

NARRATOR: NORI MASUDA

INTERVIEWER: IZUMI TANIGUCHI

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NM: My name is Nori Masuda. I was born in Fresno, California, and my parents, both of them came from Hiroshima, Japan. My father was in the United States around 1898 and my uncle was here before then. Then my dad worked in Ventura, San Francisco, and then he came up to Fresno. And I have a—

IT: What year did he come to Fresno?

NM: Fresno, about 1908. My uncle had a store in Chinese Alley and my uncle had to leave for Japan about 1910 or 1912 and I think it was 1910, no 1912, around there. And anyway, there were four boys in the family and three sisters, there is seven of us and my dad had a Japanese bookstore that was located in Chinese Alley in the 900 block. I think it was 923 or something. The store, the building is still there today. And I went to Lincoln Grammar School and Edison High School and then I went to Fresno High School and graduated Fresno High School.

IT: And what year did you graduate?

NM: 1936 yeah. And that is about my history I guess.

IT: What did you do after you graduated from high school?

NM: Oh, from, after graduation, I started working for Rose Boniworks (??) in Fresno. It was run by a Japanese owner named Kisagiro Kimura and I worked there until about 1940— from 1936-1941, yeah that is right. '42 we couldn't go more than five miles, there was, you know, the war started in 1941, December 7th so we couldn't go travel more than five miles in a car so we couldn't, my job was or we didn't have a job.

IT: What were you doing when Pearl Harbor was announced?

NM: Well, that Sunday we were getting ready to play basketball. We had a Japanese league here in Central California. And we all played in Sanger Gymnasium, Sanger High School Gymnasium, and about sixteen got together there and then there was about three games played. And we were waiting to go to Sanger that morning and it was about noon and I noticed somebody was calling me, he said, "Nori, come over here and listen to the radio." We had—someone had a radio in the car and it was saying somebody was bombing Pearl Harbor and Japan is Pearl and then we were wondering, Gee, there no extra newspaper announcing there is a war or anything so that must be some kind of a story, and where is Pearl Harbor? We didn't even know, you know. So anyway, we went to a basketball game that morning or afternoon about twelve o'clock and we asked everybody else and at that time, hardly anybody listened to radio. In fact, some people didn't even have a radio so nobody listened to radio about those times. And then we asked everybody and no, they never heard of any war or bombing and then after the game, it was about five thirty, we came back and sure enough there was an extra on "War with Japan." And that is the first time we felt something deep inside, we didn't feel very good.

IT: Now when you said play basketball, you had about six teams. Was that all from Central California?

NM: Oh, Central California. We had a league from Bakersfield up to Madera and the league and then every Sunday certain teams would get together at Sanger High School and they will play three games or four games if possible.

IT: What was the age group?

NM: Oh, that was between, I would say, sixteen to eighteen or nineteen, high school age and so forth.

IT: But you were older since you graduated high school in '36.

NM: '36, yeah and oh, that's right. And so we were up in age then. We played from high school time, anyway so we played up to 1941, after that, you know, we had to evacuate so that season ended there, yes.

IT: Then what were you—were you working?

NM: I was working for Boniworks (??) back then. Rose Boniworks (??), Kimura was the owner and we used to go to all the local (inaudible) or town like Fowler, Selma, Kingsburg, Dinuba, Sanger, or Reedley and then we used to go around the county, you know, towns like once a week, twice a week and we went to Kern County, Delano, isn't it?

IT: Well, it is on the borderline.

NM: Borderline, well anyway, we went to Delano once a week and then the other three days we had the local Fresno town.

IT: What kind of brand?

NM: That was Rose Boniwork (??), it was a plain soda water. They made the soda water, orange, strawberry, lemon, all flavored so like we had certain orange kist right now and lemon, regular soda water, yeah. And then we also sold beer and Japanese sake like Takuzuro, Kamozuru, and Kiku (inaudible) and we also had some wine from Tulare, we used to bottle them.

IT: Now you were thirteen, were you active in the Young Buddhist Association?

NM: Yes, I was a member of the YBA and we also had our club and that was a basketball team and then we traveled to Gardena and we made our trips to San Francisco and San Jose and things like that. You know, and played inner section games like that.

IT: Now back tracking a little bit.

NM: Yeah.

IT: What kind of work did your father do?

NM: They had a bookstore, you know, that sold Japanese books and then they had a Japanese magazine too they called "Shitomoto" or (inaudible), I can't remember all that. That's the only two that I remember and then my dad used to roll those up, then send it to the customers and all that in the valley here. We also had Japanese notions like comb, toothbrushes, tooth powder and the old medicine. All Japanese and they had it imported, I guess, and so we were selling all those things. And then we had a little small soda fountain, too.

IT: Was your father involved in any Nihon-jin Kai Japanese associations?

NM: Well he was a member of the Nihon-jin Kai, yes, and then also the Buddhist Church member and to build that building, to build that church building, they always had to go out to get donations. All the Issei used to take turns, I'm sure. And they used to go to local town and then they also went to country to do, you know, get some money and donations like that.

IT: When was that building built?

NM: Well, they had a Buddhist Church and had the one wooden building that burned in 1918 and then that burned down so they made a construction on the concrete construction so today it is still sturdy so that was built for I would say about a hundred thousand dollars.

And they had a big mortgage on that before we went in it, but they finally got paid up on that after we came back yeah.

IT: You camp back you mean from camp?

NM: Yeah from camp.

IT: Now when was that building completed? What year?

NM: Well about 1920.

IT: 1920.

NM: And it was all concrete and the structure is still strong but the roof, we had to change it now about five years ago we changed the whole rooftop.

IT: Now let's get back to Japan Town or China Town. What kind of stores were the main business there?

NM: Business in Fresno in those days, they had many small grocery store, you know, like a country food store. They had a lot of them in Fresno, they had Yabuno's, Abuno's, Arata's, Fujimura's, and Ni's had it, and others were restaurants. Fresno had about fifteen Japanese-American restaurants, you know, they served nothing but American food like hamburger, hamburger sandwich or hamburger steak, beef stew and pork chop, whatever a regular restaurant had. And there was about a good fifteen restaurants and they all survived during the Depression. The Depression time was so hard but due to a lot of Spanish people, I think the Japanese community survived through their business because there were Spanish people who came out here to work, the immigrants, they were all coming to Fresno to pick grapes or seasonal work they usually come by. They used to, by God, walk around China Town and it was full, full of people, all Spanish people. Yeah.

IT: Were they—how many hotels?

NM: Hotel? There was about one dozen hotels, too.

IT: All Japanese?

NM: All Japanese-run and I was wondering who was staying there all the time but I know now there was a lot of Japanese, you know—what do you say, migrant worker?

IT: Farm labor?

NM: Yeah, farm labor they went from seasonal, they went to El Centro and they came down to the south all the way to Centro and when Centro finished, they went to Sacramento or you know, Lodi, they were picking grapes. They got Lodi and what kind Tokay grape, yeah, so there was all this seasonal work, and then a lot of people went to Stockton to, for maybe potato or asparagus or something like that, yeah.

IT: Did you have any idea about how many Japanese were farm laborers at that time?

NM: At that time, I would say a good hundred people come by and then they stayed at the hotels like that there.

IT: And then at the hotel, did they have meals or—?

NM: No, the hotel didn't serve meals at all. At that time the hotel rooming was early twenties, was about twenty-five cents a night. Yeah, and then barbershop, I remember the barbershop for the kids was fifteen cents and then the adults were about twenty-five cents.

IT: So they had to go eat in the restaurants then?

NM: Yeah, the restaurant, that is why the Japanese people survived like that, too. Yeah.

IT: That's why there is a lot of restaurants?

NM: Yes, there were. I can name a good bit there like Nakamoto's, Ni's, Yoshioka, Matsubara's, Tanaka's, Sasaki's, and Yuki, Ego, and then there was a lot of Japanese restaurants, mishiya and all that. There were about three or four in China Alley and there was one on Kern Street. There were a couple of them on Kern Street and then the other business was pool halls. There was about five pool halls run by Ota, Nishida, Hamasumi, and Mitsuhara, and Mishima and Kori and Murikami combination there.

IT: And were they the Japanese that frequented the pool halls?

NM: Yeah, there is a few like Mr. Ota's place was a lot of Nisei used to play there. They play, what do you call it, nine ball? Or eight ball like that and for a nickel or something.

IT: Then were there some Japanese doctors and dentists?

NM: Doctor I can remember was Dr. Okinogi, he had a hospital already in the twenties, the 1920s already, Dr. Okinogi. And there was a Dr. Hashiba. And there was a Dr. Hiyashi and there was about two or three hospitals, Okinogi Hospital and Hayashi Hospital, and Hashiba had a hospital right there on E Street. That was, what did they call that before, but I don't know but Mr. Oshiba, Dr. Oshiba took over that later on. And then Hiyashi had sort of a residential home and that was a hospital, too, so there was about three hospitals, doctors, oh more than that. I can't name them all because I don't know them. I can name just Okinogi, oh Dr. Aki too, you know Reverend George Aki? His dad was a doctor, too, at Okinogi and I was treated by him many times. And Oshiba, Hiyashi, and then Dr. Taira came after that, and then Dr. Kazato, and then dentist, there was Dr. Yatabe and Dr. Inada, and there was a one more, I can't remember his name. There was about three or four Japanese dentists. And then George Suda, Dr. Suda, George, he was one of the first Nisei that come back to Fresno to open up, that is after the war, of course.

IT: Where there garages and—?

NM: Other businesses were, like Hami had a grocery store, grocery store there were quite a bit and then Star Supermarket came in the later part of, after about '30—'34 or '35, I guess. Inaba, you know, Star Super, Inaba brothers came in. And they had a big, after Kamikawa moved, Inaba's came in there. And then Inaba's grocery there and then Komoto's bought that and he opened up a furniture store and he also had a book store and then other business is, there was drugstores. There was about two, let's see. There was a drugstore was Home Drug Store that was run by Ozawa, Mr. and Mrs. Ozawa, and then Nichibe Drug Store, there was one on Tulare Street and that was Yamamura and any other pharmacy. Fujimura, Sam came in afterward, though a little later.

IT: Was there any garages?

NM: Oh garage. There was O.K. Garage right on across Fresno Buddhist Church and run by Mr. Yamamoto and Mr. Tom Inouye and those two ran that partner and West Fresno Drug Store, a West Fresno Garage was run by Mr. Tsutsui, Taketomo and Taigusa.

IT: Is that Taketomo, Emiko's relative?

NM: Taigusa, Taigusa no.

IT: Is that Taketomo, Emiko's dad?

NM: Yeah, that is Emiko's dad, yeah. And then there was another garage called Liberty Garage on G Street and that was run by Mr. Hamasumi, yeah. And then there was a bathhouse, there was about three of them that I remember. One was in China Alley, no, no, that was a long time ago. That one, there was four, that's right, China Alley. And then one of them favorite of most people that went to Baba yute right now on Kern Street, you know, there's a barbershop is still there okay. That was a bathhouse in the back and

then the barber was Mr. Baba and then they also ran a bathhouse and there was a bath. And we were kids then and we used to go in for five cents and then we had two towels, one to wash with and one to dry with. Then adults had to pay about fifteen cents and student size, they had to pay ten cents and we were kids, only five cents, five cents. And then there was three of them. Mr. Baba run one, then Mr. Ondo, they had right on F Street, right in the center. Do you remember Ni's Restaurant? Right across there, it is about the middle of the block, there was Ondo Bath House. He also ran the barbershop and bath and that was patronized quite a bit, and there was one on Tulare Street, and on Tulare Street there was a Ryan Theater there, a Japanese theater, right next door Iwata had the bathhouse so there was actually three good bathhouses there.

IT: Who was running the theater?

NM: The theater, Ryan Theater was run by Mr. Nishioka and he had all the American pictures like, you know, when we were a kid, we used to see cowboy picture like Tom Mix and Fred Thompson and what else now, quite a bit, anyway, old time oh, Pat O'Brien, Hoot Gibson, and like that. And then there was another theater on F Street. That was on Tulare Street and right on the corner on F Street and F and Tulare, there was a Lyceum Theater and that was owned by Mr. Miwa, and they had three sons named Frank, no, Ted, Frank and Saburo, they were there for about four or five years. I don't know where they are now. Maybe they are in L.A. or something. So there were two Japanese theater and then the third one was that Japanese Nippon Haru (Hall) right there, you know—who is there now? Fuka's Restaurant is?

IT: Oh right by Kern and F Street?

NM: Yeah, Kern and F Street, you know, that corner with Ito's Dry Good Store next to Home Drug Store and next, they call that Japanese Hall where and we used to go see movies there, Japanese movies. That is all they had and they used to bring the movie films to Fresno and they had a Benshi to talk all the girl part and women part and all that, you know, and they called that the Benshi and if you talk about took part of every actor or actress or something. So that was what we saw in the Japanese movie at that time? And that was something. Of course we didn't understand Japanese at that time but our folks pushed us to go so it was a Japanese movie and they figured that we will pick up Japanese, all that.

IT: Did they have any shibai?

NM: Shibai all the time, yes.

IT: At that hall?

NM: At that hall, yes. There is a man that's named Mr. Ishita and Matsumoto, he had a printing shop and they are the ones that took care of all that. They had some kind of a Ingei Club, you know, and they had odori and they showed that and shibai, they did that, and then movie, they had about three different companies like, I forgot their name, I forgot. But there were about three of them that used to come by and so we didn't have it every day. Maybe once a month or once in two months like a Japanese movie like that, then other times I remember one time the Japanese Buddhist Church, you know, we had Japanese School. We had a big enrollment though days. They had two shifts, one was three o'clock to four and then one, four o'clock to five, you know, for the older group.

IT: First through—?

NM: About fourth grade and then fifth through ninth grade, like that they had. So there were a lot of students so we used to have Gakugei kai, you know, school play, so we used to have it in there and that place would fill up, you know. Yeah.

IT: Do you want to take a time out?

NM: Okay.

IT: Okay, let's see. You said the Tofu Company?

NM: They had tofu making into a manufacturing right on Kern Street, you know, where that Kiku Floral is right now, it is on the fourteen hundred block, a fifteen hundred block. Or is it fourteen hundred, yeah, fourteen hundred block, Kiku is right about that place. Yes a, Nagahama used to make the tofu, age, konyaku and all that, and there was another one right on (inaudible) alley. In the middle of the alley there, there was a small building there and they had tofu, age and all that too, the same, and so they had two tofu manufacturing place. They also had kamabuko manufacturing, what was his name? Marutama and that is the name of the brand. They are in L.A. now and they have a big company there. Marutama Kamabuko, and that was run by a Mr.—I forgot his name.

IT: Did that start here in Fresno then?

NM: Yes, he started the kamabuko here.

IT: And he moved to Los Angeles after the war?

NM: Yeah, after the war they moved to L.A., yeah. So we don't have any kamabuko manufacturing here, yeah.

IT: What about fish markets?

NM: Fish market? There was Saito Fish on F Street and he was the only one that lasted long. There was another family named Masuda. They had a fish company on Tulare Street and

they also sold chicken, fish, chicken, too. You know they used to kill a chicken right there at the shop there. And they plucked the feather and all that and then they were selling fresh chicken, yeah. And fish and barbershop and oh yeah, Kowamoto's, they were—they had a big hardware store and of course they had it until recently, and they had their first store on Kern Street. And –

IT: The same place that it was recently?

NM: No, Kern, excuse me, it was on Tulare Street. Tulare Street they had it on. Tulare, yeah, on the fourteen hundred block. And then there was Western Hotel on top, and there was a Japanese mishiya there called Kagetsu and it was run by (inaudible). And that was pretty well known place.

IT: Were you a member of JACL at that time?

NM: Yes, I was. Toward the end I was—I think I must have joined around 1938 or around there, so I remember the meeting we had, Dr. Yatabe and all the ones that used to get together during that time. But I think the leader was Dr. Yatabe there and he says, you know, they are going to send us to camp and so forth and so we have to be prepared now, and so they chose all kinds of committees to do something now, I know they chose me to collect some toys, you know. Any toy you can get, some donations from homes. So I had to go around to all the residents and homes, you know, and ask the people if you have any old toys, broken, that is okay. And then I had to accumulate all those toys and we had them at the church in there, and I used to fix some so that they could be useable, and we had a library, toy library in the assembly center. And you know, at the fairground, and I think Robert Kimura then was at charge at that time. And I don't know what happened. Well, of course we had other, like basketball and rims and goal, you know, we

took that from the church, and we took it all in there and we made our basketball, and then in camp we had to do something to keep everybody busy, so we had tennis, you know, Butler Avenue—

IT: Yeah.

NM: We had tennis court on Butler Street. Of course it was ground up on the street, you know, but we just drew a line and just to hit around, and then we had volleyball tournaments and basketball tournaments and baseball.

IT: Now getting back to the JACL. Where did you meet?

NM: You know, there were three churches we forgot, you know. Fresno Congregational Church, that's on the corner of Inyo and B Street, and Buddhist Church was on E and Kern, and then Methodist Church was on Kern and D, D Street, and so those three corners were all church and during that wartime, we couldn't get together but we got together. Dr. Yatabe called a meeting and we had a meeting at the Emi Church, you know Henry Mikami, their church. That was on D Street. It is a United Methodist Church, yeah. Then they moved to Fresno Street later on. But we—it was on D and Kern Street that we had the meeting. Then we had to get together and then be prepared and then they discussed about shots and all that. During that time, the evacuation notice came out, we had to get shots so there were a lot of volunteer, of course all the doctors like Taira, Kazato, they all came, and all the nurses and nurse's aides, they all came to help, you know, to hold on the kids and they were giving shots.

IT: This is before you went to camp?

NM: Before we went to camp, everybody had to get a tetanus shot or something.

IT: I remember we had to get out shots in camp right at the—.

NM: In camp, huh. We had ours right at the church there and they called us all to go there and get your shots and we got our shots there.

IT: Now when you went to camp, your family how—who was all in your family at that time?

NM: My older brother, he was in the army already. He went in April of 1941 already. So he was in already so I have two other brothers, myself and three sisters. And we all, I volunteered to go in first, you know, so when the people come in, they had something to eat, like that. So I was a kitchen helper, that is about it. And then the camp, the wages were for professional man was sixteen dollars and skill labor was twelve dollar and labor was eight dollars. That is what we got, labor pay and that was for a month, now.

IT: When did you go into the camp?

NM: May the ninth.

IT: How long were you there?

NM: In that camp see, we were the first to go. We had volunteered to go in. Anybody who wanted to go in earlier, they could. The reason I volunteered to go in first was because I could take a lot of things because they were going to take me on the truck. Otherwise, you could only carry what you could carry. So what I did, I told my folks about it. I said I will take all the big comforters and whatever you can't carry, I'll put them on the truck and they will take me over there and once I'm in, I'm in there, you know. We could carry, too, so we got by, see. We were lucky because a big family, you know, my sisters, they are all young yet and so but they had a hard time holding up at home back there.
But (inaudible) wages.

IT: So that was Fresno Assembly Center?

NM: Fresno Assembly Center, yeah.

IT: And when did you leave the Fresno Assembly Center?

NM: Okay, we were in there first and then when the group came in, why they wanted to volunteer was we had the kitchen already opened already and of course the people coming in, they had to eat so we had to prepare the meals for them when they came in so that is what happened. So when they came in, they just came into eat and then they'd take off.

IT: All the Fresno Assembly Center go to Jerome?

NM: Most of them did, yeah. Somebody, some people that wanted to go to Arizona and dry climate, they could go, so a few of the Fresno people went to the dry climate because Arkansas was humid and all that.

IT: When did you go to Jerome?

NM: Jerome, we were the last ones because they wanted us to close up the camp there, so we left about November the third and it took about five days to get across and yeah. But in camp everybody was well organized anyway, you know, because they do whatever you tell them. Don't go near the fence, you know.

IT: This was in Jerome?

NM: No, this was in Fresno, yeah.

IT: Fresno?

NM: And then of course, all the policemen and it was just another city, all the mayor or the council like that. We had managers from each section, they went by section, A, B,C, D, up to K or J, like that. So there was about seven, eight, nine, twelve or, sections. And each section had five hundred people.

IT: And in the assembly camp, did you have a barrack or did you go into one of the—

NM: No, no. No horse stall. Some people said we were thrown in a horse stall but that is wrong. Other camps were like that, Pomona Fairgrounds, but Fresno, they got barrack. But the barrack, there was a little double wall, just outside wall, you know, the plank board and then they got tar paper covered, then they had wood strips all tacked there so the oil paper wouldn't come off. The inside wall, there was no inside wall so you could see the wooden bare wall there. And then you could see the two-by-four. And the room was, the biggest room was about twenty by twenty, I think. Then there was two smaller room and three big room like so that there were five rooms in each barrack. And then each section had twenty, you know. So there was about five hundred in that one section. So they didn't have a ceiling, they just had the wall, one side wall, then they had that, what's that, sheet rock there so they didn't have just a wall up to eight feet and then you could see the neighbors light, or no ceilings so it was wide open so you could hear them. If you were sleeping, you could hear them snoring, all that. And then the floor was, they had three types in that section. They had center, they had concrete, they had asphalt and wood, okay. The wooden floor, it was lifted up higher but within the fairground race track so the wooden floor, they had alfalfa coming up. And they had and so in the summertime it is hot. And asphalt, you know how hot it gets, we had no cooler, no fan. Anyway, the asphalt gets warm and if you are sleeping in bed, it sags on one side and goes in, and then concrete, it has its faults, too. You want to clean it up, you know how dusty it gets, and it's not a smooth finish, it's a rough finish though. So if you sweep it, it is just too dusty, so my mother, they had newspaper, wet it, and then they swept it like that. Then the mattress was ticks, you know, and we used to get canvas sacks and put hay in there. That was our mattress and all that. And we had problems, too, with ticks.

What was it, not ticks, bed bugs, yeah. You know, we had that metal cot, you know, and we wondered what happened, you know. We were sleeping, and morning time we'd get two bites, you know, and they are big bites and it get's big. So we wondered and they started popping and that's bed bugs and, by God, you know, you look around for the bite and they are walking around on the sheets, you know, for the red blood sucked out already. So we got wise to that. We got all the bed, the cot bed out, it's between that metal part there, and so we used to burn that thing, yeah. And let's see.

IT: Now we got pretty much information about camp life so. In Jerome did you come straight back to Fresno?

NM: No, I went to Detroit and I worked in Detroit.

IT: When did you go to Detroit?

NM: This was in '40, '43, I think.

IT: Then how long were you in Detroit?

NM: I was there six months, I think.

IT: Six months?

NM: Yeah, because I got hurt and I had to come back. Yeah, I couldn't work because of my thumb. I smashed it.

IT: So then you went back to camp?

NM: Yeah, I went back to camp and I stayed there and then I was going to go out again but they start to announce that Jerome is going to close in another six months or so. So I said well, I'd better help, you know, 'cause my younger brother was old enough, he was out already in Michigan working, so I stayed and then we moved. After we moved to

Rohwer, I stayed about a month and then James Kamikawa and I we went to New Jersey to work.

IT: What—?

NM: New Jersey, yeah, Seabrook Park. Yeah, and then I worked there for about a year and then I go my notice from the war department, you know, so I took my oath and then I got called into the army.

IT: Yeah.

