

MR. AND MRS. MASAO NAKATA

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is July 19, 1980. I, Helen Hasegawa, am privileged to interview Mr. and Mrs. Masao Nakata in my home. Mr. Masao Nakata and Mrs. Haruye Nakata live at 9541 South Marks Avenue, Fresno, 93706.

Before we get into the interview proper, Mr. Nakata, will you please tell us when you were born and where?

MR. NAKATA: I, Masao Nakata, was born in Fowler, California, to be more exact, on the corner of Jefferson and Peach Avenues. My birthdate is April 8, 1906. My family lived in Fowler until 1910 when we moved to Bowles. Ever since then, we lived in Bowles, except for the time of the evacuation.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You've been one of the pioneers in the Bowles area, haven't you?

MR. NAKATA: You might say that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did your parents do in Fowler?

MR. NAKATA: My father had a place on Jefferson and Peach Avenues. Then they sold that and moved to Minnewawa and Clayton Avenues--lived there until 1910, and then sold it. Moved to Bowles area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many acres did they have in the Fowler area, and what did they raise?

MR. NAKATA: It was mostly peaches and grapes. We had 20 acres. We more or less made profit in buying and selling. He was quite a progressive farmer. I always bragged that even on a 20-acre farm he had three horses. One was Mother's horse and the other two were work horses. My mother had a buggy and a horse for her very own use.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did your mother do with a buggy and a horse?

MR. NAKATA: She went shopping. We didn't have automobiles in those days.

MRS. HASEGAWA: By the way, when did they come to California or to this area?

MR. NAKATA: My dad came from Japan in 1900. He was one of the later Issei to come. Most of them had come around 1896 or 1898. My dad was one of those precious boys at home, so his father wouldn't let him go.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was he the eldest son?

MR. NAKATA: He was the only son, only child. But the neighbor's son, like Mr. Okuda's, would send U.S. money back to Japan and, naturally, the parents were proud of that. My grandfather wanted some of that money, I guess, and so he let dad come to this country.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How old was your dad when he came to this country?

MR. NAKATA: He was about 23 years old. He was born in 1877. In 1900,

he landed in San Francisco, got a job on the railroad, and was sent down to Flagstaff, Arizona, I think. He worked on the railroad for a while there. For some reason, he was sent to Fresno, still working for the Santa Fe Railroad. He worked for the railroad about three years and then decided to quit and get into farming in Oleander, California. That's where he got started in the farming business.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Could I ask you, what kind of work the Issei did on the railroad?

MR. NAKATA: They were actually constructing the railroad. There was a new project putting in the main lines. It was all construction work.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your mother come later?

MR. NAKATA: After my dad made a few nickels, he decided to go back and get married. She came to this country in 1905.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did they both come from?

MR. NAKATA: They're both from Hiroshima.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was she the only child?

MR. NAKATA: There were three or four sisters. One of her sisters told her that if she went to the United States, "We will never see you again" and asked her not to go. But, she came anyway. She never did go back.

MRS. NAKATA: She had an only brother who came before her, but he died from malaria. He was an only son and left all the girls to work the farm in Japan.

MR. NAKATA: After so many years, the people in Japan wanted the brother's remains sent back to Japan. Well, it was coincidental that the State of California wanted to move some graves in order to put in a street in a certain area. So, when my dad went to petition to get his brother-in-law's remains, there was no problem at all. They dug it up and sent it back to Japan.

MRS. HASEGAWA: They were not ashes?

MR. NAKATA: No, not ashes. When they dug it out, naturally the body was disintegrated, and the only thing left were pieces of bones. My dad opened the box and showed it to us. It was in a box 10 inches wide and 30 inches long.

MRS. HASEGAWA: He had died in the Sacramento area? Was he in the railroad work?

MR. NAKATA: Yes. They were all in the railroad work in those days. After, say around 1902 or '3, that's when they started going on the farm.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You said your father got started in the Oleander District, then he bought the Fowler place?

MR. NAKATA: He was acting as the labor contractor when he got off the railroad. He contacted different farmers to get jobs for different

people. That's how he got started. When he made a few nickels, he decided to farm and got started.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I presume that since he worked on the railroad for three years, he could speak English, and that he could act as an interpreter for the newcomers.

MR. NAKATA: I heard some comical stories of his English. Just like, for instance, "What do you call that bird over there?" He was referring to the pigeons. My dad said that in Japanese it's called "hato," so it must be called "pato." Then, the foreman said, "No, it was called pigeons."

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

MR. NAKATA: I have one brother and one sister, and that's it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do they live nearby?

MR. NAKATA: Oh, yes. My brother lives about one-half mile away. My sister lives in Oleander area about six miles away.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What is your sister's name?

MR. NAKATA: Sister's name is Masuye Okada. You might know her. The brother lives about one-half mile away from us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Perhaps I should now ask Mrs. Nakata about her early life?

MRS. NAKATA: I was born in Fowler in 1912. My father worked for people like Mr. Chambers. My parents had a pool hall in Fowler, but my father liked farming and started working for the people. He was leasing the farm. My father and mother worked real hard, because they had all girls. Ever since I was 5 years old I was told to cook the rice outside on the open fire "kudo." I guess it was dangerous, but my mother had fixed it so all I had to do was start the fire at 11 o'clock. When she came home at noon, the rice was ready. I was only 5 years old, and I don't know how she made me do it. And I watched all the little ones at home. There were five. Then, we had a hand pump for water. We had to have drinking water and bath water, and it was my sister who was three and my job to pump that water for the bath in the evening. It was an all-day work. My father had a little "toki" made out of wood, like a trough, and the water would trickle down that, but a lot of it would leak. We would go to the bath house 100 times to see how full the tub was!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your mother start the fire underneath the tub after she got back from the fields?

MRS. NAKATA: We didn't have to. My mother started the fire after she got home from the fields. Pumping water was a job!

MR. NAKATA: You were 10 years behind schedule.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you have on your farm?

MR. NAKATA: We had a gasoline pump. We didn't have electricity in those days. There were very few "furo" (baths). The first one I know of was at

the home of Mr. and Mrs. Otoichi Ninomiya, and so we'd go over there to take a bath, every so often. Before 1911 and 1912, there was no electricity, so domestic water supply was pumped by hand. In those days, the wells were very shallow a depth of 8 or 10 feet. That was it. So, it wasn't any problem pumping water, even by hand, because lots of water used to come up. But, now days, when you had to pump water by hand, if you got a gallon a minute, you're lucky. I remember one time, we didn't have an automobile, so when we wanted to take a bath at a neighbor's, we had to hitch up a team and get on a buggy or some kind of wagon to go there. It was about two or two and a half miles away. And coming back we were all cleaned up, but we must have run into a skunk. We got sprayed! The wagon and our clothes smelled for two or three weeks.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What an awful experience!

