

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Japanese American Oral History Project

An Oral History with MARY KIMOTO TOMITA

Interviewed

By

Arthur A. Hansen

On June 18, 2000

OH 2859

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NARRATOR: MARY KIMOTO TOMITA (d. 2009)

INTERVIEWER: Arthur Hansen

DATE: June 18, 2000

LOCATION: Oakland, California

PROJECT: Japanese American

AH: This is an interview with Mary Kimoto Tomita by Arthur A. Hansen for the Japanese American Project of the Oral History Program at California State University, Fullerton. The date of the interview is Sunday, June 18, 2000. The interview is being held at the address of the narrator, or interviewee, in Oakland, California. The time of the interview is about five after ten in the morning. The purpose of this interview is not to provide a biographical overview of the interviewee as per usual—and the reason for that is that she has done much of this herself. What she has done is available in published form.

I want to read onto the record the book and the article and the bibliographical information so that anybody that hears this tape can refer to these sources. The first is a 1995 book published by Stanford University Press called *Dear Miye*, M-i-y-e, and its subtitle is *Letters Home from Japan 1939-1946*, and it is by Mary Kimoto Tomita. And it's edited with an introduction and notes by Robert G. Lee. This includes not only the letters back and forth between Mary and two principal correspondents during this period, but also it has an introduction, it has an epilogue, and reading through it one can get a pretty clear sense of not only her wartime experiences and immediate prewar, immediate postwar [experiences], but an overview of her life up until 1995.

Then, in 1997, Mary, under the name Mary Tomita, authored an article in a special issue of the *Amerasia Journal*, which was Volume 23, Number 3, year 1997, pages 165-180. This piece is biographical. It's entitled "Coming of Age in Japan," and it tells us in the bio note that Mary is a retired librarian and author of the aforementioned *Dear Miye: Letters Home from Japan, 1939-1946*.

On the back cover of *Dear Miye*, which is marketed by Stanford University Press, both in history and women's studies, it says in the short bio note, "after her return to the United States, Mary Kimoto Tomita received master's degrees in Oriental Languages, American History, and Library Science at the University of California, Berkeley, and

became a school librarian. It says that Robert G. Lee, who is the editor, is an assistant professor of American Civilization at Brown University.

What we are going to do in the interview today is to concentrate on Mary Tomita's relationship with the late James Omura,¹ who was born in 1912 and died in 1994. But, during the last few years of his life, he was working on his memoir and he would take trips from his home in Denver, Colorado, to the coast. And one of the places he came was a place that he used to work as a journalist in the pre-World War II years, and that was San Francisco. When he would come out, he would go to dinner with Mary and one of her friends, Miya, M-i-y-a, and she will talk about this in the interview. But I am right now in the process of editing for publication the memoir that was left by James Omura at the time of his death. And so, I am doing this interview in order to get background information largely about Jimmie Omura.

Mary and I have been in contact for a month, and we've written enough emails back and forth to be able to constitute the body for a new book that would be a companion for the *Dear Miye* book about letters. (laughs) She is a prolific letter writer. In the introduction that Robert Lee writes, he writes about the special property *of* letters and how they give rise to a kind of expression that is rather unique to that genre. And maybe email has an even further twist to that because it is so instantaneous.

In any event, welcome, Mary, to the interview. I am so delighted to meet you and be in your home here in Oakland. I've been looking forward to this for the whole month, and even before this, because I knew of not only the book *Dear Miye* but I knew of your interest and willingness to help complete Jimmie's memoir. It was nice to finally get that email directly from you and then to respond to it. I just enthusiastically endorse anything you can do to help, so welcome to the interview.

MT: Thank you very much!

AH: In the files that Jimmie kept in his archives—and they're extensive—with the correspondence, there is a correspondence file with you. I've looked through this just recently and correlated it with some of the things that you have told me in our email exchanges. But the first letter, Mary, that I have is one from Jimmie to you and it's dated May 13, 1989. And what it says at the beginning is *just a word of thanks for the dinner and for having your two guests present. I am glad it was a Japanese style dinner as I don't get much of that here in Denver. We are not often seen in Japanese establishments in this city.* I am wondering, how was it that you originally made contact with James Omura? If you could talk a little bit about that. Is 1989 about the time that you did meet him for the first time?

MT: Well, I think it is, although I am not too sure. My memory is not that clear right now about that. I think that I met him for the first time when Miya, who lived in San Francisco, asked me to come over because she had a special guest. And so, I went there and met Jimmie, who was looking for a place to stay because he used to come out to this

¹ James Omura, OH# 1765 and OH# 2331, Center for Oral and Public History.

area to do research for his book. I immediately was very impressed with him because he was one of the very outstanding resisters. He was a very interesting person to talk to and listen to.

AH: Had you heard of him before or not? When she said it was a very special guest, did it resonate when she said who it was? Or was this totally new to you since you weren't in the country during World War II?

MT: Well, I don't really remember. I am sorry that I can't remember now whether I had heard about him before, or the other resisters. I know that *after* I met him, then I started to look for literature and heard about other resisters. But, at that time, I doubt if I knew about him or any of the other resisters.

AH: Now you wrote to me a little bit about this, but maybe you could go into more detail. How did Miya get to know him?

MT: Well, I think that we had someone in common, a friend in common. There was this organization called PAACTS, Pacific and Asian American Center for Theology and Strategy, that was set up by Roy Sano, who started this Asian American caucus movement in the churches. I know that Roy Sano had come to our church, which is the Sycamore Church in El Cerrito, an ethnic Japanese church, where Miya and I and other people were attending.

We had a newcomer there to our church, a man who was very interested in the Asian American Movement. The Japanese American churches used to have a conference. I think it's yearly, although I am not sure. It might be once every two years. But there was this conference at the Sycamore Church in which Roy Sano was one of the main speakers. He's a Methodist church member himself. And he talked about how the various mainstream denominations like the Methodists and Presbyterians and others, where it usually seemed like the Japanese were the ones who started these Asian caucuses. And so, after he had talked to us at this conference, or even during that conference, one of the members of Sycamore said, "Well, how about United Church of Christ?" That's the church that we belonged to at that time. I think it was United Church of Christ because our churches had combined. And so, he was suggesting that in the UCC we start a Japanese caucus. And so, that was the time that this idea first came up. Now, let me see, what was [the question]?

[00:11:47]

AH: What I was asking was how Miya happened to know Jimmie and what was her relationship to him?

MT: Oh, yes, that's right. Well to get back to how that started, since Roy Sano had started PAACTS in Berkeley, at the Pacific School of Religion, we used to keep in touch with the person who was the head of PAACTS. At first it was Roy Sano, but he went on to other things. There was a man there who took his place as the director of PAACTS, and I can't remember his name right now. He's presently in Japan. However, he was a friend of ours—not a close friend but an acquaintance. Somehow I think Jimmie may have

contacted him because Jimmie was looking for a place to stay.

And so, he suggested he go to Miya's place because she had this apartment in San Francisco with two bedrooms and it was in a very accessible place. So I think that he had brought Jimmie over to Miya's place. She found him interesting and she called me so I drove over there. We had dinner together. Because Miya used to be a very wonderful cook. Any invitation to dinner I would never [turn down]—and others, too, who were lucky enough to be invited, we would never turn her down. At that time, we first became acquainted with Jimmie, and were very happy to see him whenever he came.

AH: And so, how did he strike you when you first met him? Tell me a little bit about your response to him as a person, or a quick sort of read that you would have had of him in terms of his personality and his character and just his habits, et cetera. He was on the road at this point, so to speak.

MT: Yes. Well, I don't really remember exactly my first impression of him, but it must have been very good. I knew that what he had to say was very interesting to us. Especially his pride in being Japanese American, I think that's one thing that struck us. I don't know what the word is, but we were very impressed with that. And his eloquence, how he expressed himself, we were very impressed with him in that way. Although, I don't remember if that was the first impression I got of him. Anyway, Miya and I were very good friends and we had the same ideals and ideas, and whenever she was impressed with someone, well I was usually impressed, you know? (laughs)

AH: Jimmie was a person who, for a good portion of his life, was isolated from the larger Japanese American community. I am taking it from re-reading some of our emails and also looking at stuff in your biographical material that you also were somewhat [isolated]. You started with your dad moving your family apart from other Japanese Americans in, say, Livingston, and then moving out to a place that was a little bit more remote, where there were very few, so that you frequently found yourself one of the very few students of Japanese ancestry in your classes at school. Then, of course, being in Japan during World War II, and then coming back. From some of the references that you made, I think you even said point blank that you have not always had that sort of—was that a bond between you and Jimmie? That you were both—if not for instance black sheep—outsiders?

MT: Well, I am not sure about that because at that time I didn't realize that he was sort of outside the Japanese community. We just didn't talk about that part of his biography, I don't think. I know that I've often wondered why my father had bought land that was not closer to a Japanese community. But I think perhaps his father had advised him that way. His father had come to this country—and the only reason why I know that is one time we went to San Francisco to look for his father's grave, but we couldn't find it. It should have been there, but there were lots of houses built on top of it, so we couldn't ever find it. And so, I think, just guessing, because I never really talked to my father about it, probably his father advised him to locate in a place that was not in the midst of the Japanese community.

Also, my mother, of course she was from a place in Japan, where very few Japanese came from. But, before she came to this country, she went to a school that was founded by a Christian person who wanted to provide—indigenous? I'm not sure of the word.

AH: That's the right word, indigenous.

MT: Indigenous people, who would lack the funds to go to a regular school, to prepare them to go abroad. His name was Reverend Shimanuke, who used to come to this country, to look at the conditions, so he could go back to the [school] and teach people who want to emigrate. I think that perhaps there, maybe, they were taught that if they wanted to go to the United States, to try to settle there, and to have their children become Americans—because at that time many Japanese came to the United States with the idea of getting rich and going back to Japan.

Well, I think my father and my mother both had the idea that they wanted to come to this country and settle and have children. I guess we often don't like the word "assimilate" but I think they wanted us to. One proof of that is that they didn't give us Japanese names. I am Mary and my brother is George. We all had English names. The Nisei, who were in Livingston, most of them had American names, too. I guess the Christians were more—not intent, but they had the idea of staying here and settling, and that's why they wanted to give us names. It would be easy for the native people of this country to call us, instead of giving us Japanese names.

[00:20:11]

AH: When I told you that the word was "indigenous," I thought you were going in another direction. What you were working towards was the word "indigent." You meant poor rather than native.

MT: Yes, that's right.

AH: Jimmie, when he came out here, what usually would have been the kind of scope or the parameters of his conversation? Like, did he talk about his prewar experiences, did he talk about his family in Colorado, his grandkids? I mean, what was included in his conversations? Not specific conversations that you had because they get lost, but the general tenor and nature of conversations usually stays with us in the course of our interactions and stuff, and we reflect back on them. But what do you recall as the subject area of your interaction? I mean, he was eating food and you were loving Miya's food, and so was he, obviously, but what about the conversation, what was it about?

MT: You know, I am sorry, I just can't remember. I don't remember him talking about his family. Because when I read his memoirs then, for the first time I found out about his family.

AH: And by family, you mean family back in Bainbridge Island when he originally was a kid? Or do you mean family he had in Denver, Colorado?

MT: Either.

AH: He didn't talk about either? Okay.

MT: Not about his background. I think we talked more, probably, about what was happening to the Nisei now. Maybe about the concentration camps. I am not really sure. It's too bad that Miya is not able to remember any of these conversations because she probably would remember, or we could enforce our memories by talking to each other.

AH: Now, Miya, you mentioned in your email, is suffering from dementia and she's in Chicago, is that right?

MT: That's right.

AH: She had Parkinson's before that.

MT: Right.

AH: Why do you say that Miya would have remembered and you wouldn't particularly? Did Miya have a different type of relationship with Omura than you did?

MT: No, I think the relationship was the same, but she was very remarkable. She was very smart and she would remember things that I wouldn't. Now, there were three of us who stuck together: Julia, Miya and I. And the three of us sort of stuck together and we tried to start the Asian American caucus of the United Church of Christ.

So we really got along well, and we would rely so much on Miya for her memory of various events, and depended on her for that. Often when I wouldn't remember something, why, she would remember, or she would bring up topics that I would not think of. That's why I say I'm sure that if she hadn't contacted this disease that she would be of great help at this time.

AH: So it was her facility to recall things, I mean, that set you apart? It wasn't that she had so much of a different relationship, but she had the memory *of* the relationship that eludes you now. Who was it that you mentioned that when Omura came to the Bay Area that he had known for a long time that had been a concert pianist? Who was that? Miya seemed to have a connection with that person, too.

MT: No, Miya didn't have any connection with her, but her name is Vera Matsumoto.

AH: Oh yeah, Vera. How did you know about her?

MT: Well, Miya had to move to Chicago because of her Parkinson's. Her children live there. So Jimmie was unable to stay at her place. One time I remember he called me and he was at Vera's place. So, of course, I was very happy to go there and meet him when he had come. Vera was a concert pianist and she lived in Berkeley. She said that they had been friends long ago, prewar. I didn't realize at that time that Jimmie had been interested in music and arts, prewar. But now I see why he had met her and was

interested in her.

