

HIDEICHI AND MASAKO YAMANE

MR. UCHIYAMA: Today is August 30, 1980. I, Mikio Uchiyama, am privileged to interview Hideichi Yamane of 504 North Sixth Street, Fowler, California, 93625.

Before we get into the interview proper, would you tell us your full name, your place and date of birth, and your place of longest residence?

MR. YAMANE: My name is Hideichi Yamane. I was born in Tottori-Ken, Kurayoshi-shi, Endai, Japan on March 11, 1895. My father's name was Matsutaro, and my mother's name was Sen. I was the oldest son, and I have three other brothers.

MR. UCHIYAMA: You are 85 years old! When did you come to America?

MR. YAMANE: I came in 1914.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Where did you come?

MR. YAMANE: I came to Los Angeles.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Do you remember when your father first came here?

MRS. YAMANE: He came approximately five years before, and he worked as a farm laborer. He was 19 years old.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Where did he go to school?

MRS. YAMANE: He graduated from Agriculture College in 1913.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Did Hideichi-san come by himself or did he come with his brothers?

MRS. YAMANE: He came alone and joined his father in Los Angeles.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Was he in Los Angeles for a long time?

MRS. YAMANE: Not too long.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Did he come directly to Fowler?

MRS. YAMANE: No, he purchased a 40-acre farm in Bowles in 1919, and he was one of the first Japanese to buy land in this area. In 1938, during the Depression, the land was lost for lack of income. The raisins sold for \$15 or \$30 a ton! The land was stony and sandy, and we had a very bad time. So, after we lost the farm, we went to Los Angeles where the younger brothers lived.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Mrs. Yamane, what is your name and when did you come to the United States?

MRS. YAMANE: I came in 1922 to Bowles; and my name is Masako.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Were you married in Japan?

MRS. YAMANE: Yes. I was married in Japan. My husband came to get me.

MR. UCHIYAMA: How many children do you have?

MRS. YAMANE: I have five children. The oldest is Kinuko, and she was born in 1923; then Sumiko in 1925. Kenichi was born in 1929 and Eiji in 1933; and then Hideo in 1936.

MR. UCHIYAMA: You farmed until about 1938?

MRS. YAMANE: Yes, until we lost our ranch. Along with farming, we shipped fruits that we produced to the Los Angeles market.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Were your husband's brothers living in the Los Angeles area at the time?

MRS. YAMANE: Yes. They had lived here earlier, but farming was so bad that they moved to Los Angeles.

MR. UCHIYAMA: What were their names?

MRS. YAMANE: The brother next to my husband was named Toraji, and the next one is Mitsuzo. Toraji had a fruit stand and Mitsuzo taught in a Japanese language school and also attended college. After Mitsuzo married, he worked in his brother's fruit stand for a while before he opened his own store.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Did your husband take his fruit to his brother's fruit stand?

MRS. YAMANE: Yes. After we gave up the ranch, our family moved to Fowler to this place in 1938 and lived here until the war began in 1941.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Did you go to a Relocation Center during the war?

MR. YAMANE: We went to Gila with your father. We did not go to an assembly center, but went directly to Gila Relocation Center about August 1942. We all left together from Fowler.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Did you experience any racial discrimination before the war?

MR. YAMANE: No, only after we returned from camp. Before we left, there was no prejudice that I was directly aware of.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Who looked after your home while you were gone?

MR. YAMANE: We left our home with a neighbor who was a grammar school teacher. She did not have to pay rent, but we trusted her to take care of our home.

MR. UCHIYAMA: When you returned, how did you find your home?

MR. YAMANE: It was a mess. Before we left for camp we had a good relationship with our tenant, but during the war the feelings had changed, and we found many things amiss.

MR. UCHIYAMA: How was the attitude toward Japanese changed over the years?

MRS. YAMANE: When we returned from camp, the prejudice was very bad, and I felt sorry for my children. But prejudice became less with time.

MR. UCHIYAMA: What organizations did Mr. Yamane belong to?

MRS. YAMANE: He belonged to the Tottori Kenjinkai and the Buddhist Church, and the Nipponjinkai. We belonged to the Fresno Buddhist Church before we joined the Fowler one.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Have you been back to Japan?

MRS. YAMANE: We went back two or three times after the war.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Are all your children married?

MRS. YAMANE: All but my second, a son, are married.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Do your children live nearby?

MRS. YAMANE: The boys all live in Los Angeles, and the girls in the Fresno area.

MR. UCHIYAMA: What is Mr. Yamane's hobby?

MRS. YAMANE: He likes fishing.

MR. UCHIYAMA: What was his job?

MRS. YAMANE: He was a crew boss for the Hall Packing Company after the war until 1970, when he retired.

MR. UCHIYAMA: How many Japanese families lived in this area when he first came here in 1938?

MR. YAMANE: I think there must have been 130 families. There were many Japanese stores when I came here. There was the Kamikawa Store and two other stores; a Kondosan and a Iwamotosan. I think Mr. Iwamoto replaced Mr. Kondo.

MR. UCHIYAMA: What does your husband do now?

MRS. YAMANE: He wasn't very old, but he had to retire because his circulation was poor, and he would have frequent dizzy spells. It was dangerous for him to work, so he retired on Social Security.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Do the brothers still live in Los Angeles?

MRS. YAMANE: After the war, the second one settled in Cleveland, Ohio. The other is working in Lone Star.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Do you remember when the Fowler Buddhist Church began?

MR. YAMANE: The church was already built in 1938 when we arrived.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Did Mr. Yamane go to Japan after the war?

MRS. YAMANE: He went back to Japan for a year but decided to come back to be near his children. He became ill about 1940. He had cancer of the stomach. He doesn't leave the house much.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Are his brothers still living? Your husband was the oldest, wasn't he?

MR. YAMANE: Yes.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Were there many Japanese when you came?

MRS. YAMANE: There were the families of the Nakatas, Nishimotos, Arakawa, Ninomiya, Shinkawa, Kumagai, and some others. These were people who bought property around Fowler. There were two families of Ninomiyas. There were about 10 families in 1919. We were about the last ones to come. The others bought their property before World War I, but we bought just at the end of the war, so the Depression made it bad for us. My husband had some peaches to dry and some Vines, and about 10 acres of Muscats. Papa planted Thompsons; some of the land was so poor that the plants did not grow. There was also a big pond. It was sandy soil, so it was not farmable. We had mostly peaches.

MR. UCHIYAMA: Thank you for this interview, Mr. and Mrs. Yamane.