

LIFE IN CAMP:
THREE DIFFERENT VIEWS

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Asians in America
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December 12, 1974

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BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MASUKAWA FAMILY

The parents of the three interviewees were Tomosuke and Koyuta ^(Miyoren) Masukawa. Both were born in Hiroshima, Japan and of Issei ancestry.

The childhood of Tomosuke Masukawa is unknown due to the fact that his children cannot recall such events and Mr. Masukawa is deceased. History since arrival to the United States is known, however.

Mr. Masukawa arrived at Tacoma, Washington in 1898. He worked on the Santa Fe Railroad and also in the coal mines in Montana. Later, he farmed at various places and ended up in Fresno. He later moved to Los Angeles and opened up a pool hall on First Street with a partner. Then he went back to farming in the strawberry fields in Gardena, Moneta, Torrance, Harbor City, and Long Beach.

During this time, a picture bride was sent to him in 1909. Koyuta arrived in Seattle aboard the Seattle Maru. In Moneta, Tsutomu (1911), Mas (1913), "H" (1915), Sakaye (1917) and Fred (1920) were born. Mitsuko (1923) was born in Torrance and John (1925) and Bob (1927) were born in Harbor City.

While in Long Beach, the news of Pearl Harbor reached the Masukawa family. Due to the illness of Koyuta, Tsutomu felt it wise to evacuate to Reedley instead of Santa Anita. They lived in a shack in the middle of a field for five months until they received orders to evacuate to Poston. (Sakaye was married and evacuated to Santa Anita .)

In Poston, Tsutomu worked as a dishwasher in the kitchen. Koyuta did not work because of her weak condition and also because her duty was to her family.

After the war, the family moved to Glendale, Arizona and later to Harbor City where they stayed. The children are all married today and living in various parts of California. Both Tsutomu and Koyuta stayed in Harbor City until their deaths.

BRIEF HISTORY OF MITSUKO MITZI NAOHARA

Mitsuko Mitzi Naohara was born on March 16, 1923 in Torrance, California. She is the third youngest of eight children and was brought into this world by a midwife.

Her childhood was spent in Harbor City where she attended Harbor City Elementary School for one year. The family then moved to Long Beach where she attended Garfield Grammar School until the fifth grade and then Dominguez Elementary School until the eighth grade. She attended High School at Banning High and graduated in 1941. After graduation, she went to a sewing school in Los Angeles until Pearl Harbor broke out.

Upon hearing the news of Pearl Harbor, the family evacuated to Reedley and from there, they were given orders to evacuate to Poston, Arizona. While in camp, Mitsuko worked in the school as a pre-school teacher and also attended classes on her own. After camp, the family moved to Glendale, Arizona and Mitsuko went to Chicago to meet her husband-to-be, George Nobuo Naohara. They were married in 1945 and have two children aged 25 and 19. They are both barbers and have been living in Gardena since 1958.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SAKAYE SALLY SASAKI

Sakaye Sally Sasaki was born in Moneta, California in 1917 on July 26th. She is the fourth oldest of eight children and the second daughter of three girls in the Masukawa family.

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Her childhood was spent in Moneta where she attended Harbor City Grammar School and when the family moved to Carson, she attended Carson Grammar School. Her High School years were spent at Banning High.

At the age of 21, Sakaye married Hiromi Sasaki in 1938 and they settled in the Torrance area. They had their first child, Amy, in 1939.

When the news of Pearl Harbor broke out in 1941, the Sasaki family evacuated to the Santa Anita Race Tracks. They lived there until they were evacuated to Jerome, Arizona where they were placed in the relocation camps. During camp, Sakaye worked in the mess hall as a waitress. Their second daughter, Sachi, was also born.

After camp, the Sasaki family moved to Harbor City and farmed for awhile. Later, they moved to Torrance where they are presently living today. Both daughters have married since.

BRIEF HISTORY OF TSUTOMU TOM MASUKAWA

Tsutomu Tom Masukawa is the first son and child born to to Masukawa family. Born in Moneta, California on October 10, 1911, Tsutomu spent his first eight years of his childhood in the Moneta area. He attended Moneta Grammar School for eight years, Carson Street Grammar School for three years, Lincoln Grammar School for three years and Harbor City Elementary School for three years. He attended Narbonne High School and also graduated from there.

In 1936, Tsutomu married Yuki Yokota . They had two children before the war broke out. Their first child, Kay, was born in Long Beach and their second child, June, was born in Terminal Island.

In 1942, when the family heard the news of Pearl Harbor, Tsutomu, his family, and also his parents and family, voluntarily moved to Reedley where they lived for five months. Upon receiving notice to evacuate to Poston, Arizona, the entire family left Reedley by train to Poston. During camp, Tsutomu worked as a mechanic. Also, their third child, Joe, was born during camp.

After the war was over, the Masukawa family moved to Glendale, Arizona where they farmed for a year. Then, they moved to Harbor City where Tsutomu worked in a garage for a year. They have been living there since. Their children have married and all have families.

INTERVIEW I: MRS. MITSUKO MITZI (MASUKAWA) NAOHARA

- 00:00 Name
- 00:10 Where and when born
- 00:20 Where raised
- 00:35 Schools attended
- 01:05 Racial breakdown of High School
- 01:45 Any discrimination felt in High School
- 01:50 First hears about Pearl Harbor
- 02:30 Feelings toward it
- 03:06 Prejudice felt in Los Angeles
- 04:05 Evacuation to Reedley
- 04:27 Life in Reedley
- 05:10 Notice of evacuation
- 05:45 Reedley to Poston
- 05:55 Transportation to Poston
- 06:30 Appearance of Poston
- 06:55 Salt pills and pregnancy
- 07:20 Assigned sleeping quarters
- 07:55 Labor work: Mess hall duties
- 08:35 Worker in the school
- 09:20 Wages
- 09:35 Types of food in camp
- 10:46 Clothing
- 11:40 Catalogues
- 11:55 Recreation
- 13:00 Benefits of camp in the area of the Japanese culture
- 13:25 Popular recreational activities
- 14:45 Social activities
- 15:00 Treatment by the Caucasians--contact with them in schools
- 16:00 Teachers--Miss Hemingway
- 16:55 Treatment of official vs. camp member--discrimination felt

- 18:27 Discussion of Japanese families--rich vs. poor
19:42 Annual events held
20:45 Feelings toward Kibei as a Nisei
22:25 Riots and gang fights, suicide
23:15 Camp as a good experience
24:40 Feelings toward the White American now
25:55 Self improvement in camp
26:50 Obtaining goods for pre-school children
28:20 Adjustment to life after camp--experience on a train
30:35 Conclusion by interviewee.

EVALUATION OF INTERVIEW I

Mrs. Naohara was very easy to interview due to the fact that she is my mother. She is very easy to talk with and will give information when asked. She offered information freely and without hesitation except for the moments when she could not recall her memory on certain topics.

Mrs. Naohara's view toward camp was an optimistic one. She enjoyed camp very much and considered it a worthwhile experience. She feels that if it was not for the camps, she would not have been able to learn about her culture as much as she did and it was also a time for self improvement of herself. She feels no hatred for the White American except for a little bit of resentment for placing the Japanese in the relocation camps.

Working in the schools gave her the interest to work with children and I feel that when she brought me up, the experience she had in camp with children was shown to me. (I can remember her teaching me alot of different songs and telling me stories.)

She has never talked about the camps in detail until now. Now and then, while I was growing up, she would say "When I was in camp...", but never gave me details. I feel, though, that she is not ashamed of what went on in the camps and not reluctant to speak of her experiences as opposed to those who suffered bad experiences.

INTERVIEW II: MRS. SAKAYE SALLY (MASUKAWA) SASAKI

- 00:05 Name
- 00:11 Where and when born
- 00:22 Where raised
- 00:30 Schools attended
- 01:05 Racial breakdown of High School
- 01:24 Any discrimination felt in High School
- 01:30 First hears about Pearl Harbor
- 01:45 Feelings about Pearl Harbor--"scared," "felt bad"
- 02:00 Evacuation of family to Santa Anita--greeted with guns
- 02:24 Life at Santa Anita
- 03:00 From Santa Anita to Jerome by train
- 03:15 Arrival at Jerome
- 03:30 Life in Jerome vs. life at Santa Anita
- 03:50 Sleeping quarters
- 04:30 Foods in Jerome and Santa Anita
- 04:50 Work in mess hall
- 04:56 Wages
- 05:10 Recreation
- 05:35 Baseball as being popular sport
- 05:55 Sears catalogue--ordering through it
- 06:15 Clothing
- 06:40 Riots and gang fights in Santa Anita and Jerome
- 07:00 View of Kibei as a Nisei in Jerome
- 07:15 Experience during evacuation--furniture taken from family
- 08:11 Feelings toward the White Americans
- 08:26 Camp as a good experience
- 08:40 Daily routine done
- 09:25 Near end of war, family goes to Kila River, Arizona
- 10:00 Contact with rest of family in Poston
- 10:30 Saw camp as being very enjoyable.

EVALUATION OF INTERVIEW II

Mrs. Sasaki is my "Auntie Sally" and we were never really close in our relationship with each other. Mrs. Sasaki was a little scared of being interviewed and suggested that I interview her husband instead. I feel that she was scared to be interviewed due to the fact that she is the nervous type, but not because she did not want to talk of her camp experience.

During the interview, Mrs. Sasaki gave me short answers and it was hard for me to get her to express more of her personal experiences. I felt rushed because I knew she was nervous and wanted to get the interview over with. As time proceeded, I think she became more relaxed, but I tried to finish the interview as soon as possible for her when I felt I had covered sufficient ground.

Mrs. Sasaki's attitude toward the camps was that she enjoyed it very much. Her description of the camp she was located in seemed to be a very nice place and she had no objections to it. She feels no hatred toward the White American and saw camp as a very good experience. I felt that her attitude toward the camp may have seemed too optimistic, but it is possible that camp life for her was great. Due to that fact that the interview seemed rushed, I may not have been able to ~~obtained~~ more detailed and deeper feelings toward camp life.

INTERVIEW III: MR. TSUTOMU TOM MASUKAWA

- 00:10 Name
- 00:15 Where and when born
- 00:25 Where childhood was spent
- 00:36 Schools attended
- 00:55 High School racial breakdown
- 01:15 Any discrimination felt in High School
- 01:25 What generation
- 01:36 First hears the news about Pearl Harbor
- 01:45 Feelings toward Pearl Harbor
- 02:10 Voluntary evacuation to Reedley
- 02:30 Life in Reedley
- 02:40 How they were evacuated
- 02:55 Amount of luggage allowed
- 03:07 Train ride and drawing of the shades
- 03:30 Arrival at Parker and then to Poston
- 04:00 Sleeping quarters--beds of hay
- 04:25 Weather
- 04:35 Life in Poston--"bearable"
- 04:55 Work as a mechanic
- 05:05 Wages
- 05:17 Food--"eatable"
- 05:25 Mess hall situation
- 06:00 Recreation--fishing in the Colorado River
- 06:15 Other recreational activities
- 06:35 Annual events in each block
- 07:05 Did not like being in one place
- 07:15 Officials treatment--no contact with the outside
- 07:50 Feelings toward the White American and the camps
- 08:15 Camp as a good experience
- 09:00 Nisei view as a Kibei
- 09:15 Kibei as viewed in the camp
- 09:34 Never wants to go through it again.

EVALUATION OF INTERVIEW III

"Uncle Tom," or better known as Mr. Tom Masukawa, was very easy to interview. Of all my uncles, he is the one I am the most closest too. He offered information easily, tersely and candidly. His interview, like Mrs. Sasaki's seemed a little rushed even though I am close to my uncle. I think that the idea of being interviewed on tape may have caused the nervousness in both interviews. Mr. Masukawa, though, was more relaxed and was willing to offer information to me.

Being the eldest of eight children, Mr. Masukawa experienced more of the hardships. He looks upon the camps as a good experience in the way that he can tell his children and grandchildren what he went through and ways to avoid it. But, he feels that the White American had no right to place the Japanese in the camps. He felt "we didn't belong there in the first place." He says that he has no harsh feelings toward the White American, and he feels that it was public hysteria which caused their evacuation.

Even though this interview was a short one, I feel Mr. Masukawa expressed his feelings toward the camp well. As he sums up his interview, he "never wants to go through it again."

EVALUATION OF THE THREE INTERVIEWS

Each interview held a different view of the relocation camps.

Interview I with Mrs. Naohara gave the viewpoint of camp as being very interesting and enjoyable.

Interview II with Mrs. Sasaki saw the relocation camps as being enjoyable also, but in a different sense. Mrs. Sasaki was in a different camp from Mrs. Naohara and it seemed Mrs. Sasaki enjoyed camp much more than Mrs. Naohara in a broader sense. Mrs. Naohara enjoyed camp in the way of doing different things, learning different crafts and culture whereas Mrs. Sasaki was married with two children and viewed camp as being more carefree in the social aspect of it.

Mr. Masukawa saw camp as a good experience only in the way that he can express his experiences to his children and grand children. It seemed he did not care to be in the camp and would not exactly describe it as being enjoyable. He expressed that it was a type of easy life where he did not have to worry where his next meal was going to come from, but he did not agree that the Japanese belonged in the camp. I feel he took a more realistic point of view of the camp than the other two interviewees. He looked more to the cause and effect of the camps than just seeing the camps as something you had to make the most of.

I have learned alot more from these interviews. My interest in Asian American Studies has grown. You cannot read the history of a race, but you must go out and dig for the truth by interviews and different research materials. I have found it to be very interesting as well as educational.

I also feel that the interviewees feel more comfortable having talked about their experience in the camps. I think I can communicate much more easily with them than before because I can understand their feelings toward camp and how it has affected their lives.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Interview with Mitsuko Mitzi Naohara, Barber,
Gardena, California, November 10, 1974, 1:00 - 2:00 PM.
Had interview and discussed history of herself.
2. Interview with Sakaye Sally Sasaki, Housewife,
Torrance, California, November 11, 1974, 6:30 - 7:00 PM.
Had interview and discussed history of herself.
3. Interview with Tsutomu Tom Masukawa, Mechanic/Gardner,
Harbor City, California, November 12, 14, 1974,
(11-12:8:30 -9:30 PM) and (11-14:7:00 - 8:00 PM).
11-12: Had interview, 11-14: Discussed history of
himself and Masukawa family. Obtained research
material.

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