

HIROSHI MAYEDA

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is October 2, 1980. I, Yoshino Hasegawa, am privileged to interview Mr. Hiroshi Mayeda from Dinuba, whose present address is 39723 Road 64, Dinuba, California, 93618. This interview is being conducted at the Fresno County Library.

Mr. Mayeda, what is your full name, your place and date of birth, and your place of longest residence?

MR. MAYEDA: My full name is Hiroshi Mayeda. I was born in Fresno, California on November 19, 1917. I have resided at 39723 Road 64, Dinuba, with the exception of the time spent out of state due to our evacuation during World War II.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your parents were living at that place when you were born?

MR. MAYEDA: I was actually born in Fresno, but my parents were living there at the time. My mother went to a midwife in Fresno.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where and when did your parents come from in Japan, and why did they decide to settle in the Dinuba area?

MR. MAYEDA: My parents were from Hiroshima-ken, Asagun, Japan. My father came to this country in 1900, and my mother arrived in Seattle on July 21, 1917. He settled in Dinuba due to having made friends here, and he was offered a job by Mrs. Driver, a prominent farmer of that period.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was your mother a picture bride?

MR. MAYEDA: No, my father went back to Japan, and they were married there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you know whether he knew her before he married her?

MR. MAYEDA: He probably did since they came from the same area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It was probably baishakunin, an arranged marriage?

MR. MAYEDA: That I'm not sure; it most likely was.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your recollections of your childhood and growing-up years? Could you tell us a little bit about the area, the people, and the way the Japanese were treated?

MR. MAYEDA: We primarily grew up in a German neighborhood, predominately of German ancestry, so we were never discriminated against or anything of that nature. We were treated very well.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was on your place? Do you remember what it was like--were there grapes, or what?

MR. MAYEDA: The ranch that we settled on was owned by the Kennedy family. They were one of the original settlers in the valley, and I

understand that they owned in excess of 7,000 acres. When they decided to sell, they sold some of the property to a Mennonite colony that decided to settle there. The house that's still standing on the ranch is one of the oldest houses in Tulare County. It was built in 1885, and it's constructed entirely out of square nails. In fact, the house is so old it faces the opposite direction from the county road. There were very few roads when that house was constructed. The land was predominately in grain.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is that the house you live in?

MR. MAYEDA: No, we built another house on another part of the ranch, but there are some families living there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: But that's the home that you were raised in?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It must have been quite a substantial home to withstand the weather and everything all these years.

MR. MAYEDA: I imagine the wood was very well cured before being used.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Talking about houses, your father came from a very wealthy family in Japan, didn't he?

MR. MAYEDA: No. His family was very poor; he lost both parents at an early age.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh! I thought I saw a picture in one of the old Japanese albums that was a picture of your parents' home in Japan.

MR. MAYEDA: That was all acquired after he came to this country.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, I see.

MR. MAYEDA: When he was able, he invested in a home in Japan which was a large two-story house with concrete fencing. When the times became difficult here in the early 20's, he sold it to the president of a firm that manufactured pyrethrum oil. This was one of the most important insecticides that we had at that time. Pyrethrum was used to quite some extent in California agriculture.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your father order it? How was it brought in?

MRS. MAYEDA: Oh, you mean the pyrethrum? No, he just sold the house to this person who was manufacturing it. I really don't know how the content came, but I imagine it was in liquid form. I can still recollect that in the 20's and 30's, nicotine and pyrethrum oil were the two most important insecticides that we had.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember anything about your childhood days, any incidents you might recall about elementary school?

MR. MAYEDA: We went to Granview Grammar School, which is still there. I think at that time there were very few Japanese families going there. Everyone either walked to school or some children came in horse and buggy--that's about all I remember.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you live very far from school?

MR. MAYEDA: We lived across the road from the school.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you have brothers and sisters?

MR. MAYEDA: I had three sisters. Two are still living here in California. The eldest of the sisters was living with my grandmother in Japan at the time of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and she perished at that time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was she sent to Japan as a child?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, she went to Japan with my mother, and since my grandmother was living by herself, she left her there to stay with her.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How old was your sister then?

MR. MAYEDA: I imagine she was about six years old. She grew up in Japan and was married there. She had one child, a girl. She must have been about two years old when the war was going on. When the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the grandmother shielded her from the blast. The child was fine, but my sister, her husband, and grandmother all perished.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What happened to the girl then?

MR. MAYEDA: One of my aunts raised her. She's married now and has a family.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Had you or your mother ever seen her?

MR. MAYEDA: No, we have not.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, that's too bad. And where do your sisters live?

MR. MAYEDA: One lives in Dinuba and the other in Los Angeles.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are their names?

MR. MAYEDA: Fumiko and Hideko. One is married to the Yamamoto family and the other to a Sawai family.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was the Japanese language spoken in your home when you were growing up?

MR. MAYEDA: Both of my parents spoke Japanese. My mother was a schoolteacher in Japan, so we were fortunate enough to learn to speak proper Japanese--speaking the language correctly. I went to a Japanese language school for seven or eight years, but I don't think we learned a great deal.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Which Japanese school did you go to?

MR. MAYEDA: Originally, we did not have a school in Dinuba, so I went to boarding school at the Buddhist Church in Fresno. I stayed there for several years. When they opened a language school in Dinuba, I moved

back home.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How old were you when you came to the boarding school?

MR. MAYEDA: I was in the second grade, so I must have been seven or eight years old.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, that young! And you went to elementary school there?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, I went to the Lincoln Grammar School in West Fresno. After leaving public school, we had to go to a Japanese language school. We were able to learn a great deal about the fundamental Japanese language, because we went to Japanese school every day.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many children were at this boarding school?

MR. MAYEDA: I would say in the neighborhood of about 30 children.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And did they come from the surrounding areas?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, the surrounding areas in the valley. I imagine about half of the students were girls.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You know I never thought of girls doing that.

MR. MAYEDA: There were quite a few girls; many were much older than the boys.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to Lincoln School until you were in the eighth grade?

MR. MAYEDA: No, I went to Lincoln School for about two and a half years, I think, through the fourth grade, then moved back to Dinuba.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go home every weekend?

MR. MAYEDA: No, not every weekend, but whenever our parents had an opportunity to come after us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You were only seven years old! Weren't you lonesome?

MR. MAYEDA: Many children were there, so we had a lot of fun. It was right next to the church where the Fresno Buddhist Church Annex is now situated.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who took care of you when you were at the boardinghouse?

MR. MAYEDA: There was a person named Mr. Nara, he and his wife, and also Mrs. Hirasuna. After several years, Mr. and Mrs. Nara went back to Japan. He was a very educated man, and he became the editor of several popular magazines that were being published at that time. Since his son had a fairly good knowledge of the English language, he went into the foreign service for the Japanese government, and he was assigned to Chicago, New York, and London. Some time later, he became an ambassador, and he was assigned to France. When he retired, he was ambassador to Canada. We met Ambassador Nara and his family during his return trip to Japan. Several of us had dinner together.

MRS. HASEGAWA: For heaven sakes! Classmates!

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, we were classmates.

MRS. HASEGAWA: After you returned to Grandview, do you recall any incidents of prejudice, anything like that?

MR. MAYEDA: No, none that I recall. I think we were too young to be thinking of things like that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many Japanese kids were there in Grandview School?

MR. MAYEDA: I think the Fukushimas were there, Nishidas, Nagatas, Abes, you the Tajiris were there. I imagine at one time in that small school, there were probably 20.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you go to high school?

MR. MAYEDA: I went to Dinuba High School. I took a college prep course just in case I should be able to go to college, I would be able to be properly credentialed. I was mostly interested in baseball, so I played for the high school baseball team for four years. I played second base. One thing that I recall that was kind of on a comical note. Most of the Japanese children were fairly short. I can still hear one of the coaches. When I told him we took a shower in P.E., then when we went out for baseball I took another shower, and I told him that when I got home I had to take another bath after working in the fields at home. He said, "No wonder you Japanese are so small. You're washing everything off."

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why did you go to the University of California at Davis?

MR. MAYEDA: I was primarily interested in agriculture, and they offered a two-year course whereby you could take any course you desired if it would assist you in your future work. The only prerequisite was that you take a course in English and a few math courses. This was a period when many farmers were going bankrupt and times were very difficult. I wanted to take courses at a school where I wouldn't have to attend four years of college. They offered courses at Davis that were geared to practical farming experiences. My major was viticulture, which is the study of grapes. I also took courses in land surveying, plant breeding, soils, enology, and a class in trouble-shooting for mechanical equipment. They really gave us a good diversified course, and that's one of the reasons I went to Davis.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Have you made any use of the plant breeding that you learned?

MR. MAYEDA: We used to grow quite an acreage of watermelons at one time. I had learned enough about plant breeding so that when we were ready to purchase the seeds, we did look at fields where they were being grown. We tried to stay with companies whose seeds were fairly pure. If four or five watermelon varieties were grown in one locality there's always a chance of cross-pollination. I passed up a good opportunity when the instructor who was teaching genetics at Davis moved to Utah State. He became the head of their plant breeding department. When I was

in Poston Relocation Center, he offered me a job to assist him, but it was right after we got into camp, and we were still unsettled. I turned the offer down. As an afterthought, I guess I should have accepted this job offer.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, you must have been outstanding or he wouldn't have asked you to come.

MR. MAYEDA: There were many students that were interested in plant breeding. but he was nice enough to offer the job to me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was pretty unusual at that time!

MR. MAYEDA: Plant breeding is a very delicate process. Companies such as Campbells Soup and others were interested in certain types of tomatoes. It all has to be developed in a plant breeding process. It may take years to develop a desirable fruit or vegetable.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Enology! Is that wine making?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, that's wine making. Of course we made champagne in addition to wine. Kind of an interesting project.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You went to school in 1936?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, 1936 to 1938.

MRS. HASEGAWA: After you graduated from college, what was your first work experience?

MR. MAYEDA: My first work experience was to work on my father's ranch. I wanted to become thoroughly oriented because he was getting ready to retire. During that time it was a corporation, and I was planning to buy the ranch from the corporation.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is your farm under your name now, or is it under a corporation?

MR. MAYEDA: We had it under our name, but we recently incorporated again. It was advised by our legal people and our accountant.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you incorporate does that mean each member of the family has a share in it, or how does it work?

MR. MAYEDA: That depends on how you set it up. Presently, it's under my wife and myself.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you were at Davis, did you live in the dorm?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, I lived in the dorm.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that a regular school dormitory?

MR. MAYEDA: It was called North Hall, and at that time I had my own individual room. They cleaned our rooms, and they laundered and ironed our bedding once a week. The rental cost was \$6 per month.

MRS. HASEGAWA: My goodness. A far cry from today! During your high

school or college days, do you recall any cases of discrimination?

MR. MAYEDA: I do not recall any discrimination at all in high school. During college the Sino-Japanese War was going on, and we overheard anti-Japanese remarks, but I don't think they were directed at us. It was intended for the people in Japan.

MRS. HASEGAWA: About how many graduates of Japanese ancestry were there when you graduated from Davis?

MR. MAYEDA: About four or five.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was in the school of agriculture?

MR. MAYEDA: At that time, it was still designated as an agriculture school. They did have a home economics school. We had about 900 students in our student body; about 50 of them were girls. At present the enrollment is in the neighborhood of 16,000. Of course, they are very diversified now--they have a new medical school, a law school--almost all the other professions a large university has.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your memories of December 7, 1941? How did you feel about it and how did your Caucasian friends and neighbors react?

MR. MAYEDA: We heard the news about Pearl Harbor over the radio. Our immediate reaction was of utter disbelief. Personally, I felt very badly about it, and I knew there would be some reaction among our friends and neighbors. Our neighbors and friends really didn't react to it that strongly. They treated us as well as they could, but that's on the surface. You really don't know what their inner thoughts were. People around Dinuba were very nice to us until the evacuation. Of course, they had some big signs up. I recall the one in Orosi; a big billboard saying "Japs Not Wanted," or something of that nature. The only offensive thing that I can think of was when a lot of our Korean friends put stickers on their windows saying "Not a Jap." That was rather disturbing to us because some of those people went to school with us. I have a feeling--that it wasn't their own individual decision to put those on. It probably came from the higher ups, some Korean leaders who always hated the Japanese nationals for infringing on some of their rights in Korea. Other than that, we had no bad experiences. When we did go back East, we saw equally large signs saying, "Gentiles Only." Areas west of Chicago in localities where they had expensive developments, we saw "Gentiles Only" signs. A salesman in this particular area was a Jewish person, and he would not sell to another Jewish person because it would devalue the property. Even restaurants had signs posted saying "Gentiles Only." I asked my employer if it was permissible for me to go in, and he said, "Yes." We were allowed to go in anywhere.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you recall about evacuation and your camp experience?

