

NARRATOR: MARTHA KAJIWARA

INTERVIEWER: ROBERT OHKI

DATE: June 22, 1999

RO: I'm Robert Ohki and I'm here interviewing Martha maiden name Takimura, and married name is Kajiwara and this is June 22, 1999 in Livingston, California. We are here to interview you and we will try to cover at least the questions we have here about our—for the history of the Japanese-American people. That's something, I lost my paper here.

MK: I hope it's not on.

RO: Well one of the questions we'll have is life before WWII and then during the war and of post-war resettlement and questions about what has happened lately. So can you tell us about where in Japan your ancestors came from?

MK: My father and uncle came from Kiba-ken in Japan and I think they were small farmers at that time.

RO: What do you think of—?

MK: My mother came from the same -ken but she was unmarried at the time you know and then my father married her.

RO: What do you think caused them to come to the United States and leave Japan?

MK: Oh I guess it sounded like there was a lot of opportunity in Japan and being they were interested in farming mainly and mostly more than just rice farming they thought it would be profitable to come from Japan so my uncle and father came and started the farm about a fourth of a mile from where I live right now.

RO: Okay, can you tell us about your family's life in the United States before WWII?

MK: Well, it was a little tragic I think for my father I think because my sister is about fifteen months older than I am and she was the first born and then when I was I don't even remember my first mother but when she was—when I was just almost a little two or three years old, she passed away in Japan and so I think what he thought if he would take her back to Japan, she might be cured but she had tuberculosis and passed away in Japan. And when we came back, my father left my older sister in Japan with his mother to care for her and I came back with him and then later he went back and got my step-mother, married my step-mother.

RO: You have other relatives here in the United States?

MK: No, no except my immediate family. I have no brothers. I have two sisters in the United States.

RO: Do you have—did you learn anything more about your relatives in Japan from your folks?

MK: Somewhat—we went back how many years ago was that? A few years ago now, twenty-a little over twenty and I think of course my grandmother was gone and I just went to visit her grave and then my mother's, my first mother's grave was in Japan so we went to visit them. And I really didn't have too many relatives except my uncle's family because he had sons and they had families.

RO: Okay, can you tell us different places you have resided?

MK: In my life?

RO: Pre-war?

MK: Pre-war? Oh we had our first home in the back of Freesan's(?). It is still standing there and we always lived there. And I remember my step-mother taking care of the garden

and watering it with a hose and things like that. And then when I was I think a freshman in high school was that in thirty-one, they had the big Depression and my father and uncle lost their farm so we came over to the place that I'm living now on the forty acres and I think at that time when things were going well he had about a hundred and sixty acres which was the same land that (inaudible) and goes up to the highway now. Is there anything else?

RO: Oh well the next question is about schooling. Do you remember things about your grammar school days and so forth?

MK: Yes, uh-huh.

RO: Until the war started?

MK: Why school was really exciting being I just had my—I didn't have anyone until I was a little older and when my step-sister was born. In the meantime did I say my father married a very young person, young lady and she was my step-mother but when she was not married too long, she also contracted tuberculosis and passed away when I was about oh let's see (inaudible) was just born it must have been I was about eight years when she passed away. And school was exciting because I was practically an only child with my little sister and so I loved school. We at first we just walked to school. I don't even remember when I had my first bus ride but we walked to school and went through where Robert Ohki used to live and picked him up and Rose, his cousin and I and then we picked up Rose on the way to school and we walked down the highway to kindergarten. And that was about the year nineteen—nineteen—about 1925 it would be.

RO: I think that is right. I remember those days too.

MK: Oh I have to say that Rose and I (inaudible) were so adventurous we used to run around and thought it was so exciting to steal a few grapes and put them in our lunch buckets and then we made Robert hold the lunch buckets but we even tried chewing some tar along the way going to school. I remember that.

RO: Well it was—after high school or can you talk to us about high school or college. I'm sure you went to school before the war.

MK: Yes, we went to high school. I enjoyed that. I kind of first met Guch little before going to high school because my neighbor Tomoye Masuda who is married to Fred Toyama would go to Cortez for meetings and then Hannah Masuda and I would go along with them and here just a couple of young boys about our age were playing basketball and so I was a real—I thought I was a pretty good basketball player and I loved to play with the boys but they were always so much more challenging than playing with girls and here was Guch and somebody else at least I didn't know who he was but they were shooting baskets so I told Hannah and to let's go play with them. So that is when I first met Guch and he took my ball away while I was dribbling and then I hit him in the rear and I remember him saying "Wow what a spanking machine." That was my first contact with Guch before I even went to high school.

RO: Well did you study for a career?

MK: Well I thought I would like to be a teacher I think all the way and so I just took what was—the academic things in high school you know like oh what was it certain courses how you take your math and Latin and French and a little Spanish. I don't know how much I took of that and then regular required courses. And my family always wanted me to go on to college so we already had our goals kind of set.

RO: Any activities at school that you enjoyed?

MK: I used to make the Honor Society and I loved playing basketball. I thought I was a pretty good player at that time. I was one of the few girls that could shoot one handed I thought and on many occasion I was just pretty athletic and we played everything we could including tennis and we went traveling all around the area playing I think tennis tournaments and things.

RO: That's right you played tennis too, quite well.

MK: Uh-huh.

RO: Well, one more question about school is how did you feel about being Japanese when you were growing up in your school years?

MK: I really have no feeling about that. I just didn't think or we didn't talk about discrimination or anything you know. I remember one of our eighth grade parties I think and Clifford Gant was my neighbor down towards the highway there and we just decided to have their brother or father or whoever could drive take us so I went over to his house and waited until it was time to go and we went to the eighth grade party together like that you know. But I didn't like him or anything in any way romantic he was just a friend of mine. So, I don't think I ever thought anything about the difference of race and I didn't experience anything like sometimes we do now you know about racial slurs and things.

RO: Well you felt then that you were assimilated or you had friends both Japanese as well as Caucasians?

MK: Caucasians uh-huh.

RO: Okay is there anything else about school?

MK: Well I remember the excitement about Joe (inaudible) was living up on the hill where the (inaudible) live right now but he always used to come to school on the little Shetland pony. Do you remember that?

RO: Oh uh-huh. Oh yeah.

MK: And I used to want to ride but he would never really let me ride it. He let me sit on it and pull the reigns around but I thought that was so interesting and I can just hear him clomping down the road you know when he was going to school and really went fast.

RO: That was bigger than a Shetland pony.

MK: Was it? A little bigger? Uh-huh, he was a pretty, pretty little horse. And he would tie it up on—I think they had those things that hold—to tie them up on and he left it there on the school grounds and come home again.

RO: I think he was the only one with a horse.

MK: Yeah, uh-huh.

RO: Okay, we can always come back to the subject if you have something. Now, we have a church here in Livingston. Maybe you can tell us something about your church experiences?

MK: Well, being somewhat of an only child until my sister came and she is seven years younger and it was unfortunately that she lost her mother too when she was quite young. I don't remember when she died. I had it written down somewhere. And we always used to go to church and at first I just walked the field and went every Sunday and it was very interesting. And I used to see all the burrowing owls coming out of their holes you know and just shaking their heads up and down like they did. They all did that and I used to think they were saying good morning to me and it was fun walking through the fields and

there were always different flowers, wild flowers that we don't see anymore like we used to have, brodaeas, tidy tips, of course the poppy, and yellow buttercups and Indian paintbrushes and Chinese houses they used to call them. You can hardly see them unless you go to the foothills anymore. But they were just filled with flowers. The fields were filled with flowers. As long as there was what you call it—natural land with nothing growing on it yet, just fields.

RO: Well was there anything else about church affiliation?

MK: Oh yeah church? That was one of my social experiences because you know I only had my sister and she was seven years younger than I was. But we always had nice beautiful young ladies like I think maybe Makiyo Kubo and later Andow and some of those younger ladies were our teachers and I used to think they were such beautiful people. I wished I would be like them when I grew up. And they were very good teachers, more than, learning the bible or the lesson I thought just being with them was really something I looked forward to in Sunday school.

RO: Well okay.

MK: And being with my friends too. We had quite a big group I think our age anyway. We were the biggest Japanese group that was born.

RO: Age group?

MK: Age group, yeah.

RO: Now the next question is military service. Ladies didn't normally go because—

MK: Before I go on you know I used to have—I can't remember her name anymore but she was one of the teacher's daughters and she lived across from where Sam's is right now and at lunch she'd invite me home and to eat lunch and I took my—I think I took my

lunch but went to her house. And one time she gave me some potato soup that her mother had left for her and I thought that was the best thing I ever drank and tasted. And she was one of the teacher's daughters that lived right across from the present Sam's. And the house is gone now but—

RO: Now there are some questions we can ask and talk about well none of us got married before the war I don't think. Not our age group. Now the teenage years now you did mention that you didn't feel much about racism or injustice.

MK: No, I never thought of that. I really never did. I had wonderful Mexican friends that we got to know through our farm and I didn't know the Filipino people too well that close to but the Mexicans were just you know just like any other people and I still have one of my a, Josephine Cortez with whom I played all the time because she was living at the present city—what is that? You know where you used to live? They used to live there.

RO: Oh.

MK: Josephine Cortez, she is still around and I see her every once in a while and she's getting quite weak and old. She is in Livingston.

RO: So you don't feel—

MK: No.

RO: Okay.

MK: At least I never felt about anyone.

RO: Okay, so there are any questions I see here did you do any dating at school at high school for instance or in college years?

MK: No I didn't date alone anyway but after we went to high school you know well Guch would bring all his Cortez friends, girls and then he'd pick me up last and we'd go to dances in Livingston in high school.

RO: High school?

MK: Yeah high school but I never really dated alone until after high school.

RO: Okay now another question is in your child—in your pre-war years did you think they were hard times because of the Depression or whatever happened? Did your parent's say or?

MK: Well our house is still standing next to in back of Breeson's(??) and it's a greenhouse now but I've often wondered if I could get permission to go and see the inside of it you know. It is still standing and someone is living in it. But so what was the—

RO: The hard times yeah?

MK: The Depression, well I was very, very embarrassed when we lost the other land where I was born you know, right there. So we had to come over to this forty acres –

RO: That was probably your property though?

MK: Original property and I was so embarrassed because well, we just had a few shacks.

What happened was Mr. Andow gave us a house and I think he and then we had some old houses from the other place that was sort of empty so we brought it over and put some of the houses together and it was just nothing but a shack. And I was very embarrassed that I used to get off at my old house off the bus and walk through the fields and nobody knew I had to move over here. And in those times we just had grapes so you could see the shacks very clearly from the road so that was my very, I don't know, it's a wonder I am normal after going through such an embarrassing situation.

RO: That is traumatic.

MK: Traumatic to me and I just used to walk pretending that I still lived there for a long time until I don't know what happened. I just finally gave up, I guess.

RO: Well what's—

MK: Yeah losing a whole hundred and twenty acres over there was really hard on my family too, I think, the home and all.

RO: That was kind of common during the Depression.

MK: Yeah was it?

RO: Yeah.

MK: Was it thirty-one or something?

RO: Pardon me?

MK: What year was that, thirty-one?

RO: Yeah, around 1930.

MK: Thirty huh?

RO: Or twenty-nine.

MK: Twenty-nine?

RO: The Depression started.

MK: But we managed. My younger sister and I were here and then later on my father finally called my sister back because you know she was his daughter and she had been helping her cousin's family raising a bunch because he had about nine kids I think. And I guess they finally called her back so it was kind of sad for her to come you know things like that. I don't know what she thought I knew and I didn't ask her so. But she—oh and

then she was left in San Francisco and she lived in a dorm or something for immigrants and learned English first. So she didn't come directly here.

RO: I recall those days, too, Martha when she came. Okay is there anything else about pre-World War that you want to tell me?

MK: Well my—kind of interesting but sad but kind of interesting. My father lost his first wife when I was about three so he went back to Japan to find a new wife and my older sister was living with her grandmother because when our first mother died, my father felt he couldn't take care of two little girls so she stayed in Japan and that is why we were separated when we were young. But Ruth came along. But my father then married a very young girl and my older sister said she was very young at that time and brought her back from Japan. But I remember definitely seeing my first mother's father you know and he wanted me to—in Japan they used to feel if they had a little grandchild, they wanted to sleep with them. And he was this great big fellow you know and he had one of this big kimonos that was kind of short and he came and he was so thrilled to see me, one of his first grandchildren I guess. And next to my sister because my sister stayed in Japan and had her grandmother raise her you know. Anyway I was so (inaudible) and just wouldn't go to him. My father was so embarrassed. He felt so bad because he wanted to just—he actually said he wanted me to sleep with him because they thought if they loved this little child, they just thought it would be a treat to sleep and I just wouldn't. And my father said he was so embarrassed because I wouldn't and just raised such a ruckus because I didn't want to even go near him and of course he was a total stranger. But to him, I was his grandchild.

RO: Yeah.

MK: Anyway that was one of the experiences.

RO: Now you went to see your grandfather in Japan?

MK: Yeah with my father. It was my mothers—

RO: Now (inaudible) your parents weren't picture brides or that type of marriage?

MK: I don't think so. I think they were you know -ken and they knew them yeah because even my step-mother, my sister said at that time they went to a restaurant and this young girl you know went with us and that was the step-mother that we had.

RO: Yeah.

MK: But I remember when we came to Angel Island coming back with my step-mother you know and all the women are supposed to sleep in one side and girls too. But I didn't want to sleep with my step-mother because I didn't even know her you know so they allowed me to sleep with my father. And I remember sleeping on a fan or something.

RO: And how old were you at that time?

MK: At that time I must have been let's see—Ruth is seven years younger so I must have been about five or so. Five or yeah five or six no I wasn't in school yet I think so I must have been and that's when my first mother died and my father came back and wed. And my uncle was working with him so my uncle was like the housekeeper. He didn't work outside at all hardly.

RO: Oh.

MK: Yeah you know for a long time he just tied vines every once in a while.

RO: That's another thing, you had an uncle here that was part of the farming?

MK: Yeah. Yeah. And he used to be oh just so thoughtful about us you know. And I remember we'd come home from school and he'd always have this funny pudding on the stove that he made with eggs and milk you know. So yeah he was very good and nice.

RO: Now he was a gentleman.

MK: Oh yeah.

RO: And you know, community too, in the community he was—

MK: He was a very good Christian you know. My father just wouldn't go until he got a little bit sick I guess and maybe he had cancer in his chest or something and but anyway then he started to go. I can't remember oh I don't remember the minister that invited him to come and invited him to come and finally he went. And it was kind of he wasn't well and he kind of needed some strength, you know.

RO: And your mother, did she die of tuberculosis?

MK: Tuberculosis, yeah.

RO: Both your mothers?

MK: Yeah, I think my first mother did too but I don't know.

RO: Oh.

MK: I'm not sure.

RO: Times getting long so whatever comes up again will be fine you know you can say it. World War II period now what was your reaction when the bomb came into Hawaii?

MK: Yeah, I went to Merced Junior College for two years and then I transferred to UC and so I was in my last—taking my last finals December 7, 1941 I guess was it forty-one? And then I was studying for my finals because that was about the last final I was going to take and all of a sudden this I went to the bathroom and my friend was in there crying away.

And I said, “Well what’s a matter Dorothy?” I think her name was Dorothy. And she said oh Japan bombed Pearl Harbor just now and she must have found out some way and her brother was at Pearl Harbor so she was real upset you know. And that was my first experience about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and then all of a sudden there was almost that very day or afternoon the Chinese having those great big buttons that they started to wear “I am Chinese, I am Chinese.” and everybody wore those buttons and it just made you feel so bad and we had nothing to do with it. You know and Japan did this and we were Japanese and it was kind of a horrible you know feeling. So we just hurried and Frankie gave me a ride or his father must have gone after him and, boy we just high-tailed it home.

RO: Well did you have any non-Japanese people reaction to you about Pearl Harbor?

MK: No, no they didn’t say much except for that friend that was crying in the bathroom. And but I was all worried about my own family so I don’t know how I came home but I got home and took a bus or something and came home. But I got my—they sent me graduation, my certificate –

RO: Diploma?

MK: Diploma to the camp for me.

RO: The camp?

MK: I had a very nice advisor who was a home economics teacher and I majored in child development you know so, she sent everything back to me and even gave me a book she had written on child development so.

RO: Well that shows they cared.

MK: Yeah.

RO: And different people cared about you.

MK: Yes and I used to kind of correspond with her but I'm sure she's gone now.

RO: Okay, the next question is about evacuation. Did you—was there a reaction do you remember about evacuation?

MK: Well, I really felt bad for my father you know. My uncle was in Japan. Yeah, I think he just by then he was in Japan and I don't think—he never came back I guess so I never saw him after that. But we used to send him you know old clothing and things and almonds. But anyway just my older sister Momoyo we had called her back of course from San Francisco and she was living at home. And then she—oh what is it? Oh my father stayed in New York for a while instead of coming to camp. After he was in camp he went to New York with Momoyo. By then Momoyo was with the family and so after camp, he went to New York, my sister married James Tagama and they went to New York so they called my father over. You know so and that's when we were in Amache and my father was there for a while but then he went and he'd come home, no we didn't come home.

RO: So talk about some traumatic experience in evacuation or resistance or we had to do this kind of thing.

MK: We just went. We didn't resist or anything. I was too young to even think about it.

RO: You were twenty?

MK: Yeah, I was just out of college but as soon as we got to Merced I guess we all did our jobs and so I directed the nursery schools in Amache and—

RO: Merced?

MK: In Merced first then when we went to Amache well they had—every block had a nursery school.

RO: What did you do about your home and your belongings?

MK: Well we left it with Momberg you know. Momberg and Joe Ferjardo who was—

RO: (inaudible)

MK: Well he used to work for my father for a long time so he took care of the farm but nobody lived in the house but it was just a shack at that time.

RO: But your belongings though, did you put them away or sell them?

MK: Gee—

RO: Or was that—

MK: I think we just left the house and just left it.

RO: Left your things in the house?

MK: Not important things but what did we do anyway? Didn't we store some things in the social hall?

RO: Well we probably had a community place.

MK: Yeah, but when we came back well you know actually do you want to know what happened before we came back from camp?

RO: Yeah, this is during well this is during the World War II period so we aren't on that question yet but so your things. You think you what you had—your important things you had you took it with you?

MK: Yeah, but I remember—

RO: Necessary things?

MK: Taking a big duffle bag things to that place right across oh it's a—it's some kind of a Veteran's Hall or something.

RO: In Merced?

MK: No, across that stationary store and we all went there and brought our big duffle bags and dumped it there and from there on we got on a train I think.

RO: Well you mean—

MK: It's a Veteran's Hall or something.

RO: Yeah, but they took you to Merced Fairgrounds?

MK: Was it—oh yeah there we stayed there for a while.

RO: Yeah and didn't the bus take you there?

MK: Yeah, yeah.

RO: With your duffle bag?

MK: Duffle bag yeah. And then I remember we moved from there to go to Amache didn't we?

RO: Yeah.

MK: We got on the train there. I see we went up to that place in Merced and then they took the bus and took us to the Assembly Center yeah and got on the bus then.

RO: Now you already said something about the child development thing.

MK: Yeah.

RO: In Merced.

MK: Yeah.

RO: What was camp life like for you and your family?

MK: Oh, I got pretty busy right away so it wasn't you know. I always had something to do with the nursery education there. And when I remember that when we were going to go

to Amache they had a big Assembly Center at the fairgrounds there and ballpark or whatever.

RO: Assembly yeah.

MK: Yeah, and we were singing I don't know what song it was, "God Bless America?"

RO: I kind of think so.

MK: And something like that and Guch said, at that time he was in the hospital you know and they found—and he took his test for, for induction to the Army and they found a little spot on his lungs so he couldn't go with us and he said he felt so lonesome because we were all singing at the field there and—

RO: He could hear you in the hospital?

MK: He could hear it so well.

RO: Oh that's right. It is not too far away.

MK: And after that of course we boarded the train and he was left behind.

RO: Yeah. So camp life—well was okay?

MK: Well it kept me busy. But my brother before we went into camp was taken by the FBI to Santa Fe you know my brother, Guch's brother.

RO: Yeah.

MK: And because he took care of a lot of things the community things and he could speak English and Japanese and he would be treasurer for gathering money to help Japan you know and things like that. And anyway he was taken to Santa Fe before we even went to camp and so it was kind of sad for my sister-in-law because she had seven kids you know but all the community took over and helped her so it wasn't too bad but Guch's mother was still living at that time.

RO: Oh wow.

MK: But anyway we were singing and he said he felt so lonesome. But he came later back to camp and—

RO: Well during this period though I guess you and Guch had a pretty good close relationship?

MK: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, I was always at least I was always faithful to him. I didn't run around with boyfriends or anything yeah. So.

RO: So you were taken to Merced Assembly Center and also the next one was Amache, Colorado.

MK: Uh-huh.

RO: You know and then in February or so of 1943 we had this—this question is about your loyalty questionnaire.

MK: Oh yeah.

RO: Now I don't know about ladies but how—what was your reaction to that? Was the question difficult to answer?

MK: Not for me. I just put I guess and it made it sound like I was very patriotic, whatever it was no, no, no. Or did the women do that too?

RO: Well I think so. I don't remember but the men did, boys did.

MK: Yeah, but I would never have thought of going to Japan because our family wasn't too Japanese-oriented as much as maybe the Buddhist families, you know.

RO: Uh-huh.

MK: I think maybe the Buddhist families were much more that way and that's why you have Mino Nakita and a few others and his brother that were taken from camp or something and put into one of those no, no boy camps.

RO: Yeah. So none of your family was arrested by the FBI?

MK: No, no, no.

RO: (inaudible) okay. Did camp internment experience affect any of your at all many your plans or how did it affect your career or was it helpful or—

MK: Yeah well for me it was helpful because I majored in nursery education and I did a lot of practicing teaching in nursery groups you know. So and I guess they couldn't find anybody else but I don't know if they just asked me or what? So I organized the nursery schools and we found that we had lots of nice teachers. And Hiso Inoki was one of them you know. And Asako Yamamoto, maybe you know her from Reedley and she's another. She's not Asako Yamamoto anymore but anyway she was a chubby, she was a chubby girl and something and you know somebody Ino somebody family from Fresno way was teaching and we had quite a few good teachers that you know—

RO: How long did you teach in Amache?

MK: Oh it wasn't very long because then I went to Detroit. I got married in Amache and then I think all these schools were taken care of pretty well by then. And I got married on April 9, I think I can't remember the year.

RO: So this was all the World War period.

MK: Yes.

RO: And did you get married during that time?

MK: Yes, see Guch came back from being in the hospital and so we just got married by a Buddhist priest I think near our twenty-fifth anniversary and we just got married in that last little camp that was very small only (inaudible) or something.

RO: Well you actually—

MK: Got married inside one of those barrack rooms.

RO: Oh not in a chapel?

MK: No, no reverend and I think it was a Buddhist minister that married us and my father was there, Mitsi Nitobi was there and she was about the only one that was around that I knew. And then because I had gone off to work in Detroit and then came back to get married so. And then Guch and his mother, his brother had gone to Santa Fe so that was all.

RO: And none of us was there to help you?

MK: No, no.

RO: You were all alone?

MK: Yeah so this Reverend Yonemura or somebody did the little thing and then we just sat around a little table and my mother and sister-in-law and Guch and I or something. Well Guch and I were facing each other and then when they were finally finished he said, “Now you may shake hands.” (laughing)

RO: (laughing)

MK: It was so funny. You know they say, “Now you may kiss the bride or something.” And Reverend Yonemura said “Now you make shake hands.” How funny. So it was a funny wedding but then you know these.

RO: (inaudible)

MK: In a small—you know how big—

RO: Oh yeah, there must have been twenty by—

MK: Oh yeah.

RO: About the size of this room maybe.

MK: Not quite, half of that maybe.

RO: Yeah.

MK: A little bit bigger anyway she—the kids were all clamoring and trying and getting each other up to see what's going on through the window and everything. And then that night and of course you go to take a shower and I was so embarrassed because all the little kids are following me because they heard that somebody got married and this was her and it was just so embarrassing. So I went to take a shower and everyone was peaking around after me.

RO: So you were real self-conscious probably.

MK: Oh yeah. Because—

RO: So you spent your honeymoon there more or less?

MK: Yeah.

RO: Not honeymoon but early part of your married life?

MK: Oh yeah and then we—see I had gone to Detroit to work for a while and I came home and came back to camp to get married so I had my places already established and so we got the train and stayed at Chicago for the first night and because that was too long—it would have been too late. And then we caught the train and went to Detroit where I was working you know. And then he got a job right away with an orthodontist. And so you know he used to take the bus into town into Detroit.

RO: And you were what now?

MK: And I was teaching in a nursery school—I mean a catholic nursery school.

RO: Did you feel that people in Detroit welcomed you?

MK: Oh yeah.

RO: And do this job and—

MK: Well Dr. Duttridge(??) was the President or director of this very famous Mary—Merrill Palmer School of Nursery Education. It is very well known. You can read books about it you know. Dr. Duttridge(??) was from Australia and she had an accent but I went to see her and said well I was majoring in child development and I directed nursery schools in camp and she said, "Oh yes I'll give you a job in this Catholic institution." They were kind of old fashioned at first and the nurses used to—well it was because no, I didn't tell her that so I got a job there directing the nursery schools or the nursery school then maybe and I worked then and I was so shocked because you know the sisters would be telling a story around and everybody sitting on the floor and the little girls you know a lot of them have sucking thumbs and things because they are lonely. And they don't have a real mother and it's just an institution so Sister Katherine says, "Theresa come here." And boy she goes up and so straight and by golly the sister bit her thumb because she was sucking it. Boy then I told her—I went back to downtown Detroit and told this lady Dr. Duttridge(??) you know she is the director of the education of nursery education I guess and so I said, "I can't work there anymore. I can't—you know I don't want to work there anymore." And I told her what happened. And she said, "Martha, don't quit. I'll go out there and give several you know lectures on child development."

So she did that and all the sisters had this meeting you know and she talked to them about child development and so she said, then things changed I guess. They all

decided it wasn't spanking that was going to help kids and things because oh it was terrible this little Patsy or one of the girls wet her—when she got up the bed is wet and all these nurses that come from Canada and a lot of Indian girls from Minnesota came to get a job. And they all didn't know anything about child development and they'd spank them. I used to see this poor little girl the nurse would take her pants down and because it's all wet and spank that child you know in the rear and oh my gosh, that isn't what I learned you know. But then Dr. Duttridge (??) went to give classes once a week or something on how the child development and how you have to handle them this way or that way. And so she said, "Martha, I think you will be all right. So you go on back and don't give up and don't quit." So I went back and it was good after that.

RO: Yeah and for even Guch's case, your husband's case, internment was so quick.

MK: Yeah. He went to the WRA and—

RO: WRA?

MK: Well relocation—War Relocation Association—that was a big thing in finding jobs for people.

RO: Oh.

MK: Yeah, I just went to the Merrill Palmer School because I knew about it in my studies and it was a training ground and very good school so she gave it to me the job. But he went to the WRA and they said well he didn't have any skills I mean except farming but they said "Well, hey, how would you like to work in orthodontics?" You know with an orthodontist and he got the job and he was a Jewish Doctor and they had an Irish nurse that slapped on the doctor's shirt and every time they went out for lunch, he said it was

the funniest sight this big fat doctor Lewis and this lady, tall Irish woman and he was a Japanese and anyway he was very good and showed him how to make braces and things.

RO: It was wonderful relocation.

MK: Yeah.

RO: In the East was so easy.

MK: Very good uh-huh.

RO: For Japanese people.

MK: And we saw Dr. Lewis was very nice to him.

RO: Why do you suppose they were so open to us?

MK: I don't know. I don't know. Maybe they are so used to black people.

RO: Oh yeah.

MK: You know, but we didn't find. No one ever said anything or treated us with any kind of a you know discrimination.

RO: Yeah.

MK: Well see now Shiki later was there for a while.

RO: (inaudible)

MK: Yeah, and she and a few other people, Mas Imoto and we had a few others but not that many. Yeah. But—

RO: Well did you have ways of meeting other Nisei there?

MK: We really didn't go out that way. I don't really think there was any social thing.

RO: Oh.

MK: Yeah.

RO: So okay this is World War II period and of course the war ended—

MK: Oh yeah.

RO: In Japan earlier and Europe later by summer in forty-four, forty-five.

MK: Forty-five.

RO: Was there of course this involved the World War II period so is there anything else that you might want to say about injustices?

MK: No.

RO: Or opportunities or?

MK: Well I know Detroit had lots of black contingents there you know and when I went to work I could see all the black ladies going to work on the bus and there was another Polish group that was strong there. Detroit was mostly Polish and a lot of Polish people. But in neither race I didn't see any discrimination that I knew of. You know—

RO: Okay, well we can always come back to it before we close. But who are—then now from Detroit did you plan on staying there all the time? The rest of your life or—?

MK: Well no, see Guch got his job and then when we were able to come home he bought a new car and we drove home and went to my brothers because he was home already and he had, peaches were ripe in August you know so he was busy with peaches so I stayed in Beliko(??) for while and then finally through—because one good thing was Momberg made quite a bit of money during the war you know.

RO: Yeah he saved your money.

MK: Yeah he saved our money so we were able to build this house almost immediately.

RO: Right you were one of the first ones to build a house.

MK: Yeah. So it was—well we are very grateful to Keith—what's his name? His partner and Momberg? They must have done a good job because that is how we were able to build a

house otherwise there was nothing but shacks. So we moved all the—oh we had somebody come down and burn the shacks down.

RO: Yeah, so you built it on the original.

MK: Yeah.

RO: The place where the house was?

MK: Uh-huh.

RO: So you resettled and come to farm?

MK: Yeah, and well you know fortunately Guch was a farmer too, you know, so it was good for my father and everybody and my father came back too so he was—he lived in here when the boys were born. And he had that room and the kids were born and their room was there but we added on a little room there so you know. I think the kids lived in here. We had a double-decker. And my father lived there and we didn't have that part but anyway he stayed with us for a long time.

RO: Uh-huh.

MK: And then he got sick and you know.

RO: Okay, well okay—

MK: My uncle went to Japan and died there.

RO: Oh, during the war?

MK: Yeah, well—

RO: No, it was after the war. You said you sent him things after the war.

MK: Yeah probably yeah. But I don't even know. I have to look it up. But he was so—he really suffered evidently you know during the war. He was with his son's family and the wife was from a very high falutin' family and they had quite a few kids and the wife

wasn't treating him right. She'd feed her kids and didn't give him anything you know so he was really having a hard time. And he finally wrote to us and told us don't send anymore almonds or anything. Because he was so mad at his daughter-in-law. Isn't that a sad way to die? Yeah. And then finally the war ended and he was on the—no the war didn't end. He was coming back from the last ship that came from the Pacific and—

RO: This was before the bombing right?

MK: Yeah, what's her name Kimoto? Do you know her?

RO: Mary Kimoto.

MK: Mary Kimoto was on the same ship.

RO: Oh really.

MK: They didn't know but afterwards I found that out and they had to turn back and my uncle was on that ship.

RO: Oh.

MK: And so when they turned back you know he had to live with the family again and I think he—we used to send clothing and things but he told us don't send any packages. He wasn't treated well from his wife. Not his wife. His daughter-in-law. His son had a very high job. He was a judge of a city or something you know so she was high falutin' and he got this wife that is from a fine family and you know she had so many kids and she wouldn't even treat him right and he said the neighbor lady would boil sweet potatoes and bring them to him. And so he was mad and said don't send anything to her and you know. And it's not like my uncle to be that way you know. I think he really was mistreated and of course he finally got on the boat and went out and then the war started. And that was Mary Kimoto so—

RO: So then he eventually died there?

MK: Then he died there. Yeah.

RO: Wow, okay after World War II you had a career?

MK: Yeah.

RO: Tell us about your career?

MK: Well I took child development so I was able to go right into nursery education and wait a minute; after I came back I just started to teach. I don't and then I must have been—

RO: You got a job here in Livingston?

MK: Yeah Livingston.

RO: Grammar school?

MK: Elementary. I think I started with fourth grade, oh in the meantime I took a lot of correspondence courses or Fresno State would come to Merced and give education classes so I took all that so I got all my requirements finished that way.

RO: And so how long was all that after you came back that you got a job?

MK: Well it was after the Joanie started kindergarten so gosh I don't know. I don't know when she was born.

RO: She was the youngest?

MK: Yeah youngest. So then I got a job.

RO: Gee that was more than ten, twelve years after you came back.

MK: Yeah, yeah.

RO: That was about 1960?

MK: Yeah.

RO: The war was 19—into 1950's?

MK: (inaudible)

RO: But anyway then you taught for many years?

MK: Yeah.

RO: Until you retired about—

MK: Yeah, how long ago?

RO: After you reached sixty-five?

MK: Yeah I think.

RO: About that time?

MK: Yes.

RO: Oh,

MK: (inaudible)

RO: Okay now so you raised a family?

MK: Yeah Joanie was the youngest and she was in kindergarten I think when I started to teach so you know. And I started with—I had some special Ed—gee what did they call them? Educationally handicapped class quite a bit too and then I went into fourth grade and sixth grade.

RO: So, you enjoyed your career?

MK: Yeah.

RO: And retired.

MK: Uh-huh.

RO: But you had a family and we talked a little bit about that. You had a set of twins.

MK: Uh-huh.

RO: Your oldest were twins, boys.

MK: They are (inaudible) I guess.

RO: And you all had family.

MK: Yeah.

RO: And so they all married?

MK: Yeah, and Joanie's the youngest.

RO: Okay, well after coming back you really had a community, the community is a little different after you came back.

MK: Uh-huh.

RO: Because they weren't all back after a number of years. What activities did you enjoy?

MK: Oh, in Livingston?

RO: Yeah in Livingston.

MK: Oh, I used to like whatever the boys did. I don't know why you know. The girls were all such ladies and it wasn't as exciting so Mammie and I used to do a lot of swimming and the drop at Kishi's and we used to play tennis in high school and went with Robert Mitchell and who was the other guy? (inaudible)

RO: He played tennis?

MK: Yeah. We were on the doubles and mixed doubles team. And we used to go to different places. (inaudible) I guess was our teacher.

RO: And that's during high school?

MK: Yeah high school. So, after I got my family—

RO: What kinds of activities did you have?

MK: Oh you mean—

RO: Family or—

MK: Oh, --

RO: I knew you might have gone camping or—

MK: Yeah we used to go camping and—

RO: Just enjoyed life?

MK: Yeah, we enjoyed life and the kids I think we are going to have a reunion this coming weekend but there are—you know the kids were pretty good I thought and I'm sure they thought we were pretty good parents you know with the boys anyway so. They used to enjoy going camping and Judy was somewhat kind of a lonely child and I used to feel so bad for her because the twins had each other and she was alone for quite a while you know until Joanie was born. But so she had her little bit of lonely time I think but she's okay now.

RO: The next question is something about community involvement. You know we have JACL here and we have church things and—

MK: Well (inaudible) my uncle was very involved in church and anything (inaudible) well my father was not at all. And I used to feel so sorry for him because my uncle used to receive so much respect and things and my father was just kind of in the shadow you know and he didn't even go to church until he had cancer or something and or he wasn't too well. And then he started to go to church and that was the saddest thing in my life to think that he never went to church but when he became sick he needed something—

RO: Well that's—

MK: And then he started to go. You know—

RO: That's probably normal.

MK: He would have been so happy if he would have become active with the other people but he was a kind of loner all the time.

RO: So you are in retirement and I guess—

MK: Yeah.

RO: And you enjoy more.

MK: Yeah—

RO: And any new experiences? Did you—do you remember the question we talked about did you do anything with any involvement with any other organizations and groups and awards and honors. I think you were something with the JACL that one year.

MK: I don't think so. I don't remember.

RO: Or was it Livingston? I remember hearing some kind of award.

MK: Oh gosh I don't even remember.

RO: Oh, okay. Recent years, this of course is I'm not sure what they mean by recent years but what do you have for—remember we had this redress thing that happened and the government finally apologized and gave us some money.

MK: Uh-huh.

RO: Is that something that sort of erased some of our evacuation feelings or—

MK: I was never too emotionally upset with any of that. I don't know maybe I just was so satisfied with my own life that I didn't feel like rebelling or going on a march or anything like that. I don't know, I'm just not very aggressive in that way I guess.

RO: Do your kids know about your camp experience? You think?

MK: Not too much. We do have some books and I think they should read it.

RO: Yeah. Okay, now getting back to I'm trying to kind of wind down here a little.

MK: Yeah.

RO: Because I'm looking at my watch a little. What do you think about contributions the Japanese-American's made to our society?

MK: Well I think the best thing is to come out in the open with their talents and things and leadership we have you know because I think long ago they were very insignificant. They didn't associate with other people too much and they stayed in a clique like Isseis, they had their own group and a lot of them couldn't speak English. And so they were kind of unnoticed but now that we have so many talented and brilliant people that are coming out into the American society you know through their education and capabilities.

RO: You mean the Nisei?

MK: Nisei yeah and Sansei so I think that we're one group that I feel are very what do you call it? They don't cause too much trouble you know. Maybe that's trouble but you don't have a lot of crime by the Japanese that I know of unless they are Yakuza or something.

RO: Nisei?

MK: Yeah Nisei have some very good, you know, citizens and helped the United States in whatever way they can because that is their country you know.

RO: Is there anything else you'd like to say? This is the last questions?

MK: Well you know. As I—since I turned eighty, I feel very grateful that I have such a good life although there were some tragedies in it or hardships in it. But I was—I never felt like discouraged or anything. I was always optimistic and I think Guch has been a great you know, great partner I think and I think he has traits that I don't have that I wished I had. And so you know and the kids are all fine and they seem to appreciate us and we get along very well with each child.

RO: You know—

MK: And grandchildren so.

RO: You know a lot of times I wonder what our parents you know envisioned coming here and what—how we all turned out. How our society was changed you might say because of us.

MK: Well I really feel bad because they didn't see the results of some of their things you know that they were—they brought us up you know.

RO: Yeah.

MK: To think of all the Japanese in Livingston the Nisei I just think they not only made a good economic life for them but they are all such nice people. You know good kids and good Niseis and I really think we are grateful.

RO: Do you think the community had something to do with it or—

MK: Oh I think so. I think that certainly church has been a big thing in my life, the church. I may not show it but when I was even very young I used to look up to my Sunday school teachers that I had and when I had a lot of sadness in my life and still I think it was the church or Sunday school education that really sustained me many times.

RO: Yeah.

MK: And I feel kind of sorry that my kids don't have the same feeling for religion you know. I don't know how you can help them out but none of them are church goers.

RO: But you know when you were growing up you know the community was the thing that sustained us all because we were always together.

MK: That's right.

RO: The things we did were centered around our church area.

MK: Oh yeah.

RO: And playground and see things our parents provided and ball fields.

MK: The playground was just something that no one could pass you know because we had the tennis court, basketball goals, swings, that swing that went up so high.

RO: There was bars and—

MK: Bars and we used to play a lot on a Sunday afternoon as I remember you were with us.

RO: Oh yeah, tennis every Sunday

MK: And there and just have a good time and the boys were flirting with the girls and—

RO: Oh we did?

MK: You didn't know. Yeah they were but they built that playground and it's kind of gone down but I think it was the best thing they could have done.

RO: It's a wonder how our parents provided those kinds of things.

MK: I know it.

RO: For the community.

MK: The whole group of us.

RO: To grow up in and give us a normal life.

MK: I know it and then remember did you go to those—

RO: How about Japanese stuff?

MK: Yeah.

RO: Kendo and bring that up too.

MK: Yeah.

RO: Cultural things.

MK: Yeah, I guess it helped. I don't know why it was a good time but maybe you call it the—

RO: Well it was—

MK: You have to control yourself—

RO: Yeah, they controlled you and the teacher—

MK: Oh yeah.

RO: You had to bow to him and start your thing.

MK: Oh I used to hate—

RO: But you were good at it.

MK: Yeah but Grace Tanji was the one. She just knocked the brains out of my head. She was so strong.

RO: I guess.

MK: And she was tall and we would just spar with her and-

RO: But anyway that only lasted until the war started.

MK: Yeah, yeah, yeah and then we hurried and put those things away.

RO: Yeah, but—

MK: Yeah I think it was—they really thought of us and had Japanese school and I remember your mother was a teacher.

RO: Yeah. We didn't talk about language school at all did we?

MK: Yeah I think.

RO: That's what the parents provided.

MK: Yeah And I still can find the words and write and I still have several books that have Japanese writing in it so when I write to Japan I can look it up and I'd buy books that and I think Maryann was the only other person that she had the same set of books in San Francisco.

RO: Oh my.

MK: But so it was a good beginning. I could write letters to Japan and things.

RO: Okay, I don't know how to end this except.

MK: Well I had a very sad life in a way but I just at the moment I am just perfectly contented with what I have and what I don't have and my family they are just all good kids and I think they have good rapport with us and we have a lot of fun. Yeah.

RO: So life has been good after all?

MK: Oh yeah and Guch has been a very excellent spouse. We have fun together and we can do a lot of things together because we have similar interests.

RO: Well as an interviewer I guess I have to say this is the end of the interview.

MK: Okay.

RO: Well so I'll have our cameraman shut it off. And by the way our cameraman is Martha's husband, Guchi Kajiwara. Thank you, Guchi.

GK: You are welcome.