

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Good morning, Mr. Taniguchi.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Good morning.

>> Carlene Tinker: Welcome to Special Collections. We are at the Henry Madden Library and Special Collections is a research center here and we are focusing on an oral history project. And the name of the project is Issei to Gosei Interview Project. And I know that's a mouthful and actually it's a condensed version of a title that we had come up with representing the five generations of Japanese in the United States. For the viewers, I'd like to take a little time right now to explain what the generations are.

>> Ken Taniguchi: [Laughing] Oh, go ahead.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Issei are the first ones who came probably late 1800s to early 1900s from Japan. So that Issei, "ichi," is the first number in Japanese. Their children are called Nisei. They are born in the United States. Their children are called Sansei. Sanseis' children are called Yonsei. And the Yonseis' children are called gosei. Which generation are you?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, I'm Sansei except I'm probably more, I guess culturally more, like a Nisei.

>> Carlene Tinker: More what? Nisei?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I'm more Nisei, my upbringing, but generational-wise I'm a Sansei.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. But -- oh, I see. OK. I understand. OK. So the focus of our project is specifically to gather stories about people who have grown up in the San Joaquin Valley, especially Japanese Americans, to find out what their experiences were like. And I believe our director, Tammy Lau, had talked to you earlier and she was inspired by your story. So that is why we are talking to you today.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Alright.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Today is Monday, April 15, 2019. And the time is 10:03. OK? First of all, let's start with some identification. What is your full name?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Kenneth Kenichi Taniguchi.

>> Carlene Tinker: What's your middle name?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Kenichi. Kenichi.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. You're going to have to speak up for me because I'm hard of hearing.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Alright.

>> Carlene Tinker: [Laughing] OK. Date of birth?

>> Ken Taniguchi: September 12, 1951.

>> Carlene Tinker: 1951, so you weren't in a camp.

>> Ken Taniguchi: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: No, OK. So your parents had come back to California at that time? Or is that true?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, my parents were in California, yes. Coming back to California -- they were not interned so they did come back to California in the late 1940s.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Well we'll talk about that a little bit later. They happened to have been in Japan at that time?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Correct.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. OK, but where were you born? You were born where?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right here in Fresno.

>> Carlene Tinker: In Fresno. Do you remember what hospital?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Saint Agnes, the old Saint Agnes.

>> Carlene Tinker: The old Saint Agnes over on Glenn Avenue?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, OK. And is that where your family was living, in that area at the time?

>> Ken Taniguchi: My family was living in West Fresno.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Oh, West Fresno. What was the address of that?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I don't know the exact address. It was a market, a mom and pop grocery store, on the corner of Merced and C Street.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh! OK. So how long did they live there?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, I don't know how long they were there. I know I was there after I was born until I was about five years old.

>> Carlene Tinker: Until you were five years old. OK. OK. What schools did you attend?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Roeding Elementary and then Cooper Junior High School, Fresno High School. Those were locally. Then I went on to college after that.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Alright. And your educational background -- as I recall, you went to UC Davis. Is that correct?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Originally UC San Diego.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, that's right. OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Transferred to UC Davis. Graduated from UC Davis and then I also went to the law school.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Yeah, we'll talk more about that in a minute. Marital status -- are you married?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Single.

>> Carlene Tinker: Single. And family members, do you have any of your siblings still surviving?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes. All of them are still surviving, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Are they here in Fresno?

>> Ken Taniguchi: One is in Fresno, my sister. And then I have a brother in the Bay Area, a brother in San Diego, and another sister in Hawaii.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. So there were four of you.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Five, myself included.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK [laughing]. Well, we can't forget you, can we? OK, so let's go on. I usually like to start with your grandparents' generation because that is actually the beginning of your story.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Correct.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. So let's talk about your paternal side.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Alright.

>> Carlene Tinker: What -- where did they come from? Why did they come here? Names, etc.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, my grandfather is Kosobro Taniguchi [phonetic] from Asumi in Wakayama Ken.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: My grandmother, her maiden name was Hana Ono. My sister likes to make fun of that because she says she's related to Yoko. She's also from Asumi in Wakayama Ken.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, and where is Wakayama Ken?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Wakayama Ken is located on Honshu, the main island, and it's -- if you know the shape of Japan, you know it has the shape of a dragon. The island kind of at the lower -- the first island just below Honshu would be Shikoku.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: North of Shikoku would be pretty much where Wakayama Ken is.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. I think my grandfather on my dad's side was from there, however he died before I was born so I never got to find out anything about him. What about your mother's side?

>> Ken Taniguchi: My mother's side is Yoshiyo Hayashis [phonetic], my grandfather. He's from Saitama Ken.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh!

>> Ken Taniguchi: And I believe my grandmother -- I'm trying to remember her name right now. I can't remember her last name but let's see -- her first name. My grandmother knew me but she passed away after I was born. Yoshiyo and -- I've got it written down but I can't recall her name right now.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, where was she from?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Apparently she was also from the same area, from Saitama.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: She was pretty much, I guess, a mail order bride. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Now, locate that place for me. I don't remember --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Saitama Ken is located pretty much to the northwest of Tokyo.

>> Carlene Tinker: Northwest of Tokyo, OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Maybe west or northwest of Tokyo.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. I'm trying to think of my mother's side, where they're from, but I can't right at the moment. What kind of occupations did your grandparents have?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, I know my mother's side, my grandfather on my mother's side, he had a much more interesting experience in this country. I don't know exactly what he did. I know that he made and lost several fortunes, apparently. He was an early immigrant to this country before the turn of the 20th century so in the late 1800s he came here.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: He landed, apparently, in Seattle from what I understand, migrated his way down south, came all the way down into the Fresno area. He actually said -- my mother says he actually worked for Theodore Kearney at one time on the Kearney plantation or farm out there toward Kerman. My grandfather, I remember, he described one time Kearney Boulevard back then as being a long, dusty road with little tiny palm trees about knee-high all the way down for miles and miles. Which of course now have got giant palm trees.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, they're very tall.

>> Ken Taniguchi: He was much more of the adventurous type. He traveled all the way back east. Apparently he went to the World's Fair in Georgia at sometime in the late 1890s at some point.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, which grandfather was this?

>> Ken Taniguchi: My mother's side.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow!

>> Ken Taniguchi: Iyoshiyo Hayashi [phonetic]. He went into the deep south at the time of, you know, pretty much post-Civil War, highly segregated. How he would go there and they had never seen a Japanese person before --

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my gosh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: He said that he saw the signs saying when old drinking fountains and restrooms were all separated by, you know, colored or not colored.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yes.

>> Ken Taniguchi: He thought the water would be colored when he drank out of a colored water or drinking fountain. [Chuckling] He said he mentioned something about going onto a bus one time and all the African Americans were at the back of the bus and he tried to go back there and the caucasians all said, no, no, no, you're not a colored, you've got to sit up in front. He didn't understand what was going on but he followed directions.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yes.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I know he traveled quite a bit back east. His favorite city, apparently -- I think he was working in some kind of Chinese restaurant or something in Cincinnati.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh for heaven's sake.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And Cincinnati was his favorite town. I found out later when I found out he was a Cincinnati Reds fan. Why did he like the Cincinnati Reds? Because he had been living in Cincinnati and you know back then that was the beginning of major league baseball. He was a Cincinnati Reds fan.

>> Carlene Tinker: So about what years would those be?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh, you know, it's very foggy back then. My mother has never really disclosed all that. I should ask her more questions about that.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: But she's hard of hearing so it's hard to get answers out of her.

>> Carlene Tinker: Join the crowd [laughing].

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I know he was there probably into the 1920s.

>> Carlene Tinker: 1920s.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah, I bet there weren't very many Japanese at all at that time --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh no.

>> Carlene Tinker: In the east, right? Or in the south.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's an interesting story that you told about the colored versus non-colored.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Apparently he had a caucasian girlfriend at one time back there too that he was strongly considering marrying and then my mother said he had an epiphany when one day he was walking with her and he looked into the mirror of the reflections off of a store and saw him with his girlfriend and he for some reason he felt this is not going to work. And so he broke off that relationship. And then he sent back to Japan to try to find a bride. And that's how my grandmother came to this country.

>> Carlene Tinker: I see. So that was a picture bride marriage.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. So OK. This is your maternal grandfather?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Now what about your paternal grandfather? Tell us about him. [Laughter]

>> Ken Taniguchi: [Laughing] That's another interesting set of stories. He came apparently in the early 1900s. So I'm guessing -- I've got the records. I just can't remember off the top of my head. I was able to pull up the archival records from the Japanese National Museum and saw the boat that he arrived in from Japan into Seattle.

>> Carlene Tinker: I'll be darned.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And I have to -- I'm guessing it was something like 1910, 11, 12. Somewhere around there, I think.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And then he also had called for a wife from Japan and that's how my grandmother ended up coming. And they had known each other apparently in Japan, I believe. So they had already kind of preset the whole thing. In Seattle he was -- he and my grandmother apparently were running a hotel or operating a hotel or managing, I'm not sure. But my grandfather was an

avid fishermen which kind of rubbed off on me, I suppose. So apparently he had -- my father was, well my aunts were born there first. My father had two older sisters who were both born first. My father was the third born and that was in 1924 he was born in Seattle. So they were all living in Seattle.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And I know they had a hotel going into the 1920s and almost into the '30s, I believe.

>> Carlene Tinker: Were there a lot of Japanese living up there at that time?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh yes because that was one of the ports of entry up there.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: There was probably more -- I think more Japanese probably came into Seattle, I think, than anywhere else, from guessing right now because most of the records I've seen seem to be at ports of entry being Seattle.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Most of them were bachelor or single men and the hotels up there were pretty much -- I'm not sure if they were room and board or whatever but there were a lot of single men residing in those hotels up there in the Japantown area of Seattle.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. So your grandparents were -- this was your paternal grandpa.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. And they were running this boarding house or hotel.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, it was called the Royal Hotel. So --

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So that's -- and I know where it was at. I mean, I've had the address. I even tracked down the location of them when I did some investigating on my own. And of course it's gone now but it's a rather nice looking highrise office complex right where it used to be. But it is right in the Japantown area of Seattle.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, OK. So What happened after they ran this hotel for a while? Didn't your grandpa go fishing a lot?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well yes, he was. Like I said, my grandmother was left pretty much in charge of the hotel. My grandfather was more interested in going fishing and apparently my grandmother had an attraction for one of the tenants over there. So ended up one thing led to another and next thing you know my grandparents are being separated. And my grandfather took his kids, my two aunts, my father, and then there was a younger brother my dad had. He also went back with Japan with them, back to Asumi.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: My grandmother apparently remained in Seattle with her new beau and they married. So she became a Kimura [phonetic].

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And apparently we have to -- you know, this is one of the family things that's we've come to recognize. That my dad's younger brother may very well have been fathered by Mr. Kimura.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Because my grandmother went back to Japan and brought the young, her young son back to America with her. My dad and his two sisters stayed in Japan for quite a while.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And my dad was pretty much educated in Japan from preschool all the way through -- well, through afterwards as well. He was in Japan throughout the war alone because both of my aunts had been called back to help their mother in whatever business they were operating which I believe was a produce business in Los Angeles by the end of the 1930s.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, these are the Kimuras?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes. Kimuras were Massawa Kimura [phonetic] -- that was my step-grandfather who was the only grandfather I've actually known on my father's side.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And my grandmother, Hana. So they were both living in Compton, I believe.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, Compton. OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And so they had brought both my Auntie Yasco [phonetic] and Auntie Tasco [phonetic] back to the States with them. Neither of them spoke English so they had to pick up English. My Auntie Yasco, she ended up -- she was actually pretty good. She picked up the English language much better. My Auntie Tasco pretty much spoke Japanese. She never did seem to pick up English very well. My uncle George, George Kimura -- he took the name Kimura. He was born Taniguchi but he took the name Kimura. His entire upbringing pretty much was in the United States because he was brought back as a toddler. So he didn't have the same upbringing as my aunts and my father did.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Now, that was your dad. So your dad stayed in Japan?

>> Ken Taniguchi: My dad was in Japan and he went through school. He got accepted to the Japanese Merchant Marine Academy which was a very prestigious organization in -- let's see. I think it was in Toba, I believe. And he was in -- he was, I think, first year cadet at the Merchant Marine Academy. First year or second year, I can't remember. Well, I take that back. It must have been second year but I think he was -- because he went into the Merchant Marine Academy, I believe, in early 1941.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So he had pretty much finished his first year at the academy when World War II broke out. And --

>> Carlene Tinker: And of course he stayed in Japan.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, he couldn't come back. I mean, once you're --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Once the war broke out, there was no way to get moving back and forth between the two countries. And my father, who was a US citizen born in Seattle, being at the Japanese Merchant Marine Academy, the entire merchant fleet was conscripted into the Japanese Navy.

>> Carlene Tinker: Hmm.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So my father ended up being pretty much a Japanese Naval Officer.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Even though he was a non-combatant. He was a merchant seaman.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right, right. Now, what about your mom? I understand that she was raised in Japan. Is that right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: how did that happen?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, my mother was born in 1928 in Los Angeles.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Because my grandparents apparently had come all the way back to California by that point and he was -- and I really don't know what my grandfather was doing in the Los Angeles area but I should have. I know I have it written down someplace but I don't have it off the top of my head.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: My mother was actually the second born.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Her oldest sister, unfortunately, had passed away.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So -- in fact, I'll give you a little story about that one too. My mother's side of the family has this, I don't know, this psychic thing going on with them that my mother always alludes to. But my aunt that passed away, my mother's oldest sister, had a very odd name. Her name was Sound of a Thousand Years. It translates as Sound of a Thousand Years. And my -- and the firstborn child and everything else. So apparently my grandparents decided to take her back to Japan as an infant and wanted her to be raised in Japan since the custom was back then discrimination and the lack of proper education was pretty noticeable to the Japanese living in this country -- that they weren't treated as full citizens.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And given a second class education, so to speak. And those who could afford it would often send their children back to Japan so they get a good education. So as an infant, my grandparents took my older sister to Japan and left her there. And apparently my grandparents were living in this country and then one night while they were sleeping, they were awakened that night by just a tremendous noise. They didn't know what the heck was going on. They thought, you know, that just

whatever it was -- it just roused them out of their sleep. And they woke up the next morning and they asked everybody in the building what happened last night and they said, what? They said, well that huge noise last night. And they said that they said, there was nothing last night. Nobody heard anything -- just my grandparents. And then they got the telegraph from Japan that their daughter had died.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh wow. Isn't --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. And that's one of the stories. The other story is -- and I'll tell you that there's a [good one?] here. My sister, my mother and her sister and their younger brother, as they were born they were all sent back to Japan to relatives in Saitama and in the Tokyo area for their education. So my mother was sent to Japan preschool. So she had her entire education also in Japan.

>> Carlene Tinker: So she was there probably in 1930? You said she was born in 1928.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So in 1930 she was sent to Japan and she went, she was all over. She was in high school when World War II broke out.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, so basically she got stuck there.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And like I said, this was -- this psychic thing is my grandparents, my mother. And apparently one of my stories -- two stories -- that we have is I think one. I think maybe it was my mother or my aunt or somebody met this young couple who were expecting a child and one of them, they told them, you know, she's going to have a baby. And he says, whoever it was -- my mother or my aunt -- just blurted out, no, they're not. And he said, well, yes, she's having a child. No, no, she's not. And sure enough, the child was stillborn.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And they were going, this is kind of strange. And another story from my mother's side is how during the war, I can't remember who it was but my mother tells the story how one of her aunts was, her son was off to war. And she was coming

down the street and saw her son walking toward her down the street and she thought, oh good, my son's come back from the war. So she ran up to meet him and he just disappeared in front of her. And then she got the word that her son had died that day.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my gosh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So this kind of runs in -- [laughing].

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh! Ooooh. That's kind of eerie [laughing].

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I have my own experience like that too which is kind of strange. I was up doing a wine tasting up in Sonoma County.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yes.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And I was supposed to spend the weekend up there and after dinner that night, I just -- something was telling me I had to get back to Fresno. And I couldn't understand why I had a strong urge I had to get back to Fresno. But I said, you know, I got -- I just got to go back to Fresno. So I canceled the rest of the trip, came back to Fresno. So I got here that night and that's the night my grandmother passed away.

>> Carlene Tinker: Who did?

>> Ken Taniguchi: My grandmother.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my gosh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. So -- [laughing].

>> Carlene Tinker: You guys have this special talent. [laughing]

>> Ken Taniguchi: It's a little eerie to have to deal with sometimes but -- and my mother, she keeps using that as for one reason or another she tells us things are going to happen. And most of the time nothing happens. But you have to have a little bit of hmmm, you know? Maybe I ought to just listen to some of these things sometimes. So --

>> Carlene Tinker: [Laughing] OK! Whatever you say!

[Laughter]

Well, OK. So getting back to your mom and your dad, they didn't know each other in Japan?

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, no. Not at all.

>> Carlene Tinker: However, didn't they meet in Japan somehow?

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, no.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, they didn't?

>> Ken Taniguchi: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, well now, when did they come back to the United States? When were they able to?

>> Ken Taniguchi: After the war. My dad survived at least two sinkings by US submarines during World War II. He worked on the Merchant Fleet for Japan. And my mother survived. I think she was in Tokyo when Doolittle came over. She was passed around from one relative to another during the war because, you know, before they were getting money from the United States to support them. But once communications broke off between Japan and the United States, my mother and her sister and her uncle were pretty much left as almost, you know, cast-offs and then passed off from relative to relative.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I mean, they were -- I think they were even separated out because, you know, they, one, couldn't support three kids.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: You know, so they were passed from relative to relative. So my mother, you know, was a high school student during the day and she was, as all the other girls were back then, they were all sent to the munitions factory.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So that was the war effort that was going on in Japan. So both of my parents were somewhat involved in the war by circumstances -- my father in the Japanese Merchant Fleet and my mother being conscripted as a schoolgirl to work in munitions. When the war ended, things were really tough in Japan by then, you know. The country was devastated.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: My mother was telling me how they had instructions on which weeds were edible to try to fend for

themselves. But my mother was fortunate because she was a US citizen and when the occupational troops came in and they brought their families with the occupational troops, especially with the staff, the upper military staff, they were looking for domestic help. And they were fearful of, you know, Japanese. They would, you know, they weren't -- they were very distrustful of them. But the fact that my mother was a US citizen, she was able to find employment. So she was one of the lucky ones that was able to get work post World War II in Japan. [Inaudible] The opportunity to repatriate back to the United States arose little by little after World War II. And I'm not sure what year it was. It's got to be '46-47, somewhere around there, that they were, both my parents were able to get a ride back to the States because they were US citizens and the Japanese, they'd get repatriated.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right, right. So did they meet during the time that they were coming back? Or when did they meet? I kind of remember there was something about being on a boat together.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes. The USS Swallow.

>> Carlene Tinker: What was that?

>> Ken Taniguchi: The boat's name was the USS Swallow.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh [laughing].

>> Ken Taniguchi: In fact, I've got a picture of it and everything else too. It was a converted US military transport vessel that they were using to bring people back across.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And they were, they happened to be on the same boat coming back to the United States.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: The men and women were segregated in the course, you know, where the bunks where and whatnot. My father was bunked with my mother's brother. So my uncle, they didn't -- nobody knew each other but he happened to be my Uncle Leo was bunked with my father.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And through my Uncle Leo, he Uncle Leo, introduced my father to both my mother and my aunt. And my aunt's name is Naomi.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So they were -- my mother's name is Marie. So they were both introduced by my Uncle Leo to them. And it's a long trip coming back from Japan back then.

>> Carlene Tinker: [Laughing] Long enough.

>> Ken Taniguchi: It's -- you know, I guess it's close to a month-long journey maybe.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, that long! [Laughing]

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, it's several weeks, a couple weeks at least. So anyway, they were, you know, they hit it off and everybody on the boat, the ship, was saying, oh those two, they got something going on here, you know. So they were the kind of the --

>> Carlene Tinker: [Laughing] Long enough for them to become interested in each other.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes, yes. So apparently that's what happened on the ship coming balance across from Japan.

>> Carlene Tinker: And that was the US Swallow?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, the USS Swallow.

>> Carlene Tinker: did you say you have a picture of it?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh yeah. I've got pictures of quite a bit of things I've got in here. This is on my iPad but --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, just let me know when you want to introduce a picture.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, let me log this thing on so I've got it on here. Let's see. See, I think I -- oh. Oops. I think I'll let it load. You know, I'll let it load up first.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, well we'll come back to that. So they had this romance that budded on the US Swallow and then did they get married after that or what happened after they landed in the United States?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, it was kind of funny because, like I said, they didn't know each other at all.

>> Carlene Tinker: Who didn't know each other?

>> Ken Taniguchi: My parents. Before they had been on the boat, they didn't know each other at all. So the ship ended up -- Going up, ending up in San Francisco. That's where the vessel ended up.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Finally disembarking. And you know, the ship pulls in and pulled up next to the wharf and whatnot and they looked down there. And they're looking for their parents. And there's my father's -- my uncle, my grandfather, and my grandmother from my dad's side. And there's my grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side, and they're next to each other at the dock.

>> Carlene Tinker: They're standing each other, coincidentally.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, they were with each other. Yeah. And so they get off the boat not knowing that both my grandparents who didn't know that their children were hooking up on this ship coming back knew each other because they were been in Amache.

>> Carlene Tinker: Who was --

>> Ken Taniguchi: During camp.

>> Carlene Tinker: Who was in Amache?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Both my grandparents on my father's side and my mother's side.

>> Carlene Tinker: And your mother's. So that would be the Taniguchis and the Kimuras.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, that would be the Taniguchis and the Hayashiss.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, Hayashis, excuse me.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, well it's actually it would be the Kimuras and Hayashis because my grandmother remarried Mr. Kimura.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, OK. Thank you.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So the Kimuras and the Hayashiss were both at the dock to greet their children who were coming back, not knowing that their children had hooked up during the trip coming back from Japan. [Laughter] In fact, they had known each other so well that they were both in Los Angeles, I believe, at the time. Or -- I know they knew each other. But they had both carpooled to greet them up in San Francisco.

[Laughter]

>> Carlene Tinker: That's an amazing story.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right. It was bizarre coincidence. Bizarre.

>> Carlene Tinker: [Laughing] But then -- well then did your mother and father continue their relationship or did they separate at that point or --?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well my father went with my Kimura grandparents and they resettled in Fresno.

>> Carlene Tinker: Ok.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Where my grandfather, Kimura, was operating a grocery store. My mother went with her parents back down to Los Angeles. So they were separated because now my father's in Fresno, my mother's in Los Angeles. But apparently the relationship was enough that my father would take the time to drive from Fresno to Los Angeles to go out with my mother which is, you know, quite an endeavor considering the distance back then. It wasn't a quick trip from Fresno to Los Angeles at all. I mean, it probably took easily half a day to get down there. So --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So your mom went to L.A.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. And your dad was staying here.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Again, what did your dad do?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well [laughs], initially my father had to learn English.

>> Carlene Tinker: He what?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Had to learn English.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh! OK. Well both of them probably.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right. Pretty much both of them. My father was, you know, he was in his 20s at that point. So he got sent to grammar school with a bunch of other -- what do [inaudible]. We know the Japanese Americans who are educated in Japan are known as Kibei.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So both my parents are Kibei. And my father and for several other Kibei in the Fresno area, they were all rounded up and sent to grammar school in Fresno to learn English. But my dad was kicked out.

>> Carlene Tinker: What school was this? Was it one of the public schools or --?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes, it was one of the public schools.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh!

>> Ken Taniguchi: But I can't remember the name of the school. I'll have to look it up. He was in -- went to one of the public schools in Fresno but he was booted out.

>> Carlene Tinker: Huh! Why was he booted out?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Smoking.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

[Laughter]

But he was also an adult at that time, right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes, he was. He was. Yeah. They were all -- all these Kibei young men who were sent to this grammar school were all basically men. They weren't, they weren't children. But they --

>> Carlene Tinker: Was that on the west side, do you think?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Ah, you know, I've got the name of the school somewhere in my records. I can't remember where it is. But in fact I should try to get -- I guess if I could get this thing to open up I've got pictures of him and his buddies in front of the school and they look like a bunch of, I don't know -- I guess you could call them like gang members hanging out [laughing].

>> Carlene Tinker: I was going to suggest that but I resisted, but you -- [laughing].

>> Ken Taniguchi: It looks like a bunch of young, little punks. They're all, you know, hanging together there. And I can see these guys smoking and getting in trouble because they're -- you know, they're young men. They're not kids.

>> Carlene Tinker: Well obviously he didn't last very long. When -- so his English didn't take off right away?

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, and you know, his English never did fully develop. I mean, he spoke business English pretty much and the things he needed to know to operate a business. So you know, my mother ended up picking up English a lot better than my father did.

>> Carlene Tinker: Well now, what kind of -- well, he went into business. What kind of business did he do?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, he was -- he started apparently working with my grandparents Kimura at their market. And then when I was born, I was like I said, living in the back of a mom and pop grocery store. So that was their store.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: The Columbia Market was my parents were operating it.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, you said on Merced Street.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Merced and C Street, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: It was across from the old Columbia Elementary School.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. Because I remember -- I can remember living there and you know, you look out the front door you're looking straight across the street at an elementary school.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. OK, so they were separated after they got off the boat and corresponded for a while, right? How long did it take for them to get married?

>> Ken Taniguchi: It must have been about -- I'm guessing it was about two or three years.

>> Carlene Tinker: Two or three years?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, because they were married in 1950.

>> Carlene Tinker: 1950, OK. So they came back probably '46-47?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. So they get married and then Mom comes from L.A. She stays here with your dad, right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Once they married, yeah. They settled in Fresno and that's where I was born.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Are you having trouble getting on [trying to use iPad]?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes, I need to get onto the WiFi system here it looks like.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I see one so it looks like a public access. I'll see if I can load that on. I guess Bulldogs is the --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, I don't know how to do that.

>> Ken Taniguchi: It says I'm -- it looks like I'm logged in now. [Lots of notification alarms] Oh yes. Oh yeah [laughing]. It looks like my [inaudible] definitely. I think I'm on here. OK. OK, let's see if this is going to let me open this up now. I'll see what happens.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Sorry about that. Yeah. I had trouble with my phone, too, getting on. OK. So you were the first one born. What was your date of birth again?

>> Ken Taniguchi: September 12, 1951.

>> Carlene Tinker: 1951. OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right. In fact, my middle name Kenichi -- Ken-ichi -- in Japanese characters, the kanji character for ken is the same character you use for important documents like on a constitution or a treaty because that was when the final peace treaty was ratified with Japan. So my mother used that character for my middle name.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. So that's the derivation. I like that. So you were the first one born.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: And you have two sisters.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: And the brother.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Two brothers.

>> Carlene Tinker: No, two brothers. Yeah. OK. What was I going to say about that? Now, because your parents were Kibeis and their English was not very fluent, I assume that they were speaking mostly Japanese at home.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Exactly. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, so you kids were speaking Japanese only, probably.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Me.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, just you?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I think just primarily myself. My sister was one year behind me. It's boy, girl, boy -- it's boy, girl, boy, girl, boy.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: OK, so we're flip-flop-flip-flop. When I was born, yeah, that's pretty much all we spoke was Japanese. I was -- my grandparents as well. They spoke Japanese to me and my parents spoke Japanese to me. My first language was Japanese. My mother still has -- I have them still. There's a vinyl recording of me talking and singing in Japanese. Just a little side story there. Back then, a lot of these mom and pop grocery stores, it was all cash or some kind of bar system going on in these stores. And one of the things they had, when somebody owed them money they gave them a record-making machine. So that's how I ended up my voice getting on vinyl. And I'm speaking Japanese a mile a minute and singing Japanese. And I can't understand myself anymore. [Laughter] And it's me speaking. It's kind of bizarre.

>> Carlene Tinker: Do you still speak Japanese?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Some. I never really kept it up. So my speech pattern and my vocabulary kind of died when I entered -- well, it was locked during that period when I entered public education.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: But so I do have a fundamental grasp of the Japanese language and sometimes I'll rattle off a sentence without even thinking about it. And then someone from Japan will think I'm speaking fluent and they'll start talking back at me and all of a sudden I hit a stone wall. [Laughter] And I have to tell them, whoa, whoa, wait a minute.

>> Carlene Tinker: I'm sure, however, if you stayed there a while, you'd be back in business.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I notice that when I go back to Japan sometimes all of a sudden I'll start thinking in Japanese and --

>> Carlene Tinker: I know, isn't that interesting?!

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, so I start thinking Japanese and I've even -- I take these delegations to Japan once in a while. And it was kind of bizarre. I got so involved in something one time that somebody said something in English and I started answering in Japanese. They looked at -- wait, wait. Oh, excuse me. I just push back again.

>> Carlene Tinker: [Laughing] Yeah, I'm not very good at other languages but I had a little experience with trying to learn Spanish. And after being in Mexico for a while it took a little while but after about three weeks then I started thinking in Spanish rather than English. Well, getting back to your not being able to speak English right away, that gave you a rough start in school.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh, it was extremely bad. When I was growing up in west Fresno, west Fresno back then -- we're talking in the early '50s -- was still a melting pot of immigrants. It wasn't primarily any particular ethnicity over there. You know, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, African Americans, as well as Armenians, as well as Italians, just about any ethnic group you could think of when they first immigrated to the or moved into the Fresno area seemed to end up in west Fresno. So we -- everybody got along. And I didn't have any -- I didn't realize, you know, anything special. The next-door neighbors were the Ranterias [phonetic] and so, you know, I was speaking a little bit of Spanish. But most of the time it was Japanese. And you know, my mother was taking me to the Buddhist church and so everything was hunky dory until my father decided to move us out of west Fresno and he bought a house in what was back then northwest Fresno which is the area of Dakota and Shields.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Dakota, Shields, West Avenue, that area right there.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Roeding Elementary is on the corner of Dakota and West Avenue so that's the exact -- that's we were one block from the school.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: But when I moved into that area, it was suburbia, pretty much a new suburban area. The houses were all built post World War II. And the kids there were all caucasian. I mean, I was the only Japanese kid. I think I might have been the only -- well, other than some Jewish families and some

Armenian families, everything else was pretty much straight caucasian. A lot of people from, you know, who had come here during the Depression from Oklahoma. So I knew there were -- so that's the group I ended up falling into and they had not seen anyone Japanese other than the war movies and the fathers having been through World War II. So I ran into a lot of racial hostility.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So what kinds of experiences did you have? Did the kids tease you, bully you, harass you? What kind? Did they -- of course, you weren't speaking English yet.

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, it was --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, you were struggling with that.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I think in the group that I was going -- my own age group, you know, we're all kindergarteners, first grade. I went from first grade all the way up through sixth grade in Roeding Elementary. The biggest prejudice I seemed to be getting was from those kids in the older grades.

>> Carlene Tinker: They were what?

>> Ken Taniguchi: The older grades. You know? The --

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: You know, the kids that were -- you know, four or five years ahead of me.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Of course, those kids were born, you know, end of World War II.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: They were 1946-47. Their fathers are just come out of the military. So the fact that I was Japanese and I had, you know, coke bottle glasses and I had pretty much a butch haircut -- Buddha head haircut -- boy, I was like stereotypic of what they'd been trained to hate.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So the older kids were the ones that I got most of the grief from. And yeah, I would be chased down by groups of boys coming home from school and there was an open field just past between the grammar school and my house which was a block away. There was an open field. There was still a lot of agriculture -- there was a cow across the street from our

house. That's how it was back then. [Laughter] And I remember being ambushed by these boys sometimes coming home from school. And I'd be in the middle of a dirt field. Just, man, they'd be throwing dirt clods and rocks at me and I'd be trying to fight myself off of these kids coming at me.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my gosh!

>> Ken Taniguchi: I got pretty good at throwing things, you know?

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah!

>> Ken Taniguchi: I was pretty good.

>> Carlene Tinker: [Laughing] Well, were you walking by yourself or were you with any of your --

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, I was by myself.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: But now, I assume it didn't last the whole time you were in elementary school because as you, as time passed, those kids graduated and they went on. And then you learned English. OK, of course, that helped, right? So what were your experiences like as you went on to junior high and high school?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, it definitely got better as the other kids graduated out or moved on. And you know, when you start getting into high school and junior high school you're dealing with a lot shorter age groups. There's three-year chunks, basically, right? Because junior high school was 7th, 8th, and 9th, and high school was 10, 11, and 12. So you know, now you're dealing with a much smaller group of kids and you're dealing with kids -- as you move forward, you know, you got three years coming in behind you. So my sister was one year behind me. And my brother is about three years behind me. Three, four -- yeah, three years behind me. So my sister got some of the same grief that I did. But she had a different way of having to cope with it. She was a girl so she had to cope with it a different way. But as I got toward the end of grammar school, things got much easier. And then by the time I had gotten to junior high school, then I'm just basically with my own gang or my own group anymore and as a matter of fact, one of my oldest friends is we went to kindergarten together. And most of my buddies here in Fresno, we all went through, you know, that whole era, the time period from elementary school through junior high school through high school

together. We all went through Boy Scouts together. We all went through Explorer Scouts together. So the bond with my gang, as we call ourselves the wolf pack, is, you know, engrained in that period of time when we all bonded. So yeah. It got -- by the time I got into junior high school I didn't run into that problem nearly as much as I did before. In high school, the same thing. And of course as the larger schools you went to, the more kids you got, we started drawing from other areas. So now there were other Japanese American kids, a lot more other ethnic mixes in there -- you know, Chinese and one of my other oldest best friends is Mexican American. And he came into my elementary school in the fifth grade and he's been a lifelong friend as well. And --

>> Carlene Tinker: I'm trying to think of what years these were, Ken, when you were in elementary school and high school.

>> Ken Taniguchi: 1956 would have been when I started kindergarten.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, '56. OK. Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, so I was only about five years old then.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And then so then, you know, you got kindergarten then seven years after that, so 1960 -- let's see, '63 would be junior high school because I was in seventh grade when Kennedy was assassinated.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And then high school was '66 through '69.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Yeah, I'm trying to remember what the geographic distribution of Japanese were and other ethnic groups during this time. As I recall, the railroad tracks were a dividing line for a lot of them. I mean, segregation. I'm surprised that you were actually over in the northwest side of Fresno.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, that's my father's doing. My father wanted to move us into what he felt would be a better neighborhood, better environment. You know, trying to look after his kids. He thought, you know, going into suburbia would be better than dealing with what he thought was a degrading neighborhood in west Fresno. So he moved us to the northwest Fresno.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. OK. And then as I recall, you told me earlier about not being a very good student.

[Laughter]

In grammar school. And I think that was a result of, you know, your inability to speak English fluently and there was some correlation between that. And I think at one point didn't your mom want to hold you back? Or was there an issue like that?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes. It was -- I had a very rough start. In kindergarten I didn't speak English. It was -- if it wasn't for television which, you know, one of the new things that came out, black and white television. Probably one of the -- I guess one of the tools that people used to start learning the language. And my mother, she saw the hassles I was going through. She decided that it wasn't going to happen to the rest of her kids. So she started forcing herself to use English rather than Japanese at home. We hardly ever saw my father. He was working all the time. So you know, and I started school, basically trying to catch up just with the language. So I was a terrible student first grade, second grade, third grade, you know, all the way through elementary school. But I guess I did stand out because I was a troublemaker. I was a class clown, goof-off, whatever. A funny story on one of my first trials as an attorney. I wasn't even looking at the jurors that were coming in that day but the judge asks the jury panel, you know, do you know any of the parties. And this lady said, I believe I know Mr. Taniguchi and I looked up. And I go, oh my gosh. It was my first grade teacher.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh! [laughing]

>> Ken Taniguchi: She had remembered me. [Laughing] But yeah, all the way through elementary school I was pretty bad. By the third -- I was basically, you know, C-D student.

>> Carlene Tinker: Whoa!

>> Ken Taniguchi: Terrible. By the third grade, I was below grade level. You know --

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: By then they test you to see if you're keeping up with the rest of your classmates. One of my good friends, Milo Lukovic [phonetic] and I were pretty much in the same situation and he was also below grade level. So they kept Milo back a year. Back then, if a student wasn't keeping up with his classmates, they'd make him retake that grade over again. So

Milo got held back and it has a stigma to it. You know, we were good friends when I was, you know, all the way up until that point and then when he got held back, all of a sudden, you know, he was no longer part of the gang anymore. You know? So I completely lost contact with Milo. My mother was worried about me so she told my fourth grade teacher -- because I got through third and went to fourth and in fourth grade I was again in trouble and whatnot, messing up. And my mother asked my fourth grade teacher to hold me back. And I know her name, Mrs. Dudley. She told my mother no. She said, you know, he's not stupid. He just needs to catch up. You know? And she thought it would be detrimental to hold me back, making me -- in a way, teachers need to be aware of these types of things, you know. The self-esteem of a person is important and [inaudible] to their educational track. So she said no, make him struggle. Make him earn it. So my mother followed her advice and let me continue. And I was pretty much still struggling all the way through seventh grade. And then all of a sudden, eighth grade, I guess everything just finally came into place. And all of a sudden from becoming a barely passing D and C student, I started getting As and Bs. And it took off from there.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And then when you got to high school, I think, you got good enough grades that you were winning a scholarship to university.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I got a Cal State scholarship, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Which one was it?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Cal State.

>> Carlene Tinker: Cal State?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, California State scholarship. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And so then high school was just the opposite of grammar school.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: For you. You found your niche. You were able to speak English well. And as I recall, you felt very comfortable in high school. You found your friends and you started some clubs, didn't you?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, I did a -- I got involved in more things than just, you know, being a goofball. I was involved in clubs. I ran for class office. All the things that, you know, you need to do to get into college, all of a sudden I was doing all those things. And so yeah --

>> Carlene Tinker: Mrs. Dudley did a good thing.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, she did.

>> Carlene Tinker: She knew what she was doing.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, smart teacher.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. And I'm glad your mother didn't capitulate.

[Laughter]

So then you successfully graduated, I think from Fresno High. And then where did you go to school? Where did you go to college?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, I was the first of my siblings or pretty much most of my family to actually get into university. I didn't know what I was doing. I just knew that I wanted to go to college. My parents thought I should go to City College. But you know, I was pretty much full of myself. I figured I could do anything, you know. So I said, I'm going to apply to UC. They said, well you know, it's kind of hard to afford that. I said, well, I'll apply for the scholarship. So they said, OK, fine. You know. So you try it. So I did. And I didn't know one college from another. I just knew UC was probably, you know, for a university was probably the most inexpensive. So I applied. But I didn't know where to apply to. I had no idea which, what colleges -- how they're configured, what's the difference between the, you know, colleges. Especially the University of California has different colleges within the university. You know, so San Diego there was Muir College, Third College, Revelle College. I knew Scripps Institute of Oceanography was down there. I wanted to be -- I was interested in fisheries and fish and whatnot. So I think, I want to be an oceanographer. I didn't realize Scripps Institute was a graduate program. I just knew that it was there. So I applied and they were asking which college and I'm going, well, I'll pick Revelle, you know. So I pick Revelle, not knowing that I had probably selected probably the most difficult college in the University of California system. No wonder there weren't a whole lot of applicants going there. It was people who had any, who knew the system knew that was not where you wanted to go to. But I applied there and of course they accepted me. And with a Cal State scholarship, so off I went to UC San Diego.

>> Carlene Tinker: And what was your experience like in Revelle College?

>> Ken Taniguchi: That was --

>> Carlene Tinker: A learning experience?

>> Ken Taniguchi: It was a very learning experience. I got in the first -- it was on a quarter system back then. First quarter, I ended up with an A, a B, a D, and an F.

>> Carlene Tinker: Whoa!

>> Ken Taniguchi: For a C average. OK.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, so you were able to stay in.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So, I'm OK. Second quarter, I fell below a C average.

>> Carlene Tinker: Whoa.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I'm getting in trouble now.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And so they put you on probation.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Which means that you're on the verge of getting expelled if you keep this up. And of course this was back in 1969-70. And for those who don't know it, back then the Vietnam War was going on. We were all raised for the draft. You could avoid the draft if you were a full time college student. It was called a student deferment. If you got kicked out of college, now you're in line to get shipped off to Vietnam.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yes.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So you know, there was a lot more at stake than just an education.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: You know, the fact that you may get yourself killed if you don't continue your education. So here comes the spring quarter of 1970 and I'm in big trouble. I was taking a full time student so with all my classes and I think I was only passing maybe one or two of them. And the rest of them I was pretty much headed right out the door. And then Kent State happened. And for those who don't know Kent State, that was a student protest at Kent State University and the National Guard opened up gunfire on unarmed protesters and gunned them down. So the death of those college students caused tremendous turmoil in the university system. The UC system went into pretty much a

giant protest on every campus of the UC system and they shut down the university. The university was shut down for about a week, almost two weeks, it seems like. The university got shut down. When we came out of that shutdown period, the chancellors said it's not fair to have you guys try to continue this quarter having lost this much time. You can drop any classes you want, as long as you have some class you can still remain a full time student.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: That was my opportunity. I dumped every class I was failing or getting below grade. And I was able to -- I think I only carried two classes for that end of that spring quarter which was enough because those were my best classes. And I was able to pull myself out of probation because of the Kent State situation. So by the end of the first year, I was back onto an even keel so to speak.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, you were OK at that point.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. And then after that, I got wise to how to study, how to be a good university student. So the second year I went back to the classes that I was having trouble with and retook them and I excelled in those. That little extra time to get up to speed. So by the end of the second year of university at UC San Diego, I was not on probation. I was on the dean's list. And now on the dean's list, I said, I've got to get out of this place. This place is too hard. So I tried to find someplace. Now I understood the system and I realized where I wanted to be was UC Davis which had a fisheries program. So I transferred to UC Davis.

>> Carlene Tinker: So how did you get involved with fisheries? Were you like your grandfather, liked to fish, or is that --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. That's pretty much it. That's my -- see, I was a problem child. And one of the things that I had was a very bad temper. And I'm one of these kids that would get so angry and throw a temper tantrum to the point that I'd hold my breath and pass out.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So my grandfather Kimura said he needs something to, you know, compensate for this thing. So they said, teach him how to fish. Fishing teaches you patience. You know?

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, it sure does.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, because fish aren't going to bite all the time.

>> Carlene Tinker: No.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And it's not --

>> Carlene Tinker: [waiting for a fish to bite] for hours.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Like I tell people, fishing is fishing. It's not catching. It's fishing. It's an actual activity that has elements of meditation in it and concentration. So they told me, you know, you've got to learn how to fish and then you can't get mad at the fish because if you get mad at the fish you're not going to catch them. So you have to learn how to calm down. And so I got involved with fishing and it's -- you know, that's been pretty much me my whole entire life. [laughing]

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, I know it continues to be a very important part of your life. So then you found Davis as a likely place to transfer to?

>> Ken Taniguchi: So much simpler. It felt like going back to high school. That's how much easier it was academically than UC San Diego Revelle College. Like I said, I found out later I had gone into the hellhole of all colleges in the UC system, not realizing it was being run by a bunch of Cal Tech alums who wanted to create the new renaissance man. I mean, the campus had -- you had no real academic freedom to pick classes for the first two years practically. The first two years were pretty much regimented that you had to take a set course of social sciences and set course of science. And they wanted you to have not only a major but a noncontiguous minor. So in other words, if you're a science major you have to have a -- you had to have a non-science minor. And you had to go and pass a language proficiency of a second language.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So it was crazy.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. So you felt as though you moved to heaven. [laughing]

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh, it was so much simpler. It was so much simpler.

>> Carlene Tinker: So you then pursued the wildlife fisheries major and graduated in that major as I understand.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right. Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And then -- but I know that you've become a lawyer.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Or you became a lawyer.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: How did that happen? I mean, wildlife fisheries, law. It doesn't seem to connect.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, it goes back to UC San Diego again. UC San Diego, because you had to take the social science classes, one of the classes was a humanities class on law and society.

>> Carlene Tinker: Law and society. OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes, and it was taught by a US magistrate. A US magistrate is like a judge. He's not a life appointment like you have with a US judge but they work as judges in the US court system. And he taught that class. And I aced the class. And he came up to me, you know, at the conclusion of the class and said, you need to go to law school. And I said, I'm not a -- I'm a science major. He goes -- but he told me, you have the aptitude to be an attorney. You have the legal mind. You should be an attorney. And I said, no, no, no, no, no. Heaven forbid. I'm a scientist. I'm not a lawyer. You know. So but it was in the back of my mind. So I went -- when I graduated as a fisheries biologist, I tried to get a job as a biologist. And I got picked up a couple of times by the California Fish and Game as a seasonal aide biologist. So I worked on two different projects. One was the Bay Delta Striper Project and one was the Herring Assay in the San Francisco Bay. And they were both -- you know, one was a summer job. One was a winter job. But I couldn't get picked up full time. You know, I kept applying and US Fish and Wildlife Service. But the job opportunities just weren't there for a fisheries biologist. And so I was doing odd jobs. I did everything from I went to bartenders school so I bartended. My photography, which I picked up in junior high school and high school, also paid bonuses. I became a -- I was a stringer newspaper photographer up in Davis for one of the newspapers up there. All the time, all my fishing down in as a youth and also when I was at UC San Diego during the summertime, I was deckhanding on fishing boats. I accrued enough time to take the captains license to become a captain. I failed the first time so I went to nautical school in San Francisco and then I took the exam again and I passed. So I became a licensed sportsfishing captain. So I was doing that as well. And but it got to the point where I'm going, you know, I really wanted to

be a fisheries biologist. That's not happening. I could be a sportsfishing captain for the rest of my life but it -- you know, all through it I felt guilty. It didn't seem like work. It feels more like play when I'm running a boat. But it's also very stressful when you're dealing with a boatload of people whose lives depend on you to keep them out of harm's way.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And especially running boats out of San Francisco. That water is --

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh, it is -- it was one of the --

>> Carlene Tinker: Unpredictable.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, that and the dangers up there. There were two types of captains up there -- ones that are extremely obese from eating all the time and those that are extremely skinny and emaciated looking because all they were doing was drinking coffee and smoking all the time because that's what the job entailed, having to pay attention to not only trying to catch fish but watching out for other small boats, watching out for sea conditions. And then in and around San Francisco, especially, with all the heavy ship traffic going by. You had to keep your eyes open for freighters and other things coming your way. There were days when I had tremendous nervous tension built up because I'm sitting there trying to watch a sonar screen, a radar, the deck, and visually keeping my eye out in a zero-zero fog so I don't hit anything.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So you know, it was a high stress job. You know, on beautiful days it was great. But on those marginal days it was extremely stressful.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So this was probably about 1977 or so. I graduated in '73. So about '77. After about four years of knocking around trying to, you know, find another occupation, I thought, you know, let me take the LSAT which is the law school entrance exam. Let's see how I do. I scored pretty good. So I applied and I was -- I wanted to get into another UC system again because of the cost. And I got accepted by about two California law schools but the UCs I was on the waiting list.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I was on the waiting list at UCLA. I was on the waiting list, I believe, at UC Davis. I can't remember if Berkeley had me on the waiting list at all. But I know I was on two of the UC campuses waiting lists. So I turned down the ones that accepted me and tried to hold out to see if I could get in in the UC system but it never happened. So the first year I applied went to waste. So I said, well, maybe if I take the LSAT again and try to boost up my score, maybe it would help. So I took the LSAT again. I think I scored about the same, really. And I guess maybe that was the stigma because I applied again and you know I couldn't seem to get on anybody's UC system waiting list this time but the other schools kept, you know, offering me positions. So at the last minute I decided to take Southwestern University Law School all the way down in Los Angeles which is the fifth largest law school in the country. I accepted to take their invitation and said, OK, I'll start over there. So that's where I went to law school.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. And then how long was law school? Three years?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Law school was full time. It was three years.

>> Carlene Tinker: Three years.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And everybody told me how -- what a, you know, how difficult law school is. So I was steeling myself for a hard go and I found out it wasn't hard [laughing]. For me, it wasn't hard. I guess that U.S. magistrate was right. I just fit right in. So --

>> Carlene Tinker: Well, that's great.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I went through the first year and I figured it was going to be difficult but I did -- I think I might have overdone it, overanalyzed too much. I mean, I ended up with a good, you know -- I ended up in probably the top, I'm guessing, I don't know, the upper half of the law school class final exam scores that year. I might have been higher than that. But I know that I tutored two of the people who won top scores in a couple of the classes. I was actually tutoring them [laughing] and they excelled me. But at that point I realized law school was not going to be that hard for me. I just needed to get it done, so I did.

>> Carlene Tinker: Good.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: So then did you practice law down there or did you come back to Fresno to -- where were your first jobs as a lawyer?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well --

[Chuckles]

I was -- law school. The bar exam is in June. I took the bar exam. My intent was if I passed it, great, but I wasn't going to take it more than once.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: If I failed it, I'm going to go back to the fishing boats again. So I was running fishing boats waiting for the bar results to come out.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: It paid pretty good money too, by the way, so I mean it's not -- you know, it's a very good occupation if you want to do that. But then I passed the bar. And then so now I've got to figure out what I'm going to do with this. So I started applying. And I had worked in Los Angeles and interned -- student intern -- with the Los Angeles District Attorneys Office. I was supposed to work for Lance Ito, Judge Ito. He was a DA back then but he was working the Gang Task Force Unit with the Los Angeles District Attorney at the time and I was living in East L.A. which was the middle of the gang territory. So when he offered me the job, I said, I don't think I can work for you because the guys you're prosecuting, I'm living in there. And I don't think I want to be in that situation [laughing]. So I mean, you know, he was kind of upset with me. He said, it doesn't matter. Come on! I said, no, it's OK. So I ended up working in the Consumer and Environmental Protection Division. Again, my biology background, I had some help there. And the fact that our family had run grocery stores, I had some commercial experience too. So you know, my other life experience would fit right into that division. So I started applying to DA's offices, figuring that the fact that I had interned in the DA's office would help. So I applied with Fresno and I applied to Sacramento and a few other places. And I also applied to the Public Defenders Office in Fresno. But meanwhile the fact that I'm a captain and one of my friends in law school's wife was a lieutenant commander of the United States Navy, told the US Navy to recruit me. And the US Navy did come after me. And they wanted me to be a JAG officer. So they were recruiting me pretty hot and heavy [laughing]. They came after me. They said, you know, we'll offer you this, we'll offer you that. You're the

perfect guy for this job. You know, they knew exactly were they wanted to put me. They wanted to put me on shipboard duty, knowing that I'm, you know, I can handle the ocean. I'm not -- I don't have a problem with seasickness or anything like that. So they were giving me all kinds of incentives to join the US Navy. So I was tempted even though back during the Kent State and everything else I was pretty much involved in the anti-war activism down there. Little side note, I got in trouble with my brother because of that because you know back then anybody involved with the anti-war movement, even though I may not be a face of the anti-war movement, if the fact that you're involved in the anti-war movement drew the attention of the FBI. So I didn't know it but the FBI apparently had a file on me. So when my brother, who was -- my brother Brian which is the third child born. He is the one that really excelled in school. He ended up going to Stanford and he graduated cum laude Stanford. And he wanted a job with a government agency and they turned him down because of me.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: He asked them, how come I can't get the job? Well, we've got a security issue with your brother.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So he told me, what the heck did you do with San Diego? [Laughing] And I said, I just helped out these guys. I was kind of like a courier. I just, you know, passed information.

>> Carlene Tinker: Isn't that something that they would do that?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. And that's how pervasive some of these government activities are that you don't realize until [inaudible] impacts you.

>> Carlene Tinker: Not just the person but the relative.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. Well, they figured that there was something going on. I don't know if they thought maybe -- I don't know. I doubt it was anti-Japanese sentiment, but you know there was something in the fact that I had helped out with the Peace March in San Diego, the fact that I had confronted a security guard at the naval base where I tried to enter the base to attend the court marshal preceding that was being held at the time. And the court marshal is supposed to be open to the public but the base commander closed the base to the public. It was one of those, you know, one of the tricky things they can pull off there. Oh, it's a public court marshal. But the base is

closed. So we ended up confronting the guard at the gate, you know. And apparently I got noted down as being an agitator or whatever. Anyway, so I had applied to all these places on the verge of being in the US Navy. Something that I was kind of leery of since I had gotten this stuff with the, you know, in the past with the military. And then I had gone through the physical, all the paperwork. All I had to do was sign on the dotted line and I was headed for officers candidate school when I got a phone call from Ed Sarkisian who's Judge Sarkisian.

>> Carlene Tinker: Here in Fresno.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Here in Fresno. He was running the public defenders office at the time and he said, you know, we got an opening here for an extra help position. We think you'd fit in. I know you -- it looks like you're a DA and maybe you are better for the DA's office but you know, you're a west Fresno boy. You've been in the environment. You know the clientele. They're some of the people that you know how to deal with. You can handle them as customers and whatnot. So we think you'd do well here. So if you want it, you've got it. So I said, maybe for this low paying job here in Fresno I'll go stay with Fresno. So I turned down the Navy and I started working as extra help. And my career took off from there.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And basically define what a public defender is.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, the public defender is your right to counsel. You know, you have a right to counsel at any time your liberty is at stake. So you don't get a right to an attorney if you're being sued by somebody. But if you're going to be locked up and your liberty is at stake, then you have a right [for representation, even if you have no money to hire an attorney]. It's a constitutional right. Now, various -- the right was established by Gideon versus Wainwright which happened back in the early '60s. And this was Clarence Earl Gideon. It was a case out of Florida which this man was charged with a burglary which was going to put him in the state prison for several years. And Florida had a rule back then that if it was not a capital case - - in other words a murder case where they could put you to death -- that you had no right to an attorney. Well, Mr. Gideon had to defend himself in the trial. There's a very good movie out, a made for TV movie starring Henry Fonda as Clarence Earl Gideon. He had to defend himself and of course he lost because he was somewhat of an uneducated man. He probably had a, you know, secondary education, about it. He had to defend himself against a seasoned prosecutor and of course he lost. So he wrote a petition of [inaudible] to the US Supreme Court. And he had no

access to any kind of resources. So he had to do this whole thing in pencil by hand. And he sent this request into the US Supreme Court because all the other appeal courts had turned him down. And the US Supreme Court heard his case. And that was the case that ruled that yes, one of your fundamental rights in the United States is your right to freedom. If your freedom is at stake, you have a right to an attorney and if you cannot afford one, one should be appointed for them. And the government should pay for it. That forced all the states to have to come up with a way to have to provide attorneys. Now, some of them did it piecemeal. Some of them, say they'd you know hire a -- they'd take a private attorney and they'd appoint them to them and pay them whatever rate they want to set up. Other agencies started to go with what's called a public defender which is the office paid for by the government to take care of all of those people. And California is the leader in that.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Farrah Shortridge Fultz is the mother of public defenders. She is a first -- I believe she is the first female attorney in California and she started setting up this whole idea back in the early 20th century. In fact, the courthouse in Los Angeles is named after her. So she started the whole idea. And public defenders took off probably -- the idea took off in the 1950s pretty much. People don't even realize it but, you know, public defenders were held in pretty high esteem back in the '50s. There was a TV show called The Public Defender back then.

>> Carlene Tinker: Called what?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Public Defender.

>> Carlene Tinker: I don't remember that.

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, but if you Google it and if you look for it, you'll find it.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And they were -- it's like Dagnet.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: They would take true stories and then they would make a play out of it. You know, a video play out of it and they would present it every week as a 30-minute show of a story of a public defender's case. And so Fresno decided as it got larger and became to the point where they needed a full staff as opposed to just piecemeal of appointing attorneys, in

1967 I believe it was they created the public defenders office. And so that office had been in existence for you know 15 years or so by the time I started working over there.

>> Carlene Tinker: So you became a public defender. You weren't the only one, of course.

>> Ken Taniguchi: No.

>> Carlene Tinker: And then did you ultimately become the head of the department?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes, I -- well, when I first started, it was like, so, like 1982.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And -- because I passed the bar in 1981. After that one year period where I was trying to figure out which way I wanted to go. I did a little stuff in between there. Surprisingly and so many of my friends all decided to hold off on their divorces until I passed the bar. The next thing you know, all these friends are saying, you need to file divorces for me. Oh my goodness! [Laughing] What do I have to do. So I was doing divorces and wills for about a year. And I wasn't really charging people for that. I was just doing it for my friends. And then so I started in 1982 as an extra help. I was probably getting paid less than the custodian. My mentor back then was Hugo Cazato. And Hugo Cazato was one of the original public defenders for Fresno County. He was deputy public defender for Fresno County.

>> Carlene Tinker: What was the name again?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Cazato. Hugo.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. So he was my mentor. And you know, he was the one that showed me the ropes, so to speak. So I was there as an extra help for only about I would say two or three months. And they said, you know, you're doing well. We've got a full time position for you. We want to offer you a full time position. So I started as a deputy one. And I, you know, worked my way right up through the ranks. There's several levels -- you know, attorney one, attorney two, attorney three, attorney four, and then an attorney five which is called a senior. And above that is management. So I worked my way right up through the ranks doing every kind of case you could think of at the public defenders office -- everything from petty thefts to homicide. I defended all the people for about every kind of crime you can

think of pretty much. I had to -- I was defending people. And by the time I -- by the 1990s, I was now spending more time as an instructor than anything else. I had -- I guess I was good at it. The new attorneys they would pass off to me for me to mentor them. So what Hugo taught me, I became Hugo and I was teaching these young attorneys how to be a public defender. And I think I did a pretty good job because apparently my reputation was held in pretty good regard by the entire court system. The DAs knew I was not a trickster. I was a straight shooter. And so I had, you know, good rapport with the district attorneys. I had good rapport with the courts. And when the public defender unfortunately passed away from cancer in 2006, a vacancy occurred and so I applied. And in 2007 I was appointed public defender.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I leapfrogged, actually. I leapfrogged from being a senior attorney, senior defense attorney. I leaped right past the management level of a chiefs or assistant public defender and went straight to the top.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, straight to the top.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Now in that role did you ever face any racism and/or discrimination? Or I wouldn't think you would.

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, I wouldn't. You know, I'm always -- you know, it's a sore spot for me still. You know, I mean, every once in a while I run into somebody that does something or says something that will get me riled up. And so but I try to stem that saying, you know, I shouldn't be paranoid about it and start thinking that every time something goes against me it's because of racism. But you know, sometimes I wonder. You know, sometimes some of the animosity I face, is it because of what I'm standing for? Or is it something because of who I am as a Japanese American?

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's something we're going to be plagued with all our lives.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh yes, I think so. I can't -- it's just one of those things, so.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Now, in the public defender role -- just an aside -- I guess you deal mostly with blacks and Latinos or is that true? Or is that --

>> Ken Taniguchi: It is. It is. And it's a sad thing, too, because I can definitely see the racism involved there. You know, the demographics of Fresno County -- really the majority here is Hispanic. The caucasian or the whites would be number two. Number three is Asian.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh really? Oh yeah, Asians now.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And African Americans are four.

>> Carlene Tinker: And what?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Are the fourth. And yet the, I would say most of the clientele, at least the public defender's office gets appointed on, are primarily Hispanic or African American which tells me something is askew here. Why are there so many African Americans being prosecuted --

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: When they are only the fourth as far as the population density of the area.

>> Carlene Tinker: What have you come up with? What explanation do you have?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, a lot of it does have to do with racial profiling and racial bias and the fact that people --

>> Carlene Tinker: I'm afraid that's true. Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And you know, when you look at it you'd expect, OK, so Asians are the third. But they are below them. You know? I would think -- especially if you look at the jail population. If you're looking at the jail, you're going to find, I think, primarily Hispanics which is natural considering the population.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right, the most populated.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And then the disproportionately large amount of African Americans --

>> Carlene Tinker: That is --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Incarcerated compared to the whites. And then the Asians are on the low end.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, that is amazing because in my experiences as I worked in Fresno Unified as a counselor and as a teacher. Well, not as a -- an administrator. And we had a lot of dealings with Asians, southeast Asians. And I'm surprised that they're below the African Americans.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, in juvenile hall -- because we represent juveniles as well, or did. [Laughing] I'm retired now. I keep thinking of myself as if I'm still there. I did notice an uptick as -- you know, remember, I started back in the '80s.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I just started to notice an increase in the southeast Asian juvenile problem as far as those that are the delinquency courts are being -- the population in the delinquency court. And I could see a lot of it had to do with these kids being with parents not able to figure out how to deal with this society and the kids becoming enamored by the gang life. And they started adopting that. And I can see that the families themselves -- I don't see where they're dysfunctional but they just lack the resources to know how to deal with this.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Particularly if they're immigrants, right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: The parents, yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. And the kids are -- you know, maybe they want to be accepted by other people. You know, that's an easy way. I don't know how they're [inaudible] but that's another --

>> Ken Taniguchi: They're seeking identity and sometimes the easiest thing for them to do is to adopt an identity that is given to them.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right, right. OK but you're not working anymore. You retired --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: I think about how many years ago?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Let's see. I retired in 2013 so it's getting -
-

>> Carlene Tinker: So, it's already six years.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: So what do you do now for entertainment?
[laughing]

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, besides fishing?

[Laughter]

>> Carlene Tinker: You go fishing. I see your shirt there --
Taniguchi, Incorporated. Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: It happened to be a company in San Diego that
when I was working as a deckhand I used to buy supplies from
them. It turned out they had the same last name.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh! [Laughing] I thought you were in -- I
thought it was your company.

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, they had the same last name. And
apparently came from the same part of Japan as well, as I was
talking to -- that company now is owned by their son who is Norm
Taniguchi. But I knew his mother and I don't remember if I met
his father or not. But way back then, when I first started
working down in there, I was talking to them. And we were like,
oh yeah, it must be in our blood. We come from fishing villages
on the coast and [laughing] -- we're still doing the same thing.
So yeah, that's how that got on there. So I do fishing. I'm
still involved with the Bar Association.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, are you?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I was the past president of the Fresno
County Bar.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: It's a nice distinction because I think I was
the first Asian bar president of Fresno county.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh!

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I was able to do that. And I'm still
involved with some legal things like next month is Law Day
coming up and I've been involved with their law day public --
I'm not sure if it's an informational day at the court house
every year since they started this whole thing. I'm involved
with the Asian Pacific American Central California Asian Pacific
American Bar Association. I started that as well.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh wow!

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I wanted to make sure that, you know, there were ethnic bars for -- just by everybody. I'm a member of the Japanese American Bar Association. That's down in, based in Los Angeles, although it's pretty much a national organization. Most are members of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association which is a nationwide organization covering all Asian ethnicities. But Fresno now has an Asian bar, an African American bar, and naturally of course a Mexican American bar.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: I know also you do a lot with the JACL, don't you?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I do. JACL -- back in the past I used to be a member of the Board of Governors.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Locally. I kind of let that membership lapse for a while. The internal politics were driving me crazy. But I'm just basically a general member right now.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: of the Fresno chapter of the JACL. Judge Ikeda -- he's been involved in a lot of projects here for the Japanese Americans so I've been involved with some of his projects. Most recently was the museum at the Fresno Fairgrounds.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, which is awesome.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. So I was involved in that project and in fact I have a -- we did a big map of what used to be Japantown which is Chinatown, which was pretty much renamed Chinatown after or during World War II. But it used to be Japantown. There's a map of it that we posted up there which I was -- I helped put that whole thing together. That's drawn from west Fresno. That was my old haunts.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I figured that was a perfect fit for me. So I helped with that. There are some of the objects that are on display in the display cases I donated over there as well. And then I have been involved with the Sister Cities program with Kochi, Japan. Kochi, Japan is the longest continuous sister city relationship Fresno has.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, really?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. So it's over 50 years old now.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Initially it got started pretty much in 1964, although it's not officially looked at as a sister city until 1965.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: But -- That tie with Japan has been probably the strongest sister city connection Fresno has had.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, I recall that when I was at Bullard High School there was a group from Tenaya [Middle School] that went over to Japan and then they hosted a group coming back over.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: That was probably in '80-something.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I've got all the records at home.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I can probably pull it up for you.
[Laughing]

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: There used to be a lot more stuff than that going on than now. Initially it started with Holland Elementary School which is right behind the Fashion Fair.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right behind.

>> Ken Taniguchi: One of the -- the sister cities program in Fresno is, again, how it came together is interesting. Fresno had two people who had made connections in Kochi. One was, I believe it's Eddie Kubota. It was stationed in Kochi after World War II as part of the occupational troops. And he is pretty much Japanese speaking Nisei. So he had a connection over there from having been over there as part of the occupational troops stationed in Kochi. Kochi, by the way, is both a city and a prefecture. So when I say Kochi, I don't know exactly if it was in the city or was somewhere else. The other one was a professor who apparently taught over there for a while back in the -- I'm guessing it was the 1950s. So you know, he told them about Fresno and everything else. And he was -- then he came back over here to Fresno, Fresno State, I believe. So back then in 1950s President Eisenhower decided to set up the Sister Cities

Program. President Eisenhower felt that part of the problems of global tension or whatnot were based upon the fact that people didn't know people. And he felt that rather than diplomats talking, you know, like diplomats, it should be citizens talking to citizens and getting to know each other on a much more personal level. So he wanted to set up citizen diplomacy. So he set up the Sister Cities Program. And so Fresno had two other sister cities before Fresno came into existence.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: One was in Pakistan and the other was in Burma. Both of those have disappeared. They are -- they didn't last as long. Kochi would be the third city that became a sister city with Fresno but the way Kochi got set up, again, it has to do with culture and language barriers. Kochi wanted to set up a sister city and they approached Fresno first. They sent letters to the Fresno City asking if they'd be interested. For some reason they wrote it all in Japanese and they sent it. And of course the people at City Hall get this letter from Japan and it's all written in Japanese. They go, what the heck is this thing? And they just threw it away. So they never heard any response back from Fresno. So then in 1964 or so, right around there, Mr. Otsubo who was from Kochi was on a business trip to the United States and he decided to swing into Fresno to see what was going on. So he shows up in Fresno unannounced, goes up to the city hall, and wants to talk to them. And he doesn't speak English very well. So city hall is going, who is this guy? So they got ahold of the local Japanese American community and they got ahold of a couple guys who could speak Japanese and they called him and, who is this guy? So they talked to him and he -- in fact, he thought these guys that came in to talk to him were Filipinos at first [laughter] because they were, you know, working the fields and whatnot around here. You get pretty dark. And when he realized that they were, you know, Japanese Americans, then they told him who was there. So when they found out that he was from Kochi and that he was here and he was trying to set, they put him up. They paid for a room at what was then the Dell Web Townhouse for a week. So the city of Fresno picked up the tab and housed him as a guest for a week in Fresno. And so he got to walk, run around, and see Fresno and talk to city councilmen and whatnot. And Fresno City said, you know, yeah. OK. I think we should -- we'll set up the sister city. [Laughter] So it was one man's effort to come to Fresno and the local Japanese American community coming to the rescue of the city of Fresno to set up the Sister Cities Program.

>> Carlene Tinker: [Laughing] That's a wonderful story. Well, I know that you are hosting a group this July.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And next year you'll probably send a group over there, right? Is that --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right. That's --

>> Carlene Tinker: That's usually how it works, right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, lately that's been what the Sister Cities Program has been doing is us hosting and them hosting us. You were mentioning earlier about these schools. Holland Elementary has a relationship with, you know, Kochi Elementary in Kochi. But you know, it's so sad. They wanted to set up video conferencing and whatnot but it doesn't work because of the time difference. You know, when our kids are in school here, it's the middle of the night over there. And then by the time they get into school it's late in the evening here or in evenings over here. So it's hard for them to have a timeframe where the two overlap to be able to make direct communications that way. So although they do communicate and there are some communications still, I understand, pretty much by letters, it's hard to have -- you know, in a modern age right now it's not letters anymore. It's texting and videoconferencing. And so real time and they can't really. It's not possible.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And of course, you know, before all the modern technology took over and the junior high schools were also part of that project. And I think some of the kids who went from the elementary school carried it on. And the next thing you had contacts with junior high schools. That's pretty much gone now because they just -- it doesn't have the connections. I've tried to set up something with the high school level.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK, Ken. There are a couple things I did not ask about and I'm not sure how much you know about them. Relocation -- you said, I think, both sides of the family were in camps.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes, in the same camp.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. How did that happen? Where were they living at the time that evacuation occurred?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, both my father's side and my mother's side were both living in the Los Angeles area so they both got sent to San Anita.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And from San Anita they were all transported to Granada or Amache.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. And what were their surnames?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Kimura and Hayashis.

>> Carlene Tinker: Hayashis. OK. And I recall -- I happen to have been in Amache myself. You were able to locate the barrack that they were in? How did you find that?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, you gave me a directory so I looked at the directory and I knew their last names. I knew their names so I searched it. Naturally, my mother's side under Hayashis was quite easy to find, at least my grandparents. There was just two of them. My father's side, though, because my grandmother married Kimura, I had to search under Kimura and Taniguchi. And sure enough Masawo and Hana Kimura popped up.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Then I had to look for my aunts and uncle. And sure enough Yasco, Tasco, and Iwoao Taniguchi popped up and naturally they were all housed in the same unit.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right? Do you remember the barracks number and the apartment number?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, I've got it here but I don't. I'd have to look it up. [Laughing]

>> Carlene Tinker: Let me see if I have them in my notes then. Let's see here. Oh, I guess I didn't write them down. It's something like nine --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I might have them right here. Hang on a second.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, block 9L and block K. Does that sound right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Could be. Let's see. I think I've got that in this thing here. I think I kept that in -- let's see. Let's see here. No, that's the ship's manifest I'm looking at [laughing].

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

[Inaudible Comments]

>> Carlene Tinker: Nine L and block 9K. Does that sound --

>> Ken Taniguchi: You know, if you wrote it down, you probably have it. Let's see. Oh, I think it is right here. Let's see if this is it here. Kimura. Oh, my grandmother's -- my mother's -- her name was Hide [phonetic]. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, Masawo and Hana Kimura were in 9L7B.

>> Carlene Tinker: Seven B.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And let's see if I've got the other one here somewhere. I think I do. Oops. I must have misplaced it. Oh, there I probably put it on my mother's side maybe.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now these were your grandparents, right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right, my grandparents. Yeah. Here it is. Let's see here. Hayashis. Yeah, Yoshioni and Hide Hayashis were in 11K/10A.

>> Carlene Tinker: Eleven K ten A?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And I was in 11G/4C. So I was a neighbor.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

[Laughter]

>> Carlene Tinker: I didn't know that at the time! [Laughter] Did you ever have a chance to talk to your grandparents about their experiences? Your aunts? What did they do? Do you have any ideas, anything about that?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, I know that my grandmother Hana Kimura became rather a very good artist. I still have some of her oil paintings. And she was in an archival photograph of the art class. My grandmother is in the photograph. So I was able to -- you can actually see her in the class in that old photograph. And I don't know what my mother's side was doing. I know my aunt on my father's side who was in camp -- Yasco was a very good -- excuse me. Drink some water. She was a very good -- with her hands.

>> Carlene Tinker: Be careful. That doesn't [spill on you].

>> Ken Taniguchi: She was very good with her hands and she was a seamstress. And so they were -- I had got the copy of her clove patterns book that she created in camp. In fact, I think it was on display here at Fresno State when we had the --

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I know she was good at that. Later on in life she was so good with her hands that she was in the early stages of the electronics business putting together computer -- well, microboards. She was so good at soldering that she was out doing that when she was living in southern California.

>> Carlene Tinker: So they came back to L.A.? Is that right? When they -- did both sides come back?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I think so. I think they both came back initially because that was an area they were familiar with. I don't think -- there was really no connection to Fresno that I know of. But somehow the Kimuras ended up coming to Fresno apparently because they must have talked to people or something, maybe in camp, and they said to come to Fresno. So they settled in west Fresno.

>> Carlene Tinker: So that's how your mother was here. Is that right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, that's how my father was here.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, I mean your father.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. I get that mixed up. OK. Now of course because they were in camp they were able to receive reparation monies, right? Or did they accept it?

>> Ken Taniguchi: When was that anyway? That was 1980s? No.

>> Carlene Tinker: It was -- oh you mean 88 is --?

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, '88 was when they --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, that was a civil liberties act then.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: And then we got our money staggered probably 19 -- I got mine in '92.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, so all my grandparents were gone by then.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I'm pretty sure. My aunts and uncle on my dad's side, of course, they were incarcerated so I think they did get it. In fact, I know my aunt up in Sacramento, Auntie Tasco, she got it. Yeah, for sure.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, yeah. OK. Let's see. What else did I want to ask you about on that? OK. So basically you made a comment a little bit earlier about, you know, when something happens you don't know exactly is it because I'm Japanese or is it because of something else. Do you ever feel that you've been, even as an adult, discriminated against?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I don't know.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I don't know. You always put it in the back of your mind sometimes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Because it works both ways. Maybe I was picked because I'm Japanese. Or maybe I was excluded because I'm Japanese. You never can tell.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, that's true.

>> Ken Taniguchi: But it's always in the back of your mind because having gone through the negative part of it, you always kind of wonder. You know. I think I told you one of the reasons why I'm a Dodgers fan was when I was in grade school -- I'm a big baseball fan. And the Giants and the Dodgers moved to California in 1957. And that was about the time when I was about -- well, it was '58 when I was, when you about start playing ball as a kid.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And I wanted to play ball. I wanted, you know, to go to Little League and the whole bit. And there was a lot of kids back then that were still pretty hostile to me and they wouldn't let me play ball. They said, we don't want the Jap on our team. So you know, maybe I wasn't very skilled but and so I thought -- you know, initially you think it's because, you know, you're just not very good but when they interject that into it, you said, oh maybe it's not because I'm not so good. It's because of who I am. And those kids that were saying those kinds of things that were mean to me, you know, they were all Giants fans. I was going to be a Giants fan like everybody else in

Fresno, you know, because the Giants were being promoted here. And if you know the Mason-Dixon line, so to speak, between the Dodgers and the Giants was pretty much the Fresno County border. So everything north of Fresno was Giants territory. With the gentleman's agreement, everything south was Dodger territory. So and the Giants had to -- you know, the Fresno Giants were here back then. So everybody was going to be a Giants fan, I was going to be a Giants fan and Willy Mays, the whole bit. And then these kids come after me and I said, the heck with you guys. You know, I'm not going to be fans of a team that has you for fans. So I became a Dodger fan.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh. Oh, that's interesting. You said the dividing line was at the end of --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Fresno.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And you know, and I'm glad I became a Dodger. You know, today is Jackie Robinson Day. Today is the day Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier with the Dodgers in Brooklyn. And so when I -- as I became a Dodgers fan I started to read about the Dodgers and realized I picked the right team. This is the team that broke the color barriers. This is the team that was going to be more inclusive.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I was very happy that I --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, you made a good choice.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I became a Dodgers fan. And then -- then even later when as time progressed and the Dodgers won the World Series in let's see '59 and I had the last laugh of all these Giants fans because, you know, my team wins the World Series. Your team, you know, they beat the Dodgers in '62, I think it was, in a one game playoff and they went to the World Series and they lost. You know? I said, haha! You know?

[Laughter]

We can win it, you guys can't. You know?

>> Carlene Tinker: Well that's interesting because I have a friend who grew up in Fowler which is south of Fresno and she's a Dodger fan. I didn't know that was -- maybe that's why.

[Laughing] I don't know.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I don't know but I just know that my story is why I'm a Dodger fan is because I had to face that kind of hostility and so I gravitated to the opposite of those people that I detested and --

>> Carlene Tinker: That's right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So I became a Dodger fan.

[Laughter]

>> Carlene Tinker: Now you've got your iPad -- I guess that's your iPad. And you were going to show me some pictures.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I was trying to.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: It's pretty tough. I can't get into the photo albums that I wanted to. I can show you some things here. Like this is my grandfather on my father's side.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh!

>> Ken Taniguchi: This is Kosaburo Taniguchi [phonetic].

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: OK. And then this is my Auntie Tasco.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, beautiful.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. And this is my Auntie Asco. Like I said by this time they were -- you know, this was back in the states.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yes.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I wish I could get into my other photo albums because they had much more interesting photographs. It just doesn't seem to want to open up for me. I've got pictures of me [laughing].

>> Carlene Tinker: Well, we like to see those too!

>> Ken Taniguchi: This is an interesting one. No, that's not. That's just my dad's buddies in Japan. Let's see here. Well this is -- this is even dated. This is my birthday in 1953.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh.

>> Ken Taniguchi: That's me in the middle. And you can see that the kids are there. The neighbors' kids are Hispanic and then there's some Japanese kids so --

[Laughter]

Let's see if I can -- if I can get that other thing to open up it would be so much more interesting. Let's see if I can [try to log on] one more time to see if I can get it to open up at all. It just doesn't seem to want to open up for me. It looks like these are opening up very slowly.

>> Carlene Tinker: I think that's partly because we're in this -
-

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh, here we go. Here we go. I got some stuff here now.

>> Carlene Tinker: Ok.

>> Ken Taniguchi: These are my -- this is my father's side. This is my father as a cadet in the Japanese Merchant Marines.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Very typical haircut there.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. Let me see if I can find something more interesting here. Oh [laughing] -- I told you my father and this gang at the elementary school. Remember when he was -- see these are the boys. [Laughing] These are the rough kids.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, these are the gangsters. [Laughing]

>> Ken Taniguchi: These are the gangsters in elementary school. That's how old they were. [laughing]

>> Carlene Tinker: Was that a very common practice to try to get the group to learn English? I wonder how their communities did that.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I don't know. I don't know if it was something unique to Fresno or not but you know --

>> Carlene Tinker: I'll have to ask.

>> Ken Taniguchi: See, this is my father when he got here in Fresno. That's what he looked like.

>> Carlene Tinker: This is your dad?

>> Ken Taniguchi: My father, yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, see, you don't look like him. Do you look more like your mom?

>> Ken Taniguchi: [Laughing] Maybe I do. I don't know. Of course maybe if I showed a picture of them older, maybe --

[Laughter]

See this one's even got the date on this one. This one is a photo inside of our mom and pop grocery store back in 1954.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I don't know if this is getting on your camera or not but --

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. That was over on --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Merced and C Street.

>> Carlene Tinker: Merced and C.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Maybe the other one is going to open up now. Let me see what happens here. So I've got -- oh. Like I said, I was a troublemaker here. Here's a -- oops. That's me in the middle with my cousins. [Laughing]

>> Carlene Tinker: Who's the adult?

>> Ken Taniguchi: That's my dad.

>> Carlene Tinker: What?

>> Ken Taniguchi: My father.

>> Carlene Tinker: Your father. OK. And where is the place that you're standing?

>> Ken Taniguchi: This is probably Roeding Park, I'm guessing.

>> Carlene Tinker: Where?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I think this is Roeding Park.

>> Carlene Tinker: Roeding Park?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah I think so.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I think it's Roeding Park. I can't tell for sure. I mean, it's a park someplace. It could even be a park up in Sacramento because that's where my cousins were. These were my cousins from Sacramento and my sister's right there. That's Jane. She's right there. That's my -- that's the second born.

>> Carlene Tinker: Second born, OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. Let me see if I can find -- [Inaudible] something interesting out of here. Oh, there's more of my -- I've got so many shots of my father in Japan. He's --

>> Carlene Tinker: I don't remember where they were going to school. Were they in Wakayama Ken when your mother and father, when they were --

>> Ken Taniguchi: My father was in Asumi.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, and the other one was Saitama.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, Saitama. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Saitama.

>> Ken Taniguchi: In fact, my father's childhood friend who's still living is, his name is -- his last name also happens to be Taniguchi but he's not related. His name is Fukuzo Taniguchi [phonetic]. And this is my dad and his buddy Fukuzo Taniguchi back in school. So my dad's in uniform and Fukuzo is not. That's them back in Japan back in the 1940s.

>> Carlene Tinker: 1940s, yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: OK. And then my father -- let's see. I've got a picture of a more recent photo of those two guys together here.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, your mom is still alive, right?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes, my mom is still alive.

>> Carlene Tinker: But your dad passed when? Two years ago?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, about two years ago.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Let's see here.

>> Carlene Tinker: How old is your mom now?

>> Ken Taniguchi: She's 91.

>> Carlene Tinker: Ninety-one.

>> Ken Taniguchi: See, there's the same two buddies together -- so my dad and Fukuzo.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Good.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. So they kept a lifelong friendship to the very -- literally to the very end. The last voice my father heard before he passed away was Fukuzo.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. I was able to get a video sent from his daughter to -- Fukuzo sent a video of himself talking and my father had got it at about midnight. And I was able to get it to my brother who was at my dad's bedside that night. And I told him, you got to play this. And my dad was out of it. You know, he was -- he didn't appear to be conscious but he was still alive. And I said, but you know, even though he's not going to see it, you should play this. So he did and he could hear his voice. And he could hear his buddy telling him, you know, hang in there, you know, you got to get better. We can still go hang out together, that kind of thing, you know. And it was about 15 minutes later he passed away.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my.

>> Ken Taniguchi: It was like he was waiting for closure, you know.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: So it was -- you know. I thought --

>> Carlene Tinker: Was your dad here in Vintage Gardens too?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yes. That's where he passed away at. But it was, like, so poignant. It fitted. You know, everything -- he lingered for like two or three weeks, you know. And pretty much unconscious and kind of comatose state. But he heard his buddy's last words and then he was able to go. So it was kind of nice.

>> Carlene Tinker: That is something.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. Let's see here if I can find that -- I'd like to show you a picture of our store if I can find it here.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: For some reason, this was not just -- this page does not want to open up for me. Maybe I got it in my -- No, those don't open up either. Hmm. It must be a slow connection. It's having trouble loading it, it looks like.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: At least I got part of this stuff opening up. [Laughing] Let me see if I can find -- Maybe that one. Hmm.

Yeah, it looks like right now I've got sporadic pictures that are popping up on here for me. Let me see if I can go down all the way down to the bottom down here and see if anything else popped up. Well, I've got pictures of me and fish as always. [Laughter] Let's see.

>> Carlene Tinker: Why don't you show one of those? [Laughing]

>> Ken Taniguchi: This was -- that's me and my little brother down there. These are albacore.

>> Carlene Tinker: How old were you at that time?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Probably about, I'm guessing about -- my brother's born so he was born 12 years after I was. So he looks like he's about, probably about four years old, I guess, in that picture. So that would be --

>> Carlene Tinker: So you were 16.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Beautiful fish. I've caught a few myself.

>> Ken Taniguchi: They're not much sport to catch but they sure are good to eat.

>> Carlene Tinker: What's that?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I said they're not really a hard fighting fish as far as I'm concerned but they are sure good to eat.

[Laughter]

>> Carlene Tinker: Well, I'm not in the same category as you but I found them very fun to catch. [Laughter]

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah. OK. Yeah, unfortunately I can't get the other pictures to come up for me. I would have loved to have shown you the store. I have pictures of the store that I was raised at, the Columbia Market. I've got that in my album here someplace that won't come up for me.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Well thank you for sharing those. Let's see. I think I've covered what I intended to cover -- what your life has been like as a citizen of the Fresno area, San Joaquin Valley, and some of your experiences. Is there anything that I have overlooked and you might want to add to kind of round it out?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, just living in Fresno it's kind of interesting how we got -- it seems like there's two distinct, separate Japanese communities going on right here because you've got the agricultural community out there which has a different lifestyle. And I play golf with a bunch of, you know, guys my age, maybe a little older. They're, you know, they're Sanseis. But their life experiences are so much different than mine. You know, they grew up with other Japanese Americans. I didn't really except for my relatives. I didn't have the connection. I probably would have if I stayed in Japanese language school or you know if we were with the Buddhist church or Japanese Congregational Church or something. And I did go to those churches as well. But my mother was so trying to get us involved in American culture, I think it might have gone into the extreme the other direction. My brothers and sisters, they don't have nearly the Japanese American experiences that I had growing up. When I first went to Japan when I was 16 with my brother Brian -- Brian is the one that's the Stanford grad. He's the smart one. [Laughter] Let's just say he's the one that was able to take advantage of the situation better than I was. I don't know if I would have been able to do as well academically as he did. But you know, my brother Brian graduated valedictorian of Fresno High School. And but he also had -- it's also kind of funny that we went through grammar school together at the same school. And my mother was the longest continuous PTA member at Roeding Elementary because my little brother David was 12 years behind me. So she has an unbroken chain of membership in the Roeding Elementary School PTA from me all the way to the end of my little brother's time there. So that's a long time to be a member of a PTA. But my brother Brian was so good in school that, you know, the teachers all remember him for his academics. But they remember me as the Taniguchi. So my mother's always cracking up that, you know, teachers would say, oh yeah Kenny was such a great student and la-da-da-da. And she's going, they got you confused with Brian. [Laughter] You were not the great student. He was but you left a lasting impression. [Laughter]

>> Carlene Tinker: Well what does Brian do now?

>> Ken Taniguchi: He's an executive for Chevron.

>> Carlene Tinker: OK. Well you said that -- correct me if I'm wrong. You said you were not as Japanese as some of these guys you play golf with?

>> Ken Taniguchi: No, I think I'm more Japanese.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, just the opposite. OK.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Right. Yeah. They're -- you know, I speak to them and they all say something in Japanese but the inflection is like a caucasian would speak. You know, they don't say the word like I think the word is pronounced but because they've got -- they've Americanized it so to speak. And so I'll hear them and I go, OK. You know, I'm not going to say nothing but, you know, that's not the way I was taught how to say that word. And they will string something together and it's pretty much like listening to -- which I was used to in college. I took Japanese a little bit in college and the other students would be speaking conversations. The conversation part of the class they would be speaking and it would be very consonant-vowel-consonant-vowel -- very staccato.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: You know? And I'd just rattle off something in Japanese and it's -- you know, since I'm used to saying it, it would flow out. So you know, that's kind of how the guys I hang with -- they tend to speak that way.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. Well that leads me to a question. Why are you so involved? Do you think -- I don't know about your siblings. Are you more involved in the Japanese American community than they are? Why do you think that is?

>> Ken Taniguchi: I think -- well, I know they all are to a degree. My little brother maybe not so much and Jane maybe somewhat but more because of church. She goes to the UJCC -- United Japanese Christian Church. Brian probably because he's a globetrotter. And his Japanese is probably better than mine because he has to use it more for travel. Although when we were -- like I said, when I was 16 I was in Japan with him. He'd have the vocabulary but I'd know how to string the sentences together. So we were kind of like a tandem team in Japan. I'd ask him, what's the word for [inaudible]? And he'd tell me. And then I'd ask the question, you know. So we'd wander around Japan and he'd be kind of like my dictionary and I'd be the one talking.

[Laughter]

My sister, Kathy or she actually uses her middle name, Keiko. Everybody knows her as Keiko. She's involved. A lot of it has to do with her children. Now, there's an interesting thing there because of cultural distinction. Well, the problems with the generation -- now we're talking yonseis there. But she married an Italian American, Viacona. So her kids are half Japanese and half Italian American. And her son had problems. He was, both my

-- well, let's see. I think they were -- yeah, both my niece and nephew were born in California. My niece, she seemed to be able to, I don't know, maybe merge better or she was better adapted at it. But my nephew had real problems. He had developed behavioral problems in living in Santa Fe, New Mexico where my brother-in-law was working at the university over there. And he got into trouble. He got into some serious trouble over there. His mother, my sister, was at wit's end about what to do about this problem. And we were wondering, you know, which way his life was going to go. So she sent him -- he was able to get a GED, I guess and get into the University of Hawaii. He went to University of Hawaii and all of a sudden it's like he flipped the switch all of a sudden. I guess the culture -- my sister didn't realize how much he was being stigmatized by being half Japanese in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's interesting.

>> Ken Taniguchi: And so that's where his behavioral problems were coming from. But when he got to Hawaii where you have a much more of a blended society over there he felt more accepted and he actually became more receptive to his Japanese side. In fact, he's in Japan now.

>> Carlene Tinker: I'll be darned.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, he went to -- he graduated from University of Hawaii. He started studying Japanese. My mother's delighted that he writes to her with some Japanese stuff and he's studying organic farming in Japan right now. He'll be there until the end of the summer, I believe. So you know, his experience at being "happa," you know, you can see that there is the problems out there for that generation out there that have to learn how to fit into society being of a mixed race.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah. That's interesting. I'm thinking about my father who was "happa." OK? And in the '20s and '30s he suffered a lot of discrimination and I'm surprised to hear that even now that's a problem, you know, for your nephew and --

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, and I don't think it's just Japanese. I think it's any kid who come from a mixed race background. Yeah. Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Yeah, that's true. I don't mean to say it's just unique among us. But being a marginal person and you

know, I keep hoping that we have grown away from it but unfortunately --

>> Ken Taniguchi: I think that the current society right now it's raised its ugly head again big time and that's this. There's one of the things that -- and then you asked me about it and why I'm involved with JACL and whatnot. I think now is a time when you need to really step it up.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's right.

>> Ken Taniguchi: You need to be actively involved. You can't let this be put off to the wayside. You have to confront it head on.

>> Carlene Tinker: Absolutely, absolutely. And I think that's why I tend to be more vocal than I used to be. And I think it's a time for everybody to step up, you know, and not just Japanese and Japanese Americans.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Yeah, I've turned off a few people that were used to be my friends who I've had to confront because what they were saying was unacceptable. And I pointed it out to them and some of them really have stopped talking to me. You know? And like I say, OK, that's fine. You know? I was trying to point out something but if you're going to -- if that's your attitude, well you know what? I'm going to keep correcting you whether you like it or not. So if you don't want to hear it, I can understand why you don't want to talk to me anymore but that's OK. You know? I've done my job.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Ken Taniguchi: I just want to keep it in the forefront. So.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right, right. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Taniguchi. Just to summarize, you are a Sansei born in Fresno and you had a rocky start as a student [laughing]. However, you've overcome that because you've become a successful lawyer and have done that very well in the public defenders office and, you know, ultimately became in charge of that. One of the things I like to conclude our interviews with is a question to you. What do you think your legacy will be? How would you like to be remembered?

>> Ken Taniguchi: Well, I guess that I did my share to maintain the community standards that make Fresno a welcoming society for everybody, that there is justice for all, that the rights of the US citizens were defended by me, and that hopefully people will -- a little side note here. The public defenders office back in

2008-9 during the recession was in danger of being abolished. And -- which I thought would be a travesty for our justice system in Fresno County. And so I had to make some hard choices and I had to do some major battling during that period of time to keep the public defenders office alive. And I'm so glad I succeeded. The public defenders office right now is flourishing beyond where it was when I took office. In fact, they've added more and more staff to it. It's probably about as healthy as it's ever been. And I hope that that was partially because of all the effort I put in to raise it to that level that the electeds could understand that this is an important constitutional right that needs to be cherished by our local community and make sure that, you know, all people have a fair shake in this community.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. A right to be protected. I appreciate your statement here. I think in your role not only as a public defender but also in your role as a member of the Kochi Sister Group, the JACL, and so forth, you've done a lot and are as much appreciated by the community in making sure that we're recognized, that we have our place in history. And that is one of the ultimate goals of an oral history project like this. We want to share your story and also have it part of our history so other people can know what you went through and what others have gone through. So I thank you today. Your story is very unique. I've enjoyed interviewing you. I hope you have enjoyed it as well. And obviously people who will see this will enjoy it as well. Thank you very much.

>> Ken Taniguchi: Oh, you're welcome.