

CHESTER AND AKIKO LILLIAN SASASHIMA

MRS. HASEGAWA: Today is July 31, 1980. I, Yoshino Hasegawa, am privileged to interview Mr. and Mrs. Chester Sasashima in their home located at 2178 Walton, Sanger, California, 93657.

First of all, I would like to know your full name, your birth- date and place of birth, and your place of longest residence.

MR. SASASHIMA: Chester Sasashima.

MRS. HASEGAWA: No Japanese name?

MR. SASASHIMA: Negative.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did you get a name like Chester?

MR. SASASHIMA: Well, we lived in the riverbottom, right off of Goodfellow and MacDonough. And my dad was the foreman of a ranch there, and Mr. Townsend, H.E. Townsend, owned it. He was the head of the California Packing Corporation. Used to take grapes, dried fruit, you know--prunes--cut them, dry them. His friend was an attorney in Reedley named Chester Tackeberry. And they gave me the handle of Chester.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I've never heard that name.

MR. SASASHIMA: Tackeberry? Oh, yes, he was a very prominent man in Reedley. His daughter and I graduated the same year from Reedley High School. I went to Alameda Grammar School, right on the borderline of Reedley and Sanger. And the Reedley bus came right around the corner, so we went to Reedley.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was Alameda School in the Sanger District?

MR..SASASHIMA: I think it was in Reedley. It was later consolidated with Great Western, Navelencia, all those.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where was that school located?

MR. SASASHIMA: On Goodfellow between MacDonough and Rio Vista. Going east it would be on the right-hand side. The building was torn down-- it's history.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When is your birthday?

MR. SASASHIMA: April 5, 1917.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And were you born in Sanger?

MR. SASASHIMA: Yes. But where, I don't know.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your grandfather is recorded to be the very first Japanese to settle in this area--in the latter 1800's. Do you know anything about him?

MR. SASASHIMA: I don't know anything about him, as my dad never related and I never asked him. Therefore, there was no reason for me to know. I wasn't very inquisitive at that time.

MRS. SASASHIMA: Tell her what your grandfather did. He made money and went to Japan and bought a lot of property.

MR. SASASHIMA: That's what my brother told her.

MRS. SASASHIMA: I heard he was the first one to dig trenches for irrigation, all that. They made these hand-dug ditches, canals, just like in Japan. No one had irrigated on the riverbottom before. He taught the Hakujin all that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, that's certainly a contribution.

MR. SASASHIMA: Yes, but I can't verify it.

MRS. SASASHIMA: Mr. Fukuda could recall all that--he's sharp; very, very sharp!

MR. SASASHIMA: He was instrumental in getting the Sasashima family tree from Japan, see?

MRS. SASASHIMA: He has relatives in Japan. Then he wrote them, and he got our Sekitohon.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where did he come from in Japan?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Nagasaki.

MR. SASASHIMA: But I don't know anybody from my family living over there. I landed in Yokohama two days before they signed the surrender terms. But we just stuck around Yokohama and Tokyo area for three or four months. Then I had enough points so I came home. We couldn't go up there anyway because the bomb had been dropped there. But I had no communication with them. This cousin who came that was married to Mr. Fukuda told us that if we went to Japan, we'd be welcome.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What was your place of longest residence?

MR. SASASHIMA: That would be Sanger.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Can you recall anything about your childhood?

MR. SASASHIMA: I don't really remember my mother, you know, as I was only about one-year old when she died. I do remember this Spanish family from Sanger--Garcia. I was taken care of by them. My dad furnished whatever they needed; money, groceries.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did your dad live with you?

MR. SASASHIMA: No. After my mother passed away, he never did get married. He was batching--never did find anyone he wanted to marry, I guess. And it's hard to have a youngster around. So I went back to live with him when I was about 12 years old, I guess. So my childhood was spent with the Mexican people.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did they treat you?

MR. SASASHIMA: Just like one of the family. They spanked me, all

that. I must have been a regular devil, too. They had six or seven children, a typical Mexican family. Fidel Garcia here in Sanger.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Oh, that family.

MR. SASASHIMA: Yes. They are old-timers here in Sanger. Fidel is just like an older brother, you might say.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Are you still close to that family?

MR. SASASHIMA: Oh, we see them once in a while. But we are not really close. We each have our own lives. Once in a while we get together, but not especially. We usually get together with just our own girls and son-Christmas so forth. We're pretty much of a close-knit family. So, we don't associate with town activities much. Even JAACL. We are members, but we don't participate. We aren't antisocial, but we are busy. I work everyday at General Cable, then we have the ranch. Lillie does almost everything there. If it weren't for her, we wouldn't be able to work the ranch.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you recall any kind of memories about your childhood?

MR. SASASHIMA: I lived pretty much the life of any Mexican people at that time. Kids were on the east side of town, and on the 15th or 16th of September, I used to march with them with the Mexican flag. That's Mexican Independence Day. Also, May 5th we used to have a parade. I could hear people say, "Look at that Japanese boy." I guess they figured I was not going to amount to anything anyway.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Didn't the Japanese people ever help you? Take you anywhere, entertain you? Or did they just ignore you?

MR. SASASHIMA: As far as the Japanese people were concerned, I didn't pay much attention to them. I didn't run around with any, and I didn't participate in the church or the school except for about three weeks. And as far as that goes, they were closely knit, too. My dad wasn't especially religious. Oh, he would donate, things like that, and neither was I. I went mostly to the Catholic Church and since they always spoke in Latin, it was over our heads.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you were really a Mexican, not Japanese! How about the English language? Did you have any trouble when you went to grammar school?

MR. SASASHIMA: We were pretty much accepted at Alameda. Even in high school, most of the Japanese were better than average as far as schooling was concerned. We were in sports and all that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you excel in school?

MR. SASASHIMA: Not necessarily in academic lines; I got by. I didn't study as much as I should have. Mexican families, at that time, were like our Iseis, busy trying to make a living and times were tough. Basically, they were strict with the family; watched their daughters very closely. Wanted to be sure they were virgins when they were ready to marry. I didn't feel I missed out on anything as a child.

MRS. HASEGAWA: That's a real credit to them that you didn't know what you missed out on. You were just one of them.

MR. SASASHIMA: But after my dad passed away--that was the difference between night and day. I lived with my uncle, then I had to work just like the rest of the Japanese Nisei. They had a truck farm. Mr. Sakata and Mr. Taka raised sato imo, yama imo, Bobo, cabbage, napa. My dad's sister married Sakata. I had to work from early in the morning, go to school, come back after school and work some more, so that was a hell of an experience. That was in 1933-34. So I was about 17 years old.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you had it pretty easy until about 17.

MR. SASASHIMA: Yes. Because I was going to high school. I graduated about 18--a little older than most, for some reason or another.

MRS. HASEGAWA: In high school, did you participate in extra-curricular activities?

MR. SASASHIMA: Mostly football, basketball.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You had a pretty good social life, then?

MR. SASASHIMA: I have no regrets about that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How about dances, things like that?

MR. SASASHIMA: I used to go to Mexican dances. But as far as others, no. Besides, Nisei ladies couldn't go out even if you asked them because of parental control. Being brought up the way I was, I couldn't understand it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: This family that adopted you, did they have children?

MR. SASASHIMA: No, they were bachelors. My father's sister has passed away. They must not have had children.

MRS. HASEGAWA: I suppose if your aunt had lived, you would have been sent there as a baby.

MR. SASASHIMA: I suppose. That influenza epidemic must have been a real good one.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Why did your dad put you in that Mexican home?

MR. SASASHIMA: Because they lived on the ranch where he was foreman. It was convenient.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you get to see him every day?

MR. SASASHIMA: No, not every day. And later they moved to Sanger and lived on Sanger Avenue. So I went to school there as "John Garcia!"

MRS. HASEGAWA: After high school, what was your first work experience?

MR. SASASHIMA: I continued with my uncle. We even farmed in Chowchilla. Then not too long after that the war broke out. I was drafted in 1940, so was in the service in 1941 when war was declared. I

took my training at Camp Roberts, then went to a regular outfit, the 40th Infantry Division. We knew something big was coming up, because they had confined everyone. We could only go 36 hours away.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were there any Japanese besides you?

MR. SASASHIMA: Oh, yes, a whole bunch. From Northern California to Delano in that outfit. I was about 22-23 when I went in.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Mrs. Sasashima, were you married at that time to Chester's brother?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Yes. We farmed together in Chowchilla.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What kind of farm did you have?

MR. SASASHIMA: We raised potatoes, lettuce, onions, corn--you know, truck farming. Made a living, but not too lucrative. And lots of hard work.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What happened then when the war broke out?