NM: Then I went to Camp Robinson and then from Robinson we were going to go overseas, Europe, and then they called us, all the Nisei at Camp Robinson, they said report to the headquarters, so and so and John Nakamoto and this and that. There was about one hundred Nisei right in that camp. It was a big camp, Camp Robinson. It had about twenty thousand people in there.

IT: Where is Robinson?

NM: Robinson is around Little Rock.

IT: Little Rock?

NM: Yeah, close to there. Uh-huh. And—when we reported to the headquarters, we saw all the friends that we knew, and Ben Nakamura was there, too. And he was in special service though. He was stationed there. And he was helpful, you know, and encouraged us, anyway, we all got—I got called there and they said we're going to go to Minnesota so we had no choice. We didn't want to go but that was the best thing that happened. I loved it now, you know. I had a good experience in Japan. That is the first time that I went Japan.

IT: Yeah, and you went to—

NM: Minnesota, Fort Snelling.

IT: When was that?

NM: That was December, God, I, '44?

IT: '44, yeah. 1944, '46.

IT: '46?

NM: Yeah, because, wait a minute now. '44 I went, '45, '45 I went.

IT: Snelling in '45?

NM: Yeah, yeah.

IT: And that was after the war ended?

NM: No, the war wasn't ended yet. We were taking training and then the war ended.

IT: Oh yeah, but then you are taking training in Snelling?

NM: No.

IT: Where were you taking training?

NM: Training was—

IT: Robinson?

NM: Robinson, yeah.

IT: And then—

NM: Robinson because I know, we looked it up.

IT: So the war ended when you were in Robinson?

NM: Yeah, and in Camp Robinson.

IT: And then you went to Snelling?

NM: Uh—

IT: Oh, that had to be '45.

NM: Yeah, yeah.

IT: How long were you in Snelling?

NM: From November to July.

IT: July?

NM: So six, seven months.

IT: And then you went to Japan?

NM: Then they sent us to Japan, yeah.

IT: And where did you go in Japan?

NM: Tokyo, I was stationed in Tokyo.

IT: Attis?

NM: Attis, yeah. I was very lucky I was stationed there. My younger brother was in Korea already, you know. And—

IT: In, in?

NM: In Korean occupation, so when I went there, I was in Tokyo occupation, and then we went to the NYK Building at (inaudible) and that's where all the Attis people translation this and that.

IT: And how long were you in Attis?

NM: Six months, that is all. Then I got my discharge in Japan. So I was very lucky, yeah. And they said why don't you re-up, you know. You know, we got, well, I can't help it. They froze our rating and all that so the whole group never got our rating and everyone was real mad about that but can't help it, you know. They said you will get it when you graduate. You will get your rating when you graduate. You will get it overseas. We

went overseas and didn't get it. It wasn't a promotion, it is more money, you know. You get rating because you get corporal rating.

IT: T5 or something.

NM: I forgot the rating now. And they say, why don't you re-up? And then you get a promotion to officer and no, I had enough. (laughs) So somebody did get lieutenant. Yeah.

IT: But it was much later though?

NM: Yeah, a month later yeah. So I said I'm going to get out. One of my friends, he said, "Nori, you should re-up." He was lieutenant already. And no, I'm getting out already, and so I got out. Yeah, I worked as civil service and that was really good.

IT: In Japan? Civil service in Japan?

NM: Yeah, within Japan. I made a lot of good friends.

IT: How long did you go with civil service in Japan?

NM: I stayed with them until 1954. Yeah. And so I made a lot of good friends, yeah. I am very lucky. And then when I came back and then I worked for Mikami and it sure came in handy, you know, taking groups to Japan.

IT: And so you came back to Fresno?

NM: I came back to Fresno.

IT: From the service, and was the rest of your family here?

NM: Yeah, they were back in Fresno, yeah.

IT: And they came back here from Jerome?

NM: No, from Rohwer. You see, we moved to Rohwer first. See, I made sure they were all set. I didn't want them to be moving because my next brother, he was already taken in

the army, and I was after him, see. My oldest one was already in and he was out already so but, you know, just my three sisters and my one kid brother were the only one left and they cannot move by themselves so I have to help them move to Rohwer, yeah. But from Rohwer, they moved to, on their own.

IT: And when they came back to Fresno?

NM: Yeah, they came back to Fresno.

IT: How many sisters and brothers?

NM: My one sister got married so two sisters and my one brother and my father and mother.

IT: They came back?

NM: Yeah, they came back, yeah.

IT: And what did they do to resettle?

NM: They resettled at the church dormitory. They had sort of people coming back and they had no place to go. We had to stay at the dormitory for a while, one bedroom like this and about five of my two sister and my brother, five of them stayed in one room, yeah.

IT: Did they start the bookstore again?

NM: No, we didn't start no business afterwards because it is too hard. So my dad and well, first of all, we had to find a home. We had to move out of that dormitory, you know, because it was so hard to do anything. You can't cook. Anyway, Mr. Inaki had a house for rent and he rented it out to us so we stayed there a while, a couple years. And then we had a home built in Fresno close to Edison High School, yeah. So we were very lucky after that. My dad and my mom, they did this little work going out packing grapes or, you know, wintertime they go make the cuttings, you know, the grapes cutting. And they used to do that, yeah.

IT: So when did you come back to Fresno?

NM: I came back in 1954.

IT: In '54.

NM: Yeah.

IT: So did you go to work for Mikami at that time?

NM: No, no, from Mikami I went to work for some company in Pinedale here. Yeah ,they had a furniture-making manufacturer here. I forgot what their company name was. But I worked for him for about a year there making furniture, then I said I better get going and I went to L.A. And then I worked in the May Company there, and then I learned how to repair furniture there because I was doing upholstery work and making furniture and like that. So I learned the refinishing and all that so I was doing all that kind of work for May Company. And I worked there for about a year or so and then my dad passed away so I came back and then I worked for Montgomery Ward, yeah. I worked there for about ten years and then they closed up and then after that, I got a job at the Bank of Tokyo.

IT: Oh yeah?

NM: And then from there, I retired, then I'm working for Mikami now. What a long ride.
(laughs) Let's see. What else is there?

IT: Now from when you are working for Mikami.

NM: Yeah.

IT: How many times a year do you go?

NM: I used to take a group, about three groups sometimes, you know. Two at the most, two, you know, one spring and one autumn, and sometime in the summer I took Tenaya Junior High School group. They had a sister city deal with Koichi and Fresno, and the Fresno

student, they all, you know. They had about fifteen to twenty students who wanted to go so I used to take them. And then they used to go just to Koichi and then they used to come back to Fresno one week.

So one time I told the teacher, I said, you know, your group is okay going to Koichi and all that but, you know, you don't see Japan just by Koichi. If stay another week, I'll take you to Kyoto, Tokyo and Hiroshima, that is the three big cities you have got to see. She said well if you take us around. I can take you around anytime a whole week and, by God, they said okay, and we—and that was a good group. The student liked it, yeah. They stayed one week in Koichi and one week I went to Koichi, and brought them back to Hiroshima two nights, Kyoto two nights and Tokyo two nights, and then we came back. So that was neat. Now today, now I have been at it about seventeen years now. And I only go once. Once is enough.

IT: Yeah, when you stayed with the civil service, did you travel around Japan a lot?

NM: No, I didn't travel that much. Just to visit my uncle, you know, that is all I did. Now all I knew was Hiroshima. God, I wish I did travel because it was free for us. We could ride the train and go anyplace we wanted but I wasn't interested in those things, you know, seeing other places but I regret it that time, yeah. But now I am all right.

IT: When, before civil service, what kind of work did you do at Attis?

NM: Yeah, they assigned me to some interpreting section and they put me in the post office, too, yeah. So I used to get all the mail and then they'd call for their mail and all that. It wasn't bad, yeah. I didn't do too much head work.

IT: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to talk about?

NM: Well, that is about it. I think we can get together again and I can point out all the places and you can get the map out.

IT: Yeah. I have that interview I have with other people.

NM: Oh, oh.

IT: And so if I can get a picture of that map, I can work it out and then I might have questions for you later.

NM: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW