

NARRATOR: HUGO KAJI

INTERVIEWER: GRACE KIMOTO

DATE: August 18, 1999

GK: Good morning. This is an interview with Hugo Kaji, a Nisei man of seventy-seven years old, in his home in Livingston, California. Today, August 18, 1999, and I am Grace Kimoto of the JACL taping for Central District of JACL which will be housed in the Fresno State Research Media Center. Let's start with the family life, Hugo. Where were you born? And what is your day you were born?

HK: I was born in Livingston on the same as we are here now.

GK: And your family life and work was?

HK: My family life?

GK: Yeah, tell about you dad and—?

HK: My dad was a farmer and he used to like baseball and so he used to have a baseball team in town.

GK: Tell more about your life as a family, how many sisters and brothers.

HK: There was eight of us, five girls and three boys in the family.

GK: Okay, and where are you in the family?

HK: I'm the third one in the family, the oldest son.

GK: The oldest son, so you have two sisters above you?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Okay, and your dad was a farmer? What did he farm?

HK: He farmed grapes and plums and almonds.

GK: And what did he do with them? How did he market it?

- HK: Everything was marketed through the co-op, that is, we belonged to the Almond Exchange and the local co-op, the Livingston Food Exchange.
- GK: Did everybody work on the farm?
- HK: Yes, everybody put their share on the farm working.
- GK: How many acres did your dad do?
- HK: We had seventy-two acres at the time.
- GK: At the time and now you are farming how many acres?
- HK: One hundred and ten.
- GK: What do you remember about growing up with your sisters and brothers? What are some incidents?
- HK: Really no incidents, just the family.
- GK: Did you work?
- HK: Yes, we all worked together and we had a family project and as children, we raised eggplants and so we all worked at that and the other parts, we had all hired help.
- GK: And Livingston was the eggplant capital at the very beginning?
- HK: No, it was just a little side business that we did.
- GK: Okay, and what did you guys do for entertainment?
- HK: Entertainment? Well, we played baseball and we had a lot of equipment to play with also, and we used to do a lot of swimming.
- GK: Yeah, and what were some of the hardships and what was really tough?
- HK: Well, we really had no hardships, just easy life.

GK: It's hard work, farm work. What do you think your dad and mom expected of the family as they grew up? Do you think they wanted to enlarge the farm or did you think they would go back to Japan or?

HK: No, we just found life here.

GK: You mentioned a little bit about baseball, and that must have been one of your entertainments?

HK: Well yes, my dad used to, every Sunday, his baseball team played different towns so he used to be going to, so I'd tag along.

GK: That was—that was coming into project I know all the interviews are coming out but what were some of the towns that you played in?

HK: Atwater, Merced, I think it was, Waterford, what else? Modesto, I don't remember all of them.

GK: This was a Nisei baseball team?

HK: No, no, this was—

GK: Oh, this isn't that.

HK: This is a Sierra League semi-pro baseball team.

GK: Oh, your dad was involved with that?

HK: Yeah, he used to manage it.

GK: Oh, he was the manager of the Livingston?

HK: Livingston Peppers.

GK: Livingston, so what are some of the names of some of the players?

HK: Well, the players were mainly Caucasians because like Chief Gilbert had three sons, they played on the team. And the mayor of Livingston, Robin Corbett, was the second baseman and, I think Joe Noda and Taro Sato was on the team also.

GK: Really, so then your dad was part of the team that took them away.

HK: He was the manager.

GK: He was the manager of the Livingston?

HK: Livingston Peppers, yeah.

GK: How interesting, and I hadn't gotten that, at all. So as far as your parents were concerned then did the girls do one kind of work at home and the boys do one kind of—?

HK: Well, we picked and we packed, and the almonds, we peeled them by hand. That was the old days.

GK: Oh, I see. And so and then they marketed through the Farmer's Association, I see. So the girls did pretty much the same things the boys did?

HK: Yeah, pretty much.

GK: So did the boys do the housework, too?

HK: No, we didn't do no housework.

GK: The girls did the housework.

HK: The girls did the housework.

GK: Right. So there is a little difference. (laughs) So what was your responsibility growing up?

HK: Well, I was taking care of the farm mainly, so worked with the team of horses.

GK: Oh, so you had horses? How many horses did you have?

HK: Oh, we had four.

GK: Do you remember when you changed over to your tractor?

HK: That was just before the war we bought a tractor.

GK: What kind of tractor did you buy?

HK: Ford Ferguson.

GK: Do you remember how much it cost or anything?

HK: I think it was thirteen hundred dollars.

GK: Oh, my. What do you think your parents had for values that you had, to learn? What were some of the important ones that they had?

HK: Well, number one, they wanted us to have an education to get along in this world.

GK: Okay, that is good. So they stressed honesty and stuff like that?

HK: Oh, yes.

GK: Where do you learn some of your values? From your parents basically?

HK: Uh-huh.

GK: So, so do you remember the early days when the Yamato Colony was—do you have any stories that your dad used to tell about the Yamato Colony?

