STANLEY MASASHI NAGATA

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is August 4, 1980. I, Yoshino Hasegawa, am privileged to interview Mr. Stanley Masashi Nagata who lives at 6782 Avenue 400, Dinuba, California, 93618, at the Fresno County Public Library, 2420 Mariposa, Fresno, California.

Before we begin, please state your full name, your date and place of birth, and your place of longest residence.

MR. NAGATA: My full name is Stanley Masashi Nagata. I was born in Dinuba, California on December 1, 1922. I have lived in Dinuba except for the three years between 1942 and 1945, and I am still living in the home in which I was born.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did your parents come from in Japan?

MR. NAGATA: My parents came from Wakayama in Japan. My dad came around 1906 and my mother, 1914. They settled in Dinuba as farming was one of the only pportunities given to them to compete with others.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your father come directly here?

MR. NAGATA: No, to San Francisco. He was in San Francisco at the time of the earthquake, and they thought he was lost as most all communication was gone at that time. He came as a regular laborer and was hoping to make enough money to go back to Japan and start on his own. In the meantime, they came to Dinuba because it was in a centralized farming area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And your mother?

MR. NAGATA: She came later. I don't know how they met, but I would imagine picture-bride.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your father buy the property when he came to Dinuba?

MR. NAGATA: Yes. He bought that property prior to the Alien Land Law, so he was exempt from prosecution by the California Alien Land Law. In fact, he was in better shape than many of the Nisei, because their question of eligibility of the title of the land was questioned. We had to go to court to prove my brother's eligibility as a citizen to own his land when he came back from the war!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did your brother have his land?

MR. NAGATA: He bought a place just after he was married--and this was just prior to the war--in Kingsburg. After the war broke out, they had the Selective Service, and he was exempt for a while because he was married. Then when he came back, the question was how did he buy the place, and we had to go to court. And it cost us quite a bit of money, but we eventually won the case.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. What are some of your recollections of your childhood and growing-up years?

MR. NAGATA: My childhood and growing-up years were exciting with new

friends and new ideas daily. My parents were busy farming and too busy to take care of us in our present needs. At my school, most of the students were of German descent, so there was very little discrimination or anything like that. We were treated well.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What school did you attend?

MR. NAGATA: Granville Elementary School which was about a mile and a half from our place. We took a bicycle or we walked. Cut through the vineyard and went right to the school. It was a small school with all eight classes in one building; three teachers. The principal also taught the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were there no school buses in those days?

MR. NAGATA: Oh, no, no! We had transportation when we had events with other schools. My dad had a truck so he furnished a truck, and we all jumped on the back end of the truck, you know, and nobody worried about insurance. There were two or three farmers who would donate the use of the truck and that is how we went from school to school. No school buses, no school lunches--we took our own lunch--no cafeteria. Special events like Halloween we ended up with some people donating cake and hot dogs and buns. Nothing like it is today.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was the area like when you were growing up?

MR. NAGATA: All improved farming land. In our area, mostly grapes, and most of them made raisins. At that time very little went to the wineries. Winery was in a very small area at that time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember anything about mingling with other Japanese people?

MR. NAGATA: Oh, yes. We went to school together. I know my friend used to come with the bicycle and I had mine, too, and we'd all go together to school. In school some of us knew how to play the harmonica and we'd get our little band together and we competed very well. Scholastically, we tried to do the best we could, and we were fortunate that we were able to compete so well. And in sports, I guess, the Japanese were very outstanding. Especially in grammar school. It was a lot of fun.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to Sunday School when you were little?

MR. NAGATA: Yes. Being that my dad was one of the original charter members of the Palm Methodist Church--at that time it was Dinuba Japanese Methodist Church--so our parents took us every Sunday. So that's how my religious background was made. In fact, when that church was built in 1922, it was the central point for the Christian and Buddhist people, Then, shortly after that, the Buddhists went on their own and built their own church. But at one time, they all came to the Christian Church.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was Japanese the language spoken in your home?

MR. NAGATA: Well, it was, but we weren't that fortunate like the rest of them. It was more of a Japanese mix. We'd speak Japanese with a little bit of English in there, especially when we didn't know that part in Japanese. We had a language school, but, unfortunately, I didn't take

it seriously. We met once a week, a full day, and we were kind of happy to go because we didn't have to work at home then.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What were your experiences during your high school years?

MR. NAGATA: Well, in high school it was a little different. Then is where we began to see signs of discrimination. Of course, we strived to do the best we could in our sports and studies, but in this area we were not discriminated. The discrimination came when you began to see Rainbow Girls. They didn't have any Orientals in their organization. And my friends were members of the HiY, but we weren't asked to join. Then in the later years, especially my senior year, it dawned on me that all my education and study had prepared me for college and there was no opening for Japanese. I had intended to be an engineer, all my courses pertained to engineering. I took German courses and mechanical drawing and things like that, but then when it came close to graduation time and my future looked dim. Because of the present discrimination in the engineering field, I turned back to farming. I figured it was time for me to help the family. So that's why my education finished at the end of my high school career.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you went directly to work for your father?

MR. NAGATA: Yes. My work experience after high school was nothing exciting, because I had done it during my grammar school and high school days. All your time off you worked on the ranch. We raised watermelons and grapes, whatever we could. It was our source of living.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you ship your watermelons?

MR. NAGATA: Well, watermelons were quite a bit different in those days than present days. The buyers used to come to the ranch with big semis that would haul 22 tons, and they would pay cash for the melon. We didn't go through brokers or packinghouses. There were one or two brokers, but the most of it was cash sales.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you grow these watermelons?

MR. NAGATA: Watermelon is a crop that you cannot plant on the same ground every year. In fact, once you plant it, you cannot plant it again. In early time we had to keep rotating. Just before relocation, we farmed in Hanford, 30 miles from home. Prior to that Caruthers and Conejo. We journeyed away, always looking for virgin ground. Most of these grounds were not level, but they said, "It takes a Japanese to irrigate and push water uphill," and that is what we used to do.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you really had to look for a new place all the time.

MR. NAGATA: Yes. Every year. Just before the end of our season, we were already looking for new ground. Hopefully for ground that had noting in it at all, like permanent pasture ground where cattle were grazing and all kinds of Bermuda and Johnson grass. In order to control it you had to summer plow it, in the summer you could kill it. And this was ideal ground for planting watermelon, preferably sandy ground. In this area, watermelon was one of the major Japanese crops outside of tomatoes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you find these open lands if other Japanese were looking, too?

MR. NAGATA: Oh, it's all competitive. And same thing as your ranch. You find a place, offer so much, and hopefully you get it and that somebody else didn't find it or offer more money. Then you'd have to keep looking! It was a struggle of livelihood, competition. And out of a ranch of 100 acres, some of it rolling hills, you might only have 25 acres where you could plant watermelon. So on only 25 acres you would maneuver your water so you could make that ground produce.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did watermelon bring a good price?

MR. NAGATA: In those days, very seldom did you get enough money. It's just a matter of existence. There were seven children in our family, and the income from the vineyards wasn't sufficient, so the watermelon would supplement it. Had to make ends meet.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are there any other prewar experiences you'd care to share?

MR. NAGATA: One of the experiences was when I was in the fifth grade. At recess we used to play horseback. This is where a person gets on top of another person and we'd try to pull each other off. In the process, somebody tripped me; I was the horse. And everyone jumped on me, it was lots of fun. But it ended up when they all got off me that I had a broken elbow. And my principal put me in his car and took me to the doctor's office. I sure remember that because I felt every bump and it just about killed me. And yet my doctor remarked to my parents, "Your son didn't cry. Why is that?" The reason is we'd always been taught that you're a Japanese and you endure pain, you don't cry out loud. This is one of the first Japanese cultures, you learn suffering.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your memories of December 7, 1941? How did you feel?

MR. NAGATA: Actually, I was stunned--flabbergasted! I asked my mother, "Why? Why did they do this?" and she had the best explanation. She said, "If you would think back, you see Japan over there on the map, and you see the United States has her surrounded by battleships, and Japan has no place to go, so it's just a matter of time. They couldn't help it." But, in spite of that, my local friends treated me very well. I was fortunate in Dinuba. In the Cutler-Orosi area it was terrible. They uttered remarks, and it was really hard to be a Japanese there, real hostility there. But in our area, the businessmen were able somehow, through communication, to hold it pretty good.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you leave from when you went to camp?

