

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Children's Village at Manzanar Oral History Project

An Oral History with LILLIAN MATSUMOTO AND TAEKO NAGAYAMA

Interviewed

By

Lisa Nobe

On May 13, 1994

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON
CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY

NARRATOR: LILLIAN MATSUMOTO AND TAEKO NAGAYAMA

INTERVIEWER: Lisa Nobe

DATE: May 13, 1994

LOCATION: El Cerrito, California

PROJECT: Children's Village at Manzanar

LN: This is the second part to an interview with Lillian Matsumoto and Taeko Nagayama by Lisa Nobe for the Japanese American Project of the Oral History Program at California State University. The interview is being held at the home of Taeko Nagayama in El Cerrito, California, on Friday, May 13, 1994, at approximately 10:20 A.M. We had discussed the Shonien and the Children's Village and kind of your lives after that yesterday, and there were some general questions or areas that I forgot to go over. So we might have to go back and forth between different times during your lives and the span of camp, but I'll try not to bounce around too much. I wrote down a list and tried to kind of go in order. First of all, I don't think I asked either of you, just in general, stepping off of the bus and seeing Manzanar for the first time, just what your general impression of Manzanar was?

TN: I can't even remember that part, stepping out of the bus. I don't know why. (laughs) I can't remember. It's terrible how there's different times I just can't remember.

LM: Even to me the recollection isn't too clear. The only thing I do remember, as the bus pulled through the gate and up to where the Village was located, that the people who were already in Manzanar, I think they sort of stared, and probably knew who were, and probably looked at us rather strangely. I kind of sense and remember that. But, once the bus stopped at the buildings, I think we were just too busy getting the children off and getting them settled. I know I remember it being very, very hot. (laughs) The children were tired, I remember that, but I don't think there was anything out of the ordinary, actually.

LN: So, seeing the desert and everything didn't really hit you in any way?

LM: We just came through that Mojave Desert, so I don't think there was—and I think the children, you know, the younger ones, when you see this picture, there are so many that are, say, under ten, and so I think to them, many of them—well, we sort of

probably explained it to them, that it was a new adventure we were going through. So, I think they were very eager to see Manzanar, what it was, and the new place where they were coming to live.

LN: How long was the bus ride, do you remember approximately?

LM: We left probably around 8:00, 9:00 in the morning. There was one stopover someplace where they had a chance to go to the bathroom, but we didn't take anything to eat or anything, did we, on the bus?

TN: I don't recall.

LM: Or stop anywhere for a meal? I think it was probably mid-afternoon when we arrived there.

LN: And did they have the shades drawn, or did they put something up in the bus windows so you couldn't see out?

LM: Oh, no, no, there was nothing. But, there was an MP sitting in the front of the bus next to the driver.

LN: Of each bus?

LM: Um-hm.

LN: And you broke the buses up? Was one bus for boys and one bus for girls?

LM: Um-hm.

LN: So, were you on the bus with the girls?

LM: The girls. I have to tell you this one experience. For the children to be entertained—you've probably heard, and I think you mentioned it—but different ones would get up and sing to do whatever. This one little girl, her name escapes me but I can still picture her coming up, you know, and said she was going to sing. She must have only been about four years old, three or four years old, and she started singing "God Bless America." And then, whenever she didn't know the words, she's just hum a little, and that was the way she would sing it. (laughs) But, the thing was that this young MP, he was a very young soldier, he put his head down and he was crying. And I noticed that because I was sitting sort of on the aisle, crisscross, and I think _____(inaudible). I remember that. But, when the bus stopped and we got out to use the bathroom, to take the children to the bathroom, this MP had to stand up, and he had to be on guard with his bayonet, I think. (laughs) I don't know what the children would have done. (laughs)

LN: So, you knew where you were going? I mean, you could see out the window, you could tell?

LM: Oh, yes.

LN: Because on the trains and stuff when other people were going to Manzanar, they would have the shades drawn. They weren't allowed to look out.

LM: Oh? No, there wasn't anything like that.

LN: Did you feel that it was kind of ludicrous in a way to have an MP on the bus? I mean, it was just a bunch of kids.

LM: Yes. I was, I think, surprised. I don't know at what point he joined us, whether he came up to the Shonien, because that's where the bus went and we were loaded there. Whether he came there and got in and started from there, or whether the bus picked him up someplace in downtown L.A., I don't remember that. But, he definitely was on the bus. (laughs)

LN: And you were talking about when she sang "God Bless America," he kind of put his head down and cried. Do you think in general, among the white administration at camp and the MPs, that there was a general sense that they felt that there was something wrong about internment, but they were just carrying their orders out?

LM: I really couldn't say because we didn't have—at least in my work I didn't have that kind of contact with the MPs, the soldiers that were assigned there.

LN: How about with the white administration that you had to deal with?

LM: I think among them, some of them felt it was an injustice, and others probably it was their job they were carrying out.

LN: I think yesterday, Lillian, you had talked about choosing the site of the Village. So, when you and Harry went up there to Manzanar, you got to actually choose where? I mean you said, "This is where we would like the orphanage to be," and they agreed with that?

LM: The project director at the time, I think he agreed with us, but, of course, the final say would have been the Army engineers, whoever was in charge to build it. But, we thought of that site as being—it wasn't too isolated. We didn't want the Village to be put in some corner, isolated from the rest of the community, but it was near enough. We were part of it, but not being right in the midst of it and we were next to the orchard, which I thought gave a setting for the Village. And then, the other consideration was that we would be near the hospital. And they did pick that site that we more or less hoped they would.

LN: How about when you first got to camp or when you started living there to begin with, how was it being among so many other Japanese Americans? I mean, you're talking about hundred thousand others of the same ethnic group as you. What was that like for both of you?

LM: I don't think it made any particular impression. It just seemed like a natural thing to us. Maybe it was because my work and my contact was always with the Japanese socially, and business, too, and the work at the Shonien. So, going to Manzanar, with all the rest of the Japanese being there, I don't think it made any particular impact on me. I think it seemed just a natural thing, that that's where we were all together.

LN: Taeko, how about you?

LM: I didn't really have that much of an impression. I just took things as they came. I don't know why. I know I was there in the late teens, but I don't know, it was just kind of hazy. I just kind of took things as they came. I didn't really have that much of an impression, just to know that there were a lot of other Japanese aside from us that were there in camp.

[00:10:41]

LN: Was it kind of exciting, in a way, to be around so many other Japanese Americans?

TN: I guess, sort of, yeah.

LN: How about in terms of the Caucasian staff, do you remember Margaret D'Ille?

LM: Um-hm, because the Children's Village came under her supervision. Wasn't the title she had Director of Community Affairs or something like that? We came directly under her, so what we needed or anything would go through her. We would present it to her. But she was a very cooperative and understanding person, a much older person. I think she was from a missionary family, and she had lived in Japan a long, long time, so she understood. She spoke a little Japanese herself.

LN: She lived outside camp, correct?

LM: No, in one corner of the camp was the area where the Caucasian staff lived.

LN: But, I think that area was kind of outside of the camp, I think, in a corner outside of the camp, I believe.

LM: I'm not sure because we were able to—I think you might be right because we were able to go to the project director's home, but I don't think we needed any special escort or anything like that.

LN: Did she actually have an office in the Village?

LM: No. She was down in the regular section where all the offices were.

LN: Would she come to the Village regularly to check up on the Village?

LM: She'd come, but then I think her visits were more like a friendly visit and seemed not officially to check up on what was being done or anything. I think we held a weekly meeting with her down in her office to go over whatever was necessary, give her reports, and—

LN: When she would come to the Village, would she interact with the children?

LM: Oh, yes. She was a friendly person.

TN: I think so. I remember meeting her.

LM: She was a large person, a big person, and very friendly, a friendly person, you know, so I think the children would come to her.

LN: This is her, right, in the Easter picture?

LM: Yeah, right next to us, or between us or something.

LN: Yeah. And I see her, she's holding a baby, so I'm wondering if, when she would come, would she pick up children and play with them?

LM: Or talk with them, yeah.

LN: How about Eva Robbins? What was she like?

LM: Let's see. We only spent a few months together because she came maybe a couple months, two or three months before we left. The impression I got, and she may have told me herself directly, that this was her very first contact with the Japanese. She was from the East, and she was probably a person in her fifties or something.

TN: I don't remember her.

LM: She gave me this appearance of an old maid type of a person, you know, small, but I think she had a lot to learn about the Japanese. I think she was just sent officially to get ready to close the Village and make the final preparation for the different children, how they were to be dispersed or whatever.

LN: And how did she react with the children? How did she interact with them?

LM: She was friendly, but I think there was a certain amount of reservation. Oh, you don't know her because you were gone, right. But, I don't think there was that close relationship, unless she became more familiar and was able to. At the time, that we

- knew her, for the few months that we were with her, I think there was a certain attitude or reservation.
- LN: Was that even with you and Harry she'd be a little bit reserved?
- LM: I think she was very cautious of what she said. She didn't try to tell us what to do or anything. I think she was willing to gain all the information that we could give her about the Village.
- LN: Did you get a feeling that maybe she thought that Japanese people were inferior to whites? Did she ever give you that feeling?
- LM: No. But I know this was her first contact with Japanese. I don't know if she felt intimidated or anything like that, I'm sure she did, but she didn't have that attitude of saying, you know, "I'm here, I'm white, and—"
- LN: How about Margaret D'Ille, or maybe any of the MPs? Did they ever give you the feeling that you were somehow less than they were?
- LM: No, not with Ralph Merritt, who was the project director, he was not that kind of a person, as far as our contact with him. And then with Mrs. D'Ille, too, we had a very close relationship with her. I never ever got the impression that they felt that way. Now, I knew the—I think her name was Genevieve Carter. She was the superintendent of schools. And I think she had a little—her attitude was a little more restrictive, but the Caucasian staff that I met, I didn't get that feeling. Now, the MPs and the military I never had any contact, so I don't know anything about that.
- LN: To what extent did you deal with Ralph Merritt?
- LM: Very closely, as far as the Village is concerned, and we also got to know him on a social basis, too.
- LN: Would he come over to the Village and visit?
- LM: Oh, yes. And I think every visitor to camp of any distinction or anything, you know, he would always bring them to the Village. I think that was sort of his pride and joy, too, one of the big things of Manzanar to him, to bring them and show them the Village.
- LN: Did he ever play with the children or interact with the children in any way?
- LM: Oh, yes. Not like a younger man would do, but very friendly.
- LN: Were his visits frequent, or maybe just a couple of times when he would just come to see the children?

LM: If he was ever in that area where the Village was, I think he quite often stopped by just to say hello, and he would go into the kitchen and shake hands with the kitchen staff or talk with the other staff members. So, he made himself known in a very friendly way.

LN: When you say you knew him also on a social basis, what does that mean? Did you have dinner with him on occasion?

LM: No, not too often because Harry and I felt that that might work against us with the Japanese. And so we didn't do that, going to that point of having dinner with him. I think we had dinner a couple of times with Mrs. D'Ille in her apartment. But, with Mr. Merritt and Mrs. Merritt, I think that we were invited, but we felt that it wasn't proper for us to do that. But, we were friendly in other ways with them.

[00:20:14]

LN: Did you keep in touch with any of them after camp, Ralph Merritt or Margaret D'Ille?

LM: Yes. I think he and Mrs. Merritt wrote to us several times after we had left, and then for about two years they sent Karyl a birthday present. Mrs. D'Ille, I don't think I ever saw her again after we left camp, but then she was an Episcopalian so she always attended the services with us whenever the bishop came. And I think, as I have mentioned, she would invite us to dinner. Sometimes it would be just Harry and I, and then other times it would be other—not staff members from the Village but other Niseis who were important (laughs) in Manzanar.

LN: You had talked about visitors coming. Did Ansel Adams actually come to the Village?

LM: Oh, yes. I think Manzanar was picked by Ansel Adams especially because he was an old, old friend of Ralph Merritt. They were very close, and so I think Ralph Merritt probably invited him to come and take pictures. So, he spent a few days probably in Manzanar taking pictures.

LN: Do you remember him being at the Village?

LM: Oh, yes. Because he took a number of pictures there. Only I think one or two are in that book, but—then we had church people, and of course, government officials, and I don't know who else. But I have a guest list, a look with a guest list, and I'll try to get it back from a girl who thought she was going to write something about the Village. I don't know what she's done with it, but she has several of my things. Like, there's a biography of Mrs. D'Ille that—she remarried after we left camp and her name was—I think it was Gibson or something like that. So, after she died, her husband printed a biography of her life, and I have a copy of that. This person has it, but I'll try to get it all back from her.

LN: Was it in a book form?

LM: Yes, it was a small booklet, you know.

LN: How about when Ansel Adams came to the Village? Well, I guess Ansel Adams is kind of praised for not setting people up to look a certain way. He kind of takes pictures just the way he sees them. Because I know, for instance, the picture that Ansel Adams took that was in his book of the Village, it's kind of a nice picture. Did he pose people to look happy, or to look a certain way?

LM: I don't even recall that. I think his was very—oh, what do you call it? Not posed pictures. He would just take action pictures, and I think he took—I saw a lot more pictures he took that are not in the book that weren't used, and I think that's his way, isn't it, un-posed pictures?

LN: So, there are a lot more pictures of the Village?

LM: I'm sure.

LN: That might be something worth trying to find out, too, to get ahold of those negatives or whatever. Lastly, Winifred Ryder.

LM: I don't know whether she was the director of the State Department of Social Welfare. I don't know what that agency is now called, but at that time it was—and whether she was the director or one of the people there in that agency, the State Department, but she came. She represented them and came and went with us to Manzanar because she felt that maybe the state would have something to say or do about it. But, I think they put a lot of input and push into the Army to back this, you know, getting the Village started in Manzanar.

LN: Did Miss Ryder ever come and visit the children, or did she come?

LM: I don't think she ever came. She may have come to visit. I also knew Miss Ryder because she was one of the professors that I had at Cal in welfare, so I kind of knew her that way. She may have visited the camp after it was established, but I don't actually remember any particular incident.

LN: So, she was what, about ten years your senior, or fifteen years your senior maybe?

LM: Um-hm.

LN: Well, if you had her as a teacher, too, was your impression of her as one of caring about Japanese Americans and the orphanage children?

LM: I think she was. Otherwise I don't think she would have backed us up. She must have written from their point of view, their reasons to the Army about the need for a place.

LN: When you went up to visit Manzanar with her, did you all meet in Los Angeles and get in a car and drive up to Manzanar, or did you meet at Manzanar? or how did you get there?

LM: I think Harry and Dr. Ishimaru and I drove up there, and I think she met us at Lone Pine, which is a town outside because we stayed overnight. We stayed overnight, and whether we had another meeting the following morning before we left, I'm not sure, but I remember staying overnight. I don't think there was anyone else from the City of Los Angeles or anything like that. It was just the State Department.

LN: How about in the Village? I was reading Helen Elizabeth Whitney's thesis on the Village, and she says that fourteen of the children were of mixed ancestry. Is there anything that you can remember about them having problems being mixed?

LM: The only one I would think of might have been Dennis Tojo¹, and that was not—see, he just stood out because he was blond. He must have been about ten, twelve years old then, wasn't he? And then, the fact that his surname was Tojo, and that wasn't a popular name, you know, so everything was against him at that time. I guess even the children teased him. But, as far as the other children, we had a number of mixed. Many of the mixed children are the babies and the small ones, so I don't think—it didn't affect them.

LN: Some of them were also born out of wedlock, the children. Was it just a general thing—I mean, I know that there's a sense of shame of not being married and having a child, especially among Japanese Americans at *that* time. Would the majority of children born out of wedlock just be turned over to the Village? Or did some females that you know of actually just raise their own kids?

LM: I don't know. I have no idea. Some of the children that did come to us from—see, a number of these small babies came to us after we were established there. They came from other relocation camps, so they may have been children of unwed mothers and then the arrangements made to bring the baby to Manzanar right away.

LN: Would a person then from one camp bring the baby across?

LM: There was a courier, a Caucasian. The meeting point usually was, I think, at Reno because beyond Reno would be the restricted area. I think probably a social worker from the other camp would bring the baby to that point, and then she would bring the baby into camp.

¹ Dennis Tojo Bambauer, O.H. 2335, Center for Oral and Public History.

LN: How about the kids that were in camp, would their families come visit them ever, or write to them? Because some of the children there were only there for a limited amount of time, correct? They were there for maybe a year because their parents couldn't take care of them, and once they could, they would be back with their families. So, would they come visit them or write them?

LM: I don't think we had any children whose parents, a parent or parents, lived right in Manzanar. But outside, most of the other children were usually—not too many where the single parent was a mother. It was where the single parent was a father and couldn't take care of them, and he left the children in Shonien or Maryknoll or the Salvation Army home. Then, if they were one of the men that was picked up on the night of Pearl Harbor, and after things were settled, and I think when they were released they usually asked to be sent to Manzanar if they knew their children were there. Then we would reunite them and the father would take them.

[00:30:45]

LN: When the children would leave, would you throw parties or give presents or anything? Or would they just leave?

LM: I don't think there were presents, but we had little parties if children—or when the staff left. Because Taeko and her sister Ruth left, and then two of the girls went into the WAACS [Women's Army Auxiliary Corps]. They were our staff members.

LN: That was Alice Kaneko, and who was the other person that watched—

LM: Maseo Deguchi.

LN: Okay. She went to the WAACs as well? How about in terms of the loyalty questionnaire? Now that was given to people who were seventeen and older, I believe, so did any of the orphanage children have to fill out that questionnaire?

LM: I don't think so. Now, like the Isozakis, the older brothers and sisters were not living within the Village. They were outside in the block homes, so they may have as a general with the rest of the Manzanar people. But, other than our staff, I don't think any of the children had to go through that.

LN: Do you remember, Taeko, what that was like, filling out the loyalty questionnaire?

TN: If I did fill it out, I can't remember, but I think I would have signed it to stay in the United States.

LN: So, you don't remember having any problems with it? Because, you know, like the No-No Boys and all that?

TN: No, I don't remember.

- LN: Do you remember anything about public assistance grants? Because I believe every month or something each child would get, like, fifty cents, and they could spend it however they wanted. Do you remember? Because I know Tamo² was telling me when he would get his fifty cents or whatever it was, he would go down to the store and buy Ritz crackers.
- LM: Oh, how that was allotted I can't even remember, whether everybody in camp—if we worked. We had that three-scale—maybe it was pay, I don't know. But, you said he received fifty cents?
- LM: Something like that.
- TN: Yeah, I don't remember the children—
- LN: How about in the barracks, the Children's Village barracks, was there a lack of privacy? I mean, you and Harry had your own.
- TN: Oh, it was all open. There was no—
- LM: Yeah, the children—there was no division. Each bed was—
- TN: Yeah, lined up right next to each other.
- LM: The only thing—there was a little boxlike thing that sort of served as where they kept their personal things, and clothing, there was a closet, wasn't there, where they could keep their things?
- TN: Yes.
- LN: Did they just sleep on cots, just like all the other internees?
- TN: Yes.
- LN: Now, by looking at the pictures of the orphanage barracks, and compared to just the regular barracks, the orphanage barracks seemed a lot nicer.
- LM: Oh, yes, definitely.
- TN: Oh, yes, much nicer.
- LM: See, the regular barracks were built very close to the ground. Ours you can tell because there are steps leading up to them, so they were built much higher. The floors were solid. I think everything was better built.

² Tamotsu Isozaki, O.H. 2332, Center for Oral and Public History.

LN: Do you know why the barracks in the Village were built higher than others?

LM: I have no idea why.

LN: Now was there a request to make the barracks in the orphanage nicer, or you got there, and they were just nicer, and you don't know why?

LM: Well, some of the things we asked was that they be suitable for the staff and for the children, so that we could care for them. We didn't want to have to take them to an outside toilet facility, so we asked them for showers and toilet facilities within the building, in each of the buildings. And then I guess sometimes some of them might have been larger in the center. If the barrack was like this, we had an entrance on the two ends, the two long ends, and then there was one room here, a large room, and a large room in the front. And then, in the center on this side was, say, the showers and the toilet. And here, if it was one large room, we might have asked to have them separated so that one of the staff could have a room. Like, in the girls' building, a staff, Ruth Takamune had a room there, and the other one was the diet kitchen where the babies' formula were made or whatever.

LN: So, the whole room would be closed off? I mean, it would be an actual room with a door, and she could just come in and out?

LM: Mm-hm. And then I think John had his room in the boys' [barrack]. Although some of the—like John or Dick who worked for us, opted to sleep right there in the open room with the boys instead of being separated.

LN: Did it make you feel in any way guilty to have more than other internees had, or did you feel privileged? How did that make you feel?

TN: I felt fortunate (laughs) that we were able to live in a so-called barracks, or whatever, that was nice.

LM: I think it would have been very hard to have taken care of a hundred children in the facilities the others had. I think we emphasized that a lot to try to make it—not nicer, but to try to make it that it would be easier for us to take care of that number of children. We knew, I think, at the time that we went up to talk with the authorities there approximately how many children would be there. We knew what we had. I think we had heard from the Salvation Army about how many, so we knew about how many would be there right at the beginning. Then, if other children were going to be brought in, and they thought there would be, we asked, I think, that the buildings and the facilities be built so that it would be convenient for all of us.

LN: Taeko, as a staff worker, were you involved in helping out with birthday parties or any kind of parties or activities with the children?

- TN: I can't remember the parties so much, except just to take care of them. Like, for myself, I remember having other outside activities, going to church. There was a Christian fellowship, Bible study. Well, I had a room in the office building, right near the office where I stayed, and just went through the regular routine every day, trying to help care for the infants and the older children. I can't remember helping out with birthdays. There might be others that helped out, but I don't remember doing it myself.
- LM: I think quite often Mrs. Ichida was the one—because she was sort of in charge of the recreational activities, especially for the girls.
- LN: What was her first name?
- LM: May, May Ichida.
- LN: And was she Issei or Nisei?
- LM: Nisei, I think.
- LN: She was a Nisei. But she was just one of the other internees?
- LM: No, she was from the Salvation Army home. Her husband, I think, was a Japan-born person, but he wasn't active with the affairs of the Village. He was an ordained minister, so his activities were with the church group.
- [00:40:10]
- LN: Do you remember his name?
- LM: Ainozuke or something like that. (laughs)
- LN: How about movies? When the camp would put on movies, would the children be free to go to those?
- LM: The older ones probably.
- LN: Do you remember the Village kids playing with the non-Village kids?
- LM: I think the older ones did; the little ones probably wouldn't, no.
- TN: The little ones wouldn't. They stayed there at the Village.
- LN: Would any of the non-Village children come to play there at the Village?
- LM: That again would be with the older teenagers, I think. I don't think we allowed them to stay to eat at the Village dining room for the same reason. One of the problems we

knew that the families were having, that their children—they couldn't eat together. They would be scattered. Of course, we always made it a rule for our children to come back to the Village for their meals, so we didn't encourage, unless there was some special occasion when one child would ask if they could have someone come and stay for dinner or something like that. But, no overnight stay or anything of that kind.

LN: Were there other areas in camp that had swings and other toys or slides?

LM: I think so. It depended on the blocks, what the block people did for their block. I think they had swings and things like that, whatever they would make for them.

LN: Because I'm just thinking that maybe the other children would want to come to the Village to use the swings or slides or something. But, you don't remember?

TN: I don't remember others coming in to swing.

LN: But, they could have, right? I mean, there would not have been any restriction on that? That would have been fine for them to come?

LM: I guess so. But as you mentioned yesterday, there might have been sort of a prejudice on the part of the rest of the community who said, Don't go over there. You know, the parents might say, Don't go over there and play with those children. Maybe that was the reason they didn't come, one of the reasons, I don't know. (laughs) But then, that was no problem. If they came, why, certainly we wouldn't have chased them out or anything. (laughs)

LN: Did you have trick-or-treating for Halloween?

TN: I don't think so.

LM: I don't know whether the camp ever had that or not. I don't remember at all.

LN: But, there would be Christmas parties?

LM: Um-hm. We always had a Christmas party. We had parties, and sometimes the cook would have something special in the way of dessert for a special occasion. Like, if it was a Valentine's dinner, he would have special heart cookies or something that he would make up. So, in that way, the children were fortunate, that the head of the kitchen was a very understanding person.

LN: Did you have better food at the Village than the rest of the mess halls?

LM: Well, I don't know whether we had better food, because what is passed out to all the mess halls is the same, I mean the basic food. But I think he probably made it—his

menu was probably more interesting. He didn't have to serve as many, but he made it. (laughs)

LN: And he was Japanese so he would have more of an understanding also of what Japanese people would eat. I mean, because in other mess halls they would have things like Jell-O on top of rice. Did you ever have Jell-O on top of rice?

TN: I don't remember anything like that, no. I don't remember that.

LN: Or what else would they do? Canned peaches on top of rice.

LM: No, we didn't have anything like that. (laughs) If we had canned peaches, it was separate as a dessert. I know one of the things that the boys just loved was pork—was it pork or something roast? But anyway, the gravy on top of the rice. (laughs) That I know they loved, and he would fix things like that.

LN: Do you remember his name? I think I asked you that yesterday.

LM: No, I don't.

LN: Was he a Nisei or Issei?

LM: Issei, I think.

LN: He was Issei? So, he was an older man? And then, the other kitchen staff would, of course, have been Japanese internees?

LM: Japanese internees. I think those who worked on the kitchen staff there, I think a lot of them wanted to be able to get on that staff there because they said they had food that was a little different. (laughs)

LN: And then they could eat that food instead. You had mentioned being close to the hospital. How often were children sent to the hospital? I mean, was there a big need? Did they get sick?

LM: No, no big need. I don't think we had any serious—I don't think we even encountered a broken arm or a broken leg or anything like that.

LN: I think Tamo said he had appendicitis, though, while he was in camp. So, he went to the hospital for it?

LM: Oh, for surgery?

LN: Yeah.

LM: Did he? Oh, I don't remember that.

LN: Were there any deaths of any of the orphanage children?

LM: No.

LN: No? Did any of the females—there were no pregnancies or anything?

LM: No.

LN: No fights?

LM: No real bad fights. Sometimes there might be shouting and a tear and something, but—

LN: No fist-fighting or anything?

LM: No.

LN: It sounds like a good bunch of kids. (laughs)

LM: See, the older boys, Tamo and his group, who were the older ones, really looked after the little ones, the younger ones. I think they mentioned that at the fiftieth anniversary, those who are now grown up, this group that's grown up—and here's Tamo, the older, how they looked up to Tamo and the other boys, and how good they were to them. So, I think that was one of the reasons why the children were happy to stay there.

LN: So Taeko, as an older staff member—I mean, you weren't that much older, but you were a few years older than some of the teenage girls there. Would they come to you when they needed to talk to someone about boys or personal things?

TN: No. I don't remember any of them coming to talk on any kind of personal matter.

LN: And they would all be educated outside of the Village, so you didn't have to worry about schooling, except for the nursery school children, right?

LM: Um-hm.

LN: Now for the nursery school, would you allow other nursery-school-age children outside of the Village to come in?

LM: No, it was just the children there. Mrs. Ichida was in charge of that.

LN: And how about in terms of having a group of males and a group of females living so close together without parental supervision all the time? Did you have any problems between males and females in terms of sex or them wanting to go off?

LM: No. I had several girls who came because they were older ones who were interested in one of the boys, non-Village boys, you know, who they met in high school or something, and they wanted to go to the movie together or something. They usually came and asked permission. They didn't just go off on their own.

LN: So, they would usually come to you or Harry to ask for permission to do something like that?

LM: Um-hm.

LN: So, you and Harry, in that way, were kind of parental figures.

LM: I guess so, yes.

LN: And it was your sense that they could come to you freely if they wanted to talk?

LM: Um-hm.

LN: Did you and Harry spend the majority of your time actually in the office, or was a lot of your time spent out in the orphanage with the children?

LM: I think 50 percent of the time we would be interacting with the other staff and with the children.

LN: What did you do during your spare time?

LM: Well, what did we do? (laughs)

[00:50:00]

LN: Did you have any spare time? (laughs)

TN: I guess walking around camp, going to the co-op store, buying a little something. Or there were times when we'd order from the catalog, Sears catalog, and anxiously wait for the item to come.

LM: What you could buy for the \$16. (laughs)

TN: Just walking around, I guess, and watching people play, baseball or—I don't remember volleyball. I remember baseball.

LM: We had a team. The boys had a baseball team that was part of the Manzanar league, or whatever it was. I think we let the girls join a club. There was a YWCA, and I think some of the girls took part in the activities there.

LN: Did you and Harry have any free time to spend together, to do whatever?

- LM: I suppose there was. (laughs) We went to the movies together or something.
- TN: I can remember my sister taking up cosmetology there in camp, and it just so happened she came in first place in the hair styling. They had models that they fixed their hair, and I remember she came in first place. I was so proud of her. (laughs)
- LM: And then, when she relocated to New York she had enough training that she was able to get a job there.
- LN: She was in cosmetology training after she left the Village?
- TN: It was there in camp, Manzanar camp.
- LN: No, I mean after she was in the Village. She lived in the Village first, right?
- TN: Yes.
- LN: And then, you and she had moved out of the Village to live just in Manzanar?
- TN: Yes.
- LN: So, was she going to cosmetology school then?
- TN: I think that's when she was probably going to school?
- LN: How about when you were relocated from Manzanar? How did you get to your destinations?
- TN: Oh, by train, I remember. I have a picture in the Children's Village of the day that we left, my sister and I and Ruth Takamune. Ruth isn't in the picture, but my sister and I are with Harry and Lillian, and that was the day we left camp, July 14, 1944. That's what the date said on the back. We relocated to New York City, all the way across the United States. (laughs)
- LM: By train.
- TN: By train, right. I remember the train was for ladies only, ladies and children. It was all painted pink outside, all pink. We got to New York City and my sister found a place at the YWCA. That's where she lived and went to work. Then Ruth and I went to that Saint Mary's Hospital for Children in New York City, just maybe about a mile from Macy's department store in 34th Street, as I remember.
- LN: Do you remember how you were treated?
- TN: Oh, we were treated very nice. All the teachers were nuns. They wore their habits. They were all very nice to us. I liked it very much.

LN: Lillian, how did you get to Salt Lake City?

LM: By train. We had permission to take Karyl. My parents were already there. They had a bought a house. They were in Topaz and had relocated. They decided to live in Salt Lake because that's where they're originally [from]. From Manzanar they always had a little shuttle bus that would take all the people who were relocating up to Reno, and then they'd board a train there. I don't know how long Harry stayed with us, maybe a couple weeks or three weeks. And then, he went on to New York. Eventually, see, Karyl and I were to go to New York and join him. But, in the meantime, I found out I was—

LN: Pregnant. (laughs)

LM: So, we decided to stay in Salt Lake until I had the baby, and then maybe join him later. But, he was there maybe six, seven, eight months, then he decided that New York wasn't a place to raise children, and he didn't like it there. So, he said he was coming back. He came back just before Kent was born, and then we lived in Salt Lake for, oh, I guess Kent was a year old or so when we moved back to Berkeley.

LN: Did your whole family go? Your parents went back to Berkeley, too?

LM: No, they stayed. They moved later, but they were there for several years. Well, my father died while we were still living there. And then my mother and younger sister came to Berkeley, I think, in 1949 or 1950. But, my other sister decided she was going to remain in Salt Lake.

LN: What did Harry do when he was in New York?

LM: He was working at the YMCA for a while, and then—I guess he worked there the whole time he was there. Then when he came back to Salt Lake it was harder to find a job, so he picked up all kinds of little things, manual as well as whatever. Then we decided to come back to Berkeley, and then he became a salesman for the Alcoa Company selling WearEver products, cookware.

LN: He had been born and raised in Los Angeles, so was this his first experience in Berkeley when you moved?

LM: Um-hm.

LN: And why did you choose Berkeley as a spot to move to?

LM: Oh, I guess we both decided we didn't want to go back to Los Angeles to live, and we decided Berkeley was an easier place, a nicer place to maybe raise children. I told him if he wanted to go back to L.A. we could, but I think he felt he'd rather be up here.

- LN: Do you think maybe because of his experiences from being interned and relocated, having been in L.A., do you think that had anything to do with it?
- LM: I really don't know why. Of course, maybe he thought I would like it better because my family would eventually plan to come.
- LN: Taeko, you went for training as a nurse, correct?
- TN: Um-hm, a nursery nurse. (laughs)
- LN: Is that what you ended up doing after you finished school?
- TN: I did for one year. After I graduated, I worked for one year at a hospital out there, then I moved to the West Coast and I was, like, a governess. It wouldn't be like a schoolgirl because I didn't go to school, like a governess in a private home for about a year. And then, I got married to John.
- LN: Why did you choose to come back to the West Coast?
- TN: Oh, because John had to go back to the West Coast. That's where his parents were and he wanted to help them settle down, and then we were writing to each other, so that's why I went back to the West Coast.
- LN: Where was John relocated first?
- LM: Well, let's see. He was at Wheaton College, and then he went to the West Coast and took a year at UCLA, and then I think he went back to Wheaton College to finish, and graduated from there.
- LN: And then, after you had gotten married, did you become a housewife then or did you still work?
- TN: Yes, I did work. I worked in L.A. city at the general hospital for a while. While he was going to the seminary, I was working. We were living with John's parents then until John joined the Pacific Coast Free Methodist Conference, and they sent him on his first assignment to Gallup, New Mexico. And that's where we went. (laughs) We didn't have any furniture or anything. Everything we owned, we packed it in our car and drove all the way to New Mexico.
- LN: Did you already have kids by then?
- TN: Oh, no.
- LN: No? They came after?
- TN: Joy came afterwards. (laughs)

[01:00:00]

LN: Lillian, how about for you and Harry? You had spent time in your life doing social work. Did you just not have the desire to get back into social work?

LM: After we moved back to Berkeley, I decided—and Harry didn't want me to work. He thought the children—it was important then, and so I was just an ordinary mother and housewife until both Karyl and Kent started high school. Then I felt that I could go out and work or whatever I wanted to do. Then I decided—not particularly I didn't want to go back into social work, but I didn't see anything that I really liked in that area. Then I applied at the university because there were several positions open in the library. I started first in the Biology Library as just a regular worker there, and then I got promoted to be head of the circulation for Biology. I was that for almost ten years, head of circulation for the Biology Library. Then I transferred to the main library and became head of the interlibrary lending. And then, I was in charge of that for another ten years. By that time the children had grown. Kent was on his way to grad school, and Karyl had married (laughs) and then I retired in 1979.

LN: So, do you think your internment experience, or your experience at Shonien or the Children's Village had anything to do with your decision not to—

LM: No. I don't think that affected me at all. I just wanted to do something else, I think. Because I wasn't trained in the area of community social work or anything like that, and I didn't particularly want to go back to work as a caseworker. And I think the idea of working at the university was rather attractive.

LN: Have either of you visited Manzanar even after camp?

TN: No. My son has, and so he took some snapshots and gave them to me. It looks like there's been quite a bit of change there. I would have liked to, but—I know they have trips to Manzanar from Southern California, but never up here in Northern California. You'd have to go way down there. I don't remember any of them from up here. Maybe they have, I don't know.

LM: I don't think too many people were sent to Manzanar from here, so I don't think there's enough to.

TN: So that's why I never have taken the trip, but I would have liked to see what it was like.

LN: Well, every year they have a Manzanar pilgrimage. They just had one in April, and it's kind of like just anyone who wants to go can go.

TN: That's from Southern California.

LN: Well, people come from other places, too.

TN: Is that right?

LN: Yeah, I think sometimes they'll take a couple buses or something, but some people drive on their own. But, you would like to visit?

TN: Yes, I would have liked to, if it were from here. (laughs)

LN: But, you and John never had that desire when you were younger to go back there?

TN: No. We didn't, I guess, have a chance then. Financially, we weren't that well-off to take trips like that.

LN: Lillian, you haven't visited Manzanar?

LM: No.

LN: Is there any reason why you haven't?

LM: No, not particularly.

LN: So, it's not a matter of, Oh, that was a bad place for me?

LM: Oh, no, no. I guess it's the distance from here. It's rather inconvenient to make a trip there. And we don't know about it till—because most of the publicity for that is in the Southern California papers, and so once in a while I'll read about it if I come across the *Pacific Citizen*, the JACL paper, and, by that time, it's usually too late. It's something afterwards. (laughs)

LN: How about between you and Harry after camp, would you every bring up camp? Would you ever be just talking about your experience, or was camp kind of something you didn't mention?

LM: Oh, no, it came up regularly, and was discussed with my children. Like Karyl, from the time she was in junior high school and high school, she knew a lot about camp life. She wrote a paper once—I think it was in social science in her high school class. She got a lot of the information from my mother because her experience was different from ours, you know. She went the regular route with all of them. They were in Tanforan and they lived in a stable for a while, and so she had stories like that to tell Karyl. So, when Karyl wrote it up in her social science paper, this was at Berkeley High School, she got a note back from the teacher. At the end of the last page, it said, Tell your grandmother to tell the truth.

TN: Oh, isn't that terrible!

LN: Oh, my gosh.

LM: That's written. So, I told Karyl, "Don't lose that paper. Keep it." And she still has it. Berkeley High was one of the top schools in the country at that time, but even the teacher there, and a social science teacher of all things, still had that attitude.

LN: But, it wasn't a sense of shame. Camp wasn't a sense of shame for you?

LM: Oh, no.

LN: Taeko, how about between you and John? How often would you talk about camp, or would you talk about camp at all?

TN: Oh, we did, from time to time we would talk about it, how we used to meet in camp. (laughs) Because that's where we met.

LN: Did you talk to your children about camp as well?

TN: Yes, we have mentioned it to them.

LN: And it's not a sense of shame or anything for you?

TN: No.

LN: Do you consider it a bad experience in your life, a bad part of your life?

TN: No, I don't think so, no. I just accepted it. I mean I never gave it a thought that it was a bad experience.

LN: I'm wondering if, for the both of you, you were both raised in Christian families, if that had anything to do with how you view camp, how you viewed it then and how you view it now? I mean, do you see that being raised in a Christian family has helped you deal with it, or helped you deal with in that maybe not being as bitter about it?

TN: I think it has helped me a lot in camp, being a Christian.

LN: Lillian, how about for yourself?

LM: I think so, too. I think my parents' attitude, too, they were very open-minded, and from the time we were small, the way they raised us, so I think—well, there's bitterness. And I saw that in my mother and father when the evacuation started, but then I think it wasn't bitterness that they carried all the time. I think they realized that it had to take place. I think I saw a lot more sadness in my father when war came to an end and Japan lost. Although everything he tried to teach us was patriotism to America and so forth, but still he wasn't a citizen and couldn't be a citizen. So, I think when Japan lost and that news came over, I think he saw that—I think _____ (inaudible) they had to feel that. But, I think to us, Taeko and I, and I think some of

the children expressed it at the anniversary, was that the whole experience of internship was something no one else had experienced. It was ours alone. But, those of us who lived that phase of our life at the Children's Village also had a very, very unique experience, in that we were part of the whole evacuation, but also that we were with the Children's Village, and that was something different. No one else had that. And I think many of the children said that that was a separate part of their life, but an important part of their life, because it was something that no one—even though they had to go through this [evacuation], they didn't experience it the way we did.

[01:10:00]

TN: I think it was also a time of growing up for me. (laughs)

LN: How about now when you're just sitting at home or maybe you go shopping or something, do you ever just see something and then it reminds you of camp? For instance, do you see an apple or something and think of the apple orchard? You know what I mean? Is there something that hits you and it reminds you of camp?

TN: No, I don't think so. (laughs) I haven't yet.

LM: I don't have any contact with something that suddenly brings that up. But, I have a granddaughter who's—of course, my son never experienced camp. He was born after the war, and my daughter-in-law is Caucasian. But, they've told her that Grandma went through this kind of experience and what it was so my granddaughter is very conscious of that. She's only eight, but she has had, this past year a very excellent teacher. And even though they're only third graders, she read to them Korematsu. There's one that's written by Steven Chen, and it's in paperback and it's for children. Well, she read the book to the whole class and they took it _____ (inaudible). They talked about justice and injustice and so forth. So, at the end of that, my granddaughter said, "My grandma went to camp. She went to Manzanar. She was in charge of the Children's Village. I think Grandma will come and talk to you." (laughs)

LN: (laughs)

LM: I got a call from the teacher, and I got a call from her. "Grandma will you come?" So, I did. I did talk to them, and I was so surprised because they're third graders. It's a divided class so some of them are second graders, but they're very intelligent, second graders. But the teacher was so surprised because I held their attention for an hour-and-a-half. They just sat there, and then at the end, we showed a lot of these pictures. Then after that, I asked if they had any questions. I didn't expect them, but you should have seen the arms that shot up. One of the things I told them about how they all had tags and a number. It was a family number, that's what they went by. Everything in camp was your family number. So, many of them, they wrote me thank you letters, too, and they thanked me for coming to talk to them. And they would say, But I don't think I would like having to wear a number or about a number or

- something like that. One of the questions they asked, there was one little boy who asked, "If an American father and mother were living in Japan when war broke out and they had a child, were they interned, too, in Japan by the Japanese government?" And these are third graders. Well, that was a question actually I couldn't answer, you know, whether they interned them or not. So I told him I didn't know whether they had interned them, but I'm sure their movements were restricted. But, I was so taken by this question by a third grader, and I certainly didn't touch on anything _____ (inaudible). It was an interesting experience.
- LN: Do you think that it's different now? I mean, the fact that you can go into a classroom and talk about it with second and third graders and they respond that way, do you think maybe twenty years ago, or maybe five years after the war had ended, that it would have been different, that you would have received—
- LM: I think I talked once to some group, and that was quite a long time—but I think at that time it was an older group, not adults, but older. They were maybe, like, junior high grade students, and I think their reaction was sort of disinterest. They weren't, Oh, this happened, or maybe—I think these third graders seemed a lot more interested, but maybe this particular class has had a lot of background.
- LN: Right. I know this is bouncing way back, but you had mentioned before we started taping about the Alaskan children, the children from Alaska. Do you remember approximately how many children came?
- LM: Well, to the Village, it was just this one family of three little small children. I think Harvey, who was the oldest, was probably maybe five or six, and then two younger.
- LN: It was Harvey, and what were the other two names?
- LM: From that picture, James and Rachel, and she was the baby, and she couldn't have been more than about two years old, two-and-a-half.
- LN: And Shirai was their last name?
- LM: Shirai. And that was the only children that were sent to us from Alaska. The background in that was that I think their mother might have been Eskimo—she may not have been Japanese—but she was in a tuberculosis sanitarium. And then the father, I guess up there maybe all the Japanese men were taken someplace, and so it left the three children and they were sent to us. That's the only family that we had.
- LN: But, they spoke English?
- LM: Yes, I think so.
- LN: And you didn't have any special problems or circumstances with them?

LM: No. I think they were so young that they probably wondered why they were there or something. They got along with the rest of the children _____ (inaudible).

TN: I can still remember their faces very clearly. (laughs)

LM: Yeah, that little girl was so cute.

LN: Can you remember the best experience you had in camp?

TN: The best experience? (laughs) Well, I guess my best experience was meeting John. (laughs) At that time I didn't think I'd be marrying him later.

LM: Of course, as I mentioned yesterday, the most memorable was that Christmas Eve. But going back to this fiftieth anniversary, I think what impressed me most was that these children, who I knew as ten-year-olds and so forth, had grown up and seemed like very respected, fine, children. So, I felt that their experience maybe in the Village was a good background or a nucleus for whatever they turned out to be. I'm sure among all of them, too, there might have been some who have fallen in the cracks, but then the fact that so many were such nice young men and women, that really overwhelmed me.

LN: So, you think that part of it could have been their orphanage experience, the Children's Village orphanage experience?

LM: I think so because I don't know what the staff and Harry and I could have done, but then I think overall they took that experience in a positive way; otherwise I don't think they would have grown up to be the kind of young men that I saw there. They're not young because some of them are grandparents, (laughs) but then turning out to be. They became married, had their own family, and now being grandparents, and they were such a fine family. And how so many of them thought so much of their own family. They came from maybe broken homes, but they tried to keep their own marriage steady, their own family. I think that showed in Tamo's case and in Clara's case, you know, in how they brought their own grandchildren there. I just felt that, not trying to take credit or anything, but I thought that experience—if they were unaware of it, but I think it shows. Because Tamo is so proud of his family.

LN: Did you have any problems with the children then, in terms of them feeling bad about themselves being orphans? Do you remember them ever crying about not having parents?

LM: I never had that experience with any of them, either there or at the Shonien.

LN: Taeko, how about you? Do you remember any of them complaining or feeling bad about not having parents?

TN: I don't remember anybody sharing with me about that. But, for myself, I felt sometimes very alone. I wanted somebody close that I could relate to about personal matters, but I couldn't find any so I just kind of learned through mistakes. (laughs) Family life now is very important to me, and keeping close to my children because I missed a lot of that at the Shonien, so it's very important to me.

LN: Did you feel at all that some of the other orphans were like your brothers and sisters in a way?

[01:20:00]

TN: Yes. I think you kind of look to them as brothers and sisters. I myself didn't get really close to them. We had our differences and all, but I guess growing up together, playing together and all, you kind of consider them as brothers and sisters.

LN: Did you have a feeling like Tamo did of feeling responsible or taking care of the younger ones? Did you feel that way about the younger girls?

TN: Yes, in a way.

LN: How about when the fight for redress and reparations was going on, and now that it's been approved, how do you feel about that? Do you agree with that? Do you disagree with that?

TN: Oh, I agree with it. I was very thankful to really receive the redress. In fact, my son-in-law was born in camp, so he also received a redress. Although they took him to the hospital outside of camp, he was born while in camp, so he also received a redress, which really helped him. (laughs)

LN: And Lillian, what's your feeling on redress and reparations?

LM: Well, I think it is not the amount that counts. I think it's the fact that the government finally acknowledged that they had done something wrong, and came to a point of apologizing in that way.

TN: I think for those families that were hit very hard financially, having to maybe sell their homes, losing their property or business or whatever, to them probably the redress doesn't cover all that they had to go through. I guess it did help just a little probably, but—

LN: Now that you've gotten the \$20,000 and the government has apologized, what does that mean in terms of people now and in the future learning about camp? In other words, does getting the money and their apology make up for having to go to camp?

LM: I don't think it makes up 100 percent because those feelings and what we have are going to remain with us. I mean, I don't think anybody could wipe it out by giving a

- letter of apology or making a payment. I mean, that's in us, you know. But it probably lightens that feeling, helps us, a letter apology like that, that the government finally recognizes—but I don't think it will wipe out our experience. You know, to say, "Well, now you can forget it." That's not true.
- TN: Reading in the newspaper, I can see where it kind of caused a little reaction. Like the black people wanted redress because they were taken into slavery so many years ago because we had received the redress being in camp. I guess they kind of feel that they should receive their redress.
- LN: But they weren't actually slaves. The problem that I have with that was you were actually interned, so you're getting that money for that. Is there anything that either of you would like to say or add about just your lives or camp or the Village, anything you can think of?
- LM: I think the children that grew a part of it, I know as they grow older I think they think back about it, or they hear about it, those who were three, four, five, years old, who maybe don't remember, and what they know of it is from what they hear. But, I'd like them to take that experience of having lived in the Village as a positive thing in their life and not to look at it as a negative. Because I feel that they're special, that they went through that and have grown up to be—so I think I'd like them to remember that in that way. It's not easy, I know. I think, Taeko, you too, you don't look at it as a negative thing. I mean, your experience has added something.
- TN: No. That's why I'm willing to share. But, I guess there are those that, to them, it was a bad experience, so they'd rather not have anything to do with living at the Shonien.
- LN: I think now it actually could be easier for them to deal with it now than thirty or forty years ago. Because now being an orphan is not considered such a bad thing, whereas back then it was a stigma to be an orphan, so it could be that it's easier for them to deal with it now. And I think the reunion was good, in that bringing everyone together it kind of gave them a sense that they weren't so bad, or they weren't bad people because they were in an orphanage.
- LM: I know there was one person I spoke [with] and she said she brought her son and daughter. In fact, one who was a little baby had a little granddaughter with her. She said that she was only maybe three, four, or five, and she's *heard* that she lived in Manzanar. But she doesn't have much memory about her experience of being in the Village or anything like that, but she's been told that's where she grew up. So, she said she came to find that identity. "Was I really there, or was this just people telling me that I lived there? Now that I'm here and I've talked with the others, and they said yes, they lived there, and this is what happened, now I know that part of my life, which was just blank up to that time." So, that was one of the reasons why she came to the reunion.

LN: Lillian, could you restate for me—we were talking, I believe, yesterday about what you hoped would come out of these interviews and doing research on the Village.

LM: Well, I'm grateful to you that you are doing this because especially just before the redress movement started, camp life and the evacuation and all that was something on everybody's mind and in the back of their—I mean, it was sort of closed and put away, but those things brought it out. Then, of course, as I talked to people or read about it, I realized that nobody knew that there was such a place as Children's Village. Even now if I say, "Well, I was there." "Oh, that must have been some experience." That's it. Nothing. They're not interested in it. But, I'm glad that there's someone like you who is putting this into record and will be part of the whole history of the evacuation because it was a unique thing, something different. And if no one was there and it just passed, it might have been that it was the Army's way of saying, Well, somebody take ten and distribute the children someplace. But, we were able to do something about it.

LN: Taeko, how about your feelings about—I mean, your willingness to do this interview?

TN: Oh, I was willing because I didn't see anything to hide. I think I've overcome that sort of a stigma. Maybe I still have a little bit within me, but I am willing to share about myself. I can understand those that don't want to because I had that feeling there for a long time. And I guess as you go through life, you meet different ones. I mean, you can't always be quiet about yourself. People ask me different things, so I will tell them. I know a lot of our church people that know about me. Maybe there are some that don't. I don't go through details, but if they ask me different things, I tell them that I lived in an orphanage and all that. So, I'm willing to share. I have nothing to hide. (laughs)

[01:40:00]

LN: Do you keep in contact with anyone from the orphanage, from the Shonien or the Children's Village now?

TN: No, not really.

LN: Lillian, how about you? Do you keep in contact with anyone from Shonien or Children's Village?

TN: Oh, just one I remember, Ruth Takamune.

LM: Some of the staff and a couple of the children that lived in the Shonien still correspond with me at Christmastime, and then Ira³ writes to me from time to time. So I have some contact.

³ Ira Iwata, O.H. 3775, Center for Oral and Public History.

LN: Is there anything else that either of you would like to say?

LM: Well, I'm happy, and I think Harry would be, that the Village will be remembered anyway.

TN: I'm glad that we did have that fiftieth reunion with the former Children's Village internees. I don't think there'll be really another opportunity to have another one, but I'm glad that we did have it.

LM: The final get-together was a breakfast. It was just going to be, you know, have breakfast and goodbye, but it turned into kind of a teary session. (laughs)

LN: Yeah, that's when Sohei Hohri⁴ have his speech, right?

LM: Um-hm. And then, Tamo opened the floor to anybody who would like to [speak]. And it was surprising, a number of people got up and said a little about their experience at the Village, some at the Shonien, sort of got mixed up in there, but a lot of crying. (laughs)

LN: Well, I want to thank both of you for your willingness to do these interviews. I'm glad that both of you were willing to speak about the Village. [recording paused] Well, like I was saying before the tape cut off, I'm really glad that you were willing to share about this. Because without your perspective it would have been a lot harder to get a full picture of what the Children's Village was like, especially because a lot of the interviews from the people that we have done interviews with so far were real young when they were at the Village. So, they don't have an understanding of everything that was going on. The two of you were older, to see things in a different way. And Lillian, because you were responsible for how it got started, that can't be found in any of the newspaper articles that exist or any of the theses exist. It doesn't talk about your desire and your motivations for wanting the orphanage to be there. I think, to have that knowledge, there's a lot more understanding than about what the purpose of the Village was and how the children were raised, and it makes it a lot easier to see how the children became the way they are today. Because you're right, when we talk to some of the former orphanage children, instead of being bitter they tell me things. Like Tamo, he told me he doesn't feel bad for himself. The people he feels bad for are the other internees who lost their homes, or who lost things like kimonos and things that they could not bring with them to camp. But, for him, it was a good experience because to be around all these other Japanese Americans and to have a kind of sense of family at the orphanage—and I think that's really rare. I have asked people to talk about you and your relationship with the children, and they can't remember. They don't remember really spending time with you, they were too young or whatever, and talking to you helps me understand your role in the Village. And now when I write my thesis I can give credit where credit's due and also talk about your contribution to that, and getting it from you, as opposed to from other people.

⁴ Sohei Hohri, O.H. 3786, Center for Oral and Public History.

- It's too bad that Harry and John couldn't be here now to talk to them. I'm sure that they would have a lot to add, too.
- LM: We've enjoyed meeting you. What little we could contribute, I'm glad we were able to.
- LN: It was a lot. It wasn't just a little, it was a lot. When it's transcribed, you'll get a copy and you can edit out whatever you want or change things around or add things if you'd like to do that. Once I finish my thesis, which will probably be in about a year, I'll let you have a copy of that. And my paper, I'll send you a copy of my paper and all that, too, okay?
- LM: Well, we wish you lots of luck.
- LN: Thanks, I'll need it. (laughs)
- LM: And, if there's anything in the course of writing your paper or something you feel that maybe we could clarify something for you, why, just feel free to contact us.
- LN: Thanks.
- TN: So, the pictures, you'll be taking them, and take out whatever you need to use.
- LN: Okay.
- TN: And then, you'll be sending them back?
- LN: Yeah, I'll send them back. I'll just need to get copies of them. I'll probably need to ask who is this in this picture, or what did they do. If in the future I might want to do further interviews with you, then I will let you know, or maybe there's other people that you know of that I could contact. I haven't talked with anyone from the Salvation Army staff, and I don't know if they're still alive.
- LM: We have had no contact with the Ichidas, as you know. I know Mr. Ichida passed away years ago, but where May is I have no idea.
- TN: I know Ruth Takamune—well, she's way out there in New York or Mexico.
- LM: The last letter I got from her was in Mexico. After her husband retired, they divided their time between southern France—they had a home in Nice—so part of the year they would be there, and usually toward the winter and holidays they would come back to New York and spend it with their children and grandchildren. But, they sold the place in France, and now they've purchased a place in Mexico—where, I can't remember what little place it is.
- TN: How many years ago was it that we had the reunion with _____ (inaudible) and Ruth?

LM: Maybe it's five years.

TN: Was it five years? It's been a while.

LM: She invited us a number of times, and she said, "Before we move, come to France."

LN: And you never went, huh? (laughs)

LM: We never did. That would have been nice.

LN: That would have been nice.

LM: But, Ruth would have a lot of interesting—because she had a lot of contact. She worked directly with the children, so—

TN: Oh, yes. She was well-respected by all the kids.

LM: Because at the reunion many of them asked, Where is Ruth?

TN: Yes, right, many of them mentioned Ruth.

LM: The children at the Village refer to us, the staff, as the *otonas*. (laughs) They always say, The *otonas* said this, or did this.

TN: I haven't heard that word for so long! (laughs)

LM: They'd say, Oh, we heard you're one of the *otonas*. (laughs)

LN: I'm sure Margaret D'Ille has probably passed away.

LM: Yes. Would you like me to send it to you if I get that back?

LN: Her biography? Yes, I would like that. And I wonder, Eva Robbins, was Eva Robbins older than you?

LM: I think so. I don't even have a picture of her. Sue used to be in contact with her? Do you remember?

TN: Sue used to be in contact with whom?

LM: Eva Robbins, afterwards.

TN: Oh, I don't know.

LM: I think she was. Maybe Eva Robbins might be—what, fifty years since the evacuation, so she might be quite elderly, or might have even passed on.

LN: Okay, I'll go through the pictures and see.

TN: This is, I guess, the life story of Yasu Kusumoto. She was the adopted daughter of Mr. Kusumoto of the Shonien, and it tells about her life. I typed it from this newspaper clipping that she had made. I tried to make copies, but it was so dark, and it's so hard to read when it's so small. So, I typed the whole thing like that, and it's easier to read. Did I give you one, Lillian?

[01:50:03]

LM: Yes, I received one, thank you.

LN: Is this for me to keep?

TN: Yeah, you can keep it. I have other copies.

LN: Thank you.

TN: Do you have that?

LN: I have that.

LM: She lives in Los Angeles. Her name is Kusumoto.

TN: On Redcliff Street.

LM: Her husband is Japan-born, and I guess in the old Japanese way, he was a Yoshi, so he took her surname. She lives on Redcliff, which is the old Shonien address there.

LN: Now does she live in one of the old buildings that was the Shonien?

LM: Yes.

TN: I don't know if you saw this. These are what we had received at the reunion.

LN: Yeah, I have this one.

TN: You have that one? Oh, I see.

LN: Actually, I have it on video. I haven't watched it yet, but it was videotaped, and so Tamo—

TN: You mean the reunion?

- LN: Yeah, the reunion. I think it was Tamo what lent it to me, and so I'll watch that and see. Mary Miya⁵ (inaudible)—yhis is a nice picture.
- TN: You sure can recognize them.
- LM: It's nice ever that many came.
- LN: That's quite a lot, I mean, considering everyone lives far apart.
- TN: Yes, and some have passed away.
- LN: Well, because there was only a total of 101 orphans. That's quite a lot when some have passed away and some live on the East Coast. So now, including your two interviews, this will make twelve interviews, and that's more than 10 percent, so I think that's pretty good. Hopefully, if people have the money to travel to go to places to interview other people, hopefully we can get everyone interviewed.
- LM: Who are some of the people you have interviewed?
- LN: I have a list. I can tell you right now. So, in addition to the two of you, Dennis Tojo Bambauer.
- TN: You met with him?
- LN: I didn't meet with him. Reiko, who is also on the project, she came up to Sacramento and interviewed him. Let's see, Clara Hayashi has been interviewed. Both Tamo and Tak Isozaki⁶ have been interviewed. Betsy [Setsuko] Matsuno.
- TN: Oh, yes, she was a baby then in camp.
- LN: Yeah. Tak Matsuno, Mary, Miya—or Mary Matsuno—have been interviewed.
- TN: This Betsy, can she remember _____ (inaudible).
- LN: I don't think she remembered much.
- TN: Because she was just a baby then.
- LN: Annie Shiraishi Sakamoto⁷, Takashi Suyematsu⁸, Sam Masami Tanaka⁹, and Susie [Watamura] Matsuno.¹⁰ And like I told you, we tried Alice Kaneko, and she has refused.

⁵ Mary Matsuno Miya, O.H. 2489, Center for Oral and Public History.

⁶ Takato Isozaki, O.H. 2337, Center for Oral and Public History.

⁷ Annie Sakamoto, O.H. 2486, Center for Oral and Public History.

⁸ Herbert Takashi Suyematsu, O.H. 2488, Center for Oral and Public History.

⁹ Sam Tanaka, O.H. 2333, Center for Oral and Public History.

TN: I'm surprised that Maseo—

LM: Maseo I think won't because we called her to come to the dinner at least, but she wouldn't even come to the reunion.

LN: Did you give you a reason why she didn't want to go?

LM: No, she just said—so I called her from—and I said, “We're here, so can you just come? Somebody will come after you.” “No,” she said, “I won't.” She gave me no reason, but she just refused, so I didn't push it. But, Alice came. We went after her, and we brought her.

LN: Maybe Alice should have gotten her to come. (laughs) I don't know, maybe now I can call Alice myself. Someone else was trying to ask her, but maybe now this time I can call Alice myself.

LM: Maybe you could tell her that you had interviewed us.

LN: Right. If she knows that the two of you are willing to speak about it, maybe she would be more willing to speak about it, too.

LM: I know one person that you might interview, but then he has no experience at the Village because he was raised at the Shonien, and then when he was about eighteen, he left: Mits Yamazaki.¹¹ It's really interesting because tight after this reunion thing, I got a letter from him out of the clear sky. He used to send Christmas cards, and it dropped. It just stopped. And out of the clear sky came this letter, and he had met Ira. Ira had come to see him and told him about the reunion, and oh, he said he was so sorry he didn't know about it because he would have really—then he goes into the letter about his experience, his feelings of having lived at Shonien and what I meant to him and things like that. So, although he's hasn't anything to do with the Village—because where he evacuated I'm not even sure—I think he was in the Army, too. He went into the Army. He might be an interesting person to interview if you have—I can send you his address.

TN: I remember meeting him. He came over to see us in Phoenix when we were out there. He brought his wife.

LM: I think the reason he told me why Ira came to see him after the reunion was that Ira's wife and his wife are related in some way. Either they're sisters or cousins or something. You remember the mother and the son that got up and spoke? She was one of the little ones, but she and her sister came to live at the Village. Because that was one of the tragedies at Manzanar: her father murdered her mother.

¹⁰ Susie Watamura Matsuno, O.H. 2487, Center for Oral and Public History.

¹¹ Mitsuru Yamasaki, O.H. 3592, Center for Oral and Public History.

LN: And killed himself.

LM: Um-hm. And so the two girls were brought to [the Village] and they lived—but she came to the reunion with her son.

LN: Isn't it Shizuko [Sharon Okazaki Kodama]?

LM: Yes, she's the one. But, she said her older sister, Himeko [Helen Okazaki Fukai] wouldn't come. She said, "I wish she would have come, but she wasn't interested and didn't want to come at all." But, she told me she came because she was the one that wanted to really know that she was at the Village and so forth. At the breakfast meeting she and her son got up and talked, and the son *really* said that it's up to us, the third generation, to get all the information we can about evacuation and so forth. He said, "Some of the things are painful to our parents, but we are the ones that should try and put it in writing and so forth and try to pass it on." The two of them got up, so she might be an interesting person [to interview]. I have her address, too. I can send that to you. She lives someplace in Southern California.

TN: I thought it was brave or real thoughtful of the son to go up there with his mother, to kind of give her support. I thought it was so sweet.

LM: Because she broke down, you know, right by the son who came.

LN: How old was she about when she went into the Village? Just three or something?

LM: I think so, somewhere.

LN: Twenty-two, yeah, she's right here.

LM: She was right next to the little Matsuno. This is she.

LN: So, she was really, what, four or five?

LM: I think so. And her older sister, I wonder where she is?

LN: Did you at one time know all of the children by name? I mean, if you saw them you would know them by name?

LM: Yes. It took a while, but I'd have to—(laughs)

TN: I can't even remember a lot of them.

LM: Some of them I know the name, and I can't picture them, and so when we got this numbered, then I thought, Oh, that's _____ (inaudible).

TN: That really helped to have them numbered.

- LM: This girl, she must have been only about ten, twelve. She's Clara Niguma [Yakushi]. She's the one that brought three children and about four grandchildren with her. Because she said, "I want them to know that I have gone through this, and I want them to know that this is true." So, she brought the whole family.
- LN: You know, we've been talking about it as *the Village* when we talk about it. Would you just refer to it as *the Village*, too, at that time?
- LM: I think so, didn't we? Just *the Village*.
- LN: I'd really like to know how that name came about. That's what I would like to know.
- LM: I don't think we gave it the name. I think maybe the project director or—I don't think Mrs. D'Ille was there yet.
- TN: Was it Ralph Merritt? Was he the—
- LM: He was later. There was this person who was there when Manzanar first started. Then after that was a project director, his name was Temple, something Temple, and then it was Mr. Merritt. But, my recollection is that the name was there when we got there, that it was already named the Children's Village by someone.
- LN: I've looked into computers trying to find something on the Children's Village, and when I put Children's Village in, other things with the same name come up that were orphanages. I wonder if they just took that name from other orphanages. My other hypothesis is that to say orphanage doesn't—because at the time orphans were looked down on, and so to say orphanage kind of sounds bad. It gives people negative connotations. So, by calling it the Children's Village, in a way, you're euphemizing it and not having to call it an orphanage and making it seem like it's not an orphanage. So, it's not so bad. That's my other idea, but I don't know.
- LM: I always liked when I went to the Japanese Children's Home to work. Of course, I knew it was an orphanage for children or orphans, half-orphans, but I liked it because the word orphanage didn't even appear in the name. It was just Japanese Children's Home of Southern California. And in Japanese it was Shonien, which meant children's garden.
- LN: Oh, that's what Shonien means?
- LM: Um-hm, children's garden. At least, I guess when the Japanese characters are written—that's what I was told because I can't read that, but that was what it meant. I always liked the fact that the word orphanage never appeared. I myself never use it. I will refer always to the Village or the Children's Home or the Shonien home. Or, if I'm talking with someone who's a social worker, I will refer to it as the institution or something like that.

LN: But, you don't—

LM: I don't like the word orphanage, and I never have. I try to wipe that off my mind and not use it. (laughs)

LN: Do you know why you don't? Is there a reason?

LM: I don't know. Maybe it's the fact that it has that connotation that children who were bad were sent there. It's never because they don't have a parent. It's always, to me, it's like bad children went there. And that was what many of the people in the Los Angeles area told their children, If you're bad, you're going to go to the Shonien, so you better be good. So, I used to try when I talked to, like, the church women's group and things like that, you know, to help try to erase that. Because I said, "There's no bad children there."

LN: Taeko, was it you that—didn't you say *Naka Shonien*?

TN: Um-hm.

LN: Why do you say it that way? What does that mean?

TN: *Naka* is Southern California.

TN: In Japanese, *Naka* means—

LM: No, *Naka* refers to Southern California.

TN: Southern California. Yeah, I've seen that written down as *Naka*.

LM: The character, I think, refers to that area.

LN: Oh, so that's why you say it that way. Well, I guess I'm going to turn the tape recorder off now.

END OF INTERVIEW