

KATSUSO AND HATSUNO ARIFUKU

MR. ABE: Today is August 28, 1980. I, Norman Preston Abe, am privileged to be in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Katsuso Arifuku, a retired Parlier farmer.

Before we get into the interview proper, I would like to have you give us your full name, place and date of birth, and your place of longest residence.

MR. ARIFUKU: My name is Katsuso Arifuku and my wife's name is Hatsuno. I was born October 25, 1906, 30 miles from Hiroshima-Ken, Shobarushi, Japan.

MR. ABE: What is your place of longest residence, and how long have you lived there?

MR. ARIFUKU: I moved here in 1953. Twenty-seven years.

MR. ABE: Where did you live before you lived here?

MR. ARIFUKU: I lived six years in Fowler.

MR. ABE: Before that?

MR. ARIFUKU: 1929-1932 at my brother Ty's in Parlier.

MRS. ARIFUKU: See, there was two farms, on both sides of the road, on South Avenue.

MR. ARIFUKU: I didn't have citizenship, so the owner was my brother.

MR. ABE: So your brother owned the farms?

MR. ARIFUKU: Yes. Most Japanese paid for the farm, but used their children's name.

MR. ABE: Your father's first farm was where?

MR. ARIFUKU: Bowles.

MR. ABE: Did he pay cash or borrow from the bank?

MR. ARIFUKU: I don't know, but he bought the place with a friend. But the partner quit and went back to Japan in 1918, so he took it over.

MRS. ARIFUKU: His father came to the United States about 1911.

MR. ABE: So he bought the farm after that?

MR. ARIFUKU: I was 6 years old when my mother came to the United States. At that time my father bought that farm and needed help so I stayed with my grandparents in Japan, and Mother came to the United States to help. That was in 1912.

MRS. ARIFUKU: January 1912.

MR. ARIFUKU: Maybe earlier.

MRS. ARIFUKU: In those days no one had money, so if he wanted to run a 40-acre farm he had to have his wife there to help out.

MR. ARIFUKU: He didn't buy a farm like mine (already planted), his was open land. After he and his friend bought the place, they planted young grapevines. Then next year his friend wanted to go back to Japan, so my father took over. No money to hire other people, so he called his wife to help. Then December 1917, they came home to Japan to see us and our grandparents. Then in 1919 my grandfather died and we came back to the United States.

MR. ABE: At the time you and your friend bought the place in Bowles, were they able to put it in their name?

MR. ARIFUKU: Yes. At that time there was no laws, anybody could buy the land.

MR. ABE: And the next farm your father bought?

MR. ARIFUKU: They bought in a corporation.

MR. ABE: Which corporation was that?

MR. ARIFUKU: Fairview Ranch in Fowler, across from Hiyama Farm. At this time, because of the Alien Land Law, he could not buy a farm, so four or five Japanese got together. Yamagiwa, Wakida, and Yoshikawa got together and hired a lawyer.

MR. ABE: To form that corporation.

MR. ARIFUKU: Yes. Mr. Yamamisaka was president. He did all the translation. He had an office in Fresno before and did a lot of interpreting. In the old days, not many people spoke English. So on the check it was to be signed "Fairview Ranch Corp." by...then your name.

MR. ABE: When did your father buy into this company?

MR. ARIFUKU: 1919, when he came from Japan.

MR. ABE: What happened to the farm in Bowles?

MR. ARIFUKU: He sold it to go back to Japan. But at this second farm, it was depression years and some partners could not keep us so he went bankrupt. To keep his farm in December, he would have had to pay all the other farm partners' tax. In those days, not many people had extra money. If he paid tax for the other farmers, he'd have no money to operate the farm. That's why the lawyer said for every- one to quit.

MR. ABE: Do you know who that lawyer was?

MR. ARIFUKU: Nielsen.

MRS. ARIFUKU: I think his first name was Iener. Iener Nielsen.

