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Title: Lois Shikami Interview
Narrator: Lois Shikami
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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<Begin Segment 5>

- AT: 00:20:38 So where, um, where was your family assigned to go?
- LS: 00:20:44 We were told that we were going to be going to Puallup, Washington. To the old, I believe it was a fair grounds, um, in, um, uh, w, I believe we had been there before. Anyway, under happier circumstances. And so we were told we had to meet the bus, uh, after those two weeks with our belongings. We didn't necessarily have suitcases. We had, I think they call them kayode, I see them on display here, the wicker baskets, um, straw baskets. And um, uh, that became our dressers because after we got to camp, we kept our clothes in there and flipped them under the cots. We did that for three years actually. Um, I forgot what question you asked.
- AT: 00:21:53 What umm, so I think this is actually the first time I've spoken to someone where the assembly center was somewhere that you had been to before.
- LS: 00:22:08 Yeah, I'm not sure because my dad didn't drive so we didn't have a car. So we went where our friends took us, you know. The only reason I say that I felt like we had been there is every summer my mother would take the younger kids to the farm, a friend's farm and she worked and the older kids worked to pick crops. And I was too little to be picking crops so they let me just play around and I just sort of remember the, the midway. But I could be wrong and I remember some of the rides and whether we saw them somewhere else or not, but I couldn't swear by that. In fact, I'm going to have to ask my older sister. I have one sister has passed away, but the second oldest sister is still living and she remembers things when she's six years older than I am, so I'll have to ask her that.
- AT: 00:23:18 And um as a, as a 10 year old. Do you remember your reaction to that was going to be the new living space?

LS: 00:23:31 It was, um, it was a shock. It was a shock because when we, the buses went in through the gates, there were soldiers and barbed wire fences everywhere. And then when they let us off the bus and we walked to our barrack, it was built under the rollercoaster of the fairgrounds and I thought, wow, you know, that's really something. It was one room for the eight of us. And it was wood, just sorta hastily put together in a long barrack. And the walls went up towards the ceiling, but it didn't cover the area under the roof. The eaves. So we could hear everybody, you know, everyone was sort of angry and families weren't thrilled, you know, to be there. So you could hear everyone talking. We had a no win, I don't think we had any windows, we just had a wooden door. Not a real door, just a made door and um, I think we had the, the end ah...end room. But the only thing in there was our stuff and the eight cots. We had to make our own mattresses too, so suddenly to be put into that kind of thing was just a horrible shock. But as a kid to be there with my whole family was comforting.

AT: 00:25:25 You said you had to make your own mattresses?

LS: 00:25:28 Yeah, they gave ah, we had to go to a place where they had bags and we were told to stuff them with a straw that they had. So everyone had to do their own. I guess as kids we sort of probably liked it. I just don't remember the exact process. And, and I was a real picky eater and to go to a place like that, I really worried about what they were, what we were going to eat, you know. So our first meal, we had to go to this, what they called the mess hall. It was an old barn and line up and my mother had bought, since we were told to bring you utensils she had brought plastic divided dishes for each of us and I was thinking, you know, this is sort of fun, you know, it'd be like picnics, you know. But it wasn't fun though. It was a crew behind the the line and they just slop the, slop the food on, um, I think it was potatoes and Vienna sausages and the Vienna sausages were just dreadful, you know, soft and mushy and ew uh just hated it. And so I knew right away this was not going to be fun, we had to eat like that.

AT: 00:27:04 And where are you going to, did you continue in school at the assembly center?

LS: 00:27:11 And this happened in May. It was May 10th and so school was over for us. And um, uh, so for the next couple months that we were there, we really had no school. We sort of played all day. The next day after we arrived, my sister and I walked around to the other barracks near us and we were, we found some friends from our old neighborhood in Seattle. And we were thrilled to

meet them and this one girl, she had older sisters and they came prepared they had a hot plate. They brought rice and pot and one pot, I think, and they made their own rice and so they, they let us share the rice and they had butter so they put butter on the rice and it tasted like popcorn. And we were so thrilled to be eating something that we liked, you know, we didn't think of bringing any kind of food. And so I don't think at that point there were snack shops or anything, you know, just ate what they gave you, period. But the one thing that thrilled us was as we were roaming around on our own, somebody said, hey, the fun houses open. You know, they actually, they sort of whispered it. The fun house is open. So we went running over and sure enough it was the midway and, and the door was left open and when we went in, uh kids were already in there. And there was a, that's why I sort of think I must have been there because there was a, a big barrel. And you could walk through it, but it all and the electricity or whatever it wasn't on, of course, but it would sway back and forth as kids ran, you know, or stayed in there, we go rock it. And we had so much fun. We were laughing and carrying on. And then there was a room with a slanted floor and banisters that went across. And so you had to walk sort of at an angle through this room. And we just thought that was so much fun and they had the crazy mirrors you know. So I thought, wow, this is going to be a neat place, you know. So the next day when we went back, it was all locked up and that was it. It was, we were the kind of children that would never have thought to break the lock to get back in. I mean, you know, we're law abiding citizens. So that was the end of that.

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