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Title: Tonko Doi Interview
Narrator: Tonko Doi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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<Begin Segment 9>

- AT: 00:36:49 Um, okay. Um, well in that case, um, can you tell me a little bit more about, so you explained some of the background of how your family ended up, um, going to Cincinnati and, and you mentioned that the Quakers had a hostel and you know, to house your family. So can you just, um, tell me a little bit more about what you know or remember if you did, um, of those early days in Cincinnati?
- TD: 00:37:20 Yes. Um, first of all, I have a scar here and that scar, oh, was because I fell down the steps of the hostel. My mother told me, so I must've been like four years old and, uh, I fell down the stairs and I uh, when I go back to visit Cincinnati, I always, I don't know if you do this, but you go by your old house, you know where you lived. Paul, my husband says, oh my gosh, again, we're going by these houses. But I go by the hostel and uh, where we lived in Cincinnati, uh, was a mixed community. It was uh, white Appalachian, uh people, black people, white people of all different, uh, economic, uh, levels. It was kind of an unusual neighborhood but in this house, which I understand used to be the dormitory for mortuary students because down the road on Ridgeway, there was a school, mortuary school where people learn to be undertakers.
- TD: 00:38:36 Anyway, it was kind of a funny house. But in that house there were lots of JAs, lots of Japanese American families which made, and they must have been placed there, you know, by social service agencies, by the Quakers. But was like a little camp again, you know, people would go up and down the stairs, visited people you know. But my mother, to um, help supplement the income, I remember seeing her in, um, my father's old winter coat in the wintertime, old winter coat and she had a scarf and in the basement there was like a big furnace. And I saw my mother shoveling coal into the furnace and she would also sweep the stairs and keep the hallways clean. They must have gotten a reduction in the rent for that

work. Now in telling that story, I have to give you a little history about my mother. I told you that my grandfather worked for Sun-Maid Raisin and uh, he was in charge of selling the product in Japan.

TD: 00:39:57 So his idea, he went to all the candy stores. He went to the grocery stores, he went in, nobody knew farm raisins. So he's the man or person who, um, thought of that small red raisin box because he said then it's like a sample. You know, people will try that, but they're not going to try this big box until they get used to it. So anyway, at one point, after living in Japan a few years and developing his business, my grandfather became the third highest paid man in Japan, because he was paid in US dollars and the yen was at 360 forever, you know, until the 60s. It was 360. And so my grandfather had a nice life. My, my mother went to a private Christian school. Um, my grandpa was a hunter and he had dogs. He imported, he brought with him, uh, wire hair, terriers.

TD: 00:41:08 I have a picture of my mom and her at home and there's a pack of wild hair, wire hair carriers in their yard. Well, he imported one at a time from Germany and in this book of, um, about wire hair terriers, they listed his name that he and baron so-and-so brought dogs to Japan. So my mother told me that when my grandpa would go hunting. The train stopped not far from his house, our house, their house. So he would get on the train with his dog, with his gun, and he would ride the train someplace and go hunting. Well, you know, coming from that background, my mother was a very, I don't know what's the word, she, she didn't talk about wealth, so for her, to be a janitor, but she never complained about doing that kind of work even though, you know, and her, uh, that's another thing, I guess my grandmother didn't want to spoil my, my, her children. So she never had a maid, you know, everybody worked in that house even though, you know, they didn't have to. So, I don't know. My, I have to admire my mother for never complaining about her station in life. I wish I'd never come to the United States. I could have lived in Japan and you know, who knows, but I have to admire my mother and father. And that was a true love story, actually, my parents.

TD: 00:42:58 And, uh, when he found work, I don't know where he got this name, but they called him Jack. His name is Shiro, but, uh, all of the people that he worked with called him Jack. And, uh, so he worked at, in a, in a factory, uh, Juice, Juice Ridge. They, they took juice, orange juice and they packaged it and it wasn't far from our house. And then, uh, he wanted to be a salesman,

maybe get more money. So he tried to do that, but it wasn't successful. So at that point we moved to Chicago.

AT: 00:43:43 Um, and just, just to clarify details because it, it sounds like you had a bit of family in Cincinnati, um, you know, extended relatives. So, um, as far as going to Cincinnati, um, who, who was, who did you go with and who were you staying with in this hostel?

TD: 00:44:06 Um, I, I don't know, but they probably did. Now the same uncle who moved from Venice to Stanton also went to Cincinnati and he and his wife, this was his second wife uh, his, her two daughters and his son and his daughter. So four and they were teenagers and he and his wife, us, we went to Cincinnati, so the two brothers and their families and my uncle Kenji was a dental, I don't know what you call him. And he made false teeth and uh, I guess he was very good. I thought he was a dentist cause I remember going there at night and he work on our teeth because we couldn't afford to go to a dentist. So I thought uncle was a dentist. They said, no, no, he only makes the false teeth, but he worked on our teeth.

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