

>> Carlene Tinker: Good afternoon, Mr. Imamura.

>> Richard Imamura: Good afternoon.

>> Carlene Tinker: How are you doing?

>> Richard Imamura: Just fine, thank you.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, well, I want to welcome you to the Special Collections Research Center at Fresno State. My name is Carlene Tanigoshi Tinker, and I'm a volunteer here at the center. And [the reason] why I've invited you today to be interviewed, we are endeavoring to enlarge our collection on Japanese Americans in the San Joaquin Valley, and, of course, in the United States. So that's what we're going to do. We're going to find out about you, your family and how you've become a part of the San Joaquin Valley, okay?

>> Richard Imamura: Absolutely.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and today is Tuesday, December 12th, 2017. And the time is 2:20 p.m. As I said, the Special Collections Center has this very vast collection of oral interviews, oral histories, and that's what we're going to contribute to. Presently, there are about 150 of these interviews that are available for researchers and the public. And these all are online. So the way we became familiar with your family was to have seen an obituary about your father, Mr. Haruo Imamura, who was a very important community member, not only because of the Fresno Judo Club, but also because he was an integral part of the Physical Education Department here at Fresno state. Isn't that correct?

>> Richard Imamura: That is correct.

>> Carlene Tinker: And so correct. Okay, so can you tell me just briefly something about your dad? Did he actually come from Japan, or was he from the United States?

>> Richard Imamura: My father was born in Japan, and he was born in 1933, so before World War II, and his father was actually a policeman, and he was raised in Korea, because at the time, Japan occupied Korea, and my father grew up in Korea as a young child. He had a brother, and his brother, at a very--at infancy, passed away, along with his mother, my dad's mother of I believe it was some sort of sickness. So he lost his little brother and his mother at a very young age. And so he actually, actually as the war ended, because Communism was taking over Korea, they had to evacuate, and eventually ended up back in Japan with his father. And his father remarried a Japanese woman who he later got to know as his--the mom that raised him. And from that point, he started doing Judo, mostly to fend off kids that would tease him and give him a hard time, because growing up in Korea, it was a little bit different than the rest of the Japanese boys, so he started doing Judo at a very young age, I think it was 12, and from that point, he really progressed. I think it was more of his way out was developing his skills in Judo, because it actually got him a scholarship to a start-up university that's called Tenri University, and it's close to Osaka and Nara. And he became a--he

was actually a recruit. The first team captain of Tenri University in an up-start Judo program. After a few years starting that program, they actually won a national title, and since they haven't looked back, because they've won numerous national titles, and they're known as a major Judo university in Japan, which has, I believe, developed many Olympic players as well. So he was pretty much the start of all that. And once he took Tenri to national fame and world fame, he actually moved, or actually, after they graduate, a lot of the Judoists were asked to go teach Judo in different areas, even internationally. And because my father had been part of a tour after his college career as an all star Judo team, he was able to go to Hawaii, California, as part of a tour, and actually went to Fresno. So when he came back to Japan, went back to Japan, he decided that he was going to teach Judo in the United States. He liked Fresno so much that he picked Fresno as his spot. And that's when he came to the U.S. I believe it was 1958 or so.

>> Carlene Tinker: 1958. I'm very ignorant of what Judo is. Do you want to describe what the sport is? I guess you'd call it a sport. What is Judo?

>> Richard Imamura: Judo is basically a sport, and it was derived from the martial art Jujutsu. And basically, the art is self-defense, and it uses your opponent's force in your favor, so you learn to manipulate your opponents' actions to your favor. And that's what Jujutsu is. And Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo, what he did is he took the form of Jujutsu and made it into a sport form. That was a sport. You can't really use a martial art because it's very dangerous because a lot of things that you do in martial arts are dangerous. And what he did, he decided to remove the dangerous portions of the sport and modify it and apply it to rules and develop the sport of Judo.

>> Carlene Tinker: I see. I see. Now, you mentioned that he was highly regarded, he earned a lot of honors. I think when you receive honors in these kinds of sports, you get belts, is that true?

>> Richard Imamura: That's correct.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, do you want to explain what a belt is? And I know they're different colors and different levels, is that correct?

