well and so we just packed up. My father went and bought a trailer and loaded it up and we headed home and we were driving from Pennsylvania through Ohio, Kentucky and he blew two tires out up in the hills of Kentucky. And he couldn't believe it but he said he found a little gas station up in the hills of Kentucky had two brand new tires. He couldn't believe it. Those were the days of rationing and it's like what you call, Hen's teeth, to be able to find such a thing.

We continue on our journey home and wound up going to Little Rock Arkansas, have some welding done on the trailer and then we crossed over to

Texas and my mother went into a grocery store I can't recall the name of the town and as soon as the grocer found out we were Japanese, he couldn't do enough for us. Apparently, one of his relatives was in the 36th Division [the Lost Battalion] that was saved by the 442nd [Infantry Regiment] and they were very, very appreciative. Actually, that was kind of the highpoint of our trip home. And we came across Texas, New Mexico and then we stopped for a few days in Glendale, Arizona, because my dad has a second cousin there. They were very fortunate because they had a farm but they were across the road from the areas that was evacuated, so they didn't have to move. So we stayed there a couple of days to rest up and then we continued on our way home. After we got home, grandma was out of danger, so we settled back into rebuilding the ranch.

JACL: And your grandma, they came back to Petaluma?

Martin: They came back to Santa Rosa earlier.

JACL: Who were some of the people who were helpful when you came back?

Martin: Well, like I told you before, John Kelly was very helpful in helping my dad with various things financially and Louis Hozz, who had the feed mill, they staked us to a start in the industry again.

Dorothy: We were lucky too. Sam Andreisen used to have a feed store, in where was it Petaluma? Penngrove? So he came to Oakland to pick us up because the train took us as far as Oakland and that was it and nobody had a car. So he picked us up and brought us home. And after that as far as our business went, the Golden Eagle Company in Petaluma, the feed store, staked us and none of us were really wealthy. We had just bought the property and we didn't have any money. I used to tell my dad we came home with \$36 and we still lived, (*She laughs*) because of the friendship of all the neighbors, all of us here are very lucky.

JACL: Were there any instances during camp or when you came back as far as being prejudice?

Dorothy: Well, the foremost thing was to our temple. There were some teenage kids that went and took an ax and tried to make a dent in the two pillars in front and then they started a fire. The most terrible thing that I recall happening was to our temple. Later on I found out it was teenagers, you know, but nevertheless, it was a hate crime. And they took an ax and tried to... you could still see it if you go to the temple and see what they did. And in the mean time the minister had no place to live so he lived with us and it was quite a catastrophe because people felt tuberculosis is a terrible thing and the wife and the two daughters had it and the youngest daughter and minister stayed with us. We used to go visit them every week and none of us got it, because we were healthy.

JACL: And what was the ministers name?

Dorothy: Yonemura. After they fixed up the place well, he came to live here and I think Julia is gone but Kimi lives in San Francisco and the youngest daughter, Mae,

lives in Rohnert Park, she's a school teacher, but *sensei* [teacher] passed away when I was going to school in San Francisco.

JACL: Were you aware of the teenagers in Sebastopol that helped guard the temple?

Dorothy: Yeah, my father was a funny guy, he always left all the business and all the intellectual work to his father. My dad was a people person. So he was the one that helped our community establish itself. We had to have a place where people could meet. So that was the beginning of our barbecue, as you well know.

JACL: Were they instrumental also in building the hall or was that more of a Sebastopol?

Dorothy: No, that was a combined effort, it was not only Enmanji Temple, and it was JACL, all the community. That's the problem with people here, they don't understand that it wasn't built by one club, it was built by all the people.

JACL: And I understand there were contributions from Sebastopol community to which the Hall is dedicated?

Dorothy: As far as, I worked in all the pancake breakfast that I was able to and the community of Sebastopol more than any other community, they support us. There was a Mr. Pain, Lily Okomoto's friend, that JACL decided to have a pancake breakfast on every Mother's Day. And every pancake breakfast he brings orchids to all the workers in the kitchen and we have lots of nice people, he is getting old and he still supports us.

JACL: Martin, do you have any recollections about the community?

Martin: Well for the longest time, besides working on the ranch and going to high school there wasn't too much time. We weren't a very church going family at that point and then my dad from camp, he was the wartime JACL president for the local chapter and in camp he was asked to be a block manager and various other civic responsibilities. Even in camp I remember delivering the JACL newspaper to our county members that were in camp. I think one person I remember delivering to was Leo Kikuchi's family, cause they were not between 11 or 12, they were down in the lower level area, they were like in 9G. And then after we came back they asked my dad to start JACL all over again and I think, in the early part of 1950's where our Isseis were offered the opportunity to become citizens, he would go, in fact Suzy Hiruoka would pick him up and go to Ukiah and he would teach them English so that they could pass the test. Most of the time we were just busy working.

Dorothy: Didn't Frank Oda help you dad?

Martin: Yeah, he was a federal employee and he was very active in JACL and basically he was the backbone of the Sonoma County Chapter.

JACL: Did your parents talk to you about camp experience very much and did you related that to your children?

Martin: Actually, they never said a whole lot. Mom always complained about one thing or another. But my dad would never say anything as far as his experiences go.

Except, I remember one time he went to the National JACL convention in Salt Lake City with Mas Sato. One of the items on the agenda was to reinstate the draft for the Niseis [second generation] and my dad seconded the motion at the convention and it was passed by the JACL convention and when we got back to the camp area he heard that Mas Sato had been beat up for what they did and he was always looking around to see if he was going to have the same fate.

In camp he never had any problems with that sort. He was very fortunate. At one point even my cousin who was of draft age at that point and they got together at the mess hall and they asked my dad what do you think of us not going to the Army. They had a two part questionnaire, yes-yes or no-no, kind of a thing. And he told them, I don't know about you fellows, but if I go back to Japan I still have a house with my name there, my sister is still living there, but can you say the same thing, is there a place for you to go back to in Japan. I have a house there but basically, I have never been to Japan and I don't know anything there, except for the house I have nothing to go back to. And he asked them the same thing, do you have someone or something to go back to and he said other than looking Japanese, we are not really Japanese. I think the young people understood this but some of the older folks might have had a different opinion. I heard that in some of the other camps they had more problems, but we didn't have that kind of a problem in Amache camp.

JACL: What were the feelings of the people in the camp about the draft and having the Nisei go to the 442nd?

Martin: I think it depends on whether you were educated in Japan or had some knowledge of Japan, but most of the young people in camp, had no knowledge of Japan. They had nothing to go back to. Some may have had relatives there but they don't really have that much connection to them.

JACL: So their loyalty basically was to the U.S.

Martin: Yeah. There are always people that had this attitude that they were going to go back to Japan. Then there were the other people, who were raised here that had nothing to go back to, so they don't know anything about Japan.

JACL: Have you talked to your children about the internment and camp?

Martin: Every so often, it would come up in school, but as you know, being a teacher, the part of the internment took less than half a page in the history books. So most of the time they never did ask.

Dorothy: Well Bruce and Paula were both active in JACL and the Temple. And Marin County had a workshop with some of the guys, the older, Doctor Hirabayashi and they talked about the camp life and we were very fortunate to have the boss of the camp. Who was he, Lindsey?

Martin: Lindley.

Dorothy: His daughter saved all the pictures, saved a scrap book about that big (*She motions about five inches with her two hands*) and her husband had all the pictures framed. And when I went to the session, I went like this to the

scrapbook, (*She motions flipping a book*) and my grandmother was the first one to die in camp. So he kept a really good book of all the different festivities, we had different religions, Buddhist religions and they had Dai Gong, and all that stuff, so it was kind of nice so our children have a bigger view of Camp. And there were some of the people on the panel that were “No-No’s” and they went to prison and one of them happened to be our relative. And Bruce said, Oh my God! But that’s the way it was and they didn’t do anything really bad, they just didn’t know what to do but when you’re a teenager and you asked the question, do you want to give your life for your country, you think twice. So, but, yeah, redress and everything and JACL, I think the children understand a little more and John Tateishi, [National Director, JACL] he came to speak to us.

JACL: What were the feelings of your family in regards to redress?

Dorothy: They were okay with it, but like I told U.S.A Today, redress is not for the money, although money is very important to the majority of the people, but the main purpose is let’s don’t do it again. But they don’t quote you right in the paper, but anyway, it is past. And President Reagan, of all the presidents, did something, you know.

JACL: Yes, I think it wasn’t the money so much as the apology and saying it was something that shouldn’t have been done to American citizens.

Dorothy: Yeah, because we have a small JACL membership and they all worked hard and all the ladies worked hard to make sushi, so we had money. So it kind of brought the community together and at the same time it opened your eyes to what was happening, because the majority of the ladies they stay home and they don’t know what’s going on unless you’re an active JACL member, you know, I think Margarette and Lucy did good.

JACL: They’ve done an excellent job as well as everyone else from the country. Martin, what were your families feeling about redress?

Martin: For a while I think my father had the feeling that, just let it lie. I think a lot of Niseis thought that, at one point by filing suit for redress, it might open up a lot of old wounds and there might be a backlash. But I think that all in all it was, cause I think that most of the people involved in the redress movement were Sansei and Yonseis [third and fourth generation] who had never experienced internment but they were more into law and they knew it was a violation of their constitutional right and they were finally able to get the majority of the people to say it was the right thing to do. It’s like you said, it wasn’t the money but it was basically the apology, that was basically needed.

JACL: We are going to wind this up and we thank you for your candid comments and we have one last question, what do you think this experience should teach the younger people and the future generations.

Martin: Well, I think, probably the greatest lesson would be to not think like Senator Hayakawa said at one point, when he said, “intern the Iranians”. Remember when the Iranians were holding the Americans hostages. I think he was a basic

disgrace to the Japanese Americans because most of the people feel that, I think the general public too feels that any abridgement of Constitutional Rights is not anything that you want to do.

Dorothy: Well, my children too, I keep telling them to be proud, you know. Maybe if they lived in another country, they wouldn't have the freedom. Being that I was a hairdresser for many years, I met ladies from the Iron Curtain, not being able to read books, not having simple freedoms. I think we should all enjoy what we have, preserve it. I think that they understand that we live in a good place and we have a lot of people protecting it like Jim [Murakami], so that's about it. *(She has tears in her eyes.)*

JACL: We thank you again for your willingness to come out and tell your stories.

End of Interview

ALYCE SUGIYAMA INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: Alyce Sugiyama
Date: July 26, 2001
Place: Enmanji Memorial Hall, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewers: Phyllis Tajii, Cynthia Hayashi, Marie Sugiyama, & Alice Kashiwagi
Summary: Jodi Hottel
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on December 4, 2002 from DVD source material.

Interview Summary

Alyce Sugiyama was born in Healdsburg and lived in Sonoma County her entire life except for “evacuation” and “concentration camp” period during World War II. When her family moved to Petaluma around 1929-30, they raised chickens on their ranch.

Although their neighbors all spoke different languages such as Italian and Portuguese, Alyce noted how everyone got along with each other. She remembered that being “American” was not emphasized and that she was aware of her “Japanese heritage.”

During WWII she remembered her family was given little notice to evacuate, and when in camp, she first encountered dust storms, snow, community bathrooms with little or no privacy, mess [dining] halls and talent shows. She reflected on “being confused” for having done “nothing wrong” and, yet, sent away. She also remembered her husband being drafted into the army to serve on the European front during this same period.

She recalled her family left camp in 1946 for Colorado Springs, and Denver, CO, and finally returning to Petaluma, CA. She worked in a hotel and hospital in Colorado and resumed working with her family raising chickens and vegetables upon their return to Petaluma. Post WWII she encountered a dentist who refused to serve her. She pointed out that “...for everyone who didn’t like you for what you looked like, there were those who made up for it by being extra nice.” Alyce recalls her family’s property was taken care of by Caucasians while they were evacuated without any serious damage to their house. Alyce advised today’s young people to “know their rights” and “stand up for their rights.”

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Hi Alyce, lets talk about your experiences before the war, lets start at the beginning, talk about your family, what they did.

Alyce: Well, I was born in Healdsburg and I lived in Sonoma County all my life. We moved to Petaluma in 1929, 1930 and I’ve been here ever since except for evacuation.

JACL: And when you were going to school, did you have mostly friendships with other Japanese-Americans or did you have a lot of friendships with Caucasians or other ethnic groups?

Alyce: Mainly we were, there weren't that many Japanese people in my class, in fact, in grammar school there was not even one, probably in junior high there were two probably. But mainly it was Caucasians.

JACL: Do you recall with your friendships, when you were growing up, was there any type of discrimination or did you feel any animosity?

Alyce: Well, not that bad but I think you were made to feel different. I think that, like the Italians were different, we were different. I think there were different groups.

JACL: What did your parents do?

Alyce: When we came to Petaluma they were chicken ranchers.

JACL: While you were growing up, did your parents have friendships with mainly other Japanese Americans, the few that were here or did they have friendships with other Caucasians?

Alyce: Well, they did have the Japanese movies here in Sebastopol. I remember going to those, and also New Year's. They had the New Year's party. I can tell you a little story about my father. He didn't speak any English. The fellow down the road was Italian and a Portuguese fellow and they would trade off. One had a horse and one had a cow and they would just trade things. They kind of just exchanged things and neither of them spoke the common language. But they had a way of just saying, "come on in and have a glass of wine and salami and that good stuff." It just amazes me in my old age how they got along without having a common language.

JACL: As you were growing up did you consider yourself American, Japanese-American?

Alyce: I don't think there was an emphasis on being an American. You knew what your heritage [was] being Japanese. That's the way it was.

JACL: So Alyce, we're going to talk about World War II and during that period of time in your life. Where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor and how did that make you feel and what happened to you and your family. The good parts, the interesting parts, the bad parts. Any part of that.

Alyce: Are you talking about prior to evacuation or the day of the evacuation?

JACL: Where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Alyce: I was home.

JACL: And how did you hear about it?

Alyce: On the radio.

JACL: And was there confusion in your family life? How did your parents react, did they talk about it at home, did they know what was going to happen?

Alyce: I think you're in this country so you know it is pretty serious when the county you're in is attacked. Oh yeah, it makes a difference.

JACL: And when you got ready to leave, how did you prepare to go to camp?

Alyce: Oh Boy! How can you ever prepare yourself for something that you've never experienced in your life. You knew that it was a mandate that you go and so it's like, you only have, I don't know that we had even thirty days, to tell you the truth. Maybe we had thirty days but I don't think not much more than that. So in thirty days you're trying to get yourself all ready to leave whatever you had.

JACL: And can you remember anything that you took? Did your parents... was there a list?

Alyce: No I don't remember a list. It was like whatever you can carry, so do the math, it was not very much that you could carry.

JACL: When you got into camp, what was life like, the weather conditions...?

Alyce: We first went to Merced [Assembly Center]. Of course, that was really hot. I think we stayed there about three, three months and then we were on a train going to Colorado. Although I don't know if we even knew where we were going to tell you the truth. Once we got to Colorado in Granada, it was like, you didn't have a limo taking you to the relocation site [Amache Internment Camp], it was just a cattle truck and that's what you were on and that's what they took you on to all the barracks that were there.

JACL: And were you in school in camp?

Alyce: Oh yeah, I was in school. It was very different. You walked in, it was the first time that I knew really what snow was like and what a dust storm was like. It was different. No buses to take you to school.

JACL: How did the camp life affect your family relationship, did your whole family live in the same area?

Alyce: Oh yeah, one 20 by 20 room, probably, with one pot-belly stove. Yeah, we didn't have the luxury of separate bedrooms, separate bathrooms. We had community bathrooms, mess hall.

JACL: And to go to the mess hall, did everybody eat at the same time? Was there a required time that you ate?

Alyce: I believe so. I believe so. I don't remember. I just remember the big mess hall. I'm sure it had to be staggered.

JACL: While you were in camp Alyce, did you stay in touch with your friends who were outside of camp or did you loose touch with them?

Alyce: I think basically I lost touch with them. Uh-huh.

JACL: And did you have any relatives that were in the military during World War II?

Alyce: My husband.

JACL: And which branch of the service was he in.

Alyce: The Army.

JACL: And did he volunteer or was he drafted?

Alyce: Oh no, they were drafted.

JACL: And where did he go, into Europe or the Pacific?

Alyce: He went to Europe.

JACL: If you had to kind of sum up this part of your life time, what would you consider the best memories of this time and probably the worst memories of this time?

Alyce: (*Deep Sigh*) Oh boy! I remember, I think you are kind of confused as to why you are confined where you are. Because normally you would be punished for something or some wrongdoing. But knowing that you hadn't done anything wrong you're kind of wondering why you are gathered up into this concentration camp, if you want to call it that. And you can't really be carefree when you know there are guards posted with their guns aimed at you if you did something wrong. So you know that life is not normal even as young as you might be. I guess the good things were I remember they had talent shows. You know, you make the most of what you get.

JACL: Were you in any of the talent shows?

Alyce: Heavens no. (*laughs*) But there were some pretty talented people.

JACL: Excellent. Well, thank you.

Alyce: But we didn't have any rights really. You know it was like oh, okay, but if it was in this date and age it would be different.

JACL: Alyce, what were some of the conditions in camp that bothered you at that time?

