

[Begin Frank Endo CD 1]

Interviewer:

We are here in the home of Mr. Frank Endo. That's spelled E-n-do; located at 18009 LaSalle Avenue in Gardena. That's G-a-r-d-e-n-a, California 90248. It is now 10:15 a.m. on April 23, 2004. My name is Ike Hatchimonji. The first name is Ike, I-k-e; the last name is spelled H-a-t-c-h-i-m-o-n-j-i, and I will be interviewing Mr. Frank Endo. That's F-r-a-n-k; last name E-n-d-o today as part of the South Bay Oral History Project. The audio equipment recording this interview is being monitored by Mr. Ernie Tsujimoto. That's E-r-n-i-e; last name T-s-u-j-i-m-o-t-o, and the interview is being cataloged by Mrs. Collette, C-o-l-l-e-t-t-e; last name Isawa, I-s-a-w-a. All copyrights, title, and any other rights arising out of this interview whether in its entirety, part, or derivative form, or whether in audio, written or any other format shall belong to the South Bay Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. Copying of this interview recording, whether in its entirety or part is strictly prohibited without a written authorization from the South Bay Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. This is the first CD of the interview of Mr. Frank Endo being recorded on this date. Let's begin the interview.

Mr. Endo, what is your full name; please state your full name.

Endo:

Frank Koo Endo; Koo is my Japanese name, K-o-o.

Interviewer:

Okay; any names adopted since childhood, nicknames or such?

Endo:

No.

Interviewer:

Okay; we'll start first with the---in sequence we'll do this interview starting with the pre-war period, your childhood, your family background and so forth. Okay; when were you born?

0:02:46.2

Endo:

I was born in April 20, 1923.

Interviewer:

All right; and where were you born?

Endo:

In Wilmington, California---W-i-l-m-i-n-g-t-o-n---Wilmington,
California.

Interviewer:

Okay; and what were---what are your parents' names or what were
your parents' names?

Endo:

My father name was Fred Matsukichi, M-a-t-s-u-k-i-c-h-i,
Matsukichi Endo, and my mother name was Reiko, spelled R-e-i-ko,
Reiko Endo.

Interviewer:

And where did they come from in Japan?

Endo:

My father and my mother were both from the Shizuoka prefecture.
Shizuoka is S-h-i-z-u-k-a---Shizuoka prefecture.

Interviewer:

Was that a particular city in that prefecture?

Endo:

My mother was from let's see what were there names... I forgot.
My father though was from the town of Shimizu in Shizuoka
prefecture.

Interviewer:

All right; now when did they immigrate to America either singly
or...?

Endo:

My... at the very beginning, my grandfather was first. He came
here about 1915 to work in the copper mines in the Utah as a
cook. He later went back to Japan and brought my father here
probably about I'm going to guess about 1917 or '18, and my
father worked here for a short while. Then he went back and
married my mother and they must have migrated to the United
States together about 19... I would guess about 1920.

Interviewer:

Very good; did your father work also in the coal mines?

Endo:

My father did work in the copper mines; yes.

0:05:04.5

Interviewer:

Okay; very good.

Endo:

The interesting thing is that in later years during the---during the---when we were incarcerated in the camp, in 1944 I went to the same copper mine and worked there just by coincidence.

Interviewer:

Where was that at?

Endo:

That was in Bingham Canyon, Utah.

Interviewer:

Oh yeah; Utah.

Endo:

An open pit mine.

Interviewer:

My goodness; that's strange. Let's see; so they first settled in America about 1920 you say.

Endo:

That's right in Wilmington, California.

Interviewer:

In Wilmington; what sort of work did they do there?

Endo:

My father was a fisherman; he had a fishing boat. And he fished in the local water here and my mother worked in the fish cannery.

Interviewer:

I see; by the way, backing up a bit, what port of entry did your---do you know the port of entry?

Endo:

Yes; there is no problem there. It's the San Pedro Harbor here.

Interviewer:

They came in San Pedro?

Endo:

L.A. Harbor.

Interviewer:

Oh, I didn't know; good. Of course, you had some siblings?

Endo:

My children?

Interviewer:

Yeah; well no your brother and sister.

Endo:

Oh yeah; my brother and sister yes. I had a twin brother. His name was James, but he passed away when he was 59 because he had a bad accident when he was a child. But at the same time, I have---I had another younger sister; I have a younger brother and older sister---three others all lived---my mother and father left them in Japan.

Interviewer:

Oh you... they're still there?

Endo:

One of my---my younger son; pardon me---my younger brother.

Interviewer:

Could you give me their names please?

Endo:

My younger brother is Ben, B-e-n---Ben, and my oldest sister is Emiko, E-m-i-ko---Emiko. They both reside in Shizuoka prefecture. They were left there---my mother and father left them there, therefore they---my oldest sister was actually born in America; so it's a little confusing I realize, and my younger brother was born in Japan. But they were never brought back to the United... at least my oldest sister never came back to America. And my younger brother served in the Japanese Army.

Interviewer:

Oh really?

Endo:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

That's World War II then?

Endo:

That's right.

Interviewer:

Getting back to yourself; what elementary school did you attend?

Endo:

Terminal Island Elementary School; it's called East Los Angeles Elementary School on Terminal Island.

Interviewer:

Oh really; on Terminal Island. I see okay; and did you go to Japanese School and if so, what was the name and the location of the Japanese School?

Endo:

We went to the Buddhist Church and the teacher's name was Ikita so we called it the Ikita School---Japanese School.

0:08:24.9

Interviewer:

On Terminal Island?

Endo:

On Terminal Island. We had two schools; one was the Buddhist and one was the Christian one and my mother took us to the Ikita School---Ikita Japanese School, simply because he was also from Shizuoka.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Endo:

[Laughs] Interesting.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; you settled in Wilmington, but you're saying you're going to school in Terminal Island?

Endo:

All right; in 1935 the fishing industry started growing on Terminal Island; so we moved from---in 1935 from Wilmington to Terminal Island.

Interviewer:

Okay; but at that point, your father still had the fishing boat right?

Endo:

My father was still fishing; yes.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; well good.

Endo:

Because from Wilmington to San Pedro, we're talking just a few miles.

Interviewer:

Yes, yes; all right. Did you speak English or Japanese in your home?

Endo:

Well my folks, most of the Isseis were---they only spoke Japanese. My father, however, mingling with the Caucasians here and they were able to speak so me English, and my father spoke fairly good English. My mother, of course, had no contact with the Caucasians; therefore like all other Issei parents---mothers---they spoke no English.

Interviewer:

Besides she was too busy working in the canneries to...?

Endo:

That is correct and taking care of the children.

Interviewer:

Yeah; right. So growing up, you lived primarily on Terminal Island?

Endo:

On Terminal Island.

Interviewer:

That was a community of...?

Endo:

Six thousand Isseis and Niseis living there on the island.

Interviewer:

You all lived... I think---I've seen pictures where you pretty much lived in the same kind of houses.

Endo:

There were---the homes there were rented to us by the cannery. They were all fish cannery homes.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm.

Endo:

All wooden homes.

Interviewer:

[Laughs] So you didn't---your family didn't actually own a home?

Endo:

No we did not.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; okay. This is a question that you can answer as---you know speak about it as much as you want. Please describe your hometown; help paint a picture for us. What did it look like? This is, I guess, would be Terminal Island. Describe the current conditions---the current locations, landmarks, in relation to the past. In other words, if you were to go back to Terminal Island today, compare that to what it used to be when you were growing up.

0:11:11.1

Endo:

Terminal Island, what it was then and today is entirely---it's completely---all the homes are completely gone. However, at the

time we were there, it's interesting that since we are---we were in the fishing industry, all the streets were named after a fish... like the street that I was on was called Pilchard. You have Tuna Street; you have Albacore Street, Cannery Street, in relationship to the fishing industry. And of course, like we said before, there were 6,000 of the Isseis and the Niseis---the majority being the Isseis---the first generations.

Interviewer:

I see; so if you were to go back there today, the streets wouldn't be there or anything?

Endo:

The streets may be there, but the buildings are all gone.

Interviewer:

All gone; so for all intents and purposes, the fishing industry no longer exists?

Endo:

The fishing industry disappeared right after---probably about 1955 or so. The fishing industry just---there was no more fish. Apparently all the fish had been you know taken out from the ocean, and therefore there was no more tuna or albacore or sardines that my father was catching.

Interviewer:

I see; what was your relationship to your parents? Like I guess it must have been a traditional relationship.

Endo:

My father was too busy fishing all the time and so I didn't have much relationship with my father.

Interviewer:

I see.

Endo:

And however the big thing was my father was the oldest of five brothers, and just before World War II, my father went back to Japan because my grandfather was ill, and therefore he wanted the---my father to come back and take over the business that my grandfather had. And therefore, this was about 1940, when I was in junior high school, my father left us for good because the

war came along and we no longer were able to see him during the war years.

Interviewer:

So what ultimately happened to him? Did he come back to the U.S. later?

Endo:

He never came back simply because when I went there during the occupation of Japan and met my father he wanted to come back here only temporarily, and I didn't have that kind of money. I was a young man yet in the 20s and I could not afford to give him that kind of money and because you know I only had several thousand dollars at the time. I was still a young man---24 years old. And therefore, I declined my father's trip to America. If it was permanently to stay with my mother, I would have said, "Yes." But he had a business going; he was in charge of a rice distribution store, along with my youngest brother and my oldest sister was there, and therefore he did not want to leave Japan.

0:14:29.1

Interviewer:

So he remained there the rest of his life then?

Endo:

So he remained there for the rest of his life, but my mother in later time... of course she made a couple trips to Japan to see her siblings. That's later on; we're talking about---after 1960---much later.

Interviewer:

I see; so with your parents... well actually your father gone, what was your relationship with your... well with that... let's see that; well how...?

Endo:

Well my mother took all the responsibility because my father was gone.

Interviewer:

Yes; she was the head of the family.

Endo:

That's right; but we were growing up, too, and therefore you know what was going on and we knew we didn't have much money, because I don't think we had no more than \$200 at the time of the evacuation.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Endo:

But of course, many of the people were in the same boat.

Interviewer:

Yeah; but you had to rely on your---just your mother's income then?

Endo:

Yes.

Interviewer:

It must have been difficult. How did the kids---other kids in the neighborhood treat you? I guess they were all Japanese kids?

Endo:

They were all Japanese kids; so we got along fine---no big deal. We did gymnastics; we did baseball; we did you know---we had activities among ourselves. We loved weight-lifting; so I mean I started a little weight-lifting thing in our neighborhood and so we did some of that because we had the wheels from the canneries---on the carts that they had in the cannery were iron wheels. So we would put a pipe with it and make our own barbells.

Interviewer:

With the wheels; that's clever.

Endo:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Very good; so this next question I don't know if would apply. Did you face any discrimination or prejudice growing up, and if so please describe---because you had very little contact?

Endo:

There was very little contact with them except in junior high school---high school when we went across the Bay. In order to go to junior high school and high school, we had to cross the Bay from Terminal Island to San Pedro. And so when we went there, of course, we became the minority. We were maybe what about eight percent of the... not even eight percent; we were just a minority in junior high school and high school.

Interviewer:

Do you have---do you recall any incidents?

Endo:

No; we got along good with the kids in school. They accepted us very nicely and there was no discrimination.

Interviewer:

Were they also children of immigrants, probably...?

Endo:

Most of the people there were Italians and Yugoslavians.

Interviewer:

Italians and Yugoslavians?

Endo:

Yeah; immigrants---children just like you know my folks---they were immigrants from Japan.

Interviewer:

Okay; so the name of the middle school you attended was... what was the name of that again?

Endo:

The junior high school is called Dana---Richard Henry Dana Junior High School.

Interviewer:

Richard Henry Dana?

Endo:

Uh-hm; Junior High School.

0:17:32.0

Interviewer:

Probably D-a-n-a?

Endo:

D-a-n-a, Dana.

Interviewer:

And then after you attended the junior high school then you went right into high school?

Endo:

I went into high school---San Pedro High School.

Interviewer:

So let's see; there---you were there until...?

Endo:

Until my last year in high school, but I did not graduate simply because the war came along.

Interviewer:

Right; I understand. So you lived---you were going to high school and you were crossing back and forth to Terminal Island, and what was your social life like? Was it mostly that the social life was on Terminal Island or in San Pedro?

Endo:

We didn't have much of a social life just except that being a young boy, I just played around Terminal Island. We---during the summertime was our biggest activity; I went swimming into the Pacific Ocean there at Fish Harbor. And so we swam there in the Pacific Ocean almost every day during the summer as a young boy in junior high school and part of high school.

Interviewer:

So that was your idea of fun---swimming?

Endo:

It was fun; I enjoyed it immensely. However, during my last year in high school though, when I was in the 11th Grade, I started working in the produce industry helping you know with the produce---lettuce and fruits.

Interviewer:

In a grocery store?

Endo:

Uh-hm.

Interviewer:

I see; yeah. That was pretty common for young men like that.

0:19:15.9

Endo:

At that time; many of the Niseis were working in the produce industry.

Interviewer:

That was right in San Pedro, or...?

Endo:

That's in San Pedro; that's right uh-huh.

Interviewer:

Were you involved in community organizations of some kind---Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts?

Endo:

Just I belonged to the Terminal Island Baptist Church. So I attended Baptist Church for as long as I... my mother said as soon as I got to Terminal Island, my mother said to---for me to if you wanted to attend the Baptist Church because she wanted me, I went. And I---I went there for six years and I had a perfect attendance. I attended every Sunday.

Interviewer:

So your parents were Christians?

Endo:

My parents were not Christians; they were Buddhist. But they weren't strong Buddhist, and therefore my mother recommended I attend some kind of class, and she selected the Terminal Island Baptist Church.

Interviewer:

Japanese are predominantly Buddhist; so I imagine in Terminal Island, most of the people went to the Buddhist Church.

Endo:

Yeah; but there were many Christians though. We had a missionary there and I accepted Christ when I was 13 because I had a perfect attendance and I love Jesus; so.

Interviewer:

Right; very good. I guess there was a lot of social activities in connection with the church as well---social gatherings?

Endo:

Social, but the most exciting time was we had a baseball team, the San Pedro Skippers---the Nisei team, all Japanese Americans, and they were very strong. And so I would go out there and watch the ball players out there and I enjoyed that immensely.

Interviewer:

They played other teams from different places then?

0:21:10.1

Endo:

Different Japanese teams and American teams came to our Island and we had a great time.

Interviewer:

Hmm; great. Was your mother... well this is I guess after your mother was by herself; were they active in Kenjinkai or the prefecture organizations?

Endo:

Every year we would have a picnic from various prefectures where they came from Japan. We were from Shizuoka, but the strongest one probably was like Wakayama-ken. They would have a picnic every year---their organization was fairly strong, whereby when the... in summer time when business was slow, they would have a picnic and they would load up in many buses and they would go to the local park and would have a picnic, and would celebrate what the Japanese culture was doing---Ondo street dancing---Japanese Ondo---O-n-d-o... Ondo and putting on performance on the stage.

Interviewer:

Yeah; right.

Endo:

It was very exciting; I enjoyed it very much. The kids would have races and would have---we looked forward in getting ice-cream and soda pops.

Interviewer:

Everybody won something, huh?

Endo:

That's right.

Interviewer:

Let's see; so you weren't married prior to World War II because you were still 17 years old, I guess.

Endo:

That's correct.

0:22:51.2

Interviewer:

This is a cultural question; while you were growing up was there any Japanese sayings or phrases that seemed to resonate in your mind such as... well we would probably be using Japanese expressions, but _____ or _____---these?

Endo:

Yeah; those are very familiar. _____ is a lot of time you know being Japanese and since we are not in the regular society in the---in Los Angeles, we used that word quite frequently. But you must understand that being Isseis (immigrant, first generation Japanese), they used a lot of Japanese, and therefore us Niseis are second generation are---we understood Japanese quite well simply because they spoke it so much to us. And therefore, we were not able to express ourselves too much until we learned more in school---in Japanese School because we went to Japanese Schools like twice or three times a week. And therefore, we were growing up with the Japanese language, and so when my folks spoke to me, we understood our parents. And therefore, the Terminal Island, however being fishermen, they used dirty words like _____, which means stupid you know. And they would---my father would hit me over the head and say, _____. And boy it's not very pleasant because many of the fathers did that to their kids. And it was not a very good thing.

Interviewer:

But you remember that?

Endo:

Yeah; I sure do.

Interviewer:

Okay; well we're going to get into the World War II period. But if there is anything that we haven't covered in the pre-war period, if you'd like to talk about it, you know we can always get that in. Okay; here we are in World War II. What were you doing on that fatal day of December 7, 1941?

Endo:

Okay; on December 7th, early in the morning were doing some haircuts. We do our own haircutting with each other, and after finishing we heard it on the radio. Since there was no television, the means of communication was radio. And we had the radio on and they said that Pearl Harbor was attacked. But you know I don't---at that age... and in fact, I'm sure many Americans didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was. And so I was just wondering, "Where is Pearl Harbor," and this attack, "How bad was that attack?" So on that day, it didn't bother me. I decided that I'm free; I want to go see a movie. So I crossed the channel, the L.A. Harbor Channel, went to San Pedro High School, just like I do every day to go to high school, and I was stopped by an MP. And when the MP stopped me he said... I said, "I'm an American." I said... therefore, you know I had hoped that he---I would be able to go to the movie. But no; they corralled all of the Japanese into a fenced in area.

Interviewer:

On that day?

Endo:

On that day on December 7th, and I have pictures to prove that I was incarcerated on that day for several hours.

Interviewer:

So it was an emotional experience for you on that day?

Endo:

It was frightening.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

0:26:29.2

Endo:

I knew that war might come; I was a little afraid.

Interviewer:

Okay; and so you---at that time you were 17 and you were living in Terminal Island I guess.

Endo:

Yeah; I was already 18---almost 19.

Interviewer:

Did you notice a difference in the racial climate after the news of Pearl Harbor?

Endo:

You're talking about in school?

Interviewer:

In school or in the community?

Endo:

Yes, yes; the attitude of the kids in school, of course, changed drastically. They looked at us differently now because we look like the enemy's face. And the word Jap started appearing very shortly.

Interviewer:

Did they taunt you or make any expressions?

Endo:

No; since we were classmates, they didn't say any bad words to us, but we knew the expression from their face.

Interviewer:

Okay; so let's see. In the days following Pearl Harbor, you continued to go to school?

Endo:

Yes; we went to school as long as we were able to attend, but I was fearing for the people on Terminal Island and people started moving out from Terminal Island. Being near the Naval Base there

on Terminal Island, we saw P-38s taking off on December 8th already. There were airplanes that I've never seen before---the P-38s. And therefore, people were starting---getting scared, and in a short while people would start moving out.

Interviewer:

Well they allowed you to move out?

Endo:

No problem moving out, but my folks couldn't go fishing anymore. So everything---as a standstill, and soon as that happens, people would start moving out. And therefore, my mother and my twin brother were no exception. We decided to move out and my uncle was in Los Angeles, and therefore we moved to Los Angeles several months later.

Interviewer:

Oh I see; so what happened to all your father's fishing boat and...?

Endo:

My father got rid of his fishing boat before he left. Therefore, we had no problem there. We had no home, but you have---we have a refrigerators and our radio. Our radio was probably our best thing around besides you know our beds and everything else were old. In furnishings we had some old furnishings. That we had no choice; we had to leave those behind. You couldn't sell it.

Interviewer:

No; of course not. So all the other fishermen were faced with the same problems of...?

Endo:

Same problem---no... we were all in the same boat and there was a curfew every night. Terminal Island was... we had---we were probably hit the hardest in America.

Interviewer:

Yes; I think so because of the fact that you had boats, that you had radios on these boats, I imagine. So you all went to Los Angeles and where did you stay?

0:29:42.6

Endo:

We went to my uncle's place, but before that you know the FBI came around to our house on Terminal Island. That was a frightening thing, and they would even take the ice cubes out to see if we hid anything in the refrigerator. It was very frightening because they made a fairly--you know a search of our premises to see if we had anything related to the Japanese Government---to see if there was any---to see if you know we were doing anything with the---making connection with Japan. The only connection we had of course, everyone may have a sibling or a brother or a sister---my folks; you know my folks had brothers in Japan. So they had letters, but nothing regarding the war. You know there were no... as far as I know on Terminal Island there was no spy or anything like that. But being fishermen and all that, close to the ocean, you know we were very suspicious.

Interviewer:

Sure absolutely; I imagine the FBI searched all the other homes as well.

Endo:

Everybody was searched. That was very frightening.

Interviewer:

Did they apprehend some people right away?

Endo:

Yes; you---the Japanese School teachers---you know and things like that---anybody that had anything... Kenjinkai, which is, you know, a Japanese prefecture organization, head people that were in the United States were all picked up and incarcerated for years.

Interviewer:

Yeah; they probably knew who to pick up even before Pearl Harbor.

Endo:

I would say so.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; yeah.

Endo:

They seemed to know who they are and they picked them up.

Interviewer:

I'm sure they were under surveillance for many years.

Endo:

I agree.

0:31:33.1

Interviewer:

Okay; let's see. So you went to live in Los Angeles at your uncle's place---whereabouts in Los Angeles?

Endo:

But Soto Street in the southern part of Los Angeles and I continued to go to high school there at Fremont High School.

Interviewer:

Oh yes; he had a home and he was able to...?

Endo:

They were renting a home and therefore we squeezed in. We didn't like it, but we had no place to go. So he had to put us in.

Interviewer:

Did you talk about the situation with Japan and the war and how did you---what was your reaction... well perhaps your mother--- about how did she feel toward Japan and did she express these thoughts to you or...?

0:32:20.0

Endo:

No, we... everybody was more frightened. My wife---mother knew Japan, but you know you couldn't go back anymore; we couldn't communicate anymore. But she was concerned over her other children and her husband---what's happening over there.

Interviewer:

Was there question of loyalty toward Japan ever raised?

Endo:

No, no; my mother was very loyal here; but somehow a lot of the Issei however were very loyal to Japan. My father was. My father said and gauged that Japan had never lost the war, and therefore he didn't think the... at least he told me this later on. Or

maybe no; I'm sorry. He was able to see all the battleships and the aircraft carriers as they go out fishing every day, and therefore he thought the Japanese was stronger. It's an amazing thing, but my father was in favor of the Japanese winning the war.

Interviewer:

I see; what were your own personal feelings about Japan?

Endo:

Well of course I opposed my father as being an American and not knowing what Japan looked like, I argued my father. Of course, my father was a _____.

Interviewer:

Oh yes; a lot of that went on between the fathers and sons.

Endo:

Father and son; yeah. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Okay; some Japanese people thought that the attack on Pearl Harbor was a stupid mistake by the Japanese. And I guess in some respects it was because they were over-powered after that. But how did you feel about it?

0:34:16.5

Endo:

Well I had no feelings; I was just disappointed that we were attacked because I didn't know how strong Japan was.

Interviewer:

Yeah; of course not. Okay, there was an Executive Order 9066--- was posted. These posters that were put up in the neighborhoods; did you happen to read---see one in your area?

Endo:

Yes; I still have that poster and we were asked to report to a certain area at a certain time, and we weren't given too much time. However, we just took what we can. You can't bring too much, but we had the gathering and we were shipped to Santa Anita Racetrack where maybe there were 20,000 other Japanese Americans.

Interviewer:

Yeah; this is when you were in Los Angeles?

Endo:

From Los Angeles, we were asked to report.

Interviewer:

You had to make all the preparations? I guess your uncle....

Endo:

They gave us several---probably a couple weeks, maybe 10 days or so notice and so we gathered all our---whatever belongings. We couldn't take too much. We were told that we can only take one suitcase. So you know that's all we took.

Interviewer:

You dropped out of Fremont High School?

Endo:

So I had to drop out of high school, and I asked for my diploma and they gave it to me. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Well even before graduation?

Endo:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

This is probably...?

Endo:

This is about three months before graduation and since I had enough credit, they gave me my diploma.

0:35:54.2

Interviewer:

So at this point, how did you and your family feel about being ordered out of your homes and having to go to Santa Anita? How did you feel about that? This is probably a difficult time.

Endo:

A very frightening period---very frightening because we didn't know what the future is going to be, and therefore we did not

know people... we thought maybe we might be incarcerated and killed.

Interviewer:

Really?

Endo:

My folks---my mother thought that we may never come back.

Interviewer:

Oh my goodness; that's terrible. Yeah; well so you were all sent to Santa Anita and how did you feel about being thrust into this?

Endo:

Well we had no choice; everybody else was in the same boat. Therefore, we did the best we can to survive.

Interviewer:

Right; but didn't you feel like, "Gee whiz, we're being treated unfairly as an American?" Did you feel that the government has no right to do that to you?

0:37:09.1

Endo:

Well on December 7th, at the time I told the MP that I'm an American. And you know he said, "You have a Japanese face." I had no choice. Therefore when the government ordered the Executive Order come through, we were forced to go into the camp and you know what right did you have at the time---nothing.

Interviewer:

Nothing; that's too bad. Okay; all your family belongings were put in storage?

Endo:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Were they there when you came back after the war?

Endo:

No; they were gone. Part of my things were gathered up at least. Someone broke in at this church that we stored our things and so you know probably 50 percent of it was gone---maybe more.

Interviewer:

Any particular thing that you missed a lot that you wished you...?

0:38:08.5

Endo:

Well yeah; my childhood things you know that I wanted were gone.

Interviewer:

Yeah; did you have a pet?

Endo:

No pet.

Interviewer:

No pets; okay. Okay; so you were in Santa Anita for what two or three months?

Endo:

Several months; I---the only thing I knew at the time I wanted to teach gymnastics because gymnastics that I learned in high school being an all city Champion; the only thing I knew was gymnastics. So I taught---at Santa Anita, I taught gymnastics.

:

Oh really?

Endo:

Yeah.

0:38:51.6

Interviewer:

They had facilities to do that?

Endo:

They had some mats there; so I taught tumbling.

Interviewer:

I see.

Endo:

And then I had an assistant who was all city champion, Tak Kawagoye. In fact, his wife... Tak had passed away, but his wife is like a City Clerk for City of Carson.

Interviewer:

Oh yes; Helen Kawagoye.

Endo:

There you are; uh-hm.

Interviewer:

So tell me about your experience in Santa Anita---your day-to-day living and....

Endo:

Well everyone had to work and I was 19 years old, and therefore I started to work at the Blue Mess, one of the mess halls located in the stable area in Santa Anita. And they put me to assist another older man making coffee every morning. So that was my job in Santa Anita. I lived in a barrack like everybody else; I didn't live in a stable, but I lived in the barracks.

Interviewer:

You were luckier. So, but aside from working in the Blue Mess, you had some recreation---gymnastics?

Endo:

I taught gymnastics in the underneath the grandstand.

Interviewer:

I see; okay. Okay; were you able to attend church services at all?

Endo:

[Response Inaudible - Silence]

Interviewer:

Okay; at this time we'll take a short break so you can cut the....

0:40:26.1

[Break]

0:40:27.5

Interviewer:

Okay; we'll continue now after our break. Let's see; we were talking about you being in the Santa Anita camp and the kind of work you did and some of the recreational activities you were involved in. And did you attend school?

Endo:

No; there was no school there at Santa Anita.

Interviewer:

Okay; but there was some kind of classes of some kind weren't there?

Endo:

Not that I know of.

Interviewer:

Tell me something about the food that you---they served you there in Santa Anita?

Endo:

The food wasn't too bad; I didn't do any cooking or anything. [Laughs] Of course, one of the people... you know I worked in a mess hall. I only made the coffee and I helped serve some of the food. But the food wasn't too bad. It was healthy food and so at least I never went hungry.

Interviewer:

Okay; how did you find the bathroom facilities?

Endo:

Well those you can't help; it's a public shower, public bath, public you know bathroom. So that you can't help. That you have to share and it was clean---neat. We kept it nice and clean.

Interviewer:

And the living accommodations---beds, barracks?

0:41:51.6

Endo:

Well you know they only give us a cheap spring-bed, but I mean we were able to sleep. We may have a crack and a hole, but everybody put newspaper and so that you can't see through. That was the main thing; you didn't have the privacy because you can hear it, the people next door.

Interviewer:

Yeah; okay so you moved onto the relocation... where the WRA Center(concentration camp) at Amache in Colorado?

Endo:

Not knowing we were going to go though you know when they shipped us out, we didn't know where we were going to go. And when they boarded the train, we were told to pull the curtain down---whether it was for our protection, which they say it was for our protection, but of course, we wanted to see where we were going. So when we left the city and we were in the mountains where there were some beautiful views, we would lift up the curtains and enjoy the views of the mountain and the surrounding area as we traveled.

Interviewer:

Were there military police on the trains?

0:42:58.6

Endo:

That I don't know.

Interviewer:

I understand that in some places there were. And that train ride was pretty long, I imagine?

Endo:

Probably an overnight trip to Amache because I didn't know where the destination was. That was a frightening thing.

Interviewer:

Okay; so that trip included your mother and yourself and who else was on that trip?

Endo:

My mother and my brother---just three of us.

Interviewer:

Okay; just the three of you. Okay; you arrived at Amache; you were assigned a barrack?

Endo:

Yeah; the interesting thing is you know the name Amache is the daughter of the Chief of the Cheyenne Indian Tribe that once frequented the area. And she married an early pioneer builder and cattleman and his name was John Power, and the county of Power was named after him. And there in Amache I taught gymnastics; that was the only thing I knew---in junior high school.

Interviewer:

So you were on the staff there at the high school as a teacher?

0:44:12.7

Endo:

In the junior high school; I was too young for high school teacher.

Interviewer:

Okay; so that was your occupation there. Did you get paid for that?

Endo:

Yes; we got paid \$19 professional wage.

Interviewer:

Good; and then your mother, she...?

Endo:

My mother worked in the kitchen there at the---where---we were called 7-K Block. And my mother worked in the kitchen.

0:44:44.0

Interviewer:

Okay; and your brother?

Endo:

My brother was---he became an electrician there in the camp.

Interviewer:

Oh, an electrician; good. Okay; so not too long after you... let's see; I guess in 1943 they start recruiting or asking for volunteers or drafting Japanese Americans into the military. At that point, you were interested?

Endo:

Okay; a couple of my friends that I knew---my next door neighbor, his name was Saito---S-a-i-t-o; the two brothers wanted to volunteer. They came to recruit us for military service and they decided they would want to go, and therefore I, too, wanted to go. And I went to my mom and I say, "Momma," I said, "The Saito's are volunteering to---for military service and I want to go; I want to fight for my country."

Interviewer:

What did your mother...?

Endo:

Boy, she was mad. She says, "You're stupid." She said, "You don't go while you're being incarcerated." She said that in Japanese to me, and it scared me and frightened me. I wanted to go, but after she said that [Laughs], there was no way I can go because she opposed my desire of volunteering. So therefore, I did not go. But the Saito boys went on and they never came back.

Interviewer:

I believe---I know that story that---the two brothers, George and Calvin.

Endo:

There you are---they were my next door neighbors in Santa Anita, and they were... in Amachi they were just a block away from me and we were good friends.

0:46:37.2

Interviewer:

Just within three months, they were both dead?

Endo:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So you continued on there, but ultimately you did make a decision about the military. Was that after...?

Endo:

That's after I left Santa... Amache and went to Chicago.

Interviewer:

Okay; let's get into that. So the rest of the time in Amache, you taught gymnastics?

Endo:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm.

Endo:

Until we were able to leave camp.

Interviewer:

So you all relocated together?

Endo:

So we relocated to Chicago---my entire family in 1945---early '45.

Interviewer:

What did you have to do in Chicago that drew you?

Endo:

In Chicago, I decided that... my mother always said, "You're handy with your hands," therefore I decided I wanted to go into making furniture. They had a job for me and I decided to do woodwork.

Interviewer:

Good; so you all found a place to stay and you started to work... and your brother?

Endo:

And we settled down and started working.

0:47:42.3

Interviewer:

Right in Chicago?

Endo:

Right in the heart of Chicago.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; good. So how long did that last?

Endo:

Well until I got drafted, but before I got drafted you know I--- since I was teaching gymnastics and I was the City finalist in Los Angeles, I wanted to compete once more. I was teaching also at the Hyde Park YMCA at the time. As soon as I got to Chicago, I made a point to work out at the YMCA there at Hyde Park and I wanted to compete and I worked out very hard both in gymnastics and weight lifting. And I entered the junior all around championship and I won the title that year in 1945. And since I was a lifter, lifting weights from the Terminal Island days, I decided that I better do my weightlifting competition at this time because maybe I won't be able to compete again once I go into the service. And I came in second in weight division for the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. They would say, "That Nisei boy; he beat me." But we became good friends; but I wanted to beat him real badly and I competed against him three times. Each time I thought I was going to be better than him, but he did just a little bit better than I did each time.

Interviewer:

But all this while you were working?

Endo:

Yes; this was during my Saturday and Sunday and evenings where I was able to... I was teaching at the Hyde Park YMCA at the same time. There was the coach from the University of Chicago was leaving his post and therefore he asked me to take over the teaching position there at the Hyde Park YMCA, which I did. And I enjoyed teaching gymnastics at that time.

0:49:47.6

Interviewer:

But then you were drafted?

Endo:

Then in about September... I forgot when it was, but in September of 1945, I reported for induction into the military service.

Interviewer:

Oh okay; where did you train?

Endo:

And I went to Camp Gordon, Georgia for a training where---from the company of a young man. About a fourth of the unit was Niseis.

Interviewer:

This is an integrated unit?

Endo:

Integrated unit; so we were---I was tickled to death to have so many Japanese Americans there with us.

Interviewer:

What kind of a unit was it?

Endo:

It was just Army---just regular training camp.

Interviewer:

Okay in Georgia; from there you were training and then tell us.

Endo:

After basics, we took an examination. The war was being---the war was coming to an end and our unit was ready to go to Europe to have their last push for the end of the war. However, for the Niseis, they gave us an examination---Japanese test, and I did a lot of _____, a lot of difficulty, you know a Japanese word on it. And they threw me to the top class. I didn't realize it; and we were sent---all of us were transferred to Fort Snelling there in Minnesota for our Japanese language. They call it military language training. You know we knew Japanese. Well I always knew Japanese; we spoke Japanese. But we had to learn military terminology. So we learned the military terminology; it took us six months. Meanwhile, the war in Europe was finished, and while we were studying Japanese, the war in Japan was finished.

Interviewer:

Right.

0:51:53.9

Endo:

So they were thinking about the occupation of Japan.

Interviewer:

Okay; so you're in Fort Snelling. You've been trained and then after Fort Snelling, you were shipped out to Japan?

Endo:

So we went to Fort Lewis in Washington and we boarded our military ship and went to Japan.

Interviewer:

Right; and then the name of the unit that you were attached to in Japan?

Endo:

Before that, as we entered Yokohama Harbor, I was impressed. In the early morning, I saw Mount Fujikama. It was beautiful. It was a nice clear morning about 6 o'clock in the morning. I saw it at---Mount Fujikama and it sort of welcomed me to Japan. It was a tremendous feeling because I wanted to go see my father. I wanted to go see my father; so as soon as we got to Japan, I saw how hungry the Japanese were. They were very hungry. I never saw so many people so hungry. So I decided, I wanted to work in the mess hall, and I---whatever food we had left over in the camp, in the Army there, I took the food out in a big tub and fed the Japanese for three days. I felt good because the Japanese were hungry. And then the first chance I had, I wanted to go see my father and I knew Shizuoka was about 100 miles away. The trains were very slow; the street cars and the trains were very slow, but I made my way to Shizuoka and when I arrived at home---or my father's home, he was not home. So I was very disappointed and I was leaving on the train, and the train was moving so slow---on the side of the road, my father was walking. And so I called out his name. I knew that was my father. And he looked up at me, and I jumped off the train and decided I'm going to go AWOL one night. And I stayed with my father and I was able to see a father that I haven't seen since 1940 or early 1941. I had not seen my father for many years. And that was 1946. It was a joy to see my father. I went AWOL one day; I went back to camp the next day. They didn't miss me. [Laughs]

0:54:21.1

Interviewer:

Good.

Endo:

It was a joy to see my father.

Interviewer:

Now what unit were you in at that time?

Endo:

So from there we---I was assigned to Tokyo to a place called ATIS-- Allied Translator Interpreter Section---ATIS. And from there people were assigned to various units, but since I was in one of the top classes in the military training camp in Fort Snelling, they decided that you better be with the legal section for the war crime trials---investigation. And so they assigned me to a unit, and they said they wanted me to go to either toward Nagasaki or Sendai or Osaka. And I immediately asked the Colonel where the closest point to Shizuoka because that's where my father was. But Osaka was the closest but it was still some 400 or 500 miles---it's about 300-400 miles away. And I selected Osaka as....

Interviewer:

That's where the war crime trials were being held?

Endo:

War crime trials investigations; Tokyo was... in Yokohama was where the crime trials were held, but the pre-investigations, in order to get all the information, we had to have offices away from Tokyo simply because we couldn't call people up for interrogation all the way up to Tokyo; it was too far. The trains were just too slow. Therefore, we had to have an office in Osaka, and I interviewed former Prisoners of War... I mean the Japanese that held American Airmen, prisoners, and we wanted to find out what happened to our American prisoners. If they came home, how were they treated, and they will let us know if we were mistreated and we would interrogate those people that mistreated our Americans. But the most important thing was some of the flyers from various islands as well as in Japan were killed by Japanese Military personnel, and we had to find out where the Americans were buried. And therefore, we had this investigation.

Interviewer:

They were killed while they were in captivity?

0:56:48.0

Endo:

Well in Japan some were killed, and we wanted to find out where the bodies were. And we had the grave registration go with us and dig up the bodies where they were buried like up in Osaka Castle---underneath we found many bodies.

Interviewer:

Really?

Endo:

Yeah; they were Americans and we had to find out who they were. They had---because they had their dog tags.

Interviewer:

That's too bad. You were not an attorney yet you participated in the war crimes trials. Now what were your functions?

Endo:

Mine---strictly interpreting.

0:57:25.6

Interviewer:

So you interpreted between the prisoners or the accused?

Endo:

The American Officer that was making an investigation and the Japanese people that treated the Americans whether they treated them fairly or whether they treated them---mishandling, I'm the mouthpiece between them.

Interviewer:

I see; so you got a pretty good idea of the Japanese attitude toward the Americans?

Endo:

The frightening thing was the Japanese were very, very scared because they were afraid that they may you know be prosecuted, and therefore the Japanese were very nervous. They were very nervous. In fact, later on in Tokyo, I remember I interviewed an Admiral, and then we had to locate another Admiral and therefore this one Admiral that I knew, I told---I mentioned to him that

we're going to call in the certain Admiral. And the frightening thing was he went and talked to this Admiral and said, "You're going to be interviewed tomorrow." He went out and hung himself. So I felt very guilty in revealing that information. That was a frightening thing.

Interviewer:

He must have done some bad things.

Endo:

Yeah; I'm sure. So instead of being hung, he hung himself.

Interviewer:

Oh my goodness. So how long were you doing this sort of work?

Endo:

I did that work for two and a half years.

Interviewer:

The trials took that long?

Endo:

The trials---we did all the investigations and the trials went--
--must have gone on from 19---late '45 all the way to---ended up
probably about 1949. But it was a short time; it's not that long
when you figure you know all these trials had gone on for a
military tribunal. This was you know about a four-year period.

Interviewer:

Were there a lot of convictions?

Endo:

Most of them seemed to have been you know---they had to hang
them I guess because they had no choice.

Interviewer:

Yeah; that's too bad. Well it's the kind of work you had to do.

Endo:

Well I didn't like it; it was a dirty job, but the biggest
thing... I mean it was not my life. All I was---was the
mouthpiece.

0:59:52.4

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Endo:

And the Japanese were very scared. Many of the people that I interviewed were sentenced to hang and I felt very sorry for them because they were like any other person you know; but they committed a crime by killing the Americans whether they stabbed them or whether they mis-fed them or mistreated them. If they mistreated them, they would not have been hung; but a lot of them in the other island, they were forced to bayonet the Americans and when they did that they were prosecuted and hung because you know... and the Japanese were hungry you must understand on those islands. They---when they killed them, they ate the Americans, and they were good. I said, "How was the taste," and I'm only an interpreter and they asked, "How was the food?" They said, "We were hungry and so the food was good. Human flesh is good."

Interviewer:

Well so; so you couldn't be pro-Japan or anti-Japan; you had to be very neutral in this work that you were doing?

Endo:

Yes; as I spent time in Japan, I became fond of the Japanese people and I had---I was---I had no bias against either, you know for the Japanese. They became good people.

Interviewer:

Yeah; I think it turned out well. So let's see; you did this work and then... what was your rank or grade in the military?

Endo:

All right; well in the service when we went in we were old Private. And when we went to Fort Snelling, they gave us our PFC stripes. All right; as we got our PFC stripes, those who were leaving for Japan said, "Don't put on your stripes, simply because in a short time, all of you guys are going to be Sergeants. All the interpreters are going to be Sergeants." So we didn't sew on our stripes. Meanwhile, the war was concluded, and when we graduated, we didn't get our stripes. They said, "The war was over; we're not going to give you anymore stripes." And we felt real bad about that because everybody that was going to Japan were Sergeants, and here we... in my position, we were in the top class and going to the war crime trials as PFCs. That

wasn't very good. So my Major, while I was doing... I was Chief Clerk at that same time. I took typing in San Pedro High School, and therefore I was Chief Clerk, and I outranked the other Japanese interpreters in my office. They kept me because of my typing ability. And so my Major put me in for a Sergeant. You know since I'm on TDY, I couldn't get any rank. So when it came time to be discharged, they still wanted me---the war crime trial investigation was still going on, and therefore they asked me to stay as a Department of Army Civilian---DAC. So I remained on my job as a DAC, but they gave me Officer's rank.

1:03:10.8

Interviewer:

Well good.

Endo:

So I stayed in the Officers Quarters now. And I decided I wanted to stay for a couple more years. So I stayed in Osaka, and then was transferred to Tokyo before the trials were all concluded and investigations. Then I, as a DAC, I took another examination and became an Officer for the Air Force. I'm talking about... when I say Officer, I am Officer Rank. I got about a Captain rating, and I took a job with the Air Force Intelligence. The Air Force Intelligence is making targets in Russian. That was my next job during the occupation of Japan.

Interviewer:

Okay; this is about 19...?

Endo:

This is 1948.

Interviewer:

Forty-eight; okay.

Endo:

The beginning of '48.

Interviewer:

So you're a Department of Army Civilian, but you have a different job title. You're no longer doing translations?

Endo:

That's right.

Interviewer:

But you are working on something having to do with the Russians?

Endo:

Yeah; we're making targets in Russia now because we might go to war with Russian.

Interviewer:

Yeah; it was the Cold War period.

Endo:

Very cold.

1:04:27.9

Interviewer:

Okay; so you're posted in Tokyo at that time?

Endo:

Yeah; and I was making target... there was one very interesting thing. One of the last targets I did, I interviewed a Japanese Prisoner of War returning from Russia. He worked in a chemical plant north of the Yellow River there in Korea, right in Russia there. MacArthur was told not to bomb that, but the Intelligence Office came to me and asked me how reliable that information was. I told him, "Why?" He said, "You're the only one that has that information." I said, "He was very reliable," according to my report. I said that. And he said, "Yes, we have that written," and so he left and one week later I found out they bombed the target.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Endo:

And it went sky-high. For that General MacArthur got fired.

Interviewer:

Yeah; he wasn't supposed to go north of the Yellow.

Endo:

The Yellow River; and that was my target. [Laughs] Interesting thing that I was the---I'm responsible for MacArthur getting fired.

Interviewer:

That's right; you had a role in that. Okay; we're now in 1948. Perhaps how long did you hold onto this position in...?

Endo:

I was in there, and I could have stayed longer, however you must understand, being there at the age of 25-26 years old, I fell in love in Japan. So I wrote to our Congressman, but I wrote to a lot of Congressman, but apparently I was not writing to the right person. So I wrote to Mike Masaoka. Mike Masaoka was our Representative---Japanese-American Representative in Washington, DC. He saw my letter and introduced that letter to my Congressman, Sydney Yates in Chicago, where I was inducted.

Interviewer:

Okay.

1:06:33.5

Endo:

And therefore he wrote up a bill in Congress so that---a private bill signed by the President and the Vice President---and I was able to get a bill passed and---to bring my wife. I was the first American to be such a bill.

Interviewer:

The first one?

Endo:

The very first one to bring my wife to America.

Interviewer:

Tell me the circumstances of your courtship and your marriage.

Endo:

Well my wife was working for the Osaka American School and she spoke fairly good English because she was Clerk/Typist and Interpreter for the Principal. Therefore, I you knew I knew she wouldn't have too much difficulty in coming to America and to speak the language. Meanwhile, I---I wanted to see more of Japan. I wanted to see Kyoto; I wanted to see Nara; I wanted to see all over Japan and therefore the one-day trips were all nearby. And she took me and introduced me to all these places in Japan. And I fell in love with her.

Interviewer:

I see.

Endo:

So when I moved to Tokyo when I got transferred, I wanted her to come to Tokyo and she agreed that I'll go to Tokyo with her. And so I knew an Admiral that I became friends with and he said, "I have room at my house," and said, "If you want to rent that room, you may you know borrow the room." And so my wife came to... pardon me---my girlfriend, came to Tokyo and she stayed at this Admiral---Admiral Beppu---B-e-p-p-u-.

Interviewer:

A Japanese Admiral?

Endo:

Japanese Admiral, former Admiral who actually made the Airport. He is the one that developed that airport in Japan--- the first airport---until the new one was built, and so Mr. Beppu was very good. And she stayed there until the private bill was passed in Congress for me to bring my wife to America.

Interviewer:

Very good; did you keep in touch with your father?

Endo:

I made occasional trips to see my father. At least once every two months I was able to visit my father, and there I was able to learn more about my brother and my sister, whom I had never met before in my lifetime.

Interviewer:

That's right.

Endo:

So it was a joy to see my relatives and at the same time, they were hungry, too. Therefore, I went to the PX. I had my own car when I got to Tokyo, and so I would take my car and fill it up with food and take it to my folks in Shizuoka.

Interviewer:

Okay; let's see. Where are we now? You're in Tokyo. You're about to get married. The bill was passed.

Endo:

But in the meantime, I was helping the Japanese developing their gymnastics program. That was a big thing and this started back in Osaka when someone noticed that I was a gymnast.

Interviewer:

You were doing this on your spare time?

Endo:

This is my spare time, and they noticed my skill in gymnastics. And they invited me to their first national sport festival where I met Mr. Kundo who was the President of the Japanese Gymnastic Association. And after I got to Tokyo, since he lived in Tokyo, he invited me to their national championships. And then I noticed their equipment was very run down, and since I knew more about the American equipment, I told them what they should be doing because their equipment is old-fashioned. It's got to be developed.

Interviewer:

Because yeah; its occupation and they're just recovering for the war and they didn't have....

1:10:45.5

Endo:

They've been fighting China all this time since 1935 or '36, and they need help. And I was there. And they were really--you know they really wanted me to help them; so I became their advisor. And before I knew it, they wanted me to invite the American Olympic Team to Japan.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Endo:

And therefore, we made arrangements; at least I called New York several times and made arrangements for the three top male gymnasts along with the coach to come to Japan, and we had several---one competition and three exhibitions while they were in Japan. And at my request, I asked that the team be permitted to meet General Douglas MacArthur. And General MacArthur agreed that the team---that he would want to see the team, because General MacArthur was Chief Delegation of the Olympic Team in 1924---Olympic Games in Amsterdam. And therefore he had great

interest in the gymnast. And so we visited General MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo for 30 minutes. And my---the coach of the gymnastic team participated in the 1924 Olympic Games, and so General MacArthur had something in common to talk the American Delegation Chief.

Interviewer:

So MacArthur was a very important part of this---getting this Olympics program going, huh?

Endo:

Yes; and General MacArthur told me that he wanted me to continue to help the Japanese build their program. So I was very happy to do this for the Japanese.

Interviewer:

Okay; yeah I'm sure that because of his role that---in charge of the entire occupation that it was very important.

Endo:

Yeah; and after my child---my first son was born, I named him after Douglas MacArthur. His name is Douglas.

Interviewer:

Very good; okay I think at this point we'll just... we need to take a break so we can get a new CD going. So let's just cut it at this point.

[End Frank Endo CD 1]

[Begin Frank Endo CD 2]

Interviewer:

At this point, I have to read some more material here. It is now 11:37, the same date, and we're in the same location talking to Mr. Frank Endo. This is a continuation and the second CD of the interview of Mr. Endo on the same date being conducted by me, Ike Hatchimonji for the South Bay Oral History Project. The audio and cataloging persons remain the same. All copyrights, title, and any other rights arising out of this interview whether in its entirety, part, or derivative form or whether in audio, written, or any other format shall be long to the South Bay Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. Copying of this interview recording whether in its entirety or part is strictly prohibited without a written authorization from the

South Bay Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League.
Let's continue the interview.

Okay; at this point, you're still in Tokyo. Did you get married yet?

Endo:

Yes; as soon as the bill was signed by Truman, I was notified that you have to get married within 30 days--the bill would be good for 30 days. Therefore, I had my best man, who was Mr. Kundo, the President of the Japanese Gymnastic Association, was my best man and we got married there at the church--the military church--in Tokyo.

Interviewer:

Military; okay. So... well at that point you're happily married and did you---were you able to take some time off?

Endo:

So we only had a short honeymoon right there in Tokyo; there's no reason for us to travel anymore. I've seen a great deal of Japan, and so we prepared to return back to the States because we had to return within a short period according to the bill.

0:02:04.7

Interviewer:

Oh I see.

Endo:

And therefore, we returned back to Chicago where I was inducted.

Interviewer:

Oh I see; so you quit your work in Tokyo, you and your new wife...?

Endo:

I had to quit because the bill said I had to return.

Interviewer:

Oh; right.

Endo:

I was forced to return and therefore my first thing was to visit my Congressman, Sydney R. Yates, in Chicago, my Congressman who

introduced a bill in Congress to thank him for the bill that he introduced.

Interviewer:

So you resettled in Chicago, you and your wife, and...?

Endo:

We did not; we decided to go on our honeymoon. Even though my full--my mother and my brother were there, I wanted to return back to the West Coast.

Interviewer:

Oh I see.

Endo:

And therefore, we went to New York and visited Mr. Rory Moore, the coach that came to Japan on my invitation to compete with the Japanese, and we stayed with him a couple days visiting the Statue of Liberty and Empire State Building. We returned back to Los Angeles where I wanted to continue my education like all other Niseis that were returning from overseas. And I went to school---college for education for two years.

Interviewer:

G.I. Bill?

Endo:

G.I. Bill.

Interviewer:

And where did you go to college?

Endo:

So I went to Woodbury College for a while and at the same time I had time left and I went to the L.A. Trade Tech to learn cabinet making because my mother mentioned when I was a little boy that I was handy with my hands and I took some woodworking work in Chicago when I was released from the relocation center. And so I went and took up cabinet making.

Interviewer:

Let's see now... you're just going to school; you're not actually working?

0:03:59.1

Endo:

I was working part-time while I was going to school.

Interviewer:

What sort of part-time work were you doing?

Endo:

Woodworking.

Interviewer:

Oh woodworking; okay. And you're living right in Los Angeles?

Endo:

I lived in Los Angeles at the time near Gardena.

Interviewer:

Okay; so let's see once you've completed your studies, you continued to live in the same place, and you got a...?

Endo:

I got a job as a cabinet maker.

Interviewer:

Okay; for some company?

Endo:

Yes; a nice restaurant fixture company. So it was nice work and cabinet making is a very technical work and I enjoyed it very much because you have to use blueprints and art to put the things together simply because every fixture is different. There are no two fixtures the same.

Interviewer:

So your wife is a homemaker?

Endo:

My wife worked temporarily for a while, but we decided we wanted to raise a family; so my wife was tied down with the family.

Interviewer:

Oh okay; all right. Were you still involved in gymnastics at this point?

Endo:

Okay; very interesting because as soon as we got back, the Southern California Gymnastics Judges Association wanted me to talk about my experience in Japan. After that they asked me to join the Association so that I could learn judging. And I wanted to learn judging; I thought that should be my next step in the gymnastics field.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Endo:

And the people, the coaches there and the judges were all---may of them were Olympians, and they took me under their arms and they said, "We want you to become a judge. There is no money in judging; it's a volunteer job, but we will teach you." And I gladly accepted the offer and started judging gymnastics in the L.A. City Schools and the C.I.F. Schools.

Interviewer:

This is all outside of your regular job?

Endo:

Yes; outside my job, this would be judging in the afternoons. I would leave my job and go out and judge gymnastics and the high school will pay you though. L.A. City Schools and C.I.F. High School whether it's day time or evening, there was a lot of gymnastics going on in the late 50s and the 60s and 70s; gymnastics was a booming sport.

Interviewer:

Okay; I wanted to get some idea of what the attitude of the community was when you came back to Los Angeles? Could you feel...?

0:06:33.1

Endo:

Okay; that's a very good question because we wanted to buy a home when I first got back. What I did was travel around the various areas in Southern California to buy a home. It was very difficult at that time; they didn't want Japanese to buy a home.

Interviewer:

Yes; there were a lot of restrictive covenants.

Endo:

Even when you're in Gardena, the northern part where all the black people were at the time, they would not sell me a home.

Interviewer:

I see.

Endo:

So I had difficulty and I decided that I should stick in the general area of Los Angeles and I bought a home where I had no problem.

Interviewer:

All right; in the meantime, your mother and brother were still back in Chicago?

Endo:

They were in Chicago, but since I had already returned to Los Angeles, they also decided that they would want to come and return back to California.

Interviewer:

Okay; so you re-established your relationship with your mother and brother, and then of course with your wife, and then when did your first child come along?

Endo:

Oh, almost immediately---about 1953 or so I guess we had our first child.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; good. Boy or girl?

Endo:

Boy; his name is Douglas for Douglas MacArthur. **[Laughs]**

Interviewer:

Oh yes; okay. Okay; so you're working in cabinet work. You're doing a lot of judging.

Endo:

Judging---I'm judging gymnastics, and I was judging---I was judging the National Championship---the National Collegiate Championship in Berkley in 1959. And Mr. George Nissen of the Nissen Trampoline Company, the inventor of the trampoline,

wanted to introduce trampolines in Japan and asked me if I would contact Japan. So of course, I knew Mr.Kundo who was the President of the Japanese Gymnastics Association and I called him and he says, "Please come to Japan and introduce trampolining." We were tickled to death to go to Japan and we put out exhibitions with the world's best gymnasts and best trampolinists we took along with us, and we introducing trampolining to the Japanese. And the Japanese loved it.

Interviewer:
[Laughs]

0:08:55.5

Endo:
The loved it so much that they were smart enough to take the trampolining tricks and introduce that into their artistic gymnastics, such as a double-back somersault or a double-back somersault with a half in and half out twist---very difficult tricks, but the Japanese decided that's what they wanted to do in gymnastics rather than trampolining. I didn't realize that, but I did the Japanese a tremendous favor by introducing the trampoline to the Japanese.

Interviewer:
So you re-established your connection with Japan through the trampoline and then what?

Endo:
And so the Japanese went on in '60, and became in Rome in 1960--the Rome Olympic Games---they became Olympic Champions.

Interviewer:
Well it didn't take very long did it?

Endo:
No.

Interviewer:
Okay; in the meantime, you're still doing...?

Endo:
I was doing... in all for 15 years, I continued to do cabinet making and in the evenings and spare time, I was judging gymnastics.

Interviewer:

Okay let's see now; what year are we at---1960...?

Endo:

Sixty-four Olympic Games; okay the Tokyo Olympic Games. I had the Frank Endo Olympic Tour for gymnastics tour to Japan. No one knew Japan better than I did; therefore I set up a tour to Japan. I had an Olympic Tour and they had a good time. All the people, the most important people in the United States, were on my tour.

Interviewer:

Good for you---good.

Endo:

[Laughs]

Interviewer:

Okay so what happened next?

Endo:

I just kept on judging gymnastics and I was---it was about that time that I decided that my---I should start into the gymnastics supply business. I have done cabinet making for 15 years, and I was getting so successful in getting samples from Japan for gymnastics shoes that I decided we don't have shoes in America. And I started importing... at first I asked if I can buy 100 pairs. Then we increased it 200 pairs---400 pairs, and before I knew it I was getting 100 pairs at a time---1,000 pairs at a time. And therefore I decided maybe it's time for me to quit cabinet making. I've done it for 15 years. I'm going to go into business because I can make more money by doing less work by selling gymnastics shoes, and I quit my cabinet making after 15 years. I retired from that and went into the mail order business.

Interviewer:

Let's see; I want to try to get a fix on the year. That would be 19...?

Endo:

Nineteen Sixty Six---I quit my cabinet making business.

Interviewer:

Okay; so '66 on you're devoting most of your time to...?

Endo:

Gymnastics now; and now I can do more judging of gymnastics at the same time.

Interviewer:

All right; so '66 on. How long did that last now---your business?

Endo:

My business was still---I've been in business since 1958, starting part-time and going full-time in 1966. I'm still in the business of judging gymnastics and selling gymnastic supplies. I think I've been fairly successful and my two sons are now working for me. They both attended high school gymnastics. They both went to Cal State Long Beach, was on the gymnastics team, and therefore they have joined me in my business and are both working with me.

Interviewer:

Well good; you're passing it onto your children. That's great. Okay; here we are---your two sons have been born and so what's the next big even in your life?

Endo:

Well I judged many competitions, therefore they asked me back in 1972 to be the Head Judge for the United States, and I've had the honor of being the Head Judge of many U.S.A. championships, as well as being the Judge for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. I was a vaulting judge and I really enjoyed that probably you know because it was right here in my own backyard. My entire family was able to visit and observe the Olympic Games here in Los Angeles.

Interviewer:

Well good for you. So let's see; so you're still involved in gymnastics and I think what we could do is talk about some of the awards and some of the other documents that I've---that you've handed over to us to explain some of the things that---some of the highpoints in your life in gymnastics.

0:14:16.0

Endo:

Probably the first highlight came in 1990. I was invited with my wife on an all expense paid trip and I was presented the Korosho. That's K-o-r-o-s-h-o. Korosho means the Japanese Hall of Fame. I went to Japan to receive that honor.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Endo:

And then in the year 2000, I have served 50 years as a National and International Gymnastic Judge here in America. And so the Southern California Gymnastic Judges Association honored me with the first Frank Endo Southern California Judge of the Year Award. They now award even though I have not passed away yet [Laughs]... they are honoring me each year and I am able to present my trophy to the best judge of Southern California.

Interviewer:

I see; well that's interesting. Okay.

Endo:

And then in 19... 2001, the United States Gymnastic Federation presented me with the Lifetime Achievement into the United States Gymnastic Hall of Fame in Philadelphia.

0:15:34.1

Interviewer:

Oh that's quite an honor.

Endo:

So I have now two Hall of Fames. And because I was in the Hall of Fame, the United States finally started a---the International Gymnastic Hall of Fame some 12 years ago and they asked me to be a member, one of the Directors of the International Gymnastic Hall of Fame, where we are now inducting gold medalists around the world. And I'm part of that group now that honors the great gymnasts of the past like Nadia Comaneci and Olga Corbet, Bart Connor, and these great gymnasts of all-time are now being honored and I'm one of the Directors of that group.

Interviewer:

Very good.

Endo:

I'm very honored.

Interviewer:

I imagine you keep very close touch with gymnastics going on today.

Endo:

Yes; I'm... the only problem I've had for the past year and a half was that my wife was sick about three years ago, and it took me out of commission for a couple years, whereby I had to travel to the hospital to see my wife. And she passed away after two years and two months, and it's been a year and a half now since she has passed away, and I've gained my strength back again to the point where I want to get back in action there and to be able to judge gymnastics and I've done that this year, whereby I was able to meet all my friends again. But you must understand, I've judged over 50 years, and I've been honored for that. And I'm the oldest judge now in the United States and I've served a long time. But I'd like to judge as long as possible at this time even though judging is not easy. We have an examination---we have to take an examination every year. I've done that for over 50 years, and we have to take a National test as well---it's International. The National is every year; the International is every four years qualifying you to judge in Olympic Games. I may not be interested in International because it's very difficult; but I do want to take the National test so that I can judge any place in the United States.

Interviewer:

Is there a National Federation that oversees all...?

Endo:

Yes; we belong to the National Gymnastics Judges Association once you are qualified to judge in a National.

0:18:12.6

Interviewer:

Okay; well what... well you're getting back into the swing of things. I suppose you're looking forward to the Olympics coming up here this summer?

Endo:

I've been to Athens already; my wife and I took a trip to Athens, and it's---apparently it's going to be very successful

according to Uberhoff, the Chairman of the 1984 Olympic Games, and I look forward to that. The tickets are too hard to get, but if I can go, I'll go. But I... we'll see.

Interviewer:

I imagine the U.S. has a strong team?

Endo:

The U.S. of course has a very strong team and has a chance to win the gold medal for both men and women.

Interviewer:

Good---very good; well we've covered a lot of territory and I think you have a very fascinating life history starting from the son of a fisherman in a place called Terminal Island, having gotten an interest in things like gymnastics, but also cabinetry. You've gone through the war years with internment and then relocation, followed by military service in a very--- probably as you mentioned, a very difficult field of interpreting and the war crime trials and then following that with the Air Force Intelligence, and of course I think your marriage to your wife in Japan must have been a very happy period of your life, and then your---the interest that you've had in Japan and in America with respect to gymnastics was very good, and of course having spoken with General MacArthur and then your long-standing relationship in the field of gymnastics has been very good. You've accomplished a lot. You've received a great number of honors, and I think you have much to be proud of. So have you some closing remarks that you'd like to make?

0:20:33.5

Endo:

Not really; I'm happy that you were able to talk with me and I could leave a little bit of history behind because I don't know how many more years I've got left, but I'm going to do the best I can to do the best I can for whatever time I have left.

Interviewer:

Yeah; well we're glad to have met with you and as I told you, the purpose of this project is to study the history of people in the South Bay area and I think we've done that very well with you. And so I think what we'll do here is we'll conclude this CD, but we'll talk about some of the other documents that we

have received from you. We'll put that on a separate CD. So at this point we'll just end this CD for now.

[End Frank Endo CD 2]

[Begin Frank Endo CD 3]

Interviewer:

... this interview with Mr. Endo. We received a number of interesting documents that I'd just like to list here, and as we go along Mr. Endo, you may want to make comments. But what I've done is written these down. But the first thing we have here is a recorded life history in deed of gift, which form you've already signed. And let's see, we've done the pre-interview. Oh yeah; the Military Intelligence Service Occupation of Japan was a document that you had written. I believe it's in this....

Endo:

You have it on your file.

Interviewer:

Right. Also a newspaper article in the Rafu Shimpo newspaper (a local Japanese vernacular) sometime in 1999; I couldn't quite make out the date.

Endo:

Two Thousand and Two---in March, my whole life story.

Interviewer:

Well this was a Kunsho Awardees Recognized, but that's the one that you said....

Endo:

No; I never got the Kunsho from Japan.

Interviewer: Yeah; but... okay; then there's a copy of the Western Defense Command, Order Number 21, which....

Endo: Which was given to me at the time of the evacuation. You have a copy of that.

Interviewer: Right; and then of course the very famous photograph of General Douglas MacArthur, which he signed.

0:01:23.3

Endo:

Yeah; you have the picture of General MacArthur with his signature.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm.

Endo:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Is this his name here?

Endo:

Yeah; I got it signed in Tokyo in 1950.

Interviewer:

Okay; very good. And then there's a picture of you in 1989 at the Grand Canyon where you're---it's your---you're 66 years of age, and I think you're doing a....

Endo:

A handstand on the edge of the Grand Canyon. **[Laughs]**

Interviewer:

That's quite a picture there. You wonder if you're going to fall over or not. Also, there's a Rafu Shimpō article dated March 2, 2002, written by Mark Yoshida. It's about your influence in... the title is, Frank Endo's Influence in Gymnastics Endures.

0:02:17.1

Endo:

Two days of it.

Interviewer:

And then another article dated August 8, 2001 in the Rafu Shimpō where you received the U.S.A. Gymnastics Lifetime Achievement Award. And then the article in the L.A. Times, the South Bay Edition, June 9, 1994---there was an article and a photograph of you receiving your high school diploma. That's interesting.

Endo:

Oh yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

Yes; that late... San Pedro Awarded High School Diplomas.

Endo:

Yeah; because we didn't receive our high school diploma. We had to evacuate for the evacuation and therefore I thought it would be nice if we can get our diploma even though most of us got degrees in college and some got Doctorate degrees; we decided... at least I did; I wanted to get my high school diploma because that's where I went. And I talked to our Councilman from San Pedro and the Principal from San Pedro High School, and they both agreed that they would give us the diploma. And so I wrote to all of my classmates and they---no one opposed the situation---and therefore, we set up a date and we had our graduation. And since I set up the thing **[Laughs]**, I was the speaker and they asked another person to speak. And we even had---one of our boys, the shortest guy was a Colonel in the U.S. Army, _____, who also served in Japan was there, too, and I was happy for him because he was our highest ranking person in our class.

0:04:09.0

Interviewer:

How many of them were you?

Endo:

Oh gee; just ourselves along with another class I think under us wanted to come in together at the same time; so we had them come with us. So we must have had at least oh 30---maybe 40---of us together. So we had a nice group at the school. They would do---present us with our diploma.

Interviewer:

Great; that's a great idea. Also we have here your Go For Broke Hanashi, H-a-n-a-s-h-i, which means *speaking*, I guess---Oral History Project---your personal profile that explains in about 10 pages. Also your military history dated... let's see it includes your honorable discharge from the service 26 November 1944, your enlistment record and report of separation. There's a Los Angeles Examiner news article on the... yeah this is December 8, 1941, The Terminal Island Detention Camp.

Endo:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

This is a very dramatic picture of people living in Terminal Island actually being detained.

Endo:

On December 7th.

Interviewer:

Right; with a military guard and all. Okay; also we have a copy of your Congressional Act of Relief of Miyoko Nishitsuru, N-i-s-h-i-t-s-u-r-u, to immigrate to the U.S. and marry Frank Endo. This was dated June 20, 1950 and the Act is signed by President Truman and Vice President Alben Barkley. Also the---there's an International gymnast article dated December 1990 in which you're, Mr. Endo is honored. There is another article in the Rafu Shimpō dated December 1, 1990 where a Japanese group salutes Gardena's Frank Endo---an article written by Chris Komai, K-o-m-a-i. Yes; it's a very well written article. A Rafu Shimpō article again in the August 8, 2001 and it's---the title of the article is, In the Spotlight. It talks about Frank Endo Received a Lifetime Achievement Award. Okay; are there any other articles or things that we should mention before we conclude this list?

Endo:

No; that's---you covered it pretty well.

Interviewer:

Well I think at this point, as I told you before, if you needed to add something later on or you wanted to delete something, well certainly. But we enjoyed being here today; we learned an awful lot about you and I think we had a very successful interview. I think you have much to be proud of Mr. Endo, and we enjoyed being here.

Endo:

Now the last thing I would like to say is you know in all of these years, you know I'm a Christian, and Jesus Christ has been very good to me. And that, in my travel you know he took me up to the Empire State Building; he took me to the Statute of Liberty---to there and crossing the ocean there. I've seen the Changing of the Guard there at the Buckingham Palace in London. I saw the Mona Lisa painting there in Paris. I went up to the

Alps there in Switzerland and saw the Mermaid in Copenhagen Harbor. My wife and I crawled into the Pyramid of Egypt and we leaned on the Leaning Tower Of Pisa, and saw the Rembrandt painting there at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia as well as the Last Supper---the painting of the Last Supper by Leonardo DiVinci in the Milan, Italy. But the most exciting and inspirational place was in Bethlehem where Jesus Christ was born and the Via Dolorosa where Jesus Christ walked up for the Crucifixion of---you know on the Cross where he walked for the last time. And for the past 35 years, I've been a member of the Gardena Valley Baptist Church. My family had Bible study with Reverend Sam Tonomora for the past 30 years and we rotated from house to house on our Bible study. And my most favorite verse is Proverb 3:5-6 and it reads, "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not on your own understanding and in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your path straight."

0:09:20.9

Interviewer:

Very good.

Endo:

Thank you.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much, Mr. Endo. At this time we'll conclude the interview. Thank you.

[End Frank Endo CD 3]