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Title: Ben Chikaraishi Interview
Narrator: Ben Chikaraishi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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- AT: 01:07:52 Did you know the folks who were working there?
- BC: 01:07:55 Yes. Well, yeah, um Koki Kawasaki was probably the first person there. And then there was Abe Hagiwara which is his...Every, every person in Chicago, any young person should know, should know, and I appreciate what he did for everyone because he was a social worker and he was set up, uh, we have, we take trips, we used to take trips, to YMCA camps and, and he used to, was a social worker and uh gradually, as more and more people, young people came with, we developed a lot of social activities. Uh, and, and uh, sports activities, and gradually, like, in our case, our church, um, eventually because the fact that we had to move to all an institute and we stayed there for about two years and then, uh, he was there at that time. He moved there too as a social director of the Olivet Institute. And uh, from there we, we developed basketball teams and, what they call the Japanese American Service. I mean uh, the JAS, CNA, Chicago, Nisei Aesthetic Association. And um, and then we had, we had mostly young people I think, but this building and we had.
- AT: 01:09:44 Were you, were you involved in organizing some?
- BC: 01:09:47 Yes, yes. Yeah. Abe and us and I think several others yeah, and we got. At that time there were quite a few churches, there was probably about six or seven Christian churches with that Japanese population two Buddhist church. And there were a lot of girls, teams, girls' social clubs and there they had had boys clubs and everything. And we assembled. The leader is different for every different group. Got together and said, why don't we set up a basketball team, league and that was the beginning of the league. And um, then after that'd we--well we had all different scenes, we had most of the games at the beginning. Was at Olivet Institute where Abe Hagiwara was the associate

director, but then the, the league got so big that we had to, to go to the, to rent some of the high schools' gymnasiums in the South Side. And eventually we moved to the Chute Junior High School in Evanston and we had our basketball games and um, on Saturday, all day Saturday and on Sundays from 1 o'clock. And then that became too small because we had a lot of girls team and we had some younger teams of people from maybe 12 or 13 and they had and then rented a Middle School, Haven School in the Nor, in Evanston. So. And then, and then from the basketball it was very big a league. And then we had towards the end of this season we had the team from Detroit, Cleveland, Minneapolis come through for a tournament. And so, and then from there we started baseball, baseball leagues and we had every Sunday we were able to rent a Grant Park and they have six baseball fields there. And so we use to occupy all six of them. And it was, it was, it was a lot of fun because we would, we would get, people will bring their lunches and we had the games from 1 o'clock and, and then yes.

- AT: 01:12:42 Were all of the participants Nisei,
- BC: 01:12:44 Pardon?
- AT: 01:12:44 Were all of the participants Nisei, in the league?
- BC: 01:12:52 Are they what?
- AT: 01:12:52 Um, everyone in CNAA was everyone Nisei, including the kids you were bringing in from Detroit and Cleveland?
- Mrs Chikaraishi: 01:13:00 It sounds like Nisei and Sansei weren't there?
- BC: 01:13:01 Oh yeah. We mostly, mostly, Nisei's when it started, but then, and then we got into the Sansei's because we started the leagues in 19, about 1946 and that was the only for mostly fellows and then, and then, uh, yeah, they had to expand to a younger groups of people coming. And then the Sansei. So we, the league itself, the CNAA was from 1946 to I'd say about 60. Yeah.
- AT: 01:13:37 And um, you were involved in organizing that through MBT, is that right?
- BC: 01:13:44 Yes. That MBT there were about three or three or four of us, Yas Hara another fellow from Christ Congregational Church and somebody from the, Mas Kimotsu from the CCP. And so different school. So we got, we always of got together to, to, to,

uh, set up the leagues. Yeah. And we had all the representatives of the different churches and everything come in.

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