Alyce: It's the first time that you go and take a shower with everybody else around, same thing with going to the bathroom. And I remember especially in Merced maybe there were four or five places for you to go to the bathroom and there you are with everybody else like little chickens doing whatever you have to do. It's different, your privacy is taken away.

JACL: And you had to walk fairly long distance to go to the bathroom and to take your showers?

Alyce: It is different from living in a modern home, that's for sure. You had to walk to the bathroom to the mess hall. It wasn't that long but when the weather is bad I'd say, you know, every step is long.

JACL: And I want to discuss a little bit about resettlement. When did you find out that you had to leave camp?

Alyce: It had to be in 1946. But we had left earlier than... yeah, there was a time that they had set that you were supposed to leave camp by. But we had left a little bit earlier. I really can't say what the exact date, it must have been 1946.

JACL: And where did you go?

Alyce: We went to Colorado, well we were in Colorado. So I went to Colorado Springs and then from there we went to Denver, Colorado. And from Denver Colorado we came back to California.

JACL: What type of employment did you have while you lived in Colorado?

Alyce: Well I worked in a hotel and then I also worked in a hospital.

JACL: And what did the rest of your family do?

Alyce: Mmm, good question. (*chuckles*) I can't recall.

JACL: And how did you happen to be able to come back to California?

Alyce: We came back in a car. Let's see, it must have been my two brothers, myself and my mother and father. And so we traveled back in a car.

JACL: And where did you settle?

Alyce: In Petaluma.

JACL: And was it difficult getting employment, at that time in Petaluma or did you have friends who helped you.

Alyce: Ah, this isn't exactly employment but I got to tell you that we had been going to the same dentist for years before evacuation and after evacuation we naturally made our appointment with the same dentist and he said "no way" he said he just will not treat Japanese. You know the prejudice was there and for whatever reason he chose to have us as his patients. But I'm glad that he went and told us that he wasn't going to work on our teeth cause I'd rather him be honest than to do something that wasn't legal, perhaps. Oh, and also car insurance was also hard to get. I think there was only one insurance company that would insure cars, especially in Petaluma, I don't know about the rest of Sonoma County. Anyway, that was our experience as far as prejudice when we came back.

JACL: And how did you find housing in Petaluma, did you have a place to come to?

Alyce: We had our own place, yes, we had our own place. We were fortunate in that respect.

JACL: So you have your property before or is it...

Alyce: We had the property since the time we came to Petaluma.

JACL: Oh I see, and was there any problem with your property during World War II?

Alyce: No, because we had someone staying there. So basically the property was looked after.

JACL: So you had friends who looked after the property for you?

Alyce: Caucasian, uh-huh. We had someone taking care of our property so when we came back the property was still, it was not vandalized as far as I could [tell].

JACL: Now you had someone stay in your property, that took care of your property while you came back, during World War II, is that correct?

Alyce: Yes, that's correct.

- JACL: And did they pay your taxes for you and they took care of the property, is that what happened?
- Alyce: I really don't know what type of arrangement it was. I just know that someone was there on the property.
- JACL: When you came back, what type of employment, what type of work did your family do?
- Alyce: We basically went back to what we were trying to do before.
- JACL: And that was?
- Alyce: Farming.
- JACL: What type of farming did you do.
- Alyce: Chicken. Poultry. Some produce.
- JACL: Was your whole family involved in the farming business?
- Alyce: Oh yes.
- JACL: How old were you when you came back from Colorado?
- Alyce: Nineteen or Twenty.
- JACL: Have you ever talked about your war experience with your children?
- Alyce: Somewhat but not a lot. I haven't shoved it down their throats, as far as that goes, but if it came up, yeah, we talk about it with the children.
- JACL: Do you think you may have passed down some of your so-called Nisei [second generation] traits to your children?
- Alyce: What do you mean by Nisei traits?
- JACL: Oh probably, push for education, sense of self-responsibility, hard working?
- Alyce: Oh sure, probably.
- JACL: How were you ever able to deal with racism when you encountered it.
- Alyce: After we got back?
- JACL: Yes, was there a lot, or every once in a while?
- Alyce: I suppose every now and then you would meet up with someone who didn't like you for the way you looked and then there were those who made up for it by being extra nice to you, so I guess it balances out.
- JACL: Who were the people that were helpful to you to relocate again when you came back to Petaluma? Were they neighbors or anyone special who were very helpful, friends?
- Alyce: I don't think so. I think you're pretty much on your own to try and get back to making a living.
- JACL: How many were there in your family when you came back from Colorado?
- Alyce: Well, there were six of us in the family scrounging around to make a living.

JACL: And what are their names, in order of age?

Alyce: Oh God! (*rolls her eyes*) I can hardly remember my own age. (*laughs*) I guess the youngest must have been 16 coming back and probably the oldest was maybe 30. Somewhere in that range, I never thought about it, to tell you the truth.

JACL: Alyce, I'm was fascinated by what you have to say. What lessons did you learn through all of the experiences that you've had, prior to World War II up until now, what lesson did you learn through these experiences?

Alyce: (*rolls her eyes*) You can ask me something easier.

JACL: We can think of things like how you deal with people. Are you more tolerant? or less tolerant? Are you angry? And if you're angry, show that anger.

Alyce: Well, if we go back to when I was evacuated, at my young age. Well you do what you're told. But if it happened now it would be much harder to accept that. Because usually you are punished for some crime that you committed, not because you are who you are. So as I got older I got resentment. That about sums it up.

JACL: If you were asked to evacuate today, July 22, 2002, what would you do?

Alyce: I think now, I think today you have a better understanding of what your rights are and you don't have to do it just because you are told to do it. I think that not only with our race but with any other race, that it would be hard for the government to just step in and say here you go.

JACL: So you would seal yourself to the ground and say absolutely not.

Alyce: Probably, probably. Go screaming, yeah. (*laughs*)

JACL: I know I would. What do you feel about redress, Alyce?

Alyce: I think redress should have been given to everyone who evacuated. I think it should have been given earlier than 50 years later. Because I think that amount 50 years later is not a huge amount of money, pure and simple.

JACL: Now you've been on stage for quite a while. What advice would you give the young people of today?

Alyce: Stand up for your rights. Absolutely. Know what your rights are. Don't let them bully you around.

JACL: Alyce, thank you so much for this afternoon.

End of Interview

HARRY SUGIYAMA INTERVIEW

Person interviewed: Harry Sugiyama
Date: May 20, 2003
Place: Sugiyama residence, Petaluma, CA
Interviewer: Marie Sugiyama
Summary: Jodi Hottel
Transcription: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on June 4, 2003 from audio source material.

Interview Summary

Harry Sugiyama starts this interview by telling about his childhood when his family followed the seasons, working the hops in spring and apples in summer and fall. He attended two different elementary schools because of this situation, Jonive in Sebastopol and Mill Creek in Healdsburg. As a young boy, he was active with baseball, 4H and activities in the Japanese community. At the time of the evacuation, he had almost completed his four years at Analy High School but had to receive his diploma in the mail at Amache camp, Colorado. Harry recalls that most of his teachers were supportive, in particular Mr. Davis and Mr. Pat Irish, who was the advisor for the Japanese club.

Harry comes toward the middle of a family of eight children. The family was evacuated to Merced Assembly Center and then Amache Relocation Camp. Harry describes the train trips there and the conditions of the barracks, mess halls and latrines. He also tells about his experiences in the Army as part of the Occupation Forces in Germany.

Harry got married to Alyce in 1953, and they have two children, Rodney and Janel. He is active in the Sonoma County JACL and the Enmanji Buddhist Church boards and used to be a Scout Master for the Boy Scouts. He and his wife, Alyce, have spoken to students about their internment experiences and feel that it's important for people to get information. As an example, he points out that not many people realize that some veterans of WWI were interned during WWII. Currently, he enjoys fishing and is enjoying life in retirement.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Harry, I have a few questions to ask you about WWII and internment. Let me know what your family did before WWII and why they came to California.

Harry: What they were at that time was called "fruit tramps". They picked apples and worked in hops. They had a dehydrator at our place, and during the springtime we went to Healdsburg to train hops. Before we went to school, usually we did a little bit of work, and then after school we had to do chores around the place, things like that. I had to pick up apples, put them through the dehydrator. The hop training time, I remember that we used to put the strings on wires, and when we put the strings on the wires we used to get up early in the morning.

We used to get up at dawn, and we used to put the strings on stakes and tie them together so they could train the hops on them.

JACL: What ranch did you work on?

Harry: Well, we had what they used to call the Story Ranch in the hops. For the apples, we ran an apple dryer on the Lynch Ranch. On the Lynch Ranch we had berries, Royal Anne cherries and apples. We had a hard time as kids going to school because we would go to one school for six or seven months and then the other school for two or three months, going back and forth to the two schools. I remember that both schools were one-room classrooms. In other words, we were eight grades in one room. And the one in Sebastopol was Jonive School, and I think we had about 20 students total. Most of the time the older kids would help the teacher teach the younger kids. And it was the same way in Mill Creek School in Healdsburg. We were the older ones teaching the younger ones. The thing I remember about Mill Creek School is the teacher was named Mrs. Schaefer. When we were out on recess and we were playing baseball, she got very involved, and it seems like we played a lot of baseball. She'd forget about the class work for two hours at a time.

JACL: Now, do you remember who your teacher was at Jonive?

Harry: Yes, at Jonive it was Mrs. Banks. I think her first name was Greta. In the summertime we used to buy some of the windfalls, Gravenstein apples from the orchard that her husband used to run. And her husband's orchard was called El Centro, I think. I'm not sure.

JACL: When did your father and mother come to the United States? Do you recall?

Harry: I don't recall. I think my mother was a picture bride, and I'm not sure when they came to the United States... California.

JACL: What did your parents teach you?

Harry: They taught me, more or less, to be more honest and to try your best at whatever you did.

JACL: What activities were you involved in when you were younger?

Harry: Younger... like I said, when we were in school, we played baseball when I was younger. But I think, when I was going to Jonive School, I spent two years in the 4H Club. I don't recall what we did actually,

JACL: Were there a lot of Japanese community activities at that time?

Harry: Where we lived there wasn't too many activities. But in Sebastopol there were quite a few activities. They used to have, I remember, what they called *Shibai* [play, drama]. They used to have actors on the stage and a lot of stuff. When they closed the curtains, I remember, they used to hit wooden blocks together and they made a kind of clapping sound. On New Year's Day the father and the oldest son usually used to go from house to house and visit all the community people. I guess that went on for about a week. They would sit and talk and visit.

- JACL:** So basically, New Year's was the time to get reacquainted with all your friends and visit with them?
- Harry:** I think that more or less, [that's] what it was. We celebrated New Year's that way.
- JACL:** How did you feel about school?
- Harry:** Well, I think if I'd studied harder, I would have had better grades, but I was one of those guys that just studied enough to get by. I enjoyed school, actually. Math was my favorite subject.
- JACL:** Were you able to take part in the school activities?
- Harry:** Yes, we used to go play baseball in the schools. I think one of the schools was called Lafayette School. We played baseball games with each other. Anne Yokoyama Ohki used to be on the Lafayette School team.
- JACL:** Where did you go to high school?
- Harry:** I went to Analy Union High School for four years, and I graduated in 1942. I received my diploma in the mail in Colorado.
- JACL:** Did you have any problems while you were in school because you were Japanese?
- Harry:** I had a few incidents where the students would call me "Jap". And, you know, I used to just let it roll off my shoulders. You know, the old Japanese saying was, *shikataganai* [it can't be helped]. You let it roll off your shoulders.
- JACL:** Were there any students who came to your defense if something like that happened?
- Harry:** A few. I don't recall any one. Most of the students were pretty good. There were just a few, maybe four or five, out of the whole school, I think, that really called me "Jap".
- JACL:** Were there teachers who helped you?
- Harry:** Most of the teachers were pretty good. I remember I had a metal shop teacher named Mr. Davis. I can't think of his first name. He helped me out quite a bit. There were about 40 Nisei in school, and we had our group called the Japanese Club at Analy High School. Our advisor was Mr. Pat Irish. Just when the war started and we were outlawed, we had to disband the club.
- JACL:** I understand from looking at the picture, there were about forty? Forty-five?
- Harry:** No, there's not forty-five. In our class there were 16 Nisei. For a while, the Sonoma County Board of Education was thinking of having a diploma ceremony for all the Nisei in Sonoma County that graduated in '42.
- JACL:** When did you first hear about Pearl Harbor, and what were your feelings about that?
- Harry:** I heard about Pearl Harbor early Monday morning when I was going to school. That's when I first heard about it. We didn't have electricity in our house. There was a radio, but half the time we never listened to it. We were on the bus going

to school the next morning when we heard all about it. I'm pretty sure it was the next morning, Monday morning. Most of the people were pretty good, like I say. We didn't worry much about the bad things.

JACL: When did you find out that your family was restricted and that eventually that you would have to go to camp?

Harry: When we found out we had to go to camp... There were a lot of kids and not too much money. We were out of school and worked the hop fields.

JACL: Did you have to sell your equipment?

Harry: Well, Art, he was my older brother, he was taking care of most of all that stuff. I don't recall too much, but I think we had a car and a truck that we left with the people that were behind us to take care of. They were both destroyed before we got back, and we got nothing out of it. We had a tractor, pick-up and a disk. I think Art sold them before we evacuated.

JACL: How long did you have before you found out you had to leave?

Harry: It wasn't many days. I don't recall exactly. We were working the cherries, so it was kind of hard for my mother and father, especially with the little kids. The older kids were all right. We had eight children in our family—Isako, Art, Eva, me, Norma, Anna, Keiji and Marie.

JACL: So all the others below you were younger and were either in high school or elementary school?

Harry: Oh yeah, it was pretty hard for children in elementary school to try to carry things around, which they did. They couldn't carry as much as the older kids could.

JACL: In high school, did you run around with Nisei kids?

Harry: I think it was more with the Nisei than we did with the Caucasian people. It seems like that, anyway.

JACL: How did you feel about having to leave and going in camp?

Harry: Being that I was still pretty young yet, I thought it was an adventure. But you think about it now, and you say, "It wasn't such a good place for us, really."

JACL: Were you in the service, and were there men that tried to enlist who were refused?

Harry: You know, I hear there were a few Nisei already in the service and they were treated pretty rough. In other words, they would be training, and they would be handed wooden rifles instead of regular rifles.

JACL: Did you go to camp first?

Harry: We went to Merced Assembly Center, California. The barracks were fairly new. But there was no ceiling, so that from one end to the other, if someone said something on one end a little bit loud, everybody in the whole building knew what it was. And there was only a partition with eight-foot high walls, and each family was stuffed in one room. We had community showers, and when we

went to go to the bathroom, they had what-you-call-it, the holes. Eventually, you learned not to sit on the end because every so often the bucket would tip over and all the water would come flushing down, and if you were sitting on the end you get a little bath. (*Laughter*)

JACL: Were there any activities in camp that you can recall?

Harry: Yes, we used to play basketball and baseball, in Merced anyway, and they had activities, such as playing cards.

JACL: So it was like an interim. When and how did you go to Amache Internment Camp?

Harry: In August by train. All the windows had curtains on them and they were drawn so you couldn't see outside. We didn't know where we were going. We were just on the train. Once or twice we stopped and we were allowed to stretch our legs outside, but there were guys who had rifles pointing towards us so that we would not get away. We were treated like regular prisoners, and we didn't know where we were going.

JACL: So basically, the family was apprehensive because they did not know where they were going and what was going to happen to them?

Harry: That's right. When we got to Amache, they took us to our barracks.

JACL: How many rooms per family?

Harry: The family had one room, about one and a half, I would say. There was another room where Art and Tomosan stayed. The family was stuck together in one room, no privacy for the boys and girls. It had a pot belly coal stove that would heat the whole room.

JACL: What were the sleeping arrangements?

Harry: We had some Army cots. After we'd been in Amache for a little while, they picked up scrap lumber and made beds and other furniture. Also some men did wood carvings, which were beautiful.

JACL: What was the weather like?

Harry: During the winter there was tons of snow. Cold. Summertime when the wind would blow, you'd get sand all over the place. We had basketball. There were people who thought we had a swimming pool in Amache. It was the sewer ponds. Eventually, Art and I moved out and we went to top sugar beets. That was the hardest work. Talking about experiences, we stayed at one place, and during the night I felt itchy. I wondered why, and one night I took the flashlight and I turned it on the bed sheets and there were bed bugs. The place was full of bed bugs. And then one night we got up to get water, and the water was frozen in the bucket. That's how cold it was inside the room.

JACL: You had no running water?

Harry: No, we didn't have any running water to speak of. We used to go to an outhouse.

JACL: Now, when you were in camp, what facilities were near your room in camp?

Harry: It was just like everything else. It was a community bathroom and there were no partitions in the stalls and anything like that. So when everybody is on the john, you could see who was sitting next to you.

JACL: Were the showers the same way?

Harry: The showers were the same way. Yes, for the men's side. I don't know about the women's side.

JACL: And the mess hall?

Harry: We used to go eat in the mess hall. I think we used to have just one shift, but I'm not sure how the mess hall used to work out. I don't remember too much about camp because Art and I were not there long. The first year we went to top beets and the next season we went to work on a farm in Ault, Colorado.

JACL: The beets, was that near the camp? Did you have to go far?

Harry: No, we went to Ault... what was the name of that town? It was a little town north of Greeley.

JACL: How long were you at the farm?