MR. NAGATA: Well, I did not go to the Assembly Center as many did from the coast. We were on the east side of 99 which was supposed to be free from evacuation. But then the order came saying, "All people had to be evacuated from California," so, therefore, I couldn't protest very much with a bayonet in my back! They loaded me at Visalia. The recollection of the trip is not a very pleasant one. It was hot and when we got into Poston, Arizona I said, "Oh, my God, what kind of place is this? Hot desert with nothing here, a road leading to nowhere, 117 degrees--". You wondered why. Barbed wires there, high power rifles being manned by

soldiers, being met at the gate with soldiers there to check us in. Once we're in, we can't leave. I wondered why. Why us, what did we do?

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do while you were in camp?

MR. NAGATA: I was fortunate. I didn't stay too long. Everyone said, "Oh, it's going to be nice to go to camp, nothing to do, nothing but time on your hands." But time on your hands is the worse thing a person can do. The more you think with idle minds, it's just not good for you. So, in order to occupy my time, I worked for warehouse department which was physical labor, unloading trucks of produce or whatever. When you came down to it, the whole camp was run like a town or like a school where supplies come in and you had managing control. I worked in the warehouse because the people who did physical labor were entitled to special privileges such as going to special mess hall where they fed you better than regular mess hall, that's one of the reasons I went there. At least we had dessert in special mess hall:

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember anything else about your Poston experience?

MR. NAGATA: Well, when I was there, the future looked pretty dim. I was just out of high school, 20 or 21 years old. Even my classification for the Army was "Enemy Alien." Here I went to school in this country, never even went to Japan, can hardly speak Japanese language, so why am I classified this way. Fortunately, I was only in camp about a month. An offer of employment looking for sugar beet workers came from Idaho, and I wanted to leave in the worst way, because I had the American habits of eating hamburgers, french fries, to see a movie, drinking milkshakes. That's all we thought about. When I was ready to leave camp, I asked my mother and she said, "No, there's no way you are going to leave. People haven't left here yet and you don't know what the outside people will do." She objected terribly. And I was able to persuade my dad after six or seven meetings. Just before the deadline, he finally said, "Okay, if you are careful, you can go." So I left Poston, about 100 of us, in a semi-truck. It was kind of sad. Many of us were singing Japanese songs we had learned in camp, leaving memories behind, looking to a future that you didn't know what was out there. But we wanted to get out.

So, then, in Preston, Idaho, we worked in sugar beets and this was a poor farming area. The sugar beets were all infested with nematodes. The sugar beets were about the size of a parsnip, and we worked terribly hard and were barely able to make ends meet. But for the first time in my life I had to get up at 3:30 in the morning and work until 7 o'clock in the night. Being that we didn't know how to cook, we used up our meat ration, our sugar ration, so we really had an experience as farm laborers. Later, as winter approached, I was asked to go to Minadoka, a relocation center in Idaho. And I was chosen to go there because I didn't want to go back to Poston. It was too far from farm work, so I spent the winter at Minadoka.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You didn't have any family there?

MR. NAGATA: No, but we were admitted by a friend of ours. He knew the people at the administration office, and he said, "I think I can get you people in." We worked with this fellow from Portland, Oregon and through his efforts we got in. It's funny how word gets around. We got in about 2 o'clock in the morning, and by 6:00 in the morning they all knew there

were four Japanese from California.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did the others come from?

MR. NAGATA: Mostly Portland and Washington. When we socialized, like at a dance, that's when you could tell the difference. People in Washington and Oregon had a different way of dancing than California people. They danced real fast, flung their legs out, tripping people. So they'd say, "Oh, you're not from around here." Our identity was established real quick!

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long were you in Minadoka?

MR. NAGATA: We left there about March; snow started to thaw out. In winter there's no farm work at all because the ground is frozen. That's one of the good things about farming up there, you have a compulsory three or four-month vacation.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you go after that?

MR. NAGATA: In camp we began to question other people, and they told us to go west, go toward the Snake River which was Coleville, Idaho, Ontario, Oregon. They had a farm labor camp and many Japanese stayed there because they had housing provided by the government at a real low rent. So that was our labor center, and we went to our work from there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of work did you do?

MR. NAGATA: Oh, Stoop Labor. You name, it, I did it. Thinning sugar beets, thinning lettuce, weeding onions, harvesting onions--that was really some job--picking apples, cherries, harvesting lettuce. Every sort of farm products that was being raised, we worked in them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many Japanese were, there?

MR. NAGATA: About 125 of us. Those that were fortunate enough to have a family qualified for the two-bedroom house, but you had to have four people in the family. So my cousin and I lived with my brother and his wife so we were entitled to one house.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, Eddie was there, too?

MR. NAGATA: Yes. I called him out, and he came with his wife. And shortly after, he went to farm with another partner over there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you come back to California then?

MR. NAGATA: Well, I worked continuously in Idaho, Oregon, then in 1944 word got around that the FBI were screening Japanese, and if you are going to come back, you have to apply for a screening permit, so we applied. And I had a plastic credential with my picture and fingerprint, and was officially cleared by the FBI to go back to California. Just about that time, word came that California was opened to Japanese, so my brother and I loaded the truck with all his belongings. We were afraid people wouldn't sell us gasoline so we had two big tanks of gas on the back end of the truck. I drove the truck and my brother and his family in a car, and we journeyed back to California. We followed each other and came through Winnemucca and Reno, and when we hit Sacramento this is

where we were debating, "Would they sell us gas?" Prior to evacuation my brother used to haul watermelons to Sacramento so he knew this service station, and we went in there and got gas. So we came hack to the ranch, and we were fortunate because the people who lived in my brother's house moved out right away. So we unloaded the furniture, then I notified the people who lived in dad's house that we would be coming back, and I took the truck and trailer and headed for Poston. So, I went over there and loaded my family's belongings, and we brought it back, and we were able to get right into our house.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How were things on your ranch?

MR. NAGATA: The ranch was in terrible shape. The people who farmed it took all they could off of it. They didn't fertilize it so we had to pull up all the grapes and the land was back to its bare land again.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about your house?

MR. NAGATA: The house was okay. The people who took care of my brother's place really took advantage of him. We let them have free use of all the equipment, and when we came back the tractor wouldn't run, and we asked him if he was going to fix it and he said, no, he wouldn't. We were advised not to take it to a lawyer because we didn't have a chance, don't cause any hard feelings. All the neighbors advised the person that he should fix it, he had used it for commercial farming. In fact, he bought additional land for himself. But we were advised by the WRA, "Better leave well enough alone." So we fixed it ourselves, just took it on the chin. Our dog of three years earlier was okay, too. We had given him to some friends who lived 30 or 40 miles away, but he had come back. I guess he howled and howled. But he was there, and when I spoke he knew who I was and it was a rejoicing in our hearts. The master had finally come home!

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many of you were there?

MR. NAGATA: Our whole family, except for my married brother, came back to our family home.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who would that be?

MR. NAGATA: My parents. My oldest sister is Millie Hanada. Another Lydia, Lydia Shiba is living in Sacramento right now. Lillian Kiyamoto lives in Reedley, Amy Akahishi lives in New York, and a younger brother Gordie lives in Cutler. All are married, pretty well established, have families of their own.

MRS. HASEGAWA: So you came back, had to pull your vines out. What happened then?

MR. NAGATA: Well, then we had no alternative, so my dad started planting cotton. At that time cotton was a pretty good price. In between cotton he started planting a few of the grapes back. But it didn't go quite that good. Shortly after that he retired and I took over his place. I had purchased a neighbor's place next to his and put in grapes and then put my dad's place all in grapes, and that's my permanent home right now.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of grapes did you raise?

MR. NAGATA: Thompson, at that time, mostly for raisins.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you continue to plant cotton?

MR. NAGATA: Well, yes. Let's go back a little bit. After I got married. I met my wife at a joint sponsored fellowship retreat between Reedley Fellowship Church and Dinuba Methodist Church at Lake Sequoia. Right now she's my right arm in farming, and she also packs peaches and plums for other people. And I also have two daughters Carol and Marsha. I am very fortunate. They are both married. Carol teaches first grade in Lincoln School in Dinuba, her sixth year. My younger daughter Marsha is a licensed registered nurse at Valley Medical Center in Fresno. One is married to a Japanese descent and the other a Korean. We are proud of them. At the present time we don't have any grandchildren.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you please discuss your career after you returned to Dinuba.

MR. NAGATA: Well, my brother and I continued to farm, then we formed a partnership. Then in 1947, I got married and we continued to farm together mostly raising watermelon. And shortly after that we quit watermelon after a disastrous season. Then we went to raising cotton. Three of us; my brother, my brother-in-law, and I put our resources together and bought a cotton picking machine, and we did commercial picking along with our farming. Then for a while we farmed together. I rented cotton land and vineyards. Later on I was able to buy additional land for my vineyards, then I bought another 40 acres and planted cotton. During that time, I had an accident that almost took my life. It was a gas explosion, an accident, and shortly after that, after a successful year in farming, I sold my cotton land. Now I'm just farming 40 acres of vineyards at home, on the place where I was born.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Please tell us about your involvement with the Palm Methodist Church, the California-Nevada Conference as lay leader to the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church.

MR. NAGATA: I was automatically a member because of my father. And also I attended every Sunday and was a Sunday School teacher. And as I grew older, I took on the position of Chairman of the Board, Chairman of Financial Stewardship, lay leader of the church, and lay leader of the Annual Conference. I got that because of the busy schedule of most of the members of the church. At that time they are harvesting and they barely have time to eat, you know. So after I was elected, no one would volunteer any more, so I continue to go to the Annual Conference. I enjoy it. I meet the past ministers we have had and socialize with them. As for the conference, it's like anything else. Too big, so not much glory in going to a conference.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where does it meet?

MR. NAGATA: In Sacramento last year. It used to be in Stockton at UOP, then later at Stockton Convention Center, then it was suggested to move it to different localities, so it's been in Fresno, Redding, Reno, San Jose, and then Sacramento.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You served for 15 years, 1963-1978, on the Board of Agriculture Stabilization Conservation Service. What is ASCS?

MR. NAGATA: ASCS is a branch of the Federal Department of Agriculture designed to carry out the many farm programs such as wheat, tobacco, cotton, rice, then water conservation practices, forestry, establish all guidelines for participation because many of these projects are federally funded. That means in a time of disaster, when the present market price is not what it should be, to qualify for a decent living, the federal government comes in and gives you "X" number of cents to bring it up to what it should be to provide the farmer with the present-day cost of living. It's not a grant, as a lot of people think, or a Christmas present. No farmer is getting rich on this money. All it does is bring it up to production price.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you become a member of this group?

MR. NAGATA: I was nominated and elected to serve my area. First as a chairman of Alta District and now Tulare County District is divided into seven areas. I served as chairman of Alta District about six or seven years. Then while I was serving on that, later I was elected to serve as alternate, then regular, then chairman of Tulare County ASCS. The chairman of the department has a real big responsibility because now you are chairman of all activities within the county.

And the purpose of serving on the committee is to enforce rules and regulations set by the government pertaining to farm projects in order to qualify for farm assistance.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you think it is a good program?

MR. NAGATA: It's a program that will be here forever. As long as there is money, someone has to administer and set the guidelines for farming or whatever it is. Yes, it is a necessary program. Three years ago when we had that drought, we had a serious condition in our livestock industry. There was no grass, so, consequently, if the federal government hadn't stepped in, they would have had to sell their livestock. Livestock you can't bring up right away like a seed from the ground. It takes two or three years to bring a calf up to production. If the government hadn't stepped in to help fund their feed supply--alfalfa was $100 a ton--they couldn't afford to feed their beef cattle. They would compensate by figuring out a schedule to help that was to be given where the feed would be about $60 a ton, and the federal government would help with $40 a ton. This way the farmer did not have to sell the cattle, otherwise, we would have a cheap price of steer that year, then three years later, a terrific price for steers. This is so we can have a more or less steady procedure in our farm products.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You were involved with the Y's Men for many years as president, vice-president, and secretary of that organization. What was the most satisfactory thing about being a member of the Y's Men?

MR. NAGATA: One of the most outstanding satisfactions was being able to help youth. We had direct connection through our various programs. We were in a rural area, so our involvement was rural grammar schools. There is very little programming between rural grammar schools so our club set up a program so we had competition, especially in the field of basketball. We had roughly eight or nine teams in the rural areas, no city schools. We ran the schedule for three nights and we awarded real nice trophies to them and showed them sportsmanship, above all,

sportsmanship. Later we offered this to girls and
we had a girl's team and toward the end we really had a good program.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You told me earlier that in your high school you were not asked to join the Y. But you went back as a grown man and helped this organization.

MR. NAGATA: Yes, in high school I wanted to join but we weren't asked. It was really unfortunate. One of the faults of the Nisei was we lacked communication with others. We were too busy with our own families and trying to make a living and we failed to socialize with other people. Lately I go to the coffee shop, not because of coffee, but because I get to know my fellow man. We talk over different projects, current events. We are able to argue, leave and be friends. We have discrimination talk, but we are able to talk it out and not get angry at each other. Then they understand us and we understand them. And I believe this is a major fault of the Nisei, and I hope the Sansei and future generations would join all sorts of service clubs and help their community.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are the benefits you derive from belonging to the Farm Bureau?

MR. NAGATA: The image of the farmer is no longer what it was in the past. The time has come when you have to belong to an organization such as the Farm Bureau that is able to study different regulations and guidelines set forth in farming, not just insecticides, but in the marketing side. They look at all the different views. In farming it is no longer the ability to use your hands. You have to be a bookkeeper, know how to repair machines, say "No" to people who come to sell you lots of stuff because a farmer has poor sales resistance, they'll buy almost anything! You have to be cautious! And it's essential that our congressmen know the needs of the farmer. Also we need an agency to educate the general public that farmers are human beings, just like anyone else. We need a comfortable home, three meals a day, and often we can't afford it because of our fluctuating income.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What services can a farmer expect as a Farm Bureau member?

MR. NAGATA: You can have legal assistance, the newsletter, lobbyists in Sacramento. They alert you on new legislation that needs attention; life insurance, health insurance, many things. Buying by volume at discount houses.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What is the Nisei Farmers League?

MR. NAGATA: The Nisei Farmers League originated with second generation Japanese who grouped together to fight unorthodox methods used by labor unions to try to organize farm labor, thereby causing undue hardship for the Nisei. At that time we grouped, we united, to fight against this type of organization and methods they were using meant no income for the rest of the year. So, if a farmer got stuck, we combined our efforts to help that farmer harvest his crop so he would not lose it. The Nisei Farmers League is like anything else. We have lobbyists in Sacramento looking after various bills that come up. Our president, Harry Kubo, is doing a terrific job in the education of the public. This is essential!!

MRS. HASEGAWA: You are presently Governor of the Japanese American

Citizens League, Central California District Conference. Please discuss your involvement with the JACL at the local and district level.

MR. NAGATA: My JACL involvement started as being a member of the Tulare County Chapter. It's just in recent years that I have become an active member. Since being a member of the chapter, I have served in the capacity of secretary, vice- president, and chapter president, then later on was elected to serve on District Council in capacity of secretary, vice- governor and now I am presently District Governor and I also serve on the National Board.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you do on the National Board?

MR. NAGATA: National Board is composed of presidents and the Executive Committee and also the governors of various districts. We set the guidelines of United States JACL, and one chapter in Japan composed of American citizens over there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, really? How many members are in the chapter in Japan?

MR. NAGATA: I don't know. They were just asked to join.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was the main issue at your conference this year?

MR. NAGATA: Well, it lasted a whole week, so it's hard to say what the main issue was. Main thing was budget, how to supplement the budget so we could carryon needed programs. They had cut the budget in the past to limit issues of the Pacific Citizen which has been a weekly paper, and they pushed it every two weeks. Now they want it weekly again. We spent a lot of time because our budget is deficient. We had discussion groups on Aging, on Redress--a presentation by the Redress Committee on what would be apt to happen in this Commission Approach. At that same time, President Carter signed a
Commission Approach for the Redress.

MRS. HASEGAWA: As Governor of CCDC for the past two terms, what was the most important focus of your governorship?

MR. NAGATA: Well, I guess it was to see that our present operation of our regional office be kept going. We have just started many programs for the elderly, trying to get funding for Nikkei Service Center and also to acquaint our membership of the various services given by the regional office and the many National Programs. So many of our members do not realize what programs the National is involved in, so they don't realize how much it takes to fund JACL. Just taking a case to court costs from 25 to 30 thousand dollars. Even getting our Board together costs $7,000 Our National Board is big business. We have to find ways to support it. Part of my job is to acquaint our membership with the importance of all the programs being offered and why our budget it low, and how to get assistance to help.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How do you think you can accomplish this, and what do you propose to do?

MR. NAGATA: They tell us to take this back to District Council and get more membership. It's not that easy. You have to have a program to show them, educate them as to what JACL is doing in the different fields.

Because a lot of people don't even know we have an office in Washington, D.C., and that it costs $52,000 to run that office. They don't know that the staff watches legislation, watches the schoolbooks for discrimination. These programs will have to be written down so you can show them the areas we are in. Maybe we could get members then. It's unfortunate that one-fourth of us speak for the total population, and if something happens to the Asian, then JACL is called upon.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You represent other Orientals, too?

MR. NAGATA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What changes have you seen in the activities and problems of the Japanese-American in your lifetime?

MR. NAGATA: I would say the change in discrimination in the various careers that are offered. Very few opportunities were available before the war. If you wanted to be on your own, you had to run your own drugstore, you couldn't be a pharmacist looking for a job in someone's drugstore. The only place we could compete was in farming, because we used our skill and knowledge and it didn't take much money. But now the general public accepts us and opportunities for the Japanese are terrific. They should go out and get the education they can, and strive to compete with the rest of them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you do to maintain your Japanese ethnic identity?

MR. NAGATA: Well, in our place, I guess we don't have too much of that, because our mother didn't stress it that much. But I guess in our cooking. My daughters are learning some of the Japanese cooking from their mother. Another thing, too, is being that I had lost my mother, and my wife also lost her parents early, we make it a general custom to take flowers to the cemetery. I notice very often when you go there it is bare, a very lonesome feeling. One of the Japanese customs that is outstanding is that they remember. Also we observe special events like New Years with special foods. We modernize it with a potluck affair so that one person doesn't have to do all the work and not be able to enjoy the day; one family brings sushi, another teriyaki, and so forth. We get together at my brother-in-law's place and have a big celebration for that one big day.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you see is the future of the Japanese as an ethnic group?

MR. NAGATA: We have one thing in our favor, we have pride! Therefore, we will be able to excel in any field. One way or another we hate to be defeated. It's been taught to us as children, we have pride! We don't like to take defeat. Now whether that's a custom or whatever it is, I guess it's our parents' teaching.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is there anything you'd like to add to this interview?

MR. NAGATA: Yes. I think the coming generation can be proud of the performance of the past generation, what the Issei have worked so hard and contributed. Not knowing the language, working hard, raising a family, getting established, having control over us. When we went to

camp, we were fortunate having had such strict control previously. I would say the majority of other nationalities would have had chaos in camp.

Now, the second generation, although we were called the Quiet Americans, we were caught in a little different area. At the time of the evacuation we were too young to say anything, we didn't have money, and it cost money to go to court, so we went along with the family. However, by proving our loyalty as a citizen, then by coming back and working hard, putting our kids through school, the opportunity was there. Finally the public has accepted us. We are on the same footing as the rest. By going to college, different careers were open to us. Now, finally, they have taken leadership in legislation. We have Nisei congressmen which we never had before, and in the minorities the Japanese have the most congressmen. We can be extremely proud, even in the judicial field.

Now, the Sansei, they have all this behind them, and the full support of the Niseis. It is up to them to take advantage of the many opportunities given to them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's right. Thank you so very much for a very interesting interview!