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Title: Geri Handa Interview
Narrator: Geri Handa
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
Location: San Francisco, California
Date: July 20, 2011
Densho ID: ddr-densho-1021-2-4

<Begin Segment 4>

GH: Yes, and then we also need to make sure that we have senior citizens' centers to provide services for us.

NW: Right.

GH: And also, meals. Ethnic meals.

NW: Right, right.

GH: You know, that we are very comfortable with. So there are certain things that they often felt "okay this," they can agree on. And, and I wanted to make sure that all the seniors, they . . . the organization was actually run by the seniors themselves, you know. We were there to assist but they themselves would come up with the goals and direction and what they wanted. So that worked out very well, and because of that, I got to meet all these different key leaders within the community and also within the senior organizations.

NW: Right.

GH: And so, I would go to the Filipino community senior center, the Chinese, the Korean, and, you know . . .

NW: Did you take care of Japanese seniors as well?

GH: . . . Japanese, yeah.

NW: Right, yeah.

GH: So, during that whole period of time, I got to work with another group of volunteers, who we decided, well in Japan, in Little Tokyo, there was an unserved need for seniors, for meals. And, and serving ethnic food.

NW: Right, yeah.

GH: So for five years, we would serve meals once a month, we'd go shopping in the morning, to the maybe, to the produce market, or, and pick up things to make for the meal and then we'd prepare that evening so that it could be served the next day.

NW: Right, right.

GH: And so, and we invited all those seniors that lived in Little Tokyo, the ones that lived, well maybe alone, you know, and living in the hotels or, you know, in the area, and people who, who we felt, probably because of their income, couldn't always have a warm meal, you know? So we did that for five years, and finally after five years, it got funded.

NW: Ohoho. [laughs]

GH: Yeah.

NW: Well, congratulations.

GH: And so now they, they . . . it's still going on -

NW: It's still going on?

GH: Yeah, in fact, they've expanded it and it's serving other communities too, you know. And, and at that time, it was, it was during that time that they had all this resurging of Sanseis trying to find their identity, their roots, and so . . .

NW: Are you Sansei as well?

GH: Yes. And so they developed senior centers, you know, they're called pioneer centers. And they, these young people all worked with the, you know, seniors, to provide, like, say for example, health fair, services for the seniors, you know, transportation, all those things. And bilingual services, you know, social services.

NW: Right. Right.

GH: So, it was all kind of working together at that time.

NW: Yeah.

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