

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Japanese American Oral History Project

An Oral History with MITSUYO N. NAKAI

Interviewed

By

Arthur A. Hansen

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NARRATOR: MITSUYO N. NAKAI
INTERVIEWER: Arthur A. Hansen
DATE: July 14, 1997
LOCATION: Lake Elsinore, California
PROJECT: Japanese American

AH: This is an interview with Mitsuyo Nishida Nakai, and the interview is being conducted by Arthur A. Hansen, and the interview is for the Japanese American Project of the Oral History Program at California State University, Fullerton. [The interview is being held in Lake Elsinore, California, in the home of the interviewee, Mrs. Nakai. The time of the interview is 10:20 a.m., and the date of the interview is Monday, July 14, 1997.] Well, let's begin the interview. Can I call you Mitsi during the interview?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Mitsi, let's begin the interview by having you tell me whatever you can remember or has been told to you about your family background, going as far back as you feel free to go, okay?

MN: The first visit when I went to Japan, my mother's brother who raised my mother, told me that I was offspring of some samurai, and he showed me the picture of his father, who was my uncle's and my mother's father, on the wall. He had a samurai haircut. I asked him who he was, and he said, "That's your grandpa." That's where I found out that my grandfather was a samurai. My mother, when she was five, her mother passed away, so her brother raised my mother. She lived in Miyazaki, Japan—that's near Shingū—until she came to the United States, about 1912, and I was born in 1913.

AH: And you were born in Oregon, I know, because you showed me your passport.

MN: I was born in Portland, Oregon, on December 4, 1913.

AH: And how long did you live in Oregon?

MN: I didn't live [there] very long. I guess my father was a lumberjack and had got a job in Mukilteo, and that's where he met my—I happened to be there when I was about two years old, and I remember sitting in the lumberyard and talking to the different boys, because I was the first girl that was born down in the lumber company in Portland.

AH: Which lumber company was that?

MN: That I don't know. Then we stayed there until my father moved to Yakima, [Washington], and that's where he did the farming.

AH: How old were you about the time you moved to Yakima?

MN: I think I was about three or four years old.

AH: Okay, so preschool then?

MN: Yeah.

AH: And how long were you going to live in Yakima altogether?

MN: I lived in the Yakima Valley until I came to California, and I was going to go to junior high school, so about twelve years old.

AH: Do you have strong recollections of the Yakima Valley?

MN: Oh, I lived among the Indians. My father was very good to the Indian people. [When] harvesting time came, the squaws came and helped my father harvest the corn and pumpkins and potatoes, and whatever there was leftover, he gave it to them free. So we had a lot of protection from the Indian people.

AH: What did you learn about the Indians and about the Indian way of life from growing up and seeing them work around the farm?

MN: Well, the men didn't work, only the squaws worked. I don't know if they went to school there or not, because I don't really recall going, but I know we had to get up at five o'clock in the morning and then go through the different fields to go because there was no real road. Those were horse and buggy days, so I lived on the farm, tending the sheep and cattle and the chickens. I went to bed with the chickens and got up with the chickens. (laughs) All of what we had there on the farm, we had our own poultry, we had our own milk—my mother milked the cow—we had a Jersey cow and a Holstein cow, and so we had plenty to eat.

AH: Did your dad have a farming background in Japan?

MN: No, my father was the oldest of the family, and his father died when he was very young, I understand. But, when I first made the trip to Japan, I met his mother. We didn't stay there very long because he had a brother who wasn't very nice to my father, so went to live with my mother's folks in Miyazaki, near Shingū.

AH: And what did you find out about what your father's family did to earn a living in Japan, if he didn't have a farming background?

MN: Well, that part I don't know too much, but my father, when he was very, very young, I guess he must have been in his teens, he knew he couldn't take care of his brother and sister the way that they were living, so he wanted to come to Osaka, which was a good sized town at that time, to get a job. He went to a place to apply for a job, and when he went in there to apply, the gentleman asked him different questions, his age and where he was from and so forth. But, as he was going out [of] this place, he noticed they were doing the bamboo—what do you call these?

AH: Rattan?

MN: Caning. And as he went out, he told the gentleman that, "I'm sorry you couldn't find a place for me," and he said, "Well, we'll think about it." And as he left, on the sidewalk, my father said, he mentioned to me many times, "When you find anything, always return it." He found a piece of metal of some kind—I don't know what it was—and he picked it up. He was looking at it, and he took it back to the man that made the interview, the first interview. This man told him, "You're an honest person. I'll hire you now." So, he got hired. (chuckles) That's his first job that he told me about. And from there on, we learned caning, and I love caning myself. I like to do upholstery work myself, so that's how I learned different types of wood.

AH: Where did you do caning? Where was that?

MN: I went to night school here in Elsinore, because I like caning and I do my own upholstering.

AH: You mean something that your dad did years and years ago, even before you were born—

MN: I remember it.

AH: And then, he used to do it later on when he came to the United States, too?

MN: Oh, not too much. He went right to the lumberyard down in Portland.

AH: Where did you see him do the caning?

MN: The caning? Well, I went to night school and learned it, and, at that time, he said that caning was—you know, you have to have the desire to make things. So, he showed

me different things, but that's all I got. But then, I like to work with my hands, and I do my upholstery and caning.

AH: Who showed you how to do the caning?

MN: I went to night school here in Elsinore.

AH: But, there was a male teacher, is that it?

MN: Yes, a male teacher.

AH: How did you relate that to your father's situation? Had your father told you that he'd worked in a caning place?

MN: Well, if anything at the farm broke, he'd fix it. And then, he'd tell me how to fix it and how not to fix it, because in those days we used mostly wood.

AH: So, he was sort of your first mentor in fixing furniture and things?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Now, when he came to the United States, do you know the conditions under which he came? Did he ever tell you about that?

MN: No, the only thing he said that at first was that he got a job—oh, when he first came to the United States he worked in Wyoming. He worked for the—

AH: The railroad?

[00:09:32]

MN: A railroad company, and the only thing that they could eat anything to keep them from starving was to make soup or broth was chicken. So, if you took twenty-five cents, you got two chickens, two hens. If you gave them a dollar, later on they gave you six or seven of whatever you like. But one funny thing that my father told me is when he was—at that time there was another fellow that came from Japan, but he couldn't speak English. My father tried very hard to learn because he worked for the Mormon Company, the railroad, and they taught him some English. So, one day over the weekend they had a few days off, and they told them that, You go ahead and get your things ready for your week's food and so forth. So, he sent this one fellow that came to work on the railroad with my father, and he told him to go to this trading post down so far to get a dozen eggs. Well, he couldn't say *egg*. My father taught him, but he forgot about it. So, he went to the man, and he said, "What do you want?" He scratched his head, and he couldn't say it. So then, he went over to the corner of this little trading store—in the corner he saw a box—and so he sat in the box and he said, "Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck!" (chuckles) So, the man [said], "Oh, he wants

eggs." (laughs) He took him to the box of eggs, and he said, "Is this what you want?" "Yes." So, that's how he got his very first eggs. (chuckles)

AH: So, your dad was in Wyoming first, and then he went from Wyoming to Portland. Is that right?

MN: Yes.

AH: Okay, and then from Portland he went to Seattle?

MN: Yes.

AH: And then from Seattle he came down to—

MN: To Yakima Valley. He lived in Mukilteo, that's where the big—Mukilteo and in Everett. That's where my brother and sister were born.

AH: I'm glad you pronounced that for me, because I've always seen that. I can spell it, but I never could pronounce it, so thanks. (chuckles) Then the family went out to Yakima Valley, and then were you farming? About how many miles from the city of Yakima would that have been?

MN: Oh, Yakima was quite a distance. The nearest town was Toppenish and Wapato. That's an Indian name.

AH: Now, I know there were quite a few Japanese Americans in Wapato because they had a famous baseball team there, and they won a lot of championships. And I've seen articles written about them by people from Washington State [Gail Nomura], but in the whole area there, were there quite a few Japanese American families?

MN: Evidently so, because my Uncle Ed was a Methodist, and in Japan, where he was born, there is a Methodist church, a very nice Methodist church. I visited there a few times when I was in Japan. He played the organ and piano for us at the Sunday school.

AH: Where did you go to Sunday school?

MN: Wapato.

AH: In Wapato. Okay, so when you were growing up, there's a lot of ways you can tell if there were quite a few Japanese Americans, and that is did they have a language school in that area that you went to, a Japanese language school?

MN: No, at that time I don't recall.

AH: What about on New Year's occasions? Who would your family see?

MN: Just ourselves. We didn't have cars in those days. The first car that my Uncle Ed got I think was called Nash. Because our first car that we got, and we came, in that car, to California. It was a Ford, a Touring Ford.

AH: What about at the public school? When you went to school, did you see any—

MN: Yes, it was like a one-room school, and we had eight classes.

AH: Were there any Japanese American students there?

MN: Yes, there were some.

AH: Out of the total school population, what would you guess was the population of Nikkei or Japanese American students there?

MN: The Japanese American students at our school in Harrah—and then I went to school in Ashue. That's, I guess, about the second or third-grade school I started. Under one roof there were seven or eight classes and two teachers, and on Friday the health officer came, on Friday, to check us. I don't think that we had more than fifty or sixty students at the most that I remember.

AH: And then, about how many of those would have been Japanese American out of the fifty or sixty students? Five?

MN: Maybe about five or eight.

AH: If somebody said, "Can you remember a Japanese American student from your elementary school up in the Yakima Valley," who would you say?

MN: I could only say Hiraharas. I heard that they were in California, but I've never met them. The oldest boy was much older than us, so I don't recall too much.

AH: Usually people, when they move from one place to another, move because somebody else is ready to receive them or has gotten them a job or a place to live. Who was the contact for your family that helped—

MN: My uncle. Uncle Nishi was.

AH: And how long had he lived there?

MN: I don't know if any uncle was in Yakima before my father. He must be because he called my father to Yakima Valley. And because my uncle was a developer and he was very sharp in math, that's how we got to know—that's where my father found his bride, which was just a young woman. So, when she came to the United States, since they had maids and things at her home, she couldn't even boil hot water. (chuckles)

AH: Tell me a little bit about your impressions of growing up as a young girl in the Yakima Valley, not necessarily things Japanese but just generally.

MN: In the farm?

AH: Yeah, tell me a little bit about your way of life there.

MN: Well, when I was small I knew there was one lady that came to visit my mother, but she didn't have any children. So, when she came, I was the only one at that time, so she'd pick me up and take me home. I'd stay there a few days, and then I'd come home again. (chuckles) That's about how I started to know that there were other people besides our family.

AH: Because you were pretty isolated?

MN: Yes.

AH: What did your family do for medical services? Since you later worked in a hospital, you're familiar with medicine and things, but when you were a kid and you got sick or something?

MN: Well, my mother's family are more or less in the medical field or in teaching, and my father's side is mostly in farming or timber land, and that's how I got to learn more about sicknesses and different things, through my mother, who knew more about what to do to ourselves when we cut our fingers or we had a nosebleed or we fell down on the ice and bumped our heads. She'd put cold ice on it so the bump wouldn't come back.

AH: When you say she was from a medical family and everything, what did that mean?

MN: My mother's family side?

AH: Yeah, what did that mean? Tell me about that.

MN: Well, my mother's side, they were quite well-to-do, so most of them were teachers or professors in different schools, but I didn't get to know them too much because they were away all the time. And my father's side, there were a lot of politicians—(chuckles)—and they went to Wakayama, which is a prefecture of the town that I understand is like Riverside County and Los Angeles and so forth. They were politicians. I had an uncle who was quite a politician, House of Representative. It was my father's side, though. He lived in a city where all these politicians had bodyguards and things and they took care of them so they'd be safe. One of them was my father's brother's boy who came here pole-vaulting in 1932.

AH: At the Olympics, huh?

MN: Uh-huh. He just passed away recently.

AH: Gee whiz! Did you see him when he came over?

MN: Uh-huh, I went to—

AH: Los Angeles?

MN: Yeah, to see him.

AH: Now, this is the Nishida side of the family, right?

MN: Nishida's, my father's side.

AH: What was your mother's maiden name?

MN: Nishi.

AH: Oh, so when you say your Uncle Nishi, you're talking about her brother?

MN: Yeah.

AH: And what was his first name?

MN: Isakichi.

AH: Okay, and so he's the one who sort of then got into the Yakima Valley and then brought—

MN: Um-hm.

AH: One thing I want to go back to a little bit, because you were talking about the medical background of your mother's side of the family, but then you haven't told me too much about that. You said they were teachers and professors, but where does the medicine come in?

[00:20:08]

MN: Well, my mother didn't say very much about where her medical teaching came from, but what she told me when we got hurt or when we went ice skating, what we should do if we did fall down and get hurt or got a bump. That's why I put two and two together, and I thought, Well, she must have had some medical background when she was young. But, my mother was very young when she came to the United States.

AH: So, she hadn't gone to college in Japan, had she?

MN: No, I don't think so. They went to high school, I'm sure, but not—

AH: But, you remember her imparting certain medical ideas to you?

MN: Um-hm, and she delivered all my Uncle Ed's children when they came, out in the country, and they had a midwife. The midwife was late coming. And the baby was born and my mother would bathe it and cut the umbilical cord, and she knew just how much to cut off and where to tie. So, she used to brag about it. She said, "None of my brother's children have protruding navels." She'd brag about that all the time.

AH: (chuckles) Did a good job, right?

MN: Yeah, she did. Not one of them had any protruding navels?

AH: Did you have any contact with doctors, or was everything medically done within the family by your mom?

MN: No.

AH: Did you have an appendix out or anything so that you had to go to a hospital?

MN: No, the only time that I had a cold sore, and I don't know, somehow I had—that's the only scar that they put on my passport even. I had a scar on my neck here, and that's the only thing. Then when I came to California, the state of Washington has higher scholastic—and so we had to take an aptitude test and an entrance exam when I came to California. At that time, the only thing I didn't have was I didn't have my tonsils out. They wouldn't accept me, so I had to go to Marion Davies Clinic in Sawtelle to have my tonsils out.

AH: And that was probably the first time you were in a hospital.

MN: That's right.

AH: You were born probably with the help of a midwife, right?

MN: I had a doctor in Portland.

AH: You did?

MN: Yeah, he was a doctor. He delivered me, and I was the first child that was born in the timber land, a girl.

AH: In the time that you were growing up in Japan, and then even among Japanese Americans, there was often a combined practice of Western medicine and then also more traditional Japanese medicine and things, and a lot of people have talked about

moxa burning and things like that. Do you recall any of that in your own household or not?

MN: No, because I didn't go to Japan until—the first time I went to Japan was when my father—I've forgot what year that was, but we had finished high school—I think I had just finished high school and he wanted to take me—

AH: That was probably about 1931 then, or so?

MN: Um-hm. That's the only time that I can recall that I went to Japan. He showed me different things, but outside of that he just taught me what they did. But I've never been in that—my mother told me how they had babies in Japan. They didn't have midwives, they didn't have doctors close enough, and they had to come on rickshaw. They'd come out in the country like that, but they'd be very expensive, so they didn't. Everybody took care of yourself. Neighbors helped one another take care of the babies. And then, what I saw when I first went back to Japan, that was before I was even married, I visited my uncle, and they had a barrel. They have a nice little—like a bungalow, like small, and it's got nice straw matting on the floor, and there's a big barrel like that in there. So I said, "What is that barrel?" She said, "When you have the desire to [push], you have to grab ahold of that barrel and you squeeze it hard, and that's when you have your baby."

AH: Really? So, you don't have somebody that assists in the birth at all?

MN: No.

AH: So, it's unassisted? The husband doesn't help or anything?

MN: No.

AH: Wow! So, the woman just delivered herself? Sometimes I have heard about them delivering in a field or something, but this is in the house, where they would just squeeze that barrel?

MN: The barrel. And it's real nice and clean, and they have everything there. There is a big barrel, well, I'd say maybe a hundred gallon water barrel like that on the side, and you can get the water from the—because all the water there, they don't have any pump. They have to put it down the hole and then drop the water [bucket] and then pull it up with a pulley. You know, like we did in the olden days here in the United States?

AH: Sure, with the bucket and stuff.

MN: Yeah, drop your bucket down in, and then the water fills, then you put it on this little roller and then just pull the water up and then dump it into this big barrel, and then you bring it home. At nighttime, before you go to bed—when I first learned this is

when I went to Japan, is before you go to bed at night you have to fill this barrel with a lot of water. Because, in case of fire, that's the only water you can find.

AH: Comparing your situation on the farm in the Yakima Valley when you were growing up with the situation you found in Japan when you first visited there, say about 1931, what was more modern, what they had in Japan or what they had at that time in the United States? The reason I'm asking that is because some Nisei who were brought up on farms here, I've talked to them, and they said when they went to visit family in Japan, gee, they found things that were way more modern than they had on their own farm here in Orange County or Los Angeles County, especially if they lived way out way from the cities.

MN: Well, kitchen-wise I think we were much ahead over here, because we had a wood stove. Over there they had just a regular—what do you call those kind that—like a fireplace-type, and they had this—

AH: Like a hibachi or something.

MN: Yeah. That's all I can remember. Although I have a fireplace where they hook these hot water pots there, I've got one of those pots here. When I first came to Elsinore and bought this place, there was one in the back there, and I still have it.

AH: You still have it? What about bathroom facilities? What did you have in—

MN: In Japan?

AH: Well, first what did you have up in Yakima?

MN: We had an outhouse.

AH: You had an outhouse in Yakima. And then, when you went to Japan, the same thing?

MN: It's almost alike. That's out in the country anyway. Yeah, outhouse.

AH: So, it was pretty similar then?

MN: Yeah. The only thing, we here out in the country, we used all our Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck catalogs. (laughs)

AH: Oh, yeah, for the toilet paper, right? (laughs)

MN: We didn't have toilet paper.

AH: Uh-huh, that was it. Now, you moved when you were in junior high to Los Angeles, right? And where did you move? Terminal Island?

MN: No, I didn't come to Terminal Island. I came to Venice, California.

AH: Okay, right by Santa Monica there.

MN: You know by Culver City there there's that mental hospital there on the corner, Centinela? I lived about a mile [from] there and lived with my aunt for about six months there before I went to Terminal Island.

AH: Okay, and so you were living in the town of Venice then?

MN: No, I lived out there between Venice and Culver City there, by that Centinela mental hospital, about a mile down.

AH: Oh, you mean it wasn't there then?

MN: The mental hospital? It was there.

AH: It was there then? Wow! Now, mostly what I'd heard about Venice was among the Japanese people there, there were a lot of celery growers and stuff like that.

MN: Yes, they used to have a Celery King there who did a lot of—my uncle, I don't know if they were in partnership, but he was a schoolteacher before he came to the United States. That's what they told me. But, I didn't stay with them very long because my father's sister wasn't very good to my mother. So, that's how we go to Terminal Island.

AH: Oh, really? Hold on a second. I've got to turn this over real quick. [recording paused] Now, when your dad first came down here, what was his incentive to coming from Yakima Valley and coming down to Venice?

MN: To give us education, because out in the country he knew we couldn't get education.

AH: Oh, really? And how many kids were there in the family at the time?

MN: I had three sisters and one brother.

[00:30:00]

AH: Can you give me their names and sort of the siblings order, who is the oldest and—

MN: My brother Tom is gone now. He's passed away.

AH: Was he the oldest?

MN: No, he was the third. I'm the oldest.

AH: Okay, so 1913 was the oldest then.

MN: Um-hm. And then, 1915 was my sister, Misao was born, and she lives in Long Beach. Then my brother Tom, Tokusaburo, he was still a young boy, so when he came to Terminal Island to live, he went to school there. And all his buddies were fishermen's children, so he went into fishing, and the last time that he did fishing was in Panama. He became a Panamanian.

AH: Oh, really?

MN: That's why he doesn't feel good, and he comes home. And then, they said that he had some kind of a sickness, and so he stays with my sister. I have a sister next to me who doesn't have any children, and my daughter that you met this morning, she is taking care of her as their child.

AH: Wait, didn't you say Tom died?

MN: Tom died about three or four years ago.

AH: Okay, and then you have two more siblings besides that, after Tom?

MN: No, Tom is my brother.

AH: Yeah, I know, but then—

MN: There's another sister, one sister, June.

AH: Yeah, June? And that's the youngest one?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Was June born by the time your family moved to California?

MN: Yes, she was.

AH: Okay, so the whole family was intact. No more kids after that, huh?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: So, your parents wanted to get education for you kids.

MN: My father did.

AH: Okay, your father did.

MN: He said that we didn't know any Japanese language, couldn't read or write, and he didn't have time to—he'd get the newspaper out, which came from Seattle or Yakima—it would come maybe once a week or once a month—and he would show

us the difference. And he would take a Japanese brush and show us how to learn Japanese ABCs, and that's when I learned what little I know. (laughs) Then I went to school on Saturday when I wasn't working.

AH: Where? Here in California?

MN: In Terminal Island. We had [Saturday] school.

AH: Okay, but this was after you came here then.

MN: Yeah, not up there. On a newspaper or something, my father would take a brush, and he'd show us how to do the ABCs.

AH: Now, when you came to Venice, what was your father doing for an income? What kind of work was he doing there?

MN: Because he was still a farmer, he thought maybe he could help start working on the farm and raise us and then put us through school somehow. His sister, who lived in Venice, didn't have any children, and her husband was a schoolteacher when she met him. I don't know where they met, but anyway that's—

AH: Was he a Japanese language schoolteacher?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: On Terminal Island or in the Venice area?

MN: No, he wasn't even—he was just a farmer. A Venice celery farmer he was. I didn't get to know him too well because my mother and his sister didn't get along.

AH: So then, you moved to Terminal Island. Did both your parents work there in Terminal Island?

MN: In the fish cannery.

AH: Both of them?

MN: Our father worked for Van de Camps seafood until the war broke out, and he came to live in Elsinore with me. Then we were all pushed out of here and went to Manzanar.

AH: Well, let's back up before we get to Manzanar. I want to hear a little bit more about Terminal Island and also about your family. Now, you mentioned that your mom worked in the cannery in Terminal Island. Of course, a lot of women did work there, but had she been working on the farm before up in Yakima?

MN: In Yakima? Yes, she did.

AH: Okay, and you had, too? The kids had been working there, too, right?

MN: Um-hm, we used to have chickens, thousands of white chickens, [egg-laying] chickens, and we used to candle them and crate them and my uncle or my father would take them to Wapato to some warehouse and then they would have them sold there.

AH: Oh! So, you raised chickens as an additional source of income?

MN: For us, yeah. What else did we have down here?

AH: When you came to the Venice area, did you work in the celery then too?

MN: Yes, I worked out in the field. That's when my sister got sick. Because my aunt, my father's sister, didn't know how to treat the children because she didn't have any children, so she didn't know how to treat the children, so she thought, well, just like the rest of us, and then she just worked and worked so hard that she got a kidney infection. She landed in Marian Davies Clinic in Culver City or in Sawtelle, and from there on my father said, no, he couldn't do that to his children, whip them so like that. So, that's how we moved to Terminal Island. He had some friends that, while he was in Seattle, they worked in the lumberyard, too, with him, and they had come to Terminal Island to live and do fishing.

AH: Oh, so that was a contact there then?

MN: Right.

AH: And they were probably from Wakayama originally, too, huh?

MN: Yes.

AH: Now, if somebody asked you, "Tell me a little bit about celery farming, what you remember as a kid," what kind of work is it? Is it hard? Is it easy? How is it? Tell me about it.

MN: No, raising the celery, the men did all the watering and the fertilizing. But, when the harvesting came, we had to have them crated and had to move the big crates of celery. It's not a small crate like they have now. They were almost four times, about a one hundred pound or a two hundred pound crate of celery, and we had to hook a board on the side, and my sister and I would have to carry it out so that when the trucks came they could load it onto the truck. My sister worked so hard, she was a hard worker, and she worked so hard. Because we were raised on a farm, we weren't just a city person, so she got very sick, and she got a kidney infection. So, she landed in the hospital in Sawtelle, and she was kind of blind for about two weeks, till finally she started seeing and the doctor said, "Now she'll be better." So, from there on, my father said, no, he couldn't see his child dying, so he moved us to Terminal Island

because he had some contacts there. He had helped them when they were young boys and came from Japan. My father helped them, so that's how we got help at Terminal Island.

AH: Now, you're undergoing some big changes in a certain way too, and maybe you can think back on those. You were living pretty much in isolation up there in the Yakima Valley. You didn't see too many people, of any background.

MN: No, most of them were—one family, Sim Lawrence's boy that was going to junior high school on horseback, and then the others were all the Indian people that came to help my father on the farm, to weed or get some food for themselves to eat, and they would bring him rabbits and pheasants. That's how I got to know the Indian people.

AH: And how did your situation in Culver City area before you moved to Terminal Island differ from your situation up in Yakima Valley? Tell me a little bit about what it was like in there. Because when you move at that age it's pretty traumatic sometimes and you say, "Hey, this is different!" What way was it different?

MN: Well, because my aunt didn't know how to treat us children, and we worked, oh, just like grow-up people, early in the morning till late at night and didn't get enough time to have any recreation or anything. Then on Saturday my father said we had to have some Japanese language teaching, so there was a—I think it was two hours or one hour schooling in, I don't know what part of Culver City it was. Or toward Venice. There was a Japanese schoolteacher there that taught a little Japanese. I only remember going there maybe—not even a month there. But, we didn't learn anything there because my aunt didn't treat us right, and we didn't have time to study. So, we worked on the farm. We worked on the farm harder than we did in Yakima.

AH: So, you remember that as an unhappy period?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Because you worked so hard, your sister went blind, a lot of things.

MN: Um-hm.

[00:40:00]

AH: There were a lot more Japanese people there, though, than there was up in Yakima Valley. Is that right?

MN: Yes.

AH: One of the ways that that affected you is that you ended-up going to a language school, but did you now also develop more friends? Did it change your social life a little bit?

MN: Well, you know, we were so poor, and, during that time, our government—we went to the rock bottom and all the banks closed. That was about—was it 1928, '27, '28 around there?

AH: Twenty-nine when the stock market crashed. Is that what you mean?

MN: Crashed. I remember going to Terminal Island one day from Venice where we were living to find a place to live, that there was a lady in Inglewood who was hanging on the Back of America door crying. So, I said to my father, "Daddy, stop the car. What's the matter with that lady? She's crying." He said, "You know, this morning there's a paper flyer out that the United States, the bottom fell out of it and nobody has any money. That poor lady must have some money in the bank, she lost her money, and that's why she's crying." And that's the last time I heard about that. Then from there on we gradually moved to Terminal Island. We didn't have very much. So, that's how we went to Terminal Island to live.

AH: When you got to Terminal Island, now that must have been a dramatic difference for you, wasn't it?

MN: Yes, very, very much.

AH: Okay, tell me about Terminal Island. I saw a film that you had that was put together on Terminal Island, and then I have read a lot of things about Terminal Island, but it's kind of interesting to hear it from somebody who spent their youth there and probably went to school and finished high school from Terminal Island.

MN: I went to high school.

AH: So, that was an important part of your life and everything. Tell me a lot about Terminal Island, what your recollections are.

MN: Well, Terminal Island, all I know [is] that we were poor; didn't have much, so I know that we worked very, very hard. And get up at five o'clock in the morning, take the red car, and I went to Gardena. I was only about twelve years old then, and I'd take that car and go to work in a market and get the market all opened up. Because the baker—

AH: Before you went to school? You would do this in the morning?

MN: No, on weekends, on Saturday and Sunday. The baker would come because the bread man came early. In those days, a pound of bread was only three cents. If I beat the man that opens the door, then I knew where the key was, so I'd open the door for the baker and the man that opened the door would open the display up and everybody would come and get their bread, and I'd help him until the vegetable department is ready to be opened up. Then I'd help him. I stayed till nine o'clock, and then I'd take the red car from Gardena to San Pedro, at night, and come home.

AH: Was this person in Gardena Japanese American, or was it a *hakujin*?

MN: He was Japanese. The baker was a Caucasian.

AH: The baker was Caucasian. Now, I keep hearing this term sometimes, M-o-n-e-t-a. It is pronounced Moneta [emphasizing long E] or Moneta?

MN: Moneta [emphasizing long E]. A lot of Japanese lived there, farmers.

AH: Yeah, was that on the outskirts of Gardena, or was that part of Gardena?

MN: Well, you know where Redondo Beach Boulevard is?

AH: Uh-huh.

MN: It's around _____ (inaudible) area. It's around there someplace.

AH: Okay, and you remember seeing that when you were a kid?

MN: I saw on the road, but then outside of that I never really went there to visit or anything.

AH: About how far do you think it is from Terminal Island over to Gardena on the red car?

MN: Gardena? I think it took about—did we go through Watts first or Gardena first? Because I remember going through Watts, the colored district.

AH: You probably went through Watts first.

MN: And then to Gardena.

AH: That's probably the first time you had ever seen black people, too, wasn't it?

MN: Yes. No, the black people is when I came to California at that one railroad station we had to cross, and I saw a black man there. I had never seen a black man, so I said to my father, "I didn't know we had black people here in the United States." He said, "Yeah, that's a conductor for that train." That's the first time. So, I knew what an Indian was and what a colored person was. That's all. Then I saw some Japanese.

AH: Had you never met any other Asian people, like Chinese people, up in—

MN: No, I never knew a Chinese until I came to Portland or Los Angeles probably.

AH: And how about Mexican people? Did you just meet those here, down here?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Okay, on Terminal Island, did you go to school on the island?

MN: No. My husband did, though, but I didn't.

AH: Oh, he did? And where did you go to school?

MN: I went to Playa del Rey, where my aunt and uncle had lived.

AH: Junior high, was this?

MN: No, we had to take the test. There was once a school that had the one roof like, you know, and they had all different classes. Seventh and eighth grade was in one room by itself, and the rest of them was fourth, fifth, sixth in another class, and then so on.

AH: Your dad moved you down here so you'd get a better education. Was it a better education in Playa del Rey than you got up in the Yakima Valley?

MN: I couldn't say for sure, but all I know, that I had to take this entrance exam and my aptitude test. If I passed that and did well, then they would give me the grade that I belonged to, and that's when I skipped a whole year.

AH: Oh, you skipped a year? So, you went from what grade to what grade? What grade did you skip?

MN: A-7 and B-8. So, I struggled hard for my math. The others weren't so hard, but my math was very hard for me at that time.

AH: And then, did you graduate from there, eighth grade? Is that what you did?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: And then you went to which—

MN: Then I went to San Pedro.

AH: San Pedro High School? Okay. How far is San Pedro from where you were living in Terminal Island? How long would it take you to get there?

MN: San Pedro High School? Let's see, First Street is where the ferry lands, and then we had to go to Thirteenth Street. That was Gaffey High School.

AH: So, you always had to take the ferry when you went to school, right?

MN: Um-hm. And I worked for the ferry company after I finished—no, I wasn't quite finished with high school, I was about in junior year. I went to work for the ferry company.

AH: Now, who was on that ferry? Like when you would come over, the high school kids would be on the ferry, but who else took the ferry? Because I just was out to Bainbridge Island on the ferry—

MN: All the Japanese people who went to work up in Point Fermin.

AH: Okay, and what did they do at Point Fermin? What kind of work?

MN: Farming, worked on the farm.

AH: So, of the Japanese people that lived out there on Terminal Island, how many of them do you think worked on Terminal Island itself in the canneries and things?

MN: Most of them were fishermen. That's all they did. If there were times that they were not doing anything, they were doing the netting, you know, fixing their nets and things but mostly farmers. But, those that had relatives up in Palos Verdes or something, they had those peas and celery. I don't know what other things they had, vegetables in the garden, I guess. They went up there on weekends, and when the fishing was slow they went up there to make spending money.

AH: You said you didn't speak too much Japanese and still don't, right? Is that true or not?

MN: (laughs) I can speak it and I can read a little bit, but not fluently like I went to full-term school.

AH: Would you say that your Japanese, your command of Japanese compared to other people who were on Terminal Island, is less—I mean, for your age group?

MN: Well, my father didn't like us to use slang words in Japanese.

AH: No swear words or slang words? (laughs)

MN: So, the fishermen, they talk not very high-class Japanese, so my father used to say, "You shouldn't say that kind of language. You should say it this way," and he'd correct me. My father was very, very—

[00:50:10]

AH: Proper?

MN: Yeah.

AH: So, some of the Japanese that they knew was kind of vernacular, some slang and stuff, right?

MN: Yeah. (chuckles)

AH: I was reading somewhere that on Terminal Island the people from Wakayama, a lot of the Nisei were very, very Japanized.

MN: Yes, they are.

AH: The whole way of life and stuff was that way, the fishermen particularly, right?

MN: Yes, because most of them went to college, junior college. They went to Long Beach State. The dentist, there's two of them that went to Long Beach State that I knew. They're all gone now. They passed away already. One of them, we were about the same age, but I don't know, those boys didn't do so well in regard to health. They're all gone.

AH: When you live in Venice, you weren't very happy. What about on Terminal Island? Were you happy there?

MN: I was much happier because we didn't have to deal with that rudeness.

AH: You're talking about from your relative?

MN: Yeah.

AH: But, what about just living on the island itself and working on the island?

MN: Well, on Saturdays we went about, I think, one hour to our Japanese language school in the church, the Baptist church. On Sunday we went to church, because I'm a Christian, and I was baptized when I was thirteen, I think. I don't know about my mother wanting me, because my mother had gone to Seattle to have her dentures fixed and she wasn't home. But, I told Dad, "I'm going to go this Easter Sunday and be baptized." He said, "You're sure now that you want to be a Christian?" And I said, "Yes. Uncle Ed is and he thinks all right, so I'm going to be baptized." So, that's when I got baptized.

AH: When you went from Terminal Island where you were living over to San Pedro High School, was it like going from one world to another, in the sense that I know San Pedro had Yugoslavians living there and they had Italians and they had Portuguese and probably Mexican-American or whatever. And yet, on the island, were you pretty much in sort of an exclusively Japanese population?

MN: Yes.

AH: So, it was a little different in that way.

MN: I had that kind of feeling. But, when we weren't working or anything, we were supposed to be studying. As my father said, "You're here to study," so we studied all the time.

AH: When you were home.

MN: Um-hm, if we weren't working.

AH: What was your living situation on the island? What kind of place did you live in?

MN: Well, the cannery, if you worked for [one], they gave you, like, a house. It had a front room and a bedroom and a kitchen and a bathroom, and you paid so much to the Van de Camp's Seafood each month to live there.

AH: Was it a pleasant enough place to live in or not?

MN: Well, I come from the country, so I didn't see too much difference, only it was a little crowded because there was four of us, you know, three sisters and a brother.

AH: And then, where your closer neighbors? How close to them?

MN: (chuckles) Just a doorstep over.

AH: If somebody says, "Compare your housing situation at Terminal Island with your housing situation at Manzanar," what would you say?

MN: About the same. (laughs)

AH: About the same? Okay. (laughs) What kinds of things did you do? Because here you were away from a community—now, all of a sudden, you're in the middle of a community. You're working out there and living out there and things like that. You said you went to language school, but what other kinds of things did you do on Terminal Island that you recall? Did you join organizations? You said the church, you were in the church there.

MN: Yeah, we were in a church, but really that was on a weekend. Like Sunday after church we got together and talked, and then [got] ready to go home. We went home, and then, if we didn't do our own ironing, our washing, or things, then we had to study. So, that's all we did.

AH: Well, I know they have Terminal Island reunions and picnics and things on a pretty regular basis.

MN: Yes.

AH: They still have a Terminal Island Association. Now, if you get together, and I've seen some footage of this, people seem to be animated and talking to one another and being nostalgic. What do you get nostalgic about? (laughs) When you get together with other Terminal Islanders, what do you talk about? What kinds of things do you recall?

MN: Well, nothing really too much. We just get together and we have lunch together and we have a little meeting together on what we're going to do next year or what are we going to do with this new crowd that we're going to have, and we just keep on going. We just had a picnic. So, all that group, we get a president. Then when the Women's Auxiliary, which I am for many years, I travel from here to Los Angeles, and I have a twice-a-year meeting. At picnic time we telephone each other and say, "Hey, we're going to have a meeting. Let's get together, and let's get those mailed out." So, we go and lick some stamps. We had to write each one, but now we have the regular stickers so it's not so bad.

AH: You've got your tongue left now, huh? (chuckles) Usually, a community is held together by some distinctive kinds of things. Like when you reflect back on Elsinore, it has certain things that hold people together, and Terminal Island must too, or Manzanar. All these places are not just a name or licking stamps or doing things like that, but they're a collection of things that you've experienced and feelings that you have in common. So, what do you think are the ties that bind people together in Terminal Island?

MN: For Terminal Island, most of them we went to church together, or, if you were a baseball player, you formed a baseball club and you played baseball. If you were in tennis, you played tennis. Or, if you were in judo, you do judo, and they just congregate among themselves. Well, here in Elsinore my husband was a Mason, so he belonged to the Shrine, so most of his time was that type of work. So, when he [wasn't] home, he was taking care of the small league baseball. They started that one here in Elsinore when my children were small, and so he took that until he got sick.

AH: When did you meet your husband?

MN: Oh, he was graduating high school, and I was just a scrub going in the ninth year. (chuckles)

AH: So, he's three years older than you? Is that right?

MN: No, he's much older, about seven years older than I am, six or seven.

AH: Did he start school late or something? Did you say he was just finishing high school when you started the ninth grade?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: So, I would figure that's about three years.

MN: He was older. Because see, he was born in Japan, and he came here when he was just a young child, about ten or eleven, I guess.

AH: So, he's what you'd call a *yobiyose*? Is that right?

MN: (chuckles) Yes. And he was a naturalized citizen, after the war.

AH: But, he was actually born in Japan?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Was that common to find a lot of people of his situation on Terminal Island, where they came here as infants rather than as—

MN: The older ones, yes. Although some of them, I'm surprised, but like Fred Wada and them, he was born in Seattle.

AH: Would you say that there are more marriages between Nisei and Issei out on Terminal Island than would be the case in most other places?

MN: Not too much, although there are a lot of them that were born in Japan and then they came here and they were raised here, or some of them were born here and went to Japan and were raised there.

AH: Okay, so were there a lot of Kibei then on Terminal Island?

MN: Kibei, um-hm.

[01:00:00]

AH: There were? Okay. So, it's a fairly distant community, in terms of the kind of work that they do—fishing—where they come from is Wakayama-ken, and then—

MN: Shizuoka-ken. They're the fishing type of—

AH: Hold on a second. This has just ended, too. [recording paused] Okay, I wanted to ask you, before we get into the evacuation from Terminal Island, a question about really the island's culture or society or whatever. Usually, if people in an area are doing the same thing, whether it's potato farming or citrus agriculture, or it's cotton growing or tobacco cultivation, it usually creates a kind of rhythm and a mood and a way of life, really. And Terminal Island was very much involved in fishing in one or another way, the canneries that you talked about, or actually going out on the fishing boats and things like that. What kind of environment does fishing create? What do

you recall of how that influences people's way of life there on Terminal Island, or how it did?

MN: Well, when I first came to Terminal Island I said, "Is that what they do to make a living?" When the whistle blows the men bring in the fish from the ocean, and then they're dumping it out there in a big trough. And the whistle blows, the women, regardless of the time, day or night, they have to go out and pack them or clean them to get ready to be put in trough to be canned?" And I said, "Boy, that kind of hard work." You have to go just any time of the day. When they'd bring the fish in, you had to go to work, is all I thought. And I didn't like that type of work, so I thought, Well, I'll just go on. I liked my science, I liked my math, so I took in high school business law, business type of—something that I could use later on after I moved away from Terminal Island. Because I knew I wasn't going to live in Terminal Island. (chuckles) But then, in the meantime, my father had come out here to Elsinore to the springs to rest, because he worked very hard at Van de Camps Seafood. Because it's without notice you had to go to work. My father had one time a bad cause of meningitis, so he was very careful about his health. And then, when I was taking my science, I came up to see him one day here, and they were living in a little cottage out here someplace. I said, "What do they do here?" He says, "Oh, a lady in here, if you've got a bad back, she does massaging, but she is not a real graduate of school." I said, "Well, you have to have a license. You have to go to school." And then, about that time I happened to run into a school nurse, and she was a maiden woman but a much older woman. She said, "You're good in science and biology and things, so why don't you take nursing?" I said, "Well, I'll take that as an avocation because I am taking business law and business practice." She said, "That's okay." So, I went to change my science into nursing, and I became a full-fledged—all I had to take was the state license for nursing, but I just didn't have money to go through that because my parents were very poor. My sister had a scholarship in millinery and dressmaking, but my parents were so poor they couldn't afford to send her to Woodbury College in Los Angeles. But, she is a good seamstress.

AH: Now, Mitsi, let me go back a little bit. You were going to San Pedro High School, and then you graduated from high school. Probably the year you graduated from high school was sometime around 1930—

MN: Thirty-five.

AH: Thirty-five. And then, when you graduated, how long was it before you got married?

MN: Oh, I got married in '36, I believe.

AH: Okay, now, when was it that your parents moved out here to Elsinore, when your dad came out here, when you said you came to visit?

MN: I came here first.

AH: Yeah, but I thought you said you came to visit him.

MN: Oh, he was out here resting.

AH: Yes, and that was when you were still in high school, or after you [graduated]?

MN: Um-hm, when I was still in high school.

AH: Okay. So, you first came out here then to visit him?

MN: Between the seasons they had, say, a week or then days of leisure time, and my father would come out here and rest.

AH: Did other Japanese come over here?

MN: Oh, yes, there used to be—the whole [of] Elsinore was full of them.

AH: No kidding? In the thirties, huh? What were they doing here? Just on a vacation like that?

MN: Yeah, they'd take ten days or a week, rest, and go home, and then they'd start working.

AH: This was largely run by Jewish people at the time, wasn't it, most of the—

MN: There were Jewish people, there were Scandinavian people, and German people.

AH: And so this was a place where Japanese used to come out to. That's interesting? From Los Angeles they would come?

MN: Well, all over, but mostly fishing season, as in the sardine season or mackerel season, tuna season, in between there, if there's a time out, then they'd come out here and rest.

AH: Wow, you told me something I've never even heard before!

MN: We didn't have a car, and some of them would come on a bus, a Greyhound bus.

AH: No kidding? And then, where did they stay when they were here?

MN: In those little shacks—back here even, these little cottages that have been spray-painted, they used to be just all one bedroom, kitchen, in the place. They'd just put a little porch on it, and they added on and added on.

AH: And what would they do? Give me an idea of what they did. Would sometimes the whole family come or just usually the husband?

MN: Well, the husband would come, and a wife and a husband would come.

AH: And what would they do when they got here?

MN: Well, they bathed in the hot water, and then they'd go for a walk out toward the lake and come back. And some of them I saw them playing cards all day long.

AH: Now, do you think the relationship has something to do with all those hot springs in Japan?

MN: Could be, because a distant relative of mine—when I was in Japan before I was married, when my father took us the first time to Japan, we went to a hot springs near our part of the country there, and it was bubbling like mine. Mine is artesian, you know. You don't have to warm it. It's an artesian well, so sometimes it blows-up. About two years ago in wintertime we had so much hot water, we didn't know what to do with it. We had to throw it in the sewer.

AH: Were there Japanese people that lived here all year round?

MN: I'm the first one.

AH: So, they were just visitors then that came here? They were just visiting out here?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: And usually for therapy for their—

MN: Just to bathe and rest up.

AH: Any social things here that they would do, take walks or—

MN: I guess they went walking out toward the lake or something.

AH: Was the lake there?

MN: Yes.

AH: I know some famous people like Lena Horne lived in Elsinore, didn't she?

MN: Up on the hill. Aimee McPherson did the preaching up here.

AH: Oh, really?

MN: Uh-huh. I knew the pianist. He used to come to me, and I used to work on him.

AH: No kidding?

MN: She was quite a movie star.

AH: Who's that?

MN: Aimee.

AH: Oh, you mean the priest, the woman—

MN: (chuckles) That one. I knew the organist. I used to work on him. Sometimes he didn't have an iron, and we didn't have electricity here at that time, or even gas—that's after World War II. We had lamps in order to—a wood stove or coal. One day he saw my iron sitting on my stove out there, and he said, "Can I use your iron?" I said, "What are you going to do? Be careful. You have to put your thing on this and test it to see if it's okay; otherwise you'll burn your garment." "Oh, you've got everything all in order." I said, "Yes, and nobody touches it but myself." "What do you use your iron for?" I said, "To warm the people's back." We had nothing to do to heat them up, and I used iron. He said, "Can I use it?" I said, "What are you going to use it for?" "The evangelist, she's going to preach tomorrow, but her gown is wrinkled. I want to iron it for her." So, he used my iron.

AH: So, that flowing white grown, he used your iron for that? (laughs)

MN: Oh, he used to tell me the funniest things about her.

AH: Now, when you first came out in about—you were still in high school when you came out the first time to see your dad?

MN: No, I was out of school already, and I had my physical therapy license already.

AH: Before you came out to visit your dad?

[01:10:00]

MN: Oh, my dad? No, I was still going to high school then.

AH: Okay, and you came out and visited him one time, and then you found this was interesting to you a little bit. Now, when you went back you graduated. You probably did pretty well in high school. You skipped a grade. Did you get good grades in high school?

MN: Before I went to San Pedro.

AH: Okay, and then when you were at San Pedro High, did you do pretty well in school?

MN: Hm, I did all right. (laughs)

AH: Were you thinking that you wanted to go to college somewhere or not?

MN: No, I had to help my mother because I was the oldest. And my sister couldn't try and go to use her scholarship, so I thought, Well, I'd better not do that. So I didn't go on to college but a special school.

AH: Okay, so what did you do then you graduated from high school, because there was one year before—

MN: I went to a physical therapy school in Los Angeles.

AH: And this was before you got married?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Okay. And then, did you do that on the red car, too? You would travel in on the red car?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: During this period when you were growing up in Terminal Island, did you ever have any occasion to go into Los Angeles for other things? Did you ever go into Little Tokyo at all or not?

MN: Unh-huh.

AH: Never? You had everything you needed out on Terminal Island?

MN: Well, we had to make the best of it.

AH: You just didn't have the money to do it? For a whole year you commuted on the bus or the red car or whatever, huh?

MN: The red car.

AH: So, you'd have to take that? Just give me that little route, because I want to get it. If you wanted to go to school in L.A. from Terminal Island, you'd have to take the ferry?

MN: The ferry.

AH: And then you would get the red car in San Pedro?

MN: The red car in San Pedro.

AH: And the red car would take you right into downtown L.A.?

MN: Uh-huh, from Terminal Island. Once we'd stop at Watts and Gardena once, and that's all, and then right straight on through.

AH: And then, where was it that you went to school there?

MN: It's up on Broadway. I've forgot the address. It's on Broadway.

AH: Okay, but it's up on Broadway.

MN: A Swedish massage school.

AH: And were you one of the first people from Terminal Island to do this?

MN: Yeah.

AH: Or did other people do it too?

MN: [No.]

AH: Okay, so how did you find out about that?

MN: I just looked in the catalog and different—because you had to have a license, and that's all I could think of was get a license and get going.

AH: So, you finished that year, and you had already met your husband. Had you been dating your husband?

MN: I just knew him. You know, in those days if we stood on the corner and talked to your boyfriend or anything, it would be the talk of the town. So, you'd just know him going to school. So, if you saw him, he'd be walking on that side of the street and I'd be walking on this side of the street. If you stood on the corner and started talking, that would be all a big noise.

AH: So, how did it lead to—do you sort of have your parents arrange your marriage between you?

MN: No, there was a go-between. The go-between on my mother's side, she knew them when he was in Seattle, when he first came, the father. He knew Mr. Toma, and they were our go-between. They had to have a go-between in case we got in a scrap or something. You know, they had to make it go or then divorce or whatever, so they had to have a go-between in those days. So, Mr. and Mrs. Toma was our go-between, because my mother and father knew them when they lived in Washington, in Seattle. These people that my husband—they had a big fishing fleet in Terminal Island. They're from the same part of the country, and his mother's oldest brother's daughter, their parents had decided that they were going to intermarry them. So, when I was a senior in high school, he was already graduated, and he was working for this Hama

Company, because he's bilingual so he could translate. So, any shipment that came from the Orient, he could translate it back into English and English into Japanese. So, they were go-between. My husband told them that he was going to go to Japan and didn't want to marry his cousin. He wanted somebody that was in the United States that knew English and so forth, that he'd rather have that type of a life. So then, that's how we got together.

[recording paused]

AH: Okay, anyway, why don't you continue then? You were talking about the go-between.

MN: So then, his parents couldn't say—because they knew me, who I was, and my father [and] his father when they were young knew each other up in Seattle. He knew that I could speak Japanese and English both, so somehow they said, "Okay, that's all right." So they gave their permission and then the go-between went in and we had a Christian marriage wedding.

AH: So, it was still pretty traditional out on the island there. I mean, they went through a go-between and they wanted to have bilingual so that they'd be sure that you knew Japanese. That was a condition of your acceptability as a bride the, huh?

MN: Evidently so.

AH: When did you first start talking to him? I'm interested in when you first had a chance to talk to your husband-to-be.

MN: Well, he was very active in sports and baseball. He took care of all these different young people in Terminal Island—somehow he got his foot into the different sports and things—and he played tennis. And so I like sports, too, but then the only time we got to see each other is on the street or getting on the ferry he says, "Hi."

AH: So, you were able to say, "Hi," on the ferry or something. But then, until you got married, you really didn't have much of a contact with him then?

MN: No, no body contact.

AH: So, there were no escorted dates or anything where somebody went as a—

MN: I went to one movie with my sister and her boyfriend, and that boyfriend was his good friend, too, so he went to the Fox Theater in San Pedro. That's the first time, and then that's all.

AH: But, you had a better situation than somebody who was a picture bride.

MN: Oh, yeah.

AH: I mean, you knew who this person was, and you would have been able to have backed out of this, you think, if you wanted to, if it wasn't satisfactory? Would you have gone against your parents' wishes if they told you to marry this person or not?

MN: I probably wouldn't have got married.

AH: You wouldn't have?

MN: Because my mother was so strict. She told me when I was small, I still remember when I was about thirteen what she said about the men you know, and the boys. I couldn't believe the stuff that she said. I didn't even tell that to my kids.

AH: She put the fear of God in you, huh?

MN: Yeah. I never told that to my kids even.

AH: Was it scary for you, if you were that protected by your mom, to do something like going all the way into Los Angles to go to school or not?

MN: [No,] I wasn't scared. I thought, Well, I had to have my education to do what I wanted to do. My father was more of a person that had to have a good education in order to get along with people.

AH: Tell me about the education, the years of training and education that you got in Los Angeles. Tell me a little bit about the curriculum and what you learned.

MN: Well, we learned the body, like they do now. I have a son who graduated Loma Linda here, and he's taking care of that type of work now. He's doing more and more for the people in the health field now. I thought that by doing that you can raise your own family in good faith and take care of them, so that's what I did.

AH: But, did you take a lot of science courses? What kind of curriculum did you have?

MN: No, I read a lot. I read a lot, but I didn't really particularly go to school. Because after you got married and had children, you couldn't be leaving them home and going to school all the time or learning something.

AH: No, I meant the year that you went to school. What kinds of things did you take there at school?

MN: Oh, we worked on the body, on each other.

AH: Did you take anatomy courses or physiology courses?

MN: Yes, anatomy course. You had to have it, yes.

AH: And then, you had some practical therapy?

MN: Practical, yeah. We did practical work a lot.

[01:20:00]

AH: And did they have any kind of training facility there?

MN: Yes.

AH: So, you did get some hands-on experience?

MN: Yes, hands-on experience.

AH: And then, you get certified at the end of that year?

MN: After you take your test.

AH: And what is your certification called? What is that? You become a licensed what?

MN: A licensed physical therapist. In that day they had what they call Swedish massage, and we had to have that, and then we had—

AH: Did you have Swedish instructors?

MN: Um-hm. And then, a lot of things that we were doing that the chiropractors tried to take it away from us, but the chiropractors weren't able to proceed with that because they didn't have the proper education on that, evidently. Because I remember the state board said that we were licensed to do that, but then the chiropractors tried to take it away from us, but they didn't give it to them. Because there was a chiropractor down the street came and wanted to know if I was fully licensed, and I said yes. I showed him my license, you know. And he couldn't do it.

AH: Well, that's interesting. So, the chiropractors are always thinking the doctors are taking things away from them, and physical therapists were thinking the chiropractors were taking things from them. (chuckles) So, it's territoriality here, huh? Okay, so you went for a year, and then what did you do after you finished your years worth of education? You got married at that point.

MN: After that, yes.

AH: And had you started working as a therapist before you got married or not?

MN: No. Because when I did my test I had to give my test to the owner of the business. She was a big lady and then she gave me a good mark. And they asked us different

questions. I've forgot what they asked us, it's been so long. They asked us all kinds [of questions], and then she gave me a good grade. She was a big lady.

AH: A big Swedish lady, huh? I'm trying to get established, after you got married, when you came out here, or did you work somewhere else in Los Angeles as a therapist before you moved to Elsinore?

MN: No, before I left I got a job as an interpreter at the port of call, and I helped in immigration. I did that for a while, and then I worked for Garbo and Walsh the ferry company, for about six years. Then I worked for Dr. Dunbar in San Pedro at their home.

AH: Okay, tell me about that. Who is Dr. Dunbar?

MN: He was a medical doctor. He was originally from Kansas, a farmer boy, and he liked my type of work that I did in the office sometime and helped the lady there. So, I went to work in their home and helped them with—his wife was older than he was and they had two boys. They went to college and so forth after they grew. They were little babies when I look care of them.

AH: But, there's like six or seven years then before you even get the chance to use your education. Is that right? In other words you're working, doing office work and then you're doing housework, but you're not doing physical therapy.

MN: Well, if Mrs. Dunbar didn't feel good, I'd use that and help her. And then, if the children got sick, I knew what to do for them. So, I had a little nurse's know-how, as well as taking care of the children, so that's how I got to know Dr. Dunbar.

AH: Well, let me ask you this, why did you not go to work as physical therapist right away? Was it because of discrimination against Japanese people? MN: No, not that, but I wanted to learn a different type of living, what other people do. Because just living in a Japanese community, you don't just live in a small community. You don't know what other people are doing, but I wanted to know what other people were doing.

AH: And you found out.

MN: So, I came here and started the business here.

AH: Okay, now, when you were working in the Dunbar's home you were married, right?

MN: No.

AH: I guess I'm getting the chronology all mixed up. You graduated from high school in 1935. When did you get married?

MN: Well, I worked for Dunbar while I was going to high school.

AH: Oh, so—hold on a sec.

[recording paused]

MN: —married and I had the girls. I think I had Janie already then, too.

AH: Okay, now you graduated from high school in 1935, you went for one year into Los Angeles and went to therapy school, and then, after you got out with your license, it was about three more years or years or so before you got married, in 19—

MN: See, while I was married, I worked for the boat company, the ferry company.

AH: Right, while you were married. And then you had your first child when? In 1940 or so?

MN: No, '39, I think Margaret was born. I think a year-and-a-half or two years after that I had her.

AH: And you still weren't doing any physical therapy work, except at Mrs. Dunbar's?

MN: I had the place. I had the place, but I was still working for the doctor and the family.

AH: So, tell me about you coming out to Elsinore and establishing a place out here. How did that come about? I remember you told me you visited your dad when he was out here for a short time, but when you came out, what were your intentions coming out to Elsinore?

MN: My father said, "If you're going to be a nurse, that's good, but you can't leave your children at home and have somebody else take care of them," because I was particular how the children were raised and how they were taken care of. So, he told me that I should go on—that's where I went to school and then I came back. I bought this property and I was going to start working on it, and then I still lived in Terminal Island.

AH: When you bought this place, right?

MN: Um-hm. And when I came here and my mother-in-law, she lived in the United States over fifty years, she went to Japan. They were going to build a house, and they had put down the cement foundation, and she got attacked with gallbladder. And she dies.

AH: Oh, boy! In Japan?

MN: Um-hm. She wanted to come home because she could get a good doctor here, but she didn't get that far. She left the money—when I went back to Japan, I saw she had her passport and her money there. In those days, it cost \$75 to get on a Japanese third-class boat, and we didn't have no airplanes or anything in those days. So, she had that right there by the fireplace when she was going to come back to the United States so that we would take care of her. But, she dies, so then, when I went to Japan, I had to build this home for her. That's just before World War II. I was in Japan ten months. I built that home. We got a buyer for that, but I don't know—

AH: Who built the home?

MN: I built it.

AH: You knew how to build a home?

MN: It's about as big as this one.

AH: You built it?

MN: You had to get the people to do the architectural work.

AH: But, you did all the hammering and sawing and everything else?

MN: No, no, I did all the putty work. We had a tiler, we had a roofer, and the man that did the inside work. It's a big home.

AH: And your husband went over there with you?

MN: Unh-huh.

AH: Where was he, back here?

MN: Yes, Terminal Island.

AH: Okay, now you had purchased this place out in Elsinore though before that?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: And where did you get the money to buy a place?

MN: Well, I had a little five-room house out here, the first _____ (inaudible) house in Elsinore.

AH: Yeah, but where did you get the money to buy it?

MN: I went to my health insurance/life insurance, and they said that I had so much money I could buy that property. So I went to the bank and made a proposition, and they propositioned this Norwegian lady, Johnson—Matilda was her name—if that was okay. I said, “I’ll give you the first deposit, and then, when we sign the paper, I’ll give you the rest of it.” _____ (inaudible) at the bank said, “You can’t beat that, Matilda. You’d better get it.” So, that’s the way we got it.

AH: How much did it cost at that time?

MN: Ten thousand dollars.

[01:30:00]

AH: And was your husband in favor of this?

MN: He can’t say anything. I wanted to do it.

AH: (laughs) Well, did you think he was in favor of it?

MN: I guess so. Well, because I’m the only one going to do the business anyway, nobody else.

AH: What was he doing for a living?

MN: He was working for the Hashimoto Company or Hama Company in Terminal Island. He was bilingual, so he could run that.

AH: Oh, the import-export thing. So, did he continue doing that while you started this business?

MN: Um-hm. I did it myself. Then I went to Japan with my two babies and built that home up there. Then the war broke out, and I had to come home. One month before the war broke out.

AH: But, had you started your business here the war?

MN: Yeah.

AH: Tell me about that?

MN: I rented to a lady—

AH: Hold on, I’ve got to turn this over. [recording paused] What did you have in the way of property, and what kind of business did you establish initially?

MN: Well, this place was mortgaged, the business was mortgaged, and the elderly lady lived in this little house over here, a two-bedroom house, a small house. My father said, "Well, ask them what—" Well, this house is mortgaged, and it's got too much repair to do. So, I went to the bank, because the bank evidently had the mortgage, and I propositioned to the banker, _____ (inaudible)—not the headman but the man who was handling the case, I guess—and I said, "I'll give you so much down, and at the end of the escrow I will give you the rest of it." And, in those days, it was after the government, you know, Wall Street was down and all that and everything was kind of bad, so he was surprised that as young as I was that I could—but I had gone to the insurance company and asked them if they would lend me that money. They said, Sure, we'll lend you the money. So, that's why I got going.

AH: And what did you get here? What was here on your property at the time that you were buying for \$10,000?

MN: I had two lots, two lots with that business. Part of it was on there and part of it was not yet—

AH: Was it sort of similar to what it is now, or was it different?

MN: Yeah. I had to fix the inside.

AH: But, it had a pool? Tell me what was in the business.

MN: It was all the tubs, Roman tubs.

AH: Okay, so these tubs go back until the thirties?

MN: Yes.

AH: The ones that you have here now?

MN: I had to repair them.

AH: Wow! But, you did have them. There's still continuity.

MN: Then after I came back and worked sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, hours a day, raised my kids, I worked hard and did all that. Then one day we got talking, and my husband said, "Well, in case I retire, how are you going to do it?" I said, "Well, I'll do it slowly, do a little bit at a time." Well, about that time my second son, David, was going to UCLA because he wanted to be a dentist. But, I didn't know my other boy, the oldest boy, Roy, was interested in it either. So, while they were going, David had a football knee in high school, a side hit, you know, and had to be operated on. He came home one day, and he said, "Mom, I don't think I can do dentistry anymore." I said, "Why?" "Because standing around that chair as a dentist, I can't take it." So, if I can raise four kids (chuckles) doing physical therapy, I'm going to

go into physical therapy. "Well," I said, "See how your grades are." The grades were okay, although he went to summer school, too. So, he said, "I'll come down, and we'll make an appointment to go and see the registrar at Loma Linda. I said, "Okay." So, I made an appointment, and the certain day he came home and he and I went to Loma Linda, because we had an appointment that day early in the morning. By luck the man that took care of the registration thing happened to be there that day and was going to take our case. So, we went in, and he had all the papers there and his grades all there in front of him. Then they started talking about what kind of a family life he had. Was it a Christian family, or did they smoke or drink or whatever? (laughs) They had to get all that down.

AH: Because that's a Seventh Day Adventist school, isn't it?

MN: Yeah. I told him, "I'm a Baptist, but I'm not a drinking or smoking type of person. I'm a health-minded person." And what else did they ask us? There was something else they asked us. Oh, yeah, they asked Davis, "I don't drink. In case we have a party or something, maybe one, but then that's about it. I'm not a drinking person. I'm not a druggie or anything." He said, "Fine," and then they put all that down. So, by the time they got through talking to us and saying different things, he said, "In case you do join our school, would you do chapel duty in the morning? Once a week you have to go early in the morning and see that everybody gets in their line and sat down." He said sure, he'd do that. So, that put it together. So, by the time we got through talking, they had already accepted us.

AH: What do you mean *us*? Did you both go?

MN: I went, and he said, "That's fine," to me, you know. So, I knew that if he said "That's fine with me," that he knew money-wise that he would be taken care of because I had my own business. (chuckles)

AH: So, did you go to Loma Linda, too?

MN: No, I didn't go.

AH: Oh, just David?

MN: David.

AH: Now, by the time David comes, the next generation, there's more requirements to be a physical therapist, right? You went for one year in Los Angeles, and how many years did he have to go at Loma Linda?

MN: He got, I think, four or five years full-time. See, he's a pre-med. Because see, he brought home one box that cost about \$200 that I had to pay for. Bones!

AH: So, is he a doctor?

MN: Of physical therapy. So, in case of emergency, when they do an autopsy he's there.

AH: Wow. But, getting back to when you first came out here, you were saying you had that facility that you still had the work part. What kind of living situation did you buy for the \$10,000? What kind of house was here?

MN: That was only that then and that little house I was—that two little bedroom cottage I had.

AH: Who would come over and live in that house? Just you alone?

MN: Yeah.

AH: And your husband would stay in Terminal Island?

MN: Up in Terminal Island.

AH: And would you actually live out here or did you commute or what?

MN: Yeah. No, we didn't have any car.

AH: Did you take the kids with you? Okay, so he worked there, and then would he come out here on the weekends, or what?

MN: No, maybe once a month.

AH: Once a month. Okay, so you didn't see him too often then, and you were gone in Japan for ten months. So, the first part of your marriage, you were on your own a lot.

MN: Yeah.

AH: Wow! And was that lonely, or did you just develop a sense of independence, or—

MN: Well, I just got independent. I've got to raise these children, and I've got to take care of the business because I bought it.

AH: Right. (chuckles) And tell me how you got started in the business. Did you inherit some customers or did you—

MN: No, there were Japanese customers already coming here. And I was frugal. I just didn't go buying just anything, you know.

AH: Did you mostly get Japanese customers when you first came here?

MN: Yes.

AH: And how long did it take—was it until after the war before you started getting non-Japanese?

MN: No, I had some non before.

AH: You did? Okay. But, you couldn't have spent more than half a year working here, did you, before the war?

MN: No.

AH: And when you went to Japan for ten months, what happened to the business?

MN: I had a lady that took care of the place, but she was smoking and chewing snuff, that I can't stand it. And I said, "No, this is a health establishment. I can't have you chewing snuff and chewing tobacco and spitting in my cuspidor."

AH: Was she Japanese or not?

MN: No, she was a Caucasian. She was from Tennessee.

AH: And did she have a physical therapy license?

MN: No.

AH: She just watched it. She didn't keep the customers then?

MN: [No.]

AH: Oh, I see. Okay, so as far as the business was concerned, it was pretty much closed while you were gone.

MN: Down, yeah. Just kept it open.

AH: So, you left for ten months, huh? Wow! And then you came back. But how long were you here before the war broke out?

MN: Well, see, I came home in September and then the war broke out in December.

AH: Gee whiz! So, it was really close, wasn't it?

[01:40:00]

MN: But, you see, my place was insured. I don't believe in just letting it go, you know. I had it insured. Nobody in the United States government would carry my insurance or fire insurance. Lloyds of London did. They said that they checked my back record, and they said it was okay. So, when I came back we had to pay more, but Lloyds of

London carried it until Lloyds of London said, "Hey, you're honest, and we want to be honest with you. You can buy any insurance in the United States now, and we will let you go."

AH: Because it was cheaper for you? But, that was after the war?

MN: After the war.

AH: But, they carried it all throughout the time that you were in Manzanar?

MN: Oh, yeah, I had the documents about that thick that wanted to buy the place because I have an artesian well. The water is hot and you can bathe in it.

AH: Did anybody run this during the war, or not?

MN: A lady helped me do it because she stayed on the premises. The place was paid in full, so she didn't do anything. My name was already on it as paid in full, and the taxes had been paid, so what could they do?

AH: But, there was no business going here in the war?

MN: Well, she did, but she got them all.

AH: Did she know anything about the business?

MN: Oh, yeah, she knew how to make the money and pull the switch on and pull the water up.

AH: That was about it, huh? But, she didn't do any therapy?

MN: Well, she did light therapy. I had a naturopath doctor that stayed on the premises at that time, but whatever he made he made it himself. He didn't pay me anything. He was just like a watchman. He was a good naturopath. Some of the doctors asked me, "Do you know Petes?" He was a German. I said, "I don't know him, just what I have heard, but I can take his word for it." He seemed to be an honest naturopath, and I can take his word for it." He seemed to be an honest naturopath, and I liked naturopaths anyway, so from there on we went on till—I had him till he died.

AH: And that was how long ago? Years ago?

MN: Oh, yeah. He died just about a year before I came home.

AH: Oh, he died during the war then?

MN: Um-hm. But, I had his nephew, and he was good to me, too. He wanted to get married. He was a bachelor. He had a big machine shop in Whittier.

AH: Did you spend any time here after you came back from Japan in September of '41, or did you go live in Terminal Island?

MN: No, I stayed right here. I didn't go to Terminal Island.

AH: Okay, so you were here when Pearl Harbor came?

MN: Yeah.

AH: Oh, really?

MN: I had this German doctor, I had gotten rid of that lady, and there was George—what was his name? He was psychic, and he came to live with Petes. He wondered if it was okay. I said, "It's all right." Just one man isn't going to—you know, bum around together. Sure, you can stay as long as you want to." So, George stayed with him, and George would say, "You'll be back in four years, Nakai." I said, "Why?" He said, "My intuition tells me you'll be back." I said, "That would be good. So, you can stay with Petes until everything is okay." Well, Petes dies in-between. In the meantime, I think George dies, too.

AH: So, they both died during the war?

MN: Um-hm. But, he told me I'd come home in about four-and-a-half years, and I'd have two boys before I came home.

AH: He was psychic, wasn't he?

MN: I'd have two boys, and my place would be okay when I came home. So, I believed that, and that's what I did. I prayed every day everything was going to be all right. And Lloyds of London helped me, took care of my insurance. But everything was gone. My front door was padlocked. That was broken in. The telephone was broken, no toilet, nothing was inside. They were all gone when I came back.

AH: Just stripped, huh?

MN: Then they broke into my storeroom. I had some wedding gifts and stuff and my blankets and things. There was nothing there. But, it's wartime. You can't say anything about it. I had to close my eyes. So, I never used those things. I started from scratch again.

AH: Now, when the war did break out and you were up here, can you recall what had happened when you heard about this and how fast you got back to Terminal Island?

MN: Well, we didn't go back to Terminal Island. They called us at 8:30 in the evening and said that if we wanted to go with the Terminal Island bunch—because my father and mother were in the same group—that we had to be on Seventh at some bank building.

We had to all get in there with one suitcase only, and whatever you can carry on your back is all you can take—nothing [else]. But, I had just bought my new car, a Dodge, in Long Beach.

AH: You had it out here?

MN: I had just brought it from there here, and I just put it in my little small shed/garage I had. And I drove that from here to Los Angeles, and the last time I saw it, it was down in that racetrack.

AH: Which one? Santa Anita?

MN: Yeah. And then from there, about a year later I saw it in Manzanar.

AH: The car?

MN: It was sitting right in front of my mother and father's barracks, in the front right there. I said, "I know for sure—I just only rode in it once, but I know my car." I went to look inside, and they still had my license on there. And that official was driving it. So, I knew the official at the office. I said, "I saw my car today." And he said, "What?" I said, "My car is sitting right out on Block 8, right there in front of my parents' barracks." And sure enough, it was my car.

AH: How did you see it in Santa Anita?

MN: They just took it in from where I parked it at Seventh and Broadway or something when I parked it.

AH: But, you didn't go to Santa Anita, did you?

MN: No.

AH: Oh, you just knew that they took it?

MN: Yeah.

AH: You didn't see it there?

MN: No, but they told me they saw it.

AH: Oh, okay, you just saw it at Manzanar?

MN: Yeah, they said, Your car will be in Santa Anita. The government will take care of it.

AH: What did you mean you didn't go into Terminal Island? Didn't your husband live and work in Terminal Island?

MH: Um-hm.

AH: Well, where did you go when you came from Elsinore to Los Angeles?

MH: To go to the—well—

AH: No, because there were a couple of months before you got to Manzanar from Pearl Harbor. I mean, that occurs on December 7, 1941.

MH: Well, for three months we had to stay—I had three apartments here, a duplex.

AH: So, you stayed right here?

MN: We stayed here until—

AH: Who is *we*? Did your husband come out here?

MN: Until they gave us a call that the Terminal Island bunch was going in that one big train.

AH: Did your husband come out here then and stay with you for those three months?

MN: Yeah, he could come here and stay, and then he took care of those people [whose] husbands were all gone. They were all babies and the wives, and so they all got together and we kept all of them. There were over sixty people.

AH: Out here? In Elsinore?

MN: We had to keep them there until the government got our train ready to take the Terminal Island—

AH: So, you had them out here on this property?

MN: Yeah. You know the vacant lot out next to this? I had three duplexes on there.

AH: No kidding? You had sixty people living in there! Boy!

MN: I didn't know what I'm going to do.

AH: All Terminal Islanders, huh?

MN: Terminal Islander. And the city couldn't say anything because my taxes were paid and everything. They couldn't say nothing.

AH: How were the people out here acting towards you in Elsinore?

MN: Oh, some weren't very nice.

AH: Shooting at all?

MN: No, no shooting or anything, but some of them said—after I came back from the camp, you know, they said, Oh, if you want to see a slave driver, go see the Jap lady. But, I didn't cause any trouble, and I didn't let my children go down the street to play in the pool hall.

AH: But, with sixty Japanese here after Pearl Harbor, were there any kinds of attempts to try—

MN: [No,] because they didn't do anything wrong. I told them, "You don't do anything wrong." But, they went downtown to shop and go to the meat market. She was a German, and she would sell to them. They never had any problem.

AH: How did the Swedish people act towards the Japanese?

MN: Oh, back there she had a—I've forgot her name, but she didn't treat anybody nice, so everybody was against her.

AH: What about the Jewish people?

MN: Oh, that didn't happen till after World War II.

AH: Oh, so they didn't come to Elsinore until afterwards?

MN: No, they were here, the old people were here. But see, the Metropolitan Water came in and they turned the city water off, which was the mineral water. They were all bathing in it in their own houses, and they had no place to do that. We had a big Jewish temple here, too, and they burned it, so the Jewish people went away. They had their own cemetery out here.

[01:50:16]

AH: Right. But you had sixty Japanese people out here?

MN: Over sixty.

AH: So, they came out to stay in those duplexes while they were waiting to go to Manzanar?

MN: Yeah, I guess. We would get one set of trains to go, and, when it came, they let us know at 8:30 p.m.

AH: And then, you had to go all the way into Los Angeles and then get on the train, huh?

MN: Yeah, we put them on the trucks and everything else.

AH: Then what about your husband's family? Were they out here, too?

MN: He didn't have any.

AH: They were dead by then?

MN: Oh, his sister, he had an older sister, and she had six children. But, her husband was interned. See, when the fishermen got caught, he was one of them. They had put him in Tujunga, and then they shipped him to Missoula, Montana. So, we had to take care of that family, too.

AH: Okay, and what about your mother and father?

MN: They were here with me.

AH: They came out to Elsinore. Okay, so then you brought them into Los Angeles, and that's when you gave up the car at that point, once you got into—

MN: Yeah. (laughs)

AH: Oh, my goodness! Then you went out to Manzanar, and you got there in April?

MN: Yes, April.

AH: Of course, at that time, they were still building on the camp.

MN: Oh, yes! It was cold. You know, there was snow up on the High Sierras, and it was so cold. [There was only] the one little potbelly like that. We had the outside toilet, you know, those old outhouses, and about five o'clock in the morning my father wanted to use the bathroom. He stepped out of the barracks, and there was somebody moaning. "Oh, help me!" (laughs) And they had fallen into one of those holes.

AH: The toilet? Really?

MN: But, we couldn't do anything until daybreak. (chuckles) Oh, we went through a lot of problems, the first year anyway.

AH: So, you said you had moved into Block 8.

MN: Um-hm.

AH: And that was mostly Terminal Island people. And then, your parents moved in Block 8, too?

MN: Later on yeah. There was no partition, you know? So, that's one thing, they had to separate the singles, let the singles go, and not married and singles mixed up together. (chuckles)

AH: So, who lived with you to begin with? You and your husband and your two kids?

MN: The two children.

AH: And then was there another family with you?

MN: My mother and father stayed in the next—you know, they blocked it off. The first night everybody slept in one same place, and they only gave us one blanket. The children got a pillow, but we didn't get that, just one blanket apiece and one straw mattress.

AH: And what were your feelings about all this that was happening at the time? You were losing your business and—

MN: But, it was wartime, and everybody just said, "Well, they're all fighting. You have to do the best you can. If you've got something to eat"—and so in the morning when we went to eat, they had rang a bell. We went to eat, [and there were] 360 some people in the one lot there. We went to this one big, long mess hall to eat. They gave us the soldier's tin cups. You could get coffee—if you could get one—and one toast, and if they had fried potatoes you could get fried potatoes. If you didn't, that's all. No eggs. I hadn't seen eggs and butter since—well, I ate eggs once, I think, when I was in the nurses evening supper one night. We had to work overtime, and I ate that egg. But outside of that, I hadn't eaten butter since I came home.

AH: Having been in Japan for ten months, could you get a feeling there that war was on the horizon?

MN: Coming on?

AH: You could feel that? How did they treat you in Japan? Because a lot of Japanese Americans that were over there—

MN: No, they didn't treat me any different, just like they [were]. I spoke and I went to market and I'd buy things. I paid what I had to do. If I went to have my hair washed, I paid them. They couldn't see, because I spoke their language.

AH: Right. Some Japanese Americans who didn't have a good handle on the Japanese language had a difficult time in Japan.

MN: No, I didn't. I didn't have any hard time.

AH: So, that's part of the Terminal Island background.

MN: Yeah. And my father taught me, too—not slang Japanese, good Japanese language.

AH: Now you told me a little while ago that when you got—I asked you how long did you work at the hospital, and you said from the time you got there till the time you left. How did you end up getting that job out there at the hospital in Manzanar?

MN: Well, they asked you to give your preference for what would you like to do: farming, kitchen, taking care of the sick, or working in the clothing. You know, they'd make jackets and things for the—or if you wanted to—I don't know, there were some other things you wanted to do. So, I told them that I had a nursing background and so forth. So then, being a married person, they wanted me to work in the children's department. We had measles the day we went in there till almost the day we left, measles and chicken pox. And lice! Oh, we had so many lice from Alaska. We had a whole busload of them, and we had to work on them. And we had to wear hats, and we had to wear a certain type of shoes to go—

AH: What do you mean? Like when the Aleuts came down from Alaska?

MN: Um-hm, a whole busload.

AH: And they had a lot of lice?

MN: Lice. And some of them were half-Eskimo. There was two boys and a girl, little ones. One of them couldn't say nothing. Their mother was an Eskimo, they said. The father was Japanese. But, they had so much lice. We had to take a fine comb and comb it out every time we washed their hair. We had nothing to put on them, but we used vinegar.

AH: Did they look more like the Indians that you used to see in the Yakima Valley?

MN: They looked more like Eskimos.

AH: They didn't look Japanese to you?

MN: They had black hair.

AH: But, you combed the lice out, huh? Where were they living in the camp?

MN: Before they came down?

AH: No, at Manzanar. What part of Manzanar did they live in?

MN: I don't know what block they lived in, but their mother and father weren't there. The mother was an Eskimo, but the father I don't know. I never did meet him.

AH: He must have been Japanese.

MN: I never met him. There some German ladies there, too. They were married to American soldiers.

AH: Did you have contact when you were at the hospital with the Children's Village? Because that was out by the hospital, the orphanage.

MN: Oh, orphanage? Maybe I did, I don't recall, because I took care of so many of those—some were dying. Their mothers didn't want to let them go because they had measles, chicken pox. They kept them in the barracks, and they almost died.

AH: They wouldn't take them to the hospital?

MN: No. And they'd bring them to the hospital, just a regular barrack, but all had a bed of their own.

AH: Why wouldn't they bring them, do you think?

MN: Well, because the mother couldn't come in. We didn't want them to come in and stir up the kids, because the minute they see their mama they'll start crying.

AH: So, they didn't want to be separated from their kids, and they kept them in the barracks?

MN: Some kept them there until they almost died. Then they'd bring them in. Ambulance goes and bring them in and says, "Oh, you've got a big job tonight," you know? And some nights we didn't hardly sleep. In fact, there was one girl—she was what, about four years old? The mother kept her until she almost died. The health officer said, "You know, Nakai, she won't be here till tomorrow morning at 7:00 when we come in for the rounds, so don't feel bad about it." And I said, "Oh, my gosh!" She was a nice looking little baby girl. So, I kept working on her and putting a cold towel on her, and I thought, God if we lose her, that'll be the first death in this part of the barracks. I sure didn't want to do it. So, what I did, when she fell asleep, I went down to the latrine and got some cold water. There was no running water. We didn't have towels to wipe their faces. We were without anything. We didn't have cups, only paper cups. And every time we'd do it, we'd have to throw it away. And then, if we didn't, we had to save it for their next drink. The beds were all tick mattresses with straw they were making in the big warehouses. That's what they were stuffing them [with].

[02:00:26]

AH: Is this in the first hospital that they had? The small one before they built the bigger one?

MN: Yeah. All the children and all the people—we made the hospital out of those barracks. And this girl, the doctor said, "Well, if you live till 7:00 tomorrow

morning”—so about two o'clock in the morning, she woke up, the baby, and she started to sweat. Because I was putting cold towels on her, she started sweating. And I know something about health, so I said, “By golly, if she's going to sweat, she's going to come through this thing.”

AH: So, she broke it.

MN: Yeah. So, you know what I did? I had an enema tube. I took that enema tube and put in in her rectum so the gas would come out. Her tummy was just like that.

AH: And it just released it, huh?

MN: To release the gas out of her, get all that air out of her. Then I had some water to drink, but I said, “I don't care what they say, I'm going to use it.” So, I just soaked that up and put it all over her. Then pretty soon she said, “Oooh,” (moans) and she came to. And then, that gas in her stomach, I'd massage it because I know how to do it, and all that went out. So, when the doctors came at 7:30 or 8:00, just about that time when we make our changes, they came and the doctor says, “Well, we've got one here.” She walks in the door and says, “We've got one here that we've got to put away.” You know, she walks in saying that. That's the health officer!

AH: And then there it is, alive.

MN: And she was alive, and she was sitting there like this. I had to put a baby pillow there that I found someplace and put it on there, and she was laying there. And the doctor said, “She pulled through!?” I said, “Yes, she pulled through this morning between 4:30 and 5:00.” She asked me what I did. I said, “I had to take this enema tube and go down to the latrine and wash it with hot water. I brought it back, and I put it in her rectum to let the air out.” And that health officer, she was a maiden doctor from San Francisco, she hugged me so tight, I said, “You'll break my ribs!”

[recording paused]

AH: We were talking before lunch—and we had a wonderful lunch, which I thank both you and your daughter for. We were talking about the Manzanar hospital, and the last thing we talked about was essentially how you saved a little girl's life. Was it a boy or a girl?

MN: A girl.

AH: A little girl. But, you were mentioning some of the conditions of the hospital, and the conditions of the hospitals in the camps has been an item of discussion in recent years. I've read a few things about it, but why don't you give me your impressions of what you thought of the hospital, in terms of its staff, in terms of its facilities and the like, and how that changed while you were working at Manzanar. Because you worked in the hospital the whole time of Manzanar's history, its whole existence, so

why don't you think about not just the beginning portion of the camp but how things changed over the course of the war years when you were, okay?

MN: Well, after we moved from the barracks down to the hospital—I think we had a 250 or so bed hospital—the facilities could have been much nicer, or better. But, it was wartime, and so we didn't have everything we needed. We did the best we can. Some doctors were transferred to different relocation [camps] and didn't stay very long. At night they'd take us home. [If we] worked the night shift, they'd bring us to our barracks so we wouldn't have to go through the big barrier, what we called firebreaks, to go home.

AH: Why were they afraid to let you walk through the firebreaks?

MN: Because it was so dark, and sometimes we had some problems.

AH: What kind of problems?

MN: Well, some of them got hurt because, in going home they—I don't know all the details, but some of the girls were being harassed by other people.

AH: Are you saying there were some rapes and things?

MN: I don't know about rapes, but they were chasing girls. Because some of them were going home from their work late at night from the warehouse, and then in the morning when we were changing, "Boy, so and so was being chased last night," or something like that. But, for ten thousand people in Manzanar, I think you could expect it.

AH: Right. How about the hospital staff itself? What was your estimation of the doctors that were at the hospital?

MN: They were kind and took good care of the patients.

AH: And are you talking about both Caucasian doctors as well as the Japanese doctors?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: I believe while you were there Dr. [James] Goto was—

MN: Transferred.

AH: But, he was there when you first started, right?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Tell me a little bit about him. What was he like?

MN: Well, I didn't have too much contact with him, only with Dr. Little that came in later. He took care of most of the smaller children, and I think Dr. Goto was mostly with the older people.

AH: So, was your particular job pediatrics? Is that what you were, a pediatric nurse?

MN: More or less, yes.

AH: And did you have adequate training as a nurse, do you think, to handle this? I mean, you were a physical therapist by training, and you probably did things that went way beyond physical therapy, didn't you?

MN: We had to do the best we can to mix therapy as well, because we had a lice condition, which most nurses couldn't handle it. We had to do that. We had skin problems, and we had to take care of that. So, I think it was more divided. Those that were severe medical cases were taken care of by RNs.

AH: How many RNs, for example, do you think that the hospital had? People who actually had training as RNs?

MN: I don't know.

AH: Were all RNs Caucasian, or were there Japanese RNs, too?

MN: All Japanese.

AH: All Japanese. And who of the nurses have been Caucasian? Was the head nurse Caucasian or not?

MN: No, I don't think the head nurse was a Caucasian. She was Japanese, because for a while we didn't see any Caucasian nurses, only health officers.

AH: Okay, so you mean Dr. Little might have been the only Caucasian in the building?

MN: Yes.

AH: Did they have LVNs at that period or not? Was what a classification?

MN: I don't know. I couldn't say. We had a good pharmacy, though.

AH: Of the nurses, how many of the, percentage-wise—I mean, like half of them, a quarter of them were in your situation, that weren't really trained nurses, and those who were RNs?

MN: I don't know, toward the end, the last two years, because, when I had my children, I worked more in the relocation center than I did in the hospital.

AH: But, would you say that a third of them were RNs, or half, a quarter of them, when you were working in the hospital?

MN: Well, when we'd give the inoculations, all those that were helpful and able to handle it took care of it all because we had to put it outside, but those that worked inside the hospital were mostly RNs.

AH: And were they people who had, had experience before the war working in hospitals?

MN: I couldn't tell you that either.

AH: Did you ever have conversations with some, and they said, I worked at the Japanese Hospital in Los Angeles or something like that?

MN: No, because I took mostly children and the contagious ward.

AH: Well, did you think that they were mostly well-qualified? I mean, you worked alongside of a lot of these nurses.

MN: Um-hm.

AH: So, it was a good group of nurses?

MN: Yes.

AH: I have been reading that some people were afraid to work in the hospital because of tuberculosis and that there was a big fear in the Japanese people about tuberculosis. Is that true or not?

MN: No, I don't think so.

AH: There was a tuberculosis ward at the hospital, wasn't there?

[02:10:00]

MN: I didn't know that we had one in Manzanar or not because most of my cases were baby ward patients and skin conditions.

AH: You had the pharmacy and also the dentistry sections right in the same hospital?

MN: Yes.

AH: So, you probably knew Dr. Kikuchi, the dentist, did you?

MN: Yes.

AH: And did you have contact with the first administrator of the hospital, Frank Chuman?

MN: I know who he was, but I did not. I knew who Dr. Watanabe was and Dr. Goto.

AH: And did you always work at night?

MN: Afternoon shift, 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

AH: And then, who took care of your kids when you worked?

MN: Oh, they were going to school. The two girls were going to school, so when they came back to the barracks, if they weren't in studying, then my mother watched them.

AH: Oh, I see. Okay, so you had your mom there to watch the kids.

MN: Um-hm.

AH: And were you paid the \$19 a month? Is that what you'd get?

MN: Yes.

AH: And the doctors get the same thing?

MN: Yes. (laughs)

AH: Somebody told me that oftentimes the doctor's salary got supplemented by gifts that people or families would give to doctors to get their salaries up.

MN: I don't know.

AH: You don't know about that?

MN: No.

AH: Was there a big turnover in doctors at the hospital so that they would go out and relocate and take a job somewhere, in Cleveland or something, in medicine?

MN: The only one that I know is when Dr. Goto left to go Amache.

AH: And what rumors did you hear about why he left?

MN: Oh, I don't know the rumors, but I knew that his wife was going to go, too, go away soon. And that's the last time I heard.

AH: But, you didn't hear any rumors about why he left?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Was he popular among the nurses, Dr. Goto, or not?

MN: Well, I was so busy with the children that the minute I'd go in till I had to leave, till I got my nurse that came to relieve me, I had to stay, so I didn't get into conversation with any doctors or nurses much.

AH: You were saying that you had pretty good nurses, and does that extend to the doctors, as far as you could judge? I mean, you may not have been able to tell everything about their competence but about their compassion and things, was it a good group of doctors, would you say?

MN: The ones that worked with me more or less were good doctors and nurses. We compared notes and our patient's conditions, and we would work from there. If we didn't, then we'd go to the pharmacy and find out what's good for them.

AH: Okay. If you had good nurses and you had good doctors, what would be the downside or the problem areas in the hospital? If it wasn't the personnel, if it wasn't the doctors and it wasn't the nurses, was it something to do with the facilities?

MN: Yes, more or less, the facilities.

AH: Okay, how would you evaluate the facilities?

MN: Well, I think we could have had better sanitary conditions, because we didn't have everything that we needed to take care of the sanitation.

AH: And did this persist throughout the entire war or just at the beginning?

MN: Well, more or less in the beginning.

AH: And then, that changed as time went on?

MN: And, by the time we were ready to leave—

AH: Then you had better sanitation?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Any other things? What about equipment and supplies in the hospital?

MN: It was mediocre.

AH: Mediocre. And at the very beginning, was it especially bad?

MN: Yes, very bad.

AH: What kinds of things did you lack? When you think back on it, what caused you to feel, Gee whiz, I wish we had this or wish we had that?

MN: We didn't have enough tissue papers or towels. The room wasn't able to be kept clean because of the barracks situations. And some of the children, we couldn't give them sheets. They needed sheets to put on, but we couldn't get them on because there wasn't any.

AH: Were you able to accommodate people who had special needs, like special diets and the like?

MN: That I don't know because the dietitian had another group that took care of that.

AH: Were women who had to have babies terrified of coming into the hospital and having their children? Do you think they had same concern about that?

MN: Not that I know of.

AH: So, after the first couple of months or so, do you think it was a safe thing? Because there were a lot a Nisei women that were of child-bearing age at that time, and there were a lot of children born in Manzanar. Were the facilities for birthing et cetera good, adequate, superior? How would you evaluate it?

MN: Well, those that came in for evaluation or to be found if there were any conditions, if the baby was doing all right or not, the nurses that were in charge of it took care of it, so we didn't get to have anything to say about that.

AH: Was the hospital understaffed? I mean, you may have good nurses and good doctors, but were there enough of them, do you think, to handle the population's needs?

MN: Sometimes they said they were short of nurses, sometimes they said, they had sufficient. It depends on the condition. But, when we had contagious conditions, then we were not staffed enough because we couldn't cover them all.

AH: So, what did you do?

MN: We did the best we can and talked to the doctors, and some of them had to work a double shift.

AH: Did you have a lot of outpatients?

MN: Not that I know of.

AH: This was a situation in which some of the problems were physical, but they also had a strong psychological basis because of the trauma and everything of people's families being separated and being uprooted and things. Were there any medical social workers that were assigned to the hospital to help people on the psychological side?

MN: Not that I knew of. I don't think that we had any really.

AH: So, you sort of had to function that way yourself then, right? I was reading the other night something about the Gila medical situation, and they said there that they had a *tremendous* number of people, way more than during the prewar period, that used to come to the hospital. That the amount was staggering of the people who showed up at the hospital with such regularity, and so many, that they couldn't possibly handle all of the people that seemed to need attention. Was that true at Manzanar or not?

MN: Not in our care, baby care, no. Some of the parents kept the babies in the barracks because they didn't want their children to be left by themselves at night, but there was always a nurse on duty twenty-four hours on the baby care.

AH: Was it one of the hardest jobs you've ever had in your life, working at the hospital at Manzanar?

MN: No. (laughs)

AH: It wasn't? Okay. Did you feel that there was a lot of community pressure on you as a nurse in the hospital?

MN: No.

AH: So, you weren't confronted by a lot of people who felt that you weren't taking care of their babies property?

MN: No.

AH: Did you feel that you had prestige for working in the hospital? Did people sort of appreciate what you were doing in giving healthcare?

MN: Well, some of the mothers would come up to me and say, "Thanks for taking care of my child. He's a naughty child and doesn't like to listen." I said, "They'll have to listen when they're in the hospital because all the other children have to listen, too." And they all listened.

AH: Did you form a special bond with the other nurses in Manzanar, where you became friends and continued to contact one another over the years?

MN: No, not very many, because I'm kind of isolated way out here in Elsinore, and I don't go out of the city very much unless I really have to go.

AH: So, there are no nurses that you worked with from Manzanar that you still exchange Christmas cards with or anything?

[02:20:04]

MN: No.

AH: The hospitals was a point of action in early December of 1942 during the time of so-called Manzanar riot, and one of the reasons was that on December fifth Fred Tayama, who had returned from a conference in Salt Lake, he was identified as a leader of the Japanese American Citizens League. He was set upon by some masked internees who beat him, and then he was taken over to the hospital. Then the next night there was a demonstration because the person who was accused of being involved in the beating was a man named Harry Ueno,¹ and he was put in jail. They were going to free him from the jail, but they were also going to go and beat up some JACL leaders, like Togo Tanaka² and others, who they thought were *inu*, dogs. The one person they really wanted to finish the job on was Fred Tayama, but he was over at the hospital. So, a big group of people headed over to the hospital. And when I've talked to people about that, they said they can still remember hearing the crunch, crunch, crunch on the ground of the footsteps of the people running over to the hospital. Now, the hospital was in the back of the camp, and that's where you used to go to work. Were you on duty on the night that they were coming to try to kill Fred Tayama?

MN: No, I wasn't on duty. I heard it the next day.

AH: And what did you hear?

MN: They said they hid him in the baby room. That's all I know, because I was so busy with my duty that I couldn't stand there and talk.

AH: Well, there were two people—one of whom was killed almost instantaneously, and one who died a few days later—and then there were nine other people who were wounded with gunfire, shot by the military police. Did you hear or see any of those people?

MN: No. No, I didn't.

AH: Okay, so none of those people you saw at the hospital?

MN: Unh-huh.

¹ Harry Uneo, O.H. 1518.1, 1518.2, & 1518.3, Center for Oral and Public History.

² Togo Tanaka, O.H. 1271.1, 1271.2, & 1271.3, Center for Oral and Public History.

AH: You heard about them being there?

MN: Yeah. I heard the nurses talking about it at—I don't know whether it was supper or in-between something. We were standing around—and some were sitting down—and they talked about it, but I wasn't interested in that because I had to go back to my ward.

AH: Well, the rest of the camp was pretty interested because they had a big strike for a long time after that, and people wore black armbands. So, there was a lot of response on the part of the community. Frank Chuman, who was the administrator of the hospital, told me when I interviewed him that all of the people who were shot were shot in the back, that they were not charging the jail. They were running away when tear gas was thrown by military police, and Dr. Goto was asked to sign a paper to the contrary, to talk about how they were shot. Did you hear rumors about that at all?

MN: No, all I knew, a lot of them said they ran into the latrine, and some of them didn't go to the men's department and went to the women's. They ran into women, and they said, Oh, excuse me, and they left the other way out. That's all I heard.

AH: You mean the rioters, the people who were involved in the riot?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Not the ones who were shot or anything?

MN: No. I didn't know there were very many shot.

AH: Well, there were eleven different people that were shot, and two of them died.

MN: No, they didn't say anything about it. The only thing that—there was one boy that went to get some piece of lumber to make a little bookcase or something, and he was shot by a MP from the back. They had the funeral out there in the desert is all I know.

AH: What were the biggest epidemics that you had to deal with in camp while you worked at the hospital that affected children, particularly, since you were working in the children's section?

MN: Epidemic?

AH: Yeah, measles, or did you have problems with polio, which was then called infantile paralysis?

MN: No. The only thing we had, and only those that knew how to take care of them, was lice.

AH: This is what you're talking about that came from Alaska?

MN: Um-hm, it was the only thing. That's the only one. After we got rid of that, then we didn't have any more problems.

AH: But, you don't remember measles or whooping cough or ringworm?

MN: We had them, but they were brought in. They had them before they came. So, when they emptied this bus, we put the whole thing into the barrack, and they stayed there until they finished.

AH: Other camps had things like valley fever. Did you have any of that in camp?

MN: No.

AH: What were the most frightening sorts of things that you worried about, in terms of medical concerns, when you were a nurse? Whether you call it a concentration camp or not, there were ten thousand people concentrated into a mile square. This means you've created a disease environment, too, and it could spread. Like rumors spread, so could disease. What kind of medical concerns do you think were most paramount in people's minds? What did they fear would happen? Food poisoning or—I mean, what kinds of things did they concern themselves with do you think?

MN: Well, we got most of it under control after about a week, so we really didn't have a big epidemic. But, a lot of them were scared about the lice, because you know how they are. And those that took care of the lice, the minute you went inside this one little room, you had those three or four children there, then we had to have a certain gown on. And when you left there you had to take the gown off and throw it in the hamper, and then mark it that it was used for lice or something. The rest of them we weren't—even measles we weren't very careful.

AH: Do you think that there were a lot of Nisei young women who were aborting their children at camp?

MN: Um-hm. There were a lot of them, I guess. Because this one that the doctor didn't think would live till morning was kept with the measles, I think, in her barrack. And when the baby got so feverish and kind of lost its mind, then they brought it to the infirmary to have it checked, and that's when the doctor screened it and put it away. Well, we had a lot of measles cases too, and that's when the doctor, when I went in the afternoon said, "Well, I don't think [she'll] live till morning, so just watch it." That's all.

AH: What about venereal disease? Was that a problem at camp?

MN: That I don't know. I don't know about that one. I think they had it in a different barrack. I didn't take care of it. I took mostly children.

AH: I was a child during World War II, and I remember that one of the big things that people worried about, and of course Sister Kenny was associated with it, was what we talked about before, this infantile paralysis. Was there a fear of polio or infantile paralysis in the camp or not?

MN: No, not that I know of.

AH: So, you don't remember having crippled children to deal with?

MN: No.

AH: Did a lot of dietary problems show up by having kids come that had chronic diarrhea or any other sorts of things so that you could relate sort of food problems?

MN: [No.] The only reason why I was very concerned is when they didn't serve eggs or butter or a certain type of cereal to the children at two o'clock in the afternoon—because that was their main meal. Breakfast, some of them didn't come, some of them their mothers didn't get up, and so the children didn't get a good breakfast. But, in the afternoon, at two o'clock we had it, and that was getting very, very poor. So, I even reported it, that if we don't change it the children will go blind. And that's when the Presidio at San Francisco stepped in and said, "Hey, we'd better take care of those kids or they'll go blind."

AH: So, you didn't have much of an incidence of kids becoming blind, did you?

MN: No.

AH: This was sort of prevented.

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Were there any public health measures that the hospital was involved in? I mean, not just the stuff that they were dealing with in terms of dealing with the public in the hospital itself, but out-hospital kids of things where they did checkups or put out literature on advice for people who were pregnant or anything else like that?

[02:30:24]

MN: No, not that I know of.

AH: When you think back about your job at the Manzanar hospital, was it a job that you think about in a positive way, or is it something that you don't like to talk about, or how do you feel about it? What does that mean to you that experience?

MN: Well, I've seen different hospitals and different places where they have different sicknesses. In a lot of places that does happen, but it went through Manzanar as well

as other places too, so I can't say for sure. Public health is a good thing to have, but some of the people don't like to talk to people that handle public health. I have a daughter who is a public health nurse, and she has a hard time even—she has to take a policeman to get the patient to come to the hospital to have a checkup or have shots. They don't want to go. And some of the mothers hide their children when the nurse comes. So, when an epidemic comes, it's pretty hard for the doctors or nurses to take care of all the patients.

AH: What did you learn about Japanese people and health when you were at the hospital? Sometimes when you're working within a community strictly, you start seeing certain patterns and stuff like that and you can relate to it yourself since you're of that ethnic group. What sorts of things did you notice?

MN: Well, some of them don't like to be told what to do, and they hide the patients if they think that they're not going to let them come home. Which is a bad thing to do, especially with a [communicable] disease, but I've seen that. And in camp the same way. They wait to the last minute, till they're almost ready to pass away, and then they try to call the ambulance and, "Hey, hurry up and get my patient going there." Probably they've been home over ten days in that condition. So, it was pretty hard.

AH: I've got to turn this over. [recording paused] Did you encourage the women to breastfeed their children at that particular time, or was that a problem because of the kind of diet that the women had at that time?

MN: No, I think they should breastfeed their baby, at least the first few months anyway, because that kind of cleans the child's body internally. It cleans them out, and I've noticed, in the years that have come, that more or less the children that are breastfed when they're first born have better health than those that are put on a bottle.

AH: So, you would have encouraged that in the hospital?

MN: Yes, I breastfed all mine. I told my children and my grandkids, "If you ever get married and have children, always breastfeed them, at least the first two or three months anyway."

AH: Now, you were giving medical care at the hospital, but there was a point at which you must have needed some care yourself because your son Roy was born at Manzanar.

MN: Um-hm.

AH: What year was he born?

MN: And David, too.

AH: Oh, both of them? So, you had two births.

MN: So, I tell them they're GI-issue. (chuckles)

AH: Oh, really? (laughs) So, did you have to stop work for a couple of months when you were pregnant with your two children, or what?

MN: I generally did light work, office work down at relocation the last three months, I think.

AH: One was born in '44 and the other one '45, is that right?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Okay, so you had them towards the end of camp.

MN: Um-hm. I thought if I got home I'd never have any children. I'd better have them if I am going to have them, so I thought I'd better try. David—my husband didn't know I was even pregnant when I went to Oregon to work for the federal government in the kitchen. I worked there, and so I told the head man at the kitchen taking care of that, I said, "I'm going home on September 1 because I'm going to have my baby pretty soon," He said, "My, you work awfully hard." I said, "Yeah. If you sit around, you'll get clumsy and not—but here I work and I'm feeling fine." He didn't know I was even pregnant.

AH: I don't understand the reference to Oregon. Tell me about that.

MN: We could have a furlough. Those furloughs that their husbands were working out—my husband was working, and my sister and her husband were working in Nyssa, Oregon, on my Uncle Ed's farm. They had a farm out there.

AH: Oh, I see. Did they do that early on?

MN: They went to Cody, Wyoming, but they evacuated to—that's the farthest they can go, because they lived in Zillah, Washington, and so they had potatoes, red potatoes, and I don't know what other things they had. So, they recruited, and they included my husband and my sister and her husband and somebody else that went.

AH: And how long did your husband do that?

MN: All during the time—(phone rings)

[recording paused]

AH: I wanted to say that I know from as early as the fall of 1942 there were short-team leaves, and some people went and worked topping sugar beets and things in Idaho and Montana. But then, after that, there were longer-term indefinite leaves, and a lot

of people went and worked with farmers or whatever else. This is what you're saying?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: So, probably it was around 1943 or something?

MN: That's before David was born so—

AH: So, again your separation from your husband since you were married was quite frequent, wasn't it?

MN: Yes.

AH: So, even during the war, even though he was in camp, he left camp to go out and work. Now, did you quit the hospital then for a little while and go up to live with him in Oregon?

MN: No, I stayed right there at the camp and took care of two girls.

AH: I thought you were just telling me you went up to Oregon.

MN: Oh, up to Oregon, yes. He was up there with my other sister, the younger sister and her husband, working for my uncle.

AH: Yeah. Well, that's what I mean. Did you quit the hospital to move up there with him or not?

MN: No, when I thought I was pregnant, I wasn't working in the hospital. I was working in the relocation.

AH: Okay, now tell me about relocation. I know there was a relocation office that used to help people who wanted to relocate around the country.

MN: Yeah, that's what we did.

AH: Okay, so that was nothing to do with medical work then?

MN: No.

AH: What was your job in the relocation office? Tell me about that.

MN: Some of them couldn't speak English and could only speak Japanese. I can speak both languages, and so I would relay to our head lady that this is where they went to go, this is where they don't want to go.

AH: Well, I know the biggest problem they had in relocation was not with the Nisei who were single and had a command of the language and the culture and everything, but with Kibei and then with Issei and stuff. So, did you specialize in working with them?

MN: Yes.

AH: Did you ever have to take any trips out from the camp to go to these different places, Chicago or anyplace?

MN: No.

AH: Okay, now who did you work for in the office? Who was your boss?

MN: She could speak Japanese. Her name was—

AH: Margaret D'Ille, was it?

MN: Yeah, D'Ille, and then there was Nancy. She used to take them to Reno in her car.

AH: Oh, yes, in the *Black Mariah*. She used to take them and then they would—yes, I met her. She lives up near the camp right now. She lives in, not Independence but maybe Bishop. She came to Manzanar a couple of years ago when we had a trip, and I met her.

MN: Did she? A nice person.

AH: Yes, her picture is in the same book with you. I mean, it's on the back cover of that. It shows the car with all the baggage up there and then they would drive them to Reno and then they would take the train out from Reno. Oh, so you worked with her, too?

MN: Yeah.

AH: But, your specific job there was trying to get them acclimated to the idea of where they were going and what they would be doing, because of your language facility?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Okay. How resistant were most of them to relocating?

MN: It wasn't bad. If somebody that they knew was already there or they were going to go with them, they all were glad to go.

[02:40:00]

AH: So, you were delivering children in the hospital, in some way, and then you were also delivering people from camp here. And you did that for almost as long as you worked at the hospital?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: So, about half of your time was at the hospital and half in the relocation office.

MN: In relocation, till I had babies.

AH: Why did you switch the job? Because of being pregnant?

MN: Yes.

AH: Okay. Well, I didn't know you did that! And mostly where were people from Manzanar going?

MN: They were going to New Jersey.

AH: Oh, to Seabrook Farms. Okay. And were you getting quite a few Issei to do that as family groups? Whole family groups would go to Seabrook?

MN: Well, some of the singles were already there, and they'll say, Mom, or the uncle, You come, because you can eat what you want to, you can have free time yourself. It's better out here than to stay in the camp. So, that's how they went.

AH: It's kind of ironic, you were working in the relocation office and sometimes hearing somebody say it's better to leave the camp than to stay, and yet you stayed in it. So, I want to ask you—

MN: (chuckles) Why I stayed?

AH: Why you stayed.

MN: Because I wanted to come home. If I went out, I knew I wouldn't be able to get home.

AH: Oh, I see. You were afraid to go too far away from the camp?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Okay. Did you have fear about the outside yourself or not?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Okay. Did you have fear about the outside yourself or not?

MN: No, but I knew I couldn't get everything together and all come home at the same time, because I had Mother and Dad, you know—although my father worked in the glycerin bunch all the time he was in the camp—and my husband stayed, oh, in the office for relocation. Then, after the camp was closed, the government asked him to come back again. So, he went back, and I think he worked for another three or six months after they closed Manzanar, until they got rid of all the animals and everything. He cleaned the whole—

AH: So, he stayed up at Manzanar and worked for six more months?

MN: He came home, and then he went back. They called him back.

AH: Let me ask you a question. You just alluded to something, and it's real interesting, because at the time they opened up the camps they prohibited having animals. And so you have all of these stories and these photographs of Japanese Americans having to leave behind their domestic pets and usually they showed dogs. But then, at the end of the camp, there were so many animals in there that they then *again* had to leave them in Manzanar. So, you had the same experience. They had to leave them in, say, Terminal Island; then they have to leave them in Manzanar.

MN: And you know they had to hire people to kill those animals? He couldn't stand it, so then I think the police came and took care of the rest of them.

AH: Well, where did those animals come from in the camp?

MN: Everybody had them.

AH: But, how did they get them because they weren't allowed to bring their pets. Where did they come from?

MN: I don't know.

AH: Did you have a dog?

MN: I didn't have any.

AH: You didn't have a pet?

MN: No.

AH: Was it a concern at the hospital about rabies and things or not?

MN: No, none of them had any—I never heard of any disease of animals there.

AH: What animals did you see at Manzanar while you were there?

MN: Only dogs. I never saw any cats.

AH: You didn't see cats? And there were lots of dogs?

MN: I didn't know, but toward the end when my husband was hired later on by the government to go back and check and close the gate up and everything—they were the last to get out of there—he said that they had to hire police to go and shoot those dogs and then gather them up and then get rid of them.

AH: You know, I was up at a National Archives facility in San Bruno, outside of Tanforan, and they had some records of different government groups that related to the camps. The stuff that they had on Manzanar was real interesting. It was the War Assets Board—and that may have been who your husband was employed by—but what they had to do was to assess the value of all these things and then it had to be sold off. One of the documents I found was fascinating. It had the hospital, and it had every single item that they had in the hospital—every single sponge or whatever was left in the whole sort of thing—and how much they were worth, each one of those things. And I was thinking, Well, you know, they have all this in 1945, but in 1942 they probably didn't have anything like this.

MN: Nothing.

AH: I had interviewed Dr. Kikuchi, and he told me the primitive stuff he had in his dental practice to be able to use. But those dogs, so your husband was actually up there at the time that this—

MN: After we came home, they rehired him, and they had to go back again. They had all the dockets that had to be put together, and then the last thing to close the gate, they had to get rid of all the animals.

AH: I wonder how many other Japanese Americans went up there to work with your husband?

MN: I don't know. I told him when he was ready to go, I said, "Boy, they really picked you at the wrong time." But, they told him they'd pay well, so I said, "Well, I'm not making much money right now, and I have to get all my patients, so if you want to go, go."

AH: So again, your husband's gone!

MN: Yeah.

AH: So, you come back from the war, and you said you came here to Elsinore, right?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: We talked about this a little off tape, but why don't you tell me on tape what this was like when you came back. Your property here at Elsinore, what condition was it in?

MN: Bad condition. The things that were in my business, the toilets were gone, the doors were knocked out, and somebody must have come and put a padlock on it. Everything was gone, even the therapy tables. There was nothing in there. It was just ransacked. And then, I had a room with all my blankets and different things that I had for my wedding stored away—because after I got married, I came to Elsinore—and that was all gone. I never got my silver or anything. My dishes, they were all gone.

AH: Did you react to this emotionally?

MN: Couldn't help it. It was war, and you can't blame anybody, only the people that were here. And those people that were here were all gone, so I couldn't find anybody to blame it on.

AH: So, you just turned philosophical then, huh? You said you had to start from scratch again, and you really did, and then pretty soon your husband was gone up to Manzanar again.

MN: Yeah.

AH: Tell me what sort of successes did you have? You have here now four kids, two of them who are toddlers, really, the other are in school, probably, and had to go to school here in Elsinore. Now, how did you get on your feet, in terms of your business?

MN: Worked every day, seven days a week: Saturday, Sundays, holidays—only Thanksgiving, New Year's, and Christmas.

AH: Well, most of your customers before the war, you established earlier, were Japanese. What about after the war?

MN: All mixed races. But, people would come from far and near. As long as I gave them good treatment, [word of mouth] was more important than advertising, so that's how I went.

AH: Did you have any Japanese that ever came back after the war?

MN: We had a few, but a lot of them, they were working to help their family and make their ends meet. And some of them didn't drive a car; they didn't have money to buy a car. I didn't buy a car until way in life. If I went to Riverside or Los Angeles, I had to take the Greyhound bus or the local bus to go to Riverside and do shopping.

AH: What did you supply here? What was your service, as far as your business?

MN: Therapy.

AH: Tell me, a customer comes, give me a sense of what happens.

MN: Well, they'll come, and I ask them, "Do you have a prescription from your doctor?" "No, but this is my problem." And, if I think, Now this is what they've got, I can handle it. And then I said, "Well, I can take you." If I can't, I say, "You go to the doctor and see if the doctor will give you a prescription for that. And if not, the insurance company. And if the insurance company says okay, then—" I had it all the way from Los Angeles and Beverly Hills to Santa Ana, the doctors that gave me a prescription.

AH: And what would they do when they got here for board and room? Where did they stay?

MN: That's what I tell them before they go. I said, "I don't give board and room. You have to find a place before you come."

AH: And where did they usually go when they were in Elsinore?

MN: Oh, all around here they had—across the street where the vacant lot, where the Market Basket—there used to be a whole lot of cottages there.

AH: No hotels in town?

MN: The hotel across the street where this market is, it burned down.

AH: So, that was a big hotel, pretty big?

MN: A good-sized hotel.

AH: Okay, so they would stay there sometimes?

MN: Yeah, sometimes. And then, Friday nights, Saturday nights they used to have big shindigs there.

[02:50:02]

AH: And what was your competition in town? How many other places were doing this same kind of thing?

MN: There was a chiropractor down there, but he wasn't doing it right. He got pinched one time from something he did. Then some young fellow came there—but he had a girlfriend in there. I don't know if they got married or anything. Anyway, he was a chiropractor. I don't know if he's there or not. From time-to-time the chiropractor examining committee would come around, and one morning they asked my husband,

"Are you Nori?" Nori said, "Yes." He said, "Do you do pressure-point?" He said, "Yeah, my wife does that. I don't do pressure-point." And he said, "Do you crack their necks?" "No." "Do you crack their backs?" "No," he said, "that isn't physical therapy, that's chiropractor." So, you know that guy that came to ask him? He was the inspector. He showed him his [identification], and he said, "I'm a chiropractor inspector." He said, "You're free. You're okay."

AH: In town there are a lot of mineral baths and things, but they don't—

MN: That was city water.

AH: Okay, but they don't do anything in their places that are similar to physical therapy?

MN: Down here, that Jo Faiths—that's a Korean. He had a fellow there that did massage, but I don't know if he was licensed in the state of California or not. I heard he's not there anymore.

AH: But what about those other places? What did they do? I remember coming here in the sixties and there were still some—it looked like Jewish owned because they would have a Star of David on it, and then they were mineral baths or something. Now, did they not give therapy at those places? Did people just come there and take the waters and just sit in the pool or what?

MN: I don't know. Some of them say that and some of them say that they rub your back and all that, but I don't know. Because I'd rather keep my mouth clean and not say I said this or nothing about it. So, I did what I had to do, and so I never got any notice from the state that they would close you up or anything.

AH: So, did your business pick up after, what, after a couple of years? Three?

MN: Yes.

AH: Quite substantially?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: And where were you getting your business from mostly?

MN: All over.

AH: San Diego, Los Angeles, where?

MN: We get them all the way from Sacramento now.

AH: No kidding? But after the war, where were you getting them?

MN: Yeah, Sacramento, San Diego, Orange County. We still have from Tustin.

AH: And were you doing it all yourself for a while?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Everything?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: So, you'd take care of all the mineral baths and—

MN: But, we closed that all up, and we do nothing but therapy and Medicare.

AH: Well, when your husband got through with his stint of duty at Manzanar, he must have come back here, right?

MN: Yeah, he came back.

AH: And what did he do here?

MN: He was a full-fledged physical therapist, too. He took the state license, and he passed it.

AH: Oh, when did he do that?

MN: After he came back.

AH: No kidding? Where did he go to get his license?

MN: We have a physical therapy—I don't know if we had that. We had what they call a state—I have the folder up on the wall there, and they gave us a test. We traveled from San Jose or San Francisco. Oh, let's see, where else did they go? And every place they go, they give us a test and see if we were writing up. And then there's a school called National Physical Therapy, and they gave us a big test, and if you pass that, then you got your license.

AH: But, you already had your license, didn't you?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: But then, your husband got this?

MN: Yeah, he got his too, and just for the heck of it, we took another one ourselves.

AH: Had you been training him a little bit before that?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: So, was he pretty good?

MN: Yeah, he was pretty good. Pressure.

AH: So, you both did it. He did acupuncture or pressure?

MN: He did pressure-point.

AH: How is that different? It doesn't use needles and stuff? Is that just with the—

MN: No, we don't use needles, we use electric. We don't break the skin.

AH: What other things do you do out there?

MN: Right now we have healthcare that sends out these different folders for people to clean blood, and we send some back to—I know a doctor that does that, what's called chelation. Do you know what chelation is?

AH: No, I don't.

MN: It's to clean out your blood so you don't have heart problems.

AH: Really?

MN: But, I know that doctor, he's a Jewish fellow. In 1970 at—oh, what's that? In Santa Ana there's a big—

AH: The hospital there?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Saint Josephs?

MN: No, it's in Santa Ana. Well, we had it three four times there. The doctor came. He's a small Jewish doctor. His father had a bad heart, but his father wouldn't believe in it, that we could do that. I had a patient from—she raises horses in Corona, and she was teacher at Orange Coast College. So, I said, "Audrey, why don't you have a chelation?" She said, "Who's going to give me chelation?" I had the book here. Somebody wanted to borrow it the other day, and I gave it to them to read it. Slaven? Dr. Slaven, and he's in Mexico. He went to Florida, he went all over, but they wouldn't give him a license. But now he's in Mexico.

AH: I've heard of Dr. Slaven.

MN: I knew him in the seventies, and he gave Audrey chelation. I don't know how many she took. They generally take you about ten. Loma Linda is doing it now. And David has tried it, just to see the feel of it so he can tell his patients. He took nine of them. The tenth one, the doctor was not able to get to it, so he had to forego it. He's got one more to go if he ever gets it, but they have capsules now that are a mixture of different things that cleans your blood, that chelates it.

AH: So, once you came back here, you never turned around and went to Terminal Island again, huh?

MN: No.

AH: There was no Terminal Island to go to.

MN: No. The government gave us once a year, all the Terminal Islanders can come home, and I'm on the staff.

AH: Oh, really?

MN: Yeah, and this year is the first time we didn't go to Terminal Island down at the Naval—

AH: What time of the year is that that you get to go?

MN: We generally do it in July.

AH: No kidding. So, they allow you access for that one day or something?

MN: Um-hm, but we can't go this year. We had ours already at Point Fermin. But, the reason why, I think they're trying to do that is those big containers that come on those vessels, they want to try to make that kind of port. I think China is mixed in it.

AH: Yeah, I see there's a lot of controversy over that.

MN: China. And we didn't want to get mixed up in that, so we went to Point Fermin.

AH: Instead. Yeah, I saw the TV program on that. Huell Howser had a great big—

MN: I'm on the staff, so I know.

AH: Oh, you are?

MN: (chuckles) I'm still on it. I tell them, "You don't want a gray-haired woman on that staff," and "Never mind"—

AH: (chuckles) You'll be on it anyway, right? Now, I know you were so busy when you came back here that you probably didn't have an awful lot of time to concern yourself with what was happening in Elsinore, but could you kind of give me a sense of what Elsinore was like right after the war, in terms of what kind of town it was and what people did to make a living and what kind of people lived here in this town? Because you've got to be a little aware of this when you come here, as you've told me.

MN: We had a lot of walnut trees, and the walnut trees they were trying to get rid of. They cut the walnut trees, and the trees were shipped to Italy to make veneer. Everybody was so upset about it because there were no more walnuts, no more of those nice trees anymore. They're all gone.

AH: Did that happen pretty soon after the war?

MN: Yeah. All those are nothing but houses out there. Torn Ranch had over one hundred acres. He sold his. There's nothing there hardly. And some lady one weekend went over to—I've forgot who the owner was. He moved to Hemet or someplace. He's a contractor, a road builder, and he said, "Who are you talking to?"—not him but the new owner. He says, "I'm the new owner. I can do what I want to do with my trees." So, she got off her high horse and then went over and asked him, "What are you going to do with those trees?" He said, "I'm shipping them to Italy. I'm going to make veneer." So, there are no more trees out there. On Grand Avenue there are no more olive trees like there used to be or apricot trees either.

[03:00:00]

AH: And that hasn't just happened recently? I mean, that happened a long time ago, huh?

MN: No, it started right after the war.

AH: How big a town was Elsinore then when you came back? Was it five thousand? Or less?

MN: No, I don't think so.

AH: Smaller? And stores downtown and stuff?

MN: Oh, it started to go down fast. Oh, I'd say the last ten or fifteen years it finally went down.

AH: By *going down*, what do you mean? The economy fell out?

MN: Um-hm. The stores all moved away and people moved away and some of them passed away.

AH: Do you like the town less or more than you used to? You've got a good business and you've got a beautiful house here, and I'm just wondering how do you feel about the town?

MN: They're not living up to what they should be doing—you know, give more to people that would like to come and relocate. But, we have a bad crowd of people, and too many—what do you call them? Medical aid patients and too many Mexicans and too many welfare.

AH: Do you feel endangered if you walk downtown now or not?

MN: I wouldn't go walk at nighttime.

AH: You wouldn't? Years ago would you have walked downtown?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: Did you have any fear after the war when you came back here, being Japanese?

MN: No.

AH: And you didn't have any incidents or anything with people driving by and shooting at the property?

MN: I have more incidents now than I did at that time.

AH: You do now? And what are the incidents around? Do they have anything to do with race now, or do they have to do—

MN: After I built this place, the last few years I had to build up a wall in the back and put an extra wire on it. I spent a couple thousand dollars more on that, and they're still throwing their trash on my place.
[recording paused]

AH: Now, you were mentioning the fact that in the last few years you've had more problems than you did after the war, people throwing garbage over the back. After the war, when your husband came back from Manzanar and you were raising your kids here, you didn't have too many problems then?

MN: No, not this kind of problem.

AH: No? But, what kind of problems did you have?

MN: Well, I had to know who I'm running into. I had to be more alert on that. This one is all the trash they throw in here.

AH: Did you advertise for business in different publications, or was it all, like you say word of mouth?

MN: No, word of mouth. All these years.

AH: Wow! That's incredible. Sort of like Hershey bar, you don't have to advertise. They know a good thing, and they just keep getting it, right?

MN: You have to do the right work.

AH: Now I know you have your son working here now, and you had your husband—

MN: Because after my husband retired—

AH: So, it was just you and your husband for many years, then. When did your husband retire, about?

MN: Over ten years ago.

AH: And then, when did he pass away?

MN: Three years ago.

AH: Three years ago. And so during that retirement period and his death, he didn't work at all in the facility here?

MN: Yes, I worked.

AH: No, your husband.

MN: No, he didn't work since he retired.

AH: When he retired, he really retired then, huh? It wasn't a partial retirement?

MN: No, he went to Terminal Island daily. If there was anything he wanted, he went to Japan, he went all over.

AH: He had a good time?

MN: I guess so.

AH: (chuckles) Did he like this business as much as you did?

MN: I don't know. I think I like mine better.

AH: You enjoy it. And then, your son is really involved in it?

MN: Oh, yeah, way beyond what I've been doing. More.

AH: Do you get the feeling that he's going to stay here?

MN: He's going to stay here because I gave him the business part. This is my part, but that's his part.

AH: So, you mean you're not working in the business as much as you used to?

MN: I take care of his patients when he's not there.

[recording paused]

AH: Your son then has the business part right now, and you're helping out a little bit on that, but you're still up every morning?

MN: Yes, I get up at six o'clock, and I go over there and open up and get the patient going. Then he comes in about eight o'clock.

AH: And how long ago was it that you moved into a different stage of your career here, I mean, that you started doing less than you used to do?

MN: Oh, in the last three years, I guess, but, until then, I did it full-time.

AH: What changes have gone on in the business during the many years that you've been involved in it? I mean, you really got started in this in 1939.

MN: Well, we don't do the bathing part. Outside of that we do about the same.

AH: No kidding? So, some of the stuff remains the same pretty much?

MN: The same.

AH: And some of the equipment is the same.

MN: Oh, yes, all the equipment is the same.

AH: And have some of the customers remained the same?

MN: Yes, we have them.

AH: So, you have customers that have been here as long as forty years?

MN: Oh, yes.

AH: No kidding? Wow!

MN: I used to get them all the way from Pennsylvania.

AH: Gee! And then, they come out every year?

MN: Yeah. We have them from Portland, and we have them from Sacramento. I used to have a man that came all the way from Fresno, a truck driver. And no doctor could find it. I can always talk about him. You know why? He had had a bad hip for years, he was a big truck driver, and he never could have any of the doctors tell him what's wrong. Even the hospital out there couldn't find out what's wrong. They were going to give him a new hip and all that. Somebody told him about me, and he said, "Oh, it's on my way home. I'll drop by." So, he stopped at the Ninth Street Market and left his produce there, his grapes or whatever he had on there, and he came around here. I gave him three treatments. He was getting better, but he said, "I can't get the full—like all the rest of them that come here to see you." So, one day he came in with his dirty britches, you know, and overalls and walks in, and he went to the bathroom. As he turned around, I looked at his hip pocket. He had a big hole in his hip pocket where this pocket is. I said, "Wait, a minute!" I went over here, and I said, "Was it this hip that bothered you?" He said, "Yeah." "You know what's wrong with you?" "No." I said, "What?" I said, "Go to the bathroom and then come on out and I'll talk to you more." He said, "Okay." So, he went in and came on out, and I talked to him about a half an hour before I stated the treatment. I had the hot pack on, and I talked to him. [I] said, "The trouble with you, you carry everything in the hip pocket, your wallet and the whole thing, and you get in that big truck and drive many miles home, all the way to Fresno? That's what's putting the pressure on it. And it's not one day or two days, it's years and years the same thing." So I said to put the stuff in his front vest and out of this pocket. He went home. That day he wasn't [better], but he slept pretty good. The next day he said, "By god, I'd better listen to her," so he took that wallet and put it in his front vest again from that day on. He went to some doctor up there, and he said, "Son of a gun, I found out what's wrong with me. I had to go all the way to Elsinore to find out."

AH: Did you start getting any Japanese American business after the war?

MN: I had a few, but not like I used to.

AH: So, even today you do, then?

MN: Yeah, I have some that will call, but ours are mostly, right now, the patients that have insurance company that they can't be able to take care of them or not able to give them peace of mind. My son goes to all their homes after they leave the hospital. He goes to their homes and takes care of them.

AH: No kidding? So, he does a lot of outpatient stuff as well?

MN: Oh, a lot of them. That's all he does all day long. That's why I have to go back and help him now until—that's what keeps him busy. We have an extra secretary in the

office. She's a Caucasian lady. But, I don't think she's coming today. She has personal problems. I said, "You don't have to come. I'll take care of it."

AH: Well, tell me a little bit about each of your kids before we wind down here. You've got a lovely family, and why don't you—

MN: Margaret, that's my oldest daughter, she's a public health nurse for Los Angeles County. After she finished at UCLA, she's been with them all this time, twenty-some-odd years. Then this one that you met today, she was a teacher, too.

AH: And her name is?

MN: Jane Tanaka. And she's retired. She doesn't do anything. She's got two daughters. One of them is a health woman and she works for Mother's. Besides that, on the side she does nails. Then I have another granddaughter who graduated UCLA—that's her daughter—graduated UCLA, and she's in men's clothing. But, clothing is down, so she works in a great big restaurant or whatever, an eating place where they have chefs, so she's an assistant chef now.

[03:10:00]

AH: Is Jane recently retired, or has she been retired for a number of years?

MN: No, she's been retired a long time, and she's taking care of my sister who is next to me. Her husband passed away about four months ago, so she goes over there and helps her. She doesn't have any children. And then, I had a brother, Tom, but he's been gone about five years, I guess, five or six years.

AH: And then, your other kids are?

MN: Then I have one—no, that's my brother.

AH: Yeah, I know, but you were talking about your kids. Jane, and then after Jane is whom?

MN: Then I have Roy, the dentist, and then David.

AH: Okay, and David is the one that runs this place?

MN: Um-hm. And since I've been a health nut all my life, the children are all going into the health field. Roy is much more than I am now, so is David.

AH: Are all their health good, too? Do they all have good health?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: And your health is great.

MN: (chuckles) So far.

AH: Yeah. Well, that's wonderful!

MN: So far.

AH: And tell me a little bit more about your husband. We've talked about him being gone places but we haven't talked about him very much.

MN: He was a Mason, a Shriner, so he did a lot of the children's work when he was here.

AH: Right here in Elsinore?

MN: Um-hm. He and another doctor, Dr. McDowell—he was a veterinarian—they formed Little League baseball here when it first started many years ago, and they kept it up. One morning the fire department called me and said, "Mitsi, you friend passed away this morning." I said, "Who?" "Jack." First of all, they said, Get a hold of a chair, because we were real close, like a son to me. And I got it, and I said, "I'm okay." He said, "Change your phone onto the other ear," and I did, and he said, "Well, Jack just passed away." So, about the time I went to the house, I woke my husband up, and I said, "Daddy, we've got to go. Something happened to Jack." "What happened to Jack?" and I said, "No, listen, let's go over there first." I knew what had happened. So, when I went in there—he had a wife that was just like a girl, just a young one, her kitchen sink was just full of dishes, and nothing was cleaned-up in there. I said, "My goodness, that's the way they lived?" And he was gone. Thirty-some-odd years old.

AH: Oh, thirty? Is that all?

MN: See, these Loma Linda people, they do dissecting, too—he could be an M.D.—so he went to—they were [going to perform] an autopsy and they went down to the mortuary to see, and David said his heart was just like a rock.

AH: What's it been like being pretty much the only Japanese American family in Elsinore all these years?

MN: I feel comfortable.

AH: Do you prefer it? Do you prefer being away from—

MN: No, I don't, but then that's the way I kept my business and I raised all my four children here. And they did well. And my grandson is doing all right. David's little boy that has been adopted, he's doing good, too. He's going to a Christian school.

AH: Your daughter was telling us at lunch, when I asked her, that did she date non-Japanese fellows when she was going—she said yes. Then probably all of your kids did, didn't they, when they were going through school?

MN: I guess so, when they were going to college.

AH: But, I mean here in high school.

MN: There were no Japanese here.

AH: No, that's what I mean. So, if they dated, they dated non-Japanese, right?

MN: Um-hm.

AH: But then, they did have bigger social lives probably when they went to college, didn't they?

MN: Oh, yes.

AH: Have you retained contact with the Japanese American community largely through these reunions, or are there other things that you do, too, that keeps you in touch with—

MN: Well, we have one in Los Angeles, that museum? I'm one of those members.

AH: Oh, the Japanese American National Museum? So, you go there once in a while?

MN: When I can get away.

AH: (chuckles) Do you get out of here much to go on trips different places, or not?

MN: Yeah, I drive. When we're not so busy at the office I go. I'm supposed to go to Washington.

AH: Washington State or Washington, D.C.?

MN: Washington State. That's where I came from, you remember.

AH: Right.

MN: I'm going up there.

AH: The Yakima area? Are you going to go up there?

MN: Yeah, when Roy goes to his convention. He's the head of those conventions, you know, Roy.

AH: Now, you went to Japan; seven years ago was your last trip. Have you ever been to Europe?

MN: [No.] Janie has. She just came back. Her husband works for Bettea, and he went to France and got back just last week.

AH: And have you ever gone to other places in the United States? Have you been to Chicago, New York, Washington?

MN: No, I can go anytime. They send me a letter, *Grandma, I'll get you a ticket. Come.* I say, "Don't buy no ticket. If I want to come, I'll come."

AH: Would it be fair to say that you've been a workaholic all these years?

MN: Yeah, I am a workaholic. (laughs) I go to my daughter's in Pasadena, the nurse, and I work in her garden. The other day we had a professional tree trimmer come and trim the trees out there. I said, "I've got to have one of my trees trimmed, too."

AH: All of us have jobs, and some of us regard those jobs as just jobs and others regard them as vocations. I mean, it's really sort of the most meaningful thing that you do. It's clear that for you it comes closer to a vocation than just a job, just a way of making a living.

MN: Yeah.

AH: What has this job, if you could try to put it into words, if you've never done it before, what does this job do for you that—

MN: To keep my health going.

AH: It keeps your health going? Is it by ministering to other people's situation that you feel healthy, or how does that work?

MN: Well, if I get up at a certain time, do what I'm supposed to do, and take care of my work, what I'm going to do, I feel very comfortable and very free that I've helped somebody.

AH: Do you have any special feeling about water or about just the tactile sort of touching and stuff?

MN: Meditation.

AH: Meditation?

MN: David does a lot of that. Yes, I do, but I work mine internally. Some will come out and, oh, their stomach is sticking out like that. "Oh! Oh!" I said, "Give me your ear

and now listen, did you go to the bathroom today?" And some of them will say, "Hell, I haven't gone to the bathroom in thirty days." I said, "That's your problem. You go." "What am I supposed to do?" and I tell them. "If you don't, you come back and tell me." "I'd hate to tell you if I did go." "Why?" "I'll fill the pot." I said, "So, you do that." And I've saved a lot of people that way.

AH: You used the word save. Is there a religious kind of dimension to what you do, your job?

MN: Maybe.

AH: Do you go to church still?

MN: No, I don't like to go to church here because they're all among themselves, hitting each other's shoulders.

AH: Too tight?

MN: I don't like that kind. I like to talk to this one that's free to talk about somebody else, too. I don't like to talk behind the backs of other people.

AH: So, you don't go to church anymore?

MN: No. I read my Bible, I say my prayers at night before I go to bed, and that's it. I belong to the Baptist Church. I was baptized in San Pedro.

AH: And is there a Baptist church here in town, in Elsinore?

MN: Yeah, but they moved around from one place to another, and I don't like that kind of church either.

AH: So, you never felt sort of stable here in the church?

MN: No.

AH: You told me off tape, and we need to talk about it just a little bit. Elsinore has changed a lot, in terms of the people who live here. There's still only one Japanese family, (chuckles) and now your son, but what other people live in town now?

MN: There's the Korean people up there, Jo Faiths.

AH: And most of the Jewish people are gone?

MN: Um-hm, most of them are gone. Even the cemetery is being closed-up, although there are some using it.

AH: And you mentioned, too, I think, off tape, there were some Southeast Asians living here now?

MN: Yeah.

AH: And then a lot of Hispanics?

MN: Yeah, a lot of that.

AH: Do they dominate the town? Is it Mexican Americans that you see mostly in town?

MN: On welfare, yes. Welfare.

AH: So, if you go downtown now, it looks different to you, it feels different than it used to?

MN: Yeah, Yeah, I don't feel comfortable.

AH: Do you ever go downtown anymore?

MN: Oh, sometimes, but I drive in the car because I still drive.

AH: Yeah, I heard you still drive. And you go shopping?

MN: Yes.

AH: Where do you shop now? In a supermarket or do you shop in a downtown thing?

MN: Yeah, a supermarket. There's no market downtown; they all closed-up. That one was the last one across the street.

AH: The name of this place is—actually, up in here you call this Elsinore, but it's Lake Elsinore, really.

MN: Yeah.

AH: And the lake is central to Elsinore, and sometimes the lake has been dry in its history and sometimes it's had water. What does the lake mean to you? Anything?

MN: Just a place to enjoy boat riding, that's all.

AH: Do you ever go there?

MN: No.

AH: Have you ever been on a boat on the lake?

MN: No.

AH: Have you ever been swimming in the lake?

MN: No. I don't eat the fish out of the lake either.

AH: (chuckles) So, the lake doesn't mean too much to you, huh?

MN: No.

[03:20:00]

AH: Has it been a nice place for you to live over the years?

MN: Yes.

AH: And what makes it nice?

MN: Well, before all this happened, the bad people in the back, it's been quite, and I can go shopping and I can talk to people I want to talk to. People respect you. They talk to you, and I can talk to them. And since my husband was a Mason and takes care of the children, all the kids remember him.

AH: So, there was a feeling of tolerance within the community?

MN: Uh-huh.

AH: You didn't feel sort of that people put up walls between one another then?

MN: No. If they do they're not here very long, they're gone someplace else, because they do the same with the other people.

AH: And has the cost of living skyrocketed here or not?

MN: I don't think much difference.

AH: So, is it a fairly affordable place to live?

MN: Yeah. I pay my taxes and I pay my utilities and everything and it's according to how you take it. So, I like it.

AH: Well, I think we've come to the end of our discussion here, our conversation.

MN: If there's anything you want to know, you let me know.

AH: Well, let me say one last question, and that is, are there any things that we haven't talked about that you want to talk about? And you set the agenda on this. What would you like to chat about?

MN: Well, after I read the transcript and hear it, and then if there's any additional things, we'll let you know. (laughs)

AH: Okay. Thank you very, very much.

MN: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW