

NARRATOR:           GEORGE OKADA

INTERVIEWER:       GRACE KIMOTO

DATE:                 October 17, 2003

GK:    This is an interview with George Shiochi Okada, a Nisei man at the age of eighty-two at his home in Fresno, California. Today's date is October 17, 2003 and I my name is Grace Kimoto and I'm on the project called the JACL Oral History for the Central California History, this is tape one, side one, okay. Thank you very much for letting us come into your home. We're going to start with before WWII. Where were you born?

GO:    I was born in Parlier in 1921.

GK:    So what was your family's line of work?

GO:    My father came to the Fresno County. As far as I can think it was about 1890 or even before that. He worked as a farm laborer and he left his family, he left a family back in Japan back in, around 1880 and he came into Seattle and worked on the railroads and he ended up in Fresno around 1890.

GK:    And what ken in Japan?

GO:    He's from Hiroshima, both my mother and father are from Hiroshima.

GK:    And what did they do in Japan? (inaudible)

GO:    He had a family in Japan and for some reason or other, he served in the Japanese Army and after he got out of the Army, he came to the United States. He left a wife and a daughter in Japan. And my mother was widowed and she left the family in Japan and she came, she married my father in 1920 so it was the second marriage for both. And my father was fifty-eight when I was born. My mother was thirty-eight.

GK:    Okay, the war you're speaking of must have been the Russian War?

GO: No, it was the—he was in the service before the Chinese, Japan War so this is back in 18—1880 sometime.

GK: Okay so how many children were in the family and where do you fall in the family in line?

GO: My father had a daughter in Japan.

GK: What was your father's name?

GO: Matsujito.

GK: Matsujito? Okay. And Matsujito and mother's name?

GO: It was Sasayo.

GK: Sasayo?

GO: And she left a son and a daughter from her first marriage.

GK: And so, for you, how many brothers and sisters?

GO: There is another younger brother and I, the two of us.

GK: Okay.

GO: So I only have one real full brother, younger.

GK: I see. So out of two you have a younger brother? So what do you remember about growing up with your dad and your mom?

GO: They were both farm laborers and we grew up. Well, the years the Japanese couldn't own property and they had to, in fact by law, they couldn't even share crop. So, they were forced to farm labor or they worked in the city or something like that. But both of my parents were farm laborers. And my brother and I both grew up, in fact I first went to work as a farm laborer when I was twelve. I was a little tall for my age and they were, during summer vacations, I went to work with the rest of the—well there were Japanese

Issei farm laborers so we were able to go to work. I remember working and picking peaches at ten cents an hour for a ten-hour day. A dollar fifty for ten hour work.

GK: And you were picking peaches in (inaudible)?

GO: Yes, in the Parlier area.

GK: Okay, do you remember having any fun? What was the entertainment?

GO: Well it wasn't very much when you're working for fifteen cents an hour you didn't have much extra so most of my memories go back to my school days. I attended grammar school in Parlier and went through eight years of grammar school in Parlier and four years of high school in Parlier.

GK: The name of the school?

GO: Parlier Grammar School and Parlier High School.

GK: Okay.

GO: And to give you an example of the cross section of our school as a first grader, I didn't realize this until one of my haku-jin friends, classmates reminded me of it. As a first and second grader, we were in segregated class. I didn't realize it at the time that we were segregated but as I look through my class pictures, I realized that our class is two Armenians, one Chinese girl and I think there is three Mexicans and the rest were all Japanese. But by the time we were and most of us couldn't speak, we didn't know A from Z. We were brought up by Issei parent's and we couldn't speak any English but by the time we were in second grade we were in class with the rest of them.

GK: Did you have friends then there at school that you would?

GO: I still have contact with some of my classmates. We went through twelve years of school and I still talk to them. We meet with them once a month for lunch and so I am able to keep up with them.

GK: So evidently the role for boys was you worked in the field.

GO: Yes.

GK: How about the girls? Did they work in the field?

