

TOM TOSHIMI SHIMASAKI

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is June 25, 1980. I, Yoshino Hasegawa, am privileged to interview Tom Shimasaki at his office located at 2902 West Main Street, Visalia, California, 93277.

Before we get into the interview proper, I would like to have you give us your full name, place and date of birth, and your longest place of residence.

MR. SHIMASAKI: My name is Tom Toshimi Shimasaki. I was born in Lindsay, California on May the 11th, 1915. And I have resided at my present place of residence, 22150 Avenue 250, Lindsay, California, for the longest period in my life, which began in January of 1941. Of course, I was evacuated during World War II, but other than that, I still reside there. I returned to that address and have resided there ever since.

MRS. HASEGAWA: To begin our discussion of your life and career, would you tell us how it was that your parents came to live in the Lindsay area. And some of your memories of your childhood.

MR. SHIMASAKI: My father came to the United States and among other places, he worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad. And he heard of opportunities of working in agriculture, so he came to Lindsay. And, at that time, there were places in California that discriminated against Japanese. But, apparently, Lindsay was one of the communities that accepted the Japanese and provided occupational opportunities for Japanese. So, my father came to the Cairns Ranch where there was a labor camp. And he worked there. After a period of time, through the picture bride arrangement, he called my mother and they settled in Lindsay. I was born at a location approximately a mile from where I reside presently. But it is interesting that I was born in Lindsay, not in some other community like Exeter or Porterville, which did not really welcome the Japanese as well as the people in Lindsay.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. Where did your parents come from in Japan?

MR. SHIMASAKI: They both came from Kumamoto-Ken.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your father know your mother before he married her?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, he might have. But then, since my father had to reside in the United States about 12 years prior to his calling her, it is likely that he did not know her, because she would have been a small child. She came when she was 20 years old. So it is unlikely that he knew her. But then, probably, that made no difference.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How old was your father when your mother arrived?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, I have to do something in the way of calculations. I think that he was around 32 or 33 years old.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I just wondered about the difference in age of the two, because there were many of the Issei women were so much younger than the husbands.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, there could have been 15 years difference in age.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Can you remember anything more about your own childhood? School?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. My father got into the labor contracting business, and he boarded a number of single Japanese laborers, Japanese bachelors, and he went around contracting. So, I remember the barn in which we lived, there was a loft upstairs where the men slept. And my mother did the cooking down below and we resided in a couple of small rooms there in that corner of the barn. I do remember well my first experiences at school. I went to Jefferson School, and we resided about three and a half miles west and somewhat south of the Jefferson School. I recall that we had a neighbor, people by the name of Norris, and they had a daughter whose name was March Norris, and she was in the third grade. So every morning Mr. Norris would take his daughter to school, and I was able to ride with them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In an automobile?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes, in an automobile. I don't recall the make of the automobile, but it seemed to me it was a Model-T Ford. I can remember that I was brutally treated by some of the other students. There was a Mexican boy by the name of Peach--at least that's what they called him--and he must have been three or four years older than I. But this is what I remember: Once I developed a sore on the face, beneath my nose and was scabbed. Well, every morning he would catch me and peel that scab off my face. One day there was another student that saw him do it, so he got ahold of Peach and beat him up to the extent that Peach was convinced that he should never try that again. So that was the end of Peach and his peeling the scab off my face.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh!

MR. SHIMASAKI: I did not know any English except for two or three words of profanity that I learned, and then the usual salutations like good morning. So I had a difficult time. But the teacher was very sympathetic. And, somehow, I was able to go through the classes, with difficulty of course, but I managed. But when I reached the second grade I found I really hadn't learned. That I had memorized the words by looking at the pictures of the objects. Such as, this is an apple. I would see the picture of the apple, and I had memorized what it was. So, in the second grade, when I began reading, I found out that I couldn't read. I hadn't learned. So there I had to start the learning process all over again.

And then my father bought me a bicycle and on good days, why, I would ride the bicycle to school. And I thought that was phenomenal, you know, as I look back upon it, because I see youngsters in the first grade around school, you know, they cannot even ride a bicycle. But, nevertheless, those are some of the things that I remember.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who was the champion for you, when this Mexican boy was hurting you?

MR. SHIMASAKI: His name was Jack Webb. And the reason I remember that was that one day somebody stole my bicycle and Jack Webb found out who did it, and Jack went after it and retrieved it for me. So I became

friends with Jack even though later when I went to Strathmore High School and Jack was a Lindsay High School student. He was two years older than I. And we became good friends. During World War II, he lost his life at Saipan, which grieved me very much.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Very sad to lose a good friend like that.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes, I grieved over that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then -

MR. SHIMASAKI: So in the second grade our family moved to an area close to Strathmore. It was closer to Strathmore than Lindsay. So, consequently, in the second grade I went to Sunnyside School, which was much closer than going back to Jefferson School.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then after you graduated from grammar school, you went on to Strathmore High School?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Strathmore High School.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember anything about your high school days?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Oh, very much. In fact, I remember things so well that it would be difficult to tell you all of my experiences at Strathmore High School.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Anything outstanding in -

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, I faced no discrimination. People talk to me and tell me about the discriminatory encounters they faced in high school and various places. I feel fortunate that at Strathmore High School I did not experience any discrimination. Of course, I wasn't invited to all the parties, but then, neither was anybody else. So, I didn't feel that I was discriminated at all. I didn't have unhappy experiences. And I must have been a kind of jovial type person, because I had many friends. And anytime we went anywhere or anything, why, they welcomed me. Encouraged me, just as if I were another person.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Personally, and for the past eight years, I have been conducting a class reunion--not only for the class but for several classes that graduated prior to 1933, the year that I graduated, and after. And I call myself the Reunion Coordinator. So, the first class to graduate from Strathmore High School was 1921 and through the class of 1943. We have been calling them back every year, and I have been corresponding with all the graduates whose addresses I have. We don't have all the addresses. We cannot locate everyone, but I am commended by everyone for doing this, and it thrills me because people have such a good time. Some people come and they haven't seen their classmates for 40 years. Such as the case of my sister who graduated in 1940, and it was her 40th reunion. Well, she came all the way from Madison, Wisconsin. In fact, she didn't want to come. She thought it would be just too much of an effort. But I persuaded her and once she arrived, why, she really enjoyed it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Good.

MR. SHIMASAKI: While I was attending Strathmore High School, I participated in all the activities. I was a member of all the clubs. I was a member of all the athletic teams.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh.

MR. SHIMASAKI: And like most Japanese, I was short in stature, but that didn't preclude me from participating. In my early years, I wasn't allowed to play on the team because of my prematurity or inability. But through my junior and senior years, I was a member of the team and -

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you play football, too?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Football. Football, basketball, track and field.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Everything.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. Everything. Everything that they had.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Sounds as though you had a good time in high school.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes, I really did.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You talked about your sister. Do you have sisters and brothers?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. I am the oldest of eight children. And next to me is my brother Ira who lived in Bethesda, Maryland for the past 35 years. A year ago he retired and came out to California and lives in Los Angeles.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did he do in Bethesda?

MR. SHIMASAKI: He worked for an automobile agency. The Flood Pontiac Agency as a foreman of their body repair department. But his contribution to the JACL was that during those 30 some years he was chairman of the National JACL Arlington Cemetery Committee. So he had been honored as being the national chairman who had served the longest of any national committee. But my sister lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What's her name?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Atsuko. And she is married to Paul Kusuda. And then my next brother is Fred who has a drug store in San Leandro. And then I have a brother Sam in Chicago who is an employee of a bookbinding company.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, what company is that?

MR. SHIMASAKI: I don't know. But the Fresno County Historical Society had some work done by this particular firm. It's a history of Fresno County. And it goes back to the early years and, my goodness, it has a huge number of photographs. The early photographs of all the early residents and early activities.

And then I have a sister named Rinko who lives in Harrisonburg, Virginia. And she is married to George Imasaki. He works for Reynolds Aluminum,

and she is a social worker. Then I have a brother Walter in Eureka who is an oral surgeon. And then my youngest brother is Joe who is a pharmacist in Porterville.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Quite a family!

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Everyone seems to be doing very well.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes, they managed. And of my children, the oldest is Robert, and he is a dentist in Pasadena. My oldest daughter is Janet Yoshida, and she is a housewife. My daughter Irene Cannon is a teacher in San Diego; and then I have a son named Lynn who is an investment banker with the Salomon Brothers in Hong Kong. And then my youngest child is Christine. She is unmarried and is a kinesiologist.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why, you have a large family. Who is your wife, and how did you meet her?

MR. SHIMASAKI: My wife is named Mitsuye, but people call her Michi. She was born at Cutler, California. At the age of four she went to Japan and returned at the age of 17.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What is her maiden name?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Uyeda. The Uyeda family lived in Lindsay. When she came back from Japan I was impressed by the way she looked. I thought she might make a good wife. Well, that's where it started. Finally we were married, about three years later.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What year was that?

MR. SHIMASAKI: 1941.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Sounds like you have a wonderful family. What year did you graduate from high school?

MR. SHIMASAKI: 1931. Then I went to Porterville Junior College for two years and that was the end of my schooling.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where were you and what was your reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December the 7th, 1941?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, that particular day I was working east of Strathmore on the ranch where we were harvesting peas. During the noon hour we were listening to the radio when we heard the newscast. I was appalled--I could hardly believe the newscast as to what had happened. Actually, I was frightened.

But then, after work we returned home and over the radio there was alarms and you heard nothing else except about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. By that time some of our neighbors had come over and they assured us saying, we were good people, that they had known us for a long time and we were not the Japanese enemy or the military. "If you have any problems, let us know, we'll help you out," they said. So we were assured by our neighbors, which made us feel well.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you went to school, was there very many Japanese?

MR. SHIMASAKI: In the elementary and the high school, I was the only Japanese. Of course, my brother was a year and a half younger, so he came along. But other than that, we were the only Japanese in the school.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about at junior college?

MR. SHIMASAKI: I was the only Japanese.

MRS. HASEGAWA: There weren't very many Japanese families living here then?

MR. SHIMASAKI: There were families, but they didn't have children of my age. They had children, but they were younger children who had not approached that level.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are there lots of Japanese here now?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, when you speak of here, you are probably referring to Tulare County.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, no. The Lindsay area where you lived.

MR. SHIMASAKI: There are probably less people now than there were prior to World War II.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's not very many, then.

MR. SHIMASAKI: No, that isn't very many.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Does Tulare County have a lot of Japanese?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. Because we have a high concentration of Japanese in the Dinuba-Orosi area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I thought there were lots of Japanese in Visalia.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, there are a few. But not as many as: in the Orosi-Dinuba area. In fact, if you roam around town, occasionally you come across a Japanese person. Prior to the war, there was a Japanese town, but that doesn't exist any longer.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It seems to me that in the history of Tulare County there was a big Sumida grocery store?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. And the two sons operate a drug store. That's the only Japanese business in Visalia that I can think of.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to a relocation camp?

MR. SHIMASAKI: We went to Fresno Assembly Center first, from there to the Jerome Relocation Center in Denson, Arkansas.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Tulare County people then went to Fresno Assembly Center?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Not all. Highway 65 was the dividing line. Those who lived north and east of Highway 65 went to Fresno Assembly Center, and those who lived west and south of Highway 65 went to the Poston Relocation Center.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember something about your evacuation?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Of course. Could I tell you something about what had happened prior to evacuation? Some days after Pearl Harbor, the government authorities rounded up all the Japanese aliens that they had suspected of anything. I was taken in with them, even though I was an American citizen, and that was a frightful experience. There I was an American citizen and I wound up as an alien. I got to the Tulare County Jail and they left me there, and the authorities said that they had to go to dinner so, "You wait here until we get back." So they finally returned. They didn't care whether I ate or not, but they had their dinner. Then one of the officers started to ask me questions and I couldn't very well understand--for one thing he had a toothpick in his mouth, and he was speaking with a toothpick in his mouth. And I think I told him that I didn't understand the question. But, nevertheless, I answered him the best that I could. Finally they released me that night on the basis of my American citizenship, while all the Isseis were kept there and locked into the cells.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How many Isseis were there?

MR. SHIMASAKI: There were probably 40 or 50, because the round-up covered the entire county of Tulare.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where was this? Visalia?

MR. SHIMASAKI: County Jail. And from there the Isseis were transferred to Sharp Park.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was your father still living then?

MR. SHIMASAKI: No. My father had died about a year before.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I wonder if they took you because you were the head of your family.

MR. SHIMASAKI: No. I was active in the Japanese community. That is, when various things come up I had something to do with it. So I was probably victim of that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: They probably thought you were the spokesman for the Japanese.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Someone probably told them if you're going to get anyone, why, get him.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was a frightening experience!

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. Now, you're talking about the relocation experience. The Executive Order 9066. There were military boundaries from which persons had to evacuate. Someone came along and tacked notices on the telephone poles saying that all persons of Japanese ancestry residing south of a given road or west of a given road were to appear at a certain place. This way it was a building in Tulare where we

had to report at a given time with toothbrushes (it didn't say toothbrushes), but whatever change of clothing that we might need. So we appeared there. We herded onto buses and were sent to the Fresno Fairgrounds and assigned barracks.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you own your land before you were evacuated?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What happened to your property while you were gone?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, we had to dispose of it the best way we could. And I wasn't able to find a tenant or someone to look after it, so I just left it. Then later on someone said that they would take it over. I had strawberries growing on the farm, and the people that took it over just let it die. They abandoned everything. And these are things that we were not able to recover after we returned.

MRS. HASEGAWA: But you did have your property?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. We had our property when we came back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Before you went to camp, and after you graduated from junior college, were you a farmer?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And you raised strawberries on your property?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Strawberries primarily.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What were some of the experiences in camp that you might recall?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Of course, living in camp was not all that great. You were confined, and you were out in public view. You had no privacy. We were young, so we were able to adapt ourselves to the situation. I can recall carrying my baby boy to the hospital for immunizations. And about the third or fourth time I took him, why, he saw the needle, and he knew what was coming off, so he began to cry. That's something that I remembered. But, I guess, I could say that I was impressed with the people, the way in which they tried to adapt themselves to the situation and the environment. Of course, when you get a number of people together in one location, you are going to get all kinds of people. There are arguments, there are fights, there are expressions of moodiness. It didn't seem to bother some people a great deal. This same thing transferred over to the Arkansas Relocation Center. I thought the four or five or six-day train ride was not all that enjoyable, but that was something different. I had never taken a five-day train ride before.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You had a baby then? It must have been hard traveling with an infant.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. For women with babies. They had the pullman car instead of coaches so they could sleep at night. Those of us who were in the coaches had to sleep the best way we could. En route, my young son developed convulsions and that was a difficult experience. Fortunately, he survived and we were really happy about that.



MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you have a doctor on the train that took care of him?

MR. SHIMASAKI: I don't know whether you'd call him a doctor. There was a medical attendant on board. He was called in this instance, he said there was nothing he could do.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was he one of the evacuees?

MR. SHIMASAKI: No, he was someone that was provided by the military.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of job did you do in camp? Did you have a job?

MR. SHIMASAKI: At the Assembly Center we had the farm project. I was part of the leadership of that. At least someone suggested that I do that, so I had that job. And the pay was \$16 a month. Well, that's more than the \$12 or \$8 that some of the others were receiving. But in the Jerome Center I was solicited to teach school. I taught algebra and geometry and those types of subjects. After a period of time, there was a lot of recruitment for laborers going on in camp. They wanted laborers outside. So in the September of 1943, I left camp by myself with one of these labor parties and many of the youngsters who left with me were from our block, the block in which we lived. We went to a place called South Haven, Michigan and picked peaches and apples. After I had been there for a couple of weeks, I received a letter from Saburo Kido who was the National JAACL President, and he said that Dr. Yamagiwa of the University of Michigan was in Salt Lake City interviewing candidates to teach Japanese in the Army specialized program. And he said that I should go to Ann Arbor, Michigan and apply for a job, which I did. When I arrived and had the interview, I found that I had forgotten a lot of Japanese or that there were certain things lacking in my knowledge of Japanese. But, then, Dr. Yamagiwa gave me an opportunity, and there I taught in the program teaching conversational Japanese.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is that where you stayed, in Ann Arbor?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. I was there until July of 1944, and about that time the relocation centers were closing, and they had transferred my family from Jerome to Rohwer, because they were consolidating camps. So I took my family out to Utah and there I obtained a position with the Federal Public Housing Authority and worked as a maintenance worker until December of 1945 when I returned to California.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was your involvement with the military service then?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you return to Lindsay, and what was the community reaction?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, it was December of 1945, and it was in the winter. When I got into Lindsay I noticed that on the car windows they had signs, "No Japs wanted." And I said to myself, "Well, we may be having a difficult time, but we will have to persevere somehow." There

was nothing left but the house, and we made out the best we could. I obtained employment picking oranges and picking olives, pruning trees to sustain myself until I could get started farming on my own. So it was a couple of years before I could get on my feet.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your former friends come to your help?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. Those who opposed the return of Japanese in Lindsay were the minority. I encountered no hostility anywhere. Although in places like Orosi I understand there were some shootings of homes, I can't recall that there was anything like that in Lindsay. So I farmed for a number of years and then I went into the insurance business in 1960. What prompted me to go into the insurance business was that I had some bad experiences in farming. In fact, I went broke, so I had to do something else, and in the process of going broke there were my creditors who were coming around pestering me for payment. They were attaching my farm equipment and making it somewhat miserable for me. But what sustained me was that I had some cash value life insurance, and this was something that they could not attach. So I said to myself, well, if life insurance has worked this well for me, it certainly should be good for other people. It prompted me to seek employment in marketing of life insurance. Now, I deal strictly with life insurance and disability insurance. I have those licenses.

My disability insurance includes not only disability income but medical/hospital insurance. Both individual and group. There have been considerable changes and improvements in the insurance in that particular field over the years. Most of these improvements have been prompted by changes in the laws, particularly the tax laws that govern insurance. The kinds of insurance that we market today are more suitable to meet the needs of the people much more than they were 20 years ago when I started the business.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Talking about hospital insurance, hospitalization has become so expensive; what would you recommend for an older person?

MR. SHIMASAKI: By older person, you mean a person on MediCare?

MRS. HASEGAWA: Right.

MRS. SHIMASAKI: Those who have the JACL-Blue Shield Group Insurance should keep that. But if you do not have that, why, then there is supplemental insurance through MediCare that may be purchased. I think the present cost for that is somewhere around \$80 a quarter. That may sound high to some people, but considering the coverage and the cost of medical expenses that supplemental insurance has to cover, it's reasonable.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You mentioned that the laws have changed insurance. What are some of the laws that have affected insurance?

MR. SHIMASAKI: For instance, the 1976 tax law made drastic changes in insurance, particularly in the way that the benefits are paid. There is greater security for patient recipients now that did not exist prior to the law. And the law designated the kinds of insurance that could be marked for tax shelters. People who could receive tax deductions on future benefits particularly retirement benefits, medical benefits, these types of things.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. Now going on to organization participation, you are a very active member of the Japanese-American Citizens League. You're a candidate for the National President of the JACL 1980-1982. Will you please discuss your involvement with JACL from when you first became involved and your sentiments about the organization?

MR. SHIMASAKI: The Tulare County Chapter was organized in 1945, and I was 19 years old at the time. We were encouraged to join by the Issei. The Issei felt powerless because they were an alien organization, the Japanese Association. And they did not have the integrity of citizenship. They were ineffective, and they used to tell us Nisei, "You are American citizens. You have the right to vote, and right to franchise, and rights to a number of things. Right to own land," because they, as aliens, the Isseis could not own land. So I was caught up in that enthusiasm and I went to a couple of the meetings, and I was impressed with the JACL--what they had accomplished in a short time, such as repeal of the Cable Act when the Nisei women lost their citizenship because they married alien Issei. And they had acquired citizenship for those Japanese who were veterans of World War I. They were promised their citizenship, but they never got it and JACL sought the legislation that gave them citizenship. Well, I was enthused, and I was determined that JACL was deserving of the membership and support of every Nisei in the country. So that's how I got started, and I went to the meetings, and I think I was somewhat vocal because before long I was elected as an officer, and within two or three years the president of the chapter. And I held that office for a few years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In Tulare County?

MR. SHIMASAKI: In Tulare County, yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you meet?

MR. SHIMASAKI: We met most of the time in Visalia, but we would rotate the meetings. And at that time Delano was part of Tulare County Chapter. They weren't strong enough to form their own, so they said they would become members of Tulare County until they were able to have their own chapter.

MRS. HASEGAWA: About how many members did you have in 1935?

MR. SHIMASAKI: I think there were around 150 or more.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That many!

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: They were all very young, then?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. They were young. Dr. Yatabe was the president, and he could have been about 35.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was he Nisei?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Nisei, yes. Then we would go to the Northern California District Council Meetings which consisted of approximately 35 chapters in Northern California. Before long, why, I was elected vice-

chairman of the District Council and when Saburo Kido was elected National President I was moved up to the office of chairman of the Council and that put me on the national board. I was 25 years old at that time. But over the years, I've done a number of things related to JACL. I have served on national committees, been chairman of several national committees, in fact, I have been active. One term I was the National First Vice-President, and I have run for national office four times. Three times I was not elected. So this time will make my fourth or fifth time that I have run for national office, and I don't believe there is another Nisei in the country who has done that; run for national office five times. But if I'm elected national president, my program would be to seek the involvement of Nisei in community activities. I feel that there are a large number of Nisei who have the ability, the skills, to contribute to community efforts, and I feel that there should be a national program in JACL to encourage Nisei to participate actively in their communities.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Yes.

MR. SHIMASAKI: We read about instances where some Nisei is president of PTA or something like that. There should be more of that, because through what we have experienced, and what we have learned, we have the talent, and we're not utilizing ourselves to the fullest extent unless we really participate in community activities.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why is it that there are so few Nisei that participate?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, I think their hesitation comes from the enryo syndrome that they have adopted from their parents. It was difficult to get the Issei involved, there was a lot of hesitation. Of course, some were more aggressive than others, but then I think in most people there was hesitation. They just didn't want to get involved that way.

MRS. HASEGAWA: The Isseis you could understand because they had the language problem.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes, the Nisei should be a little more aggressive. You would think so, but then they are not. There are many Nisei who are successful in their businesses, so naturally they have other talents that they can use in the community. Redress is very important to me, because all we want to do in this program is to arouse the conscience of the American people as to the injustices that were perpetrated upon the Japanese during World War II. Certainly if we are going to make our mark on the sands of history, we will have to crack this. We know that the majority of American people do not know what happened, because they have never been told about it; it is not in the history books. We have been apprehended, and we have been tossed into concentration camps. We want to rectify our position.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I think this is one of the things we are trying to do with this project, to record the history of the Japanese-Americans.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. It is said that anyone under the age of 10 years is not able to recall very much that has happened. It has been 38 years since then, so you might say that no one under the age of 48 would remember or would recall or would know anything about the evacuation. Now if you talk to people under the age of 48, well, that's the majority

of our population, by far. So this is going to be an educational process.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How do you plan to accomplish that?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, redress has number one priority in the program already. And I think that I can give the organization a kind of leadership that will spur us to reach those goals that we have set. You know, goals are one thing, but reaching them is another.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Yes.

MR. SHIMASAKI: So I think I have to generate the enthusiasm that is necessary for the Nisei and the Sansei to strive towards that goal.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I can see the Sansei doing so, but the Nisei?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, they could participate actively in the fund raising and those kinds of activities. They could do that better than the Sansei.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's true. According to your resume, you have held many responsible positions in the community and in your professional organization. Would you like to tell us a little bit about this?

MR. SHIMASAKI: I ran for the Board of Trustees of the Lindsay District Hospital. I thought I could be of some service so that's why I ran. When I was elected I didn't know whether I should have done that, because I found out that I really couldn't devote that much time with my other activities. And as far as the Tulare County Republican Central Committee, you have to file as any other candidate. In that instance, I was encouraged by people to run. So I ran, and I was elected, and I was on the Tulare County Republican Central Committee for about eight years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do during your term of office?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, we participated actively in the campaigns. If you're on the central committee, in this instance the Republican Central Committee, you're the Republican Party in the county. I was elected from the First Supervisorial District of Tulare County which included the communities of Lindsay and Porterville. So anytime anything comes up, you are the Republican Party.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see.

MR. SHIMASAKI: And if somebody indicates that he wishes to run for office, you have to make him available and provide him with the facilities and do whatever you can.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you foresee for this coming election for the Republican Party?

MR. SHIMASAKI: From what I can see and with people that I have talked to that are members of the California Republican Party, we think we have the best chance of winning the presidency that we have had in a long time. Definitely we think we are going to win the presidency, and I am channeling my activities in that direction. That is to say that I'm not

really not interested in the United States Senate race. I don't know--I hate to say we have weak candidates, but my goal as far as politics is concerned, is to try to get our party to win the presidency.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are there very many Japanese involved in the Republican Party?

MR. SHIMASAKI: On the California Republican Party which consists of about 1100 people, the only Japanese people I know on it are Assemblyman Paul Bannai, United States Senator S.I. Hayakawa, and that person by the name of Yo Takagaki from Los Angeles.

MRS. HASEGAWA: No local people?

MR. SHIMASAKI: No. There were others who have served from time to time, such as Mrs. Yamamoto of Los Angeles who served on it a great number of years. And there are other people I have met over the years. At one particular time, we had three Japanese from Central California on the Republican Central Committee.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh.

MR. SHIMASAKI: They were Robert Kanagawa and Don Kurihara and myself.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. Now you are the only one?

MR. SHIMASAKI: From this area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you like to comment on some of your other activities on community service that you have been involved with? You have quite a few listed here in your resume. Tulare County YMCA?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. I have been a member of the YMCA for a long time. I thought that if there is any organization that I really should help, why, YMCA should be one of them, because they afforded me an opportunity to go to camp when I was 10 years old. And I think that my life has been enriched by that camping experience. Then at a subsequent time, I went to camp also, and I think that was a facility afforded me by the YMCA men who were active at that time, who made it possible for me and other youngsters to go. I think I should return that to the youth of today. Same way with the Boy Scout program.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. As Lieutenant Governor of Kiwanis International, what were the highlights of your year in office?

MR. SHI.MASAKI: Division 18 consisted of Tulare County at that time so the responsibility of lieutenant governor is that you have to go to the clubs, various clubs, in the community and inspire them to community service, to do more for the communities. If some clubs are inactive, you have to use all devices to get them to be active. To spur them on you have to be inspirational. And I felt good that particular year, because that year was the 50th anniversary year of Kiwanis. It was the Golden Anniversary Year, and there were many golden anniversary parties, special projects that we could use. And I felt very good about serving in that responsible position at that time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you belong to any professional organizations that

you would like to comment on?

MR. SHIMASAKI: I have been president of the Tulare/Kings County Life Underwriters Association, and I am the only one from Tulare County that has ever been president of the Fresno Chapter of the American Society of Chartered Life Underwriters. This is an organization of CLU, Chartered Life Underwriters, which corresponds something to CPA in the county. As professional organizations, we try to upgrade the professional ethics, these type of things, and try to give our profession a better image in the community. I have delighted in serving in these responsibilities because I think these are the kinds of efforts that we should exert if we're in this profession.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You received the Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scouts of America and have been chosen as the Lindsay Man of the Year. What did you feel was most gratifying about receiving these awards?

MR. SHIMASAKI: I don't think any person goes out to perform community service with the idea of receiving an award for doing it. So awards are byproducts of a person's dedication and person's effort. I felt that since I have benefited from the Boy Scout program as a boy that I should put something back into it, and in that process, I have probably made a number of contributions to the Boy Scout program in our Mount Whitney Council which constitutes Tulare and Kings County. I have served in various positions in the Mount Whitney Area Council, and finally they gave me the Silver Beaver Award. This is a distinguished award, and I said at that time that I felt embarrassed about receiving it because there are others who have done so much for the scouting program in the Council. But, then, as I looked back upon it, I hate to say it is about time I received it, but, then, I have done a great deal for the Boy Scout movement. As a community person having served as president of the Chamber of Commerce in Lindsay and chairman of the Orange Blossom Festival, and a number of other civil responsibilities, when they gave me the Man of the Year Award, well, it was gratifying. I could look back and see myself with my name listed with others who had received it in the past and it was a great honor. So I appreciated it very much. Although my wife tells me that I can take that thing up to town and 37 cents with which I can buy a cup of coffee almost anywhere.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I am interested in historical societies, especially the Japanese history. As past President of the Tulare Historical Society, do you recall whether there were any records of early Japanese settlers in Tulare County?

MR. SHIMASAKI: No, there are not. I have looked at all possible places, and I have made inquiries as to whether there might be any records of the early Japanese. And people say that there were Japanese woodcutters in Tulare County as early as 1890. As you might know, most of Tulare County was in oak trees which had to be felled to produce the farmable land, and there were Japanese who were cutting wood in those days. The records at the Visalia District Cemetery indicate that there are Japanese who were buried there as early as 1885. There are quite a number of gravestones from that period, from 1885 to 1900. Now it is said that most of these people were working on the railroad, because indications are that a number of Japanese worked on the railroad in this area. But that is about all we know of them. Some of their names are in the books at the cemetery. And some of the markers indicate the name of the Caucasian boss and their worker's names, and that is the way the

graves are marked. But those graves are in the corner of the cemetery and Jun Hatakeda went over there to the cemetery and searched the records, and he found some information, and he wrote a story on this for the Tulare County JACL Newsletter a couple of years ago, so we have that information. But while the Japanese were buried there in that corner of the cemetery, the cemeteries were not very well kept and Jun Hatakeda said that as a boy a number of them would go over to the cemetery and clean the weeds around these Japanese graves.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You say a corner, what corner would that be?

MR. SHIMASAKI: I don't know what corner that would be. But there is a certain area there where the Japanese were buried.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is this a Visalia cemetery?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. Visalia District Cemetery and then there are some Japanese buried in the Tulare Cemetery.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where is this Visalia cemetery?

MR. SHIMASAKI: It is located in the North Central part of Visalia. In order to reach there you go down Main Street, north on Main Street from here until you get to Giddings, and you turn left at Giddings, and that should take you very close to the cemetery.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You said the other was at the Tulare Cemetery?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. We have had regional studies or inquiries, and we are reasonably assured that early Japanese are buried there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where is that? In the city of Tulare?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes, that's in Tulare. Of course, in the Lindsay Cemetery, there are Japanese buried, but we can't find any graves much before 1910 or thereabouts.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Will you explain to us your duties as foreman of the Tulare Grand Jury, and who was responsible for your appointment.

MR. SHIMASAKI: As you know, the process of grand jury selection is that they seek responsible people and put their names into a hat, and in the first round they select a number of people from each community. Then out of this list they select 30 people; they pull out 30 names. Then they call these 30 people in for an interview to talk about their availability and interest in serving on the grand jury. Then, out of this 30 people, they pull out 19 names. Call everybody in out of the 30 and these 19 people will serve on the grand jury. Then the judge of the court will appoint the foreman. And, in our case, I was appointed the foreman. The responsibility of foreman is to preside at all grand jury hearings--all grand jury meetings and at indictment hearings. We, as a grand jury, had a number of indictment hearings, and we indicted a number of people. This is a cost-saving process, because if they were to go through the regular Superior Court trial it would cost a considerable amount of money. I think that the grand jury indictment process is necessary; otherwise, the court costs would be enormous. I felt that during the time I served on the grand jury, my time was well spent.



MRS. HASEGAWA: What years?

MR. SHIMASAKI: 1977 through 1978.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you like to comment on the sister city program that you helped organize?

MR. SHIMASAKI: One day I was called to Visalia to interpret for a couple of Japanese who had come from Miki City. They had just completed a sister city relationship with Miki City. I was thrilled with the experience and the value of such a program as a sister city relationship. So there was a meeting of the International Relations Committee of the Lindsay Kiwanis Club. In fact, I was a member of the committee, and I proposed to the committee that the Kiwanis Club take the leadership and try to organize a sister city with some city somewhere. I didn't care whether it was in Mexico, West Germany, or wherever. But, I did say that I was encouraged by the sister city relationship that Visalia had with Miki City, and that we would want to have a relationship with some city in the country that was economically strong so that we could both benefit by such a relationship. They said for me to go ahead and see what I could work out. So I came over to Visalia to talk to the officials and ask them to ask Miki City if there was some city that might be interested in having a sister city relationship with Lindsay. And it so happened that the neighboring community, Miki City's neighboring community Ono City was interested in such an arrangement. So, we sent our mayor over there to discuss things. And he came back very much enthused. He felt that it would be a real good idea, and by that time we had sold the people of Lindsay on the idea. So then, they sent their mayor over and things went very well. Well, that was the start, and then in the spring of 1974 we sent the Lindsay High School band of 100 students over there. And they came back very happy for the experience. We had to raise \$40,000 to do that, and I was chairman of the fund raising committee. I was very happy that we were successful in raising the money and sending the students over there, and the program has come along very well. In fact, a month ago we had about 27 visitors from Ono City for a three or four-day stay. In fact, each delegation that has come, we take them to various places of interest around Lindsay; to the packinghouses, the businesses, the manufacturing plants. One time we took them to Sequoia National Park.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where do you put them up, in your homes?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes. We ask for volunteers, and we've always been able to take care of them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you raised this \$40,000, what kind of fund raising did you do?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Individual solicitations. One-to-one basis, you know, we have to ask people. We did have raffle tickets, but that was about as far as we went. We didn't have fund raising dinners or anything like that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I wondered, that's a lot of money.

MR. SHIMASAKI: For a small town it is.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is there any other organization with which you are

involved that you'd like to comment on? I see that you have been president of quite a few. I don't see how you could have been active in so many organizations.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, these activities are spread over a number of years. I was involved in the Farm Bureau when I was a farmer, but then since I am no longer a farmer, I am not concerned with the Farm Bureau. Oh, I might tell you something about the Elks Lodge. You know, Elks had a discriminatory clause in their membership requirements; they would not admit Chinese or Japanese, and I have a number of friends in Porterville who are members of the Porterville Elks Lodge. One day one of them said, "Tom, why don't you join the Elks, be happy to have you." Well, I knew that there was this discriminatory clause but they didn't, and I told them, "Well, thank you, but there is no way I can get in, you have this discriminatory clause." They didn't believe that there was.

So they proposed my name anyway, and finally it did come back that I wasn't able to join. And they said, "Well, we're going to get this changed right now." And I said, "Well, if it has to come from the top leadership, I don't think you are going to get very much changed." But at that time the JAACL was involved in this thing, getting discriminatory clauses removed from membership requirements. So, finally, they found out that I couldn't become a member and then they raised a big fuss. They said that the 800 members of Porterville Lodge were going to resign and form their own organization. Well, under that threat they changed the national membership requirements. So, it might be that I am the first Japanese to join the Elks.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, I wondered about that.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Of course, I didn't want to joint another organization. And when I could join, and they gave them the papers, I told them, "Well, I am involved in so many organizations I don't think I am going to have time to join the Elks," and they said, "Bologna, you're the cause of all this and now we got it changed you've got to join." So I am a member of the Brotherhood of the Protective Order of the Elks, Porterville Lodge 1342.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What year was that change made?

MR. SHI.MASAKI: Must have been about 1974. It seems that I have been a member about six years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Now it's open to anyone?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's wonderful. Do you still observe any traditional Japanese customs in your daily life or on special occasions?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, the older I have become, the more I appreciate Japanese food. As a youngster I didn't like Japanese food, but now I do. And, of course, if you can say the use of chopsticks is a Japanese custom, I use it. But, my wife is a very good cook, and she cooks Japanese food, and I enjoy that. Most of the members of our family are of the Christian faith. In fact, there isn't anyone that is a member of the Buddhist faith, but I still have a living aunt that is. And this year is the 35th anniversary of the death

of my mother, so we're going to have a reunion in San Francisco and we're going to the Buddhist Temple for the 35th year services. But, that's about the extent of observing any Japanese customs.

MRS. HASEGAWA: As a very active and civic-minded Nisei, do you have any remarks or advice to future Nikkei in America?

MR. SHIMASAKI: Well, there are times when I could have said this is the United States of Americas and we should integrate as quickly as possible. But then, I have been cautious in saying things of that nature. We have attained our successes by hard work, by perseverance, by diligence, by honesty. And these traits should be continued. In fact, you don't have to give them advice like that, because our records indicate that we have the lowest crime rate and the lowest number of people on welfare. We practice self-reliance so there is hardly any advice that you could give them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Thank you very much. I wish you the best success for the National Presidency of the JAACL. I think you would be an excellent person for it.

MR. SHIMASAKI: Thank you.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Thank you.