

NARRATOR: TOSHIYE HIROSE

INTERVIEWER: RALPH KUMANO, JULIE MOORE

DATE: July 2, 2005

RK: We are in San Francisco, California on July 2, 2005. This interview will be part of the Izumi Taniguchi Oral History Program housed in the special collections unit of the Henry Madden Library at the California State University of Fresno. My name is Ralph Kumano of the Central California District Council which is part of the Japanese-American Citizens League. I am here today with Julie Moore who is the niece of the person we are going to interview. I am interviewing Toshiye Hirose, a Nisei woman, and Toshiye how old are you?

TH: Eighty-three.

RK: Okay, she is eighty-three years old. Okay, first question, we're going to go back into family life and so before WWII and we want to know where you were born and the date of your birth?

TH: I was born in King City, California on September 26, 1921.

RK: Okay, what was your family's line of work?

TH: My father was a farmer anyway. I was born in a Japanese labor camp okay and six months after I was born, we moved to Oak Grove Strawberry Farm.

RK: Okay.

TH: It was run by a—managed by a Japanese fellow Mr. Yamamoto and there was a village of Japanese families and so we got to live with them and work on the farm for five years there.

RK: Okay, now what is Oak Grove closer to the North towards Salinas?

TH: It is ten miles south of Salinas.

RK: Okay, so that would be in that area where they have a lot of sugar beets? There is Spreckels and Gonzales and—

TH: Not that far.

RK: Soledad.

TH: It's on the other side.

RK: Oh, it's on the other side but in that general vicinity though?

TH: Yeah, that way.

RK: Okay, and how many members were in your family?

TH: I'm the oldest of eight.

RK: Okay, you're the oldest and so how many were brothers and how many were sisters?

TH: Four brothers and three sisters.

RK: Okay, now thinking back what kind of childhood did you have growing up in that area where the strawberry was?

TH: Well we were in a village.

RK: Okay.

TH: Of Japanese families. So, we were you know it was great for my mother because she just came from Japan.

RK: Right.

TH: And that year and so—

RK: Were you nearby a school? Were there schools close by?

TH: When I started school I have a picture there of I went with the village children.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: And we started school.

RK: So there was a school bus that came by?

TH: No, we walked to—

RK: You had to walk.

TH: Two miles, two miles.

RK: Okay.

TH: And this one—you see all the Japanese kids in the—all of the Japanese children in the class—in the school.

RK: Oh yeah.

TH: One room school house. That is how it got started.

RK: Okay, and then what grades—what grades was the school from?

TH: From one to eight.

RK: One to eight grades okay.

TH: One teacher.

RK: One teacher okay.

TH: One room.

RK: And how many kids there roughly? It looks like about twenty, twenty students.

TH: Twenty, thirty.

RK: Oh thirty back then, okay.

TH: Lot of Japanese but anyway when I was in fourth grade, we moved to Spreckels.

RK: Oh okay, so now you moved to the Spreckels area. And did you go to the same school?

TH: No we went to the Spreckels School.

RK: Oh, okay they had their own school?

TH: Right across the street from our house.

RK: Oh, that was very convenient.

TH: That was nice.

RK: You didn't have to walk two miles to the—

TH: So from fourth grade to eighth grade.

RK: Eighth grade?

TH: We went to the Spreckels School.

RK: Okay.

TH: And then for high school and junior college I went to Salinas High School and Salinas Junior College and I commuted on the bus.

RK: Okay, now what grade were you in when the Pearl Harbor was bombed?

TH: Oh, I was done. I graduated from junior college in 1941.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: And I went to work for Salinas Army Air Base.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: And worked for them for one year until Pearl Harbor.

RK: Yeah, December 7 is when December.

TH: Yeah, it was quite a change on the day after.

RK: The bombing?

TH: Yeah, the day after the military all, all you know.

RK: And how long did they let you work at the base?

TH: Just until the end of the month.

RK: Oh okay. And then how long was it since—when you were having to pack up and go to an assembly center?

TH: Oh, that was December of forty-one.

RK: Right.

TH: And we went into the rodeo grounds, the Salinas Assembly Center.

RK: Right.

TH: In May 1942.

RK: And how long were you there?

TH: And then in July.

RK: Okay.

TH: We went to the relocation center in Poston, Arizona.

RK: Okay and that was Camp #2?

TH: Camp #1.

RK: Camp #1 okay.

TH: We were from Salinas but we opted to stay in Camp #1. Because we landed there with eight—with our children all settled in.

RK: Right.

TH: And we weren't going to move again.

RK: Okay.

TH: And the kids were settled down so we stayed in Camp #1.

RK: Okay, now recalling back at the Assembly Center how were the accommodations there at the fair grounds?

TH: (laughing)

RK: Most people in the other camps they were in horse stalls and things like that, was that the same?

TH: We had new rooms, new barracks.

RK: Okay.

TH: And the end of the barrack was facing the fence you know so all ten of us in one room about the size of this room and we just lined up the cots.

RK: Okay.

TH: And that is about it.

RK: So everyone was in there.

TH: And it was community living.

RK: Right.

TH: And we had to take our plates and go to the mess hall and there were a long line of people.

RK: And the same for the shower?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: And washroom?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: So you were there for a couple months and then you—

TH: Went to Poston.

