NARRATOR: TAKASHI TSUTSUI

INTERVIEWER: RALPH KUMANO

DATE: July 28, 2005

RK: We are in Kingsburg, Californi,a on July 28, 2005, at the home of Takashi Tsutsui, a Nisei man who is seventy-three years of age. This interview will be part of the Izumi Taniguchi Oral History Program housed in the Special Collection unit of the Henry Madden Library at 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. Okay, Takashi, we are going to start with life before WWII and one of the questions will be of the family and the home life. Where were you born?

TT: Fresno.

RK: Okay, and on what date?

TT: January 21, 1932.

RK: Okay.

TT: And at that time there was midwives so I was born in a house on Chestnut Avenue.

RK: Okay, and what was your father's—family's line of work at that time in Fresno?

TT: At that time, he was a farmer.

RK: Okay, and your father was he an Issei?

TT: Yes.

RK: And he came over from Japan?

TT: Yes.

RK: Roughly what was the date if you can recall?

TT: It was in 1916, I think.

RK: Okay, and then, was he married to your mother or did that happen after?

TT: No, he came over to be adopted by his uncle.

RK: Oh, okay. And then later he met your mother?

TT: Well, he went back again to Japan and married her.

RK: And then came back, okay. And then you were born, okay. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

TT: Two brothers and two sisters.

RK: And where did you fall in the family line?

TT: Middle.

RK: Okay, you are right in the middle, okay. And what were the orders of the brothers and sisters?

TT: The oldest one was a sister named Toshiye.

RK: Okay.

TT: Then a brother named Marvin.

RK: Okay, and then you.

TT: And then a sister named Tadaho and a brother named Hideo.

RK: Okay, what do you remember of early family life when you were living in Fresno?

TT: Well, living in Fresno, I don't remember a thing.

RK: Okay.

TT: I was too young. But my father rented a farm above the Lane's Bridge. It is not there anymore. The Lane Bridge isn't there. And I remember one night he was gone. His cousin was checking a ditch for irrigation and his cousin came running to the house and told my mother to lock the doors. There is a drunk guy on a horse. And he was dragging

a rope and he told my father's cousin to peer up that rope, and he had a double barrel shotgun across his saddle so my father's cousin got the rope for him and he whipped it across my father's cousin's face.

RK: Wow.

TT: And made one side bloodshot and he told my mother that he was going to go over to a family named Torri for help. While he was gone, my dad came home and asked my mom who threw everything out of the pump house. And my mom told him that this drunk man on a horse did it. And my dad was real hot-tempered so he grabbed the shovel and put it on the fender of the car and went looking for that guy. And my father's cousin got to Torri's and it just so happened that there were young guys there, Johnson Shimizu, I think the Ikedas, Mike Torr,i and anyway ,they all came over and they were going to beat the heck out of that guy. And my mom told them that my dad went looking for him so they waited. My dad came back and he said the boss won't bring him out. So he came home. My dad knew where this guy worked but the boss wouldn't let him come out. Now that I remember. I was about five years old. From there we moved to Hanford. My father started a fish market. And every morning he would load up two boxes of fish in an insulated box in the back of his pickup. And he'd make the routes and 99% of his customers were Portuguese. And my mother, not knowing English, she took care of the store and on Saturdays, my dad would take that fish box off the pickup, wash everything and many times we would go to my grandmother's farm in Clovis. When the war broke out, he tried to get his mother to come to Hanford or we'd go to her farm and the relocation said the authorities wouldn't allow it. And my father knew a lawyer in Fresno named John Phillips. He came over and got mad at my dad for letting his mother go to a

different camp. And he said he tried. And Mr. Phillips said you wait here ,and the WRA office was only about a half block away. He came back and he said tomorrow you wave good-bye to your friends and get on the bus and you drive to your mother's place. And my dad had that pickup and he had a car so my older brother must have drove one of them and I think he was only fourteen.

RK: Wow.

TT: And no driver's license.

RK: Right.

TT: From there my younger sister and I went to Polaski's School and I think that building is still standing. It was a one-room school with eight grades in there.

RK: Okay, K-eight, eighth grade.

TT: And there was a kid riding a horse to school wearing Levi's and western shirt and cowboy hat and one day that kid said something to me and I guess from my younger days I was always hot tempered so I beat him up. The others came up to me and said, "Why did you fight a girl?" I said, "That was no girl." So you watch and see what restroom she goes to. She went to the girls' restroom and she was riding a horse and dressed like a boy and hair cut like a boy.

RK: Real short, yeah.

TT: So I had to go and apologize to her. And then after school, my sister and I had to walk a couple of miles to my grandmother's farm. And there was two Caucasian boys and a girl. They were brother and sister and they would tease us, throw rocks at us so we would throw rocks back at them and we were more accurate so they were running away from us. And then we went to camp.

RK: Now before you went to camp, was this school outside of Hanford or in the city?

TT: No, Clovis.

RK: Oh, this is in Clovis, okay. And then so you didn't go to all eighth grade, you went to camp during what grade?

TT: Fifth grade.

RK: Okay, fifth grade and which camp did you go to?

