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Guadalupe Speaks Oral History Project

Title: An Interview with Alice Maxon

Interview with: Alice Yoshko Shimizu Maxon Guadalupe resident

Interviewed by: Lucia Stone, Cal Poly Student
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Edited by: Janet Crabaugh

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About the Guadalupe Speaks Project

Guadalupe Speaks is an oral history project that is part of California Stories, a multiyear initiative designed to strengthen communities and connect Californians by uncovering personal and community stories that help document multicultural communities in present day California. California Stories is funded by the California Council for the Humanities.

In 2003, the Guadalupe Speaks project began recording and transcribing oral histories of the residents of Guadalupe. The stories reflect the history and culture of the town, capturing the residents' impressions of their community. The stories represent the multicultural backgrounds of the residents including Swiss-Italian, Portuguese, Filipino, Chumash, Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese ancestry.

Situated approximately ten miles west of Santa Maria on historic Highway 1 on the border of Santa Barbara & San Luis Obispo counties, the City of Guadalupe was founded in 1843 as one of the earliest communities on the Central Coast. In 2003, the city has a population of 5,700, mixed with long-time and native residents, recent retirees from outside the county, and a large Latino population.

Guadalupe was once the principal agricultural center of northern Santa Barbara County, at one time providing one-third of all lettuce grown in California. Although it is still primarily an agricultural community, the crops have changed to include broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and other vegetables. However, Guadalupe is no longer the central distribution point for the area, and communities such as Santa Maria have surpassed it in growth by almost 2,000 percent. Guadalupe has remained at a standstill, much as it was 50 years ago, while the rest of the Central Coast has grown at an astounding pace.

Today, Guadalupe is a town poised between its past and its future. In 2003, the inaugural year of the Guadalupe Speaks project the small town is on the cusp of modernization and large-scale development. Through the Guadalupe Speaks project, the community will be able to document its history and unique, multicultural way of life.

Using the Guadalupe Speaks Oral Histories

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Guadalupe Speaks – Oral History Project

Interviewee: Alice Yoshko Shimizu Maxon

Interviewer: Lucia Stone

Date: August 01, 2003

Location: Guadalupe Buddhist Church

Stone: State your name and where and when you were born.

Maxon: I was born Alice Shimizu. I was born in Santa Maria but my folks lived here in Guadalupe.

Stone: Describe your childhood home.

Maxon: Wooden, they were all wooden, you know. At that time they were new but if you look around right now in Guadalupe they're on the used, worn side. At that time it was home, nice, family.

Stone: Describe the inside. What was inside your house when you walked in?

Maxon: I can't remember. No TV.

Stone: Describe what your childhood room was like. Bedroom.

Maxon: It was a little add-on. Just had a bed and a few pictures. We used to go to the theater, walk-in theater, no TV, so I had pictures of all the actors and actresses. My favorite ones. That's what mostly what it was.

Stone: What was your neighborhood like in those days?

Maxon: [On] Guadalupe Street there was not that many sidewalks and the house was behind Villa's Auto Body Shop. The house was behind that.

Stone: What was your family life like growing up?

Maxon: My father worked and my mom stayed home. His father lived with us because he's the oldest son, and the oldest son takes care of the parents. That's the custom.

Stone: What would you do as leisure activities as a family? Like on the weekends.

Maxon: We'd go to the beach and go fishing in the mountains. Go camping. My father was in a rifle club and he would go out and do his thing. Mom would stay home. She did all the housework and stuff. My brothers and I would help around the place.

Stone: What type of responsibilities did you have as a child?

Maxon: My father was pretty good about teaching me how to use the saw and hammer. I used to go out and help my brothers fix places up. I did plumbing and all that.

Stone: Were those your chores? Or did you have any chores? Did your brothers have any chores?

Maxon: Not that I remember.

Stone: So your mom did most of the housework?

Maxon: Yes. She wouldn't let me cook because it was faster for her to do it by herself. I learned how to cook after I got married the first time.

Stone: Were there separate expectations of boys versus girls with chores or responsibilities?

Maxon: I don't think so. My father wanted boys [laughs] and I guess he didn't talk to my mom about that and I turned out to be a girl. He treated me like my brothers.

Stone: Were you kind of a tomboy?

Maxon: Yes. [Laughs]

Stone: What holidays or events did your family celebrate?

Maxon: Church celebrations. The Obon. I think this grounds me: when we belong to it, I belong to it. I'm still here, so it must have done something for me.

Stone: Did you celebrate holidays or events with your neighbors?

Maxon: Church members also. When I was in Colorado during the war (we had to move inland until the war was over), our next door neighbor was a German family. A Japanese family and a German family during the war. We got along real good.

Stone: Who were your friends when you were younger? What kind of activities did you do together?

Maxon: Go to church. That was a meeting place. There was a lot more Japanese in this community and the church brings them all together. They brought the ministers here.

Stone: Your friends were all Japanese?

Maxon: At first. Then you go to school and meet all these different people. I guess the color doesn't make any difference, especially here. I never had anything prejudicial happen to me, until the war started.

Stone: Describe what a typical school day was like for you.

Maxon: I liked it. It was fun. It got me out of home. I got to play with my friends and study. I was good in spelling.

Stone: Did you ever attend Japanese language school at the Buddhist Church?

Maxon: After school.

Stone: What was that like?

Maxon: It was pretty good. It was hard for me to learn Japanese because when the war started...I don't know, I wanted to be American and I picked up on just conversational Japanese. Enough to understand a word here or there.

Stone: Did you participate in extracurricular activities like sports or clubs? Or was it just primarily the church?

Maxon: No, just sports at school.

Stone: What was your first job and how much did you make?

Maxon: It was a flower farm, flower fields. Used to be Waller-Franklins, the Waller-Franklins seed company. We'd pollinate the flowers. I can't remember how much money we made. Probably something like a dollar fifty an hour, which was a lot of money then.

Stone: Do you think Guadalupe was a good place to grow up?

Maxon: Yes.

Stone: During those times?

Maxon: I think so. California. Why? Because, I don't know, it's open. It's not close. Certain areas of the country, they're really close. If you're Baptist you're close. If you're white you're white. If you're dark you're black. Right here it doesn't make any difference, that part.

Stone: When and why did your father first come to Guadalupe?

Maxon: Well, he came from Hawaii. He worked in the cane fields and I guess he didn't want to live like that all his life. He had an opportunity to come to the United States and he came over and went to school. [He] learned mechanics and learned a little Spanish. He lived in Los Angeles for a while. Then he moved up here to Guadalupe.

Stone: And when and why did your mother first come to Guadalupe?

Maxon: Because she got married. When they get a match made they send pictures to the woman. So my father's picture was among several men and I guess she picked him. I'm glad, cause I wouldn't be here or my two brothers [laughs].

Stone: What type of schooling did both your parents have?

Maxon: I think my father went up to the sixth grade. My mom probably went to the fifth. That was in Hawaii. My father worked in the fields, so I guess that was more important.

Stone: You said they met because they were match-made and your mom was a picture bride, so when or where did they first meet?

Maxon: I don't know whether my father went back there or mom came over here and they got married. But they didn't even know each other.

Stone: Describe what the personalities were like with both your parents. What was your dad like?

Maxon: My father was the man. What he said, went, cause he was making all the money and mom was the housewife. But when George was born, there was one time, she told me a long time after, she said she was ready to pack up and take George with her. He [father] had one of those cars that cranked up in front. If they (unclear), they could hit you. He was trying to have her crank it up, and she just gave up and went back in the house. She said she was ready to leave then. But she persevered. And it lasted for fifty years.

Stone: What was your mom's personality like?

Maxon: Cool. Everybody liked her.