- AH: Yeah. Actually, I had been going over recently the 1930s columns that he was writing for the various vernacular, or community Japanese American newspapers, and he writes so much about the arts. He was particularly connected to the Oshino family in Alameda. Ruby Oshino became quite a well-known singer and then she had siblings that were also very much involved in music. But it went *way* beyond that. He would write lengthy reviews and he followed all Nisei sports and stuff, he also followed the arts. So apparently he knew Vera from way back then, probably.
- MT: The other thing—in looking back over our correspondence—I see that he was interested in finding out about his sisters. As I read his autobiography, I can see how his mother took the three sisters and went to Japan. Those are the sisters he was interested in looking up. He was especially interested in finding out about a river that his father told him about, where he used to go fishing, and he wanted to know exactly where they lived and what they remembered of life before they went to Japan. So he wanted me to write to his sister. He had her address.
- AH: This was Hanuko, right?
- MT: Yes. My Japanese is not that great, (laughs) especially to write a Japanese letter. So I asked my friend from Japan, who often helps me, write this letter. I would tell her what I wanted to say and I would sketch out in my poor Japanese what I wanted to say, and she would write it out in letter form and send it to her. Jimmie was very interested in finding out some of this history about when his father was a little boy and used to go fishing. But, unfortunately, Hanuko was quite elderly at the time and she never answered any of these questions. She went on at great lengths talking about some Buddhist sect that she was a member of. She wasn't trying to—
- AH: Proselytize.
- MT: —proselytize us, but she had just become one of the members and that's all she talked about. So, poor Jimmie, he was very disappointed in her not answering those questions.
- AH: Yes, I noticed in reading through the correspondence that that was a continuing sort of theme, back and forth, trying to get you to do certain things and you negotiating back and saying that's beyond my capacities in terms of the language. Some of the phraseology was very much tied to a particular region. And then, you enlisted the services of other people to help you get that sort of thing out and even suggested he might want to hire somebody to do some of this because it was tricky.

He was certainly caught up with trying to find out something about his family roots. One of the things that is apparent is his family—because of the circumstances in which his mother got sick and went to Japan with siblings early on, and then later on, pretty much took both of his brothers—the family was a very shadowy kind of entity for him. How did he talk about family when he talked you about it? What did you get the sense of, in any event? I'm not asking you to remember words that he said. But what was the sense of his family as far as you were concerned?

[00:30:00]

MT: Well, that's the thing that really surprised me, when I read his memoirs, about his family because I don't remember him talking about his family at all. I guess we didn't *ask* him about when he was young or anything about his personal life at that time. But he never talked about it. I am a Nisei. Often it's not very polite to ask questions—especially us being two women who were not that well acquainted with him—about his personal life and more personal questions like that. So I don't think we ever talked about anything about his family.

AH: He didn't volunteer it, either?

MT: No, he never volunteered.

AH: So is it fair to say that the conversation had a lot to do about, obviously, the array of things that go into ordinary life, I mean, the rounds of feeding and traveling and sickness and health and stuff like this? But beyond the contemporary political issues, like the resisters thing—because I know some of your correspondence has to do with you attending an event that he was *not* attending. Clifford Uyeda² was unable to raise funds to be able to send him to things. And then you ended up writing a little piece on that event, that was published, and asking a rather embarrassing question at the event itself. But, aside from that, there didn't seem to be that personal dimension.

MT: That's right. Let me see, I was going to say something but I've kind of forgotten now. Oh, I know, with the resisters, now Miya is from Mountain View, and that's where many of the resisters were from, so she knew many of them. You know, she grew up with them. They went to same school and things like that.

AH: Who did she know? Did she know George Nozawa? Is that one of the people she knew?

MT: It could be. I don't remember the names of the people that she knew.

AH: Okay, so they didn't figure in your relationship?

MT: No. No, but then he was very interested in meeting them. I think she made an appointment with one of them, and they went up to interview that person. I don't know how many persons she recommended. I know that it was rather difficult at times to get them to talk. But I think Jimmie was hoping that since Miya grew up with them and knew them so well, she would kind of pave the way for him to talk to the resisters himself.

AH: So she did actually have an additional bond that you didn't have with him because she had grown up with resisters and he had defended the resisters. *That* was a big issue in that area, San Jose and Mountain View and everything. Because they not only have the center of the resisters community, they have Mineta and others of the JACL group as well. I mean, Norman Mineta's sister, Mary, Mike Masaoka, and so there's that real

² Clifford Uyeda, OH# 2535, Center for Oral and Public History.

strong connection right there.

MT: Yes, and also, I guess there was kind of social differences, too. Like, Mineta, I think his father was an insurance man. While Miya and others, the resisters, were farmers. And, of course, they were kind of like dirt farmers. (laughs) While the insurance people would go around like white collar people, I guess. So Miya felt the resisters were the same community as she was, and her family.

AH: You raise an interesting point. When I was at the book reception for the book by David Yoo—we were talking about this, *Growing up Nisei*. One of the people who was there was a fellow named Lon Kurashige. He's a Sansei who teaches at USC.

MT: Oh, I know him.

AH: Oh, do you?

MT: Yes, I know him.

AH: Well, I had done an article years ago on the Manzanar Riot and he's doing a new article. He's just had a wonderful article on Nisei week, in Los Angeles, in the *Journal of American History*, but he's working on a revisionist article on the Manzanar Riot. And one of the things he's going to introduce is the business of the *class* differences between the resisters and the people who they were resisting, as their oppressors. He's dealing with the Manzanar thing in particular, but I can see where there is a correspondence to that in the draft resistance. A lot of the people had perceived that their oppressors were, in a sense, the JACL, who were collaborators more or less with the War Relocation Authority and with the government, with respect to endorsing the agenda. I'm glad you brought that out. I think it's quite interesting.

Did Jimmie strike you—this was one of the things you'd said. He came to my house in 1984 when we did this long interview that I was talking about. He came to Southern California and at that point, he arrived with his luggage and he opened his—I thought it was a briefcase that had books in it. But he opened up and the whole thing was full of medicine. I was rather frightened because it was in the hot part of the summer and we didn't, at that point, have air conditioning in our place. We're about twenty-five miles from the ocean and it can get very oppressive. I asked him and he said this was all heart medicine and stuff. But I noticed in our correspondence, you said you were not even aware that he'd had any sort of health problems, so that didn't become a factor when he was out here visiting.

MT: Well, we didn't realize it was. Since I am healthy I'm afraid I wasn't very sympathetic to someone who had problems like that.

AH: But he probably didn't talk a lot about it, did he?

MT: No, I never knew that.

AH: He didn't talk about it to me either. It just was that objective fact of the medicine. And

then, not being Japanese American, I was quite direct in my inquiry (both laugh) and asked because I got frightened. I said, "Oral historians are sometimes accused of being ambulance chasers."

Okay, when he came out here, aside from having dinner together, were there a round of activities that you ever did? Did you go places to visit people? Or did you have any other dimensions? Social events where you would go to some kind of community event? One of the things he talks about a lot, even in his correspondence with you, is he wanted to have a dinner at Fisherman's Wharf and everything. Of course, I think he was a little out of touch with what Fisherman's Wharf had become. I think he remembered it from the pre-tourist period. But did you do any of those things?

MT: No, we never did. I don't know why. I didn't feel that comfortable going places with him, even with Miya around, because after all, I am a woman and he is a man. I don't know, in my Nisei, it is very hard for a man and a woman to become good friends, you know? There was always some barrier. I guess it's because of the way we're brought up. In the Japanese society, women are inferior and we should always defer to the men. And even if we don't feel that way really, we were brought up that way. I, being in Japan, too, realized how boys were brought up in the Nisei family, more or less like the Japanese custom. Boys were special and the women are not quite as good. So, even if our family wasn't so much that way, we know how they'd been brought up and I didn't know Jimmie that well. I don't know his background. I didn't know anything about his former life. It's just that he came here growing up and he was interested in writing his memoirs. I realized that it was going to be something that was different, or that he was opposed to whatever the JACL did. But, at that time, I was not that interested in all that and I didn't really follow through with that very much.

AH: Did you feel more comfortable when there was three of you? When Miya was there as well?

MT: Yes, I did. In fact, I don't think we were ever together without someone else being there. Because when I'd go to Vera's place, of course, Vera was there all the time.

[00:40:13]

AH: Right. But he stayed at Miya's house, didn't he?

MT: Yes, he did.

AH: And was somebody there with her? Or did she feel not the same way you did about this situation? Did she feel more comfortable?

MT: Yes, I think she felt more comfortable. She had men staying there and she'd think nothing of it, you know. And besides, she knows that he's a friend of the boys she grew up with. And so, it's just like a part of your family, more or less.

AH: Okay, you don't think there was a flirtatious relationship with those two?

MT: Oh, no. I am sure there wasn't. Because Miya was not that type of a woman. (laughs)

AH: Well, the reason I ask is because I interviewed a contemporary of his, up in Washington, and she's a well-known sort of person. There was no relationship like that with her either. But one time she got a call from Jimmie's wife in Colorado saying, "How do you know Jimmie Omura?" She said, "Well, we went to school in Bainbridge," and everything. And [his wife] said, "You know he's married, don't you?" So she was mortified by this sort of thing.

But usually what would happen was someone like Frank, who was making the film, would be up in there. And then he would take the two of them out to Bainbridge Island. Jimmie was trying to find out all the stuff that you read now about Bainbridge Island. He was doing this sort of research and she was one of the few links that he had over that period.

She lived in Seattle. Her name was Fumiko Hayashida. She's the one that if you see this image sometimes it's become a famous image of the evacuation—she's holding a baby. She went out from Bainbridge Island. She's pregnant and she also is holding a baby. When she got to Manzanar, the child she was pregnant with was the first child born in a camp during World War II. They always show this image of her because her husband had been picked up and she was by herself, she's pregnant, she's holding a child. If anybody was in a beleaguered sort of sense, it was her. It just all came through her face. A lovely looking face, but just creased with this concern and apprehension.

So anyway, but she told me that. She said it was so mortifying and everything. But there was no feeling that he was doing anything except being out here and getting information and stuff.

MT: Right, uh-huh. Yes, I think she felt more like he was part of the family, since he was interested in the boys she grew up with.

AH: Now, talking about Fumiko Hayashida, I also had access to all of her correspondence with him. In looking through the correspondence, one of the things he basically asked in an early letter—because he made inquiries to find out if she would be willing, if he came to the Northwest, to talk to him about these things and put him in touch with some people on the Bainbridge Island that were part of their common childhood. One of the things he said, "Well, what have you been doing for the last half-century?" (both laugh) She answered back, "A half-century is hard to summarize but essentially this is what," and she told him about her family and everything. Her husband had passed away.

And then, she said that one of things she had been doing a lot recently is going—she was affiliated with the JACL, and they were going on these trips. And then he said, "My goodness! The JACL? Couldn't you have found something better to do with your time?" (both laugh) And so, she wrote back to him and said the JACL was not a big part of her life but they provided these tours and stuff. She was visiting all over the world and enjoying herself immensely. She'd gone to Japan and Europe and all these different things, you know, the ordinary rounds and things. But that was it.

I was wondering, what was your relationship, and what was Miya's from Mountain View? "Miya of Mountain View" is like a lore. (laughs) But what was your relationship with the JACL, the two of you, who were his friends out here?

MT: Well, we didn't have much to do with JACL at all. Mostly, in my case, it was because I was in Japan. I had no interest in JACL. Sometimes I'd read the *Pacific Citizen* because someone who subscribed would lend it to me. But then, I never felt any commonality with the JACL.

AH: So you were never in the JACL as a member?

MT: No.

AH: Before the war or after the war?

MT: No, unh-uh.

AH: And then, what about Miya?

MT: I don't think she was ever a member, either.

AH: That was comfortable then, in a sense, for Jimmie, probably, too. That the two people he was dealing with, both could look at the world not as politically as he did, but at least empathetically.

MT: Right.

AH: Okay. And what about his politics as far as you could figure it out? Because some of the things that have been said about Jimmie was he was very idiosyncratic. I think he voted for Ronald Regan for president a couple of times.

MT: Really?

AH: Well, he was marketed as a progressive. But a lot of people upset him. He didn't like group think. He didn't like to go the way of all. He had a lot of different ways of breaking up the world, so he wasn't like a card-carrying leftist; he was very suspicious of communists and people in the front. Did that come up at all, his feeling about his political outlook, aside from community issues?

MT: Well, I don't remember. We must've touched on things like that, but I don't remember anything about our conversations about politics.

AH: Do you ever remember him talking about particular people? For example, one of the people, who he was a good friend with in Los Angeles, in the early or mid-thirties, and then again, in the late thirties, was somebody who he then *broke* with. And that was Larry Tajiri. And they both figure in this book. But Jimmie hated to say bad things about Larry Tajiri, even though he felt betrayed by him and felt that he had gone, for instance, in an opposite direction.

I noticed, in looking at some stuff the other day in the archives, that Jimmie had actually gone to Larry Tajiri's funeral when he died. He had even written a letter to the newspaper, and I think it was probably the *Denver Post*, but he didn't say that, which was then later printed as an op-ed sort of thing, rather than a letter to the editor. And it showed to me that—[recording pauses] in any event, Larry Tajiri was somebody who, even though he represented the quote, unquote, enemy, in terms of the JACL—being the editor of the *Pacific Citizen* from 1942-52, and taking a perspective of variance with Jimmie—there was still a residual feeling of friendship. But I was just wondering, did Larry Tajiri's name come up in his conversations?

MT: Well, it might have, but I don't remember it. I remember Larry Tajiri's name from reading the ethnic newspapers when I was growing up in Ceres. But I don't remember Jimmie's name. Although, I may have formerly read some things he had written. I hope I did. I'd hope I was impressed by what he said. But then, I don't remember us ever talking much about those kind of things.

AH: Did he talk about Mike Masaoka?

MT: Not that I know of. Although, I think that maybe Miya might have been quite disgusted with him. So maybe they did talk about him, however, I don't remember.

AH: During the time he was coming out here—and this comes across in the correspondence—you were working on one manuscript and he was working on another one. You had already started, at least during part of your relationship here, the last three years. He is writing this memoir and you're working on this thing with Stanford. Did you talk a lot about putting together books? Was that a big part of your relationship?

MT: No, I don't think I ever talked much about my working on the book, either. Because I didn't think it would be much. I didn't think it was a big deal, why should I be talking about it? (laughs) And so, I don't think I talked about my working on the book. However, we were very interested in Jimmie working on his book, and we used to ask him when is it coming out? We wanted to read it. We kept asking him every time we saw him.

[00:50:20]

AH: In every letter you wrote to him, you asked him.

MT: Yes.

AH: In one letter, *twice* in the same letter you asked him.

MT: Is that right?

AH: You asked him in the first paragraph and then again in the last, I think. I got a kick out of that. (both laugh)

MT: We were really anxious to read his side of what happened.

AH: That sounds like the letters I get from the resisters now: when is Jimmie's book coming out? (both laugh) First he was plagued by it and then he passed the plague to me.

MT: (laughs)

AH: It's kind of interesting. Your book has now been out and you considered it an eternity from the time it got started. And yet, the amount of time between when it got started and the time between it was out was not that long. It was a total of four years, from '91 to '95. But I know you had written sort of a memoir *years* before that and had every intention of getting it published probably years before that. So maybe it felt like a long, long time for you.

MT: Well, I talk about this whenever I give a book review. When I was going to Boston University, we had to write a paper of 10,000 words. I thought I would *never* be able to pass that English course until I thought of writing in the form of letters about my time in Japan. And, in that way, it was very easy to write 10,000 words.

Some of that has become part of *Dear Miye*. During wartime, of course, I was unable to correspond with Miye at all. But, when I did hand it in, the professor gave me a B minus. I thought, Oh, I had dreams of being a writer sometime. But that really discouraged me and I thought, Oh, I can't really write at all worth anything; I better just give up that dream.

So I just didn't think about writing very much after that. I got married, and bringing up the family and working, well, I didn't ever have the time to think about writing at all. But then, it's only after I retired and I showed my term paper to my nieces and they were very excited and interested in it. I showed other people and they said, Oh, you should get it published. But I didn't know how to ever get it published or anything. So, during the time I was seeing Jimmie, I hadn't even thought that I would actually ever become a writer, or ever have a book published. I wasn't really proud of myself for working on it. I didn't think it would amount to much anyway. And so, I kept egging *him* on. I thought, Well, at least Jimmie has something that we all want to read.

AH: The last few years that he was alive—you already had a contract from Stanford and you were working with Lee on a book for an academic press, and he had no sort of entré. Is this something to do with this difference between Nisei women and men? The relationship we were talking about earlier where somehow you defer and you were silent about what you're doing?

MT: I think so. Because when you're brought up from childhood that you are the wrong sex, or you are the sex that is inferior to the male sex, and then going to Japan and having that idea compounded into you more. I guess you can't help but feel that way. Although, *I* feel that I am as good as any man, but I was brought up that way and when I am in the presence of Japanese men, that sort of feeling comes back, I guess.

AH: So, in a sense, there is more about his stuff than about your stuff going on in the letters. If one did a quantitative analysis you would see that. The ones that even were his, I mean, he never asked you when you're going to get your book out.

I thought it was very interesting that the original book was going to be named *Dear Kay*, and then actually it came out as *Dear Miye*. Because you came to include this stuff dealing with your pre-World War II letters from Japan. But it was almost like, over that amount of time, Japanese American as a topic was more important than it had been at the time before. Before, you had to legitimate it by talking about Japan and everything. But then, later on, it not only became important but a reverse to the point that the fullness became the letters with Miye. And more ancillary to it were the letters with Kay. I mean, maybe it should have been *Dear Miye and Kay*, since it really encompassed both?

Like in this special issue of the journal. I thought it was a wonderful issue because it really frames the whole situation as a trans-Pacific thing and you see wartime from people who were going both ways and caught up in it. I just thought it was a fabulous issue, including your article; I loved that.

Well, let me take a look here at a couple of the other things. He put you to work, obviously. You were willing to do that, willing to run down some things for him, et cetera. He talks about one time, "Larry Tajiri and I were friendly rivals since our Little Tokyo acquaintance. We spent considerable time together and with his prompting I became a columnist." So he tells you some things that are interesting for me, in the course of his letters. So, it was obvious that if he'd have been talking about those things *to you*, he probably wouldn't have to *tell* them to you in the letters. So the relationship, then, was one of just providing some sort of nurturing companionship while he was here doing his research, as it were, removed from his home in Denver, is that fair to say?

MT: Yes, I think so.

AH: You nurtured not only the kind of context when he was here, but also, insofar you could nurture his inquiries, whether it was family inquiries or publication concerns. You tried to help him, and Miya did, by putting him in touch with the resisters. So it wasn't a big *deal*, but it was significant, in the sense that, for a person who didn't have a place to stay and didn't have many people left of his generation, and had been an outsider, it gave him a quote, unquote family? Is that fair? That you provided a family context of sorts?

MT: Well, I hope so. The last time we had him over for dinner here, I invited [my daughter-in-law] Marianne and Toji, too. Jimmie had asked her to look up something because Marianne is a librarian on the campus. She said that she had a really hard time, and finally couldn't find what he had asked her to look up. It's good I invited Marianne or else I would have forgotten all that, too. I think he enjoyed having dinner with us. I don't remember what I provided but probably some kind of Japanese meal.

AH: You were reading the opening section of his autobiographical memoir about Japan. You found it tiresome a bit, boring. Did you ever find yourself bored when you were talking with Jimmie during his visits out here? Or was he congenial and interesting?

MT: Oh, no, it was never boring. He was very, as you said, congenial and interesting. Always had something to say, and we were very interested in whatever he had to say. But I think maybe we did talk about the resisters, especially when Miya was here. I can't remember

exactly when, but she did have to go back to Chicago. But after he came and stayed at Vera's place, I don't know if we talked about the resisters very much or not.

[01:00:35]

AH: Now you went to one of the events, and you actually even sent him a copy of the program, which I have, *Heart Mountain: Principal Dissent*. Clifford Uyeda was the moderator. Frank Emi³ was there. Mits Koshiyama⁴ was among the panelists. They had different people reading sections of things. Then they had another panel that Frank Chin was on, and Grace Kubota Ybarra, who was a daughter of one of the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee resisters. And this is something you sent to Jimmie. And this was one of the parties he ordinarily would have been in, but he wasn't. You were sort of a stand-in for him. You had even asked the question to Clifford, "Why isn't Jimmie Omura here?" And you weren't that satisfied with it. In fact, you mentioned in the letter that you had found Clifford a little shallow in the past, and this helped to confirm why he had stayed with the JACL, rather than breaking.

MT: (laughs)

AH: Now, I did a long interview a couple of years ago in San Francisco with Clifford Uyeda. I was asked to do it because they thought that Clifford was dying. Well, as it turns out, he not only didn't die but recently I saw him in the *Pacific Citizen*, where he's got a publication on out on his own autobiography in the last few years. So he is at least alive enough to be able to do this.

But he is one of the interesting people because he had not been affiliated with the JACL until Redress. He came in, he was the head of Redress, then he became the president of JACL. But he then became an insider who supported the resisters early on. This panel was breaking with all of the pressure to succumb to JACL. And yet, I couldn't figure out what was motivating him, why he wouldn't have been able to come up with the funding to be able to bring Jimmie from Denver. The way he answered your question was to say, "Well, these other people paid for their way up from L.A. and Jimmie didn't pay." Well, there is a big difference between driving up from Los Angeles and then taking a plane and finding lodging and stuff in San Francisco. So, I don't know. You talked about in your letter that you remember that particular night and that particular event and your reaction to the whole situation.

MT: Well, it actually took place at the Oakland Museum, for which I was very grateful since I didn't have to cross the bridge to go to San Francisco. I thought it was *great* that they were having a program about the resisters. I assumed that Jimmie would be invited, and I was very disappointed that he wasn't. So it was only natural that I ask *why* he wasn't. And I was not satisfied with an answer at all, but at least I was able to say what I wanted. (laughs)

AH: You sounded in the letter, when you talked about Clifford Uyeda, as though you had

³ Frank Emi, OH# 2331, Center for Oral and Public History.

⁴ Mits Koshiyama, OH# 5774 and OH# 5782, Center for Oral and Public History.

known of him or had known him even before this event.

MT: Yes, I had met him. I don't know how. Oh, I know. His wife had died and he married a friend of Miya's. And through that connection, Miya had been invited to their place. So I thought, Well, maybe he's not so bad after all. (laughs)

AH: So he was a friend of Miya's?

MT: Yes.

AH: She sat in the room during the time that I was doing the interview with Clifford because he was really in a marginal state. She sort of canopied herself out of my view and out of his view, but she was there, I think, waiting for some medical emergency. And she did that for, my goodness, for the entire first day, for probably six hours. She was sitting there the whole time. Once in a while, she would bring him tea or some delectables or something like this. But the rest of the time she sat in this reading room, almost. And then the next day, I was interviewing and she wouldn't come into it. I guess she felt that he was going strong.

MT: When was that?

AH: Just a few years ago, probably 1998. I was at a testimonial dinner for him. I wrote something that was published in *Nichi Bei* based on the interview. I didn't think it was a very satisfactory interview. Largely because, I haven't done an awful lot on the Redress movement. Clifford was a big player on the Redress movement and they wanted me to immediately come up there. They felt like this was an interview that they needed to get right now. Otherwise I would have spent a lot of time framing questions. I could do all the questions on the other things but I couldn't really do it on the Redress because I really hadn't gone into that. I've done a lot on resettlement, I've done a lot on the evacuation, a lot on the prewar and stuff, but I just have not done a lot on the Redress.

But he was involved in so many things, the Tokyo Rose stuff. I mean there was just a proliferation of different topics. I mean, things dealing with the American presence in Japan, the nuclear testing and everything like that. And so, he had sent me some things in advance. He was so organized, so prepared and stuff. I don't know that I would have used the term superficial or shallow or something like that. I probably would have used the expression—when I was with Clifford—that things seemed brittle. He seemed more of a person that wanted to control things, more than most interviewees I've had. He'd say strong things, but certain areas he wouldn't venture into. It was cordoned off for me. But then when he went in and said something, it was very much for history and very strong.

MT: I guess I was very prejudiced, too. I already knew that he and Jimmie were not getting along. So I don't think I had a very good assessment of Clifford.

AH: He talked about Omura on the interview and it was all positive. And then, he recently sent an email to Steve Yoda and it was a fascinating. Steve got a message on the email list-serve about the Japanese American Memorial controversies. He put up some quotes

from Jimmie Omura and some from Mike Masuoka. And he got a response from Clifford Uyeda. And this is what he said, to Steve, *Thanks for sending out copies of Mike Masuoka and Jim Omura's statement in 1942, to many Japanese Americans. I had known about them well since returning to the West Coast some half a century ago, from the East Coast. Masuoka was a political man; Omura was an ethical man victimized by circumstance. Mike spoke what the government wanted to hear, and Omura spoke what many Nisei felt deep in their hearts. The difference between the two was like day and night. Many of us have wondered how the NJAMF [National Japanese American Memorial Foundation] Board was formed. The Board has failed to represent various generations of Japanese Americans. The greatest joy of the voices expressed recently are those that look at the Japanese Americans from a bigger perspective than those limited to a narrow World War II period. The new voices are becoming stronger each year. I believe the true voices of Japanese Americans are finally being heard. The JACL creed is expounded by Mike Masuoka, half a century ago, was an outdated concept, which no American will want to espouse as true beliefs. The JACL creed does disservice to future Japanese Americans.*" Clifford Uyeda.

MT: Oh!

AH: Now that seems strong, doesn't it?

MT: Oh, it *does*.

AH: What do you think at that time was the problem? Did you get an insight into that? Of why Jimmie and Clifford were not getting along.

MT: No, I haven't really analyzed this at all. But I see now that I was superficial in judging Clifford. But I didn't really know him. I hadn't really talked to him in-depth at all. I had just superficially talked to him a few times is all, so I think my judgement was very wrong.

AH: Well, the other thing is, it's difficult, I think, when you're not only associated with a group like the JACL and you're setting up a panel and there's a lot of pressure on you to be equal-handed, to make sure that you give both sides a choice to be heard and stuff. So he might have been bending over backwards to try and accommodate his critics, et cetera. And when you bend over backwards for one group, you usually do a disservice. And Omura probably thought he was not being sufficiently supportive in buttressing *his* voice, getting his bills taken care of. And you, having the friendship more with Jimmie, probably picked up Jimmie's discontents—

MT: Yes.

AH: —and transferred that over to Clifford.

[01:10:41]

MT: Yes, that's probably correct.

AH: Actually, you were dealing with two pretty ethical, strong spokespeople. Jimmie had a history, I think, of rubbing people the wrong way.

MT: Oh, of course.

AH: His friends as well as his foes. There could have been a little jockeying of egos and stuff between those two. You hear more or less one side of it when you're in touch with one as against the other. I think one of the things that is my role in writing this introduction is to be able for us to allow Jimmie in his manuscript to speak Jimmie's story, but for me as an editor, to be able to provide a fuller story of Jimmie so that readers can be able to get an independent voice from Jimmie's. Because Jimmie's is pretty much unlike, say, Steve Yoda's. You had commented that you thought it was more even-handed in the way he presented things. Jimmie presents Jimmie as a guest of JACL. And it's Jimmie as a knight in shining armor and the JACL, of course, are jackals. Even though I sympathize and identify with the general point of view that Jimmie presents, I think it's incumbent upon me as a historian to present something a little bit more quote, unquote objective, you know?

MT: Yes, I think that's a very admirable thing to aim for.

AH: So you didn't talk too much about his manuscript either then at that particular time?

MT: No.

AH: So your manuscripts were not necessarily—it wasn't professional business, et cetera?

MT: No.

AH: Okay, so you didn't talk very much about that. He was actually, up until his death, during that period, fairly closed mouth about what he was doing in his memoir. I mean, in looking at his correspondence with his closest associates, he wasn't sending them drafts; he wasn't saying where he was. Sometimes he told you things that were interesting. Explained what it was doing, what he saw it as doing, and stuff like this, and what he hoped to accomplish. He even told you some interesting things about his progress. So looking at the correspondence with you, I can figure out a lot about where he thought it should be—and *why* he was in an accident at one time. He told you about that. Do you remember that?

MT: No, I don't.

AH: Okay, well, he was in an automobile accident. He was hospitalized for six weeks. He was hit by a car in an intersection, going 50 miles an hour. He had a lot of cuts and bruises. He hurt himself so that it rendered him unable to be able to sustain some things. But I got that out of his correspondence.

MT: Oh, really?

AH: Yeah. To *you*. But you hadn't seen him when he was in that state.

MT: No.

AH: As we get older, all of us start measuring our own mortality a bit, and we partly measure that through the yardstick of other people older than us, or becoming more infirmed than us. You had around you, Miya, and you watched, in a sense, her decline. You meet Jimmie at a pivotal time with respect *to* his mortality. You knew him from 1989 until 1994. Now, during that period of time, did you start to notice that he was slipping? That he seemed frail? Less flexible? Did you see signs of his aging that you recall, or not?

MT: No, I don't recall now. I was not that observant, I guess. And also, as I said, I am not very sympathetic towards people with problems. I feel, as I said, guilty that I was not more sympathetic with, say, my husband, who had heart problems, too. Because being so healthy myself, it just didn't occur to me. And so, I am sorry that I was not more solicitous about these men in my life. I did not observe him becoming more—not feeble, or that he was having more problems health-wise.

AH: So you didn't see that at all?

MT: No.

AH: Because I know the last time I saw him was at a resisters event down in Los Angeles. Sometimes it goes between what did you think when you saw him and what did you think when you saw the photos afterwards?

MT: Oh, yes.

AH: I remember it conflated two things, the event and the photos of the event. I had to say in my mind, knowing that he seemed weak and he seemed drawn. I wasn't totally surprised when I found out. When I read some of the correspondence towards the end of his life, I could see that it was increasingly difficult for him. He'd had a minor heart attack as well as the accident. And then, there was stuff going on in his immediate family circle that had put more of a burden on him to do yardwork because his son refused to do it at a certain point, because they were mad—I don't know the issues as to why they were upset with one another. But it meant that here was a guy who had a heart attack—which he masked from the family—going out, doing yardwork, et cetera, and quickening his demise. But, in any event, he lived a long, certainly rich life.

You've had a chance now to go through a senior thesis that was written by Steve Yoda about Omura, which you currently liked and you let Steve know that. Then you've also had a chance to read Jimmie's memoir. Having had access to the full representation, at least of his life, as opposed to *him* as a person in the latter part of his years, what are the things that surprise you now? What are those things about Omura that now registers with you that maybe didn't before? That makes you say, "Gee, I didn't even know that," or "I wouldn't have guessed it." You alluded to some of them today, but maybe you could talk a little bit about that.

MT: Well, I was really surprised at how difficult it was for the Japanese on Bainbridge Island. Because it rather contrasts with how we were accepted in Central California. Of course,

in Ceres, we were farmers and it didn't matter our color or race or anything, so we thought more or less equal to everyone else and they accepted us. And being so few in number, too. I just could not believe that they wouldn't even allow him to get on the school bus. Because we just took it as natural that we would get on a bus like anyone else. But the difference in his treatment and other Japanese Americans contrasted to those in my area. And also, I was really relieved to hear that his first six years, when his mother was with him, was a good family life. Because I feel that a person's earliest years are very formative, and at least he had that to fall back on. His mother seemed to be very loving, kind, and concerned person.

AH: And a good story teller.

MT: Yes! Yes, I especially liked that about when the police came to look for the still and there she was in the middle of the room with the kids around her. And then afterwards she laughed about it. (laughs) I thought that was really wonderful. But I think he had that as a real foundation for the rest of his life, which I was relieved to hear because otherwise it was a broken family and a father who didn't show much concern for him, and who didn't encourage him to read or even go to school out here. However, he ended up how he did. But I am sure that his mother was a great influence on him. It goes to my theory that the first years of your life are so important and formative.

I think he is a very good example of someone who stuck to his guns, who had his beliefs, and really stayed by them for all of his life. The part about his fight with JACL, I think was rather repetitive, but I guess you have to have a lot of that to show the extent of misunderstandings and, of course, how human we are. We always like to think someone is altogether wrong or altogether right, but we are usually a mixture of both of them.

But I really enjoyed reading his memoirs, except for the introduction about Japan, (laughs) which, of course, I am glad to hear it will not be included. But I was wondering, too, when he used to come here for research, whether he was doing research for writing the first part, or what it was that he was actually looking for. I guess I should have asked him but I never thought of doing that. I didn't know him that well and I thought it would be kind of intrusive of me to ask him. Although, he probably would have told me. I just didn't think of doing that at the time.

[01:22:15]

AH: You were interested enough in what he was doing and knew enough about it so that after he passed away, you volunteered your services to bring his manuscript to completion. Was that because of your experience with the Stanford thing? And then, feeling that you might be able to help out in that way because you've been working through editing and working through the maze of things that one has to do to get through a university press to get something finally out? Because that's interesting, as we've been talking you didn't really talk much about the manuscript or a lot of the other issues, and yet, you were able to be a good enough friend to volunteer your services.

MT: Well, I admired him so much and I wanted this book to be published. I didn't want it lost

to history, because it's such an important part of history. I don't know what he had planned to have done with it, but that's why I offered my services. I don't think having my book published or that I was working on it at that time had anything to do with it. But being so close to Cal, and I did like to do research and I had done graduate work there so I knew a little bit about doing research. That's why I offered to do that. But I'm really glad now that he had (laughs) trusted you to finish it because I am so glad that it *will* be out soon.

AH: Let's hope it is.

MT: (laughs)

AH: I wanted to ask you a couple more things if you don't mind.

MT: Of course not.

AH: One of the things I was going to ask you about is your career as a librarian since my wife has a Ph.D. in History and she's involved in library work because she also has a degree in library science. She's been doing a lot of library history; particularly she's trained as a women's historian so she looks at it as a profession. You've got a Master's in History and one in Oriental Languages, is that what you said?

MT: Yes.

AH: As well as an MLS, Master of Library Science? How did you happen to go into that field *rather than* into, for instance, becoming a community fellowship or a professor with an MA in History, et cetera? Was that considered from an ethnic perspective, a women's perspective, or both? Or was that just your druthers? Because you didn't do library work in Japan.

MT: Well, yes, but at that time I had no library training.

AH: I know, but that's still more miraculous, really.

MT: I've always enjoyed books. Even when I was in high school, I used to help the school librarian, and felt very close to her. But my husband was very ambitious for me. He wanted me to continue on. After we got married and we were in the Bay Area, he wanted me to continue on with my studies.

He was from Japan and his field was government. He was, at that time, unable to become a citizen. I think what he wanted to do was go to Japan—he had a chance to go to Japan with the State Department, I guess. But then, we had fallen in love by that time. I said, “I never want to see that place again in my whole life!” (laughs) Because I had *really* suffered there. I hated everything about Japan. That was my reaction to when he was there. So he decided he would stop thinking about going to Japan. But of course, not being a citizen, he was unable to do anything in his field of government here. He could not get a decent job.

However, he came to the Bay Area because Miya was here. He didn't quite know what to do, but anyway, the plan was I would stay in Boston and continue my graduate work at Radcliff. However, we decided that it was more important that we be together so I came here. He wanted me to continue on with my graduate work at Cal. That was easy to do. And then, Miya, her husband was going to Cal at that time, in the graduate school.

AH: Miya Iwazaki?

MT: Yeah, Miya Iwazaki. She was having a family then. But they were in UC housing, so if I went to Cal we could live in the housing, too, which was very important. Because there was no place to stay especially at that cheap price. So I lived there and commuted to Cal. Mostly men were going to Cal at that time.

But then, I became pregnant and then my husband couldn't find any work in his field. In order to support us, he was working at a grocery store in San Francisco. We only had one baby and he paid for a babysitter. He paid for a babysitter, but that was later. The first time I had Miya watch my oldest, my first baby. She would watch him. I found it very difficult to have a baby and study. We had very little money. We didn't have a car. It was very difficult. I was actually working toward a Ph.D. in Asian History. But I failed. Anyway, I was unable to study. I had no encouragement from the faculty either. I guess I was before my time, too.

AH: You didn't write a thesis then. You took the exams and they gave you a Master's?

[01:30:00]

MT: Well, yeah. At some point I was able to take these classes and I was able to write a thesis in U.S. History.

AH: Oh, you *did* write it on U.S.? What was your topic?

MT: It was about the occupation. Not the occupation, but about the relocation.

AH: It was? What did you write?

MT: It wasn't much at all.

AH: I know, but what was it?

MT: Well, it was about the concentration camps.

AH: Okay. Here you had been writing it as a person who wasn't in there because you weren't here.

MT: Well, I was interested in what it was.

AH: And did you write just an overview of it? Or did you focus on some topic?

MT: No, it was just an overview.

AH: Which at that time was important to have because you wrote it right after the war, really.

MT: I don't think I even have a copy of it now.

AH: Oh. But you did that, though.

MT: I did that, and because of that I was able to get an MA.

AH: That's interesting. I didn't know that that was what you'd written on. I was curious whether you wrote it on something on Japanese history or—so it was U.S. then.

MT: Well, in order to get a Ph.D. you have to gather three fields. So it was the Far East before 1500, the Far East after 1500, and the third was U.S. History. So that was very difficult, especially U.S. History.

AH: You got no encouragement? Who directed your thesis for your M.A.?

MT: It was a history teacher.

AH: A U.S. professor? Do you remember who it was?

MT: I think his name was Davis. He didn't last very long.

AH: But he was there at the time. Did he know anything about the evacuation?

MT: I don't think he knew anything. I didn't depend on him to research my paper.

AH: What did you depend on?

MT: Well, just what had been written up to that time.

AH: Were you able to have access to records? Did you talk to people?

MT: No, I didn't talk to people. I just read about it. It wasn't a big deal at all.

AH: Well, it was probably important to you. Because it's figuring out what your parents and siblings had gone through. Quite interesting. You're like, "What did I miss? I know the horrors that I experienced, what were the horrors that I *didn't*?"

MT: That's right.

AH: It's interesting. Did you go to library school here?

MT: Yes, at Cal.

AH: Was that immediately after the thesis?

MT: After the thesis, then I thought, Well, I wanted to do something. And my husband wanted me to do something, too. He didn't believe in women just staying home after

they got married. So I took a teaching credential. I worked towards a teaching credential, which is just another year.

AH: Independent of the library stuff? Because you became a school librarian but first you did the teaching credential.

MT: I got that. Taking those boring classes.

AH: Right, I've taken them, too, so I know.

MT: Just in order to be able to teach. Then I taught at the junior high level for a year. Oh, it was terrible, the discipline, you know? Here in Oakland.

AH: Did you have any Nisei kids?

MT: No, mostly black.

AH: Mostly black? Really, then?

MT: Yeah. Well, first I started out with a black junior high. And then, they said there are too many teachers, would anyone like to transfer? So I took the chance to transfer.

AH: Were you able to get a job pretty readily?

MT: Yes.

AH: And this was about what year would you say? Late forties or early fifties?

MT: Early fifties.

AH: And then you went to library school?

MT: Well, one year teaching was too much. I just thought, Oh, I can't do anything with that. Because the discipline was so difficult for me. So I talked to somebody who was going to my church, Sycamore Church, and she had the same experience. She had taught for a year and she says, "Oh, that's not for me," so she became a librarian. So I asked her about it. In the first year of library school, they said if you're over forty, don't bother to apply. So that stopped me, but she said, "Oh no, you just go ahead." And I *did* apply and they did accept me.

AH: Did you enjoy your library school experience or no?

MT: As a whole, I did not. But then some classes were interesting.

AH: How did you happen to select where to go to school?

END OF INTERVIEW