MR. ABE: What did your father do after leaving that company?

MR. ARIFUKU: We came to Parlier and worked for farmer Mr. Katsura for about three years. Then we moved to Fresno around 1925.

MR. ABE: Why to Fresno?

MR. ARIFUKU: My father loaned money to someone who then couldn't pay it back, so he wanted us to take over his restaurant.

MR. ABE: What was the name of the restaurant?

MR. ARIFUKU: Boston Cafe, at Tulare and Sixth Streets. We stayed four years.

MR. ABE: What kind of food did you serve?

MR. ARIFUKU: American dishes.

MR. ABE: What kind of people came in?

MR. ARIFUKU: All kinds. Most of the people who worked at C.P.C. Packinghouse. Many Russians and Mexicans.

MR. ABE: How did you like working at the restaurant?

MR. ARIFUKU: We had been farming, and we had no experience. When we took over the restaurant, their cook and helpers stayed. But my mother and the cook had an argument, and the cook wanted to quit one day. So we put an ad in the paper and interviewed lots of cooks, and we hired two cooks who used to cook for other families. They weren't used to working in a restaurant, they were too slow. And the young packinghouse workers would come over when the whistle blew at 12 o'clock. They wanted to eat and run so they could play pool nearby. But that family cook was too slow, and we lost lots of customers, so my mother started cooking. I had to get up at 4:30 every morning and walk five blocks. At that time I was 17 and did this for four years. If I overslept, customers would be waiting. But that old cook was too perfect and too slow and people sitting at the counter would knock on the counter. And I did everything there and worked in the kitchen.

MR. ABE: What did you mean the cook was a family cook?

MR. ARIFUKU: Rich people would hire him as cook.

MR. ABE: So what did the family do next after the Boston Cafe?

MR. ARIFUKU: The depression came and we went back to farming (in Parlier). So then my father bought the farm in South Avenue in 1929 in the name of a good friend, since Ty, a brother, was not 21 yet. So when Ty turned 21, they changed it over to his name.

MR. ABE: Let's see now, you came over in 1919. What was it like for you on your father's farm?

MR. ARIFUKU: I didn't like it. I didn't farm in Japan, and I didn't know anyone. I couldn't speak English. In Japan, you could walk five or six steps and see your neighbor right then. Out here, there was no one and no young people.

MR. ABE: Not too many people spoke Japanese?

MR. ARIFUKU: No, not too many.

MR. ABE: Who was here then?

MR. ARIFUKU: Mostly Armenian people owned farms at that time in the Fowler district. They couldn't speak Japanese, and I couldn't speak English, so I couldn't make friends.

MR. ABE: Do you know if there was a big Armenian community in Fowler?

MR. ARIFUKU: I think there was lots of Armenian people, but in those days I just stayed on the farm and worked.

MR. ABE: What did your father have you do on that corporation farm?

MR. ARIFUKU: Shoveling, plowing.

MR. ABE: How did you plow?

MR. ARIFUKU: Two horses pulled the plow.

MR. ABE: What were your hours and how much did you get paid?

MR. ARIFUKU: I didn't get paid; I just got to eat and worked sunup to sundown.

MR. ABE: Did you get Sundays off?

MR. ARIFUKU: Sometimes. There was always something to do.

MR. ABE: Sounds like hard times.

MR. ARIFUKU: We always had a hard time. Even after we took over the restaurant, I had to go every day and my mother would say, "You come early so then you could go home and rest." So I try to take a nap and rest. Then they would call me on the telephone telling me, "Too many people come in. Come and help."

MR. ABE: Did you get paid when you worked at the restaurant?

MR. ARIFUKU: No.

MR. ABE: Did you get tips when you waited on tables?

MR. ARIFUKU: Maybe five cents once in a while, but not much. Three stacks of hotcakes were 15 cents, you know, and rib steak was 35 cents, hamburger steak 25 cents, beef stew 1 cent. So nobody had money in those days. My old man didn't even give kozukai (allowance) to us kids.

