

INTERVIEWER:

It's now 12:25 on January 23, 2004. My name is Richard Kawasaki. I will be interviewing George Ishibashi today as part of the South Bay Oral History Project. The audio equipment recording this interview is being monitored by Ernie Tsujimoto, and the interview is being catalogued by Jean Tsujimoto. All copyrights, titles, and any 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 Citizen 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 Citizen League.

Okay; we had to do that as a formality, because for recording it, I want to make sure that you are aware of what's going to happen to this.

You're George Ishibashi; your parents are---could you tell us about your parents? Could you tell us about your father and mother?

ISHIBASHI:

Actually, there isn't too much to tell about them. All I can remember---they were there.

INTERVIEWER:

Your father's name was what?

ISHIBASHI:

Kumekichi.

INTERVIEWER:

And your mother's name?

ISHIBASHI:

Take.

INTERVIEWER:

And her maiden name was what?

ISHIBASHI:

Her maiden name was Hanaoka.

INTERVIEWER:

Were they both from the same part of Japan?

ISHIBASHI:

They were both from the same prefecture in Japan.

INTERVIEWER:

And that was what prefecture?

ISHIBASHI:

Wakayama-ken.

INTERVIEWER:

Did they---were they married when they came to the U.S.?

ISHIBASHI:

No---picture bride.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, so they didn't know each other before?

ISHIBASHI:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

How did your father come to the U.S.?

OH02M13S

ISHIBASHI:

I don't know whether it was on a sailboat or steamship, because it was in the late 1800---'90, to San Francisco.

INTERVIEWER:

And from San Francisco he came down to Southern California?

ISHIBASHI:

And he walked down to Los Angeles.

INTERVIEWER:

He walked.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Wow; and then when he was ready to be married, how did he find your mother?

ISHIBASHI:

I don't know, but I think there were agencies that had these picture bride deals.

INTERVIEWER:

I see.

ISHIBASHI:

But I don't know exactly how that worked.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; then you told me one time, the story of how your father found the farm in Palos Verdes. Can you tell me again?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah; the thing is---I know he was working in L.A. as a houseboy for this rich family, but I don't know exactly how he found out to come to Palos Verdes. Anyway, someone told him about Signal Hill---that you could farm on Signal Hill. That would have been nice, but there was no ocean. He wanted to be by the ocean, I guess. **[Laughs]** You can't blame him. **[Laughs]** So, anyway, as far as I can remember, somehow he worked a little while for this American hay grower name Phillips.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, Harry Phillips?

ISHIBASHI:

They live on this side of P.V. Hill. I think---and, let's see; I see Mrs. Phillips. She used to come down to a gas station I used to help at in Lomita. But I never saw the husband, and one of the kids came to San Pedro High School, I know. His name was---his last name was Phillips, but I didn't know whether he was the Phillips that was living up on this side of the Hill, see.

INTERVIEWER:

But your father met Mr. Phillips?

OH05M22S

ISHIBASHI:

So, somehow he must have met Phillips and then from there he met Mr. Haslam who lived on top of the Hill, see. And then, I guess somehow he found out how he can rent ground on the hillside down below, see. That---I don't know how he was able to arrange that, see.

INTERVIEWER:

About what year was that?

ISHIBASHI:

That was 1906.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, and do you remember what the rent was for the land?

ISHIBASHI:

The price of the land rent, I don't know, but then the rent had to be paid in gold coins.

INTERVIEWER:

Interesting.

ISHIBASHI:

So, he paid his rent in gold coins.

INTERVIEWER:

When he got money, he had to go to the bank to get a gold coin to pay?

ISHIBASHI:

Well, I guess he had few gold coins everyplace where he worked you know. Gold coin was the medium of exchange, see.

INTERVIEWER:

I see; do you remember where his first farm was?

ISHIBASHI:

His first farm was still the same place, but it's a golf course now. You know that P.V. Golf Course they have on that side the hill?

INTERVIEWER:

The one that . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

That new one?

INTERVIEWER:

Ocean Trails?

ISHIBASHI:

I don't know what the heck they call it.

INTERVIEWER:

There's a new one there; it's called Ocean Trails.

ISHIBASHI:

Hardly anybody playing there.

INTERVIEWER:

Ok, I know the place. That was your . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Nobody likes it.

INTERVIEWER:

. . . dad's farm. One time you told me about the water. How did you get water for your . . .

ISHIBASHI:

The water---the only water was this water down here at . . . that would be . . . Anaheim going this way and Gaffey coming this way from San Pedro. And right here was a water well, and that pumped the water and that went to Palos Verdes, the city of Palos Verdes, see---you know, when they made that into a city, because when Dad was first farming, it wasn't a city. But then, the original water, he had to take the horse and tank and go to where

INTERVIEWER: Is that where the . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Today, let's see---today it's a fenced area, so you have to have the right number to press the gate to open the gate to come up, but then after you come up in that area, there was water that ran out of the side of the mountain where somebody dug a hole in the side of mountain and the water from the top trickled down, you know, through the ground and came down. And they had a tank that it dripped into and came down to the old dirt road, see. The dirt road that went from San Pedro to Redondo.

So, my dad, from the ranch had to go all the way over there to get the water, see. And it was an all day job, just to go there and bring water home.

OH09M52S

INTERVIEWER:

How often did he go?

ISHIBASHI:

Once a week.

INTERVIEWER:

Once a week; and that water was just for the house.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, just for the house, for cooking.

INTERVIEWER:

How about the farming? He never used water for farming?

ISHIBASHI:

No; no.

INTERVIEWER:

What did your father grow?

ISHIBASHI:

What?

INTERVIEWER:

What crops did he have?

ISHIBASHI:

He grew pea, beans, cucumber, and tomato.

INTERVIEWER:

Amazing.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah; those were the main crops, see. And then, at first, he used to---when he harvested, they used to put every---you know, like pea and beans, they would put it in gunny sacks. You know those sack that, something like the rice sack? You know the big, hundred-pound rice sack? You put that in, and then you sew the top up so you got peas or beans in that. And then he used to take the wagon from the ranch and go all the way to . . . nighttime take it all the way to San Pedro down where---just near where Ports of Call is today. There used to be a railroad track and railroad cars used to come there, see, and he would load it on to the railroad car at nighttime, and that car will take it up to L.A. market during the night. And then when they get there by morning, then commission house will take it out and then display it and sell it, see. And then sell it and tell

them how much it was sold for, and every week send him some money, see. That's the way it worked.

INTERVIEWER:

So, the price was pretty much on your honor. They . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

That's pretty good.

ISHIBASHI:

And then eventually Ninth Street was opened up by the Japanese, see.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you mean by the Japanese? I mean, you're . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, Japanese merchants around there, they open up that Ninth Street market, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, I see.

ISHIBASHI:

So, all the Japanese growers all around that area would send it there. They could send it anyplace they want, in other words. And later on, between the Ninth Street and Seventh Street market was a small Mexican market, even. So, if the Mexican grew something, they would send it to the Mexican market, see.

0H12M43S

INTERVIEWER:

Well, now, how long was your father here before your uncle came?

ISHIBASHI:

Before uncle came---I don't know how long it took uncle to go from his job as a coal miner and come all that route, but then, let's see.

INTERVIEWER:

Why don't we start---tell me how your uncle came to the U.S.

ISHIBASHI:

How did he come from where?

INTERVIEWER:

From Japan to the U.S.?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, I think at that time, they must have had a steamship. But then, that was in 1924 when they wouldn't let anybody Buddha-heads come to United States, so he had to go to Mexico, see. And then get off in Mexico and then walk all the way up to El Paso. Then when he tried to cross the border, you had to have money.

INTERVIEWER:

And so he wrote your dad a letter?

ISHIBASHI:

I don't know how they wrote letter---write it in English so it'll go through the post office **[Laughs]**.

INTERVIEWER:

So your dad sent money to your uncle.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, I don't know how he send the money, whether he put it in an envelope and sent it by mail, but that's about the only way, because they didn't have, what you call . . .

INTERVIEWER:

Western Union?

ISHIBASHI:

. . . no service like we have today, see.

INTERVIEWER:

And then from El Paso, where did your uncle go?

ISHIBASHI:

Then, Japanese contractors took him up to Wyoming, coal mine up there, see. So, you have to work your contract before you can get away from them---then, finally, walked his way out of there. I don't know what other city---you know, he had to come through before he was able to come to the ranch.

INTERVIEWER:

And then he leased land, also, for a farm?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, so my dad got him a piece of ground for him to farm.

INTERVIEWER:

Where was his farm?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, today it's in the slide area.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh okay; and your uncle grew the same things?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, they all grew the same thing out there.

INTERVIEWER:

How did they learn to farm this way?

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

How did your father learn how to farm?

ISHIBASHI:

I guess natural instinct.

0H15M26S

INTERVIEWER:

Really.

ISHIBASHI:

They didn't learn that in Japan, because the ground is too small in Japan. You know, they own a piece of ground, but then they own the hillside, too, because it's not a level place in Japan, see. So, I guess the family (would) still have the hillside, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Have you been to Japan?

ISHIBASHI:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

So you don't know if you have relatives there.

ISHIBASHI:

My dad's youngest brother is still there.

INTERVIEWER:

Still living?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, but then the two brothers that went to Brazil, you know Japan colonized Paraguay, so that wasn't a good place, so my dad's brother ran away from the contract and went to Brazil. So, to go to Brazil you got to go over the mountain, because they're on this side of the mountain, see. So, you got to cross the mountain, get over, that's all walking, see. I don't know how they did it, but they did it, see.

INTERVIEWER:

So, you might have relatives in Brazil?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Ishibashi's there; interesting. Wow, I didn't know this about you before. Now, your uncle, Tomizo, he had how many children?

ISHIBASHI:

How many children; let's see---Ichi, Kat, Yukiko, Tom, Hiroshi, Suzuko---six kids.

INTERVIEWER:

Six kids; and in your own family, how many?

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

How many in your family?

ISHIBASHI:

In my family---five of us.

INTERVIEWER:

And what were their names?

ISHIBASHI:

My older brother's in Keiro, right now? You know, he's hospitalized.

INTERVIEWER:

That's Mas

ISHIBASHI:

And then, my brother next to me, he had a place in---he still has a place, his wife's there, but then he passed away when they did a heart surgery. They didn't connect a pipe good, and during the night it came apart, see. So, he died, and my sister lives down in Orange County, yet. And my youngest brother lives in Lomita yet.

0H18M26S

INTERVIEWER:

What's your youngest brother's name?

ISHIBASHI:

Aki, the one in Lomita's the youngest one.

INTERVIEWER:

Now, where were you born? You were born in hospital?

ISHIBASHI:

We were all born out here at the ranch.

INTERVIEWER:

At the ranch?

ISHIBASHI:

But, then, you know, the midwife deal was in L.A., see or---I think, LA, yeah---but then they call the birth in San Pedro.

INTERVIEWER:

How did you find out? You'd go to San Pedro, call downtown, and say, hey, come down . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

I don't know how that deal was done, but then, in the old days, anything can be done.

INTERVIEWER:

[Laughs] Where was your house? We know where your farm was, but . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Right where the golf course is today; that new one.

INTERVIEWER:

OH, so the . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Right at the entrance---just off the entrance to that golf course. The house and barn was there.

INTERVIEWER:

Near your uncle's house---farm.

ISHIBASHI:

Uncle's house was toward the slide area.

INTERVIEWER:

I see. That's a couple miles away.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

You didn't see each other that much?

ISHIBASHI:

Not too often.

INTERVIEWER:

What was your house like? Your father built the house?

ISHIBASHI:

It's one of these one by twelve shacks. You ever see a house built by one by twelve?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ISHIBASHI:

You make the floor plan first, and then you put up the side. You only got single wall, see. So, you put up the strut first, and then you nail on the one by twelve. Then you cut the hole for the window and then you make the window frame and you pound the window frame in there. And you put the window in. Oh, in other words, simple as hell see.

INTERVIEWER:

Like a garage mostly?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, it's really simple way.

INTERVIEWER:

How many rooms?

ISHIBASHI:

The one we had had (a) kitchen, dining room, bedroom, and a playroom. Then we made an extra room to do our schoolwork.

INTERVIEWER:

You didn't have any plumbing?

ISHIBASHI:

No, plumbing is all outdoor; but don't laugh---when I went back east, this was after the war, they were still pumping water like that, and they still had an outhouse. And they're supposed to be more modern than us guys on the west coast.

INTERVIEWER:

[Laughs] But we had it first

ISHIBASHI:

[Laughs]

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember when you got electricity?

0H21M46S

ISHIBASHI:

We put in electricity ourself. We bought battery---car battery---and the volts all had 32-volt generators for their light and everything, so we bought that and hooked up---and bought six battery and hooked them up and then that makes 36-volt, but then everything like the light bulb and everything, is 32-volts, see; so we had our own electricity and got away from the Coleman lantern. And the stove was---I don't know if you remember these old kerosene stoves. That was what you called a modern stove in those days. You know, it's got that glass bowl that you put kerosene in and then you tip it over upside-down and then you put it into a container, and it's got a pipe that runs down and then it's got this deal, and you got the burner on top, see.

INTERVIEWER:

I never saw one like that.

ISHIBASHI:

You never saw one like that? Man, you're a young fart!

INTERVIEWER:

You're right; I'm 61 and still too young.

ISHIBASHI:

How old?

INTERVIEWER:

61.

ISHIBASHI:

61---I'm 90.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, I heard that. Can I ask you some other things?

ISHIBASHI:

No. What else you want to know?

INTERVIEWER:

I want to know about the furo.

ISHIBASHI:

Furo---that's an ingenious one. See, my dad went to town and got this sheet metal guy to make a form like that, you know, big . . .

INTERVIEWER:

Oval shaped . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

. . . maybe this wide---about that wide, see. And then wrapped the sheet metal all around and soldered the bottom, but then before he soldered the bottom, put the roll on top. You know, you ever see the . . . ?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

ISHIBASHI:

You crank---put the sheet metal on, guy got to crank it and fold that sheet metal. And then you make it round and you solder that all up, see. And then you put the outlet on so you can drain the water, see. There you have the bathtub.

INTERVIEWER:

So, it was all metal like a big bucket.

ISHIBASHI:

But, other Buddha-heads all made it out of wood. They were all made out of wood, red wood. But, my dad didn't go for that; he made it out of the galvanized sheet metal.

INTERVIEWER:

You had a fire underneath?

ISHIBASHI:

And then you put the fire under there, and you got warm water.

INTERVIEWER:

Now, who got to use the furo first?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, anybody that can . . . wanted to go in, see.

INTERVIEWER:

No particular order, no?

ISHIBASHI:

No, other family had way of doing that, but then us---my dad didn't give a damn if we want to go in first; okay. Whoever wants to, go ahead---go. But you got to make the fire if you want to go in early, you make the fire first and put the water in and get it going. Nobody's gonna make it for you if you want to take a bath early, see.

0H25M34S

INTERVIEWER:

In everyday life, what did you usually do after dinner? What was your nighttime activity?

ISHIBASHI:

Nighttime---there wasn't much to do. You do your study---school study and go to sleep. Then we had a crystal set---did you ever?

INTERVIEWER:

Like a radio?

ISHIBASHI:

Radio, see---and the only way you find a station that you want, you got that little crystal here and you got that ding-ding, that touches that thing and then you hunt for the station you want.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, I remember that.

ISHIBASHI:

You ever see those?

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, I used to have one when I was in grade school.

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, you had that?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, cheap, very cheap---like 50 cents, I think, you could buy one.

ISHIBASHI:

[Laughs]

INTERVIEWER:

Why don't we take a break; okay?

ISHIBASHI:

Ok, bring out the wine.

INTERVIEWER:

We'll take a break. Let's bring the wine out.

[Break]

INTERVIEWER:

Let's start again.

ISHIBASHI:

Now?

INTERVIEWER:

Let's see, it's about five minutes to one. We took a short break, and I wanted to ask you about---more about your house and family life. What kind of food did your mom cook?

ISHIBASHI:

Regular Japanese food.

INTERVIEWER:

You got whatever vegetables and meat . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, whatever veggies we had thrown in with that. And then, later on, fish man used to come every week, so you could buy fish, or you can buy bologna, weenie, tofu, age, things like that.

0H27M26S

INTERVIEWER:

That was a good deal.

ISHIBASHI:

That was once a week, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Your mom died pretty young.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, she died when, let's see, I was---I think I was around 14 or something like that. She had kidney problem, but today you have kidney problem---nothing to it. In the old days, doctors didn't know what to do, see---there was nothing they could do.

INTERVIEWER:

She must have been in a lot of pain.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

So, who took care of the kids after she died?

ISHIBASHI:

I had to do the cooking.

INTERVIEWER:

You did the cooking?

ISHIBASHI:

And I had to clean the house, until my sister got older and she started helping.

INTERVIEWER:

I see. And you cooked about the same kind of food?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah; then my dad would cook breakfast, because he would get up early.

INTERVIEWER:

What time did you get up?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, you got to get up around five o'clock every morning. And then you got to feed the horse early enough so they would have food in their stomach before you put them to work.

INTERVIEWER:

I see.

ISHIBASHI:

You can't just get up same time and put the harness on and expect the horse to work. They got to eat, so you got to make sure you feed them, maybe, a couple hours before you put them to work.

INTERVIEWER:

So they digest a little bit. You didn't have a tractor at the beginning.

ISHIBASHI:

In the beginning, no; we bought a tractor, let's see, oh, that would be, I think around the time my brother graduated from high school, so that would be in 1932, I think it was.

INTERVIEWER:

Where did you go shopping?

0H29M50S

ISHIBASHI:

San Pedro.

INTERVIEWER:

San Pedro; and you bought your clothes and shoes, everything in San Pedro?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah; everything there.

INTERVIEWER:

How about doctors and dentists?

ISHIBASHI:

Doctors, there's a hakujin doctor we got to know, Dr. Smith. And there was one more doctor, let's see, who was that doctor? Anyway, there's two doctors we can depend on in San Pedro. And then, serious case, we could call Dr. Tashiro. He was practicing in L.A.

INTERVIEWER:

We know about him.

ISHIBASHI:

You know about him?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, we heard

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, because when he was in sanitarium and his older daughter was in there, too, with lung case

INTERVIEWER:

Something like tuberculosis?

ISHIBASHI:

So, my friend and I went to see him then.

INTERVIEWER:

You talked about the road around Palos Verdes was always dirt

ISHIBASHI:

Dirt road.

INTERVIEWER:

Until when?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, let's see; when did they start building that? They must have started, let's see, 1928, someplace in the 1930s.

INTERVIEWER:

Early 1930s; so you were graduated from high school about then.

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

You graduated from high school around 19---, what, 32?

ISHIBASHI:

I got out in 1930---I think 1935, someplace around there.

INTERVIEWER:

You were born in 1914?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Kind of old for high school?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah. Skipped . . .

INTERVIEWER:

Because you missed school?

ISHIBASHI:

. . . a whole year; and then, and then, after running around all over and doing all kinds of things, I decided to go to Woodbury College. So, in the last---I think, I had another quarter to go and the war broke out.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, let's go back. You went to what elementary school?

ISHIBASHI:

Elementary school was Point Fermin.

INTERVIEWER:

Point Fermin; and then intermediate school was, where?

ISHIBASHI:

Junior High School was Richard Henry Dana. That was a brand new junior high school.

INTERVIEWER:

And then San Pedro High School was your . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

And San Pedro High School was the old high school.

OH33M31S

INTERVIEWER:

Were there many Japanese kids in your classes?

ISHIBASHI:

Well, there's quite a few that came from---at junior high school and high school from Terminal Island. See, they were all fishermen family.

INTERVIEWER:

And how about sports; did you play sports?

ISHIBASHI:

No; the only thing we had was judo and Japanese wrestling at the farm. And we can join as a club against any team in Southern California.

INTERVIEWER:

You told me once that there was a Japanese community building.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, we had a community building.

INTERVIEWER:

And then afterwards, they built a barn . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

To be used for judo.

ISHIBASHI:

But the area is still there, and there's one of the old houses, usable house, still there. That's above that slide area.

INTERVIEWER:

Slide area---any part of that building still there?

ISHIBASHI:

There's one---I think one building is still up there.

INTERVIEWER:

And they had Japanese school there?

ISHIBASHI:

They used to have Japanese school there, see.

0H35M06S

INTERVIEWER:

Did you go?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, we went just to go and that's about it---not to learn, just to play.

[Both Laugh]

INTERVIEWER:

We talked about judo; your older brother was pretty good.

ISHIBASHI:

My older brother was pretty good. He went to Japan on a tournament, and then my younger brother next to me, he was pretty good, but then he didn't go into no tournament.

INTERVIEWER:

Your older brother went with your cousin?

ISHIBASHI:

No; he went with a group from Terminal Island and the Gardena area---all around here there formed a group that went to Japan.

INTERVIEWER:

So, this might have been, what, 1925, something like that?

ISHIBASHI:

No, had to be in the 30s, I think. After the 30s . . .

INTERVIEWER:

So, he was probably 18-20 years old.

ISHIBASHI:

. . . someplace around there.

INTERVIEWER:

I heard they went to Korea and Taiwan, also. Is that possible?

ISHIBASHI:

No, I don't think so; they were just in the Japan area only.

INTERVIEWER:

Did he get to go . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Because other groups, I think, they start expanding and going further.

INTERVIEWER:

Did he get to go to Wakayama?

ISHIBASHI:

At that time, he got to take a trip to see the grandfather area, the house and everything.

INTERVIEWER:

Now, how often did the families get together; was it just on weekends?

ISHIBASHI:

Today?

INTERVIEWER:

No; in the old days?

ISHIBASHI:

Well, there's no place else to go. You stay home.

INTERVIEWER:

You just stayed home?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you go see your cousins?

ISHIBASHI:

No, if they want to come over, or we want to go over, we went, but then, there's no reason.

INTERVIEWER:

About how many families were there in the old days, 20s and 30s?

0H37M35S

ISHIBASHI:

In the old days, how many farmers as a group out there---see, in the beginning, the very beginning, the association was called San Pedro Farmers Marketing Company. And that include the farmers in---that would be, let's see, anyway, one would be, one farmer was on top of that where Union Oil Company is, just south of that there's a trash burning---a big trash burning chimney up there. That hill used to be, I think, one or two farmers farmed up there. But the original farms started in Wilmington area, see.

But the shipping was done from San Pedro, so the name was San Pedro Marketing Company. And that's one of the end of the lug box. You know, lug boxes you make to pack cucumber and squash and tomato. That was the lug box, see. And pea and beans were gunny sacked until later we start using wire-bound. But that's the original end of the lug box.

INTERVIEWER:

So you didn't have much time to play around when you were a kid?

ISHIBASHI:

Wait a minute---wait a minute [hearing difficulty].

INTERVIEWER:

When you were a kid, did you play around or roam the Palos Verdes area?

ISHIBASHI:

You don't get to play around too much.

INTERVIEWER:

Don't get to, huh?

ISHIBASHI:

You always busy.

INTERVIEWER:

Even weekends?

ISHIBASHI:

Even weekend, yeah---weekends, if we, well, we had to go to Japanese school on Saturday, and Sunday, you had to work on the ranch because anything that you harvest, you have to harvest on Sunday, so it goes to the market to be sold on Monday. And the last day you would pick anything for the market is Friday, because that goes in, it would be sold on a Saturday.

INTERVIEWER:

You had a six-day week, for sure. You told me one time, you could find arrowheads and things.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, you could find arrowheads in the field once in a while, and then, you know where the lighthouse is today?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

0H41M27S

ISHIBASHI:

You look on this side that hill on the lighthouse used to be a cave. And the Indians used to stay in that, so we used to find arrow heads in there.

INTERVIEWER:

The lighthouse you're talking about, Point Vicente Lighthouse? Did you know the people that lived there?

ISHIBASHI:

Who?

INTERVIEWER:

Did you know the lighthouse keeper?

ISHIBASHI:

No, there was a girl that always went to school from there, but then, you know how white people were in those days---they wouldn't talk to you.

INTERVIEWER:

They wouldn't? I was going to ask you about that. Do you have any non-Japanese friends?

ISHIBASHI:

Any what?

INTERVIEWER:

Did you have any non-Japanese friends?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, yeah, at White Point, the hakujin family---they were nice, the hakujin family, and one of them is still around. He's Chester Woodman that became sheriff. He's retired, but then he

lives in---I think he lives in Inglewood or in that area. But then, he's too old to come out to say hello or anything.

INTERVIEWER:

Was he a close friend of yours?

ISHIBASHI:

We all went to school together.

INTERVIEWER:

School friends.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Who was your closest friend? Do you remember?

ISHIBASHI:

Well, those guys, they were all friends, and then there was the Tagami's that had that hot spring down below? They had the hot spring, they had the restaurant, and they had a swimming pool. They lived up on top, too, see, and we all went to school together.

INTERVIEWER:

Did they also farm?

ISHIBASHI:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

They didn't know how to farm?

ISHIBASHI:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

Now, going back to the Indian relics, you said there was a cave by the lighthouse, were there other caves?

OH43M34S

ISHIBASHI:

There was a---I know there's a cave above . . . I never went to it, but Ashimoto, Mas Ashimoto went to that cave up there, because he lived near there.

INTERVIEWER:

Around the other side?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, and then, the cave we always used to go, above the ranch, not too far---let's see, where May lives right now.

INTERVIEWER:

By the quarry?

ISHIBASHI:

It would be on that side, you know, and further in the gully, but all that---housing level everything off, so you'd never find nothing.

INTERVIEWER:

Geez; how about animals, did you see animals in Palos Verdes?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, there was always rabbit, squirrels, skunk, and then coyotes. Oh, there was a bunch of coyotes, but they seemed to travel from this mountain and between (the) Santa Monica Mountains. Sometime, you don't hear them at all and then sometime they come back over this side and they be barking up on the hill.

INTERVIEWER:

They come after the rabbits?

ISHIBASHI:

They chase a rabbit and everything, but that---I guess that's what they ate, anyway, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

You didn't see any fox, or anything like that?

ISHIBASHI:

The fox came there because of the Vanderlip's had these fox hunt brought in eastern friends, so they brought in the fox and turned them loose, and then on the horseback they be chasing the fox all over the hill.

INTERVIEWER:

They brought the peacocks, too.

0H45M46S

ISHIBASHI:

The peacocks were there before the Vanderlip's bought the place. The person that had it, I don't know, whether it was this guy that's down in Baja today.

INTERVIEWER:

Was it the Bixbys?

ISHIBASHI:

No; because he had a caretaker that lived there, out there all the time, and the caretaker would come and collect the rent, I know, see.

INTERVIEWER:

You used to go diving for abalone. Tell us about that.

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, man, there were so damn many abalone you couldn't believe it. And then on the shore, you could get these black ones; but then, we didn't care for the black one. So we go diving for these green abalone, and red ones, big ones like that.

INTERVIEWER:

You didn't need anything special, you'd just dive in with your trunks on?

ISHIBASHI:

In other word, I don't like cold water, so, anyway, before you jumped in to do any diving, I would make a fire, see. But later on, after the war, Kojima---most of the Japanese that came out of the camp that were sent back home, you know, a lot of them took over and stayed at these homes that the government built for shipbuilding people. You know, at Wilmington there were hundreds of these big two-story buildings that the shipbuilders were housed in. Well, after everything was over and the Japanese came back they lived in that. So, his father lived in one, see. And anyway, we met him in Lindsey. This story goes backward

INTERVIEWER:

Ok, yeah.

ISHIBASHI:

When the war broke out, right away the hakujin that was running Palos Verdes Corporation---oh, they were mean son of a bitches. They came out and told us the contract lease is over, get the hell out. But, Redondo side, the homeowners association owned

the property that Japanese were farming. Before, there was nothing, there was bare ground, see. I used to take the car out there and run all over the dry field, because nothing is growing, see. But during the Depression, all these gardeners in LA were losing their jobs. They started coming out to farm, so that area became a farm ground, see. But the homeowners association said since you guys got kicked out, you guys can come over and this side and live with the family on this side, so we were able to stay on this side for a little while, but then during that period, the two other younger Niseis, they were older than me, but then I came back from Woodbury to take care of everything because everybody was too busy to do anything.

So, I volunteered to go look for places. So I traveled all over looking for a place. But then, went to Arizona, there was a nice place, big track of ground, This guy that worked for a railroad company owned a big track, but I can't bring them out here to this desert where we have to have big tractor because, you know those mesquite bushes growing here and there. They're far apart, but then when the wind blows, all the sand is piled up by the mesquite tree. You can cut the mesquite tree by hand and burn them, but how you are you going to get the ground level unless you have big equipment. So, I told the guy, this is a nice place away from everything, but then, we don't have the equipment to work this kind of ground. So, I'm sorry, we have to decline. So, that was south of Poston [Relocation Camp]--- you know what Poston look like?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

0H51M20S

ISHIBASHI:

But, Poston was all right because the contractors run everything over so it wasn't bush with a pile of sand that you couldn't climb over.

INTERVIEWER:

You actually were looking at land, if you had been farming there, you wouldn't have been sent to Poston.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, you have to farm to survive. So, then, I finally found this place up in Lindsey, see. So the Lindsey Japanese Association farmed the ground, but they went broke. So the building was there, the water pump was there, the electric line

was there. So all we had to do is rent it from the hakujin that owned it. So, he says, well, you can have it for \$3,000 a year. So, I say, okay; write him a check for \$3000. Here it is; we'll be up here with a bunch in no time. So, I got everybody to come up and then we start working on the ground, plus brought with the big trucks, we bought all the house material, and the house we had---we tore that house, because it had all good, brand new wood, see. So, we brought all that wood up to build a barrack, and kitchen and everything.

INTERVIEWER:

Why don't we take a break again, and we'll continue your story.

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, you gonna take a break; okay.

INTERVIEWER:

And were gonna go back and talk about the start of the war, because you started your backward story.

0H53M12S

ISHIBASHI:

All right, let's see what you want to talk about now.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; we'll take a break.

[Break]

INTERVIEWER:

Let me introduce this part. You were telling us about when the war broke out, you knew that there was a part of California you could still farm in, but wouldn't be sent to the camp.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, when we were still farming there, they issued an order and stuck these paper up and say we got to evacuate, and get down to the train station, and you can only bring what you can carry, see. And that's how we had to get out of that farm out there.

So, we're all on the train, and they pull the shade down where you couldn't see nothing, and all you know **[makes train noises]** the train going this way. Pretty soon it stop, pretty soon (makes noise) going backward. All night long, back and forth. Finally got to Poston---oh shit; was it hot---hotter than a son-of-a-gun out there. And you couldn't get out until they brought

the buses over, and they would . . . you had to wait, anyway, hotter than a son-of-a-gun. And they had the guards around, but I says, "This is full of shit; there's a store over there. I'm going to jump over and go down and get some ice cream for the kids." So I jump out of the damn place, the guard's there, but I didn't care. They want to shoot, go ahead, shoot. I'm gonna go there and get some ice cream for the kids. So, I made about two trips. With all the money I had, I bought ice cream, and pass it out to all the kids in the car.

Then, finally, they brought the bus over and loaded us out, and oh shit; we're going down this dirty road, dusty as hell, get to the damn camp there, and they dump us off, and then they tell you . . . you know, they had guys ahead of us that told us what to do, see---so what building you can get to. Go to the damn place---nothing there. They find you a different room, it's a barrack, but then it's got how many doors, and so many could get in this and that and all that. Get in there, there's nothing in there. They tell you, here's a bag. You go over there, there's a pile of hay there. Put the hay in there, that's your mattress. So you go there and get that filled and that's your mattress for the night. Oh shit; the wind start blowing and all the cracks---the dust is coming through---man, that was one hell-hole.

INTERVIEWER:

That was your first?

ISHIBASHI:

What camp did you go? You wasn't born yet?

INTERVIEWER:

I wasn't born

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, you lucky.

INTERVIEWER:

I was born in Topaz, Utah.

ISHIBASHI:

Oh.

INTERVIEWER:

So, my parents tell the same story.

0H56M56S

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, they told you all the story?

INTERVIEWER: So, when you were in the barracks, how many of you were in the one room?

ISHIBASHI:

Well, my dad, and myself, and my brother were able to stay in one room in that big barrack. I don't know who else stayed in these other ones. I didn't give a damn who was in the damn place, because I ain't going to stay there that long.

INTERVIEWER:

What about your brother, Mas? Was he in the same room with you?

ISHIBASHI:

No, he was in another room with his family.

INTERVIEWER:

He was married, and he didn't

ISHIBASHI:

Because Mas, Satoshi was about, let's see, I think he must been about four years old or something. Anyway I remember when everybody had to take a shot---what kind of a shot? Some kind of shot, anyway, **[Laughs]** and the guy, intern, or the doctors, nurse, or whoever it was give him a shot, so he's mad, he goes up there and kick the guy **[Laughs]**.

INTERVIEWER:

This is Satoshi! **[Laughs]** How about, let's go back to Pearl Harbor Day, What were you doing that day?

ISHIBASHI:

Pearl Harbor, when that, let's see---now, anyway, I don't know exactly how everything happened. All I know is the war broke out; but before the war broke out, I know everything was full of bullshit. The Army already put the telephone wire from Pedro, Fort McArthur all the way out to the ranch, because that point sticks out a little bit further and, I don't know if they went further that way. I never give a damn which way that wire went, but the wire went down the ranch and went out to the outpost they had at the point of our ranch.

The God damn thing gets in the way, so I was telling one of the guys, son-of-a-bitch I might run over, and he says, you run over that son-of-a-bitch, we'll shoot you. **[Laughs]** So, that was before Pearl Harbor. The wires were---outpost was already in, and you can't tell me that Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japanese first. Everything was planned to the detail.

INTERVIEWER:

You told me once about a submarine you saw. Can you tell me . . . ?

ISHIBASHI: That was full of shit because I seen it.

1H00M00S

INTERVIEWER:

You and your brother?

ISHIBASHI:

My brother was with me, and I think at that time, I think, I let him drive the truck and I was sitting on the side, and ocean was rough. You know, it wasn't a big rough like this, but it was choppy water. So, as we're coming up by the lighthouse, as the road goes up and then it goes down, just when it's coming up like that, I tell my brother, hey, this is a good time for the sub to come up and shoot. And while I'm watching, there comes a torpedo, heading right for that lumber schooner that was going.

And it hit toward---behind the engine room, anyway, about the middle here, the ass-end here, about right here. It hit there, a gush of water went up, see. And all the news, people say, "Oh, we were standing watching then, and the submarine came up and they waved the Japan flag." Oh, the bullshit they put in the newspaper. But, the sub was on the inside shooting outward. It had to be a U.S. sub, see. And then, instead of bombing mid-channel, the airplanes when they came out, you know where they dropped the bomb?

INTERVIEWER:

Where?

ISHIBASHI:

Where would you say would be the logical place to drop a bomb?

INTERVIEWER:

I don't know; I'm not a good Army guy.

ISHIBASHI:

Mid-channel, because a sub can only go so fast underwater, see; that's because they're running on electric motor. And they were dropping bomb on the shoreline of Catalina. You know the wind blows so right along the shoreline of Catalina is a clear spot, maybe the clear spot must be about one mile wide, or so. Dropping bombs ---how can the sub get out there that soon, see? Because a fishing boat, they go 12 knots. It takes, the fishing boat from Catalina to this side, not to the shore, but out by the edge, way out where you're in deep water yet---two hours, and they're going 12 knots. The sub can't go 12 knots underwater, no how, see. So, how can they be out on the shoreline of Catalina and dropping bombs out there, see?

INTERVIEWER:

Very suspicious.

1H03M49S

ISHIBASHI:

So, you know right away, it's a US sub that shot the torpedo. And they didn't shoot it from outside, for---where submarine should be. They shot it from shoreline side. So, the war was made---made up, see; even in Hawaii, the President's staff knew exactly where the Japan armada was coming. When they were 200 miles out, they could have told everybody in Hawaii, "Hey, get ready, and then moved that *Arizona* out." No; the only ones that got a message, a private message that was from Washington, carried by this person, went on this---it's not a super-cruiser, it's one of these ---it's not a destroyer---it's bigger than a destroyer, smaller than the battleship.

That captain got an order to pull out---head out, and when you get out in the deep water, open this letter; his instructions there. When he opened the letter, prepare for war, throw everything overboard. So, he got . . . in other word, whoever wrote this article got this all this down pat. The captain read the message, threw all the luxury items overboard and he headed out, but was not told where to go. All he did was head out, so he's heading out east instead of going north. And, Japan armada is coming North, heading out toward Alaska, and then coming down into Hawaii, see. And the war staff knew all that. And when they were 200 miles out, the Japan armada, they could have warned the general, but no. They didn't know anything, until the bombs start flying. And, when the plane came over, they thought it was their own U.S. plane.

Then the admiral that was supposed to have the airplane ready to take off, they were all in a group, so these guys won't steal anything off of it. So, he had to get them all scattered, and he's out there in his pajamas to get everything out, see. Now, how did they fix, the headquarter---fix all those things? So everything was fixed.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, despite that, you joined the service.

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

You joined the service.

1H07M39S

ISHIBASHI:

You know, they won't take anybody in the service Buddha-head. My brother was in San Luis Obispo. All the Buddha-heads lost their gun, and then they were all shipped out to Kansas, no guns. Then all they did was sit around and do clean-up. Then, I don't know who got the bright idea to let the Japanese Americans form a group of their own. So, the ones that were there, were used as a leading group. So, when they were sent down to Shelby, they took over all the upper jobs, see. And then when we got in, you couldn't fill any of the positions, because everything was all filled.

INTERVIEWER:

So you were a buck private.

ISHIBASHI:

So you're down on the bottom shit list [Laughs].

INTERVIEWER:

And this was what group?

ISHIBASHI:

So, anyway, I was sent in to F Company. And, anyway, somehow during the last practice maneuver I got hurt. So I got sent to the hospital, and I went from hospital to hospital, and then they finally sent me home.

INTERVIEWER:

But no Purple Heart?

ISHIBASHI:

Nothing. [Laughs]

INTERVIEWER:

But your brother served?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, he was lucky he came back without getting a scratch.

INTERVIEWER:

He went over to Europe?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, he was in headquarter company, so, you don't do nothing but sit in the office, or sit in the tent where nobody bothered you.

INTERVIEWER:

He didn't have to shoot his rifle or anything.

ISHIBASHI:

He didn't have to get into no shooting fight. But, he ran across a whole, big chest full of invasion money---the German invasion money. So, he says, "Oh shit; look at all this God damn money." So he tells, "Hey shit; you guys want money, here." He just taking it and throwing it out and giving it to everybody. After he gave everything away, he found out that money was good. It wasn't invasion money, but it was good, usable money [Laughs].

INTERVIEWER:

You went to Chicago during the war?

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

You went to Chicago during the war; what was that story?

ISHIBASHI:

What?

INTERVIEWER:

You went to Chicago?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, I stopped by in Chicago. See, after the war they were still taking guys in the Army for these after-war duties, see. And my brother, the youngest brother . . . see, when we were in camp. I wasn't gonna stay in camp, no how. Nobody's gonna keep me in jail, because that's a jail. The gun of the soldiers that guard the place is facing in, not facing out to keep the guys from coming in---keeping the Buddha-heads from going out. Shit, I ain't going to stay in this God damn jail. So, you could go out on a contract to top sugar beets, see. So, I says, "Okay; I'm going to get my ass out of here."

So, I go look in the paper that has all these contract where you can go. I look for the smallest acreage I can find. Oh, here's one that's---what the hell was that? It must have been about five acres or so. And my brother don't want to go out, but I says, "No; you're going out with me. So I take him to smallest acreage, never mind. And then when we get out, you're going back east, because he was a chick-sexer, and you go back east, shit you can make good money chick sexing, so, anyway, I made him come with me, and we take this small acreage.

And the house the guy have, it's one of these little teeny shit house like cabin, no running water, no nothing. It has a coal-burning stove only. I know all about coal so it didn't bother me. And running water, there's a little creek the water's running. So that's the only water you got, see. And I look at the water, God damn, got these muskrats in there. You know they stir the water so the water's dirty, so, God damn, the only way to get clean water is early in the morning before they stir the water. So you got to get the bucket and make sure you get enough water. Anyway, it didn't bother me about the stove, because I know how to start fires in the stove, see. There's nothing to it, so, anyway, the owner took us down to the store to buy stuff. I had enough money to buy enough grocery, I figure, well, should be able to finish in a week, so buy enough food for over a week, anyway. Buy everything I need and then come back. So, anyway, all set to work. Oh shit, them sugar beets are big as hell. They're about that long, and they got the leaf, about that much, and they're about that round.

The farmer goes with a kind of a plow that goes along the side of the plants and loosen them up, see. So then, you got to go along and you got a big, butcher knife with a hook on the end, so you take the hook and hook it while it partly out of the ground, so you can get them out of the ground. And when you get it out, you're lifting it up with enough speed so you can go like that and release it, and cut the leaf off. But when you

cut the leaf off, then you can throw the beets to the side, and you keep doing that all day long.

INTERVIEWER:

And so with one hand?

1H15M26S

ISHIBASHI:

With one hand; yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

This beet is as big as football

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

You spike it, and throw it up and then slice the beet . . .

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

How long did it take you to learn that?

ISHIBASHI:

And it took us a week to do that small acreage. And then the Buddha-head---two of them, they took acreage close to town.

INTERVIEWER:

George, we got to change the CD now.

[End of CD 1; Begin CD 2]

INTERVIEWER:

It's approximately 1:58 on January 23, 2004. This is a continuation and the second CD of the interview of George Ishibashi on the same date being conducted by me, Richard Kawasaki, for the South Bay Oral History Project.

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strictly prohibited without a written authorization from the South Bay Chapter of the Japanese-American Citizen League. Let's continue the interview.

So, you were talking about your contract experience doing sugar beets. And what did you do after that?

OH01M06S

ISHIBASHI:

After we finish, then we helped the two boys that had a bigger acreage, and then I went to Salt Lake City. And I arrange everything for my brother to go back east.

INTERVIEWER:

This was after the war---during the war?

ISHIBASHI:

No; after the war.

INTERVIEWER:

George, let me clear it up. The sugar beets was during the war?

ISHIBASHI:

During the war.

INTERVIEWER:

And you sent your younger brothers back east during the war?

ISHIBASHI:

So, he went back east, but then later on, after the war he got a draft order to report . . . let's see where in the hell did he have to report? Anyway, I forgot where he had to report. Anyway, I decide, oh, I'll go back east and go---come back with him. So I went back east and caught different train and went out there. And then we stayed together for a few days and then another friend of his wanted to come back, too. He was a chick-sexer, too, so three of us came back together---drove back.

INTERVIEWER:

Now, you have a younger sister?

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

You have a younger sister; what did she do during the war?

ISHIBASHI :

Let's see; she got married before the war, so she was in Santa Ana. They went to Gila Center. Then when my brother got the place up in Utah, told them to come out, because he got the neighboring ranch and a house there; so they came out and stayed at the next house.

INTERVIEWER :

What part of Utah was this?

ISHIBASHI :

This was northern Utah, north of---let's see---it would be near Brigham City. Right there Brigham City had a Army hospital, I know---you know a recuperating center. That's where some of the 442s came back to. So I used to go visit them over there, see.

INTERVIEWER :

So you had a brother and a sister in that area? And you were roaming all over the place?

ISHIBASHI :

I was still running around, yeah; doing different things.

INTERVIEWER :

You had been released from the Army because of your injury, so you pretty much went anywhere you wanted to?

ISHIBASHI :

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER :

Why was that, because you were a serviceman, or?

ISHIBASHI :

I could go anyplace for 30 days until I got home. Army says you can travel 30 days to your home. So, I'm not going from here to there in 30 days; I'm going all over for 30 days. So, I brought my friend, because my friend had---I met him over in Salt Lake City, see and became friends---him and his wife and a baby. So, he lived in Gardena, see. So, he wanted to come see and sell the house. So I tell him, okay; I'll take you because that way you got protection, see. I'll be in uniform yet, see. But, you're not going sell the house. So, we come out and then . . .

INTERVIEWER :

You came to Gardena?

ISHIBASHI:

. . . Gardena, right here on Halldale Street. The family had the house there, so they had everything still in there. And when the Buddha-heads could come to the coast, he rented the house to some young couple that were out in Salt Lake City, see. And, anyway, that house had a back house, too. The back house, the mother used to have that back house as a sewing school, because she was a seamstress, see. So, anyway, he wanted to come look at the house and sell it. And I says, "Bullshit; we'll go out there---we'll look at the house, but you ain't going to sell it."

OH07M04S

INTERVIEWER:

What was this fellow's name?

ISHIBASHI:

The fellow's named Shigaki. The wife is still living, but the husband passed away.

INTERVIEWER:

What was it like during the war coming back to Gardena?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, nothing; just like anything else, one time it goes bad, or one time it was good. Like, one, you know where A-1 Flower Shop is?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

ISHIBASHI:

That---the old man came back first to stay in there. So, anyway, my friend knew him so, so we stayed there, see.

INTERVIEWER:

You stayed there?

ISHIBASHI:

And then he was living there by himself, nobody was there, so we stayed with him. Then we cruised around here and there, see. So, anyway, I told my friend, "Hey, you know, I got to have a drink, let's go to Daniel's Café." You know where Daniel's Café is, right there on---is it---corner of?

INTERVIEWER:

Was this in downtown Gardena?

ISHIBASHI:

Normandie and Gardena Boulevard, I guess.

INTERVIEWER:

Something like that.

ISHIBASHI:

Anyway, that was a popular place for everybody. So we go in there, and my friend don't drink so, we go in there. He orders Coca-Cola and I order Scotch, see. And we're drinking, and then a whole bunch of GIs in the back, they see me and my friend in there, and say, "We're gonna throw these god damned Japs out of here." So they come out after us, then one big **haole** stands up. "Over my dead body, you guys, get back there." So those guys stopped. He was a six-footer, anyway. And he was my friend's good friend. They knew each other well, see. So, anyway, that ended everything and we got out of there.

INTERVIEWER:

Otherwise, they would have beaten you up.

INTERVIEWER:

[Laughs] Lucky, huh? So, you went back to camp. Where did you go from there?

ISHIBASHI:

Then, we hung around for a while, and we went back to Salt Lake City, and I told them to arrange everything to get back here, see. So, when I got ready, I got my uncle to come with me, and then, we're going to look for a place to stay and may look around in Lomita, and see if we can find a place to stay. So, it was pretty hard to find anything, but then, we finally---I think it was my aunt finally heard about---there's a chicken farmer that lived in Lomita, and they weren't coming back. So anyway, she told us to go look at that, see.

INTERVIEWER:

So, you were getting ready for the end of the war---thinking about coming back and starting.

0H11M26S

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, before anything happened, I know we're coming back. Bullshit on all this stuff. They ain't gonna keep me out. So,

when I was inducted into the Army, and I was given a 30-day pass before reporting for duty, I went to see the owner of the ranch at P.V. And the original guys that---kind of a hard to get along haole---that were operating that piece of ground, they got fired, and two brothers of Vanderlip, took over so they would be out of the service, because they were our age, so they're scheduled to be inducted. So, if they were operating a ranch, they wouldn't be bothered. So, anyway, I went to see them, see. So, I asked them, in case I don't get knocked over oversea, and I get a chance to get back, can I get a chance to lease the ground? So they said, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

This was Frank, Jr.?

ISHIBASHI:

Frank and Kelvin.

INTERVIEWER:

Kelvin . . . and the guy that you had trouble getting along with, was that Mr. Hansen?

ISHIBASHI:

The other **haoles** were kicked out so I never had any problem.

INTERVIEWER:

So you moved around a lot when your family was in camp, you were traveling.

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, I was cruising around all over.

INTERVIEWER:

You went to Chicago one time, how did . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, that was on the way back, when I brought my brother back from back East, because he got the draft order to report, see. Even though he was a chick-sexer, see. So, we dropped off in Chicago to see some of the guys that moved out there.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you work there for a while, or . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

No, we just drove through and drove out.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, okay; you moved around a lot for somebody that was supposed to be in camp.

ISHIBASHI:

Well, I did a lot of running around. I don't know how I did it without no money.

INTERVIEWER:

Now . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

And a funny thing, I never earned a lot of money, but I always had some money someplace. Everyplace I went, I had a saving account. I would spend so much, and I would put so much in the saving account. So, when I had to buy this house, I said, "Oh shit; I got to get all that money from all over. Oh, no, no, I got to write here---write a letter here, write a letter there, and have them send the money." You know, when I got the money---that money was over---well over \$100,000. For a guy that didn't earn much money, where in hell did I get all that money? I didn't steal money from nobody. I gave money to a lot of guys. The kid---you know young guys that were out of the service, but running around. Oh, they're broke. Naturally, they're broke, because they're always gambling, see. Oh, okay; let's go eat. We go eat. Oh, they need someplace to stay. Okay; go over to this hotel, get you a place to stay.

0H15M46S

INTERVIEWER:

You must have had a lot of accounts?

ISHIBASHI:

I don't know how many accounts I had, but I know I had quite a bit, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

ISHIBASHI:

But, how can I when I wasn't earning too much money?

INTERVIEWER:

I don't know.

ISHIBASHI:

Even when I was working at Kojima's. I worked there 20 years. The first five years I was making \$240 a week. And all these other guys making \$300, \$400, \$500 a week.

INTERVIEWER:

Let's come back to Kojima's, because we skipped the part right after the war. When the war ended, what happened to you and your family?

ISHIBASHI:

Kojima's family, the old man

INTERVIEWER:

Your family---the Ishibashi's, what happened to them?

ISHIBASHI:

Which one?

INTERVIEWER:

Your family, your dad and Mas . . . where were they at the end of the war?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, they were still all in Utah, so no problem.

INTERVIEWER: B

But you had already talked to the Vanderlip's about coming back.

ISHIBASHI:

Say what?

INTERVIEWER:

You talked to the Vanderlip's about coming back.

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

So how long before they all came back?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, let's see; that was when they released the area for all the Buddha-heads to come back if they want to. So, I don't know exact what year it was.

INTERVIEWER:

Sometime after the war, they came back. And they started . . .
.

ISHIBASHI:

After the war, see.

INTERVIEWER: And they farmed the same land?

ISHIBASHI:

Somebody else was still farming that area, see. So, San Diego Fruit and Produce, they were big growers in Idaho, and they were growing in Santa Barbara area, and then they grew some out here. So, when I saw the foreman that was running the place, I tell him, "Hey, you need some help?" He says, "Yeah, can you get me some help?" "What you want me to do?" "Oh, go cut the grass in the pea field. Oh, I'll get five guys."

So, out at Long Beach camp, I get five guys to come with me. So I got to go pick them up everyday, and then we go through the field. Five guys finish the place in no time, and then it's time to pick the pea. And at that time, he didn't have a crew, so he asked me, "Hey can you get anybody to pick the peas?" I says, "Oh, yeah; I can get you all you want." So then, I told the people in the camp, I tell them, "Hey, if you going to work picking pea, I'll come down with a truck and you can jump on the truck and I'll take you up there. And you can pick pea."

So, the way they did it, well, you have to pick it in a bushel basket, see, and then when you fill that bushel basket, you take it to the scale. And then they weigh it. So, it's got to have more than 30 pounds in it, because a bushel is 30 pounds, and then they weigh it. And then, I had one of the girls watch the scale, and had this, you know, like the movie ticket that's in a roll, you take out one ticket and you give to the people, see. End of the day, they bring the tickets in and the big shot will take the ticket and give them cash. And that's how it works.

So, anyway, bring a crew from the Long Beach camp, and let them pick pea. So, they all make just enough money so they would have cash to buy something. So, that lasted only about two years, and that's it. And then, the last trip I---they still have pea that they grew in San Clemente. The Army had a---Army area in that big, flat canyon that went way back in, and they had San Diego Fruit and Produce grew pea in there, so they want me to bring a crew to pick pea in there.

So, I went for about a week with a bunch to pick the peas down there, too. So, they had a little cash on hand to buy what they needed, anyway. Because how can you get a job, you know, when you're in a camp and you go down Long Beach, or Wilmington, and want to get a job? No way, see.

OH21M21S

INTERVIEWER:

So, when did you go back to Palos Verdes?

ISHIBASHI:

So, after I helped them pick peas, and clean the place up and then I talked to the hakujin guys that were---that raised some garbanzo beans and grain, see. They were from---their nationality was Basque. And their father owned a big chunk of ground next to Howard Hughes' airport. But the old man owned that ground and the kids could work on it. But then that's not enough for the kids to make enough money. So, they got to do something on their own. So that's why they were growing garbanzo beans up in P.V.

So, I talked to them, and asked them, "Hey, can I come out here an help you guys, and whatever we can do?" They say, "Yeah, yeah, you can come out and help." So, that's how I got back in, and then they knew the ground wasn't big enough for them to make enough money, see. So, they found some ground up around central Cal. What they needed was, maybe, 500 acre flat ground. So that's what they got and they moved up there, so they left the ground to us. So, that's what I had. So, in other words, I was the one that got the lease, and got my brother and my cousin, and my other friends to come in to farm, and then Kojima's father want to come out, so I told him, no, I'll let you have 10 acres you can farm there, too, see.

INTERVIEWER:

How many farmers after the war?

ISHIBASHI:

After the war---just us guy.

Interviewer:

And the Kojima's?

ISHIBASHI:

Because there wasn't enough ground left, see, the housing's coming in like mad.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

ISHIBASHI:

In the old days, there were 43 separate farmers out there before the war.

INTERVIEWER:

But after---maybe a handful?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah. See, like Ashimoto family, they were gardeners in L.A. All right, Depression come, the house-owner maybe had lost his job; they didn't want no gardener. The hell with the grass.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

ISHIBASHI:

So most of them all lost their job. And they came out to PV and like where I told you, there was nothing---bare ground. I used to run my car, race around the damn place. They took over that kind of place and start growing, see. And they were making money. Like Ashimoto. Come out there with a junky old Cadillac. First thing, make a crop of peas, because they farm up on the hill. They just grew straight crop of pea only. They made money the first year . . . no more junky Cadillac, bought a brand new Ford coupe, see.

INTERVIEWER:

So after the war, you had yourself, your cousins?

0H25M25S

ISHIBASHI:

After the war, well, housing had moved into the Redondo area, so there was no farm, no way a farm out there---nothing but homes. All the way up, not quite to the lighthouse, see. They call it up to Berry Hill; that would be about mile that way toward Redondo up that lighthouse. So that lighthouse---that area was still hakujin guys still grew garbanzo beans in there, see.

INTERVIEWER:

And the Army took over some of that land.

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

The Army took over some of that . . .

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, right on the edge, they took over a little piece for rifle range.

INTERVIEWER:

I remember that. So, your farm was in the same old place that it was before the war?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, same old place, but then, we start losing, because that area where that golf course is now---they wanted to sell the ground for real estate purpose, and they changed the law saying any ground that's being farmed, but going to be for sale for real estate, you cannot farm on it. So, that big piece of ground where we had garbanzo growing---because I took over all that piece all the way up to the lighthouse, see---so, it was bare for, shit, way over ten years. You couldn't do nothing. Shit, we could've made money up the ass yet, see, but we only had a little piece left over, see. But this other part where we had left over, the house started moving in. It got smaller and smaller, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Your brother Mas was still farming?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, so it got so damn small that he almost didn't have nothing to do but sit around, see.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, wow.

ISHIBASHI:

And then the big piece that's still vacant now, a guy from Arizona bought it---a developer. And he bought it to put a golf course and homes in it, but when San Diego Sea World came and bought Marine Land, they bought Marine Land not to run it, see. Marine Land and Sea World, they were just barely, both of them, just barely making it. So, Sea World used their head---hey, buy that and close it up. So, soon as they bought it I knew what was going to happen; they're going to close it. But, all these guys working there didn't think so, see. That's where they made

their mistake. In no time flat, nighttime, they took all the animals down, out, and then told the guys, "Hey, no more job. That's it." So, the City Council was mad. So, regardless what somebody wants to do on that property, the City Council won't ok it. So, this guy that bought it, he can't do nothing. He wants to put a golf course and some houses in there. They won't okay it. So, it's still sitting there.

INTERVIEWER:

Still sitting there, yeah.

ISHIBASHI:

And then the guy wants to rent it to us, and he wants \$1,000 a month. I says, "You're crazy. The ground isn't worth that much to farm on." So, I see him, but I don't bullshit with him no more. No sense because he can't understand, see; he should have just let us farm it, and the ground would still be good. Somebody might want to grow something there, see.

INTERVIEWER: After the war, your dad lived how many years after the war?

0H30M45S

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

Your dad lived how many years after the war?

ISHIBASHI:

My dad didn't live---let's see.

INTERVIEWER:

I heard 19

ISHIBASHI:

He was there until Marine Land was built, and we all went to Marine Land to see it just for the hell of it---pay money to see it.

INTERVIEWER:

So your dad saw that?

ISHIBASHI:

So, after that, I don't know how many years he lived after that.

INTERVIEWER:

I heard 1954, 1958, does that sound . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

Someplace in there, I don't remember. You know, I'm one of those guys that don't remember things too well.

INTERVIEWER:

How was his health after the war?

ISHIBASHI:

Oh, his health was pretty good. He was---we didn't want him to do nothing. He can just sit around, or just walk around the fields chopping weeds. And that's about all he did just to be doing something.

INTERVIEWER:

He lived with your brother, Mas, it was kind of a big, extended family, and you lived in a different house or . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

A what?

INTERVIEWER:

It was a large family, your brother, Mas . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

No, I don't know nothing about anybody else. I don't try to learn anything.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; did you live in the same house?

ISHIBASHI:

No, after the war, see my house---I let Mas and the family live in that. And then the little shack I had, my younger brother and I stayed in that, see.

INTERVIEWER:

But you quit farming after a while . . . ?

ISHIBASHI:

After we start losing too much ground, there was no sense for me to hang around, because there was no money in it. So, anyway, I used to work at different gas stations.

INTERVIEWER:

This is when you went to work for the Kojimas?

ISHIBASHI:

No, then Tom came along, and that station up here at---that would be Van Ness and Compton Boulevard, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, I know where it is.

ISHIBASHI:

That gas station there now, it's there, but it's a bad one. It was empty, because the street going this way, street like this, gas station on this corner was nice because you got the sun coming in and very good. And this gas station on this side, you're in the shade all the time, see. And then after the shade goes away, you're bucking against the wind that's blowing from the ocean coming this way.

INTERVIEWER:

So which one did you work at?

ISHIBASHI:

This one, see; because he wanted to take over, see. This was empty---nothing there. Nobody want it, because the wind's coming in this way, you're in the shade all the time; it's cold.

INTERVIEWER:

But Tom wanted it.

ISHIBASHI:

He wanted to try a gas station, see. So, it didn't last too long, because his cousin--he brought his cousin in with him, but then those two didn't work out, see. So, anyway, he sold that place to two brothers from Hawaii. It's nothing to sell those kinds place if you're running it, because the gas company representative takes care of everything, see.

So, when Tom decided to quit, the representative knew the two guys from Hawaii under him, you know he takes care of maybe ten gas stations only. So of the ten, this one here wanted to come into a better location instead of being the korombo area. So, when Tom quit, he brought them over here.

INTERVIEWER:

What'd you do after that?

ISHIBASHI:

I just loaf around, and I used to help him for nothing all the time, see, while Tom went into the school board. Anyway, so I was just helping him for free all along, just to show him what we used to do, anyway. And then, finally, he'd tell me, "Hey, you might as well get on the payroll." So, I tell him, "Well you're not making too much money." Oh, anyway, he say, he can only pay so much, but that's all right. I say, ok, I'll help you, so I stayed on the payroll for a while until every once in a while. Kuida---Frank Kuida would drop by and he want something done on his car. I tell him, you're full of bullshit; you can't do this, or you can't do that on that kind of a car. You can go so much for so much money, but if you want to go and be number one, you gonna have to spend, maybe \$10,000 \$20,000. You're not in that bracket. You know, take a Chevy and make it a real fast car. You got to put money in it, see---can't do that. So, anyway, he would stop by once in a while and that was it. And then, he kept bugging me, "Hey, come to Orange County and work for me, see."

So, finally, I agree. I says, okay; here I'm sixty years old already and he wants me to work out there. Oh, well, I go out there and, shit, there's nothing but--everything you got to work on---lawn mower, little teeny gasoline motor, bit ass diesel truck, big ass diesel tractor; you got to know everything. Oh, man, that was job, but the pay isn't there.

INTERVIEWER:

No; you had another bank account?

INTERVIEWER:

Shall we take a quick break here again? We'll take a break; let's take a break.

0H38M26S

[Break]

INTERVIEWER:

Talking about being a mechanic for all kinds of different engines from little lawn mowers all the up to diesel trucks . . . you went to work for Frank Kuida.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah, Frank Kuida and Paul Kuida. They had Kuida Farm Supply.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, a farm supply business---out in Orange County.

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Then you worked how long there?

ISHIBASHI:

Exactly 19 years---almost 20.

INTERVIEWER:

So that brings you up to about being 80 years old, and you finally retired?

ISHIBASHI:

Yeah; because they closed the place.

INTERVIEWER:

They closed it

ISHIBASHI:

If they hadn't closed the place, I would've work until I couldn't move.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay; about that time then you came back to Gardena.

ISHIBASHI:

What's that?

INTERVIEWER:

You came back to Gardena, or were you in Gardena all this time?

ISHIBASHI:

No, I was traveling from the ranch. And let's see, in 1980, oh, when was it . . . they told me . . . San Diego Aquarium deal there; sent me a letter this time saying I have to vacate the property there, see. And, I don't know how that deal worked, but then one of the guys close to them down there must have bought the piece of ground and then declared bankruptcy. So that property was in bankruptcy, I think in Georgia. And that's when this developer from Phoenix saw it, and bought it at auction.

OH41M10S

INTERVIEWER:

Ok, so then you . . . ?

ISHIBASHI :

And he wanted to build a golf course and some homes there, but the way everything went, the City Council didn't like it, so no way could he get a permit to do anything.

INTERVIEWER :

So, you wound up here?

ISHIBASHI :

So I wound up sitting out there---high priced property. So, in other words, if he lives long enough, that's going be worth a lot of money. Because one of the house that's down on this corner as you look down from where the ranch is, the Buddha-head that put it up is a million dollar house, see. So, anything else that's going up from now will be worth more than a million dollar.

INTERVIEWER :

Yeah, usually that's the way it works. So, now you're finally retired, you're here in Gardena.

ISHIBASHI :

So, I'm sitting here bullshitting; that's about it.

INTERVIEWER :

Well, I think you for giving me all of this bullshit, and . . .
.

ISHIBASHI :

But, funny thing---the funny thing, with a small amount of money I earned, I got more money saved and put away, and more money working for me than anybody that's making hundred time more money than me.

INTERVIEWER :

You better find all your bank books, George.

ISHIBASHI :

No, I don't have any in the bank book, I just go over there. Just like my money in the bank over here, what's that, Union bank?

INTERVIEWER :

Union bank, yeah. Okay; well let's end the interview right now. I certainly thank you for spending the time with us.

South Bay History Project
Interview of George Ishibashi
File 1 & 2

January 23, 2004

ISHIBASHI:

Okay.

INTERVIEWER:

We'll get a copy of this interview back to you sometime, okay?

ISHIBASHI:

No, don't do any good, I can't remember anything.

[End of CD 2]