>> Richard Imamura: That's correct. Basically, the color of belts indicates your progression in Judo and your development and your skills. And it starts out as a white belt.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Richard Imamura: And yellow belt is the next step. Orange belt, green belt, blue belt, purple belt. Then the next step would be brown belt. And brown belt has three degrees. It's third degree, which is initial, next would be second degree, and first degree is the highest rank of the brown belt. Then once you pass the brown belt, you go into black belt. And that goes from one, first degree, second, third, fourth, fifth, and so on. And I don't believe anybody, especially under the [inaudible], has ever reached anything past 10th degree.

>> Carlene Tinker: Past the what degree?

>> Richard Imamura: 10th degree.

>> Carlene Tinker: But now, your father, didn't he receive the 9th degree?

>> Richard Imamura: That's correct. He received the 9th degree. I believe it was 2008, I believe.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Richard Imamura: 2007 or 2008. And he was one of the few 9th degrees in the United States. And he was--we were actually trying to get him another promotion to 10th degree. But unfortunately he passed away in September.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, I presume that in order to progress through these different levels and get these different degrees at each level, you have to participate in tournaments or contests, is that correct, is that how you get the--?

>> Richard Imamura: Yes, there are many different ways to get promoted, but primarily it's because--primarily to get promoted, especially if you're younger, is to compete. And that would be the best way to show your ability in what you're learning and how you devote your skills. So competing is very, very integral part of getting promoted at an early age. As you get older and you no longer compete, a lot of it is how much time you put into the sport, as far as teaching, and also developing your skills and *kata*, which is forms, and just basically how much time you put into the sport.

>> Carlene Tinker: I see. I see. Well, getting back to your dad, now, he learned the sport and he was very [inaudible] reached a very high level of proficiency, and he decided to come back to Fresno after he returned to Japan, is that correct?

>> Richard Imamura: That's correct.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, he decided at that time he was going to just teach Judo, but didn't he have another occupation before that? What did he get actually trained for?

>> Richard Imamura: Well, actually, he wanted to do two things when he came to the United States. He wanted to teach Judo and also learn English. And he went to city college and he learned English. And also he eventually got a job at or actually Bank of Tokyo.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Richard Imamura: And Bank of Tokyo eventually turned into California First Bank, and then later Union Bank. So it currently exists today. And

he started at the Chinatown branch in Fresno, yeah, at the Bank of Tokyo, which is now known as Union Bank.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, yeah. Coincidentally, my parents used to bank [there], yeah. I didn't realize the tradition there, yeah. So let's talk about your mom briefly. Your mom, is she from Japan?

>> Richard Imamura: She actually was born here, but her parents were from Japan, and they were from the Wakayama Prefecture of Japan.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, what prefecture or city was your dad from?

>> Richard Imamura: My father was from a little town called Tamana. And that is close to Kumamoto. And those that don't know Kumamoto is close to Fukuoka which is a major city in Kyushu, which is a southern island of Japan.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right, okay, so your mom's family came from Wakayama, but she herself was born here. What city was she born in?

>> Richard Imamura: She was born in Dinuba.

>> Carlene Tinker: Dinuba.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, what brought her parents to the United States?

>> Richard Imamura: You know, that's a good question. I don't know. But I know that her parent owned a little ranch out in Dinuba. And they were very integral in bringing or actually helping Japanese who had come to the United States because initially you don't have anyplace to stay or any money and--or very little, so a lot of times the immigrants from Japan would come to my grandfather's ranch and they would, you know, provide for them and help them get on their feet so they can adapt to the new environment.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. Now, so in terms of generations, you know that terms Issei, Nisei, Sansei, what do you consider yourself in?

>> Richard Imamura: Well, that's a tough one because it's not that clean because my father would be an Issei because he's first generation and my mom would be a Nisei, so I couldn't be a Nisei because my mom was. But not correctly a Sansei because, you know, my dad was an Issei. So I would say that would be a Nisei point five, I guess.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, did your mother work when she--well, first of all, how did she marry, meet your dad?

>> Richard Imamura: My mom, since she was from the valley, she pretty knew pretty much all the stuff that went along with the Japanese community. She was very into Japanese classical dance. But just like any other child, most of the Japanese-American children growing up there today, she took Japanese school to learn Japanese. And I believe my

father, when she was taking Japanese lessons, was an instructor, a Japanese teacher at the Sunday school of the Buddhist church. So I think she spied him while she was going to school, Japanese school, and then later found out that he was a Judo champion, and I think she saw him in the paper and said, you know what? That's my target. I'm going after him. So she was able to arrange a meeting with my father, and, of course, my father intended to go back to Japan, but once he met my mom, that's all she wrote. He wasn't leaving after that.

