

Densho Digital Repository
Naoko Wake Collection of Oral Histories of US Survivors of the Atomic Bombs Collection
Title: Jun Dairiki Interview
Narrator: Jun Dairiki
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
Location: San Francisco, California
Date: July 22, 2012
Densho ID: ddr-densho-1021-6

<Begin Segment 1>

NW: So, as I said to you earlier, I'm really curious about your personal history, life history because I'm curious about Japanese Americans who had a lot of international experiences. To me, you are fascinating figure, from which I expect to learn a lot. So, I'm gonna ask you a few questions.

JD: Sure! Absolutely.

NW: Why don't we start by asking you about your parents. If you could tell me what kind of people they were, what they were doing, that's what I'm curious about.

JD: You know, it's interesting. I don't know too much about my mom' and dad's background in Japan. They both came from Kumamoto-ken.

NW: Oh, okay. From Kyūshū.

JD: And uh, I understand that my dad, you know, there is a national archive, Uncle Sam's National Archive, down in San Bruno and we did some checking down there, and we discovered that my dad came into the United States on at least three different occasions, at about 3 or 4 different ports. And my dad was a very young man, and he came out here all by himself, and I think my grandfather came with him. Unfortunately I never knew my grandparents on either side of my family. I never met them, didn't know what their names are or anything, you know. Anyway, my dad came out, and he stayed here for a little bit, then came back, so he went back and forth about 3 or 4 times.

NW: Was he doing some business, then?

JD: He was only like 16 or 17, yeah. So the last time he he went back, maybe my mom came over on her own, I don't know if she was a picture bride, I don't know any of that part about them. Or maybe it was already an arranged marriage, you know, from before. I just don't know any part of that.

NW: Even though they met in Japan or here in the States?

JD: Oh, it's over in Japan. Because my mom came over from Japan.

NW: After they got married?

JD: They got married here actually, but I think she came over to marry him. That's, that's just my perception. But my dad worked for a Japanese export-import company. He was a salesperson for that company. And his territory, I don't remember the name of the company, I'm sorry to say, but his territory was like from Central California to all the way up to Northern California, like around Loomis, Penryn, in that area, so he covered all of that territory. And he actually did business with Jack's father, grandfather.

NW: So there was a sort of family connection there.

JD: Because his grandparents ran a Japanese grocery store in Penryn. Now, his mom and dad ran a hotel in Sacramento, and so my father stayed in their hotel. That was a place for him to come back to and he would go and visit all his customers, whether it'd be in Sacramento or Penryn, or Lincoln, or wherever the business was. So that's what he was doing. My mom was basically a housewife, but she did do some domestic work, and in doing so, she did not have to cook, all she did was to cleaned the houses, you know. But she wanted to learn how to make American food, so she would ask the kitchen staff, you know, the cooks and the people in the kitchen staff, she asked if she could maybe watch them to see how they made roast beef, leg of lamb, stuffed veal, roast with potatoes, you know, cooking at the same time, roast at the same time as the meat, and so she did that. She learned how to do that and she learned how to make apple pie, lemon meringue pie, custard pie, she learned how to do all this by watching them do it, she was very good at this. So that's what she was, basically. Now, when I was growing up, I went to a regular, you know, grammar school, but I also had to go to Japanese language school after school. I hated it. I hated it.

NW: Oh, what was wrong!

JD: And the school that I went to was held at the San Francisco Buddhist Church. And the teachers were the ministers, I think, you know. I never enjoyed going to that. But I did because my mom and dad sent me there. Because when I came home from grammar school, I wanted to stay home and play. Not go to another school. So I did that, and of course, when Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941, I was, well, I had just turned seven that year.

<End Segment 1> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 2>

NW: So you were born seven years before 1941.

JD: I was born in '34. I was born in September of '34. So, 1941 in December, I was, I had just turned seven a few months before that. And then, of course when the war came along, we were interned. We went to Tanforan first. In fact a lot of Bay Area people were housed in Tanforan. A few months later, we were sent to Topaz, Utah. So, from the age of seven till the war ended in 1945, I was, I had just turned eleven when the war sort of ended. We did not come back to San Francisco because there was no Japanese export-import company that my dad could come back to. He had really no other skills. And my mom was a domestic, but, you know, I don't know, she didn't know if that would really work out. So, we had some friends who were up in Idaho, and he said you know, there's is a lot of work to be held but it's all farming. It's all agricultural.

NW: Different kind of world. Yeah.

JD: Like I said, I had two of my older sisters who lived in Chicago, but we did not go to Chicago because, again, there was nothing that my dad could do. And so we decided, "Okay, we'll just go up to Idaho." So here they were in their 50s, and they knew nothing about farming. So they had to learn all over. A new life style, a new line of work. Something they had to learn, like . . . it would have been easier if they were younger. But, they weren't. So they were up in Idaho, I was in Idaho from 1945, and the war ended in 1945, until I graduated in 1952. So, '45 to '52, is what, seven years? So I lived there for those seven years, and when I graduated from highschool in 1952, I went to Chicago because that's where my two older sisters were.

NW: Right, right. What were they doing there in Chicago.

JD: Well, both of my sisters were working.

NW: But in what line of business?

JD: You know, I don't really know. I don't know what work they were working or anything like that.

NW: But were they near downtown Chicago?

JD: No. They lived in an apartment. I don't know where the apartment was, come to think of it. At that point, my older sister was married, while my other sister wasn't. But, so we roomed and boarded with my oldest sister and her husband.

NW: So remind me, she, older sister, the oldest sister was twelve years older than you are?

JD: She was thirteen years older. And she actually was, at the time the war started in 1941, she was a junior at the University of California. And my other sister, that was between the two of us, she was a junior in high school.

NW: So they had to . . . their education was . . .

JD: So their education was interrupted.

<End Segment 2> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 3>

JD: But anyway, I went to Chicago after graduation, I took secretarial courses, and at that time, the year I was there, it was the first year that Northwestern University, in their school of business decided to open up a school for secretaries.

NW: Really? So that was the first year, new project for them.

JD: They no longer have it. But the way I understood it, I could be wrong on my facts with this, but MacMillan, and whatever the name of this book company was, published all of the Gregg's [?] shorthand notebooks. Apparently when the Gregg's, there was a separate Gregg's secretarial

school in Chicago and I don't know what happened, whether the owner passed away or whatever, but they didn't carry it on as a private school, and they gave it to the publishers, who published the shorthand notebooks, and of course the publishers didn't want to be saddled with the school, so, the way I understand it is they in turn, asked Northwestern, their school of business, would you be willing to take over the school, and so I guess Northwestern did agree to that, so that's how come I went there. I went, it was formerly the Gregg's Secretarial School, I think, privately owned, but now it became a part of the Northwestern University system. So I went to school there and I went there for about a year, because I had taken some business classes in high school, my typing and shorthand, so I already had, I had some background in it already. This was just to further my skills and to prepare myself to go into the business world.

NW: Oh yeah, do you have a certificate? That helps.

JD: And I actually have my certificate from there, from the university, Northwestern University telling me I successfully completed their education, all this and the other. So I went and worked for a branch office for a major insurance company. Chicago had a branch office, and the home office of the insurance company was in Indianapolis. It was known as Lincoln National Life Insurance Company. I don't know if it's still in existence anymore, they get all gobbled up and everything, you know. But I went to work in the branch office in Chicago for that. And it was a clearing house for the insurance company, the branch office was. There were like three agencies that all sold Lincoln National Life Insurance Company policies. There were three different uh, agencies, but all of their applications had to be cleared through our office, ours was, that's why we're known as the clearing house. You know, you have to send out an inquiry as a background check on the policy holder's potential and all the standards, then you send it on to, you send the application on to the home office. So anyway, I worked there from, so I graduated in '53, so from '53 to '55 I worked in that office, and I decided that I really would like to travel. [laugh] So, you know, I thought well, I'll go and see what I can do. I don't know how I found out about the Civilian Office for Uncle Sam, but it was posted where I worked. I went there and I asked some questions about it and they said "Oh yeah, we could use civilian employees, secretary types, to go overseas."

NW: Now, at that time, were you fluent in Japanese? You told me earlier . . .

JD: No.

NW: Do you think they were interested in you because of your background?

JD: No, I don't think so. It was, you were sent to where the need was, where the position was needed. And actually, to be very honest with you, when I made out my application to Uncle Sam, I listed all the European countries I wanted to go to; I did not list any Asian countries.

NW: Why is that?

JD: I didn't want to go to Japan, or Hong Kong, or Okinawa or anything. Because I had music as my background, a little bit, I mean, I don't sing anymore, but I used to, at that time. And I wanted to go to Europe to further my singing. Not to make it as a career or anything, but just to, just to keep up with that. I really wanted to go to Germany, that's where I really wanted to go,

either there or Italy. So, I did not list any Asian countries, but where they sent me was Japan, because they had an opening there.

NW: I see, so it didn't quite work out.

JD: Yeah, so it didn't work out that way. But anyway, so, I ended up in Japan; I mean, it worked out okay, you know. I sent two years there. I spent about the first twenty or twenty-one months in Nagoya, and then the last three months, I spent in Tokyo because our headquarters got moved from Nagoya to Tokyo. So I spent my last three months there. Then I came home, I went to Chicago, and visited with my sister there. And I came out to San Francisco because my other sister had moved from Chicago to San Francisco, in the two years that I was gone, she moved from Chicago to San Francisco. So I decided, okay, I would like to then maybe come out and "bach" with her. I'll go find me a job.

NW: So she was working in San Francisco at that time?

JD: She was working for Fort Mason, which is Uncle Sam. That's an Uncle Sam facility. So she was working there. And of course, I came home, I didn't have a job, so I had to go look for a job. And I looked around, and actually, what I wanted to do was to go to Europe. I still was trying to get to Europe.

<End Segment 3> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 4>

NW: Now, your interest in, I suppose, classical music, is that something you just acquired when you were growing up?

JD: Well, let me tell you something about my mother, then. Okay. My mother was a person who felt that each of her children should learn something. So my oldest sister, the one that was married and living in Chicago, she took classical Japanese, the traditional Japanese dancing, so that's what she took. The sister that was in between us, she took ballet, tap dancing, and piano.

NW: Hmm. It's a very different kind of thing from what the older sister learned.

JD: That's the way my mother was. She did not think it had to be steeped in Japanese traditions necessarily, she appreciated it, but it didn't have to be steeped into it, and with me, I took voice lessons. And the little town I grew up in after the war, it happened to have a voice teacher. And so I took voice lessons.

NW: Nice coincidence, then. So that's based on your mother's teaching philosophies, so to speak. And you liked it.

JD: Yeah, oh yeah, I always enjoyed singing. I think my mother must have seen that in me. And I remember making a comment to her, when I was still in, because when we came out of camp, I was in like seventh or eighth grade, middle school anyway, and she says, well, you know, one of these days, we ought to get you to go in to take lessons, voice lessons. But she did not push me at the time I was in middle school, um, but once I became a freshman in high school, she didn't let

up until I called the teacher. She was very pushy in that respect. She says, "I want you to call Mrs. Benning," that was the name of the teacher, "And make an appointment for us to see her." So, I kinda, procrastinator, you know, but finally I did call Mrs. Benning and told her, that we'd like to make an appointment to see her, so, we made an appointment, went to see her. And she took me on as a student. Now, I was Mrs. Benning's first Japanese student.

NW: Oh, so she had Caucasian students, but not Japanese or Japanese Americans, for that matter.

JD: So, I was her first Japanese student. I am not saying this as bragging, but I was also her first success. I got a lot of awards in my high school years, and I sang at the high school graduation, and so forth and so on. So anyway, that's why I wanted to go to Europe, I wanted to further my voice lessons, you know.

NW: Why do you think that your mother was so eager to kind of push you ahead so you can continue to do this voice lessons?

JD: She wanted each of us to have something.

NW: So, she wanted to make it concrete.

JD: I think that probably was a goal of hers. You know, because in Japan, I don't know about now, but in old days, you had to learn *ikebana*, learn how to cook, and learn how to do this, and maybe you took classical dancing, too, I don't know. I think that's what they did in Japan, I don't know. Maybe some of that was still instilled in her when she came here. Okay, we're still in America, true, but it doesn't mean that you can't, shouldn't be taking something. So each of us was instilled to do something. And my older sister was actually quite good at Japanese classical dancing. So good to the point that her teacher wanted her to go to Japan to get further training and get a certificate and all that. And my sister said no way. She did not want to go. So, I mean she took classical dance, she was very good at it, but not willing to go to Japan to further that part of it. 'Cause like I said with my other sister, it was all American style, you know, ballet, tap dancing and piano. And then with me it was voice. So it was . . . just that my mother was very adamant about the fact that each of us kids had took something.

NW: And, uh, I know you know, in case of Jack, he was just in Japan, although he's born here, and he just was in Japan because his grandfather was ill.

JD: His grandfather was ill.

NW: Right. Whereas, in your case, it could have been the case that your mother probably wanted you to, or your sisters to go to Japan and could have been in a similar situation as Jack.

JD: I don't know. See, I don't know about that, yeah.

NW: Your impression is that, let's say, among the family like yourself, Japanese American families, of the time, it was common thing for parents to send kids back to Japan.

JD: I think a lot of them did send their kids to Japan for education reasons. Yeah, we have some friends who were sent back there because of that, you know. I don't think my parents were going to send us back to Japan though, for education. I don't think that was their intent. I think she just wanted all of us to have some kind of cultural, I guess it was mostly cultural, thing. Because my mom and dad are Christians. Yeah, they were not Buddhist. They might have been Buddhist in Japan, but when they came here my mom decided to convert to Christianity.

NW: So, change it. Okay.

JD: So she'd be . . . She and my dad are Methodist, because in Idaho where we lived, there was a town called Ontario, Oregon. And although we lived in Idaho, we were six blocks away from the river . . . where the bridge was, and if you crossed that bridge, you were in Oregon. And Ontario was like twenty miles away from where we lived. And that's where the hub of the Japanese community was. So *obonoburi* [?] was in Ontario. The Japanese grocery store was in Ontario, there was a pretty good sized Japanese population in Ontario, you know. But, here was a Methodist church, and there was a Buddhist church, they were across the street from each other. But I never went to the Japanese Methodist church, my mother and dad at the time were so busy working and trying to make a living that they didn't have time to go all the way to Ontario, so the church I went to was all Christian, but there was Christian churches in the town that we lived in.

NW: Oh, so it's nearby. It wasn't far away.

