

DR. GEORGE SUDA

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is May 16, 1980. I, Helen Hasegawa, am privileged to be in the office of Dr. George Suda at 2051 North Fresno Street, Fresno, California.

Before we get into the interview proper, I would like to have you give us your full name, place and date of birth, and your place of longest residence.

DR. SUDA: My name is George Masayuki Suda. I was born in Fresno on February 18, 1916. My longest residence was at 1447 West San Bruno in Fresno. My zip code is 93711.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You said you were born in Fresno. Do you recall what part of Fresno?

DR. SUDA: Yes. I was born on the west side right next door to what formerly was the OK Garage which was right across the street from the Fresno Buddhist Church on "E" Street-- "E" and Kern Street.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What schools did you attend?

DR. SUDA: I went to Lincoln Grammar School, then onto Edison High School for a couple of years (both in West Fresno), then went to Fresno High School to finish the last two years in 1934. I went directly to the UC Berkeley campus and onto the University of San Francisco Campus College of Dentistry to finish my schooling.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you recall some of your early schoolmates, or how you were treated? How you got along with them? Some of your teachers? What was the atmosphere in grammar school and high school?

DR. SUDA: I can't remember much about grammar school, Helen, but I had a very friendly atmosphere at Fresno High School. I can't remember too much at Edison. Fresno High always stands out in my mind because I have several dear friends, Hakujin friends.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you still keep in touch?

DR. SUDA: Oh, yes!

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are their names?

DR. SUDA: One is Superior Court Judge Leonard Meyers, and the other Dudley St. John who used to be my doubles partner in tennis.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I remember that name. His father was professor of English at Fresno State.

DR. SUDA: Yes. We used to get together now and then, but not too much lately. And there are a lot of other good friends, too, but those two stand out in my mind as the fellows I liked to get along with and play with a lot.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You went into dentistry. I believe you are the first Nisei dentist in Fresno! What influenced you in the choice of your profession?

DR. SUDA: I've been asked that many times, Helen. I think one of my teachers at Fresno High School; she was the most helpful one. I guess she liked my printing so much and my interest in basic sciences that she always encouraged me along this line. I think that's how I really got started. She was a mathematics teacher, her name was Ms. Haberman. There's a lot of things I owe her for.

MRS. HASEGAWA: A mathematics teacher! That's interesting. I imagine having to be precise in your thinking and your working. I can see some of those traits in the work that you do.

DR. SUDA: I must also give credit to Dr. Tom Yatabe for introducing me into dentistry. He was a fine person, as you know.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Going back to your schooling, did you go to Edison just two years and then transfer to Fresno High? I know several students who did that. Was Edison only a two-year high school at the time?

DR. SUDA: I'm trying to think, Helen. I believe it was easier for one to get into the University of California. It had something to do with the accreditation ratings. I know they tried to keep us at Edison, but we had to transfer because of that reason.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Can you think of anything else in connection with your schooling? You said Fresno High was a very happy time for you, some of your best friends were there. What about after you went to UC?

DR. SUDA: After I went to UC in Berkeley, because of the short preidental time and the large size of the campus, there was less chance of becoming intimate with fellow students.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Of course, you probably still keep in touch with your dental classmates.

DR. SUDA: Oh, yes. Yes. Since the class at the Dental School was a mere handful compared to thousands at UC, we became well!-acquainted to each other.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see your choice of profession has led you to many wonderful areas as far as living is concerned; opportunities for children, your social life, and so on.

DR. SUDA: Yes, I think I owe dentistry quite a bit as it's given me a very good life.

DR. SUDA: I can see that! You've been one of the very fortunate early Nisei. I notice throughout your office you have lovely photographs of your children, a metal sculpture, and very beautiful paintings. Are these your choice?

DR. SUDA: No, that comes from my wife Sumi. She loves paintings.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, you have something in common, then, don't you?

DR. SUDA: Sort of. In some respects.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, you had already shown an artistic inclination

with your printing and so forth back in high school.

You probably inherited this interest in the arts from your mother Mrs. Ryuko Asada, who was one of the outstanding flower arrangement teachers in Fresno. And, I believe, she also taught tea ceremony.

DR. SUDA: Yes, she taught Japanese language, too, in Fowler for many years. And she also taught reigi saho. That somehow lingers in my mind, because she always used to impress upon me the idea of reigi saho, meaning "courtesy" and Japanese etiquette. She taught this to a lot of the Issei ladies here in Fresno as well as to the Niseis.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Now I recall. There was this great big word. How did you say it again?

DR. SUDA: Reigi saho. And I remember, too, she used to prepare speeches and she used to mention that term all the time she had me listen to her speeches.

MRS. HASEGAWA: She gave her speeches in Japanese? And she talked to you in Japanese also?

DR. SUDA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You said she taught Japanese language school, also. How old were you when she did all of this?

DR. SUDA: Well, I guess she almost had to as I was being sent to college. It was right after high school, so I must have been about 18.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did she teach students in classes or individually?

DR. SUDA: Well, she would have a small group of 2 to 10, like in flower arrangement class, and they always used to come to our home. She had a few private students, too.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did she also teach koto? I know Sumi said you have two kotos in the family that your mother left you; beautiful instruments. Did she play the koto?

DR. SUDA: Oh, she used to dabble at it, but I don't think she ever taught koto. I think that was my aunt Mrs. Tomiko Kuwamoto, but I can't recall her teaching koto.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How old was your mother when she came to America, and where did she come from; what prefecture?

DR. SUDA: Her family Nakatas, were from a place called Asagun, Misasamachi, Hiroshima.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you recall how old she was? Was she a picture bride? Did she get married before she came to America or after she came?

DR. SUDA: My mother was married in Japan when she was about 21 years old. My father Toichi Suda died when I was about 3 years old, so I don't remember him at all. He died in the flu epidemic of 1919.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I vaguely remember everyone having to wear those gauze

masks. It must have been a terrible epidemic. Do you mind telling us about your stepfather?

DR. SUDA: My mother remarried. It must have been 10 years after, I guess. Mr. Asada had come to the United States in 1915 to attend the World's Fair and settled in Fresno. He was working at the Aki Hardware Store. He was a very quiet type of individual. He was very intellectual. In fact, he was a graduate of the Imperial University in Tokyo which is comparable to Harvard in the United States. He was the principal of a Japanese middle school back in Japan, and here in Fresno he was the language school chairman. So, of course, the only father I knew was Mr. Yoichi Asada, and my uncle Zenjiro Suda.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You know, Mr. Asada always impressed me as being such a kind person. I didn't know him, I never talked to him, but I can still see his face. He seemed so gentle and so kind.

Do you recall any especially happy incidents or any adverse incidents while you were growing up or when you went to school that made you feel that just because you were Japanese you were discriminated against? Any racial prejudice? During your high school days or younger?

DR. SUDA: The only prejudice--I guess you might call it that--was at Dental School where one couldn't get into the fraternities. They were not taking Japanese or Orientals at that time. That was back in the 1930's.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, really? That's surprising. I'd heard about the exclusiveness that was true of social organizations, but I thought honor fraternities were above that. Do you recall when they took away that restriction?

DR. SUDA: Yes, possibly 5 or 10 years later. That was after Pearl Harbor, because I graduated in 1939 and Pearl Harbor took place in 1941.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Post-Pearl Harbor saw a lot of changes in the way the Nisei and Sansei are being accepted on their merit. By the way, when did you and Sumi get married?

DR. SUDA: We were married in camp of all places. We were in Gila Relocation Center and the date was October 8, 1944. Sumi had attended the jokkakuen in Hiroshima so she knew the country, the customs, and so forth. In fact, she was able to come back to the United States on the last ship.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was a close call! If she hadn't made the ship you wouldn't have met her!

So you stayed in camp for a couple of years?

DR. SUDA: Yes, we left in 1945. I believe we were one of the first ones to come back here to Fresno.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you came directly to Fresno from camp!

DR. SUDA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was your reaction when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

How did you feel when you actually had to evacuate?

DR. SUDA: I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe that they could do anything like that to us. I was numb when I first heard of it. I was at the movie theatre and, of course, that funny feeling came over you.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they announce it at the theatre?

DR. SUDA: Oh, no. No. I heard it on the radio. I was driving back, and I thought at first it was a hoax. It was just unbelievable!

MRS. HASEGAWA: When evacuation took place, did you go with the Fresno group into the Fairgrounds Assembly Center?

DR. SUDA: No, the Assembly Center here in Pinedale; then on to Gila, Arizona in 1942.

MRS. HASEGAWA: While you were in camp did you sense that you were being really watched all the time or did you feel free? You know, some people talk about the relocation centers as being concentration camps. Did you feel that your liberty was stripped?

DR. SUDA: Yes, Helen. I never thought for one moment that our precious rights to citizenship could be taken away.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you feel going into camp was a good thing?

DR. SUDA: No, Helen, not only from a constitutional standpoint, but psychologically, it was a big mistake. We still have emotional wounds that have not healed over the years. What a shock to the families that had the head of the family whisked away "Gestapo Style," and sent to concentration camps in a matter of hours. I can think of one such camp in New Mexico. Some of the families included an invalid wife with aged parents. No financial support, no means of transportation, no communication, et cetera. They were stricken with fear that left scars all the rest of their lives. And then in the camps when the "Loyalty question" came out, there was another trauma added to all the rest of the injustices. Brothers and sisters were pitted against each other. As you know, Helen, the Loyalty question asks for one's patriotism to the United States. Family members took sides on the issue, pitting one against the other. There were terrible conflicts and confrontations among the family members; the result was in some instance very tragic. Everyone was affected: young ones growing up, not understanding why they were in camp, and why their families were always fighting; older ones, their pride deeply hurt. There were many other psychological incidents that left deep scars, some people endured, many did not, especially the old and the disabled. I sincerely hope that we shall never have such occurrences here in America again.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Tell us more about your feelings on evacuation.

DR. SUDA: No sooner had I started practice in 1939, the war clouds of 1940-1941 culminated in an attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Then the tom-tom of race baiters began to beat the messages of hate, fear, and malicious rumors which led to confusion and gradual demand for governmental and military action. Demand came from those with economic axes to grind and partly from people who were emotionally and badly

frightened. As a result in February and early March of 1942, the crowning blow was struck; the evacuation of all Issei and Nisei from areas of the West Coast including all of California, Oregon, Washington, and segments of Arizona. I remember well the curfew laws when we had to be home between 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. The evacuation means disruption of jobs, businesses, and professions and divisions of families in many cases. This meant drastic adjustment for many thousands of people. Some adjusted, some did not.

I was sent to Pinedale Assembly Center, Fresno along with the advance medical staff. The camp was a mess; nothing was organized at all. It was far from complete; lack of privacy everywhere, incomplete partitions, strangers thrown together in small barracks. We were issued straw mats for beds, only the aged were given regular mats. We had community washrooms and mess halls. It was necessary to line up for our meals; lining up was the pattern of camp life for everything.

I still remember the barbed wire fences around the camp with armed guards and tower guards.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How was your dental facilities?

DR. SUDA: Our medical facilities were meager. I had to finally get permission to Fresno to get my own instruments and supplies. There was not a single dental item provided. We even had to make dental chairs from scrap lumber. No plumbing, no nothing! The FBI escorted me to my office. Once I left the compound, the "outside" looked so wonderful! Even a clump of weeds was a sight for sore eyes. As you know, Helen, there was no "greenery" inside the compound. How beautiful the weeds, flowers, vines, trees looked after a month of confinement. When I visited a variety store, I almost went beserk--I wanted to buy everything in sight! Well, when I finally returned to the compound, I was greeted by a squadron of members of the FBI and the Sheriff's Department and the camp administrator. You see someone saw and reported that there was a "Jap" loose in town. But what a wonderful experience it was for me, even for only a few hours of FREEDOM.

In retrospect, I find myself amazed at our acquiescence to this sudden upheaval of our lives during those critical days. This evacuation was without precedent in United States history. Obviously the government agencies responsible for the execution had no previous experience on which they could rely for guidance. The formation of sound policy and procedure was further complicated by racial prejudice and war hysteria. I think now and I am sure some of the leaders of our people thought during those critical days was that one of the most important tasks was to keep the faith in democracy among our children. Most of us knew no country but America. We had never left these shores and our children would be left without a country, spiritually, unless they could continue to respect the fundamental ideals of democracy, for which the nation stands. Actually, we were going into exile as a duty to our country because the President and the military commanders of the area had decided it a necessity.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do in Gila?

DR. SUDA: Well, in both places, I practiced dentistry.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What were the wages they paid you in camp?

DR. SUDA: I was in the "skilled" category and I was paid \$19 a month. In fact, I still have that first check in my safe. I think it was \$16 at first, then it went up to \$19. Perhaps the \$16 was in the Assembly Center, I can't remember. Anyways, they had two categories; skilled and unskilled.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You had already started your practice here in Fresno before the war broke out? What did you do with all of your equipment and everything? Your office, too, at the time of evacuation?

DR. SUDA: I left it there in the office in West Fresno. Of course, we boarded it up and took a chance that it would still be there when we got back. Fortunately, nothing was touched. Unlike some other people who had lost practically all their belongings and life savings, I was lucky. When I got back, I had everything intact.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, that was fortunate! Did you have anyone looking over your property, checking on it?

DR. SUDA: I suppose Mr. Sakamoto, he was the landlord, he had someone checking it once in a while. But I was very amazed that everything was there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about your home?

DR. SUDA: My home? Well, my folks were renting a place, so when we got back, we had to buy the one my mother was living in.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did your mother do with all the furniture and everything; her flower arranging equipment?

DR. SUDA: You know, that kind of strikes me. What did she do with it? I'm sure she must have stored it someplace. Oh, yes, the furniture was stored at the office, 941 "E" Street.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Those were hectic days, weren't they?

DR. SUDA: They sure were!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Very traumatic. Well, things are much better now. Back to your marriage. You said you met Sumi in camp. Where was she from?

DR. SUDA: She was born in Los Angeles, and I met her when she was working as a receptionist in the hospital. We got married and had a honeymoon in Poston Relocation Center! We went from Gila to Poston. In fact, I was lucky enough to get to Phoenix, Arizona for a few days' honeymoon. Then, off to Poston Relocation Center.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I suppose you had fun meeting some of your old friends? There were many from Fresno area there.

DR. SUDA: Yes, I had a very good friend Perry Matsuura there, and was he surprised!

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long were you there?

DR. SUDA: A couple of days.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And back to Gila?

DR. SUDA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You had said that you came back to Fresno from Gila in 1945.

DR. SUDA: In 1945, after they started relocating the evacuees from the center, as I told you, we were one of the first ones to come back to the West Coast.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was the reception like here?

DR. SUDA: Well, the reception was very nice, Helen, surprisingly. We had many Chinese friends and some Hakujiin friends that wanted me to start practicing right away. But we did stay in Selma for about six months. I was commuting from Selma simply because I didn't know whether we could really get going. I wanted to size up the situation and we had a place with Mr. George Takeuchi of Selma. They were kind enough to let us stay there. And I can still remember the rocks thrown in the middle of the night. We used to live under a tin roof, and it sounded horrible when the rocks started to come down; that was an experience!

MRS. HASEGAWA: There were people in Selma who were trying to show their displeasure?

DR. SUDA: Right. And talk about discrimination! It was one of the first times I ever ran into it. Going into the pharmacy we were told, "Japs, go away!" That was one of my first encounters that I could remember. It wasn't a very friendly atmosphere. Then, when we did find a place in Fresno, we used to sleep with a shotgun at our bedside. There was some shooting going on around here in Fresno.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many were back in Fresno then?

DR. SUDA: There were just a few: Dr. Yabuno, Mr. Tom Inouye, Mr. Tom Okawara, and Mr. Sakamoto.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You were brave to come back so early! I've always been interested--Sumi was a Christian. Was her family of Christian background?

DR. SUDA: Yes, she was quite a religious gal. Her family was members of the Japanese Union Church in Los Angeles. It's a wonder how she accepted our faith.

MRS. HASEGAWA: She has made a beautiful life out of it. I had heard that she went to a missionary-funded girls' school in Japan.

DR. SUDA: Yes. A high school in Hiroshima, Hiroshima Jogakuen, which was founded in 1890 by a Miss Gaines, a Methodist Missionary. Her family went back to Japan a few years before the war because her mother, being an only child, wanted to return to take care of her mother.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. And the fact that your family is a strong member of the Buddhist Church, how did they accept her? Had they ever expressed their desire that you find someone of the same faith?

DR. SUDA: The parents were strong Buddhists, not so much myself. I don't think religion ever was that much of a factor.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, that's good. She is so lovely, and what with her education and training in Japan, they couldn't help but accept her! I heard that she came back to the States on the last ship before Pearl Harbor. That was close! Please tell me about the rest of your family. I believe you have three children?

DR. SUDA: Yes. Diane was born in 1949. She's 31 now. Arlene was born a year and a half later in 1950. Then Steven, our only son, came in 1957

MRS. HASEGAWA: All of your children have attended the University of California, right?

DR. SUDA: Yes. UCLA for Diane. Arlene went to Fresno State, then onto Berkeley Campus to finish her training. And Steven is finishing his education at UC Berkeley.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you like to tell us what your children are doing. Are they married? And did they marry Japanese or Caucasian?

DR. SUDA: Diane married a Caucasian --Kirby Perkins. He's a very fine man. After graduating from UCLA, Diane went to work for the National Endowment for the Arts for a number of years. Then a couple of years ago she decided to go back to school. When she told me I said, "What?" because I could not understand why she would give up the nice job she had. So when I asked her why she wanted to go back to school, she told me she wanted to take up dentistry. I was very surprised, so I said, "Wait a minute! Let's talk this over," so we talked to the dean, and he was very much for it. So now she's entered Harvard and she'll be there another four years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: She was an art major, was she not? Was it history of art or was it the actual painting and all?

DR. SUDA: She majored in fine arts and while her husband attended graduate school in television journalism at Boston University, Diane applied for a job with the National Endowment for the Arts as dance tour chairman, and continued in this capacity for five years in California.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did she meet her husband?

DR. SUDA: They were both students at UCLA. They got married before she graduated. Her marriage to Kirby raised a few eyebrows since she was the first at our church to marry outside of her race.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And Arlene?

DR. SUDA: At the moment Arlene is teaching at an East Bay Area high school.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What is she teaching?

DR. SUDA: She's teaching French and Spanish languages. She went to France to study for a year, then two years ago she studied in Spain for

two months. Last summer she went to Guatemala to learn more Spanish, so she got credit for two languages. She was in the San Francisco community orchestra. We are pleased that her interest in music is strong. She is a member of a quartet and plays the violin. The group often plays at weddings and bar mitzvahs.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Isn't that wonderful! These young people are so liberated. Going back to Diane, when she decided that she was going into dentistry, that meant that her husband had to change his job, too, didn't it?

DR. SUDA: Yes. He was working as a TV news producer in Oakland. The Oakland executives referred him to people in Boston, so there was no problem getting a job there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How fortunate! I suppose there's nothing like prejudice or even experiencing any prejudice for this generation.

DR. SUDA: I don't think they know too much about the meaning of prejudice. Not the way we experienced it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, we felt so intimidated when it came to looking for jobs. I know quite a number of girls who had considered going into teaching, but some of the teachers came right out and said, "There's no use for you to get a teaching credential because you won't be able to get a job." There's nothing like that any more.

DR. SUDA: No, in fact, they are encouraging them to become teachers in all phases of education. And, well, in the way of life, mainstream of life, they are well accepted.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Yes, it's really a turnabout. Your son is going to be graduating from the University. What is he going to become?

DR. SUDA: Well, he's in a different line from my field. He wants to pursue interests in international economics. He must have been influenced when he took that world voyage on that University Campus Afloat ship. And he was very much impressed by some of the international professors they had on that ship. He is very much in this line of international this and that, especially concerning Japan.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It will be very interesting to watch how his interest will develop. Maybe you'll have a diplomat in your family!

Did your mother ever get to Japan while she was bringing you up and sending you to school?

DR. SUDA: Not while I was in school, but in the 50's, the first time. Then she had a trip again sometime in the 70's.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, that's wonderful! And you have been there, I recall hearing.

DR. SUDA: I've been there twice in the last 10 years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was your impression when you first went?

DR. SUDA: Oh, I thought it was very modern and very busy. Very up-to-date and clean.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you feel? Did you feel any kinship with these people?

DR. SUDA: Yes. I was thinking about our safety after hours. You know how we hesitate to even go outside our own home in our country today. But I felt as safe as I could be in the middle of the night or in a real dark alley. I felt like it was the safest ground in the world. That was the one thing I'll always remember, because you hear so many stories of people getting attacked in America. Despite the drunkards and funny-looking weirdos on the street, I never felt frightened at all while I was visiting in Japan.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you have any relatives there?

DR. SUDA: Oh, yes. Yes. We have plenty of relatives. We visited my uncle's place in Japan and my cousin's place was right nearby, so we stayed there most of the time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was this in Tokyo?

DR. SUDA: No, this was in Hiroshima. I own a piece of land in Hiroshima, so we stayed in that territory.

This wasn't the first time I had met some of my relatives. A few had come several times from Japan for visits, so we were not strangers.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In the 1950's your civilian life was disrupted, as I recall. How many years were you in the service?

DR. SUDA: I was in the service for two years, 1954 to 1955.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did it happen that you served your Army years so late?

DR. SUDA: They started drafting all the professional men, and somehow it interrupted my practice twice; evacuation once, then the service took two or three years out of my practice.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you were in the service, you probably didn't experience any prejudice of any kind.

DR. SUDA: No. I had a very congenial group of men. They were not career type of officers. They were in the same boat I was, so we got along pretty nicely.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where were you stationed?

DR. SUDA: I served at Ft. Lewis in Tacoma, Washington.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Have you noticed changes in the treatment of the Japanese people, as a whole?

DR. SUDA: I think people are more tolerant. The trend is pretty nice since the war. The "gaman" trait of Japanese is paying off.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your profession has given you entries into a wider social life, hasn't it? Into the mainsteam of the Caucasian world?

DR. SUDA: Yes. We were able to get into organizations that led us into a more acceptable social life.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you care to tell us about some of the organizations you belong to?

DR. SUDA: I belong to the East Fresno Rotary Club. It's a very small group, very congenial, a very friendly group. Most of our social life is centered among these members. We are also charter members of San Joaquin Country Club.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do some of these members do as their professions, or line of work?

DR. SUDA: Oh, in Rotary, we pick one member from each type of profession so we have all kinds of classifications. Actually, there is more than one. They can put in a new sub-classification and somehow get a member in.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How do they do that?

DR. SUDA: If you are specializing in a certain field; for instance, in dentistry, there could be room for two or three more because of specialty in his field.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's a service organization, isn't it?

DR. SUDA: Right. Well the Rotary Playground in Roeding Park is one of the good projects here in Fresno. We have fund drives for some equipment for the hospitals, for instance, and many other worthy projects like that. But the main thing is fellowship, local and international.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to any of the conventions?

DR. SUDA: Yes, I went to three, Helen. One in Japan, one in Hawaii, and one in San Francisco.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did people come from all over the world? How large are these conventions?

DR. SUDA: Well, in Hawaii we had about 4,000 delegates from Japan alone! Must be 20, 30 thousand.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How active are you in JAACL?

DR. SUDA: Not so active now, I'm afraid. Somehow we let the younger group take over. I was chapter president in 1951.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to Japanese school?

DR. SUDA: Just say I went through the motion. I guess I went several years but somehow our athletic program would take priority and we would go in for just one-half hour towards the end of each day. I'm sorry to say now that I didn't take advantage of that schooling.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I think a lot of us regret that. And another thing I regret is not having listened to my mother tell of all her experiences

as she was growing up, and conditions surrounding her life in Japan, and about her relatives. I guess there are others who feel the same way.

DR. SUDA: Yes. How right you are!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you still observe some Japanese customs in your family like birthdays, weddings?

DR. SUDA: Yes. I believe we observe our 60th birthdays. That seems to be a traditional Japanese custom where one wears a red cap, is it? When my mother was 80 years old, we gave her a big party. Although traditionally it is given at 88, we had an early celebration.

There must be others. Maybe we're breaking down a bit. For instance, New Year's Day used to be quite a festive time for Issei people. They had three, four days of partying. We still have some Japanese "gochiso." I know when our kids come home they all look forward to eating some kind of Japanese food. So Sumi usually cooks a little bit ozoni, kuromame, nishime, traditional New Year's dishes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's interesting how so many of the Sansei enjoy Japanese food.

DR. SUDA: Oh, they certainly do!

MRS. HASEGAWA: What would you say is a Japanese influence on the weddings?

DR. SUDA: The only thing I could think of is the baishakunin practice-- would that be?

MRS. HASEGAWA: Possible. Did you get a baishakunin? You met Sumi in camp, but on top of that get, symbolically, a baishakunin?

DR. SUDA: Yes, right. Of course being in a concentrated Japanese community we did have Mr. and Mrs. Ito of Fresno. They are deceased now, but they acted as our go-between. And I understand that there's still this traditional practice in this day and age, even among the Sanseis with Niseis acting as a baishakunin. Very rare, but I do hear of it once in a while.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, I don't understand why the Sansei would need that.

DR. SUDA: I think as a go-betweener just to introduce the two people together for the first time, or to help finalize the plans.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Now, what did Mr. and Mrs. Ito have to do in your case? You were in a small place like camp, and I can't see much in the way of preparation. You had already met, you knew each other.

DR. SUDA: Well, maybe in name only, but I'm sure they looked into some of the backgrounds first; that's the usual Japanese custom I'm told. Sumi's family background was investigated through the Red Cross!

MRS. HASEGAWA: When your daughters got married, did you have go-betweens, baishakunins?

DR. SUDA: No.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you look into the family history and all that?

DR. SUDA: Well, in the case of Diane being married to a Caucasian, that's pretty hard to -

MRS. HASEGAWA: Be nosy, right? He seems like a fine person.

DR. SUDA: Oh, Kirby? Oh, yes, he's the gem of the ocean. He's really a good man. Kirby's father died early, but his mother, I felt, just generated warmth and love. Wanted to be part of the family, and we're real happy about that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, that makes it nice.

DR. SUDA: I think it was just a little bit different with Kirby at first. At that time there were not too many intermarriages, and, of course, we were a little disappointed that Diane didn't pick another Japanese then. But, nowadays, mixed marriages are almost accepted without too much question. So Kirby might have felt a little wall there at first. You see, we kind of wanted to stall it off there at first. We met with them, asked them to wait until they finished school, but it seemed like they had their minds made up.

MRS. HASEGAWA: There isn't much you can do these days with young people. They have minds of their own.

DR. SUDA: Now along that line of Japanese wedding ritual. My mother used to make little cranes out of mizuhiki, very ornate. She sculpted turtles, pine trees, bamboo, plum blossoms, all symbolic of long life and happiness.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Silver, red -- ?

DR. SUDA: Red, gold, and all colors. That was place on Diane's cake. Of course we rarely see that nowadays except at a very Japanese type of marriage. I remember that because she spent several weeks on it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It must have been very beautiful.

DR. SUDA: Yes, it was very nice.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, yes, that's supposed to be, as they say, omedetai?

DR. SUDA: Yes, happiness, long life, et cetera.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I was very much interested at Diane's wedding. Kirby had to listen to the service in Japanese, right? Pronounced by the Buddhist priest? And I thought he carried the ojuzu.

DR. SUDA: Right.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did that mean he accepted Buddhism? People sometimes change their religion when they get married to someone of a different faith.

DR. SUDA: I don't think so. That's not true in Kirby's case. We

wouldn't expect him to do that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What social and economic changes have you seen in your local community, over the years?

DR. SUDA: This is after World War II, I gather.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Yes, comparing before the war and after the war.

DR. SUDA: Well, we're integrating very nicely over the years. We hardly ever got together with hakujin groups socially. But now days it's just like being part of their family.

Economically, I guess everything has been upgraded. Practically every home has two cars now, and nice homes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Another thing that has occurred is the desegregation, you might say. Remember before the war there was a concentration of Japanese in Fresno, but now most of them are scattered.

DR. SUDA: Scattered all over; hardly any on the West Side.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you know of any instance where the Nisei or Sansei have tried to get into the North Fresno area and had any difficulty as far as real estate people have been concerned?

DR. SUDA: I might have heard that many years ago, but during the last 10 years I've heard none. I know the area we moved into before we built our home there, it was unheard of for any Orientals to get into the areas north of Shaw Avenue. And surely I thought we might get some opposition. But I was in the service then so Sumi took over. And she didn't have one bit of trouble. But prior to that time when I first got out of school, there were many restricted areas.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about opening your practice away from the West Side? And among your patients, what would you say is the percentage of Japanese and Caucasian people? I ran into Mrs. Goldberg last time I came in, and I have talked to other people who are non-Japanese who have had you over all the years.

DR. SUDA: Yes, I think our practice now is mostly Caucasian, about 95 percent. Of course when we were on the West Side, it was a different story. I believe I made the switch around 1958 when things were getting a little bit rough on the West Side. Of course, by that time, I had a fairly good number of Caucasian patients so it was a problem having them come from the other part of town. Some of them hesitated to come over, I know, for later afternoon appointments. There were drunks and loiterers. Probably not very pleasant for them. Even with the police nearby (there was a little police station right off from my office), they still hesitated to come over.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I should say. How did you get so many Caucasians, so early? Good word spreads!

DR. SUDA: I suppose.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Even when you were on the West Side--to have built up that kind of professional following.

DR. SUDA: Yes, I was fortunate. I still have some of those patients I treated when I first got out of school.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That speaks well for you.

DR. SUDA: I was lucky.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It can't be just luck. You have a sister Chisako. She's living where?

DR. SUDA: In Madison, Wisconsin. She's married to a professor of engineering at the University of Wisconsin, and they have three children. One of them is married to a physician and the other two are graduated from college. One is a law student at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Their son Kenny is working at some electronic school.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I imagine they are thoroughly Americanized.

DR. SUDA: Yes, too much so. In fact, when my mother was alive, they wanted Kenny sent over to the West Coast to meet some Japanese girls; it is a problem of meeting Japanese eligibles.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, whether it's eligible or not, just from the standpoint of having a few Japanese friends would give them a different outlook in general. They probably have some there in Wisconsin, don't they?

DR. SUDA: Yes, I'm sure they do. I'm sure there must be Japanese war brides, so there must be some Japanese atmosphere somewhere along the line. But for a generation of college students, I'm sure Chisako would like to have some college club or Japanese-culture group to meet once in a while.

You know, my boy hardly ever associated with Japanese, but now in his last year of college, he started taking Japanese language. He wants to study in Japan for a couple of years. He's always dwelling into religion, of all things. He wants to know more about Buddhism, life, and Japanese culture. So we're very happy about that. It's a trend in the right direction, don't you think?

MRS. HASEGAWA: Yes. They are beginning to wonder about their roots. What does Chisako do with her time out there? Is she in faculty wives, things like that?

DR. SUDA: Yes, she used to be quite active in faculty wives and related associations. But she has been suffering from a severe case of arthritis, so has had to curtail her activities.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Coming back to your mother, did she ever teach flower arranging to Hakuajins?

DR. SUDA: Yes. She had one lady. I think she's gone by now, but maybe you know her, Mrs. Cockrill.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, yes.

DR. SUDA: Yes, she used to come over by herself to the West Side week

after week and Mrs. Weiner was another student.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Mrs. Cockrill was the person with whom my mother lived when she first came to Fresno.

DR. SUDA: Oh, I think so. I know she often mentioned your mother.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I had forgotten that Mrs. Cockrill studied flower arranging. Did your mother speak English?

DR. SUDA: In a very limited way. She somehow got through to them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Isn't that amazing? Through the arts, through the eyes, and spirit somehow they managed to communicate. And then she also put on many demonstrations, didn't she, for various groups?

DR. SUDA: I remember when I was in Berkeley, she wrote saying that she had one of the first flower arrangement exhibits in Central California, and it seemed like that was in the 30's. She used to tell me how long she spent teaching and getting ready for that big occasion.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Isn't that wonderful? She's one of the very few at that time who did so much in the way of Japanese cultural arts, I would say. That's really remarkable. Did she write to you in Japanese?

DR. SUDA: Oh, yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you had to study quite a bit in order to be able to read Japanese.

DR. SUDA: In order for me to ask for "tuition" money, I had to write back in Japanese! That was the only way I was able to communicate with her. So, I had some sort of a form letter composed by a Kibei friend that I sent home each month. One time I had him compose a very touching Dear Mom letter, and when she read that she said she cried. But she knew it was composed by someone else.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How often did you write to each other?

DR. SUDA: Whenever I needed money.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, your Japanese really got a good work-out, didn't it? I think that's delightful.

Well, I think on this very touching note I'll close with a big thank you for your time and for sharing so much of your family.

DR. SUDA: The pleasure was all mine, Helen.