GO: No, most of them that I know of, there were some. By the time we got into being teenagers, they did work in the fields and there were crews doing things in vineyards and things like that.

GK: So do you remember that being hard or were there other hardships?

GO: No, really when you are twelve or fifteen years old, it is a long day but you don't remember that as a hardship.

GK: Okay, do you remember what kind of discipline? Were you a bad boy some times and?

GO: Oh I think most of us grew up under similar conditions. There were things that we did that maybe we shouldn't. (laughs)

GK: Well, what was the discipline then? How was that?

GO: Really, our teachers in our schools didn't have to discipline the kids that much. We had to stand up in the corner of the classroom or something like that but that was about it.

GK: So, you were pretty good? Children were pretty good in those days?

GO: Well, (laughing) we were typical kids growing up.

GK: So what do you think were the values that your dad and mom taught you?

GO: Well that is something that I think we should pass on to the next generation. Parlier had probably a hundred or maybe a hundred and thirty Japanese families and in all the years

that I can remember, there was not one in Parlier that was arrested for anything outside of some traffic violation. And we grew up in the depression era when there was a lot of people who couldn't eat then and had to depend on public assistance to get by on. But it was not one that I know of who had to depend on public assistance. And that is something I think that the Issei brought with them from Japan and tried to impress on us. We call it "haji", you know, shame, but to accept public assistance we maybe some days maybe we only had a bowl of rice to eat but we never had to beg for assistance from anybody else to get by and that is something that is characteristic of the Japanese people.

GK: What's the word for opposite of haji? I guess it is some kind of pride that tells you.

GO: Yes its pride in fact my dad used to tell me that in the old days in Japan if you were a Samurai and maybe you didn't have a meal for a couple of days, but they walked around with a toothpick in their mouth to make it look like they had a full stomach and I think those were the things that were taught to us. And at the same time maybe I shouldn't mention, we had in the Japanese community in Parlier, we had probably had some place close to two hundred Japanese kids that went to language school in Parlier. To give you an example of things that the Issei did, it cost about a day's wages to send us to Japanese language school on weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, so it was like my dad had to put up, I think it was three dollars a month for my brother and I to go to language school. And this was—they stressed that education this—they made sure that we went through school.

GK: That is one of their values. And so the Japanese language was valued very much?

GO: Yes. I think they wanted—it wasn't the language itself so much as some of the things that they learned in Japan about discipline and obligations and things like that that they wanted to instill in us.

GK: So those were some of the cultural values.

GO: Yes, more so than the language itself.

GK: Is there any values that you rejected that you thought that the parents were wrong?

GO: Not really, not that I can think of at the present time.

GK: Okay, so were you part of the community then of Japan, of Japanese and how did you take part? What are some of the things you did in the community of Japanese and Japanese-Americans?

GO: We were very active in the Buddhist Church. In fact in 1931, they established a Buddhist Church in Parlier. It was independent from the church of Parlier. This was during the depression days and we had a minister who taught Japanese language school and he was a Buddhist minister and those were the things we were very active in. We worked in fact we were active in the young Buddhist program after (inaudible).

GK: Boy Scouts, did you have?

GO: No, in fact I don't think there was a Boy Scout troop in Parlier of any kind.

GK: YMCA or?

GO: No, there was nothing like that.

GK: Did they come in for picnics or (inaudible) on Sunday?

GO: We had—well we had a community picnic once a year in the spring. It was out in the foothills and then the church had a “Hanamatsuri” and an “Obon Festival” so they were probably the two or three activities that the whole community took part in. In fact at

Parlier it was probably ninety, ninety-five percent Buddhists and so Hanamatsuri and Obon were pretty prominent activities in the community there here.

GK: So you sound good about it?

GO: Yes, we enjoyed it. We took part in it and we enjoyed every bit of it.

GK: How about sports? Did you do any Judo or Kendo or?

GO: We had a, in fact our Buddhist minister had a black belt degree in Judo so he started a Judo class around 1932 or 1933. I think we had some Kendo classes in Reedley or something like that. Parlier itself I don't think there was anybody who took part in Kendo. But as we grew up and at the high school, we had high school, all of us took part in the athletic program. In fact Parlier we had a pretty good basketball team before camp, before we went to camp.

GK: Did you take part in basketball?

GO: Yes, my brother and I both and there was three or four others we were about the same age group.

GK: Baseball?

GO: Parlier, in fact the older group, they had a baseball team around in the early twenties.

GK: Really? You have memories of that?

GO: Yeah. I remember as a kid I used to watch them play baseball. And the Issei people, the fathers liked baseball and on Sundays there is always a pretty good crowd of people watching the Nisei, our people are older in our group, play baseball.

GK: So did you notice, Isseis, were they interested in baseball?

GO: Yeah they were.

GK: Apparently so.

GO: They were very supportive of it.

GK: So do you remember, you told me you went to school in Parlier and all, how did you feel about school in those days?

GO: You know I think most of us didn't feel discriminated against or anything like that. In fact we had a high school principal that was very supportive of the Nisei group. And we were really idealistic. In fact, I made a talk at my commencement and my title of it was "American Ideals". And my principal told me he said, "you know in real life, it isn't that way."

GK: No, it isn't (inaudible).

GO: You know he told me about it and I didn't realize this until evacuation came by and the reality settled in. To give you an example, my high school class graduated in forty-six and twenty-six were Nisei.

GK: Oh gee. And you were a graduation speaker?

GO: Yes, there was three of us Nisei who became life members of the California Scholarship Federation. And I didn't realize this until later but every year there was an honor graduates who were all Nisei. And when my graduating class, we had two Caucasian speakers and one became a speaker because he was the student body president, not because he was an honor student.

GK: So you did mingle with the Caucasians?

GO: Yes, in fact like I say I still have a good memories from my classmates. Some who went on to become, well in fact one of my classmates was Red Adams he was a pitching coach for the LA Dodgers and I still have contact with him at least a couple times a year.

GK: So do you remember ever going to your Caucasian friend's homes?



- GO: Well when we were youngsters we didn't but now I do. There were the days when we grew up, there was no social contact with most of our Caucasian friends.
- GK: How about your teachers?
- GO: We had in fact I had contact with a couple of teachers until recently. They are gone now but our principal, Mr. Rohr of the high school, was very supportive of the Japanese community. In fact in 1942 he tried to, there was a curfew on the Japanese-Americans, I think an eight o'clock curfew, and he tried to postpone graduation. I mean change the time of the graduation from eight o'clock to six o'clock so there were three or four Nisei graduates in our class and he tried to change it and the community wouldn't let him change it. And the Board of Trustees fired him as a principal.
- GK: Wow. So you feel that—how good were the teachers and the principal?
- GO: Well, the teachers were very supportive.
- GK: Okay.
- GO: I don't think there was one case that I can say they picked on us because of our race or anything like that all through the years, twelve years of schooling.
- GK: And all the other children?
- GO: Most of the kids were pretty good.
- GK: Did you consider yourself a Japanese child or Japanese-American child or American child? How did you feel about that?
- GO: I think that some place in the back of my mind I guess we felt that we were different because the background and society itself and we really didn't mingle with the Caucasian community at all.
- GK: So you considered yourself Japanese?

GO: Yes.

GK: How about your parents? Did they come to school at all and talk to the teachers and principal?

GO: No, they didn't because they couldn't speak the language anyway and so they just felt that unless we were bad kids and they got called in, other than that, very seldom. I don't think there was any case where Issei parents had to come to the school to talk to teachers.

GK: How about your school work? Did they take interest in what you were doing?

GO: Well they made sure that we had—that we were able to stay up in school.

GK: Okay, let's talk about at home at that time? What kind of a dinner table and conversation? Did you talk to your parents and brother?

GO: Really not that much. I think that we lived in two different worlds so there was very little well they were busy and we had our things to do, too. So we ate and that was it.

GK: But you did sit down at a table together?

GO: Yes, yes. We made sure of that. All of our meals we sat down together and ate.

