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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

<Begin Segment 1>

Anna Takada: 00:00:00 To start, can you just state your full name?

Lois Shikami: 00:00:03 My name is Lois Shikami. Um

AT: 00:00:05 And um, Mrs. Shikami, where, where, and when were you born?

LS: 00:00:13 Where, I'm sorry?

AT: 00:00:15 Where and when were you born?

LS: 00:00:16 I was born in Seattle, Washington on August 25th, 1931.

AT: 00:00:26 And can you tell me a little bit about, um, what Seattle was like when you were growing up?

LS: 00:00:33 Ah yes, for a 10 year old girl, it was a wonderful place. I had a wonderful family. There were six of us children and my mom and dad had come from Japan. Well they were 10 years apart, so my dad was born in 1885 and my mom was born 1895 and my dad came over, I believe he was about 17 years old and so they had been there quite a bit. I was the second from the bottom of my family. So my parents had been there quite some time. I just, I loved my childhood. I think my whole family was absolutely wonderful and my parents are very religious. So we attended the Episcopal, Japanese American of Episcopal Church and our whole life seems to revolve around the church and uh, so our friends were from church except for some from school, but basically our family life revolved around our church and its activities.

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<Begin Segment 2>

AT: 00:01:54 And what um, I guess first I'd love to hear a little bit more about your parents, um where they were from in Japan and what they did?

LS: 00:02:07 My dad came first and he was from a place called Hongomachi in Hiroshima. He wasn't like the typical, like second son or so who had to get out on his own because of farm, you know, that they were never going to inherit anything. My father was born to a very fine family. My nephew looked it up and they were from a Samurai background and, in fact, we went to visit, Jim and I went, my husband, and I went to visit. Ah, to see what it was like and it was still there, they're still there. The cousins are in the home in it. And at that time it was 240 years old. It was a beautiful grand home. And my father came because my, I think his father was killed in, I'm not sure, the Manchurian War and his mother was about to marry ah I'll get another husband and he wanted no part of it. And they had in mind for him to become a school teacher and that's not what he wanted. He wanted something completely different. So he came over and he spoke no English, but he was, um, it was sort of a fun loving person. And um, he went to work as a school boy and he learned how to speak English and apparently he learned how to cook because eventually he became ah, the chef for the general manager of the Great Northern Railroad, which had its home office I believe in St. Paul. So he would travel with him every week back and forth from Seattle to a St. Paul. So as a father we didn't get to see him very much because when he was home, he also had a part time job. Um working at the tennis club in Seattle. I thought I always thought he was a waiter, but I find out, you know, not too long ago that he was a busboy, but no matter, he was very busy and in between times if he had any moment to spare he would be playing tennis. He loved tennis. So. But before that, after don't know how many years he was here before he went back to Japan for an arranged marriage with my mother, my mother came from the city part of ah Hiroshima from a very fine family. And I won't say it was love at first sight, but they got along really well and my father called all the shots and my mother, you know, took care of him, put out his socks and his underwear every day and, and just agreed with everything, you know. He said she was very sweet and kind, you know.

AT: 00:05:43 Do you have a sense of at what point they came, or that he came back to the US and that she moved to the US?

LS: 00:05:51 At what point that came back? It became soon after.

AT: 00:05:56 Okay.

LS: 00:05:56 Yeah. If I don't, I don't hear too well.

AT: 00:06:03 Oh no, that's not a problem.

LS: 00:06:03 Okay.

AT: 00:06:03 And so there's six of you. With your, between you and your siblings. And um, and what, um, did, besides school and Church, did you do any activities or anything for fun?

LS: 00:06:25 Um, no, I, I, I remember at one time I was going to be taking Japanese dance class a class and I was thrilled. I mean, I, this was the girl who really wanted to learn things and, and for some reason before I got started it stopped. So I remember being very disappointed and everyone in our family took some sort of music lessons, but I think it was about my time to begin because my sister right above me, I had started taking violin lessons and the two older sisters took piano lessons and I believe it was my time to start piano and then the war came and so I just really missed it because I loved music and I, and we all loved dancing. Our family loved dancing. We practiced at home a lot and I got to learn early because my older sister and brother were really into it. So on Saturday nights, if they were home, we would practice dancing in the living room.

AT: 00:07:46 And, um, can you tell me a little bit more about that, your like your home and the area that you grew up in?

LS: 00:08:00 I didn't know, um, until years later that we were actually living in a ghetto. All, it never occurred to me that all my, most of my neighbors were Japanese and in school we were a Japanese, Filipino, Chinese have a very few Blacks and a few whites. But, you know, uh, to me it was normal and I liked school. I loved school.

AT: 00:08:39 And did you speak Japanese at home?

LS: 00:08:42 Um, my mother spoke very little English so we would speak sort of a broken English to her and she would respond in Japanese and we understood each other very well and we'd, oh, we went to Japanese school and ah up until well, about two years, until the war came.

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<Begin Segment 3>

AT: 00:09:12 And so do you remember the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked?

LS: 00:09:23 Oh yeah, very clearly, although now that I think of it, it was a Sunday and I can't remember if I heard it at church or my sister and I went to a neighbor's house which was sort of across the street from church because I remember my little friend and her mother talked about it and she got hysterical and my sister and I were on the quiet side and we just listened. But we became really worried because her mother, well, the little girl wanted to know what, what happens in a war? And her mother said, well, they'll be fighting each other and there might be bombs and, and saying things that really scared the three of us. So my sister and I thought we'd better hurry home. So then when we got home, my family was, was there and they were very worried, very, very worried because my mother and father had a lot of relatives, sisters and brothers and parents and back in Japan. And you know, the thought of that really worried.

AT: 00:10:45 The family that you were with when you got the news, were they Japanese Americans?

LS: 00:10:52 Yes, they were fellow church members and very close friends of my parents. Yeah.

AT: 00:11:01 And do you remember any of the, the conversation, were there conversations in your family about it or

LS: 00:11:11 Yeah, they worried a lot. And that first day, they only were really worried about their relatives. What would happen in the whole idea of fighting against your own family members, you know, that are worried them a lot. But in the days that came after, there were so many rumors that were swirling around the community and the friends and they would always sort of be whispering about what things are happening. And one thing that happened started almost immediately was that the FBI came to all our friends homes to investigate. And they were looking for people who had men, fathers who had connections with Japan and um, they were uh, searching homes for any, anything that had to do with Japanese relations and they, they took them away. Um, the men, the fathers and the husbands, they took them away and they never said where they were taking them to. So the families were deathly afraid of what was going to become of all the rest of us and my fath, my sister, my older sister happened to mention just last week or so, how my father had a suitcase ready to go in case they took him away and I don't remember when they came, but my sister remembers that they asked him a lot of questions, but they

decided that he was not one that they were interested in. So we were relieved. Yeah.

- AT: 00:13:09 Did your father, um, have any kind of um affiliations with any organizations besides the church or was that
- LS: 00:13:21 I think it was basically the church. As I described his job and his part time jobs. He never had time except for friends gathering with them, but he never joined any, any, uh, clubs. I don't think.
- AT: 00:13:46 And you described that there were a lot of rumors going around about what was going to happen. Do you remember what any of those words did you hear about them as a 10 year-old?
- LS: 00:13:56 You know, I don't think anyone at first thought of that we would ever be gathered up and put into camps. But little by little it came out that yes, we were going to be put somewhere and they started to give us shots, inoculation. I remember typhoid and um, I mean I was deathly afraid of shots and so I was very afraid and sure enough, can't remember where we got them. Um, maybe at church or wherever there were groups of Japanese we started to be inoculated so we knew something was going to happen to us. But as a kid, um, you know, just so I was with my family, I guess it didn't scare me as much, but it wasn't long before we were told that, yes, indeed you are going to be taken away and you have two weeks or I forgot what time it was. Pack up, uh, you know, clothing, bedding, um a cook, eating utensils. No, well, you could take radios. Don't take knives or cameras, you know. So we knew about all of that. As a kid I worried about could I take any of my toys? And I believe I took one, what I call dy dee doll, one of my favorite dolls that I received at Christmas that drank a, you could drip feed of water, you could change the diapers. I managed to put that into my suitcase. Yeah.
- AT: 00:15:59 And as far as the shots, was that um, was that something that the government had ordered or
- LS: 00:16:07 Oh yes. All of it was coming down from the government. And um, it was frightening because, I mean...We were told, well, it-- what, it actually happened, they had a curfew and every night at 8:00 we all had to be home and I believe we had to pull the shades down and wherever you were, well you couldn't go anywhere because you had to be home by 8. And my sister and I and a neighbor who lived two doors away, a little girl, we'd be jump roping outside and then when the siren went off, you know, we'd run for home. I remember my older brother, he was like, maybe he was about like 18 years old. He had a girlfriend

that lived two doors away and he would sneak out the back and climb two fences to get to her place and spend the evening, but us little ones were scared to death.

AT: 00:17:17 Do you remember any other ways that your life as a 10 year old had a change?

LS: 00:17:23 Yeah. Um, we had friends in school who were Chinese and, and suddenly they started to wear little signs, you know, on their lapels that said I am Chinese. And I remember feeling really hurt that, you know, our friends would do such a thing but that they didn't want to be mistaken for you know, the enemy. So that really hurt. But my, my best friends were Japanese, so we were all sharing the same problems.

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<Begin Segment 4>

AT: 00:18:09 And um, can you tell me about when your family got word the evacuation orders and what that process was like if you, what you can remember?

LS: 00:18:21 Yeah. Well, I'm not sure, but I think we were probably given two, two weeks. I think probably instead of. I know they had signs posted in our neighborhood and everyone read them and so everyone heard about it, but I'm sure at church it must have been discussed more in detail. Um, so of, the thing was, we didn't have to sell a house because we didn't own the house. We rented a house and the owner of the house was especially kind and so he told my parents that we could just leave everything except our own, um, a private belongings and store them in the basement and he was going to rewrite the house and leave our furnishings out and every month he would send us a check to pay for the rental of our furniture. And I thought that was really, really nice of him. And he did, he sent us a monthly check for, I don't know how long, um, but, but he was really kind. This was a house we had moved to maybe two years before. Before that, because the house I was born in a was in a completely Japanese area right near Japantown. And they were going to tear up the whole neighborhood to make housing for defense workers. And I thought later on thinking how did they know that they needed defense workers, you know? But anyway, that's what I remember that we were told we had to move. So we moved to this house that had been remodeled, so it was a fairly nice house. In fact, it's still standing. I go to see it

and when we go to Seattle. So uh the other house was big and old and I thought it was wonderful. But, you know, it was old.

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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 Puallyup, 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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AT: 00:30:27 And so you entered May 10th, you said, um, the at the assembly center. And then how long was your family there?

LS: 00:30:42 Um, it was, it was either late August or early September. When we were told ah pack up your stuff, we're going to be taking a train to Idaho and so, by then you know, you're used to being imprisoned and this is one more bad thing that was going to happen to us. We're not going back home, we're going to someplace that they think is more permanent and it might be better, you know, so I think maybe, I'm not sure, but I think the family was a little bit hopeful that things would be better. But so we, they pulled out, I think the railroad pulled out old trains from somewhere. They were really old and dirty and dusty. They took us by bus to the train station. I think I just remember it was filthy dirty. And but my sister remembers that the food we had was in the dining car. So we got to sit at a regular dining tables to eat our meals and she remembers that it was pretty

nice, better than the camp food. And so I think it took either one night or two nights to get to Idaho. I would think two nights. But I remember being really dirty, dusty, grimy, yeah.

AT: 00:32:32 And, um, and then can you tell me about what you remember? Um entering Minidoka?

LS: 00:32:43 Yeah, this, this camp um, Minidoka, had a big canal that ran in front of the gate because I remember we had to cross the canal and this place was even more permanent. You know, they had taller fences and, and he's more soldiers and a tall century tower. It just looked more foreboding, big gate. And um, I don't know, I just thought, oh my gosh, this, this is even worse than the other place, you know. But um, they took us, um, I don't know if it was my truck, I think it was by truck to our place. Of, the camp had I think 44 blocks and we were blocked five. So it was fairly close to the gate, I believe. And um, it was, the room was larger but, and it had windows, had a potbelly stove and this time they had cots, the kind that it was a metal cot with springs and I believe there was a thin mattress and that's all it had with eight of those and the potbelly stove and dust everywhere because they built it in a desolate place and always had seen coming there with sage brush just all over. That was it. The scenery was horrible. And the camp itself that was dust blowing around blowing around everywhere.

AT: 00:34:42 So your oldest sibling you had, it was a brother? He was the oldest?

LS: 00:34:47 We had a, my oldest sister at that time was, um, she's 16 years older than I was, so she was 26 and then six years later it was my brother. And then two years later was another sister. And then the sister that was closest to me, she was 13 years older. Masako, she and I were close and then I had one younger brother who's two years younger, so we had like a family of a, of older kids, three of them. And then there are three younger kids. So when, when the older kids did things, we were not part of it that the three kids, younger ones did things together. Yeah.

AT: 00:35:43 And the, the younger ones. Did you go to school?

LS: 00:35:48 Yeah, um in September. Maybe October uh school started right in the barracks. Not too far away, grade school and um, I think all of us kids loved going to school because it gave us structure, you know, something to do every day. And as kids we just love learning. And um, at the beginning we had a, our teachers were college graduates who sort of took over the younger grades and it was, I mean we learned, you know, we had, um, that was, I

was in sixth grade at that time and I just remembered maybe there are a couple of sixth grade rooms, but I remember school, as being fun. I remember they, I got to be a patrol girl and they had a pith helmet for us and, and a wooden, a flag plywood. It was painted red and it said stop on it. And we stood on the corner when it was our turn and the truck traffic was a truck, you know, delivering something, you know, but it made me feel really important. I just loved that job.

AT: 00:37:22 Was your, was there any kind of church, in the CamC?

LS: 00:37:26 Yeah, our, our, um, our priest, our Episcopal priest actually came into camp with us and a deacon and so they carried on their Episcopal mission in the church, you know, just like I guess they, they were expected to uh, so, uh, my parents were really happy because they were very religious. Us kids and you know, I didn't really enjoy going to our church that much. But on Sundays I guess we went, my problem was that my friends didn't belong. They belong to the Baptist Church, which was the most popular. And in those days, you know, so it was okay. I mean, yeah, we were expected to go to church.

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<Begin Segment 7>

AT: 00:38:23 Um one thing I want to ask you, because you had kind of alluded to you, you had mentioned, you know, that you were in prison, you know, at the assembly center listed in, you're still going to be going to prison but it might be better. Um, was that something as a, as a 10 year old that you were aware of or you know, like the fact that you and your family who was incarcerated, did you feel. How did you feel as a child? Did you understand or?

LS: 00:39:10 I didn't like it, but at that age being, being with my whole family, that meant a great deal and with my friends and their families, even if none of us really wanted to be there, we'd rather be outside of camp, I think there was a feeling of security, um, and it was sort of, I must say it was fun, you know, for us kids, we knew it was not a good place for the fam, for anyone, to have to be behind bars. But um, but they did take care of us. I, um, but I think the family thing was most important, even if it meant being in one room and as a 10 year old going onto you stayed there til I was 13. I hated the lack of privacy. Everyone together all the time. And um, but it got better and better as my older siblings left camp to, um, to work or to go to school. And so the

weren't as many of us, but still that was not a proper way to grow up. But I loved being with my friends all the time. You just have to go out the door and you're with somebody, one of your friends. And as I was getting aware, becoming aware of boys and by 12 years old, you know, now I was in junior high and we used to have school dances and um, and we'd get permission I guess, and we shove all the desks to the logs and somebody would bring, I don't know where they got it, but what they call spangle and it made the floor slippery and somebody else, someone would bring records and um, and we played the popular tunes and we danced, you know, we had a wonderful dances on a Saturday night. So it was fun for us kids, you know, we played Monopoly a lot in the laundry rooms. We would listen to hit parade on Saturday nights and, and somebody would be able to buy, um, a weekly magazine about hit parade and they'd have words to songs and then we'd memorize them on the latest school and back and in the laundry room. And we'd sing all the time. Well, you know, it was like being away at a, at a fun camp for us kids, but you know, but we knew that there was a heavier side to it and I know because my mother was telling me about things and we would hear from others that my, one of my classmate's mother killed herself. She was depressed and and there was a woman next door who used to come over, I don't know for how long of a period, but she would come over and cry and moan to my mother and my mother would patiently sit and listen to her. My mother had a, had a piecework job sewing for a company that made Indian, Indian jackets with tassels and beading and she would sit at the sewing machine and this woman would come every day, knock on the door, come in and talk about her problems. And my mother would patiently sit there and listen to her. So I saw that going on. No, things were not all good. And then when they passed, maybe it was the second year they passed out those forms that families had to sign side their loyalty. And that was, it didn't happen to any of my immediate friends, but it happened to a lot of families where the kids didn't want to go to Japan and yet the parents insisted so they had to leave our camp to go to Tule Lake. And that was horrible. Horrible for the families. If they didn't all agree, you know, if they all agreed it was one thing, but families were torn up and even as kids we realized that you know. And to find out later that yes indeed they did go back. They were sent back during the war. Horrible.

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<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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<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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<Begin Segment 10>

AT: 01:04:33 And so when you came to live in Chicago, where were you living?

LS: 01:04:40 Well then I joined my sister's at their place and it was a three story apartment place. So they were living in different

apartments, but they were all in that same building. And so I joined them and I got a single room there.

- AT: 01:05:01 Was that the one across from the Aragon?
- LS: 01:05:04 Yeah, or around the corner from it.
- AT: 01:05:06 And, and where was Carson Pirie Scott or where was work?
- LS: 01:05:12 It was downtown. Yeah. Um, I mean it was a big deal, you know, I loved that job. I got dressed up every morning and take the L downtown, you know, always had breakfast down there and, and I liked the work very much. Uh, and so I was there four years and then, um, a year after we were married we had our first child, so I just stayed home for 18 years.
- AT: 01:05:45 And where were you living?
- LS: 01:05:48 We lived at on Melrose off of Broadway in a one bedroom apartment. And we stayed there for, until our, after our third child was born. I mean we were way too crowded. We had kids sleeping in the dining room and one in the living room, one in the bedroom with us, but we were saving to buy a house and the rent was really reasonable and it was uh, you know, we liked the apartment and the neighborhood, but then we were ready to move. So we moved to a Lunt, Rogers Park and um into a big house so it was worth a squeezing ourselves for awhile because now our fourth, fourth child, we had three boys and now our fourth child, a girl was born. So we were happy in that neighborhood for awhile and until we were worried about schools, so then we look for a house in the suburbs and ended up in Glenview in the New Church District. And so that's where our kids grew up.
- AT: 01:07:19 So the year that you came to Chicago, after college, what year do you think it was?
- LS: 01:07:33 It was 1953. 1953, I came to Chicago and it for three years, it was great fun. I had always wanted to be in a Japanese community but I never had a chance. And um, and I really didn't know anyone except my sisters and their close knit group, but all they did was play poker every, well, that's what I thought. All they did was play poker and, and go bowling and you know, and my mother didn't want me to come because she didn't want me to become a poker player. And so she really, I had a, I had a job, actually had the job up in Minneapolis for the same type of position up in Minneapolis, and I was ready to go there when I

