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Title: Ben Chikaraishi Interview
Narrator: Ben Chikaraishi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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<Begin Segment 3>

AT: 00:13:24 And so you were at UC Berkeley in 1941. Can you, can you tell me about your, your recollections of the day Pearl Harbor was attacked-

BC: 00:13:40 P- pardon?

AT: 00:13:40 The day that Pearl Harbor was attacked. What, what were your recollections of that day? When you were at University of California?

BC: 00:13:51 When I went to school?

AT: 00:13:53 Because you were in school when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

BC: 00:13:57 Yes. You mean when the war started?

AT: 00:13:59 Mhm

BC: 00:13:59 Oh yes. That- I, I- definitely. It was so clear. I- I had at that day- it was a Sunday and I had come home from church, it was 1 o'clock, and I was- and at that time there were no televisions or anything, so I turned the radio on and start the clothes- changed my clothes to everyday clothes and then all I heard was that, that Pearl Harbor is being bombed, bombed and you hear the sirens. You can hear the bombs. You can hear the- all the noise of warfare, and it kept saying that a P- P- Pearl Harbor, Pearl Harbor is being bombed and I just couldn't believe it I just- because, I thought was another radio program, because at that time there was a very well known producer named Arch Oboler and he used to- he used to produce a radio programs that were really out of the ordinary and so I thought it was one of those. But they kept saying, this is a- a dial, I mean, a live report from and they were saying that the Missouri- the, the, the ship,

Missouri, was being- drowned. And then all of a sudden I realized it was, it was true, the war was going and, and so I just stood there for a few minutes and, and- what we going to do, what's going to happen? But, you know, so I-

- AT: 00:15:40 At that point, did you have- were you with friends or anyone that you knew? Like at that time that you went to the new school?
- BC: 00:15:53 Well, yes, we, we- when I was going to school we- we lived at a Japanese boarding house, so there were about eight of us in the house. And some of them- because of the war- start of the war, they decided to go home right away. And my sister, meanwhile, called me and told me, "Please try- try to stay in school as long as I could." Because I was only a one- going to be- it was about three months away from my graduation, for my degree. And so I was able to see there- stay there until exactly three weeks before I graduated. Then they order from 9066 came and so my sister called me, "Please come right away because we're going to have to have to go to one of the assembly centers and so I went home right away. So I only had one year- one month before graduation. And I stayed there, yeah.
- AT: 00:17:04 Do you remember, like how- some of your thoughts and and feelings at the time?
- BC: 00:17:14 It was just- just a matter of wondering what's going to happen. Didn't know- what was going to happen to us because as the enemy I had no idea that we would be- asked to leave- into any kind of concentration camps or anything like that. But we wondered about the safety of our being as far as the town is concerned, as far as the- But- there wasn't too much- I just think that- what couldn't happen.
- AT: 00:17:54 Did any- besides- like in the immediate days and weeks following Pearl Harbor, did anything change in your daily life?
- BC: 00:18:06 Well, yes. We got the day after Pearl Har- Pearl Harbor, two- FBI agents, came to our house- and told our, told my father that please pack, pack a small suitcase or whatever you want because you are going to be incarcerated. And that was 9 o' clock in the morning, say about 7 o'clock in the morning. And then my sister told them, gee, let him have have coffee and they waited by the door and then after that they took- they didn't say a word as far as taking- why, why he was being taken prisoner, as far as concerned. And they put'em into the county jail together with several people in the city. And for awhile I couldn't understand most of the, the- tea- Japanese school

teachers or the administrators, a couple of the business administrators- people that were active in community, were all approached and, and, and taken the same day. And- from I can understand, that they had a list of about 3200 people that were to be immediately, after the war, taken into- So, so from, from there, they stayed in the county, county jail for sev- two days. And then they went to San Francisco and then they were sent to a, uh, Missoula, Montana, then then they were moved to Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and then then finally to Louisburg where they- where he spent about three and a half years in the concentration camp. And these were the regular concentration camps. They were not the W- WRAs concentration camp, but they were, they were set up by the Jus- Justice Department, so they were very, so they were into these concentration camps with German prisoners and Italian prisoners.

AT: 00:20:27 But as far as where he was actually going, you learned all of that after the fact, right? At the time, you all didn't- They didn't say where your father was going?

BC: 00:20:40 We have no idea. They won't say a word. And it was one year, one month before we knew where he was. Whatever letters we sent they were all- well, and whatever the letters that they sent- they, they, they crossed out, all of those important locations and dates and everything. So we have no idea. And finally we found out where they were.

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