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Title: Chiyoko Chiyo Omachi Interview
Narrator: Chiyoko Chiyo Omachi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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AT: 00:15:09 And can you describe kind of what your life was like in Terminal Island before the war? I guess like--

CO: 00:15:21 Oh

AT: 00:15:22 Family life and school.

CO: 00:15:23 Oh, it was wonderful. I had a surfboard [chuckles] I didn't know how to swim. [points at 2nd interviewer] My daughter is horrified. The lawyer. My daughter. That I used to drag this red surfboard to the beach and waddle about. There was a nice-- oh, what is it called? There were these rocky enclosures and so--

I3: 00:15:52 Jetty.

CO: 00:15:52 You know, it was a break. What did they call those--

I2: 00:15:59 Break water?

CO: 00:15:59 Well a breaker, so that the sea wouldn't come roaring in. It would break out yonder the, the surf would just be calm as it came in. And I used to go out there quite often myself. And, used to make sandcastles and stay down at the beach for quite a while. I was very independent, I think as a child. And my brother and sister didn't follow me, always. I think my sister seemed much younger, somehow, and she, she would stay at home.

AT: 00:16:58 Growing up, did you speak any Japanese at home?

CO: 00:17:02 Yeah, at home, we, we spoke Japanese until we went to school and I think we learned English in school. That was very hard, I think going to school. I remember not wanting to drink milk and they wanted me to drink, you know, half a pint or whatever, it's

milk, and never liked milk at home and never drank it at, at home. And so I said, I don't want to go to school. But my father said, "Well you have to go to school in order to learn. Oh, to learn arithmetic, I think. Sanjutsu, I think it's called in Japanese. Math and I thought, oh, okay. [Laughs]

AT: 00:17:58 Did you go to Japanese school or was that around?

CO: 00:18:02 Well let's see. We went to Japanese school for a little bit. Our family was baptist. There were two, there was a Baptist Church on this island-- Terminal Island-- but most of the Japanese were Buddhists and there was a large Buddhist Temple, and not at temple, you know, but, a church. I don't really know where it was, but the Japanese had Japanese school in, in the church, the Baptist church I believe. But I was still too young. I don't think I went, I may have belonged for a year to Japanese school, but I didn't like Japanese school. I didn't do very well as I recall. But, my folks were very lenient-- I think too, I was-- I think because I had these two brothers who passed away, they took very good care of me health wise, and I was anemic as a child and they were very concerned. You know, that I have-- that I had rare steak to eat-- Oh, that wasn't, that wasn't, that wasn't what I wanted, but anyway. They were very young. I think they made me into a hypochondriac. [Everyone laughs] Well, I was always, I think, concerned because I was thin and underweight and everyone said, "Oh, well she's anemic you know. Well, as it turned out, I was an early diabetic and that was rare, you know, and, I had a diabetic specialist in Chicago who said, "The Japanese are not diabetics." That's-- he thought it was rare.

AT: 00:20:40 Did you find that out much later in life?

CO: 00:20:42 Yeah, Much later. But then, everyone in my family, you know, my Japanese family, were-- many of us are diabetics. And so, in fact there was a Japanese scholar, a physician who was at the University of Chicago, and he was from my mother's province, and he was very interested in the family and said, "Oh, that's very interesting." He didn't say one thing or the other about how rare it was. But, he wanted to know about my history and then my relatives in California who were, you know, many who are diabetics over there.

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