

NARRATOR: FRED HASHIMOTO

INTERVIEWER: JAMES KURIHARA

DATE: July 29, 1999

JK: It's on, it's on, okay. All right. All right, this is an interview with Fred Hashimoto, a Nisei man, seventy-nine years old and it is taking place in Hilmar, California, on July 29th.

FH: I think so.

JK: Well the interviewer is James Kurihara and this is conducted with a project being done by the Livingston-Merced JACL cooperating with the Central District of the JACL in Fresno. Now we'll ask questions about your life and family. Where were you born, Fred?

FH: Suisun, California.

JK: What was your date of birth?

FH: October 28, 1919.

JK: And that would make you at being seventy—

FH: Seventy-nine years old.

JK: Yes all right. What was your family's line of work?

FH: Are you talking about my dad?

JK: Your, your dad previous to when he moved here, what did he do?

FH: Well he's a farmer ever since he started to work or make a living so is my grandfather and go ahead.

JK: Okay and when did your father come to—

FH: The United States?

JK: The present, the permanent residence?

FH: In the Livingston area?

JK: Yeah.

FH: As near as I know, it was about 1922 I believe.

JK: And your father came to farm.

FH: He was farming. He had farmed the Suisun area and also in Live Oak where he raised rice with the Koda family and so on and then they went broke right after the depression during WWI and went back to farming and then relocated to Cressey about 1922, could have been '23.

JK: Okay, what were the circumstances at the time—there were many alien land laws as I recall and what were the circumstances of your father farming or purchasing a farm?

FH: Well at the time all Niseis couldn't own the farm so it started out with a farm that is under my uncle's name because he was a citizen and then when I became of age it was put under my name and that is how it was farmed.

JK: Now your mother, where was she from?

FH: She's from Hiroshima, Japan.

JK: And when did she come to U.S.?

FH: I believe my dad went and when he was farming and when he accumulated enough, he went back to Japan. I presume about 19—about 1917 or I think around there and he married and got married in Japan and brought Mom back here so she was a bride in Japan.

JK: And what did she do on the farm?

FH: She was a housewife like a lot of other Issei women, raising a family and helping on the farm and so on.

JK: What is your position in the family?

FH: I'm the oldest of the five siblings.

JK: What do you remember about family life?

FH: When?

JK: During the time you were growing up?

FH: What was my what now?

JK: During the time you were growing up, pretty, let's start with pre-school? What was the—what did you?

FH: Well, I don't remember a whole lot. But when I was a kid, the only as far as speaking, I guess Japanese was the only language that we used and of course my parents were struggling. And I still remember the first day of grammar school that I went, I thought I was in a foreign country because I didn't speak a word of English and I didn't know another language existed so I was in a total new environment, that is what I remember. And as you grow up and we started to go to Sunday school and so on, we started to meet people from the Livingston district because I was from the Cressey district.

JK: You went to Cressey Grammar School?

FH: Right, eight years and then went to the Livingston High School for four years.

JK: Well Cressey Grammar School was very small?

FH: A very, very small school. From the first grade to the eighth grade is two teachers and I guess the split was probably at sixth grade or someplace in there and one class is probably only about five or six kids per grade or something like that.

- JK: And you had the same teacher then for several years?
- FH: Yeah, you know, from the time you go, you had one teacher and I don't remember where the grade thing broke up, broke at but sixth grade or up or whatever it was, maybe fifth grade. Anyway then you get a different teacher.
- JK: What did you do for entertainment?
- FH: Which part?
- JK: The family? What did the family do?
- FH: Family entertainment? I don't think there was any entertainment. Of course my parents liked music and so we had, early on we had records and later radio. And of course my dad liked to go camping and things and so we did that during vacation time, did a little traveling but that was about it. Most of our recreation would be swimming in the canal at the summertime.
- JK: Do you recall any of the hardships of country living?
- FH: Well I think the tough part was that we never felt that we were equal to the Caucasians. We had Portuguese and other whites but they were in one class and it seemed like we were in another class altogether and we were called Japs quite often and even teachers did that sometimes on some occasions. And that all sticks in my mind all this time. And then if you got in a fight with any of the white kids, you always took, not a beating, but a tongue-lashing from the teacher because it was your fault and not theirs and that is the way the ball bounced in those days.
- JK: What about family expectations?
- FH: Oh family expectations, I guess we were automatically expected to go to college when we got out of high school so we all did.

