MASAO OKANORA

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is September 10, 1980. I, Yoshino Hasegawa, am privileged to interview Mr. Masao Okamura in his home on 20282 East Manning Avenue, Reedley, California, 93654.

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

MR. OKAMURA: My name is Masao Okamura. I was born on Reed Avenue in Reedley, California on May 1, 1915. My place of longest residence is here on this farm. I moved here when I was three years old. I went to Japan when I was six years old, so I have lived here about 57 years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why did your father settle here in Reedley?

MR. OKAMURA: He was aware of farm work that was available in this area, and he was interested in buying land, and this seemed a good place. Even when others, who were partners, left the farm, my dad stayed on and worked the land. The partners sent the money, and Father stayed on and provided the labor. He came in 1906 during the grape season when grapes for raisins were being harvested. He started by picking grapes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was he a migrant farm worker?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, he was.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you recall hearing where he landed when he came from Japan?

MR. OKAMURA: He first went to Hawaii in 1898, then came to San Francisco in 1902. Then he worked around the Sacramento area for a while. Prior to 1906 he had come to work in Central California, but he came to settle in Reedley in 1906.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your mother come to Reedley with your father?

MR. OKAMURA: No, she came in 1914 some time after they were married.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your dad go to get your mother or was she a picture bride?

MR. OKAMURA: He went to Japan to marry her.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was he acquainted with her before he went back to Japan?

MR. OKAMURA: I guess he didn't.

MRS. HASEGAWA: From what ken did they come?

MR. OKAMURA: They are from Yamaguchi-ken, Kumagegun, Hirao-machi.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your recollections about your childhood?

MR. OKAMURA: Well, I remember there used to be old willow trees and vineyards on Manning Avenue. I left when I was six years old, so I don't remember very much, although I did go to Lincoln Kindergarten. They tore down the old building and there is a new building now.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You were here until your sixth birthday, then you went to Japan?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, I staved there until I was 15 years old, so I was there nine years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why did you go to Japan?

MR. OKAMURA: Well, my dad was going to make money and go back to Japan, so he wanted to educate us over there. Times and circumstances changed, and in 1930 I came back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to high school in Japan?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, to Yanai Chugakko. I had quite a hard time getting into this high school, since I had been born in the United States, they would not accept me. It was a Kenritsu school, a school established by the prefecture, which is like our state.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You had to be a top student to get into a prefectural school !

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, baseball was very popular in that school. They won the championship for the first time when I was enrolled, but I didn't play baseball.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you have a difficult time with the language when you went back to Japan?

MR. OKAMURA: Oh yes, and when I returned to the United States I had quite a time, too.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you came back to the United States, did you attend high school?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, I went to elementary school a couple of years, then to Reedley High School and graduated there. I like sports, so I participated in track and baseball. I also did kendo. Kendo was started in Reedley in 1933. The prime time for kendo in this area was I935-- there were over 100 kids taking kendo. It was quite popular.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many Japanese boys participated?

MR. OKAMURA: About 65 families sent their boys from Reedley, and there were others coming from the surrounding towns, too.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were Japanese families large then?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, most families had two boys taking kendo. Later our membership dwindled because Dinuba and other towns began to hold their own classes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where were these kendo classes held?

MR. OKAMURA: They used to hold them in the Japanese gakuen halls. They would take out the partitions and make a large hall where we could practice.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that the Japanese school?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was there a Buddhist church there?

MR. UKAMURA: Buddhist church was the old Japanese Hall. The present Buddhist church is on the west side now. The east side was the gakuen. We moved the building to north of the church. In that building the partition could be moved to make a large hall for large gatherings. They took benches and desks out whenever they used the hall. That's where it started, then in 1935 or 1936, the new hall was built. The floor was well-built and strong for kendo and judo, that kind of activity. Judo classes were also held there at one time, about 1938, a later date.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were there any girls taking kendo in those days?

MR. OKAMURA: About half a dozen girls. Ayako Osato and the Okudas were some who took kendo. I think Mrs. Nakashima ended up as a shodan, first step in the black belt series (Ayako Osato). I am a nidan (second degree).

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who were your instructors?

MR. OKAMURA: Tokichi Nakamura. He was still teaching in Japan in 1976. He is kendo 10 dan. I met one of his students who is an 8 dan on the train in Japan, a coincidence. He was 70 years old and still active in kendo.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are you still involved in kendo?

MR. OKAMURA: No, not anymore. Mr. Araki asked me about kendo just the other day, as Fresno is starting kendo classes again. I cannot physically participate any longer because of my back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember any incidence of discrimination during your years after returning from Japan, or during your high school years?

MR. UKAMURA: I remember: there was always discrimination. They used to call us "Japs" all the time. When I was in grammar school they were always picking on me. I tried to ignore them, but some kids are persistent.

There is one incident that I have never told, but this kid who was five or six inches taller than me, continually picked on me until I licked him good! When I was a freshman in high school, there were a half-dozen Japanese fellows that boycotted a class. Nothing came of it, we were being called "Japs" and we were mad because we were picked on. When we came back from camp, it was a terrible time! I would meet a friend in town whom I thought was a good Caucasian friend before the war, I knew his family, but he didn't want to be seen talking to me in public! He had been a very close classmate, too. It was terrible! My young son Dennis came home from school and said, "I'm being called Jap!"

MRS. HASEGAWA: How old was he then?

MR. OKAMURA: About 10 years old, in grammar school. He asked his mom if he was a Jap, he didn't even know what a Jap was! He had never been exposed to that. There was another man who used to pester me like heck before the war, trying to sell me insurance, but after the war he never talked to me--just ignored me!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Does he talk to you today?

MR. OKAMURA: Oh, he has passed away, so I won't mention names. Those things happened. I know most of the old-timers in Reedley, and they were loyal to us during the war, because they knew and trusted us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was it like during your father's time?

MR. OKAMURA: We had good neighbors. After the war began, one neighbor would sneak over to help us. In fact, I still work for them. My father told me about being called "Jap" when he would be working on the farm. Those were horse and buggy days, and we were used to being called names. It is much better now.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was the landscape like then?

MR. OKAMURA: A Caucasian old-timer told me that he arrived about 1900, and 6 little house and the barn which was built by a Japanese named Miyata and his partner, was here on this property. They had formed a corporation. Anyway, Mr. Miyata planted the vines, and later my father bought it. The Miyatas lived in the barn and later built a new house. However, they were not able to live in the new house even for a day, when we bought the farm and moved into the brand new house.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What happened to the Miyatas?

MR. OKAMURA: They went back to Japan.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You mentioned corporation?

MR. OKAMURA: It was a partnership. There were the two Nakamura brothers and my dad. They called this the Masumiya Land Company. Mr. Masuda and Miyata both from Hiroshima, were the original land owners who had built the barn. Charley Nakamura's place was called O.N. Company--that was Okamura and Nakamura.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they form this corporation in order to buy land?

MR, OKAMURA: Yes, that was the reason.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When your father bought the land from the Masumiya Company, did he buy it as a corporation or under your name?

MR. OKAMURA: It remained Masumiya Land Company for a long time, and in 1937 things were getting pretty bad, so my dad told me to take over, so I have had it from 1937 on. My father retired. In those days, land was about $100 an acre, and we had a little mortgage on it which we eventually paid off. Most Issei used to send money to Japan, and my dad did likewise. Of course, during wartime we lost all the money that was sent. In 1976, we went back to Japan, and though our property is still there, it is no longer under my name. My cousin has it, and the old house is gone.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that your father's land?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your father go back to Japan?

MR. OKAMURA: No, he lived with me and died on January 1, 1975 at 93 years of age. My mother passed away when she was 56 years old, in 1949. Most of the farms around here were owned by Japanese people, but everything has been changed, old vines and trees pushed out and new trees and vines have been put in.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is it mostly vineyards in this area?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, mostly Muscat vineyards. Most Muscat, you know, are bush types as opposed to cordon types.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you mean by cordon types?

MR. OKAMURA: The grapevines which are trained sideways on a trellis.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was in this area before the grapes were planted?

MR. OKAMURA: An old-timer tells me it was planted in grain, wheat, and such. This was the only house around here. He was about 86 years old. He told me that when he just came, he rode around on a bicycle, and all he could see were grain fields. West of 99 there were more cultivated grapes. There were mostly Muscats at that time. You could hardly find Thompson grapes then.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did they do with the Muscats in those days?

MR. OKAMURA: Well, I guess they made raisins. In the late 30's they processed it, took the seeds out for consuming purpose. My vines were planted too close to dry the grapes, so we used to sell them fresh. In 1929, they made juice from the Muscats for the first time. The government paid so much. I think my dad got $750 for the whole crop. That was big
money then.

MRS. HASEGAWA: For how many acres?

MR. OKAMURA: Twenty acres. $750 for 20 acres. He thought that was good. So he called us back from Japan. Since that time they called Muscats juice grape. In those days they couldn't make wine, so it had to be juice. It was still during the dry years. It was called juice, but some people made wine out of it. They weren't supposed to since it was during the prohibition. In 1933, Roosevelt made winemaking legal!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they can this grape juice?

MR. OKAMURA: I don't think so. I really think it was for the purpose of making wine.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I don't think I've ever heard of Muscat juice.

MR. OKAMURA: The old-timers know what Muscat juice is. They call

Muscats juice grape in the Eastern markets even today.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where do you ship this Muscat juice?

MR. OKAMURA: It goes to the Italians. They make their own wine. Most of it goes to Canada. We pick the grapes in 30-pound boxes, shed pack or field pack, either way. I remember that the only time we made raisins during the war was when they couldn't ship the Muscats for juice. That's what my neighbor who took care of my place told me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You said you took over the farm in 1937. What kind of crops did you have then?

MR. OKAMUPA: I had black figs. We pulled the fig trees out in 1939 and started raising vegetables, so I was in truck garden farming for quite a while. We raised squash, fall and spring lettuce.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long did you do that?

MR. OKAMURA: Until evacuation, August 3, 1942. Then we went to camp, came back, and went into the tomato business. Then we started taking out vines and trees and went into more truck farming. There were three acres of Santa Rosa plums that were planted just before evacuation, so that remained. In 1924 my father planted persimmon trees here. They replaced olive and orange trees which had been planted by Mr. Masuda and Mr. Miyata. I still remember Alcantes were here, too, but we pulled those out because the persimmon trees grew so big.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You had trees and grapes planted at the same time?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, it is called interplanting. Old-timers did that. Whatever chance they had, they took advantage of it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Don't they do that anymore?

MR. OKAMURA: They will if you want to change over. Supposing you wanted to change to a certain variety of trees or vines, they interplant and eventually pull out the older vines or trees. In the meantime, until the new plant produces, the old is still bringing in some income. It is common practice now. Mr. Uchiyama did a lot of it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Doesn't it disturb the root system when you pull the old ones out?

MR. OKAMURA: It does in a way, but in the long run they come out ahead.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You have persimmon trees on the west side of your house?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, they are big trees. Another 10 days and we should start picking. The older trees ripen earlier than the young ones. They are the Hachiya, the Fuyu, and Maru varieties. The Maru was originally brought over from Japan by Kitagawa of the Seed Company. I have three Maru persimmon trees. With this variety, the fruit is cinnamon colored on the inside when it is ripe. But the unique thing about it is that only every other year the fruit darkens and is edible. The other years it never ripens. This is called Hiyakume in Japanese. There was a superstition about picking the fruit when the moon is dark to get a

sweet persimmon. But that doesn't work!

MRS. HASEGAWA: So you have three kinds of persimmon trees?

MR. OKAMURA: Persimmons are beginning to become popular now. American soldiers who went to Japan acquired a taste for them, especially the Fuyu, the crunchy kind. They are kind of flat in shape and can be very sweet.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you grow enough to market them?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, a little, but not that much. I advised my boss to plant them, and now he is doing better than I. Now I see that many farmers plant them along the border of their property. The Itos and some Filipino farmer has planted along their border. They could be planted a little closer. The tree doesn't get too big.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many acres do you have?

MR. UKAMURA: About one acre, about 64 trees.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are those great big grapefruit-like citrus that you grow?

MR. OKAMURA: That is the Chinese shaduc. I only have one tree left. It ripens about January or February. They grow to be a good size, at least five inches in diameter. It's shaped like a pear or a gourd.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you recall hearing about the old times when your father first came here to Reedley?

MR. OKAMURA: My dad told me that Mr. Yasui and Mr. Ibara were one of the first Japanese who were here in the beginning. Then Mr. Kitahara came in 1905. Dad came in 1906, and Mr. Wake came a little later. Mr. Wake had a partner who was here before he was. Mr. Omata was here. These people were all neighbors and between them they bought this half-mile section. There were 65 Japanese families in Reedley before the war. It was a small community. Probably about 80 percent of them came back after the war. Some, whose children settled in the East did not return, hut most came back. When we came back from camp, most stayed at the Japanese Hall until they could find a place to live or until their homes were vacated. We came back on May 11, 1945, one of the first to come back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of social activities did you have before the war?

MR. OKAMURA: The Japanese community picnic was the number one social event. They were held up in the hills in a pasture. It was a community affair. The Christians and the Buddhists all came to these picnics. The Japanese schools had their activities which we all attended. If there was a funeral, it didn't matter what religion, so long as you lived in Reedley, you are a member of the Reedley Japanese community and were required to get together to help each other out. We always had, and have resumed, Bonenkai--the end of the year party. We used to have this party in December, but since the fog is so heavy during that month, we now have it in November. It is beginning to be a big affair now, close to 200 people come to it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do the Sansei come, too?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, well mostly Nisei. The ladies prepare all the food; sashimi, teriyaki, sushi, and other traditional New Year's food. We see war brides coming, too. We also invite Nikkei newcomers to the community, those who have celebrated their golden anniversaries, and newlyweds as our guests.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do they still have Japanese movies or plays?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, we have a benefit movie about once a month put on by some organization. This month the Bukkyokai is sponsoring the movie.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where do they obtain the film?

MR. OKAMURA: Matsu Kogio Kaisha brings the films from San Francisco.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were films shown before the war?

MR. OKAMURA: Oh yes. There were two people who used to bring the films. Ban Flarase and another person. There was no admission charge, but we were asked to donate some amount.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to Japanese School?

MR. OKAMURA: No, I didn't need to go since I was educated in Japan, but my kids went. My children, who are in college, tell me that 75 percent of the students in the Japanese classes in college are composed of people of Japanese descent, and a very small percentage of those had attended Japanese schools. My daughter went to CSU Santa Barbara, and our son went to UC.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Getting back to your farm, how did you get out of vegetable farming?

MR. OKAMURA: I planted tomatoes, and in those days they didn't have hybrids, so we had to plant on new ground every year. Now you can plant them in the same place year after year, but in the 50's and early 60's I used to farm in Orange Cove on rented land. In the meantime, I planted vines and plums and became a diversified farmer. Another thing, the labor situation was getting pretty rough. Workers don't like to pick tomatoes. Picking peaches and plums is easier than picking tomatoes, so laborers were hard to get. If I hired them, they were mostly women, and they couldn't lift boxes, so the poor men had to lift boxes all day, so it didn't work out. I was honored as Farmer of the Month in 1954 or around there--there was an article in the newspaper.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why were you so honored?

MR. OKAMURA: I was farming on a large scale at that time. I also served on a committee for the school district when the Community College wanted to build and expand. I was asked to serve on a committee that wanted to preserve this agricultural area. Eventually, the college bought three sections. In the meantime, until the construction at the college, the land was farmed. I was the first one in this area to plant fall tomatoes. Everyone said I couldn't do it, but I did well those first two years. I am no longer in the business, but everyone is doing it now.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you mean by fall tomatoes?

MR. OKAMURA: You harvest the crop at the end of October or in November. In those days they called them barn tomatoes. You put them in storage to ripen.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you decide to do that?

MR. OKAMURA: I knew tomatoes were raised on the coast in cooler weather, and since in October and November we have cool weather, I decided to try it. Once you get a chill at night of under 50 degrees, a tomato cannot survive. The danger was in the frost, but I had all kinds of frost protection.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you plant them?