Harry: I got my draft notice in Ault. We went to Denver and I was inducted into the Army in July and was sent back as reserves. In September we were called again for active duty and sent to Fort Blanding in Florida, for I forget how long it was. I had a furlough and went home, and we went back to Fort Meade, Maryland. We stayed from February the 23rd to April the 19th in 1945. Most of the groups would stay maybe five days and they'd be shipped out. But we were stuck there for that long. What happened was the 442nd was full at that time. We were the first group of Nisei to be integrated with the Caucasians. We went to Le Havre, France on April the 28th and were replacements for the 159th Infantry Battalion of the 106th Infantry Line Division. What happened was they were pretty well depleted because they were in the Battle of the Bulge. We served with that group from May the 9th to July the 22nd. Then the 159th Infantry was sent to the Pacific, so all the Nisei were transferred to the field artillery, the 627 Field Artillery Battalion in Heibron, Germany. All of us from Sonoma County who were in the same battalion, me and Sam Miyano, we were in C Battery and Ed Kawaoka and Dr. Fred Fujihara, they were in Headquarters Company. We were in the Army of Occupation most of the time.

When we went up to the front lines on May 9th, the war wasn't over yet, and it was kind of scary. Machine guns were going off all over the place, and there was a whine of bullets going all over while we were being transferred up to the front line. I was pretty lucky because of the fact that the... I guess you can say we were pretty lucky because we went up to the front line one day and the next day the war was over, although there was sniper fire all around us. We guarded prisoners, but it was over.

JACL: But there were still problems.

- Harry:** Yes, there were still problems because there were still snipers. It wasn't too bad, but it was still going on.
- JACL:** But you had to be careful about where you went.
- Harry:** After we were there for about six months, it kind of died down and it was pretty good. It got to be better.
- JACL:** Did you see a lot of devastation as far as buildings and everything being bombed?
- Harry:** The cities, yes, but most of the small towns were in pretty good shape yet. Like the small towns where we stayed, the Army of Occupation, were in pretty good shape. The bad part was the going in and staying in their houses. But we got orders, so that's what we did for about six months. Then we started living in tents.
- JACL:** How did the German people feel about the Occupation?
- Harry:** They were irate, but I guess they couldn't do anything about it. Because we did things that shouldn't be done.
- JACL:** Did it ease a little after you started staying in the tents?
- Harry:** When we started living in tents away from the homes, the people felt a little bit better. For six or eight months, we had prisoners of war who helped with the cooking. It was an experience.
- JACL:** How long were the German soldiers kept as prisoners?
- Harry:** I spent a year and a half in Germany, and by then, most of them were home.
- JACL:** Were they antagonistic when the war was over?
- Harry:** Some were just like us, you know, family people. They got drafted, and you have a few exceptions, you have the SS. The ones that were farmers, they came back and they worked as farmers and that was it.
- JACL:** So, as a whole, as part of the occupation...
- Harry:** From the time in Le Havre till we moved in, and at that time, as I said, I think the guys were pretty good.
- JACL:** So, you came back after a year and a half in Germany?
- Harry:** Back to Healdsburg and started working in the hops, picking hops, worked for the Frost Ranch for a little while.
- JACL:** After Art had already gone to Healdsburg, right?
- Harry:** Yes, I came back home after Art and the rest of the family had already come back to California. That's why I came back to Healdsburg. I don't know too much about what happened in Colorado during the time I was in the service. I do remember one incident when we went in to see a movie in Healdsburg. Some guy said, "Oh, you dirty goddam Japs!", and that was the only incident that I remember. They might think it, but they wouldn't say it.
- JACL:** Did you have any other problems?

Harry: There might have been. I do know that we had some insurance companies that wouldn't insure us. There were some dentists that wouldn't take us.

JACL: Did people have a hard time getting loans to buy property?

Harry: I don't think so. We bought property in Santa Rosa, Art and I together.

JACL: Which bank was it through, the Exchange Bank?

Harry: I think so. I moved out when Alyce and I got married. We went to Petaluma. I was working for Cal Poultry in '48, I think, '48 or '49.

JACL: When did you get married?

Harry: September 6, 1953 at the Enmanji Buddhist Church in Sebastopol.

JACL: How many children did you have?

Harry: We had two children, Rodney, who lives in Santa Rosa, and Janel, who lives right down the street from us. Rodney is an electronic engineer at Agilent, and Janel is a schoolteacher at Sequoia Elementary School. It's good to see that they got along so well at school.

JACL: They both graduated from college?

Harry: Yes, they graduated from Cal State Sacramento.

JACL: Are you involved in the Japanese community here in Sonoma County?

Harry: Right now I'm on the Sonoma County JACL board and on the Enmanji Church board. I'm involved with the church, in the bazaar and other activities that the JACL and the church has.

JACL: So you help in quite a few community activities?

Harry: I used to be Scout Master for the Boy Scouts of America. I was Scout Master for about ten years, I believe. We had a pretty good time. We have Rodney; he is an Eagle Scout. Then there's other Eagle Scouts. One Eagle Scout comes to visit me every Christmas.

JACL: Tell me something about Sam Dolcini.

Harry: Sam Dolcini, he's at his father's ranch now. They raise cattle. It used to be dairy, but with the dairy situation, they decided to quit dairy ranching. I'm not sure what kind of award he has, but he won a prize for being... [he got] a Dodge pickup. He's coming Thursday, which is the 20th, I believe, to go to Petaluma, down the fairgrounds, and he's going to give a speech.

JACL: He comes for Christmas every year.

Harry: He's doing quite well. I had to push him a little bit to get him to make Eagle Scout. He would help the younger scouts and forget to work on his own advancement.

JACL: When you came back, you didn't have difficulty finding work?

Harry: Art was already working at the Frost Ranch, so I had a job the next day after getting home.

JACL: Yeah, so you were established and worked out at the Frost Ranch?

Harry: Yeah.

JACL: Do you talk much about WWII and what happened during that time?

Harry: Gee, not too much. Alyce and I have gone to Roseland Elementary School. What made it good was that the teacher was interested in what happened, so she had the kids kind of clued into how to ask questions. The interview went pretty well, I thought. And the kids were really good. A week or so later, we went to the school and they had a tape of some of the kids talking about evacuation.

JACL: I think it's great for you to do this because I think it makes the kids care about what happened to someone who has been in camp.

Harry: Two students from Casa Grande High School came over to our place during spring break and out of the blue came to interview us. It was a little bit harder to talk to them because they were high school students, you know.

JACL: How did the war experience affect you in your life, do you think?

Harry: I think I got to see a lot of places. (*Chuckles*)

JACL: How do you feel about redress?

Harry: I think it is all right, but if you start thinking of the value of the money now and the value of money then, and you start thinking that this was four or five years out of your life down the drain, so to speak. It could be nothing, but then I think we should have all been compensated. Like you say, there's a lot of them that are gone now.

JACL: What do you think is the greatest contribution of the experience?

Harry: Getting so that the human life should be valued.

JACL: Are you in a veterans organization?

Harry: I am right now. Did you know that there used to be several Japanese in World War I, and they were in the American Legion? It was Mr. Mukaida from Sebastopol, and the other one was Mr. Uyeda from Petaluma. It was Mr. Uyeda, but the family used to go by Shimazu.

JACL: They are citizens of the United States because they were in the service.

Harry: They were in the service, and yet they were pulled along just like the rest of us and thrown into Amache camp.

JACL: What advice would you give to the young people of today?

Harry: I would say stand up for your rights because we were younger and we were citizens.

JACL: The situation also might have been a little bit different because the parents were unable to become citizens of the United States, and if they were resistant they might be sent back to Japan and be separated from the kids. Most of the Nisei were younger at that time, weren't they?

Harry: Most of them were. We didn't have the right to vote or anything, so we were taught from our parents to go along with whatever the law was. It was different then.

JACL: As you go out to speak to students about what happened, I hope it will educate those who have not heard that the Japanese Americans were even in concentration camps.

Harry: I do know that, for example, there are four or five guys that had been in the Army, they were soldiers. They did not even know about it, or if they knew about it, they just ignored it. Then you have some people that were in the service that did not know of the evacuation and were not from California. But what it is, is that the information is there but they just ignore it.

JACL: Any comments you'd like to share with us?

Harry: Now I'm retired, and I'm enjoying myself. I go fishing, and life has been pretty good.

End of Interview

SUGIYAMA & YOSHIMURA FAMILY INTERVIEW

Persons interviewed: Isako Yoshimura, Arthur Sugiyama and Norma Sugiyama, Matsumi Mukaida Sugiyama

Date: May 27, 2003

Place: Arthur Sugiyama residence, Santa Rosa, CA

Interviewer: Marie Sugiyama

Summary: Marie Sugiyama

Transcriber: Transcribed by Sylvia Romero Ramirez on June 7, 2003 from audio source material

Interview Summary

The Sugiyama family members were born and raised in Sonoma County. Their father immigrated to Hawaii to work on the sugar plantations and then came to Healdsburg, California in the early 1900's to join his brother. Their mother, sister of their aunt, was brought by an arranged marriage to Healdsburg, California. They were married in San Francisco when she came in on the ship.

Before WWII, they leased an apple ranch and dryer during the summer and fall and worked in the hops during the winter and spring. Arthur was very active in the agriculture and farm mechanics program at Analy High School. He won top honors as a student, and his pigs won top prizes at the Interstate Livestock Show in San Francisco. As many of the Japanese women did in the early days, Isako did domestic work for families in Santa Rosa while attending high school.

Many of the residents of the greater community of Sebastopol aided the family prior to and during the time they were forced to evacuate. Teachers at Analy High School were very supportive of the Japanese American students. After Pearl Harbor, their automobile insurance company canceled their insurance, even though Isako mentioned that she was an American citizen. When they relocated back to California, they were denied automobile insurance by AAA.

While in Amache, the family members, both men and women, participated on sports teams, which was a popular activity in camp. They related a story where a young soldier guarding the camp shot at a three-year-old girl who was outside the fence. Later, the young guard fell and broke his ankle. The family of the girl reported the accident to the authorities.

The family tells of their experiences while in Colorado and their relationships with the native Caucasians and Japanese in Colorado. They feel the younger generation needs to be informed of their WWII experience through education, and the citizens need to be aware of their civil rights to prevent other civil rights violations in our country.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: Now, Isako, can you tell me a little bit of the background of your mother and father, and when they came to California?

Isako: My father first came from Japan to Hawaii to join his brother and sister-in-law, *ojisān* [uncle] and *obasan* [aunt]. Do I give their names? Gensuke and Seki Sugiyama. My father came and joined them. He worked in the sugar plantations for about three years and then *ojiisan* and *obasan* decided to come to California. A few months later my father decided to come to California to join them. They lived in Healdsburg, California. While there, they decided to call my mother from Japan. My mother was my aunt's sister and my father was my uncle's brother. A couple of years later my mother came from Japan and joined the family. They lived on Westside Road in Healdsburg and trained hops, picked prunes and did farm labor. I was born on Westside Road in Healdsburg.

JACL: When were you born?

Isako: I was born on February 8, 1916.

JACL: And Art, where you born?

Art: I was born in Santa Rosa.

Isako: He was born on the Ross Ranch. Mr. Ross had an apple dryer on Bennett Valley Road in Santa Rosa.

Art: On April 4th, 1919.

JACL: When were you born, Norma?

Norma: I was born in Healdsburg, California, on March 19, 1926.

JACL: Matsumi, you are a Mukaida. When were you born?

Matsumi: Graton, California, September 23, 1923.

JACL: Your family came from Japan, also?

Matsumi: Yes, they went to Maui, Hawaii, and they worked in the sugar cane. Then my father went into the Army, and my mother was left to work in the sugar cane. Then he got his citizenship. Then Tom was born in 1919.

JACL: In Hawaii?

Matsumi: Yes, then they came to California.

JACL: So your father was in WWI. What did he do?

Matsumi: He worked in the kitchen. He was a PFC. (*Loud laughter*)

JACL: Who are the other people in your family, Norma?

Norma: Oh, Anna married Takeo Matsumoto and later went to Hawaii. They have three children, two boys and a girl. Unfortunately, she had cancer and passed away. I have a younger brother, Keiji Sugiyama. He lives in Napa. I have a

sister, Marie Sugiyama, who is the baby of the family and is conducting this interview.

JACL: Art, what about the other two in the family after you?

Art: Eva, she was right under me, and we were really close. We went to school together. She had cancer and she passed away in 1947. Then there is Harry after Eva. He helped with the family. We grew up in Sebastopol. When I turned twenty-one, my dad grabbed the books dumped them right in front of me and said, "From now on you are the boss of the family." So I kind of took over as the boss of the family. Then we went to camp. I didn't stay too long in the camp. I stayed, maybe, a year and drove a coal truck for a while. Then I worked with Rich Asai. We worked on the XY Ranch. We rode a horse around. One time, we got chased by a cow. From there we went out to Eaton, Colorado. My brother, Harry, and I worked through the winter cutting hay. I talked to the boss, and then I went down to the camp, packed up the whole family, and we moved to a ranch in Eaton.

JACL: Do you remember the ranch?

Art: The Bill Johnson Ranch.

JACL: We're going back a little bit because we are going to talk about elementary school. Where did you go to elementary school?

Art: We went to Jonive School and to Mill Creek School. Dryer time and apple time we were in Jonive School. When we worked in the hops during the winter and spring, we went to Mill Creek School. I graduated from Mill Creek Grammar School.

JACL: Isako, where did you go to elementary school?

Isako: I went to grammar school all over Sebastopol. I went to Pleasant Hill and Spring Hill. During the hops season, I went to Mill Creek, back and forth. I graduated from Mill Creek Grammar School.

JACL: Do you remember who the teacher was when you graduated?

Isako: When I graduated from Mill Creek, the teacher was Mrs. Marian Gardner. She later married and her name was Mrs. Marian Baldo. She later taught at Pleasant Hill School and taught Japanese students there. I was friends with her until she passed away at the age of 105.

JACL: Norma, which elementary schools did you go to?

Norma: I also went to Jonive and to Mill Creek. I also graduated from Mill Creek. Every year we went back and forth. During the apple season we were in Sebastopol, and during the hop season we were in Mill Creek.

JACL: And Matsumi?

Matsumi: I went to Oak Grove in Graton. I went to Lafayette and graduated from Oak Grove.

JACL: We went by Lafayette the other day.

Matsumi: No more, huh?

JACL: No. All the old schools are gone. Isako, what high school did you go to?

Isako: I went to Santa Rosa High School and graduated in 1934.

JACL: What did you do when you were in high school?

Isako: I stayed with a lady all my high school years. Her name was Mrs. Minnie Mills. She was the supervisor of music for the elementary schools in Santa Rosa. I stayed and lived with her until she passed away.

JACL: Were you involved in any activities in high school, such as clubs, sports?

Isako: I helped with the family every year until December, so I really wasn't involved with too many things.

JACL: Art, where did you go to high school?

Art: Analy High School and I took up agriculture. I was fortunate enough to I raise some pigs for an Interstate Junior Livestock and Baby Beef Show in San Francisco in 1938. My pigs got a second, fourth, eighth and fourteenth out of 300 of that breed. I had the reserve grand champion of the pen of three pigs in that breed. I was voted as one the top two in my junior year in the agriculture department and received a Block A in my junior year. In my senior year, I got a Block A for being one of the top two students in agriculture. I took farm mechanics for four years. When I graduated, they gave me an axe, which I still have, for being the top student in that class for four years. I also played two years of varsity baseball.

JACL: Who was the coach then?

Art: Corson. He transferred to Tamalpais after that.

JACL: I met him years later at the North Coast Section. He was the treasurer of the North Coast Section. I didn't get a chance to talk to him. I didn't know then that he was your coach or I would have said something to him. He died shortly after that. You started high school at Analy, Norma?

Norma: I started high school at Analy. Then we evacuated to Merced [Assembly Center]. They didn't have school in Merced. After Merced, we were sent to Amache Internment Camp, Colorado. I graduated in Amache.

JACL: Matsumi, did you go to Analy?

Matsumi: Yeah, I went till my junior year, and then in my senior year I went to camp and I graduated in Amache.

JACL: Now there were a lot of Japanese at Analy weren't there? Quite a few Japanese Americans?

Matsumi: Yes, there was a Japanese Club.

JACL: Were there about forty or fifty people in that club?

Matsumi: Yes.

JACL: Now, do you remember any incidents when you were in elementary school or high school where you were given a hard time because you were Japanese?

Art: At that time, people didn't get too involved about racial lines. They were really nice as far as I was concerned. They treated me really good.

JACL: Isako, when you were in school did people say anything because you were Japanese?

Isako: No, I think I was treated real well. I didn't have very much trouble.

JACL: Norma?

Norma: I was home in Sebastopol, it was nothing that was said face to face. Some people were going up the road and hollering racial and derogatory stuff. That's the only thing I can remember.

JACL: Matsumi, do you remember anything?

Matsumi: I don't remember anything.

JACL: When did you find out about Pearl Harbor? What was your reaction when you found out about Pearl Harbor? What was the reaction of your mother and father?

Norma: I can't really remember what the reaction was, but I remember that mama was really scared. Art had his *kendo* [swordsmanship] equipment. She just took it and buried it because she thought it might be something that might be held against us.

JACL: Were there a lot of things, like artifacts, that they didn't take with them when they went to camp?

Norma: That's right. We stored some of the things in a little shed and some things we took to Nippon Hall. The things we took to Nippon Hall were there when we came back, but the other things we left in the shed, on the property, were all gone.

JACL: What property were you on at that time?

Art: We were on O'Farrell Hill. Mr. Lynch was the owner of a packing company in Oakland. He was really good to us. He rented the place to us for a measly \$100 a year. So what I did was to start buying equipment. We figured it was real good because when the dryer was getting old and dilapidated, he sent a contractor out and rebuilt the whole dryer for us. He'd come over every two or three weeks and spend time with us. I don't know why, but he always brought us pigs feet. We couldn't figure out how to cook it. So mama, she'd look at it; and when Mr. Lynch went home, it went into the garbage can. (*laughter*) He was real good.

When we left, he came to say goodbye. Mrs. Banks, she was our schoolteacher. We used to buy apples from their ranch. She had a worker there; and, of course, Mr. Banks wanted a place to get rid of his apples. So he asked his worker if he would take over the place. So I talked to Mr. Lynch and he talked to Mr. Harris. He took over the ranch, and all the stuff that we left, all the

equipment such as the trailer and peeling machines. He was supposed to pay us afterwards. Evidently, after we left, he took over the place. During the season, he must have fallen asleep and the dryer burned down. So we never got paid for all the equipment in the dryer. The other equipment—I had a spray rig, a disk and a tractor, a fellow from Santa Rosa, who sold us the equipment, sold it for us.

JACL: Did you get full price for it?

Art: No.

Isako: The tractor you did. The tractor you sold to the Italian people in Bodega Bay. The tractor you bought for \$900 and sold it for \$1,000, so you made money on the tractor.

Art: The tractor was a good tractor.

Isako: Stevenson's is where you bought the spray rig; he didn't give you much.

Art: That and the disk we bought at Stevenson's.

JACL: What was Mr. Lynch's first name?

Isako: Peter Lynch.

Norma: He was the president of the Holly Meat Company.

Isako: Oh, no, the Grace and Owen Packing Company from Emeryville. Yes, Holly Meat was the brand name.

JACL: Were there people who were really helpful?

Art: Real nice. Mr. Banks, when we left to get on the train, took us and all our luggage to the train. Isako left her piano with Mrs. Banks until we came back.

JACL: What do you remember about that time, Isako, and how did you feel? Were there restrictions on the Japanese?

Isako: Oh yeah, there were restrictions. You couldn't go any place after 8:00 o'clock at night. I remember, I had my tonsils out, and then during the night, I started hemorrhaging. Art had to take me to the doctor. It was about midnight and the doctor met us at his office. He had to call in to tell them what happened otherwise, we probably would have been arrested.

Art: What happened is one day, the FBI people came to our place. They looked at papa, who was 61 years old. They checked all around the house. We had a battery-run radio. Evidently, because he was so old, they just left him. Other people like Mr. Kobuke were arrested and taken to the concentration camps.

JACL: Who were some of the people they took away?

Art: Mr. Kobuke, Mr. Taniguchi, Mr. Wakayama, Mr. Hamamoto and quite a few Petaluma people.

JACL: So they took the ones who weren't citizens? Quite a few of them had property. So they had to leave their property?

Art: Yeah, some people leased their property, like the Kikuchis. Actually, you called it leased, but they didn't get much for the leased property.

Matsumi: Tillman's had the Kawaoka Ranch.

JACL: Oh, really. I didn't know that. You mean Art Tillman?

Matsumi: He stayed there, so he took care of it. Then when they came back, they took over.

JACL: Now was it his father? Or was it Art?

Art: It was Art.

Matsumi: Was it George's?

Art: You mean whose place was it? It was Frank's... the whole Kawaoka family.

JACL: The whole family, but it was under his name.

Art: Art Tillman was real good to them. He had chickens left and he sold the chickens to the Kawaoka family when they came back.

Matsumi: Mrs. Tillman was telling us about it.

JACL: Too bad Mr. Tillman's not living.

Matsumi: Mrs. Tillman is, but I don't think she remembers.

JACL: They were married then?

Matsumi: Yes.

JACL: Isako, where were you working when the war began?

Isako: When it happened, I was at home. I used to do domestic work in 1941. I was working for Dr. and Mrs. Patterson in Santa Rosa.

JACL: Matsumi, were you and Norma still in high school? Did you have any problems with the kids in high school?

Matsumi: No, the teachers were pretty good at Analy High School.

Norma: I liked the gym teachers. They were really great. I also had a homeroom teacher. She taught English and music. When I was in Merced Assembly Center, she was nice enough to come. She asked me what I wanted, and I said milk shakes. When she came to visit me one time, she brought about half a dozen milk shakes.

JACL: What was her name?

Norma: Charlotte Smith. I remember there were so many shakes, and Kanemi was there, so I gave him one.

JACL: Isako, were there people who came to see you at Merced?

Isako: One of the people that came to see us in camp was Grace Pearson. She was with a Quaker group. She was very supportive and very much against the war. She was a friend of the family for years and years. She would come to see my father. When she saw how thin and sickly he was, she made arrangements

with the doctors in camp to be sure and give him a physical. She used to send him coffee every month, one pound, because he loved coffee. She came to see us again in Amache, I think it was in probably 1942 or 43. They were in camp for a couple of days with *Niisan* [older brother] and *Nesan* [older sister], the Mitanis. They were all good friends as they grew up together.

JACL: Who were *Niisan* and *Nesan*?

Isako: *Nesan* was my cousin who was married to *Niisan*. He was a block manager in camp at that time.

JACL: Tell me about the conditions in camp. Let's start with Merced first. What do you remember about Merced?

Matsumi: The *benjo* [toilet]. There were no partitions. We just sat in a row and the water splashed by, and everyone had to stand up, otherwise you got splashed.

Norma: I can't remember now, but was that timed?

Art: Yeah.

Isako: Every five minutes, I think.

Art: When the tank filled up, it automatically tipped over.

Matsumi: That was funny.

Isako: And the showers had no partitions.

Norma: One of the things I really remember was there were about five families in a building, and it was all open on the top. You could hear all the families' conversations all the way down.

Isako: I remember mama used to make me *misoshiru* [soy bean paste soup], and they smelled it next door. The lady would come over and say, "My son would like to have some of your *misoshiru*. (*Laughter*)

JACL: That was the Yamamotos. Yutaka. Did they have guards around the camp?

Isako: They had guards at every corner.

JACL: Were there any incidents that happened during camp where people might have been in danger?

Isako: There was one incident where there was a three-year-old girl. Now, I don't remember who it was, but she went out of the fence and the guard shot at her. He did not hit her or anything, but he shot at her. She was only about three years old. Then she came in. A few days later or a few weeks later, the same guard was climbing up to his perch and he missed his footing. He fell and couldn't move. He broke his leg. The family of the girl he shot at went to the authorities to get help for him.

JACL: I guess they were all young, too. The soldiers were young and they were probably scared.

Isako: They were under orders.

JACL: How long were you in Merced?

- Norma:** In May, and we left in August or September.
- JACL:** How did you get from Merced to Colorado?
- Norma:** By train and they had all the shades down.
- Isako:** No air conditioning, no heater. We didn't need a heater. It was hot.
- JACL:** Did you go through Salt Lake?
- Norma:** Yes, we had rest spots in the middle of the desert. Nothing was there, and they still guarded us.
- JACL:** Were people scared when they guarded you as you got out in the middle of the desert?
- Norma:** I wasn't scared. If you were scared of anything, it was probably the rattlesnakes.
- Art:** The guards, sure they had guns and everything, but they were just standing around. They weren't harassing anyone.
- Norma:** They were just young guards. They had a gun and everything. Some of the guys were playing poker and before you know it, one of the guards was down playing with them. He got caught, and I never saw him again. I don't know what happened to him. Do you remember that? He was just a young kid, and all these Japanese guys spoke English. He probably had some Japanese friends or something. Poor kid.
- JACL:** Do you remember anything, Matsumi, as you were going across? Was it hot?
- Isako:** We had all the windows open except when we went through towns.
- JACL:** How long did it take?
- Isako:** All day and all night. It was an overnight.
- Matsumi:** Did we eat on the train?
- JACL:** They must have had food.
- Norma:** What did they give us? Sandwiches, I think.
- Isako:** We were on the last train, so everything was last for us. Last on, last ones to eat.
- JACL:** When you got to Granada, Colorado, what did you do?
- Art:** We got in a bunch of trucks, and they took us to Amache camp.
- JACL:** How were the camp conditions?
- Art:** It was half-finished.
- Matsumi:** The floor was brick. They had a potbelly stove.
- Isako:** No mortar or anything. Just bricks laid on the sand. There was no insulation. All the sand used to come in the side. One pot belly stove and folding cots. That was it.
- Art:** We were the last ones on the far end near the fence.

JACL: 12F 8C & D. Isn't it funny, I remember the address. I was only six years old. How many rooms did you have? There were ten of us.

Isako: There were two big rooms in the middle. The boys were in another room. You [Art] and Harry were in the other room with Tomosan.

JACL: Oh, then just mama, papa, me and Keiji were in one room and all the other girls in the other one?

Art: Yes.

Isako: That was in Merced that you were in the other room. We had Keiji, Harry, Eva and you and I. No, you were in the other room with mama.

Norma: Yes, I was with mama and papa.

Isako: Arthur, Harry, Anna and Eva were in the other room with me. Five on one side and five on the other. On the other side, there was you, Keiji, Norma, mama and papa. We used a sheet as a partition.

Matsumi: We had two rooms. The boys were in the little room and the rest of us in another room.

JACL: So Kaz, Tom and George were in one room and Judy, Nancy, you, your mother and father were in another room. Were you in 12 F, too?

Matsumi: 12F right next to the mess hall. I don't remember the number. We had to go outside to the bathroom. It was far. In the wintertime it snowed, didn't it?

Isako: When we washed our hair, we had to cover it up; otherwise, it would freeze.

JACL: So did you have chamber pots at night when you had to go to the bathroom?

Matsumi: I never went to the bathroom at night.

Norma: Mama and papa used chamber pots. I never went at night.

Art: You had to get out and run.

Norma: Men are different. *(laughter)*

Art: At first when we got up there in September, Toby Ogata recruited a bunch of us to go top beets. That's the first thing we did. When we went to a place, the boss came and picked us up. There were eight of us and we stayed there.

JACL: Did Harry go?

Art: Yeah. Toby was the type of guy who got along with *hakujins* [Caucasians] really well. He spent most of his time at the boss's house. The boss had a nice looking daughter. A bunch of us stayed and topped beets. Boy, in the middle of the night we were scratching like heck. He went and talked to the boss, and the boss said to look for bed bugs in the mattress. So, by golly, we looked in the mattress and boy, the bedbugs were just like ants crawling all over the place. One day they fumigated the whole thing and it was all right.

Norma: You stayed out there?

- Art:** Yeah, we bought a whole pig out there. We really got to eat. The boss was slaughtering pigs for himself. So he said, "You guys want a pig?" We said, "Oh, sure, let's buy a pig." By golly, it was a 500 pound pig—a big old thing. They slaughtered it and took it into a place that had freezers. So whenever we needed meat, Toby would go to the boss's place, and he'd take us downtown and bring home the meat. Boy, we ate a lot of pork.
- JACL:** What did you do when you were in camp, Isako?
- Isako:** When I was in Merced, I worked in the mess hall, KP duty. Then I transferred to recreation and did recreation work for a little while. When I went to Amache, I worked in the milk station giving out food for babies—newborn babies and children up to three years old. We gave out cookies, orange juice, eggs and all kinds of baby food.
- JACL:** What did you do, Matsumi, after you graduated from high school?
- Matsumi:** Oh, I worked for the welfare office. This lady, a caseworker, was nice, Miss Means. She helped me read my shorthand.
- JACL:** Was she the one we went to see?
- Matsumi:** She died in Colorado. When everybody left, I worked for a supervisor, Miss Brown. Remember her? She was mad. I typed a letter and it was wrong. Gee, I didn't want to do it, but there was nobody else left.
- JACL:** What did you do, Norma?
- Norma:** You know, it was interesting. I also worked for the welfare department with Matsumi. I just took dictation, transcribed it and everything. I took dictation from *Niisan* [older brother]. He was my cousin's husband, Mr. Mitani.
- JACL:** Now, was he like a supervisor, a social worker?
- Norma:** A social worker. He worked with Miss Means.
- JACL:** What kind of recreation was there in camp?
- Norma:** They had football and basketball.
- Matsumi:** They had talent shows.
- Norma:** I think they had movies. In Merced they did. I can't remember there being movies in Amache.
- Matsumi:** Just talent shows. There were some good ones, remember? What's her name, Kawamura? She was good. Pat Suzuki and who was that guy?
- JACL:** Goro Suzuki. Jack Soo they called him.
- Isako:** His real name was Goro Suzuki. They were from the Santa Anita Relocation Camp. They formed a group and called themselves *Yogores* [punks]. Art Mitani was one of them. Goro Suzuki, who later became Jack Soo, was one of them too. They put the *Yogore* bunch with us. They were kind of a rowdy bunch, and they wanted them to be mixed with a quieter bunch—the Merced group. The Merced group was orderly and quiet. I guess they wanted a balance. The Merced group didn't want them, and the LA group knew it when they came.

- JACL: Now, Art Mitani was Mr. Mitani's younger brother?
- Isako: Yes.
- JACL: You played sports in camp didn't you, Norma?
- Norma: Yes, I did.
- JACL: And Matsumi, too?
- Matsumi: I played softball.
- Norma: I played softball and basketball for the *Ramblerettes*. Our softball team had a fantastic battery. The pitcher and catcher were the Kunimoto sisters. Aya was the catcher and Shina was the pitcher.
- JACL: They were from Sebastopol, right?
- Norma: Yes, they were from Sebastopol. They couldn't pick an all-star from our team because they did not know how we fielded because the battery was so good. We never had a chance to show them what we could do. So they took the all-stars from the other teams, and they played against us and we won.
- JACL: Matsumi, you played in the outfield?
- Matsumi: No, I didn't. I just played sometimes. I wasn't on the team.
- Norma: I played third base.
- JACL: Did Eva play, too, or did she just play basketball?
- Norma: I don't remember her playing. She must have played in the outfield.
- JACL: They had a good basketball team. Eva was on the basketball team.
- Norma: Chiz Kanda, Norma Hamamoto and Eva were forwards. The guards were also good. Janet Kobuchi, Mary Yokoyama and a little teeny girl, Holly Onamiya, were guards.
- JACL: She lives in Ukiah now.
- Matsumi: Did Mieko-san play?
- Norma: Yes, Mieko Akutagawa.
- JACL: They had a good team. What about the guys, did they play basketball and baseball, too?
- Art: I played third base. The basketball team was good. Tosh Shimizu, Kanemi Ono and those guys. Who was that funny guy in basketball? He was from Marin. In between game time, he would put a hat on and go running around. I can't think of his name.
- JACL: Tosh Shimizu was eventually your cousin-in-law. He was very good. Did he play in college?
- Matsumi: I guess.
- JACL: With Hank Lucetti.

Art: Hank Lucetti was Tosh Shimizu's understudy. Tosh was first string. He'd do things that the other guys would not even think of doing. He'd be bouncing the ball and going down. A guy goes to guard him, and he taps the ball over him to the other side.

Norma: I don't know if you can do that now.

JACL: I think that's called a double dribble now. You can't combine it with a dribble. You can toss it up and go over to the other side, but you can't dribble it and do that. What did the older people do in camp?

Matsumi: They did carving.

Isako: They used to go to sewing classes, flower arrangement classes and make artificial flowers. Mrs. Kato used to teach that and cooking classes. I remember Mrs. Ikegami use to bring Shigeko-san over, and I watched her while she went to sewing class.

JACL: How much did they pay you for working in camp?

Isako: I used to get \$16. I worked at the co-op.

Matsumi: The top was \$19.

Isako: Skilled labor used to get \$19. Kitchen, KP, used to get \$12.

Isako: The professionals got \$19. Doctors and lawyers used to get \$19 a month.

Art: I was in between. I got \$16.

JACL: You weren't able to vote, could you?

Matsumi: We couldn't buy schools rings.

JACL: How come?

Matsumi: I don't know. They said it would be pampering.

Isako: They had this big cesspool outside the camp. There were some people who flew over in a plane. They saw the cesspool, and they thought that the government was spoiling the Japanese internees by having a great big swimming pool. *(laughter)*

JACL: Some people went out to work in the fields, didn't they? They worked in the vegetables.

Matsumi: At harvest time we used to go out there to help. It was volunteer.

JACL: What kind of food did they give you?

Matsumi: What's that butter?

JACL: Apple butter jam. Did they have meat?

Isako: They had meat, but then a lot was stuff that would go a long ways. A lot of hamburger.

JACL: They had Japanese cooks. So did they cook Japanese food?

Isako: They didn't very much. They had rice.

- Matsumi:** You had to toast the bread in the oven. They used to get burned every time.
- JACL:** Did you have to sign that loyalty oath questionnaire, those questions that asked if you would be willing to serve in the United States Army?
- Art:** I don't remember. Of course, I wasn't in camp that long.
- JACL:** Maybe you weren't in camp when they did that. The other question was, "Would you be willing to give up your citizenship of another country?" A lot of the *nihonjins* [Japanese] didn't want to do that because they couldn't be naturalized citizens of the United States at that time. Some people said, "no" and they got into trouble when they said, "no."
- Isako:** That was the group that went to Tule Lake.
- JACL:** Yes, because they said, "no." They didn't want to give up their Japanese citizenship because they couldn't become American citizens. They would be people without a country.
- Norma:** It's terrible to be without a country.
- JACL:** Now, did you eat with your friends, or did you eat as a family?
- Norma:** Sometimes with the family and sometimes with our friends.
- JACL:** Some people felt that the family structure was divided because the family didn't eat together often. I don't think it made a difference to us.
- Norma:** I don't feel our family was divided because we didn't eat together.
- JACL:** How did they run the camp? Just like a little city?
- Norma:** Yes. They had block managers. I guess the block managers would get together and discuss all the problems.
- JACL:** Was there a volunteer fire department or did they have a regular fire department?
- Isako:** They had a regular fire department. Michi [Eva] used to work for the fire department and get paid. Then they had volunteers, too.
- JACL:** Did they have a police department? Who were the policemen?
- Isako:** The Green Police, the police department. They didn't have anything to do because they didn't have crime.
- Norma:** However, we did have some violence. The farming group, you know, the people from Merced and the people from Santa Anita didn't get along. Some city people and some farmers had a few riots. I remember that. There weren't that many, but Kanemi and Tad Ono, they wouldn't take any guff.
- Art:** At one, papa was there with a club taking care of Keiji. He wanted to make sure nobody hurt Keiji.
- JACL:** He was right in the middle of it.
- Isako:** We used to go see the ball games, and papa had a club behind him.
- JACL:** To the baseball games?

Isako: He and Keiji used to take it to the baseball games all the time.

JACL: Art, did you work outside of camp a lot?

Art: Yeah. We first went out to top beets. I was out the month of December, and then I drove a coal truck for a while. Then we went out of camp for almost a year. I went out again to top beets and went back to camp. That's when I worked at the XY Ranch with Yosh Asai. We were the maintenance men. I went out again to the Johnson place. That's when I brought the whole family out.

JACL: I remember the house and the outhouse.

Art: What we did was when we topped beets, I recruited a bunch of people from the camp. There was Kanemi Ono, Tosh Shimizu, Yo Ono. There were about eight who stayed with us after everybody else went home after topping beets. Harry, Tosh Shimizu and I stayed there and worked through the winter stacking hay and feeding livestock. When the winter was over, Tosh went back to camp. That's when I got the family and brought them out.

JACL: So did you lease a farm?

Art: Sharecropped. When we sharecropped, we worked for Bill Johnson in our spare time. After we got through that then George Otani wanted to go partners. That's when we moved over to Ault and we sharecropped 160 acres.

JACL: What was his name? Platte, like the Platte River?

Art: Platte. He came to visit us in Santa Rosa one time. He was in the Olympics. He was a discus thrower.

JACL: I didn't know that.

Isako: He was part of the Platte Family. The Platte River was named after his family.

JACL: So did you sharecrop or lease the land?

Art: No. We sharecropped. We had cabbages and onions, sugar beets and potatoes.

JACL: There was some corn there, also.

Art: When we planted the potatoes, Keiji would drive the tractor and plant the potatoes. While Keiji was at school, George Otani did it and the Keiji would come home and he'd look at it and say, "damn it, he put in another crooked row." Keiji would straighten it and George Otani would finish it off.

JACL: Yes, there were horses there, too, huh?

Art: Yeah, we used a horse down in the bottom. We had 20 acres of sugar beets and onions. We used the horse to cultivate the onions.

Norma: I used to drive the horses. I used to stand on a box and put the harness on. That red horse was huge. Unfortunately, it got sick and died. We had a cow that used to jump over the fence all the time. *(laughter)* One time George had the team hitched up, you know, and then he just put the reins down. It was dragging a harrow. All of a sudden something spooked the horses and they started to run around. He couldn't catch them because the harrow was on and

was making all this noise. They wouldn't stop. Finally, they got tired. That was really scary.

JACL: You used to make good haystacks, too, huh? *(laughter)* I remember you had the horse put the hay on top with a lift and you had to smooth it out. They leaned to the side.

Art: George didn't know how to drive the horses to cultivate the sugar beets. So after I got out of the hospital, I showed him how to set everything up and how to drive the horses. So at first, he had a hard time. Finally, he got used to it and you'd see a great big patch with no sugar beets, four rows at a time you are cultivating. Drop off four or five feet and you cut off all the sugar beets right there and nothing would come up there.

Isako: I think that was the first time he ever farmed.

JACL: I was going to say that. He worked in a grocery store.

Art: Yes, wholesale eggs and wholesale vegetables. The funny part of it was when they were loading the cabbage, Mrs. Otani with Eva on the other side. They threw up the cabbage heads to us on the truck. The guy on the truck would place them on the truck. Pretty soon she couldn't keep up with it because the truck kept going. She skips a bunch and goes up front. He had to stop and back up for the rest of them.

JACL: That was really hard for her because she was so tiny. Isako, you got married in Colorado, didn't you?

Isako: We got married in 1944 in Greeley. Then we went to Nebraska to work in the ordnance plant. Sioux, Nebraska. We were there for nine months. Mike's father got sick, so we had to come back to Colorado.

JACL: What did you do in the ordnance plant?

Isako: I worked in the office in the machine shop. I used to do everything in the office. The most important was the payroll. I was the only woman there, and I was treated like a queen. *(laughter)*

JACL: What did Mike do?

Isako: Oh, Mike worked in the ordnance. He used to unload bombs, all kind of bombs. Later on he drove a lift.

JACL: Matsumi, your family went to Fort Morgan?

Matusmi: We worked in the cabbage and onions and everything else. At that time they didn't have any wine, you know, alcohol. We all had to go to the next town to get it. What do they call that?

JACL: A dry town.

Matsumi: Yes, no liquor stores.

JACL: Norma, you worked on the farm with everyone else?

Norma: Yes, I did.

- JACL:** Did Eva work on the farm, too?
- Norma:** Yes, she did.
- Art:** We had a whole lot of potatoes. They'd go there and help plant potatoes. We didn't know a damn thing about it.
- JACL:** You learn. They put the potatoes in the cellar, and you have to cut them up and plant them. Is that what you did?
- Norma:** Did we plant them? I thought we did that by machine. It was the picking up the potatoes later that was hard. They had a machine that dug up all the potatoes, then we had to put them in sacks. It was piecework.
- Isako:** It was the hardest work I ever did. I think we put 65 to 70 pounds in a sack. We had to drag that.
- Norma:** That's hard work for women, you know.
- Art:** Boy, we made good money, though.
- Isako:** We made \$13 a day. That was good money then.
- Art:** Harry and I were hauling potatoes for \$6 a day.
- Norma:** Remember Dan? He was so happy, because his wife was picking potatoes with us.
- JACL:** Who is Dan?
- Norma:** I don't remember Dan's last name, but anyway, he was one of the workers on the Johnson Ranch. He was a foreman. He was German.
- JACL:** I remember one time when you were in Ault you had German soldiers. Did they come over to weed?
- Art:** They harvested the beets. We got late. We couldn't get them out on time, so George went over and got the POWs.
- Norma:** They were working next door. Remember that young family that was next door across the road? I think they had those POWs.
- Art:** We hired a kid and a truck to come and help us. We couldn't load everything with just one truck, so we hired a couple of trucks. That kid, man, he was a worker. He was only about 17 or 18.
- JACL:** Did the Japanese people get together in Colorado?
- Art:** We used to have socials once in a while.
- Norma:** I remember going to a dance in Greeley. We integrated pretty well with the Colorado natives. I don't think everyone did, but we sure did.
- Art:** I had the inside track, because Bill [Osaki] and I were such good friends.
- Norma:** Kathy, Shizue [Osaki] and I really got along well.
- Art:** When Harry and I were "batching", we used to go there [Osaki's] and eat all the time. We used to bring things. Pretty soon, the old man, Mr. Osaki said,

“You don’t need to bring stuff.” Mr. Osaki, he sure did a lot for us. He planted all of the cabbages and onions. He was really was good with the horses. That guy, when he was planting the cabbage and he’s driving the horses, you’d go up there and look at the row. It was just straight as an arrow. He sure was good.

JACL: Isako, you were working with Mike’s folks?

Isako: We were at the ordnance plant. After his father got sick, we came back and had to finish the onions and stuff because he couldn’t do it anymore.

JACL: So there were quite a few Japanese people in Colorado.

Norma: There were quite few. Watanabes were there.

JACL: Did some of them move to Colorado rather than go to camp?

Norma: Mike was one of them.

JACL: He was in Arizona, and they moved them to Colorado.

Isako: He was born in Colorado, Severance, Colorado. They moved to Los Angeles. Then Eva [Mike’s sister] got married and they owned a fruit stand. They were in Los Angeles when the war started. They evacuated from Los Angeles back to Arizona. From Arizona they went to Colorado. They never went to a camp.

JACL: So there were quite a few that never went to camp. Did most of the people you knew live in Colorado before?

Norma: People that we knew were living in Colorado.

JACL: So they were natives.

Norma: Kinoshitas were there and Tateyamas were there. They were all natives of Colorado.

JACL: The Ogatas started in California and then went to Colorado.

Norma: They didn’t go to camp?

Isako: They went into camp.

JACL: Art was saying that Toby got him the job.

Art: What is Shizu’s last name? Ogata?

Isako: That was the Ogatas from Kersey. Ogatas, formerly from Nebraska. They lived in Nebraska and then moved to Colorado.

JACL: How did you decide to come back to California after the war was over?

Art: We were broke. We had to borrow money from Tomosan in order to get back to California. All I had was a truck and a car. That’s it.

JACL: So the sharecropping didn’t work out too well. Why did you decide to come back to California?

Art: Well, we took a trip to California to look things over. It just happened that I stopped at the Frost Ranch and talked to Chester. They wanted workers pretty bad.

JACL: What about you, Matsumi? How did you come back to California?

Matsumi: Oh, Mr. Ito wrote us a letter and wanted to know if we wanted to come back. So we came to the Perry Ranch.

JACL: The Perrys and Itos were pretty good friends, huh? Did the Perrys take care of the Itos' property?

Matsumi: I don't know.

JACL: In Sonoma County, people didn't lose their property as they did in other places.

Norma: I remember the Moritas, they had really good tenants.

JACL: I think the Lorenzos took care of their place. I went to school with one of the Lorenzos. Now there is a story about the Round Barn at Fountain Grove in Santa Rosa.

Isako: Nagasawa was left almost 4,000 acres of land at Fountain Grove. He had a lawyer. Because aliens couldn't own land at that time, I don't know exactly what happened, but he had to have this lawyer and everything was taken. He had to sell all the land to pay the lawyer. Finally, the lawyer had to leave the area because all the people, even the other Caucasian people in Santa Rosa had heard about it and were against the lawyer. They were all for Mr. Nagasawa. Finally, he passed away. His niece lived with him. She had a son and a daughter. Some of the prune ranch was where the Journey's End Trailer Park is now. He owned all that and it was taken away from him, too. After Mr. Nagasawa passed away, his niece and her children went to Berkeley. She was doing housework until she passed away. I don't know about the daughter, but the son lives in Oakland.

JACL: What year was that?

Isako: I think it was way before the war.

JACL: Quite a few Japanese worked up there, didn't they?

Isako: A lot of Japanese. His was the first winery around here and he had prize wine.

Art: I think papa did grape pruning up there.

Norma: They never got the land back.

Art: The Furuta family, they worked in the winery.

Isako: And Mr. Oka worked there, too. It must have been after the war because Kosuke is the same age as you.

Norma: When did Tak Furuta pass away? In camp?

Matsumi: After he came back.

- Isako:** He didn't come back here after the war. He lived with his mother and father. They didn't get along so he moved away.
- JACL:** So all that happened after the war. I think they still have that exhibit about Fountain Grove at the Paradise Ridge Winery.
- Isako:** I'd like to see that again. It would be interesting.
- JACL:** So the whole family came back and worked in the hops?
- Art:** Harry and I worked all year round. Chet Frost put in tomatoes, prunes and grapes. In the wintertime we would take out the bad hops. I decided we just couldn't make it with just Harry and me working. Chet Frost said if you leave you can't come back. We had no choice. The year after that we went to the John Miller Hop Ranch. Then we went to Vinehill Road to do apples at the Garbro Ranch with Mr. Land. We got money from Harry, you [Norma] and Anna—we pooled our money together and we bought this place.
- JACL:** Where did you get your loan to buy this place?
- Art:** The owners, the Fesselmeyers, financed it. So everybody has an interest in this place. Like I tell her [Norma], you have an interest so if you want to come home you are welcome.
- JACL:** Norma, what did you do when you came back?
- Norma:** Well, I worked with the family in the hops. Then we bought this place. After that I went out to San Francisco to find work. I walked the streets for two weeks. I had a hard time because I had been out of school for quite a while.
- JACL:** Now, were Anna and Eva already there?
- Norma:** They were already there. Anna got a job right away because she just got out of school. It really made a lot of difference. Eva got a job first. They worked at the same place. Finally, I got in at the telephone company and I worked there for 36 years until I retired.
- JACL:** Matsumi, when your family came back, they came to Perrys'?
- Matsumi:** They worked in the apples, the dryer, and I think they did hops, too.
- Art:** Kaz Mukaida always used to talk about that. How they worked in the hops.
- Matsumi:** They used to have the low ones in Sebastopol. The Frati's on Vine Hill Road.
- JACL:** Did you get married about this time?
- Matsumi:** Yes, but I went to sewing school in San Francisco first. Hazmoor.
- JACL:** Quite a few people from here went down there.
- Matsumi:** Yes.
- JACL:** Isako, you were in Colorado when we came back?
- Isako:** We did sharecropping there and we came back here and did hops. Then we bought the place. We worked at the poultry plant for a while and then I

worked for Art at the Diamond Market. Then I got a job at London House as a nurse's aid and worked there for 8 years.

JACL: You had strawberries for a while.

Isako: In between times.

JACL: Mike used to work for California Poultry?

Isako: Yes, California Poultry. Then he went on his own. He did gardening work.

Art: The Sugiyama Store [grocery section of the Diamond Market] wasn't doing well, so we had to sell everything. We did pretty good, though. I had \$5,000 in cash and that was pretty good. I sold the stock to Garwood's Market. I told him, "I'll give you two weeks to sell what you got from me, and at that time you can give me \$500. The rest you can pay me off monthly." That's how Garwood's got started in their new location. He never forgot that. That was the older Mr. Garwood. He was from Colorado.

JACL: That's how we got acquainted. We went over to the store and he said he was from Colorado. How many children do you have?

Art: I have a big family. I have one boy.

Isako: I have an adopted daughter. She was adopted when she was five days old.

JACL: That was Patti. Did you all get redress? How did you feel about that?

Norma: I feel like we earned it.

Art: Actually, I felt that it wasn't quite enough, because of all the equipment I lost. The place wasn't mine. It was rented so I lost money on all the things that I bought.

JACL: Isako, how did you feel about the money?

Isako: I don't think it's enough compared to what we lost and what we went through.

Norma: We could take nothing but the clothes on our backs. Absolutely nothing.

JACL: You could only take what you could carry.

Norma: That's right.

JACL: Are there any other stories you would like to tell about your ethnic background and how people react to you?

Art: All I want to say is that Mr. and Mrs. Banks were real good to us.

Isako: I remember Mr. Banks sold us the insurance for our car, and then when the war started, the very next week, that insurance company cancelled. Mr. Banks felt so bad that he had to come back and tell us.

JACL: Were there other companies who would not take Japanese as clients?

Art: AAA turned us down when we first came back. Yeah, my dad, he was with AAA before the war, and then when we came back, I tried to get into AAA and they turned me down.

- JACL:** It's kind of interesting, because it depends on which person handles it. Like with the Exchange Bank, some people got loans and other people didn't get loans. Jim Murakami got a loan from the Exchange Bank to finance his property. It all depends on who the loan officers are or who's handling the loan request.
- Art:** We were lucky enough that the people we bought from financed the loan. Sure the bank collected the money but it went to them. I still had two years to go when the loan came due. I talked to Mrs. Fesselmeyer and she said, "Oh, my brother, Pete, owns three bars from Sacramento to Stockton." She said, "We don't need the money. Just keep paying it off \$60 a month like you have been." So they extended my loan for two years.
- JACL:** So, basically, people were pretty good about that. They were very helpful. Could it be because there were lots of Italians and Germans in the area?
- Norma:** Occidental has lots of Italians.
- JACL:** Do you talk about this to your children?
- Isako:** I talk about it to Patti once in a while.
- Art:** Gary is different.
- JACL:** He gets it off the internet or talks to other people. He is very interested in it.
- Norma:** He kept the book, *The Quiet American*, for a long time.
- Art:** Whenever I say, "When I was young..." he says, "Here we go again." (*laughter*)
- JACL:** If this happened again, would you go into camps like you did before? Do you think people would do that now?
- Norma:** I don't think so. Now you know more about your rights and things like that. Before you didn't know anything about that. You didn't know that people had all these rights.
- Isako:** And most of the second generation people weren't old enough to know a lot of things about the law.
- JACL:** They were young teenagers. But then, the Japanese who were first generation were afraid because they weren't citizens. They were not allowed to become naturalized citizens by U.S. law. At that time the media wasn't like it is now. They didn't have the ACLU and all those organizations.
- Isako:** The only thing I did know was we were American citizens and we shouldn't have been going to camp like that—treated like aliens, we did know that. When Mr. Banks came, that car insurance was in my name. I said, "That car is in my name, and I'm an American citizen." He said, "I know, but they cancelled it anyway."
- JACL:** It's like the dentist that Alyce Sugiyama said they were going to. The Yamasakis went to him for years. When they came back, he wouldn't take them as patients anymore. Alyce said, "It was just as well, I wouldn't want someone

working on me that was prejudiced.” What would you tell the young people of today about this experience?

Matsumi: There are a lot of young ones that didn’t know we went to camp. They say, “How come you had to go to camp?”

JACL: So they are not really aware of what happened. A lot more education is needed in the schools to inform the young people.

Isako: There are lots of people that didn’t even know.

Matsumi: One guy I worked with said, “You deserve the redress.”

Isako: There are a lot of people who are against it who don’t know any better.

JACL: They’re not aware, and they have not been educated about it. Hopefully, the oral interviews we are doing will be informative. We are going to put them on the Sonoma County JACL Website. Maybe the young people will learn a little more about it. Also, the Sonoma County JACL has a yearly essay contest to make people more aware. What do you think are some of the things young people need to know to be successful?

Norma: Equal rights.

JACL: So something like this doesn’t happen again? Be aware of all your rights and what you need to do if something like this should occur again. Unfortunately, the recent Patriot Act is targeting the Islamic and Arab Americans.

Isako: They need to be educated on this Iraqi situation. There are lots of people who have the same feeling.

JACL: Especially, because of September 11. A lot of people were killed, similar to Pearl Harbor. Now, Harry was the only one in our family in the service during WWII. Keiji went into the service later during the Korean War.

Art: Keiji wasn’t in Korea. He went to Germany.

JACL: It was during the Korean War, in the 50’s, but he was in the occupation forces in Germany.

Thank you very much. If you think of any other stories, let me know and we will add them to the transcript. We appreciate the time and your willingness to tell us your stories for our future generations.

End of Interview

AYAMI TANIGUCHI INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Ayami Taniguchi
Date: February 6, 2001
Place: Ayami Taniguchi residence, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Lucy Kishaba & Rose Fujii
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Phyllis Tajii, Spring, 2003 from written source material

Interview Summary

Mrs. Taniguchi is an Issei member of Sonoma County. She started her life in Japan, moving to America as a young bride through an arranged marriage in 1924. Despite the fact that she had to adjust to both a new marriage and a strange land, Mrs. Taniguchi had no fear coming to America, and found life in her new land enjoyable with the support of friends and community.

Of the Caucasians in the community, she felt they were all “nice and helpful” and never felt any prejudice, even though the laws of the land were unfair. In fact, soon after Pearl Harbor when her husband was to be taken by the FBI, two of her husband’s Caucasian friends spoke on his behalf to try to convince the FBI from taking him away. During the internment years, the Taniguchi’s belongings were kept in perfect condition with Caucasian friends, including their beloved dog, who was there to greet them upon their return.

After internment, life resumed in Sonoma County, working and raising a family, with a highlight when Mr. Taniguchi was honored as Grand Marshal of the local Apple Blossom Parade.

Transcript of Interview

Generation: Issei
Name: Ayami Taniguchi
Residence: Sebastopol, CA
Birthdate: 2/1/09
Birthplace: Hiroshima, Japan
Marriage: Married to Shiichi Jim Taniguchi—April 1924
Education: Yae-machi, Hiroshima-ken Grammar and High School
Occupations: Housewife, Farmer—Sebastopol 1925 Retired 1969
Special Interests: *Utai* [Noh chanting]—15 yrs, Sewing, cooking, spectator sports. Travel to Yosemite, Hawaii, Chicago, San Diego, Japan, Washington

DC, Los Angeles, New York, Utah, Nevada, Colorado, Washington,
& Texas

Religion: Buddhist

Community Service: Enmanji Buddhist Temple and Fujinkai

Ichi Ni San Gakko

Enman no tomo

Sebastopol Apple Blossom

Sonoma Co. Fair

Sonoma Co. Harvest Festival

Other Biographical Information:

Accomplished seamstress—sewed men’s outfits for several young men for Chigo parade to church, hapi coats for En man no tomo; housed painter volunteer [who painted church] for a month.

Special Achievements and Awards:

San Francisco Cherry Blossom Award [recognition Senior Citizen Award at San Francisco AT&T Appreciation brunch]

Apple Pie Award, Apple Blossom Festival , Sebastopol 4/86, Sonoma County Harvest Festival

Life in Japan

Hiroshima, Japan. 2/01/09 [Meiji 42 year]

Father was an entrepreneur. Owned two large places milling rice. Also ran hotel prior to being involved in rice work. Mother passed away when I was 9 years old. 7 members in the family—youngest.

Raised by father. Good relations with parents. Siblings were away at school. Had very happy life in Japan. Studied hard in Japan. 10 years in school when marriage talks started, then learned of coming to U.S.

Future husband, accompanied by *baishakunin* [matchmaker], came over. No letters. Knew the future husband’s family through marriage. Sister had married husband’s uncle. Mr. Taniguchi had returned to Japan seeking a wife. Her father said he would help the family find a *yome-san* [wife]. When the family came for the visit as he [Jim] told Ayami they were married, he thought, “why do we have to go find another young lady when there was one right here in the house?” Sometime later, such an arrangement was made for the two to be married. For Ayami’s part she felt her father was concerned for her because she was coming of marriageable age and she didn’t want him to be worried about her so she consented, though she did want to continue with school. But it must have been love at first sight on the part of the future bridegroom. No fear coming to America. Relied solely on husband.

1924

Hops. Apple dryer with husband's older brother. Also worked with Mr. Akutagawa. Husband took care of finances. Went to each others place, sang songs, played ping pong. Thought husband was reliable and very ambitious. Felt lonely feeling but soon worked together with husband. First years of marriage—fine. Japanese community and church very helpful. *Hakujin* [Caucasian] very friendly. Mr. Hotle and Mr. Hart begged FBI not to take Jim [husband] because he was a good person. Because we couldn't own land, felt there was prejudice. Felt comfortable with my family. Talked about everyday doings. Happy in U.S.

No encounter of prejudice with Caucasian. They were all so nice and helpful. Spoke up for my husband when the FBI came to take him away. Told them he is a very honest and trustworthy person. Before evacuation all our material goods were stored at the neighbors and when we returned they were in the same condition as the day the goods were packed for storage. Little occasion to shop since the grocery truck came weekly to the house.

Life before Pearl Harbor

Sebastopol Daily routine—Children—going to school, having great day.

Father would miss day of work to take his two girls [1-expired, 1-73 yrs.] to go shopping.

Golden rule—always reminded children to behave.

Akutagawa family, longtime friends who have passed away—Picnics

Go to visit friends and occasionally they wanted me to sew.

World War II

Thought we are at war. Did not fear for family.

Did not think we are enemy alien.

Husband helped friends because brother was taken by FBI right after Pearl Harbor. Husband was taken by FBI, was taken in March and put in jail—had to stay in Santa Fe with a drunk. Taken then to Silver Ave., Santa Fe, and Lordsburg, New Mexico and reunion [with family in] camp in Crystal City, Texas. I went to Merced Assembly Center, Amache, Colorado, and joined husband in Crystal City.

Very hot in Merced—lost weight. Felt Amache would be last place to stay and worried about family life.

Handicraft offered but did not participate. Knowing future would be geared toward English, I took English classes.

Being aliens, this was war so being sent to camps was inevitable. But Japanese Americans, being citizens of this country, should not have been sent to camp. This was a big, big U.S. blunder.

Resettlement

1946 Husband. House vacated then we returned. Had to hurry and get work started.

Hakujin [Caucasian] very kind. One family kept our furniture, etc. during war. Mr. Hart kept our greyhound dog all these years—dog was sight for sore eyes.

Naturalization: Both Ayami and Mr. Taniguchi took citizenship papers out and then was able to purchase land. I studied and studied because I had to take the test in English because I wasn't quite 50, if I were, I could have taken it in Japanese like my husband. I was very happy I passed the test.

Recent Years

Husband and brother-in-law were chosen Grand Marshals of Apple Blossom parade.

Husband passed away. Daughter passed away of cancer. Saddest time. War is very bad. All grandchildren and children are reminded not to get in trouble and lead a safe life.

Husband should have received redress—they suffered the most not knowing where the family was, etc. redress was absolutely necessary—to right a wrong even a small fraction. It was very much appreciated. Even young children born in camp were compensated, but rightfully the redress money should have gone to the Issei's. Because they are the ones who suffered the most; being hauled off to prison and separated from the rest of the family. It was about a year before we were together again in Crystal City. Life in camp was okay. I took English classes while there starting with the ABC's. I was not interested in sewing or craft classes.

Feelings about camp: *shikataganai* [there is no choice] attitude. Had to do as the government ordered as we were aliens and we were at war with Japan. My initial feeling was that Japan would win the war since I am a citizen of Japan.

Looking back over my life I cherish the friendship of the Akutagawas. Having one good friend, someone to talk to about happy [events] as well as sad times, sharing feelings and thoughts is all one needs. Relatives don't or can't always fill this role. I was very sad and became lonely when Mrs. Akutagawa passed away. She was my very good friend. Because of her I did not feel lonely living here in America. I trusted my husband to take care of me and provide for me so did not have feelings of loneliness or homesickness when I arrived in U.S. I had already made up my mind that this is where I will be living and I will make the most of it. Having a good friend like Mrs. Akutagawa made living in a different country less formidable. Though we worked hard especially during the war it was a good life. [Wish that] family life would be more routine. Crystal City was geared more of a family life atmosphere. Never go to camp again.

Best time when husband was Grand Marshall of the Apple Blossom Parade.

Photographs: Crystal City Book: page 246 wedding picture, *Story of Taniguchi*, *Apple dryer*, *Apple dryer 4 people*, and *Apple orchard*

End of Interview

SHIGEKO TANIGUCHI INTERVIEW

Persons Interviewed: Shigeko Taniguchi
Date: March 5, 2001
Place: Ayami Taniguchi home, Sebastopol, CA
Interviewer: Lucy Kishaba
Summary: Jodi Hottel
Transcription: Translated and transcribed by Michi Duda in March 2003
from audiotape source material

Interview Summary

Mrs. Taniguchi with Japanese translation help from Mrs. Michi Duda, recalls specific incidents from her childhood in Hiroshima. Her mother died during childbirth when Mrs. Taniguchi was in her teen years. At age 17 she came to America through an arranged marriage. She tells about their life and work while living in Graton. During the war, the FBI arrested her husband and their family was separated for one and a half years. Although she doesn't say much about her time in Amache Internment Camp, she describes some experiences of prejudice upon their return. She says that her greatest happiness is seeing her grandchildren, something her parents never got to do.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: The place you were born is Hiroshima-ken... weren't you?
Shigeko: Yes, I was.
JACL: You were born in Hiroshima-ken and went to school through ninth grade and lived in Hiroshima-ken. When you were a child did you...?
(Tape is skipping)
Shigeko: Oh, yeah, I didn't think about anything.
JACL: What was your father doing?
Shigeko: He was a farmer.
JACL: How many brothers and sisters do you have?
Shigeko: Total of five, one elder and two younger brothers died at a younger age, and I was the youngest. Father is Aburabe Matsuto and mother is Momoyo... I was born in Meiji era.
JACL: Had you lived in Hiroshima-ken since you were born?
Shigeko: Yes.
JACL: What did you do when you were child, working or playing?

- Shigeko:** I did nothing. Until seven or eight years old I was playing, and I didn't work. Only I was playing with friends, playing with girls in neighborhood, and I did not work at all... I learned at school. I learned to make only dishes which farmers eat, meaning I learned only dishes for my family.
- JACL:** When you were a child...
- Shigeko:** I did not thinking about anything.
- JACL:** In your childhood you behaved like a good girl, didn't you?
- Shigeko:** I don't know... I think I was not a good girl. In farm house cows were kept in the back of the house and the cows couldn't get out from there.
- JACL:** Oh, oh.
- Shigeko:** Probably I did something wrong. My parents said, "I'll tie your body to a head of the cow."
- JACL:** Oh my gosh.
- Shigeko:** I still remember that incident. I can't recall whether I did something wrong or said something wrong, but probably I said a very bad thing. Probably I did not listen or follow parents.
- JACL:** Ah, ha.
- Shigeko:** I was very scared. "Tie my body to the head of a cow." I can't recall the reason they said to punish me by tying me to the head of a cow. Anyway, I guess I was not a good girl.
- JACL:** Were you often scolded or punished when you were a child?
- Shigeko:** I was not. And also my parents did not scold or punish children in general, but if you did not listen nor follow them or did wrong thing they punished.
- JACL:** What relationship did you have with your parents or family?
- Shigeko:** I had an older brother. Parents preferred boys and girls not spend together. I liked to go fishing with the older brother but he said, "don't come with me. A girl should not go fishing." And he scolded me if I tried to go fishing with him. In those days, in general, a female did not go fishing in Japan.
- JACL:** Did you take care of your younger brother?
- Shigeko:** I don't think I took care of a younger brother. My mother did. When he was nine years old my mother died.
- JACL:** How old were you when your mother died?
- Shigeko:** It was two or three years before I came to America.
- JACL:** Had you completed school?
- Shigeko:** No, I could not go any place. I was busy taking care of the family, such as cooking meals and everything.
- JACL:** Did your mother die in the field?

Shigeko: No, she died after baby delivered.

JACL: Oh, poor childhood.

Shigeko: I do not remember it well.

JACL: When you came to America you were 17 years old. Is that so?

Shigeko: Yes.

JACL: Did you get married here in America or in Japan?

Shigeko: I got married in Japan. At that time Japanese men had to go to soldier in the Japanese Army, so we rushed to return to America.

JACL: Had you husband already lived in America?

Shigeko: Yes, he had been in America for seven years and returned to Japan. Then he wanted to go to South America, but his parents opposed his going to South America so he came again to America.

JACL: To California?

Shigeko: Yeah... He grew potatoes for three years in Bacon Island in Stockton, and he made some money and returned.

JACL: Where did he return to? Japan?

Shigeko: Yes, Japan.

JACL: Did he return to Japan three years earlier?

Shigeko: No, he grew potatoes for three years in Bacon Island, and his father requested him to return to home. You may know Term Taniguchi.

JACL: No, I don't.

Shigeko: Term Taniguchi's father came through Mexico to America when he was young. Then Term's father called his father from Japan. Then he, Term's grandfather, called my husband and Ayami Taniguchi's husband from Japan. Someone called to come to America like we did, otherwise people could not immigrate to America in these days.

JACL: Oh, you mean that people who wanted to immigrate to America needed to be sponsored by someone, otherwise people couldn't come, don't you?

Shigeko: Yes, that's right.

JACL: Why did your husband return to Japan and come to America again, since he had lived in America?

Shigeko: His parents said, "Return to home."

JACL: I see.

Shigeko: My husband wanted to go to Brazil but his parents opposed that, therefore he returned to America. Term's parents had lived in Graton so when we came from Japan we lived there.

JACL: Were you married in Japan?

Shigeko: Yes, we were.

JACL: I see. Did you know your husband earlier?

Shigeko: No, I didn't.

JACL: So were you introduced by a matchmaker?

Shigeko: (*Laughs*) I think so because someone came for arranging marriage so I should call them a "matchmaker".

JACL: How did you feel about that?

Shigeko: Oh my goodness. I felt only "ashamed". Oh my gosh, I was embarrassed. (*laughs*). All the neighbor's kids were following us. I had no choice. My father said you should get married, and it could not be helped. I did not think about it at all.

JACL: After you got married did you come to America immediately?

Shigeko: No. We were in Kobe for a month. My husband had some infections of the eyes and hook worms. He needed to have doctor's office visit to cure them before going abroad, and we didn't work.

JACL: Had you known before marriage that you would come to America after marriage?

Shigeko: No, I had not known until we got married..

JACL: How did you feel when you heard you would immigrate to America where you would be far away from Japan?

Shigeko: (*laughs*) Oh, what I did feel? I do not remember. I didn't think like it would be a far away place. Rather, I say I did not think anything. I did not have my mother. The day we left home, my father and two elder sisters were watching happily.

JACL: Yeah, at that time... people were like that in those days?

Shigeko: Yeah, they were in those days. We left for my husband's uncle's place in Graton.

JACL: You did come by ship to America. How did you feel, and how many days did it take to get to America?

Shigeko: It took two weeks.

JACL: Yeah.

Shigeko: We arrived at San Francisco. We went to a Japanese person's house. I bought a pair of shoes which were high top shoes with laces and high heels. Everybody wore these shoes here.

JACL: You came to Graton... what did you do?

Shigeko: I worked at the place of Mrs. Morita's father where they were making... in Santa Rosa.

JACL: Did your husband and the husband of Mrs. Ayami Taniguchi come to America together?

Shigeko: No, her husband came two years later.

JACL: Oh, he came later.

Shigeko: Yeah, two years later. He came here in 1923, oh no, in 1924.

JACL: And when did his wife come?

Shigeko: She came here in 1924, around March 1924.

JACL: Did you work at Huckle Berry?

Shigeko: Yes, I worked at Kobukei's dryer.

JACL: When you came to America and settled at Graton, how did you feel?

Shigeko: I didn't feel I was pleased or not. Anyhow, Graton might be better than the place where I was born in Hiroshima, but here it was a dreary place.

JACL: It was a dreary place.

Shigeko: When I felt lonesome and sad, I was crying and called, "Father, father," because I didn't have mother.

JACL: It was a dreary and different place, huh?

Shigeko: Oh, yeah. I was not a picture marriage and many picture marriage people were...

JACL: Were you and your husband a love couple [a happy couple]?

Shigeko: Ah, *hai, hai* [yes, yes].

JACL: Did you have a quarrel between you and your husband?

Shigeko: We had a quarrel too. We were an ordinary couple.

JACL: (*question missing from tape*)

Shigeko: Oh, yeah. People couldn't immigrate from Japan. There were no newcomers.

JACL: But there were Japanese here, and you could talk with them, couldn't you?

Shigeko: Oh, yeah.

JACL: Could you make friends?

Shigeko: Oh, yes. We didn't have a car, so we didn't go any place in general.

JACL: During daytime you worked in the field and in the evening what did you do?

Shigeko: How did we spend the evening?

JACL: Were there books?

Shigeko: Well, I do not remember. You could purchase books in San Francisco. There was a bookstore in San Francisco. But I got books from Japan.

JACL: Oh, did you bring them from Japan?

- Shigeko:** No, I didn't bring books from Japan, but I ordered them from a book company in Japan and I bought books directly.
- JACL:** Did all you Japanese get together occasionally and have a picnic or activities?
- Shigeko:** Oh, yeah. We had picnics and played Japanese card games. We often got together and played Japanese card games *karuta* [playing cards] in the evening.
- JACL:** Did you get together?
- Shigeko:** Yes, we played often in the evening. Mr. Yamamoto in Petaluma, Mr. Otani, Mr. Wakayama, Mr. Nagasu of Sanyo Shokai and Mr. Hamamoto of Asahi Shokai, everybody passed away. There were Sanyo Shokai and Asahi Shokai in Santa Rosa. Mr. Nagasu of Sanyo Shokai came to sell Japanese food, and he had a car. When we went out in the evening, he would take us for a ride and we went to play *karuta*. That was when my son Hiroshi was a baby.
- JACL:** ...How many years later? Two years later?
- Shigeko:** Yeah. Two years later. I have three children and seven grandchildren and...
- JACL:** When did you move to here from Graton?
- Shigeko:** Only one season we were in Graton. In winter after apple season was over, we moved down near here for pruning. Anyway we were growing hops for three years and also pruning apples all over. We moved around two to three times.
- JACL:** Did you live at Kobukei in Graton?
- Shigeko:** We came to Graton [from Japan] in March or so, then in pruning season we moved down here.
- JACL:** Oh, I see. You moved around by seasons.
- Shigeko:** We moved around two to three times in one year.
- JACL:** So you came from Graton and did you buy this property?
- Shigeko:** Yes, my husband and Ayami's husband bought together. We were here for a while.
- JACL:** At that time could you Issei [first generation] buy the property?
- Shigeko:** No, we couldn't.
- JACL:** You couldn't buy?
- Shigeko:** Therefore we asked someone who was a U.S. citizen.
- JACL:** At the very first time...
- Shigeko:** No. We asked *Kokennin*, a guardian who was a U.S. citizen and recorded three names on the deed with him.
- JACL:** Was the guardian Nisei?
- Shigeko:** Oh, yeah.

JACL: So probably you were under the guardianship of the person. Did you have a hard life?

Shigeko: Did I have a hard life?

JACL: Did you feel alone?

Shigeko: Not exactly. I didn't feel alone. In general, most other people had died or left and the particular person had already died. Now everything had been changed and different from these days.

JACL: Did you have a hard time?

Shigeko: We were not so. We didn't feel hard these days. But after returning from camp, the Moritas were hated.

JACL: Oh, yeah. How were you?

Shigeko: We were nothing. They didn't do anything to us, but we didn't feel good moods because we didn't know about what they were thinking.

JACL: Oh, when you returned from the camp?

Shigeko: Yes, when we returned home from the camp.

JACL: Did you talk with them before you left?

Shigeko: No, they didn't talk when we left. We hadn't been friendly.

JACL: Who was taking care of your place?

Shigeko: Someone was here.

JACL: Someone, a Caucasian?

Shigeko: Yeah, a Caucasian hired Filipinos to take care of our place.

JACL: Did your neighbor, the Caucasian, live here?

Shigeko: No, someone came and lived here.

JACL: Oh someone, not the next door neighbor.

Shigeko: Not the next door neighbor, but someone lived here.

JACL: Could they use the ranch for free?

Shigeko: I don't think they could use it for free.

Michi: They could use it for free.

JACL: From the camp, did you return here immediately?

Shigeko: Yes, we returned here immediately from the camp.

JACL: When you returned here, did someone still live here?

Shigeko: No, if someone was here, we couldn't be here.

JACL: I see.

Shigeko: Therefore they were already out of here. Before going to the camp we were very hard. The next day after the war began, the FBI arrested my husband.

JACL: Ah, so.

Shigeko: The FBI searched our house. They were even searching under my bed. I used to read books in the evening. They thought we hid books.

JACL: Uh-huh.

Shigeko: I put books near my pillow. I used to read monthly [Japanese] magazines in bed, and they didn't understand it [Japanese], therefore they were seriously searching.

JACL: Uh-huh.

Shigeko: Anyway, the FBI put my husband in the Santa Rosa jail immediately, then they brought him to the immigration office on Silver Avenue in San Francisco, and then...

JACL: Was that you or your husband?

Shigeko: That was all my husband, not me. I asked Jimmy Hikubo to take me to see my husband at the immigration office of Silver Avenue. My husband was not there. He had already been sent to Montana.

JACL: Oh, so how many days after he was arrested did you go to see him? You didn't know where he was sent?

Shigeko: No, they said he was sent to the Army camp in Montana. Then he was sent to the Army camp in Louisiana. They sent them all over, sent around them to Oklahoma and other places. At last we were sent to Merced where the assembly center was. Then they sent us to Colorado and Amache camp, and Crystal City camp in Texas where family members were put together.

JACL: Ah, ha.

Shigeko: We were there for three to four years. Our family could get together there.

JACL: So how many years were you apart?

Shigeko: We were apart for one and a half years.

JACL: Did you count one and a half years after you left here?

Shigeko: Yes, one and a half years after we left here. When we left here my son was 18 or 19 years old, and the year would have been his high school graduation... Therefore I had to do everything.

JACL: Oh.

Shigeko: It was very hard for me, and I often cried and my son said, "Mama cried often," and "Mama cried again."

JACL: Were you doing everything?

Shigeko: Yeah, I was boss and I had to do everything. I had to do everything from cleaning to organizing. I couldn't go to shopping but I had to do cleaning and everything. Since my children were in grammar school I was trying to do this.

JACL: Were you trying to do this...?

- Shigeko:** I had no problems to... after returning from the camp, I took the test... I tried this again.
- JACL:** It was good for you.
- Shigeko:** I've done it until recently. Uh-huh, *hai* [yes]. After we couldn't support the family enough, by this we were inconvenienced.
- JACL:** Before you went to camp [Crystal City], you cleaned everything?
- Shigeko:** Yes, I did everything [without husband]. I was crying everyday. For one and a half years.
- JACL:** One and a half years?
- Shigeko:** We were in the family camp [Crystal City], and the Army managed the camp so it was not... so much.
- JACL:** It was not...
- Shigeko:** Bacedonia. We went to Bacedonia in February. Was that in May?
- JACL:** So, during that time what were you going...?
- Shigeko:** Barbara was born in February.
- Michi:** No, no...
- Shigeko:** At that time.... She was born in February at Kaburagawa.
- JACL:** Here?
- Michi:** (*mentions Apple Blossom Parade*)
- JACL:** Oh, oh, oh.
- Shigeko:** After returning here we were that.
- JACL:** What?
- Michi:** Appointed Grand Marshal
- JACL:** Oh, oh, Grand Marshal. What year was that?
- Shigeko:** I don't remember it.
- JACL:** That was in 1972. That year I just moved to Sebastopol.
- Shigeko:** You moved here in 1972?
- Michi:** I think also Taniguchi's brother was in the parade.
- JACL:** Oh, the Apple Blossom Parade.
- Shigeko:** Oh yeah, at that time the brother was already in poor health.
- JACL:** Okay, after you returned here, did you start the apple business again?
- Shigeko:** Uh-huh *hai* [yes], uh-huh *hai* [yes].
- JACL:** Did you raise apples and then dry them, or only dry them?
- Shigeko:** Only a little bit, you know.

- JACL: How many acres are there here?
- Shigeko: 10... 10 acres. What was your husband doing?
- JACL: My husband?
- Shigeko: Yeah.
- JACL: Engineer.
- Shigeko: What kind of engineer?
- JACL: Electrical engineer.
- Shigeko: Oh. Were you in Sacramento?
- JACL: We moved here from Sacramento, after that he worked with Jim Murakami. Okay, when you lived here, were you with the church and...?
- Shigeko: Oh, temple... before the temple was set up, we bought a house over down... near a hospital and the Reverend lived there.
- JACL: Oh, Reverend lived there. What did you do for amusement?
- Shigeko: I do not know music. I do not know dance.
- JACL: Well, you told me you went to the mountain with Mr. Morita.
- Shigeko: Yeah, I went to the mountain for cutting wood with Mr. Morita. That was my amusement.
- JACL: Oh, that was your amusement.
- Shigeko: Anyhow, Mr. Morita drove and took us all over. He took all of us to places where his friends lived such as San Jose, Fresno, Salinas. He took us all over places his friends lived.
- JACL: You were favored by everybody?
- Shigeko: I was favored, uh-huh.
- JACL: Since you came here, did you make bonsai? Did you or your husband make them?
- Shigeko: Oh, I worked with my husband and helped him. That is men's job. We had to go to mountain hunting for stones and trees. He went to hunt for the Russian River jade and Clinton jade.
- JACL: Where?
- Shigeko: The Russian River jade.
- JACL: Oh, oh, yeah.
- Shigeko: They are not so good quality.
- JACL: Ah, so.
- Shigeko: Jade over there is brought from Japan. Brother in Japan gave us.
- JACL: This stone?

Shigeko: Is there something attached to it?

JACL: Yes.

Shigeko: Crystal, crystal.

JACL: Is this Japanese crystal?

Shigeko: Yeah. My husband's brother went to the mountain and picked them up and gave them to us because when we would be facing hard life they might help you.

JACL: How did you feel?

Shigeko: I did not feel miserable. I just had a happy life.

JACL: Oh, yeah. You were a small...

Shigeko: Uh-huh *hai, hai* [yes, yes]. I was happy. I met many people.

JACL: You didn't know if your parents were having hardship.

Shigeko: Where were you from?

JACL: Wyoming.

Shigeko: No, no.

JACL: Oh, Los Angeles. From Los Angeles.

Shigeko: From Los Angeles, and are you still going to Hawaii? Why?

JACL: After the War was over, we returned to Hawaii. Grandmother had lived in Hawaii, and it seemed that for a long time she had been asking us to "return to Hawaii, return to Hawaii."

Shigeko: (*laughs*)

JACL: In Los Angeles all our belongings had been sacked, and we didn't have anything left there so we went to Hawaii. Okay. Let's see, what's else? Oh, I know one thing. So you and your husband got along okay?

Shigeko: What does "got along" mean?

JACL: *Nakayoku*

Shigeko: *Nakayoku* (*laughs*) we were getting along well? We were not only getting along well but, of course we had quarrels and... (*laughs*).

JACL: Did you also have good friends?

Shigeko: Yeah, if I had good friends... Reverend visited us. I didn't go to temple.

JACL: Oh, you didn't go.

Shigeko: Reverend said, "You were lazy. You even didn't come." Oh, I was busy with errands every day, and I had to do different things every day.

JACL: You are now 95 years old. Look back on your life. Do you think you have had a good life?

Shigeko: I think so.

JACL: What is your hobby?

Shigeko: My hobby?

JACL: You are a good cook.

Shigeko: I'm not a good cook.

JACL: *Omanju* [sweet bean-jam bun]?

Shigeko: Recently I barely made *kimchee* [pickled cabbage].

JACL: Oh, that's so good. When you look back on your 95 years life, what is the happiest time in you life?

Shigeko: The happiest time is that I see my grandchildren's face and I meet my grandchildren. My parents didn't have chance to see the faces of their grandchildren. My parents died early in their lives. Seeing my grandchildren is happiest to me. Of course, I have had many happy occasions.

JACL: Do you understand redress?

Shigeko: What?

JACL: After we returned from camp, we received money from the U.S. Government. That is called redress.

Shigeko: Oh.

JACL: How do you feel about redress? Do you think we deserve redress?

Shigeko: I feel that redress is a matter of course.

JACL: Okay.

Shigeko: We didn't do anything wrong, and we were sent into the camp. It was not bad in the camp. There was not enough food, but we were not hungry. If you ask me for a monetary donation, I can't do anything.

JACL: Your story is our treasure.

Shigeko: Ah, so.

JACL: What kind of a person do you want your children and grandchildren to become?

Shigeko: Oh, I want them to become a respectable and independent person who will not be pointed at and whispered about. ...he had a degree, a Ph.D. in Hokkaido. He received a Ph.D. after returning home.

JACL: Mrs. Taniguchi, you started to make *imagawayaki* [sweet bean-jam pancake].

Shigeko: Yeah, yeah, I started it.

JACL: I learned how to make *imagawayaki* from you.

Shigeko: Ah, so. I used to make *imagawayaki* and *omanju*, but now I don't.

JACL: Well, you made them until ten years ago, probably five years ago.

Shigeko: Oh, I made *takuan* [pickled radish] and ate it yesterday, or no, on Saturday. (*laughs*) Also I used to make salame, but I don't make it anymore.

JACL: Oh, that takes time to make. ...Graton Festival?

Shigeko: No, Sebastopol.

JACL: You were not in Graton?

Shigeko: Only in picking season.

JACL: In 1922?

Shigeko: No, 1927.

JACL: Did you come to Sebastopol in 1927?

Shigeko: Yes, since then I have been here.

JACL: Oh, so in these five years, you had moved around here and there.

Shigeko: Yeah.

JACL: Okay.

End of Interview

JIM & MARY YAMAKAWA INTERVIEW

Persons interviewed: Jim and Mary Yamakawa
Date: February 7, 2002
Place: Yamakawa Ranch, Sonoma, CA.
Interviewer: Jim Murakami - also present, Margarette Murakami, George & Alice Kashiwagi
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by from audiotape source material

Introduction

As in other transcriptions there was discussion about:

- * How much editing was needed to clearly communicate the oral history for the reader
- * What tone or emotional knowledge would be lost to the reader as a consequence of that editing

Subsequently a minimal amount of editing was conducted in order to preserve the tone, a vital part of the stories. The colloquial and vernacular expressions provide a clue to the social, economic and cultural context and perspectives of the narrator.

At the beginning of the tape, observations were made of the Fujinkai conference picture that Margarette Murakami had brought to the Yamakawas. This was one:

“My father came to the islands, made a few bucks, then returned home and got married. Then he came to the U.S. Just about the time that the earthquake in San Francisco struck. Left the wife in Japan and called for her later. He farmed in Isleton. He met an old doctor who talked him into sharecropping beans. He lost his butt, didn’t make no money. Then he got wind of work in Ukiah so he left.”

– Jim Yamakawa 2/7/02

Interview Summary

Mr. Yamakawa’s father first came to Hawaii from Japan. He returned to Japan, married, and had a child. He then returned alone to the United States, and sent for his wife to join him after he had become established. His oldest child never came to America, and was raised by grandparents in Japan. After his wife joined him, they had several more children, first living in Ukiah, and then in Sonoma where Jim Yamakawa was born.

After Pearl Harbor, when it became apparent that the Japanese Americans would be forced from the area, Mr. Yamakawa’s father decided to move the family to Utah because he knew of friends who were moving there. The family worked hard farming in Utah, moving back to California after five years, first to San Jose, and then back to Sonoma County in 1952.

When the war broke out, neighbors offered help to Mr. Yamakawa's family, but because of limited time, the family had to give away a great deal of their possessions, with most of the farm equipment going to their landlord.

Mrs. Yamakawa was born in Sebastopol, and was sent to the Amache Internment Camp during the war. After the war, Mrs. Yamakawa's family returned to their ranch, and even though their house was alright, the crops had not fared well. She and Mr. Yamakawa married in 1957 at the Enmanji Temple.

Very few people had cameras in the camps, Tak Kameoka from Pt. Reyes was one of the exceptions, so very few photos exist of most internees during the years of internment.

Transcript of Interview

JACL: There were a lot of *Isseis* [first generation] in Ukiah. My dad was there. The Akutagawas were there; many Issei worked such crops as hops, pears.

Jim: There was a lot of work to do up there, work that the Mexicans are doing for us now pruning grapes and pears.

JACL: From there they came to Sonoma County.

Jim: Don't know how my dad got wind of work here of the truck farm, uptown. [There were] a couple of acres where he started the truck farm, where me and my young sister were born. My older brother and sister were born in Ukiah except my very oldest brother. He was born in Japan. My Dad made a family in Japan before he came here. [Back] then he figured on [returning] so he left the kid with the grandparents. He never [intended] to [stay] in the U.S. When he got established here, he called my mother over. He never did call my brother here. He ended up in Manchuria, military police or the service, that's when Japan was spreading [its influence in the world]. Hiroyuki [my oldest brother] died in Japan. My three sisters live in San Jose. My [other] brother's name is Ato, he was named after a German who owned a grocery store. I got named after a man who owned a grocery store here in Sonoma where my Dad was delivering vegetables. Gottenberg was his name. There were a lot of Germans, French and Italians living here.

JACL: What we are trying to do is get all the family histories before we lose the people. That is why I told you that we are going to Ukiah to talk to Holly because her Dad went to Ukiah; my [Jim Murakami's] dad went to Ukiah; the Akutagawas went to Ukiah, too.

JACL: Two of my sisters were born up there in Ukiah.

Jim: I was born here in Sonoma. I am the baby of the boys. I have a sister younger than me. Hanaye is younger. I was in the 6th grade, 10 or 11 years old, I got held back a couple of years because I didn't speak English. I didn't advance to 1st and 2nd grades because I didn't speak English. In those days, they held you back.

JACL: Why did you go to Utah?

Jim: [Do] you remember the Yamamoto family that had all those boys playing baseball on the Sakura baseball team in Sebastopol? They had a brother-in-law who was born and raised in Utah. He knew of a Japanese family back there [in Utah] so Yamamoto came and told us he was moving to Utah, so [he] told us to move with his family because we had to move anyway [to concentration camps]. My father said, "Well, they are going to run us out anyway." The army did come out and gave us a choice. Move out on our own or go with the rest of the evacuees. This was in early '42 or late '41. It was in March '42 when we left here [Sonoma]. We bundled up. We took two families or three families, rented a freight car and took whatever we were able to.

We rented a regular freight car; we got rid of some farm equipment. Three families had a lot of trunks and stuff. We were destined for Ogden, Utah. The old lady folks and the real small kids went on the train. All us big folks drove pickup trucks and cars and I was the youngest one to travel [by] car. Right at that time, Yamamoto bought a big, ol' Buick car that was in pretty good shape. My dad just bought an international pickup truck, a three quarter ton pick up truck; it was pretty new so we hauled a lot of mattresses and bedding. Hell, I didn't know where we were going. I guess they knew [meaning the adults], and we ended up in Garland, Utah. I was surprised that there were Japanese families there, a lot of families. It is near 40 miles north of Ogden. A family was just building a new home and all they had was the foundation. The farmer was Nishiguchi, and he had no wife anymore but three sons. They farmed sugar beets, onions, peas.

JACL: You didn't have to go into an internment camp?

Jim: There was a window of time in which they permitted people to leave. Then they suddenly decided "No, we don't want to do that." So that's why they decided to do this evacuation thing and rounded up [people].

JACL: [Do you feel] that you were kind of lucky?

Jim: Well, I don't know. My dad was receiving letters from the people in the camps, and how they were having an easy life. All they had to do was to go eat and sleep. So my dad said, "we should have went to camp."

JACL: That must have been different though because coming from California with a totally different climate, [the] soil was different, [and the] farming was different.

Jim: It was totally different, Jim. It was quite an experience. Farming practices were ten years behind CA. Everything was horse and wagon there. There were very few tractors [let alone] up-to-date tractors.

All the kids had to work hard because we had to survive on our own. We had to work like the Mexicans are doing now... pick up whatever work you can and don't "bitch" about it. We had to work hard. We felt bad about my youngest sister and my mother, because they had to go right along side of us and do the same kind of work.

They had a good sized building, a community building owned by the local Japanese. It was like the old Nippon hall. After staying with the Nishiguchis for

several days, we had to find a place to stay. We went to stay at this hall, we were told we could stay there until we were able to find a place to live; three families were living in the hall. We all met in Utah. The outside world needed help. Whole families came.

There was a family by the name of Taura who was Kumamoto-ken. Do you recall Si Sakata who lived by Rohnert Park? [The] husband died and his wife died, too, and the only ones left are the kids. One, the oldest daughter, lives in Sebastopol; she married a *hakujin* [Caucasian] by the name of Ray. One of the sons works in Vacaville for the waterworks/irrigation canal in the valley. Catherine and Suzie Sakata live in Oakmont. The mother lived until she was near 100. Both Catherine and Suzie were nurses back East. Well, Si was from the Taura family in Utah.

JACL: You graduated from school in Utah?

Jim: No, I didn't graduate. I went as far as half of my senior year in Box Elder High School in Utah.

JACL: How did you meet Hirano?

Jim: I met him in Prairie, Utah. They built a cannery there and they needed workers so they got people to come out of the camps to work in the canneries. They left camp, 8F, to go to Utah to work.

When we went to Colorado Springs for the reunion, I saw a few Hiranos. But on the bus, we kept looking at each other and kept looking at each other, and one of us said, 'Don't we know each other?' Yep, we did; it was from our days in Utah.

We were not quite five years up in Utah. My folks decided that this was long enough up here. We better go home. So we came back and went to a family's place, Mr. Narimatsu's place in San Jose. My dad made contact with the family, they were Kumamoto-ken, too. They said, "Come to San Jose, we have room to put you up until you see what you want to do."

At that time a guy by the name of Joseph Kaiser was setting up a strawberry farm in Sunol, Alameda Co., sharecropping. [The] Strawberry was starting to become a hot item so my dad said, "Well, that can't hurt." So we moved to San Jose until homes were built for us sharecroppers. Meanwhile to build these homes, Joseph Kaiser bought big warehouses in Pleasanton at a Naval base, and hired us guys, who were going to become sharecroppers, to tear these buildings down [in order] to build 24 homes for [us] sharecroppers. After the houses were built, we got to live in them.

JACL: When you were in Utah, did you face any racism?

Jim: Oh, yeah. I hate to tell you this one. I was in the 7th grade, and the teacher made a real bad remark. He was real prejudiced. What was hard was that I had to sit back and take it. I was the only Japanese in [that] History class and what was bad is that he was my 7th grade gym teacher, too. So, I had to put up with that sucker twice.

JACL: Did the local Japanese experience a lot of damage to their property?

Jim: I can't comment on that but most of the local Japanese were established in that community. The people who would make bad comments were the outsiders coming into town.

JACL: When you went to town did you experience any discrimination?

Jim: I didn't go to town too much. I don't think so, though. I understand the grocery store people were happy to see us [because] we bought a week's supply of groceries. The grocery store man was as happy as hell to see us. That little town called Corrine had one gas station, one store, and a little brick building for a school house. There was a feed store, by golly, where the people bought feed for their livestock. There was a mill by the railroad tracks, and so that is about all that I can recollect. Granada had a drug store, a grocery store.

Mary: We went to the drugstore to get ice cream. We walked there. We got a pass to get out of camp. When Amache had a reunion recently, the people of Granada gave a luncheon for all those who attended the reunion.

Jim: I couldn't believe where that camp was. I said, "Golly, this is desolate." Unbelievable. Probably when the camp was there, it was worse, pretty gritty; the land [was] pretty gritty.

JACL: Mary, you were born in Sebastopol?

Mary: I was born in Sebastopol. I went to Pleasant Hill School until the 6th grade, then I went to Merced. I didn't stay there too long. Then I went to Amache. After Amache, I went back to Sebastopol. That was in late '46"

Jim: After we came back we sharecropped strawberries for four years. Then my dad said this is enough of this. So we returned to the old place but there was no water so we went to the local real estate office and he brought us out here [to Watmaugh Rd.] We always wanted the one with the big house across the road, but the Niles son [Buick people] got it. He showed us this place here, and there were two cash crops already on it, two types of prunes, so my dad decided to buy it. And with the cash crops, he made money to put in four acres of strawberries but he couldn't find pickers. We peddled the fruit in Petaluma and San Jose. We drove all the way to San Jose to the freezer that Kaiser owned. We had to create our own market. We had to stop a little earlier to get to San Jose before the freezer closed.

I graduated high school in Pleasanton in '49. After the war, I had to help the family get settled. Then my dad sent me to finish my last half year of high school.

We came back here in '52. Being we had all this acreage, we invited my brother to join us to come and farm here, too. Well, that didn't work out too good. There wasn't enough income for two families. So in about five years time he moved back to L.A. [Los Angeles]. Of course he didn't move back directly. He moved little by little first to San Jose, then to Watsonville. He worked his way down. It wasn't that bad because his wife was from L.A. His wife wanted to get closer to her own family which is all right.

JACL: How did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

Jim: I guess I heard about it on the radio. My dad was just able to buy a radio, a console radio. We were able to get Japan; it had short waves. We had to turn it in; [we] gave it to my brother's friend before we left. Pa came home from delivering vegetables and the white people told my dad, "Hey, we are at war with you." Our neighbors said, "If there is anything we can do for you, let us know." My brother, Ato's guns were given away to his friends. I gave my rabbits away that I was raising. We had to give everything that they didn't want us to have away. Our landlord couldn't see us move fast enough. Our crop was ready to be harvested, he got the equipment for really cheap. He made out like a bandit. There were a lot of fire hoses that my dad got for irrigation purposes. He [landlord] got that for nothing. We had a couple of horses that he got for nothing. We had to just get rid of it. We loaded up the hand tools on the freight cars. We didn't take the planter jr. We gave it to the landlord.

JACL: Who took care of your ranch, Mary?

Mary: I don't remember who did. It was a *hakujin* [Caucasian]. They were saying that he just ruined the ranch. Didn't put nothing back into the ranch. Just kept on taking from the ranch and didn't put nothing back into the ranch. Just ruined it. The house was okay.

Jim: The funny thing is that we didn't raise strawberries when we came back. Ted Sakata did; he and Si did. I don't know how in the hell they did it with that minimal water but they did it. There wasn't enough water for flood irrigation. Of course now, they got these drip holders that you bury in the mountain. The strawberries do wonders.

JACL: And you can plant strawberries on the side of the hills. We saw this in Santa Maria.

Jim: Remember the trip we took to L.A.? We went to the museums and the dedication of the Manzanar Memorial. Down in Santa Maria I saw all these strawberries. I couldn't believe all the strawberries there and in Arroyo Grande, and the San Luis Obispo area. That was quite a trip. I liked it [because] it was a good trip! We went to the Getty Museum, the Holocaust Museum. That was a terrible museum. That's where they took the knife away from me. I had a pocket knife. Yeah, they took it away from me. This big, older colored guy comes out and asks, "Have you any weapons on you?" So I told him, "No, I ain't got no weapons." [He asked,] "You mind if I search you?" So I told him to go ahead. He took out my pocket knife. I guess he was afraid that I would cut up the pictures.

JACL: When did you and Mary get married?

Jim: In 1957. We've been married for 45 years. We got married on March 16, 1957. Forty-five years is a special one. We got married at the Enmanji [Temple].

Mary: Who had a camera in camp?

JACL: Tak Kameoka had a camera in camp. He took pictures of the guard towers, the barb wires. He lived out in Pt. Reyes and that was guarded by the army because they had a "listening" station out there. Well, he was farming out there, he and

his family. So they used to go in and out, just like ordinary. The guards got to know him and he would just wave at them. He was raising peas out there. It was really heavily guarded out there but anyway he was a very, well, he knew a lot about radios. And he was building his own radio and he kept a camera and took all these photographs in camp.

Mary: How about your dad. He was a photographer.

Alice: He was a photographer but I heard that he gave it up when they moved here to Sebastopol. He had a studio in Salinas and gave it up. I don't know whether he had a camera. I don't have many pictures of myself at all.

Mary: I don't have many pictures of myself either.

Jim: I don't have many either.

JACL: So, how is the grape crop?

Jim: It's been okay so far but it looks like it's got a down grade now...

End of Interview

YEHIEL YISRAEL INTERVIEW

Person Interviewed: Yehiel Yisrael
Date: February 28, 2003
Place: Oakland, California
Interviewer: Alice Kashiwagi
Summary: Phyllis Tajii
Transcription: Transcribed by Michael Bryant on June, 24, 2003 from E-mail correspondence between the participants

Interview Summary

Mr. Yisrael recalls the Fujihara-Hamaoka family, “best friends who were like family to us” from his childhood in Sebastopol, California. Mr. And Mrs. Sai Fujihara had six children, one of whom fought in Italy with the 442nd. The oldest married Sadao Hamaoka, who also served in the U.S. Army during the war.

Mr. Yisrael’s family was very saddened about the internment of their friends, and his grandfather, William Marley Hotle, who was a business and community leader of the area, was attacked at his home by a white racist mob because of his support of the Japanese American community. Mr. Hotle truly was a man who did not judge people by the color of their skin, as he was also almost arrested years earlier in Atlanta, Georgia, for giving up his front seat to an African American woman.

Mr. Yisrael was told that support for the Japanese American community also came from the Sonoma County Sheriff who announced that he would protect their land until they returned, and with the help of Mr. Yisrael’s grandfather and others like him who cared for the properties, families did come back to reestablish their lives after the war.

Interview Transcript

JACL: Who in the Japanese American Community do you know that spent time in the Internment Camps?

Yehiel: I’ve only discussed the WWII internment camps with our best friends who were like family to us from my childhood—the Fujihara-Hamaoka family. Shizu “Suzie” Fujihara Hamaoka was the oldest of six children of Mr. & Mrs. Sai Fujihara, of Hiroshima. The Fujiharas were sent from Sebastopol to various centers and camps. Suzie’s brother, Dr. Fred Fujihara, D.D.S., was the only one not interned and he fought in Italy in the 442 R.C.T. As you may know, Suzie’s husband Sadao Hamaoka, of blessed memory, passed in December 2002. Sad was born in California, raised in Hiroshima by his grandparents from age seven after his parents passed. He returned to California before the war and was drafted and served in the U.S. Army through the war. I’ve heard the names of so many camps that my memory is rusty and you should get it directly from Suzie who remembers all.

JACL: Which camp were they in?

Yehiel: I think they were in Manzanar for a time. I'm sure it's Okay for you to call her.

JACL: Have you talked with them about the conditions in the camps, both positively and negatively?

Yehiel: I have mostly just listened to Susie and also a few general remarks of her younger sister Edna, however, I didn't ask many questions about conditions in the camps. Suzie and Edna made it clear that the horse stalls in the old race track were not fit for human dwelling. They obviously did not want to discuss their experience in any detail and we were all very sad and hurt about this terrible fact of our history which happened to many of our closest and dearest friends and neighbors.

JACL: Did your parents keep in contact with a Japanese American family during the war years?

Yehiel: My mother told us about going with them to the train when they were sent away to internment. They all cried then and I cried hearing of it. I am very proud of my family and of all the families who suffered through it. We were told that they all returned to their land in Sebastopol. We were told that the Sonoma County Sheriff announced publicly that he would protect their lands until they returned and that "no one will take anything of the Japanese American community in Sonoma County, except over my dead body".

My grandfather, probably with other ranchers, cared for the places and homes of his neighbors until the families returned. However, I don't know any more details of this history. Certainly our neighbors the Wakaymas, Shimizus, Onos, etc. *Issei* [first generation] and *Nisei* [second generation] would know and *Sansei* [third generation], who may have done research on this important history.

JACL: How was this contact maintained?

Yehiel: I'm not sure but I believe that my family wrote to their friends and neighbors in the camps. I never heard this detail discussed.

JACL: When the war ended, was your family instrumental in helping Japanese Americans resettle in the Sebastopol area?

Yehiel: Yes. I don't know [many] details of this, except that my grandparents worked closely with the community after the war. My grandfather's ranch foreman was a Japanese American man. My grandfather was a key business and community leader in Sebastopol and Sonoma County for many generations and he organized the apple growers, berry and pear growers and was president of those organizations and of the Sebastopol Fruit Growers Association, with many Japanese American neighbor growers.

My grandparents also invited the community to his home to hear the commander of the Pearl Harbour attack who came from Japan to our home to speak to the Japanese American community.

JACL: What do you admire most about the Japanese American families that you knew?

Yehiel: I admire everything I know about them because I was raised with them and I know the most excellent character of those generations who brought great culture and sacrificed so much in that time and subsequently expressed no animosity but continued as the most loyal citizens even when this country did not live up to our Constitution but treated them shamefully without need to do so. Obviously this question could take a book to answer. I need to take more time to add a few pages at least to this answer.

JACL: Please provide us with a brief history of yourself, your family. Thank you ever so much.

Yehiel: My grandfather William Marley Hotle [1873-1966], was known as the best friend of the Japanese American community and was attacked at his home by a white racist mob because they considered him to be so. They called my grandfather “a Jap lover and the leader of the Jap lovers”. My grandfather simply knew and loved his neighbors of all backgrounds. That same grandfather was also reprimanded and nearly arrested in 1926 in Atlanta, Georgia for giving up his front seat to an African American lady. Let me get back to you to give you a brief description of myself.

Thanks for asking me these questions. I know that e-mail is quicker than a trip from my home in Oakland. I will get back to you soon, to complete my answers to your questions.

Yours for awareness of our history and in our continuing struggle for social justice and real peace.

Yehiel Yisrael, M.A.

End of Interview