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Title: Ben Chikaraishi Interview
Narrator: Ben Chikaraishi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location:
Date: October 31, 2017
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-11-1

<Begin Segment 1>

Anna Takada: 00:00:00 So to start, can you just state your full name?

Ben Chikaraishi: 00:00:03 My name is Ben Tsutomu Chikaraishi.

AT: 00:00:07 Okay and where and when were you born?

BC: 00:00:10 I was born in 9- September, the 10th, 1921. In Colusa, California a little, little city of about 2000 people, about 40 miles northwest of Marysville.

AT: 00:00:30 And how long were you- were you and your family there in Colusa?

BC: 00:00:36 Well, my father had two people when was there in, in the 1920s and they started the cleaner businesses just with two people and they started this business and then two years they found out that two people cannot make up the living on cleaners, so they drew straws and two of, two of the three partners went farming and my father was one of them. And then from there we've moved, to- Colusa- wait- from Colusa we went to Live Oak, and then to Marysville, California. And then from Marysville we came to Chicago in 1930.

AT: 00:01:36 Which which town were your first memories in?

BC: 00:01:42 Well, when I- when I was there, well, I was very young. So the as far as my memories is something going to school and such and, and my, my, my, my brother, my sister and myself, we used to walk to the school and these well the [unclear] dusty road and we had to look for snakes going by on the roads and go into a one, one room, country school. There we had one teacher teaching all ages of people that I remember very clearly.

AT: 00:02:24 And which, which town was that in?

BC: 00:02:26 That was in uh a Live Oak, California? Yes. And then Marysville was a, a, a ci, a lil, a bigger city and I stayed there for a while, but then they moved me to Chicago. I was nine years old and I left ah ah ah Marysville and came to Chicago.

Unknown: 00:02:53 Not Chicago?

BC: 00:02:53 Not Chicago, Stockton, Stockton, California.

AT: 00:02:56 Okay.

BC: 00:02:56 Oh boy. I'm skipping a few years!

AT: 00:03:01 And so in those early years in Live Oak were, was there a Japanese American community there?

BC: 00:03:13 No, in there, in those days there were, there was no, no, so, what they call, a small community. Ah, they were just practically farms and my father, like many other people never owned the farm. They leased the farm and, and they lease peaches. And then my father was growing rice for a few years, so there was, there were no, there was no community. Probably the nearest neighbor was maybe about, 5, 10 miles away.

AT: 00:03:48 And as far as your, your family, where were you all religious or did you do any activities outside of school?

BC: 00:03:57 Well, at that at that age I mean, no, the oldest, my brother helped a little bit on the farm but I was too young and my sister was too young. So- So there wasn't any, anything that we did or communicate with doing the community as far as that's concerned. No, not in those years yet, yes.

AT: 00:04:21 And can you tell me the names and the ages of your siblings, where you are in the birth order?

BC: 00:04:31 At that time or now?

AT: 00:04:33 Or just the age difference between you all?

BC: 00:04:34 Oh my, my, my. Well, why go back to all the history as far as my father and mother concerned. There- there were originally six in our family, and the first one passed away in Stockton when he was only 21 years old, from tuberculosis. And then a second one, passed away in Japan and he was 60- 78- no 68- 78? 68 years old. And then the- my other brother was in Lodi, California and he passed away when he was 66, and my sister just passed

away last year and she was 98 years old. And my, myself, I'm 96 now, I'm still living. And my sister, younger sister, passed away when she was 71 in Gardena, California.

AT: 00:05:46 So you are the second to youngest?

BC: 00:05:47 I was, I am the- I was the second youngest of the family, of the six, yes.

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