NARRATOR: DR. FRANK NISHIO

INTERVIEWER: IZUMI TANIGUCHI

DATE: February 1, 1999

IT: (inaudible)

FN: I'm Frank Nishio of Fresno, California. My parents came from a place called Kawakami-mura, Kamugon Hiroshima-ken, Japan. They were married before my father left Japan. I think around 1900 my father went to Hawaii as a labor contractor for, I believe, it was a two-year contract according to other historical factors. He settled at that time in the northwestern part of the big island of Hawaii and he was working there. Apparently, he was involved in a field, a horse-drawn wagon or something, and the horse either kicked or something and he had to go to the hospital because he was seeing double. And after the hospital release, he came to the mainland and there he arrived in, around north of Stockton. I think he got there because a couple of his friends were there from the same village. And as a child, I remember going to the funeral in Walnut Grove and I believe another person in Japan with the same Nishio name broke the bank at Walnut Grove so I think he probably settled there.

My mother already had a child with my father before he left and she was waiting for him to call and send money to go over there but he didn't do that so finally she used her own money to get here with my oldest brother. So my oldest brother, of course, was a Japanese citizen. They came over and settled in the Stockton area and the water was so bad that my mother had a problem with the water physically, so they moved to the Fresno area. And she said Fresno water was just absolutely the best in the area, so that's how we came to being in Central California. And in Central California, first oh, I'm going to go

back to Stockton. We had another brother born there but he died immediately, immediately after birth so he was supposed to be buried somewhere in Stockton, and after they came to Fresno, my older brother George was born. I believe in Reedley, I think, or in Monmouth, which is close to Caruthers. And I was born in Parlier. And from there, at that time my father was engaged in agriculture either leasing or working a farm for someone else. But when I—as I remember from the first time what was happening at the age of four, I was in Sanger where he had a huge labor group, probably sixty, seventy, eighty Japanese and another equal number of Mexican laborers under his command and he used to ride around on a big white horse, saddle horse and I enjoyed riding with him.

IT: About what year would that have been?

FN: That was around 1924 that I start to remember, and 1925 I started school at the age of five. Actually, they wanted me to start at age four and in those days the teacher got paid according to the number of students so we started at a school called Round Mountain, which no longer exists.

IT: Do you recall what year you moved to this area from Stockton?

FN: Oh, that must have been around 1915 or so thereabouts, ‘15or ‘16. My mother joined him around 1909 or 1910 so. Oh, my mother tells me it was either in Stockton or Monterey area, her brother was a transoceanic ship’s captain so he happened to get to the United States and they had a reunion and we had a picture up there of them standing together and all that, and after the war, I don’t think we have really (inaudible) old pictures, we lost a lot of that. I am very proud of the fact that I had an uncle in that. I had another uncle who was either a governor or a county administrator in Formosa where they said, well, they said they had maids and cooks and everything else. But when the

war ended, they got back to Japan for only five hundred yen, which is a little over ten dollars, and they had no source of income so my uncle died very soon after that, probably from depression from the change. I felt very sorry for him. Oh, going back to what I had been saying in Sanger in camp. From there we moved to several different camps and some of the camps were very small. In Las Palmas, which is very close to where the Fresno Air Terminal is, we only had about fifteen or so workers working under Dad and the Depression hit and he lost his farm laboring job because the farms were suffering and we came to the city of Fresno and we settled in West Fresno where he did gardening work. He did garage work. He did car washing and whatever he could do.

In 1933 they sent me to Japan to study. So I went to Japan and stayed with my uncle. The reason they thought of sending me was that a good friend of my parents, Mr. Yuki, was going back to Japan and stay. So my parents asked them to take me along. So I went to a country that I didn't know, to be cared for by an uncle and aunt whom I never met, into an absolutely new culture which I was completely unfamiliar with, so it was quite a change. And I felt, I remember even to this day, how lonesome I was and lonesome in a child in the early teens is a terrible thing to live through.

The other day I went to a funeral of one of my friends in San Diego and one of the audiences came up and said, "You know, I was in Japan when I was a kid and that was the worse, worse thing that happened to me." He said that nobody should be sent at that age to somebody that they don't know and be with—and he was very adamant about such things. And the person that died, his brother, also had spoken of this to this man that I'm referring to and I heard back in Fresno, through Mr. Leo Nishioka, that yes, Mr. Okumura was quite, what was the word that they used, deeply impressed with the

loneliness that he felt living with others other than his own parents and his own brothers and sisters. When they came back, they were isolated because they had lost the real close contact with their own parents. And their own brothers so it was kind of a dilemma that they felt. Well, to a certain extent, I had that but not as bad as others. I am a Kibei but most people don't know that about me because I made it a point to, when I came back, I said if I'm going to live here, I'm going to live like everybody else and not be a small group of people that are isolated, so I made every attempt to integrate into this culture, which I think I fairly successfully did. Well, where do you want me to go from there?

