

Miyoko S. Ike

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So we'll just start off with questions about your background and family life. Were your parents from Japan and if so where were they from?

My parents were born in Hiroshima, Japan but in the country and they immigrated -- my father immigrated when he was at the age of twenty and why did they immigrate? My father was the second of four sons and his younger brother was already here in Seattle and had encouraged my father to come. And although my father was married and expecting a child he came in 1907.

Then how did your mother -- did your mother come later?

My mother was left alone with an expectant baby and she did not come until the child was seven years old. By then my father had worked and saved enough money so he must have had a place for her to come to but until seven years of just being alone with -- must have been quite a life for her.

Did she have family to help her?

She had an immediate nephew -- two nephews and a brother in the same area but her story was that every night she was not allowed to stay in her own house and instead she would pack her daughter and go to the eldest brother's house who was the honke and he expected her to stay there because he did not wish her to be alone in the house. So every night she went there and bowed and she stayed overnight and in the morning she bowed and came back home to her own house. She did that for seven years.

Could you tell me what honke is?

Honke is the main house and it is the family house and usually it belongs to the oldest son. And my father was the second son, so this is one of the reasons that he was able to leave the country.

And is that spelled honke is h -- how do you spell honke?

Honke is spelled h-o-n-k-e, the e sounding like an eh.

So when your parents were in America what did they do for work?

Actually my father worked as menial jobs, as far as I can understand he was a dishwasher at one time and he did say that he had been chased down the street at one time by people calling him a Jap and uh I don't know what other jobs he might have had but after seven years he and several other people got together and they were able to start a hotel. And that is the reason my mother was able to have a place

to stay when she came. And the hotel they started was the NP hotel and I believe there were about four or five partners and they had the support of some group here. In order -- because at that time Issei could not buy property so they did have the support of some Caucasian.

...To help purchase...

Yes to start the -- yes and so they continued and my uncle who has been here before as a single man, had already been here several years before my father so he was instrumental in helping him.

Did they actually purchase the building or did they build the building?

As far as I know they built the building and it's a six story structure and it's still standing.

What year do you think that was that they built it -- do you have. . .

We figured that he came in 1907 and uh -- no rather yes -- 1907 and it must have been built about 1914 which was about the time when World War I had begun.

So NP stands for. . .

For Northern Pacific and I -- for the longest time I didn't understand why NP and my father said at that time the railroads were very important and NP stood for Northern Pacific Railroad which came into Seattle.

And when and where were you born?

I was born as far -- my mother has said that I was delivered by a midwife in the NP hotel.

And what year were you born?

1923.

And so were you raised in Nihonmachi?

Yes and we were raised in the area, in the hotel and we lived there until I was twelve years old. I'm sorry until I was about -- must have been that I was about six years old because at that time we moved to a house in a residential area. And the reason was, we three girls had to go to elementary school and that was when we all went to Rainier school which is no longer around. And it was a school that survived to 100 years, the building. And it was demolished but it was on 20th Ave -- 23rd Ave.

23rd . . .

Yes, near Jackson Street.

So you lived close to the school then?

And we lived on 20th and Dearborn, so everyone of course walked to school, and that was a matter of about half a mile.

Could you tell me what Nihonmachi was like?

Nihonmachi was -- as I remember at that time between 19 -- when I was born -- 23 we were living there until about '30, '33. It was very active, vibrant neighborhood and Main Street and Jackson Street had all types of stores, there were many jewelry stores, we had a market, there were banks, and bookstores and of course restaurants. Small cafes, not restaurants. And then we had Higo Ten Cents Store, which started when we were living there. And that was a big event because it was a big store in a brick building. And we had many dentists and doctors using the building upstairs or other offices so things were central and you didn't have to go beyond a mile because the whole Jackson Street and Main Street from 4th Avenue to 6th Avenue Main Street was just covered, every block was full of Japanese stores. We had a tofu shop, a fish store, all the needs were there.

So do you remember, did you grow up speaking Japanese then?

No we spoke with parents in Japanese until my father, of course doing business, he had to understand English. My mother took a while because we moved into the residential neighborhood, the children started to go to that elementary school, they offered several of the Asian families and Italian families English classes and she did go there. Yes, so I'll remain though, the spoken language was Japanese at home.

And then in Nihonmachi, did the store owners speak both Japanese and English then?

Yes.

Okay.

Mostly -- though predominantly Japanese because the majority were.

Could you tell me what organizations your family belonged to? Were there (inaudible) __ Kenjinkai?

My father and mother were both in the Buddhist Church and with the Hiroshima Kenjinkai. At that time when people came from Japan they immediately associated with their area people which was the Kenjinkai. And they got support and so that was a natural thing to join, group -- meet, your old friends. My father was very active with the Japanese Language School also. He was the treasurer of both the Kenjinkai and the Japanese Language School and I think he handled finances also with the Buddhist Church.

So did you go to the Japanese School?

Yes.

Language School . . .

And um, most people did. I think parents at that age were really interested in having their children continue their Japanese language so most of us went to the Japanese Language School until about sixth grade. And after that when you got into high school, it was a little difficult to continue if you wanted to

take part in after school activities in high school so generally they dropped out after the eighth grade Japanese School, which was one hour after regular school from four to five. And four to five thirty in the summer time.

Someone said that they called it tip school . . .

Yes.

Do you remember that?

Right.

Do you know why that is?

The reason we've gathered was because it was additional -- to our regular school structure, which most people went in the daytime until about two or three but then we had this other one hour to attend to. And generally that mean you went home -- everyone walked -- you went home and grabbed a snack and then went out again to go to study school. Which happened to be located near an area accessible for most Japanese. But people did come from Beacon Hill when I think that that is quite a walk.

They walked? They didn't have a bus?

They all seemed to walk, I mean no one seemed to . . .

Wow. That's great. Were you involved in any sports or social clubs or Japanese arts?

I think we were all in the Japanese language school activities. They had a yearly summer picnic and outing which they called Undokai, which meant that you went out and brought your lunch and stayed all day and usually in a park and they had games for different grades and it was fun because there were prizes. And then in each case the Kenjinkai also had picnics also the Buddhist Church had picnics so during the summer you were either going to one picnic or another and everyone had a good time because they would have team sports, boys against the girls or -- and you could (inaudible) __ races, three legged races, sack races, spoon races and everyone enjoyed it. Mothers all prepared a nice obento lunch so we just stayed all day from morning until -- and then of course it always ended up with the watermelon smash and that was a fun thing where you had a person would be blindfolded, be twirled around, have a stick in his hand and he would be pushed to go forward and strike the watermelon. Usually a long watermelon. And if they were able to crack it then they were able to keep the watermelon.

They keep the whole watermelon?

Yes.

Wow.

Well there were enough people there to share with. (laughter) But that was one of the highlights.

Aww that's a good memory.

It was fun.

Yeah.

And we always had the Japanese type games where people had the red team and the white team. And you had a red band around your head or a white band. And then you had boys against girls but usually a toss of some kind you know, ball toss and there were always lots of competition.

Where were these picnics held?

Usually -- happened to be Jefferson Park was the most popular place because it was accessible, people didn't have to go too far and it had enough space, for games as well as picnicking. Then some of the Kenjinkais they also went to Lincoln Park which is also a nice area.

So if people -- if they were going to Lincoln Park -- did a lot of people have cars that would just drive?

At that time -- by then people had cars yes, because they always took all their obentos (laughter) and the mothers always made wonderful obentos -- you know you went and you eat and it wasn't going to the store, you had to make it. So, all those sushi . . .

Nice, so you talked a little bit about -- you said your father was chased and yelled at. . .

That was just a inci -- several incidents but he never dwelled on it. This was when he was -- I imagine when Japanese immigrants were coming fairly regularly.

Did you experience any discrimination or. . .

No, that's for myself, just being a student and just going to school. I don't think we did -- our elementary school had only six Japanese Americans in the class and they weren't -- they were mostly Jewish or Italian and they were all from immigrant families so we did -- they all had structure, they all had family morals and we didn't seem to have that problem.

What about -- so you lived in the hotel for a little while?

We lived in the hotel and then moved to this big house and that's when we started our grade school. And we were there until I finished -- I was twelve and I wanted -- and so we moved back to the hotel and I was in the seventh grade and I didn't want to transfer and so I took the streetcar and went to my school, which took a little longer than just walking. But it was nice to graduate with your own class because those days people didn't change schools, you usually stayed in the neighborhood and your friends were from grade one.

So the hotel -- who was the clientele at the hotel?

At the time, it's mostly single men. And I remember when a lot of -- a number of Filipinos -- bachelors, because they weren't allowed to bring their wives. And many of them worked in the canneries in Alaska,

so it was seasonal. But most of the time, they would just keep their -- they would come back again after. And then we had a lot of -- no real families. There were Japanese couples living there and I began to wonder how did they live and cook in just a hotel room, with just a little sink. But I remember this one lady, she and her husband lived for years. And she had a hot plate and I don't know in those days whether you were allowed to cook in a -- but they managed. And they weren't that many take out places so you had to either cook and she managed on the hot plate.