MR. OKAMURA: In the springtime, in February or March, under the hotcaps. The Earlyanna plants are good until about July, then a new variety, the Pearsons last until September. We plant the Pearsons the first week of July. Now they plant the seeds about the 10th of July, and because we don't disturb the roots, they can stand the summer heat. We also put in young plants. There is a new variety now that can withstand tomato wilt, Fusarium wilt, or better known as cotton wilt. There are wilt resistant seeds now. Tomato is a hardy plant, and as long as they have water they will grow. When squashes were planted on hills for many years, the nitrate salt came to the top of the soil, and when the seeds germinated, the plants burned because of the salt. If you irrigate the furrow and plant the seed in the furrow, they will germinate easier. So that was how we planted tomatoes and squash on a big scale.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that all hand labor?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, but later on we used the tractor and springtooth and covered them that way. So every year we learned something new.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Flow many acres of tomatoes did you have in Orange Cove?

MR. OKAMURA: Twenty acres.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you market your tomatoes?

MR. OKAMURA: There was a market, John D. Martinez and Levy Zentner in Oakland. We also sent them to Los Angeles to Crown Produce, Seventh Street Market, and to H & F Produce, a Japanese firm. I used to try to send quality stuff so wherever we sent our produce they were well accepted.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you send it?

MR. OKAMURA: Before the war, Ray Martin Trucking outfit delivered my produce to Levy Zentner Company in San Francisco and Oakland, but after the war, it was hauled by Kimura Trucking. Later on I found out that selling local was better, so I sold it locally. We sold it to peddlers who acted as middle men much like our packinghouses now. We packed our own produce and sold it. We used to have return belts and other equipment for packing. We no longer pack, except the persimmons which we send to T. Apkarians and Sons Packing and Shipping Company. I have been

a field man for the company for the past 14 years, and do my own farming, too.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you have now on your own farm?

MR. OKAMURA: I have four varieties of plums. Regular Santa Rosas, Nubianas, Black Beauties, and July Santa Rosas, persimmons, some oranges, Thompson seedless, and Calmeria grapes. The Calmeria are better known as ladyfingers and are used in the hospitals since they have less acid.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you hear the news about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

MR. OKAMURA: We were planting lettuce at the time, and I said, "No!" Sam Kunishige brought me the news. I couldn't believe it. I didn't think a small country like Japan would attack the United States! When I was in Japan in the early 30's, Japan was Gunshuku (disarmament) and not interested in developing the military force. It was peaceful then. So I was truly shocked!

MRS. HASEGAWA: What happened to your family after Pearl Harbor was attacked?

MR. OKAMURA: Our lettuce was ready to be harvested that following March, and we couldn't travel west of 99, but fortunately I was able to take the lettuce to Fresno to market it. So I salvaged most of it.

Four men from Reedley were taken to Sharp Park Detention Center in San Francisco in March. From Reedley, the Nakamura brothers, Mr. Katsura, and my dad were arrested by the war authorities in connection with kendo. I wasn't home at the time the FBI came. They took my radio which had the short wave removed, but because my kid brother didn't know that, the radio was confiscated, and I never got my radio back! There was a receipt confirming the removal of short wave stuck in the radio! The people at the police department saw it, but it didn't help me!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was your father taken because of the short wave radio?

MR. OKAMURA: That was part of it, but the other was that he was connected with kendo. He was president of the kendo club, and his two sons were Nidan (second black belt), and one son was Shodan. So he was under suspicion. What happened was that Mitsuru Toyama, a top military consultant in Japan, was listed as sponsor or honorary chief of the Kendo Association. So, although we had no direct relationship with the man in Japan, anyone who was connected with kendo came under suspicion. My father and the other three Reedley men's names were printed up in a booklet as being responsible for forming a kendo club in Central America. And Mitsuru Toyama's name and picture was printed as being some big shot in the organization. That was the reason for their arrest. When I was in camp, I was on the Stop List because of this. I had a good job offered to me in Las Vegas, but I couldn't go because I couldn't leave camp without a hearing.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where were you when your father was taken?

MR. OKAMURA: I was in Fresno at the market. My dad was driving a tractor when they arrested him. He was about 55 years old. He was taken

so suddenly that he didn't even have time to take a shower. We took his clothes to him at the Reedley Police Station later that day.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did they take the men after detention at Sharp Park?

MR. OKAMURA: Some went to Crystal City, Texas. We were united with our father in camp. My wife's father, Mr. Tashiro was taken, too. My father came back to us directly
to the Poston Relocation Center from Sharp Park.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long was it before he returned to the family?

MR. OKAMURA: Let's see. We left here on August 3rd, and he came in three weeks later, so it was the latter part of August.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you were ordered to evacuate, did you leave from Reedley?

MR. OKAMURA: We left from the Reedley train depot. We were the first ones to go. We were shipped to Poston III, in Arizona.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do in camp?

MR. OKAMURA: I was a fire inspector.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

MR. OKAMURA: I have two brothers and one sister who are still living, and two who died in Japan.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you were left in Japan, did your mother come back to the United States?

MR. OKAMURA: We came first, and mother came back a year later. We didn't expect to return to the United States--that was the plan, but things changed so we came back. Mother didn't have too much trouble entering the United States, but she had to stay in Angel Island for about a week, because she hadn't had her visa extended. I went to Japan in 1921, and the rest of the family went in 1923. Dad came back to the United States in 1924. There was a law pending saying that Oriental aliens couldn't return to the United States, so Dad hurried back. He made it just in time. Everyplace you go, one should make up his mind to become a permanent resident. I think I learned that lesson. In Japanese you say, "Never be Chugoshi--in a half-sitting posture"--my dad could not make up his mind. He bought land in Japan and bought this and another place, but he lost the property in Japan and the Pinkerton place both because he was indecisive.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You mentioned earlier that your name had been placed on the Stop List when you were in camp, and that you had to have a hearing before you could be released from the Relocation Center. Please elaborate on that.

MR. OKAMURA: I was on the Stop List, not the Black List. Then I had to have a hearing. They wanted to know if I was loyal to the United States of America or not. Then it took another six weeks until I was cleared.

After that I went to eastern Oregon. I left on May 1st. Fifteen of us worked on a sugar beet farm contract as part of the war effort. We left our families in camp. I was in charge of the other 14 men. We worked there for a year before returning to California. My wife Tomi came to Oregon in September where our son was born. We went back to camp the following year in 1945 to make arrangements and return to California with my parents. My wife and family came back directly from camp, but my brother-in-law Yeiki Tashiro and I went up to Oregon to get my truck before coming back to our farm in Reedley.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was the condition of your farm when you returned?

MR. OKAMURA: I was amazed at how the people lived there! I don't see how they were able to find the house--the weeds had grown tall all around the place. They just never cleaned it. They were some people from Missouri who worked for the packinghouse and worked on the farm. Before we left, we put our belongings upstairs, but when we came back the doors had been opened, and many things had disappeared. We had locked the doors but that didn't prevent the theft! We came back and started over from scratch!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you belong to any organizations?

MR. OKAMURA: I belong to the Buddhist Church and to the Nikkeijinkai.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why did the Buddist and Christian churches split?

MR. OKAMURA: Because the Buddhist Church wanted their own church, and I think the Christian people had their own church at the time. We didn't want to split, but some young people wanted to have their own building. That property was under my name in those days.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is it still under your name?

MR. OKAMURA: No, it has changed. There was a lien against the building at one time, and so I looked into it. There were four person's names on it. I was in Japan about the time the building was purchased, but I guess my dad let them use my name. My father did not like people arguing about whether they were Christians or Buddhist. I don't either. I went to the Christian Church when I returned from Japan. Locally there were many Christians, and I went to their church because I wanted to learn English. I haven't done much for the community, but anytime I am asked I try to do whatever I can for Nikkeijinkai. I was vice-president for a long time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are there any Japanese traditions that you still observe?

MR. OKAMURA: We celebrate New Year's and the various Buddhist religious observances. We used to celebrate Boys' Day and Girls' Day, and we probably will celebrate those days with our grandchildren.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you celebrate?

MR. OKAMURA: New Year's is our biggest time of celebration even today. About one week to 10 days prior to New Year's Day we have the traditional Mochi-tsuki, using the big wooden mallet and regular medium sized poles to pound the rice and make the sweet rice cake. This is one

time of the year everyone comes home from far and near to participate in "Mochi-tsuki." We all take part in it; young, old, and even the little tykes, too. We divide the rice cake "mochi" with each family, and this special mochi is offered on the family altar on New Year's Eve. We also have our "un-soba" for good health. New Year's Day we attend morning services, then from that time on we receive relatives and friends all day long and during the evening to welcome the New Year!

Hina-Matauri is observed in March 3rd, which is Girls' Day. On this day we display on several shelves, which are covered with a red cloth, a whole set of dolls which consists of 15 special "hina dolls." On that special day, the girls have their own little parties and invite their little friends. They play games, enjoy the sweets and food offered to the dolls which were baked and cooked for this special occasion.

May 5th is Tango-no-sekku which is Boys' Day. We usually celebrated that week by displaying a huge cloth or paper carp atop a tall pole in the yard. In the home we displayed warrior dolls, miniature arms, swords, bow and arrow, and banners. This was to express our thanks for the health and growth of our son and to keep out sickness and evil influence. We usually invited all the family to dinner and served a special sweet rice cake wrapped in oak leaves or perhaps orange leaves. Religious observance days were kept by attending service for that special day.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Have you noticed the change in the treatment of the Japanese over the years?

MR. OKAMURA: Now everything is neutral. Some people still have attitudes of racial discrimination, but the younger generation aren't like that. Now they don't say "Jap," they say "Orientals." That's the change. Since Japan has begun to manufacture quality merchandise like the Toyota, Honda, and Kawasakis, the attitudes of the Americans toward the Japanese have changed. Japanese can do as well as the Americans. Long ago when they said "Made in Japan" it was an embarrassment since everything then was of poor quality.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In other words, because Japan produces quality merchandise you feel you are better!

MR. OKAMURA: Once in a while you hear a non-Japanese claiming to have some Japanese blood. Even jokingly, years ago you'd never hear anything like that! They didn't want any part of being related to Japanese!

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's interesting!

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, it's quite a change! Now there's a shopping center near here and lots of new housing where there was nothing but vineyards. There were only two or three houses from Buttonwillow to Columbia. Now look at how many houses there are!

I work with people now and I have learned to work with them. The main thing is to get results. I am a field man and consultant for this fruit grower and shipping company. I do anything from soup to nuts. Summertime there are seven to eight foremen that I have to approach, each in a different way. As field man I have to explain why and how we do things in the agricultural field. You can't just order people around anymore. We must educate each man so he will understand how we raise quality

fruit and how we harvest it. I have to know each procedure of farming before I can teach anyone.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where do the Apkarians ship their fruit?

MR. OKAMURA: All over--Hong Kong, Japan, Europe, South America--everywhere in the United States.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your children's names?

MR. OKAMURA: Dennis and Karen. Our son Dennis is 35 now, and he is an architect working in San Francisco with HKI&T architect firm. His wife Mary is Japanese, and she is employed by the California Judges Association as the administrative assistant. They have two children; Ross, eleven, and Lori, nine. Karen is now 31, employed as a teacher in the special education department with the Los Angeles Unified School District. Her husband Kenneth is Japanese, and he is employed as research analyst with the American Honda Company.

MRS. HASEGAWA: She is a dancer of traditional Japanese dances, isn't she?

MR. OKAMURA: Yes, she and her cousin Darlene performed for a TV program at one time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is there anything else you'd like to add to this interview or anything you'd like to leave for the future generation?

MR. OKAMURA: I feel that you have to know everything yourself, and try to be progressive and to educate yourself! "Shinshu no kisho"--you have to do the best you can. How to get there is something else! In farming you should know about the sellers market, when to thin or not to thin for more or quality fruits, when to expect heavy or light crops. We can tell at the first of the year when it is a light or heavy crop year, so we have to prune or thin accordingly. We look back on the records of the past years to see what the weather pattern is, and we can almost predict how much fruit we will have for the coming year. If you have big-size and quality fruits your revenue will generally be better. So, you see, there are many things that a successful farmer needs to know.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Thank you very much for your time and for this very informative interview.