

NARRATOR: SABURO MASADA

INTERVIEWER: GRACE KIMOTO

DATE: April 1, 2005

GK: This is an interview with Saburo Masada. Rev. Masada lives in this home 2009 East Shay Drive in Fresno, California. And today is April 1, 2005 which is Saburo-san's birthday. He is seventy-five years old. And I am Grace Kimoto with Ralph Kumano on the Japanese-American Citizens League Central California District Oral History Project. So let's begin life before the WWII, okay? Your family and home life, would you tell us where you were born you know and what your family's line of work was and what your father did?

SM: Okay, I was born in Fresno near Caruthers so out in the rural area and all seven of us children were born there and we had a vineyard. We had Thompson grapes and we grew up working in the vineyards and doing other kinds of work on other farms during off season and when we needed, we had time to do other work to earn more money.

GK: Okay and your father then did the farming and your mother worked alongside?

SM: Yes we all the whole family we worked together picking grapes and chopping cotton and everything we did together.

GK: Okay, tell us about your siblings then? Where do you fit in your family?

SM: There are three girls and four boys and I was next to the youngest. My youngest brother had cerebral palsy and he was let's see—he was about five years younger than I was I think.

GK: I see and so your parents were farmers and you grew up in it? What do you remember about your family life as you were growing up?

SM: Well, since I had an older brothers and sisters, I didn't have to do too much other than work just along with them so I had a wonderful, fun, enjoyable family life. We all ate together. We all worked together and we were poor so we didn't go out to restaurants and movies and things like that but we just found things to do around on the farm whether it was playing with blocks of wood as little kids you know, playing with dirt and playing in the vineyards, chasing the doves and putting things like chocolate on the vine posts during the winter and then in the morning, it would be frozen and we'd have our popsicles and things and we just had a lot of fun, yeah. I enjoyed our family life.

GK: Do you remember the hardships that your family had?

SM: Other than just had to work, work hard all the time. My father had a stroke and so he had to limit his work and his working and my oldest brother had to drop out of school as a junior so he could help out on the farm. And a, I didn't know my father very well. We weren't close. He was working all the time and I didn't speak Japanese that much and so I knew he was there but we all sat down at the table together but there was no conversation with my father anyway like you know how are you doing or anything like that. It's like keep quiet and obey.

GK: So do you have a sense of what the family expected of you people? What were the expectations of the children?

SM: Well in those days, you know, the Japanese community we were all trained to be polite and be you know good citizens and good students and don't get in trouble and don't bring shame and so we all abided by those values and it worked real good for us.

GK: That's good.

SM: Yeah.

GK: Did the girls in the family have to do different things than the boys?

SM: No we all worked picking grapes, male and female we all worked the same.

GK: And who did the cooking and all?

SM: My mother mainly. And but I remember when I was real small she would carry me on her back as she tied the vines and pruned and things like that and she used to tell me a lot of stories. I guess Japanese folk stories and she, of course, sang a lot of the folk songs to and she loved, she used to—well she graduated some I guess high school before she came to America and then she taught Japanese school for I don't know how long in Fresno. But she didn't teach me Japanese. I mean I really didn't learn Japanese from her.

GK: So you are talking about some of the values that your parent's taught you. Are there any that you rejected and didn't agree with?

SM: I can't—I can't think of anything I didn't like. That is probably because I wasn't the oldest in the family.

GK: You were next to the youngest?

SM: Right and I think they sort of spoiled me although I can't say spoiled because we all worked sometimes around the clock when the weather got bad.

GK: Good well, so how did you feel about your community? Were you involved were you family involved in the Japanese community?

SM: Before the war, WWII, of course the Bowles YBA community we were all a part of and there was community picnics and there was a community hall and we used to go to the movies, Shibai or what do you call it? Anyway the movies, I remember the news would come out with the Japan Army and things like that but the main—the best things I liked about those gatherings is they had Rose Bottling Company, that is a Japanese soda

company in Fresno and boy, their strawberry and lemon and orange were just the best things and I remember that a lot.

GK: That's nice. Okay then so did you participate in any of these the church, the scouts and the YMCA?

SM: No we worked so much and then there was no scouting program and we didn't belong to the church although the Japanese community would get together every so often. And we were all Buddhists but you know, we didn't go to temple service. One summer I went to Japanese school which was Saturday and it must have been four or five Saturdays during the summer and the Buddhist priest would come around and we would chant, learned the chanting and things like that but that was only for one summer. So I learned my Hiragana and Katakana and I remember we had to—I took part in one little Japanese play. I think it was Kendo, Kendo-themed play. But we didn't—we didn't have any opportunity to take part in other activities because we were on the farm and working all the time.

GK: Right, how about instruments? Band instruments?

SM: Yeah, grammar school I played clarinet from six grade and I still remember I paid twenty-five dollars, twenty-five cents back in those days. Now it's curved, it's warped this metal and I still play it every so often for the fun of it.

GK: Oh gosh. How about sports? Did you take part in sports?

SM: Well let's see what period are you talking about?

GK: This is before the war?

SM: Before the war—well I was only up to twelve years old so.

GK: That's right.

SM: At school, at grammar school we played soccer and the usual recess-type games. And that is about it. I loved sports but you know there was no team sports.

GK: Okay, so you shared—did your mother take part in a lot of cultural flower arrangement and things like that?

SM: No, there was no time for those kinds of things.

GK: Koto and Judo you said that Kendo you took part in?

SM: Well no that is just a little play, play acting.

GK: Oh I see. Okay what school did you go to?

SM: I went to Alvina Elementary School which goes to eighth grade and then there is four years of high school but from sixth grade through the, almost the end of ninth grade, I was in camp.

GK: Oh I see.

SM: And when I came back, I was a freshman in high school and finished up the Caruthers Union High School graduating in forty-eight.

GK: I see, so your grammar school years, how did you feel about school?

SM: Oh I loved school and I loved my classmates and we were all close and one was black and the rest of them were all Caucasians or maybe Mexican or Armenian but I didn't know their background but we were all close. We used to wrestle together, throw our arms around each other. We really had a wonderful grammar school life.

GK: So were you the only Japanese-American family?

SM: Yeah, uh-huh. Well my sister was going there eighth grade when I was in first grade probably. Well probably actually several years but as far as in my class, I was the only Japanese.

GK: Okay, were you invited to other friend's homes?

SM: Not really. I do recall PTA's and parent's of my classmates would all come to school but my parents didn't come because they didn't know the language and they were working anyway. But I always thought, gee how nice that their parents are there on the school grounds and but I didn't experience any prejudice all the way through elementary school. Yeah, we were real close and our family neighbors and friends were all very good to us until the war.

GK: Okay, and tell me about your teachers. How were they to you?

SM: Well, well elementary school I had all wonderful teachers. And my first grade teacher was my—I told her just a few years ago, that she was my best teacher.

GK: Why?

SM: Pardon me?

GK: Why?

SM: Well she must you know how we think of as adults as old but she must have been maybe in her twenties, early twenties but we did all kinds of things, fun things in class. And I remember one fellow one of my classmates was a real rough student to handle and I remember seeing her holding him at arms length and he is swinging away at her but she—he can't reach her and trying to spit at her but she just held him off and made him obey her. But we did a lot of fun things. I still can remember the taste of cheese and we were studying Holland at that time. We were studying about Holland and so she would have Gouda, what is that cheese?

GK: Gouda.

SM: Yeah, Gouda cheese. I can still taste the flavor of it.

GK: Isn't it interesting what you can remember as a child? Gosh, so did you then at that time consider yourself or Japanese or American or?

SM: I'm sure—well, I knew that I was an American. I was aware that I was Japanese because all my friends were not Japanese but I never thought of it as a disadvantage or anything like that. Other than when the parent's of my classmates came to school, my mother and father would never be there and I wished that they could have been there.

GK: Okay, so what did they expect of your school work and your school? [telephone ringing]

SM: Well, it was just understood that we should study hard and I had advantage of asking my sisters to help you know with my studies.

GK: That's right. So at the time that you are growing up and all the families at the table the dinner table, what did they talk about? What did she talk about?

SM: Well, I really don't remember although we must have talked about the food that we are enjoying and probably talked about tonight we got to stay up all night to bring in the raisins because it is going to rain. And we used to do a lot of things like paper bags for lunch. We had raisin trays so we would spend like the winter months, we would make our own paper bags using rice as a glue you know. And so all those things are wonderful memories I have and using rice, starch to put up the wallpaper and things like that.

GK: So at home then at the dinner table, where did you sit?

SM: I don't remember.

GK: You don't remember?

SM: No, I don't remember any particular spot.

GK: Okay, okay so let's get to your teenage years then.

SM: Okay.

GK: What do you remember of your teenage years? What were some of the fun things and what were some of your--?

SM: Well teenage would thirteen more or less?

GK: Yes.

SM: I was in camp.

GK: Okay.

SM: So twelve, thirteen, fourteen I was in camp.

GK: What camp is this?

SM: Jerome, well Fresno Assembly Center and then Jerome, Arkansas and then Rohwer, Arkansas.

GK: So how old were you at the time of internment?

SM: Twelve years old finishing my sixth grade but not quite the end of my sixth grade because May, May 16th I know the exact date we went in. So teenage years well that would be camp days.

GK: I see.

SM: We're talking about camp days now or—

GK: Well it's your age, it doesn't matter. Did you what did you do in camp for fun then?

We'll go into that.

SM: In camp I played from sunrise to late at night. I don't—

GK: Played what?

SM: Pardon me?

GK: Played what?

SM: Whatever kids play you know. Well if there is basketball or football. It would be pick up basketball or pick up football. Going to see movies whenever there was a movie but nothing but play time. I don't recall ever eating with my family in camp, not once. And like when I think about that I think, gee that was a big change from before camp.

GK: That's right. So your experience as teenage is camp? And some of my questions are actually about growing up with other people in the community. Well what is the problem you used to think about if you can remember during your teenage?

SM: Actually I don't remember anything other than I never studied so if I had some homework I used to get mad at my sister because she wouldn't do my math for me and things like that, you know. I didn't study at all. I just played and played and played. And school was just a play place and let's see. Yeah, I didn't, yeah, my study habits became zilch.

GK: So would you say your childhood was—

SM: Fun?

GK: Yeah it was fun, was it—

SM: Yeah, all play and no work.

GK: Okay.

SM: Which was not the way I was brought up.

GK: That's right.

SM: And not the way I had to do when I came back.

GK: Well then let's scoot on over to WWII.

SM: Okay.

GK: Okay, so how do you remember hearing about Pearl Harbor?

SM: Well I remember exactly that we were working in front of the house and every time we'd come back to the house, we'd put our radio on to listen to something that were wanting to hear—listen to radio. And one time we came back and I was listening about eleven thirty or so, there was an interruption of our program and they announced that the bombs were dropping that the planes were dropping bombs on Pearl Harbor. And I remember saying what a stupid thing, Japan is doing. Who do they think they are, bombing us? And I could you know, I distinctly remember listening and feeling that way and saying that when it happened. I don't know how time elapsed before I was aware that it was people were saying we were part of that enemy. We did—that didn't make sense to me. That sounded stupid but I know that that was what was starting to—

GK: Do you remember some of the feelings you had at the time you discovered?

SM: Well, no probably not for me, being the youngest. I think I was probably very immature. I was very immature but I remember things like time came when we were burning Japanese things and buried them because we didn't—not I so much but I got the understanding that we didn't want to be associated with the enemy because we had nothing to do with Japan. Japan was like the other side of the moon for me, so I remember doing a lot of that which, which indicated that you know, we were afraid. We were afraid of what we were being accused of falsely.

GK: And what did you think would happen to your family?

SM: Well, you know I had no idea that there was talk about evacuation but as we neared evacuation, I just realized, I just knew that we were going to be picked up and rounded up and so I remember going to my grammar school before school started and I went to my principal who was my teacher too and is a one building, four, three room school and the

fourth room was the auditorium. And I remember going to see Mrs. Fike, my teacher, and saying I need to—I need to pick up my war saving's bond stamps and apparently she had us start a little bank account and plus the war bonds that we were contributing towards and I said you know I need that because I'll be leaving. And I don't recall her saying, "Oh I'm sorry you're leaving." I don't remember her saying "We're going to miss you." I just remember her going to her desk and getting my stuff and as I walked out I remember looking through the fence at the school yard and some kids were playing out there and this was before school started so they weren't all there so there were some playing and I had—I still remember how I felt about leaving and nobody saying good-bye or we'll miss you or where are you going. Of course I didn't know where I was going either but that is something I was suppose to do so I did it. I went home and before and in time we were in the Fresno Assembly Center.

GK: Was there any thought that "My I'm an American. Why am I going?" Going to be put away.

SM: We didn't talk about it. I don't remember the talk about it. But, there was no question that something was happening that was not—that shouldn't be happening and I tried to talk to my brothers and sisters about what they remember and probably two that might remember the most, are gone so. But my oldest sister can't remember too much and my other brother doesn't remember. I remember the Army truck coming to our front yard and we all piled in and there was one Caucasian couple, I think they were the Neilsons and they came and I can tell from across the yard that my sister and two sisters, they must have been having a tearful farewell. But I remember coming into Fresno and I know it was May 16, 1942 because the West Coast Relays was on May 16th and one of my—one

of my heroes was Cornelius Warmerdam who broke the world record in pole vault team. He broke the sixteen foot mark and actually he broke his record again that day but I remember you know coming to Fresno and going to the fairground and the banner's across the street, West Coast Relays, the next thing I knew I remember the gate sort of closing and a few people were outside, Caucasian talking to their friends and we were inside and we were trying to get settled and going to our barracks. But it is sort of strange to me that we went so quietly and obediently and I think somehow we got the idea that we were doing our country a favor, you know. That we were good citizens by doing this, not knowing that it was all based on propaganda and yeah, rumors. But I was only like I said, I was immature as a twelve year old. I have another friend who was about one year younger and he remembers sitting in his house and there were no chairs, no furniture because they all had to sell it. They were sitting on the floor and he told about how he felt you know, as a young boy. But he was the oldest in the family.

GK: Yeah, he was kind of at that age you didn't know what was going on anyway.

SM: I didn't. It was sad.

GK: So what kind of—describe a day in camp that you can remember for you a little boy? Describe a day in the camp?

SM: Well waking up and going out to play with my friends, coming home and going to bed. In between going to the mess hall eating and of course going to the latrine and I guess I must have gone to the shower probably wore “gettas” to keep our feet from getting muddy. But I remember Fresno Assembly Center the toilet, that's a memorable thing for most of us who were in assembly centers, at least Fresno, there used to be all the rows of potty which were just an open hole in the wood and there was a big tank that would fill

up with water and when it got so full, it would unload and the water would come gushing down. We made sure and try not to get the last seat because the water would come up like that and—

GK: That's the trough.

SM: Yeah, but those are memorable things.

GK: Yes, you can't forget that. I went through the same things. So your family was still together though in the same camp? Let's see, you were in Jerome you said.

SM: Yeah, yeah well in Jerome my, let's see. Yeah that's right in Jerome, we were all together but when we went to Rohwer, my brother and sister, my two brothers and sister they went out for work.

GK: I see, so. So you were a little boy yet?

SM: Yeah, but when we got to Jerome after four weeks, six weeks, my father caught pneumonia and he died and I think that was probably the first funeral in Jerome. But when my father died at the hospital or was dying, they were looking for me and they couldn't find me because as usual I was playing with my friends and they didn't know which friend I was playing with. I remember I was playing monopoly and they finally found me and they had me go in the ambulance to the hospital and my father was almost near death and I sort of remember, their lips get dry because they are breathing through their mouth and I remember a nurse, a nurse told me if he wants water, don't give him water. Just get a Q-tip and wet his lips and that will assuage his thirst. So I remember that instruction about thirst. All you have to do is wet their lips and they will feel they had their thirst quenched. And so he died and we had the funeral and about two weeks after the funeral, we were all going to the Christian Church for the first time. And I

didn't know—I didn't know anything about Buddhist Church or Christian Church, it was church. And I think Caruthers has about twenty-seven churches back then. I don't ever remember seeing a church. (laughing) That is how unobservant I was.

GK: Yeah and busy. So, so, did you have an inkling of why you were in camp?

SM: Yeah, we were all Japanese. I knew that and Japan bombed Pearl Harbor.

GK: Okay.

SM: But I didn't have to deal with the loyalty oath, for example. I didn't even know it was being presented to the internees.

GK: That's right. Do you remember, was the camp life peaceful or do you remember any problems or troubles happening?

SM: Well no in our—in our association they were all well-behaved you know. There weren't any demonstrators or rebellions. They were typically polite, well-mannered, obedient community who worked hard and cooperated and did their very best. Had the best and gave it their best to have it a great kind of living you know even though we were behind barbed wires, yeah. It is sort of fascinating.

GK: Were you in touch with any of your friends on the outside?

SM: No, not at all.

GK: Not at all?

SM: I often wondered about well I'll tell you later about my return.

GK: So in camp you played with the children. Do you remember school there? Your teachers there?

SM: Yes.

GK: Were they all Japanese-Americans or did you have Caucasians?

SM: There were a couple of Nisei teachers and maybe three Caucasian teachers. One, we made fun of because she made sounds when she breathed but there was another who was a very good teacher.

GK: So you did learn some things?

SM: But junior highers, that is how we were and I played in the band there and one person played one instrument but he was an adult and I wondered what he was doing there. And he played awful and the flute I said was the worst sounding instrument in the whole band. Well, I found out many years later that this fellow divorced his wife who went back to Japan. He always thought that he was a good musician. Well, I thought it was the flute that was an off instrument until I met a Sansei who played the flute and I never heard such a beautiful sound coming out of the flute and I realized that this guy thought he was a good flutist.

GK: Oh goodness. So—so camp you would describe it as fun?

SM: Yeah for me, it was, yeah. But you know I picked up a lot of bad habits like studies and work and things like that. There was too much free time.

GK: Yeah, okay. Now let's see. You did not marry in camp? You married after camp. After the war, right? So it doesn't fit in here. What is the worst remembrance you have of this period?

SM: Of the camp?

GK: Of the camp or this time? Besides your parents?

SM: I think the worst feeling about the camp is I had to leave all my friends in school because we were very good friends and close friends and had to be away from home and you know behind barbed wires with the guards around. That obviously wasn't a good thing

for us. They were not protecting us like some people made me think it was. So I knew it was—it was being in prison yeah. But we Japanese had been taught to say “shigata ganai” and we were taught to make the best of everything and improve on what the worst things are, so that just helped out a lot.

GK: So what do you think is the best thing that happened during camp?

SM: Oh let’s see, in camp I guess the best thing that I thought was the best thing was free time and meet a lot of people you know, I mean, a lot of friends, but I’ll tell you about the friends later.

GK: So when did you leave camp?

SM: We left in April of 1945 while the war was still on.

GK: Oh.

SM: And it ended in August but we went back in forty-five. My brother and sister who had been outside of camp three of them came back and then they went on ahead about one month back to Caruthers where our farm was and I later found out our tractor man, Orville Sorenson, who did all of our disking on our farm, my brother because my sister doesn’t remember, but my brother must have made arrangements for him to take care of the farm while we were gone and when we came back, he handed it back over to us so we were one of the few fortunate ones like that. And our house was occupied by somebody but Orville had them vacate the house so that my brother and sister came back and they sort of cleaned it up and we came back a month later and let’s see. Yeah, so the anti-Japanese feelings are still very strong when we came back. We came back fairly early.

GK: What are some of the indications that they didn’t want you back?

SM: Well we couldn't shop anywhere. There were two grocery stores, Clevingers let us shop there fortunately. Next door was Anderson. Mr. Anderson had a lot of Nisei play on his baseball team before the war but he refused to let us shop there and it was probably a lot to do with business. You know, he didn't want to lose business and be called a Jap lover. But Clevinger's, there is a Mr. Brown there. I guess he was the owner and somebody told Clevinger, no, you serve these people because they are good people so we were fortunate and then in May of that year some vigilante's come by and they shot about six twenty-two bullets through our house and one barely missed my sister who was still up. And a, I slept through it because I was in the back in the garage sleeping, so you know we had and then when I went to school, I could tell, like the first day of school I asked some kids on the on our dirt basketball court, where is the coach and they said over there, "Jap". Well these were I could tell guys would come in during the war from Oklahoma, Arkansas and they weren't local people but—but because I got on a team right away, baseball not football, track and basketball, I had a nice support group so.

But my sister, may I just share what happened to her? She was a senior and I was a freshman so April we came back and May, June school gets out in June and she was a senior and I wasn't that aware but I got on the school bus that came around every day and dropped us off every day. I got on the bus and I must have—I didn't notice I should say that, my sister would get on the bus and when she sat down the person next to her would get up and move. They didn't want to sit with her. And so she really was treated badly. And then when the end of school came, the principal Mr. Buzball said "I don't want you to come to the graduation." So she got mad and said the heck with it so she dropped out.

And but I was you know playing baseball and basketball so I didn't have that kind of problem like that anyway. But maybe I will share with you about the friends.

GK: Yeah.

SM: Well I had very, very close friends, Andy Hoff and Bobby Jones, he was black, and we were just real buddy, buddy, buddy. And so I remember thinking about going back to Caruthers. I couldn't wait to see my wonderful friends again and I really looked forward to that. And then one day, it must have been the first day I asked somebody, "Where is Ed and where is Bob?" And they said, "Oh they are on the lawn eating lunch." I said okay so I went over there and they were sitting on the lawn with their girlfriends and when I came by to say hi, they got up from sitting on the lawn and I remember looking way up like that—they had grown about three feet I had grown probably about three inches and I said, "Wow." But I do remember that they all said was "Hi." They didn't say we missed you or they didn't say where were you? They didn't say anything other than they just said, "Hi." And you know it was a real let down for me. I was really looking forward to seeing all my best friends and it was like, they were just like people I knew the names of. And a, so in camp I met a lot of you know friends, buddies but I haven't kept in touch with them at all, so the effects that you will be asking about, one of the effect is, it was a real disillusionment of being close to friends and having that destroyed and so I am probably feeling like, even today, I can't think of one person I would say is really my close friends, you know. I would have, it this had never happened, and then what shocks different people and my family, is some of them would come by and say to them "Sab is my best friend." And I am surprised because I don't consider them best friend, you know.

GK: So did this happen all year, they gave you the cold shoulder?

SM: No we were just friends but we never buddied around.

GK: Not buddy?

SM: We played basketball together but it wasn't the same anymore. Yeah it wasn't the same.

GK: How about the teachers? How did they treat you when you got back?

SM: In high school?

GK: Uh-huh.

SM: They were all good. They were all good yeah. I didn't experience any over prejudice from them and my coaches, you know, they treated me real good yeah but there was one fellow see, Caruthers Union High School is the school where elementary schools from different areas they graduate and they go to Caruthers Union High. One fellow was from Raisin City and I don't know those kids in Raisin City, different elementary school. I came from Alvina but his name was Stub Ripley. One day, I don't know why, but I think I know why, thinking about it. He said, "Sab, if anybody gives you trouble you tell me about it and I'll beat them up for you." And he was German descent and as often a German-descent person was very sympathetic and understand especially during the WWII, they got really persecuted like we were and if anybody I feel close to, it would be Stub and I didn't even know this guy.

GK: Okay, that is so—the high school years were fun or good or?

SM: It was good because I studied real hard. I had to earn my grades but I got almost straight A's once I got back to and out of the camp. And I played sports so I was a real salvation in terms of support group.

GK: I think so. So you went on to school. So you went to college?

SM: Yes, when I graduated in forty-eight I had taken my English exam at Reedley College because that was where I was supposed to go. I passed my English so I didn't have to take what they called "bonehead" English. But my sister was in San Francisco so she said, "Come to San Francisco, you might want to go to school here, and work as school boy" and I went to visit her and she said I'll find a home, a family for you to stay with and once you go to school up here and I said "Okay." And so I went to registration in line and they said "Where do you live?" And I said, "Caruthers." And well you don't belong in this school. You have to go to your junior college back home. They said "Is this your permanent home?" And I said, "No, but I am thinking about getting school boy job and my sister works here and thinking maybe I should go to school here." They said, "Well I don't know if you can, you know, we will check on that." Well, they let me stay there but a couple of funny incidents. In the registration line, the registrar said, "What is your father's name?" And you know we never call our fathers by first names so I was pretty proud that I knew it was Ihei you know, Ihei at least I felt that was wonderful that I would remember my father's Japanese name. And then she said, "What is your mother's name?" Well that was a little easier, it was Nobue and then she said, "What is your mother's maiden name?" And I said, "She didn't have any." And then we looked at each other and she had to have a maiden name. So that night I called home and I said, "What is mom's maiden name?" And they said, "Onishi." I said, "Onishi?" Oh that sounds like McDonald or something. But see, that's how far removed I was from Japan and I didn't know any other—

GK: Culture?

SM: Yeah any other than just our cousin. We are the only relatives. There are some others but I thought they were the only ones. So that was strange. And then the professor said, “What is your major?” And all I could think of is major league and minor league and I didn’t know what he was talking about. You know and he said, “Well what do you like?” And I said, “Well I like chemistry, physics.” He said, “Here give me your card.” And he put in some courses and said, “How does that look?” And I said, “I like those.” And he said, “Okay.” So I went through but anyway what I, I think what happened was during those junior high age, going into high school, if the evacuation had not come, I think I was sort of being nurtured towards, you know going into higher education, but in high school I never thought once that I’d go to college. No one in our family had gone to college and I was like the first one to go to college. But I remember one year, people from UC Berkeley came to our school and they met with the seniors, some of the seniors and I know some of my friends had discussion with them but I had, no, no inkling that that was something for me. So when I got to college I was really out of it but I think if I had stayed you know in Alvina and went on just graduating I would have picked up a lot of this stuff about going on to college. So I think coming back from camp we had to, what is the word? Start all over again like and we were just so engrossed in recovering and higher education wasn’t part of our priority.

GK: Expectations? Yeah. Well can you tell us how you met your wife and what happened?

SM: Did she tell you? Well I was working as a student pastor in Watsonville going to seminary in San Francisco—

GK: Wait a minute. Let’s back up then. You graduated high school.

SM: And then I went to San Francisco to go to City College.

GK: Correct.

SM: And then I transferred to San Francisco State.

GK: Okay.

SM: For two more years and graduated there in fifty-two. Then I went two years to seminary in Pasadena then I was going two more years San Francisco Theological Seminary in Marin County and I was working as student pastor in Watsonville and Marion worked at a Christian Ed. Office, yeah Christian Ed. Office in San Francisco. So one day I went in to get some Sunday school material and I'd tell people and I picked up Marion instead but anyway I just saw her working and I said, oh gee, there is a Japanese person working here. And then a week or two later she was registrar at a, at a training event at our seminary and so I saw her again and we chatted for a long time. And a romance started.

GK: Tell us about the wedding and how—

SM: Oh, well being a poor student minister, we got married on a shoestring I am sure and we got married in San Francisco at a church she was attending, a church that I had gone during college and we got married. And I was in Watsonville at the time and so we rented an apartment and she worked with me and although the minister gets paid, the wife who might work just as hard if not more doesn't get paid. But we always worked together as a team even though only I got paid, so the same goes. I was paid to be good and she was good for nothing.

GK: That's a line.

SM: But she was a wonderful partner in my work and my life.

[end of tape (part 1)]

GK: Can you go ahead and share how you guys worked and graduated? So you are seeking a divinity degree?

SM: Uh-huh.

GK: Where did you do that and-

SM: San Francisco Theological Seminary I graduated there and we served, we continued to serve one year in Watsonville, Watsonville Presbyterian Church which ironically my wife lived there at a hostel when she returned with her family from camp. And she gave me a picture when we were courting and she leaned against this pine tree and I said, "That is the pine tree by my church. What are you doing there?" And she said, "I used to live there in the church." And I was living in a small room and it was like ten years apart but we were living next to each other at that same church. (laughing) Then we went to Ogden, Utah for twelve years and then we finished twenty-six years at Stockton.

GK: What church were you at in Ogden?

SM: It was the Ogden Japanese Christian church. It was a congregational, Presbyterian church for twelve years. And then we came to Stockton and we stayed there for twenty-six years at Calvary Presbyterian Church and then we retired.

GK: I see.

SM: Ten years ago.

GK: I see. And you had children?

SM: Three girls uh-huh.

GK: Uh-huh and they are doing well today?

SM: Well yeah, the oldest has schizophrenia and she's doing well, independent living.

GK: Great.

SM: And our middle one is an optometrist and doing well. And the youngest is mentally retarded and she's doing well.

GK: Yeah, that is wonderful. That is wonderful. So you are settled down, you have family and a wife and you are a professional. How many years did you do your pastor work?

SM: I was doing it for forty-three years.

GK: Forty-two?

SM: Forty-three. I didn't think I'd ever retire and but a couple of Niseis retired before I did and they said "Sab, you ought to retire, it's great." And I never thought of retiring because our senior ministers never retire. They serve until they drop dead so I thought that is what we all do but when I got sixty-five, I retired and I've been enjoying it very much.

GK: That's very good. That is a wonderful life but you now have a new life.

SM: Yeah.

GK: Tell me about your family? I understand you have your brother here?

SM: Well I had three brothers and three sisters and let's see. Let's see, there is only three of us alive now. I wished I had talked to my oldest brother because I'd like to know what happened. Did the Sorenson's who took care of our vineyard, did he put money in the bank or did he get all the profit and just return the land to us? But unfortunately none of us know how the arrangements were made and of course a lot of things I wanted to ask my mother but I thought I had plenty of time like most of us think. But she is gone and I wanted to know how she felt about camp and being evacuated. I wanted to know what she did as a teenager and all that but never ever took the time to ask her.

GK: So what has happened to the land now?

SM: Well they—my brother sold it. He sold it the farm because his health was making it you know physically, he didn't think he could continue.

GK: How many acres was that?

SM: It was forty acres. We started out with twenty but he bought the neighboring so he had forty acres.

GK: Of—

SM: Of grapes. Now they pulled twenty acres of it out the new owner because the grape price was so bad but now it's going up and he's probably sorry he did that.

GK: My goodness. So your brother's retired and you have someone else living here?

SM: Yeah my sister and brother live behind us side by side.

GK: Very good.

SM: So Marion is the one who said "Let's go to Fresno." Because we were headed for Pasadena for a retirement home since we didn't own a house and we had no equity and living on a check to check, you know. There was no way we could buy a house but the redress money came in you know a few years before we retired and after making some donations we had thirty thousand left and so we used that as a down payment and now we have this home. Without that, we would be in Pasadena for sure.

GK: The lord has his ways?

SM: Yes, yes.

GK: So, you still have good relations with your family that you have left? Uh huh, and so as of now you are retired. What are some things you are doing in your retirement?

SM: Well I'm doing as little as possible and enjoying the retirement. We go to the church here that we love.

GK: What church is that?

SM: The United Japanese Church of Christ in Clovis. It's a former United Church of Christ that my mother belonged to and the United Methodist Church which my sister-in-law and my brother used to go to. They've united and formed the one church and now it's like a multi-ethnic type church. And we got, my wife and I go to the prison. We used to go twice a month but now we go once a month because her nephew will be released in April. And we've been in an Oral History Project board but that will be done soon.

GK: And what board is that for?

SM: Huh?

GK: Oral History?

SM: Well we had an Issei Oral History Project and I was on the board and interviewed some two hundred Issei before they died. And we transcribed and we put it in written form and produced three books. And then we went on to do the Nisei Oral History Project and we put out two volumes. We are working on the final third one which will be of seven Nisei pastors and we are almost finished on that. And when my friend Reverend Tahei Takurabe, who is from Japan, he fell in love with the Issei people when he heard their stories so he felt we should record their stories and all the Nisei ministers and Nisei church members said, "You don't have to take their interview. They will still be with us a long time." But by the time we finished, they were all gone. And so we knew that we had to hurry and get the Nisei stories and most of the Nisei that we interviewed, over half are gone so we interviewed quite a few.

GK: I want you to know that Hei Takurabe is our escort to Japan next year.

SM: Oh he is? He's a great escort.

GK: So he's not in Japan. He is going to be in Japan.

SM: Oh yeah. The Tanaka Services are sort of using him.

GK: Yes.

SM: As a guide.

GK: Yes. So that project I know my mother was interviewed.

SM: That's right. Yeah.

GK: So you are using your time in ways that you want to use the time.

SM: I tell people I am busy doing the things I want to do.

GK: That's right.

SM: So it's different than I have to do it.

GK: That's right. Are you preaching ever?

SM: Not if I can help it. Once in a while for emergency I help out at a funeral, if the pastors are gone from our church. I am always available for emergencies.

GK: I see. We have a lot of Nichi Goba ladies in our church that require retired ministers to come in and preach for them.

SM: Yeah, yeah they need that.

GK: So you do it in Japanese right?

SM: No.

GK: Oh, it's English?

SM: Yeah. That's why I don't.

GK: I see. I see.

SM: They don't—they don't—I don't have to be asked by them.

GK: Okay, very good. Well okay then so as far as your Japanese culture, you didn't do that much in the languages and all.

SM: No very little because—

GK: Did you share some of your experience of camp with your children?

SM: Well, yeah I think we do because we speak at schools you know and I encourage our church people to talk about it but I was sort of shocked in Little Rock when one of the news reporters asked my daughter when I was standing with her "Has your father talked much about the camp?" And she said, "No." I said, "Michelle, I tell you all the time about it." And she said, "I guess it is just in one ear and out the other." And, but I wrote a story, my story that I gave to the University at the motel, hotel I gave her a copy to read and she was reading and she was crying and she said, "Dad, this is real good." I said, "Michelle, I've shared with you that before but you just didn't hear it." But in a way you know a lot of things we shared was just like information, not so much feelings yeah. I think that is what still needs to be, more needs to be done on that.

GK: How is it you missed the Japanese language learning?

SM: I was too young.

GK: Too young?

SM: And we were in the country so we didn't have Japanese school after school and the one summer of Japanese community hall, they had the language and so I went but that is just summer. The rest of the year we had nothing like that.

GK: I see.

SM: We just studied, I mean worked and worked.

GK: This is an interesting question I am going to ask you. Do you think you have passed down some of the so called Nisei traits like inhibition, lack of spontaneity, difficulty articulating, push for education, sense of responsibility, working hard, do you?

SM: I'm sure I did but fortunately the Sanseis like our children and because my wife is Sansei or half Sansei, they, they have been overcome an influence I might have had in those ways and in fact Marion herself has helped me a lot to open up but I am one of the younger Nisei so I have an advantage because I have the advantage of being able to think more freely rather than the older Nisei who had to worry about their job and things like that. But I don't know how much time we have but there are a couple of real important things I want to share before we wrap it up. Go ahead.

GK: There is another question I need you to answer. If you were encountering racism in your community today, how do you think you would deal with it?

SM: How would I deal with it?

GK: How would you deal with it?

SM: You know we have it today with the Middle Eastern background people and I always regret when they marched in Fresno, I didn't take the time to join them but I think things like that are really important and we stand with people who are being treated unjustly. And, but if I personally were, you know prejudice against, I wouldn't have any hesitation to tell them a thing or two about how they are ignorant and how they are wrong, yeah. But a—

GK: So you don't have an interfaith group?

SM: Yes there is an interfaith group here yes.

GK: Because that is something.

SM: But I haven't participated or attended events.

GK: Do you feel that—through your church you probably feel part of the Japanese-American community don't you.

SM: Yeah we do. That is right.

GK: How about your children? Do you think that they experience that?

SM: Pardon me?

GK: Do you think your children feel a part of the Japanese community, Japanese-American community?

SM: Well, they are comfortable even though they are not active in the JAACL group in LA because my daughter has schizophrenia, she isn't active in that way but she is comfortable with any Japanese group. And the church is Japanese so yeah. In a way like job discrimination, I didn't have that situation because I always worked in the Japanese church. I didn't have to find a Caucasian church and compete. So in a Japanese community and Japanese church, you didn't have to deal with that within the group.

GK: I see.

SM: Although once in a while my Caucasian minister friends would say things that I would have to deal with. Like one of the common, again I think my Christian faith or rather my Christian environment have really contributed to prejudice and discrimination a lot.

GK: Contributed in which way? (laughs)

SM: Well it's just like a mindset you know, like everybody, like we Nisei growing up in America, we thought that this was a Christian nation. Well it is not a Christian nation but you know that is the mindset we have, that Caucasians are Christians and all the Japanese are Buddhists so the mindset of the Caucasian Christian is how come you have ethnic

churches? That is not Christian. We are all brothers and sisters. So one minister in Ogden said “You know what? I think that is a black mark.” I said, “What is a black mark?” “Well it’s a black mark that you have on Japanese Christian church here in Ogden.” I said, “Well what do you mean?” “Well you should close your church down, church doors and join us because we are Christians and we would welcome you.” I said, “You know what you ought to close your church and all of you come to our church.” He said, “That is different.” I said, “What is different about it.” See it is that superiority, inferiority you are nice and you come and join us. And then also I learned when I became a Christian in a more of a conservative Christian upbringing in high school and college and I was taught things like you know, God has a plan and any bad things that happen is like a blessing in disguise. And so early in my Christian, my ministry, people would ask me “By the way, how do you feel about the evacuation?” And I said, “Well you know I think it was a blessing in disguise.” Meaning we got scattered around you [telephone ringing] know the United States and got out of our ghetto like I used to read some people describe it. And went to super schools out east so that’s the way I was taught to accept the camp experiences which was full of injustices but you know sort of sluff it over that God meant it to be something wonderful. Well in 1960, I was watching Cronkite. He did the first documentary on the camps and it was called “Pride and Shame.” And I was sitting in my living room watching Cronkite narrate this documentary and I saw the older Niseis in Tanforan talking about stuffing the bags with straw like I remember doing and sweeping out the horse stalls at Tanforan and I’m sitting there and felt my blood start to boil. And I’m saying to myself, “How could this happen

in our country? How could this happen in our country.” And I remember really getting angry about what happened for the first time.

GK: Oh.

SM: And so from that time on, never would I tell people it was a blessing in disguise. It was wrong, wrong, wrong but the Japanese community, you know, they really turned that into something that was positive. But that was quite a high experience for me. So ever since then, I encourage the Nisei to talk about the camp experience and they would say, “Oh that happened so long ago. It doesn’t bother me. We had fun and we had dances.” And I said, “I know, but you really need to talk about the pain and trauma you went through.” And they said, “Oh that doesn’t bother me.” Well working at church I just felt the older Niseis especially, were really impacted by that event even though they seemed successful and all that. Well when the commission hearing was held I began to hear that the people who testified, the men especially, I don’t know if all of them, but most of them broke down and cried. They got choked up and they couldn’t talk. And I remember hearing the other Nisei saying, “My gosh, I never saw him cry before.” I wonder what is going on. I said, “You know, that’s all that poison in their gut that they were permitted to talk about and it’s all coming out.” And now they are older so they have more freedom plus the government is giving them permission to tell their story. And its showing how much hurt they went through. And I remember going to Fred Korematsu’s hearing at district court in San Francisco and Judge Marilyn Patel, we sat and listened to the debate between the government and Fred’s lawyers and the judge after hearing the argument said, “We’ll take a recess and I’ll come back and give you my ruling.” And so we sat there during recess time and then she came back into the court and she said, “He made (crying)” She

ruled in favor of Korematsu's saying that the government had, had withheld evidence. They had based it on propaganda and lies and I remember tears coming down my face (crying) because it was like the first time, my own government was saying we were wronged and that was really healing for me and the beginning of healing and it meant a lot to me that the government that we were all taught to love and respect especially the Japanese, you know, we respect authority. And the government that we loved, we you know gave 200% to be loyal to, suddenly saw us as enemies. And I think that's, it was hard for me to even comprehend that such a thing was happening but we were taught to say, "Shigata ganai" And do our best for our country even though they are doing us in, do the best for our country. And so we behaved and everything else. Well later on if it's okay, I want to share—

GK: Please. [telephone ringing]

SM: That I think the best description of what happened is you know when a woman is raped she is the victim but she's the one who feels the shame even the condemnation by the people around her, "Oh she must have wanted it and she probably even enjoyed it." And she can't talk about it because she's—because she's a victim and yet the victim experiences the shame and ostracism from the public. Well, this incarceration of what happened to the Japanese-American was like rape but even worse it was, I call it "incest." The government that we loved, we cared about, we respected violated us and but we have a hard time complaining because it's like a child opposing their parents. Their parents loved them so how can they hate their parents? So the child lives in this violated state and feels ashamed and can't talk about it and nobody will believe them and I think the incarceration of the Japanese-Americans was very much like an incest. And that's why I

think that many Japanese-American Niseis don't want to talk about it or haven't talked about it. I mean we don't like to be heard blaming our government, you know. Our President or whoever but now things are a lot easier and people say all kinds of things about the government. But in our day, we—this government we loved was violating us and you know we were feeling the shame and the guilt and everything else and yet we knew this wasn't right. We couldn't come out because we also were, don't rock the boat like even today I'm just shocked that. I told my brother let's go to the Caruthers' library and tell our story. He said, "No, no there may be some people who don't like to hear that." I said, "Oh my gosh. We are in a new day now. They want to hear what we have to share." He said, "No there might be some people that may not like it." Well I can—I can feel what the children who has been violated by their parents say, I don't want to admit this because my father is not going to like it or my mother is not going to like it.

GK: That's right.

SM: But anyway. I haven't heard, actually I haven't heard anybody talk about incest as a good parallel but to me that is a very good parallel of what happened, you know. The country you love violates you and you don't want to hate your own government and yet you hate what their doing or what they did to us, you know. But—

GK: Excellent.

SM: I think things have changed and these are healing experiences. And maybe one quick addition is when I went to Little Rock, one of the leaders of the group said she wrote and said, "I hope this is healing for you in visiting the camp ground and things like that." And I said, "No that didn't mean anything to me because I had been there before to camp but what was healing was that all you people are talking about this camp experience as an

injustice and you are teaching it to the forty-four thousand students in Arkansas from kindergarten to high school and you have all these Caucasians who are just so excited about telling the story, my story to these—to the students.” And when you listen to the teachers, the master teachers who are training others, it’s just unbelievable how much they understand what happened. And how they feel it has to be told. That was very healing for me that people understand. You know like rape victim being affirmed by friends and people or incest child having the love and support and people understand what an awful thing that happened to them.

GK: Very good.

SM: Yeah.

GK: That is a very good analogy. You said that the men were crying. When I was at the San Francisco hearing and it was the women that we had never heard their story of how her husband was taken by the FBI the minute he got home from work and didn’t have a chance to change clothes or anything. And then they took him and this one lady said she didn’t know where to send some clean clothes. And so the Isseis really did hold up til that hearing time.

SM: I heard an interesting comment by Satsuki Ina who produced that “Cocoon.” One of the questions asked after the movie was “What about the fact that Isseis and Niseis never talked about camp to their children?” Which is you know common and we hear that all the time. And she said, “I think the best answer is what the Buddhist priest in Sacramento said, he said, “I think that it was a silence”—it was—let’s see I forget how she put it now. It was beautiful what she said. He said it was, we need to respect that silence because they were concerned for their children, something like.

GK: So they wouldn't feel any shame.

SM: Yeah, sort of protect their children and that's now how the Sansei saw it but that is how the feeling you know. They didn't want to put that on them this awful thing that happened. Like Mary's mother we asked her "How was it?" And she said, "I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to talk about it." So the older Issei especially they don't—you know didn't want to talk about it. I mean who goes around saying, "I got raped or I got violated sexually by my mother or father." Who goes around and talks about that.

GK: That's right. That's right. This is a good analogy. Okay let's get to the recent years.

SM: Okay, there is some more?

GK: Okay, what is the most important thing that has happened to you in recent years?

SM: Recent years? Well retirement for sure. I don't know what's recent but from the time of sixties like I told you, you know with Walter Cronkite and there was black revolution I think I began to really understand what the blacks were saying when they told a dominant group, "We don't need you. You need us." Meaning you can't become a whole person unless as long as you are treating us sub-humanly and so I think I learned a lot from them. And the early Sansei activists began to say, "Yellow power." And I got—I got sort of led into a group called the "Yellow Seed" In Stockton where I went there in the seventies, sixty-nine on and every other word in this group that I joined was a cuss word, four letter word or two letter word or whatever it was and I was really uncomfortable but I thought it was really important for me to know what they were thinking and feeling. And so I sort of endured it but you know I learned so much from them. You know coming from a Nisei's culture where we don't say anything bad or protest. Here were these Sansei street kids who were just letting it all hang out and talking how they felt and

how they saw things and that really sort of began to free me up. And so to me, since then in my Christian faith I had to—I had to what’s the word? Revise, or throw out a lot of stuff that I feel is not Christian but is very much dominated by Western thought, very prejudicial and has nothing to do with the Christian faith but has a lot to do with Christian culture, which is not the same.

GK: How true. How true.

SM: As Christian and so that has just been an ongoing thing in my years.

GK: Of learning. You are still learning.

SM: Into my retirement years.

GK: So what is your biggest worry?

SM: My biggest worry maybe that is something I don’t think about too much but we are all reaching there and I know I am seventy-five so you know I am just wondering what’s going to happen if I become incapacitated or what my mind set is going to be. Most of us when we see someone have a heart attack, I hear people say “That is the way I want to go.” Just drop dead, you know, but not all of us have that kind of opportunity. Sometimes we just get in a vegetative state and then we have the controversy going on today to pull the tube or not pull the tube. Well, I want my tubes pulled.

GK: So what makes you really really happy?

SM: Really happy? Well I guess to see my wife happy because that means a lot because sometimes she complains a lot about me, which is okay. And I guess, see the grandkids grow. See my daughters, especially my two daughters who are handicapped how they are being cared for as well as caring for themselves because that is something we have to worry about that they didn’t have that going on in their life.

GK: That's right.

SM: Yeah well also I think what would make me really happy, especially the Christian— Japanese Christian churches if they could begin to understand mental illness because as a Japanese culture, it is “kichi gai” and hush hush and as Christians they say it is the devil or a demons and it's all you know so unhelpful to people like our daughter who has schizophrenia and people committing suicide and it's oh gee, he must have lost his job and he committed suicide. That is not the reason, but those are all myths that we grow up with.

GK: That's right. Okay the next question then. We are coming towards the end. Okay so how did the war experience affect you and your life and what helps you most during those hard times? And what did you learn from that?

SM: Well let's see. I think like I said I think being torn away from my friends and finding that that was enough to not allow that friendship to be resumed. That was a real disillusionment for me and so I'm thinking, you know and this is just guessing, but I'm thinking that is why all my close friends in camp, they are not close at all. You know I haven't maintained the closeness because maybe psychologically I'm thinking that if I get too close, I might have to lose that again. But think one thing I—let's see. I don't know if this is the most important thing but I know in camp, as soon as we got into camp oh the Niseis were right on the ball. They set up like a self government. They set up talent shows. They started schools. I mean they just didn't sit around and say “Oh my gosh. What are we going to do?” They really just like hopped to it and I really notice observing that I said that is the way to do it instead of moping around and letting become

a victim. Take charge and do the best you can for yourselves. That and that observed a lot being a younger.

GK: Make lemonade when you have lemons.

SM: Yeah right, that's it.

GK: So how do you feel about that redress and reparations we received?

SM: I was all for redress but at the time, most Niseis didn't want it. They criticized it and everything else but I was all for it. And but today once in a while I hear someone say they paid us. They paid us for part of our loss but it wasn't enough. It wasn't, the way I understand it, it was a penalty the government had to pay which was meager but it had nothing to do with reimbursement for our loss. It was a penalty. That is the way we understand our justice system.

GK: That's good. That's good. So today you kind of shared what you do with your time today. Are you active in the Japanese-American community politically or socially?

SM: Yeah well I'm not much of a political person and I contribute that a lot you know to my Japanese inhibitions and but I am full supportive of those who are active and very political. I appreciate them. And I'm not real active in JACL now because I've been so busy in the church and then church work and now we are doing these other things. Like we are trying to help people raise their awareness of mental illness and we're also working with mentally retarded to raise awareness on that. Now we relate somewhat to prisons and oral history and like I said I'm enjoying—I'm busy with things I chose to do. And JACL right now is not one of the priorities although I support them fully.

GK: Thank you.

SM: Yeah.

GK: Okay, so for recreation you are really doing a lot of service projects?

SM: Yeah. What say you?

GK: Are you traveling for recreation?

SM: Well we're always on the road but my wife especially, we wish we could travel but our income doesn't allow that.

GK: That's right.

SM: But we've had some wonderful trips.

GK: If you can imagine no WWII, what would life be like if there was no WWII?

SM: If there was no WWII it's just we—I don't think we can imagine what. I think we would have Nisei Banks. We would have Universities with Nisei Presidents and like I was telling—I was flying from Ogden to San Francisco for a different church meetings and there was a Nisei fellow with me and I said, "Where are you from?" He said, "I'm New York. I'm from New York." And I said, "How did you end up in New York?" And he said, "Well we were in camp and if it wasn't for camp, I wouldn't have gone to the cold East Coast and you know I think the camp was a good thing because now I'm flying back and forth." I said, "You know what." And he said because of camp you know I said, "You know what, if that camp hadn't happened, you might be owning this jet plane you are flying." And he had nothing to say.

GK: Oh that's good. That's good.

SM: And so it's really—I can't imagine what it would be like. I mean, we were top students.

GK: That's right.

SM: We were—we owned a lot of high percentage of the truck farming which included land. We had all that. We can never imagine. I know in Brazil where there was no

discrimination, they were in the government, top places in the government. You know there wasn't—gee you are a Japanese in there? That was a natural thing.

GK: Wow that is wonderful. So if you can imagine there was another eviction order what would you do?

SM: Oh yeah. Gee you know, that's not a fair question to compare with from the time back then because times have changed so much. But obviously we are going to fight it, protest it. And let me tell you an interesting story. When I was in Stockton our girls were elementary school and the teacher came to our house for teacher parent conference and we were around the coffee table and I had some camp books on the table. And she said, "You know I'll never forget the day that my friends, meaning the Nisei, that my friends were all rounded up and put into the Stockton fairgrounds." She said, "I'll never forget that date?" She said, "Do you think that could ever happen again?" I said, "You know, I don't like to think that would but you know across the street is the Lee's, our neighbor. And if the FBI came and rounded them up and took them." Because we were having trouble with China at that time, if the FBI rounded them up and picked them up, would I have protest or would I say the FBI knows what they are doing? And then—and then she said, "but you have a lot of friends now." I said, "In forty-two and forty-one I thought we had a lot of friends then too." And she said, "Well I didn't know anything about it." I said, "You just told me a minute ago that you will never forget that day." And then she realized you know that she was sort of—oh I didn't know anything about it. Well, I could see that easily happen even today as long as it's not our skin, like the Muslims are picked up and we say, wow they must be. But there are a lot of Muslims I'm sure who are like we were incarcerated without our child, without any accusation and

like you say if it happened again, I would hope that we would be a little bit more what is the word?

GK: Active, pro-active?

SM: Yeah, pro-active right, right.

GK: That's true.

SM: But I understand my Caucasian friends who used to be friends and who were afraid of their friends and didn't want to be Jap lovers and because I might have done the same thing. But that doesn't make it right, it's wrong.

GK: That's right. So what do you think are the greatest contribution by our Nisei men and women?

SM: Well I think their steadiness and their commitment to their high values. Some of them was used against them but still they tried to make the most of it and of course the Veterans they really sacrificed especially those that lost their lives. I remember Tom Kawaguchi when he went to Bruyères and they walked around the area where they saved the lost battalion. I mean yeah they saved the Texas loss and he started to cry because he said they were so young (crying) and they really didn't have to die and I thought, Gee they were like seventeen year olds and eighteen year olds and they were out there because their parents were behind barbed wires, you know.

GK: That's right.

SM: So anyway the Nisei I think really—

GK: Contributed?

SM: Yeah, stood up yeah. And the women of course I think we are not recognizing like the WACS and the Nisei women who played such a big role.

GK: That's right.

SM: You hardly hear about them, you know.

GK: How true. We have one WAC in Nisei.

SM: Yeah, but I think they have been a tremendous contribution that still untold story for America among the Japanese community we might recognize more of them but in our American society they are unsung heroes and the Isseis for sure.

GK: Here is the most important question. What do you feel was your greatest achievement?

SM: Wow that's—for a—for a Japanese-American, that is hard to talk about.

GK: You are a minister. You contributed more.

SM: I think—well you know what is most important to me is understanding that—that self worth and self esteem is not based on what people think of you but it's how you understand yourself. How I understand myself. How I understand that you know my worth is not based on what—you know even things I accomplished or even things, my performance. My self worth is in just being a human being and that requires responsibility you know, contribution to our humanity and there is so much now things being pushed through advertisements and everything else that wants to in a sort of a way, rapes us of all these sales pitches. But I think my—I hope my best contribution is constantly reminding people that their self worth is not in these things but it is in how you understand yourself. So I just feel that's what I—what I hope has been meaningful to people.

GK: Would you feel that is your advice that you'd give young people today?

SM: Yeah, the same thing right, right. Yeah.

GK: Okay, we're at the end of our interview. Here's your chance to say one more thing? Is there anything else you'd like to say? Do you have any questions for me? Thank you so much for sharing your story.

SM: You are welcome. You are welcome. Yeah. Let's see, anything you want to say?

GK: I sure appreciate your thoughts and your analogy. That was good.

SM: You are welcome. Well, I like what John Cho at City College said. He said, "You have to speak to our students because after you guys are gone, it's going to be second hand and you are the first generation to talk about it so." I like that so I think it is important the project that you are doing that at least those that have been through it are going to tell the story. It is not going to be by somebody else who heard about what happened.

GK: That's what we feel and these tapes are really important.

SM: Yeah. So I appreciate the work you are doing.

GK: We sure thank you for—

SM: It's a lot of work.

GK: Sharing your life and your thoughts. It is very, very important.

SM: Thank you.

GK: Thank you very much.

SM: Okay.

GK: That was fabulous.