So when your family lived in the hotel did you have a . . .

With our family my mother had -- she also cooked for some of the ladies who worked there -- the chambermaids. Many of them brought their lunches because they came out from -- they had their own families. But there was one lady who lived in the hotel she was single and we always included her for lunch. Men who manned the desk downstairs, we always provided food for them. So she was cooking for a big group and then they would certainly just have to eat and then go right back down and be on duty again, it was always a 24 hour duty after all because the hotel was open. So we had the night duty people and so it was a busy place.

Were all the employees Japanese?

No, not all we did have Caucasian people because it's hard for anyone to be night duty, away from families that they had, generally they were single. And as you said, we did have some Caucasian, single men living there and as I said several Japanese husband and wives. Because it was easier for them, just husband and wives, no children, rather than trying to find a house. And also because the hotel was sort of a social place, we had the Japanese bath next door. And so -- and then there were restaurants around so it was sort of nice when a man was working going to the bath and eat and then come in. And there was this one man that did this so regularly I didn't think he had a family. Later I found that he had five children. (laughter) But he was there so much and he always had a toothpick in his mouth like he had just come from a restaurant. (laughter) But that was the nice thing, men could take their baths, women didn't go to take a bath although they had a women's section. But I do know that several of my friends that they came with the family and came with children and took baths. I never saw a bath myself next door because we had our facilities.

Did Your family experience tuberculosis?

No, we didn't. We heard of people and we knew there was a Fernan (?) Sanitarium where you went if you were ill. But no we did not.

Could you tell me about your earliest memories of Higo and what products they sold there?

Oh, the Higo as far as we knew was a big event when the store opened with all the dry goods that they had. Up to that time I don't believe there were any stores as big as Higo. And I can't remember how they managed to get all of their utensils. I mean the cooking -- they had to have their pots and all the little things and somehow they must have had some -- either the requisition ordered them -- somebody who was coming back from Japan. We had regular ships going back and forth to Japan and I'm sure whenever

they came back it was an event because there was several -- the last one was Hikawamaru. And that is um, still in the Port of Yokohama, was used as a hostel after it was retired, became a museum. And I don't know if it is still there but it was the longest -- the last running steamship line and when it came -- it was one of the newer ones then -- they had many other sister ships. They would bring Japanese passengers from Japan and with it we would have great big taru we call it, containers -- wooden tubs of shoyu. And they would be brought from Japan -- of course rice. So as I remember you did your ordering by the ships coming in. So you knew that when a ship came in you would have some of these spies(?) -- so Japanese families could buy the rice. And um, up until that time we didn't have a big market for Japanese goods. So when Higo came in it was not a food place but with the dry things and the goods and they had Japanese materials and Japanese equipment, cooking things and I think that attracted Japanese. By then you know, we were having the Bon Odori and people needed kimonos and they would -- that was the place to go.

Do you remember when Bon Odori started?

It started with the Buddhist Church and the Buddhist Church had it outside their old church, not the church now, but the old church. I remember they had it right on the street and so it's not a large group but there must have been before the thirties as I remember, yes. And it was a big event, it was summer, hot, everybody liked to go out. It was fun. Its now so commercial.

Do you remember if Higo was a gathering spot or a social spot?

No because actually it was more of a store, and you go in and you buy something, you come out. It is now a gathering place but at that time every space was allotted to selling. As I said I don't recall any food, fresh food being sold, it was just regular things ready to wear Japanese stuff, books little -- there were book stores but they had stationary. So that was where you went. I don't really recall any other stores in Seattle.

And who was their clientele?

At Higo's? Mostly I think it was the mothers.

Could you -- could we talk about Takano's Studio now . . . ?

Takano's Studio. . . I vaguely remember that it was one of several studios here but Takano was either early or it established itself so that everyone seemed to go there. It was the longest one too. I cant remember some of the others. There was about three others and everyone was patronized because no one took pictures at home, and these family gatherings because we didn't have the film and the facilities to take a family gathering picture. So it was just natural to go to the studio and take pictures. Now, even our graduation pictures from when we graduated from high school, I remember taking my dress down and changing and taking -- and that's what everyone did. Of course you do that now I think you take several changes. But this was just -- and I'm sure the other studios must have had -- but Takano's you see I think because both husband and wife were there people knew that.

Could you describe like, do you remember what it looked like or what it was like inside the store?

Just a small shop like most of the shops on Jackson Street -- the Japanese shops were not large, we just went in and they had an inner room for changing and a dark room for taking pictures. Not much of a reception area, you don't waste space. But it's just functional.

So when you went in to where he took the pictures, what was that like in there?

Just a dark room as I remember. He was a very businesslike man and all I remember is he got under the dark cloth and took the pictures. He just stood in a certain way and we just sat or stood as you were told and I think that -- I don't remember too many families going in or seeing them there but with all the pictures we did.

Did you get to know the Miyakes?

They were Buddhist Church people and Mrs. Miyake lived to be quite a -- old age and very pleasant lady. Mr. Miyake was business like. Didn't see him other than in the shop. I believe they had one daughter.

And do you know when and how they took over and operated the studio?

I forget about the history unfortunately.

Could you tell me what their roles were at the studio? Henry and Riyuki's roles?

It was a husband and wife operation and she was always there.

And who was their clientele?

The whole Japanese community I think. Last I said there were other studios; there was a taiko studio which was pretty big -- popular too. I think its one thing because you either knew the Takano's and then because they were Buddhist, they had a large Buddhist following.

Do you remember them sharing any stories about the studio?

No. Other than their studio -- my oldest sister knew Mrs. Miyake well. But we did not see them socially.

What role did Takano's studio have in the Nihonmachi or the Japanese American community?

I would think that they -- she was a Buddhist, I'm not sure if he was -- I would think that a number of the pictures of the Buddhist church and then anyone connected with Buddhist Church who had weddings, weddings were all performed in the Buddhist Church, those would be all taken by the Takano's studio. They were quite lavish wedding pictures, and then reception pictures, they would often had receptions downstairs or else in a restaurant. So I would think that most of the Buddhist Church group would be. I think it was the largest Church group at the time.

Do you know what happened to the Miyake's and their studio during World War II?

I have no idea. I know they were evacuated and probably -- she was in Minidoka too I think.

Do you know what happened to them after the war?

I have no idea what happened after the war.

Do you know how long they operated the studio?

I have no idea.

Okay, that's okay.

I'm sorry.

Do you know anything about Henry and Riyuki in terms of where they were born and raised?

No, my sister probably would have because she was socially with Mr. -- Mrs. Miyake and where they went to school I have no idea. And their daughter Elaine, I did not know.

So about your internment. What do you remember about the evacuation and how did your parents explain the evacuation to you?

Actually I think that the Nisei had to explain to the Issei about the evacuation because it was all written in English and the orders came from the government and so many of them were not that fluent in English. But as far as the evacuation I just remember December 7th, when it was a Sunday, we had just gone to Buddhist Church for service, came home, and it was Sunday and we turned on the radio and that's when we heard about the Pearl Harbor incident. And what a shock because at that time you just felt that this is your country and you don't know Japan. And how could this happen. And it was -- they-- and because President Roosevelt was the only president we knew. When you think he was in office for twelve years and that's about half of the young peoples so there was no one -- you just felt your allegiance to Roose -- President Roosevelt and you just felt like this was really a sinking feeling. As far as explaining to parents I think everyone had to deal with their own situation and it was a shock in any case because we had a lot of single men living and I really wondered what happened many times because December 7th evening we already had FBI men, usually in groups of two, coming in their dark hats, dark coats, dark suits. They would say nothing and just come up to the desk, present a card or name. 'Where is this man? Where is he?' And they would go up in the elevator and next thing you saw this one single man coming out with his -- just a coat and just told ____ and he'd be walked out and couldn't ask him any questions, they just took him out. So many of them were single men and I really wondered what happened since because there is no family to contact them. They were all taken to the immigration building here which is still here and that was it. And my Uncle was a single man and he lived at the hotel and at the time he was married but his wife preferred to live in Japan. So he was essentially a single man and he also was taken, and we just didn't know what reason. That was a real shocking because there were several men and these FBI people just come -- silently come in and slip a paper, where is this man, you don't ask any questions, you have to tell them what room, that's it. So it was very -- you just wonder what's happening, what's gonna happen from now, so as far as the relo -- evacuation, that was later but the immediate December 7th was quite memorable. And of course, like I said nothing like this had ever happened before so when we were told to pack up -- and our belongings -- that was in April when we got the orders to evacuate and I could remember my mother just sitting with all these things around her

just wondering what to do. And its true nobody knew how long, what to pack and so were you going to a camp? Your idea of camps . . . But that was a real -- I'm surprised how well most people did -- able to do what they did in a short time we were allowed. Fortunately for our hotel we had a Caucasian night clerk and he was the one that looked after the hotel.

So the hotel was still running?

Was still running, because there -- people there were as I said many Filipino people who were not affected and they had no other place to go and Caucasians. So they just stayed and it was nice that we were able to have this one man -- I just vaguely remember him. And we were in contact with him.

Did you have to -- when you came back then everything was still in operation, did you have to store your things?

We did, we stored our things back in the hotel storage room but found that it had been pillaged. A lot of it was removed and I don't remember exactly what was stored there but my parents must have done that. However who or how they were -- I have no idea. It was in an area you would hardly get to if you were a . . .

So did your whole family go to Puyallup first?

First.

And then to Minidoka?

To Minidoka. Yes.

Could you describe a day at Minidoka or what it was like there?

Minidoka itself, because we were a family of five we were assigned to the barrack with the middle rooms. One barrack had six units, the two units on the outer end were for couples and the next one was larger for people -- families of six to beyond. Then the two middle ones were for families four and five people in the family. Luckily my oldest sister's married family were -- they had also five so we had a joining -- not connected -- but two rooms in the middle. Rooms because each family only had one room and you go -- you were in the assembly centers we were just given ticking for our mattress and they came around with hay and we were supposed to pack our individual mattresses with the hay. So you could imagine how prickly it was. But in the Minidoka centers they had cots and we had mattresses which was a little better. But each family even with a family of five with one room you know that its not easy so we would have a curtain, most people would have a curtain for the area where they had the beds and maybe just have a little table or something so they could sit around if they had a snack or something. No cooking in the rooms of course, one pot bellied stove with a stove pipe and you had to go out and get your coal to heat the stove and you were allotted a certain amount. And so you did that was a chore and then if you wanted water you had to go and then take something to take some water back to your unit. Other than that your room -- you didn't cook because you went to the mess halls, lined up and had three meals a day provided, and then the rest as far as your room itself you had your clothes

hanging up, you had laundry maybe hanging up and all the rudimentary -- the worst thing was if you had a sandstorm or a windy day, generally these camps were out in the desert so when the wind came you had the sand blowing in. These windows were just a frame of glass and you always had seepage of the dust coming into the window sill. So that -- some of it landed on your bed and you always had that dusty feeling. So the first chore in the morning was you got newspaper, wet the newspaper, and tore it up and threw it on the floor and you swept the wooden floor -- wooden floor where you could see cracks between the floor and you swept the flooring to get the dust off because otherwise you had inhaled all that dust. So with one room and how many people it was always a matter of ventilation.

What was the food like?

The food depending on the creativity of the cooks of each block. And each block had -- lets see we had twelve barracks and you figure that each barrack has six unit rooms and so there is quite a few people so each mess hall in each block is given the same ingredients so it up to the chef and we were very lucky to have a chef that liked to cook and he did a good job.

Do you remember the meals?

I think that the first thing you think of camp is the aversion to things that we had so often because it was easy to feed -- Vienna sausage, that is the one thing that nobody can look at anymore. Vienna sausage was served quite often because its bite sized and very little preparation. And apple butter, we had so much apple butter.

So you don't eat any of that now?

I think it takes a lot to try to come back but as a whole the holidays were always nice. We always had turkey and all the trimmings. But the rest of the time you are in line, you get your plate and you just get the food. So it turned out that many families disintegrated because you didn't have a family situation, the kids would go with their friends and eat and no manners. Naturally because you are with your friends and so the families could not control the . . . yeah and that was alright then because they needed to socialize, there was very little else you could do.

So did you have a sense of home there in the camp?

I know it's amazing, the Japanese were very creative and they could make do with so many things. And some of the -- before long these little barracks started to have curtains, they started to go into the desert land and people would come back with wood that they would carve and they had all these wooden vases and it was just amazing. There were classes that were started, even Ikebana classes for what was available and Japanese Odori classes were started. And even the you know just for the Hapi, once the -- we were able to order things from camp. Sears Roebuck and the Montgomery Ward catalogue were the most popular ones in camp and we would pass it from one person to another, and just wait for the orders to come. And then when they started having the canteens, canteens were mostly snack food but they started to get things like boots and things. Which started to become -- it was very essential to have footgear with the mud and the rain and of course when it was hot it was very very

hot in the summer. And very very cold in the winter but it was dry cold not like what we were used to here. But as a whole I think most people Japanese are really adapted to situation before long, we had the farms going, we had all the produces, self sufficient and Japanese food started to appear on the menu just because they were able to use the -- they were somehow able to get shoyu and I don't think very many people complained about the food. I mean it was cooked for them, all you did was stand in line and for the older people I think for the first time they were able to relax. Which was a nice -- most of them were in their sixties and they were the first -- older group. So I think for them it was the first time they could rest.

Because they had -- it felt more like home or. . .

They didn't have any -- no worries as far as having to tend to your property and there was no -- nothing they could do about it and so all the -- just the meals and you had to sleep at a certain time because there was curfew. And if you didn't get up for meals then you didn't have food so you made sure you got up. Laundry was available but you had to wait in line, make sure you had you know -- they had water and you had to go to a common laundry room and a common bathroom. Many of them didn't have doors and the young girls wouldn't go and take showers -- as late as they could until curfew time and take showers. And so it was certain things you missed very much.

Did you think you would return to Seattle?

I think most people had the idea they would because they were from Seattle area, their businesses, their associations and I think the older people were certainly planning to return. The younger people I think they were restless because if you were at the University and had to quit work -- quit studies, you wanted to get back before you lost too much time and for this I -- that was very encouraging that National Japanese Student Relocation Committee which was started by the Quakers in Philadelphia and they sent out teams to different camps to tell the young people to try and get out of camp, go to school because they could help you. And they were a great source. The help with the application process, because so many of us didn't know colleges in the East coast. And so when they came and spoke about how to it was a real opening. So many young people took advantage of that, or many churches also helped students too, to relocate elsewhere.

How did you hear about leaving Minidoka?

I heard because I was helping at the time working in the dispensary there. Each camp had a little hospital and clinic and I had been working at the clinic as a nurses' aid because they needed help and although you didn't know anything you would learn some. So it was a great experience, the camaraderie with others was lots of fun. And we had to work till different shifts, morning and afternoon and we would have to get there by the Red Cross bus that would come around the camp and stop at certain areas and you had to be there to hop on the bus. And it was just a little clinic and people there -- when you think that the one person -- I think the one nurse that was really experienced was Teru Uno who was -- had already had a lot of nursing experience behind her. A number of the others had just finished nursing school so this was a whole new situation. And all of us, we just, we knew nothing. And so it was one -- and because of that I decided that it would be something I would like to do. I had done some

clerical work in the camp but this was more appealing. So I started to look around for nursing schools, I don't know how many of them I wrote to. All of them were very polite saying no because they didn't feel that was safe for Japanese American to come out. They weren't sure they would be able to protect you and they just politely saying no to me. And finally one hospital in Philadelphia, the director of nurses said yes, come and I was so surprised. And when I got there I realized the reason was, there was already half a dozen Japanese girls there, several from Hawaii. All the way from Hawaii to Philadelphia to go to nursing school. And so she was very welcoming.

What school was it?

It was called the Episcopal Hospital School of Nursing. It was already a hundred years old when I got there. So it was not a spanking new hospital but it was just kind of fun to go to another hospital.

So did your family -- what did your family think about you going away to school?

My father -- he's an old time Japanese thinker -- nursing is not one of the things that you want a daughter to go into because you are taking care of human beings. Human waste. And he just didn't think that was -- I should go to college and do something else. But so he was against it but at that time you see, the Cadet -- U.S. Cadet Nurse Corp was implemented and they were in need of nurses to serve and what you did was, you were going to get your training but after the end of your training you would promise to serve in the service, either in the army or navy until minimum the war was over. So this was the idea that you were going to get your training but you would have this obligation. So that was fine with -- you know you are going -- you are going to get out but yes. . . so and -- so but then I think he realized that you know staying in camp would be ___. My sister had already gone out the year before and she had gone to Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. And small college, she had already been at the U so she was glad. And that's when she met Mari Sabusawa who became the Mrs. Missioner. Mrs. James Missioner, later on. She was already in school; she had also been out from camp.

Were there a lot of young women your age that were going to college then?

At that time as many as could, tried to, yes. But of course some of these private colleges you had to have the funds, and then they did offer small scholarships. Student Relocation offered small scholarships to people to, help them.

After school, what did you do?

I stayed in Philadelphia for six years to continue working at the hospital that I was with and I worked on the surgical floors and the medical floors and happened to be the head doctor of each of the floors was Japanese American. The surgery floor was headed by a Japanese doctor, a Japanese American doctor from Seattle. His name was Dr. Charles Kanbe. And then the medical floor was bought out by a Japanese American doctor. His name was Dr. Hanaoka and he was originally from Hawaii. So he, I don't know how he got there because he wasn't ___. But you could tell that this hospital was receptive to Japanese Americans.

Yeah, especially in leadership positions too.

Yes, that was quite a -- and then I stayed alone and took another year at the University of Pennsylvania. Took a public health course and then I became a visiting nurse and worked in the field carrying a bag.

Like house calls?

Yes, you have a uniform and you carry a bag and you go into people's homes and people who -- now a days yes they needed injections but they couldn't go out and get it you know three times a week something like that, just go in.

So what about your parents when they came back, what was that like for them?

That's the thing that I don't really know very much because I wasn't around, I understand they came back before the camp closed. But before that my brother in law Mr. Chojido Fuji (?) had come back earlier, several months earlier, had looked at the situation here and he had already -- was able to purchase a house so his family could come back. Now our family would go back to the hotel and so I think my father followed after my brother in law came first -- stayed out here. So he sort of was in charge here. And then Choji . . .

So they . . .

So I had no idea how the packing and how they managed to get back, my mother and father and I believe my younger sister might have been here at the time came back with them. So and then they came back to the hotel.

And then they were able to start -- keep it going?

Yes, my uncle had been detained in camp -- in other camps where the single men were taken. Any man that was connected with the martial arts types of organizations, any type of Japanese language school, any kind of organization that was active socially with Japan. Which covered a lot of the Japanese clubs here so were picked up they were taken to different camps. My uncle was moved from different areas and he ended up in Lordsburg, New Mexico. It was one of the camps where these men were taken. Originally he went to Missoula, Montana now my brother in law also because he had been active in the Buddhist Church and organizations that -- he was also picked up and taken and he went to Bismarck -- is it Bismarck, North Dakota? He was there -- that was his first place and he too was transferred to other places but he was released and came back to Minidoka and then became very active in the government there, because he was able to -- fluent in Japanese and English so he had the -- one of the places on the community council in the camp. Now my uncle did not get released until the end. Because of his connection with Judo group.

Oh. . . Okay.

So all these other men in the camps -- they were taken for different reasons -- some were released earlier, came back to join their families, some until the end.

You talked a little bit about kind of that quiet discrimination when you were applying to schools, did you face any other kind of discrimination? Do you know if your parents faced any discrimination when they came back?

I don't know about when they came back because I wasn't here, as far as they had the hotel and I don't think anything was really visibly, they didn't seem to say anything except that they're belongings have been trashed. But as far as my own discrimination, I thought that Philadelphia was very welcoming and we were -- already they had such a large group of blacks and they were just not surprised. And I was asked to speak to ___(?) group there about my experiences in camp and they were very interested. I just never -- the friends -- the American friends -- the Quaker group is there. So you just have this feeling, its known for being the city of presents, love and I thought it was great.

So, did you return after Philadelphia? Where did you go from there?

No after that -- after six years there -- and then I met my husband and so he was coming through Philadelphia on his way to Germany to be assigned there to work with the Air Force as a civilian. But first of all he went to Morocco. And was in the heat of Morocco for a while, they had a radio relay station there; he was an electronics engineer so they were able to use him there. He was there for about a year. And then we corresponded and then finally we decided to get married. And by then he was in Germany assigned to the Wezebun (?) US Air Force as a civilian. So he was still going to be attached there for about a year, so I went over there in about 1953 and we were married in the German Counsel in Frankfurt? Wezebun is where we were stationed Wezebun, Germany was where we were married. In the German City Hall, in German so we didn't know what was said but we were married in front of this man in front of the table and all we did was sign some papers, we had two friends of his -- witnesses, that was it.

Did you learn German then while you were living there?

One year in Germany and you have to have some German knowledge to shop, but otherwise you had the military facilities. But yes, it was interesting. At the time I had my nursing girlfriend had married a Dutch man who was a minister in Holland and she said we could do a little church ceremony for you, so we went up to see them and they lived in a little town in the Netherlands, it was just across the border from Germany -- Auckland(?), Germany. And he was a beginning minister so it was just a little shack almost, a little building. And there was nobody that we knew so they just asked their friends to come and he performed a little ceremony for us.

Aww that's very sweet.

And my friend would stand outside the door and say please come in (laughter).

So it's a very small group huh.

Very small. It was -- but it was my own friend and her husband so it was personal. So that was it. No (laughter).

No pomp and circumstance. (laughter)

Exactly. (laughter)

And then after that . . .

We stayed in Germany for a year, __ (?) And then after that we had gone there with only a few suitcases, no home or nothing in the US. So we said maybe we should just continue to travel if he can be of service somewhere. And he found that he -- that there was an opening in Japan. I said why not we only have a few suitcases so we went to Japan in 1956.

So what city were you in?

Yokohama.

And what was that like?

It was very interesting twenty two years. We expected maybe a few years and he was assigned to the US Army at the old Japanese Army headquarters it was in Sama, Japan. And just about twenty miles from Yokohama. But that's where the US Military -- the Army had established their headquarters. And they had a Navy headquarters in Yokosuka. Joe started at the Army headquarters. And there were many other civilian people attached working. Most of them lived in Yokohama, and we had to find our own housing because we were not with the Military itself, so we didn't have Military housing. So what you call a private rental, it has to be an approved house in the Japanese community but it must have a Western style toilet and shower, so those were the requisites. And many Japanese owners -- our particular owner of our house was very smart. He had built small houses about half a dozen of them, and all of them were occupied by people that were not able to get into Military housing but were like us. Who had to rent but had to be approved. Then we could borrow furniture from the Military so you didn't have to buy the furniture. You were only going to be there supposedly only two years. And so -- which was nice.

So did -- how did the Japanese react to you being Japanese American?

Yes, and I think they were wary because you're looking like a Japanese, and you are really their old enemy but eventually they realized that they were treated well. When we first went in 1956 Japan was really poor and the garbage cans were being searched all the time, they were -- to see if there were anything edible and especially for cigarettes. And you can't even imagine our garbage can many times was turned upside down, people looking for -- cigarettes were so hard to get. And Japanese were smoking a lot. So that was surprising when you think that we were there from the time they -- and people with -- children with holes in their socks and that was in '56 -- by the time we left in '77 -- I mean at that time there was no TVs in their individual houses so a lot of it was stolen from the Military people. The Military people would have TVs. So it was common to have TVs. But by the time we left in '77 everybody -- everything. It's just amazing the recovery because you saw these people looking -- there were no real outright beggars people just looked at you. And when you saw how well they were everything -- it's just amazing how Japan makes this leap to recovery. And people are so disciplined.

So you really didn't come back to Seattle until '77 then correct?

Yes, I had two children in Japan. And then they were both born in the Military hospitals and then later I did help teach some of the Red Cross -- as a Grey Lady you would call them people who are volunteers. And I was not able to work because you would be depriving a Japanese person of a job so what you were able to do as a young wife, you could volunteer. Or teaching -- those are the two things that people -- was in demand. And having been a nurse I did have some classes for post-natal mothers, newborn babies and mothers. Teaching them how to take care -- it was our way of taking care -- they had their way too. It was a learning situation for both.

What was the adjustment like when you came back to the States?

Well I began thinking that you know, we're American Citizens in Japan but we haven't voted, or anything. Yeah, I'm thinking about that after the children had gone to the International school first as an elementary school -- it was established in Yokohama from I think 1924 they had an International school - - small one. The headmaster was a Dutch person and the students were people that were working there from different companies, oil companies as Mobil and so they -- we had Dutch, English, French and it was an interesting environment -- and Americans going to this International school. The Military school was for Military people. And -- which was right off the base but after they finished elementary school they had a choice of either going to the Military high school or a private school. In Tokyo they have private girls schools and boys schools, mostly they are Catholic sponsored but they are very reputable and so my daughter went to the International school and then to the Military high school. My son went on a train and his friends were going there so he went to a boy's school in Tokyo.

And then -- so you came back in '77, do you remember going to what was left of Nihonmachi? Do you remember Higo's?

Yes, yes, we came back and I was very disappointed because none of the familiar printing stores, and the book stores, you know Sangamiya(?). Nothing was evident. And it was sad to see that -- but understandable that young people couldn't continue and what was there. And yeah it was disappointing. But by then Uwajimaya had started and by '77 it was already in full bloom. But way back a little store.

What do you think now -- in terms of the Japanese American community -- in terms of interest in the culture and the history? Do you think that's there? Do you think -- because I know there are still a lot of Japanese American organizations? Do you think that will keep going or what do you think is going to happen?

I do hope they continue as long as there is an interest I think that with so many younger people marrying out of the Japanese community, it is harder to get them together. And I think there will come a time when people want to know what their roots are and you have to have that type of thing to come back to. So it is important to keep it going. Right now there might not be a demand but I always feel that there will be probably an interest later on. People always looking for their beginnings and especially because there is a rich culture here and how it was started. I hope it does.

Do you have anything else you would like to share?

No, I believe that -- I think that Wing Luke is doing a great job. As long as you have these exhibits that sort of awaken people who are still here that remember and for the younger people who might be curious. I think it's great.