

**Interviewee: Yukio Ode**  
**Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda**  
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Yukio Ode: Office thing got sidetracked, and then Mr. Tanaka, I think it was, the editor, wrote about it- about my far- our family things [filing through papers]. Is it here? Oh, is it here? [gives paper over to interviewer].

Lisa Uyeda: Oh, wow.

YO: This- this is the article that he wrote. And I didn't know that he was gonna write about this article. And there's quite a few mistakes in it.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: Which I didn't- I wasn't in the mood to go and correct it, cause once it's published, you can't make any corrections to it, yeah? So, I wanted to get the story straightened out. And this is why I started thinking, well, I should try and get a proper story made out of it.

LU: Mm-hmm. Oh, wow.

YO: Now, you- There's a- I'm quite sure there is- there was an English version of it. But I couldn't- I think I kept it, but I can't find it, you know, again. Well, when you put things aside [shrugs while raising hands up], you forget where you put it and then-

LU: Mm-hmm. It's okay. I can- I can find it. Let me just write down the- [writing noises] So, what else do you know about your father? Where was he born? And what part of Japan did he come from?

YO: Oh, he's from- I got- Have I not got it written down here somewhere? [files through papers] I think it's right up in here.

LU: Oh, okay. Do you wanna tell us just so it's on the camera?

YO: Oh. Well, he was in born in Hiroshima-ken, Mitsuki-gun, Ohama-mur- [laughs] This is- I'm quoting. You want it in English style?

LU: Doesn't matter.

YO: Oh, well, in a small island on the inland sea.

LU: Oh, okay.

YO: Which is called Innoshima . Now, right now, they call that island Innomachi , which is a city of Innoshima . And this Ohamamura is just a small portion, a small village in the Northern part of the island. And in the southern part, there was a city called Habu, which had, when we went back in 1937, we were told it was the biggest shipyard in the- in the- in Asia. There was a lot of *gunkan* was built in that area. And we heard later that the bombers, the US bombers used to come over almost daily and check the building and when the- when the ship that was in the- in the dry dock there were almost completely- They would bomb it

and destroy it. But where my parents come from, from the Northern end, was just a small farming community. There was no- no war damage at all. Anyway, when we- The story is that my father had got a job with Union Steamship and in 1917 or so, he decided to get married. He went back to Japan, got a wife from the same village, and came back to Canada to get back on the job. And so, my mother, who's- was- She married, came by herself, right from the country, to Vancouver, and this is where the rest of our family was born, you see.

[00:05]

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Yeah. So, my- my- my mother had no English to speak of. She landed up in the Japanese town in Vancouver. Raised the four kids. Cause my father never came home. He only came home once a week because of the work that he was doing with the company. And whereas my mother had to stay home, raise the kids, and do everything all by herself, you might say, except for the community that helped her out.

LU: Was that in Steveston?

YO: No, this is in Vancouver.

LU: What part of Vancouver?

YO: Downtown. Japanese town.

LU: Oh, right downtown. Oh, wow.

YO: Yeah. Yeah, she first went to a place at Horizen[?] Store. It's another Japanese family there. They had a store there, and I think my sister was born in- on Powell Street, whereas I was born on Main Street, which is a few blocks over, and then we came over to Cordova Street and as far I can remember, Cordova Street is where- is close to number one fire department. And the main Vancouver police station. We were just a block away from the police station. And that's where, in fact, Tairiku Nippo, a Japanese language newspaper was right across from the- from the police station. Anyways, she rai- So, he used to come home- come to home- I remember him coming home once a week. Stay ho- stay- stay at home for one night, and you go back to the ship the following day kind of thing, you know. And you know how Japanese used to have this *tanomoshi*, which is a- People get together and raise money for somebody who needs money in the group. If he needed a lump sum, you might say. The group raised money by themselves and loaned it to him, and he would pay it back to the group. At his convenience, you might say. This *tanomoshi* thing is a thing that the Japanese community did within different groups they had. Anyway, my dad was able to work right through the Depression, until 1935 when there was a- The seamen had a big strike. And all the- all the longshoremen shut down the Port of Vancouver completely. And that's when he decided to go- go to Japan because his livelihood has vanished, you might say. And after the- after the- Well, the hiring of Japanese were- Well, I guess you know that- During that time, in the early- in the 20s and 30s- [*Hai-suke?*]. Discrimination against Japanese was quite strong. And he realized he can't get any work.

[00:10]

YO: So, that's when he decided to go to Japan. And- So, he- The whole family went to Japan. And that's when I found out that he had a son from the previous marriage. That he's been supporting while he was working. 'Cause, you know- And his intention was to go back to Japan for retirement, anyway. So, while he was sending money back to Japan to- for his son's upbringing, he also had a house being built for him. And the- his former first wife's parents were looking after his- my dad's welfare. Building the house for him, buying property for him, to- anyway. I found later that he's- he had quite a bit of money. Plus, the house and the property in Japan. So- But, you know, that didn't affect us. Whereas my mother had to struggle all this time, trying to raise the kids and doing everything to raise the family with the amount of money that he more or less allotted for his new family here in Canada. So, the major portion of his earning had been going back to Japan for his retirement thing. However, when he got back to Japan- Or, well, in order- When he decided to go back to Japan, well actually, he had to tell us what he was gonna do. Or wanted to do. And my sister, who was older than I am, was just finishing off high school. She'd been going to Grand View Commerce, I think, was a commercial school. And she said, "If I'm gonna go back, at least let me finish off my high school. And then we'll go." So, at that time, I'd been going to- I was in second year technical school, whereas my other two brothers were still in public school. So, we had to cut off our education at that time, went back to Japan to start a life in Japan as a Japanese citizen. Now, that's when we found that he's been registering us in Japan, 'cause in those days, dual citizenship was allowed, and it was customary for any Japanese kids born in Canada to register in the father's homeland. So, in this [*koseki-to?*] home that we have, it's all registered as being born where, when, and all those kinds of thing, is recorded in Japan. So, we actually had dual citizenship. You know, in Canada, when you're born in Canada, or Vancouver, it was reported to whoever- So, it's been reported here in Canada, and it also reported to the Counsel in Vancouver of our birth, so he in turn notified where the parents were.

[00:15]

YO: So, we were all- we were dual citizenship thing. Anyway, so, when we went back to Japan, first thing- It was in autumn. And Mom says, "Taking the trip back to Japan, this is the first time I've- my hand was this soft." Cause she's been labouring through, washing clothes and all this kind of thing. And her hand was quite rough. Whereas the two weeks it took us- I think it took us two weeks to go to Japan by boat- Her hand got nice and soft. She says, "This is the first time in my lifetime that my hand has got this soft and clean." You know. So, she was, in one way, very happy to be able to resume a life of leisure. Cause until then, it

was quite an uphill battle for her living in- in a- Circumstances was all foreign to her and adapting to the Canadian life, you might say. So, we got back to Japan, and the first thing she says, "Well, since you're in Japan-" And this in late fall now, she says, "We'll get you to go to school and pick up some Japanese in Japan." We'd been going to Japanese school in Vancouver but as you know, in those days, we went to public school during the day and after school, we used to rush down to the Japanese language school and hour, or hour and a half of learning Japanese. But at home, my mother is strictly Japanese. So, at home, we always spoke Japanese. We might pick up a certain word in English, which she wouldn't understand anyway, but our conversation at home was strictly Japanese. So, to me, anyway, I'd been brought up as a Japanese. Whereas once you get out from the house, we're Canadian. Cause going to public school and all of that, it's English, you see. Right? [LU: Mm-hm] Well, when we go to Japan, we have to change our whole- Cause in Japan, we're no longer Canadian, we're Japanese. And the first thing we did was find- go to school, get- so that we'd pick up proper Japanese and customs. And then, decide what we're gonna do. My sister, having gone- finished high school, commerce, said, "Well, I'm- I'm not interested in learning any more Japanese. I'm at an age where I should be going to work." And through the school, she managed to find a job with a German who was living in Kobe, running an export-import company. Where she could work as a secretary for this German, using her education that she had at school, become a secretary or whatever, you know. So, she was- managed to find work. For me, I'm what? 16, 17. Around there.

[00:20]

YO: There's no sense for me going to school cause school wasn't an option for me. So, I- We found out that the- Family connection, was a family connection to this Kubota [speaks Japanese]. Kubota Ironworks. Apparently, one of our relatives was a president of this [speaks Japanese] Kubota Ironworks. And all our educated- educated relatives were- had senior positions in this company. So, I could be placed in this company and be able to work myself up because of the family connection. Not because of education, huh? My- I'd never been a good scholar. My school- I'd never been- I was always in the bottom half of the class, you might say. But because of my English and the family connection, they say, "You can be able to work in this company and find yourself in a good position." So, they sent me out to work. Which- which I didn't mind because I'm- I'm not a kind of person who becomes a leader. I'm kinda -to accept things as they come and be a follower, you know. As long as I can work and make money, make a living, that was all I'm- was interested. So, when I first got sent to Amagasaki, which is just outside Osaka, it was a big factory there. This company had four or five companies in Osaka area. And like I said, in all these different factories- Our relatives all had good positions in the company because of the family connection. In fact, actually, even the- even the president of the company, who came from my village, got to be

president of the company because he- he went in as a Yoshi. He was- Yoshi is being- going into the family- another family as an heir.

LU: Ohh. And taking on their last name?

YO: Take on the last name.

LU: Yeah.

YO: He was an Ode. But he went as a Yoshi and became Kubota. And he became president of the company. So, all the Ode in the- on the island, or in the village who wanted to work or given job as a- as a- Well, I'd say, different, good jobs in the company. Is it- So my when - when my dad heard about that: "Well maybe I should have stayed in Japan and wait for that opportunity." But he had already come to Canada. And this was the story, he found out later, when he went to- back to Japan. But the story was, the story about my dad was, after living in Canada for so many years, going back to Japan and trying to pick up his life in Japan, he had a very hard time.

[00:25]

YO: I remember the- the time he says, "Oh, we have these properties that has- that was rented out, you might say, before. Now that you're back, it's gonna resort back to you and you have to maintain it." And so, I remember caring- What you call it *benjo*, you know, the toilet stuff. The- You pick up the- We have these outhouses attached to the house. But the outhouses, the toilets, had clay bottom- Not clay. Anyways, it's got a bottom that you can scoop up and then put it in a bucket, wooden bucket, and then carry it to the field and spread it in the- in the vegetables or the orange- We had a lot of mandarin oranges trees in that island. And we'd spread out around there. And I remember doing it several times while I was still in there. And says, "This- this is no life for me." [laughs]. And my dad used to do it too but- I don't think he wanted to do that too long. Yeah. Anyway, I went to work in Amagasaki and my- my two- two younger brothers were going to school. And after all they- they decided to come back to Canada. Which I didn't know about. It's only- only when they stopped by where I was living in Amagasaki-[sen?] that they said, "We're going back to Canada. Would you like to go back to Canada too?" Say, "Oh, that's fine. I- I mean, this is no life for me." So, I came back both later, by myself.

LU: What year was that?

YO: Huh?

LU: What year was that?

YO: Well, I think we came back in 1940. Is it? '40.

LU: 1940.

YO: Yeah, so it was- it was late 1940 that I came back.

LU: Mm-hmm. Wow.

YO: Anyway, while- Once you come back, then it's back to work again. But, uh, we- For me, it's working in the cannery. Cause -those days, work in the cannery, sawmill, is about the only thing- only thing that we can do. So, when I came back, all my school chums- Everybody that I knew, had disappeared from the Vancouver area. Cause they had to go out to work. You know. This is 1940. 19- Well, we were- Back in 1937, I was, like I said, second year high school. Two years later, they finished their high school and those that had wanted to go to higher education went afar, those that wanted to work had to go elsewhere looking for work. So, to pick up any social contacts, I had to well, start new. And that I start working in the saw- in the cannery, was the first place to work with. And then, sawmill. And then, I guess, sent to Wood Fibre to work. And then, the war started, you know? In the meantime, my dad was probably getting his old age pension.

[00:30]

YO: So, he had small income whereas my mother had to go out and work. In the cannery because- Cannery and housework, if she could find housework.

LU: Which cannery was she working in?

YO: Well, the- We used to have a- There was a cannery- There was several canneries right on the Vancouver Harbour. So, she can go to these canneries. There was one- Closest one was two blocks down to the- We lived in Cordova, she walked down to- to the waterfront, there was a- I can't remember the name of the cannery but there was a cannery right there. So, she used to be able to walk down, worked cannery, whenever they got fish, they'd call them up, they'd notify whoever, and the word comes around, that work is available, so they would go down and work. And it's all piecework, you see. Yeah. So, that's how they were able to make income, whereas to me, my dad was getting his pension. I think it was- He was getting his old age pension then. There was a 20 year- 19, 20 years difference between my dad and my mom. So, she was quite a bit younger, you see. So, she wasn't- she wasn't at an age to get any pension yet. So, she had to go out and work and, like I said, work in the cannery, or go house working. And she- A neighbour had a telephone. We didn't have a telephone. A neighbour had a telephone. So, we had- We put an ad in the paper saying, "Person is available for housework," and what the telephone - the neighbour. The neighbour notify us, and she used to go out and do housework to make a living. The war started, we got evacuated from Vancouver- Oh, we got- Actually, my parents were living in Vancouver and my- When we decided to come back, my sister decided to stay. 1940. She decided to stay in Japan because she had a good job working for this import-export company. The job, she wouldn't be able to get in Vancouver, right. My younger- two younger brothers were still going to school. And they wanted to finish school in Japan.

LU: Is that Kozo?

YO: Kozo is the youngest. And-



LU: Tadashi?

YO: No, Tadashi was the one that wanted to come back to Canada with my parents. My father, my mother, and Tad- decided to come back to Canada, ok. My sister, older sister, and the younger brother stayed in Japan.

LU: So, Toshiko and Kozo.

YO: Yeah. So, when- when they came back to Vancouver, Tad wanted to finish his high school. So, he went to work as a house boy and work- go to school, to finish his high school education, okay. Whereas me, I'm past the age of going to school, so I had to go back to work.

[00:35]

YO: Like I said, my schooling wasn't that important to me. Cause I- I never got good marks in school, anyway [laughs]. So, when- when war started, we got- I got evacuated, I was working with fiber when the war started. So, naturally, we- They closed- I had to come to Vancouver. My brother was still working as a house boy in Vancouver. And when he finished school, me and my brother went to road camp in- near Revelstoke. Road camp called Griffin Lake, which is the last camp they had in that Revelstoke area. For the Canadian and naturalized Japanese. Whereas the *issei*'s were in a different section. I think Princeton- Hope Princeton highway. The *isseis* were sent to Post- Prince- Hope Princeton highway area. Whereas the young Canadian- Canadian and naturalized Canadian were sent to this Revelstoke area, to the road camp. Now, whereas my parents were shipped off to Popoff. In Slocan Valley. Near Slocan City. Now, when we got sent to road camp, our pay was- Part of our earnings were taken out to support our parents. This is standard procedure; cause otherwise they have to put all the people that were sent to the interior camps- They either became welfare citizens or had somebody support them. And because we were of eligible age when we were sent to road camp, we had to sign part of our wages to support our parents.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Now, I don't know how much- I can't tell you how much it was, but you know, that's how the system worked in those days.

LU: Do you remember how much you were paid?

YO: 25 cents an hour, we were paid.

LU: 25 cents...

YO: Yeah, well, that was the standard wage at that time. 25 cents an hour. But I can't tell you how much money we got cause I don't remember all things. Well, cause, when we're in the camp, we- They fed us and all this kind of thing. All we had to do was be there, kind of thing. And do the work that was assigned to us. Pick and shovel, fixing up the road, or making new roadway. It was quite a- quite an experience. But so, when they- After a year or

so, they decided that the- B.C. Commission decided to close these camp and try to disperse us to other parts, primarily go east, young men go east, you know. Or, like, or go to work somewhere else on your own kind of thing. They- They look- They- So, I decided to stay in B.C., and so I went to work in Vernon. In apple- Coldstream Ranch. Doing apple picking.  
LU: Oh, wow.

**[00:40]**

YO: Whereas my brother went out east with his friends. And I think he came to London to work in a factory. You know. Now, from what I- what he tells me, he says, the factory work was too hard on him, so he had to ask for another type of work. We were restricted, as far as traveling, or working, cause we couldn't just go to an unemployment office those days. We had to work through our Commission to get work.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Anyway. I think he- he was assigned to work in one of those sanitorium- TB sanitorium. And when he was on his way to report- report to this work, he met an acquaintance from Vancouver, saying, "Oh that's a TB san- You shouldn't go there. Cause you might get TB yourself." So, he turned around and went back to the Commission and asked for a different job, and I think he worked- he found work- got placement with a- with a man that required a house boy. I think he said he went to Ancaster and became a butler, and this particular family, who, as a butler, he went up to Muskoka and had a nice time up there [laughs], working as a butler for this man who had a mansion up in Muskoka [laughing]. But work was fun, how much- I don't know how much money he got, but it was a job anyway. And this is my- This is what my brother tells me. But- Whereas when I came, I came down to Kitchener. Kitchener is a German town. I guess you know. Anyway. I got work in this company, some plastic company. Later, I got a better job with BF Goodrich Rubber Company. In Kitchener, there was several rubber companies those days. This is in- What, after 1945? 19-Yeah, anyway-

LU: It was after the war? After the war?

YO: Yeah, cause- cause by the time- I can't remember when the war ended- I think I was in Burnham when the war ended. And that's when the Commission says, "You people either have to sign up to go back to Japan or go east." And that's when I came out east.

LU: Do you remember when you heard that the war ended? Was it on the news? On the radio, or-

YO: I got no idea now.

LU: Can't remember when you heard it?

YO: I got no idea.

LU: Do you remember how you felt when you heard that the war was over?



YO: Well, all I knew is glad- All I know is- It's glad that it's over. We knew it was a losing cause. I mean, we'd been hearing the stories about the war all along. During and after the war- You know. And the-

[00:45]

YO: It's only- only when we were in Vancouver, I guess, we're hearing stories, how successful the Japanese were in the war. But after that, it's never been that good. Any story you heard, one way or another, was that Japan was either- either holding its own or else, losing. I guess, the story- that Japan has never been that successful after the initial strike, you might say.

LU: Yeah.

YO: Yeah.

LU: When you were in the work camps, do you- did you receive any news on the war or, did you get updates? What was it like in the road camps? Were you guarded, or-

YO: Yeah. There was a guard. There was a home guard person who was there all the time.

LU: Just one?

YO: One or two person, we never saw them. They're around, but they're always there. Yeah.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Well, I mean, what could we do? We had no- Oh, we had a lot of axes and saws, and axes and shovels and stuff, but we had no way of moving around. Yeah, so. The life in the camp was eat, sleep, and work, that's all.

LU: Where did you sleep, was there a-

YO: We had a bunkhouse.

LU: Bunkhouse.

YO: Yeah.

LU: How many people in each house?

YO: I think we only had one bunkhouse cause it was a small camp. But, you know, it's- We had tiers, upper and lower bunks, that much. It was no luxury, but it was adequate.

LU: How many people do you think were at the road camp with you?

YO: Oh, there must be, uh- I have no idea. 50? 50- Less than a hundred, anyway.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Oh, there was- There was about five- Frank Moritsugu would have better idea cause they'd been here- there earlier and they were the- I think Frank Moritsugu were one of the first to go to Yard Creek. To the road camp. They had to build bunkhouses and all that kind of thing. And there were about four or five different camps on that stretch of the highway.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Yeah. You heard of Craigellachie, was it? Where the last spike was- The last spike was- put in. Trans-Canada highway. Trans-Canada railroad.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Well, this Yard Creek, was right- close to that place. Yeah. This Taft, where we got unloaded, was just a- just a station. And there was no- no community there. But when we got off there, the truck was there to take us to our road camp. It was already prepared for us. So, we got unloaded to the camp and then everything was supplied to us through the Commission, you know.

LU: Oh, wow, yeah.

YO: Yeah. Oh, the road camp- If you ask me about the camp, Frank Moritsugu, who's been writing about all these things, he can tell you more about these camps than I could because to me, all those- all those experiences, you might say, has faded. This is another thing that I should- I want to tell, but you forget. It's, you know, it's been so many years that life in those days, you forget.

**[00:50]**

LU: Would you work every day, or did you have a day off when you were in the road camp?

YO: Oh, yeah, well, we had a day off.

LU: And what would you do on your day off?

YO: You can fool around [laughs], or- They used to take us to Revelstoke, if we wanted to go to Revelstoke. And they would supply us a truck, and take us there, and bring us back again.

LU: What would you do there?

YO: Oh, you can go and drink beer [laughs]. Which- We weren't allowed in the camp. Then, I found out that I knew some- the family knew some people that lived in Revelstoke. They were evacuees from- from Vancouver. Mr.- There was man named Tagashira. Mr. Tagashira, who'd come- who'd actually come from the same- Well, he came from a different village, next village from our parent's village [Nakanashigo?]. So, I used to go visit him. But we'd primarily- See the city lights, go to movie, or- anyway, drink beer. Which we were able to do in Revelstoke. But not at the camp, see. At camp, you weren't allowed to drink at all.

LU: Would you play cards?

YO: Yeah, but I- I'd never been good at cards. People- They said- The old generation had Japanese cards. But I couldn't get a hang of that one. And the card thing, cards and poker and whatever, I've never been good at it, so I never done any of those things. But, you know, you could do things- Well, I think, I made ship models or something. We were able to fool around. I think I- If I remember right, I think I made myself a pair of skis and went skiing by myself. We get the- the strap to put on the ski through mail order. And get that done. But- We managed to spend time one way or another.

LU: Mm-hmm. Oh, wow.

YO: Yeah.

LU: And what about when you were in Vernon, and you were working on the apple farm? Where were you living?

YO: Well, Coldstream Ranch had a bunkhouse available. When I got- There was some

dispute with the management, and I got kicked out. I went to work for the- a Japanese farmer- Or a Chinese farmer, actually. I worked for him and his farm. And then after that, I worked for a Japanese family. There was quite a few Japanese families there, having their own farm. And I think when I was working for the Japanese family, the war ended.

LU: Was it just you, yourself, or was there other Japanese people working on those farms as well?

YO: On that particular farm, there was a couple other people, but they were from different places. Not from the camp, of the original camp. We got scattered all over the place.

LU: Did you stay in touch? Did you stay in touch with anyone from the road camps?

YO: No, no. We- Making a living and trying to make a thing- Liveable- Very few people- I lost contact with most people, you might say. Everybody had their own problems to work out, you know. Yeah.

LU: Oh, wow. So, what was it like working on the farms? Was it hard work?

YO: It's all new. Something new. So, I had to do what he tells me to do.

[00:55]

YO: This Chinese farm had a lot- Did all of- Vernon is, on the whole, very dry. And the only the way they can keep that going was to irrigate the farm.

LU: Oh, yeah.

YO: So, irrigating- They had a community irrigation system with- Some farm had irrigation systems. This particular Chinese guy had his own irrigating system. And he had to get people to have a diesel engine, cranked up, pump up to the top of the hill, and then do the irrigating, making- cutting irrigation channel. And that was the main job that I had to do.

LU: Oh, wow. Just gonna switch the tape. [camera noises 56:09] Okay. Sounds like a hard job.

YO: Well, it's a job, you know. And different people came and went. I think, one time, the Suga family came. Kaz Suga and his dad came and worked. This particular place was owned by a- an Anglo-Saxon farmer, but the fields was rented out to Chinese farmer. So, when the Suga family came, I don't know what reason they came for, but I know they came, and they were put to work to paint- paint the house. I think that's when I first saw them. Now this Kaz Suga, you might have heard, was part of a- Asahi Baseball team. And Kaz Suga was a friend of my brother Tad.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Yeah. But I saw him for that short period when he was there, but I lost touch with him. Cause I wasn't interested in him. Like I said, he was my- my younger brother's- Tad's friend. But the whole story is about my parents, which- which- After we were sent out to the road camp, they were left behind in Vancouver- With the last bunch to be sent to different ghost towns. And I heard they were sent to- to Popoff Farm, which is just between Slocan City and

Lemon Creek. In a big bunkhouse where they shared a- the whole building with a whole bunch of other people that had no family. Lot of the family who had family were given houses to sleep in, whereas the people that were just couples were sent to a big bunkhouse where they shared the big building with a whole bunch of other people. Yeah. Now, whether- How they really spent the family- Their lives, their- I really can't tell cause I wasn't with them. But I do know that at Popoff, they- they were able to meet quite a few countrymen. Or people that was from Hiroshima, or Okayama-ken.

**[01:00]**YO: That they can talk to, because the- the area where they come from, you like to have people you can converse with, that you can have something in common, you might say. And people from- When people say Hiroshima, everybody think of Hiroshima City, but this- My parents come from Innoshima, which is quite a ways from the city itself. It's closer to Okayama. And I- From what I understand, when people in this Innoshima were conscripted to go into the army, they were sent to Okayama rather than to Hiroshima for conscrip- to become soldier- Part of the imperial army, you see. So, one of the reasons they were close to it was Okayama was quite close to where they lived rather than to Hiroshima, which is further south. But- So, they- they were living in Popoff for a while, and then, when the war- I think when the war ended and they were trying to disperse the people either to go back to- sent back to Japan or go east, they're gonna close down these different locations. And so, from Popoff, they were sent to New Denver. And it's from New Denver that they finally came out to Toronto. Now, in the meantime, my brother had joined the S20 or S20 whatever- They were recruiting. Near the end of the war, they were asking us *Nisei* to join up in their intelligence. Which I wasn't approached. And I wasn't going to join up, anyway. Whereas my brother joined up. And I heard that he was sent- he was sent from- He joined up when he was in Brantford, I think. The war ended in Brantford, and I think he had a picture where he was marching- marching in one of those- V.E. Parade, they're doing. Oh, they were- He was still in the camp, at Brantford. And then, he got sent to Vancouver for his intelligence training. Cause his Japanese was quite good. And then, from there, he got sent to England to become part of the English army, British army, who then sent him to Tokyo. Now in those days, the only reason Canada decided to get Japanese Canadians in the army was by the pressure from- from England. The British wanted- British wanted the Japanese Canadians to join the- to be recruited into the British Intelligence, so that they can work- be sent to Southeast Asia. Right? I guess you heard about that. Anyway, so, my brother went- got sent- joined the English army, and then he got sent to Tokyo where- Or was there as part of the English- Oh, British army.

**[01:05]**

YO: So, when- when- The shipment of Japanese Canadian that had decided to get sent to Japan- He was told that the- He was informed that a bunch of Canadian Japanese are

coming into Japan: "Would you like to go see them?" So, he said he had a chance to go and see the shipment of the- of the Canadian Japanese that have returned to- got sent back to- to Japan. And here he met quite a few people that he- he knew, and he was able to help them- help them, through his connections, to get them relocated back to where they actually wanted to go. At the same time, he also said he had a chance to go and see my relatives, where my dad was born.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Now, you- One of the- one of the evacuees that was sent to Japan was a- Shishido family. [Dechan?]- [Dechan?] was part of Asahi baseball team at the- in 1941. He was part of the Asahi team. And he- his parents wanted to go back. His parents- actually his dad, Mr. Shishido was the First World War veteran. I don't know what his capacity was, but he was a First World War veteran. But at the time we- evacuation- When they- the Japanese, Japan started the war, he was treated as an alien, same as the rest of- rest of Japanese Canadian. You know. Even though he was a veteran, he was- And I think that really angered him, and this is why I think he chose to go home- go back to Japan. When he had a chance. And so, he took his whole family. No- I don't know. I don't know whether he took his whole family or whether he took some of the family, cause by then, most of his children were, I think, grown. I'm not sure what it was. But anyway, the Shishido family, when they landed in- in Japan, found out that their- the contact that they wanted to reach- I think in their homeland- was no longer living. So, my- Tad was able to locate, find, inquire around and find out where and how to get to where they wanted to go. And that particular family later came back to Canada. The- Naturally, the parents died in Japan, but I think some of the family came back and that's when I found out- I heard from them, how my brother was helpful to them, you know.

### [01:10]

YO: Now, my family, in the meantime, my family was from Popoff to New Denver and my brother had come back from Tokyo. He got discharged. And through his veteran's thing, he was able to go to school. So, he went to- to University of Toronto. And he said he had to go to Ajax. Well, that's where this mechanical engineering section was situated at that time. So, he had to go to Ajax to get his education. I think. But when- when he graduated with his mechanical engineering thing, he called- he had his mom and dad come as his graduation ceremony and all that. And then, get them relocated to Toronto.

LU: Where were they at the time? Were they still in New Denver?

YO: Yeah, they were, cause New Denver was the last place for the dispersal of people who were either going to Japan or going out- coming out west. But the security commission had to make sure that they had destinations to go to. And I think it's when- At the time Tad graduated, that he was able to get them to come to Toronto. Whereas I was in Kitchener. I was sent to Kitchener, then I went to work for- went to work for BF Goodrich. Then the

work there- I started- started getting some reactions to some chemicals, especially sulfur. Making rubber. And I had to quit the job, because my condition. And I had to scrounge around for work elsewhere, so, I did a lot of different type of work. Being a labourer, you might say.

LU: So, who sponsored you to come out to Kitchener? Who was your sponsor to come out to Kitchener?

YO: It's- The security commission.

LU: Oh, they organized it.

YO: Well, yeah, see, in order for us to come out, they had to find work for us to go to. So, they had a list of places that were willing to hire Japanese people and this job in Kitchener was one of them.

LU: What about living arrangements? Would they help you find a place to live?

YO: Well, living arrangements, we- we have- I guess, I really don't know how we got to find it, but I think there were places that were willing to take us on. Room and board kind of thing. Places. And I know I got stuck in a- Yeah, there was some other Japanese there when I got there. With this German family. Well, in fact, she was a widow, I think. Yeah, so there was two other- Tako- I think Tako was there and Sugio Iwasa was there, I think. So anyway, there was quite a few family in Kitchener, too, at that time.

### [01:15]

YO: There was Johnny- Oh. Johnny Nakashima was there. And there was- I can't remember his name, but actually he was an old friend of mine. He was working at the Kitchener-Waterloo hospital. Yeah. So, there was quite a few Japanese family there by the time I came out to Kitchener.

LU: Mm-hmm. Did you ever experience any discrimination when you first arrived in Kitchener?

YO: Well, discrimination, as such, we knew it was always there. But it was very subtle. And we took- Most of us took whatever job that was available. It didn't matter to me, as long as it was a job and we could make a living, it was okay. The hardest part was trying to have a social life, which again, is very hard to get into if you're a sociable type, you know. And I wasn't a very sociable person. But as far as discrimination is concerned, we knew- There was always people can say outright that, "Oh, we have no space for you," even though- Like, I know when I first came into Toronto, Toronto was a forbidden place. We could pass through Toronto, but we weren't allowed to stay in Toronto for a while. Yeah. Toronto City actually didn't want any Japanese evacuees coming in. So, they- the Commission- B.C. Commission had an office here, we had to stop off here and then get directed to wherever they directed us. But eventually, people start drifting in on their own. And the- I think a lot of the Christian church people tried to help out people moving in. And I think at- Ms. Kaufman- I don't which church group that she was- connected with, established a co-op

center at 506 Jarvis. And a lot of the Japanese people who came to Toronto stopped off at 506 Jarvis.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And from there, moved onto- to different jobs in Toronto. Now, my parents, after- When I was in Kitchener, I tried- There were people that I met that was willing to hire older *Nisei* for housekeeping job, kind of thing. And I tried to interest my parents into doing that, coming over to Kitchener, cause it was a place they can come to if they wanted to. But *Issei* people wanted- Most *Issei* wanted to come to where they can associate with other Japanese, cause to be- For the *Nisei*, who could adapt to Canadian life among Anglo-Saxon, it was no problem.

[01:20]

YO: Whereas to *Issei*, it's a very difficult thing. To be too isolated. So, they wanted to be where they can- where there is a gathering of Japanese where they can go to. And in Toronto, like the Buddhist Church tried to maintain a group, even though they didn't have a church, they used one of the- one of the house where they can meet together as a group and communicate. You know, help each other out. And different- different church group in Toronto were able to get together and help each other out, you might say. More- more of helping each other out, rather than for actual work itself. Cause once you come into Toronto, there's always- There used to be lots of work available in the Jewish area for garment working. Garment. Clothing factories. Cause at that time Spadina, Lower Spadina Avenue was noted for a Jewish garment industry.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And a lot of the *Issei* who- that were not able to communicate in English can do work in the factory without too much communication by being told what to do, work on a sewing machine, and turn it inside out or whatever. And my mother got a job like that in the garment industry.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Yeah. But- In order for us to- to- to be a family unit, ever since- since we went to Japan, the family had to scatter, you might say. Coming back, naturally, coming back to Canada, we were scattered all over. My sister and my sister and the youngest brother was left in Japan. My brother came to Eastern Canada. I was out in B.C. Then, when we came- when we find- when my brother find this- we're able to work- He decided to come to Toronto and find a house, get a house. So, we pooled our resources and bought a house in my name. I was- I don't if that- Yeah, I guess I was working in Toronto then. But I think that my brother was now a qualified engineer. He was the one that was making money. Whereas I was just an ordinary labourer. But I still managed to acquire some money.

LU: Yeah.



YO: Now how much money my parents had; I don't know. But anyway, we were- We managed to buy a house on Ossington and live as a family for a little while. As a family.

LU: Do you remember how much the house was when you bought it?

YO: I don't know. I got no id- Even though it was in my name and all that, I've got no idea. But then, even then, the real estate agent was a- was a Japanese *Issei*.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Mr. Yanagizawa. Who was quite a businessman out in Vancouver before the war [laughs]. So, his name was well known. And I think his family was well known.

**[01:25]**

YO: And I think we bought a house through him. And he- So, there- We finally were able to establish what you call a family unit on- in- on Ossington Street. A house in my name. And, anyway, so, we lived there as a family unit, we rented out a few- a few rooms to help pay for the house. And then- I don't know whether- whether it was my sister that wanted to come back to Canada or my youngest brother that wanted to come back to Canada, that we were- Oh, my sister- I think my sister came first. My sister, after the war- During the war, she was- When the war first started, she was working in Kobe for this German export-import company. When the war started, that business went caput. You know. Import business has to stop. And she had to look for another job. And through- through government sponsored things, she was- she was sent to Manchuria. Manchu- They called it Manchu, at those days, it was Manchuria. Manchuria, where Japan has taken over that area, this particular factory was run by a British- and they needed an interpreter to communicate with this Japan- with this Englishman that was running the company. So, she was sent to- to Manchuria. And she was there all through the war until the war ended. And when the war ended, she said she had a hard time fleeing Manchuria to return to- to Japan, because as soon as the- right around then- as soon as the war ended, Russia was gonna invade- invaded into China, you see. And it was nip and tuck kind of thing to run away from them. To return to Japan. Now, so, she was able to do that, return to Japan. When she came back to Japan, first thing she went to was to- who my- My youngest brother was still at Ohamamura. He was still going to school when the war started, right? When the war ended, he had just finished his schooling. And when the war- So, when he got discharged from the school, they were inducted right away into the- into the army to become soldier. So, he told me that they were training with wooden- wooden sticks. To work.

**[01:30]**

YO: Doing marching, and this kind of thing. Getting disciplined as a soldier, when the war ended, he said.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: So, he- All through the war, he was going to school. So, he never had to worry about being- Those days, I mean, they didn't recruit children for war then. It's only after they graduate from school that right away, they were inducted. But - Sohe never saw any war-war action and such. And during the war, this Ohamamura had no problem- were never bombed or anything, cause it was a very insigni- insignificant place. Which is just a small village, in part of the island. Whereas the other part was getting bombed all the time. The southern end had a big shipbuilding place where it got bombed all the time, he said. Anyway, his war time experience, he didn't talk very much, but after the war, my sister managed to find job in the occupation troop. In Tokyo. With the U.S. government, you know, as an interpreter or whatever. Because of her knowledge of English. Whereas my brother, he wanted to go to school, so I guess we- I don't know whether we financed it or whether there was enough money left over from whatever we had, whatever my parents had, but he went to school in Tokyo at Waseda University. Where he graduated, where he met his future wife. Where he married- He got married in Japan to his girl. And he worked for a bank, Fuji Bank, okay. Now, we're talking about both my sister, who's in Tokyo working for U.S. Government, for the army. My brother is working at the bank. And then when they decided to come to- I think when my sister decided to get married, she wanted to get permission to get married. You know your typical *Issei* Japanese family, where you get permission from the family and all this kind of thing. So, she came. She came to Toronto where we had established the house to sort of- came to Canada to get permission to get married. And with their consent, she got married to this U.S. soldier who worked for the Air Force, who she met in Tokyo. Okay, now this guy, even though he worked the Air Force, he wasn't a pilot or anything, he was just in the administrations duties. So, she got married at the United Carlton Church on College Street, which was a- I can't remember the- Which- The Reverend there was very sympathetic to the Japanese and the Japanese used to go to church there at that time, right after the war. Now, that church no longer exists.

[01:35]

YO: It's been knocked down- Cause it's almost across from the Maple Leaf Garden. I don't know if you know the place, but around there- Anyway, there was a church there. United Church. And, anyway, she got married, and then she went down to the States to live. My brother was working at this Fuji Bank, and when he decided to come, we called him over to Toronto, where he came to live with us in- at 990. And I can't remember whether these kids- his kids were married, whether they were born here or married- Whether they were- I can't remember whether they were born in Japan or Canada. Anyway, they came here to Toronto and then they- Tad helped them relocate and get a house in Scarborough. And that's where they're living right now.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Yeah. So, anyway, the mainstay of keeping the family together was through the effort of my brother Tad rather than through me. Even though I was the first born in the- in this family, he was the one that was able to help things out financially because he was the best wage-earner, yeah. So, anyway, in the meantime, he's been- We're living together for a while. And then, I don't know what happened. We- I find- I worked in different places in Toronto. He worked in different places. I think when he first graduated, he got sent out to Peterborough, and then he came to Toronto and worked for H.H. Angus Company, which at that time, were doing a lot of expansion of the hospitals. And I understand Tad had quite a bit of work at making things- As a mechanical engineer, he used to make drawings and stuff and- for the expansion of the Toronto General Hospital. And my family- My mum found work, like, in the garment industry and so, she used to go out to work in the garment industry, whereas my dad was actually too old to do much work. But he was able to pick up some odd jobs here and there, cause after all, he's- After 65, you- cause he was getting older, he was getting pension kind of thing.

LU: Yeah.

YO: You know. But they both- they both died here in Toronto. My father went first and then my mother.

LU: That was in 1957?

YO: Well, like I- I can't remember these things, but I got it written down somewhere, yeah.

**[01:40]**

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: But the- Even though I was the first-born and primary- I was the one that was supposed to be helping out the family all along, I never had to do that much. It was my brother Tad that- Financially, he was the one that helped us get going. The unfortunate part about him is that- He- Again, I don't know when he got married, but he married a widower, Anglo-Saxon widower, who had a couple of kids, and he helped them- I understand he helped them go to university and all this kind of thing. When he got married, naturally, he left home and lived with the family. He ended up getting Alzheimer's disease and we had to put him into Castlview [Castlview Wychwood Towers Long-Term Care Home (City of Toronto)] to be looked after there.

[Conversation redacted from 1:42 to 1:47]

YO: The unfortunate part is that when the power of attorney was given to Kozo, Kozo had it with him and his oldest child, Yoko, who lives in Hamilton. So, whenever I have any problem with Kozo, I go to Yoko to get things done, whatever was necessary to get done. It's a bad situation [chuckles], but Yoko understands more than Kozo does. Kozo is quite stubborn, whereas Yoko is more flexible. So, far as I know, everything is under control, as

far as Tad's situation is, but I understand Kozo's wife is in very bad shape now. It so happened that Kozo's wife is a few years older than Kozo himself. But he knew that when he got married, you know. So, like I said, my sister's husband is younger than she is. So, in one way, my sister says, even though he's- My sister is older than her husband, her husband is, health-wise, not as good as she is. So, I don't know. I mean, we still- She fl- We keep in contact through telephone. Before, I used to be able to go over, now with passport problems, I know I can't go over anyway. And I have- I can't- I don't drive anymore.

[01:50]

YO: I used to, but I got caught- my car was stolen once, and I haven't bought my car ever since. I rely on TTC now to get around. But my wife can't get around too much because she's got problem. She's got all those herniated disc-

LU: Oh, yeah.

YO: In the back. So, she's bent over all this- quite a ways. Doctor says she's gotta get- To get straightened out, she'll have to get operation. She doesn't want to get an operation, so she started getting acupuncture, which helps relieve the pain. But acupuncture relieve the pain, she says, "Oh, once you get the pain, it's alright, and you get the treatment, it's alright, but a few minutes later, after you get it done, the pain comes back," she says. "It's not a cure. It helps for a while," she says.

LU: Yeah.

YO: So, then we started hearing stories about how this back pain could be relieved by some treatment. And she says- Well, it's one thing- When she got herniated disc, the doctor told her the only way to cure is to get operated and she didn't want to get operated because she heard so many stories about how if the operation went bad, you're in very bad condition. Whereas I've heard people that have got operated and got cured- got straightened out, you know. So, anyway, she didn't want to get an operation, so the next thing was, acupuncture and physiotherapy. Now, when- In our area, there's- We- There's a walk-in clinic which, when we first started, said, "I can become your family doctor if you wanted to." So, we got him as a family doctor, but he also said, "As far as herniated disc was concerned, there's no cure for it except operation." And since she doesn't want to get operated, the only other thing is acupuncture and physiotherapist. And at that time, there was no physiotherapist close by. So, when I found out a physiotherapist moved into the area, I told her about it, and she was able to go up and get physiotherapist. And when she walked in, the physiotherapist says, "Oh, your condition is very bad. But I can- I can fix you within a year." That was her story. But- And there's no operation, but- but it's- So, she's been going to the physiotherapist. It's been over a year, but- but she claims there's an improvement. And the fortunate part about it is that where I work, when I was working, we had medical insurance for drugs and medical expense and hospitalization. And when I

retired, they told me if I want to continue the coverage, as long as I paid the premium, I can still be part of the- So, I continue paying for the group insurance thing.

**[01:55]**

YO: So, and that's when I found out that- we found out that the physiotherapist pays- Right now, 80 percent of the cost is paid through insurance.

LU: Well, that's lucky.

YO: So, that's very helpful. Whereas with acupuncture, they only paid ten dollars, I think it was.

LU: Oh, my. Just gonna switch this one. [camera noises]

YO: Yeah.

LU: There we go. So, what made you decide to go from Kitchener to Toronto?

YO: Well, that's- that's- by that time, the war ended, I guess. War has already ended, and we were out to find work that I can get- I can find without much education. So, I had to pick and choose whatever job I can get. The first job I did get was to go up north. This Jewish family had a place up in Lake Simcoe, they wanted somebody to cut the lawn and look after the outside. Which I knew was a temporary job, but it was job, a place to stay, and be on my own kind of thing, and still have an income. And from that, I- After that job petered out, cause it was just a summer job, I came to Toronto where I had a friend- I knew a friend who had a house on Gore Vale Avenue, which- who- My friend, Sab Kubota, a classmate of mine from Vancouver, who I'd met before, whose brother Roy had a house on Gore Vale Avenue in which house- Nobody was married. It was a- They had a- I think quite a big house, three storey house, where they had a bunch of single men staying with them. And I was able to go there and stay with them while I looked for a job. As soon as I find the job, I found a place on my own where I can- Without having to rely on Roy's place, cause that place was a gathering place of single men and the Roy- There was a- this Trinity-Bellwoods Park, had a tennis court. Now, I don't know whether you read the paper or not. The *Nisei*- There was a- One of the first tennis court the Japanese Canadian utilized, this tennis court was run by the city, and it was open to anybody that wants to play there, except that you had to reserve it by- First come, first serve basis.

**[02:00]**

YO: And so, these people bought their own net to string across and for every Sunday, somebody from the house would go down and string their net to reserve it for them. And the guys who wanted to play tennis would get down and play there. And come to Roy's house, which is on the edge of the park, to leave their stuff there and this Grove Cycle- This Grove Cycle had a bicycle shop on College Street, and he's one of the tennis player. And he's- And this Grove Cycle, he had a bicycle shop, and he used to be able to get a tennis

racket, tennis ball, all wholesale. You know, cause, he had a shop. And so- And he was part of the member of the group, you see. And Grove Cycle people- Matsui people, from Vancouver, this Matsui had a- In Vancouver, they had a big bicycle shop on Main Street. And one of the biggest- So, they had many connections with CCM, apparently. And when he came to Toronto, he was able to establish a bicycle shop in Toronto through his connection before the war. Anyway, from there, I managed- Well, I found work, this and that. For me, my crisis was every so often I'd get sick. When I was born, before I went to school, apparently, I had pneumonia. This is what I was told. I had pneumonia, I had asthma. When I was about ten or so, my father used to take me to a seaman friend, a single man, who lived close by, who had asthma, and when we'd go there, he told me, "Your asthma right now is cured. So, you don't have any problem. But when you get old, and when you catch a cold or your health get bad, this is what you're gonna be like." And with asthma, you have a lot of breathing problem, right? And I'm always scared of catching a cold and getting sick. And it's been my problem ever since, like even- Once I got over the sickness, I'm okay. I can be quite energetic. But I always run short of breath, no matter what I do. I'm- My lung apparently, because of the previous pneumonia condition, has always been bad. So, when I was working in Toronto, I was- I had a job in a garage through a fri- I got a job through a friend. I got sick. My sickness was so bad I got laid off and told to go home, which I did. We had got the family to talk to Dr. Kobora, was still, one Japanese doctor that came from Vancouver that had- out working in Toronto, he had his office here in Toronto.

[02:05]

YO: And he came and looked at me. One look at me and he says, [shakes head] "You have to go to a sanitorium. Your lung-" Apparently, I had- My lung was filled up with water. I had pleurisy. So, they sent me to this hospital in Weston. I can't remember the name of the place. But anyway, I went there cause- From pleurisy, first step, next place is TB, apparently. So, when I got there, they managed to pump out the water from the lung and give me medication, they treated as if I had TB.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: So, stayed there for a year.

LU: Oh, my goodness.

YO: Well, I mean, condition is bad, you see.

LU: Yeah.

YO: So, that was a whole year, I stayed there before they finally said, "Well, you can get out- go out." Fortunately, I didn't have to pay for the stay in the hospital, cause in those days, anything connected with TB, once you go in, it's an isolated case, or- They try to keep you isolated from everybody else. Where even during the war, we had TB sanitorium throughout- Even in B.C., in B.C., when we relocated, there was a special sanitorium in New



Denver to accommodate TB people. You didn't know that? Well, that sanatorium is still there. I think they use it as a hospital or something now. But anyway, I didn't have to pay for all those treatment that I had- Cause I didn't have any money to pay for it anyway, you know. So, anyway, after they discharged me, they told me, "Well, you have to find work. We have to get you to-" They get you to go enrol into some school to become self-supporting. And at that time, TV was- TV, accounting, this kind of thing, was very popular, and I thought, "Oh, gee whiz, being a TV technician should be good." I went through the course, I became a TV technician, but it wasn't for me. I couldn't- I could never do anything right [laughs]. So, in the meantime, my sister had come back from TV to Canada to get married. And she was working in a secretarial job, or whatever job, for this company called Carswell.

**[02:10]**

YO: Carswell Law Book. Publisher. They specialized in law books. And they had their own building on Adelaide Street, 145 Adelaide, Adelaide West. And the editorial department was up on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, and my sister worked for a lawyer up there and they needed somebody to clean the office or something. So, part time, I got a job there, cleaning the office up on the fifth floor. And from the fifth floor- This company had the whole building; it was their building. They wanted me, or us, to clean the whole fifth floor- five floor.

LU: Oh, my goodness.

YO: This is before this organized housekeeping thing that was available. So, me and my younger brother, Kozo, that came from Japan, worked there on weekends to clean the five floors, kind of thing. So, we were doing that. In the meantime, when I was in the sanatorium- while I was in there, I picked up typing, cause with typing, as long there's a typewriter, you can learn how to type, which I managed to do. And when I was working in this cleaning job, I heard about this job being available on the main floor for some typing work. I applied for it and managed to get a job there.

LU: Oh, my goodness.

YO: Yeah, and from there- So, I worked there as a typist cause this TV thing didn't work out for me, you see. And typist- I wasn't that good a typist, but I could type, and I was able to work there as a typist and then learn the business and became a supervisor in one section of the job. And I worked there for well, 15 years or so. In the meantime, they- The company moved from here, from downtown Toronto to new location on Midland Avenue, I think it was, up in Scarborough. And that was when they started changing into computer systems. And with the computer system coming in, they started laying off people from different section, and I got laid off from there. And I was in- I was around retirement age, then, you see. My retirement age-But-

**[02:15]**



YO: When I got laid off, well, this is it, I have nothing to do. I've puttered around the home, but with retirement, they paid me- they paid me for half a year or something, I think. In the meantime, I puttered around the house for a while, and then I started looking for some job that I can do, and I managed to find a job, part-time job with Montreal Trust.

LU: Oh, yeah.

YO: Montreal Trust, going over some papers and stuff as a part-time worker. And then, I- When that job finished off, I asked to whether I can be put on full-time, which I managed to do, and I stayed there for a while, until I got sick. By then, well I must have worked a few years there, it became my retirement. After retirement, I said, well, I was still healthy then- Those days it was compulsory retirement at 60. Say, "Well, if you wanna work, we can put you- I'll give you work a retiree. You'll get your pension-" Which, I got. And this guys will come in when I got left- when I had- when they fired me, they told me I can take my pension money if I wanted to. And I told them, well, it's no good to me right now. I'll leave it there and I would rather get it as a pension when my- when I become 65 or 60, I guess it was.

LU: Yeah, yeah.

YO: So, I left it there. So, anyway, here at 60, I'm still working at Montreal Trust, and then, I thought, "I might as well work until-" I wanted to work 'til 70. Or 65, I think I said. Anyway, before I want- before I can get to that age, I got sick again with this fibrosis thing. When I landed in the hospital, he says, "Well, now, we'll have to let you go." 'Cause I'm not on permanent staff anymore. I'm on part-time, you see. Cause I had already retired and getting retirement- I'm already getting retirement and you're on part-time kind of thing. So, when I got- I told them- when they were- going to hospital, they said, "Well, we'll have to lay you off completely." So, this is where I got laid off.

LU: Yeah. And that was your last job?

YO: That's my last job. But, like I said, when the retirement time came, they asked me about this health benefit thing- Coverage, group coverage. I have kept it on as long as I contributed- It was- I would be covered- So, after 60, the payment for the group coverage was paid through my pension, cause the pension came from Montreal Trust, you see. So, when I got sick, I went to the hospital, the group insurance paid for that hospital and the treatment I got, which was very fortunate.

**[02:20]**

LU: Yeah.

YO: And another fortunate part about working for Montreal Trust was when my daughter required- What do you call this? [motions hand across mouth]

LU: Uh, braces.

YO: Braces. I paid for it. But later on, they informed me that the- anything with the teeth would be covered through group insurance, which was paid by the company to the

employee and the ex-employee. So, any further work done on the teeth was covered through health insurance.

LU: Isn't that lucky?

YO: Yeah, so even my teeth, whenever I go to the dentist, it's covered by group insurance. My wife's sickness or doctor visits- Well, when you're 60, there's the- Ontario Blue Cross thing comes in effect, but drugs that we acquire, certain drugs is not covered by group insurance, the medical insurance covered it too. So, we were- I was gra- I was very fortunate to be covered by this group insurance which I managed to get from Montreal Trust.

LU: Wow.

YO: Yeah. So, the- my income right now, I get income from the pension from Montreal Trust, a pension that I've got from Carswell is coming in, then we have the government CPP, and other insurance things that I got through Johnny Nakashima. I had a life insurance, which he told me that, if you become 60 years old or older, you can convert that into annuity.

LU: Oh, okay.

YO: Did you know that?

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: The life insurance, you pay in, every year, whatever it is, if you don't use it, that insurance become actually a payment to be- You can convert it into a RRIF or annuity. So, he converted this life insurance into an annuity. Now, I'm not- And so, I'm not covered by any insurance, private insurance, except the- When I joined this Montreal Trust, they had life insurance which they paid for employees and retirees. So, in a sense, I've got insurance to cover for my- when I die, kind of thing.

LU: Mm-hmm. Where did you meet your wife?

YO: I met my wife with- At the Centre.

LU: The JCCC?

YO: Yeah.

LU: Oh, yeah.

YO: Yeah. The Centre- I was involved- I was all for having a community centre in the very beginning. And so, I was a very active member before the thing was built.

**[02:25]**

LU: Oh, yeah.

YO: Yeah. So, I met a lot of interesting people. This is where most of my friends, acquired friends, through- going to these- participating in this- getting the Centre built. And one of my friends, one of the guys was Kaz Nakamura, who is an artist. He's quite a bit younger than I am, but he's a well-known artist. In fact, his name has been printed in the Canada

Who's Who. He's dead now, but- So, the friends that I par- Primarily is through the Centre. And this is where I met my wife.

LU: What- Do you remember what year it was, or how old you were?

YO: No. Actually, Kaz Nakamura, who I worked with going around canvassing for raising money, at that time, we had to go door to door, and I was paired with him going to different houses to ask for donation or to get pledges. Anyway, he's the guy- He met- What's her name, Faye, at the Centre, and he had an eye on Faye. And apparently, from my understanding, he had even asked her to marry him.

LU: Oh.

YO: Marry. But she didn't- Now, Faye is very interested in art. I'm not an artist. I don't know enough about those kind of thing to say anything about art. But- It's- I think because of her interest in art that she got interested in Kaz. But Kaz apparently even asked her to marry him. But he said he got turned down. So, oh, she must be very interesting girl. So, anyway, because I was working at the Centre, well, in different things, I got to meet her, and I eventually got her to marry me. Yeah.

LU: Oh, wow. And did you ever have any children, or-

YO: Yeah. Well, by that time, I think I'm in my 40- Most of my friends married, as you know, when I came back from Japan, in 1940, I'm already- I must be 18, 19, then. During the war, most of my friends did- got appointed, got married, during the war. I wasn't interested in girls. In fact, I might have been afraid of girls, I guess. Well, cause I've never associated with girls. And I'm not- Like I said, I'm not very social, and- Whereas in the Centre, you get mixed up. Again, I wasn't interested in girls, either, but my friends- By the time-

### [02:30]

YO: When I was in Vancouver at Hastings Park, I had a friend in Hastings Park, that got- that had gone from Vancouver to work in the island and so, I went to see him at Hastings Park, and he introduced me to his friends from Cumberland. And so, I got chummy quite a few Cumberland people. And one of the friend was Mas Kumabe, he's a ball player, apparently. He worked in the mines in Cumberland, I don't know whether they worked in the mines or in the forest. Anyway, this guy got married in Rosebery, I think. And when he got married, I was- I went to his wedding, kind of thing, I think, and he even went up to Revelstoke with him on his honeymoon. He- They went up to honeymoon, to Revelstoke, and I went up to Revelstoke to get a train to come out east. Now what year it was, what date it was, I can't tell you, but I know. And I've kept in touch with Mas when he came out west, or out east, he got sent- He got a job out in Thunder Bay.

LU: Oh, yeah.

YO: Fort William, I think it was called in those days. And I used to visit him, and he came to Toronto, and I used to visit him. By then, he was starting a family, I was still single, I used to see him, go to him at Christmas, bringing gifts for the kids. For so many years. He moved, he

got a- He apparently got a job- When he came to Toronto, he got a job with a Furuya, or another Japanese firm, I can't remember the company, but he- As a driver, he used to deliver food to the Japanese families that had bought- They came and ordered food, cause we- Those days there was a lot of *Issei*'s and they were main was getting rice and Japanese food. So, a lot of the Japanese bought food from them rather than going to the supermarket or grocery stores. Cause *Issei* people still wanted Japanese food. Right? And he got a job- He got other jobs, when he came down from Fort William, or Thunder Bay, Fort William- Toronto, he had got different jobs, but if- but these jobs never lasted too long. Whereas, by that time, I got a- I was working for this Carswell company, and we had moved to Midland, and when I heard that he- Mas was looking for another job, I got him a job with Carswell company, and when I got laid off, I got fired from that job, particular job I was doing, Mas was still working.

