

VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH KANEJI DOMOTO, AND SYLVIA SCHUR 02/26/96
AT TALIESIN WEST ARCHIVES

Interviewer and Camera: Indira Berndtson for The Frank Lloyd Wright Archives

IB: This is February 26, 1996. We are in the Archive Oral History Office, it is 11:50 P.M., and we have the happy circumstance of being visited by Mr. and Mrs. Domoto. Mr. Kaneji Domoto was at Taliesin sometime between 1939 and 1940. We are not quite certain of the exact date. Welcome, Mr. Domoto. Please tell us a little bit about your background -- like where you were born, what your parents did, and what gradually led you to the Taliesin Fellowship?

KANEJI DOMOTO: That is very interesting. I was born in California, in Oakland, California. I was born on a nursery, my father's nursery. He had one of the largest nurseries west of the Mississippi. At that time I never realized what a large operation he had worked out. He was the first generation Japanese immigrant that didn't know anything about the nursery or anything about running a greenhouse or anything, or being able to speak the language. He picked it up when he got here on board ship, and after many years he learned to speak English and got into horticulture. And that is where I grew up, on there.

IB: And what town was that in, in California?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It was Oakland, California.

IB: And what was your father's name?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It was Kanataro. He and his brother had started a nursery called Domoto Brothers. And they were the biggest greenhouse people west of the Mississippi at that time. So I grew up in this atmosphere of greens and growing things and things like that. The only reason why I got into architecture was when I was trying to make a -- well, my brother went into the business after my father retired. So then I worked, and this is during the Depression years, I worked for my brother and for nothing for about seven years.

At that time, I thought, "Well, it might be nice to be called Domoto Brothers again just like my father and his uncle." And my brother didn't agree with that so I said, "Well I've got to get out of this to get into something more."

At that time, I had already put two years into college at Stanford in Physics and Mathematics. But then I started looking at some magazines to see what I could get into. And I came across a magazine called "The Coronet Magazine" that had an article on Frank Lloyd Wright. And I said, "gee, that's sounds very good." Which I didn't know too much about. But then I said, "I have to the University of California for this." Because Stanford didn't have any architecture or landscaping school. They had physics and math and other sciences. So I had to change my "rah-rah" rooting for school, from Stanford to California. And so I went to California for my education on Landscaping at the University of California. It was quite an experience in there in that freshmen year at the University of California going through the Freshmen entries and there were over 100 students applying for admittance into this place. The University of California was big but it was only allowed for about 50 students. So these places were crowded for the freshmen. I got an idea that I better look around at another part of the campus and see what other subject I could pick that had more room. I came across this little very quiet place that said, "The Department of Landscaping Architecture" and there was hardly anyone there. A small space with about 10 students. So I said, I think I'll enroll in this, just because I had more room. That is how I got involved in the Landscaping part of it. That planting material thing was deeply imbedded in me, but the designing of the garden wasn't and this gave me a chance to work on that part of it. On the Architecture part, -- I'm not so sure, I have to look at my records. But I spent two years at the University of California in Architecture and at the same Landscape Architecture. And the reason I left at that time was that the Golden Gate Fair was coming up. The Japanese government was putting on a Japanese garden in the exhibition and all they wanted was some young fellas with muscle to move some garden rocks and things.

At that time, I was with a group of young fellas that were pretty tough; we played football, were farmers and were nurserymen. So we were rugged people, so they wanted us to move rocks around. So that's how I got to learning how to

move the rocks, and muscle type stuff. So I went back east with them to the New York World's Fair. After they finished with that, I worked for a Landscape Architect there in New York.

After a few months of working there, I said, "Gee, I read about Frank Lloyd Wright, so I guess I'll write to him and ask him to admit me as an apprentice." So when I wrote to him, he said, "come on out". I had a Model A Ford at that time and I took that car and going away at 35 miles an hour, chugging my way to Wisconsin. And I got there on time. So I spent that whole summer at Taliesin East. Then he went around Thanksgiving to Taliesin West with their caravan to the desert. So at that time they were just starting Taliesin West out here. And I came out here.

IB: Who did you go on the caravan with?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Oh, I had to start late, so the caravan left without me. So when I got ready to go, Benny Davis, I guess -

IB: Dombar?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, Dombar wanted to ride with me so we went out together to Taliesin West.

IB: In your Model A?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes.

IB: How many days did that take?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Oh, it must have been about a week. We were chugging around about 35 MPH.

SYLVIA SCHUR: Did you bring any supplies?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, we just had some very simple things.

IB: Did you camp out along the way?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, camping out. we didn't stop at a motel or anything like that. We didn't have that much cash with us. But the caravan was quite a sight to see. They had

small cars, trucks full of things. Most of the kids were born and raised on the east coast and this was their first trip west and it was quite education for them. It is just like now eastern people coming across the whole USA to get to California or Oregon or Washington. It is an education of what is in the USA. It still works out very well.

IB: Let's back up a minute to go back to your summer at Taliesin, your original interview. Who did you first see? What did you do the first days? What was your impression of the buildings? And things like that.

KANEJI DOMOTO: One thing that stuck with me was that we had a quartet from Indianapolis, or I've forgotten where -- a midwestern place. A good quartet, that played in the summertime. And then one other thing that we had beside working on the farm, was on a Saturday or a Sunday, I forget which one it was, they would have a picnic. We would load up all the little cars and Wright with his small car would lead the way with this caravan behind him looking for a good picnic ground. It was a funny sight to see us going down a country road with all the cars and trucks following him. We would go to one place and we'd look at it and if it wasn't very interesting, then we would go around back in a circle. It happened many times but we enjoyed it, because it was seeing the countryside pretty well. So that was another part of it. Then in the evening on Saturday night we would have a concert of some kind.

IB: Now with this quartet, was this was Sam Sciacchitano one of the people?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Sam?

IB: He was a Cellist?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, that's right.

IB: Because we still know him. He visits still fairly often at Taliesin in Wisconsin.

KANEJI DOMOTO: We had a good quartet there.

IB: Antoine Bek? Was he there?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, he was there. I didn't know these people, players. I wasn't a musician or anything. I always tell people, Wright and the apprenticeship give people a good round education because we worked in a garden, we worked in garage, we worked in the kitchen, helping cook the food, as well as clean up afterward. And I said, that is the best thing you can do for an Architect because when he is designing for people, he has to know what goes on in the kitchen or in the other parts of the house. That's the way the education was.

IB: Did you feel that right at the time, or is this something that you realized in retrospect?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It's more like in retrospect. [Laughs]

IB: At the time, did you feel that you weren't getting what you expected?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, I had read quite a bit about it, and I knew that these things were going on, and that we worked around the farm. So when any of these things come up you expect some unexpected things, because on the farm something comes up all of the time.

IB: So what were your impressions of the buildings and the people in general?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Oh, the people... Well, we had visitors, like Buckminster Fuller who came as a visitor and there were two or three other very well known people that came to visit Taliesin East. So we'd hear their lecture -- not a lecture but a speech. And let's see ^{and} Mrs. Wright ran the house and Wright ran the studio.

IB: What was Mrs. Wright like?

KANEJI DOMOTO: She was just the right person to run the household. She was very precise and it worked out pretty well. [SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: Which Mrs. Wright?] This is the last Mrs. Wright, Olgivanna.

IB: They were married in 1928. She helped establish the Fellowship. What sort of relationship did you have with her?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I was one of those people who wanted to work in the kitchen or work in the garden, or other things that would be routed out as a schedule. But I didn't get to know her that well.

IB: Where did you live there?

KANEJI DOMOTO: At Taliesin East, we had a dormitory. After the gallery there was a building along there, with these rooms and we had a roommate. It was like a regular dormitory.

IB: Was that over at Hillside?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Hillside, that's right.

IB: And was the drafting room floor being built then?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It was built already.

IB: It was already built, okay. What about the drafting room then, was finished?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, the drafting room finished and they were working in there. I think they were working on the Guggenheim building, back then.

IB: How large a group was it?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Something less than 50, must have been about 45, quite a group. Because when we ate, the dining room was full. Like I said, I know most of these people here, so _____ the number pretty well. We had exercises, too. When we went out on a picnic, we would play touch football or something like that, like regular kids.

IB: Did you feel free to talk to Mr. Wright and talk about anything or did you feel shy?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I felt a little shy. So I would talk to Edgar Tafel or some other people who were supervisors on Wright's buildings, and talk to them. At that time, Wright would be gone, because he had the Guggenheim and a few other things that he had to design. We didn't see too much of him all summer.

IB: What about Japanese Print parties? Did that ever go on, where he would get out his prints and show them?

KANEJI DOMOTO: That's right. He had a showing. He had one of the best collections of Japanese prints. It was a tremendous collection.

IB: Were you fairly familiar with that art form or not?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I was just getting educated on that. I wasn't an expert and I didn't know too much about it. But that is where I got a lot of my education.

IB: Did he ever ask you to translate the poems or anything like that?

KANEJI DOMOTO: He knew better than to ask me. I am a second generation and my Japanese is almost nil. There is a funny story I tell about this. The other day two young American kids came to see me, and they started talking beautiful Japanese. I said, "Where did you learn how to speak Japanese like that? And they said, "We were born and raised in Japan." So I told them, you know, I look more Japanese than they do, but they are more Japanese than I am. Because I don't speak that well in Japanese and my Japanese writing is just basic. I don't know a whole lot of written words. I am not ashamed of it so much, but I am saying, I am an American of Japanese descent. So if I know my English and so forth, that's where it counts and my other Japanese secondary part, I could get along and talk to these Japanese but I am not fluent.

IB: Did you ever write any letters home about your experiences at Taliesin and are those saved if you did?

KANEJI DOMOTO: They're not saved. I haven't found them. I used to write to my sister and so forth but not a heck of a lot.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: Did you write to WATZ? She might have saved them.

KANEJI DOMOTO: She might have saved them, but I haven't asked her.

IB: It would be interesting because we are getting a lot of information from Bob May, just from his letters that he wrote

home to his mother, and she saved them all. And so he has them now and he's gone through them.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: His sister is still alive and he can ask her.

IB: Oh good, please do. Did you get into the drafting room at all?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Oh, yes. But not that much. Because at that time, most of his building was big building. We didn't have a need for a draftsman. He had a lot of seniors there.

IB: But did you know how to draft? Could you have gone in and done prospectives, or working drawings, etc.?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, I could draw. I went to the University of California Architecture Department. And that's where I learned how to draft. I was a farmer, a nurseryman, and I didn't do much drawing or anything. But when I got into the University of California, my first year of being an Architecture student, my hands were tough and they didn't move so much and I see these young kids going in there and drawing so easily and so beautifully. And I said, "Gee how am I going to last this year out if I can't improve?" But I did manage to improve and I happened a pretty good style of drawing. Now I am so far behind because the computer came in. They are so perfect, the delineation, that it is pretty hard to compete with a computer drawing. So I keep doing free hand thing, this is my free hand way of showing it. A computer can't do that, so I have to keep maintaining some kind of individuality about it.

IB: I am glad you are. Were the drafting methods that you learned at the University any different from the ones that you encountered at Taliesin? For instance, they were using colored pencils weren't they, at Taliesin, which they probably didn't at the University.

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, they didn't. They used ink and pencil. But on the working drawings they used mostly ink. Of course, the renderings on these things were all together different at Taliesin than at the University.

IB: Did you ever do a complete rendering, I mean, a color rendering, did they have a Box project then? Where they gave a present to Mr. Wright of a drawing?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I did some drawings for the Usonia Homes in Pleasantville. This is a Frank Lloyd Wright development in Pleasantville. I did several houses that required some drawing. I may have to find these because these are all over 50 years old now. I have them stored someplace and I'll have to look for them. If I do I can tell you just what came out of it. I don't know if you know that on the Usonia Homes in Pleasantville, these were about 45-50 homes. And we have, besides Wright, other architects that are Wright students or so forth, contributing to the design. And they all had to go to Wright to get approval of the drawing. So when it comes to my drawing, he looks at it, and then says -- It was one of my very good drawings, he said, "Here is a young fellow who wants to run before he can walk." And that kind of stuck with me pretty well because at least I'm trying to run anyhow. [Laughs]

IB: So that was 10 years after you left Taliesin, that the Usonia homes were built. Wasn't that in the late 40's, early 50's?

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: It was mid 40s, because they had their 50th anniversary last year.

IB: Before we get into that and I do want to talk more about that, I'd just like to hear about the drafting room -- who ran it, who were the key people and what were they like?

KANEJI DOMOTO: At Frank Lloyd Wright's place?

IB: Yes.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Jack Howe. Wes Peters. Wes Peters was sort of a foreman for the whole project. He worked pretty hard.

IB: Did you have any particular experiences with either Jack or Wes or Gene that you recollect?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, a funny thing I remember, we were relaxing at a picnic and we'd be playing football with Edgar Tafel on my side. Somebody called out, "it is time to eat",

so we had to cancel the whole thing. Well, I was playing quarterback at that time and Edgar Tafel was way down there and he said "I gotta go". So I threw this great big pass all the way over and said "EDGAR"! And he looked up and saw this ball coming over and he caught the ball and it was a touchdown. And that's the one thing I remember! [Laughs]

It is a funny thing, there is a lot of things that I should remember, but when I was going Stanford I played soccer in my freshmen year. I played wing. We played the University of California, that was our greatest rival. On this one big day, our big game, I was dribbling down on the left wing, I got a chance to get a corner kick on him, and I kicked a corner kick and my center forward was right in front of the goal and it hit him in the head and like that we got a goal out of it. So in the 1931 or 1932 yearbook, they gave me a little by-line that said "Kan Domoto was lucky to kick this goal with (I've forgotten the fellows name) and we won 1-0". And I remember that more than some of these more important things.

IB: But in general, do you remember it as a happy time -- your time at Taliesin?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Oh, yes. I started meeting these different people from different part of the country and of the world.

IB: I was going to ask about that, was there ever any kind of discrimination between the different cultures, or any problems?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Not at Taliesin.

IB: For Instance, I've heard that Japanese and Chinese don't get along and yet there was a Chinese student there while you were there. Was there any problem?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, I didn't meet anybody that was Chinese.

IB: Oh, maybe he came later, he's on that list.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, he came later. Its a funny thing, when I got around to it, there weren't very many Japanese any place on there, Japanese-American that is. I'm not a true Japanese. I'm an American.

IB: What about Spring Green, were they rather small minded about people with different nationalities, or not?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, Spring Green -- Who was the carpenter that was Wright's carpenter? He came from Spring Green and he had a son.

IB: Will Weston?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No

IB: Marcus Weston and Will Weston?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No

IB: George Haas?

KANEJI DOMOTO: He was an older gentleman as a carpenter. Wright had him around all the time. His son became an Apprentice later. And he and I got along very well. So when we went to Spring Green, he said, "Come with me". So they know the native son and me are together. We got along pretty well.

IB: What did you think of Spring Green at that time?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It was very interesting. It was a country village and I read about these things, so this was my first experience in the middle west. But once before, during the World's Fair, when I stopped school at the University of California to work on the World's Fair I went East with the Japanese Government to do some work there. There I met quite a different group of people, because they hadn't seen Japanese people around very much.

But that wasn't as bad as during the war time, when I was looking for a job on the East Coast. I was pretty dark from being in a concentration camp in Colorado. I was suntanned. So when I got on a bus or a train or something, the people would be very careful and say, "What nationality are you?" Because they wouldn't know if I was black or not. Because on one of the buses the man said "Get in the back." Because they thought I was black. It's not a very pleasant feeling to have something like that happen.

And the other part too was, during the war time, I was in Bethal, Maryland, where the Marines were. One of the Quaker men I was working for, was working there and he said, "come along and I'll get you a job." Then the people looked at me, and I'm Japanese; I look that way. So what they did was, they nabbed me, and brought me to a police station, wondering what the Japanese were doing in a Marine camp. But we were told that, when we were having difficulty to call a certain branch of the government forces, who knew what was happening. So I called for these people, and when they came over, they said, "Oh, we know all about you. You are free to go". So when I came out of the police station, with these two guardsmen on both sides of me, just talking away and going on, they said, "What's going on here? Do you let a Japanese spy get away or something like that"? But you get all that sort of thing.

IB: I want to hear more about that later too, but I want to hear about Taliesin West and just what was here when you got to the desert that first time.

[Break for lunch]

IB: We are back on camera. We have been at lunch at the Taliesin West Dining Room. It is approximately 2:00 PM right now. We ended before lunch just starting to talk about Taliesin West, the first impressions Mr. Domoto had and just what was here when you came. Which buildings had been built and what was being done?

KANEJI DOMOTO: What impressed me most at that time was the drafting room that had the canvas roof on there. It had just a single canvas piece on there so it was flopping around in the wind. But it made a very strong design effect because the beams were wooden pieces. It had the same kind of design as it is now, but it was a little bit more rustic. And there wasn't a lot more. Besides most of it the drafting room and I don't remember the dining room, even! It was a very casual sort of thing. And I don't remember where we slept. It must have been another section of the place.

IB: Did you stay in tents?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Oh! yes! I think it was as simple as that. Only I don't remember them being built anything like this over

here. They all knew that when they came out here they could undress and be in bare skin, and work like pouring concrete... I mean it was the heavy work that they loved to do. We all took part in that.

IB: I know they used to have different crews. One crew would build the wooden formwork, and the other one would get the rocks and pour the concrete. Do you remember if you were on one of those crews?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, I don't. Isn't that funny. The only time I remember a working crew was out in the East where we worked on the landscape on the outside, but it was not building anything. It was just working around the hillside. And over here we moved some big saguaros. We liked to move some big plants. So we moved one or two of them, using the equipment that we had. But we didn't transplant the others, like it is now, where there is greenery all around. It looked kind of bare, more like a real desert.

Then I didn't get back here until -- oh, when we were incarcerated or something like that and I had a chance to get out I asked Wright if I could come back to him and he said "Sure." But then I had a family by then so I had to look for a job on the East Coast because I was out there before. And I managed a hotel there, so that is how I started working and making a living around New York City.

IB: Okay, before you go into that, could we just say -- So you went home for Christmas, but you had intended to return and then something happened that you couldn't return?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, I came home for Christmas. What happened was that we had declared war on Japan. And that knocked everything out then.

IB: And so, did you have any communication after that? Did you write and say, "I won't be able to come back because I can't leave."

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, I didn't have any communication with him at all. But when I got into camp and we were trying to find a place to relocate, I did write a letter to him and he said "Come on out." But I never made it there.

IB: What were those camps like?

KANEJI DOMOTO: They were like -- they were army barracks. The army barracks were a whole row of housing with a common dining room. So that's how we lived. In these shacks. Did you ever see an army barracks?

IB: Yes, but not on the inside.

KANEJI DOMOTO: They were these shacks that a family lived in, one unit apiece, and they could hear that person on the other side and not much of protection or anything like that. And they all have the common dining room where they go to this one big room, where they have dining for everybody. And the funny part of it is, the family cohesion started falling apart because you had certain control over your kids when they were unruly or something you said, "Well, you're not going to have supper or you're not going to have breakfast". Get some disciplining that way but this way the kids knew that they don't have to be with the family to go eat. When the bell rang, they just ran to the mess hall and they got fed. So the father or mother said, "No, you can't have supper." And some of them would just go up to the dining room and have something to eat. And that is how some of the morals of the family broke down.

IB: When did you go in and when did you come out? What was the name of the facility?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It was called "Amachmit" -- A-m-a-c-h-m-i-t , at LaMar, Colorado.

IB: Weren't you in one in California first?

KANEJI DOMOTO: What was the name of that one? We went to one in California. We were on the Bay Area and there was a big group coming from around San Francisco area. But before that time, we found out that, if we moved, as Japanese moved 50 miles back from the shoreline at the ocean, then we could stay there. So we had relatives in Livingston, so we moved to Livingston, California to avoid ~~internment~~. But in no time at all, when we moved to Livingston, they said, "no this is not going to work; you have got to move out again." So from there, we weren't with a group that we were originally with because we were in another area then, wherever had the jobs

and things. So, we were in a camp that was sort of unfamiliar to our friends. If we stayed where we were born and raised we would have been among friends that we'd known for sometime. But this worked out alright. They were farmers, all of these people were farmers that we were with. When we got into the concentration camp, some camps from a rather unruly, like they were people from San Francisco or Oakland, a highly populated Japanese area. They would be very -- they would know their rights or something. The camp would be slightly rough, to talk about control. But when they are farmers, they are not that knowledgeable about rights. We were a docile group of people so had a very quiet camp life. While some of the other camp life were very hard to take on.

IB: But you must have felt some anger or resentment at the whole treatment of having to move into these things?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It is a funny thing. Who run these camps? We did. The prisoners who were in there. We were policeman. This was like a little village. All of us who live in this place, they went to school. We formed a school. We made teachers from our own group that taught there. We had fireman, policeman and mayor and all the rest of it. It was like a little village. And that came from us on there. And since most of us were farmers they were very subdued people. But if you went to San Francisco or San Jose, or Los Angeles, they get kind of unruly because they are a little bit more knowledgeable about their rights.

What I was working in was an architectural department. They were building some more school space because there were more kids than what they thought. And that kept us busy, so we didn't have that much time to get unruly about it. But there were two or three of us that had more law in mind. I think a little bit more cognizance what rights are theirs. And they said to us, "This is unruly and this is not justified". And we didn't back them up because we were farmers and we didn't know that much about it. But other places where they were more sophisticated they formed some complaints in. I think in some places they were shipped out of the camp to other concentration place.

But when you ask me why I didn't feel badly about it. Well, my reactions and my brother's reactions are all together different. My brother had a nursery already and this hurt his

business tremendously because he lost a lot of his plant material. I had just got the family together to begin my career, so the only thing to my name at that time was my car at the time which was a Dodge, or something. I had to give that up but it was three years old and falling apart. So I didn't feel the loss or bitterness that my brother felt, and he still does about the concentration camp.

IB: How many children did you have by that time? Your wife and you?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Just one.

IB: Have you gotten any restitution? Weren't they giving people restitution?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, the Japanese American Citizens League got organized and they got political know how. And they got \$20,000 for restitution. But it required a lot of preparation and political know-how in this.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: This was \$20,000 per family.

IB: So after the California experience, you moved to Colorado. So how long in toto were you in the camps.

KANEJI DOMOTO: After one year, they started saying that we made a mistake. That is what the government said. So after that two years in it you were qualified to go looking for a job eastward someplace. And that's where we got out of the camp. They paid your way out in transportation to look for a job. So they wanted to get rid of the camps. The war was still on so these people that went looking for a job, did manage to find jobs. Before then, there were very few Japanese in the eastern states. Most Japanese-Americans were mostly populated on the West coast, like California, Oregon and Seattle. To me at that time, although I went to college, I didn't feel any urge to go east at all. I loved California. And all of California at that time. Loved California. "Why, this is heaven." So at that time, when I traveled eastward on some other things, I'd stop in at a railroad station, I never saw a Japanese person. I saw Chinese, though. Almost all these little towns had a Chinese restaurant and a Chinese cleaners or something like that. No Japanese. Now, we were scattered so that in all the smaller town, no matter how big

the town, they would have a Japanese population inside. So in that way we got scattered around pretty well.

IB: So you did end up in New York?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes. That is how I got to New York.

IB: Tell us your history from then on. You were traveling with a wife and was it a little boy of a little girl?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, I think I went to several places. The camp was still there at the time. The concentration camp was still there. So I had a chance for a half a year or a year to look for a job. So then when I sent for my kids I would have a semi-decent place to work. So this gave me time on the weekends to look for a house. So I started out in Statton Island once a week, started looking for houses. And that is how I found a house. And then when I found the house, I managed to get a settlement and then I sent for my kids, the family.
on it?

IB: So what was your first job?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, the first place I stayed at was, there was a Japanese Christian Association in New York City, of all places, on 57th Street. One of the most busiest streets. This was a six story small apartment that was a Japanese Christian Church. I was looking for a place to stay while I was looking for a job. It was like a YMCA. Go there and find a room. And the only way that you could stay there was on Sundays you had to attend church. So here we are. All of my friends were staying there at this church just so that we could look for a place to stay for the family. And in no time at all we most of us found places and jobs and then a home for the family. It took us another year or two to do that. And I found a place in New Rochelle to move into and then I sent for the family to come live there. That is where the kids went to school, in New Rochelle.

IB: And how many children did you have?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I only had two children at that time.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: But all together. I think you are asking how many children he had all together?

IB: Oh, yes.

KANEJI DOMOTO: I had four kids.

IB: So tell us how you got involved with David Henken and the Usonian project?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I don't know how I got to know him. He knew that I went to Taliesin already. At that time I had a drafting job working for an architect. And somehow we got together. When he started the Usonian homes, he said, "How would you like to work for me"? So I worked for him for couple of years now, to start Usonia homes.

IB: So this was around 1945 or so?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Something like that. 1945 or 1946.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: It must have been earlier than that because the 50th anniversary was '95.

IB: So 1944 or so, maybe. Well, what was he like? I never met him.

KANEJI DOMOTO: He was quite an organizer. I mean he was amazing on the Usonia homes. He had two or three other people helping him, but he was responsible for getting Usonia homes started, and getting Wright to design the cooperative, I think. There is quite a bit of history about him there. Quite a responsible person.

IB: And you liked him?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, we got along very well. But among his own kind there was always scrapping about something or other. He was in this very active group. When his group of people moved out to Usonia Homes the people around there said, "These were the liberals from New York City they are too progressive we don't want them around." After 50 years some things now, people around them call them the conservatives now, the Republicans. They changed the whole thing. The children come up a little different than their parents. It is interesting to see the concept of it.

IB: So when did you start re-communicating with Mr. Wright? Obviously, you saw him since you took that picture of him and David.

KANEJI DOMOTO: When he was organizing for the Usonia homes. He was making a survey and coming out. We would all gather around and follow him to see what he had to say about this concept. I mean he had to criticize all of us, so we were entitled to be criticised by him, each of our projects. Do you understand that? This cooperative-- we had about 4 or 5 of the architects that designed buildings there. And he would come and look at the drawings and give us criticism.

IB: Did you see any change in him over those years since you had left?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, I think he kind of liked the Usonia homes, because he had named after something. And his first Usonia homes project didn't go through -- it was in the middlewest someplace. And this one, it was hard going to get it, because we had to get a mortgage and everything else like that. That was to David Henken's credit, that he worked hard to get financing.

IB: Aside from designing some of the homes, did you supervise any of the ones that Mr. Wright had designed, like Friedman or Reisley?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, those were Wright's -- he had his own superintendent. I supervised my own part, but Wright sent his own people.

IB: So, what were the names of the clients that you did jobs for? Do you remember those off the top of your head?

KANEJI DOMOTO: There was Dr. Bier B-i-e r, and Silson, S-i-l-s-o-n. There was a Harris. And there was a Lurry - L-u-r-r-y, and Siegel - S-i-e-g-e-l. These were my clients, and their houses were somewhat different from all the rest of them.

IB: What sort of innovations or things did you bring to the concept?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, I didn't feel quite so guilty about not following exactly along Wright's line. Because in his drafting room at Taliesin East, his home, there were big words that said, "Follow my thinking, but don't copy my work." He was trying to say, "Get to know what I have to do, and then get on your own and think about it, instead of just laboriously copying all he had done. So when I started drawing a thing I'd get these different ideas, and somebody said, "Hey, that doesn't look like Wright's work." And I said, "that's what he says in his drafting room. He said to get your thinking going to follow his principle and not just to follow him design-wise." So I wasn't being _____. It gave me a chance to work on a little different type of houses than _____.

IB: But you said at one point he did criticize all of your different works. Was that difficult --? Was there any validity in his criticism? How did you receive that? Was it difficult to hear him criticizing you like that?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, he was quite honest about it and I recognized that. He wasn't being sarcastic or anything. He was right, that I was trying to get going -- Oh, see, I didn't have my license to practice architecture then. You know you have to have so many years of experience or be graduated from an architecture school and have so many years experience. And then you can go for your architectural license. Well, I didn't have my license or anything, so when he said, "Here's somebody who wants to run before he can walk," well, that was true that I was trying to get ahead. And it took me a couple more years before I got my license.

IB: So, did you run into any problems in your buildings -- just in general? These were some of the first things you had built, weren't they?

KANEJI DOMOTO: That's right. They were the first things.

IB: So you probably had a few glitches like every young architect does? Or did everything go rather smoothly?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It went rather smoothly. I don't remember any big difficulty. There were some different ideas on them. One of the favorite ones -- like he did over here on your living room -- a plate glass roof with canvas underneath it? Well,

I like that feeling of subdued light coming through. But at that time there was a thing called fiberglass. It was plastic and it came in corrugated sheets. And they were very durable -- fire resistant and water proof. And then I used 2x2s underneath it, so it isn't just a big glare. I used that as a roofing material, and it worked out pretty well.

IB: It holds up under snow?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, and more recently I used it on another building and it's 25 years old and it's holding up very well.

IB: I understand that David Henken and Mr. Wright had some difficulties in agreement -- or disagreeing, occasionally?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I wasn't part of that kind of work on that, so I don't know. I know that David had more difficulty with his association with a group of people than Wright -- you know what I mean -- the Cooperative people.

IB: Oh. So subsequently did you go out and have your own office?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, when I had these houses I had my office already started.

IB: And that has remained until this day?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Until about six years ago or so. I started getting more interested in landscaping than architecture.

IB: At lunch you were talking about your fascination with rocks -- could you tell us more about that?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, while I was working as an architect at _____ my oldest daughter wanted to go the University of Wisconsin, so we took her there. And going to the place through Chicago I bumped up against the nursery called "Hill Nursery," which was an old, well-established large nursery. At that time they were inaugurating a bonsai festival. It was the first time in the middle west where they had bonsai, and they were inaugurating this thing. So I went to see what was it all about. They had done business with my father for some time, so the companies knew each other pretty well. So when I went in there and told them I knew something about bonsai,

they said "We're looking for a fellow who would demonstrate to the group." And since I was a bonsai designer I got the job to do that. So I used to go back there every August and give demonstration of bonsai.

I didn't stay with bonsai, because people don't understand to have a sensitive plant like a bonsai live and prosper they have to take care of it just like it was a child, or a dog, or something like that. They have to water it, they have to prune it and tenderly take care of it. And I found out that a lot of people didn't do that. Myself too -- I'd have some bonsai in the house, and I'd be gone, and when I got back they hadn't been watered and they died. So I felt pretty badly about that. So somehow I got into rock work which I loved -- right before, even when I was going to the University of California I'd done a rock garden for somebody and it worked pretty well. So that influenced me on doing the rock garden. And I found out that with the rock work -- well, one thing I don't have to tell them they have to be watered frequently, or fertilized, or vandalized, or anything.

The other part of it is that if you plant a bush or tree, it grows, and you have to trim it sometimes, because it grows out of shape or it gets too big or something like that. You have to be with it all the time, which is all right. But if you get a stone garden, and you place a stone garden in there. You place it in the harmony with another stone and it's for keeps! And it appeals to me that I come back many, many, many years later and look at it, and there it is, still there. Except that it hurts sometimes that the owner will plant a plant in front of it, and the bush will grow so big that you don't see the rock anymore. And that kind of hurts. You try to convince him to prune it back or take it out.

IB: And you're still working? You mentioned also that with rockwork you could make just a concept sketch and it didn't have to be totally followed -- You could change it as you went along, and so on.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes. When I use natural stone on there it isn't like an architect cutting a stone to size, on a terrace -- you know, "This is going to be six feet long and two feet wide," or something like that. You get this big stone, whatever it is, and place it. And it may be two inches different from what you made a sketch of, or six inches on

there -- but it fits! And from then on -- I've developed a theory that whenever you're doing a rock composition start with the biggest rock, and face it in the direction that you're more accustomed to looking at things. Then the garden's all set, already. That's your main rock, facing where you're standing most of the time looking at it. All the rest of the stone is in conjunction with this thing, and you carefully place it on and it becomes a group of one accent, the biggest one, and the rest is secondary to it. So there you have a composition hanging together pretty well. And sometimes it goes one way and sometimes another, depending on how the rocks fit. And you have to look at the rocks very carefully to make sure they will fit all right.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: Tell her how you find the center of gravity, honey.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, you've seen rock work when you see a pillar rock and it looks straight up and down. You don't have any worry about them. They look serene and set -- straight up and down. And the reason why they do is the center of gravity is coming straight down. If you lean it forward you feel it's going to lean over a little bit, and it becomes a dynamic composition, because it has a feeling of falling or something. But when you do your design work and the center of gravity is there it comes straight down, and you feel a serene stability on this piece here. So that's how you start with this rock work. And it didn't come from finding out a theory that works so much as mechanically speaking, lift the rock up with a chain you can find the center of gravity by the way the rock hangs. If it hangs straight down that chain, the chain is right in the line of the center of gravity. And when you drop it down it has this serene quality of being stable. If you tried to make a lean on that then you're going to get into difficulty. How are you going to stabilize that? You going to put a piece of wood down this way _____. No you've got to stabilize it.

So what I did is that I forget all kinds of dynamic design. My design is not for dynamic design, it's for serenity. So all my rocks aren't leaning -- they're straight down this way so there's a feeling of eternity, just looking at them.

IB: Mr. Domoto, how old are you now?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Let me see -- I think I'm 83.

IB: And you're still working!

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes. I did some big work just before the snow storm, and it was quite a chore to walk from one product _____ to the next. But when there's an urge you can do it. And I have this urge when it comes to stonework.

IB: Did your father live to this age that you are now?

KANEJI DOMOTO: He passed away when we were in the concentration camp, and it was a shame. There's a new book -- not a book, but a magazine -- out by the San Francisco flower mart --

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: Oh, it's a large book!

KANEJI DOMOTO: That tells about his work. He made it on his own. He came up from working in the San Francisco area. So he built up this big nursery and everything. But he would hire anybody from Japan who wanted a job, and he'd teach them anything. And when these people got a knowledge of how to raise chysanthemums, camellias, or whatever, they would go out on their own; and he would encourage that. So pretty soon they called it "Domoto College," because they'd go there to learn from him. But that's the kind of a guy he was.

IB: One thing I was getting at is -- do you think that you're genetically just working to a grand age; or is something that maybe you were inspired because you saw other older people working, or is it just something within yourself? Or a combination?

KANEJI DOMOTO: A combination, yes. Well, with me, you look at the stone roof on there, and you put one together and another together and another together, and they start fitting pretty good, you get excited. It's a composition that's working.

IB: Well, I think we should also mention, since your good wife Sylvia has been here throughout the interview -- can you tell us a little bit about how you met each other? Why don't you start, and then we'll get back to her --

KANEJI DOMOTO: She makes a better story.

IB: Okay. Sylvia?

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: We've known each other casually for many years. We were neighbors, and actually I knew Kan's first wife Sally better than I knew Kan; and he, likewise was very friendly with my husband. And his wife died about twelve years ago, and my husband about eight years ago. And it wasn't until I moved from the neighborhood, and Kan came to bring something to me from another neighbor, that we sort of met. And for the first time we went to a garden show together -- Home gardens -- and he said -- we were coming close to Mamaranek, "Let me show you a house I did." And for the first time I saw his architectural work and his gardens. And I'm afraid [laughs] I fell in love with the house, and with his concepts of work, which I found very, very interesting. So I got to know him better. Then he decided we ought to get married. And when he makes a decision he makes it quickly and decisively, and that's IT! And he doesn't generally change. ..

IB: So you were married about three years ago?

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: Yes.

IB: That's wonderful. At lunch we were hearing that you have something to do with cooking and editing.

SYLVIA: Yes, I'm a food writer. _____ and also do food product development for major companies.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Mention the company. [Lea & Perrins]

SYLVIA: I generally have a book out in bookstores. And when that one begins to peak off I manage to have another one.

IB: You mean you actually write them or edit them?

SYLVIA: No, I write them.

IB: What name do you go under?

SYLVIA: Sylvia Schur -- S-c-h-u-r. And now I'm beginning to say "Sylvia Schur Domoto."

KANEJI DOMOTO: Why don't name us some of the books?

SYLVIA: Right now the one that's in stores is "365 Quick and Easy Low-Calorie Recipes." because everyone is so much interested in that. But, like Kan's rocks, I think they always have to have a feeling of reality, that people want and that sits straight with them.

IB: That's wonderful. We'll have to talk with you about our Taliesin cookbook, which people have been wanting to publish for years, but it needs tested. Let's go back to you, for a moment. Speaking of Taliesin cookbooks, do you remember any particular foods or anything when you were at Taliesin? Or were those fairly lean years?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I don't remember anything tremendously _____ on food at Taliesin. [Laughs]

IB: What about working in the garden? Did you harvest tomatoes and squash, and things like that?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, I did some landscaping for Wright. I had some experience in that sort of thing, and I was surprised that Wright would let me get away with so much of the design work on it. Sometimes he would change the things, but he would accept what I had done.

IB: Which areas, do you remember? Would that be something that might be still there?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, I doubt it would be there. It was outside the drafting room. We used to go out in the woods and make some collection of pine material to plant in areas. It's just generally in the whole hillside in his workshop area. I can't remember just which one....they won't be alive now.

IB: You might be surprised.

KANEJI DOMOTO: I haven't gone back recently. That's right -- I better go back and check on that.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: You also did the garden in Jackson Park in Chicago, didn't you?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, but that was before Wright.

IB: But it's good to know. Because we do want to know what former apprentices did do and what happened after they left.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, some of the better known things: I did the Penguin Pen at Coney Island. And I did also at Mystic there's _____, and I did those there.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: It's a public aquarium.

IB: I see. I'm not familiar with the East Coast, so I don't know these things.

KANEJI DOMOTO: If you're familiar with the University of California, in the Strawberry Canyon up on top there I did the steam bed there.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: By U. of California he means Berkeley.

IB: That reminds me -- earlier you had said that you loved California, and yet you never moved back there. Did you come to love the East Coast just as much, after living there a long time?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I'm not quite so sure. It's just that I got stuff and stuff and got involved and didn't let go on there. Because when I go back to California I say, "Oh, what I missed." [Laughs] But California is changing somewhat too; it isn't like it used to be.

IB: So you think you will spend the rest of your days in the East?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Maybe in Arizona. [Laughs]

IB: Well, good.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Not in Florida, though.

IB: Do you still see Edgar Tafel?

KANEJI DOMOTO: No, he's spending more time in Florida than in New York City. I see Al[fie] Bush.

IB: Is he still practicing?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Last time he was out of a job, and he was sick too. So he's beating old age, like I am, I guess. Let's see --- who else?

IB: Did you know Morton Delson? He was a later apprentice.

KANEJI DOMOTO: No.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: You met Guerrero at the show.

IB: You had mentioned that you went to the 50th Anniversary of Usonia II. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

KANEJI DOMOTO: It was interesting that at this time of 50 years the children have grown up and they have children of their own; it was that many years apart. So there was just a big group of people, rather unfamiliar looking. Because the parents were the ones I knew, and the daughter I knew somewhat slightly, but the granddaughter I didn't know at all. It was rather interesting to see.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: They all knew you!

IB: Are some of your original clients still living in those houses, or have they gone on to other owners?

KANEJI DOMOTO: They have other owners now.

IB: But your wife was saying that everybody was starry eyed, and there was a whole kind of aura to the occasion.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: They all felt that the place had been very important in their lives, and the houses that they lived in. They thought that this had really been a shaping influence in their lives.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, what I like to talk about them is that when these people first moved out to Pleasantville, the area around them was very conservative and everything else. These were the liberals coming out of New York, the progressive people. So they have a different attitude, politically speaking -- like a Democrat or a Republican. But after one generation the reaction of the people around there is not that these Usonian people are progressive and liberal. They're the

conservatives now! After two generations or so they start changing their political feeling.

IB: Could I ask what your political bent is?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I'll tell you what -- I've been voting Democrat, but in the last election I voted for Perot, and this election I'm going to vote for Pat [Buchanan].

IB: What do you like about his politics? Is there anything in particular that attracts you?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I like his personality. I don't go for his anti-abortion of children -- one or two of the things I don't go for. But I like the way the man talks. It's just like one of my best friends, the way we moved into where we're living now. I used to live in a more lower-income housing, because I'd just moved out to New York and my family was there and I wasn't making that much. So this is rather low-income housing. And I had a family doctor who attended us there and he said, "Come over to Sutton Manor; there's a couple of houses are empty." And I said, "I couldn't afford those." And he says, "I'll finance you." And this was a doctrine guy [?] named Davis, who is a Quaker. And he encouraged me to live in this other area which is where she [Sylvia] had her house, too. So on his strength I moved into Sutton Manor, and that made the world of difference. This man I felt a lot of respect for. When we get into a conversation we couldn't agree on the same thing. His religion was Quaker and I had no religion at all. But this is what I feel: I don't have to agree with a man on many of his points, as long as I know he's a good friend. And that's how I feel about Pat -- Buchanan. He's got one or two points that some of the people are very strongly against him for that. But I feel that he's a good, responsible man, that would be the best for us out there. He's pretty close to it, when it comes to Republican to think about it. It's going to be a close race. But I'll vote for him and get out of my Democratic --

IB: Why are you disillusioned with Clinton?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, the reason is that -- I thought a lot of F.D.R., when in the Depression he had WPA and the CCC. I think they were terrific. He's the one who got us imprisoned too, but I said, with the number of people affected that he

did more good than harm. I mean, he harmed us by putting us in concentration camps. But look at the good he did with all these unemployed people that he got working -- like the WPA project and the CCC thing. And we ought to have that right now, because there are that many people unemployed. Clinton hasn't involved anything about rehiring or getting people working. I don't think he's making that much dent in anything.

IB: Are there any people, on either the national or international scene that you would think of as really heroes, or someone you'd look up to at this point in your life?

KANEJI DOMOTO: You mean, _____ like the Kennedys or something like that?

IB: Are there any people comparable to Roosevelt? Is there someone alive today that you think very highly of? In any field? Political, scientific, arts, architecture, humanities...?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, as I said, _____

IB: Well, that's quite a lot to throw at you. What about you, Sylvia? Is there anybody that you find is particularly admirable in today's world?

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: Well, I've thought that it was strange, that in a country as democratic as we are, and with such a pool of human talent, we don't seem to tap them for leadership roles in our scenes, so it's hard to identify a hero, or even a heroine, at this point. We don't have that kind of leadership. I think one thing that might be interesting, Kan, coming back to his and your joint interest in the architectural scene, is that, you know, we're frequently with a young architect who attributes all of his interest in architecture to what you did with his parents' home.

IB: So you have influenced --

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: You have influenced a lot of young people who seem to come around...

KANEJI DOMOTO: [Modest murmur]

IB: What are your own children doing?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Oh, they're having a ball! My son is an architect. It's an interesting thing; I put him to work during a summer when he was in high school with the drafting and things. So I guess he had a stomachful of being an architect. So when he went to college he said that he was going to be an engineer. So he went to Columbia to be an engineer. Then he graduated, and he went back to school to get his masters in engineering. Then the war came along and he had to serve two years with the Armed Forces. And after two years with the Armed Forces he came back and said, "I'm going to be an architect." So he went back to school, and took up architecture. But he didn't come to work for me; he worked for some other people. He's got his own office and everything. It's an interesting that that one time I had a problem with a footbridge to go across a stream -- there had to be a curve in it. And I couldn't quite figure out how to do it, just without putting a pole in the middle of the stream which was not right. And he come up with the idea, "Hey, make it like a diving board and bend it!" And I said, "Well, that paid for your college education." [Laughter]

And my other daughter graduated from college as a biochemist. Then after two years of that -- after graduation she had a job at Harvard and Los Angeles too. Then she went to Hawaii to get another look at herself. And she came back to school and said, "I'm going to be a doctor." So she became a doctor in geriatrics. Then afterwards she got to be the business doctor for a hospital in hospital -- one of these places, what is this? Chronic disease hospital. Then she found out she didn't have enough business backing so she went back to school to take up business. Now she heads a hospital in Boston.

That's what I tell these young kids, "Take something that you like." Don't do nothing about it. Take something that you're interested in. And if it doesn't work out, change your idea and go for it again. This is where you learn." And that's why I like school -- My granddaughter who is going to Harvard now - Harvard Freshmen all live together in a freshman dormitory -- it's called, what do they say, "indoctrination." They keep all of these kids together. And that's a good idea, too.

But then I come across some other people who say , "Well, we've got to educate the kids to be more non-racial, and more open, and things like that." But I said to them, "It isn't the kids that you need to teach; you've got to have teachers who can teach the kids." Because if you're just going to say, "We're giving you this program," it's not going to work. The teacher has to feel that, work on that." And I said this was the matter -- When these two grandchildren of mine were going to a private school in Boston, we went to a play. I think they call it "Grandparents' Night," not Grandparents' Day.' In the PTA when you go to it, it's after 8 o'clock [p.m.], you know -- Parents-Teachers' Association. But Grandparents' time is something different. It's 8 o'clock in the morning and you go to a class. So if they're in Boston I have to get there the night before.

So I go through this classroom with one of my grandchildren. And I notice two or three of the kids there are very ill-mannered: They put their feet on the top of the stool, and everything else. And they get away with it in all the classes except one! You'll never guess what classroom that would be. It was in singing class. The teacher was at them the minute they came in, seeing that they weren't gossiping like that, they were all like that. They had a wonderful choir. And I wonder, "How does she get these kids to behave without bopping them?" When in the history classes, the English classes and all the rest of them, these kids were not behaving very well. And I said, "That teacher was something special. You don't get very many teachers like that."

IB: What about your other two children? You have one who is an architect, one who is a doctor -- and the other two?

KANEJI DOMOTO: My oldest daughter is --

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: Now she's a lawyer!

KANEJI DOMOTO: She was in social work, and she went around the country with her husband who got into state work [SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: State Department] They were stationed two years here, two years there, and got around. So we saw them in South America quite a bit; they were stationed down there. But after being a social worker she went back and she got into adoption. And she found out that she didn't have enough law background. So she went back to school in Washington, D. C. in

one of those new law schools -- Most of the law schools are men, and they're in there for the big money, big corporation thing, This law school is for the minority and feminine thing. And in the graduating classes there were only two men - all the rest were girls.

IB: What's the name of it?

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: D.C. School of Law.

IB: And your other child?

KANEJI DOMOTO: She was the most talented member of the whole family. She played the cello like nobody, and everything else. But right now she's just got a job with a college as a secretary. But she loves the taiko, the Japanese taiko.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: Drummers.

IB: Oh, yes.

KANEJI DOMOTO: So she got into a group that plays the drums on there. And since she played in an orchestra the director would like her to be able to lead the whole group. Because in an orchestra there's a leader, while in a drum [orchestra] everyone's drumming away at his own speed. So I still have hopes for her for doing something else, but she's having a good time of it.

SYLVIA SCHUR DOMOTO: The interesting thing is that Kan's children and my children, because they grew up in the same area, were schoolmates. And so there's a lot of interplay between the two families now. And between us we have 13 grandchildren, which takes a lot of maneuvering [Laughs].

IB: Oh, goodness! When you were talking about music I was wondering, were you in the chorus when you were at Taliesin, or not?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Yes, I sang. I liked to sing.

IB: Were you a tenor or a bass?

KANEJI DOMOTO: A bass.. I wasn't a very good singer, but there was a whole bunch of us the same way. [Laughs]

IB: And Tony Bek was the conductor?

KANEJI DOMOTO: Oh, that's right! He was one of the conductors, I think, wasn't he?

IB: Yes, he was the choral director.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Choral director, yes.

IB: Well, what do you think about Taliesin going on as a school of architecture today? Do you still believe that this kind of variety of working on maintenance, on construction, in the kitchen and the drafting room -- do you think that's still a way you can train people?

KANEJI DOMOTO: I think those items that you mention are a must. Because I can draft a kitchen, or inside -- I mean, this other part that I'd never get. See, I had six sisters in my family, so I never got into the kitchen or any of that work. When I went to Taliesin, boy, they put me washing dishes, or cleaning this, or doing vegetables -- I mean, the whole thing. It's a complete education in -- homemaking -- which most of my work was residential, so I thought that was well worthwhile. Plus you see a different approach to architecture, too. You don't have to stick to a standard sort of thing. And have enough courage to do it, too.

IB: Well, I think we've more or less finished up. And I really enjoyed talking to you very much and getting to know you.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Just give me a list of ones that I didn't answer right -- [laughs] _____ I have records of *my files* someplace.

IB: Then when I turn off the camera I'm going to be looking at some of your work. And we might turn it back on again and say something about it. But thank you very much for coming today, and I hope you'll keep in touch.

KANEJI DOMOTO: Well, I enjoyed this coming here very much. It gives me a feeling I should keep trying walking some more.

IB: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcription by Sandy Willems and Indira Berndtson

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