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Title: Keiko Shinmoto Interview
Narrator: Keiko Shinmoto
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 4>

NW: So you were born in '36, you were probably, when you were 5, wait a minute, the war started out in 1941, so you were 5, 4 years old when the war started out.

KS: Yeah, I believe so. And after that, when I was 8 years old? Yeah. From 7, 8, 9, 10, I think, if people don't have [relatives in] countryside, everyone had to go *shūdan sokai*. That's the one I joined, yeah.

NW: So, your family was within the city limit of . . .

KS: Oh, yeah, just the middle of the city, the Bomb Dome, you see. We lived in, right there.

NW: So because you were in *syūdan sokai*, you were able to survived, in a way, that's right?

KS: Yeah.

NW: Now, after the war started out, do you, of course, you are very young, but do you have any memory of like, um, food shortage or a kind of things didn't work?

KS: Of course. We, well, after war finished, we all got together to live, I think that maybe, after the war finished, two years, year and a half or two? We, my mom, the sister lived in a little suburb out on the city, little bit out city, so, . . .

NW: Outside the city.

KS: So she had a, not the city, maybe 5 mile out from the city. They had a small house here, there, rental house. So my mom asked if we all gonna come to live there, in one of the rooms. They says naturally, it's a good home. So I came home from the city. But that time, we didn't have any food. So, that's the only thing I remember, the sweet potato. So my mother said, dinner ready or lunch ready, and we go down to the table and a look at the plates: one potato.

NW: Hm, that's right. Did you have one potato per person?

KS: Just, only, one potato.

NW: Were you able to eat three times a day? Or?

KS: Well, it's not that, well, after that my mom, mother's devoted mother. We have a lot of sisters and brothers, so they have to keep them alive. So she went to the countryside. There a lot of people from Portland, together who had come back to Japan. They arrived at countryside, and they were farmers. So they said, well, anytime you need food, come over, we gonna have food. But, do you know *yamiichi*?

NW: *Yamiichi*, sure.

KS: Actually, we cannot do that. So mom has just a, back, *rukku sakku*, we call it, backpack. She go visit friends. Only the mom. we were so small and my sister was working so only the mom had to go. And, sweet potato, vegetable, and a little rice, general things like that. Yeah, then, everyone say don't ride on a train or bus, because police is looking for *yamiichi*, you know, *yami*, everything that's under that, whatever that's called. So mom walked all the way, how many miles, I don't know. Yeah. And my sister had a little bit land, farmland. So they grew there something, we all gonna get it, from there, too. In the mean time, a little bit rice, I think only the rice or wheat. Whether we could get it from the government, that one, yeah.

NW: It's ration, yearh, it's . . . the kind of the food you can get is pretty limited.

KS: Yeah. You cannot choose anything. Whatever put on the place, you have to eat it.

NW: So was it true even before or during the war? Or is this something that became worse after the war was over?

KS: To me, it's after the war.

NW: After the war. War is over, you mean.

KS: Over the war, for while.

NW: Do you mean during the war ?

KS: During the war, I was at *syūdan sokai*, so that's no problem.

NW: So, relatively, food was alright.

KS: They provided for us food, for children. Yeah. I am pretty sure that time my mom thought that's okay, too. But anyway, when atomic bomb dropped, everything [was] burned. Everything, just nothing. So I'm pretty sure rough time my parents had to take care of all of these kids.

NW: So, yeah, during the war, you were in the countryside, so food was practically okay, whereas, after it's over, because you're already back, it was very difficult in terms of, yeah, access to the food.

KS: But, sometimes after the war, you know, *shinchū-gun*, America no soldier comes to that. Then, oh, today they're coming, so we go over there. And that was nearby my aunt's house. They were training or something because of big field. And when they come, all the soldiers were so kind, or, you know. We five or six kids would go over there, come on, come on, at first we

were a little scared, but oh, they share chewing gum, chocolate. So, you know, “Thank you for the candy!” That’s was the first time I remembered my age to have it, chocolate.

NW: Yeah, especially for small kids, sweets are very, very important.

KS: Yeah. And after, what I remember is that there was a professor from Harvard. I don’t know where, from, he came to, but our elementary school, after I go back to the city, across the street from the Atomic Dome, that was my elementary school. Then, uh, they brought a lot of supply for children, you know. At that time, too, one thing, funny thing happened. Toothpaste. We don’t have, everybody want to, some of the candy, some of the toothpaste, this and that. And one boy opened it and he put in mouth.

NW: Oh, he thought that it’s sweet?

KS: Yeah, it’s candy, you know what I mean?

NW: Yeah, I do, oh my god!

KS: I never forget that one. We just laughed and laughed and . . .

NW: But isn’t toothpaste, depending on, the flavor, it kind of tastes sweet, so you would think “Oh, I should be eating this.”

KS: Because other people, other friends had chocolate, or candy, and he got the toothpaste. And it was “Oh my gosh! You have bubble coming out of your mouth!” So you know, we all laughed about it, of course.

NW: They shouldn’t have mixed it up! You know, sweet has to be food. Yeah, toothpaste is sort of . . .

KS: Yeah, That’s what I remember.

NW: Yeah, that’s kinda a striking story.

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