JD: There were a lot of churches in our town, tons of churches in our town. [laugh]

NW: [laugh]

JD: So I went to one of them, and that's where I did a lot of singing, too. So, so I was in an all Caucasian church most of the time. So that's what we did. That's how come all of us took some kind of lessons. That's why I wanted to go to Europe instead of Japan. But anyway, to go back to Japan, I worked there for two years, and I was assigned the U.S. Air Force. And I came home and settled here, and looked around for a job and found a job in San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank. And uh, before I went to work for them, I had applied for different places, one of whom was Chevron, which was at that time known as the Standard Oil Company of California, they are now known as Chevron. Okay. But, at that time, that's what they were known as, and I applied there as well. But at that time the jobs were frozen. And when I was trying to go to Europe, with Uncle Sam, federal jobs were frozen as well. So we must have had some kind of economic downturn at that time, I guess, you know. So anyway, I finally found this job at the Federal Reserve Bank and I worked there for about three months. And I got a call from Chevron. And they said "Are you still interested in working for Standard Oil in California?" and I said absolutely. Because I wasn't really happy at the Federal Reserve Bank.

<End Segment 4> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 5>

NW: What kind of work did you do?

JD: It was secretarial. I was a secretary all my life. So anyway I said “Yes, I would like to come and work for you.” So, I quit my job at the bank and went to Chevron. So I started with them in June of 1958, and I retired with them in September of 1999. So I was there for like forty-one, forty-two years.

NW: Oh wow, that’s a long time.

JD: Yeah, it is.

NW: You must have liked it alright.

JD: I did! You know, the company was very good to me, I don’t care about what people think about the oil industry. But they say bad things about them and maybe some of it is true, you know, but I would never say anything bad about the company because they always have been so good to me, so why should I badmouth a company that was good to me, right?

NW: So what do you think was appealing for them about you? I mean, they called you up, they must have really liked something about you.

JD: Because they started to hire people again, and they needed people to be extras. So when you first go to Chevron you go to work in what they call a typing pool. That’s how you start out. And you could be sent to different departments to fill in for people who are gone or on vacation, or whatever. And eventually you move out to a permanent position. Some department would say, “Okay, Mrs. A, we need, one of our people is moving out and we need to replace her.” And so, you might be one of two or three people who get sent up to be interviewed for the department and then you get put on a permanent position with that.

NW: Is that what happened to you, then?

JD: Yeah, I did that, and then a few years later, the department that I was assigned to got downsized, which meant that the office staff got downsized as well. And so then my name, my resume and everything got sent to other departments that are requesting people, you know. And I wound up the second time around at an engineering department. And I was there for like, from about 1960, about ‘61 to about 1979, I was there almost twenty years, in that department.

NW: Oh, so, sometime in early ‘80s, probably?

JD: Yeah, and then maybe about the mid-80s, I guess, well, a little beyond the mid-80s, but at that time, my boss, that I was assigned to retired, and so they brought somebody else in to replace him, and I worked for him for a few years. And he got transferred out to head up a new department, and in the meantime, the department he was assigned to was also going through some structural changes, so I thought okay, and at that time the boss got transferred out to head up this organization, and it took about, I don’t know, nine or ten months before we could get everything all settled away. Because he was going bring me in to work for him, he was going to take me with him to the new position that he was going to, but there was already an existing secretary, and he did not want to just shove her away. So he was compassionate about it, I’m glad he did it that way. So, eventually he was kind of building up his staff, and after about nine

or ten months, a situation came up where the secretary there posted for a job that gave her a promotion to work for some higher-ups, and she got the job, so then I came in.

NW: So it worked out alright.

JD: So it worked out very well. So but anyway, I worked for them for this this organization from about, oh God, the mid, it must have been 1988 or '89.

NW: Oh, that's a long time then.

JD: You know. It could have been 1990 when I moved into the new organisation that I eventually retired from.

NW: But, that's all part of the . . . Chevron?

JD: Yeah. You're just going from one Chevron department to another.

NW: Right, right.

<End Segment 5> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 6>

NW: Now, stepping back a little bit, going back a little bit in time, I guess I'm curious about the time when you were young, and you were not internment camp before but then then after the war you were in the camp. I wonder how you'd describe, that sort of the change, it must have been a drastic change, but in terms of the kind of food, life pattern, that used to be true before the war started and how it was . . . it must have been very different once you were place in the camp.

JD: Oh yeah, very very different. Well, for one thing, we had a central mass hall, where everybody went to eat. You know, so my mom was not cooking anymore.

NW: Let me just make sure I understand what you're saying, so you said that your mother wasn't cooking but she was really good at learning American cooking, so do you mean she had servant and then she . . .

JD: Oh, no, no, no. She was a domestic in somebody's house; she was cleaning somebody else's house,

NW: Oh, okay, I see.

JD: but that house had a staff of kitchen help. Because that staff cooked for the family that lived there.

NW: Okay, missed that part.

JD: But my mother wanted to learn American style, so she would ask the kitchen staff, can I watch you prepare some of the foods? And so that's where she learned to make the roast beef,

roast leg of lamb, roast pork, all different kinds of pies, and stuff like that. I mean, she was also very good at making *nihonshoku* as well.

NW: So, you ate both types of food as you were growing up. Well, sounds terrific. [laugh]

JD: Yeah, we did. She was a very good cook.

NW: Do you think your parents were comfortable before the war started in terms of . . . ?

JD: We had a very comfortable life actually, before the war, you know. Because my dad was making pretty good living, and my mother was bringing in some money as well, you know. We had a pretty good living, you know, enough so that my sister could be sent to the University of California, you know, we could afford to send her there. So anyway, yeah, it was very different. Before the war, before we were interned, you had your own phone, you could make your own phonecalls, you had your own bedroom, you had your own toilets and everything. Of course all of that changed when we got interned. Everybody went to a communal public bathroom, and the kitchen was the central mass hall that everybody went to. So at that point the ladies in the camp did not have to cook anymore, they did not have to wash dishes anymore, they didn't have to go shopping, they didn't have to pay any telephone bills or electric bills, cause I asked my mom once what did you think of the camp, and she says, "Well, for the first time in my life, I did not have to cook, I didn't have to wash dishes, I didn't have to pay bills, I didn't have to go shopping," yeah, so from that standpoint, she said it was actually pretty nice. But I think she probably missed some of the other things, freedom to go out to do things where we couldn't do it in the camp. Okay. We made a lot of friends, and we met a lot of new people, made a lot of friends. You learned to do a lot of arts and crafts sorts of things, in the camp, you could go and get a job within in the camp. In fact my mother was a cook, not for the mass hall in the block we lived in, but uh, there was a kitchen outside of the camp. And that kitchen was for people who were working outside the camp but could not come back into the camp to have lunch there. My father was one of these people, he was a supervisor for an irrigation crew, made up of all people from the camp. They would go out to help farmers, for the farms around where the camp was, and he would have his team, and when it was lunch time, they would go to this kitchen, wherever that was located, and my mother and a few other women were the cooks there. So they earned some money, but not very much. I think they earned something like \$16 a month.

NW: Hmm. Not a lot. Yeah. Do you remember your family talking about, possibly their frustration about being in camp? I see what you mean when you said mother was happy about certain aspects of being in the camp, because she doesn't have to cook or clean.

JD: Yeah, she doesn't have responsibility, you know.

NW: Right, right. But you know I am sure there are many people who are frustrated with that. How do you remember people talking about their situations?

JD: You know, I don't remember that. I don't remember that at all. And if they did talk about it, I don't think they talked about it to us kids, you know. Because I am not sure if we would have really understood. In fact I didn't even, for one thing, I didn't know until many years later, I didn't know why we were in camp.

NW: Ah.

<End Segment 6> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 7>

NW: When did you first realize “Oh! There was a camp . . .

JD: It must have been, was it in high school? Or maybe after high school? But it was much later, you know. I did not know why we were in camp, it dawned on me why. It was quite a bit after camp, that I really realized why we were there. And I remember when, to digress a little bit, when the president Roosevelt died, you know he died in April of 1945, and I remember we got the news, and each block had a manager. Okay. There were like forty-two blocks, and each of the blocks had its own manager. And we were having a dinner in the mass hall and the manager said that I have an announcement to make, I want to tell you that President Roosevelt died today. And he said that I would like to give a little prayer, whatever prayer you want to give. So I remember him saying that; I don't know why I remember that. It's just that I do remember him standing up and making this announcement and then telling us that each of us maybe should maybe take a little bit of time to give a little prayer for him, for the president. So I remember doing that, and that's all I remember. I don't even remember anything about A-bomb being dropped.

NW: Did people talk about it, so . . . ?

JD: I don't remember that, I don't remember that at all.

NW: You were quite young.

JD: Yeah. So, when the war ended, I had just turned eleven. And the official date of surrender for Japan and the United States was September 2nd, 1945, that, September 2nd, is my birthday. That's how come I remember that. But that's the official surrender date for Japan and the U.S. But I don't know anything about the A-bomb, I don't recall it ever being discussed, and I don't even know when I really realized what an A-bomb was or anything like that. I just never thought about that, you know.

NW: So, when you first came to revelation, as to the reason why you were in the camp, what, how did it come to you?

JD: You know, I wish I could answer that, but I don't know.

NW: You said you were a high school student?

JD: Probably an older high school student.

NW: So, sixteen, seventeen years old, probably?

JD: Yeah, I don't know how it came about, as to the reason why we were in camps, but something must have clicked. I just don't know what it was that clicked.

NW: Hmm. Was it your schoolteacher? Or probably friends? Were there other Japanese American friends at the school you were going?

JD: Not a lot of us, but there were enough of us. And we were in different camps.

NW: Oh, so, you talked about that? So, where were you, kind of?

JD: Yeah, that always seemed to be a common topic. What camp were you in? Where did you live before the war? Because depending on where you lived you were sent to different camps. The Bay Area people all went to Topaz, and some of them went to Heart Mountain, Wyoming. But yeah, I don't remember why, how I discovered the reason why we went to camp, I don't remember that.

NW: Your parents didn't talk about it, even after the war was over?

JD: Not too much, I don't recall them even, ever talking about it. Not to any great length anyway.

NW: Even small things, I'm really curious. I mean, you just mentioned how you and your friends talked about where were you during the war. Was there anything else? There may just be tiny things like that, but . . .

JD: God, I don't. When we were in high school, because when I was in high school, I am not the athletic type, okay, but this one gal that was in my class, she was a Nisei, and she was much more athletic than me. Okay. So she was more into sports and stuff and I wasn't. I was more into music and that sort of stuff. But uh, I know that we were friends, we didn't really pal around. I had more *hakujin* friends, I pal'ed around more with *hakujin* friends, people, than I did with my Japanese counterparts.

NW: Why do you think that was the case?

JD: I don't know. I don't know if it was because . . . I think one of the main reasons was that our interests were different. You know, I was really steeped into music a lot, and I was the only Japanese in the whole school that was like that. You know, the others just wasn't.

NW: What kind of interests did other students have then, that kind of separated you from other Japanese school kids.

JD: I don't know what their interests were.

NW: But you felt it's different from what you were into.

JD: Yeah, it was. We just didn't have the same interests, you know. So I didn't really pal around with other Nisei kids.

[Interruption]

<End Segment 7> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 8>

NW: So she just asked me to call her back later this afternoon, so we can continue. So, tell me about what you liked to do when you were in junior high, high school, after the war is over. What kind of play did you do?

JD: I participated in plays, of course, I was always in the choir. We always had what you call an operetta, so I always participated in those. So I guess my whole life really revolved around music more than anything else. So I was heavily involved in that. You know, it's funny, I don't remember a lot of the stuff I did in high school. [laugh]

NW: [laugh] Any teacher that you liked, or?

JD: I had one, right after the war, when we came out. I had a few, but the first one I remember was in middle school and her name was Nell Rhodes. She was a little old lady, been teaching for years, but she was the most compassionate person you could ever meet. And she was very kind to me, and I learned a lot from her. So she's the first teacher I really remember that I, probably'll never forget. I had a couple of other teachers at highschool. One was Mrs. Low, um, she taught English and she taught French. And I learned a lot from her. And those two teachers, I guess were the heaviest influence on me.

NW: Now you told me that there are both white students and Japanese American students, were there any other types of diversity at your school?

JD: Not very much.

NW: So that was the two major groups. Do you think that teachers, or, you know, school principals, let's say, might have dealt with those two groups of students differently because . . .

JD: I don't really think so.

NW: You didn't really think that.

JD: No, they were pretty good. I mean, this girl that I was talking about, the Nisei girl, we knew each other, we were good friends and all that but her brother, she had an older brother who was in high school at the time when we were in middle school. But her brother was, like most Niseis, we're not very tall, but he made the varsity basketball team, he was short, but he was the best player they ever had. You know, so, no, we were not looked at very differently. We were, I think, all treated very equally, I mean there was enough of a Japanese population where there were enough Japanese, Nisei students in the high school, and we had one family where all the kids in that family were just brainy people, really brainy people. Extremely brainy, you know, and I think all of them went on to get their PhDs. Unheard of in those days, you know. But they were just a really brainy family, they were not athletic or anything, but they were brainy.

NW: They were high achievers so to speak.

JD: Yes, absolutely. You know.

<End Segment 8> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 9>

NW: How about your older sisters, you told me that their education was interrupted because of the war experience. Did they go back to school after the war?

JD: Well of course . . . the one that was between my older sister and me, she finished her high school in camp. We had high school, we had schools, you know. They were maybe not really the best quality teachers or anything, but we had, we still had our education.

NW: You could have a diploma and everything.

JD: They did. See, because I was like in the fifth grade, going into the sixth when the war ended, so I didn't have any kind of diploma. You know, but they did. She, uh, the one who graduated from high school did. Okay. Now, my other sister, she had hers interrupted because she was a junior at Cal, she went, oh, she did go to BYU, Brigham Young, in Utah. But she did not finish, she should have, but she didn't because she had a friend living in Chicago, who said, you know Meg, there are so many jobs out here begging for people to come work. So Maggie thought, maybe I'll go there, you know. Because, also to go to BYU you had to have money to go there too. And my mother and my dad didn't have that kind of money. So Maggie thought, maybe I'll go to Chicago. So she went to Chicago in probably '43 or '44 . . . so might have been '43 or '44, and she lived there for all her life in Chicago.

NW: So, even before the camp closed down, she moved out. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JD: Oh, she left. in fact she wasn't in any camps, for maybe about two to three weeks. Because, I said, how come you left camp so early, she says well, because she was a young adult, they were asked when they came in what would you like to do to be a productive member of society here. And her answer to them was, well I want to get out of here, you know. So, a few weeks later she got a job with a family that was outside of the camp, and she became a nanny for their two young girls, and as a housekeeper as well. So she stayed and lived with them and did all these chores for I don't know how long before she went to BYU.

NW: And the fact that she had a solid employment probably helped her to get out of the camp.

JD: And of course, in Utah, everyone is Mormon, just about, and that was a Mormon family, and in fact, the name of the family that she worked for . . .

[Dairiki's husband]: This is it, the condition she was talking about, that's the family, somebody made a newspaper clipping and made a copy from that. Babysitter or a nanny.

NW: That's the family. I see, I see, yeah. Oh, so it's Margaret, that's why it's Meg. It's Meg, you mentioned.

JD: But her name is Margaret. But anyways, so she went to, when her friend said "There's so many jobs out here, so why don't you just come out here?" So that's what she did.

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

<Begin Segment 10>

NW: How about you, then? When did you meet Jack? I mean, you to me . . .

JD: Oh, it's here in San Francisco, we were both living here at the time, and I met him at a party.

NW: Wait, a minute, that's already after you are back from Japan?

JD: Oh yeah.

NW: So it must have been . . .

JD: It was back in, probably 1963 that we met, because we married in 1964. So we met in '63 at a party.

NW: What kind of party was it?

JD: Oh, it was just a friend who was putting this party together and friends invited people, friends invited friends, it became a big party. He came with somebody else and I came with my friend who invited me, and so we got to talking. I was singing at a church at that time, here in San Francisco, and I said, well, our church was putting on a concert. [Jack there's something going on. Yeah, but it's clicking.] I told him that our church choir was going to put on this recital, not a recital, a concert, with songs from different religions. So I asked him, do you have anything from the Buddhist church, because he told me he was a Buddhist. He said, yeah, I can probably get you one of our *gosa* books. So, he did that a few nights later and from then we sorta started dating, and then we married in 1964, yeah. He still goes to the Buddhist church, he's still active in the Buddhist church, and I still go to my Christian church.

NW: Hmm, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right, it works out. You go to different churches.

JD: Oh, yeah.

NW: So, when you were dating, and getting to know each other, did it ever come up that he is a *hibakusha* and that you have experience during the wartime of the camp.

JD: I forget when he told me that he had the experience, we didn't talk about that at the beginning, I don't think. I think it was afterwards. I forget when you started to tell me that you were in Hiroshima. Well, I guess that you told me that you were in Hiroshima during the war years, that you lived in Hiroshima during the war years.

[Dairiki's husband Jack]: Well, of course, my father and her father were good friends, business associates, I asked. So, our family knew each other, something of a coincidence.

JD: I don't think we were that close, but we knew each other.

[Jack]: Like business associates, my father ran a hotel, and her father was traveling salesperson, so, and he stayed at the hotel.

JD: I told her about that.

<End Segment 10> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 11>

JD: I don't know how it came about that he told me about the fact that he was in Hiroshima and experienced the war, but I know one of the things, I remember, when the medical team came over the first time, and my mother was still alive, and we were taking *Nichi Bei Times* for her. So I remember reading about it in the *Nichi Bei Times*, and I said, you know, Jack, I think it might be good if you went for the medical checkup. He wasn't really keen about it. He didn't think he needed to go, but I said I really think that you ought to go. And so he did, and from then on he has been going every time.

NW: So was it like late 1970s when you looked at the newspaper article?

JD: See, they just finished the eighteenth biannual, so if you add, eighteen and eighteen is thirty-six, say thirty-six years ago. From 2011 it would be 1975, right? So I guess it was about that time then.

NW: So, from the beginning, you encouraged him. Yeah.

JD: I thought, when I saw that article, I said, "I think you really ought to go and get yourself examined," and so he did that, and he's been going to it ever since.

NW: But when you got married with him, you knew about his Hiroshima experience. And he knew about your camp experience. Now, this is very striking to me as a historian because, you know, many historians still publish books on the experience of internment camps and historians publish books about A-bombs and their experiences of being survivors and I'm really curious to know how you talk to each other about your own past, and also, you know, the past of your own communities, right.

JD: Don't forget that he had family in the camp.

NW: Right, right. So he has both ends.

JD: He was exposed to it, from talking to his sisters or whatever, you know. And of course, I had my own experience, but. So he knew about the camp. Interesting thing about him is that he had a brother who died in camp. Maybe he told you about this already.

NW: Well, yeah.

JD: His brother died, and he got the message in Japan from Red Cross that his brother died, and they were in camp. and his father said what camp, they're supposed to be in Sacramento, and that was the first he knew all the Japanese Americans, all the Japanese were in internment camp, you know. So when he came home, I think his sister told him something about it. So he knew something about camp when I met him.

NW: Yeah, so, it must have helped you to talk to him about your experience because he has some, yeah, exposure to that as well. What did you think about, you know, if you are getting to know her soon as your partner, you are curious about this person, and he has a very unique experience of being the second generation American and then also a survivor of Hiroshima. What do you think that you were thinking when you are trying to get to know him? I mean, of course, you are trying to know him in every aspect possible, so it's not just about the bomb.

JD: Yeah, and see, that part never really entered into the conversation, I think it was basically what our interests, what we like to do, what don't we like to do, what turns us off and what turns us on, and I don't know that we really talked about our camp life or his Hiroshima life. Certainly not in serious terms. We might have mentioned it in past conversation, but it was nothing that we pursued at.

NW: What would be those passing things you might mention, I just want to get the sense of what you talk to each other, it doesn't have to be, you know, I'm going to sit down right now and have a conversation of two hours. Yeah.

JD: You know, I don't really remember; I don't recall. I don't know what we talked about, or how we talked about it, or how it even came about to talking about it. I don't remember that. When we were dating, I don't remember any of that. Yeah. I don't remember. [laugh] I'm sorry I don't really recall.

NW: That's alright, but you mentioned how from the beginning of the system of medical checkup by Japanese doctors, you really wanted him to go, right? So that's probably one example, in which it probably came up.

JD: Yeah, you know, at that point, of course, I knew about his background, but when this newspaper article came out, I was like, "Well, it's free, he doesn't have to pay for it, so why doesn't he go and get examined." So he did.

NW: Yeah.

<End Segment 11> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 12>

NW: Now, I think you told me, I think it was last year when I first met you two, that you as a couple decided to, not to have a child. Could you please, if you don't mind, tell me a little more about what you were thinking when you made that decision, for me?

JD: I . . . It might have been because he was a survivor. Not that, I mean, there were some negative aspects to it. And yet, you know, he has an aunt in Hiroshima who bore three children, very healthy kids. You know, and so, and she really was a survivor because she got half of her body burnt. But she had children and they are all very healthy. [Interruption] I don't know if she's told you this part of it, but I just remember her telling me about it. Because she was a fetus in her mother's womb. And I think when she was growing up, her mother told her if you ever get married don't ever have any children.

NW: Oh, so that was her mother.

JD: That was her mother. If she didn't tell you this, please don't . . . I don't want this to be part of our conversation.

NW: Okay, that's fine. Yeah.

JD: That I think she should tell you rather than me. But I remember her telling us that that, you know, her mother told her while she was growing up that if you ever get married, don't have any children, and it's because of A-bomb effect, you know. And I think in Japan, uh, there were many families who, if they had marriagable kids, son or daughters, they would never say that they were A-bomb victims, or survivors, because of the fact that they could not have children, or even if they could have children, how would they be born, would they be deformed, or would they be healthy, would they have a health problem later, so. So the same thought must have been going through our minds too.

NW: Did your parents tell you anything about it? About . . . So that was your decision.

JD: No. Yeah, yeah . . . So, anyhow, so, we never had kids. Yeah. Hm.

NW: How about your siststers, did you talk to your siblings about this, it must have been a difficult time.

JD: No, I don't think it was difficult or anything, um, we just never talked about it. It was never an item of discussion for us. We had other things that we talked about, you know. Not necessarily about our camp life or anything. Just other general things. We never talked about our lives, it wasn't that important. I guess it wasn't important to me, either.

NW: Like you said, you know, when you are looking for partner, you really want to know this person, rather than thinking, well, what does it mean that he is A-bomb survivor, you don't think about it as the most important thing. I think I can see that. Yeah.

<End Segment 12> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 13>

NW: Now, probably, um, switching a gear a little bit, and going back to the internment camp. As I said earlier, that's something many people are intersted in and many people think it's an absolute injustice done to Japanese Americans, and that's the reason why there is a huge interest in the subject. You said earlier that your mother was kinda glad about certain aspects of it, but you didn't really . . .

JD: From the stand point of never having to do any domestic stuff at home. I don't know how she really felt about camp over and above that, you know. She never said, and I never asked her. I never thoguht to ask her.

NW: But you must have heard what other people said more recently, probably, the '70s or '80s or '90s or even today, who talk about the experience of injustice being done to Japanese Americans. Do you think, you know, your view on internment camps changed over time?

JD: Probably, I don't want it to happen again, and it almost did happen when 9/11 occurred. Against the Muslims or anyone who was middle-eastern descent. It did not matter where in the Middleeast they came. Or whether or not they were royal or not, but that's something I don't want to see ever to happen again. It's not right, it's very definitely wrong. Just because of our ethnicity, we were thrown into camp, and yet when it was all of the sudden done, there was no evidence that we were gonna harm the U.S., even among the Issei, you know, I mean I am sure there were some radicals and what not, but it was proven that we intended no harm against the U.S. This became their home, and this is how they were behaving. The unfortunate part was that they could not get U.S. citizenship until 1952. So they were aliens in this country after living here many years and in 1952, a lot of them have passed on or what ever, but yeat it was in 1952 they were able to get the U.S. citizenship. Surprisingly my mom and dad never went and got it. And I don't know why. Maybe we should have encouraged it. They were there by themselves, we were scattered all over, because 1952 was when I graduated from high school, you know. But if I thought about it over the years, maybe I should have pushed them to get the U.S. citizenship. But I never did. None of us kids did, and I don't know why.

NW: So, you are, you are not citizen now?

JD: No, I'm talking about my parents.

NW: Your parents, okay, sorry about that.

JD: See, they were aliens, and they could not get citizenship until 1952.

NW: That's right, because you were born here, you have the natural citizenship. But, you know, in the 1970s, or even late '60s, there are, especially Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans as well, who are starting to think about their past more seriously, how, what did you think of that sort of, the rise of that sort of social awareness?

JD: See, the thing is that Niseis are known as quiet Americans, because they don't say too much, but Sanseis are very vocal. They're the ones pushing for social justice and civil rights, all this, that and the other. So if you are talking about the 60s and 70s, and certainly into the 80s, it was Sanseis who were doing that. Sanseis and from that generation on, they were more vocal than we Niseis.

NW: What were, you must have had opinion about what Sansei generation was doing.

JD: Did I? I don't know. Because my niece is very active.

NW: Was she a university student at that time?

JD: No, not in the '60s, she was born in 53.

NW: She was too young.

JD: You know, I don't know. Maybe because I wasn't too much into being vocal, at that time, I wasn't into being very vocal about social injustice and what not. I wasn't vocal. I might have felt that this was all wrong, but I might not have said much, you know. I was just glad that Sanseis decided that it was wrong and they decided to do something about it. I am glad that they have done that. And of course now that Yonseis doing the same thing. So I am happy about that.

NW: Do you think your relationship, or you yourself as a second generation Nisei, do you think because of this rise of the civil rights movement among Sansei, the relationship between people like yourself, Nisei generation to Sansei generation, changed?

JD: The relationship? Oh I don't think so. I don't think the relationship changed. I think that if anything I think that we respect them for, you know, having the gumption to do it, that we didn't do. So I don't think the relationship changed any. If anything, probably, giving them a lot of respect for being so vocal. Because if it weren't for them, there might not be, I mean, we still have some discrimination issues in the U.S. even amongst us, you know, even though you are U.S. born, there are still some discrimination. It's a lot better than what it was, but it's still here.

<End Segment 13> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 14>

NW: You said that in Chevron, you had been very well treated, and I think you really didn't think that even right after the war's over, in 1950s, when you were back in high school, there was no discrimination against you or people like you. Am I getting you right or?

JD: In high school, there wasn't any problems, in the town that we lived in, there was not any problem. Okay. Now, when I moved out to San Francisco, what I learned later on was that Chevron, from 1945 to about maybe the late 40s, they did not hire any Niseis. That was discrimination, they did not want any Nihonjin to be working for them. And that was totally because of the war. Okay. But once they hired one, found out what good workers they were, then the door's open.

NW: The door's open. Yeah. After you started to work for them, did you feel any . . . , you know, different treatment?

JD: Discrimination? No, I didn't.

NW: So, you're happy with that.

JD: Yeah. I think a lot of us Niseis were very good workers. We had good work ethics. And I think that . . . we were just good workers, not just good work ethic, but we were good at what we did. That's what they saw in us. So there was, there were really no discrimination barriers there.

NW: It's kind of amazing that earlier they were not hiring any Japanese at all, but the same company can change, so quickly.

JD: But it took a few years before they did. And when I went to work for Chevron, there was only one African American.

NW: Oh, so you noticed it.

JD: Uh-huh. She was the only African American that I saw anywhere. Now of course we have tons of them, you know. So, over the years that has changed, but when I started working for them, there was only one.

NW: What was she like?

JD: She was very nice, very well dressed, I didn't know her, I never worked with her, I just knew that she worked there. I don't even know what department she worked in, but she must have been fairly good for her to stay on, for her to be kept on.

NW: Right, right, because she was probably the first example of racial diversity.

JD: And she was the only one for a long time, that I can remember.

NW: Somebody made sure to keep her. Yeah. Now, I know that you are not survivor yourself, but because Jack is very active, I mean, he was really doing all kinds of helpful work. By the way, Mariko, I just talked to over the phone, she was saying, "Please tell Jack that he's number one." [laugh] She really wanted to . . .

JD: [laugh]

[Jack]: She's very kind.

NW: Well, you are, well you are.

[Jack]: You know she had a flat tire one time, and we fixed it up for her. We were at a funeral home and she was driving a Cadillac.

JD: Mariko Lindsays?

NW: Oh, Mariko, I mean, Michiko Benevedes.

[Jack]: Benevedes.

JD: Michiko Benevedes, I remember your changing the tire.

[Jack]: I don't know who's funeral it was but we gathered, and when she was about to leave, we noticed the flat tire. That's why she remembers me.

NW: That's very kind of you. You always show up for medical checkups and that's . . .

[Jack]: As long as I am healthy and able to, I really like to help, today I'm talking about [?].

NW: But you also help out others too. I remember you carrying heavy tables and you packing up the trash. Oh sure, I think people notice that.

JD: I mean, every year, moving the tables around and chairs.

[Jack]: And health [?] is getting difficult to get [laugh]. You don't know how long you'll have it.

NW: Well, you have to make sure that you have it.

[Jack]: I'll do as long as I can.

NW: Hopefully there will be other people who can do that.

[Jack]: Yeah, we used to have more people helping too, but now, not so much.

JD: But they're aging, too.

[Jack]: Yeah, they are aging. I don't blame them.

<End Segment 14> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 15>

NW: But now you are familiar with his work because you see Jack close up, and I just wonder how you see this effort of American survivors of the bomb within an American context. For one thing, in the 1970s, they tried to get the compensation from the US government, but then they didn't succeed, so now they have Japanese doctors coming over from Japan, what's your views on that? I mean, you said that for internment camps, it's injustice being done, and some people might make a similar argument, similar, might have a similar opinion about what they didn't do to the American survivors. What do you think of that? I am not saying either way, but . . .

JD: You mean, if the US should be helping them out?

NW: Yeah

JD: I am kind of ambivalent on that, I guess. See, I am ambivalent on the issue of the A-bomb dropping, I'd say yeah, maybe it was okay to drop it because it shorten the war, without too many more people getting killed, but on the other side of that fence is all the civilians that got killed. And I am not happy about that. You know, you had kids who had nothing to do with the war. You had mothers, you had older people so I don't know from that standpoint if it was justified. Now Truman had to justify it. Bceuase of the millions of money that was spent to build this bomb. So he had to test it somewhere so he felt justified in doing that. But I don't . . . he wasn't thinking ahead that it was the civilian population that it was going to affect. So from that standpoint I am not happy about it because it killed so many innocent people. And injured a lot of people. But on the other hand, it shortened the war, maybe it did, because Japan surrendered within a month. You know, so it did shorten the war. And even though people say, oh Japan was already losing and they knew they were losing, but my question to them at that point is but how much longer would they have stayed on because they had this *Bushido* attitude, right, in those days, it was a *Bushido* attitude? So how do you know how much longer the war would have dragged on? With more people getting killed, more people being malnourished, malnourished. So, you know, I am ambivalent about that. Okay. And yeah, I think that it did shorten the war. Because Japan surrendered within one month's time. So no more people got killed, although millions of people got killed in Nagasaki in Japan, I don't know it that was a good thing, it isn't,

you know. If they did it to the Imperial Army, I'd say yeah maybe it was justified, because they were not kind to either, excuse me, but the Imperial Army was not kind to a lot of people. The Chinese, Okinawans, you know these comfort women, as they call them, and I know that happened. If they did it to the Imperial Army, I might say, okay, maybe that was justified. The only problem there is that if they did it to the Imperial Army, it would have been close by to where some of our forces would have been.

NW: Right, so they couldn't do that. US forces.

JD: So there is no right or wrong answer to that I don't think. I don't like, I mean, the war is hell. It doesn't accomplish anything. To me, war does not accomplish anything.

NW: Yeah, well, I agree with you. And I think I, as much my limited ability goes, to understand, experience like yours, I think I see when you said you feel ambivalent about it. Because you are American citizen and, you could see it's important, no country wants to lose a war.

JD: And this is the question I have, I am sorry I know you are from Nihon and everything, but the question I have asked a couple of my Nisei counterparts, I said, you know, we were talking about camp. And I said, you know, I said, what if Japan never bombed Pearl Harbor. Would we have been sent to camp? No one can answer that for me. I don't know what the answer to that would have been. So I said that you know Japan was very stupid about bombing Pearl Harbor. For one thing they lost the war at the end. But I don't like the fact that because they bombed Pearl Harbor, that we were targeted by Uncle Sam to be sent to camp when there was really no good reason to do that except for the fact of our ethnicity. But it is the bombing of Pearl Harbor that instigated that. So I always ask the question, I say, okay, what if Japan never bombed Pearl Harbor, would we have gone into camp?

NW: Probably no.

JD: I don't know.

NW: Well, but war would have been, I don't know if the war would have happened, regardless but . . .

JD: I think probably it would have happened. But I just don't know. But see there was tension already in California, there were tensions, there was a lot of hatred against us. Because in California, there are fertile lands, they are fertile because Nihonjin came in and worked their butts off. So California has very good fertile lands, but a lot of it goes back to our Issei grandparents or parents. But they had a lot of hatred for us because of that, because we were becoming more successful, so I don't know.

NW: Hmm.

<End Segment 15> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 16>

NW: Well, going back to current status of survivors, do you think they are well perceived within Japanese American community? Because, you know, there are people like Jack, who is originally from America, and are American citizens to begin with, whereas they, many other survivors, who came to the States after the war, and they are probably working together probably in many regards to make sure this biannual checkup happens smoothly. Also, like I said earlier in the 1970s, there was some, like a movement to get the medical bill passed by the US government. Do you think that is well perceived within Japanese American community? Let's say, non-survivors, what do they think of that kind of effort?

JD: Well, you know the survivors who live in America now, either married GIs, or other Niseis. And they have kids of their own. I don't know, I don't know too many of those people, and I don't know how they're perceived. The question is, do they even talk about it to other people that are not a survivor. They probably don't, you know. Especially . . . maybe they talk about it to another Nijon-jin or Nisei, or whatever, that might be okay, but I don't think that they'll talk about it to a *hakujin*.

NW: Oh. That's interesting.

JD: Because some of them might have fathers or brothers or uncles who were in the war in Japan. So you don't want to talk about your Hiroshima experience because they could come back to you with their fathers' experiences or their uncles' experience, they might have been prisoners of war in Japan.

NW: That's possible.

JD: So, I don't know too many of the survivors, I know who they are but I don't really converse with them, You know, I just don't know.

NW: But you sense it's probably, they are not just going to talk about their experience just about anyone.

JD: I don't think so. I think that they would be very careful about to whom they would talk about it. I think amongst themselves that's fine. And I think among the Japanese community, I think they're fine. Only because our ethnicity is the same. We have, you know, Niseis who fought in the Pacific War as linguists. And they were known as the MIS. The Military Intelligent Service or something like that. They served under General Merrill, I think. They were known as Merrill's Crusaders or something like that. But anyway, they fought in the Pacific war because of the linguistic ability to talk to the Japanese soldiers, and I think it's okay to talk to them about Hiroshima and everything. I don't think they'll have a problem, but I don't know.

NW: In a way, it's a difficult, difficult place. Like you said, people like you might feel ambivalent about the bomb, and they, survivors themselves might feel ambivalent about whether or not they should be talking about it.

JD: Yeah, I don't know, because if you talk to *hakujin* group about it, you see, they are going to have relatives who were in the war in the Pacific, and they may not have happy memories about it, so you don't want to say too much about how you are a Hiroshima survivor.

NW: Yeah, that's interesting, even though, I have talked to some survivors who have talked to *hakujin* audience, right, so I think it really depends, it's not as though, all *hakujin* will have similar responses to that kind of story. Well, how about the camp experience, um, do you feel like you feel easier talking about that, with certain groups of people, what would that be?

JD: I don't mind talking about my camp life. It doesn't matter whether *hakujins* or talking to your own friends, you know, with your own friends, you have a common interest, a bond, regardless of what camp you were in. But I don't mind talking about it to my *hakujin* friends or anything, a lot of them are aware of it. And they just ask me some questions, and I just answer. But I don't have a problem talking to them about it, yeah.

NW: But, their response might be different, to what you tell them.

JD: Ah . . . I don't know, hm, I don't know. I don't know what their response would be, they ask me a question and I tell them. I give them an answer and they seem to be happy with that.

<End Segment 16> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 17>

NW: Okay, well, I know you must be getting tired, because I've been asking you, I've been grilling you with many, many questions.

JD: No, that's okay.

NW: But, is there anything you felt you wanted to talk a little more about, or probably you were thinking that Naoko is going to ask you some, ask me some questions but she didn't. Because I'm obviously not you, so I can't really think of good questions in a perfect way.

JD: Yeah, because in camp, you know, I was there from seven to eleven. So all we did was that we went to school, we had a summer vacation, but what I remember about camp was the snowstorm that we had, the sandstorm that we had. The sand trickling in through the windows, and we had to always clean up the floor, sweep up the floor. Because the floor was full of sand after a sandstorm. I remember the sand getting into my nose and ears, the first time that it ever happened to me. Because living here in San Francisco, you never experience that.

NW: You don't see that. Hm.

JD: So I remember that, and having a communal bathroom.

NW: So, it was new to you; you didn't have that at home.

JD: Yeah, it was new to all of us because you had to share the bathroom with everyone else in the same camp, in the same block as us, you know. When you had to go to the bathroom at night time, you had to leave your unit, to go to the communal. It was kind of scary at times. I remember we had, you know, this main mass hall, and to this day I don't like apple butter jelly. We had so much of it, we had it everyday in camp. And I hated it. Oh I do not eat it, I will not touch it, you tell me about it and I'd go absolutely berzerk.

NW: [laugh] You've had enough share of it, so to speak.

JD: I don't like egg fu-yung for the same reason, I don't like pork and beans for the same reason. That's memories from camp, and I don't like any of that. But he likes pork and beans because he did not enough of it when he was there, so we have it, but he's the only one who eats it.

NW: That's funny, it's kind of criss-cross. Yeah. After you were out of camp, um, you must have been eating something entirely different, then.

JD: Because then we were able to go out and buy food. We didn't have much money, though, you know, and my mom and dad didn't have much money until way after I left high school.

NW: Well, because they were deprived of that during the camp.

JD: Well, yeah, not only that but now they were making the time to make a living on the farm, and they never had farm experience, it was hard for them to catch up, to make a living. They worked very hard for what they got. Yeah, so we were eating but we weren't eating very heavily because we didn't have money. So we had a lot of hotdogs and hamburgers, cheap hamburgers, every so often we might have a piece of different kind of meat, every so often, if we had the money, my mom would make a leg of lamb, and we would have that, but we sure didn't have it often.

NW: Uh-huh. Yeah. But she knew how to cook it very well. Leg of lamb must have been one of your favorite because you've been saying it many times. [laugh]

JD: Yeah, we did like lamb in our house, in fact we went to the butcher one time and, I don't know how many times she had gone in there to buy lamb at this point, but, over through a period of years, she would go into this butcher shop and order lamb, and the butcher said you must be from California, because most people in Idaho did not eat lamb.

NW: [laugh] . . . didn't eat lamb.

JD: They are mostly beef people.

NW: Oh, but the butcher knew there was a connection between California and lamb.

JD: Because all the Californians do like lamb. Lot of Californians do like lamb, so that's why he said, you must be from California.

NW: And he was right!

JD: Oh, yeah, he was absolutely right on target.

<End Segment 17> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.

<Begin Segment 18>

JD: I did not like working on the farm, because we had to get up, like when it was potato season time, harvest time, we had to get up two o'clock in the morning, have a breakfast and had to be

on the field by 3:30 or so. Even at that time of the hour in the morning, you could see the potato even though it was kinda dark but it was kind of getting light. Here I was only eleven, twelve, at the time we were doing all this, I hated farmwork, I hated farm work. It's very backbreaking, very hot in the sun, and you worked like twelve, thirteen hours a day, oh yeah. Potato you picked only from about 3:30 or 4:00 in the morning till about eleven in the morning, because you could not leave the exposed potatoes out in the sun otherwise they would bake. So that's why I had to get up so early. And you take a lunch break, and you go to someone else's onion field, and you start doing what we call weeding, that's separating the weeds away from the onions so the onion can grow without interference. So you did that after lunch hour, so by the time you came back home it was like 6:00 at night five, six o'clock at night. Then you have to make dinner, wash the dishes, go to sleep, get up next morning, at two o'clock in the morning, and you start all over.

NW: That's early. So it's from two to eleven all for potatoes?

JD: Pretty much.

NW: That's how many hours? It's . . .

JD: Well, you got up at two, you might have started picking the potatoes around four, but that's still seven hours, four to eleven is seven hours, but you're up much earlier than that because you have to get breakfast and all.

NW: Get breakfast and eat it. Oh, God.

JD: So in my junior year, or maybe in the year before I became a senior, I said, I go to downtown and see if I can get me a job. I didn't tell my mother I was going, I just told her that I was going downtown. She said okay, that's fine. I didn't tell her why I was going downtown. And in those days we had Montgomery Ward and JC Penny. And they were both geared for farm workers. Okay, you know, they had the tractor tires and they had the overall bibs for farming, and stuff like that. Plus, they carried, the regular stuff, dresses and stuff, too. But I went to Montgomery Ward, and the Montgomery Ward and JC Penny were across from each other, but I went to Montgomery Ward, and I said, I want like to know if I can get a job here, you know, and they hired me.

NW: Oh they did. Huh.

JD: So I went to work for them part time, in the summertime I went to work everyday almost, of course during school, I went after school and worked on the weekends as well, but I brought home some money during winter months for our family, because we didn't have any money then, you know. So I brought home a little bit. So in summer months when my mom and dad are out in the field I was working in the store.

NW: What do you think your parents thought about it?

JD: Well, I went home and I told my mom and dad, they said: You did what? [laugh]

NW: [laugh]

JD: And I said, well, I went downtown to get me a job and they said well, okay.

NW: It was good, good for them.

JD: And I was the first Japanese to be working in any kind of store because everybody else was helping their parents out on the farm.

NW: Right. Well, so you were the first one. You know, the store, it was probably a first for them as well, right? Yeah, yeah. But do you remember any co-workers at the time?

JD: Oh, I don't remember their names, it was a gal by the name of Twila, she was really a nice lady. I was a Jack of all trades in the store. Wherever they needed help is where I went. I used to do inventory, I would go down to the stock room, help with putting the prices on the goods that came in, I would go and take up the boxes of whatever to whatever department needed them and stuff like that. So I did wherever I was needed. I was a sales clerk, yeah, I just did everything and helped out with the inventory when the inventory time came.

NW: You liked it probably better than the farm work. [laugh]

JD: Absolutely. That's why I went to the store to find me a job.

NW: And it's nice to be able to bring in some income in winter too, right? So it must have been pretty snowy in severe weather in winter in Idaho.

JD: It was, it was. Very, very. Yeah.

NW: Well, thank you very much, Jun.

<End Segment 18> - Copyright © 2012 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.