TELLING OUR STORIES
Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project

RITSUO TAKEUCHI

Oral History Interview

Conducted on:
NOVEMBER 15, 2004

Interviewers:
JEAN-PAUL DeGUZMAN
MICHAEL RAZON

Transcription Prepared by:
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LIFE HISTORY
BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

SFV JACC Representative Nancy Takayama *Date* 11/15/04

CSUN Representative Mike Razon

CSUN Representative JP deGuzman

Location of Interview CSUN AAS Activities Center

1. Name: Ritsuo Takeuchi **M / F**
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Email

4. Birth Date: 12/21/12 5. Birth Place: San Fernando CA 6. Citizenship USA

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

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
(People, Place,Activity)

Photo description and approximate date

Photo description and approximate date

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Photo description and approximate date

DEED OF GIFT

ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT

JAPANESE AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

I, Edna Takeuchi,
RESIDING AT: 14400 ORO GRANDE ST,
CITY OF Sylmar, STATE OF Calif,
ZIP CODE 91342 HEREBY GIVE AND GRANT TO SAN FERNANDO VALLEY JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY CENTER (SFV JACC), ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY AT NORTHRIDGE (CSUN) AND THE CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY CIVIL LIBERTIES PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM (CCLPEP) AS A DONATION FOR SUCH SCHOLARLY AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES AS THE SFV JACC, CSUN, AND CCLPEP SHALL DETERMINE, THE VIDEO TAPE/INTERVIEW TAPE RECORDINGS ON _____ (DATE OF INTERVIEW), INCLUDING THE CONTENTS OF THOSE RECORDINGS AND ANY TRANSCRIPTIONS THAT MAY RESULT FROM THEM AND THERETO.

Ritsuo Takeuchi — Edna Takeuchi

PRINT NAME OF INTERVIEWEE — SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWEE

11/15/04

DATE

RITSUO TAKEUCHI

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

Narrator:	Mr. Ritsuo Takeuchi
Occupation:	Retired carpenter
Address:	14400 Oro Grande Street, Sylmar CA 91342
Interview Date:	15 November 2004
Length:	59:36 Minutes
Session:	Two (Previously interviewed on 24 March 2004)
Interview Location:	Asian American Studies Activities Center, California State University Northridge
Subject:	Japanese American farmers in the San Fernando Valley, focusing on the roles of women and interracial/ interethnic relationships
Interviewers:	Jean-Paul deGuzman and Michael Razon
Cameraperson:	Michael Razon
Transcriber:	Rika Hirai

RITSUO TAKEUCHI ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

ABSTRACT

This interview with Mr. Ritsuo Takeuchi was conducted on 15 November 2004 at the Asian American Studies Activities Center, on the California State University Northridge campus. This was a follow up interview to one that Mr. Takeuchi gave last March. In this interview, Mr. Takeuchi shared with the interviewers (Jean-Paul deGuzman and Michael Razon) stories about his youth that focused on the roles of women, interethnic relationships and racism and discrimination.

Mr. Takeuchi spoke eagerly of his mother, a picture bride. He used her as an example in discussing the overall experiences of Japanese American women in the San Fernando Valley. While some women worked in domestic labor, Takeuchi's mother worked in the fields and in the home. Takeuchi is quoted as saying that the workday is never over for women and that he had to "give them a lot of credit..."

The lives of Japanese Americans often crossed paths with people from other ethnicities. Takeuchi attested to this as he spoke at ease about the large number of Chicano laborers that lived in the Valley, and often worked on a contract basis. He noted that the lives of many Chicanos, as well as many Japanese Americans, were hindered as they faced a language barrier. Additionally, Takeuchi described the many Filipinos who lived in the Valley. His recollection of the only Filipino family in the Valley was very interesting. Most Filipinos in America at this time period were single male laborers, but Takeuchi made sure to note the Hernandez family, whom he remembered as the lone Filipino family. He discussed eating with the family and even growing up with their only child. Finally, Takeuchi also recalled the marketplace was a place of interethnic interactions, as many buyers were of Chinese descent.

Other interethnic mixing occurred at school, for Takeuchi. He recalled his grammar school classmates in San Fernando were primarily Caucasian, but there wa still a minority population of

Chicanos and Japanese Americans. In discussing sports, Takeuchi noted that while there was "animosity," among the races, it was generally not displayed. Moreover, the students did not face overt structural discrimination, as Takeuchi observed that ability was the only criteria for joining a sports team.

Nevertheless, Takeuchi's life involved various examples of racism. He recalled that Japanese Americans were often seated in the back of a movie house, or in the balcony. Additionally, he became more contemplative as he recalled Caucasian youths driving by his family farm shouting racial epithets, and his inability to do anything.

This was a rich and engaging interview. Ritsuo Takeuchi's stories tell of many different experiences that truly bring to life the often forgotten history of Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley.

INTERVIEW INDEX

Interviewee: RITSUO TAKEUCHI [RT]
Interviewer: JEAN-PAUL DeGUZMAN [JD] and MICHAEL RAZON [MR]
Date: November 15, 2004-12-06

Topic: Japanese American experiences in the San Fernando Valley prior to World War II, focusing on the roles of women and interracial/ interethnic relationships.

JD 0:10 — We are here interviewing Ritsuo Takeuchi, and this is just another interview after the interview you did with us last semester. We are CSUN students working with JACL and the Japanese American National Museum and we are trying to get a sense of what it was to be like a Japanese American before World War II and I was really interested in the conversation we were just having 'cause we are actually interested in Japanese American women and you were talking about how women gambled and caroused like that.

RT 0:43 — No, well most of them came over early on. Now, when I say, early on, from 1910 and later. They were, most of them were farm folks There were, you know, domestic help or hired help somewhere. Very few of them were in business for themselves. Now we're talking the early 1900s. That's the way most of them were., you know, when they came over. The women folk, if they were farm folk, the women really worked hard. You know, the saying that they have about women, the day, the work is never done? That was absolutely true.

JD 1:43 — I see.

RT 1:44 — Using my mother as an example. She woke up early, made breakfast, and everybody, if there was any hired help, most of the hired help in those days were live-in. And so, she had to make breakfast and send them off to work, and as soon as she finished that, off to the fields she went. And then come home half an hour early so she could prepare for lunch. That was the regular routine for most farm folks. It doesn't matter whether they're produce, or whether they were flowers, or whatever they were doing, you know if they were in business, that's what they did. So the women really worked hard. I have to give them a lot of credit for that.

JD 2:37 — So, did your sisters help out a lot, then, once they got old enough to do laundry, and...

RT 2:42 — You better talk a lot louder, 'cause my hearing is not all that great.

JD 2:46 — Okay. So, I imagine your sisters had to work pretty hard, too.

RT 2:51 — Well, I didn't have any sisters. You know, they died early, so I didn't have any sisters. There's just four brothers, out of I think eight, four survived. But the girls did, I don't care what their work, in Central Cal area, you know that was still a farm, you know, feeds and vineyard farms, and they worked hard. I'm sure all of them did. Matter of fact, they got left out because the oriental custom was to give it to the boys, and basically, the older boy. And then if they were more modern, then they distributed it among the three boys or four boys, whatever, it was distributed among the boys, with

the older one getting the major share. But the women, I don't think, I never heard of any one of them that really received a bundle.

JD 3:50 Oh, I see.

RT 3:51 Even if the folks were well-heeled.

JD 3:54 Well, on the topic of women, we were talking before we were rolling, you were talking about your mother who was a picture bride.

RT 4:05 Yes, she was a picture bride.

JD 4:07 Could you tell us a bit more about that?

RT 4:08 Well, like I said, they married in proxy, the man wasn't there, but she went through the registrar and she was, the daughter of the Takeuchis. Because her maiden name was Morishita. So, she became a Takeuchi. And they gave her a photo, and put her on the ship, and she said now he's real light, so if you see anyone down there that's real light, nine times out of ten, he'll be your husband. So that's what she said, she said she took the picture and stood up on the ship, on deck, looking down on the port to try to locate her man, because she's never met him physically. So, she recognizes him right out. My father.

JD 5:05 About how old was she when she came here?

RT 5:08 I think she came here when she was eighteen.

JD 5:10 Oh, wow. Young. I see.

RT 5:13 I'm not positive, but it seems like it was something like this, because there was a big difference between my father and mother. He was in his mid thirties or late thirties when they got married.

JD 5:25 I see. Did she come from a farming family?

RT 5:29 Oh, yes. Most of the women did. They didn't have, that's in Japan, they were, most of the Japanese families, especially in the country, were all mostly farmers.

JD 5:45 Oh, okay.

RT 5:48 The small majority were business people, the brewery, and other things, now what would they call that? Governmental type of people. There wasn't a heck of a lot other than little stores. A lot of them were, what did they call them, papa-mama type, this is at their own place, people came.

MR 6:22 Family business?

RT Yeah, family business. They didn't open a store or anything, they did it right out of

6:24 their house. Today it sounds funny, because I know it's altogether different. See, I was there for a year and a half, sixteen months, back in 1928 and '29. It's altogether different now. I went back in '85, you know, a few years later, altogether different. You have to look for a village that looks like when I was there. As a matter of fact, it was like a museum.

JD Wow. Wow.
7:04

RT Yeah. None of the old houses are there. The churches, you know the temples, they're
7:07 pretty much the same. But other regular family homes, they're altogether different now. They've gone more modern. I think they're more modern than us here. They had a period where financially they were well off. Things were really going good. Of course the last ten or twelve years, they had hard times. It's come down somewhat. But before that, they were really booming. So instead of thongs, went to shoes, and all them good things. And I think that's happening with most all of the countries there, including China, Russia, I mean Korea, and all the other third world countries, or Southeast Asians they call them, they're all getting to be modern. I don't think none of them are like they were fifty years ago.

JD Definitely. Well, you know on the topic of communities, countries changing, what
8:17 differences have you seen between the San Fernando Valley when you were growing up and the way it is now in 2004?

RT Well, it's, in my days, you could just about, when you came up on Sepulveda, that was
8:32 before the freeway, the old Sepulveda, you'd come up and you could see the valley. Then you'd see a clump of lights here, and that was, at that time it was Owensmouth, which is Canoga Park, and then a little clump of lights over here, and that would be Chatsworth, but that was a smaller light. Chatsworth was very small. And then there was this area here. This was known as Zelzah. Northridge had many names, but Zelzah was the name I knew, because I went to school right about here. I think two or three years I went to grammar school. But then there was Reseda. That was a pretty good size town. And then Tarzana was known as, I think it was known as Gerard. And then there was Lankershim, which is North Hollywood now. And, I forgot what they called, I think it was still Studio City over there, where there was a lot of movie things going on. Max Senate and all the old fashion movies. You have to go to a silent movie house to see them places, but they have a lot of studios just over the hill into the valley, where it would be Universal today, in that area. Like I said, North Hollywood known as Lankershim, and there was always Van Nuys. I think they were all named after the people that more or less started the city. Then there was San Fernando, and Roscoe, which is Sun Valley. Let's see, what else? That's basically, Burbank and Glendale. But they were basically more city. They were tied into L.A.

JD You mention San Fernando. I learned from your past interview that actually, your dad
10:40 once lived at the San Fernando Mission.

RT Yes, he did.
10:46

JD That's very interesting, could you share a bit more about that?

10:48
RT
10:52
Well, he worked, see Porter, Mr. Porter, the family of Porter owned, what today is called Porter Estate?

JD
11:01
Porter Ranch?

RT
11:03
Yeah, that was Porter Ranch. Now they call it, it was called Porter Ranch, and he owned the mission. It was in his, grant, whatever it was, it had to be some kind of a big grant, given to him by the Spanish, or Mexican, but anyway I'm pretty sure it was a Spanish grant, and he owned from Brand Boulevard all the way over to Topanga, and north of Devonshire, so all of that, most of all of that was his, so I lived, when I was going to school here in Zelzah, I was on just the other side, because there was quite a few Japanese farmers in there, at least from Mr. Porter, and not only that, they also worked for him prior to that, when they were still trying to get on their feet, they worked for Mr. Porter.

JD
12:11
I see.

RT
12:12
Well, the Porter family.

JD
12:16
Was it mostly Japanese Americans who worked for Mr. Porter?

RT
12:19
Well, they weren't Japanese Americans. They were definitely Japanese. You know, I don't think they had the opportunity to become a citizen, most of them. It was after the war that they gave you an opportunity to become a citizen. Prior to that, you just stayed a Japanese, and that was it. That was the same with all the other Asians. They had the Asian Exclusion Act. Now, the Chinese came here much sooner. My Dad came here in 1898. And he came on a contract, a labor contract to Hawaii, for three years. And he didn't make it. He didn't have his poke, so he had to come over here, and give it a shot. It must have been difficult. I have to give them a lot of credit, because it was an altogether different culture. You guys would know, the difference between the Oriental culture and the Caucasian culture. It was just flip-flop. This side and this side. Altogether different. They didn't even write the same characters. They didn't use the alphabet that we use here. So not being able to speak and all that, but, it was surprising, what was he called, wasn't it intelligent how things go when they necessity, they flap around like a bird and act like they're hatching an egg when they wanted to buy eggs. Those were some of the things that they did. And the merchants were not all that dumb, either, because they would understand right away what they needed. Oh, that's what it is. He's acting like a hen, so maybe he needs eggs. Things like that, yeah. Communication was very difficult. I'm sure it was. So if there was anyone in the group that spoke English, or even a little bit, he was a kind of a, the leader of the batch. Otherwise, they'd all come to him to tell him their griefs and whatever, and needs.

JD
14:52
You know, we're talking about how hard it was for Japanese folks and foreigners. When you were growing up, did your parents ever tell you about any other foreigners or any other ethnic folks, like Mexicans?

RT 15:09

No. No I didn't. Well, a lot of the hired help were Mexicans that didn't live in, okay. But my dad used to hire maybe two people, sometimes, or a man and a wife, an another outsider to help with the farm. And they went down downtown to kind of like a boarding house, and they all worked, I don't think it was an agency, but it might have acted like an agency.

MR 15:45

Were they labor contractors?

RT 15:49

Yeah, for employment agency. See, the problem was still the language barrier. So it was hard for them to hire other than their own kind, and there was a lot of those people that, like I said domestic and farm work, and they were available, so that's the way it was. As I remember it. But, you know, a lot of the things today sounds kind of funny to hear how it was done, but that's the way it was. Now a lot of the Latino community, which was obviously a segregated community, little areas that they stayed, and from there they'd go out of their houses to work. A lot of the Latinos did piece work or contract, so much a row, or so much an acre, and things like that.

JD 16:59

I see. I see.

RT 17:01

Because it was hard to communicate. They didn't speak too much English. And our folks didn't speak much English. So, they'd come and, for some reason, though, they used to get it done though, That's the funny part, when you stop to think. Without being to communicate real well, they got it done, they got their pay, and the work was done, and so forth.

JD 17:28

Did you or your family, or any of your neighbors, did you have any interaction with Mexican folks?

RT 17:37

Oh, yeah, they were at school. We had no problems there. We never, it wasn't like the coloreds and the Mexicans today. There was no animosity.

JD 17:49

In that case, could like a Japanese American person or Japanese person, could they maybe like date a Mexican person?

RT 18:02

Well, that... some of the older ones that didn't get married, and women were kind of a rare commodity. So... none of them come on their own. They were either already assigned to a man, or something like that. But very few of them came over here like the men folks did. I think that was more the general trend with even the Filipinos, 'cause there was a lot of Filipinos here in the early 20s, but they were all men. So, and because of the, they had a law here, they couldn't marry other than, no Caucasian. The only place that people got married if they came from anywhere else, usually it was from the Midwest. They worked on the railroad or something, and met some lady in say Nebraska or Kansas, then there were mixed marriages there. Well, it was the same with the Chinese and all the other ethnic groups. But most of them were Japanese that came here early, and then Chinese obviously, and the Filipinos followed that. Just like the Europeans that came over. The Germans came, and then the Italians came, and the Irish came, and they had their problems, even though they were all Caucasians. Whereas ours, was altogether different. Caucasian and Oriental. It was a

big difference there, because of the way, I think it was a lot easier for an Italian to learn American, or the English language. Germans also, and Swedes and Norwegians and Irish, they all more or less had the same alphabet, so they were using, used to pronouncing the words, so it was easier for them. But now the Italians were very easily assimilated with the Latinos, because there was very little difference.

JD 20:34 Really?

RT 20:35 Yeah. Some of the words are altogether different, but most of them are very close, so most of the Italians that were on farms, they could talk to the Latino help with no problem at all.

JD 20:49 So there were Italian Americans here in the valley?

RT 20:51 Oh, yes. There were, the way it was, was obvious the regular English, and those associated with England were here first. We're talking about the Mayflower. But following that the Germans came here. Lankershim, does that sound like a German name? Yeah. Now Van Nuys might be Dutch. Could be, couldn't it? Could be Dutch. See they came here right following the others that were here early on, and following that the Italians came. So most of the Germans had been here since orchards and stuff like that. They were more or less in the farm area. And then the Italians came, and they worked for them obviously for a while, and the first thing you know, they owned the property and the Germans went on to do other things. Maybe politics. They were smarter. They went into politics.

JD 22:11 Well, you know, we've been talking about Italian Americans and German Americans, but you mentioned earlier there were also Filipino Americans?

RT 22:17 Yeah, Filipinos. They came here. They couldn't become citizens just like everybody else, even though it was a terrority of U.S. The Philippines was a territory of U.S. It was like Hawaii was a territory, until it became a state. But a lot of those guys joined the World War One, a lot of them were in the service, and they didn't get the recognition, and they couldn't become citizens, either. So, it was kind of an unfair situation, but that's the way it was. I think there was, there might have been a few Orientals, too, Chinese and so forth, that went to war as an American soldier.

JD 23:10 Although the Filipinos here in the valley, did you ever have any of them work on the farms?

RT 23:16 Yeah, a lot of them worked on the farm, so it was easier for them to get into the farming business, because they knew the farms. So most of them, in North Hollywood area, there was quite a few before the war, Filipino farmers.

JD 23:34 Oh, I see, they had their own farms?

RT 23:37 Yes sir. Well, they were leasing their land, because they were just like the Japanese. They weren't citizens, so they couldn't buy land. They couldn't lease it, either. So they probably leased it through, there again like proxy, some American citizen, Filipino

would negotiate. Either that or they might have had a European man that was real friendly, and they would lease the land. In other words, they would lease it, and sublease it to them. That's the way it worked.

JD 24:16 I see. Do you have any memories about the Filipino men who were hired hands on your farm?

RT 24:24 Oh yeah. They were, you know, they didn't talk like us, obviously. And they were another one that was like the Chinese, they had so many different dialects. But the ones that came, usually, I think there was two different dialects that they talked, but they seemed to get along.

JD 24:47 I see.

RT 24:48 Yeah. 'Cause I mentioned it once and, oh yeah, but they, when they were here, in the mid 20s there were big discussions as to going to a universal language, like Tagalog. That's what they used, and they were always discussing that, whether they should or shouldn't. The folks that I knew that worked my dad's farm, and so forth.

JD 25:16 And did they live on the farm?

RT 25:19 No, most of them lived in the San Fernando town, and they had a little section of their own. You know, most of the immigrants, that's the way they managed, they gathered in certain areas, and that's where they all, the newer arrivals would also immigrate to that particular area.

JD 15:41 That makes sense.

RT 25:42 Yeah. Well, that was the same way in New York or the eastern seaboard. So they used to have some fights obviously, because one was from the Bronx, and the other was from Brooklyn. Well, there you go. They had their differences. And besides, one was German and another was a Dago, Italian. A Dago was a common word that they used to describe them, but Italian, you know?

JD 26:16 I see.

RT 26:17 And I think the Irish had a name, too, and the Germans also. I think they called them Heinees or something, you know they had nicknames that was not real good. When they heard it, they weren't real happy, they didn't jump up and down with glee.

JD 26:35 I wouldn't think so.

RT 26:37 Yeah, but nicknames that didn't sound all that good, but those were all, though. Most all those, and the thing is this. I would say 75% maybe even more was the immigrants, you know, we only have a little community here of native Americans. All the rest are imports. And a lot of people don't think so, but that's the truth.

JD Well, actually on the topic of, you know, nicknames that weren't too nice, was there

27:13 much discrimination against Japanese Americans?

RT 27:24 Well, it depends. There was a certain amount of animosity, you know. But we didn't really, we never had any fights over it or anything like that. But if you went to a theater, you had to go upstairs. You know, you were kind of segregated. That happened quite often, unless it was right downtown. And there, if you paid, well even here, if you paid for loges you'd get to go down, but that was expensive. It was probably twice more the cost to enter the theater.

JD 28:00 Of course.

RT 28:01 So, most of us, you come in the entry, and the usher would point to the stairway.

JD 28:10 I see. I see

RT 28:13 Yeah, those kind of things did happen. But there was some places, were you, but this is basically along the Pacific coast. If you were elsewhere, you were either white or black. So there was no in between, because I was, during the war I was back east. And I thought that they caught it just like we were catching it. This was the Jewish community. Now we were kind of, they didn't know too much about Orientals, although in New York they had a big Chinatown.Yeah, but the other places I'm talking about, the average Midwestern town. If they had one Chinese, that was, 'cause they were all over. I don't know what you guys are, but they were all over. Chinese were known as the Jews of the Orient. And they were everywhere. Yes. And basically Cantonese.

JD 29:26 Oh, I see. I see. Were there any Chinese merchants?

RT 29:31 Oh yes. Down the wholesale, you went down to the wholesale market, in the 20s they probably were, I'm guessing 25% maybe 30% were all Chinese merchants. That bought and sold, jobbers more like. They bought and sold from the farmers that brought in stuff to sell.

JD 29:57 Did they usually deal with the Japanese American farmers?

RT 30:00 Yeah. Most of them were, there were some Italians, and others obviously, but the majority were Japanese farmers that went to the wholesale market. That was both the city market and the 7th Street or Central Market. Well they had an 8th Street market, but 7th Street.

JD 30:20 I see. Well, just to shift gears for a moment, we're talking about all this inter, all these relationships between different ethnicities, and other folks like that. I kind of heard an interesting story about how your house was built, when your dad worked with Mr. Porter.

RT 30:41 Oh yeah. Well, most of them built their own. They weren't, I don't think they were trained as a carpenter, but they were not all that dumb. They would put them up. And a matter of fact, a lot of the miners and so forth that came out here, and a very few of

them were carpenters, but they seemed to manage to put up a shack. And we're not talking about a shack that will blow over, but something that was fairly substantial, withstood the weather and so forth. So, yeah, that's what they all did, either that or they helped each other. It was like barn raising in Midwest, when all the farmers in the neighborhood, somebody's farm goes up in smoke, why they would all come out and help. None of them get paid. It was all gratis.

JD 31:41 I see.

RT 31:42 Volunteer help. Well, neighbor. So those are some of the things among the farmers that is much similar. They helped each other.

JD 31:58 I see. Would that be just Japanese American farmers helping Japanese American farmers?

RT 32:00 That's right. Basically that's what it was. It was their own group. Because there was the ethnic groups, you know? Mexicans did the same thing. Like a clan was, I don't think they had any real fancy looking carpenters, but they managed to put up their houses, you know, livable houses. Although, in comparison with the Caucasians, it might have looked like a shack. But it was nothing unusual to find farms, in the early days, especially, with no inside plumbing. See, even today I think there's farms out, where they have to go to the well, and haul, haul it up. Put it in a bucket, and haul, the bucket stays there, so they had to haul the bucket in, yeah. I'm pretty sure there's spots, even today, in isolated areas where they don't have any electricity and stuff like that, although they have portable power and all that, but I think a lot of them still end up using, down and pick it back up, dump it in your bucket or wherever, and carry it in. It was, that's why if you ever watch any old movies, and they had this wash basin in the hotel, it was about that big, and they had the pitcher of water right on side, and you notice how much water they put in? And they used all that water without throwing it away. You know, we've got to the point where we're really abuse of all our uses. That goes for putting everything we have. You see, in those days it was thrift. Even water, if you have to down go to the well and haul it home, or to the river, you're not going to throw it away very easily. You know, that was obvious.

JD 34:19 Do you remember when your home got like running water?

RT 34:24 Oh, gosh, I was probably about 5 years old, when they moved into Alhambra on the farm. My dad and his uncle separated because dad's uncle went back to Japan, I guess. They were on a farm, they farmed it together, and he didn't want to farm it by himself, so he went to Alhambra and worked as a gardener, and in those days, most of the families either had live-in gardeners, or they come to work for them, but they didn't have to bring anything. All they had to do was bring their hand and labor. They had all the equipment right there on the estate, or on the premises, so, but that's what he did. He rode a bicycle, in the Pasadena area, and that's when we first had our indoor plumbing. The old pull chain. The tank was way up above. That was to give it force, I guess. You know, to flush it. So it was tall enough. It was usually right close to the ceiling. And most of the people were shorter, you know. They're getting taller now, but in those days, I guess, even if they were a Caucasian, 5-foot-6 or 5-foot-7 was

probably normal. And then, obviously, every year went up. More hamburgers and they grew up bigger.

JD 36:14 — True that. Definitely.

RT 36:16 — It's the diet. You know, instead of eating real wholesome food, what we'd call wholesome, we went into eating a lot of more meat, and other stuff. So it made it so most of us, isn't what they talk about today? A lot of the kids are overweight, obese. What is it, 60 or 70 percent?

JD 36:47 — I know. It's a lot.

RT 36:48 — It's pretty high. And these are, we're talking about grammar school kids, and junior high and so forth. Of course, but see when we were going to high school, a guy 180 pounds or so was a big dude. Yeah, he was a big man. About, 5-foot, I'm guessing about 5-9, or 10, maybe 11. Not very many were 6-foot. The tallest guy we had in our high school was 6-foot-2, but he was clumsy, so he never played basketball. The guys that were 5-11, 6-foot, those were the guys that played basketball. And some of them were shorter, obviously. 5-foot-6 and 7.

JD 37:35 — Did you or any of your brothers play basketball?

RT 37:39 — No. No. None of our family played basketball.

JD 37:43 — Were, could anyone join the basketball team?

RT 37:46 — Oh, yes. As long as you qualified. And, you know, of course you had to be scholastically, you know, eligible because they'd knock you off the book real quick or off the team, if you didn't. So, I knew a lot of guys were on their knees talking to the professor. And usually the guys that were real big were not all that brilliant, either. But they were good athletes, but because they weren't brilliant they had to go on their knees and beg the professor, well that's what we used to call them, the prof, to kind of doctor them, doctor the grades so they could go out and play.

JD 38:35 — I gotcha. That's great that, you know, anyone.

RT 38:42 — But that's the way it was. I mean I don't think it was just our school, I think they were all like that. Yeah, the athletes that were, they were good athletes, but they weren't too good scholastically, well then they had to do, even today I think they have a lot of those, don't they? They get kicked off the team because can't make it, so they, what do they call it, a [unclear], or whatever, and go back in the following year. Either that, or make it up, now like ours, a lot of the guys that couldn't make it up, they had to go to summer school and make up their classes.

JD 38:18 — I see. I see.

RT 39:22 — In other words, they weren't running off to the beach or anyplace. They were restricted.

JD 39:29 And what high school did you attend?

RT 29:31 Huh?

JD 39:33 What high school did you attend?

RT 39:39 I went to San Fernando. I'm a graduate of San Fernando. And I graduated from Pacoima Junior, I mean Grammar. In those days, the grammar school went to 8th grade. But when I went to San Fernando, they had it from 7th to 12th. So I was in junior high for one year, so they started off, you know in the past, it was freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, four years. But San Fernando had it so you stayed at junior high school for one year, in the ninth grade, and then you became a sophomore you went into senior high.

JD 40:13 Was it a pretty good mix of white kids and Japanese kids?

RT 40:16 Oh yeah, well it was basically all white. The percentage would have probably been Latinos and other minorities, probably 10%, and that would be kind of high, I think.

JD 40:32 Oh yeah. Yeah.

RT 40:36 Of course, in our class there was 77, and there was only 4 Orientals, 4 Japanese, and there was 2 Mexicans, and that was during the Depression, so a lot of them quit at the tenth grade. I think there was 2 guys that I know of that graduated, that were Latinos. Mexican fellows.

JD 41:00 Did everyone get along pretty well?

RT 41:03 Oh yeah, There was no problem there. At least, they didn't, they wouldn't display their, what do you call them now, their animosity or anything like that toward you during school. But everybody did their own little thing in separate groups.

JD 41:28 That makes sense.

RT 41:30 So if you were included in some of the groups that you wouldn't normally, well then you were one of the popular guys. Or person, that would cover both male and female. I don't think, I think it was a lot simpler, and nicer in a sense, but it wasn't like today, you know. You couldn't take them to court, and stuff like that. Or, run to somebody and tell them, hey that guy called me such and such.

JD 42:11 I think everyone just had to deal with it themselves.

RT 42:13 Yeah, So, now, it's in that respect, it's a little bit different.

JD 42:19 I see.

RT You know, people used to drive by the farm and holler at us, calling us names and so

42:22 forth, but those guys are all dead and gone now, so I can talk about them, but. Let's see, I was about 8 or 9 years old, so these guys were probably then early 20s. Drive by in a car and scream at us, you know. We're on a farm, so we can't get off.

JD 42:58 Gotta keep working.

RT 43:12 Yeah. Things like that did happen, but it wasn't bad. I think I grew up in a real wonderful time.

JD 43:17 That's good. I see.

RT 43:17 Of course, I lived a little longer than a lot of people, but you know, when I look back I say gee, how wonderful to have gone through all the stages. I saw everything going from here to where we are today.

JD 43:40 Definitely.

RT 43:42 Big difference, you know?

JD 43:43 That is so true.

RT 43:44 Huh?

JD 43:45 That is so true.

RT 43:50 Yes, it is. Well, what do they call it, evolution?

JD 43:55 Well, on the topic, on that, we're pretty much through with all the questions we have, but are there any striking memories, anything you want to share with us that we didn't cover, or that you didn't get to talk about in your last interview?

RT 44:10 Well, like I said, most of our activities were among our own little community, and most of the farm folks new each other, associated. Some of them more socially, and others not so much. But they knew who they were, and like I said, if the barn burnt down they'd all go down there to help them put it back together. And if it was burning, why they'd all run down there with the hose, and all that kind of stuff. Yeah, that was common. And I think that's still common among the farmers in the Midwest. They're close knit, I guess you would call that. But, most of the activities were among our own group.

JD 45:03 I see.

RT 45:05 Yeah. There was some, now what are you by the way, your ancestry?

JD 45:10 We're both Filipino.

RT 45:12 Oh yeah, okay, 'cause he don't look too much like a Filipino.

MR 45:17 A lot of people say that.

RT 45:19 He looks, more the Oriental, not like a regular Filipino. Now you guys all talk Tagalog, then huh?

MR 45:33 I do.

RT 34:45 You do. He don't talk?

JD 45:37 No. No.

RT 45:38 It's unfortunate. I don't care what it is, gambling or anything. To know it is to your advantage.

JD 45:45 Right.

RT 45:46 Not to know it is a basically a loss.

JD 45:50 I know.

RT 45:54 Yeah, so were your folks, did they speak any other dialog other than.

MR 46:00 My mom does. My Mom, she speaks both Tagalog and Kapampangan.

RT 46:06 What's the other one?

MR 46:10 It's called Kapampangan. It's a dialect of the Philippines.

RT 46:14 I don't know that one. The older ones that came here were a lot of Bisayans.

MR 46:20 Yeah, and Ilocanos?

RT 46:21 Yeah, Ilocanos. There you go, I couldn't think of the word. But they got along real well though.

MR 46:26 Yeah. They do.

RT 46:27 They must have been come from the same neighborhood.

MR 46:30 Probably.

RT 46:43 'Cause I learned a few words in Bisayan that I can remember. I was about 12 years old when I learned it, but I said, so I asked everyone, are you Bisayan? Can you understand Bisayan? No, most of them can't. But sometimes I do. Then I tell them this. Ah, I say, like one girl, woman, I told her that, and she says too late. I was telling her I love her. And she says it's too late. That was funny. But it's, yeah, there was a lot of Filipinos here in the early 20s. Before the war there was a whole lot of them in North Hollywood. A lot of them had dual names. Spanish and regular Filipino. Like

one of them I remember very well. His name was Kabatanga. Now you know that isn't Spanish.

MR 47:39 No, I don't.

RT 47:44 Yeah, then another guy's name is Modesto. Now that's Spanish.

MR 47:46 Oh yeah, that's Spanish.

RT 47:47 Yeah, but they were all Filipinos. I don't remember, let's see, the guy that worked for us and lived with us, his name was Tadena. And I'm pretty sure that's a Filipino name. That don't sound like a Latin name. Yeah. And him and his friends used to get together, and they'd, they were discussing whether they should go to the national language of Tagalog, that's why I know what Tagalog is, because they were discussing it all the time, whether they should or shouldn't. This was around 1925, 26. So it goes back a day or two. Yeah there was a whole community in San Fernando, but they were all guys, no women. Oh, I take it back, there was one, his name was Hernandez, and they were married. And they had a boy about my age.

JD 48:43 Did you know the boy yourself?

RT 48:46 Yeah, they had a son. About my age. He was a good ukulele player. I remember that very distinctly. Yeah. And he left, let's see, he left there about 1931, around 32 or 33, and then I ran across him about 4, 5 years later in Downtown, on Main Street.

JD 49:14 Oh wow. Small world.

RT 49:17 It was kind of strange. It was really a coincidence to meet like that. But I haven't seen him since.

JD 49:25 Oh. Did he go to the same elementary school as you?

RT 49:27 No, he didn't go to, he was, I think he was, I don't know what happened to him. He came from, he was living in San Fernando with his parents, and then they moved out to a house right next door to me. So, that's how I knew him. That's how I learned how to eat pigs feet. Yeah. I don't know, but you know what they did, I never knew anything about it, we didn't go for necks and feet and stuff like that you know, so they boiled the heck out of it, and they got all the fat off of it, and it was nice afterwards when they cooked it. I ate it. It was kind of crunchy. Is it kind of crunchy?

MR 50:09 Yeah.

RT 50:10 Yeah. That was it. They said this is how we do it. Oh yeah? So, you know, although we come from the Orient, each one has their own way of doing things. And things that they ate were different. And I think they used their hands more than chopsticks. They didn't use any utensils. I think they used their hands to eat. And nothing unusual, because a lot of the, what the Arabs do it, and there's a big bunch of people that still eat with their hands. As a matter of fact, some of the Mexicans do. They eat with their

hands, mix it up. A lot of the old Ottoman Empire, with Persia and all them, they all eat with their hands, I'm sure they do. You know, they don't use any utensils. You know, now it's different, but I'm talking about the past, like probably, I don't know, how old are your folks?

MR 51:13 Mine?

RT 51:14 Fifty?

MR 51:15 Yeah, my dad's around 50, and my mom's 44.

RT 51:21 Okay, so see, so they might still do it, they might have done it at one time. Let's put it that way. 'Cause, you know, you have to go, flow with the times.

JD 51:37 Of course.

RT 51:40 You probably use the regular utensils that everybody else does here.

MR 51:41 Yeah, we do.

RT 51:43 Yeah. 'Cause, we used, you know we were all raised with chopsticks. Chinese also. Chinese, and there's a lot of others. Koreans, I think, use chopsticks. There's a lot of others that use chopsticks. We still do. But we only use it for certain meals. You're not gonna eat chopsticks, with chicken with chopsticks. That's pretty hard. Chicken's better with the hand. Go directly with your hand. But, you know, knives and forks, the other things, most of it, we have. So, that's the times, so everything changes. Hopefully for the better, you know. Hopefully for the better. I don't know sometimes, they may not, but we hope that it does change for the better. So what else did you want to hear?

JD 52:37 Well, that's about it.

RT 52:38 Okay.

JD 52:40 There's, as I said, if there's any other memory, or anything you wanted to share.

RT 52:43 Well, I was an athlete. I was a, I run the hundred. And I did play football for one season. And the coach really tried to discourage me, 'cause he says, I don't want you out there 'cause heck, you're gonna be gone the next semester. So I said, nah, it's all right, I'm gonna come in, so he gave me all the junk stuff that he had. Pads didn't fit, the padding didn't fit. Oh gosh, it was hard to bend over, it was so long. Yeah, he really did make it rough to me. It was 57 guys, and I was towards the end, obviously. I never played football in my life. But I ended up basically earning enough quarters to get a letter, but in those days, times were tough. So they could only, they were only allotted so many letters. But he said it's okay, you already got your varsity letter in track, so it's okay isn't it? I said, well what could I say, no? I'd be some kind of a not so good person if I hollered and raised a smell, a stink, right?

JD
54:10
I know.

RT
54:12
Yeah, but I didn't. Lightest guy on the team, 125 pounds. But the biggest guy was only 187.

MR
54:22
That's not a big difference.

RT
54:24
Yeah, he was the tackle. I played left half. I was halfback, because of the speed, you know. Yeah.

JD
54:35
I see.

RT
54:37
But it was interesting. And the kid that I, well he graduated a year after me, he was the quarterback, no he was the fullback, I take it back. Anyway, the quarterback only weighed 137 pounds.

JD
54:47
Wow. Ain't that something?

RT
54:50
Yeah, well we had two. One guy was bigger. He was taller, about 160, and right close to 6-foot. But Rob [unclear] was only about 5-7 and weighed 138 pounds. But he was smart. He didn't carry the ball much. He let the other guys carry, and get hurt.

JD
55:20
Were there other Japanese kids on the team?

RT
55:22
Ah, yes. Not on the varsity. A matter of fact, several quit because the coach made it difficult for them. You know, we had, there was five strings, that was more than enough. So, but my brother-in-law played the B, played three years of B, and one year of varsity. And he only weighed 138, and he was a running guard. 138 pounds. He wasn't bigger than me. We were about the same height, he was huskier. So, you know, things like that. I played ball, but they times were tough, so they had to quit, and it became intramural. That's between classes, so I didn't get to letter in that. I played ball. We had invited different high school teams to come and play, but we didn't get any letter even if we played a lot.

JD
56:35
I see.

RT
56:38
But that's what they called them, I think, intramural team, but we did invite Burbank, and different schools. We only had, when we were going, we had Canoga Park now, and then we had Van Nuys, and then we had North Hollywood, and San Fernando, and we had Eagle Rock, and then one time we had Beverly Hills in our league.

JD
56:49
Really?

RT
57:02
Yeah. And when Beverly Hills dropped out we had the University High. That's in West LA.

JD
I see.

57:17
RT
57:21
Yeah. So when we played Beverly Hills, we played at the old UCLA. You know, UCLA was a small school then. Let's see, was it Pomona? Yeah, Pomona and UCLA played against SC one year as I remember, you know separately, one time, one day. But they both got trounced.

JD
57:52
Oh, dang.

RT
57:53
USC had a real strong team then.

JD
57:54
I see.

RT
57:59
They called them the thundering herd. Howard Jones was the coach.

JD
58:12
I see.

RT
58:14
UCLA was up and coming. But they had a lot of good players come up after that, though. Yeah. You know, guys that made a name for themselves in baseball and football, and so forth. Some in the theater, yeah Woody Strode, guy by the name of Woodrow Strode, he was a kind of like a sample for physique. He really had a good physique, so when they wanted to make up a deal for his physique, they used him as a model.

JD
58:51
Wow. I gotcha.

RT
58:54
Yeah, Woodrow Strode. If you see old movies, you'll see him. Yeah. He was a pretty good-size guy, about 6-3, probably weighed 200 or a little better, was muscular. You know, he looked like a man that would, Arnold Schwarzenegger type, body building.

JD
59:15
Well, you know. On that note.

RT
59:23
You gonna close today's interview?

JD
59:35
Yeah.

RT
59:26
Okay.

JD
59:27
We want to thank you very much.

RT
59:28
You're welcome.

JD
59:30
All your experiences are so valuable, and we're glad you could come out today.

RT
59:36
Yeah, no it's okay. I gotta, this is a dual purpose. I'm coming here and I gotta go over here, that would be Tampa and Vanowen, so just keep right on going. No problem.

END OF INTERVIEW