

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Children's Village at Manzanar Oral History Project

An Oral History with MARY MATSUNO MIYA

Interviewed

By

Celia Cardenas

On March 13, 1993

OH 2489

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NARRATOR: MARY MATSUNO MIYA
INTERVIEWER: Celia Cardenas
DATE: March 13, 1993
LOCATION: Los Angeles, California
PROJECT: Children's Village at Manzanar

CC: This is an interview with Mary Matsuno Ito.

MM: No, Miya. Ito was my first husband, and I am Miya now.

CC: Oh, great, Miya. So, it's Mary Matsuno Miya, by Celia Cardenas, and this is an interview for the Japanese American Project of the Oral History Program of Cal State University, Fullerton. The interview is being held at approximately 1:29 p.m. at the home of Tamotsu Isozaki¹ on March 13, 1993.

MM: In Monterey Park, California.

CC: In Monterey Park, California. (laughs) Okay, Mary. I'll just ask you the first question. How old were you when you went into the camp?

MM: I was fourteen.

CC: You were fourteen. So, basically you had a very stable life before you went in?

MM: I would say so.

CC: What can you tell me about life before camp?

MM: Life before camp? Well, we were right in the middle of it because we were on Terminal Island. I don't know if you're aware of Terminal Island. Terminal Island was an island right across the bay from San Pedro. We had forty-eight hours notice to move. They made that a Naval base. Therefore, the Baptist church helped us. I'm fourth in line of nine, so from myself down to the next to last baby—my mother was in the state institution in San Bernardino, Patton. She went in there in the summer of

¹ Tamotsu Isozaki, O.H. 2332, Center for Oral and Public History.

'41, and she had a baby a month before Pearl Harbor, on the 4th of November. My youngest sister, therefore, was the youngest child to go into this Japanese children's home, which is also known as Shonien, or known as the Japanese Children's Home of Silverlake because that's the area of Los Angeles where it was. Therefore, from myself down, we were placed into this home. That was approximately February of '42. The older ones, three above me, they were in East Los Angeles, Boyle Heights. I don't know what kind of arrangement they had, where they lived, or anything, but they had hostels or such where they put these people. When the Terminal Island people had to move out, as I understand, a lot of the Japanese people in Norwalk and all the areas around came to help them to move out, because forty-eight hours is nothing.

All I remember is my father had a safe since I was little, and it took five people to move it. He was a champion Sumotori. When my kid brother below me, Shioo, was born—Shioo, Shido, and Takatow², that's Tak, the three were born in a hotel, when they ran a hotel. They ran a labor camp, labor camp workers that worked the fields in Oxnard and in San Pedro. My father also had a transfer company called Kozan Express, and that was his Sumo, his championship name, Kozan. So, my brother below me, Shioo,

S-h-i-o-o, he was named during the time my father was champion, and the way his name is written in Japanese, which we just found out a couple of years before he died—he died in '89, November, of cancer. I went to tell him about an incident, and then he figured out that that's why my father kept telling him the way his name is written means never defeated.

Like I say, a lot of things happened. I'm sure I'm just touching here and there, but this is one of the events that a lot of people don't know about. I could tell you more about that because the people on Terminal Island were fishermen, and during full moon, which was that weekend of the 6th of December, my father went back to Monterey where his boat that he was working on was. During full moon, they do not fish. They come home if they're far away. They don't work. He had to find a way to get back home because my kid sister was being taken care of in Japanese Town, in Little Tokyo. We were on Terminal Island, the rest of us, and my mother was in the hospital in San Bernardino. So, it was difficult, but I came across a man that happened to be the driver that drove my father and several other men back from Monterey. We were friends because of a later on incident that happened. His son died in a dune buggy in Pismo. Because we used to go to Pismo when all the children were growing up. I had two brothers up north, my oldest brother in Mill Valley and my brother below me in Sunnyvale. It was a halfway point, so we all used to gather at every chance we got, especially the ones that had children. This is why we always went there. This fellow and his wife, it was the first outing, and tragically, they lost their son because the son-in-law was so anxious to go out dune bugging. They didn't know how to drive in the sand or anything. They couldn't wait for the rest of us. We all went out in a pack, eight or twelve dune buggies, would go out. Anyway, I wasn't there that trip, and all the people there, my brothers, all pitched in and helped.

² Takatow Matsuno, O.H. 2339, Center for Oral and Public History.

He was the one, we were going to Monterey, and we stopped at his place. He lives in Nipomo, which is right by Pismo, Oceano. We stopped there, and I was talking about a character he had on the wall. I was mentioning about the fact what does that mean and this card I had at home. I was telling him—I don't know how I got on the subject, but I get on all kind of subjects. I rant and rave, actually. But, what happened was, I was talking about this, and he was agreeing with me, like he knew. Well, it turned out he was the driver and owner of the car that drove my father and the other men. This friend of his had approached him and said, "Would you help us out? I'd like to go to Monterey and bring these men back to their families." You weren't allowed to travel right after Pearl Harbor, none of the Japanese. There was no movement. But they got through. How I knew about it—my father never told me, but one of the other fellows that ended up in San Diego or National City, he had a grocery there—he died several years ago—he was the one that told me about it. That he was on this car, and my father was on this car that was driven back to Terminal Island. He had told me about it, so I knew at least two of the occupants, my father and him. Then I found out the driver. (laughs) It's a small world. It really is a small world. He was the driver.

See, when the war broke out, they did everything to us. They froze the money in the banks. I mean, they made life impossible. You had to turn in all your radio, shortwave, and such. You had to turn in all your firearms. I don't know about cameras, but anyway, they had to do all this. There weren't even receipts and things like that.

My father, he had a lot of guns, rifles especially, because as a young man and being prominent, he used to go hunting to Utah. So, we always had a deer head. We had two deer heads, with the antlers and then a baby deer. That was stuffed and on the wall when we had the hotel and when we lived in Terminal Island. Then after that, they disappeared. Whether they were in storage or not—I know we had a stove, and we never got back our stove. Things just disappeared. It's unbelievable. You have to think of your parents and think what they worked for because I couldn't remember—we made the last payment on our gas stove and the war broke out.

[00:11:09]

CC: And you guys never got it back.

MM: Yeah. We laugh about it.

CC: Now? (chuckles)

MM: Yeah. It's little things, but the little things make up what happened.

CC: They make up life.

MM: I always believe this way, that what happens happens, and it happens for the best. I don't try to look at the bad side of it. For one thing, the war brought a lot of feelings. The repercussions came rather late, because this generation was the first generation of

this country. Therefore, your innocence really dragged you down because you don't come to the realization till later, after things happen. That's why I say it's kind of difficult, but what happened was, we couldn't come back to the West Coast. We had to have West Coast clearance. The West Coast was evacuated from Washington all the way down to California. If you were on the West Coast you were—you know, if you lived in Utah or Idaho, you weren't a threat to the country, so to speak, but they brainwashed the public. I could think about it. I was at that age, and I know what happened. There's things that you read about, and it's surprising. People, the stories they tell, trying to get through and people helping them, because by rights they weren't allowed to travel. I talked to somebody once; they were newlyweds. They traveled to Colorado, and they were jailed. And this man knew he had to work on the wife because that was the only way he could get to the husband, and it worked. The husband let them go, then told them where to go and when to travel and where to stop at so they could get there. People helped you when they realize what you're up against. It's unbelievable the stories you hear. I think, because we weren't allowed on the West Coast, and we were spread all out through the United States, that gave us our opportunities.

CC: Because you were spread out?

MM: That's right. Like before, the professionals could only practice within their own race. This opened up the field because they had to spread out to places they didn't know or anything. Because when they were sent out from camp, they made sure that kid that was going to go to college, or schooling, or something was A-1 stuff, not a deadbeat. You know what I'm saying? Because the example they were going to set to the people in the community, they had to be careful. I mean, you know, it was planned. If you were permitted out or you went anywhere, to work in a home or whatever, they had to pick people of good character, so to speak.

CC: To set a good example.

MM: That's right. That's right. Because we would reflect on all the rest of us.

CC: Did it reflect on you guys? Did it make a difference when you guys got out?

MM: Oh, well, sure. They excelled. They excelled. That's why when I read in the paper that if the Japanese people of American descent are in the top bracket or something like this, you've got to figure it comes back from Japan. They go to school six days a week. I don't know what now, but they went six days, and they're the most educated country in the whole world. If they had education—you know yourself that education is going to help you. That's why you're going to school. So, what happens, it reflects when my folks come here. They both came here when they were sixteen years old.

CC: Your mom and your dad?

MM: That's right.

CC: So, they were Issei?

MM: Yes. My grandfather was here, too. My grandfather was here, and my father did not know his father. Our history, the Matsuno's, is very unusual. When you say Issei, that's Japanese born, right? We would be third generation then, because my grandfather was here, my father was here, and then we were the firstborn. But, that's why they say Nikkei, because some people, the married ones might be born in Japan and the other ones born here. So, they say one-and-a-half or whatever. (laughs)

CC: Where were you when you found out about Pearl Harbor? Do you remember that day?

MM: At home. I remember it, and I still picture it. We were at home, and it came on the radio. My two older brothers had a bet. They knew there was going to be a war. This war was egged on by the United States. I mean, even at that young age I was aware of it. And they had a bet. I don't know which way they bet or what, but I remember that. I remember that my two older brothers had a bet with each other.

CC: But, you never expected what happened, Order 9066 could happen?

MM: Well, that Order 9066, I wasn't really aware of it until after I was in camp.

CC: After you were in camp?

MM: Um-hm.

CC: You didn't know why you were in camp, at first?

MM: I know that we were in a home, and we were the last ones to leave the Los Angeles area. Mrs. Matsumoto said the housing wasn't complete. That's why it was so late. But, I remember there were some children that had got CD, contagious disease. I don't think it was chicken pox. I think it was scarlet fever or something like that. I was going to ask one of these girls that I remember that we had to leave behind. Anyway, that's what she told me, and what I remember is two different things. I had to ask this girl about it. But I never got the chance. Because I get exhausted, and in the summer I have arthritis very bad. In the summer I get exhausted quicker. Like now I'm feeling good, in this cooler weather and everything. I feel good, so I could exert myself. But at the time we had the reunion, I couldn't join in and talk to a lot of people like I wanted to because it would just absolutely wipe me out, you know what I mean? Getting involved. You know your limitations, so, when you have a sickness, you have to govern it yourself because you're the one that suffers. So, I always think, Gee, I wish I could have talked, that we had more time.

[00:20:00]

CC: Well, now we can talk and put it out for everyone to hear you. Because it's important, people should know. So, you didn't go directly from Terminal Island to Children's Village. You went to an orphanage?

MM: Yeah. We went to the Japanese Children's Home.

CC: How long were you there?

MM: We were there roughly from February to July, I think it was. June or July. I remember when we came on the bus into Manzanar, there were all these people, they were all Japanese, and they were all brown from the sun. And here we are, we were all white because we were just arriving. And this is the desert, below sea level, Manzanar is. I remember that when we were going on the bus to Children's Village, Children's Village was directly the last thing in the back from the road. There was the hospital to this one side, then there was a road, and Children's Village was here in Block 29, in front of the hospital. They were right across the street from us.

CC: Did they allow you guys to take any personal belongings?

MM: Well, they just packed everything. They packed everything for us. But I think the evacuees were just allowed, whatever they could carry, that was it.

CC: You guys had no choice on what to take?

MM: We didn't have much anyway, so it didn't matter to us. When you're a child, you can get along with anything. You find that out. You don't have to have a lot of things. If you have clean clothing and a change, that's enough. As you get older, it's different. We just accumulate more worldly goods.

CC: Like you said, the Children's Village was located at the northwest corner of the center.

MM: Is that where it is?

CC: Yeah, the northwest corner, right opposite Block 29.

MM: Yeah. See, Block 29 was across the street, and then Children's Village.

CC: Did you make friends with the people outside the Village?

MM: Yes, across the street. The Kageyamas. Wilbur [Sato] was in 29 also, but I knew Wilbur before the war. They lived across the street in Terminal Island.

CC: So, he was a neighbor in both places.

MM: I don't know where he lived. I think he lived in 29.

CC: But, you did make friends with people outside the Village?

MM: Oh, yes, because we went to school also. They had school. They called it a secondary school, but that was way down there, roughly Block 8. I think it was 1, 8, 13, 19, 25, and 30 that was facing the street, Highway 395. So, the school was right down there. In other words, it's 1 to 7, right? So, 8 would start down here again, and each block is composed of fifteen barracks, and then two bathrooms—men and women—and laundry room in the middle.

CC: Since you went to school with the rest of the kids, how was their education? How well was it? How much did they teach you?

MM: Oh, we had speech, we had English, we had bookkeeping. I don't think we had any real deep sciences or anything like that. I don't remember that. I was there from the ninth to the twelfth grade.

CC: You graduated there?

MM: Yeah. We were the last graduating class, in 1945. I should have brought the album, huh?

CC: Oh, you should! Maybe next time. That would have been interesting.

MM: There's a lot of pictures. Tamo's brother and he were both classmates of mine, but they were older. The Salvation Army kids were all older, and they weren't really in the right classes. You know what I'm saying? What they did in camp was made one year school. So, if you had to catch up to belong to this next grade, they didn't have—there's only one class of ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth. I remember, I think I had to go to summer school to catch up to be able to be in this one class with the rest, ninth, or whatever it was. We didn't have A and B classes.

CC: Was their education high quality? How would you describe it?

MM: It was called secondary school, so it wasn't the top. I don't know how they recruited their teachers, but we had a lot of older people, like the principal and the bookkeeping teacher, Dr. Woods and Dr. Potts, she was English, and she was also I think principal of the school kind of thing. The superintendent, I can see her face but I can't remember her name. We had a wonderful teacher who taught drama and choir.

CC: What was his name?

MM: Lou Frizzell. He was in the movies, Louis Frizzell. He was from Pasadena. Tamo and his kid brother, Aki, they were very close to him. From what I understand, they used to help him grade the papers. But he died. I went to one reunion—my sister was in the first graduating class in '43. Then my brother above me was in '44. Then myself in '45. So the three graduating years one of our family graduated. And we

were fortunate because Toyo Miyatake was there. He's the one that snuck in the camera lenses.

CC: Oh, the guy who took the pictures in camp?

MM: Yeah. He snuck in lens only and built his own camera. That's a story in itself. It shows it in one of the movies. Toyo Miyatake.

CC: How old was he?

MM: Let's see. He's the same age as my father, because he came here, but he went to high school in this country. My father was born in 1895. And Toyo Miyatake, say he came here in 1912 or 1916, he went to L.A. High when it was downtown L.A., wherever it was. I don't know. He told me himself, Toyo Miyatake. He went to L.A. High when it used to be located in the downtown area. I never have talked to anybody to find out where it was. It's very interesting. He used to encourage me to write, because I used to write.

CC: Have you written anything about your experience?

MM: No. A lot of people asked me to. Wilbur has tried to persuade me to write about the Village.

CC: You weren't able to, or you feel like you can't do it now?

MM: I don't know if I have time enough. I'm lazy. I'm sixty-five. If I was ten years younger, I think I wouldn't hesitate to do it. A lot of the children, or the ones that were there in the home, were orphans, or they only had one parent. We had both parents.

[00:30:03]

CC: What's your father's name?

MM: My father's name was Kanroku, K-a-n-r-o-k-u, and my mother's name was Okina, O-k-i-n-a. My father was supposed to have another woman sent to get married to, but he told his father that he wanted my mother. My mother was a beauty that lived way in the inside of the country. How he knew about her, I don't know. From her house, she was at my grandfather's house and stayed there, because my aunt that was five years older than my oldest brother, she told us about it. My mother stayed with her father. See, when my grandfather went back—well, let me tell you. My father didn't know his father. My grandfather went back to Japan and got him, and approximately in 1910, 1912, somewhere in there, he brought my father to this country. They worked for two years, and in the two years they accumulated \$2000, and he sent his father back to Japan. Then my grandmother had another child. I always believed that this was from a step-grandmother, but she was from my real grandmother. I found

that out when we went to visit. See, my father used to tell each of us kids different things. My father, before he died, he told me about this, and he told me about the two thousand. But when you're young, you don't pay attention. You hear it, but it doesn't really sink in. Then, when it was too late and he was gone and when I thought about it, I wondered, what did he do? What did he do? If they worked as farm laborers, they would never be able to accumulate that kind of money in those days, right?

Okay, so in 1972, my oldest sister, my youngest sister, and I went to Japan. At that time, the bullet train didn't go all the way to Hiroshima. They're from the country in Hiroshima. Not the city, the country. [recording paused] We found out from my younger aunt—my older aunt was already—I'll tell you the age difference. She was born in 1916 and my older aunt was born in 1898, so there's eighteen years difference. The older one was already gone out to marry when she was born, so there was no communications then. My oldest aunt just turned ninety-five last month. But, anyway, this aunt—her name is Yukie—she presented us with a picture on a postcard. I guess in the old days they used to have a lot of postcard pictures. And here this man was with a dog on a leash, with britches and one of those caps and a jacket on. She says, "Who do you think this is?" Of course, we knew that was our father. She laughed. She said, "No, that's not your father. That is *my* father, your grandfather." (chuckles) Then there was Japanese writing. They ran a boarding house and they had the farm laborers and they had the camp. They controlled the workers sent out in the fields to work, labor camps, and things like that. That's where they made their money.

CC: So, they were in business?

MM: Yeah, they were in business. And I think there was a pool hall there, too. My father would always play pool. He was a regular guy. He did everything. But he never—well, his thing was, "Speak Japanese. When you're home, you speak Japanese."

CC: So, you guys were taught to speak it and read it?

MM: No.

CC: Just to speak it?

MM: We were supposed to, but he wasn't home most of the time because he was out fishing, trying to earn a living.

CC: Do you know any Japanese?

MM: Enough to give a speech in Japanese. When we went, I had to give a speech in Japanese at a wedding. My aunt on my mother's side, she asked us if we would—it was a surprise. We met our one cousin at my mother's place. We didn't know any history on my mother till we went to Japan. Even our cousin that took us over there,

on my father's side, they'd never been way out in the country. It was way out on the other side of the mountain kind of thing.

We went, and they raise cattle, (laughs) so they had these cattle with rings on. The ringed cattle were in little fenced off areas. So, I asked my cousin, "What is this?" Because he was the oldest son's oldest son, so he was my cousin. My mother's oldest brother, he was the son of. He moved in his ancestral place, and they had the cattle there. They had two humongous—the steers must have been about this big, two of them. Because you have to go to the bathroom in the barn, and they were in the barn. I remember that. When we went back in 1987, they didn't have it anymore. They said they had given it up two years prior. They weren't raising the cattle anymore.

CC: In camp did they ever emphasize Japanese? Did they speak Japanese?

MM: They were teaching Japanese. There were a lot of Japanese schoolteachers, so they had Japanese school for whoever wanted to go. Probably at that time it was free. Maybe. It was next to nothing probably if you wanted to go learn.

CC: Did you go?

MM: I remember I started to go, and I didn't go. I remember it because I remember this one husband and wife, and their daughter was in my class. Their name was Ban, B-a-n, and they were from Boyle Heights. They taught Japanese, and there must have been others that taught Japanese in different parts of wherever they lived.

[00:40:05]

CC: Were the Bans in the orphanage too?

MM: No. They lived in barracks within the blocks. See, when my sister and brother above me moved out of the Village—after we got there, they had to leave because that was the agreement that was made for them, that they were going to be transported there only. Then they were going to go—my oldest brother was there already, and they were going to get an apartment and go live. I begged them to take me, so they took me.

CC: How long were you in Children's Village before you got transferred with your brother and sister?

MM: That same year.

CC: So, you were there less than a year.

MM: Oh, yes, definitely. I must have been. I don't really know when I left the Village. It's when they got the apartment, and they took me. That's why I wasn't—but I

- would go and visit. And then, I had a boyfriend in the Village that was from the Salvation Army.
- CC: What's his name?
- MM: His name was Gene _____ (inaudible). They used to call him Bugs.
- CC: I think I saw his picture. Do you keep in touch with him?
- MM: Well, he's one of them that I should have talked to, but I didn't. I remember when we all had to get up and say our names, and he said, "Esquire." I never knew if you used esquire, what it means. It means you're an attorney. I didn't know that. I even went home and asked my husband, and he wasn't aware of it. My sister-in-law, Tak's wife, is the one that told us esquire means he's an attorney.
- CC: When you were in the Children's Village, did you have activities, sports?
- MM: Oh, yeah. We had a team called the Fighting Nines. This was after I wasn't in the Village, but we had a baseball team called the Fighting Nines. My little sister was also in it. She was known as the homerun queen because she always hit homeruns. Then the boys had a terrific basketball team.
- CC: In the Village?
- MM: Um-hm. Most of the kids came from the Village. Tamo was in it and his brothers. Three brothers were in it. Maybe more than that. Three that I remember. Bug's brother was in it. They were great. They used to beat the Terminal Island, and the Terminal Island were known as _____ (inaudible). That was their name. What would you say? Like a gang.
- CC: Terminal Island, were they like the tough kids?
- MM: Yeah. Terminal Island was actually like a ghetto of all Japanese. I remember there was a Russian girl that lived in Terminal Island. Her family lived among the Japanese. Oh, my god, they used to tease her. She spoke Japanese fluently because she lived—and if you weren't born on Terminal Island, you were a foreigner. We were from Los Angeles so we were foreigners.
- CC: Were you treated differently?
- MM: Yes, definitely. I mean, prejudice goes on wherever you go. Even within your own people, it's worse. It's worse. But then, you have to learn to forgive because we are only children. We are children and your parents are working and they're not aware of what you're doing.

CC: Was there a big difference between the rest of Manzanar and the Children's Village? Was the Children's Village better off? Like the barracks, was the quality better?

MM: I don't think there was any difference. The only thing was that you had, instead of parents you had matrons, or men that took care of the boys, that looked over you. To me, I think every person is different. I think the boys got more love than the girls did because a lot of those—there were two sisters that were matrons that were formerly in the Japanese Children's Home. They grew up, and they became matrons. And they were matrons at that time. Some of the older ones, they were very strict. Maybe the boys' side, too, they were strict, but we didn't hear of it from my brothers, my younger brothers.

CC: They were more strict with the girls and a little bit [more] lenient with the guys?

MM: Yeah, because you've got strict teachers, and the other teachers might be very lenient. You know what I'm saying? People don't all come the same.

CC: So, two of the girls that grew up at the Village worked inside the Village?

MM: Yes. They became matrons.

CC: Did you work there, too?

MM: No, I wasn't an adult. You were an adult if you worked there.

CC: Did you work anywhere inside Manzanar?

MM: Yes. I worked in a Caucasian mess hall. I used to baby-sit for the people that worked within the camp. Because I worked in the mess hall where they would come and eat, I got to know people, and then they ask you would you baby-sit or whatever. [recording paused] I worked at a pickle factory. Little daikon like this, the baby ones? We used to pickle them so we could eat them at the mess hall. We used to pickle them. Just like they had camouflage. They used to make camouflage nets and things like that, other people. But I remember, they used to come and pick us up when I worked at the daikon place. We called it daikon factory. I remember they used to come in a flatbed truck and go all over and pick you up. You'd just sit there on the back of the thing with your legs dangling. (chuckles)

CC: Did they treat you okay at work? Were they nice to you?

MM: Oh yeah, because you're just with the people that's in the camp. In other words, the people that are directing you are actually the ones teaching you how to do the things. They were incarcerated too. I worked in the hospital. In the hospital there were a lot of Caucasian nurses. I can remember a Dr. Little, but I can't remember if that was a man or a woman. I worked in the hospital, and we were kids. I remember one of the other girls that was younger than I, we'd sit there—we worked graveyard—and we'd

get this great big book out and look at the pictures and look at the nasty things. (chuckles) In fact, Rosemary's father, he was in the hospital, I remember, when they had to clamp is penis, and they used this thing. Then we would look at it, and we would laugh. You're know, we're young and don't know any better and things like this. There was one guy that was in there from day one. His name was Pete Kondo, and he was a famous baseball player in Japanese Town, in the L.A. area. He was in an automobile accident, and then he was paralyzed. So, we all used to go see him. He was the number one customer in the hospital. (laughs)

[00:50:00]

CC: Was he sort of cute?

MM: He was okay. I mean, we were friends. I remember my older brother knew him, and they came out to visit once. This nurse took him under her wing when she left the hospital, when camp was dissolved or whatever, she still writes to me. Every Christmas I get a letter from her, what's going on. Her name was Thelma McBride. She took care of him. I remember she brought him one time to Los Angeles, and we all went up to the Miyako Hotel. We all went up to see him and everything, the people that were in the hospital. I guess he must have passed away. She's not too healthy. She writes the newsletter for her friend. That's what she said in her last Christmas letter. My older sister worked in the hospital. I don't know if it was the boiler room. I think in the laundry or something. When you came in the hospital, on the entrance side, they had the dental offices. I never went there for a doctor's visit or something, so I don't remember the doctor's offices. All I remember is I went there to get my teeth fixed, so they must have had places where you went. That one ward where they had babies and stuff—we didn't have a separate ward for just babies. I remember I got to see a two pound baby—that was the smallest—and a ten pound baby. And I wasn't even eighteen.

So, when I came out of camp—I don't know if you're familiar with Boyle Heights or where you're from—but I went to work—I worked for my father during the day. My father and my two brothers had this room right above Toyo Miyatake's studio. There were three cots in it. So, what I would do is, I worked at night, but I worked during the day also for my father. I don't know how I did these things, but I remember I worked graveyard shift at the hospital—the first night the student nurse was late—taking care of newborns. The first night she was late, and she showed me the routine. The routine that you clean so many babies—it's written up what you're supposed to do. You have to take them out for feeding. Some of them you take them out to the parents. Others you feed them. Stuff like that. I remember the second night I was by myself with twenty-two babies.

CC: Twenty-two?

MM: Twenty-two babies. I cleaned this one baby, and his cord was bleeding. They did not have a phone in the section where I worked, and it was on the second floor. So I had to stand out in the hallway, go back and forth, because if one starts crying you have to

- keep them quiet because all of them will start! So, I would run out in the hallway to see if somebody came up the stairway. Anyway, I got the nurse, finally, and then she tied the umbilical cord. I remember, God, how could she tie something that delicate? (laughs) You would think they just—(laughs)
- CC: Did you see your father in camp?
- MM: No, no. He was taken on the train, and they had the blinds all down because they didn't want them to know where they were going or the public to see them either. They went to North Dakota.
- CC: They sent him to North Dakota?
- MM: Um-hm. Then he went to I think South Dakota. I can't remember now all the places, but he was in Texas, Crystal City. He ended up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and he asked my sister—my sister used to correspond with him, with one of the guys was going to that camp to visit somebody, his parents, or I don't know who. So, I remember her talking to him. She told him what to say to my father, too. My father never commanded my sister. He always requested. My sister, to this day, will tell you—she was the oldest daughter, and without her he couldn't manage the kids or anything. He asked her if she would go with him and everybody to Japan. She told him no, that this was her country, and he accepted it. Eventually, he was released into camp. I was looking at something the other day, and it said January of '44. It was after New Year's, because I remember he spent one New Year's with us.
- CC: At the camp, in Manzanar?
- MM: Yes. So, it was after the New Year's he came. The rest of my brothers and sister came out at the Children's Village, and we had half a barrack. Nine kids and my father. My father made a basement on the side of the barrack downstairs. He was making, bootlegging, (laughs) making sake or whatever. I don't know, something to drink. My oldest brother, he always had a sign on the wall while we were growing up, Please refrain from profanity. I remember this one girl—I won't say her name—but she came over to our house, and she cussed. She just cussed, like a lot of kids do. He ordered her out of the house. He kicked her out of the house because he didn't want the little ones to be exposed to that.
- CC: So, your older brother was more of your father?
- MM: Yeah. He and my older sister were the ones that brought us up. He used to paddle us, my kid brother and I. We'd bend down. "Hold your knees, bend over." We'd be laughing our head off, and pretty soon we'd be crying. When we grew up, then we were the best of friends. It was just—what would you say? This was put on him just like they were the oldest. They had life insurance, mind you. My father had bought life insurance on them, and I remember that, as young as I was. We moved to Terminal Island when I was eight years old, and I remember that. He helped a lot of

people. And my mother got sick, so everything fell apart. My mother could say ABCs in one breath. You try it someday. When I'd go visit her in the hospital when she later went to Metropolitan in Norwalk, I used to bring her out. The nurses would always let me take her because no matter what kind of shape she was in, she would come back in better spirits. They would always let me take her, because I would take her home to my older sister's house, and then all the rest of the brothers and sisters and their kids, they would congregate. We would always meet. Right after the war there was no cars, so the two doctors, Dr. Ichioka in East L.A., and Dr. Tashiro, he was the famous surgeon—my father knew both of them. So, he borrowed their cars on Sunday, once a month, and he would take the two cars so we could all go to San Bernardino, to Patton State Hospital, to visit my mother.

[01:00:26]

CC: Was this after the war?

MM: Yeah.

CC: So, after the war the family came together again?

MM: Well, in a way, because when we first came out of camp we were assigned two trailers in Long Beach. We came out with the Terminal Island group. We had a boys trailer and a girls trailer, and the girls trailer, my sister cooked. One time she cooked shellac instead of soy sauce. She cooked shellac. It looked like soy sauce, right? And it's in gallons, and she grabbed the wrong thing. (laughs) We laugh about it today. And it was too late, because you didn't have a car or anything to go to the market. We laugh about all these little things. When we used to go to San Bernardino, we used to sing. We would all sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," and all these songs.

CC: So, would you say you guys were a close family?

MM: Yes, very close family. I would tell people my father could have run away from us at any time. (laughs) Nine of us kids and my mother sick, in the hospital. What man would want to go through that hell?

CC: But, he stayed. What did you think about the facilities in the Children's Village? How were they? I mean, the staff, did they have enough staff members to take care of you guys?

MM: Well, I suppose so. We always had to say our prayers. God is good and God is great and we thank him for this food. Whatever they served us, we had to eat every bit of it. I blamed them for giving me ulcers. Because I was petite—I'm fat now, but I was small when I was young. Everybody's beautiful when they're young. But anyway, what happened was, I couldn't wait to be excused from the table because I would run to the toilet and puke.

CC: On purpose?

MM: No. Because it was too much. It was too much food. See, you couldn't be excused until everybody ate what was served. So therefore, you had to eat everything there was on your plate. I don't think that's right, when I think back about it, but maybe I'm the type. I know I got both, and when I worked I had ulcers and stuff like that.

CC: So, they didn't treat you all that well. I mean, they treated you well, but they forced you to eat the food?

MM: Well, if nobody could get excused from the table, you had to eat your food. I said on the video they were very strict with us, but I guess, in a way, that was right. It was right at that time.

CC: Was the food good? Did they serve good food, healthy food?

MM: I can't remember that it was good food. I didn't know about diet or anything like that. We always got rice though. We always got rice. I can't remember milk. When I was growing up, I cannot take milk. I don't have the enzyme. It gives me the runs.

CC: Was anybody mistreated by the staff? You or anybody else you know?

MM: I never saw anybody get whacked. They would be strict. I mean, I was aggressive, so therefore maybe that's the reason why. I remember when I was in, not in the Village but in the home, I didn't eat dinner one night because I had to clean the auditorium, and that meant the stage area and everything. See, I went to work when I was in the sixth grade, cleaning house and things like that, for this one lady. This lady was brought up in an orphanage, and she asked my father if I could come and help her. She would go around doing this to the edge. (demonstrates checking for dust on furniture) I was brought up real strict with her, as far as cleaning. Now if I see dust, it doesn't bother me!

CC: This was after camp?

MM: This was before camp. I was fourteen. But when I was twelve in the sixth grade I—you know, it's what people mold you, adults mold you to be. My father used to always make me pray when he was out fishing. He would ask me to pray.

CC: What religion did he teach you?

MM: Buddhist.

CC: And was it practiced in the Children's Village?

MM: No.

CC: Did they make you guys—

MM: We had Christian services.

CC: Did they make you go to them?

MM: Yeah. They'd take us to church. I remember we used to go to Union Church, the one that's closed on our San Pedro street. We used to go there when we'd go in the camp. And then, a lot of the people that were there, the matron and the—what would you call them? Not the matron, but the man. I don't know what you call them. But their wives and them would be Christians, and they would practice. I remember one of them said to me, "When you get kissed, you become pregnant." (laughs) I remember that. I mean, I believed it for a long, long time.

CC: Who told you that if you kissed a guy you'd be pregnant?

MM: One of the wives of the—I don't know if he was a reverend—would take care of the boys. I remember his name, but I won't say his name. I understand they broke up years later because that came out at the reunion. I remember that being said. Because when you're young, if you're jesting, you don't know the difference, so you believe in whatever. But, I learned in school when we had some kind of health education thing about how babies are made. I remember that.

CC: Like sexual education?

MM: Yes. I remember that because I was the only one that asked the teacher a question. (laughs) I can't remember what the question was, but I remember I asked her. It was something about the sperm, if it's in your fallopian tube, or if it had gone down to your uterus. It was something. Because she was trying to emphasize the miracle of birth, too, how your pelvic opens up when you deliver the baby, things like that.

CC: Who took care of the woman necessities? Who talked to you guys about entering puberty, birth control, and all that kind of stuff? Did they talk to you guys about that?

[01:10:00]

MM: They didn't believe in birth control or having intercourse or anything like that. I mean, you just didn't talk about those things.

CC: What about when the teenage girl is becoming a teenager and she needs that extra help on woman things?

MM: I don't know. Because I did not encounter it until I was about probably twenty, twenty-one years old. I remember one of my friends, she and this dentist friend used to come to our café and talk to me about douching and stuff like that. We had a café on First and San Pedro, right behind—there was a nightclub right on the corner, on

the southeast corner, Club Cobra, and then right next to it, adjoining door, we had a little restaurant.

CC: After camp?

MM: My father was a cook, and he had another guy as a cook. Then there was another middle-aged woman that was a waitress that spoke good English, and my sister and I were waitresses. He wasn't fishing. He started out with a transfer company. His friend bought the truck and everything and my two brothers and there was another guy and then my father's partner and my father, so there were five of them. But anyway, we had this café later. I remember when the war was over. We were there in '45, '46, and the Hawaiians were staying at the Miyako Hotel across the street where Sumitomo lived. They were waiting to be shipped home to Hawaii. So, they would come over to our café and eat and sing songs and play their ukes. I remember this (laughs) one time, this word kept coming up, and I stupidly said, "What does that mean?" They were embarrassed. I could see they were embarrassed, but I didn't know any better. So, they told me to ask this guy when he comes. He'd come later. So when he came, I asked him. Then he whispered in—he told me. The word was *panipani*, p-a-n-i-p-a-n-i. He explained what it was. I don't remember in what words, but all I remember was he said to me, "We go tonight." (laughs) That's the way they talk. They always talk to you like, We go show. That's not like a date. I used to wonder whether I have to pay for it myself, or does he pay for it. (laughs) Because the way they act, that's their way of talking, Pigeon English.

CC: How about your social life at the Village? You say you were dating—what's his name?

MM: Bugs. Well, I was out of the Village then. He would walk me down to where I lived and everything. Then all the girls were chasing him all over the camp. I remember that. He made a comment to my sister about that, that I had chased him. I never chased him, but I remember all the girls were chasing him.

CC: Did you guys go to dances, movies, inside?

MM: No. We just spent time together, whatever they're doing. I don't remember. I don't know. They would have movies probably once a week or something like that.

CC: Is there any way you can honestly say—well, is there any way your life has been affected in a major way by being there? Has it changed your way of thinking?

MM: By being there?

CC: By being in the camp.

MM: Of course, because those were the years that you were growing up, and your foundation is laid. If we were in a different environment and no coaching or anything

like that, without being exposed to Christianity or any religion or no upbringing, we wouldn't have—we had some kind of guidance while we were in the camp, I would say. I can't say about my brothers and sisters, if they're Christian or Buddhist or what. Any one of them could change. They probably take their wives religion. They just want to be cremated and thrown in the ocean or whatever. Two of my brothers were thrown in the ocean, and my other brother that died in Denver, he's buried because his wife scattered his ashes over the mountain.

CC: What religion are you, if I may ask?

MM: None. I believe in all religions because they all come together, a superior being. I don't believe that we just came to be. Maybe that's true, and a lot of people believe that. Do you think there's an identical earth?

CC: I don't know.

MM: Like science fiction and everything else, who's to say? Life is too short. It really is, because you look around and you think, gosh, I'm sixty-five already. Where did the years go? You figure fifty years ago, you're talking about fifty years ago. Or fifty-one years! Another three or four months it'll be fifty-one years. But, it doesn't seem that long. You know the kids that were different, that were half Japanese and half—

CC: The *hapa*?

MM: Yeah, the *hapa* kids. They didn't stay long.

CC: In the Village?

MM: Yeah, they were adopted because most of them looked more white than Japanese. Why I don't know.

CC: They were adopted before the rest of the kids were, or before any other kids were?

MM: I don't know if there were other kids adopted, that many. There was a couple of them, you know, he's kept in contact with. One that lived in Bishop and then another one that lives in Colorado, he and his brother. They go see them if they go to Colorado or Bishop. When we went to Manzanar, we went on the bus, and we went to the museum. The guy that has the museum, his wife was one of the Kageyamas. She was a songstress of Manzanar, singer. He had Alzheimer's. Now she has to manage—I don't know what's going to happen, but I remember the last time I saw him he just kept saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I don't remember."

CC: Were they treated different inside? The *hapas*?

[01:20:00]

MM: Yeah, because they were—I remember this one kid’s name—I don’t know if his name was Tojo or not. Oh, they used to—because they were different. Like I say, when you’re different, you’re treated that way. Like on Terminal Island, I told you we were different. My mother was sick. My mother lived with us, and she used to take walks and go all over the island. And she used to make this _____ (inaudible) looking smock that she sewed and wore. She just liked to walk, but the kids used to always tease us about her. So, that in itself was hard on us. My sister, she don’t even like to talk about Terminal Island. She can’t stand it, but she’s older than me, four years older than me. I learned to accept and forgive in a way because we were kids. Kids say the meanest things, and if you don’t have no supervision—and they didn’t have no supervision, the mother and father were both working—they’re not aware of what goes on. Or they’re so small minded—I went to a reunion of the Baptist church, and I wasn’t aware it was the Baptist church. I was invited as a guest by one of the—she was a minister in the Baptist church. She invited me, but then she found out she couldn’t sit with me because she was going to be at the head table because she was one of the honored guests. I had to find a place to sit, and that’s when I found out it was the Christian church. We lived right next to a Buddhist church, yet we used to go to the Christian church. We tried to go to the Japanese school, but we quit because kids would razz us too much. So, that part I understand.

I remember I had to sweep the floor and wash the rice. Before my sister came home from school, I would have to do those duties. We always pitched in and did it together. I remember turning off our gas and lights and everything, and we had to have a bonfire in the back with a big barrel to cook soup or something. My brother would make soup. But, we never went hungry. We never went hungry. Maybe it wasn’t the right kind of food, but we had something to eat. (laughs) More than the Africans! (laughs)

CC: You guys worked together; you guys stayed together.

MM: Yeah.

CC: Who were the *hapas* mistreated by? The other children?

MM: Yeah, the rest of the kids.

CC: Did the staff treat them different or just the kids?

MM: I don’t know. I don’t remember the staff mistreating them.

CC: Why did they treat them different? Was it because they were different?

MM: Yeah.

CC: Out of anger, jealousy, or—

MM: I think what it is it's like anything else, if you're not normal by what is normal – if you're all the same color, if you're all black.

[recording paused]

CC: Okay, we're back now. We were talking about the *hapa*, and Mary was telling me about how the *hapas* were the first to be adopted and how they were treated different by the children in the Village.

MM: Yeah, they were. But, what happened was, they disappeared, so therefore they were adopted. They weren't there any longer. But, we kept getting more new babies, I guess from out of wedlock or whatever it is, from other camps, or wherever they came from because we had babies in that 1944 picture. I think officially there was 106 children in the Village at one time or another during this period to this period, in the archives. We were laughing because we have all these books and notes and what came from archives, and there's a lot of baloney. (laughs) I mean, really. I'm sitting there laughing. I'm absolutely sitting there laughing because it's so funny because of the things they put in.

CC: Like what stuff?

MM: About the count. I mean, I'd have to go back and see it. I was talking to my sisters and saying, "See here, it's this and that." Then I'd tell my older sister, "Here you are." They don't call you by your name, but this is what happened. She was the eldest of the family. You could identify who the person was or whatever because we lived it.

CC: Mary, your younger sister the one that was born right after Pearl Harbor—

MM: One month before Pearl Harbor.

CC: One month. Was she in the Village also?

MM: Yes.

CC: Where did she go after the Village?

MM: Well, she came with us. When my father came into camp in '44, then she lived with us. Then my sister used to screw up all our clothes, screw up the clothes. One time she went to get my graduation suit and went to see my mother at the hospital in San Bernardino. She got a leave approved, and she lost my annual that my classmates were supposed sign. When she went to get the suit at Zookers on Broadway, she lost it. I forgot what I was going to tell you about that.

CC: Was that your sister?

MM: Yeah. She went to visit her.

CC: You were saying how she ruined all your clothes.

MM: No, no. We had to scrub the clothes. We had to scrub all our own clothes, all the rest of us. Now, I always kept the house clean. That was my duty. And she scrubbed the clothes herself. So, when she went on leave, she went out of camp, we had to wash the clothes, and we never washed the clothes before. It was a riot. We didn't know how to scrub. (laughs) If you have to scrub sheets and pants and socks and everything, you appreciate it more, because you've never done it and then it's being done for you. We didn't have no washing machine. Just imagine if you're not used to something like that.

CC: How about when you were in the Children's Village, you were one of the older ones, right?

MM: Yeah.

CC: Did you have to do more work because of that? Did you have to do laundry or take care of other children?

MM: I don't remember doing any laundry. I know some of the girls helped with the children or whatever. I think I more or less worked cleaning. I don't recall exactly, but I would say—because I can remember one of our classmates. She was always in this nurse's aide pinstripe thing, and she would help take care of the babies. But, I don't remember that I took care of the babies. I remember I used to go into the nursery a lot because two of my sisters were there, so I would go see them. And then one time, the second youngest, she had, just below her shoulder in the back, she got a burn, a Lysol burn. Do you know what Lysol is? It's a disinfectant. She got a Lysol burn. I don't know how she got a hold of Lysol and got burned.

CC: Did this happen inside the Village?

MM: Uh-huh. She probably don't remember it either, but she has a scar from it.

[01:30:07]

CC: What about other people that were there? Do you keep in touch with any of the people from the Children's Village?

MM: We did right after the war. A lot of the kids used to come to our house, but those same kids did not come to the reunion. The ones that did come, I'm in contact with. There's Sue Tanaka Osawa that lives at the Tokyo Towers, and Clara Hayashi³, she lives in Redondo Beach. Because if you're in contact with these people, you're able to persuade them to come, but if you don't know where they are and you can't talk to

³ Clara Hayashi, O.H. 2334, Center for Oral and Public History

them, it's pretty hard. I always wondered about this family that was from Maryknoll. There were two girls and three boys, and I understand one of the boys died. There's four of them left. The only one I know that we had an address on was the second, one sister, and she lives in Rosemead. I haven't got a reply from her. The other sister, she's supposed to live in Simi Valley. But, it's sad that they weren't able to come or didn't make an effort because I'm sure if any one of us could have talked to them and we would go after them or something, maybe they would come. We had one guy come, this girl that lives in Tokyo Tower, her brother, he came, and he had a severe heart condition. You could see he was—but he made it to the breakfast in the morning.

CC: He was an orphan? Or he was at the Children's Village?

MM: I knew his father. I knew the father after the war. And the mother was in a state institution. The oldest daughter, she used to talk to me. She wanted to see her mother but she didn't want to really see her because she figured financially they'd come after her. It's sad. To me, I would have gone after them whatever the cost would have been.

CC: You guys kept seeing your mother after—I mean, visiting her regularly?

MM: She didn't know us when she was severely sick. You can always tell a person that when they're sick; you look at their eyes. Their eyes have a sick look, if you look at the person's eyes. If you take Quaaludes or if you take any kind of drugs and you're out in space, whatever, but when you're sick, there's a look about you. So, when that look goes away—I mean, I know because I saw my mother all those years. When I got married, I remember my mother-in-law. I have pictures. My sister had a picture of my husband and I. She's got the only picture that I know of that I have that has my first husband in it. She was showing—

[01:34:25; recording paused]

CC: We were talking about the picture of her and her first cousin. There's only one picture?

MM: Yeah, that I know of. She had some pictures with my ex-mother-in-law in the picture. I know my mother wasn't well then. I could tell by just looking at the picture. Because years later they transferred her to Metropolitan, and then they let her work in the laundry room, and then they retired her. That's how old she became. She wasn't there very long. Then when Reagan was governor, he cleaned the state institutions out of all the patients that had been in the hospitals a long time. She was in the rest home right by Lincoln Park. She didn't last a year. She died of pneumonia. I saw her on Sunday and my sister saw her on Wednesday and the social worker saw her on Thursday and Friday. They were to phone me, and when they went back to her, she was gone. That's how quick it happened. She was smart. My mother was smart. They used to say she went to Metropolitan. In other words, she

went to school here before she even had my brother, so I figured she must have gone to school—let's see, if she was born in 1903, 1919, she went to school probably for one or two years or whatever. She had my oldest brother September 7, 1921. I don't know what became of her passport, but I remember I had it at one time. Also my father's. One was January and the other one was July, when they came to the United States. And also my father's passport showed he had an appendicitis operation, and he had my oldest brother, her son, with him. He went to Tijuana because they had that stamp on his passport, when he was a baby. He had his appendix operated on right in the office.

CC: Ouch!

MM: Yeah. Well, you know, you have a lot of outpatients today that you wouldn't have thought that you could do forty or fifty years ago. I can remember the time when they had those eye operations and how still they had to be and everything like that. Now it's all changed. Everything has changed. You get a hernia operation, they make you get up and walk off the table. That's what they did to my husband. My husband had a triple hernia, reoccurring, last March 10th, and I took him. He was an outpatient. But, they were varied—different things happen like that. It's interesting. Getting back to the Village, I don't think, outside of probably church, that there was so much affection among humans in the Village.

CC: There wasn't much affection?

MM: No. I said there was a lot of affection, because you shared your deepest secrets. Being young and finding out—there was two sisters. Both of them are gone. I knew one was gone, but I found out the younger one was gone too. They were burned by fire, so they must have lost their parents by fire. They were very attractive, but there were burns on their face.

CC: Is it true that a lot of children didn't want to be adopted, they wanted to stay together?

MM: That's what one of the guys that was in the home that had a speech—you'll see on the video—said. When he was in there maybe that was so. I don't know. I don't ever remember being prepped to be adopted. Well, I wasn't adoptable anyway, so I'm not aware of it, you know. They must have.

CC: So, all the children in the Village were close?

[01:40:00]

MM: I would say they were close. Now, we had one girl come from San Francisco. She's a famous artist today. She makes pottery and stuff. She discussed with us a misunderstanding, why she never came around afterwards. She blamed something on me and said that she thought I was the older sister instead of my older sister being the oldest sister, which I thought that was a big joke. And I didn't make any comments—

it was a touchy subject, because her mother became involved with my father, and I had said something. And I said, "No, I wouldn't have said that to her or anybody," because she had nothing to do with it, number one. Number two, two of the people that were from Terminal Island, one male and one female, came up to me and told me my father was having an affair at this hotel when I was working in the cannery in San Pedro. I even went over there, but I didn't have the guts to go up to the door, or whatever.

Then I thought it over and I thought, this woman, she used to fool around, and she was a waitress, and she was a next door neighbor. She had no room to talk. Her husband was lost at sea in the rain, a rain storm. He was fishing. And then, the other guy, he was a big fat guy. They're just petty. Then what right do they have? If two grownups had sex, that's their business. And my father didn't have his wife, my mother, with him. Therefore, sex is like drinking water. I mean, really, if you get right down to it. When you're young there's more prejudice because you're possessive and you want to show that possessiveness. When you get older, you come to understand, it's like there's black and white. When you're young, you're so strong in your opinions, [but] you might be more wondering. Then ten years down the line, you might be the other way, or you maybe might not think nothing of it. So, you can never say. It's the time of your life that, as you mature, you understand these things, and what basis is fear and jealousy is, I think, two of the greatest things that create a lot of confusion in life.

My older sister, she doesn't care for Mrs. Matsumoto⁴ because she was such a cold person, and that was the vibes she gave. Her husband was the same. They never showed any affection. But, they were social workers, and that qualified them, being social workers under the ruse, so some people can show affection and others can't. They had adopted one of the children, and then I understand she had a child of her own after that. I didn't talk to her about that, but I figure whatever the reasons are, nobody has the right to judge.

CC: Did you get the same sense that your sister got of Mrs. Matsumoto? Was she kind of a cold person?

MM: Yes, she was. But, she came to the meeting. She came to our reunion. To me, that meant something, after all those years. I didn't expect her to come, I really didn't, but she came. I had a very short chat with her, and I'm sure she got a lot out of it. One of the other matrons that didn't come that was very strict. Her birthday is the same day as mine. They telephoned her to try to make her come. She wouldn't come. I even got on the phone. I cried. I begged her to come, but she said she had to look after her grandchildren or something like that, or her brother's grandchildren or something. She was a spinster. She became a WAC [Women's Army Corps] afterwards. But I feel, to me, she hadn't mellowed. The years hadn't mellowed her. Normally, the years do mellow a person, but then everybody isn't on the same plain as others, the acceptance, religion, love, your environment. If you had no children or some people to take them but when you get older, it's very hard to take children. You don't have the patience, nor the energy, because you don't have to stand for it anymore. Old

⁴ Lillian Matsumoto, O.H. 2492, Center for Oral and Public History

people get sick. When you're sick, you don't want to be bothered, which is the way it is. But, when you're young, you want to enjoy everything that you possibly can, and that's the way it should be. But, some people are too timid to accept that, right? You never stop learning. You never stop learning about those things.

I think that if you see the video and you get to go up north and see some of the matrons, you would understand. This Taeko Nagayama⁵, her name was Kajiwara. She is the most lovable person. She married a guy that one leg was shorter than the other. He became a minister. I don't know how many children she has, but she lives in Los Cerritos. To me, she was a great example of a person raised in a home—I don't know anything about her background, that she was an orphan or anything, nothing about her, but she gave of herself. She gave of herself. To me, it's a pleasure to be around somebody like that. Her sister was not like that. She didn't emit the same feelings. She was younger. I don't know how much difference in age they were. It's funny because they're the only ones that became matrons.

CC: And they were sisters?

MM: Um-hm.

CC: So, both sisters became matrons. How interesting.

MM: They probably weren't complete orphans.

CC: How about around the Village and outside in the community, did the orphans, or did the people in the Children's Village, experience any kind of prejudice?

[01:50:06]

MM: No, because the kids all played sports and things like that. They participated in that and you had the competition wherever they played, on the school basketball courts, or wherever. They were very good. They were outward going. Remember he was talking about when he went to meet that sister, _____ (inaudible)? Well, she goes by I think Joyce or Janis. They go by the American names now. I think her name is Patrick. Her sister was coming, then her back was bad, so she had to take a _____ (inaudible). This sister that ended up coming, she went to the Manzanar reunion. Then she came back, and I think she went home, and then she came out on her sister's ticket, which was very interesting. She was just tickled pink. One thing about the Salvation Army and about the Japanese Children's Home, they packed all the bedding, all the beds, everything, and took it to camp. When they were there, they needed every bit of it. They wanted the ones from San Francisco shipped to camp, but they had had a fire at the Salvation Army home, so somebody must have set it on fire. There was nothing to send. I remember Mrs. Matsumoto talking about it.

I think in our time and all this happening, a lot of the kids I knew, their mother was in an institution. And they were able to communicate, and they give up their secrets to you. I didn't realize till the other day what it means to some kids to cover

⁵ Taeko Nagayama, O.H. 2492, Center for Oral and Public History

their past. Just because I'm not that way, I guess that's why I expect them to be that way. But, I could see where they want their past not brought up because there's too much hurt for them. They can't face up to it. Well, I can't talk for them because I had both parents. One was sick and one was—but still I had both parents, where they had one or none. It must make a lot of difference.

I made a friend in Victorville, and she's taking care of her husband. The first husband abused her, and she brought up three kids all by herself. She brought them up by herself and gave them everything, gave them college degrees and everything like that. She always brings that up, "I brought those kids up." She went without, and she brought them up. She's really a good example. She's very open. She comes out with everything. Honest. She says, "I don't know if I can take this. I don't know if my husband's going to be dead. Sometimes I wish he would." Because it gets to be too much, too much. She took care of him for eighteen months once. He had water on his brain. They drained that water out, and he came back. But, that part of his life he doesn't remember a thing of what went on. And she did everything for him. She did absolutely everything for him. So, she's tired. She's tired. She said that. And she's had bypasses. So I always think, well, you know, she's honest. Most people when they're mad at somebody they want to strike out to hurt them. I was telling them—because one of her friends came by and she was saying her daughter—I said, "How come you're so angry with your daughter over nothing?" To me, it's nothing. I said to her, "My niece said to her mother, when my brother died, she told her mother, 'I wish you had died instead of my father.'" "Oh," she says, "I would never forgive her." She was the eldest. And she told me when she got married for the second time—the first husband died—she told me, "Oh, how I hated myself for saying that." I says, "You know, you tell the truth."

I could understand it because my brother did everything, absolutely everything, for the kids. The mother didn't. All of a sudden, she's there, and he's gone. Now she's got to do everything for the kids. So, I think she probably learned to carry her burden. But, when her daughter told me that—that's pretty hard to admit to saying to have said that. I'm sure she told me because she knew I would understand, or she wouldn't have told me that. I told this person to share it with her because I wanted to show her that that is really a hurt that you couldn't ever get over. She just died of cancer, and her two daughters took care of her. They're both married. She did the best she could. In Japanese I used to call her _____ (Japanese phrase), which is like a rich man's daughter. You don't do nothing; you're just a rich man's daughter. She worked for her parents, because they had a grocery store. She would do things that her parents needed, drive them around or run errands or something like that. But she didn't used to take care of them. She didn't take care of those kids. The reason I know is when I went to Denver the first time, I was the first one out after they moved, and she didn't clean the house, she didn't cook, she didn't do nothing. And I know. I saw it, so I know. I mean, to her face I was always calling her bad names. Rich man's daughter kind of thing.

CC: Who looked after the kids?

MM: He did. He made the formula. He cooked. I mean, he didn't do a good job of cleaning house, but you know. The son was sick. He was running a temperature at the funeral. He went to the funeral. My brother went, and he was supposed to come back—this was Sunday. They went, my father and him. I made reservations for two, so I needed to send two people. He had his business, so I said, "Okay, I'll go there. On Wednesday you come back," because he had unfinished things. Then he was in a coma, and then the minister was coming every day, Buddhist. Then he realized how dear his brother was to him, so he wanted to stay. Even though he was unconscious, he wanted to stay. So, I said to him, "Okay. Then I won't come out. If you're going to be there, I won't come out." And I didn't go. Then he died. He was unconscious for six days. He died the morning Kennedy died at 7:30 in the morning. They just missed me when I left for work. After I got to work I got the call that he had passed away. I remember kicking myself because I said I was going to go, and I didn't go, so I didn't get to see him. Then you argue with yourself mentally. Then I thought, Oh well, even if I went it wouldn't have made any difference. It's hard to accept. I remember my father had to come home because he got sick over there. And oh, my god. If you see a parent go over a child that died, one of the offspring that died, there's nothing worse than seeing a parent, because they feel they should have gone and they should be living. It's just that way. Everyone that I talk to, they say that. There's nothing worse than losing a child. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

[02:01:50]

CC: Five sisters and two brothers.

MM: Wow! You almost made it. We have nine, and you've got eight. Five brothers and three sisters. Where are you?

CC: Second to the youngest.

MM: That's a good place, yeah, when you're young.

CC: Do you know why they called it Children's Village? Why did they pick that name?

MM: My brother called it the orphanage, and I always tell him I hate that name because it wasn't an orphanage. Whoever picked that name, I never thought of it. It's a good name. It was a village full of kids. What an appropriate name. I never thought to ask why they named it that, but they did talk them into making that. The way they set it up and everything, it was all planned. They went down there and Mrs. Matsumoto said they went down there and the progress and the building and stuff like that—she said that's why we left late.

CC: So, you were fourteen when you went in there. You were a teenager. How did you deal with it? You were not an infant, so you knew what was going on. You had feelings that the younger kids didn't. How did you deal with that? Were you scared?

MM: No. I could say that because I've never—in all my life, I don't get scared. It's a funny thing to say. I guess because I had trust maybe. Growing pains—my father had a friend that was white, and he was about two or three years older than my father. I don't know where my father met him, but as far back as I can remember, two or three years old, he used to come and drink with my father at the hotel. He would put me on his shoulder and take me to the grocery store. He was more a father to me than my father was because he could communicate with me. Maybe that's why. He had one son that was an official in the Shell Oil Company. But maybe that's why I got the insight like that, the way I feel, because he always told me how it was or whatever. My attitude grew from what he brainwashed me over the years. It could be that.

Once I worked thirteen years for a chain restaurant. I started as girl friday and went up to office manager. I used to deal with all the managers and whatnot. And I worked with four men for thirteen years, three brothers and the general manager, so I learned to think like that, like a man. When they used to get mad at me or something like that, I would always tell them, "If I'm a monster, you guys made me that way." (laughs) Because it's how you're brought up, right? I think so.

CC: It is how you're brought up. I believe so, too. Now, when you think about the Village, what is your most vivid memory of it?

MM: Well, we had a typhoid shot. We had to get typhoid shots, and that made us sick. I mean, we were down.

CC: How often did you get them?

MM: Once.

CC: But, you were down?

MM: Yeah. I never heard of people getting typhoid shots. It's to prevent the disease, but we got it in camp. That's all I remember. We all got the typhoid shot. That stands out because I guess it affected us, all of us. We were down for at least two days, and the pain and the swollen and everything like that. But I remember that. I don't know why.

CC: That's what comes to mind when they ask—

MM: Yeah. I've never been asked that question!

CC: How about your family life after camp? Was it happier than it was before? Was it the same? Was it different?

MM: Yeah, it was different. See, I was fortunate because I wasn't born the oldest, so I learned to go from job-to-job, and I did pretty much what I wanted to do. I wanted to become a nurse one time after, but then we had no money. Then I found out I could

have gone. This is years later. I went to County Hospital—I don't know who funded them or helped them. Most of my jobs I learned on the job. I just picked it up. I worked as a waitress too, at one time. I think, to me, no job is beneath me, and I've been there.

I used to talk to this one guy, whose name was Doc _____ (inaudible). We used to go to this fountain, and we used to talk about whatcha been doing? What job had you been—or whatever. And I used to go job-to-job. I would become allergic or something like that. Really, really allergic! I just got allergic—so I would have to leave—from the fumes or whatever. One time I got fired, and it was from a sewing job, power sewing. I didn't even know how to sew, let alone a straight line or anything. They had me sewing zippers. Sew a zipper, heck, I was unraveling more than I was sewing. (laughs) They had no alternative but to fire me.

CC: How long did you get to stay?

MM: One day. (both laugh) I always laugh about that. That wasn't my calling, but you gotta give me credit, I tried.

[02:10:00]

CC: You guys had a reunion last year, right?

MM: Yeah.

CC: What were your emotions about it? What are your emotions about it today?

MM: I wish we had more time. I was glad when the time came, and then we all pitched together and had everything ready. Everything went pretty much like we expected it to. The most important part was, we had enough response. I had to write those letters, those demanding letters. The first time we didn't get no response. Tamo _____ (inaudible), they sent them out. I never did any mailing because I wasn't here. That wasn't important for me to be here. I was able to get my other sisters to help or my brother. But anyway, I would have to make it strong enough for them to come. You have to lay it on the line. Unless we have the response, you can't pull it off. That's the most important thing. Unless you have the backing and the money, you can't promise that hotel. It's not worth it if twenty-five people came. But, if fifty people came and the banquet and the cost and everything—that's what happened. We got the response.

Then we had to watch for the money, keeping control of the money. Then we had to watch for some people that came at the last minute that didn't make reservations and that were trying to get information to write books or something. I mean, they found out. They're not dummies. Then Matsy, she lets this one person in, and I said, "What the heck?" "They come at the last minute." "We don't even know about them. And you let them in?" That's a no-no, because you don't know what they do or what—then what happened was, they discovered that this person was listening to everybody's conversation and stuff like that, that was going on.

My brother Tak, he had brought a camcorder, and I borrowed my husband's camcorder and had one of the girls' husband—he's a photographer, but I never knew he didn't know how to run a camcorder. He ran it for me. I mean, at least I got somebody to get—but Tak had his kids come at different times, and each one of them ran the camcorder for him, so his was more complete. He was very protective. He's very protective about the privacy issues.

CC: Tak?

A: Yeah. He's younger, see, so I'm sure his feelings and stuff come from his peers. Like I'm older, and the older you get, what's the difference? (laughs) Your attitude is different. But, when we talk about it, I don't argue with him. I think that he should maybe let it go a little bit. But, if *you* have that VCR, it's different because you're doing it for study purposes and for humans. There's a difference. Where a person that might take this information and try to make money from it, he doesn't believe in it. So, why should he do that if you want to write it and everything? I said, "No. What's the sense, unless you set up a fund to help somebody?" We don't have a Japanese Children's Home today. Unless you could donate to something like that, what's the sense of it? The only thing is if there's a fund made that it never happens to another race in the United States.

CC: Do you think that there's a chance that could happen?

MM: Those Iranians almost got it. Don't you remember that? They almost got it that time.

CC: Like you guys weren't expecting it, didn't even think about it. It could happen again.

MM: Yeah. Did you ever get a copy of the apology they sent with our twenty thousand?

CC: No.

MM: I'll have to bring it next time. I made a copy of it. I made a copy of the check, and I think I made a copy of the letter. I have it together. It said non-taxable, but if you save that money and buy a second house with it—there's certain things you do with it, it's no good. They could take it back. There's stipulations on it. Because my second to the youngest sister sent me what came out in the papers. I was just reading it just recently. I'll send you that, too.

CC: Yeah, that would be interesting. I didn't know they had stipulations on what you could do with the money.

MM: Yeah. What did it say? If I die and my husband gets it, then I had left it in the bank, it becomes taxable. It's non-taxable to me, but it's taxable to him. [recording paused] If I die and my husband gets it, it becomes taxable to him because I didn't spend it. So, when I got mine, I said I'm going to spend it on buying a car. I let everybody know I'm buying a car. Then I draw out so much, whatever I bought or

whatever I paid for it. Because I usually put it in savings, then I put it in the checking in increments of how I'm spending it. Then I was going to send five thousand to my nephew in Japan. He's taking care of the property over there that my father and my grandfather bought. That really went to my oldest brother's family, but they gave him part of it, too. He wants to eventually turn that money around and have a place in the city for the cousin to come visit Japan because the place in the country where my father was born is right off the main road there in the country. One of our cousins is running a business there.

CC: What about after camp when the doors were open and everybody went out, did you notice any difficulty with the Japanese Americans getting accepted?

MM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. People spit on me or whatever. The prejudice was high. Then we moved—well, I came to Japanese Town where my father was later. What happened was all the blacks of the south took over Japanese Town. The blacks from the south are different from the blacks that's here and raised in Utah or West Coast kind.

[02:20:00]

CC: The blacks from the South are different, huh?

MM: Yeah, they are. Like you hear poor white trash, or something like that? Well, the southern—they never had the freedom like the blacks that were here. I remember there was only one black family in our junior high school. I was talking to another person that lived down the block from me, and she was from Torrance or Hawthorne, somewhere in there. She had none. There was none in her school. So, there you are. There weren't that many blacks here.

CC: How about the whites? Did they also exert prejudism towards the Japanese Americans?

MM: Yes. Everybody. Now we used to laugh about it because my oldest sister looked Indian. Now I look different because I usually have my hair blonde. I have it dark, ash brown right now, but usually it's blonde. So, my sister would say, "You look like a Jew from Palm Springs." (laughs) I could care less. I have a Mexican girlfriend that's my hairdresser. I needed to get my perm, and I had set my hair because I had to get a perm. I thought maybe today, Monday, I would get a perm.

CC: How long was it before you felt you were accepted back without feeling uncomfortable?

MM: Quite a while.

CC: Years?

MM: Yeah, years, uh-huh. I would say years. You learn to ignore it. You have to learn to ignore it. That's all it is because what prejudice is, it's stupidity, really.

CC: So, do you have any, if not prejudice against what happened and who did it, do you have any resentment for what they did? For putting the Japanese *Americans* behind—

MM: With no due process of law?

CC: Yes.

MM: This one friend of mine, he was an actuary. An actuary is a guy that deal with numbers, that make the pension plans and things like that. So they're smart. He was smart. He'd get a bonus worth my year's wages kind of thing, money-wise. But anyway, he was a drunk, and I wrote him off later. I told him why, because he was a drunk, and I found out he was fooling around with somebody else. I don't need that. But anyway, he told me there's two mistakes in American history, so far. One was the habeas corpus during the Civil War, and two was us being thrown in camps without due process of law. That's what it amounts to.

I was just reading in the *Times* yesterday—I don't know if you get the *Times*? We get the *Times* and the local paper, and it told about the resisters in camp, the guys that were drafted that refused to go. I think it said in the paper there were 310 of them. I cut out the article. I'll send that to you, too. But remember, I don't have a Xerox, so you could Xerox these things. It said that these resisters resisted because they weren't given the due process of law. Why should they go do something for the country, or whatever, when they weren't being treated right to begin with being thrown in the camp like that. Then there was this other guy that went into the Armed Forces, and he wrote for the columns. He was a news reporter. And he said they were chicken. They were chicken. That's what he printed in the paper, but he's a stupid ass anyway. He makes comments like he's uneducated. When I read his column—but that's the way he sees it, and that's the way I see him, when he makes comments without giving it enough thought. These guys were standing up for their rights, so they were courageous. The guys that went to service, they were courageous also. It's what you believe in that you have to pursue, and this is what happened. Then Truman, he dropped all charges after the war, and they settled it. Because they had their rights. It's just like you get slapped around by your father or something like that, and then he tells you, "Now you have to work with me for five years." No questions asked. You stand up for your rights. It's as simple as that. It's the same kind of principle. At all times I think you have to stand up for your rights.

See, Roosevelt had those two representatives from Japan. They didn't even know what was going on. Then they blamed them for knowing about the sneak attack, as they called it. But they planned it. They planned it. They broke the code, they knew they were coming, and they didn't do a thing. But, when you read about different things that happened in history, as long as that person isn't there to get the brunt of it, they don't even care. You know? I mean, their attitude is they don't care, or let it come. It has to come this way. I don't know how their reasoning is, but

that's the way it seems like things happen. Even though they don't want it to happen, they let it happen, when they could have changed the course of the whole war.

I was trying to talk to this friend of mine. And they're all older than me. She more or less knows what happened to the Japanese because she saw part of it. But to tell her—what did I tell her about—her father bought a business from somebody, some kind of business. He picked it up for nothing. What happened was they were given the 9066 notice, and they had to get rid of their land or whatever they had to do. A lot of people you read about where the woman she had her china, and she didn't want to sell it. She couldn't get the money out of it, so she broke every piece rather than have to give it to somebody who would just leave it there. Material things, you should be able to walk away from, if you can. You cannot become attached to these things because, when you die, you can't take it with you anyway. Or if you want to leave it, then you should just say, hey, take the whole thing. Give it away or leave it. That's all—if you don't have the money for storage, or whatever. This one author that wrote a book called *Nisei* – did you ever hear of it or read it?

[02:33:08]

CC: No.

MM: I have two of them. My husband has one, and I have one. A lot of the things he wrote I didn't agree with it or didn't think it was true because certain things—it's like the *Nisei* have always sat back and said yes to their parents and done what they have asked you to do. And we've never fought it. If we went to work, or we were going to show an example, we did it. We didn't brag. We did it kind of thing. That's why they call that book *The Silent American*. The *Nisei* is the silent American. We don't cause any waves is what it means, because he don't know any better I guess. (laughs)

CC: Is that true?

MM: Yeah. Because I could see it in my oldest brothers and my older sister.

CC: And you?

MM: I don't know. When I've always worked, I just worked and done my best, whether it turned out or not. If it didn't turn out right, then I figure, well, that's the way it was going to be anyway, so I might as well make the best of it. Because if you end up feeling sorry for yourself, or if you try to fight city hall, you're going to lose because you ain't got the bucks. I've been there, and I've been told by my brothers—I've been a lot of times the spokesman for the family. My oldest brother would tell me, "You take care of it." When my father died, "You take care of it." I've always been told that, so I feel that there comes a time when you revolt. (laughs)

CC: You get tired.

MM: Yeah. That happened to me. I used to write all the letters to Japan for _____ (inaudible). When I went to visit, I told them, "I'm not going to do it anymore. I've been writing these letters, so I'm just telling you to your face, I'm not going to write the letters anymore. I've been writing for my oldest brother, and I left it up to him." So then, he started taking care of things. _____ (inaudible) in Japan and he was going back. Then he drops dead of a heart attack. Then he told me, "Go over to the Japanese American museum." Have you been there?

CC: Yes.

MM: Great. So, he tells me, "Take all the pictures." Pictures of my father with his deer, with his shotgun. I'm sure you're not going to see a picture like that. Then he _____ (inaudible). It's just history. He had asked me to gather up the pictures. Well, I didn't have the pictures to begin with. He and my kid brother and my other brothers had the pictures. I told him, "I'm working, and you're not working, so you can do it yourself." (laughs) But, he died on me. So now, I tell my kid brother to do it. You should see the albums and pictures he's got.

CC: He has a lot of pictures?

MM: Oh, yeah, he's got pictures.

CC: Family history?

MM: Family, everything. He has lots of pictures. Videos, those frames, slides and stuff. He made a picture, a history-like, of my brothers to show. When my brother turned sixty, we had a party for him. It was supposed to be a surprise, and it just so happens about two weeks before the party, we find out he's dying of cancer. So, we were just fortunate we had this arranged. His birthday is three days before Christmas, and we had it the end of July. His wife's attitude was, "His birthday is in December. Why are we having it in July?" We said we were having it because everybody's too busy at Christmastime to celebrate, so we'll do it when everybody's in town. So, that's what happened. We had it in July. And his wish was to have this reunion, his fiftieth anniversary reunion for the Children's Village. That's why Tak asked Tamo to head it up.

CC: So, Tak did it for his brother?

MM: Yeah, the two of them were going to do it.

CC: Tak and his older brother?

MM: Yeah. My brother right below me. Then it turned out he asked Tamo, because Tamo has the leadership. He's been president of the American Legion. He's familiar with the process and what to do. So then, he did that.

CC: What about privacy at camp?

MM: Privacy? There was no doors in front of the toilets. There was just like a wall like this. In the showers, it was just one big room with showers on two walls.

[02:40:00]

CC: What if you guys wanted to be alone? You didn't have a place to go?

MM: No. There wasn't anything, unless you went for a walk or something out in the field, out in the fire break, or something like that. The sand was so bad, wind storms. You couldn't see in front of you, and you would get sand all over everything. It was horrible. But, the stars at night in the desert, you could see every star in the whole continent. Then, when it thundered, you'd think the whole sky was going to come down on you. But, we had straw mattresses.

CC: Comfortable?

MM: Oh, no. They're like _____ (inaudible). They're not like regular ones. But, you just learn to eat canned spinach. You learn to eat what they feed you, because there's nothing else to eat. We started to grow all our vegetables. We had our farm, and we had a hog ranch, started raising all those pigs. They're very—what do you call it? Japanese people's initiatives are very high. They find ways to make do, and I believe this. I've always believed in my heart—the delta area and all that farmland, the Japanese, they did raise produce and everything. They weren't allowed to have property in their name. They put it in the children's names. I don't know if you're aware of this? There's no way they could take it away from a child because the child was a United States citizen. They weren't allowed to become a United States citizen till—what year was it that my dad died? Nineteen seventy. No, my dad died in 1966. Somewhere in that time they were allowed to become naturalized citizens. Those are rights. But, you look at Japan. What rights did they give to the Korean people that were born there? Stuff like that. You look at that, but they're not a democracy, so it's different. I mean, you say this is right? It's wrong how they're doing that, but there's nothing you can do about it.

CC: What about emotional support in the Village? Who provided that when the kids needed it? Did anybody provide it?

MM: I would say—see, I know about the boys more than I know the girl because my brothers would tell me. Those guys would support them. John Nagayama and John Hohri.⁶ The older guys would look after the younger guys. Wilbur, I'm telling you, my brother, the one that died, he used to protect him. My brother below me was a very unusual person. He was very, not soft-hearted. Tender. I mean, I could say this, not because he's my brother, but as a person, he would never turn a person away. I could turn a person away, but I don't think he was the type that could. He was

⁶ Sohei Hohri, O.H. 3786, Center for Oral and Public History

always gentle, and he was always trying to find out if he could help the younger sisters or whatever. How's it going?

CC: Pretty good. Why did you feel it's important to tell your story now?

MM: Nobody's asked me before. (laughs) Well, I think what I tell you is what I believe in and what happened to me and things I could tell you. There was so much tragedy in some of those kids' lives before they were in the Village that I used to feel for them. I used to really feel for them. And I always felt lucky, because I *was* lucky. Because I had parents, and I could understand how they would feel. I'll tell you, at the hearing for the reparation, one of the boys—I don't know if he was in Tak's age or whatever—he got up and told his story. I didn't even know it was him until he got up there and gave his name, and he sat two away from me.

CC: In school?

MM: No, at the hearing, the public hearing of the stories they told. He told of how he was in the Village and that he's always been a minimum earning person because he was in the Village. He had gone to the hospital from the Village, and he almost died of pneumonia. And he blamed everything on the system. He did. That's one of the things on that video that one of the guys talks about. I never got to talk to him about it, but I thought, That's too bad. That's too bad that he felt that way. If he was minimum wage—he had a Mexican wife. In fact, I have their address. I think he said that they would have liked to adopt a child—he told me that when I talked to him—but there was no way they could afford anything. She didn't work. He worked. I thought, Gee, how sad that he felt that way. But, if he did feel that way, he believed it. I thought, Gee, how could he believe such a thing? It's tragic, isn't it, that a person could say my life is ruined, I've never been able to make anything because I was in the Village and I went to the hospital and I almost died of pneumonia, and to this day I work for minimum wage. To me, that's self-pity. But yet, John Hohri, he brought it up. He says one of the children is in the hearing. But, he had empathy for that person. And I thought, Well, maybe I haven't reached that stage yet. Maybe I don't understand it because he got something from it, but I didn't. I didn't get what he got from the message that he was trying to give.

CC: So, this was during the hearings for—

[02:50:00]

MM: Before they even decided to pay us reparation. I get this paper from William Hohri. He writes every month. Have you ever heard of it?

CC: Uh-huh. I've heard of William Hohri. I haven't heard about the paper.

MM: He writes a letter every month, and he gives his opinions. It's very interesting. He tells you about what's going on and all the papers he reads. He's retired now. He represented us on the reparation.

CC: He was the main leader, right? I've heard of him.

MM: He was at our—he's on the VCR? He comes in the morning for breakfast the last day, on Sunday, on the VCR.

CC: Mary, what reminds you of camp today? Do you see anything that triggers camp?

MM: Only that I'm so close to camp because I live in Victorville. It's on 395, and it's not that far. I haven't talked to my sister-in-law on my husband's side that was married to his oldest brother. She went from Tule Lake to Japan on that boat during the war.

CC: Did you have to fill out a questionnaire, too? Or you were too young?

MM: I was too young.

CC: Do you remember if they voted—

MM: They're asking for reparation for those people. I mean, that was in the paper just recently.

CC: How about voting? Did they let them vote inside the camp? Do you remember them voting?

MM: No. The only thing I got [as a] benefit, before we left camp, everybody was leaving camp, so they said, Anybody that wants to get a driver's license, come and apply for it. Well heck, we didn't know how to drive. We never got a chance to drive. My brothers did, but I never did. I went an applied for a driver's license and got it.

CC: How old were you?

MM: Seventeen.

CC: You had never driven before?

MM: No. Then I lost my wallet in Chinatown, probably on the Ferris wheel or something. Do you know what that is?

CC: Yes. Oragami.

MM: A thousand cranes.

CC: _____ (inaudible) make a wish. That's when you want to make a wish. Oh, wow!

MM: That's for when we'd have a wedding or something like that. My niece made this for— who was that for? Was it for my father? They made those. My mother made most of them. They made a fish, and the fish looked so natural. She was an interior decorator. Now, her father, my kid brother, had told her, "Whatever you want to do in life, do it, and do it while you're young because you'll never do it when you get old." So, she pursued her dream rather than keep on with her interior decorating. She was successful. She makes earrings, pins, and she makes jewels out of paper. Nina M, that's her, you know—but she's very talented. It's been—'86, '89? That must have been two years before that, so she's been in it about five years, I'd say.

CC: When did you remarry? Tamo told us April, and I was sure—

MM: He's stupid! A lot of people—I named Weller Court. Do you know Weller Court in Japanese Town? Where the Otani Hotel is in shopping mall right there? They had a contest, and I won it, because six out of nine of us were born there in Japanese Town. I won a trip to Hawaii, roundtrip, and a week's stay at the New Otani hotel over there and \$200. And I could taste it. Who did they notify? They notified my sister that she won. So, it came out in the newspaper. I was reading the newspaper right there. I'm sitting on the john getting ready to take a shower, and I jumped out of there. I ran to the back bedroom, and I said to my husband, "I won! I won! I won!" "What did you win?" I named the court, Weller Court." So, he says, "How come they haven't notified you?" "I don't know why they haven't notified me."

The next morning his brother called, and he's talking to my husband and asked him, "What's your wife's middle initial?" Then he's repeating it. So, I take the phone and say, "What difference does it make what my middle initial is? I won." Then he said, "I'll have my wife call you." When she got that notice, she couldn't understand it, because she didn't submit. So then, she just put it aside and didn't think anything of it. So, when her husband I guess got wind of it, he called. Then she says, she didn't think I was the type to submit names. I thought that was real stupid. I says, "What better reason do I have than you? Six out of nine of us were born right here in Japanese Town." Anyway, she says, "I'll call them." And she did. What they did was, they figured all the Mary Miya entries were from the same person. They didn't realize that it was two different addresses in Los Angeles, so they picked the wrong one. I had submitted twenty-five names. You had to submit each individually on 8 1/2 x 11. So, what I did was, I typed out all the names I submitted. Then the thing was, if there was duplication, whoever sent it the earliest would be the winner. So, I sent it as soon as I could. I sent it right in. And I begged my brothers and sisters and took them the forms to submit, too.

CC: Did they?

MM: I don't know. (laughs) They didn't win!

CC: Anything else you would like to add, Mary?

MM: What would I like to add? Well, the Children's Village experience I think should be happy for the people at this time, because when you're young and you're growing, there's countless pains, but when you get older, then you should just have learned something from it that you shared with others of your kind, so to speak. If you're a black, you have blacks. If you're white, you've got whites. But no matter. This is a melting pot, and we should learn to just live with it. I could say that, but I could think of my one girlfriend that I wish that I could really talk to. She has a husband that uses her, and it's unfortunate that everybody's life can't be as good as mine has. I mean, I'm lucky. My husband, he's like, "Go for it!" (laughs)

[03:01:00]

CC: He's understanding.

MM: Yeah. He says, I'm going to be back in three days. I says, "That's how it looks right now, unless it's going to take a little longer to get my permanent or something." I have a new dog I got in November, and that thing is a wart. You know what I'm saying? It stays with me, and I'm its mama. And it's been mistreated. First I thought it was deaf. It's ears were infected. Then I waited for the rainy season to end so I could get its teeth cleaned. Then it had fifteen teeth removed. It had infected gums. I kept telling my husband, "This dog is not deformed; it's been abused." It's an abused dog that has brain damage so it doesn't know anything. It just worships me because I take care of it so good. It wouldn't even go to my husband for one month-and-a-half. Now he's learning to tolerate him a little, but he knows when I'm leaving. Oh, and he's so happy. He just jumps and jumps, and he's all happy when he sees me finally. He's a little poodle. He's about eleven, thirteen pounds now. I really think that he was brain damaged, because we had one that was seventeen years old. He died last year, and the other one was fifteen. The doctor said it was epileptic, but I think it was from the Corona shot that it caused _____ (inaudible). That one was thirteen or fourteen years old. So, we had pretty good luck with dogs. This one here, I'm just trying to wean it. It sleeps with me. Wherever I go, it's right there. It won't go in the house first. It makes me go in the house first before it follows me to make sure. But, it's so cute.

CC: Thank you so much.

MM: Well, you put your address—what's your address?

CC: I'll write it down for you, but thank you so much for giving your time. If there's anything else you want to ever discuss, give me a call. I'll be happy to come and see you. It was great. Thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW