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Title: Ellen Watanabe-Huxtable Interview  
Narrator: Ellen Watanabe-Huxtable  
Interviewer: Anna Takada  
Location: Chicago, Illinois  
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<Begin Segment 1>

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, 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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**<Begin Segment 2>**

- AT: 00:05:38 Can you tell me about what happened to both families when the executive, what are, when the executive order went out, but when the evacuation happened?
- EH: 00:05:49 When that happened, everybody was at, was in the Los Angeles area at the time. And so when that happened, the families were evacuated as the exhibit, as it's described, in family units. So my mother was in the family unit with her, her parents and her and her brother and her, her parents, her sister, her younger brother. Her parents, her sister, I take it back, her parents, her sister, and one of her younger brothers. The other younger brother, on my mother's side, my uncle was in the US Army before Pearl Harbor and he was scheduled to be discharged for the US army in December. Unfortunately, Pearl Harbor happened right before he was discharged and when Pearl Harbor happened, nobody was discharged. And so he did, my one uncle did serve during the war in the US Army, uh, a stateside in a very isolated capacity, but he did serve in the US Army for the duration of the war. And when he was home on leave, he would be going to the Manzanar Relocation Center to go home on leave.
- AT: 00:07:07 Do you know if either family unit went to an assembly center?

EH: 00:07:12 Yeah, they went to the Santa Anita Racetrack. Both of them both went to the Santa Anita Racetrack. And uh, from there were transferred to Manzanar. Um, my father had at Manzanar, was one, I think he was probably in charge of the athletic programs there. So he was a, he had been a summer pro baseball player before the war and organized the sports and sports activities in Manzanar. He also ended up organizing the artificial flower making factory or whatever you want to call it, activity at Manzanar because that was something that was, that he had a skill and that he'd been in the floral industry prior to the boards, well, he understood flowers but knew how to construct artificial flowers out of crepe paper, wire, things like that. And so he, he was active in the camps as a sports coordinator. Um, and certainly member of the base, Manzanar Knights baseball team.

AT: 00:08:20 And do you know anything about his, uh, his time in as a semi-pro?

EH: 00:08:27 Yeah. When he was in semi-pro ball, there was a Japanese, a Japanese American semipro baseball team, and had a number of them. They had a league actually prior to the war and he played for a one of the, the LA Nips and it was the LA Nips baseball team. He played locally. They also traveled to Japan prior to the war twice to play against teams in Japan. And so he had been in the team of for, a period of time before the war. He was also very active before the war in a group called the Oliver's. There was a woman in Los Angeles, a, a Caucasian woman who was, seems to be sort of like the, the, the Hull House for the Japanese American youth in Los Angeles, and that was a very active group as well that my, my, my grandfather, my father was part of.

AT: 00:09:28 And then how about your mother? So she also went to Santa Anita and then Manzanar. Did she take up work in camp?

EH: 00:09:32 There really wasn't a lot of work available and so most of the people, including my mom, really didn't have a job everybody, had the stipend that they received for, to buy incidentals, but she didn't really have a formal job in the camp. However, to pass the time she made an incredible collection of lace, doily tablecloths. So I have a lot of lace, handmade, beautiful lace doily table class because she was very adept at that. They had lots and lots of time and sometimes we have some very, uh, very, uh, dramatic pieces of artwork because of that.

<Begin Segment 3>

- AT: 00:10:12 And then, do you know how long each family unit was in camp?
- EH: 00:10:19 I don't know exactly. I know that my father, my father came out of camp relatively early because the, as he explained to me when I was little, as the war was starting to wind down the word went out in camp that you could leave camp and see if you could find a job and if you could, you could stay out. If the sentiment was so strong against the Japanese community that it was dangerous for you or you couldn't find work, then come back to the camp because at least you'll safe you'll be fed. So my father came out to Chicago because it was known that Chicago was relatively accepting of the Japanese community. So he came out to Chicago first and wrote back to my mom saying, I'm in Chicago and my parents weren't married yet. Saying, I'm in Chicago and it's livable here. If you want to come out, I'll watch out for you. And so at that time, according to my parents, my mom they were hanging out in the group of guys and women and my mom went and told the people that evening "Gee, Min--who was my father--Min wrote and said that Chicago is livable. And invited me to come out and some of the guys that were there say, well, hey, we're leaving for Chicago in the morning early and if you want to, if you want to come with us, be at the gate at 6 o'clock. And my mom's said, sure, I'll go with you. And they said, no you won't. She said, sure I will. So in the morning there was my mom with her suitcase to leave the camp with these guys we have with my dad in Chicago. So that's when my parents ended up coming here and I know from JASC and that they've done graphic things about about where the Japanese community located. My parents located on the North Side. We lived, they lived first of all at the corner of probably Clark Street and near Clark and Chicago Avenue, or Clark and Chestnut was. There was a boarding house where they lived first initially and then they moved to a four-flat building on Chestnut Street. So when I was. When they were living at the 11 East Chestnut, which was a very residential neighborhood, and my uncle, my father's younger brother also came out to Chicago and always stay geographically very close to my parents and my family. So he lived in the same building.
- AT: 00:12:44 Was this the uncle who was serving?
- EH: 00:12:44 No, this wasn't. This was my paternal uncle, my maternal youngest brother, my maternal youngest brother went back to Los Angeles with, uh, with my grandma, my maternal grandparents. And so they got married. He got married after the war.

AT: 00:13:03 For your dad's family, his siblings and his mom had been in Japan during the war?

EH: 00:13:11 Yeah. His siblings and mom had been in Japan. They lived in rural Japan and uh, they were from Kumamoto-ken and I don't know, I believe that they probably went back to, I don't know, they probably did think about it. So they were back in Kumamoto-ken. Um, my father had told me that one of his younger sisters, my aunt and her husband, because they were in their twenties, late twenties, early thirties were married. They were living in Hiroshima. And when the bomb went off in Hiroshima, my aunt and my uncle were, were spared because they were there visiting in the country so they were not, they were Hiroshima residents, they were not Hiroshima at the time of the bomb. And so that's, you know, it was very fortunate. It was extremely fortunate for them.

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**<Begin Segment 4>**

AT: 00:14:01 Are there any, um, does your parents ever share any particular memories or stories?

EH: 00:14:12 Mhmm

AT: 00:14:12 Are there any of the family?

EH: 00:14:14 Well, there's a couple of them, but that don't involve family members. There's a, when the, the movie on television Farewell to Manzanar came out. One of the episodes that was related in there was when there was somebody that was being pursued by a mob that at the camp and went to the hospital to hide because in the camp there's not a lot of places you can hide. And so the, the family history was that in the movie they said that they put them in the laundry or something like that. And when my parents and I were watching, when I was younger and my parents said naw, he wasn't in the laundry, they put him, my parents they had put them underneath a woman that was in labor in the maternity wing. He so you think he wasn't in the laundry, he was under a woman that was in labor. That's where they put him. So I don't know whether that's true or not, but that's what they, their recollection was, and there are other recollection was that there was a. A young man who was a little, slightly mentally handicapped and a ball roll too close to the fence and he was shot by a guard. Not fatally, but that was

another one of the things that they remembered as being one of the episodes that they remembered from camp.

AT: 00:15:22 Did your parents talk about their experiences with you, when you were growing up?

EH: 00:15:27 They did and my parents were of the opinion that it was important to know and so they would tell me things about, I knew about the Camps. I didn't know, um certainly, they didn't overplay the hardships, but they told me that that's where they met a lot of their friends and in fact when I was little and they would talk about their friends, they were trying to identify who knew who it was like, oh yeah, that was so and so. Who are they? Well, they were in Block 22 and, and that's how they related to each other. Oh, that sounds like, they were in Block 15. So they were far away geographically. So that was there like as somebody from Evanston or somebody from Wilmette. No, they were from Block 22, they were from Block 21. And so that was their geographic reference, who, when they were meeting new people that uh, that, that relocated into the Chicago area.

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**<Begin Segment 5>**

AT: 00:16:19 And when they came to Chicago, what kind of work did they do?

EH: 00:16:24 My father was working in a brewery, they worked wherever they could find. My father worked in a brewery and afterwards he said, did you know how they make beer? You said you would never touch the stuff again because of course at that time it wasn't quite the same thing as Anheuser Busch with the beautiful horses and the Clydesdales, it was probably very, very basic and so he said if you don't know how the conditions under which brewery's, you'd never drink it again. And so he worked at brewery at first, then went to work in the floral industry. He was a floral designer when I was born in 1953. He was a floral designer, whereas before what would that time was Anna Flower Shop, which was the preeminent florist in Chicago. They did the cotillions, they did all the social engagements. They did the flowers for Holy Name Cathedral was a very eminent, a florist in Chicago. My mom worked again as a secretary. So my mom got a secretarial positions. She had clerical skills and typing skills. So she worked in a secretarial position?

AT: 00:17:27 Do you know where she did?

EH: 00:17:27 Not initially. I don't know where she worked initially. Um, so I, I can't remember where she worked initially, I don't know.

AT: 00:17:36 And then the floral business, do you know where that was located?

EH: 00:17:41 That was on the North Side of Chicago actually, and my dad was able, was able actually to walk toward from, from where we lived. And so it was, um, but that was where he went ultimately when I was born, when I was born and little. That's where he worked for, for that period of time.

AT: 00:17:59 And do you have any siblings?

EH: 00:18:01 Nope. It's just me. The, the North Side of Chicago was interesting. There was, besides myself, my best friend in elementary school was Japanese American, also Sansei. And so there was the, my family, her family. Um the Kawasaki family with three sons, and ah the Higashigawa family with one son. And so there was in a school that was very small, we had a good number of Sansei all going to the same elementary school at the time. So that was very interesting.

AT: 00:18:35 Which school was it?

EH: 00:18:35 That was the William B. Ogden school, which was on State Street in Walton. And so there was a cluster, a significant cluster of Japanese Americans that lived there. Toguri Mercantile was just down the street. And uh, of course Mrs. Toguri was there. And uh, was a member of the community and people knew that that was her background is Tokyo Rose had been, but it was something that was just part of the past and we all knew that and was accepted as, as just, just the fact of the past.

AT: 00:19:10 Do you recall any other Japanese American businesses or um?

EH: 00:19:16 It was fun to right within walking distance of there, there was, um, there was Clark Restaurant which was run by three Japanese brothers at the corner of Clark Street and Chestnut. And they were the Joichi brothers and there was Rowland Joichi, Oscar Joichi and Chester Joichi. Three brothers ran a greasy spoon restaurant, it was very efficient. The one brother had the breakfast shift, the one brother had the lunch shift and the other brother had the dinner shift. And so they were very well established. Um very popular with the Chicago Avenue Police District because any officer that came to their restaurant, no matter what day it was, a dollar and coffee was always free.

There were the safest restaurant in all of Chicago. And so that was one of the businesses that was there. Um, Star Market was the, was the grocery store that was there and uh, that was a little bit further away, but, uh, that, that was when the neighborhood grocery stores. Of course, totally Toguri Mercantile was there. And um, so those are the Japanese businesses that I remember being in the area.

AT: 00:20:34 And then uh, what about for doctors and dentists? I know a lot of folks were going to Japanese American services when possible?

EH: 00:20:49 Actually my parents really didn't. We used, I was born at, at, at a Wesley Memorial Hospital, which is part of the union, of the Northwestern campus now, but all of our doctors were pretty much a Caucasian. All of our professionals, pretty much Caucasian at the time.

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**<Begin Segment 6>**

AT: 00:21:07 And then, um, how about, was your family religious at all or did you have any activities outside of school?

EH: 00:21:15 We were, we were not religious. I would periodically go to one of the local churches with some of my friends, the, we did go to the Buddhist Temple to the Buddhist Temple of Chicago once a year in January for my grandfather's memorial. Um, my, my paternal grandfather came to Chicago as well, along with my father, brought his brother and his father to Chicago and my paternal grandfather died the year before I was born, so I never got to meet him. But he died in Chicago. And at the time he passed away, it was in January, my my of 1952. My parents didn't know anybody. My father made blind calls and ended up calling Reverend Gyomay Kubose, who had just started the Buddhist Temple in Chicago. And so Reverend Kubose presided at my grandfather's funeral. And my parents were always, you know very appreciative that, very much a, we got over the many, many decades. We got very close to, to the Buddhist temple. Uh, my parents were Christian though and uh, so that every year consistently you'd go once a year to the Buddhist temple. And when my father passed away, he wanted the, his memorial service presided over by Reverend Kubose. And then the pastor of the church that my husband and I went to. So we had this half Christian, half Buddhists memorial service, my father. But Reverend Kubose was, you know, very, very active

and had a very dynamic and still, still very dynamic under his son.

- AT: 00:22:54 So the reason for reaching out to to BTC this had less to do with the Buddhist affiliations.
- EH: 00:23:08 That was because my grandfather was Buddhist and so my. My father felt that he wanted to honor his father's preferences that he knew of and so he reached out to, he was looking for a Buddhist, a connection to honor my grandfather.
- AT: 00:23:28 And you said that sometimes you would go to church with friends. What were some of those churches?
- EH: 00:23:35 Oh, when I went on my for a while to Fourth Presbyterian, because this was on the North Side. And then I went for a while as a little bit older to El Masales, which is a church that drew a lot of it's Sunday school teachers from Moody Bible. So those are the two churches I went to. There was also a church I, I wish I could remember where it was. There was a church that had a large Japanese American congregation that we went to once or twice, but it was geographically too far away, so we didn't go very often. As far as social things go, my Dad played golf with the 19th Hole Golf Club, which is how I know San Utsunomia Who was on the video, because he was one of my dad's golfing buddies. And my mom and I would tag along often, so I know San very well at least when I was 10, 11, 12 years old. And so that was one of the very strong unifying things for the for my father and getting involved in, in the, in the larger Japanese community. And so there was. That group was called the 19th Holers. They played local courses. There was some are private and there's another group called the 19th of the call, the cavaliers golf group, and they were out of a church because they only played on Saturdays because all of them went to church on Sundays, which is really nice as opposed to my dad's golf club who were a little bit more non religiously affiliated who golfed on Sunday morning, at six in the morning. But uh, eventually those two Japanese American golf groups came together and so then they became the 19th Cavaliers and the all golfed together as a unit.

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**<Begin Segment 7>**

- AT: 00:25:12 And so how long was your family been uh over on the north side of Chestnut.

EH: 00:25:19 We were there until I was out of the eighth grade, so that would've been 15, 16, til the mid sixties probably. And during that time that particularly had great turnover, it was residential when I was very little. It became highly nightclub oriented as Rush street, which is right there, moved, was expanding, so it became a very, a very dynamic nightclub neighborhood. It was highly nonresidential. And so then our family kept on moving further north. We moved up to right by Wrigley Field for a while and lived there. The people that owned the restaurant at Clark and Chestnut moved their restaurant up to up to the north side of Chicago right by Wrigley Field. Um, so their restaurant moved. At that time there was already a small Japanese, oh, a small restaurant owned by a Japanese person on a very small triangle of land on Clark Street, right by Wrigley. Um

AT: 00:26:15 Do you know what that was called or where exactly it was?

EH: 00:26:17 It was like Hamburger Heaven or something.

AT: 00:26:21 Hamburger King?

EH: 00:26:21 Hamburger King. Somebody's told you about Hamburger King already?

AT: 00:26:25 It was even around in my lifetime.

EH: 00:26:28 Okay. It was on a little tiny triangle of land and they had like seven little stools in it and it was bizarre. And then I went across the street from, that was Nisei Lounge, which was the bar that had pool tables and when my family moved up that way was my favorite hangout, which is pretty fun because it was a bar and he didn't, he never drank. Having seen how beer is made, he didn't want to touch the stuff. And so, but he would go there frequently to play for the Nisei Lounge, which was happily happily next door to the restaurant, has, door passed between that and the Japanese restaurant moved up from Clark Street. So it was a very nice little microcosm community. Star Market was just a few blocks down on properly Belmont and Clark. And so there was, there was a relatively compact Japanese community at that time.

AT: 00:27:16 Would you happen to remember the name of the re, the new Clark restaurant?

EH: 00:27:22 Oh gosh, that's a good question. It was Clark Restaurant and it became, I can't remember. I'll have to think about that one. Good question.

AT: 00:27:32 And how about your address with what streets were you living on?

EH: 00:27:36 When I lived, when we moved up north, I always in high school then, which would have made it in, in the late sixties, late sixties. And it was, we lived at 921 West Cornelia, which is one of the court buildings. It's just down the street from Wrigley field. We lived, we lived in, in the court, which put us very close to both the Japanese owned restaurant and the Japanese bar, which is very convenient.

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**<Begin Segment 8>**

AT: 00:28:03 Um, which school, did you go to?

EH: 00:28:05 I went to Francis Parker and so that, um, I would catch the bus on Clark Street, and ride the bus, the Clark Street bus down to school and then ride the bus back at the end of the school day. And so I would do that, some of our family, our family friends went to Senn and lived right across the street from Senn High School. Some of our very good family friends went to Senn.

AT: 00:28:26 Did you ever go to the Japanese cinema that was held out of Clark Street?

EH: 00:28:30 No, no but, but it was fun because um the person that I met was Omar Kaihatsu. And I remember him in the corridors and he was a very dramatic person. He had, he would wear his coat over his shoulders, sort of like a cape. They would go through the halls of the school is, as a very dramatic character and then on something else and it might have been on the drum core things that my son is involved in. Somebody else named Kaihatsu on there, on Facebook. So I texted him, I said, hi, are you by any chance related to Omar? And the person says, that's my father. How do you know him? I said well, because when I was in school he used to come through the corridors and I have no idea why he was there. It was because of the Japanese cinema and so I had no idea about the Japanese cinema, but I remember, I remember Omar Kaihatsu from that.

AT: 00:29:21 Were there other Japanese American students at Francis Parker?

EH: 00:29:25 Yeah, there was, the Hikawa sisters were there. And I'm thinking who else was there? Um, oh yeah, there's a couple of guys. Um, there are several other Japanese families there. The Kurahara's, Marty Kurahara was, one of, was another family there. And actually I need to look up, I need to look up the, the Hikawa's because they marched in the Nisei Ambassadors from the Bugle Corps. And that's what my son is researching now for his senior project probably feeding into a PhD thesis that he wants to do.

AT: 00:30:07 And then, your high school where they, were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

EH: 00:30:12 Not really. Not really. It was, um, it was very, not really, we didn't get involved in any. It's not like the, the, like the, the other kids did.

AT: 00:30:24 And how would you describe your overall school experience in Chicago as you were growing up?

EH: 00:30:31 It was fine. I think that there was, I never really experienced any discrimination. I never experienced anything that was racial or hatred. The kinds of things that people accepted just as part of the culture then were very different than they are now. And that people would have the little, little things that playground that would say things like Ching Chong Chinaman sitting on a fence. Or they'd say, my father is Japanese, my mother is Chinese. And I'm both. There were many things that were racial. But at that time I truly never took offense. Nor did I think any other other children's parents are parents may or may not have. But as children at the time, um, it was, it was not said in hatred and it was like something like Jack and Jill went up the hill. It was a little diddy rhyme that never really, at least in my case, had that, uh, it's stinging impact at all.

AT: 00:31:31 And then uh, what happens after ah your family lived in Lakeview? Did you all move again?

EH: 00:31:42 We kept on moving more north, so after that we ended up moving up north up to Dam, up on Damen Avenue. Then we moved further north and ended up by Lincoln by Lincoln Avenue and Irving Park Road where like my parents had retired and lived there, had a very small house. Made my mother very happy because she didn't think she would ever have a house of her own. And so we moved up to up to there and that when I got married I moved with my husband, moved to where my husband was in Des Plaines. Well, my parents were in that house until they both passed away.

AT: 00:32:21 I'm sorry, they were both in the Lincoln and Irving house?

EH: 00:32:25 Yeah. Yeah. Which is off of Lincoln, Irving. They lived on Berteau, which is just north of Lin, Irving Park on Lincoln.

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**<Begin Segment 9>**

AT: 00:32:31 You had mentioned is, uh, your dad's involvement in the golfing club.

EH: 00:32:42 Mhm

AT: 00:32:42 Were there any ways that you personally found yourself involved with the Japanese American community?

EH: 00:32:52 Very marginally because we did not have, we did not have a car when I was little, so our transport our transportation was very limited when we needed a car. When you borrowed the car from the guy that worked the third shift at the Clark Restaurant, because he was there until one in the morning, so when we needed to car, we'd walk two blocks down to Clark Restaurant, ask the owner for his car keys, borrow his car, do whatever they wanted to at nights long as it was back by midnight or so. We return his car keys and walk home. And so we, I got, I didn't get involved a lot in, in the Japanese community at all really because there were not that many opportunities that were availed themselves.

AT: 00:33:34 And um, you could just help me clarify it. The brothers, at Clark Restaurant, was that the Joichi brothers?

EH: 00:33:44 Okay. It was a very eclectic restaurant and would you kind of think it would be interesting to make a television show about. Because it was three brothers only this restaurant, they had a polyglot of customers there was Misha and Yasha two Russian guys, one of who would do Russian dances in the middle of the restaurant when he felt so moved. One of whom looked like something that was like out of your typical cartoon character. I mean, just big guy. And so it was a very interesting place. You'd have people there that were down on their luck. You'd have to police walking in all the time. Um very, very interesting community at the time.

AT: 00:34:27 Can you describe the, what it looked like on the inside?

EH: 00:34:32 Sure. It was an interesting little restaurant. It was a little greasy spoon restaurant. There were probably eight tables that, four running down one long wall. On the other side, there was a counter with probably 10 benches. And in the middle there's probably two or three tables that would seat two people a piece. And the fun part about that of course is that the brother who ran the the dinner shift, which is the busiest, was the youngest of the brothers and kept everything in his head. He didn't cook. He didn't wash the dishes, but he waited all the tables. He bussed all the tables and he ran the register and the way he did it was quite amazing. He would get, you'd open the menu. You'd ask for, order your thing everybody would order what they wanted to and when you're done, we'd walk up to the register, he'd look at you say, okay, you had the meatloaf, the mashed potatoes, the coffee and the rice pudding for dessert you owe me and he would have the whole bill all split out, he'd know exactly what everybody had and how much they owed him. And so that's how he did it efficiently was all in his head. So it was a pretty interesting uh, thing to watch my uncle from my father's side who relocated to Chicago with my mom and my dad was their steady customer. He was there for dinner every night at the same time. It's 6:00. If I wanted to find my uncle, we knew where to go, we would go there. Was at the same table every night eating the same dinner every night. So it's really quite convenient if we needed to find my uncle.

AT: 00:36:08 And the location you described, is that its original location?

EH: 00:36:13 Yeah. Of the restaurant?

AT: 00:36:15 [Nods]

EH: 00:36:15 When they, when as far back as I can remember, which should've been in the mid-1950s, uh, they were already very well established there.

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**<Begin Segment 10>**

AT: 00:36:33 So what, what year would that have been that you moved out to this place? That wasn't in the city.

EH: 00:36:39 That would have been in 19, 1988 probably. So I was in the city for a long period of time.

AT: 00:36:50 And how did living in the suburbs compared to?

EH: 00:36:55 It was very different. Certainly I have to become a much better driver than I had been in the city and unfortunately I lost my, all my, my city sense of how the L's run and how the buses run and everything like that, because when I was in high school I was a, I was able to go pretty much anywhere in the city that I wanted to on public transit and I don't have that skill anymore unfortunately. And so that was one of the changes that had to become a much better driver than I than it had been before. But the, um, I think the Relocation experience was one for my parents, that was good. I mean, my, my, my aunts and uncles on my mom's side, we're back in Los Angeles. We'd go back to visit them once a year, sometimes once every other year but they had established their life over there and my parents had established their life's over here and it was a change that would have never happened had it not been for the war. I'm sure that my parents would have stayed in Los Angeles, can continue to do what they did there. It was a very different turn in their lives.

AT: 00:38:04 Do you know anything about your mom's family's experiences or what it was like going back to LA?

EH: 00:38:12 I don't know. When they, when my grandparents left camp. They, my mother's oldest sister was an optometrist prior to the war. My mother's, she was married to a dentist before the war, so they were both, two professionals. And after the war they bought a, a bungalow courthouse complex, which is, which actually on, um, on Google maps, the crazy building is still standing. It was old when I was a kid. And this stucco building is, is that they were at 985 and 4/5th South Ardmore in Los Angeles. It's still there. But they bought this section, I think it's 16 units and then an old farm house kind of house. And my grandma, my maternal grandparents ran the complex for my aunt, my uncle, and so they lived in the old firehouse house and they pretty much took in the rent, handed out the keys and somebody locked themselves out of their apartment and did the, the general oversight on behalf of my aunt and my uncles, my maternal grandparents lived their lives in a very comfortable existence because they had a place to stay in, in, uh, we're compensated, I expect in some way by my aunt for watching the property for her. So they were, that's where they lived until they passed away.

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**<Begin Segment 11>**

AT: 00:39:45 All of this information that you have about your family history and experiences, how did you get interested in learning about that? Or was the process like for learning all of this information?

EH: 00:40:03 My parents would always share everything and they would tell me about about family history. I know that my on my father's side, my, my, my great grandfather and my, according to family lore, immigrated from Japan to Hawai'i because she went to Yokohama Harbor, to see his friend off on the boat and decided he was going to jump on the boat and go with them and so and so that's how my, my great grandfather ended up in Hawai'i. He did work at, I think, owning a pineapple plantation and my grandfather, his son was evidently not much of a pineapple plantation farmer and ended up not following the family trade or the family business and I think that they lost. My understanding is they lost the plantation because not management, but so that's part of the family lore that, you know, my father would tell me about the stories about the past and um my parents, things would come up conversationally because as an only child I was always very careful that whatever was said in front of me as a child, the line was, don't repeat it. You got it. And so by, by having that degree of trust, I could hear an awful lot of things from my parents talking about things. And it was like, well, here's what's really happening and here's what so and so's did or has done or did and they would talk freely in front of me. So I just sort of sat there and listened and ended up finding out all sorts of things because because they were very comfortable and their friends, we're very comfortable talking in front of me. So I just learned just by listening to people what, you know, what things are like

AT: 00:41:54 That's um, from what I heard and learned from speaking with people. That seems pretty unusual. The, you know, hearing about these experiences.

EH: 00:42:05 My parents very much felt that this was something that was important and of course until things like this exhibit came, um, many people had no idea. Maybe people still have no idea as to what happened because there's, the tour guide was so apt to point out the camps were very carefully located there in places that people didn't know about. And so that there was lots and lots of just lack of knowledge about any of this happening. And my parents knew that and they felt that if people didn't speak up about about what did happen, that the memory would be lost in therefore the experience would be lost and it was too important for, it was too important that that not be lost.

AT: 00:42:52 And how do you feel about that?

- EH: 00:42:54 Well, I think that it is very important because in this, especially with all of the, the still latent fear and uncertainty and people being so afraid of difference and you can't blame people for being afraid of difference if they've never been exposed to or taught things, but I think it's important that the whole experience be remembered because people need to realize that yes, it can happen. Yes, it did happen. So that we as a society are going to be able to to cut it short, to avoid it. To say people can say, well, that will never happen, and the nice nice enough, the positive is that people can no longer say, that will never happen in this country. We know about the Holocaust and were it not for the Holocaust, we would people would say, that's impossible. How can people be so inhumane that can never happen, well it did. And then people can say, well, that kind of a profiling in segregation of a certain group that would never happen in the United States and and because of this we can say yes it can, and it did. So I think that's the part that's very, very important and that's what my parents very much wanted to have that remembrance. Not that it was anything that was family oriented only, but that there was bigger than that. This is something that was much bigger than that and that that collective society memory is not lost.
- AT: 00:44:39 Do you feel a responsibility or any kind of obligation as a Japanese American or or daughter of people who went through this experience to keep that alive?
- EH: 00:44:55 I think that, I think that's important. When people asked me about it, certainly, I share what my parents told me. I share their experiences that I know of. I definitely share it with my son because he, he's felt a very close affinity to my parents because my mom was alive when he, until the time he was in kindergarten and she was very close to where she was, old and frail, so she spent a lot of time staying with this for extended periods, so he got to be very close to her and he felt by assimilation close to my dad because my son was, always loved baseball. My dad, of course, played a, you know, semi pro baseball and so he always has felt that affinity for him. And so because of that, he's always wanted to know more about the, about the grandfather he never got to meet you. He wanted to know more about the background for my mom. So that, and so that makes it very easy to share with them some of the, uh, experiences. And also we have some items that my parents did save because they said, I know there's some people said we're going to get rid of everything that reminds us of any of that time. My parents did save some certain things from their period. Uh, we have a couple of pictures that were painted in the camp. One of them has to be my paternal, my paternal

grandfather and he was one of the people that went to Manzanar to build Manzanar. Because he had carpentry skills and there's a picture that was painted and of what I know is my paternal grandfather because I've seen pictures of him, it was a hand painted picture, cartoonish nature, and he looks just like Mario, in the Mario games. He was really short, stumpy size, very short, very stumpy, a mustache. He had the little slouched hat, he had little carpenter's apron and is carrying a big mallet in this, in this picture. Looks like a Japanese Mario. So I have things like that that there are pieces that my parents handed down to me and that my son has seen and when he's asked, he's done some school projects on Manzanar. And so when asked about school projects, I have the things that I have from my parents. I've shown them to him. So he knows what we have. I have the notebook my mom had when she was taking dressmaking at Manzanar. You mentioned how what did she do. They had lots and lots of opportunities for people to learn hobbies and so people that knew how to do something with would show others how to do, what do they knew. And so my mom took up dressmaking, which was wonderful. She was never very good at it. Her best friend was superb at it, which is really good, but my mother was never good at it, but she had detailed notes from her dressmaking class that I have her notebook and that has ended her address Manzanar is for her, her block in her barracks and unit number that she had.

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**<Begin Segment 12>**

AT:	<u>00:48:00</u>	Can you tell me a little bit about this book that you had mentioned before I started filming that you're working on, and what inspired you to do that?
EH:	<u>00:48:10</u>	Well, I have a book that I am. I do have to finish because it is important for family history, but when my son was very little, he was very, very upset that he never got to meet my father and his he and then when my mom passed away, that was a seminal moment for him that he was old enough to understand, but misses her, still misses her greatly and he was wishing that he would have had a chance to meet my dad. So I wrote a, a middle school, a young middle schoolish book, in a time travel mode. So in this book my son would have had the opportunity as a character in the book to go back in time to go to Manzanar and to engage with and meet my dad because my dad had questions very involved in baseball at the camp and then he would have a chance to develop that relationship that he never

had a chance to develop and so I wrote a draft of the book and very much from the heart and recognize of course, that that, that as far as plot development in complexity, it's not ready yet. It's not ready. I do need to do more, but certainly this is something that my son has had the opportunity to read and even when he was much younger, this is done when he was in middle school, young middle school. He's now in college and almost ready to get out. It's been a while, but at the same time it was, that prompted me to do a lot of research about Manzanar and the camp experience and when I started the book years ago now, there is almost nothing out there. There were the photos of Dorothea Lange through the photos of Ansel Adams. There was some things that Densho had pulled together, but there's very little out there and now that there's so much more available, I'm able to fill in a lot of the things in the book, some of the texture of the detail that was just not available before then. The Manzanar Free Press, uh, the newspaper there were, there were selected copies available as pdfs years now I know that the whole Manzanar Free Press has been digitized and is available. And that's how I found out about a lot of the things my dad did because his, with his profile in the athletic programs at Manzanar, his name does come up occasionally in the Manzanar Free Press. And family friends that I knew from when from childhood, their names come up in the Manzanar Free Press as well. So as I think about Chiyo Tashimo was a woman that was a professional bowler from the pro bowl circuit after the war, uh, an in-law of my mother's and she was a, she was a jock back and Manzanar, I mean she was uh, uh, I was a very athletic woman. She was a jock back in Manzanar, and that's all in the Free Press that she and her sister, who's my, um, my mom's sister in law, uh, they were both very athletic back, back in Manzanar. Things like that are, are fun things that as I find names of people I know, that are in there, and I remember them when I was a child and what they were like after the war. So it was always fun, it's fun for me to go back and look sometime.

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**<Begin Segment 13>**

AT: 00:51:39 Are there ways that you, do you think that there were any kind of lasting impacts or or legacies from the experience of the incarceration that we're kind of passed down to you or that you experienced in your own life?

EH:

00:52:04

I think that if it's something that had a profound effect on the identities of the Japanese American community. That the community always, even though they often have enclaves like Japantown in Los Angeles, that the, the, the overall philosophy, overall mindset of the Japanese community was was one of assimilation integration, not to give up the things that are that are Japanese, like the Obon ceremony and in, in LA. Not to give those things up but to but to be part of the American culture, which is why, for example, the Nisei Ambassadors were a Japanese group that was very engaged in this very USA activity. Most of the drum corps of the time were run by the VFW Halls. And so this, there was always this feeling I think, of, of wanting to be good US citizens. I think that that was, that was intensified by the experience in some cases. In some cases, no, there are people that after the war that my parents knew that said I'm going back to Japan, so that, but for some, for one part of the community, part of it was that, no, we are, we are Americans. We're going to prove our loyal to the 442nd of course. We are Americans, we're going to prove our loyalty, we're going to be American. And I think that was something that was always there. There's also the recognition that there is a, there was at the time, certainly a racial bias. The people that were successful as adults in the broader community after the war were very circumspect. They were very much the ideal employee and as children were raised too very much to be the ideal child. And so I think that kind of thing was always part of the Japanese, uh, expectation. I think that, that, that, that expectation though was, was sustained because we want the community very much wanted to prove that they were US citizens. One of the things I remember from childhood was when I was about six or seven in the Rush Street neighborhood. We lived off of Chestnut, there was a rash of fires. We had a pyromaniac in the neighborhood and buildings are being torched every few nights and they were major fires. The person was very good at it, unfortunately, and one of them was a multistory residential buildings that was three doors down from where we live and there was an arson investigation because this was arson, and things are going up every night. And the arson investigators were making inquiries and they, they asked about my family because the, the, my, my parents and myself and my uncle were the only Japanese and that in that area. And so they asked about. They're asking the neighbors about our, my family. Do they think that somebody in the family was the arsonist basically? And God bless there was a Italian woman in the building and she was very outspoken and she wrung the people out and said, no, that's a family, they've been here for many years. They're upstanding citizens. They're not who you're looking for. They're not the arsonist. And she got very mad at them, uh, for, for having that kind of prejudicial

thinking. They did find the arsonist actually, and it was interesting because back then technology was pretty smart. They took pictures of the crowd watching the fire and they looked in the crowd pictures. There was somebody who was in all the pictures that would look really abnormally happy and they, that was the arsonist. The person was setting the fires so that he could watch them. But the, uh, the prejudice that was there, except Rosa was that this family is not white. Um, is there somebody in that family that is setting, setting these fires? So that was one of the things that did, was a, a racial stereotyping, prejudice. Still at that time.

AT: 00:56:28 What are some of your hopes for your children and maybe eventually grandchildren, for future generations in general. And if you could have, you know, pass down any kind of message or legacy, what would you want to pass down?

EH: 00:56:47 I think that what I see is that there are two things that are important. One certainly is that we're all part of a larger society. We're all part of the United States. We're all part of a world actually, we're part of a world, a world nation now. The world is very small now. We're all part of a world community and that's important. I think it's also important to celebrate the things that are unique to each culture, each, each nationality, each, each, each culture has very unique things that should be celebrated. And I think what is important is that we as a world nation get to appreciate the differences and not be fearful of them and not be biased toward any one set of tendencies, any one culture and any one background. Any one ethnicity that everybody has great contributions. Every culture, every individual has great contributions to make. And that by celebrating those we were all richer for it. Uh, that the, that, the fear, that the lack of understanding based upon a lack of knowledge, it is something that we can't afford the capability in this day and age of blowing the whole thing up. It's very, it's very simple to, to wipe us all out in this day and age is very simple and that is going to be a product of fear and hatred and lack of understanding. I think that what the whole experience is should teach us and hopefully will teach us all is that differences that they're to be celebrated, that we're all richer for this, that this is something that makes the can make the United States a very great country or can rip this apart and that polarization, which is something that right now is was very, very prominent, which is unfortunate. That polarization is destructive and it will destroy it. There's no, there's no way around that, but I think that the, the experiences as being in a minority culture is that every culture has great things to contribute and that we all need to appreciate that which is sometimes hard for people to do.

AT: 00:59:25 Well, thank you so much again for taking the time to speak with me. Before we wrap up, is there anything else that you'd like to add or that I might've missed?

EH: 00:59:36 Not really. I think that I appreciate you taking the time to do the interviews and I hope that this is something that becomes a richer and richer project, because it's the experience of one group at one period of time, but there are things in there that are universal. And there are things in there that are important to capture because things history repeats itself. And if you can establish things so that the good things repeat and the things that are unfortunate, don't repeat them. It's worth it. So thank you for the time.

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