

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Japanese American Oral History Project

An Oral History with KEN HAYASHI

Interviewed

By

Arthur Hansen

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NARRATOR: KEN HAYASHI  
INTERVIEWER: Arthur Hansen  
DATE: July 1, 1976  
LOCATION: Unknown  
PROJECT: Japanese American

AH: This is an interview with Mr. Hayashi by Arthur A. Hansen for the Japanese American Oral History Project at the California State University, Fullerton. The date is July 1, 1976. The time is approximately 11:00 a.m. Why don't we begin the interview, Mr. Hayashi, by getting a little bit into your background, your family, their place of origin, your early life, et cetera. Let's talk about that in a general way.

KH: My father was from a prefecture in Japan called Yamaguchi. I guess that would be in the southwestern part of Honchu Island. He came over here in 1903 or 1904. It must have been 1903 because I think the San Francisco earthquake was in 1904, and I guess he went through that ordeal. Eventually, within the next couple of years, he moved to Seattle, Washington. During World War II, he was in the grocery store business. And then in 1921—he had a little education. And when I say education it probably was only equivalent to a sophomore in high school. He could read and write Japanese quite well. He hooked on with a vernacular newspaper called the *North American Times*. It was published daily out of Seattle. He became the branch manager for this paper in Tacoma. He used to handle all the subscriptions and the ads and the writing for that particular area. Eventually, he had seven children. I'm the second oldest. My background—this is in Tacoma, Washington—I was raised primarily in Tacoma. I went through high school and attended two years of college, a local college there called the College of Puget Sound. I think it's Puget Sound University now. I was there until war broke out. Then naturally, when the war broke out there was so much tension that I had to drop out. Also, I was working part-time at a gas station my dad purchased for me because I was handicapped. I had stripped my nerves in a childhood accident. My father felt that I had to have some occupation to get into. Even though he was a writer, because of the discrimination problem, he didn't have too much faith in attending college to get a better job because most of the guys who graduated in the thirties, they might have had a degree in aeronautical engineering or journalism or whatever. Most of them would end up working in saw mills, fruit stands, gas stations, or even still on the farms. Anyhow, I went back to the

gas station, and, of course, during wartime, the tension was great. I remember, having belonged to the JAACL [Japanese American Citizens League], that some of us volunteered. We had a Civil Defense Corps. We felt that we could offer our services to the city and the community and the nation in that way, but the leaders pointed out that, Your face is just like the enemies. They appreciated our efforts, but the best thing we could do was stay home and out of sight. Right after Pearl Harbor, then they put a curfew into effect. We had to be in our homes by 8:00 p.m. You had to be restricted to a five-mile radius. We couldn't wander away further than five miles from our home. Conditions like this went on until there was the announcement that we had a month or so to make preparations for wherever we were to be evacuated. I guess we were kind of lucky because we had a month or so to make preparations for whatever we were going. We disposed of all our goods. What we couldn't dispose of, we stored at the Japanese Methodist Church, because, in camp, literally, all you took were things you could carry.

AH: Before we could go far into the evacuation, maybe I could back up a little bit and run through some questions concerned with the earlier period that you've already covered? You talked about your father coming over. Do you know the conditions of his immigration? Was he a legal or illegal alien?

KH: He was legal.

AH: Which was his port of entry?

KH: San Francisco.

AH: Was he part of a gang of workers when he came over here, or did he come over independently?

KH: I think he came over here independently. I know right around that time they had—I guess it was similar to indentured servants. The United States government and the government of Japan had contracts where agricultural workers served in the Hawaiian Islands. They were supposed to stay there, but a number of those people illegally came over to the mainland. As far as I know, my father wasn't one of those. He wasn't the farm type.

AH: What did he have in the way of reception over here? Was there a contact for him? People he could hook up with or a community he could find some security in?

KH: Usually, they worked through church groups or wherever they came from—even to this today, they have a Yamaguchi-ken or Hiroshima-ken, that like a state of Iowa club. I imagine he may have some contact like that, but I'm not sure.

AH: You talked about his work with *The North American Times* in Tacoma. I'm very interested in the project about community newspapers. You probably had a lot of contact with it yourself as a child. Could you talk about the nature of the newspaper

business, a vernacular newspaper, where they got their advertisements, what kind of subscription group they had, things that relate to newspapers?

