

SHIZUYE NAGATA

MRS. EZAKI: Today is July 3, 1980. I, Bessie Ezaki, am privileged to interview Shizuye Nagata at 1281 Sierra, Kingsburg, California, 93631.

Before we get into the interview proper, I would like you to state your full name, date of birth, and place of the longest residence.

MRS. NAGATA: I am Shizuye Nagata.

MRS. EZAKI: And your birthplace?

MRS. NAGATA: Kagawa-ken, Japan. I was born on September 20, 1903. I am now 77 years old.

MRS. EZAKI: And your longest place of residence?

MRS. NAGATA: Kingsburg.

MRS. EZAKI: And you are still living here in Kingsburg today. How did you get over here to Kingsburg? And I would like to ask about your parents.

MRS. NAGATA: Well, my father got a permit so we could come. My mother and we came in 1910.

MRS. EZAKI: And your father was in Kingsburg already? Now when do you think your father came?

MRS. NAGATA: I don't know. I think about 1905.

MRS. EZAKI: Then he must have been here for the earthquake at San Francisco?

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, yes.

MRS. EZAKI: That was 1906. So he must have been here before that. Can you tell us something about your father, what he did when he came to America, his early life before he came to Kingsburg?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, he worked on the railroad. And I don't know how he happened to know Kingsburg, but he couldn't stand the food they served, and so he -

MRS. EZAKI: That was with the railroad?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, so he hitchhiked along the San Joaquin railroad and came into Kingsburg. That's what I hear.

MRS. EZAKI: Where did he work in the railroad?

MRS. NAGATA: I think towards Denver way.

MRS. EZAKI: So he was laying the rails then, the Trans-Continental tracks?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes.

MRS. EZAKI: There was nobody here that he knew? He just followed the railroad and came?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, Shintakus were here already, and he started living with them when we first came. But after we first came we started living with a Caucasian man where the Okotos live, close by the ditch there. There were a very nice family, and we worked there during the summer, and then in the fall we started a boardinghouse.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, that same year?

MRS. NAGATA: Same year. After we finished the peaches, we started the boardinghouse.

MRS. EZAKI: How many were you at that time? Were you the oldest?

MRS. NAGATA: I was the oldest. I had one brother. He was born on July 4th, and he died at Christmas. And then, after that, my mother didn't have any more for a couple of years.

MRS. EZAKI: So there was only three of you when you moved into the boardinghouse.

MRS. NAGATA: Yes.

MRS. EZAKI: Can you tell us about how the Kingsburg town looked, the Japanese community? Who was there: Were you the first Japanese people there?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, Mizutanis and Yamaguchis were there. And they congratulated us in full Kumamoto language, and we just couldn't understand what he was saying.

MRS. EZAKI: What kind of house did you live in, and what did you do?

MRS. NAGATA: Well we lived in a pretty fair house.

MRS. EZAKI: And it was two-story house, you say.

MRS. NAGATA: Two-story house, and the boardinghouse.

MRS. EZAKI: And you ran the boardinghouse. What kind of people stayed in the boardinghouse?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, what do you call those, immigrants?

MRS. EZAKI: Immigrants. They were Japanese immigrants?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes.

MRS. EZAKI: And did they have blankets with them, or did you give them blankets?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. They just carried blankets around.

MRS. EZAKI: And they followed the season?

MRS. NAGATA: The season of work. They followed the season of work here and there. And a couple of years after that they started running a camp.

MRS. EZAKI: Labor camp?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, a labor camp. There was Nakamuras down where the Matsuokas live.

MRS. EZAKI: There was a Koga labor camp, I heard.

MRS. NAGATA: They didn't run a labor camp. They just lived there.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh.

MRS. NAGATA: I met with one of their boys once. When I was going to Los Angeles, I rode with his wife. The Koga boy was real quiet. He was working in Visalia, but he didn't say much. That's why he worked there a whole year and didn't get paid. And the lady was so mad, she said she was going to take him to the lawyer and everything.

MRS. EZAKI: To make sure he got paid for his work?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. And Nakamuras, I think the name was Nakamura, he was a bachelor, but he had one boy; real smart boy. By the time I knew him, he was going to high school.

MRS. EZAKI: He was one of the first boys to go to high school here.

MRS. NAGATA: I don't know where he is now. He was going to high school when I knew him.

MRS. EZAKI: Okay. Let's go back a little. At what age did you come here?

MRS. NAGATA: I came here in 1910 when I was six or seven.

MRS. EZAKI: And then you lived in town. What kind of business did Yamaguchi have? You said they were in business.

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, they had a pool hall, and we were next door neighbors to them.

MRS. EZAKI: That's all the Japanese that were in town at that time? Just you and the Yamaguchi's family?

MRS. NAGATA: Yamaguchi and Mizutani and Shintaku.

MRS. EZAKI: What did Shintakus have?

MRS. NAGATA: I don't know how they came. There were here already. Shintakus and Minamotos are related. Mrs. Minamoto is Shintaku's daughter I think.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh. And you say that Minamotos are Etajima people who stayed at your place?

MRS. NAGATA: There were lots of Etajima people who came here. Not too many Hiroshimas. Etajima is part of Hiroshima.

MRS. EZAKI: Is that right?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. They call it the Hiroshima Etajima. It's a smaller island, that's what they tell me.

MRS. EZAKI: You said there were some other people before you moved into this house. Who was there before you?

MRS. NAGATA: I don't know--Chinese, that's all I know.

MRS. EZAKI: And what did these Chinese people do?

MRS. NAGATA: They were laundry, I think. That's the only Chinese that were in Kingsburg.

MRS. EZAKI: But after you bought the place, they left?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, we rented it from them and then from Mizutani. We were renting it for a couple of years. And then Mizutani bought the whole property.

MRS. EZAKI: And so you people had to move out?

MRS. NAGATA: Yamaguchis had to move, too.

MRS. EZAKI: And then you went out to the country?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. We went over and stayed at that place where my brother stayed. We stayed there for half a year or so. Then we bought that ranch down on the island. All the Japanese laughed at us and said, "How long do you intend to stay in America?" because my father purchased the land. It must be right around 1912 because when we came in 1910 the farm had Muscat grapes on it already, and Dad planted Thompsons, and those people that came to help him said, "Do you expect to get a crop off of this?"

MRS. EZAKI: These were the Japanese people?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. A lot of migrant workers--well, since we had the boardinghouse, the friends came to help. They loved my mother quite a bit. "Ando no Kansan (meaning Mrs. Ando), they really respected her. They were good to her.

MRS. EZAKI: I hear you people were the first ones that had a car?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, Shintaku had a car, too, in 1913-14. I don't know. Shintaku had a Ford.

MRS. EZAKI: They must have made good, huh?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, in the boardinghouse they made pretty good. A couple of years after that, Dad bought a Chevy.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, I heard they rode on your car to go the Japanese movies.

MRS. NAGATA: Dad bought our first car; he bought a Chevy, and he always bought a Chevy after that.

MRS. EZAKI: I hear that you were driving it.

MRS. NAGATA: I drove a little bit. My mother would tell me to drive. She said if I didn't drive, then she wouldn't be able to go any place, and she just forced me into it.

MRS. EZAKI: So you were driving when you were about 12 years or 13 years old?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, around there. She just forced me into it. I was scared to death.

MRS. EZAKI: So, when did you start to school? There was school here already?

MRS. NAGATA: As soon as I came, I went to this grammar school. I stayed in the first grade three years, I think. I couldn't get any heads or tails out of it.

MRS. EZAKI: I stayed two years in the first grade. When did you start Japanese school? Not until real late?

MRS. NAGATA: I started Japanese school--when was that flu epidemic, influenza; I think 1918.

MRS. EZAKI: But, anyway, the year of the influenza epidemic, huh?

MRS. NAGATA: Right, I was going to Island Riverbend School, you know. My mother says I had to learn some Japanese language. And so I waited a while, and then she took me to Fresno Kishikusha. I stayed there and started going, and what do you know, two or three days later the flu epidemic began, so we all got to go home.

MRS. EZAKI: They closed up.

MRS. NAGATA: And then while they were talking, one of the Shintaku boys, Harry's father, brought my mother to the hospital to the Nihon Biyojin (hospital). He brought my mother down there, and said, "Your mother is sick, so you've got to go home." Well, I couldn't stay there anyhow.

MRS. EZAKI: So you went home, and your mother was sick.

MRS. NAGATA: And about a week or so, week or 10 days, she passed away. So, Mrs. Kimura helped us. I think she had met my mother a couple of times. She had an older brother and older sister, and my mother was very close friends to them. But they made money and left for Japan.

MRS. EZAKI: I see.

MRS. NAGATA: School started when my mother died, and then my younger brother was only 10 months old, and Mitzy, my sister, was a little over a year.

MRS. EZAKI: So you didn't get to go to school?

MRS. NAGATA: I had to give up school and take care of the family.

MRS. EZAKI: Now, was there any prejudicial activities during this time after you got here and lived with your father and engaged in farming? Or when you lived in town, was there any discrimination of any sort that you can remember?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, of course there was. They didn't understand the Japanese too much.

MRS. EZAKI: They left you alone? They didn't bother you at all?

MRS. NAGATA: They didn't bother us, no bother. Of course, I had to take Gohan (rice) and Okazu (vegetable or meat dish). Okazu on top of the rice in my round bento bako (lunchbox).

MRS. EZAKI: When you went to school?

MRS. NAGATA: When I went to school and the children would all come and gather, "I want to see the rice you eat. I want to see the rice you eat." It was pretty hard, they didn't know what rice was. But now they cook rice; they know what rice is.

MRS. EZAKI: So you had to quit school, and you took care of your brothers. But how did you manage to make your living? What did you do all those years? I mean raising your family--without a mother, with only your father on the farm? What did you people do to work?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, Dad had that 20 acres, and I guess he got money out of that. Of course, we didn't go out to work too much.

MRS. EZAKI: Because you had little ones.

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, we had little ones. And we never thought about work. We had a boardinghouse, and a few people stayed and they went out to work. But Daddy never did go out to work elsewhere.

MRS. EZAKI: What sort of work were they doing around your neighborhood?

MRS. NAGATA: Pruning trees, or something like that.

MRS. EZAKI: A lot of cutting of fruits, I guess?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes.

MRS. EZAKI: Cutting and drying of fruits during the summertime.

The war started on December 7, 1941. Do you have any recollection of that? Where were you at that time? Were you in Kingsburg?

MRS. NAGATA: Yeah, I was in Kingsburg.

MRS. EZAKI: Were you already in Kingsburg and married?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, I was married.

MRS. EZAKI: Please tell us about your marriage in 1922 to Mr. Frank Nagata. Was it a baishakunin marriage, or did your father fix it up?

MRS. NAGATA: Baishakunin marriage.

MRS. EZAKI: Was he a Nisei or an Issei?

MRS. NAGATA: He's Issei.

MRS. EZAKI: Issei. Was there a lot of age difference between you?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. Quite a bit. I think there was about 13 years difference.

MRS. EZAKI: And what part of Japan was he from?

MRS. NAGATA: He's from Ehime-ken. It's still on that Shikoku Island.

MRS. EZAKI: That's where your parents are from, Shikoku Island?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, Shikoku Island.

MRS. EZAKI: And what did he do until he met you?

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, he was renting a ranch and working here and there.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh. He was never here in Kingsburg, though?

MRS. NAGATA: No, he never lived here, but he lived in Selma and Del Rey. And when I got married, he was living in Wasco. His friend moved to Wasco, so he moved along with him.

MRS. EZAKI: What year was this?

MRS. NAGATA: I forgot.

MRS. EZAKI: And then when you got married, you farmed most of the time?

MRS. NAGATA: Then we moved back to Kingsburg. Well, I encouraged him, because I still had to take care of the young kids. Even if I did get married, well, I had to take Mitsue or Kingo. Just like my own, you know. Take them along -

MRS. EZAKI: I see.

MRS. NAGATA: Yeah, pretty rough, raised them like that.

MRS. EZAKI: And then you lived with your father again?

MRS. NAGATA: No, I did for about a month or so and then we moved out and worked for other people. But still, I took one of the kids with me. Mats never did come with me, my father wouldn't let loose of him, because he said, "He's my Kakari Musuko (heir to his estate and one to care for him). I'll never part with him. I'll part with my wife, but not with him."

MRS. EZAKI: I see. When the war started, you already had your family, too?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, when the war started, my husband was real sick. He had cancer, you know.

MRS. EZAKI: Already?

MRS. NAGATA: Already, and when the war started that made it worse.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh. And how many children did you have?

MRS. NAGATA: I had four.

MRS. EZAKI: How old were they?

MRS. NAGATA: Lil was 13. I was lucky, I didn't have small ones. Thirteen was the youngest. Two of them were out of high school.

MRS. EZAKI: Where are they now, today?

MRS. NAGATA: The oldest son Tom is in Fowler. Helen is in Fresno. And I've got two in Los Angeles.

MRS. EZAKI: What are they doing there? Their occupation?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, Tom is working for the State. And my son in Los Angeles is in construction; he's running a construction firm by himself.

MRS. EZAKI: Your two daughters are married, and do they- work outside the home?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, my older daughter works outside. Lil, she's running a medical hospital.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh. What is the name of her job?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, she's the manager there.

MRS. EZAKI: Great. And your other daughter?

MRS. NAGATA: The older daughter, she works in K-Mart as a cashier or something.

MRS. EZAKI: I see. We'll go back to December 7, 1941. Now, since your children were still going to school, what happened when they went to school?

MRS. NAGATA: Nothing happened. People were all nice. I didn't have any trouble at all.

MRS. EZAKI: About this incident about the bicycle being -

MRS. NAGATA: Well, when they were going to high school over here, then some of the bad kids would break my daughter's bicycle. But the teacher said they didn't do it because she was Japanese. The bad kids were bad. It doesn't matter whether they are Japanese or American. They'll do it anyway. That's what the teacher used to say, and fixed it for her. And then well, sometimes, there will be a car chasing after her. In those days, it was Justesen's store or the lumberyard. She would run in there. And then the manager would bring her home.

MRS. EZAKI: They were nice.

MRS. NAGATA: They were nice. And then one time she went to Fresno and was coming home on the bus. And one Oklahoman young lady said, "I'm going to ring the neck off of every Jap I see." My daughter got so scared, she went to the bus driver and the bus driver said, "Sit down, and we're not going to let that happen while you're in the bus. We'll protect you, nothing is going to happen to you," and nothing did.

MRS. EZAKI: There were some understanding people.

MRS. NAGATA: Some of them do talk rough, and you'll hear it, but people are all right--there's good and bad people in the world.

MRS. EZAKI: Sure. Now what are your memories of evacuation? Were you evacuated, and where did you go?

MRS. NAGATA: We went to Gila.

MRS. EZAKI: Gila. Now you evacuated from Kingsburg. Did you evacuate with your father and the rest of your brothers and sisters and family?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. Where did you go?

MRS. EZAKI: We went to Poston III.

MRS. NAGATA: How come you went to Poston?

MRS. EZAKI: We were in Tulare County.

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, Tulare County. What camp were you in Poston?

MRS. EZAKI: Camp II.

MRS. NAGATA: The Manabu Fukudas were there, weren't they?

MRS. EZAKI: Yes.

MRS. NAGATA: And also Shintakus and Kimura families were in Camp II. I had a friend that lived in Camp I. She passed away and I went to her funeral.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, I see.

MRS. NAGATA: When I was going there to the funeral, I was told to take somebody along since I might get lost on the way going from Gila to there. So, someone said, supposing two of them get lost, that would be worse yet. Let Mother go alone, and then she'll be the only one that gets lost.

MRS. EZAKI: So you went alone?

MRS. NAGATA: I went alone.

MRS. EZAKI: Did any of your boys go into military service?

They weren't that old yet, were they?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, the younger one went--just as soon as he finished high school, he was drafted. I think he had his 19th birthday on the boat going across. He was in the 442nd Battalion.

MRS. EZAKI: So he went to Europe?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, to Italy.

MRS. EZAKI: I see. And your oldest one didn't?

MRS. NAGATA: He was not at that age.

MRS. EZAKI: And what are your recollection of him going to Europe and fighting, were you very worried?

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, yes. I had to listen to the news every morning to see whether they were fighting.

MRS. EZAKI: When did he come home? After you came back from relocation center?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, but he volunteered again. He did two years again.

MRS. EZAKI: After he came back to Kingsburg?

MRS. NAGATA: He was in Italy when the war ended. He said during the war he was busy, but when the war ended it was kind of monotonous, and he didn't have enough to do, so he volunteered again. And that way, he could come home and stay for one month.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, to visit you.

MRS. NAGATA: That's why he told us he volunteered. I said, "No, don't volunteer, you've only got about half a more year to go." But he volunteered. But he stayed in Seattle.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, I see. But you had a nice visit with him when he came home?

MRS. NAGATA: Yeah.

MRS. EZAKI: You were glad to see him, all well. He didn't have any wounds or anything? He wasn't hurt or anything during the war?

MRS. NAGATA: No, he wasn't hurt. He was lucky. His friend got shot as soon as he got off of the boat. As soon as he jumped off the boat he got his leg shot or something. And then he was sent back to San Francisco Hospital. When my son came back he went to visit him and see him. And then they went to the movie. They were showing war picture. And he couldn't stand it. He was hurt so he couldn't stand it. He had to walk out.

MRS. EZAKI: What was the community reaction when he came home to Kingsburg? Everything was like before?

MRS. NAGATA: I was living in Parlier then. Living with my brother. And

we lived out in the country, so nobody bothered us.

MRS. EZAKI: There was some hard feelings, I hear, when they first came home to Kingsburg.

MRS. NAGATA: Bungos had a hard time. Miyamotos, they were shot. But we didn't have any trouble.

MRS. EZAKI: You didn't have any trouble?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, I guess if you are good to them, they stay out of your way.

MRS. EZAKI: Were there some exceptional people that came out to visit, I mean, welcome you home?

MRS. NAGATA: The old folks did. They brought canned goods and everything, and canned peaches. Of course, in their heart they don't like it, but after you know them so long, they felt kind of sorry for us and brought them over.

MRS. EZAKI: That's nice. Now, you are a Buddhist, aren't you, by faith?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, I don't go to Buddhist church.

MRS. EZAKI: Were you in a Buddhist organization?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, I don't belong to any organization at all. Over here once in a while, I go to the Methodist Church since it's close and I've been going to the Methodist Church since I've lived down on the Island. And so I know more about the Christians than Buddhists.

MRS. EZAKI: Can you tell us about your trip back to Japan? You left there as a child. What did you think when you went back for the second time?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, did I see these kind of places, oh my, I don't remember. Some of the places I do remember. A little memory of it.

MRS. EZAKI: But you didn't remember anybody. Your grandparents were all gone. They had died already?

MRS. NAGATA: No. My mother's side Ji-chan, Ba-chan were still living. They treated me like a baby.

MRS. EZAKI: Yeah. So you had a nice reunion?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, we really had a nice reunion when I first went.

MRS. EZAKI: When was that, when you first went?

MRS. NAGATA: 1919, 1920. Someplace around there, I think.

MRS. EZAKI: So you would remember?

MRS. NAGATA: Uh-huh, that time when I went. Yeah. Ji-chan, Ba-chan, they were still living; they were so happy to see that I was Japanese.

They were so happy that I didn't have a red-haired child.

MRS. EZAKI: You were married then?

MRS. NAGATA: No, I wasn't married. I wasn't married yet.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh. Who did you go with?

MRS. NAGATA: I went with my father. That was after my mother died. Five of us went.

MRS. EZAKI: You went by boat?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, by boat.

MRS. EZAKI: How long did it take at that time? About two weeks one way?

MRS. NAGATA: Fifteen days, I think, one way.

MRS. EZAKI: I see. And how long did you stay?

MRS. NAGATA: We stayed December, January, February; about three-four months. We stayed down at where my step-mother's--see, my step-mother's is really my father's homeplace.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, related.

MRS. NAGATA: Related. And I don't see why my father married her.

MRS. EZAKI: You stayed at your mother's, too, for the first time?

MRS. NAGATA: Yeah. And then the second time, I just went to visit my mother's side. My aunt was still there, and my mother's sister, one of them was still living. And so my aunt at Grandpa's place took me and said they'll be happy to see you and took me down to see her.

MRS. EZAKI: Did your husband go with you?

MRS. NAGATA: He died just as soon as the war started in 1942 at age 51 or 52.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh.

MRS. NAGATA: He wanted to go back so much. My husband's side,,it's really out in the sticks. I don't see how he ever thought about America.

MRS. EZAKI: Did you go out there? You must have seen his place?

MRS. NAGATA: Yeah, I went to visit. I wasn't planning to go, but I was encouraged to pay my respects to the ancestor's grave. And so I went. They made all the reservations for me and told me to take this train and take this and take that.

MRS. EZAKI: That's the travel bureau.

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, it's really way out in the mountains.

MRS. EZAKI: What ken did you say it was?

MRS. NAGATA: Ehime Ken. Way out. I don't see how he ever thought about America.

MRS. EZAKI: He must have had courage to come out here.

MRS. NAGATA: Well, he had a brother-in-law, and he had a brother. Three of them started. They all came together. And they all passed away together. Not together, but around the same time. And none of them went back.

MRS. EZAKI: Well, you have had a really a very interesting background. And we appreciate what you have told us. But now, with this rich cultural background, may we discuss some of the changes you have seen in the activities and problems in the Japanese-Americans during their life? You know, problems.

MRS. NAGATA: Well, in the olden days, I think it was much better. Buddhist Church, you know, they all got there and had undokai (track meet).

MRS. EZAKI: Yeah, leisure, that they had.

MRS. NAGATA: Uh-huh. We all get into the group.

MRS. EZAKI: They had more time together and have fun like that?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes, more time.

MRS. EZAKI: More leisure time.

MRS. NAGATA: More leisure time. Nowadays they are so busy the kids just have to go on their own. And the parents don't take them.

MRS. EZAKI: In the olden times we had more family unity.

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. I think that was very nice when we went to the Buddhist Church and all the families got together and--well, not get together, but in a group, you know. And have undokai and running and jumping, take turns. And I thought it was very nice. But nowadays, they don't do that, huh?

MRS. EZAKI: Yeah, those are the changes we see. And olden days like when the gakuen started. Do you remember when the Kingsburg Gakuen started? Who were the charter members?

MRS. NAGATA: When the Gakuen started, they were going to Selma school, you know. First there was Selma had it started, earlier. And then they got tired taking them to Selma --

MRS. EZAKI: The parents did.

MRS. NAGATA: And they--we were living in the Island and here was quite a few; Ueharas and our kids. And there was quite a bit down there. And we started asking my husband to teach them Japanese. There was a small vacant house, and says, "You can teach as much Japanese as the children learn in Selma." But still you got to have your school education. You got to have so much of an American education to teach. And that's what

my husband found out. He said, "I-can't teach."

MRS. EZAKI: He tried?

MRS. NAGATA: He tried. And then Nomuras said, "We'll bring our kids." All that other side going to bring their kids to our place. People didn't want to go to Selma. And that's how it started.

MRS. EZAKI: I heard they started in a small house over there. Before the church went up. Is that right?

MRS. NAGATA: There was a small house there. And they had a classroom there. And there was a man that used to own that place. They call it buta-ji (pigman). He used to raise hogs all the time. And that's where they learned--they started and then they started building a big one. Well, at first they wanted to start one in the Island.

MRS. EZAKI: Really?

MRS. NAGATA: And wanted my husband to teach it. But you got to have your license or something, something. You can't just go--just because you know Japanese, you can't teach them right away.

MRS. EZAKI: That's interesting.

MRS. NAGATA: And so that's how the school started.

MRS. EZAKI: You and your husband tried.

MRS. NAGATA: I didn't -

MRS. EZAKI: Your husband.

MRS. NAGATA: Uh-huh. My husband said, "Well, we better do it." And then talking like that, and they all want to join in. "We don't want to go to Selma. We don't want to go to Selma. Well, then why don't we build one in town."

MRS. EZAKI: Sure. And that's how it got started?

MRS. NAGATA: That's where it got started.

MRS. EZAKI: And then so many years later the church came up. Is that how it happened? That church wasn't a temple, Buddhist Church, wasn't there before. It was just a little house.

MRS. NAGATA: Yeah. Then they built a great big hall.

MRS. EZAKI: It was a hall?

MRS. NAGATA: It was just a hall. A stage and a hall, that's all.

MRS. EZAKI: That's all.

MRS. NAGATA: And they had a small Butsudan (altar).

MRS. EZAKI: Uh-huh.

MRS. NAGATA: It's not a tera (temple).

MRS. EZAKI: No, no, it wasn't. I remember, it was a hall.

MRS. NAGATA: Just a hall.

MRS. EZAKI: That's right. Most of the Buddhist churches were halls. They used it for a gakuen (Japanese school).

MRS. NAGATA: They had two classes in the back rooms. And then they used the little house for a classroom.

MRS. EZAKI: Where did the teachers come from? Did they commute?

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, yes; Araki-sensei, Tada-sensei, and others.

MRS. EZAKI: How about Murayama, Takeo Tachio-san, did he help teach?

MRS. NAGATA: He was teaching, too.

MRS. EZAKI: What are some of the cultural traditions that you have tried to educate into your children? Japanese traditions?

MRS. NAGATA: Japanese way?

MRS. EZAKI: Yes, have you tried to teach them some of the Japanese traditions? Well, like New Year's celebration, do you cook, have 0-shogatsu (New Year's feast)?

MRS. NAGATA: Yes. And then you know, a long time ago they had that speech contest.

MRS. EZAKI: Oratorical contest. That was really something.

MRS. NAGATA: That was really something! In every town, two or three would go and participate. Speak out in Japanese or English. And, oh, my husband just loved those things. And he never missed them.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh. I used to hate that because I had to memorize things.

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, you hate it, huh?

MRS. EZAKI: Especially when the Gakugeikai came we had to all learn, you know, memorize it and say it in front of everybody.

MRS. NAGATA: He loved those speeches.

MRS. EZAKI: He didn't have to give it, that's why.

MRS. NAGATA: Well, he wrote for them once in a while. Well, like some of the kids from Kingsburg who went out for the speech contest.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, he was quite educated then?

MRS. NAGATA: He had a lot of interest in it.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh.

MRS. NAGATA: And well, Haha no ai (mother's love) and that kind of speeches--he hated that. He says, "Why don't they say Chichi no ai (father's love). I love my children, I think I love my children more than you do."

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, nice man. So, thinking about on those days, seems like we are losing that kind of closeness.

MRS. NAGATA: Yeah, we're losing it. And that way--young girls would meet the boys, too. Nowadays, like my brother, they don't go out, so they don't meet girls.

MRS. EZAKI: Yes.

MRS. NAGATA: Now, Clarice got a boyfriend. A Portuguese boyfriend and so -

MRS. EZAKI: So, it's getting mixed, huh? The younger generation is getting sort of mixed. What do you think about that? In all our families somewhere there is a mixed marriage. You have been fortunate probably because your children are older that you didn't have any yet. But you might have yet in your grandchildren and great-grandchildren, huh?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, my grandchildren are mixed marriages.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, I see. What do you think about that?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, I don't know. I hope they last.

MRS. EZAKI: That's right.

MRS. NAGATA: Helen's daughter, the second one--the oldest one isn't married. The second one is married to a Caucasian boy. He's very nice. He's a lawyer. He's a very good lawyer. But as a handyman, he can't nail one nail.

MRS. EZAKI: He's a lawyer, so he comes from a different kind of breed.

MRS. NAGATA: He put up a shelf one time, and then he put up a couple of stuff on there, and it all fell down. And he can't change the battery in the car.

MRS. EZAKI: No training for that.

MRS. NAGATA: But I hear he's a very good lawyer. A very quiet boy, and the boss likes him.

MRS. EZAKI: Well, that's the main thing.

MRS. NAGATA: Yes.

MRS. EZAKI: Do they have children?

MRS. NAGATA: They have one. They got one baby. And the second one is going around with a Caucasian. The second one was married for about a month or two and divorced him. Like Helen's kids, they don't go around

with Japanese too much.

MR. EZAKI: I see. Maybe because there aren't too many Japanese around. They don't have a chance to meet the Japanese.

MRS. NAGATA: I guess. I don't know. My daughter in Los Angeles, the kids don't go around with Caucasians.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh. They have a lot of Japanese around there.

MRS. NAGATA: Yes.

MRS. EZAKI: And that makes a difference.

MRS. NAGATA: That makes a difference. Where you live and what friends you have. And, of course, those kids don't go out at all. They stay home and their friends would come visit them. But if it's a Japanese friend, it's a class friend, he's got about three or four class friends. They get together when they have time.

MRS. EZAKI: So it looks like we're not clannish any more. We're kind of spreading out and mixing in with the other nationalities.

MRS. NAGATA: My grandson, Lil's boy, he'll be starting school in Rhode Island pretty soon. When he goes there, he says he doesn't see any Japanese. And if he doesn't see any Japanese, he might catch a Caucasian girl!

MRS. EZAKI: That's right. So, now our blood does get kind of thinner along the way. But as for yourself, what would you like to see that you hold important in the life that is Japanese?

MRS. NAGATA: Well, don't you think the same nationality in marriage is much easier? You have one -

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, yes, I have -

MRS. NAGATA: White girl?

MRS. EZAKI: She's French Canadian. Wouldn't you like to see them carry on some interest in our Japanese cultural background in the future?

MRS. NAGATA: You know, this mayor, Gordon Satterberg, his father, when we used to live down there, used to stop in over at my father's every so often. And he used to tell me, "Japanese don't mix in with Americans. That's where the trouble is. You got a mixed marriage. You just got to mix in with the white people and marry them, and that way you don't have to go to camp. Japanese stay put together, that's why you're thrown into a camp together. But if you're married to a white man or something like that, well you won't have to be like that. And so you just got to mix marriage."

MRS. EZAKI: Stress that, huh? What did you think at that time?

MRS. NAGATA: I didn't know what to think.

MRS. EZAKI: You weren't for it?

MRS. NAGATA: I wasn't for it, but I don't know. Well, I think it's a good idea to have mixed marriages.

MRS. EZAKI: I get the impression that as the third and fourth generation goes it's going to be mixed anyway. So then, I guess it doesn't really matter whether they forget Japanese culture all together or do you want them to always be proud that they are part of a Japanese ancestry?

MRS. NAGATA: Now, my grandchildren in Fresno, they don't think they are Japanese. They think they're true American.

MRS. EZAKI: Oh, yeah. Well, of course, all these people were ethnic groups, you know.

MRS. NAGATA: When my grandchildren get into a fight with the other kids, and they say, "Oh, you dirty Jap," and he hollers back at them, and then my daughter says, "Who you hollering at?" "That guy over there." My daughter says, "He's not a dirty Jap. You are a Jap yourself!" Grandson says to his mom, "I am not."

MRS. EZAKI: So, they don't think they're Japanese?

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, my grandkids will fight and stand up and fight and say, "I'm not Japanese." And then get into fight with other American kids, why he'll be the first one to call them a dirty Japanese.

MRS. EZAKI: How old are these grandchildren?

MRS. NAGATA: Oh, they're big now. That was when they were going to grammar school.

MRS. EZAKI: But today, I bet, they kind of think a little differently.

MRS. NAGATA: These grandchildren all go around with Caucasians. They don't even know Japanese.

MRS. EZAKI: So you kind of feel that maybe our being Japanese, the knowledge or feeling of being Japanese, is going to get thinner and thinner?

MRS. NAGATA: Kind of food you are eating or something. Kind of enryosuru (hold back). Well, those kids like makizushi.

MRS. EZAKI: Then they can't say they are Americans. They still are receiving Nihon (Japanese) culture.

MRS. NAGATA: This American boy, this--their husband. They'll eat all the Japanese food; they love it. Especially Inarisan (sushi), they love it.

MRS. EZAKI: I see. Your grandchildren and great-grandchildren, they like it too, don't they?

MRS. NAGATA: Yeah. They love it.

MRS. EZAKI: You can't say that they don't appreciate their ethnic, Japanese background. I think maybe without knowing they probably feel

that they do appreciate and that they just don't realize that --

MRS. NAGATA: They don't make it too much. But my daughter's husband, my son-in-law, his niece, well, they're from Utah. She makes all kinds of sushi and tempura. She makes all kind of Japanese food. She's pretty good at it. She's better than my daughter. My daughter can't make sushi.

MRS. EZAKI: Well, there are some people that really appreciate it and they learn. They want to learn Japanese cooking. Difference of personalities, individuals.

MRS. NAGATA: And then they go to Girl Scouts meetings, and learn all kinds of American ways, and of course, Japanese ways, the mothers teach them.

MRS. EZAKI: So, you'll get half and half. They're Japanese and American traditions. Well, I think we've covered quite a bit. Is there anything else you would like to leave with this history? Background of our Japanese ancestry? Let me ask you this: do you think you had a very rich background, your life was very enriched all the way? Do you feel sorry for anything that happened? You learned and gained something coming to America from Japan at that early age and going through what you did? You really had a rough time. You know, you lost your mother -

MRS. NAGATA: I had rough time, but I am glad I am here. I'm glad I'm in America.

MRS. EZAKI: And your children treat you real nice, huh? And you have no regrets? They really think a lot of you.

MRS. NAGATA: Well, my younger daughter's two boys, they really think about me. My grandson Steve calls me up about two times a week, asks me what I'm eating, what I'm doing.

MRS. EZAKI: See. He loves you very much.

MRS. NAGATA: When I'm in the hospital, every meal one of the boys would be there to see that I eat my meals. They don't want to see that pushed back. And they just cut up my meal for me and make me eat.

MRS. EZAKI: So you are a very fortunate person.

MRS. NAGATA: I'm very happy, they treat me very nice. Well, I get spoiled.

MRS. EZAKI: Thank you for this interview.