

Japanese American Farmers in the San Fernando Valley Before and After World War II

Oral History Project

Fusaye Ohara

Oral History Interview

San Fernando Valley

26 March, 2004

Interview conducted by

Faith Ramirez, Henderson Lee

Transcript prepared by

Henderson Lee

AAS 390: Asian American Communities Field Practicum

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LIFE HISTORY  
BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

SFV JACC Representative \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

CSUN Representative FAITH RAMIREZ AND

CSUN Representative HENDERSON LEE

Location of Interview SAN FERNANDO JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER

1. Name: Jusaya Oba M / ☒ F  
2. Address: 11042 Arleta Ave Nishi Hills 91345  
3. Phone(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

4. Birth Date: 4/14/17 5. Birth Place: Glendale Calif 6. Citizenship USA

6a. Date of immigration: \_\_\_\_\_ 6b. Departure point: \_\_\_\_\_

7. List Sisters / Brothers (Eldest to youngest - Include yourself): \_\_\_\_\_

Jomige Kasamatsu, Masaochi Oba, George Oba

8. Marital Status (and dates): \_\_\_\_\_

9. Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Children (and birth dates): Mae (1- Jim (2, 21,

Harry (4, 12 - Eddie (Oct 14-

11. Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Languages Spoken: English

13. Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Places lived and dates: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Mother's Maiden Name: Tokuno Segimichi Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of immigration: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

16. Father's Maiden Name: Jimuto Oba Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of immigration: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Maternal Grandparents: Segimichi

18. Maternal Grandparents: \_\_\_\_\_

19. Education:

Elementary: X Secondary: X

High School: X Other: \_\_\_\_\_

20. Work Experiences (and dates): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

21. Organizations, member of (past and present): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. Location of farm(s) and the types of crops/flowers grown

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

23. Size of Farm(s) 10 A

24. Circle the category(ies) that best describes you (Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Kibei)

25. Do you have any photos of yourself prior to World War II, or immediately after World War II that you can loan us? If not, can you show the camera person the photo?

Photo description and approximate date \_\_\_\_\_

Photo description and approximate date \_\_\_\_\_

Photo description and approximate date \_\_\_\_\_

Photo description and approximate date \_\_\_\_\_

Photo description and approximate date \_\_\_\_\_

Photo description and approximate date \_\_\_\_\_

FUSAYE OHARA

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

Narrator: Fusaye Ohara

Occupation: Retired farmer

Address: 12953 Branford Street, Pacoima 91331

Date of Interview: March 26, 2004

Length: 65 minutes

Session: One

Place: San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center

Subject: Japanese American Farmers in the San Fernando Valley Before and After World

War II

Interviewer: Faith Ramirez and Henderson Lee



### Abstract Summary

Faith and I interviewed Fusaye Ohara in the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center on March 26, 2004. I think our interview was very challenging because Fusaye doesn't remember much of her past and she answered no on most of the questions.

Fusaye doesn't remember were there any Japanese American families or other ethnic groups living in her area while she was growing up. She doesn't know why her parents ended up in the San Fernando Valley. She just told us that her parents came from the farming class in Japan, they grew corn and strawberries in the San Fernando Valley. Fusaye was the eldest child in the family, she has three brothers and two sisters. Her father was the one who made key decisions in the family.

Fusaye doesn't remember much about growing up on the farms. She has to work on the farm after school. She felt that her parents treated her siblings equally, and I was surprised to hear that none of her parents tend to be stricter. Her parents tried to instill the traditional Japanese customs and values inside home such as they had to obey their parents in the Japanese way.

Fusaye didn't remember much about her school experiences. She did attend Japanese school while growing up. She told us that she didn't experienced any racism being a Japanese before the war. She met her spouse from her families' arranged marriage, she was not allowed to date anyone because of her parents.

Fusaye's family were sent to Manzanar during the internment. Her family went to Colorado after the internment for nine months, then returned back to the San Fernando Valley for farming.

After we finished our interview questions with Fusaye, Nancy Takayama of the SFVJACC came in and joined our conversation. They began to talk about their families. Fusaye

told us a little bit about her children. She said that she gave her children freedom, she let them do what they want. For example, one of her sons married a Chinese girl. The Chinese girl didn't talk to her at the beginning, later on, their relationships became better. Fusaye is grateful that her children found a great job.

## Index

### Minute

- 001 Fusaye couldn't remember the neighbors in her area. Her family grew corn and strawberries in the farm.
- 002 Her parents were farmers in Japan, their farm started as ten acres.
- 003 Her father's daily routine was working on the farm, and went to the city market at night. Her mother's daily routine was the same as her father.
- 004 She has three brothers and two sisters, they all took care of themselves. Her father hired someone to work on the farm, but she forgot who.
- 005 Her father made the key decisions in the family. Her parents never participate in any strikes before the war time. The hardship that her parents face from society would be when they first came to America.
- 006 Her daily routine was go to school, work on the farm. She also went to the Japanese school, she liked there. She doesn't have any specific chores.
- 007 She felt that her brothers and sisters were treated equally by her parents. She was the eldest children in the family.
- 008 She was age 32 after the war.
- 009 Her family's aspirations for her and her siblings was to help out on the farm. Her parents usually spend with them over the weekend.
- 010 None of her parents tend to be stricter, both the same. The children just need to help the mother.
- 011 There were nobody living in the house besides her family. Her parents tried to instill the traditional Japanese customs and values inside the home such as the children have to obey the parents in Japanese style. They also have to greet the outsiders.

- 012 When any of the family members getting sick, the others in the family would take turn to take care of the sick person, they never go to the hospital.
- 013 Her mother gave birth in the house, her father would take care of the baby after the birth.
- 014 When her parents didn't work, the family would listened to the radio. Her family celebrate Christmas and the New Year. On New Year, they would stay all night to prepare for the good stuff. She has no family vacations.
- 015 She doesn't remember the ethnic make-up of her school in Glendale, mostly Caucasians. After certain age, she began to have friends of different ethnicities, but they never come over to her house. There were not a lot of Japanese Americans in her classroom.
- 016 Before the war, people didn't treat her differently as a Japanese. She attended Japanese school while growing up, and she liked it. She doesn't have any activities for fun because she has the same routine everyday. Her family involved in the North Hollywood Farming Association, they go to picnic once a year.
- 017 Dating was never allowed in her family because her parents were strict about that. She met her husband before the camp, they married in 1934.
- 018 Most of the marriage were like a picture bride or arranged by the family. Her husband worked in a grocery store in Japan. She didn't knew her husband too long before they married. The wedding was big, it was held in the Hikashi Temple in Los Angeles.
- 019 She has nothing to do except farming.
- 020 Her children were too young to work on the farm.
- 021 She didn't experienced any racial backlash before the war.
- 022 She doesn't remember Pearl Harbor Day, except they were not to over five miles their own district.
- 023 Her family left some of their properties in a white family, they were not able to get it



back after the camp.

024 Her family burned the family photographs because they lived near to the Burbank airport.

025 Her family carried what they could, mostly clothes, they were sent to Manzanar.

026 She remembered some of the Japanese claimed they were Chinese and didn't have to go to camp.

027 Her family went to Colorado for nine months after the camp, they were back to Northridge afterwards.

028 Her family never returned to their old farm because somebody lived there already. They continued farming.

029 Her eldest son used to work for Lucky and now retire in Sunfield, second son used to work for Fedco and retire before it closed, her daughter work in Simi and Glendale. She sees her children often except the one in Sunfield.

042 Her second kid Jimmy who worked in Fedco married a Chinese girl.

059 Her husband passed away in 1975.

Interviewee: Fusaye Ohara [FO]

Interviewer: Faith Ramirez [FR]

Date: March 26, 2004

Subject: San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center

001 FR: My name is Faith Ramirez and I'm interviewing Fusaye Ohara in the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center at March 26, 2004. Hi Miss Ohara, how are you doing today? First of all, I would like to know about the demographics in the San Fernando Valley. Were there other Japanese American families living in your area?

FO: I don't know.

FR: Do you know any of your neighbors?

FO: I don't think so.

002 FR: What did your parents do?

FO: Farming.

FR: Can you tell us how your parents end up in the San Fernando Valley?

FO: I don't know.

FR: Does your parents have any previous farming experiences?

FO: In Japan.

FR: What kinds of crops did they grow?

FO: Strawberry, corn, and that's it.

FR: How many acres was the farm?

FO: We started as ten acres.

003 FR: Can you tell me what your father's daily routine was?

FO: My father work on the farm, do everything, and go to the city market at night.

FR: What about your mother's daily routine?

back after the camp.

- 024 Her family burned the family photographs because they lived near to the Burbank airport.
- 025 Her family carried what they could, mostly clothes, they were sent to Manzanar.
- 026 She remembered some of the Japanese claimed they were Chinese and didn't have to go to camp.
- 027 Her family went to Colorado for nine months after the camp, they were back to Northridge afterwards.
- 028 Her family never returned to their old farm because somebody lived there already. They continued farming.
- 029 Her eldest son used to work for Lucky and now retire in Sunfield, second son used to work for Fedco and retire before it closed, her daughter work in Simi and Glendale. She sees her children often except the one in Sunfield.
- 042 Her second kid Jimmy who worked in Fedco married a Chinese girl.
- 059 Her husband passed away in 1975.

FO: Same thing.

004 FR: Who was responsible for the household duties and taking care of your brothers and sisters?

FO: I have three brothers and two sisters, all of them take care of themselves.

FR: Did your parents hire anyone to work on the farm?

FO: Yes.

FR: Who were they?

FO: I don't remember.

005 FR: Who made the key decisions in your family?

FO: My father.

FR: What kinds of hardship did your parents face from society?

FO: When they first came to America.

FR: Is there one memory of your parents you would like to share with us?

FO: No.

006 FR: Can you describe what your daily routine was like?

FO: Go to school, work on the farm.

007 FR: Do you feel that your brothers and sisters were treated equally by your parents?

FO: Yes, I think so.

FR: Who was the eldest?

FO: I am the eldest.

008 FR: Did your family want you to grow up and take over the farm?

FO: Yes.

FR: What were their aspirations for you and your brothers and sisters?



FO: They just want me to help out the family.

FR: Did your parents have time to spend with you?

FO: Over the weekend.

FR: In what ways?

FO: They drove the old Model T around.

010 FR: Which parent tended to be stricter?

FO: Nobody tend to be stricter.

011 FR: Were there other people living in the house besides your parents and brothers and sisters?

FO: Nobody.

FR: Did your parents try to instill the traditional Japanese customs and values inside the home?

FO: We have to obey our parents in Japanese style, greet the outsiders.

012 FR: Who would take care of the sick?

FO: We all take turn.

FR: What was the medical care like?

FO: We never go to hospital.

013 FR: Do you recall your mom giving birth? Did someone come to the house to help her?

FO: No.

FR: Did she go to the hospital?

FO: No.

FR: Who helped take care of her and the baby after the birth?

FO: My father.

- 014 FR: When your parents didn't work, what kind of activities did you do as a family?
- FO: We listen to the radio.
- FR: What kind of occasions and holidays did your family celebrate?
- FO: On New Year, we have to make good stuff, so we stay up all night to prepare for it. The men greet people from one house to one house.
- FR: Did you have family vacations?
- FO: No.
- 015 FR: What was the ethnic make-up of your school?
- FO: I don't remember, mostly Caucasians.
- FR: Did you have many friends of different ethnicities than that of other Japanese?
- FO: After certain age, I have all kinds of friends, but they never come over to my house.
- FR: Was there a lot of fellow Japanese Americans in your classroom?
- FO: Not a lot of Japanese.
- 016 FR: Did people treat you differently because you were Japanese?
- FO: Not before the war.
- FR: Did you attend Japanese school while growing up?
- FO: Yes.
- FR: What was that like? Did you like it?
- FO: I like it.
- FR: What were some activities that you did for fun?
- FO: No, same old routine everyday.
- FR: What community activities were your family involved in?
- FO: North Hollywood Farming Association, we go to picnic once a year.

017 FR: Can you tell me how you met your spouse?  
FO: We met before the camp. I knew him not long before getting married.  
FR: Can you tell me about your first date?  
FO: Dating was not allowed in the family, my parents were strict about dating.

018 FR: Can you describe your wedding?  
FO: It was a big wedding, it was held in the Hikashi Temple in Los Angeles.

021 FR: Growing up, did you experience racial backlash or stereotypes?  
FO: Not before the war.  
FR: Can you tell me what the social climate was like back then. How did people regard the Japanese Americans?  
FO: It was bad after the war.

022 FR: Do you remember Pearl Harbor Day? How did you and your family react to the news?  
FO: I don't remember, people just told us not to walk over five miles of our own district.  
FR: Did any of your parents or family members get taken away prior to internment?  
FO: No.

024 FR: What did your family do with the family photographs?  
FO: We burn the photos because we live close to the Burbank airport.

025 FR: What things did your family decide to take to the assembly center/relocation center?  
FO: They carried what they could, mostly clothes.  
FR: Which internment location did your family go to?  
FO: Manzanar.

026 FR: Do you remember any Japanese Americans that didn't have to go to camp?

FO: Some claimed that they were Chinese.

027 FR: Where did you and your family go after internment?

FO: We went to Colorado for nine months.

FR: Did you resettle in the San Fernando Valley?

FO: After we came back from Colorado.

028 FR: Did you return back to your old farm?

FO: No, somebody take over it.

FR: What did you do for work after internment?

FO: Farming.

029 FR: Thank you for the interview.