MR. ABE: What were your hours there?

MR. ARIFUKU: Oh, I left home about 4:30 a.m. and reached the restaurant about 10 minutes to 5 o'clock and started coffee. But workers who worked in the engine house (packinghouse) came in early and they wanted to drink coffee and if it wasn't ready, they give me a hard time. "What's the matter! No coffee!

I have to go back now to see the engine." So I always try to make it before 5:00. Then I rest sometimes in the afternoon.

MR. ABE: Then how late did you work until?

MR. ARIFUKU: Oh, about 8 o'clock. But most of the time I was always there. If I go home, they'd telephone me to come back. So sometimes I stay at the movies; they can't call me.

MR. ABE: How much did the movies cost?

MR. ARIFUKU: Five cents or 10 cents.

MR. ABE: Did you see talking movies?

MR. ARIFUKU: First they didn't talk. Then about '25 or '26 the talking movies started coming. I remember it, because I saw the news which showed Negro people saying, "We don't want Hoover. We don't want Hoover." He was campaigning for president.

MR. ABE: Why did they say that?

MRS. ARIFUKU: It was the peak of the Depression.

MR. ABE: When you were on your father's farm, did you ever want to do jobs other than farming?

MR. ARIFUKU: Oh, yes. In 1919 I came to Fresno and I saw quite a few Japanese people driving Ford cars. So I wanted to be a mechanic. So I said to Dad, "Let me go so I can be a mechanic." He said, "Go ahead." But he didn't give me any money, so I had to stay. When I first came, I didn't know anyone who could help me. My old man treated me like a slave.

MR. ABE: When did you get this present farm?

MR. ARIFUKU: Twenty-seven years ago (1953). At the time we bought the farm it was run-down and we had to replant everything. Grapes produced about one ton per acre. At that time raisins were worth \$65 a ton. You couldn't make a living, so we dug them up and planted strawberries. After we came back from camp we worked on Shirakawa's farm for six years, because our farm was too run-down.

MR. ABE: What kind of damage was there to your father's place after the war?

MR. ARIFUKU: It became run-down.

MR. ABE: Who took care of your father's place during the war?

MR. ARIFUKU: Frankenthal's packinghouse.

MR. ABE: What about your dad's house?

MR. ARIFUKU: It burned down.

MR. ABE: What did you lose in the fire?

MR. ARIFUKU: Good suits and many new things, because we thought we were going to come back, so we took old suits to camp.

MR. ABE: What about historical items?

MRS. ARIFUKU: A lot of photographs.

MR. ARIFUKU: And at Ben's Cafe in Parlier, they said a policeman would watch our things if we brought them there, but we came back after the war, and nothing was left.

MR. ABE: Who owned it?

MR. ARIFUKU: Mr. Ikemoto. They were good friends with the policeman, but one man can't really watch it.

MR. ABE: So you came back before the others. What did you see at Ty's house?

MR. ARIFUKU: People living at the house, and they wouldn't let me go in the house. They thought they owned the house.

MR. ABE: What did they say to you?

MR. ARIFUKU: "I don't want you to come in the house."

MR. ABE: Who was it that said that?

MR. ARIFUKU: A woman.

MR. ABE: What nationality was she?

MR. ARIFUKU: White.

MR. ABE: How did you feel when you saw them living in your house?

MR. ARIFUKU: I felt I had a right to go in the house and inspect what was going on in there.

MR. ABE: Who let them live there?

MR. ARIFUKU: Packinghouse.

MR. ABE: How did the packinghouse get the home?

MR. ARIFUKU: They took care of the farm for us.

MR. ABE: So when you came to Parlier, where did you stay?

MR. ARIFUKU: Sadao Kakutani's.

MR. ABE: Did any incident happen while you were there after the war?

MR. ARIFUKU: Yes. Someone shot a shotgun at the house. We went outside and they drove away.

MR. ABE: Where did the shots go?

MR. ARIFUKU: On the butane tank and on the roof.

MR. ABE: How did you feel?

MR. ARIFUKU: Not too good, not many Japanese here.

MR. ABE: In 1919 when you left Japan, where did you leave from and where did you arrive?

MR. ARIFUKU: I left from Kobe, and I arrived in San Francisco, May 17, 1919.

MR. ABE: How long did it take, and what ship did you come on?

MR. ARIFUKU: Two weeks, on the steamboat Korea Maru.

MR. ABE: Did you come straight over or did you stop along the way?

MR. ARIFUKU: We stopped once in Honolulu, and I saw my aunt.

MR. ABE: Where did you get to ride in the boat?

MR. ARIFUKU: Men in the back, women in the front.

MR. ABE: Did you ride first, second, or third class?

MR. ARIFUKU: We tried to ride second class. We pulled straws, but with six people in one family, there was no room except third class.

MR. ABE: How was the trip to California?

MR. ARIFUKU: I was pretty weak, I got seasick. Half the time I stayed in the bed sleeping.

MR. ABE: How come you got seasick?

MR. ARIFUKU: It was everything. Even paint, and not enough clean air and the smell was pretty bad. I took a bath only one time.

MR. ABE: How come the paint smelled?

MR. ARIFUKU: If they didn't paint, they got rust, so they paint every time they reach the port.

MR. ABE: Where did you first step on land when you arrived?

MR. ARIFUKU: Angel Island, and I stayed a couple of days.

MR. ABE: Why did you stay there?

MR. ARIFUKU: To take tests for disease.

MR. ABE: What kind of disease were they looking for?

MR. ARIFUKU: Tapeworm and everything.

MR. ABE: How do they check for worms?

MR. ARIFUKU: You have to show them samples when you go.

MR. ABE: Did you feel that was unfair?

MR. ARIFUKU: Well, that was fair. You know you can't tell who's got the disease or not.

MR. ABE: When you bought the farm in 1919 in Fowler, did you have electricity?

MR. ARIFUKU: No, not at first. We had gasoline and kerosene lamps.

MR. ABE: How did you water the farm?

MR. ARIFUKU: Gas engine to pump water. Two men to pull a rope to start it. Before that, we had ditch water only. At that time, you didn't irrigate too much.

MR. ABE: What transportation did you have then?

MR. ARIFUKU: My father bought a car.

MR. ABE: Did you get to drive?

MR. ARIFUKU: Not right away, but a couple of years later at 14 or 15.

MR. ABE: Did you need a license?

MR. ARIFUKU: No. At that time we didn't have to have one.

MR. ABE: When were you married?

MR. ARIFUKU: March 22, 1935.

MR. ABE: How did you meet your wife?

MR. ARIFUKU: Baishakunin. Baishaku kekkon (arranged marriage).

MR. ABE: If you wanted to pick your own spouse, would your parents get mad?

MR. ARIFUKU: Yes, they'd get mad.

MR. ABE: How many children do you have?

MR. ARIFUKU: Six.

MR. ABE: What was the extent of their education?

MR. ARIFUKU: They all went to college and graduated. Isami has a degree in psychology and a PhD in criminology.

MR. ABE: Did your children marry Japanese?

MRS. ARIFUKU: No. Three married Caucasians, one married a Chinese, and

one married a Mexican-American.

MR. ABE: Have you been back to Japan?

MR. ARIFUKU: Yes, five years ago.

MRS. ARIFUKU: Many seem inconsiderate.

MR. ARIFUKU: When I was in school in Japan, every morning you have to say good morning to the teacher. Nowadays I don't know. When we were in Hiroshima Station, lots of high school riders, they're a little wild, they don't have manners. Pretty bad now, they almost knocked my wife down.

MRS. ARIFUKU: I was carrying small luggage going up, and they were going down and they ran right into me and turned me around. But there were good ones, too.

MR. ARIFUKU: One student helped me. The first time we met this student in Shobaru Hiroshima, and I was carrying two big suitcases and he helped me all the way. There's some good ones, but many don't have much manners.

MR. ABE: Getting back to the war period, did you have guns on your ranch before the war?

MR. ARIFUKU: Yes.

MR. ABE: What did you do with them?

MR. ARIFUKU: We took them to Sheriff Moncrief's Office. We never got them back. They said Moncrief had a wild cat or animal that got loose, so they gave our guns to the people, and they must have taken them home.

MR. ABE: Who told you to turn in your guns?

MRS. ARIFUKU: We got some orders from Sacramento telling us what to do, and one of the orders was to turn in the guns to the sheriff.

MR. ABE: Did everyone go together during evacuation to the concentration camps?

MRS. ARIFUKU: Everyone left except me.

MR. ARIFUKU: She was going to have a baby within a month.

MR. ABE: Where did you stay?

MRS. ARIFUKU: With Mrs. Cornelia Frech. My husband used to work on her farm.

MR. ABE: What was it like here or what did you see after everyone left?

MRS. ARIFUKU: I saw signs in Sanger saying, "We don't do business with Japs," or something like that. But Penney's and Brehler's Drugstore didn't have those signs.

MR. ABE: Which camp were you at?

MR. ARIFUKU: Gila Number I in Arizona.

MR. ABE: What kind of work did you do there?

MR. ARIFUKU: I worked cooking, and my wife checked the eating room.

MR. ABE: What did you think of camp life?

MRS. ARIFUKU: No privacy. There was eight of us with no partition, just one big room. My mother and father-in-law, and two brothers-in-law, and us.

MR. ABE: What kind of things did you do to pass time?

MR. ARIFUKU: I played softball; each mess hall or block would make up a team.

MR. ABE: Did you think of leaving camp for work back east?

MR. ARIFUKU: I wanted to go to New Jersey, but my mother didn't want me to go.

MR. ABE: Have you noticed any change in the treatment of the Japanese people since the 1920's?

MR. ARIFUKU: Maybe 20 or 25 percent of the people are still bad. You can't tell what they're thinking inside.

MR. ABE: What do you see that shows that things still are not fair?

MR. ARIFUKU: In the San Diego airplane crash, the Nihonjin (Japanese) survivors were awarded only \$60,000 and the Caucasians got a lot more. That's not fair.

MR. ABE: What social and economic changes do you see?

MRS. ARIFUKU: Japanese are doing real good, with new houses, new cars, new farm warehouses.

MR. ARIFUKU: Last few years real good, but I don't know now.

MR. ABE: Do you still observe Japanese customs?

MR. ARIFUKU: Boys' Day, May 5th; and Girls' Day, March 3rd.

MR. ABE: How do you observe those days?

MRS. ARIFUKU: We send gifts to grandchildren or visit them. We also observe the custom of giving koden at funerals. And the second and third generations still do, too. You'd put money in an envelope and give it to the family of the deceased.

MR. ABE: What was that incident about your father's gold watch?

MR. ARIFUKU: He took a dollar watch to camp and left the gold watch at home in the safe. My father told me when to get his gold watch. But when I got there, it was broken

into and there was nothing inside.

MR. ABE: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

MRS. ARIFUKU: We taught our children to be good and honest.

MR. ARIFUKU: I had six children, and they went to college. I didn't tie them down like the Isseis did.

MRS. ARIFUKU: Oh, I almost forgot to mention another holiday we celebrate, New Year's Day. We make lots of sushi, sashimi, and other Japanese and American foods. And our children and relatives come over to help celebrate.

MR. ABE: To wind things up, I want to thank you. I appreciate you for taking time out, and I thank you for sharing your experiences with us.