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Title: Ben Chikaraishi Interview
Narrator: Ben Chikaraishi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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- AT: 01:26:47 So it seems to me that in the, your early days in Chicago, um, you were pretty involved with the Japanese American community.
- BC: 01:26:59 Yes. Yes. As much as I could. Yes.
- AT: 01:27:03 What, what drove you to want to be involved?
- BC: 01:27:08 Pardon?
- AT: 01:27:08 Why did you want to be involved? What drove you?
- BC: 01:27:11 Well, let's see. Well, there are so many young people in our churches and then, and in Japanese family that we knew that perhaps it'd be nice if they have some something that keep them busy, keep them out of trouble and it can hardly be happy to say that while we had our, ours CNAAs, we didn't have any person that we knew that it had gotten in trouble or did drugs and things like that. And so busy because we had a basketball, basketball season, baseball season, and we had track meets, we had volleyball and uh, all kinds of things. So all year round we were. And was, it was, it was nice. It had a, uh, not only help the young people, I think it helped the adults also because I, in order to maintain the teams, you know, we had to buy that job, the churches and everything. They had to buy a equipment for basketball and baseball and all the other things like that. And so, so practically every weekend we had different groups, different churches, and things, they had their, ah spaghetti dinner, we had a pancake breakfast, so we used to, we used to support almost every group that happened. So for the every day, every, every weekend we had ah going to different places. And so we not only got the young people playing the sports but for the parents. So, so it was very, very good.

AT: 01:29:02 And um, are you still involved with the Japanese American community today and the church?

BC: 01:29:10 Not, not, no, no, but, but even at that time or later, uh, after my wife and I got married and we had children and we had, we had to go to church to help at the church at uh almost every, every Sunday. And then, um, and uh, took so much time that we had more seats at the church. So I didn't to participate too much in the political activities, but mostly I, in the athletics and the social programs.

AT: 01:29:53 And what, how do you think, how does the, the Japanese American community in Chicago had, how would you compare it from those early days of resettling to today? What are some of the things you've seen change over the years?

BC: 01:30:16 The situation is so different now, you know, that at that time the church has probably the area where most of the social programs or recreational programs and cultural programs, uh, they were the center of, of the old activities. And so the people had to assemble at the different churches. Not just the Buddhist churches just but the other churches too. And then now, now that the Japanese people like in Chicago, as you know, have probably half of the Japanese people living in the suburb like you people probably do. And just ah half in the city and their recreational activities and source of community are so different. Um, they have more electronic games. There are different kinds of, uh, and those days, in the early days people did not have the means to, for all of those electronic things that they had but. And so the social, the athletics and such, were the only way that they can, they can spend their time.

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