RK: Boarded the train in Salinas itself or where did you board the train?

TH: In Salinas.

RK: Okay, and do you remember the ride all the way over across the desert?

TH: Well Salinas is cool weather and by the time we got there to Poston, it was hot.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: We got so sweating then.

RK: Now did you—when you were on the train ride were you able to look out the window and see the surroundings as you went through the various countryside?

TH: I don't remember looking out too much.

RK: The shades were—a lot of the trains they said the shades were pulled down so they didn't know who was inside the train.

TH: Yeah.

RK: Okay, and so when you got to Arizona they didn't take—the train does not go straight to Poston? It goes to Parker correct?

TH: Uh-huh. Parker then—

RK: Then took a bus okay.

TH: And then went into camp.

RK: What time of year were you in Poston?

TH: July.

RK: Okay one of the hottest times okay.

TH: One of the hottest.

RK: So were a lot people from the coast fainting because of it was so hot.

TH: Well some were—we were going around—a lot of people were going around with wet towels on their heads and carrying umbrellas and taking a lot of showers and trying to keep cool.

RK: Now the amount of stuff that you could take like your own belongings and things were just the amount you could carry, is that correct?

TH: We were only allowed to have one suitcase we could carry but I understand we could've carry more.

RK: Oh really, okay.

TH: All you could carry.

RK: All you could carry right.

TH: Was the criteria.

RK: And then did they put a number on you, a tag on you?

TH: I think so. I don't remember that.

RK: Oh okay. And then when you got to Poston, how was the accommodations there?

TH: Like everybody else it was very—it was a new camp and they what scraped all the sage brushes and all so it was very dusty. And so and there is cracks on the floor of the barracks and so when we got in, there were dust on the floors and everything and we had to clean it up and usually washed it down. So everyday dad was washing it off (laughs) .

RK: And I heard there were insects and things coming up through the floor?

TH: Not that I remember, it was high enough.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: But the—

RK: It was built on a foundation so you were above it, but there was dust coming in. Now how was the building to cold and heat? Was it pretty good?

TH: Summer was hot.

RK: Okay.

TH: And it had double roofing so that helped it.

RK: The top but there is no type of fan or anything inside?

TH: No, and in the winter we had just—each apartment had a pot belly stove.

RK: Oh okay, so what did you use charcoal or wood fire?

TH: I think it was wood.

RK: Okay, and so that was enough and it kept you pretty warm inside?

TH: I guess. I don't remember being hot or cold.

RK: Okay, now in the rooms themselves how many were in one room? And—

TH: All the boys in one room and girls, we had two rooms.

RK: Okay.

TH: So all the girls were in one, and boys in one room, so that is five, five.

RK: Okay, so that worked out okay because a lot of families, they put them in just one room but you had enough that you could split it into two.

TH: We had two rooms, yeah.

RK: And did you—if you can recall the rooms did you—was it a single room or did you eventually build partitions for privacy or anything?

TH: It was two rooms with a partition.

RK: With a partition in between?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: And then in the room everyone just was open and everyone just had cots?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: Okay.

TH: But my brother was very handy with his tools and he made furniture like everybody else was doing. He made two settee and a screen in front of the door.

RK: Wow. Yeah.

TH: Ironing board and shelves and things like that.

RK: Wow and he was very industrious.

TH: And my father and my older brother they were good at—

RK: Carpentry yeah.

TH: Carpentry.

RK: That was good. Now can you recall the “ofuro”, the shower? Was it open shower in the restrooms?

TH: Uh-huh, that’s the part we couldn’t get used to and at first especially open shower, open—

RK: I heard some of the camps they eventually the people put in some cloth partitions to have a little bit more privacy so was that also done in Poston?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: So that made it a little bit easier. And how far away from your particular barrack was the shower and the bathroom?

TH: It was just right—

RK: Within easy walking distance?

TH: Yeah. It’s laid out like the army with the latrine and the shower.

RK: Now what about the mess hall? Was that pretty close also, the cafeteria?

TH: No not too far.

RK: And how was the food in there?

TH: I ate (laughing).

RK: Okay did they—

TH: I didn’t complain. I mean no, you just—

RK: Regular food or did they have any like rice and Japanese type food.

TH: They had rice and they had variety yeah. I don't remember too much.

RK: Okay and you are what age at this time?

TH: Twenty.

RK: Okay, so you had just like you said, you had gone to junior college and so and then you were working and then you went into the camp. Now, do you recall anything around the camp itself whether there was a fence or some of the camps had barbed wires and guard towers and—?

TH: I'm sure we had them but I ignored them, I guess.

RK: So, did you walk a distance from the camp and did you go to any of the other camps, Poston Camp Two and Three?

TH: No, I didn't. I just stayed in Camp One.

RK: Oh okay. But did you go out into the countryside as far as you could go?

TH: Oh no.

RK: Just stayed around the camp itself?

TH: Uh-huh. Just went from our barracks and to the mess hall and to work.

RK: Okay.

TH: And to the office and come home and—

RK: Okay, so you had a job working in the office there?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: Now did you do any other activities also like, did they have church service?