JK: And were there different rules against girls? You had a sister, I recall.

FH: Different rules, do you mean?

JK: Within the family.

FH: Within the family? Well, my sister was the only daughter and the rest of us were boys so I think my dad kind of favored her over anybody else because she got piano. She got the Japanese, all kinds of dolls and things extra that we didn't get but maybe that is just the sibling rivalry or whatever you might call it. But I thought she got favorite treatment.

JK: Did you participate in church activities?

FH: Do you mean in high school days? It depends on—

JK: High school probably.

FH: High school yeah. There was a youth fellowship group and I was in that group and so I was fairly active there.

JK: Were you in the Boy Scout?

FH: Yes, I was in the Scouts.

JK: Did they have local picnics?

FH: The community had their picnic and I'm not so sure who sponsored it but anyway I remember going to various picnics in the past and I think we kind of looked forward to it because they all seemed to be in the late spring and we'd go to different places. And like my mother would go all out and make different goodies and so on and so on.

JK: Were you into any music at the school?

FH: No, I wasn't. I am not musically inclined so I never got into it although later my sister and brother were involved in music. We had a piano at home that my sister used to play

and I think my brother used to play horn but since I was the oldest and we were still going through the Depression, I didn't get the benefit of something like that.

JK: How about Japanese language school?

FH: Yes, this is something that, I don't know, in a way I kind of dread it but in a way I kind of didn't but we used to go to Japanese school on Saturdays. And I think we went out there to play than to learn, that is what it seemed. Because I don't—I guess it must have helped some but boy, I forgot just about everything that they tried to teach me then.

JK: I don't suppose that this was something that boys generally did but did you have practices in Japanese cultural things?

FH: The only thing that I got involved in is kendo which they had at Livingston at one time and so we used to go to kendo and I forget which (inaudible) or whatever it was, so while it lasted, I was involved, yes.

JK: Do you think it had some influence on your life?

FH: Yeah, I think they teach you the spirit of the samurai or whatever it is and I guess it makes the—it gives you the fighting spirit or whatever. But anyway it is kind of hard to define. But anyway talking about kendo, it was one of the things that we had to get rid of after Pearl Harbor because when we were burning things up and getting rid of things, that is one of the those that went.

JK: Okay, what school did you go to, Stockton Grammar? Oh we did discuss about that.

FH: Oh I went to the University of California, both Berkeley and Davis, so on December 7, 1941, I was in Berkeley taking my finals and that is when it happened, Sunday morning.

JK: When you went to Davis for graduate work?

FH: No, no, I split my term and started out in Berkeley and went to Davis and then back to Berkeley, yeah. Because I took some ag courses and I was majoring in Ag Econ and I thought I should take some courses at Davis and I kind of enjoyed it there. Smaller campus and so on.

JK: How did schoolmates treat you in school?

FH: Grammar school or high school?

JK: Grammar school, we'll start with grammar school.

FH: Well I thought grammar school was so-so but like I mentioned, year to year, I thought the Caucasian kids had the upper hand and the teachers always favored them. So, you know, kids get in fights every so often and if you did that, you were the bad guy. So I was the bad guy and I still remember one got after me after school, and in those days we carried a lunch pail made out of a piece of tin I guess with a handle on it. And the only defense I had, I swung it at him and I hit him on the head I guess and he didn't bother me after that but boy, the next day I really caught heck from the teacher because I guess I must have cut him on the face and here I was trying to defend myself. I didn't go after him, he came after me. But as far as high school, it was fairly neutral. But the funny part of it is, I find that I still felt a lot more comfortable among the Nisei. Like during lunch hour and free period, I'm hanging around the Nisei and somehow I gravitated towards the Cortez group but it was always the Nisei group that I hung around with and I never felt too comfortable with the Caucasian group at that time and it took me a long time to get over that. Somehow, I don't know whether it was—let's see, what do you call that? Anyway, whether I felt inferior or I felt prosecuted I don't know what, but I just didn't feel

comfortable with them. But, high school days were much better, much better than grammar school.

JK: In high school did you associate quite a bit with Caucasians?

