

SADAME YAMADA

MRS. EZAKI: Today is July 4, 1980. I, Aiko Bessie Ezaki, am privileged to be in the home of Mrs. Sadame Yamada at 3201 Sierra, Kingsburg, California, 93631.

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

MRS. YAMADA: Year 1895, Janaury 21 (age 85). Place, Kumamoto Shi (city), Ezu machi, Shimo mata. Age 85.

MRS. EZAKI: Where did you reside the longest after coming to this country?

MRS. YAMADA: Kingsburg.

MRS. EZAKI: Please relate your marriage in detail. What reason was there that this picture bride marriage was arranged and your decision? Your feelings at the time?

MRS. YAMADA: One reason was my father and the other family were related. And the other reason was my friend had decided to go to America so then I said "Let's go together," and my mind was made up to go, too.

MRS. EZAKI: You had seen the picture of your marriage partner, but had not met him yet?

MRS. YAMADA: No, I had not met him.

MRS. EZAKI: Your passport--where did you leave port?

MRS. YAMADA: Nagasaki. From Kumamoto I went to Nagasaki.

MRS. EZAKI: When you arrived in America, where did you embark at?

MRS. YAMADA: San Francisco. (August 1914 on Shunyo Maru.)

MRS. EZAKI: You had embarked in San Francisco, but was there any delay of any kind with the Immigrations prior to your embarkment?

MRS. YAMADA: Yes. Account of Trachoma I had to stay two months at Immigration Angel Island to recuperate and care for this disease. For the necessary fund we had to raise \$300 worth in bonds to stay and recuperate. I came in August but was not released until October the 13th.

MRS. EZAKI: You had seen the picture of your husband. Now how did you recognize your husband?

MRS. YAMADA: Out there was a representative from the Hotel and he called my name. I looked for the person and realized he is the one--"Oh, yes."

MRS. EZAKI: You were not allowed off, so what did you do? You couldn't be together, so you saw him from the ship (Shunyo Maru)?

MRS. YAMADA: Yes, just saw him. I spotted him right away. It was easy because we were in close range.

MRS. EZAKI: While you were caring for your eyes for two months, what did your husband do? Did he stay and wait for your release, or did he go back and come after you later?

MRS. YAMADA: At that time, we met for a short period. When it came time for me to leave for hospitalization, we got to meet again. At which time I told him, if it was to take too long maybe I should go back home to Japan and care for my eyes and then come again. He said, "You go back to Japan and return again and then if you had the same problem, it is better to stay here and care for your eyes now." That made up my mind.

MRS. EZAKI: In the meantime, what did your husband do?

MRS. YAMADA: He stayed in San Francisco during the whole time at the Iki Hotel. Oh, he did go back for a short time. The \$300 worth of bond was all spent, which my husband had to acquire for my treatment of the disease. My husband had the money, and I had \$300 which was called "Mise kin," money that those that was to go to America had to have ready and not spend until upon embarkment on land. So beside my spending money, I had this \$300 with me. This was in American currency.

MRS. EZAKI: After finally being released and got on land of San Francisco, did you go to Kingsburg right away?

MRS. YAMADA: No, we stayed two days. While there, a minister came and arranged wedding rites for us. A simple one. Had exchange of wedding band.

MRS. EZAKI: Next day, did you go to Kingsburg on train?

MRS. YAMADA: Yes, on train.

MRS. EZAKI: When you reached Kingsburg, what did you think about the place? When you rode through the country, what were your thoughts?

MRS. YAMADA: When we got to town Mr. Ujiro Ezaki was at the station to pick us up with a buggy drawn with horses. It was late afternoon, and as we rode on the buggy and rode on, I wanted to ask Mr. Ezaki where the place was but I just met him so I didn't ask. Anyway, we rode on and I said, "How far?" and he replied, "Here we are!" I looked and there was a dirty old looking shack we came to. I thought to myself, "No, not to this awful looking place!" In Kingsburg, the very first place I came to was to Mr. and Mrs. Ezaki's. When we reached there, there were three ladies and they had prepared a lot of food and with other friends were waiting for us. They gave us a warm welcome.

MRS. EZAKI: That dirty old shack you had mentioned, was that Ezaki's?

MRS. YAMADA: No. We rode past that place and down further. I asked Mr. Ezaki, "How far is it?" And he said, "Here we are." This place was off the road, and then I saw some Japanese people near the house. I was relieved to see some Japanese people. They were waiting for us.

