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Title: Donald K. Tamaki Interview
Narrator: Donald K. Tamaki
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 5>

NW: Yeah, it's very—in many ways exciting part of the Japanese American history to go through this era of redress and eventually leading to the formal apology and compensations by the U.S. government, but also I think you're right to point out that there are some remaining elements that um, uh, they don't really necessarily involve the straightforward acknowledgement of how the entire decision to—to round up Japanese Americans—including U.S. citizens—and placing in concentration camps. Um, so, um, I'm very, um—as somebody who teaches Asian American history, I think it's a very important component of what we all have to, sort of, know as part of our nation's past. But, uh, let me ask you, uh, a question about the reason that you mentioned as your second interest in your involvement with the Friends of Hibakusha. Um, so you say that in addition to policy and political reasons there were logistical or practical assistance that you were able to offer. Um, I'm somewhat familiar with this, uh, because I understand that for instance, you know, uh, medical license in Japan does not translate into a doctor's ability to practice medicine in America. So, I understand that there are some arrangements that need to be made. But could you tell me, uh, from where you stand based on your experience? What kind of logistic, um, assistances that you were able to offer to your survivors.

DT: So I'm not the most qualified to explain this, because, um, it was some time ago, and my memory is a little, um . . . weak on it. But, um, my recollection is that, uh, the medical examinations took place at UCSF, University of California—San Francisco Medical Center. And uh, of course, there were teams of people visiting from Japan . . . uh, researchers and doctors. Um . . . and so, there were others in our group, and survivors among them that were principally responsible for arranging for the local contacts. And that probably was done in Los Angeles and . . .

NW: Yes.

DT: Seattle. You know, I just don't know where the locations were, but in San Francisco, I believe it was UCSF. I think.

NW: Mhm. Yes, I think it changed a little it over time, but yes.

DT: So, um, you know, hospitals are busy places, so in order to get examination rooms ready and then . . . um, have coordination with the, uh, the local medical staff and . . . and I'm sure there

was an interest on the U.S. side about, you know, the impact of . . . impact of radiation exposure over time.

NW: Right.

DT: There probably was, um, and I'm speculating because I don't remember. I mean, there was probably some interest on the U.S. side as well. But I think principally it was the Japanese government's commitment to um, provide services to A-bomb survivors and to study the impact of radiation and the legacy of uh, the World War II. So, um . . . just the facilities arrangement and um . . . I presume that the doctors and staff visiting had their own, um, accommodations for travel, but . . .

NW: Mhm.

DT: Um . . . I presume there was some coordination that would be needed.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And then, um . . . of course people here, um, had to be contacted.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And their families, and depending upon what physical condition they were in, they could either get there on their own or they needed transportation.

NW: Right.

DT: So, there was coordination on that side and when these, these were happening there were hundreds of people in my recollection. Now, it's pretty much dwindled. People have passed away. But, um, when these started, uh, again, I'm not sure at what point I got involved in this, because . . . maybe it was going on for some time. I just don't remember. But . . .

NW: Well, Friends of Hibakusha itself was established in 1982 and the medical checkups started in 1977.

DT: Ok, so I was not involved. Good. Yeah, I'm glad you know, because I was not involved in 1977. So our involvement, if it started in '82, we were doing the internment camp cases, so I was too busy.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And then so, uh, my recollection is probably '84, '85.

NW: Mhm.

DT: And so I was involved maybe two or three years in that . . . area. And only locally. And so, um, getting back to the activities, so, I think . . . the, among the, um, Mariko Lindsey for instance, I'm sure was, who you've probably interviewed, was doing the coordination among the, um, survivors themselves. Contacting the family, making sure they got there. There was a

certain amount of fundraising that had to go on to, to provide for that. And the I, I think I was more involved in, uh, um . . . the press releases and . . . you know, public education.

NW: Mhm.

DT: That, you know, this is a significant event, and, um, a newsworthy story.

NW: Right.

DT: So, I was helping.

NW: What kinds of public education programs did you become involved?

DT: I think these were just mainly press conferences.

NW: I see.

DT: Where people like Jack, uh, Dairiki and um, Mariko Lindsey and others participated, and, and . . . just to let the public know that, in their midst, you know, there were these A-bomb survivors who are willing now to talk about their experience. And, that generated a certain amount of interest.

NW: Mhm. Right.

DT: Because for most people, of course, it's . . . it's an academic, historical . . . you know, footnote really, to World War II. It's not a, something they realize. So…

NW: You'd hope not. [chuckling]. Um, yes, teaching American students nowadays, it's quite a challenge to even . . .

DT: Yeah, it's very abstract. Yeah.

NW: . . . impress with them that World War II was a world war and that's something to be remembered.

DT: Right.

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