

**"Japanese American Farmers' in the San Fernando Valley Before and After WWII  
Oral History Project"**

**Ritsuo Takeuchi**

**Oral History Interview**

**Japanese American Farming Families in the San Fernando Valley Prior to WWII**

**March 24, 2004**

**Interview conducted by**

**Joseph Kim & Dinah Nghiem**

**Transcript prepared by**

**Dinah Nghiem**

**AAS 390:Asian American Communities Field Practicum/Professor Edith Wen-Chu  
Chen**

**CSUN, Department of History and University Library's Urban Archives Center  
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LIFE HISTORY  
BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

SFV JACC Representative Nancy Takayama

Date 3.24.04

CSUN Representative Edith Chen

CSUN Representative Joseph Kim & Dina Nguem

Location of Interview 2 studio classroom

1. Name: RITSUO TAKEUCHI ☒ M / ☐ F

2. Address: 14400 ORO GRANDE

3. Phone(s): (818) 367-6978

Email N/A

4. Birth Date: 12/21/12 5. Birth Place: SAN FERNANDO 6. Citizenship: USA YES

6a. Date of immigration: N/A 6b. Departure point: N/A

7. List Sisters / Brothers (Eldest to youngest - Include yourself): RITSUO TAKEO HITSU  
TETSU

8. Marital Status (and dates): 1935

9. Spouse's Name: MICHI IWATA / TAKEUCHI

10. Children (and birth dates): HAVE TEN CHILDREN

11. Ethnicity: JAPANESE 12. Languages Spoken: ENGLISH

13. Religion: N/A

14. Places lived and dates:

15. Mother's Maiden Name: TOKU HONISHITA Ethnicity: JAPANESE

Date of immigration: 1910

Country: 1

16. Father's Maiden Name: KYO HACHI

Ethnicity:

Date of immigration: 1898

Country:

17. Maternal Grandparents:

Deed of Gift

Oral History Agreement

Japanese American Experiences in the San Fernando Valley

I, Hitao Takeuchi,  
residing at: 14400 ORO GRANDE SA,

City of SYLMAR, State of CA., Zip Code 91342

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RITSUO TAKEUCHI Hitao Takeuchi

Print Name of Interviewee Signature of Interviewee

3/24/04

Date

**Ritsuo Takeuchi**

**Oral History Interview Introduction**

Narrator: Mr. Ritsuo Takeuchi

Occupation: Carpenter

Address: 14400 Oro Grande

Date of Interview: March 24, 2004

Length: 12641 Minutes

Session: One

Place: CSUN, Oviatt 2A Studio Classroom

Subject: Japanese American Farmers' in the San Fernando Valley Before &  
After WWII

Interviewer(s): Joseph Kim & Dinah Nghiem

**Ritsuo Takeuchi**

**Video Tape Summary**

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Interviewee: Ritsuo Takeuchi (RT)  
Interviewer: Joseph Kim (JK) & Dinah Nghiem (DN)  
Date: March 24, 2004  
Subject: Japanese American Farming Families in the San Fernando Valley Prior to WWII

JK: For this project, we are interested in the experiences of Japanese American Farming families who lived in the San Fernando Valley, focusing on the experiences prior to WWII and immediately after WWII. Your experiences are very valuable to this project, which has not been well documented. This project was initiated by the San Fernando Valley JACC and SFV JACL. We are CSUN students helping them out with this project as part of our Asian American Studies class project. The information you provide will be used for research and educational purposes. If there is any portion in which you do not want to discuss, feel free to let us know. With your permission, we will be taping this interview. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. Ok the background of the San Fernando Valley. Can you give us a little; can you give us your full name and where you were born?

RT: Ok, that I can do. My name is Ritsuo Takeuchi, the year I was born is 12-21-12 and I was born right in San Fernando while that was the mailing address at that time but it actually it was Pacoima. According to my birth certificate this was at the end of Van Nuys and Gladstone Street and ahh... today it is Lake Gutierrez.

JK: The background of the San Fernando Valley. I like to get a sense from you what the San Fernando Valley was like. Can you tell me what the San Fernando Valley was like when you were growing up? Can you tell me what it was like and how it has changed?

RT: Well, San Fernando was basically the big town of the valley so ahh... then we had let's see Mission Acres, Zelzah, which is Northridge today, Mission Acres North, Hill, Sepulveda and then we had Chatsworth and Owens mouth which is Canoga Park today and come over to Reseda and well let me put put Zelzah in there that's Northridge and there Reseda and going over would be Van Nuys and then N. Hollywood which was called Lankershim and then going E. from there would be Roscoe which is Sun Valley today and going S. again is Burbank and next-door to that was Glendale that basically was the valley other than Studio City obviously.

JK: Were there any other Japanese American families living in your area at that time?

