

Densho Digital Repository
Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and
Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS)
Oral History Project Collection
Title: Susumu Mukushina Interview
Narrator: Susumu Mukushina
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location:
Date: September 14, 2017
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-4-6

<Begin Segment 6>

AT:	<u>00:19:40</u>	What else do you remember about those early days in Chicago, were there a lot of other Japanese Americans
SM:	<u>00:19:50</u>	Yeah
AT:	<u>00:19:51</u>	At your school?
SM:	<u>00:19:51</u>	No, there are some in our school, but I'm, uh, I belonged to the Cub Scouts. It was all Japanese American Cub Scouts. Then, um, I was in the Boy Scouts that Boy Scouts. It was troop 515, I think still around and that's where all my friends were Japanese, you know, uh, um, uh, or the rest were African Americans and it was kind of hard to it. It was just hard to know each other culturally. So, um, um, when I was in the Boy Scouts, um, um, um, interesting thing was that every one of the Boy Scouts I knew went to college. We were talking about college, even in grade school. Where are you going to, people were talking about various schools and um, some of the, uh, the thoughts that came out of that was when I moved to another, when we moved to another neighborhood on the North Side, um, I had my first non-Japanese, Caucasian friends. They were Irish Catholic, must of them. And, and, um, so I remember asking some of my friends, which college are you going to? None of them had college plans and I remember being totally shocked because every one of my Japanese friends went to college as though it was, you went to grammar school, high school, college. Of course, we all go to college and, and I am, and that was my, my introduction to a, uh, a non-Japanese culture. And I remember one instance, um, his name was Ken and it bothered me so much that I still remembered it, you know. And I said, uh, he went to St. Gregory's Catholic Grammar School, St. George. And I said uh you're smart, why don't you go to college? And I remember him saying this, my old man will kill me. I says, I thought he was kidding. He said, college is for pencil pushers, you make, you're a man, by doing things with your hands. And I

said, your father would punish you for going to college? And that was my first surprise coming from an all Japanese background. And, and I found out that was a fairly common, you know, so I quit talking about college to my non-Japanese friends and um, and they thought it was weird because I was going to, I was thinking of going to college, you know, so, uh, that was my cultural shock, you know, uh, as a, as a kid because we are playing baseball, football things that kids play, you know, and getting into trouble playing tags, that kind of stuff. So we all knew each other. But, uh, um, uh, another thing was that this one boy had a birthday and he came to me, he says, I can't invite you to my birthday party, I said because why not? Because my mom says no, Japanese. Now, if right now it doesn't bother me, but if you're 12, 13, 14 it bothers you. And that's when I first became kind of aware of my Japanese identity.

AT: 00:23:17 From other kids?

SM: 00:23:20 Yeah. Peers, who'd love to have me at their party. You know. Because he came to me and says, I can't invite you to my party. He says, I want you to come. You know, that kind of stuff. And I remember this one lady, uh, our neighbor, um, when my mom and I will walk to the store, she'll just turn it back, you know, and my mother was a, I will say, why is she doing that? That's just, in Japanese, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. We went away. And these, I think that was the awakening on my Japanese identity. And um, another moment was um, when my mom and I were at the corner of Clark Street and Balmoral on North Side. There was a cigar store. Now it's, uh, uh, uh, I think it's a hamburgers there now, you know, but we were there and my mother speak, spoke Japanese and, and the, we were just talking about, I don't remember, we're talking about this one day he came to us and says, speak English. I don't understand you. That was a shock. So I think when you're like a preteen or teen, you become very sensitive to your, uh, you know, I caught that, like your awakening, you know. So, um, so that was my first, uh, um, uh, um, you, you could call my first baptism into a non-Japanese culture.