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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Japanese American Project

Department of Justice Internment Camps--Internee Experience

O.H. 1616

REVEREND SEYTSU TAKAHASHI

Interviewed

by

Mariko Yamashita and Paul F. Clark

on

December 16, 1978

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Interview Introduction

A deeply religious man, Reverend Seytsu Takahashi drew upon his Buddhist background to sustain himself and others through his years of wartime internment and separation from his family. He expresses many of the fears that the early detainees confronted, often not knowing what their ultimate fate would be. In later years, Takahashi has utilized this period of his life as a source of personal reflection and strength. "Throughout the experience in the camps," he explains, "I learned many things which I could tell anybody anywhere I went."

Takahashi was born in Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan, in 1905. He attended Koyasan College where later he became a bishop in the Koyasan Buddhist sect. In 1931 he came to Los Angeles, California, and has remained ever since as the superintendent of the Koyasan Temple in Little Tokyo. During World War II, he was interned at Fort Missoula, Montana, Livingstone, Louisiana, and Crystal City, Texas.

Like the earlier interview with Mitushiko Shimizu and a later interview with Kenko Yamashita, this interview was conducted in Japanese by Mariko Yamashita under the direction of the author. The interview was recorded in one, two-hour session at the Koyasan Temple, Los Angeles, California in December 1978. Afterwards, Yamashita transcribed and translated this oral document. Takahashi, due to time limitations on this thesis, had not completed reviewing this interview at the time the interview herein was final typed. However, the interview which resides in the Japanese American Project of the California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program, will include Takahashi's corrections and changes.

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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
JAPANESE AMERICAN PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: REVEREND SEYTSU TAKAHASHI
INTERVIEWER: Mariko Yamashita and Paul F. Clark
SUBJECT: Department of Justice Internment Camps--Internee Experience
DATE: December 16, 1978
TRANSLATOR: Mariko Yamashita

C: This is an interview with Reverend Seytsu Takahashi for the Japanese American Project of the California State University, Fullerton Oral History Project. The interview session is at the Koyasan Buddhist Temple located at 342 E. First Street, Los Angeles, California, and the date today is December 16, 1978. The interviewers are Mariko Yamashita and Paul F. Clark. The interview will be conducted in Japanese with Miss Yamashita acting as the principal interviewer.

Would you like to start the interview, Mariko?

Y: Okay. (To interviewee) First, would you tell us when you came and what motivated you to come to America?

T: I was born in December 1905 in Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan. I arrived in the United States at the San Pedro Port, California, on August 17, 1931. The ship I boarded in Japan was the *Shin'yo Maru*, the same one that carried Reverend [Shutai] Aoyama, who was the first bishop of the temple. He was thirty-four years old when he came to America in 1909. Japan took the ship from Germany during World War I. I boarded it in 1931, and it was the last navigation of the ship.

I'm going to tell you what made me come to America. We Buddhist bishops were required to train ourselves at the Buddhist headquarters. After I graduated from public high school in Okyamhama Prefecture, I had to go to Mount Koya and Koyasan College. Mount Koya is about three thousand meters above sea level. I went there in the fourteenth year of the Taisho era [1925]. The training I had was to cleanse our soul through meditation. We could study many things about Buddhism at Koyasan College.

I met a person [Kakuo Okimura] at the college who had been afflicted with

an eye disease and who was cured through his belief in Buddha. He told me that he would become a priest because he was saved by Buddha. He joined us and we went through the training together. When I was in the fourth grade at the college I went on a lecture tour with a professor of the college to each prefecture in Kyushu. There is the inner sanctuary at Koyasan Temple in Kyushu where Kobodaishi is said to be enshrined. When we went there I came across Mr. Kakuo Okimura. He said he was going to Hawaii. I didn't confess it to anybody then, but I thought that I wanted to go abroad too after I graduated from the college. At that time I still had two years to go toward graduation. During the two years, I didn't say my plan to anybody; I put it in my mind. After completing my thesis and graduating, I wrote a letter to Mr. Okimura saying, "To confess my mind, I felt I wanted to go to either Hawaii or America since I had met you."

