

MRS. KIYOYE NIKAIDO

MR. INAMI: Today is February 17, 1980. I, Joe Inami, have the privilege to interview Mrs. Kiyoye Nikaido who lives at 5510 Gilgunn Way, Sacramento, California, 95822. Mrs. Nikaido was one of the pioneers of Madera.

Before we get into the interview proper, please state your full name, your place and date of birth, and your place of longest residency.

MRS. NIKAIDO: My name is Kiyoye Nikaido, and I was born in Wakayama-ken in 1900. My longest place of residency was Madera.

MR. INAMI: What was your late husband's name?

MRS. NIKAIDO: My husband's name was Kazuo Nikaido, and he was born in Wakayama-ken in 1896.

MR. INAMI: When did he come to this country?

MRS. NIKAIDO: He came in 1910 and farmed in Thornton. In 1916 he found employment with the Libby Company at Walnut Grove on the Canal Ranch where he worked with asparagus.

MR. INAMI: How many years were you there?

MRS. NIKAIDO: We were there for seven years. We moved to Madera when my eldest daughter was seven years old.

MR. INAMI: When did you go to Walnut Grove, ohasan?

MRS. NIKAIDO: We were transferred to the Libby McNeil asparagus ranch in Madera in 1927. Haruko was just about eight months old and crawling at the time.

MR. INAMI: What was it like then at the Canal Ranch?

MRS. NIKAIDO: There were many Filipinos. My husband was the foreman there. There was a Filipino cook there. When we moved to Madera, my husband became the farm superintendent.

MR. INAMI: How many acres were there in Madera?

MRS. NIKAIDO: One hundred fifty acres. They also had vineyards and apricot and peach orchards besides grapes.

MR. INAMI: Was there a Japanese labor camp there?

MRS. NIKAIDO: Yes. There were 32 or 33 young men at that time for most of the year, but during the pruning and harvesting season there were 200 or 300 workers living on the place.

MR. INAMI: Were they all Japanese?

MRS. NIKAIDO: No, there were Caucasians and Mexicans, too. Mostly haku-jin (Caucasians). The farm was so big that they had their own dairy and raised and butchered their own hogs for food. There was a Filipino cook on one side, and a Japanese cook on the other. They had chickens,

turkeys, and ducks and a big truck garden. They raised all the food for the labor camps. They had a bookkeeper named Junichi Nakagawa. He lent his name to many Japanese in Madera to buy land.

MR. INAMI: Weren't living conditions poor?

MRS. NIKAIDO: Wages were about 25 cents an hour at that time, and we were given board for a small amount.

MR. INAMI: How did you meet your husband?

MRS. NIKAIDO: Papa's mother came to ask for my hand in Japan. They brought Papa's picture to me and arranged for our marriage. It was a baishaku kekkon (arranged marriage) with a go-between who introduced the families who made the arrangements.

MR. INAMI: Have you ever returned to Japan?

MRS. NIKAIDO: I went back 22 years ago for the first time in 1954, and twice after that.

MR. INAMI: How many children do you have?

MRS. NIKAIDO: I had five children. A son died when he was nine months and later a daughter passed away, so I now have three living children.

MR. INAMI: Are all your children married to Japanese spouses?

MRS. NIKAIDO: Yes, they are. The three oldest girls married grocers. One of the husbands was a reporter for the Hokubei Mainichi. The girls' names are; Helen Tanaka, May Ishida, June Sakamoto, and Grace Morimoto. The girls all live in the Sacramento area.

MR. INAMI: Have you encountered any acts of discrimination directed at you during your life?

MRS. NIKAIDO: No special incidents except when Papa was taken by the FBI on suspicion but for no cause; no reason for his arrest.

MR. INAMI: He was picked up for no reason?

MRS. NIKAIDO: He was the president of the Japanese Association; perhaps that was the reason. They said he was the leader of the Black Dragons. There was no such organization.

MR. INAMI: Where was he interned?

MRS. NIKAIDO: First he was taken to Sharp Park, then he was taken to a camp in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

MR. INAMI: When did Mr. Nikaido come back to the family?

MRS. NIKAIDO: He came back to Jerome, Arkansas where there were many snakes. After that, Jerome was closed down, and we were transferred to Amache.

MR. INAMI: Do you belong to any organizations?

MRS. NIKAIDO: I belong to the Sacramento Buddhist Church Fujinkai (Women's Organization) and to the Wakayama Kenjinkai. My husband was the chairman of the Wakayama Kenjinkai and was on the Madera Japanese School Board and involved in kendo and the Fresno Nihonjinkai.

MR. INAMI: Do you observe any Japanese traditional customs?

MRS. NIKAIDO: I make ikebana arrangements. We observe the traditional Japanese New Year's celebration by making omochi and the rest of the Japanese feast. We still observe funeral and wedding customs when the occasion arises.

MR. INAMI: Did you have Caucasian friends in Madera?

MRS. NIKAIDO: Yes. There was a good friend who was the head supervisor. The Caucasians all worked in the sheds, the Japanese were the only ones who could do the pruning. The Filipinos picked the fruit. The Caucasians cut the fruit.

MR. INAMI: What did you do?

MRS. NIKAIDO: I didn't do anything but care for my home and my children.

MR. INAMI: What were some of the happy experiences that you had?

MRS. NIKAIDO: The most pleasant and happy occasions were the Madera community picnics. That was number one! The picnics were held by the river. The children were little, and we were young. It was something to look forward to.

MR. INAMI: Thank you for giving us this interview.