

AKIRA YOKOMI

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is April the 1st, 1980. I, Yoshino Hasegawa, have the privilege of interviewing Mr. Akira Yokomi in his office at the Central Fish Market on 1537 Kern Street; Fresno, California; 93706.

Before we get into the interview proper, please give us your full name, your place and date of birth, and your place of longest residence.

MR. YOKOMI: My full name is Akira Yokomi. I was born in Fresno on "E" and Ventura. In fact, all the children in the family were born there. This midwife that had a place there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh.

MR. YOKOMI: All five children were born over there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. Do you remember the midwife's name?

MR. YOKOMI: I can't recall. She went back to Japan. Before she went back to Japan, she wanted me to buy the property, but, at the time, I didn't have money and later someone offered her more money and so I ended up not buying it. She said since our family were all born there I should buy it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It would have been nice. Can you tell me what part of Japan your parents came from?

MR. YOKOMI: Hiroshima. But inaka, in the mountains, they tell me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. When did they come to the United States?

MR. YOKOMI: My father came to this country about 1897 or so, when he was 18 years old.

MRS. HASEGAWA: He was one of the first issei to come to this area?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes. And then my mother came about 1919, I think. So in my father and my mother's ages there are pretty close to 20 years difference.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they come here?

MR. YOKOMI: No. When they got married they came. I think Dad worked around Seattle on the railroad tracks and then later on he worked for a while for Kamikawa Store. They were one of the biggest in Fresno around 1906 or somewhere around there. He used to drive their delivery wagon from Fresno to around Centerville for a while.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did he have on the wagon?

MR. YOKOMI: I think they used to deliver rice and stuff to the labor camps way out.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see, he was a deliveryman. Was he a peddler, too?

MR. YOKOMI: No. He just worked for Kamikawa about a year or so. He changed from one job to another until he got married, then he more or

less settled down in the Fresno area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your dad go to Japan to get your mother?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was she a picture bride?

MR. YOKOMI: Well, in a way. But the family in Japan knew each other so he went to get married. It was the first and last time he went back to Japan. That was around 1918, right after World War I was over. Only my mother said she came because her sister was over here already and living in Lodi. But after she came they had that flu epidemic and she died at the time. But that's the reason my mother says she consented to come to join her sister.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then when your mother came to America, did your parents come to Fresno?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes. At that time my uncle had a place in Bowles, a 40-acre place. So they came and lived over there for a while. And my father worked in that area and then later on they moved around here and there. They lived in various places until 1929 when someone abandoned 20 acres, the owners asked my dad to take over the place and pay the taxes on it. And so, since he had a family he felt it was better to stay in one place. So that's how we bought that place and we've lived there every since.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was your dad in farm work?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that his main occupation?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MR. YOKOMI: I have three sisters and one brother.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are they still living?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes, they're all alive.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who are they? What are their names?

MR. YOKOMI: I have one sister Mary who lives in San Jose, married to George Taketa. He's a retired Army officer. And then I have an older sister Marie, whose husband owns a fish market, wholesale company in Los Angeles. That's how I got in the fish business. My brother-in-law's name is George Doizaki. He's the one that's raising funds right now for that cultural center in Los Angeles. He's going all over trying to raise \$15,000,000 or something for that project. He figures \$15,000,000 to \$20,000,000 to complete the project, so he's really working at that. Then I have one sister that's living in Fresno here. Her husband works for some wholesale grocery place.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What's her name?

MR. YOKOMI: Akimi Sakazaki.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And your brother?

MR. YOKOMI: Joe. Yeah, he lives with us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Joe lives in Fowler?

MR. YOKOMI: We all live together on the ranch. My mother, my wife, and my brother Joe.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are you married?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes. My wife works at the store, too.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What is her name?

MR. YOKOMI: Nofuko.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's an unusual name.

MR. YOKOMI: Yes. Everybody thinks it's Nobuko, but it's Nofuko.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. Do you have children?

MR. YOKOMI: No, no children.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. How old is your mother now?

MR. YOKOMI: My mother is about 84. She still does our cooking, washing and everything for us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's wonderful. What do you recall about your childhood days?

MR. YOKOMI: I think we enjoyed ourselves. When we were growing up everybody didn't have money and--I don't think we had a sad time. We enjoyed it. We used to visit each family and go picnicking and this and that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you have other relatives here?

MR. YOKOMI: I had a cousin in Los Angeles and another, my father's brother and his family. But--we had other friends because our cousins were older than us. We used to visit them, but that's about it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you go to school?

MR. YOKOMI: In Fowler. Before we settled in Fowler I think I went to Winchell Kindergarten in Fresno which used to be near the Fairgrounds. And then we moved and went to Bowles Grammar School and Oleander Grammar School. Then we moved to North Fresno, went to Roosevelt Grammar School and McKinley Grammar School. That's when my family decided we had better settled down on this ranch that was abandoned and the owner wanted us to move in and take care of the place.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And is that where you still live?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where is that ranch?

MR. YOKOMI: Right on Clovis and Highway 99. You know where that Clovis Avenue and Old 99 meets right there. We live half-mile off the freeway, about seven miles from our store.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You feel that your childhood was pretty nice?

MR. YOKOMI: Yeah. All my neighbors were Armenian kids and we all got along pretty good. In fact, one of them became the judge in Fresno. He was our neighbor.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you remember about your high school days?

MR. YOKOMI: Well, high school, I suppose, there was some prejudice, but we went to a small school at Fowler High and all the teachers were broad-minded so like my dad used to say, we're different and you've got to expect discrimination. For the same job you're gonna have to be twice as good as the other guy. I think all the kids, Armenian kids included, went together. I was student body treasurer and George Teraoka was the business manager for the school annual. My parents did not want me to participate socially with white kids because later, as we got older, they would drift away. Overall, we got along pretty well, because it was a small school. For one thing, I'm Buddhist, and there was a physics teacher who used to be an ex-preacher who wanted me to convert to Christianity. That's where we used to go around and around.

MRS. HASEGAWA: He wanted you to convert to Christianity?

MR. YOKOMI: Christianity. And I told him my family was Buddhist, and I thought all religions were tolerant and taught you to be good. So, since I grew up in the Buddhist religion, I stuck to it. The teacher used to tell me we worship idols and this and that and tried to discourage me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What year did you finish high school?

MR. YOKOMI: 1939.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do after high school?

MR. YOKOMI: Oh, I went to work for Mr. Okuda, my neighbor. He was farming 80 acres, and he told me to help run the farm. So, I went to work for him and told him I was going to work for three years to save money, and then I was going to buy me a 40 and help on his farm, too. My parents wanted me to go to college, but I told them I was just wasting my time going to college, because we used to hear jokes about guys that had college degrees being fruitstand workers and all that. But those people that did go to college were ready to get jobs after World War II. That's why I always tell these young Mexican farm workers that the only way they are going to get ahead in this life is to study hard.

It's nobody's fault that I didn't go to college, because all my high school teachers wanted me to go to college, and I tried to take easy courses, but they used, to make me take academic courses. And they

always used to tell me that I had a negative attitude. They always used to pounce on me. I used to like civics, American history. In my class I always received top grades, so they encouraged me to go to college. These teachers used to hound me.

At that time, you had to more or less work your way through college, and I was too lazy. My parents couldn't help me. All my friends had to work as a schoolboy and this and that to go to college. But I figured I'd rather farm since I always like farming.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, you didn't do so bad after all. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, were you working for Mr. Okuda?

MRS. YOKOMI: Yes. He was one of the first in Fresno to be picked up by a FBI. Because he was a pretty active man, but he always used to tell me that whatever happened this was the best country there is. And he really believed in this country.

Well, my dad, too, said he would never go back to Japan. So we, even after World War II, when we wanted him to go visit Japan he said, "No." He left Japan and he said he'd rather just die here and be buried here.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Can you tell me what happened to you on December the 7th? Where were you and what were you doing? What was your reaction?

MR. YOKOMI: That day I went to Guadalupe to a wedding. I drove my pickup and hauled the bride's furniture and whatever she took as a bride to her husband's home. Her two nephews and I went with the pickup to Guadalupe and that's when we heard about Pearl Harbor. That night they had a wedding party, and we didn't know at the time there were FBI agents at the hotel. They let them finish the party that night. After the party, I understood they picked up all the men in Guadalupe. But they were nice enough to let us finish the party.

The three of us were bored with nothing to do so we went driving up the coast. No one at the party knew they were FBI guys. They told us to have a good time, so we went to Pismo, visiting around there and this and that and nobody stopped us or anything. So, really, there was nothing exciting.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You just came on home?

MR. YOKOMI: We came on home with no incidents or anything. Later on we found out all the men in Guadalupe were picked up that night. But the FBI were pretty nice about it They told us to have a good time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then after you came back did you go to relocation camp?

MR. YOKOMI: Yeah, I had heard all kinds of rumors. So a fellow named Fred and I, who was working with me at this farm, went to volunteer to go in the Army, so that way we thought our parents wouldn't have to get shipped out. But they told us we had been classified as enemy alien or whatever it was and they refused us. "Sorry, it's the rules," they told us. They apologized and said that was the order that had come down. So they couldn't do anything about it. We were evacuated; 99 Highway was the dividing point. People on this side went to Fresno Assembly Center. I encountered a lot of people that were real nice, like a fellow named

Martin Bue. A lot of Japanese were working for packing houses, Hall Packing Houses, so he knew a lot of Japanese people and so he used to tell us that anybody that needed baggage hauled to the assembly center to let him know and he would provide the transportation.

Then there was Dr. Cobb, a dentist. I went to pay my brother and sister's dental bill, and he told me I didn't have to pay until I came back. All the Japanese were paying their bills and he says, "I think they need their money so they can keep the money and forget about paying the bill." And he told me anytime the Japanese who were being interned needed any recreational material or anything, just write to him and he would do whatever he could to help.

So, we had pretty good people in Fowler. All the Armenian people, they were pretty sympathetic because they went through that Turkey Massacre. They took it pretty hard, all my neighbors, when we were leaving.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do in camp? Where did you go?

MR. YOKOMI: Went to Fresno Assembly Center, and I figured I might as well learn something, so I went to work as an electrician, because I thought I would learn something. And when they closed, I went to Arkansas. Few guys stayed over here and closed up the Fresno Assembly. And in Jerome, Arkansas where I helped build those roads a while, then worked in a garage and the following April left to work out of camp. When you saw all those girls who were leaving to go to college, I said, "If a girl has the guts to go out on her own, why should I be sitting around now?" So, I went to work in Colorado on a farm where my brother-in-law was farming at the time. I figured he needed the help.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where in Colorado?

MR. YOKOMI: About 50 miles north of Denver.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would that be around Greeley?

MR. YOKOMI: Yeah, well, kind of. It was the same county as Greeley, but we lived east of there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was the name of the place?

MR. YOKOMI: Prospect Valley. Town of Keenesberg in a little valley.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were you married then?

MR. YOKOMI: No, I was single.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do there? What kind of work did you do?

MR. YOKOMI: Oh, on my brother-in-law's farm, there were about 1,000 acres of vegetables. At the time, he was the first guy that ever farmed so big around there. In Colorado, agricultural people and different people came to see the operation.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of vegetables did he have?

MR. YOKOMI: He had lettuce, carrots, onions, and et cetera.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your family evacuate to Colorado, too?

MR. YOKOMI: No. My folks were in Arkansas. When they closed that camp they moved to Granada Relocation Camp in Colorado. That camp was about 200 miles from where we were living.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And how long were they there before they left?

MR. YOKOMI: I think until they let them come back to California. First they got out of Granada, they went to live with my sister in Keenesburg. From there they came back over here.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you come back?

MR. YOKOMI: I was in the service at the time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, were you drafted?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes. I was drafted in, I think, in 1945.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you lived in Colorado?

MR. YOKOMI: Colorado.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go overseas?

MR. YOKOMI: No, I stayed in the States. They told our group war was over in Europe and our battalion was going to be sent to the Pacific. So there were about 100 Nisei in that group out of 1,000 that trained. They pulled all the Nisei out. And they made us stay in Camp Hood. I think one-half, one-third of the people stayed as the cadre. Baker, clerks, and people in like positions.

I was company clerk. Some of the guys went to language school. People that refused all duty except to go overseas were sent to Europe for occupation, but we all volunteered to go with the batallion to Pacific. But they said, "No, the Niseis couldn't go." But I went to General Headquarters. Well, they told me you don't tell the Army what to do, we tell you what to do. I enjoyed being in the service. I suppose some people didn't like it, but I enjoyed it myself. It was hard training and all that, but it's what you make of it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: So you were in the service from 1945. When were you discharged?

MR. YOKOMI: 1946. I think I was in about 22 months. They wanted me to become first sergeant of the company, but I was still a private because everybody was getting discharged, and they knew I didn't want to go to Fort Snelling. They told me to take charge of the company, but I told them, "I was just a plain old company clerk and a private, I don't want to be responsible for 200 people." But, you know, that my company commander was shipped to the Pacific so they got a young second lieutenant to take over the company, who was 19 years old.

He really wanted me to stay because he didn't know anything. But I was so mad that they didn't give me a promotion that I refused, and they sent me to Fort Snelling. It was kind of silly. He was only 19 and just

out of OCS training, and then he had to take charge of the company. He begged me to stay, but I didn't want to be responsible for 200 people with such lousy pay. Too much responsibility for \$20 a month.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you were discharged, were your folks already here, back in Fowler?

MR. YOKOMI: They were back on the farm. We had a lot of pressures on us to sell the farm, but nobody wanted to give any money for it.

When I went to volunteer for the Army, I had to have a birth certificate at the County and found out it wasn't recorded. I did not have the original certificate. I was born on March the 3rd in 1921; there are no records for that day. They said that the recorder got drunk once in a while and so we had the original, we had to go to court. Some Japanese association said they would get a certificate, but they wanted \$160 at that time, since they had to go to court for it. Then, about that time, a man named Henry Hirasuna told me about a woman lawyer who had patented his equipment level for the Ford tractor, who was his patent attorney, and he said she was real smart and cheap. So he talked to her and she said, "I'll take care of him, it's only five minutes work." With court costs and everything she charged \$80; half the cost of the Japanese Association!

A friend of mine who had been born the same day as I had not been recorded either, so both of us went to Superior Court and got our birth certificates. The lady lawyer told me not to sell the property. She told me that we were under pressure, but if we sold the property cheap and if the ownership of the land was declared illegal, they would get our money anyway. But to always hang onto the property so we would have a place to come home to. She said it's unconstitutional to intern a citizen, and they can't keep you in the camp forever. And she also advised us to hang onto the place so we would have a place to come home to.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Good advice.

MR. YOKOMI: She gave us good advice. So when my folks came back, we had a place to come back to.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did someone take care of your property while you were gone?

MR. YOKOMI: Things were run down and everything, but we still had the property.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who lived in your place? Who took care of it?

MR. YOKOMI: My neighbor, this Sam, father did? And then he had a Mexican family live in the house.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was lucky.

MR. YOKOMI: Yes, we were kind of fortunate. We lost a few things that were in the garage, but we just had built a new garage at the time we went to camp. Many of our friends stored their things in the garage. We didn't lose too much out of it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you came back to your ranch in 1946?

MR. YOKOMI: I think around 1946.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are your parents still well?

MR. YOKOMI: No. My dad died about 10 years ago. He was 86 when he died.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you came back from the service, was your dad still alive?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was he working on the ranch?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your mother and brother, too?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then after you came back to Fowler, what did you do?

MR. YOKOMI: Well, I worked for a while on my farm and remodeled the house. Then I went to work for Cal Theatre owned by Mr. Okuda. He wanted me to go into business so I helped Ben Nakamura to run Cal Theatre to learn the business.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In Fresno?

MR. YOKOMI: Yeah, in Fresno. For about a year and a half or so. He wanted to have a place where they showed Japanese movies. Mr. Okuda and Ben Nakamura asked me to help manage it, so I did. I was waiting for a lease to run out on a store space. Mr. Okuda advised me to work in theatre to get experience handling money. So I was running the theatre. My folks were raising strawberries at the time, so they worked from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. to pick strawberries so when I came to work I peddled it around town and then I came to work from 11:00 to midnight at the Cal Theatre. I went to Los Angeles to work at four different places to learn how to sell fish, because I never seen fish before then.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When the lease for this store ran out and you got the store, and did you start the fish market right away?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes. About three months before the lease ran out, I went to Los Angeles to work in various fish markets. And I told them my brother-in-law and I wanted to learn about marketing fish. He asked the different stores if they would teach me, and most of the people were pretty nice and they said yeah, as long as I worked for free. One place refused, they said why should they, in one month, teach me all that they had picked up in 50 years of experience. That was the only place that refused. The rest of them, four or five places that I went to work for, were really helpful.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you learn?

MR. YOKOMI: How to cut fish and to sell it. I didn't know anything about fish at the time. It was a crash program. And the first time I waited on a customer he asked for fish

and was looking at the fish, so I picked up the one I thought he wanted. He laughed and said, "No, not that fish." Because I couldn't see where his eye went. I picked it up something else.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I'm sure you had to learn about the different kinds of fish.

MR. YOKOMI: Yes, and how to clean them. I figured if I could work at different places in one month I could learn faster, because each guy has a different way of doing it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: At how many different stores did you work?

MR. YOKOMI: All together, I think four stores; three Japanese stores and with one American guy who catered to colored people. Because they figured for me to break into Fresno I had to cater to colored people. o, that's how we got our foothold in Fresno by helping to get the fish the colored people liked.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And what kind did they like?

MR. YOKOMI: They have fish which they prefer like buffalo, catfish, drum, and carp. We were getting carp locally.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you mean by drum?

MR. YOKOMI: It's like a fresh water perch. That's what we call drum fish or gaspergoo. Like white perch, a little more coarse meat.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What year was it that you started your fish market and at what location?

MR. YOKOMI: 1950, at 1507 Kern Street.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long were you at that location?

MR. YOKOMI: Thirty years, just about 29 years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you first started that fish market, what was business like? Did you have any competition?

MR. YOKOMI: Well, I was bucking the biggest competition there was, Fresno Fish was the fish market. So I knew it was hard to get the Japanese business, so I concentrated on the colored people. So when people tell me that I treat the colored people really good I tell them that they're the ones that gave me the helping hand when I really needed it. I kind of lean over backwards for them. If it weren't for them I wouldn't be here, in my new location.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, it seems to me that the original store was pretty popular. The last four or five years, every New Year, whenever I go there for supplies for the traditional New Year feast, people were crowded and waiting in line!

MR. YOKOMI: Yes, and then we outgrew the place. We kept on expanding, but the fish counter, itself, wasn't being expanded, so it was really crowded. So we decided about

three years ago that we'd better move. Took us about three years to finally get everything together.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you move here, to this place?

MR. YOKOMI: Last December, the 8th.

MRS. HASEGAWA: There's quite a bit of difference, isn't there? What was the size of the other store as compared to this one?

MR. YOKOMI: Originally, that thing was 13 feet wide and 70 feet deep. And then we expanded to both sides so we had 13, 13, and 13 so we had 39x70. Now this one here is 145x68 feet. There is quite a bit of difference.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many employees do you have here?

MR. YOKOMI: With the part-time helper, we have about 18.

MRS. HASEGAWA: According to the Fresno Bee, it stated that you have an employee who has been with you for 25 years.

MR. YOKOMI: He's still with me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are some of the changes that have taken place in doing business since the time that you began?

MR. YOKOMI: Well, everything has gone up.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Price?

MR. YOKOMI: Pricewise, and I think we get more people, different types of people. We get quite a bit of people from the other side of the tracks. And more Mexican people eat fish now than before. We still have these colored people that have been with me ever since I opened up, so we still have them coming.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And what about the fish? You said the fish market was something like a farmer. Why is that?

MR. YOKOMI: Yeah. Like the farmer, much depends on the weather and we have our problems. Storm or big waves or things like that affects the harvest.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where do you get most of your fish?

MR. YOKOMI: All the way from Seattle to San Diego. A lot of our ocean fish comes out of Mexican waters, because we are pretty fished out around San Pedro and LA.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you order directly from Mexico?

MR. YOKOMI: No. There's a place in San Diego where the boats come in. The wholesalers, a couple of houses over there and in San Pedro,, We have three different houses, and I call my brother-in-law about twice a week to find out what's going on. He tells me what to get and keeps me informed. They're a lot bigger company, strictly wholesale. He has about 60 employees.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You have a good source then?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes, even though I don't buy from him. But when there's a scarcity of fish he gets it for me or advises me on who to call.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why don't you buy from him?

MR. YOKOMI: Because he, too, has to handle it. So this way I buy direct and I save a little money with less handling. Actually, he has enough business out there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I thought it would be easier for you to get all the fish at one place, but I see that you're saying that you get fresher fish by dealing directly with the wholesaler.

MR. YOKOMI: Yes. They go down there and then they have to come back. For instance, all of the fillets come from Oregon and Washington. We have to take the shipment whenever they come through Fresno with the truck. One night we had to wait until 2 o'clock in the morning. The truck has to be in LA by 4:00 or 6:00 in the morning. So when they come through here they drop it off, and we have to be here waiting for them otherwise we don't get the fish, and they just keep going.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How is the fish delivered to you?

MR. YOKOMI: It's delivered on a refrigerated truck. They come in carton boxes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You said something about shipments coming by air, too?

MR. YOKOMI: Yes. We get some from back East, Boston, by air, and then San Diego by air, because it's actually cheaper than trucking. From San Diego it only costs us 12 cents a pound to air freight it. Even fish from Boston is pretty cheap. We get 500 pounds at a time, and they only charge us \$78 up to San Francisco. So bringing it from San Francisco to here is what is expensive. They charge us \$120 from San Francisco to here.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's quite a difference.

MR. YOKOMI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you get from Boston?

MR. YOKOMI: Oh, we get Eastern Oysters, mussels, and different kind of fillets. Or sometimes when the weather is bad over here and the weather is still good over there, we get sole and cod and other stuff.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And Maine lobster?

MR. YOKOMI: Maine lobster, too, Sometime they don't seem to like to fool around with the Maine lobster. We buy them frozen. We try to get it fresh. Every week it's kind of hit and miss.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who are your customers besides the individuals that come into your store?

MR. YOKOMI: We sell to a lot of restaurants, to the better restaurants in town.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What restaurants do you sell to?

MR. YOKOMI: We sell to Towerhouse, they use a lot of fresh fish and we used to sell some to Cedar Lanes and sometimes to Pardini's, and Charlie's. We sell quite a bit to the Outpost and a few others. Also to Cattle Baron in Clovis. We must serve about a hundred different restaurants. We don't solicit. They call us because ours is a small operation and I don't have a salesman. They call us because we try to give them the most reasonable price and good quality merchandise.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you sell wholesale, too?

MR. YOKOMI: That's to the restaurants.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see.

MR. YOKOMI: Volume-wise, everybody likes lobster and more expensive seafood in the restaurant, so we do more volume wholesale through them. This year we hope to do about a million-and-a-half in wholesale business. I'm trying to do about a million retail on the fish.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Big business! What social and economic changes have you seen in the local community?

MR. YOKOMI: Well, mostly the Japanese are moving away. But they still come down to get their fish and Japanese merchandise. That's why I would like to have the big Japanese churches stay in this area, a place for them to come. I think the Kern Street businesses are doing pretty good, they are holding up with restaurants and West Fresno Flower Shop and others. We are all working together.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you think there's a good future for this part of town?

MR. YOKOMI: I think so.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Have you been involved with any religious, social, business, or any political organizations?

MR. YOKOMI: No. Every once in a while I send the Republican representative, some minority candidate, a donation. I don't care for some of their philosophy, but I figure that he's a minority who is trying to help the minority group.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are you active in the Buddhist Church?

MR. YOKOMI: I'm not active, but I try to help the kids, like providing trophies and stuff like that. I try to help them out.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Thank you for your generous donations to the Japanese-American project. The Japanese language readers of the library will be grateful.

MR. YOKOMI: That's what I tell these colored people, too. I tell them that they have to get together. I tell them that the Japanese and

Chinese group have limited means, too, but they're all out there pitching together. Even if it's a dollar, if a hundred guys give, it's a hundred dollars. I always keep on telling them, you know these Japanese projects you hear about around here or the Chinese projects, all the people in the small community contributed towards a goal.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Good advice. Do you belong to any Lion's Club or any kind of social organization?

MR. YOKOMI: No.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you still observe any Japanese customs in your family?

MR. YOKOMI: We celebrate New Year's. And I don't know if you call it a Japanese custom or not -

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about birthdays? Does your mother prepare traditional Japanese food?

MR. YOKOMI: She used to, but not any more. I suppose everybody just go their own way more or less. Everybody tries to come down for Christmas or New Year's. The whole family tries to get together.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is the Central Fish Market the biggest fish market in Fresno?

MR. YOKOMI: It's supposed to be.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And I think that from the looks of your new store, you're very successful.

MR. YOKOMI: I don't know about successful, but we're out there pitching.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Something was mentioned in the Fresno Bee that I thought was very meaningful, and I think you said it earlier during the interview about succeeding. Will you please tell us again.

MR. YOKOMI: My dad always said there's always going to be prejudice, so if you get mad and give up you're not going to get anywhere. So you just have to be twice as good as the other guy. So when anything happens I don't become angry.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Thank you, Mr. Yokomi. Thank you very much, we really appreciate your interview.