When I wrote this letter to him, he was in Los Angeles. He was concerned about the future of the Nisei's education, hoping they would retain what's good of the Japanese race. He had gone as far as Vancouver, Canada in order to fulfill his desire and wrote a pamphlet to promote Nisei education. Unfortunately, he had poor eyesight, so he couldn't drive. You can't live without driving a car in America. So, he went back to Hawaii.

While he was staying in Los Angeles, I sent a letter to him. In the reply from him, he said, "If you want to be blessed with material well being you might want to go to Hawaii. But if you come to Los Angeles, you can come in touch with the continental culture of America. It will make you a good man." Since Mr. Okimura, no one from the Koyasan College had come to Los Angeles. It's too far to come. Mr. Okimura came to Los Angeles three or four years before I came. I came here on August 17, 1931.

In 1925, the Ministry of Education in Japan established a junior college system. In 1924, Mr. Shinoko Fujimoto, who had a college degree both in literature and law from the University of Tokyo, went on a trip to Europe and America in order to observe their systems so as to establish one in Japan. He visited here too and stayed for about three months. I met him in Japan. When I came here the Japanese didn't have the right to lease land, so everybody wanted to go back to Japan. In those days, Japan sent ships to California to buy oil they used for warships. The sailors who were assigned the job earned the lowest pay in those days among the sailors in the world. So when they landed, they carried sandwiches or biscuits with them, and we served tea for them. When I arrived here we served them *Oyakodonburi* [a bowl of rice with cooked chicken and eggs on top] for free. They were all young so each of them ate about three bowls of it. There had been a *Kaigun-kyokai* [Navy Association]. We could help them by joining that club, but after Pearl Harbor the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] rounded the club members up and persecuted them with questions, and all were put into a jail.

December 7, 1941, fell on Sunday and the day Buddha attained spiritual enlightenment. On that day I had a meeting of the Los Angeles Buddhist Church Federation. After that I went to San Pedro in Terminal Island where

about three thousand Japanese were living. There is a suspension bridge across to Terminal Island, and the bridge was closed on that day.

Y: You mean after you had entered Terminal Island?

T: Yes. I couldn't go anywhere. So I stayed there with a family overnight. I couldn't send anything written in Japanese. I carried with me the notebook of the temple's donation list. The construction of the temple had been complete but we were still in debt for that. We needed donations in order to pay off the debt. I went to the post office and tried to send the notebook to the temple, but they didn't allow me to send anything written in Japanese. I was staying in a member's house, so I didn't shave myself. The guards were standing in line at the bridge holding guns with bayonets and checking every car.

Y: How was this watch like? Was every one who was going to cross the bridge stopped or did they check only Japanese?

T: They did that to all; they checked car trunks and anything, even Caucasian people. They thought I was a Mexican because I didn't shave myself that day and I was tall. So I could pass there. I went to driving and stopped by a gas station. I heard President Roosevelt giving a speech to the Congress on the air right at that time. I had to break a dollar bill to make a telephone call there. I noticed that the people working at the station were staring at me. I think they thought I was a Japanese.

Y: How could you tell that they thought you were a Japanese?

T: Because I was intently listening to the speech. Then I called here [the temple]. They said many FBI men had come and they were in the yard of this temple. So I couldn't get into the temple. My house is in the Vermont Area. I called my wife [Sujue Hasu Takahashi] and asked her to go out to the sidewalk and check. She said no one was there; then I went back home. It was December 8. I was prepared for the FBI to come to my house and pick me up, but they didn't come on that day.