MRS. EZAKI: As you rode from San Francisco by train, what did you see of the big valley? What did you think about it? What was grown, was it

wheat fields and bare land?

MRS. YAMADA: It was mostly bare land. Mostly north of Fresno and then again, this side of Fresno. As we rode into Fresno, it looked green around the town with grape vineyards, but didn't notice too many trees. There was hay fields and just for little towns along the way, rest looked like barren land. We came to Kingsburg and set up housekeeping.

MRS. EZAKI: What kind of a house did you live in? What was it like?

MRS. YAMADA: The very first house we lived in was Ezaki's. From there we looked for a place to lease. We found a place, 30-acre ranch to lease. That was all in grapes.

MRS. EZAKI: Was there a house on the place?

MRS. YAMADA: Yes, there was an old shack-like place and had a hand pump. While we were there for three years, the boss of the ranch died, so we got to move into his home which was nice. We were lucky.

MRS. EZAKI: The first shack was not a place to put horse, was it not?

MRS. YAMADA: No, it was a small structure to house workers in. The floor was of rough boards.

MRS. EZAKI: After three years in that place, did you go elsewhere?

MRS. YAMADA: From there we found in Parlier a 110-acre place to lease. With my husband's sister and her husband we went partnership and leased this 110 acres together.

MRS. EZAKI: Was this during the good years, before the Depression?

MRS. YAMADA: Yes. Times was still good then. We stayed there for three years and made 10,000 dollars and came back to Kingsburg and bought 40-acre place.

MRS. EZAKI: Until you had moved to Kingsburg, how many children did you already have?

MRS. YAMADA: We had three children.

MRS. EZAKI: Up to this time, you didn't just live to work did you? You must of had some enjoyment, social life? No parties, get together for eat and drink?

MRS. YAMADA: No, up until then there were no parties. There weren't too many Japanese families around.

MRS. EZAKI: After you had returned to Kingsburg, you didn't stay on this ranch all the time? You had lived in Kingsburg the longest, but you moved didn't you?

MRS. YAMADA: We bought this 40 acres near Robert Kakiuchi's, It was mostly bare land. It was 1919 that we purchased this ranch, then Depression came. We put in grapes and when it started to bear fruit, we sold the grapes to a winery. They took all our grapes, but we were not paid a cent. This ranch was paid in full with cash. No profit

whatsoever came in. The land was bare, so we planted trees and grapes.

Due to Depression with no profit from the ranch, we stuck it out for seven years on this place. By then we were in great debt! Went broke! We gave up the place and left. We decide to work at labor to earn money to return some of the debt, but it didn't work out. So, again, we bought a 20-acre place cheap. This time the boss wasn't good, and we didn't buy with cash.

Yes, there was prejudice right from beginning. By now the Alien Land Law was in effect and the 40 acres we bought was by using someone else's name. We work and left with no money and worked and bought the 20 acres. This was on the "Island." Then we came here and bought this land. (20 acres.)

MRS. EZAKI: Way before the war?

MRS. YAMADA: Yes, way before the war.

MRS. EZAKI: How many years were you on the "Island"? Were all your children born already?

MRS. YAMADA: Three in Parlier, three born on the 40-acre ranch and two on the "Island." Eight children in all. The oldest one is farming and lived here the longest.

MRS. EZAKI: How many children do you have, and where do they live?

MRS. YAMADA: Seven children.

MRS. EZAKI: There were eight, but you have lost one. How old was she and what was her illness?

MRS. YAMADA: It was a girl; she was 6 years old. Died during the worst year of the Depression. She died of diphtheria. We couldn't go to the funeral so friends held the funeral for us. We were quarantined and until the paper came, we stayed home. After the period was over, we went to get her remains (ashes) and held a Memorial Service at the Fresno Buddhist Temple and hand over the box of ashes for safekeeping.

MRS. EZAKI: Where are all your children now?

MRS. YAMADA: In Los Angeles there are four; and in Fresno, one; and here, two.

MRS. EZAKI: Are all your children married to Japanese?

MRS. YAMADA: Yes, all of them are married to Japanese.

MRS. EZAKI: What about grandchildren? How many do you have?

MRS. YAMADA: There are 15, and they are married to Japanese.

MRS. EZAKI: What is your opinion on mix-marriages which is very popular in our Nikkei society? Your family has, so far, not had any mix-marriages, but if it were to be?

MRS. YAMADA: As for me, at this time I feel there need not be any

discrimination as long as the ones involved will be happy.

MRS. EZAKI: Will you tell us the occupation of each, of your family?

MRS. YAMADA: The oldest one and the second one are in farming; third and sixth sons are in swimming pool business (building and the care); fourth son is with State agriculture Experiment Field Station; fifth is working with dental products; and seventh is a doctor.

MRS. EZAKI: During the war time, your sons all served in the Armed Forces. Were they inducted in the Army?

MRS. YAMADA: Six of them went, all except the oldest. He stayed behind.

MRS. EZAKI: To what war areas did they each. go?

MRS, YAMADA: The second went with the 442 Battalion and went to Italy. Third and fourth were already in the Army, but the war had ended so they came home here for furlough and from here they went to Maryland. From Maryland they were shipped to points unknown. They went to Philippine Islands and the war was over, so they watched over the prisoners there until, at a later date, they were sent to Japan to join the Occupation Forces. They stayed in Tokyo. While they were there, one by one, they visited their grandfather; grandmother was deceased, but they met my sisters and brother. They went to Kumamoto.

Now, how long did they stay? I believe it was about two years they stayed and came back. The other and the last went as a member of the Occupation Force to Korea way later (1950-51). And he also went to Kumamoto to see his relatives.

MRS. EZAKI: Will you tell us some prejudice experienced before the war, during the war, and after?

MRS. YAMADA: Before the war our neighbors were nice people and we hardly found an unfriendly person with whom we'd feel that did not like the Japanese. Upon arriving home after the war was over, it was different, There was a strong feeling of prejudice. Right here on this bridge written in bold red color was "Jap not welcome." Same thing was written on other side of the High. School, too.

MRS. EZAKI: When, or what month was it that you came back?

MRS. YAMADA: In July 1946. When we came back, the two sons in the Army came with us. Our home was a mess! The Mexicans lived in it and made holes all over.

MRS. EZAKI: Was someone taking care of your place while you were away?

MRS. YAMADA: Yes. An Armenian took care, the ranch he leased. The young vines we had planted he pulled them out and replaced it with barley. The old tree was here, and my husband was busy every day getting rid of weeds growing all over in the hot sun. Once I was in the house and I heard a lot of noise coming from outside, the church bell was ringing. I thought what's happened? Then I found out that the war had end. Times, when I went into town with either of my sons they would be wearing their uniforms so nothing happened. But after they had gone, after spending their furlough here, I went grocery shopping alone to Justesen's. I

would—in those days we had coupons and stamps--take them and we wait to be waited on. The cashiers would take care of others, but not us. Then Myron Jerpe who worked there saw what was happening and so he called us and took care of us. He speaks Japanese a little and said, "Don't worry."

MRS. EZAKI: Do you recall any humorous stories or real to life stories of some incidents? Any enlightening story you might tell us?

MRS. YAMADA: We went to the Hot Spring a lot to rest our aches and pains from working hard. There were still little ones, so we took them along with us. There was a school at the Hot Springs, and the teacher was very nice. She invited the children to their Christmas Program so they went. School was close, so the children walked each day. When it rained, she brought them back. One year, it was raining and the children didn't go to their Christmas Program, she came after them. This is the reason the children wanted to go to Hot Springs, so they can go to visit that school.

MRS. EZAKI: Do you believe in the effectiveness of massage, acupuncture, or "Kyu, incense burning" treatment? From your experience?

MRS. YAMADA: Acupuncture and "Kyu" treatment might help a little but to me, the Hot Spring baths I believe is most effective.

MRS. EZAKI: Please tell us of the time your arm did not move.

MRS. YAMADA: Yes. That time I had "Kyu" done, massage, and electric needle treatment in the spring. Acupuncture, too. The two of us went to Hot Springs in the spring. Not too many people went to Hot Springs around then, and when we came back and went to the doctor, he said, "Hot Springs baths is best in the spring." From then on, we went in the spring.

MRS. EZAKI: What traditional things from our heritage would you like to see your coming generations continue or adapt in their living?

MRS. YAMADA: I really don't have any thought on that. I think it will be difficult to carry on old traditions, because the young people from now will grow in many aspect. The only thing I am serious is about religion. Our family has been .a ShinShu follower, so I would like them to be, and continue to be an ShinShu Buddhist. Fortunately, in this family, most are ShinShu Buddhist except for one grandchild who married a Christian. Of course, I would wish this on others, but after I am gone, I don't know. However, if they continue the lineage, I think that will be fortunate.

MRS. EZAKI: Thank you.