

SHIG DOMOTO

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is March 23, 1980. I, Yoshino Hasegawa, am privileged to interview Mr. and Mrs. Shig Domoto in their home on their farm which has been in the Domoto family for 56 years. The farm is located just northeast of Sanger in the Centerville Riverbottom area.

The address is 528 North Rio Vista, Sanger, 93657.

Have you lived on this property for 56 years?

MR. DOMOTO: That's when we moved down to this farm.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your family own it before that?

MR. DOMOTO: No, we actually owned it from '32.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see.

MR. DOMOTO: You know, Japanese couldn't own property so we had it in someone else's name. And when I became of age they transferred it to my name.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. Are you the oldest one in the family?

MR. DOMOTO: No. George is the oldest.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How come your name was used? Usually the oldest sons in Japanese families inherit the land.

MR. DOMOTO: I think George didn't want to have anything to do with it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. This farm is located just northeast of Sanger in the Centerville Riverbottom area. And the address is 528 North Rio Vista, Sanger. To begin this interview, Mr. Domoto, please state your full name, place and date of birth, and the place of your longest residence.

MR. DOMOTO: Shigeru Domoto. I was born August 30, 1911, and I've been down here the longest.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were you born here?

MR. DOMOTO: No, I was born in Centerville, but we moved down here in 1922.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where in Centerville was your home?

MR. DOMOTO: On Joe Moodey's place.

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

MR. DOMOTO: Wakayama-Ken, Naga-Gun, Nagata Mura.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you recall anything about why they came and why they settled in the Centerville area?

MR. DOMOTO: To this area? I haven't the slightest idea.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I thought maybe they had friends or acquaintances from the same Ken in Japan.

MR. DOMOTO: There might have been, but they never talked about it. At least they didn't talk about it in front of me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And when did they build their house?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, that was built just before we came. It was built for us. When the house was ready, we moved in. The carpenter was named Buffalo.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your dad didn't legally own this land. You said he had bought the property under someone else's name.

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. But it was his property, so he had a house built. Would you say that your folks were one of the first Japanese that came to this area?

MR. DOMOTO: No, I couldn't say that. I remember there were quite a few Japanese up and down the Valley, you know, you called them fruit tramps. They followed the work. And my dad had a camp in Centerville and we always had somebody in there all the time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is that what he did, then, before he came here?

MR. DOMOTO: No.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You said he had a camp. What kind of camp was it?

MR. DOMOTO: A labor camp for single Japanese workers. Never had more than half a dozen at a time. He housed and fed them there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. Who did the cooking?

MR. DOMOTO: My mother.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that on Moodey's property?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did your father do for the Moodey's?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, he worked for him and then he had the place rented later.

MRS. DOMOTO: Didn't he work in Fresno? He always used to talk about the Edgerlys.

MR. DOMOTO: Well, yes, he was there before he came to Centerville.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh.

MRS. DOMOTO: Pearl Edgerly Smith. She used to come down and see him, because she knew him when she was a child.

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How old was your dad when he came from Japan?

MR. DOMOTO: Twenty-seven years old. I don't know whether he came directly to Fresno or how he got to Fresno. Anyway, from Fresno he came out to Centerville.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did the Edgerlys live in Fresno, then?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. They had a place there near Ratcliffe Stadium.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was there any other Japanese family living in this area when they moved down here?

MR. DOMOTO: No. Later there was a gardener down here by the name of Okamura, and about the 1930's the Nakamura family became our neighbors. Other early Japanese families in the area were Ihara, Mayeda, Watahira, Nishina, Nishioka, Matsumoto, and Ohama.

MRS. DOMOTO: Yasumatsu Domoto was born April 18, 1872, Wakayama-Ken, Naga-Gun, Nagata Mura, Japan. He entered San Francisco in October, 1899.

MRS. HASEGAWA: He was one of the first Japanese pioneers to come to this area. Fresno was beginning to be populated by Japanese in the late 1800's. The first Japanese came about 1889.

MRS. DOMOTO: Shig's mother came from the same town in Japan. She was born November 28, 1877, and her name was Koto Handa Domoto.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did she come at the same time, with your father?

MR. DOMOTO: No, she entered Seattle, October 1907.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I wonder if she was a picture bride.

MR. DOMOTO: I don't think so. They celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary July 16, 1950, so they were married in Japan.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Wasn't it kind of unusual for Japanese people to have a brand new house built for them in those times?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, it wasn't much of a house.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kinds of crops were on the place when they came to live here?

MR. DOMOTO: These grapes right here. There were about seven acres of Thompsons. Actually this place was divided into two pieces. We had the back piece and there was another house right here, a fellow by the name of Katzemayer lived in it. I think that's how you spell it. But, anyway, any body in Sanger who is an old-timer will know. He had two sons and a daughter or two, I don't remember. The boys distinguished themselves in athletics in high school. Anyway, they had the grapes and we had the back part and we were growing vegetables.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you grow?

MR. DOMOTO: Oh, most any kind of vegetables; spinach, beets, and onions.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do, market those?

MR. DOMOTO: That's where Watahira and Mayeda come in. They were trucking and going to market every day to Fresno, and we sent it in with them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they come to here to pick it up?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. And then Round Mountain had a truck going to San Francisco every day. We sent some stuff up there, too. We sent all kinds of vegetables. In the wintertime, we had winter vegetables, summertime we had summer vegetables. We had sato emo later.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about the bamboo that grew out there? Did you ever market those? Did you ever sell them?

MR. DOMOTO: We tried it, but it didn't pan out so we didn't bother. It just didn't bring enough to bother sending it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's a shame because bamboo shoots are so unusual and so good in season.

MR. DOMOTO: Well, I don't know why they didn't go for it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Maybe it was too expensive.

MR. DOMOTO: No, I don't think so. Because the returns weren't much. It wasn't worth our trouble to pack it and send it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did they start the bamboo out there?

MR. DOMOTO: I think George got it someplace from somebody. I can't remember who it was. And he just decided to put some in there and see what it would do, and it really spread. Sometimes he wishes he hadn't started it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you say that the river bottom soil is better than other places?

MR. DOMOTO: No. It depends on what you do with it. Now, it's not very good for summer vegetables, but it's good for winter vegetables. The soil is too loose and sandy for summer vegetables.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What about irrigation?

MR. DOMOTO: You don't have to irrigate near as much as you would on the upland. But vegetables have to be irrigated often because their roots are shallow.

MRS. HASEGAWA: With the grapes you don't have to irrigate them?

MR. DOMOTO: Years ago, we didn't. But now it's gotten so we have to irrigate.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Does that mean the water level has gone down?

MR. DOMOTO: Not necessarily. In the springtime, the water level is up high because the river runs high. But in the summertime, the later summer, it goes down. The river is way down.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Talking about the river, did you have lots of flooding before the dam was built?

MR. DOMOTO: Many times. Water got under the floor. It didn't get into the house, but got underneath.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When was it that you had that really bad flood?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, in 1950 I think we had the last one, wasn't it? They had begun to build the dam up there, but it knocked out whatever they had in there. That was a bad one then. That was the last one that did any damage. It tore out vines and made big holes here and there and washed up a lot of debris against the vines which stuck real tight. We had to go get some potato forks and chop it away.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did flooding occur that often?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes, it did. 1938 was the first flood I remember and each time we had to move out. If we didn't get out right away, we wouldn't have been able to get out. We would not have drowned or anything, but there was no telling how long we would have been locked in.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you evacuate to during the flood? How did you know when to evacuate and was there a chance of it coming in the night with no warning?

MR. DOMOTO: No, I think we had plenty of warning. When we knew it was coming we went to friends' homes. Many of the Japanese families went to the Sanger Japanese Hall.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Japanese went to the Japanese Hall, but where did the other people go?

MR. DOMOTO: Most of them had places to go, you know. So I guess they went to relatives; or friends' places. I don't remember where else they went. It wasn't too well populated down around here. There weren't too many families at that time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: During those years, did the Red Cross help you or were you able to get any other kind of help?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. They volunteered to help, but we didn't get any help. They called us a disaster area so they said we could get a government loan at low interest, but you had to prove that you couldn't get it anyplace else.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see.

MR. DOMOTO: So, it didn't do any good. About the only one that could get it were people that had no home or anything. Maybe they lost a blanket or something.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were there Indians in this area? Did they live on your property?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they work for you?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. They worked for us and we provided a place for them to live.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You were saying that you had six or seven acres on the backside of the farm. Was that in vegetables also?

MR. DOMOTO: No. About seven acres were in vines, but we didn't have that until '32 or '34 when I took it over, because the people who had contracted the other part of the farm gave it up. The agreement was that if they gave it up we had to take the whole thing.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was this the property that Katzemayer lived on?

MR. DOMOTO: They were going to purchase the property on the contract. The original owner owned both pieces, and if they gave it up we had to assume the mortgage.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. How many acres were there all together?

MR. DOMOTO: There were 64 acres all together.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is that what it is now?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, 64 acres.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I don't quite understand. Your two families bought the place from the original man, or did you buy it separately?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, in a way. These Katzemayers had the whole place, the whole 64 acres. He was buying it from the man Robinson. And when my dad came down there he said he wanted some of the property in the back, so they agreed to divide. My dad agreed to take it off of Katzemayer's hands, the back 30. And the agreement was that if Katzemayer couldn't make the payments on this part, my dad had to assume all of it. That's how come he had the whole thing.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. So Katzemayer moved out?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long was that after you dad moved here?

MR. DOMOTO: I can't remember how long.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was it after you took over?

MR. DOMOTO: No, before. So we weren't here too long before Katzemayer quit.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you go to school?

MR. DOMOTO: Centerville.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you walk?

MR. DOMOTO: I rode a bicycle. Two miles, but that's not far. In that day and age, we'd cut across the fields, you know.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was it like in this area? Now, we have county roads and different farms.

MR. DOMOTO: I can't see much difference except for along the slough where there was a lot of brush and wood. We cleared most of that out. That's the only difference I can see around here. And the roads are all the same. They haven't changed the roads any. They put up a lot more fences down through there, so you can't go cutting across the fields.

MRS. HASEGAWA: This area is called Deaverville. Why is it?

MR. DOMOTO: Because the Deavers settled here, I guess.

MRS. HASEGAWA: There are so many of them. Where did they come from?

MR. DOMOTO: Missouri, originally. But they were down there by -- do you know where Howard Wolfe's place is? They are down there by the rock crusher. That's where they were before they came here. We were here before they came. You can call it Deaverville because there were quite a few families of Deavers.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you have any special recollections of your childhood?

MR. DOMOTO: No. My life was just ordinary, I guess. Nothing special.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to Japanese school?

MR. DOMOTO: For a while, yes. I didn't learn anything.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to Sanger for that?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you get there?

MR. DOMOTO: My folks, they drove me. My dad, rather. My mother didn't drive.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember going in horse and buggy? Or was that before your time?

MR. DOMOTO: No, I remember horse and buggy. We used to go horse and buggy to Fresno from Centerville.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long did it take you?

MR. DOMOTO: I don't know. And we used to go on picnics to Watoke Lake from here. Do you know where Watoke Lake is?

MRS. HASEGAWA: No.

MR. DOMOTO: That's quite a ways. We went by horse and buggy and spent all day up there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your folks were very religious and involved in the Japanese Methodist Church in Fresno. Were you?

MR. DOMOTO: To a certain extent. Fresno was so far away. We didn't get there very often.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You're not involved with the Japanese Methodist Church any longer?

MR. DOMOTO: No. When the children were old enough to go to Sunday School, we decided to take them to Sanger rather than to Fresno.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are you members of the Sanger Methodist Church?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember anything about the flume going through Centerville?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes, I do.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was it like? Did it cross your property?

MR. DOMOTO: No. It followed the river. And this Trimmer Road. It went right along the Trimmer Road back here, to back of Centerville. Sometimes when we got out of school early, that is high school, we would walk the flume home. You could walk along. They had a plank on the top there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was there water running in it? Logs coming down it?

MR. DOMOTO: When they had their lumber coming, they had water running in it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did it look like? The flume?

MR. DOMOTO: I can remember an old picture.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It was up on stilts, wasn't it?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. It was way above the ground. How far above the ground depended on the level of the ground because they had a certain incline to it, and they couldn't have too much incline or they couldn't bring the water up there. They couldn't go downhill too fast.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see what you mean. It was V-shaped, wasn't it?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. It was V-shaped. It had good supports. I remember that much of the structure. It ended in Sanger a little east of where the Sunkist Orange Company is now located.

MRS. DOMOTO: That was still there when we first came to Sanger.



MRS. HASEGAWA: Was there a big pond where the lumber finally ended up?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. There was a pond, but it wasn't that big.

MRS. HASEGAWA: But the water that came off the flume had to go somewhere.

MR. DOMOTO: It went into that ditch. Finally went into the Lone Tree Ditch. It crossed the Rainbow Avenue right there between Yamamoto's and -- before you get to the Sanger Community Center. The flume more or less ended just about there. I'm not sure.

MRS. DOMOTO: Tom Nakamura used to live in that flume house. We used to visit them. Part of that flume was still there. Wasn't that the flume house?

MR. DOMOTO: Flume house, yes. Every so many miles they had a caretaker's house for the flume. By the time the Nakamuras were living there, they weren't using that flume any more, just the houses. The flume came from Hume Lake.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where was the Nakamura house?

MR. DOMOTO: Out by where Paxton's house is now.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I would say this is a very historical area then.

MR. DOMOTO: I don't know if they call it historical.

MRS. DOMOTO: Well, look at that house Jack and Kay live in. That's just an old stagecoach house.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's where Shig's parents lived?

MR. DOMOTO: Near there, on that property and then the one across the road.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that the stagecoach station?

MR. DOMOTO: I don't remember.

MRS. DOMOTO: Stagecoaches stopped there, that's what Jack and Kay were telling me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to Centerville School for eight years?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. Then I went to Sanger High School.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you get there? Was there a school bus?

MR. DOMOTO: There was a bus. We walked out to where Howard Wolfe's house is at the present time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that to the end of your driveway?

MR. DOMOTO: No. There's a road that goes beyond this side of the rock

crusher, the scale, there's a road that goes toward Howard Wolfe's house. There was a bridge there. And that's before this other bridge. There was a bridge across the river there and this Rio Vista went out to the bridge. That's where we caught the bus. Then the floor washed the bridge out, so the county had to make another bridge.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How was high school?

MR. DOMOTO: It was nothing special.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go out for sports?

MR. DOMOTO: No.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your brothers are both football players, were they not?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do after you graduated from high school?

MR. DOMOTO: I just went to work here on the farm.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You didn't have other plans for working elsewhere or plans for another career?

MR. DOMOTO: No. I didn't prepare for anything.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you get married?

MR. DOMOTO: 1938, wasn't it?

MRS. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you meet your wife?

MR. DOMOTO: Just so happened, I guess.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to school together?

MR. DOMOTO: We went to school, never had any classes together, did we?

MRS. DOMOTO: No, you were ahead.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was your reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December the 7th, 1941? How did you hear about it?

MR. DOMOTO: Radio, wasn't it? An uneasy feeling. Everyplace we went people would stare at you.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was there a lot of prejudice in this area directed to you as a Japanese?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, to all Japanese people.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Personally, did you feel that you were being discriminated against?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, people talked like it was my fault that it happened.  
Of course, I had no control over that, but they made me feel that way.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was your war experience? Where did you go when you had to leave this area?

MR. DOMOTO: We went to Gila Relocation Camp. It was near Phoenix, Mesa or somewhere in that area.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you leave from Fresno or Visalia?

MR. DOMOTO: We left from Fresno.

MRS. DOMOTO: No, we left from Sanger.

MR. DOMOTO: Sanger, that's right. The train came through Sanger.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was it just Sanger area Japanese people that left from Sanger, or did it include some of the other area Japanese?

MR. DOMOTO: It must have included some others.

MRS. DOMOTO: Yes, well, we were supposed to go with the Hasegawas and you folks, you know, to Poston, but we got a permit to go to Gila because my folks were in town. We got a special permit to go with them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, did the country people go to another camp location?

MR. DOMOTO: There was a dividing line somewhere. Kings Canyon, I think it was. We happened to be on the wrong side. So we moved into town with her folks, and we went with them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: The whole Arita family?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What about your folks, Shig?

MR. DOMOTO: They went to Gila Relocation Center.

MRS. HASEGAWA: After you were married, did you come here to work on this farm?

MR. DOMOTO: After we were married, we rented a ranch on the corner of Belmont and Academy. When we left for camp, we took a big loss as the crop was almost ready, and we just got our expenses.

MRS. DOMOTO: Belmont. Peter Hasegawa's place was on Tulare there, remember?

MRS. HASEGAWA: Yes. Then who worked this ranch while you were gone, before going to the Relocation Center?

MR. DOMOTO: My brother Lyman wasn't married then so he was farming here.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you go after leaving Gila?

MR. DOMOTO: We left Gila in July 1943. We left for Awatonna, Minnesota and we didn't like it up there so we went down to Dayton, Ohio. And we stayed there until we moved back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do in Dayton?

MR. DOMOTO: Oh, we worked on a garden.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You raised vegetables?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. Working for a fellow that had a garden. Just worked the farm.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see. Then you came back to California, what year was that?

MR. DOMOTO: It was 1944. We came back before the war was over, as soon as they allowed us in here. We were one of the first ones back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you come back here to this ranch?

MR; DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your folks come with you?

MR. DOMOTO: No.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Just the two of you came back?

MR. DOMOTO: We came back, arid then we had a flood the next day.

MRS. HASEGAWA: A flood the next day?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do?

MR. DOMOTO: People told us to move out, that it was going to flood. And then that's when we found out who our friends were.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do? Where did you stay?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, Seichi Yamamoto was here already. He lived near Fresno, so he came down here and told us to come up there to his place. So we went and stayed with him. Our friends would come down here to see us. If we needed any help or this and that. That is a friend, you know. I knew some guys that I knew very well, but I was walking down the street in Sanger there and when they saw me coming they would walk across the street so they wouldn't have to meet me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: So there was discrimination?

MR. DOMOTO: Oh, sure. You didn't feel it?

MRS. HASEGAWA: Definitely. But I thought since this was a close-knit

community that you wouldn't have that kind of feeling.

MRS. DOMOTO: The neighbors were all right.

MR. DOMOTO: I don't know. Most of them were kind of afraid to meet me out in the open where other people could see them. But there were a few that didn't give a damn. They came down here to see us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That was true friendship!

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Have you been involved in any social, political, or business organizations?

MR. DOMOTO: No, I don't think so.

MRS. HASEGAWA: The Japanese American Citizens League?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, in name only.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you plant out the rest of your vineyard? You said there was seven acres of Thompsons here originally. What kind of grapes do you have?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, in 1947, I put in Palominos and Thompsons. Later on, we put in some more Palominos.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are Palominos?

MR. DOMOTO: It's a wine grape. It's a white wine grape.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why did you choose to plant that instead of another variety?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, at that time, it was a premium variety. And they said they made champagne out of it and needed more of it, so we put it in, and by the time we started to produce they decided they didn't want it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who told you to plant that variety?

MR. DOMOTO: Nobody told us to, it was just the way the market was going.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I thought maybe you were associated with a certain winery and they recommended it.

MR. DOMOTO: No.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you think it's a good crop now?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, as grapes go I guess it is just about like Thompsons now, because the white wine is such a popular wine.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you plant the grapes?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who helped you? How did you go about planting it? What was the procedure for planting grapes?

MR. DOMOTO: You have to mark your rows. Measure them off. Then stretch the wires and every so many feet we had a button, soldered a button, and we spaced them by those buttons.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How far apart are they planted?

MR. DOMOTO: The Thompsons were 12x8. Palominos are 11x7.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is that because the vines are bigger?

MR. DOMOTO: I don't know. Somebody recommended we plant it that way, so we put it in that way. The Thompsons are 12x8 because there were some already in there. They were planted that much apart.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you recommend planting it that far apart?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. Twelve feet anyway, and then either 7 or 8.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How do you market your crops?

MR. DOMOTO: We belong to Allied Grape Growers and all of our crops go to the association. And right now, it's contracted with the United Vintners.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Have you had any kind of labor problems?

MR. DOMOTO: So far we haven't. We've been pretty lucky, I guess.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who picks your crop?

MR. DOMOTO: Illegal aliens.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you contract the pickers or does the Allied Company bring them in?

MR. DOMOTO: We have to deliver the grapes. The contractors pick and deliver the crew. We usually have the Ihard Brothers do the contracting.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In the growing of your crop here, do you have to fertilize and dust them with insecticide or pesticide?

MR. DOMOTO: We haven't had to fertilize too much. But you have to dust.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is it because the soil is richer here, because of the floods?

MR. DOMOTO: You could say that before, but I don't know about now. The flood water just doesn't settle here. It rushes over the land so it takes away more than it leaves.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see.

MR. DOMOTO: Maybe before it was all grown up with brush and stuff like that and probably left a lot of nutrients. Not any more.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When you and your folks settled out here, there was not the housing development that there is across the river at the present time. Would you tell us a little bit about how the scenery has changed.

MR. DOMOTO: That used to be an old vineyard back in there. Flowers, brush, and rock most of it. And I guess they quit raising things back there because they always got flooded out. Since the dam went in up there, they started a housing development.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It's almost like a city on the other side of the river.

MR. DOMOTO: That's right.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Does that affect the ground water here?

MR. DOMOTO: I don't think so. It might down lower, but not, I think, around here. I guess it's easy to pollute the water down here because the ground is so porous.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you feel that farming is a prosperous field, and would you recommend it to young people coming up?

MR. DOMOTO: It might be prosperous in some places, but don't know about here. It's just a struggle here.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I see.

MR. DOMOTO: Every once in a while you get frosted out.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why was that?

MR. DOMOTO: Well, this ground is a lot lower than other places and the frost settled where it's low.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh. Your own family consists of two brothers and a sister. What are their names and where do they live, and what do they do? Do they come back here very often?

MR. DOMOTO: No, George lives in Sanger. He has a house in Sanger and he's still associated with the Sorensen Packing Company. Lyman lived up here on Viau Avenue, he passed away.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did they both have farms of their own?

MR. DOMOTO: Lyman did. George got rid of his sometime back.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And your sister Lena?

MR. DOMOTO: Lena is married to Hiroshi Hamaguchi, and they live in Livingston.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What are the names of your brothers George and Lyman's wives?

MR. DOMOTO: Rebecca Christiansen Domoto and Evelyn Fair Domoto.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Would you like to tell us what social and economic changes you have seen in your local community in Sanger and in this area? How has it changed from long ago?

MR. DOMOTO: Most of the people around here, I suppose, who had their places all paid for became more prosperous. But, if they're still paying for it they're not too prosperous.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What happened to you during the depression years? What was it like then?

MR. DOMOTO: It was a struggle. I remember I used to like to go hunting and fishing and all that. And one year I couldn't even buy a hunting license. We really didn't have the money. And we grew vegetables on the farm here and beside sending the produce to the market, I peddled the rest in town.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In Sanger? How did you do it?

MR. DOMOTO: Yes. We just loaded it up and took it into town and sold it at different stores, grocery stores. There weren't those chain grocery stores in those days, mostly independents, you know. We could just deal with the boss right there. And I remember they had WPA and all that, you know, and they had another one that was run by the State. They came in and cleaned the channel out along the slough.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was that the CCC?

MR. DOMOTO: No, it was something else. I can't remember what it was. Anyway, it was run by the State. And both crews that came out here were well-to-do, or used to be well-to-do people in Fresno. They had no job or anything, and they were getting paid something like 18 cents an hour to come out here. They were sad. For them, we were a little better off than they were.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It was fortunate that you were able to hang onto the property during those depression years.

MR. DOMOTO: Yes.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You still had to pay your taxes?

MR. DOMOTO: Taxes weren't high at that time. And I don't know how we made the payments. But we were still paying for the property then.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long did it take you to pay off the property? How many years?

MR. DOMOTO: We had a 20-year contract.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your family observe any kind of Japanese customs?

MR. DOMOTO: My folks weren't too much that way. I don't know whether it was religion or what. Rut, anyway, they did not observe too much. Once in a while something would crop up, but I can't recall anything else except that we celebrated, what was it, the 80th birthday or something like that. I know my dad insisted on that. That's all I can think of.



MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember anything special about that occasion?

MR. DOMOTO: No, just that I don't even know if they had a party or not. Had some kind of celebration.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Is there anything else that you can think of that you might want to add to this interview?

MR. DOMOTO: No. Can't think of anything right offhand.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Thank you very much for sharing your experience on the farm in the Centerville Riverbottom area.