was recruited from Chicago. But um, so my mother really had hopes for me up in Minneapolis, but anyway, I ended up in Chicago and I only knew my sisters, but for some reason or another I, I kept meeting people every time I'd go anywhere I'd meet somebody who wanted to go somewhere together and these are men. And so every weekend after that I was busy having fun. So those are happy years.

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- AT: 01:09:13 You mentioned that the Japanese American community in Chicago, um, what, what was that like at that time here in Chicago from what you
- LS: 01:09:30 Yeah. Um, during the time I was in Delavan I kept hearing about all the fun that the young people were having who came out of camp, you know, they had basketball games together and, and lots of dances and they would have picnics and I was so envious and I, there I was in Del, really, I was sad about that, but by the time I came, a lot of the young people were married and having their families and I somehow attended the, a Christ Church that was called something else at that point, Congregational Church. It was on, um, it was near my, it was off Broadway, um, and when I went there I met some single women, so I did a couple things with them and then I met more fellows and then I was on that sort of merry-go-round. It was wonderful. You know one thing after another. So but they had picnics and church outings and stuff like that. I got involved in some of that.
- AT: 01:11:09 Do you remember, were there any Japanese American owned businesses or restaurants or
- LS: 01:11:16 Uh, yeah, as soon as we got married and we lived on Melrose, we used to go to Star Market and there were um, restaurants, uh, Matsuya and Naniwa, Sen, Senko. Yeah, that Clark Street area was filled with different businesses. Yeah. I really liked that. I used to put the kids in a stroller, one stroller held one child and one hitched a ride in the back and then I'd have one at that point, one kid holding on and we walked everywhere. We walked to the beach, or walk to the lake, walk to the lake. Those are happy times.
- AT: 01:12:20 And how did it, um, when you were living in Glenview, how did that compare to your experiences in Roger's park or

LS: 01:12:34 Um, when I first got there, it was something my parents are working all the time. Um, my mother worked as a housekeeper in the hotel. My dad was a chef in the, um, uh, in the restaurant. They were busy all the time. Um, I, as soon as I was old enough, at, when I was 15, I babysat for one of the bosses and that soon as I turned 16, they let me work, I really enjoyed it. I, um, they let me work in the snack shop, you know serving hamburgers and ice cream cones and then they let me work in the coffee shop. And then when I came home from a, during vacations, I got to work banquets as a waitress. And then at that point we started to get other workers who were from Hawaii. They came there because they couldn't afford to go back to Hawaii during vacations. So they came there to work. Uh, they, they only got to work as dishwashers, but at least they were there. And we had a lot of fun on Wednesday nights, was employee nights at the great ballroom on the lake, you know, they had real orchestras and um, we used to go there dancing or we used to go have a picnics after work, like we would have a midnight picnic and they use to borrow food from the kitchen and we'd have a fire at along the lake. And those are really fun times that continued all through my college years.

AT: 01:14:44 And I'm so sorry, I was um asking about Glenview in the suburbs and how that compared to uh

LS: 01:14:54 Oh yeah, I'm sorry.

AT: 01:14:55 Here in Chicago?

LS: 01:14:57 Okay. Glenview,

AT: 01:15:01 Is that where you're living now? Where do you live now?

LS: 01:15:05 We live in Glenview. Um, so you're asking how living there was? Well, you know, as, as we get older and the kids tell stories. Actually I did not like exposing my kids to that, that type of environment, especially New Trier where it's upper class, you know, and we were sort of struggling when we got. Because you know, we're probably living beyond our means. But we did it for the kids' schooling and I couldn't, we couldn't afford the best clothes and so I sort of worried about it might've been tough for them and once in a while my sons would say something that indicated that life wasn't all that great for them. And plus they're small, they're just small build like us and, and these are, you know, I don't know, I just have a feeling high school wasn't the best, but they had good schooling, you know, it really got them. They became educated. So as I hear now other parents out there saying, you know, New Trier isn't all that great for our

kids and these are Caucasians saying that. So if it was tough for their kids, I thought, oh my god, what my kids went through. Um, as far as our neighbors, we lived in an, it's not the fanciest neighborhood, but it was nice, nice middle class neighbors. And when we got there they were all friendly. One family in particular, came from England and they knew what it was to come to a new neighborhood. So they were especially kind to us taking us shopping and inviting us over for parties and things and, and we, we were invited to all the neighborhood parties and we got to know everyone. But then as time went on, and the kids were not especially good friends of our neighbors, they had their friends from outside of the neighborhood, but they did okay. But um now the neighborhood has really changed and everyone is young and the children are young and now the homes in the area have gotten so expensive that only the professionals could live there. So it's a whole different place. We're one of two older families who are still there. Everyone else has gone.

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AT: 01:18:03 And so we can start to wrap up a little bit, um, but one thing that I like to ask people is, um, if you could pass down some kind of legacy or, or message to your children and maybe grandchildren, what, what would you want to leave them with? Or what would you want them to know?

LS: 01:18:36 You know, um, recently, just few days ago, actually, my younger brother just lost his wife and um, since then, but they live so far away in New York City, in the not New York Ci, New York State out in the boondocks. So he's never been, after he got married, he's never been with Japanese and, and so we've been talking quite a bit and even he has said, and I was really surprised, that camp was, uh awful and, but I mean it was not a good thing, but he was even younger than I was. So he enjoyed it too. But it has, he hopes that it has taught the country that they should never do such a thing to others. You know, and I think that's my feeling too, if we learned a big lesson that we are, we should never point out people as being different and to exclude them, uh, from our, uh, uh, a friendship or whatever at um, right now we see that, you know, there are efforts to try to point out differences and that we should always work to try to be inclusive. And I think my children have learned that lesson. Not directly from talking, but they see the way we are and I hope that they will always be inclusive and um, just be kind to

everyone. I, I really believe in kindness and I can see as my children grow up that they are each one, each one they're especially kind and thoughtful people. And if I, I know my husband is also, but if we taught them together, always been considerate of others, you know, that we've done our job.

AT: 01:21:22 Well, before we wrap up, is there anything else that you would like to add or that I might've missed in this conversation?

LS: 01:21:31 No. I mean I haven't really gone through the whole exhibit here because both times we were with groups and today I'm hoping to go through the whole thing. And I think just having this wonderful exhibit is a huge lesson for, for the general public who I never talked about things to anybody until, until it was 1988 when I finally wrote about it. Never talked to our neighbors about our experience. And I don't know, I wasn't ashamed, but I thought, how could you ever explain such a big influence on my life? It was until I wrote a story about it for my class at Northeastern. I was going for my Masters and I was asked to write about something that I had never told anyone. And I thought, well this is the time and I, that's why I wrote it. And I sent it eventually to my, one of my classmates from Delavan, I said, did you ever wonder where I came from? You know, suddenly there's one Japanese person their class, well, in freshman year, in a small town, they come from various country schools, so I wasn't the only new person. So they said, they heard I was from somewhere in Idaho, but that was it. So then I sent them my story and they were astounded. They knew nothing about the camps. So to have this exhibit here, exhibit here, to teach us everyone about it, that there was such a thing and that we must never do such, such an injustice to anyone, any American, anyone who comes to this country, you know, that's a good, wonderful thing.

AT: 01:23:53 Thank you so much for sharing and for speaking.

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