[Begin Miyoko Fujikawa CD 1]

Interviewer:
That's it; there's a mic. It's so technical. Is hers on. You can hear me?

Fujikawa:
Yeah.

Interviewer:
So you said you did some census taking. Do you work...?

Fujikawa:
No, no; I didn't too much of that. I forgot why the reason was. But, they did give me this because they thought I would be able to do a certain amount. But, I forgot what happened that none of us that were asked in our neighborhood were---did it.

Interviewer:
I see. How's that? Is it good? Say we go back to the beginning? So just give me a signal when to start. Any time is fine; okay. It is... let's see what time it is. It's about 10:16 in the morning on October 29, 2003. It's a Wednesday. And my name is Dale Sato, and I will be interviewing Mrs. Miyoko Fujikawa today as part of the South Bay Oral History Project. The audio equipment recording this interview is being monitored by Irene Rafael, and the interview is being cataloged at a later date. This is the first CD, and we'll call it number one, of the interview of Miyoko Fujikawa, being recorded on this date. Let's begin the interview.

Thank you so much for inviting us here. And you sent in a questionnaire and you have written on your---that you were born in Reedley, California.

Fujikawa:
Yes.

Interviewer:

Could you tell me a little more about your parents and growing up there?

Fujikawa:
No, because we left Reedley when I was about five years old; so I have no recollection of my life there.

Interviewer:
Uh-huh; it's a big blank, huh? **[*Laughs*]**

Fujikawa:
It's a blank.

Interviewer:
Do you remember your parents or your aunts and uncles talking about living in Reedley at all?

Fujikawa:
My parents.

Interviewer:
Uh-huh.

Fujikawa:
They talked a lot about their friends, their neighbors, and when they first settled in Reedley what it was like.

Interviewer:
Could you tell me some of those things if you can remember?

Fujikawa:
I think my parents leased land from---I can't quite be sure, but I think their name was Johnson or something like that. And they raised grapes, peaches, things that grow in that valley. And my father had other Japanese workers helping him work. My two sisters were barely school age, I think. And one of the things I remember my parents saying was since the neighbors were so far apart and they themselves did not speak English, they decided the only way that my sisters could learn English was to take them where there were nothing but English speaking people. So they took them to a church; so they were---they went to Sunday School. And although they're Buddhists, we were all brought up going to church. And aside from that, just before World War II broke out, my parents had bought a new car and they were going to take us to Reedley to see where we were born and where we grew up. And that was the first time that I really saw where I was born. And then in recent years when my son and his family

lived in Clovis, I had a friend that lived in Reedley so I looked her up and she and her husband kind of rode us around to see, but we couldn't quite remember the exact place where my parents' farm was except that it was on Kings River. So we had a general idea. And my sister--my older sister was with me and she remembered passing a cemetery. So we did see the cemetery. But of course, there was no trace of the barn or anything. It was all just nothing but vineyards when we went the last time. But that's about it.

0:06:32.0

Interviewer:
Before Reedley did they live in another place in California?

Fujikawa:
They lived in another smaller town called Parlier, which is right next door to Reedley

Interviewer:
Do you think your parents had any difficulties starting up their business?

Fujikawa:
No, I never heard them say anything about having difficulty. And I really don't know how they happened to be able to lease the land to farm or anything because I was too little to know, and you know by the time I grew up---just didn't think about things like how did you happen to you know do all this.

Interviewer:
Did they talk about other Issei and Nisei families in the area in Reedley or Parlier**?**

Fujikawa:
Oh yes, because they had friends, and when we went back just before World War II, they did look up a couple of their friends that were still living in that area.

Interviewer:
Were they farmers, also?

Fujikawa:
Yes, because that was all there was in that area, you know---is big vineyards. People grew either grapes, peaches, apricots.

0:07:56.4

Interviewer:
Okay; and so you made a decision---or your family made a decision to move to the Southern California; was there any big reason why they decided to relocate?

Fujikawa:
Yes---yes; my father was---when I was born, my father was already 50 or maybe even past 50. He was almost like a grandfather to me. After, or I can't say after, but during World War I when they were shipping things like raisins overseas to the soldiers and things, my father had raisins to ship. And just prior to the date of the shipping, they had a big winter rain, I guess, and it just spoiled everything. So, he lost a lot of money. So that's when he decided to give up because of his age, too. And, he didn't feel like he could start all over again. And so they made the move. And they came with another family who were not farmers. She, the wife, was a midwife. But they happened to live in the same area. And they had two sons. So the two families decided to move together. And so we came and I was five. We settled in Compton.

Interviewer:
Do you remember this family's name?

Fujikawa:
Yoshida.

Interviewer:
Yoshida.

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
And did she deliver you do you think?

Fujikawa:
No, no; some Caucasian doctor.

Interviewer:
Oh, a Caucasian doctor. So you moved to Compton?

Fujikawa:
Yes, and we were there just---the two families rented a house together because they didn't know anything about this area. So after---I don't think we even stayed a year there. We---they

looked around and my parents found this place on Manhattan Place. That's where we lived.

0:10:14.0

Interviewer:
You've lived there continuously then...

Fujikawa:
Yes.

Interviewer:
... for how many total?

Fujikawa:
Until World War II broke out.

Interviewer:
Until World War II broke out.

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
Do---was there a Japanese community here that as you moved into this area---what did it kind of look like, if you could remember it?

Fujikawa:
It was mostly---it was always a---maybe we'd call it bedroom community because there were no big businesses out here. Gardena was, I think it's still only about five miles square, very limited; and Western Avenue was called Moneta back in those days. And from 166th this way were shops. There was a---on the corner of 166 and Western was a Courthouse. And then there was drugstores and a candy shop and shoe store, bakery, barber shop---that types of things. And the opposite side had stores and they often had a little framed building library. So from where we lived on Manhattan Place, we were able to just walk to the library and do---and shop. And then on this side of Redondo Beach Boulevard on Western Avenue between Redondo Beach and up to about 153rd, we had regular Japanese stores. There was a tofu place and a grocery store, a yardage store, a seed store, barber shop, chop suey---it was called Eagles Cafe---and in the back was a theater, Yamato-za, in which they had not only movies, but plays---kabuki---plays. The traveling groups, you know would come and put on plays. Also, the movies were traveling type of--

-you know they would bring, and they would have what they called benshi, somebody that told about the story and he would talk a male part and female part. He did it all because there was not a talking. So we had entertainment you know every weekend. So that was in the back of these stores. And then besides that, in the empty lot was a baseball field, in which the Nisei young men used to have teams that would play baseball back there. I remember going, you know when I was about 10 or 11, going with my friends, sitting on the bleachers, watching the game. So, it---and not that there were that many Japanese living right in this area, but there were farmers---Torrance, Hawthorne, Lawndale, and they would all come in here, the farmers would. And on Gardena Boulevard in downtown Gardena, we had the Kurata Department Store, in which all the farmers on Saturdays would shop if they needed clothing, you know of any type. So, although the families were scattered, they were all farmers; and these farmers were not big farmers---maybe 10 acres---something like that. They had farms even as far this way as---you know where the Roadium is where it is now an outdoor, like a flea market? That was Minami's farm, Sam Minami. His parents had a farm there. And I remember that well because their sister, Mitsuye, was a good friend of my sister. And so we used to visit back and forth. We had, before the war, we had several nurseries here. Right in this area was nurseries.

0:14:43.2

Interviewer:
Were they growing carnations or...?

Fujikawa:
No, everything you know.

Interviewer:
Everything?

Fujikawa:
All kinds of plants, ground covers, and what not; and on the corner of Manhattan Place and Redondo Beach was a nursery and their name was Kimura. And then on the corner of Redondo Beach and Western on this northeast corner was a nursery run by... what was their name now---Nakayamas---Lloyd and Jim Nakayama. And their sister, who was Mrs. Inoue whose daughter was Sakaye who is now Mrs. Aratani. That was the nursery on that corner.

Interviewer:
Yes.

0:15:31.8

Fujikawa:
And of course the Kamenishis lived here. They were---and one of the stores here in this Japanese store section was a furniture store, the Toshima's. They were not original Gardena people. They came from Pasadena or somewhere, but their daughters and sons---we all went to school here. So they moved here when the children were school age. So their oldest daughter and I were classmates. She married a Japanese citizen and lives in Shinabashi in Shiba. And she had four children, and the oldest son---because her parents were living out this way. They didn't relocate in Gardena after the war. They relocated in Pasadena. So her oldest son, I think when he graduated probably junior high school in Japan, she sent him to go to school here. And so he stayed with the grandparents and went to Pasadena J.C. When he graduated there, she brought him over here because he was interested in going to UCLA and my son was going there at that time. And so he came to visit with the mother to find out a little bit about things. So I said, "Well I suppose when you finish college, you'll be going back to Japan." He said, "Never."

0:17:05.9

Interviewer:
Was this common for the Issei families in this area to send their kids back for school?

Fujikawa:
No, no, no. This family was different. The father chose---picked every husband for their three daughters. They had no say about anything. I felt sorry for my classmate that we graduated in June. In September she was put on the ship and sent to Japan. He had already picked a person she was to marry. And so she must have had a rough two or three years. I know she really had a rough time adjusting you know.

Interviewer:
Yeah; you had mentioned various businesses and what about schools? You went to elementary school here?

Fujikawa:
Yes; I forgot to get that picture out of Moneta--- Moneta Elementary School is where JCI is now, our grammar school. And

that became Denker Avenue Elementary School, because when that was torn down and they moved and rebuilt Denker Avenue.

Interviewer:
It isn't this one is it that I'm showing her the picture?

Fujikawa:
Uh-huh; uh-huh.

Interviewer:
It looked like this?

Fujikawa:
Uh-huh.

Interviewer:
Wow; could you identify the different buildings and so forth?

Fujikawa:
No, this was like a garden---the garden section. And this was a circular sidewalk in front along, but I don't know what this was because I started first grade from here because I never went to kindergarten because that was when I was moving. And I remember playing---sitting on the sidewalk playing jacks, things like that. But, from our house, which Manhattan Place is around here; so it's very close walking distance. So from here, we went to Perry Junior High School, which was also Gardena High School. It was a combination.

0:19:14.1

Interviewer:
What languages were you speaking at home when you were in elementary school?

Fujikawa:
Well my parents---with my parents I spoke nothing but Japanese, but with my sisters I spoke English and friends English.

Interviewer:
Do you have any memories of teachers or other classmates or club activities?

Fujikawa:
Oh yes; you know our graduating high school class---we have a reunion every five years, which is very unheard of. Nobody else did it. We met every five years. And out of---in my---among my

classmates, there were only four Japanese girls---myself, Florence Toshima, Shieko Murakami, Rose Tanaka, oh and one more---Masako Ando---five girls. And there were maybe about five boys, but the only one I really remember well is Yasushi Yasutake, who passed away.

Interviewer:
This is Gardena High School?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
Uh-huh.

Fujikawa:
Harry Ota, who passed away and Shig Sato, who passed away, and Yoshinori Sato, who passed away. And there were two other guys, Saisho, Sam Saisho or something like that and Mitsuru Oriba, and I don't know what ever happened to them. Oh, and there was one more person; his name was Kitazono, last name was Kitazono, whose sister is---and she's very active with Simbas, Midori Watanabe.

Interviewer:
Oh, what kind of organizations or club activities did you attend when you were going to high school?

Fujikawa:
Well, I was in the Japanese Club, French Club---French was the worst language to take. I have no use for it now, you know. I wish I took Spanish. And I was in Drama Club, because I belong to drama. The reason why I wasn't taking drama is because I signed up for public speaking and there were so few people that they didn't have a class when I was in that class---I think that was in like the 11th or 12th grade---probably 11th grade. So the next best thing was joining the Drama Club; so that's what I did.

0:21:49.0

Interviewer:
Did the Japanese Club have certain events that they sponsored or what... I mean what did you...?

Fujikawa:

I don't remember any special thing we sponsored. Later on, I think they were more active than at the time that we were in there. And, I think one of the reasons why was because so many people lived on the farm and they usually worked on Sundays. You know Saturday was their day off. And I think it was very hard to get together to do any---too much of anything. Most of my friends, my classmates that I did things with or visited were all Caucasian people that lived in---nearby. And when we have our five-year class reunion, all these people I went through grammar school, junior high school, and high school you know. Now we had our---our 60th was our last reunion because on our 65th, the people that---my classmates that organized the reunions every year was our class President. He married the class Secretary. So together, they were very good about keeping in touch with everybody and sending out notices. So we were always together. Well, his wife passed away. So he wrote Christmas; he sent me a Christmas card and he said, "You know it's so hard to get everybody together because there were so many people that passed away and everything that he didn't know whether he was able to organize without his wife you know helping him and all. And he had also moved out of Gardena to Long Beach, and he said, "Do you think that if we have it somewhere in Long Beach that you would be interested in attending if we have it?" And I wrote back that I would be interested, but I don't think he had enough people that responded that they would be able to, because on our 60th reunion, a lot of the people had their children bring them because they were no longer driving because they're not living here anymore. You know they are way out of town; some are out of state. It makes it very difficult you know.

0:24:18.9

Interviewer:
When you---because your home life you were speaking in Japanese except in English to your sister, when you visited other Caucasian homes, did you notice things that were different than what you grew up with as you were growing?

Fujikawa:
No; next door to where I grew up on Manhattan Place is now Clearview Sanitarium. That was a private home from Western to Manhattan Place. Mr. and Mrs. Steele, S-t-e-e-l-e, had two daughters. Dorothy was a year older than I and Evelyn was a year younger than I. I played with them all the time and I was in their home all the time. They were over our house all the.... So I never felt anything different you know. And because their

property was so big, the half of their property was---he was in this business of making statues and wall decoration out of cement. You know how cornerstones on buildings and things? Well after the earthquake, you know that became very unpopular because those are the things that tumble. Well, he was that manufacturing thing; so he---half of that place was manufacturing those things. And on---so they had two tennis courts and then they had a house for the grandparents built on the same property. And like sometime in the summer time when the grandparents would take the two daughters to their cabin up in the mountains, they'd invite me and I would go; you know I went with them. So when I visited my classmates and visited their home or anything, I don't know---I didn't seem to notice anything different.

Interviewer:
I heard reading Gardena history that one of their biggest community events was the Strawberry Festival. Do you have any memories of a Strawberry---Moneta Strawberry Festival?

Fujikawa:
Uh-uh.

Interviewer:
Then on Saturdays, you said that was their day off; right?

Fujikawa:
Yeah; farmers uh-huh.

Interviewer:
What did the Issei and Nisei families do on their day off?

Fujikawa:
I really don't know because I never really asked those kids. But, I imagine one of their big things was shopping and maybe they went out to eat or something after they went shopping.

Interviewer:
Uh-hm; they went to those local Japanese restaurants?

Fujikawa:
Or, they want to Japanese Town maybe. I don't recall there were too many restaurants here.

Interviewer:
In Little Tokyo?

Fujikawa:
Yes; because I remember my parents taking us up there, too, sometimes.

Interviewer:
Driving you to Little Tokyo?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; they might have spent Saturday---maybe they go to movies because we had movies here.

Interviewer:
When you went to Little Tokyo, and do you remember any special places there?

0:27:31.7

Fujikawa:
Uh-uh; I don't remember.

Interviewer:
Far East Cafe, that was a well-known place.

Fujikawa:
Yeah; probably but I guess I never really paid too much attention to those kinds of things.

Interviewer:
When you were in high school, what subjects did you enjoy studying? Did you have to pick a major back then?

Fujikawa:
Yes; I enjoyed English literature mainly because of the teacher. She made it so interesting.

Interviewer:
Did she?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; and I hated chemistry. And I was not good in geometry or algebra, but I took them anyway because it was part of my course that I had to take.

Interviewer:
All this time while you're going to school and your family is re-establishing themselves, how they were doing---your father's business?

Fujikawa:
My father didn't---he retired.

Interviewer:
He retired?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; he didn't do anything and my mother kind of went in---like I said, they had so many nurseries around here and they hired a lot of women. So she used to go because she could just walk to it and they'd sit and plant you know in these little boxes and things like that. So she used to do things like that.

0:28:55.5

Interviewer:
Did---tell me a little bit about your mom. What kind of personality did she have? She sounds....

Fujikawa:
Oh, my mother was very... let's see; what is the best word to describe her? She was ahead of her time because she was very broad-minded. She was very broad-minded and she was the kind that would try new things. I remember her telling us when she first came from Japan she was married to my Dad.

Interviewer:
Did she come as a picture bride?

Fujikawa:
Yes; but she had met him in Japan before. They did come from the same area in Kumamoto. Her---the landlord, the Johnson's, Mrs. Johnson was very kind and invited my mother and she would try to teach her a little bit of English and feed her different things. And she said from right of the bat she enjoyed like things like cheese, you know which was not typical Japanese food. And my Dad used to be horrified. He says, "You're going to get sick eating all that strange food." But she was willing to try things and she enjoyed.... She was that type of a person and very understanding, very broad-minded about things. I remember when I was about 12, they had a family friend who had only one daughter. Her name was the same as mine, and they lived in Venice. They had a farm. And one weekend when they came to visit my parents, the family having just this one daughter was a year older than I, asked me if I would like to come and spend some days---this was summer vacation---and play with their daughter--

-you know come and visit and play with their daughter. So I said, "Sure," and my mother said, "Sure," you know I could go. And so here I am packing clothes for two weeks taking my roller skates, and my mother never said, "You're going on a farm. There's no sidewalk. You're not going to need those clothes." She didn't say; she was going to let me find out for myself. You know she was that kind of person you know. She never says, "You shouldn't do this," or, "You shouldn't do that." She's going to let me find out. I take all this stuff and go there. The first morning, as soon as the parents got up and ate breakfast they went to work on the farm right outside their house. Well, by the time we get up and we eat breakfast then she has to clean the dishes, make the beds, then she has to wash the rice because they're going to come home for lunch. I said, "Gee, there's no time to play." I said, "This is no fun." And the very next day, you know I had such nerve, I asked these poor people working all day on the farm, they come home and I say, "I want to go home." **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
And did you go home? **[*Laughs*]**

Fujikawa:
Yes; I did come home with my two weeks of clothes and my roller skates. And I told my mother, "It was no fun. There was no time to play. She's always having to either do the dishes after they go...." **[*Laughs*]** I said, "There's no sidewalk to skate on," and I complained about this and that. So when my next door neighbor, the Steele's, invited me to go to the mountains for two weeks, my mother says, "Remember, you can't come home the next day." But you know that was so different, you know. I had a lot of fun up there. But, I remember how nervy I was and just wanted to come home. I never even... you know as I became an adult, I realized, "Gee, you know they're tired coming home from working out in the farm and they have to eat and take a bath and then take me all the way to Gardena you know from Venice and no freeway or anything."

0:33:12.2

Interviewer:
People were traveling in cars?

Fujikawa:
Oh yes.

Interviewer:

Uh-huh; do you remember a time when they were using horses or whatever?

Fujikawa:
No, no; I don't remember that---uh-uh. We always had a car; so. But I really had a fun life growing up because I was not like being brought up on a farm where the kids have to help you know after school and on Sundays and all that, you know. All I did was play.

Interviewer:
Was it different for your---is it older brother and sister?

Fujikawa:
No; my---I had one younger brother, but my two older sisters, it was different for them. They helped with the household chores. They helped my mother, you know. But, I was---I never did a thing. And you know when I grew up and I was telling my daughter-in-laws about it, they said, "Didn't your sisters ever resent you, you know not having to do anything and they have to help cook; they have to help wash or iron or clean house and all that?" So oh just a few years ago, I asked my sisters. I said, "You know my daughter-in-laws they said, 'Didn't you people resent me for not doing a thing and helping out?'" They said, "We never thought---we didn't think a thing about it. We didn't you know give it a thought." They didn't say, "How come she's not pitching in or anything." My biggest job was to sweep the front porch. That was about it.

Interviewer:
And that was how old were you? **[*Laughs*]** Is this elementary school?

Fujikawa:
No; all time I just didn't.... Oh you know as soon as I graduated high school, I went to beauty school. And I used to have to take, there used to be a Red Car that used to go right into downtown because the school was on Fourth and Broadway, Polytechnic Beauty College, or something like that. So after a while, my parents had a friend in Los Angeles... no I take that all back. When I was commuting, some of my friends at the Beauty School, these were Nisei girls, were from outlying communities like El Monte and far away, and they got jobs working in homes as school girls you know. So one---they told me, "Why don't you get a job like that and you'll be closer to school and you won't have that long commute?" And one of the girls says, "I have.... The lady I'm working for has a friend who is looking for a girl

to baby-sit," and I didn't have to cook or do anything but baby-sit, especially in the evenings when they would like to go out. So I'd go home and tell my mother and she says, "I don't think you could do it." She says, "You have never done anything that's responsible." I mean you never---you know we don't---I didn't have young kids to take care of you know and all that. So she says, "No; I don't think you could do it." But I said, "I already said I'd do it." **[*Laughs*]** So my mother says, "Well, you can try it." And the people---the couple I worked for were very nice and they didn't---they didn't ask me to help cook or clean house. I just had to relieve them; they had a year and a half year old son---and baby-sat.

0:36:55.9

Interviewer:
Did you---do you remember how much money you got for that? What---did you think it was quite a bit or a little?

Fujikawa:
I don't remember.

Interviewer:
Yeah.

Fujikawa:
I don't think I even bothered to say how much was I going to get paid or anything. I was just thinking, "Well you know I'm going to do something to be closer to school."

Interviewer:
Was going to beauty school a kind of popular choice for a job for Nisei girls?

Fujikawa:
Well the reason why I went was because I graduated in June and as September was approaching my mother says, "What am I going to do?" She says, "You know I know you don't want to go to sewing school," like my sisters did---anything. And I said, "Well, I thought I was going to go to college and be a nurse." She says, "No; you can---you're not the nurse type." I'm glad she realized that **[*Laughs*]** because I really am not the nurse type. And so I said, "Well I don't know then." I said, "I don't know what I want to do." So at that time, Fusai Kamenishi was going to be beauty school and they were neighbors. So my mother said, "How would like to go to beauty school?" And I said, "Well, you know I never even been to a beauty shop you know let alone think

about things like that." But I said, "Well, I don't mind going." And so my mother said she'll let me try it out for a month. You know she'll let me go and at the end of the month if I don't like she said she'll let me quit. You know she was very considerate that way. She didn't say, "You've got to go. You know once you start you've got to go---finish it," or anything. She said she'd let me try it. Well, at that time I was going around with my husband already; see---right after I graduated high school. And he lived in Los Angeles. So when I went to school, it was Fourth and Broadway. I was near all those department stores and everything and I had such a fun time. In between times, we'd walk up and down, go into stores. We'd eat our lunch at Clifton's and sometimes we'd ditch class and go to the movies and you know. I was having a grand time. And John would pick me up and sometimes we'd eat out and take me to the movies and.... So heck I thought, "This is great;" so. **[*Laughs*]** And this was a one-year course in which there's no break. And then after the year, there's about two months of night classes in addition. And so as the time approached that I would have to take exam, I start worrying, "Gosh, supposing I don't pass. What am I going to tell my parents," you know how---you know ditching school and having all this fun time. I think 70 was a passing grade. I must have gotten 70 because I did pass. But that was my time that I really kind of worried was when it came time for exam you know.

Interviewer:
So they were paying all your expenses?

0:40:13.8

Fujikawa:
Oh yeah; uh-hm.

Interviewer:
You mentioned that your sisters went to sewing school?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
Was this the thing to do?

Fujikawa:
Yes; a lot of people did. In fact, my oldest sister, after she graduated sewing school, she and another lady friend started their own sewing class.

Interviewer:
Was this in Gardena?

Fujikawa:
Yes; right on Western Avenue.

Interviewer:
There was a sewing school?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
Do you recall the name of that sewing school?

0:40:42.7

Fujikawa:
No; it was not a sewing school like you would think. It was in the home.

Interviewer:
Oh I see.

Fujikawa:
I wish I knew where all those pictures were. I remember having pictures of some of the students and my sister and the other lady that ran the school. And then we used to have to model clothes you know that they made and all that.

Interviewer:
Was this something that---like mothers encouraged their daughters to do?

Fujikawa:
Yeah; because in those days, for women it was either being a secretary or a nurse or.... The vocations were very limited and I guess they figured it was just the high school education, if you're not going to college or anything, perhaps sewing would be the best. But, my sister you know, after she became, or before the war I guess, she started college. But the war interrupted. So then she joined the WACS. So with the GI Bill she was able to school and get her Masters and all that; so.

Interviewer:
Okay; we'll take a break.

[Pause]

0:42:02.6

Interviewer:
Now we're going to begin to talk about the World War II years and say 1940. In 1940, what were you doing about this time near 1940?

Fujikawa:
I was working in a beauty shop.

Interviewer:
You were working in a beauty shop? You graduated?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
Tell me about working in a beauty shop. Where was it?

Fujikawa:
My father had a friend, an Issei lady, who was widowed and had a shop. And he---when I came home one day, he said---this was before I graduated, he said, "Mrs. Kashiwagi wants to know if I would like to work in her beauty shop." I said, "If I pass, sure." So when I got my diploma and all, I had a job waiting for me. So, I worked for her on 54th---first she had a shop on Florence Avenue.

Interviewer:
Downtown L.A.?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; Florence Avenue. Then later she moved to 54th Street off of Slauson. Then the war broke out.

Interviewer:
I see; what kind of clients did you have?

0:43:24.9

Fujikawa:
Caucasians.

Interviewer:

Caucasians?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
What was the hair style then?

Fujikawa:
In those days, it was beginning to where they used to wear their hair up kind of. They used to wear their hair up. But other than that, it was not anything very different, and they used to do marsels? and the waves and the permanents with all those big things hanging down from the thing; yeah.

Interviewer:
And did Nisei girls do this, too? I mean did they perm their hair?

Fujikawa:
Oh yes, yes.

Interviewer:
Did their parents approve of that?

Fujikawa:
Oh yeah; I don't think any of the parents said, "You shouldn't do it," because I think most of the girls in those days had their hair permanent.

Interviewer:
This was a job that maybe Nisei women did; what about the guys? What kind of jobs were they working at?

Fujikawa:
Lots of them worked in fruit stands or grocery stores in the produce department. That's what John was doing. I suppose there were some that were gardening at that time. And probably if they owned their own business, they did that.

Interviewer:
So do you think then that the Nisei guys had to leave the Gardena area to find jobs or could they find jobs in the Gardena Valley Region?

Fujikawa:
Most of them worked on their farms.

Interviewer:
And this was---what kind of farms---what would they be farming?

Fujikawa:
Well they grew all kinds of things---all these cabbage and celery and tomatoes and you know just a garden variety of vegetables.

Interviewer:
And then you had the nurseries, and they were still going strong at this time?

Fujikawa:
Yes, yes.

0:45:35.4

Interviewer:
Were there any other businesses that Japanese Americans tended to flock to?

Fujikawa:
Not in this area because things like dentists and things like that was just very you know one or two people would have that kind of business; so.

Interviewer:
So when you had to go to the dentist then they would be dentists in the Gardena Valley or did they have to go to Little Tokyo?

Fujikawa:
Oh, well we had one right on Western Avenue, right there was Sizzler's is now. **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
Do you remember the doctor's name?

Fujikawa:
Okuno.

Interviewer:
Okuno; and if the---if you had to see---if you had medical problems then where would you...?

Fujikawa:

Oh yeah; Doctor Tashiro, you know Aki Tsukahara's father, Doctor Tashiro. There was Doctor Honda.

Interviewer:
Okay; so then December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor; what do you remember about that day?

Fujikawa:
I was home, hard to believe I guess you know like everybody else; it was just.... But aside from that I don't remember too much of that day.

Interviewer:
Was it a Sunday?

0:46:59.4

Fujikawa:
Yeah.

Interviewer:
Did you go to church in those days?

Fujikawa:
Yeah; I went to Sunday school here---Baptist Church here.

Interviewer:
Okay; and do you remember how your parents... what did they say when they heard about this?

Fujikawa:
Well, they couldn't believe it either. I don't recall exactly what they said about it. But, I'm sure they felt like everybody else that you know hard to believe. And I don't recall any particular reaction that they had.

Interviewer:
Were you reading about it in the Japanese newspapers?

0:47:49.2

Fujikawa:
Oh, we took the Times.

Interviewer:
You took the L.A. Times?

Fujikawa:
My parents took the Rafu Shimpo; yeah.

Interviewer:
Yeah; so what happened next? Pearl Harbor happened and then did you continue going---working at the beauty shop?

Fujikawa:
No; because there was a curfew. We were not allowed five miles radius outside of our home.

Interviewer:
How'd you feel about that, here you just started a new job?

Fujikawa:
I don't know; I.... All I could.... I'm crazy, but all I could remember is that when the curfew started, John was over our house and we must have gone somewhere and we came home and I said, "Oh, it's too late for you to go home," so he had stay over. So he had to telephone his parents that he had to stay over. **[*Laughs*]** The things that I remember are fun things.

Interviewer:
Sure; so when did your family hear about the evacuation order? What was...?

0:49:02.6

Fujikawa:
Oh gosh; I think we left Gardena in April. We had about five days notice.

Interviewer:
Only five days?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; and we were taken to Santa Anita.

Interviewer:
People drove themselves or you...?

Fujikawa:
No; if you had cars you were allowed to, but then you had to leave the car there.

Interviewer:
At Santa Anita?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; they sold it for you or whatever they did.

Interviewer:
And so where did report from living in Gardena and Moneta?

Fujikawa:
Since we went on our own car, I don't recall where we were supposed to meet to get on the bus, because we went on our own car and just left it there.

Interviewer:
I see; do you have any memories of Santa Anita?

0:49:57.8

Fujikawa:
Oh yes; we were given one of the horse stalls, but you know my mother had hay fever so when they started building the barracks, my sister asked if you know we could be moved to the barracks because it was bothering my mother so much. So we moved into the barracks. And it was a fun time for us because for the first time, a lot of people that always had to work on the farms and everything didn't have to do anything. **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
What kinds of things did you bring with you; do you remember that?

Fujikawa:
Oh gosh, no; because they told us only what we could carry, which meant mostly clothing and personal .. you know effects like toothbrushes and stuff. Then we go there and then we find we need this, we need that, and I didn't realize that my husband's family was also going to be coming into Santa Anita. We went in April and I think they came in May. So when we found out they were coming in May and they're going to bring their own car, we asked if they could bring a few items for us. We needed a washboard.

Interviewer:
You needed a washboard?

Fujikawa:
To wash clothes, you know you can't be washing like this, and a few other items you know like that.

Interviewer:
What did people do about food?

Fujikawa:
Well this fed us.

0:51:21.9

Interviewer:
Yeah; no Japanese food?

Fujikawa:
No, no; it was awful because when we were in Santa Anita, they were not quite ready for all this. So we were given like tin plates and they would have everything on one plate and the thing that I think we hated the most was when the beet juice ran into everything---rice---you know it colored up everything.

Interviewer:
Oh, you got rice?

Fujikawa:
Yes; we did get rice once in a while, but I don't remember too much about the food. But, I just remember how that beet juice would just stain everything, you know and so unappetizing. But, we were fed; yes---not the kind of food most people like, but you know that was it.

Interviewer:
If you could recall, what would be a kind of every day routine?

Fujikawa:
We were allowed to get jobs---jobs like being a guard at the laundry room or in the---where the people take showers or something I guess you know in order to keep things in order. You could help in the kitchen. That's where they used most people was kitchen help, peeling vegetables or chopping up, or doing the dishes, or.... So there were things to do like fellows could get jobs driving the truck and taking things from place to place. So everybody found something to do.

Interviewer:
Were there organized social activities?

0:53:16.1

Fujikawa:
Yes; they used to have dances like every night out you know and they would have.... I don't recall movies and things like that. I just remember they used to have dances and that kind of activity for young people all the time.

Interviewer:
As far as your parents' generation, how did they feel about being evacuated and now they were living in barracks at Santa Anita?

Fujikawa:
I think they didn't like it, but they were---you know how they say, "shigata ga nai," it can't be helped you know so they just went with the flow I guess. It didn't do much good to just complain you know. There are complainers and there are those that will just accept things and do the best they can.

Interviewer:
Did they also have things like schools and churches?

Fujikawa:
Not until we were in the permanent relocation places.

Interviewer:
I see; uh-huh.

Fujikawa:
Not---because Santa Anita was just a temporary place. We were there from April to October---September, October, something like that until they were able to process everybody. I don't know how they decided who goes where. **[*Laughs*]** Because, when we went to Arkansas, there were people from Stockton and other areas. So, I don't know how they divided us all up. And then like John, who came from Los Angeles, he was in Colorado in Amache and they had people from Sacramento and some other areas, too. So I don't know why they just sort of mixed everybody up.

Interviewer:
Did you see guards or were there locked gates or fences?

Fujikawa:
Oh yeah; oh of course, you saw guards at every corner of the area you know.

0:55:21.3

Interviewer:
Were they carrying guns?

Fujikawa:
Oh yes; uh-hm.

Interviewer:
Didn't that scare people?

Fujikawa:
Oh, I guess so; but I mean I don't think.... I've never heard of anybody being really scared. They just---because they weren't doing anything wrong you know. Nobody was trying to run out of there.

Interviewer:
I see; so now your whole family has evacuated. So what happened to your house and your land and all that?

Fujikawa:
Oh, we had a very good Caucasian friend who was a spinster who owned several properties and among the properties was a bunch of homes in Gardena on Western Avenue where now is the Clearview---this side of Clearview Sanitarium. There were rows---there was just nothing but houses around here you know. So what she did was instead of renting one of those homes, she let several Japanese families use that home to store valuables or whatever they want. So they gave each one of us a room. So I don't know how many families were able to do it---maybe three or four. We had one room in which we were able to---in our living room we had one of these big area rugs. So we rolled that up and had that, and a few---stuff like that---that we wanted. And she also took care of our parents' home that she would rent it out. So she had it rented out for you know like $30---in those days $30 or $35 must have been quite a lot of money, but she rented it out for that, and took care of the property for us. So when our parents---my parents were about the first ones to come back out here. They came by themselves and she had linens on the bed. She had bought groceries and put it in the cupboards. She bought some things and put in the refrigerator. She went to the Union Station and picked them up. And she did all that you know; there are really very few people like that. But my parents were really lucky. And my parents could not speak English except for a few words, but somehow they were able to manage you know. And....

Interviewer:
Do you remember her name?

Fujikawa:
Mrs. Hudson.

0:58:01.1

Interviewer:
Mrs. Hudson?

Fujikawa:
Not Mrs.---Miss Hudson.

Interviewer:
Miss Hudson; and her first name; did she ever tell you?

Fujikawa:
Grace.

Interviewer:
Grace Hudson; you said she was among the few---why do you think she did that for the Japanese? I mean there was hysteria and...?

Fujikawa:
To begin with, she---this lady, Mrs. Kashiwagi that I worked for at the beauty shop, she lived with her. Mrs. Kashiwagi had one daughter, Sachiko, and the three of them lived together. And I don't know how they knew each other and all that. Grace Hudson was a Presbyterian Church member, but as far as I could remember they've always lived together. And she had that tie with the Japanese, I guess. But, I never did find out how she happened to know her to befriend her in that manner. I don't know if she knew her when Mrs. Kashiwagi still had a husband or what. But, Grace Hudson was very---she was really a Christian woman. I mean she really took care of us and those that she really knew well.

0:59:23.4

Interviewer:
So you got your orders to go to which camp in Arkansas?

Fujikawa:
Rohwer.

Interviewer:
Do you remember that moving from Santa Anita to Rohwer very much?

Fujikawa:
Riding on that train. **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
There was a train, huh?

Fujikawa:
Old, rickety old Army train; yes. I don't remember too much; it must have been a long ride. But the thing that I remember the most about it is as we approached the southern states, and we could look out the window, I see these black people with bandanas tied in their hair riding on these rickety old, like a wagon, maybe pulled by a horse or something. And, I'm sitting there saying, "This is just like looking at a storybook." And that is what impressed me the most about the whole trip going across up to Arkansas. And then you'd see these shacks; they were kind of leaning because they're about ready to fall apart, or they'd propped up with a big pole or something. And there'd be chickens on the porch, and you know things like that. I said, "Gosh, this is like looking in the pages of a storybook."

1:00:50.6

Interviewer:
So the windows were open; they weren't covered? I've heard that....

Fujikawa:
I suppose in certain areas they might have covered it, but most of the time I recall looking out. I suppose if we were passing by any factories or something important maybe they would have closed it. But, the route we took, I guess there was nothing of that importance, because I remember seeing those kinds of things. I guess there's nothing threatening you know.

Interviewer:
So here you were in this rail---train car, and how many families do you think?

Fujikawa:
I don't know.

Interviewer:
Do you have any memories of that? Oh okay; then you arrived in Arkansas at Rohwer. Are there any memories of that?

Fujikawa:

Remember?

Interviewer:
Of moving into Rohwer, arriving at Rohwer---anything?

Fujikawa:
Oh, no we were in Block Two. **[*Laughs*]** That's all I remember. And that was mostly all Gardena people you know naturally in that area. I was there six months. The first time the FBI said, "If we got a clearance from the FBI then we could leave." I think we had to show proof that we could support ourselves in some manner and whether we're going to school or going on a job. I said, "I was going to get married and I was going to work in the beauty shop." But in order to work in the beauty shop, I needed to take a test---a State test. And that would take a month because after you take a---there's two tests, and after you take a test, it takes about a month before you find out whether you passed or not. So how was I going to do all that? Fortunately, the WRA, Relocation Authorities, in Minneapolis, had some volunteers working there who were Caucasians. And one of these women, one of these society women, doing their bit for the war, had gotten a hold of my letter. She wrote to me immediately and said, "How would I like to be her houseguest and take the test." She would you know let me stay over there. I said, "Okay." So off I went. And my sister, my oldest sister, left and she was going to work in Chicago, and she had proof that she was going to be able to support herself and all that. So the two of us left in six months. So that's why I don't know too much about camp life. And I didn't make any outside friends because people around me were all Gardena people, and because we were not settled into activities, I didn’t get to meet other people.

I went to Minneapolis, and she was there at the train station to meet me with her mink coat on. And they had two homes, one in downtown---right in Minneapolis, Dupont Avenue, and then one home on Lake Minnetonka---out that way. So we were in the city and she was a very kind woman. She had a couple of maids and a cook, but the maids had quit to do defense work because that paid more. So, that’s why she had room for me. She said I could have one of the maid’s rooms. I opened the closet and all these maids---you know little aprons and everything is hanging. **[*Laughs*]** But she kept the cook, a Swedish woman, and she did the cooking. But, I was never asked to help. She really let me stay there as a guest.

And one of the funniest incidents was one day the cook, she had a family outside of Minneapolis, and she was going to be gone

overnight because somebody in the family was ill or something happened. So she says, she asked me, “Do you suppose I could fix breakfast for the husband of the house,” because the wife never got up for breakfast. She didn’t take---she just stayed in her room. And so I said, “Well I guess I could do that.” Here I had never done anything in my life. So I said, “Well what am I supposed to do?” She says, “Fix him a glass of orange juice,” and it had to be freshly squeezed, you know---one of this frozen stuff. And he always had scrambled eggs and she told me how to do that. And she said, “You put a little bit of milk in and make scrambled eggs and a toast and coffee.” So, I learned that.

So the next morning, I get up and make this breakfast, and when I start putting this milk in, it went in more than I was supposed to put in; so it got kind of loose you know. But anyway, I didn’t---I took it to him. And he was one of these---I think he worked for the grain elevator and he was some big shot up there. But he---the wife was built like me, chubby and short---very nice. The husband was skinny and he had really a sour look like he’s never happy. I guess he was stressed out with his job. So anyway, I take this thing---the tray to him with all this breakfast and he says, “This scrambled egg looks like you know it has too much milk or something.” I didn’t say a word. **[*Laughs*]**

So when the cook came back, I told her and she just laughed. I says, “Yeah; I didn’t say anything and he just made a comment about this egg being kind of loose.” And I told her, “You know the milk just dumped; I just poured it in.” **[*Laughs*]** I guess---I told her, “I guess they’ll never ask me to do anything for them.” **[*Laughs*]** But, that was the only time that I ever had to do any kind of help. **[*Laughs*]**

But, she was nice; she would---when she went shopping---clothes or anything, she’d take me along. So the first winter I was there she said, “Miyoko, you need a winter coat.” And she says, “I’ll take you to my store where I shop and I’ll have my girl...;” you know “my girl” wait on you, you know. I guess she has a particular saleslady. It was at Dayton’s---she took me and I got my coat. And, every time she went somewhere she’d take me. And then she was one of those that she would maybe go to New York or something and she’d buy clothes, hats, and things, and then they would send it. And then she would try on and decide what to keep. She always asked me, “Oh come in; come into my room and she’d try on and say, ‘Miyoko, what do you think of this and that, this and that?’” And she would... and I’d say, “Oh, I like that one,” and then she’ll keep that. And she’d do

that you know. She just treated me like one of her daughters---very nice.

When her daughter went to Radcliff and graduated, she was getting married to a guy from Harvard, and they were having this big wedding at the home because they had.... Oh, from the city, because of the war---to help the war effort, they're going to close down the townhouse and move into the lake. Now the lake house is more modern and bigger and had a tennis court and everything---really a lovely home, which is a summer home.

Well, when I first went to stay with her, she says... the beauty shop she goes to, the ladies are all going for defense work, and she's looking for a worker. So she says... she'll ask if she will---could use me. And here I am, having taken the test, don't know if I passed or not, and she's going to get me a job.

When she moved---decided they were going to move to the lake, she says there's another beauty shop she goes to when she's at the lake, and she would see if she could use me. So instead of having me go down and find out about all this, she has her come to see me, interview me, and she comes all the way from the lake to the townhouse. And this woman, Irene Strange, was a---she was about 40 years-old at that time---came to interview me and she said she never saw or spoke to an Asian in her life. The only Asian she ever saw was a Chinese waiter at the Chinese restaurant in Minneapolis. **[*Laughs*]**

But, she was so impressed with me; I mean she just really liked me. And she wanted me to come and work for her. And the thing that I am so, I don't say surprised, but thought so highly of her was when I went to work for her at the lake, when I found out I passed you know and I went to work for her at the lake, I found out from the customers that she had told them, "I'm hiring a Japanese American girl. If you don't like it, don't come." And you know her clients were all millionaires. They were Pillsbury people, the Gold Medal people, the Honeywell people, because they all were living on the lake during the war. They had their summer homes you know. And there were all these people, but she had nerve enough to tell me---tell them that she was hiring this Asian girl, and if they didn't like it, don't come.

So they all welcomed me with open arms. And then next door to her shop, it was a row of shops like a dress shop and movie theater and right at the corner next to the beauty shop was a drugstore, and it was like in the old days when thrift(ies) used to have booths where they served meals. It was that kind of a

drugstore. So I used to go there and eat my lunch and my breakfast and my dinner. I never cooked; I still hadn’t cooked in my life yet.

1:11:35.6

Interviewer:
Did she give you some spending money?

Fujikawa:
Oh, I got paid well. She paid me well, and I got good tips and all that. So anyway, when I came back from lunch one day, the lady I had put in the dryer was gone. So I said, "Oh, I didn't know she was dry that quickly." So Irene told me, "This woman was muttering under the dryer about she didn't like the idea of having me work on her." So she had taken---told to get out before I came back.

Interviewer:
Wow.

Fujikawa:
But other---the other people all really were nice. Like when I was pregnant with Bruce, you know, the Mrs. Pillsbury, her chauffer came and brought me some baby gifts, and you know and then some of them offered me their home to stay while I had the baby. But, I says, "Well who is going to take care after the baby is born," you know and all that. That's why I left and went to Chicago to live with my sisters. But, they were very good to me. And my mother said, "I'm always lucky; I never walked the streets to look for a job. I always was---a job was always you know handed to me more or less." But, Irene retired and she moved to Escondido because she had a friend here or something. And I guess in those days, Escondido was known for a good retirement place you know. So we used to go and visit her every year---once a year go visit her. But, she died a few---several years ago.

1:13:16.8

I see; any of the Minneapolis or St. Paul families that you lived with, did they express any opinions about the camp situation?

Fujikawa:

Well, this is the only family, Mrs. Sweeter?, that took me in when I was taking... that was the only family I ever knew and then Irene.

Interviewer:
Did she say anything about the treatment of the Japanese Americans?

Fujikawa:
Well, they felt badly about it; but you know why they had the MIS schools there is because when they kind of researched for the work to have the school, they found that people in Minnesota were the ones that were more open-minded, and they really were. There were very nice people there. And that's why they were---had the school there. I guess they kind of found out you know.... I'm sure there are places that wouldn't accept---they would say, "We don't want the school here. We don't want all these people around us."

Interviewer:
When you were walking down the street, did people stare at you?

Fujikawa:
Yes.

Interviewer:
Hmm; okay.

Fujikawa:
But, they were very nice.

Interviewer:
Yeah; so all this time you are now working. You've been relocated to Minneapolis or Lake Minnetonka, and where was John? **[*Laughs*]**

Fujikawa:
In the Army at Camp Savage. At first he was Savage and then Snelling. Then when I was---when I got pregnant then he was sent overseas to Australia.

Interviewer:
So you got married at what time?

Fujikawa:
In '43.

Interviewer:
In '43, while you were at Arkansas?

Fujikawa:
No, no; I left camp to get married.

Interviewer:
Oh, you left camp to get married.

Fujikawa:
Yeah; and I took the exam and all that---uh-hm.

1:15:18.5

[End Miyoko Fujikawa CD 1; Begin CD 2]

Interviewer:
Okay; just a minute. It is 10:14 a.m. on November 7, 2003, and this is a continuation and the second CD of the interview of Miyoko Fujikawa on the same date being conducted by Dale Sato for the South Bay Oral History Project. The audio and catalog persons remain the same. All copyrights, title, and other rights arising out of this interview whether in its entirety, part, or derivative form, and whether in audio, written, or any other format shall belong to the South Bay Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. Copying of this interview recording whether in its entirety or part is strictly prohibited without a written authorization from the South Bay Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. Let's continue the interview.

Today we will continue with your life in Minnesota during war time, and you spoke of working at Lake Minnetonka in a beauty shop and staying with the Wheeler family. And were you married at this time?

Fujikawa:
Yes.

Interviewer:
So did you get married in Minnesota?

Fujikawa:
At the---a chapel in Fort Snelling.

Interviewer:
Ah---military?

Fujikawa:
Yes, yes.

Interviewer:
How was that? **[*Laughs*]**

Fujikawa:
It was nice except there---my family members, none of them could come except my brother. He gave me away. He was younger than I was and he was also in the Army. But no other family members could come---not because they were all in camp, but my sisters were living in Chicago and it was sort of a hardship for them to come out; so. And so most of the people that attended the wedding were fellow soldiers. Most of them were not married at that time. They got married eventually after that. I had two friends, who were marriages before I was. But, so there were very little women folk at the wedding. **[*Laughs*]**

0:02:24.6

Interviewer:
Was your husband studying Japanese at this time?

Fujikawa:
Well in class, yes.

Interviewer:
So you were working in Lake Minnetonka and he was studying?

Fujikawa:
Yes, and he was stationed at the base. It was Fort---Camp Savage at the beginning. So he was one of the early ones there.

Interviewer:
Why did they move to Fort Snelling?

Fujikawa:
I guess the accommodations were probably larger. I don't really know why. I guess they---I suppose because they got more students and they had WACS and you know.

Interviewer:
Where did he eventually end up serving?

Fujikawa:
Australia.

0:03:12.2

Interviewer:
Australia?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
What kind of work did he do there?

Fujikawa:
Well, they were interpreters, and I think he was assigned to---as one person---one person assigned to one of the outfits in Australia. And because he was Asian, they had an Australian soldier with him at all times so they won't mistake him for one of the enemies. And then from there he went to Rabaul and some of those islands around there. Then when the war ended, he landed in Japan for a few months after the war.

Interviewer:
When did he get back to the United States?

Fujikawa:
In 1945.

Interviewer:
1945; were you still in Minnesota at that time?

Fujikawa:
No, a few---no a few months before that, me and my son who was about 14 months old, I believe---14 or 15 months old, came back to Gardena because my parents were already located back in their home.

Interviewer:
Did they tell you about how it---their first impression or when they got back to Gardena what it was like?

Fujikawa:
One thing, they were one of the first to leave camp, which was in Rohwer. I guess they were unafraid because they said they couldn't speak English anyway, and then the soldiers on the train were very kind to them. And our friend, Miss Hudson, met them at the Union Station, and brought them to their home and she had already bought groceries and put things in the

refrigerator, had their beds made up, and ready for them to just live---come home and live. So, my mother and...

Interviewer:
This was in 1940... when they arrived back here?

Fujikawa:
It was 1944.

Interviewer:
'44; about that time?

Fujikawa:
About that time, and everybody... my mother said everybody in the neighborhood, they were all Caucasian people in the area, would just look at them because they were always out in their yard working. That was the first thing they were concerned about was cleaning the yard up because whoever was renting their place just left it a mess. But, they weren't afraid, and I don't think anybody abused them because, for one thing, if they said something to them, they wouldn't have understood anyway.

0:05:57.5

Interviewer:
Does this mean that before the war, your parents were able to lease or buy property?

Fujikawa:
They bought it---they were leasing it, but then they bought it when my oldest sister turned 18, I think. They were allowed---she was allowed to buy it.

Interviewer:
I see, so it was placed in her...

Fujikawa:
It was in her name.

Interviewer:
It was in her name; I see yeah. How---about how large; do you remember?

Fujikawa:
Half an acre.

Interviewer:

Half an acre?

Fujikawa:
Uh-huh; right on Manhattan Place right there.

Interviewer:
And this is when they were growing all kinds of vegetables you said?

Fujikawa:
Oh my parents; yeah for their own use.

Interviewer:
So, when they came back to the South Bay, there were---it was almost a new life. I mean they had to start over.

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
What kinds of things were they---what did they decide to do?

Fujikawa:
Well, like I said, my father was retired. But, my mother, like most Issei women, could find all kinds of jobs we---they had several nurseries in this area. And that's what they mostly did; you know they could just walk to one of the nurseries and sit and plant and chat with all the other ladies. So, it was nice.

Interviewer:
Did she work until late in life?

Fujikawa:
I can't quite remember when she gave up working, but she did work for quite a long time as I recall. I know she was still working when I graduated high school and was---went onto beauty school, she was still working. You know, those kinds of jobs were not hard. It was not hard on you physically you know if you just sit and plant in these boxes. So, they were able to work for quite a while.

Interviewer:
Were there a number of.... These are nurseries owned by Japanese Americans?

Fujikawa:
Yes, yes.

Interviewer:
And there were quite a few in this area?

Fujikawa:
Oh yes; you know all this area on Redondo Beach?

Interviewer:
Uh-huh.

Fujikawa:
It was a big nursery. And then on the corner of Redondo Beach and Manhattan Place, on the corner was a nursery. There was a nursery on---further down on Redondo Beach. There were several nurseries.

Interviewer:
Why did they choose to go in the nursery business? You know they had experience you know growing strawberries or rather produce; is there a reason, particular reason?

Fujikawa:
I don't know whether it was in demand you know buying you know like celery plants or flower you know bedding plants or whether they were in demand at that time because a lot of houses were.... I don't really know. I never even thought about that or you know.

Interviewer:
Yes; I'm going to go back a little bit asking more about you know now you were married and your husband was in the MIS; is that correct?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
And did you---were there several other Nisei wives for you to socialize with or to meet?

Fujikawa:
Oh yes; uh-huh. But, we didn't live close enough. I lived on the lake, and most of them lived in the city, which was like I say about a 30 minute ride on the bus. But we did; I had a couple of friends that with their husbands we would get together.

0:09:37.8

Interviewer:
Were---was that difficult for them to find housing when they arrived in Minneapolis?

Fujikawa:
Most of them, I think through the WRA, the War Relocation Authorities, I think they helped them.

Interviewer:
Uh-hm; and were they looking for jobs, too?

Fujikawa:
Yes, yes; I know a couple of the girls were working like in offices doing typing or things of that sort. I know a couple of the girls did sewing. They were---that was their vocation to begin with so they were able to find jobs that way.

Interviewer:
Hmm; did they have to actually physically go out and visit every place to get a job?

Fujikawa:
I think, like I say, the War Relocation Authorities probably helped them because they probably got lots of lists of people looking for workers and what was available.

Interviewer:
Okay, I see. So then it came to the decision to leave Minnesota and return to the West Coast?

Fujikawa:
No, I didn't.

Interviewer:
Oh, you didn't?

Fujikawa:
No, when---before my son was born, I had no family there. My husband was---suddenly they went overseas just before the baby was born. So, my sister---I had two sisters living in Chicago. They said that I should come and live with them and they would take care of me. So, I moved to Chicago. I had my child there. And then when he was about two months old, I went to visit my parents in Arkansas with the baby. And then I went to visit John's, my husband's parents, in Amache. Then I went from Amache, I went to live with his sisters in Washington, DC and I

left from there to Gardena when my---when Bruce was about 14 or 15 months old.

Interviewer:
Bruce is your first son; yes?

Fujikawa:
Uh-huh.

0:11:55.2

Interviewer:
So, all this time, were people thinking, "I want to go back to the West Coast?"

Fujikawa:
I don't know.

Interviewer:
It wasn't in your particular mind that you had to go back?

Fujikawa:
Uh-uh; only thing is when I lived in Chicago and my son was just an infant I says, "I sure don't like to live in a weather where I can't hang diapers outside you know." The basement was damp and all that. And that's when I thought, "Gee, I would rather be in California than you know living in the east where we had these winter weathers." But aside from that you know I didn't give it much thought.

Interviewer:
Among your Nisei friends and acquaintance, did they have---were they feeling the same way?

Fujikawa:
I really don't know; I never talked about things like that with them.

Interviewer:
Were you able to get any reports of how it was on the West Coast?

Fujikawa:
No.

Interviewer:
No?

Fujikawa:
Uh-uh.

Interviewer:
All right, so finally you came back. That was about... with your child, Bruce, and that was about 1940?

Fujikawa:
Beginning of '45---well sometime in '45 because he was born in '44 and he was 14 months old.

Interviewer:
And you stayed in Chicago less than a year then?

Fujikawa:
He was born... yes, less than a year.

Interviewer:
You took the train back?

Fujikawa:
Yes, yes.

Interviewer:
Was it uncomfortable for you in any way? I mean I think a lot of Nisei felt you know they came from camp, they were among strangers and among non-Japanese after living so many years together with other Nisei; did you feel uncomfortable in any way when you were traveling across country?

Fujikawa:
No, uh-uh; because I didn't associate with that many Japanese all during that time. So it didn't bother me at all. I was more concerned about lugging the baby around. **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
Right, okay; so now you're in Gardena, and where are you living?

Fujikawa:
With my parents on Manhattan Place.

Interviewer:
And your sisters?

0:14:42.1

Fujikawa:
They were still in Chicago.

Interviewer:
They were still in Chicago?

Fujikawa:
Well, my other sister was still in the east somewhere with the WACS you know; so she was in the WACS. I stayed with my parents until my husband was discharged.

Interviewer:
And he was discharged in 1945 was it?

Fujikawa:
Yes, yes, uh-hm. So I stayed with my parents not very long.

Interviewer:
And, did you look for work at this time?

Fujikawa:
No.

Interviewer:
You didn't go back to getting a beauty shop or anything?

Fujikawa:
No, not until after my husband came back. I just stayed with my parents and they didn't expect me to go out and work or anything because I have a baby to take care of and all that.

Interviewer:
Did you have to help support them financially?

Fujikawa:
Uh-uh.

Interviewer:
They had some kind of---through the nursery work or...?

Fujikawa:
Well, they never asked me to help them out in any way. So, and it didn't occur to me that maybe I should contribute something. **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
Did they ever talk about their camp days at Rohwer?

0:15:56.1

Fujikawa:
Evidently, they had I won't say a good time, but my mother was very talented in craft work. She did a lot of embroidery. She used to make paper flowers and things. So when they found out she could do these things, at first they used to come and ask her to show them how to do it, and pretty soon, it got to become so many that they actually had a class. And I remember my mother saying these people felt that they should pay her something, but she said, "No, she didn't need the pay." So they would leave a dime or something with her. But, I don't know what happened when they actually formed a class whether she was paid or not. But, that wasn't an issue with her. And, my father had a job as a custodian for the school in the camp. That meant erasing the blackboards and dusting the tables and all that---desks and all that. And so, they never complained. They were---they had things to do you know. It wasn't as if they were just sitting around and moping.

Interviewer:
So you're living with your parents. Your sisters are in Chicago and your son is young, one or two years old I guess. And so when you walked outside and looked at the Gardena community, what was it like? Was it quite different from before the war---if you remember?

0:17:42.2

Fujikawa:
Well, it seems to me that people had changed. I mean there were a lot of people formerly living around us that had moved. And I don't know if it's because during the war if they went to service and never came back, or if they were women whether they got married and relocated, because my neighbors were all changed. They were not the same people.

Interviewer:
This is among your Caucasian neighbors, also?

Fujikawa:
Yes; they were all Caucasian neighbors except for the Kaminishis, they didn't live right in our neighborhood, but eventually they did live near us after the war.

Interviewer:

I see; what kind of business were they in?

Fujikawa:
They used to before the war had little fruit stands where they sold vegetables and fruits. But after the war, I don't know whether they were doing anything and whether they went back to having their own business, because by that time, most of the Isseis were pretty much into their maybe 60s, early 70s or something like that you know. So, I don't recall what they were doing, but I remember, like I say, a lot of the wives went out and worked in the nursery and she probably did the same you know.

Interviewer:
So, when people weren't working and you---if you wanted to get together with other Japanese Nisei families, what---where did that usually happen?

Fujikawa:
Just in homes---each other's homes.

Interviewer:
You visited each other's homes?

Fujikawa:
Uh-huh.

Interviewer:
Was it a kind of a potluck situation though? **[*Laughs*]**

Fujikawa:
No, no; I don't think they visited each other for meals. Maybe they just visited and had tea and some refreshment that way. But, I don't think they actually went for dinner to each other's home. Everybody was busy. A lot of them still had kids at home and all that; so. I remember my mother used to have people over and they used to have tea and you know visit that way.

Interviewer:
When you say tea, does that mean Japanese tea or an English?

Fujikawa:
Uh-huh; Japanese.

Interviewer:
Japanese tea; uh-huh.

Fujikawa:
And they would make Japanese refreshment like manju. My mother was good at making things like that. **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
So, I can---I'm trying to fill in this empty you know picture of like what Gardena looked like after the war. So, they---so what kind of businesses were then in this area? You said there were a lot of nurseries?

Fujikawa:
Yes; and then they had stores, like I say, where Honda Auto Stores are right here on Western Avenue.

Interviewer:
The same business?

Fujikawa:
No; they had....

Interviewer:
After the war?

Fujikawa:
They had things like tofu, grocery store, barber shop, seed store, furniture store, a yardish store.

Interviewer:
These are all Japanese---Nisei owned?

Fujikawa:
No, no---Issei.

Interviewer:
Issei owned.

Fujikawa:
Yeah; Niseis were not of age to get into business yet.

Interviewer:
You're talking about before the war or...?

Fujikawa:
This is after the war.

Interviewer:
After the war?

Fujikawa:
No; before the war. I'm sorry.

Interviewer:
Before the war; yeah. And then so after the war, those---did those people come back at all?

Fujikawa:
No; they all relocated to other places. The people who had the furniture store, they relocated to Pasadena and I don't know for why---what reason or anything like that. And some of them had---some of the Issei people that had stores, they passed away. There was a Chinese restaurant, which was owned by Japanese people and we don't know whether they went back to Japan before the war or what. Those kinds of things I don't know, and if my parents knew, I never heard from them mainly, because I was not interested I think. I never asked what happened to people.

Interviewer:
Oh you didn't? At this time in your life, what were you interested in?

Fujikawa:
Well, mainly raising my family I think. It was---that's why I gave up working was to stay home with the kids.

0:22:41.6

Interviewer:
So, at one time you were working at the 54th Street Beauty Shop. That was pre-war wasn't it?

Fujikawa:
Pre-war.

Interviewer:
Yeah; did you ever give thought about doing that again?

Fujikawa:
I bought that shop.

Interviewer:
Oh, you bought that shop?

Fujikawa:
That's why you said you found that ad.

Interviewer:
Yeah.

Fujikawa:
The lady I worked for, she asked me if I would like to run it. So, I bought it from her.

Interviewer:
But, that was before the war?

Fujikawa:
No, after.

Interviewer:
After the war; so....

Fujikawa:
Before the war, I worked there. And then the war broke out so we all had to leave.

Interviewer:
Oh okay; so you bought the store---the beauty shop, and so---how about your clients? Your customers were usually Caucasian?

Fujikawa:
Caucasians, yes.

Interviewer:
All Caucasians. You had mentioned on your questionnaire that you were a member of the Gardena Valley Baptist Church. Is that correct?

Fujikawa:
No; I was not a member.

Interviewer:
Are you---attended?

Fujikawa:
Attended, yes.

Interviewer:
The Gardena Baptist Church; yeah.

Fujikawa:
Uh-huh.

Interviewer:
Were churches kind of growing at that time or...?

Fujikawa:
You mean after the war?

Interviewer:
Yeah; after the war.

Fujikawa:
Yes, uh-huh.

Interviewer:
So, is that when you went to Gardena Baptist Church?

Fujikawa:
No; I started from before the war when I was about seven years old.

Interviewer:
Uh-huh; did any of those---oh seven years old, you weren't.... So after the war, there were a different set of people going to the church?

Fujikawa:
Yes; like I say, so many people didn't come back to Gardena. So it was all different.

Interviewer:
So then your husband began---he must have begun a new business?

Fujikawa:
No; actually he could have gone to school with the GI Bill, but his mother being a typical Issei woman said, "You have a family to take care of; you better think about going to work instead of school." So what could he do without any... what should I say; education or any.... Well if he didn't have any kind of training in anything because before the war, right after high school, he worked in markets. That's what a lot of the Nisei guys did. He had no training for anything. And his father was a gardener; so that was what he did. And that was easy to get into because you just bought your tools and you could start in right away. And it gave us a good income. So, I worked in the beauty shop and he worked at---as a gardener until my second son was born. And he was born four years after my first one. So, it was a matter of what do I want to do---keep the shop or stay home with the kids?

And I decided, "I think it's more important I stay home." And I never regretted it. I never thought, "Gosh, I should have kept that shop," never---because I really didn't even look for a job until all four of my sons were in school and much older than first or second grade you know. And then after they were about third or fourth grade then I was working like part-time.

0:26:43.1

Interviewer:
It seems to me that it was rather rare to find women who owned their own businesses. Did you know of other women who had their own businesses?

Fujikawa:
Only one person, and she was an Issei lady. She and her sister-in-law, both Isseis, but very young Isseis, had a shop in Los Angeles before the war.

Interviewer:
You're talking about a beauty shop?

Fujikawa:
Yes; in fact, one of the ladies' daughter is the one that took over my shop when I decided to give it up.

Interviewer:
And what was the gardener's life like here because it---now we don't know too many Nisei gardeners because they're retired.

Fujikawa:
Yes.

Interviewer:
Did your husband have to go to far away places?

Fujikawa:
No; he didn't go that far. He tried to keep it within five or eight mile radius, something like that; because I know he didn't travel that far. So when we were living in Los Angeles, it was near SC. It was a home that was owned by his parents from before the war that they had always rented out. It was a small framed house, three bedroom, but it was enough for us. And it was nice because they let us live there rent-free for eight years.

Interviewer:
Who was that? Who was the owner?

Fujikawa:
My parents---John's parents.

Interviewer:
John's parents.

0:28:27.8

Fujikawa:
So that really helped us a lot and after eight years we were able to---we moved here; we bought this house. Well we were looking for another house because I was expecting my fourth son. My parents who lived in Gardena, every time I would visit they would say, "Why don't you move to Gardena? Why don't you come back here?" And I said, "Oh, it's so far," because it was no freeway and my husband's jobs was in that area. But one Easter we were visiting my parents and their neighbor was a contractor for building houses. And they had just built these---about four houses right here---four or five houses. And they were having an open house on that Easter Sunday. So my mother said, "Why don't you go look at those houses?" So we said, "Okay;" just to please them you know we came. And at---by that time, we must have looked at 50 houses in the Los Angeles area and every one there was something wrong. If the kitchen was big the bedrooms were not adequate or something. So when we came here and this open house, we stepped in, and the kitchen was adequate for six of us to sit around the kitchen table. We had three bedrooms and two bathrooms. So in 10 minutes we said, "This is it; we're not going to look anymore," and the price was right. When you think about the old houses like on Adams and everything and this brand new house for practically the same price. So that's how we happened to come to Gardena, and I think we made the right choice because during the time we were looking for houses, if we had bought any one of those houses, we probably would have had to move again because those places that we looked at were---became undesirable neighborhoods. You know what I mean like Inglewood and the Adams section and.... Oh, we looked at so many houses.

Interviewer:
Yeah; could we take just a little break here?

Fujikawa:
Yeah.

[Pause]

0:30:37.7

Interviewer:
When the Nisei had to start out their gardening businesses, I mean how did they get their customers? I mean how did that kind of grow?

Fujikawa:
I think if a person had a gardener and that family knew of other people looking for gardeners, they would ask their gardener, "Do you know anybody that you know could do my garden or something?" So it was by like people taking to each other and telling them about where there's jobs you know available. I don't think they knocked on doors and said, "Do you need a gardener or anything like that?"

Interviewer:
Well I imagine with all the houses being built?

Fujikawa:
Yes; and naturally like if John went to work for one family, the neighbors around there who didn't have gardeners would walk over and say, "Could you do my place," and that's how it worked.

Interviewer:
Were the gardeners organized at this time in...?

Fujikawa:
In 1955 or around that time they organized.

Interviewer:
Oh, and for what reason do you think they organized?

Fujikawa:
To help each other more or less, and well one of the main things was I think some kind of legislature came up in Sacramento about licensing every gardener. And I think it was called, "Mahoney Bill," or something like that. I'm not too sure; I'll have to ask John. But they organized and they were able to defeat it so that they didn't have to have a license to garden. And that was the reason; I think one of the main reasons they organized was things like that came up in which they couldn't fight by themselves and be organized. Then each community organized their own association---like Gardena has their own. San Fernando Valley has their own. Long Beach has their own, Pasadena, so forth and so on.

Interviewer:
I'm wondering if this licensing issue came up as a kind of act of racism or...?

Fujikawa:
Probably.

Interviewer:
Do you think so?

Fujikawa:
I suppose, because a lot of the gardeners may not have been Niseis that spoke English you know. So, I really don't know; I don't know the details because I never looked into it. But, I know that was the big issue. And that's why they had to organize to be able to fight it.

Interviewer:
So when they had meetings, do you happen to know what...? I mean you said that they would help each other. Do you happen to know specifically in what way they helped each other?

Fujikawa:
Well, they have---they had classes for one thing about using pesticides and sprays of different kinds and that kind of stuff you know. And they, in fact they organized the Southern California Federation, which all the different associations belonged to it, and that group was from Santa Maria to San Diego, so that included about 21 or 23 associations. And they would have once a month meetings and they would send representatives you know and they would have issues that they would talk about. And they started their own co-op so they could buy things in bulk, you know like rye seeds, grass seeds, and tools, and things like that. But now that the gardeners have just gotten so small, the membership in every association has dwindled to just a handful. The co-op is not doing that well, and I don't know how much longer they will continue it. There aren't enough people to come and buy that it's not worthwhile for them to buy in bulk you know. They even used to buy things like gloves and work shoes. And once a year they would have a big sale in which people from all over could come and buy things at a little discount, you know. And then people from like San Diego or Santa Maria, or somewhere a distance, would send members and they would buy for other members of their association. You know like they'd say, "How many guys want shoes or hoes or rye grass," and they would load up their trucks. But,

now they have this once a year, but there aren't that many people and since they are all giving up gardeners, they don't need that stuff anymore. So, I think it's going to finally---they're going to finally have to give it up.

0:35:53.9

Interviewer:
But, as of this year they---the few still meet?

Fujikawa:
They did have it this May; yeah. But the only young gardeners that are Japanese are people that have come from Japan. But they are in their now early 70s, I imagine; so it won't be long before they'll be retiring, too. But, the Niseis are all you know late 70s, early 80s, and they are working. But they're working only part-time.

Interviewer:
These gardeners that came from Japan, did they come from that kind of background or was it something they learned? Do you know?

Fujikawa:
I really don't know. I never associated with anyone to find out about things like that. It seemed like if you know the community of Edgewood that is out towards Glendale or Pasadena or that way, because there is an Edgewood Gardeners Association. Now, they have lots of people from Japan.

Interviewer:
You're talking about now?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; that are gardeners. And I would say they are in their early 70s.

Interviewer:
Were there other types of nurseries run by non-Japanese, by Caucasians or other ethnic groups at that time after the war?

Fujikawa:
I'm sure there were a lot of nurseries. It looked like Armstrong Nurseries, and things like that. Yes; they had nurseries.

0:37:41.8

Interviewer:
Did the Japanese specialize in their nurseries in any way as far as the type of flower or...?

Fujikawa:
No; I think they had everything because the gardeners could go and buy you know things---all kinds of things.

Interviewer:
Did the women---the wives of the gardeners?

Fujikawa:
Well, some of them went to help their husbands, actually. Yes; I know several women that went to help. In fact, when all our kids left us **[*Laughs*]**, I was left at home and I wasn't working anymore, I used to go with John just to keep him company. I used to take a lunch and sit and eat lunch with him. Then you know you can't just sit there; so I'd get a rake and help him rake some leaves up and help him bring---if he needed something from the truck, I'd go and get it, you know. But I just used to spend the day with him. And then all the wives of the people that he worked for, they'd invite me, "Come in, Miyoko, and have coffee." I'd go and chitchat with them. **[*Laughs*]** In fact, some of the women are so lonesome because they don't have kids at home and their husbands are gone to work, they said, "Miyoko, let's go to the mall." I go to the mall while John is working---go out to lunch with them, and.... **[*Laughs*]** So I had a fun time.

Interviewer:
Yeah; your kids are now in elementary school?

Fujikawa:
When this all happened; no.

Interviewer:
And when you came back they were.... So in the 1960s; is that right?

Fujikawa:
Well Bruce was---when I came back, Bruce was going to elementary school and then after Mark was born, well he attended school for a while before we moved here.

Interviewer:
You're talking about when you were in Los Angeles?

Fujikawa:

Yes; because I think we moved here when Bruce was like about 10---so Mark was like 6.

Interviewer:
Were the---did the---because they---I don't know if there were leftover feelings from World War II, did they have any...?

Fujikawa:
No, uh-uh.

Interviewer:
So the other students were mostly Caucasian in their schools?

Fujikawa:
Yeah; in this area and up there, too.

0:40:09.7

Interviewer:
Were there other areas besides this neighborhood where a lot of Japanese lived in Gardena or Torrance or...?

0:40:16.9

Fujikawa:
Lawndale, Hawthorne.

Interviewer:
Lawndale and Hawthorne?

Fujikawa:
Not a lot, but they were.

Interviewer:
Why do you think they kind of clustered there?

Fujikawa:
I don't know. I don't know whether it's because of availability for housing or what. I really don't know.

Interviewer:
Do you think these were nursery people or gardeners?

Fujikawa:
No; in Hawthorne, one family that I knew.... The reason why I knew a couple of families was they came to the Baptist Church and in those days they had a bus that went around and picked up

the kids from all the outlying areas. That's how I met people from all over. One of the girls, the Yamamotos, they had a nursery. And then the Oshikis, the father had---it's almost like these catering trucks. He would have Japanese grocery items and went to all these farmers, made all the rounds of the farmers, and sold food from his truck.

Interviewer:
Like tofu and...?

Fujikawa:
And canned goods and vegetables.

Interviewer:
Japanese vegetables?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; daikon and all that kind of stuff. But he made the rounds that way and that was his business.

Interviewer:
Were there any Japanese food stores? Now we have you know Mitsuwa and we have in Pacific Square, Japanese markets?

Fujikawa:
Yeah, yeah; well they had Motoyama's**?**

Interviewer:
They had? Motoyama's?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
That's on Western?

Fujikawa:
It was not originally on Western. I think they started out, like I say, this family going around. That's how it started Motoyama's, and they changed hands several times in running the store. But, they kept the name; uh-hm.

0:42:21.4

Interviewer:
Okay; so you began to live in this house that we're sitting in now and when people wanted to get together, did they---did the

JACL start up at that time? Did you---what kinds of organizations did the Nisei go to?

Fujikawa:
Well, we had JACL, but we didn't belong to it at that time. It was much later in the years, more likely after our kids were pretty well grown up you know.

Interviewer:
So, it was mostly the Baptist Church and the gardeners' events? Were there other like Japanese schools still running?

Fujikawa:
No, the Buddhist church ran a Japanese language classes.

Interviewer: This was after the war?

Fujikawa:
After the war. And, I think there is some private Japanese school started across the street from Rush Gym, which is near the Gardena Civic Center. But, I don't know who runs it, but they still have it. I think they say mainly a lot of people that come from Japan whether for three months or permanently, they send their kids there. So, it's an ongoing thing over there. And the Baptist---not the Baptist, but the Buddhist church as a big school.

Interviewer:
Did you feel that your---did you send your kids to Japanese school language classes?

Fujikawa:
No; when I moved here there was none. And when they finally did start it, I guess.... I don't know why; I guess I'm not a pushy type. Now that my kids are adults, they say, "Why didn't you make us learn Japanese?" They tried to learn at the University, but you know that was not the same as learning---they learned---and listened to tapes and things like that. I remember them trying to learn that way. But unless you speak it in the home, you don't learn it. The reason why we learned it is because we had to speak to our parents.

Interviewer:
Did they learn any English at all?

Fujikawa:
Very little, very little because we spoke Japanese to them.

0:44:50.7

Interviewer:
If people wanted to learn some other cultural arts, your mom had... you had mentioned that your mom was teaching craft. Was that a Japanese kind of craft or just...?

Fujikawa:
I think she learned a lot of that in Japan; so I would say Japanese---embroidery work and all that you know; she learned it in Japan and flower making. So it was not---so I would say more or less Japanese. And I never learned anything from her.

Interviewer:
Are you saying that with regret?

Fujikawa:
I guess, I just didn't have the interest because she did everything; so. **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
I see. Some people would say that a lot of Japanese came to Gardena because they couldn't live in Torrance or some other areas because of housing...

Fujikawa:
Oh yes, yes.

Interviewer:
... covenants or something. Were you aware of that at the time?

Fujikawa:
Yes, very much so because when we were looking for a house, one of the neighborhoods that was very nice was Inglewood. Right off the agent says, "No Orientals or blacks."

Interviewer:
The sign?

Fujikawa:
Oh no; they tell you outright.

Interviewer:
Wow.

Fujikawa:

So then after we moved here, we would get calls because by then they had this open policy. You could not refuse anybody if they had the money. So the would call and say, "Would we like to buy cemetery plots in Inglewood?" And I says, "You know you didn't want us before." I said, "We already have our own plot elsewhere." **[*Laughs*]** But you know, I think they've regretted that because once they opened it up for anybody to buy, the blacks came in. So then a lot of Japanese never did look for that area. If they had opened it for everybody, it would have been a nice community of mixed culture. People don't think that way, and of course, maybe they're more open-minded. But, yes; I was very much aware that certain areas did not want Asians or blacks.

Interviewer:
Would you say you were aware meaning you were shocked or angry at that?

Fujikawa:
Well, I was---I wasn't upset. **[*Laughs*]** I was mad. I says, "You know they don't know what they're doing to refuse us good people. **[*Laughs*]** But that's the way it was right after, about that time.

Interviewer:
Were there other areas that were kind of notorious for that?

Fujikawa:
Oh yes; I think a lot of places were---many places. I think Orange County might have been. I'm not too sure, but....

Interviewer:
How about the beach communities?

Fujikawa:
Yeah.

0:48:12.1

Interviewer:
Well, when you considered---anyone considers getting a house, you have to get a loan. Was that a difficult thing I think for Nisei families?

Fujikawa:
No, no; it wasn't for us.

Interviewer:
Were there Japanese American banks established at that time?

Fujikawa:
Sumitomo Bank maybe.

Interviewer:
I'm just wondering maybe....

Fujikawa:
Bank of Tokyo.

Interviewer:
... as families came back from the camps and they didn't have a lot of capital and then they used that---they needed money to start up their businesses, and you know I wondered how they managed to get loans.

Fujikawa:
Well, they did have a Bank of Tokyo, which is now Union Bank.

Interviewer:
In this area after the war?

Fujikawa:
Yes; and then Sumitomo Bank.

Interviewer:
Uh-hm.

Fujikawa:
Those are the two main ones that I can remember. And then later on they started having others.

0:49:12.5

Interviewer:
Do you think though Japanese families exclusively went to those banks?

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm.

Interviewer:
Uh-hm; I see. I'm still wondering why you know you mentioned Inglewood was a place where they said you know, "No Japanese or

blacks," and then they have these other surrounding communities and why Gardena was different? **[*Laughs*]**

Fujikawa:
I don't know. I don't know whether because they were used to having Japanese truck farmers all around here before the war. And they had no problems with them you know; so maybe that was one of the reasons, knowing them. I think that was the main thing---knowing the people.

Interviewer:
I think I've heard before the war that like if the kids wanted to go to pools or something....

Fujikawa:
Oh yeah; they were not allowed. Well, that was in Redondo Beach. There was no pool in Gardena. If there was, there wouldn't have been that problem.

Interviewer:
Hmm; what was that problem exactly?

Fujikawa:
What?

Interviewer:
They---did they say, "No Japanese can enter the pool," or...?

Fujikawa:
Well, I'll tell you, my sister in her gym class, because Gardena didn't have a swimming pool, the gym teacher took the class to Redondo Beach, and my sister was not allowed in.

Interviewer:
And how did she fee? I can imagine it.

Fujikawa:
Yeah; she had to sit outside and wait. And even if the gym teacher said, "This is a class," and you know she expected the class you know to be in there together. No; she had to wait outside. So, that's how bad it was outside of Gardena. And, I suppose Gardena was always too poor to have a pool. **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
I see; having grown up as a third generation, I'm thinking you know so many things to endure like that. And what is it that gave you the strength to face these difficulties and

discrimination and all the internment and the military people going out to Europe and in the Pacific and Australia; what do you think it is that gave them the strength to keep going?

Fujikawa:
Keep going?

Interviewer:
Or, in your case or other people's cases?

0:52:00.1

Fujikawa:
Well, I don't know about other people, how they felt about things like this, but in my husband's case, you know his parents felt very badly about him going into the service, because they felt we're in camp and why should you go defend your country. But, he felt that was one way of proving their citizenship, and I think a lot of the guys felt that way who went. And as far as being rejected like going into pools or things like that, we took that.... I guess it was a feeling of, "Well what else can we do?" And we were not a big enough group or old enough to have this feeling of fighting something---you know we should fight for this or anything. That's how we got put in camp, too, is we didn't have enough leadership to be organized to defend ourselves. We were at the---born at the wrong time. **[*Laughs*]** So anyway, I think most of us just felt it's something that we had no control over and that we just had to make the best of it. At least that was our feelings---my feelings.

Interviewer:
Okay; we've talked about a lot of different things. I wondered if there's something that maybe we haven't talked about yet that you would like to bring up, something you want to...?

Fujikawa:
Speaking about prejudices and things, I think it comes from the home because the one big incident in my family's life was when we moved---we were going to move into Los Angeles when I was living with my parents, my husband says his parents are offering us this house. And I says, "Gosh, you know I never lived on.... I don't want to move there because there's so many blacks in that area." You know it was around SC. And I never knew a black person. Gardena didn't have black people all during and before the war. There was not one black family. So, I was not familiar with them, and I just kind of didn't like the idea of living next door to one. And my husband says, "Heck, I grew up with

them; I went to school with them you know. They're like everybody else," and this and that. So, I said, "Okay, move there." Across the street---not directly across, but a few doors down like that were two Japanese families and one family had kids that were the age of my children, and the boy was the same age as Bruce. And right next door was a black family with young kids like my sons' ages. And this boy would come over and play with Bruce, and he one day said to Bruce, "My mother says don't play with those blacks." See, it comes from the home. My son didn't know what it meant because he says, "Don't play with the kuromubo you know that meant black. He didn't know. And I never told him you know what that meant or what he said or anything. And here Bruce always used to say he wished he had curly hair like Billy next door. He thought it was so great. **[*Laughs*]** You know when he had birthday parties, we invited all those kids---neighborhood kids, and I would not say they are any different. And he never felt any different. And that was when I felt that you know it comes from the home. If that mother didn't open her mouth---she was teaching her kid already not to you know associate with certain people.

But, to this day, my kids are very open-minded. They have.... I remember when Bruce went---came home from Vietnam. It was Easter and he called me and he said, "Is it all right if I bring an Army friend and his wife for Easter?" And I said, "Oh sure." He never said they're blacks or whites or Mexican. He just said friend. I opened the door and here's this tall black guy with his wife and a baby. And that's the way it was with my kids. They never said, "It's going to be a white person. It's going to be a Mexican friend or anything," and I'm always proud of that, that they wouldn't say---like they were afraid it would offend me or I would say, "Oh don't bring them," or anything. They would never say that. So, to this day, my kids are like that and they've brought their kids up that way. And that I'm really happy about, because you teach the kids things like this. You know you have to like a person for what they are. And you make friend with people that you know you like and because you like them because for what they are you know. And it's not because what they look like or what their background is.

So, I remember you know my third son went to Afghanistan after he graduated college to teach with the Peace Corps. One day he writes, and you know in those countries, women are you know nobodies. They don't associate with women. He met this Afghan girl and he was writing to me about it and he says he thought he might bring her home and all that you know. He even sent me a picture of her and all that. And I thought, "Oh my gosh," you

know, but I didn't say you know, "Not a good idea," or anything. Of course, it didn't work out that way anyway, but you know he---they didn't think about you know because they're a different race or something.

0:58:26.2

Interviewer:
When you were living in this area before the war, you said there were no blacks, and there were the Japanese and the Caucasians?

Fujikawa:
And a few Mexicans.

Interviewer:
And a few Mexicans; what kinds of jobs did they do---this is pre-war?

Fujikawa:
I don't know.

Interviewer:
But they were living in the neighborhood.

Fujikawa:
Uh-hm; they might have had small shops or eating places and things.

Interviewer:
And did the gardeners employ some of the Hispanics?

Fujikawa:
Not in those days; no, no.

Interviewer:
Not in those days; okay. And so we are here after the war; here is the neighborhood and so is the ethnic mix quite different or beginning to change?

Fujikawa:
Oh yes.

Interviewer:
So in the 1940---late 1940s right and then the '50s?

Fujikawa:

It started to change the early '70s I would say or late '60s or early '70s---around there.

Interviewer:
Uh-hm; you mean more different kinds of people coming in?

Fujikawa:
Yes, until the late '60s, you rarely saw black families around here, very few. Then when they started busing them in is when they start coming in, and then eventually they start buying into this area.

Interviewer:
Oh okay; of the Japanese farmers who, in your case you were able to keep your land and your belongings....

Fujikawa:
The farmers didn't come back?

Interviewer:
The didn't come back at all?

Fujikawa:
No; because they didn't own their property.

Interviewer:
Uh-hm; so the businesses that were able to start up again in the same businesses were the ones you mentioned before? Any different kinds of businesses that Nisei took up?

Fujikawa:
Well, let me see; the people that had these shops on Western Avenue and everything, they didn't come back because they didn't own any of that property. But, the Niseis who came back here were very few at the beginning as I recall. There weren't that many Japanese. But, I don't remember what kind of businesses they first started, but eventually when they started coming in, they had all kinds of small businesses you know.

Interviewer:
So, is there anything else? I thought what you said before was very important. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this oral history?

Fujikawa:
Well let me see; what can I say? **[*Laughs*]** Well Gardena has been a good place for us to live and to bring up our kids, because

until we start having all the different ethnic groups moving in here, this was a very good neighborhood. You know we all got along real well. The school is very good and they had good education here in Gardena. So we were quite happy that we decided to live here. And, I'm glad that our kids had all gotten out of school before things changed so radically.

Interviewer:
You mean arise in crime and so forth?

Fujikawa:
Yes; uh-hm.

Interviewer:
I see, okay; well, you've certainly been generous with your time and your stories, and we really....

Fujikawa:
[*Laughs*] I hope I told things correctly. Do you know what Bruce says? I told him about this as he was taking us to the doctor yesterday. And he says, "Oh that's great; but I hope they let you read it so you could see if you said anything wrong." **[*Laughs*]**

Interviewer:
All right; so thank you very much, Mrs. Fujikawa.

Fujikawa:
Oh you're welcome.

Interviewer:
And this will be the end.

[End Miyoko Fujikawa CD 2]