TT: Poston, Poston Two. All the other Hanford went to Fresno Assembly Center.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And we went direct to Poston.

RK: Now do you remember what the exact time when Pearl Harbor was bombed, December 7, 1941?

TT: Well, I was told that Pearl Harbor was bombed.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And I never knew there was a Pearl Harbor.

RK: Okay, and were you at school when this happened or were you at home?

TT: I think I was at home. My older brother had a radio and he heard it on the radio.

RK: Oh okay, a lot of people (chimes ringing), okay, so now you had the news of Pearl Harbor but you still continued to go to school, right?

TT: Yes.

RK: And were there any animosities or feelings from the rest of the people?

TT: The school I went to was on the other side of the tracks.

RK: Okay.

TT: So most of the kids were Mexicans or African-Americans. Very few Japanese and very few Caucasians so we had no problems.

RK: Okay, now before you went to Poston, did you have to go to assembly center?

TT: No. We went to my mother—my grandmother's farm.

RK: Okay, and then they drove the cars over?

TT: Well, we had to get on a train.

RK: Train, okay.

TT: In Clovis that took us to Parker, Arizona, and from Parker, busses took us into camp.

RK: Okay.

TT: We go off the bus and they handed us a pill and told us to drink it, and so with water we drank it and I asked my father what that was and he said salt pill. I said, "Why salt pill?" Well, yesterday, people from Salinas came in and Salinas' temperature is around sixty degrees.

RK: Right, because it's on the coast there.

TT: And Parker and Poston was about a hundred and fifteen. So a lot of them collapsed.

RK: Yeah, they fainted because it was so hot.

TT: And being from San Joaquin Valley we are around a hundred so that heat didn't bother us. We didn't need the salt pills.

RK: Now when you were going on the train, I know most Japanese, they just had only a few items they could carry and then they had to wear a tag. Is that the same situation as yours?

TT: I don't know about the tag but it was what we could carry.

RK: Carry, okay. And which camp in Poston there were three camps.

TT: Two.

RK: Oh, Camp Two, and then when you got there, do you recall any of the buildings, how the buildings were made and constructed and were they hot inside and cold during the winter?

TT: Well, it was 1x12" redwood siding and they had a double roof and black, what do you call that?

RK: Tar, tar paper?

TT: Yeah, black on the sides and on top and it was hot, and then the floor, the cracks were half- inch or three-quarters of an inch, when the wind blew, you couldn't see the next barracks but you ran into your own barracks and went inside but you couldn't see in there because the dust was from the floor.

RK: Yeah, there was cracks in the floor, yeah.

TT: Later, the government gave linoleum and everybody had the same color so they tacked those down and the government gave heavy paper that they put on the inside walls so inside the dust wasn't too bad and they had gardeners for the blocks. My uncle and my father's uncle, they were the gardeners for our block. They would plant vegetables between the barracks and that kept the dust down.

RK: The dust down, yeah.

TT: Then later, the older people would go out in the woods and first there was a slough and they would cut cottonwood limbs or willow and bring them back and plant them around the barracks so we got shade. And they had big piles of scrap lumber so with that scrap lumber, they gave us canvas cot beds that tore within six months. Then they gave us

mattress but I heard they were GI mattress so the men made bed frames out of scrap lumber and put the mattress on there, which is a lot better than cots.

RK: Exactly.

TT: And then the men went out and cut poles out of trees and brought them back and put those along one side and up the other and back and then put some poles on top and then with the scrap lumber they made shade so under there, was a gathering place and we had shade there.

RK: Yeah, because you are basically right along the Colorado River and inland a little ways and there was probably not many big trees, right? (sneeze)

TT: Well, they built our camp in a mesquite forest.

RK: Oh, okay. Now can you describe the room now? Was it a single room with the entire family in one room?

TT: Yeah.

RK: And so you had your two brothers and sister and plus your parents in that?

TT: Yeah.

RK: What about grandparents?

TT: My grandmother and my cousin and my uncle were in the next apartment.

RK: Oh, okay, so they did have a separate room, okay. Now in that room, did you put up partitions for privacy? Any walls or anything or kept it a single room?

TT: My dad bought cloth and my mom sewed it together and they strung it up from the ceiling and made rooms out of that.

RK: Okay, yeah, I understood a lot of Japanese did that. Now the restrooms and showers, were they in a different building and how far did you have to go?

TT: Oh, I would say to the men's restroom and shower from our barrack, it couldn't have been a little over a hundred feet. And then some men made partitions between the commodes.

RK: Right, because it was all open, I understand.

TT: Yeah.

RK: The—

TT: And then they made a bench and some hooks where you could put your clothes while you take a shower. And in the winter when it rained, that dirt would stick to your shoes real bad. It was kind of—

RK: Clay, right, wasn't it?

TT: Clay.

RK: Clay, oh, it was pretty muddy, I bet.

TT: So the men all got together and went to that scrap pile and they made wooden walks from each barracks to the latrines, the laundry room and to the kitchen so we didn't have to walk through the mud. (cough) When we first got there, my dad was the head sumo instructor. And government said something about them so he got on a crew making charcoal and from there he worked in the slaughterhouse and they had their own hog farm. And one morning somebody had parked a caterpillar in there and they had to move it and my father being the only farmer, went to move it, and you had to crank it and he knew that when you crank a tractor, you hold a crank this way. But he held it this way and when it backfired, the crank came back and broke his arm.

