Interviewee: Mas Shin
Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda
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*Note that this interview contains outdated terminology regarding Asian people.

[00:00]

Mas Shin: Ask me questions, or do I just read this?
Lisa Uyeda: Mm-hm.
LU: I'll ask you questions.
MS: Oh, I see. Okay.
LU: And do you wanna go by Mas or Masashi? What do you prefer to go by?
MS: Oh, Mas is okay.
LU: Mas is okay?
MS: Yeah. But, uh, I guess Mas is all right.
LU: Okay. [laughs]
MS: Yeah, because everybody calls me Mas.
LU: Yes. We'll get started then.
MS: Well, I better keep one of these in my pocket- in my mouth, just in case. [puts gum in his mouth]
LU: Okay, wonderful. So, today is January 19th, 2011, and this is an interview with Mas. And, Mas, can you please start off by telling us when you were born and where you were born?
MS: I was born in November 21, 1921.
LU: And where were you born?
MS: I was born in a place called Whonnock, uh, 35 miles east of Vancouver, on the north side of the Fraser River.
LU: And what do you remember about Whonnock, BC?
MS: Well, Whonnock was a- Well, it was a very nice place, you know, like out in the country, and our house was about a mile up the mountainside from the Fraser River, on the north side of the Fraser River. And, uh, over the treetops you could see the wide river, and beyond the river there was a plain about five, six miles wide. And beyond the plain was a low mountain range. And beyond that, there were high mountains. And in the horizon, there was a snow-covered mountain called Mount Rainier. It was snow-capped all year round.

The scenery was beautiful. Yeah.
LU: And did you go to school in Whonnock, BC?
MS: Yes. Oh, yes.
LU: And what do you remember about your school days?
MS: Well, I- We used to play games, you know, like football and duck on a rock. We'd throw, throw- You know, we'd put a little- Small rock on a large stone and throw rocks at it to knock it off. That kind of game, you know? And we didn't have any professional games or expensive equipment to play with. That's the kind of thing we did. We played with natural things—stones and sticks, you know? Yeah.
LU: And, um, what about marbles or going swimming?
MS: Yes, we played marbles. Yeah. And, uh, football, softball. Yeah.
LU: Mm-hm.
MS: And we played ping pong in the wintertime. You know, in the basement- the basement of the school.
LU: Oh, wow. And what school did you go to? Do you remember the name?
MS: Just Whonnock public school.
LU: And how long did you stay at that school for?
MS: Oh, I went to- Eight years, to grade eight. And from there I went to high school. Yeah.
LU: And in the Whonnock Public School, were there a lot of other Japanese students?
MS: Oh, yes. Yes. Lots of Japanese students there. Well, a third of the students were Japanese, I would say. Yeah.
LU: That's a lot.
MS: Mm-hm.
LU: Mm-hm. And what, um, what were your parents doing for work?
MS: My dad had a lumber mill and logging camp. But in 1930, during the Depression, we were in Japan for three months, three to four months. During that time, the Depression hit. And, uh, by the time Dad came back, everything was gone. So, he started farming after that. Yeah.
LU: Wow. Do you remember going to Japan?
MS: Pardon?
LU: Do you remember going to Japan?
MS: Oh, yes. Yes. I was, I was nine, I think. In grade three. And, uh, we had a lot of fun in Japan. In Japan, the students do the janitor's work in the school. There's no janitor. And the grade- I think the grade five students cleaned the windows. And the grade six students cleaned the washroom. And I was in grade three. Our job was to clean the playground. We all lined up- used to line up on one side of the playground, and each of us had a broom. We walked across the playground, sweeping the ground. Yeah, we swept the ground with a broom. That's the kind of thing we did.

[05:00]

LU: Oh, wow.
MS: Mm-hm. And the students belonged in groups. You know, like, the group I belonged to was boys about my age, and a little older boy was the leader. In the morning, they used to come, they would come and bang on the door and wake us up. They'd wake- My older brother and I were in the same group and they would wake us up and we'd go for a trot out in the fields, up and down the rice fields. They called the rice fields *tambo*. And we used to run up and down the fields saying, "Asa, asa, asa" as we trotted, and came back and had breakfast and went to school. It was really organized, you know, and I thought it was really good.
LU: Mm-hm. And how long did you spend in Japan?
MS: Three months. Three months, yeah.
LU: So what was it like going to school in Japan for only three months and then having to come back to Whonnock Public School?
MS: Well, in BC, we went to Japanese school on Tuesdays and Thursdays from five o'clock-, from three-thirty to five o'clock, and all day Saturday. So, we studied only reading and writing, that's all. No history or mathematics or anything. We studied that in public school. So, we could read and write and speak Japanese, you know. So, in Japan, it was very similar. The classes were very similar, the things we studied, you know.
LU: And what do you remember about your family farm?
MS: Farm? Oh, we had to help out, you know. After school, we would help out on the farm and on Saturdays and holidays. Yeah.
LU: And what kind of chores did you have to do?
MS: Oh, we had to fill the wood box, you know. And in BC, we lived up the mountainside, and there was no electricity, no hydro. My dad tried to get hydro up, but the BC Electric Company wanted at least nine houses to sign up for the hydro before they would bring the line up. My dad canvassed all the neighbors, but nine would never sign up. So, we couldn't get hydro up the mountain. So we had coal oil lamps and wood stoves, you know.
LU: Oh, wow. And what about taking care of the farm? Did you have farm animals as well?
MS: Yes, we had a cow- cows, a horse, and chickens, you know. My younger brother Roy's job was to feed the chickens and collect the eggs. Yeah, he was in grade five, grade six, around that age. When we were kids, my dad said growing children should drink lots of milk, and he bought a cow. At that time, my sister, Hisako, was in grade seven, and it became her job to milk the cow. She had to milk the cow every morning before school and every afternoon before supper. When she went to high school, high school was six and a half miles from Whonnock—we had to catch the bus at eight o'clock in the morning, and she couldn't be milking the cow. So when she started high school, my oldest brother, it became his job to

milk the cow! And when he went to high school, it became my job to milk the cow. I was in grade seven.

So, I used to go to the barn every morning before school with the milking pail. I would give the cow fresh hay in a manger and a scoop of oats in the bin. The cow would be eating the hay and oats and keep still while I milked her. The oat bin was in the far corner, and to put oats in, I had to go in front of the cow. One morning, I went in front of the cow to put the oats in the bin, and the cow jumped up on top of me.

[00:10]

MS: In front of the- Her chest was on my back and her front legs were on either side of me. I couldn't move. So, I yelled at her and banged my elbows against her chest and struggled free. I got free, I ran home and told my dad what the cow did. Dad knew what was wrong. You know. He gave me a two-dollar bill and said, "Take the cow to the Watsons." Mr. Watson had a dairy farm and he had a bull. I put the lead chain on the cow, a chain about 20 feet long, and led the cow out to the road. As soon as we went out to the road, the cow knew where we were going and started to run. She ran and pulled me down the road, all the way to Watson's. And Mr. Watson wasn't home. So Mrs. Watson took the chain and led the cow round and round in the bullpen, and the bull followed close behind. After a couple of rounds, the bull jumped up on top of the cow's behind and he did his business. So I gave Mrs. Watson the two dollars. And uh, going there, the cow ran all the way. But coming home, she wouldn't walk. I had to pull on the chain, yell at her, coax her, and uh go in behind and hit her from behind to make her walk. Finally—it took a long time—I got her home. And I was sure late for school that morning. When I went into the classroom, my teacher—my teacher was the principal—asked me, "Why are you so late?" I told him, and all my classmates laughed and laughed. Nine months later, the cow gave birth to a calf.

LU: Oh, wow. [laughs]

MS: So when I went to high school, it became my younger brother Roy's job to milk the cow. We didn't have to milk the cow when we went to high school. Didn't have time.

LU: Did your family keep the calf?

MS: No, we sold the calf. Because one cow was all we needed. It was too much of a job to have two cows, you know. Then my dad used to say "growing children should eat lots of fruit." He had a lot of fruit trees. He had four apple trees, three plum trees, two cherry trees, a pear tree, and a walnut tree, and he had a grapevine climbing a trestle. So we had lots of fruit to eat. But kids will be kids, I guess. On the way home from school, we used to sneak into neighbors' orchards and steal apples and eat them [laughs] when we have all those fruits at home. I guess kids are kids.

LU: Did you ever get caught? [laughs]

MS: No, we never got caught. My sisters- Older sisters used to go to the United Church with their school friends. There was no Buddhist church in Whonnock, even though my parents were Buddhists. But Dad said, "it doesn't matter what church you go to. When we die, we all go to the same place." So we went to the United Church. My younger brother Roy and I went to Sunday school there. Dad used to give us five cents to put in the collection plate. That was a lot of money in those days—men were earning ten cents an hour in wages. So five cents was half an hour's wage. On the way to Sunday school, there was a candy store—Luno's[?] Confectionery Store. They had candies: two for one cent, three for one cent, four for one cent. The three-for-one-cent candies were really good. So, Roy and I used to buy nine candies for three cents, munch on them on the way to Sunday school, and put two cents in the collection plate. And uh, all the other kids were putting in two or three cents, so we thought, "Why should we put in five cents?" [laughs] We did this for quite a few Sundays when a church member—a lady—saw us at the candy store. She realised out what we were doing and she told the minister. The minister gave us a lecture and a sermon, and Roy began to cry. [laughs] But good thing Dad didn't find out—he would've given us the dickens.

[00:15]

MS: Yeah. We used to do all kinds of bad things like that, kids, you know?
LU: Mm-hm. [chuckles]
MS: And, uh, like the Japanese have a custom of, uh, offering osonae mochi to *Kami-sama*—to, to God—at New Year's. You know, [ozoni?] mochi is two mochis, one on top of the other with a Japanese orange placed on top. And she used to, uh, put an offering of osonae mochi in the shrine on top of Dad's desk. And she put another offering on the shelf in the bathhouse, and one in the barn, one in the garage. My oldest brother Kaz and I used to go to the barn and garage, and Kaz would peel the oranges, you know, and, uh, take out the inside. And he'd put the empty skin together, make it round, put it on top of the mochi, and giggling and snickering away, we'd eat the oranges. We used to do bad things, [chuckles] but good thing mom didn't find out.
LU: Yeah.
MS: She would've said—[*kamisama ga ba chi wa ga eru?*]
LU: What does that mean?
MS: That means 'God will give us—bring us bad luck.' Yeah. But we used to do all kinds of things like that. Yeah.
LU: And what do you remember about going to high school?
MS: Well, yeah, during, in high school, you know, the- When we were in high school, I used to think, "what's gonna happen when hundreds of Niseis graduate from high school and university?" In those days, the Niseis couldn't get any industrial jobs, you know, jobs in business offices or government offices. University graduates were working in the paper

mills. You know, they couldn't get decent jobs. And, uh, there was a girl who lived about a mile from us. She was a normal school graduate—she was a teacher—couldn't get a job teaching. And her brother was a university graduate, and he couldn't get a job anywhere. So he was working in the paper mill. All the university graduates were doing jobs like that—in the lumber mills and paper mills. And I used to wonder, "what's gonna happen when hundreds of Nisei graduate from high school?" You know, none of us would get the jobs in offices. So then, uh, my oldest brother used to take *Popular Science* magazine. So, and I used to look at this magazine every few- And, uh, I came across an ad in the magazine by the International Correspondence School in the States. And looking at the ad, they had a list of courses in the ad, the auto mechanic course caught my eye. I thought, "yeah, I could become an auto mechanic. I could start a service station and repair cars and sell gas, sell new cars." So I started the course. And, uh, I was doing all right. I used to study. They used to send me lessons every month, and then an exam every month also. And I used to write the exam—without cheating—and mailed them in. I was getting good marks. And then, I started to take the components in the truck apart—parts like the carburetor, generator, starter, et cetera. I'd study the parts and put them together again, assemble them again. They used to mail exams once a month. I used to write the exam without cheating, mail them back in. I was getting good marks. But it was a four-year course. And after two years—I was in the second year—when I got the order. You know, Japan bombarded Pearl Harbor. And I got the order to report to Hastings Park. So I dutifully went on the day I was told to report. I went to Hastings Park, and I was assigned to a narrow single bed.

[00:20]

MS: You know, there were hundreds and hundreds of single beds lined upside by side. And they were so close together—lying down on the bed, you could almost touch the bed beside you. There were hundreds of them, hundreds of men in there. I didn't know anybody. And, uh, in the ladies' section, they had sheets hanging between the bunks, between the beds for privacy. But the men's section was wide open. There were hundreds of men in there, and I didn't know anybody. And at lunchtime, we all lined up with a tin plate in our hands, you know. And during the day, every day, I had nothing to do, nobody to talk to. I used to sit on the bed or go outside.

The immediate ground area was surrounded by a chain-link fence. You couldn't go anywhere. So I used to stand outside and look through the fence at- I'd uh gaze out at the city. And, uh, after two weeks, I went to the office, and then I asked them, "I'd like to go home. Okay if I go home?" He says, "All right." They gave me a permit to go home. So with this permit in my pocket, I got on the highway bus and went home. And, but they said, "be back in two days," when they gave me the permit. So, I went home and, and when I got off

the bus, I felt so good to be in Whonnock, you know, my hometown, home village. And when, when my mom and dad saw me come home, their eyes opened up, they couldn't believe it. They thought I didn't have to go to the road camp anymore. And, uh, but after two days, I went back to Hastings Park, and I reported back and they said, "Get your things together. You're going on– You're going to Revelstoke on the six o'clock train that day"

So I got my suitcase, and there were- Outside, there were lots of buses lined up outside to take us to the station. I got on the bus with my suitcase and, uh, going to the station, I was really feeling really depressed. I said, "My God, I'm going to a road camp with a bunch of strangers into the mountains, a road camp in the mountains. And, uh, yeah, I have to eat, live, and sleep with strangers. I wonder what kind of work I'll be doing, you know?" And I was really depressed on the train. And, uh, about an hour after we left Vancouver, as we approached Whonnock, my home village, I pressed my face to the train window looking outside. I was thinking, "Gee, I won't see Whonnock again for who knows how long." And, uh, the train started to slow down. I thought, "Wow, we're, we're going to stop." And the train did stop at the station, and I saw my four brothers on the station platform—younger brother Roy, Ross, Joe and Yosh, you know. So I hopped off the train, went to talk to them, and they said- When they told me in Hastings Park that "You're going on the six o'clock train today," I asked for permission to use the phone. And I phoned my sister, Hisako, who was living in Vancouver at the time. She was married and living in Vancouver. I told her, "I'm going on the six o'clock train tonight." So, and my brothers told me when I saw them at the station that Hisako phoned home and said, "He's on the six o'clock train, and he'll be coming through Whonnock around seven o'clock." So they dashed to the station, and there they were at the- On the platform. And I had time to easily talk to them. And they said, "Ritsuko, my oldest sister, and the youngest brother are at the railroad crossing to the wharf, which is about a quarter mile further down the tracks." And they, they couldn't, they didn't think they would get to the station in time. So they stayed at the crossing to the wharf, you know, to just watch the train as it went by. And, you know, when the train , you know, went past the crossing, it was still going quite slowly. It was picking up speed, but it was still going quite slowly. And I had to- So I stood on the steps, and I waved to my sister and youngest brother, and I said goodbye to them. They hollered, yelled back, "Goodbye!"

[25:00]

MS: And the first letter my mother wrote to me—it was about a month after—you know, she wrote to me, she said that she and Dad and the younger sister stood outside the house facing the station, and they heard the train come to a stop, and then they heard the bells clanging. Then they heard the "huff, huff" of the engine as it started up and picked up speed. And they just stood there, you know, listened to the sound of the train. And around 10

o'clock that night, the train stopped at the Kamloops station. Kamloops was a city in the interior of B.C. And, uh, there were three cowboys walking on the station platform, their spurs jingling, and their real cowboy suits and cowboy hats. The first time I saw cowboys. So I really perked up: wow—cowboys! I felt a little better. And the next morning, as we approached Revelstoke where the road camp was, the Mountie stood up in the car. The car was full of isseis and niseis, you know. Every seat was taken. It was full of Japanese. The Mountie stood up and said, "I'm going to call nine names. So, you nine stay on the train, and, uh, you're going to a farm- a farm service camp in Chatham. There's a carton of food here for you. The conductor will be in charge of you, so you do as the conductor says. The rest of us will get off at Revelstoke and go to the road camp. So you do as the conductor says. The rest of us will get off at Revelstoke, go to the road camp, you know." So after everybody got off at Revelstoke and the train started up again, we nine were left on the train. You know, when the Mountie called out nine names, my name was one of them. I thought, "gee, I'm going to Chatham. How come they picked me?"

MS: But, uh, when everybody got off, we nine, we were scattered on the coach, we, gather- Got together in one corner of the car. And to my surprise, I knew two of the boys. One was George Takaoka and his brother Harry. Oh, and then there was another older man. I actually knew three of them. They were from Surrey on the south side of the Fraser River. And I had met them, uh, seven years earlier at the hop yard in Sumas, in Sumas Prairie. We picked hops together. And they were living in the cabin next door to us. And I picked hops all day with George, you know, the one- one of the boys. So, I knew them well. And after supper, we played together every day. And so that was one real big surprise. So, I sat with George all the way to Toronto- to Chatham, you know. And that day at lunchtime—there's just nine of us—we opened the cart'n of food at the mountain. I said, "it's our cart'n, our food." Open the carton of food. And we expected all kinds of good stuff to eat. It was full of homemade bread, canned tomatoes, and a can opener. That's a- We figured the bread was made- made at Hastings Park. So that's what we ate for four days, all the way to- to, Chatham- Or Toronto. After the fourth day, the train stopped at the Toronto station. And, uh, conductor said, "We're stopping here for 40 minutes." And, one of the boys, Mas Sugita[?] from Surrey said, "Uh, let's find a restaurant. Eat a decent meal—we have 40 minutes."

So we went out from the station and walked up the first street. We walked and walked—no restaurant. So I remember saying, "Toronto's a funny city—there's no restaurant!" And as we started- We had to get back in 40 minutes. So, we started to run. So we ran and ran. Finally, we came to a restaurant. We ordered in a hurry. We told the waitress to hurry, you know. And we gulped down our food and ran back to the station. We were gone one hour. And the conductor was looking for us. He was furious. He says, "Where were you boys? You held up the train 20 minutes!" He was responsible for getting us to Chatham. He couldn't

leave without us. But when we got to Chatham, there was a Mountie waiting for us, with a Canada Dominion Sugar Company truck, to take us to the farm camp.

[00:30]

MS: And, uh, we- The camp was, uh, looked like an army bunkhouse, you know. Army bunkhouse in army. And, uh, it was newly constructed. And, uh, the—the Mountie said that, "I'm stationed here. I'm not, uh, police- Gonna police you boys. I'm stationed here to prevent outsiders from coming to do you harm," you know. And he was a very pleasant Mountie. And, uh, in the camp bunkhouse, there was a bunk bedroom—a large bunk bedroom. And there was a kitchen, a dining room, and a washroom with—there was six basins along one wall, four shower stalls around the- At the opposite wall. The outhouse was outside—a long outhouse. And, uh, the cook was a- I think he was a retired army cook. He was an elderly man. Looked like a very pleasant man. And he- You know, many times he said that—this is after a couple months, about a month or a month and a half we were there. He said several times, "I never saw such nice boys," he says. "You—all of you—when you come back, soon as you come back from work, you all take a shower. You put on a clean shirt and try this. You comb your hair before sitting down for supper," he says. "And, uh, you're always chatting and laughing." He says, "I never saw such clean nice boys." He used to praise us, you know.
LU: Oh wow.
MS: Yeah.
LU: What was the name of the farm again?
MS: The camp was on Mr. Harold English's farm—on his property. I guess he allowed the Ontario Farm Service Force to use the corner of his farm to build a camp. The food was very, very wholesome. Good food. It was either steak or meat—meat and potatoes, vegetables, and nice dessert. There was always good dessert: pudding or pie or something. Breakfast was ham or bacon, eggs, and coffee, or cocoa, or milk, you know, in the morning. And boiled—or fried—eggs. You know, it was always eggs in the morning. The food was okay. But after about the middle of the summer, there were thirty-seven in the camp, about ten elderly *issei*—around age forty or forty-five. The rest were all young *nisei* age, you know. After around August or so, they began to crave- A lot of the boys began to crave for Japanese food. You know, the cook was cooking food- I guess it was the food that the Army used to eat. That type of food. It was good food. I enjoyed it. It was good for your health. But they began to crave for Japanese food. So, there was a fellow named Jin [?] Hirai. He was one of the boys who came with us from Hastings Park, one of the nine. He was a very good cook. So, the army cook's contract was terminated, and we made Jin Hirai the cook. He used to cook rice and *okazu* and, you know, things like that—Japanese food. So, the half the summer, we ate Japanese food. And the farms, they grew a- The vegetables like tomatoes, carrots, onions, potatoes, and things like that. And then wheat—lots of wheat—tobacco,

and corn. And fruit orchards, you know—apples and pears. The farms were- The average farm was about 400 acres in size. Small farms were about 200 acres; large farms, about 600 acres.

[00:35]

MS: One of the fellows in the camp was made foreman. His name was Tom Nishijima. He stayed at the camp every day, and the farmers phoned in and asked for whatever number of men they wanted the next day—two men, or four men, or six men. And Tom would assign us to the farms each day for the next day. The farmers used to come for us around- Between seven and seven-thirty in the morning and they would take us to their farm. And the cook would give us lunch, you know, like sandwiches and fruit and cake, or something with dessert, and a jug of milk to drink. The food was okay. I didn't mind it. Mm-hm.
LU: Do you mind just taking a break for a moment?
MS: Yeah.

[cuts to after break]

MS: Okay. [reading from paper] I was born and grew up 135 miles east of Vancouver, on the north side of the Fraser River. Our house was about a mile up the mountainside, facing south. The view was beautiful—over the treetops, we could see the wide river. Across the river was a flat plain about six miles wide, and then a low mountain range. Beyond the mountain range were high mountains. And the horizon was high peak Mount Rainier, which is snow-covered all year round.

When we were kids, we went to Sunday school at the United Church. Mom and Dad were Buddhist, but there was no Buddhist church in Whonnock. My older sisters were going to the United Church with their school friends. Dad said, "When we die, we all go to the same place. So it doesn't matter what church you go to." My younger brother Roy and I went to Sunday school at the United Church. Dad would give us five cents each to put in the collection plate. The other kids were putting two cents and three cents in the collection plate. Five cents was a lot of money in those days. On the way to Sunday school, there was a candy store—Luno's Confectionery. They sold candies two for one cent, three for one cent, and four for one cent. The three-for-one-cent candies were really good. Roy and I used to buy nine candies for three cents, munch on them on the way to Sunday school, and put two cents in the collection plate. We did this for quite a few Sundays. One Sunday, a lady church member spotted us and figured out what we were doing. She reported us to the minister. The minister gave us a lecture and sermon. Roy began to cry—he was six years old. I was

eight. I was the instigator. Good thing Dad didn't find out. He would have given us the royal dickens.

[00:40]

MS: Dad used to say, growing children should eat a lot of fruit, and he had lots of fruit trees planted—five apple trees, [turns the page] two pear trees, three plum trees, two cherry trees, a walnut tree, and grapevines climbing a trestle. But kids will be kids. With all the fruit trees at home, on the way home from school, we used to sneak into other people's orchards and steal apples and eat them.

Dad also said growing children should drink lots of milk, and bought a cow. Hisako, an older sister, was in grade seven. It became her job to milk the cow every morning before going to school, and every evening before supper. When she started going to high school, it became my oldest brother Kaz's job to milk the cow. High school was in Haney, six miles away, and we had to catch the school bus at eight in the morning. We couldn't be milking the cow. When Kaz started high school, it became my job to milk the cow. I was in grade seven. After breakfast, I went to the barn with the milking pail. I gave the cow a bucket of water to drink, put fresh hay in the manger, and put a scoop of oats in the oat bin. The cow would be munching away on the oats and hay and keep still while I milked her. After milking, I let the cow out to the pasture, took the milk to the kitchen, and went to school.

This one morning before milking, I went in front of the cow with the scoop of oats and was putting the oats in the bin. The cow jumped up on top of me. She had me pinned against the manger with her chest—I was between her front legs. I couldn't move. After banging her chest with my elbows and yelling at her, I struggled free and ran home and told Dad what the cow did.

[00:45]

MS: Dad said, "take the cow to Watson's", and gave me a two-dollar bill. Mr. Watson had a dairy farm about half a mile down the road. He had a bull. I took the lead chain- I hooked the lead chain, about twenty feet long, to the cow's halter, let her out the gate to the road. As soon as we went out to the road, the cow knew where she was going. She started to run. She ran and pulled me all the way to Watson's farm. Mr. Watson wasn't home. Mrs. Watson took the chain, led the cow around in the bullpen. The bull followed close behind the cow and mounted her from behind and did his business. I gave Mrs. Watson the two-dollar bill. Going, the cow had run all the way, but coming home, she wouldn't walk. I pulled on the chain, yelled at her, and coaxed her all the way home. I was sure late for school that morning—I was in grade seven. The principal was my teacher. He asked me, "Why are you

so late?" I told him, and all my classmates laughed and laughed. Nine months later, the cow gave birth to a calf.

The Japanese have a custom every New Year of making an offering to Buddha of two mochis, rice cakes placed one on top of the other, with a Japanese orange on top. They called it [ozoni?] mochi. Mom and Dad had a shrine on top of Dad's desk. Every New Year's, Mom placed a mochi in the shrine. She also placed an offering on the shelf in the bathhouse, one in the garage, one in the barn. When we were kids, my oldest brother Kaz and I went to the garage and barn, and Kaz carefully peeled oranges without breaking the skin. Took out the middle, put the empty skin together again, made it round, and placed it on top of the mochi. Snickering away, we ate the oranges. Good thing Mom didn't find out. She would've given us the dickens, saying, [*kamisama ga ba chi wa ga eru?*] "God will bring us bad luck." We used to do bad things.

In the spring of the year I was fifteen, during the Easter holidays, Dad said, "You better get your driver's license and haul the berries this summer." We used to haul our berries and produce for six neighboring farms [turning page] to the shipping plant and jam factory in Mission City, ten miles east of Whonnock. I knew how to drive—I'd been driving the truck on the back roads since I was fourteen. It was during the Easter holidays. So the next day, I drove to Mission City, parked the truck outside the police station, and walked in. A big policeman was sitting at his desk beside a big picture window. He saw me drive up and park the truck. I said to him, "I came for my driver's license." He opened the drawer on his desk and started to take out some papers. He asked me, "How old are you?" "Fifteen," I told him. He said, "Until you're sixteen, we give you a restricted driver's license. The license will allow you to drive the one vehicle only. Your father has to sign the application form and be responsible for you. You better come back with your father tomorrow. Leave the truck there and go home by bus. You're breaking the law, driving without a license." The next highway bus wasn't due for four hours. Besides, I didn't have any money for lunch or bus fare. I walked from the police station, got into the truck, and drove home. The next day, I went back with my dad. As soon as we walked into the police station, the policeman looked and barked at me sternly. "I told you yesterday to leave the truck there and go home by bus. You're breaking the law, driving without a license. I'm going to lock you up in jail." Along the back wall were two doors with bars in the windows—jail cells. He- I started to shake with fear. He's going to put me in jail! But after giving me a lecture, he gave me my license. Dad signed the application form and that- Ahem .[clears throat]

in those days, no matter how well educated, we Japanese were unable to get decent professional jobs in business offices, industries, or in the government. The only jobs open to us were in lumber mills, paper mills, logging, et cetera. The only jobs available for girls was

in housework, fish canneries, et cetera. All the *nisei* university graduates were working in paper mills, lumber mills. A *nisei* girl who lived about a mile from us was a normal school graduate. She was a teacher, but couldn't get a job teaching. Her brother was a University of-A graduate of UBC and working in a wood pipe and paper mill. In BC at that time, most *niseis* were still young. A lot were still in high school. I used to wonder what's going to happen when hundreds of *niseis* begin graduating from high school and university. We were going to be the most highly educated laborers, working in lumber mills, farming, and fishing.

My brother used to get *Popular Science* magazine, and there was an ad by the International Correspondence School in the States. Looking at the ad, I noticed the Auto Mechanic course. It clicked in my head. I could become an auto mechanic. I could open a service station, sell gas, repair cars, sell new cars. I started the course. It was a four-year course. I wrote the exam without cheating, mailed them in. I was getting good marks. I took apart components in the truck—parts like the carburetor, distributor, starter, et cetera—studied them, and put them together again. I studied this course for a couple of years and was doing okay when Japan bombarded Pearl Harbor. [turns page]

In April of 1942, I received the order to report to Hastings Park. I was 18. I dutifully went. I was assigned to a single bed in the horse and cattle building. Rows and rows of narrow beds were crowded side by side—hundreds of beds. In the ladies' section, there were sheets hanging between the beds for privacy. But the men's section was wide open. No privacy. You slept with hundreds of strange men in plain view. At mealtime, we all lined up, each with a tin plate. The immediate ground area outside was enclosed by a chain-link fence. Every day, I sat on my bed or stood outside with nothing to do. Gazing out at the city through the chain-link fence. I couldn't go anywhere. I didn't know anybody. There was nothing to read even. After two weeks, I put in a request to go home. To my surprise, they said "okay—but be back in two days." With my permit to leave in my pocket. I boarded the highway bus and went home. It was so good to be home. When they saw me, Mom and Dad couldn't believe their eyes. They thought I didn't have to go east anymore. On the second day, I dragged myself back to Hastings Park. As soon as I reported that I was back, I was told, "Get your things together. You're boarding the six o'clock train. You're going to the road camp in Revelstoke."

I asked for permission to use the phone and called my sister, Hisako, who was married and living in Vancouver, and told her, "I'm leaving today on the six o'clock CPR train." There were lots of buses lined up outside. I boarded one with my suitcase. On the bus to the station, I was feeling very depressed. I'm headed to a road camp in the mountains. I have to eat, work, and live with a bunch of strangers—and for how long? On the train, about an hour

after leaving Vancouver, as we approached Whonnock, my home village, I pressed my face to the train window. I won't see it again—for who knows how long. The train started to slow down. I thought, "Wow, we're going to stop at the station." It did stop, and I saw my younger brothers Roy, Ross, Joe, and Yosh on the platform. I hopped off the train and talked to them. Hisako, my sister, had phoned home and informed them I was leaving on the six o'clock train, which should pass through Whonnock around seven o'clock. My brothers dashed to the station. They told me Ritsu and Gene—my oldest and youngest brothers—were at the railroad crossing to the wharf, a quarter mile further down the track. The station was a little distance away. They didn't think they could get there in time.

The train remained stopped for about 10 minutes. I had time to leisurely talk to my brothers and say goodbye.

[00:50]

Mr. Whiting, the station master and friend of my father, was there, so I said goodbye to him. As the train started up and went by the crossing where Ritsu and Gene were standing, the train was picking up speed but still going quite slowly. So I stood on the steps and yelled goodbye to them. They yelled back, "Goodbye!"

In her first letter, Mom wrote that she, Dad, and Minako[?]—my youngest sister—couldn't possibly run to the station in time. So they stood outside the house, facing the station, and heard the train come to a stop. The bells clanging, and the huff-huff of the engine, as the train started up and picked up speed. Around 10 o'clock that night, the train stopped at the Kamloops station. There were three cowboys walking along the station platform, their spurs jingling. I perked up—"Wow, cowboys!" It was the first time I saw cowboys. [turns page] The next morning, as we approached Revelstoke, the Mountie on board stood up and said, "I'm going to call out nine names. You nine will stay on the train and go to the Ontario Farm Service Camp in Chatham. There's a carton of food for you. The conductor will be in your charge, so do as he says. The rest were to get off at Revelstoke and go to the road camp." My name was one of the nine called. I'd never heard of Chatham before. I was getting worried again. I'm going to a place called Chatham with total strangers. What would I be doing there—and for how long?

I asked the Mountie, "Where's Chatham?" He replied, "It's a city in southern Ontario, between Toronto and Windsor. You're going to a farm camp. You'll be working on farms." After the rest got off at Revelstoke, we nine remaining moved to one corner of the coach. To my surprise, I recognized three of them—George Takoka, my age; George's younger brother Harry; and James Sakamoto, an older man—all from Surrey on the south side of the Fraser

River. I had met them seven years earlier, in 1935. Mom, my sister, Hisako, brother Roy, and I picked hops with them at the hop yard in Sumas Prairie. George, Harry, their sister Margaret, their mother, Jim Sakamoto, and another man lived in the cabin next to ours and picked hops in the rows beside us. I was with George all day picking hops, and we played together every evening after supper. George's two brothers and another man from Surrey were also on the train. I wasn't with strangers anymore. They were at Hastings Park at the same time—I didn't even see them. George and I sat together on the train all the way to Chatham. We opened the carton of food at lunchtime. It was full of homemade bread, canned tomatoes, and a can opener. What a downfall! We were expecting all kinds of good stuff to eat. That's what we ate for three days.

The bread was probably made at Hastings Park. Jim Hirai, one of the fellows kept saying, "We got Shanghaied! We were supposed to go to Revelstoke. Now they tell us we're being sent to a place called Chatham." After four days, we arrived at the Union Station in Toronto. The conductor told us we're stopping here for 40 minutes. Masunita[?], one of the fellows from Surrey, said, "Let's go to a restaurant and eat a decent meal." We went outside the station and walked up the first street. We walked and walked, but no restaurant. I said to the others, "What kind of city is Toronto? No restaurants?" We had to be back in 40 minutes. We began to run. Finally, we came to a restaurant. We hurriedly ordered, told the waitress to hurry, gulped down our food, and ran back to the station. We were gone one hour. The conductor was looking for us. He was furious: "Where were you boys? You held up the train 20 minutes!" He was responsible for getting us to Chatham and couldn't leave without us. Thinking back, we had gone up Yonge Street and ate at the Honey Dew Restaurant at Richmond and Yonge streets, across the street from the southeast corner of Simpson's Department Store. At the Chatham station, there was a Mountie waiting for us with a Dominion Sugar Company truck to take us to the farm camp.

[00:55]

MS: The camp was newly erected, looked like an army bunk house. There were double decker bunk beds, a dining room, a kitchen, washroom, and six basins along one wall, four shower stalls along the opposite wall. The outhouse was outside. The Mountie was stationed at the camp. He told us that his duty was not to police us, but to prevent outsiders from coming to do us harm. The menu at camp was very good, wholesome and well balanced. Breakfast was orange or grapefruit juice, porridge or cereal, bacon or ham and eggs, toast [turns page] with butter and marmalade, and coffee. We were given lunch in a bag to take with us—beef or ham and lettuce sandwiches, one or two cookies, orange, apple, banana, or other fruit, and a jug of milk. Supper was roast beef or ham, sausage or other meat with baked or mashed potatoes, vegetables, pudding, or pie for dessert. We had

no complaints about our meals. The cook was a retired army cook. I think he cooked army food for us. He was very pleasant, easy to get along with. Two from our group were employed in the kitchen to assist the cook, clean up, and do the dishes. Many times during the summer, the cook commented, "I've never seen such nice clean boys. As soon as you come back from work, you all take a shower, comb your hair, put on a clean shirt, and draw this before sitting down for supper. And you're all always chatting and laughing. You're a great bunch." The average farm was 400 acres in size. The smaller farm was 200 acres; large farm, 600 acres. They grew wheat, barley, sugar beets, tobacco, and vegetables such as corn, carrots, onions, tomatoes, watermelon, et cetera, and fruit orchards. One member in camp was elected as foreman. He remained at the camp all day, every day, took phone calls from the farmers, and made requests for a certain number of boys for the next day. The farmers came for us at 7:30 AM and brought us back at supper time. We worked half days on Saturdays.

LU : Do you want to stop for a moment? I'm just going to switch the tape.
MS: Oh, is it all right?
LU: Oh, it's great.

[cut to after tape is switched]

LU:Okay.
MS: Where did I go to?
LU: On Saturday afternoon. At the bottom there.
MS: Oh, I started on Saturday afternoon?
LU: Mm-hm.
MS: Did I read that?
LU: Just reread that part. Yeah.
MS: Start from there, right?
LU: Mm-hmm.
MS: I can start now.?
LU: Yes, please.
MS: Okay?
LU: Mm-hm.
MS: On Saturday afternoon or evening, those who wished to go into town phoned for a taxi. The taxi charged $1 one way. Five would climb in, making the cost per taxi 20 cents each. Twenty cents was two hours' pay. I went into town every Saturday afternoon. While the others were bowling or at the pool parlor, I went to the library. I read books or magazines such as *Life*, *Popular Science*, et cetera, and signed out two books each time I went. Most days after supper, I sat under a tree and read my books. Every Sunday afternoon, the minister from a different church came with a few church members and a few choir singers.

We would sit in the dining room, listen to the minister's sermon, and sing along with the choir. There were about ten guys who didn't attend. They played poker instead in the bunk room, and we could hear the jingling of money through the wall while the minister was delivering his sermon. It was very embarrassing. After church service, we played softball. The residents of Chatham and the area would drive by slowly. Many stopped their cars and looked at us—they had never seen Japanese before. An organized softball team in the city of Chatham challenged us to a ball game to be held at the ballpark in the city. We thought it might be fun and agreed. For three innings, we held the Chatham team scoreless. After the third inning, our pitcher couldn't continue, and another fellow stopped in to pitch.

[1:00]

MS: His balls were easy to hit. We lost the game by a score of 13 to 3. They were an organized team. We were just nine players out of 37 in the camp. The next day, there was an article in the *Chatham Daily* paper, written in a very nasty, sarcastic way that they sunk the Japs. I was working for a farmer named Mr. English at the time. Mr. English was boiling mad that the Chatham players wrote such a nasty article belittling the Japanese. After the sugar beet season was over in July, one Sunday the Dominion Sugar Company took us on their truck to a picnic at Rondeau Park on Lake Erie. We had a great time. In the next issue of the *Chatham Daily News*, there was a nasty article saying the Japs were using up our precious ration gas going on picnics. There were no more outings after that.

The army cook's meals were very good, but by midsummer, a lot of the residents of the camp began to crave Japanese food—rice, *okazu, udon*, et cetera. One of the residents, Jim Hirai, was a good cook. A request was made to install Jim as the cook. The army cook's contract was terminated and Jim became cook. We had Japanese food for the rest of the summer. Most of the farmers were very pleasant and easy to work for. During the wheat and barley harvest season, each farm would require 10 to 12 men. The farmers and wives would take turns going to their neighbors' farms and having a harvest bee. The men would help with the harvesting, and the wives would prepare lunch and supper. I was hired to work in five of these harvest bees. At noon and after work, we were all given lunch and supper. They laughed and talked and treated me as if I was one of them. I worked alone for three weeks for a refined English couple, Mr. and Mrs. Graham. They appeared to be in their fifties in age. They were very well-spoken, appeared to be well-educated. They took a liking to me—wanted to adopt me. They came several Sunday afternoons to take me for car rides and show me interesting places, using up their precious ration gas.

Gasoline was rationed during the war. Every car owner received a set number of gallons-gasoline coupons every month from the government. Each coupon was good for purchasing a set number of gallons of gas. If you used up your coupons, you couldn't buy any more gas

until new coupons were issued the following month. The Grahams asked me if I had a girlfriend in BC. I think maybe they wanted grandchildren. If I had taken them up on it, I would've inherited a farm. Last half of September and until the camp was closed up in the third week of October, I and three others worked picking apples and pears for another very nice farmer—Mr. and Mrs. English and their son John. They had a huge orchard. Half the orchard belonged to John. They had pigs roaming loose in the orchard, eating apples that had dropped to the ground. The pigs would scratch their backs on the bottom of the ladder and skew the widths. We threw apples at them to make them go away.

Our camp was on Mr. English's farm. The cook didn't make lunch for us, saying "you're working on this farm, you can come to the camp for lunch." But the orchards and camp were on opposite corners of the farm. It was quite a distance. To be back in one hour. we had to run to the camp, eat in a hurry, and run back to the orchard. Mr. English took pity on us and handed me the key to his car every noon saying, "Take the car." That's how nice he was. On the last Sunday before camp closed, Mr. and Mrs. English and John invited the four of us who worked on their farm to a chicken dinner and apple pie for dessert—pies made from apples that we picked. It was very nice of them. About a month before camp was to close, we were told that we were going to be sent to a road camp in Northern Ontario. I didn't want to go to Northern Ontario and a road camp.

[1:05]

MS: Masonita, one of the fellows who came from Surrey with George Takaoka and his brothers, said, "I'm going to put in an application to the B.C. Security Commission for a permit to go to Toronto. Maybe I could get a job driving a truck." The Takaoka brothers and I also put in applications. Seven of us received permission to go to Toronto. What a godsend. The rest in the camp were sent to Schreiber. We came to Toronto in the fourth week of October 1942. We were told that there were 12 other niseis in Toronto. We seven made it 19. We stayed at a small hotel at Yonge and Gerrard Street. I had $64 in my pocket. The next morning, after looking at the 'Help Wanted' ads in the paper we bought in the lobby, we started walking the streets. Day after day we walked. Nobody—no company—would hire us. Every day after supper, we walked the streets looking for a place to live. There were "room to let" signs in the windows of a lot of houses, but as soon as they opened the door and saw us, they closed the door in our faces.

After a week and a half, I found a job. I saw that a carpet factory on Bathurst Street near King Street had a 'Help Wanted' ad in the paper. I went there and was told by a man in a suit and tie to start work at 8:00 AM tomorrow morning. The next morning, I went there at 7:30 AM and was standing by the punch clock. The same man in the suit came out of the office

and asked me, “Are you Japanese?” I answered, “Yes, I’m Japanese Canadian.” He said, “The management doesn’t mind if you’re Japanese, but the employees are protesting. They don’t want a Jap working with them. I’m sorry, but we can’t hire you.” I was out on the street again.

My money was getting low. At the camp in Chatham, when we were told that we were being sent to Schreiber, I went to Eaton’s store in Chatham and bought a warm winter coat, hat, scarf, gloves, winter boots, et cetera. It took a big chunk out of my money. We were eating the cheapest meals in the restaurants. I was beginning to wish I had those loaves of homemade bread and canned tomatoes that Hastings Park gave us to eat on the train. After two weeks, George and his brother Harry found jobs in a glue factory. I went there the next morning hoping I might be hired too. I didn’t like the idea of working in a glue factory, but I had to get a job. I was down to my last $10. They hired me. I had a job. They manufactured wallpaper paste, envelope and stamp glue, glue for sticking curtains, linoleum, floor tile cement, et cetera. All the glues and pastes were made from vegetable products such as flour, cornmeal, starch, et cetera. So, it wasn’t bad—a little dusty, but all dry vegetable dust. We still didn’t have a place to live. We were still living in the hotel. We walked the streets every day after supper. It was getting colder and colder. It was the middle of November. I had my driver’s license from BC, so we decided to get a U-drive and drive up and down the streets. We would cover more streets. It worked. A Ukrainian lady rented us a third-floor room. George, Harry and I moved in. Finally, we had a place to come home to.

In the room there was a double bed and a cot, a small table, and two chairs. Nothing else—no place to cook. We went out and purchased a two-burner electric hot plate, two-way electric plug, two pails (one for clean water, one for salt water), two small pots, and a fry pan. We plugged the two-way electric plug into the light socket on the wall and plugged in our hot plate. We filled the clean water pail from the bathtub faucet on the second floor, dumped the slop water into the toilet bowl. It was very slow cooking, but we managed. We didn’t cook anything fancy. Eaton’s had a grocery department in the basement. I used to go there for herring for *okazu* and sauerkraut for tsukemono. After a few days, the landlord came up to our room and gave us the dickens. We were burning out too many fuses.

[1:10]

MS: He said to us, “don’t switch both burners on the hot plate at the same time. Use one burner at a time.” We had to finish cooking the rice or boiling the potatoes, then fry fish or meat, then boil water for tea. It took a long time to cook, eat, and do the dishes. When I got my first paycheck, I felt rich. I decided to go to a good restaurant for a decent meal. I went to a large Chinese restaurant by the city hall on Elizabeth Street. I sat at the table. Five Chinese

waiters just stood by the kitchen door looking at me but wouldn't come to serve me. I sat for about 15 minutes—no service. I walked out, went to a Greek restaurant, had a roast beef dinner and apple pie à la mode for dessert, and smiling waitress waited on me.

About two weeks after we moved into our room, the landlady came up to our room. She said, [turning page] "You boys use too much hot water. The hot water tank is always cold." All three of us were taking a bath every night. She said, "there's a public bath on Sumach Street. Ten cents a bath. Go there." Sumach Street was five blocks away. The next night we went there. The place was so filthy that even after the bath, we didn't feel clean. We just had sponge baths after that. In April 1943, six months after I came to Toronto, the president of the glue factory came to me and said, "You have a couple of visitors in my office. Shut down your machine and go and meet them. Take your time." I was wondering who would come to the president's office to see me. It was Mr. and Mrs. Harold English from Chatham—the kind people who gave us a chicken dinner on our last Sunday at the Chatham camp.

They said they came to Toronto for three days and dropped in to see how I was making out. We talked for about 15 minutes. It was very kind and thoughtful of them to go out of their way like that, and for them to think of me. They and their son John were very refined, friendly people. They spoke very highly of me to the president of the glue company. A couple of days later, I wrote to Mr. and Mrs. English and thanked them for their thoughtfulness and kindness—for taking the time to come and see me and to check to see how I was making out. I still don't know how they found out where I was working. From 1943, more and more *niseis* came to Toronto—girls as well as boys—and the majority of the girls took employment as live-in housegirls. Housework was relatively easy to find, and the girls took these jobs as a stepping stone. They received three meals a day, a nice room of their own to sleep in. It enabled them to leisurely look for more desirable permanent jobs, or take business and typing courses. We formed a Nisei Young People's Club at the Metropolitan United Church. Thursdays was a day off for girls doing housework, so to accommodate them, we assembled on Thursday nights in the recreation building of the Metropolitan United Church at Church and Shuter Streets.

In the recreation building, there was a large social room with tables and chairs. There was a chapel, a four-lane bowling alley, and a badminton court. Fred Sasaki was president. Paul Oshino's sister, Heidi Oni, was secretary. Every Saturday night, I noticed more and more new girls. There were lots of girls coming to Toronto. We played table games and floor games. We had sing-alongs, storytelling, et cetera. At every assembly, a fellow named Dave Arikado brought his portable record player and MPA polka music records. He taught us polka dancing. We danced round and around the room—um-pa, um-pa, um-pa-pa, um-pa, um-pa, um-pa-pa. I think Dave was attending a polka dance club. We also had dance nights

when we did jitterbug dancing and popular dancing. After Young People's, going home from Young People's, we were chatting and laughing. We all walked to the streetcar stops.

[01:15]

MS: We all met new people, made new friends at our Christmas parties. Two years in a row, Koto Adachi read to us *The Nutcracker Suite*. She was very good at reading it. Every October we had a Sadie Hawkins Dance Night. That's a dance where the girls date the boys. I used to wait for a girl to date me. We held a costume dance one year. We all went to the dance dressed in all kinds of nice costumes. I went dressed like a samurai. My brother Roy went in diapers, dressed like a baby.

We held these special dances at the YWCA on Gerrard Street near Greenwood Avenue. We held our regular dances at the badminton court in the Metropolitan United Recreation Building. In those days, we took the girls out on dates to the movies and dances by streetcar. The girls wore nice dresses. We walked to the streetcar stops. Many of us bought badminton rackets, and we played badminton in the badminton court. [turning page] That's where I met my late wife, Rose. She was a very good badminton player, and she caught my eye. When she first came to Toronto, she took a light housekeeping job, looked after two small children—a boy and a girl—while she studied a typing course. When I met her, she was working at Mutual Benefit Insurance Company on University Avenue.

Two years in a row in July, Young People's went on a cruise on the *Cayuga* across Lake Ontario and picnicked—one year at Christin Heights on the Kenogami River, and one year at Port Severin. We played games. Both years ended with a softball game, girls against the boys. The boys had to be left-handed. The girls brought delicious lunches. It was sure nice of them. We cruised home in the moonlight, the warm wind in our hair. There was a dance floor below, but most of us were on deck. A lot were in pairs, many holding hands. Some were sitting on the benches, necking. A lot of romances started in those days.

It took the boat three hours to cruise home across the lake, and we were young. I think it was Christmas 1944—we had a Christmas dance in the recreation hall at the Carlton United Church. The room was packed. There were a lot of *niseis* in Toronto by that time. I went up to a lot of girls, introduced myself, asked for the dance. I think most of the guys and girls were strangers to each other, but we all had a great time. It was very cold that night. After the dance, George, Harry, and I walked home. It took us about 40 minutes. When we got home to our room on the third floor, my left ear was stinging. I said to George, "There's something wrong with my left ear." He took a look and said, "Your ear is frozen. It's all white." I went to rub it and he said, "Don't touch it. You might break it off. It could crack." I

held a cold, wet towel against it. I didn't know that you could freeze parts of your body. It sure used to get cold in those days. The first chance I got, I went to Eaton's and bought a pair of earmuffs. In September 1944, I took a one-month leave from work and went to Tashme to visit my folks. It was sure great to see my folks again. I think it was also in 1944 that the Japanese Red Cross sent gifts of miso and shoyu to the Japanese in Canada. A few prominent *niseis* organized a get-together meeting in the recreation hall at the Carlton United Church. They got up on stage and tried to persuade us not to accept the misu- Miso and shoyu. They said if we do, there would be nasty write-ups in the papers that the Japs were accepting gifts from the Japanese government. Many in the audience argued and reasoned that the miso and shoyu were being sent by the Japanese Red Cross, not the government. There was nothing wrong in accepting it. Those who organized the meeting were overruled. The miso and shoyu were distributed at the Church of All Nations at Anna and Queen Streets. I went to get my share. After years of flavoring my okazu with salt and vinegar, the shoyu and sugar were delicious.
MS: That's the end of what I wrote.
LU: Wonderful.
MS: Is that all right?
LU: Yeah, that was great. I didn't know you used salt and vinegar to flavor.
MS: Yeah, when we were batching and cooking on our plate, all our cousins—we used salt and vinegar. And then when Japan sent us the shoyu—oh, did it taste good. We didn't get very much.

[1:20]

LU: No, just a little bit?
MS: Yeah. But everybody in Canada got it. Maybe the States too, I don't know. But they gave us a little bit each.
LU: Mm-hm. Now, you mentioned that you went hops picking with George?
MS: Yeah.
LU: Why would you go hops picking?
MS: We used to go every September. The hop picking season was from the third week in August to the end of September. And a lot of Japanese used to go hop picking for extra money. It was money for buying clothes for the students- For their children, school children, you know. That's what my mother and father spent the money for—buying our clothes and things for going to school. The whole family used to go pick hops. So we used to go to school about two weeks late every September. A lot of families- They had camps—rows and rows of cabins to live in. We cooked in there. Whole families were living in each cabin.
LU: And what were the hops used for?

MS: Hops were used for making beer.
MS: It was nothing to it. You just picked the hops off the branches into a basket.
LU: Mm-hm. Was it long hours? Were you there all day long?
MS: Oh yeah. We used to start early in the morning and pick until dark. The more you picked, the more you make. They paid us by the pound—the pound that we picked. So, the more you picked, the more you made. And everybody used to pick, even the kids. That at was like pocket money and money for buying school clothes.
LU: How many people were in your family? I know it's a very big family.
MS: There were ten of us. Seven boys and three girls, and mother and father—so there's' twelve actually.
LU: And where do you fall in the line?
MS: I'm number four. Two girls- Yeah, number four. Roy my younger brother was five under me. Ross was number six. Hisako was number two.
LU: And I've heard before that your family is a very musical family, when you were growing up.
MS: Yeah, my older sister took singing lessons in BC. She was like an opera singer. And they both studied the piano. Dad bought a piano, and we, Ritsu and Hisako used to take piano lessons. Roy was very good at singing. I mean, he was good at playing the mouth organ.
LU: Oh wow. Did you play any instruments?
MS: No, we couldn't afford to give us lessons. You had to pay for an instructor, and it cost money, so.
LU: Would you ever go mushroom picking—matsutake?
MS: Yeah, in the mountains.
LU: Yeah, tell me about that.
MS: We didn't go that often. I might've went about three times, mushroom picking with my cousins from Japan, you know. We had to go quite a distance—about 10 or 15 miles into the mountains, so we didn't go very often. But we just walked through the woods. I don't know- For some reason, they knew where the mushrooms would be, could be. You had to hunt around, look around, dig under the leaves and everything and look for them, you know. Once anybody found mushrooms, they wouldn't tell anybody else where they found them, because they wanted to go back there and pick mushrooms again.

[01:25]

They're very difficult to find. It takes a long time to find them.
LU: Why are they so difficult to find?
MS: Well, they grow under the leaves and everything in, in certain places they grow. They don't go everywhere in the mountain. And they don't want others to find them because, uh,

then everybody will go and pick, pick the mushrooms. There will be no more mountain-Mushrooms the next time they go.
LU: Do these mushrooms taste different? Is that why they're such a commodity?
MS: Well, they're mushrooms. Mushrooms, [chuckles] but uh, you have to know which are mushrooms and which are not. 'Cause if you eat the wrong thing, you could be poisoned.
LU: How do you know what's the difference?
MS: I don't know how they did, but my dad used to know. He would go through every, every mushroom, check it carefully, make sure it's a mushroom, nothing else. I guess there are other things that look similar to mushrooms.
LU: I don't know. And when you went, um, mushroom picking, would you only go for the one day or-
MS: Yeah, just a day. Just for the afternoon or so, you know.
LU: And how long would it take you to walk there, into the mountains?
MS: Well, there were no mushrooms around our house. We had to go about 15 miles into the mountains, you know, so you drive as far as you can go into the mountains and walk the rest of the way up and down in the mountains, you know?
LU: And how many would you be able to gather?
MS: Oh, you might fill a little basket or a bag or something, you know. You couldn't find very much. Mushrooms are very scarce.
LU: Mm-hm. That's interesting. Is there a certain season on when to go mushroom picking?
MS: Yeah. Yeah, there is.
LU: Do you know anything about when to go?
MS: No, I don't. I don't know when it is. I think it's in the autumn that you go.
LU: That's interesting.
MS: Yeah. We didn't do very much mushroom picking. I don't know that much about it.
LU: Mm-hm. And what about after, um, you visited your family in Tashme when you were in Toronto?
MS: Yeah.
LU: During the war years, were you able to correspond with them or was it difficult?
MS: Oh, yes. We wrote. They were in Tashme. I was in Toronto. And I used to write to them. I used to write in kanji too, Japanese, you know.
LU: Really?
MS: Yeah. But once they came to Toronto, I didn't have to write anymore, so I forgot all my Japanese kanji. I can't read or write kanji anymore. Forgot it all.
LU: When you spoke to your parents, would you speak to them in Japanese, or did they understand English?
MS: Oh, Japanese.
LU: Did they learn how to speak English?

MS: My dad used to speak English. He studied English.
LU: Do you know where he studied English?
MS: Yeah. When he first came to Toronto, his idea was to go to the States. So he got a passport to go to the States, and he went to the border. And the, uh, whoever was in charge at the border looked at his passport and said, "This is made out to Mr. Arata[?], not Shin." You know, you could read the names- Atarashi Shin or Arata. Whoever made the passport wrote Arata[?] instead of Shin. And they wouldn't let him go through the border. They said, "This passport's not yours. This is Mr. Arata's passport." Dad couldn't go to the States. So I think, like my mother- The way my mother told me, it came to his head, "oh, to get along and to succeed in Canada, you have to know English." So he went back to Vancouver—he was trying to cross at Seattle—so he went back to Vancouver and got a job as a houseboy, you know, working in a rich English family's house. And there he would have to speak English from morning to night. So he learned English, and he went to school, night school I think, to study English. And living there as a houseboy, he also learned how to cook and roast turkey, make pies and cakes and things, puddings. He learned how to cook English food. So he became very good at it.
LU: Mm-hm.
MS: Yeah. And he studied English so he could read and write English, my father.

[1:30]

MS: He started a logging and lumbermill business. And Mr. Whiting, a friend, he kept the books. He advised my father to register an English name, you know, and they looked better on the letterheads company name. And Mr. Whiting's second name was Sidney. Sidney. So he, he, he told my dad, "Use Sidney for your name." So my dad register- Yeah, he registered the name Sidney, and he became, uh, Sidney Zentaro Shin. And he studied English, he could speak and write English quite fluently. He was very good at it. He used to write very good English letters. Yeah. Business letters, you know. And he used to speak English.
LU: So, when you would talk to him at home-
MS: Oh, in Japanese.
LU: Oh, in Japanese though.
MS: Yeah.
LU: And when did he come to Canada? From Japan. How old was he?
MS: He, he came around 19- It'd been during the First World War. I think he came around 19- Uh, 1912 or thereabouts, 1912, 1913 and 14, thereabouts. He came to Canada.
LU: Mm-hm. And how old was he at that time? Do you know? When he was born?
MS: I think he was 19 or so. Not very old.
LU: Mm-hm.No. And how did he meet your mother?

MS: Oh, they lived in the same village.
LU: In Japan?
MS: Yeah. They grew up in the same village in Japan. After he came to Canada, established himself, he wrote back and, uh, married my mother. My mother came—he didn't go to marry her to Japan. They married by—what do you call it? You know, by-
LU: By mail.
MS: Like, it wasn't *shashin kekkon* [picture bride], because they knew each other. But he was here in Canada, she was in Japan. They married. I don't know how they do it in Japanese, but, in those days, a lot of people got married that way. They didn't get together and have a church wedding.
LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow. So did your mother ever talk about, um, leaving Japan and how she felt coming to Canada? Was she-
MS: No, she never, never talked about that, you know, but- A friend married *shashin kekkon*, you know, a picture wedding. My mother's friend in Japan, a lady, married a man in BC and they were strangers, and they kind of- They didn't know what each other looked like. And this lady came with my mother on the boat, you know, together. My mother says, on the boat, she used to say her, her friend, Mrs. Makimoto, and my mother says she used to keep saying, "I wonder how I'm gonna know my husband when we land in Vancouver." She says, she doesn't know what he look like, you know? She said, "How will I which is my husband?" There were quite a few wives, picture, you know, wives on the boat, about half a dozen of them. And so, they figured there would be half a dozen men on the dock in Vancouver, waiting for their wives on the boat dock. Mrs. Makimoto used to say, "I wonder how I'll know my husband when we dock?" [laughs]
LU: I wonder how they found each other.
MS: Well, my mother said, "He'll be standing with my husband, so we'll know right away."
LU: Oh my.
MS: Yeah. There were lots of picture weddings in those days.
LU: Mm-hm. That's very different.
MS: Mm-hm.
LU: Yeah. I wonder, did they ever mention, um, how long the boat ride was to go from Canada to Japan?
MS: Yeah, in those days, it took about three weeks.
LU: Oh, wow.
MS: Yeah, we went to Japan in 1930. It took two weeks. Two weeks for the boat to go from Vancouver to Yokohama.

[1:35]

LU: And do you remember the boat ride?
MS: Oh, yeah.
LU: And what was it like being on the boat for that long?
MS: Oh, well, good for us, and no problem for us kids. My mother was seasick all the way though. But, uh, we used to run around all over the boat. Yeah.
LU: And where would you sleep? Where were-
MS: We had a- It's like a, you know, like we had bedrooms, bedrooms. Uh, the wealthy ones had, you know, places that looked like apartments, and the cheaper ones, down the third class was bunk beds, you know, lower bed and an upper bed. Rows and rows of those beds in one room. And, uh, there might be about 20 sleeping in one room, all on the bunk beds, you know.
LU: And what would you do for privacy? Were there washrooms that you could go to, or-
MS: Well, it's like the men- There was a men's bedroom and a ladies' bedroom. And there's washrooms in, in each place, I guess. Yeah.
LU: Mm-hm. And what about for meals? Were-
MS: Meals. We went to the meal- The dining room to eat.
LU: And was it Japanese food or-
MS: Yeah, Japanese food. Japanese boats, yeah.
LU: Oh, wow. I wonder if it would've been expensive.
MS: I don't know what it cost. That, that, I don't know. I was a child, so. But we used to run around all over the boat. Yeah. We used to go to the captain's cabin and play in there. Captain didn't mind. Yeah.
LU: Oh, wow. Yeah. And so who went back to Japan?
MS: Well, another family went with us when I was nine. I was nine years old. We went back to Japan, the whole family. We stayed there for three months, and another family went with us, you know, so we had,- I had friends. There's two boys in the other family and two girls. So my sister had friends, and I had friends.
LU: Was it just you and your sister that went back?
MS: No, the whole family went.
LU: So I guess some of the siblings though, wouldn't have been born yet.
MS: No, it was, there were five of us.
LU: Five at that time.
MS: Five of us went. Yeah.
LU: And who did you stay with when you went to Japan?
MS: Oh, with grandmother. My mother's mother, you know, grandmother. Yeah. And all the relatives were there—cousins and uncles. And my mother's mother and father were there in the same village, you know?
LU: Mm-hm. What was your mother's maiden last name?

MS: Mother's name was, uh, Ogura. Ogura, yeah.
LU: Oh, that's interesting. And what, what part of Japan was that from?
MS: We're from, uh, uh, Kagoshima, you know, the Sakurajima, the one that's, uh, erupting all the time, fire, flame and smoke coming out the mountain all the time. Sakurajima in southern Japan.
LU: Mm-hmm.
MS: Near there, from- Near city of Kokubu. We could see the mount- The volcano there erupt, the fire, smoke coming all the time. It's just something like Center Island from Toronto, little further than Center Island. But, uh, there's water in between, ocean in between, you know. And when the wind blew towards the village, the white ashes used to cover our village, the white ashes from the mountain. You know, it's a flame and smoke coming out continually, nonstop.
LU: Mm-hm.
MS: Yeah. One day that's gonna erupt.
LU: One day. Yeah.
MS: Yeah. And there were six hot springs within a half-mile drive from our house. Lots of hot springs.
LU: Did you go?
MS: I think there were 18 hot springs altogether in the area. You know, within a two, three hour drive, but there were six in about- Within about a half-hour drive.
LU: Did you go to the hot springs?
MS: Oh, yes. We went to a lot of hot springs.
LU: What was it like?
MS: Oh, it's really good. You can- The water's really warm, you know, you go sit right in, right up to your neck. Yeah.
LU: Were there a lot of people using the hot springs?
MS: A lot of people there when you go, yeah.

[1:40]

MS: It's good for you, too. I don't know what it does for you, but they keep telling you it's good for you.
LU: I heard the Japanese monkeys go into the hot springs as well.
MS: Monkeys. Yeah, there's monkeys around there, yeah.
LU: Did you see them?
MS: No, I didn't see any, but there are monkeys in the area, yeah.
LU: That would be interesting, having a bath with a monkey.
MS: Yeah.

LU: What about afterwards, when you're in Toronto, and after the war ended, where were you working after the glue factory?
MS: Oh, that glue factory, there's no chance of advancement, you know. You couldn't advance, you couldn't better yourself. The work you were doing, you'd be doing it for the rest of your life. And I wanted to advance a little bit and get better job, better pay, wages, you know? So, they needed a station engineer there, so I studied the station engineer's course, went to the Parliament building and wrote my exam, got my engineer's certificate. So I was an engineer there, but I couldn't advance. It was such a small border, and I couldn't increase my wages. So I kept looking in the papers. There was a 'Help Wanted' ad by the General Electric company, and General Electric is a big- One of the biggest companies in Canada. So, I thought, "oh, I'll try this company." I applied for the job in the paper, and I went for the interview, and they hired me. But the- I found at General Electric, you do one job, and there's a supervisor above you, and then a foreman, and then a manager, and so on, you know, above you. And everybody's in a class. To get an increase in wages, you had to be promoted to a higher class, and then you'll get a higher wage. And if you want higher wage than that, you have to get promoted to a class above that. And it'll take years and years and years; not much chance of getting advancement, you know. So I kept looking for a better job, you know, where I could advance myself and get better pay. And I noticed an ad, I didn't know, it was a small company; it was a food manufac- Food processing company. They made canned goods, bottled goods, so on. Food, you know? So I thought, "this might be alright." I applied and I got hired. And it was a fa- A small family company, a man and his wife's brother were running the company. It was Germans, you know? But they were into all kinds of different kinds of foods: canned foods, bottled foods, and instant foods, you know, all kinds of different kinds of foods. Salad dressing, canned foods, bottled foods, dehydrated foods, instant foods, maraschino cherries, peanut butter, all kind of food products. And I thought, "gee, they might be alright." So I applied for the job and they hired me. It turned out, instead of doing on job I became the, what do you call it? There's a word for that. Well, like a maintenance, mechanic man. I did the electrical work, the mechanical work, the hydro work; I did everything. All the repair work, I kept all the machinery running, I kept all the air conditions running, I kept the cold storage room operating, I repaired everything, you know? And all the production machines, I looked after them, kept them running.

[01:45]

MS: And every time I asked for a raise, they gave me a raise. And it was four times—or was it five times?—they gave me a raise without me asking. My wages kept going up, up, up. So I kept going to night school, studying mechanical work, machine shop work, welding, electrical work; I kept studying and every time I studied, I got a raise. [laughs] So that's

where I worked, yeah. I was busy, though. No time to take it easy. Yeah.
LU: And why did they give you raises without you asking for them?
MS: Machine used to break down, production machine. If the machine breaks down, they can't get the order out. You know, they have to get an order out for salad dressing- They made 55 different kinds of dressings, all bottled. And they had an order and have to ship the order by a certain date, make sure the customer gets it by a certain date. And the machine breaks down, they can't honour the order, the order can't get- It doesn't go out. So then they don't get paid. And I used to keep the machines running. And quite often a machine used to break down; I would repair it right away and have it running within 15 minutes to half an hour. So the production would get finished. And the order got out, they gave me a raise. [laughs]
LU: Mm-hm. And how did you know the machines were going to break down?
MS: Pardon?
LU: How did you know the machines were going to break down?
MS: Once the machine's operating, I can figure out what's gonna break, you know? I could figure it out, say "this part doesn't look very good, it's gonna break." So I would either order or make a new part for that machine, keep it in the workshop, keep it on the shelf. So I had all kinds of parts on the shelves for different machines. And sure enough, that part would break. [laughs] And I'd get it going again within half an hour or so, and for that it keeps going, you know. Yeah.
LU: And did you stay there until retirement?
MS: Yeah, so I stayed there 'till retirement. I kept getting raises until I retired. [chuckles] I said, "well, I've worked enough." So I quit.
LU: Mm-hm.
MS: And I wanted to go to Japan, you know. The karaoke club went to Japan, and I wanted to- My wife and I decided we'd go with them. So we retired. [laughs]
LU: And what year was that?
MS: Hm?
LU: What year was that?
MS: That was 1987. 1987, That's 30 years ag- No, twenty-
LU: 24 years ago.
MS: 25 years ago. Yeah. And we went to Japan five times with the karaoke club. The first time they went, we went with them.
LU: Was that the first time in 1987?
MS: That's the first time we went. And then every two, three years, we went to Japan with the Karaoke Club. And the last time we went, we went to Okinawa. So, we toured Okinawa and we toured every part of Japan. Everywhere we went, we sang with them, with the Karaoke Club in Japan, had parties with them. I sang with the Tokyo Club two times. And,

well, all these karaoke clubs in Japan, you know?
LU: Mm-hmm.
MS: And we toured all over Japan. Every part of Japan. Interesting part. And we went to Saddle Island, Saitama—all over. We went to the NHK zipper company. You know, the officials of a zipper company knew my brother, my brother Roy. He was the head of the karaoke club. And he knew my brother's business partner.

[01:50]

MS: And, uh, a tour of the zipper company, oh it was amazing how they make zippers. Yeah. Oh, all automatic machines. Nobody operating machines. Machines are all rows and rows and rows of machines. About 15 machines in one room. They're all going, and zippers are flying out. Nobody's around there, nobody's looking at them. Nobody watching the machine, automatically operating on their own. Mm-hmm. And, uh, they make the tiny zippers for very fine dresses up, the huge zippers for the astronaut suits, you know, and so on. All kinds of zippers, it was amazing. Yeah. And we went to Sony, Sony company, Panasonic Company, where they make the Sony, the TVs and things. We went to all the companies.
LU: Did you ever travel to BC?
MS: BC? Yeah, I went three times to BC. Mm-hmm. I went back to where we were born, you know.
LU: When was the first time you went back?
MS: That's after I retired at, uh, 1980, I think. In 1990. We went to BC first time. Um, I still have friends there in BC, you know, friends that we grew up with.
LU: Were you able to keep in touch over the years?
MS: Oh, yeah. Yeah.
LU: And what was it like going back to BC? Did it look the same? Was it very different?
MS: No, it's—the town is different. Uh, no more Japanese. And, uh, the farms are all weed, nothing but weeds. High tall grass growing, and the trees are going into the farms, nobody looking after them. And the houses are all gone. No more houses. All the houses were built on wood foundation, wood posts, you know, they buried posts in the ground, uh, upright. And then they built the houses on top of the posts, you see? And they all rotted. Once they rot, the houses tumble over. So there's nothing there. Just grass.
LU: Wow.
MS: So all the Japanese houses are gone? Mm-hmm.
LU: Yeah. It must be very different.
MS: Yeah, it's very different. Yeah. Mm-hmm. The new people, they don't farm. That's to the laborers, you know? They don't like working on it the way we did.
LU: Mm-hmm. So who's working on those farms now?
MS: Pardon?

LU: Do you know who's working on those farms now?
MS: There's no more farms. There's the weeds growing.
LU: It's just open fields.
MS: Open fields, grass is going waist high. Oh, grass all over. Yeah. And all the fruit trees are gone. We, we had all those fruit trees—they're all gone. None of them standing anymore. Walnut tree was still there. The rest are all gone.
LU: Mm-hmm. And when your family had to move to Tashme, did—were they able to sell their farm or was it confiscated?
MS: Confiscated.
LU: Did they receive any compensation for it?
MS: No, I think they got about a thousand, a thousand dollars or something. Not very much.
LU: Oh wow
MS: $1,100, I think. [train goes by]
LU: Do you mind saying that again? I don't know that the tape got it…
MS: Pardon?
LU: Do you mind saying that again?
MS: It's just what I was saying going on there.
LU: Yeah. The train just went by.
MS: Oh I didn't know what I was saying was all going on there. [points to the camera]
MS: The houses are all gone.
LU: Yeah. And they were only compensated about $1,100.
MS: Well, I don't know how much everybody got, but we didn't get very much.
LU: No. Do you know if your family expected to go back to the farm?
MS: No. No, no. Nobody will go back now. Mm-hmm. We all have our own professions here in Toronto.
LU: But what about when your family was in Tashme? Did they ever say that they were hoping to go back home?
MS: Oh, at that time, I imagine they hoped to go back. Yeah.
LU: Yeah. And did they come out to Toronto afterwards or—
MS: Yeah, they—like, I was in Toronto, and, uh, my dad wrote to me and asked me to find a place for them to go there, you know, so I found a place in Guelph. A farm—a dairy farm in Guelph.

[01:55]

MS: So my, my dad went there with the family, but, uh, in Guelph, there's no high school close by. I inquired about high school for the, my younger brothers to go to. And the farmer says—no, there's no high school here. He says, "What do you have to go to high school for?" the farmer says.

LU: Oh my.
MS: So, uh, we decided, no, just no good staying in Guelph. Dad says, "find a house in Toronto." You know, we moved to Toronto. So my oldest brother and I look for a house. We purchased a house, and they came to Toronto right away.
LU: And where was the house located?
MS: The house was on Gerrard Street.
LU: Oh, yeah.
MS: And near—near quite close to Yonge Street. Gerrard and Sherbourne. So, before the summer—before the September—they came to Toronto, so the boys could start high school right away.
LU: And were your parents working, or were they retired by that point?
MS: No, my, my dad, uh, got a job where I was working. I got him a job where I was working. He worked there for about a year, and then he quit.
LU: And what was he doing there then. He purchased a house next door and rented out rooms. And, uh, I don't know how much he made, but he purchased another house—a third house—rented out rooms there too. He was renting out rooms in three houses.
LU: Oh, wow.
MS: And then he, uh, we, uh, rented a piece, we rented two acres at a farm in Guelph, no near Brampton. And we grew *daikon* and *napa* there, and my dad started a *daikon* business. We—he was selling fresh *daikon* and *napa*. And, uh, but most of it we pickled, you know, and he started selling *takuan and nappa-zuke*. And he made a little bit of money that way. And, uh, with the rooms rented out, he made enough to live on.
LU: And?
MS: I purchased a house in the suburbs—you know, my wife and I, when I married—and, uh, there was a large backyard and a nice woodland in the back. And my dad used to come there, and he used to envy us, say "Oh, I wish I had a backyard like that," he'd say. You know, he could grow flowers. My dad liked to grow flowers—*kiku* (chrysanthemums). And he used to grow chrysanthemums and get and — enter contests at the Cultural Centre—Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. He used to display his *kiku* there, and he'd win prizes.
LU: Wow.
MS: He used to win prizes, you know, when he was doing that on Gerrard Street. But the backyard was very small—not much, much area to grow flowers. So he wanted, uh, a house like the one my wife and I bought—with a big backyard.
LU: Mm-hmm.
MS: So he sold all his three houses and bought a house in the suburbs, you know, and he started to grow chrysanthemums as a hobby.
LU: Yeah. Just going to switch the tape.
MS: Was it? You gonna do some more?

LU: Oh, just a couple more questions. [laughs]
MS: How, how, how, how—how many minutes on that, one of those?
LU: Um— sixty
[laughs]
MS: One Hour?
LU: Mm-hmm.
MS: Oh, is that DVD? That's not DVD.
LU: Okay.
MS: Does that, does that play?
LU: Uh, no. They're mini tapes, but then I transferred them over onto a DVD.
MS: Oh, you transferred that to DVD?
LU: Mm-hmm.
MS: Yeah.
LU: So, was your family always part of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre when it first started?
MS: Oh yes. Yeah. My father and my brother Roy, they really, uh—you know, what do you call it… I can't think of the words. They really put in a lot of effort and time into the Cultural Centre.

[02:00]

MS: And the Culture Center. And my younger brother Roy was president of the Culture Center for a couple years. Yeah. He was one of the presidents.
LU: Oh, wow.
MS: And my dad, he started the Buddhist church. He looked around for— they used to have the Buddhist church in a house. They purchased a house and used that as a church. And my dad was looking around for a church to purchase and use as a Buddhist church. But then they decided to build, so my dad was at the forefront building the church. He really worked hard building that Buddhist church on Bathurst Street.
LU: When was that church built? What year was that?
MS: That was way, way back in the early fifties. About 1952 or thereabouts. 1952, 1953. I think it was about that time because the Emperor's brothers came, and I drove them. My car was used as one of the cars to drive them to Niagara Falls after they finished in Toronto. They were here in Toronto a couple days. They went to the States and before going, they went to Niagara Falls for a day or two, and we drove them there, you know.
LU: Oh, wow.
MS: We took pictures at Niagara Falls. I remember, I think it was around 1952 or '53. Yeah. They didn't have the church at that time. No, they didn't have the church yet at that time. But we held a reception at a building on University Avenue near the museum. I think it was

a room in the museum they used for the reception with the prince and his wife. Yeah, because I drove them to Niagara Falls.
LU: Oh, wow. It'd be much different now.
MS: Yeah.
LU: They would come with security guards and—
MS: Yeah.
LU: Oh, wow. Were you able to speak with them?
MS: I didn't. My father did, not me.
LU: Wow.
MS: I'm not a Buddhist, I'm United Church, but since my father was the head of the church and he asked me to drive them—I had a car, so—
LU: Yeah. What kind of car did you have then?
MS: Oh, it was a Ford.
LU: Were Japanese cars in Canada yet at that time?
MS: No, no Japanese cars at that time.
LU: Do you know when they started coming over?
MS: I think it was in the seventies. Yeah, in the seventies, I think. The Toyota cars.
LU: Hmm. And what about the Cultural Centre? What do you remember about it back when it was at its old location?
MS: Yeah, the Cultural Centre. I didn't get involved—I was too busy working—but my dad and my younger brother Roy, they were involved in the Culture Centre. They worked towards it.
LU: Wow. Were there any other stories that you can think of that you'd like to share?

[02:05]

MS: Well, when I retired, my wife was very interested in *odori*, you know, so she joined the HiFuMi Stepper Odori Club. The odori club started about the time I retired, and we used to go all over Metro performing dances. We used to dance at City Hall and Harbourfront every year. We danced at all the town centers: Scarborough Town Centre, Mississauga, and head offices like Canadian Bank of Commerce head office, Bell Telephone head office, that place at, uh, Eglington and Don Mills – IBM it is – IBM head office. We danced in a lot of head offices and senior homes. I can't name all the senior homes, but there were two or three on Markham Road, several in the West End. We, the HiFuMi Steppers, used to go and dance in all these places and entertain the people, residents in the senior homes. We went to Harbourfront every year, City Hall, Mississauga City Hall, Scarborough City Hall.
LU: And what kind of dance was it?
MS: Japanese dance, *odori*. And I used to play the music for them. My car was used to

transport them. I took the tape player machine with me and the microphone. Five girls traveled in my car, five in another. There were about 15 girls altogether. We called it HiFuMi Steppers.
LU: Was that with Mrs. Uno?
MS: Yeah, Sumi Uno was the leader.
LU: Oh, wow.
MS: While the girls were changing costumes, I would get up and sing.
LU: You would sing?
MS: Keep them entertained, yeah. I played big band music on the tapes to keep the audience occupied.
LU: Were you the only gentleman that went around with them?
MS: No, another man. I can't think of his name. There were two other cars.
LU: Did the ladies not drive during that time?
MS: No. There were a few ladies who drove, but they didn't.
LU: Were they allowed to drive the car?
MS: I don't know. I guess some had licenses. I'm not sure. But we did the driving, the husbands, you know.
LU: Oh, wow. Were there any other activities that you would do? Did you ever play badminton or—
MS: Oh yes, we played badminton at the Young People's group. We used to play badminton.
LU: Would you play badminton at the Cultural Centre?
MS: No, no badminton club at the Centre.
LU: Where would you play?
MS: At the Metropolitan United Church with the Young People's, way back in the forties.
LU: Is that where you would play ping pong as well?
MS: No, ping pong—we play ping pong at the Momiji right now. We play every Wednesday night.
LU: And what about card games? Did you ever play card games?

[02:10]

MS: No, I don't play card games. A lot of people do, bingo and card games, but I don't.
LU: Mm-hmm.
MS: I used to, when I was single, way back when we first came to Toronto. We had nothing to do, so we used to get together and play cards.
LU: Would it be Japanese card games?
MS: Yeah. Like poker games, and rummy.
LU: And what other activities would you do when you were just coming out to Toronto and

still single?
MS: We used to play tennis. Tennis and we used to go skating in the winter—outdoor skating when there was ice, like at Riverdale.
LU: And where would you-
MS: We used to go bowling. There was a bowling alley at Maple Leaf Gardens. We used to go bowling there and bowling at Spadina and Carlton, or College—there was a bowling alley there. That was way, way back.
LU: When you were in Toronto in the forties, was it very difficult to find other Japanese people?
MS: Yes. We used to get together, young people, at Metropolitan United Church. That's where we got together. We had concerts at the Ukrainian Hall on Bathurst Street—Bathurst and Dundas. Song concerts, singers would get on stage and sing. We played records at that time—there were no tapes, just records.
LU: Would it be a dance as well?
MS: Yes, we used to have dances too.
LU: Anything else that you remember about those early days?
MS: Yes. One thing that amuses me when I look at my photo albums—we have pictures taken at the Zoo, Centre Island, Sunnyside, Casa Loma, everywhere. Every picture, we're all dressed in a suit and tie and a hat. Everybody wore a suit and tie and a hat. No matter where we went—the Zoo, the park, Centre Island, Sunnyside—everybody dressed in a suit and tie, even hakujin, in those days. We didn't go in jackets.
LU: Oh, wow.
MS: Yeah, that part makes me laugh. Nobody wears a suit and tie anymore unless they're businessmen or going to a party. But at the Zoo or Centre Island, my goodness.
LU: Wonderful. Well, thank you very much.
MS: Yeah, thank you.

[Interview ends]