

Densho Digital Repository
Naoko Wake Collection of Oral Histories of US Survivors of the Atomic Bombs Collection
Title: Matsuko Hayashi Interview
Narrator: Matsuko Hayashi
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
Location: San Jose, California
Date: June 3, 2012
Densho ID: ddr-densho-1021-4-9

<Begin Segment 9>

NW: And, um, so . . . how about American-school? Did you have other Asian-American friends . . .

MH: Oh, yes.

NW: . . . in American-school as well?

MH: There were so many Japa . . .

NW: Uh-huh.

MH: Uh, out of fifty . . . you would say about twenty of them were Japanese.

NW: Oh, wow. Okay. Quite a bit.

MH: Ours was the largest class.

NW: Uh-huh.

MH: But there were a lot of prejudice in those days.

NW: Mhm.

MH: And . . . for convenient, they always . . . we were—you could feel the prejudice.

NW: Mm.

MH: But right after war, you know, the four-forty-second? Italy and all the . . . medal of honor people?

NW: Mhm. Mhm.

MH: That thing really changed a lot.

NW: Changed it. Right. Yeah.

MH: Made it so good for us.

NW: Yeah, for all the Japanese-Americans.

MH: Yeah.

NW: That's true. Well . . .

MH: We used to argue with schoolteachers about . . . prejudice.

NW: Well, tell me more specifically, for example, how did you argue with the teacher?

MH: Well . . . I was in fifth grade, and she say Japan's bad, they try to invade the China.

NW: Mhm.

MH: And, and, they're the aggressive one. And . . .

NW: Mhm.

MH: . . . they used to blame 'em, and we used to get so mad, and said that's not right. We used to argue with them.

NW: Mmm. Mhm. So, you felt like you need to defend Japan?

MH: Yeah.

NW: Yeah, yeah. And, how about, you know, white kids in the same school? Did you feel like there is a sort of tension?

MH: We, we always stuck with Japanese . . . I feel, I guess, we feel more comfortable.

NW: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

MH: 'Cause they—they think they're better than us and.

NW: Mhm.

MH: We eat different things.

NW: Right, right.

MH: And, of course, we have sandwich for lunch, but, we always were segregated, sorta at . . .

NW: Mm.

MH: Grammar-school.

NW: Mhm. So, you didn't have any white friend at your school, then?

MH: Not really.

NW: Not really.

MH: Classmate, we all know the names . . .

NW: Right, right.

MH: . . . everything, but we—we didn't—never felt that close . . .

NW: Mm.

MH: But like, my kids—they, you know, Sansei?

NW: Mhm.

MH: They think they're same.

NW: Mm.

MH: You know.

NW: That's right. Yeah.

MH: With that . . .

NW: Yeah, with the rest of the Americans . . .

MH: Just, just . . .

NW: Yup.

MH: My, my daughter, she's—she's uh, assistant minister here.

NW: Uh-huh. Oh, okay. Okay.

MH: Yeah, she's married to *huakujin*.

NW: Yeah.

MH: So.

NW: So she doesn't think that there is such a huge, kind of, uh, gap, or difference between . . .

MH: Uh-huh.

NW: . . .white Americans and . . .

MH: Uh-huh.

NW: . . . Asian Americans. Hmm. So, when you went to Japan at the age of fourteen then, what was your impression of Japan? Was it your first time to go to Japan?

MH: It's the first time.

NW: Yeah, what did you think?

MH: Well I don't know. There were . . . we should . . . they felt . . . they treat us like a spy or something—Japan *no* people.

NW: Ohhh. Hmm. In 1935, already?

MH: Uh-huh.

NW: Mhm.

MH: You know, especially, that was just before...was it *shinajihen*?

NW: Mhm. Mhm.

MH: And . . . Manchuria and all those things, and—that's what we used to—we had about four or five Niseis in our class.

NW: Mhm.

MH: Japanese school. So, we used to stick together and every time, we just talk English instead of Japanese.

NW: Ohh.

MH: They all say *warukuchi iu*.

NW: Yeah.

MH: They . . .

NW: Right, right.

MH: . . . think we are talking about them.

NW: Yeah, yeah. So, you didn't really, uh, associate, make friend with . . .

MH: We don't have real close friend.

NW: Right.

MH: It was all Niseis.

NW: Right, right.

MH: And they were quite a few.

NW: Right. Mhm. So, what was the original plan, then?

MH: Huh?

NW: You went there at the age of fourteen, but did you think you were gonna be there for just a few years, or?

MH: Well, we wanted to come back, so . . .

NW: Right.

MH: Uh . . . junior . . . thirty-eight, summer vacation, my father said to come back to America . . .

NW: Mhm.

MH: For vacation.

NW: Right.

MH: So.

NW: Did you do that?

MH: Yeah.

NW: Yeah.

MH: On a boat.

NW: Yeah.

MH: Two weeks, it takes two week on a boat, one way.

NW: I know.

MH: So, one whole month is traveling.

NW: Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah.

MH: But we were able to come back.

NW: Mm.

MH: And nobody—in those days, nobody would do things like that. Nowadays, they just fly back and forth like nothing.

NW: Right, right. But you obviously were in Hiroshima, back in Japan by 1945. Tell me about how it happened.

MH: Uh.

NW: So back in 1938, you were back in the U.S. for summer vacation, but then you, also, after that went back to Japan.

MH: J-Japan.

NW: Right? Yeah.

MH: And finish-finished *jogakkō*.

NW: Right.

MH: Uh-huh.

NW: Which, did you do that?

MH: Yes.

NW: You finished it? Okay.

MH: And then we got stuck in the war-wars in 19 . . .

NW: Mm.

MH: Oh, it was right after graduation.

NW: Mm.

MH: But I was going to *yōsai* and Japanese *kimono wasai*.

NW: Mm. Mhm. Yeah, so, ah, that was after your graduation . . .

MH: Uh-huh.

NW: . . . from . . .

MH: Graduation.

NW: . . . junior high school. Yeah.

MH: Mhm.

NW: Yeah, yeah.

<End Segment 9> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.