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Title: Susumu Mukushina Interview
Narrator: Susumu Mukushina
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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<Begin Segment 7>

- AT: 00:24:50 And when your family was in Chicago. Um, you had mentioned that you were in the boy scouts. Were there other, um, activities that you would, um, that you were involved in that work within the Japanese American community. Like any church or temple?
- SM: 00:25:10 I went to Japanese school on Saturday. We all, we all with the Japanese school, you know, with them whether or not, you know, parents just took us there. And that was at a, a, um, a Protestant church about two blocks from where I lived. And, um, and my father, even though he was a Buddhist priest, he was, he was very good friends with the minister there. His name was Nakamura. I remember that. And, uh, uh, he loaned us for free the rooms of the church so that, uh, uh, the Japanese language could be taught to the other children at least to keep some identity of who we were. And we hated that because we wanted to play baseball and football this. But we were forced to learn Kanji and Katakana and Hiragana, that kind of stuff. But uh, in retrospect, I'm glad that I went there. But if you're a kid, no one, no one wants to go to school on Saturday.
- AT: 00:26:03 Can you still speak and read and write pretty well?
- SM: 00:26:07 No, I think speaking is uh language skill, that has to be kept up. My, my mother passed away in 2004 and so when she was in a nursing home and so whenever I saw her, we spoke in Japanese, I encouraged her to speak Japanese, you know, so we also probably hear Japanese language for a three, four, or five hours a week and then she'd just speak to me and tell me what's going on in her life. And she was making crochets and things like that. I didn't mind what she was talking about, but I'm, I'm in in earlier, my father passed away in 1990 when I visited my parents. They all spoke Japanese. So, uh, it came into my mind, my brain. But since 2004, um, none of my close friends speak Japanese. And so, uh, I lost the ability to speak even though that

was my first language. What was interesting was when I first visited Japan, uh, my Japanese was getting very, very rusty even at that point. When we were

- AT: 00:27:18 When was it?
- SM: 00:27:18 A back in, the first time was 1978, you know. And um, I remember being in Tokyo and people are speaking so fast. I, I had a headache, but on third day everything fell in place. I understood language, I understood the characters I learned in Japanese school. So I didn't get lost, you know, in, in subways. But that's what I meant. I meant, uh, I, I was so glad that I learned that uh a Japanese language, at the Japanese school because somehow I think all of that, all of that education is buried in your brain someplace it's gray matter someplace. Maybe in, in, uh, uh, our version of a hard drive, brain drive.
- AT: 00:28:00 At what age did you stop going to Japanese school?
- SM: 00:28:04 About 14 time high school started at that time. We moved and we moved from South Side to the North Side.
- New Speaker: 00:28:13 Where on the North Side?
- New Speaker: 00:28:15 We lived on Rascher Avenue in Rogers, now called Rogers Park and um, uh, we live about, we lived about a quarter of mile from Foster and Ashland Avenue Northwe, Northwest. And what was interesting was that we were, we moved there because the landlord was the first Japanese person to buy property there. The last name was Boji. And um, I guess my father has some prominence so they invited my family to a better neighborhood, better education and so forth. And so we moved there and there was only one other Japanese family probably within jeez, a mile, half a mile and they were called Watanabe. And they were on Balmoral Avenue, just near Balmoral and Ashland Avenue. And, um, uh, they had a little girl about my age, her name was Lynne and that was my association with the Japanese community at that time, you know.

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