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Title: Ryoko Kobayashi Interview
Narrator: Ryoko Kobayashi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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- AT: 00:33:47 How long did your family live over there?
- RK: 00:33:50 Well, I moved out, uh, when I was 27. I said, I have to get out of here because my job is on the north side.
- AT: 00:33:59 Which job was that?
- RK: 00:34:00 Oh, let's see, I worked for a AC Mc club. It was a wholesale place. There's quite a few Japanese working there. And uh, let's see, I was living on Linen Avenue, on 909, I think it was. Wesleyan, and uh, I was on the second floor and there was one, but it was owned by a Japanese. And all was under third floor. That's right. Third floor. So the water system, too much water. And uh,
- AT: 00:34:40 Were you living alone?
- RK: 00:34:42 Yes, I was alone. Then, my friend, um, uh, the, Terumi, she were learning how to play cello and she said, uh, I have to study, but I have no, no, I have to go all the way downtown. I go out every afternoon, so why don't you use the apartment? Nobody's going to bother you. So that's how we became friends too, you know. And uh, she, she became a beautiful cellos, but they said that if you don't, if you're not a guy, you can't get ahead in those days. You know. So I guess, what the, the teacher, uh, she had a top notch teacher that she played for lyric opera and uh, another guy he played for Milwaukee Symphony. And they want her too, but she said, I can't because I got to join the union and then, uh, if you're going to join the union, you got to or she said it was just too messy. So she, anyway, uh, I was living alone anyway.
- AT: 00:35:52 And, um, in those first few years that you were in Chicago.

RK: 00:35:57 Um, what were some of the challenges of, of moving to a new place? Oh.

AT: 00:36:07 And, and, to moving to Chicago. Did you experience any challenges?

RK: 00:36:12 Well, I expense uh, Oh, I taking subway and it was close contact with people in those days. And then the guys, you know, they see a woman standing there now all of a sudden like your leg around my, his leg around my leg and things like that, I said, what's going on. And then, uh, I was was going to go upstairs to catch the L? Yeah. Oh, going upstairs to catch the L and, uh, the guy stopped me and I couldn't get through. And um, the lady and the, um, the one that takes the money, cashiers, she knocked and said, you'd let her go through, I'll call the cops. I mean number, things like that. And um, in that each job I had, if I didn't like the job, I'd just roll up my apron, throw it up, and I said, I quit. And then I go to the office, send me my check, because not improving me. And I get on just slur remarks when the people, hey you, that's, that's the, that was a thing then, hey, you, not my name, but hey you, so, uh, if I didn't have a college degree or anything, it was putting tough. Then after awhile, they said, you have a college degree, BS anyway? I say, no, I don't have any, just a high school diploma while we can't hire you. So, you know, it was, it was just, I just, uh, I just felt like a piece of just the Hong Kong beat, huh, but my mother said, you know, just just be calm and just be yourself. And I was daddy girl. So he used to say, you know, there are many nice people here, regardless of their age or the color of the skin. Be nice and you know, learn to like people. So that's how I, he told me what to do and that was the best thing he told me because I meet so many nice people here in Chicago more than New York or California. And even if a, I'm sitting on the bus and then I happened to look like this. I see somebody smiling. I say, I smile back. It made my day, you know, so I still love Chicago in the, like the other day I was eating at uh, McDonald's and a lady, the Black lady sat next to me and then I gave her one of my hand wipe. So you know, it's kind of, you don't know what she touch. Oh, thank you very much. She said, would you like, uh, fries? I said, well, I'll take a couple of them. So she gave me a couple of fish fries. We start talking. She said, I'm a teacher. And I say, what do you teach? She said, I teach everything. You know that place up there by, uh, she was telling me, uh, used to be a restaurant bomb down below an upstairs, a char, I think a charter school. Was she. What was there to teach. I said, oh wow. And I found out she very educated person, you know. So I came home and I told Terumi about it. She said, oh wow, that's nice. Because you know, and I said, I didn't see any color in her.

I just, you know, we both sat there like we knew each other for a long time and we talked and talked all through the meal. She said, I have to go now, huh, but, you know.

- AT: 00:40:09 Do you think that's something that's particular to Chicago?
- RK: 00:40:12 Pardon me?
- AT: 00:40:13 Do you think that's something that's particular to Chicago?
- RK: 00:40:16 What I can't ...
- AT: 00:40:17 You said that you felt like people were nicer in Chicago than say New York or California?
- RK: 00:40:23 Yes. The New York is so fast, you know, and uh, you have Garmin just looking this and that. I like the calmness, you know, I mean, uh, they'll come up and it's, so comical. One day I was waiting for the bus and a guy came rushing up and he said, I want to ask you, are you Filipino? I said, no, that's number one. What's next? Are you Chinese? No, I'm not Chinese. Are you ah, this, are you that? I think five of them, he was saying, and he said, well, I give up. What are you? I said, I'm American, and I'm Japanese. And he said, oh, okay. Then, he disappeared. It's so funny, you know, but.

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