HK: Well, my dad was secretary for the community for sixteen years and it was before that the community started. See our farm is not the Yamato Colony. My dad worked for Skobal and Day, shipper in Livingston, and there was a man named Mr. Ledi who used to own this property, which we bought from them.

GK: Do you know how much he paid for it?

HK: No, I don't.

GK: But so you bought it before the war?

HK: Well, land was pretty cheap then. Something like fifty dollars an acre.

GK: Well, so you said this land was not part of the Yamato Colony?

HK: No, it is not.

GK: How did your dad end up being the secretary?

HK: For the community? I don't know, he just did it for the community.

GK: He probably had the skill for it. Do you know much about your dad? Where he came from and what ken?

HK: Oh, he comes from Kiyogo-ken, a town called Arima.

GK: And your mom?

HK: My mom is from Kyoto.

GK: Kyoto?

HK: And not too many from that area, well, there is Mr. Naka and Mr. Tochiya were good friends of my dad's.

GK: So do you remember what year your dad came here?

HK: My dad came here in 1907.

GK: 1907, one year after the earthquake?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Okay, and what did they do?

HK: Well, first he came, I guess he worked for the railroad a little bit and then he settled down in Livingston.

GK: Okay, did he come from a big family, how does—

HK: Oh, my dad has one brother and one sister.

GK: On a farm, you said?

HK: Yeah, on a farm of course, I guess his brother built a sake plant and—

GK: Is that made from rice, isn't it?

HK: Yeah, rice.

GK: I see.

HK: And when I went in 1940, he had a hotel, a small one.

GK: Was your dad the oldest in the family?

HK: No, he was the second son.

GK: The second son, okay, so that is—do you know why he came?

HK: Oh, he came to study here.

GK: Your—and how did your dad meet your mom?

HK: Oh, he went back to Japan and brought her.

GK: I see.

HK: It was several years later.

GK: So, he landed in San Francisco probably?

HK: Yes.

GK: On Angel Island and he was friends with (inaudible) and they probably encouraged him to come. Is that what happened?

HK: I don't know how they came but anyway, Mr. Tochiya and him were classmates and Mr. Naka was the teacher.

GK: Yeah, and so, so they came and your dad married your mom in Japan?

HK: I think so.

GK: So that would be like 1906 or before? What year would be—so what year were you born?

HK: 1921.

- GK: 1921? So that is quite a few years after?
- HK: Yeah.
- GK: After your dad had already come to America. Okay, so you said that your dad was in the community with the baseball so were your friends haku-jins?
- HK: Mainly haku-jins, yes.
- GK: So that was in the Nisei community, okay. Do you know of any stories about the Yamato Colony? We are trying to base some of this on the beginnings of the Yamato Colony.
- HK: Only thing I can tell you is this road that is called Olive Avenue used to be called Yamato Colony Road and since the war, they changed it to Olive Avenue.
- GK: I see. And now the Yamato Road is (inaudible).
- HK: Is (inaudible), yeah.
- GK: So which road was called the Yamato Colony Road.
- HK: Olive Avenue.
- GK: Olive Avenue?
- HK: Right here.
- GK: Oh, oh, just right in front of you, this used to be?
- HK: Yamato Colony Road.
- GK: Oh, that is information that we don't have. Do you know how or why it was changed?
- HK: Well, right after the war they changed it when we were gone.
- GK: Oh, when you were gone they changed it.
- HK: Yeah.
- GK: Isn't that interesting. So when you were a kid and playing with a lot of Caucasian kids did you feel very much of being Japanese heritage or?

HK: No.

GK: No, you didn't think of it at all. You were like everybody else?

HK: Just like anybody else.

GK: Most of the Nisei felt that way, it looks like. Okay, and how about the schools? What school did you go to?

HK: Livingston Elementary School, the old school that is over where Sam's Market is.

GK: Yeah.

HK: And the new school, they called that Selma Herndon School. And I went to the high school.

GK: In Livingston?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Okay, did your parents have any contact then with the school as you were going to school?

HK: Oh, very little.

GK: Mostly—dad must have spoke a lot of English?

HK: Yeah, my dad spoke good English.

GK: I see.

HK: My mom didn't speak much English but she taught me how to read and write.

GK: That's great. So what other activities in the town did you dad have? He was busy then, wasn't he?

HK: Pretty busy with the baseball.

GK: And all that basically baseball. Well, let's talk about your dinner table.

HK: What?

GK: Your dinner table, your family. Did the family eat together?

HK: Yes, we always ate together.

GK: And did you have conversation? What language was it in?

HK: Well, English.

GK: English?

HK: Yeah, very little Japanese was spoken so most kids don't speak good Japanese at all.

GK: Do you speak any Japanese?

HK: Very little.

GK: Very little? Did you go to any Japanese school?

HK: Yeah, they had a Japanese school here at the church there for a little while.

GK: So okay, so you were at the table speaking English?

HK: Yeah.

GK: And your dad, did he partake in your conversation?

HK: Oh, yes.

GK: But your mother could understand, even though she didn't speak it, she knew what was going on?

HK: Oh, yes.

GK: Okay, so when would all the kids jabber and talk at the table? Or was your dad pretty much in control?

