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Title: Chiyoko Chiyo Omachi Interview
Narrator: Chiyoko Chiyo Omachi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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- AT: 01:00:27 Which camp did your family go to?
- CO: 01:00:29 We were in Poston.
- I3: 01:00:29 Arizona?
- CO: 01:00:34 Pardon?
- I3: 01:00:35 In Arizona?
- CO: 01:00:35 Yeah, in Arizona. And because Papa was a contractor and uh, you know, he was, um, he made ships but he made, he built homes too. And he built a big uh Tenmei Kiyo Temple on Terminal Island. Uh, Tenmei Kiyo is the, uh, Buddhist sect. Wonderful big, uh, temple. Anyway, so when he went to camp. He was the camp, um, whatever they needed for. I don't know if they, they must've had, uh, someone perhaps who oversaw the, uh, ummm. The camp buildings, a papa, was part of that team or whatever he, he rode around and uh, I don't know what they did. Looked for leaks perhaps, you know. Um, but that's why I think I was able to leave camp before any other, uh, anyone my size and age left camp. I left and went off by myself when, came to Chicago and met up with some Baptists who took me in. And then my uncle came along on his car and picked me up and we went to Pennsylvania.
- I2: 01:02:31 But the weird thing was before you were able to leave, you had to get FBI clearance?
- CO: 01:02:36 Oh yeah.
- I2: 01:02:37 You had to make sure you were, what not a threat or whatever. And then you were able to get the out there, which is very ironic I think.

CO: 01:02:45 Oh, yeah, well, it was a given. I think, you know, the West Coast and East Coast clearance and the FBI and the local police had to know that you were uh

I3: 01:03:02 How long were you at the camp before?

CO: 01:03:07 Not longer than a year and a half, I guess. I can't

I3: 01:03:10 That's a good amount of time.

CO: 01:03:12 Yeah. You know, uh, you know, people were there for what, four or five years.

AT: 01:03:19 Do you remember your first impressions of the camp?

CO: 01:03:22 Well, when we went to camp, we, they gave us a huge bag and we filled it up with hay. Uh, and I was to be our mattress. And, uh, I kept saying, be sure we don't capture any insects and whatever and put them in there. And, uh, I guess there was a serviceable, mattress dragged it into our little, a homely, homely spot. Um.

AT: 01:04:03 Do you remember your block number or your part?

CO: 01:04:07 I think I do. 7C I believe, but I'm not sure.

AT: 01:04:20 And, um, can you just describe a little bit about life in camp? Um, what were some of the routines for you as well?

CO: 01:04:31 Well, we ate in a mess hall, you know. We were lucky because we had a lot of men in our camp who had been, uh, who had been uh restaurant owners in Los Angeles, so we had good grub. Um, and they had to make the most of whatever the government gave them. Uh, just stuff. Um, perhaps not, you know, that they made a good meals. In fact, the kids used to go from, from block to block. I mean, they would hear about some block having good food, and so they would all go over there for lunch or dinner. Um, and, uh, our four blocks, uh, we're the city blocks from Los Angeles and there are a number of the restaurant owners. And so they had uh some good meals they said. Well, we didn't wander around, but uh

I3: 01:05:51 Did you go to school there?

CO: 01:05:53 Yeah, they had, not right away, but then they started a school and, uh, ummm. But let me see. They can, um, they, uh, I don't know how they recruited teachers, but we had some very poor

teachers. And, uh, then we had a ummm, college students, uh, you know, Nisei, Japanese college students or college graduates who were teaching. And some of them were good and some of them were poor.

- I2: 01:06:38 I imagine you didn't have any supplies, you probably didn't have any books?
- CO: 01:06:42 What?
- I2: 01:06:42 You probably didn't have any books or anything, did you?
- CO: 01:06:44 Oh no, we had books. No um.
- I3: 01:06:46 Were there white people?
- CO: 01:06:51 Yeah, there were a few white teachers who came in. Some of them were.
- I2: 01:06:56 Volunteers?
- CO: 01:06:56 Very good volunteers, dedicated, you know, people.
- I3: 01:07:01 And they were like sympathetic to
- CO: 01:07:03 Yeah sympathetic. And others who were hardly able to teach. We had some really bad teachers too.

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