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Title: Ellen Watanabe-Huxtable Interview  
Narrator: Ellen Watanabe-Huxtable  
Interviewer: Anna Takada  
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Anna Takada: 00:00:00 To start, can you state your full name?

Ellen Huxtable: 00:00:02 Sure. My name is Ellen Watanabe-Huxtable.

AT: 00:00:05 And where and when were you born?

EH: 00:00:07 I was born in Chicago in 1953.

AT: 00:00:11 Okay. And so like I mentioned, we'll be interested in hearing a little bit about, um, your family's background and your parents specifically. So I guess to start, are you Sansei?

EH: 00:00:27 Ah, yes.

AT: 00:00:28 Okay. And then do you know anything about when your grandparents came to the US?

EH: 00:00:32 I know about my paternal grandparents. My paternal grandfather and grandmother had one child in Japan. My eldest aunt, who I never did get to meet, and then they immigrated to California to San Jose, I believe actually by way of Hawai'i at one point, but they did, did land in, in San Jose. And uh, my grandfather worked a number of jobs in that area. He was a, he, both my paternal grandparents were in the trades. My paternal grand, my maternal grandfather was a gardener. My paternal grandfather did lots of things. He did, I believe he did some gardening, he did some handyman work, things like that in, in Southern California. And my paternal grandparents were in the Los Angeles area. See my maternal grandparents were in Los Angeles, paternal ones were in San Jose. I'm sorry.

AT: 00:01:35 Did you know your grandparents?

EH: 00:01:36 I did not ever meet my paternal grandparents. I did know my maternal grandparents when I was little. At that time, after the war, they did return to the Los Angeles area, as did my maternal side, aunts and uncles, aunt and uncles returned to the Los Angeles area, so they were all in Los Angeles and my parents relocated to Chicago after the war.

AT: 00:02:00 And then as far as your, your parents go, how old were they? When the war broke out?

EH: 00:02:09 They were, in their, probably in their thirties because they were born, they were in their thirties when the war broke out, so they had established jobs. My mother worked for a dental office. My father worked in the, in the, in the produce markets in Los Angeles. And my mother worked as a receptionist for a dentist who was Jewish and when the war was eminent, war with Japan is eminent, he offered to relocate my mother to live with his sister, uh, outside of the exclusion zone or what would have become the exclusion zone. And so he offered to have his sister house her and feed her, and so for the duration of the war, and my mom decided against that, she turned down the very generous offered because my grandparents were alive and nobody knew what was gonna happen. And so she needed, she felt she very much needed to be there with her parents no matter what was gonna happen. So she respectfully declined her, her boss's offer to relocate and be spared from the exclusion.

AT: 00:03:16 Do you have any idea or sense of where exactly the sister was living?

EH: 00:03:20 Somewhere in the Midwest. It was significantly off, out of the exclusion somewhere in the Midwest.

AT: 00:03:25 Hmm. And then how about your dad?

EH: 00:03:30 My dad worked in the produce markets. Um, he was here. My paternal grandfather was here. My paternal grandmother had returned to Japan with all of the younger children. And so my, my dad was here with his, with his father. The family history in that case was my paternal grandparents came to this country to make money and go back to Japan. And my, the plan was, and what happened was my, my paternal grandmother took all of the children back to Japan and my grandpa, my father was about 11 to 14 years old when that happened, so she took all the children, including my father back to Japan, and my father spent a year or two in school in Japan, which was very difficult for him because he didn't know that much Japanese and was

put in with the class as much younger children because of that. And my grandfather on my father's side was supposed to have closed down the boarding house, which they ran, ran a boarding house in southern California. He was going to sell the boarding house, close it down, and go back to Japan as well. And in that one year period, my paternal grandfather was victim of carbon monoxide poisoning. He had abrasion of coals in his room, let off carbon monoxide, and he was mentally disabled. And so a family friend wrote to Japan and said, he cannot, he cannot survive on his own. He can't come back. So at the age 14, my father came back from Japan to the United States all by himself being the eldest son to watch out for his father. And so when the war broke I would just several decades later, um that's why my, my paternal grandfather and my father were the two members of that side of the family that were in, uh, in southern California at the time my father worked with my uncle and my maternal side, which is how he ended up meeting my mother. And so that's how they knew they were very close families even before the war broke out.

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