

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-1021-1-9

**<Begin Segment 9>**

NW: How about yourself, I mean, you being a, a women and being successful in medical profession, especially . . . I, I actually was talking to another historian of medicine who had a chance to interview first generation American women, not just Asian American women doctors but any doctors who are women, who went to medical school, so 1940's and 1950's . . .

KY: Really?

NW: . . . and his question was mostly about how they might have had a sort of unique challenge because of their gender.

KY: Oh yeah.

NW: Do you think that you, you went through some of that?

KY: Yeah, oh yeah. It was very hard.

NW: So you told me you went to medical school in UC San Francisco, and . . .

KY: Yeah, I was; I went, it was very hard for me. I had a very, very, very hard time. Very, very, very hard . . .

NW: How many women students did you have?

KY: We had, we had twenty-five percent women, and this was 1971 and this was the biggest, it was the largest percentage of women, um, except for the women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. Because I think previous it had been like around fifteen percent. And then all of a sudden my year it jumped to twenty-five percent, and this was 1971, women's liberation has started, and then right after that, it just started going up. But being where I was, there weren't very many women role models. And the ones that were there, many of them were, they said "Oh, there's no problem being a woman." They were like out of it, you know.

NW: [laughs]

KY: So it was very difficult.

NW: Right.

KY: It was very, it was horrible. I actually cried my way through medical school and residency. It was, and, and I think it was harder because I don't come from a professional family. My father's a gardener and my mother never worked outside the home until I was out of college. So, I didn't have preparation, I didn't see this kind of profess . . . I didn't see this around me, and the whole idea of making, making decisions, being responsible for other people was very difficult for me. I was a girl. I think I was supposed to just get married. You know, it was very hard. And I just, I had a really hard time. I feel like I had a harder time than most or I was more willing to talk about it but I had a very hard time.

**<End Segment 9> - Copyright © 2011 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.**