MRS. NAKATA: There were no roads, just tracks. There were no telephones or electricity. They were put in after the road came in. We were out in the wilds, when we got started.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was it like a desert? We're talking about Bowles.

MR. NAKATA: The roads were all dirt roads. They weren't square like it is right now. They followed the high grounds, because in the wintertime, the water would be rushing around. None of the roads were straight, they were all crooked. What the Japanese did were: One party would buy, say, 160 acres or more. Then they subdivided it to their friends--say 20 acres where they want, 40 acres or whatever parcel they would like to have and be divided and sold to them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you have the land surveyed?

MR. NAKATA: A county surveyor, generally, came out to survey it. It was pretty accurate.

MRS. HASEGAWA: This is near Manning and West?

MR. NAKATA: Yes. Manning was there, but it was a dirt road, Francis Manning was pretty straight until you hit Fig Avenue and there was a pond. You had to dodge the pond west of Fowler Avenue. So we had to circle that, too, otherwise we had to go through water. Practically all the roads were not oiled. We lived in Fowler and we had to come to our Bowles farm. My mother would hitch up the horse and hook it on up to the buggy. She'd put us kids on the buggy and we headed for the Bowles farm. And our pet dog would follow the buggy. It would get so hot, that he'd get underneath the buggy and cough at the same time, because he had to breathe the dust.

MRS. NAKATA: Why didn't you put him in the buggy?

MR. NAKATA: He didn't want to get in the buggy.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Before you moved to Bowles, you had already bought the place? Wasn't there a law prohibiting the Isseis from buying any property?

MR. NAKATA: Yes, but that was way later. We bought the land before the Alien Land Law, 1910 as it was all right. I don't know how many acres he bought, but, anyway, he kept the rest where people didn't care to buy.

He must have bought 160 acres at one time and subdivided it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: He was a big landowner, wasn't he?

MRS. NAKATA: The home place was 40 acres.

MR. NAKATA: He sold 40 acres to Goroku Yokomi, 40 acres to M. Miyake and Tokuichi Sasaki in partnership, 20 acres to Kumaichi Nakamura, 20 acres to Hirahara, and kept 40 acres.

MRS. NAKATA: They were mostly Japanese families there. I guess they didn't feel lost or anything. They visited each other.

MR. NAKATA: They didn't have any money to speak of, they only had a little, but not too much. So what they had to do was, they bought the land. And during the harvest season or busy season, they used to go out to labor. After the busy season was over, they would work their own land. Between time, they would go out and work and earn the cash. That's how they financed their own land. The first year they planted their vineyards. They failed, because they made the cuttings. They thought the ground was nice and moist, they put the cuttings into this soil, not knowing that this was alkaline ground. So, naturally, when they went to plant, the cuttings were dead. So they lost one year, right from the start.

Then they had to do it over. They had a rough time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did the neighbors help each other?

MR. NAKATA: The Japanese neighbors helped each other, yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: There was a colony or community of them? Had they known each other in Japan?

MR. NAKATA: Oh, yes, they were neighbors or were close by. They knew each other in Japan.

MRS. NAKATA: They came from the same locality in Japan.

MR. NAKATA: It was very pleasant for them, because they knew each other from back home. They were close by, not more than five or six miles away.

MRS. NAKATA: They were more or less independent, weren't they? They went out to work to earn the cash.

MR. NAKATA: There was something about this in the Fresno Bee.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What were the first homes like?

MRS. NAKATA: They built large barns. They lived in one part and kept stock in the other part.

MR. NAKATA: They put the hay with the livestock and you know why. They put the horses and mules on this side and the other side was the family living quarter.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It was very important to have that barn. Many families started out this way. They tried to live within their means,

too.

MRS. NAKATA: It had to be done, I guess.

MRS. HASEGAWA: This is a very interesting picture. It shows a handsome barn, and family and neighbors have gathered with all their children and worldly belongings.

MRS. NAKATA: A Mrs. Arifuku used it for her project of collecting old photographs of historical buildings or some kind of markings.

MR. NAKATA: It was a state project, and she was trying to find out how Japanese made such a big progress in 10 years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you tell her?

MRS. NAKATA: It was people's determination. The Japanese people's determination to get ahead.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It took more than 10 years. Don't you think?

MR. NAKATA: It took 20 years to get on their feet. The last 10 years, they made such a big progress. The first 10 years were rough.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Which 10 years are you talking about, after the war?

MR. NAKATA: After the war. First 10 years after the war we still had quite a bit of discrimination, which was rough. The last 10 years were easygoing. The Sansei are progressing fast.

MRS. NAKATA: Even our children, who are Sansei, there's no such thing as prejudice. And I said, "When I was going to school, I felt it." My children in high school didn't feel any prejudice. When my son went to U.C. he said, "Mom, I know what you meant." That's when he first felt it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you meet up against it? Did he tell you?

MRS. NAKATA: No.

MR. NAKATA: First semester he went to the University of California, he came home with a long face. Professor told him, "No use coming here, you might as well go home to your dad's farm and start from the ground up, there." He didn't know whether to go back or to stay home. Well, I told him, "I know Dr. Session, he's the chemist for Chevron Chemical Company, and he's a Mormon." So I said, "Ted, let's talk to Dr. Session and see what kind of idea he has."

Dr. Session said to come back at such a certain time, and I'll make time for you. So we did. Dr. Session had a big tablet out and said, "Son, what's your name? What do you take, what kinds of credit do you have" and asked this and that. Put it all down and looked it over. He said, "Son, you got lots of potential. You could be a minister if you wanted, or a lawyer, a doctor, any occupation. You got lots of ways to go." But, he said my daughter is different. She is one-sided and she can only go into teaching. But you, he said have lots of potential. And, he said, "Anyway, go back to school. I'll write you a letter to see a certain professor there, so he can get acquainted with you. Don't be bashful with the professors if you got to fight them, fight them so they know

you." From there, he went through sailing, just like nobody's business. At the beginning, he had it rough.

MRS. NAKATA: He didn't know whether he should go ahead with it or not. You know, the professor told him to go back to his dad's farm and farm; that jolted him.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That professor was a bit rough with him?

MR. NAKATA: No, that's the way it should be. In other words, the student who has the gumption to fight will get ahead. The other way is to give up. First, I thought it was prejudice, but it was not. When my daughter graduated from high school, she and one of the valedictorians who graduated at the same time, both entered University of California. My daughter got ahead. This valedictorian, the professor treated so rough, that he decided to quit and come home. So, whether you're Japanese or hakujin, University of California does that kind of treatment to see whether you can buff them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is this Akiyo-san?

MRS. NAKATA: No, it's the third daughter Kaye. She became the nurse.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And she lives where?

MRS. NAKATA: She lives in San Francisco.

There's Akiyo, Haruko, Ted, and Kaye.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You have three girls and one boy.

MRS. NAKATA: We have four girls. The last one Jo Ann isn't married. The first four are married. The third daughter said, "I'm not smart like my sister and brother." I said, "You're you, so do what you can do for yourself." When she was 12 years old, she had burst appendix and she almost lost her life. I think the nurse really saved her. I told her, "Since they spared your life, why don't you become a nurse or something to help other people's lives." She thought about it and became a nurse. Right now, she's at Kaiser Hospital in San Francisco. We're real pleased with what she's doing. She's got two daughters of her own, and her husband is the head pharmacist at Kaiser Hospital in South San Francisco.

MRS. HASEGAWA: This has been about your own children. Now about your sisters?

MRS. NAKATA: I'm the oldest of seven. There are five of us out here in Fresno. One is in San Francisco and one in Lodi. They are all in farming, except for the one in San Francisco.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are their names? You're the oldest and you're Mrs. Nakata.

MRS. NAKATA: Genjiro and Helen Fujita; Tom and Agnes Tsutsumi, she's in Lodi; the fourth one is Umeyo Saunders in San Francisco and works in the hospital.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is she a nurse?

MRS. NAKATA: No, she's a secretary there, and her husband died. She didn't remarry. And the fifth one is Yo, and she's a nurse. Her husband Seijiro Nishi is a farmer. Sixth one is Kazuye. Her husband is Kazuo Inouye. They're both farming in Kingsburg. The last one is Sue and Kiyo Kawamoto. Sue is active in the Buddhist circle, and they're both farming. She works as a secretary at the Christian Brothers Winery there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you have a get-together, there's quite a number of you, aren't there?

MRS. NAKATA: Right. I used to think there's 35 of us, but I think there's more than that. We used to eat in shifts.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You had a wedding in one of your sister's family recently? And then you're having your own Golden Wedding Anniversary?

MRS. NAKATA: Our children thought they wanted to do this for us. So they said, "Mom give us the list of names and we'll do the rest."

MRS. HASEGAWA: Can you tell us how you two met?

MRS. NAKATA: We moved from Fowler to Bowles. Do you know the Sumida's ranch? Mr. Sumida had 80 acres. My father came there to run the farm. He started out with a team of horses--no tractor--just shovels, all manual work. The bermuda grass was so thick that it was just like a haystack when we pulled it all out. My father really worked on it. When he was 70 years old, he decided to buy a place in Bowles. I dreaded that, but he tackled it. When he passed away, at least the family had a place to stay. That kept my mother going until now. One of the grandsons bought the place. He's continuing on. They had a hard life. At least, we all survived.

MRS. HASEGAWA: After you moved to the Bowles area, you met your husband.

MRS. NAKATA: Yes. We went to the same church. He's six years older than I am, so we didn't go to school together.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What school did you go to?

MRS. NAKATA: Manning Grammar School. They tore it down later.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What school did you attend, Mr. Nakata?

MR. NAKATA: Oh, I went to Manning Grammar School, that was the second year after the school was built. There were only seven students.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many grades?

MR. NAKATA: Poor teacher had to take care of them all.

MRS. HASEGAWA: After that, where did you go to school?

MR. NAKATA: After that, we went to Washington Union High School. I went to Fresno High for a while, when I was going to Japanese school.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You went to Japanese school in Fresno?

MR. NAKATA: Yes. I was in the same class as Dr. Taira.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, is that right?

MR. NAKATA: I was going to show you this first Japanese school building in Bowles. It was built in 1914. This is the first graduation in 1920. The picture was taken in 1920.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is that building still there?

MR. NAKATA: No.

MRS. HASEGAWA: There's a building in the back of the Buddhist Church. What is it?

MR. NAKATA: That used to be there, but we moved it. And we put a Sunday School building.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You went to Fresno High School at the same time as Dr. Taira?

MR. NAKATA: No. Dr. Taira was not going to Fresno High yet, but at Japanese school we were in the same grade. He is four years younger than I am, so naturally, he wouldn't be in high school with me.

MRS. NAKATA: Dr. Taira is the same age as his brother Morito Nakata.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You used to commute to Japanese school that long distance?

MR. NAKATA: No, we used to stay at the dormitory at the Japanese school. There used to be a big dormitory right behind the Temple where the present annex is. There used to be the dormitory and right next to it was the Congregational Church. We used to live in that dormitory, then.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you live there during the school year?

MR. NAKATA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And you went home in the summertime. It's as if you went away to school.

MR. NAKATA: That's right. That's where we had lots of fun.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your parents send you away, so you could have Japanese training?

MR. NAKATA: Right.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they think that some day, they'd be going back to Japan and wanted you to be prepared?

MR. NAKATA: I don't know whether they had that idea or not. But it was for communication between the children and the parents. Just like our kids. They grew up in the English language. They don't know what we're talking about in Japanese.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you speak Japanese to each other?

MR. NAKATA: Sometimes, when we get mad.

MRS. NAKATA: It's more or less mixed. When his parents were alive, we'd try to speak more Japanese.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Communication gap. You try to get the Sansei into the conversation circle.

Were your parents still living when your children came along?

MR. NAKATA: Yes, they were still living so the children spoke a little Japanese, but not very much.

MRS. NAKATA: We tried to send them to Japanese school here in Bowles. But every year they had a different teacher or something would happen, and so they didn't learn much.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And it was once a week?

MRS. NAKATA: Yes. Five hours on Saturdays. They can understand what we're talking about, but they don't speak it. My last one Jo Ann took Japanese at the University of Hawaii when she was there for one summer. Sometimes the Isseis will call me on the phone and she would converse with some Japanese. Then she went to Japan, one year, for a visit and also my younger son. All the children went to Japan except one and us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You haven't gone?

MRS. NAKATA: No. Our children wanted us to go two years ago, but something kept us from going. Last year he had to have surgery. Now, he has to go for treatments so routinely we can't stay away too long. There are about 11 families going to Japan this year from the Bowles area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: We're going with that group, too. Your two sisters are going, I've learned.

We've been talking about your family, his family, and your own brothers and sisters. It's been very interesting, especially about life way back, because your parents' and your early experiences aren't written in books. This is the kind of material my sister-in-law wanted to collect for the library. If a student wanted to know how hard the Japanese pioneers worked in order to help develop the San Joaquin into the number one farming center, they could see that they started from practically nothing.

MR. NAKATA: We started from nothing and during the big Depression in 1933, 95 percent of the farmers lost everything. In Bowles area, just a few: Mr. and Mrs. K. Ota, Mr. and Mrs. Shinkawa, and Mr. and Mrs. Nishimoto were the only ones who were able to hang onto their places. The rest lost their land. From there, we started again.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then the war came along.

MR. NAKATA: When the war came along, they were in fairly good shape,

again.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did they do with their property?

MR. NAKATA: Most of them were leased out to the Caucasian friends or somebody. And the beauty of it was, those people who had Federal Land Bank loan. The manager of the bank said, "While you people are gone, we have to protect our own interest in your farm, so I'll see to it that the farms are run right and I'll do all the disbursing of the money for you people."

MRS. HASEGAWA: Wasn't that great? Who was the manager?

MR. NAKATA: Julius Rupp. He was a great man. He had a nickname. We used to call him the "Red Fox."

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was there any reason to call him "Red Fox"?

MR. NAKATA: Because he was sharp. He was two or three miles ahead of us all the time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: By that time the Nisei were -

MR. NAKATA: Of age, yes. They went to the Federal Land Bank to borrow money.

So, after the second start, it was easy going. Because at the Federal Land Bank, they treated everyone alike whether we were Nihonjin or hakujin, it didn't make any difference. Sometime there was prejudice, but most of the time it was pretty good.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I started to ask you when you two met, and it's going to be 50 years now. What day did you get married?

MR. NAKATA: December 7, 1930.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, December 7th?

MRS. NAKATA: Yes, and the time isn't here yet, but the children said let's not wait until it gets cold. Let's make it next month.

MRS. HASEGAWA: So you're celebrating early?

MRS. NAKATA: I hear that's the Japanese way.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What struck me was the date December 7th, your wedding day. December 7th is Pearl Harbor Day. Of course, no one dreamed that such a thing would happen 10 years later.

MR. NAKATA: We didn't want it on December 7th. One poor fellow was going home from the reception and had a wreck here that day.

MRS. NAKATA: In those days, they didn't have any white lines in the middle of the road. When we were taking off on our honeymoon, we went as far as Kingsburg. "Gee," I said, "there's a fence here," and we were on the opposite side and off the road. And the fog was so thick! And so we said, "Let's stop in Kingsburg." That's what people tell us, that that night was so foggy, they don't remember how they got home.

MR. NAKATA: Some got home all right, but some went into the pond. Takemoto and those guys didn't get home.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You mean they were drowned?

MR. NAKATA: Oh, no, there wasn't any water in the pond, but they had to push to get out.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you have "baishakunin" wedding?

MR. NAKATA: Yes, we did. They arranged it. Mr. and Mrs. Fukushima. They were the baishakunin.

MRS. NAKATA: They used to live in Nakata's house in Fresno. His father had five of those houses by the Buddhist Church.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your father had property in town, too?

MR. NAKATA: Not too much. There were five residences.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where was this?

MR. NAKATA: Right now, it's where Yaohan's and where Mikami's Insurance is. That part was all residences.

MRS. HASEGAWA: They were kind of dark red?

MR. NAKATA: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: There was a Miyano-san?

MR. NAKATA: Miyano-san was in one of those buildings. Kawahara, and Kamiyama, the photographer, was living there. The other house was on "B" Street close to Lincoln School.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did he build them or have a contractor?

MR. NAKATA: No, he had a contractor build them. In fact, his idea was to move back into town and live in one of those buildings. And us kids were to go Japanese school from there. That was the original idea, but never worked out that way.

MRS. NAKATA: He had those houses rented and that's how Mr. and Mrs. Fukushima became our good friends. They were real nice people.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Going into past history, is interesting!

MR. NAKATA: At first we didn't have any cars, automobiles. It was three hours buggy ride from home in Bowles to Fresno. When we used to come shopping to Fresno, first thing we did was take the horses and buggy to the livery stable, where they kept our horses and buggy.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where was this livery stable?

MR. NAKATA: It was on "G" Street and between Kern and Inyo Streets. We used to take our horse and buggy there. I used to like it because my dad, he used to go to the Western Hotel right across that. I liked it

when dad went to the Western Hotel. Mr. Murakami used to have a room right next to the alley towards the Open Air Theatre, and we used to go there and watch the movie all night. And we thought that it was great. We used to come into Fresno and stay overnight, then shop all day and go home the next day. It was a real holiday! I didn't like it worth a darn when dad got a car. We'd come in and shop then buzz right home.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That open air theatre, I'm still trying to visualize where it was.

MR. NAKATA: All that building wasn't there on that block. The hotel, that used to be there. Right across from the hotel, there was a Hiroshima-ya, where Hasegawa Grandpa used to be.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was right across from the Western Hotel?

MR. NAKATA: No, catty-corner from it, toward "E" Street, directly west of the hotel, right across the alley on Tulare Street.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who owned the theatre?

MR. NAKATA: I wouldn't know.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I just wondered if it was Japanese. Japanese had the other theatres.

MR. NAKATA: The Ryan Theatre on Tulare Street was near Western Hotel there.

MR. AND MRS. NAKATA: There was also the other theatre. It is Cal Theatre now, was the Japanese Hall.

MR. NAKATA: What did we call that? That's where we had Nihon shibai and this and that.

MRS. NAKATA: It was the Nippon Hall.

MR. NAKATA: That's the one Mr. Okuda found. Mr. Okuda built that. Taira and Yamamisaka and others enjoyed it so much.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Present day outdoor theatres are not innovations. That open-air theatre you enjoyed so much was the forerunner wasn't it?

MR. NAKATA: That's an old idea. It was a silent movie with the words coming out.

MRS. HASEGAWA: The people, where did they sit?

MR. NAKATA: They had wooden benches!

MRS. NAKATA: In those days, they made do with what they had. It's amazing, they got by with very little.

MR. NAKATA: All those Isseis had a good time. In fact, they enjoyed life because in their leisure time they went picnicking and camping once or twice a year. They loaded all the belongings, whatever they wanted to take, on their hay wagon and sometimes took off for three days.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you go?

MR. NAKATA: We used to go down Elm Avenue, past where Ishii used to live and another six or seven miles there used to be a hole with lots of fish. We'd eat fish for lunch there. Nowadays, there isn't a place like that. We kids used to have lots of fun. Nowadays, everybody is busy, busy, busy all the time and have no time to relax.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Maybe they have too much nowadays.

MR. NAKATA: We didn't know what keys were. We never did lock the doors! Occasionally burglars came in, but burglars couldn't take too much, because they didn't have a car to put it in. So, the only thing they could do was, carry it, and they couldn't get very far. Life was pretty nice.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You certainly recall a great deal of your early days.

What do your children do for a living?

MRS. NAKATA: We have two teachers, and one nurse, and one dietitian. My son is a periodontist.

MRS. HASEGAWA: He specialized! Are they married to Japanese?

MRS. NAKATA: So far they are, except for the last one. She's not married yet.

MRS. HASEGAWA: We find the Sanseis marrying different races.

MR. NAKATA: Oh, I guess it seems to be all right.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Have you experienced any prejudice? Before or after the war, while you were growing up, or as a young man?

MR. NAKATA: Every once in a while. It was kind of unpleasant. I asked for permission to come back to California, to see what California looked like.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Now, when was this?

MR. NAKATA: Six months before West Coast was reopened to Nihonjin to come back to California. It was while we were still in camp. On a certain day we could come back to California, if we wanted to. So, I asked permission to get the pass to come back to California to see what it looked like. Well, I came back. They said all of the financial organizations were wide open for Nihonjin evacuees who came back. The first thing I hit was Bank of America. Bank of America wouldn't come across with the sale. I don't know what they had in mind, but they said, "When you come back, we'll speak to you about it." They gave us no encouragement when to come back or anything. Then I went to Production Credit Association. They told me to sell my stocks and bonds, which I had with the Association and get out, because we are definitely not financing any Nihonjin when they come back. That was not the manager. The manager would talk differently. This was the vice-manager. It didn't sound so good. I went to the Federal Land Bank Association and talked to Julius Rupp. Julius said, "Sure, come back and we'll finance you, whatever plans you have. We'll help all the Nisei that's coming back."

He's the only one who gave me a good encouragement. The rest of them, it's kind of rough, and then I go to Nihonjin town store and these "Shinajin," that means Mexican, even if they had the merchandise, they'd say, "No got 'em, no got 'em." They wouldn't even try to sell you anything.

Then I went back to camp. They called me into the office and asked, "What kind of impression did you get in California?" So, I told them the story of what I ran up against. So one of them said, "We got to fix that. We're going to contact the WRA Office in Washington." And in 60 days he said, "You should get an answer from those people," which I did. In two months they worked at it so the reception would be different in California. When I did come back, it was a lot better than the first time. It was terrible the first time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It must have been very discouraging. The second time, did you come back just to feel the atmosphere again, or did you come back for good?

MR. NAKATA: I came back for good, because I got a letter from the WRA Office in Washington, D.C. stating that they had fixed everything up, so I came back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You had your ranch to go back to?

MR. NAKATA: Yes. That's about the only time I felt kind of low. When I came back to investigate, the reception was very poor.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What about when you were growing up?

MR. NAKATA: Oh, yeah. I was told directly in my face, when I was going to high school. The Armenians said, "Look at that, the Japs have all the good ranches around here, and we have to farm these poorer ranches. How many acres you got there." I said, "We have 260 acres." "See there! You guys got the best land around here." That's how they used to treat us. We worked a little harder and tried harder to get it going, that's why. But every once in a while, you'll find such people.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you encounter any prejudice, Mrs. Nakata?

MRS. NAKATA: No, not as much as he did. Only thing that when we went shopping, after we came back, we were very cautious about going to the stores. But they didn't give us any problem.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about when you were growing up in your community?

MRS. NAKATA: Well, I didn't feel as much as some of my children did, when they were going to school. Especially my last one, she felt it. She used to take a light lunch to school for snack time. She said she gets so hungry, she asked if she could take an egg sandwich. So I said, "Yes, you can." It so happened, she was going to share it with someone, and so this certain person said, "Well, I don't want a Japanese egg." So she told her, "This isn't a Japanese egg, it's an American egg!" Then she came home and said, "Mom, I'm an American, aren't I?" I told her that she was a Japanese-American. But she didn't want to be a Japanese-American, she just wanted to be an American without the Japanese.

MRS. HASEGAWA: After you came back, have you experienced anything unusual? Something else that you would like to share?

MR. NAKATA: After we came back, it wasn't too unpleasant. We had good times in our neighborhood, so we didn't have too many problems.

MRS. NAKATA: Nobody bothered us.

MR. NAKATA: It wasn't like the Masadas whose home was shot at.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Which Masada would this be?

MR. NAKATA: In Caruthers. Miyoko-san. She was sitting, studying when the bullet went through. We didn't have anything like that. In fact, we had German friends. They were on our side so they gave us small protection. In fact, I understand, one night a gang was supposed to beat us up with chains, and these guys met up with them about a quarter of mile of my place, so they had a chain fight, right in the street. The guys got beaten up and went home.

MRS. NAKATA: We heard about it later.

MR. NAKATA: That's about the only time we had an incident. We never ran into any. Rest of the time, we've been having pretty good relationships all the way around us, so we had no problems.

When we were in high school, the Japanese school teacher said, "Mr. Nakata, we want to get our Japanese school recognized and will have to try to get some kind of grade system included in our public school program. Well, can you do something about it?" I said, "Wait a minute.... Take it easy. If we go too fast they'll turn us down. Let me think it over." We tried to work it through our local high school. I went to the high school and said the California Board of Education has this kind of law pertaining to foreign languages. I understand that if we can meet their terms, we can get our Japanese school accredited with the Education Department. So I asked the vice-principal if he would check it out for us. Which it so happens, the story goes back a long ways to the Issei when they first came to America. When Dad was acting more or less as a labor contractor he had contacted Mr. Thompson to let him harvest his grapes. He had contacted others in the neighborhood, too. Mr. Thompson comes to my dad and says, "I'll give you so much if you pick my place before the other guys." My dad says to him, "No, here's the lists that goes one by one. You just wait." This started the friendship between Mr. Thompson and my dad, and his sons Eckart, Harold, and Frank. Frank was the vice-principal at Washington Union High School. So I went to Frank and said, "I understand the Board of Education offered us a certain deal, where we can get accredited, and if they would let us know how to go about getting it. He said, "Oh, sure. I'll work on it. I know you guys went to Japanese school while we were playing around the outside. I know you guys went to school every day. I know all about it." Little later he called me up and said, "Come on over to the school with your committee. We have the whole thing to be signed and ready to go." So we went, they had paper to be signed by the teachers, the committee, and the whole thing. Bowles Japanese School was the only Japanese school to be accredited by the State of California, Board of Education. Saddest thing about the whole thing was that we lost the teacher who started the whole thing. But for two years, the kids that were there, got credit for Japanese language.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, this is what Mr. Araki was hoping to do in Fresno!

MR. NAKATA: They all tried but couldn't make the grade. For the simple reason, you must have five hours a week, and must have so many hours a year, just like the regular school. Mr. Albert Yamauchi, our teacher, enforced this requirement but couldn't meet the hours.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Otherwise they couldn't get credit.

MR. NAKATA: We were recognized by Washington Union High School and also by Caruthers High School, too.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, my! This is interesting! That was a big step forward, wasn't it?

MR. NAKATA: This Mr. Frank Thompson and his dad and my father were friends and as he helped me he told me "Just because my dad and your father were friends doesn't mean that I'm going to give you certain advantages." So, I told him, "Wait a minute, Frank, I'm asking no favors at all. All I'm asking is if this is the way it should be." So, we were really good friends. Those high school people treated us right. Frank Thompson was the vice-principal.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I would say that that is one great change that happened in Bowles. That gives other Japanese schools something to think about doing--getting credits for their students.

MR. NAKATA: That's the biggest change in Bowles. From then on, whenever the Buddhist Church has a bazaar, there's more hakujin that comes than Nihonjin.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I went to the bazaar this year, and I was amazed at the percentage of hakujins that patronized your bazaar.

MRS. NAKATA: They all look forward to it!

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are there any other social activities where the Japanese get together with the rest of the community?

MRS. NAKATA: They used to have the Caruthers Fair, too, but it got to be too much for the ladies. They wanted us to participate in the foods. They wanted us to sell Japanese food. But, it's three days' affair, and it was getting the ladies down. They said that they would like to bow out and not participate any more. We participated for five years, though. It went well, for they all looked forward to the Japanese food. We got closer to each other.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What other experiences would you like to share?

MR. NAKATA: Oh, that darn Depression! Lots of people got really hurt by that Depression.

MRS. NAKATA: The year we got married was really bad, 1930. Crops were consigned; they didn't give us money. We had to wait to see how much they were going to pay us. It was about \$5 a ton, roadside or something. So, unless we harvested, we had to do it by ourselves. We couldn't hire anyone. It was pretty tough.

MR. NAKATA: 1933 was the worst. You can see how bad it was. One year a Mexican fellow wanted a job. I said, "I got lots of jobs, but I got no money. I said, "The only thing I could do was pay 90 cents a day, which I hated to do, and I only have a job for one man." I only had 90 cents for one day's work. So, the next day, he and five other fellows came along and said we'd like to get a job for one day. So I looked at them and said, "One day only, I'll give the five of you a job for one day only." So they went to work, and at the end of the day, I paid \$4.50--90 cents apiece! And you know they were real happy and said, "Now we can eat for one week!" So you can see how bad it was.

MRS. NAKATA: I know. Five dollars worth of groceries, we couldn't put it all in the car. Now you buy \$20 and you wonder what you did with it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you compare those economic times and now--like you said about the groceries--someone said that Japanese who now own 40 or 60 acres are considered millionaires.

MR. NAKATA: No. That's when we were in trouble. We're in real trouble, because 40 acres wasn't big enough.

MRS. HASEGAWA: The way the government has to tax you.

MR. NAKATA: What are we going to do? What am I supposed to do. If I sell out, the government will get the whole "shebang." With the income tax and this and that, they got us in the high bracket. If we sell it, we've got nothing; if we keep it, we still have nothing!

MRS. NAKATA: As we get older, it gets harder to work. Masao has had surgery. And it's hard to make any kind of change.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many acres do you have now?

MR. NAKATA: I have 200 acres, 200 acres too much.

MRS. NAKATA: He has to work alone.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you have on your place?

MR. NAKATA: We have plums, peaches, and grapes. We had strawberries, but it was a problem.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's a back-breaking job, isn't it?

MRS. NAKATA: It's all right if you can get the labor when you need it. Unless you get the right kind of labor, they do more damage than good. Now the trend is that they're the boss. They tell you what they're going to do. This year we had really good people, on the whole. At least they took orders. Up to now, they're the ones that tell you what to do. If they didn't want to do it, they just up and leave, leave you flat. So it's getting to be a problem.

MR. NAKATA: This year, I got short tempered on account of the chemotherapy. I really got rough with those guys; told them to hit the road if any requested beer.

MRS. NAKATA: And during the break, they want to be served all the time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Have you been involved with any social, religious or political organizations? Are you a member of JACL or Lions' Club and some kind of Kenjinkai?

MR. NAKATA: I used to be, but not now. I was with the Lions' Club and JACL. Then what happened. I think, somewhere along the way, I got a raw treatment.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was there a chapter in the Bowles area?

MR. NAKATA: They were trying to organize a chapter out there, but it didn't work out. We're supposed to belong to the Fresno area, but us country hicks sometimes get too busy and get lax in paying the dues. The headquarters in Ogden gave us notices that they didn't want us. So, I said that's fine, we'll stay out. That's why you don't see too many Bowles people belonging to the JACL, especially the older ones.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you were a member of the Lions' Club, did they meet at night? Did you enjoy it?

MR. NAKATA: Yes, it was a dinner meeting. Well, it was fine, but I was sick, so I quit.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh--this was quite recent?

MR. NAKATA: No, it was 10 to 15 years ago, when I had spinal meningitis. There are six different kinds. I had one of the mild ones. Doc said I was fortunate that I came out of it--otherwise I could be crippled or something.

MRS. NAKATA: It's hard for him to go out at night, and he declined a lot of night meetings.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When it's harvest season, we have to keep going as long as there's sunlight.

MRS. NAKATA: You can't leave your place, 'til everything's taken care of.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are there many Japanese who are members of the Lions' Club?

MR. NAKATA: No, not too many. There's more in Caruthers now.

MRS. NAKATA: They're younger people in their early 60's. They are quite active yet. Masao is a generation ahead. He was the president of the Strawberry Exchange Cooperative in 1950.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is that when Strawberry Exchange was formed? What is the work of the Strawberry Exchange?

MR. NAKATA: To market our own strawberries instead of going through some private place. This is where the coop takes charge.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's a coop? Are the members mostly Japanese?

MR. NAKATA: Originally, it used to be but there's a lot of Mexicans

now. They are really coming up. Originally it was practically all Nihonjin with a few hakujin.

MRS. HASEGAWA: We heard of some connection between the Exchange and the Sunnyside Packing Company. In what way?

MR. NAKATA: The Exchange members are the growers and the Sunnyside Packing Company sold and distributed the berries to various buyers and markets throughout the country; the Northwest, the East, and Canada. We used to hold banquets for everyone connected with our work. At first these banquets were held in Chinese restaurants, but the guest list outgrew the facilities. We must have had over 400. Some of the growers would ask, "Why invite all the hakujins? It costs us money to feed people!" So, we had to explain to them that those people distribute our products all over the United States, and we should have good relationship. We help them, and they help us; we can make a go of it pretty good. One year we decided not to have a banquet and, oh, boy! We really heard from the hakujin people. They really had looked forward to it. So I hated to go through this uproar again. So we told the association that we better have that banquet.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I think the last several years some of my friends who are wives of the Strawberry Exchange people and the Sunnyside Packing Company have had something to do with preparing food for the banquets! It sounds like a tremendous task. They hold them at the Buddhist Church Annex and the directors and helpers from both groups prepare huge amounts of chicken and beef teriyaki.

MR. NAKATA: The expense for putting on this banquet was shared by the Strawberry Exchange and the Sunnyside Packing Company, as well as all the labor.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many years were you the president?

MR. NAKATA: Seven years.

MRS. NAKATA: Then he got sick.

MR. NAKATA: Right now, the Nihonjin are getting old, so they are getting out of the strawberry picture. It's getting to be a problem. How is the coop going to operate? The Mexican people will have to take over, I guess. They seem to be pretty good farmers, and most of them are conscientious.

MRS. HASEGAWA: The Sanseis are not farming!

MR. NAKATA: No, most of the Sanseis are going into white collar jobs. They don't want to stay on the farm. You can't blame them. Some Mexicans have been in California for two or three generations, and they're getting the idea why slave on the farm when you could do better elsewhere. And they are doing that now.

MRS. NAKATA: They are getting higher education and finding an easier way of making a living. It's hard work on the farm.

MRS. HASEGAWA: They had to struggle like the Niseis did.

MR. NAKATA: The Niseis were stuck on the farm with what the Issei

started out to do, but the Sanseis are different. They're getting the education and are going into something they like.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's amazing that Sanseis are getting into all kinds of fields.

MR. NAKATA: I'm trying to get the Sansei interested and to inch his way into farming. It's got to be between the Sansei and Yonsei! So I said, "Boys if you want to farm, here's a chance for you. It takes a lot of money to start farming now and there's no way in the world you can raise that kind of money. If you continue with what Grandpa is doing, we don't need to sell out. If we sell out, the government will get the bulk of it. So, I got over \$500,000 worth of equipment. Let's see you purchase that one. I bought a little at a time and let it accumulate. Now, the way government got the real estate figured, they got me classified as a millionaire, but I don't have that kind of money. But, still, the farm has to keep going. So, if you guys want the farm, you watch closely what Grandpa is doing and try to follow the footsteps and you'll probably make it. First thing you have got to do is to make friends with the people smarter than you. These friends are the ones who'll help you out, or pull you ahead. That's how Grandpa got ahead. I used to know practically all the county officials in Fresno, tax collector and assessors. One year I forgot to pay my taxes and asked him how much the penalty is going to be. He said to write the tax, the date when you were supposed to pay and send it by mail. "If I took the money now, I'll have to collect the penalty." So he said take it home and put it in the mail; they're not going to look at it for another 10 days or so. See, so it pays to have good friends. So, I didn't have to pay the penalty!

MRS. HASEGAWA: And are your grandchildren going into farming?

MR. NAKATA: We don't know, they're so young yet.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How old are they?

MRS. NAKATA: The oldest one is 18 years old, the others are 16.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do they help you?

MR. NAKATA: Oh, yes. They come in the summertime to help out.

MRS. NAKATA: They drive the truck, tractor, forklift, change the water for Grandpa.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I think lots of them are finding out that it's a good life.

MR. NAKATA: It's a hard life. You are your own boss, but when you are your own boss, you have to go out before dark and come home after dark.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you get a chance to relax a little?

MR. NAKATA: In between times. But you have to work like the dickens.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you do have diversified farming, like you do, you don't have too much time between crops, do you?

MR. NAKATA: No, my farm is diversified so much that I'm busy all the time. Crops come out one after the other.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's better than having one come in all at once!

MR. NAKATA: Oh, all at once, it's better. You get done in three to four weeks. Then you get a chance to relax.

MRS. HASEGAWA: But, say that one season, the strawberries were wiped out. That's it then, isn't it?

MR. NAKATA: That's the way the vineyards used to be. The raisin men used to have a rough time, but now they have this new marketing program that stretch the market season out. The raisin industry are making the most money right now. They got the prices so high that the raisins are backing up. They aren't buying like they used to. They have to drop the price or they're going to be broke. The production cost is going up all the time. How are you coming out, is the \$64 question. Even the dehydrated grape buyers are backing up. They want to pay \$150 a ton, so it doesn't look too hot.

MRS. HASEGAWA: They dehydrate them instead of putting the grapes on trays?

MR. NAKATA: They dehydrate them and make this bleached raisins. The market for bleached raisin is pretty well filled up so they'll have to slow down.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Shall we look back into another area of our lives? Did you observe Japanese customs when you were young, and do you still observe any?

MRS. NAKATA: We try--the weddings, the proper way of getting married instead of just taking off. If you want to have the right kind, then you'll have to go through the church. If you wanted to save money, and go to Reno, that's okay, too. But when you look back, you want to be proud of what you went through. All of kids, so far, had church weddings. We still have one more to go, and I don't know about that one.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about New Year's?

MRS. NAKATA: Oh, yes. So far, I've been preparing special Japanese food, but it's getting harder each year. Getting older, you know.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do your daughters help you?

MRS. NAKATA: Well, they didn't quite acquire the knack of preparing it. They feel that it takes a lot of time. You always prepared them didn't you?

MRS. HASEGAWA: Very few things. Actually you and I are in the same generation. But, I helped my mother cook some Japanese dishes, but not very much. I try to have a little ozoni but my family doesn't care for it. They love the chicken teriyaki, osushi, umani, however.

MRS. NAKATA: The younger ones, they don't care for some of the Japanese dishes. One of my daughter's children, they will be fourth generation, they eat more Japanese food than my children did. Akiyo won't eat

"sashimi" (raw fish), she won't touch it; and they eat sushi and the other dishes. And they have to have mochi at New Year's. I'm getting tired of it, but they said, "You'll have to continue it; we rather come over here to make it."

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you actually make it?

MRS. NAKATA: We have a machine. We steam the rice, and put it in the machine. The machine makes the mochi but you have to cut it and roll it and put "an" inside. And their hands have to go real fast. So we do that once a year. My mother always used to say that it was a must to bring in the New Year. So far, we've been doing it. I don't know when they will quit, but I guess if we quit, they'll quit, too.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What is the significance of the "omochi"?

MRS. NAKATA: They use it for "medetai." It is sweet rice.

MR. NAKATA: I wonder, too. What's the meaning of it?

MRS. NAKATA: They use it for a happy occasion--that and sekihan, the red rice. My mother made it for my birthdays, that's another must. It signifies happy occasions.

MR. NAKATA: My mother is a Buddhist, and there are certain customs that are followed. During the funeral, it's custom in our area to help out on such occasion. They wanted us to have "Shiagi" or lunch after the funeral. So I asked what kind of food should we prepare? Oh, chicken and meat and all this and that. Then Mrs. Fujioka came over and said that "Oba-san is a Buddhist so if she comes to the funeral we might not hear the end of it. So can you prepare some "shojin" food? The Buddhists don't use meat on such an occasion. There were about 150 there to eat regular foods, such as sushi or meat, chicken, and what not. There were about 50 strict Buddhists, for whom we prepared meatless dishes, and had it buffet style. The food was intended for the relatives and the helpers. But, the chairman announced that after the funeral, dinner will be served at the Bowles Church and anyone who wished to attend, may attend. When he said that, I started to count the number of people in the congregation. In fact, we had some left over. But, do you know, the meatless food went first? It disappeared fast. I thought the Buddhist people were the only ones that ate meatless foods. Beside "nishime" was tasteless. Each food has to be seasoned differently, and that's why it takes so long to prepare.

I guess that's a Japanese custom to feed the people who help, the relatives and people who come quite a distance to attend the funeral.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you have quite a large group that day?

MR. NAKATA: Oh, about 175, I'd say and they all came.

MRS. NAKATA: Since this family lived in our area, we offered to help at their daughter's who passed away.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When was this?

MRS. NAKATA: It was about seven years ago, and they were very grateful, because our church went out to do that for them. So we made both kinds

of food and they were happy with that. We were surprised that "shojin" food went first.

MR. NAKATA: When Mr. and Mrs. Fujioka moved into our area, and I asked if they would join us, he said, "We're Christians." It didn't make any difference because we had two organizations. One strictly Buddhist, the other comprises of Buddhist-Christian, et cetera. It should be a community affair. When something happens, we're supposed to help out. Their daughter passed away when they'd been there about 10 years. We went to help--so we planned the program. They really appreciated it because we did give them a hand. That is the way Bowles people are regardless of their faith. When they need help, they get it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's certainly a warmhearted way of living together in a community. Did your daughters have any "hina matsuri" dolls? Did you when you were small?

MRS. NAKATA: When we had to evacuate, we threw them in the attic. When we came back, the mice had gotten into them, so we saved what we could. There weren't that many.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What camp did you go to?

MRS. NAKATA: We went to Jerome, Arkansas.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You moved around quite a bit, didn't you?

MR. NAKATA: It wasn't too bad. We got a good ride from the Fresno Fairgrounds to Arkansas. We didn't know where we were heading for.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many days did it take? Did they have the window blinds down?

MR. NAKATA: During the days, we had them up. It was a night trip, although the desert and the Sierras was the first night, second night we were in the Rockies. It took three days and two nights. We stopped in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The windows were opened, the kids were coming around. Pretty soon they found out we were Japanese and man, they changed all different colors and they weren't friends any more.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You didn't get off the train?

MR. NAKATA: No, they wouldn't let us off. Then we got to Arkansas.

MRS. NAKATA: It wasn't bad after we got there.

MR. NAKATA: They wouldn't feed us lunch, told us we could eat lunch after we got to the camp. I figured by the time we get to the camp, it'll be closer to 4:00 or 5 o'clock. So I asked the manager of train, if they could feed us lunch anyway--by the time we get half settled we'll miss the lunch. They listened, and so we were served lunch. It wasn't bad.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your children were small?

MRS. NAKATA: Yes. Akiyo was 8, Haruko was 6, the boy was 41. He wanted his milk and wanted to go back home. I told him we couldn't until the MP tell us we can go back. Then he said, "I'll go ask him." In Arkansas,

just the 21 and younger got milk.

MR. NAKATA: That's because they didn't have dairies around then.

MRS. NAKATA: They just had powdered soybean milk.

MR. NAKATA: Anyway, it was a good experience.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were you in camp all the time?

MR. NAKATA: No, I went to Seabrook for a while.

MRS. NAKATA: He did, but we stayed in camp until they released us.

MR. NAKATA: I tried to get out earlier, but they had me classified as an enemy alien.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did that happen?

MR. NAKATA: I don't know; they said I didn't answer the questions properly. So I had three hearings on account of that. They wanted to know why I answered the question "No." I told them, that I didn't understand it. "How far in school did you get?" I told them I was a high school graduate. Then they said, "You mean a high school graduate can't understand that paragraph?" I said, "Yes." They gave me a rough time, so I said, "Give me a pencil," so I put a comma here, and a colon there, and comma here, and a period here. So I told him, I'm going to change it around. I told him I understand that he is a military man and can't answer that. So I said as long as you understand, I'm satisfied. So he called the sergeant, "I think this fellow is all right. Better take him home." I had the privilege of riding in the jeep! Then he says, "In about two or two and a half months, you'll get a notice from the military people of what's going to happen. And I did get a notice. They had a questionnaire so simple that you couldn't make a mistake. The other way you could interpret the questionnaire two ways--a little later they gave me a release, took me off the enemy alien list. It took three years to do that! And I was going to a hearing every month and my stack was getting like that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And where were the hearings held?

MR. NAKATA: In the camp where the main headquarters were. The military would come up there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you went to Seabrook?

MR. NAKATA: When they released me, I went to Seabrook and stayed there for two or three months. I heard California was going to be opened so I came home to camp. When I decided to come home, I went up to the manager's office and said, "I'd like to get a release."

"But if you get a release tomorrow morning, you'll go right into the military." But he told me, "I have everything fixed up so if you worked at the Seabrook Farm, when you get a release, you don't have to serve in the military." They had an arrangement that anybody that worked for essential operations could get a release and start his own enterprise.

So they gave me a release right away. He told me that if I had my own

enterprise and they had no right keeping me away.

MRS. HASEGAWA: So then you came back to California?

MR. NAKATA: Yes, I came back to California.

MRS. HASEGAWA: As a final statement, would you like to give some words of advice to the younger generation?

MR. NAKATA: The only advice I have is as I said before, find good friends, smarter than you are, and with more money than you've got. They may be able to help you one way or another.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Improve your life as you go along?

MR. NAKATA: That's right.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you have anything you'd like to say, Mrs. Nakata?

MRS. NAKATA: No.

MRS. HASEGAWA: About bringing up your children?

MRS. NAKATA: Well, they had good teachers and good advisors, they got along well. And I didn't have any trouble, didn't have to worry about them. I feel very fortunate about that. I guess we lived in a good area. When my son graduated, he asked if we could invite eight boys--his friends. I said, "That's fine if they like simple meal." One was a "kurochan" and I looked at him. My son said, "He's a better one. He's trying to be a doctor." Due to financial help he didn't get there and a professor told him he'll never make it. It discouraged him. Now he works at a drugstore. He came over once, but he always knew us wherever we met.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your son is very democratic. The Sanseis are like that.

MRS. NAKATA: All in all, we had good people around us. We're thankful about that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you recall anything else you would like to add? Any experiences?

MR. NAKATA: That's about the only experiences.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I thank you both very much for reviewing so much of the early days and your experiences.