

WILLIAM HIROSHI WAKE

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is August 27, 1980, and I, Yoshino Hasegawa, am privileged to interview William Hiroshi Wake at the Fresno County Library at 2420 Mariposa Street, Fresno.

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. And your present address.

MR. WAKE: I'm William Hiroshi Wake, and the date of birth is January 5, 1912. The place of longest residence would be my present address which is in Dinuba, 42410 Road 80, Dinuba, California. I was born in Reedley so I haven't moved very far.

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

MR. WAKE: They came from Okayama-Ken and my father came to Fresno and worked as a clothing salesman--I don't know just what year. They moved out to Reedley, I believe around 1910. I was born in 1912 in Reedley, so they were already there. I think that year, 1910, came up several times in some discussions we had a while back when we were talking about Reedley old-timers. He wasn't one of the first families out there in Reedley, but probably because he worked in Fresno. He worked as a clothing salesman for Radin and Kamp Department Store. They built the J.C. Penneys' Building on Fulton. Before that they were across the street and down a little way on Fulton, but he worked for them way way back in the early 1900's. Either that, or before that, he had learned enough English to get by and he was able to sell. I guess he sold mostly to Nihonjis.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your mother come with your father from Japan?

MR. WAKE: No. I'm sure she didn't. I don't really know history that far back. My sisters know more about it than I did.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then your father went out to Reedley from Fresno?

MR. WAKE: Yes. He may have had some friends in Reedley, or my sisters thought he may have located there because of Radin and Kamp--that he was able to locate something out there. Anyway, he was saving his money and he didn't want to work for someone else and wanted to strike out for himself, so that's where he ended up.

MRS. HASEGAWA: He bought a ranch out there?

MR. WAKE: Yes, a 40-acre ranch.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did he have on that place?

MR. WAKE: All grapes. And we had a border of fig trees, and a quarter section there was all Japanese. There was the Nakamuras to the west of us and northwest of us were the Kitaharas and Nakamuras on the south.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is that where the Okamuras live now?

MR. WAKE: Yes, and where Charlie Nakamura lives is the old Nakamura place homestead.

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

MR. WAKE: Well, I guess I was one of the older Niseis around there, and it seems like all the other families, their children were younger. And then the older children in the families around us were sent back to Japan. They were raised in Japan, except for the Kitahara family. They were all raised here.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that for economic reasons?

MR. WAKE: It might have been. It must have been. Can't see any other reason. So, my childhood friends, other than Nihonjin, were Armenian and hakujin friends I used to run around with. Even in school days, we started out with very few Nihonjins there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What school did you go to?

MR. WAKE: Lincoln Grammar School in Reedley. We walked in, and when we were able to ride bicycles, we rode those in, but most of the time when we were young we walked in. Two and a half miles, that wasn't too far. There were others who lived farther out who walked in too, so there was always a group of people walking in to school.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was it like, the area around there, the people, the way the Japanese were treated in school?

MR. WAKE: When I started out I couldn't speak any English, and I had quite a time becoming accustomed to English, but after I broke the ice, so to speak, my sisters and most of the kids learned enough English before they went to school to be able to get along.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were you the oldest?

MR. WAKE: Yes, I'm the oldest.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to Japanese School?

MR. WAKE: Yes, once a week, on Saturdays, we went to Japanese School. Folks thought that somehow I should "bridge" the gap between Japan and America--and knowledge of Japanese was important. My father had always tried to impress upon me when I was young that I should try to better myself. If I would be satisfied just "beating the horses behinds" (we used horses and mules a lot on the farms then) all my life, then I could go out and play with my hakujin friends. If not, I should buckle down and study Japanese as well as English. It was go to Japanese School or work, so a lot of us just ended up at Japanese School. Our folks thought it'd be a good thing if we learned Japanese, and we went there because we thought we wouldn't have to work! However, it wasn't a total loss. We must have picked up something, though--we must have learned a little Japanese.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you recall any kind of discrimination as a child going to Japanese school?

MR. WAKE: No, not because we were attending Japanese school, but merely because we were Japanese-Americans. Little incidents, but I guess

I was fortunate enough to have three or four American friends who I associated with through the upper grades of grammar school and high school and even Junior College. Oh, I had some incidents of discrimination --like Reedley had a swimming pool that was supported by the American Legion. They built it and they supported it, and there was a question of my being able to swim there. I must have been about a freshman or sophomore in high school, and my friends went to bat for me and I was allowed to swim there. Really, I didn't have any of those nasty incidents. You run into those little ones that you sort of forget about; name-calling, little things that happen when you are kids-- choosing up sides, for instance.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your experiences during your Reedley Junior College years--what changes do you see in junior college from the time you attended to the present?

MR. WAKE: When I was attending there, (I graduated high school in 1930) we were still having college classes in the high school buildings with the high school students, so in a way we didn't feel like we were really going to college. It was a very small college, must have been a student body of 200 or so. Here again, all my friends were hakujins, there were other Niseis there then. We had a basketball team; I don't recall any football team though. There was a league formed already, and I remember we used to take trips with the basketball team.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How do you feel about the recent change in the name of the college?

MR. WAKE: I don't live in Reedley, and I don't care one way or another. I think it's a tempest in a teapot. A rose by any other name smells just as sweet. I can't see any difference.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was your major in Junior College? What was your ambition?

MR. WAKE: To graduate with Associate of Arts, and to go on to a University. At that time I don't think I knew what my major would be in anything. But I had a science professor who was from the University of Washington, and I guess in his college days, he had friends who were architects or were in architectural courses. He would tell me how those friends would study and what a good time they had together, and what a close knit group they were as students. It sort of appealed to me, and then he thought I might have some possibilities there, so that's what he recommended. I soon found out I didn't have what it took, but I stuck it out at U.C. and graduated from the architectural school.

MRS. HASEGAWA: But you did pursue that later on didn't you?

MR. WAKE: Oh yes. In the late '38, I believe it was, I started to work for Taylor and Wheeler. They were homebuilders, here in Fresno.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are there some houses here that you have helped to construct?

MR. WAKE: Yes, out there in the Fig Garden District, mainly. They had an architect as an employee and I worked under him. I got the job in a roundabout way. We had to have a furnace installed in our house, and the contractor was from Fresno. He said, "What? You are an architectural

graduate and not even drafting or anything?" I said, "No, I couldn't find a job." Jobs were hard to come by at the time. They only picked the top students to fill vacancies and I wasn't in that category. It was a little hard for me to get jobs.

So I came back home and was working at home. That's how he happened to find me and he said, "I know of a place where you can find work, I'm sure, because they're looking for some draftsman." He mentioned Taylor and Wheeler and it happened to be a firm he had done work for. He knew both Mr. Taylor and Mr. Wheeler, so I went in there for an interview and got the job. I was with them for about three years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you feel that race had anything to do with you not getting a job?

MR. WAKE: Oh yes, I remember when I was still in Berkeley, stories get around among us who were looking for jobs, and I believe it was the Forest Service that had some openings, even though it was more seasonal (summertime). They were designing and constructing buildings in the parks. Their main office was in San Francisco for that area, so I phoned there and this fellow says, "Yes, we have a job, but some Japanese came in. But we're saving it for our people."

MRS. HASEGAWA: He told you this on the phone?

MR. WAKE: Oh yes. He didn't know I was Japanese. I'm sure he wouldn't have said it to my face. We lived in the Student Club in Berkeley, and my roommate was a very good--top student in his class, (he was a year younger) and he was able to find a job. In those days, you know, you had to work summers. You had to start out when you were maybe a sophomore or junior and most of them worked for nothing, or for very little--just for the experience. That way, by the time they were able to graduate, they had a place where they could go to. I couldn't do that. I came home summers and worked on the ranch. My roommate went to Japan for a while after he graduated. Even though he could have had a job here, he thought maybe the possibilities were better in Japan, so he worked there, for a Japanese firm for a while. His Japanese was good enough that he could. Living in San Francisco and attending Japanese School everyday made a difference. So he worked there for a while and didn't like it so he came back and he was able to find a job. But mainly because he had the ability and because he was a top student.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you apply any other places besides that?

MR. WAKE: Oh yes. I went around and applied, in Fresno too, but the jobs weren't too plentiful. And of course you had to have experience.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I suppose it was much harder for a Japanese to find jobs anyway.

MR. WAKE: I think so because I know some of them who graduated who were very capable. I know one particular case, Aiji Endo, from Los Angeles. He was working in the market before he graduated, then I understand he went back to the market because he couldn't find any jobs.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you worked as a civilian in the office of the Quarter Master Corps in Fort Ringgold, Rio Grande City, Texas. When was this?

MR. WAKE: It was around 1940. They were beginning to draft people and my number was coming up. If you had a job in the defense area, you were deferred. My number was coming up so I made several applications through civil service and that's how I landed that job. They needed somebody up in there. I had never heard of Fort Ringgold or Rio Grande City and I didn't have any idea where it was or what it was like. It was on the border. Right on the Rio Grande River about 100 miles up from the Gulf of Mexico. It was an old Cavalry post on the border and there were a small number of soldiers there-- enlisted people, and I got in there as a civilian in the Quarter Master Corps.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That took the place of your serving in the army. What did you do there?

MR. WAKE: Oh, I was in the Construction and Maintenance Department and kept records of all the buildings and supplies, issued work orders, et cetera, on the fort there. I lived right on the post in civilian quarters. Rio Grande City was a Mexican town even though it was on the American side of the river. All the businesses were run by Mexican people. from banks on down. I was quite amused by the banker's remark when I asked why there weren't any Caucasian-American businessmen in the town. "Because, if they were allowed in town, they soon would take over the whole town."

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long were you there?

MR. WAKE: I was there a year, until the war broke out, so it wasn't too long.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your memories of December 7, 1941?

MR. WAKE: If I remember right that was on a Sunday, and I had gone out to hunt "whitewings" with several American friends down there doing the same kind of work, when we came back and they said, "Hey! Japan has attacked Pearl Harbor!" and that's the first I'd heard of it. Then they didn't know what to do with me, and finally they said, "Well, we're going to have to let you go. We hate to lose you, but that's the way it is," so they just terminated my employment right then and there.

Oh, I was there several days afterwards--they didn't know what to do with me, I stayed in town there with a civilian friend, a fellow who worked right next to me and he was very good to me--he and his wife both. I stayed there for a better part of a week then I decided I'd better get home so I drove back home. On my way home, I remember, it was the first time I was stopped for a border check somewhere in Texas. They didn't know what to do with me--the Border Patrol people. They said, "You're a Japanese-American and because of that we better hold you here until we find out what to do." And they radioed in and I sat there for several hours. Meanwhile people who were being checked were mostly Mexicans who couldn't even speak English, but they were allowed to go through while I sat there fuming away.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You were on the Mexican side?

MR. WAKE: No, the American side, but the people who traveled there--a lot of them were Mexicans. I don't remember where that border check was--whether it was on the Texas state line, or where. But I do remember

sitting there about three hours. They finally decided I was harmless and they let me go on. From there on I wasn't bothered. I was able to come right on home.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you had to buy gasoline, did you have any problems?

MR. WAKE: No, I didn't.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you got home, then, what was it like here? Were you in Dinuba?

MR. WAKE: The folks had moved from Reedley to Dinuba in '36 and when I came back to Dinuba from Texas I helped out on the ranch. My father had several ranches then--in fact, he had more acreage than I've got now! He had a partner, so between the two of them, they had several ranches. There was always plenty of work to do on the ranch, and I believe it was in the following spring when Japanese living in the coastal zones had to move inland or go to Assembly Centers. My older sisters were married. One sister was in Sacramento and the other in San Francisco, and of course when they had to move out of those areas, they came with their husbands to Dinuba, so we had a houseful of people. All of us worked different places, for different people, too. In packinghouses, and I remember picking oranges out towards Exeter way. But eventually we had to move out. The older sister's husband was in the Oriental Antique Art Goods business with his father. They had a lot of stock that they had to do something with. And they didn't want to store it in San Francisco, so they stored it at our home. We had something like 21 big steel cabinets full of antique art goods, there, stored on the place--a veritable storehouse of Antique Oriental Art Goods!

MRS. HASEGAWA: What happened to all of it?

MR. WAKE: When they came back they set up their store again--we moved them all back up there again.

MRS. HASEGAWA: But it was safe?

MR. WAKE: Oh yes, it was safe, and that was because we had some good people to take care of our ranches. We had some Mennonite people who were very good people. They were missionary minded in the early days and they would--well, because my father was one of the few Christians in the area, they became acquainted with my father, who could speak English better than the others. They said why not have Sunday School. They started a Sunday School right there in Reedley Hall. From that connection, we were able to get two men who were very reliable. They may not have been the best of farmers, but they were trustworthy and took good care of our property.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. You were very fortunate. When you had to evacuate then where did you leave from?

MR. WAKE: We left from Reedley on a train. Being that we were among the last evacuees, we had more time to prepare for evacuation. J.A.C.L. organization helped with this evacuation.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your memories of your trip to Poston?

MR. WAKE: Well, as I remember it--most people in Reedley were very nice. They gave us a nice send-off from the station there. I remember pulling into Visalia probably to pick up some Visalia people, then from there on I think it was straight through to Blythe--was it Blythe? We were let off in Parker. Buses came from Poston and picked us up and took us the 10 or 15 miles into camp. I remember we started out on the train in the afternoon and rode all night. It was the next afternoon when we got into Parker. Of course we had to have the shades drawn, the MP's, that sort of thing on the train.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your family have little children?

MR. WAKE: No, no babes in arms. The youngest was my sister Betty who was just starting high school. We all went together, the whole family. In fact, my sister had her in-laws in Reedley, too. They came into Reedley to live so all of us left from Reedley. It was a big group.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do in camp?

MR. WAKE: Well, we were in Camp Three. There were three camps in Poston and I was in Camp Three, the last camp. I thought I might as well go to work in the drafting department somewhere because I had that experience in construction and drafting, so I applied. There was nothing in Camp Two or Three but they said there was an architectural department in Camp One. So then I moved to Camp One, and being single, that wasn't much of a problem--just moved over there and started to work in the Architectural Department. There was an architect by the name of Charles Popkin there, and by the time I got there they had already started work--I guess it was the sketching and design stage, of the Poston schools so then I got in on that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they make the schools out of adobe?

MR. WAKE: Popkin believed in using native materials so the Construction Department started in on adobe brick project, so that was one of the things we had going there in conjunction with the work in the Architectural Department.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long did it take to build a school?

MR. WAKE: Oh, it took the better part of a year, I guess. All of that. And that was actual construction. The brick making was started quite a while before that. Soon after they moved into camp, I guess.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I just wondered if it was constructed in time before the camps were closed.

MR. WAKE: Oh yes. Most of it was up before the camps were closed. The schools were being used.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What else did you build there?

MR. WAKE: Well, that was about it. That took most of our time. I think all the millwork--window frames, doors, all that came out of Los Angeles, from some mill in Los Angeles. I remember they trucked them into camp and we had to go over there and check out all the millwork that came in.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many schools did you build?

MR. WAKE: One in each camp.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many students were there in those schools?

MR. WAKE: Gosh, I have no idea. There must have been plenty of students because in Camp One there were, let's see, 10,000-- in the three camps there were supposed to be something like 20,000 people, so there must have been plenty of students.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then after camp you--

MR. WAKE: Went to Washington, D.C., and that was through Civil Service but I ended up in the W.R.A.--War Relocation Authority, at the head office in Washington, D.C.

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

MR. WAKE: Engineering--architectural engineering.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that just for the camps?

MR. WAKE: Yes, we had an office that was in charge of all the construction and the maintenance of all the camps, so we had all the different camp records and the architectural drawings of any construction that was done at the camps, in Washington. That was the headquarters.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you go there?

MR. WAKE: 1943, or '44--so we were there about two years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then when the war ended was it closed down?

MR. WAKE: Yes, eventually it was closed down. I left W.R.A. headquarters before it was closed. I went to work with an architectural firm of Faulkner and Kingsbury, Washington, D.C. We worked on the plans for the George Washington University Hospital--a six-story \$4,000,000 hospital building. In December of '45, the people who were running ranches for us wanted to get out and I said, "Well we have to have someone here on the ranch to oversee everything," so I had to come back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What about your parents?

MR. WAKE: I lost my father in camp, so there were my mother and six sisters and one brother left, (two married sisters). And my brother and one sister attending school in Kentucky, (Asbury Seminary).

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they stay there, after the family came back to Dinuba?

MR. WAKE: They graduated from Asbury.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was it after you were all back?

MR. WAKE: Yes. But they came back to Dinuba.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they get into church work then?

MR. WAKE: My brother did. He went to Seminary in Berkeley-- Baptist Seminary in Berkeley. Then he became a minister at the Pine Methodist Church in San Francisco. My sister went into nurses training and worked in Selma and Dinuba before she got married, and they moved up to San Jose.

MRS. HASEGAWA: So you came back to farm.

MR. WAKE: Yes. My brother probably would have made better farmer, but he was in another type of work so I had to get down and become a farmer. I did a little drafting on the side, but I found out it didn't work too well, so--I still had my father's partner on one of the ranches. We were together until 1955--Mr. Tanaka, (he was truly one of the old-timers there) went back to Japan, he and his wife. He passed away, but I think Mrs. Tanaka is still living.

MRS. HASEGAWA: So when you came back your house was in good shape. Was your family back from camp?

MR. WAKE: Most of them had moved out to Cleveland so by the time I came back no one was in camp. I think in mid-'46 they moved back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you came back in '45 what kind of reception did you get from the community?

MR. WAKE: Well, I didn't expose myself too much, but I didn't think the reception was too bad. We'd heard all these terrible stories about how some of these people were received back in '45, but by the time I got back, things had settled down. Tulare County wasn't as bad as Fresno County. Fresno County prosecuted people for breaking the Alien Land Law--the Kitaharas went through that and there were several others who were on the docket, but I don't think there were any cases in Tulare County.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your property was in your name then?

MR. WAKE: Oh yes. Either my name or my sisters or my brother.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In your farming operations what kinds of crops do you raise on your 100-acres?

MR. WAKE: Before we evacuated we had mostly grapes. Then my father became interested in trees and we planted a few acres of trees in Dinuba. We did in Reedley, too, but we didn't have such good success there. On one ranch we planted some trees there and it was a low-lying area and we had too much water. By the time I got back some of the older vineyards were in pretty bad shape so I started to replant and got interested in deciduous tree fruits and gradually worked everything over into tree fruits, and now I don't have any vineyards.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of tree fruits do you have?

MR. WAKE: Mostly peaches. A few acres of plums and a few acres of nectarines, but mostly peaches. And we planted them so we could take care of everything ourselves. We raise it, we pack it, but we have them sold for us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How do you do that?

MR. WAKE: I used to go strictly "local" which meant going to either the Los Angeles market or the San Francisco market. I was in the Los Angeles market and I was with a firm called Cal-Vita run by the Koike brothers--George Koike and Henry Koike. About five years ago they decided they were going to call it quits. They had had enough of that and they were getting on in years. The stress was too much for them so they decided to get out of it and they recommended a packer in Reedley, Jim Ito, whose fruit they had handled at different times, so now Jim Ito does my selling.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did he sell it on commission?

MR. WAKE: Yes, commission. He charges so much a package for selling, and so much for handling, pre-cooling, and storing, et cetera.

MRS. HASEGAWA: By the time you pay all that out, you don't get too much back, do you?

MR. WAKE: It's still better than having a packinghouse pack for you.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, you pack it yourselves!

MR. WAKE: Oh yes. We have a little packing operation on our ranch and it's packed and trucked into the Ito packing shed where he sells it for us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It has it go through the cooling process?

MR. WAKE: Yes, and if the market is slow, he puts it in storage. He had good facilities there. Ito goes all over. He has markets all over the United States plus foreign countries. He has a good all-around market. That's the reason I went with him. If it looks like it's better on the local level, he'll go into Los Angeles area because he has good connections there. And he can go anywhere in the United States--just wherever he can sell the fruit.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do Minamis do the same thing?

MR. WAKE: Yes, except that they don't go local at all. I don't think they have a local outlet. They may have but they don't depend on it too much.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are some of the kinds of peaches and nectarines that you have?

MR. WAKE: We have mostly Yellow-Fleshed Freestones. They're all called Freestones, but early in the year they are really semi-free because they cling to the pit until they are fully ripened, then they are free. But as the season progresses, they become more and more free. My peaches are all Freestones. My nectarines--I have two varieties, the Independence, which come out the later part of June or the first part of July. I did have some Fantasias which comes out a little bit later. But last year the nectarine market wasn't too good so I grafted over my Fantasia. If I had kept it till this year I would have done good, but that's farming!

MRS. HASEGAWA: How do you feel that the fruit industry has changed since you first began?

MR. WAKE: Well, it's done on a bigger scale for one thing, the volume is much greater. We would never have dreamed in years past, when I first started, of handling the volume we now handle, because there weren't as many trees planted at that time. And people weren't fresh fruit minded either. I think there's lots more stress on fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, and that's in our favor!

MRS. HASEGAWA: I should say! What do you see in the future for deciduous fruit marketing?

MR. WAKE: As good as our market is now, we may reach a saturation point where we can't handle all the fruit that we can raise. Some seasons it's already at that stage--there's too much for the market to absorb.

MRS. HASEGAWA: But isn't California the only state that raises nectarines?

MR. WAKE: Well, I wouldn't say that because there are other areas that can raise nectarines but not the way they can raise peaches. They don't seem to be able to raise nectarines everywhere that they can raise peaches. I believe they could raise nectarines in Arizona and maybe some of the other states. Peaches they can raise anywhere.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you tell us a little bit about your family. You talked about your sisters and brothers. You had six sisters?

MR. WAKE: Yes, six sisters. I'm the oldest. The next Edna, May, Alice, and then Lloyd, so I had three sisters after me, then my brother, then two sisters younger than my brother.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you ever get together?

MR. WAKE: Oh yes. Our whole clan gets together every once in a while. My mother had an 88th birthday celebration several years ago and at that time she had 29 grandchildren. She passed away last year.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You have two children, did you say?

MR. WAKE: No, we have four. They are all grown. The oldest was a girl, Carolyn. She and her husband live in Fountain Valley. That is in Southern California near Costa Mesa. He is with McDonald-Douglas. He is a physicist. He graduated from Stanford and went to Durham, North Carolina to Duke University and got his Doctorate in Physics there. Then he came back and got a job in McDonald-Douglas organization in Southern California. My daughter works for Air-California. She went to San Jose State and graduated in Home Economics I believe, designing--well, in fabrics and things like that. She never did get into that too much. About the closest she got was working for Gottschalks in Visalia. Then she was married.

Then I have three boys. The next boy Ronald is in Walnut Creek. He's a dentist. Ronald graduated U.C. and went to work with another dentist in Walnut Creek. He's a Chinese doctor, and I guess he still has an office with a Japanese doctor in San Francisco, but I think he intends to

terminate that. He lives in Concord and is married. Second son is Jerry. He took up Optometry and is working in Gardena and Los Angeles, with Dr. Koyama, an optometrist there. He is intending to get married in a couple of months.

MRS. HASEGAWA: The other son then was your third child?

MR. WAKE: Yes, he is the third son, and my youngest. Eugene graduated U.C. last year as an optometrist and he was married last year about this time and they are living in the Freemont area now. Eugene works in San Jose, and his wife, also an optometrist, works closer to home somewhere. She was able just recently to get in with Montgomery Ward. They have an Optometry Department and she is in charge of that Department. Eugene is in with a Chinese Optometrist and they have an office that caters mostly to union people.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You didn't tell me about your wife. How did you meet your wife?

MR. WAKE: Oh I met her in camp. She happened to be in Camp One and came out of Los Angeles. She was born in Seattle and they moved to Boyle Height area in Los Angeles and she went to high school there. And then she taught in a church school, I believe it was Baptist City Mission Society, in Los Angeles. She was teaching a pre-school class at the time the war broke out. She ended up in Camp One and we met through church. She was the choir director and I was in the choir and became interested in her. So we were married in camp in '43.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Now the organizations that you belong to--you belong to Farm Bureau, the Nisei Farmers' League, Federal Land Bank of Visalia, Rotary Club of Dinuba, and involved with Japanese Methodist Church.

MR. WAKE: Well, Farm Bureau, I'm just a member of the Farm Bureau Organization mainly because I have insurance with them, I guess. But I thought it was a good organization when it started, even before they had this insurance program. I'm not actively engaged in any of their activities, really. Nisei Farmers' League, we got in on that because of the Cesar Chavez fracas they had several years ago.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you like to tell us something about how the Nisei Farmers' League got started, and some of the incidents that happened?

MR. WAKE: Well Nisei Farmers' League got started because of the picketing activities of Cesar Chavez' group. They used to go around and picket farmers when they were harvesting and a group of farmers got together, and most of them were Japanese Americans. They would go around and mostly give moral support because they couldn't do anything otherwise. Sometimes they actually helped to harvest the crops. Finally we decided we had to have some kind of an organization to counter the union picketing activities, and so we had meetings. We finally organized, and Harry Kubo was our first president and he still is.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why were they picketing?

MR. WAKE: They thought by picketing and intimidating the workers and the farmers too, they would be able to unionize the workers.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did the pickers not want to join the union?

MR. WAKE: Well, I don't think they wanted to be bothered at all. Most of them are Mexican people and they don't believe in paying out dues, and things like that. And they wanted to be left alone so they could work.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then Chavez' group was not really fighting the Nisei, they were just trying to get the Mexican people to unionize. Is that the idea?

MR. WAKE: I think so. Chavez wanted to unionize the workers, and picketing was one way he had of doing it.

Unlike other labor unions, they started in working on the working people, instead of the employer. Finally, I believe, they did recognize the Japanese-Americans were quite a factor in farming, and they sort of stood in the way of their unionization. They took it out on us too. They would vandalize farmer's equipment--turn on pumps, slash tires, and all that sort of thing. And on many of the ranches, on one side of the road there would be a line of pickets, on the other side would be a line of farmers. When the pickets got tired of picketing one ranch they'd go to another, and the farmers would follow them. We had quite a thing going for a while.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long did that last?

MR. WAKE: Well, it lasted several years. Until they finally realized there were too many farms and farmers in this area. They couldn't concentrate on any one. By that time we were pretty well organized so that we knew where the pickets were, where they were going, and we always managed to have a group of farmers there opposing the pickets, seeing to it that they were able to go through the picket line with the fruit that they had harvested. They would attempt to block the workers coming in and we had to make sure the workers were able to come in unmolested and we had to make sure that our produce was able to be trucked out. So that was quite an organization that we got going and it's still going. In the meanwhile, so much legislation unfavorable to agriculture and farmers has been pouring out of the state government that the N.F.L. began to see the importance of a concerted political action effort. Now there is a great deal of effort put out by the N.F.L. members in that direction. Now even though it's called Nisei Farmers' League, 60-percent are non-Nisei.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your father and mother began the Methodist Church in Reedley.

MR. WAKE: Reedley never did have a Japanese Methodist Church before the evacuation. It was after the evacuation--after we came back, that we finally formed a church. My folks weren't active in that. Some people in Reedley, Minamis, Kitaharas, Yanos, I think finally realized that we should have a church so we got started.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you belong to the Reedley Church or Dinuba?

MR. WAKE: The Reedley Church. I live in Dinuba, but since living in Reedley years ago, I've always kept my ties there, and the Reedley people always considered me as a Reedleyite.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are you involved with any of the Dinuba civic organizations?

MR. WAKE: Just the Dinuba Rotary Club. I've been a member there for about 18 or 19 years I guess.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why did you choose to join the Rotary Club?

MR. WAKE: Well, I was asked to join the Lions Club, and at that time I was still going to Reedley Toastmasters Club and it met the same night the Lions Club met and I said I can't give up my Toastmasters Club, so then I put them off, then somebody approached me about Rotary, and Rotary meets at noon. I thought that was a good organization. I remembered that Ben Yamaguchi was a Rotarian (before evacuation) and I had met some of the Rotarians through him so I joined. My wife belongs to the Dinuba Women's Club, the Hospital Auxiliary and used to be active in the P.T.A. organization.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you belong to the JAACL?

