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Title: Lois Shikami Interview
Narrator: Lois Shikami
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location:
Date: October 25, 2017
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-8-8

<Begin Segment 8>

- AT: 00:44:43 So you had mentioned that your older siblings were kind of moving out for different reasons. Can you tell me a little bit more about where folks went?
- LS: 00:44:53 Yeah. My oldest sister left first and she came to Chicago to work. She had a, I think you had to have a sponsor. And so she worked. She came and she got a job in accounting and she stayed in--at first, I think she stayed in a home where she sort of Babysat and earned a little bit of spending money. And then she also had a job, I don't know when she was working for Edgewater Beach Hotel, but that was one job that she had.
- AT: 00:45:39 Do you know what she was doing there?
- LS: 00:45:41 Accounting. The horrible thing was that she couldn't find decent housing. So she and her friends, well, at first, you know, they stayed at people's homes where they babysat, but when they went on their own to look for apartments, nothing was open to them because of their Japanese, you know, ancestry. So they--I remember when we came out of camp, her basement apartment was just dreadful. I remember going to the bathroom and you could hear the rats in the walls, you know, scampering. Oh my gosh. It was just horrible. Oh. And then that was my oldest sister. My brother ah, went to, came out, to go to the University of Cincinnati. And our friends from our church were helped by our, our pastor, his name was father Joe Tagawa. And he was instrumental in pulling teenagers out of camp, finding them scholarships to attend University of Chicago where he himself ended up. But he thought it was a horrible thing to happen to teenagers. And so he worked very hard and so he got my brother out and I believe he had, he also about my second older sister out and she went to Denver to go to a business college Barnes Business College. And then I think then she found a job also, but she loved living with her girlfriends from camp. Um in Denver. So she, she liked getting out. So the

three of us were sort of stuck there. All three kids. I mean, I didn't really want to leave unless I could leave with my mom and dad and my friends are still there. But there came a time when they said, well, we're going to close. And oh I forgot to mention my brother eventually was drafted from his schooling. So he eventually ended up in Japan as an interpreter. Just bef, just as the war was ending so he didn't have to fight. Um, so anyway, um, after we were there in our third year, so now we're up to 1945. Um, they said the camps are closing. Then, was that a knock on the door?

LS: 00:48:52 No

AT: 00:48:52 Um, they said the camps were closing my father was and my mother were desperately worried what was going to become of them, you know, where was he going to get a job? You know, where were they, where were we going to live? We had no money. They had run through all their savings all those three years. And my father asked me to write a business letter, you know, I was an eighth grader and I was asked to write a business letter to his former employers, the Great Northern Railroad to see if he could possibly come back to work. And I said, no, they're sorry, you know, they have nothing for him. So there we were only old people and the young stocking cap without a place to go. Well, my father had a fam, a friend of the family who ventured out and came to Chicago. His name was Henry Suru and he was younger than my dad, maybe about 10 years younger. He came out and he went to the employment agency downtown and found out that there's a resort up in Wisconsin called Lake Lawn, that we're desperate for cooks because um all the eligible men were gone serving in the armed forces. And um, so Henry Suru went up there and he found that he liked it and the owner said, um, if you have other people please invite them to come. So he wrote to my dad and said, there's a place for you up in Wisconsin, so come out. So he came out and he went there and it was a, it was a beautiful resort, not that his place to stay it was going to be beautiful, but it was a nice place. So he called for my mother and the three younger ones to come there. So I, I guess my family was relieved to have a place to go. But as a 13 year old I was not happy to be going to a place in Wisconsin that I had no idea what it was gonna be like and all my friends are still in camp and there was talk that they would go back to Seattle. I wanted it to go where they went and not way off by myself, but you know, had to do it. So I remember I really cried when I left. This is not what I wanted. But anyway, there I was with my sister and my brother and my mother. We were all scared to death, getting on a train, arriving in Chicago, you know, unknown future, scared to death. Well, when we got

to Union Station, got off the train and there was no one to meet us because my sister wasn't there as she had promised. And my mother told my sister and I go to the telephone and call her good friend who was living on the South Side of Chicago. So, um, my sister and I, we hadn't used her telephone in three years and we had never used a payphone. We hardly knew what to do, but we finally figured it out and got ahold of Mrs Tahara. And she said, no problem. You just catch the IC train and, and we'll meet you. We had no idea what a, do you catch a train in Chicago? You know. So we're standing there figuring out what to do. And then my sister and her friends came running towards us and I was so glad to see her. We were all relieved that we didn't have to figure out a way to get to the South Side of Chicago and um, and so she got us a room two rooms on, in a awful hotel. It was on Ainslie, I believe it was on Ainslie near Broadway, right off Broadway on the North Side and my sister and I had a room upstairs and my brother and my mother had a room downstairs. We were frightened it to be in such a desolate place and there was a cloth covering for the closet and we were sure bad men, we're going to come out of there. So during the night we found our way down to my mother's room and the four of us slept in one bed and then I believe, uh, soon after we went to Delavan. Wisconsin? Yeah.

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