

Densho Digital Repository
Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and
Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS)
Oral History Project Collection
Title: Lisa Doi Interview
Narrator: Lisa Doi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location: Chicago, Illinois
Date: September 6, 2019
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-20-9

<Begin Segment 9>

- AT: 00:33:23 And that was through school?
- LD: 00:33:23 We didn't go to school together. I didn't go to school with the other two girls, but we did a lot of like social events, especially before, you know, before elementary school, like in Pre-K and kindergarten stuff where our moms would get together and we would, I dunno, go to the zoo or things like that. Um, my mom was also very involved in the Chicago, Japanese American Historical Society and Heiwa Terrace when I was younger. So I was often dragged to community events. So I remember going to, um, an exhibit at the Field Museum called "Strength and Diversity of Japanese American Women", which I think came in 1995.
- LD: 00:34:00 Um, so that was probably like one of the earliest memories of a community event. We were just talking the other day about how there used to be Kanojo fashion shows that happened in the, um, room next door here at the service committee and how I think I was a model in one of those fashion shows when I was about five or six. So, from a very early age, I had a strong sense of, of other people who were also Japanese American, as well as community institutions, events, organizations that I really felt connected to. I also remember going back when the service committee used to run Fuji Fest, um, at the Union League Club. There were a period of time, maybe when I was like eight and nine where um, along with another person who was maybe like 10 or 11. We used to sell raffle tickets until they found out it was illegal for people under the age of 18 to sell, you know, to participate in gambling.
- LD: 00:34:54 Um, and we were drastically under the age of 18, um, but who wouldn't turn down like an eight year old and a 10 year old asking you to buy raffle tickets. So I'm sort of, all of these things really made me feel connected to the community. Um, because of MBT I participated a lot in Ginza. I'd volunteered there

starting as a little kid, um, you know, doing the snow cone machine and then working in the shop MBT table. And I also was in the original iteration of Ho Etsu Taiko when it was a youth, truly a youth taiko group. And then I stopped when, uh, my skills did not, did not grow.

AT: 00:35:34 Um, so you mentioned that, um, your parent's decision to bring you to MBT and to have you involved was less to try to raise you as Buddhist and more about community involvement. Um, have you talked to them about maybe why they felt that way or have any guesses if you, if you haven't talked about it explicitly?

LD: 00:36:00 So in terms of attending MBT, I think my parents, neither of my parents are particularly religious. Um, so I don't think that they really had a strong desire to have me have a strong faith identity. Um, so I think that that's why they were viewing it really as a cultural experience and not as much a religious experience.

AT: 00:36:23 Um, and uh, as, as far as school, what, um, elementary school did you go to in Evanston?

LD: 00:36:35 So for school I went to Midwest Montessori, which was a very small Montessori school from Pre-Kindergarten through third grade. And then third grade, I started at North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka. And I attended that through the end of high school, um, North Shore. And I am currently a trustee of North Shore. So it was a really positive and powerful place for me to be a student. Um, but it's an incredibly white school. Um, which is not to say that I think I would've really been exposed to a lot of Asian Americans or Japanese Americans had I gone to public school in Evanston. I think Evanston is very much a community that's segregated between Black and White. Um, but I think North Shore maybe even, I had even less exposure to um, other Asian American or Japanese American peers, um, at North Shore, through middle school, or I guess maybe starting in middle school and through high school I really began to explore what it meant to be multiracial. And I didn't really come back to looking at my Japanese American identity really until college and participating in the Kansha project. So I think from middle school to high school I really explored what it meant to be for me to be multiracial. That in college I think I spent a lot more time exploring what my Asian American identity meant and then sort of it's been post-college that I've really return to what does being Japanese American mean to me.

AT: 00:38:07 Um, and which college did you go to?

LD:

00:38:09

So after North Shore Country Day school, I went to the University of Pennsylvania. So, um, I lived there. I lived in Philadelphia for four years, then I went to New York for two years, um, where I taught at a boarding school in West Chester. And then I came back to Chicago to start graduate school at the University of Chicago.

<End Segment 9> - Copyright © 2019 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.