

SHIZUKA DOBASHI

MR. INAMI: Today is June 8, 1980. I, Joe Inami, am privileged to interview Mrs. Shizuka Dobashi at 4270 Amherst Way, Livermore, California, 94550.

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

MRS. DOBASHI: My name is Shizuka Dobashi, and I was born in Hiroshima-ken on May 25, 1900. And my place of longest residence is Madera.

MR. INAMI: What was your husband's name? Where was he born and when?

MRS. DOBASHI: His name was Jiroku Dobashi, and he was born in Hiroshima-ken in 1889, and died in 1970.

MR. INAMI: When did he come to the United States?

MRS. DOBASHI: He came to Hawaii in 1903. He had a contract to work there for three years. When he fulfilled that obligation, he came to the mainland and arrived in San Francisco in 1906. After that he worked in Bakersfield for a short time.

MR. INAMI: What did he do in Bakersfield?

MRS. DOBASHI: He worked on the railroad. In 1922 we were married in Japan and came to Sanger in July, 1922. There we worked until December at Mr. Kawate's farm. We moved to Reedley soon after that and worked on a farm on a contract basis. But after we worked there for about a year, we ran into trouble with the Alien Land Law, so we returned to Sanger in 1924. In 1925 we came back to Fresno and then moved to Madera in 1927. We lived in Madera until 1978, then moved to Livermore.

MR. INAMI: How many children do you have?

MRS. DOBASHI: We have five children. Sho died in 1973, Masao lives in Los Angeles, Chizu in Los Angeles, Iku in Guadalupe, and Mary is in Livermore. I have three grandchildren who are married. I have 16 grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. Another one is on the way and due in October.

MR. INAMI: What would you think about your offspring marrying outside of the Japanese race?

MRS. DOBASHI: I would like my grandchildren to marry Japanese spouses, but from now on, there is nothing I can do nor say about it.

MR. INAMI: Didn't one of your children go into the military service?

MRS. DOBASHI: Yes, Masao and Sho both served in the service.

MR. INAMI: Did your children go to Madera schools?

MRS. DOBASHI: Yes, they went to Madera High School. They went to Ripperdan Elementary School and also attended school in the relocation camp. Chizu graduated from high school in Jerome, and Iku came back and

finished up at Madera High School.

MR. INAMI: Did any of the children go to college?

MRS. DOBASHI: Mary went to college, but did not graduate since she had the opportunity to get a job. She had just a little more to go for graduation! Papa was very disappointed that she did not graduate. Although my children do not have college educations, they are all doing very well. Mary works as a secretary for a school, and the other day she received a lovely bouquet from one of the students. During Secretary Week she received many presents from the faculty. She works hard and is appreciated for the work that she does. Masao donates time and works with the Boy Scouts and with the JACL. He cannot say "no." Chizu is a seamstress. Sho is a court reporter in Santa Maria. They are all conscientious people, and there is not a lazy one amongst them.

MR. INAMI: Have you ever been back to Japan?

MRS. DOBASHI: Yes, I returned to Japan in 1938. At that time my relatives did not want me to return to the United States since they felt that war with Japan and the United States was inevitable.

MR. INAMI: Did you become a citizen of the United States after the war?

MRS. DOBASHI: Yes, I received my citizenship after taking an examination. My husband also became a citizen at the same time.

MR. INAMI: Were you married in America?

MRS. DOBASHI: No, we were married in Japan. I came to the United States with Papa.

MR. INAMI: Did you encounter any racial prejudice during your lifetime here?

MRS. DOBASHI: In 1924 the Alien Land Law was passed and that was a great discriminating factor, but as a whole I did not feel too much discrimination aimed personally at me. The reason for this is that I did not go out into the public very much. I stayed home. In fact, I did not know very many of our neighbors. In the country we are not geographically very close to our neighbors.

MR. INAMI: I think the people in Madera were very good to the Japanese.

MRS. DOBASHI: When we returned to Madera from camp, our Armenian neighbors brought a live turkey and a cake to welcome us back. When the mother in that family passed away, we went to her funeral. They were good neighbors. However, there was one neighbor who did not like Japanese, and when one of the Japanese families, the Kumagai's house burned, two or three young Caucasian boys came to watch the fire, and when they were asked to help, they refused. They just stood around and watched the disaster taking place, and then left!

MR. INAMI: Did you observe any traditional holidays such as the Girl's Day or the Boy's Day or birthdays in a special way?

MRS. DOBASHI: No, we did not celebrate anything, not even birthdays. We

did not have time nor money to spare, but every year we did have mochitsuki before the New Year. Although I have never celebrated my birthday, now my children celebrate my birthday with a party every year, and I am grateful.

MR. INAMI: Did you or your husband belong to any organization?

MRS. DOBASHI: No we did not.

MR. INAMI: Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

MRS. DOBASHI: No.

MR. INAMI: Thank you, Mrs. Dobashi.