Stone: So your dad did most of the decision-making? What would you say would be the reason for that? Why was he the dominant one?

Maxon: Cause he's the man. He's pretty practical.

Stone: When and how did your father begin the dealership?

Maxon: Before the war. I didn't know how he did it. He must have borrowed money because he was always going to the bank and borrowing money. He was able to pay it back too. So he must have been pretty frugal and knew how to handle the business. That was back in nineteen thirty, probably [the] thirties.

Stone: Did you mother ever work?

Maxon: I think once when we were in Colorado. That's where we relocated. She worked in the fields for a while there.

Stone: What were your parents' daily schedules like when you were growing up?

Maxon: My father would have the garage and he'd be working there. Mom would be at home preparing, cooking, washing, cleaning, taking care of me. I was a spoiled brat. She had to chase me all over. One time I must have been ornery or something cause she was running after me with a fly swatter and I ran outside in the dark and lost a slipper. The next morning I couldn't find it.

Stone: What expectations did your parents have for you and your siblings?

Maxon: To get married. [Laughs] No, to go to school and probably to get married and have kids.

Stone: Did their expectations differ between you and the boys?

Maxon: I don't think so. Pretty cool. They weren't against any of the women my brothers picked and my first husband was okay with them.

Stone: Were rites of passage discussed openly in your family?

Maxon: No. [Laughs] Had to find out for myself.

Stone: And how'd you find out?

Maxon: From kids at school. Probably at school they taught sex. Which was a word you were not supposed to use at that time.

Stone: So your parents would never discuss things like that with you?

Maxon: Nope. When I had my period mom just gave me a pad and said "Wear that. It's going to happen every month." I said, "What?"

Stone: But would you say that was more of a cultural thing or more of the times?

Maxon: Probably of the time, I think.

Stone: Did your parents participate in any community or religious affairs?

Maxon: He helped build this church. Mom was a member of the FUJINCY, which is a woman's association for the church. We did a lot of stuff here. In fact, this church was located on Guadalupe Street. They tore that one down, it was a wooden structure, and built this one in nineteen sixty.

Stone: Your dad was a part of the rifle association?

Maxon: NRA. He made his own bullets. A sportsman, an avid sportsman.

Stone: When did your parents pass away?

Maxon: Nineteen seventy-eight. Mom passed away first in June and my father passed away from cancer in December. My mom passed away from a heart attack, massive.

Stone: Where are they buried?

Maxon: Guadalupe Cemetery.

Stone: Describe the ritual funeral services for the Buddhist procedures.

Maxon: Well, they have a casket. They have to get a casket and they come in the church congregation. We send the obituaries out to all the newspapers and then whoever can come are invited. After that we go out to the cemetery. Then there's a seventh day memorial, forty-ninth day memorial, one year memorial, third year memorial. It's that kind of a deal where whenever people get together you think about your ancestors. It's really for us.

Stone: Now we'll move to World War Two. What global events were happening pre-internment camp?

Maxon: I was only seven or eight, so it was fun for me. I was getting out of the state.

Stone: You don't remember any big things in the news? Can you remember at all where you were on Pearl Harbor Day?

Maxon: No.

Stone: Did you ever experience any form of discrimination before camp?

Maxon: No. That's why California is pretty nice.

Stone: How were you notified? How did you learn about going to the interment camp?

Maxon: All I remember was that my folks were in a room at the house, and I think we went in car. We had to move to Tulare. Had to go to Tulare for a couple or three months and then we got assigned to Gila in Arizona. We went by train, or the car, and we stopped in Poston, Arizona for lunch. We were going to go into this restaurant and it had a sign on the door. My brother George stopped pop from going in and said the sign said, "No Japs allowed", so we went somewhere else. That was the first time I ran into prejudice.

Stone: Do you remember the day you left? How you prepared, and did you pack your own stuff?

Maxon: No. My folks did that, I think. Had to leave most of our property and our house. Somebody took care of us; somebody took care of it. Friends of my father, white people. They didn't have to go.

Stone: What happened to the dealership?

Maxon: My father left it with I think Mr. Finch. I can't remember his first name. Finch Chevrolet took care of it and sent the rent, I think. I don't know all the financial details.

Stone: Describe what camp was like when you first arrived there. What do you remember?

Maxon: Dust storms. There were long barracks, and it was divided into four family rooms. We were all in one end. Bathrooms and toilets were located separate. The reason I remember dust storms is because one time, I don't know whether I was coming home from school, and the door wouldn't close and I started to cry. My brother had to come out and shut the door. Stuff like that.

Stone: That's what brothers are there for. The whole family went to one camp, correct? Gila?

Maxon: All together. My grandfather had to go to South Dakota because he was not a citizen. He was a Japanese citizen.

Stone: So you were separated?

Maxon: Yes. For a while.

Stone: Was that hard for you?

Maxon: No, but we got reunited later.

Stone: Do you ever remember any of your mom's reaction or your brother's reaction?

Maxon: Nope.

Stone: Anyone ever being scared or fearful?

Maxon: No.

Stone: How did they act? Did they kind of...

Maxon: Just went with the flow. I'm not sure. We weren't pushed around or anything.

Stone: How did, did you ever notice a difference between the Issei generation and the Nisei generation at camp? Their reactions or how they acted while they were there?

Maxon: Yes, I think the Isseis, some of them were from Japan, and they were close, they had ties to Japan. Some of them were kind of mavericks. They had to be sent to Manzanar or one of those isolated camps cause they were probably radicals. But not us.

Stone: You guys were well behaved?

Maxon: Yeah.

Stone: Describe the typical school day in camp.

Maxon: Gee, I can't remember. I cannot remember.

Stone: Do you remember school being a good thing? Or was it as fun as when you were back here? In Guadalupe?

Maxon: It must have been. I think I went into the wrong room and got promoted [laughs]. That's the only thing I remember.

Stone: Did you take part in any extracurricular activities when you were in camp, or religious activities?

Maxon: Nope. We had an outdoor movie theater. It was built on the side of the hill and the screen was down here. So you'd just stand up or sit anywhere you want and watch the movies.

Stone: You didn't play sports.

Maxon: No.

Stone: What were your favorite memories at camp?

Maxon: This man used to have rattlesnakes and mice and he have the rattlesnakes in this can and he'd throw the mouse in there. They'd chase each other around for a while and the mouse lost.

Stone: Now that is pretty interesting to watch. What would you say would be your least favorite or worst memory of camp?

Maxon: Gosh, I don't know. Maybe the heat. My mom worked over there in the dining hall. They'd prepare the food and everybody would come in.

Stone: And the dining hall was hot?

Maxon: Yes, it was pretty hot.

Stone: How long were you at camp?

Maxon: First, in Tulare, we stayed about three months and then got transferred to Gila River. I guess they'd [decide] if you're safe, then move you over to this other camp. After another four months there, they gave you a choice of staying there or going into another state.

Stone: So your worst memories at camp was the heat, why did that stand out?

Maxon: Cause I'm not used to it. Guadalupe, California is mild, nice. Now that [Arizona] is hot. It's a dry heat, but that's okay. I didn't realize what worse weather we had inland over there in Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Stone: How were you released from camp?

Maxon: On our own recognizance. We were able to move as long as we didn't go back to the coast. They didn't want us on the coast because they probably thought there were, and there probably were, a few spies. I'm not sure. They even launched a bomb or something and hit the Oregon coast once. But I don't know if that's true.

Stone: So once you were at Gila they said, "You can go anywhere?"

Maxon: Yes. So we went to Colorado because we had friends in Colorado.

Stone: How'd you get there?

Maxon: By car, I think. I liked the school there. I remember being in the third or fourth grade there. When the war was over I came back here and I went to the fifth grade.

Stone: Do you remember any Japanese being hesitant to leave the camp?

Maxon: I don't think so. I think there were a few people that stayed until the war was over, probably because they didn't have any place else to go.

Stone: You went to Colorado for two years?

Maxon: Something like that.

Stone: What was it like when you returned to Guadalupe?

Maxon: I don't know. It looked like we picked up where we left off. The furniture was still in the house. The friends were still here. Our friends were still here.

Stone: Did you guys still own your house?

Maxon: Yes. The property was intact.

Stone: Who in the community helped your family?

Maxon: The other Japanese families that came back, and the church.

Stone: Did anyone make your return difficult?

Maxon: Nope.

Stone: Were you ever ashamed to be Japanese?

Maxon: At one time, but you find out that if you're comfortable in your own skin psychologically and physically then you don't have to worry about other people's prejudices.

Stone: How old were you when you were ashamed? Until you got comfortable?

Maxon: I think when the war started. Of course. That's all I knew; I was American. So I didn't want to be Japanese.

Stone: Why didn't you want to be Japanese?

Maxon: Because the enemy was Japanese.

Stone: And you were American.

Maxon: Misplaced, or displaced. [Laughs]

Stone: Were there any negative reactions from the community that you remember after the war?

Maxon: No. During the war when I was in Colorado when I went to school one time, I was only what second grade, a kid. I was coming home from school and these two little kids standing on the sidewalk when I went by asked me if my father was Tojo. I said, "Well, let's see." My grandpa joined us and he took me back and forth to school.

Stone: How did your father rebuild the business when you came back?

Maxon: Let's see. I don't think he did. He just kept it rented out to Mr. Finch. I don't know whether he passed away or moved. Then he gave it to the Kelsey brothers, Roy and Frank. So the dealership became Kelsey Chevrolet. That was after the war.

Stone: What'd your dad do...

Maxon: He was retired because he had a lot of rentals and stuff. He bought some property before the war and he was able to hold those. When he came back I guess he kept on going how he was before.

Stone: So you stayed in Guadalupe through out junior high school and high school?

Maxon: Went to Guadalupe School, that's up to eighth grade. Then Santa Maria High School. Graduated in nineteen fifty-three. There were two hundred and twenty-two students who graduated, seniors, in nineteen fifty-three. And we're having a fiftieth anniversary, reunion. This year in September.

Stone: Then you went to Santa Maria Junior College?

Maxon: That's now Allan Hancock.

Stone: Was it common for women to go to college then?

Maxon: I think so.

Stone: Or Japanese women?

Maxon: I think so now. In my family, I was the only one who went to junior college. I went to San Jose and I graduated. My brother George worked. He has four kids. My brother Eddie went to junior college twice [laughs]. He put in four years. He liked to go to school there. He played in the band and he was a popular guy.

Stone: Then what'd you do after junior college?

Maxon: Junior college, I went to San Jose State.

Stone: What'd you study?

Maxon: I studied to be a teacher. However I washed out when I was student teaching and so I had to make up about ten units after I went home. I called my dad. My father was really understanding. A good thing he asked me while I was in junior college to take a business like typing and shorthand, because I was able to get a job out at Cook, it's now Vandenberg Air Force Base. I was there for twenty years.

Stone: So you were ten units shy of graduating at San Jose?

Maxon: Yes. After I got married and had Matt, I took college courses and I made up those units. I graduated in sixty-four rather than fifty-six. It took a while but I made it.

Stone: When and how did you meet your first husband?

Maxon: At the base. He was in the Air Force and in the same office as me. There was a secretary who got us together.

Stone: What was life like with him?

Maxon: Very adventurous, very new. He took me to South Dakota with him and we lived there for about two years. Matt, my son, was born there. I learned a lot about cows and I learned a lot about sheep cause his dad had a ranch. Bud's from a family of twelve kids. He's seventh oldest. There's four girls and eight boys total. And that really branched out into a lot of grandchildren and cousins. So it was a good experience.

Stone: When did you return to Guadalupe from South Dakota?

Maxon: Nineteen sixty-four, I think. Bud was nice enough to bring me back here before we got divorced. We remained friends. We were better friends than being married.

Stone: What type of work did you do returning to Guadalupe?

Maxon: I got back with Civil Service. I was in Civil Service for three years and when I got back I just reentered Civil Service. I had a total of twenty years there before I met my second husband.

Stone: What was the biggest change you noticed in Guadalupe as a town in the time you left San Jose and the time that you came back?

Maxon: Actually not much. It's [change] been more the last ten years that I've been home. I came back the second time. In ninety-two to now it's really changed. Everything's getting upgraded and I think it's going to become a beach town.

Stone: How did you meet your second husband?

Maxon: He was in the Air Force also. It was out at the base and he was on a missile team from Tucson. I tried going out there with him to find a job and couldn't find a job so I came back. Then they got transferred over to Little Rock, cause all the missile bases were closing down. [Then] Little Rock closed down. We got married there in Little Rock. When the missiles closed down, he had to learn another job, so he went into computers. He got reassigned to Tinker Air Force Base, which is in Oklahoma City, just about five hundred miles down the road; closer to California.

Stone: What was life like with Mark?

Maxon: Very good. He was a lot younger than me and he took me to all the rock concerts and stuff. At Little Rock and Oklahoma City.

Stone: In what year did you return to Guadalupe?

Maxon: Nineteen ninety-two. June.

Stone: You said that you noticed everything got upgraded.

Maxon: Yeah.

Stone: Describe to me what it was like, what Guadalupe Street was like when you were young?

Maxon: Very, I don't know. We used to go out and walk up and down because there was no TV until nineteen fifty. We used to go to the movies. Dawn and I and a bunch of kids would hop in the car, go to Santa Maria, and take in movies or go bowling or have fun. Go to Leo's Drive-In or Rancho, Rick's Rancho. Those were drive-ins.

Stone: What kinds of shops were there around?

Maxon: Department stores, JC...

Stone: In Guadalupe.

Maxon: In Guadalupe, just restaurants and grocery stores. There might be a five-and-dime store. It was not too many things. Kids went to the park. Or we'd go to school and play there.

Stone: What aspects of Guadalupe do you think are strong, of the community?

Maxon: It's located close to the ocean. Might be a resort kind of thing. It's heading that way. Two beaches are accessible. One in Los – oh, skinny bear -.

Stone: Oso Flaco. That means skinny bear.

Maxon: Because somebody saw a skinny bear walking along so they named it Oso Flaco there. Then there is the Guadalupe beach where they made that Ten Commandments. Two beaches accessible and [they are] probably good for camping grounds. The bicycles go through here on a regular basis. And so on.

Stone: What about among the people of the community? What do you consider strong within Guadalupe?

Maxon: They're pretty nice, people are nice to you. I don't know, I don't see any conflict...except for the young kids. Get in or want to get in trouble. Don't know how to stay out of trouble.

Stone: I was going to ask you next, what aspects of Guadalupe do you consider weak as a community?

Maxon: I don't know. I don't know.

Stone: It doesn't have overnight accommodations.

Maxon: That's probably forthcoming. Everybody keeps building. We have a park over there going toward the Guadalupe beach. I think that will accommodate RVs and stuff. Maybe, might build one.

Stone: Is that what you would like to see Guadalupe develop into?

Maxon: Sure, why not? It's a nice place; nice place to be.

Stone: You want to see it be a beach city?

Maxon: If we want to keep our economy up. Some people might not want it, but that's the way it's probably going to move. Manifest destiny.

Stone: So you think it's possible?

Maxon: I think so.

Stone: Do you think tourism would help Guadalupe?

Maxon: Definitely. The people come, go to the restaurants, and then we'll build businesses that would accommodate people who come in here. Like souvenirs. Probably like Shell Beach; those people, types of stores and stuff. I don't have that kind of stuff in mind. I stay home. I'm not marketable. I don't know how to set up businesses.

Stone: Do you think Guadalupe is a good place to grow up now?

Maxon: Yep. I think so because of the people. It's just real comfortable. Not unless you ask for a fight or something, that's up to you. I enjoyed growing up here.

Stone: In what ways are you involved in the community now?

Maxon: I am the church treasurer. I work at the Guadalupe Hardware part-time as a bookkeeper and I keep busy. I think that's the thing for people to do, is to keep busy and keep an open mind, then they'll be happy.

Stone: There's a strong standing Japanese community in Guadalupe?

Maxon: No. They've all moved out.

Stone: Why?

Maxon: No jobs. Unless you have strong ties here and you have jobs here that you can work at. My son's here because he has a job. If he didn't work at what he does then he'd be out of here too, I'm sure.

Stone: In your lifetime, what are you most proud of?

Maxon: To be able to do what I want to do and not have any regrets. You have to live cause time goes by too fast. God, I'm sixty-seven already and I haven't learned everything. You learn something everyday.

Stone: If you were able to relive your life would you do anything different?

Maxon: No.

Stone: Why? Or why not?

Maxon: Cause I don't know, that's the way it is. To karma. See? In this religion here it's karma. Karmic action. There's a reason why you're here and I'm happy.

Stone: No reason to change the path?

Maxon: No.

Stone: Did you receive repatriation from the...

Maxon: When the war was over I think there were a couple of Japanese representatives - I think Japanese-American Citizens League (like the black and the white and the Jewish people leagues). Japanese-American Citizens League started the ball rolling I think to get reimbursed for being incarcerated. They call it incarcerated or being in prison, but it's like relocation. We were just relocated. The United States apologized and gave us money and sent us a certificate.

Stone: I'm kind of jumping around again. Back to the future of Guadalupe. Is there anything you'd like to see return to Guadalupe?

Maxon: Nope.

Stone: But those things that have changed, would you want to see come back?

Maxon: The people. I miss my folks. I miss all the friends we had before. Just talk with them.

Stone: That would be a lot of the Japanese population that was once here?

Maxon: It'd be nice to have them come back. I keep talking to the young kids, I say, "When are you coming back?" "Maybe, when I retire," they say. We'll see.

Stone: How does your son feel about Guadalupe?

Maxon: It's a place. And he enjoys it, wherever he is. He's that type of guy. He has grandchildren, I mean I have grandchildren. He has

one girl, I have one boy and he has one girl. He's not married now, but he still gets along well with the other families. I get along with my ex-in-laws. And it's great! I love it.

Stone: Why does he live here?

Maxon: I don't know. It's here. This is home too.

Stone: Where mom is?

Maxon: Yes. I'm glad. He keeps me company.

Stone: Does he speak Japanese?

Maxon: No. That's part of progress I guess, of living in the United States. You're just American.

Stone: But you were the only one that learned a little bit of it, along with your brothers?

Maxon: Oh, Japanese?

Stone: Uh-huh.

Maxon: Yeah. Actually, my brother spoke good English. He was more American than the Japanese people who were here. He was born here and he ran around with a lot of different people, different types of people.

Stone: If you personally could improve the town in any way, what would you do?

Maxon: I'd do exactly what I'm doing now, I walk my dog, and when I walk my dog I pick up after him, and then if I see paper and junk I pick it up and clean it up.

Stone: Is there anything else that I didn't ask you that you would want to say about the town?

Maxon: No...It's a wonderful place. I love it here. You can't make me leave. I'm not leaving.

Stone: Never again?

Maxon: Nope. Not until I die.

Stone: No. Where do you plan to be buried?

Maxon: I think my ashes are going to be spread around here.

Stone: From where?

Maxon: Maybe off the coast. I guess that's it.

[Interview ends]

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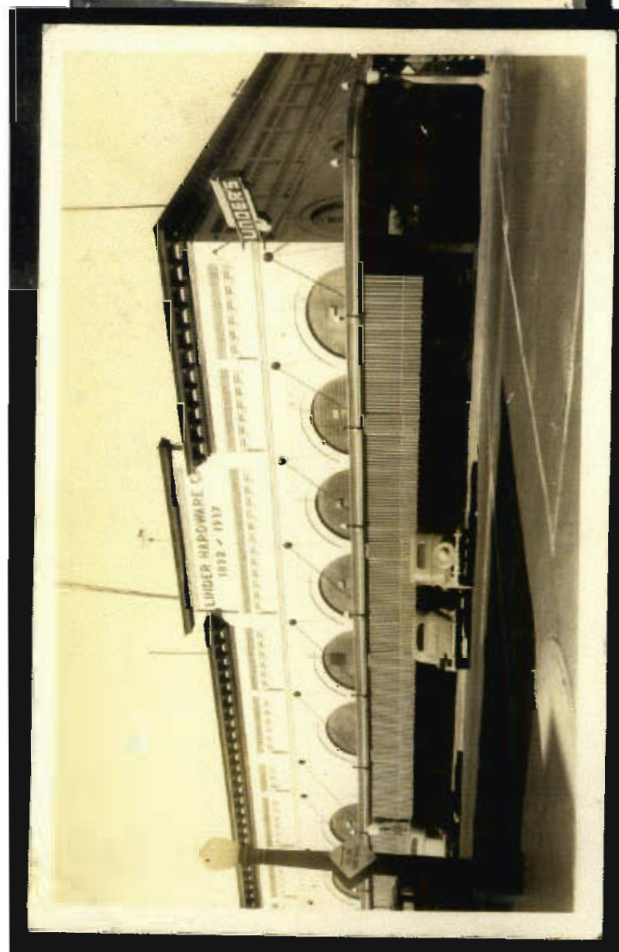
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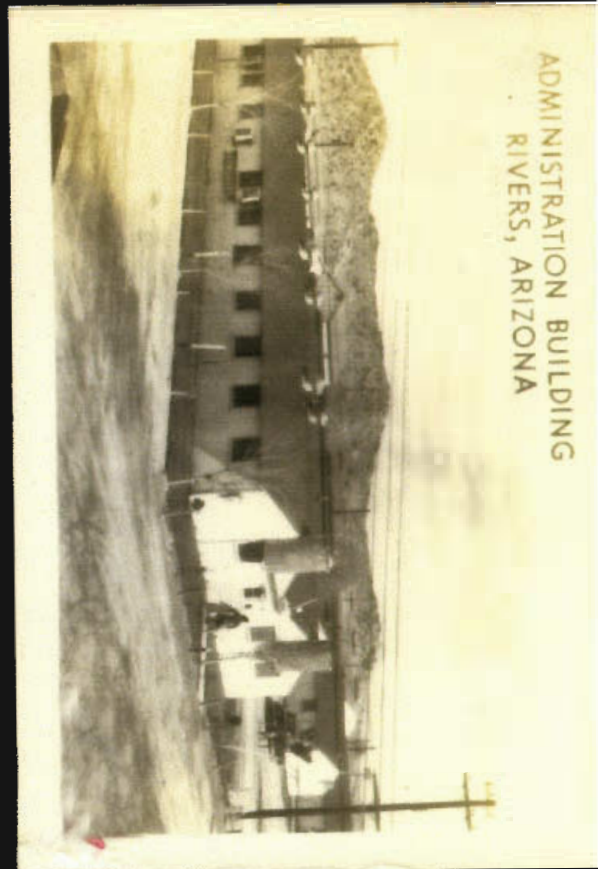


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ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
RIVERS, ARIZONA

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BUTTE HIGH SCHOOL
RIVERS, ARIZONA

MESS HALL
GILA RIVERS, ARIZONA







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