HK: No, we all spoke our piece. They let us speak.

GK: That's good. So let's talk about your teenage time then. When you went to high school then, right?

HK: Uh-huh.

GK: Starting in high school and tell us about your experiences and stuff you did in high school.

HK: Well, in high school I played basketball and I played tennis.

GK: How did you do? Were you on the varsity team?

HK: Well, in basketball no, but in tennis I played singles and so in '39 I took a championship.

GK: Oh, in 1939 you took a tennis championship?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Holy cow, was that from the whole—?

HK: Tri-Valley.

GK: Tri-Valley Championship, congratulations. I'm glad I got that on tape. Well, who were your playmates in, you know, in high school?

HK: High school? Oh yeah, Carlo Johnson was a good friend of mine.

GK: Carlo?

HK: Carlo.

GK: He's the same age as you.

HK: Yes.

GK: And he partake in all the sports that you did?

HK: Yeah, he was—he played tennis with me also.

GK: Were you ever invited into Caucasian homes?

HK: Oh, yeah, once in a while the neighbors the (inaudible)

GK: Did you—like the girls in your teenage years, were you friends with them or did you date the, or what did you do?

HK: Through high school years, I didn't date. The only date I had was Junior-Senior Prom.

GK: You went to Junior-Senior Prom?

HK: Yeah, I went.

GK: Oh, you did? Who did you take?

HK: Janet Toshima.

GK: Oh, you did. That's great. Did you experience any racism in your younger days?

HK: Very, very little.

GK: Very little. And was—is that that age when you were young, were you thinking at all about what kind of girls you want to marry or anything like that?

HK: No.

GK: Did you have any problems or things that you remember in high school days or that age?

HK: I don't think I had any problems.

GK: No, how about your brothers and siblings you were growing up with at teenage years. You were still working on the farm?

HK: Yes.

GK: You were together. Did you take part in all the picnics and stuff in Livingston?

HK: Yeah, we used to go to the community picnic.

GK: School assemblies and—

HK: Yes.

GK: Okay, what do you remember from the picnics?

HK: Well, the games we used to play.

GK: Where did they hold it?

HK: At the river, the parks.

GK: Down by (inaudible)?

HK: I think they used to have it at McConnells out here before.

GK: I see. And you had races and things?

HK: Races.

GK: But you say they did a good job?

HK: They did a very good job.

GK: They made all the sushi, so they were wonderful times. Did your parents have any problems with racism or anything?

HK: I don't think so.

GK: You don't remember any problems.

HK: No.

GK: And your mother worked in the fields also?

HK: Yes.

GK: Okay, and did you attend any college?

HK: In a sense, no. Evacuation took place just before that happened.

GK: And it robbed you of the college days?

HK: Yeah.

GK: So did you hire other people to work on your farm?

HK: Yes, we had some.

GK: Okay, what kind of people, who did you?

HK: Well, we had some Mexican employees.

GK: Okay, about how many?

HK: I think one or two, mainly the one guy, he worked steady for ten years.

GK: Do you remember what kind of pay he got or did he live on the farm?

HK: No, he lived in town and he used to come. Jessie Fujardo was his name.

GK: Okay.

HK: His brother used to work for Minabe's.

GK: Oh, how great.

HK: Joe Fujardo.

GK: They worked together. Can we go to evacuation time? What camp did your family go to?

HK: We went from Livingston to Merced Assembly Center, then from Merced Assembly Center we went to Amache, Colorado.

GK: Do you remember about Merced?

HK: Well, my dad was in the hospital at Merced so in fact, he died in Merced.

GK: Oh gee, before evacuation or?

HK: No, this was during evacuation.

GK: During evacuation?

HK: No, when we went to Colorado I got notice and so we came back for the funeral for my dad, my mother and I was the only ones that they would let us come.

GK: Oh, and your dad had (inaudible) at the time?

HK: Well, he had, they call it decomposition of something.

GK: Decomposition?

HK: So, anyway, see during that time Merced Assembly Center, they put any person that was sick, all of them in the Merced County PD Hospital. The reason, I was sort of the interpreter because I worked in the police department as a messenger, so I used to

interpret for a lot of these people, pregnant mothers and anybody that was sick was put in to the Merced County Hospital, PD Ward.

GK: And so was your dad already in the hospital when you evacuated, or?

HK: Yes, evacuation, they took him directly to the hospital. He was sick then.

GK: For goodness sake. So he wasn't in the hospital until evacuation time?

HK: Well, not until evacuation. Evacuation, they moved us out and that is when they stuck him in the hospital there.

GK: So how was his morale?

HK: Well, what could you say?

GK: That really must have hurt him. Did that play any part of his sickness? When they did the evacuation?

HK: It could have been, I guess.

GK: (inaudible)

HK: Anyway, for the funeral, we came and at the funeral parlor, Mr. Winton and his wife, and our neighbors, John Sekura and his wife, they were the only two couples that came.

GK: So, actually how long was he in the hospital? Because I think we were only in camp like three months.

HK: So it was just a little after, just after September of that year that he passed away.

GK: So, that was a difficult time for your family? That must have been—

HK: My sister or nobody could come for the funeral. They allowed just my mother and I.

GK: How come you and not your older sister?

HK: Well, I was the one in charge of the family.

GK: Oh, I see. Your sisters were not—but they were in camp with you, weren't they?

HK: Well, my older sister was in a different camp.

GK: Oh! What camp was she in?

HK: I think she went to Manzanar, I think. And she was married.

GK: Oh, I see. So you were in charge of the family.

HK: Yeah.

GK: How old were you at that time?

HK: Twenty.

GK: Twenty?

HK: Uh-huh.

GK: I bet your mom had a difficult time then?

HK: A little bit.

GK: So you kind of had to hold her.

HK: Oh, when we were coming through on the train and to Kansas, I guess, and the doctor said, "Which reservation are you all on?"

GK: Indian reservation—so actually, when we were in Amache, when you were in Amache and you had to come all the way from Colorado then. I was thinking you were—he passed away when you were in Merced?

HK: No, no.

GK: I see.

HK: And then there was a man from the military to meet us at the border of California and he was a man who owned the *Manila Bulletin*—

GK: Oh, come on.

HK: And by the name of Carson Taylor. He was a very nice man. He missed us when we came from Livingston to the Hotel (inaudible), he shows up and says, "I was supposed to catch you at the border." But it was really good for us because he had a car and took us around to take care of all the funeral arrangements.

GK: So how was it, the funeral arrangements? Were you able to get a coffin and everything?

HK: Yeah, well, we had cremation.

GK: You had cremation?

HK: This man owned the *Manila Bulletin* and he used to send me the annual edition for a number of years.

GK: Oh, how nice that he remembered you. You went through camp and evacuation and all.

HK: Well see, he was in the Philippines, so the Japanese took everything, they took his cars and books.

GK: So what was he doing? He was living in California then?

HK: He came in, I don't know what connection he had, but he had some connection with the military.

GK: That's why. And so in camp, in Merced, did you have a job in camp?

HK: I was a messenger for the police department.

GK: Oh, I see. Okay, (inaudible). And did your mother work, too?

HK: My mother, no.

GK: No, and then like in August, I think we went to Colorado.

HK: Yes.

GK: Okay, and how—describe your camp.

HK: Well, in camp see, we were the last ones out of Livingston, so we ended up with the people from Sebastopol in Ward E. And so when we moved to Ward F, to Amache and so we were kind of separated from the Livingston people.

GK: And do you know the Hamamotos, and they are my relatives.

HK: Yeah, oh.

GK: And so did your mother work in camp?

HK: No, my mother did not work in camp.

GK: I know some of the ladies did. So what did your mother do?

HK: She just took care of our needs.

GK: Did she go to any of those craft classes and make anything?

HK: Not that I know of.

GK: Okay, and what did you do in camp?

HK: Me, in camp? Well, I drove a truck to build the roads in Amache and also we hauled coal from the railroad tracks to camp.

GK: What that to heat our rooms?

HK: Uh-huh. And also went out to haul sugar beets.

GK: After?

HK: During camp days.

GK: During camp days you went out to harvest sugar beets? Where did you go?

HK: The next town down, Holly, Colorado. Well, we went out with a big group that took about fifty people down to harvest broomcorn, even. I never knew what broomcorn was, but—

GK: Okay, so Amache camp, you worked and went out and did all your family do that, too, the girls?

HK: I don't know what the girls did.

GK: That's what camp did. No one knows what they did. So how did you get to—

HK: Chicago?

GK: (inaudible)

HK: I was one of the early ones leaving camp.

GK: You left early and went to Chicago?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Okay, do you remember, before we get to Chicago, do you remember the loyalty questions, number 27 and 28?

HK: No.

GK: You didn't have to do that?

HK: No, I didn't have to do that.

GK: Okay. And I think you already told us that it kind of disintegrated your family. Your family didn't eat together in camp?

HK: No.

GK: Sometimes, most of them did not. How do you feel now about people of Japanese ancestry being in concentration camps?

HK: Well, I don't feel it wasn't right, but we did the best we could then.

GK: Okay, do you remember any camp problems?

HK: Well, I was so busy at the camp, I didn't really.

GK: Okay, okay so, then let's get to. Were you in touch with any of the people from Livingston at all at the time?

HK: No.

GK: Okay, because, let's get to Chicago. How did you get to Chicago? Why did you go?

HK: Well, I applied to the jobs they had at WRA and they arranged for me—I had a job to go to in Melrose Park, in the greenhouse. The family was of German descent and they grew, Sally Rose was a patented rose they grew, so I went to work there for a while and did everything. I raised the glass in the greenhouse, rebuilt the boiler, did the plumbing, and then a friend of mine came up there to get a job and for some reason, we left Melrose Park and went to Park Ridge to carnation growers. And that was a German family also, and the wife was French descent, so we went to work and maintain carnations and while I was there, I went to night school and used to walk twenty-two blocks to catch a streetcar and went to a machine shop at Wayne Tech for six hours a night. And they said, "Oh, you will never make it." But we did it. Then later, I applied to college school at Greer College.

GK: What's the name of it?

HK: Greer.

GK: Greer?

HK: I thought of going to Northwestern, but I did the best I could get, would be two years in, so I figured, well, I'll go to trade school so at least I will finish. So I went to Greer College and finished up and I had a connection with Hemphil Diesel School that was in Long Island, New York. So I went to New York and went to school in Long Island. But you see, I had a correspondence course while in Chicago, so I had two months to finish it

in Long Island and that is how come I went, and just as I was leaving, I got my draft notices. So I went to the draft board and a real nice lady was there and I said, “You know, I have two months to finish my course in diesel engineering.” And she said, two months? And I said, two months, and she said, I’ll take care of that for you. And I said, what will you do for that, and she said, I’ll just cover your order for two months.

GK: She did?

HK: Very nice lady, so when I finished school, two days later comes my notice.

GK: I see.

HK: So I had to report to Fort Dix, New Jersey.

GK: So all that travelling was done by train?

HK: Yes.

GK: And you had to pay for all that?

HK: Oh, yeah.

GK: In the meantime, who is taking care of your farm?

HK: Well, we had it leased out to a Mexican family here and not under the Momberg deal.

GK: It wasn’t under the Momberg deal?

HK: No.

GK: What was the name of the family?

HK: Macias.

GK: Macias, oh. So it was okay then even though—

HK: Well, they took care of it. They took care of everything we had.

GK: Everything, your equipment and all?

HK: Oh, yeah. We had the equipment when we came back.

GK: Okay, how about—how did you discover your wife, or where did you get married and when?

HK: Well, I met my wife in Chicago.

GK: I see. From there?

HK: Well, see my brother married Marion's sister (inaudible) sister and we met at Compton where they live, I guess.

GK: So you married, so the wedding was where?

HK: Chicago.

GK: Chicago, in a church?

HK: No, we just went—

GK: To the justice of the peace?

HK: Yeah. And we went to Niagara Falls.

GK: So you were out of camp already?

HK: I was out of camp, in the military and came back.

GK: Oh, I see. You were married after the military.

HK: Yeah.

GK: Okay, well, let's get to the military then. Well, you got your orders in what, 1942, 1943?

HK: Uh-huh. And I was shipped to Camp Blem (??) in Florida and 25—259, 229 infantry and we trained for the 442nd and seventeen weeks in infantry, and so we shipped to Fort Mead, Maryland. Well, we got a five day delay on route from Florida, which took me seventeen days to make the five days on a train, and went to Amache and came back here and went back.

GK: You came home to check the farm?

HK: Well, take over the farm 'cause they were going to close camp.

GK: Oh, at that time.

HK: Yeah.

GK: And then you went into the military?

HK: No, I was in the military already.

GK: You were in the military already and then—

HK: And (inaudible) and I asked for the American Red Cross to give me an extra week to take care of things.

GK: And do you did bring your mom back and things?

HK: Well, when my mom came back, I was still around. My mom and my sister and Hubei came.

GK: Hubei came, well, before we get back to the (inaudible), tell us about your military experience.

HK: Well, military, I got, after basic, we went from Fort Meade, Maryland, we were shipped to (inaudible) Germany.

GK: Did you join the 442nd then?

HK: No.

GK: You never did?

HK: My buddies all went to 442nd and I was left out because when I went to Fort Meade, Maryland, the captain said my hair was too long, so I got a butch haircut and I detailed in the snow and I caught a cold. Yeah, I spent a week in the hospital.

GK: Oh, gosh.

HK: Meanwhile, all my buddies went to Italy and I ended up in Germany.

GK: I see, so you were in a different—

HK: Yeah.

GK: Regiment, okay. So where were you?

HK: Well, I landed in the Rhineland.

GK: Rhineland?

HK: Yeah, that's on the Rhine River, a little town called Nedlbrizich (??) and they had a prison of war camp, and we were there just a few days before VE Day. So when we were ready to move to the front, that was VE Day. So they said, you can handle prisoners, so they were bringing prisoners in so meanwhile, they checked me out and sent me to a service company as a mechanic, so I got shipped to a camp in, right by the Remagen Bridge. So I worked in military vehicles in an apple orchard.

GK: So you were kind of a mechanical?

HK: Yeah, I was a mechanic so.

GK: I see.

HK: So then a while later, orders came that the outfit was going to the South Pacific. So then, there was a Hawaiian kid and I, we got left out, so we—

GK: More safety, huh?

HK: We ended up, there was a 309 field artillery that was in Nancy, France, and they were running a rest center and they got shipped back into Germany and that was the outfit we went into.

GK: Oh, gosh.

HK: So there I was a battalion motor sergeant as a buck private. Then a little while later, I don't know why I got orders, but I got shipped to the First Armor Division and I was a

motor sergeant there in military tanks and half-tracks. Then later, they shipped me to a school and they said we want you to be an instructor there. So they can't force you to do it, but we want you to do it, so I went to school and then I became a section chief so I had sixteen instructors and a hundred students to take care of. From there, I got discharged. Funny part, they sent all the fathers home and about a few months later, come orders. My orders come in, and I was the only one leaving the outfit and so I had to go from Heidenheim, Germany, to Bremerhaven, that is northern Germany. So I figured the best way, instead of riding a train, I hopped a GI Truck and drove a truck all the way up there and at the airbase, I ran into Hiroshi Hanaguchi, he was shipping home and so we were on the same ship coming back.

