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Title: Lois Shikami Interview  
Narrator: Lois Shikami  
Interviewer: Anna Takada  
Location:  
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<Begin Segment 9>

- AT: 00:54:37 Where was your sister's apartment or wherever she lived in?  
Your sister?
- LS: 00:54:43 It was on, I believe it was 4843 North Winthrop, which is around  
the corner, around the corner from the Aragon Ballroom. And it,  
no, that's not the exact address because they lived across the  
street from there in the basement. It was called Bobby and  
Apartments. I'm sure it's no longer there. It was bad then. Just  
awful. And had an owner that didn't like it when we came to  
visit. So he would be sneaking around looking to see how many  
were visiting and it was awful. It's just awful. I think you might  
have charged a little extra, but the lights were really dim, he  
didn't allow bright lamps and just really dim lights and so on. We  
used to come to visit her after we got to Delavan. I didn't like it  
at all. Thought it was a dreadful place, Chicago.
- AT: 00:55:58 Um, and how many nights were you at that hotel?
- LS: 00:56:03 I don't know if it was one night or two nights. I remember, I  
think it had to be more than one night because I remember the  
first thing we did the next day was go to a corner drugstore. And  
I noticed that they sold candy bars. I mean we hadn't seen real  
candy all that time in camp. I was so delighted. So we bought  
candy bars to send back to my girlfriends. I don't even know  
how we managed to send it, but I remember they wrote thank  
you letters. So I know we sent them, but that was my first  
contact with my friends. Here we are out of camp: enjoy some  
candy bars, a Baby Ruth and Hershey's or something.
- AT: 00:56:58 And um, so it sounds like you weren't in Chicago for very long  
before meeting your father.
- LS: 00:57:04 Yeah. Oh yeah. It was just temporary. We had to hurry up and  
get. My father was waiting for us in, in Delavan. So we took the

train and I believe he just, met met us at the railroad station at Delavan, yeah.

AT: 00:57:26 And um, so can you tell me more about that? How long were you there? And then

LS: 00:57:31 Um, I got there as a freshman in high school and I could tell you about the school, of course. Well at the resort with mom, there were no kids because it was the workers and the people, the guests at the hotel and, and there were cottages there for rent for families. So as I met kids once in awhile, you know, they'd be out at the lake and I would get to know them, I had to know them quickly because in a week they're gone and it was really sad for me because then I'd meet somebody I really liked and then they have to believe from Saturday to Saturday, but I didn't have a little fun. But after that it was four years of high school. Luckily the first day of school I met a girl, her name was Doris and she and I became best friends for four years. So I was delighted to have, you know, a friend to myself and she was happy to have me and I still see her. She's up in Milwaukee. But um, it was so different because in camp, you know, we were all Japanese and I knew everybody and everybody liked me and I liked everybody. But you go to a town of all Caucasians and not everybody is your best friend. Little by little, being a small town, I uh, 60 of us in our class, you know, I got to know pretty much everybody, but I knew that I was different and I was never completely accepted. I had friends, they were kind but I was not accepted in the same way that others of the same race would have been.

AT: 00:59:43 And how long were you there?

LS: 00:59:45 I was at that school for four years and then towards, at the end of the school, I don't think college was in the works for me. I don't know what my parents were thinking that they would send me somewhere for schooling but not especially a university life. But at at graduation I was given the scholarship to the University of Wisconsin and suddenly my father, I think maybe my mother in the back of her head was sort of dreaming of good things for me. But my father being a, a Japanese man, you know, he wasn't thinking of college for the girls, he was thinking of a business school or something. But when I got that scholarship, suddenly my father and my mother were enthused about sending me off to Madison and so I got to go to four years of college, which my, none of my siblings, sisters were able to do. So I consider myself my placement in the family and the fact that I, I guess I did all right at school in spite of camp,

you know, I was privileged to go to college so it changed my whole life. It did.

AT: 01:01:12 And um, how long were you in Madison?

LS: 01:01:17 Um, I was there four years and then I was, um, I was in Home Ec. I was in a Clothing of the, Fabrics and Clothing- is not the real name, I just can't think of it right now. But because of it I went into it because I was thinking what kind of job am I going to have after I graduate, because in those days girls didn't necessarily have a choice of jobs and I was thinking of becoming a Home Ec teacher maybe. But as I went along I decided I didn't want to be in a small town in Wisconsin, the only Japanese, I was still interested in needing Japanese people after being in camp. I didn't want to be off in a small town in Wisconsin. So I was, I was thinking then of merchandising. So when I chose that major at the end, um, someone came from Carson Pirie Scott to recruit and I became, so they recruited me to join the, um, it was a junior executive training program and as a buyer. So I thought it was a chance to be with my sisters who were by then, they were all in Chicago. So that's why I became the first Asian person to be working in that position I think ever because they, at that point, the whole, it was the aim of the, um, of the Carson's to expand their working staff. So I think maybe a year after I joined the program, there was a Black girl who was also chosen, so at Brotherhood Week time were carted out to show people that indeed they were integrated. But I was there for three years when along came Jim, my husband. And so, um, uh, he became part of that program and then he was there for a year when he realized that that was no, we decided to get married, we'd match it, you know, people want to know, have you met that new person? Have you met him? Said no, no, no. And when we did meet it was, it was destined, we were destined to become a pair. And he knew that that was not a place to be making enough money for a married person. So he left.

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