

[Beginning of Interview]

INTERVIEWER:

Today is June 28, 2003. It is 1:56 p.m. now. My name is Bryan Inoue. I will be interviewing Midori Kamei in Torrance, California. The interview is being cataloged by Amy Phillips. The copyright belongs to the South Bay Chapter of the Japanese American Citizen's League.

Midori?

KAMEI:

Hi.

INTERVIEWER:

Hi; thank you very much for filling out the pre-interview questionnaire.

KAMEI:

Oh, my pleasure, Bryan.

INTERVIEWER:

The focus of this interview is to get a feel from--about the South Bay Area before World War II---so any specific examples and recollections you may have, we're going to try to be focused on those kind of events, and what the area was like and things such as that.

KAMEI:

All right.

INTERVIEWER:

I am going to be referring to the questionnaire quite often and if there's any corrections you need to make, please feel free to do so. You were born on July 21, 1923 in Redondo Beach?

OH01M07S

KAMEI:

That's right; uh-hm.

INTERVIEWER:

And your parents---mother, Tsuta Kitazono and father of Kinnozu Kitazono.

KAMEI:

That's right.

INTERVIEWER:

They---were they married before? They came from Japan to San Francisco; is that correct?

KAMEI:

My mother was a picture bride; Bryan.

INTERVIEWER:

I see.

KAMEI:

And so they married by proxy. Three years before mother came to America, actually, and it took my dad three years to save enough money to give her a ticket to be married. So as soon as she arrived here in San Francisco, my dad took her out shopping and bought her a complete American outfit and they were married that day.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

KAMEI:

Then they came down to Los Angeles where they settled in the Little Tokyo area, right off of Maple Street.

INTERVIEWER:

So, as soon as they got married, they came to Los Angeles?

KAMEI:

That's right.

INTERVIEWER:

Any particular reason why they came to LA instead of staying in the Bay Area?

KAMEI:

Well, my father was working at the wholesale market; yeah. He came to America as a businessman, and I think he was doing something of bookkeeping at the wholesale market, so that was the reason they came to Los Angeles.

INTERVIEWER:

Did he get an offer of a position in LA, and that's why he didn't stay in San Francisco, or . . .

KAMEI:

Well, from what my dad tells me when they first got to San Francisco he went to the missions. The Presbyterian Church had missions for the newly arrived immigrants, and so he studied English and he learned English so he could---he could actually read and write somewhat. And then he worked his way all the way down from San Francisco in the grape vineyards of Fresno, you know and all the way down to Los Angeles, and he settled in Los Angeles.

INTERVIEWER:

And when he settled in Los Angeles, did he have to go back up to San Francisco to get . . .

KAMEI:

Yes, he did.

INTERVIEWER:

I see, okay; so he was already in LA.

KAMEI:

Yes, he was in LA.

INTERVIEWER:

And he went up to San Francisco to meet his future wife, and then they came down--back to LA. I see, okay; and then, from LA around when, if you know, did they move to Redondo Beach area?

KAMEI:

The Redondo Beach area? That

INTERVIEWER:

Or did they go someplace in between?

OH03M22S

KAMEI:

No, from Los Angeles, they moved to the Redondo Beach area, and that was probably before I was---yeah, before I was born. So that was probably in the '20s, I would say. Mother came to Los Angeles in 1917, Bryan; so by 1920 they moved out to the Redondo Beach area, which at that time was all farms. It was all agriculture and all rural. And my father still worked at the wholesale market in Los Angeles and he commuted by red car---by the street car into the wholesale market. And Mother stayed in that area and

periodically, I know she worked as a farm laborer, because my earliest recollections was of me being in a buggy and being out in the field with my mother.

INTERVIEWER:

And, do you remember the hospital you born in, in Redondo Beach?

KAMEI:

Oh no; in those days, Bryan, most of us were born at home, and Mrs. Sakamoto was mother's mid-wife, see. So she would come to the house and my sisters tell me that the house was so dilapidated that they were able to peek through the cracks of the house, and she saw me when I was born.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow. And your father's occupation, you mentioned---actually in the questionnaire, you said what he did in Japan. What was that?

KAMEI:

Yes, in Japan he was a teacher, yes. He was considered a very bright, capable young man, but he didn't particularly like teaching, and he came to America as a businessman.

INTERVIEWER:

And brothers and sisters?

KAMEI:

My brothers and sisters?

INTERVIEWER:

Yes.

KAMEI:

Yes, I had two older sisters and one older brother and one younger brother. There were five in the family.

INTERVIEWER:

Were they all born in Redondo Beach, or . . . ?

KAMEI:

No, my sisters were both born in Los Angeles, and I think--
-I'm not sure where my brother was born. Isn't that interesting; [Laughs] I never asked him.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; and what elementary school did you go to?

KAMEI :

I went to 184th Street School.

INTERVIEWER :

That's located in . . . ?

KAMEI :

On 184th; now they call it the 186th Street School and it's right off Western Avenue and 186th Street. But at the time when I went there, it was a very typical rural school with only four rooms, and we had a principal who was the---who was a teacher/principal, just an outstanding [Emphasis added] person.

OH06M10S

INTERVIEWER :

And that's in Torrance?

KAMEI :

It was in Gardena, but it is actually that strip---you know that strip that is part of LA?

INTERVIEWER :

Okay so---and you were still living in Redondo Beach, but went to 184th?

KAMEI :

No, no; I'm sorry, Bryan. From Redondo Beach we moved to Gardena; yeah, around the Normandie and Artesia Boulevard. There used to be an old brick yard there. It had some very old dilapidated houses.

INTERVIEWER :

Any particular reason why, that you can remember, why you moved? It was just a bigger home or . . .

KAMEI :

Well, I think, [Laughs], well because my father had a drinking problem and my mother wanted him to get away from the bad influence of the wholesale market where he used to gamble there, also. So this is one of the reasons they came to North Torrance to farm. So this is why they moved to North Torrance, and we had a five-acre truck farm.

INTERVIEWER:

What kind of farm?

KAMEI:

A truck farm, which means that we grew things---vegetables like beets, spinach, radish, string beans, and then later on they grew berries. They grew long berries, which is really quite profitable. But just when the crops were becoming very profitable, you know the war broke out. So we had to give up the farm.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember at the 184th---in your elementary school at the 184th Street School about the, I guess the demographic information. Was there a lot of Asians at the school---Asian kids or was it mostly Caucasian, or do you remember?

KAMEI:

Yes, it was primarily---we had a---I would say maybe about 20 percent Asian children and a few Mexican families, otherwise it was primarily a white middle class, working class community at that time.

OH08M07S

INTERVIEWER:

Among the Asians, were they primarily Japanese or was it a pretty good mix of Chinese, Japanese . . .

KAMEI:

No; we didn't have any Chinese at all. In fact, in all the years I was at Gardena High School, I never---you know Japanese were the only Asians. You didn't have any Filipinos. Of course, we didn't have anyone from South---you know from the South Pacific.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; Were most of your childhood---staying in elementary school, were most of your friends Japanese, or did you have a mixture of Caucasian and maybe a Hispanic or two?

KAMEI:

No; my friends were primarily Caucasians, because my sister, being the third child, she taught me---she spoke English to me. And so in many ways I was more fluent in English than I was in Japanese. And then the children in my immediate neighborhood around 182nd Street and Western

Avenue were primarily white middle class children, although we had some very wealthy families there also. And the parents were really very, very good to me. You know they would invite me over to birthday parties and I spent many, many days visiting them, spending vacations with them.

INTERVIEWER:

Is there any particular event or something that happened during those years at 184th with your friends that kind of--
--a particularly fun time---any particular event that you just remember, "Wow, you know, I had a really great time;" something?

KAMEI:

Okay; 184th Street School, was a very distinct school because we didn't have any---it wasn't fenced; it was all open fields, and then, during our recess time, we were able to choose whatever we wanted to do. Now, you know, it's all structured; kids have to play in certain areas. But in those days, so the boys would go and play baseball and basketball, and we girls would have our little---we'd play--well we had a lot of fantasy games; you know. We'd make up make believe games. And then the principal, as I told you, was very, very progressive, and, like as an example, before Easter, we used to have Easter egg hunts. Can you imagine out in the open fields? And it was just a very ideal---it was a beautiful school. The principal kept it clean and neat and we always had art, you know in the hallways. And I'll never forget our room because our teacher loved flowers, so she would have these magnificent bouquets, and, as a former elementary school teacher, I can see what a tremendous school that was. We also had our own garden so we could you know plant our own gardens and vegetables.

0H10M50S

INTERVIEWER:

Going back to the area, you mentioned your particular home had five acres. Was the school, I mean, the area, the whole South Bay Torrance/Gardena area was primarily farm area; is that correct?

KAMEI:

With---interspersed with the dairies, white middle class families had their homes---it was somewhat part suburban and part rural; right.

INTERVIEWER:

Was the school, in like the middle of a farm area, or...?

KAMEI:

Mostly white, middle class families.

INTERVIEWER:

So it was residential?

KAMEI:

Yeah, it was more of an open residential. We had a lot of open fields, too; you know where we can play and . . .

INTERVIEWER:

What were the---were there paved roads, or can you describe what, you know now looking outside, it's all paved roads with streets and sidewalks and curbs and everything; what was it like then?

0H11M40S

KAMEI:

Well, we didn't have sidewalks, but Western Avenue was paved and 182nd Street was paved. And, then---yeah, most of the streets in that particular was paved.

INTERVIEWER:

What was the primary way of transportation? How did you get around---how did people get around?

KAMEI:

How did people get around? Well, most people had cars, and then the red car line came from Los Angeles and passed Normandie and at about 190---at Normandie, and it went down all the way down to San Pedro. So people used to take the red car. People who didn't have cars would take the red car. Otherwise, most people had cars in those days, by the time I was in elementary school.

INTERVIEWER:

While you were at elementary school, did you feel that there was any discrimination at all? Did you feel any sort of that kind of a feeling at that time?

KAMEI:

No, I didn't at that time; yeah. The teachers were very loving, and in fact, my first grade teacher was just the most phenomenal person. She wanted to adopt me. **[Laughs]** And unlike most of the Japanese because we were very shy and inhibited, I was always very talkative, as you can see now **[Laughs]**. And she was the most loving person, and she would say, "Oh Midori, I would love to adopt you;" you know. And I remember one time she told me that she wanted me to come to spend the weekend at her house. And so, my mother made a special nightgown for me; you know. But then evidently it never went through, because I'm sure at that time it was not considered quite justifiable, you know for teachers to invite little children into their homes. But, anyway---and, you know Bryan, I made a very important decision at that time. I'll never forget that decision. You see, I don't know if I told you, but we were very poor. And, I had to see my mother work as a farm laborer. When **father's** crops were not coming in, mother had to go out and hire herself out as a farm laborer. And I used to hate the idea that Mother was struggling out in the hot sun while I was in school. And so, I remember from the first grade, I made a decision, that if I, number one, if I get the teachers to like me, you know I'm very clever **[Laughs]**, and if I'm a good girl---if I behave myself and if I get good grades, eventually I'll be able to work off the farm. I'll never have to end up as a farmer's wife. And I think---you know these decisions are very important that we make as children.

OH14M18S

INTERVIEWER:

So that's what motivated you?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes; all through my life. All throughout my life it motivated me.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you feel that any of your friends or classmates had any---were discriminatory at all or made any sort of remarks at all?

KAMEI:

Oh, no---not at all, because they were very warm and caring and invited me to their homes for birthday parties. We couldn't---we never had a birthday party. Bryan, you know

Japanese families didn't have birthday parties. But my friends were always inviting me to their homes. And, I went on excursions with them, and their parents were very lovely and very kind.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you, at that time when you were going to elementary school, did you also work on the farm, and help your mom or dad?

KAMEI:

No, we didn't work until I think after we got out of elementary school. Once you got into junior high school, you see, mom and dad never told us that we had to work on the farm. We had sort of like the---sort of an unspoken type of rule in the family. Once I got in junior high school, I would get home from school and then I'd work on the farm for a few days, a few hours, and then on Sundays. Saturday was our day off, but on Saturdays, we went to a Japanese language school, and then on Sundays it was a work day. And so Sundays, I worked all day long; vacations were workdays and even summer vacations were all---you know all workdays for us.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you go to Japanese language school even while in elementary school?

KAMEI:

That's right; uh-hm.

INTERVIEWER:

All the---from kindergarten on or do you . . . ?

KAMEI:

Probably from about first grade on.

INTERVIEWER:

From first grade? And what was the name and where was it?

KAMEI:

We went to---I went to Dominguez Hills Gakuen. Dominguez Gakuen.

INTERVIEWER:

And that is in---where Dominguez Hills is now?

KAMEI:

Yes, you know where the university is now? That was our---
the Japanese school was located in that area.

INTERVIEWER:

So, how would you get from elementary school to there?
Well, actually, you went on Sundays you said.

KAMEI:

We went on Saturdays.

INTERVIEWER:

On Saturdays?

KAMEI:

Yeah, uh-hm; yeah. So we would---we drove, yeah. By that
time yeah; my brother was driving and . . .

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, I see.

KAMEI:

My dad didn't drive. He was one of these scholars [**Laughs**]
---he was not very mechanical so he never learned how to
drive a car [**Laughs**].

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; you mentioned going to junior high school. What
junior high school was that?

KAMEI:

Gardena High School, because in those days Gardena High
School was a junior high school, a senior high school
combination. So we started in seventh grade, and we
graduated in the twelfth grade.

INTERVIEWER:

And that's where Gardena High School is now?

KAMEI:

That's right; uh-hm---no; where the Perry Junior High
School is now.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, Gardena High, back then is where Perry Junior High is
now?

KAMEI:

Uh-hm; and then the new Gardena High School was built you know since I graduated.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; once you got to junior high, did the friends, the teachers, or anything---did anything change as far as your interaction? Every---you know it sounds like at 184th it was wonderful. You didn't have any discrimination or anything like that. Did that change at all at any time during that--
-at Gardena High?

0H17M24S

KAMEI:

It was the most interesting phenomena. The minute we got into junior high school, all of my white classmates---all and I separated. Only---the Japanese children started to socialize together and only all the Caucasian kids socialized together. So we had that dichotomy right from junior high school, and there certainly wasn't any interracial dating in those days. None of the girls dated anyone besides Japanese.

INTERVIEWER:

Can you figure out, or do you have any idea why that happened, or is it just . . . ?

KAMEI:

Well, part of it is peer pressure. I think that's part of it. Part of it is, you know when you're an adolescent, you're very aware of your image, and by that time, remember the anti-Japanese feeling was becoming more apparent. And, I'll never forget when we were in junior high school, I was walking toward a new class, and one of the---some of the white kids, you know the so-called class leader would look at us and said, "Oh, here comes the Japs; you know." And, I'll never forget that because that was the first time that I was referred to as a Jap.

INTERVIEWER:

Was in Gardena High?

KAMEI:

In Gardena High School; yes.

INTERVIEWER:

And how soon after you went there did that happen, was it right away like the first day?

KAMEI:

Junior high school---I think about the eighth grade.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; about the second year.

KAMEI:

Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

How did that make you---how did you react?

KAMEI:

Oh, I was very angry, and I felt it was terribly, terribly unfair. And I remember, years later when we had a class reunion, my 10th high school reunion my girlfriend and I said, "Let's get all dressed up and really put on a show for them," you know [**Laughs**]. And would you believe it, Bryan, they did not remember me? They said, "Oh Midori, you weren't in our class." And you know why; because in those days I was just a dark little skinny country girl, probably very inhibited, and they were so---they considered themselves superior that they don't . . . and so finally, one of the fellows said to me, "What was your---what did you do? How come you changed so much?" The only thing I could think of was, "Oh, I went to New York," you know. [Laugh]

So later on he was muttering, "I should have sent my wife to New York," you know [**Laughter**]. But yeah, it was a very interesting phenomenon. And, then by that time, there was more equality among my classmates. In fact, at our 50th class reunion, we had a party at my house because we have been having the reunions always in restaurants you know. And, we just had a---we had the most fabulous time. We played a lot of interacting games and we sang high school songs, and it was such a wonderful feeling because there seems to be---all the class and social differences and racial differences by that time were erased. And I was very pleased to see on the whole my classmates were---turned out to be very decent, you know middle class, law abiding people.

INTERVIEWER:

When you mentioned that it was the---how did you phrase it, "The white class leaders," does that mean like they were student body president or something?

0H20M30S

KAMEI:

Student body president, yeah; they started right from junior high school---right into high school, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Was that, was it mainly those types of people that were--- that would say racial remarks like that?

KAMEI:

They would---in my class they did; uh-hm.

INTERVIEWER:

Did they---were there any other Caucasian white people that did not say that, were actually friendly or nice?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes; one of my friends was Buzzy Garvin. I'll always remember Harold Garvin because he later became a professor at Harbor College. In fact, he was a board member also; he ran for the City Board of Education, and he was a very--- more of a liberal.

INTERVIEWER:

So not everyone was a . . . ?

KAMEI:

No, everyone wasn't.

INTERVIEWER:

Probably, was it a few would you say . . . ?

KAMEI:

Just a few, the so-called cliques, you know; the ones that thought they were the tops in the class [Laughs].

INTERVIEWER:

Did the area, itself, change much during that time, like, you know, from farm to getting more industrial, or more residential, or anything? Was it . . . ?

KAMEI :

During that time when I was in high school, let's say from about 1937, yeah until I graduated, Gardena didn't change that much. You know, this was just right after the Depression, Bryan. And, we did have some students changing. We had some students from the Washington High School area--were, came down to attend Gardena High School. But, by and large, the population didn't change that much because it was too primarily . . . Gardena itself was a typical working class, middle class area, and then all the surrounding area was nurseries, dairies, and farms, and then a splattering of homes, you know in this farming area.

INTERVIEWER :

During that time, what did you do for fun? What did you do just you know . . . ?

KAMEI :

Oh, school was a very important time, because we had our little Japanese clubs, and we had our dances, and we had our---last year of school we all went on an outing to the beach. And going to Brighton Beach was one of the big highlights. And, Brighton Beach is no longer there, because after---as soon as the war broke out, the whole beach area was taken over by the Navy, and they made it into naval---shipping, I understand. But, going to Brighton Beach was just fabulous because it was all Japanese there for some reason, you know. It wasn't segregated, but that would be . . . and a lot of the Japanese from L.A. would come down to the beach area.