MR. SASASHIMA: Well, we stayed with our outfit until the time we had to be sent inland. They rounded up the Nisei and Kibei--a lot of Kibei were being discharged. So we wondered what would happen to us. Our company commander was a kid from Sacramento, and he really went to bat for us. But it didn't make any difference. It was just mandatory. They took us to a troop train and we went to Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Stayed there six months. They didn't know what to do with us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: All Nisei?

MR. SASASHIMA: Yes. From all over. I think the Hawaiian outfit was at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. We formed a crack drillteam. We were very good. Then out of the clear blue sky they said, "You guys are going to go somewhere," so we waited for orders. We ended up in Minneapolis. Imagine sending me to Japanese Intelligence School! It was some experience. We stayed there close to a year. I couldn't cut the buck as far as learning Japanese, because you had to memorize everything. So I did everything from shoveling coal to kitchen duty. I volunteered for the 100th Infantry, but they were over-strength and wouldn't take me. They were trained to go overseas.

Then, in March, we ended up in Angel's Island in San Francisco. Then we went on a ship to Australia. We were in Brisbane, Australia, situated in a little town called Indooroopilly. There were quite a few from around here; Takashi Mori, Nakamoto, and I think Kato from Fowler area. Lots of local Nisei as interpreters. We spent quite some time there, then we were shipped to New Guinea. While we were in Australia, the Japanese were bombing Port Moresby and things were getting hot. The newspapers said they were willing to give the north half of the country to the Japanese. We all said, "What are we going to do?" Food for thought, you know. I don't know what would have happened if they'd caught us there.

We were in New Guinea for six or seven months. In that area the Nisei had to have a companion soldier go with them wherever they went for safety. Then they had a PW camp, so they had quite a few Japanese interpreters. The main base was Australia. We were just doing supplies, stuff like that. We used to go and raid Japanese dumps up in the jungle

and get all the pickled daikon--radishes--in those bamboo vats. It was really good. Also kegs of shoyu. We would take what we wanted, and that's it. You always had a feeling that someone was watching you; all that undergrowth. We'd say, "Better get the heck out of here." But they never bothered us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: They probably wondered what those Japanese were doing there.

MR. SASASHIMA: After that we went to Manila. We followed General MacArthur into the city of Manila. We stayed there at an ammo dump with bombs, large caliber mortar shells. The minute we got off our landing craft--there were about 10 or 15 of us who couldn't speak Japanese. Anyway, these Filipino people were standing there watching us. Our officer Lieutenant Konagai, got on the horn land got in touch with the landing commander and pretty soon we had a group of Philippine guerrillas guarding us against the natives. They weren't friendly looking at all! We stayed several months. It got kind of tame. They even brought in some WAC's to help with the bookwork. And one evening all hell broke loose. We had gotten word that they wanted to talk turkey--give up. We were scheduled to go overseas to all parts of Japan, which would have been a pretty bloody mess, had it happened. But they put us on shipboard and we went to Yokohama. We got there two days before they signed the surrender terms.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You didn't see any actual battle, then?

MR. SASASHIMA: No. The closest was in New Guinea, and that was just watching and listening to bombs and machineguns from airplanes strafing certain areas. Some of the boys went with the 32nd and 41st. Some got shot up, some didn't make it, some went back three or four times. They'd lost 15, 20, 30 pounds--come back. Made believers out of some of them. There were pretty rough characters from Hawaii, too. They had interpreters and translators in the 100th from Hawaii. They were college graduates, but they spoke that Pidgin English, so you couldn't tell they were educated. They spent money freely, gambled, liked to live. Most of our other friends went in the 442nd; the majority I think. We volunteered for it, but they passed us up. Luckily, I guess. We didn't know if we were going to come back either at that time, because it didn't look rosy at all.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long were you in the Yokohama-Tokyo area?

MR. SASASHIMA: Oh, I'd say, three or four months. Not too long.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do?

MR. SASASHIMA: Fooled around, spent money. I got paid \$96 a month, because I was a Staff Sergeant. On the way back from Japan, we met Eddie Abruamen--you've heard of him? We came together to Seattle, then Camp Beale. He asked me where I was going, and I said I guess I'm going to Sanger. So he said, "Come stay with me, and I'll take you there." So that worked out very well for us.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What year were you discharged?

MR. SASASHIMA: December 1945, I believe.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do after you returned?

MR. SASASHIMA: I worked--just like the rest of the people-- at Leonard's. I went to school in '49 to Inglewood on the GI Bill, California Flyers School, and got my engineer aircraft government license. So then I worked on civilian aircraft in LA. But you couldn't make any money, because the guys who owned the airplanes could hardly make ends meet, too. So then I went to North American. They were paying good money. I worked for Grand Central, another aircraft company that lasted for a few years then petered out. Then I worked on the farm. Then started at General Cable as a mechanic.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do you do at General Cable?

MR. SASASHIMA: Everything electrical, mechanical to keep the machinery running.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What do they make at General Cable?

MR. SASASHIMA: Well, they first started making wiring that was used in houses, power cable for power transmissions up until this year. We are in the process of changeover, and we are making telephone wire, cabling. I'm still doing electrical/mechanical work. It's a good place to work. Small, mostly young people.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who is the owner of General Cable?

MR. SASASHIMA: General Cable changed hands to GK Technology, then just recently Penn Central has bought everything out. We're still operating as GK Technology, but this is a larger outfit. And I understand that the stock has gone up since then. Penn Central had that big railroad. I don't know how they got into it, but they consolidated.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Where were the headquarters for General Cable?

MR. SASASHIMA: Used to be New Jersey, then they changed it to St. Louis, and now I don't know. They have plants all over--even Spain. They are spending a lot of money changing this one over--150 to 200 people are going to be working there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do they have a retirement plan?

MR. SASASHIMA: They have, but not too meaningful. We have a union, too, but the people were all young people, and they are interested in money over the table. Now they are married, have children, so their viewpoint has changed. They are going in for more retirement, more fringe benefits like hospital, dental. They go for all they can get. It's just a vicious circle.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, they are an international company, so they should have good fringe benefits.

MR. SASASHIMA: Well, sometimes they aren't as good as one would think. They might get better as time goes on. I don't see how anyone can make it on social security. You'd have to be pretty frugal. My wife, maybe--she's real conservative.

MRS. SASASHIMA: Well, we worked hard so we can't just give it away.

We've helped our kids so much.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your children are all on their own. Peggy is a successful lawyer.

MRS. SASASHIMA: And Larry started his own business. Linda works for Lundbert, Steinert in Fresno. Shirley is a housewife. We helped Larry start this business, financially. He is an employment recruiter. If anyone needs help--executive, accountants, engineers, they help find them. Barbara is thinking of going back to teaching. Three are divorced.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Were they married to Japanese?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Well, Linda was married to Yamamoto, Leonard Yamamoto. They got divorced, too. Can't help it.

MRS. HASEGAWA: No, it's their lives.

MRS. SASASHIMA: Peggy had to raise two little kids on her own, and she went to school, so we helped her out. Now she is a lawyer, so it was worth it.

MR. SASASHIMA: It's gratifying, you know.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your kids were really smart--always at the top of the class.

MRS. SASASHIMA: We helped them out. I always say, "What's money."  
If we leave it behind, they just spend it. Maybe fight over it. So when they need help, we help them. This way we know where the money went to.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When did you get your farm?

MRS. SASASHIMA: In 1955.

MRS. HASEGAWA: And that's where your children grew up, and then went on to Sanger schools? Do you have grandchildren?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Yes, seven. Peggy's oldest is 16 years old.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What social and economic changes have you seen in Sanger over the years?

MR. SASASHIMA: We have lots more places to spend our money. More shopping centers, fast food places, industries. Especially the changes at Seabrook, and United is one of the largest packing houses in the state.

MRS. SASASHIMA: Sanger doesn't seem to grow too much.

MR. SASASHIMA: It does, but we don't notice it because we see it every day.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember the flume as a child? Where did it end up?



MR. SASASHIMA: As I remember, over where Sunkist Orange is now, that area, off of Annadale.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Was there a pond or where did the logs land?

MR. SASASHIMA: All I remember was that sawmill there. Dad and I followed the road to Piedra several times, and we could see lots of times the water slosh out of the flume. If you had enough presence of mind to take pictures, it would have been good. We also used to take a wagon loaded with dried prunes into Reedley, and it would take us half a day to get there. The packinghouse was there, and they'd grade them, ship them out.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you remember cutting peaches and drying them?

MR. SASASHIMA: Yes, Lovell peaches, that brand. We'd cut them, take out the pits. People got five cents a box for a 50-pound box. Then put them on trays, stuff them into a sulphur house, pull them out, and sell them. We also saw the advent of the car; old cars like Jordan, Fiat, Essex, Whippet. I'm a car nut anyway. Our neighbors had a Pierce-Arrow with lights on the fender, also a touring Studebaker.

MRS. HASEGAWA: If you had one of those cars now, it'd be worth a fortune.

MR. SASASHIMA: There's a lot of people who restore them. Be nice if you had the time. The Japanese, in general, have gone through a lot. The only thing about us is that we've never been close to activities in Sanger.

MRS. SASASHIMA: We can't, you know, with two jobs; the ranch and Chester working. When my first husband got sick, he did not do anything. I did everything! I worked more than anyone, among the three of us. It's kind of hard to get rid of that ranch, though. Kind of like a baby to us. But our kids don't want to be a farmer. One grandchild in Los Angeles, Barbara's son, he says, "Grandma, I want to be a farmer." One kid out of seven grandchildren.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Your property will become more valuable being so close to town.

MRS. SASASHIMA: Only a mile out of the city limits.

MR. SASASHIMA: Not even that far.

MRS. HASEGAWA: So, pretty soon, you'll be able to sell the ranch and really go places.

MR. SASASHIMA: Go places? No, that will not happen. She doesn't want to go anywhere in particular.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You mean you don't want to go to Japan or Europe or elsewhere?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Not really. I hear everyone tell me that we are so lucky in the United States. They go to Europe and see a lot of things and come back and say the United States is a wonderful place. So I'll be

content to be in such a beautiful place.

MR. SASASHIMA: There's a lot to see here, even in our own state.

MRS. SASASHIMA: I've been in Japan, lived there three years. My dad was the oldest son, so his parents had shipped him to America, to Hawaii. He stayed there four or five years and never was satisfied. Then, he came to California. After he got married to my mother, a picture bride, he settled in Turlock and started working in the melons. That was a hard, hard time. I remember.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What year did he come to America?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Well, he was 18, so probably about 1910. He went all over, but he settled in Turlock. They worked in melons. There was this guy they called "Cantaloupe Smith." He could say cantaloupes are bad, and take all their money away, so they would have to go pick grapes, make some other money. He got rich on all of them.

MRS. HASEGAWA: It must have been like the old company store--give them credit, then put them in the red.

MRS. SASASHIMA: My Japanese teacher Mr. Arahara, he used to say, "Aki-chan," they called me Aki-chan, "you're the first Japanese to be born in Turlock." There were lots of older people, but all born someplace else.

MRS. HASEGAWA: When was your birthday?

MRS. SASASHIMA: July 19, 1916. It says on my birth certificate, actually firstborn. I never forget that.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How long did you live in Turlock?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Until I was married, 1936. Except for the three years we spent in Japan. Since my father was the eldest, and my grandparents died, he had a sister 18 years old who was to get married. Japanese custom says someone has to give her away, so he went to give her away. Then he stayed one year. My mother and us, we stayed three years.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do in Japan?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Nothing. My father had a lot of land. My grandparents had been very rich--had 3, 4, 5 acres of land. But by the time my father went, all of it was mortgaged. So, my father used his money to buy it back. So it was my dad's property. After the war, no American could own land anymore, so he lost it. I guess cousins have it. We did nothing. My dad sent us money every month.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to school?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Oh, yes, three years. I was in the fifth grade in America, so they put me in the fifth grade there. I didn't even know Japanese. Didn't even know how to say "okasan, otosan." Didn't even know how to say water.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Didn't you speak Japanese at home?

MRS. SASASHIMA: I guess my mother did, but we went to school and

studied hard. Didn't have time for Japanese. I was the tallest one in my grade. Oh, I was so ashamed, so embarrassed. So I studied like everything. In arithmetic, art I'm way ahead; but if it has words, I can't understand. So I studied--I cried--I studied. And I worked my way up to third from the top, that's how hard I worked. That's what I tell my kids, if I could do that, you can do anything, have good grades. Then when I came back to America, I didn't even know how to say hello, not even how to say own name. I had such a hard time. Then in four or five months, everything came back to me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you have brothers and sisters who went to Japan, too?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Yes, seven of them. My dad must have saved lots of money. He was a bootlegger, besides, so made a lot of money there.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did he make his own sake?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Oh, sure. Sake and wine, everything. We had a big cellar.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Who did he sell his wine to?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Japanese store in Turlock named Akuni. He used to get rid of it somewhere.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You said your dad worked for a doctor later. Did he have vineyards?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Well, he had this open place, you know, and my dad planted it in grapes. Then while the grapes were small my dad planted sweet potatoes, corn. This doctor he don't care, he says plant it and sell it. That was extra money besides wages. During that time we had everything we wanted. Except for the melon time, I can't remember being poor.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Did you go to high school in Turlock?

MRS. SASASHIMA: I couldn't finish. I had to work raising the melons, work hard. My brother stayed in Japan, so I was the oldest, so I had to pick grapes, help with the cantaloupe. Everyone went to work.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You went to camp with your husband during the war. What camp was that?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Rohwer, Arkansas. We left from Stockton, we were living there at that time.

MRS. HASEGAWA: How did you meet your husband?

MRS. SASASHIMA: By baishakunin. He lived in Stockton. These two brothers, they were never together. He worked here and there, didn't have time to take care of Chester, I guess. I didn't meet Chester until I, got married--way after. Then the brother took responsibility for taking care of Chester. After we had Barbara.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Then you came to this area after the war?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Yes, Barbara was the first Japanese to go back to school in Sanger.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What school was that?

MRS. SASASHIMA: Granville. Mrs. Moltzen was the teacher. She used to say Barbara was so shy. I sent her to school so early, you know, because in camp they wanted a nursery school to give the high school kids some jobs. So they wanted Barbara, but she wouldn't go. So I said you have to take Peggy, too, then she'll go. So they took both, and they went to school when they were 3 or 4 years old. They always say, "All I remember of childhood is always going to school." So, Mrs. Moltzen wanted Barbara promoted to third grade. She hadn't had longhand writing, none of that. And she cried, "Mama, it's too hard," so I went to school to explain it was too much of a skip and please put her back in second grade where she belonged. We argued and argued. She said her IQ is too high, how can I put her there. So I said just put her back. It's not fair to skip a whole grade. Peggy started early, too, so in high school she was the youngest in the whole class. But it didn't bother her. Maybe going to school in camp helped a lot. They liked school. Shirley, the rest, they were different. We were out of camp before they were old enough to go.

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do in camp? You couldn't work with the children.

MRS. SASASHIMA: No, I couldn't do anything. Then in Arkansas I was really sick. Lucky for me Dr. Kanagawa, our neighbor from Stockton, was a camp doctor. And he said, "If you are like this, you're going to die," (I had female trouble), "but the law says you are only 26 and so you can't have an operation. Where are your parents?" I said in Colorado, so he said he would get permission, get everything straightened out. And in one week he said, "Here are your papers, you go."

MRS. HASEGAWA: What did you do in Colorado, and where was the camp?

MRS. SASASHIMA: My husband drove the ambulance for the hospital; Amachi, Colorado. Then they asked everyone to go out of camp who had no work, so all the young people left. Only ones in camp were old ladies and ladies with kids. So I was drafted in--had to be a mess steward. So I was a timekeeper making sure everyone who works in mess hall had their physical that kind of work. I did that until we came out of camp, for \$12 a month. My husband got \$14 a month for ambulance driving. So \$26 a month.

That was such a hard time, all those little kids. Then I lost Peggy on the day we went to Rohwer. We were all in a big truck, and while we were looking for the luggage, Peggy just went off by herself. I had Larry in my arms and Barbara by the hand, and we looked all around calling, "Peggy." Everyone was looking, looking. We finally went to our barracks, and there right across from us, was this little old lady and man with Peggy. "Where did you get her?" I cried. "Oh, she was crying away so we thought we'd take her to our place then look for her parents later." From then on, that old lady became our grandparent, and I had it easy from that time on. She took care of Larry, was wonderful to me.

MRS. HASEGAWA: You are fortunate to still be so active. You go to the field, don't you?

MRS. SASASHIMA: I do all the pruning, tying vines, the irrigating. The ranch keeps me young.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Do you observe any Japanese customs?

MR. SASASHIMA: Just eating food, lots of Japanese food.

MRS. SASASHIMA: He's more Japanese than I am.

MRS. HASEGAWA: Well, I certainly do appreciate your cooperation. It was an interesting interview. Thank you.

MR. SASASHIMA: You're entirely welcome. Glad to have you come over.