

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Japanese American Project

Sansei Experience

O.H. 1231

JOHN YUKIO MORI

Interviewed

by

Betty E. Mitson

on

December 19, 1972

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INTERVIEWEE: JOHN YUKIO MORI

INTERVIEWER: Betty E. Mitson

SUBJECT: Sansei Experience

DATE: December 19, 1972

BM: This is an interview with John Yukio Mori at the Amerasia Bookstore at 313 1/2 East First Street, Los Angeles, California, 90012. The interview is for the Japanese American Project of California State University, Fullerton. The date is December 19, 1972, at 9:00 a.m.

John, would you tell me where and when you were born?

JM: I was born in Salt Lake City on [REDACTED]. My mother was Japanese American, and my dad was from Japan.

BM: How did they happen to be in Salt Lake City?

JM: Well, after Relocation, my mother went back to Salt Lake City with the rest of her family, because they were kind of afraid to come back to the West Coast, because of all the sentiment against the Japanese people at that time. They went back there because my grandmother knew some people living back there.

Apparently my dad was working there during the time of the Relocation. When he first came over here he was working in Santa Ana, Orange County, farming. And when the war broke out, they went back to Utah to farm, because they heard that they would be put into concentration, uh, relocation camps. They were doing agricultural work during that time.

BM: So they actually went to Salt Lake City before the mass movement into relocation camps?

JM: Yes, my dad did. It was a funny thing, too, that my dad came over here on a forged passport. Not exactly a forged one, but a borrowed passport. That's how most of the Japanese immigrants came over to the United States at that time.

BM: About what year was that, do you know? Before 1924?

JM: I don't think so.

BM: That would be after the Exculsion Act. See, the Exculsion Act went into effect in 1924.

JM: I don't know. I haven't figured that out.

BM: Do you know how old he was when he came?

JM: No. I think my dad got married when he was . . . Well, he's sixty-one now. I think he was twenty-three. I don't remember; I don't know.

BM: But he married in the United States?

JM: Yeh, he married in the United States. And when he got married, he took my mother's name. Or the name that he had was the same as that I have now. Not until my brother started grammar school did he legally change his name to Mori.

BM: What was his family name?

JM: His family name was Ishigaki.

BM: Your mother's family name was Mori?

JM: Yes. They both came from pretty large families. My dad was the only son, and there were seven sisters. My mom had six sisters; they're all living here in the United States, all born in the United States.

BM: Do you think the reason that your father took your mother's name was because he had come in on a borrowed passport, or because there was some tradition of taking the mother's name?

JM: No, I don't think there was any tradition. I think it was because of the forged passport. I don't think that there was anything about carrying on the name of the Mori family, or anything like that. I don't think that was the case.

BM: In view of that, do you think your father was married soon after he immigrated? Or was he on his own for quite a long time?

JM: He was on his own, because he was living with his sister and his brother-in-law, and he was farming for quite awhile.

BM: In what area?

JM: Out in Orange County.

Then after they got married, he ran a restaurant in Salt Lake City. There is a Japanese staple that they have, called tofu, which is soy bean cakes. He was the only manufacturer of them in Salt Lake City at that time. There was somebody else who started making them too, and it was getting pretty cold in Salt Lake, so they decided to move out when I was about a year and a half old. So I think I came out to the West Coast about 1950.

BM: Was this restaurant opened after the Relocation period? In other words, that would be post-World War II when he opened the restaurant?

JM: Yeh, right.

BM: Did his restaurant cater to both Japanese Americans and Caucasian Americans?

JM: Yes. I think the sentiment and most of the relationships between the whites and the Japanese in Salt Lake City weren't as bad as here on the West Coast, because they were free to work on the farms, and they had to communicate with the whites because they had to sell their products and stuff like that. So I think that, in the working relationship between the Japanese and the whites, there wasn't that much antagonism between the two races at that time.

BM: Your mother and father were married before World War II started? Is that correct? In other words, when he went to Salt Lake City, was he already married to her?

JM: No, they got married after the camps, because my mom didn't get to Utah until after they were released from the relocation camps.

BM: So your mother, then, was in the camp as a single woman.

JM: Right.

BM: But were they acquainted before that, do you know?

JM: No, I don't think so.

BM: Did they meet in Salt Lake City?

JM: Yes.

BM: Oh.

JM: I don't think it was really so in this case, but what I've noticed, as a Sansei, is that in a lot of Japanese families . . . A lot of people of Japan that came over here, it appears to me, got married for the family, I mean, to raise kids and to see that they had a better life than they had, not especially out of love or

something like that. To the Japanese, the Western style of love is something really abstract. I see the Japanese family, let's say, on a vertical plane, in terms of the father, the mother, and the children, and there is some priority--not exactly priority, but the figurehead in the family is the father, the mother being the one who stays at home and cares for the children and things like that. The father is the provider and stuff like that. Whereas, from a lot of my friends, white friends, their family life is more or less horizontal, and even though there is a father figure in the family, there is more interrelationship among the family, there is more participation among the family as a group. This may be because, too, in a lot of Japanese families the mother and father got married late, and between, let's say, the son and the father, there was a big gap. Also, there was a language difference.

I know that was the fact in my family. When I started school, just when I was in the early ages, I would get really, really mad because I couldn't understand why my dad was yelling at me. He was yelling at me in Japanese, and I didn't know what was going on. He was yelling, and he didn't know what was going on, and I'd be yelling back at him in English. So that type of relationship went on until I was about thirteen. We kind of understood what was going on, but not really.

BM: Did he eventually learn English?

JM: Yes, he eventually got his citizenship papers, and my father figured it out that it was easier for him to learn English than for us to learn Japanese.

Although I did attend Japanese school. They have Japanese school here in Southern California, and I think I started at about age eight. I guess I went for about eight years, but those eight years I think I really wasted, because it was just another school on Saturday. They used to have it every day, too, but we only went on Saturdays, all day from nine to three. I didn't really feel like attending school on Saturdays when most of my friends weren't going to Japanese school, or anything like that. They were out, you know, rustling around, and I was in school.

BM: When you say friends, were they all races? Or are you speaking of mostly Sansei who weren't attending Japanese school?

JM: At that time, my friends were mostly Sansei that weren't attending school.

BM: Do you think, then, that you were more apt to be attending the Japanese school because your father was an Issei?

JM: Well, yeh, that, plus--I didn't realize it at that time, but now

I do, why my parents sent me to Japanese school--because it is my heritage; it is my culture, and I am Japanese.

BM: You appreciate the fact that you went more now than you did at the time you were going?

JM: Oh, yeh! I think that goes for regular school too. But at that time I didn't really understand what was going on. Now I would probably look upon it in a different way.

BM: What sort of curriculum did you have in the Japanese school?

JM: It was basically just conversation and writing. They didn't really stress too much on grammar or anything. It was just mostly follow the leader. The teacher said something, and you said something back, and she would try to explain to you what it meant in English.

BM: It was built, then, around the language skills and not necessarily around the cultural heritage? In other words, were you taught about the Japanese culture itself other than the language?

JM: Yeh, we had different classes. I mean, it wasn't really taught to us, it was something that they would present to us over and over again in a way that not exactly brainwashed us, but, I don't know. Culture is, I think, really peculiar in that just the person teaching Japanese, and the way he moves, and the way he talks, his expressions, his attitudes on how he teaches the class, that person's ingenuity, the resources that he uses . . . You could tell the difference between a public schoolteacher and this Japanese schoolteacher, because none of them had really good teaching skills as though gaining them through a university here in the United States. They were more or less people who had gone to college in Japan but, yet, weren't into teaching. They may have gone through some engineering school, or something like that, or they just might have gone up through high school in Japan, yet they tried to teach the Japanese language to people here in the United States. Most of them did speak a little bit of English, so they could communicate with a lot of Sansei and Nisei that went to the school.

BM: Then the teachers in Japanese schools are immigrants from Japan. You don't find Nisei, for instance, teaching in the Japanese school, do you?

JM: Yes, that's right. Hardly any Nisei were teachers when I went. I really don't know why that is. It could be because the Nisei don't really have time for that. They're too busy trying to raise their families and things like that. Now there are a couple that I know that teach at Los Angeles City College that are Nisei.

BM: Was this Japanese school attached to a temple here in Little Tokyo?

JM: No. It was called Unified Japanese Language School, or something like that. I'm not really sure about the history of that school, but I know that when I was attending it, there were about five other schools in different locations in Southern California. They were in Hollywood, the San Fernando Valley, out in Pasadena, Gardena, around the Crenshaw area of Los Angeles, and they had a junior high school and a high school setup over there near the Red Cross on Vermont and Olympic, or someplace around there.

BM: Is that where you went?

JM: Yes, I graduated from the so-called elementary school part. I attended that for what must have been about a year and a half, or less than a year, something around there, because at that time I was starting junior high school.

BM: Oh, and did you discontinue at that time?

JM: Yeh, I discontinued the Japanese school because I was starting to attend public school junior high school, and I had a lot more outside activities.

BM: So then you went from about the age of eight to about nine and a half to Japanese school?

JM: I think I started when I was about six, and I went until I was about thirteen or fourteen. I might have been into junior high school at that time.

BM: You said you were about one and a half when your family came back here from Salt Lake City, so you don't remember that experience in Utah.

JM: No, I don't.

BM: I'd like to return to the marriage of your mother and father. You started to talk a little bit about the marriage relationship. I wonder if there was an arrangement with their marriage. Were you intimating that?

JM: I don't think so.

BM: You think they met on their own and decided to get married on their own?

JM: Yes. I haven't really talked much to them about that.

BM: You also mentioned quite a number of children in both your mother and your father's families. Is your father the only one of his generation in his family who emigrated to the United States?



- JM: No, he has one more sister. She was the one here before my dad came over. She was here with my uncle, and they were farming out in Orange County, out in Santa Ana, when my dad came over.
- BM: And you said your mother was born in this country?
- JM: Right. All my mother's sisters were born here in the United States.
- BM: Do you know if her family was able to go as a group to the camp, or were they split up?
- JM: I think they were split.
- BM: Then when she went to Salt Lake City, she wasn't married yet. Do you know if her folks were with her in Salt Lake City?
- JM: As far as I can remember what my mom was telling me, I don't think so.
- BM: Was she working on her own in Salt Lake City?
- JM: Yeh, I think she was. She had gone to Salt Lake City with two of her other sisters. My mother had been in Poston.
- BM: Do you suppose she was resettled to Salt Lake City before the camp was closed?
- JM: No, she wasn't.
- BM: She was in Poston right to the end of the war.
- JM: Yes, right.
- BM: When your father went to Salt Lake City, rather than going to camp, he went in the early stages. Did he know someone in that area who was able to take him in?
- JM: He went back with his sister and his brother-in-law, my aunt and uncle. They were here before he came over; they were farming. I think they knew somebody out in Salt Lake City.
- BM: Have you ever returned to that area?
- JM: Yes, I've gone back there about four or five times.
- BM: Do you know folks around there?
- JM: Yeh, we still have pretty close family friends, about four or five families that still live there.
- BM: Are they Japanese Americans?

JM: Yes.

BM: Are they located there as a result of having gone during the same period that your mother went? Do you know?

JM: I'm not sure. I think a couple of them were in camps and they did do that. They had resettled out there after the war. But I'm not sure about the other ones.

BM: Are the people that you are acquainted with located within a specific section of Salt Lake City, or are they pretty much spread out?

JM: They are pretty much spread out. The Japanese community in Salt Lake City isn't that large. But they have a Buddhist church there, and they also have a Japanese Americans Citizens League there. Most of my family friends in Salt Lake City do participate in the Buddhist Church. A lot of them are moving out from the central city. They're moving into the suburbs of Salt Lake City. As for a group of one particular area of Japanese living in a section like here in Los Angeles, let's say, or Gardena, or Monterey Park, or on the west side of L.A., and sections like that-- I don't think they really have areas like that. They do have some Japanese stores that I know about, but I don't think there is one particular section.

BM: Have your folks ever made any comment about their treatment in Utah in that early period right after the war compared to what it was on the West Coast? Did they feel more at home in Utah because of the hysteria, for instance, on the West Coast? Have they ever made any comments about the comparison?

JM: No, they haven't. I asked them about that, but I don't think they expressed their really true feelings about it. Apparently, from all the pictures that they had, it seemed like there was really no hardship laid on them after the war.

BM: Do you know what brought them back to the West Coast?

JM: At that time, I think, most of my aunts, my mom's sisters, were living out here. My grandmother was out here. When we came back out, we were living with my grandmother for about three or four months until we found a place.

BM: Was that in Los Angeles?

JM: Yeh.

BM: Had your father owned any property before the war that he may have lost?

JM: No. My mom's family, my grandfather on my mother's side, they were

farmers. They had been farming out in the Doheny area around San Clemente right where Camp Pendleton is now. At that time, my grandfather owned some land over there, and I don't know what was the situation that happened, whether the government paid my grandfather money or if they just told them they had to leave. I think that was the situation--they told them they had to leave, to take everything they could carry, and that was it.

BM: That property isn't in the family now?

JM: No, that property is part of Camp Pendleton. So they had some land that was ripped off from them. I can't think of anybody else that had any taken.

BM: Is your grandfather that lost the land still living?

JM: No, he died in 1953 or 1954. I can remember going to his funeral, but I really didn't know my grandfather, because I was still pretty young, only about five or something like that.

BM: But your mother and father are both still living?

JM: Yes, and my grandmother is still alive. I never met my dad's mother and father. They died before my father came out here to the United States, I think. My dad said that his father died when he was seventeen, so it was pretty hard on him, being the only son in the family and the male figurehead in the family. So he had a lot of responsibility.

BM: Do you think that part of his motivation in emigrating was to get ahead here and help the family back home? Has he ever expressed that?

JM: I haven't really talked to him about why he came to the United States.

BM: Were your father's folks and mother's folks from the southern part of Japan? Do you know what part of Japan they emigrated from?

JM: Yeh, they were from the southern part.

BM: On both sides of the family?

JM: Yes, right. I personally have never been back to Japan yet.

BM: Do you plan to go?

JM: Yes, I'm the only one on my dad's side that has never been to Japan. All my cousins have been back to Japan, even my older brother who was there for a year studying. He got a scholarship, or a loan or a grant, to go back and study.

BM: What was he studying?

JM: He was studying architecture.

BM: Where?

JM: Waseda University. It's in Tokyo.

BM: Was the grant from the university itself?

JM: No, it was more or less an exchange. So I don't know what the situation was.

BM: The Sansei that I interviewed yesterday made the comment that most of the immigrants seem to have been from the southern part of Japan. Have you come across that bit of information? Have you ever observed that in talking to your friends?

JM: No, I really haven't seen that.

BM: Is that observation new to you, or had you thought about where the concentration of immigration might have come from?

JM: Yes, that's pretty new to me. There are a lot of what they call kenjinkais here in the United States--not a lot, they are dying out. But what kenjinkais are, if you were born in a certain prefecture in Japan--prefectures are like little counties or states here in the United States--here in the United States they have like clubs. This started out a long time ago, after the war, to know people and to get together with people, they started these organizations here in the United States. This was for financial and social reasons.

BM: Are those clubs organized on the basis of the area that they came from?

JM: Yeh, right. If you came from, let's say, Hiroshima, you would join a certain club with other people from Hiroshima, or Yokohama. They still have social activities like big picnics and get-togethers, golf tournaments. The golf tournaments started with the Nisei and the younger Issei who came over here. They still have picnics and dinners. They act as the greeting party for that certain prefecture. For example, if someone came over here from Hiroshima Ken, or somewhere like that, an educator or a doctor or some person who is on the city government, then they would take them to dinner and things like that.

BM: When they have their get-togethers, where do they hold them?

JM: They have them at big banquet halls down here in Little Tokyo. Most of these restaurants down here have banquet halls they can rent out.

BM: Is there some sort of officer-type setup? I mean, an organizational type of arrangement where people arrange these things?

JM: In most of the clubs here, there is a president, a vice-president, and all the way down the line.

BM: They have monthly meetings and that type of thing?

JM: Yeh, they have monthly meetings. My dad is the president of one of those kenjinkais. He is the president of Mie Club for the prefecture of Mie. I never really got into it, so I really don't know the full name of it. It's called Mie Kenjinkai or something like that.

It's really funny, that this is their little world, you know. This is where they have their say-so, because they can't attain this in the white society, because of the language problem of communication, and just because of their nonassimilation into society. This is their form of expression. This was forced upon them because of the situation after the camps and because of the feelings of society against the Japanese people. They had to set up their own society within the society, because of all, let's say, the racism that was taking place at that time. So if you go to one of these meetings, you find farmers and gardeners that are presidents of these particular clubs and who are really, really good organizers; they're good leaders. But then it is in their own sort of closed society or situation that they live in. And this has been reflected on the Nisei.

Right now the Sansei do still associate primarily with other Japanese, but a lot of them are into school offices and the community, outside of the Japanese-American community. They are helping out within city government and different situations like that, working for social service or civil service jobs.

Before, for the welfare and social security, the medical, and everything, it was all based around the Japanese community--the so-called Issei--just around their friends, and people like that.

BM: Oh, really? You're speaking of before the war, or even since?

JM: I think this happened before the war and after the war, because of the anti-Japanese, the anti-Asian sentiment against the Japanese. They had to live in particular areas, and things like that. If you notice, before--like when Gardena was set up--here in Los Angeles most of the areas that the Japanese live in are what is considered now the lower-class areas of the city. This was because of the lack of money and, I guess again, too, they weren't accustomed to living . . . well, they didn't have, you know, the money to live in bigger houses and stuff like that. I've heard that on a couple of occasions they wouldn't rent to my aunts and uncles. Some whites wouldn't rent their house to them

because they were Japanese. This was around the early 1950s. They had tried a couple of places and they used American-type names, and when they went there, the people said, "We don't rent to Japanese." It was out-front racism.

BM: At that time, there wasn't much recourse, I presume.

JM: Yeh, right. So most of them did live in lower income areas of the city.

BM: So it wasn't always due to a lack of money. There were other factors, as well, forcing them to live in certain areas.

JM: Yes, right. A friend of mine, his dad was one of the first ones to start an insurance agency here in the United States for Japanese people, because of all the racism and oppression that Japanese people faced after the Relocation. All the businesses were closed, all the services, insurances, borrowing money, for example, through a credit union, and things like that; they were all closed.

BM: Do you mean those that had been owned by Japanese-American people? Or do you mean such businesses were closed to them?

JM: Yes, closed to them, in terms of like actually buying some insurance or getting a loan for some money. That was closed to them; they wouldn't loan them any money.

So out of this situation came the necessity to set up something. So they had to set up things like their own credit union, their own insurance agency. And a lot of it took a lot of struggle, and it was a lot of fight for them to become insurance agents, and to get their license and things like that, to be an insurance agent or broker. There was a group of them that started, and a few of them are still around yet.

BM: I want to place this in time. Are you speaking of pre-war times?

JM: No, this was after the war. Another thing that the Japanese had to set up was this thing called tanomoshi. This system of money and the workings of it are still kind of vague to me yet, but this grew out of the need for loans and things like that. I think, the working basis of this is more or less a lottery in which each member of this group puts in so much money. If you need that money for that month, then you would bid for it, so that next month you would pay for that money. Or you would put up a bid. Let's say there were twelve of you, and everybody put in a hundred dollars, so that's twelve hundred dollars, and you wanted to borrow that twelve hundred dollars. So you would put in a bid of five to ten dollars or even more, depending on how badly you wanted or needed that money. They would open the envelope at the end of the month, and if your bid was the highest then you would

receive that money. You would have to pay each member of the group that amount of money that you had bid.

BM: Like interest to each one in the group.

JM: Yeh, right. But you would pay that only that particular month, to use that money. So each month they would put in so much money, and things like that. That's still going on today, because it's a good financial basis to lean on.

BM: Is that done through the type of club that you were speaking of before?

JM: Some are and some aren't. They set it up merely because of location or friends. A group of people just got together and they did it.

BM: Is this sort of thing pretty much confined to Little Tokyo?

JM: No, it's confined to the Japanese community. When I talk about the Japanese community, I talk about the Japanese community in East Los Angeles, in Gardena, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, out in the Valley. Each particular geographic location has a Japanese community within it.

BM: These things that you are describing go on wherever there is a sizable number, then.

JM: A sizable number of older Japanese Issei that are living in a particular area.

BM: Do you think that before the war there was quite a lot of this cooperative-type of organization going on, too? And were these people who may have been active in this sort of thing singled out for special treatment when it came to excluding people?

JM: Well, I talked to different people and from what I've read, there were a lot of attitudes against Japanese people. I don't understand what you mean by "singled out."

BM: Well, what I mean is, do you know if there were a considerable number of fraternal organizations of this type, or self-help organizations, and were the people who were leaders in those organizations singled out to be sent to a detention camp rather than a relocation camp?

JM: I understand what you're talking about.

BM: In other words, is this self-help sort of thing pretty much of a postwar situation, or was there quite a lot of that fraternal-type self-help going on before the war? And if that was the case,

were these people who were active in it singled out and sent, then, to detention camps rather than to relocation camps?

JM: Yes, I think they were.

BM: You think there were quite a number of these types of organizations?

JM: Yes. I think it posed a threat to . . . They thought it posed a threat to the national security of the government, when yet all they were doing was trying to make a living for themselves.

For instance, before the war the Japanese would bring their products from the outlying places around Los Angeles, and they would bring them to City Market. They had built up a pretty big clientele within the white society. I don't know if they had at that time grocery stores or what, but they would come down and they would buy most of their products from the Japanese people. I think the white farmers took this as being a threat to their own survival, getting enough money to buy other foods to live on. So I think this type of feeling existed against them, of them being a threat of them being foreigners, that, and the society not knowing what they were actually trying to do. All they were really trying to do was make a living for themselves, and yet somehow they might have been doing it better than everybody else; I don't know. But when the war broke out, a lot of the markets in the City Market were taken over by the whites. The same situation: they gave them only forty-eight hours to move out. It was taken away.

BM: Oh, forty-eight hours to get out of the markets, you mean?

JM: Yeh.

BM: I understand it was forty-eight hours to get out of Terminal Island, too. You're not speaking of forty-eight hours to go into a relocation camp, but forty-eight hours to get out of the situation in the markets.

JM: Right. Because I think that they were living in other particular areas. Well, they were living here in Little Tokyo, and one of the deportation points was right here at Union Church. The address is on the evacuation notice.

BM: Is that a Buddhist church?

JM: No, that's a Christian church.

BM: That was an evacuation point where they had to gather for the Little Tokyo area?

JM: Right.

BM: Were the people sent directly from Union Church to Poston?



- JM: I don't know about the situation with the people here. I think most of them were sent to Santa Anita, and then they were dispersed to wherever: either Manzanar, or Poston, or Heart Mountain, or wherever.
- BM: We talked before about the fact that you are a Buddhist, and your parents are both Buddhist. Do you still attend the Buddhist Church?
- JM: Yes. I attend Jodo-shinshu Sect at Senshin Buddhist Temple, which is on the west side of Los Angeles. It's right near the University of Southern California in a predominantly black neighborhood, right now. At the time there were a lot of Japanese Americans living around there. There are still a few living around there.
- BM: Do you still live with your parents?
- JM: Yes, I still live with my parents. I attended Alta Loma Elementary School, which was made up predominantly of blacks and Japanese, Asians. And then I attended Mount Vernon Junior High School, which is, again, predominantly blacks and Asians. A lot of Japanese Americans attended that. Then I attended Los Angeles High School, which was split pretty evenly. What I mean is that it was like a third white, a third black, and a third Asians, and there were Chicanos attending. There was more or less an equal balance of percentage of races. But up until that time, most of my friends were predominantly black. That's who I grew up with, predominantly black and Japanese people.
- BM: Did you go beyond high school?
- JM: Yeh, I went to Los Angeles City College. I majored in dental technology and art. Something about art, though. I think my parents wanted me to become an engineer or architect, like my brother is, and stay more or less away from liberal arts. I think it was this thing, because of the situation of camp, that to be accepted by the society and try to gain some status was to have a good job, in terms of being a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer. In their eyes these were the status jobs. And to be accepted throughout the white society was to attain these jobs, and to make a name for yourself. So I felt this pretty heavy pressure on me. At that time, I didn't realize what was going on, why they really wanted me to attain these pretty high goals. So I was taking all these art classes and stuff like that, and I was really enjoying it. I'd be making A's and B's in the classes, and I'd be really enjoying it, but there was something about art, my parents knowing that it was really hard to get a job in the art world, and the competition, and stuff like that. So I think they wanted me to have more of a concrete job, a doctor or a pharmacist or something like that. They wouldn't really encourage me to continue art, so I just took it anyway among all of the other classes that I took, the math classes, the history classes, and the chemistry classes. So I didn't really know after

graduating from high school what I was going to do. I had taken all kinds of industrial arts, wood shops, auto shops, and all the other crafts.

So I went to Los Angeles City College, and my cousin at that time had just got out of the Army, and he attended an extension course at the University of California at Los Angeles, a dental technology class. I was asking him about what he was doing and what was the situation. I got pretty interested in it because he worked with his hands. He was carving and things like that. I heard that they had a program at L.A. City College, so I looked into it, and I saw a friend of mine there that was also applying, so it made it a lot easier. We went to two years of that formal training in dental technology. I finished that and got an Associated Arts degree in that plus getting some transferred units and things like that.

After that, I was working as a dental technician. I quit a couple of jobs. I was roaming around, and then I got on with an orthodontist technician which makes up the bands for orthodontic work. My parents really dug that. They really thought that I was getting settled down. At that time I was only about twenty when I was working as an orthodontic technician. I was settled down, and they were pretty happy. If I had to do that, I would do it again.

BM: You really enjoyed the work.

JM: Yeh, I enjoyed the work. I liked talking with kids and stuff like that. Then I started hassling the draft. I was about twenty-one then.

BM: You mean you had a number that was low and you were eligible to be drafted?

JM: Yes, I was in the first lottery, and my number was being called. My friend had a number that was two digits lower than I, and he got his letter of induction. So I was kind of wondering and pondering on it. When those things come up, all these things go through your head about what your situation is going to really be in the future. I had never really thought about it. I never really thought about the war until about 1969, when I entered college, and I never really developed my own personal stand about the war and what I was going to do if it ever came to me being drafted. I decided to try to postpone my induction as long as possible. I talked to different people in different walks of life on how they felt about the war, so I came to the decision that I didn't want to go. I just didn't want to go, so I applied for a conscientious objector status through Buddhism. Here in Southern California, this had never been done before.

BM: Do you mean that a Buddhist had not applied for C.O. status before?

JM: Through a particular sect of Buddhism--through the BCA which, I think, we will get to later on. No reverend had been approached to sign a letter of recommendation for this that I had known of, because I had talked to most of the English-speaking reverends and all the Japanese-speaking reverends to see if I could talk to somebody, or if they knew of somebody who had gone through the same situation that I was going through. And they had said, "No." There had been about six other people before me in Northern California. They were all around the Bay area, San Francisco, Berkeley, or Oakland, that had gotten their C.O. status through Buddhism here in the United States. They were all Sansei. I talked to various different reverends about applying for the conscientious objector status. I applied, and it took me about a year to obtain that status, and today the government released my C.O. status. I was put into second priority because of some paperwork that they had neglected, so right now I am in second priority.

BM: What do you mean by that?

JM: The way the lottery system works, they draft all the nineteen-year-olds first, and then if you go through the year without being drafted, you are put into second priority. Then you have to wait 365 numbers, and then they would have to start with "1" again for the second year.

BM: Do you mean that you are still eligible to be drafted?

JM: Yeh, right. But they would have to go through all the nineteen-year-olds, the twenty-year-olds, the twenty-two-year-olds, and get to the twenty-three-year-olds.

BM: But is your C.O. status no longer in effect?

JM: No, it's still in effect. If I ever get drafted, then I would be put into C.O. status again. But, see, with C.O. status you would have to do non-military work. You would have to do work that would be beneficial to the security of the nation, state, city, or local community.

BM: You spoke of speaking to reverends about your C.O. status. Was that reverends of the Buddhist faith only?

JM: Yeh, right. Because that's the only thing that I really knew, because I was raised in a Buddhist family all my life, and so I felt pretty close to them in relating some of my experiences to them.

BM: Did you find any resistance on the part of anyone to assist you in going this route?

JM: No, I talked to most of the English-speaking reverends. They were

mostly Nisei. There is one particular reverend, Reverend Kodani, who is a Sansei reverend, and there is a group of reverends who after the war--I wouldn't say really after the war, but they are in their early sixties--had gone to Japan and were studying there. They were all English-speaking. They were all Nisei, and there are about five or six of them here in the United States now that are ministers. I talked to most of them. And this one reverend who was in Oakland at the time that I applied for C.O. status helped me out quite a bit, because he had written papers for other C.O. applicants, too. And so there was some outline or something that I could follow that he had. They were all willing to help me with my C.O.

It was kind of hard to try to base my C.O. appeal on some church here in the United States. The philosophy of Buddhism is really peculiar, in that during World War II, because of the pressure on Japanese Americans, there was a lot of pressure on the Buddhist Church, too, that it was some mystical sensation or something and not too much was known about it. I think the government was really scared of it. So the institution of Buddhism here in the United States, the Buddhist Church of America, had written up letters, not exactly supporting the war, but supporting what the Japanese Americans were doing. By that I mean, it was kind of, more or less, saying it was alright for you to go into the war and fight.

BM: Now, are you speaking of the Vietnam War?

JM: No, I'm speaking of World War II. They would send letters to the families and they would send letters to the individuals who volunteered to show patriotism to their country, to the United States. They would send a medallion plus a letter of support to these individuals to participate in the war. That's how funny Buddhism is here in the United States. They have all these doctrines, theories, sayings against killing and against war, yet, they would beat around the bush and support this person that would go into war. Buddhism leaves up to the individual which actions he does.

Getting back to my situation, they would support a person who would apply for a conscientious objector status, but they would also support a person who found it necessary to participate in the war. So a lot of the actions and the sentiments that I got from the Buddhist ministers were pretty mixed, because of the Japanese-American situation.

BM: Did you have to go through a hearing situation?

JM: Yes, I had to go through two hearings with my local draft board, and I was denied my C.O. status at the local level. And I appealed it about two times. Then I sent my appeal to the State draft board, and I got it there.

BM: I want to clear one thing up. You said you just didn't want to go. And I would like to know if your studying about the war influenced that decision. In other words, was it the history or the issues of the war that had influence on your decision? It wasn't just that you just didn't want to go, was it?

JM: It was a combination of things. I don't think I could really put my finger on one particular thing, whether it was because of the Buddhist religion or because of my study of the war. I think it was a combination of a lot of things. At that particular moment, I felt that I didn't want to go. Maybe a few years earlier I might have gone in, but during the situation at that time, I wasn't going to go in.

BM: I was hoping to be able to pin you down a little more on that. When you say a combination of things, can you be a little more specific?

JM: (audible sigh)

BM: Or do you prefer not to?

JM: See, my attitudes right now about the war have changed. I'm more against it now than I . . . you know.

BM: Was then?

JM: Was then. I think it was like . . . A good personal friend was killed in the war. A lot of returning veterans had come back and told me about the situation that they had gone through while they were serving in Vietnam, plus when they were going through boot camp here in the United States. One particular person said he was in the Marines, and he was singled out as, "This is the enemy." He was Japanese, and they considered him an Asian. So he would be like an example to the rest of the company or whatever he was in, saying that, "This is what the enemy looks like." So there was really totally out-front racism, you know, in the armed services at that time. In one particular instance when he was in Vietnam, he had gotten wounded, and he was the last one to be administered first aid, because the medics or the doctors thought he was a Vietnamese. Yet he had an American uniform on, and he was serving his time in the armed forces, yet he was the last one to be administered to. And there was a hearing in 1971 after the Vietnam War. It was called the Winter Soldier Investigation, or hearings, about the war in Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> The Vietnam Veterans Against the War conducted that, they had it documented, and all the facts were true. He had witnesses and things like that. I don't think he had any legal case. But,

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<sup>1</sup>Vietnam Veterans Against the War, The Winter Soldiers Investigation: An Inquiry into American War Crimes, Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.

see, talking with people firsthand, because I read a lot of things about the war, and stuff like that, and I really couldn't see that. I didn't know what was going on or what was really happening, so my talk with other people and my reading on the war brought about that situation for me to apply for a C.O. status.

At that time I was putting my parents through a lot of changes. They wanted me to go into the Army, and to participate.

BM: Then was the fact that you applied for C.O. status a shock to your parents?

JM: I had discussed it with them, and I think they accepted the situation at that time. They were becoming more and more aware about the war, too, themselves. And I explained to them the way I felt about it and the situation that I was in, let's say, where my head was at, in terms of what I thought about it, and they let me continue the way I was going.

BM: So it didn't necessitate a break with your family to take this kind of stand, then?

JM: No, it didn't.

BM: How do they feel about it now? Have they come to the point where they feel that you really did the right thing? Have they expressed that to you?

JM: No, they haven't. They kind of see it as a time that I lost, because during the time that I was going through all this legal hassle about my C.O. status, I couldn't get a job. I couldn't give my employer a definite time of how long I could stay on. Because, just in case I didn't receive my C.O. status, I didn't know what the situation with myself was going to be, so I couldn't really go out and get a job.

BM: Had you quit your dental technician job?

JM: Yeh, I quit my dental technician job, because I wasn't sure if I was going to get drafted, and I didn't want to hang him up. There is a ruling that I could have just called up my employer the day that I got inducted and tell them that I won't be in. That would have put him in a bind, so I told him my situation.

BM: Do you have occasion to discuss the war situation with your parents now, at all? I mean, when the news comes on the television about the Vietnam War, do you discuss it?

JM: Very rarely, which is bad on my part.

BM: Do you know if they are against what's happening over there? I

mean, do they express themselves on their attitude toward the war itself?

JM: No, they don't.

BM: That's not something that you . . .

JM: No, I think they're just satisfied with the situation.

BM: Are you the oldest of the children?

JM: No, I'm the secondson of the family. My brother is three years older than I am.

BM: What is his name?

JM: Sam.

BM: Where is he?

JM: Right now, he is working as an architect here in Los Angeles. He attended the same schools that I attended. Upon leaving City College, he went to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and studied for architecture. He was always into architecture.

BM: Is he off on his own now?

JM: He is still living at home, but he just got back from Japan about a year ago, so he's just getting back into architecture, which he was into before. So he will probably be on his own like in the next year.

BM: Do you have a younger brother?

JM: No, there are two boys in the family.

BM: John, how did you happen to get involved in this bookstore where we're having our interview today?

JM: This bookstore is a nonprofit organization; it's applying for a nonprofit status. I have a lot of personal friends who told me about it. I first got into this store about a couple of months after it opened. It opened about August 1971. It has been open about a year. This store is applying for nonprofit status, so one of my functions as a C.O. . . . I had gotten my C.O. status, and for three months I was considered a C.O., so I had to find a non-military job which was for the benefit of the welfare of either the nation, state, county, city, or the community. This store provides Asian-American books for the people in the community, and it puts on programs. So participation in the store would also be used for my C.O. status, as my alternate service.

BM: Was this store already established when you first got interested in it?

JM: Yeh, it was going for about two months, and I heard about it through talking to my friends. I came down to see what was going on, and that's how I got into it.

BM: How many people were involved in running the store at that time?

JM: At that time there was about ten people. There are about twelve now.

BM: Are they of all ethnic groups?

JM: Most of them are Japanese Americans, being down here in Little Tokyo, and going to some classes. See, most of them in the beginning were students at Long Beach. It was during the Cambodian crisis, when most of the colleges around here were on strike, and most of them had quit school and were demanding more ethnic studies in the different colleges, and they had gotten it at Long Beach. California State College at Long Beach was the first one to get an Asian American Studies going. Through that, they came to feel that there was a need for a place to get books, because at that time such books were inaccessible. Their purpose was also to have an outlet for people to bring crafts and artwork of Asian Americans. So they started this store.

The store is basically based on the collective idea, collective decision making. Most of the store business is agreed upon by all the members in the store. There is no vote taken in the store because, through past experiences, we learned that if you voted on something and you lost, that means automatically that in people's heads you were wrong. Yet, if we talk things out, even though you're wrong, we come to some agreement; we compromise, so to speak. In that way, you're not really considered wrong and you're not considered right, there is just the relationship of working with people.

Another thing about the store, too, is that, since it is a collective decision, there is no boss. There is no employer-employee type of relationship. We are all responsible for what happens here at the store. So, for example, in terms of trying to tell a Nisei or an older person or businessman or somebody else about the store, I would go about it sometimes in two ways. I would explain it to him sometimes with respect to the political aspects of the store in which we are a part of the community. This is the community store. All decision-making is made by people in the store. There is no boss. We feel that we are serving the people. This is one of the needs of the people. We try to educate the people to what is really going on, and to help people through freedom of expression of writing. We carry a lot of literary works of people who write in the community. And this could be



like an outlet. I can explain it to you that way, and I can also explain it to a person who normally wouldn't even bother to listen to me tell about my feelings about an alternative life-style. For most of us, this is an alternative life-style. It's away from the nine-to-five job, even though the hours are from ten to eight, or something like that. We do different things every day. We do have to take care of the bookwork and stuff like that, but it's more humanistic to talk to people that come into the store and spend time and talk to them.

BM: Do you have a schedule whereby you rotate the duty?

JM: We did during the summer, because there was a lot more participation in the store. I say that there are ten people here at the store. There are four people here right now that actually run the business part of the store but keep the rest of the people informed about the business situation of the store, and then the rest of them . . . We are here and our organization is doing projects and workshops for people in the community, and so our resources here in the store are broadened. For one thing, I'm into silkscreening. Another person is into body dynamics, health, and nutrition. And so, instead of, for example, spreading myself out too thin, this other person would take on sewing, or body dynamics, or something like that. So as a group, we do things; we try to set up different culture nights for people in the community.

BM: Is that done here on these premises?

JM: Unfortunately, these premises aren't big enough. So we have to go out to different facilities. We have gone to different churches. We have gone to different auditoriums, and rented out auditoriums.

All the money that we make here at the store goes into these functions, and it goes back into the store in developing, or buying books, or goes into things like community projects. Up until recently, there wasn't anybody getting paid. Now since the expansion of the store in terms of distribution, national mail-outs, and stuff like that, there is a working staff here during the week that does get paid to take care of the paperwork and things like that.

BM: Do you advertise in outlying areas? You speak of national mail-outs. How do you publicize that kind of thing?

JM: A lot of it is done through newspaper articles. A lot of it is done by word of mouth. A lot of it is done through different colleges. People come in here and tell other people about it. It's basically through word of mouth. A lot of things that we distribute are things that are developed by an organization called Visual Communications which was a segment of the Japanese American Citizens League up to about a year ago. They split away from

JACL and they still are gaining donations from JACL to develop some curriculum of Asian Americans for use in different public schools. So JACL helps to publicize that. We carry certain materials, and this way we can get a lot of publicity out without advertising.

BM: Have the materials had acceptance and usage in the public schools?

JM: Yes. This one particular packet or curriculum that they have is being implemented right now in the Pasadena City School District. They had gotten a grant to do this.

As for myself, my participation in the store I see as being an alternative style, something different than the situation that I would be into normally--a nine-to-five job. If I were talking to some businessman, I could kind of consider it as me being my own boss and owning my own store. I think part of my participation has grown out of the fact that you can't find a lot of these books in any other bookstore. Sometimes it's a lot easier to talk to an Issei, a first-generation Japanese, about the store and about what I'm doing than it is to talk to a Nisei, because he kind of grasps that it is the same situation as he experienced, trying to develop something within his own community at the time that he first got here to the United States.

BM: That's interesting.

JM: And it's easier for me to talk to him. He kind of knows the situation that I'm going through, in which I want to set up something for myself as a person and as a Japanese American in the Japanese community.

BM: You find that Issei, then, do frequent the store

JM: Yes, they do. Not that often. We would usually talk to them and approach them, because here in Little Tokyo, a lot of them that do come down here mainly speak or read Japanese, so there is not that much occasion that they would come up here since our publications are in English. So our communication with them is mostly through going out and talking to them.

BBM: How did you gain acceptance in the store? Did you have to buy into the group?

JM: No. The store started off by donations through a dance, so that's why I say this is the people in the community's store.

BM: Did you tell me UCLA had a part in it, too?

JM: Yeh, UCLA has an Asian American Center, and they got to the point where they saw the need to help, to offer grants to different community projects that were starting to develop. We had heard

about this, and we applied for it. We tried to take the emphasis off of economics. Since this was an alternative thing, we wanted to get it started differently. This is a nonprofit organization plus we consider that this is the people's store, the people in the community's store, so that if they don't dig what we have in the store, then they would voice their opinion about it. But then we still have some political lines ourselves as to what kind of books we carry in the store.

So this started off differently than most businesses would. There wasn't a loan from a bank, or anything like that. It was just through donations and other people seeing the need for this type of bookstore to be created. They didn't have time to help participate in it, yet they could help us out financially. This is how we got it together.

BM: But you're not tied down to any one group, as far as being obligated to any group, financially speaking?

JM: No, we're totally independent upon ourselves. Just totally independent.

BM: I notice you have a publication in the store, the Amerasia Journal. Is that a publication of this bookstore?

JM: No, it's a publication of UCLA. The word "Amerasia" is "Asian American" turned around, and that's how the name started. The Amerasia publication was around before the store started, and we just picked up the name.

BM: So, in a sense, would you say that the store is really to help a people with their identity?

JM: Yes.

BM: It's not a store that's oriented toward getting people to "make it" in American society. It's more to help people, through literature, to find their own roots and their own identity. Would you say that's a fair statement?

JM: Yeh. There are a lot of other reasons, that you could use. That's one of them. Another one of them is to help them find themselves as to what they're going to do in the future. Like you said, it could provide a cultural background which they could read, you know, about their history and things like that. But yet we also carry books on things that they could base their life on from now, so there are a lot of other segments. As you said before, you could use identity as one of the definitions, but I think it goes beyond that, too.

BM: I notice you carry books on many ethnic groups, including the Irish.

JM: Yeh, right.

BM: You're not confined to any one group.

JM: No, but we try to specialize in Asian America. For instance, there are probably a million more books on blacks, but we carry in the black section the ones that we feel are necessary to help bring experiences of the blacks to the people of the community.

BM: You mentioned the fact that you seem to have a certain interest on the part of the Issei. And I know from previous conversation with you that you were at Manzanar for the thirtieth anniversary commemoration.

JM: Right.

BM: Did you observe at Manzanar the generational situation, as far as the people who came was concerned? Did you make any observation about that?

JM: Yes. One observation that I saw was that there were more Sansei and Issei out there than there were Nisei. The Nisei were the ones who had participated heavily in the camps.

BM: I'd like to talk a little more about the Buddhist Church. Maybe you could tell me a little bit about the hierarchical setup. You had mentioned an organization that you thought you would speak about later--maybe a youth group. And also about if you have any knowledge of what happened to the Buddhist hierarchy when the Second World War came on.

JM: Okay, well, I'll give you like a general background of my personal participation in the church. As I said before, I was raised in a Buddhist family, so all my life I've known Buddhism; Buddhism was introduced to me through like Sunday schools, and things like that. I guess I started participating in the Buddhist Church when I was five years old and went to Sunday school. They had a Boy Scout program, Cub Scout program, at the church, and I participated in that. They also have this group called YBA. They have the Junior and Senior YBA. YBA is Young Buddhist Association, and I participated in that in junior high school. That was after I got out of the Boy Scouts. This is like a social organization, somewhat organized like the YMCA. I wasn't questioning any of these organizations or anything at that time. I was just having fun.

Then the situation arose--I was in the Seniors--and the situation arose about the consciousness of the Asian Americans, the experience of the Asian Americans. So I started questioning more and more about the institutionalized Buddhism that is taking place here in the United States, and through this I've been finding out a lot of things. Through this, you know, I wasn't

really forced but I was really curious about the structure and the history of the Buddhist Churches of America, since it did pertain to the Asian-American experience here in the United States. I guess most people start off investigating the camp experience, since that is a pretty big issue. So I would ask a lot of reverends about what happened to the Buddhist Church in the camps. The particular sect that I belong to is Jodo-shinshu, and they were one of the first or they were the first organization of Buddhists here in the United States. They have been here seventy-five years. It started off by being just all men, and it was based solely around philosophies like those of the YMCA. They called themselves the Young Men's Buddhist Association, and then more women started to participate, and they changed the name to Young Buddhist Association. And then, I think, all the ministers were from Japan, and before the war all the sermons and everything were in Japanese. At the outbreak of the war, everybody was put into relocation camps, and most of the ministers were the first ones to be taken into relocation camps because of the, you know, the mystical thing about Buddhism. People weren't sure about it, for example, since the altar and the facade of the Buddhist Church appeared to the people of the Western world as being very closely related to Japan. They thought it posed a threat, because services were in Japanese. I think it was just all a part of the ignorance of the American people at that time. So the Buddhist ministers were one of the first ones to be put into camps, you know, taken away because of the influence on the people that they had, being respected in the Japanese community at that time. During the camp situation, a lot of the Nisei couldn't understand the sermons, so they were translated into English, and the only basis on which they could explain some of the Buddhist philosophies were in Christian terms. For example, Nirvana means some sort of enlightenment or tranquility; they would have to explain it as Heaven. So these different types of words were put in the place of Japanese sayings and phrases.

BM: They introduced Christian-type terms, you mean?

JM: Yes, right. I guess that was the only way they could really explain their feelings, and the only way to express some of the doctrines and philosophies of Buddhism so that the Nisei could understand them. So through this, they adopted Christian service formats into the Buddhist Church. They would have benedictions and aspirations. They call them gathas, translated, that means like songs, so like they really didn't have developed any . . .

BM: You mean psalms?

JM: Yes, psalms. They took some of the Christian songs, and they just substituted the word "Buddha" for "God" or "God" for "Buddha", in that way. Nobody questioned that, and it's still there today.

BM: Oh, they still use the songs?

JM: Yes, in some churches they have choirs and organs and things like that. See, in the true Buddhist service there is no singing, there is no organ. That's unheard of in Japan. Just here in the United States it has been Westernized.

So again, the Nisei were trying to show the rest of American society that they were Americans. They had to change their religion. They had to change their format. They had to change basically the format into more or less a Christian style. One reason was for the purpose of understanding it, for the Nisei to understand, and I think another was to show the American society that Buddhism isn't really some mystical thing, to show that it follows closely to Christianity, which really isn't true. But that's the only way that they could show people that they were into American society.

Not until recently was that questioned, and readings and things like that were questioned. Even today it's still being used and they're still developing that, but it's changing. Before they went into camp, the YBA was a somewhat organized group of Japanese Americans in the United States, and then when they went to camp, they kind of really got it organized. There was the social function of trying to gather all the young people together. It was somewhat like the JACL at that time, but at the time I don't think the JACL had any program for the youth.

BM: So in a camp it served as the social organization for the young people.

JM: Yeh, I'd say it was one of the major social organizations of the people in the camps. And when they got out of camp, it was still considered a social organization. It still is somewhat today. But personally I feel that it's going to have to change, because there are a lot of other outside activities. The JACL has gotten stronger. A lot of other Japanese community groups and a lot of Christian groups have gotten together for things like social activities. There are groups in school and different other groups that they can participate in. So they don't have to necessarily participate in church activities for the social things.

Then if you ask me the question: What purpose would the church serve then? If one of my friends asked me, "What is Buddhism? What happens in your church?" I'd say, "Oh, well, in the beginning we say Aspiration, and then we sing some songs and some gathas, and some hymns, and then at the end, we have a Benediction, and then we all go to classrooms to Sunday school." This friend probably is a Christian, and he says, "Wow! That doesn't sound like Buddhism; that sounds like Christianity. That's the same thing I do when I go to Sunday school myself." So then the guy starts questioning a lot of things, you know, like, "What is Buddhism? What's really going on? Because I've been instructed

In Buddhism, and my friend says, 'That's the same thing I do when I go to Sunday school myself.'

in Buddhism, yet my friend tells me it's the same thing that Christians do at their Christian Church."

So that's why, at Senshin Buddhist Temple, we started to question a lot of things about what is really Buddhism, what is the real culture of Buddhism. I can see that it's going to have to . . . We couldn't really do what they do in Japan, because it's here in the United States. We have to develop something for ourselves. But it's following the Christian format and outline, you know, really.

BM: Do you have, then, a movement within your own youth group in the church to start reversing some of the trends that have been happening?

JM: Yeh, right. There are people who are aware of the situation and are trying to change it. A lot of the young people are questioning, because they're questioning a lot of things. There are a lot of instances. This will show you what I mean--the original Buddhist symbol was a swastika turned backwards, or, I guess, Hitler got the symbol from Buddhism and turned it around. This philosophy of the turned-around swastika is the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang in which you have to have two sides to everything. So that's kind of what Buddhism is based on, plus suffering, ignorance, and karma, which is cause and effect. But as far as the Buddhism here in the United States is concerned, it has gotten really institutionalized, due to the money situation of supporting programs of the BCA and things like that.

BM: Has the Buddhist Church in America become a big real estate holder, as many churches have?

JM: They are starting to. Most of the churches have bought their own property around the churches.

BM: I was thinking of income property.

JM: A couple of churches are starting to acquire income property now. They are building some low-cost housing projects in San Jose to try to help house the older Asian people that live around the Buddhist Church and help facilitate the housing problem up there.

BM: So there is a purpose other than just for investment.

JM: There is, yes. They are trying to find, right now, some retreat site, like a camp or a place where people can have conferences and stuff like that away from hotel-type meetings.

BM: Somewhere up in the hills, do you suppose?

JM: Yes, in the hills or out in the desert, someplace like that. The reason why I kind of got into it and participate now is

because . . . The Buddhist Churches of America, the organization, is the second largest organized group of Asian Americans in the United States. They are second to the JACL. So I feel like, you know, through these resources I could try to help the youth, or even help myself, through this organization, trying to combat the drug problem that we have here in the Asian-American community. There are a lot of problems with drugs in the so-called younger movement, you know. It started with the hippie movement and stuff like that. And trying to deal with the drug problem and the gang situation. The gang situation here in Los Angeles is still pretty heavy, but not that much so with the Asian Americans as it was before.

BM: Before? What do you mean by "before"?

JM: I guess "before" would be maybe about eight years ago, in which people from the East side would fight the guys from the West side, and there would be a big hassle with different locations of Japanese and Chinese, Asians. They came on purpose, stuff like that.

BM: Were these gangs interracial, or werethey gangs confined to Asians?

JM: They were gangs confined to Asians. It was mostly confined to Asians, because that was about basically the people they hung around with in school.

BM: Were you confronted with that kind of situation when you were in school, as to whether or not you ought to join a gang?

JM: Uh . . .

BM: Or were you oriented so academically that you didn't have to confront the decision of whether or not you should join a gang?

JM: I think the situation started off because of feeling a lot closer to Japanese. So you did hang around with Japanese people, and then you had common problems, common family situations, social problems in going different places, you know, not having a car. And somebody had a car, so you all jumped in the same car. And then you'd go someplace, and people would ask you, "Where are you from?" And it just started from that. So it was, more or less, not exactly forced upon you, but it was one of the things that helped you to get through school, associating with this particular group of people. It's still pretty prevalent, gangs and stuff like that, but not as much so as before.

BM: Are you saying, then, that whether a young man is academically oriented or not, there is pressure on him to be part of the gang since he is pretty much left out if he isn't?

JM: Yeh. It wasn't exactly a forceful pressure upon other people to join, you know, but it was an underlying thing. Most of the time,



the gangs grew out of different high schools or different junior high schools that are around Los Angeles, like Foshaye Junior High School. Most of these high schools are in predominantly black neighborhoods. In a couple of instances, the blacks would fight the Asians, and this was another type of security, you know, to be with a group of people. If you were . . . There were some instances where there was academic separation. If you were academically inclined, then you would associate with different people, but most of the people come from low-income families and they weren't really into studying and things like that. They were pretty much left on their own. Most of the time the mother and father in the family worked, so this kind of inflicted problems on the children. A lot of times there was nothing to do in the afternoon after school, so you went and messed around with the fellows and stuff like that.

BM: You were saying that the young people's organization in the Buddhist Church is attempting to deal with the problem, as far as drugs and the gang situations are concerned. They are trying to address themselves to that situation?

JM: Yes, right. The gang situation isn't very heavy now; it's almost nil. But personal struggles, just personal relationships with other people, are still pretty heavy. But I think, the major factor right now is the problem of drugs. I think in the first six months of this year there were thirty-five o.d.'s, overdoses of barbiturates or reds.

BM: Thirty-five within what group, do you mean?

JM: Within the Asian-American community in Los Angeles County. There were thirty-five suicides or o.d.'s. Suicides and o.d.'s-- I think it was o.d.'s. An o.d. is an overdose; you get high on taking reds. It's mostly reds, which are downers. That's another thing, too. Most people in the white society, in the other society, they take uppers, you know. Speed freaks, they call them. They take all these things to speed you up and stuff like that. But the pressures of the Japanese Americans are--I wouldn't say funny, but they're pretty peculiar. On one hand, your parents want you to do good in school and to get a good job. To do that you have to associate predominantly with the white society, like the big businessmen. Right? You go to school and most of the people that are in the classes preparing for the higher paying jobs are whites, and so you start associating with them. Yet, on the other hand there's a lot of pressure and there's a lot of things that say, "Why don't you, in your social activities, why don't you participate more with Japanese Americans?" There's this thing of pushing you. Yet you're going to school and you're associating with whites there and in your work and stuff like that. But then in your social activities, in your relationships between male and female, relationships of going around with somebody, the

parents want you to go around or to associate with Japanese people. See?

BM: Yes.

JM: So that there are all these pressures, you know, plus the pressure of being a minority in society and stuff like that. There are all these pressures upon you. So that's why, instead of taking uppers and stuff like that, they take reds which are downers, barbiturates. They just make you real tired and sleepy and drowsy.

BM: They don't give you a high; they make you just the opposite?

JM: Right, right. Because they want to try to escape the realities of the situation that they are in. Most other people get off on uppers; you know, they're pretty satisfied, they feel pretty secure.

BM: I wonder if you have any feelings about the effect of religion on the culture of American Japanese in the American context, as compared with the effect of the generational changes. In other words, does the movement from the Issei to the Nisei generation and from the Nisei to the Sansei effect a great change in culture in the American context, and do you feel that the Church in the American situation has a great deal of influence on the culture?

JM: I think that the Western interpretation is that "religion" is a word that describes Buddhism. In most of the Southeast Asian or the Buddhist countries they kind of do look upon Buddhism as a religion, but they look upon it more as a philosophy and a lifestyle, not as a religion. If you look in the dictionary, "religion" is a belief in some Supreme Being. Well, in Buddhism there is no belief in a Supreme Being, or a creator, or a godly-type figure. Although you do have some perceptions of there being, let's say, a godly-type figure. Still there are different degrees of so-called Buddha.

Getting back to your question then, it's more or less that the culture from Japan is similar to the Buddhist philosophies. There are some changes within each generation. I think that is within every society. Each generation develops more and more. But as for the influence of the Church on it, for me it's hard to try to separate church and culture, because they have been kind of like one to me. There has been no real separation between the culture of Japan and the Church culture, because I consider them to be the same because of my relationships of working with people who are older than I am, the Issei, and seeing how they participate and how they work. It's similar to, let's say, a Christian person. Personally, I can't see any difference. There is a difference when you get down to the relationship between Sansei. Well, I think it's just the attitudes between the Sansei, the Nisei, and the Issei, you know, just the attitudes about work or certain cultural-type things. My parents have always influenced me toward being

Japanese. There was this saying called enryo. It's not like, "Don't feel bad, or don't hesitate." I think that's a pretty good word. Like when you go to somebody's house, they would say, "Don't enryo." That means like, "My house is your house." That type of thing. "Don't feel bad about taking another helping." But then this word enryo plays a big part in where the Japanese are today. This enryo is kind of holding back; it's kind of keeping the frustrations in check. I think it was based upon pride, gumption or pride in themselves. Like every time I would leave the house to go to some dance or to just go out with my friends and things like that, even though they were Japanese, too, my parents would always say, "Remember that you are Japanese." And then I would say, "What has Japanese got to do with it?" And then I'd leave after that, always having this in the back of my head, of being Japanese and being proud of it, this type of situation.

I'm culturally oriented. My parents always had me . . . Well, for one thing they put me through Japanese school. They would always observe the American holidays plus some of the Japanese holidays. The one Japanese holiday that they really celebrate, it's not really a Japanese holiday, but it's New Year's. There is a certain type of food that you cook for New Year's. There are certain things that you should do on New Year's and things like that.

BM: Does New Year's come at a different time?

JM: New Year's is the same time; it's on the first. So there was this type of culture, the food and the language. They put me through like martial arts, which was judo. They had me participate in that. So as far as being culturally denied, I wasn't. As far as how I am going to raise my children, if I eventually have any, I can't say. But then, I don't really know what's going to happen, but right now I'd probably try to base it on cultural things. Excepting the fact that times are changing, but I'm pretty sure that I'd still keep a lot of cultural-type things. As far as religion is concerned, I would introduce him to Buddhism but also introduce him to Christianity and things like that, and have that person decide for himself. Culturally, I would explain to him some of the philosophies of the culture of Japan and try to express them, because that's how I was brought up, and that's how my life-style is, with some Japanese culture. I don't think my kids would ever lose that; I wouldn't want them to. I would explain to them the situation, their heritage, the history of the Japanese in the United States, and what led up to that, and what the situation is now, and what it has been, like what I've gone through being Japanese American. So he would be a Yonsei. I'm a Sansei; that would be a fourth generation. There are some Yonsei; my cousins have kids. And we're always talking about how they are trying to express some of the cultural things that they know to their kids.

BM: Do you have any friends who were brought up in the Christian faith? If so, do you know whether their folks had the same sort of attitude about wanting their children to succeed and so forth? Have you any comparison within your acquaintances?

JM: Well, right now a lot of my friends are fed up with the institution-alized church, the administration-type workings of the church. Going back to your question, I think there was a little bit more of pushing them than in the Buddhist families. But yet, that's very general; there was probably the same situation in both types of family.

BM: You think, though, that perhaps those who changed over to the Christian religion might have been even more oriented to want to succeed in American society? Is that the implication of what you just said?

JM: Yes, from my personal idea, I think so. But I don't know, really. Because I haven't really talked to too many Nisei about that. But I doubt if they would tell me right off that they did that because they were Christian.

BM: When we were speaking about the generational changes, do you think that probably because your father was an Issei rather than a Nisei, that is the reason that you were so much more involved in the Japanese school?

JM: Yeh, I think so, plus, my mom was raised pretty heavily in the Japanese culture type of thing, of really hard work. The life-style that they were living was predominantly of the Japanese culture, even here in the United States.

BM: Are the Buddhist churches having a struggle to maintain themselves? Is there a dropping away of membership to the point where they are having any difficulty in maintaining themselves?

JM: I think right now that it's on a steady level, but there are a lot of memberships that are heavily declining. That's fairly noticeable, especially like in the Young Buddhist Association. During 1956, they had a conference. It was up in Fresno, and the people who participated were close to eleven hundred. Now the conferences are cut in half. They are maybe about seven hundred. I think it's because of the issues that are at hand now. A lot of them won't come to these conferences because they are pretty social, and the Church isn't really dealing with the situation now. They're not really defining some of the philosophies on certain social issues, like on the war. They're not really taking a stand. They're not really providing an alternative life-style for a young individual to follow. They're not developing some philosophy that we here in the United States can actually follow. It's really vague, really vague. And so they are going to have to start changing, or else a lot of people are

going to leave the Buddhist Church and find some other. A lot of them have left and they're not into anything else. A lot of them are into the Asian-American movement, wherever the location is, and they've kind of grasped and saw more of a practical and alternative life-style working there, and not as much within the Church. Like the Christian churches, let's say, they have developed, they've taken more stands. They've set up a lot more clinics and hospitals and things like that. So if a person would like to have that alternative to work at, you know, then they could go into it; but in Buddhism in the United States there isn't that alternative.

BM: I imagine that probably part of the reason for the difference is that there is a lot more that large groups can do.

JM: Right. Probably because being Japanese, too, being hampered by being a minority within a minority, it's pretty hard. And the decline of the Buddhist churches, and stuff like that. They are starting to develop more positions for younger people to try to get the Buddhist religion somewhat together, in terms of trying to help organize it to deal with some of these problems. It has been put off and put off, and they have finally awakened to the fact that, if they don't find an alternative right now that the younger people can relate to, then there won't be anybody around to help pay the bills for the churches and things like that.

BM: In your own church, is your minister American-born?

JM: Yes, at my church my minister is the only Sansei, third generation, minister in the United States. He was born and raised in Compton, California, and then he went to the University of California, Santa Barbara. But I think he might be the only one who can deal with the situation at our particular church, since he knows basically what the problems are of a Japanese living in a predominantly black neighborhood. He knows the kinds of situations that we confront and we have to deal with. He talks to us about it.

BM: What is his name?

JM: Rev. Masao Kodani.

BM: Is he married?

JM: No, he's not.

BM: He's just a young fellow?

JM: Yeh. We're trying to get him married, though. (laughter)

BM: Is his father a minister?

JM: No. He was a Christian before he turned Buddhist. I forgot the reason he told me why he changed.

BM: Was he trained in Japan?

JM: Yes. Most of the ministers, English-speaking ministers, now are Nisei, and they have gotten some sort of degree here, a bachelor's or something, and they go to Japan and study for about three years to get what is comparable to a master's degree in Buddhist philosophy and Asian religions. They learn all the rituals and all the chants and things like that, and they are ordained in Japan. They have to be ordained in Japan to be recognized by the Buddhist Churches of America here in the United States as being a minister.

BM: Does he preach only in English?

JM: Yeh.

BM: Do you have a minister who preaches to the Issei?

JM: Yes, right. At most of the larger churches there are two ministers, one that deals with the Issei and one that is the English-speaking minister. A lot of the smaller churches around the southern district area, the Southern California area have reverends that go out there from the central branch. They call it the Betsuin. They called it Nishi Hongwanji Temple but they changed their name.

BM: Are you speaking of the church down here on First Street?

JM: Yes, the one here on First Street. They send ministers out to different locations, like to Hollywood or out to the Valley.

BM: To places where there isn't a permanent minister?

JM: Yeh, right. And some of these places don't really have a permanent church, either. It's like a cultural center, or a Japanese American center, or something like that in these particular communities. And the ministers go there Sundays and conduct service.

BM: Do you know if the services have always been on Sunday in America, or if before the war they were on a different day?

JM: No, I think they have been following the Western thing. In Japan the churches have services every day. There is no particular day that they attend, and in Japan there is no sermon when they conduct service. They conduct the ritual format, and then if there is a sermon or a speaker they leave the temple, the konda hondo, and go to another room to have the sermon. It's just a Western concept to have a sermon at the service.

BM: That's what they have in the churches now here in the United States, a sermon?

JM: Yes, they developed it here. But usually if there is a sermon in the Shinshu tradition, they would be away from the church.

BM: Is there a collection of offerings during the service here?

JM: Yeh, there is.

BM: Is that right during the service?

JM: Some collections are during the service, but then usually there is an offertory box in front as you enter the church, where you deposit offertory into the box before you enter.

BM: So in a church like that they don't pass a tray, as a rule?

JM: There have been occasions where they do.

BM: What is the practice in your church?

JM: There is a box in the front. There is usually a box next to the offertory stand which is called an oshoko table. There's burning incense, and you put more burning incense into the offertory, and then you bow. Each person should do this. And then each person should do this after.

BM: As you leave, you mean?

JM: Yes. That's part of the service.

There is a group started by Reverend Kodani to try to get a lot more Buddhist culture and Buddhist tradition back into the churches, with chanting and playing Buddhist instruments, and trying to build up some Buddhist art here in the United States. In doing that you have to learn the history of the Buddhist art, and this will go along with the Japanese culture.

BM: Are you involved in any of the music?

JM: Yes, currently I play a taiko, which is a big Japanese drum. A long time ago in Japan they used it in their services. They still do in certain sects of the Buddhist religion. But we basically play the taiko for entertaining purposes, and this kind of develops our own Asian-American music. I can sit around and I can listen to Japanese music, but I won't have the same feeling for playing it. I can copy it, but I just won't be able to get behind and really play it.

BM: Do you get music from Japan that you use?

JM: We have one piece that we play that's from Japan, but everything else we develop ourselves.

BM: Oh, like improvising, as you would jazz music?

JM: It's basically working out our own feelings. We kind of base it on the six realms of man. The only way I can describe it is like Heaven and Earth, Heaven and Hell, hunger, man, animal, demon fighting warrior--I forgot the rest of them. See, you get certain feelings like from hunger, then you play the way you feel when you are hungry, so to speak. There's another one, a ghost; it's a pretty eerie feeling. We try to express these the best way we know how on the drum. We sit down, and we actually write out each individual piece for each person to play. So it is some sort of improvising in the beginning, but because of our own self-discipline, we practice and study each other's pieces, and things like that.

BM: And what other kinds of instruments are there?

JM: They are mostly old Japanese instruments.

BM: Stringed?

JM: There are some, like the koto, which is long and has thirteen strings on it, and then the shami sen, which has only four strings. It looks like a mandolin or a guitar. And then there are a lot of wind instruments. There's one called the sho, which is derived from one of the oldest instruments in the world. It's bamboos tied together and a reed placed on the bottom of it somehow. And then there is a regular side-flute, a bamboo side-flute, and there's also a taiko in this group.

BM: About how many of you would be playing at one time?

JM: Well, our particular group is just a taiko group, so there are eight of us playing. Unfortunately or fortunately, there are mostly all guys in the group. There are some girls that dance with us now, and most of their moves are what they know of Japanese dancing, what they know of Buddhist gestures, and things like that.

BM: Do you use this music, at all, during the services?

JM: Well, not our group, but there is a group called gagaku, which is the oldest form of Japanese music, or the oldest form of, I think, written music, and it came from Asia. It developed through India, then China, then to Japan; and this form of music is used during the services sometimes.

BM: Do you ever have occasion to perform for exhibitions at a college or something like that?



- JM: Oh, we've gotten like different gigs, different job things, through other churches and other functions, so we have played to audiences. So it's not just primarily us playing for ourselves. We have gone out and played.
- BM: That's interesting. But the group originally developed out of the youth group at the church?
- JM: Right, and out of the concern for getting back to Buddhist tradition more, back to some sort of culture that we could kind of define as our own and not something that we had taken from somebody else.
- BM: I asked you about the ownership of the store, and I'm wondering if there are any young ladies involved in that?
- JM: Yes, there are. There are about twelve people altogether. There are five sisters. I talk in terms of sisters as being women. If I would say brother, I would be talking about other guys in the store.
- BM: What is the age range?
- JM: About twenty-one to about twenty-eight. They are also participants in the store. They take equal part in the work and equal part in the decision making, so that there's no . . . The brothers have to try to break down this male chauvinism-type thing. If we do consider ourselves an alternative to the society that is happening now, this is one of the major factors in what's happening today.
- BM: So you're putting into practice your ideas right here in your own relationship in the store.
- JM: Right.
- BM: Do you supply books to colleges?
- JM: Yeh, we have been dealing more and more with a lot of the colleges since a lot of ethnic studies have been developed. We deal nationally now throughout the United States. Again, this is another reason why this store was started, because there was no facility, such as the Amerasia Bookstore, to equip or to inform the people about Asian Americans. So we are getting a lot more inquiries or correspondence from a lot of the major universities throughout the United States, asking for more information on the Asian-American experience. We also are in contact with a lot of school districts and a lot of teachers. Three members of our staff here at the store work with the Board of Education. One works as a teacher, one works with the Adult School, and one works in the college department of the school system. So in terms of providing books for people like teachers and educators, we're equipped for that. As far as developing our own materials,

we haven't gotten that far yet. But there is a group here in Los Angeles called Visual Communications who are trying to develop curriculums for Asian Americans.

BM: And they work with you as well?

JM: Yeh, right. We distribute most of the materials that they develop. They distribute directly to the school districts, and we distribute their materials to the people of the community, plus other groups, plus other colleges who are interested in it.

BM: Have your folks expressed their opinion about your participation in this store?

JM: Yes, they have. After they knew that I didn't have to work for a nonprofit organization any more, they told me, "Well, why don't you go out and find yourself a better-paying job?" Because right now through the store, we are getting survival allowances, which is very, very minimal. It's like two hundred dollars a month. And where they're at now, they can't really see that. But the way I explained it to them is, the way that they could see it, is like this is a business that's just starting. And the store has only been open for a year, and we have never been in the red. The store has never been in the red, and we have never borrowed any money from anybody. If we did, it was a personal loan, say a hundred dollars or something, but that was paid back like in the first few months. So we have never been in the red. I explained to my parents that I'm trying to develop my own business, our own business, and it's like a partnership. And we are just getting off the ground right now, so there are going to be times when it's going to be really difficult to maintain the salary or to survive, really. So right now I'm struggling with that. They kind of accept that situation, and they know what I'm going through, so they accepted that pretty well. Yet I still think they are pretty hesitant about it.

BM: I've certainly enjoyed talking to you. It seems to me we have covered quite a bit. Does anything else occur to you right now that we ought to talk about?

JM: Well, yes, I think there's one thing. You being Caucasian and taking this interview, I think, reflects pretty heavily on the situation of the Japanese Americans or the Asian Americans in studying or trying to find out more about our own culture, you know, our own history. And I think that has to be closely examined.

BM: You mean the fact that I'm a Caucasian taking the interview, or that the history of the Japanese American needs to be closely examined?

JM: I think both. I think both, because . . . I just think both,

because, you know. I think that if it's a history about the Asian Americans then it should be written by Asian Americans. I'm not saying what you are doing is bad.

BM: No, I understand.

JM: It's just that I feel that it's a criticism upon myself and upon the Japanese Americans or the Asian Americans that things like this haven't been initiated by us.

BM: I think there has been a certain amount of history written by Asian Americans themselves, but perhaps it has been a long time in coming because of the suppression, in a sense, of their culture due to the climate in which they had to function. And the American society as a whole has gone through a certain amount of convulsion, you might say, which perhaps has only in recent times made for a certain reception of that kind of historical work. I have noticed lately there are books coming out by people with Oriental surnames, more and more so. But there are also many outside that culture who seem to be getting involved, and perhaps there is a certain amount of guilt that must be assuaged. I'm sure there are many factors, but certainly guilt is one factor that motivates people who are outside that community to do work in that area. Perhaps not personal guilt, but guilt because they feel themselves part of the larger group that may have taken what they personally consider very wrong actions in the past, and they see the need to expose those things, not only for the benefit of the group involved, but for the larger society, because some of us see, possibly, trends of repetition that we don't want to see happen.

JM: Yes. I can see it, too, as sometimes being--again, it could be that . . . I don't know the motives of some people who are writing, you know, but they could be taking advantage of the situation.

BM: You mean, of a certain popularity right now?

JM: Yeh, right, a certain popularity of the situation of the ethnic movement in the United States. Another thing, too, is that people might have all these stereotypes and this may be really heavy racism that has to do with this conflict that's maybe going to happen with Red China. Nobody really knows. But one thing--this is like my own personal tripping out or whatever--but I feel that if you are going to have a war with somebody, that it's best you know as much about them as possible, and as much about their strong points and their weak points, so that hopefully maybe you can defeat them better. Right? It just struck me really funny, you know. I just thought about that a couple of times in talking to people about why is there so much Asian-American history that's happening right now, plus a lot of influence being put on Asian Studies, "Asian" being China and Japan.

I think that what a lot of the people in the movement are doing right now is trying to relate a lot of things to Vietnam and to the oppressed Third World people, to try to unite the Asian people, to try to get together with the blacks and the Chicanos and the Asians and get them together so that there would be more of a unified body that would try to change things. It's going to have to be from these Third World groups, because of the oppression of imperialism throughout the world.

As for myself, I can relate better to a black person than I can to, let's say, a person from Japan. Well, it's really hard to judge where I can draw a line between cultures, because his culture, the black person's culture, and my culture here in the United States has been pretty much parallel. The person from Japan and his culture is still really unknown to me, because I haven't really lived in Japan. So I can relate to the struggles of a black person here a lot better than I can to a person from Japan. There are a lot of struggles taking place in Japan and I could relate to it that way, personal problems and stuff like that; I can relate to humanistic needs and wants and things like that. I think it's common among all people. But getting down to really specifics and trying to relate a lot of the culture things to what's happening here in the United States, I can relate better to the oppressed people here in the United States than I can to those in other parts of the world, although I am trying to develop some sort of relationship with other people throughout the world, and working with the Third World groups.

BM: Do you foresee any possibility that Oral History might become a branch of the kind of activities you might go into, supplementary to this bookstore?

JM: Yes.