They already started interning the German people before the war started. So I put my mind at rest about what seemed to be the fact that the Japanese people who were regarded as important to the Japanese community would be detained too. The FBI men came to take me in the afternoon of December 9. It was raining at that moment. I took my overcoat, toothbrush, and razor. I put them into my pocket. The younger FBI man asked the older one what I had put into my pocket, and the older man reported to him all the items I took. I also carried some pocket money. I was taken to the police station which was located in front of USC [University of Southern California] and they transferred me to the police there. Then two policemen sent me to the county jail. I took all my clothes off there and put prisoners' [blue] jean pants on. I left my clothes and wallet with them. They allowed me to carry three or four dollars because people came to sell goods such as toothbrushes and candies, and I needed to buy them.

On the same day, December 9, someone who had attended a wedding party was taken into the jail. He came with a swallow-tailed coat on him. When we were taken to Montana by train after that, he didn't have any clothes except the swallow-tail. Another man, who was a boss of a market, was wearing only an aloha-shirt when he was put into the jail. He said he was told that he would stay about thirty minutes in the jail, so he came with the aloha-shirt. When it came time to go to a cold place like Montana--we didn't know that we were going to be sent to Montana at that moment--he said he had nothing to wear. So I lent him mine.

In the county jail one lady hung herself to death. The Japanese people had no experience of being treated so harshly before. When it came to being imprisoned, some got very nervous. Another one, a doctor [Rikta Honda] who was blamed for committing espionage, cut his wrist and put his hand in the toilet water. Blood doesn't harden in the water, so it naturally bled him to death.

Y: Who was the lady who committed suicide first?

T: She was a proprietress of Umeya, a confectionary in Little Tokyo. She belonged to the navy association. She said she was suspected as a spy. She was a woman, and she was so shocked at being suspected. The news of these two persons was put in the *Los Angeles Times* here in Los Angeles. While I was in jail, I heard the news that the best battleship England owned, the *Prince of Wales*, had been sunk by the Japanese air fighters.

Y: How did you get the news? Were you able to know what was happening outside?

T: Yes, I could know that because people came into the jail to sell newspapers. They came everyday and sold things like candies and newspapers. Two persons were put into one cell and each cell had a bunk bed. A young guy who shared the cell with me said he would feel sorry if he took up the upper bunk and fell down from the bed. He was a Kibei-Nisei. He was rounded up because he belonged to the *Kaigun-kyokai*. That boy was working under a Japanese medical doctor by the name of Dr. Furukawa, and his name was Mr. Tsubo. He now has become a boss in the Asian Travel Bureau.

There were also German and Italian people in the jail. When night came, they yelled and threw chairs against the walls of the cell. It was no use getting irritated, so I told a story to the Japanese people of Tajinokami Yagyu and Takuan-zenji in order to compose ourselves. The story was about a tiger which Iemitsu Tokugawa received from Korea as a gift. He ordered Tajinokami Yagyu [a master swordsman] and Takuan-zenji [a well-known Buddhist monk] to go into the cage in which the tiger was kept. First, Tajinokami Yagyu went into the cage with an iron club in his hand. He intended to hit the tiger if it started to sink its teeth into him. Meanwhile, Takuan-zenji said one should concentrate his mind through meditation in order to settle himself down so that the tiger wouldn't get excited.

Meditation led him to attain a peace and oneness of mind. So, after all, it was to our advantage to maintain our composure while in the jail.

They led us out on December 19. On the day before, I had a chance to meet my family. When they came to see me they saw I was wearing faded jean pants--everybody is wearing jeans today but no one wore them in those days--and they cried for ten minutes.

On December 19, I thought they would release us, but the guards came up and ordered us to get on a bus. We were taken out to a train and transferred onto it. They didn't take us to a train station, but they took us to a place where a lot of rails were and trains were placed. About 200 to 250 were captured and taken there. When I arrived there I recognized some familiar faces. After we got on the train I found that watchmen were standing in every compartment. They threatened us, saying that they would shoot us if we opened up the blinds. They ordered us not to see anything through the windows. We had no idea whether the train was heading north or south. We later found out that the train went along the Pacific coast through Seattle. The train picked up the Japanese people who were rounded up by that time at several stops.

On the train, one smart old man said he had taken a look out of the window and saw brackens and ferns. If we were heading south we should see desert, so he said we should be going up north. Then he whispered, "It must be Oregon!"

The train we were on was nice, and we had good food on the train, but some people had nervous breakdowns. One person attempted to bite his tongue through and commit suicide. So we put a toothbrush into his mouth and let him bite it instead so that he wouldn't bite his tongue through. Being captured, we worried about our wives and children, and we couldn't look out through the windows. That drove us to nervous breakdowns. The place we arrived at was Fort Missoula in Montana.

Y: It's a very cold place, isn't it?

T: Yes, it is. When we arrived there, the temperature was 28 degrees below the freezing point.

Y: How was the heating system set up?

T: There was one big stove for one barrack, which accommodated fifty people. If the fire didn't burn well, smog [smoke] prevented us from sleeping. Watchmen came every night to check up on us so that we wouldn't escape

There happened a funny incident there. If we put a piece of bread on the stove it turned it into toast. One person who had suffered from a skin cancer put an ointment can on the stove and somebody took it for butter. In the camp, everybody tried to take advantage of any chance when you could find something to eat. That person with the "red face" [from a skin cancer]

came back and said, "I thought I put my ointment here on the stove, but I don't see it now." And the guy said, "Was it your medicine? I thought it was butter. I have eaten it!"

Y: (laughter) That's terrible. How was the food situation? Was it that bad?

T: It was bad. The Immigration Service and the Army were very different in the way they took care of us. In war, the Army came first and had better things. In America, some people cook cut cow's intestines and eat it. The dinner menu for the day we arrived at the [Fort Missoula] camp was stew. There was nothing in the stew except the cut intestines. We later found out that the cook was cheating; he used only a small amount of meat or other stuff for cooking and sold the remains to restaurants in the town.

Y: So he was selling it through an illegal channel?

T: Yes, he was. When we found out about it we complained, and the cook was fired. The chief administrator of the camp [N. D. Collaer] was good but the men working under him were bad, so that happened. The camp had just opened, and there was no hospital facilities; we had a hard time when we fell ill. On April 15 the next year we were transferred to the Army's hands in order to move out to the next camp. They threatened to shoot us if we tried to escape in the process of the moving. They didn't let us talk with each other in the mess hall. We all thought we would be taken to somewhere and shot to death. So the greeting words exchanged among us was "Make smile to death."

About 250 people who were rounded up first were put on the top list. When we had a hearing, they mentioned that some of us celebrated *Ten choset su* [the Emperor's Birthday] on a Japanese warship which arrived in San Pedro. They held a picture we took on the ship. If they found any of us in the picture they sent them to the other camp. People who were not in the picture were permitted to come back to Los Angeles if they swore allegiance.

Y: So there actually were some people who came back here to Los Angeles from camp?

T: Yes. They came back here in May and got together with their family, and some of them went to the relocation centers together with their family. The rest of us crossed the mountains. They were covered with snow. We couldn't see anything but white snow. I heard that the lakes were beautiful there during the summer. Until we crossed the mountain pass, we thought that our end would be here and we would all be killed. We exchanged the greeting words with each other, saying no matter what would happen to us we would smile when we would be put to death.

The second camp we went to was Fort Sill in Oklahoma. The camp was the headquarters of an artillery division, so there were big buildings which were used for storing guns. I first wondered in which of the buildings we would sleep, but ours were but sixteen by sixteen foot tents. Two beds were placed

in one tent. In May, the tents were blown away by a storm. When the wind rose, it blew away the holding stones. It became hot on one day and cold the next day. That's what the weather was like in Oklahoma. The tents, which accommodated five hundred Japanese people, were pitched in a limited portion of the camp ground, and were surrounded by double barbed wire fences. An asphalted path was built in between for temporary use. Before we arrived, the Japanese people from Hawaii were there with about eighty-five Buddhist ministers among them.

As far as I remember, it happened at around eight o'clock in the morning. A man from Hawaii tried to climb up the barbed wire. You couldn't climb up it even if you wanted to try. Then a watchman tried to shoot at him. We said to him not to shoot him because he couldn't climb up anyway. Machine guns were placed at the four corners inside of the camp but a watchman who was standing in the outside of the camp shot him to death.

There was a man from Panama who was known for his collection of articles from the ancient Inca Empire. He collected them in Lima, Peru. He engaged in his business on a large scale in Panama, but he was suspected of being a spy because of that. He and fifteen men were put into the camp. The administration people were very strict with him; they checked up on him twice a day, once in the morning and once at night. His name is Yoshio Amono. He is still living and well known in the world for his wide collection of historical records of the Inca Empire.

Y: Where is he living now?

T: He is in Lima, Peru.

Y: So he went back where he had been?

T: Right. He had suffered from financial trouble in maintaining the museum. Running a museum costs lots of money, you know, so he has asked the Japanese government for financial aid. That man planted pine trees which grew into huge trees. He was quite successful in appointing the Japanese living in the country to leadership positions in his business and employing the Caucasian people who were to work for them.

A lot of other Japanese came to the Oklahoma camp too. The number of Japanese people in the camp was as many as to make up the number of American prisoners-of-war in Japan. The guy who tried to cut his tongue through on the train and attempted to commit suicide by poking his head into a stove in Montana was there in Fort Sill. He clamored at night, so they killed him. On the day he was killed, they thought the Japanese would go on a riot and they turned on a searchlight to keep strict vigilance on the internees. We couldn't go to the bathroom because of the searchlight. We could piddle somewhere behind the trees but we were in trouble if we wanted to evacuate the bowels.

The eighty-five ministers performed a funeral service once for three persons.

One had suffered from a tongue cancer, and the other two from Hawaii and Los Angeles had had neurasthenia. The funeral service was performed individually for each on the asphalted path.

Y: Were the eighty-five ministers who had performed the service the total number of ministers in the camp?

T: Yes, about eight-five from Hawaii. There were only two from Los Angeles, another person and I.

The third camp we went to was in Livingstone, Louisiana. It was located two-hundred miles north of New Orleans. I was going to drop by the automobile club and pick up that state's map and show you where it was located, but I will send you one if I can get it.

Y: Do you recall the day when you went to Livingstone?

T: Yes. On that day the American government decided to have a demonstration to show the public how many Japanese they were holding. On the way to Louisiana from Oklahoma we had to walk from a station through a town. That happened to fall on Memorial Day.

In Oklahoma, the artillery were in the camp and while they were training in shooting they played a song every morning like, "Remember Pearl Harbor. . ." (sings) They had to build barracks in the Livingstone camp while we were in Montana. The construction was not completed when we left Montana for Livingstone, so they put us with the Army in Oklahoma for forty-nine days, I think. The barracks were already built when we arrived at the Livingstone camp.

We made up two platoons with each consisting of 250 persons, and that made up one company of 500 persons. We were so divided that we [the people from Los Angeles] couldn't associate with them [the people from Hawaii]. A Japanese lawyer used to read the *Los Angeles Times* by holding it in his right hand and translating it into Japanese everyday. We had two commanders for each platoon and the commander of the company was Mr. Gongoro Nakamura. Mr. [Katsume] Mukaeda was the commander of our platoon. Mr. Mukaeda and I slept in the the same barrack, which had fifteen people put into it. Mr. Mukaeda and I know each other well. I had Mr. Mukaeda read the *Saturday Evening Post* and translate it for us, and I took notes of it. One of the articles he translated which I couldn't forget was about Persia. It said the most valuable land in the future would be Persia. I also remember that in 1942 the papers said the founder of Japanese militarism was Shoin Yoshida. He was planning to come to America, but he was not a militarist. It was said that he wanted to know about foreign affairs in order to keep Japan on a global level. Most of his followers, such as Hirobumi Ito and the others, became politicians but not militarists. There was nothing to do in the Louisiana camp. So, things like competing or racing with other internees in searching for a big pine tree was the only pleasure we had there.

I went to the Crystal City camp in August 1944. The reason they opened the camp in August was because school started in September. Schools were so built that the kids who were going to go back to Japan attended the Japanese school, and a public school was built for the other kids who would stay in America. Teachers taught them hard in the schools. People needed to find a job in the camp and the teaching job was the best paying. The teachers could get nineteen dollars a month. One teacher, by the name of Mr. Sugimacni, saved all the money he earned from teaching. He was the man who received a Ph. D. in Los Angeles and used the money he made in the camp as an investment to build a joint system of Japanese language schools. The passage fare to go back to Japan by boat was expensive in those days. It cost from \$75 to \$85, and it wasn't a price I could easily afford. After the war was over there were people who wanted to go back to Japan if they had a chance because of the anti-Japanese sentiment. Some of the Japanese who wanted to go back to Japan circulated a false rumor saying Japan must have won the war although we had been informed that she had lost. They said it because they wanted to go back to Japan. They made up a *Katta-gumi* [a group of Japanese people who believed Japan had won the war], and they went back to Japan in a group by a government ship.

The food situation in the Crystal City camp was good because the head administrator of the camp, Mr. [Joseph] O'Rourke, was a good person. It was bad in Santa Fe and Montana. My wife had become as skinny as a ghost because she brought up four children by herself for three years in the Rohwer Relocation Center. The humid weather that we had in Crystal City agreed with the Japanese. My wife gained weight there, and she was relieved from anxiety. I sometimes cooked there, and my kids said, "Daddy's tastes better." (Breaks into a smile)

One time I sent my kids to get a haircut and to the movie. They came back with a rough head bit by mosquitoes. My wife cried looking at their heads. They were small kids and they were so absorbed in watching the movie that they forgot to drive the mosquitoes away from them. When I was working in the garden, I held a cigarette in my mouth in order to keep away mosquitoes. I didn't want to smoke a cigarette, but the smoke drove the mosquitoes away.

Runners of cucumbers grew more than one foot long over there. I heard that there were about 1,200 different kinds of birds in the United States and 700 of them were in Texas. This tells how Texas is rich in crops and blessed with warm weather. Texas is the place where elephants in a circus rest during the winter. If you buy a postcard in Texas you might find elephants in it and you might wonder why. That's because they come back there in the winter.

After the war was over, I received a deportation order. I was regarded as an undesirable alien. I couldn't come back here to Little Tokyo.

Y: How many people went back to Japan?

- T: I wonder how many. . .lots of people went back. Most of the bachelors went back. Those persons who had family and left their stuff in their house couldn't go back, you know.
- Y: What was the anti-Japanese sentiment like after you came back here to Little Tokyo?
- T: According to the survey done by UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles], people thought the Evacuation of the Japanese race was good because the Japanese didn't commit crimes and have to be taken to jail. I think that's the way it should be.
- Y: Going back a little, I heard that some riots were going on in some camps. Have you seen any?
- T: I heard that there was serious tension in Lordsburg.
- Y: Did you hear what it was like?
- T: Yes. It was in connection with the Japanese sailors who were in the Lordsburg camp. The Japanese sailors didn't hold their lives dear. They raised a Japanese flag in the camp. America is unified under the stars and stripes, and it wasn't allowed to raise a flag of a foreign country because America was the country of the stars and stripes. You can put up an international flag or the flags of many nations in front of the United Nations Building in New York. If one joins in a parade for a ritual with a hat on his head, he can't complain if he would be killed because of that. People respect the flag, respect it as a symbol of liberty and happiness. The Buddhists revere a mortuary tablet. It's just like idol worship of Christians. The other day, one Sansei said he doubted that people would see an American flag as an idol when they were at a ritual. He said he thought it's just a wooden pole and a piece of cloth colored red, white, and blue. A Japanese sailor drew a big sun on a bed sheet and put it up in the camp, and he said he would scream. America is a foreign country, so I don't understand why he should do that.
- Y: What about the Santa Fe camp?
- T: I heard that there was a riot there, but that went on after I left the camp. While I was in the camp, there wasn't any clamorous riot. Our group was made up of a kind of persons who had leadership positions. They should be sensible persons. Most of them were rounded up first because they were the leaders. There were second and third roundups. An old man I know was preparing to go whenever they came to take him. He put a suitcase aside and waited for their coming, but after all he wasn't rounded up.
- I wanted to come back here to Los Angeles after the war ended, but I received a deportation order. The former bishop of this temple was a strange person. He took up all the revenue for the temple and didn't pay even a tax.

If he had used the temple just for the church activities, he could have been exempted from the tax. But he let the Japanese people place their stuff and allowed them to stay in this temple. So he received a five thousand dollar tax to pay, and there was a possibility that this temple would be put up to auction. No money was left for the temple. In order to solve the problem, I told them I would go back to Japan. I thought it was enough for me to have an experience of helping to build this temple. I didn't have a good command of English, and I thought things were going to be with the Nisei generation.

They have ABCs even in Sanskrit and German; they just pronounce them different. Japanese are poor in English because the Japanese language doesn't have ABCs. Now we live in an age when the world has become international. On the other day, my son [Koji Milton Takahashi] met Mr. Gongoro Nakamura who was a lawyer and a graduate of USC, just like Mr. Mukaeda. His second son [Robert Masao Nakamura], who is a biochemist and a specialist in the study of the female hormone, goes all over the world giving lectures. He goes everywhere, whether it's Germany, Egypt, England, or Brazil. A Japanese businessman bought a house next to his place on a hillside in San Pedro. He [the businessman] brought their parents from Japan to live with him, but his mother had no command of English. When she fell ill or had an accident, she had trouble in making herself understood. So, he thought he'd better go back to Japan with them because of the trouble with English. When I was invited to their home the other day, I told him he should become an internationalist, and try his best to link what's good about America and Japan. After the war, I always told college professors the importance of raising people to be internationalists. I know some English vocabulary, but I can't use verbs because I didn't study English at school. I can put some words together, but I can't use verbs.

Y: I bet it's hard.

T: When I talked to you over the phone you said you were a student from Tokyo. A lot of people come from Tokyo because they know how to go through the formalities to come to America. When I visited Japan after the war, I found people in Tokyo knew what kind of sweater matched them. (Pulling the interviewer's sweater) For instance, they knew a sweater with a vertical stripe design would look good on a fat person. Whereas, in Osaka, people didn't care about that. (laughter) This is just my opinion. What I'm saying is Tokyo is an international city where western fashion and Japanese custom mix. I am not saying that everything in Japan should be Americanized. The traditional beauty of Japan should be retained, too. American style clothes are easy to wear, but you don't feel serious when you are at a ritual unless you wear the traditional Japanese apparel.

Anyway, when I received a deportation order, the members of the Little Tokyo boy scouts filled a petition requesting that the order be removed. They said I was a bishop who brought them up and helped to make the boy scout troop number one in America. Owing to their plea, I could come back here on May 10, 1946.

- Y: Did all the Japanese leaders receive the deportation order?
- T: Yes, they did. Persons like Mr. Mukaeda received the order too. I guess there was about 150 to 250 who received it. They shouldn't have interned a person like Mr. Mukaeda. He is a sensible man and worked hard for cultural exchange between America and Japan. They thought he was an agent for the Japanese government. Russia sent a lot of spies but America might have spies too. You can't tell how many weapons your enemy has unless you send spies.
- Y: I understand that a Christian minister by the name of Herbert Nicholson visited the camps. Do you know what he did for the internees?
- T: He helped to send the internees' messages to their families. Some people such as Mr. [Yoemon] Minami had his house usurped by a Caucasian. Today he is a big farmer, and he is from Wakayama Prefecture. Some people left their business to Caucasian and Mexican people while they were in the camps. A believer in Buddhism whom I know left his business to somebody and restarted it after he came back here. Some others who were engaged in agriculture had to work very hard because they had a lack of hired hands. In those days, everything they made had a great sale. But they died soon because they worked hard due to a lack of hired hands.
- Students from Japan in those days had a difficult time in catching up at college because of the language problem, and some of them committed suicide. In American colleges, there is an exam in one week or two, you know. Even Japanese Americans, such as the Nisei, can't do well at college if they get drunk often. You've come to study at an American college and you are working hard to become an international person. By all means we need more mothers who had an experience like you. Otherwise, the Japanese won't become a good race. It's great to have a person like you.
- Y: Before ending this interview, would you like to say something about what you think about your experience in the camps, or would you like to add anything to this interview?
- T: Throughout the experience in the camps, I learned many things which I could tell anybody anywhere I went. My wife delivered her fifth baby in the Crystal City camp. The hospital service there was perfect. There is kindness in American society, I think. I had a chance to know many people who were from all over. I met some good Caucasian administrators. I can tell all those experiences wherever I go. I learned good lessons throughout my experience in the camps.
- Y: Well, we thank you for your frank expression of ideas and interesting conversation on behalf of the Japanese American Oral History Project of the California State University, Fullerton. Thank you very much.
- T: You are quite welcome and thank you for coming.

END OF INTERVIEW

Notes

¹Reverend Aoyama served as the head of the early Los Angeles Koyasan Buddhist Temple from his arrival in the United States to 1921.

²Shinoko Fujimoto was closely connected with the Koyasan Buddhist sect in Japan acting as the dean of Koyasan University and a bishop.

³The Los Angeles Koyasan Temple was known as the "sailors' temple" or "sailors' auntie" for its work among visiting Japanese naval personnel. The book, *Koyasan Buddhist Temple, 1912-1962*, (Los Angeles: 1974), remarks that the Japanese naval officers were well received by the Southern California Japanese American community, however, the common sailors were often neglected. Church groups, like the Koyasan Temple, stepped in to fill this need.

⁴See "Terminal Island Isolated as Defense Precaution," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 December 1941, p. F. The *Times* reported that soldiers "halted all motorists and required identification and particularly questioned all Orientals attempting to enter or leave the area."

⁵Some German and Italian seamen had been interned prior to Pearl Harbor.

⁶See "Japanese Doctor Kills Self in Cell." *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 1941; see also, *Foreign Relations 1943*, Vol. III, P. 1052, and pp. 1076-1077.

⁷The recently constructed British battleship, *Prince of Wales*, and the battle cruiser, *Repulse*, were sunk off Malaya by Japanese aircraft on December 9, 1941.

⁸See subsequent interview with Yamamoto by Clark.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰See previous interview with Mukaeda by Clark, particularly f.n. 5.

¹¹See previous interview with Shimizu by Yamashita and Clark, particularly f.n. 5.

¹²See subsequent interview with Yamamoto by Clark, particularly f.n. 6.

¹³See previous interview with Dockum by Clark and Pressler.

¹⁴See previous interview with Mukaeda by Clark.

¹⁵The tax problem of the temple was solved in two ways. First, the tax authorities allowed the temple's back taxes to be payed off over a ten year period through installments, and, second, monies were obtained through the Wartime Evacuation Compensation Bill; see *Koyasan Buddhist Temple, 1912-1962*, pp. 187-188.

¹⁶The Koyasan Temple's Boy Scout Troop 379 traveled in 1935 to Washington, D. C. to participate as a group in that year's Boy Scout Jamboree. While in the East, the troop was greeted by New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia and Japanese Ambassador Hiroshi Saito; see *Koyasan Buddhist Temple, 1912-1962*, pp. 146-148.

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