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Title: Constance Yamashiro Interview
Narrator: Constance Yamashiro
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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- AT: 01:11:12 So we have a, just a little bit of time left, let's see. I guess, but before I get into kind of a random question, is there anything else, you know, as far as, so since, you know, we are curious and interested in learning more about resettlement in Chicago and kind of those, this start of, you know, a pretty strong Japanese American community, or at least Japanese American presence in Chicago. Are there any other things that come to mind or that you'd want to share and, helping us have a better sense of what that was like?
- CY: 01:12:05 It was interesting. It was a time of transition. I don't really know if I can, you know, really help you out with that because, it depends on, as I say, the times, the times are changing very quickly, very fast. It was unheard of at the time that, you know, when I was young, but to be mixed marriages, for instance, as such, my daughter is married to a German fellow. You know, I mean, it's so different now, you know, but at the time, you know, it was, it was a very narrow way to see the world. And I think we maintained that I have in this Japanese community and having boyfriends in that group and having the clubs all know each other. We tried to sustain and maintain it, but a lot of them, as we got older, we have what we call reunions. We're old now and, there are certain was like, I like to go to the unions. Say, have it in Las Vegas or something, but there are some of the people that just want nothing to do with it one. Nothing, as a reminder, it depends on, I guess what you got out of it for yourself. You know, I feel like, it created a lot of good memories for me. There was some sad memories too, and, self-worth. But I feel that, I feel that it was very, very unique. You know, it's like I get together with Japanese people now, my church. I do go to church now. And, and you know, you get, you meet people in the first thing you said, one of the first things you say, where were you in camp? You know what, someone who was around my age in the 80s and what camp are you in? So it's a form of, you know, it's a touchstone that, because say,

you know, and I've had friends who were not in camp who are almost jealous of the fact that, well, I don't have the community sense that you do because I don't know these people are that people are there. Because, I was, I stayed in Chicago. I said, well, I just stay in Chicago because if you're in Chicago and the war broke out, you were not sent into a camp. It's interesting that, I feel, I was more privileged to be able to be in this, history. I don't think my children will ever understand us, you know, because they see it as a sort of anomaly, you know, that, you know, the world's, so you're Japanese American and, so what? You know, their attitude, well, it was a big thing at the time. It was a community that could never be reestablished and it was unique and, we thought it would go on forever, you know, at the time and it doesn't like everything else, you know, it, it dissolved and, that's what's so sad about it. You know, it is what it is, you know what I'm saying?

AT: 01:15:52 Do you, are you saying that the community dissolved, that sense of community?

CY: 01:15:57 Yes, yes, yes. Which is good because it was too enclosed.

AT: 01:16:03 Yeah. Do you have any, any thoughts of why that might have happened or what happened?

CY: 01:16:09 Well, I believe one of the things is that we were all together because we were desperate for trying to survive. You know, at postwar. But as people became more prosperous, as people became more aware that they could establish themselves in the city, they felt that they wanted to go into like the suburbs or they felt they didn't want to be tagged along with, you know, provincial ideas of being a Japanese community as such. And I can understand that, you know, it's, you got one foot in that, one foot in this other, what you want to do is you want to be just as the same as the whole population here. There's a sense of, we, you know, we all felt we weren't less than but we were not Caucasian people, you know, so it's interesting. It's a very, very half and half type of thing. Yeah. I don't know how to put it.

AT: 01:17:26 It is interesting and I keep thinking about what you were sharing about, some of your father's perspectives because on the one hand he, you mentioned he was pushing for, you know, we need to assimilate that, you know, it's almost like, you know, quote unquote our faults or, you know, we're taking on the burden.

CY: 01:17:50 Right, right, right

AT: 01:17:51 But on the other hand, when you were bringing home friends who are not Japanese, you said.

CY: 01:17:58 Oh, it's terrible.

AT: 01:17:58 He had issues with it. So it's, it's kind of, that's what I'm, to what you're saying, that's just what I'm thinking about is kind of this double edge sword.

CY: 01:18:08 Yes. Yes. Especially I had real close Korean girlfriend. Oh yeah. It's just the whole, I had to see her on the sly, so to speak. And yeah, he had all kinds of, very, racial or racist ideas about people. I don't know, it was just his ideas that would be a projection of his own anger. I remember he, he worried about, when I was growing up about my being dark, he said, don't let yourself get dark. And if they would rub lemon all over me thinking that, and they were worried about, you know, looking, to, Asian, that was a big thing. You know, he felt that was a detriment. And, he, he himself, put a great emphasis on appearance of, you know, Japanese people, you know, he felt it was very exhausting to be around. Yeah. In that sense of speaking, you know,

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