[02:35]

YO: And he retired- When he became 60, he retired at Carswell company.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And- So, my connection with Mas through marriage, through jobs, we were quite close. And when he died, when Mas died- After he retired, I think it's within a year he died. For one reason or another. I guess it's his health. Whereas even after I retired, 20 years afterward, I'm still getting pension. You know, the pension, you use the pension- lasts until you die. In this particular company, the pension, when the pensioner died, everything stops. At Montreal Trust, if I die today, the pension- half the pension will go to the survivor, my wife, if she's still living. Different company has different policies. So, Mas Kumabe, his wife, when he got pension, which was very nice, but when he died, his pension stopped. So, when I phoned her, how her income was, she says, "Well, pension has stopped but I get CPP." Apparently, she gets CPP, and she gets survivor things, I think, from the government. There is a government pension for people that don't have any other income.

LU: Mm-hmm. And they were active at the Centre as well?

YO: No, they're never active- See, I'm the- I'm the only one that was active in the Centre. Most of my friends, they might have been active with the- They were very prominent with the Buddhist Church, but he had a big family, so he wasn't an active member. I got another friend that was very active in the- But when he got married, he didn't have a family, so he continued being active, but I don't see him anymore. I understand he's still living. Most of my friends, I had acquired from the pre-war and after the war- Most of my friends are- that I acquired through the Centre, but even those friends is very few. I've kept in touch- We have- I'm with the *Kokikai*, of the Japanese- Vancouver Japanese language school. And we managed to have reunion. Nobody was- When they started having these reunions, nobody in Toronto, even though we had a big group of *Kokikai* member in Toronto, nobody wanted

to become- organ- do the organizing. So, this George Tomita, who lives out in Ottawa, said he will become- organize. So, once we got that- once he decided to have a *Kokikai* reunion, we had it in Ottawa.

[02:40]

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And being a guy that wanted to- I was able to help out in that *Kokikai* meeting, or group reunion, which we had in- in Ottawa. After that was disbanded, people wanted to have reunion in- in the Centre here in Toronto.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: Nobody in the group wanted to do anything about it, except there was Ga-kyu-kai member in Toronto that wanted to- So, the Gakyukai member, whoever it was, were able to hold quite a few reunion here at the Centre. Which is- was at the old building. I think.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: The big one was here in the new building, I think. I can't remember.

LU: So, did you also participate in the redress?

YO: In the-

LU: Redress.

YO: No. These things- I've never been active in those things. A lot of- Like, I've known quite a few- Because my brother was in the S20, there was a quite few people involved in it that I knew, but I wasn't involved- never got involved in those things.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: In fact, there was a- Stan Hiraki who lives close by, close to where we live, I think he would ask me whether I got would get involved, but I- By then, I had a fam- I was married and my main concern was providing for the family and trying to- After I got married, I wasn't- I didn't get involved in any of those things.

LU: Mm-hmm. How did your parents feel about your brother joining the Canadian Army? What did they say about it?

YO: They- My- They weren't the ones, kind of people to say you shouldn't or should not do. They say, "We're gonna leave it up to you to decide what you want to do," cause they were at the age- he was at the age where he couldn't say that, "You should do this, or you shouldn't do that. You have to make your own decision and go whichever way." So, he decided to join up, whereas I decided not to join. I said, "I would try and do whatever I can for the family and for myself." Whereas my- Tad, my brother Tad, was more interested in joining up- the redress- By the time the redress thing came about, I don't think he was in any shape- When was redress, come to think of it?

[02:45]

LU: '88. 1988.

YO: Ah. I think he was starting to have little problem with his memory cause- When did he go into- When did I-

LU: Oh, when he went in for the Alzheimer's?

YO: Yeah.

LU: Um, ten years ago, I think you said.

YO: Yeah, he's been in there for ten years now.

LU: Yes, yes.

YO: But there was sign of him having- He was starting to forget quite a few things before then. And I don't know what his thought of redress- I think he was more interested in his family things cause by then, his work- I don't know what happened to his work cause- After leaving H.H. Angus, I think he had different jobs, I know he went down to Phoenix, Arizona. Regarding his work, and again, I don't know what company he was working for then, or what job kind of thing, but I think he was more interested in the family affairs rather than the whole redress thing. Yeah.

LU: Do you remember how your parents reacted to the war situation and having to move from Vancouver to New Denver? Do you remember their reaction and how they felt about the war?

YO: Well, again, when they left Japan, they knew that whatever happened, they won't be going back to Japan. He knew he was too old, and he can't go- His life is no longer what, you would say, you can't make anything going- going back to Japan again. So, he was the type to say, "Whatever happens is gonna happen, we'll go along with whatever gonna happen." And I'm that type myself. I would- I'm not the type to say, "I'm gonna fight this or fight that." I would go along with whatever happens. This is what Japanese say, "*Shikata ga nai*." You can't do anything about it, accept what's gonna happen and make the best of it. And that has been my philosophy. Why fight it? I mean. It- cause wherever we go, we still have to make a living, whether there's a lot of discrimination, or if there's discrimination- When I came to Toronto, I applied for a job that I thought I was qualified for- for TTC, for instance. They say, "Oh, you're not qualified for it." That's it. They don't even look at my resume. You know. Whether there is discrimination or whether it was- Maybe I wasn't fit for that job, I don't know. So, I accept the fact that they weren't gonna hire me. So, I went to work wherever that was- wherever work was available. If I made living, fine. I can make a living, one way or another. And I accepted the jobs, or work, whatever I could get I went and got it.

LU: Mm-hmm. Whatever happened to your father's retirement house in Japan? Did he sell it before he left?

[02:50]

YO: Oh, uh- No, he didn't. He didn't. When I- when we left Japan, he had given me a portion of the land so- to establish a household. And they had certified me as a head of a new household, at such and such a place, and gave me a title to it and everything else.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And all the properties that he had- The house and the property, when he first left Japan, when he first left Japan, he had made his father-in-law- This is his first wife. The first wife that died. He became an executor of his property of his first son that lived there. Cause his first son was raised by the family of the- of his wife. First wife.

LU: Oh, wow. Mm-hmm.

YO: And they became- He became executor of his house, his property, everything else. So, when he left Japan in 1940, everything still reverted back to him. Okay? So, when the war started, the war started, the war ended, and the laws in Japan say, "Anything- Property that was in the name of person that lived outside Japan had to be disposed of." One way or another. The executor decided to sell.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: I mean, he had the authority to do everything. And so, they were all sold, one way or another.

LU: Oh, wow. So, when you were in Japan for a few years, did you ever meet?

YO: I've- I wasn't- I never met this person.

LU: Yeah. Kuni- Kuniharu?

YO: No, no, this- Kuniharu is the son.

LU: Yeah. Yeah, did you ever meet him?

YO: Yeah- We- When we went to Japan in '37, they were at the dock to meet us at Yokohama, I guess it was. And we met the whole family there. And he had a family- He had him and his wife, a son and daughter. They were all there to meet us. And together, we had a tour of Tokyo with them. In fact, I think we had to get two taxis to accommodate us, and we had a tour of Tokyo at that time. And then we had- Then, we got on the train and came to Amagasaki, where he lived, and we stayed there for a few days, I think, before we came- went back to Ohama, where my parents had the house ready for him.

**[02:55]**

YO: So, Kuniharu- By then, Kuniharu was, like I said, he had his own family.

LU: Mm-hmm. In his 30s.

YO: But he was not an executor.

LU: Right, right.

YO: The executor was the family of- Father of his first wife.

LU: Did you know her name or- It says Uta.

YO: Uta.

LU: Uta.



YO: Yeah, I think the name was Fuji or something. Right?

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: No, have not written down-?

LU: No, no. Just says Uta.

YO: Well, anyway, so, when- I got it in Japanese. In fact, he is the one that decided to sell, and we got a letter and some money. He got a letter and some money of how he disposed of the house and property after he sold it.

LU: Yeah. Oh, wow.

YO: Well, I got- So, he got letters explaining how much he sold it for, who it was sold to, and all this kind of thing, all in Japanese. Which, I got it in here somewhere. Which, I figure there's no sense showing it to you, but it was disposed of through his- through this Mr. Fuji, I think it is. His name was. Yeah.

LU: Mm-hmm. Oh, wow. And what do you know about Uta's- Uta's life? How did she die, do you know?

YO: Well, if you look at the thing [points at papers], you'll notice-

LU: She was-

YO: Kuniharu was born this way he- Within a month, she died.

LU: Yeah.

YO: So, I think maybe had a difficult childbirth or something, but she died soon after- right after he was born. So, his married life with Uta was- He got married, was born - Kuniharu was born, and she died, kind of thing. So, maybe, reasonably he left Japan to start a new life, was to forget about the whole affair. I think.

LU: Oh, yeah. Oh, wow.

YO: But he knew he had a son, right? And therefore, my father's intention was that he would acquire enough money-

LU: Oh- [camera noises] Missed that one.

YO: The idea was to go back, retire in Japan, with a house that he was gonna have built for him, and his new family. And enjoy retirement in Japan. But when he went back to Japan, found everything's changed, he got used to living in Canada, which is quite different. No obligations to worry about in Canada. Cause in Canada, his new wife- my mom- and the family experienced life in Canada- He himself never experienced life in Canada, aside from the fact that he had steady work. It's only when he got laid off, after big strike, longshoreman strike in 1935, that he lived as a family in Vancouver.

**[03:00]**

YO: But life in Canada, for him, was living as a retired person, collecting old age pension, and living in the family with no obligation aside from the family.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: Whereas in Japan, it's not that simple. There's obligation to the in-law, obligation to the family, obliga- You know, and this kind of thing. And he can't work as a farmer. He was getting too old for that. And maybe that's the reason he wanted to come to Japan- Uh, to Canada again. Where, as long as there's enough money coming in to exist, there's no obligation. So, I think, maybe that's one of the reason- Cause when he went back, aside from the friends he used to have, they no longer lived there. They either were dead or not living there, and therefore, he had nothing to fall back on except memories. And the fact that- The house that he lived in was paid for, which he had worked and raised money in Canada, and any time he had- He's got nobody to even think about.

LU: Did he have any siblings? Any brothers or sisters?

YO: Yeah. Come to think of it, yes, he had, in fact- From what I understand, two of his older brothers had come to Canada before, but they didn't like it and they had come back. So, when we went back, there was only one brother that was still living that had come to Canada and again, I don't think I've even met him. Or I think if I met him, I'd forgotten about him.

LU: Did he have any other siblings? Two older brothers and any sisters or-

YO: Apparently, it was quite a big family. But the immediate family, they didn't have- There wasn't anybody left. So, actually, the only family, you might say, that was still living was his first son and family. The others were family obligation to the- When this family- when his family, his parents had separated from what you call the *Honke-do*, the main family, they became a different family. *Bunke*, they call it, different family. *Bunke*.

LU: Wow.

YO: *Honke* is the main family, okay? So, to establish- Any family that wants to separate from the main family become a *bunke*. And *bunke*, he had no family left when he went back.

### [03:05]

YO: The *honke* family, there was a family member still there, so apparently, he went to see them, but like I said, *honke* and *bunke*, once you differentiate from family, the tie is severed. Now, when they became *bunke*, you can still carry your family crest with him. So, when I asked him about our family crest, he still- In fact, he said, when he- when his- when he had his house built for him, while he was in Canada, he had a family crest put on his house. And the family crest consisted of two- [draws in the air before pulling out papers] [draws on paper]. It's a- [hands over paper] arrow tail, which had feathers. So, my feeling is that at one time, his family was a samurai, okay? Cause otherwise, they wouldn't have this arrow tail feather thing. So- But once you become a family, a *bunk*- Once you become- Once you get away from the samurai family, you become *heimin*. Ordinary citizens. Or farmer. So, you no longer carry the samurai implication in your family.

LU: Oh. So, then, are you supposed to come up with your own family crest, or how do you decide a new one?

YO: No. We can carry the family crest with us.

LU: Mm-hmm, right.

YO: But we no longer say we're a samurai family, we're just *heimin*. We're an ordinary farmer, you might say. Yeah. So, the crest, right, indicates that our former ancestors might have been samurai of some sort. But once you become- Once you drop your family status, you become an ordinary citizen, ordinary family, which is called *heimin*. And that's what our *koseki tohon* would indicate. You're considered ordinary family. No longer associated with samurai. But when I questioned it to my- When we went to Japan, my *honke* family- I'd never met anyone from the *honke* even though there was a guy living there, and he was a bachelor.

**[03:10]**

YO: Now, my mother's parent was still living. So, we went- I went to see them. Oh, in fact, we all went to see them, and my mother, when he fir- met my- met her mother, she was- The parents were still living, and they were quite old. But they were still active. In fact, my grandfather, I called him grandfather cause it's my mother's parents, he was in his 60s but he was active enough to do things- He was healthy enough that he can compare with a guy in the 20s. Yeah. And every time I went there, he used to make *waraji*. Which is straw sandals that he used to make by [rubs hands together] weaving straw and making straw sandals to wear. Cause they didn't wear shoes. In fact, I don't think in his lifetime, he never wore shoes. He wore- He might've worn *geta*. *Geta* is a wooden- wooden footwear. You might've seen it downstairs. Haven't you, or haven't you?

LU: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

YO: And you've never seen a sandal, have you?

LU: Well, they're like wooden sandals, aren't they? The *getas*?

YO: But it's straw sandals. He used to make sandals and we used to wear it instead of shoes. Cause once you go into *inaka*, you don't wear shoes, you wear sandals. There's no- In the village there was no big sidewalk or anything. It was wooden- And we used to wear sandals. Whereas we're- whereas if you go into the city, you had sidewalks. Now, whether it was hardpacked sand or what, we were able to buy *geta* and sandals that were made- commercially made. And I don't remember whether it's made of rubber or what, but I know I used to go around with *geta*. In the rainy weather, you buy- you wear *geta* with the high footwear, about four inches or so high. Whereas for ordinary work, you wear the one that's quite low. Yeah. And you get to used to wearing to sandals, which, here, we would call it flip-flops, right?

LU: Mm-hmm.

YU: That's the type of footwear that I remember wearing. But when we went to Japan, we had shoes, right. Which we only wore on special occasions [laughs]. Yeah. The life in Japan is- Well, in Ohama, you revert to old, old Japan. Tokyo, Osaka, Am- It's a newer Japan which my parents actually never experienced. Cause my mother grew up in Onomichi, or, Ohama, which is a country of old, you might say.

**[03:15]**

YO: In fact, when we first went to Ohama, we went by train, like from Amagasaki, where Kuniharu had his family. Down to Onomichi by train. We disembarked at Onomichi and got on a ferry that used to travel from Onomichi to the island. To Innoshima. And there was a- I think, when he first left Japan, I don't know whether there was even a ferry those days. There must've been. Or there might've been. But when we went to Japan in '37, there was a ferry that commuted from Onomichi to Innoshima that carried people that wanted to go to the mainland and this ferry traveled from- I don't know how they went- either went from Ohama, Onomichi, to- Ohama and then to Habu- The island consisted of quite a few villages. So, the- There was a ferry going from east to west, or west to east. Apparently, there was two ferries cause my brother said- I asked him, did he always train- bus- the ferry always went from Onomichi directly to Ohama, I said. He said, no some ferries went the other way around.

LU: Oh, okay.

YO: And the last ferry stop would be Ohama before going to Onomichi. Another ferry would go from Onomichi strictly first to Ohama and then to Habu and then to- like several villages all the way around the island. For people- Especially for the kids that wanted to go to school, you see. So, my- My Kozo had to go from Ohama to Onomichi to go to school at Onomichi High School.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: So, I don't know. He said- He's the one that told me you can go either way. One way or the other. And I said, "Did you ever go around the way?" He said, "I tried that once," he said. "But it's a long ride going from the other way." Which goes east to west, whatever it was. But it bypasses Onomic- In Ohama, as the last stop. Whereas if he came by way of Ohama as the first stop, it's the first stop that stops off at- [sighs].

**[03:20]**

LU: Onomichi?

YO: Ohama.

LU: Ohama.

YO: No, I don't- I don't know how my sister went. When my sister first went to Jap- when we first went to Japan, she- There was a high school at Habu. And I don't know whether she

went by- I don't think there was a bus over there. I think there was a ferry service available. So, she must've taken the ferry service from Habu- from Ohama to Habu. Where there was a private high school. I think.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: I'm not sure.

LU: So, what was like to visit your grandparents for the first time?

YO: Well, we could communicate by talking Japanese.

LU: Mm-hmm. Were you excited to see them?

YO: Well, we were- I was excited to see them. But like I said, my first impression was him sitting there, making his *waraji*. Footwear. And this is what he did in his spare time. When he wasn't working as a farmer, his spare time was filled with making *waraji*. And he's the one that told me that there's a gully close to where he lived. Where the- thousand soldiers had died and had been buried there. They called it Se-ni-zu-ka. But I haven't heard of anything further of that sto- of that gully. But this next village was a stronghold of a Murakami pirate. They call it Kaizoku. And it was a stronghold of this Murakami pirate. He was considered a pirate, and this Nakamasho was considered his stronghold. Now, at that time, there was no castle or stronghold built there. But later on, a castle was built when we were- when we went to- when we went there, I think in 1990 or something. We went for a tour of Japan.

LU: You and your wife?

YO: The whole- Quite a few people went.

LU: Oh, okay.

YO: They told us there is a castle built there as a memento of- for this Murakami Kaizoku, and a lot of samurai gears were left there. Now, this castle, I don't think was ever built for- cause we never heard about it when we went, in Japan in 1937.

### [03:25]

YO: Whereas when we went in 1990, this whole island was made into a tourist area. With this Kaizoku Castle being one of the highlights and another village was turned into a floral farm, or highlight, and it became a tourist attraction. Which, we- I didn't even go because my interest when we went to Japan was to visit my- Onomichi. And when we went there, they had managed to build a bridge- When we first went to- In '37, to go to Ohama, we had to go by ferry. We went in 1990, they had built a bridge from Onomichi, to Mukojima, to Innoshima. And they were gonna continue building the bridge to connect to Sakoku. Now, in 1990, they had already built the bridge from Osaka to Shikoku, which is another main island. And another bridge from somewhere in Okayama to Shikoku. I think. But this trip to Japan, which we took, which will quite take us from Tokyo down to Kyushu. My wife's family is from Kumamoto, which is in Kyushu, and we were gonna stop off there without

making any side trip. Okay- The fami- The trip was gonna go from Tokyo to, I think, to Kyoto, from Tokyo to Kyoto to Hiroshima to Kumamoto. City of Kumamoto. So, I've arranged to make a side trip. Instead of going directly to Hiroshima, to- from Hiroshima to- No, from Kyoto to Hiroshima, I arranged to make a side trip from Kyoto to visit to Onomichi.

**[03:30]**

YO: So, this side trip- Because I made a side trip for my family only to go to- to visit Ohama, we didn't make any arrangements to stay. This side trip was strictly a side trip for us to go to Ohama. Strictly for our own family. I think Joe Ohori made the trip- made this arrangement for us.

LU: Mm-hmm. And did you see your wife's side of the family as well?

YO: So, when we went to Kumamoto, we met the family there.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And we made a visit to the family and all those kind of thing there. Yeah. Which was very nice.

LU: Was that your first trip to Japan after the war?

YO: After the war, that was the first trip. Yeah.

LU: Oh, wow. Mm-hmm. How did it feel going back to Japan? Was it different from the first time that you-

YO: Oh, it was strictly different, yeah. Yeah. Cause I don't have too much recollection of what we did- of what it was like in the first trip. All I remember is that we met the family, Kuniharu's family, at Yokohama. And we went to Tokyo to see the Imperial Palace. It's part of the trip, kind of thing, the palace, the Yasaka-jinja, which is a must for any Japanese. And all this trip was made- And then we went, you know, Yasaka-jinja is where the war dead is enshrined, you know. The Imperial Palace, you never get to see, we went to see the Nijubashi, which connects by boat to the Imperial family, which is a must for any family that goes to Japan, you know. And the first trip, I've got no recollection as such as to what did the- what the place was except that we ended up in Ohama. And then me going back to work at Amagasaki. Cause by then, when you start working, it's not a sight-seeing trip, you know. But the trip in Japan, earthquake and all this kind of thing, is made up of- To me, I'd sleep through any earthquake. I was a sound sleeper. Now, right now, in my old age, I have to get up several times at night cause I've been unable to sleep straight through. I've asked the doctor to give me medicine to sleep through, he says- He gave me several medicine, but it just doesn't work. I got problems. It's my health, I guess. But things in Japan- When we first went back in '37, my recollection of the life in Ohama and then at Amagasaki, like I said, was no different.

**[03:35]**

YO: I'd stayed with Kuniharu for a while. And then I stayed with my mother's brother's family for a while. For one reason or another. I stayed with different families. But my family in- staying with the families in Amagasaki is again, the main recollection was me going to work. What the family condition- is very different from the time we went after the war.

LU: Do you remember the boat ride that you took to and from Japan in the 30s? When you first went to Japan and when you first came back? Do you remember what it was like to be on the boat?

YO: When we went on the boat, the only recollection I remember is my mother saying what it was like-

LU: -to have soft hands.

YO: To have soft hands.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: Coming back, when I came back, I don't remember. Actually, I'd even forgotten who I came back with. Cause by then, I came back by myself. I met a few people. There was some people that I met that I remembered for a while, but I don't remember. Those things I've forgotten.

LU: Did anyone else on your mother's side of the family come to Canada? Or did everybody stay in Japan? How big was her family? With her brothers and sisters?

YO: Her family wasn't that- very big. But when we went back to Japan, we met Kuniharu, which actually, is my stepbrother.

LU: Your half-brother.

YO: Half-brother. He's my half-brother. I met that family.

LU: What about your mother's family?

YO: When we- The mother's family, we- we met her father and mother. Her father and mother and her sister. She had a sister who was a widow.

LU: Oh, was she an older sister?

YO: Who had... a son and- who had a son and a daughter, I believe.

LU: And she had a brother- Your mother had a brother. Your mom had a brother? Was he older or younger than she was?

YO: She didn't have a brother.

LU: No?

YO: No. She didn't have... she didn't have any other family, aside from her sister, who was a widow, who had a son and a daughter.

**[03:40]**

LU: Mm-hmm. Do you know what your mother's maiden name was?

YO: Kono.



LU: Kono. Mm-hmm.

YO: That much, cause her family- grandfather was Kozo Chikamatsu. There was no other family to- that I- I don't think she had a family, that's why- the tie- There was no active connection to Japan, aside from the grandfather and her widow family and my half-brother's family.

LU: Yeah. Yeah. So, how did your- Or why did your mother decide to leave Japan and go to Canada?

YO: To start off with- She's married- When my dad decided to get married, he went back to Japan to find a wife, who happened to be my mother.

LU: Ohh, okay.

YO: And she was, what, according to the registry, she was about 25 then, see [ruffling paper]. So, I can find out for you if I go through the Japanese registry.

LU: Mm. So, she was probably married in Japan first.

YO: No- Who?

LU: Your mother.

YO: My mother married my father in Japan.

LU: In Japan. Yeah.

YO: And then, for her to come to Canada, because my father was gonna come back to Japan, she had to get passport and all this kind of thing. Now, this is the funny part, you see. My father first came to Canada, he jumped ship. He had no passport or anything. He jumped ship and then he acquired his Canadian citizenship by being naturalized Canadian. And so, he had no passport as such.

LU: Mm-hmm. So, how did he travel from- Where did he get a passport?

YO: So, maybe he got a passport as a naturalized Canadian, or he went to Japan as a Japanese citizen. And I don't think they needed a passport to get to Japan as a naturalized- as a Japanese citizen. So, to come back to Japan- to Canada, he had to get- This is where he first had to get his passport, to come to Canada and how and when he got these, I really don't know. But my mother had to get a passport to come to Canada because- So, I think this is why he had- she had to come to Canada by herself. Now, how these things work, I really don't know. But she had to get a passport, and how he gets a passport, I really don't know how these things work. But he came back- After he got married, he came right back, you see. But by then, he must've got his passport. Japanese passport. Because in order to come to Canada, you still had to get a passport.

**[03:45]**

YO: He could no longer get a passport by jumping- He couldn't get into Canada legally without a passport. Cause originally, he jumped ship.

LU: So, did your parents ever try to learn English? I know you said your mother only spoke Japanese, but did your father-

YO: He did- Well, this is the whole thing. In order to work- to learn English, you have to go to school. Or somewhere to learn English. But to work as a seaman or a fireman in the ship, as long as you was told what to do, shown how to do, and do that as and when required, he didn't have to learn English.

LU: Oh, wow, yeah. Mm-hmm.

YO: So, they were told- He was told, cause when he acquired work as a fireman, all he had to do was to shovel coal into the boat- into the furnace. When the dial indicated that it wasn't getting enough steam, the fire went down, and it required more feed. And- . So, he didn't have to learn English to speak of. As far as his work was concerned, as long as he worked according to what he was told or when he was supposed to shovel coal, or all the- or- this was his only English required. He didn't have to learn English. Whereas my mother had to pick up her English, which was- It was necessary, through going to school, which I don't think they had English teachings. Cause if you lived in Vancouver, in Japantown, Japanese town area, where she lived, you can get by without learning English. There might've been church that would help her learn English or maybe the Japanese- or the city had schoolboard that would help her English, I don't know. I never found out. But I know the only group that would actually help them was the church. The church- Anglican Catholic Church. That would help them learn English.

LU: Mm-hmm. And did you go to Japanese school as well after you went to normal school when you were growing in Vancouver?

YO: In Vancouver, that was our way of living. We went to public school, which was a Strathcona school, after school, we went down to Japanese school.

LU: Mm-hmm. And how many years did you do Japanese school for? Do you remember what grade you completed, too, or-

YO: Yeah, in 1936, we graduated Japanese school, and this is where we went- formed this *Kokikai*.

**[03:50]**

YO: And then, to further our studies, Japanese, we went to night school afterwards for several years while I was a- Cause like I said, there was night school available to pick up more Japanese. Whereas we- I went to school, to Strathcona, then from Strathcona I went to Vancouver Technical School. When my mot- when my sister went to Strathcona, and then from Strathcona, she went to Grandview Commerce to get her high school education, as a commercial school to learn her shorthand, and typing, and whatever they taught at the commercial school. High school. Yeah. So, our English was acquired at the public school and high school- public school was the main place we learned English, I guess. And like I said,

my scholarly- I was never really good at it. Whereas my sist- my wife- my wife was brought up in Kelowna. And she learned her- were schooling in Kelowna public school, and I think in the early 30s, the family moved to Grand Fork. And this is where she went to her high school. And this is where she was when the war started. Now, I've told her that she should come to you to tell her about her family. Cause her family- her father is a- went to- Nichiro Sensou. Russo-Japanese War.

LU: Oh.

YO: He went there as a medic. And he was discharged, and he had acquired Kinshi Kunsho. Which is a- one of the highest medal a soldier can get in Japan.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Uh, this Kinshi Kunsho is- well, equivalent to- what is the highest military award in Canada? Do you know?

LU: No, I can't think of-

YO: You don't know?

LU: -can't think of it off the top of my head.

YO: In the United States, it's the Congressional Medal of Honor, isn't it? Well, in Japan, in the Kinshi Kunsho, they have different categories, you know. But anyway, her father has acquired Kinshi Kunsho, one of the highest award you can give to a military man. And now, they say, from what she tells me, she said, after the war, he was a different man. I mean, having to go through any war, I think a man changes.

**[03:55]**

YO: But he couldn't live in Japan, I think, because of- Anyway, he became a changed man. And he immigrated. This is before he married. He immigrated to Canada.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Now, I don't whether he got married in Japan or not. But he's- But as I understand, well- He must've got married- I don't when he got married- I don't know when he got married. But all his kids were born in Canada.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: So, anyway, like I said, he was- He must've got married in Japan. Cause as far as I know, his children were all born in Canada. And I understand he went from Vancouver- He worked out in Queen Charlotte Island, where there was work available. And from there, I understand- This is the story- You can get better story from my wife, but from where- They went overland to B.C., down to Kelowna, where he settled. But he moved from Kelowna, the whole family moved from Kelowna to Grand Forks. Just before the war.

LU: Mm.

YO: Apparently- I think. Like I said, you can get better story from my wife. But the fact- One of his son tried to become a doctor. But he couldn't for one reason or another, and he became a naturopathic doctor. Another son became mayor of Grand Forks.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And he tried to stay as a mayor for ten years, but I think in the ninth year he got kicked out. They got another son that-

LU: Oh. Just gonna have to switch. [camera noises]. Good thing I've got spares. How are you doing? It's been four hours.

YO: Has it been that long? I'm sorry.

LU: That's okay, are you okay?

YO: I'm okay.

LU: I'm okay.

YO: I- This is one of the reasons I came- wanted to come here cause my memory is starting to go, I think.

**[04:00]**

YO: But I know- I just want to make sure that my parents get credit for being one of the pioneers in B.C.

LU: Yeah.

YO: Unfortunately, they didn't- they died before the- their- got this redress thing.

LU: Your parents?

YO: Yeah.

LU: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. So, you grew up in Vancouver.

YO: Grew up in Vancouver.

LU: Yeah.

YO: Like I said, I guess I was sixteen when we went to Japan. The whole family went to Japan. But we came back- part of the family came back. My father and mother, and Tad came back- wanted to come back to Canada. So, we came back. And on the way back, they dropped in to see me, to tell me they're coming to Canada, so, "Would you like to come to Canada?" And I say yes. And so, I had to come to Canada after to get the pas- necessary papers and passport and all this kind of thing. I didn't have to get passport. Cause I was there as a Canadian citizen, I came back as a Canadian citizen. But to get booking on the ship. And so- Whereas my sister and the youngest brother had stayed in Japan throughout the war. And- I haven't told you- Or did I tell you part of the fam- family coming to Canada?

LU: No, you told. Yeah.

YO: Did I tell you about my fam- Ah.

LU: But what was it like going back to Vancouver after being in Japan?

YO: Oh, coming back to Vancouver, first thing I had to do was look for work, cause I wasn't gonna go to work- going back to school.

LU: What about your friends? Did you try getting in contact with any of your friends that you had growing up in Vancouver?

YO: My friends has all scattered somewhere, cause they had to go to work. After going to scho- after graduating, they had to go to work. So, I never actually got in contact with any of my classmates until I came to Toronto.

LU: Mm-hmm. Do you remember growing up in Vancouver and playing activities or games with your friends, or- What would you do on the weekend for fun?

YO: Well-

LU: Do you remember?

YO: For fun, we went to- Growing up in Vancouver- Like I said, I wasn't- I was a sickly kid when I was growing up, so my main thing was going to the library.

LU: Mm.

YO: At Main and Hastings. And going through the books and to a museum which was on the top floor. I didn't- The only other activities was going out to Powell Ground, where there's always kids playing. And I really didn't make much friends aside from the classmates going to school in- before the war.

#### [04:05]

YO: The friends that I acquired was either at school, at Strathcona school, or at Japanese school, where I managed to pick up, after I came to Toronto. When I came to Toronto, Koe Sugawa was first- one of the first that I met who told me that he was married and raising a family. And another one was Sab Kubota. Kubota- Sab was still unmarried, but he got married later on. But getting acquainted with pre-war friends, classmates, was through Kokikai meeting. Reunion. And meeting people at the Centre. Cause when I came to Toronto, and working, the only way we could get- to meet people was through some type of social club. And the Kubota family was a good tennis players, they were active- Kubota- George- Sab Kubota is a classmate, Japanese classmate, Japanese language school classmate. The Strathcona classmates I really don't remember.

LU: Do you remember if there were other Japanese students?

YO: Yeah.

LU: Were there a lot or just a couple or-

YO: Well, there was a few we met. But by going to the Centre, and going to these Japanese- Kokikai reunion thing, that we were finally able to pick up friends, classmates then, you see. So, I was quite active in the Kokikai reunion in- which we had in Ottawa. And like I said, most of the Kokikai members were here in Toronto. And because I was active and recruiting these people to have a reunion, to go to Vancouver, I was able to contact quite a few people that were living in Toronto that we got to get to know. But, like I told you before, I wasn't very sociable kind of guy. And so, any friends that I really got to know is actually through working on this reunion and through the Centre.

LU: Mm-hmm. When you were younger, do you remember playing outside and activities like going to the beach, or swimming, or hiking, or you know, riding a bike, roller-skating? Do you remember any of that? Did you ever-

YO: In Vancouver days? In Vancouver days, there was gangs in the- Each area had a gang, you might say. And downtown, we had a gang.

LU: Mm-hmmm.

YO: Which we kinda grew up together. The people near the- The main group- Japanese Powell Street area had one gang.

#### [04:10]

YO: Another gang was up in Buddhist Church area. Five or six hundred block, Cordova, on Powell Street. The group that I was- There were- Quite a few were here in Toronto, but because I didn't stay- I didn't work in Toronto very long- And they were all involved in their family and their group in the different area that they lived in, I never got to see them very much. It's only through working and participating in the Centre that I made friends.

LU: What else do you remember about Vancouver days? Does anything come to mind when you think of Vancouver days? What was your house like growing up?

YO: Growing up, the house- Well, like I said, the only house that I remember growing up, it was 302 Cordova Street. Which was next door to Mr. Nakano, who had an insurance agency. Sun Life agency, and he was a head man there. And I think a lot of the person that were recruited into Asahi team went there for job as a- Sun Life insurance company agent. He was able to offer them job, to go out, get insurance in the outlying area. Wherever they came from. The- What was your question? The place- the people that I remember in Vancouver- There was Tobo family living upstairs. Mike Tobo, his sister, [Sachan?], who married- I can't remember his name now, it'll come to me later, but- Who I found out later that was quite active in CCF.

LU: CCF?

YO: CCF is a political party. NDP. I guess it is here in Toronto. New Democratic Party. I think she was active- She had a job there as an NDP secretary or something, in Toronto.

LU: So, you didn't have your own house for the family? You rented the house? Your Vancouver house?

YO: In Vancouver, we rented that house- in Vancouver, this is- The one I remember is the 302 Cordova Street, which is right opposite St. James Anglican Church. St. James Church. And they had a Boy Scout group, which was primarily *hakujin*, Anglo-Saxon.

#### [04:15]

YO: But they recruited Japanese people to become scout, or the small group called the Wolf Cub, which I eventually joined, and became a Wolf Cub. And- But this church, Anglican- St.

James Church catered to the city of Toronto, Anglican Church, whereas the Japanese church was- Anglican church- was at Holy Cross Church at 400 block, right opposite the Powell Ground. And then there was United Church on the other side, near Powell Ground. And then there was a Catholic Church on Dunlevy Street- or is it Gore? Dunlevy Street, on this side of Powell Ground. There's churches all around. Anglican Church on Powell Street- or, on Cordova. United Church on other street. And then the Catholic church. And then on Powell Street, it was all Japanese stores and Japanese *ofuro* and you know. Three, two hundred, 300, and 400 was the main Japanese town. Japanese commercial street went from 400 to 500, extend- There wasn't too much beyond 300. There wasn't any store on 200 Powell. But on Main Street, there was stores on- near Cordova, Powell, and right down to the Grove Cycles<sup>1</sup>, down to 100, right near Alexander Street. So, all the- Most of the commercial Powell- Japanese commercial stores were right downtown near 300, 400, 500 area. And beyond Alexander Street, was mainly Japanese people, which for some reason, I don't remember any kids from Alexander Street. But Cordova Street had a lot of kids. And beyond 400, 500, between Powell and Hastings, there was lots of kids. And that's where different social group were available. A lot of people that you hear about was from Powell Street, 400, 500. And then, the outlying area, Kitsilano, or Fairview, they had different groups. Which the Japanese people, who were sociable, were available through church. Like the Buddhist Church or the Catholic Church or the United Church.

#### [04:20]

YO: But like I said, my mother- Being from Japan, directly from Innoshima , Ohamamura, her contact with people were mainly from downtown area or through Hiroshima *kenjinkai* picnic.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: You know. Japanese people, *issei* people, socially was through the village or *ken*. So, she went to all these *kenjin*- Hiroshima *kenjinkai* picnic. She might not know them through Japan, but from *kenjinkai* picnic, she would acquire friends. But she didn't have any friends socially aside from the *kenjinkai*- or from the local area. So, she had to rely on, more or less, people she got to know socially in the downtown area. So, her life must have been very hard, you might say. But raising the family in Japan- Japanese town in Vancouver was primary through neighborhood, I think. Her time was quite full raising the family, cause like I said before, Father was not home. My father was away most of the time, working on this Union Steamship. And he used to come home just once a year- once a week. So, we didn't see Father at all while we were growing up except when he came home.

LU: Would he write letters or correspondence when he was away or-

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<sup>1</sup> Speaker is likely talking about the Tammy Bicycle Shop at 114 Main St in Vancouver. Grove Cycle was located in Toronto.



YO: Well, the only writing he did- Well, in fact the only writing my mother did was to write home all the time.

LU: Oh, yeah.

YO: So, we used to write to Japan in Japanese. You know. So, my Japanese, which I acquired through home and through Japanese school, and living in Japanese area in Vancouver, was strictly through living in- at home, you might say. And socially. The English we acquired through going to school and playing with each other, which we conversed Japanese and English, all mixed up.

LU: Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm.

YO: So- Like I said, my social life, even- Well, once we came to Toronto, and once I got married to Faye, her- She's been raised up- raised in Kelowna and Grand Forks.

**[04:25]**

YO: The area that she lived in- In Kelowna, there was quite a few family in Kelowna, but there was no- They wasn't concentrated like in Vancouver. So, her English is better than mine was. In fact, when she came to Toronto, she went to university and got her B.A. in English.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: At U of T. You know. So, her English and her social thing is much better than mine. Mine has been primarily centered on the family and the Centre. So, I was quite active in the Centre, but I've never took any leading part at the Centre except when I was shoved in to do the first bazaar that we had for the Centre. I was involved in it. And that's when I had to go and learn how bazaar operated by going and solicitating help from all these Japanese units that we had. The Japanese Buddhist group, the NAJC, the- You know, different group that we had, I had to do the walking around and asking for them to help. Cause most Japanese- A lot of Japanese that had come to Toronto to live, didn't actually join the Centre. In fact, most of the friends that I had even built up since then are not JC member. They're not member of the Cultural Centre. Cause most of them, as they grew up, they had to- they- their social activity in the area where they lived. Or through the company that they- Cause that way, they were able to raise the family in that area, wherever they lived. They didn't have to come to the Centre to build any social life. Whereas myself, I wasn't- I had never acquired what you call social living- I could live as a hermit, I might- you might say. And this is one of the reasons I didn't get married to- way after all my friends were married, you see. I guess I was in my 40s before I got married. And the only reason I got married was getting acquainted with people at the Centre. Cause my upbringing was, you might say, more Japanese than Canadian. My family, my mother being from Japan, directly from Ohamamura, which is a small island in the Midland Sea-

**[04:30]**

YO: So, she had no city life, not even in the- even in Japan, in Hiroshima, Hiroshima City, or Hiroshima-ken. Most of the Hiroshima-ken people around the city of Hiroshima- To her, City of Hiroshima was a foreign country. Cause she lived in an island in the Midland- in the inland sea, which is a very isolated island. And her experience with neighbours and social thing was when she first came to Canada.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And meeting people- Japanese people from different part of Japan. Which, you know- which, to the younger generation, is- well, very foreign, I guess you might call it. Cause to us, when we grow up in a neighbourhood, we go to school, we acquire friends from school in the neighbourhood, right? Whereas to her, she hadn't had that experience. Her getting-meeting people was living and raising the family in Japanese town in Vancouver and through the ghost town. The first time she met people- more people, was when she was living in the ghost town. Was the strictly Japanese. And this is- living- or, acquiring- or, getting to know people outside of the immediate family was through living in Vancouver and living in ghost town. And living in Toronto, where she was able to meet other Japanese people outside the circle of where you live. It must have been really hard on her and yet, she managed. And my- you know, my brother Tad, who- He was the one that was actually closest to the family, with the family, when we went to Japan- When we went to Japan, he stayed with the family. He stayed with the family until they came to Canada. And when he came to- came back to Canada, he still- He came back to Canada with Mom and Dad and him, you see. So, he became the core of the family. Whereas I, even though I was the first-born, after we went to- when we went to Japan, I had to leave family to- and when we- And when we came back, I had to be informed they were coming. So, I came back to Canada. But still, I can't live with the family, cause soon as I came back to Canada, I had to go out to work. And then going back to work means not living in- not living in Vanc- in Toronto, but going away to find- Well, when the war started, again, you can't stay as a family. We were scattered.

LU: Mm-hmm, that's right.

**[04:35]**

YO: Whereas Tad, after going- after going to the ghost town, he was- When he came back, he went to school, got to be an engineer, and he was the one that was able to call the family to live as a family in Toronto because of his effort as a main wage-earner. Cause becoming a mechanical engineer, he had enough money to be able to call them to try and establish a family. So, we- He became the core of- of family. And I- In family structure, because I was the first-born in the family, I'm still the one who was- should've been responsible to look after the parents and doing things for the family. But the- My brother Tad took over that

responsibility, you might say. But unfortunately- Well, once we got together, it was alright. But he married a widower, Anglo-Saxon Canad- Oh, just a Canadian, you call it, yeah. Whereas I felt that being the first-born, I'm responsible for the family. And- Which is one of the reasons I refrain from getting married to a *hakujin*. To get a Japanese wife, so that- as if I can look after the family- Or, we can look after the family as a Japanese family. Which was actually unnecessary because, you know- my family has- my parents have learned to accept things as they come. To live by themselves if necessary. And they were- They had already realized that their children are no longer- could be no longer responsible for their living as a Japanese family. But my res- It's- The feeling that I had was I was responsible for them, even though their old age pension and everything else, the B.C. Commission, if necessary, they would have provided them welfare for living. But as it was, I don't how they managed to get through, but every time we made- While we were- During the war, while we were working in the road camp, like I said, our wages were taken out. Part of our wages were taken out to support the family.

LU: Yeah.

YO: The parents. That happened to my brother, too. So, when he enlisted for the army, he- his wages- part of his wages went for the upkeep- for the family.

**[04:40]**

YO: For the parents. So, I understand that he- his wages were- part of his wages went to the family. Whereas when I became independent, I'd forgotten all about the family. Cause it's first come first serve or you have to look after yourself. So, I'd forgotten about the family. But when we came back- When we started- got the house in Toronto, the feeling was still there. And so, I delayed- I wanted to get a Japanese wife so I can say that between us, we can live as a Japanese family. But it didn't turn out that way, you know. My father died- Like I said before, I don't know when my brother married Dorothy. But I lived- When my- When they married, he went to live with his wife. I think they were living in Oakville or somewhere. But I stayed home. My family was already here. My father and my mother and we lived at Ossington, and my wages and stuff, we'd leave to the family for the payment of the house and all this kind of thing. We lived as a Japanese family. But- Actually, I guess we didn't- This is in word only, I guess. And when I finally got to marry, I wasn't thinking in that term. Cause when I- After we got married and we moved into 990, my wife didn't want to live or eat as a family. And I couldn't do anything, but to go - And do what my wife wanted to do. Well, it's either that or change the whole thing, but- Well, anyway, by the time I got married, my father had died. My mother was still working in the garment factory. And she was able to get by. She had her social life with a church group that she had joined after she came to Toronto. So, I could leave my mother without having to worry about her. So, we bought a house. But I kept in touch with my mom. My wife couldn't look after the

family in her house- in our house. But I can look after my mom, cause in her house, she was living and working and having her own social group.

**[04:45]**

YO: So, to me, part of my responsibility was ok. Until she died, you see. So, we had- The family was- After we left- After I got married and had a house for ourselves, we rented out rooms to Japanese people wherever possible. And Mom kept working until she had a stroke. Well, we were told that the family- One of the family that was staying at the house phoned to tell me that my mom had a stroke. And they found her on the floor. And that she had called the 911, or whatever, to have her taken care of. Oh, in fact, I had to ask him to make sure she gets sent to the hospital to be looked after and we tried to look after her, but she died in the hospital anyway. So, after she died, well, we decided- Sold the house and yeah. In the meantime, the- We- By then, my- Kozo, who had come back to Canada, would recall them to 990 had already bought the house and was living in Scarborough. They bought a house in Scarborough. When they first came to Canada, they went to church, United Church, where the Japanese community had a United Church group at- near Ossington. Anyway- Davenport Road, I think they- there was a church there. But once Kozo went over to Scarborough, he didn't want to come to United Church, where the Japanese- They wanted to go to a church close to where they live. So, she didn't want- she didn't want to get tied- tie in with the Japanese community. Well, I guess she didn't- she wanted to get away from the Japanese community, I guess. Which cut her off from- But she went- The family tie kept her, as far as the family tie goes. Because she's married to my brother, the tie is still there. And up until then, my family- Tad, actually, was living with his family in Oakville. I was living in- with my family in-

**[04:50]**

LU: Toronto?

YO: In our house in Toronto. So, it's only after the- my mom died, that we split as a family unit. And we all had our family as a different family unit and their different area, you know. But the only thing that kept- keep us as a family unit is our name only, you might say. Cause there's very little contact between the family itself. Now, my sister, who had gone to live in Colorado, she raised her family, she had her fam- she's got her own family. She's got a brother. She had a son and a daughter. And they're now both married and live in different places. But she's still in Colorado Springs. Tad- Kozo is living in Scarborough, and they got two daughters. One is married- is married and living in Barrie. And the other one is living in Hamilton. She works for McMaster . But she still comes up to see the family in Scarborough. My- I- My brother, who is now in- My brother Tad is Castlevue, no longer knows anybody. Of his Alzheimer's. He's still living there, but all I can say is he's still living. And naturally, he

doesn't know anybody, he doesn't talk to anybody, and his mind, you might say, completely gone. But he can still- I understand he can still feed himself, but they have to look after him. They have to put him in diapers to look after his bodily functions. Doing shaving for him or getting somebody to shave for him. He gets a haircut done by one of the volunteers there. But his own family, like I said, he's got no actually his own children. His wife's kids are grown, and they got their own families, so there's nobody to look after him except through the place where he's living. It's unfortunate. But the family, we can keep in touch. My sister keep phoning me through our birthday, but that's about all.

LU: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

YO: The family- My brother doesn't want to talk to me because of his disagreement with Tad. I don't know what happened, and there's no sense asking, cause my brother can't talk anyway. My brother doesn't want to talk about it. His wife will talk to me but, you know, we haven't got much in common. It's unfortunate, but- So, my social life is strictly through Faye, who has quite a few friends that she falls back on.

**[04:55]**

YO: As far as my friends is concerned, I've acquired friends through the Centre and through my- through- My hobby was more drinking than social, through Centre. But my wife doesn't like me drinking so I had to quit drinking at home, anyway. Any social life I have is through her family and through the Centre. But I haven't been any active- done any activities through the Centre.

LU: Mm-hmm. Well, you'll have to see if your wife will come do an interview.

YO: Well [laughs].

LU: Sounds great.

YO: My wife is very social.

LU: Oh good, good.

YO: And, in fact, like I said before, her family is a very- is kind of a very big family. And two of her family- There's one that was- became a naturopath doctor. He wasn't able to practice as such- I don't think naturo- But he was- he was a very learned man; he was a professor at one of the universities in Calgary.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: There was one of those mail order universities. I can't remember- from my family can tell- [shakes head]. Faye can tell you about it, but he was very active in that, and he had a professorship kind of thing. And he was very active in that university. One of his brother- one of his brother was a high school teacher. He was a- high school teacher at King George High School in- He was a principal in High School- Prince George High School in Vancouver.

LU: Oh, wow.

YO: And he's got quite a few friends there and he's very active. He plays tennis and he- And he's got quite a big family. And one time he was very active at the- on the Japanese Museum

thing in Vancouver. Now, Vancouver- When Vancouver said they were gonna make a museum for the Japanese Canadian in Vancouver, I had a Japanese *sakezuki*. Japanese wine drinking cup, which they have- which they have special drinking cup at a wedding. Which my father-

LU: From the seaman's group, wasn't it?

YO: Got from the union. Seaman's union. Which I thought should belong to the university. Which I managed to have it taken down to university, from one of the member- Victoria-Virginia Sato, which had come to Vancouver-

[05:00]

YO: Apparently, she had lived in Toronto before going to Vancouver and becoming member of the museum. Anyway, she had a company in Vancouver. She's- But anyway, when I heard that she was coming to Vancouver – to Toronto for some reason, I got in touch with her, and got her to take the *sakazuki* to Vancouver to be put into the museum.

LU: Yeah, isn't that great?

YO: And that was the last I heard about it.

LU: Mm.

YO: In fact, I did receive the- from the member- the museum that they were pleased to get this *sakezuki*. And they wanted to have a form released that it was given to them from me to be placed in the museum. Which I, you know, signed and sent back the form and all this kind of thing. But that was the last I've heard about it. And the museum has been in operation for a number of years, but I haven't heard-

LU: Oh, it's probably there.

YO: Whether they have been able to even display at the university. At the museum.

LU: Mm-hmm. No, it's probably- it's probably there. Cause that's what we do here, is once we get the release form for it, then we can work with it, but yeah. Yeah.

YO: Yeah. But- but- my feeling is that if they have placed it in the museum to show to the people, they probably wanted to get a history of the Japanese Seaman's Union before they would even display it.

LU: They probably have- probably have the history for the museum.

YO: Well, this is it, you see. My feeling is that they couldn't get the history. Cause nobody that I knew in Toronto have even heard of a Seaman's Union except this Mr. Shisito, who had said he was gonna write whatever about his life and that he mentioned-

LU: Are we still going?

YO: About this Seaman's Union that he was gonna write- have it written about it.

LU: Can you see the name? For who it was?

YO: Mr. Shisi- Not Shisito. Shimoda. Mr. Shimoda.

LU: Shimoda. Mm-hmm.

YO: But Mr. Shimoda died a few years ago. And I haven't heard- And I've heard that Mr. Shimoda's- what do you call this- his history? Has been given to Jack Nakamoto.

**[05:05]**

YO: And he was gonna get it published.

LU: Ohh.

YO: But Mr. Nakamoto- Jack hasn't finished making that. Rewriting it in English. Cause I haven't heard anything about it. So, if he hasn't mentioned that, or if he hasn't finished writing Mr. Shimoda's memoir or whatever you call that, the museum won't have- or couldn't get any history about the Union. In which case, I don't think the museum would want to place it in their museum to show to the public without having some record to say that this Union even existed.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: Right?

LU: Yeah. Well, the- It's the Burnaby Museum that you're talking about, right?

YO: Yeah.

LU: The Japanese Canadian National Museum? We're actually going to be joining our archives with their archives. Hopefully, sometime soon. So, I'll look into it for you. I'll see if they-

YO: This is- Yeah. This is probably what's gonna happen. But in the meantime, that stuff is still with them in Vancouver.

LU: Mm-hmm, right.

YO: Now, I have asked my wife, who's got a brother in Vancouver, who had once been active in this group. The Japanese Museum stuff. To see whether he can find out anything about it.

LU: Oh, yeah. And these- *sakezuki*?

YO: *Sakezuki*.

LU: *Sakezukis*.

YO: Yeah.

LU: They were given to as presents to your parents or to you?

YO: To my father.

LU: To your father.

YO: The *sakezuki* was given to my father for his upcoming- Or, for his wedding. Getting married.

LU: Mm-hmm.

YO: So, he had a- See these- these- Seaman's Union people who hadn't had a house or place to stay at home used to stay at this Seaman's Home or hostel.

LU: Oh, yeah.

YO: There was a host- home there for these people to stay.



LU: Oh, wow.

YO: Cause a lot of these seamen were bachelors. And a lot of the jobs in these steamships, they were sleeping in the city and working on the boat. Most of these boats were- Majority of these boats were berthed in the city and they didn't sleep and eat on the boat. The only time they ate was while they were working on the boat.

LU: Yeah.

YO: Whereas my father ate and slept on the boat.

**[05:10]**

YO: The only time he could come ashore was when he was in Vancouver. So, while he was working on the ships that stayed in port, in Vancouver, he stayed at this Seaman's Hall. And when I was living in Vancouver, I kinda remember seeing this brick building which was built close to Japanese Language School in Alexander Street. Where- It was called Seaman's Hall, you see. And those seaman that didn't have a place to live lived in this hall and went to work in the ship of various companies that would hire them. So, I thought there might be some record left at the hall, but the hall wasn't run by Japanese. It was run by the seamen- the union seamen. So, there was no- To my knowledge, there was no- There might have been records in English, but not in Japanese. But for a Japanese seaman to have a union, there must have been a record somewhere. And there were- there was a few married people, married Japanese people, that had worked in the ships, and I had assumed that there was a Japanese record somewhere. And one of the family, I've lost touch with the married seaman's family, that had a family, that had belonged to the union, that might have had a record kept in their home. Cause my dad never had record at home. We used to have *tanomoshi* family at home every so often. *Tanomoshi* family. At gatherings is where seamen chip in their family as a cooperative, you might say a cooperative union. It was strictly with the family, Japanese seaman's family. And every once in a while, we used to have families get together at our house, cause he was part of the union family, and we used to have celebrations and gatherings and parties at home. So, I'm assuming there were other families available, too, that they might have taken turns having family, *tanomoshi* parties, at their family.

**[05:15]**

YO: And I thought there might have been record in their family. But the only family that I- that might have it was this Hirota family, whose father was quite fluent in English and used to talk to the ship owners about union affair. But I don't know. I haven't talked to them about it. I should. About if they have any records in their family. Cause this family had three girls. Sachan, Hisako, Masachan, I think. Kimichan and Masachan, I think. Three girls, anyway. And the two girls whom after they got married were in Toronto, one was in

Montreal, when her husband died, I think she- When I heard about it, her family came- she came down to Momiji, was living at Momiji. You know, the Momiji- I don't know what you call it now.

LU: The health centre.

YO: Momiji Health Centre.

LU: Or, yeah, health residence. Did you want a bottle of water?

YO: Pardon?

LU: Water?

YO: No, it's okay.

LU: No, it's okay. [hands over bottle of water]

YO: Anyway, this- When she died- I heard this youngest daughter died here at Momiji. But her two other sisters, as far as I know, are still at Momiji. I should contact her to see about the- her family- her father's memoir, if there was any memoir.

LU: Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm.

YO: But, like I said before, I've- I haven't been much of a social person, and I had a very hard- difficult time trying to get in touch with people. So, I've left most of these things to my wife to do it. But my wife is having her problems right now. So, she doesn't want to do too much. She doesn't want to do anything right now, herself. Cause, like I said, it's her- She's got her problems to look after rather than for mine.

**[05:20]**

YO: And I haven't been pushing my problems. I can push my problems and say, as long as I'm living, I try to do whatever I can myself. Unfortunately, I can't do too much. And now, I find that I have to rely on somebody else or pass on my problem to somebody to look into, to see if they can solve it themselves. So, I don't know. It's- I've lived longer than I should've. And I think if and when I get sick next time, and- or, when my- if my asthma comes back, I'll be in no shape to do anything. And I have, in my memory, how bad my father's friend was when he had asthma and was trying to take care of it by himself. Cause he was a single man, and he had no means of going to the doctor or anything, you know. I don't want to be in that position, but I would like to be able to give credit for my parents for having me. Having raised the family the way they did under a very tough circumstances. Which, to me, when I was being raised, didn't think it was tough. You know. I didn't know about my father's position or my mother's position. But to come to a foreign country without knowing anybody and have to raise the family- actually has to raise the family all by herself, isn't it? I mean, raise the family by herself and the support that she could get from the neighbours. Cause at that time there was no support as such made or organized.

LU: Yeah.

YO: Yeah.

LU: Oh, wow. Must be very different.

YO: Yeah, well.

LU: Well, I don't have any more questions. I think we've-

YO: Well, like I've said before- What about this conference that we're having?

LU: Oh, yes, okay. Well, let me turn these off. Thank you very much for the interview. Thank you. And I'll shut these off.