RK: Oh, wow, yeah.

TT: And so while he was in a cast, our block manager left so they made him block manager.

RK: Now was there a hospital nearby so he could get his arm fixed easily.

TT: Yeah.

RK: Okay, now was there any communications between Camp Two and Camp One and Camp Three?

TT: I think so.

RK: Okay.

TT: There was, we called it a bus, but it was a flatbed truck with a side railings on it.

RK: And go between the camps.

TT: Yeah.

RK: Oh, so you could see some people in the other camps. So do you remember any of the barbed wire or guard towers or you are in fifth grade right at this time?

TT: There was no guard towers, and the only barbed wire fence I saw was in the woods to keep the wild horses away from camp.

RK: Okay.

TT: And one time, P-38 landed or belly flopped and landed outside our camp and there was I think three or four strands of barbed wire on that side but we are out in the desert, if you went east there were foothills and mountains and if you went west, there was the Colorado River.

RK: River, right.

TT: So, some of the older men used to hike to the mountains to go get greasewood to make canes and ironwood and they would make canes, cigarette holders and chopsticks, and us young people, we would go hike up there, too. And then when got to know how to get to the Colorado River, I'd go to the mess hall and tell them how many days I would be gone

and my friends would go there and they would tell them how many days they'd be gone and they'd give us food. And we'd hike to the river. At first we all carried a gallon of water. Well later, we just carried one gallon of water among us because we drank the river water later.

RK: Right.

TT: And I was about eleven and cooked our rice in an open one-gallon can and a wire handle on it and fire going up the sides but we never burned the rice.

RK: That's pretty good.

TT: And I forget what we got to cook but one day back at the barracks (cuckoo clock chirps) they had those electric hot plates and I decided I was going to cook rice and about that much on the bottom was black.

RK: (laughing)

TT: I did better with open flame.

RK: Open flame, yeah. Now they had a mess hall. How was the food there? Was it prepared by the internees?

TT: Yeah.

RK: And was it sufficient, do you think? Can you recall the food situation?

TT: I, on the whole, I think it was all right.

RK: Okay.

TT: And they had two shifts of cooks and cook's helpers so my mom was a cook's helper and she would work every other day and you had to go there early in the morning. One morning when she was just about to open the door, she heard a scream outside so she

peeked outside and the neighbor was one of the cooks and he was on the ground holding his head. A mountain lion had clawed him.

RK: Oh gee. Did he survive?

TT: Yeah.

RK: Yeah, okay. Now with the schools, did you go straight into a fifth grade school in Poston?

TT: Into sixth grade.

RK: Into sixth grade, okay.

TT: And our classrooms were one block of empty barracks so but they were building a school, my father's cousin worked on it. They made adobe block and built the school with adobe.

RK: Oh, yeah, that is a better material.

TT: Yeah, so it didn't get as hot in the summer or get as cold in the winter.

RK: Yeah, exactly, that was smart. (chimes ringing)

TT: They built a high school and a grammar school there. And my brother was a senior the last year we were there. And he had a government pickup with him twenty-four hours a day. He was the head refrigeration man. When they had trouble, he had to go to the block and fix the refrigerator. He was working with another man learning it and the other man left camp. So my brother had to take over.

RK: Now do you recall the year that you actually went to the camp? Was it in 1942 or?

TT: '42.

RK: And so how long were you at the camp?

TT: We came out in '45.

RK: Okay, so three years.

TT: Two or three years.

RK: So you never got to the high school. You were in eighth grade when you came out?

TT: I graduated in eighth grade in camp.

RK: Okay. (cough) Your older brother and sister, they went to part of the high school, I guess?

TT: My older brother did. My older sister had a health problem. She couldn't speak so she never went to school.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: So whatever we said in English or Japanese, she understood.

RK: Now how was the education? The teachers at the camp, were they Japanese or some of the Japanese?

TT: Some were Japanese and some were Caucasian.

RK: Okay.

TT: And being twelve and thirteen years old, we thought the Caucasians were dumb for coming out into the hot desert.

RK: Right.

TT: But actually they were dedicated people. They cared about us.

RK: That's good. Now also what was the interaction between you and the military at the camp? Were they friendly?

TT: I was too young but my cousin lived in the next apartment to ours. He was one of the first five or six that volunteered out of our camp.

RK: Oh, for military service? Okay. Now when they had that choosing of the loyalty oath, you were too young to?

TT: I didn't even see it.

RK: I think that was for anyone over eighteen, eighteen and older, I think. Now, what other activities especially a person when you were like you said in middle school, did you do during the day when school was out? Were there things to do?

TT: Well, we used to go fishing. A friend and I used to go golfing. Some people made a nine-hole golf out in the mesquite—

RK: Oh, wow.

TT: For us and we did a lot of fishing. My friend's folks used to dry that fish.

RK: What kinds of fish did you catch out of the river?