IT: To coming back in 1940 and coming back.

FN: When the war started.

IT: When did you get back from Japan?

FN: 1940.

IT: 1940—well where did you go from that and then of course about Pearl Harbor and camp and army and I don't know what order but just the rest of—

FN: Is it on yet?

IT: Yeah, it's not recording now.

FN: Well every so often we'll rest, you know to gather together our thoughts. Did I go too far out in the periphery when I started to mention the lonesomeness and all that?

[pause: fixing the camera tape]

IT: Well, I guess it's fine now.

FN: Recording?

IT: Yeah.

FN: When I came back from Japan the year was 1940 and I immediately started—I figured I would have to go to high school before I got to college because I didn't bring back any of the certificates and they told me I didn't have to graduate from high school. We will recommend that you go to college so I went to Fresno State, Fresno State College at that time, and started to study for—attend college I should say, I wasn't a great student or anything like that. And after a year or half or so, a year in college, December 7th the war broke out. So on December 8th, I felt I should do the duty to my country. Incidentally, I only had one country. I was not a two-citizenship person. My only citizenship was in the United States. So I went to the Fresno Post Office, which at the time was where the recruiting office was, and I volunteered my services to my country. And the recruiting officer, after I said I want to volunteer for the air corps, he said, "I'm sorry, it's filled." So I figured, you know, they didn't want Japanese in the air corps so I figured, well, in that case, I will volunteer for the medical corps, and in those days nobody wanted to do any behind the line work. They all wanted to—they all wanted to be in the front line. At that point, when I said I'm volunteering for the medical corps, he called me aside and said, "Look, you are of Japanese ancestry and you're Japanese, aren't you?" And I said, "I am an American of Japanese ancestry." Well, you know what I mean, he says. I said well yeah, I know what you mean. He said well, we don't know what to do with you guys. I said, "What do you mean, you don't know what to do with us guys?" I am a citizen of the United States volunteering my services to my country and you say you don't know what to do with us guys. He said, "Well, it isn't my determination, it came from Washington." So I felt I had a pretty good idea of what was happening so I hung my head and left and was greatly affected by that decision because it was a statement

saying that I am not an American when they do things like that. And I went back to school with no intent of studying and when the semester ended, I quit and went out to do day labor because I saw no future in my country that would not even accept my services to defend the country. Well, soon thereafter, evacuation came. Just before evacuation, within a year period, my oldest brother bought a service station-grocery combination near the Fresno Air Terminal and my other brother who just received his license to practice ophthalmology opened an optometric office so they both invested money or the whole family invested money into supporting those two enterprises and almost immediately thereafter, the war broke out and evacuation was coming in months so they did the best they could and borrowed money and somehow sustained themselves on that. My oldest brother who had the service station and grocery store with living quarters in the back, let one of the customers, who was not a wealthy person, stay there for nothing as long as he paid the taxes. Well, after he got to camp he got notice to pay taxes because the guy wouldn't pay taxes so he had to find somebody to pay it. Well, after he came back out and looked at it, it was a terrible mess and the furniture was all messed up and used and unkept and the house was just a shambles.

My other brother who fortunately able to abscond with enough money to store and keep his equipment which he had down payments and stuff to deal with, came back and reopened in a different location. In the meantime, while we were in camp, we lived, my parents and my brother and myself, my closest brother, who was two and a half years older than me, lived in one compartment, and my older brother, who was married and had one son, lived in another apartment right next to each other and while they were there, they had another child, a girl by the name of Kay, and they lived next door to us.

IT: Which camp was this?

FN: This was in Jerome, Arkansas. Where, in Jerome, most of the people from Fresno Assembly Center, and Long Beach-L.A. area came in and there were some folks from Hawaii that also came and joined us in Hawaii a, in Jerome. Some people like Mary Tsukamoto was here in the Fresno camp with us. In Jerome my brother worked as an optometrist. I worked in the medical warehouse for a short while as a regular warehouse worker and then Mas Tsubota was the head, became an x-ray technician and so I became the head of the warehouse crew, which was a wonderful job because we had two large, very large warehouses plus a nursery part and there was lots of space there. So we had some very nice-looking ladies up in the hospital and administration so somebody brought in a record player and during noon hours, we would play the record and everybody would dance in the warehouse. Not too frequently but we did enjoy our (inaudible) there.