0H23M08S

INTERVIEWER :

And where exactly is Brighton Beach? Is that . . . ?

KAMEI :

It's close to Terminal Island. It's just on the outskirts of Terminal Island; uh-hm.

INTERVIEWER :

How often would you be able to go out to the beach, or is it just weekends?

KAMEI :

Well, maybe, about once a month in the summertime, yeah. And, then maybe about once a month we would go to a movie

in Torrance. We didn't have a movie in Gardena, so one of us had to be brave enough to ask my dad, you know **[Laughs]**. "Can we go to the movie?" And dad was very sweet; he never said no. And that was such a treat.

INTERVIEWER:

When you say movie, you mean like a theater to see a film?

KAMEI:

Yeah, just to see movies in Torrance.

INTERVIEWER:

And was that the only place you could see movies?

KAMEI:

Yeah, because they didn't have a movie house in Gardena at that time; and that was the closest for those of us who lived on 182nd Street and in that area. In fact, my---some my so-called affluent Japanese friends went all the way into Hollywood to some of the, you know first class theaters **[Laughs]**.

INTERVIEWER:

So, even the theater in Torrance wasn't considered first class?

KAMEI:

Oh, no, no, no; it was not considered first class **[Laughs]**. Those---they had Grauman Chinese, you know and some of the larger theaters; yeah. And, we---all throughout high school, we had our dances, which were always you know

INTERVIEWER:

When you went out on these activities was it with groups or was it on a date or a combination?

KAMEI:

My girlfriend was lucky; she had a boyfriend see. But, I didn't have a boyfriend, so I'd go with my girlfriend **[Laughs]**. And, then my girlfriend's boyfriend would drop me off at the house **[Laughs]**. But really, so much of our social life did revolve around school, luckily you see, because I didn't go to church because I was working on---I only went to church as a little girl. But, once I got in junior high school, I had to work on the farm so I couldn't go to church on Sundays.

INTERVIEWER:

Take a break.

0H25M12S

INTERVIEWER:

Midori, you mentioned talking about you know living in the Gardena area and going school in Torrance or venturing into Torrance for seeing movies. Did you go outside of those two areas of the South Bay? Did you go to the Peninsula, the Palos Verdes area, or any other parts of the South Bay area at the time?

KAMEI:

To visit do you mean?

INTERVIEWER:

To visit, yeah; or just for fun or . . . ?

KAMEI:

Yeah; well see at that time, there was so much discrimination that we Japanese were limited to only certain parts where we could live. Like for instance, many times on weekends, my friends and I would take a trip up to Palos Verdes and Japanese couldn't---the Japanese could not live in Torrance, Bryan. Only North Torrance, where I lived was open for Japanese, see. And so, Palos Verdes was completely out. All the beach cities would not allow any Japanese to move in that area also. But, we did go to the beaches and we'd go to the pike in Long Beach and that was always a great place you know. We'd go on the rollercoaster on the Pike and we'd go to Ocean Park. And then, on very rare occasions when we finally got a car, our first trip was out to Southern---a place like San Diego and places in that area.

INTERVIEWER:

When you visited these areas, were you given a hard time? I guess depending on what time period, but did you go to those areas as an elementary school child or primarily during high school?

KAMEI:

High school and elementary school, yeah; no we didn't feel any overt prejudice until Pearl Harbor, yeah. Then, that's when we began to feel the hatred. I'll never forget when we

had to come into Gardena, you know to buy things to go into camp, Bryan; I could just feel the hatred in the air. You could just almost cut it, and they'd never say anything. There was absolute silence, see. They didn't say . . . but then we had knit-close neighbors nearby us who were very kind and helpful. Like one of our neighbors, *hakujin*, the Douglasses, took our car. We had a Buick at that time. And, they stored our car and they took after---they took care of our dog for us. And, we---the neighbors around us were very kind. But people in general, like especially in Gardena, were just horrible. And so, going into Santa Anita was sort of a relief, you know because I didn't feel that terrible hatred in the air, and behind barbed wires, I felt safe there, although I resented it, but . . .

0H28M00S

INTERVIEWER:

So, until December 7, 1941, then you really didn't feel too much prejudice and hatred, other than those cliques you mentioned in high school?

KAMEI:

Yeah; uh-hm.

INTERVIEWER:

And you said---you did also mentioned before that you---when you got to Gardena High, the anti-Japanese sentiment seemed to be on the rise. Did it gradually stay on the rise, or did it kind of taper off as you got . . . ?

KAMEI:

It gradually increased as we got closer and closer to Pearl Harbor. You figure, see because I was in high school at that time, see---period; yeah. And there's so much anti-Japanese in the newspapers, and remember the Hearst papers used to write these horrible lies about us Japanese?

INTERVIEWER:

Like . . . ?

KAMEI:

Oh, like, for instance, they said that the Japanese schools were places where they were hiding armaments, and as an example, some of the Japanese boys were taking kendo. They're not armaments. Kendo, if you're in kendo, you have wooden swords; right. And one of the most ridiculous claims

they made is that the Japanese farmers in the Inglewood area had plowed their farms, the rows so that it shows a right direction to the National Defense plants. And in reality what happened was, you know all Inglewood was all farmland. And so these companies like Lockheed and---not Douglas---and Northrop came in, and they bought land right in the---among the vegetable fields. And so naturally the rows would point toward the plants. But, that was very typical of the type of prejudice that was in the newspaper. It was just absolutely sickening.

0H29M54S

INTERVIEWER:

You mention the Hearst newspaper; was that William Randolph Hearst?

KAMEI:

William---the Los Angeles Examiner was notoriously anti-Japanese; uh-hm. Accused us of being spies, you know and . . .

INTERVIEWER:

Was there at that time any South Bay area-type newspapers?

KAMEI:

Pardon me?

INTERVIEWER:

Were there any South Bay area---like right now we have Daily Breeze; Was there---were there anything similar---a local, local newspaper?

KAMEI:

Yeah, we had Gardena Valley news in those days, but they didn't cover national news like that. And, the L.A. Times was not quite as vehement in spreading all the hatred and lies as the Examiner.

INTERVIEWER:

So then during high school then, it sounds like the anti-Japanese partly because of media and things that it just slowly was rising. When you were a senior, and you had graduation, did you go to---was there a graduation ceremony? Was there a prom? Did you go to any of those?

KAMEI:

Oh yes; I went to the prom. And, that was a highlight of our senior year is going to the prom, and we got all dressed up in our formals, and

INTERVIEWER:

Where did you go?

KAMEI:

We had the prom right in the high school gym. And then after the prom, we all went to a nightclub in Hollywood. That was also another big event. The first time I stayed out until, you know early in the morning [**Laughs**].

0H31M20S

INTERVIEWER:

After you graduated high school, what did you do?

KAMEI:

Well you know, I graduated high school with honors, but I couldn't get a job because in those days, Japanese were not hired in most white firms. Like, when my sister's friend got a job teaching---working at a dime store in Gardena that made the headlines you know. And I'll never forget when Frank Yamaguchi was hired as a mechanic by Douglas that made the headlines in the Rafu Shimpō. And so, my first job out of high school was picking strawberries and farm laborers and my mother in the area that is now Del Amo---where the Del Amo mall is located. And I went---I just worked for about a couple months, and then I was offered a job to be a clerk in a Japanese fruit stand, which was a much better job. And, the fruit stand was located near Western Avenue and Rosecrans, and I found out that I liked working with the public. And, I guess I was a pretty conscientious worker, because within a couple months my boss had me in charge of one of their little stores that they had over in Hawthorne.

INTERVIEWER:

What year did you graduate high school?

KAMEI:

February, 1941.

INTERVIEWER:

You said your first job was picking strawberries with your mom; that was not at your farm?

KAMEI:

No, no, no; that was at a nearby farm; yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Was there a reason why--- I guess, didn't your farmhouse have strawberries?

KAMEI:

No, we had long berries, but the farm usually didn't pay enough see to support the family. So in between when the crops were too---not paying for all the bills, we had to work as farm laborers.

INTERVIEWER:

So when the crops at your farm were not doing well you had to work at another farm?

KAMEI:

Yeah, as a farm laborer; yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

I see.

KAMEI:

And both my sisters graduated high school and they worked as farm laborers, you know.

OH33M28S

INTERVIEWER:

On other farms?

KAMEI:

On other farms; yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

What percentage---or around if you had to guess---of the land in the South Bay area of where you are aware of . . . it sounds like it was a lot of farm. Would you say like half of the land was used for farms, or . . . ?

KAMEI:

I would say so---if not even more. Maybe, like 75---maybe about 60 percent, because interspersed among the farms were dairy farms---dairies and nurseries; yeah. So maybe about 60 percent was farming I would say.

INTERVIEWER:

And were strawberries . . . ?

KAMEI:

Strawberries, and then they used to grow string beans, asparagus, cabbage, celery. We didn't have so much celery in our area, but you know the Venice area was well known for its celery and some of the Japanese became very, very, wealthy when they hit it right you know and got a good price for their vegetables.

INTERVIEWER:

So you graduated high school in February, 1941, and started working at a---how long did you work at the strawberry farm with your mom?

KAMEI:

I would say maybe about a couple months, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

A couple months, and then you worked at the fruit stand.

KAMEI:

At the fruit stand yeah, until the war broke out.

0H34M48S

INTERVIEWER:

Which brings us to December 7, 1941; were you at the fruit stand?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes; I'll never forget it. It was around 5:30 in the afternoon and I was working---I was selling to customers and someone heard on the radio that Pearl Harbor was bombed, you know. And then I knew Bryan that my life would never be the same again. I just had this premonition that our lives would never be the same again. And sure enough, that night you know the FBI came and imprisoned---yeah, all the Japanese leaders---community leaders. My girlfriend's mother was teaching Japanese school in Compton Nihongakko ---a very refined, delicate woman, and highly educated, and she was put into the Terminal Island Prison for Women only because she taught at a Japanese Language School, see. Fortunately, my father was not that involved in the community, so he was not you know imprisoned by the FBI.

INTERVIEWER:

When the person---you mentioned that around 5:30 p.m. someone had heard on the radio what had happened. Did the other customers in your store also hear what happened or . . . ?

KAMEI:

No, they all heard; they all heard.

INTERVIEWER:

Did they say or do anything to you at the time?

0H36M16S

KAMEI:

Oh, no, no; not at that time. I think we were all sort of in a state of shock, and that's when they also enforced a curfew. As soon as Pearl Harbor occurred, all Japanese Americans had to be in the house by 8 o'clock at night. You couldn't be out at nighttime. And so my brother was going to Compton Junior College and working at nights, and going to school during the daytime to get his education, and I'll never forget how just terrified every night thinking that what if the FBI picks him up because he's not home, see. We all had to be home by 8 o'clock, and so that ended a lot of our social life. And then by that time again the newspapers are always starting to talk about evacuation, and so we just sort of expected the worst.

INTERVIEWER:

What did you do at the time that you heard? I mean, you had a feeling that things would be---would change?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you close the store right away and go home, or what did you do?

KAMEI:

Well, I think I just went home the usual, you know. When my shift was over, I went home.

INTERVIEWER:

Which was about what time?

KAMEI:

Oh, probably about six o'clock; yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, so it happened right before you had to leave.

KAMEI:

Yeah, yes; uh-hm.

INTERVIEWER:

When you got home, did everyone at home already know about it?

KAMEI:

Oh, of course. We had all heard by then.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you guys talk about it at all?

KAMEI:

Yes, we talked about it. And I'll never forget the comment my parents made, you know. They said, "You know..." of course we---my brothers and I were very vocally against any type of evacuation, but my mom's and dad's attitude was, "You know, you're American citizens; so you must obey the government." It was our---they said, "It's our duty;" typical of the Samurai background, see. It is our duty to obey the government and go peacefully, and therefore we did, Bryan; you know. We very obediently packed our things up and got rid of some of our belongings and

INTERVIEWER:

But on the evening of December 7th you didn't know that you had to be evacuated then?

KAMEI:

No, no; we didn't know that, yeah. That was a few months later, yeah; because we were evacuated in April, see. It was about three months between, yeah---the time we were finally evacuated.

0H38M35S

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember what you were---what was discussed on December 7th that evening?

KAMEI:

Just sort of shock and horror, you know; I think we all sort of expected it. I wasn't that surprised. We knew that war was imminent, yeah. So we weren't that surprised.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you go back to work the next day?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes; I went back to work, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

How was it then? What was it like on December 8th? Did you have regular customers coming in and did they say . . . ?

KAMEI:

Customers came in; no, they didn't say anything to us luckily.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you feel any different?

KAMEI:

No, I didn't feel anything. I really---my customers were very gracious and very . . . and of course, my boss was very kind, and then shortly after that I was asked to manage this one little store for my boss. And, the neighborhood people were very, very kind and friendly.

INTERVIEWER:

Were your customers primarily Japanese or did you have a mix?

KAMEI:

No, Caucasian.

INTERVIEWER:

Mostly Caucasians?

KAMEI:

Mostly Caucasians, yeah; they'd come from Los Angeles primarily on weekends, you know to buy fresh vegetables from the farms [Laughs] in reality. Those vegetables---every morning, Mr. Kunioshi would go into the wholesale market and buy all the fruits and vegetables from the wholesale market and bring them back to the store and we'd

put them out in the store, you know. But, a lot of our customers thought that they were getting fresh fruit and vegetables right from the farm [Laughs].

INTERVIEWER:

So, you didn't feel any different after---at least from your customers?

KAMEI:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

They wouldn't even ask any questions at all, or . . . ?

KAMEI:

No, they didn't; it was really amazing. They were very gracious and very kind in that respect, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

And that was throughout the time until April when you had to be evacuated? Did you work at that fruit stand all the way until that time?

0H40M39S

KAMEI:

Yes, until the day we were evacuated. My boss, they had to close the store, too, see, because we were all evacuated. So they closed the store.

INTERVIEWER:

And you were, when you were evacuated you had to go to--- you went to I guess---what did they call it at Santa Anita?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes, the assembly center.

INTERVIEWER:

Assembly Center?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER:

And how long were you there?

KAMEI:

We were in the assembly center from April until August---
end of August.

INTERVIEWER:

And from there?

KAMEI:

And then in August I was at---when we were in Santa Anita, I was very fortunate because I won a two-year scholarship to a women's college in Denver. And, it was a scholarship, and tuition and room and board free, see; because my mom and dad certainly couldn't afford it you know. They were in camp. So, this scholarship was given by the Baptist Home Missions Society.

INTERVIEWER:

How did you win that; did you apply?

KAMEI:

No, my minister, Harper Sakawea, was a Baptist minister, and he heard my graduation address, I think. He came to my graduation. I gave one of the graduation addresses, and I think he was very touched by my graduation address. And then also, in Santa Anita, I talked myself into a teaching job. You know they had thousands of college graduates and college students, but no one had any teaching experience, see. So, I sort of talked to them, "Oh, I'm interested in children," etcetera, etcetera, and I talked myself into this job, teaching first grade children. And the woman who was the superintendent of our school had a degree from Berkley, but she never had one days of experience. And since we didn't have anyone to teach us how to---show us how to teach, Bryan, all we could do---I could do was to remember my elementary school and replicate, see, what my elementary school teachers taught us.

OH42M46S

INTERVIEWER:

What was the name of the college where you won this scholarship to?

KAMEI:

Colorado Women's College; and it was a very unique school--
-that it was a Christian school. The president was very kind and very loving, and he treated us like his children, you know. And when I first went there, I was supposed to

work something like eight hours a day at the college. But he was very kind; he said, "No Midori, you just wait on tables for two hours a day, and that'll take care of your room and board."

INTERVIEWER:

Can you remember when you---the day that you evacuated?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes, I remember it.

INTERVIEWER:

Can you tell . . . ?

KAMEI:

Well, we all had to gather at a place in Hawthorne. It was a farm that had been sort of set aside as a gathering place, and so we all went there, and I remember this big barn. We all had to line up and they gave us numbers, Bryan. In fact, I have the family number yet in my scrapbook. I made a scrapbook at Santa Anita.

INTERVIEWER:

And you're pointing like it was something that was pinned on you or something?

KAMEI:

It was like a tag; you hung it around your neck. That was your family number. And then we had to get on the buses, and we just had our suitcases with us at that time. And I had a girlfriend luckily who went into Santa Anita before I did. So she said, "Midori, bring everything you can, you know. Bring all of your household goods, all of your belongings, your personal things, because . . . don't listen to them and just bring one suitcase, you know because they thought we were going to be there for two or three weeks and then we'd all go to But it turned out, we were there from April to August, see. And so, we had our neighbor load up his truck, his panel truck, with all of our belongings, you know extra clothing and linen and personal things, and he brought them to Santa Anita, and they accepted it---except we couldn't keep our dog. I was so heartbroken. I was hoping that maybe they would let me keep my dog. But our friend---our neighbors had to take the dog home.

INTERVIEWER:

So the neighborhood you lived in were not all Japanese then?

KAMEI:

No, they were *hakujins*. My immediate neighborhood was more *Hakujins*.

0H45M05S

INTERVIEWER:

I see; when you had to evacuate or the days leading up to the evacuation, did they---how did they treat you? Were they . . . ?

KAMEI:

The only people that really offered to help were the Douglases, yeah. But otherwise, they were just Cordial. They didn't say anything. They were just very silent. We got the silent---it was more like getting the silent treatment, as if it's not really happening, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

So it was not outwardly helpful; but it wasn't very anti or anger or anything---or hatred?

KAMEI:

No, there was no hatred; there was no animosity.

INTERVIEWER:

I'm going to skip over I guess some time period.

KAMEI:

Oh, yes, certainly, sure.

INTERVIEWER:

After your time at Colorado Women's College, how long did you spend actually . . . I mean, after you went to Santa Anita, your family went to . . . ?

KAMEI:

To Heart Mountain, see.

INTERVIEWER:

And you didn't spend too much time at Heart Mountain?

KAMEI:

No, I had to go up to Heart Mountain to reapply to be allowed to return to---allowed to become a---relocate as a student, see. And I was interested---I was very interested later on to find out that my president of the college had vowed to be my guardian. He agreed to be my guardian; otherwise, they wouldn't have let me out because I was still under age, see. I was still under---I was 19 at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

So then, after you finished at Colorado Women's College, you went to . . . ?

KAMEI:

Yes; to New York City.

INTERVIEWER:

To New York City---because?

KAMEI:

Well, you know Colorado Women's College was a two-year college. And my brother was in New York City working as an engineer. So I wanted to go to a real good university to get my degree. By that time, I wanted to get in psychology, but I also knew I had to teach, too. And so, I went to New York City; and here again, the Women's Baptist Home Mission Society had a job for me---waiting for me in New York City. I'd work in their office. And then I enrolled at Columbia University.

INTERVIEWER:

And you got your?

0H47M24S

KAMEI:

I got my Masters Degree there. My Bachelors Degree and then got my Masters Degree in Developmental Psychology.

INTERVIEWER:

And also during that time in New York City, you met someone . . . ?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes, yes; actually my childhood sweetheart and I---we had gone to Japanese school together, see. And all through high school we dated off and on. And then when I was at

Colorado Women's College, he was at the University of Wyoming getting his degree in engineering. So he'd come back to Denver and we'd date again. And then we he came to New York, his mother wanted him to go to Columbia to get a degree in Engineering---a graduate degree. So he came to Columbia again---to New York, and we dated for a while and got engaged. And he had to---he was inducted into the service and he served in Germany for 18 months. He was deferred until he got his Engineering degree, Bryan. So, but once he got his degree, why he was inducted into the armed forces.

INTERVIEWER:

And you still stayed in New York City?

KAMEI:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

And when did you . . . I guess, did he finish his service when you moved back to the West Coast?

KAMEI:

No, he got a job as a structural engineer in New York. And then, we got married in 1947, and then in 1951, we decided to come back to California, because he was an only son and his parents were getting older, and we thought it would be good to be near them. So we moved back to California. And Ichiro got a job working for Lockheed as an Engineer.

INTERVIEWER:

What part of California?

KAMEI:

That's in Burbank---we lived in Sherman Oaks, and he worked in Burbank at Lockheed Aircraft Company.

INTERVIEWER:

So from the time you left Gardena for the relocation in 1942, then it's about nine years later, you get back and actually you're not in the South Bay area anymore, you're in the Valley, the Sherman Oaks area; how much had changed? I mean, I guess it's hard to compare South Bay with . . . ?

KAMEI:

Oh, Gardena has changed. You couldn't believe---I couldn't believe it was the same city.

0H49M44S

INTERVIEWER:

When you went back to Sherman Oaks, did you visit Gardena in the South Bay area?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes; because Ichiro's family lived in Compton, see. So we would--weekends, many weekends, we would drive out to Dominguez Hills because his father was a flower grower. So we'd come on Crenshaw Boulevard. In those days we didn't have the freeways [**Laughter**]. So we'd get into L.A. and then we'd get Crenshaw Boulevard all the way you know practically to Compton.

And the first thing I noticed was this horrible haze. And I thought, "What is this; it's so strange looking?" Later on I realized it was a smog. But even more mind-boggling was how the residential areas had changed, Bryan.

INTERVIEWER:

In what sense?

KAMEI:

The homes---all the suburban homes; by this time Gardena was practically connected to Los Angeles, you know with all the new homes and development. And Torrance had grown large with new developments.

INTERVIEWER:

So at the---there were much more new homes and less farms?

KAMEI:

Oh, yes; less farms---yes.

INTERVIEWER:

But was there still farming?

KAMEI:

Very little farming was available, because not in our immediate area, see. There was farms up in Dominguez, but even Torrance had very few---at one time, Torrance was mostly outside of the city limits, the city proper, outside of that, that was all farming---Japanese farming.

0H51M13S

INTERVIEWER:

Did you go back to visit your old neighborhood, the Douglasses, or anyone where you used to live?

KAMEI:

Well, we used to pass by there.

INTERVIEWER:

Did that change much?

KAMEI:

Yes, you couldn't recognize it anymore because our old farm was a new suburban development. And they had homes; you know new brand new lovely homes are all in that area, so.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember, as far as the farm that you did have, was it taken over by someone else or was it sold; or how was that like? I mean, what were the transactions that were going on?

KAMEI:

Okay; because of poverty, my mother and dad could not pay the \$15 a month rent many, many times. But our landlord was very kind. I really thank her, and I bless her many times, because we could have been homeless, or, you know, we could have been kicked out of our home. So, by the time, World War II occurred, my parents owed hundreds of dollars in back rent to the landlord. So the landlord took over our farm, and after that I don't know what happened, see. Because, the Douglasses were not around anymore, as far as I remember. When I came back to California, the Douglasses were not there anymore. And they were primarily my brother's friends; see they weren't my friends. And, my friends had all moved away.

INTERVIEWER:

If you could, I guess, describe one or two of the biggest changes that occurred in the area from before the war to after the war, what would you say that would be?

KAMEI:

In terms of housing---industry?

INTERVIEWER:

In either---well, in two ways; in terms of how it looked and as far as the people.

KAMEI:

The people; oh, I'm so glad you brought that up, Bryan. Because after the war, see, so many people from back east and the Midwest came to California. And so, California was no longer that very rigid prejudicial community that we had left. We had all these people from all over, New York, you know the United States, came to come to California, and so the social atmosphere changed completely by the time we got back here.

OH53M48S

INTERVIEWER:

So when you left you had a feeling of animosity and hatred, but when you came back you didn't have that same . . . ?

KAMEI:

No, we didn't have that, but there was still housing prejudice now, see. We wanted to buy a house up in Hollywood Hills. I was teaching up in Hollywood Hills, and we wanted to build a home up there. And, the landlady sold the property to us, but the neighbors said, "Well, we don't mind Mrs. Watanabe, but we don't want any other undesirable people moving up there, see. So we couldn't build our home up in Hollywood Hills.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you think that when you were in New York City---you mentioned how people from the East Coast and the Midwest were not as rigid as the people in California?

KAMEI:

That's right---or prejudicial.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, prejudicial as they were here in California? I guess, then, does that mean that your experience in New York City and other parts of the country---Denver, even; is that when you realized that people in different areas weren't all I guess . . . ?

KAMEI: Yes, New York place is an ideal place to be at that time, Bryan, because there is so many people of different nationalities. And we---like on a subway, you heard all

these different foreign dialects you know. And no matter how strange you looked, there was always someone who looked even stranger. So, for the first time, Bryan, I was not self-conscious about being a Japanese. And New York City is a very liberal city on the whole, and so people are very, very stringent about civil rights at that time, you know. And so we---I felt no prejudice whatsoever; never once did I feel any prejudice. My brother was sort of insulted, because when he first went to New York, someone came up and asked him, "Where's your laundry," you know [Laughs]. And my brother was so proud of his engineering job [Laughs] because they assumed all Asians had laundries you know or restaurants.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, as I said in the beginning, we were primarily focused on the South Bay area before the War. Would you---unless there's anything else you'd like to add, I probably would like to close it on this note.

KAMEI:

Oh, I think so.

0H56M16S

INTERVIEWER:

If there is anything else you would like to add

KAMEI:

If I can think of something, I will be sure to interject [Laughter].

INTERVIEWER:

Well, thank you very much.

KAMEI:

Oh, you're welcome.

INTERVIEWER:

I apologize, Midori, we do have a few more questions for you.

KAMEI:

Okay; fine.

INTERVIEWER:

When you came back after the War and you came back to California and moved into Sherman Oaks, you mentioned before how you could only live---the Japanese couldn't own homes, only up to North Torrance. When you came back after the War, did that change? Could you---could Japanese still--could they then buy homes?

KAMEI :

No, it wasn't until about 1965 when the---when Congress passed the Fair Housing laws, you know, which prohibited discrimination that Japanese were even allowed to move into Torrance. And I remember how Marlon Brando had to go and defend some black families that wanted to buy homes in Torrance. And then, gradually even Palos Verdes opened up to all nationalities . . . so thanks to the Fair Housing Laws.

OH57M37S

INTERVIEWER :

Which was in 1965?

KAMEI :

Yeah, around 1965.

INTERVIEWER :

When you were in Sherman Oaks, you eventually moved back into the South Bay area? Around when was that?

KAMEI :

I moved back about 1967, because I was hired at El Camino College, and it was such a long distance to commute from [Laughs] from Los Angeles, so luckily I was able to buy a home in Palos Verdes.

INTERVIEWER :

And you went to New York City and stayed there? What happened to your family after---I mean, they were at Heart Mountain, but then what happened after that?

KAMEI :

Okay; I'm glad you asked, Bryan. See, mom and dad couldn't come back to California. There was nothing here for them. By that, plus they were up in their 60s by that time. And so my brother and I found a larger apartment for them. So mom and dad joined us in New York City. And in fact, they lived there; my father died when he was in New York City.

But, mother didn't come back---then when I came back to California, she eventually came back to California also.

INTERVIEWER:

Around when?

KAMEI:

Let's see, now mother came back about---when would that be--about 1948---around there; yeah. No, I'm sorry; it was later than that. No, we came back in '51; so she came back in about 1953. Cut that part out.

INTERVIEWER:

[Laughs] And did she resettle or move back into South Bay Gardena area, or . . . ?

KAMEI:

Well, at first she . . . my mother-in-law became an invalid, so my mother took care of my mother-in-law, and because my mother had been a surgical nurse in Japan---she was a wonderful caretaker---and she took care of my mother-in-law. And then when we moved to Silver Lake, I needed mother to baby sit for me. So, we got her a little apartment near our house in Silver Lake.

INTERVIEWER:

So you moved from Sherman Oaks to Silver Lake, and then from Silver Lake to Palos Verdes?

KAMEI:

No, from Silver Lake, we moved to Mt. Washington West, and then from Mt. Washington West, I moved to Palos Verdes.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay; either as a child or going back at any time period, especially when you were young, how did you feel about your Japanese identity internally? I mean did you---what was your feeling about being Japanese and can you talk about that a little?

KAMEI:

In some ways, I had mixed feelings about being Japanese. Number one, I was very proud of my ancestors, because mother never let us forget that for generations we came from a Samurai family, and they were educated. In fact, I could trace my family back to the 1600s in Japan. And my grandfather was a very notable Satsuma Samurai you know;

fought for Saigo Takamori. And so, that part I was always proud of being Japanese. But in America, you know, I was never treated as an American. So it was not until---and then of course, when war broke out we were obviously branded as being Japanese. And then in New York City for the first time, Bryan, I could say to myself, "I am an American," because I was voting and I felt like a citizen with all my civil rights.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; last question---were you especially in high school, and even before, were you politically active, and, if so, in what sense and what kind of organizations? And could you also talk about any type of Japanese/American organizations, especially here in the South Bay area, at that time?

KAMEI:

Okay; before the War, Gardena was probably about 90 percent--99 percent Democrat. And, we had a civics teacher whom I admired tremendously, and he was a very liberal Democrat. In fact, he became an Assemblyman, and we voted. We helped him with his campaign, and he became---he actually became a Congressman later on. So, I've been a Democrat all my life.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember his name?

KAMEI:

Lee E. Geyer; his name was Lee E. Geyer, but he died, unfortunately. And I'll never forget when I was in Santa Anita, when I saw those search lights and the machine guns, you know with an Army uniformed men facing those machine guns at us, I made a vow that if I ever have my freedom, I will fight for liberty and justice for all Americans. And for me at that time, here again the Democratic Party was a party that you know really fought for the civil rights and minorities.

And so, even up in Mt. Washington, when we lived in Mt. Washington, we didn't have a Democratic Club. So, I started the first Mt. Washington West Democratic Club, and became the first president.

And then when I moved to PV, it was all Republican [Laughs], and I felt terribly de-franchised until we joined

the Palos Verdes Democratic Club which is very active, and then some friends got---and then I thought, "Gee, we should have a Democratic Club for Japanese Americans here." And so, I talked to people like Terry Terauchi, the present mayor and George Nakano, who was a City Councilman at that time, and we formed the South Bay Asian Democrats, and from there we started the Asian Pacific American Democratic Club.

INTERVIEWER:

Would you consider yourself politically active at all in high school when you were in Gardena High?

KAMEI:

Not too active; I had my liberal attitudes, but [Laughs] there weren't too many ways that we could express.

INTERVIEWER:

Other than church clubs and social clubs at school, were there any sort of---like I guess there wasn't an Asian Democrat Club or Society or anything like that. But, was there anything similar to that during your days in high school? Were you aware of any?

KAMEI:

Not really; we had our speech clubs, we had our Spanish Clubs, and I did some public speaking at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

All right; well, thank you very much.

KAMEI:

Well, you are certainly welcome.

[End of Interview]