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Title: Joe Takehara Interview
Narrator: Joe Takehara
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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AT: 01:26:17 Um, and, um we are wrapping up. How do you feel like, um, the move to Chicago, um, in the, the mid-forties, how did that shape you as a, as a person?

JT: 01:26:32 It's strange. For some reason, my upbringing, I did a lot of things, but my mom and my brothers, I guess they kept me straight because my friends were doing all the things that, you know, were illegal, you might say, I was with them, but I never participated. Problem was if they got caught, I'd be part of the group, right. But uh, yeah, it's so they did those things. Not always, but you know sometimes that's what they're good selling stuff on Maxwell Street. Yeah. No, I had a tough time though. Little kids used to call me Jap and all that yellow stuff and had adults too calling me yellow Jap and crawl into your whole and all that. I went through all that. Uh, because I think more so because where I lived, there wasn't many Japanese. The other Japanese were clustered. I think a lot of the other non-Japanese, at least they had some contact or they knew, or they were around enough that it didn't happen as much. But I lived on the West Side so I stuck out a lot. And so they're always calling me names and little kids. Black kids they would call me names. I thought, well, they have someone else to step on, to dump on. But uh, my friends were Mexicans and the Mexican kids they were the best kids. And their parents, they really treated me nice. Most of the Mexican kids didn't call me names or anything. It was the others, the white kids, the Black kids in the neighborhood. And they were mostly younger kids, you know, seven, eight, nine, you know, they make these things and all that. Call me Chink, stuff, Jap and Chink and Chinatown and stuff like that. So I went through all of that. But I survived that somehow. But it was always little kids. It was old kids, they didn't as much because not the kids around because they knew my friends, right. So the Mexican friends who were boxers, in the immediate neighborhood got around. Even the immediate neighborhood where I lived, the first day, I'd be in that

neighborhood, none of the other parents or adults in that neighborhood never said hello to me or anything, they just kind of, they ignored me. They didn't do anything bad to me, like throw rocks at me or something like the other people. But the whole neighborhood, the block, I didn't, I didn't, no one, none of my friends were from the neighborhood. Most of them are Italian kids. They just didn't want anything to do with me. And so that's how I grew up. And I tell another story, my friend, how I frame me is Volvo, I used to see his grandfather, he was, they were German, his name was Wurster and I used to come over, they used to live on the second floor. My friend used to live on the first floor, on Nelson Street. And they're telling me, he used to call me [inaudible], Hey Tojo. And that used to get me so mad. I just couldn't say anything. I used to burn underneath. And I used to tell my friend that you know that your grandpa's calling me Tojo and stuff. But his parents treated me well. In fact, his father was a big shot at, I forgot the company's name now, it was I think the LaSalle. Anyway, and he was an engineer, he had kind of, was an inventor of the [inaudible] for the cars or something. But one summer, I used to, every summer I used to go to work. And I was in college and one time I went to work there, good friend of mine that was a gymnast he had got out and he got a job there. The personnel department says, come on over there and I get you a job. So he went to the red book or yellow book and found out some job California or something. Okay, this is where your work and this and that. By the time, they catch up to you, you'll be gone. Summer job. Right? So I go up to the personal department, walking in there. And I interviewed by this lady, to get the job. This guy walks by, us this guy's father. He's a big shot. There he's got his tie. He comes up and says, Joe, what are you doing here? I said, "I'm trying to get a job." And he winks at me and goes, "Why?" So I didn't, he knew, I shouldn't be getting a job. I think he kind of helped it. Yeah. So anyway, I got a job. I can't, I don't know why I can't remember the company, but it was the company. It was hard group time.

AT: 01:32:24 So we're at time, but, um, before we wrap up, is there anything that you'd like to add or that we might've missed in the conversation?

JT: 01:32:33 Yeah, I think the other reason why the kids at Navy Pier, the Japanese people, you know, I was, they didn't care for me, it was also because I was an athlete and I was captain of the gymnastic team. So they used to have write ups in the paper about me being a gymnast or a picture. So I think they, they were kind of, I don't know, jealous, not jealous, but they though well, oh he thinks he's something doesn't stink or something. I

mean, that was there. That's the way I looked at it and they were not good friends.

AT: 01:33:18 Well, thank you so much for taking the time and for coming in. I still have a lot more questions for you but maybe you can do another interview.

JT: 01:33:32 Well, you can delete a lot of this stuff I guess.

AT: 01:33:32 This has been great. Thank you so much again.

JT: 01:33:37 Anyway. You're welcome. I thought I should tell, I don't know. I tell bits and pieces to my son. And uh, he turned out, all right. I said if he did half the things that I did, he'd be okay.

AT: 01:33:53 Thank you Mr. Takehara.

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