

>> Carlene Tinker: Good morning, Ms. Tagawa. My name is Carlene Tanigoshi Tinker, and I'm a volunteer from Fresno State's uh, Henry Madden Library. Specifically, the Special Collections Research Center. We're conducting oral histories of people who were in relocation camps during World War II [audio issues], and I know that you were in one as well. And um, first of all I want to say thank you for inviting me into your home today, which is located at 216 North Green Street in Hanford, California. Um, as you know, Dr. Howard Ono, whom you met recently is also a volunteer, and he's interested in people just like you, as I am, because both of us were in a relocation camp. It wasn't the same one as yours, but we were in the Granada Relocation Center in southeastern Colorado. And maybe you don't know it by that name. It was renamed Amache, because the nearby town—nearby town of Granada, and they pronounced it Grenada, was getting inundated flooded with over 7,000 letters a day. And so consequently they put pressure on the relocation center and said “we got to do something, so you need to rename it so we don't get your mail and we don't get yours.” Okay. So they -- some people decided that they would rename it after a prominent citizen of that area, and the prominent citizen they were thinking of was John Prowers. He was a cattle baron living in the area in the early 1900s, and they said, well "Okay, maybe we'll name the camp after his wife." And she died, I think, in 1905, but she was a Cheyenne Indian, and her name was Amache, that was her first name. So that's how she got or how the camp got named that and another interesting thing about Amache is that her father was a very prominent chief among the Cheyenne Indians, and he was killed in around, I think it was 1864 in the Sand Creek massacre, which happened about 50 miles west of Amache. And so she was lucky to have survived that massacre. So anyway, that's a little bit of history.

>> Naomi Tagawa: What an interesting history.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Isn't it?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So people say, well how in the world did it get named Amache? Well that's how it got its name. Yeah. So, anyway, Dr. Howard Ono and I were little kids in Amache, and because of our interest in camps, our personal histories we wanted to reach out to people like yourself and compare your experiences with ours. So that's why we're participating in this project.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Thank you. Thank you so very much.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So before we begin, will you give me your full name?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Naomi Tagawa is my full name.

>> Carlene Tinker: Do you have a middle name?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, I do not.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Well that's interesting.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: What is your birth date?

>> Naomi Tagawa: February 20, 1920.

>> Carlene Tinker: So how old are you now?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Ninety-seven.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, that's wonderful, that's wonderful. And where were you born?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I was born in Hanford, California.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, so your parents were living here at the time?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And have you lived at this residence the longest?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Probably, okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes

>> Carlene Tinker: Because I think your dad built the house or had it built?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, because they worked for the Vendome Hotel in Hanford in the 1900s.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And they made enough money to buy the five lots for one gold coin, which is \$600.

>> Carlene Tinker: Isn't that amazing?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: In the 1900s, early 1900s?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And so then they built this, I had a two story building for a boardinghouse.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And mom cooked for five years, and she got tired, so then they went into the laundry business.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, that's how it became the laundry business, because your mom got tired?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. [brief laughter]

>> Carlene Tinker: I don't blame her. [laughs]

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Let's see. Now, have you lived anywhere else besides Hanford?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, in San Francisco when I went to school up there.

>> Carlene Tinker: But that was only for short time?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Just about a year or year and a half.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Now just an aside, I want to point out to our readers that Naomi has done an interview, a very detailed interview which is online in our collection as well from 1980. Do you remember giving that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think so.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I got to speak at the College of Sequoia for six years, because the professor there knew about all the Japanese and what happened. And so I spoke to her class for six different years, and then to the Pioneer School, the eighth grade history class I spoke to them too.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, so that's probably how that interview came about and how it— I'm not sure how it got in the collection, but I found it. So a lot of this information that we're going over today is probably in that one as well. So we'll call today's interview Part Two.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Okay. [brief laughter]

>> Carlene Tinker: All right. Okay. Before we start on your own personal history, let's go into your background, your family background, your grandparents, your parents. Where did your grandparents live? Were they in—from Japan?

>> Naomi Tagawa: They're from Japan.

>> Carlene Tinker: Did they ever come here or was it just your --

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, no. I have never met them, my grandparents.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: My father came over in 1900s from Japan to—through Seattle, Washington.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And then he worked on the railroads.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And then, but I wish I had asked him more questions, because I don't know how he got to Hanford.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, that, yeah. So that was going to be my next question, yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. And then there were all single fellows at that time, and they didn't speak any English, but my father and two other fellows were raising chickens, and then, but dad

thought something was just not right. So he wrote to his brother in Japan to ask him to find a wife for him...bride.

>> Carlene Tinker: How old was he at the time that he came?

>> Naomi Tagawa: He was 25, I think.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, he was an older guy?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Was he a farmer in Japan or do you know what he did in Japan?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, I don't know. I wish I had, but he took a very good Jōruri— Jōruri singing for the bunraku... play, you know where they have the puppet?

>> Carlene Tinker: Yes, yes, yes.

>> Naomi Tagawa: So he took that and he said, "I wasn't that good, so I thought, no, I'll just come over. So he came over to work in the United States." And then so he wanted a wife, and so he wrote to his brother in Japan and asked him. And she was from a farm family.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And she came over in 1907.

>> Carlene Tinker: 1907, okay that was after the San Francisco Earthquake?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Uh-huh.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, okay. Did she come from the same area that your father came from or do you know that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, Kumamoto. You know the Kyushu [Southernmost island of Japan]

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>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, but I never met my grandparents, but the first time I ever visited Japan was in 1980.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh!

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. And so I met— ah, my sister said, "Oh, I didn't get anything for your birthday." I said, "That's okay." And she said, "How about a trip to Japan?" And so, I said, "Ooh, yeah!"

>> Carlene Tinker: [laughs] I'll take that.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. So I met some cousins there, and they took us around and he was very gracious. He owned about 11 service stations.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh wow.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: So they were quite well-off then.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well off.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: He drove us around, and he found out about our— his relatives that he didn't know that...

>> Carlene Tinker: [laughs] He didn't know about, huh?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And likewise you didn't know much about them?

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's right. So that was in 1980 --

>> Naomi Tagawa: -- '80. first time.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- you took that trip. Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And the second time was in 1990, because my brother-in-law was from Wakayama.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And his—he was going to take us with his daughter, my niece. And—But he passed away, but we went anyway. [background noise] And so to the Wakayama City. And his relative was a mayor --

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: -- of Wakayama City.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And so they were very gracious to us and they took around.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, Wakayama, is that a province of *ken* or is it a city?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. It's a city, Wakayama.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. I think my own -- one of my grandfathers came from there.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I see.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. I think generally the first people who came to the United States were sort of from the same areas that were affected by taxes and depression.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, I see.

>> Carlene Tinker: That was my impression.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, I'm—I'm not sure about that.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, yeah. So you said you went with your brother-in-law, was that Henry [Sugimoto]?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, Henry, but he passed away so in 1990.

>> Carlene Tinker: Ooh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: So his daughter and I went.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, he didn't physically --

>> Naomi Tagawa: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- he didn't go with you.

>> Naomi Tagawa: He didn't go, no.

>> Carlene Tinker: His daughter went, okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And then his paintings of the camps he didn't know what to do with it, and his cousin said, "Bring them over here."— "So send them over here." So it's in the library there.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, over there?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, in Wakayama.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And there's a big painting of New York City in the City—City Hall there.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, my gosh. I wonder if they're still there?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. I think so.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Naomi Tagawa: When we visited. His cousins drove us around everywhere.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, my gosh, okay. So getting back to your own father --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- and your mom. So they married in --

>> Naomi Tagawa: San Francisco.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- San Francisco, and that was 1907? Is that when your mom came?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And they got married right at -- was it like a picture bride type of thing?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. There's a wedding picture of them I have somewhere. [inaudible].

>> Carlene Tinker: I'll take a picture of that. Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: But he actually sent over there with a picture of himself, is that typical?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, No, he just wrote and so she was very tall for a Japanese and he's short.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh [laughs]

>> Naomi Tagawa: And he--he was not very complimentary, [laughs] but he was very nice, you know. They got along very well.

>> Carlene Tinker: What was your father's name?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Sakutaro.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And your mom's name?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Tazu.

>> Carlene Tinker: Tazu?

>> Naomi Tagawa: T-A-Z-U.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And what was her maiden name?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think it was Nishiyama.

>> Carlene Tinker: Nishiyama. Okay. So they married around 1907. How many children did they have?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Three.

>> Carlene Tinker: Three.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Girls, and my sister Susie was the oldest, 10 years older than me.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And Kikuya was the middle. She was born five years later, and but she died with diphtheria.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my God.

>> Naomi Tagawa: She was only about three years old I think.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, you know, during those times it was so hard to lose people. They didn't have the modern medicines that we have...

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: ...Antibiotics specifically.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: So it sounds like your parents had children one—once every five years?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Because you came in 1920.

>> Naomi Tagawa: 1920 [laughs] yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now is your older sister still alive?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: When did she die? That was Susie?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, I forgot. She died in New York City there. I forgot what year it was. She had breast cancer.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay. And probably before 2000?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. I kinda remember you saying that. Okay. After your parents married, did they, you know, they got married in San Francisco. How did they get to Hanford? Did they stay in San Francisco or did they come directly to Hanford?

>> Naomi Tagawa: They came to Hanford, and they were working at the Vendome Hotel.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And in the 1900s they were working there.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that hotel still here?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, it just burned recently, maybe three or four years ago. And they rebuilt that place, and they [Naomi's parents] made enough money to have the two-story building built as a boardinghouse on Green Street.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay. Oh, just recently they did that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: But the job was in 1911.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay. Oh, oh I see, I see. Okay I'm getting it mixed up with the current.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Incidentally, I didn't mention that we're doing this interview on Friday, August 18, 2017. Yeah. And we want to compare that with your previous interview.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. I see.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Okay, so your parents were working for this hotel, and then they were given some a lot. Is that right? And then --

>> Naomi Tagawa: They were paid and what they had they brought the property here.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And then the house was built and then the two-story building next door?

>> Naomi Tagawa: The house, this house is built afterwards.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Because I had to go back and forth, because the kitchen and the dining room was in that building, in the two-story building, and so my niece and his—her father said we will help you. Would you please have kitchen put in this house.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So that's how it was added on?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Added on, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: What time—what year was that? Do you remember?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, dear. I think there's a date on there, but I'm not sure exactly. But it was after we came back from camp—

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay. Okay, Naomi. We had a little break there. Just I think we were talking about your parents building this house after they were working for the hotel people, and they built this house as well as the two-story building next door, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And then later on because you didn't have a kitchen in the house. You had to go next door to the two-story building. Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Actually this was built afterwards.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh! After it, okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Of the two-story building.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And the two-story building was a boardinghouse, and your mom cooked for everybody.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Five years.

>> Carlene Tinker: And how many borders did you have?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, there were several of single fellows that used to work for different places, restaurants and – [audio issues]

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And so was it mostly men or all men?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah, men.

>> Carlene Tinker: All men.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Okay. So what years would that be? Was that -- were you born yet?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And that, so after you were born, then mom got tired of being a cook?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And then she decided not to work there anymore, right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh --And then went into the laundry business.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Now did she work in the laundry as well?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yes. Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And what kind of services did they provide?

>> Naomi Tagawa: It was hand laundry, so dad delivered a basketful of laundry for a family for a \$1.50.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, my God.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And then he delivered with a horse and buggy, and then next it was a model T Ford.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, for heaven sakes.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. And we were doing laundry [audio issues] for different various people who lived in the big homes here.

>> Carlene Tinker: So it was mostly the people who were on the wealthy side who were able to -  
-

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- to afford the laundry service?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: So your dad delivered these things by horse and buggy, and then later by --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. A car.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And then there were three ladies usually were hired to do the hand ironing.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: So it was a fairly large business.

>> Naomi Tagawa: There were Caucasian people who came to work.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay so your customers. What was his—What were his customers? Were they primarily Caucasian people?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, mostly.

>> Carlene Tinker: Mostly, but also on the wealthy side?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, wealthy side, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Would you consider your father's business a success?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So he became a fairly successful businessman?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And made a considerable amount of money?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. And I know he helped a lot of the different Japanese families that had a large family during the depression years. He was very kind to help them financially.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Now was your dad able to become a citizen and your mom became-- were they citizens?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, they were not able to become a citizen until after that we were incarcerated.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Why is that? Why—why couldn't they become a citizen.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I really don't know, but I know that afterwards after we came back from camp, there were citizen—citizenship classes at nighttime, and I used to take them up to the high school where they were all given this, and then they were at the courthouse after 40 years they were given their citizenship.

