

**Interviewee: Harold Takayesu**

**Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda**

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\*Note that this interview contains references to Anti-Asian slurs.

[00:00]

Lisa Uyeda: Okay. So, this is an interview with Harold on August 31st, 2010. And would you like to get started off, Harold, by telling us where and when you were born?

Harold Takayesu: I was born in Vancouver on the 28th of February, 1925. And yeah, that's it.

LU: Was it Vancouver City that you were born in?

HT: Yeah. Well, we were- we lived outside of the Japanese community. I don't know how to describe it, but we were- about, I would say, 10 blocks away from the Japanese community. 10 blocks. Yeah. In Vancouver's terms, that would be a mile.

LU: Oh, okay.

HT: Yeah. Vancouver was cut up into blocks, and I think every 10 blocks was a mile.

LU: Oh, wow.

HT: That's how they counted that one.

LU: Mm-Hm. So, the Japan area that you're talking- or Japanese area you're talking about, is that-

HT: That was down in Powell and Hastings and place like that. We lived in- out in Clark Drive, and down near Powell Street, but Clark Drive. So we generally lived outside that community.

LU: And did you grow up there? Did you spend most of your years there?

HT: Yeah. Well, until the evacuation, that's where we were. [laughs]

LU: And how old were you then, when the evacuation happened? Probably around 15?

HT: 1940, yeah '25 to '40, '41

LU: Mm-Hm. So, 15 or 16

HT: Left in '42, right. So I was- what would that be? 17.

LU: Mm-hm.

HT: 17 at the time.

LU: So, what do you remember about growing up in Vancouver? How- where did you go to school?

HT: Went to Seymour School, public school. And then, after Seymour School went to Templeton Junior High. And then from Templeton Junior High, we went to- I went to Britannia High. So that's- yeah, that's the last high school I was involved in Vancouver anyway.

LU: Did you end up completing high school before you went away to the war?

HT: Hm?

LU: Did you complete high school before you went away?

HT: No, no. We were-, I was in grade 10 at the time, when the war started. And yeah, all our activities pertaining to anything military were curtailed right away, you know? So, yeah, it's a little bit of a embarrassing situation where you are patriotic one day, and then you are saw as enemy alien the next, you know?

LU: Mm-hm.

HT: It must have been a rough time though. I don't remember too much because I think regardless of- we were kept busy, you know, because we had to face the evacuation situation that was coming up. It was coming up pretty fast, and gullible me, I thought, "Hey, I'm not gonna be evacuated." I'm Okinawan, you know, my dad's Okinawan. Okinawans are not Japanese [laughs]. But we're all put in the same pot, and out we go, you know?

[00:05]

HT: So, yeah.

LU: So what- let's talk a little bit about your dad's history. What do you know about his family and where he came from in Japan and why he came?

HT: Tragically we know nothing about his family. We're- At this stage of the game, we're trying to find out. In Okinawa, it's believed that he was from a place called Chatan, I think. And Chatan out in Okinawa was the- I believe, the beachhead that the United States decided to invade Okinawa. And so, talking to the people in Chatan, they said, "Oh, they leveled the place down till there was nothing over six feet high." You know, in other words, every

building, everything was blown apart. And then they invaded the island of Okinawa. And I believe, if I'm not mistaken, Chatan still has an American air base, right in their outskirts.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow.

HT: Yeah. So it's a, you know, rather tragic thing, of course. But, you know, you don't know how tragic it was. For instance, over here, we're evacuated to a camp out in Slocan and us kids, well, I think we lived somewhat a life of bliss, you know? We didn't hear too much about what's going on in the war. Death and destruction wasn't part of our everyday living, because we had no radio communication, though, I mean, there was radio communication. Somebody had a illegal radio somewhere in the settlement. And the communication was generally done in the bath houses, you know, where they're having a bath after work, and they're talking about what's going on and stuff like that. If we didn't hear about it, we didn't know about it. We were rather immune to all the things that were going on. Unless you were inquisitive enough and you- or your parents would tell you because they knew what was going on, because I'm sure they had a good whispering campaign or a communication system. And- but they didn't- at least my parents didn't lay it on me, you know, about what was going on. If they heard what was going on, even to the point of where the invasion of Okinawa happened, you know, I didn't know anything about that. So, yeah, we were- in that kind of censorship, we were out of that circle. And I don't think we concerned ourselves, or at least I didn't concern myself with what was going on, other than the fact that if push come to shove, and there was a invasion of Japanese troops into- onto Canadian soil, you know.

[00:10]

HT: Then, you know, my father says, "At that time, you can join the army, and fight against the Japanese, if you feel that's the way you want to go." So that's the only kind of thing that stayed with me, you know, that, yes, if that kind of- at that time, maybe I would join up. But my brother who was older than me, he was independent as all get out. And he had come out to the east, and somehow or other, they tried to join the armed forces, and finally they got a breakthrough. And, he joined the- well at the first he joined the British army because the Canadian army wasn't taking any Japanese Canadians. And then finally, the government accepted the Japanese Canadians to go as interpreters. And so that was okay.

LU: Oh, wow. So, was your brother sent anywhere, or- ?

HT: Well, he was in India, I think. I believe he was up in India near the Burma area. And that's where he was stationed during the war anyway. Yeah.

LU: How much older is your brother?

HT: My brother was three years older than me, and a tough nut. He was a disciplinarian. He did what he wanted to do, and then he would- and, for instance, while I was a child, if I got into trouble, I wasn't disciplined by my father. And he took it upon himself to say, "Look, dad's not gonna do anything to you, but you do something-" And, you know, clench fist and wham, you know, and he says, "I'll do the punishment." So, that sort of made me behave a little better. [laughs] So when the war started, and he was able to join up, he immediately wrote to me and said, "Don't join up. You look after mother, or else," you know. So the thought of joining up was limited to circumstances, you know? And- but, yeah, he had a lot to do with me not joining up. So, anyway, as life progressed, it turned out to be okay.

LU: So how many siblings do you have?

HT: Hm?

LU: How, how many siblings?

HT: I've got, uh, well, it's very difficult to say. [chuckles] I have three brothers that were older than me. I was the baby of the family. So, when the war started, being 17, I was eligible for being sent out to a war camp. But circumstances were that I had an operation on- in my younger days, when I was four or five years old, four years old actually, and that scar was on my back, and they looked at- the doctor looked at it, and that would limit me from enlisting anyway. And so I was allowed to stay with my mother.

[00:15]

HT: So, you know, by the time, I believe, April- March or April of '42 came around, my father and all my brothers were gone, you know. They're already shipped out to work camp- road camp, they called it. And if you didn't want to go to a road camp, you had to go east of the B.C. border. You had to be in Alberta and all that. And I believe my brother didn't want to hang around with the family, so he went out to Ontario, and he was in the mosquito infested Schreiber, you know. And so, I don't think- He made the most of it, but I don't think he had a great time. It wasn't entirely what he wanted, but they were, you know, almost literally prisoners of war, even out in Ontario, you know? Because you're way out in Schreiber. And anyone who travels Ontario knows how distant you are from any kind of civilization. Like when you're born in Vancouver, you immediately think of Toronto, you know, and that's not what they got. And they had to work their way towards Toronto the best they could. So, you know, that was quite a challenge for them. And those *nisei* kids did very well, I think.

LU: Mm-hm. So, you have no sisters?

HT: No.

LU: So, what are your brother's names?

HT: My brother, immediately older than me, is Frank. Then the one above that is Jack, and then the one above that is Tom or Kaz. And then I have a stepbrother. Oh, I have a stepbrother and stepsister, Roy Masui and Chiyo Masui. Chiyo married TU Umezuki of the New Canadian. And so, yeah. So that was my family.

LU: Did Roy marry a lady named Mary?

HT: I beg your pardon?

LU: Is Roy- did Roy marry?

HT: Roy?

LU: Yeah. Did he-

HT: Well, he's- since he passed away just a while back. He passed away, I believe he was 92 or something like that. My sister- stepsister Chiyo, or Margaret as we called her, she died quite early from a stroke.

LU: So how do you have a stepsister and stepbrother? Did your father or mother remarry?

HT: Yeah, my mother remarried. She came over and I believe- and this is where my kids are looking up and trying to find our ancestral background. So my mother married- Now we're- I'm not clear, maybe my kids have already found out by now what the situation was, but I believe that this man, Masui, married and then had three children, and she died. And then the marriage arrangement was made with my mother to dismiss Masui with two, three children.

[00:20]

HT: And then they moved, they traveled to Vancouver, and she had, well, she had three children in this marriage before they got to Vancouver. And then he died. I don't know from what, but he died. And then- so she was left with these children in Vancouver. And, so, somehow or rather, she met my dad and they lived together. And then she had the four children. Though I believe there is- there was a girl born, and she died when she was one, or one and a half. But anyway, yeah. And that's how it came about.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow. So, do you know your mother's maiden name?