BM: Do you think there is any possibility we could interest you in taking an Oral History class at Cal State Fullerton, and learning the techniques of Oral History? In other words, would you go into it, just get a tape recorder and go into it? Or do you think there is any chance that you might get involved in our program or develop your own Oral History program?

JM: That . . . I don't know. I see the Western man going toward technology to learn, in terms of things like the television or tape recorder-type things, video tape and stuff like that, because of laziness of the American people. That includes myself, too, because I've been brainwashed with the TV for so long. As for myself, right now I don't think I would have the time. Right now what I'm concerned with is trying to get my community to a point where we can do this and not have to worry about where I'm going to get my next meal, or something like this. There are a lot of people here in Little Tokyo and in Los Angeles that need

medical help, that need boarding, they need places, need food. These humanistic needs, right now, aren't being fulfilled. Like jobs, for instance, jobs have been really hard to find and get. A lot of people think that jobs are a privilege, but they are a right. Food is a right, and so is medical care, housing--just things to enable you to survive through your daily life. And there are a lot of people who are denied this. I feel that there has to be quite a bit more work done in these areas before I could really go out and do oral reports and stuff like that.

BM: So your time is really taken up with the current needs of your local society, and at this time you can't go into the history, but you're hoping sometime to get involved in collecting history?

JM: Yeh, right. As far as me going out and collecting history, I don't have time, but yet you can't really have practice or go out and practice and have a sense of understanding of why you're doing this unless you have some theory. There has to be theory and practice at the same time, because if you just have all theory then you're really not getting anything accomplished, and if you're doing practice blindly without any reason or understanding why you're doing it, that's about as bad too. There has to be some theory plus practice, so here at the store we are trying to initiate study classes. We've had two classes already, developing some sort of unity among the working people here at the store to try to develop some relationship so that we could look on work as something different than what we have been looking at it as before, especially things like pushing papers, doing bookwork, and stuff like that. Granted, those things have to be done, but it's just your attitude about the reason why you're doing it. So we're trying to change these different philosophies in our own heads and trying to develop some of our own philosophies. Some of the philosophies, let's say, by Marx and Lenin and by Mao are really good, but trying to implement those type of philosophies here in this capitalistic society is really hard. Plus trying to change overnight for even ourselves, some of the bourgeois tendencies that we have are pretty hard. So I think it's going to take long years of struggle, and by doing this, hopefully we can come out with something that we can relate to ourselves.

BM: It's very interesting to see a group attempt to put theory down on a practical level. We hear about this in college so much, but very seldom do you come across a group that's really trying to practice what they've been taught and what they preach.

JM: Yes. I feel that's a really major part in what I undertake from now on: that old saying of "Actions speak louder than words"--that type of philosophy, and the philosophy of not undercutting your neighbor, and things like that. Working relationships like that, on a collective basis.

BM: Well, Mr. Mori, I think we have covered quite a lot of territory,

and it has been very interesting to me. Do you think we have covered enough, or is there anything else you would like to talk about?

JM: No, I think that's all that I have to say right now, up to this point. If we did it again, it would probably be different.

BM: Well, perhaps sometime we can add to it. I do want to thank you very much. I've enjoyed it.

JM: And thank you.

- Amerasia Bookstore, 1,21,23-24,39  
 college business, 22-23,39-40  
 cooperative, 22,40,43  
 decision making, 22,39  
 ethnic orientation, 26  
 nonprofit, 21,23,40,42  
 ownership, 22-25,39-40  
 projects, 23-24,43  
 school curriculum, 24,39-40  
Amerasia Journal  
See University of California  
 Arranged marriage, 3-4,6  
 Asian-American community, 30-31,39-41  
 Asian-American movement, 22,26,35,39-40  
 Asian Studies, 41  
 Assimilation, 11,31  
 Attitudes, 1,4-5,18  
   on economics, 25,40,42-43  
   on history, 40-42  
   others', 1,3,8,11,14
- Betsuin Temple  
See Buddhism  
 Blacks, 15,26,31,35,42  
 Buddhism, 15,16-17,26,28,32,33  
   Betsuin Temple, 36  
   Boy Scouts, 26  
   Buddha, 27,32  
   Buddhist Churches of America,  
     17-18,27,29,30,34,36  
   Christian orientation, 27-29,36-37  
   dancing, 38  
   dilemma, 34-35  
   Jodo-shinshu Sect, 15,27,37  
   Kodani, Rev. Masao, 18,35-36,37  
   kondo hondo, 36  
   music, 27-28,37-39  
   Nishi Hongwanji Temple, 36  
   offertory, 37  
   ordination, 36  
   oshoko table, 37  
   reverends, 17-18,27,35-36  
   Salt Lake City, Utah, 8  
   Senshin Buddhist Temple, 15,29  
   swastika, 29  
   Young Buddhist Association,  
     26-27,31,34,39
- California, State of  
   draft board, 18  
 California State College,  
   Long Beach, 22
- Caucasians, 3,4,14,32,40-41  
   guilt, 41  
 China, 41  
 Christianity, 27-29,32,33-35,36  
 Compton, California, 35  
 Concentration camp  
   See Detention camps and  
     Relocation center  
 Conscientious objection, 16-21  
 Culture, 3-4,23-25,27-28,30-34,  
   37-39,42  
   suppression of, 41
- Detention camps, 13  
 Discrimination, 11  
 Doheny, California, 9  
 Draft  
   See Military induction  
 Drugs, 30-32
- Economic exploitation, 14  
Enryo, 33  
 Ethnic Studies, 22,24-25,39,40-41  
 Evacuation, 1,3,13,27,28,41  
   effect of, 9,11,12,14-15,41  
   embarkation area, 14  
   voluntary, 1,7  
 Exclusion Act, 2
- Family customs, 3-4,9  
 Farming, 1-3,7,9,11,14  
 Foshaye Junior High School, 31
- Gangs, 30-31  
 Gardena, California, 8,11,13  
 Gardening, 11  
 Generation gap, 4,6,24,26,32
- Heart Mountain Relocation  
   Center, Wyoming, 15  
 Hiroshima Kenjinkai, 10  
 Hollywood, California, 13,36
- Illegal entry, 1-2  
 Immigration, 1,6,9  
   Southern Japan, from, 9-10  
 Imperialism, 42  
 Ishigaki (father's family), 2  
 Issei, 1,4,10-11,13-14,22,24,26,  
   29,32,34,36  
   property ownership, 8-9

- Japan, 5,9,18,21,28,32,33,36,37-38, 41-42
- Japanese community, 8,10,11,12,13-14, 21-22,24,30-32,42-43
- Japanese holidays, 33
- Japanese school, 4-6,33,34
- teachers, 5
- Japanese American Citizens League, 23-24,28,30
- Salt Lake City, Utah, 8
- Jodo-shinshu Sect
- See Buddhism
- Kenjinkais, 10-11,13-14
- leadership under suspicion, 13-14
- Kodani, Rev. Masao
- See Buddhism
- Language
- English, 4,17-18,27
- Japanese,
- Leadership, Issei, 11,13-14
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich, 43
- Los Angeles, California, 8,11,30-31
- City Market, 14
- Little Tokyo, 10,13-14,21,24,30, 42-43
- Union Church, 14
- Los Angeles City College, 5,15-16
- Manzanar Relocation Center,
- California, 15
- 30th year commemoration, 26
- Mao Tse-tung, 43
- Martial arts, 33
- Marx, Karl, 43
- Mie Kenjinkai, 11
- Military induction, 16-18,20-21
- Monterey Park, California, 8
- Mori, John Yukio
- birthplace, 1
- brother, Sam, 9,21
- architect, 21
- Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, 21
- Los Angeles City College, 21
- conscientious objector, 16-21
- dental technician, 16,20
- education, 4-6,15-16
- Alta Loma Elementary School, 15
- Los Angeles City College, 15-16
- Los Angeles High School, 15
- Mount Vernon Junior H. S., 15
- Mori, John Yukio (cont'd)
- father, 1,9,15-16,20,40
- birthplace, 1
- Buddhist, 15
- citizenship, 4
- immigration, 1-2
- Ishigaki (family name), 2
- Issei, 4,34
- marriage, 2-3
- president of kenjinkai, 11
- relatives, 2,7
- restaurant, 3
- voluntary evacuation, 1,7
- grandfather, maternal, 8
- property loss, 9
- property ownership, 9
- grandmother, maternal, 1,8-9
- grandparents, paternal, 9
- mother, 1,9,15-16,20,34,40
- Buddhist, 15
- marriage, 2-3
- Mori (family name), 2
- Nisei, 1,18
- sisters, 7-8
- Music, 27-28,37-39
- gagaku group, 38
- instruments, 38
- taiko group, 38
- Nisei, 1,5,7,10-11,18,22,24,26,27 28,32,34,36
- Nishi Hongwanji Temple
- See Buddhism
- Oral History, 42-43
- Orange County, California, 1,2,7
- Pendleton, Camp, California, 9
- Pasadena School District, 24
- Poston Relocation Center,
- Arizona, 7,14-15
- Primogeniture, 2
- Racism, 3,8,11-12,19
- Real estate loss, 9
- Relocation
- See Evacuation and Resettlement
- Relocation center
- See specific center, i.e.,
- Poston Relocation Center



## Resettlement

- to Salt Lake City, Utah, 1,3,6-8
- to West Coast (return), 3,6,8

## Salt Lake City, Utah, 1,3,6-8

- Japanese community, 8
- restaurant, 3

## San Clemente, California, 9

## San Francisco area, 17

## Sansei, 3-4,10,11,17-18,26,32-33,35

## Santa Ana, Orange County, Calif., 1,7

## Santa Anita Assembly Center, Calif., 15

## Senshin Buddhist Temple

See Buddhism

## Southern California, 16

Taiko (drum), 37Tanomoshi (finance club), 12-13

## Terminal Island, California, 14

## Third World movement, 42

Tofu (soy bean curd cake), 3

## Union Church

See Los Angeles

## United States armed forces, 19,20

## University of California

- Los Angeles, 16,26

Amerasia Journal, 25

Asian American Center, 24

- Santa Barbara, 35

## Vietnam War, 16,18-20,34

- Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 19

- Winter Soldier Investigation, 19

## Vietnamese people, 42

## Visual Communications, 23,40

## Waseda University, Tokyo, 10

## West Coast, 3,8

## Winter Soldier Investigation

See Vietnam War

## Women's liberation, 4,27,39

## Work ethic, 15-16,24,31-32,34

## World War II, 1,26

## Yokohama Kenjinkai, 10

## Young Men's Christian Association, 26-27

## Yonsei, 33

## Young Buddhist Association

See Buddhism