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Title: Yuriko Furubayashi Interview
Narrator: Yuriko Furubayashi
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 6>

NW: So, tell me a little bit about the reason why your family or maybe yourself went back to Japan and how things were like once you arrived there.

YF: Oh, you see, as I say, you know, we had a lot of kids, and my parents had a hard time, you know, financially. So, and this is my mother. My mother was the youngest of eight or ten or something, in Japan, that is. And she was the youngest. And before that, this auntie. This is my mother's, you see, sister. But she didn't have any children.

NW: I see. She was back in Japan at the time, or was she also here?

YF: He is, when he was fifteen or sixteen, went to America, Los Angeles. And then they sent her, the family knew each other, so send my auntie and they got married.

NW: In Los Angeles.

YF: Yeah, because he was young yet.

NW: But they didn't have children.

YF: No, they didn't have children. And this one here is older than this one. And I only have this picture, but I have another one but, oh, this one here. See, these two are sisters, this one here is this, and older sister is this. My mother had three in the family, the rest, five or six of them were boys, they died kinda young and then three of them, um, three sisters she had, no, two sisters, so three girls, right? Two of them, they didn't have children, and my mother was the youngest and she had, you know . . .

NW: A lot of kids.

YF: Ten or something. But these aunties, both of them didn't have children. Therefore, and they were married in Los Angeles, my uncle was a very successful businessman, you know, he come from a family where the parents still had the house, but the parents used to work, [what] they used to do was, in a farm, Kabe, it's a farm district, and everybody bring, you know, the rice, when they harvest, they bring it. And his parents had a mill, you know, making it into the rice. You know, the grain, I don't know what kind of machine or what, they are making to rice. That mill that the parents had, so you know, he's gonna, but he's the second son. The oldest son is gonna have the mill and all the stage, but he wasn't gonna get anything, so when he was fifteen,

he said “Okay, I’m gonna go America and see what might come.” Very, very smart, and very energetic, and then very driven, this man was. This is my auntie’s husband, he became, he was the one that when I was ten, well, you know, they give some money to my parents, you know. He was helping but told my parents it was 1938 and they had this Olympic Hotel in Los Angeles.

NW: Oh, you mean he was the owner?

YF: Yeah, he was the owner. And above, being it’s the Olympic Hotel, they have a lot of this Japanese Naval people and all kind of people staying in their hotel, you know. Then the government of Japan said to him, we have, you know, we’re negotiating with America but things are not doing too good in 1938, not doing good, and being you in Los Angeles, you had helped Japan a lot, having all those cadets, you know, all these people staying in the hotel there, you know. I think if they would have war you are certainly going to be in a concentration camp, or you might get killed because some of them, the soldiers were, you know, spying on each other, right? You, you cannot say they were bad, but you know, spying, staying in the hotel, all the cadets, not only those cadets, lot of them are high ranking people, you know?

NW: So did he then . . . ?

YF: This is my uncle. They used to go back and forth. See, these people were, see, his name is Sawano, Mr. and Mrs. Sawano and I’m pretty sure he’s one of the, kinda, double-breasted, 1934, something, I don’t know.

NW: It looks ’34.

YF: Yeah. Those days, it was going back and forth.

NW: So, did he then come back to Japan?

YF: That’s when he took me. He was going to take me and my younger brother but then, within a year, he developed a kidney problem, and he died, so, you know, it took about one year before I got the permission, you know, to leave here, you know, all kinds of stuff you have to go through.

NW: You mean, let me be clear, so he was in LA and was an important person locally, but then he was given warning that if you stay there and if the war starts out, then you’ll be in concentration camp, so why don’t you come back. So did he come back then, to Japan? And then he took you in. I see.

YF: Yeah. That’s when he decided to sell the hotel to a Japanese American citizen because he’s not American citizen.

NW: Oh, he’s not, that’s right. Okay.

YF: Sold to an American citizen on 19 . . . that’s when I think it was, 1937 or ‘8. That’s when I went. He took me and went to Japan because they don’t have heirs, you know? And my parents were having a hard time, so my auntie always [said] “You have too many kids. You cannot even educate your kids.” Blah, blah, blah. Everytime they go back and forth, my mother have to dress

us up, not all of us, but that's one of the pictures, you know. And then got to meet her in Honolulu, and she's my mother, mommy you don't, so you have something, we're in between. And they used to go back and forth to Japan.

NW: What was your impression of Japan, that was the first time for you, right? What did you think?

YF: I guess it was okay but different.

NW: How so?

YF: Yeah. I was stuck speaking only Japanese, but it didn't take me too long.

NW: But you had some Japanese because you were learning it.

YF: My parents spoke Japanese, so, yeah. See this is one of the trips that they were in a boat.

NW: I'd love to make a copy of those pictures, if you can give me a time afterward. Yeah. Those are really wonderful images.

YF: Because, I think his name would be in one of those, you know, they have those old history of the American and Japanese, you know? Japanese, that I kept a lot of these old pictures. This is one of them, but most of them burned because I had it in my town in my other, this, auntie's. I had two aunties, so while I was working, you know, I would go to the auntie's house and have most of my belongings there and then her house went down.

NW: Because of the bomb, you mean?

YF: Yeah.

NW: Which one is you? Tell me again. Over here at the back? Ah, okay. The very far end.

YF: I was kinda tall, you know?

NW: Yeah, you are.

YF: When my aunt and uncle and auntie started as, when was it, you know, when they were younger, before they bought the hotel, they had this sodaworks. See, this is my uncle and this is my auntie. 1937.

NW: May I see? Yeah.

YF: They are hardworking people. White Soda, White Star Soda. They bought it from somebody, but, you know, they made it big, and was the beginnning of this, you know.

NW: So, this is in Los Angeles, am I right? Yeah. Wow, this is a wonderful picture.

YF: Yeah, this is, they worked really hard, you know?

NW: Yeah.

<End Segment 6> - Copyright © 2013 Densho and Naoko Wake. All Rights Reserved.