RT: Oh, yes there were quite a few cause when I was gone after I was born and I lived in Pacoima or in Lake Gutierrez, which is today uh... I was there



for roughly three years for what I understand then we moved to Alhambra and I was there until after the war. Then we're talking about WWI uh let's see so when I come back from Japan I was gone for a roughly a year and a half and I come back and we came back to Osborne and Foothill that's where my father and Mr. Kono was working a farm. They were partners and from there and so let's see now, do you want all the names of the farmers were around there? Okay across the street was a fellow by the Magaitetamura. Up the street was Hashimura. Uh... Fukai, I think his name was anyway. There was 3 people farming that particular, 3 partners and then across the street and up the hill was founded by Yamane. Up Foothill from where we lived 1 block to \_\_\_\_\_ Canyon. There was an Osuigi family and a block w. of there was a family by the name of Mitsui. Now ahhh... across the street that would be D\_\_\_\_\_view and \_\_\_\_\_ Canyon. Cross the street was a family by the name of Araitani. Let's see now that all I can remember at that particular time cause later on when we were gone for 3 years to Zelzah, lived in Zelzah and we came back again so if you want to hear about Zelzah I can tell you that. Zelzah, we lived on a porter estate, which was N. of N. and E. of... It started out from Sepulveda Blvd. and way out, Topanga maybe but anyways it was pretty close to Topanga. It was all the Foothills of what would that be the local mall, Santa Monica Range okay. So there now was quite a few families again. Our place first off of ah... Devonshire going N. and E. that was a dirt road. Zelzah ended at Devonshire so the next house was there was a white man farming I can't, he was a single. Don't remember his name. Then next to them was Mitsui; there was another Japanese family I don't remember their name. Usually the ones I remember more is when they had children and these people didn't have any children. So I didn't go play there much and then there was Yomera, then there was Hatori and then ah... going up the street on Devonshire the next one there was one called Watanabe I think was that his name? Mitsui and that would be about Louise but anyway then there was and not Louise that would be it would be the first main street parallel with Reseda. I can't remember the name but anyway you follow that street up was Shinba ah... oh getting back to Watanabe there was Matoba. There was brothers there but anyways getting back over to the other street going up there was Shinba. There was a Kono, no Yokonama, and 2 Yokonama's and Yahada. And then if you followed Devonshire W. in this case I guess it is was ah... N. of there was hmmm... let's see his name was another Yokoyama and next door to them was can't remember their name but there was 2 more families that was up to Corbin I think. But that was a group oh yeah there another one just off Rinaldi Hatago no a Hara.

JK:

Um...Ok were there any other Asian ethnic groups such as Filipinos, Chinese, Koreans, and Mexicans?



RT: In our area on no basically we're talking about Zelzah, Northridge. Now if you went to Chatsworth there was a family by the name of Tanaka and he was the only one I remember, they didn't have any children so I didn't know them. There was quite a few around Canoga Park but I could remember only a few couple of farmers Ohashi, Sanwo and three or four, three more I can't remember their names.

JK: I like to a little more about your parents and how they ended up in the San Fernando Valley? How did they decide to move to San Fernando Valley, N. Los Angeles, Zelzah, etc? When did they arrive? What area did your family lived in the San Fernando Valley?

RT: Oh. Ah... My dad came to Hawaii on a contract at 1895 a 3-year contract those days that's how they did it and when that was up I don't think he had enough to show that it was big success so he came to US for, as I know he arrived here 1898 and it was around Sacramento, San Francisco was besides Seattle. That was the only port they could enter in so he worked his way down from that area into Los Angeles and then out this way, I think was around 1906. Matter of fact he lived in a mission, the San Fernando mission. Him and about forty or fifty others most of them were single and worked for Mr. Porter. 1906 from that time on here in valley so 1906 he was here in the valley.

JK: Ok can you describe to me your farm and describe what your house look like and what the area consists of today? Ok and can you describe to me what your house look like?

RT: House, it was matter of fact we lived on in Pacoima Osborne and Foothill I think there was three or four buildings: the barn, two separate buildings for two families and then they had the kitchen which was like the mess hall everybody ate together there and always had Japanese bath they all had a bath house.

JK: Ok interesting, how did your parents become farmers?

RT: Well, uh... First of all I think my father had a brother about the time I was born he was Gladstone and Van Nuys Blvd. In those days they didn't have any water called dry farming they went around with the tank and planted maybe did that several times until plant. They relied on the weather.

JK: Interesting. Uh... as far as the farm concerns uh how many acres were the farms?

RT: Well, um... Most of them were about twenty-five acres to thirty acres if you want to Canoga Park area there were forty to fifty acres is common some in Van Nuys probably sixty to seventy acres farm farmers there.

Matter of fact I remember by the name of Miyoshi ya Miyoshi I think from Van Nuys two million.

JK: Can you tell me what your mother's and father's daily routine was?

RT: Daily routine. Well they did whatever they had to do for the day until harvest, mom did the housework and did the dishes a... about half hour prior to lunch time to come home and lunch and I better be home by that time. Everyone comes home to eat and that was the general set up women folks had it hard. No time off. Laugh.

JK: So your mother kind of helps your father with the farm?

RT: Oh yes. Women work was never done from dawn till dusk done no work and dusk done.

JK: Was the pay of your parents received sufficient to make a living?

RT: Pay. I'm guessing they didn't probably get very much. Maybe 15 to 20 an hour. Early on they work for fifty cents a day. That was common even I did when I got out of school, no job, I work for about six month to a year for fifty cents a day, board no room.

JK: Enough to get by?

RT: Oh yes, things were, um... Now we're talking about depression time ok. Early 30's to the late 30's times were really tough, it wasn't only Orientals, it was tough for all. The market crash in 1928-29 and we didn't feel it till about 31 and it was bottom then.

JK: Who was responsible for the household duties and taking care of your brothers and sisters and stuff like that?

RT: Well basically, it was the mother but she left them and went to work like the harvest whatever taking care the weeds or whatever taking care of.

JK: So you were kind of responsible for your own...

RT: We usually stayed around the house and played with the dog and uh... like myself I didn't have much people to play with so I went to the neighbors and play. Hahaha...

JK: Okay so everyone was responsible for their own part?

RT: Yah well. Mostly I think women folks was in charge of that child care. Matter of fact the all the care was usually Dr. Mom. Hahaha...



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

RT: Yes, we use to have people live in so there was a place in town where they recruited people and bring them out so we usually have one couple working most of the time.

JK: Was there anyone else who lived on the farm at that time?

RT: A with us no. Just hired help there was quite a few Filipinos in the early 20's they came out and did a lot of the work. After they went into business for themselves why then we have the Latinos or Mexican help.

JK: Who made the key decisions in your family regarding moving, property, how money was spent, approval of marriage, etc?

RT: I was never in discussion on that. I think it was usually talked overnight time most of the farm leases cause we didn't own the land. Lease and when most of them were 3 that was up they were gone, unless they could renew it, most of them weren't I don't know why.

JK: So as far as making key decisions in the family I guess was just your father?

RT: Yeah, well he was head on charge as you called it I guess.

JK: Did you or your parents ever participate in any kind of strikes or protest?

RT: No, no. Most of the Orientals were kind of dossal, they kind of stayed in the background never to speak, too visible because it was there was quite a discrimination you know? No you don't know if you went somewhere they would discriminate a lot.

JK: So can you tell me a little more how they discriminated and like in what way?

RT: Well most Orientals in the Pacific Coast were discriminated election time was pretty bad. Governor election or whatever elections were in some kind of trouble so keep yourself hid away sort of speak.

JK: So what kind of hardship did your parents face society?

RT: My parent, I'm pretty sure they had real tough times. After all culture matter of fact they couldn't read or write. So it was pretty dog gone rough so they took whatever job they could at that time and I think a lot of them were gardeners did a type have green thumb. Most of them were in gardening.



JK: Is there like one memory of your parents like you would like to share with us? Any specific moment or turning points in your life that involved your parents?

RT: In other words some particular event that happened pretty much routine. Matter of fact I was interview by Sunland Tujunga Historical Society and they were interested in Lake Gutierrez area and what did you did for entertainment. There was no such thing as entertainment other than occasional picnic or visiting your friends and staying over not like today hello and goodbye but they stay over and had dinner the whole thing course it was far away.

JK: Growing up on the farm: Now I'd like you to tell me about yourself. What was it like growing up on the farms? At what age did you begin to work?

RT: Oh. Let's see growing up on the farm I think it 's a better place to grow up on but a... until you're about 7 or 8 years old chores to do but once you became the age to feed chicken, feed horse or whatever. When I went to work on the farm 14 or 15 that's when most of them were out doing manual labor keeping up with adults.

JK: So that was your primary responsibility inside and outside the house?

RT: Yeah. Usually about that age some started the chore the job that we had to do some things a younger person could do it with no problems but others had to be more or less fairly tall at least over 5 feet. Hahaha...

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

RT: What was that again?

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

RT: Ah... Well when they were younger, I think so but as you get older it's a little different story. It wasn't um... I'm sure see Orientals didn't like to display their emotions so even if they really like their kid or whatever love their children they didn't show that very often.

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

RT: Well usually they wanted you to get education at least the normal amount and to be good obviously you know to uh... to not be involve in any crime some nature that sort.

JK: Was farming life different for the Japanese Americans than it was for others living in the area?

RT: Yes, I think it was a little different you mean people that worked for others that's there were a little different yah. Farmers life was (Cough) Excuse me. He worked quite a bit it was dawn to dusk everyday day he had to work you know morning till night.

JK: As we talked before the types of crops you grew were like lettuce, watermelon....

RT: Oh yeah, yes we had some of that cantaloupe was common. (Cough).

JK: Techniques that you used to farm was you used a lot of tools?

RT: Well lot of what manual labor although we always had the horse plowing, disking and cultivating but the tractors came in and about the mid 20's (cough) most of them are able to afford tractors.

JK: Ok and so after you would harvest these plants, these vegetables and fruits you guys went on and sold them?

RT: Well not much food in this area some maybe but very little most of them were in produce, to farmers and a if you want to talk fruits central Cal around those areas citrus, peaches, citrus and part of it were vineyards um... all kinds of peaches, apricots and nectarines.

JK: So did you sell them out of a business, out of a truck? Or like...

RT: They hauled most of the stuff to the market. There's a wholesale market. There was 3 that I can recall. There was a Grand Central market that was 7<sup>th</sup> Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Street then they had what they called the City market on 9<sup>th</sup> and San Pedro so that's where most of the produce went. Very few were off the farm unless they sold the whole patch they called 5-10 acres. Whatever was if sold the whole they went to the shipper they call those guys' buyers' shipper.

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

RT: Not really when we're working together went to somebody's place the children were renovated to the back room or wherever weren't involved in adult conversations.

JK: Which parent tended to be stricter and?

RT: More what?

JK: More stricter, more authoritative?

RT: Well...well... Usually it's supposedly the father but I think the mother was more in charged for children because father was gone most of the time.

JK: So she was the one responsible for disciplining the punishments and all that?

RT: Yes, I think so most of it was there some that relied on the father to um... um... call them on the carpet and tell them off or whatever you want to call it.

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

RT: Just the family and the hired help that were um...

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

RT: Oh yeah there was strictly into that.

JK: How did you react to that?

RT: Well like I say in my case it was learning dual cultures. 2 different cultures you go to school, it was English and American way, you come home it was Japanese and that sort of thing so ahh... I think most of the Nisei, which I am, had it very difficult. We have a dual culture that's very difficult it's not like being um... all American or all Japanese.

JK: Yeah you probably had to adapt to the American.

RT: Yeah you have to assimilate both races yeah so it's not easy.

JK: Ok. Do you remember getting sick or any of your family members getting sick?

RT: Remember what? Oh yes my brothers got sick.

JK: How did you take care of them?



RT: Well we had a regular hospital in Downtown Los Angeles they called it the Japanese Hospital and it was one in town and there was quite a few doctors so, but it was probably a 2 hour drive maybe a little longer to get into town.

JK: Do you recall your mom giving birth or any experience her having a child? Do you recall any births?

RT: Watched any birth? No I never watched any birth but we've had them. I think it was 8 of us, it was 2 girls and 6 boys but only 4 survived.

JK: Oh I see, what happened to the?

RT: Well in those days infant mortality was kind of rather high um... When I was born I don't think the doctor arrived but I was already out and breathing air in other words my dad or somebody was a mid wife. By the time they drove the wagon 7/8 miles and back get the doc the first of all and bring him back no way they'd get back in time to deliver the child. Some did later on but early on that's the way it was.

JK: When your parents didn't work, what kind of activities did you do as a family?

RT: Oh holidays they took the day off didn't do anything possible can help them. There was always something to do you know feed the chicken; feed the horses that was regular few times a day at least.

JK: So there was a lot of time for you to actually go out and take vacations?

RT: Not much time for recreation we had the only time basically um... not the family but when we went to school you know and recess and those things. So those are some of the things but we were younger barely little and as we got older there were groups we formed a baseball team whatever but mostly baseball and ran around playing other farm communities.

DN: This is Dinah Nghiem. I would like to conduct the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the interview with Joseph Kim and I'm interviewing Ritz Takeuchi. Ritz can you tell me a little about your school experiences?

RT: School, well I went to several grammar schools, I went to Pacoima, I went there a several weeks, couple months but anyway I had a friend there we would play till late, my father got angry so I had to go to another one and they called it Little Tujunga Grammar School. I was there a year in a half or so and then we moved to Zelzah and so we went to the grammar school right down here. On Zelzah until 19 I think it was 1924/25 and then we



went back to Pacoima again because that's where the farm was at. My dad wherever he get the lease that's where he would farm so we went back to Pacoima area and went from there I finished up Pacoima Grammar and went onto San Fernando High School.

DN: What was the ethnic make of your school?

RT: Well Pacoima when I first went there um... Well let's see getting back to the that was basically mostly Caucasian ok and then I went to Little Tujunga and that was um... Mostly Caucasian also there was a few Latin but not too many Latin either. Um... I think that I was the only Japanese there until one of my neighbor girl started to go there so there was just 2 Japanese but it was a small one-school room house school. In other words every row was a different class. So and I went there about 1 year and a half maybe 2 years and then we came to Zelzah and Zelzah was the same way. There was a few sprinkling of Orient um... Orientals and a few sprinkling of Latinos all the rest were when I say Caucasian European ancestry.

DN: What did your parents do while you and your brothers and sisters were at school?

RT: They just went to work because they were on e farm and farm work is never done. They always have something to do very seldom the only time they really had time off was when it rained like heck and everybody would stay indoors stayed next to the stove wood stove. (Laugh)

DN: So during the weather conditions, like how was it? Was it pouring like crazy?

RT: Well we use to have a lot more rain than we do today I think yes. Also around here around Zelzah area or Northridge it was quite windy and wind would blow for maybe 2-3 months at a time. It was quite windy here but that would be in the winter usually so it didn't after November probably. But it didn't affect the farm too much having all the wind. I mean it was more than a breeze, it was what you call wind.

DN: Ok now you said while during the weather you guys stayed near the stove, why?

RT: Well weather conditions did have something to do with like I say when it rain why that was it. Lots of people they couldn't go outside it was raining like heck unless they had something to do like they had problems with water. Like a flood type a thing then they would have to get out and make sure they diverted the water somewhere else so it wouldn't go out in

the field so other than that on a rainy day that was one of the better days so...

DN: Um... Well going back to school did anyone treat you different because you were Japanese?

RT: Now what is this?

DN: Um... Going back to school did anyone treat you different because you were Japanese?

RT: What are you saying about the school? Well then we were treated a like the teachers and all that as a matter of fact a there was not too much discrimination because there was so few of us but you know if things got bad there was a lot if that.

DN: Like what sorts of?

RT: They'd call you names and so forth. Most of the time the school children were good. I liked them; we had no problems there.

DN: How did you react to them when they discriminate you or called you names?

RT: Well naturally you'd get angry but there was nothing you could do you were a minority you had 10 against 1. What good is that? You're absolutely foolish to do anything that was a no created problems so we more or less clamed up.

DN: Did you attend Japanese school while growing up?

RT: Yes, we had Japanese school in San Fernando. It was only one day a week though on Saturdays only and I think we had regular class from maybe 9-3 or 8-4. I don't remember exactly but we did they had classes was a what's it called right now? You know you had to pay?

DN: Yeah, how many hours did you had to stay in school?

RT: Huh?

DN: How many hours was Japanese school?

RT: I think it was seems to me it was 9-3. It might have been 8-4 but it seems to me to be 9-3 cause like I said most of farm folks had things to do before they could take their children over to the school house and it was from here it would be what 8 miles 8-10 miles and with old it probably ran 20-



25 miles an hour. It took at least half an hour to get to school. So I think about it seems to me it was 9-3 it might have been 9-4. I don't remember it was so long ago. Hahaha...

DN: What were some of the activities that you did for fun?

RT: What activities were involved in? Other than wandering around the country you know we did a lot of that but get on my bicycle and just ride but other than that only recreation the only activity was being at school time. At home you had to do either your chores or study or whatever.

DN: What communities' activities were your family involved in? Like picnic, churches?

RT: Well like they said maybe well we had a family friends get together once a year. I don't remember that and then we have people that come from the same prefecture or providence in Japan. They always have one and we come from was quite a number it was a big group so that was once a year and occasionally we'd go to the circus maybe if they come in the neighborhood. Sometime through the park like the zoo but that didn't happened very often maybe once every three or four year maybe once in 5 years to go to these things; circus, zoo and different parks that they have so that was basically the only activity that I know visiting friends family friends and there usually the kids got involved in themselves. Playing outside or wherever. We're never involved with the adults.

DN: Why is that?

RT: I don't know. I think that some of the Japanese traits. They don't want children involved in adult activity.

DN: Were you involved in any community activities?

RT: What? Well no. Not that I remember most of us went around the country exploring here and there. There was no river so we couldn't go fishing, so obviously we didn't go fishing. My parent s never owned a guns we never went hunting. So that basically was it just visiting your friends um... Just jump on you bicycle and go visit your friend. Usually we went where there was more children. Hahaha... Like myself I was the only one for a long time so I went to visit other people.

DN: Can you tell me a little about dating? Like did anyone in your family date or marry outside?

RT: What? Dates, uh... You mean me, myself?

DN: Yes or anyone in family.

RT: Well let's see I started dating, I met my wife and she was my girlfriend ah... at a ball game. I was she came with someone and I took her home and she since then she became my girlfriend and I never had anyone so I don't know. Hahaha... We've been together since 1931, July we're still at it. Yah a long time.

DN: Did anyone else in your family marry outside of your ethnicity?

RT: Are you talking about my brothers? I only had 3 brothers besides myself would be 4. 4 of us so I don't remember my brothers dating at all quite a bit of difference between brothers. 9 years and bottom was twins and 8 years after that good many years' between us. Think they were born in 1927 and I was born in 12 so makes a big gap.

DN: Can you describe your wedding?

RT: Wedding? We had a very small at a Buddhist Church and I think it was my mom and our friend so actually it was about 4 or 5 of us excluding not very many in reverend or preacher in this case. You know times were tough but we have a regular church well temple so that 's all about the wedding I can tell you about. We had a little dinner afterwards, which was about 6, or 7 people, which wasn't much. Cause I have more than that when our kids get together.

DN: I was wondering how come when women would marry into the family, they would have to move into with their in laws and is that a good thing or bad thing?

RT: What is this now you are talking about moving/ when we had to move?

DN: Not moving, like when your wife moved in.

RT: She came in and had all her in laws. She married me and when she married and she had brothers to in laws to take care of and mother in law, my mom which is mother in law. That's how many she was the more or less was became apart of the group. I don't think she was treated too well either. Well in-laws were kind of tough I don't know about where you come from. But where we came from the in laws they take a little, especially the younger ones catch a little bit problems. Very seldom they do have some that get along very well but most of them have a tendency not to get along too. Well this we're talking about the Oriental family in laws. Well even here I think they talk about my mother in law came to visit with us for about a month and it didn't like that too well. You know so I think in laws are kind of a problem everywhere unless the people



themselves decide not to do that kind of thing. Now my wife has never been bad to any of her in laws cause she said doesn't want to carry on e that tradition, that's not a good one.

DN: Oh that's good.

RT: Being mean to their young bride or anything like that so she said never, I'll never do that. So she never has and I have 10 children so we have a lot of in laws.

DN: What was the first job you acquired?

RT: I was a swampier. They call it swampier, that's a helper for a guy that has a truck. So I help them load up and help them unload that was the one job I was telling you about 50cents an hour. I worked on the farm for but that was only summer time you know. So I guess you couldn't call that a job, it was a job but it only lasted for the summer. Those weren't too bad. Weren't all that bad times were different once it got into the depression. Real depression money was scarce. Hahaha...

DN: What types of jobs were you able to take before the war?

RT: Before the war well I went to work for this guy as a helper and later on I drove his truck okay. So I was a driver, I didn't get much more, I was still driver but I kind of felt proud of about that and after, let's see I worked on the farm for about a year. I got laid off at this truck-driving job. I worked on a farm for a year after that was over. This fellow that I drove the tractor for I mean truck decided he wanted to sell out so I bought him out. So I went into business for myself, trucking.

DN: Did you experience any discrimination or...?

RT: Oh yeah. Discrimination was bad all the time until even after the war but one of the best thing that happened you know during the war years. Cough. Lot of the people were able to break in with the Caucasian. Jobs were scarce prior to that. You had to work for another Japanese man or some Oriental fellow. Very seldom were you hired by a Caucasian. Even if you had a degree, the only degree that was of any help was probably a doctor's degree. You know PHD, then you went into business for yourself but most of them couldn't get no work so they work polishing apples, working in the fruit stand. Cough. And working for all before the war about the time war started I think about \$25 a week was common. But after the war lot of the boys left for war, became soldiers and had to go off to war. So there was a lot of openings for people that had the skills like a chemist or a engineer or a anything of that name college graduates. That had a opportunity to get a job real quick because they needed them so after

DN: Do you remember Pearl Harbor Day?

RT: Ahhh...yes. I was on a farm we had, I bought a carrot patch and we were bunching carrots to take the market and I was trucking and I was going to the market anyway, so I decided to buy this, so that's what we were doing. We were harvesting carrots.

DN: How did you react, how did your family react to the news of Pearl Harbor Day?

RT: Well the reaction was oh my god they did it you know. Well, I didn't think they were going to. Matter of fact I think the US didn't know that that was going to happen either it was kind of like a sneak attack or whatever there was some probably an intelligence community. But it wasn't general public knowledge that something like that was going to happen so...

DN: Did any of your parents your family members get taken away prior to the internments?

RT: No.

DN: No?

RT: No. See all of us were American born.

DN: Your parents?

RT: Yeah. My mom was got stuck in Japan. She couldn't get back and she went to visit and then got no transportation back and got hung up in there. But anyway my brothers, myself and all my children were all born here.

DN: What did your family do with the family photographs? Family photographs?

RT: Photo? Well we went usually went to photography shop, you know done by professional photographer but that was prior to the war obviously. After the war we I think we're able to buy our little and snap our own backyard pictures.

DN: Now I'd like to know about life after internment.

RT: Well it was pretty bad yet...yeah. I think discrimination was probably pretty bad until about 5 years I'm guessing after the war was over, maybe a little longer. Yeah it was pretty bad, but the job opportunities were all



that I think matter of fact that it open the job market for all concerns for all minorities. Cause even Chinese and Korean hung around together. It was hard for them to break into other areas. So most minorities were in that way.

DN: Growing up did you experience any racial backlash or stereotypes?

RT: Now what do you want to talk about, my background?

DN: Yeah, your. Growing up did you experience any racial backlash or stereotypes? Did they call you names? Or...

RT: You mean calling me names and so forth? Yes it happened quite often, but like I say you're a minority. Most Japanese were not the kind to roll up the sleeves and put their fist up cause they thought it was better too shy away then to be too aggressive. Cause you be on the bad end of the stick, if you were so... I think most Orientals were like that, they kind of were, and they weren't really dossal real gentle people. But they managed to control their anger and you know put up with all this name calling and so forth and like I said it would most be Orientals, most minorities, I think were that way.

DN: Can you discuss the time immediately before Executive Order 9066?

RT: Oh like I said I was in the trucking business so... Cough. I had a relative up in Fresno area so I just picked up and moved voluntary moved up there and I found out that area was going to be corral up anyway. So it ended up I lost about 4/5 months of added costs cause I had to set up and start living there, paying for food, so on and do forth, where I could have gone into the internment center, had housing in the old beds. But I didn't so it was a little difficult.

DN: Can you tell me what the climate was like back then?

RT: What was like?

DN: Climate?

RT: Climate? The climate, it was very similar to this. No smog. Yeah other than that it was similar, it was still nice weather here one of the better that I know of. I wouldn't want to move anywhere else. I wan to stay right here!

DN: Right here in this very room?

RT: Yes, it's excellent!

ready there because it opened up field for everyone. What do they call that the equal employment? Yeah well it wasn't quite that good but good enough so most of us could go to work Caucasian without problems. So let's see what did I do? I helped my brother in laws, were all flower growers. Okay so I worked for them with them for a year or so after I got back, after that I got myself a job at a lumberyard. So in other words I was a more or less white man job and I finally got in. So from there I moved up, I became ended up finally becoming a carpenter so that's what I ended up being.

DN: Do you return to back to your old farm after the internment?

RT: No, I never did farmed, never did farm on my own. Oh I take it back, I did one year. I did a little; I raised strawberries. But it turned out to be a flop. I worked my pants off and it turned out to be a flop, I was... There was some kind of fungus in the soil and so the plants got real big, very good size, nice berries. And so forth but all of a sudden they started dying. Like somebody ate the roots they'd die here, die over there and die here so...so... one year I did that. I worked really hard too. But I think I broke even far as money goes. I broke even but all my labor was for not. Laugh. I got zero for that. It wasn't even coolie labor. Laugh.

DN: Do you still own the land today?

RT: Huh?

DN: Do you still own the land today or...?

RT: What was that?

DN: The little farm?

RT: This place that I farmed was my agriculture teacher. When I was in grammar school he had a plow of land so I went up to talk to him, sure why not for a fee obviously. And I went to work, did that but like I said, there was some kind of fungus that I raised strawberries. So we were on Foothill so we sold whatever we picked, we sold right on the street on the highway. But that was my only experience as a being a farm boy.

DN: What did your parents do for work after the internment?

RT: What did my parents do?

DN: Yeah.

RT: For what?



DN: After the internment? Like did they just go...?

RT: You mean because they didn't go to camp.

DN: Oh I mean, I know but like after after all the things that happened?

RT: You mean after the farm work?

DN: The internment?

RT: Well let's see now. I really don't remember too much because 1927, my father passed away, that's when mother decide to go back to Japan with all of us, that's when I went the following year. 28, 29 I was in Japan so which was an experience I thought that was one of my better experiences to go there. Although you know we're ahhh.... Here we're discriminated against because we're Japanese. I went back there and I was suddenly an American. Laugh. So that was not all that great.

DN: Is there one memory of growing up in the San Fernando Valley that is the most important to you?

RT: What is it now?

DN: Is there any memory that you have?

RT: Memory here in the Valley? Or where?

DN: Yeah, in the San Fernando Valley?

RT: Oh memories here are all good. Other than being discriminated against but that would've happen to anyone that were minority. So I think I really was quite happy growing up here and in San Fernando. Yeah matter of fact I don't think I want to be anywhere else in the world.

DN: Not even Disneyland?

RT: No, I've been in Japan for several years but no that ain't it either. This is the best you're gonna find a better place in the whole damn world. I don't care where you go for every all reasons; economically, you know weather wise, you know now the people are half way decent. So once you get accepted as one of them in this big old melting pot of ours you're no place like it.

DN: Is there anything that you want to talk about that we haven't covered yet?

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DN: Is there anything that you want to talk about that we haven't covered yet?

RT: Well you want to talk about the family?

DN: Yeah, that's what I want to know.

RT: Okay, I have, the wife had 10 children and ahhh... Let's see now 10 kids we have 1 boy and 9 daughters. I mean right down the line consecutively. The youngest today, the oldest is he'll be let's see 6, he'll be 68 come ahh... next month. April 13 is his birthday and the youngest is 54 out of the bat. So that makes quite a few we have 32 grandchildren, 38 great-grandchildren. We don't have any great great so I've been after this one of our great-grandchildren is a marriageable age. When she was going to school when she was going college I said, "Hey when are you going to make me give me the other title of great great?" She said, "Not until I get out of college gramps." Laugh. Now she's been out of college for a couple of years so maybe there's still a chance if I live long enough. But then I have 3 brothers like I said and 1 of them have passed away but there's 2 of them, the twins are still living. And there one of the twin became a grandfather about 6 months ago and but they were saying, "I don't think I'll ever be a grandfather cause the kids didn't want to get married."

DN: Oh!

RT: Laugh. So but, the other one had the one that passed away had let's see 1 boy and 3 girls. I don't know about 2 I think there's 2. They'll be my grand nieces and nephews, grandnephews. Anyway I have 2, 1 boy and 3 nieces there and the other one has 1 daughter so I have a niece there, the other one has a boy and a girl. So that's all I have in the family or in my family, my wife's side there's not too many either. Her older brother just passed away recently and their last name was Imai. She came from a family of 6, 3 and 3. So let's see now she has let's see her brother and sister in law passed away. Got a brother that passed away and there was 2 boys and a girl in that family, then there was another sister. She that has that was has a 2 girl, a boy in that family, and 1 more sister that she has let's see there's 2 and 2 in that family. So that the extended of her family and ours. But we always talk about it. She come from a family of 6 and I come from a family of 4 boys so the total made 10 and that's what we have. Laugh.

DN: How was life like for you raising your 9 girls?

RT: Huh?

DN: How was life like for you raising 9 girls?

RT: Raising the children?



DN: Yeah.

RT: They were not bad. They were pretty healthy it's all we had no problem you know other than the usual children diseases, illness like measles, mumps and things like that they had but... They were all fairly healthy so I was a fortunate thing for me. We were able to not have too much problems health wise. Yeah like I say it's a big gang now. So there was 22 of us, my kids, their husbands, wives, me, my wife so there's 22 of us. Laugh. I already told you how many we had others. Yeah that's a good size family. When we get together there's usually around 125-130 people.

DN: Wow!

RT: So we have to have a large place to have our gatherings. We had we have one for Christmas and one for 4<sup>th</sup> of July. So the 4<sup>th</sup> of July we go to one of my daughter's place. They got a fairly good size place with the swimming pool and all those good things. So I think last time we were there a few of them didn't show up so there was 105. But that's a lot of people 105. But the year before that I think there was around 125. So we get together oh birthdays is another time we all get together and kind of have a merry time. Yeah but mine is 21<sup>st</sup> of December so usually it's a combo. I'm one of those guys that get cheated out of one or the other. Laugh. But we usually have our birthday there was quite a there's several that has a birthday in December so we kind of have it all joint. And it's also a Christmas party and every year we had that, we always have the 4<sup>th</sup> of July party. And the last few years they've been celebrating our birthdays because of our age you know. They figure maybe next year we won't be around so we might as well celebrate this year. My wife is in August and I'm in December so but December is like it's a joint. There's I think 3 others maybe 4 others have it the same month so that and the Christmas party combo. But anyway it's a good size group and we all get along. We had no we hadn't had any deaths so far. Knock on wood block heads, I'll knock on wood but anyway so we're very fortunate yeah... There's not most most everyone I've talk to either lost their husbands or some of their kids or somebody's gone so you know in that respect we're very fortunate.

RT: So what other do we have here?

DN: Well with your size of the family how do you guys take pictures like...?

RT: Picture family pictures?

DN: Yeah.

RT: We had a professional come in and it looks like a graduation. On the stage I forgot how many people I think there was 2 missing. 2 didn't, 1 couldn't make it from Hawaii and one was anyway there's and oh one was in the hospital. Something, so 2 didn't show, there was a whole bunch of them and it was we had a photo about that big. Well it's bigger and it's all people. Laugh.

DN: Is there anything else that you want to talk about that we haven't covered? Anything?

RT: Well you want to talk more about the Valley?

DN: Sure.

RT: There was quite a few Japanese family in Roscoe area which was Sun Valley today and also quite a few in N. Hollywood. But I don't know very many there because you know they all went to a different school and they were further away. So actually they weren't part of San Fernando you know. There were Sun Valley or N. Hollywood or Van Nuys they're all separate other than the ones that came to the Japanese school in San Fernando. But later on I think Roscoe had their own or Sun Valley had their own so but we had oh yeah that's right we had a judo club. When we were younger you know martial arts, Japanese martial arts, so we used to go there twice a week Wednesdays and Thursdays. But that it was not a whole bunch of people who come there it was very few but like I said there's quite a few families here in the Valley. Yeah cause they well the Japanese school have a picnic and that would would get to know more people you know. So yeah it was quite a bit of activity going on as far as that goes school that's every Saturday. Then you met some of them at your regular high school or whatever you're attending there. So but most of them like I say now people around Roscoe or N. Hollywood or Sun Valley, N. Hollywood area we didn't know them too much. Unless they came to a park where they had a swimming pool and we use to go to one in Sun Valley quite often. Maybe twice a month take a trip out there and go swimming, meet people. But when you associated with things socially at home in the family so we just knew them as someone from N. Hollywood or someone from Roscoe or Van Nuys or wherever. That was like I say if you socialize then you knew then much more but other than that we just knew of them farm folks. But most of them were farmers here. Most there was a market in San Fernando called Sun, Sunshine Market I think it was own by a Japanese man but he was one of those that furnished a lot of Oriental foods, stuff for the farm in the Valley. So I'm pretty sure it was one of those deals where they have little tablets I Owe You onto the crop. Yeah I'm pretty sure he was quite involved in that type of thing. I don't know exactly what they call it but anyway on the cup writing it on the cup I Owe You until the crop was until harvest time.



I was talking to someone from the Midwest and they said, "That's the way lot of their merchants are you owe them until the harvest so they put you on a little on the letter." That's it; your name, so much was taken today; so much was on the letter and they on the end of harvest finished. They go over and pay each each merchant or whatever it was hardware store or grocery store or wherever and that's what he was telling me this guy. So I believe him, he was from he was from Iowa and you know that's basically is farm community. I said, "Oh yeah we have that kind of thing here too." He was only one man that I know of but that that the market, it was in San Fernando Town. He was kind of like like general store, clothes, washtubs, anything that you might need on the farm he had them there and if he didn't have it he would get it for you. Laugh.

DN: Oh how nice.

RT: Yeah his name was Motoike, Motoike that was his... There was only one left of the family though. I think there's only 1 boy left. They all passed away the father, the mother. Oh I think there's one sister living somewhere in Stockton area. But there's only 1 boy that I know of that's living in still living in San Fernando. Yeah they were well considered wealthy I guess you know. They can put everybody on the cuff that means he had little money to pay off his debts. But he bought the merchandise. I'm pretty sure that he didn't go on the lists to I Owe Yous', so I'm pretty sure he was pretty well known, and wealthy man and a there was another outfit from LA. I think there was 2 that came from Los Angeles groceries store and different things. They would go around to different farmers asking what they wanted and if they had it in their in their van. They would give it to them and if they didn't they would bring it out that next time they came. I think that was about once a week from LA. Yeah Hori and Hazaua they were 2 different outfit but they used to come out so like I say it was a good life. Yeah I wouldn't trade it for anything else cause I came from the horse and bucket days to the jet days, no to going off to the moon kind of days. My god look look what a contrast from one to the other. Yeah that was in the Midwest when I was born. I'm pretty sure there was quite a few cowboys yet that wore side arm; Utah, Nevada, Arizona. I'm pretty sure when I'm I'm pretty sure they must had cowboys until around 1925 or 26 maybe a little later so... and I think I think a lot of them had lead poisoning bullets. Laugh. Got shot, so are we finished with the interview?

DN: Yes.

RT: That's it? Good now you're suppose to tell them something?

DN: Oh yeah, not yet.

RT: That's afterwards?



DN: Yes. Thank you Mr. Take Takeuchi for your time.

RT: Yeah Takeuchi. Hey if you can write Chinese write it down somewhere.

DN: Oh okay.

RT: Bamboo house. Would you write...see if you can write it the same way because my Chinese friends say, "Hey I know what that is, that's bamboo house." But he didn't say it the same way. He had another pronunciation for it but can you write a bamboo house?

DN: I don't think I can write bamboo but I can write house.

RT: Well see if I got any here I can write on. I'll write on the back. Is that okay?

DN: Yeah.

RT: Ooohhh... That thing got something on it but anyway. But this is it; you want to shut it up?

DN: Oh no not yet.

RT: No, no okay. They write it 2 ways here how this is the way it is written.

DN: I would like to thank you for your interview, your time and I really appreciate it Mr. Takeuchi.