TH: Yes, we went to church service yeah. Yeah, I was playing the piano enough to play for the services in our particular block there we had and I started to teach Sunday school. I was teaching Annie and Michael.

RK: Okay good. And did they have any evening activities like a camp dance or things like that that went on?

TH: I don't know. I know my brothers they took their little cots and went to see a movie, an outdoor movie. And they went to the canal and went swimming.

RK: Swimming okay.

TH: And things like that. But I didn't do any of those things. I took some evening classes that didn't amount to anything because shorthand was not my—it just didn't go through my head to my hand. Shorthand and class in philosophy and class in another, piano I was taking piano so.

RK: Now going back to before you left the camp. Your father was he—when he was at the Spreckels Company, did he have any land that he leased or anything?

TH: Yes, he leased land around Spreckel Sugar Company then about sixty acres.

RK: Okay.

TH: He farmed it for about eleven years there.

RK: And so he must have had certain possessions that were lost because you couldn't take everything to Poston?

TH: Oh, and then we had in 1941 we moved to a—

RK: Oh okay.

TH: A private farm, Barton Ranch. I guess the sugar company people were aware of the difficulties between Japan and the United States and they didn't give us a lease.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: So we found another place to move to.

RK: And so did you leave a lot of things and they were never recovered?

TH: Oh, on this other ranch?

RK: Yeah, the Barton Ranch?

TH: Barton Ranch, they were really helpful.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: When evacuation came, dad had to sell all his farm machinery.

RK: Yeah, right.

TH: And he had quite a collection and he sold that.

RK: What about a car and truck?

TH: And truck and car and then mother had her first refrigerator.

RK: Oh, uh-huh.

TH: And a gas stove and all and we had to sell that.

RK: Sell all that? Yeah, and I imagine the price that you sold it for was way, way below—

TH: I am sure.

RK: What it was worth.

TH: And we just had to get rid of it.

RK: Exactly because they didn't know if they were going to get them back and so they wanted to at least get some cash for them.

TH: Yeah we were somewhat one of those. And then the rest of the things were stored in one of the rooms.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: And so it was private, Dick Barton.

RK: So you were able to get some of the—

TH: And we got it back, the government later on the government picked it up and sent it to us.

RK: Good okay. So that was good. At least not everything was lost. There was some priceless things.

TH: Some were missing of course.

RK: Yeah right.

TH: But we got our piano.

RK: Oh good.

TH: They moved that all the way to New Jersey, the one that (inaudible). We still have it, yeah.

RK: And I know when the bombing happened, a lot of the Japanese burned old pictures because they were afraid, you know, that if there was a tie with Japan government they might you know they might tie them in and so some of the Issei burned a lot of the mementos from the—

TH: I don't know what they burned but I know one thing they burned was the Kendo equipment.

RK: Oh right, so that equipment because they figured it might be used for weapons or something. Yeah. Okay, now how long were you in the camp? How many years?

TH: I was in there for two years almost, almost two years. But in 1944 in February, anyway in 1944, my brother was already out of camp and he was in the Army.

RK: Okay.

TH: Okay, going through there and so Sachi and I, we decided to go to Philadelphia. So they had relocation offices established in Philadelphia, Chicago.

RK: Right.

TH: And all these places and I don't know why I chose Philadelphia but we did and so she and I just went to Philadelphia and got a job.

RK: So from Poston you were—did you go to Parker to catch a train or where did you go?

TH: Yeah the bus took us to Parker and from there, we took the train and of course it was under military guard, soldiers were all—

RK: Oh, so it was a military train?

TH: And they took us to Chicago.

RK: Okay.

TH: And from there we took another train and went to Philadelphia. It was all very strange but looking back, you wonder, but I wasn't afraid.

RK: Right, well because you know, having military there kind of was having protection too because when you go through all those cities if you were on a public train, you don't know how people react.

TH: No, I think up to Chicago because we had military escort.

RK: But it was okay the rest of the trip all the way?

TH: All the way and then we made it.

RK: Okay, and where did you stay?

TH: And then the people in Philadelphia the office—the relocation office they found a place for us to stay.

RK: Okay.

TH: And we ended up in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Sachi was right out of high school. She didn't have any house experience so she lived in the house and took care of the house and took care of the little girl in the house and she paid for our room and board there and I commuted from Swarthmore to Philadelphia office.

RK: Okay, so you had an actual job you were going to? And how long was this for?

TH: Until I got married in 1948.

RK: Okay.

TH: So that is four years.

RK: Okay, so for four years you were there by your, with your sister?

TH: No, but I mean I worked.

RK: Right.

TH: But I worked in that office for four years. But in the meantime in August of that same year.

RK: Right.

TH: The war is still on but our parents, or the rest of the family, mom and dad and Annie and the five children, they all came to Philadelphia also.

RK: So out of the camps, they are releasing people if they are going to go back east.

TH: If they—if they had sponsors.

RK: Sponsors, okay.

TH: And willing to take care of them, anyway, so like my family they went to Philadelphia and the relocation people found a Quaker family to take my father and mother and the five children so they ended up in Riverton, New Jersey.

RK: Okay.

TH: And so the fruit orchards and so that—

RK: That is right along the Delaware River there right?

TH: Yes.

RK: And pretty close so there was all kinds of orchards and fruit there.

TH: And so after two years dad found another job Princeton Nurseries.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: He was worked in the snow and all that and it was a little too hard for dad and so that fruit farm and the fruit orchard so he got a job at Princeton Nurseries in Princeton, New Jersey. So that is where they settled down.

RK: Now how big was that town at that time, Princeton, New Jersey?

TH: It's a university town. It's an old town.

RK: Okay. So it was a medium sized town?

TH: So we lived out in the country.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: Princeton Nurseries is growing trees and stuff.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: So—

RK: And then when did the—he was living there when the war finally ended?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: In 1945, now where were you when the war ended? You are still working in Philadelphia?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: Okay then after the war ended, what did you do?

TH: I worked until forty-eight.

RK: Okay.

TH: And George came and we got married in Philadelphia.

RK: Okay and where did you meet George?

TH: In San Anselmo.

RK: In San Anselmo, and so you had known him before?

TH: I met him before.

RK: Okay you met him before?

TH: I met him before we got married.

RK: Okay.

TH: We met at a youth conference in San Anselmo, California.

RK: And so you were corresponding?

TH: We were corresponding.

RK: Okay.

TH: So anyway he came from Long Beach to Philadelphia and we got married.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: And then from there I joined him in his ministry and went to Long Beach and then Los Angeles and Salt Lake City, Utah. And then Kilderoy(?), Montana. And then to Hazelton, Idaho and Weiser, Idaho so for forty years he had ministries and then when he retired, we came here.

RK: Okay.

TH: San Francisco.

RK: Okay, and then when did you have your children and what years can you remember?

TH: Well, Elizabeth was born in Long Beach.

RK: And roughly, roughly what year was that?

TH: 1948.

RK: Okay.

TH: And Laura was born in forty-six and Peter in forty-four, no forty-two, they were in Hollywood, Los Angeles.

RK: Okay.

TH: And then Arman came along ten years later in Salt Lake City.

RK: Oh, in Salt Lake City.

JM: You mean John? John.

TH: John, yes.

JM: She said Arman not John.

RK: Oh okay. Now how were these towns after the war? Did you feel any discrimination or were the people—?

TH: It is surprising. The first twenty years of our ministry was with the Japanese churches. No problem there.

RK: Okay.

TH: And then the second from Montana and Idaho is Caucasian churches.

RK: Right.

TH: No problem really, they were very—

RK: So everything worked out okay?

TH: Uh-huh. And of course Montana there were immigrants from Europe.

RK: Right. That's right.

TH: Second and third generation from Europe and we're second generation from Japan.

RK: So very similar experience coming over from the old country, yeah. Okay.

TH: In Montana there was one fellow who was prisoner in the Japanese Army during the world and active in the church, no problem. They accepted us and we accepted them.

RK: When you were in Utah and also you said you were in Idaho did you ever go to the relocation center or camps that were there?

TH: Well in Hazelton the center is where Minadoka.

RK: Minadoka was yeah.

TH: And we visited there once. It is nothing there.

RK: Now today everything is gone.

TH: They were building a monument or something now. But—

RK: And then Utah, it was Topaz so you never went out there in the desert?

TH: My husband went to Topaz.

RK: Oh okay.

TH: Yeah, his family did but we went to Poston.

RK: Yeah, right. Okay.

TH: We never visited. We never had any—we lived there for eleven years but never had—

RK: The desire?

TH: The desire.

RK: Right.

TH: Because—

RK: Because a lot of those things were in the past and you just want to let it—

TH: But nowadays they have special reunions.

RK: Reunions every year exactly.

TH: And things like that.

RK: Because people want to remember this because it was such an act that this government should never have done in the first place that's the--.

TH: They want people to remember.

RK: Remember and never forget this incident because it could happen again, that's the main reason.

TH: Laura, our daughter, is in Salt Lake City and she's in a Taiko Group, in church she has a Taiko Group, so she went with the Taiko Group to Topaz and—

RK: When you were growing up, did you learn any Japanese culture like going to Nihon-gakko and—

TH: Japanese culture? My mother cooked Japanese food and we always had Japanese food and going to Japanese school was a little hard or impractical so mother had Japanese language class at home.

RK: Oh, she did it at home, like home school.

TH: Every Saturday morning, she had her children lined up with different grade books and—

RK: That was good, exactly. She was very resourceful.

TH: So most of the Japanese we learned from her.

RK: From her, exactly.

TH: And we always spoke Japanese to each other.

RK: And did you learn some of the recipes for the food from her?

TH: I guess, but I'm not too good at it.

RK: Oh that's all right you still.

TH: She was a good cook. She had to—she was only twenty-one you know?

RK: Oh exactly.

TH: And I don't think she cooked much in Japan.

RK: Right.

TH: We had a hired hand to cook for, too, and she learned to cook American style too.

RK: Right.

TH: And she became a good cook.

RK: Okay, so did she learn or was she good at making sushi and?

TH: Oh yeah and she did.

RK: New Year's Celebration and all that?

TH: New Years was special, family.

RK: Yeah, exactly.

TH: We always had more Mochi-tsuki and with our neighbors usually, you know. New Year's was always a special event in our family and learned to play Karuta.

RK: Now was this tradition held also in camp, Mochi-tsuki Ashisuto and the New Year's and also back east in New Jersey?

TH: I don't remember camp but back East—

RK: They resumed it?

TH: They resumed it.

RK: Okay, that's good.

TH: Mariko still maintains the New Year's tradition and the Japanese culture huh? We—we belonged to a Japanese Presbyterian Church. My father and mother we both Christians from Japan.

RK: Okay.

TH: So they were active in Salinas church.

RK: Churches right.

TH: And dad was an elder and helped raise money for the Christian Building and gymnasium and mother was a member of the fujinkai and active so, we grew up in church. Like I said, we didn't have any relatives so our church was kind of like a surrogate family.

RK: Right.

JM: Can I ask?

RK: Sure.

JM: I was just wondering about the Christianity with grandma and grandpa and how did they—were they converted in Japan?

TH: Yes, they were converted.

JM: And what were they before?

TH: Buddhist.

JM: Buddhist, okay, all right, because I thought they—

TH: The thing of it is both of them; my father went out of his village to study at a agricultural college, that is where he met Christians, too. My mother, she went to nursing school and that is where she had contact with missionaries about Christianity, so made it. It is very difficult to be a Christian in villages and because they were students, they were able to.

JM: Well even today you know you look at how many Christians there are in Japan and it's a relatively small section of the population.

TH: Right.

JM: So I always wondered about that.

TH: It is unusual I guess for our—my father's generation.

RK: Right.

TH: To be Christians yeah.

RK: Now have you discussed the war experience with your children or have they asked questions about it.

TH: No.

RK: Okay, quite a few of the Japanese have not because it's a past experience and they want to move forward so. You know that is quite all right but the Sansei and Gosei are getting more inquisitive now and they want to know what happened and so the Nisei were pretty quiet and the Sansei like me were pretty quiet, too, but the new generations are very inquisitive so that's good. They are wanting to learn about their past history.

JM: I had a question about that. I know that I've read about something called the code of silence.

TH: Oh.

JM: Did you?

TH: I don't know anything.

JM: You didn't have any code of silence?

TH: It just came natural.

JM: It just came natural. I was just wondering why it was such a kind of a secret sort of.

TH: It's not a secret; you just don't want to think about it.

RK: Exactly.

JM: You just don't want to think about it.

TH: It's just that you don't. Those were bad experiences that you don't, that were bad experiences, something that is behind you.

RK: Right and a lot of it has to do with the children. They don't want the children to worry about things like this that happened and just go on from there with the future, not with things that happened so.

TH: Right, like living among haku-jin people that it's not—

JM: What's haku-jin?

RK: It's Caucasians.

TH: (laughing)

RK: But the Japanese are known as the quiet Americans so you know, they just kept these things inside and not worried because they did it for the children so it was always “kodomo no tabe”, you know they were always thinking of the children so.

TH: Like not taking the children to see the eleven years we lived there.

RK: Now have you been back to Salinas and looked where you were—the early years?

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: Okay, so you have been back there.

JM: She took me there.

RK: Oh, okay. Now, what is probably the most important things that have happened to you in recent years?

TH: In recent years?

RK: Yeah?

TH: After retirement?

RK: It might be grandchildren. It might be something that happened?

TH: Well, grandchildren came after retirement.

RK: Right okay.

TH: So that's kind of took my seventeen years now.

RK: Oh, so you've been retired for quite a few years.

TH: Seventeen.

RK: Seventeen, okay. And is your most of your family living near you?

TH: My children?

RK: Your immediate children first.

TH: My daughter and grandson live together.

RK: Okay.

TH: Okay and then Peter he lives in Redwood City.

RK: Right.

TH: And then my daughter, Laura and John live in Utah.

RK: Okay, so they are the ones that are farthest away. And then all your brothers and sisters are scattered all over?

TH: They are really far away.

RK: Because one is in Japan.

TH: One is in Japan and then—

RK: One is in Indianapolis.

TH: And then the other one in Missouri and one is in New Jersey.

RK: Right.

TH: Joshua and Lincoln.

RK: So everyone is just scattered throughout the United States and Japan.

TH: New York yeah. And then of course the grandkids, Audrey, she is in Germany.

RK: Oh wow, yeah.

JM: I used to be in Alaska.

TH: Now in Fresno.

RK: One of the things that we always ask is do you have any worry for kids today you know as far as any worry about what their future is facing? Things that might happen you know?

TH: No use worrying about it.

RK: Okay.

TH: Just to see that they are equipped.

RK: Right and so.

TH: Get their education and—

RK: As long as they are educated and they work hard right. You know that they are going to be successful.

TH: They will manage.

RK: Right. So that is the key. The key—

TH: No use worrying about it.

RK: And so all of them that get their education and so they should be in real good shape yeah.

TH: Uh-huh.

RK: Okay.

TH: You got your education and your career.

JM: And all my husbands.

TH: (laughing) Help where you can.

RK: Now one thing, what if WWII never happened, would your life have been much different?

TH: Oh yeah.

RK: It's hard to say because you know this is a big interruption in everyone's life.

TH: Yeah, nothing like that would never happen to us again.

RK: Right.

TH: But the question is what would you do if it happened to you again?

RK: Exactly, yeah.

JM: I had a question with that one. When they—kind of going back to the beginning. When they came and said you have to go for me now it's just unthinkable that I would say, "Okay, I'll just pack up and go." How did you?

TH: The thing is our parents were aliens. They are not citizens of the United States, they are alien residents. So they are law-abiding.

JM: Right.

TH: So they obeyed the law.

RK: So that was the key right and they didn't want to have any—

JM: They were afraid.

RK: They didn't want to be exported, right.

TH: I think that was ingrained in Japan, obeying the law.

RK: Exactly.

TH: And—so you had exceptions like Korematsu and didn't.

RK: Right, well because they were educated in—at some of the universities already at that time and they kind of knew a little bit more of what's being a citizenship was and things

like that but in general most of the Issei, you know they learned that you can come over here but you are going to live your life according to the government's rules and so you obeyed the government regardless of what they did so that's why like most of them went to the camps without too much opposition.

TH: "Shigatta-ganai"

RK: "Shigatta-ganai," exactly. That means that "what can you do?" There is not much.

JM: What can you do?

RK: Right, now in the eighties, they started this movement on getting redress and reparations. Do you think that was something that the government should have done, giving every Japanese something?

TH: At first I thought it was so unpatriotic to ask for reparation but I can see the point of their having it to call attention to the Japanese, yeah. It worked that way. But at first, I didn't think it would.

RK: Well, most people look at it that the twenty thousand wasn't to pay for any of the losses because you can't even account for that but it was an amount like a fine against the government for doing something illegal that they shouldn't have done. And the key was the letter of apology by the government and the President of the United States.

TH: Yeah, it was asking a lot of people that weren't responsible for doing it in the first place.

RK: Exactly, it was the new generation. Too bad it didn't happen much earlier in time. It came a little late but at least with the JC's, the JACL's help they were able to do it while half, at least half of the people in camp were still alive but a lot of them had passed away and that was about forty years after the camp when the reparations or civil liberties act

happened in 1988. And so a lot of the Isseis have already passed away so that was the sad part that they never got the apology and benefited from the redress.

TH: Well, it was good that they got their citizenship.

RK: Oh exactly.

TH: Both mother and father got their citizenship and that was something special.

RK: And then finally in the fifties they were able to own land because they had the laws against aliens, mainly the Asians, from owning, ownership of land.

TH: That was my dad was waiting for me to be twenty-one.

RK: Exactly and they put it in their—

TH: So you could buy land.

RK: Exactly.

TH: And they could see—

RK: Because that was the only way, their kids were American citizens and so by the time they were twenty-one and they could put the ownership of the land in their names. But a lot of them didn't have kids that were of age so they couldn't do that. They had to lease.

TH: That is one of the reasons we didn't go back to California. We didn't have anything to go back to.

RK: Right, right.

TH: So we ventured out back east.

JM: I always wondered about that? Why you didn't go back to California?

TH: That is one of the reasons, we didn't have anything to go back to.

RK: Right, right. So—

TH: So we just ventured out to—

RK: Sure and a new experience.

TH: I didn't think I was being brave when I went back East.

JM: You were.

RK: You were because it's like going the two of you going into a strange world. That had to be tough though.

TH: We depended on the people who were in charge.

RK: Exactly because who knows what could have happened.

TH: Right.

RK: Because you hear about—

TH: That was so far away.

RK: Yeah, because I know because of the bombing of Pearl Harbor a lot of the American people were still pretty mad at the Japanese and they didn't distinguish whether you were Japanese-American or native Japanese and so regardless there was some animosity towards Asians and so, you know. It's a wonder you were able to you know be okay back East. That was good. And now what kind of life do you see for the future generations as far as contributing to the world that we live in today? What do you want them to do, you know?

TH: Do the best they can.

RK: Okay.

TH: To help other people, like this project we are doing, is to help people understand.

RK: Exactly.

TH: What happened and what can happen. A lot of prejudice in the world.

RK: Yes, and that is what we are trying to give—trying to extinguish from our history is from these prejudice—prejudicial acts that have gone on and try to make people understand that these things—there are always two sides to a coin and you got to look at both sides. You can't just make rash judgments and judge people just on color or race, you know. You have to make sure if you are going to indict someone as to being a certain type of people or an enemy or whatever that you had better have due process and follow the law. And unfortunately even though we had the law, the Supreme Court did not help out the Japanese back in WWII because Congress went above the Justice Department and the Attorney General. And so Congress voted to have the Japanese interned and then the Supreme Court agreed with Congress. So the Justice Department stayed out of it until after the war and today we know that the Justice Department was correct. And Congress and the Supreme Court made a fatal mistake along with the President.

TH: Well it's kind of maybe unusual but I don't ever remember being singled out and prejudice, prejudicial treatment.

RK: Well good. Now do you think the 442nd, the Japanese that were in the camp that joined the Army and were very successful in the European theater and the MIS in the Pacific and the occupation of Japan you think their work because they were very brave and very heroic helped the cause of the Japanese to be able to assimilate back in the society easier?

TH: Definitely yeah.

RK: Okay.

TH: It helped a lot.

RK: Sure, because I think it got a lot of the people thinking these people were very patriotic if they are going to risk their lives for the rest of the people so. Yeah. Do you have any questions?

JM: I just had a few questions and this kind of skips around through history. But I was wondering if you could comment on the role that religion played in the Shimomura family?

TH: I think it played a big part in our family yeah. We, from the time we were little, we always had prayer at the table and yeah, we always had when we went to church regularly, even ten miles away, we were going to church.

JM: Was that when you had to walk? You had to walk to church or something?

TH: No we had cars. That is why dad had a car.

JM: To go to church? (laughing)

TH: Yeah, we always had one car for the family.

JM: Right. And can you talk also about the role of Quakers in this whole experience?

TH: Well, I first met the Quakers in camp. They were these volunteers, were working in camp helping. And then our relocation in Philadelphia was because of Quakers. And our father, our family were settled in a Quaker home. I stayed in a Quaker home in Germantown while I was working. I got married there and a Quaker couple hosted the reception for us and—

JM: Do you remember the names of the families?

TH: The what?

JM: The names of the Quaker families that helped out, the family names?

TH: No, the one.

JM: Like where you—where you got married?

TH: When we got married yeah. Haines, Robert Haines.

JM: Haines, H-A-I-N-E-S, okay.

TH: And they were very helpful.

JM: Okay, and then the family that the five children stayed with, was that?

TH: They were Quakers too.

JM: What was their name?

TH: It was Ritchie.

JM: Ritchie?

TH: Ritchie family, R-I-T-C-H-I-E.

JM: R-I-T-C-H-I-E, okay.

TH: They were very good.

JM: And did—so they provided a place to stay. Did they do anything else to kind of help you kind of assimilate back into a—

TH: Well, mother was helping at the house and Mrs. Ritchie tried to teach her English (laughing). They were very generous with their time.

JM: And then right after you—when you got out then and you were living with—

TH: In Swarthmore.

JM: In Swarthmore.

TH: That's right, yeah.

JM: What were those conditions like or was it just—

TH: They were—he was the son of a congregational minister.

JM: Oh.

TH: And he was working with the union in some situation I don't know about. But anyway they took us in.

JM: And grandpa, my grandpa and your father, what work did he do right after, you know, when he moved to New Jersey, what work did he find?

TH: At the Ritchie Farm, he worked it was a fruit orchard.

RK: Fruit orchard.

TH: Fruit orchard, so he had to work with the fruit trees trimming and harvesting the fruit and things like that.

JM: Okay, and lets see if there is anything else.

TH: They provided housing for the family.

JM: And I was just wondering what it was like when here you are in California where you are kind of with other Japanese families and then after the internment, you went to, you know, the east where, well when I was in the east there weren't that many Japanese families (laughing). There were more Caucasian people. And I was wondering what that was like for you?

TH: Well I could speak the language, you know. I didn't have any problems.

RK: Problem, yeah.

JM: Right.

TH: So I attended the church across the street, the Methodist Church and my father he was always seeking out Japanese congregation, so.

JM: That is what I remember.

TH: So when he was in New Jersey, I mean Riverton he used to take the bus and go to the church, fellowship group in Philadelphia. When we went to Princeton he'd take the bus

and go to New York because there were no Japanese group in Princeton. He'd take the bus and go to New York but that was just dad and mother stayed home with the kids.

JM: And how did Princeton theological seminary figure in our family because I hear about it all the time and I never quite understood?

TH: Well, Carl got his doctorate at the Princeton Seminary.

JM: Okay.

TH: And Princeton seminary was about what five miles away from home.

JM: Okay.

TH: And—

JM: But it seemed like there was always people coming and visiting and eating there.

TH: Yeah, because there was very little Japanese people living around there but dad would look out and look for Japanese students and invite them over.

RK: Hospitality yeah.

JM: Hospitality.

RK: Very.

TH: Hospitality to his students by themselves. He'd invite the Japanese students over and that's how the seminary figures in.

JM: Yeah, okay there are a lot of question marks I have about the family. Your father—I'm wanting to kind of get an idea because I never met my grandfather, your father.

TH: Oh, you never did.

JM: No.

TH: In Princeton.

JM: No I never. He was gone before I was born.

TH: I thought he got there.

JM: No. And but I hear about him even right now.

TH: Well, he was a prominent member of the family.

JM: Yes. Yes and I was—I know that they can't speak for themselves and do you have some idea of what both your father and your mother would want as a legacy for themselves?

TH: Legacy? Just the children.

JM: Just the children.

RK: Just make sure they are successful and happy yeah, that would probably be the—

TH: That's what they worked for.

RK: Sure.

JM: And for—

TH: And they endured a lot of things because of the children and that's the best thing.

RK: Yeah, it is for the Kodomo.

TH: Yeah. It was a little difficult going from Japanese situation in California where four miles away we would have the Japanese church. And in Princeton there was no. He had to take a bus and go for an hour on the bus before he could get to Japanese churches. But mother said she didn't miss them.

JM: She didn't miss the children when—

TH: Miss the Japanese people.

JM: Oh (laughing).

TH: But she—there were people we invited to come to the house.

JM: Right, right and for you—I guess you kind of answered that legacy question before but I'll ask it again? You legacy what would you have that be? What would you want as your legacy?

TH: I don't know.

JM: That is a big question.

TH: Just why the children, yeah. That is them.