MR. MAYEDA: We left from Visalia and went to Poston III. I really thought that camp life was kind of an undue confinement of many intelligent people. I believe that the people could have contributed a great deal more to the war effort outside these camps. When I originally went to camp, there was somewhat of a turmoil and the first place that was in need of some help was the kitchen. I understood that they did

have a chef who had been a cook in Los Angeles, so I thought this would be a good experience to learn something about cooking. When they asked for volunteers to assist the cook in the kitchen, I was one of the volunteers. The only difficulty was that we had to get up about 1 a.m. and that really split up our days; you couldn't do anything else. When adequate help was available in the kitchen, I left for another job. The Indian Affairs was looking for some applicants to work for them doing soil survey. Several of us who attended UC at Davis volunteered for this work. Of course, we got \$16 a month just like everybody else. The purpose of this job was to survey every 660 square feet and dig a rectangular hole three feet by six feet and six feet deep to read the topography of the soil. This was essentially done to determine the feasibility of clearing this land for agricultural usage. Since the Colorado River ran through this area at one time or another, the topography of the soil would change every six inches or every foot. Some of it was not suited for farming, because much of it was gravel or coarse sand. Some time later, after the Poston schools were constructed, they were looking for a high school agricultural instructor. Since I met their qualifications, I taught high school agriculture until we left camp.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you come directly back to Dinuba?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, I came back. I really can't say what year. We came back a month or two after it was announced that we could return.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was your father taken by the FBI before you went to camp?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, he went to a camp in Tujunga near Los Angeles, and then from there he was returned to camp.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why was he arrested?

MR. MAYEDA: I really don't know because he was not connected with any so-called subversive group.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was he active in the Nihonjinkai?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, he was. That could be possibly why they picked him up. I don't think any of us still know; they picked up so many Japanese, kind of a general thing.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you get back to Dinuba from camp?

MR. MAYEDA: We lived in McHenry, Illinois. I had a small car and we drove back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were you able to take the car to camp?

MR. MAYEDA: No, I had it stored at home. After we were settled in Illinois, I had it transported East by rail. When we were able to come back, I drove it back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, I thought you said you came directly from camp to Dinuba.

MR. MAYEDA: No, we resettled back East. I worked for a person who had a

pheasant farm. He was a manufacturer by profession. I was interested in pheasant raising, so I decided to work for this person.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your family go with you?

MR. MAYEDA: My parents and sisters stayed in camp. Just my wife and I went East.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long were you there then?

MR. MAYEDA: We must have been there about 14 months.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you came back to California were your parents already back, or did you return first?

MR. MAYEDA: We came back first, then they came later.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who took care of your property while you were gone?

MR. MAYEDA: We had a banker friend and an attorney friend who cared for the ranch. I realize we really took a big risk, but we gave these two the power of attorney, and the foreman that was with us operated the ranch. The banker's wife, who was also a good friend of ours, kept the books. We were very fortunate to have had these friends.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was your property in good shape when you returned?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, it was in very good condition. They took good care of it for us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's good you trusted them!

MR. MAYEDA: We compensated them with a substantial salary, so they took proper care of our property.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was really fortunate! How did you meet your wife?

MR. MAYEDA: I met my wife at a church conference in 1938. We just celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary this year. She is employed by a doctor in Dinuba. We have one child, a girl, and she is married to a non-Japanese. Their names are Dan and Donna Jolivette. He is of French-Canadian ancestry. He's a pediatrician in Fresno, and she is a dental hygienist. They met while they were both attending Northwestern University in Chicago.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you like to tell us about your career since your return to Dinuba?

MR. MAYEDA: I have been engaged in farming, and this requires most of my time. I have also been active in church work and also in the JAFL.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of crops do you raise?

MR. MAYEDA: Totally, I farm 180 acres with one half of the acreage in grapes and the other half in deciduous fruits.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of fruits?

MR. MAYEDA: Mostly plums and peaches. Mostly freestone for fresh shipment.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How do you market your crop?

MR. MAYEDA: Most of it goes to packinghouses. We do the harvesting, and they do the packing and marketing. I ship through one firm in Dinuba and one in Reedley.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you make raisins?

MR. MAYEDA: No, my grapes are mostly for fresh consumption and wine.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you must have Thompsons--girdled seedless?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes. We also have 15 acres of new red seedless variety. We have the Ruby seedless.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's very new, isn't it?

MR. MAYEDA: It's been out five or six years. We harvested that in mid-August to late August. Our red seedless were harvested about the same time as the Thompsons. I think our area is a week or 10 days earlier than the Reedley or Parlier area where the soil is mostly white ash; our soil is mostly sandy loam.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's good, isn't it?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes. This year the earlier fruit brought better prices.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You've been very active in the Buddhist Church, haven't you?

MR. MAYEDA: In Dinuba, during the time of my presidency of the church, our main concern was raising funds to build our new temple. We constructed a new temple on Alta Avenue in 1964. The church participates in most civic celebrations, like Raisin Day. We also participated in the Bicentennial Celebration in 1976.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When was the Buddhist Church in Dinuba built?

MR. MAYEDA: The old temple used to be a garage, and we converted it into a church. That property was about a block and a half east of the Methodist Church. Japanese Methodist Church.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many members do you have?

MR. MAYEDA: We have 135 members. These are husbands and wives, adults.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you have very many young people in your organization?

MR. MAYEDA: Not in our particular area, because the shift is more towards urban areas. For instance, some of the areas in Los Angeles or Sacramento increase greatly in numbers of young people because they settle there to work. Many of our young people have moved to urban areas to work or they are attending school. Unless they go to junior colleges, we

really don't get that many.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about the high school youth?

MR. MAYEDA: They're decreasing too, because most of the children are fairly grown, and the Sansei--they don't have that many children.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, you must have quite a large Japanese community then to have 135 members.

MR. MAYEDA: This number includes members from the Cutler Orosi area, also.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. What are some of your main activities at church?

MR. MAYEDA: It's a pretty diversified type of activity. Of course, most of the emphasis is on religious education, but we have picnics, food bazaars, and all the activities a normal church would have.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you meet every Sunday?

MR. MAYEDA: The Sunday School meets every Sunday, but general services are usually on Saturdays.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you have a minister there?

MR. MAYEDA: The Visalia Buddhist Church and the Dinuba Buddhist Church use the same minister.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Reverend Yakumo is your minister then?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes. He resides in Visalia.

MRS. HASEGAWA: He has helped us with our oral history program. What were some of the main focuses of the Tulare County JACL and the Central California District Council JACL when you were their leader?

MR. MAYEDA: During my term as President of the Tulare County Chapter and the District Council, we were pretty much involved at this time with a committee called the Anti-Discrimination Committee. We were also doing public relations work because we felt there was a need to acquaint the Japanese-Americans who were joining the mainstream of the community. There were other problems which existed at this time which was the Alien Land Law, and we were also working on acquiring support for Equality in the Immigration and Naturalization Law, which I believe was passed in 1955. This naturally gave our parents an opportunity to become naturalized citizens. At that time, we had many laws on the statutes in the state of California which were highly discriminatory. We had a difficult job ahead to correct this injustice, but fortunately, during that time, the state legislators that we had were very sympathetic to our cause, and we were able to remedy a great many of these faults.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What year were you the president?

MR. MAYEDA: I was President of the District Council in 1954.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you think about the future of the JACL.

MR. MAYEDA: JACL in the future will continue to play an important part in the lives of Japanese Americans. It is the only organization that can totally speak for the Japanese community.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I hear so many people say that JACL has outlived its usefulness. What would you say about that?

MR. MAYEDA: I really don't think so, because there still exists feelings of prejudice. As long as we have that, we need the organization.

MRS. HASEGAWA: JACL has certainly done a lot for the Japanese people, I think!

MR. MAYEDA: I think so, too!

MRS. HASEGAWA: You have been active in the Dinuba Lions Club serving as its president in 1964. Are you currently a member?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, I am. I'm still an active member. I could go on and say that we spend a great deal of time in sight conservation as our main project. We purchase a number of glasses for children who are not able to afford them. There are cases where Medi-Cal and other organizations will not provide for these children. We have an eye bank in our district.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you know of any cases where an eye has actually been used?

MR. MAYEDA: Not in our immediate area, but they do transfer some of these to other areas so it can be used. We have many other projects within the community. One of our latest projects was in helping to acquire lights for the city baseball park where the Little League plays as well as some of the larger children. We provided for half of the funds which were needed to purchase the lights. We contributed \$18,000 for the lighting system.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you make \$18,000?

MR. MAYEDA: We have hamburger stands during Raisin Day, and we have a Christmas tree lot. We sponsored the Hot Stove League in the city of Dinuba.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are your duties as a member of the Board of Directors of the Central California Farmers Association?

MR. MAYEDA: The Central California Farmers Association is a predecessor to the Nisei Farmers League. I'm a member of both organizations. The Central California Farmers Association organized seven or eight years before the Nisei League. Our primary purpose for organizing was for public relations work.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is this a local organization then?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, at one time we covered an area from south of Dinuba to Madera in the north, but when Nisei Farmers League was organized some of our members joined that organization. It really cut down on our

membership, but we both work for the same cause of improving the farmer's image.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are they all Japanese farmers?

MR. MAYEDA: No, Central has very few Japanese or Asiatic farmers. They mostly joined the Nisei Farmers League. When the Nisei Farmers were originally organized, they said, "We want you to be a member of the Central Cal Farmers first, then you can join our organization." But after two or three years, some farmers preferred not to join both organizations. Many joined the Nisei Farmers League. We have many farmers who still belong to both organizations, as I do myself, because they are both worthy. Both organizations also stay abreast of the anti-farm legislation.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You served on the Tulare County Grand Jury in 1963 and again in 1970. What were your responsibilities?

MR. MAYEDA: The Grand Jury term runs a whole year. In 1963 I served as Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and in 1970 as Chairman of the Education Committee. In 1963 we visited all departments connected with agriculture, and in 1970 our committee visited all departments that are connected with education. Primarily we try to make a determination as to the effectiveness of these departments. We are also called in case the District Attorney would want to know if certain indictments should be pursued. He would present what his thoughts are, and we would make certain recommendations whether he should go ahead and pursue this case or not. There are countless complaints that we listen to such as over-taxation. We might also get some opinions on certain departments not functioning properly.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are you appointed to the Grand Jury?

MR. MAYEDA: Usually the original recommendation comes from the Superior Court judges in Tulare County. I really don't know how the procedure works in Fresno County. The original count would probably be 30 or 40 persons. Some persons would find it impossible to serve depending on the type of job they have. Some excuses will be honored. The remaining names will be placed in a hopper, and the first 19 names drawn will be required to serve.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who makes the recommendation to the judge?

MR. MAYEDA: I believe he inquires in the community, then makes his recommendations.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, it is quite an honor, I think! You were the president of the Buddhist Churches of America in 1976?

MR. MAYEDA: The Buddhist Churches of America primarily promote the Jodo Shinshu aspect of teaching. This is the teachings of Shinran Shonin. We are associated with the Nishi Hongwanji headquarters in Japan. Buddhist Churches of America is composed of 60 churches and 28 branches. We have a membership in excess of 22,000 adult members. My duties were to conduct all National Board meetings and the National Council meeting which took place once a year. I also attended all the anniversaries of churches which were mostly in their 75th year of existence.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many did you go to?

MR. MAYEDA: All the churches were not organized in the same year. We also had three newly-built church dedications. My wife and I were gone on 22 weekends.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you go? All over the United States?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, we went to Denver, Salt Lake City, Seattle, San Diego, Los Angeles, Portland; new churches constructed in Salinas and Florin. It's impossible to go to all the churches, but we did go to a number of them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: My goodness, it gave you a good opportunity to travel. What did you do at these meetings? Did you have to make speeches everywhere you went?

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, I generally had a speech prepared in both Japanese and English. I didn't want to do it in both languages and repeat myself. In one instance, they had a 100-year old person. The first row was seated with 90-year olds and the next row with 80-year olds, so in this instance I spoke in Japanese. I had to make a determination after I saw the people who were attending. I also attended all the National Conferences for young people and then the Fujinkai Conference. The ladies have a very strong organization. Their conference attendance is usually well over a thousand. When I went to the ladies conference in San Jose, I was the president, so I asked them if they wanted me to bring a message from the Buddhist Churches of America. They said, "No, we just want you to come and enjoy yourself, join us in the banquet." I didn't want to take their word for it, so I thought I better have something prepared. About 45 minutes before the banquet, Congressman Norman Mineta sent word that he was not going to be present, and he was supposed to have been the speaker. About this time, a representative came and said, "We want you to say something." A lot of these are Issei ladies, you know. Fortunately, I had a talk prepared, so I made a speech in Japanese.

MRS. HASEGAWA: There aren't too many Niseis who speak Japanese well enough to make a speech.

MR. MAYEDA: I really have to be well prepared; we don't speak it frequently. I presume they understood what I was saying.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What changes have you seen in activities and problems of Japanese-Americans during your life?

MR. MAYEDA: I notice greater changes in the younger people. Their needs are quite different from ours. I feel they have a stronger determination than Niseis to succeed in life. I also feel that they don't have the interest at heart for ethnic organizations or activities that we normally pursued.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you think that the Buddhist Church will continue to grow?

MR. MAYEDA: I believe we are in a transition period. We do have quite a few Sanseis who are becoming ministers. We have three Caucasian ministers, too, but we did have some difficulty in that it seemed

difficult for them to adapt to an ethnic church where there are 98 percent Japanese. Some of the young people in college age do not attend church regularly. I can't speak for other churches, but I know our smaller churches are worried that once the Niseis do pass on, there will be times when there may not be sufficient attendance. We will be in kind of an adjustment period, too, because we do have many mixed marriages, and we have to make adjustments to accommodate these families. At the present time, we have what we call the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley--a school for studying Buddhism--and the odd part is, more Caucasians attend than Japanese.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do they still have Japanese School in Dinuba?

MR. MAYEDA: No, we don't. I understand there's a school in Reedley. We don't have enough children that would attend school regularly. However, in Gardena, their church has about 600 students in the Japanese school. This facility is a state accredited Japanese school. The churches in the outlying area may be decreasing in membership, but areas in the urban areas tend to flourish.

MRS. HASEGAWA: If the Japanese schools are accredited, that's an incentive to take Japanese language studies.

MR. MAYEDA: Yes, so there are a number of non-Buddhist families who bring their children to the Japanese school. My niece attended that particular school and took a state language test on the Japanese language. She was able to pass this particular test and was given credit for five or six units of foreign language.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you do to maintain your Japanese ethnic identity?

MR. MAYEDA: In our church we have an Oriental food bazaar. During our bazaar, we put on different exhibits annually. One year we had flower arrangements. The following year we exhibited a collection of Japanese obi.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That must have been beautiful!

MR. MAYEDA: Yes. On other occasions, we accumulated items which were made during camp days. Other years, we had collections of Japanese crocheting, Japanese tea sets, and Japanese table decorations. We try to stay within one category if possible--that gives us an extension of what we have to exhibit. Our food bazaar is held in the Memorial Hall in Dinuba which is an excellent facility for events of this magnitude. The bicentennial year, we participated with the Tulare County Historical Society in relating our culture. During the lecture period, we explained the background and fundamentals of Buddhism, the problems our early pioneers encountered, and how they developed their skills.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's really promoting the culture of the Japanese, isn't it?

MR. MAYEDA: I believe there is some interest. The Historical Society stated that the attendance they had was the best in quite some time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you see as the future of the Japanese as an

ethnic group?

MR. MAYEDA: The future of the Japanese as an ethnic group will probably remain as long as there are discriminatory practices. Many people have said, as you mentioned, that the JACL has probably outlived its purpose, but I still maintain there will be events coming up that will require our efforts. Presently the most prominent event in our minds is the Redress program. I think it is the proper course to acquaint the people of the United States, to have them understand what took place during the evacuation. I believe that the majority of the people in the United States really don't realize the magnitude of the evacuation.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Recently, I read in the newspaper where there are some people who say we shouldn't stir up memories--this coming from the Caucasians and not from the Japanese. What do you think about that?

MR. MAYEDA: I believe that's part of the discriminatory element that still exists. I'm personally against being compensated, but I believe that there are certain segments in the JACL who would like to see that happen. The Tulare County JACL did go on record in opposition to being compensated.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

MR. MAYEDA: I can't think of anything else I would like to add.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you have any advice for the future generations?

MR. MAYEDA: I haven't given that too much thought. I hope I have given you some information!

MRS. HASEGAWA: You certainly have! I appreciate you taking the time to come today and giving us your thoughts and your background.

MR. MAYEDA: I thank you for what you are doing.