KH: There's about ten thousand Japanese in the northwest. They had two daily newspapers, and *The North American Times* was the larger of the two. They probably had a circulation of maybe four or five thousand in the Tacoma area, and it also surrounding the farm areas. I think my dad had a total subscription of—it couldn't have been over four or five hundred. He was pretty active with what they called the *Yungjinkai*, and that's the Japanese—the group was called the Tacoma Japanese Association, and they would meet once a week to discuss problems. I think he got a lot of his information for writing through that association. He also happened to be of the Christian faith, and my mother was pretty active in the Tacoma Japanese Methodist Church. And then, of course, we had the Buddhist church. So, in-between the church contacts and the Japanese association, I think that was our primary source of news.

AH: What we are talking about in terms of staff for *The North American Times*? How many people would be involved in actually putting out a newspaper?

[00:10:00]

KH: You know that Japanese type is a complicated process. I don't know if you've ever gone down to Los Angeles where the *Rafu Shimpō* is printed. They have a heck of a lot of people putting all that stuff together. I know in Tacoma, for example, my dad was the only one. He did all the writing for that area, handled the subscriptions and the ads. They had other outposts in Portland, Oregon, and probably somebody handling that stuff in Idaho and the Montana areas. But, as far as the number of staff is concerned, I couldn't say.

AH: But, it was fairly sizeable?

KH: Yes, it was pretty sizeable.

AH: Most of the newspapers in Los Angeles built up something of an intellectual circle around the newspaper, people that wrote for it. Did you find it to be a pretty intellectual center for the Japanese in the northwest?

KH: I don't know so much about the people around my father's generation, but when it came to the second generation, like us, I would say so. I think the editors of the two vernaculars, there were usually people interested in social science or creative writing, things like that. I guess they were the most progressive, you know, being involved in labor movements. A number of Japanese from the northwest used to go up to Alaska in the summertime to the fishing canneries, to work for the fishing canneries up there. A couple of my friends named Dike Miagawa and George Takiagawa, they were about the first Japanese American union organizers that I know of, and that goes back forty-some odd years.

- AH: What type of control did the publisher exercise over the newspaper? I know in Los Angeles oftentimes the publisher imposed a rather personal style on a newspaper. I know this was true of the \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) and to a lesser degree the *Rafu Shimpo*. What about the *North American Times*?
- KH: I think it was probably pretty strict. Say, for example, if a person with Japanese ancestry got arrested or something, you never saw it in the newspaper. Because it's a no-non. You lose face. Or, if someone committed suicide, they would never put it in there. They would just list the guy's funeral announcement. They wouldn't indicate why. This would be a disgrace to the family. We would try to soften those types of feelings. I guess some of that is self-control and probably some editorial control where you just couldn't write on anything, on controversial subject. If it involved too much controversy, I'm quite sure of it. At least they'd pencil it.
- AH: Do you remember the political philosophy of the Japanese section? I think when you were talking about the progressives you were talking about the English language section of the paper. What about the Japanese section? Was there a dichotomy between the philosophy of the second generation and the first generation on world affairs or on domestic policy?
- KH: Well, I know I didn't have—my father is kind of closed mouth and I couldn't read Japanese, so we didn't have too much dialogue or too much communication. I remember, though, in 1928, in the presidential race between Al Smith, who was a Democrat, and Herbert Hoover. I heard my dad say that, if he could vote, he would support Herbert Hoover. Because they were kind of business and money oriented at that time. Kind of like, being so poor, that was the first thing they strived for, some kind of economic security.
- AH: Where was the community like up there in the northwest just as an aggregation of ethnic populations? Where was the main center of the Japanese American community in the northwest? In Seattle, probably?
- KH: Yeah, Seattle.
- AH: Where was that? In which area of Seattle?
- KH: It would be the northwest area of Seattle called Beacon Hill. They had a street like San Pedro equivalent to First and San Pedro in Los Angeles; it was called Jackson Street, Jackson and Main. That's where the Asian groups congregated: the Filipinos, Chinese, and Japanese. Most of them had businesses like restaurants, bars, bathhouses, and hotels.
- AH: To what extent did you penetrate the community? Did you pretty much live within the Japanese community or did you tend to have a wider acquaintanceship?

- KH: Well, I think, during my days in junior high school, I had quite an extensive outside contact because most of my friends were Caucasian. We just so happened to live in an all-white neighborhood. I often wondered why my dad did that, considering he was so active in the Japanese community, and yet, we were way out there, just among the white people.
- AH: I'm wondering how he was able to do that, not only why. In Los Angeles that would be virtually impossible. Was it possible—I wonder if it was much more liberal in terms of the attitude toward Japanese Americans?
- KH: You know, I think the people in the northeast weren't as racist as they were here in Southern California or Central California especially. As a matter of fact, our mayor, when the war broke out and they suggested putting us in concentration camps, we had a mayor called Harry Cain. He was the only mayor of a sizeable city that was against it; and really spoke out. He eventually became a senator.
- AH: Can you account for the liberal climate up there in any sense?
- KH: Of course, you didn't have as many people, but I think, for example, right next to my gas station there had the International Workers of the World. They had an office. I think the union movement was every strong, and somehow or other, I don't know if they were street type liberals or intellectuals, but it seemed there was more of that type.
- AH: You said that you lived outside the confines of the Japanese community proper, but you lived out there but what about how you carried out your life in terms of where family services were. Did you go to, for instance, Japanese dentists, doctors, fruit stores, et cetera?
- KH: Yes, Japanese churches, Japanese dentists because these were contacts your parents made when you were children. I guess my dad's idea was, if you're going to be an American, you might as well go all the way. It must have been that type of mentality that made him move to an all-white neighborhood. We only stayed there for about ten years. By then, I was starting the period of adolescence. You go to mixed parties where there are girls and boys and then, you know, racism would kind of rear its head. They'd say, "What's that Jap doing here?" Because of my arm, I was very sensitive, so that kind of drove me the other way. I remember telling my dad, "Why can't we move back down to where there are more Japanese?" Eventually, he did. Maybe not because I told him that, but he started having other children, and we just sort of outgrew the house.
- AH: What did you do when the Japanese community growing up in the way of affiliations ethnic groups? Did you go to a language group, a Japanese language school, or join any kind of groups?

KH: That's the strange part. By the time, we move down to the Japanese section, I was about twelve or thirteen years old already. Obviously, it would be kind of embarrassing for me to attend Japanese school with six year olds, but my younger brothers and sisters, they attended for a while. They had a very good, very strict Japanese school in Tacoma. It was on a daily basis. After the kids would get through regular school, from four to six o'clock, they would have to attend this Japanese school. It ran five days a week, half a day on Saturdays.

[00:20:15]

AH: A lot of the authorities viewed some of these migrant schools as breeding grounds for subversive activity, or at the very least for a very chauvinistic pro-Japan sentiment. Did you find the activities at the school, from what you know about, to be of this nature?

KH: I think the principal of the Tacoma Japanese School was very pro-Japan person, who had the whole bit, like the emperor's picture, and they'd have to bow and all that sort of thing. I don't think it affected the kids that much. In the sense that they, themselves, like myself, knew that they were Americans and wanted to become, say, like a majority Americans. So, I think that when all that stuff was stressed, and most of their other waking periods were spent in the public schools, I think it kind of embarrassed them. As a matter of a fact, their English became sort of accented because, of course, they spoke Japanese at home, and at Japanese Language School they were so strict that quite a number of students who went there, their English became accented. And when they went out into the white America majority, people would notice, for example, how I spoke and how they spoke. They said, Why can't they speak the way you do? That kind of set you apart, and, at that time, that sort of made me feel good. I was more like them, the majority, rather than the minority.

AH: Who controlled the community? Who were the—not necessarily their names, but who more or less set the tone for the Japanese community, acted as the leaders of the community because the FBI was very interested in the leadership whisked them away and put them in detention centers and internment camps and things. Who ran the community, so to speak? [Who was] the official voice?

KH: I think every sizeable city on the West Coast had a Japanese Association. I know the heads of all those guys, as soon as war broke out, well, then the FBI came in, and they were immediately places in these detention centers. So, I think they called most of the shots because we were still teenagers. The average age of the Nisei was around nineteen, twenty, when the war broke out. Leaders in the JACL were just starting to mature. I know they were having confrontations with the leaders of the Japanese Association on certain issues. But, up to then, they called most of the shots.

AH: Were there many people in your community who went back to Japan for their education, who were Kibei, who were born here but then sent back by their parents for an education in Japan?



KH: In Tacoma, it was a very small minimum. If I ventured a guess, I'd say it was less than 5 percent.

AH: Why did parents send them back to Japan?

KH: Um—

AH: You probably talked to some Kibei as to the reasoning their parents had for doing that?

KH: I know some of the reasons were economic because some of the Japanese had fairly large families. Especially, transient type workers. They'd send maybe a couple of their kids back to Japan and some maybe some auntie or uncle or grandparents would bring these kids up, anywhere from two to ten, twelve years, and then they'd come back to the States. That's a separate group, where they became schizophrenic in the sense that they didn't know where the heck they were. They had Japanese upbringing and American upbringing, plus the fact that they're American citizens. They caused a lot of trouble in the camps they were in.

AH: What were some of the other communities around there besides Seattle where there were concentrations of Japanese people?

KH: Some of the areas around our way were the areas like Puyallup, Fife, Sumner, Orting. They were little agriculture communities, where the Japanese farmed. In Seattle, there would be areas like Auburn, Kent, Bellevue.

AH: Did you ever run into contact with people from Seattle who were from rural background? Who came from a farm, who came from Bainbridge Island or someplace inland up there. What I'm really trying to get at is possible differences between the—did you notice differences between the Japanese Americans brought up in a cosmopolitan area like Seattle and those who were brought up on the farms?

KH: Oh, yes. You could tell the difference quite readily. In the first place, the northwest is kind of cool. It's a temperate climate, so most of the city people's complexion wise would be lighter. The ones that worked on the farms, especially during the summer, would be much darker. I don't know, just the way they cut their hair and wore their clothes, they could be marked right away as the more agricultural background.

AH: Which group was more Japanese, the group that lived in the city or the group that came from the agricultural areas? Which one tended to perpetuate Japanese customs, Japanese language, Japanese, forms, et cetera?

KH: I think generally it was probably the people out in the farms.

AH: I'd like to get into your family life a little bit. What about the Japanese family, as far as a sociological unit, who wielded the power of the Japanese families?

KH: Theoretically, it was the father. As far as our upbringing is concerned, I imagine they brought over all the customs of the generation that they grew up in. That was the \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible). It was real strict. Primarily, you couldn't do anything, or you shouldn't do anything, because you're going to harm the family name. My dad used to stress that all the time. As a teenager, if I sort of wandered into a beer tavern, he'd really get up tight and say, "Think of your my name." I guess he thought people looked up to him being a writer and being president of the Japanese Association. He was real strict on that.

AH: How important is it in the Japanese American community to be able to say you came from a Samurai background?

KH: Well, I come from a Samurai background, and I didn't even know it. You're supposed to have all these papers that they keep for generations, but like, here in Orange County, it seems the people sort of talked in awe that they know the people in Orange County, the very few that come from a Samurai background. I've heard people here that are Nisei, that are fairly well to do, and have positions in the Japanese community here as leaders, speak in subdued awe, "Did you know that guys ancestors were Samurai?"

AH: It wasn't so much the case like that up in Seattle? There wasn't that awe?

[00:30:00]

KH: I've never heard my parents speak about, "You're from a Samurai background." I heard that from some other father of a friend of mine. As teenagers, we were dating a couple of girls, and I remember going to my friend's house once. Then the father said he wanted to talk to the both of us. He said, "You know, Ken, and my son, we're from a Samurai family." The girl that his son was going around with was from the so-called *Eta* class. He said it wasn't normal, and he forbid his son to go around with that girl. That was the first time I ever heard about it.

AH: So, the discrimination was really towards these people from this outcast group, the *Eta* group? Now, what about discrimination toward Japanese Americans whose family came from certain areas like, say, Okinawa? Was that also considered also a no-no to relate with them?

KH: That's another ethnic group that I never was aware of up until I lived in New York for about thirteen years. I remember the 442nd—that's a Regimental Combat Team—they furlough into New York before shipping out, and we used to hang around this Japanese restaurant. The first time I saw that particular group, knowing only Japanese from the four islands of Japan and up in the northwest, I figured I knew what all Japanese looked like. And these guys didn't look Japanese to me. Somebody said to me, They're Japanese, but they're Okinawans. That was the first time that I was aware of that particular group. Since then, I've met a number of

- Hawaiians with Okinawan background. I guess there's quite a bit of discrimination between the mainland-type Japanese and the Okinawans.
- AH: So, it was probably part of this liberal atmosphere you talked about. There were distinctions where they sort of blurred rather than—
- KH: Possibly. Either that or there just weren't that many.
- AH: You indicated before that you experienced a certain amount of discrimination at least in the form of being called in an abusive term and also you alluded to a larger discrimination of people graduating from college and then not being able to exercise their training. Partly this is because of the Depression period, but what other example of discrimination you think the Japanese Americans experienced during the 1930s, when you were growing up in the northwest of the United States?
- KH: Well, some of the public places, for example, if you wanted to go dancing and you'd try to go to a public dance hall, they'd say only whites were allowed. In Tacoma, we couldn't attend—I guess there were certain private type pools that Caucasians could go to, but blacks, Japanese, or Asians, it was just a no-no.
- AH: Were you allowed to go to movie theaters?
- KH: Yes, we were allowed to go to movie theaters. The school weren't segregated up there. I understand they were around central California, out in \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) Watsonville, and areas like that.
- AH: What did you feel about this discrimination at the time? Did it outrage you, or did you place it into some sort of philosophical outlook?
- KH: I think mostly into a philosophical outlook because we complained to our parents, and they didn't want any—I don't know how to describe it. It's not that they didn't want any confrontation type issue, but it's just that you have to accept that and do 150 percent better than the other people, and eventually you'll make it.
- AH: How old were you when the war broke-out?
- KH: I think I was twenty-two or twenty-three.
- AH: When did you start feeling that war with Japan was probably an inevitably? Well before Pearl Harbor? Not until?
- KH: Not until. It just blew my mind when I first heard about it.
- AH: When did you first hear about it?

- KH: I remember we had a big bowling tournament in our hometown, and people from other areas were all converging there. I was at my gas station polishing my car when I just heard this announcement, and I just couldn't believe it. So then, one of my friends came running down from his house and said, "Did you hear that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor?" I said that I had just heard it. I don't know. You just have this numb feeling because you're aware of the fact that because of the discrimination that you look like the enemy, but at the same time, background is completely differently, and you figure that the majority of Americans, you didn't know how you were going to be accepted after that.
- AH: What did it mean in terms of your father's newspaper? What was their response to it, or where they closed down right away?
- KH: They closed down right away. My dad passed away in 1940, right before Pearl Harbor. But, they were closed down right away. The Japanese schools were closed down.
- AH: What was the mood in the community as such? A panic or—
- KH: They didn't panic, but this feeling of anxiety. What the hell is going to happen? Where are we going to go? I just figured that they sort of sensed that they had to be moved to some place because, in the first place, I think they were scared. And I think when Executive Order 9066 came out, I think in a way, as much as I hate to say it, it was a relief to some of the older people.
- AH: To just have something definite you mean?
- KH: Yes.
- AH: Your family was in a situation without your father around, yet he was also a person who had been closely identified with the leadership of the community. Did this have a spillover effect on your family? Did the FBI come right after Pearl Harbor to question your family?
- KH: No, because he had died August 1940. That was about one year and three months before Pearl Harbor. I don't know if that had any bearing on it or not, all I know is that we was asked to turn in any kind of shortwave radio or any firearms, and things like that.
- AH: To what extent did your family have to undergo destruction of personal property for fear that it might fall into the official's hands? Did you have to burn pictures or break phonograph records or do anything like this?
- KH: I don't recall my mother doing anything like that. Of course, by then I was going to school, and I was at the gas station. I wasn't at home very much. I don't know what

personal records my dad may have had. So, I don't know if she destroyed anything in particular.

AH: When did you get notified that you were supposed to evacuate?

KH: It was probably in April sometime in 1942.

AH: Where was your family evacuated to?

KH: We went to an assembly center called Pinedale, which is right outside of Fresno. We were there for about two-and-a-half months. That was under the Army. Then the War Relocation Authority, they built these other camps, so we were sent us from Pinedale to Tule Lake. I stayed there until April 1943.

AH: What was Pinedale like?

KH: It was hot.

AH: Was it a concentration camp atmosphere?

KH: Yes, it had more of a concentration camp atmosphere than, say, Tule Lake. It was just kind of like bare bones. They built that thing so fast, just in the middle of nowhere. Of course, coming from the northwest like around the Tacoma / Puget Sound area, it's still real cool in May even. But, in the Fresno area, it's already 110 degrees, no shade, trees, no nothing.

[00:40:30]

AH: What was your role at Pinedale? Did you get a job up there?

KH: Yes, I knew the editor of the newspaper called *The Pinedale Logger*. In fact, he was my editor. He was the English section editor for *The North American Times*. That's the paper my dad wrote the Japanese for. In my high school days, I became interested in journalism so I used to submit articles concerning activities of the Japanese Americans in Tacoma and the surrounding areas. So, I got a job as a reporter.

AH: I read the full run of the *Pinedale Logger* and noted it was an enthusiastically pro-American, pro-administration sort of newspaper. Did you suffer a lot of censorship at Pinedale? Were you mandated to write certain things?

KH: No, not that I recall.

AH: How do you account for the enthusiastic pro-American philosophy at a time when you were undergoing an abridgement of your civil liberties?

KH: Well, the people of the northwest generally are a different breed of cats. For example, when the call went out to volunteer for the 442, Minidoka had the largest number. They had over 300 people. Three-hundred Nisei had volunteered for this combat team. Whereas, in our camp and in Tule Lake, of course, like Tacoma people there were only about seven hundred of us there. Most of them were from the Marysville and the Sacramento area, and as I recall, the numbers were very small. I guess you were called a dog and everything else.

AH: Who was in the Pinedale center? The people from the northwest only or people from the Fresno area, too?

KH: There were people from the Tacoma area, and then there were people from right outside of Sacramento called Perkins. They went to Poston, and then we went to Tule Lake.

AH: What kind of community groupings took place at Pinedale? Did you see right away that people from the Northwest gravitated toward one another? People from the Sacramento Valley area gravitated toward one another?

KH: Yeah.

AH: What were the distinguishing characteristics of that group from Sacramento that set them apart from you?

KH: They seem like they are more Japanese—you know, as we got to know them, they seemed a lot more provincial, maybe having come from some sort of a rural area, although some of the people from the northeast were also from rural areas, some of the Sumner / Auburn people were down in Pinedale.

AH: What kind of staff did you have on the *Pinedale Logger*?

KH: We had a staff of like six of us: the editor, the city editor, a couple of reporters. Of course, it came out in mimeograph, so we had stencil cutters things like that.

AH: I've only seen the English language version of that newspaper. Did they ever allow the *Pinedale Logger* to come out with a Japanese page, or was that still taboo at that time?

KH: I think that was taboo at that time. I remember in Tule Lake we had a Japanese section.

AH: So, you stayed about two months at Pinedale, and then you went up to Tule Lake. Did your whole family go with you?

KH: Yes.

- AH: So, you had all of them intact. You had you had eight children in the family?
- KH: There were seven in the family except my sister was married. She was in Puyallup and then and Minidoka. So then, there were five of us because my brother, that was two brothers under me, he was in what they called the triple C? That was the Civilian Conservative Corps. I guess, during the Depression they created that. Those kids helped reforest. He was up in Port Angeles, the northwestern tip of the state of Washington. I don't know why, but he had himself down as white, so they didn't catch up to him.
- AH: (laughs) They never did?
- KH: Yes, they eventually did. But, he's very rugged type individual, so they drag him down against his will. Some MPs, they finally brought him down after—I think it was two or three weeks later. They finally caught up with him.
- AH: Do you know any other people that did that, that declared themselves as white or another Asian minority.
- KH: I think so, yeah. I knew some Eurasians—like if you had 1/16 Japanese blood then you were supposed to come into camp, and I know some Eurasians who passed themselves off as something else.
- AH: You're what would be described as part of Old Tule, in that you were part of Tule Lake when it was a relocation center, before it became a segregation center. And a lot of people tend to think about the earlier camp as opposed to the later camp, but what was the earlier camp like as far as the population?
- KH: We had a population around fifteen to sixteen thousand. Like I said, they're mostly Sacramento people and people from the northwest. It was just like any other relocation center. I don't know why they made it a segregation center except it's on the West Coast.
- AH: What does just like any old relocation center mean exactly?
- KH: In a sense, I couldn't differentiate that camp from any other camp. I went Minidoka later, and I don't know if there were more—there were probably more dissidents in Tule Lake because, like I say, the Northwest people were relatively Americanized and seemingly a lot more patriotic than the other areas. The physical composition and the type of organizations that they had and the routine that we had to follow. I don't know if they had a larger number of Kibeis—that's the people that were educated in Japan—were quite rebellious. I don't know if they had a larger proportion of the Kibeis than the other camps.
- AH: I know that the two camps in California, Manzanar and Tule Lake were somewhat different than the other centers in that the other centers, after a while, the internees

were allowed on occasion to go into the surrounding communities to shop and things, but I understand that wasn't the case in Manzanar and Tule Lake. Is that correct?

KH: Yes, that's correct.

AH: Did you have any chance at all to be able to feel what the outside community's attitude was toward the camp population?

KH: I think the nearest town that was of any size was Klamath Falls in Tule Lake. We used to get the papers out and most of it was all this hysteria bit and throw words around like that, We don't want the Japs. We got rid of them and we don't ever want them back. I had a pretty good rapport with my boss; he used to work for the *Chicago Tribune*. He was the foreign correspondent and a very interesting guy.

[00:50:00]

AH: Which was this? The newspaper in Tule Lake? What was the name of that?

KH: The *Tule Lake Dispatch*.

AH: What was the background of this fellow editor?

KH: He was foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*. I guess for some reason or another, drinking became his problem. Some of the people that come into these camps as administrators, some of them, I thought were pretty high quality. Mr. Cook—I really liked him—but I think he had a drinking problem, and I oftentimes wondered how come he wound up in a place like Tule Lake. He'd go into town. He was a very kindly man and bring us back hamburgers and different things that we didn't get in camp.

AH: Was he the reports officer of the camp?

KH: He was the Public Information Officer.

AH: Did you have a Japanese American editor, too?

KH: Yes, we had an English section editor and a Japanese section editor. And the Japanese section editor, I believe, he's the editor of the *Rafu Shimpo* right now, the Japanese section.

AH: What was his name?

KH: I forgot.

AH: What about the censorship there for the Tule Lake newspaper? You said there wasn't any for the *Pinedale Logger*. Did you find any up there for the *Tule Lake Dispatch*?



KH: I don't recall any. Most of the stuff was safe stuff. I became city editor after a while. I used to write a column, but at that time, I'd be urging people to try and get out of camps. I was also pushing the student relocation program, urging them to volunteer for military intelligence and later, the 442nd. It was all red, white, and blue stuff. Relatively safe stuff, or feature stories and there was nothing controversial in there. And I don't recall that we couldn't. We got more flak from the people that were favoring Japan that wrote that stuff. They beat our editor up a couple of times, and we had to close the newspaper down because they threatened us and that sort of thing.

AH: Was there a lot of factionalism in Tule Lake?

KH: There was quite a lot of factionalism, yes.

AH: What were the major factions there? Pro-Japan?

KH: Pro-Japan and Pro-Americans.

AH: You alluded earlier to the role at the Kibei had at the camp. Maybe you could amplify that. Like at Tule Lake, what role did the Kibei have? A lot of people say that the Kibei were a troublemaking element.

KH: I now that most of the confrontations came in when we wrote pro-American articles and also when the military would come in to solicit volunteers for the military intelligence, and later the 442. They'd threaten these guys and threatened to kill them. We used to have a vanguard of patriotic Nisei, and that would sort of serve as a guard so that these things wouldn't happen.

AH: Did they ever come in and upset the editorial facilities or the paper?

KH: They attacked our editor, and they injured him quite badly.

AH: Did they destroy files and break typewriters? Or was it just physical? Well, not just physical—

KH: I think at the time they called the MPs in. I wasn't there at that particular time; I was out getting some stories. I knew we had to close the facility down for a while.

AH: I was reading an article dealing with the newspaper at the relocation centers and the person who was writing it indicated at the outset, the newspapers were really quite good. Like small daily's in reasonable sized towns but that later on as they started to relocate the Nisei where they'd go to colleges or to the 442nd that the quality of it degenerated to the point where it was really a mediocre high school newspaper. Did you find the outset or quality of the newspaper to be respectable, because you'd had some newspaper experience before?

KH: Unfortunately, I don't think our paper was very high grade. There were no—how should I put it. It was, like you say, just like high school newspaper mostly about social activities and you know—I think the only courageous part, if you want to call it that, was when we pushed for volunteers in to the service and things like that. It wasn't very high quality stuff in Tule Lake.

AH: Who controlled the camp in Tule Lake as far as the internees are concerned? Would you say it was the faction that you had exercised courage against when you were advocating these things like volunteering for the 442? What you're saying is the faction? Did the dissident element, according to the authorities, hold the power of the camp?

KH: No, not really. They controlled their own segment, and then you had the pro-American type Nisei that generally ran things. They ran all the programs for entertainment, and I think, there are other ones that consulted with the administration when it came to any kind of complaint or needs that the camp residents had.

AH: What I'm trying to get at is to what extent—like you lived in a Japanese community up there in the northwest and then you're really in another Japanese community that happens to have Caucasian administrators. But when you look at just the populations themselves, how does the camp population here differ from up there say in Seattle in terms of the power structure? Were the Issei still in control and Nisei still fledglings and beholden to the Issei?

KH: There the Nisei had much more control in the camp. In the first place, some of the stronger Issei leaders were gone. They were out in the detention internment centers right away.

AH: How much resentment was there at the fact that the Nisei were now in positions of normal authority in the camp?

KH: There probably were some, but I don't think it was that great. After all, during camp, most of the Issei had this language barrier, so the Nisei had to cooperate with the administration officials. Since they could communicate with them, they got positions of leadership. The only thing the Issei controlled, were—they became block wardens and block managers. Maybe stuff like wardens to patrol their blocks to prevent any thefts.

AH: You were in the JAACL prior to the evacuation?

KH: Yes.

AH: Now the JAACL, of course, during the time of the evacuation and incarceration period were a very reviled group by the camp population at large. Did you find this to be true at Tule Lake or even at Pinedale?

KH: I heard references against the JACL. Like in Tacoma, though, it kind of wasn't that bad in the sense that the chapter members they rented a truck—for example, the day we were evacuated we rented trucks and we helped as many local residents that needed help, you know storage problems and lugging things down to the train station. I think the people on that kind of basis they're kind of appreciative that the JACL did that. But, I remember, especially in Tule Lake, there was a lot of resentment against the JACL because we had a national JACL president and a past president; a guy by the name of Walter Tsukamoto, was kind of reviled by the people that worked with me on the newspaper and said that character was an attorney, and they bring-up all the things that he did. What they considered badly, in the sense to revile him simply because he's was JACL leader. That he charged too much, and he wasn't a real people oriented guy at heart.

[01:00:00]

AH: Did you yourself face any kind of community wrath of any sort as a result of your affiliation with the JACL? Any threatened beatings or anything?

KH: No, I remember when the war broke out, I was vice president of the chapter. Our past president went down to San Francisco when they had this meeting with McCloy and a bunch of honchos from the military and government. They had this conference, and they persuaded the JACL leaders who were there to have the Japanese cooperate with them. They were talking about camps already at the time, and, according to our delegate, they promise us that we'd get a living wage—I think he mentioned it was something like \$150 dollars a month—and it wouldn't be bad, it would just be a temporary situation, so he came back with this news. That's why I say that when he come back with that kind of news to our groups, like I say, they were really worried about living there with the racial hysteria constantly being pushed, so when they heard that news, especially, they thought, Well gee, they kind of wouldn't mind going into camp, so they went peacefully. Of course, once we went, it was a different story. It was \$9, \$12, or \$16 a month, and we didn't get all these goodies that we were promised.

AH: At Manzanar, the JACL group was allied with a group that was not necessarily members of the JACL, who were political leftists who supported or at least cooperated with the evacuation for ideological reasons and helped push the volunteering of the internees into the voluntary combat team, etc. Did you find a leftist cadre up there at Tule Lake that also worked closely with the JACL people in supporting those kind of causes?

KH: No, it was probably true at Manzanar because they had kind of like the cream of the journalistic people that liked to write and people were aware. I think Sue<sup>1</sup> had something to do with the *Manzanar Free Press* when she was there. In Santa Anita, the Los Angeles area had a lot more people so I guess percentage-wise, they simply

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<sup>1</sup> Sue Embrey, O.H. 1366, 2285, & 2426, Center for Oral and Public History.

had more talented people. Like in the assembly center, the *Santa Anita Pacemaker*, a friend of mine, Eddie Shimano, used to be the editor of that. They really put out a nice little paper.

AH: Did you get a chance to see most of the papers that were put out in the camps?

KH: Yes.

AH: Did you attempt—like at Manzanar, the JACL attempted to create an equivalent organization called the Manzanar Citizens Organization. Was there an attempt to recreate, more or less, the JACL at Tule Lake?

KH: Right before I left, yeah, they were starting to do that.

AH: What was the reaction to that?

KH: It wasn't too enthusiastic. We had this Walter Tsukamoto, who was, like I say, our past national president. When he was president back in 1938, he tried to get a corps of people interested, not only in starting the JACL chapter in that camp, but wherever we went and relocated, he told us to keep that in mind. But, right around that time, I left, so I don't know what happened.

AH: I'm going to pick up your experiences in Tule Lake and during the war, and then go into Orange County at a subsequent interview. For right now, I'd like to thank you very much for your cooperation and candor.

KH: It's quite all right.

END OF INTERVIEW