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Title: Kathy Yamaguchi Interview
Narrator: Kathy Yamaguchi
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 13>

NW: So, would you say, when you were kind of becoming aware of this huge history of Japanese American community of camps, you really didn't hear that from your parents . . .

KY: No, no, no, no, no.

NW: . . . rather you were hearing from somebody else.

KY: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

NW: Who inspired you to think about those things?

KY: It was because of, it was a Sansei Legacy project. Two ministers, Michael Yoshii in Alameda and Diana Akiyama who was a chaplain at Stanford. They had gotten together and decided that they really needed, it was time to a group of Sansei together to talk about the legacy of the internment, and they weren't sure anyone would talk. But they just got, they gathered people, you know, whoever they knew, word of mouth, and I don't know, maybe around thirty, how many, thirty, forty people came and you couldn't keep us from talking. And it was the first time that some of us were in a group of all Sansei. Because most of us, I mean people like Geri, who grew up much more in a Japanese, Japanese American community didn't have this. They didn't have the same thing; they didn't have this outsider, as much of an outsider feeling as I think I did. And also the same thing with the people who were involved in the Third World Strike politics, in the '70s, I don't think they had this problem either. Or people who grew up in a school that had lots of, you know, other Japanese Americans. I had a very close girlfriend who grew up in San Mateo, went to a Buddhist church, her high school and her grammar school had lots of Japanese Americans. She doesn't have any of these issues. So, it just really, depended, and I was fairly isolated. And those of us who meet through the Sansei project are more similar.

NW: So . . .

KY: We don't . . .

NW: So . . .

KY: Much more, we weren't, we had all non-Japanese friends. You know, so a lot of.

NW: So, in some ways, you and your friends in that group needed to have a group like this to get together and then start to talk about it.

KY: Yes. Right. Exactly. Exactly. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, and we were more interested in talking more about feelings, and not politics. You know, so it appealed to a certain group of people.

NW: Right, yeah.

KY: And mostly, and mostly East Bay, as opposed to San Francisco because it's different, you know. San Francisco considers themselves to be the Japanese community.

NW: Right, right.

KY: And if you're in the East Bay or any place else, you say, "Well, what are we?" you know?

NW: Right.

KY: And you don't have that sense of being part of the, the . . .

NW: Interesting.

KY: . . . of the San Francisco community.

NW: In the East Bay, I imagine there is no core of Japanese Americans community like Japantown.

KY: No, no. Except for the churches, and it's much more spread out.

NW: Right, right. Yeah. Do you think that's true to Los Angeles as well? I know that there is . . .

KY: I don't know. Because they have, in Los Angeles, they have pockets, there's areas that have a lot of Japanese Americans. You know, Gardena, Monterey Park, there's certain areas that have that and most of the people I know are from those areas. I know somebody though, who was more like me, and she went to UCLA, didn't have any, she didn't fit in with the Japanese Americans, and she ended up in New York, and did things totally different, and is, you know, never, never was part of a, much more white kind of event.

NW: Right, right. So you said that you were about forty years old when you started to join in the Legacy Project.

KY: Sansei Project, let me see. It was '90, I was born in '48, so I was, yeah I was in my early forties. Early forties.

NW: So, it started out in 1990, you said?

KY: It started in 1990.

NW: And where did you get together? Did you get?

KY: The Alameda, in the . . .

NW: Alameda

KY: . . .The Buena Vista United Methodist Church

NW: Ah.

KY: In Alameda.

<End Segment 13> - Copyright © 2011 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.