FH: Not quite a bit, no just what I had to do, yeah.

JK: Let's see. Were you ever invited to the home of Caucasian schoolmates?

FH: No, never. Well, we were out in the country and I can't think of anybody that I was close to at that time except the Nisei kids. So I can still remember that one of my farm neighbor was Frank Suzuki, for instance. I knew him since we were little kids and he used to come over and I remember him sleeping over at nights and that is how things were. We never had any Caucasian close friends.

JK: Speaking of coming over, maybe we ought to—where was your farm?

FH: It was sort of between Winton and Cressey and sort of a triangle between that and Livingston and a lot of times we would say we were from the Livingston area because its kind of encompass the whole area there. But our address was in Winton and Cressey Grammar School and high school I went to Livingston and the church was in Livingston so it was kind of a Livingston community.

JK: How about teachers? Did you have some favorite teachers? I know you didn't in grammar school, I suppose in high school.

FH: Well, I was afraid of the teachers in grammar school. They used to scare me. Because in those days if you did anything wrong, they got a big yardstick and you really got spanked. Or to use some foul language, they got soap and water and they washed your mouth out and that was really dumb because kids who were a little on the ornery side got that and they really got banged around. So you were all scared. But high school, it

was—I didn't have any special favorite teacher but I guess they were so-so but nothing real close though.

JK: What about—let's see. Oh, how did the—family life—describe did you have dinner all together at the table?

FH: As a family?

JK: Yeah.

FH: I always did. I can't remember not being together as far as that goes. It was just taken for granted I think.

JK: Did you have your own seat at the table?

FH: Yeah, I guess we sat at a certain part and each one had their own seats. It was just kind of a known thing I guess.

JK: Did you talk about school work at the dinner table often?

FH: Talk about schoolwork?

JK: Yeah, your school studies?

FH: Gee, I don't think at the table, maybe afterwards or something or some of other time but not especially. I can't recall too much about what kind of conversation we had.

JK: Now during your teenage years, did you—was dating allowed in your family?

FH: Was what?

JK: Dating, dating.

FH: Dating? Yeah, well yeah, I had in high school, I had a girlfriend but as far as so-called dating out in the country there wasn't much of that and so, I don't know whether you would call it dating or not.

JK: Was the woman you dated, was she Japanese-American?

FH: Well, you know who she is. I was going around with Francis at the time and I suppose I could have dated others but I didn't.

JK: Okay there was no question of interracial dating?

FH: Well, at that time I don't think I would have felt comfortable that way and either that or they didn't appeal to me. I don't know what it is but you know it is most different from nowadays where you accept them as your equal or and feel comfortable with whoever they are but it took me a long time to get over that hump.

JK: What do you think of—what did you think of racism at the time you were going through? It is rather obvious from the previous answers that you did—you were subject to some racism in school.

FH: Yeah, so yeah there was racism, undercurrent racism but you were aware of it, and a—

JK: Were you aware of it in high school?

FH: Yeah, sort of aware of it. But it wasn't so bad in high school, I think because maybe there were so many Nisei there and they were doing well in sports and so on and they were active in different things so they probably pretty much accepted us. But boy, grammar school was something else.

JK: By the way, how many, roughly how many Nisei were in your class in high school?

FH: I'm not sure. I would guess it to be around twenty-five or there about, twenty or twenty-five.

JK: Was quite a number.

FH: We were, up to that point ,we were the largest Nisei group in the high school and even today we still get together and have a reunion and go places and talk to each other and then some of them are living clear across the continent but somehow or other we are able

to get together and recently this year, we went on a ship cruise to Panama and I think there were something like fifteen of us or something. So it was a fun group.

JK: Okay. Now this an odd question. What were your thoughts about marriage? You don't have to answer it if you don't want to.

FH: Thoughts about marriage when? It depends on—

JK: Yeah, during the time, during the time that you were in high school now did you have any thoughts about marriage?

FH: No, not then. There were, you know, I think that is those kind of a thing probably came up more as I grew up and probably in middle twenties or something like that.

JK: Now when you had a problem, who did you go to?

FH: Well, if I had a big problem, I probably talked to my dad. Yeah. I was always closer to my dad than my mother. So, and I was quite close to him like when I came home from college I guess we'd spend the whole afternoon just talking, you know, just having a conversation.

JK: How would you describe your childhood and teenage years at home, at school, and community now. You can just—

FH: How do you describe what?

JK: How would you?

FH: Well, anyway during the grammar school time, there were times when I wondered why was I born Japanese, you know? Why couldn't I have been white or something? Because we sure got picked on, at least that is the way I felt it. And of course, during high school it was kind of neutral so I don't know how to answer that part but I still,

when Pearl Harbor came around, you knew you were in trouble. Because you are Japanese.

JK: We'll talk about that one later. Okay, let's see. What kind of work did you do during the time that you were in high school?

FH: Well being on the farm and the family struggling, we had to do a lot of work. My dad was quite a disciplinarian and he believed in hard work and so many, many after school, we were helping. And in the wintertime we were working on the grapes and we would wind the grape vines and summertime we would be picking fruits. And most of the—if we weren't going to Japanese school on Saturdays, there were other things to do on the farm. And later on during the high school time, I even went to Winters and Suisun to help on the farms there to pick on the fruits and that kind of a thing so. I knew that some of my Nisei friends were, I think weekends were just fun weekends for them and they were having fun playing tennis or going swimming or whatever. And I know we had to work so my recollection is, was, you know, lots of hard work, and being kids, we didn't enjoy it too much but that is the way it was. And then also my mother was out in the field working and she used to do a lot of pruning or that kind of a thing. And we went out irrigating and also my dad used to work out, too. Anytime there was a slack season he worked out so that is how we struggled on. And as far as work, that is the way it went.

JK: Now it says here, do you remember the rate of pay that you received?

FH: Well I think we were—I don't exactly remember too well but I suppose it was pretty darn low, ten, fifteen, twenty cents an hour something like that. I remember that we used to go up there and pick nectarines for Mr. Maeda and some of the other Nisei. And he was

kind of a disciplinarian too and so we really had to hustle. If we were caught talking to each other too much, he'd come around, "Hey you guys get to work."

JK: Okay now we will go on to WWII. How did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

FH: I was studying for the final exam at Berkeley and had the radio on and it came on the air and boy, it was a big shock. So I was also panicked, "Wow, what are we going to do?" And all of a sudden that night everything was a blackout and there was searchlights and everyone was in a dither and the first thing I thought about was maybe I should get home and see what things are like over there because all kind of wild rumors came on the air. And they thought that San Francisco was going to get bombed and we were living in a two-story building in Berkeley and we could see out towards San Francisco and I think they were talking about the blackouts and searchlights and of course, sirens and everything else and all kinds of bad rumors going around. And it really ruined my study period because we were taking the finals and I was able to and then being a Nisei, we found out that we couldn't travel like we did before. And I have to go to Oakland someplace to get on the bus to head on home. And so things got a panic situation in a hurry.

JK: So did you come home to check up on the family?

FH: Yeah I did for just a brief period, maybe a day or so, and then went back to finish up my finals and then when it was all done, I went home. But I didn't get to finish because I had another semester to go and that was a spring semester and by that time I had to stay home.

JK: How many years—you had been to—

- FH: Well, it was my fourth year and so I went to two and a half years and had another semester to go so that is where I stood.
- JK: And you were how old at that time?
- FH: I'm not sure exactly but I think I was around twenty or close to twenty-one.
- JK: So between the time that you came home and what—the time that you were finally told to go to camp, how did you spend your time?
- FH: Well, at that time everything that my dad owned, land and property, was under my name so it was my responsibility legally to make sure things were in order so that's another reason like my brother wasn't involved so he went back to UC and I think he finished out his term even though he might have been cut short. But I stuck around and we formed a contract with our friends and so on, and my dad made arrangements so they would take care of our farm when we were gone. And most of the Livingston people were under the so-called Momberg plan where they took a whole group. My dad felt that maybe this other one was a little bit better because he had a little bit more control and so we had Coach Carpenter as one of the trustees and a few others, prominent people, and they in turn leased the land to Hepners, local people, and to look after the farm.
- JK: So was it a successful endeavor?
- FH: Yeah. It was in that I think they took care of the farm a little bit better. My dad got the money that was coming to him and then we waited to get back one year earlier before the rest of the Livingston group because January first of '45 when the west coast opened, I was leaving a few days later to California to get the farm back and most of the Livingston people didn't get back till the fall of '45 and they would take over for the following year

crop. But we were able to get back right away although it wasn't easy because we were one of the few Nisei there and it was kind of scary.

JK: Let's go back to camp. Now when did you go to camp?

FH: The assembly center that I went to was in Merced and I guess that must have been around May of '42. And I remember that year they talked about the frost and the hail on the grapes and that kind of stuff and what I just didn't like being enclosed. I felt like I was in jail the whole time that I was there. And when they announced in Granada, California, they were making a camp there, I volunteered for the advanced crew which mean we were going to be the first trained to get there and get things ready for the rest I guess. So I left for the assembly center in Granada, they called it Amache later, on the first train there.

JK: Now, start at the Merced Center and describe your daily life there. Did you have a job?

FH: Yeah, I think what they did was they had three different pay scale, eight dollar, twelve dollar, and I think sixteen, wasn't it? Sixteen or something like that and so I applied for electrician job because I thought maybe that was a little bit easier than plumbing and a few other things. I didn't know how to cook and so I took on the job and just so happened that Frank Okude also applied for that so and another person and I don't remember his name, so anyway the three of us were electricians at the camp but most of the time we were replacing bulbs but then there would be shorts and we'd have to wire up something and there was a certain amount of maintenance that had to be done so and then we had a head supervisor that was from the administration so if you needed anything or you needed any advice, he'd help us out. So it wasn't too bad. And of course you know we were in our twenties so it wasn't too bad. I helped my dad because the Issei really

had a tough time. Here they were there in the prime of their life and just all of a sudden to be stuck in camp and I think the younger bunch probably didn't feel it as much then, although I had a heck of a resentment for being put in that position. But I just didn't have anything to do, just make the best of it. So I went to dances and we had church service and I'm not athletically inclined so I didn't participate in baseball and that kind of a thing. I still don't know how I passed away the time really. Maybe just talking to people and meeting people and so on.

JK: Now whose camp—what assembly center did you talk about?

FH: Well, I went to the Amache Relocation Center and of course, it had the same barbed wire and had a taller guard tower and they had patrols and everything else. And they had the guard duty at the main gate. And my ambition was just to get out of the gate. Boy, I said, somehow or the other I just wanted to get out of this place. And one way of doing it was to work on the farm so I signed up for the Ag site because that was my interest anyway. So I got into the administration end of the thing and the head honcho on that was Jack Noda, of course those above that were paid by the government and staff. But anyway I worked with him so we had to supervise the farm and so I got to go in and out of the gate. And just going past the gate to me was a big thrill because you felt so cooped in that just like a breath of fresh air just to go outside. And they were going to start farming out there and I still remember a whole bunch of new tractors just came in and we were checking them out and so on. So it was kind of interesting. But anyway being the first arrival I still remember in Granada the local residents all lined up by the tracks watching us get off and getting us processed and I still don't know how we got to the camp? I guess we must have got on a bus or truck or something. And boy, the place was

a mess when we got there. It was still under construction and there were one good thing, was lumber everywhere. So we were busy stealing lumber in the evenings when they were all gone and making ourselves furniture and table and chairs and whatever we could. And I still remember the first shower we took and opened the faucet and, low and behold, a whole bunch of rusty water and oil came out of that thing. I got dirtier than I started out but after you run it for a while it cleared up, but boy, I still remember that. And then the head of the department came and passed out soda water and I don't know what else. But I still remember at that time the soda water, they had a cigarette butt in the bottom and it still hadn't been open and still sealed so somebody goofed. That was my first experience and I don't know why they called it advanced crew because I don't remember doing much as far as construction and that part was concerned. We were just busy stealing lumber every night to make ourselves comfortable and watching others come in later on as each block was being built. So anyway I was isolated from the Livingston group because I was in 7G and they were in what 11 something or the other.

JK: 9H.

FH: 9H? Anyway they were in another part of the camp and so I didn't see them very often. Maybe we had a church thing and I would see them there but other than that, each block had its own mess hall and laundry and toilet and this and that so and then you have to walk some to get around.

JK: Did you ever live with your family at?

FH: Well let's see. Since we were kind of a big family, as I recall I think my dad and mother and sister had one room and I think the boys had another room. It seems that way. I'm

not—I can't say that for sure but I kind of remember it that way. And I think the doors were close together and paired off some way. I don't know how—

But anyway one thing that still sticks in my mind is that I said, "Gee, I just wonder what is going to happen to these young people because they are running all over the camp and their parents have actually no control over them and they can do anything they wanted all day long and don't even have to show up for dinner time or whatever and do whatever they wanted to do." And some of them were kind of wild. And I said, "Boy, that generation. The kids are just going to be spoiled." But I suppose they turned out pretty good. But that was my thought during that time that "Gee, the discipline is just going to go to pot."

JK: Do you remember the loyalty questions?

FH: Oh yeah.

JK: Twenty-seven and twenty-eight?

FH: Very much so. I don't, I can't absolutely say how I did it but I think I amended it and wrote it down what I thought and but they didn't throw me in jail so it must have been all right. And because the part about the emperor really bothered me and I didn't feel there was any loyalty at any time. I thought that was kind of a crazy question. It was kind of double sword of thing and but as far as the armed services. At that time I felt sure I would go if they wanted me and in fact one morning they sort of had a big session and they wanted us to volunteer and I decided at that moment that yeah, I'll go. And I still never—Mas Sato made a very good speech on loyalty and nationalism and I don't know what else. It was a very stirring speech and I felt well if it is going to help the Nisei, why not? And this was in the morning and noontime, lunchtime when the family got together

and I told my dad, “Hey, I’m going to sign up this afternoon.” And boy, all hell broke loose because he said, “You are the oldest in the family and everything is in your name. Don’t you have any loyalty to the family? They come first and you have to look after things.” And that really hit me. I really thought about it and said yeah that is true. He worked so hard and so I decided the heck with it. I won’t volunteer. So I didn’t. So after that I tried my best not to get inducted and then I just couldn’t stand the life in the camp and I didn’t know too many people there. And I just wanted to get out and earn some money and get going. So there was an opportunity to go outside and work so the first thing I did was I worked in the corn and the turkey raising place out there in Lamar, Colorado. And then let’s see, how did that work? Then a call came to me saying if I want to go to college they will help with the tuition or whatever. Well so I came back to camp and tried to make arrangements and found out it was they had already started and it was too late to register and all that so I have to give that up. So when the chance came out again to go outside to work this time I went to Rocky Forge and worked in the onions, sorting onions, and this is in the death of winter when it is really cold, and so that is where I went for a while.

And then I got another call saying there is another opening. If you want to go to the University of Wyoming, they will help us out. So back to the camp in went and made arrangements and I wound up in Laramie, Wyoming, which was a good experience. The only thing is they had a whole bunch of Ag courses but and not the line that I had majored in. It was all about animal husbandry, cows and sheep and horses and that kind of a thing. And potatoes and whatever they raised back in the Midwest but they didn’t have the Agriculture Economics which I had majored in at UC so I couldn’t apply those

credits toward the graduation but anyway that is how it went. And so my camp experience was kind of short.

JK: What years was it that you were at the university?

FH: Let's see. I think I went working out probably in—let's see. We got probably in '43, I guess. Let's see, we went in Merced Assembly Center in '42, Amache in the fall of '42. So late '42 I might have gone out and early '43 I went out, so probably about the middle of '43 I was at the University of Wyoming.

JK: Oh, let's see. So you weren't in camp too long?

FH: No I didn't stay in camp any longer than I had to. Although from time to time I'd visit my friends and my parents or whatever and see what is happening.

JK: Do you recall what your parents did in camp?

FH: Yes, my dad just absolutely decided he was going to enjoy himself because he was stuck there. Some of his Issei friends got to be cooks or MP's of whatever kind of job they had around the place, janitor, I don't know what. But he decided he was just going to goof off and have fun so he took up carving and made his own tools out of screwdrivers and whatever he could find, and he did a real good job of working on the carving. And in the meantime, my mother was involved in music and also the Japanese singing. It's kind of a chant like singing, I guess you call it, I don't know. There is a name for it but I don't know what it's called. So anyway things like that. It is more cultural things than anything, just to pass the time away.

JK: Let's see. Did you marry in camp?

FH: No, I met my wife, my future wife in camp but we were married in Ready (??), Colorado. Yeah.

JK: Well if you started a family, you didn't start a family then.

FH: Not right away, no.

JK: Your first son?

FH: My first son was born in 1945.

JK: '45.

FH: I think we were married in '43 or something like that. Forty, '43.

JK: So there was no question of child care?

FH: No, not involved in that because we were outside trying to make a living.

JK: Okay. Now did you—did you get a job after you were in college or were you college until you returned back to the states—I mean back to this state.

FH: Well when I was in the University of Wyoming. Since they didn't have the courses that I really wanted to take and it didn't match. What happened was the people that were trying to put you through college, they knew kind of, I guess they felt I was interested in agriculture. I must have put something down. But it wasn't the line that I had—the first time it would have been okay but they notified me too late. The second one they didn't have the courses that I needed to take so I decided that maybe this isn't for me even though I was learning a lot and I enjoyed it and so on. In the meantime, my dad wanted me to start farming. So we got a farm in Ready, Colorado, so we raised the sugar beets and onions and beans and that kind of stuff. And quite a few Nisei got out around that time and was involved in agriculture and that is the time I got married.

JK: I see.

FH: And then while I was doing that, I think that must have been in 1944, and then the end of—close to the end of '44 they said the West Coast was going to be open. And in

January of '45 so we decided, my dad said, "Hey, you had better get back to California and get things going." So we got rid of the farm and that kind of a thing and so in January, I was heading towards California already.

JK: So resettlement, you were already resettled. Let's see. So January you came back to California.

FH: Right.

JK: Okay. And was your farm was—was evacuated for you or did you have to wait a while before?

FH: No. Our agreement was as soon as we got back to California they had to get out.

JK: Oh I see.

FH: And we had, our land was split into different parts and so the first year I didn't—I let, in order to soften the whole thing, I let them have part of the farm to farm, for them to farm, and we'll farm the other part and then next year we'll take over it one hundred percent and kind of worked it that way. And but 1945 we were farming on our own.

JK: In the—in your attempt to leave camp, who helped you, do you recall?

FH: It was a church group out of—I forgot the name of the city but I think it was, it could have been. But anyway the group that helped the students through the church and they wanted to help us find places to go. I think the name of the person that took care of me was Bollinger if I remember right. Let's see, was it in Nashville, Tennessee? It was one of those eastern southern states some place back there.

JK: Have you discussed the war experience with your children?

FH: Did I discuss what?

JK: The war experience?

FH: No, somehow or other we never talked about it. I never mentioned it. It didn't come up. It's a funny thing. I found out now, this happened to a lot of families. They didn't discuss it until very, very late.

JK: How about some of the so-called Nisei traits. That there are traits that we think are—

FH: Well, one thing as far as trait is concerned, you know, we always kind of make fun of each other but I noticed that the Nisei has an accent. A different kind of accent from anybody else but Sansei don't have that. I don't know why but whenever I hear a Nisei talking some place or on the TV or radio, I can usually spot it. Hey, that sounds like Nisei and I guess we just speak a little different from the norm but anyway. As far as other trait is concerned I think, generally speaking, I think they are more, I don't know whether it is ambitious and a little bit straightforward and honest. Usually, I could trust another Nisei a lot more than I would some strangers, for instance. And I don't know what other trait you might say but first, it isn't one hundred percent that way but I'm just talking about in general. There is always an exception.

JK: Now some of the traits they say are like eating addiction, lack of spontaneity, and difficulty in articulating and making known your thoughts.

FH: Yeah, we are not that open. Yeah, that is true. Because being among Caucasian people and they can talk about anything and enjoy themselves and they don't hold back anything, and I think the Nisei tend to be a little bit more, I don't know if you call it, self-conscious or reserved or whatever, and they don't open up as much as the Caucasian counterparts.

JK: Now what is the most—what are some of the most important things that happened to you in recent years. This is within the few years that—?

FH: Important things? I don't know. I retired. Well, I don't know—I think our family is a little bit different from most other families because my grandfather came—he originally went to Hawaii as an indentured servant. He had a contract so he could get a passage (inaudible) and work his way out in Hawaii, and when he got that done, he came to the states. I understand that he worked on the railroad making the tracks to Yosemite. And was able to farm and he farmed in Winters and Suisun. And my dad was the oldest and he was born in Japan but the rest of his brothers and sisters were born in the USA. And I still remember, I think in 1935, that he got on a ship and sailed back to Japan for my grandmother. And one of the few—I guess it's few. Not too many Isseis were able to make enough money to go back to Japan to their home and retire, which he did. And he even had a house over there to rent and plus a house for himself. And in the meantime, my dad missed being a second generation just by a few years and my uncle, who is his brother being born in this country and educated here, he was sort of a Kibei. And anyway my dad said, "Well you are almost a Sansei because he's almost a Nisei." Not quite, because my mother was an Issei. But anyway my dad went to grammar school in this country and high school also so he was very fluent in English and he read papers and magazines and conversed very well. But so where were we now? So that is the way our family was and—

JK: How do you feel about redress and reparations?

FH: Well I guess in a way I kind of feel sorry for other groups that were oppressed, especially the black people and Indians. But we also got the short end of the stick during the war and they can never reimburse us. Reparation is reparation and it's just like I guess the same as the way I look at it, if you do something bad, you get fined for it and that's about

the way I look at it. It is a token amount that they give us but at least they apologized and realized that they made a mistake, although during that time we were experiencing it, it was very, very—there were times when it was very scary. And I still remember the January of '45 when I came back to California and I was one of the very, very few Nisei that came back and I was kind of jittery because I didn't know what was going to happen. And we, you know, some of the Nisei were shot at and we had to be careful. I still remember driving down the road and seeing a group of people down further ahead and I just stopped and turned around and went the other way because I didn't know whether they were looking for me or whether they were going to start any kind of trouble. That is how scary it was. And even in Livingston I went to the barber shop and the guy said, "We don't do Japs." So what can you do, walk out and go. And so there were Nisei members driving through different cities during that time and there were signs that said, "No Jap wanted." And this and that, so people might have forgotten that but I still remember seeing those things. And but anyway, reparation-wise, the government did the best they could and that's it.

JK: How are you spending your time now?

FH: How am I spending my time? Goofing off, going fishing, doing my hobbies. At my age I really slowed down but over the last ten years, I have done a heck of a lot of traveling and my hobby was photography and I won a few awards in my time. And I think it's kind of an easy time in life, less stress anyway than during the time we were trying to make a living and living a fast-paced life.

JK: What kind of life do you see for your children and grandchildren?

FH: As far as what?

JK: Well their future?

FH: Well as far as—

JK: Do you think there is a difference between them and the Caucasian?

FH: Well yeah. A lot of people don't think so but I think there is so-called glass ceiling and I think that applies to Nisei as well. Like my brother was a civil engineer and he got as high as he could go and he has all the people working under him but he got to a point where he got into politics and that is the level, after that you know. And he is not the kind to kowtow to people but by that time, he retired anyway. But I think, and there is always an exception depending on which line you are in, but I personally believe there is a limit for a lot of the Nisei hit a stage because somehow or other, there seems like there is a so-called glass ceiling. I believe that. Although I believe also that a hundred years from now, I think the whole thing won't exist. Things will be integrated so much that it will be melting pot, I hope. But then now that they are talking about ethnic things and sticking together and I don't know what it's going to do—what that is going to do to the whole thing but I think Nisei in general done better than some other minority ethnic group. I would have to say and they have gone a long ways.

JK: We are just about at the end of interview. If there is anything else you'd like to say?

FH: Well I think we covered the subject pretty well. I hope what I said is productive, and just complete by saying that when I was a kid growing up and we were being called Japs, I really felt like a second-rate citizen. Maybe it was inferior complex but, I mean, they really pounded it into you, the teacher wasn't on your side and you knew if you got into a fight through no fault of your own, it was still going to be your fault. And it was really—

that was one of the things that was really driven into me when I was a kid. You couldn't fight politics, so to speak, and were helpless.

JK: Okay.

FH: But as you grew older and things loosened up a little bit, things got better but I think post WWII everything opened up but not completely. So that is the conclusion.

JK: Okay that is about it. Thank you for sharing your story. I'm sure that some student is going to look at this and learn a lot from it.

FH: If they want anymore, they can call me.

JK: Okay, let's see.

ENDOF INTERVIEW