>> Carlene Tinker: So how much younger was your mother than your dad?

>> Richard Imamura: Eight years.

>> Carlene Tinker: Eight years.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, since she was in Dinuba, how old would she be now if she were still alive?

>> Richard Imamura: So if she were still alive today, she would be 70, let's see, 76.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, 76, okay. So she actually, I would assume she went to a relocation camp.

>> Richard Imamura: Yes, I believe she was sent with her family when she was a baby to Poston, Arizona.

>> Carlene Tinker: To Poston. And where is that?

>> Richard Imamura: Arizona.

>> Carlene Tinker: Arizona.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, did she ever talk about being in a relocation camp?

>> Richard Imamura: She did, but because she didn't know much, it was mostly secondhand from what other people said, because she was so young that she didn't remember much about the camps.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, what did her parents do besides--well, they had a farm. And when they went to camp, do you have any idea what they did in camp?

>> Richard Imamura: No, I don't know. I feel bad that I did not, you know, find this information out. But as a younger child, you don't really think of those things, you know?

>> Carlene Tinker: And I'm like you, I was only three when I went into a camp. And for the records, just to explain, the relocation camp was

established away from the west coast to harbor enemy people, right, at that time, the enemy was Japanese-Americans, and so I went to Colorado, and that's where I was. But there are two of these relocation camps in California, Tule Lake and Manzanar, yeah. But the rest of them were inland, yeah. So--But she never talked about it. And consequently, that's the same for me, you know? I was too young. And only recently have I started learning about my history. Okay, so your mom was into dancing, classical Japanese dancing. And did she perform?

>> Richard Imamura: Oh, often, yes, she did. She had an instructor from Los Angeles, and they were part of the Sanjo [phonetic] Dance Club. And she had been doing that ever since she was a girl, a little girl.

>> Carlene Tinker: In your family, how many children did she have, did your mom and dad have?

>> Richard Imamura: Four.

>> Carlene Tinker: Four.

>> Richard Imamura: Four boys.

>> Carlene Tinker: Four boys, okay. Where are you in the birth order?

>> Richard Imamura: I'm number two, second, second son.

>> Carlene Tinker: Who's older than you?

>> Richard Imamura: I have a brother named Robert and a younger brother named Rodney and a baby brother named Randy.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and are you all involved in Judo also?

>> Richard Imamura: Oh, yes. I think that was a requirement in order to grow up in our household. You had to do Judo.

>> Carlene Tinker: What would your dad do if you didn't?

>> Richard Imamura: You know, well, I think in our house, there really wasn't too much--I remember my brother, because he was older than me, so he started before me. And I remember the city college was the first spot of the Judo club when I was growing up, Fresno Judo club, when I started was at City College.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, is that right?

>> Richard Imamura: And there was a long hallway to go into the gym to where we were practicing. And I remember my brother kicking and screaming saying I don't want to do it, I don't want to do it. But, you know, there was no choice in the matter, and he was made to do Judo. And luckily, there were other students in the class that made my brother feel really comfortable, and, you know, after that, things were fine.

>> Carlene Tinker: So you actually started at City College before you came here, is that right?

>> Richard Imamura: Yes, well, the club was located at Fresno City College, yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, so your dad was an immigrant. He came from--I can't remember the name of the town.

>> Richard Imamura: Tamana.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and your mom's family came from Wakayama-ken, alright, so then they met in Dinuba, okay, and your mom was a student of Japanese language, and she had her eye on your dad.

>> Richard Imamura: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: How old were they when they got married? Do you have any idea?

>> Richard Imamura: I think my mom would have been 21, I believe.

>> Carlene Tinker: And then your dad being eight years older than her, 29.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, 29.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, did they live in Dinuba, or did they move to Fresno?

>> Richard Imamura: By that time, they had moved to Fresno, I believe.

>> Carlene Tinker: Had all four of you boys been born by that time?

>> Richard Imamura: My brother was born the same year that my parents got married, so in 1962.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and then what is your birthday?

>> Richard Imamura: I was born in 1964.

>> Carlene Tinker: And where were you born?

>> Richard Imamura: Actually, we lived in Fresno, but I was born in Dinuba because my mother's doctor was in Dinuba.

>> Carlene Tinker: I see.

>> Richard Imamura: That's where I was born.

>> Carlene Tinker: And Richard, what is your full name?

>> Richard Imamura: My full name, just like all my brothers, we have an English first name and a Japanese middle name. And my Japanese middle name is Mamoru.

>> Carlene Tinker: Say it again.

>> Richard Imamura: Mamoru.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and then your last name.

>> Richard Imamura: Imamura.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and so I think you are 53 years old.

>> Richard Imamura: That's correct.

>> Carlene Tinker: And where have you lived the longest?

>> Richard Imamura: Fresno. I never, never left Fresno.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Richard Imamura: I did, the longest stint I've done out of Fresno is basically when I went to train at Tsukuba University when I was in college. I took a little hiatus from Fresno State to go train at Tsukuba to develop my skills better in Judo. And that was about four or five months.

>> Carlene Tinker: I was going to ask you how long that was. Now, we were talking the other day about when you grew up in Fresno, you didn't really experience prejudice and/or discrimination, am I remembering correctly?

>> Richard Imamura: You know, actually, the prejudice and discrimination was more of being Asian. Because Asians weren't, in my school, there was a handful. In my grade, maybe three or four of us. And so it wasn't necessarily Japanese discrimination, but it was more of Asian discrimination I'd say in general. And a lot of it was teasing. Nothing serious, but just teasing.

>> Carlene Tinker: You weren't ever bullied or pummeled? Of course, you were a Judoist.

>> Richard Imamura: You know what? We used to do Judo demonstrations at the school with my father. So just from the demonstrations, I think the children actually thought that we were really tough, tough kids, so they never really bothered us at all.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, I think you had an advantage.

>> Richard Imamura: You know, there's two things that made getting into scuffles or getting, you know, picked on, bullied. One was doing Judo, just by the mere fact that they think you do Judo, they think that, oh, I don't want to touch this guy. But also, we were also very low key type

people. We didn't--my brothers and I were always easy going and not much into causing problems at all.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, when we talked the other day, you did mention that you did experience prejudice and discrimination when you were in Japan, is that correct?

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, you know, you realize, or you think that because--we went to, you know, you go to a university there, and because your father had been there and was born and went to the university, that you would, you know, get special treatment. But that special treatment actually happened, but it only happened when my father was around. Whenever he left, you know, even as [being] Japanese, with Japanese blood, pure Japanese blood, you're looked at as a foreigner because you were born in another country.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, so Japanese are very--a little different in that regard. They really try to isolate their culture.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Richard Imamura: Pretty much, yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, I haven't spent very much time in Japan, but what little experience I have had is sort of what you're describing, yeah. So basically growing up in Fresno was not a problem. Where did you go to elementary school and middle school and high school?

>> Richard Imamura: I went to Dailey Elementary School, which is located close to Palm and Shields.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Richard Imamura: And I went there, and after I left Dailey and went to Hamilton Junior High School. And then as a freshman, that's when desegregation occurred, and they started busing kids all over the place. And they actually made Hamilton a freshman-only school. So I was the first year that freshman-only campus was created at Hamilton. And the seventh and eighth were sent to other schools, like Wawona and Cooper.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Richard Imamura: But Hamilton was known as a freshman school.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, okay.

>> Richard Imamura: And then after that, I moved onto Fresno High School.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and did you participate in Judo there? Was there a Judo?

>> Richard Imamura: There is no Judo--any Judo connected with high school, junior high school and elementary, not in California.

>> Carlene Tinker: Not even today?

>> Richard Imamura: Not even today, no.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, so when you went to college, where did you go to college?

>> Richard Imamura: Fresno State.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, so you are an alumnus of Fresno State. And your father taught here for years, and you're continuing to teach in his place.

>> Richard Imamura: That's correct.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, so you mentioned City College and Judo. What was that again?

>> Richard Imamura: That's where we practiced. Our club used the wrestling room at Fresno City College for many years.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, now, here at Fresno State, where do you have your class and where do you practice?

>> Richard Imamura: Actually, right now, because I wasn't aware of it, but a lot of the club activities at Fresno State, a lot of them don't even occur on campus. Yeah, I guess just facilities are at a premium here.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, I see.

>> Richard Imamura: So we aren't able to practice on campus. But I teach the kinesiology Judo class in the south gym usually two days a week. This semester, it was Tuesday and Thursday. But the club practices off campus at Fresno Judo Club.

>> Carlene Tinker: And where is that?

>> Richard Imamura: And that's located close to 99, Valentine and Ashlan area.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, now, is this a required course in kinesiology, or is it an elective?

>> Richard Imamura: No, it's an elective. It's a one-unit elective that you can take.

>> Carlene Tinker: And getting back to your dad being the instructor here, did you teach along with him while he was teaching? And I can't remember how long ago he started teaching.

>> Richard Imamura: He started teaching Judo here at Fresno State back in the late 70s. And it was just an extension course.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay.

>> Richard Imamura: So a lot of--it wasn't required that you were a student to basically take the class. I mean, there were people who would just take a one-unit Judo class. And basically, it was just an extension course they offered. And that's how it started.

>> Carlene Tinker: I see.

>> Richard Imamura: And then I believe in the mid-80s, I can't remember the time, but it actually turned into an actual one-unit PE course.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, okay.

>> Richard Imamura: Kinesiology course.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, I actually kind of remember the 1980s. Okay, and so did you teach along with him?

>> Richard Imamura: Well, you know, I didn't retire from competition until 1991 because we were training for the Olympics. And that would be three out of the four brothers were training for the Olympics. And because of some health issues, I decided to retire after--my last shot was the Barcelona Olympics, and that was 1992. And that was my last shot.

>> Carlene Tinker: And you didn't go to the Olympics?

>> Richard Imamura: No, no, never made it. But, you know, you strive, you have a goal. And once I did make the Olympic team for the Barcelona Olympics, I decided to hang up my competing days.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, how about your brothers? Did any of them participate in the Olympics?

>> Richard Imamura: Actually, no. But my brother, Rodney, who is a professor of kinesiology at Sac State University, he was an alternate to the Barcelona game, one of the alternates at the Barcelona games.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's very good.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, that was quite an accomplishment. And he was the brother that I trained with the most.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, we were pretty close in age. So we did a lot of our training together. And we almost retired about the same time too.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: What does your older brother do?

>> Richard Imamura: He's actually a manager at a movie theater here in Fresno.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and then what is your occupation?

>> Richard Imamura: I'm a financial advisor.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and Rodney is the one who's the instructor at Sac State?

>> Richard Imamura: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: In kinesiology? And Randy?

>> Richard Imamura: Randy is a wholesale representative for a pharmaceutical company.

>> Carlene Tinker: Okay, and all four of you attended Fresno State?

>> Richard Imamura: Yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, okay. That will make the department here very proud.

>> Richard Imamura: You know, the funny thing is, you know, a lot of parents ask their kids, do you want to go to, you know, college and get a degree? That was--there was no ifs. It was kind of like Judo. You had to do Judo and you had to get your college degree.

>> Carlene Tinker: You and I must have been raised by the same parents.

>> Richard Imamura: I think it was pretty much a theme of all Japanese-American parents. They wanted their kids.

>> Carlene Tinker: There was never any question.

>> Richard Imamura: Any question, right.

>> Carlene Tinker: You just, that was just normal progression.

>> Richard Imamura: Yep, you're right.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right, now, I remember too that your niece, is it Randy's daughter?

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: She's become involved in Judo. How did that happen?

>> Richard Imamura: You know, after we all retired, I believe Randy, my youngest brother, was the last to retire from competition. And I think

that was probably in early 2000s. And I think at that point, my dad--you could see his enthusiasm for Judo kind of declined because his goal was to raise one of his sons to be an Olympic champion. Never happened. So you could see a little bit of a letdown in his psyche. He was still teaching. He would always teach. That's always--he's been a Judo instructor, and that's what his--that's what he is known for, that's his identity, that's his passion. And so but, after we retired, it kind of, you know, declined a little bit. Not, not a whole lot, but a little bit. You could tell. And then when my niece actually started Judo, Randy's oldest girl, Miranda, she started Judo when she was four, I believe, and she started going to tournaments, and you could see the light in my dad's eyes just brighten. He was so excited again, "This is my second chance at raising an Olympic champion." So after that, yeah, he was all smiles, and he was glad, you know, he was always enthusiastic about practice. And she kind of rekindles his excitement in Judo again.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's wonderful. I can just see the glint in his eyes, you know?

