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Title: Kathy Yamaguchi Interview  
Narrator: Kathy Yamaguchi  
Interviewer: Naoko Wake  
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**<Begin Segment 12>**

NW: So, your family, um, may I ask you if your family had any relationship to internment camp history?

KY: Yeah. I . . . my parents met each other during those years.

NW: Oh, wow.

KY: Yeah.

NW: Where were they at the time?

KY: They were in Utah.

NW: Utah.

KY: Topaz.

NW: Okay. Topaz.

KY: Topaz. They met actually during the summer, work, working off site.

[Interruption]

NW: So, we were talking about your parents meeting each other.

KY: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, they and because my, and my father was, what, what I would call an assimilationist. Apparently from his father, from his parents, who were in San Francisco, they never lived in Japantown. They didn't hang out with other Japanese Americans, even though his older brother by twenty years was one of the founders of the JACL, my father was like . . . he, he . . . my father was just not, he just -

NW: From the same family [laughs]. It's such a difference.

KY: Yeah, the same family. He was, he's a member of the JACL, but he was never really active. And, so we didn't, other than relatives, I did not hang around, I didn't, I didn't go to a Japanese American church, I wasn't in, I didn't play basketball with them, I didn't feel a part of that. I just didn't feel like I fit in. I was too separate.

NW: So wait, when you say your father was not really, he was into assimilation, was it after the war experience or is it something that went before? Went back to before.

KY: Ah, I think it's mostly after the . . . no. It seems to me it was after the war, but I interviewed, I did an oral history with him, when he was a kid, oh no, when he was in high school, he said he didn't have any friends. And all the Japanese, he said, lived in another neighborhood and he didn't, so he felt like, he didn't feel part of it. And then he went to Berkeley for college. And I told him, I asked him, why did you quit after two years? And he said, well, he wasn't a good student, he didn't learn good study habits, he was very smart, he didn't learn good study habits in high school because he didn't have to. And he didn't have any social contacts in Berkeley because he didn't know anybody. So he felt left out as well, so maybe, you know, and so his, his family just never lived in Japanese neighborhoods and . . .

NW: Right.

KY: . . . they didn't send us to Japanese school or Japanese church or anything. You know.

NW: But, do your parents talk about how they met? They met in an internment camp and . . .

KY: Yes, yes, yes. Very cute story. It was a, it was a blind, double date, sort of blind date. My mother had a girlfriend who wanted to go out with this guy and her parents wouldn't let her go on this date unless it was a double date.

NW: Right, right.

KY: So they found somebody for my mother to go out with, and at the last minute, this guy, who my mother said was roly-poly, roly-poly?

NW: What is it?

KY: Means he was fat. Chubby. Roly-poly, it was an old term.

NW: There we go, it makes sense.

KY: So, so, he couldn't go, and they found a last minute substitute, which was my father and my father was on an adjoining block and she used to see him because he didn't talk to anybody, he was like, you know, he was like a social, what should we say, probably socially, what's the word, social phobia, he was not, was not a you know.

NW: Social person.

KY: He was not a social person, but she noticed him because he was kinda cute, I guess. So, she was very happy to find out that he was the substitute double date, blind date.

NW: Right, right. Yeah.

KY: And that was it. I don't think he ever went out with anybody before.

NW: Oh, wow.

KY: I don't think he did.

NW: How old was he at that time?

KY: He was probably twenty-five, my mother was a little older, like she was twenty-seven or something.

NW: Oh, Okay.

KY: They were old. They were old.

NW: Yeah, well, people used to get married much younger.

KY: Yeah, I think my, I think my, I think, I think my mother probably felt like she wouldn't not get married. I, I don't, I . . .

NW: Oh, wow.

KY: She had lots of friends but, and I think she was very happy to meet my father and it's a good thing he met her because you know, otherwise, he would've been a hermit!

NW: Well, yeah, if he's very socially shy.

KY: A recluse! Right, right, right,

NW: Do your parents talk about other memories of the camp?

KY: Yeah, I was fascinated: my mother would only say that she had a great time. But every time she said that, she'd have like, her, she'd start having tears in her eyes, which is why I was so interested in, you know, going to the Sansei group. Because there was a disconnect: my mother would say what a great time it was, but what was behind you know the, she would say, what's the word? There's a Jap, a funny Japanese word, something like *kanashii*, or something. There's an interesting Japanese word that means sad and bitter sweet or something. *Kanashii*?

NW: Hmm. I'm trying to think. *Kanashii* is just pretty much sad.

KY: It's just sad? I thought there was another quality to it. Maybe it's just . . . but there was and my father had no, nothing. He just said, well the United States government was stupid. But he wasn't particularly angry, which I'm grateful for, he didn't pass on any kind of bitterness, he just said "Well, they were stupid." You know, so.

NW: That was that.

KY: That was that.

NW: And then he was ready to move on.

KY: Yeah, he, yeah, pretty much.

**<End Segment 12> - Copyright © 2011 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.**