GK: Okay, let's jump to your teenage years, okay? What kind of joys do you remember in your teenage years?

GO: Well, I think personally, we were more sports than anything in school and other than that, there wasn't. I—financially I guess we didn't have the extra money to go to movies and things like that. It was just more school.

GK: Did you have any problems in your teenage years?

GO: Not really.

GK: Not with your parent's standards and school standards.

GO: Really I don't think that most of us really had a problem or at least we didn't think of it as a problem.

GK: Did you date at all in your teenage years, interracially maybe or not?

GO: No, not really.

GK: Do you remember any injustices at that time that you can recall?

GO: Not really. In fact the only thing that even in school I don't think that the teachers in high school, all of our teachers were very supportive of us and all of the students were good students, Japanese students were all and we didn't feel like we were picked on or anything like that.

GK: So you really didn't go out on dates?

GO: No, no very little social contact with any of the other students.

GK: Did you think about well one day I will marry and what kind of person you would marry?  
No, huh?

GO: I guess in my school days those were the things, I guess you had to be a big city?

GK: And basically sports was, it sounds like—

GO: Yeah. Yes.

GK: Okay, okay. Okay then you would describe your teenage and growing up years as pretty happy?

GO: Yeah, I really didn't, it was all hard work and we had to struggle for spending money but other than that, it was all right.

GK: So you did work teenage years too?

GO: Oh yes, in fact I was telling the wife not too long ago I used to go plant watermelon way out to the, into Tulare County during Easter vacation. There was nine or ten days we

worked I think when I was about fifteen or sixteen years old. Every chance we got—we went out to pick out some kind of a job so we could have a little extra money.

GK: Do you remember how much you got paid?

GO: Probably around twenty cents an hour.

GK: Do you think you got paid the same as any other?

GO: Oh yes. I think we got our pay scale was the same.

GK: Did you attend college?

GO: No.

GK: You did not?

GO: No.

GK: Okay, and—

GO: I had the opportunity to go. In fact, my high school coach tried to talk me into going to San Francisco State and work a scholarship type of a thing but facing the reality, I just did—I had too many people who had degrees and couldn't get jobs.

GK: That is correct.

GO: I had a classmate his older brother had a master's degree from USC and he had to come back to the farm. In fact there was a couple of fellows who played football at Fresno State back in the thirties and couldn't get, they had teaching credentials and couldn't get jobs. So they were out there working like the rest of us.

GK: And you feel why?

GO: Well, they just wouldn't hire them that's all.

GK: Why?

GO: Because of race and in fact in camp I ran across a fellow that graduated from Cal Tech with a degree in a aeronautical engineering and he went to Japan. He couldn't get a job in the U.S. so he went to Japan and he thought maybe he could find something over there. He came back and he was in camp with us. I had another friend that graduated from UCLA before he was twenty years old with a degree and he couldn't get a job.

GK: So you were wise to that?

GO: Well it wasn't—I guess, the reality sets in.

GK: Okay, let's go into these things in the WWII period. How did you hear about Pearl Harbor, December 7<sup>th</sup>?

GO: Ah, in fact we were getting ready to go to church, no, there was a special service at the church and we just heard it over the radio.

GK: How did you feel?

GO: It really, the reality of it really didn't hit us until we went to church and everybody started talking about it.

GK: Do you remember any feelings that you had?

GO: Not really, not really.

GK: You weren't scared and shocked?

GO: No, just couldn't believe that something like that could happen.

GK: Did you think it would change your life?

GO: Not really. It didn't dawn on us until we started hearing about evacuation and stuff and in fact there is several of us in Parlier that used to stay up at nights with the civil defense group watching the water tower.

GK: Did you think anything about the constitution or you as a citizen?

GO: You know, it really didn't hit me until I called up my draft board. This was, Parlier was part of the free zone. It was east of 99 and we didn't have to evacuate. And then I think this was in June, when we found out they were going to put us all into camp. I didn't realize until I called my draft board. I was, at that time, I was still twenty years old and I called the draft board and I asked them if my brother and my mother, my father had passed away. And my mother and my brother if I had joined the Army, if they could stay back in Parlier and they told me you are classified as 4C and we don't need you.

GK: Enemy alien.

GO: Yeah, and that's when the reality set in.

GK: Okay, so what happened to you and your family?

GO: And so we left for Gila on October third, I mean August third, from Sanger.

GK: From Sanger and Gila is in Arizona.

GO: Gila, Arizona and we were in Canal camp, Camp 1.

GK: Okay, and you were at an assembly center before?

GO: No, we didn't go to an assembly center.

GK: You didn't go to an assembly center? I see.

GO: Yes.

GK: What do you remember about a day in camp?

GO: Well, it wasn't—I guess there was a kind of resentment of why? Because I felt that at that time, I had worked for three years to try to save enough money to get my own place to farm and then it went right down the drain. In fact if I had been able to harvest, I was a share cropper then. If I was able to harvest that crop of forty-two, I think I could have

had enough money to make a down payment and these are the things that are felt when we were in camp.

GK: Do you remember the trip there? How did you get there?

GO: We left Sanger I think it was around eight or nine o'clock in the morning and we didn't get to Arizona, we went through a—

GK: On a train?

GO: On a train, through the Mohave Desert and we ended up in Casa Grande the following day and we were stranded in Casa Grande from ten o'clock until four o'clock because we were in the last car and we were stranded there because they forgot to pick us up and this was in the first part of August, a hundred and twenty degrees.

GK: You are saying they unhooked you for an entire day?

GO: They took the car away and we were left standing.

GK: Another train was supposed to come by and pick you up?

GO: The bus was supposed to pick us up.

GK: The bus was supposed to pick you up? I see in a hundred and ten degrees. So then you were how old in camp?

GO: I turned twenty-one.

GK: Twenty-one?

GO: Just before I left for Arizona.

GK: Did you remember the loyalty questions?

GO: Yes, I refused to answer it. And I told them that I tried to join the Army before we left, and they didn't take me and why should I have to answer that question and he was a

sergeant or something and he just put down you're a "no-no boy" and if you want to put it that way, I have no choice.

GK: And so did your mother know about that and your brother?

GO: No, my mother didn't know. My brother was a yes, yes boy.

GK: I see.

GO: But I was a no, no boy and I was sent to Tule Lake from there.

GK: So you were separated from your mom?

GO: No my mother and I went to Tule Lake. My brother left camp. He was working on a sugar beet camp in Montana.

GK: So your mother knew why you went to Tule Lake?

GO: Yes, yes.

GK: How about your other half-siblings?

GO: What?

GK: Were they here or were they in Japan?

GO: Oh the rest of the—the only ones in my family were my younger brother and my mother.

GK: Yeah, but your mother's first family?

GO: They were all back in Japan.

GK: They were all in Japan. Was there any contact with them at all?

GO: My mother did, but I didn't.

GK: But your mom did have contact?

GO: Yes.

GK: So she knew whether they were alive and okay?

GO: Yes.



GK: Okay, so what other problems other than having to move? Did you experience other problems in camp?

GO: Not really. Other than—the food wasn't the best and there was no privacy, common bath room and things like that but and because of the fact that we just looked like there was somebody out there, we didn't do anything criminal or anything, but there was a patrol out there with a gun and all that and I just didn't feel we were something that I looked forward to.

GK: Was the Tule Lake camp was different from the?

GO: Yes it was different.

GK: How?

GO: The security was tighter but you know, you think about it and I lost a, in fact one of the fellows that I worked with, his older brother lost a fifteen month old child because he burned to death. He fell against the heater in the camp. And the head administrator of hospital when he left the hospital at five o'clock or four o'clock, he locked the medical cabinet and this boy and he was being treated by Dr. Hashiba and he was the best. And he was treated by the doctor and he couldn't get access to the medical until the next day and the boy had died. These things you know, it gnaws on me. And you know Klamath Falls had a newspaper that had an article and he was the head of the food division and a Caucasian head of the food division was involved in a car wreck in Klamath Falls and it came out in the Klamath Falls paper that his truck was full of meat.

GK: You mean from camp?

GO: He was stealing from camp. These things come out little by little.

GK: Oh gee. How do you feel about that?

GO: I was working for the camp newspaper at the time and I printed that story. The Caucasian head of the district department forbid me to put it into the paper. I argued with him because he told me that anything, any article in the newspaper outside of the newspaper I could put and he wouldn't let me put that. And some—it was a mimeograph Japanese newspaper and I put that article in the paper.

GK: Do you have a copy of it?

GO: No, but I didn't have a job after that.

GK: Uh huh, that's good to record that.

GO: And another thing that, very little was said about the fact that this fellow was—his name was Yamane. He was from the state track championship team from Edison High School in Fresno and he was in Tule Lake and when word got out that there was food being stolen from the warehouses, they had a group of fellows that put a watch dog out there and he was beaten up so badly that if it wasn't for Dr. Hashiba, I don't think he would be alive today. He is still alive. As far as I know he was—he is in Hiroshima, I think.

GK: In Japan?

GO: Yeah, but he's—he thinks it never makes a—

GK: And it could make you know documentation so and that is an important story. So your mother was born in Japan. But Dr. Hashiba is from Fresno. He was my doctor.

GO: Yeah.

GK: And he was in Tule Lake?

GO: Yeah, he was at Tule Lake. In fact if I remember correctly he was at the Fresno Assembly Center and at that time, I think he was a neurosurgeon or something and I

understand that the MP's came in and moved, took him to the Fresno County Hospital to perform surgery while he was in camp.

GK: While he was in camp?

GO: Because somebody wanted him to—to perform the operation.

GK: He did all our families, taking our tonsils out and (inaudible) in Livingston. Very good, so your camp days did you have friends that did go to military and you were in contact with?

GO: Yes, in fact there are quite a few but at the same time I have a friend who was drafted before the war. He was—he went through the Panama Canal on a troop ship and came out to the Pacific side to be sent overseas to the Pacific theater. And the Pacific side, they took him off the ship and discharged him.

GK: Well now.

GO: And—

GK: Because they didn't—they felt—

GO: Well there are several Nisei soldiers that were discharged and he was one of them and he was in Tule Lake with me.

GK: Is that right? I didn't know about this. That's the first time.

GO: It seems—it maybe just little things.

GK: Little big things. You see my brother was at Fort Ord.

GO: Oh, I see.

GK: In before Pearl Harbor and he was interned. He was in the west coast and he was in the medical field.

GO: Oh, I see.

GK: So they moved all the soldiers even if they had a United States uniform they moved them back East, so yeah. Okay, so very good. So then how long were you in Tule Lake?

GO: I was in Tule Lake from forty-three and then I guess we were classified as renunciants. We renounced our U.S. citizenship and we were sent to a Department of Justice camp in Bismarck, North Dakota and I was released in 1946.

GK: So you went back to Japan?

GO: No.

GK: Some were.

GO: No, there was probably half were sent to Japan. We joined, I can't remember the— Collins, Wayne Collins instituted a lawsuit in the Federal District Court in San Francisco and those who wanted to remain, became part of that lawsuit.

GK: I see.

GO: In fact I still have the judgment and it was 1952, that it was reversed.

GK: It was reversed?

GO: Yeah.

GK: Okay, so you then you renounced and then?

GO: And then—

GK: Did you go through a trial?

GO: No. Well, we were part of it. It was a class action suit.

GK: Class action suit. Okay, and then it was dropped?

GO: Yes.

GK: I see.

GO: And then I guess the U.S. didn't pursue it from the Federal District Court. They decided I guess, the U.S. renunciation was declared illegal in the District Court and then it was never retried after that.

GK: Did you get compensation for that?

GO: No, we got that twenty thousand dollars.

GK: For that case?

GO: No, no.

GK: Okay, tell me about your wife and how you met her and when you got married?

GO: Well, our families are old friends from the same village in Japan.

GK: I see, and what village is that?

GO: Hiroshima.

GK: Hiroshima?

GO: On the outskirts of Hiroshima city and they came to the U.S. and they were in contact all the way through so I knew her as a matter of fact we knew each other from when we were kids.

GK: Not in camp?

GO: She was—she was in—

GK: Parlier?

GO: She was in Watsonville and I'm in Parlier. And in camp they went to Poston and I was in Gila.

GK: You both were in Arizona, is that right?

GO: And we were married in—

GK: How did you meet her? Well you knew her, right?

GO: Yeah, I knew her. Well in those days when you are a teenager and there are three or four years difference in age and well, I was just a little kid (laughing). And we got married in Fresno and I worked. We both worked as farm laborer until we bought our first place in 1950 and we expanded our farm and we retired—well I got to be sixty-two, I figured that was time to retire so.

GK: So who took over your farm?

GO: I sold it. We sold everything we had. And we have two girls and neither one of them would fit into the farming picture so we just decided to get out.

GK: I see. So where are your daughters?

GO: We have a, both of our girls, one graduated from Fresno State and the other one graduated from UOP. They both have master's degree. One is a CPA and the other is a science teacher in a secondary system so. Neither one of them are married so we don't have any grandkids.

GK: That was my next question, did you get any grandchildren?

GO: No (laughing) so we have a dog that is a replacement.

GK: I have a granddog. So, you got back and you kind of told us how you got back and bought your place and things. What word can you say for camp life?

GO: It was an experience that I can't forget.

GK: Okay.

GO: But at the same time, you can't dwell on it. From the day I left camp that was behind me because that is something I think we as Buddhist were brought up they call it "Karma." Whatever happens, it's because something in the past creates your future for you. And you are (inaudible) as such.

GK: Okay. So you got back and you joined in another community experience.

GO: Yes. I was fortunate of being able to expand my farm. I worked hard at it.

GK: How many acres did you do?

GO: We farmed pretty close to two hundred acres at one time, mostly tree fruit—peaches, plums and nectarines. And we were very active in the Buddhist church in Parlier in the youth program. And I took part in some school activities. In fact we had—we had a parent group at the high school level and I served on the board there a couple years and things like that. In fact we kept pretty active with our kids.

GK: All through their school.

GO: Yes.

GK: I see and they attended USC, not they attended—

GO: Fresno State.

GK: Fresno State.

GO: The older one graduated from Fresno State and the younger one graduated from the University of Pacific.

GK: Okay so that sounds good. So then today you are enjoying what you really worked for?

GO: I feel we are fortunate in that we are still healthy enough that we were able to travel.

GK: Where have you traveled?

GO: We've covered close to forty states in the U.S., different sites. We've hit five Continents. The only Continent we haven't hit is Antarctica and Africa. So considering my wife and I have been very fortunate and we are kind of grateful.

GK: Deserving, deserving and so you travel now and are you involved in the Fresno community?

GO: A little. We have friends here in Fresno, old friends. But our days in the community services is past, I think it's the younger ones. In fact our kids are more involved than we are.

GK: So what makes you happy today?

GO: I think the wife and I have been very fortunate in having good supportive friends, a lot of friends. We have our kids are have a good profession and our nieces and nephews we are very close to them and they are very successful in what they are doing so those are the things that make life very pleasant for us, fulfilling, I guess.

GK: So do you have any worries?

GO: Well—

GK: Well they just alive?

GO: Well I think if you can enjoy life to the fullest, I think that's enough.

GK: Okay, so you are spending your time now pretty much, staying home?

GO: Staying home and taking care of the garden. We got to the gym three days a week to keep ourselves physically active.

GK: So what did you do about—how did you feel about your redress and your reparations?

GO: It—you know the redress in terms of actual dollar-wise, it was just a joke.

GK: How do you mean?

GO: Well, we had to—we lost a car and there was just about enough to pay for the car that we lost. And in the terms of dollars in 1980's I guess but in 1940.

GK: But you lost the farm, didn't you?

GO: No, we didn't have any.

GK: You didn't have the farm then, okay.



GO: I was trying to save up enough money to be able to buy and that's the part that hurt.

GK: Yeah, you were just about ready to.

GO: If they would have compensated me for the money that I lost on that share cropping deal, but I wasn't.

GK: Okay, so it had—bitter moment.

GO: But you know, it's the past and I don't like—I don't think that we should forget it but you can't live on the past.

GK: Uh-huh. If there was no WWII what do you think would have happened? You would have been a big farmer actually?

GO: Well I don't know whether—but I guess in a way I guess the war opened up the field for a lot of us Japanese-Americans in the field of jobs. Like I say in the forties you couldn't get a job but in the fifties, you know professions opened up for people and I have friends that have a Ph.D. in food technology and was head of the USDA lab in Pasadena. These jobs opened up in the fifties and the sixties and I guess that was—I don't know if that was because of the war or what.

GK: So we're coming to the end of our interview so do you have any advice for the young people of today?

GO: I think what I would like to tell the Sansei and Yonsei make sure that you can understand the values that the Nisei parents brought to us.

GK: Such as?

GO: Hard work and frugality and public service, honesty, these are things that I think if they could understand what the Nisei parents did, I think it's a contribution to the next generation and our generation and the generation that followed us. These are the traits

that we can treasure. I think so I think in reality if we had more emphasis on the history of the Issei population, it would enhance our image more.

GK: Very good, is there anything else that you want to say?

GO: No, I've talked enough (laughing).

GK: Do you have any questions or anything?

GO: No.

GK: Well we sure appreciate you sharing. I think you brought up some really important parts that had not been really talked about.

GO: Yeah, I belong to the Japanese-American Historical Society and these are things that I think we should—in fact I'd like to see something like this right here in the Central Valley to bring up some of the historical things that the Issei have done. As a matter of fact, when we talked about Tad Kozuki. His father and his grandfather farmed about close to three hundred acres. These are acres that he bought before the Alien Land Law went into affect.

GK: Oh, how he could (inaudible) that?

GO: And Judge Uchiyama's father farmed close to three hundred acres. The Kanagawa's and the Hasegowa's in Sanger raised, a, had the citrus groves. Things like that you know if they could be preserved because it's something the Sanseis and the Yonseis, they don't hear about these things. We know because we heard it and I think it should be passed on.

GK: Okay. Can you give us some names so that we can pursue some more oral history?

GO: Yeah, you know like I said Uchiyama, I don't remember his first name but Judge Uchiyama's father, do you remember Ernie Morishita, who used to be a county administrator officer from Monterey County? He's older than you; he's gone but his

grandfather on the mother's side had eighty acres that he had bought and he had before the land law went into affect.

GK: That's interesting.

GO: To give you the—his grandmother left the Buddhist Church a gift of thirty thousand dollars. This was a series E Bond that he had purchased right after camp, series E Bond so you just go up to the bank and said I want to give this to the Buddhist Church in Parlier and the value of this was about thirty thousand dollars. There was a Katsura family in Parlier and about eighty acres of land that was pre-Alien Land Law. Like I don't know if you remember Aki Hardware store in J town? They had something going the Kamikawa's, and in fact they are still there, the Kogetsu-do, the "manju" place in Fresno. That goes back to one of these, this is the third generation.

GK: So that's the project we're working on the contribution stories.

GO: But Kitahara has that car dealership, his grandfather was another one. Yeah, they had about three hundred acres in Reedley and Parlier area. I don't think the acres is there anymore but it was there at one time—and you know something I think the Uchiyama's, Mr. Uchiyama was involved in oil exploration. This was in the thirties.

GK: Ah that's really—

GO: I knew the man personally and I heard of it but it doesn't go down in the history books. He just got squeezed out by the big oil companies.

GK: Well, thank you very much.

GO: Well thank you.

GK: It was so valuable.

GO: Thank you.

GK: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW