

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Children's Village at Manzanar Oral History Project

An Oral History with SAM MASAMI TANAKA

Interviewed

By

Reiko Katabami

On June 28, 1993

OH 2331.1

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NARRATOR: SAM MASAMI TANAKA  
INTERVIEWER: Reiko Katabami  
DATE: June 28, 1993  
LOCATION: Cerritos, California  
PROJECT: Children's Village at Manzanar

RK: This an interview with Mr. Sam Masami Tanaka by Reiko Katabami for the Japanese American project for the Oral History Program at California State University, Fullerton. The interview is [in] Cerritos, California, on June 28, 1993 at approximately eleven o'clock.

ST: No, 10:55 a.m.

RK: Ten, fifty-five. (chuckles)

RK: So to begin, may I ask your birthdate and birthplace?

ST: January 22, 1930 in Alameda, California.

RK: Okay. So, what is your age right now?

ST: I'm sixty-three.

RK: Sixty-three?

ST: Yeah.

RK: So, what is your generation?

ST: I'm a Nisei, second generation.

RK: Second generation. Originally, when [did] your ancestor come to the U.S.?

ST: Yeah, my father is from Fukuoka.

RK: Fukuoka.

ST: He's a Issei, and he was an illegal alien.

RK: Oh.

ST: Okay, he did not get his citizenship.

RK: Okay, so when he came to the U.S.?

ST: I think he came in 1920 or '21. I think he was somewhere like seventeen or eighteen years old at that time.

RK: What about your mother? Your mother is a Japanese American?

ST: No, my mother was Japanese from Fukuoka, also, but I do not really know her history because I didn't know her when I was young. She went to the hospital when I was like three years old so, and I really never knew my mother. But, looking at my birth certificate I know that she was from Fukuoka, and I don't know when she came over or anything else.

RK: Okay. I've noticed you went to foster family.

ST: Yes.

RK: Would you describe what kind of foster family?

ST: Oh, okay. I went to a foster family at the age of four in Martinez, California.

RK: Martinez?

ST: Martinez, which is east of Oakland, maybe fifty miles.

RK: Near San Francisco?

ST: Yeah, but east of Oakland.

RK: Oakland, okay.

ST: Okay? Now, it was a Japanese family. I have two brothers and a sister, and, at that time, all four of us went to live together at this foster home.

RK: Your original brothers and sisters?

ST: Yes.

RK: Went to a foster family?

ST: Um-hm. We went to the same family. We stayed with them, gee, nine years. No, six years.

RK: Six years you stayed in the foster home?

ST: Foster family.

RK: At the age of four you went to a foster family?

ST: Right. Well, it was either I was still three or just turned four because I remember we went to San Francisco in the end of '39 or beginning '40. So, that's why I say approximately six years. But, the lady that we were in the foster home, she got sick with tuberculosis. So, she was unable to care for us anymore, so we went to the orphanage in San Francisco.

RK: Salvation Army?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Will you describe your brothers and sisters?

ST: My sister is the oldest, and she was—well, let's see, right now she's sixty-six.

RK: Right now?

ST: Sixty-seven and she's still living. I have an older brother that is sixty-five, and another brother that is sixty-four. I'm the youngest of the four, and I'm sixty three. Now, I had an elder sister that went back to Japan when I was like three years old, so I don't really know how old she was when she went back.

RK: To Japan?

ST: Yeah.

RK: So, she still in Japan?

ST: Well, we have no contact with her.

RK: Okay, you are the youngest, so at the age of four you went to the foster family?

ST: Yes.

RK: Your three brothers—

ST: Two brothers and sister went also.

RK: Okay, and another sister went to Japan?

ST: Right.

RK: How was the foster family?

ST: It was fine. They took care of us like their own children. I think they had one son and two daughters, and they were, I would say, probably ten, twelve years older than we were, than my older sister. I think the only one girl was still in high school when we lived with them, as far as I could remember. The others were already out of high school.

RK: The foster family parents were also from Japan? Or Japanese American?

ST: Yes. They were—

RK: Japanese American?

ST: No, I'm going to say the mother was Issei, and her kids were all born here.

[00:08:25]

RK: How about the father?

ST: Her father died before we met them.

RK: Oh, you are talking about her father?

ST: Her husband, I should say.

RK: Okay.

ST: Yeah.

RK: Her husband died?

ST: Yeah.

RK: So, after you were raised by her?

ST: Right. By foster mother, not foster parents.

RK: Okay, foster mother. Maybe I have to go back. Your mother was sick. What disease?

ST: Well, okay, what I could remember by talking to my father and my sister in the latter years, my mother had a nervous breakdown, originally, and then she was sent to a hospital. I don't even remember what hospital, but she was sent to a hospital. I found out later that my mother had contracted tuberculosis so she couldn't come back out. And I don't know if that was—cause I've never really seen a history on my mother's medical record, so I can't really say. But, I can only go by what the hospital people told me, and what I've known from my sister. In 1956 I went to visit her in Napa—

ST: Napa Valley?

ST: No, Napa, California. There was a state hospital sanitarium, and she was still alive at that time. I talk to the doctors and social worker. It was kind of a sad thing for me because even though she was my mother, I didn't know her. But yet, for my own self, I had to find out what she was really like or what her condition was. And the doctors, and even the social worker, advised me not to try and pursue anymore or any further than what I did. So, I says, "Fine," and I took their advice and let it be at that. Now, at this day, weather she is alive or if she died when, I can't say.

RK: Oh, really?

ST: Cause I guess if I write to the state I could probably find out. But, I really never knew my mother. And, you know, what transpired was very little circumstance in my life, really.

RK: How about your father?

ST: Well, my father, I don't know if I said this earlier, but he was an illegal alien. He came into the United States through Mexico, and I think this has to do with partly why we became orphans because he was an illegal alien and scared that if he went to get help or do things with us that he would be—

RK: Deported.

ST: Yeah, deported back to Japan. And that's why, I think, through the years, he got to a point where he didn't want to go back. There's a funny twist to this because after the war was over we understood he was sent to New Mexico where the concentration camp was, where all the aliens, the community leaders, and things of that nature were sent to. And after, I think, a year, a year-and-a-half he was released and sent to the same camp that we were, which we never knew he was. So, yeah, that's ironic that he was sent to the Manzanar where our Children's Village was, and we never knew that he was there.

RK: Okay, he was sent to another camp, concentration camp?

ST: Um-hm.

RK: And you noticed that he was in another concentration camp—

ST: Well, we found this out after—

RK: After end of war.

ST: Yeah.

RK: Do you know when he was sent to Manzanar?

ST: No, I don't. It was like a year, a year-and-a-half after, but he was in the same camp that we were. And not knowing who he was, it would have been hard if I did know him, you know, if I did see him.

RK: Mr. Matsumoto and Mrs. Matsumoto<sup>1</sup> didn't tell you?

ST: They didn't know.

RK: Oh, so they didn't know.

ST: See, we found this out after after we left relocation camp, and I guess through the state they tracked him down. And from camp, he went to Minnesota, see? Because after the relocation we had to go somewhere because we were still minors, so we went back to Martinez, and then the social workers there had to find a place for us to go. But, in the meantime, they were looking for my father, and they found him in Minneapolis. But then, through relocation they found out he was in Manzanar. (chuckles)

RK: Do you have any memories of your father before camp?

ST: Well, I could remember, while we were at the foster home, maybe he came to visit us two or three times.

RK: During the six years?

ST: Yeah. He would I guess just be like an uncle or whatever you want to say because, as far as a father was concerned, I didn't know him as a father. But, I knew he was my father.

As far as saying, he was a father to me, I would say, no, because I never knew him as a father.

[00:17:00]

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<sup>1</sup> Lillian Matsumoto, O.H. 2492, Center for Oral and Public History.

RK: Okay. Did you have time to visit your mother in hospital?

ST: No.

RK: In the hospital? Okay. Not ever? Your father is still alive?

ST: No, my father died—I'm going to think maybe back in '71, '72. He died of pneumonia in the county hospital in Los Angeles.

RK: In Los Angeles, okay. So, after end of war, where did you go?

ST: After the war?

RK: Yes, where did you go?

ST: We went back to Martinez.

RK: Martinez is located in?

ST: In California.

RK: Near San Francisco?

ST: No, about fifty miles east of Oakland.

RK: Oh, okay.

ST: I don't know if you know where Walnut Creek is.

RK: Walnut Creek, I know.

ST: Okay, it's close there. Like maybe five, ten miles.

RK: I know Sunnyvale.

ST: No, Sunnyvale is south. Walnut Creek is more east. That's where we originally lived in Walnut Creek, then we went to Martinez.

RK: Your original—

ST: Well, I was born in Alameda, okay?

RK: Oh, Los Alamitos?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Oh! In Long Beach?

ST: *No*, Alameda.

RK: Alameda?

ST: Not Los Alamitos.

RK: Okay, Alameda. (chuckles)

ST: Okay, Alameda is right by Oakland.

RK: Oh, I see.

ST: You see? Then I don't know when we moved to Walnut Creek, but I remember we lived in Walnut Creek. So then, from there, we went to Martinez.

RK: So, after war—

ST: After war we went to Martinez, and the state placed us into another foster home. And this family was Caucasian.

RK: Will you describe that?

ST: Well, you say can I describe that. Well, there was a family called Bradleys, and the wife was home by herself at the time because her husband was in the Army. He was a colonel. In fact, he was a prisoner of war in the Philippines, at the time, and the lady needed help on her farm, or her ranch, whatever you want to call it. She had chickens. She had a horse and cow, but she needed help just to maintain. And she had sons that lived in San Francisco, but they couldn't come and help all the time. After we went there, we were able to help her kind of maintain the place. But then, like I said, she was Caucasian, and I'd have to say she was probably in her late fifty, early sixties, at the time.

RK: How about her husband?

ST: Like I said, he was in the service, so she was basically there by herself. And she had a sister that would come visit her quite often because she didn't live far away. So, we stayed and went to school in Concord, California. That was in 1945. And then, in 1946, they located my father in Minneapolis, so in 1946, they decided, well, we should go back to live with our father. So, we went back to live with our father.

RK: In Minneapolis?

ST: In Minneapolis.

RK: You mean your brothers and sister also—four together?

ST: Um-hm.

RK: What happened?

ST: What do you mean what happened?

RK: With your father in Minneapolis?

ST: Well, see he went to Minneapolis after the relocation center, but he did not know where we were. And we didn't know where he was, but through the relocation, the state found out where he was. I guess they must have wrote to him or called him up on the telephone and told him were we were, and they sent us to him so that the state wouldn't have to care for us. We went back to live with him in Minneapolis from '46, and then in 1947, I came out to Los Angeles. The whole family came out to Los Angeles.

RK: Again, your father didn't take care of the four of you?

ST: Not really. It's like—well, I fell it must have been a burden on him to take care of us. All the years that we were here, he was really not taking care of us. Somebody else was so he didn't have to worry.

RK: What was your father doing at the time?

ST: I think he was a cook at a Chinese restaurant.

RK: But, he was working?

ST: Yeah.

[00:25:13]

RK: Okay, so you went to another foster family?

ST: No, after I went to Minneapolis and lived with my father. Okay? And then, we came out here to Los Angeles in '47.

RK: Forty-seven to Los Angeles. Salvation Army?

ST: No, no. By that time—well, that's were I have to tell you—see, there's different phases that you are going to have to put together because this is more about my family and my father. And this had partially nothing to do with the orphanage because the orphanages are a little different situation. But if I tell you the way I am

about my father, then it will be a little different than you can understand why we were in an orphanage, why we were in a foster home, and what happened after.

In 1947, we came out here, and I guess he decided to open a little import business. It didn't work out, and, by that time, I was seventeen years old. So, I was not on my own, but after the war everybody had a hard time, so everybody went to work and tried to help in whatever they can. I went to work as a schoolboy during my high school, so I would live with a family, do chores around the house for room and board and very little money. Your spending money was—back then you didn't need a lot because it's not what it is now. But, I used to get a little spending money and get my room and board, which was the necessity at that time. And I did that for roughly four years.

RK: After the war?

ST: Um-hm, during my high school years.

RK: So, you mean, after the war you went to another foster family and then foster family sent you back to your father?

ST: Well, the state sent us back to our father because they found him.

RK: They found him and state sent you back to your father. Then you stayed two, almost two years, and then you came back to Los Angeles area.

ST: Um-hm.

RK: So, in Los Angeles you were a schoolboy?

ST: I was in high school when I came back here.

RK: But, who take care of you at that time?

ST: I was basically taking care of myself.

RK: You did things for yourself.

ST: But see, that's why I went to work in a home for room and board.

RK: Oh, I see. I understand.

ST: They gave you very little money, but yet it was something that you could spend for yourself.

RK: Was it a Japanese American house?

ST: No, it was *hakujins*.

RK: It was *hakujin* home. So, you worked for four years?

ST: Yeah, approximately four years.

[recording paused]

RK: Well, it's about 11:30 a.m. right now. So, before camp, will you describe about your experience at Salvation Army?

ST: Oh, okay. I went to the Salvation Army orphanage about September of '39.

RK: At the age of?

ST: At the age of nine.

RK: Nine.

ST: Now, the home itself was, shall we say, supervised by the Salvation Army, which had head coordinator, the number one person in charge, with a few assistants. Now, there was a Japanese couple that was affiliated with Salvation Army, and they worked at the orphanage, in essence, was their work. I remember they had two sons, and the sons lived in the orphanage with them also. I don't remember how many people there were all together as far as supervisors, and, even the children, I can't remember how there was all together. But, the building was on Laguna and Gary Street in San Francisco. It was a three-story building with a courtyard in the back where the kids played. The girls were, I would have to say, separated according to age groups on one side of the building along with the boys on the other side. As far as activities are concern, you would have church service or Sunday school service on Sundays. You would have your meals all together in one mess hall, and I remember we used to say grace before meals. I would have to say it's just like one big family when you had dinner, lunch, or breakfast, whatever. On school days, they would make a lunch for you. I can't even remember what kind of lunch we had, but I remember they used to give us lunch. Our school is only two blocks away, so we used to walk and that was no problem.

RK: Were there American students?

ST: Yeah. The home itself was all Japanese. Now, through the years you find out by talking to the other kids why they became orphans in that home and how they got there. Some were bitter, some weren't, but a lot of them had older brothers and sisters which were already past the age of eighteen or out of high school. So, they lived outside, and they would visit their brothers and sisters whenever they could and take them to the movies or take them outside with the permission and bring them back whenever. But, there were, I would have to say probably, a neighborhood of fifty to sixty kids at that time.

RK: Do you remember friendship at Salvation Army?

ST: Yeah, it was different because being the youngest and my brothers—well, we played together when we was small, but, you know, as you get older your brothers have different interests. They don't want to play with you, so when you have kids your own age, you can play a little different. And you play the same type of games that the older kids say, "That's a kids game; I don't want to play." So, as far as having people to play with, you had no problem because you played with kids, more less, your own age. You went to school with them; you played with them.

[00:27:00]

RK: You went together with no quarrels among your sisters and brothers?

ST: Oh, no, you have quarrels and fights and whatever, just like you would if you had brother living in your home or sister, whatever.

RK: But, at least they take care of each other.

ST: Well, yeah.

RK: Okay, that's what I wondered. (chuckles)

ST: But, say had a fight with somebody else outside, he would help you or you would help him, you know, as a friend. It's just like anybody else, I would say.

RK: Did you make friends in school?

ST: Well, yes.

RK: American?

ST: Yeah, but you really didn't bring them home because you were kind of, shall we say, ashamed that you lived in an orphanage.

RK: So, you had a feeling of shame?

ST: Well, I did.

RK: You think other people did also?

ST: I would have to feel that way because, as I remember, there weren't very many outside people coming to the home. It was like the kids knew you were from there, but they really didn't interfere with your life there in the sense that, oh, you can't do this, you can do that, or you live in an orphanage. I don't remember ever bringing

- outside people into the home because, myself, I felt shameful that I had to live in that, but, at the time, you have no choice.
- RK: I see. You told me it was all Japanese kids in Salvation Army.
- ST: Yes.
- RK: So, there was no *hapa*?
- ST: No, I don't remember in San Francisco that there was any *hapa* kids, but when we went to relocation center, there was.
- RK: Maybe I'll ask later. As a kid, do you remember your experience with any kinds of prejudice or discrimination?
- ST: No, not before the war.
- RK: Oh, really?
- ST: After the war started, yes.
- RK: So, when you mingled with other kids in school, Caucasian kids, there was no prejudice?
- ST: Unh-uh.
- RK: Maybe because they're so young.
- ST: *No*.
- RK: What do you think about that?
- ST: I feel when you're not taught anything, you have no fear of it. But, during pre-war time, to me anyways, there was no such thing as prejudice against Japanese, but after the war started, there was.
- RK: It escalated.
- ST: Yes. Because the parents are the ones that, to me, to tell their kids, "Those people are Japanese, and you don't play with them."
- RK: Okay, thank you. Do you speak only English? Or Japanese?
- ST: Well, no, I can speak Japanese if I really need to. But, it's been a while since I used Japanese so I have to look for words. When I was in business, I had to use Japanese to my customers.

RK: I see. (laughs) Maybe I can ask you later.

ST: (laughs)

RK: So, in Salvation Army, you told me you don't remember any kinds of food you were served but mostly American style dishes?

ST: Yeah.

RK: American meal.

ST: Well, I remember—okay, in the morning it was generally cereal, hot cereal, cold cereal, and then every now and then you have eggs, toast, and things like that. It was basics, you know. It wasn't nothing fancy, just basic meal that would, I guess—I know it was balanced because the cooks used give you—I remember a lot of vegetables and, like I said, in the morning they used to give you juice and cereal and things like that. At the time, you don't think nothing of it. When we used to come home from school, we used to get like a glass of milk and cookie or piece of cake or something in that nature because dinner, I guess, I don't remember what time we used to eat dinner, but I know it was like 5:30, 6:00. Even to this day I can remember we used to have to, not report in, but let them know we're home, and we'd go in and get our snack. And I tell people we used to have *oyatsu*, they say, what was that?

RK: *Oyatsu*.

ST: But I guess I learned that when I was in the foster home cause when we used to come home we used to have—at the orphanage we got milk and cookies and things like that. But before I went there, I remember we used to have maybe a juice, milk, and then sometime we'd get candy or cookies or whatever. You know? But, I learned that when I was in the foster home.

RK: Your foster family cooked for you mainly Japanese food? Do you remember?

ST: Gee, I don't even remember. Yeah, I guess it would be mostly Japanese food.

RK: Did you like that? Do you like Japanese food, generally?

ST: Oh, yeah.

RK: Because if you don't eat Japanese food at a small age, you never eat Japanese food. (laughs)

ST: Well, but then, see, when you live on a farm, back then basically most of the things were *okazu*.

RK: *Okazu*, yeah.

ST: But, I could remember like New Year's, Christmas, we had turkey and chicken, things like that. How different it was in comparison to Japanese food, I can't remember, but I remember we used to go visit homes during \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) time.

[00:37:07]

RK: Do you know, was it special Japanese cuisine? So, your second foster family, you used to eat American food?

ST: Yeah.

RK: How did you make contact outside while you were staying with your first foster family?

ST: Well, we went to school, and I remember, we went to Japanese school on Saturdays. And they were basically—I don't even remember how many kids, but I remember going to Japanese school maybe for two years. I didn't really learn much.

RK: You were five or six years old?

ST: Yeah. Well, after I started first grade, I went to Japanese school on Saturday. Until then, I didn't, but my brothers and sisters did.

RK: Oh, really?

ST: But, I only went for maybe two years. I only went to second and third grade, somewhere around there. I don't really remember Japanese the language how to—what do you say the adverbs and the verbs and the—

RK: It's hard.

ST: Yeah. I mean, even since then I haven't gone back to Japanese school. I've never tried to learn Japanese. I only use what I know.

RK: Language requires patience.

ST: (laughs)

RK: Did your first foster family speak Japanese?

ST: Yeah. The lady talked a lot of Japanese, but yet she spoke a lot of English because her kids only spoke English.

RK: Your father mainly spoke Japanese?

ST: Yeah.

RK: And mother too?

ST: Well, I don't remember my mother. I don't even remember what kind of conversations we had.

RK: So young. While you were staying with the Japanese foster family, how did you make contact with Caucasian kids?

ST: In school. We had a neighbor that was Italian, and the boy was either same age or one year older than I was. So, we went school. We played together.

RK: Did you enjoy?

ST: Well, yeah. I could remember we played kids games, normal kids games.

RK: So you didn't have a special friend—did you prefer playing with Japanese boys?

ST: No.

RK: Did you have a girlfriend at that time?

ST: No.

RK: (laughs)

ST: Not at that age. (chuckles)

RK: Can I ask if you had aspiration for your future? (phone rings) Okay, you can—  
[recording paused] So, we are talking about aspirations in your childhood. Did you have specific—

ST: Not really.

RK: What were you thinking about at that time?

ST: As a kid, you really don't have to worry, and I don't think I ever worried about what I was going to be or who I was going to be, I would say not even until I was in high school. But, at that time, no.

RK: Did you enjoy Salvation Army life or not?

ST: Well, it wasn't a matter of enjoying. It was a matter of what you had to do and you had no choice, so you, I guess, being in an orphanage you learn you have to make the best of what you have, regardless.

RK: So, how long did you stay in Salvation Army?

ST: I was in San Francisco approximately two, two-and-a-half years before relocation.

RK: Okay. So, after the foster family?

ST: Right. So, late '39 to beginning of '42. Well, actually, May of '42.

RK: So, you were the age of eleven?

ST: When I went to camp?

RK: No, Salvation Army.

ST: I was nine when I went in.

RK: Really, you stayed six years at foster family from the age of six—

ST: No, I must have been three, just turning four because I remember I slept in a crib for a while.

RK: Sorry, I can't understand. What's a—

ST: A crib? The baby crib. See? Well, at the age I figured I was, too, small, [and] they didn't want me to fall off the bed, whatever. But, I remember sleeping in a crib. Like I said, nineteen even—well, I had to be three or maybe not four yet. So, by the time '39, I was roughly six years.

RK: From nine years—no, at the age of nine when you went to Salvation Army?

ST: Yeah.

[00:46:00]

RK: Oh, I was just wondering, your brothers and sisters did not tell you at the age of three or four?

ST: Tell me what?

RK: That you went to foster family. The exact age?

ST: No, I never asked. (laughs)

RK: So, you had contact with outside while you were staying at Salvation Army?

ST: Um-hm.

RK: Did you see TV or radio to contact the outside?

ST: Well, they didn't have TVs back then. They had radios, but we use to make our own, what they called crystal sets. It was just like a radio. And they had earphones so you used to listen to that. But, they had radios, and we used to listen now and then.

RK: I heard about the adoption inspection at Salvation Army. Did you—

ST: What kind of inspection?

RK: Adaptation.

ST: Not really.

RK: Really?

ST: Well, whoever was in charge of us used to inspect the rooms because there was like maybe—some of the rooms are two people in a room. Some were like ah, six; like a dormitory, like a big dormitory? Depending on how old you were and depending on where you lived. But you know, you would have to wake up and make your own bed and then clean your own area. And then, once a week, I know we used to mope the floor and dust things like that, but I can't remember who used to come and check to see if we used to do it.

RK: So, you experienced adaptation inspection while you were staying in Children's Village? Maybe I can ask later.

ST: Oh, yeah. Well, like I said, we had to make our own beds so you learned to make your own bed. It's not like when you were living at home, at nine, ten years old your mother is going to come and make your bed.

RK: Did you envy those?

ST: Not really.

RK: I think you are a happy child.

ST: (laughs)

RK: You seem to be happy child.

ST: Well, like I said, when you're a kid, you not really think about a lot of things.

RK: Just enjoy playing.

ST: Oh, yeah. As you get older, than you worry about where your money is going to come from, when you're going to go to the movies or whatever.

RK: That's right. (laughs) How did you find out about Pearl Harbor?

ST: How did I find Pearl Harbor? Well, maybe you're asking what do you think of Pearl Harbor?

RK: Yeah, anything is okay. I just wondered who told you? Where did you get the information?

ST: Well, it was Sunday. In fact, it was Sunday—I used to be a batboy for—

RK: Bad boy?

ST: *Batboy.*

RK: Oh, batboy.

ST: You know, baseball? Okay, I used to be a batboy for a *hakujin* baseball team. At my age—I was what, eleven? So, I used to go every Sunday morning after church or after Sunday school and be the batboy. Well, when the game was over, I was going home and that's when I heard of Pearl Harbor. But, to me, it really didn't mean much. I guess it was the next day that you heard all the commotion about United States is going to war. Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. To me back then, Pearl Harbor, I didn't even know where it was.

RK: So, you got the information from a baseball player?

ST: No.

RK: From—

ST: I was already coming home when I heard, but, like I said, it really didn't mean nothing to me.

RK: Did you happen to be affected by curfew?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Will you describe how it was?

ST: Well, I guess being in the orphanage, at that time, I used to deliver newspaper in the evening, the San Francisco evening paper. I used to deliver in residential area.

RK: Every morning?

ST: Evening. That's how I made some money.

RK: Pocket money?

ST: Yeah. Other than that, I had no allowance.

RK: How long did you do that? One year or something?

ST: I think I only did it for about six months, seven months. Then, after the war broke out, the supervisors at Salvation Army told us that we had to be home by a certain time, and you can't go back out. See, I used try and finish my paper route before dinner, but sometimes I didn't, so I used to go back and deliver the paper. Because my dinnertime was a certain time—if I didn't go there for dinner, I wouldn't get dinner.

[00:55:00]

RK: How did you manage if you didn't get dinner?

ST: No, you made sure you got dinner because where else would you get dinner?

RK: No way.

ST: So, that was something that I guess was part of your bringing up that you learn to be for lunch, for dinner, whatever.

RK: Did you think that the meals were enough? Breakfast, lunchtime?

ST: Well, yeah, I guess—

RK: You can have another helping?

ST: If there was, yeah. Like most of the time, I remember at the home, they would bring food out, and if it ran out, then they'd bring more but only what they had left.

RK: Do you remember what you liked?

ST: I don't remember.

RK: Spaghetti? (laughs)

ST: That I don't remember.

RK: But, you ate any kind of food?

ST: Oh, yeah.

RK: To survive.

ST: Well, I guess in my first foster home I was taught to eat whatever was put on your plate. So regardless, if you didn't like it or not, you still ate it.

RK: But whatever you were served, you think you were a healthy child?

ST: Oh, yeah.

RK: Okay, that's good.

ST: I mean, even now I think the same way because I haven't been sick.

RK: That's good. You know, I was wondering, what type of religious service did you attend?

ST: In the Salvation Army?

RK: Yes.

ST: Okay, it was Christian.

RK: Protestant maybe? Or Catholic?

ST: No, Christian. As far as denomination of like Baptist or Holiness, that I wouldn't know. But—

RK: But, it's a Christian church.

ST: Right, because the men that founded it was a Christian in the Salvation Army church.

RK: Oh, Salvation Army church? You didn't go outside to church?

ST: No, the church was right there. Yeah, we had our own service. The leader of the home was the so-called preacher or minister.

RK: The person who was deported to Japan later?

ST: Yeah.

RK: That was after he was called by FBI. So, you never experience the Japanese Buddhist church?

ST: No. I remember going to a Catholic church, but I just went with a friend to see one. This was in camp, not outside—

RK: Salvation Army.

ST: Yeah.

RK: Did you enjoy the Sunday service chanting? Or preaching?

ST: Well, you don't call it chanting.

RK: Oh, really?

ST: No. It was just like a regular service. When you say chanting I think Buddhist.

RK: Oh, yeah. It's different, so I should say songs.

ST: Songs? Okay. Yeah, I mean, like I said, I accepted what I was taught. So, regardless, if you believed it or not, you still went and you did what they told you.

RK: So, you attended almost every Sunday?

ST: Yeah.

RK: And after the Sunday service, you played baseball?

ST: Well, I remember we had—after we had lunch, well, service ended an hour before lunch, close to. So then, you always waited and had lunch, and you went to go play. But, you still had to ask permission to go play outside. So, that way they know where you went.

RK: What time did you used to have to come back to the Salvation Army home?

ST: By dinner.

RK: But what time?

ST: By dinnertime.

RK: But what time?

ST: Five o'clock, six o'clock. I forget what—

RK: Okay, okay.

ST: See? Because, like I said, if you miss dinner, were would you eat?

RK: Nothing. (laughs)

ST: (laughs) But sometime, you know—well, I remember the older kids they used to play sports in school. They come late. But, they know they are coming home late, so they used to save dinner for them.

RK: Did you carry keys?

ST: No.

RK: Nothing. Just wondered.

ST: The door was open.

RK: Yeah, okay. But, if you're locked out, (chuckles) do you have anything—

ST: I don't remember what time they used to lock the door, but it was probably nine o'clock.

RK: So, you used to occupy a room by yourself or with other kids?

ST: No, at that time I was young so there was six of us in a room.

RK: Wow, that's a lot. And you each had a bed?

ST: Yeah.

RK: What time did you go to bed?

ST: I'm going to have to say about nine o'clock.

RK: Before nine o'clock, what did you do in your room?

ST: Well, if we had homework, we did homework. Grammar school, I'd have to say I don't remember doing homework in grammar school, unless you had some arithmetic or math. But, as far as reading, they had a room where you can study. It was just like a library.

RK: So, facility-wise, was it enough?

ST: Oh, yeah. It was nice.

RK: What subject did you prefer, did you like most?

ST: When I was young?

RK: Um-hm at Salvation Army.

ST: Like I said, I was a kid so nothing bothered me.

RK: But, you liked reading?

ST: No.

[01:04:00]

RK: No? Okay. Kids don't worry about that. (laughs) Okay, for the serious topic, how did you find out about evacuation?

ST: Well, by then, we knew all the friends that we had were already gone. They went to either Tanforan or they went to a camp; but Tanforan was like a center.

RK: Tanforan?

ST: Tanforan.

RK: What does that mean?

ST: Okay, Taforan was the name of a racetrack, just like Santa Anita.

RK: Oh, okay.

ST: Okay? Where the people from here went to Santa Anita. See? Well, in the San Francisco area, they went to Tanforan where they used that as an Assembly Center to put everybody before they went to the relocation center. We knew that all the other people were gone, and we were the only Japanese left. But, other than going to school and coming home, we didn't go anywhere else.

RK: Until June or something?

ST: No, see? I'm thinking it was in May we went to camp. School ended sometime in May, and right after school ended, then we went to relocation. But, during January and May, we were—I would say, you could see the Japanese not going to school. You only assumed they went to relocation or whatever. But, by the time May came, we were the only Japanese there. Everybody else was gone.

RK: So, you got the information from your—

ST: Well, the supervisor used to tell us what was going on.

RK: Was it the big news among kids also? Do you remember?

ST: Well I wouldn't say—nothing big. It's just something that they told you say, okay, well.

- RK: Kind of emergency. Okay. So, your reaction was nothing like big one?
- ST: Well, like I said, at that time I was too young so I really didn't worry about where I was going.
- RK: So, you didn't worry about that. Okay. So, from the Assembly Center—
- ST: No, we didn't go to the Assembly Center.
- RK: Okay. So, you took the train from the racetrack, Assembly Center?
- ST: No, no. We didn't go to the Assembly Center.
- RK: Oh, really?
- ST: We were in the Salvation Army home. From there, we took a bus to Oakland, and they put us on the ferry. And then, the ferry, we went to the train, and then from the train— we got on the train that afternoon—I forgot what time. The train took us to Manzanar, but, in the middle of the night, you knew the train stopped but you didn't know where you were because everything was dark. And, when we woke up in the morning, you look outside, and all you see was desert.
- RK: So, you don't remember you took the bus?
- ST: From the train they took us on a bus to the camp.
- RK: Oh, I see.
- ST: Okay?
- RK: So, when you first see Manzanar, it was like a desert?
- ST: Well, the surrounding [area] is like a desert, yes.
- RK: What was your reaction?
- ST: Hm.
- RK: Many people were there? Did you see people?
- ST: Yeah. Well, we were the last people to come. But when we seen it, we said, well, this is desert, so what are you going to do? And it was hot because it was already the end of May.
- RK: But, nighttime it's so cold.

ST: No, not in the summertime.

RK: Oh, okay. What did you bring with you from Salvation Army?

ST: Just your personal clothes, that's all. Nothing else.

RK: Maybe one suitcase or something.

ST: Well, I remember they gave us a bag, and we just put things in a bag. That was all.

RK: You packed everything and brought it with you?

ST: Well, just the clothes. You didn't take toys because you didn't have room.

RK: You miss all that?

ST: Yeah. Or whatever toys you had, you didn't take. But, the Salvation Army home, after we left, what they did was they cleaned it up because *hakujins* ran the home after.

RK: *Hakujins* took the Salvation Army after?

ST: The building itself belonged to Salvation Army. They owned it. So, the *hakujins* that stayed cleaned it up and turned it back over to the main Salvation Army. I don't remember—the last time I seen the home was '85, somewhere around there, but it was still there.

RK: What was the mood when you moved to Manzanar? Was it like an excursion?

ST: No.

RK: Tell me.

ST: I really didn't have any feeling about where I was going and why.

RK: Other kids also didn't think about it?

ST: Well, like I said, I was only twelve years old, so it really didn't bother me, but I knew I was going to a camp. I really didn't think about why or what they going to do to us or anything like that.

[01:12:34]

RK: Did you do some singing or gaming?

ST: No.

RK: Oh, really? Okay. The Shonien kids were singing in the bus while they moved to Manzanar.

ST: Oh, really?

RK: Okay, so, already the Children's Village building was complete and you were assigned to live in there.

ST: Um-hm.

RK: So, three buildings are there?

ST: Yeah.

RK: One building is for boys and another one was for girls and another one building was administration.

ST: The three buildings was—okay, the first building was the mess hall, and they had this little recreation room and the director's apartment or whatever. The second one, which was the middle building, was a baby nursery and the other half was the girls' section. So, I don't remember about the girls, how they divided it, but I remember there was infant care. And then, they had the little girls, and then there was a partition like the bathrooms and the showers were in the middle. Then the older girls were on the opposite end. And then, in our building, we had the boys that were, I would have to say, sixth grade and under— when I say under, they have to be already in first grade, six to twelve in age, roughly. And then, the older ones were from thirteen or junior high school and up, and they had their own area. It's not like you couldn't go into their place to see your brother. The only one you didn't go see was your sister. You can see her, but you couldn't go into the dormitory and say, "Hey, where's my sister." You have to ask for permission for your sister to come out or something like that.

RK: But, during the daytime, you can see your sister?

ST: Oh, yeah.

RK: By the way, I have to ask. Do you know what it was called Children's Village, rather than it being called orphanage?

ST: Well, my perception would be that they were kids from different denominations. Now, Maryknoll, which was Catholic, Shonien I did not really know if they were anything to do with religion, and the Salvation Army, which was Christian, and how they got their name, I don't really know. But, when we got there, I know it was called Children's Village. In the latter years, it was considered the Village, instead of Children's Village. When I say the later years, it was referred to as the Village, not Children's Village.

RK: You mean later years after the end of war?

ST: No. I would say like—let's see that was '42 so maybe '44 or '45, people started saying—well, that's just like saying your name. Instead of Charles, Richard, they start calling them Rich and—

RK: Ah, I see. Like an abbreviation?

ST: Yeah, but you knew what they were referring to. They just cut things short or whatever you want to call it, but everybody knew what it was.

RK: Well, maybe some people didn't like the word orphanage because it has a connotation of—it doesn't sound right.

ST: Well, I myself, I feel when you say an orphan, you have no mother and father, which is not the case of 90 percent of the people. So, when you say orphan, it's really—

RK: \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible)?

ST: No, it's a bad way of saying a person is by himself or not by himself. Like I said, I have to believe that a lot of these people have mothers or they have fathers, but they are not really orphans.

RK: Maybe word orphanage was not the right word, not a suitable word.

ST: Well, maybe back then they used the name because it was appropriate, or something that they gave homeless kids as a name. But, I don't really know.

[01:18:30]

RK: Moving to Children's Village since we're already dealing with topics about Children's Village. Inside the dormitory or boys, how many people were in one room?

ST: Well, actually, it was one big room.

RK: One big room? And then, there was a partition?

ST: No.

RK: How many kids?

ST: Okay, the barracks or the building had two sections. The adult section and the young kid section and in-between was bathroom, shower, and what they call—

RK: Closet.

- ST: No, you didn't have a closet. You had a person who was in charge—
- RK: Office?
- ST: No, he had a room for himself. Just like the size of this room, where he had a bed, and where he hung his clothes and things like that. He was isolated.
- RK: From other kids?
- ST: Right, but that was for the older group. But the younger group, the supervisor actually slept there with the young ones. So, he was either what you consider a big brother or—
- RK: Father?
- ST: —father to the boys because say during the night if somebody—
- RK: If something happened—
- ST: Yeah. Well, every now and then you'd hear somebody screaming and wonder why. Well, if you lived in your own room, you won't hear it. But, it was nothing to be ashamed of or anything like that. It's just that we were all one group.
- RK: So, you belong to older kids part?
- ST: Say that again?
- RK: Sorry, you were one of the older kids?
- ST: When I first went, yeah.
- RK: When you were in Salvation Army, you shared with another five boys in the bedroom?
- ST: Um-hm.
- RK: But, this time, you shared with how many people?
- ST: Oh, I think there was like twenty.
- RK: Twenty.
- ST: Yeah, somewhere around there. Sixteen to twenty.
- RK: So, sixteen to twenty beds inside one room?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Oh, there's no privacy?

ST: Not really. Well, say like—

RK: Like a hospital?

ST: I'll say a dormitory at school. You have one big building with maybe fifteen kids—say like this one was one room and each one had a bed, and then each one had their own area, so to speak. And then, they had shelves, so if you had a toy you put your toy up there or whatever. But, you didn't have a partition such as a wall or a *shoji* [screen] or whatever.

RK: So, do you know what kind of toys? (laughs)

ST: Well, if you wanted to share it with them, well, you steal it from them. (chuckles)

RK: Generally, did you enjoy these circumstances? It's like a big brother—

ST: It wasn't bad because—

RK: You don't have to feel—

ST: You didn't have fear of one person, you know? Because we played each other, we all went to—

[01:34:00; recording paused]

RK: Okay.

ST: As I was saying about having parties, even at my age now, I do not feel I need to have a party every time I have a birthday. If somebody tell me happy birthday or at dinnertime maybe we'll have steak for dinner or roast or something like that where all the kids coming home to dinner that night, to me, that's sufficient. But, to have presents and everything like that, I don't really worry about that. I guess I wasn't brought up that way, that's why.

RK: But, in Children's Village, you got a cake and—

ST: Well, yeah, they would acknowledge that so and so had a birthday. A lot of time they wouldn't have a cake because they didn't have things to make cake with, so we'd sing happy birthday and that would be it. But, as far as parties go, you didn't really have a party, any kind.

RK: At the Children's Village?

ST: Unh-uh.

RK: Oh. The information says that there was parties.

ST: Well, depends on what they call parties.

RK: Of course.

ST: Sure, I could remember times that we had cake and punch on Sunday or Easter and things like that. Well, they might consider that part of a party. I don't know. What I look at as a party, you have games, dances, presents, whatever.

RK: Yeah.

ST: This is why I say certain people get information that may not be true to the fact. But then, you asked about movies. Well, they showed movies on an outdoor screen, and it was generally in the summertime cause the winter was too cold. The movie was generally free unless somebody or some organization was funding some kind of project or a boys club or a girls club a wanted to make a few dollars. Like five cents, ten cents, twenty-five cents for a movie or whatever. They would have it in one of the mess halls. A lot of time you would get to go, and a lot of times you wouldn't. But, the outside movie was just like a drive in without any facilities to sit down. You'd have to bring your own blanket, sit down on the sand or the dirt, whatever you want to call it and just watch the movie from there. If the wind starts blowing or if starts raining, that's part of the hazards.

RK: How often did you get to see movies?

ST: I don't know.

RK: Did you enjoy seeing movies?

ST: Well, yeah because there was nothing else to do.

RK: Mostly American film? Or Japanese film?

ST: No, there were wall American films. I don't know how they got Japanese pictures in there, but I remember a few times they would should Japanese pictures.

RK: How did you feel?

ST: I didn't feel no different. Half of the time I couldn't understand them so it didn't bother me.

RK: Do you remember the titles of those movies? It's hard.

ST: Yeah, that's fifty years ago.

RK: Yeah. So, how about your dating? Did you have a girlfriend?

ST: No, not really a girlfriend.

RK: But, you had somebody you liked?

ST: Hm, yeah, I guess—well, let's see. I'd have to be fourteen. We had a boys club, and these were kids basically in the same age group but they lived in different blocks. Basically, we would play basketball, baseball, and stuff like that. But then, socially, every once in a while, we would get another girls club, with the same age area, to have a dance. It was maybe once in six months, once a year, sometimes more often. But, I never really had what you call a girlfriend or never really dated anybody, in that sense. At that time, my interest what much as far as girls are concerned.

[01:41:20]

RK: That's interesting. How about the other boys?

ST: Oh, yeah, you know people—

RK: Of course, it depends.

ST: People had boyfriends and girlfriends, but to me, where did they go? All they can do is—well, if they had a movie, okay, they go to the movie together. And at night if you didn't—well, maybe they just sat around and talked to each other because they couldn't go anywhere. I know we had a canteen, but there wasn't really an area where you can go sit and talk or whatever. Well, they had a couple of parks that they built, so people went for walks or whatever.

RK: Facility-wise in the wintertime, was it warm enough inside the Children's Village with the stove?

ST: No, not really. If I'm not mistaken, there was only one stove to heat up an area about say, 20 x 50.

RK: So, it was so cold?

ST: Well, yeah, sometimes, even with the stove on, you would keep your jacket on. You didn't really have, shall we say, the warm clothes that you needed.

RK: It was not provided by the Village?

ST: Well, they gave you that they could. But see, that was part of the relocation project, to clothe you, but, if they didn't have something, how could they clothe you?

RK: That's right. In school, I noticed there wasn't enough textbooks, not enough facilities. How would you describe?

ST: Yeah, I guess—well, let's put it this way, in that essence I would have to say, certain classes, not all, you would not be about to take the book home and do your homework. You had to do it there. Or you had to borrow—say if they gave you half an hour to do your homework, and you didn't finish, you either didn't do it, or you had to ask permission to take a book home. I think a lot of it, if I may remember, they would make copies of things and give it to you that way, so that you wouldn't have to worry about taking a book.

RK: What about your experience? You also couldn't get a copy?

ST: Well, I have to say, I wasn't a very good student (laughs) because I really didn't care if I passed or if I didn't pass. I mean, that's the kind of person I was then. You know, if the teacher wanted to fail me, fine, fail me. It wasn't a matter of not learning or trying to learn. I guess, being—like I said, my feelings were, I went there because I had to be there, not because I wanted to be there or anything else in that sense. And the teachers that were teaching, to me, they wanted to be there to teach, they weren't forced to teach.

RK: Teachers were not forced to teach?

ST: I don't think they were forced to teach. I think all the teachers were *hakujin*. And, whether they liked you or not—well, I had feelings. Half of the teachers I didn't like because half of them didn't like me, so it didn't bother me. So, if I did homework, I did it. If I didn't, I didn't. Whether they, shall we say, flunk me or not pass me, that was up to them.

RK: Do you know kids that failed?

ST: Yeah.

RK: In that case, where did they go?

ST: They didn't go nowhere.

RK: They had to stay there just to study?

ST: They do the class over.

RK: Just to make sure, you went to Manzanar Children's Village at age of—

ST: Twelve.

RK: Until end of war?

ST: Um-hm. Well, no, I left camp in June of '45.

RK: June '45, so before the end of the war?

ST: Yeah. The war ended in August.

RK: Yes, August fifteenth. I'll ask later about that. So, in Children's Village, did you attend Sunday service?

[01:49:00]

ST: No.

RK: You didn't have to go, so you didn't go?

ST: I went when I wanted to go. See, we didn't have a Sunday service at the Village like we did at the Salvation Army. Like I said, Maryknoll was Catholic. Shonien, I didn't know if they were Christian or Buddhist. The Salvation Army was Christian. So, we went to whatever church we wanted to.

RK: You visited, though, the Catholic?

ST: I went to a Catholic church once, but I didn't go to a Buddhist church because I couldn't understand what they were talking about.

RK: That's what I thought. Do you know some kids went to the Buddhist church?

ST: Not that I know. I went to the Christian church now and then, but if I didn't feel like going, I didn't go. Nobody said you had to go.

RK: These may be overlapping questions, but how did you view Mr. and Mrs. Matsumotos and other *hakujin* staff?

ST: How did I view them?

RK: Um-hm. Did they take care of you?

ST: Well, like I say, when you're young, you don't really worry about how well you're being taken care of as long as you're being taken care of. Really, your needs are really not that much. As far as I would look at it, I would say they probably did what they had to do. Through the years, I look at it as, it's not so much what they did, it's what people they hired to do for us is what counted. It's just like saying it's their job to hire you as a nurse to take care of the infants, but, if you did something wrong, then it was up to them to reprimand you or dismiss you and get somebody else. I really don't have a lot to say in that area.

RK: Okay, what about the hospital, medical care?

ST: They had a hospital.

RK: In Children's Village?

ST: No, in the camp. As far as hospital was concern, our medical in the Village, they didn't really have in the Village. But they had a hospital, which was like a community hospital. If you got hurt, you went there. You didn't pay, but they took care of you and whatever was wrong. From my own experience, I broke my arm when I was, I guess, thirteen.

RK: How come?

ST: You know what the horizontal or parallel bars are?

RK: Oh, yes, I know.

ST: Well, I was playing on one of them and missed my grip, so I broke my arm. I went to the hospital, and they reset it and put a cast on. It was like 9:30 at night, so I had to stay over in the hospital that night because by the time they put the cast on and by the time it dried, it was too late. So, I had to stay over and I said, "Oh, well."

RK: Did you break your bone?

ST: I broke my wrist right here. Then another time I had to go to the hospital when I got bit by a squirrel. (laughs) You know? A regular squirrel?

RK: It's cute! I can't imagine. (laughs)

ST: Well, they're wild, right?

RK: Hungry.

ST: So, he bit me on my finger, so I had to go and get taken care of, take shots, whatever. Another time I had my appendix taken out. Back then it was like a two-week ordeal.

RK: Will you describe [it]?

ST: Well, when I went to the hospital, it was like 4:00 in the afternoon, and at 6:30 they did the operation. I stayed in the hospital for ten days at that time, and I couldn't do anything for almost a month. I couldn't play or whatever. The technology back then wasn't as knowledgeable as now. Other than that, I had no other hospital. I guess they took care of whatever they had to, and they did whatever they needed to.

[01:57:14]

- RK: Was not a good facility?
- ST: Oh, no, they had good facilities.
- RK: But medical wise, there was not so much development. How did the doctors find out that your appendix needed to be taken out?
- ST: Well, I had a stomachache.
- RK: And then, you went to the hospital?
- ST: Well, actually, I went to school, and I got a stomachache. And I stayed at school until lunchtime. I told them I couldn't walk anymore, so they sent an ambulance to me, and they took me home. Then I went to bed, and my stomach still hurt at 3:00, 3:30, so they had to—see, we didn't have a telephone either, so they had—
- RK: No telephone?
- ST: No. They had to walk to the hospital, which was like maybe half a mile, quarter of a mile away, and go get an ambulance again.
- RK: So, an ambulance took you to the hospital?
- ST: Yeah.
- RK: It must be difficult to describe, but comparing the hospital to today's hospital, was it different?
- ST: I don't think so. You figure you have private, semi-private, they have curtains, whatever. The nurse and the doctors they come visit you just like they would if you were in a hospital here, but how good the doctors were or how good the nurses were, you would never know. As long as you got well, you figures that's all.
- RK: Did you get other people's comments about hospital at Manzanar?
- ST: (shakes head no)
- RK: Okay. You at least felt safe in hospital?
- ST: Well, yeah, I guess I would say so.
- RK: How about Manzanar, Children's Village did you feel safe?
- ST: In the Village, what?
- RK: The Village life?

ST: In the Village life? Oh yeah, because like I say, you had older people, brothers, and sisters, whatever. If you really had any problem, you can talk to somebody.

RK: By the way, why is your nickname, Sausage?

ST: Why?

RK: Yes. (laughs)

ST: Well, I have to go back to San Francisco. My Japanese name is Masami, and the kids started calling me Salami. From there, it ended up with Sausage. I guess whoever wants to call you what they want to call you, they call you, and I got stuck with that.

RK: So, the Japanese kids called you Salami at first?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Not the *hakujin* kids?

ST: No, the *hakujin* called me Masami.

RK: Do you remember some of the staff from Salvation Army going to Manzanar?

ST: There was only this one Japanese couple that went to Manzanar, but they did not go to work in the Village.

RK: Where did they go?

ST: They went to another block. I remember the lady, or the Mrs. used to come and help now and then, but she was not working as a staff member.

RK: Well, she maybe quit? Or a kind of volunteer?

ST: Well, you can't say quit. It was a different—see, she was part of Salvation Army unit. So, as far as a job, her job was with the Salvation Army. It wasn't with the Village.

RK: Did you want to go back to Japan?

ST: You say, do I want to go to Japan?

RK: Um-hm.

ST: Theoretically, no. I feel it may be nice to visit, but to try to look up my roots or forefathers doesn't really interest me. People wonder if I knew my father and my mother, it would probably make a little difference. But since I don't, I really don't

- feel any feelings toward going back to Japan to find out who my grandfathers were and things like that.
- RK: So, you didn't get the loyalty question?
- ST: No.
- RK: There was counseling staff at the Children's Village?
- ST: When you say counseling, it wasn't really counseling, except, like I say, with the big brother or your supervisor would do for you or tell you. But, he wouldn't really counsel you in the sense—when I look at counseling, like trying to teach you something.
- RK: Give advice.
- ST: Yeah. It was more like you did what the other kids did or from what you see you did or you should know better. (laughs)
- RK: So, the supervisor just listened to your story, but not so much teaching?
- ST: Yeah, well, there wasn't that much teaching in that respect.
- [02:08:00]
- RK: You mentioned there were some *hapa*?
- ST: Yeah.
- RK: In Children's Village, will you describe how those were treated?
- ST: I think they were treated well.
- RK: Same as you? Or other kids?
- ST: Yeah, but, like I say, knowing that they were part Japanese, there wasn't really a racial prejudice.
- RK: There wasn't?
- ST: No.
- RK: Inside the Children's Village?
- ST: Yeah. I don't know, did you ever see a picture of the Village—

RK: Easter Sunday?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Yes, yes, I have.

ST: Well, there's a few of them in there. Yeah. Well, you could probably go by the name, too.

RK: Will you specify who is your sibling and who is the *hapa*?

ST: Okay. Somebody already—

RK: Yes, I just marked because this coincides.

ST: Oh, yeah. Okay.

RK: These are Tanaka so they are your brothers and sisters?

ST: Yeah. This one.

RK: This is your—

ST: That's my sister.

RK: Um-hm.

ST: My oldest brother and this one, next brother.

RK: Next brother. So, three?

ST: I have two brothers and a sister.

RK: Who were the *hapa*?

ST: Okay, let me see here. (looks at image) He was a *hapa*.

RK: You can mark it. Those were mainly Japanese Mexican? Hispanic Japanese?

ST: No. Ah, Japanese, I guess *hakujin*.

RK: But no Black Japanese?

ST: Not that I remember. See, there was some that I remember that already left camp.

RK: Maybe, this is enough *hapa*, a couple people you marked for me.

ST: Um-hm. Actually, six and eleven are brothers. There were other people but they are not in the picture.

RK: Oh, I see.

ST: I don't know why, why they weren't in the picture. I can't think, '44—no, I really can't say why they weren't in the picture.

RK: They skipped?

ST: Either that or they were sent to their father or their mother at the time.

RK: Maybe they were visiting mother and father?

ST: No.

RK: Okay.

ST: They were already—see, from the camp, after they found mother and father to the siblings, they would send them to 'em.

RK: Okay, yeah.

ST: I know towards the end of the camp, even if they were on the outside, they would send them to the outside. But, if they were young, they would have a guardian take them.

RK: Okay, so next question. Did you have any physical or mental abuse?

ST: No.

RK: Did you attend craft classes?

ST: No.

RK: You're not interested?

ST: Well, like I said, I was, too, young.

RK: So you told me, you lost schooling. You cut class.

ST: Um-hm.

RK: Why? It wasn't fascinating?

ST: Like I say, number one, I didn't like school. I didn't care for school, really.

RK: Most children don't.

ST: When I use to cut class, I used to fight.

RK: Fight for what?

ST: You say, for what? But it's—

RK: [Was] the fighting meaningful?

ST: No. Toward the end of camp, it got bad because we used to have a club that we used to play. It didn't matter if we beat them or if they beat us; it would always end up as a fight.

RK: Was it serious fighting? Beating?

ST: Oh, yeah.

RK: Wow. Were you injured?

ST: Not injured, not in the sense that you got injured in that way. I mean, you're kids; you fought. Then it got to a point where they start ganging up on you at school. But, if you didn't go to school, they couldn't gang up on you, so I cut class. If the teacher asked where I was, "I went home, didn't come to school." We didn't have to bring absent notices.

RK: Oh, that's why. I see. So, it's easier to cut class?

ST: Yeah.

RK: You were separated from your sister in Children's Village, but you made contact?

ST: Yeah.

RK: In your case, what did you talk to your brothers and sisters about?

ST: Nothing in particular. Like I say, if I had a problem, or wanted to know something, I would ask them, but just normal conversation or whatever came.

RK: Okay. Do you have vivid memories of Children's Village?

ST: Oh, I have memories, yeah.

RK: What are they?

ST: Well, living in a group of sixteen to twenty, everybody's not going to go to sleep at the same time when they go to bed. We used to go to bed at nine, but every now and then somebody would try and talk to somebody next to them, and the supervisor would hear who is talking but couldn't tell exactly who the person was, so they'd ask. Nobody wants to say anything because they figured, well, if I say something, I'm going to get punished. When I say punished, I mean, that they'd have to stand in the corner or something like that for half an hour or whatever. But nobody would say, so they would make all of us.

[02:20:00; recording paused]

RK: We are talking about—

ST: I was saying, When somebody was bad, they might stand them in the corner for half an hour, or if nobody said anything, to say who was talking then they would make us all stand up until somebody would say, yeah, it was me. Sometimes it would be standing there half an hour before our bed or an hour. They wouldn't let us go to sleep. Then we'd get mad because we'd know who did it, but the guy wouldn't say nothing. So, the next day, we'd beat him up.

RK: No wonder it's a vivid memory.

ST: But then, there are fun memories, too. I guess in every life, regardless what kind of discipline you get, you learn by discipline and you learn that you have to be disciplined in order to become stronger. Being that I was in an orphanage, I guess I learned a lot quicker than a lot of other kids.

RK: Do you think so?

ST: I believe so, yeah.

RK: You learned a lot.

ST: Well, it's just like they say, the sooner you're on your own, the faster you learn, regardless what you learn. You learn the values of living life and responsibility a lot sooner and, to me, you appreciate certain things more. As you grow older, you look back, and you think some of the things weren't as bad as they really seemed. But, you don't want your kids to go through what you did, or some other kid that you know. It gets to be, shall we say, a spoiling fact when you have kids. Regardless how good times are, how bad times are, you don't want your kids to be in the same situation as you, so you try and give them more, but yet you're not really doing them right when you do that. At least, I don't think so. That's why—well, I still have two boys that live at home.

RK: One of those, he appears there?

ST: No, he's the only son that I have that is married.

RK: And then you have two more boys?

ST: No, I have four boys.

RK: No, girls?

ST: No, girls.

RK: As a father, as you see your boys, what is your concern as a father?

ST: I think, at their age—well, the youngest ones, I have twins that are the youngest. They're twenty-nine, almost thirty, and my oldest is thirty-three. And I think as a father, my biggest concern on them is their well-being. As long as their life is going smoothly, I don't worry, but, if they need help in any way, I try to help, regardless of what it is. If I can't help them, then I at least I feel I tried to do something.

RK: After camp, did you experience prejudice?

ST: Oh, yeah. Well, okay, I came out of camp in June of '45. I lived with a *hakujin* foster. Now, when I went to high school in Concord, I didn't really feel prejudice as a kid. But when I go to Oakland, or when I went to San Francisco, people look at you like you're Oriental, are you a Jap or Chinese or what? So, to save yourself, when somebody asked you, What are you, you'd say, "Chinese," because the war wasn't over yet. But, as far as fear goes, I had no fear in the sense that people who I associated with because they knew we were Japanese. The sons and sister, daughters, they all knew we were Japanese. So, they didn't treat us any different as far as racial goes. But, when you read the paper, every day, and the Japanese family that lives in the farm in Visalia or Fresno, San Jose had a bomb thrown into their house of one kind or another, you have to have nothing but fear or hate for what happens and just hope it doesn't happen to you or somebody that you knew. To me, all the horror stories come out after the fact, but there is nothing you can do or nothing that the so-called law enforcement or government wouldn't do because they feared just as much as you as an individual.

Being that I went up to Martinez after relocation, before the war was over, in school I did not really feel any prejudice. But, even when I moved out to Minneapolis, I had no prejudice towards me because we were all kids. I think it's more adults that felt the pressure or the racial than anybody else. In fact, my wife has cousins that live in Minneapolis, and they are *hapas*. They were born after I had left Minneapolis, but yet they tell me that growing up they did feel racial prejudice because they look *hakujin*, yet they have Japanese names. So, if it was the other way around, I think they wouldn't have felt it. But, being that I was Japanese, looked Japanese, I had no problem.

[02:30:00]

- RK: You told me as a kid in Minneapolis you didn't experience any prejudice. How about as a grown up, you didn't have any prejudice?
- ST: Not really. Not in the sense—as an adult you may hear racial slurs or racial comments. And I tell everybody the same thing, that if you tell me that you are not prejudice, I'll tell you you're a liar. Because everybody had prejudice, regardless what the prejudice is. But, as far as racial prejudice, I would say no. See, because I've worked with people other than my own kind, so I've gone through a process—my race had nothing to do with what type of job I performed. Where I know a lot of other people, they would say, yeah. But, being that I only worked in civil service eleven-and-a-half years, it may not be that I was with them long enough for—say my goals weren't as high as a person that was only thirty when they started working. So, naturally, he's goals were going to be—okay, he needs to get up here to be a supervisor, but how he gets there is a different story. But he may come into a racial prejudice in just the promotion itself.
- RK: So, you were a civil servant?
- ST: Yeah.
- RK: For eleven years?
- ST: Eleven-and-a-half years.
- RK: I can ask later. Do you have any memories of other children that came from other places to the Children's Village? Where did they come from?
- ST: Like I said earlier, there was a few. The father, the mother died, and they were brought into the home because they were under age. A lot of them came and they left soon because maybe some of them had contacted relative, an aunt and an uncle.
- RK: To take care of them?
- ST: Yeah. They tried all they could to reposition kids that were orphaned or deserted. I think this is what Mr. and Mrs. Matsumoto worked a great deal on.
- RK: To transfer the kids.
- ST: These are the things that, as a younger, I'd never realize or seen until I started growing up, and I thought, Whatever happened to so-and-so? How come he was only there six months?
- RK: So, children didn't know what was going on when they left.
- ST: Yes, or even after—this is hard to say, but it's my feeling that after the Matsumotos left, there was a *hakujin* lady that came and took over as supervisor, or coordinator.

This is where I think a lot of the young adults—now when I say young adults, [I mean] high school age kids—felt that they were mistreated by her because, what she would do is, she would try and place people by just placing them, not trying to find a respectable couple or family for John, Jim, Jane, whoever. I know for a fact that there were kids that had a hard time after they left, and they were still in the minor age brackets.

RK: Do you know \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible).

ST: Yeah.

RK: I read an article, he mentioned a little bit about being mistreated.

ST: No matter who you are or what you are, everybody has a different concept of what happened and why it happened. It's just like, even myself, I mean, I can tell you things that wouldn't interest you. On the other hand, it is part of my growing up after I got out of camp, and after my father had left us again, more less because he didn't want to be responsible. By then, I was seventeen years old.

RK: You parted from your father at seventeen?

ST: Well, he parted from us. (laughs) Not that I'm trying to say something different, but when you misunderstand, then it comes out that you left him.

RK: That's right. I should have said, he left you.

ST: That's why I say what I do. I'm not trying to ridicule you—

RK: No, I know. Do you feel that you were deserted?

ST: Yeah. Well, like I said, in the past I really never knew my father because I haven't lived with him long enough. And, when I did live with him long enough, after the war, I wasn't like a father/son relationship. See? So when I did live with him, well, he's just another man in the house. So if he said something nasty to the fact that I didn't feel which was right, I would tell him something. If he didn't like it, well, like I said, I can walk out that door.

[02:39:40]

RK: Oh, he said nasty words to you?

ST: No, I say—

RK: If, *if*—

ST: Yeah. See? Because that's the type of relationship we had already. I mean, here I am, seventeen years old or sixteen years old and not really knowing him, and he's going to tell me what to do and not what to do? It's kind of hard.

RK: Yeah, I understand.

ST: It's hard for me to stomach.

RK: As a father's words, you can't accept. Maybe your father came illegally to the U.S.

ST: Yeah.

RK: So, he had a—

ST: Well, I believe that had a lot to do with—

RK: Maybe that changed a lot of decision making why he lived in the U.S., and then that \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) your life.

ST: Yeah. But still, I look at there had to be thousands of others in the same position. See?

RK: And you know some of this father/son relationship they have?

ST: Yeah, but then—see, they became citizens later on because they know what they had to do. Whereas my father—this is a feeling I had with my father because he is the type of person that was always running away from something. To me there's a little difference.

RK: When you became a father, I think you learned a lot from your father.

ST: Oh, yeah.

RK: And then how those learning, as a father to your—

ST: That's why I said I have two boys that live at home, and yet they are almost thirty and over. But, I don't tell them, "No, you have to move." (chuckles)

RK: But, they don't feel like leaving?

ST: Well, they don't feel like they have to leave either.

RK: That's good. It's relationship.

ST: Well, I tell them—and I tell my wife the same thing—because I never had a home of my own when I was young, and when my boys have a home that they can come to,

and they can bring their friends home, too, that's what I want to have. It's different when you have things when you are young. Like I say, it's kind of like spoiling them, but it depends on how you spoil them.

RK: I don't know if it's spoiling a lot. (chuckles)

ST: Well, I do. Because if you look at a lot of the Sanseis now—theoretically, see, my wife is Sansei.

RK: Japanese American?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Your wife was born in America?

ST: Yeah, but see, she's a Sansei. I'm a Nisei. Her father was born in Hawaii, so theoretically, she is a Sansei. But yet, my kids are really Sansei because of me. But, you when you stop and think of it, there are three-and-a-half generations. You're thinking! See, it's not like two Niseis having a family. It's a second and a third generation having a family, so the kids are actually three-and-a-half generations. And, when you come down to it, the Japanese way of thinking, since I'm the father, and I'm a Nisei, the kids are only Sansei. But, when you look, okay—how can my wife a Sansei? And she's what, fifty-nine. Because her brother was born in Hawaii, there is a big difference. But, when you stop and look at all the Sansei kids and the Yonsei kids that their parents and their grandparents had given them, this is why, to me, they're spoiled. But, what somebody else does to their kids is none of my business. My kids are my business.

RK: Father's responsibility.

ST: Oh, yeah. See, because when they grow up, their image is based on what I and my wife taught them, not what grandpa taught them. But, if I gave them everything, then they would have no responsibility.

RK: Cause they are on their own.

ST: Right.

RK: But, you are a good father.

ST: Well, yes and no.

RK: Because, as you told me, you learned well in your world. I think you learned earlier.

ST: Yeah, I learned a lot earlier than a lot of kids. Now, I can't say I learned any better, but I learned to be independent since I was like, shoot, five or six years old. When you go back into your childhood, okay, it's just like, say, in your case where you

- lived with your mother and father, they probably tried to give you or do things for you as much as possible, but being that I was living with a foster parent, that's not going to be possible. Being that I was living with a foster parent, they're not going to give me everything. They're going to give me whatever I need.
- RK: Did you feel parental love from the first foster family that you lived with, when you were small?
- ST: Not really. I guess I was, shall we say, young and free, so I didn't really—well, since I had my brothers with me all the time, I had no problem in that sense. My brothers and sister probably replaced my father and mother because, when I needed something, I went to them.
- RK: How did your older brother and elder sister manage those problems? They needed parental love, too.
- ST: Well, I guess you really do.
- RK: Do you think they help each other?
- ST: Well, see, we were close in age. I would say, anywhere, from sixteen to two years between each one of us. So, when you say that, well, you're really not, too, far away from the next one. You're not three or four years apart. But, say, if you had two brothers and a sister, and between the top, the first one and last one was twelve years, then there would be a big difference in age. So, you wouldn't be able to talk to them like a brother and sister would. You would have to talk to them like a brother and a mother or father and a daughter.
- RK: Do you think you had an advantage because your age difference is so close?
- ST: Not so much an advantage, but the companionship is a lot easier.
- RK: To overcome difficulties?
- ST: Yeah, it's not like a twelve-year difference between two people.
- RK: Do you think a sibling can replace a father figure or a mother figure?
- [02:50:00]
- ST: No.
- RK: No?
- ST: Not after I raised my family. Until you raise a family, you don't really know the true meaning of who you need and what you need.

RK: Until you become a father?

ST: Well, until you raise a family to a point where, shall we say, they are on their own. Say if I died—if one of my kids was ten years old. See? My death would deprive him of having a father for the rest of his life. But you don't know how he's going to become, or how he feels because he had no father after he had a father. But like I said, even in the case with my father, which I really didn't know, then, when I lived with him for a couple of years, it really didn't mean anything to me.

RK: But I'm sure you have a picture.

ST: Yeah, but let's put it this way, it's not a good picture.

RK: Maybe older one?

ST: But, you look back in life—even as young as you are—you could probably remember more of the good things than you do the bad things because the bad things that are not good, which is bad. But somewhere along your life, you're going to compare some of the bad things against the bad things that you encounter. Whether they are good or bad is up to you to decide how bad your misfortune is worth. Then, when you stop and think, you're—well, the old saying goes, you don't know how much your problems are until you hear somebody else's problems.

RK: Like a comparable experience that tells you what your experience was really—

ST: Yeah. In essence, what I'm saying is—okay, say the death of your father may mean more to you than the death of my father. But, I may look at your tragedy, the death of your father, maybe like the death of my brother or one of my sons or my wife; or even a close friend. Because your tragedy and my tragedy on my father's side, are two different tragedies, but they are different meanings. So, when you look at life and what you're doing—that's why I say, you start comparing, regardless if they are good times or bad times. Your good times may be better or they may be worse than what you think they are.

RK: Hm, I see. Um, Manzanar climate was terrible?

ST: Was what? Bearable? Depends on what you can bear.

RK: The wind blows.

ST: Oh, yeah. The wind blows thirty, forty miles per hour. Sand—well, I don't know if you've ever seen a sandstorm. You couldn't see ten feet in front of you. Or visualize fog. When you can't see ten feet in front of you, but the only difference is you had sand in front of you and that hurts. It could be ninety degrees, and the sand would be blowing out there. It could be one hundred.

RK: It's also a terribly hot place.

ST: Oh, yeah. Well, I don't know if you've ever been up there, that way?

RK: I have for our history project. So, you seem to be that you didn't feel any loneliness in Children's Village, right?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Okay.

ST: You were talking about the weather in Manzanar.

RK: Oh, yeah.

ST: I think you have to know that every temperature in the Mohave desert is one hundred in the summertime, and like fifty-five, sixty in the winter is the high. And the low in the summer would be about sixty-five, and in the winter it would be like thirty-five. I remember you asked me a question about, earlier, if I was warm enough in the winter. Well, you really don't get warm. You stay cold 90 percent of the time because you don't have enough proper clothes.

RK: But, you have told me about daytime, what about nighttime?

ST: Well, this is what I'm saying, the high and the low.

RK: Did you sleep well in the nighttime?

ST: Yes and no.

RK: Because it's so cold.

ST: Well, when it's cold you put—well, I could remember time when I went to bed with my pants on because it was cold and a sweatshirt.

RK: You got cold.

ST: Yeah.

RK: But, the difference in temperature is big between daytime and nighttime?

ST: Well, I wouldn't say that big, maybe thirty degrees.

RK: Difference? That's not big.

ST: If you say one hundred against seventy. You see, seventy is not cold, but yet, cool enough to sleep.

RK: I'd like to ask another question. I noticed another interviewee named Lisa Nobe did an interview with Tamo. You know Tamo?

[02:08:56]

ST: Um-hm.

RK: Tamo Isozaki.<sup>2</sup> You are in same Salvation Army. Did you know each other very well?

ST: You say very well but then, he is probably for five years older than I am. When you're growing up, five, four years means a lot of difference. See? So, I knew him, but I didn't know him very well as far as I think in the concept that you're saying. But, I remember he acted as a big brother when I was in camp.

RK: Oh, Children's Village.

ST: But see, when he went I was right at the age that I was going to come out, yet, I still remember him as a big brother, a supervisor.

RK: Do you still have contact with him?

ST: Well, I had contact with him even when I came out here in '47. I have always tried to stay in contact with him one way or another.

RK: Since '47?

ST: Um-hm.

RK: So, what other friends are you still in contact with?

ST: From the home?

RK: Yeah, from the Children's Village or Salvation Army.

ST: I don't really stay in contact as regular friends, but I do stop or I do talk to a couple of the Matsunos.<sup>3</sup> And Tamo and his brother that lives in Gardena cause when I see

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<sup>2</sup> Tamotsu Isozaki, O.H. 2332, Center for Oral and Public History.

<sup>3</sup> Takatow Matsuno, O.H. 2339, Center for Oral and Public History and Mary Matsuno Miya, O.H. 2489, Center for Oral and Public History.

him—I guess his brother in Gardena has boys that are the same age as mine. So, every now and then I see him when his boys are playing baseball. Not necessarily playing against my boys but playing in the same league or same tournament. So, I do talk to him, but I don't socialize on regular basis.

RK: When you came out of Children's Village, did you have a sense of insecurity about the future?

ST: Not really. Like I say, I was fifteen at the time, and it didn't really bother me in that respect. So, you don't really know where you're going when you are being told to go here, go there. But, if I was on my own, which was roughly two years later, I can tell you a lot of the insecurities, the goods and the bad of what my childhood life was when I was growing up. To me, it all depends on the individual and how they handle things.

RK: Can I change?

[recording paused]

ST: When I was in the Salvation Army in San Francisco, I don't remember parties. We didn't really didn't celebrate birthday unless it was at dinner. Say if I had a birthday and somebody else had a birthday, maybe you would get cake and ice cream. They'd sing happy birthday. But, as far as gifts and things like, that was out of the question. Even at the Village, maybe the—I don't know if it was the Matsumotos that would ask the cooks to bake a cake. It wouldn't have to be a big one, it was a small one for, say, whoever's birthday it was. And then at dinnertime we would sing happy birthday or whatever. And ah, that was all. I don't know, to me back then—even now, even after I'm grown up, I don't really need—

[02:16:00; recording paused]

RK: Okay, so I'm going to ask you, what is the effect of internment on your present life?

ST: On my present life?

RK: Yes.

ST: Well, I don't really feel there was any effect to it. Because like I said, when I was a kid growing up, it didn't really affect me, but coming out of relocation, I think was the hardest time of my life. Not knowing what I was going to do, what I was going to be. And when you have to, more less, work for peanuts or work at anything you can do to get ahead. Like I said, who knows what you would have had before? What would be the outcome, if the there was no war? But, since there is, you only have one way to look at it. You know you have a scar, and the scar no matter what you do is not going to heal.

RK: Do you think it's still not healing?

ST: I feel that way because my memories—

RK: Are still there.

ST: Are still there. And when you stop and think about, regardless if you worked or you didn't work, your life is full of memories. Regardless, if they are good or bad, but you only want to remember the good. But, the bad you have to live with.

RK: Again, back and forth. Did you get allowance in Children's Village?

ST: No. I had no money.

RK: But, children were given certain amount, and it depended on what age you were. So, the older kids got—

ST: No.

RK: Well, the article says so.

ST: If I wanted money, I had to go work or do something for the money I earned.

RK: In Children's Village?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Well, your friend Tamo, he used to get Ritz Crackers because he chose quantity rather than the quality. Some kids get ice cream.

ST: He was older.

RK: Oh, I see.

ST: See? So being young, I don't remember getting an allowance. Not like saying you get a nickel a week or whatever. I don't remember that.

RK: Maybe the amount was so small. (laughs)

ST: Yeah. I do remember one summer I worked on the farm, and I worked two months. Two months or three months, I made \$12 a months.

RK: Was it small amount?

ST: Well, when you work—well, I wouldn't say eight hours, but when you work six to eight hours a day and you only get \$12 a month. (chuckles)

RK: So, you don't have any memory that you were given—

ST: No, I don't remember getting an allowance. Even in San Francisco, I don't remember getting an allowance. I remember—even like at the PX, we used to go to but ice cream. I don't know where I got the money from, but I know I had five cents, ten cents to go buy ice cream.

RK: There is a store in Children's Village?

ST: No, in camp, one mile away.

RK: Okay, again changing subject, when I asked you if you accepted the internment by receiving the \$20,000 or not, what would you react?

ST: It's like I said before, to me it means nothing. Like I said, how is it going to heal a person's wounds. It just like saying, you take a situation were a woman is raped by a man. Okay? He gets a jail sentence, but she is never the same, regardless of who she is. No matter how much punishment he gets, it's never enough.

RK: What I'm asking is, you accepted the \$20,000, but you don't accept the internment?

ST: I think what you're trying to say is, if I accept the \$20,000, do I accept that in place of internment?

RK: May I should ask like this. Even though you accepted the \$20,000, you don't accept past ordeal?

ST: You mean in replacement of that?

RK: Um-hm.

ST: No.

RK: It's obvious question, sorry.

ST: Like I said, it's not going to heal what did happen.

RK: Because the past remains?

ST: Well, yeah. It's just like anything. You want to remember the good, but the bad is always there. And being taken away from wherever you where, does not heal that fact. That's just like saying the police comes here to take me away now and put me in jail. My wife comes homes wondering what happened. She wouldn't know. How would I be able to tell her? See? Well, the fact that they already took me, she's going to have to think, Well, what did I do wrong? But, if they let me out two days

later or the next day, it ain't going to heal me because they let me go. They still took me away with no reason.

RK: The reality can't be healed.

[02:26:00]

ST: I feel that way. Whether you want to talk about it, is a different story. That's why I think when you talk to a lot of the older Nisei, even some of the Isseis that are still alive, a lot of them will not want to talk, period. They say, I don't want to talk to you. Because they may have ill feelings about what happened to their husband, their wife, or even their kids at one time or another; because it was hard times.

RK: Still it is difficult to open up. You told me it was important to tell your story to others. You took action—like today, you are interviewee of my interview. Did you take action, so far, to do—

ST: You mean, did I take action towards the government or politically? Is that what you are saying?

RK: Sorry my question is not good. How about this. How did you react to your sons? Did you try to talk about your story to them?

ST: Not really.

RK: How come?

ST: I think it has to come from them, as far as what happened during your relocation and internment. But, I talk openly in front of them. I feel if they want to know, they would ask, but I feel they don't really want to know, not at this age. Maybe later on when they get older and realize some of the hardships that—who knows, it may be one of them getting ready to die that they may want to know. I even asked one of my sons—in fact, I asked more than one of my sons, when we had our reunion back then May last year, “Would you want to go?” He said, “What for?” See? So, his interest isn't there so why push it.

RK: Last time in May, '92 reunion, your wife accompanied you?

ST: No.

RK: Because it is different?

ST: No, it's not that it's different. She wasn't part of it.

RK: Yeah, she wasn't part of it. Different camp.

ST: Well, okay. Not only that but—different camp was one. She don't know the people at the reunion. She would know a few of them that she has met through me. Even like the one in San Francisco, she only went because we were on vacation. So, I kind of made her go to the dinner. Naturally, whoever I sat at dinner with, regardless how I feel that she was there, but she's still part of my life. And people, I would say, they accept who you are or what you are. I told her, "You don't have to be a part of something, you just have to be there to be part of me." I says, "Well, if you want to go, fine. If you don't want to go, that's fine, too."

RK: You don't want to push?

ST: No. On the other hand, even when she has her reunion at Salt Lake, I don't go. I says, "If you want me to go, I'll go," but I says, "I see no reason to want to go."

RK: I see. But, she went?

ST: She went to the one in San Francisco but not this one.

RK: No she went to the Salt Lake reunion?

ST: No, but then, see, that's altogether different.

RK: Okay. Were you scared that another Manzanar will happen?

ST: (pauses) I would have to say, yes. If it happened once, it can happened again, regardless what nationality.

RK: You mean, history repeat itself?

ST: Sure. Regardless.

RK: Did you suffer from insomnia? You couldn't sleep?

ST: No, not really.

RK: Importance to talk to others about your stories, are you going to write about your story?

ST: No, I see no reason to.

RK: Why not?

ST: This is my life. It's not somebody else's, and I feel a personal life is a personal feeling. I will share some of my feelings, but I will not write about them. That's the same thing— on the other hand, like I said about my kids, now, I could write things. They may not read about it for fifty years, or they may not read about it until I've

died. And then, it could come out, Why didn't you say something? I says, "No, to me, I don't need to say something."

RK: I was just curious. You told me your scars are not healed, do you have any other therapeutic or healing experience in your life? How did you try to heal your scars?

ST: Well, I would have to say the less you think about it, the less you talk about it. Yet, when you read in the newspaper about certain things, it brings back memories. Like I said, some are good, some are bad, but it's part of your life already. So, when you read about certain things, you're getting a feeling about what somebody else is saying.

[02:36:28]

RK: You can communicate.

ST: You're right. The more you read about somebody else's writings, the more you learn yourself. Like I said, you have to take the good and the bad, but you don't want to think about the bad because—okay, that's just like saying, even in my mother's case, who would say she wouldn't have been home if the war didn't break out. Those are things I'll never know.

RK: So, you never know about your mother, what's going on?

ST: That's why to hide things, I used to tell people when they asked me about parents, I used to just tell them, "No, my mother is dead. I have no mother."

RK: Must be easier?

ST: Yeah, so when you say that, people assumed well, she's dead. But if they start asking how did she die, I tell them, "I don't know." I just tell them I was small. It's good and bad, no matter how you look at it. Even people saying, why don't you go to Japan to see what your forefather were like or whatever, "Why?" I mean, I may go over for a visit, just to visit the country, but not to go look for something.

RK: By the way, have you visit Japan?

ST: No.

RK: Oh, you should have gone. (laughs) If you have time to visit Tokyo, I'll show you around. (laughs)

ST: Oh, you're from Tokyo?

RK: Yes. Not Tokyo, I come from next—Chiba. You know Chiba?

ST: You're from Chiba?

RK: Uh-huh.

ST: Well, my wife's grandmother, had to be grandmother, used to live in Chiba, where the airport is now.

RK: Airport? Oh, it's ah, yeah, airport. Mine is Sawara? It's Sawara city.

ST: What kind?

RK: Sawara. Sawara city. Okay, don't worry.

ST: No, I don't know Japan.

RK: You still are currently Christian?

ST: Yeah.

RK: So, you attend Sunday service?

ST: Okay, I don't go to church. But, if I had to choose a religion, yes, I still am considered a Christian.

RK: Religion doesn't help you to heal your past?

ST: No, I don't look at religion to do that for me. I may be, what *I* consider, a hard person. It may be because I lived a hard life. But, I don't look at somebody to, shall we say, do things for me to make me better. If I can't do it myself, I don't need to get better. I think it all goes on to how I was brought up and my surroundings and what I did. I look at myself as not a stubborn person per se, but a hard—I know what I want. But, on the other hand, I want people to realize the same thing. So, as far as using or doing something to so call heal the past three years of relocation, nothing will ever do that, even if I have to take it to my grave. (laughs)

RK: Before camp, during camp, and after camp, which period was the hardest in your life?

ST: After camp. Let's see, '45. '50, I'd say probably four or five years after camp.

RK: To find out who you're going to be?

ST: Not so much that. I kind of let my occupation come on its own. I really didn't pursue being a mechanic; I just kind of fell into it. I think the hardship part is trying to adjust to the life after—well, at that time I was probably sixteen, seventeen, eighteen. To me, those were kind of the good years that you should have, but yet they were hard years that become part of your life.

RK: You mean sweet sixteen for the ordinary people.

ST: Well, that's only hear say, (laughs) or just a phrase, put it that way. No, but when I say sixteen, seventeen, it's when, as a teenager, you would be more less at the prime of your life because going into high school, meeting girls, friends, playing sports, things like that, things that when you look back, those are really your good years of having fun. Going to senior proms and parties, or whatever.

RK: Like flourishing?

ST: Yeah. And that's when you really start coming in on your own. I mean, I don't know if Japan is any different in that aspect, but to me, I don't know anything else.

RK: It's universal.

ST: It may be, but customs could be different.

RK: But, sixteen, seventeen was just kind of blooming.

ST: That's just when you're just starting to grow up.

RK: And then conscious about opposite sex. (laughs)

[02:37:00]

ST: Because, you know, even if you play tennis or if you golf or if you play basketball, no matter what you play, you try to become as good as you can, yet, some people may never become good. Yet, without trying you couldn't become better than them. These are the things that you look at. Well, he could never beat me at golf or tennis, but he would always beat me in this and that. I look at that as good growing years that every individual has as they are between fifteen and twenty.

RK: I heard that a lot of people in Japan do not know who they want to be, what they want to be and the kind of consuming their lives.

ST: Well, there's always people like that.

RK: Really?

ST: Yeah. Over here it's the same thing.

RK: Yeah, I've heard about that.

ST: Not only hear about it, you probably see it when you go to school. You talk to people, "What are you taking?" "Oh, I don't know, I'm just taking a bus-ed course."

- “Why?” “Well, I got to do something.” But, they don’t really know what their goals are. They have no goals.
- RK: I think you told me you learned so quickly because you faced hardship in your life. At sixteen, seventeen young people start to know themselves. So, do you think it doesn’t matter the human being is trying to find out who they are?
- ST: No, I have to say at that age, you know certain things, and you may want to be a certain thing or be a certain body, but how are you going to achieve getting there? And these are the things as a young adult you know what you want, but how you’re going to achieve it is a different thing. And then, as you go on, you come across these obstacles. Well, is this obstacle too hard to overcome? Or do you try to go around it and still try to pursue what you want? But when you get to the end of the line, as the old saying goes, The grass looks greener on the other side. So, you want to go this way, instead of keep going that way.
- RK: So different path, but maybe same goal.
- ST: You may have same type of goal, but how you achieve it may be different.
- RK: Do you remember your hardest obstacle after camp?
- ST: Oh, yeah. I had lots of obstacles. (laughs)
- RK: But, you didn’t experience serious racism?
- ST: No, because see, as person that couldn’t afford to go to college, I know where my limitation was.
- RK: You mean financially?
- ST: Not only financially, but as a kid I never had anything. As a young adult, if I wanted something at least I can pursue it because I never had it when I was small.
- RK: Those were obstacles?
- ST: Well, yeah, those were some obstacles that you come across.
- RK: Nothing is, too, late.
- ST: Well, no, nothing is ever, too, late. Unless you run across something that is, I shouldn’t say mind boggling, handicaps you from doing it. Even in my case, I dropped out of college because I didn’t get the kind of classes I wanted. If I told you I was interested in art, and I had to take so many classes and I couldn’t get to those classes for a year or two, well, why keep on pursuing the same thing if you know you can’t do it. See, the obstacles are okay, you can’t get into this class. Well, why can’t I? Who knows?

That's just like—I'll give you a good example of one reason why I quit. Just to take some classes, I took a German class. I went in, and I signed up for class. I gave my paper to the professor or the instructor. He looked at my paper, and he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Isn't this a German class?" He says, "Yeah. What are you doing here, and why do you need German for?" You know, this was in '51. So I told him, I says, "Well, I'll tell you what the hell I'm doing here, but it's none of your damn business why I'm taking this class." And I took the paper and walked out, and I went to the counselor and told him, "If you have instructors like this, I don't need to come to your school."

RK: Yeah.

ST: But, that was in '51, now.

RK: So, those instructors were available in those days?

ST: To me he was not a good instructor in that sense they couldn't communicate with the students.

RK: Well prejudice?

ST: Not so much prejudice.

RK: Because you're Japanese American?

ST: No. I think it's only because I was pursuing art, and I was trying to take a German class. Well, it's just like I told the counselor, "I don't need to come to school." So, I gave her my paper, and I said, "I want a refund on my tuition." She started talking to me, I said, "No, just forget it." So, they signed the paper, and I went and got my money and went to work somewhere else. (chuckles) So, those are the kinds of obstacles I talk about as obstacles.

RK: Is there anyway to take other courses besides German?

ST: Yeah, but came to that one point, I says, "What the hell is the point in going to school?"

RK: Unbelievable.

ST: You tell people that, and they say, Well, why the hell did you want to take German for? Well, why would anyone want to take Latin or Spanish? *Because they want to learn the language.*

RK: Because they want—

ST: That's right. I mean, you don't have to have a reason other than you want to learn.

RK: As a teacher, he was not qualified?

ST: Well, I don't consider him a teacher.

RK: Can you think of any other obstacle?

ST: Well, I would say one of my big obstacles is not having parents. I couldn't do what a normal child would do. I did what I had to do.

RK: When you become a parent, as a father, did you have a hard time being a father?

[02:48:00]

ST: I wouldn't say it was a trying time because I really didn't know what I had to do, but yet, I had to do what I thought was right. And that isn't always true or good, but I look at my boys now and I feel good about them because to me they are in good, prominent positions or jobs. To me, like I said earlier, to me as a person, my life as been fulfilled for what I did and what I have. Regardless what I do, I have the four boys that will carry on something of me.

RK: Do you think you overcame that you didn't have parents?

ST: Yeah, I think I overcame.

RK: Wow, that is a success.

ST: Well, yeah, I feel that way. That's why when I talk to people, or even my kid's friends, and they talk about wanting to leave home for no real reason. This is when they were younger, I tell them no. I says, "Your home is your home, so you have to, more less, make it your home. It's not your parents that make it for you; it's you that make it."

RK: You mean becoming independent?

ST: Right. You can learn to be stronger if you learn what the value of your home is.

RK: I do want to ask about your children's educational background, but since you had a hard time in college, did you push them to get a higher education?

ST: No. That's why I did not.

RK: That's why I thought.

ST: When, well, my wife is a university graduate. Now, three of my sons have gone to Cal State Long Beach.

[recording paused]

RK: What did you do?

ST: (inaudible) Then I worked for them for eleven-and-a-half years before I retired.

RK: You just recently retired?

ST: February?

RK: February this year?

ST: Um-hm.

RK: Wow.

ST: Like I say, when you grow up, when you do things, you have to be satisfied with a certain portion of your life.

RK: And you find a career as a mechanic?

ST: Yeah. That's why, myself, I don't like to tell my kids what to do. I want them to do what they want to do.

RK: That's what you learned from your own life.

ST: Yeah.

RK: Then your boys—

ST: Well, they are all prominent now. They have good jobs.

[02:53:00; recording paused]

RK: You were talking about your sons. You don't want to push them who they want to be, what they want to be.

ST: I want them to be what they want to be.

RK: She was third generation Japanese American?

ST: Yeah.

RK: She was born in the U.S.?

ST: Yeah, she was born in Santa Monica.

- RK: When did you meet her?
- ST: Oh, about '58, '59, somewhere around there.
- RK: How old were you?
- ST: Well, twenty-eight, twenty-nine.
- RK: And then, you fell in love.
- ST: She's what? She had to be twenty-four, twenty-five at the time. She's a nurse or was a nurse, let's put it that way. At that time she lived in Utah, and she moved out here in '60, '59 or '60. And then, we got married in '60—no, she had to come out in '59, so we got married in '60. Yeah.
- RK: She also went to—
- ST: Yeah, she also went to relocation center in Topaz, Utah, but, when she was relocated, she went from Berkley.
- RK: Oh, she went to Berkley.
- ST: No, she was living in Berkley at the time of the relocation. So she went to Topaz, back then. She was only like seven, something like that.
- RK: Was she a fatherless, motherless child?
- ST: No.
- RK: Her parents are Japanese American?
- ST: Yeah, because her mother was Nisei, too.
- RK: Father was also was also Nisei?
- ST: Yeah. That's why she's Sansei.
- RK: Sansei, yeah. (chuckles) Where did she go after Topaz?
- ST: Salt Lake City.
- RK: Salt Lake, I see. After the war, you can't live in California?
- ST: After the war?
- RK: Yes.

ST: No.

RK: No.

ST: I could live.

RK: How, why? Because all people have to leave California after Manzanar.

ST: No, you didn't have to leave California.

RK: Really?

ST: When they release you from the relocation, they let you go where you want. But, it's not whether you wanted to go, it's where you thought it was safe. See? Because they burned houses. They shot at you. There's horror stories about people getting hanged and things of that nature. How much of it is true, I can't really say because I never really seen it.

RK: But you read articles in the newspaper? I see. And those attacking Japanese American?

ST: Um-hm.

RK: By the Caucasian people?

ST: Yeah.

RK: Do you talk to your wife about the impact of camp life?

ST: No because she keeps telling me that she doesn't remember enough.

RK: Doesn't remember enough?

ST: Well, like I said, when she went to camp, she was seven or eight. I says, "How can you not remember?" And she tells me, "No, I remember Mrs. so-and-so next door or whatever," but, as a kid, she didn't really pay attention to anything.

RK: I see. I was just wondering if you have those conversations. You lived in Children's Village maybe four-and-a-half years?

ST: Three-and-a-half.

RK: Three-and-a-half. And when you left camp, what did you think about that? What was your reaction?

ST: What was my reaction?

RK: It's like a family.

ST: Well, it was good because the people the people from San Francisco were all there, and we made new friends. I'm not going to say they were bad friends. Even to this day—when we had our reunion last year, a lot of them came and a lot of them did not want to come to, shall we say, rekindle some of the bad feelings which a lot of people had. Like I said, it's hard to say how one person felt when you don't really know how they really felt.

RK: So, each person a different feeling?

ST: Oh, yeah. I don't know if you ever—do you take the *Rafu Shimpo*?

RK: When I go to Japanese restaurant, I see them all the time, *Rafu Shimpo*, so I read the paper.

ST: I think because of the fifty year anniversary, you hear and you read a lot about anguish, hatred, happiness, joy, and the sorrow of what happened during camp and after camp. Where ten years ago, they wouldn't have published it.

RK: The *Shimpo*?

ST: Yeah. Because these, to me, these are thoughts that people have kept within themselves. And now that they have let it out, I have to believe that they feel other people should know.

RK: So, it's a big change.

ST: As a person, they held back all these years and, to me, it's not good. And, even myself, about the reparation, I look at well, what good does it do me? But, on the other hand, my parents are not here to receive any of it. But, theoretically, it does not do me justice. Who knows, I may have been nothing. I may have been prominent. Who knows? But what is—well, \$20,000 is \$20,000 in that sense but it doesn't heal what it's supposed to heal. I think, originally, that's what it was meant to do.

RK: Did you accept it when you received the \$20,000?

ST: Yeah, I accepted it. But, like I say, I don't really feel that it heals wounds. Or that's just like saying, say if I scared you in the arm and you are going to have to live that way the rest of your life. Now, when you stop, the judge will say, he awards you \$50,000 from me. I give you the \$50,000. Well, \$50,000 is not going to heal what I did wrong because back here you have different feelings about what happened. And no matter how much money, how much talk, whatever there is, it's not going to heal what they took out of each person's life.

[03:05:00]

RK: So, you tried to adjust to society after camp?

ST: Well, as a kid, I don't think I really had to adjust that much because I didn't have to go out and work or go out and find a job in order to survive.

RK: So, you told me you didn't experience racism?

ST: Not really.

RK: Also prejudice, no?

ST: Well, like I said—

RK: It's a prejudice, the definition is different. I see.

ST: I don't know how you feel. (laughs)

RK: Did you think that evacuation and the orphanage was wrong?

ST: Do I think the deportation?

RK: Evacuation?

ST: Oh, the evacuation.

RK: And the orphanage, I should say Children's Village life was wrong?

ST: No. Okay, I say no for the simple reason, if they didn't have a Children's Village, where would I go as a minor?

RK: Is it like a rescuer?

ST: Well, yeah, it had to be a safe haven or a sanctuary where I knew I was going to be safe. No matter what happened I was there. Nothing was going to happen, really.

RK: You have to start from what you have. You have to accept because—

ST: This is why I say when you go back and start talking about, okay, you do with what you have. You do what you need to do in order to make every day go by. It's not like you have things, and you don't need things. That's just like saying, maybe in your case, your mother and father can't afford to send you to school anymore. So, they say, "Reiko, I can't send you anymore money, so you're going to have to go work if you want to continue in school, make your own money to go to school." Well, it's a sharp cut-off that hurts, and that's when you feel, okay, what am I going to do? And you do what you have to do. Regardless if it's quitting school and

working for a year or two years, and then going back to school. I think different situations take different meaning.

RK: If you have different choice.

ST: Well, really, it's not a choice; it's a path. I mean, you go one way to get ahead, and you go that way if you don't want to get ahead. So, which way are you going to go? You're going to go that way. Or most people would, but they're a few that want to go the other way.

RK: How do you feel about receiving redemption?

ST: How do I feel about receiving it?

RK: Yes.

ST: I really have no feelings about receiving. Like I said, it won't heal the wounds, regardless. But when you stop and put yourself in another man's shoes, how would you like if I took three years from you and isolated you from the rest of the world, and three years later come back and say, "Here's \$100, go find your own way." Thirty years later, come out and say—maybe your family had spent \$40, \$50,000 trying to gain respect for you. No matter what you receive will not heal what I took away from you from you for three years.

RK: Nobody can't.

ST: When you stop and think about things, what could you have done in that three years? Not so much as a child, but more as a young adult, a teenager in their prime of their life. This are scars that they will never forget.

RK: Okay. You had the reunion in '92. Will you describe that?

ST: Okay. I have to go back to '85 or '86. The Salvation Army had a reunion. This was in San Francisco, and it just so happens—well, I didn't read about it. My wife read about it in the newspaper, *The Pacific Citizen*, and after she told me, I called my sister. She said, yeah, she remembered reading about it. We had already thrown away the paperwork, so I called PC and I asked them, there was an article last month about this and that. They told me, Yeah, so they found the paper. In the meantime, I called Tamo and found out, and I sent him my money. I was on vacation at the time in Lake Tahoe, so I left on Friday to go. I got there late in the afternoon, so I didn't have anything to do with the activity on Friday. But, to me, to compare with this one, it had a lot of meaning to me because I went and was part of the first one where it was only the Salvation Army group. I met people that I didn't really know, but they were part of the home at one time or another. And when Tamo called, oh, about a year-and-a-half or two years before we had this one. I told him, "Yeah, I would be glad to help." So whenever anything came up, we got together, and I tried to do whatever I

felt necessary because the way I felt about the reunion I had back in '86 would mean something to somebody else here in this one. So, I had really good vibes or feelings because I would see people that I haven't seen for probably, some of them, for fifty years.

[03:16:30]

RK: Salvation Army reunion, how many people gathered?

ST: I would have to say there was probably thirty kids that actually lived in the home at one time or another, and some of them had already left when the war broke out.

RK: Out of thirty how many people gathered?

ST: No, no, that's what I'm saying. The kids that were in the home, there was probably around thirty. All told, there must have been seventy, seventy-five because it was their spouses and their kids. Gee, I'm trying to think if there was Mr. Kobayashi was there. He was like eighty-two, eighty-five, somewhere around there—and his wife and some of the ladies that were cooks. I don't know if any of the other Salvation Army people that were working as supervisors or that were contacted, if they were around anymore. I felt, like I said, back then, it was good for me. So, when I helped Tamo and the Matsumos do this one, it made me that much more enthusiastic about it.

RK: How many came together?

ST: In this one?

RK: Salvation Army.

ST: All together, I would say probably around seventy-five.

RK: Last year's reunion?

ST: Over one hundred. Out of that picture, I think there was thirty-five, forty that came.

RK: Out of the—

ST: Out of this picture.

RK: Okay, so the other seventy people didn't show up?

ST: Well, let's put it this way, a lot of them have died. A lot of them—

RK: Out of state.

- ST: Or nobody knows where they're at. Like I said, a lot of them had feelings that they did not want to go. They don't want to bring back the old memories or rekindle old wounds, let's put it that way. But, that's where individuals are according to themselves.
- RK: Maybe some are sick. What did you do during the reunion? How long did it last?
- ST: We started Friday afternoon. I think it was probably around two o'clock. We had a hospitality house, and whoever had pictures, brought pictures. They had a couple of videotapes on stories. I don't remember the stories, but about the evacuation or people that were part of it. That was Friday.
- RK: Two o'clock?
- ST: Yeah. Well, people came in and we kind of more or less picked people up, took them to the hotel, and we had the hospitality room that day from like two o'clock until maybe two o'clock in the morning. The next day was Saturday, so what we did was met at the hospitality house, and that was the first week that the museum opened.
- RK: What museum?
- ST: Japanese American Museum. We just had people who had vans and people who wanted to go take them. And ah, they had that fashion, \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) fashion people or somebody.
- RK: What?
- ST: There was a fashion show that, I don't know what the name of the people are, but they were at the hotel at the same time so they invited the ladies or the girls to go to that if they wanted. Saturday evening, we had dinner. God, I have to believe there had to be one hundred, or better, people. People that came brought their kids, grandkids. We had a little program and we had a mixer, which was good. They had bingo, but the bingo had to do with names. You had a nameplate, everybody had a nameplate. So, what you had to do is go fill out your bingo paper with names. So, if I came to you, and I asked you, "Would you sign?" You'd put your name in here. What we did was put names all in the hat, as we picked the names out—if the person was a woman, we would use her maiden name with her married. We would have the person stand up, so that everybody would recognize who so and so was.
- [03:25:18]
- RK: Must be a good reminder.
- ST: Oh, yeah. I thought that was a good way rekindle friendship because you wondered, geez, that looks like so and so, but I don't know if it is.

RK: So much change.

ST: Yeah, well, fifty years.

RK: It's difficult.

ST: Actually, camp started in '42, and like I said, it was kids that were in and out from '42 to '45. See, they did stay there all the time.

RK: The maximum children number was 101 children, at the peak.

ST: Yeah, it could have been.

RK: But usually, maybe, sixty, fifty kids. It's hard to remember who came and who left.

ST: Oh, yeah. But somebody must have a log of it.

RK: What?

ST: Somebody must have a log.

RK: Log?

ST: You know, names who came when—

RK: Oh, I see.

ST: But, I don't know who would have something like that.

RK: I have.

ST: Oh, you have one?

RK: I have who came, who left. Yes, if you like, I can give you copy.

ST: No, not necessary. It's just something that you're curious about.

RK: At reunion time, you had the time to mingle with those people?

ST: Oh, yes.

RK: Mostly, what did you talk—

ST: Well, you talk about what happened or where they went, what did they become—

RK: Marriage?

ST: Yeah, because the—you know, when you're a kid, you visualize somebody to be a lawyer or somebody to be a doctor, but whether they become a doctor, lawyer or whatever, you never know. There were people that were never married, and you think, Gee, I wonder why she never got married. I wonder why he never got married. And, part of it was, I think, something to do with what happened during their relocation time. You don't really know. But, if you don't know the person, you don't want to ask. See? Or so and so—what happened to your sister? Or what happened to your brother? And some of them passed away. Some of them were sick or they died during the war. So you know, things like that. But, it's good to see people after, say, forty, fifty years.

RK: So, people opened up conversation?

ST: Oh, yeah.

RK: Outlet their feelings?

ST: Well, like I said before, some people feel they need to say something in order to ease their pain or give somebody else more comfort, and I think it works both ways.

RK: So, a lot of people individually mingle with one another?

ST: Um-hm. Even the supervisors and the so-called grown-ups that had left the Village early, a lot of them came back. Some of the people you remember names, but you really don't remember the person. And, when you come back to it and start talking, yeah, I remember so and so. Things like that.

RK: Who did you personally talk to?

ST: Who did I personally talk to?

RK: Yeah.

ST: Well, the Isozaki boys, the one sister—she was the same grade that I was, but I think she was one year younger than I was. Uh, what's his name? Gene Murakami. There was—I'm trying to think what his first name was, Iwata.<sup>4</sup> Sachiko, the one that came from Vermont. I talked to the Matsunos. The younger girls, I hadn't seen for maybe, thirty years, forty years. The Yamashitas. There was quite a few that—I'd have to look at the picture and say, "Yeah, I talked to so and so, so and so, so and so." It's kind of hard even remembering names, even if it was last year. But if you look at the pictures, oh yeah, I remember who that was now.

[03:33:00]

RK: So, do you have reunion pictures?

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<sup>4</sup> Ira Iwata, O.H. 3775, Center for Oral and Public History.

ST: Um-hm.

RK: So it's kind of a process of healing?

ST: Well, I would not say over healing. I think it's a process of rekindling friendship.

RK: This year, on August 21, there is going to be a reunion.

ST: Yeah, that's the Manzanar one.

RK: In Manzanar?

ST: No, it's a Manzanar reunion.

RK: Not specifically orphanage reunion?

ST: No.

RK: Oh, I see.

ST: See? When you stop and think what they do when they have a reunion. There's a lot of work, there's a lot of preparation, but there's always people that say, let's do something, and never want to do anything.

RK: Everybody is busy. (laughs) Are you helping for the reunion?

ST: You mean the one in August?

RK: Yes.

ST: No, I'm not even going.

RK: How come?

ST: I've never been to any of them. It's a camp reunion. And I feel—like I told Cecelia, I may have been part of the camp, but my thing is the Village itself. Somebody from UCLA called and asked me if I would be interested in helping them to interview. I said, "No, because I feel they are a lot of other people that would be in different position that what I would be." Because, like I say, my feeling is I was in the Children's Village. I wasn't in a block, and I can't relate to a block. I can relate to the Village. Even though I had friends in blocks—I talked to them, but I think a block was completely different. How would you like to wake up at two o'clock in the morning to go to the bathroom and have to walk 150 yards to the bathroom when it's raining? You would think twice about going. Or if you open the door and the wind is blowing hard, things like that.

RK: Different.

ST: Yeah.

RK: So, you do not have a sense of belonging with the camp people?

ST: Not in the sense of reunion. I mean, if I go, I would go as part of the Village group, not as part of a camp group.

RK: There is going to be a lot of people?

ST: Probably.

RK: Yeah.

ST: Because in the past, they told be they've had three, four hundred people.

RK: How many time have Manzanar reunion been held?

ST: Twenty first or something like that. (pause) No, maybe I'm wrong.

RK: Oh, really?

ST: This says fourth.

RK: Just fourth reunion?

ST: Yeah, see? Fourth.

RK: Oh, yes.

ST: I thought maybe—no, you know what? I'm thinking the pilgrimage.

RK: Pilgrimage?

ST: Yeah. There's a difference. (chuckles)

RK: When did you get this announcement?

ST: Tamo sent it to me.

RK: So, he's involved within the reunion?

ST: Well, he called me and asked me if I wanted to go. I told him I wouldn't be able to because I was going to be on vacation.

RK: Do you have any idea if Tamo is going or not?

ST: Probably.

RK: So, some people go?

ST: Yeah, in fact, my sister called me last night and wanted Tamo's phone number, because she misplaced it because she was going to tell him that she was going to go.

RK: So, your siblings are going, except you?

[03:39:51]

ST: No, I think just my sister. [recording paused] As I was saying, I have three of my sons that went to Long Beach State. They went, more less, earning their way through college, living at home, with very little money support from me. But, as far as learning, I think they learned more this way than if I gave them money to go to school, and said, "All you need to do is go to school." This way they learn the value of school by working, even if they didn't have to pay any room and board or contribute to the home. So, in that sense, I feel they got a learning process of what they want on their own. My other son, he only went to a two-year college and became a firefighter. But, even that takes a little time, because even after the college, he had to go to an academy to go through firefighting academy before he qualified to work. He's working with the San Diego Fire Department.

RK: Right now?

ST: Right now. I think he has been with them almost three years. I feel good about all my kids.

RK: They are not dependent.

ST: Well, they are not dependent. They are self-dependent, even though I still have two at home.

RK: So, you didn't offer money?

ST: No, and I didn't tell them what I want them to be. They became what they wanted themselves.

RK: You went beyond your parentless experience in childhood and also your experience in Manzanar Children's Village. Those experiences, do you think you expanded those \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) in your life?

ST: Well, I have to say, I'm grateful for what I went and did with my life, being that, at one time, I was an orphan in an orphanage. And I think being in an orphanage, you

learn a lot of values of life. And even last year talking to—I forget who I was talking to, but we were talking about the kids that were in the orphanage, how prominent many of them became and how very few went by the wayside. And, when you talk to people that were in the same situation as you, I think you learn the value of the communication of you see and what they see. And not only yourself, but what you see in other kids that went along in the same path. And I think, like I say, it makes you a stronger person because you learn faster. And the faster you learn in life, the stronger you became.

And like they say, Leaders aren't born; they're made. So, when you stop and think about the different grades in you life that you went through and the outcome, I think individually you feel and you evaluate you own life, but I think you evaluate it harder than somebody else would. Myself, I could say, like I said before, I feel good about what I did with what I had. Regardless of if my kids know the whole history of my life is immaterial, because, somewhere along the line, they are going to know a majority part of my life. But, those are the kinds of things I was never able to talk to my father about, and I feel if he was around, I would have asked him. But, since he wasn't around, I had nobody to ask, not even an uncle or an aunt. Where, in my case here, I'm still healthy, and if the kids want to talk to me about my past, I would welcome to talk to them about it. But, they have to be able to want to learn, not me trying to teach them what I went through. I think that's probably part of a family tree that somebody has to learn themselves.

RK: Maybe they will try to find their roots.

ST: Yeah. I mean, it may not be today, tomorrow, but within a few years—but I think looking at history, I think everything comes out of a person when they are in their last, shall we say, dying years. I don't know why.

RK: At the last moment.

ST: Yeah. Or, shall we say, even in your case, maybe you did something bad nobody knows about and you kept in all your life. But, you know you were dying, so you have a sister, and you tell her. And that relieves you, but yet it makes your sister happy you were able to let something out.

RK: Everybody needs an outlet.

ST: Yeah, but it depends on what the outlet is or how it's done. It's hard. Like I said, being an orphanage or in surrounding with people that are in the same surrounding as you are, make s a big difference in your life.

RK: Do you think Manzanar still is not healing but it's kind of paying back to you, so it was an experience?

ST: I don't think of it.

RK: Why?

ST: Because it's—when I talk to people about Manzanar, it's generally the good things, it's never the bad things, and I guess that's true of life. You don't want people to know the bad things of your life, you only want them to know the good things. I think that's just human nature.

RK: If you have, like me today, I asked you such a long hours so you can talk stories. But, maybe other friends are not so much long hours want to listen to the—

ST: No, I think—well, I shouldn't say I think. I have talked to people in lengths that are friends of mine, not only on personal matters but friendship. And I think the more you do that, the more—not healing, better feeling you have about certain things.

[03:52:00]

RK: You gain better feeling?

ST: Oh, yeah. And I heard a thing one time that your best friend may not have to be the same sex, regardless if it's your girlfriend, your boyfriend, or just a friend. And it doesn't always have to be the same sex, and a lot of people look yeah, he's my best friend. But, she may be a good friend, but you don't consider her as a best friend. When I heard that, I thought, That makes sense. And it doesn't even have to be a wife or a girlfriend, just a good friend.

RK: So, you don't think it's paying back to you?

ST: No, (chuckles) I don't think there is such thing as payback.

RK: But, you're feeling better if you talk?

ST: I think everybody does. I think a lot of people hold back too much.

RK: Maybe they are slaves.

ST: Well, yeah.

RK: Like a prisoner. (laughs)

ST: Well, they are prisoners to themselves or a slave to themselves.

RK: And even don't know.

ST: Yeah. Well, that's the same thing when I was running my business. People, even years after, people ask me how come I never got ulcers.

RK: Sorry?

ST: Ulcers. You don't know what ulcers are?

RK: Ulcers?

ST: In the stomach.

RK: Oh, it's a disease?

ST: Yeah.

RK: I don't know, sorry.

ST: It's like when you hold back too much.

RK: Yes, I think so. *Like a stone!*

ST: No.

RK: Okay, okay. Something, it's kind of accumulating?

ST: Yeah, it's like acid, and it starts to eat your innards. Or it bothers you with stomachache all the time.

RK: I think it's *kaiyō*, in Japanese.

ST: Anyway, I used to tell people, no, certain things you just have to let out. If you hold back, then that's what bothers you. If you let it out now and then, you don't get that problem.

RK: For those people that don't release their feelings, still they are holding and then don't show-up to the reunion, what would you think about those people?

ST: Well, that's their own business in what they want to do and how they want to express themselves. But, if you know the person, then you take the person for what he is worth, or you look at them a little different.

RK: I think expressing is a human right.

ST: Oh, yeah.

RK: Basic right. (chuckles)

ST: But see, not everybody expresses or thinks that way. Even in this case, they are people that you are going to talk to ask for an interview and they are going to tell you, no, I don't want to talk. Regardless what reason it is, they won't talk to anybody that

they don't know. I know I have a brother that probably wouldn't talk to you. He would turn you down just like hot and cold.

RK: In your brother's case, because of what?

ST: I would say probably because of the, shall we say, the type of life we had.

RK: Was your brother still in the hospital?

ST: No, not that one. The one that I told you about, no, he's sick. He has inflamed heart. He can't afford a heart transplant, and he's diabetic, so between the two, he just does very little. I guess he's had this condition about three years, four years.

RK: He suffering heart, so heart transplant is difficult?

ST: Say that again?

RK: Heart transplanting.

ST: He needs a heart transplant.

RK: Oh, transplant.

ST: His heart is no good anymore.

RK: Are you looking for somebody to contribute?

ST: No, it cost too much to do it.

RK: Yeah, it might be expensive.

ST: But I told his wife, I says, "Regardless what the situation, if there's anything I can help, I'll help." I guess they have looked into how much it cost, and it's like saying, I don't want a second life. I don't believe in it either.

RK: He's saying?

ST: Well, that is what he is saying to me, in essence, if he doesn't want a heart transplant. But, on the same hand, if I had a choice, I wouldn't want one either. I don't need to be alive when I'm ninety on a second heart. I guess I'm that way. I don't know. But that's just one of the things I feel I have gone through my life, or when my life comes towards an end—

RK: Nothing like that.

[04:00:42]

- ST: No, I don't need extra things to keep me alive another five, ten years. If God wanted me to live until I was ninety, I would live until ninety. But if I was to go at seventy, who am I say, "No, I don't want to die? I want to live longer so give me more life." I don't understand why people want to do that. (laughs)
- RK: What newspaper do you read? Do you read *Rafu Shimpō*?
- ST: I read the *Rafu*. Well, this friend of mine subscribes to it, so he gives it to me after he reads it. I subscribe to *Pacific Citizen*, and I don't know if you've heard of *Toazi Times*?
- RK: Um-hm.
- ST: I had that.
- RK: Do you keep articles about Manzanar when they appear on the newspaper?
- ST: No. (laughs) How recent?
- RK: How recent?
- ST: Yeah, you said articles—do you know?
- RK: I think Children's Village articles available a long time ago.
- ST: I have a copy.
- RK: Oh, really? When was the article—
- ST: When was it printed? Well, it was after the reunion.
- RK: Oh, last year?
- ST: Yeah.
- RK: Yeah, I have some but—
- ST: Why don't you—
- RK: Okay. [04:05:00; recording paused] Did you have chance to visit Children's Village after World War II?
- ST: No.
- RK: So far, did you visit?

ST: Well, you say did we visit, but I think they tore down the camp after. And the first time I went to the area was like 1980.

RK: You visited?

ST: The camp area but there was nothing there.

RK: Nothing.

ST: All the barracks were gone. I think, I heard, one years, two years after they closed the camp, they tore all the buildings down.

RK: We talked about the *Come See the Paradise*, how do you view that?

ST: How do I view it?

RK: Yes. Or how do you criticize?

ST: Well, it's been a few years now. At the time, like I said, there was too much non-truth to what they had in the picture, and it was based, shall we say, a true love story of Japanese and an American, which was probably was true to a certain point, but not 100 percent. There was too much falsified things in it. But ah, as far as—well, that's true to anything. If you know facts, and you see somebody interpret facts that don't really mean that, and that's the way I look at.

RK: Do you think it was a beautifully made picture, comparing reality?

ST: No.

RK: No?

ST: (laughs) Well, when you say beautiful as far as the picture is concern, I think what you're trying to imply is. Was the picture—

RK: I mean love story, it's kind of happy ending.

ST: Not really, but I think if they are going to show something, or do something that is supposed to be non-fictional, then they should keep it that way and not fix it. I mean, I've read different books, or I've seen movies, and I can't believe what they do to some of the books.

RK: Toyoko Yamazaki? It's a Japanese writer. She wrote about two countries, it's about Japanese American experience during World War II. They have to fight against the Japanese soldier. It's a tragic story, but ah, do you know about that?

ST: I heard about it, but like I say, during World War II, I was too young. I have friends that talk about it. I have friends that have been there. But my way of looking at it, if I was one of them, I would just as soon be in prison than have to face an enemy of my ancestor. Regardless, if I'm interpreting for him or, even if I had to fight against him, I think I would have to stop and think twice before what I did.

RK: It's like a trial.

ST: Yeah, to me, it's hard to see, or say something, that you have not really been in reality with. Now, I think I've always thought of people or things as saying, you can't really say a true feeling if it never happened to you. You can only assume, or you can give an account, which is not really true. That just like saying—okay, if somebody held you up, he's trying to shoot you, well, you have no choice, so what are you going to do? You really don't have an alternative but to try to save your life. Whether you die or not, that's secondary. The primary thing is to stay alive. But, if you ask somebody else that, his answer may be completely different. But, if it actually happened to you, then you think different.

RK: Do you know, among your Japanese American friends, have they seen this story? Maybe it's televised?

ST: What story? The *Paradise*?

RK: No, the *Two Countries* by Toyoko Yamazaki. *Futatsu no Sokoku* \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible).

ST: I never heard of it. How long has the book been out?

RK: I think, I don't know. Maybe less than two decades.

ST: Oh, okay. Do you know if it's sold in—what is that Japanese bookstore? Nippon?

RK: \_\_\_\_\_???

ST: No, the one on First Street?

RK: First Street?

ST: First and Central.

RK: Yawhon—

ST: No, not Yawhon.

RK: \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible). It was closed.

ST: No, this is right there—you know where the plaza is?

RK: Yes.

ST: Okay, it's right outside in the plaza on First Street.

RK: I've heard about it, but that name doesn't come.

ST: Let me get a piece of paper.

RK: Thanks.

ST: What's the title now?

RK: I think *Two Countries*.

ST: *Two Countries?*

RK: I can write in Japanese.

ST: No.

RK: Maybe *Two Countries*.

ST: Well, if you write it in Japanese, it may not be an English book.

RK: I have no idea, but I'm sure it was televised, too.

ST: It's a video or a movie?

RK: TV story.

ST: But, there's a book, too?

RK: Yes, and also the T.V.—both available, book and maybe video.

ST: What was her name?

RK: Toyoko Yamazaki, if you are interested.

[04:15:00]

ST: No, I read now and then. I'm not a very good reader, and my reading span is not very long.

RK: It don't matter.

- ST: No, see, when I read, I like to understand what I am reading. So, if I read something and I don't understand it, I keep reading it until I understand it. Sometimes it may take me half hour to read one page.
- RK: Yeah, me too. (laughs) Doesn't go far, especially textbooks.
- ST: That's different. But if it was written in \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) it would be different, right?
- RK: It depends on the subject.
- ST: Yeah.
- RK: I'm asking last question. Do you have any comment about Japanese emperor system?
- ST: The Japanese imperial system?
- RK: Emperor.
- ST: Oh, emperor.
- RK: Before camp?
- ST: Well, it's hard for me to answer something like that because I didn't know anything about him, and I really never studied Japan history as far as the emperor system went.
- RK: I was just wondering, Shonien got donations in the name of the emperor, so I thought—
- ST: See, these are the things you don't read about, you only hear about from people who know. And John Hohri<sup>5</sup> was one of the persons that was there from—I think he said he said somewhere around '28, and, when the war broke, he was old enough that he and his brothers were put in camp together as young adults. I think his younger brother was still going to school at the time. But him and his older brother was already finish. I don't know exactly when he went out of Shonien, but if you had not found out about John Hohri, you probably wouldn't have found out. And that's the same thing, he was saying the United Campaign Fund used to contribute to Shonien. I don't know if Mary Knoll was funded 100 percent by the Maryknoll church. See, like the Salvation Army was all funded by Salvation Army.
- RK: Is the Salvation Army—
- ST: Part of an organization.
- RK: A part of it?

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<sup>5</sup> John Hohri, O.H. 3786, Center for Oral and Public History.

ST: Yeah. So I guess, I'm guessing cause I don't know for a fact, but the person that started the home was working for the Salvation Army at the time. And I don't know how he became contact with some orphan children, and he started that like in '30, '31.

RK: The Salvation Army is still in San Francisco?

ST: Yeah.

RK: I was just wondering.

ST: You say Salvation Army; the building itself belongs to Salvation Army. Now, I understood, after we left, they cleaned it up, and then they made a college or a teaching school for the Salvation Army. Till this day—like the last time I said it was like '85, '86, when I was there, and they were still using the building as a university or college, or whatever you want to call it.

RK: So, no more—

ST: No more orphanage. I think the only reason they put the orphanage up was because of that one man wanting to start an orphanage for homeless Japanese.

RK: How about Maryknoll, is it still existing?

ST: No, not that I know. See, I never knew where Maryknoll was.

RK: So, you don't know?

ST: I heard it was in Lincoln Park area. And the Shonien was in Silver Lake.

RK: I think it's almost done. If it's not enough, can I come back again?

ST: Yeah.

RK: I think maybe on the phone.

ST: No, feel free to call, and if you feel like you want more information or you want to clarify something, don't feel obligated.

RK: Well, thank you so much.

ST: Like I said, as long as it's about something I was part of, which was the Children's Village, I don't feel hesitant in talking to you. But, if it was something about Manzanar itself, then I would say no.

RK: It's different.

ST: Yeah, because being a youngster is different. But, when you are among a family of kids or a group that become your family for three years, then it becomes a little different.

RK: Thank you so much. It's almost 6:30 p.m. We started at almost eleven o'clock.

ST: Eleven, yeah.

RK: Well, thank you so much.

ST: No, you're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW