

Densho Digital Repository
Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and
Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS)
Oral History Project Collection
Title: Hiroki Kimiko Keaveney Interview
Narrator: Hiroki Kimiko Keaveney
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location:
Date: September 2, 2017
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-3-4

<Begin Segment 4>

- HK: 00:12:45 Um, so anyways, so they were living there and then, um, like everyone else they were put on buses and they were taken to, um, to Manzanar. And my grandfather described it as like, they were really scared. They just thought like they may shoot all of us. Like he, he like shared little details. I still remember from fourth grade about like how - he didn't tell me that part when I was in fourth grade, he told me that one as an adult about being scared that they were gonna get killed. But when I was in fourth grade, he told me that like, they like would stop on the side of the road and just give them toilet paper just to like, yeah, just like in public, just like so anyways, so -
- AT: 00:13:25 And how old was he?
- HK: 00:13:27 I think he was 23, if I remember. Like, and so it was really powerful, like, getting to know my grandparents at 20, I think I was 22 or 21. I actually think he was 22 or 21 cause I remember thinking, oh my God, like my grandpa was my age and I'm all the opportunities I've had because of my grandparents and financial support to get an education is because of them. Um, and he never had the opportunities to get an education, um, because he was incarcerated. And, um, so they were in Manzanar, um, and before they got sent to Tule Lake, um, the reason why I'm wearing this shirt is because my grandfather had a bunch of jobs and one of them was he would sell hot dogs at the baseball games, which I thought was pretty cool. And so I got this shirt at Manzanar when I went. Um, I forget, I think it was the Bainbridge pilgrimage. So what was interesting about his story was that I was so grateful I lived in Seattle, um, because I've been to Bainbridge and I've also met people on the internment like Minidoka pilgrimage committee who are from Bainbridge. And they were the first to be taken away. And so because it was so quick, they were sent to Manzanar and so because my grandparents were like landscapers, um like agricultural stuff like every Japanese American back then, or it's either hotels or

agriculture. So they um, he farmed with them cause it was like a way to get out of the camps was you could go farming and like farming for the white people. And so they basically, like, he befriended people from Bainbridge island, which made sense because I remember when I was in undergrad, it's so funny when you learn the story and then all the details kind of fall into place, like they always talked about Bainbridge, when I lived in Seattle for undergrad, they were like, go to Bainbridge island, go to Bainbridge island. And I was like, okay, like I had no interest. And so now it makes sense. So the story, cause he was friends with people from Bainbridge, which is why they bought like a house there, um, as a property.

HK:

00:15:29

Um, yeah. So they were in the camps just doing their best to like, like what everyone else did, just doing their best to seem like a human being. And then, um, then the no-no, the, um, questionnaire came out. And so my grandfather would've fought, he wasn't gonna forswear his allegiance, but cause he always said, he's like, I didn't really understand the question and I would have said no to it. Um, cause I think for him it would've meant he wasn't Japanese, but he was willing to fight for the military. Like he was like, yeah, I would've fought for my country. I'm an American. Um, but my great grandfather, oh, I'm sorry, my great grandmother was really disillusioned. And she was like, no, like you need to be like a good son. I assume. Like it's funny, I read that John Okada's "No-No Boy" and I have a feeling - I don't know if my family was exactly like that, but it, it just, a lot of it was mental health and I'm feeling disillusioned as a Japanese immigrant at that time, Like as an Issei, I can't, I can't even imagine what my great-grandmother was going through. And, um, and maybe I would've done the same thing too. Um, and so she was like, she was like, no, like I need to go back to Japan. We can't live here. They don't want us. And so I mean, like my family, they sold their car. I remember when they told me this, I think I was in fourth grade when they told me, they sold their car for \$10. And I just like when you're in fourth grade, you hear that and you're just like, what? But like as an adult, like \$10, I can't even get lunch for \$10. Like, and I know it's like different, you know, obviously it's not 1940s, but it's just so humiliating. I can't even imagine how she felt. Um, yeah, I can't even imagine how she felt. So she um, yeah, so they were no-nos, um, which was a sexist term! Cause there are no, no girls, I think, but whatever, um, cause Yuri, oh no, Yuri Kochiyama was part of the war. Nevermind, I was like was Yuri a no-no? Um, so basically my family, um, were sent to Tule Lake, and because they were a part of the no-nos, they were sent to like the, probably the shittier part of the camp, honestly. And from there they joined the Hoshidan, because I think they

wanted to learn Japanese because they were going gonna get deported. So they were like better learn the language cause, assimilation, no one taught us. So basically, um, they're part of the Hoshidan and I think it was in Tule Lake where my great-aunt Anna got married, and so she and her husband after the war moved to Hawai'i. But um, yeah and there was like more with another cousin. Like my family story is very complicated. Like, and I'm still piecing it together, honestly. So from Tule Lake they went to Fort Lincoln in North Dakota and I was so excited to see that the exhibit actually has Fort Lincoln. I was like, what? Like no one ever talks about those camps where they put Germans and Italians and Japanese people. So it's like, damn, you know, my family's messed up. It's like they're with the white people. So anyways, so they were there and from there they were sent to Japan.

- HK: 00:18:34 And I remember reading an article about my family because like that's how it is with my family. It's like they only share certain details, but I've been really lucky that I've had a family who likes to talk about themselves so much. It's like narcissism is a great quality to have, but it's also like, I hope part of their healing process too. Um, and I think it is. I really do think it is. And, but, um, anyway, so my great-uncle Benny, he had done an article with someone and he had essentially described what I'm about to tell you, like about going to Japan and what that was like. And so it was the three siblings and the two great-grandparents,
- AT: 00:19:10 Just to clarify, can you help me out with, like, how old everyone was.
- HK: 00:19:17 By that time?
- AT: 00:19:17 In the order of your grandfather's family?
- HK: 00:19:19 Oh, so he, oh, so my great aunt Anna was the oldest siblings, so she was probably mid-twenties. He was early twenties and then Grace and Benny were probably teenagers, like probably like 19/18 cause they were all pretty close in age. Yeah.
- AT: 00:19:35 Okay thank you. I didn't realize that
- HK: 00:19:36 Oh yeah, sure. Of course.
- AT: 00:19:38 But so, so