HT: Yes. Takeuchi. And strangely enough, some- a number of years after she had died- she died in '59, and then about 10 or 15 years later, my brother Frank and I were at something, and a man came up and said he knows my mother and dad. Okay. And so, he said, "Your mother's a graduate of university." And we both looked at each other and said, "Oh, we

never heard of that.” And, he says, “Oh, yes, she graduated university.” And he says, “It wasn’t language.” Then he says, “She graduated as a- in chemistry.” And we- my brother says, “Oh my God. Now I understand what she was doing.” Because in our house, in those days, you know, you get a newspaper picture of your mentor. I guess she- her mentor. And she pasted it up on a wall or something like that. And I didn’t know who- well, my curiosity was very limited. I didn’t care what it was. But my brother was always saying- asking who she was and all this. And then finally she said, “Oh this is Madame Curie.” Well, Madame Curie was her idol or mentor because she went through chemistry. And so you realize, you know, all of a sudden, why all those pictures were always pasted up on places, you know. And then we understood, but she was long gone and I wondered why she didn’t tell us, but then I met a Japanese lady, we were in a discussion with a bunch of us potters and one of the potters said, she says, “Well, how come you didn’t know about your mother?” And this Japanese lady who was from Japan, she says, “Oh when we get married to a- when we get married, our life is no longer part of that family, we are a part of this new family, our husband’s family.”

[00:25]

HT: “So they generally don’t talk about themselves or their family. It’s not a right thing to do.” You know, so, well, it’s too bad and of course it’s too bad that mother had boys and the one girl died at an early age because if she were alive today she’d know all about the family. Whereas us four boys, collectively, you could put all that information into a thimble and there’d still be room to rattle around. So it’s one of those kind of things and so just this last Christmas, my boy from up north, Iroquois Falls, he comes down every Christmas and he says, “Dad, I’m going to take- grab all the photos you’ve got and I’m going to take them up north and then I’m going to start cataloguing them and find out.” And I said, “Well okay.” Because I wouldn’t be doing anything about it. My intentions are there but my procrastination takes over, you know, it’s- my procrastination is superior in all parts of my personality. [chuckles] And so, anyway, before he left, he came over and says, “Look at this picture Dad.” And I look at it – Oh my god, I hadn’t seen that picture and I didn’t know my- we had it, you know. And there’s a picture of a school graduation and I didn’t know whether it was university or whether it was high school or whatever. But it was obviously a school graduation and I- but I knew that person there was my mother. I said, “That’s my mother.” “Oh, okay.” And so I asked a person who teaches Japanese at our cultural centre if she could look at this picture and figure out what it was. And she looked at it and she says, “Oh yes, this is a school in Kagawa.” So, alright, I guess that’s all the information I’m going to get. Well, I wasn’t satisfied with that, but anyway – I take *ikebana* because I think I’d like to- Well, this may help me in my pottery, making *ikebana* vases and stuff. Know the kind of structure they want and form that they would like to have in their vases. So, that’s why I’m

taking *ikebana*. Anyway, I asked the teacher, "You know I got a picture of mother graduating from a school and now so and so had told me what school it was and I had forgotten. Could you look at this picture?" "Oh yeah, just bring it." And this was Terry Uchida, who's my *ikebana* teacher. And she looked at the picture and she says, "Oh yes that's Kagawa, a school in Kagawa." I said, "Oh." And she says, "Yes, well that's my home town." Wow, you know. So that sort of blew me away and I thought, wow I've got a connection, maybe she could start looking to see if there's more information on this. So I thought, okay we can be serious about this and start investigating that. And maybe we would get something out of it, you know.

[00:30]

HT: So, now I realize that, yes, she's from Kagawa-ken and her name is Takeuchi, which is like Peter Smith in Canada. So, you know, and I thought, well, I already knew the circumstances of anybody graduating from university, because, they got a lot of universities in Japan and she had gone to a university somewhere in the neighbourhood of Tokyo. Anyway, so I think my niece, Chris Okawara says, "It might be very hard to find because they had so much bombing in Tokyo, but all the records could have been wiped out in the fires," you know. So, hopefully we can find something, you know. But that's on my mother's side. My father's side is a little more difficult because there's a language barrier there. According to Chris, she says, "When you're in Okinawa looking up things, you gotta know what their Okinawan name was and not the Japanese name which they had to have." Because of the Japanese government's takeover of Okinawa. So, you know, we're pretty clueless as to what his Okinawan name was anyway. And so we'll have to find that.

LU: So do you know how old your parents were when they first came to Canada, and why they would've come? What about your mother? What do you think?

HT: My mother-

LU: Or do you know their birthdays or when they were [?]

HT: Yeah, there is, but I haven't got it. I mean, my daughter's got the family tree, sort of a pseudo family tree system worked out. And this is where they're finding that the more things are missing than they are present, you know? So, this is a new venture into finding out the old life.

LU: Do you know how old your mother was when she passed away? Or roughly?

HT: Yeah, she was 76, somewhere- died in '59. So that put her in 1875, somewhere around there, I think. I'm not sure. And, yeah. And my dad was killed in an accident during the war, where he was working for a logging company down the highway from Slocan. And, it was a



very mild spring thaw, and he was saying, not too long before he died, that, he says, "This weather is, not good. Things are- the snow's melting too fast. We're gonna have trouble." And sure enough, there was a break in the water, little creek, you know, and all the way up the mountain, there's debris all over that stopped the water from coming down. And so those little pools, well, the first pool broke, second all the way. And some of the loggers who were working there said, "Oh," they said, "it was massive, it's water going down the valley."

[00:35]

HT: They saw logs that were three, at least three feet in diameter, coming down the hill upright, you know, and I know I went out to see the site because somehow my dad's body was buried and they thought maybe the blood ties may help me find the body. But, no, me and my brain are insensitive to that kind of thing, you know? And, but he was never found. And, so, yeah. And it's funny, during that time, well, during that time, the insurance company at that time said, "Well, no body, you're gonna have to wait seven years before it's declared"- that Dad had died. Well, and the war is- Where could the person wander off to? Soon as you they find you're oriental, they're gonna report you anyway, you know? So anyway, a member of parliament for the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] stepped in and he got ahold of the documents and everything else, and he went to bat for my mother, didn't know us from a load of hay, and he got it so that she would get the insurance, you know, right away, and the Canadian pension.

LU: Who was that?

HT: It was MacInnis, his wife, Grace, and he were both members of Parliament and, you know, went to bat for my mother and never a bill. Nothing. He just did that. So, you know, I don't forget a favor like that. And, therefore, I'm a staunch NDP [New Democratic Party] person. I don't do work for them anymore, but I still vote for them because they always- they've proven to me that they do concern themselves with a person who never even- well, in that case, we never had a vote, nothing. There was no nothing to say, "Oh, we're doing it so that you're gonna vote for us." Nothing like that. And, you know, in this day and age, you get some politician, "Hey, you're with me or against me. If you're with me, I'll do things for you. If you're against me, hey, I'm not here." You know, that kind of thing. So, yeah.

LU: So how old was your father when he passed away?

HT: He was 56.

LU: Oh, wow.

HT: Yeah, he was just a young man. Yeah. And, you know, it's strange. Here I am, 85, and I still look up to him and remember him as a father, and, yeah. And even my mother, you



know, they- and in my mind, they still look older than I feel right now. It's a strange feeling. And, you wonder about things like that, you know?

LU: Mm-hm. So, when you were growing up in Vancouver, before the war started, what do you remember about your parents then? Was your mother working as well? Or was she mostly keeping care of the house?

HT: No, she was just a housewife.

**[00:40]**

HT: And Dad, of course, was doing all the work. And my brothers, three of 'em were already working. And when the war started, or just prior to the war starting, the boys were thinking of starting some kind of lumber business, you know, and they were looking at sites and things like that. And then that sort of disappeared suddenly with the advent of war.

LU: So where was your dad working before the war started? What was his job?

HT: Well, he was working for a lumberyard or logging place where they either cut wood and- they cut wood and lumber and stuff like that. I can't remember what company it was, but, yeah, he was working there and, they let him work night shift, and somebody reported them, and he ended up in jail for a day or so, because it didn't matter whether you were working or not, you're breaking the curfew law.

LU: Oh, this was after they set the curfew law?

HT: Yeah. Oh well, the curfew law came in pretty quick, you know, I mean, politician can move fast when it's something dirty, but-[chuckles]

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, yeah. So, what else do you remember about growing up in Vancouver, pre-war days? And what do you remember about Japantown and what it looked like? And-

HT: I didn't think of myself as Japanese. You know, I thought I'm Canadian, out and out. I remember having an argument with my mother, that was in '41, the summer of '41. I had been out, berry picking, and I'd come home, and my mother was saying to me, "Japan's going to go to war against United States." And I said, "Don't be silly. The United States is too strong. They got the best of weapons, they got the best of air-" I was an airplane nut anyway. And, I said, "They got the best airplanes in the world." Chances are, you know. I believed a lot of propaganda by the Americans at that time. And so she said, "No, they're going to go to war." I said, "Mother, they can't go to war. They're going to lose." And she says, "Yes, the possibility that they will lose is pretty big. But," she said, "What happens here is, right now, they- nothing can come into Japan, because the Americans have created an embargo that surrounds Japan completely now." They bought out the Russian by, you

know, whatever, however they bought them out. Therefore, that was the last link to trade, and Japan has to have trade in order to survive.

[00:45]

HT: And I said, "Well, you know, why don't they give in?" "No, they can't give in, because then they would, you know, if they give in to this, United States would take over and do it, Japan would not be a country anymore. It'd be a protectorate of United States. That can't be right. But," she said, "Now, if they lose the war, they will win the trade back." And I thought, this is crazy, you know. She says, "Well, if they lose the war, people will be willing to bring food and stuff into Japan, and Japan will send products out, and they will be able to make a living again." Whereas they can't make a living now, people are starving in Japan, and they can't work in Japan. They can't send it out because the embargo won't let ships out or in. So I thought, no, I think mother's all wrong, you know? And I felt she was wrong all the way along till well after the war. Then all of a sudden, you know, seeing Japanese products and things that were being made in Japan were being bought by a lot of western people, United States, Canada, Britain and all. They created fads and things like that. All of a sudden, people were able to carry a portable radio on, you know, even though it might be two pounds, it was better than the 11-pound portable radio that the American- What the heck did they have? Oh, Zenith. Zenith used to have a portable radio, and it was 11 and a half pounds, and that's a portable radio. And then the Japanese came out with- they came out with cameras that were really good cameras. And here, I was just buying a camera, and I bought a German camera. But just a year or so later, the Japanese came in with their old Canon cameras and Pentax, and stuff like that. And they were very good quality. And they had more things going for it than, you know, the German camera. And, this- sort of handwriting on the wall, that Kodak was gonna be out of the camera business, you know?

LU: Pretty quickly, yeah.

HT: Yeah. So, yeah, and so when all those kind of things came about, you realize that, or I realize that my mother was right. That losing the war, they won the trade. If they won the war, they still won the trade. Okay. It was a win-win situation, only how much are they gonna suffer for? One way or the other. And, yeah. And, you know, the sad part about it is, they had to experience the one thing that the world had- no one else in the world has ever experienced, and that's the hydrogen bomb. You know, in other words, the Japanese were the Guinea pigs of that kind of devastation. And yet everybody's fighting to either have it or not have it, you know? And so, yeah.

LU: So where were you when you heard for the first time that Pearl Harbor was bombed. What do you remember about that time?

**[00:50]**

HT: Oh, I was home in bed. I think I was home. It was a Sunday morning. And, I heard over the radio, I think, about what was going on. And we knew that, well, the writing was on the wall. The government's gonna close in on us. They're going to do things to us that isn't fair, but they're gonna do it anyway. Yeah, and so, you know, even the following Monday, you go to school and, you know, every morning we would have cadet training and whatever you were supposed to be. I was in the cadets for air spotting, spotting different kinds of airplanes. And when we got there, we were told, "You don't come in, you go to the library and sit there until they're finished." So they'd have that morning period where they're doing the training, and then when they were finished, we could come outta the library and go back to class.

LU: Oh, wow.

HT: Yeah. So, it was an embarrassing situation. I don't know whether we resented it or not, or at least, whether I resented it or not. I guess I did. I didn't think that it was a very good thing for Japan to do a surprise attack that was not- didn't help or cause any- If they had declared war and had a war of- the normal kind of declaration, I wonder if we would've been treated any different. And chances are we wouldn't have been treated- A lot of politics went into that. A lot of working force went into that, you know, for instance, the unions were generally against Japanese workers anyway. Because, Japanese workers generally worked hard. And, chances are they worked for less pay because they couldn't get a better job. But whatever job they got, they worked at it. You know, just because you got a job that's paying you less, doesn't mean you say, oh, okay, you're only gonna put 65% effort into it. I mean, , you don't do that. You know, you got a job and you put a hundred percent effort into it. And I think a lot of things were done that way, and the non-Japanese part of the society would be against that. They felt that the cheaper pay and all this kind of stuff, these Japanese were taking those jobs away. But in reality, a lot of those jobs, the white society didn't want anyway.

**[00:55]**

LU: Mm-hm

HT: But then in the aim of war, anything is fair.

LU: Mm-hm. So, when you were growing up in Vancouver, were there a lot of other Japanese people around you, or mostly just in Japan?

HT: No, not in our neighborhood. We did have a few, and they were our friends. I believe - well, the story I got was that, when my mother first came to Canada, because she had a

university grad situation, she became a school teacher in the Japanese town, you know? And, after a while, she got it in her head that the children have to go to English school so they can become proper Canadians. The people of- or the elders of the town said, "No," the children are gonna learn Japanese properly, and they're saving their money up so that they'll send their children back to Japan. And when they get back to Japan, whatever money they've got with them will be big. And they can go into any kind of business in Japan, and things don't look good. You know, but they have to learn Japanese and don't worry about the English part. Mother said, "No," that's not the way she thinks. She says, "If that's the way you want to do it, fine. I'm gonna pack up my family and move out of this area." So she packed up the family and literally moved out of the Japanese area. And so we- and by that time, all my brothers had gone to Japanese school as well as English school, but Japanese school, and by the time I was born and old enough to go to school, she wouldn't let me go to Japanese school, you know? And so she really rebelled against the elders of the Japanese community, and, whether she was right or wrong, you know, debatable. But-

LU: Who did your mother come with when she came from Japan? How did your mother come over from Japan? Who did she come with?

HT: Well, Kagawa, which is just outside of Tokyo. And- now, just the other day, my son was saying that he's not sure, but it could be that she had to travel to Canada to marry Mr. Masui. Now, I'm not sure about that. I can't say it's wrong- right or wrong, because I have no knowledge of that. In fact, I have no knowledge of anything- [chuckles]

**[01:00]**

HT: If you want to put it that way. Anything, pertaining to the history of how the family came to Canada. It's just that- yeah, circumstances were strange in those days, I guess, for my mother and- so, you know, somehow or other she managed. And I'm not sure whether she got married in Japan or whether she came here and got married. Those details are- we don't know that yet. And hopefully we'll find out, though I think my son says he's got the record of Mr. Masui coming across, and he believes that she came across on her own too, you know, so-

LU: So, it's- oh, I forgot my question now. [chuckles] I had a question. It just popped outta my head.

HT: That's good. I'm glad I'm in good company.

LU: When the war started when you were younger, did you have a lot of friends that were non-Japanese, and what was their reaction?

HT: Oh yeah. Yeah, they were- my non-Japanese friends were- 75% of 'em were non-Japanese. The only ones that I knew were generally family friends, and the ones that I meet through sports, Britannia High School, well, we used to play English rugby, and we were good at it.

LU: Oh, just need to switch this [changes tape]. Can you start by saying, Britannia Beach rugby again?

HT: Hm?

LU: Can you start your sentence over by saying-

HT: Yeah, yeah. So, in-, my friends, Japanese friends, I were generally friends of our family, and those that I had met through sports in school. Britannia High had a rugby team. And, I think, in that rugby team, Bantam group, Bantam, because we had the, and B.C. they had a weight scale to grade whether you are Bantam or junior or senior. And they went by weight. And if you weighed 110 pounds or less, something like that, you were Bantam. So generally, our sports team were- the Bantam were usually 50% Japanese in there anyway. Yeah.

LU: And what was the reaction when the war started and you had to go home because there was a curfew? What did they ever say about it?

HT: I don't know, I don't know whether there was a negative reaction or that. We were allowed to play sports right till, you know, you're evacuated.

**[01:05]**

HT: And, you know, it's one of those kind of thing, but you just couldn't do anything that was military. And so, that kind of thing was okay, you know? And we were, at least, I was immune to a lot of things going on politically and didn't bother reading the newspaper or radio and stuff like that. And they took those things away from us anyway. Yeah.

LU: Mm-hm. Do you remember when the RCMP came to your house? Any encounters with them?

HT: Uh, no. We just- we just knew, while we were told through newspaper and stuff like that, what is expected of us. And, you know, we were prepared because first of all, they confiscated all the firearms and fishing equipment. It's a wonder that they didn't take our knives away, but they didn't, because knives are more lethal than anything else. But anyway, they routinely took all those, and people had to take 'em down to, I think, Hastings Park to register all this stuff. And, and whatever happened to that stuff is beyond me. I only

know that they took the stuff away. And, whether anybody got their stuff back again, I don't know.

LU: Were you the one who told me this story about the lady who came up to you and apologized?

HT: Oh, yes. Well, the thing is, as we were only allowed to take what we could carry, and, in our case, mother said, the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] and CNR [Canadian National Railways], when families are moving, the sewing machine doesn't become part of the luggage- baggage. It automatically goes with the family. It's one of those kind of things that was written into the CP and CN's mandate because they wanted to encourage immigrants to move from the east to the west. So, if they had to have a lot of luggage, the sewing machine was free. Because that's the one thing that would encourage wives to be able to get a sewing machine and make clothes and stuff like that. So, consequently, I made a crate for a sewing machine. It looked like a big sewing machine, but it wasn't a sewing- I made it big so that it would include my bicycle. And then I- my choice of toys disappeared. I guess if you call a bicycle a toy, that's part of it. But all the other toys were left behind in other crates. And I packed up all things. Two encyclopedias, one was a 20-volume encyclopedia called, "The Book of Knowledge." And the other one was called, "The World Encyclopedia," I think. All I remember was the blue cover. I think Japanese people got quite a bit of snow job on encyclopedias, you know? And we always ended up having encyclopedia. And that's where our, well, hopefully, we could get our knowledge, you know. I mean, encyclopedia were our internet at that time, I think.

**[01:10]**

HT: So, anyway, those were packed in, so it became a very heavy case. But- and all the other kids stuff and things like that were packed in another crate, so that we would get it after the war. Well, we never got those things back, as far as I know. And when I was taking a course at Mohawk in Hamilton on sculpting, I was taking- doing my sculpting and the class and stuff. And a lady kept looking over, and she finally came over and she said, "You are- you're Japanese, aren't you?" And I said, "Well, yes, Japanese descent." And she said, "Okay." She said, "You're the first Japanese I'm meeting. So I promised myself I would apologize to your people." You know, and I thought, okay, what did she apologize for? So she said her husband job was transferred over to Vancouver, and in her neighborhood where she lived, one of her new friends called up and said, let's go to this auction. And she thought, okay, let's see what it's all about. So they traveled to the, I believe, southeast end of the city somewhere. Anyway, she found that they had a warehouse there, and the doors were open, and somebody had- there's all these crates, and there's these people cutting the ropes off of these things, and with a hammer and chisel, they're opening up these crates. And she says,

"You could see cloth flying out of these crates." And she realized later that these cloths were literally kimonos. And the guy would bring a glass case with a- she says, a beautiful Japanese doll in there. And the guy would say, okay, what am I bid for this? This guy said, "I'll give you a nickel." He said, "Sold." Away it went. And she said she was so ashamed of what was going on. She just turned around and told her friend, she can't stay there anymore. She's going back home. And she promised herself that when she met another Japanese, after the war, she would apologize to him for what she had seen and what had been done. And I took this comment quite seriously, though I didn't do anything about it, I'm ashamed to say, but, you know, if you plundered during the war, I always heard that if you plundered during the war, the sentence is death by firing squad. Yet here we are in peaceful Canada and doing the same- allowing the same plundering. And nothing was done about it. People have lost their family heirloom. They've lost a lot of other personal articles. Even if they aren't family heirloom, they are things that people take pride in. I'm sure that there were books and notes and things like that, that were treasured for the family, diaries and things that went that way.

**[01:15]**

HT: And so, when you open up those crates and start throwing things out, you are throwing things out that's a personal thing of a person. And that person happened to be Japanese Canadian, and nothing was done about it. And if this kind of thing was done by, well, let's say soldiers in- Canadian soldiers in France or something like that, they'd have been charged with plundering, you know. And I realized a lot of plundering was going on, but in this case, you know, it's a wholesale thing of a place, warehouse full of crates, all named and everything. And these people were- and they were only out for nickels and dimes and stuff like that. And yet they were literally destroying family history. And that was sad, sad to realize that that had happened. And sad to realize that that was happening, happening by my fellow Canadians. But, you know, in British Columbia, they have a little different kind of- they think a little different from the rest of the country, you know? And, I guess that's the way it went. When we- I said, I mentioned this story at a meeting, and a lawyer that was in there came up to me and says, I don't want to hear you talking about that kind of thing anymore. And I thought it was strange that he would be the one to say don't bring it up, because it would, well, maybe he was afraid that if we tainted people who were higher up, it would- there'd be a backlash, and it wouldn't help us personally.

LU: Mm-Hmm. This was a redress meeting.

HT: Yeah. You know, and, you know, even during the war, you know, you're sitting there in the house, and the father and a couple of people are in the house, in these cabins and sipping tea, and they're talking about things. And I recall they were talking about a guy, he



was a beach comber, and he says, every week he'd go up and down the beach, along those beach areas on Vancouver Island, and he'd bum a nickel off of people like us. And this is what he was doing all the time. And he says, he said, "We believe that that same beach comber whose name was MacMillan, is the same person as MacMillan Bloedel, lumberer, lumber conglomerate," and on the B.C. coast. From beach comber to a multi, multimillionaire. And this is what, you know, but these are things were, where some of the Japanese had mountains of virgin forests, and they had to give that up. They was taken away. In other words, they took a potential millionaire and took everything away from him, you know, and they never recovered from those things.

[01:20]

HT: And I can understand some of it, them being bitter, but, thank goodness, collectively we weren't. That rebellious, you know, somehow we managed to survive this discriminatory situation that has happened to us. And, in a lot of ways, we fell into the stink hole, but we came out smelling like a rose because, I honestly believe that, it's the first generation, *isseis*, that had protected us and prepared us for how we are today, how we are accepted today. Had we not had an education, chances are we wouldn't have got where we are today. You know, education alone and stuff, knowing what to do. I remember applying for this job. I was at the unemployment insurance, and of course, I got penalized for refusing to go down to steel company to apply for a job. I said, "Hey, I'm a short runt of a person. What am I gonna do at Telco?" You know? Well, they're all big guys. He said, "You are refusing to take it." I said, "Well, I don't think I should apply." So, I got fined, you know, I didn't get my unemployment insurance for a whole week- a whole month. Just because I refused. So next time a guy offered me the job, okay, I'm gonna go down, down to Defasco I would go, and they'd- you'd sit there waiting. You are sitting between two big hulking persons, you know? So, my time goes in and I started coughing and everything else, and show how sickly I am, and just a little runt. And they said, "Oh, we'll call you. Don't bother calling us." You know, and you know that that's a refusal. So that was fine. I found the method. Then one day he asked me, the unemployment guy asked me, "Hey, you know anything about radios?" I said, "Hey, I'm Japanese ancestry. We all know something about radio." "Oh, okay. Go down to this place and apply for this job." So I went down and I asked the personnel manager, I said, "Now what about- what kind of radios do you make?" He said, "Oh, we don't make radios. We make pieces or parts of radios that help assemble the radio itself, but it's not done here. We only make pieces of it." "Oh," I said, "Ah, I see." And he says, "Well, there's a job for an inspector here." "Okay?" He says, "Do you know how to read micrometers?" And I said, "Oh, yes." He says, "Good, sign this paper and come in Monday." Well, I got out of there. I didn't know what a micrometer was, but I immediately went up to the public library, looked up micrometers, found out what they looked like, how they're supposed to be read and

everything. Then I went out into town to see- find a machine shop that was selling lathes and stuff like that. And in the glass case, there was a micrometer. And I'm looking at it going, oh, yeah. The person said, "Oh, what are you interested in?" I said, "Oh, that micrometer, how much?" You know? So, he opens it up, lets me handle it.

**[01:25]**

HT: I'm looking at it, reading it, and, he says, "That's a \$65 micrometer." And here, you know, you're making 25 cents or 50 cents. I don't know what the pay would've been. I said, "Oh, I'll have to think about it." But at least I handled the micrometer. Then I went to- on Monday, I went to the place, went up to the second floor. Soon as I got into the department that I was supposed to be in, the foreman hands me micrometer. It looked like a beat up old micrometer, you know, quite worn out. And he says, and gives me a piece of steel, and he says, "Okay, tell me how thick that steel is." I checked it. I said, "Oh, that's 125,000th of an inch, that would make it one eighth of an inch." He said, "Good, you can work." And I got the job. But here again, if it wasn't for our parents saying- and they went through hardship, making sure that we went to school, and we went to school, I wouldn't have known how to look up anything. Right? You know, what is a micrometer? You never met up with a micrometer in your life. And so, what's the solution? The library. It will have something about the micrometer. So you go up to find out, then once you find out what the micrometer is, you go to a place that sells the thing to get the feel of it. And then- and so I got the job, but at the same time, years later, I found out that that department had a vote to see if they would allow a Japanese to come into their department. And I just got into the skin of my teeth. They said two votes was all you got over the no's. And then to top it all off, after I've been there a month, I said, inspector, and that's production machines, and, you know, I shut down the whole department quite often because the parts weren't coming out right. Looking wrong measurements and all this, or wrong angles and everything else. And I get blasted for this, but I said, "If the part's wrong, I got no other choice." So, okay. But couple months later, you know, the foreman comes up and says, "Do you know any other Japanese," he said, "Need a job? We'll hire." And I thought, oh, yeah. I thought about it. Yeah, it's too bad. I had pushed my brother and another friend of mine into it because, in the long run, my brother died of cancer, pancreas cancer. And he worked at [?] insulation factory. And I think, you know, any of that stuff, insulation that they make, and they trim and everything else has silica in it. And that creates cancer. And my brother died- I don't know how old he was when he died. I would think that he was around not 60 yet, you know, and that's tragic.

**[01:30]**

HT: You know, but here again, those, the things that weren't in your mind at the time, and you tell them about the job, and they, well, you know, I work in a place where they lay you off just before Christmas all the time. So, because they've reached a maximum production. And then right after the new year, they rehire you back. And that's the condition that you work on until, you know, five years or so, then all of a sudden you- they're throughout the Christmas, you know.

LU: How old were you when you- or what year was it when you first got this job?

HT: Oh, yeah. I got that job in '46. '46, that makes me 21, I think. And, I stayed there for 41 years. 41, 42 Years. Yeah.

LU: So what had happened to your family when the war started and, you had to be pack up your house? Did you pack up your entire house into crates, or did a lot of it stay out?

HT: Yeah. At that time, my sister, half- stepsister, moved into the house, and, uh, uh, that would be TU Umezuki's family. And, he helped make crates and put all the stuff into crates, have it all packed and ready to move into warehouses and stuff like that. And then when the time came, we get a notice. And-

LU: How much time did they give you in the notice?

HT: I think they gave us a week and then a day or two days, just to make sure we remember. And then we'd have to go down to the train station. Catch the train. And, all my buddies were on bikes and they would follow the train as far as they could on their bikes.

LU: Oh, your non-Japanese friends?

HT: Eh?

LU: The non-Japanese friends?

HT: Yeah. And then they- when they got to a certain area, they parked, they waved, and that was the final time I ever seen any of 'em, you know?

LU: Do you remember who they are?

HT: Hm?

LU: Do you remember their names?

HT: Yeah. Harry Payton, Hector Mackenzie. Dick Addit, Marvin Brown. Yeah. There were a couple others. Yeah, I remember them. And, I don't know what happened to them. Well, they probably got in the Army. I think they were possibly heading towards being thieves, anyway, who knows.

LU: So what happened to your house? Were you- did your family own the house or were you renting it?

HT: Yeah, we were, we were paying a mortgage or whatever. I think we had the house. I believe it was worth- when we bought it, I believe it was worth, I'm not sure, \$1,200. And when the war ended, and my mother was already widowed, she got the amount of \$200 for the house.

**[01:35]**

HT: And here they got a list of what they did to the house. They put new shingles on the house. Strangely enough, in 19- the summer of 1941, my brothers were putting a brand new set of shingles up on the roof. And, you know, cedar shingles are 20-year shingles. And here they're saying, they replaced it. Please, don't gimme that kind of garbage. They fixed up this thing and that thing. And I had to repair this thing and that thing. Well, I saw the house in- the first time I've ever gone back to Vancouver was in 1973. And, I went out of my way to have a look at the house. The house looked the same. There was still an empty lot next to the house, you know, where we used to build our little clubhouses and stuff out of lumber that we confiscated from other places. [chuckles] Anyway, and the house looked the same color, and the roof looked the same, you know, and all that. And I'm thinking, God, all the stuff that they said they did to painted it and all that. They painted it the same color that was there when we left. And the shingles looked a little grayer now than they was at that time.

LU: How big was the house?

HT: It was a two-story house. There were four bedrooms upstairs and had a toilet separate from the washroom, tub and sink. And, downstairs we had a fair sized living room and a dining room, a pantry, and a kitchen. And then we had a full basement where we could put the coal, or sawdust. We, at that time, we were burning sawdust in our furnace. And, yeah, we had a pretty modern kitchen stove, which was run on some kind of kerosene or whatever. Yeah. Yeah. And, we had a washing machine, stuff like that.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow. So a nice house.

HT: Yeah. Well, we live quite well. You don't realize how well you lived until you talked to some of the Japanese people that lived right in town. And they're living in these old- some of it run down rooming houses and stuff like that. And, you don't realize that, you know, as a kid, you don't realize that. But, when you find out, you realize you were living on the better end of the situation, you know?

LU: Mm-hm. Before the war started, did your parents ever plan on going back to Japan? Was it their plan to stay in Canada for the rest of their life?

HT: Oh, yeah. They promised- well, they never talked about it, but there was never any suggestion. And none of the boys would've gone back to Japan.

**[01:40]**

HT: You know, they said, "If you want to go back, go back. Don't include us." Because that's the way. And, of course, my mother was, as I say, in full rebellion about learning and becoming Canadian. And therefore, that kind of thought didn't enter her mind, you know? In fact, uh, when I was in grade five, my class would be finished, and I'd go to the corner of the school of [?] School, which was an elementary school, and I'd wait for my mother who was coming out of grade one. Yeah. She'd come out in grade one, and we'd walk- I'd walk my mother home.

LU: So where did everyone get split up to after you left your family home in Vancouver, and you were taken on by the train and- Did everyone stay together, or was everyone split up? You mentioned your father and brothers went to the road camp.

HT: Yeah, they all went to the same camp, as far as it goes, went to a camp called "Three Valley" I think, near Revelstoke. That's where they were, well, the term should be incarcerated. And that's where they had to work out of. And, they were there '42, '43, part of '43, and then, my dad came down to Bay Farm, and my brother Roy was able to reunite with his wife and child and two children.

LU: Where were they?

HT: Well, they had- got a place in Popoff in the Slocan Valley. And, my brother Jack, he just got married just after the war was over, I think. And he went- came out to Hamilton. And yeah, that was it. And I was just a hanger on, you know, and I got a job, and I stayed with it. I think the possibility was that, you could have made a better life of yourself, but I think the war does a little bit of psychological damage, you know, like, you got a job, hold onto it, hold onto it for dear life. And yeah, I didn't- I lacked the incentive to go beyond what I was capable of, I think. I was lazy in a way.

LU: Maybe it's that procrastination kicking in.

HT: Yeah. So this is why I, you know, stayed with it for 40-

LU: 41 years?

HT: Yeah, I think so.

LU: So, was Bay Farm the only place that you went to, or- and it was just you and your mother, or where was your stepsister?

**[01:45]**

HT: No, we went to Slocan. And we were, I believe we were the second or third train in.

LU: Oh, early.

HT: Yeah. So- and they didn't know where to put us. They put all us men in the ice rink, and the women and children were put into these lodges. They were really rundown buildings, which the Commission had to get people to repair and get it into a good enough condition for families to live in. And they- and there were some of 'em that were living in these rundown buildings where you'd have a whole area where the bunks are set up, and, you know, they, all the children and family had to live in that with, if they had separation, they would separate with a blanket, You know, And that was the only thing that allowed them the privacy. So, yeah. It wasn't a great time for a lot of people, you know?

LU: Yeah. So how long were you staying in those houses until? Did- And when you were in Slocan, did they find you a house for your family? Or did you-

HT: Well, we were building these cabins as fast as possible. And here again, because the Japanese mind is to organize, get things going, I think, they would have a team of workers who would clear an area where the cabin was going to be built. And they would clear that area, and then go to the next one and clear another area. That was their job. And they would keep on going around. Surveyors would come in, previous to that, and survey where the house should be and located. Then they'd- so that went, then another team would come in and they would build the foundation of it, foundation of first floor of the house. And they would do that routinely all the way around. So, you know, in a way, because they did- were repeating what they were doing, they were getting good You know, they did a good job. And then when the cabins were made, it was two rooms with a common kitchen. And a common kitchen had a- I think they had a sink and a stove. And all it was was a- what they call a Quebec heater, you know, and there's no plates on top or anything. We had to figure out how to do that.

LU: So what did you do? So how did you put things on top of the stove?

HT: Well, innovation was one of them. Some- I think they eventually start bringing in some stoves, you know, and that was okay. And some of 'em, well, a lot of us, we put an extension on our cabin. We go down to the saw mill and find these first strips of logs. Now the first strip of log is where the bark is. Only the bark is pretty well gone. And they'd strip off a slice, and then that would be discarded, and the rest would be turned into lumber while

this, we could go down there and pick up the scrap stuff and take it home. Or if we're lucky enough to get a driver to take it, you know, then people, of course there was still lifting the finished boards and stuff like that from other houses to fix up your own, you know? And, so there was a lot of borrowing of material from one area to another. And, but yeah, some families really needed the extension. Because they were, you know, four, five kids or something like that. And you've got a house with two bedrooms. Yeah.

LU: I didn't know you were allowed to build extensions.

HT: Oh, well, there was nothing to say, we couldn't. And so any anybody who was going to build an extension, he just went ahead and did it. Because, you know, you just do it on your own. And there's no illegal- legal way of doing anything, because if somebody outside the community, non-Japanese person would come in and say, "You can't do that," then there would be a rebellion. And, we were- in spite of the fact that we were quite docile, they soon found that you can't rub us the wrong way. I remember one of the foremen had gone and said to one of the workers- Oh, he was mad, and he called that worker son of a bitch or something like that. And the worker, "What'd you call me?" You know, all of a sudden, everybody dropped their tools. They dropped their tools and word spread. This foreman called so-and-so son of bitch, and that was a crowning insult. Said, you know, the whole area stopped working, and they, the head supervisor or superintendent of that location had to try and settle things. And, okay, you can settle it, but you're not going to get away with it. He- They had to transfer him out of our area. And well I recall in this one case, it was so hot that they even provided every worker with pop, you know. So, yeah. So they, you know, they soon found out that we work hard, we do things, but don't try and insult us, or try and make us do more than-

LU: Mm-hm. Do you need to take a break for a minute?

HT: Okay.

LU: Okay. Stretch your legs a little bit. [HT stands up] This one.

HT: Oh, now the question.

LU: And this one. Yeah. So, we left off talking about your house in Slocan, and where was it that you were working once you got there?

HT: Oh, I worked at a place called United Car Fasteners. As I say, they made little radio parts, nothing to do with the function of the radio per se.

**[01:55]**



HT: But we used to make little things that would be attachments and rivets and things like that. And our company used to make all sorts of things. During the war, they used to make bullet shells and things like that. And, even after the war was over, I was inspecting some of those. We used to make zippers. And we used to make fair size zippers. We used to make the zippers for flying jackets. Flying jackets where you can zip it up, and then you could- it could immediately break open, for safety for the flyers if they ever got down into a water, and they can get out of that jacket without having to zip it up or down. They could just touch something and that would release the whole thing.

LU: Oh, wow. Isn't that neat?

HT: Yeah.

LU: And so you started working there when you're in the internment camps?

HT: Well, when I first came out here, yes.

LU: Oh, okay. Where were you working in the internment camps? Or what were you doing?

HT: Well, other than going to school? We would work as- what, what did they call 'em? Swampers on trucks. We would have to load and unload trucks. They were referred to as swampers. And we did that, and, we were too young to take logging things, because both of those jobs were, you know, taken by a married man anyway, you know? So, anyway, the interesting thing about, you know, what did they say? After the war, there was a bit of a ruckus about why they sold our houses from us when it went into the B.C. Security Commission to protect us from other people stealing your property. And they literally stole it, you know, as far as I'm concerned, they did. In that, we realized that, you know- and so in- they had to give a reason why they sold the property, to cover up, well, if I put it in my kind of word, it'd be grand theft, you know? And they said they had to sell the house to pay for our keep in the ghost town. Right? Well, you know, it wasn't really- it wasn't really the B.C. Security Commission that was responsible or- yeah, responsible for the successful result of those incarcerations.

[02:00]

HT: I believe to this day, that I have to put the responsibility to success, the peacefulness of the thing to the *isseis*, our parents, who went along, didn't disturb things, only when they had to. And when they- if there was some something they had to get or discourage or they were discouraged about, all they had to do is voice it. And after, you know, an example of the workers just dropping everything and saying, that's it, you know, that guy's gotta go.

Well, they knew that the handwriting was on the wall. I mean, it got to a point where you have all these people incarcerated, and what have they got? Maybe four, four to six RCMPs from Lemon Creek all the way to Slocan City. And, you know, you only have two or four RCMPs in New Denver, Rosebury and Sandon. Hey, if we had been rebellious, they would've had to have half the RCMPs, you know, looking after these things. And that would've cost money. Now, the thing is, you're going to a place like Slocan City. There's an old sawmill down in- down on the beach, you know, a beach or where the lake is, and the young bucks, they go there, look at it, there's an old diesel-powered engine there. They'd rip that thing all apart, right down to nothing, clean everything up, put it all together. The old guard, the *isseis* would get the saw, and they'd polish it all up. And because it's all-, these things hadn't seen the light of day for 30 years, probably since the silver mine and the zinc mine and all that went kerplunk, you know? So, out of all that besides the fact that we were cutting cedar trees, which were all in the diameter of, I would say less than 12 inches in diameter, and long enough we supplied telephone poles right across the country. I mean, we'd load up these train, flat cars, fill it with- loaded up with these poles, and they'd be gone. And the sawmill would cut out railroad ties, and they'd be gone. And it wasn't just in Slocan, I'm sure that they did the same thing in New Denver. They did the same thing in Tashme. And you think the government was giving all these railroad ties for nothing while they sold our house to pay for our keep? Not on your life! Not on your life! They were making money. They were putting it in their pockets, probably, you know? So not only were we self-sufficient, we were buying our own food to feed our family through minor wages, because whatever wages we were making, heck, when I- when they called us up to do forest fire fighting, that's in '45, 1945, the government- It was a government thing. They were paying us 25 cents an hour. Hey, that's a lot of bucks. But, you know, when you're working for the Commission then, I don't know what we were making, because I never kept tab of it. We were just getting to pay. And, you know, me, I just handed over to my mother.

[02:05]

LU: Mm-hm.

HT: And so we were paying for our own food, you know? So, we weren't costing the government a heck of a lot of money unless they were paying a substantial amount to these owners of where we were putting up the cabins. You know, because if there's going to be anything politically underhanded, they were capable of it. You know, so, anyway, it's a pile of baloney that they had to sell the houses to keep us in these areas. That's the last one, is it?

LU: This one. Yeah. [HT laughs] Well, I've got more, if we need more.

HT: Oh, you had to tell me that, didn't you?

LU: So what do you remember about going to school in the camps?

HT: That was interesting. When I first went into camp, and I went in there in June of '42. And while we're working there, summertime, the school time was fast approaching. And so I saw the school and I thought, geez, I should try and get into that school. And so I started making inquiries. And somebody said, "Oh, you have to talk to the reeves of the community." And so, okay. Where was he? Went to his house, and his wife told me that, "He's over in that building over there." And so I went there. And I walked in and he's scrubbing a body, you know, I realized he was also the community's undertaker. Anyway, I went in and I saw the body being scrubbed and everything. But I didn't care. And I introduced myself and he said, "What is it?" What am I inquiring about?" I said, well, "There's a high school there. I'd like to be able to go to that high school when it reopens." He says, "Oh, are you a Canadian citizen?" And I said, "Yes, I am." "Well, then there's no reason why you can't go to that school, just go in and enroll." So when school started, I went in and enrolled. Some of the friends were saying, "How'd you get into school?" I said, "I just asked the reeves. And he told me to enter." He says, "You're a Canadian citizen. So that's the only thing that I know that is okay. You're a Canadian citizen? Get in there." So, you know, all of a sudden the elementary school and the high school became pretty crowded, and they had to hire some teachers. And of course, here again, the sinking and organization of these communities relied a lot on the people themselves. And that is, you know, when you- when the camp opens and they start- the B.C. Commission was, you know, if you left it up to them, everything would be tied in a knot. With the advice of the, I'm sure the *isseis* at that time, you know, all of a sudden you got loggers. Okay. You go and you cut forests.

[02:10]

HT: Ship builders? Yes. If you can keep water out, you can keep water in, make bath houses, you know, bath houses and little sink, basins made outta wood. And so that, those are things that they made. And so every community had a full-fledged bathhouse. I mean, they would go and see what kind of cedar trees are being chopped, and they'd tell these people exactly which way that lumber should be cut for making the bathtub. So, every community had a bathtub. And, it was a godsend, because you could sit there and talk about what's happened during the day. And us kids, we never even thought of. We never talked about, oh, who's winning or losing the war. No [shakes head] Who's gonna be dating who, you know [chuckles]. And when are we gonna have a dance? And all that kind of stuff. And so the bathhouse became the community information center pretty well. And the older men would talk about the war and what's going on, and anything politically that had to be done

around their community to make it better, like building a tower and getting a piece of railroad and a hammer, and if there's a fire, you go bang, bang, bang, and if you needed a meeting, you go, bang, bang, bang. So all these things were done by people getting together and knowing that, oh, yeah, that's a good idea. Usually the idea must have come out of bath houses and into a meeting where they would talk with the Commission, saying, "This is what we need." And the Commission would say, "Oh, okay. Yeah, well, we could cover that cost," and stuff like that. And so everybody had, you know, if you were a plumber, you became a head of a group of people who dug ditches to make the pipeline or whatever. And if there wasn't a pipeline, you know, up in the mountain, I think, there are areas where these same ship builders were making a trough for the water to go down. And so, in short time, all the houses, every fourth house or whatever would have a pipe sticking up and a faucet, and we could get our buckets of water and taken into the house. You know, that was comfort. And of course, there was a group of people who made outhouses, and they- So everybody, every two cabins had an outhouse. And, you know, that's pretty darn good. And, all these things were done. And I'm sure that there wasn't a architectural-and organization of the B.C. Commission. It was more these people, elders of the community that would get together and say, okay, this is what we need, go ahead and do it.

LU: Do you ever remember seeing your parents worried about what was going on in-

HT: In the war?

LU: What was their reaction?

HT: Oh, I don't recall them showing concern in front of us. You know, if they were concerned about certain things, I don't think they laid it on us, you know, saying, "Hey, we're in a destitute situation, and this will- and be prepared to rebel, or whatever," you know?

**[02:15]**

HT: Because, basically, if something came up, we were all for it. If the elder said, "This is the way it goes," you know? And, you know, when they were selecting people, anybody who had senior matriculation papers or high school, or university, you know, they automatically became teachers, okay? And high school diploma, you know? So, when they built these schools, and they built two story schools, and they were pretty big. And they built all these schools, and every community had a school, and then the books came in, and you had- and the children were all going to school. This, you know, and when they said they select these people who had the education to become teachers, yeah, then it was pretty well organized that way, you know? And, I think we were fortunate in being able to do that kind of thing.

And so all across the- all the settlement places at- Yeah, it's- you felt- well, I didn't know until after the war how fortunate we were when we were in concentration camp, because, I'm sure that the educational system outside of our community wasn't that good. You know? I mean, those who were in Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba, you know, how many of those kids were able to get to school? Did they- I mean, when you're doing sugar beets, and a row of sugar beets is a damn near a mile long, hey, and depending on the whole family to do it, you know, what happened to those kids, you know? And they must have solved it some- one way or the other. But I- when you're in a camp, like in B.C., it was routinely solved, you know? And, the kids were able to have a much- probably wholesome life, you know, of regular- get up in the morning, get breakfast and off to school, and then coming home and stuff like that. And our social activities were such that- In our case, in Slocan, there was a person called Tak Toyota. He had a public address system of some sort, you know, he had a record player and a microphone and stuff, a loudspeaker. And I was talking to him, and he says, yeah, the only thing he hasn't got is records. I said, "Oh, well, I got about 50 records in that, at the house, at the cabin." He said, "Yeah, can we borrow?" I said, "Well, we'll check out what record we got." I said, "They were jazz music and all that." And so we got together and we got the Odd Fellows Hall and Saturday night dance. Yeah. And off we went. And we would have Saturday night dance, pretty well almost every Saturday.

**[02:20]**

HT: And then, a girl and I decided- at least she wanted a drama group. So okay, we started drama group.

LU: Who was that?

HT: Then we'd have a concert, or a evening of drama. We'd put on several plays. And then there'd be other people who say, "Oh, hey, we could have amateur night." You know, so they'd have amateur nights. So, all in all, we created our own entertainment, and it was good because the community all participated into it, you know? And they would all- we'd have the concert and, you know, charge a nickel to come in and stuff like that. And, you know, they'd even have the- typically, they'd even have the Japanese concerts, you know, or- I don't know whether you can call 'em concert or production of some sort. And, you know, there'd be some of the old guys who get up there and marvelous, or what, you know, they would be in their *kimonos*, and do their one of a kind talk of some story and everything else. And so that was very pleasing for the older people too, you know? They'd come and they'd go, "Oh, yeah, this is the kind of thing that we used to have at the Buddhist temple," and stuff like that, you know? And so, yeah, life was pretty sweet, even under hardship. It

helped cover up some of the things that could have festered had not that kind of thing been available, you know? Yeah. Because when you're sitting around and there's nothing to do, except think about how we got short changed in life, you know? It's nice to have things happening that you could participate in and say, "Oh, that was a nice thing to do," you know? And we'd have our Christmases and everything else. And of course, always the memories of Eaton's catalog, you know, Eaton's catalog and Simpson Sears catalogs and comparing notes and everything else. And this was quite the thing, you know, we kept the community pretty busy with all the stuff that we'd be ordering. You can imagine ordering, you know, six pairs of pants or whatever, or shirt, all different colors and then you select one of 'em, shipped the rest back [laughs], you know? It was our way of shopping and, oh, yeah. You know, and Eaton's and Simpsons-Sears, they were very good about that. You know, they were- of course, they were good about that all the way across the country. But, you found out how good things could be in this kind of isolated community. You know, it's not like, you're making the best of being able to go into Woodward's, Hudson Bay and Vancouver, and look at all the clothes and make a selection. You were still able to- God, do I have a medium or large, or, junior or whatever, you know? And especially shoes. You get a shoes. You know, all these things.

[02:25]

HT: And it was great that it was available to us, and we took advantage of it quite well, you know? Yeah.

LU: So what made you decide to come to Hamilton?

HT: Well, my brother- my stepbrother, Roy, before he- before the war, he used to work for cleaners, you know, and he was what they call a spotter. And those spotters were very important people. What it was, it was, you know, you get a dress coming in, and there's a big red mark. He'd have to analyze what made that mark then figured out what chemical he needed to eliminate that mark. And so it was quite a skill which he had. And it was a skilled job, really. And, he came out to Hamilton, and he- because he applied for job at one of the cleaners. And he- his comment was, I heard the boss, his boss, owner of the cleaners talking to a friend, and his boss was Irish, you know, a real strong Irish accent. And he's telling the person, "I got this Japanese guy in here. He does a good job, but you know what," he says, "he can speak English better than I can." And I think, here again, we're back to education again, eh? And it's shocking to find out that- and yet over here, the woman I married, she was of English mother, Romanian father, and she used to be- play the church organ. She heard the announcement the week before that there was a Japanese family coming in, and she was slightly frightened of this situation. And then when the following Sunday came



around, the family came in, I believe it was the Yoshidas, and they come walking in, and she couldn't believe it. She said, "Just children, they've got children." Up until that time, propaganda- all the propaganda she heard about the war and the enemy never included children. And she was amazed that this was a man and woman with children coming to us. She didn't have to be afraid of them. And, in the long run, the girl that was in that family became one of her best friends, you know? So, it's- you know, geographically, the only thing they learned about the Japanese was a guy in- guy in a geography book wearing a *kimono*, you know, and looking very stern and everything else. Wow. You go to Japan and you start taking pictures of people there, and they all stand up straight, you know, to have their picture taken. Nothing normal. You know, they still do it, you know?

[02:30]

HT: So, I guess, you know, it surprised her. And she was ever, you know, so please that these people came. And we became fast friends. Yeah.

LU: Um, did you find it was difficult after the war, and in Hamilton, to come across other Japanese people and socialize with them, or how was it?

HT: No. We were very lucky in Hamilton. The YMCA opened their doors to some of the Japanese people that were in Hamilton. A lot of it has to do- probably a lot of it had to do with some of the students that were coming in. You know, for instance, at the very beginning, these people were coming in. They were all in their 20, 25, you know, and wanting to continue their education, go to- And they would get a job as a house boy, a house girl or maid at someone who lived near the university, and the university professors and staff would gladly hire these people. And, these people would do a good job of cleaning the house and becoming nannies and all this kind of stuff. But they, at the same time, they would ask if they could have, you know, a day off. Of course, you always got a day off. Okay, what day would that be? And a lot of 'em would go to university or high school, and take night courses, and, extend their education. And so, you know, because they were accepted wholeheartedly into the thing, and the YMCA did the same thing, they accepted us. And we would have our own group at the YMCA. It was a sophi-ed, they called it sophi-ed. Social physical educational club. And all these people who were here as domestic workers and stuff like that would join in. And all us who worked in the other field, we'd join in, we'd have a quite a good group, and come Christmas, New Year, we'd be able to get the gymnasium, [?] and we'd all get together and we'd have a dance. And that was great. You know, it helped us get to meet people in our- Because there were a lot of 'em that were here without any friends. And this was a place to meet, and they were able to meet their future wives and husbands and stuff like that. And, the YMCA and the YWCA had a lot to do with



that, you know? And of course, all the churches were more than happy to have us people around, you know? There was no discrimination. The only discrimination we ever met up was at the beginning, and that was right at the very beginning was some of the restaurants wouldn't accept us as customers.

LU: In Hamilton?

HT: Yeah. Oh, yeah. They- some of the Chinese restaurants and stuff like that, they wouldn't accept.

**[02:35]**

HT: And- but it didn't take long. They found that we were good paying customers, you know, and we ate.

LU: Yeah. Japanese people. They eat well.

HT: Japanese people eat, and they eat a lot, you know? Yeah. So, you know, those are things, and we're readily willing and able to go into the kitchen and tell them what else they could do, you know? If we thought they were a little short of ideas, you know, so- Oh, yeah. We- those things- But there was that discrimination. And, well, let's face it, one of- some of the major organizations, Odd Fellows and all that, you know, you weren't allowed in Yeah. And- But, you know, this, we found quite the norm, really. The- it's an understandable thing, I guess. Yeah.

LU: So how did you get involved with the redress?

HT: Redress?

LU: Yeah.

HT: Oh, well, when the redress start kicking in, in full force, you know, there's the NAJC. You know, National Association of Japanese Canadians was formed to get the nucleus of people who were going to address the government. And then there's the old JCCA. Japanese Citizens or whatever, Association. And in Hamilton, we had a JCCA group. And they weren't particularly interested in recognizing NAJC as their spokespeople, JCCA wanted to hold their- you know. But when you think of it, you think, well, if they do that, we're splitting the power of being able to do things. And there was always that debate every time you had a meeting about the JCCA and the NAJC and- in Hamilton, you know. There was always that squabble, and I thought, that's not good. So when I got into it, there was still this squabble, and then finally they're saying, "Well, we gotta settle this one way or the other. We gotta get

our- both our organizations functioning somehow or other.” And so there was a promise that they would still be- they would get together, but they still kept their separate organization. And I got elected president of it during redress, mainly because I'm one of these odd Japanese people who have no connection with that family and their tribe, or *ken*, or whatever you want to call it. And the other one, this family and their tribe, they're both struggling to get control.

[02:40]

HT: And control is not what we wanted. We wanted harmonization so that we could work together. And so, I was willing to be the president because I had no influence on either group, and none of 'em favored me anyway. You know, they tolerated me because I was a neutral, I was an out and out neutral. And so, as the redress thing was going along, we start working on, we have to come to terms. The JCCA across Canada was losing its power, and there was a few people trying to hang on. And unfortunately, in a lot of ways, the JCCA didn't do a hell of a lot in the latter part of the years. And the younger people who were eager to do something, and find out why their parents got all this abuse and got nothing, and all this kind of stuff that went on and got- not recognized as something that was abusive. They wanted justice, I think, and this is where the NAJC got greater power. And so, I took over, and finally, near the end of my terms, I had the two groups come together. And then I made a proposal that the Hamilton become the chapter of the NAJC. And it got voted on and passed. And I stepped down and said, “Okay, that's-”

LU: That was it?

HT: “End of my term.” They wanted me to stay. And I said, “No, I'm not. I gave it one year because I wanted to get all this stuff straightened out and put together. And now, now that I put the ball in the court there, and you guys gotta settle it out.” So, you know, and there's still some bitterness by people of the old JCCA, but that's typically oriental anyway, you know? Every oriental group has a terrible pile of stuff that they don't want to settle, you know, because it- I guess it helps them live a little longer. I don't know. But, yeah. And I think the NAJC has done a pretty damn good job, especially when you think, okay, they got the redress, you know? And, you know, at the time, they would say, “Well, how much money we should- we'd be looking at?” You know? And I think the JCCA was looking at \$50 million. That was their mandate. They thought that that would give them a thing that they could put a- some kind of plaque somewhere in this country somewhere. And it appeared probably overgrown with weeds. Anyway, they- you know, and I know at that time, they had asked me what I thought, you know. And I said, “Oh, yeah, I think the government should give us half a billion dollars.”

[02:45]

HT: They almost ran me out of the meeting because I've been, you know, ridiculous about this thing. And I didn't think I was ridiculous about the thing. So, when the results came, and I was- I knew the girl up in Ottawa who was the head of the thing, and we're talking about things, went up to Ottawa to check out, see what the heck is going on. And she says- You know, and in Ottawa's thinking, they'd turn around and say, "Okay, we're having a redress information. We're going to give the Japanese who were under the War Measures Act, and during that period of time, three years to fill out the form." My wife, who was a non-Japanese, of course, she got the job as a field secretary in this area. We used to go all the way around and help-

LU: Help people fill out the forms?

HT: Yeah. Fill out forms. And she says, "These people, your people don't need to know how to fill out the form. They know how to fill out the form. They're educated people." The trouble with the politicians is they got no idea what- how educated we really are. So, she got the job, and she'd go around, and yes, there were people who had questions, but they were minor questions. And, instead of three years, less than a year, less than three quarters of a year, less than half a year, damn near all the applications were in. Well, you know, it was the typical Ottawa scenario of ethnic groups, and they need help, you know, but they didn't realize that Japanese people were well educated. Everybody could read the form if they put it in Chi- Japanese, yes, they could read it in Japanese. So they could fill out any form. And so, this was all done. But here, you know, you're given the three years and okay, so you try, but after a year, Donna says, "They don't need me anymore." Close up her end, you know, and so, it was all okay that way. the- it was only the government that delayed everything, because they didn't realize how quickly and how fast the Japanese Canadians could respond to this redress. And all of a sudden, they flooded with- and the girl who was in charge, she says, "Look at this. I'm gonna show you." Took me into the room, rows and rows and rows, up three thing, she says, "I've got- what was it, 18,000 or something applications." And she says, "And they're still coming in." And I said, "Yeah, I can imagine. And you haven't got enough help to keep this up." She says, "Yeah, well, we're trying to get things."

[02:50]

HT: And so, they had settled and they assumed that across Canada, we had something like 12,000 people of Japanese origin who were in that period of time and under the War Measures Act that were eligible for applying. And here it is, she's pointing out 18,000. You know, and so from- so that's, you know, one and a half times as much as they expected. And

I start laughing to myself. She says, "What's the matter?" I said, "Well, one time I was at a redress meeting down in Hamilton, and they almost laughed and ridiculed me out because I- they asked me what the government should be paying us, and I said, half a billion dollars." Well, they had signed the thing, and they estimated it was going to be \$250 million for redress, all the policies and everything else. You add on another 6,000 people who get the redress, and I calculated it out to be \$360 million. I'm closer to my half a billion than most people were, you know? Now, the thing they underestimated is the fact that the Japanese Canadians produced a lot of children between, after the war to 1947, you know. That's only a few years, but it made a heck of a lot of difference. And, there they are, you know? So in the end, they had to pay well over \$300 million. Not bad, eh? You know, and the thing I have to say about the NAJC is they had done a very good job, a good job, and an impressive job that other minority groups wanted to- wanted to talk to them, "But how the hell did you do that?" And they're not minority groups. The Japanese Canadians were the minority of minority groups. I mean, we couldn't even get ourselves in the book of statistics because 50,000 is the limit. And, you know, when you look at immigration and stuff, and they said, oh, in 19 something or other, the most- the largest number of immigrants came from Japan, came over. And you say, oh, how many was that? And you find out it was something like, oh, I don't know, 500 or 600 immigrants in the year of that year. Hey, we could get that in a month of Vietnamese people for crying out loud, you know? And, 25 years ago, you never heard of Vietnamese people. Now we got 380,000 of 'em in the Toronto area, I think, you know, so we're really still a minority, even though we are finally in the book of statistics. And, I think they're covering everybody, including their dogs and cats, you know? But, yeah, we're finally in there. We are not- the Japanese are not- are no longer the other, which it could soon be.

[02:55]

HT: Because, you know, this unemployment and everything else that people stopped producing children and stuff, go right down very fast. But, yes, the redress, the redress committee did a yeoman's job of bending the public's ear to what has happened. And the net result is that, well, we got- we didn't get what we wanted, but we got recognition. Too bad this recognition isn't stamped, stamped in every school book in Canada, because people still come up and say, "What's this I hear you were incarcerated?" Hey, that shouldn't be. I look at the other end of it, and I see the Jewish people and the Holocaust, and we get it ad nauseum. I mean, we get it every week. Some article about something, or some article about somebody being anti-Semitic, you know? And here, you know, you could refer to anybody as a J-p and say, oh, so what's your problem? You know? You know, and, it's just like years ago, I think my daughter was in high school, and she's walking down the hall with her non-Japanese friend, and somebody, a couple of the girls walking by them says,

referred to as a ch-k. And she stopped and turned around and said, "Hey, get your expressions right. I'm a J-p, not a-" [laughs] you know, okay. There's, you know, the insult still is clear, but still there's a bit of recognition that if you're gonna insult me, insult me properly, you know? And, the trouble is people have a hard time trying to insult the Japanese. They can't say, you know, that the Japanese haven't been able to send a satellite out up in the sky because the candle keeps burning out before this thing takes off. Stuff like that, you know. It's that intelligence comes from Japan. And even their offsprings here are intelligent. I mean, I remember playing- when I first went into Slocan, there was a family in number ten. I think it was number ten. No, it wasn't number ten, number three or five, I can't remember. Anyway, I used to play bridge with him. And later on, I found that they were- I believe Carr and Eleanor Suzuki, and remember the little couple of kids under their feet all the time, you know, that one of 'em was David. Okay. And here in Slocan, we've got a gang of kids, and one of the kids in that gang is Raymond Moriyama.

**[03:00]**

HT: You know, we have to- we've been lucky to have these people of recognition. And they're not braggarts or anything. They stay subtly, you know, almost behind the screen, but everybody knows they're there, you know? And I think that's a very nice thing. And we have a lot of famous people, and even the people that come in, you know, Ozawa, conductor, you know, and stuff like that. And yeah, I have- even in pottery, there's Shouji Hamada, and the story goes, how he settled, the fact that somebody was making pots that looked like his and was selling them as Shouji Hamada's pots. And so a reporter goes up to Shouji Hamada and says, "What do you think about that man that's down several villages, you know, who's making pots just like yours? And he's selling them." and he looks up and says, "Oh, is there a man doing that?" "Yes. Haven't you heard?" "Oh, well, oh, that's all right." And they go, "Alright? Why?" He says, "Well, if I make a bad pot, they'll think he made it. If he makes the very good pot, they'll think I made it." So, you think about that philosophy and you go, right, you're taking advantage of, in a very subtle way, and say, I'm not gonna disturb this situation because I'm gaining all the way. Anything he makes that's very good, they'll think he made it. Shouji Hamada himself made it. Yeah. Shouji Hamada was a living treasure of Japan. And that's his philosophy. And you go, how different it is being a Japanese and the attitude, if you were American, you'd have that guy in court and asking for jail time. And the sad part about it is one person said, "Ontario has more lawyers than all of Japan."

LU: Wow.

HT: Yeah. Ontario has more lawyers than- in other words, you know, a lawyer in Japan, they're in the middle class. And this is an interesting factor. And, you know, things that we take for granted, we don't realize, like, who was it? Audrey Kobayashi, I think her name is, she's a professor at McGill on demographics. And she had said one time, and I just couldn't believe what she had said. She says, "You know," it was after dinner speech. She says, "10% of all the children in Canada who graduate from high school go to university. 10% of those graduates go to university." She says, "10% of all the children of Japanese origin in Canada take a post-grad course."

[03:05]

HT: That is a phenomenal amount, and a big difference. And it has to do a lot with the parents that are willing to let their kids go through, you know. And me? Huh. I'm a nobody, no education. Hey, but I sent four of my kids to university, and my wife. I mean, my wife went to university after she had the four kids. And, they were all in high school, then she went to university and she got her degree and everything. That's not bad. But here again, it's the- what do you call it? The osmosis effect of what our parents have done that keeps on coming through, you know? Yeah. Rather nice, isn't it?

LU: Our whole history is a tribute to the *isseis*. It really is. Yeah. We owe them everything.

HT: Yeah. And, we should recognize this, and we don't recognize it enough, you know? I mean, we can brag about the fact that not too many Japanese names are under the police blotter and all this. And I recall talking to my mother-in-law about that. And I said, "You know, if a child of Japanese origin gets arrested for something, the whole- his whole family gets slightly ostracized for, they have to pay the penalty along with him." And so, you know, it's enjoy yourself, but don't do anything to shame your family. And she used to say to the kids, my children, as they were growing up, she'd say, "You go to university. Yes. We'll get you, you know, your school, university books, whatever." And she says, "Enjoy yourself, but don't do anything to shame your family name." And she picked it up, you know, and hey, I think, it's something we should have pride in. You know?

LU: Mm-hm. Well, we only have a couple seconds left, but two quick questions. Did you have any nicknames when you were in the camps?

HT: No. I didn't. I can't understand it. My name is Harold and who the hell wants a name like Harold? You know, and now in the potters field, I'm referred as Tak for abbreviation of my last name. And that's it.

LU: And what house number were you staying in, in Slocan?

HT: Eh?

LU: Oh. What was the house number?

HT: Oh, uh-

LU: Do you remember?

HT: Yeah, 22, 22. House number 22 on Second Avenue in Bay Farm. And you know what? I was born on Clark Drive and the house number was 222.

LU: Huh. Isn't that phenomenal? Wonderful. Perfect. Thank you.

HT: Well, I hope you get a couple of seconds out of all that.

LU: Oh yeah. Oh, lots of information.