RK: Right, they are going to be your legacy.

TH: And they are our legacy, good or bad.

RK: That's right exactly, but it looks like you are pretty successful because they are all look like they are going to do pretty good. Now one of the things—since you were back there if you were going to make, back in New Jersey some type of Japanese food, were there stores that sold? I know on the West Coast it was more, it was easier.

TH: They had to go to a special store.

RK: Okay, so there were special stores?

TH: Way over some place.

RK: That sold Asian food, huh?

TH: Asian food yeah and dad grew soy beans himself.

RK: Oh, okay.

TH: And made tofu.

RK: So you could make tofu exactly.

TH: By himself, yeah. They had to have the Japanese food.

RK: Oh, tofu you need that and so you grow your own soy bean.

TH: So he made his own tofu.

RK: Yeah, and if you knew the formula, you could actually make Sho-yu from the soybeans too.

TH: And Miso.

RK: And Miso, boy there is a lot of products from soy bean.

TH: Yeah, Japanese have to have Japanese food.

RK: Yeah, exactly.

TH: You have to buy the rice by the hundred pound.

RK: And then did you make any sukemono like.

TH: Oh yeah, mother was always making.

RK: Pickled radish and things like that? Yeah. So, that was good. Yeah.

TH: Mother always had a garden. Mother and dad always had a vegetable garden.

RK: Yeah that is important and you can grow your own types of vegetables that you need.

TH: Yeah.

JM: I was always so amazed by Bachan. She would be outside digging in the garden even when she was eighty some years old she was all hump, you know, sitting down.

TH: That is something she picked up in the United States, you know. She was—she was not brought up to do things like that in Japan.

RK: You said she was very young when she came over, right?

TH: Twenty-one.

RK: Twenty-one, so right.

JM: And she was from sort of an elite family too right?

TH: She was one of the Shizo—she is from the Shizoku family.

JM: Shizoku?

TH: Samurai family.

RK: Samurai, Samurai.

TH: Of course, in those days the Samurai status was reduced—

RK: Had gone down yeah after the Shoguns and things.

TH: —during the Meiji Period. But she was still carrying the family name and things like that.
And she lived in the city so coming to the United States and starting on a farm.

RK: Oh yeah, that is really—

TH: Farm and cooking for other people. Oh, that must have been rough.

RK: Exactly, but she seems like she made herself.

TH: But she had other Japanese people.

RK: To learn from, right.

TH: Learn from and that helped a lot.

RK: Well that was good.

TH: She had a lot of kind people who helped her.

JM: Oh I had another question about the name Shimomura. Why—why was it that the
grandfather Shungo—

TH: He was a Momura.

JM: Momura.

TH: And he had to change it to Shimomura.

JM: Why did he change?

TH: Because mother was carrying the name of the family.

RK: They need the male to carry the name, right?

TH: There was no male to carry the name so—

RK: Right, so that's why.

TH: See, mother was carrying the name of Shimomura.

JM: And there were other Momuras?

TH: Huh?

JM: There were other Momuras to carry?

TH: Yeah, but dad was the youngest of four boys.

JM: Oh okay.

TH: So he was able—

RK: He was able to change his name and he carried the name.

JM: Oh, okay.

RK: That is amazing.

TH: Isn't that amazing that the fellow changed his name?

RK: Exactly.

TH: It seems like it was done a lot in Japan, never in the United States you know.

RK: That is probably why it is hard to follow the family history because if you change names
oh yeah, this line ends here you know.

TH: Adopt.

RK: It's like an adoption. Yeah. Adopted name.

JM: Right.

TH: Interesting, mother's family were family physicians, old... like the Chinese herbs and old
style physicians.

RK: Now have you been back to Japan many times?

TH: Three months in all my life.

RK: Oh, okay.

TH: After we retired, we visited for three months.

RK: Oh okay, and that—

TH: No, three weeks.

RK: Three weeks?

TH: Because my sister lives there.

RK: But have you gone to your original ancestral?

TH: I didn't know I had so many cousins.

RK: Oh okay, well that's good.

TH: One cousin, she knew my father. She was up in age, must be eighty something but she remembered my father.

RK: Now were they curious about what happened? Because I don't know if they understood that the Japanese here were put in internment camps. Some of them probably did but—

TH: Probably did but we didn't discuss it.

RK: Oh, okay. I was wondering if they were just curious as to how it was like and how this government treated?

TH: Considering they suffered a lot.

RK: Oh, exactly.

TH: To them with the war. They really suffered a lot so.

RK: So those things never came up, yeah. Well, we appreciate your agreeing to do this interview because all this information will be now documented and put in a library for future generations to use.

TH: Oh dear.

RK: No, which is very important because otherwise it would be lost if we weren't talking to you and putting this information on tape, no one would know a lot of this history and it would just die with each generation. So now people in the future, researchers and others can look at some of the things that happened with various people that we are interviewing through this hard time during WWII and I think it is important and it is helpful. And it can help other races and cultures also if they ever were going through something similar, how difficult it can be and also how you can make a bad situation good by coming up above it and becoming successful and I think that is where the Japanese people should be proud of themselves. Because I think today a lot of them are very, very successful. So we appreciate it and thank you.

TH: Well thank you.

RK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW.