

[Begin Alice Ono CD 1]

0:00:03.9

**Interviewer:**

It is Friday, February 6, 2004, and we are at the home of Mrs. Alice Ono in Torrance, California. This morning we will be interviewing her as part of our J.A.C.L. Oral History Project in conjunction with the Cal State University Long Beach. We have been granted--we have received a grant from the C.C.C.L.E.P. to conduct a survey of older Nisei who have grown up in the South Bay area to record their experiences both pre-war, during the war, and after World War II during the resettlement stage. So, we will now begin recording with Mrs. Alice Ono.

Good morning, Mrs. Ono; how are you today?

**Ono:**

Fine, thank you.

**Interviewer:**

Thank you so much for letting us interview you this morning. And, we will start with some simple questions just to make you a little bit more comfortable. Could you tell me first of all where you were born and when you were born?

**Ono:**

Well, I was born in Los Angeles---1912.

**Interviewer:**

And, what were your parents' names?

**Ono:**

My parents were **Yujiro and Yone Fukuyama.**

**Interviewer:**

And, did you have any siblings; and if could you give me their names and if they are still living or if they're deceased.

**Ono:**

All right; my oldest brother, his name was---or is---was Iwao Fukuyama and he is deceased. And the second brother, Sunao Fukuyama is also deceased. And the third brother, Mitsuo, also is gone. And the fourth brother, Shigeo, is still living. And my only sister, Yuriko **Iwashita?** is deceased. That's it.

**Interviewer:**

Okay; let's talk a little bit your parents' immigration from Japan. Can you tell me what prefecture they were from; when your parents came to the United States, and where their port of entry was?

0:02:48.4

**Ono:**

They are both from Kagoshima-ken. I don't recall when they came to this country, but I know the port of entry was San Francisco.

**Interviewer:**

Were your parents married in Japan?

**Ono:**

Yes.

**Interviewer:**

Oh they were; so they grew up together?

**Ono:**

No.

**Interviewer:**

No.

**Ono:**

Total strangers.

**Interviewer:**

But---and were any of---was your oldest brother born in Japan, or . . . ?

**Ono:**

We were all born in this country.

**Interviewer:**

What was your father's occupation? Well first, did he stay in San Francisco, or did he come right away down to the Southern California?

**Ono:**

I'm not clear on that, but I think he tried San Francisco for a while, and he was, I believe, around 19 years old then when he first came. So, he went back to get married and bring a wife. So, but when he first came, I understand they were working--he worked in a restaurant as a dishwasher. And, he didn't care for

San Francisco weather, so he came down to Los Angeles---Southern California.

**Interviewer:**

So, all of you were born in the Southern California area?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

I see; and can you tell me---you had told me before that you had grown up in the Los Angeles area and had attended school . . .

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

0:04:23.8

**Interviewer:**

. . . closer to downtown Los Angeles.

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

And, what junior high school and high school did you attend?

**Ono:**

Junior High School was Lafayette Junior High School and Jefferson High School.

**Interviewer:**

And, if so, did you go onto school after you graduated from Jefferson High School?

**Ono:**

No, I didn't graduate from Jefferson High School. When I was in junior---I think it was in junior year, I went to Japan and this would be my second trip to Japan because I was in Japan when I was five years old, and stayed there until I was 11.

**Interviewer:**

Oh I see; well was English or Japanese your main language as you were growing up?

**Ono:**

Well, you mean at home or . . . ?

**Interviewer:**

At home---at home?

**Ono:**

At home, yes; Japanese for---with me. But, my brothers were different because---younger brothers, because they weren't sent back to Japan by then. Father realized that [ Laughs] that getting---reaching America wasn't going to happen.

**Interviewer:**

No, it wasn't easy. Well now, can you tell me a little bit about what you remember as you were growing up as a young girl, you know during your say elementary and junior high school days? What was the area like in Los Angeles as you were growing up? Were there farms up there? Was it city life?

**Ono:**

Well, like I said, I was in Japan until I was 11 years old. So when I came back, I didn't speak a word of English. It took me about two and a half years to get back to my grade---age level in school. And, I don't know; I lived in that area where there quite a few Japanese residents. I don't think I was aware of, you know what living conditions and all that was in other places other than myself and the neighbors.

**Interviewer:**

Well, were you not too far from the current Little Tokyo Japanese town area, or did it exist as you were growing up?

**Ono:**

I don't know about that at that time, but I think so. It's been there forever as far as I can remember. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:**

Well, do you remember, for example, like in your neighborhood---was your mother able to purchase Japanese, you know groceries?

**Ono:**

No, no, no; I think we had to go down to certain areas, uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

What was your relationship with your parents like and your siblings?

0:07:27.6

**Ono:**

Well, after I learned to speak English, I was---I was more like . . . what should I say? I translated everything that happened with my brother---my family to my parents in Japanese. And, whatever they said, I translated to my brothers in English. I think that's how I learned to speak English. And, I think one advantage I had was that my brothers were very, very cooperative with me, because I was more like a second mother. What I said passed; and so to this day, you know they treated me like they were---their mother.

**Interviewer:**

With a great deal of respect?

**Ono:**

With respect, yes. What was the other question?

**Interviewer:**

No, that's good.

**Ono:**

That was it, uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

I just wondered, and your parents you obviously---it sounds as though you got along with your parents very well, that you had a happy family?

**Ono:**

Oh yes, uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

Good; did you have time . . . I know that in the early days it was difficult with going to school and trying to adjust to, you know everything that was going on. But, did you have time for a social life? Was church or school activities a part of your life at all?

**Ono:**

I wouldn't say it was a part of my life because as a---being the only daughter, I helped my mother a great deal, especially when my sister was born. I practically did everything. I was only 12 years old.

**Interviewer:**

Uh-hm; I understand. Now, can you tell me what your father's occupation was? I understand that your mother probably was a housewife at this time. But, tell me---could you tell us a little bit about your father's occupation and what he did?

**Ono:**

Well, he had what I think at that time they called a wholesale market. He was---went around and bought produce from the farmers and then in turn he sold that to the markets and back east. Since I never worked in the market, I really do not know what went on inside the market, but I know they slept during the day and worked from early morning---most of their business was done during the night. So, they were ready in the morning.

**Interviewer:**

That sounds a little bit about like my grandfather and father's business where since they were more or less brokers, they bought from wholesalers and sold to retailers, and therefore they had to get their product to the retailer before their stores opened. Does that sound about right?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm; yes.

0:11:08.3

**Interviewer:**

Uh-hm; good. And, you had mentioned that your father was successful in his business?

**Ono:**

Yes.

**Interviewer:**

And therefore, you were able to go back and forth to Japan?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm, uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

Uh-huh good; yeah. Now, moving on after---as you became an adult, can you tell us where you met your husband?

**Ono:**

Where like---where we had socials among the Kagoshima and picnics and New Year's and his---he lived in Arroyo Grande area because his two uncles were farmers out that way. And, that's how my husband---I mean my father used to go around there to have them send their product to his market. So, that's how they knew they were from Kagoshima. And then we were on the subject of what?

**Interviewer:**

How you met your husband?

**Ono:**

Husband---he came to Japan---America from Japan when he was 15, I understand. And, they stayed with his uncle---one of his uncles until he . . . of course, he didn't speak a word of English until he was too old to go to the elementary school there. They didn't have a high school; so he came to Gardena to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Yamauchi. They were from Kagoshima, too. And so he graduated high school, and then he went onto USC because he wanted to become a dentist. And, I met at those little functions they had. That's how it all started. **[Laughs]**

**0:13:14.5**

**Interviewer:**

That's interesting; and so your husband, who was Doctor Richard Ono, graduated from USC in was it the '30s or about---when did he finish dental school?

**Ono:**

Well, we were married in 1932, I think. **[Laughs]** So, and then when he graduated from school, he went back to Japan to visit his folks because his father was ill. And then while he was in Japan visiting, his father passed away. And so, after everything was over, he came back. And then we were married a year after he graduated.

**Interviewer:**

From dental school?

**Ono:**

Yes.

**Interviewer:**

Oh I see; that's interesting. So, does your husband still have family or relatives still living in Japan then?

**Ono:**

I think so.

**Interviewer:**

Uh-hm, uh-hm.

**Ono:**

The ones I met, they're all gone of course; so.

**Interviewer:**

But he set up practice in Gardena then---his dental practice in Gardena?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm, uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

And you have---you had your children. How many children?

**Ono:**

Three girls.

**Interviewer:**

And their names, please.

**Ono:**

Phyllis, Mildred, and Bernice.

**Interviewer:**

And they are married and you have grandchildren as well now?

**Ono:**

Yes; and great-grandchildren, too.

**Interviewer:**

Oh; now during this time, backtracking a little bit, even prior to marriage; did you feel any discrimination of any kind as you were growing up both in the Los Angeles area while you were at home or pre-war when you moved to the Gardena area after your marriage?

**Ono:**

I---the only time I felt discriminated was right after Pearl Harbor---before that; no.

0:15:35.3

**Interviewer:**

We'll be moving onto that time in a minute, but is there anything that you would like to tell us about your pre-war days, anything that maybe I haven't covered---something, you know just general feelings of how you were and your family? Was your family treated well? Were they happy once they came to America? Did they ever express any regrets? Did your father ever express any regrets of coming here and staying?

**Ono:**



I don't think so because . . . my father never talked about things like that---to his children anyway. In fact, I probably was the only that really talked to him. So, no I didn't---I never got that feeling though. But, my mother only had a sister in Japan, and her parents had passed away earlier. So, she never talked about wanting to go back and stay there.

**Interviewer:**

But, they were able to keep in touch with their families back in Japan. You'd visit or certainly letters?

**Ono:**

Oh yes; she went back a few times to Japan to visit, you know what we call Haka-maeiri and then see her sister. And, then that would be enough for her. And, one of those trips she picked me up and brought me back. I wasn't supposed to come back, I think the original schedule, but oh . . . well it just happened, I think.

[Laughs]

0:17:30.3

**Interviewer:**

Certainly; as an aside I know that you, you know you and your husband were good friends with my parents, as well; and I remember my mother telling me that you had taught in Japanese school. And, I don't think I covered that. Now, was that pre-war time or was this later after the war?

**Ono:**

Both.

**Interviewer:**

Both?

**Ono:**

Yes.

**Interviewer:**

Can you tell me a little bit about how you came to teach in the Japanese school?

**Ono:**

Well, let's . . . a few of us from Los Angeles found out that Compton Japanese School was the best, because I was going to Rafu Dai Ichi Gakuen. And, I wasn't learning much. And then in the meantime, we heard about Mr. and Mrs. Endo in Compton Japanese School, and how successful he was. And so a few of us transferred to Compton Japanese School. And she realized---the teachers realized that I had a Japanese education, especially in the

elementary level, and she kind of really enforced that Japanese language---not with the students, but for me. And so when I was 16, I went back to Japan again. I was never happy in one place, I think. When I was here I wanted to be in Japan. When I was in Japan, I wanted to be back home. So, I went back and forth twice. And, when I came back the second time, I was 19 years old. And, that's when Mrs. Endo, Endo Gakuen teacher---she wanted me to help her teach Japanese school. And at that time, they had every day school, and then just Saturday school. And so, I used to go on Saturdays and help her out. And I had the oldest---older group and I stressed translation---more like if you read something in the newspaper, you were going to talk to your parents, how you translate that into Japanese. That's the class I had. I didn't teach Japanese as such; it was mostly translation.

**Interviewer:**  
Interesting.

**Ono:**  
Yes; it was interesting for me, too.

**Interviewer:**  
Well good; that was very interesting. About how long did you do this?

**Ono:**  
Oh, until I became---I got married and pregnant; then I stopped.

**Interviewer:**  
Can you tell me a little bit about Doctor's practice in Gardena? Was he the first Japanese American to start a dental practice in Gardena? In fact, he must have been one of the first Japanese Americans to graduate from Dental School from USC?

**Ono:**  
One of the first; yeah. At that time in Gardena Christian Church, there was a Reverend named Wada, and her---his daughter married a doctor that was in the same---graduated at the same time as my husband. But, he practiced in other areas, and my practiced in Gardena. And I believe, as far as I know, he was the first dentist.

**Interviewer:**  
Was there a sizeable Japanese American or Japanese community in Gardena even at that time?

**Ono:**  
Oh yes, uh-huh, uh-huh.

0:21:25.7

**Interviewer:**

And . . . .

**Ono:**

Like I said, there was a medical doctor living next door to me.

**Interviewer:**

That would be Doctor Tashiro?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

Uh-hm; I remember Doctor Tashiro---I know Doctor Tashiro and his family, of course. They are long time members of the community and we were fortunate enough to interview one of his daughters, and find out a little bit about Doctor Tashiro, as well. I think we're going to take a break now, and we'll continue with the Pearl Harbor days when we resume.

**Ono:**

All right.

**Interviewer:**

Thanks.

0:22:04.2

[Break]

**Interviewer:**

We are continuing with our interview with Mrs. Alice Ono. And, we will just recap a few of the events in her life prior to World War II. Mrs. Ono, would you like to tell me a little bit about your experiences in your junior college years in Japan?

**Ono:**

Well, it wasn't any different from the---just that school I was attending opened and decided to have an extension instead of just ending as a high school. So that's how I---there were only a few of us in that class in the beginning. And, for them it was a new experience, too, because this school was under the sponsorship of . . . what . . . it was---it was not a Christian school. It was a Buddhist school. And, my aunt that I---that was married to my uncle in the Navy, she was . . . they have a (strange) transition in their life. They were staunch Buddhists---no;

Christians first---and so they went to Christian school in Sendai. She, in fact, went to this Christian school until the older sister became ill. And, you know the Christians said, "God will take care of everything." Well, he didn't; she passed away. So, they completely lost faith in Christianity. They became staunch Buddhists. And so, she was one of the . . . well she had quite an influence in that Buddhist church, and since they sponsored this school, she was able to keep me in there. And, so I stayed and whatever and we all had---there were about six or seven of us in the beginning. And, every day there's---some professor would come and just kind of teach us whatever was his expertise. And, that's how it was until the Olympics. And that's when my father said that I should come back.

**Interviewer:**

So you were lured back to the United States with the promise of attending the Olympics in Los Angeles?

**Ono:**

Right; and because I didn't know what, you know--how important that would be. [Laughs]

0:25:18.0

**Interviewer:**

It was interesting, in a little previous earlier conversation, that your father was financially able to buy a block of tickets for the events in the coliseum, and so he was able to not only have his family attend, but also some of the other people that he knew that worked at the market---the produce market with him. That's . . . .

**Ono:**

Uh-hm, you know and then like students that wanted to . . . you know that's how I met my husband---I mean, he got in the picture, too, because he attended the Olympics.

**Interviewer:**

And this was during 1932, during really---during the Depression as we know it; so.

**Ono:**

Yes, uh-huh; the tail-end of the Depression.

**Interviewer:**

Uh-hm; that's very interesting. So, recapping a little bit again about your husband when he was living in **Arroyo Grande**, you had said he was living with his uncles, but in reality . . . .

**Ono:**

Actually, it was---yes, his older brothers, who had come to America earlier, and they were farmers.

**Interviewer:**

And what brought him to Gardena?

**Ono:**

Because after a few years, he finished elementary school and they didn't have high school there. So, they arranged to have him live with a family that was in Gardena. And so, that's how he started Gardena High School.

**Interviewer:**

I see; that's interesting. All right; before we move onto the World War II years, is there anything else that you'd like to share with us about your family, your experiences, just pre-war life both in Los Angeles and in Gardena?

0:27:10.7

**Ono:**

Well, I don't think our lives were any different from other people---just got older [**Laughs**] and I can't think of anything that happened that was unusual.

**Interviewer:**

Okay good; well why don't we move on now to World War II. Do you remember what you were doing, where you were, and could you tell us a little bit about your reactions to hearing about the Pearl Harbor bombing on December 7th?

**Ono:**

It stands out in my mind because I was, of course, already married and had my third daughter, and my husband was in the sanitarium in Monrovia. And so, every Sunday I took my three girls to my folks in Los Angeles and left them while I visited my husband in Monrovia. And then I would---on the way home, I would stop at Japanese town and buy mochigashi and things that you couldn't get anywhere else, and then I would go home to my mother's. But, that particular day, I came to that . . . what's the next street to San Pedro---not San Pedro and East First, but the one . . . ?

**Interviewer:**

You mean in downtown Los Angeles, San Pedro Street.

**Ono:**

In L.A. in the Japanese . . . is it Central?

**Interviewer:**

Central or Los Angeles Street---one of those?

**Ono:**

Well, anyway one block east of San Pedro and East First . . . I was going to turn into the first street to go into one of the stores. Then I saw these police cars and police all over the place. And, I didn't know what had happened because I didn't have my radio on or anything. And, but I sensed something was wrong; so instead of going into the Japanese store, I went straight home without making any stop. And, that's how I found out what had happened.

0:29:30.7

**Interviewer:**

What was your reaction or what was your reaction? How did you feel once you knew of the attack?

**Ono:**

Well . . . .

**Interviewer:**

Were you frightened at all about the repercussions, or . . . ?

**Ono:**

I didn't think it would affect me personally; you know it just happened to the country. So, I wasn't aware that it was going to be a big thing to us. And, but my father was very concerned and he says, "Well you better not stay for dinner tonight because I don't think I want you to drive at night. So you just go home and see what happens in Gardena." And so, after that, you know all kinds of things happened---not just to us, but to the whole country. You had to put---in the evening when the lights came on, we had to have all this black curtains up so the lights wouldn't penetrate outside. And, I thought that was just for the Japanese, but no. Of course, first time in your life you were really stressed the fact that you were Japanese Americans and not Americans. And the people were beginning to look at us like foreigners, too. And I was afraid to send them to school. But, the teachers, of course, being educated understood what it was going to be; so . . . and then we were only about a block or so from the school. But, they were not to loiter or visit anybody else; go to straight to school---come straight home. So, after that, they lost all their freedom of playing with their friends, of course. And that happened December and April 1st, we were interred to Santa Anita.

**Interviewer:**

Prior to the Santa Anita evacuation, did your children's Caucasian friends or your Caucasian friends and neighbors treat you any differently?

**Ono:**

Well, they weren't . . . well they kept their distance. But they didn't know how to treat us either and I didn't know how to treat them either. So, we kind of kept our distance after that.

0:31:57.9

**Interviewer:**

But you didn't have any . . . ?

**Ono:**

Oh yes, and then I had this Filipino family I found out. I used to have garbage dumped on my front steps. At first I didn't know what had happened.

**Interviewer:**

By the Filipino neighbor?

**Ono:**

And, then I found out that these were Filipino. The parents work for Japanese farmers. So, that resentment . . . I think there was talk in the family that young boys do those things.

**Interviewer:**

Oh, that's interesting. Were you still able to go about your business as far as buying groceries and just doing your regular shopping and all with Caucasian businesses without any problems, or were you . . . ?

**Ono:**

Well at that time---yes. In the beginning, there was . . . because we went to, you know like a fisherman will come to---make his rounds; so we were able to get things like that---our tofu and things like that. But, and then there was a Safeway, which I had been going to all the time. So, they weren't any different. As long as I didn't get in anybody's way, it was fine. But, we were more concerned with . . . then we . . . let's see . . . December---I don't know when it happened, but we knew quite early that something was going to happen to us. We won't be able to live in our own homes. We will---we didn't know how it was going to happen, but there was that uneasiness all the time. And, since I didn't have my husband to talk to, I had to talk to the Tashiro's, and she was just as ignorant about things as I was.

So, that's how the life went until we finally knew what was going to happen. And so, people who had money decided they were going to go to what they call the Free Zone. But no, I think they called it White Zone. And, they . . . but I had no choice but to join my family. So, that's how we prepared ourselves.

**Interviewer:**

This White Zone, would that be more inland---a more . . . ?

**Ono:**

Closer to Nevada, but it's still in California.

**Interviewer:**

Closer to Nevada, but inland . . . yes; not along the coast.

**Ono:**

Uh-huh; yes. Away from the coast though, you know near the Nevada State line. So, I know from---even from Gardena, I know the Tashiros went and quite a few people went. So, by the time we were all sent to Santa Anita, I think maybe I was about the only one that was left. I don't know if the Kobayashis went.

**Interviewer:**

No, I don't either.

0:35:05.8

**Ono:**

But, I know they were in internment camp someplace because when we came back . . . I don't know how it started. We just didn't have time to socialize or anything. We were just too busy getting ready.

**Interviewer:**

Were there concerns about Doctor's family and your family in Japan . . . how this would---you know, how this would affect them, as well as the Japanese Americans here?

**Ono:**

I didn't even think of them.

**Interviewer:**

Was there---there was never any question about your parents' loyalty to America?

**Ono:**

Well . . . .



**Interviewer:**

Was there consider . . . did they consider returning to Japan at this time at all?

**Ono:**

No, no; well, like I said, they were busy clearing their---they owned a home; so they rented out, I think. And then I . . . well the Japanese people who owned the homes in Gardena trusted this Reverend that was a Missionary in Japan for a long time. And, I can't think of his name; but anyway a lot of us, and he betrayed us at the end.

**Interviewer:**

In which way?

**Ono:**

Well, he was supposed to collect so much rent, and he wasn't supposed to just chop the house into little different rooms. I understand there was a need for a lot of single rooms for people who came to the coast to work in the factory---ammunition factories. And so, that's what he did. So, when we came back, the inside was a mess.

**Interviewer:**

Oh, that's a shame. That's a shame, too.

**Ono:**

I guess, I'm going ahead, but that---when it first happened before we went into camp, really not anything except get ready and get out of that place---instead of us . . . and I was kind of lucky. We had two choices---either go the last day of March or the first day of April. And I don't know why I chose April 1st, but I was glad because people who went in the last day of March were all put in the horse stalls in Santa Anita. And, you know how it smells? Well, that was---and we were put in this pre-fabricated kind of a bungalow full of holes and just tar paper, you know. At least, if you were in that---the little old horse stall, I think she would have been dead, because they pour just gallons of Lysol. She says you just couldn't get the stench out of the way. And, so they slept outside. But fortunately, it was April so it wasn't that cold. But, it was cold enough, not you know . . . and then we didn't have any---nobody because we were only allowed a suitcase. And since my girls couldn't carry any suitcases, I had just one big suitcase, which was mostly my kids' diapers. If it wasn't for my brothers, I stuck all the extras in my brothers' suitcases, and that's how we survived.

0:38:44.0

**Interviewer:**

How long were you in Santa Anita before you evacuated to Amache?

**Ono:**

We were all---in the fall of September, we were all sent to our permanent places.

**Interviewer:**

So you were there from April---roughly April through---April 1st through September?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm, about four or five months.

**Interviewer:**

Four or five months; and you went to Amache, Colorado after that for camp?

**Ono:**

Uh-huh, uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

And, did you remain there with your parents and children the whole time until 1945?

**Ono:**

Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:**

Yeah; and how about Doctor; was he released from the sanitarium?

**Ono:**

He joined us just about a year before. But, in the meantime, he had his kneecap removed. So, he came home you know a disabled person.

**Interviewer:**

This was done in the camp hospital---Doctor had the surgery?

**Ono:**

No, no, no; it was all done in California in that Monrovia . . .  
.

**Interviewer:**

So, would you describe to us a little bit what the physical facilities of Amache were and also just in general how . . . you know your life? Would you like to take a break now? We'll take another break.

**Ono:**

Yes; okay---thank you.

0:39:59.2

[Break]

**Interviewer:**

Once again, we're resuming our conversation with Mrs. Alice Ono. And, we will continue with her experiences during World War II. Mrs. Ono, we've completed discussing your Santa Anita days and how you left in September of 1942 to go to Amache, Colorado to the assembly camp. Could you describe your feelings and your arrival at the assembly---at the camp?

**Ono:**

Well, at that time, I think all of us---all of the Japanese who were waiting to board the train---none of us knew what was going to happen. And, I think our---everybody's thoughts were the same, "What's going to happen?" And, we couldn't anticipate anything because you really didn't know. But, when we got to Santa Anita--I mean, Amache---I remember going through all this farmland, miles and miles of farmland after we got off the train. Then, we went to Grenada, past---a little city called Grenada, and then the camp, and with all this barren barracks. And, we were assigned certain areas---each of us, all the families. I remember filling papers, but I can't tell you what was on it. And first we were assigned to 8-H. And no sooner than we got settled there, they told us that that was going to assigned to school. So, we had to move. And so, we were moved to barracks 9-L, and that was kind of---up on a hill---not a hill, but a higher than the lower 8-H. We were closer to the area where you could have snakes and field rats and all that coming in. And then, you can't say that you settled in because you only had one suitcase. And, the shock was that the floors were dirt. At least it was hard dirt so we didn't have the dust. And, we had one area where it was supposed to be the closet where we hung our clothes. And then, the surprise of surprises---the pot belly stove for heater, which I never learned to really operate properly. And a cot bed . . . that was really something. [Laughs] I had the hardest time getting into it; it was worse to get out of it. And, when you had to get out of it two-three times a night to take the girls to the bathrooms, it was really [Laughs] . . . I can still remember landing on the floor many times before I was standing up straight. I think that the children had an easier time getting in and out than I did. But to this day, every time I think of that--see the Army cot, I think of Amache. And then, three meals in the mess hall, if you can call it meals. And of course, my days

were filled in the laundry room with the one daughter in diapers and three little girls. I think I washed about two or three times a day, because we had to all take turns, you know. There weren't that many tubs. And oh, that's another thing that reminded me of Santa Anita; that's the first time I found out that you couldn't trust Japanese because if you hung up your laundry and didn't watch it, it was gone---especially, diapers disappeared. So that's when I learned to---not to trust people. But in camp, we were able to you know string up a laundry rope and we dried them there. But, it was on the wrong side of the house, which was in shade all the time. Oh, that place; at least I had my parents. So, my father---my mother worked in the mess hall and so she was busy. When you have that many people coming to the mess hall, they were---they went through, or they had to go early to get ready. And so, it was my father who kept his eyes on us---and she was gone with her friends, or school---during the school hours. And, that was my day---doing the laundry, I think. And towards the end when they started this, what they call milk stations, for the children who were infants, and they got extra milk and some fruit---whatever they had. And, I monitored I think about three blocks; fortunately they came to 9-L, so I didn't have to leave them a lot until they knew exactly where I was. And that paid top wages of \$19, the same as the people who really, you know worked in---workers. I got \$19. Otherwise, I can't remember how much the regular people were---allowances we got every month, but it was very . . . and then we were allowed so many shoe coupons. And so, the adults didn't go through the shoes like, but the youngsters, you know they were out of their shoes every month. So, we all used our parents' shoe coupons. I think we got about two a year. We were allowed to get shoes. I don't know whether it was---I don't think it was free, but I don't know how much we paid for it. But, it was a discount. I think during the war a lot of things were like that on a coupon system; wasn't it---outside, too?

**Interviewer:**

You know . . . .

**Ono:**

I think you were too young to remember those things.

**Interviewer:**

I don't remember exactly; I do remember my mother saying that she was able to order things out of the Sears Catalog.

**Ono:**

That's why Sears Catalog and I became friends. I never knew you could do those things. I used to pour through a Sears Catalog, because we didn't take anything. I had to order everything, even

the little red wagon that we piled coals on to bring it to our barracks you know. They used to dump coals once a week for each barrack. And like I said, you were supposed to bank them during the night so we would have something to start on in the morning. Well, mine always died in the beginning, and I used to run to the place that's where the men . . . I can't remember what number it was---your father, or your grandfather---and I . . . he knew who I was. And so, he used to give me a kind of a nice chunk of burning charcoal. So, I would run home---run back to the barracks and try to start it. But, that was really how I---unless you knew how to do it.

**0:48:36.8**

**Interviewer:**

Well, not having your husband with you was difficult for you with just the girls.

**Ono:**

Oh yes; but I don't think even he was around; I don't think he would have been much of help, because he wasn't that much of a help around the house. And, but anyway, he could have at least watched the kids or something.

**Interviewer:**

Well, you said the Doctor was able to join you about a year or so before you left camp?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

Was he able to practice his dentistry at all during this time?

**Ono:**

In camp, you mean?

**Interviewer:**

While he was in camp?

**Ono:**

Oh no, no.

**Interviewer:**

No; well what did . . . ?

**Ono:**

Because we didn't have reciprocal---Colorado didn't have a reciprocal with California. And so, if you were Utah, yes; but not Colorado. I don't know why.

**Interviewer:**

Oh.

**Ono:**

This I know because of this other doctor, and but he passed away in camp. And in fact, he was hale and hardy . . . they used to call him **?Saigo?** because he was really well-built and I think he had a kidney problem. He passed away so quickly. But, what was I saying?

**Interviewer:**

Oh no; I had asked about whether or not Doctor was able to practice his . . . ?

**Ono:**

No, no; not in Colorado. And, of course, it took a while after we came back to clean out the house and we had piles and piles and piles of debris in the back yard that they never cleaned up.

**Interviewer:**

Well now, in---during camp days, I know that they had a hospital, but were all of your say dental and medical needs attended to without charge while you were in camp?

**Ono:**

No---I don't recall then, because I didn't have needs to use it. Actually, I was lucky.

**Interviewer:**

Good, good.

**Ono:**

Uh-huh.

0:50:29.0

**Interviewer:**

Tell me again what the food was like. You mentioned that the food was awful, but even though your mother worked in the mess hall . . .

**Ono:**

She had nothing to do with . . . yes; uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

. . . setting the menu. Did they serve you Japanese food at all?

**Ono:**

I don't recall that they did.

**Interviewer:**

So . . .

**Ono:**

So we used to go down to Grenada; they had . . . the Grenada Market that came to be in L.A. later; they had that. It's a little Japanese market there. And so, maybe like once a month or once in two months we used to get osashimi. Well, that was a treat.

0:51:09.0

**Interviewer:**

How did you get to Grenada?

**Ono:**

Bus--we were allowed to go on the bus.

**Interviewer:**

Oh; I didn't---I didn't know that.

**Ono:**

Yeah; they---you go to the office early on and you---you know you're allowed only so many people on the bus. And then you get a ticket to go out there. And then you come back, of course, with the purchases.

**Interviewer:**

But, you were only allowed to go for the day? Were you allowed to stay any longer, say for example, if you had a relative or a friend, could you have stayed . . . ?

**Ono:**

Well, I never inquired; so I don't know.

**Interviewer:**

Even as a young girl, since I was in Amache, I do remember an occasional trip to Grenada, but I don't know---I don't remember what the event was or what the occasion was---probably like you; maybe just to accompany my mother to the market.

**Ono:**

Yeah, yeah; shopping---uh-huh. Food shopping mostly because I don't recall they had stove . . . they probably did, but nothing that we could use, I think. And of course, cash was very limited.

**0:52:13.4**

**Interviewer:**

Changing the subject just a little bit; were any of your brothers or any members of your family in the military during this time?

**Ono:**

Oh yes, my three brothers.

**Interviewer:**

All served in the . . . ?

**Ono:**

Uh-huh, and they left camp---after a few weeks in camp, they left for Chicago when they found---when they found out that you could get jobs outside of---on the eastern coast of the United States. So, they all left for Chicago. In fact, even my sister did.

**Interviewer:**

I see; so who remained in camp with you . . . your mother and father and the girls?

**Ono:**

That's all.

**Interviewer:**

That's all; so they're just---your immediate family there?

**Ono:**

Uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

You had mentioned that, of course, with the young girls, you spent a lot of your time doing, you know the ordinary every day household chores that needed to be done. But, did you have any time to make some friends or participate in any of the social activities that were offered during these years?

**Ono:**

I don't think so; but I did an awful lot of knitting out of necessity because the winters were really, really cold and we weren't prepared for it.



0:53:30.7

**Interviewer:**

I know that your oldest daughter, Phyllis, was in school. Did your second daughter, Mildred, attend school during this time as well?

**Ono:**

I think---just for a little while, I think. The unit my brothers occupied became empty. The family moved in and fortunately she had a daughter about Millie's age. And so, they used to play together a lot. That's all I remember. And, I didn't really have time to socialize. I don't think the other . . . I remember other ladies telling me they were playing cards and all that at their unit, but I didn't have such time. I was always busy.

**Interviewer:**

Busy?

**Ono:**

And that . . . the most happy occasion was Mochizuki during the . . . .

**Interviewer:**

New Year's celebration?

**Ono:**

Yes; that's the only time, I think, the whole block got together other than to eat---to have fun.

**Interviewer:**

Well were . . . in general---not just you---but, in general were the residents of the camp able to---once you know you adjusted generally to every day life and got acquainted you with you know how things were going to be---were you able to sort of form a community and like you say being able to celebrate your New Year's and resume somewhat of a normal type life, as much as could be expected under the circumstances?

**Ono:**

Well, many of the people worked, of course, you know just to--- just to survive or whatever they were able to get. But, at least I didn't have any time to socialize---not time at all.

**Interviewer:**

Were you able to celebrate Christmas and have some sort of a Christmas for the girls, celebrate their birthdays, that type of thing?

**Ono:**

Well, little things out of the Sears Catalog, you would buy something; yes, uh-huh. But not like bake a cake or anything; you couldn't do anything like that.

**Interviewer:**

How do you feel that camp affected your parents, your Issei parents?

**Ono:**

Well, I think it was just a big interruption in their lives, and at least my father actually had to retire because of there were no more farmers, right? So, he didn't have anything to do. And so, I think he played a lot of Go, you know that Japanese game. It's not a game really; it's a very intellectual game. And, that's how he spent his life. But, my mother of course, learned to get along with people who worked in the mess hall. I don't know; it was a very trying time for everyone. But worse I think, getting back to your old life was worse---even worse, in the beginning.

**Interviewer:**

We're going to move onto that next. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us regarding those years that you were in the camp?

**Ono:**

Can you think of anything else?

**(Mrs. Ono's daughter, Phyllis):**

You were offered a job?

**Ono:**

Well, that was in Santa Anita.

**(Mrs. Ono's daughter, Phyllis):**

You turned it down. Was it the FBI?

**Ono:**

FBI and a language school---military, a language school in Denver.

**Interviewer:**

Oh that's interesting.

**Ono:**

Well, they wanted me to teach Japanese. But, what they offered--- the salary they offered was so low; I could hardly rent a house with that money. And in order for me to do that, I had to take my parents because my husband was gone. He would have been . . . what is that? He wasn't a citizen so?

**Interviewer:**

You mean he would have been an alien?

**Ono:**

Yeah; he wouldn't have been allowed to go out of the camp, and my parents, too, unless they had a special permission. And so, and then it was a good thing I didn't take it because then it would have come out that my father was a brother of two Navy officers in Japan, and he would have been sent to you know where?

**Interviewer:**

Oh that's interesting. So if you had . . . ?

**Ono:**

Yeah; and see his name was Fukuyama, so the boy---his actual name was **Hori** so the FBI didn't have that connection.

**Interviewer:**

I see---I see.

**Ono:**

So, it was lucky that I didn't do it. If I had, they would have come out.

**Interviewer:**

So, you had brothers serving in the United States Army?

**Ono:**

Yes; all three of them, and mostly they were sent to Japan.

**Interviewer:**

Uncles who were in the Japanese Navy?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm; but they were mostly sent after the---for interpreters--- as interpreters.

**Interviewer:**

I see.

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

That's interesting---really interesting. Okay; why don't we move on now to the post-war years, the resettlement---as you say, the difficult---even more difficult times. You were in---when the war, the Peace Treaty was signed, you were in Amache with your parents and your children.

**Ono:**

I don't mean to disturb you, but all my medicine I take in the morning is starting to work.

**Interviewer:**

Oh, please; why don't you take another break.

0:59:35.2

[Break]

**Interviewer:**

We're once again resuming our conversation with Mrs. Alice Ono. And, we are discussing the post-war resettlement years. Mrs. Ono, can you tell me if you came back to Gardena after---directly from camp?

**Ono:**

Yes.

**Interviewer:**

And, just tell me a little bit about what you found in both at your home and the general climate just immediately post-war when you returned.

**Ono:**

Well, the people were different. Their attitudes were different, and some---I remember a barber shop that had a sign out saying, "No Japs." And then, there was a cafe called Daniels Cafe that a lot of Japanese used to go to, and he didn't exactly say, "No Japs," or anything like that, but I know he didn't want us to frequent it. So, we stopped going there. And then, when you stood in the grocery store line for checkouts, people will murmur something about, "How come they let the Japs ahead of us," and all that. Anyway, there was a little bit of that resentment and they were mostly not old residents---the new ones that had come in. But, this barber shop, he was there before left and he was still there, and he was not---he was either---he was one of the European---came from one of the European countries. And his daughter was my husband's classmate in high school. And, she came in and apologized for her father's attitude. But, you know that

was it---didn't say anything about anything. But other than that, then the---like the meat shop, the butcher was my husband's--- they went to school about the same time; so they knew each other. And you know Gardena knew us. And so, after a while it settled down; but in the beginning, I think the residents were kind of uneasy how we were going to react to all this.

**Interviewer:**

I understand.

**Ono:**

And then, I think then I think we were the first one to return to Gardena. And then the---and who helped us the most was the Mr. and Mrs. Morris. Do you remember Beth Hungerford?

**Interviewer:**

I certainly do.

**Ono:**

Well, she used to be Miss Beth Morris then, and in fact they went out of their way to be nice to us. In fact, he came and helped us get settled and I think he's the one that came after us at the station to bring us home. And, in fact, Beth took care of the girls when I had my problems. So, you had this real, real close friend, and then people who were kind of uneasy toward us. And we didn't have any blacks or Filipinos at that time. And then the girls, they returned to school. And the teachers were the same. So, it kind of fit back in quickly.

**Interviewer:**

Good.

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

But, you came back to the home in which you lived before?

**Ono:**

And then about the car; it was---we used to get cars from Fred Kerr, the Dodge dealer. And, I had sold my car to him when the--- when we had to evacuate. And so, we came back; my husband went to Fred and he needed a car, but he couldn't pay for it. And so, Fred gave him a brand new Dodge on I don't know what kind of term, but we got it. And then, after a while, Sam---was it uncle or . . . yeah. He came back; he couldn't get a car anywhere. And when he found out that my husband got it from Fred Kerr, he took him to Fred and explained who he was, and so he was able to get it. And, I think that kind of went on. And so, the old residents

were fine. It was just the new residents that didn't know who Japanese were and what kind of . . . how shall I say . . . how we inter-mingled with the Caucasians even before the war, you know and after the war. So it was fine. And, there was no incident or anything like that happening.

**Interviewer:**

How was your home when you returned?

1:05:26.9

**Ono:**

Oh, [Laughs] I think it took us days removing all the nails that was pounded in. They must have, you know each little bedroom was--somebody different lived in. And, the backyard was just piled and piled with rubbish. They never cleaned it up. It's a good thing it was an old house. If it was a new house, I think I would have just cried. [Laughs] But, after cleaning all that, we were back in business and he gradually got his patients back. And, they were in fact, glad to get him back.

**Interviewer:**

I'm sure. Now, you said that generally speaking, your children started school and the girls didn't seem to experience any hostility or discrimination. They didn't have any problems.

**Ono:**

Well I never . . . I think the teachers kind of kept a strict eye on them.

**Interviewer:**

So now, you continued to live in Gardena until what year?

**Ono:**

Until the year my husband passed away, which was 19 . . . here we go again [Laughs] . . . oh, 1971.

**Interviewer:**

And then you bought your home here in Torrance?

**Ono:**

Yes, uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

And your girls are grown and married and you have grandchildren?

**Ono:**

And great-grandchildren.

**Interviewer:**

How many---how many grandchildren?

**Ono:**

Six grandchildren and how many do I have . . . seven great-grandchildren---one, two, three, four, five, six, seven; yes . . . no eight---nine.

**Interviewer:**

Nine great-grandchildren?

**Ono:**

Uh-huh.

1:07:26.4

**Interviewer:**

And do they live---most of them live close to you so you're . . . ?

**Ono:**

Is it seven or nine? One, two, three from Phyllis; and two from Jill; and two from . . . seven yes, uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

And you're able---you're able to see your grandchildren and your children?

**Ono:**

Oh yes.

**Interviewer:**

And great-grandchildren frequently?

**Ono:**

Uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

Good; and you're in unbelievably good health. Are you---can you tell me how you stay so active and what you're involved with? I know you're involved with quite a few things; you still . . .

**Ono:**

Oh, I'm living a very selfish life for a change. **[Laughs]**

**Interviewer:**

**[Laughs]** After doing all that **laundry**, maybe you deserve it.

**Ono:**

Yeah; just me, me, me. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:**

And what do you do? I know you're involved in some activities.

**Ono:**

Well no; I just go to yoga class once a week. And then I play Bridge two or three times a week. And this Bridge is not the ladies Bridge, but I go to the regular Bridge Club that they--- you pay money to play and you earn points, which I'm not interested because you need a lifetime in order to get---become a master if you do it the ordinary way. Some people start playing that as soon as they learn to walk, I think; you know the families are already playing. And alot of them play in college.

**Interviewer:**

That's wonderful.

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

And I know you've had opportunities to travel. You've done quite a bit of traveling after the war?

**Ono:**

Oh yes; uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

Can you tell us where you've gone and . . . ?

**Ono:**

Oh, let's see most of Europe and Asian countries and the South American countries.

1:09:16.2

**Interviewer:**

Huh; and were you also able to resume . . . this goes back again just post-war . . . were you also able to resume some of your teaching in Japanese after the war?

**Ono:**

No, no, no; I didn't want to do that anymore.

**Interviewer:**



You didn't want to do that?

**Ono:**

Uh-huh.

**Interviewer:**

So for the most part then, you raised your---after Doctor started his practice again, you raised your children?

**Ono:**

Yes, yes.

**Interviewer:**

And were you active in any PTA groups or anything?

**Ono:**

No, no; like I . . . six months after my husband passed away, I became ill myself with cancer.

**Interviewer:**

Oh.

**Ono:**

And it took me two and a half---practically two and a half years to get over it, the whole effect. And then, at that time, they only gave you five years if you had cancer. And, if you didn't have a recurrence, then you were more or less . . . but usually within five years something came up. So, I thought well if I only had two and a half years left, I'm going to do all my traveling. So, it was like a work that I had to go see here, there, and here. And so, I did all my traveling then.

**Interviewer:**

Good and still here you are.

**Ono:**

Yeah; and I'm still here. [Laughs] And, it's . . . every morning I say to myself, "I wonder why." They told us in the Old Country that you're here because there's something for you to do. Well, I can't think of a thing I need to do, but here I am.

**Interviewer:**

Now, do you ever get a chance to---I'm sure you have---but, have your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren been interested in your experiences, you know in camp?

**Ono:**

Um . . . .

**Interviewer:**

You have spoken to them about it; they know?

1:11:02.1

**Ono:**

No, just Phyllis mostly.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think it's important that . . . there are projects like our JACL project where we are recording oral histories of those who went through the war experience so that future generations or for research purposes that this information be available.

**Ono:**

I mean, am I interested or are they?

**Interviewer:**

No, would---do you think that this whole project is of interest to others?

**Ono:**

Well, I think it depends on the line of work they do because my children don't ask anything like that. And, once in a while like Pearl Harbor Day or something comes around, they'll say---they'll mention something. But, actually I haven't come across anyone that's curious about it.

**Interviewer:**

Well, I think that you'll find like when my son was in high school, they had to do an essay on something and then you know that was when he expressed an interest because he did some research on his own. And luckily, my parents were still living---**his** grandparents were living; so my son was able to get some information from them. So, I think that---I hope that you realize that by agreeing to interview with us today that, you know you're doing a great service, and we really appreciate your time. So, thank you very much for meeting with us today.

**Ono:**

Oh, you're very welcome.

1:12:43.6

**Interviewer:**

We're going to do just a little revisit about a few things. After we quit recording then it came out that you were involved in some

community service. Would you like to tell us about that, Mrs. Ono?

**Ono:**

Well, the actual service I performed was taking, I believe it was like six students to Sister City connection to Japan, and at that time, Mr. and Mrs. Don Algie of the Gardena Valley News and his son accompanied us, too. And, I wasn't the first selection to accompany them. It was Sue Obayashi that wanted to do it in the beginning. But, toward the end---in fact, about a week before, she said she couldn't do it. And so, I was---there was no one else who could do it, so I had to---my husband asked me, "Why don't you just do it?" And so that was it; I was---I didn't do any preparation or anything. And when I got to Japan, of course it had to be all in Japanese, and I didn't know . . . it was like an impromptu affair for me. There was absolutely no preparation. But, somehow we were there for 10 days, and they were wonderful to us.

Unknown:

What did you see?

**Ono:**

Chiba -ken. . . went to---I can't remember the name of the city.

**Interviewer:**

Is this a Gardena Sister City?

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

Is it **Ishikawa**?

**Ono:**

**Ichikawa**; uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

**Ichikawa**---something like that; yes, yes.

**Ono:**

Yeah, something---really something like that.

**Interviewer:**

And how many people were in the group?

**Ono:**

I think there were six---all in all, I think there were 10 of us or 11 of us. And, we all stayed in private homes except the Don Algies; I think they stayed someplace. And, I stayed in a family--with a doctor's family in fact, and then his relative was a realtor---had a daughter who was an artist. And, this was such long ago; I can't remember their names anymore. But, this doctor family, I had---I received some sketches. In fact, they were supposed to be very interesting sketches that they call it Artist Savant. He was in fact about 13 years old mentally. But, he had wonderful talent as an artist. So, when he came to the hospital, all they do was give him some---they had the scats of sketch pads, and he would sit there and just pass his time by sketching. And, that was in great demand because in Japan, if you've hear, the department stores---they wrap everything in this---their paper, and so they used his pictures as a design on that wrapping paper. And, in fact, he supported his family. And this artist even went through Europe. But anyway, that's digressing from my visit to Japan. But anyway, it was that kind of a place. It had very interesting people, and they took us to different places. And this little community is called the Bed Town of Tokyo. So, all the men were well to do. They had businesses in Tokyo and then they had their residence in this---Ichikawa. And so, they treated us real well and took us---you know fed us well and took us to restaurants and took us to interesting places. And we had a wonderful time there.

**Interviewer:**

Oh that's terrific.

**Ono:**

Uh-hm.

**Interviewer:**

Thank you again.

1:17:46.5

[End Alice Ono CD 1]