GK: How long did it take you on the ship to get—?

HK: Two weeks.

GK: And—?

HK: Well, while I was at school, Willie came to visit me.

GK: My husband, Willie Kimoto?

HK: Yeah.

GK: How did he know you were there?

HK: Just happened to see him. He came on and he was on a special assignment with something. He wanted to know what I was doing at the school.

GK: So Livingstonians all met there, sounds like, I see.

HK: Small world, you know.

GK: Amazing, the fact that it happened with all of them.

HK: Well, I later discovered, it really turned out to be a small world.

GK: Yes, so you got shipped back and landed where?

HK: I landed in New York, I want to say. I think I went to a camp in New York. Gee, I can't remember.

GK: What camp?

HK: Anyway, from there they were going to discharge us and said, "Where is your home?" And I said, "Livingston, California." So they gave me travel pay from New York to Camp Beale in California.

GK: Oh, so what did you find when you got home?

HK: What did I bring home?

GK: What did you bring home and what did you find? What situation did you find when you came back to?

HK: Well, a run-down place. My brother Hubei was trying to run the place so I came home and he said, "Eggplants got to be cultivated," he said, you know. And I said, "Okay," and I went over there and there was one old mule left we had, so I went over there and the mule comes right up to me and I said, well, an hour later, I was done and I came to the house and Hubei said, "Well, did you catch the mule yet?" I said, "Catch him, I'm almost done." He couldn't believe it.

GK: It was a bit of a shock.

HK: That mule gave him a hard time and wouldn't let him catch him, but to me, he came right to me. He remembered me.

GK: My goodness. So you helped Hubei for a while?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Again, then you got—you were married? No—

HK: No, I wasn't.

GK: You aren't married yet?

HK: No, I wasn't.

GK: Did you go back to Chicago after that?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Oh, I see. That was for the school you went to?

HK: No, no, no.

GK: Did you end up going back to Chicago after coming here?

HK: Well, Jim was in Chicago.

GK: That's true, your brother Jim.

HK: Yeah, so I went up there.

GK: So why did you decide to go back to Chicago?

HK: Gee, I don't remember just what, but anyway, I said, "Gee, I'll go up to Chicago for a couple of years and so I left and Hubei was taking care of the farm.

GK: Yeah, so Hubei was here. So how did you—what did you do in Chicago then?

HK: Well, Jim was in the buying and selling of merchandise and so had garages full of stuff, different merchandise and—

GK: And so you helped him?

HK: Yeah. We later bought a store on two flats in Chicago to store all our stuff and now he's got four warehouses.

GK: Today?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Four warehouses. So he continues to—what is the business called?

HK: He's got three names, different.

GK: Oh, my goodness.

HK: The main warehouse is five acres, five-story building, big. He has everything, from you name it, he has it.

GK: And who does he distribute it to?

HK: Well, he has buyers coming in from all over, out of the country and—he deals with machinery and tools and even grandfather clocks.

GK: And he's still in the business?

HK: Yeah, well, he has seven kids. Of course, I think his two sons and one daughter's working with him.

GK: Okay, I see. So you went back to Chicago and that's when you got married then? I'm trying to get you married.

HK: Yeah, we married up there and then came back to Livingston.

GK: So tell me about meeting Marion, your wife, and the wedding and—

HK: Well, we had a very simple wedding.

GK: Did you get your mother up there?

HK: No, oh no.

GK: She didn't go.

HK: I came back to Livingston.

GK: What made you come back to Livingston after you—?

HK: Well, Hubei got drafted to go to Korea.

GK: Oh.

HK: So there was nobody to take care of—

GK: Oh, so you had to come home?

HK: Right.

GK: And took care of the farm and all.

HK: Right.

GK: What year was that?

HK: Oh, 1951 or somewhere like that yeah.

GK: So, you were married and you had children yet or not?

HK: I had one daughter, Jeanette.

GK: Jeanette.

HK: Yeah, Jeanette was born in Chicago. The others were all born here.

GK: Born here, I see. So you had just one child and she was young and you came back? And how was your mother?

HK: My mother was okay.

GK: She was okay?

HK: Yeah.

GK: And living here?

HK: Right.

GK: So that was (inaudible) and she was really glad to have a grandchild here. Hubei was not married?

HK: No, Hubei was single.

GK: Yeah.

HK: He went and served in the Korean War and came back and then he went to L.A.

GK: Is that where he is now?

HK: Yeah. Torrance.

GK: Is he married?

HK: Yes, he's married and got three children, two boys and a girl.

GK: Oh, I see.

HK: The boys are married and he's just got one daughter that's not.

GK: Is he employed in the farm?

HK: No, he retired from TRW. He was an engineer and worked on the (inaudible) missile and—

GK: I see, so you are in charge of the farm now?

HK: Yeah.

GK: In between, Hubei was driving trucks, right?

HK: Yeah, Hubei used to drive trucks here, right.

GK: So you got home and your farm was intact but—

HK: I farmed and did a little trucking.

GK: Yes, and then you went into trucking, what's that?

HK: Well, Hubei was trucking so he—and we had just two trucks.

GK: I see, two trucks.

HK: And we'd haul the tomatoes and haul the grapes.

GK: I see.

HK: We still haul grapes.

GK: How many trucks do you have now?

HK: Well, we diversified and we're hauling scrap, too, see. So, we have forty sets of trailers to haul.

GK: Forty sets of trailers. And how many drivers?

HK: Well, we used to have as many as twenty but we are short-handed.

GK: So who is doing most of your trucking business now?

HK: My son, Melvin.

GK: Melvin and your daughter-in-law?

HK: Sherrie.

GK: Sherrie is doing it now?

HK: She does the books.

GK: Business and the books. So how do you feel today? Do you feel you've done a good job and you have a good life coming too?

HK: I think I have a good life.

GK: And how many children did you have? I don't think we—

HK: I have four.

GK: Four?

HK: Three girls and one boy.

GK: Three girls and one boy. And the girls are not here, correct?

HK: No, my oldest daughter, Jeanette, is in Fresno, and my second daughter is in Palos Verdes, she is married to a doctor. And my third daughter is a surgeon as well as her husband.

GK: And you didn't mention that your oldest daughter is married to a judge.

HK: Yes.

GK: That would be exciting to get to go to—and so your family is pretty much okay?

HK: Everybody is okay.

GK: And how many grandchildren do you have now?

HK: Nine.

GK: Nine grandchildren, okay. And your—your grandchildren, what is the oldest?

HK: Twenty-five.

GK: Twenty-five is your oldest? And how old is your youngest?

HK: Five years old.

GK: Five years old?

HK: They all got late starts on families.

GK: So you feel like your resettlement coming back has worked out well?

HK: Yes.

GK: You have improved your whole business and all. What about going back to your feelings of your path during the war? What are some of your feelings about what happened to you?

HK: Well, during the war, life was very cheap. We survived fine. That is the way I looked at it, so you lived from day to day.

GK: We didn't cover how Livingston welcomed you back. I know many of the camp people had a difficult time when they came back.

HK: Well, yes, my brother and my mother, when they came back, had a little friction with the neighbor, other than that.

GK: What kind of friction did they have?

HK: Well, they—the guy was 4F but nevertheless, he wanted to push my brother around a little bit.

GK: How did you handle that? How did they handle that?

HK: Well, it was—

GK: Did you report it?

HK: No, (inaudible). I had a talk with him when I came back.

GK: And that helped?

HK: Oh, yeah. The guy was trying to run his cows through the vineyard to his field, a different field, so you are not patriotic, that is what he told me, but I said, “Hey, can you train your cows not to eat the grapes when they go through? If you can do that,” I said, “Fine, but otherwise, keep them out,” I told him. And that kind of settled it so.

GK: Okay so, so, we are at the resettlement time when you came back and your life is pretty much back to before it happened. So have you ever talked about your war experiences with your children?

HK: No.

GK: Have you shared, not hardly. Most Nisei have not. Do you think that any of our Nisei traits, you know, some of our attitudes, have passed on to your children?

HK: Well, my buddy that was in Camp Blanding (??), he went to the 442nd and he lives in Denver, Tom Masamori. I met him fifty years after we left.

GK: Where did you meet him at?

HK: In Denver.

GK: How come?

HK: He called me one day from Denver and he said, “I saw your paper in the PC, your ad, you know. I just called to see.” And of course, that is when Dimono was in Denver, so when I got there, I called him and he said, “You’ll have a hard time finding my place so I’ll

find your place easy.” So I said come on over. So when he came over, he said, “I bet you wouldn’t have recognized me, would you?” And I said, “Sure wouldn’t.”

GK: He really changed?

HK: When you haven’t seen a person in fifty years, it’s—

GK: Especially when they were young people.

HK: Yeah, quite a change takes place.

GK: So when did this happen?

HK: About two years ago.

GK: Oh, how nice.

HK: Three years.

GK: ’96 or ’97. And how did he look?

HK: Well, he looked healthy. I guess he does a lot of, he’s a photographer, so I guess he lectures around some of these places the Nisei had. You heard of him, haven’t you?

GK: So did your kids feel any racism, were there any difficulties that your kids used to have?

HK: Hardly any.

GK: Hardly any? That’s nice. So your children are pretty much settled then?

HK: Yes.

GK: So let’s bring you up to now, what are your hopes for now?

HK: My hopes?

GK: Yes, what are you—where are you? Are you happy? Are you enjoying the life that you deserve? Do you have any plans in your—

HK: Well, I have to travel a little bit because my wife is kind of egging me to go.

GK: All this trucking and all these trucks have been going back and forth. So where have you traveled, or where are you planning to travel?

HK: Well, we've been to Alaska. We've been to Japan, to Hawaii and China so, we got to figure out a few more places to go.

GK: A few more places? And where are some of the places your wife, Marion, would like to go?

HK: Well, probably Australia and New Zealand.

GK: Okay.

HK: And I guess she wanted to see Japan again.

GK: What are your—do you have any? You probably don't have much worries? Do you have any worries at this time?

HK: No.

GK: Or anything that you are hoping for in the future?

HK: Well, we really have no worries. It's been a pretty easy life.

GK: Well, you worked for it. You worked hard for it, you know. How do you feel about WWII in the whole picture of your life?

HK: Well, well, the good side is that we met many people in many parts of the world which was real nice and as far as presidents, we met very few, so I think it's pretty nice.

GK: How do you feel about the redress and reparation?

HK: Well, the remarks we get is kind of—people really don't know what they are talking about.

GK: What do you mean?

HK: Well, these people, when we got our twenty thousand dollars, they says, well, you didn't deserve it, but our loss was much greater just from the time we left.

GK: Were you able to tell them that? Were you able to—

HK: Well, I let them know that—

GK: From education?

HK: Uh-huh. Our losses went into a bigger amount of money compared to what little they give us, plus the value of the money is down.

GK: So how are you spending your time now?

HK: Just overseeing what is going on now.

GK: Overseeing your son's shoulder, huh?

HK: Yeah.

GK: And how do you feel about that?

HK: What?

GK: How do you feel about that?

HK: Well, trying to educate him to know, let him know that it pays to be educated.

GK: So are you pleased with him taking over for you?

HK: Well, we are sure trying to be pleased (laughing). Our children, we just told them we'll give you an education but don't expect everything else so that is the way it started.

GK: Okay, so he's pretty much handling the whole trucking business and the farm both?

HK: Uh-huh.

GK: How many acres do you have left on the farm?

HK: Well, Melvin has four sons but one's in Colorado, he's at Colorado School of Mines and he's a senior this year, but I don't think he'll be back here.

GK: Oh, you don't think he'll be back?

HK: He's in the computer business.

GK: So do you think any of them will, they won't, will any of your grandchildren take over?

HK: Well, the third one talks like he's interested in farming. That remains to be seen.

GK: Okay. How do you feel today about the social issues, the political issues, the country's direction?

HK: Well, presently, it doesn't look very good. That is the only way I can put it.

GK: Economically, it's good though.

HK: Economically, it is doing fine.

GK: What do you mean?

HK: Well, people all seem to be happy and they are making money but really it's only certain segments that's making the money I think and the other ones are having a hard time.

GK: If you could imagine that there was no WWII, how do you think that it would have been different?

HK: That is pretty hard to determine. It did mix the world's people so.

GK: Do you see what kind of life your grandchildren will have or your great-grandchildren?

HK: Well, it's educating the world, and the countries that were way behind are catching up, which is good. But our way of life compared to some of these other countries is quite different. It's, you know, they don't know the advantages we have.

GK: Your children, are they all married? Now Jeanette is married to a Japanese man.

HK: Yes.

GK: The others were—

HK: Naomi is married to a Japanese fellow.

GK: Two of your children are?

HK: Evana is married to a Johnson.

GK: Uh-huh.

HK: And of course Marilyn is married to a Snow.

GK: A Snow, and how do you feel it is working out?

HK: Really, it doesn't bother me.

GK: And the children are multicultural?

HK: Right.

GK: Some of them, your grandchildren are?

HK: Uh-huh.

GK: And does that matter?

HK: No, I don't think so.

GK: Enriching, they are more enriching?

HK: Right.

GK: Yeah, okay now the last questions are that do you think that the Nisei men and women, how did they contribute to society?

HK: Wel, they are doing a great job, I think. They are more educated than the rest.

GK: Sanseis and the Yonseis.

HK: Right.

GK: Right, what do you think was the Nisei greatest contribution and achievement?

HK: Well, they are achieving a lot of things in all fields.

GK: In all fields?

HK: Yeah, I think so.

GK: Like what fields?

HK: In science. They are not so strong in sports but they all seem to be doing very well.

GK: If you were to give them any advice, what would you tell them?

HK: Well, in sports, just the sportsmanship.

GK: Well, we are getting to the end of our interview. Did I leave out any area that needs to be covered? I'd like to—

HK: We've covered enough (laughing).

GK: Well, we want to record—you felt the military life was okay?

HK: It's an experience.

GK: It's an experience.

HK: I wouldn't want to experience it again but it's a good experience.

GK: We didn't cover too much about your wife's background then and how she likes being a farmer's wife and how is she doing? She works hard in your trucking business, doesn't she?

HK: Oh, yes.

GK: I don't think we recorded how she participated in—

HK: Well, she works very hard.

GK: What did she do?

HK: She backs me up all the way.

GK: How? How did she back you up? How does she back you up? She took care of your books?

HK: Yeah.

GK: Right.

HK: And encouragement.

GK: Uh-huh, and what did, she handled your phones?

HK: Yes, she answered the phones and—

GK: That's a big undertaking.

HK: We work as a team.

GK: I see. Okay.

HK: I couldn't have done it without her.

GK: I'm glad you said that. That is true. And so thank you very much. This is the end of our interview. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW