

Densho Digital Repository  
Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and  
Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS)  
Oral History Project Collection  
Title: Chiyoko Chiyo Omachi Interview  
Narrator: Chiyoko Chiyo Omachi  
Interviewer: Anna Takada  
Location: Chicago, Illinois  
Date: March 30, 2018  
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-17

<Begin Segment 1>

Anna Takada: 00:00:00 This is an interview with Chiyoko Omachi as part of the Japanese American Service Committee and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society Oral History Project. The interview is being conducted on March 30th, 2018 at about 1:15 PM at the Japanese American Service Committee in Chicago. Chiyoko Omachi is being interviewed by Anna Takada of the Japanese American Service Committee. So to start, can you please just state your full name?

Chiyoko Omachi: 00:00:31 My name is Chiyoko Omachi, Omachi.

AT: 00:00:36 And where, and when were you born?

CO: 00:00:38 I was born on Terminal Island, California, which is in Los Angeles harbor. I think the place exists no more. Um, I was born on July 12, 1926. And my folks had two children before me and these two died. And so when I came along they wanted to give me a long name, a Japanese name that had good vibes and Chiyoko means a thousand generations.

AT: 00:01:33 And your parents where, where were they from? Where were they born?

CO: 00:01:38 My father was from Japan-- Southern Japan, and he was a shipbuilder. He left Japan on an English ship and went to England and was in England for a while and then he came back to the United States. He met, a Japanese, shipbuilder and they decided to build ships together, on Terminal Island where there were very many Japanese fishermen and they thought that, you know, that they would build ships there and they could sell them. We have pictures of the shipyard. They did build very large ships. These two were strangers really. But my father was single, at the time this year [mumbles] the strange, stranger-- the two men, two Japanese from two different parts of Japan.

And I guess the, the old-- the older gentleman says, well, "I have a, a daughter in Japan, you'll have to meet her, and perhaps you would marry her." And so he called her over. And my-- turned out to be my mother. They got married and they lived happily for many, many years.

- AT: 00:03:25 And so that was when your father was in, or at Terminal Island
- CO: 00:03:30 Right.
- AT: 00:03:30 And she came into like--
- CO: 00:03:32 Right, and that was, oh, I don't know, 19-- I used to know exactly the, the years that they started the shipyards. But, it was way before I was born. I was born in 1926. I have a feeling it was about 1920. And we have pictures of this, of these shipyards. And they were very large, you know, places.
- 2nd Interviewer: 00:04:09 Your mother's family was from Wakayama Prefecture and your father's family was from Kawashima.
- CO: 00:04:15 Right. And in Japan they never would have met, you know.
- AT: 00:04:22 It was just through the connection of the [overlapping dialogue] right now.

**<End Segment 1> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 2>**

- AT: And so, uh, what are, what are some of your memories of Terminal Islands?
- CO: 00:04:37 Oh, you know, that was such a wonderful place. We were only about four blocks from the ocean, from the beach. And-- we had-- it's a small island-- manmade island really. We had a ferry boat that went across the San Pedro and there was a drawbridge on one side of the island. We had a car. Not many people had cars, but my father was mad for cars and he had a number of, of wonderful old cars. And when I was growing up, I guess we had a car that no one has heard of: the Moon. And we had a Plymouth. He had two cars. One was called the Moon and the other one was a Plymouth. A Plymouth was a sedan and the Moon was a roadster, you know, with the-- what did they call those? A rumble seat. I, that's what they used to call them. The back was like a, a coupe with the, the back-- It would be like a

trunk, that opened up and, there were seats, there was a seat back there and you would sit in the open air. Wonderful little car.

AT: 00:06:19 And was it pretty common for people to have cars at that time?

CO: 00:06:25 No. No. Whatever moneys there was, or there were [laughs] Papa had to have a car or two. And, I think grandfather enjoyed cars because we have a picture of the children in front of the cars. [Turns to 2nd interviewer off screen] Do you remember what, what that was? [No answer off screen]. It might've been an English car. I'll probably recall, then it'll be too late to report. But-- yeah, they-- my father loved cars. He was a bad driver.

AT: 00:07:06 And does that mean-- you said there was a photograph with your grandparents, were they in the U S as well?

CO: 00:07:14 Yes. Yeah, my father-- my grandparents, I think the year I was born my grandfather died and-- a really sad accident in the-- at the seaside. But my father lived till he was 70, and he was very keen on educating the children, especially he wanted me to go to college and when the War came, you know, we were in camp-- I will jump ahead-- but I was in camp and my father said, well, "You have to get out of here because the education you're getting in campus so inadequate, you'll never be able to go to college otherwise. And so I left early. I left camp to go to live with my uncle in Pennsylvania and went to high school in Pennsylvania.

**<End Segment 2> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 3>**

AT: 00:08:21 Just to go back a little bit to talk more about your family. Can you tell me more about, about your grandparents and how and when they ended up in California as well? And was this your, your father's parents?

CO: 00:08:38 No, this would be, well, they were strangers, but my father married his partner's daughter.

AT: 00:08:47 Right. Okay.

CO: 00:08:51 And so he, he knew, you know, this, this man and his family before he, he got married to one of the daughters. And, in fact, the daughter was in Japan, my mother to be, and they called

her to the United States. And, she had been left in Japan and lived there while the mother and father came to the United States and start a family here. So I had an aunt, well, I have two aunts and one uncle who were American citizens. And then my mother came into the picture, got married to his partner, you know,

- AT: 00:09:41 And your father's parents, were they still in Japan?
- CO: 00:09:48 My father's family. We never did meet my, my father's family. But, all of my, my maternal grandparents, you know, they were here in this country and people would say, some of my Nisei friends would say Very unusual for you to have a grandparent here, a grandmother. And, so I did until I was still in college I think when she was still alive.
- I2: 00:10:24 Do you know what caused Biyan and her husband-- this would be my great grandmother-- what caused them to come from Japan, if you know?
- CO: 00:10:37 Well, I think, the grandfather, I think he wanted to come to America. They came specifically to Terminal Island because that's where the Japanese fisherman were and they wanted to come and build ships there.
- 3rd Interviewer: 00:10:56 So they came unrelated to, to your father's side?
- CO: 00:11:01 Yeah. My father met the grandparents then in America.
- I3: 00:11:08 Yeah.
- CO: 00:11:09 You know, they were partners first, shipbuilders together. And then as I say, he said, "Well, I've got a daughter in Japan.
- I3: 00:11:21 OK
- CO: 00:11:21 And so my mother came over when she was about 16.
- I2: 00:11:27 The great grandmother [overlapping dialogue]
- CO: 00:11:28 [overlapping dialogue] She was young
- I2: 00:11:29 The great grandfather must have had some of-- his family must've had some funds right. For him to come over to the US.
- CO: 00:11:38 Well, I don't know that the, the Japanese who came to this country, that came as immigrants, I think, you know, they, they

must've borrowed or whatever they had to do or gathered all the moneys from relatives and they would come and they lived, you know, humbly.

I2: 00:12:03

Right.

CO: 00:12:04

They didn't have to live as we would expect to, to live in this country. [Overlapping dialogue] I saw there were a lot of fishermen on the Terminal Island and they would-- I think what happened was there would be, a man or a group-- perhaps a cooperative that would own a boat and they would have a captain, like Kashi's father was a captain. Very smart, advanced, knew-- what's the word?-- how to manage a ship. These were large ships. And my father, when he was building the ships, it was very complicated, you know. He used to talk to me about building because, I was, you, I was the-- I had two brothers who were about three or four years older than I, but one was a stillborn child and died, and the other one was a toddler and he passed away. And so my father used to treat me like a, a boy, and I used to go out with them and help him caulk ships. They know how to do that. And he would take me out to the workplace, and they would be doing all manner of stuff to the, these ships. And I would go around-- I remember being very young and asking Papa, "How do you do this and what are-- what is this for?" And he would take me to lunch with him and we would have clam chowder [interviewers chuckle] at the restaurant. And I felt very fortunate because I had a younger brother. I, I have a young brother and a sister, but I was the one that learned to make kites. And I used to make ships and, you know, I was-- I was the little boy and, and then the War came and my brother was much younger. And so--

AT: 00:14:44

When were your younger siblings born?

CO: 00:14:47

Well, let's see. I was born in '26. My brother was born in '29, I think, and then my sister in '30.

AT: 00:15:05

So just they are a few years younger.

CO: 00:15:07

Yeah.

**<End Segment 3> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 4>**

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.

**<End Segment 4> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 5>**

AT: 00:21:36 Going back to life at Terminal Islands. So let's see. Were there-- at the time when you were growing up-- were there-- what were, I guess the, the demographics around there. And were there other Japanese American families?

CO: 00:22:03 Oh yeah. Well, you know, the, there was-- the island was divided into two parts and, the one part was-- they used to call it fish harbor and that's where the ships came in with the fish and the were canneries there. I think there was Starkist tuna was there and a couple of other fisheries. And, most of the Japanese fishermen lived over there and the wives used to work in the canneries, and when they had-- when the fish would come in-- and I guess they would cook them however they did that-- they would blow a whistle and the women would go to

work and you could hear it all over the island except our part. It was a long island and, our part of the island was called Brighton beach and close to Long Beach. There was a bridge on our side and there were a lot of old but nice looking old homes. Some were dilapidated because, you know, the white people would-- from long beach-- would come to Terminal Island in the summer. And, because there was this nice expansive beach-- and would spend the summers there. And when we were growing up, we had one of these homes, my father being a carpenter, a shipbuilder and a contractor for homes. He fixed up the old home and it was wonderful with French windows. And, it was two story. And, some of our friends from other parts of California would come to visit us and stay for weeks. And, it would seem months, and we would go to the beach and the popsicle man would come every afternoon. It was, you know, quite, quite wonderful living on Terminal Island. And the fishing village was way on the other side where, you know, the, the tuna canneries were, and it was congested and smelly and-- but our side of the island was a totally different place. We had trees, palm trees, date trees, palms. Very pleasant. We were the only ones on the block that had a telephone, as I recall. People would come day and night to use the telephone.

- AT: 00:25:32 And, as far as school, and I guess your, your peers as a kid, and, and growing up-- were folks, mostly Japanese American or--
- CO: 00:25:47 [overlapping dialogue] Then the school I went to was called Banning High School in Wilmington and we used to take a bus to get there. And I don't know how that happened. Perhaps part of the island was in their district. So we-- the bus would come in the morning and we would get on the bus, and there were white children, not so many Asians, not so many Japanese. I don't know that we had-- I don't think we had Chinese friends. I think we were all Japanese, and white friends and they would put us on the bus and we'd go to Banning High School. And that's where-- oh, what is his name?
- AT: 00:26:49 Sam Ozaki?
- CO: 00:26:51 Yeah, Sam Ozaki was that part of the-- well, they were from a farming community near Wilmington and they used to bus in I think. But we would be coming from, you know, Terminal Island was way over yonder. And we knew Ozaki-- my uncle knew the Ozaki's because they were about the same age. I was much younger, I think than Sam would have been. And Lilly, yeah.
- AT: 00:27:28 So you would've been in high school when the war broke out--



CO: 00:27:33 Yeah, I was 15

AT: 00:27:33 Sophomore year of high school.

CO: 00:27:37 Pardon?

AT: 00:27:37 Were you at-- in your second year of high school then?

CO: 00:27:40 I was there-- well we-- they had a junior high there-- junior high and senior high. And so I was going to Banning already, and my uncle who lived-- well for a while they lived in San Pedro over-- they lived in Wilmington and those in Wilmington went to Banning High School. And my uncle was I think six years older than I. My aunt, who was his younger, the youngest sibling was, I guess she was five years older than I and he was-- would have been Sam's friend or about the same year. Uncle Yas just died. [turns to 2nd interviewer] And he was in his nineties, wasn't he?

I2: 00:28:39 Yeah. Yeah.

**<End Segment 5> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 6>**

AT: 00:28:42 Before the war broke out, did you ever experience any kind of discrimination or--

CO: 00:28:51 Yeah, we were on Terminal Island and, they give us 48 hours to leave--

I2: 00:29:00 She's asking before. Remember you told us about not being able to go to the swimming pool?

CO: 00:29:08 Oh, that was-- [overlapping dialogue] You know, all, all Asians were not invited. [overlapping dialogue] Blacks were not invited [overlapping dialogue] Mexicans were not invited [overlapping dialogue]

I2: 00:29:20 She wants to know before the war. Did you guys experience any discrimination? Before you were taken to the camps as a child, did you experience discrimination?

CO: 00:29:31 Not really because we lived in the homogeneous, you know--

I3: 00:29:39 Isolated.

CO: 00:29:40 Yeah, mostly, mostly Asian. Although Terminal Island it was a mixed group, but there were more Asians-- more Japanese, I think, even on our side of the island, than white. We had a Russian family and I was very curious about them. Never found out much about, you know, where they came from or what-- I think the father was a fisherman somehow, but he would have been an odd bird, you know

I3: 00:30:19 Where you weren't allowed to go to the, the swimming pool?

CO: 00:30:21 There were no swimming pools there anyway.

I3: 00:30:25 What is she talking about? [Overlapping dialogue] You weren't allowed to-- to somewhere

CO: 00:30:27 Well, wherever there were swimming pools, Asians were not, you know, invited. They were excluded, let's say, they were not invited. They were excluded and Mexicans.

I3: 00:30:44 Were there other examples of things that you couldn't do because you were Asian?

CO: 00:30:50 Yeah, I'm sure there were.

I3: 00:30:57 Like places you couldn't-- you weren't allowed to go.

I2: 00:31:05 Did you ever come into Los Angeles or did you stay in--

CO: 00:31:10 Yeah, well my Father had those cars and we, we drove around [laughs].

I2: 00:31:13 I know, but came into LA [overlapping dialogue]

CO: 00:31:16 We would go to Los Angeles [overlapping dialogue] about 25 or 30, I don't know how many miles it was. It's just, some childhood numbers I had in my head and it must have been further. We would go to a Japanese and Chinese restaurants in little Tokyo, you know. There was no such restaurant in, in Terminal Island, although there was a place called the New York Cafe and Papa and I used to go there for clam chowder.

AT: 00:31:54 That was on the island? [overlapping dialogue]

CO: 00:31:55 Very, very good. [laughs]

AT: 00:31:57 That restaurant was on the island?

CO: 00:31:59 It was on the island yeah. When, when he would be working and I would go with him. And I would be about 10, 11, 12 when I was helping him because I could do a number of things. And he taught me-- oh, he used to tell me about all these differences in Japanese and American tools, you know, and how can you sharpen the saws this way. And then in the American way you go to do it from the other side. I have all manner of stuff in my head about tools. And he had planes, the Japanese planes were different and you drew them instead of, you know-- American planes you use, I don't know which way it goes, but anyway, the Japanese did it the other way.

**<End Segment 6> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 7>**

AT: 00:33:04 Can you tell me about your memories of the war starting and--

CO: 00:33:16 Oh, yeah. Yeah. It was a Sunday and my grandmother had come to the Baptist church. She was going home on the ferry. And then, I think, one of the-- my uncle or my aunt called to say, "Grandma wasn't on the ferry." They must have-- they used to meet her on the other side, I think cause it was a little, oh, maybe, I don't know in mileage, how far they were from the ferry boat, you know, down at the, down at the seaport. And they used to live way beyond there. And I suppose my grandmother wasn't on the ferry. And, I think, on that day my uncle called and said, my grandmother was on the ferry. And I think the FBI rounded up all the Asians on the, 'er Japanese, on the ferry. And-- Now, this is very hazy. I can't recall exactly. Because we were having all sorts of excitement on our side of the island. We had just come back from the church, from church, and they said the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. And we were prob-- I was listening to the radio and, and then I don't remember the rest of the day, but I know my grandmother finally did get home. Her children must have picked her up at the ferry, took her home. And we were on this side, Terminal Island. And then soon after that they were patrolling the, the, the roads-- jeeps and soldiers. And then it wasn't until several months later that they said, oh, they wanted all the Japs off the island in 48 hours. And so the Baptist church in Los Angeles, which was the, you know, the, the mother or Father Church, the one that was in-- on the island-- came in buses. And it seems to me, we packed up our things [mumbles] my father was busy running around helping our friends because the fathers had been taken away by the, the government. Well, my father, now being a fisherman, was not

scooped up. And so he went around and helped. And then my uncle who was, you know, this young man, came across and helped us pack and get ready to move. And, and then we sold everything. You know, my mother had huge, beautiful dishes and we had a new console, RCA victor radio-phon-combination thing. And I think he sold it or gave it to some neighbor down the street. We just got rid of everything. And we had had a new refrigerator, an ice box. It was [gestures] it was still a ice box, I think. But got rid of everything. And I over our-- we had a fireplace and on the mantle I used to have a, a little yacht about, I don't know how big it would be, you know, but from an adult point of view maybe about [gestures] that long. And, and the cabin was scooped up. It was beautiful, little old ship with a mast. And, the cabin was where I sat and it had wheels, and must have given that away to some neighbor or something. But it was a wonderful teak and Mahogany ship that was my kiddy car. But all those things-- all of our books-- we had two encyclopedias and we left everything and got on these buses that the Baptist church sent down for its members there weren't that many members. And, the-- there was a Japanese minister who was a wonderful man of the church: Yamamoto Sensei, and my father was the only other man because all the rest of them were fishermen and they had been hauled away. So there were about two or three men. I think there was one other man, maybe an old man. And we got on the bus and it took us away to Los Angeles and the Baptist Church there had a summer, summer camp or something, with a kitchen, you know, and-- I, I think like little cottages and, uh, my grandmother was with us and my aunt and, and we all stayed in this little place and we felt very comfortable cause we had our-- all of our relatives with us. But, I remember Kanshi Amashte's father was taken away by the government-- he was a fishermen and his mother and my mother were good friends and so it was so sad. All the men were gone. So my father was one of the few men left.

- AT: 00:41:12 And the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked, as a 15 year old, do you remember your reactions or, or what you were feeling at that time? Did you know [overlapping dialogue]
- CO: 00:41:27 No, I think we, we knew that it meant that Japan had, you know, attacked America, and what that must mean for us.
- AT: 00:41:47 Did you have--
- CO: 00:41:49 No.
- AT: 00:41:49 Do you remember--

CO: 00:41:49 Not much. No, not much understanding.

AT: 00:41:54 Did you have convers-- [overlapping]

CO: 00:41:57 A lot of fear.

AT: 00:41:59 Did you have conversations with your parents about any of that or--

CO: 00:42:05 No, not much. My Auntie Kiki was my, my friend and, you know. And of course we spoke English and our parents didn't. There was that difference. Whereas my aunts and uncles-- [overlapping]

I2: 00:42:24 Auntie Kiki was only five, four-five years older. So she's kind of [overlapping] like a sister--

CO: 00:42:30 Yeah, my aunt was only five years older than I, we were good pals.

I3: 00:42:34 And you didn't know enough Japanese to communicate that well with your parents?

CO: 00:42:40 Who me?

I3: 00:42:40 Yeah.

AT: 00:42:41 No.

I3: 00:42:42 And they didn't know that much English?

CO: 00:42:45 Well, my aunt, yeah. My aunt and my uncles, would spoke much--

I3: 00:42:49 They translated? [overlapping]

CO: 00:42:50 Much better Japanese. No they-- No, there was no-- no, I don't think [overlapping from 2nd Interviewer] So we had a vague understanding of what was going on, you know. But, I don't think the parents knew what was going on either.

**<End Segment 7> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 8>**

AT: 00:43:11 And what were some, do you remember? Because I mean, Terminal Island was, of course, you know, very impacted immediately--

CO: 00:43:21 Yeah

AT: 00:43:21 After Pearl Harbor. Can you tell us just sort of what was happening? Like what the feelings were at the time or, you know, because I imagine people were probably--

CO: 00:43:35 Well, you know, when the, and then the men were taken, and--

AT: 00:43:41 How soon, were people starting to-- [overlapping]

CO: 00:43:46 Well, my father was not because he wasn't a fisherman and I think they were after fishermen because they had the idea that the fishermen were-- could contact the Japanese. Well, they weren't doing any such thing because-- for one thing, the Japanese, unless they had planted people-- which I doubt-- the Japanese fisherman were a different, a different class of people than the ruling-- the, the Japanese who were rulers in Japan and it would have been orchestrating whatever, you know, whoever was orchestrating the, the war. Well the class differences, I think, the Japanese were very-- What is that? You wouldn't even call it sensitive, you would say, class differences would, would mean that, you know, the ruling bodies in Japan would not be in--

I3: 00:45:18 Communication.

CO: 00:45:23 Yeah, communication with the likes of fishermen, you know, whereas my father was well educated. He'd been to England [laughs] It was [overlapping dialogue] different, you know, different class of people.

AT: 00:45:44 Was your family fearful that your father might get picked up by the FBI as well?

CO: 00:45:50 Yeah. Yeah. He was all packed, you know, and his suitcase all ready, but they never took him. And he could never understand why [laughs].

I3: 00:46:03 Wait, so they took the men somewhere else?

CO: 00:46:04 Yeah, and I think they--

I3: 00:46:07 Before you went to camps?

CO: 00:46:08 I think so. Oh, yeah. A little time before we went to camp and we left that island, it was like five months.

I2: 00:46:16 So did the fishermen ever come back?

CO: 00:46:17 We went to Terminal Island. We went to Los Angeles because the Baptist Church helped us. Now how the other folks on my island, what they did, I don't know.

I2: 00:46:31 So you don't know what the fishermen's families ended up doing?

CO: 00:46:34 No

I2: 00:46:34 Did they have to go with the mom and the kids?

CO: 00:46:38 Yeah except the Baptists.

I2: 00:46:38 And the fathers weren't around.

CO: 00:46:39 You know that were the Baptist and they went with us.

I2: 00:46:42 Yeah, but you had no idea what happened to everybody else?

CO: 00:46:45 No, you know.

I3: 00:46:45 Where did they take all the fishermen?

CO: 00:46:48 Pardon?

I3: 00:46:48 Where did they take all the fishermen?

CO: 00:46:51 I don't know at that time whether they took them to,.

I3: 00:46:54 They went straight to camp?

CO: 00:46:56 Well, they went to Lincoln, you know, what was the name of that place?

AT: 00:47:01 Um, there were a couple of department of justice camps, which were like separate from

CO: 00:47:08 From men, from women

AT: 00:47:10 And from like the 10 camps that we know.

CO: 00:47:14 It wasn't known to anyone at the time. Where did they go?

AT: 00:47:19 Yeah. And those, those were technically internment camps because there were some German nationals and

CO: 00:47:25 That's right, at that time.

**<End Segment 8> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 9>**

AT: 00:47:28 Um, so you mentioned, um, you know, immediately after Pearl Harbor there was kind of this change of, you know, people were getting picked up and there was now, you know, uh, patrol on the islands. Um, how, so how soon after Pearl Harbor did the, did you hear about the evacuation and have 48 hours?

CO: 00:47:55 Then we went, it was around February, I think we went to Los Angeles by way of uh the Baptist, the Great Baptist Church, whoever it is. Umm

AT: 00:48:12 What's the name of the church? Do you remember?

CO: 00:48:16 Well it's the Baptist, the head of the, was it called the, I don't know. It's a Northern Baptist. I, I have a book actually about those times. And, um, my friend Kanji wrote a chapter in there. I was going to bring that, and I should have brought that. I could show that to you. Um.

AT: 00:48:47 And so do I have it right, that you, um, your family, the Baptist Church was offering, um, housing for families before the actual evacuation?

CO: 00:49:02 Yeah and so we went to Los Angeles. I even have time to start going to the high school there. And I went to high school, uh, in Los Angeles, that city proper for, I don't know, three or four months.

AT: 00:49:22 And what exactly was the, um, uh, the purpose of leaving Terminal Island and

CO: 00:49:33 Well, just because I think there were so many of us there, Japanese there, they wanted to get all the fishermen off that island, you know.

AT: 00:49:44 So was that a, was that a government order to evacuate the island?



CO: 00:49:47 Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

AT: 00:49:50 Okay. Um and can you tell me a little bit more about what it was like at, the living at the church?

CO: 00:50:01 Oh. And then we went to Los Angeles, and it was, it was, um, ummm, it was very pleasant actually. It was, uh, enclosed, you know, they had, um, it was an enclosed area. They must have had, ummm various churches I think in California. Used to have summer kind of rallies or summer programs where they used to, um, where the young people would, would gather together, uh, for maybe a month or whatever, uh, in these very pleasant places by the beach. Um, and they were from, you know, inland communities. I know my friend, uh, Ruth used to come down from her folks were farming, uh, living in a farming community. And they used come down to Terminal Island in the summer. And, uh, you know, we'd go to the beach and it would be very pleasant. And, uh, when the war started, let's see, they were, well, we were all taken to, to different places. But before then, I think the numbers of people chose to, you know, move if they could, to places, uh, near their friends or to a community they were, well, we don't know too many of these folks. But I know my, my aunt and, um, uncle and grandmother lived on, you know, the, in San Pedro, which was across from Terminal Island. And when it was time for us to go to Los Angeles, uh, and that the church took us, they decided they would come with us instead of being out there by themselves as we were very close anyway, you know, my mother and her mother. Um, and so they came with us and we were in Los Angeles together. And that was very, that was very helpful because, um, uh, you know, I, I may have been the, the oldest child in the family, but still very young. And whereas my Auntie Kiki was five years older than I, and I always considered her, my big sister. And I used to tag along with her whenever she goes someplace interesting, I would go with her. Um, so was with us. And that was, you know, very comforting I think.

**<End Segment 9> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 10>**

AT: 00:53:31 And um, so where did you go from the church in LA, um, then I happened to your family?

CO: 00:53:40 And then, we were, you know, there were, um, rumors of a. Okay, the Japanese were going to be sent inland, they're going to be put in, uh, inland camps. We didn't know where. Although

people knew about Manzanar already. They said there's going to be a place out in the desert and they're going to make us go live out there. Uh, and then my mother, in fact, they started saying, "Well, we better get ready, um, the children ought to have a boots." So my mother takes us out and we'd go out and buy boots.

- I2: 00:54:27 Snow boots?
- CO: 00:54:27 Yeah, a little, really cute little boots for all of us. Michi, Small feet and um, and she buys some clothes for us. Get, get ready to go into the desert and we didn't know if that was true. Rumors. Um, but it gave them something to do while we were in Los Angeles. But I went to school there in Los Angeles for about three months, I think. Um big school. Um, huge compared to what we were used to. And, um, and then sure enough, you know, the sign came up and said "All Japanese." I've got one of those messages. Anyway.
- AT: 00:55:24 [Sneeze] Excuse me
- CO: 00:55:24 Um, so we had to uh, carry one bag and go down to the train station and wait. So we waited and waited. And finally. And there were ah soldiers, um, with guns and they loaded us. Um, you know, there was no, uh, ummm, there was no noise. There were, there was no, uh, nothing we just said, "March into the trains". And we did and we waited and they carried us out into the desert. And we weren't too far from Los Angeles cause we at the border there, you know, the Colorado River was there, Arizona.
- AT: 00:56:32 What was going on through, in your minds at the time, if you recall?
- I3: 00:56:40 Sorry
- AT: 00:56:43 So we're just going to pause one second.
- I2: 00:56:50 Take a little break. Are you okay? Do you want to take a little break?
- CO: 00:56:53 Um, unnecessary, but.
- I2: 00:56:58 Maybe I'll go with him. I'll be back.
- AT: 00:57:13 Um, so I was asking about what you remember, you know, as a 15 year old who was already moved and gotten rid of some of

your things, what was going on through in your mind, you know, get going onto the trains and the uncertainty. Do you remember how you felt?

- CO: 00:57:39 Not really. And that's, um, I don't know. I suppose it's suppressed, but, um, I can't recall that we were. Well, it was, um, comforting I think because we were with our family, you know, and, um, my aunts and uncles were always um. And my uncle was very, um, he was a leader. Don't you know, you know, he was, uh, someone that, um, well he's the only, let's see, it's my aunt and my uncle and then, uh, and my aunt who was already married. But my uncle, yes. Was always, um, very knowledgeable, very savvy. In fact, you know, my father, um said, "Well, you don't want it to be evacuated with the rest of us." So he gave him some money and told him to leave. So my uncle did leave.
- AT: 00:59:03 Leaving the military zones?
- CO: 00:59:05 Well, he left uh, I don't think, came with us to Los Angeles, you know. His sister, his sister, married sister. Um, and we were all together and the his mother, but he went off to Pennsylvania and uh, and then I ended up in Pennsylvania with him and my auntie, um the one who went to camp with us. The one that was only five years older than I, we were very close and I lived with her and him in Pennsylvania. I went to high school there. My father, you know, said, well, we don't want you to stay here because, uh, we want you to go to college. It was
- AT: 00:59:54 One second, we're just going to let them walk in.
- CO: 00:59:56 Yeah.
- I3: 01:00:06 Thanks.
- I2: 01:00:06 Thank you.
- I2: 01:00:06 Any water? Are you getting?
- CO: 01:00:13 I had water, thanks.
- AT: 01:00:13 And, um, so before we talk about Pennsylvania, um, you got on the train and so which camp?
- CO: 01:00:24 Yeah, I left camp my father said, "Go."

**Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 11>**

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 Kiyō Temple on Terminal Island. Uh, Tenmei Kiyō 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.

**<End Segment 11> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 12>**

I2: 01:07:13 How about the picking of cotton? Why did you have to do that?

CO: 01:07:19 What?

I2: 01:07:20 The picking of cotton?

CO: 01:07:22 Oh yeah. Well, they tried to, you know, oh gosh. Um, they had a camouflage. Um, they wanted to start uh a camouflage? Uh, you can't call it a plant because there aren't enough. I suppose the, um, the government tried various ways to, uh, uh, to use the labor of these, uh, prisoners. Uh, and let's see, um, I don't know. Where were we? They drove us, um, high school kids, uh, away from the camp out somewhere. And, um, it was, um, uh, um, a massive, um, uh, cotton, cotton growing, very interesting. Big bulbs of cotton. And we were picking up and then they gave us these huge bags and we were trailing, dragging behind us and picking cotton. And I looked at this thing and I thought, how many years would it take to fill this bag up. This thing was humongous and each person had one of these bags? Well, I suppose, you know, this is what happened to the Black folks. You know, picking cotton. And one at a time. And think, I picked half a day I think is what we did.

AT: 01:09:14 And that with high school students? That were

CO: 01:09:18 Yeah they were, you know

I2: 01:09:19 Summer vacation

CO: 01:09:21 Now can they, well, could they do that? Of course they could do whatever they wanted.

AT: 01:09:27 Were you paid for that?

CO: 01:09:29 Oh, absolutely not. No. Did they give us lunch, I wonder?

I3: 01:09:37 Was that close to the camp?

CO: 01:09:39 Yeah, it was, you know, just outside.

I2: 01:09:43 They're teaching you a life skill.

CO: 01:09:45 Yeah, oh gosh. And then they had this camouflage plant or whatever. Not plant, this. And they had adult women who went out there. And I don't know, were the painting, when I think of camouflage, I think, oh, green and khaki colored paint. Where they, what were they doing?

AT: 01:10:13 I think they were weaving nets.

CO: 01:10:13 Weaving!

AT: 01:10:16 To create those giant camouflage. So that was taking place at Poston as well?

CO: 01:10:24 Yeah. And I don't know how successful these things were, you know, I mean we, we went out for half a day and exhausted but we can, uh, I don't know.

I3: 01:10:39 So you only did that once?

CO: 01:10:41 Yeah, we didn't go out again. We weren't worthy.

AT: 01:10:47 Did your, uh, father, was he paid for his work? On the building?

CO: 01:10:53 Yes. I think in camp, they were paid \$19, \$16 and \$12.

I3: 01:11:02 Per?

CO: 01:11:04 Month, I think. Did they have to give that back to the government for feeding them? I don't know. I don't know how that, you know, cause I never did earn anything.

AT: 01:11:19 And so it was, um, your father who mentioned that you should leave as soon as you can?

CO: 01:11:29 Oh yeah, he kept saying, I should. He kept saying I should leave all the time!

AT: 01:11:35 How did you feel about that?

CO: 01:11:37 Oh I felt that, yeah, I'm going to leave. I'm going to pack my bags and I'm going to leave!

I3: 01:11:44 But what about your siblings?

CO: 01:11:47 Oh, I had no concerns. Mid to none.

I3: 01:11:52 Really?

CO: 01:11:52 Yeah, no. They were kids. You know, I was a big one. I was always the. Did they read the encyclopedia? No.

**<End Segment 12> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 13>**

AT: 01:12:04 And so can you tell us about the process of leaving camp? You had to jump through a number of hoops, it sounds like?

CO: 01:12:13 Yeah, I think so. Fill out forms, don't you think?

AT: 01:12:19 And so you said you went to Chicago first? And then from Chicago

CO: 01:12:24 Well, yeah, all this was, you know, the trains come to Chicago. And someone met me here.

I2: 01:12:32 You probably took off from the L.A. train station?

CO: 01:12:36 No! It was Arizona. The middle of you know

I2: 01:12:38 Wherever. Poston must have had a train station.

CO: 01:12:38 Must have had a stop. Well, that was an Indian Reservation.



I3: 01:12:50 So you went alone?

CO: 01:12:51 Yeah.

I3: 01:12:53 And then what did you do in Chicago?

CO: 01:12:56 I came to Chicago. And um

I3: 01:13:03 Where did you go?

CO: 01:13:04 Um, the Baptist. There was a Baptist Seminary on the West Side. I don't know if this still exists. I looked for once. Um, but that was so many years ago. Um, and I think there was a family. There, there was a husband and wife who were devout Baptists. Um, I didn't know them too well because we were from Terminal Island. They were from Los Angeles, but they had, um, they had gotten a job here at this, at the Baptist seminary here.

I3: 01:13:52 Japanese?

CO: 01:13:53 Um, it was on the West Side somewhere.

I3: 01:13:57 They were Japanese people?

CO: 01:13:58 Yeah, they were, they were people. I may have known kind of nominally. Not much, but they were much older than I.

I3: 01:14:07 How are they able to leave?

CO: 01:14:10 They probably clearance and you know, able. They got a job. They had people who, uh,

I3: 01:14:22 Vouched for them?

CO: 01:14:22 There must've been a whole, you know, all the paperwork.

I2: 01:14:26 How were you, how was this funded? You think that Uncle Yas helped you? And how did, you know, if grandpa, his assets were taken all that, where did the funds come for you to get the train, to get on the train?

CO: 01:14:42 Who knows.

I2: 01:14:43 You don't know huh?

CO: 01:14:44 My father may have had a bag full of mine, for all I know.

<End Segment 13> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 14>

I2: 01:14:48 Yeah. So then when you got to your home, how long did you stay, in Chicago?

CO: 01:14:55 I was here for only a few days I think. And then.

I2: 01:15:02 Uncle came to get you?

CO: 01:15:02 What was their name? Teragawa? Um, they were going to, they were going to, um, have me stay with them at in, uh, there in, uh.

I2: 01:15:19 Oh, stay here in Chicago?

CO: 01:15:21 And I didn't, I don't think I did. I think Uncle Yas came really right at that point and we, I got on and we drove out East. And it was snowing and October. It was October. It was snowing in Ohio as we drove along.

I3: 01:15:44 How was he able to get out though? Uncle Yas?

CO: 01:15:48 Uncle Yatz had a car.

I3: 01:15:49 But how, why was he able to leave?

CO: 01:15:52 He never went in.

I2: 01:15:53 He never went in.

CO: 01:15:53 He never went in because my father said don't come, go away.

I2: 01:15:58 Stay away.

CO: 01:15:59 Go to Pennsylvania, where we had friends.

I3: 01:16:03 So what, did he live on Terminal Island?

CO: 01:16:05 What?

I3: 01:16:05 Uncle Yas

CO: 01:16:07 Uncle Yas? What?

I3: 01:16:07 Did he live on Terminal Island?

CO: 01:16:09 No, never. He lived in San Pedro, across the way.

I3: 01:16:13 So when all of this happened, he, Baiyon and and Auntie Kiki.

I3: 01:16:19 They just left?

CO: 01:16:19 Used to live in San Pedro.

I3: 01:16:21 But they just left?

CO: 01:16:23 They were there and then Baiyon left with us.

I2: 01:16:27 Yeah. But yeah, Kiki and Yas went to Pennsylvania.

CO: 01:16:31 No, Kiki went to camp.

I2: 01:16:34 Okay.

AT: 01:16:34 Do you remember your first impressions of Chicago?

CO: 01:16:38 Yeah, I went to a Walgreens or something and it was drinking. There was this guy sat next to me, thought I was French. He said are you French? It was probably, What are you? You know, never saw the likes of you. You must be French. That was the funniest thing I thought. I'll never forget this as long as I live. So funny.

AT: 01:17:06 And so your Uncle Yas Picked you up and drove to Pennsylvania?

CO: 01:17:12 Pennsylvania.

AT: 01:17:12 And so how long were you were in Pennsylvania, and how long were you there?

CO: 01:17:16 Oh, we were, we went to, um, we were in the town of Lancaster. Nice town. Big high school. You have to swim to graduate from high school. No, not I, so we looked for a small school, went to Eastland Theater. Uh, we found this nice apartment in Byrd and Hand. And uh, Kiki and Yas went through the door of Mrs. Weavers. Knocked on the door and she had a lovely apartment in this big house. Um, uh, the living room and kitchen and then two bedrooms upstairs. And this was a huge house. They only had three kids, but a big house. You know, I can't remember that. They had two sets of stairs and a third one

somewhere. Anyway, um, so Uncle Yas and Kiki went to the door and knocked on the door and. And uh, I guess there was an ad in the paper for an apartment and uh, Mrs. Weaver said to her husband, "Well, they're very nice people there. They seem, they speak English, they say they're Japanese, but they're very nice people and her husband said, "Well, if you think they're, okay, yes, you know, rent to them." So they rented this nice place. Uh, we had the first two bedrooms and the whole front staircase and then this kitchen, this house was humongous. Have ever seen their place? You have.

4th Interviewer: 01:19:21 Did he say what he did?

I2: 01:19:22 Flowers a nursery.

CO: 01:19:25 Yeah. Huge house.

I2: 01:19:26 A lot of land.

**<End Segment 14> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 15>**

AT: 01:19:27 How long were you there?

CO: 01:19:29 I went to high school there, one, one year and then I was there for a little bit more. And then I went to college, out north and then my aunt got married, my uncle went to the Army. And you know, we gave up that place, but it was very pleasant. We, we stayed there. We were like family. In fact, um, some of those people, and I are friends to this day. How many years is it?

I3: 01:20:07 Isn't that the chicken place?

CO: 01:20:09 Pardon? Patricia?

I3: 01:20:12 Isn't that the chicken sex?

I2: 01:20:14 Yeah, uncle and auntie did chicken sex.

CO: 01:20:16 Oh yeah, Uncle Yas, that was a new new thing that the Japanese had just, it isn't invented. They had learned to. Well, they could, they could tell the sex of, of the chicken by looking at the on their behind and the Japanese

I3: 01:20:45 Perfected the art.

CO: 01:20:45 Uh, well, a relative of Uncle Yas of the Kinoshna family started doing this in Pennsylvania. And uh, we learned a bit, knew of it. And so they said, well, he ought to come out there and learn this thing and, and then he could be a help because they didn't speak very good English. And Uncle Yas was, you know, so they were of help to each other. The Mita Company started and Uncle Yas was there and he learned to do this thing and he made money. He paid you by each, each.

I3: 01:21:27 Each chicken

CO: 01:21:29 Chicken to each little chick was a

I3: 01:21:31 Was that a Japanese thing?

CO: 01:21:31 It's a Japanese invention.

I3: 01:21:35 Do they do that in Japan?

CO: 01:21:37 They did it and I guess in Japan and it was Baiyon's family that

I3: 01:21:42 Brought it over.

CO: 01:21:44 Clever. These Japanese.

I3: 01:21:47 That's cool.

CO: 01:21:47 What?

I3: 01:21:47 That's cool.

CO: 01:21:48 Yeah. It was very cool. And uh, the poultry, all the Eastern Sea Board had all the Japanese. Uh, and then they had a school, Mr. Nita had a school and taught all these Nisei men how to do this thing.

**<End Segment 15> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 16>**

AT: 01:22:09 And um, so you were in Pennsylvania for about a year and then before going to college?

CO: 01:22:20 Yeah, I was there for the last year of high school. Then I went out north to NY state for college.

AT: 01:22:28 Where did you go to school?

CO: 01:22:29 Houghton College? Um, and Houghton, New York, near Buffalo. Near Cornell, not Buffalo. It's halfway between Buffalo and uh, Cornell.

AT: 01:22:45 And so you would've been in college while the war was still going on, is that right?

CO: 01:22:50 Yeah.

AT: 01:22:50 Um, I, how was that being in college in NY, you know, as.

CO: 01:22:59 It was a curiosity, you know. Um I wrote a column in the newspaper and one of them was about the evacuation and all, and one of the Boston newspapers carried that story. Someone cut it out and sent it to me and they sent a reporter down to talk to me. Yeah. Boston Globe.

AT: 01:23:32 So did people, um, out of state, did they know about what happened to the Japanese on the West Coast?

CO: 01:23:41 Not really, no.

AT: 01:23:43 Did you have to do a lot of explaining?

CO: 01:23:47 Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It seems to me I was going around in Pennsylvania talking about, um, what was happening. The churches were especially interested, you know.

AT: 01:24:03 How did people respond or react?

CO: 01:24:08 Uh, surprised and uh, ummm. Um can't remember that, you know, it was so different from any other, um, response. And people are always surprised that there were so many, you know, Japanese. This is the first one they'd ever seen. And don't tell me there's a whole, you know, a band of band of Japanese. Yeah.

AT: 01:24:44 And.

CO: 01:24:47 Yeah.

AT: 01:24:47 At what point did you come to Chicago? Was that after college?

CO: 01:24:53 Yeah. And then my folks, um, after the war came here and then after a few years they went back to Los Angeles. Uh, my, my

folks and my grandmother, they all went back, and my sister was here, but she went back and my brother went to college, he went to Houghton with me and then he finished. Um, let's see, went a year to, um, oh, he got a Sociology degree here at the University of Chicago. Um, and then he went back to California and he taught, uh, Sociology until he retired recently.

AT: 01:25:40 What did you study at Houghton?

CO: 01:25:43 Psych and Soch.

**<End Segment 16> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 17>**

AT: 01:25:45 And, um, so was it your, your parents, they came to Chicago? Um, what brought them to Chicago?

CO: 01:25:56 Well, I think, um, there were only a few places they could leave uh from camp. They wanted them to go to, um, some of the larger, um, cities out here. A lot of Japanese went to Cleveland too I know. And not as many to New York, I guess that was a bit too far. And a lot of Japanese came to Chicago. And I worked at the Japanese Resettlers for about a year. Uh, there was Mr. Yastake and uh, Abe Hagiwara worked there. Um And I was there for a little bit.

AT: 01:26:48 What did your parents do? Or your?

CO: 01:26:53 Oh, my father. Oh, my father built a ship in the basement of a, of the place that we were renting. And then they took that boat up to my husband and his friend took that boat up to Grace Lake. They left it on the, on the, it's not a beach is it? Um, and someone stole it. We never told my father.

I2: 01:27:24 But what motivated, um, the people who went away from the West Coast were they bitter.

CO: 01:27:34 No, they couldn't go back for awhile, you couldn't go back to California.

I3: 01:27:39 She said they had to leave.

I2: 01:27:40 But some people did come, go back. I mean, didn't they?

AT: 01:27:43 That was after the war.

CO: 01:27:46 Yeah, after awhile.

I3: 01:27:48 So what they do? What did they do in Chicago?

CO: 01:27:52 They got jobs, you know. I worked at the Resettlers. Helped get jobs at Curtiss Candy. There were a number of places that hired a bunch of able bodied Japanese. They liked Japanese workers. Good workers.

AT: 01:28:13 And so when you came to meet your family here, where were you staying? What neighborhood or?

CO: 01:28:22 Oh, where was I? I was and did they come first? Let's see. Um they had an, they have very good friends. My mother's very good friend. They used to come and visit us on Terminal Island. So they're very old friends. Um, they settled in Chicago before my folks came and they had a place on the West Side and it was a three flat. So my folks rented a flat, then they didn't stay there too long. Um, then my folks went back to California and my, uh, father, well I think he was itching to build his own place. So he went, they went back and uh, uh, he was going to build his home. What did he do though? He built, um, a tea room or something, didn't he?

I3: 01:29:53 In Chicago?

CO: 01:29:54 No, in Cali, in L.A.

I3: 01:29:59 Did you live with them here?

CO: 01:30:00 Pardon?

I3: 01:30:01 Did you live with them here in Chicago when you all met up?

CO: 01:30:04 I was here with them for only a short time and then they left. Uh, and then I got married. Um, and, and Michi was already married to also, she had.

I2: 01:30:22 Mark.

CO: 01:30:22 Mark O'Polo already.

I2: 01:30:23 Yeah.

CO: 01:30:23 Yeah.

I3: 01:30:26 Where did she meet her?



I2: 01:30:26 Where did who meet who?  
I3: 01:30:29 Where did Michi meet her husband?  
I2: 01:30:32 Well, probably here.  
I3: 01:30:37 Where did Auntie Michi meet?  
I2: 01:30:37 Met Frank, here?  
CO: 01:30:37 Yeah, here in Chicago, yeah.  
I2: 01:30:37 And then they went back to California.  
CO: 01:30:41 And that's a big family.

**<End Segment 17> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 18>**

AT: 01:30:44 And um, how did you find the job that Resettlers Committee?  
CO: 01:30:53 Um, how did I find the job? Let's see. I was doing volunteer work for them too, I think.  
AT: 01:31:07 What kind of work or position did you have?  
CO: 01:31:21 Um, let me think. I worked for a group of doctors for a little bit and did bookkeeping for them, uh, on Michigan Island. And um, it wasn't too long. And then I found out that Resettlers and that was the new place I was looking for some people. And that was good fun. Um, we made our own meals, lunches at Resettlers. And there was a young woman, Eileen Nagatomo, who had never lived with Japanese. She was from either North or South Dakota. Uh, and she was so interesting that we all where they are at Resettlers and, uh, we made, uh, lunches. She was so much fun.  
AT: 01:32:31 And how would you describe the, the Japanese American community back then, say in the days that you were working at Resettlers?  
CO: 01:32:41 Well, people would, you know, had just come in or they would, this was early when people had just left camp or they were looking for lodging. And, um, as soon as, uh, the larger community knew about other The Resettlers Committee, they

would call us, um, uh, to report. They had jobs for, uh, and they, they liked Japanese American secretaries and, um, Curtiss Candy. I don't know what those folks really did, but it was piece work. And the Japanese were clean and smart and you know,

I3: 01:33:34 But maybe spies.

CO: 01:33:36 Yeah. And, uh, so, you know, they would call in and say they would have, they would have a position for 10 young Japanese American men from ages so and so and here's the, yeah. It was very interesting. Yeah. And it got bigger and bigger as you know, they had the, Japanese had good, they had a good reputation. Um, and some of these large companies, this Curtiss Candy, I remember them well would, uh, call in and ask for number and then, um, the people who used to print the, um, umm, the yellow pages, you know, and they would want proofreaders and such.

I2: 01:34:44 Yeah.

CO: 01:34:46 The yellow pages. Donnelly. Donnelly and Company. Yeah.

**<End Segment 18> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 19>**

AT: 01:34:55 We can be wrapping up soon, but just a few questions before we finish up. Um, one thing I wanted to ask is, um, so I know you mentioned you met your husband in Chicago.

CO: 01:35:12 Yes.

AT: 01:35:12 And um.

CO: 01:35:14 In church, yeah.

AT: 01:35:17 Which, which church was that? Where were you going at the time?

CO: 01:35:21 That's a Methodist Church. It's from friend, one of my early, the childhood friend who wanted to start a choir at that church. And I was attending the Baptist Church on the South Side, um, at the University of Chicago. Uh, Jitsuo Murikawa uh, who was at the, the church down there. Uh, he was an excellent speaker and he came to Chicago. And they had already made a job for him. So, uh, and we, we learned that he was down at the

University of Chicago, so some of us went down there. Uh, it was, uh, you know, it was at the Rockefeller Chapel. Fantastic, you know.

- AT: 01:36:24 And, um, where was the Methodist Church?
- CO: 01:36:28 This was a small group of Japanese Americans who started it, uh, with a minister. I've forgotten who the first minister was. Um, and they had a little choir and, uh, uh, a small congregation and it got larger.
- I3: 01:36:50 Inaudible.
- CO: 01:36:50 Yeah.
- AT: 01:36:52 And so what inspired you to stay in Chicago?
- CO: 01:36:58 Uh, well, my folks were here and then, um, got married. Uh, my husband was teaching at Loyola, the Medical School, and then he was teaching at the University of Illinois, the Medical School. Uh, he had a chance to go elsewhere, but I guess we never thought of moving. Well, we liked Wilmette. We liked the school system.
- AT: 01:37:29 So at what point did you move out of the city to Wilmette?
- CO: 01:37:36 Um, Teresa was just a toddler as soon.
- I2: 01:37:40 As soon as my brother was born. You know wanted, they wanted us to go to New Trier and wanted so badly.
- CO: 01:37:47 Go to a good high school.
- I2: 01:37:51 And there were not very many Asians in Wilmette.
- CO: 01:37:54 No, no, no one at all.
- I2: 01:38:01 Well, the Yakis.
- CO: 01:38:01 Well, yeah, about the same time.
- I3: 01:38:06 So you're moved to Wilmette in 1956 or 57.
- CO: 01:38:11 Yeah. But there were those um, fine people who went around the block.
- I2: 01:38:25 And warned

CO: 01:38:28 Warned them that we were coming. And that we were, we were good, uh, good Americans.

I3: 01:38:33 Who did that?

CO: 01:38:33 Never fear.

I3: 01:38:33 Who did that?

CO: 01:38:36 The Cleveland's,

I3: 01:38:36 They told people not to worry?

I2: 01:38:38 Yeah because this is a long time. This was before any civil rights thing.

New Speaker: 01:38:43 And then our house on Lake Avenue, the people who owned that house wanted to sell it to a Black family. No Black families came and so they had to take us and they said, I guess you'll have to do. Yeah.

**<End Segment 19> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**

**<Begin Segment 20>**

AT: 01:39:01 Well, we can not be wrapping up, but before we do, is there anything else you guys want to ask or.

I3: 01:39:11 I wanted to ask about more, just one question about, um, Pennsylvania. Like those people, it sounded like you said they didn't, they weren't super familiar with what was going on in California.

CO: 01:39:24 No, yeah.

I3: 01:39:24 And they also weren't very familiar with seeing Japanese people or Japanese American people.

CO: 01:39:28 Never.

I3: 01:39:28 But so, they, were they not discriminatory or like

CO: 01:39:35 Well, they were one Christians, a special brand of Christians, you know. They were Mennonites. Uh, they wore, you know, the long clothing, that was Patricia's mother,

I3: 01:39:51 All of the people in that area?

CO: 01:39:53 Patricia's family was interesting. They were billionaires. They were the Reese Padlock Company. And I got a job with them one summer after I graduated from high school before I went to college. And, um, Mrs. Reese of Reese Padlocks was Patricia's mother. Patricia mother was, um, uh, a, a rich American until she became, she became a reformed Mennonite and started wearing the clothes that they wore in Pennsylvania, you know. Um, and they wear a bonnet. They call it, plain people they call them.

I3: 01:40:46 Uh, so those people are really respectful and not like racist towards you?

CO: 01:40:53 No, not at all. And of course, because she's a Christian, but because first she was this rich, um, rich American, uh, well she went to college but almost barely. Um, she met her husband there. Lovely people. But um, yeah, they were, they were not, um, Pennsylvania Dutch, they were not Pennsylvania farm people. Yeah. So when we appeared at their doorstep, um, I think she was interested. He was curious.

I2: 01:41:38 She said you were dark though.

CO: 01:41:41 What did she say?

I2: 01:41:41 She said you looked dark.

CO: 01:41:41 Yes, that's right.

I2: 01:41:45 But nice.

CO: 01:41:45 And they speak English. You know, Uncle Yas was very uh, he was formidable.

AT: 01:41:58 Well, and before we wrap up, is there anything else that you would like to add or any final thoughts?

CO: 01:42:11 Well, I'm glad you're doing this. I think it's uh, um, yeah, it wouldn't be of interest. Um, you know, for those who come after us. And, um, why we came to these parts in the first place, because this was not a port of entry, you know. Whereas the Japanese and Chinese set foot on the West Coast many, many years ago, hundreds of years ago, it would seem now. Yeah. So every time we do go to a new place, um, we're, you know, we bought a place in Michigan last year and, uh, we find it very

interesting and the people are very welcoming, uh, and full of curiosity. And I spoke to a group last year and now they want me to speak in the next town, this June. Because the country is made of so many, so many interesting, diverse peoples. I think it behooves to speak up, you know, and educate folk. Yeah.

- AT: 01:44:00 And if you could leave some kind of, um, message or, or legacy with your children, your grandchildren, what's something that you would like them to know or?
- CO: 01:44:17 Hmm. Well, they seem to know more, uh, more than I do about what's going on in the world, um, before and after. But, uh, Christopher heard me speak when he was a little boy, uh, second grade or third grade, I think.
- I2: 01:44:53 Well, you're still doing it. I mean you know, the children at Evanston High School were very um interested in hearing your story.
- CO: 01:45:04 Yeah, were still interested. Well, of course our textbooks had a, the good chapters on, uh, on the evacuation and, and what do the children think about that? Um, many good questions. You know, the end of the chapter.
- AT: 01:45:34 Well, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me and us, and
- CO: 01:45:40 You're welcome.
- AT: 01:45:41 Thank you.

**<End Segment 20> - Copyright © 2018 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.**