We got to Jerome in the fall. I don't recall exactly when, around October or November, I believe. And around March or April, somebody said they are looking for people who can speak bilingually, Japanese and English both, to teach at the University of Michigan so they said why don't you apply? I did and with no real hope of getting the job but to my surprise, I was accepted. So in either April or May of 1943, I went to Ann Arbor, Michigan, to the University of Michigan and taught there, and the program there kept on increasing and increasing until the faculty probably doubled or tripled by the time it ended. But after about a year and a half of teaching there, I found I was not enjoying my teaching. I didn't mind teaching but I didn't enjoy it. And I wanted to get back and get into the army again so I applied, I volunteered again at Detroit, and their answer was, "Your job has a higher priority so you cannot be accepted by the army." I was again

disappointed that I was not able to get in but I met Colonel Rasmus, who was in charge of all military intelligence language school, and told him, you know, I could do a much greater service to my country by you taking me into a military job in intelligence and sending me to the back side of China where I could do some valuable good for you. And he nodded his head and sure enough, he arranged it so that I could be accepted, so in December of 1944, I was inducted into the army at Fort Sheridan and immediately sent up to Fort Snow (??).

In January of that year, they put me and another person by the name of Ko (inaudible) into the D-1 class, D-1 class was supposed to have been the best class there. And we were put in a month or two late and when we graduated, this was the class where Baron Goto was a (inaudible) was a member, and he got his commission, and Nada, I forget what he was. He also was a commissioner and another fellow, Yamashiro, who was an MIT grad, and he got a commission and he later married Mitsui's daughter in Japan during the occupation. But Ko and I were retained to teach in the military intelligence officer training part where the haku-jins were and the WACS were. So I was in charge of one of the WAC classes so I enjoyed my teaching this time compared to teaching boys. And of course, I (inaudible) and I was singled out to be given direct commission which we didn't know when we were sent to and suddenly picked out of the group and sent to basic training and it was a very interesting, irregular kind of a deal where Ko and I were both tech sergeants taking basic training with buck privates and our training people were buck sergeants and staff sergeants so we were outranking our training people. And it created an interested situation which Ko and I were discussing the other day. Ko lives in Cupertino, close to San Jose, and I talked to him on the phone the

other day and we went through some interesting things. Our company commander's name was Waters, Captain Waters, and he said he met—oh when we got there, Waters made a comment of how unusual it was to have noncoms come in to basic training, and Ko met Captain Waters at Camp Drake, which was close to Tokyo, and Captain Waters commented, "Now I've seen it all." When he saw Ko commissioned on, Second Lieutenant bars on.

Well, going back to Jerome. When we were there, there was always a question and a lot of discussions about (inaudible) and all that. Amongst our family members I don't think we ever discussed that except between my next brother and myself. We were kind of in the same group and my father and my older brother, my older brother who was an Issei, between they and my other brother and myself, we never did discuss those kinds of things. And it was not intentional avoidance of anything, it was just natural for him, it just didn't happen to occur because we didn't. I really don't know why we didn't discuss it but it was never a problem.

Later on, I of course went to Michigan to teach and I called my next brother and said don't rot in camp and come out, and he did and he went to Detroit to work as an optician because he couldn't practice optometry without a Michigan license, he only had a California license. From there, my—that brother was inducted into the army in 1944 and went to Europe and I volunteered for the military intelligence service so I went to service there. The interesting thing is that my oldest brother, his family and my parents, my father and mother, went to Tule Lake from Rohwer. They moved from Jerome to Rohwer and then to Tule Lake, so when I graduated, I didn't know where I was going and what was going to happen to me so they asked me to visit them. So I did. I traveled

by Great Northern off to Seattle and into Oregon and by bus into Tule Lake, which is in northeastern California. Come to think of it, you know, I was wearing my uniform which has staff sergeant stripes at the time. Going into an environment that was not conducive to American soldiers but I never thought about it at the time and I went and really had no problems at all. As a matter of fact, one of my classmates from Hawaii, his name was (inaudible), was there and another alumnus who was a previous graduate from the same middle school that I attended, and several others, had a drinking party. We got pretty well drunk together and had a great time. And when I think back on it, I am kind of amazed that I went there under the conditions where there was a lot of anti-Americanism being spoken there.

But after the war ended, my parents and my brother decided to stay because there was no hope in going to Japan. There was nothing there anymore except some property that they owned but the conditions were not conducive for them to go to Japan so they stayed. And my father did a few jobs as a laborer, a common laborer, and my oldest brother got a job with the Southern Pacific Railroad and there he started out as a railroad repairman. Immediately, they, in a very short time, they made him line inspector, or something like that, and very soon after, he became the foreman, and he stayed until his retirement as foreman for track maintenance at SP. He was of Japanese birth and didn't have American citizen and he didn't have the kind of education to fit him into a different kind of job. Although before the war, he was a motion picture projectionist, which at that time was a very, very nice job.

Now where do you want me to—

IT: Well, back in Fresno, was this back in Fresno when he was working with SP?

FN: He was in Sacramento, Cameron and up in Norton which is the peak of the Sierra Nevada where the SP passenger train was stranded one winter when it was a very stormy snowbound year.

IT: Then after the war then, did the parents come back to Fresno?

FN: Yes, my parents came back to Fresno and did common labor work because they had no place to go. They found someplace to stay in Fowler and these people, the Iwamotos, had a store before the war and the store was closed and there was a part of the store where my parents stayed.

IT: And why don't you go into your military career and go back to school and then after that?

FN: After I taught for a while, they commissioned several of us and we went over to Japan and the occupation of Japan, and Ko went into the air force and air corps and I stayed with the counterintelligence corps, which was a very interesting type of job. It is like the FBI work in the United States but in the military, well, in the occupation we were in certain smaller areas in the outlying areas of Japan. We were the big bosses on the occupation because aside from military government, the counterintelligence was the only other outfit in those places. So the first place I went to was Toyama Prefecture, a prefecture is in the size, area-wise is about the size of a county but in political subdivision, it is considered like a state in the United States. And there there were about twenty military government people and about five counterintelligence going in there. We were the big kings and we were treated like high commissioner or something like that and we were only twenty-year-old kids. It was a very interesting kind of situation and we had to mature very quickly to be able to even talk to the governors and mayors and police chiefs. These are the main guys we had to talk to. So, I think Niseis who were in the

occupations were placed in positions far higher and far different from their normal environment that they had to contend with in the United States, which was store ownership or store clerk or common laborer. And all of a sudden you are sitting with the people in high government and discussing the affairs of the state. So I think we Niseis got a much broader and much higher level of education in real life than we ever would have, if we had not had the war. I think there was some very salient positives coming out of the war for Niseis. Not only that, I think we were also spread out geographically all over the place and we have people from Washington and Southern California, San Francisco, everywhere in different parts of California both and Hawaii, both to the army and without the army, we were relocated and made new friends. So today, I am sure that we can go to any part of the United States and find people that we know and were acquainted with through some sort or another and even if we didn't know these people, we had many common personalities that we could talk about and commonalities that the war experiences that we lived through. So I always think there were so many positives that came out of it. We only speak of the negatives usually but there are some nice things that happened to me personally, I think, that elevated me from a country bumpkin to somebody that understands what is going on in the world.

IT: Now how long were you in Japan?

FN: I first went over in 1946 and I served for two years. During that time, as I said, I was in Toyama district as the head man for only a month and then they sent me to school. And then I went to Miser and I was the CO there for I don't recall how many months but maybe half a year and then they pulled me out and took me to Kyoto, Japan, which was the headquarters of CIC of all of southwestern Japan, which was from Yokohama and

Toyama all the way south to Kyushu, the tip of Kyushu, which was Kagoshima. Okinawa was a separate place at the time. So Kyoto headquarters covered all that as the region and in this regional headquarters, we were not supposed to be operative but we did have a special operative unit and we called it Special Projects which our operations covered not only the Kyoto area but all over southwestern Japan and sometimes it even went into Tokyo. And a very interesting, as a matter of fact, it even went outside of the country into Korea and into China so we were a very, very interesting, enlightening to me historically, understandable, comprehensible is the better word, kind of an experience. Not only that, from a high school, college student to commanding officer which is something quite different, and I learned the process of leading people and what not to do and what to do. Because I learned later that the guy I took over, he was a guy that wanted to be a commanding officer, and separated from other people and dined by himself and wouldn't associate with the rest of the people and naturally, his workers kind of revolted in a silent way and they did not produce any reports at all. So when I got there, my—I told them to just call me Frank, and they were completely delighted and astounded and starving, and they thought it was the most friendly thing to do, and they produced more reports than my headquarters so they thought a great deal about me. For the first time, I found out what leadership was. Leadership is not to lead, in a way. (laughs)

That was in two years and then I said I'm going to get out of the army and I left. On the way back to Seattle on a ship, there were about two hundred and fifty or sixty officers being discharged, separated because they didn't want to stay in the army. And during the trip, Truman, President Truman died (??) and suddenly made it very obvious that Russia and the Soviet Union was our enemy. At this point almost everybody except

two persons out of the two hundred and sixty or so all signed up when we got to Seattle, to stay in the reserves. I envied the guys that didn't. Well, when the Korean War broke out, we were the first ones to be called back.

IT: Now when were you coming back to Seattle, what year?

FN: That was in 1948.

IT: '48?

FN: '48 we were being separated. And after separation I went to the college in Minnesota by the name of Macalester and enjoyed one of the nicest college environments and college living ever. At that time, the JACL had recommended that we try to integrate, we try to stay away from bunching up as Japanese, and this was said to have been one of the causes of our being segregated in that we stayed together too much, which is not absolutely true. We were forced to be together because nobody else wanted to or would allow us to talk to them or interact with them in the family kind of domestic way. In other words, we couldn't go into their houses. They wouldn't permit it.

But when I got to Minnesota, there were several others there, Paul Otake and Pete Otake, both landed in San Francisco later. One was head of the public relations for Japan Airline and Northwest Airline, I think, at one time or the other. And the other one, I don't know what he did. I would meet him every so often but I never asked him what he does. While on campus we made it a point, and I felt the same way, that we shouldn't bunch together, so we would nod to each other but we wouldn't get together and create a clan of any kind. So, most of us were friends with other people, other than Japanese. We even had some Chinese Nationals there, a man by the name of Tu, and Tu went—was the only one amongst the Chinese that said he was going to go back to Communist China.

We were there in 1948 or 1949 and I think Nationalist and Communist China kind of split. So he actually went back and he is a pretty high official in the Communist government now because he's come back to visit the school several times and an ordinary Chinese citizen couldn't do that, I am sure.

IT: Did you graduate there before going back to Korea?

FN: Oh no. What happened was I—while I was at Macalester, I said, "Well, I'm not going to stay forever and finish medicine." My idea was to go into medicine but that would take too long and I was getting to be fairly old and that was twenty-eight and I thought that was pretty old. So I said, "Well, the easiest way to get a doctorate was to get it in optometry at the time." It was two years and three years of optometry. So I went to and applied to Northern Illinois College of Optometry and they accepted me so I went and studied optometry and after one year, I was pulled out and sent to Korea and on the way to Korea, I was stopped in Tokyo. But there were six guys on the ship going to Tokyo, two of them died within one month that were shipped directly to Korea, so I was very fortunate that they retained me in Tokyo. And after six months, then they sent me over. During the six months in Tokyo, I was the liaison officer for the Tokyo CIC and in this capacity I had to associate with a much higher group of people than I did back in Tokyo, I mean Kyoto, back in '48 and the governor of Tokyo was one of my contacts. The highest (inaudible) office was one of my contacts. The man in charge of national immigration and emigration for all of Japan by the name of Sato was one of my contacts, which incidentally, he had a very beautiful daughter which he tried to push on me and I was unaware of what he was doing when he invited me to his home. And here the liaison officer, to be invited by one of your contacts is a great accomplishment so I was thrilled,

and I said, "Yeah, I would be happy to go over." And when I got there, he had a western style reception in the living room. And in the old days we used to call them parlors (laughs). We don't use that word now, you know, davenport and easy chair and stuff, and we sat around and talked for a while and then he introduces me to his daughter who was an outstanding, good-looking girl and he leaves the place and both she and I were completely dumbfounded. And we—I don't think we even exchanged any kind of words, we just stared at each other, you know. And I guess that was it. It was to this day I said, "Gee, I should have said something, you know." Sit down and chatted with her but it was such a surprise kind of deal that I didn't react quite well. Neither did she. (laughs) It was kind of an interesting experience anyway. Also, the head of the national police who was in charge of all of Japan, he and I became very, very good friends and he used to write me. Even three of four years after I came back to the United States and I am not proud to say that but in a way I'm proud to say that I am the one that dropped the communications because I couldn't keep up with all the different people I knew in those days, and I said, well, I have got to do something and I'm not going to go to Japan anymore and, you know, my correspondence was too big so I dropped all of those people that were outside of California. And I'm sorry I did that because he was such a nice fellow and we were good friends. And he gave me a sword when I was there. Some of those experience are—I'll remember forever, nice things about Japan and the culture.

You know what I used to do is read the Japanese newspaper, I forget which one it was, *Asahi* or *Mainichi*, every morning before I went to visit these people because I knew they were very intelligent people and high (inaudible) people and I had to have something in common to talk about and that newspaper headlines and some of the articles and I

could discuss some of these things. I am sure that they thought I was a young brash kid, you know. At the time I didn't realize how they would feel about it, right.

IT: Okay.

FN: While I was in Japan, one of the greatest honors I had was that my school—from my school, I participated in the prefectural Hiroshima-ken Kiyogiri, which means track meet, and I came in second in the medium hurdles, four hundred meter hurdles, and the guy who came in first didn't want to go to the Ginbu Kaikai, which means National Track Meet. So they sent me. And I went to Tokyo representing the Hiroshima Prefecture and I was—I participated in the first trial, and in the first trial, there were four of us running and I came in third so only the first two go on to the next trial. And that trial, two guys will go on and on, and it will probably take about five trials until they get to the top so I was really not qualified to be there but it was a great honor to be picked to go there.

Now getting back to the United States. After the Korean War, well, in the Korean War, I went to Korea, too, after Tokyo, and served. First, I was attached to the twenty-fifth division which was at the Iron Triangle, which was in the thirty-eighth parallel where the line was drawn. It was not a straight line. The northernmost point was where the Iron Triangle was and we were facing the North Koreans there. We actually were not through fighting back and forth, we were very stationary but we were throwing artillery at each other, both sides. From there I was shifted to the twenty-fifth division because the twenty-fourth was relieved and they went back to Japan. And since I had just arrived, they shifted me to the twenty-fifth division and we ended up where the front lines were, Heartbreak Ridge, Pork Chop Hill, and the something Bowl. I can't think of the name but it was actually like a real bowl. And there we had some very interesting experiences.

We went down to a city named (inaudible) and I found some paper being sold for wrapping. They didn't have paper so they would use old, old paper, and I looked at the paper and by golly, it was an order of battle for I-Corps and I said, "This is funny. This is supposed to be secret stuff, confidential, more than confidential." And we looked into how on earth these people, common commercial entities getting hold of this kind of stuff, and found out the security at I-Corps headquarters was so loose that they dumped all the restricted, confidential and material into a wastepaper basket and they threw it out at the dump and these people, local people went over to the dump to find out whether it was salvageable and they were getting all this paper and using it for wrapping vegetables and stuff. So, I-Corps really caught hell because of that.

There was some other that was very interesting and one of the serious things that ever happened was, it was called the Punch Bowl, that's right ,and I was stationed in the Punch Bowl and they told me because of intelligence factors, we had to get a fingerprints of all the company commanders up in the front line. So I went to regimental commander and said I'd like the fingerprints of those people up in the line. And he says, "I can't afford to get those people down here, why don't you go up there." I said, "Okay, I will do that." And he said, well, they are throwing in the artillery in the afternoon so why don't you go in the morning and you can cross the line in the morning, and I said, "Okay." Drove up to the front line on the left side and I started to work through the first command post, and as soon as I was ready to start on my trip across the line, the artillery started to come in. But I had my duty so I figured well, the guy says they are over-shooting right now so why don't you go to the front trench, and I did. And you know from the left side of that whole regimental front to the extreme right side, I never saw one

person in the trenches and I had to walk through that, it was shewww, shewww going over my head. (laughs) Kind of scary but I made it all right. I had never been under fire of that kind. So it was kind of threatening but I was able to walk in.

Well, after that I was sent back to Hokkaido and enjoyed the scenery there and finally discharged and not discharged for good, I was resigned from my commission so I would never be called back again. In a way I'm sorry I did because, you know, if I would have stayed in the reserve, they would have punched me out and given me some kind of retirement, but at the time I was thinking if I was ever called up and built up a practice, I'd lose it all so I made sure that such a thing would not happen. After I finished optometry school in Chicago, I was, oh, while I was going to school, I owned a nightclub because somebody said one of them was for sale. And I was a nightclub owner-student ,and most of the time I was more nightclub attendee than I was a student and I don't think anybody else enjoyed their student life in such an environment as I did. Making pretty good money and using up all the money I did have so when I finished school, even though I was making money, I was broke. So I had to borrow money when I decided to open up in El Centro, California. Now the reason I went to El Centro, California, was because the impact upon the treatment of Japanese that is being thrown into concentration camps and for me not being allowed to volunteer for the army on December 8th, it impacted me so greatly that one of my objectives in life was to fight that kind of sentiment, that kind of discriminatory feeling. So, I was to open up my office, I found out there was a position open for a optometrist to sell his practice in El Centro, California. El Centro, California, is about a twenty thousand population city at the time.

At the same time, I heard that Imperial Valley itself which was about five, no, not only El Centro but all of Imperial Valley was developed by Japanese. They went there and opened it up and through the All-American Canal, they got water and before evacuation, it was the Japanese that were working Imperial Valley mainly. And there were over five thousand Japanese living there. After they came out of the camps and they were allowed to return to California, only a hundred or so Japanese went back to Imperial Valley and I heard it was one of the least desirable places for Japanese to be. So I thought, that's a challenge. When I think back on it, it was a very stupid move, you know, for optometry is a very difficult profession to start anywhere for any matter and for a Japanese to start anywhere, was even more difficult. Today it's a different story but in those days it was very, very difficult. And here, I challenged the system which was supposed to be more anti-Japanese than not, and starting from almost scratch for me in that kind of environment was crazy, but I did it. And surprisingly, the person's practice which I bought was owned by a blue blood American originally from Coalinga, but his grandfather was one of those that was an original settler of Millerton, which is by Friant in northern part of Fresno, so they were really one of the original Californians that came and developed this country here around Fresno. So I took over from him and I did everything possible to try to make it and I actually did. I did better than he had done in his last year of practice during my first year which is extremely unusual because whenever you buy somebody else's practice, a lot of people leave the practice so your volume of practice is supposed to go down, but I tried every method possible to get people to come to me so I actually increased the gross from that of his, and when I went down there, I didn't see a Japanese for two whole months until one day Joe Yamashita

walks in and says I wanted to say hello to you, and so I shook hands. He says, you know, I heard you were here and I didn't have a chance and I want you to know that there are some Japanese here. And I said are there many and he said no just a few of us, and we became very good friends. But when I left, I had a good practice on the way to an excellent practice. After I left, I sold it to somebody else who then became the most, best practice. It went from the bottom practice to the top practice later so I'm very proud to have done that but when I think back, it could have been a disaster. But it was a good lesson for me.

But there is where I took up Post Master and was for the first time, I was able to talk and before that it was impossible for me to talk in front of people and I think being able to talk is not only an ability but it changes the whole person, it changes the whole tension that people have while they are interacting with people. That was too long, yeah, I got too long there. In Imperial Valley there was no JACL when I returned, so one day Harry Momita contacted me and said why don't we reform the JACL and I said great, that is good, let's do it. He said, he told me you be the president and I said no, Harry, you know the inaugural president who goes down in history as the first president so you be and he took it. But he was the mainstay anyway and doing most of the work so he really deserved that. I was kind of a beginner.

From there, I think I went back to Fresno and joined the practice of Miati and George Nishio, my brother's practice. Mainly because my brother had a stroke and he was unable to practice for a while so I joined them and the practice broke up three ways, which is the nicest thing to happen to all of us, I think. And I practiced alone in Clovis after that and from then on, that was back in 1959, until I retired in 1986, I practiced

optometry in Clovis. After arriving in Clovis, I joined or started, we started, a guy named Harold Pierson and I and Dennis Chin started a study group. That study group grew and grew, and we wanted to stop it at five or six but it grew to, at the peak, something like sixteen or seventeen people, which is much too large for any study group. That study really improved the practice of local optometrists and there was so much to study and know that was developing that we integrated it into our practices. And doing so I was asked to become seminar chair for local seminars that we had, and then I went on to become the seminar chairman in San Jose, which was the state main training seminar, so I did that, and from there, I was selected to become a member of the State Research and Education group, and at this point, I was raising a family and trying to work in JACL and Lionism and in the political arena and it was getting to be too much and I had no time for anything else and finally gave that up. In Lionism I served as a zone chairman and district governor and I thought that was enough for that. And so I was asked to run for governor but I declined every time.

IT: When did you get married?

FN: I got married in 1960 I think one year after I got here and Karen had arrived about the same time, 1959, and we met at—Senator Inouye, at that time he was a Congressman and he had a talk here and I don't know whether (inaudible) and he gave a talk at the Elk's Lodge and I happen to meet her through one of my friends, Ben Hatta, and we hit it off pretty well so we got married very, very quickly. But in less than a year and we've been together ever since. She tolerates me pretty well. In JACL I was kind of involved in, some of the things I did were, well, I ran for the presidency and like Izzy says, I introduced Bridge and I introduced (inaudible) and really shook the thing up a little bit

but that wasn't too big. Later on, I was district governor. I don't know when it was, early sixties I think it was.

IT: You were governor (inaudible) '63. That's when I got here.

FN: Oh then I was governor then?

IT: Were you governor or were you in charge of annual installation?

FN: Gee, I don't recall. I didn't even know I was in charge of installation at any time.

IT: I got in touch with you about the installation.

FN: Oh really?

IT: In 1963.

FN: Well ,I must have been in charge of the installation then.

IT: Yeah.

FN: Oh I know, is that at the Elk's Lodge, too? You know, we had a real big deal where we had all kinds of politicians, you know, Zenovich, and we had four or five.

IT: I have only been to the Elk's Lodge once but I'm not sure and then the Hacienda.

FN: Oh, at the Hacienda? Oh, and we had some big ones there and some big ones at the Elk's Lodge, too. We were pretty active in those days. Incidentally, the term "district governor" was suggested by me at the Hacienda one day, and about four or five years later, the National finally brought it about and started to call the former chairperson, the district governor. The chairperson didn't mean too much. You know, you get publicity and it says chairman of something, Central California Council. To me, I don't like the word Council because it sounds like a tribal council, you know.

IT: But in JACL, what kind of committee chairs have you had?

FN: Uh, national, you mean.

IT: National and district?

FN: Oh, gee, I can't count those but national, I was part of the Ethnic Concern Committee and today I am still and I've been trying to get out of it, the a—

IT: U.S. and Japan relations?

FN: U.S. and Japan relations. Some of the things I did was, I know at one Tri-district meeting I was the chairperson for the political involvement deal in which I got Harry Kubo and Jeannette Ishii to talk, and the mayor at the time was Dan Whitehurst, who I knew personally, so I had him open the thing, and I got John Thurman and Senator Maddy and they were both running for senator. And I knew John Thurman very well and I supported him and of course I knew Maddy just slightly. But we got all of those people there and they didn't say much incidentally but at least we had a pretty good showing of good politicians. The mayor of Fresno and two guys that were running for senator so, and they came.

IT: Now why don't you tell us a little bit about your involvement in redress?

FN: Oh, well that's a story in itself, isn't it? Well, I figured this, if we are ever going to have redress, there are a lot of things that the public doesn't know, so I thought it was imperative that we spread the word that these other things that had been done and all of it were fabrications that the government had fabricated, so I thought I would go around talking about it, which I did. And I think I did the rough talks on that and some of it was not received too well because I'm saying that Frank Knox lied like hell, which he did, and I'm saying that up in Washington, the Senate, two Senate committees, were trying to pass a resolution to deport all of us in those exact terms. So, of course, you know, non-Japanese-Americans don't take to that kind of a talk too well, and I pointed out to all of

the infractions of law that had been done in order to propagandize these things. Telling us that there were Japanese planes flying over San Francisco was a lot of bologna and that we did—made farms pointing at airports and stuff like that, which is completely an unimaginable kind of assumption. And when we were trying to make a film to be shown describing the evacuation and internment of Japanese, a tape to be shown to the high school juniors, there were some unusual things that we for the first time discovered, and one of them was that they had a truckload of porcelain bathtubs on the truck and said all the comforts of outside life and these were the bathtubs that were going in, and so I had to call various people from various camps and did you have any bathtubs on that, and every one of them said, "No, we didn't." "Well, here it is. They are trying to put it into the film saying that we had these kinds of things." That and all kinds of fabrications like everybody knows that the machine guns weren't turned in but they said that those were the protection so that we would not be attacked by outsiders. And I thought it was important that the public know this, so I went around by myself doing this and I got bashed by my own people. And my own people that bashed me didn't know what I was saying. And there were not one Japanese in the audience to which I spoke about these things except one and he was a member of the Lions Club and Horse Club and he's not the kind of guy that goes around talking about these kinds of things.

But one day, three outstanding members of Central California, and I don't think I should mention their names, but they came to me and gave me hell for going down and talking to these people, "You shouldn't do that." "You are going to cause problems for the Niseis by creating antagonism." I said, "Have you heard what I said?" And I know that none of them had heard what I said so finally we arranged to have me give the talk

that I'm giving to the outsiders, at one of the JACL meetings and we did this at Sasaki's home. I forget his first name but we had a whole bunch of people there and I gave the talk with the slides, and there was not one person that complained about anything that I said. I know that—I know two people, when they came in, you could tell by the looks, you know, which way they are going and I knew they were there to criticize me, and when I got through, they did not say a thing. And I don't know if they knew it or not. I was sort of distressed with the attitude of the Niseis and the only way I could figure it out was that I think we are too afraid of the other people even when they are wrong, and I think the other people should be let known what they did wrong so that they would understand where we stand.

IT: Now was this before the JACL got involved in these things?

FN: No, it was during the redress movement before it was okay. And after, it was okay, now everybody said you can go out and talk, but before, they condemned it. And I even went up to national to say this and of course the head man that controlled the national meeting and I were not on good terms at the time. I asked to give a talk during a meeting in San Francisco and he said, "Okay." And when the time came, he said, "Can you wait a little while because somebody else." And I said, "Okay." And then when they finished, they said could you wait a while because we have this, and after about five, can you wait a while, and he finally put me on and I was so angry that I couldn't even give my talk. (laughs)

IT: Was this after Tsugiyama?

FN: I don't know who it is.

IT: Henry Tanaka?

FN: I don't know who the president was. I know they were having a meeting there but they didn't even discuss what I said. I did say that we should all be out there telling the people what happened so that even if redress doesn't go through, they will know that we were not out there trying to get money from the government under false pretenses and I thought that was important. But I don't think there were very many people sympathetic to my views. For one I was unable to talk clearly about it because I was so angry at the time.

IT: Is there anything else you want to say?

FN: Oh well. I stressed the political involvement and I always when I came—until I came there were some very good people representing the Japanese. There was Seichi Mikami, Ben Nakamura and Jim Ishikawa, and when I came, there was nobody out there to represent us so I went on in the very early sixties and, you know, it cost a lot of money to be politically involved because anytime anybody makes a move like I was, Zenovich and Sisk and that Los Banos person, every one of those people, every one of them, they come and ask for money and yet if you are not involved, we are going to have a lot of shortcomings as far as the Japanese public is concerned, so I try to (inaudible) and I recommended to the rest of the JACL but they really didn't move in Central California, except Tom who was in the Republican arena, he was State Central committee member. I was asked to serve on the Central, I was asked if I wanted to serve on the Central committee and I said, "No, no, I was too involved." I was involved in optometry itself. I was involved in JACL. I was involved in the political arena. What else was I involved in? I was involved in something else. Oh, I was giving talks, I gave talks to the district about redress at one time involving Jeannette Ishii and somebody else. Oh, Tom

Shimasaki and that went over real well. And you and I and Tony Ishii talked about U.S.-Japan relations, I think, or something to that affect, which was chaired by the lady, Peggy Liggett, and I kind of got sore at Peggy but Peggy is a wonderful lady, you know. But I said how can you put two of them against me and let them speak before I did? (laughing) And only because I was a friend, could I say that. But she was a marvelous lady. And so I was involved in a few things. A little outspoken.

IT: Anything else you want to say or should I turn it off?

FN: You can turn it off.

END OF INTERVIEW