

NARRATOR: Eric Andow

INTERVIEWER: Jan Mendenhall

DATE: July 11, 1999

JM: This interview is being conducted for the JACL Oral History Project of the Central California district under the auspices of Fresno State University. I'm Jan Mendenhall and I'll be conducting today's interview with Eric Andow. Today is July 11, 1999 in Livingston, California. If we could begin with background on your parents; could you share some of that?

EA: My father was born in 1883 in Gifu Prefecture and soon after that was adopted by a family in Aichi Ken. At a young age, he enlisted in the Japanese Navy; upon discharge, he headed for England. After a short stay in London, he headed for the United States. After working on Long Island for a short while, he headed for California, arriving here in July of 1910 to work at the Okuye farm—returned to Japan, uh in 1916—or 1915, to marry my mother.

My mother was born in Nagano Ken in 1898 and moved to Tokyo at a young age.

After getting married, my father and my mother returned to the Okuye ranch in 1916.

JM: And on the Okuye ranch, what did they do?

EA: My father was kind of a foreman of the place, and my mother helped in the feeding all the workers that were employed by the Okuye farm.

JM: And when were you born?

EA: I was born January 2, 1922.

JM: And brothers and sisters?

EA: I have four sisters. I'm—being the only son, and uh, I'm the fourth member of the family; I have three older sisters, and one younger sister.

JM: Can you share some of your experiences in growing up?

EA: Well, I grew up during the Depression Era, so times were pretty bad in those days, but we enjoyed whatever we had, and we had a lot of neighbors to play with and so the economic situation didn't—as youngsters it didn't bother us all that much.

JM: Because that's the situation you grew up in—

EA: Right.

JM: Nothing to relate it to.

EA: Right.

JM: What types of things would you do for entertainment?

EA: Well, we spent—like in the summer months we spent a good portion of our time, our leisure time I should say, swimming in the canals. There were several Japanese families within a half mile of my place, and almost every warm summer afternoon we were swimming in the canal. And occasionally, we were allowed to go to a movie or perhaps, play some sports.

JM: What type of sports did you play?

EA: Well we—I remember playing—I wasn't very adept at playing baseball, although I did play baseball and a certain amount of football and soccer and some competitive track events.

JM: So, these were all American type of sports that you played.

EA: Right.

JM: Okay, now, your parents—when they first came here they were with the Okuye Farm. How long were they—are they still there as you're growing up, or they changed occupations?

EA: My father bought a farm—I believe it was in 1918, and moved to the farm which was approximately a half mile from the Okuye farm. It was a dairy farm, and he had no experience in dairying, but he was wanting to get on his own and so he bought this farm. They farmed the dairy for—I believe it was a year, and it was getting to be too much of a problem, so my mother and father decided to quit the dairy business, and go into raising grapes.

JM: And was that successful for them?

EA: Well, it's hard to say successful, because it takes several years for grapes to mature to the point where you could harvest them and make any money. So, it was a difficult time for them.

JM: And growing up and—did you help out on the farm?

EA: When we were of age, which I would say we were possibly around eight or nine, we were already working on the farm, helping my parents.

JM: And how did you feel about that?

EA: Well, you do things that your parents tell you to do, naturally, but we realized that in order to get ahead we all had to pitch in, and so even at an early age we did work quite extensively out on the farm.

JM: And was that true for your sisters, also?

EA: Yes, it was. We didn't distinguish between boys and girls; we all worked out in the fields.

JM: Um, even though out in the fields there may not have been that distinction, in the family life, did you sense any difference between—being the only male child in the family?

EA: Well, my sisters always said that I was favored, but I didn't feel that that was the case.

JM: What other types of responsibilities did you have growing up?

EA: Well, we had our chores, you know, we used to have horses and it was my job to keep the horses fed every evening, and as I grew older I used to have to cut firewood for our stove indoors, and I had to attend to the bath, warming the bathwater in the evenings. And, oh, I can even remember having to wash clothes.

JM: Okay, it sounds like the family worked closely together. What types of values did your parents instill in you that were important to them?

EA: I think one of the primary concerns for my parents was that we all get an education. Of course, that was one of our primary goals. And naturally, they always wanted us to be honest and reliable and those are the kinds of things that my Dad especially used to emphasize.

JM: Coming from a different country, were there any values that they felt were important that were difficult for you now growing up in a different country?

EA: I can't say that their values were different from what was accepted as customary here in the country. Of course, my Dad always emphasized honesty and reliability. I think that's expected of any child, but in our family it was quite uh, emphatically emphasized.

JM: Okay. And was your family a part of a Japanese community?

EA: Being born in a rural area, you would think that we would be separated from others, but I was born and raised in the so-called "The Yamato Colony," which constituted about seventy, or so, families—Japanese families, and so our life was centered around whatever

the community did, primarily around our community church. Everything was centered—all our social life, actually, was centered around the community church.

JM: So, in terms of the community activities, you spoke of being in sports and the church was a strong foundation—any other activities that you can remember, as part of the community?

EA: I can't remember participating in these activities outside of the community. I know in the community there were baseball teams that were formed that played other communities, but I did not participate in any of those events.

JM: Was there a Japanese language school?

EA: There was for a time and my parents sent me there but I wasn't too interested in learning Japanese and so my parents kind of gave up. So after a year or so, I stopped going.

JM: But you spoke fluently at this time.

EA: I wouldn't say fluently, but you know, that was the only way we could converse with our parents so naturally, we picked up whatever Japanese we had to know to communicate with our parents.

JM: Was there anything else taught in the Japanese school besides language?

EA: Not that I recall—it was primarily learning Japanese, and that was it. But, of course for us kids it meant uh, uh—

JM: Extra school.

EA: No, it meant having some time to play with other kids in the neighborhood. That's what I used to look forward to, more than going to learn anything.

JM: In terms of your Japanese culture, what was passed down to you from your parents?

EA: I can't say anything that was specific from the culture itself, the Japanese culture itself, of course, they always said that the Japanese, they used the term "Gaman" which was expressed quite regularly in the family. You had to put up with a lot that you didn't want to put up with. And of course—

JM: Were you immersed in the food and—

EA: Well, yes. Our diet was primarily Japanese, and of course, I was raised on it and I still love Japanese food.

JM: How about holidays, Japanese holidays? Did you celebrate American and Japanese holidays? Or (inaudible)—

EA: I don't recall ever celebrating a Japanese holiday. I remember—I think in one location I remember that—I don't know what holiday it was, but it was a Japanese holiday we celebrated at the church, but I can't recall what it was for.

JM: So, it sounds as though your parents, in coming over to California wanted you to be immersed in the culture here, versus both cultures in celebrating, is that—

EA: Yes, definitely, they wanted us to always emphasize the fact that we're in America, and we're going to be Americans so, uh—

JM: They made it a question during the holidays, and um—

EA: Right, and with our—well, like the Fourth of July was kind of a great event for us kids, and of course, Thanksgiving and Christmas. But, New Year's was so-so. It wasn't celebrated with any great emphasis.

JM: In going back to the church that was one of the foundations for the community, what religion was that?

EA: That was the Methodist religion.

JM: So, there again, it wasn't the Buddhist religion?

EA: No. The Buddhist religion never took hold here in the community. There was only one church and everybody seemed to join that church.

JM: In looking back, do you—? That's interesting. Did you find that unusual that they wouldn't bring their religion?

EA: Yeah, in fact, a lot of people point out the fact that in most other Japanese communities, there is a Buddhist church with perhaps a Christian Protestant church. But in this community, we were an exception in that we only had one church.

JM: Um-hm, let's talk about school, a little bit. What school did you and your family go to?

EA: Of course, we went to grammar school in Cressey which was about a mile and a quarter from home, and we used to walk it every morning.

JM: And how did you feel about school?

EA: Well, I kind of looked forward to going to school, because you know, it means being with friends, and we certainly enjoyed whatever play we could find to participate with them.

JM: Did you find school challenging?

EA: I never did find these grammar schools or high school as challenging, of course we always strived to get good grades, and our parents always made it a point that they put an emphasis on that.

JM: So, did they take an active role in school?

EA: No, they never took an active role; they were always wanting to know how we were doing, primarily through our report cards, and as a rule I could bring home a fairly decent report card.

JM: So your remembrances of the school were positive, on the whole.

EA: I would say they were very positive.

JM: Do you remember how you were treated at school, and playmates, were they primarily Japanese?

EA: Interestingly, in my class, I think we had fourteen students, and out of the fourteen I think nine were Nisei. So, my close friends were all Niseis, although, you know we had some Caucasian friends, too.

JM: So did you all play together, as it was a small class?

EA: We always played together.

JM: Okay.

EA: It never occurred to us that there would be a difference in races, in that we always played together and didn't give it a second thought, actually, well, at least, while we were in grammar school.

JM: And would you have Caucasian friends over, and vice versa?

EA: My friends would come over; I had a couple of Caucasian friends that were in my class that would come over. But, they wouldn't come over for dinner or things like that, just for play, some in the afternoons, say.

JM: And would you ever be invited over to their house?

EA: I can't ever recall being invited. Of course, we would go over to our friend's place, but it wasn't that we were formally invited to a birthday party or anything like that. It was just to go there to play.

JM: So when you were in school was your identity of being Japanese-American, was that a strong identity, or—no, you were just—you were just one of the kids?

EA: I would say, at least in grammar school, we were “one of the kids.” I never really put any emphasis on somebody being Asian, or somebody being white.

JM: So, it’s the end of the school day, you and your sisters have dinner time—what would be a typical dinner conversation?

EA: Well, you know, we were fortunate in that respect. We loved to hear stories my dad used to tell, and after dinner, I remember many, many evenings we would just sit at the table for hours and listen to the kinds of stories that my dad had. He had all kinds of experience with having been in the Navy, and having traveled throughout the earth, and to England, and to New York. So, he had stories that I think in the process of telling them over again, he would embellish a little bit, but it still was very enjoyable to listen to. I used to be just—just—

JM: Captivated?

EA: Captivated by what he had to say.

JM: And did he encourage—to hear stories from you and your sisters?

EA: He was always interested in knowing what we might be doing in school, and naturally he wanted us to keep good grades, so he was trying to let us know that he was aware of what we were doing.

JM: Now, how about your Mother, did she also—

EA: Mother wasn’t quite as emphatic. I mean, she looked—she was always looking after our well-being. She made sure that we had clothes to wear, and food to eat. And so I can’t recall ever going really hungry, I—some kids used to tell me.

JM: Uh-huh. So, it sounds like dinner time and that conversation, that communication was really a key point in your family.

EA: I think so. We were always a close-knit family; we always ate together at supper time. Even—in fact, it just kind of carried over into our camp life when we went into Amache. We always made it a point to eat together as a family.

JM: If there was an issue, for any one of you—let's say something happened in school, or there was a challenge—was that also shared at the dinner table?

EA: I don't think our—we—I don't recall having to—making a point to share our problems with our parents, because usually there were little problems between kids, and we would be kind of embarrassed to have our parents come into our problems and trying to iron them out with other kids. We always solved our problems within our age group, I would say.

JM: So, would you talk to friends about problems?

EA: Oh, I would—we wouldn't talk about—I don't ever recall talking about family problems with our friends, but uh—

JM: Not necessarily family problems, but just problems with friends at school, or typical things.

EA: Oh, I think we did, I—yeah, and looking back, I kind of felt kind of sorry for some kids that kids made it a point to bully, which I don't recall having participated in it, but at least I didn't try to protect these kids. So, I never did speak up, and I'm sorry that I didn't.

JM: Um-hm. What were the teachers like? Were they all Caucasian?

EA: All my teachers were Caucasians; however, I never noticed any discrimination against us just because we were Japanese. In fact, we got to know our teachers quite well, and we used to visit with them even after we—I say we, my sisters and I—we used to visit with our teachers even after we got out of grammar school.

JM: Now you're a teenager, what lies ahead in those years, you know?

EA: As a teenager, I think work was our primary concern. I recall coming home from high school and I was going out to the field to work until it got dark. It was work, work, work. I didn't participate in any sports—I would have liked to, but I realized, too, that my parents were having a hard time, being the Depression years, that as much as I would have liked to have been doing something else, I always made it a point to go out in the fields and help.

JM: Was that pretty much the same for your friends, they were also—

EA: I wouldn't say—in fact I think our family probably worked harder than anybody—at least, in seeing what the neighbors were doing. Of course, we were a little bigger operator in that we owned a few more acres than most of the others, that uh—

JM: And are you still primarily, at this point, in grapes?

EA: Yes, in fact, during that time it was all grapes.

JM: And so that's very labor intensive.

EA: Right.

JM: And the high school you went to—that was which one?

EA: I went to Livingston High School being uh, part of the district of—it was almost a compulsory thing, because there wasn't any other high school to go to, actually.

JM: And in grammar school, it was over 50 percent Japanese in your particular class of fourteen. Was that a similar experience, in high school?

EA: In high school I would say, out of a student body of somewhere between 375 to 400, about 125 were Japanese. So, somewhere about a quarter of the student body was made up of Japanese.

JM: Yeah, and how were you feeling in high school about being Japanese-American? Was it the same sense that you had in grammar school?

EA: It was a little different in that when you get—when we got to high school you had a little bit more of an inferiority complex, primarily I guess, because we were physically smaller than Caucasians. And you know, they would be able to play football, but the Japanese kids would be able to play certain sports that didn't require the physical strength, like they had basketball teams, and I think the D team was made up of kids under so many pounds, and the D teams were usually made up of Japanese kids. And then, you move up to the C class, and maybe about 50 percent of the kids were Japanese, and then you get into the B class, and then maybe one or two. And you need to get to the A class, and the so-called prime teams were made primarily up of Caucasians.

JM: So there is that physical distinction. Was there any distinction in other ways of being Japanese, of feeling inferior in terms of academics?

EA: In academics, usually the Japanese were the ones on the honor rolls and school valedictorians, and I think there was a certain amount of resentment among Jap—I mean, among Caucasians, that Japanese kids did better academically in school.

JM: And in terms of the community now being a mixture of Japanese and Caucasians, what were your remembrances of how inclusive the community was in tolerance of different ethnic races?

EA: I think when we got to high school, the separation became more conspicuous. Japanese stuck with Japanese, and Caucasian stuck with their group and I noticed, too, that what few Mexicans were in the student body at Livingston High, they stuck together, too.

JM: So, it's almost like a silent rule.

EA: Yeah, right. You become self segregated, actually, is what happens.

JM: Were there any interracial dating?

EA: I can't recall of any interracial dating.

JM: And did you and your friends date in high school?

EA: In high school—I guess it's different now but, in our days, it never occurred to us, at least to many of us, to go out and date. I can't recall too many of the fellows doing that.

JM: So, it was basically go to school, go home and work. And, okay.

EA: That's right.

JM: Now is the church still a strong foundation in particularly in your family? Is it still playing a strong role during teenage years?

EA: Ah—My dad always was—I think my dad was a charter member of the church, and while we were growing up he was quite a devout churchgoer, but as we got into high school and gone down to college—more and more I would say he kind of not moved away, but didn't get involved in church as much he used to. And so naturally, we didn't get involved, as kids, we didn't get involved as much either.

JM: Since the family as you recall, was very cohesive as you were in elementary grades, and now you're in high school, do you still have those wonderful dinnertime conversations?

EA: I would say as we got into high school—of course, by the time I got into high school my older sister was going on to college—so then college involving a lot of homework, and high school, too, involved a lot more of homework than, well, being in grammar school—I would say those evening family dinner conversations weren't quite as frequent as they were when we were growing up, as grammar school kids.

JM: But, were they still a big part of your family?

EA: They were a big part still, because we always—my dad always wanted to know what was going on in school with us, and naturally, in those days we didn't have radio or television, so if we weren't studying, or doing chores, we had to do a lot of communicating with each other.

JM: And it's now your senior year in high school and education is very important to the whole family, so you're looking at college. What are you thinking, and what are you wanting, and what are your dreams at this point?

EA: Well, in growing up it was always emphasized that we had to go to college. I don't know that it was so much that we wanted to go, but that we had to go. So, we just took it as a matter of course that we were going to go. And naturally, that involves doing fairly well in high school, so I think that we put a lot of emphasis—or at least, my parents did put a lot of emphasis on getting good grades, so that there wouldn't be any problems going to college.

JM: And what did you want to do? What intrigued you?

EA: Well, you know, I've always been interested in airplanes. And my ambition was to go on to college and get an engineering degree in aeronautical engineering. Although, at that time, I was not aware of what all was involved, it just seemed like aeronautical engineering—you designed the shape of an airplane. But of course, in those days, being somewhat naïve, I thought well, you go to college and uh, draw pictures of airplanes and you can become an aeronautical engineer.

JM: And what was the catalyst for the fascination with airplanes, especially in a rural area?

EA: I don't know what it was but I think one of the primary things that turned me that way, were these dusters, the planes that used to come and dust fields. And they used to

fascinate me so much and I—and whenever there was a plane in the area that was dusting, I would hop on my bike and go out there and watch them.

JM: And were your parents encouraging about becoming an aeronautical engineer?

EA: No, uh, my parents never encouraged—I think they always thought I would eventually end up being a farmer. But, they never encouraged my becoming an aeronautical engineer.

JM: Were they encouraging in another major?

EA: Well, one thing is that they thought perhaps—well, during the time we were growing up, Nisei kids would go to college and get a college degree and yet, they couldn't find jobs in their field. And, uh—

JM: And why was that?

EA: It comes down to discrimination. And uh—

JM: So, were you hearing this back in the community—

EA: Well, you know my parents—I myself, didn't hear it, but then my parents were aware of it, and they thought that if it got to a point where the whole family had to go back to Japan—that was not in our plans in any way, but they thought that if it ever came to a point where we had to go to Japan, it would be quite advantageous to me if I had an engineering degree. That's why they encouraged me to go to Stanford, which was highly respected in Japan even during those days.

JM: So, did they see this as a ticket off of the farm?

EA: No, I don't think they looked at it as a ticket off the farm, because they wanted us to be American, and they always emphasized that, and that's why we didn't get involved in Japanese culture at all as we were growing up.

JM: So they saw this as: this is the American way, and you go to college.

EA: Yeah, if it ever got to a point where we couldn't make a living in the United States, another alternative might be Japan, but there were no plans, as such.

JM: So, from high school, then you went to—

EA: From high school, I went to Modesto Junior College; my parents certainly couldn't send me to Stanford—couldn't afford to send me to Stanford all four years, so, junior college served as kind of a stepping stone to the next move. In fact, all my sisters did the same thing. They went to junior college first, and then went on to the university.

JM: So, from Modesto you went to Stanford, and that's a major move. Modesto is fairly close to here; that would take you about, what, an hour in those days, to get to Modesto?

EA: In fact, when we were going to Modesto Junior College, there were about four of us Nisei in the same—graduated with the same class at Livingston High and so we all went to Modesto Junior College. And we used to drive up every day to—

JM: You would carpool.

EA: Yeah, with a carpool, naturally, we would take turns driving there. My sisters did the same thing.

JM: And your sisters—they all went on to college.

EA: Yes, three of my sisters graduated from University of California and my youngest sister, she was in college, in fact, she was at junior college when the war broke out. So, she couldn't finish. She couldn't go on to a university here, but when we got into camp she went on to Wesleyan University in Nebraska, and then transferred to Boston University, from which she eventually graduated.

JM: Well, starting at Stanford was a major change in your life, a brand new city—

EA: It was really—it—

JM: A residential experience on campus, is that where you were?

EA: Right, and so I had a rather unfortunate experience when I first went to Stanford. When I got on campus and entered my dormitory, somebody hollered, “Hey, Eric!” And I didn’t know that anybody would know me, and when I turned around and said, “Yes?” This fellow said, “I got a room with a roommate that’s a Jap.” Just like that. And he had found out. I didn’t know what kind of a roommate I was going to have, but he had found out that his roommate was going to be Japanese.

JM: And how did you feel?

EA: I—you can’t imagine how I felt.

JM: No.

EA: I didn’t even want to face him, actually. Because, at the time he just hollered to me and in front of, oh, I would say there were fifty people in the room, and he said, “I have to room with a Jap.” And um—

JM: And this was a room of Caucasian people in there (inaudible.)

EA: Yeah, all Caucasians, and he—and we were assigned a room together, and then he made it so miserable for me. He would turn the radio—and in fact, in the mornings, he was “hashing,” you know, working in one of the mess halls. He gets up early in the morning. He would turn the radio on real loud, early in the morning, and he would use everything that I had, and so it made it really uncomfortable for me. And he himself requested a room change, and they found a room for him in another room. And so, I roomed there for awhile by myself. Then the university found me a single room, which I was glad to move into.

Then this fellow—he was not from a well-to-do family. You can see he had no college whatsoever. But, he was going to—he got a football scholarship, but, he didn't make the A team, he made the junior varsity, and he wasn't much of a scholar to begin with I guess, but I don't know how he got to Stanford. Anyway, after one quarter, he got kicked out because of his grades. And ironically, after he moved out he never apologized to me, but he would approach me about certain things. In fact, he approached me once to borrow some money. Well, I wasn't going to lend him any money. But, he never apologized to me. Although, once he wanted to introduce me to his girlfriend, and she was the nicest gal, I thought, and I just met her that one time, but he made it a point to bring her to me and introduce me. (laughs) But, like I say, he never apologized to me. But, in one quarter they got rid of him, so I never have seen him since.

JM: Do you know where his anger or his prejudice came from, or why he—?

EA: I have no idea where it might have come from, I guess maybe the—of course, you know and in that period of time, Japan was being aggressive in China and Manchuria, and I guess that sort of thing was kind of overflowing to the U.S. newspapers, and he was getting a lot of that aggression from the—

JM: From the media.

EA: Yeah, from the media.

JM: How about the other students, your other classmates, did you sense a similar type of feeling?

EA: No, it's even—well, see I was—when Pearl Harbor came, I was in my first quarter at Stanford, and uh, we were just getting ready for our first quarter finals, and so it was a

miserable time. But other students treated me real well, and I had no other problems with the others.

JM: Did you make friends with them?

EA: I made friends with quite a few people, although, I've lost contact with them. Although, it was a different story, it's you know—well, maybe we can get back to this later, after when I went back to Stanford, because there was the interim of the war.

JM: So, let's talk about—Pearl Harbor just happened. What were you thinking when you heard this?

EA: Well, it was really—it was devastating. You became so conscious of your race.

JM: Your identity, yeah.

EA: Yeah, and I remember I was reading the paper and listening to the news, and here this news comes on the air and then I had to go to lunch, and it seemed to me that as I walked on campus everybody was looking at me, and I'm sure nobody was aware of what was going on, but it just felt that I was being looked at.

JM: Especially because there weren't a lot of Japanese on campus—

EA: I guess that's one reason, but, you know college kids as a whole are very liberal and they're (inaudible.) You don't find much discrimination on campus.

JM: Except, unfortunately, that very first incident.

EA: Yeah, of course we got rid of him fairly soon.

JM: Right. Were there thoughts about—concerns about your family? You're so many miles away from home now.

EA: Yes, because naturally, you know, you figure there's going to be some anti-Japanese feelings, and here I am in the midst of my finals, and I couldn't study, and then we would have blackouts. Every night was black out.

JM: Oh.

EA: All of the windows were covered over with black material.

JM: So it was physically—there was this reminder physically every minute of the day.

EA: Right. And then there would be false alarms. We would hear sirens going off in the night, and all of the lights would go out and so it was really a very unpleasant time of my life.

JM: Right, and with the paranoia throughout the land.

EA: Right.

JM: Yeah. And you were how old at this point as a junior?

EA: As a junior I was nineteen.

JM: And what happened now with the war and the relocation effort and being at school?

EA: Well, I wanted to come home. Here's another thing: we had to get permission to travel any distance, I think it was ten miles. So, me living on campus, I had to get permission to travel.

JM: So, anybody had to get permission.

EA: No, the Japanese.

JM: Just Japanese.

EA: Yeah, just Japanese. And I was wondering how I was going to get home, of course—

JM: Well, how did you feel about that? Now suddenly having to have permission just to go someplace?

EA: Well, it's a most uncomfortable feeling, now that you're always having this feeling that you're Japanese, so they're looking at you. But, I got permission to come home—I mean, to travel, but the problem was how to get home. I guess I could have taken the stage, but—oh, that's another thing, we used to call the buses “stages.”

JM: Okay.

EA: But a fellow that lived just two miles from here was attending Stanford, and he graduated from Livingston High School, so he offered me a ride home.

JM: Japanese?

EA: No, Caucasian.

JM: Caucasian.

EA: Yeah, Caucasian. And his mother was a school teacher and he was a couple of years younger than I was, but he liked being with the Japanese. He was attending the Japanese language school here in Livingston, and so he offered me a ride home because his father was coming up, and so—

JM: So that was a great relief.

EA: Yeah, it was really a relief.

JM: And this is after finals, though?

EA: This is after finals and just before Christmas, and I, myself, decided I wasn't going to come back for another quarter, even if I was allowed to. But when I got home and talked to my parents and at the time—

JM: Because you wanted to be home with your family?

EA: Yeah, I naturally, you know, you want to be home with the family at the time and help out, but my parents felt that—well, at that time there wasn't talk of evacuation yet, so

they talked me into going back for the winter quarter. So, I went back for the winter quarter. I believe—well, I don't know how I got back to the campus, but I got back and—but it was the most miserable quarter, with so much uncertainty.

JM: Right.

EA: And my friends were being drafted right and left and the kids were really—got to a point where they didn't give a damn.

JM: Right.

EA: And so kids were failing; the A students were getting much lower grades, and it was—

JM: It was such a time of uncertainty.

EA: It was very much so. And so in that kind of atmosphere, you just couldn't function properly, being a student.

JM: Right.

EA: And we had these blackouts and all of these blackouts and evacuation exercises, and so forth, and you think, we're doing all of this because of the Japanese, and so being Japanese, it made me more self conscious.

JM: Did you ever talk about that to any of your classmates? Did it ever come up in discussion?

EA: No it really didn't. I guess I really didn't want to discuss that. There was one other fellow, a Japanese fellow in my dormitory, and the second quarter—he tried to stick it out the second quarter, too. The fellow—he was from a well-to-do family, because he had his own car, you know, a brand new car. But I guess things got to him too, because his grades just plummeted, and he couldn't have gone back for the third quarter anyway.

JM: So, at what point now is relocation?

EA: Well, there still wasn't talk—oh yes, there was talk of relocation. Some of the Japanese farmers along the coast were being encouraged to relocate elsewhere. But we didn't think at the time that it would be such a mass evacuation of the Japanese, because they were dividing areas from which Japanese would have to leave and these areas are primarily along coasts, and so up until spring we didn't think that it would involve us. In fact, we got requests from families in the Bay Area that knew us, that wanted to move into our area. Fortunately, we didn't encourage them, because eventually we would have to move anyway.

JM: So when did you get the notification that your family would have to move into relocation?

EA: I don't recall exactly when, but I think we got an inkling of what might happen in early April, and—

JM: So you left school, then?

EA: No, I stuck it out for the whole quarter and I recall—I don't know what kind of permit Mabel had to get but she drove the car, the family car up to Stanford, and—

JM: And Mabel was your oldest sister?

EA: Yeah, and she came and picked up all my things and we came home. Then, in May it was pretty definite that we were going to be evacuated.

JM: And where were you relocated; where was the evacuation happening?

EA: Well the assembly center, which there were quite a number in California, but we were relocated to the one in Merced, at the Merced Fairgrounds.

JM: So you are having to try and put the farm in order, and turn to finding somebody to look after it?

EA: Yeah, you know, kind of a community thing is that—oh, the farm co-op kind of got some people to take care of the farms, and in our case, well, in our case too, we had started to build a home, a new home in about September of '41. And even at that time, we had to get permits for this, permits for that, because of the wartime situation. And we had gotten all of the materials to build the house with, and so we started building a home, and it was finished oh about the end of April. A brand new home, and so we thought well, we're going to have to be evacuated anyway, but let's move in. So we moved into an empty home just prior to—in fact, I think we lived in the home two weeks and then we had to evacuate.

JM: Did any of this seem real at the time?

EA: Well, you know, up until the very end I thought that it could never happen.

JM: Can't happen.

EA: It just wouldn't happen. But, it did, and we were—I was really devastated. I went into camp. When I went into camp, I know I laid out my cot, I think I lay on my cot for a whole week, not even wanting to go eat or do anything. But finally I faced up to the fact, that well, we're going to be here a while so I've got to do something.

JM: And what were your parents' demeanors during your stay?

EA: Well, like I say, being in a Japanese attitude is "Shigata ganai" which means "you can't help it, so you've got to put up with it."

JM: Were they or was your father a presence in terms of keeping the family united and—

EA: Yeah, my Dad, I've always known him to be a strong person, and he never expressed any weakness, at least, I guess he never did show it to the family. And so I would say—

JM: So, that was a great challenge to you just to be—

EA: Yeah, more than anything else, I think it was my father's strong character that kept us together and kept us sane, actually.

JM: Um-hm. So the whole family was able to be (inaudible) at the camp together.

EA: Yeah, my mother was rather emotional, but my Dad has always been strong and he always had a knack for planning things, and looking back on it now I have to really hand it to him being such a person.

JM: You could always take with you what you could carry, is that correct?

EA: Right. That is correct.

JM: Do you remember you had very little time to pull together your thoughts, and what you were going to take with you. Do you remember what you brought?

EA: Well, the only thing I can recall is that we wanted to take our clothes naturally, that was our primary concern, and you know, we had to leave things like the radio, and I can't recall taking anything else, other than clothes and maybe some toilet articles.

JM: How long were you at the assembly center; were you in Merced.

EA: We went into the assembly center, I think it was about May 12, and I'm not sure of the exact date, but the people that were going to run the farm while we were gone took us to the assembly center in our car. In fact, we had a relatively new car and they took us to the assembly center, and we were directed to these old tar—they were new, but they were just tar-paper shacks with only a piece of plywood dividing apartments, so on top of the clear opening all the way—so if somebody hollered at one end you can hear at the other end.

JM: So no privacy.

EA: No privacy whatsoever. It was really depressing.

JM: Especially being such a private culture, too.

EA: It was the most depressing experience I ever had.

JM: And you were there how long?

EA: They started moving people out—we went there in may, and they started moving people out to the concentration camp in Amache, Colorado.

JM: So when did you know you'd be going to Colorado?

EA: We started hearing rumors I think it was just prior to when they started moving people out, and I think two of my sisters volunteered to go with the first group to get the camp ready. They wanted to have a certain kind of people to go there before the others and organize things. So, I think, Mike and Jake I think, went ahead.

JM: So that's difficult because now the family's being—even though you know you're going to be together—

EA: Yes.

JM: Now you're being divided.

EA: Well, in a way, we heard that the relocation camps or the concentration camps were much better than the facilities we had, in Colorado so—I mean, Merced, so we were kind of looking forward to going.

JM: So it sounds like the most opportunities for communication was through the rumor mill, somebody knows something—

EA: Oh, yes.

JM: There was no official—

EA: Rarely ever hear it official news, it was always rumors, and you could hear the wildest kind of rumors.

JM: (laughs) Which adds to the feeling of uncertainty.

EA: Yeah, it did add to the uh—right. And then I got a job. Well, then I had to do something in camp to keep me occupied so I joined the fire department, and being a member of the fire department I didn't leave the assembly center until the last group. So, I think we went on—my two sisters went first, and then I think, my parents, and then Mabel and Chow(??) went with another group, and then I went with the last group.

JM: And there are loyalty questions twenty-seven and twenty-eight.

EA: Yes, that raised a lot of controversy in our camp. At first, we were instructed not to answer those questions.

JM: Instructed by whom?

EA: Oh, by the people in our so-called blocks, and um, because we heard rumors that if you signed, if you said “yes” on both of them, it means you were going to volunteer for the Army. We heard—I don't know if we ever—I never knew it for a fact, or not, but if you initially signed “yes” on both of them, then they handed you a volunteer-for-the-army application. I've never known that to be a fact, but that's what the rumor was, and there was—after a lot of discussion, I finally signed “yes” on both. But they never handed me a volunteer application, so I guess that rumor was untrue, but—

JM: And did you make that choice yourself?

EA: Well, you know, you're among colleagues, and you kind of wonder what they are going to do, so I think all of my friends did sign “yes, yes.”

JM: Okay, and now through this, how are you feeling about your Japanese identity?

EA: Well, up until this point you feel, how can they question your—

JM: Loyalty.

EA: Loyalty. But when we got questionnaires like that I started to wonder what was happening. I mean, why could they question our loyalty, when we'd never done anything contrary to being loyal to the U.S. But seeing things simmer down, and then we started hearing—well, we started hearing not rumors, but the facts that the FBI were clearing certain people to leave camp if they applied. So, naturally, I was so anxious to leave that I applied, and in June I guess of '43, I got my permission to leave camp.

JM: And by camp, meaning Amache?

EA: Amache.

JM: Okay.

EA: And then at that time, I thought, oh, good thing I answered “yes, yes” on most of my questions. So uh, well actually Chow(??) left to go to school.

JM: That's your youngest sister.

EA: Yeah, my youngest sister. She was helped by the Quakers and was able to go on to college. But I never had any plans on wanting to go to college from camp, because I wanted to go back to Stanford and finish there.

JM: What was camp life like?

EA: It was really depressing, but you get to a point where you know you're going to have to put up with it. So I joined—I applied for a job at the engineering department and uh, at least to keep myself occupied, and at least I didn't go berserk or anything knowing that at least I got to come and do to keep me occupied and not think about being evacuated all of the time.

JM: So this would be out of camp arose the Japanese community—

EA: Pardon?

JM: Out of camp arose the Japanese community, where there were different functions to participate in.

EA: Right, uh the camp—

JM: Like in the engineering department.

EA: Yeah, camp itself was self-sufficient in that they used people that were in the camp to keep the thing going.

JM: Did you serve in the Armed Forces?

EA: Yes uh, well this—there is a little bit more to that, in that I got permission to leave camp in June of '43, and I heard that Cincinnati might be a good destination where I could find a job. So, in fact, several of us applied to leave, and a couple of the fellows in the engineering department got their permission to leave a couple of days before I did, so they moved, went on to Cleveland—I mean Cincinnati to a Quaker's hostel.

And then Mabel got her permit to leave, so Mabel and I left camp together, and she had a friend. She was going to Boston with her friend, and I was going to Cincinnati with my friend. Then, on the train we had a real uncomfortable situation, and some drunk saw me and he was just as drunk as anything, and he came up to me and called me “a Jap” and said all kinds of—and I was sitting next to the window, and then there was a G.I. in uniform sitting right next to me, and he got up, picked that guy up and took him out (laughs) and I don't know where he put him but he—so I was real grateful to him. But that was the only unpleasant experience I had after leaving camp. I went to Cincinnati and I couldn't find any work there, at least, something I wanted to do.

So we heard that Cleveland was—being an industrial town it's an easier place to find a decent job—so I went on to Cleveland, and they had a WRA office there and they

had reserved hotel rooms for us evacuees, at a hotel. And so I went up there and it wasn't long before I found something to do. And my two friends that had gone to Cincinnati prior to my leaving, they came with me, and they went to Cleveland, too, and then so one of them—he and I roomed together, and he worked elsewhere, but I worked in a war plant. He was working—well, it was kind of a war plant in that they were making model airplanes, and they were using these to familiarize observers as to what the enemy airplanes looked like and what friendly airplanes looked like.

JM: Okay, it's almost ironic that you (inaudible.)

EA: Right, it's really ironic that here I couldn't go back to California, but I go to Cleveland and I get to work in a defense plant, and no questions asked. But, then after I worked there awhile, an FBI agent came to see me, and he had the whole history on me.

JM: Oh.

EA: So they made it a point to come to Cressey—

JM: Wow.

EA: And talk to the schoolteachers and talk to the neighbors. I was surprised how extensive the—

JM: The dossier on everybody is—

EA: Yeah, and then he didn't say much but after he left, well, my boss calls me in and he says, uh—

JM: Oh, so he approaches you at the plant?

EA: Yeah, at the plant, after I started. They didn't give me a clearance before. I mean, they gave me a clearance to get out of camp—

JM: Um-hm.

EA: But they didn't give me a clearance to work in a defense plant. But after the interview—the FBI agent didn't say much of anything, just asked me these questions to confirm the information that he had on me, but our boss called me in and he says—well, we were making B-25 wheels, and we weren't actually making them but we were processing them. It wasn't a very big plant, but my boss calls me in and he says, "You know, we're processing these B-25 bomber wheels, but don't count how many we do a day." And it never occurred to me to even count as to how many we were doing in a day, but then when he told me that, then you become aware of the fact that you're doing these things, and even if you aren't counting them you know. But, actually, I wasn't going to give out that kind of information to anybody, so it didn't matter. But then, it's really a funny thing when you think about it.

JM: Um-hm. Did the chatter of your fellow workers change after the FBI agent came?

EA: Well, from the very start they were really good to me. I mean, I was surprised. Of course it's interesting too, because one of the fellows that I worked with was a naturalized German.

JM: Um-hm.

EA: And then another one, he was American born, but he was Hungarian.

JM: Um-hm.

EA: So, when I went there it was a big joke. They said, "Oh now the Axis is complete."

JM: (Laughs)

EA: And so I got along with them real well.

JM: Yes, it's a different tolerance.

EA: Yeah, and in fact there was one family—that I got to know the whole family. In fact, when I was down in Irvine, I went to see their son, because he had come to visit me while we were here.

JM: Um-hm.

EA: Fortunately, I found this job, but it was another problem to find a place to live, and you see these ads in the paper, so you go see the apartment and right away when they see you, they'd say, "Oh, the apartment's been rented." I don't know how many times—

JM: Well, your last name, being Andow, doesn't—

EA: Yeah, that doesn't give me away—

JM: Until they see you.

EA: Until they see me. And always, "Oh the apartment has just been rented."

JM: I'm interested. What type of questions was the FBI wanting to confirm?

EA: Well, my education, and what kind of organizations I was ever a member of and gee, I think they even asked me what kind of guns I owned. They ask you a lot of questions, but nothing came of it. I guess I got a clean bill of health, so—but my Cleveland experience was—I never, while I was in Cleveland, I never once was discriminated against. I walked into certain restaurants, and always was served.

The only unpleasantness I had was I was working in the heart—our factory was in the heart of the black town. I mean, everywhere—if you go there, it's almost 100 percent black. Well, from my bus stop to the plant was about a half a block. So I would walk this distance, and wait at the corner for the bus to come, and these teenage black kids would see me and they would never tell me to my face, but as they would go by you can hear them saying things like, "Oh, why doesn't that Jap go back to where he came from?"

And all kinds of disparaging remarks. Usually it involved teenagers, and they would deliberately run into me—

JM: Um-hm.

EA: And think it's funny. And then they would be walking down the street, and maybe three, four kids, and even girls, then they would push the outside girl against, and then the girl would run into me. And they thought it was so funny. But naturally all I could do was ignore them.

JM: Um-hm.

EA: But it was interesting in that—well maybe this is another story that we can continue later. But anyway, I worked in Cleveland for just about a year. Then, I got drafted into the service on—forgot what it was. I think it was in May of '44.

JM: You received this notice in the mail?

EA: No, May of '44, yeah. Well, that's the funny part of it, too, because prior to that I got a letter from the draft board that says, "Your deferment has been denied." Well, I didn't apply for any deferment. If they drafted me, I was willing to go because kids my age in the plant were being drafted and we were seeing them go, and I didn't want to feel that uh, I wouldn't be drafted because of my race. But, anyway I got this letter from the draft board saying that my deferment was deferred, application for deferment was deferred. I mean, uh, denied.

JM: Denied.

EA: And I thought it was kind of funny, and then I was talking to my boss and he says, "Well, you're a defense worker, so we put in an application for deferment for you."

JM: Oh.

EA: It never occurred to me—he did ask me—

JM: (inaudible phrase, simultaneous talking)

EA: He did ask me where or at what draft board I was registered with, and so this took me by surprise, and then a few days later I get a notice to appear for my physical. So I had to go to Indianapolis, Indiana and report to Benjamin Harrison [Fort Benjamin Harrison.]

When I reported they gave me a physical and they classified me 1A and put me on a so-called reserve list, and said, “We’re going to send you back until you uh—“

JM: Recall you back to duty.

EA: Yeah, and so I knew what that meant. They were going to recall me when the 442 was ready for replacements, because it was happening to others.

JM: Okay, and at that point, the 442 was the only um, group that the Japanese—or military force that the Japanese could belong to?

EA: Well, I guess that’s true because while I was in Cleveland I applied for the Air Force.

JM: Oh.

EA: And naturally I had to tell them in my letter, in my application, that I was Japanese. Well, right away they send you back a letter saying, well, we have this 442 thing.

JM: Oh, okay.

EA: So, they don’t say, “We won’t accept you.” They just say, “Well, there’s this outfit that’s being formed,” and so forth.

JM: Right.

EA: And then when I got that letter from—in fact, I took that letter. I don’t know where it is now. So, I thought well I’ll volunteer for the Coast Guard, because there are always recruiting stations around the Coast Guard. There were a lot of Coast Guard recruiting

stations, so I went there and they wouldn't even consider me at all—wouldn't even give me an application, if I remember correctly. But anyway—

JM: What were you hearing about the 442?

EA: Well, naturally we were quite interested—well, I didn't like the idea of being segregated. I didn't like the outfit being segregated. I mean, it just didn't seem right to me.

JM: And what reasons were they—or were you given a reason why?

EA: No, I figured well, it's the same old thing. Being Japanese, they're suspicious of us, and will put us in a group where they can keep an eye on us, and so initially when I heard that there was being a separate unit being formed for just the Niseis alone, I resented it because, just like the blacks, you know, being discriminated against. But this is another story, but in time I thought, gee what a good idea, being in a separate unit.

JM: And why was that?

EA: Pardon?

JM: And why was that?

EA: Because we were picked on as a group and we could—

JM: Prove—

EA: Prove ourselves as a group. You know, if I were one individual in another outfit, say oh, a Caucasian outfit, I couldn't prove myself as—I could as an individual, but not as a Japanese.

JM: So this was very important to you, to prove your loyalty.

EA: Yes, at the time I thought so. People after the war have asked me, "Isn't it ironic that you were put in a concentration camp, and yet you were drafted?" And I said, no I didn't feel that it was. I felt that it was my duty because I was working the defense plant, and all the

young fellows I was working with were being drafted. So I didn't want to be excluded from that group. Of course, if I were in camp and I got drafted maybe I would have had a different outlook on it. But I remember going to a physical and I was so concerned. I wanted to be sure that I passed my physical. But anyway after being put on reserve—I was working at the time so I went to my boss and told him, "I haven't been drafted into the Army yet, but I know I'm going to be. So I'm going to go visit with my parents in Connecticut."

JM: Okay, so they have done this interim relocation to Connecticut.

EA: Yeah. Oh, that's another story, but after I left camp— Let's see my—I think Mabel and I were—after Chow(??) went, Mabel and I went and my other two sisters went, left camp, and then my parents were anxious to leave camp, too. So they got their permit to leave, got hold of one I think it was about October of '44, and so—no, '43, this other camp '43-44. So it's about October '43, I think they left camp, and they went to Boston to live with Mabel, and she arranged for them to stay at a Quakers' hospital.

And from there, they were offered a job in Connecticut to work on a farm, and so by then all of us were then—a year and a half after being evacuated, we were all on the outside again. And my parents worked for this Quaker family in Connecticut, and they were the nicest people, about the nicest kind of people you could imagine. My father kind of helped them out. They called it a farm, but it was just a few acres where you raised vegetables and mother helped in the house.

JM: Okay, sort of redeemed your faith in their kind.

EA: Really, that was really a nice experience, having met such nice people and finding out how nice people could be, I guess. And so as soon as I got put on the reserve list I knew I

would be called back into the service, so I quit my job and went to Connecticut, and I had worked for this company for just about a year. By the time I left, there were quite a few evacuees who had moved into Cleveland, and this place where I lived, it wasn't a—it was a kind of a—an Italian lady had converted two homes into apartment units, and when I went to apply for the apartment she had advertised, she didn't seem to have second thoughts about it, about my roommate and I being Japanese, and she said, "Yeah," she'd rent us the room. And then she found out that we paid rent every week on time and we kept our apartment clean, and so before a month's time she asked me, "Do you know any other Japanese that might be interested?" And so another couple that my roommate worked with, he was married, came and lived in one of the apartments, and I don't know how many units she had. She must've had about seven or eight units.

JM: But they all became—

EA: They all became Nisei. There were two houses that were all Nisei.

JM: Which was also nice for you to have other Nisei around—

EA: Yeah, and I was really appreciative to her, and she said, "You know, I'm of Italian"—or her name was Senate(?) so she wasn't married to an Italian, but she said, "You know, my parents came here as immigrants, and when they first came they were so discriminated against, that I felt that I wanted to help."

JM: Oh.

EA: And so she was real good about it. But, from Cleveland I went on to Connecticut and stayed with my folks in Connecticut, and they had their own home. This family had a—what they called a country home, I guess they called it. But it was in a real nice neighborhood, rolling hills and trees all around and—

JM: Which was so special coming out of the camp life, to have again some semblance of—

EA: Yeah, and this was out in the county where there were so many trees you couldn't hardly see that there were neighbors, and the neighbors were all nice, and so I think I worked there for six weeks and then I got my notice to report.

JM: And how did your parents feel about you being drafted?

EA: Oh, my mother— (pause in recording)

To continue, I visited with my parents and I was there for six weeks, and then I got a notice to report for duty so I went to Fort Devens, Massachusetts and from there—oh, I stayed at Fort Devens for about another six weeks, and then they assigned me to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. This was, I think, was about the early part of September, and from—I trained at Shelby for thirteen weeks and it was December of '44 that we were told we would be going overseas. Even up until that point, we didn't know we were going as a replacement for the 442, but we knew darn well that was going to be the case.

But we left New York harbor, I think it was about the last day in December of '44. And it took us ten days to get to Glasgow, Scotland, and from Glasgow we went to the English Channel, I believe it was Dover, from Dover we went to Sherberg, from Sherberg we went to France—I mean, from Sherberg we went to Marseille, and from Marseille we went to the French Riviera. And I was assigned to Cannon Company 442, Regimental Combat Team, with six other—five other people. Fortunately, my name was Andow, so being toward the top of the alphabet I was picked to join Cannon Company, which was one of the best things that ever happened to me because it kept me away from the heat of the battle, in that I joined an October unit, which usually that is behind the infantry, who do all the dirty work.

Oh, my “baptism of fire” occurred the very day I joined the company. I was taken to my company, and introduced to my captain, and as I was being introduced to my captain I could hear shells coming over the mountain and landing a couple of blocks behind us. So, I got really anxious. I was wondering why everybody just stood around and not taking cover, and finally the captain says, “Oh, we don’t have to be concerned because we’re behind a mountain here, and the shells will land behind us. They don’t go straight up and then come right straight down.”

And then from there I was assigned to one of the gun sections, and went way up into the mountains above the French Riviera.

JM: As you were leaving—as you were leaving the US did you think this may be the last time I see my family; this may be the last time I—just with the realities of war, was that heavy on your mind?

EA: I think that’s a concern of any G.I. that was going overseas. Uh, you kind of—there’s a certain amount of excitement, knowing you are going into battle, and yet you’re always concerned about survival. Of course, in a battle situation you have a lot of different kinds of ideas.

JM: The captain, or the officers that you served under—were they all Caucasian?

EA: The commanding officer of our company is a captain, and he was Caucasian. We had two Nisei lieutenants, and I think we had two Caucasian lieutenants.

JM: And how did they treat the troops?

EA: When you’re overseas, everybody is the same. I mean, it doesn’t make any difference as to whether you’re small or big, or Asian or black. I think that everyone is treated equally, within a company, anyway.

JM: Can you share with us some of your experiences with being in Cannon Company?

EA: Well, like I say, I was fortunate in that I never did get into the heat of battle, and that we were always behind the infantry. The infantry always was ahead of us, and we never moved into area that our truck couldn't go. So, we each had sleeping bags and wherever we were parked, we could sleep in the truck or anyway, we had more of the comforts that the infantrymen didn't have.

JM: You were actually wounded during your service.

EA: I wasn't wounded, as such, from enemy action.

JM: Injured.

EA: Yeah, I was injured. That's a better way to put it, in that we had the Germans on the run in the last push and we would park our gun in one position at night, and during the day we would fire and then at night, under the cover of darkness we would move up to our next position, which was moving forward. And one night, it was pitch black, and I mean it was black. And since we're moving at night, and Germans are all around us on the hills covering all the roads leading through the mountains, we were traveling in convoy. One was the—these slit lights that were on the trucks, but unfortunately on one of the curves, our driver missed the curve and went over an embankment. And I happened to be riding in the back with I don't know how many tons of shells and camouflage net and when the truck turned over, all that ammunition fell on top of me.

JM: Anything else from the war days?

EA: I was sent to an Army hospital in Digormo(?) Italy, and this was in May, and during my stay, my ten week stay at the hospital, the war ended. The war in Europe ended, and President Roosevelt died, and Vice President Truman became president. And I believe it

was late June, after being in the hospital ten weeks that they released me to go rejoin my company.

JM: And when were you discharged from the Army?

EA: I was discharged on July 27, 1946. I was called into active duty, July 27, 1944, so exactly two years, to the day.

JM: The Cannon Company has stayed or is a very close-knit company, where you have reunions, and are able to see one another, and when the group gets together, do you talk about the bonding experience, at all?

EA: We rarely talk about our war experiences. We talk about experiences we had with each other, but rarely about the war itself.

JM: So the war has ended, you've been discharged, and what lies next for you?

EA: Well, I got discharged in New Jersey, and I headed for home and I arrived here in August of '46. I was intending to come back and farm, in fact when I got home I had decided that I wasn't going to go back to finish my college education but I wanted to be my own boss and start farming the family farm. However, my parents stated that since four of my sisters had already gotten their college degrees, it was paramount that I get my degree, too. So, I didn't argue with them, and I went back to college.

I think, looking back on it, I'm sure glad I did. I met some nice people there. After going back, I roomed with three veterans and there's no—although one was a Pacific war veteran—no indication of any animosity directed to me, in fact we're all—we became very good friends.

JM: So, such a contrast. When you leave Stanford, it's a very strong identity of being Japanese and the uncertainty of what's going to happen, and then you come back now as a veteran—a much different feeling.

EA: I think it was because of the veterans themselves that it was an entirely different atmosphere on campus. We noticed that the freshman group which didn't experience war was entirely different from the more mature attitude of the veterans.

JM: So you finished your studies at Stanford.

EA: I finished—

JM: In engineering.

EA: Right. I got my B.S. in Engineering, in June of '48, and it was my intention to come back and take over the family farm.

JM: So any regrets about your original dream of wanting to be an aeronautical engineer?

EA: No, by the time I did my time in the Army, my goals in life were completely changed. More than anything, I think I wanted to be my own boss, and do my own thing. Trying to become a millionaire, or anything like that, which I would have liked to have done prior to war didn't hardly occur to me after the war.

JM: So you graduate from Stanford, you return to the farm, and what is the community like. And your family returning to the farm—was the farm as they knew it, still here?

EA: In essence, the farm was still here and in tact, but fortunately we had some good people taking care of it, so—although we lost economically, the farm itself was in pretty good shape when we came back.

JM: Just one final note on Stanford. Could you share with us the award that you received many years later from Stanford? Or the recognition?

EA: Uh, I wouldn't exactly call it an award, but I guess it's recognition of the Nisei students that were there on campus at the outset of the war. There were apparently about twenty-one of us on campus at the time, and when we did have our reunion, which was sponsored by the Japanese-American students that were on campus at the time, which was in 1992, I believe it was. We felt quite honored to be recognized as having stuck it out, so to speak on campus. It was—we really felt good about it.

JM: And the president of the university—

EA: Yes, I got to meet the president of the university at the time, and I met a bunch of nice students, wonderful people.

JM: Now we're back on the farm, and you have taken over the farm, is that correct, or are you farming with your father?

EA: Well, initially I was farming with my father, which occurred in about 1950, but he was getting on in years, so in essence I took over the whole operation in 1952.

JM: And when did you get married, and when did you start a family?

EA: I met my wife—when was it—I think it was in the summer of '51, and it didn't take us long before we decided that we were going to get married, and we got married on April 19, 1952.

JM: And her name is—?

EA: Mary, her maiden name: Mary Suzuki.

JM: And is she from the community or how did you meet?

EA: No, she was born and raised in San Francisco and at the time I met her, she lived in Redwood City.

JM: So quite a change for her to come to from there.

EA: Yes, there was some concern on my part in that a city girl coming to live in the country, but I was surprised how rapidly she adapted to this country life. Now, I think she wouldn't give it up for anything.

JM: And you have how many children?

EA: We have two children, a son, Larry and a daughter, Janet.

JM: And are they, either one of them part of the Japanese-American community?

EA: I would say my daughter, since she came back and she and her husband are going to operate the family farm, and this community still being somewhat a Japanese community, I would say that yes, she will be a part of the Japanese community. My son, on the other hand, is a banker in San Francisco, and lives in San Rafael and he's far removed from the Japanese community, as such. Although, I understand he is a member of the Japanese-American Citizen League. He is married to a Caucasian girl which makes more of a situation where he wouldn't be involved with the Japanese community.

JM: And as you were raising the family, did you raise them in a Japanese culture? Did you pass down that part of the heritage?

EA: I think, unfortunately, I think that's something that my wife and I should have done, because when we were growing up we wanted to distance ourselves from anything Japanese. But as we grew older and became aware of our Japanese heritage, we came to appreciate what the Japanese culture has to offer. And now I look back on it and I think well gee, it would have been nice if we would have handed down some of that to our children, which we did not.

JM: And in particular, what would you have like to have handed down?

EA: Well, I think that for me, I would think that I love Japanese food, so along that line, I think that's something that we should have made our children more aware of, but there are a lot of things like Japanese art—and not so much music, which I'm not too involved with, but I think that would've been nice, too. And there are other things that the Japanese are quite known for, perhaps something like the fact that we are referred to as the Yamato minority. I'm kind of proud of the fact that we've been given that moniker. But, I think that with our children it isn't all that important.

JM: And why do you think that's so?

EA: Because I think, growing up, our children were never too conscious of the fact that they were Japanese. Their friends were Caucasian, like our son—I remember we said, “Don't you have a Japanese student in your class?” And he wasn't even aware that such a person even existed, although, we were aware, because we saw the name in some newspaper.

JM: Schooling and education were very important to your parents, and passing down that to you, and equally so for you and your children?

EA: Could you—

JM: The importance of education?

EA: Well, always, our primary focus was education, and we handed down that feeling, I think, to our children.

JM: And—I'm sorry.

EA: We always insisted that—well, when our children were growing up, from the very years that they could comprehend the fact that there was such a thing as college, they knew they were headed for college.

JM: And how did they do in school?

EA: I would say my children did very well in school.

JM: You've gone through so many different experiences, and particularly the war experience, and your relocation. Have you passed—have you shared that with your children?

EA: I really haven't shared much of my war experience, or even the evacuation, I think we should've made our children a little bit more aware of what we went through during the war, but we were so depressed with the thought of evacuation and so forth, that we didn't want to burden our children with our experiences.

JM: The Japanese-American community that you live in has evolved, and do you still feel a part of that?

EA: Uh, I think I feel more Japanese now than I did when I was growing up as a youngster.

JM: Oh.

EA: I think there are a lot of things that the Japanese could be proud of—when you look at the world, we used to disassociate ourselves from Japan, and maybe not so much from the Japanese people, but from Japan. But, when you see what Japan has accomplished, you kind of get a certain amount of pride in knowing that that's where our heritage is.

JM: By being a part of the 442, I know many future—the next generations, the Sansei, and generations beyond that feel a great deal of gratitude that it was because of the patriotism and serving in the 442 that allowed the feeling that we just discussed about now being proud of being Japanese. Do you feel that's true, that you've paved the way for the next generation?

EA: I believe very much so, that that's the case. Of course, I think in time we would have been readily accepted even if we didn't have the 442, but I think the 442 was kind of a

stepping stone toward that direction. I think our assimilation into the American lifestyle came about more rapidly because of the 442.

JM: It accelerated that.

EA: Right, accelerated that process.

JM: Okay. Well, moving now into today, into—what are the things that you're especially proud of, that makes you happy?

EA: Well, for instance, I would say that my primary pride would involve my children and my grandchildren.

JM: And do you have family living close to you?

EA: Yes, I have my daughter and my son-in-law, and two of my grandchildren living right next door to me, which makes it very, very nice.

JM: And on the opposite side of the coin, what are some of the things that keep you awake at night?

EA: Well, it's a funny thing, but until I was—well, this is not keeping me awake so much at night, but the evacuation and all the bad experience that went with it used to cause me many nights of nightmares.

JM: Oh.

EA: It hasn't occurred in—I would say the last three years. But, it would always be a dream where my wife and I—although, I didn't know my wife in camp, since I didn't meet her until after the war, but always had this nightmare about being in camp with my wife and my children being on the outside, and my not being able to see my children. I don't know why that is, but that nightmare has occurred to me more often—

JM: And up until fairly recently, too. We're talking three years.

EA: Yes, I would say it hasn't happened in the last three years.

JM: Redress and reparation: what are your feelings on that subject?

EA: Well, when the redress thing began I wasn't too concerned one way or another. The monetary part of it really didn't concern me much, because I figured, well, we can do without it. And since my wife and I have always been frugal with our expenses, and we manage to invest quite a bit, so yes, we can live quite comfortably on what we have. But, it meant a lot to me in—the apology part of it I think meant more to me than the financial compensation that we got.

JM: So it was almost like a closure to you at that time?

EA: Yes, I would say, maybe not full closure, but I would say it was a direction towards closure.

JM: Um-hm. And what is still left, if that's not full closure, might I ask?

EA: Well, you still read in the papers about anti-minority activity and sometimes it involves Japanese, and that kind of thing still bothers me. I don't know what can be done to eliminate that, but I guess with human nature, that's not going to ever be eliminated.

JM: What role do you see the Japanese-American playing in society and maybe to that point?

EA: I think we're in such a small minority, that we, as an individual, can't do all that much, although we have such people such as Robert Matsui and Dan Inouye and some others that have made an influence in America, but I think we're such a small minority that we—within our minority we can do quite a bit for each other, but I can't see where we would be too much of an impression on the rest of the public.

JM: If you could give advice to this generation, the youth of today, what would that be?

EA: Well, I realize the youth of today are considerably different from the way we grew up, but I think to become a homogenous society within the whole community is something that we should strive for. I don't think there should be—that there has to be select groups and—of course, I realize that many people could help themselves, which they do not do. On the other hand, I think the Japanese have done quite well in helping themselves, to a point where—I read some statistics the other day where the Japanese—average salary of the Japanese in this country is higher than the average salary of any other racial group.

JM: So through all the adversity, and in a matter of a couple of generations—

EA: Yeah, I would say we have to give each other a slap on the back. I think we did quite well.

JM: Is there anything else that you'd like to share? You've had a fascinating life, and—

EA: Well, I can't say my life was fascinating, uh, I think through the years, as I look back and I think, Gee all the people I have met that perhaps in some ways have influenced my life—I'm proud of the fact that I have some real good friends. I can't say that I wanted it to be any different. I would say that I'm quite happy with how things turned out.

JM: All right, well if there's nothing else, that completes this interview. Thank you, very much.

END OF INTERVIEW