

MRS. TOSHI UCHIYAMA

MR. NAKAMURA: Today is August 30, 1980. I, Harley Nakamura, am privileged to interview Mrs. Toshi Uchiyama in her home at 6347 South Leonard, Fowler, California, 93625.

Before we get into the interview proper, please give your full name, your place and date of birth, and your place of longest residence.

MRS. UCHIYAMA: My name is Toshi Uchiyama. I was born in Yamaguchi-Ken on April 13, 1896.

MR. NAKAMURA: What was your longest place of residence?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: Sanger. I came to Sanger and lived there until World War II began.

MR. NAKAMURA: When did you come to America?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: I came in 1916 to Sanger.

MR. NAKAMURA: Why did you come to the United States?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: I came as a picture bride. My husband Shunsuke Uchiyama was already here.

MR. NAKAMURA: Was your husband a farmer all the years after you came?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: Yes.

MR. NAKAMURA: Have you returned to Japan?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: I went back to visit about 10 times; about every two years.

MR. NAKAMURA: How many children did you have?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: I have four children; two sons and two daughters.

MR. NAKAMURA: Are they married to Japanese spouses?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: Yes, they are. Our oldest son is Miko, an attorney and the Fowler Municipal Judge. He has an office in Fresno and one in Fowler. Shigeru, our second son, has taken over the family 40-acre farm and operates about 160 additional acres. One of our daughters is married to Jack Sumida, a pharmacist, in Visalia. And our other daughter is married to George Kimura who owns and operates the Boy's Market, a supermarket in Fresno.

MR. NAKAMURA: Do you recollect being discriminated against as a Japanese before the war?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: Yes, in connection with the Alien Land Law. We experienced hardships because of it. If it had not been for the Alien Land Law, we could have been more successful in our business dealings. My husband died when he was 90, so he lived a long life. He thought he would live to be 100. He was faithful with "Nishishiki." He had severe rheumatism, but because of Nishishiki he was able to prolong his health. When he was in his 40's, he had appendicitis, and because he thought he was surely going to die, he wrote his will. It is karma if it is time for you to die, you will die. If you are destined to live, you will do so in spite of everything.

MR. NAKAMURA: What are your recollections of the war years?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: When the war broke out, we had no intentions of selling our farm. But while we were in the Relocation Center, the packinghouse with whom we had entrusted our farm wrote saying that they would no longer be responsible for our farm. We decided that if we realized enough return from the sale of the farm for our children's education, we would sell. We sold our farm for the same low price that we paid for it 20 years before the war. We even included all the farm equipment! It was almost free! At that time my husband was very ill, so we gave up the farm. The children were opposed to it, but because Papa agreed, and since we were not able to care for the farm ourselves, we sold it.

MR. NAKAMURA: What were your experiences after the war? Did you encounter more prejudice?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: No, not really. But we experienced a lot of hardships. The packinghouses in our area resented our returning and put obstacles in our way and made it very difficult for us to buy land. We finally bought 40 acres of rundown farmland and had to start all over again.

MR. NAKAMURA: Did you get cash for the land you sold to the packinghouse while you were in the Relocation Camp?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: Yes. We forfeited the crops, too!

MR. NAKAMURA: That was terrible. What economic changes have you seen over the years, especially after the war?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: It has gotten better.

MR. NAKAMURA: Do you belong to any organizations?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: I belong to the Bukkyo Fujinkai (Buddhist Women's Organization).

MR. NAKAMURA: Was there a Yamaguchi Kenjinkai?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: Long ago there was a Yamaguchi Kenjinkai, and there was also a Bocho Club. We all belonged to the Fresno Nipponjinkai.

MR. NAKAMURA: Do you observe any Japanese traditional customs?

MRS. UCHIYAMA: Yes, we observe weddings and birthdays in the traditional way.

Please give this book about the biography of my husband to Mrs. Hasegawa at the library. It is an account of my husband's life. The book is entitled "Issei Pioneer," and was written by Yoshiaki Takemura in 1974.

MR. NAKAMURA: I will do that. Thank you, Mrs. Uchiyama.