

[Begin Yoshi Inose CD 1]

Interviewer:

It is 9:30 a.m. on Monday, March 22, 2004. My name is Jeanne Tsujimoto, and I will be interviewing Mrs. Yoshi Inose today as part of the South Bay Oral History Project. The audio equipment recording this interview is being monitored by Ernie Tsujimoto, and the interview is being cataloged by Lily Nakatani. All copyrights, title, and any other rights arising out of this interview whether in its entirety, part, or derivative form and 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 Mrs. Yoshi Inose being recorded on this date. We will now begin the interview.

Good morning, Mrs. Inose; how are you today?

Inose:

Fine.

Interviewer:

Thank you so much for letting me interview you and being a part of our JACL Oral History Project. I'm going to be asking you some questions about your life from beginning as a child and you can fill in any information as we go along that you would like to add; all right? Okay; first of all, can you tell me where you were born?

Inose:

Los Angeles.

Interviewer:

And what year please?

Inose:

1908.

Interviewer:

And, you grew up in Los Angeles, as well?

Inose:

Until I was six years old.

Interviewer:

And, what happened when you were six years old?

Inose:

My father was sick and my mother couldn't . . . took us to Japan in 1915, I think.

Interviewer:

Well, we'll get to your experiences in Japan a little later on. But, first of all, can you tell me your parents' names?

Inose:

Oh, my father's name is Seijiro Shibuya; my mother, Shibuya Soko (Okamura).

Interviewer:

And, they were from Japan---born in Japan, were they?

Inose:

Born in Japan.

Interviewer:

And, can you tell me what cities they were born in, please?

Inose:

Oh, my father---Niigata Ken; and my mother---Tokyo.

Interviewer:

And, did they meet in Japan? Were they raised together and did they meet and marry when they were in Japan?

0:02:50.7

Inose:

Oh, I think my father studied in Tokyo in Japan, you know University of . . . that was Horitsu Gakko I think. And, I think they met in Tokyo. And, my mother . . . oh, my father came to the United States in 1900, I think. I'm not exactly . . . and they knew each other in Tokyo, and my mother came to the United States later, I think.

Interviewer:

I see.

Inose:

And, they got married.

Interviewer:

So your father went to the university in Japan?

Inose:

Yes; I think that Horitsu Gakko . . . I don't know what it was called in those days, but that was the college in Tokyo, Horitsu Gakko

Interviewer:

And, what did he study?

Inose:

I don't know, but maybe economics.

Interviewer:

And, he was a university graduate?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Was that a . . . ?

Inose:

I have a diploma, but I gave---donate to the museum.

Interviewer:

Wonderful.

Inose:

Uh-hm.

Interviewer:

Well was that unusual for a man of your father's age to be able to attend university in those days?

0:04:21.7

Inose:

Maybe---maybe so, and unusual to come to the United States and study, you know. I have an application he got from the Governor of **Niigata Ken** that he wants to study economics at the University of Philadelphia.

Interviewer:

Oh; so did he attend the University of Philadelphia, as well?

Inose:

No, but he came to the United States---landed in San Francisco, and met some newspaper man. So, he stayed in San Francisco and worked for newspaper---a Shin Nichi Bei or something like that.

Interviewer:

Oh, so that's how . . . ?

Inose:

And, then I think **[Laughs]** somehow he didn't go to Philadelphia.

Interviewer:

No, but that's how he got interested in newspaper work?

Inose:

Yeah; he first wanted to study economics at the University of Philadelphia.

Interviewer:

Well, he was quite young at this time then?

Inose:

I think so.

Interviewer:

And, your mother did not come. Was he married at that time?

Inose:

I think two years later; I don't know exactly about that.

Interviewer:

I see---I see. Now, so you . . . but then, how . . . you said you were born in Los Angeles. And so, apparently your father left San Francisco. Your father and mother came to . . . ?

Inose:

They came to Los Angeles, and I think work for branch of the **Shin Nichi Bei** or something---you know newspaper.

Interviewer:

I under---I see. Did you have other brothers and sisters?

Inose:

I have three sisters; yeah. My older sister and the youngest one passed away when she was eight years old.

Interviewer:

Oh, I see.

Inose:

So yeah; three sisters.

0:06:27.7

Interviewer:

So, do you have your other sister living with you---living today?

Inose:

No, my older sister passed away two years ago at the age of 95; yeah. And, my younger sister was an English--Math teacher of the **Gakushuin** for 45 years, I think.

Interviewer:

Oh my goodness; so are you . . . ?

Inose:

Yeah; but she passed away 10 years ago.

Interviewer:

Oh, so you're the only one of the four girls that's left.

Inose:

Yes, uh-huh; surviving girl. **[Laughs]**

Interviewer:

Well, that's wonderful. Well now, did your mother work also helping your father or did she stay at home and take care of you girls?

Inose:

Well, she went to . . . I think art school, and (was) the first graduate of that art school in Tokyo.

Interviewer:

Oh, interesting.

Inose:

Yes, that's . . . and I think Bijutsu Gakko (Geijitso Daigaku), you know in Tokyo right now. That's a very nice university.

Interviewer:

So the school is still in existence today?

Inose:

Yeah; she is the first graduate of that school. **[Laughs]** So, Japanese . . . you know art.

Interviewer:

Was she able to pursue her art---artistic education or do anything with it when she came here to the United States?

Inose:

No, she never---I never saw her paint anything.

Interviewer:

Too busy raising you girls.

0:08:13.8

Inose:

She studied **koto** for a long time. So, yeah she came to the United States and performed **koto** all over at the party.

Interviewer:

Oh, so she used her artistic talents different ways?

Inose:

But with four children, I don't know how she did it.

Interviewer:

Very busy---very busy.

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Well now, you said that you were born in Los Angeles, and earlier you told me that you were raised in the Hollywood area. Can you tell me a little bit about those early years before you went to Japan?

0:08:51.4

Inose:

Well, our Hakuji neighbor had two girls and they were our friends. You know they were no discrimination or anything that . . . and mother was very nice to us. Yeah; so we had a good relation, you know.

Interviewer:

Well, this would be, like you said, about the time when you were up until six years old.

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

So that would be between say 1912 and 1918. That would be during World War II time---World War I time.

Inose:

I think so.

Interviewer:

So, you remember your early years---the first six years as your life as being very pleasant in Hollywood?

Inose:

Yes, and I went . . . I don't remember where, but I went to school---first grade and there weren't so many houses, you know those days. And, I could see Mount Low or Mount Wilson from our window. And, you know I remember movie taking---the voices running around in that open field; yes. **[Laughs]**

Interviewer:

Well, Los Angeles was a lot different in those days; didn't have the traffic or the . . . uh-huh---uh-huh.

Inose:

No, nothing; uh-hm.

Interviewer:

Well now, were there very many Japanese families living in the area? Were you able to go to school with any other Japanese children?

Inose:

No, I don't remember any Japanese, but I remember adults living in the neighborhood---no Japanese friends, I think.

Interviewer:

Well now, since your parents were from Japan then did you speak mainly Japanese at home then? Did your parents speak any English?

Inose:

No.

0:10:43.3

Interviewer:

No, so you spoke Japanese in the home?

Inose:

Japanese only at home.

Interviewer:

Well

Inose:

But, somehow you know our friends were English speaking, so I think we spoke English. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

So you learned to speak English mainly through your friends you think early?

Inose:

I think so because I went to the first grade, you know. But, I don't know how I did that?

Interviewer:

Do you remember speaking English when you started school?

Inose:

No, I don't remember speaking English. My oldest sister . . . I think she could speak English, you know. I don't

Interviewer:

And, then when you were age six, you said your family moved because of your father's illness; then you went back to Japan.

Inose:

Japan; yes.

Interviewer:

Can you tell me about your years in Japan?

Inose:

Well, we lived in Nagaoka City, Niigata-Ken for one year. But, my mother's family were all in Tokyo; so she wanted to live in Tokyo. So after one year, we went to Tokyo and lived in Tokyo. So, I went to the grammar school from second grade to sixth and went to high school. And after two years in high school, you know . . . yeah; my grandfather was living alone. So, we went back to Niigata-Ken and I graduated from Niigata Nagaoka High School; yes.

Interviewer:

I see; and you were involved in some high school activities while you were there or belonged to some clubs while you were in school?

0:12:30.2

Inose:

Oh no; in those days there weren't any clubs, no.

Interviewer:

What did you do as a young girl in high school in those days?

Inose:

You know, it's a snow country. So, in winter time---gym class, you know there was a little hill in the ground, you know. So, we used to ski [Laughs].

Interviewer:

Oh you ski? [Laughs]

Inose:

I've never been. It was a little hilly you know in the corner of the ground.

Interviewer:

But, you also mentioned that you played a little bit of basketball and ping pong, too?

Inose:

Oh yes; back . . . yeah, I liked to play basketball. And yeah ping pong; I like to play ping pong, too. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

And, how about church activities; did you attend church with your family, or . . . ?

Inose:

Well, you know our grandfather was a Zen, you know a member of the Zen; yeah. So, there was a Chokoji. You know there was a Zen Buddhist temple in Nagaoka, and when we go to Japan, we always go to Nagaoka and have a little service at that, you know Zen. The name is Chokoji. But, when I was a child, I didn't go to Nagaoka, you know. In Tokyo, we went to Christian church to play.

Interviewer:

Oh, I see; but you did attend the Christian church while you were in Tokyo?

Inose:

Yes---in Tokyo; yes from second to sixth grade, I think. Oh, of course, mother---my mother was busy teaching koto, because you know . . . so we didn't have any activity . . . that the church ground was the only you know activity. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

That's---that was interesting that you were raised a Buddhist.

Inose:

Every Sunday we went to a Christian church. And, we had friends and Christmas party or you know . . . so.

Interviewer:

Well now, how about your parents; were they active . . . well you said you went to Japan because your father was ill?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Now, did he recuperate? Was it a serious illness or was he able to recuperate?

Inose:

Not really; he had TB.

Interviewer:

So, he was able to recuperate?

Inose:

So, after we went back to Japan, he passed away in two years.

Interviewer:

Oh.

0:15:26.7

Inose:

And, my father's sister and family lived in Los Angeles; so she took care of him after we left to Japan.

Interviewer:

Oh, I see; so your father did not go to Japan with you?

Inose:

No, no.

Interviewer:

He stayed in Los Angeles and passed away after two years?

Inose:

That's right.

Interviewer:

So your mother took the four of you girls and went back to Japan?

Inose:

So he---she took us, you know to Japan. So she had a hard time.

Interviewer:

I was going to say; now were . . . did you rely on family then to help you, or how was your mother able to support you children?

Inose:

Oh, she taught koto.

Interviewer:

I see.

Inose:

And, grandfather sent her you know monthly---to her and she supported, you know the family. So, she had a hard time.

Interviewer:

Very difficult.

Inose:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

She was a very strong lady.

Inose:

Yes.

0:16:25.6

Interviewer:

Very strong lady; and when did you---how long did your mother live? Did you . . . well we'll---maybe we should get back to that after we come . . . she came back to---brought you back to the United States later---later on; so?

Inose:

Well after . . . no; she stayed in Nagaoka for a while, and then moved back to Tokyo again in 19---that was 1930---no; 19---maybe 1930.

Interviewer:

So, did your mother ever return back to the United States?

Inose:

No, no---never.

Interviewer:

She never came back?

Inose:

No, she never came back.

Interviewer:

But all of you girls came back to the United States?

Inose:

My sister and I came back to the United States in 1926. My---you know my father's sister lived in---here. So, and my oldest sister went back to Japan in two years. And, I went back to Japan with my auntie and uncle in 1930---'29, and I got married in 1932 and came back to the United States. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Oh, so you were married in Japan?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

You met your husband and you were married . . . ?

Inose:

Well he was you know here.

Interviewer:

He was here in the United States; that's right. Okay.

Inose:

Yes; he was adopted by Inose, Inosuke, you know.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Inose:

He was here, and

Interviewer:

Well, I'm confused; did you get married while you were in Japan, or did you come---were you married when you were here in the United States?

Inose:

We were married in Tokyo.

Interviewer:

Oh you were? So, he went back there?

Inose:

Yes.

0:18:24.5

Interviewer:

Was it an arranged marriage or how did you meet?

Inose:

Well, we knew each other because I was here in 1926 to '29. So you know it was a relative---kind of relative.

Interviewer:

Oh, oh; okay. That's interesting---all right; that's interesting.

Inose:

It's a confusing story. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

No, no, no; it's---it's not. I just am not quite getting all of the information probably in order and that makes you confused. I'm sorry about that. So, here we are now; you grew up and you finished your high school in Japan?

Inose:

Yes, at Niigata.

Interviewer:

Yes, yes; and obviously then you spoke---while you were in Japan, you spoke mostly Japanese?

Inose:

That's right.

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; and you were married in Japan. And, did you have any children while you were in Japan?

Inose:

No; yeah, we got married and came back. We got married in September and came back the same month.

Interviewer:

And this was what year?

Inose:

1932.

Interviewer:

1932 all right; why don't we take a short break now, and then I'll continue a little bit; okay.

0:19:44.5

[Break]

Interviewer:

Mrs. Inose, we're going to continue our interview with the time from when you finished high school in 1926. And, in 1926, can you tell me what you were doing?

Inose:

Well, graduated in March and May, I came to the United States with my oldest sister and my . . . and we stayed at my auntie's house. And, my oldest sister was learning sewing from my auntie, and I went to school. I think you know . . . first we had a hard time because we didn't know much English. But, somehow we went to a special class and learned a little bit, you know---English. Then I went to Roosevelt High School for, I think two years maybe, and then to Woodbury College. But, I still had hard time with English, you know.

Interviewer:

Well, of course--of course.

Inose:

Yes, but my auntie and uncle decided to go back to Japan in 1929. So, I went back to Japan with them. And then I worked for a while in Tokyo. And in 1932, I got married with you know Senjiro Inose, and came back to the United States again.

0:21:45.9

Interviewer:

Well going back just a little bit, when you were at Woodbury College, what were you studying?

Inose:

Oh, you know short hand. You know in those days, you know everything old style business things---typing and everything.

Interviewer:

Business---very nice; and then when you went back to Japan in 1929 during the time prior to your marriage, were you working?

Inose:

Yes, I worked for German, French company in Tokyo as typist and you know a little bit of English.

Interviewer:

Well, when you were typing, were you typing in English or were you . . . ?

Inose:

In English.

Interviewer:

In English?

Inose:

In English.

Interviewer:

So your English was quite good by that time.

Inose:

Well, not too good. Somehow I did it. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

That's wonderful; so you were---so you were bi-lingual---both Japanese and English during those years?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Very helpful; and then of course, you married in 1932, and then you came back to the Los Angeles area?

Inose:

Yes; you know do you remember old Japanese hospital?

Interviewer:

Yes, of course; in fact my mother worked at the Japanese hospital?

Inose:

Oh yeah; I didn't know

Interviewer:

Yes, she . . . it was her first job.

Inose:

_____.

Interviewer:

Yes; First and Fickett Street, I believe it was.

Inose:

Yeah; there was a house next to the hospital, and we came back to that. And Ojisan and Obasan lived there; so we lived there.

Interviewer:

Right next door to the hospital?

Inose:

Yes, behind that hospital.

Interviewer:

I'm trying to think when my mother finished nursing school and worked at the hospital. I think it probably was during that time.

Inose:

Is that right?

0:23:25.4

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; because she would be a few years younger than you are and was still not married, and came from the Riverside. She was born and raised in Riverside area, and came to Los Angeles to work--- to go to nursing school and then to work at the Japanese Hospital. So, you were neighbors for a while with my mother.

Inose:

Oh.

Interviewer:

It's a small world isn't it? Well now all right; so well you are--once you come to the United States and you are working, I mean you---oh wait are married---were you working---did you work here once you came back in 1932?

Inose:

No; I didn't work because I was pregnant, you know.

Interviewer:

You started your family?

Inose:

My son was born in 1933 in September; so you know then I was busy raising children.

Interviewer:

Of course---of course. Now, how many children did you have?

Inose:

Well, when I lived in---you know next door the hospital, I had two children.

Interviewer:

So, you had two children before World War II broke out in 1941?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Or, did you have . . . ?

Inose:

You know in 1935, the old Japanese hospital was closed. So, my you know in-laws, Inose, Inosuke and wife went back to Japan.

Interviewer:

I see.

Inose:

So, we moved to---from you know next door to hospital house from; yeah to Boyle Heights.

Interviewer:

I see---I see; that's when you moved. So you moved pre-war to the Boil Heights, East Los Angeles area?

Inose:

Pre . . . yes; uh-hm, yes.

Interviewer:

And at that time you had Ken and . . . ?

Inose:

Ken and **Kyoko**.

Interviewer:

That would be Rose?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Rose was born when you moved to . . . ?

Inose:

Yes; and then we moved to Michigan Avenue.

Interviewer:

In East Los Angeles?

Inose:

In Boyle Heights.

Interviewer:

Were you . . . ?

Inose:

Then **Hiroko** was born there.

Interviewer:

I see---I see; were you able to purchase a house or were you renting an apartment?

Inose:

Rent---rent a house.

Interviewer:

Rented a house; and what was your neighborhood like? Tell me a little bit about East Los Angeles between say 1935 until December 7, 1941---those five or six years.

0:26:09.9

Inose:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Were there some Japanese families?

Inose:

Yeah; our next door neighbor was German Italian, and left side house was Jewish. And, they had children, you know this neighbor.

So, my children used to play with those you know girls and boys in the neighborhood. They had . . . yeah.

Interviewer:

Did the children or you or your husband face any discrimination? Did you have any problems in the community?

Inose:

No, no; there were some Japanese living in the neighborhood and they had children, too. So, you know Japanese and Italian and Jewish, and they all had a good time together---no discrimination.

Interviewer:

That's wonderful; those were good times.

Inose:

Yes; but when the war broke out, my **[Laughs]**---my girls, next-door girlfriend said, "You're Japanese; so I'm not going to play with you," you know. And but, the parents are German and Italian so they scolded the child and said, "You don't have to---you don't do that." **[Laughs]** Then they started playing again, you know.

Interviewer:

I see---I see; now just in general then, covering your childhood and up until your marriage and having children, can you give us an idea of what your goals were? What your husband and you wanted, you know for your children---what kind of life you wanted for your children; what you encouraged them to do as they were growing up; and what your hopes and dreams were of a good life here in the United States?

Inose:

You know I liked to sew, so while my children were small, I went to night school sewing **[Laughs]** and you know learned how to sew. Yeah; my auntie was a sewing teacher. So, while I was staying with you know my auntie, I learned quite a lot; so. I still like to sew right now.

Interviewer:

Oh that's terrific; that's terrific. And, did you pass the sewing skills along to your girls?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

I know one of your daughters well and she sews a lot---good. And, why don't we move on now. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about you know the pre-war years before we start talking about what happened after December 7, 1941? Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your life, you know before 1941 . . .

Inose:
1941?

Interviewer:
. . . that maybe I haven't covered?

Inose:
[Laughs] Well, it's pretty hard to remember the whole thing.

Interviewer:
Oh, I think you're doing very well. Okay; well why don't we move on now to the years from 1941 through 1945. And of course, on December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor---the incident at Pearl Harbor occurred, then it affected you know all the Japanese Americans a great deal. Can you tell me if you remember where you were and how you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor and how it affected you, you know right away?

Inose:
Oh, we were living on Michigan Avenue near Boyle Avenue. And, that was Sunday morning. And you know, of course, we were shocked to hear the radio and we were you know . . . and for one week, we couldn't eat anything, but okayu because my stomach---everybody's stomach was upset. And

Interviewer:
You were worried about what---how this might affect your lives?

Inose:
That's right because it's Japan, you know. And, my husband was doing insecticide business with Japanese farmer, you know in the neighborhood. And, his partner was Mr. Takeuchi, you know business partner. He went; yeah he went on business to Santa Maria, up north, you know for . . . but he heard the radio about the war and he came right back to our house from you know---from Santa Maria or something. And, we were all shocked, and of course there, you know the business, it was---the business was pretty good, but we had to close down.

Interviewer:
And, at this time, did you still just have the two children, or did you have---had you had other children?

0:31:52.5

Inose:

I had a third one; Hiroko was born.

Interviewer:

Your third one was born?

Inose:

Yes; and when ?Hiroko? was three years old, and oh . . . Kiyoko was seven, Ken was eight, I think, we have to evacuate and in 1942; yeah we . . . yeah; we went to Santa Anita. Our good friend, Mr. Takeuchi and another good friend, Makino and our neighbor, you know Yenari---four families evacuated at the same time and went to Santa Anita. And, we stayed at Santa Anita for six months, and then relocated to Arkansas; yes.

Interviewer:

To one of the intern . . . Rohwer?

Inose:

Rohwer, Arkansas.

Interviewer:

One of the internment camps?

Inose:

And, we stayed there three years.

Interviewer:

Until?

Inose:

Until the

Interviewer:

War was over?

Inose:

No, but our friend, Mr. Yenari and family relocated to New Orleans, you know near the end of the war. And, my husband said, "Well, we have to relocate someplace." And, he couldn't go back to California. He had a notice, and it said, "You can't go back to California." So, he decided to go to New Orleans, you know because the Yenari family was there. So, when the war ended on December . . . no, no, no---August 14, 1945, we relocated to New Orleans. But, you know that was the day the war ended, that

everybody was you know at the station in Rohwer. They were so happy---everybody; but we were so sad, you know.

Interviewer:

Well now, but going back a little bit to Santa Anita, what was it like---what was it like living in the stables for six months?

Inose:

No, we stayed there for, I think, one month. But, my friend, you know Makino, he was an architect, and he had connection. So, we moved back to the nice barrack.

Interviewer:

Oh, this . . . okay; so this was---so you were not in the stables for six months?

Inose:

No, just for one month, I think.

Interviewer:

And, then where was the barrack that you were able to move to?

Inose:

Well, that was a new built barrack.

Interviewer:

Oh, in . . . but still at Santa Anita racetrack?

Inose:

Yeah; that's right.

Interviewer:

I see---I see. So you were there for about five months before you went to Rohwer, Arkansas?

Inose:

Yeah; I think six months.

0:35:01.5

Interviewer:

I see; and

Inose:

In October, we relocated to . . .

Interviewer:

Rohwer?

Inose:

. . . Rohwer.

Interviewer:

But, what was the living conditions like other than just living in the barrack---food, getting your meals, and laundry?

Inose:

Well, you know we went to the mess hall---big mess hall. We ate together; yeah. But, well I think the food was good.

Interviewer:

And, you weren't able to take too . . . when you left home and went over to Santa Anita, you were not able to take too many belongings. Was it one suitcase or something?

Inose:

No, we had the two big bags I think. That's all I think we took.

Interviewer:

But, did you need anything? Were you able to get what you needed---personal items and everything while you were in Santa Anita? How did you manage, you know just personal items?

Inose:

Well, somehow we managed.

Interviewer:

Managed?

Inose:

Managed; yeah.

Interviewer:

I guess medication was provided for you. Did they have a hospital?

Inose:

Yes, I think so. Well, I think it . . . nobody got sick.

Interviewer:

That you remember. None of your family became seriously ill.

Inose:

Yeah; we were lucky.

Interviewer:

You were lucky, good---good. And all right; going over to Rohwer now, tell me a little bit about what your three years was like while you were in Rohwer. What you did; how your children were?

Inose:

Yeah; when the bell rang, we went to the mess hall three times a day and ate, you know. We had plenty of food. And, Ken went to--- he was in the sixth grade---sixth grade; no wait. He was nine; so sixth grade . . . and Kiyoko was in the second or the . . . Hiroko went to kindergarten, and they, you know they had a good time.

Interviewer:

Good; the weather was probably not very good compared to what you were used to in Los Angeles.

Inose:

You know, the north wind blew. It was cold. When the wind came from the south, it was warm; so.

0:37:16.7

Interviewer:

Did you have snow in Arkansas?

Inose:

Oh yes, in the winter time.

Interviewer:

So you had the seasons; so it was winter?. Now, you had family in Japan. Your mother was still in Japan and you had lots of relatives.

Inose:

Yes, my sisters and all the family in Japan.

Interviewer:

Were you able to keep in contact with them at all during this time while you were in camp?

Inose:

Oh, I had two Red Cross messages from my mother, and my mother wanted us to go back to Japan. And, we got notice that we could go back to Japan, you know via Africa or something, but we refused to go back. So, we stayed in the camp all the time.

Interviewer:

Well was it difficult for your mother and her family during this time with all the war going on and relations between the United States and Japan?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Did they have a difficult time?

Inose:

I think so. My oldest sister's husband passed away during the war, you know. So, my mother and sister must have suffered. And, my sister had three daughters. So, I think they had a hard time, too.

Interviewer:

Did---were they in---did you say they were in Tokyo at this time?

Inose:

In Tokyo; yes.

Interviewer:

Did you have any relatives that were affected by the bombs?

Inose:

Uh, no---nobody passed away. Everything . . . my sister's house was saved. My younger sister's house was burned down. So

Interviewer:

Difficult.

0:39:00.4

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

A difficult time . . . now getting back to when you said, August 14, 1945, and then you were able to---you and your husband and the children were able to go to New Orleans . . .

Inose:

That's right.

Interviewer:

. . . for a short time or a long period of time, or . . . ?

Inose:

You know it was so humid and you know, so it's not a very good place. And my---Kiyoko got sick---became sick. So, we decided after one month . . . my---oh, my husband was planning to start chicken business, but we decided not to do it, and go back to California. So, after one month, we came back to Los Angeles.

Interviewer:

To the Boyle Heights area?

Inose:

To . . . first we didn't have a house. So, we stayed at the Evergreen Hostel for a while. Then and . . . oh, our friend had an apartment and we rented one room. But, after a while, we found you know an apartment, and we stayed there for a while; and while we stayed in that place, my husband . . . yeah; worked part-time as a nurse---gardener assistant. And yeah

Interviewer:

A gardener's assistant?

Inose:

A gardener's . . . his name was Mr. Maruse. That was [REDACTED]. And, while he was working for him, he was waiting him to get ready, and then his neighbor was a nursery. So, he was watching the nursery. That's something different and interesting. That's the reason we started nursery.

Interviewer:

I see; well now right after the war when your---when you came back and your husband worked as a gardener's assistant, was it doing gardening for Caucasian families?

Inose:

I think so.

Interviewer:

And, you don't---do you remember any discrimination that he might have felt during this work? Did he say anything; he never said?

Inose:

He never said anything about that.

Interviewer:

So, but it was not difficult for him to find work then right after the war?

Inose:

Well, I don't know how long he worked for him, but some day . . . oh, a real estate man came to our house---to our place, and he said, "There's land in Gardena for sale." So, my husband, you know he started to think about opening a nursery. **[Laughs]**

Interviewer:

And this what year---about?

Inose:

In 1946, I think.

Interviewer:

Right after the war---right after the war. And, that's how you came to Gardena?

Inose:

Uh-hm; yes.

Interviewer:

Interesting; getting back just a little bit, did you have any of your family members serve in the military or the 442nd for the United States? Were they in the United States Army or any military service?

Inose:

Not relative; no.

Interviewer:

Okay; how about since you had relatives in Japan, you did have--- did you have members serve in the Japanese military during the war?

Inose:

Yes, my younger sister's husband was in the military.

Interviewer:

And, did he survive? Did he survive all right?

Inose:

Yeah; the war ended when he was in Sumatra---the Island of Sumatra.

Interviewer:

Oh, he served in Sumatra?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

My goodness.

0:43:15.5

Inose:

And he came back you know after so many months to Tokyo, and he was skin and bone. [Laughs] Yeah; he didn't have enough food, I think.

Interviewer:

He's lucky to have survived.

Inose:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Now, you still had at this time a lot of relatives living in Japan.

Inose:

Yes, uh-hm.

Interviewer:

You did; and when you came back to the Los Angeles area after you know living in New Orleans after the war, did you . . . you said that you found a home to rent. But, what happened to your belongings that you had during the war? Remember, you had to evacuate to Santa Anita. Did you leave some things behind?

Inose:

Yes; our next door Jewish neighbor, he was kind enough to keep our, you know everything in their basement. And, everything was there.

Interviewer:

Oh, you were lucky.

Inose:

Yes, uh-hm.

Interviewer:

Very good; so coming back after the war was not . . . I'm not going to say it wasn't a difficult time because it was, but you didn't have---your husband was able to get a job. You were able to find a place to live with no problem and you were able to get your belongings from pre-war?

Inose:

Uh-huh.

Interviewer:

So you did---were able to start again with your young children pretty well?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

You didn't have to worry about food or shelter?

Inose:

No, no.

Interviewer:

Good, good; I'm thinking back again with your mother living in Japan, and of course, everything happened so quickly that like you said, you did not have a lot of---that you weren't able to have a lot of communication. But, did you ever get any feelings, or did your mother or your auntie, anyone---any express to you how they felt about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, how they felt about Japan going to war with the United States? Was there any discussion or any feelings that you got about how either your family or just the Japanese in general?

Inose:

Oh, my family---in Japan?

Interviewer:

Uh-hm; how did they feel about the war with the United States---the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Inose:

Well, I never heard about it. But, they didn't have enough food, you know.

Interviewer:

It was difficult times for them. The war caused problems.

Inose:

Yes, yes; that's right. Their house wasn't burned, but they had a hard time finding food, I think.

Interviewer:

Well I remember, too, and after the war once you got settled, I remember my family for many years, my mother would send clothing, and even food and things.

Inose:

When we could . . . yeah; send package to Japan, every month we'd make six packages, you know--my husband's side, my mother's side. So pack it and send it to Japan.

Interviewer:

I guess all of us Japanese Americans did the same things.

Inose:

And, my sister was making crepe paper flowers, you know and sold to soldier's families, I think, through some connections.

Interviewer:

This was in Japan?

0:46:54.2

Inose:

Yes, in Japan.

Interviewer:

To make some extra money?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

To make some extra money?

Inose:

Because her husband passed away and she had two---three girls, you know. But, I think that helped it. So, I sent crepe paper all the time. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Okay; we're going to take another little short break now; all right.

0:47:16.3

[Break]

Interviewer:

Mrs. Inose, I'd like to backtrack a little bit and talk a little bit more about your father. He seems like such an interesting man, and I'm sorry that you lost him when he was so young. But, would you tell me a little bit about him starting with the fact

that he was a lawyer and that he graduated from USC? Tell me how he decided to go to law school and about when.

Inose:

He started newspaper business with three of the---two more, you know friends.

Interviewer:

In what year?

Inose:

In 1903; and somehow . . . first they had a few copies, you know--just something like mimeograph or something. Then gradually, the number, you know---the publication increased. And then, when . . . oh, a little later, they found time; so he went to USC to study law.

Interviewer:

And this was in about 1906?

Inose:

19; yeah that's . . . and he graduated in 1906.

Interviewer:

Oh; so that means that he learned---he had learned English quite well when he was in Japan.

Inose:

I think so because I think he learned English in Japan's college.

Interviewer:

Now, what year did your father immigrate to the United States?

Inose:

I think 1900, I think; I don't know exactly.

Interviewer:

About how old? He was quite young then.

Inose:

Must be . . . well, I don't know.

Interviewer:

Well, anyway he started . . . okay; he and two other friends started the Japanese newspaper, the Rafu Shimpo, which just is still in publication and celebrated its 100th anniversary last year.

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

That's quite an accomplishment for two---just to have three boys, young boys, start this newspaper. And also, he was a very, very early graduate of USC and I understand that you have quite a number of family members who are attached to USC. Could you tell me a little bit about them?

Inose:

Well yeah. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

You have---first your father graduated from USC.

Inose:

[Laughs] Yes; and my husband graduate from USC in 1928 and in business administration. And so, Lily went to USC and (Lily's) daughter and Lily's husband.

Interviewer:

So, that's your daughter and your son-in-law and two granddaughters?

Inose:

Yes, and Hiroko's son and daughter graduated, too, you know.

Interviewer:

So, you have two more grandchildren?

Inose:

And Kiyoko, yeah---son's wife, graduated from USC. She's a pharmacist. And

Interviewer:

That's Nancy.

Inose:

Nancy.

Interviewer:

Nancy graduated---you know Nancy graduated high school and is a good friend of my son's.

Inose:

Is that right?

Interviewer:

They still keep in touch. They graduated high school---North High School together. So, I see Nancy.

Inose:

Yes, she's still working.

Interviewer:

So, you have now, that is . . . okay; so you have one daughter and am I counting four grandchildren and a . . . ?

Inose:

Well, Ken's daughter

Interviewer:

Another grandchild?

Inose:

Yes, and Kiyoko's daughter's husband, you know he's a Philippine. He's . . . him right there. He's an occupational therapist.

Interviewer:

Also from USC?

Inose:

USC.

Interviewer:

So, you have a very strong connection to the University of Southern California?

Inose:

Yes; all of them. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Interesting---very interesting; also, I understand that your father was a magician of sorts?

Inose:

Oh no, my husband.

Interviewer:

Your husband?

Inose:

Yes, my husband . . . yes that was his hobby.

Interviewer:

And did he perform just for the family or did he perform at parties or . . . ?

Inose:

Oh, he performed all over [Laughs]---church, Gardena Buddhist Church, and Lily was the assistant once. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

That would have been interesting to see.

Inose:

He (Ishida) went to the Hakujin's Magician Club, too, you know. His teacher, Mr. Tenkai was a famous magician. So, they had a club, you know---Mr. Tenkai had a club in Los Angeles, and my husband belonged to that club and learned, you know all kinds of tricks. [Laughs]

0:53:01.6

Interviewer:

That is interesting.

Inose:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Well, I understand that even today, you still teach the tea ceremony and have a number of students here in your home. Can you tell me a little bit about your hobby?

Inose:

Oh, my teacher was Mrs. Hitomi. He started teaching Omoto Senke, tea ceremony in 1960---1960, and I started learning the ceremony from her in 1964. And, from that time, well I'm still doing tea ceremonies. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Forty years; now this is when you are still raising your family. This is something you took up.

Inose:

Well yes.

Interviewer:

And, I understand that not only do you teach, but you and your students and your daughter do demonstrations?

Inose:

Oh yes; oh yes.

Interviewer:

And you participate in many festivals and do you still continue to do this?

Inose:

Yes, yes; oh yes---uh-hm.

Interviewer:

And about---tell me a little bit about your kimono that you buy especially for the tea ceremony and

Inose:

Yes, when we have a party---tea ceremony party, we have to---wear a kimono. But, you know, everybody has a hard time with obi, you know. But, somehow we do it. can do it, too, you know.

[Laughs]

Interviewer:

And do you buy your kimono here in the United States or do you have to send for it from Japan?

Inose:

Oh, yeah; we can buy kimono from Mr. Nagao. He has a kimono business for a long time. So, everybody buys from him.

Interviewer:

Here in Los Angeles?

Inose:

I see---I see.

Interviewer:

All right; now let's move onto . . . very interesting, a man that you know and you were friends as a part of the family, Admiral Yamamoto, who was with the Japanese military. Can you tell us about how you---your relationship with Admiral Yamamoto and who he was---what part he played in Japanese history?

Inose:

Oh, my auntie . . . yeah; my auntie went to the grade school with Admiral Yamamoto, and when he was attache at Washington, he came all the way back to Japan---he visited my auntie when she was living in Boyle Heights, and I was there, too, you know when he was. There were another man with same grade with Admiral, and I think they get together and talk the war---old times, I think.

[Laughs]

Interviewer:

And about what year was this that you saw him?

Inose:

Huh?

Interviewer:

About what year was this that you met---saw him at your auntie's?

Inose:

I think it was 1927 or; yeah, that's a long, long time ago. So, I don't remember exactly what[Laughs]

Interviewer:

Now, was he in the Japanese military during this time?

Inose:

I think so. He was a Navy man; so yes.

0:57:00.4

Interviewer:

And, can you tell us what part in history Admiral **Yamamoto** played?

Inose:

Well, I don't know exactly; but he . . . you know head of the Navy when the war started. But, I heard he was against the war with the United States. But, somehow Army was stronger than, you know Navy so he had to, you know fight I think.

Interviewer:

And follow orders.

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Well then from . . . am I correct in understanding that Admiral Yamamoto in following orders was instrumental in the attack---the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, even though he felt that . . .

Inose:

I think so.

Interviewer:

. . . perhaps the Japanese should not get involved with the United States in World War II.

Inose:

I think he had to; I don't know exactly, but you know.

Interviewer:

He was in the military and was following orders?

Inose:

Uh-hm.

0:58:11.3

Interviewer:

Okay; but did you say now that his family and yours in Japan share---are buried in the same cemetery area . . .

Inose:

Yeah---yes.

Interviewer:

. . . because you were very close?

Inose:

Uh-hm.

Interviewer:

Okay; let's move onto the years after the war. We covered some of the early resettlement where you and your husband were able to come back and reclaim your belongings and find housing. And, your husband found a good job, but then decided to start a nursery, a flower nursery in about 1946 in the city of Gardena.

Inose:

That's right.

Interviewer:

And so can you tell me about your move to Gardena and your life here in the South Bay area from 1946?

Inose:

Oh, yes; my husband didn't know anything about plants and nursery or nothing. But, I was so scared, you know. But, somehow we started **[Laughs]** and we bought the house on 135th Street between Normandie and Western, I think. And, when we bought the place, weeds all over the---you know the land. And, there was one cow and rabbit hutch, you know altogether we bought that, you know. **[Laughs]** So we had cow when we moved in, and but later we sold

the cow and rabbit hutch, too, and leveled the land and started the nursery, I think. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

And, how did your husband learn about the plants---about growing plants?

Inose:

Mr. Komai, you know _____, Mr. Komai's brother had a nursery in West Los Angeles, and he visited him, and saw him do you know all kinds of . . . and somehow I think he copied it, you know---how to plant and re-sod it from ground flat. [Laughs] So, you know

Interviewer:

What did you grow? What kind of flowers did you grow?

1:01:01.1

Inose:

First was pansy; we planted pansy . . . oh; I don't know how we started, I mean on the ground, you know. So, that was late in 1946, I think. So, first . . . yeah; see we planted pansy on the ground, and we had to dig up. Now everything is in the pot, so it's easy to sell. But, when we had older . . . I had to dig up and put in the, you know tray.

Interviewer:

How---who did you sell---who did you sell your pansies to---your flowers to?

Inose:

Golden Nursery.

Interviewer:

Oh, so you sold to another nursery?

Inose:

Yes; we . . . yeah; we'd grow plants and sell to---mostly to Golden Nursery.

Interviewer:

That would be the Yamane family.

Inose:

That's right.

Interviewer:

So you did not ever have to go to say the flower market or anyplace like that?

Inose:

No.

Interviewer:

You sold to other nurseries, who in turn

Inose:

Wholesale.

Interviewer:

Oh, I see.

Inose:

Not---no retail.

Interviewer:

No retail; so you did all wholesale?

Inose:

That's right.

Interviewer:

And gradually, you increased your---the number of plants and the number of flowers and the kinds of flowers?

Inose:

Yes, uh-huh.

1:02:21.0

Interviewer:

And did---how long did you stay on 135th Street?

Inose:

We started in 1946 and sold the land in 1986. So the first 20 years, we were the boss, and after 20---you know after 20 years, Ken was the boss.

Interviewer:

Well, did he always have his nursery on 135th Street there or did you move it?

Inose:

We sold it; yeah.

Interviewer:

And you moved---Ken moved the nursery to . . . ?

Inose:

To Avalon and 163rd; yeah---in 19---I think that was 1958.

Interviewer:

And Ken kept the nursery until 1986?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And then he sold it?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

So you had a good life with the nursery?

Inose:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Uh-huh; and raised your children?

Inose:

That's right.

Interviewer:

And they attended schools in Gardena?

1:03:28.1

Inose:

Yes; they went to Gardena High School.

Interviewer:

So now, I'm going to have you tell me again, your husband's name?

Inose:

Seijiro Inose.

Interviewer:

And your children's names?

Inose:

Ken Inose, Kiyoko Inose, Yoshiyama, Hiroko Sakamoto, Lily Nakatani.

Interviewer:

And your grandchildren's names?

Inose:

Grandchildren---Steve Sakamoto, Don Inose, Kathy Handa, Jeff Sakamoto, Judy and Joe, Brian Yoshiyama, Karen Bunuan, Diane Kuramoto, Cynthia Enderwik, Sharon Goddard.

Interviewer:

You have quite a large family, Mrs. Inose. Now, we're here in Torrance. You've been living in Torrance now for how long?

Inose:

Since '87.

Interviewer:

In 1987; and you appear to be in good health?

Inose:

Well, I think for my age. **[Laughs]**

Interviewer:

You're doing very well. And, besides your tea ceremony classes, are you active in any other area? Do you have---are you still active in church? Do you participate in church activities?

Inose:

No, I have no time for church. I go to . . . you know, I went to Zenshuji. I belong to Zenshuji. I have no time for it. **[Laugh]**

Interviewer:

And, about your camp experiences and your early life, have you ever spoken to your children and your grandchildren about all the things that you've told me today?

Inose:

Well, to my children I think I did. But, for grandchildren, they never ask me. **[Laughs]**

Interviewer:

Well, do you think it's important for them to know though? That's one of the reasons why we're doing these interviews and

Inose:

I think it's important because I wanted to know more about our, you know ancestors. But, when I was young, I never had interest in . . . I did live with my grandfather, [REDACTED] for three---oh, three years. But, I never asked him about . . . he was a, you know samurai. And, so I regret I didn't ask him anything about that.

1:06:26.1

Interviewer:

You know, I think that we all say that as we get older and that's why this project is so important because your grandchildren are very young yet. And it . . .just like you said; you know we don't get interested in our ancestors and our history until we're a little bit older. So, by having your history recorded and going to be on Cal State Long Beach's Website, your grandchildren and their children will be able to look back. And it is a shame that we didn't have the technology to be able to do this, you know before. But, at least we have your history and others that we've been able to interview on record. So, thank you again so very much for letting us come to interview you today.

Inose:

Thank you very much. [Laughs] That's all.

Interviewer:

What do you think---not too painful? Wasn't that nice?

1:07:27.9

[End Yoshi Inose CD 1]