

NARRATOR: FRANCES TASHIMA

INTERVIEWER: JAMES KIRIHARA

DATE: August 25, 1999

JK: A, this is an interview with Frances Tashima, a Nisei woman, a Nisei woman. This interview is taking place in the interviewee's home in Livingston, California. The date is August 25, 1999. The project is being carried out by Livingston Merced Chapter of the JACL which is working in on a project sponsored by Central District of the JACL. This project is being done through the Cal State Fresno Sociology Department and will be used by students at Cal State in their research. All right, now I'll begin by asking you questions and just answer them as well as you remember and if you don't remember anything, that's fine, okay? All right, we'll start with the life before WWII and the family and home life. When and where were you born?

FT: Well, I was born March 14, 1921 in Turlock Emanuel Hospital, Stanislaus County.

JK: What was the date of the birth?

FT: March 14.

JK: Okay, at that time where did the family live?

FT: My parents we lived, I mean my parents lived in Livingston about a quarter of a mile, no, about a half mile from town. My father had a farm.

JK: And that was on Walnut then?

FT: Walnut, currently called Walnut Avenue.

JK: And a what—what kind of a farm was it?

FT: Grapes, peaches, and when he dug up the peaches, he rented it out for potatoes.

JK: Okay, where did your father come from?

FT: He came from Japan from the, I guess it's lead to be like a county, Hiyogo, near Kobe.

JK: And when he arrived in the US, did he come immediately to Livingston, or did he—?

FT: Yes, he came directly to Livingston because he had company, his uncle's family from Japan, and because his uncle had already established himself in Livingston and had a home waiting for his family, so he came along with them.

JK: Now when did your mother come to the US.?

FT: My mother came, that's about 1917 or 1918. And she, you know, my father brought her to live at his home that he already built and was waiting for her.

JK: How many, oh no, give us a little background of your mother.

FT: Well, my mother was born in Niia-ken. I forgot the name of the town. We visited it quite a few years ago when we went to Japan for a short trip. And she is one of the women who was fortunate to get what they called a college education then and I think it was through a Christian University because she would recall her dorm days and just like over here, they did some fun things. And then she taught English in high school and she also, a short while, she worked for, oh he was quite a Christian leader. His name is Kana-Kagawa when he was working in the ghetto or whatever you call it. And I recall her telling me when she first went to apply for the job, he took one look at her and told her to go home and change her clothes into something more useful than the fancy stuff she was wearing so she did that and I don't, she must have worked for him for about a year because she was already a Christian, a very devoted Christian whatever you call them so that's the reason she wanted to work with Dr. Kagawa. I think she worked about a year and then she also taught high school English, English in high school and she also taught kindergarten, the big jump from one place to the other. And then a marriage was

arranged for her and after she got married, she didn't come, it was one of these, what kind of arranged marriage would you call it?

JK: Baishiya kunin.

FT: Well yeah, but a, my father was already in the US. My mother was still there, so they did it. There is a name for it.

JK: Proxy marriage?

FT: Well, sort of. And then she, so she lived with the Fuchiya family for about three years before she came over here, you know, and I think they treated her very royally, not like a daughter-in-law. But she lived with the Fuchiya family there and then she came over here. And I really don't know when I was born in 1921 but I do know prior to that, she would go to San Francisco to do some studying or something. She was a little independent for a housewife.

JK: A, how many siblings did you have?

FT: Two, sisters.

JK: Tell us a little bit about them?

FT: Well, the second one is Janet. She was born, I'm the oldest and then Janet was born on June 2, 1922. And Martha, the third one, was born on December 2, 1923. And we did not have any others, just the three of us.

JK: Okay.

FT: And we had a good time.

JK: Tell us a little bit about your life, the family life in those days.

FT: Well, it was—I don't recall too much but I do know that it was fun and we didn't have any—when you're growing up and you're small like that, you really don't know even if

there are problems, it really doesn't matter. And the one thing that we do remember is I guess we were a little spoiled. Do you remember the canal on Livingston-Cressey Way? Well, that was the best place to swim and we used to swim in a small canal in the back, but since we were introduced to the other one, and on the middle of a hot summer day, we'd go out to the field where my father was working and talk him into stopping his work and taking us swimming and he used to do that. And he'd sit there under the trees or leaning up against the bridge there watching us for about an hour or so and then we had enough so we'd go home and he'd take us home. So we were, I don't know, I guess you would say sort of spoiled. But then my mother was very much involved in the school. She did a lot of—well the teachers would ask her, I guess mainly because she would go visit as a parent when they would have operetta and this and that and they would ask her for help. And it didn't have to be anything with a Japanese program, just anything because I remember she would come and help us with a little program like an operetta with a bunch of flowers and we were all dressed in pretty bright-colored crepe paper flowers and things like that and but when it came to—but if they wanted to put one on that had a Japanese whatever in it then she would really help, you know and make sure that everything went all right. But she was quite a big part of the school that way.

JK: What other things do you remember about the family life? Is there anything special?

FT: Let's see. Something special?

JK: What did you do for entertainment, besides—?

FT: Well the three of us played various instruments, you know. Mine was the piano. My sister's was the violin and the clarinet and maybe that was, and my youngest sister played

a snare drum and violin and you know. We did a lot of that sort of thing and of course, we were involved in going to Sunday school.

JK: Yeah. Tell us a little about community, your involvement?

FT: Oh, I did want to say one thing. I was trying to look for proof but I couldn't find it. But I did see it once at our Methodist Church when we—the First Methodist and the Great Methodist combined to make one Methodist Church. There was a framed, like a certificate with the names of the people who were the charter members of the First Methodist Church. And my uncle's name was on there. He helped build the First Methodist Church in town and that was what, 1910 or something like that, and mainly because he could speak English comfortably too and he was already a Christian from back in Japan.

JK: That's Mr. Naka?

FT: Uh-huh, so he was involved in both churches. I remember he and his family going to the First Methodist and on some Sundays he would come to our church, you know. So, let me see now. And Mr. Naka had a huller. He was the first almond huller. Do you remember that huller?

JK: I remember, we used to take our almonds there.

FT: Oh, you did? And I would work in it when I was younger and I was talking to Helen Gionetto and she said she and Marion Scott and a lot of people my age worked there, too. I wasn't aware. It didn't even, it drew a blank so as far as I was concerned. You know so, he was quite a—he was quite involved in the community, the city of Livingston, too.

JK: Yeah, I'm glad you brought that up because Mr. Naka was a very important person in the community.

FT: Yeah, and I don't know whether he was really in sync with the rest of the Japanese men, although Livingston, as you know, was a Christian community and Mr. Abiko wanted it that way, so it was Mr. Okuye who was devoted to, and as the people came, I guess they didn't have much choice but to become Christian.

JK: The interesting—the interesting thing about it.

FT: Uh-huh, but I think that made a difference in our attitude towards how we lived here.

And—

JK: Yeah, may we continue on that subject a minute and tell us about the (inaudible).

FT: Well, I really don't know too much. Who was it? Someone was telling me that when WWII broke out and we needed to—they were moving us out, Livingston had its own nasty side as well as a good side. Well, you are the one that told us, I guess. That they had put up a big sign and it was gone the next day, so we must have had friends among them and we were very well acquainted with the Echofields and the Merchandising store I guess they had there. And for some unknown reason, my father's name was Kenji but they knew him as Joe. They always called him Joe, you know. And I think that is because of the relationship way far back, you know. And if I'm not mistaken, they must have lived around where the Nakos lived, those homes up front. And Adams, Mr. Adams, sometimes he wrote some very negative things and stuff maybe because it was for the newspaper but he always picked up Mary, and I don't know about Rose. I think he may have. But he always picked up Mary in the horse and buggy that he had to take the kids to school. And so I remember Mary Naka telling us about that. But let's see now. (Pause) And we would be invited to a, a, the birthday parties. Well naturally, we had a spirit of friendship among the Japanese our age, you know the girls, and all, but

then, on occasion we would be invited to the birthday parties, the Caucasians. And so we would go and we were involved in contests where we would recite poems and it was held at the Methodist Church but it wasn't the Methodist thing. I believe Mrs. Castle was in charge of it, Helen Jane Castle's mother, and she even had a piano contest that went with it. And when I was in the second grade, I didn't know anything about it, but that was what I was playing for, a piano contest and I found out that I took first prize. And so, we were involved that way you know, too. And I know at school we didn't feel any, I guess you would call it prejudice, maybe there was. But we didn't know.

JK: I know that, well with boys, there was a change in attitude about the time we grew up, but with girls do you think that friendships continued on into high school?

FT: Well, yeah. I think that our core group was Japanese. My core group, but the others that I knew we worked together and we had a good time. There wasn't any particular if there was—if there were, they didn't show it, just very comfortable in our school days.

JK: Did it get through high school?

FT: That's what I mean, through high school.

JK: Okay, now being a family of girls, was there any (phone ringing).

FT: Is it all right?

JK: Yeah, but I think we should turn it off. Okay, tell us about church, church participation? Did you participate? Were you in youth group or anything?

FT: I think when I first—when way back in high school, we had that youth group. What was the name of it? Do you recall? We all went to it.

JK: PCF or something.

FT: We had our meeting every Sunday evening or something if you recall so I attended that and I attended one or two conferences. But, other than that and of course I got recruited to teach Sunday school. It was rather surprising because I didn't know anything either but—(laughing). I taught the little ones.

JK: How about, did they have community picnics?

FT: Yes, we did. I don't know. I think the whole family went and there used to be baseball games and that sort of thing. And my sister Janet was the sporty one and she was involved in one and got hit on the side of her head and so that was the end of our picnic and we rushed to Fresno to the doctor. I recall that. But most of the time, we ate as families and shared our food and sat around and talked and I would go off with my close friends, you know, Eunice or Esther or Ruth and wander along the river bank. And, let's see. You just have to ask me the questions because I—

JK: There were a number of Nisei girls in your class.

FT: Yes, uh-huh. There was—well—there was Eunice, Esther, Ruth, Eileen, you know I can't think of anybody else, girls.

JK: Did you attend Japanese language school?

FT: Well, my mother started it way back when I was a kid. I mean when I was really young. She started it in the home and it got to be too many children so she used the church. And a—

JK: I think I was a problem student.

FT: I recall Kenny, Ken Yamaguchi once saying, we knew your mom couldn't see. (Laughs) so we sure fooled her in a lot of ways. (Laughs) So, but I can't recall when she quit and

then she had a few at our place too, and I was kind of naughty, a teacher's kid, you know, and she sent me to the closet once because I wouldn't calm down. I recall that.

JK: Did you advance quite a ways in that language?

FT: No, no.

JK: Are you fluent now?

FT: I can speak it but I avoid it all I can. I don't think I went much further than book seven or something, the reading you know. So, all I can do right now is read hiragana and katakana and a few characters or whatever you call those things.

JK: Okay, how—did you take classes in Japanese culture once?

FT: No.

JK: Nothing like, did you participate in kendo?

FT: No, I didn't. I think we went to see, what it was about, but I don't think any one of us were interested. So, but I recall going to see what it was about.

JK: Okay, now what kind of schools did you go to? Start out with—

FT: Well, I went to San Jose State.

JK: Well, let's start from the beginning. Grammar school, you went to?

FT: Oh, Livingston Elementary school. You know what was most interesting? This is discussing and talking about these things with other friends that I've met and how they talked about a, they were segregated, even in the Sacramento area and when I first heard of it, I was shocked, because in Livingston there wasn't any of that, you know. We all went to the same school and it never occurred to me that, you know, what is it, not be forward or a part of the group, you know. I think that is the way we all were, weren't we?

JK: Probably.

FT: And I know some places there was definitely segregated and occasionally I used to hear them speaking in English like when we went to the Merced Camp you know, with some of the others and you noticed the pronunciation wasn't exactly like the way we pronounced English you know. And that's the way I found out that they were not in the same, just the regular school, I guess.

JK: Now you are the oldest sibling. I recall in some of the other interviews that I had that the eldest sibling often had problem when they first went to school. Did you have any problems?

FT: No, that is the interesting part of it. If I did I was not aware of it and here in Livingston, they had a problem? Oh, uh-huh. I don't know, either that or it's because my parents spoke English. And so they never spoke it at home except I suppose maybe they prepared us. Because I remember, it's funny the little things that come up and I remember trying to tell Mrs. Pickton, she was Mrs. Eicher then, she was our kindergarten teacher and I was trying to tell her about a bunch of bunnies in a pile of brushes in the back and I could hardly. I had a hard time telling her. I called them rabbits I guess, you know in lots of sticks or something like that but I do recall that. And a, so I, we may have had troubles not understanding everything but you know when you are young, you just kind of go with the gang or the group so you just pick it up, and you don't realize you picked it up.

JK: Okay, now you went through elementary school in Livingston. Which elementary school did you go to? They used to have one?

FT: What we used to call the old school.

- JK: The old school.
- FT: I don't know the name of that but we went there for kindergarten and first grade and I had Mrs. Sheesley. Not the Mrs. Sheesley, not Glen Sheesley's wife but the one that lived over there on Livingston-Cressey.
- JK: (inaudible) Sheesley.
- FT: Margaret Sheesley.
- JK: Margaret Sheesley, yes.
- FT: She was my first grade teacher.
- JK: Then you went to the third, third grade school.
- FT: I went to second and third grade in the new, in what we called the new school, B Street School.
- JK: B Street.
- FT: And I started there.
- JK: And then you went to Livingston High School? What kinds of activities did you participate in in Livingston High School?
- FT: I guess we went—I mean we took the courses that we were supposed to take and oh I guess even then, I was playing the piano for this and for that, you know. I don't know. I think we participated in what did they call them, the whole school would come into the auditorium.
- JK: Assemblies?
- FT: Yeah, assemblies. And then once I think I had to explain and demonstrate the art of flower arrangements. I don't know hardly anything but I asked my mother and she made a few up for me. And I got up there and talked about the reason for the way it's made

and arranged and all that and now when I think back I think, oh how stupid. But you know how you are when you are young? You know everything.

JK: Now you did say that you were—you were invited to the homes of Caucasians.

FT: I think the Scotts and to the Castles.

JK: Pickton? Howard Pickton?

FT: No, the Picktons, they didn't have. There wasn't anybody my age.

JK: Oh, there weren't?

FT: No.

JK: I see, okay. Did you have any special teachers that you remember one way or the other?

FT: Yes.

JK: Good or bad?

FT: I remember Mr. Brown. He was the seventh grade teacher. You know and from about the fifth grade on, I was playing for the music hour or time. The classes would go into the auditorium and we'd sing and I am the one that is playing. I never got to sing which made me unhappy. But, I remember Mr. Brown he directed us and he was hard of hearing. He had a nice voice, singing voice and all. And so I'm not, he's not, it's wasn't just my class that he directed. I think he did others too and but at times, I think, the kids knew that you know, he was hard of hearing and they treated him roughly, I guess. I don't really recall. I recall him and I recall, oh yes Mrs. Sheesley, the eighth grade teacher. That was Glen's first wife and then there was a Mrs. Waxterfelder there was a Mr. And Mrs. Waxterfelder and they both taught there. Mr. Waxterfelder I think he was an eighth grade teacher although he wasn't my teacher and his wife, I don't recall, but she was in charge of the girls PE and there I was playing again and they were teaching them

ballroom dancing for PE and there they are all learning how to do that and here I am playing the piano and I don't get to join in. That made me very unhappy and one day I was walking out of the auditorium and with somebody else and I made a comment about that, you know. I don't exactly know what. And the next day, she must have been standing around and she heard it so the next day, she called me aside and said she appreciated what I did and she gave me a little gift. And I don't recall if I even said thank you but anyway I didn't open it there and it was a pin with my initials in it so I think that was her way of saying that she appreciated what I was doing. But—

JK: Okay, here is a question and I don't know whether you want to answer it. As a child did you consider yourself Japanese or Japanese-American or American? Could you—

FT: As a growing child? I don't think it was a—we knew we were Japanese. And we knew we were American but I don't think it ever bothered us, you know the three of us.

JK: Oh, okay. Did your parents have any contact with the school?

FT: Yeah, my mother did a lot. My father didn't because you know he had this—what do you call it? He didn't speak. He had trouble getting his words out so he wasn't, but my mother was involved in it all the time. She'd even come to the high school to our meetings when we honored parents and that sort of thing. And she was involved as I said before in the elementary school activities programs and such and occasionally she'd come just to watch. And she'd stand in the corner of the room and visit for that particular period.

JK: I believe that was very unusual.

FT: And I believe the reason that she did that is that she understood. She spoke enough English you know. And I did get a—when I used to tell Lorraine Oberholtzer, our

hairdresser, that I will explain what she wants done to her hair and I'd explain it and then I would tell mom I would come and pick her up later and each time Lorraine would tell me we had a very good conversation. She speaks English. But you don't have to worry about her. At that time we didn't know she was a teacher. We discovered all that after when we went to Japan and they said that's what she was, a teacher of English. But she never spoke it at home, you know.

JK: Here's a question that I don't know whether if you had any definite ideas about? But what kind of dinner table did you have? There are cultures you know that don't have a dinner table.

FT: No, they don't.

JK: And we do.

FT: We always sat down to eat together mainly because I don't know I just assumed that's the way we all ate. And we always said a prayer before we ate so all five of us were at the table. And once in a while when my mother went to teach Japanese in Merced and when she did that you know we had to eat our lunch together the four of us and my father and the three of us and even he would say you know, we have to say our Amen before we start. So and then after dinner, I remember my mother would pick up the story from one of the Japanese magazine that had a very strong moral tied to it and she would tell it to us after dinner and she was really into it herself. And we'd just listen to her and it's all in Japanese and we'd just listen to her, you know, and some of the sad parts had me tearing too, you know. But—

JK: Okay, did you all have your assigned seats? Did you all sit in the same place at the dinner table?

FT: I kind of think we did but we didn't sit there because we were told to it just sort of naturally we felt, you know.

JK: Teenage years. What kind of problems, joys, was dating allowed and stuff like that?

FT: I don't know if dating was allowed or not, but I did date, you know. My one date, in high school, that was it and that was that. After I got to college, of course, I met Tacki and that was, you can call it dating I guess but I don't think we really dated.

JK: Now I'll ask you about interracial dating.

FT: No, no interracial dating.

JK: What do you think about racism or injustice at this time, at this time that you were going through high school?

FT: Well, I was shocked. I was at—I was a sophomore in college and you know it came over the air that we would be limited as to how far we could go. Do you recall that?

JK: Uh-huh.

FT: And my sister and I had a small apartment and when we heard that, what we did was we stopped doing everything we were doing. All we wanted to do was get home to the family and so we packed everything up and I had something cooking and I gave it to the friends next door. I said you people can have it you know and left everything and we just packed everything we can and rushed to the Greyhound station and picked up the Greyhound and came home because we didn't want to be separated from the family. The interesting part of that is that Nori was already in the service. You know.

JK: So was my brother.

FT: Yeah, so it's a—it's kind of a mixed up thing, in those days.

JK: All right. We got into the beginning of the war all right. But I want to ask you, where did you live at the time of Pearl Harbor and—

FT: In San Jose.

JK: What was that?

FT: San Jose, we were going to San Jose State College.

JK: Okay, all right.

FT: My Jinx and I were and Mutt was maybe I should call him Marty just in case I should call Jinx, Janet. I'm using the nicknames and we always used and we still used. I think she was a senior in high school because Jinx was a freshman and I was a sophomore. And you know the minute that happened and we came home, I was quite determined that I wanted to finish college and so I started writing to someone about colleges inland and that's how I was accepted at what is now called University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

JK: Oh really.

FT: It was called Greeley State College when I went.

JK: Now you went there?

FT: Two, two years I think, graduated from there.

JK: In other words you didn't evacuate with the?

FT: Yes I did.

JK: Okay, let's go through that then.

FT: Okay, I evacuated with the family and lived in the Merced Assembly Center and all that time, I'm writing to these schools.

JK: Okay.

FT: And then I knew I was going to Colorado State by the time they shipped us out to Colorado. The first group that went is a small group that went to help get the place. Those of us that were going out to school, I think, we were sent with them. And then we were assigned a barrack. There were four of us, four or five of us girls in one room. And my sister and I and do you remember a Gladys Ishikawa, or somebody from Modesto?

JK: Ishida.

FT: Ishida yeah, from Modesto. I understand she is passed away and she got her doctorate in something. Anyway and so when fall came, I was able to go to Colorado to Greeley, Colorado to school and I worked my way through, all the way through and got my degree there, my teaching credentials.

JK: Anything—anything about college that you want to mention here about.

FT: No, I didn't well, I never saw any unpleasant. I never felt any unpleasantness. To be honest, I was just one of the students, you know. I never thought, oh my gosh, I'm a Japanese, I'm an enemy, you know. And but they had over there at the Methodist Church, they had a woman who was, they had organized a young people's group, I guess. I forgot what her name was. She used to be a missionary in Japan and then she come back home to retire and she led the group. So I'd attend that meeting and I think even then, because so many Japanese moved into Colorado, that there was some grumbings from some of the people and I remember her telling me. I wish I could remember her name. But anyway telling us that she was, there were an awful lot of Germans in Colorado and she was telling them that, no, she was telling us that one of the ministers said, "Don't forget what happened to the Germans in the first World War here in the US.

You know they were treated very negatively, you know. So, but then we did our best to be good, I guess (laughing).

JK: So you went two years to—

FT: And I was married there at the Methodist Church in Colorado.

JK: Oh you were married in—?

FT: I was already going steady with Tacki from San Jose State and he was out there digging potatoes, not potatoes, sugar beets, some place. I don't know exactly where but he was with John Fukushima and the gang. Do you remember John Fukushima?

JK: No, I don't remember.

FT: Reverend Fukushima's son?

JK: No, I know the family, yeah. So you were married then and then he went into the Army?

FT: Yes, uh-huh. So, but he ended up in the Aleutian Islands.

JK: That's right, yeah.

FT: Did you know he is not listed, they said his name was not put on whatever it is, down in Los Angeles, they have the museum.

JK: Oh, is that right?

FT: Yeah, because they don't consider Aleutians, Aleutians abroad. I mean a—.

JK: Overseas?

FT: Yeah (laughing).

JK: That is interesting isn't it.

FT: That made Nori kind of angry (laughing).

JK: Okay, all right. So you, did you graduate from?

FT: Colorado State.

JK: Okay, well you already had two years in at—

FT: San Jose.

JK: San Jose. Okay, okay, then what did you do after you graduated?

FT: Well, we got married and he worked in the produce section of Denver, Colorado so we were there for about half a year and then Uncle Sam called him. And so his family had already by then established themselves in Cleveland. They had purchased a home there and the family lived there altogether and they all went out there only where they were to work. And so we went over there to Cleveland because you see my folks weren't out yet. I mean they hadn't come home yet. They were, the Tashima's went out early you know, as they could do that and so I found a job with the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Tacki went off to fight the war. (laughing) And I was there for about half a, a little longer than that, almost a year but we had our own apartment after we got there you know, we found an apartment and he started to work for Bethlehem Steel. And then his call came and he went off.

JK: And this was all about 1944?

FT: Yeah, 1944 I think and 1945, you know, things really went fast I guess. I had the nicest bunch of people that I worked with at the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Cleveland, Ohio. He was at Camp Adderberry in Indiana and that's where my sister ended up.

JK: Oh is that right?

FT: Yeah, she was a WAC.

JK: Oh I thought she was (inaudible).

FT: And that's where she was and she spent all of her time there but at that time they didn't send any WACS over, did they? It was the nurses that went abroad but I'm not so sure

the WACS went. But that's where she spent her time and then Jinx of course was went to Brigham Young University and the school girl.

JK: In other words you didn't, you weren't in camp very long.

FT: No.

JK: Very little.

FT: It wasn't even half finished.

JK: When you left?

FT: But the—I do remember eating with my parents in the so called mess hall, you know, such things as sliced tongue and heart (laughs) but I wasn't there very long but, you know, when I got back—I went back just once to introduce Tacki to the family and I was just amazed at what the place looked like. You know, to me, all I saw was the desert and a few barracks.

JK: Okay, so you can't tell us too much about camp experience.

FT: No, no. Mutt had, she even taught and developed the school. I don't know what she taught, Math or something.

JK: Were your parents in 9H or were they down in—?

FT: 9H or 6H or, was there a 6H?

JK: Well 6H is the early people came.

FT: Oh so maybe that is where I was that one time.

JK: Livingston people were mostly in 9H.

FT: Well, that's where they were then.

JK: Okay, all right. So you couldn't tell us much about camp life.

FT: No.

JK: Okay, when do you—so you left camp and went to the University and graduated the University and got married and went to Cleveland, Cleveland?

FT: Cleveland, Ohio.

JK: And you stayed there how long? Until, when did you come back to Livingston?

FT: Forty-four, I guess we were there about half a year at the most and then he was transferred over to Monterey.

JK: Oh.

FT: And so I came back but the family was home in Livingston by then. When was that?

JK: That was forty-five.

FT: Forty-five? So I came back home to Monterey, I mean Livingston and then I also got a transfer with the Bureau of Labor Statistics to San Francisco and they had an opening for me, I was in short hand, I mean a secretary, and they had an opening for me in San Francisco and so that's where I went to work while he was over in Monterey. And then they had—it is interesting. They are very nice people, the Bureau of Labor Statistics. They were at that time and my boss said, "Do you have another sister or somebody who could work with us?" And I said, "Sure." My sister, Jinx, wasn't doing anything and so she came up and they just gave her the job and so she worked there too with me and the two of us had an apartment until he was out of the Army and came home. Then we came after that we came home to Livingston.

JK: To Livingston? And that was about 1946 then?

FT: Had to be. Yeah, because Jim was born in 1947.

JK: Okay, okay. Did you have any—when you first came back, were there any problems or everything was—?

FT: Well, by the time I got home everything was—there wasn't anything really that we faced in the way of discrimination. But when Jinx got home, she came home with the parents and I don't know when she got home. We really didn't keep track of each other very well. But when she got home and we went to Echofield's Grocery Store, the sign said, "Japs stay out." Or something was on the window and they apologized profusely to them because we were friends, you know. But they had to leave that sign there because their business depended on people coming in, you know. And so, so I guess my father or Jinx, I don't think it bothered them. They just went in and started shopping again. We used to charge everything over there.

JK: Yeah, we did, too.

FT: I thought we paid by the month, I think. And—

JK: Okay, now we're back home in Livingston and what did you do after that?

FT: Well, I was a housewife for one, we rented a farm. We stayed with my folks for a year at least and then Tacki rented one of Tomaya Masuda's farm, Tomaya, Fred Tomaya's farm and there was a house on there which is barely livable but we fixed it up the best we can and we moved in to that house and we were farmers. And then I think that is where we had our second child and of course she had that anomaly, no, she didn't have any bile ducts from the liver to the stomach, no bile.

JK: Oh.

FT: What do you call that? Uh, well it forms the bile and I can't think of that name right now she didn't have any of that, the liver was separate from the tummy. But we tried and tried we, the doctors, you know, and we ended up with the specialists, at seven months she had surgery and they said occasionally they had this kind of a problem and they could move

the stomach to the liver some place because there was an opening but in this case there wasn't anything. No, no, nothing they could do with the liver and the stomach and so the prognosis is she would probably be gone in a few months soon after the surgery. Well, she lived a whole year and a half after that and so we finally took her in to the specialist in San Francisco again and he said the only thing, he was surprised to see us. He thought maybe she had died long ago. And so we finally took her in and, Dr. Todd was the doctor here, so. And he said the only way we'd know what we could do for her, they can't understand why she's been living this long and so they said was to open her up and see if they could correct it, maybe. There was something there and well, there wasn't, and so after a month, she passed away. And so she lived, you for two months, I mean for two years and she walked and talked, you know. But there was never—there wasn't any place for the blood in the liver to go out and so the liver got larger and larger and larger and she looked like a pregnant woman.

JK: Oh, uh-huh.

FT: And finally the blood vessels couldn't take it and they burst.

JK: Now, somewhere along there that you got into your profession?

FT: Oh yes. With all that medical expenses and us just starting over, not over but starting, trying to get us together with the farm and everything we thought it was wisest that I went to work. And since we had my folks here and they babysat for Jim and so I went to the school and applied. By that time see your wife was already nursing so I figured there was a chance for me, you know. They might take another Japanese. So I applied and I got it and I already had my credentials in Colorado. So they looked it over and said the

only thing I was missing, was a, well, the thing that they recommend I do is to take a workshop on video or what was the name of it? You know learn to run the –

JK: Audio-visual?

FT: Yeah, audio visual course and so that's what I took and that took care of everything and at that time I do recall them saying, I was one of the few that had a teacher's credential. Everybody was working with provisional; there was a shortage of teachers.

JK: So I guess you could say that you didn't meet any adverse—?

FT: Teaching?

JK: Teaching?

FT: No, no.

JK: Situation. I know my wife was already working.

FT: And she didn't?

JK: Yeah, so I think things had changed a lot since then—

FT: Oh yeah.

JK: And then after that did, quite a few more Nisei went it to—?

FT: Yeah, Martha came in and Mary Tanji and Mr. Takahashi and you know by then, also, we already had our trustees with Spud, and Spud Masuda and Fred Kishi and Sherman and Bob Morimoto.

JK: So I guess you could say, in retrospect, that things were a lot different after the war than?

FT: Uh-huh.

JK: Than before the war.

FT: Well, yes but, well the interesting thing is that I think this community, a. I don't think they really truly made any big issue of it. Maybe there were some disgruntled people who didn't like it but they didn't express it and so.

JK: Yeah, but you would say that, by and large, the community accepted Nisei?

FT: I think so. I know I got quite a few comments as I met some of the people I knew, you know, that they were looking forward to their kids coming to kindergarten (laughs) but you see; they could have been the more enlightened people.

JK: Okay, in the recent years, is there anything that comes back to your mind of something that was real big in your life – birth, death, marriage (laughs)?

FT: Well, now that I've done all that, I guess maybe the real big thing was having lost my little two year old and then Tacki passing away in '69. That was a big shock because I really didn't anticipate it.

JK: Yeah, okay and that was probably one of the saddest things.

FT: Yeah, now that I think of it, I do recall we were debating, shall we buy that eighty acre piece out there on Westside Boulevard and he didn't know if he exactly wanted to or not and I said, you know, our little girl Jeannie is doing so well and she was expected not to live and I said it is kind of hard with me working and maybe we could swing it. Eighty acres is quite a bit of land and for us, you know. So I said why don't we buy it and that's the way we got started. But then it didn't work out that way and she passed away and—

JK: Okay, now how do you feel about your children and grandchildren today? You have...?

FT: I have four.

JK: Four?

FT: And all four of them are of mixed parentage, you know, married to Caucasians.

- JK: And happily, are they integrated into the community?
- FT: Yeah. Very much involved in each of their own communities and they are all working and so.
- JK: Do you—have you ever—have you ever talked to your children about camp, but you didn't, you weren't in camp very long?
- FT: No, and I have given them books and they have gone to see the exhibits, you know, like in Sacramento and places and what took place but other than that I really, you know? I feel like a stranger to it and I think it's because our life was a little more pleasant than what they faced, you know.
- JK: Okay.
- FT: But I really don't know whether, (laughing), I make a very good subject, I don't have any passion for something. (Laughs).
- JK: Well, now the question here at the end about your feeling about the Issei, you know, and you know some of us have feelings about what the Issei went through and do you think about sometimes, about your father, you know, and...?
- FT: Well, I know that they were—they really were afraid, I think. They would be because, I know my mother burned a lot of things including pictures, you know. And things, and so in that way, I guess, but I guess they're stoic and thought if we have to face it, we have to face it.
- JK: Yeah, they didn't verbalize much about it.
- FT: No, so they just did what had to be done and I think we are fortunate in getting our farms back.
- JK: Yes, very much so. Okay.

FT: Did you know that at the program we had for the retired teachers here, that the secretary to Momberg was there?

JK: Oh, is that right?

FT: Yeah, and I asked her what her name was because I had forgotten it already.

JK: Does she live around here?

FT: Oh no, no. She lives in Merced and she came to this. She must—she was—oh, gosh. I'm going to have to find out because she said Mr. Momberg was quite a nice man.

JK: Oh, I never had quite that feeling about him, but I respected him as a good businessman and—

FT: I think that's what she said, that he was not out to try and take advantage of—

JK: Yeah, he was an honest man and a very shrewd businessman, yeah I think so. Okay, is there anything that you think you should add to what we talked about? What do you think that Japanese-Americans have contributed to the greater society?

FT: Here in Livingston?

JK: Well, yeah.

FT: Well, in Livingston I think we've done a lot. We don't particular—I don't think we feel particularly Japanese and I don't think we feel particularly—I mean we are aiming to be white but I don't know. Just plain old Japanese-Americans I guess. But in this community, I've never been uncomfortable in any way, have you?

JK: Uh—there were a few times when I was growing up but before the war, I don't think so.

FT: Maybe it was because we were girls.

JK: Yes, I think there is a difference. Yeah, okay. Okay, well if you can't think of anything else you'd like to add, we'll—

- FT: It's just about myself and a little bit about my sisters. Was I supposed to include more about my sisters?
- JK: You can if you would like to you know share with yeah.
- FT: Well, I could just say that Janet went to the one I call "Jinx," she went to Brigham Young and got her credentials there and it was one of the schools she was able to go to and she was what they call a school girl too but she worked for a minister of a Protestant church and the relationship is still going strong. I mean they have passed away but their daughters. And my sister "Mutt" or Martha, she also went to Brigham Young for a while but she, her, we all had to work as school girls in order to do it in my family. She worked for a family named Whitecon and evidently they got along very, very well. And so when she came back and she picked up her nurse's credentials over here, she found that Mrs. Whitecon's son, Dr. Whitecon, was working as the head of some—one of the hospitals and they kept up their relationship, you know, they'd see each other often and got along with the family. And they really treated her not as someone that worked for them but you know as a friend and so—
- JK: Yeah, I think that is probably a good—I mean with many of the Nisei woman, especially the women had some real good relationships with people that they lived with and like my wife had this you know, real good friendship with the people that she lived with, you know.
- FT: I remember she was talking about that at the meeting. And well I mean there are some very good Christians about. Or their spirit was in its proper place.

JK: Well, I think that is one of the things that we could probably emphasize in our interviews that we did owe a lot to people, Caucasian people that really befriended us and you know went out of their way to help us out.

FT: That's right.

JK: You know, okay, I guess that is about the end of this interview. Thanks a lot for sharing your—

FT: That's okay. I hope there were some things in there that are worth using.

JK: Okay I'll turn it off before you move.

END OF INTERVIEW