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Title: Keith One Interview
Narrator: Keith One
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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<Begin Segment 5>

AT: 15:15 And um, so was most of your upbringing in Palantine then?

KO: 15:20 Oh yeah. Yep. Went through grade school, junior high and high school. So yeah, I lived there entire-and my mother still lives in the same house today.

AT: 15:34 And you have two younger brothers? Um...

KO: 15:37 Yes.

AT: 15:39 And what years were they born?

KO: 15:42 Well, uh, Darrell was '55 and then Jeff who's here also with me in '59.

AT: 15:51 And, um, can you tell me a little bit more about what that was like growing up in, in Palatine?

KO: 16:00 Well, um, I said our, our neighbors were welcoming, you know, I think when we went to school, um, it was a little bit different, right? Palatine at the time was just all Caucasian. There were no, no minorities. There are no African Americans, no Asian Americans. I was the only one, basically. Kindergarten was pretty, there wasn't much issue. I think when you're five years old, kids don't know the difference really. Um, but in first grade I had a different experience. And um, this is kind of interesting because, you know how you do the school pictures, you take school pictures, you get all dressed up, take the school picture, and then you wait for it to come. And then you bring it home from school and you give it to your parents, right. And it's got, you have the big picture and it's got all the little ones, all just in there. Anyway, um, my mom pulls out that picture of me in the first grade and I did not have a smile on my face. It was more of a frown. And she goes, 'oh, what's,' she says, 'what's wrong? How come you look so unhappy? Why do you look so unhappy?' And I said, 'well, oh, what, you know, I don't, I don't like this.' And she said, 'well, what is it that you don't like?' And I said, 'well, I don't like my face.' And my mom said, 'well, why don't you like your face? You know, you have a cute face.' And I said, 'it's different.' And that was what, that was in first grade, probably my first, you know, realization that I was different. I mean, at least physically different because kids told me I was.

AT: 17:52 Even at that young age.

KO: 17:54 Oh yeah.

AT: 17:55 First grade.

KO: 17:55 Yeah, yeah. So I remember in grade school and the early years, there was always a few kids that would make fun. You know, they'd say, you know, call me a Chinaman or they, um, or they would, you know, do things with their eyes, you know, and they go, you know, you go, Oh, you know, [slants eyes with fingers] 'Chinese, Japanese', and they'd say American knees [points to knees]. I mean, jokes like that. So, you know, so I felt that, you know, that discrimination, certainly not pervasive, really wasn't pervasive, but there was always a few kids that were like that, you know, and at least early on, but I'd say after like three, four or five years maybe, because we became part of the community, part school, and I participated in sports and got involved in things, that all that eventually just went away, you know, and then, and eventually other minorities started to move in. Some they had that one family I mentioned to you that were discriminated against. Um, there were a couple other Asian families that moved in when I was in high school, that kind of thing. American, uh, African American family too. So it became a little bit more diverse, not as diverse as it is today, but back then it was pretty, you know, getting pretty, uh, a little bit more diverse than it used to be. So that all that kind of went away. But when I grew up, I always felt, since I grew up with mostly Caucasians, I just felt like a Caucasian too. I mean, I just, all I saw were Caucasian faces around me and not really looking at my own. And so that's, that's how we grew up, my brothers and I.

AT: 19:43 And what about at home? Um, at home, did you, um, in what ways were you, you know, maybe connected to Japanese heritage if, if at all?

KO: 19:59 Well, that's the thing. I think, as I mentioned earlier, I think the effort, my parents effort was, let's become, let's embrace becoming Americans. And when we would eat meals at home, my mother would cook every day. We'd have the normal spa-, we'd have spaghetti, we'd have meatloaf, we, you know, we have chicken, all that kind of stuff. But the, but one constant we always had though was rice. So no matter what the meal was, there was always rice. And I think it was because my father, he would always want rice no matter what it was. And, um, I remember one day she served something, which I forgot what it was that didn't demand rice at all. And he just said, hey, where's the rice? You know what I mean? He just, it was just expected to have it every day, no matter what the meal was. So, um, so I remember that. But other than that, you know, everything was American to the 'T' in terms of, you know, how we lived, the clothes we wore, the food we ate, everything else. But there was still, I mean, we had extended family and we'd get together for holidays. New Year's was, was especially popular time where we could eat Japanese food. Um, so we kind of stayed in touch with the, with the Japanese side, but most of the year we just lived as regular Americans.