TT: Crappy, sunfish.

RK: Any bass in there?

TT: Black bass.

RK: Black bass, yeah.

TT: Catfish, Mr. Masuda that used to own Yosemite Nursery.

RK: Uh-huh.

TT: He was in our block. And he made a block pond.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And my uncle caught the second largest catfish of the three camps and that catfish was in that pond.

RK: Okay, good.

TT: And they had carps in there.

RK: Right. Yeah, a lot of the camps, they made fish ponds and different things for decoration. So you stocked it with the fish you caught so that was pretty good. Now as you were, it was nearing 1945 and people started leaving camp. Were you among the first to leave or among the last to leave the camp?

TT: I guess we were in the middle somewhere.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: My dad was block manager so out of our block, I guess we were one of the later ones. He was supposed to inspect the crates that they crated their belongings out in and make sure they weren't taking any government things. If everything was okay, then he signed it off.

RK: Okay. Now did they have busses to pick them up?

TT: Yeah.

RK: And the reverse process, they went to Parker and they caught the train back?

TT: Uh-huh.

RK: Okay, now a lot of people didn't have places to go I guess.

TT: Well, my father, his best friend who later married my cousin and a man named Kenny Taniguchi from Fowler, they came back to California—

RK: Okay.

TT: For a seven-day visit and my dad told him to bring my cousin's car back, the '38 Ford.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: So my dad told him to check the fish market building to make sure that everything was okay. The landlord came there and told him to get out of town. If I see you here again, I am going to shoot you with the shotgun.

RK: Oh, wow.

TT: So they told that to my dad and then we came out on short term, seven days. And my dad and my older brother and a man named Jack Yagura, and when we got to the—we left Jack Yagura off in Fresno. And went to the fish store, this landlord came out and my dad says, "Where is your shotgun? Go get the shotgun and I'll wait for you." I had my fish- cutting knife in there and the guy never did bring the shotgun. And there was this Kenny Taniguchi's father was already back in Fowler, the other farm.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And he had a truck so helped us haul everybody's belongings out and ship it to him where they were and then my dad had this fish market business. He had a safe and it must have been about thirty-six-inch high and about that square. And I remember my dad, Mr. Taniguchi, my brother and myself, they told me to get on top. They tied a rope around that safe and put planks and they were pushing it and they got almost to the top when it got away from them. And I slide all the way across that truck bed and because I only weighed about a hundred and fifteen pounds. But we got it over to Mr. Taniguchi's place and my dad gave it to him. Then when we came out of camp for good, this Joe Tsutsui and my dad worked for Foster Viera and we shared a home. Joe's older brother Kay worked for Joe Viera, a brother, and then Mr. Sakaguchi, he worked for mother Viera. They were all Vieras and the Japanese worked for them and he had a truck and a trailer that they used to haul prisoners of war. Well later, my dad was driving and Japanese would get on there and go from field to field.

RK: Now this was in Hanford, right?

TT: Hanford.

RK: Okay.

TT: Then people started coming out of camp so my dad would let them use his car so they can find some transportation. I guess most of the time he was helping them financially. And then a man named Ida found a job with Peloian in Reedley and he told my dad why don't you come and work for Peloian? He has a thousand-acre vineyard in Selma. So my dad got the job and then all these Japanese people that he stored their furniture and everything, one by one they came to work for him over there.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And they gradually, they went back to San Pedro, Long Beach. That is where they were originally from. When the war broke out, they were living in Terminal Island and they had to get out of there because the Navy made a navy base there.

RK: Right, right.

TT: My dad's best friend had a Dodge ten-wheeler and a Ford Bobtail and he had two Italian brothers driving it and my dad paid them the wages to go get their belongings. And there was a Japanese family named Yoshida I think, or Ishida, had a boarding house and it was empty and my dad rented that for all those people and he bought their groceries until they went to camp.

RK: That's amazing. Now when you left the camp, did you dad have a car to drive back or did he take the train?

TT: He drove back.

RK: Okay.

TT: My mom, my grandmother, my younger sister, my older sister, and my younger brother. My father's cousin and my cousin's wife, we rode the train back.

RK: Okay, how long was that trip, do you recall? It was pretty hot probably on the train because you had to go through the desert.

TT: Well, we left in the morning and about six o'clock we were in Hanford.

RK: Yeah.

TT: It was faster coming out than going in.

RK: Oh.

TT: When we went into camp, our train had to stop many times and pull the blind down because military—

RK: Oh, military bases you went by, I bet.

TT: No military train would come by.

RK: Oh, okay. They didn't want you to see certain things. Yeah, I know on the way to Parker, you cross a couple of military bases going to that area so that is probably another reason they had you close the blind. Now when you came back you were—went to school now in the high school, right? The Hanford High School, was it?

TT: My freshman year.

RK: Okay, and did you have any problems with the other students there? Name calling or any prejudice?

TT: Only one.

RK: Only one, that is amazing.

TT: And that was in the metal shop and that metal shop was divided into two rooms. And the one room had the forges that used coke to fire and we were fighting in there and Ken Devaney seen us so he poured water on that coke and cranked it up so the teacher didn't know what was going on in there.

RK: Oh, wow.

TT: But later we became pretty good friends.

RK: Now how were the teachers? Were they all pretty good in the—

TT: Just one. I guess he was a good teacher but he would always say Jap.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: So I dropped out of his class.

RK: Now did you go out for sports or any activities at Hanford?

TT: No.

RK: Now, did they have any clubs or things that you did or did you just go straight home after school?

TT: Went straight home, rode the bus.

RK: Okay.

TT: And then after one year, we moved to Selma. (chimes ringing)

RK: Oh, okay, so you were only one year at Hanford?

TT: Yeah.

RK: I'm going to pause. Well, it's too late. I was going to pause it because of the bell but— Okay, so when you moved to Selma now, did you go to Selma High School?

TT: Yes.

RK: Okay, and then how was the situation there at Selma?

TT: Well—

RK: Were there a lot more Japanese at Selma than—?

TT: A lot more Japanese at Selma and no problem as far as race went.

RK: Okay, and did you participate in any activities at Selma High School?

TT: Well, everything was Buddhist kids or Christian kids. So I went around talking to different people and I said, "Let's start a club that race is not a barrier." So they all agreed. So first, we started what was called the Selma Youth Club—no, Selma Sports Club. And it was all boys and then we decided we wanted to have some girls join us. So we put on a talent show right here at the Kingsburg Buddhist Church and invited all the girls to watch us and they joined.

RK: Oh, that's great. So how many people were in the club, do you estimate?

TT: Between twenty and thirty.

RK: Oh, that's good. That's a good-sized club back then.

TT: And we used to hold dances and the Junior YBA from Fresno would come, Reedley, Kingsburg and Sanger I think, and whenever we held a dance, it was good size.

RK: Now did your parents—were them members of the Buddhist Church in Kingsburg?

TT: No, they were Christians.

RK: Oh, Christians. Okay.

TT: And they belonged to the Harlan Memorial Chapter in Hanford.

RK: Oh, okay. So when they moved to Selma, they still went to church in Hanford?

TT: And I went to Sunday school Sunday mornings and the minister had two sons and three daughters. One Sunday, we came out and there was a man named Mac Hasei and he was about ten years older than us and the younger son of the minister used to lift barbells. And the barbells were sitting on the side there and Mac said, "Let's see you lift that?" And he said, "I know you could do it because they used to call you toughie." So he struggled to bring it up to here and he really struggled to get it up over his head. And then he said, "Let's see you do it, Tak?" I said, "I don't feel like doing it." He said,

"You can't do it?" I said, "I know I could do it but I don't feel like doing it." "You can't do it?" I said, "I know I could do it." "You are chicken." So I walked up to it, bent down and grabbed it with my right arm from the ground and I brought it all the way up, a hundred and five pounds.

RK: Yeah.

TT: They didn't know I was that strong. So I used to lift weights before.

RK: Okay, now did you do any judo or any activities like that outside of the school?

TT: My wife taught sewing in 4H and after one year she said Tak why don't you sign up for something and that way you can get involved with your own kids. So I signed up to be a tractor safety teacher. But before I had my first meeting, I had a stroke.

RK: Okay.

TT: And most of the people thought I would drop out but I had my first meeting in my pajamas and slippers.

RK: Oh, great at least you showed up, yeah.

TT: And everyone went along. My oldest daughter said, "Dad, we want to do a community service." I said, "Fine." And she said, "We don't want to go to the city park and rake their leaves. We don't want to go to the city park and pull weeds out of the flower beds. We don't want to go to homes and sing songs for the older people." I said, "Well what do you want to do?" She said, "You pick something." And I remembered that there was a place on Belmont and Brawley. I forget the name of it. But it was an old grammar school so I drove over there and the husband and wife were taking care of the place. I asked the wife, I said, "Can I take all these children from my place and give them a hayride and a barbequed hamburger sandwich dinner?" And she said, "Oh, that would be

fine, but can you do it in May?" She said, "Now during the holidays, the Boy Scouts and everyone wants to do something but later, they forget." So I said, "Okay." I went home and called the parents of the students in my class, with myself, there were seven families, and I told them what I wanted to do and asked them if they would help transportation and financially and they all agreed. And then I told them to bring your whole family and we will all eat together. That went over real good. After they left, I said to my wife, I bit off more than I could chew. And she said, "What do you mean?" I said, "There is going to be about seventy people here and all we have is a little barbeque grill." She said, "Oh, you will figure something." After I thought for a couple days I had my younger brother take me to a scrap iron place in Hanford. I would point to the iron and he would load it. I came home and when my father was over, I'd have him help me measure it and then I'd cut it with a torch and he would hold it into place by spot welding.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And I could only weld about ten minutes, I'd get tired and go in and rest for two hours. It took me six weeks to make.

RK: Wow.

TT: I still have that barbeque.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: It's in the back. It is six feet two inches long and nineteen inches wide.

RK: So you are able to get everyone and all the meat cooked, yeah. That worked out fine. Now I'm going to go back a little ways in time here. In high school did you ever go to like a Japanese language school, nihongakko?

TT: No.

RK: Okay. So you didn't do any much activity outside of the school? Did you work?

TT: I worked.

RK: On the farm?

TT: Yeah.

RK: Okay. And what happened after high school? After you graduated, what did you do?

TT: Worked on the farm.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: My dad was a foreman on that ranch. I was going to school every day I had to feed six horses.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And then work on weekends. So in my sophomore year, I had my own car and I was probably the only one that had his own car.

RK: That's good. Yeah, now what were the horses used for?

TT: On the farm.

RK: They were to pull the plows?

TT: Yeah.

RK: That was before they had a lot of tractors, I guess?

TT: They had some tractors there, but they used the horses and mules.

RK: Now how long after you graduated did you meet your wife?

TT: I think.

RK: Because you graduated what?

TT: '49.

RK: '49, yeah.

TT: In 1950 my brother and I bought a 1950 Ford.

RK: Okay.

TT: Brand new one. In 1951, five of my friends wanted me to go to the Sequoia retreat at Lake Sequoia.

RK: Okay.

TT: The young Japanese Christians would have a one-week retreat up there.

RK: Right. They have a YMCA Camp up there.

TT: Yeah, and they didn't have a car to go up so they asked me if I would take them. And I asked my dad and he said if you get all the furrows in the cotton, then you can go because that would be the last furrows of the year.

RK: Right.

TT: And I carried five gallon extra gas with me and started earlier than normal so the gas would last until noon and go back carrying extra five gallons so I could work later and I finished it so my dad said, "Okay." So five of my friends and myself, we went to the Sequoia retreat. And that's where I met my wife.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And I tell people that she thought all the boys that went to a Christian camp were nice boys, and after we were married, she found out that wasn't true, but I tell her I was fooled, too. (laughs)

RK: So after you met her, how much longer before you decided to get married?

TT: That was '51 and we got married in '53.

RK: Oh, okay. Now was she from the local area?

TT: Central High School area.

RK: Okay, and what was her maiden name?

TT: Tanaka.

RK: Tanaka, okay. And once you got married, how long was it before you started having children?

TT: First year.

RK: Okay, and so that was a daughter?

TT: Yeah.

RK: Okay and so, total how many children do you have?

TT: Three daughters and one son.

RK: Okay, and how are they doing currently? (cuckoo clock chirping) First of all, they all went to Selma High School?

TT: Yeah.

RK: And graduated and did they all go on to college?

TT: They went to Reedley.

RK: Okay.

TT: And then to Fresno State, except my son. He went to chiropractic school.

RK: Okay.

TT: And my oldest daughter married a boy of German descent. And when he said he wanted to marry my daughter, I asked him what happened the last time the Germans and Japanese got together?

RK: Right.

TT: He said, yeah, we lost the war. But he said look at West Germany and Japan financially today. This is thirty years ago.

RK: Right.

TT: He was going to school to be a history teacher and my daughter was going to school to be a home economics teacher. So they, my daughter is Vice-President and Senior Auditor for Kings River Independent Bank. And he's a finance manager of something for Federal Land Bank. They gave me a new car the other day but they won't lend me a dime.

RK: Now what about your other kids?

TT: My second daughter married a boy of German descent and they are going to get married in '78. So November of '78 I went and bought a new four-door Oldsmobile 88 and they got married that summer so they could take that car on their honeymoon.

RK: Oh, that was good.

TT: My third daughter got married right here. She didn't want a church wedding so they got married here and we had the reception out in back. And I had this cup. (chimes ringing)

RK: Okay, as you were saying before we were interrupted? She got married right here.

TT: And she wanted the reception in the back. And my wife's boss was invited, and earlier my second daughter and her husband had given me a cup and it said, "The Greatest Grandpa." And all kinds of stuff like that on there, so I was drinking coffee and going around talking to people and my wife's boss is a grandpa and he said, "You think you are the best grandpa?" I said, "No, someone else does." So he couldn't say anything.

RK: Right, that was a good answer.

TT: And then my son got married in a church in Hanford. The second daughter has my oldest grandchild.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And when my granddaughter was born, my daughter lost quite a bit of blood. They wanted to give her a transfusion and she asked the doctor if she would make it without it. And he said yeah. So they came here from the hospital and lived here about three weeks until my daughter gained enough strength. So that picture up there is of myself giving a bottle to my granddaughter. And the unique thing about that, they gave me this picture last year. One side, neither my granddaughter or myself are smiling, the other side, we were both smiling. So last month I asked my granddaughter, when it's time to put me in that casket, make sure you put that picture in with me.

RK: Okay, we'll go over to the picture there and get a shot of it. There you are holding your granddaughter. All right. That is amazing. That is quite a story. And then your other kids? Are they all married?

TT: All married.

RK: Okay.

TT: And my son had eight and my second daughter, the other two don't have any children so my immediate family is nineteen.

RK: Wow, that's good.

TT: Counting my wife and I.

RK: So when you get together there is quite a few people at the house.

TT: Yeah.

RK: Now when 1988 came around and they had the redress with the letter of apology from the President, what was your reaction when it finally came through?

TT: I don't remember. I don't think I had much of a reaction.

RK: Because it took years to go through the process of trying to get it so you already knew that people were working on it. But I guess at the moment it passed, there's a law, the Civil Liberties Act, you probably didn't have much emotion to it at the time.

TT: No, because both my wife and I put our $20,000 into paying for this house.

RK: Oh, okay. So at least it went to good use, yeah. Because a lot of the Japanese lost quite a bit more than what that amount was.

TT: Well, my father lost eighty acres of vineyards.

RK: Exactly. Now when you were farming, what were the main crops? Was it just grapes or—

TT: Grapes.

RK: Or were there other crops?

TT: No, grapes.

RK: Okay. And they were mainly, for raisins?

TT: Yeah.

RK: Okay. Because this Kingsburg area is one of the main raisin-growing areas, Kingsburg and Selma, in the nation so most of the farmers had, Thompsons, a, grew Thompson grapes for raisins. And a, what's your present situation now? Are you retired or do you still farm a little bit?

TT: I had a stroke in 1996.

RK: Okay.

TT: And that's why it took me so long to build that barbeque, I was paralyzed on one side. And at that time, I was a foreman for some Hindu people, 200 acres—

RK: Okay.

TT: And I told them I would leave so they could hire someone else. They wouldn't let me leave.

RK: Oh, wow.

TT: So I was there till 1980.

RK: Now where this house is sitting, do you own any farmland around this house?

TT: Yeah. The younger brother and I, we own twenty acres.

RK: Okay. And so, he still farms the—

TT: Twenty acres.

RK: The twenty acres, okay.

TT: He took over being foreman at Peloian's after my dad died, then he retired from that and takes care of this place.

RK: Okay, looking back at having to go in camp and those 3-4 years that you lost and having to come back, do you see any changes that it did to your life? I know that being away from this area had to be a dramatic effect on everyone's lives. How did you cope with having to go through that and then coming back and restarting your life, basically is what everyone did?

TT: Well, we had fun in camp.

RK: Okay.

TT: When we first came out of camp, I asked my dad what he thought of the government putting us into camp.

RK: Uh-huh.

TT: He said, "The best vacation I ever had."

RK: (laughs) Okay.

TT: And I thought that was an odd answer. He was a foreman for Peloian Ranches from 1945 till 1985 when he died. He was never away from that farm for more than three days at one time.

RK: Wow.

TT: So he never had—

RK: Vacation. Exactly. Yeah.

TT: But when I first started working, he said to me no matter who you work for, work like you own it.

RK: Uh-huh. Yeah, I think that's part of the Japanese culture is, you always try to do your best and always work hard and things will be okay. A, you know, you don't slack off and give, you know, a second-rate effort, you are going to work hard and do the best you can and a, and that hard work always comes out to help you out. I'm sure that happens in school, in work, and in everyday life and so I think that's the story of the Japanese. I think they all pulled through out of the hardships of the camp, coming back and then redoing their whole life and they were able to succeed. 'Cause most of the Japanese today are fairly successful and they had to do it, otherwise they couldn't survive.

TT: When my son was in grammar school, he started taking judo at age ten, and at first he was losing all his tournaments, and he said "Mr. Kawano say to perfect my technique, don't worry about the wins, the wins will come later." And later, he starts winning. And this, he applied this to his school work. Do your studies and your grades are going to come. He's a lifetime membership with the, what do you call it?

RK: Oh. The California Scholarship Federation.

TT: Yeah.

RK: Yeah, having that work ethic was good because yeah, you work at it and work and everyone will come.

TT: Uh-huh.

RK: So it takes a lot of discipline and I think that's also very important. If you have that discipline to stick with it and work hard, things will come out, usually for the better. So, a, you were mentioning he was pretty good in judo, what rank did he end up?

TT: He was 4th degree.

RK: 4th degree black belt. Yeah. So now he could be an instructor if he wanted to.

TT: Well, he head instructor for Fresno and he helps out in Fowler on Wednesdays and Sundays. Fresno is Tuesdays and Thursdays and Sunday mornings. So he spends a lot of time with judo. His oldest daughter just got back Saturday from Japan. She said she had three wins and two losses. And that's pretty good, going to Japan and—

RK: Oh, exactly, and so she's also into judo?

TT: Uh-huh. Two years ago, she took—or three years ago she took second in the state tournament and last year and this year, she took third in the state tournament. That's still pretty good.

RK: Yeah. That's real good. Now in your later years here, have you joined any Japanese-American organizations in the community?

TT: JACL. In fact last year the Selma JACL honored me at the dinner.

RK: Okay.

TT: And then I got a plaque up there from Central California Judo Black Belt Association, a plaque from East Fresno Kiwanis.

RK: Uh-huh. So you also took judo when you were—?

TT: No. I just help out.

RK: Oh helping out. Oh good, community work, yeah.

TT: So I have a third degree honorary.

RK: Honorary, that's excellent!

TT: And I was given a certificate of appreciation from California VFW and I'm not even in the VFW. I got a letter—they wanted me to go to Lemoore Air Base but I couldn't go because that's the day my daughter got married.

RK: Oh, okay.

TT: And my older brother couldn't go either, he was going to be here so another man went. And he said how did you get this? I said I don't know. He said none of us in the VFW ever got something like this. And I said I don't know.

RK: Well, it's your help to the community and they appreciate it so that's good.

TT: I got a five-year certificate from the Fresno County 4H.

RK: Uh-huh. Now if you could imagine that there were, there was no World War II—you think your life—it's kind of hard to imagine what your life would've been like, but a, you have any ideas you ever thought that if this interruption never happened, that your life would've been a little bit better or would've been the same?

TT: Well, I don't know. I would probably be selling fish.

RK: Oh, okay. (laughs)

TT: I was in the fifth grade. Every morning before I went to school, I had to call the telegraph office (chimes ringing) and make a fish order for the next morning. My brother was in the eighth grade but my dad had me do it. All my life, when he wanted something, he asked me. So I think I would have taken over his business.

RK: Oh, okay. And that sounded like a very successful business, the fish business.

TT: It was for him.

RK: Yeah, was there a lot of competition at that time or was he the only one in the—

TT: There was one other Japanese fish market in Hanford.

RK: Oh, so that's good. Yeah. That would have been very successful. (laughs)

TT: When my father first came from Japan, he ran around with American Indians so he knows how to speak American Indian, he knows how to speak quite a bit of Spanish. 99% of his customers were Portuguese (cough) so he could speak Portuguese plus English and Japanese.

RK: Now, just thinking back with what the Niseis went through—Nisei, the second generation Japanese-Americans—what do you think were their greatest contribution to the community and future generations—going through the internment camp and some of them going into the military service and a, coming through that and being successful today, what did they show us?

TT: I think they showed that no matter how tough things get, you flow with the side. Don't fight it. And you'll come out on dry ground. I think that's one of the biggest thing that the Japanese did. They didn't fight it. They just went along with what they were told.

RK: Okay. What do you feel was some of your greatest accomplishments with your life that you thought was very successful?

TT: Probably being married to my wife for fifty-two years, having children and grandchildren.

RK: Now that's very good. If you can stay married that long, I know a lot of marriages don't even last but a few years nowadays. But that's, over fifty years is an accomplishment.

And then all your children are very successful and so, having kids that are successful—that's also a very good accomplishment. And anything else?

TT: A friend asked me how we managed to stay together so long. And I said my wife says she'll never leave me. He says why. She says she doesn't want to see me happy.

RK: (laughing)

TT: But a couple of years ago she says maybe she'll leave me so she could be happy.

RK: (laughing) Yeah, I think she was just kidding. That's amazing. If you were giving advice to young people today, what would you tell them? The, you know, the new generation of people.

TT: I would tell them to respect their elders, to respect the law, to respect their teachers—and whatever they do, do it the best they can.

RK: Exactly. Yep. Okay, we are nearing the end of this interview. A, do you have anything else you want to say?

TT: Umm, not really.

RK: I think we covered quite a few, quite a bit of the history here and a, I want to thank you for doing this interview because your information and those of others who we interview will be very important to researchers in the future generations who want to look back at the way the Japanese-Americans went through this hardship of the 1940s and turned it around and today in the year, the century of 2000 we're, for the most part, pretty successful people. And a, the important thing is how were the Japanese-Americans able to persevere all through this trials and tribulations and some of your stories is important to letting us know how you were able to accomplish that and get through the hardships because it's (ahem) almost seems amazing that a group of people here, 120,000 people

that were in the camps were able to come through that and make it through and a, most of them came out of the camp and a, were able to basically come above all that, and become successful. And a, so I appreciate you agreeing to do an oral interview with us.

TT: I told my wife the reason why I agreed it said something about to be put into the Fresno State library?

RK: Right. This is going to be in the Asian Studies, Special Collections.

TT: Well, I hope my grandchildren will benefit from this.

RK: Oh, sure. All the future generations will benefit.

TT: My oldest one works at the library in Fresno State.

RK: Oh, okay that's good.

TT: She goes to Fresno State. And I don't know how many hours a week she works there, but even through the summers, she's working there. (partly overlap)

RK: Okay, yeah. It's going to be housed, the library right now is being renovated and so they're doing a remodeling but a, it's going to look real nice and the Special Collections—It's the Sanoian Special Collections and Historical Archives there is housed on the 4th floor, and the head of the unit is Tammy Lau, and so we been doing this oral history program in cooperation with her and the Asian Studies program there, so it's going to be a fine collection with all these different people that we interviewed so the people in the future will get all this information which would have been lost if you didn't do it because the stories of the people that actually experienced this are very important and sometimes they get passed on to their grandkids, but a lot of them never make it out of the family and so people on the outside never hear of all the hardships that the people

had to endure—some people had fun in the camps, other people didn't like the camps and so we're getting all the different stories of how it was and that's very important.

TT: This granddaughter that's going to Fresno State, one day she says to me, "I'm more Japanese than I am German." I said, "How do you know?" She says, "I'd rather eat mochi than eat chocolate."

RK: (laughing)

TT: Her father is of German descent.

RK: Right. Okay, so Takashi Tsutsui, I thank you very much.

TT: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW