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Title: Kathy Yamaguchi Interview  
Narrator: Kathy Yamaguchi  
Interviewer: Naoko Wake  
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**<Begin Segment 10>**

NW: Could you probably give me specific examples of things you ran into that now looking back on it, you think is a challenge that you had to deal with.

KY: Okay, one thing I had was . . . I grew up in a very non-verbal family. We didn't talk. And, in fact, I went through these sort of family therapy research kind of things about the legacy of internment camps on us. And the family therapist, this Nisei woman, family therapist who was conducting these sessions said my family was way more non-verbal than the average, we were way over on one side of the bell shaped curve, and that our family operated on mind-reading. And my father has a very, he has a . . . he's a nice man, but he had an inhibiting effect on my mother who was normally kind of chatty and outgoing, you know. But he just, he just put a dampener on everything. So, in the house, my mother became very quiet. Whereas outside she's "ehdeehdeeh," you know.

NW: Right, right.

KY: So, um, I didn't learn how to talk. I mean, I couldn't speak, which is why I have a terrible fear of public speaking because I could not . . . I didn't know how to talk. And it was only gradually that I learned to talk. And first . . .

NW: Right.

KY: . . . I, I sort of first found white girlfriends who were Jewish from New York, who talk a lot.

NW: Interesting, they do! Many of them, anyway.

KY: I found I, I was attracted to people who were very articulate, talked a lot.

NW: Right.

KY: So then, and that's what I, you know sort of, I had mostly Jewish friends for a long time.

NW: Very interesting.

KY: And then, I got . . .

NW: Is it mostly because of verbal? Thing that you . . .

KY: About what?

NW: Verbal ability that they . . .

KY: Yeah, I loved their verbal ability, I loved how they could just talk, and I just watched them and then,

NW: Wow.

KY: And then, and then the big thing for me was when we started the, what's called the Sansei Legacy Project where it was a group of Japanese Americans got together basically to talk about how the internment of our parents affected us.

NW: Right.

KY: So, um, when I got into that, when I got into that group, that was and I was, by that time I was, I was, I guess I was at least in my mid-forties. Early forties, mid-forties. I was that old. And that was when I learned how to be able to talk. In a group.

NW: Oh, wow.

KY: 'Cause for me it made a huge to be speaking in a group of all Sansei, as opposed to the normal groups, which are mixed.

NW: Right.

KY: 'Cause you know, how Americans, they're quick. And Japanese tend to be a little slower.

NW: They wait a longer.

KY: I still have trouble in a big group. I . . . if it's a big group, I won't say anything because I can't . . . I feel like I can't think fast enough to, to talk. So, so . . .

NW: Yeah.

KY: Okay, so what I was getting at, was we had to do oral . . . we had to present the patients. You do a patient presentation.

NW: Right.

KY: "This is a fifty-six year old woman who came into the emergency room because blahblahblah." And I couldn't talk, and it came out . . . I'd get nervous, and it would be all garbled, you know. So one nice doctor, one of my nice teachers didn't know what was going on because I seemed like I was intelligent enough, I got into the residency.

NW: Of course.

KY: And he didn't realize until he was reading my written and my written one was fine.

NW: Right.

KY: But I couldn't do it orally.

NW: Right. Yeah.

KY: You know. 'cause I was, you know. And I, I mean I was very aware of this. It was, I don't know how I got through it because I had African American roommate and friend, in medical school. She and I were on rotation for a while and now she's someone who didn't do so well on tests. I did okay on tests. But she had poise, her presentations were incredible, she had all this poise, you know and I'd go "Awww, I wish I was like that." Because I just didn't have that. I just, I just, you know, I just didn't have it. It's just been a, a very long struggle for me.

NW: That's interesting, not only because you know, usually Asian Americans or Asians tend to be quieter especially in American perceptions but also, I was recently looking at this 1974, 78, the congressional hearing records to obtain the medical bills to support the survivors in the States. And then the way the survivors presented themselves is that "We are the most quiet people, even within the, normally speaking, very quiet community of Asian Americans."

KY: Right, right, yeah, right.

NW: Because they weren't . . . you were earlier talking about how they are kind and very . . .

KY: Yes, right.

NW: . . . you know, gracious . . .

KY: Right, right.

NW: . . . and appreciative of your work. Because they don't, they don't assert themselves.

KY: Right, right, right, right.

NW: It really fits well with what I've been looking at.

KY: Yeah, yeah.

NW: So I think that's kind of . . . it's all there,

KY: Right

NW: This kind of matter of not being able to speak up and . . .

KY: Right.

NW: then, yeah having to struggle with that, so.

KY: Right, right, right, right, right, right. It's been a huge struggle.

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