

SACHI FUDENNA

Recalls the Washington Township and Tanforan during World War II

Full name: Sachiko Kamiji Fudenna

Born what town? Oakland. Family lived at a camp at Leslie Salt Company, in Alvarado, CA, part of the Washington Township (now known as Fremont) Family did not have a farm. Her father worked at Leslie Salt.

Birth date: April 22, 1929. She was 13 when she went to Tanforan.

Parent's names? Mother: Sakue Tanaka. Father: Kumachiyo Kamiji

Sister's names? Michiko. Plus older sister Kazuko, also Sumiko.

Husband: Takeo Fudenna

Family were members of the JACL? Fudennas, yes. "The JACL was for the Japanese Americans, not my parents (Issei)."

Buddhist back then? Yes.

Did you know Rev. Joshin Motoyoshi of the Buddhist Temple of Alameda?

Yes. "His daughter was a good friend of mine, Merika. In Topaz they were at the furthest end of the camp. We used to meet in high school (in camp). I knew her family because we used to go to church, but I didn't really pal around with her until camp." *(Before the war, Motoyoshi would drive some 24 miles south from*



Alameda island to minister in the Washington Township, often at someone's house. It was his job to do so, since the Township did not have a temple at that point.)

"Before the war, in our Centerville area, we didn't have a Buddhist church. Once in awhile Rev. Motoyoshi used to come and rented a place and we would have a service and I would go to that. If there was a special service at the Alameda (island) church we would go there."



Did you go to a Japanese school? “My sister and I started (in Alvarado) at that place that man rented (a Mr. Matsumoto, he also owned grocery store). But we didn’t go too long before the war started and we had to quit. I think we only went maybe three years. My father couldn’t afford to pay. We didn’t learn much.”

The Japanese school (one room) was next to the grocery store. “A Japanese from Centerville came once a week.” (NOT Motoyoshi)

Did you have a best friend before the war? “Harue Tanaka, they used to live in

Union City, she was the only Japanese besides me. Actually, I didn’t have many friends because there were not many Japanese in Alvarado.”

“During the war in camp, when they did that loyalty oath, Harue’s parents signed up (to repatriate to the homeland) and went to Japan. She went with them but she didn’t like it in Japan.”

“She came back, but her parent’s didn’t come back. She worked at some home in San Francisco. She missed her parents so much she went back to Japan. And then she married a Chinese soldier and went to Hawaii.”

Sachi had never been to the JACL office before May 9, 1942. “I knew the JACL were helping the Japanese.” (May 9 is the day all the Township Japanese will board buses at their local JACL office to go to Tanforan)

When did you leave that morning? “I think about 11am, because we left our place about 8:30, which was in Alvarado. A friend of my father’s from Leslie Salt took us to Centerville (the JACL) . We didn’t have any car after that. I think my father must have sold the car.”

“We were all allowed one suitcase. We didn’t know where we were going. I think we just took regular light clothes, were never wore heavy clothes here.”

Did you understand what was going on when you went to Tanforan?

“I didn’t.”

When you arrived in Tanforan, what was your impression? “I didn’t know what was going on. I didn’t think much about it. We were with a bunch of other Japanese people.”

Were you in a horse stall? “No, we were lucky, we were in barracks. My husband (to be) was in a horse stall.”

Were there classes, school, church?

“No classes.”

How was the food? Did you eat things you didn’t like? (she doesn’t recall)

Were you happy or sad to go to Topaz? “I didn’t know what was going on. We got on this train, they said we couldn’t open the curtain and look out. They told us not to.”

AFTER the WAR

Kamijis (her father’s family) came back to Alvarado after the war. “We didn’t own the house. There was this man who had a grocery store, and a big building next door. There was a Japanese teacher who came once a week or after school or on Saturdays, and he made partitions. For those of us who had no place to go, we came back to that place. One room. About three or four separate places (inside, due to the partitions). There were two other families that came back that didn’t have a place (in Alvarado).”

Did school kids treat you differently after Pearl? “No, everybody in our town, they were real nice, I remember one boy in my class said ‘nothing changed, we still like you.’”

Sachi married Takeo Fudenna on January 23, 1949:

“I didn’t farm until after I got married. My father said, ‘you marry Tak, and you’re going to have to work on the farm.’ They started out in berries I heard, in Warm Springs. Then he went into lettuce. So when I got married we were doing lettuce and cauliflower in the winter time.”

She was living at the Fudennas when she was married in Warm Springs: “They had rented a little house in Alvarado that they farmed, too.”

Eventually the Fudennas sold some of their property to the NUMMI car plant in Fremont.

Japanese Will Return to Farm

WARM SPRINGS, March 12.—
Mr. and Mrs. Ysuto Kato, accompanied by Kato's parents, are expected to re-occupy their home here on April 1. Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Benbow and family who have been occupying the Kato 20-acre ranch since evacuation of Japanese will return to their own home in Irvington which has been occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Merrill Belding and family. The Beldings have as yet not completed arrangements for another residence.

James Fudenna, another Warm Springs Japanese who owns his home here was in the township recently arranging for re-leasing of his ranch. The place had been leased by Burdette Williams for one of his ranch foremen, L. E. Quarnstrom who is moving to San Jose. Both Kato and Fudenna have been at the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. Fudenna said on his recent visit he did not expect to return here to live "for several years."

The only Washington Township Japanese family to return permanently after the lifting of the exclusion ban is the family of Kazuo Shikano, 28, graduate of the Hayward Union High School who is operating his 20-acre ranch on Mowry Road at Centerville.

Both Shikano and Kato have brothers in the Army. Pfc. Katsumi Shikano is at Fort Sam Houston and Henry Kato is overseas. Joseph Kato was killed in action in France

Did it seem like your family had to start all over after the war? "Yes. My father didn't have his job back at Leslie, so he worked on some farm."

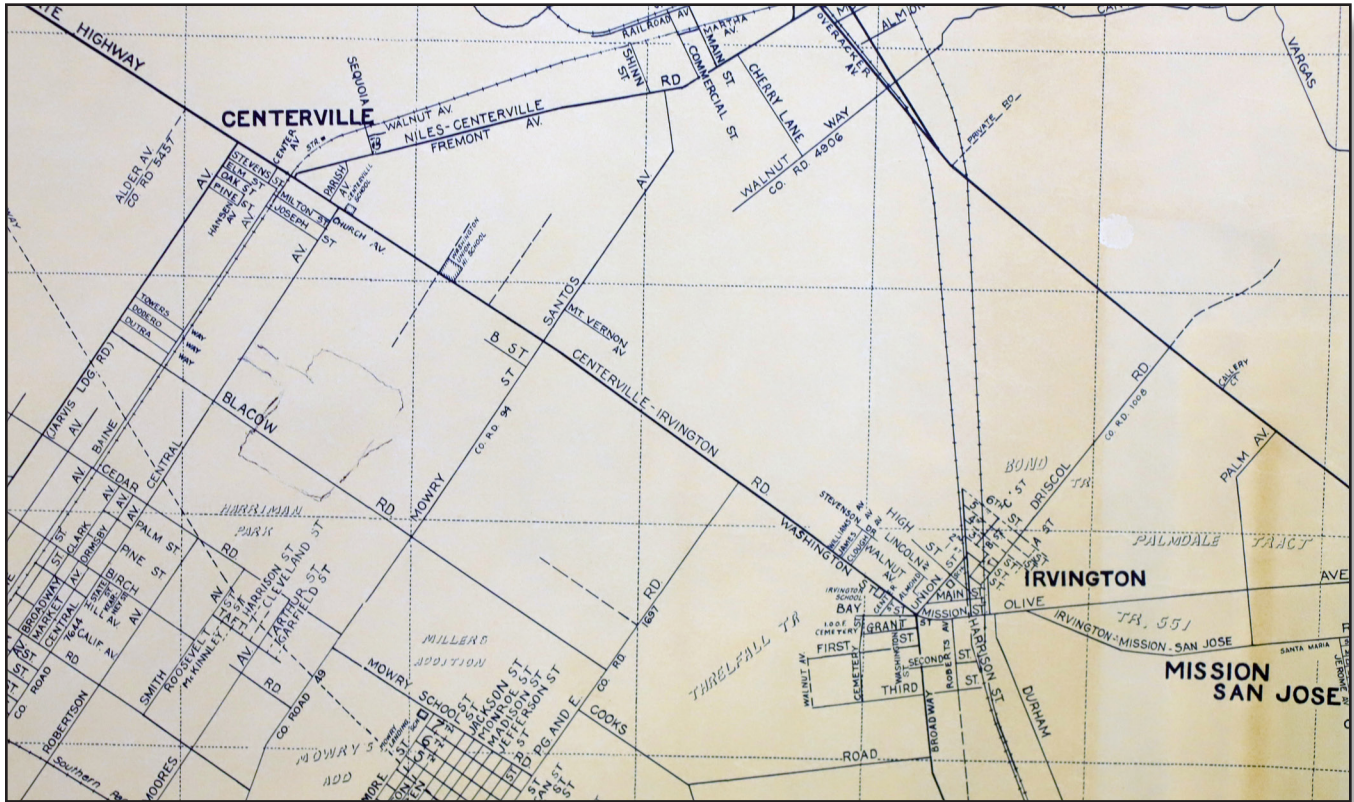
She was a junior when she returned to Alvarado. Sachi went to Washington Union High School.

Do you have any documents or photos from the war? "When the war started they took our camera away." (her son, Bob, does not have any photos, either)

Any photos from before the war? "No, we left it all at this one place but it was broken into and everything was gone when we came back. There was a (Japanese) man who owned a laundromat, he had a lot of space in the back. He told us to leave out things there, and they left their things, but when we came back, well the place was almost gone, and people had taken things." (This place was in the Alvarado area).

August 19, 2022 phone interview with
Sachi Fudenna by Brad Shirakawa

Sachi gave permission to use online.



The towns of Niles, Mission San Jose, Centerville, Irvington, and Warm Springs were incorporated into the City of Fremont in 1956.