

Densho Digital Repository
Naoko Wake Collection of Oral Histories of US Survivors of the Atomic Bombs Collection
Title: Kathy Yamaguchi Interview
Narrator: Kathy Yamaguchi
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
Location: San Francisco, California
Date: June 15, 2011
Densho ID: ddr-densho-1021-1-8

<Begin Segment 8>

NW: Do you think then, kind of the different version of my, same question, but do you think people perceive you differently because you are engaged with this very unique and worthy work?

KY: What people would . . . who?

NW: I don't know, I mean people in Japanese American community or in Asian American community? Or the medical profession?

KY: I don't think . . . I, I feel, I . . . look, the Americans aren't gonna, they're not gonna care about this. This is not, this isn't something that, that, I, you know, is impressive to UC or San Francisco General Hospital. My coworkers that I'm more friends with, like it because they help me out on this. They, they're eager to help out on this weekend. And, um, you know, they, I complain a lot so they have to listen to my complaining about "oh I don't wueuwue [phonetic]" so. But I, but I don't care, I mean, I don't, I mean, I'm not thinking about what they're thinking about.

NW: What they're thinking about . . .

KY: I just, I don't

NW: Yeah. What about other American doctors, so to speak, like yourself, or probably as a third generation doctors?

KY: I don't think they have, I don't, I don't know . . . I don't, I don't,

NW: Yeah, well, I just . . .

KY: I, I don't know. I just never thought about it, but I don't know. I don't know [muffled].

NW: Yeah, I think . . .

KY: I have no idea, its just pretty, to me, I feel very invisible about this. Number one: I don't like to be in the public. So whenever there's like a TV reporter, I go hide. And I pushed Richard, I said "you go do it."

NW: [laughs]

KY: He doesn't even want to do it either, because he's really quiet . . . Richard is a very nice man, very quiet and soft spoken, he's a very nice guy and I'm really glad that he and I do this together because I like him a lot. But I don't like to be, I don't wanna . . . plus I don't feel . . . I'm not comfortable speaking in front of anything. So I don't.

NW: That's interesting. Because . . .

KY: It's too bad, I don't like to do it.

NW: Yeah, but to me it's interesting because it is, to, partly because I am really interested in this issue, it looks like it, this type of work, involves a lot of publicity, and part of your . .

KY: I am very good at hiding.

NW: . . . what you do [laugh].

KY: I mean, very good at being out of the way when anyone comes.

NW: Well, probably it has a nice match with the Japanese mentality where it might mean . . .

KY: Well, I know, I have heard, someone said that, that everyone has a fear of public speaking but that Japanese, I think it's Japanese Americans or Japanese American women have, more . . .

NW: Women . . .

KY: . . . of a problem than most women. I mean I, you know.

NW: Oh. Yeah. Now that, actually . . . that's interesting that you mention Japanese American women, and I think it's true to Japanese women as opposed to Japanese men . . .

KY: Yeah.

NW: . . . problem with public speech. My impression is, okay so you are woman and Geri is woman and I of course know there are male volunteers and leaders in the Friends of Hibakusha or CABS, Committee for Atomic Bomb Survivors, but I think women are very much present in this whole scene.

KY: Women do volunteer work to a much . . . I mean . . . women, I think if you look at most organizations, like I, I for the last three years I was on the board of what used to be called the Japanese American Services of the East Bay, it was a social services agency in the East Bay, largely for Japanese American elders. And, I looked around, and who's doing all the work? It's the women! And it was women who tended to be retired. Because you had to have the time, so one of the reasons I resign . . . I did my three year term and I resigned because it was just too much time. I mean, it was a board that required too much board time, I thought, you know. But it's the women! It's the women who've volunteer . . . it's . . .

NW: Yeah

KY: . . . and I guess the thinking is that women don't have work that's so important. I don't under, I don't understand that at all because women have as much work as men.

NW: Right.

KY: But women, yet know, I think that you'll find . . . just in terms of volunteering, I think it's way more women.

NW: Right. Right, yeah.

KY: It's the helping out. The men feel like they have to make the money, I guess.

NW: No, because [unintelligible]

KY: But then they wanna go play golf! I don't know.

NW: [laugh]

KY: I, I really, it's a very interesting question, it's a very interesting question and I . . . that's, I'll have to think about that.

<End Segment 8> - Copyright © 2011 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.