

SADA YAMAMOTO

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Today is June 16, 1980. I, Fumi Nakajima, am privileged to interview Sada Yamamoto of 525 Third Street, Parlier, California, 93648, in her home.

Before we get into the interview proper, would you please give us your name, the date and place of birth, and your place of longest residence.

MRS. YAMAMOTO: My name is Sada Yamamoto. I was born March 25, 1904 in Hiroshima-Ken, Japan, and I have resided in the United States for 60 years.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: When did you leave Japan?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: I left Japan in January 1920 from Yokohama on the Siberia Maru and arrived in San Francisco, California. I was married in Japan and came with my husband.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Where did you first live in the United States?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: We arrived in Fowler, California where my husband was employed by Mr. Ed Gow as a farmer and fruit tree nurseryman.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: What have you done for a living in the United States?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: Housewife and a cook of 35 years in a labor camp operated by my husband.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: When did you marry?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: I was married to my husband in Hiroshima, Japan in 1919.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Have you ever been back to Japan?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: I visited Japan in 1929 and returned to the United States in 1930. After World War II, I went again in 1970, 1977, and 1979.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Have you had any children?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: I have four children. Two daughters who are married and a son and daughter, both married, by my second husband.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Did your children marry Japanese?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: The two elder daughters are married to Japanese.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: What do your children do for a living?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: One is in farming, one in gardening, one is employed in office work at Lockheed, and one is semi-retired. All of them live in the state of California.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Have you experienced any prejudice? Can you give us some examples?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: In about the year 1927, along with a few Japanese friends, my husband raised about 40,000 walnut and different kinds of grape cuttings. We received an order from a firm in Visalia, so we loaded up a truckload of 28,000 cuttings and delivered them with papers showing that they had passed agricultural inspection. A few days later, we got orders to burn up the nursery stock as they were diseased. There was no way to go that distance, so we had a friend check the Visalia nursery, but he was told that no stock had been delivered. One of our partners wanted to sue for damages, but was advised not to. Just because we were Japanese, we would be sure to lose the case. Some time later we found out the cuttings had been planted elsewhere. The stock was a total loss of four years of hard work and no money.

Another time, in July 1924, my family and another friend went to visit the Yosemite Firefall. The park was crowded, so we left to go to visit friends in Monterey. When we got to Monterey we pitched a tent, and it was beginning to get dark when three military men on horseback came with lanterns. We were asked if we knew where we were camped and we said, "No." We were asked if we saw the sign. We had not seen it as there was a dense fog. We found out we were on the road inside Presidio Road. Then the two men on horseback led us to the inn in Monterey. It was a happy and honorable event never to be forgotten! Accompanied by the United States military men! Then, the next day, we decided to go visit Los Angeles since this trip would be our last in the state before leaving for Japan. The road to Los Angeles was via Mojave and Saugus. We stopped at a restaurant in Saugus, and we waited for service. After waiting some time, we were told to look at a sign on which was printed, "NO SERVICE TO ORIENTALS." We asked for milk, which was only given for the children, but being refused we left hungry in the dark.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Have you noticed any change in the treatment of the Japanese people today?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: In one instance, before World War II, we sought employment with one farmer who never hired Japanese nor trusted them. He only had Filipino workers. But once he started hiring Japanese, he was completely satisfied with the workers. My husband's crew work was so good that other companies came to see the work being done and then started to hire the Japanese. This was an opening in field work for the Japanese.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: What social and economic changes have you seen in your local community?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: As soon as World War II started, most Caucasians were sympathetic, but did nothing to help us. After World War II, gradually and slowly, things began to work out better.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Have you been involved in any religious or social organizations?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: I have been a Buddhist all my life and am a member of the Parlier Japanese Buddhist Temple; a member of JACL; and also the Goyukai composed of friends from Saka City, Hiroshima, Japan.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Do you still observe some Japanese customs?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: We still observe funeral customs as monetary

offerings to the deceased's family and some wedding customs and birthday celebrations.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?

MRS. YAMAMOTO: I appreciate being a naturalized American citizen and seeing Japanese among other nationalities, and living a fuller and richer life daily.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Thank you, Mrs. Yamamoto.