

"Japanese American Farmers in the San Fernando Valley Before And After WWII
Oral History Project"

KENJI AND HAYAKO KIHARA

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

San Fernando Valley

14 April, 2004

Interview conducted by

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AAS 390: Asian American Communities Field Practicum

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KENJI AND HAYAKO KIHARA
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

Narrator: Kenji and Hayako Kihara

Occupation: Retired

Address: 14119 Gain St. Arleta, CA 91331

Date of Interview: April 14, 2004

Length of Interview: 73 minutes

Session: One

Place: Kenji and Hayako Kihara's home in Arleta CA

Subject: Japanese American Farmers in the San Fernando Valley

Interviewer: Joseph Kim

Camera Person: Dinah Nghiem

Kenji and Hayako Kihara Oral History

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Kenji and Hayako Kihara

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

The two interviewees that are participating in this interview is Kenji and Hayako Kihara who are married and currently lives in Arleta, California. They are both retired and been living in the San Fernando Valley ever since 1948. Before the Valley the two were farming in Colorado for a couple years going back and fourth from the two states. The Kihara's have farmed in the valley for a total of six years in Mission Hills and the North Hollywood area. The two grew the typical produce of green onions, cabbage and carrots.

Kenji the husband of Hayako doesn't speak much English so his wife had to translate and tell some of their experiences. Kenji spent most of his life going back and fourth from Japan and the U.S. However, during the early 1930's Kenji rented a room from Hayako's sister and there they met. After they met, they got married in 1940 at a Buddhist church in Los Angeles, California. Kenji originally worked in the Central California area harvesting grapes at the vineyard. Then traveled back to Los Angeles and started Night school to learn English while working as a delivery truck driver for a produce business.

Hayako's family was in the states unlike Kenji's parents who were mostly in Japan. Hayako's family was from the El Monte area, which is the San Gabriel valley. They had a farm there where Hayako and her three sisters worked and helped their parents farm. They farmed raspberries, blackberries, and vegetables in El Monte. The San Fernando Valley farmed different produce and fruits than El Monte. However,

when Hayako and Kenji started their life, they both decided to reside in the Valley where they had the experience to farm vegetables and produce.

Kenji and Hayako experienced extreme hardships growing up in California. Discrimination and hatred were clearly displayed and make it hard for both to live a normal life. Kenji and Hayako two hard working Japanese citizens were forced to internment camps in the hot Arizona state. Most of their belongings were either sold or lost during internment, which was very difficult for them since they worked so hard.

Hayako especially, experienced hostility among her school peers. Kenji was fortunate enough to be living in Japan at that time. Furthermore, they were unable to own any land due to executive order 9006 so most of their land they were working for other people not being able to get a share. However, after the war, Hayako and Kenji went back to Colorado for a while to and ultimately moved back to the San Fernando Valley. Luckily, after serving in the camps most of their belongings were retrieved and they were able to start their journey in the Valley. Though there was still a little hostility amongst them, they overcame them and worked hard to live a good life.

Kenji and Hayako were kind enough to share some of their diverse experiences with us. Kenji is now 88 years old and Hayako 85 years old. They are now living peacefully and are delighted to be helping our University with valuable information to pass along to people who are interested in this undocumented history. Though they had a difficult time in the past, they are excited about life and look forward to the growth and well being of the San Fernando Valley.

Interviewee: Kenji (KK) & Hayako Kihara (HK)
Kenji Kihara doesn't speak English so his wife translated
and talked us through the interview

Interviewer: Joseph Kim (JK)

Date: April 14, 2004

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

JK: Hi! This is Joseph Kim, I'm here with Dinah Nghiem and we're doing our interview. Um... We would like to thank you, I'm sorry the time is 6:30PM, April 14, 2004 and I'm interviewing... What was your name again? Can you please?

HK: Kenji and Hayako Kihara.

JK: Oh can you please. Kenji.

HK: Kenji Kihara.

JK: And?

HK: No, he's Kenji and I'm Hayako.

JK: Okay, okay and we're here to do the interview. Thank you for taking the time to help with this project. 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 um. We at 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 and if there is any portion of this interview you would like not want to discuss, feel free to let us know. With your permission, we will be taping the interview. Please let us know if there is any questions or concerns. Thank you!

HK: Kihara and Hayako Kihara, we came back to the Valley in 1948, we been living in the Valley ever since.

[02]JK: Okay, um. Okay. I'd like to get a sense from you what the San Fernando Valley was like while you were growing up here?

HK: What?

JK: Yeah. I'd like to know what the San Fernando Valley was like while you were growing up here?

HK: Well San Fernando Valley was just starting like um... It was all country, um, the movers per say didn't want to go back. San Fernando Valley was big big country, and um there were not many developments but it was starting to. But there was a lot of open land. When we came back, we farmed for 6 years around the Valley and a... we grew green onions, cabbage, carrots and the neighbors like the Miranaka's live in the next block over in there were in there were quite a few farmers. Like the Higashida's and the Yamano's but the we all had to work hard because we were starting new and um... what else?

JK: There was a...Can you tell me what it was like and how it has changed?

HK: Well we had... We didn't have freeways. There's just a freeways and are flood control. We didn't have. There was this flood control that goes near the road Canterbury went right through, is that it? Wentworth they had the flood control.

JK: Oh okay!

HK: There was there, was a wash there in a... There was no Roscoe. There was, there was just a lot of country roads and a lot of eucalyptus and orange trees, and um... After we quit farming the Panorama development same where they have distract homes. This house here was built like a tract house. They use to be farmers here like strawberry growers, and um... green onions and everything. Nobody bought land. This landowner just leases the land to us. Well we had to move every 3 years and so my kids didn't want to change school every 3 years so we went into gardening.

[05]JK: Okay um... As far as demographics concern can you show us on the map where, where you farmed? For the 6 years over here on the map?

HK: We farmed on Devonshire, Devonshire between Woodley. Woodley and Havenhurst for 2 years.

JK: Over here on Mission Hills?

HK: Uh huh and then we moved to Canterbury and Sheldon. Canterbury and North Hollywood.

JK: Canterbury and Sheldon so... North Hollywood, so around this area is?

HK: Canterbury, Canterbury. Where is Canterbury?

JK: So North Hollywood would be somewhere down here.

HK: No wait a minute. You know where the Thai temple is?

JK: Yeah.

HK: Around there.

JK: Okay so Mission Hills through was like the primary?

HK: Yeah Mission Hills. It was San Fernando then.

JK: San Fernando bit it changed to Mission Hills. Did you get that from here? Mission Hills and Devonshire.

[07]JK: Were there other Japanese American families living in the area?

HK: There was... I the area the Miranaka's family lived on Lassen and Yamano's lived on Chatsworth and Havenhurst or between Havenhurst and Woodly and we didn't know too many farmers. But there was quite a few like? Huh?

KK: Higashidamoto.

HK: Higashida's the 2 Higashida brothers, they brothers farm on Woodman and then they farmed on. One of the brothers farmed on Laurel Canyon, then there was Bob Yamanaka that farmed on Woodman and near Paxton, then there was the Nita's. They farmed on North Hollywood and then Ishibashi's and then then there was it. They farmed up on the other side the other side of Laurel Canyon on Van Nuys Blvd. Close to there guess you know and the Noda's farm in Lake Gutierrez and then there there's a whole bunch of the. But we Bob and then there was...

KK: Flower grower.

HK: Hamamoto. He farmed in Sun Valley I guess and there...

KK: Flower growers.

KK: And there were flower growers and everything but most of the farmers either moved out of the Valley on the count of the land got scarce and whoever stayed you know they farmed. Like the Miranaka's use to farm on the land Northridge, CSUN. Lassen and is that Lassen and Reseda? No. Where's it? It's Lassen and what? They use to farm on the cross street.

JK: Lassen and...

HK: And CSUN...

JK: Lassen and Nordhoff.

HK: No, no. Lassen and Nordhoff runs the same way. It's a...

JK: Zelzah?

HK: No, what is that street? Near Balboa, I guess.

JK: Oh okay.

HK: Reseda, Balboa.

JK: Oh okay. Reseda and Balboa um okay... Were there any other Asian ethnic groups such as Filipinos, Chinese, Koreans, Mexicans, African Americans?

HK: We had a lot of wetbacks. They lived they lived on the property with us. You know and the Filipinos there were some Filipinos too because we went to Canterbury. They lived with us too. I just know their first name Frank, Pete, um... What else? There's a lot of Filipino group that worked on the asparagus field too. They on the place like not exactly houses but sort of like shacks and things.

[12]JK: Oh okay. Issei. Did your parents moved to San Fernando Valley too?

HK: My parents lived in San Gabriel Valley.

JK: Oh San Gabriel Valley. How they so they resided there most of the time. San Gabriel Valley they weren't really from....

HK: San Gabriel Valley. They farmed mostly in El Monte.

JK: Oh El Monte.

HK: But his father came when early 1900's I guess. But he died during the flu. They had the epidemic.

JK: Oh okay.

HK: So the mother took back 2 children and 1 on the way and so my husband was raised in Japan until he was 8, 19. He came back and the war so... I was born and raised in San Gabriel Valley and I came to San Fernando after.

JK: So yeah your parents basically were... Let's see.

HK: Farmers.

JK: Farmers but in San Gabriel for your parents and his parents also?

HK: His father worked in the like a keep his family in a boarding house in Los Angeles and goes to San Pedro Hills.

JK: What was his occupation? His father's occupation?

HK: My father in law, he was but he died young so I don't think he lived. He was 4 years old when his father died so a..... His mother took him back to Japan and raised in Japan until he was orphaned at 13 so relatives and some people raised him until he was 19. He came back to the states because things were pretty bad in Japan in those days in 1930's, so I came back.

[17]JK: Can you tell me how your parents became farmers?

HK: My parents were farmers. They farmed like raspberries, blackberries and vegetables in El Monte.

JK: How did they become farmers? Though did they just....

HK: I beg your pardon.

JK: How did they become farmers? They...

HK: I think my father was from a farmer, fathers. My father's families were farmers. Back in Japan but..

JK: Were they back in Japan?

HK: In Japan when you have a lot of sons they all had to get either you got adopted or you stayed alone with another family. After the first son took after the family while the 2nd and 3rd sons they had no place to go. They had to come to United States to make money to build a house in Japan, that was their dream going back to Japan because they couldn't buy any land here. Um... but in Los Angeles they had children, they couldn't go back, couldn't become citizens until after the war. So their dream was sending their kids to Japan. So there's a lot kids that were sent back to Japan. Raised by grandparents while Parents tried to make money but eventually ended up coming back and raising children and that's the that that. Nisei that was raised here but the Kibei's are the people that were sent back to Japan and came back.

[20]JK: What kinds of crops did they grow and what kind of crops did you guys grow?

HK: My parents raised berries, rhubarbs and things like that but we raised green onions mostly in San Fernando. We raised we raised sugar beets in Colorado but then for 6 years we went into camp in Arizona. But we didn't have like the camp so we just moved out of the camp into Colorado and farmed there.

JK: So to recap. You farmed 6 years in San Fernando after the war.

HK: After the war.

JK: But before the war you guys farmed in Colorado for another...

HK: For another 6 years.

JK: So 12 years experience altogether.

JK: So how many acres was the farm? Would you have?

HK: At least 30.

KK: 30.

HK: 30 or 40.

JK: 30 or 40 acres over here in North Hollywood and Mission Hills?

HK: We have actually I think close to 40 because we farmed.

JK: So can you did you help your parents or were you came to America did you worked on the farm separately from El Monte your parents farmed on El Monte so were you guys separated?

HK: No, no. My parents were before war they were in El Monte and I got married, lived in Los Angeles and the war broke out and we went into camp and my relatives were they went to Colorado so we went to Colorado. After we spent from about 4 or 5 months in camp then the relocation said to us, "As long as we didn't come back to Valley to the West Coast we could go anywhere Inland" and so... There was danger that we might sabotage things in California but we were living in next the mission in Colorado. They didn't say anything.

[25]JK: As far as... What was your mother's and father's daily routine?

HK: My father was 20 to 29 when he came to United States. I think when he was 19 but he was 29 when he got married and my mother was 19 or 18, 19. 18-19 her picture is in the back over there. Yeah but she was a picture bride and his mother was a picture bride too they arranged marriage.

JK: So. Yeah I've studied a little about picture brides. A... So was the pay that your parents received sufficient enough to make a living? Like your parents were supporting you at that time? Is that correct?

HK: Oh. What do you mean? Laugh.

JK: Like your parents working at the farms in El Monte?

HK: They were raising us we were born and raised. There were 4 of us daughters that were born and raised in San Gabriel Valley and like him he was sent to back to he went back with his mother to Japan. When he was 4 years old so he was raised in Japan. Then after he came back he went into the produce business in Los Angeles. So when I married him a... back in 1940 and when the war broke out we were living in El Monte and we went to the assembly centers and the relocation centers. We went to the County Fairgrounds for about 4 months and we then were sent River and that's In Arizona. In from there we went after about 4/5 months we went to Colorado and we stayed there until 1948 but in the mean time everybody from like Manzanar they came back to the Valley. So when we came back some of the people had farm and changed their business into gardening and whatever so we brought back our tractor and everything from Colorado. So we like we like farming so we started that but then the land was unavailable so we just had to quit farming and went into gardening back in what 55?

KK: Yea.

HK: 1955 went into gardening and he was a gardener in the Valley until 2 years ago he was 86. Um.

JK: Can you ask your husband to get some feedback? What it was like growing up on the farms? For him like a... How was it?

HK: He was never raised on the farm.

JK: I mean like as far as working on the farm?

HK: Oh like working on the farm? He loved it.

JK: He loved it, did you guys enjoyed it?

HK: He liked to see things growing you know.

[30]JK: Can you describe so I'm sorry can you tell me at what age did you begin work both of you guys? What age did you guys began to work on the farms the exact?

HK: He was he was 24. Don't know how old yet but between 25-26 I think when you started farming.

KK: Yea.

HK: He farmed for 6 years but he would stay on the farm if you know he had land but then land got scarce than we had to go into gardening.

JK: Did you have any brothers or sisters? How many?

HK: He has brother that was born in Japan after his mother took him back to Japan after his father died. And he has a sister in North Hollywood. And they were farmers in Fresno. I had three sisters but they are all gone now.

[33]JK: Can you tell me a little bit more about your school experiences? And what school you attended and stuff like that?

HK: The school... I went to school, well I lived in El Monte, but El Monte was a redneck place. The schools were segregated. The Mexicans went to one school and we were sent to school with the Mexicans until fifth grade when the Mexicans quit school. They didn't go to the white school anymore. But after fifth school we got sent to the white school in El Monte. It was a very segregated town. When we went to the movies, we had to sit in the side. We weren't allowed to sit in the middle section. Then we went to the town swimming pool, they only let you in on Friday afternoon before they clean the pool. There was a lot of discrimination in El Monte. But we never went to the pool or we never went to the El Monte Theatre. We went to the movies in San Gabriel, which is a Mexican town, so you can sit wherever you want. But my parents did not want us to go to the segregated schools so he got an eighth grader to drive us to Rosemead which was not segregated so we went to school in Rosemead. And then Rosemead school said there were too many Japanese coming to Rosemead so then we were sent us to El Monte and then we went to school for about two years I think to the segregate school. The teacher would get a pencil and examine our head for cooties. But then after the fifth grade we went to white school. And then I went to school in el Monte, he went to school in Japan. But then my father sent my sister to mission school in San Gabriel mission because that was not segregated. But when the younger kids got older, they went to Rosemead and El Monte.

JK: Did you have a lot of different ethnicity friends or did you have mostly Japanese friends?

HK: well, I don't think we ever associated with outside of Japanese kids. We went to Japanese schools and we made white friends in school after we got to fifth grade, I had one girl tell me "I'm having a birthday party but my mom doesn't want you to come, but you can give me a present."

JK: So the Caucasians were showing a lot of discrimination against you because you were Japanese.

HK: But I had my son go to, to change the subject. But my son went to Granada Hill school in Tulsa Street in Granada Hills and he was five years old, we sent him to school over there. And then we moved to San Fernando when we quit farming and I said you

are going to school in San Fernando, and he asked if there were other Japanese kids there. And I said yea, there's a few people, a few Japanese people in San Fernando but he was the only kid going to Granada Hill at that time and I said why? and he said well nobody can call me a Jap anymore. But he never came home and said anything about being discriminated or teased or anything

[35]JK: So you experienced a lot of hostilities?

HK: Back in the twenties. I think the war spread everything. Everybody was living on the west coast. But with the war, opened up the United States all over, got to know the Japanese people. I guess they thought we were humans after all. But when we were coming back from Colorado, and we were loading up the trucks, in our friends truck with equipment, we came by New Mexico and we stopped at a hamburger stand on the road and I went in, and then we won't wait on me and I said what's wrong? And she said we don't serve Indians. I guess she didn't know the difference between Indian and Japanese. And I said, I'm not Indian I'm Japanese. And she said oh ok, what do you want? So a lot of people when we bought a house in Mission Hills, our neighbor she said, she was from Nebraska, she said I never knew Japanese until we came to California. I never even saw a Japanese in Nebraska. So this war I think kind of spread the Japanese people all over the United States. We went to Iowa for a while and lived with my sister and one of my sister moved to Florida. We never went out of California until the war, so the one good thing about the war was that people got to know the Japanese

JK: There was a lot of ignorance before anything else. I've interviewed another Japanese American and it was a time before and after the war. And he said he felt discriminated against the Caucasians, but it seems like your experiences were much more worse than his. It seems like you had a harder time.

HK: Well the Japanese like the Koreans, try to keep... I knew a Korean lady and she said we try to keep the Korean to ourselves. I said yea, so do the Japanese try to. We try to keep the Japanese. We don't intermarriage. But then I have three sons but two sons are married to Caucasians right? And when my second son was going to junior high school there was as cute girl in the year book, I said oh this is a cute girl, and he said yea she's cute but not for me. And I said why? And he said she's Korean. And then my older son was the student body president of San Fernando Valley high school and he thought being elected student body president there was no discrimination or nothing. His friend got married when his wife Caucasian. And she went to Sienna Park apartment and the nighttime came and her husband came to look at the apartment and the apartment was closed because he was Japanese. And he said mom you are right, I guess there is discrimination. But he was the only person married to a Japanese. But two of my sons are married to Irish girls. There is a lot of intermarriage going on. I guess the Nisei's are different from the third generation. Did not know much about the others

[40]JK: Can you tell me a little bit about how you guys met each other and how you guys got together?

HK: Well, he was in the produce business like my sister's husband and they were working together. So my daughter in law says we are having a hard time paying for the rent, why don't you come and rent a room from us? So he rented a room from my sister's family, and then we met and then I guess whether he ran after me or I ran after him, I don't know. Just got together because we were both Japanese

JK: You guys got married in the States?

HK: We got married in Los Angeles in 1940. But we were married in a church that was in a museum, the Buddhist church temple. And we had our 50th anniversary 15 years ago.

JK: What was the first job your acquired what was the first job you got?

HK: he came to the states he came back to a place called in central California he worked on the farm a whole year in the great vineyard table grapes and he worked for a whole year and came back to Los Angeles and started night school and learned English and worked in the wholesale produce working as a truck driver and my brother and law started the truck business 1939 and in 140 the war broke down and lost everything and he had four trucks and gave it away.

JK: Pretty much when the war stated they had to give it away.

HK: we were in El Monte at that time and people asked do you have anything for sale like washing machine or your refrigerator and a Jewish guy came and asked how much for your ring and she said I don't want to sell my ring your not gonna need it and he says your not gonna need it and I said this isn't Germany.

[45]JK: They were just animals weren't they huh?

HK: So anyway this man came very insulting but then there is some nice people on may 13 we were suppose to go to Pasadena on a train to Tulare fairgrounds he bought our truck so he said he was gonna take our baggage we were suppose to come a 7 but he came at five and he said my dad at the general hospital just passed away he died, we met him at the general hospital. And then we went camp and they let us out of the camp for one day and we had his funeral at his mortuary in Tulare and my mother had his body cremated and kept it at the mortuary until she came back from Colorado she was living with us in Colorado and had him buried in evergreen cemetery in Los Angeles. May the 13 the in the day I'll never forget because it's the day we went into camp and it's the day my father died. And may 13th 1929, we came back to the untied states my father took the whole family to Japan in 1928 thinking we might stay in Japan but he didn't like Japan and we were brought all back to LA in may13th 1929. It's easy for us to remember these dates.

JK: Right after the war you started working in the valley in the farms and even after the war there was a lot of discrimination?

HK: There was a lot of discrimination. We went to buy a house in Sepulveda, I think it was a real estate and we said we want to buy a house on the other side of Sepulveda, somewhere like Granada hills, he says I won't look for anything on the other side of Sepulveda, you have to buy something on this side of Sepulveda. After the war in 1955.

[47]JK: I like to discuss the time immediately before the executive order 9066. Can you tell me about the social climate back then and how people viewed the Japanese Americans?

HK: We never associated with white people. Just business, landowner or man who did the tractor work, but when ever had friends that were white. It was all Japanese. And the Japanese that were out here were every clannish. There were all these prefectures in Japan everybody from one side of the country form association. So many people from Hiroshima, so the people from Hiroshima stuck together, people from Okinawa were from different prefectures.

JK: Do you remember the day of Pearl Harbor, and how did you family react to the news?

HK: It was a Sunday but that day my father was growing cauliflower so he was helping harvesting the cauliflower and the people who came to pack the cauliflower said there was a war started. And that's how we found out, and we turned on the radio.

JK: How did that impact the family?

HK: Well, we thought for sure we were going to get killed or somebody's going to kill us. But nothing like that happened. Life went on until the president said that the west coast is going to get evacuated

JK: Can you tell us about the Arizona camp?

HK: We went to Taulie in Pasadena and it was just like...it wasn't the stables but it was like where the horses were. It got very hot and the heat sunk in and the asphalt got too soft. The Arizona use fresh wood so by the time we built the bags. The dust would come from the floor it got cold too.

JK: Before you got sent to the interment camp, you were telling me that you had to get rid of your belonging, as far as farming equipment concerned, did you guys have any farming equipment?

HK: The man who bought the crop and the least bought all the tractor and things. But there was no money we practically gave it away.

[47]JK: Who owned that land and what was the significance of that land?

HK: There was a landowner but my father not being a citizen could not lease the land. So there was this young man that leased the land and subleased the land to eight or nine families, and in the big land where we farmed under sublease, there were a lot of people that also subleased.

JK: You lived with your parents for a little bit correct?

HK: We lived with my parents a little over a year because he got pleurisy. He couldn't work so we went back to my parents place for about a year and farmed.

JK: As far as your sister's concerned when you were little you used to live with them too?

HK: Yea, when we were little, we used to live in the farm.

JK: What kind of work did you parent make you guys do? You and your sister, were you guys responsible with helping out on the farm?

HK: We played around a lot because my father did not believe in slavery so we just did whatever we wanted. But they kept us at home so my mother came home one day and my sisters and I we emptied the 20-pound sack of flour in a big wash tub and emptied 24 bottled kegs of salt water to mix something. Things like that we did...

JK: So your mother and father were primary people working.

HK: Yea, they hired Mexicans to do harvest.

JK: How about your husband? You mentioned he had brothers and sisters?

HK: My brother in law was born in Japan so he was in the Japanese Navy during the war but he came back afterwards. And he's here to visit us about 9 times already.

JK: Do you remember any of your family member, anyone getting sick, and who took care of that sick person? Your experiences?

HK: Well, the Japanese are pretty independent and closely dictated, and if they didn't have the money, they either borrowed, they never stole anything, but hey borrowed it and never returned it. So the people who were making money loaned the people that didn't have the money.

[52]JK: Did you and your husband and your family member celebrate any holidays on special occasions?

HK: New years, 4th of July, thanksgiving, Easter.

JK: Did you or your family get to go on a vacation? Or were you busy on the farm?

HK: We never went on a vacation while we were farming because everything was growing and we couldn't leave the farm. After we quit faring and the kids were going to junior high school, we went to San Diego for the first vacation and we went to Disneyland and probably the whole works.

JK: Can you guys tell me a little bit more about your school experiences? You were telling me that your school experiences that you kind of kept to yourselves, but were they a lot of Japanese Americans in the classrooms?

HK: There was... I had an older sister that was very shy, we were like twins, so my sisters and I went to first grade through high school. We were like twins, she was two years older but we were in the same grade and we graduated together. But there was about 4 or 5 Japanese kids in a class in any given time. They were in El Monte and Rosemead because there was a lot of Japanese family farming.

JK: Do you remember any Japanese Americans that didn't have to go to internment camps?

HK: Oh! His sister, they lived in Fresno, so they didn't have to go to camp but went to Colorado, but they got their 2000 afterwards, they passed another law that and it wasn't a camp but more like an evacuation, and then they got their money

[57]JK: Can I ask your husband what life was like after the internment camp?

HK: Well he was raised in Japan, so all the guys were like we aren't going to serve the United States. He said since you are in the United States you are obligated to serve your country, so he went for his physical after the war started, he went to Kansas and he didn't pass. But he would have served if he was called. He said that he was living in this country so...you might as well.

JK: Well, after the camp, how did he feel?

HK: He said if he were in Japan he would have been dead by now, because all his friends died in the war. I think when we were younger it was a hard time. But when we had three kids, they all went to Vietnam.

JK: After you came back from camp, you resettled in the San Fernando Valley?

HK: No, we went to Colorado and then came back to the valley. We had relatives that came back already and they said well, maybe you can start the farm since you have all these equipments?

JK: When you came back to the valley, you had to restart your life again all of your belonging were pretty much gone?

HK: Well you know, we sold most of our furniture, but my mother had her things stored where they used to farm. They kept everything in bond for her, except for her waffle iron that was missing. That was the only thing

JK: You returned to Colorado and you guys farmed there again. What was your some of the obstacles coming back from camp and farming on the land? Did you try to live your life normally again?

HK: In Colorado, there was a lot of commerce before the war, they did share cropping or they had their own farm. But the Japanese people in that part of Colorado had very good credit reading's they borrowed money from the bank so the banks first year we farmed lend us money, and they said where are you going to farm and we said "so and so.." and they said we know the place and they said it takes so much to plant and until harvest you much so money but incase you need more money, we'll land you some more money. But in Colorado there was a chance of getting hailed out in the middle of the season, where everything is gone and you'll be stuck in Colorado for the rest of your life. We liked Colorado but we never got hailed so we came back to California.

[62]JK: How was the overall experience of San Fernando Valley? Was it a pretty good decision to live the rest of your life?

HK: We don't know anything anywhere else. I thought we raised our 3 kids very well and lived to be of right age almost 90

JK: It's amazing after all these years, we look back life 5ers there were laws and discrimination, and in today's world we have freedom and so many things change. Is there one memory in the San Fernando Valley that is really important to you and is still in your mind?

HK: Well we have a lot of friends through the community center he's one of the founders that started the community center from that little house. And he's been one of the community members from the community center and judo and Japanese school and church. He did a lot of service for the community but he doesn't regret it because that was his life. But kids don't think so, kids nowadays would rather go golfing and stuff.

JK: Is there anything else you would to add or comment on?

HK: Well, there are no regrets that he did community service and he has a lot of friends. Most of his friends are gone now but after all he's 88. His friends say in another 12 years we'll be celebrating his 100th birthday.

[67]JK: It seems like your experience in the San Fernando Valley was very rough and tedious time for you guys. But it looks like you guys hung in there and overcame all obstacles.

HK: But I think that our parents went through far more because they didn't know the language. At least we speak English.

JK: Because I guess when you guys came to America, you guys had to learn the language and slowly adapted to the culture I guess it was a little bit easier for you guys even though there was some discrimination going on.

HK: But our kids don't believe that. We are just like the first generation now, because we had to come after the war. Before the war we were sort of young, like in our twenties, but...

JK: Well, ok that's pretty much it. Do you have any other questions or comments?

HK: Do you have any comments? (Turning to her husband)

KK: No... (murmur in Japanese)

HK: But the struggle of the Nisei are a little bit easier than the Issei, the first generation because they didn't know the English. Most of them wanted to go back to Japan after they made the money. The second generation just wanted to raise their kids and be good citizens.

JK: Is there any photos that you would like to show?

HK: That's his father and mother and that's him.

JK: And what year was this taken?

HK: This was taken in 1917. But his father died in 1919 and that was my father and mother when they got married.

JK: So this was your mother and father. And what year was this taken?

HK: This was 1913.

JK: We want to thank you for all your time and really appreciate for sharing your experiences.

HK: Thank you~ but I hope I didn't break the camera with the pictures.

JK: What you are doing for us is really thoughtful and really helps the students to further the education of the Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley as

well as just overall. Our class is particular in Japanese American families prior to WWII. But also your experiences, you living in Colorado and traveling all over the states and now you residing in the San Fernando Valley will give us a better incite on Japanese American had to go through.

HK: But I think more and more the white people and black people understand our situation more. It's not as segregated anymore in the west coast.

JK: Well, thank you very much for your time. This was Joseph Kim and Dinah Nghiem at April 14th 2004 at 7:42 P.M. Thank you very much.

HK & KK: Thank you.

[End of Interview]