

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Children's Village at Manzanar Oral History Project

An Oral History with MITSURU YAMASAKI

Interviewed

By

Cathy Irwin

On January 24, 2007

OH 3592

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Mits and Mary Yamasaki, 2003.

CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

NARRATOR: MITSURU YAMASAKI

INTERVIEWER: Cathy Irwin

DATE: January 24, 2007

LOCATION: Gardena, California

PROJECT: Children's Village

CI: My name is Cathy Irwin. It is 1:10 in the afternoon on Wednesday, January 24, 2007. We are in the dining room of Mitsuru Yamasaki's home in Gardena, California. It's a beautiful, warm day in Southern California. The interview is with Mitsuru Yamasaki, a former orphan who lived at the Shonien, the Japanese Children's Home in Los Angeles, before World War II and a former internee of Rohwer camp. The interview is being conducted for the Center for Oral and Public History at California State University, Fullerton. Good afternoon, Mr. Yamasaki. Do I have permission to record this interview?

MY: Sure have! No problem.

CI: Thank you. So, what is your birthday?

MY: February 3, 1924.

CI: And where were you born?

MY: I was born in Caldwell, Idaho, but I don't remember anything about that. (laughs)  
It's what my birthday certificate says.

CI: Do you know where your family was from in Japan?

MY: They were from Hiroshima, but I guess I really wasn't that close to my dad. He put us in the Shonien—the first year he came to visit us once, and then after that, we never saw him. I was there for ten years and never saw him, so I didn't really get that close to him. So, when we went to Santa Anita, we both were in Santa Anita—he came from San Diego. I really don't know. But, one of the family friends, my mother's really good friend, saw my dad there and saw us, and said, "Hey, your dad's here!" So, for me, it was not that big a deal because I figured I didn't see him for so

- long, it didn't matter to me whether I had a father or not because it seemed like I didn't have one.
- CI: So, the last time you saw him was when you were nine years old?
- MY: Yeah.
- CI: And how old were you when you were at Santa Anita?
- MY: Eighteen.
- CI: Wow. It had been a long time. Did you have siblings who were also with you?
- MY: I had two brothers, an older one and a younger one.
- CI: What are their names?
- MY: One is Isao, and one is Hiroshi.
- CI: Okay. Were they also sent to Shonien?
- MY: Yes, they were. Hiroshi was—in Shonien, supposedly, when you get to be sixteen years old, they send you out to work in a home as a schoolboy or schoolgirl, whichever. You'd could go to work, you go to school, you come home, you got chores to do. So, you get paid a few dollars, I guess, but that's what they did. The only thing is, when my turn came, when I turned sixteen, Mrs. Matsumoto<sup>1</sup>, the one who was the superintendent at Shonien, asked me if I would stay and sort of act like an otona—an adult—and help supervise the younger kids. So, I was really fortunate that she let me stay there because I finished high school there.
- CI: So, you knew Lillian Matsumoto at the Shonien?
- MY: Oh, yeah, she came in 1935, and last time I saw her was February 1942. She has been down here [in Los Angeles] visiting every one in a while, and when she comes, she'll call me. And I'd call a few people that were in the Shonien that lived around here, and we'd get together.
- CI: So, she was there almost as long as you were there?
- MY: Almost.
- CI: So, she probably came maybe a year after you?
- MY: No, she came in 1935. I was there in 1932.

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<sup>1</sup> Lillian Matsumoto and Taeko Nagayama, O.H. 2492, Center for Oral and Public History.

CI: I see, okay. So, she came a couple years after?

MY: Yes. I sort of kept in contact with her because well, I knew when she left Children's Village, they went to Utah. So, I managed to go to Utah and went to visit them. And whenever they would come down here, I would visit them. A couple of times, we went up north and went up there with Lillian and Harry.

CI: So, you kept in touch?

MY: Yes, we had been in touch quite a bit.

CI: What was it like at the Shonien? You said that your siblings were also at the Shonien with you. What were the circumstances? Was it because of your mother—

MY: Yes, my mother was in a sanitarium. She passed away when we were there, but dad couldn't take care of us. In fact, in 1932, it was a Depression year, and he had a hard time getting work. We got locked out of the house and went to live with some friends for a while. And my mother used to go to L.A. Holiness Church. I remember that because we used to go, and the minister there found out about us, that my mother was in a sanitarium and that we were living with some friends of my mother's. He got us into the Shonien, and I guess it was the best experience of my life. I was really glad for that.

CI: Yeah. So you were already in Los Angeles?

MY: Yeah.

CI: Do you remember where you were living before the Shonien? You mentioned your mother's friends—

MY: I know we were living on 10th Street, near Central in L.A., but other than that, I really don't know too much about it.

CI: So, you and your siblings were sent to the Shonien. Do you remember where the Shonien was located at the time you were sent there?

MY: Oh, yeah, 1841 Redcliff Street in Los Angeles.

CI: So, it was already there at that location.

MY: Yeah, it's still there.

CI: Uh-huh. So, what was the area like in the thirties?

MY: Oh, the area was like an upscale neighborhood, I guess. I don't know.

CI: Were there a lot of people in the area?

MY: Yes, there was a lot of people.

CI: Were there different ethnic groups?

MY: What was that?

CI: Different ethnic groups? Were there Asians? Caucasians?

MY: No, I think there were very few Asians in that area. There were some, but not—

CI: Mostly Caucasian?

MY: Yeah, mostly Caucasian.

CI: Do you remember your first day in the area at the home? What were they like?

MY: Well, even at that young age, I was glad that I was there! We had a bed to sleep in at night, we got food, we got clothes, so I was glad that I was there, really.

CI: So, you felt like the staff really cared for you?

MY: Yeah, I did. I remember most of the ladies that took care of us from the time I was there. In fact, there were pictures that I had and I could remember—I still knew who they were. That's what seventy-something years ago!

CI: Do you remember any names?

MY: Yeah, there was a Miss Wada, there was a Miss Yoshinaga, there was a Suematsu, Miss Miyamoto, Miss Sukimoto—in fact, she's still alive. She's ninety-seven years old, and I went to see her not too long ago. But, I remember the people.

CI: How did they help you adjust or how did they care for you? How did you know that you were cared for?

MY: Well, I don't know. I guess, to me, there was never anything negative about being there. I really appreciated the fact that they took me there.

[00:10:03]

CI: Yeah. Did they get you clothes every year?

MY: Well, we always had clothes. I really don't know where they got it from, and I really don't know where Mr. Kusumoto—he's the actual originator of the whole thing. I don't know where he got all the money and stuff from, but I know it took a lot of

- money to feed all the kids and clothe them. It was amazing. He used to raise money by going to different churches. He'd take a movie projector, and the churches would sell tickets. You know, that was their way of donating. He'd take a movie projector and show a Japanese movie, and I remember going with them many a time.
- CI: Oh, really? So, you got to watch movies?
- MY: Yeah.
- CI: He brought movies or you—
- MY: They were Japanese movies, and I really didn't understand too much. (laughs)
- CI: Did they ever teach you about the Japanese culture or the language at the Shonien?
- MY: They did.
- CI: Oh, they did?
- MY: Yeah, they had a Japanese school. We used to go to Japanese school. The only thing was, we never spoke Japanese. It was always English. So, what Japanese I learned—I learned to read and write, but I couldn't understand it. I still remember some of the words.
- CI: So, one of the staff members was the teacher?
- MY: Yeah, there were different staff members that taught Japanese.
- CI: Did the other children at the home help you adjust when you first arrived?
- MY: Yeah, they were really welcoming. I never had any problems there.
- CI: What were your first impressions of the buildings?
- MY: How huge it was. As I look at it today, I realize it was really huge. And when I think about how Mr. Kusumoto accumulated all the money to build that, I think, my gosh, that was really something! Of course, he started—I guess you know the history. When they first started in nineteen-whatever, 1920, it was a two bedroom, two-story house. And they moved from here to there, and it kept getting a little bit bigger. This was the final building, but it was huge.
- CI: It was huge. So, we're looking at a picture of the Shonien from 1925, which is on Redcliff Street, and we're looking at one of the buildings. Can you tell me what these buildings are?

MY: Okay. The building was shaped like a big U. It had a hallway all the way up and down. So, you could go from—this was the sick room; it had about six beds in there.

CI: The room to the left.

MY: The next section was where the superintendent lived. Then after that was like a living room, and next to that was a girl's bedroom. They had about ten or twelve beds in there.

CI: Oh, really? So, there were ten to twelve beds in the dorms?

MY: Yes, it's like an oversized dorm, I guess. I don't know about a dorm. Then, next to that, they had a baby's room. They had about ten to twelve cribs in there. Next to that, they had what they called a second baby's room. It's actually kids that were five or six years old. They were already potty-trained, I think. Then the next section was where the boy's room was. They had about ten to twelve beds in there.

CI: So, that's where you and your brothers stayed?

MY: Yeah.

CI: Can you describe what your room was like?

MY: Yeah, it was one big, big room that had ten to twelve beds in there. They turned the lights off every night around 8:00 or 8:30, and the buzzer would ring every morning about quarter to six.

CI: Quarter to six? Wow. (laughs) And then, after you woke up, did you go straight to breakfast?

MY: No, we got up, and we had to make our bed. Everybody had a few chores to do, so from quarter to six until quarter after six, that's when you had to do those things, like sweep the hall, rake the yard, sweep the whatever. Quarter of six, we went to—they had a big playroom. It looked like an oversized gym. And we had a chapel service, just like a regular church service, in the morning.

CI: What kind of church service was it? Was it Episcopalian? Or Christian?

MY: Yeah, it was Christian. We went to congregational church later, as we got older. They would send us there. But, there were people who used to come during the week, and that service lasted for half an hour, from quarter after six to quarter to seven. Then we'd go eat breakfast. After breakfast you had to get cleaned up and things, and then get ready for school. So, we always left for school a quarter of seven or seven-thirty. Then we'd go to school. And we went to Micheltorena.

CI: Oh, you went to Micheltorena School?

MY: Then we went to Thomas Starr King.

CI: Uh-huh.

MY: Then we went to John Marshall.

CI: Oh, you went to Marshall High?

MY: So, I graduated from Marshall.

CI: So, you went to these schools—I'm going to get back to that later, but I want to get back to the schedule. Did you have to come back right after school to the home when you were at Micheltorena?

MY: Well, when I was in grammar school, yes. We'd go to school; then we'd come home. And then, we used to go to a Japanese school for class for about an hour or whatever. Then this is something a little different, but we'd come home, and we used to take a brown paper bag to school, so we'd always have to fold it up, put in in our pocket, and bring it home. So, you'd bring it home, and then when you'd go to the office and give them the bag, then you'd say, "*Todaima kaidimashita, oyatsu kudasai.*" It's like, "May I have a snack?" They'd always have a couple of pieces of those Japanese round candies that's wrapped in there.

CI: How do you say that?

MY: You say, "*Todaima kaidimashita.*" It means, "I'm home." And then, *oyatsu kudasai* means, may I have my snack?

CI: And what was the name of the Japanese candy? I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.

MY: It was sort of a round, red, a little tangy. Sometimes they're yellow or whatever. But they would always have some snacks, Sanbam candy. But, when you come home, you'd always say that.

CI: So, you would have this before Japanese school?

MY: Yeah, right after you'd come home, you'd go through the office, and you'd take your bag cause you can't afford to be buying new bags for forty, fifty people every day, so they'd use them as much as they could.

CI: Did you have or did you bring your lunch to school?

MY: Yeah.

CI: So, that was the brown paper bag?

MY: Yeah.

CI: And what did you usually bring to school? What was usually in your bag?

MY: In the lunch? We used to get a peanut butter sandwich, but I liked it because what they used to do with the peanut butter was they used to mix it with Karo. It was sweet, not sweet peanut butter. We very seldom had bologna or meat or anything, but they had butter—not butter but Oleo. I remember that we used to get white—it looked like lard—then you'd put this orange power in. You'd mix it up, and that's what makes it yellow. So, we used to have oleo, I mean butter, and lettuce. That was one sandwich. As I got older, I'd say, "Gee, I need a sandwich." I'm coming home from school or something—they would accommodate you, You just tell them what you wanted, and they'd give it to you. It was all kinds of different sandwiches that they would make. We used to get beet sandwiches. I guess you've never ate one.

[00:20:41]

CI: No. (laughs)

MY: Cooked beet with a slice—well, *I* would ask for sliced onion. I thought the food was good. I mean, I know you couldn't have all the fancy foods that a lot of the other kids used to bring, but it was adequate.

CI: So, you would have lunch at school. After lunch, you'd have more school then come back to the Shonien. Then you'd have Japanese school. Were you able to do other activities after Japanese school?

MY: Yeah, we still had time to play. And one good thing about being at the Shonien was that there was a lot of kids that you can make up different games.

CI: What were your favorite games?

MY: Well, we'd play softball. We had a basketball court. And, when it was raining, we'd have to go into the playroom, which was like an oversize gym, really big, and we'd play in there pretty much.

CI: What time was dinner?

MY: Dinner was around five o'clock.

CI: Oh, five o'clock.

MY: We ate fairly early, and then, I guess as you got older, you had quite a bit of homework to do or whatever. But, I remember when we were kids, we sure did a lot of playing. (laughs)

CI: What would you usually eat for dinner? Do you remember the types of food?

MY: Yeah, well, I remember we used to get spaghetti-like dinner. In fact, I loved the spaghetti dinner. You'd get spaghetti, and they'd put it on rice. I hate to say this, I like it better than the one my wife makes because it was so much—to me, it was more juicy. She makes it too rich. I mean, you know how much most people make it? They make noodles, and then they put the goodies on top. But this was all mixed up in one big pot. So, they used a lot of water and a lot of tomatoes, onions, whatever, put that on top of the rice. They would make stew. It didn't have much meat in it, but still it was good. I mean, I liked it. They had cooked turnips that I hated, but that was the only thing I really didn't like. The food was actually good. I mean, probably healthier than I'm eating today. I liked it.

CI: So, did you ever celebrate birthdays or special holidays? How were they celebrated?

MY: Not birthdays, but I remember Fourth of July was one of our really good holidays. This San Kwo Low restaurant in L.A. before the war. They were on First Street. I guess they're still there. They used to charter a bus, take us out to the beach, Brighton Beach, before the war. It's Terminal Island, now. They'd have a box lunch for us, and they'd bring us back and take us to the restaurant and feed us a big Chinese dinner. After that they'd take us to the Coliseum, Fourth of July, you know, the firework show?

CI: Oh, how nice.

MY: Then we'd get in a bus, and we'd go home. But I'm pretty sure that San Kwo Low paid for all that, so any time I go to A Chinese restaurant, I like to go there, if it's possible.

CI: It's the Sankoro restaurant? S-a-n-k-o-r-o?

MY: Uh-huh, yes. Spelled, S-a-n K-w-o L-o-w.

CI: Oh, *kwolow*. San Kwo Low.

MY: I know Fourth of July, they always did that. And at Christmas, there was a Japanese Christian Church, they used to have a big Christmas party for us. They'd come pick us up, take us down to the church. I think it was on 20th and San Pedro in L.A. We'd have a party there, play a few games. The girls would go there with somebody, and the boys would go with somebody. They'd tell us stories, and I still remember one of the stories, he used to tell, this Reverend Chuck Severen. But, he'd take all the boys, and he told us the story of Scarback, who was a deer. I'll never forget that story. There was a deer that a man didn't want to shoot. He just wanted to get a picture taken of it. So, he finally, they got a—I don't know where they found it, but you put a light on it, and they just sort of freeze and they took a picture. But I never forgot this reverend, Chuck Severen.

CI: And so he told the story of the deer?

MY: Yeah. I still remember him. That's seventy-some years ago. Then, the Elks Christmas time—they'd get a bunch of presents and came down to the Shonien and have a party.

CI: This is the Elks Club?

MY: Uh-huh. The Elks Club in L.A.

CI: So, they would have presents for you?

MY: Yeah, they had presents for everybody.

CI: What kinds of presents did you receive?

MY: Gee, I can't really remember. I just knew there was a lot of presents! (laughs) For everybody, boys, girls, kids. Another holiday was New Year's. There was Helms Bakery, a bakery L.A. before the war.

CI: What was it called?

MY: Helm's.

CI: Oh, yes, Helm's.

MY: H-e-l-m. They used to send over—it must have been a truckload of sweet rolls and stuff that we had for breakfast on New Year's morning. You know, little things like that, you can't forget.

CI: Yeah, that's great. So, when you were at Micheltorena School—and you said junior high was at Starr?

MY: Thomas Starr King.

CI: Thomas Starr King school. Were there a lot of children of Japanese descent at these schools?

MY: There was some, but not that many, mostly Caucasian.

CI: Mostly Caucasian. Do you remember other Asians, like Filipinos? Or Mexican?

MY: No, there was no Filipinos. I didn't see any Blacks either. There was a few Latino. There was a few—mostly Caucasian.

CI: Were most of your teachers Caucasian?

MY: Yeah?

CI: How did they treat you?

MY: Myself, I think I was treated as well as anybody.

[00:30:06]

CI: Did you like school growing up?

MY: Yeah, I really liked school.

CI: What was your favorite subject?

MY: Well, I liked math.

CI: You like math. What were your favorite activities? Did you play sports?

MY: Oh, yeah, in grammar school, I guess, it was like kickball. In junior high, we played softball, we played football, we played basketball. And at Marshall, I was really fortunate that Mrs. Matsumoto let me stay there because, after school, I could stay and I played football for Marshall High School.

CI: Did you? Wow.

MY: And if I had to go out and go to work, I couldn't do those things. That's why I really appreciated Mrs. Matsumoto who let me stay there to graduate school.

CI: So, you played football at Marshall. That must have been quite an experience!

MY: Yeah, that was really fun. I mean, I really enjoyed it.

CI: What level did you play?

CI: There was a B level team and a varsity football team.

MY: Yeah, I played two years on the B team because I was smaller. And as I got a little older, I played one year on the varsity.

CI: Oh, you did? So, you got a letter?

MY: Yeah, well, I got three letters. Two years on the B, and one on the Varsity. So, I know Mrs. Matsumoto took me down to this place called Albion Mills.

CI: Albion Mills?

MY: Albion, A-l-b-i-o-n.

CI: Uh-huh, okay.

MY: They used to make these letterman sweaters, and she took me down there to get a sweater! And I thought, Man, that's something because nobody else got one! That's sort of special. I really appreciated what she did, so I wrote her a nice letter. The other day, she was telling me, "You know, I still have that letter that you sent me."

CI: Aw, do you remember it, what you said?

MY: Oh, I just thanked her for all the things that she did for me when I was there.

CI: So, did you make a lot of friends on your football team?

MY: Oh, yeah. In fact, we had a fifty-year reunion, let's see, in 1992. A couple of guys on the team were on the committee. They found out where I lived and called me up and said, Hey, Mits, you were on the reunion committee. And I said, "No, I don't know anybody." And they said, Oh, yeah, you'll know everybody when you go to the meeting. So they tell me, "Well, you know, you were the senior class secretary. You have to be on the receiving line!" And I says, "No, I don't know anybody." (laughs) But anyway, because I played football and I had a decent grade average—you have to have a 3.4 or something to be a class officer—so I guess the nominating committee is looking at this roster, and they put my name on there with two other fellows. Well, the other two fellows are real smart and they're really brainy, but they didn't know too many people. So, I guess, they tell me that I'm senior class secretary-treasurer. I said, "No, no, I can't do nothing." Well, anyway, because of that, they insisted that I be on the reunion committee. So, it wasn't a matter of because I was an orphan that I was looked down upon. I think they treated me just like anybody else.

CI: So, the teachers and students never treated you any differently, either in the elementary school or at Marshall?

MY: Nowhere.

CI: So, you had close friends on the football team outside?

MY: Yeah, outside.

CI: Were you ever invited to your friend's house?

MY: Yeah, well, it's—I guess that's the only drawback. You know, you can't let everybody just go visit whenever they want. You can't keep track of forty kids, you know. So, I realized that. My friends, a lot of them used to ditch school, go to the beach and things like that, but I never went because—I don't know, I just knew I can't do those kinds of things. So, that was one of the drawbacks, I guess, the fact

- that you really couldn't have that many outside friends to go to visit. I just a few friends that I'd stop at the house on the way home from school and shoot pool or whatever.
- CI: Do you remember any great experiences when you were playing football?
- MY: Not really. (laughs)
- CI: You just enjoyed the game, and it seems like Shonien supported your activities.
- MY: Yeah, well that's the reason. If it wasn't for Mrs. Matsumoto, I would have never been able to do that. I'd have been out working as a schoolboy and couldn't do any of those things.
- CI: Did you ever date in high school or go to school dances?
- MY: Not really. I had to go to the senior prom because I was treasurer and had to be in the receiving line. So, there was this one Japanese girl that was senior class secretary, so I didn't really date or nothing. I just said I'd meet her there and we could sit together.
- CI: So, you had to do stuff because you were the secretary or the treasurer in high school?
- MY: Yeah.
- CI: So, you had to attend some of the functions?
- MY: Yeah, I did.
- CI: And they let you?
- MY: But see, because Mrs. Matsumoto was there, I was able to do that. Otherwise, I would have never been able to. So, I was really appreciative of what she did.
- CI: Did the staff at the Shonien set high standards or have high expectations for each child?
- MY: Not really that high. They just expected you to behave, I guess, (laughs) so to speak. They didn't want you fighting and things. I don't know. I think they were as fair as anybody.
- CI: So, if you ever did get into trouble, how did they—did they just talk to you?
- MY: Yeah, pretty much. Like myself, I never got in trouble or anything.
- CI: Did you ever hold an after-school job?

MY: No, not really.

CI: And you mentioned, as you got older, you cared for the younger orphans?

MY: Well, you know, every once in awhile, the younger kids would play, and I'd sort of referee, like a few things, but not really a big deal. They knew I was older, so they weren't going to be arguing with me. It was fun doing that.

CI: Did you ever serve as a mentor or help out a younger child?

MY: No, I don't think I did. I befriended a few kids that were picked on I thought. One of the kids, in particular, was a Japanese kid that came from Japan. He lost his folks. He could hardly speak any English. I know a couple of the kids used to pick on him, so I got after them. In fact, I had a fight with one of them, and, since I was much bigger, they had no chance. But, I guess, if he were here, he'd probably say, "Yeah, Mits saved my life," (laughs) so to speak, because they were picking on him all the time. Finally, I couldn't stand it anymore. He came up to me and asked, "Sam picked on me. He beat me up." I went, approached him, and had a few words, and that was that. He never was bothered again.

[00:40:19]

CI: So, how did living at Shonien, being an orphan, affect you? Did it affect your attitude or goals in life?

MY: No. Well, as far as affecting me, the only thing was—I guess when I was going to school, I always figured, I'd like to go to college or I'd like to do something else. But, it never materialized because, right after school, we got evacuated, went to Rohwer. Then, when we left Rohwer, I had nobody to support me. I had to support myself, so I had to go to work. But, that's still not really an excuse. I guess I could have, if I really wanted to. It's just, at that time, work was pretty important.

CI: At the time, when the war broke out, when you found out about Pearl Harbor, you were still in high school?

MY: Yeah, I was still in. I graduated in February 1942. The war started December seventh. And then, I went to school, and there was no problem. I really didn't have any problems just because I was Japanese.

CI: How did you hear about the attack?

MY: I don't know, I guess it must have been on the radio. They had a radio that we had on every once in a while.

CI: What was your reaction?

MY: I thought, How stupid can they be? I mean, you know, a country like the U.S., and they're going to attack us? It really hit me in that way, you know, that, gee, how stupid can they be?

CI: How did it change your life? Did life at the Shonien change after the bombing?

MY: No, not really. I wasn't there too much longer after that. I was there a couple of months, but life went on pretty much as usual. They were waiting to get evacuated. See, after I graduated high school, I was talking to Mrs. Matsumoto, and she told me, "You know, why don't you—you don't know how long it's going to be before you evacuate, because you now you're going to have to go." I joined the CCC.

CI: What is the CCC?

MY: Civilian Conservation Corps. It's a federal government—you know, they work on the forest trails and little dams and so forth in the mountains. I joined that, but then, when it came time to evacuate, I had to leave. So, I was there for a few months.

CI: Before the evacuation, did you feel people's attitudes towards you and other people of Japanese ancestry change?

MY: Not really. I guess I never really had too much contact with Caucasians after that.

CI: Do you remember anyone losing their job because of their ethnicity at the time?

MY: There may have been, but I didn't know anybody. I guess I was too young.

CI: Were you aware, at the time, of restrictions such as curfews imposed on Japanese Americans?

MY: Yeah, pretty much. I mean, we couldn't go out anyway. We never went out when we were at Shonien. But even when we left, when I left, once we got into where we were going to evacuate, there were some \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible), and we would never go out anyway.

CI: Were you able to take everything with you when you evacuated? What did you do with your prized mementos or things?

MY: I don't know, I didn't have too much really.

CI: So, if you had anything, you could take it with you?

MY: Yeah, whatever little clothes I had.

CI: Was the Shonien ever searched or visited by the FBI? Do you remember?

MY: Yeah, Mr. Kusumoto was—you know, the night of December seventh they came and picked up Mr. Kusumoto. I thought, Man, that's the dumbest thing you can do. Here he's trying to make a home for orphans and helping people like me, and they picked him up in the middle of the morning and took him. I never saw him after that.

CI: Do you remember any staff besides Mr. Kusumoto taken?

MY: No.

CI: Do you know where Mr. Kusumoto was taken?

MY: I'm not positive, but I heard he was taken to New Mexico. I don't know—I forgot—but it seemed to be somewhere like that.

CI: How did this affect you seeing—

MY: Well, not really. I didn't really have too much contact with Mr. Kusumoto personally. When I'd see him, I'd say, "Good morning and whatever," but he was pretty much—I guess he must have just been bust raising money I think. You know, in Shonien, they had a senior board of directors. I guess, what he did is he got a lot of older, influential Japanese people, like Mr. Fukui, of Fukui Mortuary. Reverend Yamasaki, the senior pastor at St. Mary's. Mr. Tsuchiya, he was very influential in Glendale. I guess he got all them people together and got them on a board of directors. They had ways and means of raising money for Shonien. Later, as they got older, then they had a Nisei board of directors, a younger group, like Mrs. Matsumoto, Harry Matsumoto, Dr. Ishimaru, Nobuji Kawai, Mrs. Ando. I just remember them. Mr. Tayama, Fred Tayama. They were very influential in the Japanese community. I guess that's one of the ways that they could raise money for them.

CI: So, he was really good with fundraising and working—

MY: I think that was, to me, that must have been because they were very influential people.

CI: Did you have any contact with Harry Matsumoto or more so with Lillian?

MY: Well, he was like one of the otonas at Shonien before he came later. It must have been the later thirties. But, he was really good to us, too. He'd take us out. He had his own car. I remember he had a '35 Ford, and he used to take us to the beach and take us to the mountains. He'd take us different places.

CI: Which mountains? Do you remember?

MY: Yeah, I remember, he took us to Mount Baldy one time, and it snowed. And here, I've never been to the snow. Took a few inner tubes and what not, and I thought,

Gee, that was great. He was really good that way. I guess he must have realized that we never got a chance to get out, so he would find his own thing for four or five of us older kids, put them in his car, and away we'd go. But, I'd never forget that because it was one of the few times, when we could do those things.

CI: So you did not go to Children's Village with the other orphans?

MY: No, I did not go. That's why, you know, that meeting that they had? The reason I went was to see Mrs. Matsumoto. I mean, I had heard about Children's Village, and I knew some of the kids that went there from the Shonien because I guess they had nowhere to go, some of them that were a little younger. And they weren't old enough to go out on their own, so they went with the Shonien to Children's Village. So I knew a few of them, and I knew a few of the *otonas*, the workers, that went with them.

[00:50:19]

CI: So, were your siblings also able to stay at Shonien? You mentioned—

MY: The older one had to go out. He went off to work. And when I saw that, I thought, Gee, that's tough. That's really horrible. Because I knew he used to like to play basketball and things, and he couldn't stay after school to play.

CI: Do you know what kind of work he did?

MY: I guess work around the house. He was in a home in Beverly Hills, and he'd have to do some chores in the morning before he went to school. Then, after he came home, he had chores to do. So, he couldn't stay after school and play basketball, associate with any of the other kids.

CI: This is your older brother?

MY: Yeah, my older brother.

CI: So, how did you hear about Executive Order 9066? Do you remember when you realized that you had to evacuate?

MY: Well, we had to evacuate. I guess when you're eighteen, you don't realized a lot of the things that—I don't have anything, I'm not going to lose anything. It's not like some of the older people that had so much to lose. I could imagine what happened, but I never really felt it because I didn't have nothing to lose. All I had was the clothes on my back and whatever. I had very little.

CI: Were you and your siblings able to talk about this? About what was going to happen?

MY: Well, we knew that we were going to have to evacuate, so me and my two brothers, we decided, well, we'd go evacuate with this one family that—their boys and daughter were in the Shonien, so we evacuated with them. That's why we went with the family.

CI: Do you remember the family name?

MY: Yeah, they were the Fujikawa's. They had an older brother named Yukio. He was farming in Hollydale, so that's why we left from Hollydale.

CI: How much time did you and your brothers have before you had to report?

MY: Well, it must have been a week or so, a couple of weeks, maybe. Because when they found out that I had to evacuate—you know, I couldn't stay on the coast—I was discharged from the CCC. So then, I went to stay with Yukio and his family. He went and picked up—he had a younger brother and two sisters that was in the Shonien. Two boys and two girls in the Shonien. He was much older.

CI: So, you worked with the CCC for how long?

MY: February, March, we evacuated in April, so a couple of months.

CI: And what did you do?

MY: Oh, go out and fix trails, little dams on the river, things like that.

CI: So, when you realized you had to report for relocation, you had to stop that?

MY: Yes, I had to stop that.

CI: And then, you were with the Fujikawas in Hollydale. Where's Hollydale?

MY: Near Compton.

CI: Oh, really?

MY: Yeah, it's just on the other side of Compton. In fact, maybe it was called Compton before.

CI: So, you went with this family. What kind of belongings—you just had clothes that you took?

MY: That's it.

CI: Was anything stored?

MY: No, we didn't have anything.

CI: So then, you went with the family. Do you have an experience of going with the family—where did you go?

MY: We got on a bus and went to Santa Anita. And when we got there, we were assigned a stable area.

CI: So, you got on a bus from Compton or Hollydale?

MY: I don't remember exactly where, but I remember we got on a bus and got bused to Santa Anita. When we got there, there were the Fujikawas in one stable, and we were in the next one.

CI: Wow. How long were you there?

MY: We were there six months. You know, the stable area has got walls, and it goes up to the—you know how they got the angles on the roof? Well, it's open up there. So you could hear everything that goes on next door. But, it was fairly clean. It wasn't—I guess it was smelly, but we were issued straw mattresses.

CI: Just straw.

MY: It had a cover over it. It's about the only thing I remember there. We were assigned a certain area to go eat. They had different mess, so we used to go eat. I guess it's set up pretty much like an Army camp.

CI: How many people were in a room?

MY: Well, there was three of us in a room, myself and two brothers. And since we were all boys, a couple of kids that were in the Shonien, they came and lived with us, just brought a mattress. There was nothing but beds on the floor. You had no room to do anything. We didn't have anything anyway.

CI: How did you feel about being at Santa Anita?

MY: Well, I guess you're too young to really realize where you were, so it didn't really affect me like it did a lot of the older people I think. I had a place to sleep. I had a mess hall to go eat. Of course, I couldn't do too much else.

CI: Was there anything else to do at Santa Anita other than stay at the barracks?

MY: Well, they had camouflage nets that they used to make there. They had a big—like a net and people would run these strips through the net and make like a camouflage net. Well, there was a few girls that we used to go visit. (laughs) That's about all I can remember! I still see one of them. In fact, she married a good friend of ours. He had

passed away, but then we had our fiftieth wedding anniversary, so she had come. And they had a picture, a big picture, and they wanted everybody to write a few things. She wrote on there, *Never in my whole life did I dream I would see you fifty years later at your wedding anniversary.* (laughs) It was sort of cute because we used to go visit when she was working on the net. It was really my friend that liked her, but since he wanted to go, I'd go. I was never really that interested in women when I was younger. I figured later there would be time for it, but not now. So, I had been out with different girls and things, but I never got serious until I got married.

[01:00:08]

CI: And how did you meet your wife?

MY: She was in Colorado. Their whole family evacuated to Colorado. Well, one of my friends that was in Rohwer, he went to Colorado, and he was on this farm working for these people. He knew my wife before the war. So, I went to visit him in Colorado, and he got us together. We went dancing at the Y. We went up to the snow, but I sort of kept in contact with her because right after that I had to go into the Army. So, I went into the service, and I'd write her a letter every now and then. And I went to Japan. Then I came back, and I still kept in contact with her. Then, when they came out from Colorado, they came back to California. Then I sort of resumed the friendship, and after that we got married.

CI: What year was this?

MY: Well, this was—we got married in 1950.

CI: And your wife's name is?

MY: Mary.

CI: And do you have any children?

MY: Two boys.

CI: Two boys. And what are their names?

MY: Glen and Bruce.

CI: And you have grandchildren?

MY: Four of them. The oldest one is twenty-four.

CI: What are their names?

MY: Brian, Shelly, Kyle, and Stacy. The oldest is twenty-four; he'll be twenty-five. The youngest is Stacy. The oldest one graduated from SC. He's out working on his own now. The other three are still going to school. Two of them, one is going to UC Riverside, one goes to San Diego State, the other one goes to USF, San Francisco.

CI: So they're all in college.

MY: Yeah, they're all in college.

CI: So, they're between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two?

MY: Yeah, they'll be twenty-two this year.

CI: Where were we? Were you and your siblings ever separated during evacuation?

MY: We were together in Santa Anita. We were together in Rohwer. Then after that, we'd get separated most of the time. My youngest brother, when he came out of the service, he came and stayed with us. My older brother was married, and I had gotten married. But, my younger brother, when he came out of the service, he came and stayed with us.

CI: And where were you at the time?

MY: We were in Los Angeles.

CI: So, you were able to come back to Los Angeles? So, you weren't separated during evacuation?

MY: No.

CI: You were all sent to the same assembly camp?

MY: And to Rohwer.

CI: Do you remember your family number?

MY: Not really. I remember the block, but I don't remember the number, Block 16 at Rohwer.

CI: Oh, Block 16. You went to assembly center first, and you were there for six months.

MY: And then, I went to Rohwer, and I was there for about six months.

CI: When did you arrive in camp? Do you remember?

MY: No.

CI: Was it in the fall? Was it cold?

MY: It was pretty much in the fall and winter because it got pretty cold there. Even in Arkansas, I remember it snowed there. So, it was pretty cold.

CI: You weren't used to the weather?

MY: No, not really.

CI: Did you have the clothing?

MY: Yeah, they issued us peacoats. We had a big pot-bellied stove in our room, so we put that on and it made the room almost too hot.

CI: How many people per room? Was it just the three of you?

MY: Well, there was three of us, but we built bunks for three others. Three of my friends that were living with their folks, I guess wanted to become bachelors, so they moved in with us. So, we built bunks.

CI: Made out of pieces of wood?

MY: Yeah, just wood. I don't know where we got it, but we made bunks. And we had six of us staying in one little room.

CI: Did you have to take any vaccinations?

MY: No, not that I remember.

CI: So, your first day and night at camp was really cold.

MY: Pretty much.

CI: Do you remember the food you were given when you first arrived?

MY: Yeah, the food, I guess, was edible. (laughs) I ate it.

CI: (laughs) Do you remember your neighbors?

MY: Yeah, some of them because right across—you know we were in one barrack, they were in another. One of the boys was about the age of my younger brother, so he was over all the time. And a couple doors down, there was another friend. I still see him every now and then.

CI: Did anyone that you knew from the Shonien go to Rohwer?

MY: Yeah, there's the family that I mentioned.

CI: So, they went to Rohwer also? Did they stay—

MY: Yeah, we were in the next room. Same barracks, but they were in a different room.

CI: Were you able to stay in contact with your friends who went to other camps?

MY: Yes, just a few that I sort of kept in contact with. Every once in a while before, not now, because most of them have passed away. \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) There's a few of us who still get together. The *otonas* that used to be there, a couple of years ago, when we'd get together, I'd call them up and go pick them up, bring them over, and we'd sort of have a small reunion. There were people like Ms. Kaneko who used to work there; she came by herself. Ms. Naguchi used to work there and, you know, one of my friends might have to go pick her up there and take them over here. I'd sit them on the sofa and then my brother and anyone else who wants to come in and I'd say, "Who's that?" And once they started talking, they knew who they were. And that was over sixty years ago.

CI: Having lived at Shonien, do you think it prepared you in any way for camp life?

MY: It made camp life—it's not like I was living in a time, a regular residential home. I guess I'm used to this sort of regimentation life. I think it affected me less than other people.

CI: What was the typical—you said there was regimentation at camp?

MY: Well, you know, like at Shonien, you have certain times to go to bed, certain times to eat, certain times to do chores. There are certain times that you have to do things. In Rohwer, you're much freer, but you still go eat at a certain time. If you have a job, go to the job. It didn't affect me that much, I don't think.

[01:10:30]

CI: Do you feel like there was camaraderie among the people there?

MY: Oh, yeah, I had a lot of friends in Rohwer. I met a few of the friends that I still keep in contact with. We've been friends from the time that we were in Rohwer. So, I still contact them. I'm still in contact with them. One of them is in Colorado. When he comes out, he still stops over here. He's got a couple of sisters and a brother, and so when he comes to visit, he'll always stop in here, and we'll go out to dinner. I have this other friend who is in Wisconsin. When his brother passed away and he came out last year—and I was really close to both of them.

CI: So, you were in Barrack 16. Did you ever move to another barrack or block?

MY: No.

CI: You stayed there. Do you think that camp life brings your brothers and you closer together? Or did it—

MY: Oh, I think it did because before that, like when we were in Shonien, I was older. My older brother was out working. He'd come visit every once in awhile. And my youngest brother was left there. But, when we went to camp, you know, we were in one room. We have to live together. I don't know, maybe it did get us closer together

CI: Did you talk about what your goals would be after you left camp or did you ever talk about those things with your brother?

MY: I really don't remember much about that. Just what we were going to do when we get out—where were we going to go to work because we know that we don't have anyone else to care for us, so we have to go out and find a job, make a living.

CI: That was your big thing.

MY: Yeah, I think that was our big thing more than anything.

CI: Did you work when you were in the camp?

MY: Yeah, I was a fireman.

CI: *You were a fireman?*

MY: But, I didn't do anything!

CI: Oh, you didn't do anything?

MY: All I did was go over there and play cards! (laughs)

CI: So, you never had to put out a fire.

MY: No. Well they did have one, but I was off!

CI: Did you train to be a fireman? Did they train you?

MY: Oh, a little bit. We had a fire truck, and we grabbed the hose and wind it up on the track. About the only thing we did was clean the truck every once in a while.

CI: Was there a little firehouse?

MY: Yeah, we had a little small one.

CI: Did you attend school at camp at any time?

MY: No. My brother the youngest brother did. But see, I had graduated from high school already.

CI: Did you ever come into contact with any military patrol or \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) while you were at Rohwer?

MY: Not that I know. We used to go off every once in a while, sneak out. We went out, and we'd go out to a place that looked like a swimming hole. We'd go there and go swimming and what not. I don't remember having to sneak out past—

CI: So, you said the food was palatable in the mess hall.

MY: Yeah. I mean, I didn't have any problem.

CI: Did you have to wait in line?

MY: I didn't. When we went, we'd pretty much go up and get it.

CI: Did you eat with your brothers?

MY: Most of the time I used to eat with my friends. They would eat with their friends. My kid brother mostly had quite a few friends \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible).

CI: Did you ever go to another mess hall to eat?

MY: Oh, yeah.

CI: So, what did you enjoy doing at the camp? Were there any activities that you really enjoyed?

MY: Yeah, well, I guess my social life improved there. (laughs) Because these friends that I had, they had formed a club called Hawthorne and Wige.

CI: Hapa?

MY: Hawthorne.

CI: Oh, Hawthorne and Wige.

MY: Anyways, I joined that club, so it did have socials with other girls' clubs. So, myself, I never really had much interest in girls because—I don't know, I just never really had the opportunity to take them out. But, we'd go to dances and do things together.

CI: So, they had a little auditorium?

- MY: Yeah, they had different playrooms in different blocks. It's like an empty barrack, and I guess you could make reservations for it or whenever. But we used to invite different girls' clubs. We had socials. So, I guess I met quite a few girls that way because I'm not one to go out and talk to girls.
- CI: So, you and you friends created one club? Were there a lot of clubs that were developing?
- MY: I remember four or five different boys clubs. They had basketball teams and so forth. There was a few other clubs there. Then there was a few girls' clubs.
- CI: Do you remember the names?
- MY: I don't. I know some of the girls that I met, but, other than that, I don't remember any of the names.
- CI: Was there any person or thing or activity that made camp bearable? Was there anything that really helped you get through camp?
- MY: Well, you now, when I was in Shonien, I guessed they instilled the fact that church was a big part of life, and it still is. I was able to continue that. I still do, but that was the one of the few things that I like in camp because we could go to a Sunday service.
- CI: Which service did you go to?
- MY: We went to a—well, we were raised Christian. My mother was Christian. We went to Shonien, and it was all Christian. So, when I got married, my wife is Buddhist. But, I guess she wasn't that strong a Buddhist compared to me being a Christian because I wasn't about to go to Buddhist church!
- CI: So, when you were at camp, you went to Christian services on Sundays?
- MY: Yeah.
- CI: Was it run by Japanese?
- MY: Yeah, they were run by different ministers.
- CI: Do you know what affiliation? Was it a congregational Christian—
- MY: Well, I don't know. I guess you can't call it any special—
- CI: Denomination.
- MY: Yeah. Because one minister was a Baptist, but there was another minister that wasn't. So, I think it was not essentially a denominational church.

CI: Did you play sports when you were at camp?

MY: We played a little bit, but not really that much.

CI: What did you dislike the most?

MY: Dislike the most? I don't know, I really didn't dislike it that much. I guess I was too young to realize that we were interned. I was able to eat and I thought, Gee, this is really a big thing though because now I'm going out on my own. Now I'm really going to be on my own because I have nobody to depend on. So, we went to Chicago and found work.

[01:20:23]

CI: So, as you were thinking about, what am I going to do, what kind of job am I going to have, did you have any idea about what kind of job you would get after camp?

MY: No, not really.

CI: You just decided, I'm going to Chicago?

MY: Well, yeah, we went to Chicago. Actually, Des Plains, Illinois.

CI: Oh, okay.

MY: Des Plains is about fifteen, twenty miles from Chicago. We had work there in this place called Premier Rose Garden. They grew roses for the market, greenhouses, and they had about ten, twelve green houses. And there was, I guess, four of us that went. So, two of us would work with one manager of the greenhouse, and the two with different.

CI: What was the company called?

MY: Premier.

CI: P-r-e-m-i-e-r?

MY: Yeah, Premier Rose Garden; they grew roses.

CI: Did you grow roses or garden in the camp?

MY: No, not really. We just went there and they told us what to do and that's what we did. I mean, most of the time—later, they would let us cut the roses, but first you just—well, they wanted roses to grow long stemmed, so what they would do was when it was really young, they'd pinch the top off and it would push it aside and it would grow up longer. So, you have a long stem. It's what they call pinching back. You

pinch the head off. The bud is cut before it really got to be a bud. Pinch it off and it would come out another six to eight inches longer.

CI: So, you learned this—

MY: Yeah, you learned that there. But they would teach you that. Then we did a lot of syringing they called it. It's like a spray from the bottom, give you a nozzle, it would shoot a spray up in the air and it would wash all the bulbs in the bottom of the leaf. They call that syringing. So, we did that. We put manure in the beds. There was cement and all that. And we'd water. That was pretty much what we did. We were there for about a year, but after that, my friends went to Chicago, and we figured we could make more money in a different job.

CI: So, you were at the Premier Rose Garden—

MY: For about a year.

CI: A year after you left—

MY: Rohwer.

CI: And when you left Rohwer, did they give you any money?

MY: No.

CI: You just left?

MY: Yeah. Well, when we was working as fireman, I guess we got a few dollars. I think they gave you, I don't know, \$6 a month or whatever.

CI: When you were a fireman they paid you how much?

MY: Something like \$6 or \$10 or whatever. A few dollars.

CI: A month?

MY: Yeah. Well, of course, we didn't really need any money.

CI: How many days or hours a week did you work?

MY: Just like a regular workweek.

CI: Forty hours?

MY: Yeah, pretty much. We'd go in—depending on what shift you had. Sometimes we'd sleep there. But mostly when you were there, and you were there during the week, you were playing cards and watching TV or whatever. So, it wasn't really work.

CI: It wasn't really work. It was playing cards! (laughs) So, before you left to go to Premier Rose Garden and you were still at Rohwer, did you ever have to fill out the loyalty questionnaire?

MY: Yeah, we filled it out. I don't remember too much about it, but I think I put yes, yes.

CI: Yes, yes. Did you ever get drafted?

MY: Yeah, when I was in Chicago. I was there for about a couple of years, I guess, because I was drafted in 1945.

CI: Oh, you were drafted in 1945?

MY: And I went into the service, and I came out late '46, early '47. A couple of years—

CI: So, when did you leave Rohwer? What year? Do you remember?

MY: About '43.

CI: So, you left a little bit early.

MY: Yeah. See I was only there for about six months, and we left.

CI: Okay, because you were able to find work?

MY: Yeah.

CI: So, you found work before you left?

MY: Uh-huh. Yeah, they had a job for us, and that's why we went to Des Plains because that's where the—they had us already signed up with them.

CI: Did your brothers go with you?

MY: No, I went by myself.

CI: You went after six months?

MY: Yeah.

CI: Did your brothers stay in the camp?

MY: They stayed in the camp. My oldest brother got drafted. Well, actually volunteered for the service, and he went to the Army. He was in Mississippi. But he was drafted, and later, he got sent to Germany. My younger brother came out later. He was pretty much—well, there were three other fellows that was living with him. So, when he got out of school, he left and came up. He stopped in Chicago, but him and his friends went to work in Milwaukee.

CI: So, you were already in Chicago in, I guess, '44?

MY: Yeah.

CI: After you left Des Plains?

MY: Uh-huh.

CI: And then in Chicago, what type of work did you do?

MY: I worked at an Illinois meatpacking.

CI: What did you do in the meatpacking business?

MY: All kinds of work, but we weren't there too long. We got terminated because—see, they used to sell meat to the Army station in Illinois and they didn't want *tainted meat*, so to speak. You know, Japanese people working in a meat factory. They didn't want us to work there. So, we had to get a clearance or something. So, we got laid off, but then, later I went to work for National Tea.

CI: National Tea?

MY: Yeah, it's like a Safeway out here. They were a big chain market.

CI: National Tea, just the tea?

MY: T-e-a.

CI: Oh, National Tea!

MY: National Tea Company. It's like a Safeway. And I worked in the warehouse there, you know, different stores would order certain things and so, if they'd give you an order, you'd take a cart, and pick up all the vegetables. We'd put the vegetables in the warehouse picking up the orders and so forth. Then after that, I was drafted into the service.

CI: How did you feel when you were drafted?

MY: I don't know, it was part of my duty. If you have to go, you have to go. Not that I really didn't want to go, you know. I wasn't going to volunteer, but if they drafted me, I was going.

CI: So, you were drafted in 1945?

MY: Uh-huh.

CI: Was the war still going on?

[01:19:41]

MY: Yeah, it was still going on, but right after I got through basic training, I was in Texas for my basic training. They were sending me to Fort Snelling. That was an interpreter school, you know, to learn Japanese and to be an interpreter. Since I had a Japanese surname, they figured I was Japanese, and I would know, but I knew less than you. I knew very little. I couldn't converse in Japanese, so to speak. I knew some words, but I couldn't really converse. So, you know, when you went there, they would give you all these different interviews, and they found out I couldn't speak Japanese. Then after being there for a while, they went sent me to CIC School—Counterintelligence Corps. I went to Japan as a CIC agent, but I never had to speak Japanese. I never had—so they sent me to CIC School. Well, when I got to Japan, they wanted me to sign a waiver saying that I would stay for another year because, by the time I got to Japan, I had been in the service for one year and two or three months, and they were already discharging veterans that were in the service for eighteen months. So, they wanted me to sign a waiver, and I said, "No, I'm not going to sign nothing." So, they kicked me out and sent me to a MP outfit.

CI: Really?

MY: In Yokohama.

CI: Really, so you went to Japan.

MY: Yeah. And I thought, Gee, as long as I'm here, I might as well stay awhile, but I didn't want to work in an MP outfit. So, I went to the CID, which is the criminal investigation department. I could type because of high school. \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible)

CI: So, you were a company clerk? How long?

MY: I was there for about a year or so. I thought, Gee, I might as well stay there for a little bit longer. So, I started there as a private and put me as a PFC. Next thing, corporal rank. After that he gave me a sergeant. And after that, he gave me staff sergeant. And then, we had to leave. He had to go back to the States. He asked me if I had any relatives in Japan. I didn't know anything. I knew my folks were from Hiroshima, but other than that, I didn't want to look for them. Where you going to start? You

could go to California, but it's like, I didn't know anything. All I knew was my mother's maiden name.

CI: What was your mother's maiden name?

MY: Funagura, F-u-n-a-g-u-r-a. First name is Haruko. Other than that, I didn't know anything. So, see like, after I got married, I used to send my dad letters. Mary used to send him Father's Day gifts, Christmas presents, write letters about how the kids are doing. She'd call him and tell him to come out and visit. It was a long time before I got in contact with my dad. We got together in Santa Anita. Then he went to Arizona, and I guess he wanted to get together in Santa Anita. I told him, "Well, no. It's all right, but I really didn't care because he didn't care about me when I was young." Other single mothers and fathers and brothers, all of them—somebody would come and visit the kids, maybe about once a month or once every other. You know, they'd come. My dad never came, so I lost all respect for him and everything. So, when we got together, I was pretty much indifferent. I really want a good son, so to speak. Anyway, he went to Arizona. Well, as fate would have it, from Des Plains, I went to Chicago. He came from Arizona to Chicago. We were living in the same hotel. One day, I'm going to work, west, and he's going to work downtown. He was like a maître d. He spoke English very well. When I saw him, I said, "Dad!" I got off and went to talk to him. And I said, "When I get off at nine o' clock, I'll come down and visit." I went to work and came back and went down, he was gone. He didn't want to see me because we sort of rejected him at camp. So, instead of seeing him, I went down there, and he has checked out and gone to New York. I don't know where he went, but I figure, oh, well. He doesn't want us. I guess we really don't need him. After many years, my wife finally got him to come out here, so we did sort of reconcile. You know, I accepted him as a father and he'd come visit, stay with us. I guess he really enjoyed it because he used to come out and stay for a couple of weeks.

CI: Oh, really?

MY: Yeah, stay with us. Kids, by then, were really pretty grown, so wherever he wanted to go, we'd take him.

CI: Do you remember, was it in the 1960s or 1970s that your father started coming?

MY: Oh, he came out about '60, '61. But before that, he came about 1956, '57.

CI: So your kids were older?

MY: Yeah, they were three or four years old. So, I said, "Dad, why don't you stay out here?" I fell like I'm doing pretty well. I have a good job. I'm making enough money. I have a house." But I said, "My two brothers, they're having a pretty tough time. They don't have their own place. You know, you can come and still help him. It's not too late." \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible) They went to live with my aunt in San

Francisco, but I never really knew them. I didn't know my dad had a sister, so I got to know her. She would come out. Meanwhile, my dad would come out.

CI: So, did becoming a father change you? How did it affect you? Did that affect your relationship with your father?

MY: Yes, after that—<sup>2</sup>

END OF INTERVIEW

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<sup>2</sup> Audio recording is distorted for the remainder of the interview.