NARRATOR: MARION MASADA

INTERVIEWER: GRACE KIMOTO

DATE: April 1, 2005

GK: This is an interview with Marion Isami Nakamura Masada in her home 2989 East Shay Drive, in Fresno, California on April 1, 2005. She has an Issei father and had a Nisei mother. My name is Grace Kimoto with Ralph Kumano on the Japanese-American Citizens League Central California District Oral History Project. First, Marion let's talk about your family and your home life. Where were you born and what is the date of your birth?

MM: Let's see. I was born January 13, 1933 in Salinas, California.

GK: What was your family's line of work?

MM: My father was a truck farmer and my mother worked with him right beside him. As my—see, I have three older brothers and I'm fourth so as they became of age, they helped on the vegetables. My father—my father grew all kinds of vegetables—turnips, carrots, spinach, green onions, potatoes, just all kinds of vegetables and then they'd wash them and bunch them up, load it onto his cute little truck he had open on both sides, you know, and go from store to store and they would buy the vegetables. They did very well.

GK: Okay, thank you. And what do you remember about your family life?

MM: Well, one of the distinct things I remember, a, my sister and I, she is about fifteen months younger than I am, we would be left alone in the house while the rest of the family is out working and it was raining and the wind was blowing and the Eucalyptus tree right next to the house would slap the house and we would be so scared and you know we couldn't enjoy ourselves, being by ourselves. I remember that. And then we received Christmas

gifts from my uncle, that's who I remember receiving Christmas gifts from. We never celebrated birthdays that I can recall. Maybe we did but I don't recall it. And Christmas we didn't get too many gifts I remember because we were a pretty big family by then. And my uncle, when he got married, his wife would be the one to buy us Christmas gifts so I remember her very fondly for that. And every New Year's we'd go to a friend's place. My father and mother used to play Hana. So they played Hana with their friends.

GK: The card game.

MM: And then we kids would tag along and play with their children so it was nice.

GK: I see.

MM: And –

GK: Can you describe the Hana game?

MM: Oh, it's a game that has pictures on it and you match the pictures and some are flowers and it's called Hana—Hana Fure? And they didn't gamble when they played. They played with matches because in those days it was the Depression and everyone was poor you know so they didn't dare play with money because that was too valuable. And but my father sure loved to play cards. And then when the circus came to town my father loved the circus too. So he would take us to town us kids and we enjoyed the circus and I remember that. My mother was a quiet person. She married at sixteen. She had a baby at seventeen, eighteen, nineteen and had a rest one year because those three brothers of mine are older. Then two years later I came, my sister came and another brother and a sister and a brother. One sister was born in camp. And then one—the youngest brother was born after camp, after we came back. So—

GK: What camp was this?

MM: Poston, Arizona, Camp Two. So and growing up our landlady was a widow lady with a, and so she raised what they call county children, foster children and so she always had a house full of kids and so between her family which was they lived next door to us and we lived in the her property and rented from her and her land and we would play baseball, kickball, hide and seek, we had lots of kids to play with so growing up was fun and it was very nice, very nice. We had a happy life as I recall until the war broke out.

GK: And so that was kind of your main entertainment growing up with the children.

MM: Yes, just playing.

GK: Can you describe some hardships you remember for the family?

MM: At that young age before the war? I don't recall any hardship really because my mother and father worked very hard to provide for us and they did well. A matter of fact, my mother mentioned to me one time that she used to loan Japanese families money. And but she never got it back because the war you know. The war but she said she was able to loan people money because they did well in the truck farming business.

GK: That is interesting. What do you think your parent's had for expectations for your family kids?

MM: Well I guess they wanted us to be hard working, honest, treat people good. Because my mother in those days, they used to call them hobos or tramps and they used to come around and my mother used to feed them and I don't know if she made them do anything but I remember she used to feed them.

GK: What are some feelings of expectations do you think?

MM: Well—

GK: What did they expect?

MM: I think they just expected us to do good in school and work hard.

GK: Were the roles of your brothers and your sisters different then?

MM: Yeah, yeah, and then when I was about eight, I think I must have been about eight, my father said I want you to start cooking and so I started cooking the rice and then he let me experiment with baking you know, follow the recipe and everything. And I remember the first thing I made was biscuits and they came out harder than a rock (laughing) but my father ate them anyway and he never complained because he wanted to encourage me. So I was impressed with that and so I just, you know, went on with cooking and because of that I enjoyed cooking because my father never complained.

GK: Did they have—did you feel some expectations that you would go to college?

MM: I must have gotten that expectation because I tried to see if I could go to college you know or earn a scholarship or whatever which I did get a little scholarship.

GK: How about—how about did they expect you to become a professional?

MM: Oh, no, no, no, no. I think probably they expected me to get married and have a family, you know. 'Cause they wanted me to have children I guess. I—I'm not aware of that kind of feeling.

GK: So, so what was some of the discipline that your parents, if the boys did something wrong or—

MM: Well, I remember one time my father and mother had company and we made lots of noise and after the company left, we got a spanking so you know he wants us to be quiet and I don't see how kids can be quiet, you know. He expected us girls to be quiet, I guess.

GK: Okay, Marion now you have a wonderful family, a very large family. Tell us, what were the responsibilities that you children had to carry?

MM: Well, we had to wash the dishes and help clean the house and of course the brothers worked with my father so we were pretty much stuck to the house you know cleaning and washing and ironing and wash the dishes. And a, and I took care of my sister.

GK: And you were in charge of your little sister? That's good so.

MM: Yeah.

GK: Okay, that's good. What kind of values did you sense from your parents?

MM: What kinds of values?

GK: That you could?

MM: Well, obedience to parents, you know, that we don't talk back. I mean that is a no, no you know. And a, and values, values—

GK: About school probably?

MM: I think they just expected us to do good in school. They didn't—they didn't expect us to—they didn't want us to fail you know and things like that because my mother and father couldn't go to school and be a part of the PTA and things like that so we just really had to do good in school. There is just no question so.

GK: The expectations were right there and you knew it.

MM: Yeah you just—I don't know how you get that but you just kind of get it, I guess.

GK: Sense.

MM: Sense it.

GK: So were you part of the Japan Town and the community of Japanese?

MM: Well, the only part that we participated that I can remember is I think it was on Saturday nights, they used to show Japanese movies and the donations that each family gave, they'd write the name and amount of money on a long piece of paper and put it on the

wall you know so that everybody could see each other's amount that they gave. Oh my goodness, I thought that was terrible. (laughing) But that was the only thing I can recall because I don't think we—that I can remember we never took part in like "Kenjin Kai" picnics or things like that because we lived out in the country, way out in the country so.

GK: This—you grew up right here?

MM: In Salinas.

GK: In Salinas.

MM: Yeah, I grew up in Salinas.

GK: That's right.

MM: And yeah.

GK: Okay, so did you go to church?

MM: No we didn't go to church.

GK: Or temple, or Scouts?

MM: Or anything, no.

GK: Or YWCA?

MM: No nothing, not as a kid no. We lived too far out in the country.

GK: That's right, yeah.

MM: As a matter of fact, I could see the mountains.

GK: Oh my God.

MM: Because there was a quarry, a rock quarry and they would be digging out of it and you could see the white mountain, the white rock quarry. We lived near there. I could see it.

GK: So you really didn't go to those Japanese picnics, the community?

MM: Not that I can remember, no.

GK: Oh my goodness. How about bands? Did you have instruments at the school?

MM: No, no we couldn't do that either. But I do remember when we went to the Japanese movies on Saturdays right after that is udon.