>> Richard Imamura: Oh, yeah, you can see it, too.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, has she become accomplished? Has she accomplished a lot?

>> Richard Imamura: Oh, yeah, she has. She won a collegiate national title a few years ago. And because of that national title, she was also selected for the world university games in Judo. And that was held in Taipei just this past August. And so she was able to go to Taipei and compete in the world university games.

>> Carlene Tinker: And how did she do?

>> Richard Imamura: She went actually she went three rounds.

>> Carlene Tinker: Good.

>> Richard Imamura: She was one of maybe two Americans that won a match.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right?

>> Richard Imamura: And I think she was the only one that actually won her match by a full point.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow. And how old is she?

>> Richard Imamura: Miranda is 22.

>> Carlene Tinker: 22. Now, it sounds like she's passionate about the sport as well.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, she had a lot of pressure too because her grandpa, you know? I'm sure that she really--because her grandfather, my dad, supported her Judo.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, and, of course, she wants to contribute to his memory and to his legacy.

>> Richard Imamura: Absolutely, absolutely.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, that's wonderful. How about any of the other grandchildren? Any of them taken the sport up?

>> Richard Imamura: I think my oldest brother's sons have tried it. Kyle and Ryan, they both tried it. But they were more geared toward baseball. So they gave it a shot a few--I think they took Judo for a little while. But after that, they decided to concentrate on other sports. And I think Marissa actually tried Judo, Miranda's younger sister.

>> Carlene Tinker: But so far, only Miranda?

>> Richard Imamura: Well, her sisters actually went the opposite way. They went to cheer. But they were both competitive. Marissa and Megan were both competitive at cheer.

>> Carlene Tinker: I will be darned.

>> Richard Imamura: And they both had national titles, part of national cheer competition teams.

>> Carlene Tinker: And what is her name?

>> Richard Imamura: There is Marissa. She actually retired--I think they took second in the worlds, I believe.

>> Carlene Tinker: Wow.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, so she was--she actually was part of a cheer comp team. And even though she lived in Fresno, she would travel to Livermore two or three times a week just to practice.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's amazing.

>> Richard Imamura: And yeah, I think they took second in the worlds, I believe.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, gosh, awesome. Well, let's get back to a little bit about the Japanese.

>> Richard Imamura: Oh, excuse me. And also I have to mention Megan too because she's the youngest, and she was also the cheerleader. And her high school team actually won a national title.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh my gosh.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: They're using their athletic ability in a different way.

>> Richard Imamura: Exactly, exactly. And, you know, I had to mention that because I want to make sure.

>> Carlene Tinker: Oh, yeah, we don't want to leave anybody out. Okay, getting back to--I know you're too young to have known about relocation camps, and also your mom was too young to really talk about it, but academically, you know about relocation camps.

>> Richard Imamura: Yes, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: And so did you think--how do you feel about people like us being put away in these relocation camps?

>> Richard Imamura: You know, that's a tough question. And it's hard to say because, you know, a lot of what you react to, you have to be in the environment at that particular time. It has a different feel to it. You could say what you think you would say based on your knowledge and what you've learned in the past and what you know of what's going on today. But, you know, I would find it very difficult to say that's the same thing I would feel if I was actually one of the people being incarcerated at the time, you know, that this was happening. And in a different place where people were not as trusting as they were. Race was a totally different experience I think back then. Because people were more segregated back then. And it was a different time of development for this country. So I would--it's a very difficult question for me to answer, but I think--I can't say. It's hard. That's a hard question to answer.

>> Carlene Tinker: Right. And at that time, there was a lot of economic competition between the Japanese-Americans and the native, the people who were not Japanese. In farming, there was competition there. And, of course, a lot of people were racist, to say the least. So there was this sort of a kettle of boiling feelings, you know, emotions, and some people were just dead wrong, you know, about what the Japanese, how they were a threat.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, and I think it was less of an issue here in the valley than it was in other parts of the country maybe. Because from what I've known and from all the people that I've talked to in the past, meaning relatives, people in the valley felt a little bit differently about Japanese here. And they had more--farmers had more respect in general than let's say more metropolitan areas where, you know, I think that's a big difference because I think people here in the valley were a little more accepted, and Japanese were accepted in the community. And I would hear even stories of people--you hear people who lost a lot of property because they had to move when they got relocated. But I've heard many stories here in the valley where neighbors would keep their property safe until they were able to return from the camps. And I've heard that, you know, many times here in the valley. So I could tell there was a difference, I would say there was a different relationship with those Japanese-Americans.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, those are heartwarming stories, you know? We hear stories about people who turn their farms over to another family,

and those people who were taking care of the farm, but actually sell the produce, or whatever was being grown, and then taking the money to the people in camp.

>> Richard Imamura: Wow, yeah.

>> Carlene Tinker: I mean, you know, but on the other hand, there were a lot of people who lost everything.

>> Richard Imamura: Yes, yes.

>> Carlene Tinker: So like you said, it's very difficult to kind of give a one concrete answer, you know, to that. Now, in the 1988 period there during President Reagan's period of presidency, there was legislation passed to apologize to the Japanese-Americans who were incarcerated. And they were given \$20,000 to any individual who was affected. Do you think that was a good thing?

>> Richard Imamura: Yes, me personally, because I was not emotionally connected to the incident. To me, it was just money coming in. And for me, it didn't affect me, but it affected my mom, and she got this money. And I don't think my mother actually had that passionate feeling about it either because she was so very young at the time. I think the people that maybe had strong opinions about that restitution were people who actually were in camp and how they were affected. Maybe I think I've heard of some people saying that they were very insulted by that and that they feel that's nothing compared to what they had gone through in camp.

>> Carlene Tinker: It certainly wasn't a lot of money.

>> Richard Imamura: Right.

>> Carlene Tinker: And I know of people who lost acres and acres of land and so forth, that kind of thing.

>> Richard Imamura: Yeah, I don't think there's any way that you could make it fair anyways because, you know, people had more than others, and just generalizing, saying we're giving this X amount of dollars doesn't solve the problem.

>> Carlene Tinker: Now, in relocation camps, or some people call them concentration camps, there were a lot of descendants, people who objected to being incarcerated, and they objected to being conscripted to go into the Army. This group was known as the no-nos, right?

>> Richard Imamura: Mhmm.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, what do you know about them?

>> Richard Imamura: I've actually been able to talk to a few people about their experience with that situation. But also watching documentaries and movies about it. You know, it's a difficult situation for someone to be in. Me personally, I could understand that because as a Japanese-American kid growing up, I had been to Japan numerous times, so I did have some

ties to Japan more than your regular Japanese-American child growing up here, Nisei, Sansei. And you still have a little bit of pride in where you came from, and, you know, in the country you're associated, which was Japan, in my case, and if I were to be incarcerated, or, you know, taken away because of who, what I was instead of who I was, I think that would be quite difficult decisions to be made because basically back then, the government was basically asking you to choose a side.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's right.

>> Richard Imamura: And, you know, you get put incarcerated or put into camps, and then you tell me, you know, that's kind of a forced answer, if you ask me, so the no-no boys were basically, you know, they were trying to be honest with what they felt.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's right.

>> Richard Imamura: That's a difficult situation because you want to comply because you want to be known as a patriot. But at the same time, you're struggling with it. And I think there was one--I think it was a fellow at Manzanar that there was one line where they were asked to sign your--what am I trying to say? You want to pledge allegiance to this country. And they say, you need to pick, you know, Japan or America. And he gave this analogy. If you had to pick, if your parents were getting a divorce and you had to pick between your mother and your father, how could you ask that question?

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Richard Imamura: You know?

>> Carlene Tinker: That's a very good analogy.

>> Richard Imamura: And that's what I believe they used during that film when they answered that question.

>> Carlene Tinker: Is that right? I don't remember that one. That's a good analogy. Yeah, now, that was the questionnaire that was administered supposedly just to the young men, but it got mistakenly administered to all of the people who were in the camps. And so consequently, the people who were not citizens, the elderly people, how were they going to answer, you know? They're here in the United States. They're not in Japan. They have no country.

>> Richard Imamura: Right, they had nowhere to go.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's right. So as I said, it was a mistake to have administered it to everybody. So consequently, you had these groups. Anyway, so relocation, this happens to be the 75th year since President Roosevelt signed the Executive Order 9066. And all over the country, including Fresno State here, we've had all kinds of exhibitions on it, bringing back, the refreshing people's memories about this. And so it's also very timely because the current political situation, the current government of the United States, the president is talking about

incarcerating some foreigners, which would be very much like incarcerating the Japanese-Americans. How do you feel about that? Specifically about rounding up and relocating Muslims?

>> Richard Imamura: I feel that it's very similar to back when Japanese were sent to camps. That was a bad decision that was made at the time. But I can understand the fear that occurs because of the terrorists. And if you, you know, associated with a Muslim religion, extremists, of course, but associated with Muslim religion, and you think to yourself that you look at--you make yourself vulnerable as Europe tends to be because they're less concerned with that, then you opened yourself up to terrorist activity, which I can see, I look back and I can understand why the government did what they needed to do.

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah.

>> Richard Imamura: So that's why, that's what kind of gives me the idea of I'm not sure, especially back, you know, in the 40s, what the environment was. I'm sure it was 10 times worse than it was now. Because this is war, and we're talking about a country that's ready to attack this, you know, our country. So you kick it up 10 times what we're experiencing now, and then it's very hard for me to say that, you know, I wouldn't do the same, you know?

>> Carlene Tinker: Yeah, it's also, in the last few days, we've had people who are foreigners of, you know, Middle Eastern background setting off bombs and so forth, so it kind of is fodder, you know, for this argument. So yeah, I agree with you. It's very difficult to say yes or no. It's a very complicated situation and a complicated answer. Okay, to wrap this up, Richard, I appreciate your sharing your stories, not only of yourself, but also of your family. We think of the Imamuras as being a very important part of Fresno State, as well as Fresno, California. And I'm glad that we've been able to talk a little bit to put in this oral history project so that others can hear your story. Now, is there anything that maybe I should have asked you that maybe you would like to add to honor your father, to continue the legacy of the Imamuras and the Judo sport?

>> Richard Imamura: You know, well, first of all, I appreciate you taking the time to talk and letting me share my information. But my father left a legacy in this community. And I think certain things that he really felt strongly about, he loved the sport of Judo, but I think because Judo actually is more of a philosophy than anything, and, you know, it's basically maximum efficiency with minimal effort. So being able to accomplish things without straining, you know? That's how you develop your skill. But my father's take on it was that, but also in order to develop your skill, to relentlessly practice and hone your skills so much, and putting 100% effort into what you're doing. And that's what he brought to the table. He believed that if you did more than the other person, that you will be rewarded. And you don't find that nowadays. People don't, they don't put their all into anything. And I see it with, I don't know, I see it with the current generation, is that, you know? And it's totally against what my father actually taught. So I think that--I think they would learn a lot. And a lot of the students did learn a

lot from my father. And they realized that if you put 100% into something, that you will benefit from it, and my father always, always, anybody, he said he was not a prejudice man except for one type of person. He said I'm prejudice to lazy people. That's what he said. And that went along with what he taught, that you have to put 100% your effort if you want to achieve something into that. And I think that's something that he felt very valuable as far as a lesson that he wanted to teach people. And I think that's what basically separated him, his passion, for what he did, and his passion for people. Because if you ever met my father, he would make you feel very welcome as long as you wanted to do Judo, I guess.

>> Carlene Tinker: That's very powerful. And then Richard, from just talking with you, you have been infected. You are--you've exemplified just exactly what your father was hoping for. And you are continuing teaching his classes and continuing his legacy. And that's very, very significant. I really thank you for being here today. Now, one closing thing. How would you like to be remembered?

>> Richard Imamura: I would like to be remembered--I'm a big believer in passion. And I want to make sure that people, people try to, I guess try to--I like to impart that passion to people. And it doesn't have to be Judo. It's whatever. But I firmly believe in giving--being a giving person, you know? You don't have to like everybody, but respect each other. And always, if you have time to give somebody advice, time to spend time with somebody, be positive towards somebody, take that opportunity. Because that's the best thing you could do, whatever the situation is.

>> Carlene Tinker: Thank you so much.

>> Richard Imamura: You're welcome.