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Title: Jane Kaihatsu Interview
Narrator: Jane Kaihatsu
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location:
Date: October 27, 2017
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-9-15

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- AT: 01:02:45 Um, you have such a distinct recollection of the Japanese American community and, and a unique insight, just given how involved you were and your family was.
- JK: 01:02:59 Mhm.
- AT: 01:02:59 Um, I would love it if you could describe, um, you know, what the Japanese American community was like from your upbringing in the 60s and 70s in Chicago. Um, and then if you could describe how you see the Japanese American community today?
- JK: 01:03:22 Okay. From, from what I understand, like, um, from my church, Christ Church of Chicago started in 1948 and there was, there was a lot of fear among the, the Jap, relocated Japanese Americans themselves and there's fear and suspicion on the mainstream society. And the FBI was watching people who are leaving church and people didn't think much Japanese culture, didn't want to know, and things like that. And so I think the community, um, this professor told me that kind of collapsed in on itself and was very tight. Um, and I think it goes back to what my mother said too why, you know, people didn't like lose it all over the place because everybody had been in the same situation. And I think it's part of the Japanese psyche all for one is we're all going to lift each other up and you, whatever issues that you're having, you're just going to have to pull them aside. Cause we gotta get going here. We have to become Americans. We have Sansei coming along now and we are just gonna make it and we're not going to cause trouble and we're just going to get on with our lives. So I think with the Nisei, that's exactly what they did. They didn't want to talk about camp. Maybe some felt shame and anger and hurt, but I, I didn't see it because I think my parents were of that ilk. there's an expression in Japanese, I learned, called maemuki, which means face forward. And that's what they did. You're just gonna face

forward and keep going. So we followed the Kaihatsu family, my personally, family followed the same trajectory as the rest of mainstream America. In the 50s and 60s. We bought, upward mobility. We bought a house in Park Ridge. Kids went to good schools. Um, and I think in the city as well, the greater Japanese community, was trying to do the same thing. Everybody got jobs, they worked hard, but they still wanted to main, um, maintain contact with each other. And I think, um, for the, for the Nisei it was because the social ties were still very closed to them. They weren't as closed to me, but I know my, my mother, why didn't she joined the Park Ridge junior league or something like that? I don't think she felt comfortable, you know, that she still wanted to associate with her own kind. And that's what they did. Particularly since she was Buddhist too. So we had friends at Midwest Buddhist Temple, which was the sect that she was from, even though we did a lot at, at BTC too. So, um, you know, we, we, you had the youth activities with the drum corps. You had the Chicago Nisei Athletic Association with all those sports teams and you understand there's a thousand kids at one time participating in all these games, especially the Softball Diamonds at Grand Park. And uh, it was, it was growth. It was positive. The older Sansei came along in the late 60s, uh, probably influenced by their cousins on the West Coast with Yellow Power and ethnic identity, wanting to know more about Japanese culture, who we are, where we came from. Uh the Vietnam, I didn't talk about the Vietnam War at all. Uh, I think that definitely had a divisive, um, aspect in the community. I know, um, it was very painful to look at pictures of the Vietnam War and see American, white American soldiers attacking and killing Asian people. You know, I know I felt terrible looking at them. My, um, older brother and my father had arguments about the war. My older brother Dan was just lucky enough that every time the lottery numbers came up, and they were printed in the newspaper, he pulled a very high number. He still had to report to the draft, but he wasn't going to get, um, drafted because the number was too high. And my father had served and, and uh against this will actually, he said he didn't really want to go, but he didn't want to go to prison. So he felt my brother and one of my cousins who was an out now draft dodger, he went to Canada. Um, um, that they should serve. That was their duty. So, you know, I didn't hear too much about the publicly, so I knew that if it was going on in my family, it had to be these kinds of arguments had to be going on in other families too. Um, between the Nisei, who you know, came from the highly decorated 442 and the Sansei who didn't want to go, who were by and large went to college, and were anti-war protesters. There are, um, Sansei Vietnam vets. I saw them. I never talked to them. I kind of regret, some of them have

passed away too. They must have had really interesting stories. Uh, and in the 70s, there were a lot of, there was the Obondori, odori, the Ginza holiday. There were the, all these events where you would see everybody and then you had church picnics. Um, the JASC had a picnic and the JACL had a picnic too. And those were mostly attended by the Nisei, but the Sansei kids came along too and ran the games. And it was a time to reconnect with everybody. Now, as the 80s came along and I myself moved away from Chicago for awhile. Um, there was more, uh, interracial marriage among the Sanseis. And Sansei did not return to the city, for example, where they had grown up, they went out to the suburbs. We were already in the suburbs, actually, I came into the city to Andersonville. I did the opposite, but by and large, the other Sanseis went to the suburbs and their kids went to school out there. So by the 80s, you start seeing fracturing and, and a dissipate, dilution, I guess. The events are still happening. The churches are still there, but they're not as strong, anymore and if we fast forward to today, Christ Church there, everybody, I don't think there's a church or temple that's really folded but we're hanging on by our fingernails and there's some doubt of well no, I guess there's no doubt that it's going to continue as a Japanese American entity. But whether these events will still happen, is probably in question and I think it, it makes people sad. It makes me a little bit sad. But at the same time, um, though when you look at the mechanics or what had happened to the community, it's natural, how could it not become this way? Um, is that a legacy of the internment? Um, it could be by being, the Nisei pounding into us, you know, we have to succeed, we have to get along. We don't make waves. And then racist mainstream society moved on to other groups and left the Japanese alone. You know, you know, so maybe that's part of the problem too. If Japan had not been rehabilitated then maybe we would still be at a tighter community. If you look at the African American community, which in the eyes of the white mainstream has never been rehabilitated despite a Black president, you know, and you will still find enclaves. You know, in Atlanta for example. Maybe when I think back now from 1948 when people were terrified of sneaky Japs and today, so sushi is sold at Dodger Stadium. Everywhere you go you can get, sushi, bento. It's really amazing how far the perception of Japanese has come. And that made me think about the Muslim community. If the Japanese community, of course it did take 75 years or so, um, can be rehabilitated and accepted and admired even among the mainstream society, wouldn't that happen to the Muslim community. It's just right now, we don't, we're afraid, people are afraid. They don't know much about them. There's not voices speaking for them. You know, I would hope so. I

would like to think that America is that kind of community that because of what happened to our community, injustice, but rebirth and growth and acceptance, that it will happen to others who are marginalized too. That's, that to me, I hope is the greatness of the America in the future that I would like to see for future generations.

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