

Densho Digital Repository
Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and
Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS)
Oral History Project Collection
Title: Jane Kaihatsu Interview
Narrator: Jane Kaihatsu
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location:
Date: October 27, 2017
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-9-13

<Begin Segment 13>

- AT: 00:53:03 And um, just a few more questions. Uh, I wanted to, kind of take it back to, um, when you were describing your experiences kind of growing up, going through through the schools in Park Ridge. Um, I guess, could you just, um, also revisit some of the things that you saying and like kind of dreading December 7th, and things like that. How would you describe, um, your experiences growing up? You know, as a Sansei, as a Japanese American, however you identified in Park Ridge, at that time?
- JK: 00:53:45 Well, in, in elementary school, um, although I was scared to death, I remember that first grade I was, I was in third grade going to that school in Park Ridge. Um, but it was fine. The teacher was very welcoming. Um, I made friends, um, with a lot of different girls. In fact, her mother, she was blonde and I had black hair, and she used to call us the salt and pepper shakers and you know, birthday parties. Everything seemed very normal. And then, um, my mom, um, uh always made sure to introduce to my friends, um, Japanese culture too. I was very lucky. My Kaihatsu grandmother, uh, had a cousin who worked in a department store in Nagaya. And when I was born, she ordered a doll set for me the Heena Matsui doll, the complete doll set. It was probably \$1,000 at the time or something. I can't believe it. But we would put it up every Girl's Day, on March 3rd. And then my mom said I could invite a couple of friends over for lunch and we would look at dolls. We didn't have Japanese food. We had I think grilled cheese sandwiches and soup and cake. And then we would look at the dolls and that happened every year. Um, through middle school, I don't recall being bullied. Just December 7th was touchy, again, not that anyone did anything, cept, a couple of boys would throw snowballs at me and say, you know, they wouldn't say Jap go home or anything. Uh, one guy used to call me made in Japan, but it was kind of enough, a term of endearment. He's actually still a friend of mine today from fifth grade, but I just felt that everybody was looking at me, when they ever mentioned Japan

and in particular the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I just felt very uncomfortable. The war had only been over for 20 years. When I think about it in the 60s and 70s. Um, high school was not a problem. High school I was more, um, comfortable with myself and in fact, history teachers would let me take over the entire period and talk about the internment and I would show them pictures from the books, like Bill Hosakawa's book and the American Concentration book, um, American Concentration Camp book is, that's all, all we had. So that was not a problem. To be honest, I actually experienced more racial prejudice at the University of Illinois in Urbana because I was going to school with people from downstate Illinois, ah, who had never seen an Asian in person, in the flesh, before. And brought up a lot of prejudices. So I think that's when I felt more, um, overt racism was at U of I. And to this day, I, I graduated from U of I in East Asian history, but I don't have a lot of fond memories. You know, I'm not a huge alumni fan, things like that. It was, it was okay. It was a place to get a degree.

<End Segment 13> - Copyright © 2017 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.