NARRATOR: SHERMAN KISHI

INTERVIEWER: GRACE KIMOTO

DATE: February 22, 2001

GK: I'm with Sherman Kishi, a Nisei man of seventy-five years old at Livingston, California and today is February 22, 2001. I'm Grace Kimoto interviewing. And the first part is about life before WWII. Okay, so where were you born and what was the date?

SK: I was born here in Livingston on May 15, 1925 and I think one of the unusual aspects of being born here is that I had a Caucasian woman doctor who was in attendance because it is a woman doctor who signed my birth certificate.

GK: And what was your family's line of work and what did your dad do?

SK: Well right across the street from where we are doing this interview is the old home place And my father owned at the beginning twenty acres of land which is right there across the street.

GK: And your mom, what did she do?

SK: My mom—my mom was a housewife and she worked on the ranch with dad and they worked very hard over the years. She was—let me tell you a little bit about them from before. My father came to the United States I think when he was about eighteen or nineteen years old. The story is that he wanted to go to Officer's Candidate School in Japan. And so he had gone to Tokyo to take the test; they have a written test as well as physical test. And so he went to Tokyo to take his tests and after he had finished his written test at which he did quite well, apparently he had a physical test and found out he was deaf in one ear. So he was not accepted and he was the second son in the family and so he was—I guess he was sort of embarrassed by the fact that he couldn't pass the

physical so instead as I understand it before he even went home he didn't go home he just decided to come to the United States since he couldn't get into the Officer's School. So that is why he came over here and had stayed here ever since. And he never went back to visit even once in Japan all those years that he was here. And my mother, you know I really believe, it was an arranged marriage. My mother came from a—my father came from a town called Umewara in Japan close to Wakayama City and my mother came from the other side of the city about—probably about thirty or forty miles away and she was a teacher at the time. She had enough education to become a teacher and she was teaching school and I'm not sure the details but they had an arranged marriage and so then she came from there to the United States by I don't know whether she was by herself or with several other women. But she came when she was a little bit on the older side. And then that marriage was completely arranged so she was really a picture bride. And that's how they got together here and then they farmed the small twenty acre block and my father worked out a lot and that's how they managed to get along. And he ended up with five kids. I'm the one second from the bottom. I had three other—I had an older brother and two older sisters and there is one younger sister.

GK: And so you fall next to the bottom?

SK: Yes, yes. I'm second from the bottom.

GK: What do you remember about your family life growing up?

SK: Oh, those were difficult—those were very difficult times and particularly the ones that we remember are the Depression years from 1930. I was only five years old in 1930 so those Depression years were the years that we grew up and they must have certainly been tough for our parents but we as children really never felt that there was a Depression going on

and things were any tougher because it was no tougher for us than it was for all the rest of the people in the community. I remember in those days that, you know, we were starting way early at the time because the church was such an important part of the community many of the activities that went on went on at the church on the church property. And they used to have movies maybe several times a year that were shown at the church, Japanese movies. And then we'd all get together and play all kinds of games over there with all the other Nisei friends that we had because there were many, many of our age that got together. Those were very happy years that we can remember them.

GK: So, so what was the entertainment in those times (inaudible)?

SK: Well, you know radio was the only outside source of information that we really got. Of course I guess there were newspapers too but I didn't read newspapers in those days but the radio was a very important part. I think—I'm not really sure when we got our first radio about 1930—it must have been thirty-three or thirty-four or somewhere in there and we listened to all the programs they had on the radio. That was one of the main points of entertainment. Of course one of the things we always did at our place because it was right close to the Livingston Canal, it used to be a gathering point for many of the Niseis in the area. And a, we used to swim from morning until night many days (laughs) and had a good time with all our friends.

GK: Do you remember going to movies or anything?

SK: Later, I think a little later in those days, later in the thirties we did go to the movies in Livingston. I think it used to be ten cents to get in. We didn't go to too many but we did go to an occasional movie in town at the old Court Theater that still stands. That was what some of the entertainment was but mostly the entertainment was really playing with

friends. I remember that—I was one of the fortunate ones my father had a friend bring back a bicycle for me and I think it must have been about 1935 and it came from Japan actually. And we used to go riding all over with the bicycle and visiting our friends and friends used to come over and we'd play in the yard all the time.

GK: So what was the education of your family?

SK: Well, you know school was very important. There was no doubt about that but school was a very important part of our lives. We weren't really told that we had to do well but it was just sort of understood that we were supposed to do well in school. And so I think my whole family did quite well and my father never scolded us if we didn't get good grades but I think most of our family had good grades all the way through. So it was a very important part of our life, school was, as well as church also was a very important part of our life. I can remember being baptized at about ten with some of my friends and some of my friends were like Chet Takahashi and Joe Hamaguchi, Hiro Hirano. Who else was in that class? I think Taro Tanji, anyway there were a whole bunch of us that got baptized on the same Sunday by Frank Heran (??) Smith, who was the superintendent, the district superintendent of the Mission Schools and I remember his big loud voice and his dropping water on our heads (laughing) and baptizing us.

GK: And so you had sisters and brothers. What was your roles? Were they different? Did your parents expect different things from you or from your sisters?

SK: Well, my sisters say that I was—well one of dad's pets because I was one of the younger ones and I don't think they thought they got the kind of treatment I got. I was able to—my dad used to go out a lot at night. He used to visit friends all the time. He worked a lot at night too during the packing season, harvest season but during the other time of the

year he used to go out quite a bit and he'd go over to Norman Kishi's father's place and (inaudible) Kishi's place and they would talk for many hours, others—other—some of the other Nisei neighbors used to also come over and they'd get together and sit on the porch and talk and have a good time. And I remember going with dad on many of those occasions and sitting on his lap and listening to the old folks talk.

GK: What was expected of the girls?

SK: Well, the girls were expected to be very proper and my sister—my oldest sister, mainly, was not quite as proper as she should be I guess. I remember many times my dad used to—they used to have voice fights and I remember (laughs) dad threatening to send her to Japan (laughs) because she was—she was not behaving properly (laughing). But my sisters—my brother especially was a very good student in school and so he left a very difficult objective for us to get, the later ones, yeah.

GK: So that is kind of the discipline. Were there other ways of discipline in those days?

SK: No I don't think so. We were told you know that we had to go out to work on the ranches and we did work on the ranches hoeing and whatever had to be done with the grapes because that was the main crop was at that time was grapes. Things have changed considerably over the years but you know at the beginning there it was all done with horses. I can remember—I can remember so clearly the brush burning that used to go on after the grapes were pruned they had to get rid of the brush and it's not like today where you have shredders that would shred up the brush and then it would be in little pieces that would disappear. In those days these were long pieces of twigs that were cut off and they had to be gotten rid of so they were gathered into the row by hand and then they used to have a—they used to have a trailer with metal sides and the horse used to pull that

and they used to start a fire in there and they'd go along throwing the brush into it to burn the brush and that's how we got rid of the brush. The other way they got rid of the brush grape brush was to haul it out and stack it onto a wagon and haul it out and let it and dump it out and make a long high wind row of brush and then they would let that dry and then later after it got nice and brittle they would run over it with the horse and wagon and then that brush was used to heat the water in the "afuro"; you know, the bath—the old bath house we used to have and that was one of the common practices to to—

GK: So what kind of values do you think your parents taught you?

SK: What kind of values?

GK: Values?

SK: What kind of values?

GK: Uh-huh.

SK: I know one of the things he taught us was hard work and got to work hard and the other thing they taught us was that you have to get educated. And so we worked as kids we worked pretty hard although they allowed us to go and take part in all the social activities that were going on in the area as well. You know, in those days before the war in the late thirties or from even earlier in the thirties there was a lot more sports that went on and there were inter-community sports. There were Japanese teams that were made. There were baseball teams. There were basketball teams. And so there was a lot of inter-community rivalry. I can remember many times going—they used to have older guys and they used to also have the younger guys that played in the sports, too. And so I can remember our going to Walnut Grove to play and to Salinas and had tremendous rivalry with Cortez all the time and it used to be a fun time to do all those things.

I can remember some of the winter, winter days that we used to go. I remember one night we went to Walnut Grove. And I remember and interestingly you know we were very young at the time. I was probably only about ten to twelve and we used to play on one of the smaller teams. But our older siblings used to be allowed to take us all and they were probably anywhere from sixteen to eighteen and they would be allowed to take the car and we would drive all the way. I remember going all the way to Livermore to play and one night we were—we went to Walnut Grove to play and I remember Henry Kashiwata was driving a car (laughs) and it was so foggy, you know, and when you go to Walnut Grove, you on the levee road and it was so foggy that we couldn't see anything. I recall them putting their head out the window of the car so they could see the line in the middle and they are still finding themselves off the road at times. It was a harrowing time but it is just amazing that our parents allowed us to do that. At this stage we would—if we had children like that we would have never allowed. We would have gone ourselves but we would have never allowed our children, I'm sure, to do that themselves.

GK: So the values were like education and hard work?

SK: Yes and not only, and yeah.

GK: So what were your feelings about?

SK: Well, there was feelings. There was just no questions about those were the values that we were going to live with and as—as you know you know this community had a lot of college graduates. And this started way in the thirties in spite of the fact that after they graduated college, they really didn't have any opportunities to get a job. There was still that strive for them to get all the education that they could. So most of them—most of the young people went to college and finished college. So that was one of the things that

happened in this community. They had a well educated community. They were all hard working people. You know we had our association where we worked in the summertime where if we didn't work there we worked in some of the cutting yards where they had peaches and things. I still have a scar on my hand from cutting my hand and but those are some of the things we did as youngsters.

GK: And the parents—your parents were educated?

SK: Yeah, I don't know how much education my father had. I think he had probably went to high school. My mother must have been quite well educated for a woman because she was teaching and so that's all I really know about them. I don't know too much more about them. One of the interesting things about my mother is that a, her name was Chioko Hashishume and she came from a family that was—that was the owner of a Shinto Temple and so I think it had been handed down over many generations from within the family and even to this day I have a relative that is still the head of the temple and they have weddings and things there. So it's –it was very interesting to find out about my folks at a later date what all kinds of things they did.

GK: Okay, now we're going to talk about the community and your relationships and everything. So tell us about—

SK: You mean the present day or—?

GK: No. The Yamato Colony—

SK: The old days?

GK: Uh-huh and how did you relate to and your participation with it. You kind of touched on it, some of it?

SK: Well you know as—before the war, I became—I was still about seventeen years old when the war started so everything that I recall prior to that is as a very young person. I think I've said before that much of our—much of our life within the community and circulated around the church to a great extent and so most of the social functions that we had were related to the church or the church property. The church, our folks were good enough to put playground equipment at the church and so even when there was no church involved the kids used to go out there and play there a lot. They even put in a tennis court over there and that is basically where I started to play tennis. And they used to use the tennis court for skating. We used to use it for all kinds of things and very frequently on weekends, especially and even in the evenings there would be a gathering of people there to either take part in some kind of organized sport or to just hang around. I think that was a place for us to hang around and keep occupied.

GK: Were you in Scouts, Boy Scouts?

SK: Yeah I was in Boy Scouts. Yeah, the Boy Scouts were very, very popular starting in the early to mid thirties. And so I saw my brother being in the Boy Scouts and he used to go traveling all over with the Boy Scout troop and Joe Carpenter was Scout Master at the time and he was very, very a—he kept his troop very active and I can recall them going to the coast and they went to the Pacific Coast or Santa Cruz and they used to go to Yosemite and by the time I became old enough to become a scout, it had quieted down considerably. You know in 1937—in 1937 amazingly there were seventeen Eagle Scouts that became Eagles at one time and of that seventeen, there were probably fourteen or fifteen were probably Nisei kids so there was a big group of Nisei that were involved in everything like this. So by the time I got in, Joe Carpenter was still doing the scouting

but there weren't too many of us in it. It wasn't nearly as enthusiastically followed as earlier and when I talk to you about that bike business a little while ago, I can recall, you know, taking that fifty mile bike trip because of the Boy Scouts and one of the merit badges. So we had Boy Scouts.

GK: You didn't—you didn't have YWCA?

SK: They had YPCF, Young People's Christian Fellowship and they were very active. They were very active particularly the age group of my sister. My sister especially and my brother too, to some extent but my sister, my oldest sister's age was very active and they used to go to conferences to Fresno, into the Bay Area, and they had a lot of conferences and by the time I got old enough to be involved, just didn't do quite as much of that so I really wasn't involved in conferences that happened among the Christian group. We used to have—in those days our minister used to always be Issei ministers so the services, most of the services were all in Japanese. And in order to bridge that gap they used to have student ministers that used to come. They used to come, the student ministers used to come, I think they came from the Berkeley school of religion but I'm really not sure and several of those were young Kibei men that came and conducted services for the YPCF Group and were involved with that the youngsters in the area.

Our church was complete separate from the town church. Prior to this time you know some of the older Niseis and some of the Isseis too, had gone to the what we called the town church, the First Methodist Church in town. And they were involved in the Christian endeavor group and some of these things. And these were people like I think Harry Naka, Dave Kirahara I think Norman and Lloyd Kishi and Sam Ieda. These people were involved in the town church to some extent and had most of their religious activities

there and they did not—they were not involved in the Japanese church at that time. It is different—it was really different that time but it was really good that they did that because at least it kept that relationship with the town people quite congenial.

GK: So this is the Yamato Colony and they had picnics?

SK: Oh yeah. Yes. You are right. This is Yamato Colony and we had picnics every year and those were something that we really looked forward to as youngsters. You know our folks would make all kinds of "gotsuso" and then we'd—most of the picnics were held by the river and right below where Bob Marinelo lives now they had an area that was always set aside of the picnics. And used to be great fun, they used to have all kinds of games and wrestling and all kinds of stuff like that and we used to really like to go to that and looked forward to it very much. It went on every year for many, many years.

GK: And another one of their activities, local bands?

SK: Oh yeah in terms of music, many of us played in the school bands. I myself played a saxophone in the band and I remember when I was in the fourth grade, it might have been the fourth or fifth grade. I really wanted to play the trombone but I was pretty small then and I can remember the teacher telling me your arms are too short to play the trombone. So I played the saxophone and interestingly my father once again had a friend purchase a saxophone for me in Japan and brought it back and that is the saxophone I played for many, many years, in fact I still have it in the closet. I doubt if it will play anything but it is still there. And so they played in the—they played in the school band a lot and the school orchestra because in those days they used to have orchestras. My sister used to play violin and my sister Miho and she played in the school orchestra along with Janet

Tashima or Janet Tsuchiya at the time and many of the other kids in the community that played in bands and orchestras.

Interestingly too at the school every year they used to have a very, very, a—I don't know what you'd call it, something for the community. And they used to put on plays and we still have some pictures of some of the school occasions where they had the plays and it really involved basically the whole school and the band played and all the youngsters anywhere from third and fourth grade up to eighth grade participated. And there was a great production, I guess. I was pretty small at the time. I remember being involved in some of it, too. It was fun time.

GK: And tennis, what are some other sports that the colony had?

SK: Oh, well the colony was very strong in baseball. The Yamato Colony they had some very, very good baseball teams. It started way way back when the community of Livingston had a baseball team and Mr. Kaji because he was so interested in sports he became the manager of the team. And they had some very good teams even in those days and this was way back in the twenties. And the teams were mostly made up of Caucasian players you know. I guess there was an occasional Japanese kid at that time involved but most of them were Caucasian kids and those kids played under the management of Mr. Kaji. So there was a relationship that was constantly kept with the community, with the Caucasian community. So it was a good—it was a good relationship for all of us. And our teams that we had, like I said before, were the Japanese teams were formed.

One of the things that we had was softball was one of the big things in the mid-thirties. In the mid to late thirties softball became a very, very popular sport, this is night softball. And so they put up some lights here in Livingston and Livingston had different

teams. And one of the teams was the Livingston Japanese team. They were called the Dodgers and they—most of these kids had played hard ball, too. And so when the softball became popular they all formed teams and we had teams that competed with teams in that came out of Livingston and teams out of Atwater and various places and we used to compete. They had age differences too. They had a junior team as well as a senior team and I played mostly on the junior team before the war.

GK: Were you a pitcher?

SK: Yeah I pitched—I pitched softball on the junior team. And in camp too I did that a little pitching too. So there were a lot of sports activities. Our folks always encouraged that.

GK: Now about the Japanese language school? Did you go and—?

SK: Well Livingston had a very loose Japanese language school. Many of the communities had language school that they participated in every day after the regular school but Livingston didn't do that. They had a Japanese school on Saturdays and usually the kids went from, I don't know if they started at nine or eight or whatever but they started somewhere around nine and I think they went on until about noon. I don't recall if they went to the afternoon or not but they had some sort of local people that were pretty well educated that were our Japanese school teachers. I can remember Mrs. Tanji, Yobo (??) Tanji's mother. I think Mrs. Okuye taught for a while. I think Mrs. Tsuchiye taught. And I'm not sure whether my mother taught or not. And so there were many teachers that came in and taught us but it must have been a very difficult path for the teachers to try and teach us. Again we didn't learn a heck of a lot. They used to have Japanese school books and they used to go One, Two, Three, Four and Five and some people went up to I think Seven, Eight and Nine books. I think I must have gone to about the second

book and we would go Saturdays to Japanese school and sit in the class for a little while and then we'd—we'd always have nice recesses and recesses would get very long and all we'd do is play out there so we had some Japanese formal sort of Japanese but most of us I think hardly learned the Japanese alphabet. We might have learned that at one time enough to say we knew some of the alphabet but that was about it. Maybe the older ones had a little more, some of them did. But most of us didn't do very well. I remember even before the war there was one haku-jin kid that came. His name was Jay Reeves. And he wanted to be—he wanted to learn Japanese really. So he came to Japanese school and he sat in on those classes too.

GK: How about Japanese cultural arts? Did the community have like flower arranging, koto, judo, kendo?

SK: I think there was but I'm not really sure the more feminine type of culture like flower arranging and koto lessons and things like—there were some that went on because they used to put on some performances, Japanese dances and things. I can remember Mrs. Tsuchiye, I'm sorry Mrs. Taniguchi. Mrs. Taniguchi's mother, she lived right down the road here but I think that she probably had considerable training in Japan before she came and she used to play the Shiya musen and she used to play the taiko, you know the taiko that they tapped and carried on their shoulder and she taught. I think she taught some of the girls how to do some of the dances and there were performances put on. It must have been because we have pictures of them of people like my sisters were involved and the Minabe girls were involved. This is Ichiro Minabe's sisters, Amy and Nobuko, and my sister Mamie was involved, Miho was involved, and so there was performances put on and whether those were part of the church or whether it was just a cultural things that

they did, I really can't remember. But we used to put on those performances in the white building at the church, the white building that still stands there. It has a little stage in the front and had long curtains that they could draw and that is where many of those events took place.

Ah—I remember that they also made a sumo ring outside that building and we use to as youngsters do a lot of sumo against each other and had a good time. We also in the thirties had kendo that started in the community like they did in many of the communities. I can still remember the instructor that came. His name was Nakamura-sensei and he used to have this wax mustache and he used to always curl his mustache and those are sort of interesting times. Kendo was sort of a fun thing but sort of, it's pretty aggressive, you know, Kendo. And some of the people got some pretty good reputations for being pretty nasty. I think the Tanji girls were one of the few groups of girls that participated. This is Grace and what where there, Julia and Kate. Those three participated and I can still recall to this day. You know I used to sleep in the tank house across the street and still recall to this day sometime in the quiet evening and they lived you know probably close to a mile away and you could hear them practicing at home and yelling the Kendo thing. I can still remember that. I'm sure that was them because they were the only women or girls that did Kendo, so they were. I think my sister might have started a little bit but I don't think she stayed in it very long. I don't think she liked it.

GK: And you said there were some influence in your life?

SK: I'm sure there—I'm sure there must have been some influence on our lives because of those cultural things. I can remember going to a tournament. I must have been only about ten years old, I think. I am not really sure. I must have been about ten. But I can

remember going to the tournaments in Stockton and fighting against other kids that we didn't know. I can remember coming back with a whole armful of those Kendo sticks because that was the prize. (laughing)

GK: Okay, we're going to talk about the school then. What school did you go to and how did you feel about school?

SK: You know I went to Livingston schools all the way through until we got evacuated. I started in kindergarten that was on this side of the highway. I can still remember most of those teachers that I had. Miss Icho (??) was our kindergarten teacher. In those days you know the teachers were not like today. And Miss Icho (??) became Mrs. Pickton later and Mrs. Pickton stayed in the school system for many, many years.

I remember kindergarten days primarily because if you ever swore or if you said something bad the teacher would really get very angry and she'd grab you by your ear and march you off to the bathroom and then she'd—they had liquid soap. And she'd stick soap in your mouth and clean your mouth out for saying bad things. That kind of thing did happen and many of us have experienced soap in the mouth as a result of saying things that we shouldn't have said. And then the teachers in those days used to hit, you know, the students on the hand with rulers very frequently, if something bad was being done. There are some interesting experiences from those days.

I think I must have been about the first grade at the time and I shouldn't maybe name names but names become interesting. I remember Jimmy Cagney you know was a pretty good friend. He was a year old than me and he was probably in the second grade at the time and I was probably in the first grade. And he did something that was going to require him to be punished and he ran away. And they had trees all around the school

yard and I can remember him climbing to the top of the tree and not coming down (laughing) really funny incident.

There is one incident where we the teacher Mrs. Margaret Sheesley and she was the first grade teacher (laughing) and I can remember one time as she was doing something her—she wore bloomers and they fell down (laughing). Isn't that a funny thing to remember and those things happened in those days and they are funny incidents to remember.

GK: Was he your playmate?

SK: He was to some extent but not as much as some of the others like Joe Hamaguchi and Joey Takahashi and I remember clearly when Hiro Hirano first came into the community. I think it was either kindergarten or first grade you know. Hiro was an adopted child and the Yukora's (??) were the ones that adopted him and he kept his—he kept his original name later on but when he first came to kindergarten, I don't remember if it was kindergarten or first grade, but he knew the Hamaguchi's because the Hamaguchis used to visit with the Yukora's or the Hamaguchi's used to visit or one way or the other. So he already knew Joe and he was so unhappy. I remember Joe carried him in the first or second grade or whatever it was, first grade I think it was. He carried him most of the day on his back because he cried so much (laughing). Funny things to remember, huh?

GK: So then were you ever invited into homes of Caucasian families?

SK: Not really. We very rarely had any association with the Caucasians. You know we grew up with them and we were in school with them every day and played with them. We didn't do any of that until much later in high school, I might have gone to—yeah I went to a couple of Caucasian's places. I remember going to Buddy Crosby's place. Buddy

Crosby, his father was the mailman in town and Buddy—we must have started school together either in the first grade or kindergarten I don't know which. I remember going to his place and I remember going to the Lapell's. Mr. Lapell was a bus driver and custodian and Bill was a classmate and we were—and the thing was we didn't socialize with them as much because they were all part of the town church and we were part of the Livingston Methodist Church and out in the country so we didn't associate socially that much. I do remember going to visit them.

GK: Did you consider yourself Japanese or Japanese-American or American?

SK: In those days I think we just considered ourselves Japanese. I don't recall you know that as youngsters there was that much prejudice as such practiced by youngsters in any way. I just can't recall that. Some of that didn't happen until a little later.

GK: And a, were your parents close to school? Were they able to go to the school and ask questions?

SK: I don't ever remember my parents going to visit the school. You know the kindergarten basically was started by the Japanese group in town and because the youngsters were all getting to that age where they needed a little school I think our folks encouraged the school district to start a kindergarten. And that's how they really got the kindergarten started and so they were involved in school. School was very important to our parents. There is no question about that. I don't think that they were the kind that went to bother school. Once school started, once school was established I think it was left to the school to do whatever they could to educate the youngsters. So you know, I can't—I can't recall my parents ever going to school except when there were performances and things that the parents were specifically invited to.

GK: So as far as the school work did they make sure you were done with your school work?

SK: Well in those days they didn't have much school work in kindergarten or in the grammar school days. I think most of the work was probably done at school. And so I don't think there was very much homework involved.

GK: And so in those days and at your family table or dinner table, do you remember where you sat?

SK: Oh sure.

GK: And conversations?

SK: Well I don't remember the conversations as such at the dinner table. We sat down and ate together if the family was together if they weren't at school or something always for lunch and for dinner and breakfast also for that matter. And we just sat down together and ate all the meals. I'm not sure that we had that much conversation with our folks because we did have that language problem. I don't think we thought we had a language problem at the time because whatever we said, I think our folks understood what we were saying whether it was in Japanese or whether it was in English. I am sure it was mixed especially by the time I was involved actively in any of those activities I'm sure it was quite mixed because my brothers and sisters were older than I, and they knew English much better than Japanese.

GK: So let's move into your teenager years, okay. What were some of your feelings and the problems and joys?

SK: Oh boy. Before Pearl Harbor you know, school—life revolved around school because most of the year was spent at school but the relationships at school I thought was very good. We were relatively active in some of the things that we did even when I started—

even after high school started I was involved in student government and things. And we thought we had a good time. I'm sure we had a good time. We were involved in high school sports very heavily. I never played baseball but I always tennis and I always played on the basketball team. I went out for track and spent a lot of time on these sports. So those high school years were very, very pleasant years and we got to know some of the Caucasian youngsters quite well.

GK: Were you allowed to date and participate interracially?

SK: Not really. We never really dated interracially although I can remember the Junior-Senior Prom. I remember the Junior-Senior Prom. I guess it was the Junior-Senior Prom because I was a junior. And so I remember picking up a Caucasian girl and going to the dance. Her name was Delsey Cayman and she was the grammar school Principal's daughter and she was my classmate and we were good friends but it was sort of an arranged deal. She was—she was already going out with a guy named Young—the year before his name was Jack Jalean and June Suzuki was involved in this, too. And I remember picking up Delsey Cayman and taking her to the dance and at the dance we sort or switcher partners and I think I might have taken June Suzuki home. I don't remember too well. I used to like to go to dances.

GK: So there were no feelings about interracial or racism or injustices?

SK: I don't think so. I don't think so because I don't ever remember anyone you know accusing us of being Japs or anything like that.

GK: In those young teenager years was there any talk about marriages and—

SK: Too young (laughing).

GK: Thoughts that you might have?

SK: Too young to think about anything like that.

GK: Okay, let's talk about if you had problems who would you have gone to to talk about your problems and what made you happy in those days?

SK: Gosh, you know I don't really know. I don't know that we went to anyone with problems as such. Uh—uh we—we handled everything within ourselves I think because I can never remember having a confidant to go to talk to or anything like that. We just, life wasn't like that in those days. You just did things on your own. And—

GK: So would you kind of talked about your part time job. Did you go to college?

SK: Well you know WWII started and I related this a number of times but of course we were out there playing tennis because of course tennis was the sport that we liked to much.

GK: So how did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

SK: And so we were playing tennis at seven o'clock in the morning and that's when as I related before, a car stopped by the tennis courts and the tennis courts were right next to the road. And these people cursed at us, yelled at us and called us all kinds of nasty names and we were completely unaware of what had happened and this was—I was with my sister, my sister Miho and Lily Shoji was there. Lily Shoji Hamaguchi and I'm pretty sure the fourth one was Jim Kaji. I think he was the fourth one there with us but I'm not really sure of that. And I can't recall exactly that these were the people that were there but they told me later that my sister told me that she was there and Lily has told me that she was there that morning and so I am sure that there was the four of us there. There might have been six or seven of us there. I don't know, I can't remember but of course that just completely stopped us from playing tennis and we left and came home and then

found out that Pearl Harbor had happened. That was a very difficult day. I remember that.

So after that you know school continued after Pearl Harbor. And I can't recall any particular difficulties as a result of that. School went on until orders came out saying that we were to be evacuated out. You know and the posters came out and were put on the telephone poles and things that told us we were restricted, that we couldn't go places. I was sort of hanging around with June at this time, my wife, my present and only wife. And we were dating and there was a limitation of about I think there was a limitation of five miles travel that you could go. But I used to and I think it was a little further than five miles to go because they lived at that time below Cressey. They had moved because of the evacuation orders and things and restrictions. And they had moved into this little house down by the river, close to where the Wetzels live now. So I used to drive over there and go visit. And so that's one of the things that happened was that there were some restrictions placed on us. We weren't supposed to go out after dark. And before, early in the morning you couldn't go out and so we were restricted. And then, you know those are hard days to remember, how bad it was.

I can remember the notice—it must have been after 9066, which makes it after February the 18th, they decided they are going to go and stay with their daughter who lived in Denver. The notice that would appear on this particular site and I still remember their having the car with the trailer behind it all loaded up and their taking off and everybody crying as they are taking off. I remember that very clearly. I heard that later they had difficulties, some difficulties going over the Sierra's and all that. I guess they eventually got there because they settled in Denver. So—

GK: So what Assembly center did you go to?

SK: I'm sorry?

GK: What Assembly Center?

SK: Oh yeah. You know like all the people in this area, we got sent to the Merced Fair grounds where I recall I recall rather clearly that we assembled at the church. There were trucks there and the stuff that we were to carry in were placed on the trucks there and then I think there was a bus there that took us into Merced. And that bus took us to—I remember going to the American Legion Hall or it's called the Veteran's Hall now but it was the American Legion Hall at the time. And I can recall at the time Dr. Hidaki, he was a dentist out of San Francisco and I don't know how he got assigned to this area but he was assigned to this area and I remember him talking to us saying that you know that we had to obey orders and behave and all that. And then from there they took us to the—they took us to the Administration Building of the Fairgrounds and then registered us into the Assembly Center in Merced and that's where they assigned us to our barracks that we were placed into.

GK: Describe a day of your life in camp? What did you do?

SK: You know that is the day I remember very vividly the day we went in because it was my birthday, May 13, 1942. I'm sure that was the day we went in. If it wasn't it was right there close to my birthday. And so I remember that day. Camp life? Are you talking about camp life?

GK: Yes.

SK: Well initially camp life was—

GK: Are you talking about Amache?

SK: No I'm talking about Assembly Center.

GK: Assembly Center?

SK: First, Assembly Center. It was; there were a lot of people there because it was a relatively small area with a lot of people that came in. I think there were people that came in all the way from Colusa, the Turlock people came into there. And so I think there were probably about four or five thousand people in that Assembly Center. I remember going to the fence, the barbed wire fence and they were strung—I can remember they were strung real tight. And there were six strands of barbed wire there.

You know in the Assembly Center organization was started right away and there was internal organization that was started and they were developed into blocks and wards. And so I guess they were mostly wards and we were in A Ward because I think we were probably one of the earlier ones to go in. And each of the wards have a ward—what they called a ward manager yeah. And I guess they paid them a little bit and I remember Masao Fushino was our ward manager and in our block. And I got a job under Masao and I used to be what they call a ward runner, I guess. And I remember being sent to here and there to the different places within the ward to sort of check up on the people that were there and stuff like that. I was only seventeen at the time but I was able to do that and that was interesting to do.

There again, once again in camp there was a lot of activities started. They had baseball started. They used to have assemblies where people would perform. Pardon me?

GK: Talent shows?

SK: Yeah talent shows and the one that we remember so vividly I think all of us remember is Sumi Kawamura singing "God Bless America" and she had this booming voice and she

was a big woman and it was very inspirational for us. You know, you would get real upset about having been placed in a place like that but I don't remember being that upset. You are so young at the time and I think the uniqueness of being together with all the people that we were was probably more of a pleasure than difficulty for us.

GK: So let's go to Colorado and Amache then. How did you get there and all the different things from the Assembly Center?

SK: Colorado—when we went to Colorado we were in the Assembly Center from May until I believe we were there until September and then we were sent from there to Colorado on a old rickety passenger train. It was a very difficult ride I remember. There were a lot of crying babies. And it was hot and it was uncomfortable and it was dirty. They wouldn't let us see out and the blinds were all pulled. I remember being allowed to get off in the Mohave desert I think it was Mohave desert or it must have been something like a desert because there was nothing there and they let us out to stretch our legs at one time. And it took us at least three or four days to get to Colorado. That wasn't the pleasant trip and it didn't have very many pleasant memories for me that trip.

So—so we left Colorado and I think we got to—I don't know if they allowed us to get off in Granada or whether we got off in Lamar. I can't remember. But from there I think we got into trucks and they hauled us into the Amache Relocation Camp that was almost completed but not quite completed yet and that is where we ended up

GK: Do you remember the question the loyalty question 27 and 28?

SK: Yeah, that came a little later. Yeah I remember that question. When we got up there to Amache and that was in September of forty-three and forty-two I'm sorry, September of forty-two. And so school was started for us and we went to high school in the barracks. I

think we went down—we were in 9H and I think the barracks were in either seven or eight. I think it was E, F in the F building, F or K. I don't know which. But anyway they had the schools in those barracks and I finished my senior year in camp. It was not something that I remember too much but the school—the schooling that I received in camp I remember a few of the teachers that I had. I remember one, a Nisei teacher, he was ag teacher and we used to go out to the camp farm and do things out at the camp farm, work basically, I guess. And so that wasn't something that we remembered too much but I do remember, you know, even in camp church became a pretty important part of our activities. And one of the things we did is we had a choir and I can remember oh, even before the war I used to sing in the church choir here in Livingston too. But in camp we had a choir that became quite large. There must have been sixty or seventy voices at least. And I remember that Christmas of 1942 we put on a performance that was—we thought was a great performance and I don't know if it was great or not. But we had a lot of singers in the group. My sister was directing the choir. My sister Mamie, she directed the choir and it was a fun time I remember a lot of the people that were in the choir.

GK: Now was a Buddhist Churhc, was there a catholic in camp?

SK: I don't remember a Catholic church in camp. I think they had Buddhist services. I never knew very much about that because I never got involved in the Buddhist side of things. So I'm sure there must have been Buddhist gatherings too, as well as the Christian ones.

GK: What happened to your family? Did camp life really affect the situation of your family?

SK: Yeah, my, right after we got—you know I can't recall dates. I can't recall when my sisters and my brother left but they left to go to school. I know my sister went to

Wyoming and one of my sister right above me, Miho, went to Wyoming. And went to school there, my sister Mamie I think she went to—I'm not even sure where she went after camp. I think she went to school. I think she went on to finish school although maybe she might have already finished school. Let me see, she would have been, yes I think she finished. She would have already finished San Jose State at the time but she went out. My brother, because of the fact that my father had gotten sick—this is before the war started, he had come back without finishing college. He had been going to Berkeley and he finished two years I think at Berkeley or and then he had to come home to run the farm. And so while he was running the farm all this evacuation thing happened and so after we went to Amache he got out and went to Maryland, The University of Maryland. And—

GK: This is the time that Nisei student relocation council was working?

SK: Yes I think so. Yes I think the council was working and through them I think both my brother and sister went out to school, whether my oldest sister went out to school or not I can't recall. I'll have to talk to her about it the next time she is here. But a—so my brother then went out also to go to school and I finished my senior year and at this particular time, you know, this is early 1943, the—the Army had changed classification of the Japanese Niseis from the 4C to the 1A classification.

GK: And (inaudible).

SK: To 1A which is eligible citizen to join the service and they came in to recruit people for the 442nd. I remember some of my friends you know joining up. I think Ben Okuye is one that joined up at that time. Although Ruthy doesn't quite recall if he was a draft volunteer or if he was a volunteer directly. It think he volunteered directly for the 442nd.

And I remember some of my friends going to the 442nd and I sure would have liked to but I was too young. I didn't become eighteen until I was, in May of 1943—and about in May, there was also recruiters that came into camp for the MIS—Military Intelligence Service to learn Japanese to join the MIS group and so I remember going to talk to the recruiters and for the rest of that summer, I studied Japanese in camp. There was a Japanese class that they had and I learned a little bit while I was there. I think I learned the Japanese alphabet and stuff and that was enough to get me into MIS and so I went in in November of 1943, I was inducted into the Army and was sent to Camp Savage to start the Japanese classes. I think probably I should say that at that time just before we signed up, I think that the questionnaire was there and I remember those two questions and I don't ever remember having any doubt about how I was going to answer those questions. It was just no question in my mind. I know that there—

GK: The yes, yes questions?

SK: Yeah, there were—there were a few yes, yes persons. There weren't as many in Amache as there were in some of the other camps. But they did have some people that raised a ruckus in Amache as well and I think some people got beat up in Amache as well as in some of the other camps. It wasn't that severe but there was some as I recall. So I know I was—was it supposed to be yes, yes?

GK: Yes, yes.

SK: If you are loyal to the United States you answered yes wasn't it? The others were the no, no's wasn't it?

GK: Yes.

SK: So I remember that questionnaire and I remember being, saying I would be very loyal to the United States and so after that I talked to my dad about joining the service and—

GK: And you did go to MIS and to the Pacific?

SK: Yes, yes and I talked to my dad about it and I remember him telling me that this was our country and so you do what you have to do and he gave me his blessing as far as joining the service was concerned. So from there then we went into the language school in Snelling. We moved from Savage to Snelling. I finished my language studies there and then went on to basic training in Alabama. I came back and really didn't get shipped out because my language took well into 1944. I was in the nine month class. And so that was from November we were there until about the fall of forty-four learning Japanese. And then from there they sent us to basic training and it was in the winter of forty-four. I came back to Snelling and stayed there for a while and then go shipped out in 1945. In July of 1945 we shipped out of the Golden Gate. That, I remember that too we saw the Golden Gate fade away as we criss-crossed across the ocean all the way to the Philippines. That was—you know that was a pretty sight to see, but not too pleasant. (laughing).

GK: Then you were in the Philippine?

SK: Yes I was in the Philippines. The first thing they did was send us to the Philippines because that was the staging area. The Philippines had been taken again. McArthur had taken the Philippines back so the Philippines became the staging area for the what they called ATIS which was the Allied Translating and Interpreting Section of the Military Intelligence Service. They had a bunch of us that they sent to Santa Ana Race Track which is right outside of Manila and we were billeted in tents and you know there was

supposed to be some translating going on at that stage but I don't remember doing anything in Manila. We sat there for several months. And then the war ended of course. I think we got there. Well, we weren't there very long because we didn't get to Manila until the end of July. It took us a whole month to get across that ocean. And then the war ended early in August so we were only there for a few weeks before the war ended and so then after about a month they shipped us into Tokyo as translator interpreters and then we did some translating what they called the MIT building where we were staying. We stayed in that MIT building. And in the bottom floor they made—they had a bunch of desks in there and we did quite a bit of translating there. Translating documents, probably not very well but we did translate them.

But then I got assigned to the general headquarters GHQ which was about ten blocks away from there in the Diachi building and there I was assigned to a British Major who was studying the secret societies that existed in Japan before and during the war. And the one that he was particularly studying was the Black Dragon Society. And we used to go out and interview some of these people that were involved in that particular society. I remember going—there was one of the guys who was prisoned in the Sagamo prison, which was the main prison where all the war prisoners were placed, including Tojo. But I don't remember seeing Tojo in there but I remember walking through there and going to—going to interview a guy in the prison and we also interviewed some people in their homes and I have no idea what the outcome of those interviews or what happened. All I know is I did that.

GK: And you said you used to see General McArthur.

SK: Yes, yes, because we were on the bottom floor of the Daichi building which was GHQ, General Headquarters, General McArthur used to come in every morning about nine o'clock. We'd be in there you know seven thirty, seven to seven-thirty but he would come in at nine o'clock and there would be a crowd that gathered every day. And he would come in in a limousine and he would come strutting into the Daichi building into his office and I don't know where I think his office was probably on top of that building. So it was interesting. It was interesting times.

GK: Corn-cob pipe?

SK: Yeah with his corn cob pipe in his mouth yeah.

GK: Okay, anything else about the military?

SK: I don't think so except for the fact that I probably should tell you about my first experience in terms of when we got to Japan. Very impressive. We were sent by boat from the Philippines to Japan. And then we got off in Yokohama and from Yokohama they took us to Tokyo which is about twenty miles I think or somewhere maybe a little over. But the trains were running and we went in a train that went. And I am telling you I never saw such devastation as I saw, everything was black all the way from Yokohama to Tokyo, there was not—there was no building standing, it was just all completely burned out. And I mean—

GK: Many of the buildings were of paper and wood.

SK: I think so. I heard later that you know they had this tremendous loss of life in Tokyo because when the fire bombs were dropped, the incendiary bombs, were dropped, it just, everything just went up. Everything went up because the houses were made of wood and a lot of paper and they were very close together. They were stuck right close together.

And then what killed a lot of the people in Tokyo was the lack of oxygen because the fire raged so violently and it just sucked all the air up and so a lot of people just died actually from a lack of oxygen. That is how severe it was.

GK: So did you talk to other people outside like (inaudible) people or?

SK: Not really—you mean during the wartime?

GK: Or camp time or military or?

SK: Not too much. Not too much. It—one of the things that happened was that we got to know the Japanese people quite well while we were in the service some people. We became quite friendly with some and those people about three or four of us that used to go out together. I used to be with a lot of Hawaiian kids because they were the kids that were in my class or they were the kids that I really learned the Japanese with and they were stationed, we were stationed together and so some of my best friends were the Hawaiian youngsters. And so we got to know some Japanese people in Tokyo and they, to some extent, entertained us and at one time I know this guy who was the head of a company, took us up to Nikko to visit that famous shrine there. And the reason for that is that we got along real well with them mostly because we could speak Japanese.

GK: And have you met them or anything after the war?

SK: No.

GK: You are not in touch with them?

SK: No, because I've never been in touch with them since then.

GK: Let's move on to—did you get married in camp or?

SK: No. You know, I had started to go around with June before the war started, I was going around with her. And so after I got out of the service—that is one person I had correspondence with all the time. And I hope she threw away all those letters. (laughing)

GK: I hope not.

SK: But anyway after I got out of the service we got married right away. I got out in March of 1946 and then we got married in September and then I went on to college. I went on to UC Berkeley and finished UC Berkeley in 1950 and in 1951 because of circumstances, decided to come home and came home and started farming with my brother.

GK: Were there problems and what were the challenges you were facing then?

SK: Well you know I went to college and I was in wildlife conservation and the areas that you can go from there are to the natural resources and that wasn't that popular at the time. Natural resources as such was fish and game and forestry. And so I did start to work for the Fish and Game for a while. And one of the reasons I came back was because immediately I could see that my chances of getting anywhere in that particular field were not very good even in 1950 and it didn't look like there were much chance of my advancing. Maybe if I persisted and stayed long enough I might of but rather than to fight that and you know my wife June lost her brother at that time and it was very traumatic for her because it was her younger brother and at that stage we decided to come home and so we came home. That is what happened at that period.

GK: So describe your wedding?

SK: Oh my describe my wedding? That's interesting too. We decided we were going to get married and this is close to school starting already. This is in September of 1946. And because of the circumstances we decided we were just going to go to Reno and get

married so actually what we did was we drove to Carson City and got married by a Justice of the Peace there (inaudible). And those were times that were pretty hectic. There were a lot of people and no one had much money and it was tough times, at least for the Japanese people.

GK: So you went with June?

SK: Just June and I. Just June and I went to the JP and got married.

GK: Oh my.

SK: I think the wife of the judge was one of the witnesses (laughing).

GK: That is very good. Okay, so you've went to camp, you finished the military, did you at that time have any feelings about the camp and how you were treated?

SK: Not really that much. You know that—you know that my folks came back in 1945. They were one of the earlier ones to come back to the community and they got the ranch back right away because we had people that were so nice. Alvin Callister who was the high school ag teacher was running our ranch for us and when we came back he gave us back our ranch right away and we were also able to get our house back right away, because the people that lived there were such nice people they just moved out for us and our folks got in and lots of, well relatives, I guess in a sense, but the Kishi family and the Tanigoshi's they lived together with them at the house across the way. And while they were there early in 1945 the house was shot. People went by the road and I don't know how many shots they fired but there are still two holes I know of in the house.

GK: So they didn't want you back?

SK: Yeah, there was a lot of hatred at that time still against the Japanese people so that is what happened at that time.

GK: Did you discuss any of the war experiences with your children?

SK: Some, yeah I've talked to them some but not too much.

GK: How do you think that affected them?

SK: I think they—I have no—not really—I don't know how they—I think they listened and were respectful. I have no idea if they feel angered about it or not.

GK: Okay, let's move on to the last page and recent years. So what are some of the most important things that have happened to you in recent years? The family marriages or what are some (inaudible)

SK: When the children were growing up—

GK: You have two children?

SK: Yeah, I have two children.

GK: Two boys?

SK: One was born in 1950 and the other one in 1952. And about the 1960's early 1960's I decided I would get more involved in schools and things and so I ran for the school board and I was on the elementary school board for ten years and then from there went on to the high school board and I was there for twelve years so a lot of my time in those days was spent in that service of being a school board member. There was some rather interesting incidents that happened in that period. But overall I guess everything went quite well. I've had some of the people in the community stick their tongues out at me because they didn't like some of the decisions that were being made. We've had people yell at board meetings and things too but those are all part of being a board member of a school I think. But those were interesting days. Maybe I should have spent more time with the children but I think that our relations with our children is very good now.

GK: So what makes you really happy today?

SK: What makes me really happy today? Well, let's see I have my health. And I've been quite healthy which is very good. I also love to go golfing and I still love to play tennis. That means I've been playing tennis since I was about twelve years old. And so that makes it about fifty-three years, doesn't it (laughing)?

GK: Do you think the war affected you and your life and in which way or has it helped you in any way?

SK: Yeah I'm sure the war experience was a tremendous affect on me. One of the things I think the war did was and I'm not sure this would have happened if we hadn't had to go through what we did during the war years. If we were just normal citizens involved in the service maybe some of this might have happened as well but it certainly opened up the world to all of us. A world that we never knew when we lived in California as youngsters because the only thing we knew at that time was really just the community within where we lived and not very much more than that. We had some friends that we visited up—a few hours away but not really much more of the world that we knew. Well with the war we became very well acquainted with a lot more of the United States and in the end a lot more of the world so.

GK: So how do you feel about the redress and reparations?

SK: I think that one of the best things that happened was when they fought as hard as they did for the redress and we received redress and we finally received an apology from the President of the United States who then at that stage admitted that the United States government had done such a great wrong to the citizens and something that never should have happened and so that is one of the prize papers that we carry I think is the signed

copy of the apology that was given to us by—it was Gerald Ford, wasn't it? You know the one that signed the thing in the end. He wasn't responsible but he was just a veteran just like the rest of us during the war years but it was something that happened and from the United States government and he represented the United States government so.

GK: That's when I got my (inaudible) signed.

SK: Oh that was—

GK: So you are really very active in our community and (inaudible) do you know all the chairmanships and (inaudible)?

SK: You know we have a farmers organization called Livingston Farmer's Association and I've been a board member of that since the 1960's. I might be another year or two but I will probably resign from that in the next few years. I was involved in school boards for many years, twenty-eight years and right now I'm much more active than I was as a young person in JACL affairs. We're involved very much in trying to bring a message to the youngsters within our communities by having—by speaking to various classes mostly history classes as they go through their curriculum and start to study the WWII years. Those are the years that we along with Gracie who is interviewing along with Jake and—(tape ran out in camera)