GK: Oh okay.

MM: We used to go to the noodle parlor and our whole family would go and eat udon. Oh that was so delicious, pork noodles you know. Oh that was so good.

GK: Yeah it is.

MM: That was a treat you know, yeah.

GK: How about sports? Your brothers must have took part in sports?

MM: They might have but I don't recall, because in that neighborhood of ours, there was another family living in back of us, a Japanese family and up the hill there was another family so all of us kids had our own entertainment. We played baseball, kickball, hide and seek. There was you know we had our own entertainment, our own group.

GK: Okay, but that's above your family?

MM: Yeah.

GK: The others?

MM: Yeah.

GK: Okay, so what kinds of baseball groups did you have?

MM: Neighborhood, neighborhood.

GK: Neighborhood, just in the neighborhood?

MM: Yeah

GK: Okay, I see. And so did you take part in any Japanese language school?

MM: No, we never went to Japanese language school.

GK: No.

MM: That was sad, I must say. Because we didn't understand papa. So papa would say something and we said, "Momma, what is papa saying?" You know and gee just by his tone of voice we would know he's getting impatient you know. When I look back on it that is a very sad, sad I feel sad for my father. I mean having raised eight kids you know, worked hard for eight kids and then none of us speaking to him of our dreams and our wants and just to confide in father and mother. He never had that.

GK: But he certainly knew his role as father.

MM: Yes.

GK: The leader of the family.

MM: Yeah. And he would always say as we ate around the table, we had a round table and he would say, "Gohan was oishi because everybody was eating around the table." He loved that. He just loved that.

GK: That's important.

MM: Yeah eating together was very important to him.

GK: So did your mom do anything like flower arrangement these cultural things?

MM: No, not until camp.

GK: Oh, is that right.

MM: Uh-huh. She didn't have time all these kids that she had and working with papa. She didn't have time.

GK: So, no "odori" and "koto" and "chito" and "kento"?

MM: Nothing cultural so I'm a very uncultured person (laughing).

GK: Okay tell us about the schools that you went to.

MM: Schools?

GK: Uh-huh.

MM: I went to Santa Rita Elementary School from kindergarten to fourth grade, fourth grade and then camp started. Yeah, I was nine years old when we went into the camp. First grade I was still sucking my thumb and so my teacher made me come in front of the class, with a ruler made me hit each hand ten times, ten times here, ten times here, ten times on this leg and ten times on this right in front of the whole class to embarrass me and I don't think it helped one bit.

GK: That is very interesting. So how did you feel about school?

MM: Well, I didn't like school.

GK: Yeah.

MM: You know, but I guess I did all right.

GK: How big was your school? How many?

MM: It was a very small country school. Very small as a matter of fact it is no longer there. It was torn down.

GK: So how many children in your class and—?

MM: Gee, I'd say about maybe twenty, I guess. I don't know, something like that.

GK: So that's not too small.

MM: Maybe fifteen or twenty. You know I have no idea. I have no recollection.

GK: So tell me about some playmates you remember?

MM: Well, there was a Mexican girl named Virginia. There was a haku-jin boy named Billie, a Dolly, Shirley, and we used to all play together and then during recess we would play school and I would line up the kids and then I'd be the teacher or we'd play house

underneath those little trees, those little dwarf trees, and I'd be the mother and you know, I was a bossy kid. You do what I say you know from very little I was very bossy.

GK: Okay, so you really didn't enjoy school you are saying. How did the teacher's treat you and how—were you ever invited to any of the Caucasian homes?

MM: Never, never, never. The only mean teacher was that Ms. Strode, my first grade teacher that made me you know do this, (tapping hand) and my second and third grade and fourth grade teacher's I think I liked them because you know I don't remember anything mean about them. And my fourth grade teacher, I remember was Ms. Slavich and that was a what kind of name was that? Czechoslovakian name yeah? And she was very nice, a very pretty lady, yeah. Okay.

GK: So, so all in all the teacher's were okay?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

GK: Did they consider you as a Japanese, you think, or American or Japanese-American?

MM: Gee, I don't recall those kinds of differentiation between people. We were just students because there was black, there was Mexican, there was Japanese and haku-jin so I guess we were kind of a mixed group. We weren't all one and then I'd be the only Japanese no. It wasn't like that.

GK: So do you remember considering yourself as a Japanese?

MM: No I don't. I really don't. The only time I sensed those kinds of deep feelings is in high school, probably. Yeah, high school yeah.

GK: Describe that.

MM: In high school?

GK: Uh-huh.

MM: Well,

GK: How did you—

MM: I guess I became more self-conscious at that age.

GK: I see.

MM: I'm Japanese and you know you become aware—I became aware of myself as being Japanese and I felt somehow not good enough or something you know, that I felt very self-conscious and low self-esteem at that time, yeah.

GK: So and your parents probably never went to school, parent's conferences?

MM: No I don't think so.

GK: Not even for programs?

MM: No, no.

GK: So you said that they expected you to do well in school?

MM: Yes, uh-huh. Yeah. I think it was just a given yeah, just a given and we just, we just did it.

GK: Yeah.

MM: There is lots of unspoken communication among Issei and Nisei.

GK: That's correct.

MM: I guess you could hear it maybe in their conversations because I'm a very sensitive person and just by body language and tone of voice, boy you know, you had better shape up. (laughing)

GK: But you do have a recollection of your family sitting together, your dad you know enjoying the food.

MM: Yeah, around the family table?

GK: Uh-huh. Do you remember what you guys spoke about or shared?

MM: Well, I don't remember that we talked, but papa talked, you know. He and momma would talk.

GK: I see.

MM: You know about the ranch, work or whatever and we were to listen. So that's how it was.

GK: Okay, and your high school and your teenager years?

MM: Now that's a different story. Because that's after the war, after the war. Did you want to talk about the camp years?

GK: Not yet, not yet.

MM: Not yet, okay. You want to talk about after the war?

GK: No, I want to talk about your teenage years.

MM: My teenage years, okay? My teenage years I was in Watsonville for about a year I believe and then my family moved to San Jose so that is where we lived in all kinds of decrepit places. The housing was very terrible in those after years, after the war years. You couldn't find housing for a family of ten, you know. And so, I remember this one house my mother found, it was an abandoned two-story house. It smelled terrible but no matter, we had to just take it. And there were newspapers on the wall, that's how it was. And I don't think we lived there too long but the smell was awful and I will never forget that being that poor that we could not live in a decent housing. But you know, we took a lot. Then the next place we moved to was a ranch and it was an Italian woman with a widow lady with two children our age so we had a lot of fun on the ranch and we had ofuro so that was nice.

GK: What is an ofuro?

MM: Oh ofuro was a Japanese bath where it's like a little square tub and you fill it with hot water and just make it enough to that you can take it you know and scrub yourself outside with soap and water and rinse yourself off good and then you get to soak in that nice, nice hot water. That was nice. I remember coming out of it one time and barely making it home and I fainted because it was so hot. I took it, you know.

GK: How did you find—get your hot water for the ofuro?

MM: The made a fire underneath the metal box that was the back.

GK: What did you burn?

MM: The fruit trees that Mrs. Janada had, some old fruit trees and we burned that you know and whatever else kind of wood we could get. We just burned it yeah.

GK: So that's what you really start to think about. Did you think about boys about that time?

MM: No, no not that time I don't recall because we lived a way, far away from school. That is another thing. And my mother had to drive us in to Peter Burnett Junior High School in San Jose. And so then when I entered high school on the first day of high school, there was another Italian girl and I, we were the first ones in the classroom. We looked at each other and both of us are chubby you know and we looked at each other and giggled and the teacher came in and she said, "My, what two fine specimens of health, we have here." You know both of us being so chubby and you know both of us have never forgotten it. We still see each other once in a while and we just laugh, two fine specimens of health (laughing). But anyway this girl became my best friend in high school and so her mother died when she was a young girl and so her father had to remarry because to raise her and her younger brother so she invited me to spend every weekend with her at her house so I

became half Italian. I learned how to eat Polenta and spaghetti and ravioli and how to make it all, too. And drink wine, home made wine. Oh yeah we'd have that with the spaghetti.

GK: So you have older brothers and all. Did your family, parents let you date or did they date girls?

MM: No.

GK: Not at all?

MM: No.

GK: Okay, so were you thinking a little bit about racism and injustices during your teenage years, you kind of alluded to it?

MM: Well yes. I started collecting articles about the Jewish people and the different religions and I was being aware of all these different, different people and different religions, I remember that, because I wanted to be a writer. That was my one thing, I wanted to write, but I never took any classes or anything to help me with it because I needed to get a job. I needed to train myself to at least do some work so I could live. So I, in high school I took up secretarial work you know. The guidance counselors never pushed Asian children to be better than just workers, you know, beehive workers and not to try to excel in anything of something of a dream. I wanted to be an actress. I wanted to be a writer. You know those were just kind of secrets in my heart. I never told anybody.

GK: So their expectations for you were much—

MM: Low, very low.

GK: So you haven't really noticed boys in the teenage years?

MM: Well, I guess I was just too self conscious that's why I never had a boyfriend, oh no. So, I just—I just never allowed myself to think about having a boyfriend or anything.

GK: Okay.

MM: I never had a boyfriend.

GK: Okay, how, then, were there any thoughts of marriage?

MM: No, not until one of my friends got married. You know then you start thinking, "Oh my gosh, am I going to be an old maid you know." (laughing) Because they got married right after high school.

GK: Oh, my gosh.

MM: My Italian girlfriend got married right out of high school and then Cora got married. It wasn't until much later that I got married. I got married at twenty-three. They got married at eighteen. I was an old maid. (laughing)

GK: Who would you have talked to in your teenage years? You know some questions or problems or would it have been your good friend or any teachers or mom?

MM: No teachers that I remember that I would go to, no. I guess we did a lot of girl talk but other than that, that is all that I can recall.

GK: So what made you really happy in your teenage?

MM: Happy?

GK: Good things?

MM: Just getting together and eating together and having pot lucks. I remember having pot lucks and eating together and we did a lot of things as a group, a group of girls. Go to each other homes because their parents always welcomed us. Dee was a German girl, Cora was a Mexican-American from Arizona who came to San Jose and Elsie came from

Pennsylvania. So these people all came from other places so they—I think they felt just like I did, you know. They came from some place else and they have to adjust just like me so I think that is what we had in common.

GK: So did you go to college? Tell us about—

MM: Well, I did receive a small scholarship to go to San Jose Junior College so I went two years. And then—

GK: Met your—met your—

MM: And then on secretarial work and then on the last day, I find out from the student counselor's office that I'm half a unit short to get an AA so I said, "Oh forget it." It made me so mad that I was short and they weren't going to give it to me. And so anyway I let that go. And then I moved to San Francisco and went right straight to work and lived with my aunt. We were roommates.

GK: Okay. So that's what you did. So let's go into the WWII era. Okay? How did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

MM: I don't think I did. I don't remember. It was sort of hush-hush in our house and the night before we had to go into the camp, my girlfriend Dolly Jane she invited me to spend the night at her house because I was not going to see her anymore. We were good friends. And so we stayed up late and had popcorn and soda and we just you know talked late into the night and the next day I was to leave. And they were nice people. They were—they just lived up the road from us so that was easy for me to go over there and spend the night. And that was the end of that.

And so we went into the camp, Salinas Assembly Center which was the Rodeo grounds. They set up the barracks very quickly. And I remember I wrote a little—I

wrote a little something, article about going into camp when I arrived in Poston and that was in the archives. And when I asked for all my papers and my grades and stuff, there was this little composition that I wrote. My autobiography and I wrote in there that in the Salinas Assembly Center, we lived near the kindergarten where they conducted kindergarten classes and a bunch of photographers came and took pictures. I saw that. And I remember that. I wrote that in the article. And I wrote that arriving in Arizona, the bus driver was naked from the waist up because it was so hot and we had coats and sweaters. And we were just perspiring away and we had to take it off little by little, you know and here is this guy driving with his shirt off and everything, driving us to Poston. I remember that, I mean I wrote that in the article. And that I was also raised by my grandmother that's what I wrote and so I guess that is why I don't remember too much. I don't even remember living with my grandmother but there it was in black and white. It is funny how you don't remember.

GK: You blocked it out?

MM: Yeah.

GK: The mind does that for you, some of the pain? So you were on a bus and you went to camp?

MM: Yeah, yeah, that I remember.

GK: It must have been quite a long ways?

MM: Yes it was. From the town of Parker to camp. I don't know how many miles that was, Parker isn't even on the map.

GK: There is a Parker Dam.

MM: Parker Dam?

GK: Uh-huh up there.

MM: Oh, oh.

GK: So what did you think was going to happen to you and your family?

MM: In camp?

GK: Uh-huh.

MM: Well gee I thought it was terrible. I said, "Dear God, I will work real hard, I promise I'll work real hard if we could just get out of here." I remember saying that and gosh, it, it was hot and dusty and it wasn't a good place to be. I remember. That's what I remember.

GK: So you knew it was hot and all.

MM: Oh yeah.

GK: We didn't establish God in you life. Did you have religious—

MM: No, no religious training but when I was a baby—when I was in the crib. I must have been three years old and my sister two years old. My mother was walking us around with a baby blanket you know because we wet the bed. I must have been three. I've got to be about three. And she twirled us around and put the safety pin on and then she laid me down and May, my sister May, twirled her around. I remember the twirling around and then the safety pin and then both of us laying in the crib. And somewhere in the night, in the night, my father was beating my mother. And I was so scared. I was frightened and I said, "Dear God, you know." I don't know where that came from but I said, "Dear God, help me you know." And I put my little fingers in my ear and I went like that so I don't hear anything. I don't want to hear that beating and you know my mother didn't cry. My mother didn't say stop it. My mother took it and I'll tell you

something later as a result of that and hearing that, what I determined with my life. I made a decision.

GK: Why don't you tell it now?

MM: Tell it now? Well, it wasn't until I married Saburo and that was years and years later I would get angry at Sab for little things you know, toothpaste. You didn't put the cover on you know or something like that. Or you didn't hang your clothes up you know. You know how it is? And I'd just get so mad and I would just get more angry than what it called for and I just kept this up, kept this up. And then he said, "Gee, why is Marion getting mad at me for such a little thing, you know." And so, he said "Marion," one day he said, "Marion, what do you remember as a little girl, you know." And I told him about this particular experience and then I said, he said, "Well do you think you made a life long decision from that one experience?" And I said with big eyes, you know, I said, "yes I did." I said "I'm not going to be quiet like my mother if my father's beating, if somebody is beating me up. I'm going to fight back, you know." And I'm going to give it all I've got, you know. And when I said it, you know I said, "Oh my God, that is what I'm doing." And I said, not only that for women who don't have the power to fight back, I'm going to get, I'm going to do it for them, too. I'm going to do it for my mother and I'm going to do it for me so that is three different groups of people that I'm going to just get mad at the world about you know for that. And it was such and ah moment for me. It was wonderful. It was just wonderful you know and then I kind of I still got mad but I toned it down a bit. And it takes years and years to undo something like that. And but I'm so thankful that he had the insight to ask me. Being a pastor, he counsels a lot too so that was good counseling.

GK: So your life at least acknowledged it and you can go forward.

MM: Yes, yes unless you can acknowledge your pain, you can't do anything about it.

GK: That's right.

MM: And in camp I need to tell you this, when I was ten years old I was molested by an Issei man. I went over to my girlfriend's house to spend the night because she invited me and my sister and she wasn't molested by him but I was because I was closest to the bed you know. You know how it is in camp? All the beds are kind of lined up and so and it was in the night, dark of night so to this day I don't like dark, night you know darkness. And sometimes some of that anger. I wasn't able to scream or yell or tell anybody this and so the anger that was in me for that comes out every once in a while.

GK: Well, naturally.

MM: And sometimes I take it out on my husband because he's a man and he represents that man. See, so it's very difficult sometimes but you know the guy, he still loves me and that's the miracle of it all, yeah. It's—it's—he's taken a lot, I must say. He's taken a lot. But he's got the patience of Job. (laughing)

GK: So after marriage, did you do some studying on religiously or did he teach you?

MM: Okay I had three children and my oldest became mentally ill in high school and then my youngest is mentally retarded. And the middle child is the only normal child. I felt tugged to try and help my oldest one and another tugging of this kind where she really needs help you know but how to deal with this one over here is difficult and then my husband needs my help. So I felt tugged at four different strings you know. And it was very, very trying. Those years were very, very trying and so my sister-in-law, his sister sent me some money and said why don't you go to Cleveland, Tennessee to this bible

school that teaches faith healing. And so in 1982, I went with my two girls. I took Alisa and I took Carise and I said well I'm not going to go unless I've got a team of people praying for me too because I have to go by Greyhound bus, not by air and that was three days of traveling and on the fourth day arrive to Cleveland, Tennessee. Well anyway I—

GK: That's from San Francisco?

MM: No—

GK: Where were you then?

MM: Stockton.

GK: Oh Stockton?

MM: Yeah, Stockton. And all those years I had been leaning on my husband's faith that the faith really—I mean I had faith but it was like that you know. And so when I went to Tennessee to this bible school, I found out that it was meant for me, not the faith healing because when I got there, the faith healing teacher, he quit before the school even started. Before the school even started. And I said, "Why did God send me all the way over here." And I said, "I guess he meant for me." And I asked Sab, "Do you think you can manage by yourself for one year while I'm over here?" And he said, "Sure you just go ahead and don't worry about the money." You know I had to pay a scholarship—I mean I had to pay tuition for Carise and Alisa and me even though they weren't getting anything, you know.

GK: Gosh.

MM: And then I don't know how long I paid tuition but then they felt sorry for me and they said—they let those two go sometime later but I was paying tuition for them too and then paying rent and food over there. That is practically all of Sab's salary. I don't know how

we made it for one year. So during that year's time, my faith just grew. So when I came home, my faith became my own. I was strong because I experienced a lot of things, miracles and I experienced prayer, really praying and I experienced really the friendship of Christian people who really cared about me. They really—as a matter of fact, I found a big apartment for I forgot how much—a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month, a big one. And so I told my two friends, you come and live with me. You don't have to pay over there. You come and live with me and you help me. So, so for their help to me, I paid the rent you know and we did everything together yeah. So I became very strong after that. When I came home, boy I was on fire. (laughing)

GK: That is wonderful. How did you express your fire during your—?

MM: Well I helped in the bible school at our church.

GK: What church was that?

MM: Calvary Presbyterian in Stockton. We served there for twenty-six years. And then we retired from there and moved here so I was able to be of more support for Saburo then yeah.

GK: How the Lord works?

MM: Yeah, he really does.

GK: So, so we need to get back to camp.

MM: Okay, all right.

GK: So what happened to your family during camp days?

MM: Camp days? My mother was the dietician and my father was the cook in our block and—

GK: What block was that?

MM: Two eleven, one B.

GK: Okay.

MM: Yeah, and wouldn't you know it, I lived right 1B that is block number one. In front of us was the Christian church. I didn't go to the Christian church as a kid in camp. I walked to the next block which was the Buddhist church and I went with my friends to the Buddhist Church but you know we had a wonderful Sensei. His name was Iwanaga, Iwanaga from Salinas, wonderful Christian man you might say. He had two boys of his own about my age. And so he loved kids. And I just remember him with a lot of love. He was just a wonderful man. And he died of a heart attack right after camp, after camp. So I always tell people that I had a wonderful experience at the Buddhist church. And my neighbor was the pianist for the Christian church. Every Sunday I would hear da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da,("What a friend we have in Jesus") and then it wasn't until years later that I said, you know that tune sounds familiar. I wonder where I ever heard it. And I had to really think back and I said, "It was in camp I heard that."

GK: "What a friend we have in Jesus."

MM: Yeah, and then I became a Christian and so you know that was another "a-ha" moment that hymn. And then in camp my mother had a baby when I was ten years old so I did all the family washing, all the scrubbing and then ironing so I didn't have time to play too much.

GK: Wow.

MM: So my salvation was reading. I would read and go to the novel hut. They called it the novel hut, the library. A real clever name, you know, and I used to read the Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton mystery books. Oh, I loved those books. And yeah I read all those books and I had one friend, Miyoko Hada. She and I would get together whenever I

could and whenever I was free I would always go to her house and there was always a house full of people over there so it was kind of fun. Yeah.

GK: Do you recall hearing about the loyalty questions?

MM: No. I was too young for that.

GK: Okay, and you still were with your mother and father in camp?

MM: In camp.

GK: And did you eat together at all?

MM: Never, because my mother was a dietician and my father was a cook so we were off on our own with our friends and we never ate together, never once. And that you know is sad, that's sad.

GK: So your brothers and—

MM: Yeah, they went off on their own, too. And my brother, my brother Harry was a very skinny sickly looking kid so he determined to be—he must have read Charles Atlas those little advertisements you know and he was determined to build his body up. So he took up swimming and he became healthy in camp.

GK: Oh my gosh.

MM: I remember that.

GK: Did you finally realize you were put in camp because you were Japanese-American?

MM: I must have—I must have realized that because you know we were put in a prison camp and I wanted to get out. I remember I want to get out of here. I want to go home. I want to be back home with my friends. I remember that.

GK: Did you communicate with any of them in camp?

MM: No, no.

GK: So what were some of the things you did in camp?

MM: Did in camp?

GK: Did you go to dances?

MM: Oh no. No, as a matter of fact that first Christmas party, you know, when people from the outside churches, they sent little gifts to the people? Well I went to my—to our Christmas party at our block and we were playing "Duck, duck," you know we played games first before you got the gifts. We were playing "Duck, duck goose" and I was running around and I fell on my elbow and I was knocked unconscious so they rushed me to the hospital and I never got my gift. And so I remember that. So yeah.

GK: Those are the kinds of things you remember?

MM: Yeah, you remember real well yeah.

GK: Do you remember any problems the camp was having, the citizens of the camp were having?

MM: No, not—well I think our block was a pretty noisy bunch. I mean rebel rowsers but I never saw it. I saw basketball games in front of my house, the courts were there so we had that and you know. But I never heard any of this rebel rowsers but I heard about them later you know.

GK: Yeah, so you kind of told us about the recreation so after camp? Did you marry in camp? You haven't told us about meeting--?

MM: Meeting my husband okay? Well after two years of attending San Jose Junior College, my aunt told me to come up to San Francisco and live with her in an apartment and oh what an apartment that was, just a one room apartment. And then I got a job in San Francisco and but I want to tell you about this apartment. It's just one room and had a

sofa and we made the sofa into a bed at night and to cook our food, there was a closet with a burner stove. We had to have our clothes hanging and we had a little Bunsen burner I guess you call it and you could only cook one thing at a time. So you cooked the rice first and then the okazu next, you know, and that was it. And here I was cooking and then the dishes on top of the shelf there and I said, "Boy some day I'm going to write a book about this." And I kept threatening you know and I said, "Boy this is some place, you know." And then, my first job was an insurance company. And then I moved over to the sixth army, underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. I worked for Colonel Dalls in the controller office and I thought, gee this is a terrible place to work. I mean I got good money working for the government but there were older women, nothing but older women. They'd come in the morning and smoke their cigarettes and drink their coffee and yak for an hour or two. They don't do the work, you know. I'm not raised like that and I felt terrible and I just kept busy myself trying to find something to do, you know?

And then one—I was attending Christ Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. (inaudible) church and so he wanted me to—they wanted me to teach Sunday school and they wanted me to be a youth leader. And so they sent me to a youth leadership training camp in Lake Tahoe. They paid my way. And so I met this woman who was the secretary at the manager, office manager of the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education Office. And she saw me and she said, "Marion, do you want to come and work for me?" And I said, "What?" The Christian Ed Office and we need a secretary there because I have to do the office manager work. And it would be just a two girl office and I said, "Really?" Oh okay that sounds good. It sounds more fulfilling than working for the Army you know and fooling around and gossiping and all that, I didn't

go for that. It just rubbed me the wrong way. So I left there and then I went to work for the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education. Low and behold one day this student comes in and that's my husband and he says, "I want some Christian Ed materials." And he was a student minister going to seminary yet. And so I said, "What kinds of material do you want?" You know and then I gave him all the material and that's how we met.

GK: Oh, that is very interesting and so the union began.

MM: Yeah, and the next time I saw him was at a retreat at the seminary. A Christian Ed retreat at the seminary and so he was there and we got better acquainted there.

GK: Very good so we'll start—tell us about meeting Saburo-san.

MM: Okay. Let's see I mentioned that he came to my office where I worked and then the second time I met him, we were having a Christian Ed Retreat at the San Francisco Theological Seminary. So he had signed up for that retreat too. So when he saw me there as a registrar, I was a registrar he was real happy to see me and he stayed by my desk you know. Anything you want me to do to help you, you know I'll do it, you know. And so we needed to have a nine by twelve rug moved from one building to another and he carried that nine by twelve rug on his shoulders and I said, "Don't you need help? Oh my goodness you know that is too heavy." "Oh no I can do it." (laughing) And so he did it and so after I finished work there for the day then we spent the time together and we talked and talked and talked and we found out that we were from very similar families. Large families, poor families and I remember telling him, "We were so poor that and then my mother made lettuce and mayonnaise sandwiches for our lunch." And then he said, "We were poor, too. We only had canned milk and sugar on our sandwich." And then on top of that "We made our own lunch bags." You know lunch bags with the raisin tray

papers. Oh it was fun going back and forth and I didn't know what that meant. So I said, "Momma, what does that mean?" And she slapped my face. And so well, I looked it up in a book, a dictionary and so I guess that has to do with sex see and my mother wasn't comfortable in talking about sex to me.

So I guess I couldn't very well share what happened to me you know. She would have gotten excited or something you know or upset. And so anyway, we got acquainted and then he began to write to me and I wrote to him. And every once in a while he'd call me and we—we and he couldn't afford to go on dates, you know. If he came over, he came over to my place and I'd have to feed him. And you know that's how he did take me out to dinner one time and he only had so much to spend, you know. We couldn't spend anything more than that. We ordered steaks and that was it. (laughs) And then I guess by then we were pretty serious but just before that incident you know of meeting him, and getting serious with him.

I used to go dancing with a Filipino guy because he was such a wonderful dancer and I only went out with him twice you know. But then he wanted to marry me and so I called my mother and I said, "This guy wants to marry me mom and he's Filipino." And she said, "You come home right now." That is how her attitude was and I said, "Oh mom, I'm not going to marry him. He's not my type. We're just good dancing partners, you know." But I was just testing her, testing her and so anyway that was out of the way now.

And so we—a year after I met him, we got married. And in the meantime he graduated from seminary in June and he was ordained. And then we were married in September.

GK: Where did you marry?

MM: In Howatoriomi's church.

GK: Oh okay.

MM: In San Francisco and then our first church was Watsonville, West View Presbyterian Church, and that was the church we lived in after the war. We couldn't go back to Salinas because Salinas didn't welcome Japanese people back. So my mother went to Watsonville and we stayed at the Buddhist Temple for one month but it was so crowded my mother said, "We're going to go to the West View Presbyterian Church." And there was a big Sunday school room upstairs and our family was, slept up there and used the kitchen downstairs and so—so I was in eighth grade then and then when I married Saburo and I said, "I used to live here." And when that happened, our first church was West View, I felt God's hand on my shoulder. This is where you are supposed to be you know?

GK: That's right.

MM: But I didn't feel that I belonged because I was such a young Christian and what do I know about being a pastor's wife? And when I got engaged, all my friends gave me the pastor's wife is supposed to be like this and supposed to teach the bible, is supposed to have prayer meetings, and this and this and that. And that was the image and I said, "Oh what a big load." And I can't do any of that you know. And Saburo said, I said, "I can't do all that." He said, "I didn't marry you to do all that. I married you to be my wife." You know and he—he always tried to put me at ease but I put that on me, not him. So it was kind of hard. I had a hard adjustment. It took me about eight years I guess to adjust and I finally came to the point where I could only be me. I came to that point. I can only

be me and do the things that I can do, you know. But it was a tough road because people—you know how you feel. I sort of half Nisei and half Sansei at that point.

GK: Yes.

MM: And I felt I got to do more. I got to do this and I got to do that. It was terrible. But once I got over that I was able to do a lot better and a lot more for the church because I did things that, that was just natural for me.

GK: Yeah, that's good. So he served and you served there eight years?

MM: Oh yeah, and then that one chicken family, we both worked for the church. I didn't get paid, he did. But we worked so hard for the church at supper time I would cook maybe one chicken you know and we'd eat the whole thing. And then the children came and we split that one chicken three ways and then the second child came and we split that one chicken four ways and then the third child came and we split the chicken five ways you know. And I said, "By golly, I'm going to write a book about this one of these days." Because we were a one-chicken family (laughing).

GK: How wonderful and did you write it?

MM: No I never did. You know I threatened. I always threatened. I said boy that's one thing that was such a common thread. We still ate one chicken.

GK: You need to write that. Oh, now is the time you know. Did you—as your children came did you discuss any of the camp life and things with them?

MM: As they got older yeah where they could understand.

GK: Okay.

MM: And I shared with them what happened to me as a nine-year old child.

GK: Good.

MM: Yeah, an incident happened in Ogden Church. We served three churches, West View Presbyterian Church in Watsonville for one year. And then we got the call to go to Utah. Ogden Japanese Christian Church so we served there twelve years. During the twelve years there, there would be job corps boys coming into town and so we invited them into our church. They were boys from very poor homes, black kids and poor white kids and then after church, I would invite them to our house to have lunch you know. That was one thing I was good at, feeding people. I fed a lot of people.

GK: That's good. That is important.

MM: I fed a lot of people in the church. So anyway, one day I said to a boy I have to take Mr. Showazawa to the bus depot, it is just down the block. It is just down the street maybe eight or ten blocks from my house. So I'll be right back. Well, would you know this one boy tried to take down my daughter's pants and look inside, but she ran into the bathroom and pulled the drawer out and locked the door, you know. She was sharp but she was so frightened and then when I came back, she told me what happened and he did this to me, you know. And I said, "Oh my goodness you know. I trusted you, you know and everything." And I was—see that anger came out—

GK: I think so.

MM: From my own experience and I said, "Saburo you come home right now and I mean right now you know." And he was having a meeting you know and he said, "I'll be right home after the meeting Marion. I just can't get away right now." You know I was so mad you know and then, and then he tosses it off as a young boy's curiosity.

GK: Oh.

MM: That made me more mad you know. And I said, "His attitude was terrible." It was not right.

GK: The male attitude.

MM: And not knowing what he knew about me and all this experience you know. And so that never did sit well with me. Anyway I was very, very upset and Carise that is her name and Carise saw that you know and I think maybe that made it bad for her too, her experience bad. But somewhere along the way in our years together we reconciled and I told her my experience and that's why I was so upset myself. And she's—she's reconciled with it too so it's okay.

GK: That's good. Do you—one of the questions that they have is do you feel that you passed any of the so called Nisei traits like inhibition, lack of spontaneity, difficulty articulating, push for education, sense of responsibility, working hard, some of those?

MM: All of it. All of it.

GK: (laughing)

MM: All of it. As a matter of fact my husband always tried to help the kids, "Don't do it this way, do it this way because it's better." It is easier and he never let them make their mistakes which you know is one of the things we did as parent's you know. Do things right from the beginning you know but children need to experience making mistakes you know so that they know from experience that they don't do it. So that was one of the things. We would tell them you are just as good as the next person. You know you are not any better or you are not any worse but you are just as good as anybody else. And you can be anything you want to be, you know, and we tried to tell them that. But they tended to, the two older ones they tended to be shy. But not Alisa, the one that is retarded

you know. She—she in a way she was like me. She likes people. She likes to be out there and stick out her hand and say, "My name is Alisa." You know and—

GK: That's good and so did your children experience any racism or anything like that? Do you know?

MM: I don't think they ever told me anything but while they were going to grammar school, I worked in the school.

GK: That's right.

MM: As a teacher's aide and one day the principal came up to me and said, "My secretary is loaded with work so I want you to help her." And I said, "But that's not in my job description. I'm a community aide." And he said, "You do it because I told you to do it." And the superintendant of schools told me to tell you to do it. And I said, "Oh okay" But I walked out and I went straight to that superintendant that he mentioned and that superintendant called Mr. Potter, the principal, that told me and he said, "Don't you dare use my name like that again." And I went back to the office and everything was hunky dory you know. And you know that gave me a sense of power for myself.

GK: Yeah.

MM: And oh, getting back to power. I was working in San Francisco for this insurance company not enough money you know. Only two hundred and some odd dollars a month to start so I wanted to get a night job so I went to interview for a night job working for this photographer, big photography company. I won't mention names but anyway he said "I want you to do a telephone interview in front of me. I want you to tell them we are having a special and blah, blah, blah." And I said, "Okay, hello this is Ms. Nakamura and we here at so and so studio have a special out and we'd like to tell you about it and et

cetera, and et cetera." And I hung up. And he said, "Don't use Nakamura, use a Caucasian name."

GK: Oh my gosh.

MM: I said, and I looked at him and I had fire in my eyes. I remember I had fire in my eye and I'm pretty good at that by now. But I didn't say a word, I grabbed my purse and I walked out of there.

GK: Wow.

MM: I walked out so those were the two real distinct experiences of discrimination I felt and boy, did I fight back.

GK: That's wonderful.

MM: I know and that empowered me to even be alert and aware of things like that.

GK: That's good. Wonderful. Okay, then let's go ahead unless you have anything else to add about your children's growing up and—

MM: Well when my baby, my last baby was born, she suffered a little seizure.

GK: That's right.

MM: I didn't know it. I had no idea what it was but I was feeding her and her little eyes went around and back again like that for just a few seconds and then her little fists went like that for a few seconds and then she fell into a deep sleep until four o'clock. This was in the morning. She slept all the way through until four o'clock in the afternoon.

GK: Oh wow.

MM: And I said, "My gosh she's sleeping long." And then she woke up and I started to feed her again but this time the eyes went zoom, zoom, zoom and the little fists went like that for a little—and I said, "Oh something is wrong. Something is wrong." We've got to

rush her to the hospital. We rushed her to the hospital and they said, they did a brain scan or something like that and a spinal tap and things like that and they said her brain wasn't developing like a normal child should so this child is going to be handicapped. And I said, "Oh no, my worse fears were realized, realized, oh my gosh." After that boy I went into a depression. I took care of the children and took care of the family but I wore black and I stayed home. I didn't go to church for a while, I was so depressed because I would see children like my baby's age you know and they are normal and mine's not going to be normal and it just broke my heart, really pierced it. And I would feel so hurt, their child is going to be normal and mine isn't and what am I going to do? I'm not going to live forever. I'm jumping ahead, years ahead.

GK: That's okay.

MM: And thinking whose going to take care of my baby. Who is going to take care of this child? It is sitting right here Grace, right there every day of my life. I never let that feeling go. And but I still raised my family you know. And then when we moved to, from Utah to Stockton then Carise, my oldest, was about to enter—she always had a difficult time. Not academically, socially and so when she entered and finished Junior high school and the mentally gifted minor's program and everything, the other sister, too. They both were in that. Then she went to high school and the first day of high school she comes back and says, "It's either quitting high school or having a nervous breakdown. Which one do you want me to have mom." That is what she tells us.

GK: Wow.

MM: I said you can't go to school Carise, what is the matter? Everyone is looking at me and everyone is talking about me. And you know I can't go to school. And we knew

something was wrong because they aren't, nobody is spending all their attention on just one student. That is just not possible you know. You and I know that. That is just not a normal thing.

GK: But she was feeling it?

MM: She was feeling it so we had a tutor come in and tutor her for all the high school years. And she graduated with a, you know, she still graduated. She got her diploma. And so she was suffering hallucinations and depression and highs and lows and we're going to all kinds of doctors. And if one helped for a little while then that was fine but if they didn't help anymore, we went to another one. We left no stone unturned, Grace. We just went on and on you know. And then we—my sister-in-law said go to this faith—that is where the faith healing thing came in. We went and it wasn't meant to be for her it was for me. So my sister-in-law went and I couldn't handle two kids so she almost burned the apartment down. She came after her Carise, this sister-in-law that sent us to Tennessee.

GK: Yeah.

MM: She said I'll come after her and take her and live with us until you finish school. So she allowed me to finish school. I had a lot of support.

GK: Oh, that's wonderful.

MM: Yeah his mother supported me and sent me money to buy a car over there because I couldn't do anything you know. So I bought a car and we were able to attend I forgot what you call it?

GK: Seminars?

MM: Seminars that would come up and we'd have to go to Knoxville, Tennessee. And things like that so I told my girlfriends, the two girlfriends that moved in, one was black and one was white. One was forty, the black woman was forty, wonderful Christian woman. I wish I could tell you about her one day. And then the other one was the same age as Carise, young white girl. And so I said, "Georgeann we'll use your car and you drive us to Knoxville and I'll pay for all the registration for you and for me." You know and that was the exchange.

GK: That's great.

MM: She'd use her car and I'll pay and so we did that. And I did a lot for her and she did a lot for me.

GK: Wonderful.

MM: And so anyway now where was I going on this?

GK: Well you are talking about the growing up of your children and the difficulties.

MM: Oh yes. That was a difficult—those were difficult years. Then when I got back to Stockton, she got worse so we had to find a hospital and I remember in one of my brochures that I kept there was a hospital in Palmdale that had a Christian mental illness unit. And a regular mental illness unit but this one Christian, used Christian therapy as well as treatment for the mental illness. So I said, would you be willing to go there and she said yes. So she wanted to go there as long as they had Christian therapy. And so she said, "I want to take all my stuff with me." And I said, "That's not a wise thing to do because they will steal it all." No, I want to take it so she took all her jewelry and they were all stolen, pearls and a pearl that I bought her when I went to Japan. And what's that pink one?

GK: Opal?

MM: No, there is a pink one. I forgot the name of that one but I bought that in Japan for her and my mother gave her a gold necklace.

GK: Oh gee.

MM: All of that was stolen. It just broke my heart because you know that was a lot of money. Well, you can't cry over spilled milk so I said okay, I can't do anything about it. So anyway but Carise got better and they said they did everything for her so I had to get her out. Well we found a place it was a—it was a Veteran's Hospital for mentally ill soldiers and Carise called right away and said "Get me out of here. I see naked men and things like that, you know."

GK: Good for her. She knows.

MM: Yeah at least she knew.

GK: She understands.

MM: So we got her out right away, right away and then we found this center for living and learning in San Fernando and so we placed her there and she was there for five years and she was getting help at first but then it went down. So we went over there and I said, "Carise, you wait in the car and I'm going to pack your stuff and we'll take you to the car and we're going to clean your room and then we're going to go to the office and tell them we're taking you out because you're not getting any better."

GK: Yeah.

MM: And they said, "You're not even going to give us any notice?" And I said, "No." We are taking her out because she is not getting any better. She is getting worse. And we brought her home to Stockton and she would be yelling and screaming and I said, "Carise

keep it down. They are going to think I'm murdering you." You know, I was afraid for me not for her. You know and they are going to call the police, please keep it down. But somehow she had to yell and scream. The voice in her head was screaming at her.

GK: Oh I see.

MM: And she was yelling back at it and you shut up. Those were frightening years, Grace.

GK: Sure.

MM: It was just awful. And then—

GK: But you've come through that.

MM: Yeah, I came through the fire.

GK: That's right.

MM: Nobody would know that I am still sane and not insane is a miracle I must say because I've been put through the ringer.

GK: Well I think every person has—

MM: In their own.

GK: Their own cross to bear.

MM: I wouldn't want anyone else's, believe me.

GK: So how is Carise?

MM: Carise is doing well today. She still hears voices and she still says, shut up you know. But she's able to control it but it takes a lot of effort and she's exhausted because the voices are constant in her head. As a matter of fact I said I don't think you are getting better at that. It's getting to the point where you are getting upset. And I said, "I think you need to change medication."

GK: Yeah, I bet.

MM: So I said, "We've got to talk to your doctor." Anyway, she's been living in her own apartment for five years and taking care of herself.

GK: Gee, that is wonderful.

MM: And taking her own medication and she knows she's got to take it because to survive.

GK: That is so important.

MM: And she loves her apartment. She's her own boss. I mean she is very independent like—

GK: So she lives in Fresno?

MM: And then Alisa is in a wonderful boarding and care home after going through one, two, three, four board and care homes. The—when we moved her the last time to this present one I always ask her when I go after her "Are you happy? Do they feed you good? Are they nice to you? Do you go places?" "Don't ask me." she said. When she said that, I knew something was wrong. You know she could say that but she couldn't tell me what was happening. Don't ask me she said. So we went over there and took her out. And I said, "Michelle, what do you think we should do now?" And she said, "I think you should move her near me now because you know in Los Angeles I'll try and find a place and let you know as soon as I can." She found a place within a week and we took her down and they accepted her and Alisa is very happy. So you know, God took care of everything.

GK: That's right.

MM: Carise and Alisa this little thing down here in the back of my head that was—

GK: Still there?

MM: Was still there and is gone, gone, gone you know.

GK: So how old are they now?

MM: Alisa is forty.

GK: Oh gee.

MM: And the next one is forty-four and the next one is forty-five.

GK: Okay, so where is your middle one?

MM: The middle one is in Irvine. She's coming tonight.

GK: She's coming for the wedding?

MM: And for the wedding and surprise her father for her birthday.

GK: Oh how wonderful.

MM: He doesn't know it.

GK: Oh that's wonderful.

MM: So it's been wild. I let it out of the bag and said oh no she's not coming, I forgot.

GK: Okay, well we're coming to the close.

MM: Okay.

GK: You know and we really appreciate you sharing and all. Anyway, what do you think recent years then what are the things that happened to you that you are really happy about that is important and you kind of eluded to some of the things already.

MM: Well we are retired since 1995.

GK: Oh.

MM: So now its our ten years right?

GK: Yeah.

MM: And so it's been wonderful being retired and free and to just being able to be free to do what I want to do and I've been taking classes on memoir writing.

GK: Oh great.

MM: And I've written some things. I've written some things.

GK: Oh good.

MM: And I've done speak, Sab and I speak at Fresno State.

GK: That's right.

MM: And once a month we go and visit the prison and my nephew ended up in prison also so that meant I have to go and visit him. And he was in a fire camp you know if they are in a fire camp putting out fires, they get out sooner. And so he's getting out April 7th.

GK: Oh.

MM: He's going to get out April 7th and he made one terrible mistake in his life and he's had to pay dearly, dearly he's had to pay.

GK: Oh.

MM: It ruined his family and it ruined his life. And our family was so angry at him, you know, the relatives. Oh why did he do such a stupid thing and things like that. Well you know we are all entitled to one stupid mistake in life.

GK: That's right.

MM: It's a mistake and he knows he made a mistake.

GK: And he can start a new beginning?

MM: So anyway we go to these—

GK: How old is he now?

MM: Well he's about forty-four or something like that. So we go to those two prisons once a month to visit them and you know we visit this woman on death row because of Sister Helen Prejean who wrote "Dead man walking." We went to hear her speak about the death penalty.

GK: Oh.

MM: And—and we were so profoundly affected by it and she said I visited Chowchilla Death Row and the guards would not let me give them a hug. I had to put my hand through the bars and shake their hand.

GK: Oh. Gee.

MM: And I have to speak through the bars you know and she described it. And she said some of them do not receive mail or visitors. And they do not feel like human beings anymore and so my heart went out to them and she said would anyone be willing to write? So that is when I started writing.

GK: Good, I think that is so important to write. So, so what is your biggest worry?

MM: My biggest worry is Alzheimer's, oh Lordy.

GK: That's true.

MM: You know that is one of the most hideous things that can happen to a human being.

GK: That's true.

MM: To lose your memory of your loved ones and to not be able to recall some happy times you know. If I could just keep my mind you know. I'll be happy but that's my biggest fear you know because sometimes I feel, oh I'm losing it.

GK: We all have that.

MM: Oh I'm losing it you know and Alzheimer's, Alzheimer's you know and we belong to this test group that tests for Alzheimer's.

GK: Oh is that right?

MM: Yeah we belong to a test group and they test us every three years for our memory, our brain what do you call that test where you go under that machine?

GK: Scan?

MM: Scan.

GK: Scan?

MM: Brain scan and we go through all kinds of testing.

GK: That's great, that's great.

MM: Yeah. This last time, I had a hard time.

GK: I think we all have that worry. So what makes you really happy?

MM: Well traveling and going different, I like to go and see my old friends and so I have my husband take me. And just to get together with people and I like to have people over, too. That is why I got this big house. There is just the two of us but we don't have room for us in it either because we don't throw anything away. We are from that old school.

GK: That's right.

MM: That you never throw anything away because I can always use it, someday.

GK: Yeah that Depression era.

MM: And I'm such a collector. I'm such a collector.

GK: So, so—

MM: My mother's things were stolen after the war and I collected all of these things that I have. It took me about twenty-five years to go to garage sales and yard sales picking them up.

GK: Oh is that right? You know that the Nikkei Foundation has a thrift store and if you have anything you want to get rid of, please take it there.

MM: Oh yeah.

GK: Anyway the one main question is how did the war experience affect you and your life? What helped you most during those hard times and what did you learn?

MM: Well, I think it helped me to be more aware of suffering people, people who suffer like us and the forgotten people. The ones that we never think of in society. I tend to gravitate towards these kinds of people because I can offer encouragement and hope and so that's why my heart went out to this woman on death row. And then when my nephew went to prison, then I felt I must go there too. And—

GK: If you can imagine that there were no World War Two what would your life might have been?

MM: Well like I said I might have been an actress or a writer.

GK: (laughing)

MM: You know I used to go to movies a lot. Oh, my favorite was Van Johnson and some of those old stars, you know, and Audrey Hepburn and Katherine Hepburn and Gregory Peck and oh I loved the movies. I really did. And I'd look at the movie and I could do that. I can do that you know. I would tell myself that I could do that. And my husband says do it. Oh, I'm too shy. (laughing)

GK: And the other question that they asked is if you can imagine there was another eviction order what would you do?

MM: Oh, I would fight it with all my tooth and nail and my gumption and whatever I have in me. I would fight it, of course. But it wouldn't happen. Too many of us would rise up.

GK: And after redress that we received, what kind of a role do you think Japanese-Americans should play in our society?

MM: I think that they need to let them know that as Japanese people because of our culture, we are a very strong people. And we were able to take this, being put into camps and suffered all that we did and still come up on top, after the war. And that tells me something. That tells me that we need to let them know who we are. We need to know reveal ourselves more to the majority of the population because their preconceived ideas is not who we are. We are more than that. And we are—we are a better people because we have suffered so much and what has been thrown at us. Nobody else could have taken it like us. I don't think so.

GK: Wow, profound saying. So what do you think are the greatest contributions by the Nisei men and women?

MM: They went out to prove—they gave their blood you know. They shed their blood for this country that cared so little about them that didn't even have a respect for them. And when I think of these young boys seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty who went over—I went over to Bruyeres you know and we had Sab and I and my daughter. We went together by ourselves and we went to Bruyeres to see this forest and this memorial and we had a memorial service ourselves. And you know I thought to myself the boys were killed in this area and they gave their blood you know and we must not let this blood go for vain. And by keeping quiet and by not sharing ourselves and not telling our stories and not revealing more of ourselves and not I think for their sake. We owe it to them and I don't think we should ever forget that. Our—we need to tell our young people you know you have it good today because of those young boys that gave their life. And I don't want you ever to forget that. These young boys didn't get to get married. They didn't have their families. They weren't able to have what you have because they

sacrificed for you. You know a great sacrifice was paid for you and so we need to let the young Yonsei, Gosei generation, Sansei generations, we need to tell them you owe a debt to society. To the Japanese-American people to be the best you can and go out there and fight, fight for the right, fight for justice. Not for only yourself but for people who don't get justice in society. And fight for doing the right thing. Too many people are doing the wrong thing. Too many people are telling lies to cover up their own whatever it is you know. And President Bush saying that the weapons of mass destruction and there wasn't even any mass destruction weapons found. And you know people in government places, lying to the American people is got to stop some place. The truth has got to free us somehow.

GK: Good for you.

MM: I mean again I'm a soap box.

GK: I like it. That is wonderful. So, what do you think was your greatest achievement?

MM: My greatest achievement is that I raised my three girls so that they are on their own. And you know, I talked to my youngest, the middle daughter and I said I bet you think as parents we want you to watch over Carise and Alisa and the tears just shot out of her eyes.

GK: Oh.

MM: You know because we don't talk about it. And I said, "I don't expect you to do that." And you know God has a purpose for her life and you have to do that which God is leading you to and it's our job as parents that Carise and Alisa is taken care of and until we do, we can't die. And so now that it is taken care of and she's married and has those two wonderful boys there it's—I have a sense of accomplishment as a mother because

that's who I cherish as a person is that I'm a mother. Forget about anything else I might have done in life. But I raised those three girls you know. Sab and I raised the three girls and I think when I can say that that's my greatest accomplishment.

GK: Okay, and I should have asked how is it that you went to Bruyeres? Was Sab in the military?

MM: No he was not in the military.

GK: Oh.

MM: My daughter is an optometrist and the bank told her we'll, for opening up a new account with us, we'd like to give you tickets to France for real cheap. I think we paid, I forgot, maybe a hundred dollars or something like that.

GK: Oh gee.

MM: Airfare to France so my daughter calls me up and said, "Mom do you want to go to France?" And I said, "Oh sure, someday when I get the money you know." And so she said, "No, I opened and account and I get these tickets for such a cheap price, let's go." And I said, "Sure we'll go." So that's how we went. And my dream was to be invited by somebody over there in their home and you know somebody invited us to their home. The little flower shop lady that we bought the flowers from. We told her we were here to service for the boys and she knew about it you know. All the people in Bruyeres know about it. So we want to take it over there and take it to Epinow, the US Cemetery, over there for the boys over there. So we had a service over there and we had a service in Bruyeres. And we said prayers and everything at Bruyeres but at Epinow we sang. We sang—the three of us sang you know. We are in kind of this chapel like place and the—

and the guard or whatever you call it—the guy that is in charge there he waited outside and he was so impressed you know.

GK: Oh that's great.

MM: But my sister—my daughter started to sing and we joined her and the three of us sang and it sounded so pretty you know.

GK: Oh that's great.

MM: So I'll never forget it. It was just sort of very worshipful you know. Because we put our hearts in it and it was a wonderful experience.

GK: That's great. Okay, so we're nearing the end of this interview. Is there anything else you would like to say? Do you have any questions for me? And we really thank you for sharing. This is such a warm and exciting story.

MM: Oh thank you.

GK: Story to tell.

MM: Well, I always worried about the future, the future, future, future I worried about. And when we trust in God, somehow the future is all right. And I would like young people to know they don't have to fear the future, if they trust in God. It's a scary thing you know to trust in God like that but I feel it's the one thing we can encourage the young today that when they trust in God for their life, their life will turn out all right. You don't have to worry about the things I worried about all those years. I carried it on my shoulders and I had tight shoulders and I carried it in the back of my head and look how it happened. Everything worked out so I said, "Mottai nai, you know." I worried all those years for nothing when God took care of it all. And I'm so grateful and I feel like I'm the most blessed person in this world. You know.

GK: That's right.

MM: I'm really blessed. I've had a wonderful life suffering and all I've had a wonderful life. So I'd like to tell that.

GK: Thank you very much. Thank you. That was a wonderful interview.

MM: I appreciate that.

GK: Thank you so much. Thank you.