MR. WAKE: Oh yes, I belong to JAACL, but just as a member. I'm not too involved. I was the president of Reedley Chapter at one time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What social and economic changes have you seen throughout your life in your community? Japanese community, let's say.

MR. WAKE: Dinuba really doesn't have a Japanese community as such. They have a group that is Buddhist and they have a group that is Christian. The Christians, most of them, live out of Dinuba, in the Oroshi area. The Buddhist group doesn't work too closely with other organizations in Dinuba except some of their members being members of different groups like the Lions. I don't believe there are any Buddhist Kiwanians.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many Japanese businesses are there in Dinuba?

MR. WAKE: I can't remember any of them. No, there isn't any Japanese business. There used to be quite a few but there are none there now. Oh yes, one. Bud Nakashima is still there. Nakashima's Grocery. He has a little grocery store there. There used to be grocery stores--Ben Yamaguchi had his restaurant, but it's Chinese now. I take that back, the drugstore in Dinuba is Japanese--third generation.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is this a family business?

MR. WAKE: No. But it is one of Eddie Nagata's boys. And there's a Gary Nino. The two of them are together I believe. And the Nagata boy has a pharmacy in Cutler. There is also a Nisei dentist in Dinuba--Dr. Kazuo Arima, and an optometrist, Dr. Saburo Okamura.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are your children all married to Japanese?

MR. WAKE: Yes, yes they are.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you see as the future for the Japanese?

MR. WAKE: Well, I think there will be more and more inter-marriages and they'll meld into the melting pot, that's for sure. And they are being accepted, I believe, into the mainstream of American living.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you observe any Japanese customs?

MR. WAKE: No, not particularly. Having lived away from the older folks since we were married--we haven't had any Isseis living with us. My mother would come back once in a while and live. So we don't have any contact with too many Japanese observances.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your mother live with your sister then?

MR. WAKE: She lived in San Francisco with my oldest sister. And then my sister lost her husband so the two lived together for a number of years. Now my mother passed away so my sister is all by herself, in a big house.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you say your sister worked?

MR. WAKE: Yes, she worked with her husband in the Oriental Antique object store but now her second son is running it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's an old store then, isn't it?

MR. WAKE: Oh it's been there a long time--they started out on Grant Street then after they came back they opened up a store on Sutter. Now they are on Fillmore Street.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What is the name of the store?

MR. WAKE: Tozo Shiota.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is there anything else that you would like to add to this interview?

MR. WAKE: Well, we didn't dwell very long on Federal Land Bank except to mention the name, but I've been a director there for about 15 years. I don't know how I got to be a director except that one of the directors who was with the Federal Land Bank Association in Visalia was from Dinuba when he passed away it left an opening and the other directors were looking around for someone from the Dinuba area. How they got my name I don't know. I was a member of the Association because I had a loan with them, but somehow my name came up and the president of the board came down on several occasions and tried to encourage me to become a director. I said I didn't know anything about land, banks or "Landbanks". "Well," he said, "This bank is a little different. And you don't have to know too much about banks. We're interested in you because you're from this area and you should know the farmers in this area and that's the reason we are interested in getting you to become one of the directors." So I became a director.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your duties?

MR. WAKE: As a director, mainly to oversee the operation of the Federal Land Bank Association of Visalia. The Association has a personnel capable of appraising and making out all the loan papers and everything else connected with it. All we do is just review their loan

applications and approve. This is a Co-op so it has to be approved by some member of the Co-op, and as directors and members of the Co-op, and we do this. We meet once a month, we used to meet twice a month and we'd have a list of loan applications that we'd review, and approve.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you have to be familiar with the people in your area.

MR. WAKE: Yes, familiar with the people, and familiar with agriculture of the area. It's been a very interesting experience meeting farmers in situations that are different than my area. All kinds of things--field crops, walnuts.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you think there is an advantage in getting a loan from a Federal Land Bank rather than a regular bank?

MR. WAKE: They were one of the early pioneers in this long-term loans. When Land Bank started way back there in 1917, commercial banks were very reluctant to loan farmers any money. Maybe short-term loans just to see them through the harvest, and even then they weren't too interested in it. I remember when my father had to have money he went to a friend who was running a store on Grant Avenue in San Francisco. He never knew he could go to a Land Bank. He couldn't get a sufficient loan from the bank in Reedley, then finally he became a Land Bank borrower.

The Federal Land Bank got its name because it was Federal-- it was established under the Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916. They were capitalized by the Federal Government, but in 1947, they repaid the government "seed money". They've parted company and they are no longer dependent upon the government except they come under their regulations. But we go into the bond market just like anybody else, to get money to loan to the farmers.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you invest your money other than loaning it to farmers?

MR. WAKE: We get it specifically for loaning out to farming purposes. Our area is headquartered in Sacramento. There are some 30 or so associations--32 or 33--such as Visalia, Fresno, Madera, in the Sacramento area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many directors are there in each bank?

MR. WAKE: Well, it differs, but generally around five, three to five. Some have more. There are a few associations that are together with the PCA's, (Production Credit Association), which is part of the Farm Credit System. (The Farm Credit System consists of three banks: 1, Federal Land Bank; 2, Intermediate Credit Bank, [PCA]; 3, Bank for Co-ops.) PCA's are in the production end, and supposedly they are not in long-term loans. But in their business, they've gone into longer and longer terms. Land Bank is strictly a long-term loan business, as long as 30 or 40 year loans. Of course their land is collateral.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is the interest comparable to other banks?

MR. WAKE: Less. The only thing is you have to buy stock in the organization and then become a borrower. The interest rate is variable. If the interest rate is high, then they

pay higher interest rates, then when it comes down, theirs comes down again. It isn't one set interest rate.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you get paid for being a director?

MR. WAKE: Yes, per diem. I didn't know that either when I became one, but that is a new experience being a director. I was, at one time, a director in California Fresh Peach Advisory Board. We weren't paid then. So I was used to serving without pay as a director.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you feel has been the advantage of being a director other than meeting people?

MR. WAKE: Well, I think you get to know the overall agriculture picture of the area--not just one area or one particular thing--the whole area. Our borrowers have everything from livestock--all kinds of livestock--field crops, cotton, sugar beets, plus -

MRS. HASEGAWA: As long as you have land, you can borrow from Land Bank, is that the idea?

MR. WAKE: Yes. And you have to be--well, at least a part-time farmer. Get a greater part of your income from farming. We have a lot of borrowers who farm and then work at other things, too. But we try to keep it for the farmers alone, because it is getting to be more and more of a chore to go into the bond market to get money. We go right into the bond market with the United States Government, to get the money to finance our activities.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I don't understand the bond market.

MR. WAKE: Well, you have to get the money from somewhere, you know, you can't get it from the government. The government does the same thing. They go into the bond market and issue bonds, and there are people and organizations and nations that buy these bonds. They expect to get so much interest from these purchases and these bonds are for various lengths of time, short-term bonds and long-term bonds. Long-term, they go for five years, and short-term for maybe six months, one or two years. And people buy these. And because the Farm Credit Systems Bonds have such a good reputation, there's always someone that is a ready buyer for these bonds. Then we, in turn, take this money and loan it out, and then with the interest we get back from these loans, pay the purchasers of these bonds when these bonds mature. The United States Government does the same thing.

Our fiscal agent in New York goes out, and when he floats a bond it is in millions and millions of dollars, so it isn't for the individual buyers--like getting government T-Bonds and so forth. It's on a little different level. It would be like a wholesale market in other businesses. It's a wholesale bond market.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who would be buyers? Would it be companies that buy them?

MR. WAKE: Companies, financial organizations, insurance companies, and even other countries. I'm not too familiar with that end of the activities of Land Bank but that's all a part of it. It's been quite an experience to go to all these conventions every year. In our Sacramento

Bank District, there would be five or so delegates from each Association plus maybe the manager or assistant manager would go, so we would have quite a group. Plus their wives. So it's been quite an interesting series of conventions we've had.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are there any Japanese directors?

MR. WAKE: There are some, not too many, but there are some. Merced to Modesto area, Red Bluff, and several from the Hawaiian Islands.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is there anything else?

MR. WAKE: No, I guess not. I've been more fortunate in a way that I haven't associated too much with the other Nisei though I really enjoy being with them. I've had hakujin friends so even though I am a rancher I haven't had to depend on Japanese people or organizations for even my social activities. So, in a way, I'm in the mainstream, more or less, more than a lot of the other Niseis. I don't know whether that's good or bad-- there are advantages and disadvantages.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, this is America.

MR. WAKE: There was at one time a big stress, especially after the war, about integrating, and all that, but now they've gone more or less into "getting-back-to-our-roots".

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, I suppose there are lots of good things in the Japanese culture that we should not forget, but we are becoming real Americans now.

MR. WAKE: Our acceptance is a lot better. I can see the change in my life. The third generation doesn't experience nearly what we went through in finding jobs. And it'll probably get better. But it's nice to have the Japanese ties. You always feel more comfortable with other like people.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you really feel more comfortable with Japanese?

MR. WAKE: I think so, even though we are used to the Caucasian group.

I know Mary feels very comfortable in Caucasian groups, because she has been among them a lot, and I'm not uncomfortable. I just feel like I have to look up at people. When I go to these conventions I have to look up at tall people--but when I get in my group everyone is the same height--that is very noticeable and I'm more comfortable.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Thank you so very much for this interview, Bill.