>> Carlene Tinker: Isn't that something. Now were both of them able to speak English as well as Japanese?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, yes they were.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Yeah. I imagine that was a very good asset, very helpful thing for your father, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. And then there were so many wonderful ladies from the First Presbyterian Church came and taught these single fellows English. They were so touched by their kindness that they were baptized as Christians.

>> Carlene Tinker: Your parents were -

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Especially the four men, my father and Mr. Haas. I remember them, but I don't know who the other two were.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Until then were they Buddhists?

>> Naomi Tagawa: They were Buddhists. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: So because of the kindness of these people who were Christians, they converted to Christianity?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Would you consider yourself a Christian?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, I was raised, I was baptized by -- and we used to have a Japanese Presbyterian church here, and then ministers were from Japan and there were Presbyterian ministers. And—

>> Carlene Tinker: So?

>> Naomi Tagawa: --And so we had Sunday school and everything right on 7th Street here.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So would you say there were more Buddhists or more Christians at that time among the Japanese-Americans?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I really don't know. But there were quite a few Buddhist people, and the Buddhist church was right next door to our --

>> Carlene Tinker: Your Christian church?

>> Naomi Tagawa: -- the Japanese American, yes. The church.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. I think right now someone told me there are very few Buddhist left, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, very few.

>> Carlene Tinker: Are there very many Japanese-Americans living in—in Hanford?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Not very many.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: What accounts for that, do you think?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think well a lot of the young people, they moved to cities for, you know, employment and all that. And there—and quite a few of them didn't come back to Hanford.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, and I guess too a lot of them have intermarried. Is that true?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think so.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah, I'm speaking for myself. [laughs]

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh yeah. That's— That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Now, how did your -- getting back to your dad being successful. I remember you saying something about financially they helped people in Japan. Is that true or am I remembering correctly?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, not, not Japan. It was neighbors here.

>> Carlene Tinker: Just the neighbors?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Japanese friends.

>> Carlene Tinker: And people who were suffering during the depression.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right? Okay. Now it sounds like you were very happy to have been raised in Hanford, am I correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. What gives you that idea that it was a nice place to grow up? Why was it nice to grow up in Hanford?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, there were lots of Japanese family and Chinese families in this area was— the Chinatown was second to San Francisco at one time,.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: There were so many Chinese and Japanese with businesses that you're intermingled all.

>> Carlene Tinker: So you didn't really feel any discrimination from what I can gather, is that true?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, a little bit, because there was no swimming pool at the high school at that time, and there was a municipal pool, and we couldn't go swimming, because we were Japanese.

>> Carlene Tinker: Just specifically Japanese --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- people weren't allowed to swim --

>> Naomi Tagawa: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- there?

>> Naomi Tagawa: And my brother-in-law was all on the high school swimming team, but he couldn't go practice in the municipal pool, because [he was Japanese] and so his teacher arranged for him to go swimming at night.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, for heaven sake.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: So he was able to swim there at night? Was that --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- sort of secretly?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No. Well I don't know about secretly, but they opened it because there was no swimming pool at the high school.

>> Carlene Tinker: At the high school?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my gosh. Isn't that something. Now when you were growing up here, I know a lot of Japanese people, Japanese-Americans also kept up with their own culture, the Japanese culture.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: By going to school, Japanese school. Did you do that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. After regular school—public school, we had a little snack at home and then we'd go to the Japanese language school, which is located over there on 7th and White Street.

>> Carlene Tinker: So that was very -- how far is that from here?

>> Naomi Tagawa: It was only about a block and a half.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay. Okay. So what did you do in Japanese school?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, we learned to read [audio issues] and then we had put on plays in Japanese, and we had to speak, you know, orally, you know, that way.

>> Carlene Tinker: So it was an hour and a half every day?

>> Naomi Tagawa: About an hour and a half, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, did you meet on Saturdays as well?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No. Saturday was for the students from the outside the country.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: They were picked up by a bus.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, so— I see.

>> Naomi Tagawa: We had a little orange colored bus that picked them up on Saturday, so the town—town, you know, students went during the week.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, now who ran the Japanese schools? Was it the church or like some --

>> Naomi Tagawa: No. Like some of the Japanese language teacher that lived at the school too. But, no. They were not connected with the church.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Yeah, I never thought about that. So then you not only went to day school where you spoke only English. You went to the regular community elementary school and then did you went to Japanese school afterwards, and how did you do that all the way through high school?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Or was that just elementary?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, I think it was through high school, too.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, for heaven sakes.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Well then you were very proud of your community then?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. It was a very nice building too with nice playgrounds, and everything around it. It was a big one right over there on 7th and White.

>> Carlene Tinker: And White Street, okay. What about junior high and high school, did you have good experiences there?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, Woodrow Wilson was my in junior high, and it was now—it used to be on Park Avenue. Now it's turned over to 11th Avenue, and [audio issues] [background noise] yes we had a very good time.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And then high school, what high school did you to?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Hanford High.

>> Carlene Tinker: And was it the only one at the time?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. The only one at the time, and it was built like the Civic Auditorium, the same architect built it, but then years later they say “it was not earthquake proof” and they tore it down, and it just broke our hearts, because...yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. I know that happened to a lot of schools in Fresno.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Ooh.

>> Carlene Tinker: And Fresno High, for example, you know, they weren't earthquake proof. And so a lot of the buildings had to be either reinforced or broken down. Now so you actually were able to graduate from high school in Hanford.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Our graduation ceremony was held at the Civic Auditorium in 1938.

>> Carlene Tinker: 1938, so that was a few years[brief laughter] before the war?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So--so in the meantime while you were going to junior high and high school, were you helping at the laundry? Did you help your --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Sometimes, yes. I used to go with dad and down right on the model T to deliver.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I had a delivery wagon.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So it wasn't your intent, I think, from what previous conversations to work in the laundry. Is that true?

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's true, because we had ladies that were on ironing, about two or three ladies, Caucasian ladies that used to have their job.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Okay. So what did you want to do after high school? What plan did you have for your future?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, I wasn't sure, but I went to—the fashion art school in San Francisco.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And it's still going on now.

>> Carlene Tinker: What's the name of it again, or do you remember?

>> Naomi Tagawa: [inaudible muttering] let's see what it's called[brief pause]Well it was on -- all I can remember it was on Van Ness and Post Street in—in San Francisco.

>> Carlene Tinker: And you think it's still there?

>> Naomi Tagawa: in the Scot—It was in the Scottish Rite temple.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: In that building.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And I understand recently our former minister's daughter graduated Hanford, and they came to Superiors ice cream place, and I asked her "What are you going to do now?" She says "Well I'm going to the fashion school," and it was the same school I went, and it was fairly recent about two years ago.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. It's still functioning.

>> Carlene Tinker: Isn't that amazing? What did you learn in the fashion school? Were you learning how to design clothing?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Design clothing, and we also sketched our models, and that was the first time I ever saw a lady without any clothes on.

>> Carlene Tinker: Whoa!

>> Naomi Tagawa: And there was one fellow in our class, and we were so, [laughs] you know, we were surprised, because we had to see the way they would stand in form, so how we can design our clothes and things.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: We learned how to cut, you know, cut the patterns and everything too.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So after you were there for a year, was that the end of the course? Is that why you left San Francisco?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. Uh-huh.

>> Carlene Tinker: You came back to Hanford at that point?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Then what year?

>> Carlene Tinker: That would be '39.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So then what did you do? Did you go into sewing, designing or what did you do at that point?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, I just didn't do anything, I think. I can't remember what I did.

>> Carlene Tinker: Uh-huh, Okay. So, let's go ahead and proceed, let's see [background noise] okay. We talked about your church affiliation. Okay. Now, you said when Pearl Harbor was attacked, okay, that was in 1941, right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: December 7th.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And --

>> Naomi Tagawa: It was a Sunday.

>> Carlene Tinker: It was a Sunday. What were you doing at that time that you were --

>> Naomi Tagawa: We went to play tennis at the high school, you know. And then we were walking back towards 7th Street, and we kept hearing newspaper boy, you know, calling out about the Pearl Harbor, and we were just really shocked what happened you know that Japan had attacked.

>> Carlene Tinker: Had you any idea that any kind of war was going on? I— You know, Japan was probably actively fighting other people, but --

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think there war was going on somewhere.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. But it didn't --

>> Naomi Tagawa: More fighting.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. We didn't really connect it with us, did we?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Not at all.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So it was a surprise, I imagine, right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: That this happened.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: So you were going -- it was Sunday and you heard the newsboys saying, "Extra extra?"

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right? Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And we were just shocked.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So what did you do? That was probably, what, about 12:00 o'clock noon when it --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. I think it was, yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: So then did you go home and talk --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- to your parents, and ask what they knew?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, yeah. I don't remember what we did, but it was very upsetting.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, very, very. So when that happened, then things started changing. People had started expressing ill feelings toward us as Japanese, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, and right away we noted [brief pause] [audio issues] signs put up on telephone poles.

>> Carlene Tinker: What did those signs say?

>> Naomi Tagawa: That we were under -- going to be under curfew for—from eight until after eight. And then we had to turn in shortwave radio. We didn't have TV then, and the weapons and cameras, and then the bank was frozen bank accounts.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And travel was restricted.

>> Carlene Tinker: Travel was restricted?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: You couldn't leave for— Hanford?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No. Yeah. And anyway, so and then the leaders of our Japanese Association were picked up by the FBI.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my gosh. Yeah. Probably the language people, language teachers, language school people?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Well my brother-in-law was a language school teacher at the time, and so he was ready to be packed to be picked up, but he was never.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that Henry Sugimoto?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And anyway, the other people that was associated with Japanese Association were picked up and they were sent to San Francisco.

>> Carlene Tinker: San Francisco?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. I think.

>> Carlene Tinker: Did you -- how long did they stay there, do you know? Do you remember?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Not very long, because they came back and was came back to the assembly center, I think.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay. So was that after Executive Order 9066? Are you talking about that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So on February 19th, 1942, the Executive Order 9066 was signed by Franklin, Del—Delano Roosevelt our current president [at that time] of the United States. And that I think was what was on the signs that declared the West Coast as a military zone, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Exactly.

>> Carlene Tinker: And so all of us who were of Japanese descent, both resident citizens as well as non-citizens --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Non-citizens, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- had to be evacuated, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Exactly.

>> Carlene Tinker: And those are the signs that you saw on the poles?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. So you were given only a short time to get ready to go to, and I think you said you guys went to the Fresno Fairgrounds, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: For the assembly center?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Naomi Tagawa: We were there from May on—until all October.

>> Carlene Tinker: Of 1942?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. So how many days was your family given to from the time those posters were put up until the time you actually had to go to camp? Was it three days, a week, two months?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think we were [given] about a week.

>> Carlene Tinker: About a week?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Now a lot of people lost their property. Did that happen to your family?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, we were very fortunate. Ms. Myra Coe, who owned the property right now of the library, came to my sister and said, "I will take care of your property for you while you are gone." And so—

>> Carlene Tinker: How did you know Ms. Myra Coe? Was she a friend of the family or --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, I know that her niece was my classmate.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And she [Ms. Myra Coe's niece] still lives here and runs a Kubota farm equipment company, but with her auntie that was -- who cared for her [in Hanford].

>> Carlene Tinker: So she came to your rescue, and --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- said, "I'll take care of your property."

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: You were very lucky.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Very fortunate, and she had her teacher friend [audio issues] and her husband live in our house for the three years.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, really?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: In this house here?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, wow. So when you came back you were able to recover right away?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. Right away.

>> Carlene Tinker: Isn't that --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Others, oh, they were very unfortunate. Everything was just --

>> Carlene Tinker: Taken?

>> Naomi Tagawa: -- taken.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah, there's so many sad stories, and definitely was very lucky. I think previously we had— when we had talked you talked about a Mr. and Mrs. Powell. Who were they?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yes. They were the ones that lived in our house.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, in the house.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Okay. And are any of their relatives still alive?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I don't think so.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So the evacuation order sent us to relocation camps. And which one did you get sent to?

>> Naomi Tagawa: To Jerome, Arkansas.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Okay. So that didn't happen until October 1942?

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, let's back up a little bit. Now what was camp— a life like in the Fresno Assembly Center in the Fairgrounds. What was it like for you?

>> Naomi Tagawa: It was very temporary thing, and so everything was is just not very happy, because there was no refrigeration. There was a lot of [pause] cases of --

>> Carlene Tinker: Tuberculosis or diarrhea?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, diarrhea and then, you know, because they [ill people] were laid out around the—because there was no – [room in the hospital]

>> Carlene Tinker: Refrigeration?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Refrigerators. It was food poisoning.

>> Carlene Tinker: Ooh. Oh, was that a constant problem?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No. It was --

>> Carlene Tinker: At the beginning?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Yeah. Sort of.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah. So what did your families do? What did the people do when they got there? Did they have jobs? Did your parents have a job? Did you have a job?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, when we moved I had a job in the assembly center. I was a receptionist at the camp for [brief pause] there were three different barracks. One was for the general cases, and the second one was for the children, and the second barracks was for the communicable disease.

>> Carlene Tinker: So this is definitely the hospital area?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. I was in the reception.

>> Carlene Tinker: Someone's coming.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Is someone coming? [bell rings]

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So Naomi you were in the assembly center. You worked as a receptionist for the hospitals. Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And Dr. Hashiba was the doctor there. And then my friend, May Asaki, she was a statistician, and she took also the transcript of the cases that Dr. Hashiba would see. And --

>> Carlene Tinker: Was he a doctor from Fresno?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, he was a very fine surgeon. And so when she transcribed and took it into doctor,. they were laughing, and so I was wondering what they are laughing about. And it was some she wrote [pause] the person had -- oh, what was it? [laughs] It slipped my mind already.

>> Carlene Tinker: She wrote what?

>> Naomi Tagawa: She transcribed and it said, "shiftless. [syphilis]"

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And he was from Japan. The doctor was from Japan, and his pronunciation wasn't too good. [laughs] And he said, "That's right he got shiftless, because it was syphilis.

[ laughs ]

>> Naomi Tagawa: I remember that. We laughed about it all the time.

>> Carlene Tinker: Was that a problem, communicable diseases? [laughs]

>> Naomi Tagawa: And I was, I was sort of checking on those who had venereal disease. And so we would just whisper, you know, "Well here comes Louie [person with venereal disease]." [laughs] As we were going to the mess hall we would know them.

>> Carlene Tinker: Tell me a little bit about being in the assembly center. Did the—There were two departments that were overseeing these relocation center or the evacuation. The War Department, first of all was enforcing evacuation, okay. And in the meantime, because the camps weren't ready for us they had put us in these assembly centers and the people who were in charge of those were the ones that were working for the War Relocation Authority, right. Okay. So my impression from reading, and also personal experience, the War Relocation Authority was really very supportive of all the internees. I think they were working really hard, at least in our camp, to make life as comfortable as possible. So I think life in the assembly centers and the relocation camps was really like trying to make it home like, is that true?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, that's right. And there was a very fine eye specialist. I forgot his name, but he used to come into the assembly center to help with the eye problem patients. He was very kind.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. So the assembly centers I recall in that area took in people from the local communities, the farming communities, right. Now, some people didn't have to go to an assembly center if they were east of 99.

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Uh-huh.

>> Carlene Tinker: I'm going to have to look into that, because you were east of 99, right? Aren't you east of 99?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: No, you are west of 99. [background speaker: West]

>> Naomi Tagawa: West.

>> Carlene Tinker: So maybe that actually was the dividing line, because people in Sanger did not have to go to an assembly center.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Is that right? Wow.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah. See, I'm learning a lot myself.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. I am too.

[ Laughs ]

>> Carlene Tinker: So anyway life in the assembly center and the camps, even though the camps were surrounded by peop— barb wire and people with machine guns and so forth. The War Relocation Authority really try to make life as comfortable as possible, so people had jobs like yourself. Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And you had the families live together.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. And we were given clothing allowance, and we were paid a salary— secretaries, like that would be paid \$8 a month.

>> Carlene Tinker: Whoa.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And the doctor are paid \$19 a month.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: But we were fed, you know.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And it was set up like an Army camp.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's all in all.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Right. So you had schools. You had church. You had—

>> Naomi Tagawa: Exactly.

>> Carlene Tinker: --activities, sports, and so forth, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: That is correct.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So I know that the bathroom facilities, I don't know how they were in the assembly centers, but in the camps that was a whole different story.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Exactly.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. We'll talk about the assemblies, I mean, the relocation camps in the middle in a minute. Okay. So in and in October 1942, you got the orders to move. How did they transport you to Jerome?

>> Naomi Tagawa: We went by train. And Texas is a big state. [laughs] It took us a whole day.

>> Carlene Tinker: Took you several days to go?

>> Naomi Tagawa: A day to go through Texas, but we were taken by train.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, what was the train like? Was that old or was it --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. It was old. Old trains.

>> Carlene Tinker: And did you have food served to you or was that available? [background noise]

>> Naomi Tagawa: I don't really remember that part of food on the way.

>> Carlene Tinker: Did you get to get off the train at all or did you --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, way out in a no land. It looked like no man's land. We were able to get off, and kind of walk around. [background noise] There were guards around thinking that we might escape or move and do that.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, [laughs] you were the enemy, right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: In the desert you were going to do something awful.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Fly away.

>> Carlene Tinker: So you took maybe three days to get to Jerome?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I really don't know how many days we took. It was quite some time, I think.

>> Carlene Tinker: But you had to stop periodically for the people to get off? Did anybody get on the train during that time?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, not that I remember.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So when you got to Jerome, were all the barracks ready for you or were some of them not finished?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Maybe some of them more, but we were okay. Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Did your family get to stay in one apartment?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Did you have any other relatives nearby?

>> Naomi Tagawa: We had to walk. We were in block 32 and my sister and her family, they were in block 28, so --

>> Carlene Tinker: So fairly close.

>> Naomi Tagawa: It was about three blocks away. We had to walk all over.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. What was Jerome like? Was it in the desert or was it in the swampland?

>> Naomi Tagawa: It was close to a swampland I think.

>> Carlene Tinker: That was in Arkansas, right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: As I recall its way down almost to the Gulf of Mexico, is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Well, yes. Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Dermott.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: McGehee.

>> Carlene Tinker: Pardon me.

>> Naomi Tagawa: McGehee, Arkansas.

>> Carlene Tinker: Muggy and hot?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. No McGehee is the name of the town.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, McGehee?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. That was near [inaudible]?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Dermott, and we went to after about a year or so we were taken by trucks out to shop, the lake village.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay. But after a year you couldn't go anywhere for a year?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, we didn't try. Some of the others I think they volunteered to go out to the— to do domestic work [brief pause] in other areas.

>> Carlene Tinker: I see. Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Nonessential jobs.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Now when you got to Jerome, again you were an adult. What did your father do in camp?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, he worked in the mess hall.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, did he?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Mm-hmm.

>> Carlene Tinker: And what was he, a cook or --

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think he helped cook.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And what about your mom, did she work?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, she didn't. She was a—She took classes in floral arrangements and different things like that.

>> Carlene Tinker: It sounds like she was leading the life of leisure.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Afterwards, after we came back from camp, she said, "I'd like to go back to camp," because she worked so hard during the time, you know [when], we lived here. [in Hanford]

>> Carlene Tinker: [laughs] She—she didn't have any huge responsibilities?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, that's right. She didn't have to cook --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. I can see that, yeah, if you were coming from someplace [doing] a hard job. Yeah, I could see that would work. So let's talk about the physical arrangements. How were the blocks arranged? Did they have barracks inside, and then they had mess halls? What were they like?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think the mess hall was in sort of like in the middle of the blocks, and there were barracks that were for middle part was for smaller families. And the end apartment was for the larger families. And it was very -- they're very deep ditches because around the barracks, because it rained a lot in—in Arkansas.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, it did.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, very strong.

>> Carlene Tinker: Did it ever get cold?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Did it snow?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yes. They didn't have any, yes, they didn't have any air conditioning in those days.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, you found them. Oh, there it is, yeah. [audio issues] [Naomi is saying this to her friend who found Naomi's parents wedding pictures]

>> Carlene Tinker: There's the wedding.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yeah that's a cake.

>> Carlene Tinker: Let's just set it aside right now. I'll take pictures in a minute. So, okay. So what were the bathroom facilities like? I know I've heard it wasn't very pleasant for women. Why is that? It wasn't very private.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well I know—I know at the assembly center it was so temporary, that it was just open, and we were not used to, you know, showering under an open place. And with the overhead hang we have to pull the cords for the waters to come out.

>> Carlene Tinker: This was in the assembly center or in the camp?

>> Naomi Tagawa: This is assembly center.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. What was it like in camp?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well it was not too bad.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I can't remember too well.

>> Carlene Tinker: Did you have individual shower stalls?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, I don't remember that.

>> Carlene Tinker: How about bath toilets, did you have private bath toilets?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think yeah, private, there.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh. That's okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now that the apartment that you got with your family, was it just one room?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. With just one room, and with a big heater we had to burn wood in there, so they went to get the wood from the forest area.

>> Carlene Tinker: So there were a lot of trees around?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Did you ever leave the camp at all, I mean during the day, did you, could you leave?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, yes. You know, one time we went clear to Little Rock.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, my gosh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. When my friend was with the administration, she was a secretary and we all went out to shop.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, my gosh.

>> Naomi Tagawa: On the train.

>> Carlene Tinker: Do you know what year that was?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, I don't remember, but it was not right away.

>> Carlene Tinker: Isn't that something?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's a long away.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And we missed the train coming back, so we said, "oh, oh, someone's going to", you know, but, you know.

>> Carlene Tinker: Who knew? Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. We spoke to the administrator, you know, what happened, because she was the secretary too, for the administration.

>> Carlene Tinker: I'll be darn.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: So that was allowed? You were able to get permission to do this?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Yes and we went and they took us out later to the lake village to shop.

>> Carlene Tinker: Isn't that something. Yeah. We all have that impression that you're just sort of stuck there. You couldn't get out. Getting back to the camp itself, what kind of food did you get? Were you able to get rice, you know, foods that you were used to?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. And then we ate a lot of I think, because we were close to the coast there a lot of oysters and things like that. [audio issues] Yeah. I can't remember very much about the food.

>> Carlene Tinker: It wasn't something that you dis—disliked?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, no.

>> Carlene Tinker: You were okay with that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: They had schools?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yes, definitely.

>> Carlene Tinker: Definitely.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Elementary schools, and my sister got taught in that one, and, of course, Junior high school and high school.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And then, but you already had graduated from Hanford, so you had your diploma, so you --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- didn't have to work on that. Let's see what else.

>> Naomi Tagawa: There are lots of student pictures of students in that.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. So later on we'll get pictures of those, and --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yearbooks.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- include them with your interview. Then after you were in camp for a while I remember you talked about going to, you applied for a civil service job. Is that true?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I asked to go out to Washington DC.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, was that it, okay. And why did you want to do that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, I thought it would be interesting to go out, because others were, you know, going too, and I thought well I like to go in the -- there was several of us that—.

>> Carlene Tinker: But you were working in the hospital also in Jerome, isn't that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, not at the hospital.

>> Carlene Tinker: What did you do in Jerome?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I was a secretary to the high school principal.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, that's right, okay. And then you got this idea that you --

>> Naomi Tagawa: But I was also questioned, and I was wondering why I was being questioned. And they said, "Well you took fencing." And I said, "Yes, I did." And they thought it was connected with the Black Dragon Society of Japan. And I said, "I took you know, for the sport," and this happened two years before we were put into camps that a professor from Nakamura from Japan came and started all these dojo's for the Kendo.

>> Carlene Tinker: And that's the sport that you're talking about, Kendo.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Kendo. In Hanford, and there were three or four of us girls and the rest were boys that took the Kendo lessons in Hanford, and they were just prior to, you know, the --

>> Carlene Tinker: Evacuation.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: So when you got ready to apply to Washington DC, they started screening you, because they thought --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- you were a security risk?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, and I said, "I didn't know that." And in fact, Professor wanted to take me to Manchuria, because I guess I had a third degree. And I said, "No, I don't want to go," and I'm so glad I [laughs] didn't do that. And so --

>> Carlene Tinker: That would have definitely been a black mark.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. And I said, "No, I took it for the sport." I didn't know it was, you know, would be a connection. So they cleared me, and so I went out to Washington DC, and worked with a— as a secretary to the War Relocation Authority.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, really. Oh, I didn't remember that.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And I was there for a year and met a lot of the Japanese-American soldiers, you know, that were going over to the European theater.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: We went to the receptions for them, at the different churches.

>> Carlene Tinker: I had forgotten about that part, yeah. Now why did you only stay a year?

>> Naomi Tagawa: We were able to come back home, and so I went back into camp and came home on the last train.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and that was what, 1945, is that right? '44.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Mm-hmm, '45.

>> Carlene Tinker: Forty-five, yeah. So you were able to have a good experience and then able to come back to California. So when you came back to camp, was Jerome still in operation or had it closed?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think it was closed.

>> Carlene Tinker: So did you actually need --

>> Naomi Tagawa: We went to Rohwer.

>> Carlene Tinker: To Rohwer. How long were you there in Rohwer?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Not very long.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So then from Rohwer then you came directly back to Hanford, is that correct?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Went out to Washington DC.

>> Carlene Tinker: No, after Washington DC you came back to, was it to Jerome or to Rohwer?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think it was, I think it was [pause] Rohwer.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Because I think Jerome closed.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. They're closed.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So your family had moved to Rohwer and then you rejoined your family in Rohwer?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, that's right. Yes, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So then from Rohwer you came right back to Hanford?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: So in the meantime Mr. and Mrs. Powell [were living]in your house. You get your house back. Your dad was able to take over the laundry, is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Mm-hmm. Well, no, we didn't know where to start back to, so we went to pick grapes, and we picked cotton. And then one of our former customers from our church, she said, "When are you going to start your business back again?" So that got us started.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, is that how it -- so how long did you work in the fields? Just maybe six months? Less than a year?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah, less than a year.

>> Carlene Tinker: So, then, your dad started up the business. Okay, okay. So then when did you get involved in the laundry business, about that time?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah, I guess I did. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: You just sort of fell into it.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. [laughs] Right. Right. Because we had lot of --

>> Carlene Tinker: Lot of customers?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Uh-huh

>> Carlene Tinker: And, okay. Before the war, people who used the laundry, catered to, were catered to were Caucasians?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Was that true after the war when you came back?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: It was.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So your dad continued to deliver?

>> Naomi Tagawa: That I can't remember very well. I don't know.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. So you came back in probably 1945. Okay. Worked in the fields, and then dad was offered a chance to come back to the laundry business, so that would be '46, '47.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Forty-seven. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: So in the meantime you're recoded to come back to the laundry and work, okay.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah, I did. I helped.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Did you ever do alterations?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, I didn't do— well I did a lot of sewing, you know, and gave clothes to other people, friends, you know. And, yeah, I did quite a bit of sewing.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Now did you ever marry?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: No. I remember—

>> Naomi Tagawa: [laughs] I met a lot of fellows, but I didn't.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. I remember one of the stories you told me that these guys were only interested in having somebody wait on them and cook for them.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Or that was one. They tried to arrange to be with because the mother had died, and it was a just a man and his son. And they were trying to arrange marriage for me. And when they said, oh, they want somebody to cook and that did it for me, because I was not a very good cook.

[ laughs ]

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. The Japanese schoolteacher was trying [audio issues] to arrange me to get married to somebody, you know.

>> Carlene Tinker: [laughs] I kinda remember that story, so I had to throw that in. [laughs] Okay. In general, how did you feel about being relocated? Did you think it was a good thing, a bad thing? Was the government wrong in doing this?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, I don't know that. Maybe it was partly because I know the Chinese people in Hanford had to wear a sign on their, you know, clothes saying I'm Chinese American, so we could have been mistaken. You know, I mean, they could have been mistaken. So it was probably a good thing during those days that we were removed, because people make mistakes. They don't see what's in our hearts that we are loyal, you know, Americans.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Right.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And –Our protection it could be [inaudible] some of it too.

>> Carlene Tinker: I'm sorry?

>> Naomi Tagawa: For our protection.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, for our protection. Okay. Yeah. Did you personally have anybody rounded up from the FBI or anything like that? Did you have -- well you knew some people from the local --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- Japanese language, yeah. So that was scary?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: That was scary. I know of people whose family members were taken away. They didn't even know where they were.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, that's right. They were sent to Texas.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. To Crystal City, Texas.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And San— New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico. I know my cousin's wife dad was a grocer, but he ran the language school after school, you know, like you did. And they rounded him up in February or something like that, and he came back fortunately with only a few months, but they didn't know where he went. And I think to this day they still don't remember or have not found out where he went. But I think it was Santa Fe, yeah, not Crystal City.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So getting back to your feelings about relocation. So maybe it was protecting us. Maybe it was protecting us.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Did relocation have any negative effects on the people who were in the camps?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, yes, there are some, because I think question 27 and 28.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, on the loyalty question?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Loyalty question.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. What was that? That was part of a questionnaire that was trying to find out if you were -- actually the intent of that I think was to find out if these guys, young men were ready to serve in the Army.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: But it was given to everybody by mistake. And not just to the men.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I see.

>> Carlene Tinker: I think that was the case. So what was these questions, 27 and 28, do you remember?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think it was about our loyalty, you know. And I think what was upsetting is that the question is when we're put into camps.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Yeah. Are we loyal to the United States --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Exactly.

>> Carlene Tinker: -- or are we loyal to Japan.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah, that's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And obviously some people said they wanted to go back to Japan.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Exactly And they were sent to Tulee lake those who went, and then the Swedish ship, Gripsholm picked them up and took them to Japan [background noise], and I heard that they didn't have a very good time there.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. That's what I've heard too. Apparently they were food rationed.

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right. The Japanese people were having a hard time, because later on we had a young Presbyterian minister from Japan who came and said that he was eating grass.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, my goodness.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Their food supply was not very good in Japan.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, Oh my gosh. Yeah. And I know also during that time Peru, the Japanese people in Peru --

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, that's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: They were trying to get rid of the Japanese there, and they were sent to Crystal city.

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Do you remember that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. I remember, because one of the young ladies that she was born in Crystal City. Her father was sent to— from to Peru.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. She's living here now and she is a wonderful teacher of knitting and crocheting at the Veterans building right now.

>> Carlene Tinker: Does she remember anything about growing up in Crystal City?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I'm not sure.

>> Carlene Tinker: It would be interesting to talk to her.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. Ellen Matsubara.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah. Maybe you could arrange that.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. I'd like to meet her, because I, you know, I've heard so much about Crystal City, and I know the people who got sent from Peru weren't allowed to go back. They had no country. So if in case they didn't, if they didn't go to Japan, unless they found somebody in the United States they were on their own.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh.

>> Carlene Tinker: You know it was a very horrible time. Very horrible time.

>> Naomi Tagawa: And her older sister passed away I think. She would know more about that experience.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Now you returned to Hanford, and I remember you said lots of changes have occurred in Hanford since that time. Not as many Buddhists, not as many Japanese.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: What you think that the future generations like the sansei, like myself, and the yonsei in future generations, what do you think our role is in talking about relocation? What shall we tell them about relocation, based on your own experiences?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, people make mistakes. And they didn't know about our loyalty to our own country here.

>> Carlene Tinker: They should not of questioned our loyalty, right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And to move a large group of people.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Just because they were suspicious, you know, that we might do something, but this is our country, 120,000 of us were American citizens.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Right. In the late 1980s there was a group that was able to successfully address the United States government for reparations.

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: The Redress Movement.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Were you in favor of that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. Why were you in favor of that?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Because so many people lost everything when they were, you know, to be removed.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. And to get as I recall that each person who was in camp, and maybe is that true that only a few [who] were in camp, you got a certain amount of money?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah, I think so. That was the—

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that case?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I'm not sure, but I would think so.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. And how much were you given?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, gracious. It was quite a bit.

>> Carlene Tinker: I think it was 20,000, \$20,000.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I'm not sure. My mind is slipping a lot. [laughs]

>> Carlene Tinker: But that's okay. Did you—you were—you took it.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: You received it?

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think I did, and because my sister died just before that happened.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, were you able to get her money or -- probably not.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Probably not.

>> Carlene Tinker: I think you had to be still living at the time.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I guess, right. Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And that was when President Ronald Reagan was in power?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, that's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. I understand too, and I may be wrong. I think some people refused it.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think so too.

>> Carlene Tinker: Do you remember anything like that? Yeah. What you think about the JACL, the Japanese-American Citizen league.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I think they're doing a very fine job of keeping up, you know, the idea of treating Americans citizens like they should be, and not to differentiate between.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Naomi Tagawa: To carry on in this part of history that it should not have to happen to another group of people.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. And as I recall there are people today who would still support the idea of relocating a group, is that right? You know, like the Muslims and so forth, that groups like different immigrant groups. I think this is what I've read that there are some people who would actually support a relocation camp idea for those people.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I don't think that is, no. No.

>> Carlene Tinker: You don't think is there or you don't think it's right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: oh, I don't think it's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: No, I don't agree. I mean, I agree, it's not right, but I'm scared that there are some people who might actually go ahead with something like that. Just awful. Okay, so, Naomi, I've been really interested in your history. In general, I think if I can summarize what we've talked about, your experiences in growing up in Hanford have been very good.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Very good.

>> Carlene Tinker: People have been very nice. You were able to survive evacuation very comfortably, unlike a lot of people who were unable to have their property saved, and so forth.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: You had very nice support. When you went to Jerome you were able to get a job that was respectful. You were able to hold your head high. I think your parents were comfortable?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, and we had wonderful Caucasian teachers that were so kind to us, and they invited us to their administration place and served us a lunch and things. Yeah. [background noise] And I still, there's –their past, but I used to when we came back home I used to send them Sees chocolates.

>> Carlene Tinker: [laughter] Oh and I'm sure they loved that. So in general you've had very positive experiences about relocation camps.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: There are some people who are very bitter.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And maybe for the right reason, you know.

>> Naomi Tagawa: You know, I think about it was somewhat for our protection too.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Because, you know, because they don't know what's in our heart.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And I remember in talking with you before you said that maybe relocation actually moving out of California was a positive thing that you got to experience new things.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Exactly.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: That's right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So maybe it was sort of opening up your horizons, is that right?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes. Yeah. Because, you know, even the, oh, what is that? There was a young gentleman [a Quaker] that used to come into all relocate the high school students to college. Oh, what was that? Not, oh, what is that?

>> Carlene Tinker: You mean here in Hanford?

>> Naomi Tagawa: No, it was back in Arkansas. He would come into camp to have the students go out to colleges. He arranged, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And it gave them an opportunity?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes, oh, I forgot his name. He was such a kind person, [inaudible] and one of the groups that help people. [background whispering]

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Well, you know, from what I've read, the directors of a many of these camps encourage young people to go out and find jobs and go to colleges and so forth. And you yourself had the opportunity to go to Washington DC, even though you had to go through a strict clearance security clearance.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: But you had an opportunity that maybe would not have had if you had been on the West coast.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Exactly.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yes. Now, when I heard about you, Naomi, I knew I've heard that you were well respected citizen of Hanford. You're an icon. How would you like to be remembered? What kind of person would you like to be remembered as?

>> Naomi Tagawa: Oh, that I would like to help. God has been so wonderful that, yes, it's loving people in our church that is so gracious and loving and kind. I would like to extend that love of God.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay. That's very touching, very touching. And I know you have very good friends here just who are right here now, Darlene and Debra.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: They have been so wonderful for you.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I should say so.

>> Carlene Tinker: You are very lucky person. Well, thank you, Naomi, Ms. Tagawa. It's been wonderful getting to know you and hearing your story. Obviously, it's a very important part of our history of being a Japanese-American, just like myself.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Thank you.

>> Carlene Tinker: And I think your story will be a very important part of the collection, at special collections.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Well, thank you so very much, and I just love knitting baby blankets and little scarves for the children to give away.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's why I forgot to mention that. Yeah. That's a very important -- oh my gosh, look at that [baby blanket].

[ Inaudible ]

>> Naomi Tagawa: I've got about a stack [of baby blankets] I gave it to the pregnancy center too.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. We'll see that's another thing you can be remembered for, for all of your baby things that you knitted.

>> Naomi Tagawa: Yeah. I love it. I love it.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Naomi Tagawa: I just enjoy it so much.

>> Carlene Tinker: [laughs] Well thank you so much, and thank you, Darlene and Debra for the opportunity to come today.

>> Naomi Tagawa: They're just gracious and loving friends. I'm so blessed.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yes, you are. Okay. Thank you.