Interviewee: Kunio Suyama
Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda
Date: August 23, 2011
Location: Toronto, Canada
Accession Number: 2011-235

[Start]

Lisa Uyeda: Okay, so today is August 23, 2011, and can you please tell us your full name?
Kunio Suyama: Kunio Suyama.
LU: And did you ever have any nicknames when you were growing up?
KS: Well, my nickname—only nickname that I had was Kunji.
LU: Kunji? Where did that come from?
KS: Well, my name is Kunio [points to chest] and really, I don't know how it came around, but I decide like this. My name is Kunio, and they call me Kunio-san. And then older people call Kunio-chan. And then more intimately Kun-ja, Kun-ji. So, it goes down [motions with hand] and finally everybody- My friends all call me Kun-ji. And my mother's friends say they all call me Kuni-chan. And my father used to hate people calling me Kun-ji because my name is Kunio [laughs].
LU: And when and where were you born?
KS: I was born in Cumberland, British Columbia, Vancouver Island. December 24th, 1927.
LU: And what do you know about your family history?
KS: My family history? Well, not very well, but my father was born in Fukuoka-ken Japan. And my mother was from the same cit—town, Shitamachi. And more precisely, it's called Uruzu but I won't go into detail [laughs].
LU: And do you know approximately when they came to Canada or why?
KS: Well, I'll be—it'll be after World War I. But I would say before 1920s. But I'm not too sure exactly when.
LU: Was it just the two of them that came together or-
KS: No-
LU: -Who came first?
KS: -my father was here first, with his brothers and cousins and things. And then he went back to Japan, got married, and came back.
LU: Oh wow. And do you know why your father came to Canada?
KS: Well, that area was a- Fukuoka was a coal mining town. Coal mining province, rather. So, they all came to Canada because Canada was industrialist in coal mining so, and Cumberland is famous for coal mining.
LU: Oh, I see. And he came with your uncles or cousins or-?
KS: Well, his brothers and his brother in-law, I think. So, all the same age group [motions with hands for emphasis].
LU: Oh wow. Did your father come from a large family?

KS: Oh, well, I guess if you call it large in the modern age thinking, but he must've had four or five in the family.
LU: Do you know if he was the oldest son, or middle, youngest?
KS: No, I know his immediately older brother, Kengo, he was here in Canada. And I know his sister in Japan because I lived with them shortly for about four years with her.
LU: Oh wow.
KS: But I don't know whether—I can't understand I can't remember whether she was older or younger. All I know is that his sister.
LU: And what was her name?
KS: What?
LU: What was her name?
KS: Her name? She married—Well, she called herself [Tan-a-mura?] right now. But I don't know her real name [laughs].
LU: And what about your mother's family? Did she come from a large family?
KS: There's about the same, five or six in the family, but I don't know—I think her maiden name was Jizaki, but I know her sister's name was Takeshita and that's the only name that I'm really familiar with.

[00:05]

LU: Was she, I guess, in the middle, youngest, oldest?
KS: She must be around the middle. I really don't know [motioning with hands] how their original family is in Japan.
LU: And was her family also in the mining industry?
KS: No, I don't think so. I think their village was more farming.
LU: Very neat, wonderful. [laughs] So, they came to Canada around the 1920s?
KS: I would say around there, 1920 or 1915, but not during the World War I because he didn't go to World War I.
LU: And how many siblings do you have?
KS: Myself? Oh, I have- We're ten in the family. Five boys [holds fingers up on hand] and five girls [laughs].
LU: Oh, my goodness.
KS: [unclear sentence] and I'm right in the middle. I'm the fifth one.
LU: And was the oldest in the family—do you want to go by names and go by-
KS: Oh, Kaduichiro is the oldest. He's around 90 now.
LU: And who is next?
KS: Next is Wakiko. And she's married to Makiko Kiyonaga. And she's I would say she's around 89 or reaching 90. Masayo Abe is the next one and she's another year or two younger.
LU: And then?
KS: And Tokugi Suyama. And that's my immediate older brother. And he's a year and a half older than I am. The whole family was nearly two years apart except we are a year and a half apart [laughs].
LU: And then it's yourself.

KS: And then myself and then Meiko Bando. She's a couple years younger than I am. And then Yoshimi Susan Maikawa. She's same age as my wife; she must be around 80. And then Juneko Nakano, she's in- it's outside of Hamilton- Stony Creek! She's in Stony Creek. And then Eiji Suyama, who's in Vancouver now. And Masahiro, he's deceased.
LU: What a large-
KS: He's in Japan, Masahiro is in Japan. He was in Japan, he died in Japan.
LU: Oh wow. Now, did all the children grow up in Canada?
KS: We all grew up in Canada but Masahiro, my oldest brother, he went back to Japan when he was young to get the education in Japan. So, he doesn't move too much over Canada.
LU: Did he stay in Japan?
KS: Pardon?
LU: Did he stay in Japan?
KS: Yes. He stayed in Japan, and he never did come back to Canada to live.
LU: Did anyone else go to Japan for school?
KS: No, not in our family. But my younger brothers, they stayed after the war they went back to Japan, and they were educated in Japan.
LU: And you were born in Cumberland.
KS: [nods] I was born in Cumberland.
LU: Did you grow up in Cumberland?
KS: I was grown up in Cumberland until the World War II and I was– I just turned 14 when the war started. Another- Two more weeks and I would've been 14.
LU: And what do you remember about growing up in Cumberland?
KS: Oh, well, that's where I was born and a younger age I was growing up and it was quite familiar. And I know when I was– when my oldest brother just went back to Japan we were playing New Years Eve- New Year's, we used to play firecrackers.'

[00:10]

And I remember he used to throw a firecracker at me, and I have a pocket full of firecracker and the firecracker landed in my pocket and [motions popping with hands] pow pop pop! [laughs] All I remember was that.
LU: Oh, my goodness. And where did you live? What was the—do you remember the address of the house you lived in?
KS: In our house? Well, all of us lived in the same house except my older brother, who went back to Japan. Well, and one room everybody—we only had about four or five rooms, so, naturally, we all shared a room.
LU: And do you remember what the address was?
KS: Address? No, we didn't need the address in our town because there were only about 30 houses so.
LU: Were there other Japanese families?

KS: Like in Cumberland, we were in Cumberland's number one Japanese town. And this Japanese town is so-called number one because the coal mining shaft was number one. And there were about 30 or 35 families all living in that town, no other people. All Japanese.
LU: Oh wow. And were you born in the house or were you born in a hospital?
KS: Oh, I believe we were all born in home. I don't think any of us were born in the hospital.
LU: And tell me a bit about what your father did when he was there, when he was working in the coal mines.
KS: Well, I don't remember anything about coal mines because coal mining was depleted around 1922 or something like that, so all I remember is that my father was unemployed for a while, and then when I was in grade three or four something around there, he used to go chopping wood. And then he used to– When a child was born, he used to go to hos- Doctor's place and chop their wood for-to pay off. [laughs] Things like this. But later on, as I remember, he was working in a logging camp in the Chemainus, Hillcrest area in Vancouver Island.
LU: Oh wow.
KS: Yeah, he was working there in the woods.
LU: And how far away is that from Cumberland?
KS: Oh, probably by car right now it's over three or four hours, but around that time it took a while, I guess.
LU: Did your family have a car?
KS: No, no.
LU: So, I guess he lived in Chemainus when he was working.
KS: Oh yes, he used to come back every so often.
LU: And what did your mother do?
KS: My mother always stayed and lived in Cumberland.
LU: And I guess with all the children, she looked after the children.
KS: Uh huh, she was a busy lady [laughs].
LU: And did you have chores that you had to do to help around the house?
KS: Oh, yeah, we used to chop the- chop wood because in those days, we had to chop wood to burn in the stoves. And we had to go pick coals, coal mine, because- there's a business and they gather depleted coal from the coal mine and [mimes with hands] they pick the good coal from that waste. And all the family in that town used to go and pick every year, once a year, to have enough supply for the whole year. So, we never bought coal, we always got it free.
LU: And did your house have- I guess it was a wood burning stove?
KS: A wood burning stove and the coal was extra.
LU: What about electricity?

[00:15]

KS: Electricity? Well, we had electricity, but we know there are only about one or two refrigerators in the town. And we know that was in a store, two stores that they have. And we know when this refrigerator goes on because the light goes dim [motions with hands]. And the whole family-[laughs].
LU: What about washrooms? Did you have washrooms in the house?
KS: Well, washrooms were maybe two or three- not houses, but it was still our own home, but- we had the pathway, and then the bathtub, and then the washroom. Not the washroom but the outhouse, I guess. Well, it was all in a row.
LU: And did you have a Japanese *ofuro*? A Japanese bath?
KS: *Ofuro*? Oh yes, the bath was part of the *ofuro*.
LU: And was it one per family or did you have to share?
KS: No, then, we had one bathroom we shared among ten people [motions with hands and laughs].
LU: And who looked after the bathtub?
KS: Well, I guess Mother did, but we helped too, I guess. Fortunately, we had running water, so.
LU: That's good. What about groceries or food? Did your family grow a lot of your own food, or did you buy them from the grocery store?
KS: Well, most of the vegetable we grew. So- And then, we bought the fish, and the meat, but we didn't eat too much meat anyways. Little things we had to buy. Dairy products- But then, in those days, they used to deliver milk every morning, they'd deliver bread, they'd deliver- Well they come around selling fish, so we buy fish. But our next-door neighbour was a store, so we bought [unclear] from them. You know, two stores.
LU: Who owned the store?
KS: Well Mr. Nakano, the next door neighbour, owned the store and my Juneko, the youngest of the daughters is married to one of the sons from that store. And then, there was the other store. We call that next store [stallostore?] because there was a hill, and it was on the bottom of a hill. And then, the [winow store?] at the top of the hill [motions with hands], and that was owned by Mr. Yuwasa. And Mr. Yuwasa and Mr. Ochiyama used to own Royston Lumber Camp. So, they had a store there, so we had plenty to eat.
LU: And what about entertainment? What did you do to keep busy and have fun?
KS: Well, mostly, we liked to play baseball. Baseball was our favourite game but naturally, we're too young to be in an organized league at that time. But in the- and for the older or younger men, there's a Royston's baseball team with a Japanese team competing with the other team. Non-Japanese team. It's more like an industrial league.
LU: What else did you do?
KS: Oh, well, we played a little bit of hockey, but not organized hockey. We just played in a pool and all that, so- And there's no rink or anything like that. But we just had fun skating around.

LU: Where did you get the skates from?
KS: What?
LU: Where did you get the ice skates from?
KS: Ice skates? Oh, gee, I'm not too sure, probably hand-me-downs [laughs], I guess. But we did have ice skates. But I'm not too sure where we got it from.

[20 minutes]

LU: And what about in the summertime, would you have school dances or school concerts?
KS: Well, we had concerts. We called *gakuyukai* school concert. So, I loved to take part in plays. I was a singer, but I liked playing parts- taking part in plays [nods].
LU: And what was the name of the school you went to?
KS: We called it- Well, the English school was Cumberland Public School, and the high school, there are two buildings. One housing primary grades and another housing higher grades, up to grade eight. And then, the lower grade school also had a high school on the upper floor, so. So, there we went up to grade 12, I guess, around that time. In B.C. It was grade 12 in BC [British Columbia].
LU: And did you go to Japanese language school?
KS: Oh yes, we used to have a Japanese language school in our town [motions with hand]. So, every day we go to- In the daytime we go to English school and say three o clock, we come home, and then have a short snack, and then go to Japanese school, until maybe six o clock or so. Every day, every day including Saturday morning!
LU: Oh, my goodness. And how long would you be there on Saturday?
KS: Oh, until afternoon.
LU: Wow. And what grade did you complete at Japanese school?
KS: Well, I was- We just started grade seven when the war started so that was it. My Japanese language was cut off at grade seven.
LU: And when you're at home and you're spending time with your mother, or your father, or your siblings, would you speak in English or Japanese?
KS: Our town, mostly in Japanese. When you are home, you're Japanese and when you go to English school, you're English.
LU: And were there any non-Japanese students at your school in Cumberland?
KS: Not in our town [motions hand in circle].
LU: No?
KS: But in Cumberland Public School there was- It's just no limit.
LU: So, in your classes, when you're growing up, how many would you say were Japanese students and how many would you say were non-Japanese students? Is it, you know, mostly Japanese or 50-50?
KS: No, I would say- In a class, they average around 30 in those days. And I would say, you would see around four or five Japanese in that class.

LU: Ohh. And were there any other different cultural groups that were also at school? Were there anyone of Chinese background or Indian background?
KS: Well, about half a mile away from our town, Japanese town, there was a Chinese town [demonstrates the town's distance with hands], so there's both Chinese. So, there were more Chinese than Japanese. And we're all- In the English school, we're all mixed together. Italian, or Chinese, or Japanese, or whoever lived in Cumberland. But when you come home and go to Japanese school, it's just Japanese. In our town, anyway.
LU: And who were some of your friends that you remember being really good friends with or playing with in your spare time from that area?
KS: Yeah, well, he's here right now [points towards another side of the room] Mr. Makadoro. He's helping with the photograph right now. He's my- Well, we're about the same age. And, well, there were about, well may- There were about 31 families when the war started, so.

[00:25]

And we all had five or six children in those days [laughs].
LU: There's lots of you!
KS: We're all friends.
LU: What are some of your other favourite memories about growing up in Cumberland?
KS: Pardon?
LU: What are some of your favourite memories?
KS: Memories. Oh, well- Actually, like, our town is like one big family. Thirty- And I never remember locking the door or anything. We used to go into other people's homes without even knocking on the door. I remember when the radio shortwave I used to go, 4 o clock in the morning, to a friend's house to listen to news and the Japanese entertainment and things like that, so. And, well, we used to go a lot of fishing. Everybody used to go fishing because there was a creek behind every [unclear] that we used to call *uraniwa,* because it's in the backyard.
LU: So, you kept very busy.
KS: Pardon?
LU: You were always very busy.
KS: Oh, yeah, we were all busy. We had lots of fun anyway.
LU: So, you were young when the war started. You were only 14.
KS: I just turned 14. Two weeks and I would've been 14, so I'm just in between [motions with hands for emphasis] everything [laughs].
LU: Just before the war started, in the 1930s, when they had the Depression, do you remember anything about the Depression years?
KS: No, I don't remember too much about those times.

LU: And what do you remember about the start of the war, and I know some of the other countries had started in 1939. Do you remember hearing anything about the war and the World War at that time?
KS: Well, we used to hear things about the war in China, you know, and people being drafted to go to war and all that. Like I said, we used to have a drama about those kinds of things, and I used to take part in a play that I remember my father went to war, and we had to not fall back to- So, my older sister and I had to help ourselves and get by- Those kinds of things I remember but that's all drama [motions with hands].
LU: Mm-hm.
KS: But I remember, by hearsay, some of my older friends from that town who went back to Japan and stayed in Japan, they got drafted and went to war and all that. My brother was old enough, but fortunately, he wasn't drafted. And I think the reason is he was a technical engineer, and they needed engineers to make supplies. I'm not sure that's the reason, but he didn't have to go to war.
LU: Who was he living with in Japan?
KS: He was living with either my uncle or aunt. I'm don't know which uncle or aunt, but he was living with some relatives.
LU: So, during the war years, or just before the war, were you able to stay in contact with him?
KS: I would imagine so, but I really don't remember [motions to head] personally.
LU: What do you remember about the day of Pearl Harbour?
KS: Oh, remember- [stands up in seat and leans forward]
LU: About the day of Pearl Harbour.
KS: Oh no, in fact I didn't even know about Pearl Harbour except I knew the attack was in Hawaii. You know, we heard it on the radio. We all got excited- Whether we were excited, or scared, or whatever, I can't remember.

[00:30]

LU: And the next day, I believe was a Monday. Did you go to school that day?
KS: I guess we did, yeah, I guess we did. I don't remember, but my friend- lady friend, she was down [with?] a teacher pointed to us and says [points with finger] "Your company attacks!" [laughs].
LU: What about the rest of the students at the school? Did they react to you differently or did they treat you differently?
KS: No, not that I remember. Nothing to me, anyway, personally.
LU: And what do you remember about after the war, and when did you hear that you would have to leave Cumberland?
KS: Actually- Well, this was December, and we left in April, so I know a few months before and we had to pack up and we just built [motions box shape with hands] a

new Japanese school, so everything- We had to hide them some places. Those kinds of things I remember. But I don't really recall [Mounties?] coming or things like that.
LU: And how did you prepare to leave with your own personal belongings at the house?
KS: Well, my mother and older sister, they did the packing, so I know we carried a suitcase and important pictures, but I really don't recall too much about it.
LU: Do you remember some of the items that you left behind?
KS: Oh, something like a flag [laughs].
LU: What was the flag?
KS: The Japanese flag [laughs]. So, things like that. We dug a hole and buried it and things like that.
LU: And I guess you would've had to leave a lot of furniture.
S: Oh, not much, no. We didn't have too much furniture. We had a big sofa and all of that but nothing, we can't take those things.
LU: So, where did you go?
KS: From Cumberland, I remember going to Union Bay. That's where the boat took us from Union Bay to Vancouver. And recently we went there- We had a big ride on a truck, and we were wondering where we're going to go and all that- But we went back several years ago to see the place [motions with hand], well it's just close by [laughs].
LU: But it seemed a lot farther back then. And how long did you stay in Union Bay for?
KS: In what?
LU: Union Bay.
KS: Union Bay- Well that day, I guess, yeah.
LU: And when you arrived in Vancouver, have you been to Vancouver before at that time?
KS: No. Not myself, no.
LU: What was your reaction to seeing Vancouver?
KS: Well, I'm not too sure, but I remember going to the Hastings Park. That's where we were sent, in Hastings Park. Hastings Park was the [waves hands] distribution centre for all the Japanese and we went into a big building. And actually, it was an arena. And the ladies and the children were held in a livestock building. It's like our [points forward into the distance, off camera] exhibition ground here. And now that we see pictures and photographs, ladies' quarters- It was what we called bunk beds. Two decker [demonstrates with hands] bed and you put two of these beds together, wrap around a blanket or something and that's the quarter for the women and children- really small children. Men and boys [points to himself], we were 14, boys, we were in this arena.

[00:35]

And it was still a bunk bed, two decker bed, we stayed in there.
LU: So, who were you staying with?
KS: Oh, well, we stayed with my father and my brother, older brother. Younger brothers were in the children's- children with the women's side.
LU: What was you parent's reaction to moving to Hastings Park?
KS: Well, I can't say, but they were- My father especially was worried because he's right in the age group of being shipped out to a road camp, I think. Because we had ten in the family, so, actually he was really worried.
LU: How long did you stay in Hastings Park for?
KS: [leans forward in chair and mimes pushing a remote button]
LU: Oh!
KS: [laughs]

[tape resets and beeps]

LU: Okay. Good. And how long did you stay in Hastings Park for?
KS: We stayed- We were one of the longer ones and we stayed about six months from April to October.
LU: And what did you do in Hastings Park to pass the time?
KS: Well, like, if you say pass the time. But we had a school, a temporary school. But this was held in a gymnasium and some older Nisei volunteers were hired, I'm not too sure, but they used to teach us. And we had a principal- a non-Japanese principal. I know when I was in grade seven, I guess, and our class, for a while, we were practicing choir. And I know we were singing, and the teacher asked the girls to form a front line, and the boys were to go behind them and- The boys being boys didn't want to go behind the girls [laughs]. And finally, the teacher took us to the principal, and I was accused of being the leader! [laughs]. He brought a long yardstick what we call [demonstrates length with hands] yard- He used to have what they call a pointer on the blackboard. So, they lined all the boys up and he called me first and he says that I was the leader- just like being– going into the line- He brought me up first [raises hand to air] and pow!
LU: Just one hand or both?
KS: Just one hand [bad enough]. All the boys start crying [laughs]. Yeah, and all I did was what the other boys did, and they didn't want to go behind so [mimes holding out hand to be hit] pow! I can still remember that. But otherwise, it was alright going to school. It wasn't a formal school but school, nevertheless.
LU: Do you remember who the teachers were?
KS: No, I really don't know. Because it's only six months.
LU: So, did you have Japanese language school when you were in Hastings Park?
KS: No.
LU: That was it.
KS: No, after the war started, that was it [waves hand].

LU: And what about eating in Hastings Park? I guess, did you have the mess hall to go and eat?
KS: Eat? Oh, well, we had plenty to eat. One thing is they served nice food- Mess Hall style but it was wholesome food, I guess. But sometimes when you get diarrhea, everybody gets diarrhea [laughs].

[00:40]

LU: What was living arrangements like for the men? They had bunk beds, but what about the washrooms or baths?
KS: Well, bathroom was a long trough [demonstrates with hands with sweeping motion] and stalls and running water running down the trough. So, when the diarrhea came, and [unclear sentence] bunch of boys got a handful of toilet paper, [mimes rolling toilet paper in hand] lit the thing, and put it through, pow! [laughs]. I just remember that.
LU: And it went down the water. And what about the bath?
KS: Bath, gee, I'm not too sure about the bath. I can't remember, it probably was a shower. It wasn't a bathtub. I'm not too sure what the bathroom [looked like?]
LU: And did they have any organized sports, or did you play baseball when you were there?
KS: We used to play softball because there's no baseball field. Softball, and I saw the older boys or men playing ping pong. And we played basketball because we had a gymnasium. But other than that, I don't- It's summertime, so there's no hockey. But I know we played a lot of softball.
LU: And how many people would fit in the men's quarters?
KS: Oh, I'm not too sure- Three or four hundred, I guess. I'm not too sure about the figure.
LU: That's a lot of people.
KS: Pardon?
LU: A lot of people.
KS: Oh, a lot of people, yes. Just [motions with hands] rows and rows of beds, so. It was no furniture and things, just rows and rows of beds.
LU: And were you ever able to get a pass and leave Hastings Park?
KS: Oh yes, we used to get a pass to go to downtown. But we don't know downtown, and we didn't have that much money anyways [laughs].
LU: And who would you get the pass from?
KS: Oh, I guess Commission House, but I really don't know, I didn't get it myself, so.
LU: What would you do when you went downtown?
KS: Oh, we'd go shopping, eat Chinese food. We didn't know too much about Japanese food then, so.
LU: Did you go see a movie?

KS: Movie? Not in Vancouver, but the first movie I saw in Cumberland was Shirley Temple. Captain January, that's all I remember.
LU: How old were you?
KS: Oh, probably ten years or 11 years old then.
LU: And-
KS: We used to see more Japanese movies. Because from Japan- from Vancouver they used to send what we called *katsuben*- Silent movie. Silent movie with an operator adlibbing for the movies.
LU: Really?
KS: So, he'll voice out the man's voice, the ladies voice, the children's voice. One man. We called it *katsuben*.
LU: That's incredible!
KS: Yeah, there's only a few of that type in Japan right now. It's really, very rare, I think.
LU: And what are some of your strongest memories about Hastings Park?
KS: Hastings Park? Well, one of the things is my strap. [holds out hand into air and laughs]. The other thing was we used to have in the mess hall, what we called mess hall. And that's where I first learnt how to drink coffee. Because before the war, we used to drink cocoa, or maybe tea, but never coffee.

[00:45]

KS: And I remember in the mess hall there were a bunch of boys eating and when I was looking someplace, my friend put a teaspoon full of salt [mimes with hand] in my coffee [laughs]. And I drank it [mimes drinking coffee and yells out and laughs], ah! Oh, it was an awful, awful taste. You should try it! Oh, I still remember that taste. Awful, really awful.
LU: And when you were leaving Hastings Park, where did your family decide to go?
KS: Well, I don't know whether we decided to go or not, but we were sent to Lemon Creek in the Slocan Valley. And this is sometime in October, so- So, in Lemon Creek we stayed in a tent, army tent for a few days- a few weeks, I guess. And when we went there it was nice and- nice day in autumn, so. But a few weeks later, I see in the pictures, same tent all snow and the tent is collapsing and all that, so we just made it by the skin of our nose.
LU: And was that 1942?
KS: 1942, I guess, yeah.
LU: So, when you lived in the tent, did your family just have one tent or because your family is so-
KS: We had one tent, and we all fit in there somehow [laughs].
LU: How big were the tents?
KS: Oh, well, I would say maybe [motions with hand] 15, 20 feet, by 20 feet.
LU: Not that big.

KS: No, it's not that big, and all I remember is that we only had one tent, but we might've had two, I don't know.
LU: And when you moved into the house, did you have a house of your own?
KS: Oh, yes, we had a small house. Lemon Creek is a newly built camp. So, they had these 14 by 28 houses, I guess, and it's divided into three rooms. Two bedrooms and a living room, kitchen. And I think if you had six or more, you can have one whole house. And we had ten, so [laughs].
LU: How many beds were there?
KS: Well, we had ten, so my brother and I went to my friend's place to sleep. So, that way, we gained two extra rooms. But we had one house for ourselves.
LU: And who was the friend that you were living with?
KS: Oh, my friend from Cumberland. So, besides, they had only four or five, so they were happy to have us rather than some stranger.
LU: And what did your parents do in Lemon Creek?
KS: Well, my mother, I guess, she had to cook and all that. But my older sister and- two sister worked in commission office, so they were pretty well off. And my older brother and younger, we went to school, so my older brother was in high school and myself and the younger were in public school.
LU: What about your father?
KS: My father, fortunately, because of the family situation, they were to stay with us. All during the war, he didn't have to go to a camp at all.
LU: And did he work when he was in Lemon Creek?
KS: Yeah, he did a few odds and ends, I'm not too sure what he did, but chopping wood and all that sort of thing. But he was able to stay in camp.

[00:50]

LU: And what about going to school in Lemon Creek? Did you go to school right away once you got there or did you have to wait?
KS: Well, we had to wait until the building was built [motions with hand] in our camp anyway. And we had two big buildings housing from grade one to grade eight. And the government built those and supplied it with volunteer teachers. And high school was operated by the United Church, and it was separate. So, education was- it's not a formal education, but I think we gained a lot of experience.
LU: And who built the buildings?
KS: The building? Oh, the building was built by the government, the two public schools. The high school, I'm not too sure, but the United Church operated that church so I would imagine the United Church supplied the building.
LU: Do you remember any of your teachers?
KS: Teachers? Oh yes, Ms. Uchida. Irene Uchida. She's very famous in eastern Canada right now. She used to be the principal of the school. And Ms. Goramaru, and you see pictures that we called it names.

LU: And what are some of your memories about going to school in Lemon Creek?
KS: Well, Lemon Creek was a pleasant time because it was the first time we had a graduation and things like this and like- Teachers were from Vancouver and elsewhere and we were still young, so we didn't have too much experience of formality of a school. But there was a graduation, and I was a first-person graduate, I was the- What do you call?
LU: Valedictorian?
KS: Valedictorian! [points in agreement and laughs]. And I was a lousy speech writer, so I wrote it up [mimes writing with hand] and my sister looked at it and she just tore it up and wrote one for me. And I was quite adept in reading those things so my [comment?] was good on the speech.
LU: And how big were the classes?
KS: Oh, in those days, I would say 25, 30 in a class. All Japanese.
LU: So, it's much different from before.
KS: No not- not in- Well, same as the Japanese school in prewar.
LU: And did everyone get along?
KS: Oh yes, oh yeah. [nods] Definitely, we're all friends.
LU: And what are some of the activities that you would do in Lemon Creek?
KS: Well, then, we liked baseball, of course. And in the wintertime, we had the skating, hockey and all that. But baseball was prominent in those days.
LU: Did you have any Asahi baseball players there?
KS: No, we were too young to be in Asahi. But Asahi was more in Slocan, there were Asahi players in Slocan. In Lemon Creek there were only two Asahi players, which we emulate.
LU: Do you remember who they were?
KS: Yuki Uno he's- he used to play first base. And Kaz Suga. Kaz Suga was the star of Asahi, and he used to be one of the only man teacher in Lemon Creek [laughs].
LU: So, he was also a teacher.
KS: He was the only man teacher in Lemon Creek, all the rest are women.
LU: Oh wow. And what did Yuki Uno do?

[00:55]

KS: Yuki Uno, well, I'm not sure, he used to work as what we would call swamper, go around in a truck and do different [motions hand] things. I'm not too sure exactly what he did. But they being older, they had to go- in half a year or so, they were out , so after that, I'm not too sure where they went.
LU: What are some of your best memories about Lemon Creek?
KS: Well, for one thing, we all think of our hardships during the war, but Lemon Creek days were, to us young guys, were more pleasant and care-free days. Nothing like it. - -You go to school; you see all the friends. Like, our school was very close to our house. You just walk five minutes and we'd be there, so. Irene Uchida

(Yoshida?), the principal would be- From our house to the school, we used to go up in there and do chores [laughs]. Things like that, so.
LU: Did you have any chores to do at your own house?
KS: Our own house? Well, we had to chop our own wood- if- when the wood is available [demonstrates with hands the size of wood]. And, well actually there's not much to do because we had running water because our next-door neighbour was a plumber, so we were first in line to get the running water, so we didn't have to go get water. Otherwise, we had to share water from community water tap. Sharing maybe ten or 15 houses. But we had our [private one?].
LU: Mm-hm. What about bath and washrooms?
KS: Oh, well, bath, we had a community bath. It's the- the bathtub itself is maybe big as this room here. So, you know, whole-10 or fifteen people in there We wash outside and just warm up. So, we used to take bath every day.
LU: Were there certain times that you could go?
KS: No, when the bath is ready, you go in, but before we used to take baths in the evening or nighttime. But during the Lemon Creek days we used to go in the afternoon. Just about every day.
LU: Who looked after the bath?
KS: Some people- Men were hired to fire the wood and fresh water every day, I would imagine.
LU: Oh neat. And what about the news of the war and just news in general. Did you have newspapers, radios? How did you hear about news?
KS: Well, we were 16, 17 by then I guess. And during summertime, we used to go to Okanagan [unclear] to pick apples. And in 1945, we were in Kelowna. So, we were picking apples when we first heard about the war being ended. And I remember the owner, the owner of the orchard was a Japanese, and their kids went to downtown to celebrate [motions with hands]. I remember that much.
LU: Oh wow. I'm just going to pause for a second [camera beeps]. And when you were in Lemon Creek, do you remember where you lived?
KS: Where I lived? Oh, I think around 39 Holly.
LU: Do you remember this? [hands Kunio a photograph].
KS: [Studies the photograph for a moment. Once he finds something he is looking for he points to it and shows Lisa with his finger on the photo].
LU: Oh-
KS: 39 Holly.
LU: You lived with your friends too, didn't you?

[01:00]

KS: Yeah, that's Hisaki Suyama. That's my father.
LU: And where did you sleep?
KS: [looks at the photo again] Just out there.

LU: Oh, that's far.
KS: Yeah. And this was the school there [points to photo again]. And public school and high school was over here [points to a higher part of the photograph].
LU: Oh wow. And there was a church there.
KS: This was our Anglican church and [points to another part of the photograph] United Church was here. And Buddhist church was- [points to another part of the photograph] this was the Buddhist church.
LU: Oh wow. And-
KS: We were looking at the photograph the other day. And the photograph was taken this way [demonstrates with hands]. From- There's a hill over here, so it was taken this way. And my friend, he imagined it from this side [points hand in the opposite direction]. So, everything was opposite.
LU: And what's Parker?
KS: Parker, that's a store. Parker Store. And this is Graham store. Graham Store. And Horsewell, that's another store. And this used to house a post office. So, we had three stores [raises three fingers on right hand.] Yeah, Horsewell, that's the name- I think we all forgot. [hands photograph back to Lisa].
KS: Yeah, going back to this bathhouse, it's a big bathhouse and there's a wall separating the men's side and the ladies' side. There are a lot of holes in the- [laughs and mimes looking to the side].
LU: From the knots in the wood?
KS: Oh yeah, but not way up, they had too small holes [laughs]. Oh, I remember that, there was one [motions the size of the hole with his hand].
LU: And what else do you remember about Lemon Creek? What were some of the bad memories?
KS: Well, my bad memory- I don't have a bad memory but my brother- Well, we used to go apple picking- Not picking commercially, but we used to swipe, like, orchard was around here [points to photograph]. And we used to go steal apples and he got shot [mimes gun with hands] in the leg.
LU: He got shot?
KS: [nods] Yeah.
LU: With a real gun?
KS: Yeah, a small 23 caliber, something like that, he got shot in the- [laughs].
LU: Oh, my goodness!
KS: Other than that. Actually, it's our fault anyway- There's no hardship, actually. I know a lot of people, young guys, that they were earning some money chopping wood and lost their finger and all that- It's by accident, not by force.
LU: So, did your brother-
KS: Lemon Creek days was, to us, it's very pleasant, non-carefree days, but in retrospect, it was a waste of time.
LU: Would you go around- Going around the area visiting other camps, or did you go into the forest at all?

KS: Oh yes, we used to go to the closest town is Slocan. In Slocan Valley, there's Slocan City, and then there's Bay Farm, there's Popoff- Popoff and Bayfarm are rebuilt camps just like Lemon Creek. And we used to visit these towns by truck, you know, open truck. Well, it was about three or four miles. And then, across the lake- New Denver, that we had to take a truck. And then further on, Kaslo. My wife, she tells me that she used take train from Kaslo to Slocan and Lemon Creek, but we didn't. We travelled mostly by truck. Open truck. No cars, passenger cars, truck is from the commission- employed trucks.
LU: And what would you do in the camps?
KS: Oh, like, we go to school, we come home, and we just hang around or play baseball.

[01:05]

LU: Oh, when you visited the other camps.
KS: Oh, I'm not too sure, we- When we visited, we used to go play baseball or something. Compete against other schools, I guess.
LU: And do you remember your first car ride?
KS: Car ride? [laughs]. Well. Actually, come to think of it, I don't think we had a real car ride until we came to Toronto. It's always a truck, open truck, with the sides right about that [demonstrates with hands the shape of the truck].
LU: And who bought the car in Toronto?
KS: My car?
LU: Mm-hm. Your first car or your first car ride-
KS: First car, I had an old Pontiac. And, well, it was old enough that I could keep it running for a year or so.
LU: And how old were you at the time?
KS: I guess I was around 24, I guess.
LU: And did you have to get a driver's license?
KS: Oh yes, uh huh. I passed, first time. But in Japan, in Japan, I used to work for the US Army, and I was an interpreter there. And I was working in their motor pool, maintenance for all the Jeeps and trucks, army trucks. So, we have a Japanese mechanic and drivers and all that. So, I used to give them a driver's license test. And I couldn't even drive then [laughs and leans forward in chair].
LU: And when you were in Lemon Creek, how long did you stay there for?
KS: Well, we stayed there four years. 1942 to 19- yeah, 46. About four years.
LU: And where did you go and how did your family make the decision to stay or to go to Japan?
KS: Well, we had a lot of discussion amongst older brothers and sisters, I guess. But my older brother, he decided to stay. And my older sister- Older sister was married, and they decided to stay so she had to stay. And all the others- For my father, he

hadn't met his- Our grandmother in a long, long time, so he decided he wanted to go back and see her again. So, we all followed.
LU: So, how many of you went to Japan?
KS: Seven. Seven of us.
LU: And you had one brother still in Japan?
KS: One brother was in Japan in two stayed. So, 10 minus seven, [unclear]. Actually, my older brother in Japan, he sent us a letter saying don't come back to Japan because the situation is very, very bad over there. But unfortunately, we didn't get that letter in time, so off we left.
LU: And what was it like packing up and getting ready to go to Japan? Because that would've been your first trip to Japan.
KS: That was my first trip to Japan, yes.
LU: So, did you feel excited, did you feel worried? Or how did you feel?
KS: Nothing emotional, I think to myself, anyway. But the experience, we had to, of course, go on a ship a lot bigger than the one that we came from Cumberland to Union Bay to Vancouver. And I remember going back, we were in the lower compartment, and I remember sea water coming in, rushing in. [motions with hands] Yeah, about six or seven inches, a lot. I remember- I don't remember why, but you know.
LU: Oh, my goodness. And that was where you were sleeping?

[01:10]

KS: That's where—Yeah, right under the bunk bed, yeah. I remember not much.
LU: Oh wow. Was that at the end of the trip or the beginning of the trip?
KS: I'm not too sure when- Cause it takes about ten days to go across, eh. Ten days I watch, and I wait [imitates lying in bed and snoring with his nose to the air].
LU: And what was it like when you landed in Japan? Where did you land?
KS: Well, we went to a place called Kurihama, near Yokohama. And it was at actually a port- And all the- Like, were called the *yagasha*, the trip from Japan from a Chinese company, they come back there. So, we had to disembark over there. And we were in- I don't know. In the compartment, big building. Holding all these returnees. And we had very, very scarce food. We had some- We took some food from Canada, so we got by, but I can remember they were bringing a whole pot full of- [unclear] Must have been like lots and lots of [unclear] and I hated those things, anyway. So, we ate little bit, but most of it was the return. And after they take that, and they move to another relocation camp to serve the people. Definitely no food, so, come to think of it, we should be glad we had that.
LU: And how long did you live there for?
KS: Not very long, I'm not too sure how long, exactly how long, maybe a week or two.
LU: Mm-hm. And then where did you go?
KS: From there we took a train and go to our home in Kyushu.

LU: And did you- When you landed there, and the train stopped there, did anyone meet you on the platform?
KS: No, I don't remember being sent off like that. But we landed in my father's hometown and went to his old home.
LU: What did it look like?
KS: Well, it's one of those [unclear] flat. And there's several rooms but we- just about the whole family had to stay in one room. So, we managed, I guess.
LU: Oh wow. And you mentioned before that your father's brother was in Canada as well.
KS: Oh yes, well, my mother's- my father's brother, younger brother, I think, he died in a mine explosion in Cumberland, 1922, or something like that. I forgot the exact date but there was that explosion. And two houses- two of my uncles, actually, one on my mother's side, and one on my father's side, died in the explosion.
LU: So, from your father's family, did anyone else return to Japan?
KS: To Japan? No, my father's older brother had already gone back to Japan, so he was the only one left in Canada.
LU: So, how many people were living in the house? There was your family-
KS: Oh, well, our family and around two more other families.
LU: Plus, your grandparents?
KS: Pardon?

[01:15]

LU: And your grandparents?
KS: Yeah, together with- No, my grandparents and younger brothers, I guess, younger brother or sister, I'm not too sure about that. In that family. And we were the others.
LU: So, I guess you saw your brother again. Your eldest brother who had left for Japan before the war.
KS: Oh, no, he lived in another- he lived in Kokura City, so we were- My grandparents were in, more like the country, so they were in two different houses.
LU: But eventually you saw him.
KS: Oh yes, uh huh.
LU: What was it like seeing him again?
KS: Well, actually, I had never seen him before. Just his son, son was the- stayed back in Canada, so, we were- And he came to Cumberland to work, so we were familiar with the oldest brother. But the younger brother and sister went back to Japan, I had- several years ahead, so we really don't know them. But one of them is my age group and the oldest one we were, like- He was the only one left behind in Canada, so we were more like brothers and sisters. So, when we went back to Japan and got together- And he also went back to Japan, so- ahead of us. So, when we went back to

Japan, when I first went back to Japan, we had to- Well, it's in October, so rice harvest time, so we had to help harvest the rice and it's a really, really hard job.
LU: What did you have to do?
KS: Oh, well, we had to cut the stalk [mimes cutting with hands] and bundle them dry and- Well, it's a backbreaking job. Now they have a tractor and a harvesting machine, so it's a lot easier, but back then, say, we're talking 50, 60 years ago now, so. Then, they're still cutting using the small- what they call *kama*. It's a small scythe. And they used to cut it, and bundle them all up, and dry them in the sun.
LU: Oh neat. And did you have any other chores or activities that you had to do at the house to help out?
KS: No, other than that- After the harvest was over, I went to Kokura City to work, so.
LU: And is that when you were working in the Army?
KS: Army, yeah, I worked for the Army ever since. Nearly four years.
LU: And how did you get that job?
KS: Oh, well, anybody who can speak English, you had a fair chance. I'm not too sure whether my cousin took me there or not. But I had no problem getting a job.
LU: And what were they paying?
KS: Oh, they used to pay us *niman yen*, or 20,000 yen, or something in that neighbourhood. It was pretty good- Well, as far as the- we're concerned.
LU: And what were your parents doing?
KS: Oh, my parents stayed in the country, and my father was getting on in age, so he didn't do too much, but my mother, I heard that she leased some land and grew her own rice and all that. So, she was busy.
LU: Oh wow. And you worked there for four years. And how was the language when you first arrived in Japan? Because you went up to grade seven for your Japanese language school, but was there a big difference between the language?
KS: Well, I didn't feel any different, but they would know that- my friends, fellow interpreters who is Japanese, educated in Japan.

[01:20]

They used to say, "Hey, your Japanese kind of funny." But I had no problem with Japanese.
LU: Oh wow. And you mentioned before that the food was scarce at first. How long until the food supply was replenished again?
KS: Well, actually, gradually, but- like, I remember going every weekend back to the country, and when I came back, I used to bring back a pack of rice or something or a bottle of vegetables for my aunt to have, and all those things. But, to me, I was living in an Army Camp most of the time and I was eating army food, so I had no actual hardship. But I stayed with my aunt for- at the beginning, so, at that time, food was quite scarce. But remember how I said about having an awful taste of coffee? Well, in

Japan, I had exactly opposite experience. And food was scarce at that time and one morning my aunt, I remember with a big smile, "Okay, today I'm gonna feed you a wonderful treat." And she set me a nice green tea. And then she put a whole spoonful of sugar in there [mimes spooning sugar into a cup and laughs]. And I said, "Ohh." And then she put some more cream in there [laughs]. It tasted pretty good, you know.
LU: But you weren't used to that.
KS: No, that was a different culture right. That's exactly what it is. And I forgot all about this thing until last meeting that we had-
LU: In the- November, at the conference?
KS: Yeah, I said about coffee. And then I went home, and then I forgot all about it and then I said, "Oh, gee, that's exactly opposite, but it's a pleasant memory." And I don't think you've drank green tea with sugar, have you?
LU: No [laughs].
KS: Try it next time.
LU: I guess sugar may have been rationed in Japan.
KS: Oh, sugar was rationed, milk was hard to get, and green tea was plenty, but green tea and sugar [laughs]. That's one pleasant memory that I had that I really forgotten about it, but talking about the coffee, it suddenly came: "Hey!"
LU: And when you were working at the army- or for the army, how long were you living at the base for?
KS: Well, actually, around three and a half years, I guess. Cause the first three or four months or longer, I stayed with my aunt. And I used to go back to her every so often, but most of the time I stayed in the camp.
LU: And were there other Japanese people living there too?
KS: Not in the camp, no. I was the only one living in the camp. Yeah, I was a privileged guy in there.
LU: What was it like living there?
KS: Well, actually, living in the camp is especially, I was living in what we called motor pool maintenance for trucks. So, I was in the garage area way up [motions above head], and the army personnel slept maybe one field away from the pool. And you got- Still army regulations.

[01:25]

Army regulations- Army patrol all over. And sometimes I walked into the grounds in the middle of night, and I don't feel safe. But once I get into my little room, it was okay.
LU: So, you were by yourself all the way.
KS: I was by myself there and then in the motor pool, there was a dispatcher for the trucks and vehicles, so I used to go there and get my snack, and all that.

LU: What about washrooms and bath or-
KS: Oh, yeah, the washroom, there was an outhouse. The old outhouse. For the bath, there was- It wasn't a bathtub or anything, but there was an area, so I used to take baths every day there.
LU: Is that the same area as the army?
KS: Yeah, not the same bath as the army, but the same area. So, I had my adventure or privilege, anyway.
LU: So, when it came time for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, did you eat with them?
KS: No, actually, what-There was several Japanese working, not necessarily living there, but working in the same camp, and we used to get whatever- After the army personnel finished eating, we take the leftover to our different shack, and we used to share our breakfast, or lunch, or supper.
LU: Ohh. And what was the rest of your family doing while you were at the army base?
KS: Like, my family in Japan? My family- Well, my younger brothers and sisters, they all went to school. My immediate young sister, after about a year or so, she went to work for army in another camp. But other than that, younger brothers and sisters, they all went to Japanese school in Japan. So, they were fairly well educated in Japan.
LU: And did they go above high school?
KS: No- Oh, my sisters- They all went to university.
LU: Oh wow, incredible.
KS: So, they were fortunate in that way.
LU: Did you finish high school in Lemon Creek?
KS: Well, the war ended when I was starting grade 12. So, grade 11 is the highest I went, and after that I'm not too sure how we studied. Maybe correspondence, or something in that line. And I'm not too sure whether I got taught grade 12 [unclear]. But I- Somehow, I completed grade 12. And that's about it.
LU: And how long did you stay in Japan for?
KS: Four years.
LU: Oh, just four years?
KS: 1946 to 1950. Exactly four years. We went back in October, so about 1946, and I came back here, Canada, in October 1950.
LU: And did you come back by yourself?
KS: Travelling by myself, yeah. My brother, who stayed in Canada, sent me the fare, boat fare. So, fortunately, I came on the boat, another two weeks on the ocean.
LU: And your parents and everyone else stayed in Japan?
KS: They stayed in Japan. And then after that, after we came back, we sent some money and then, one by one, they all came back.
LU: And what made you decide to come back?
KS: Oh, because he sent me the money [laughs].

[01:30]

LU: Did you want to go back?
KS: No, I wasn't particularly wanting to come back or wanting to stay. Actually, there was no future in Japan either, so.
LU: So, it didn't really-
KS: So, if he didn't send me the money, then I would've stayed and found my own way around in Japan.
LU: So, one by one, everyone came back, including your parents?
KS: Oh, yes. Not- My father died in Japan, but my mother came back.
LU: How old was he when he passed away?
KS: He was around 82-83. I'm not- My sister knows the whole thing about it. I don't know the exact date, but I know he was over 80.
LU: Do you know what year it may have been that he passed away?
KS: Not [unclear] no.
LU: But in the 50s?
KS: Pardon?
LU: In the 1950s?
KS: Oh no, no, no, maybe 20 years ago.
LU: Oh, okay. And what about your mother? Did she come back to Canada?
KS: Yeah, my mother came back to Canada. And she died maybe ten years ago.
LU: How old was she?
KS: 92, 93, she died. You know, she survived cancer in Lemon Creek, and she lived ever since, so.
LU: Oh. What type of cancer was it?
KS: I don't know what kind of cancer it was or something. But she went to Alberta and my sister, older sister, was working for commission, so she took her to Alberta. Either Edmonton or Calgary, I'm not too sure where. But she survived, and she lived to a ripe year.
LU: That's incredible, wow!
KS: If we had stayed in Cumberland, she would've been a goner a long time ago.
LU: And when you came back to Canada and you came by boat, where did you dock?
KS: Well, we docked in San Francisco. From there, we took a train.
LU: And where did you take the train to?
KS: Up to Chicago. And then to Toronto.
LU: So, you never went back to Vancouver.
KS: No. No-
LU: Not at that time.
KS: No, we came back through the States.
LU: Oh wow. And what was it like when you arrived in Toronto?
KS: Well, we stayed with my older sister on Concord Avenue. And, well, in those days, they were fortunate to have a house, so they used the house- All their brothers and sisters, of her husband's side. And my older brother and I were bunking in there

too. And she used to cook for brothers and sisters in their family, so the house wasn't that big, but it was nice and noisy.
LU: It's a busy house. A lot of people.
KS: Well, it's a fairly big house in that there are three floors, so. But the old houses, the room is very- it's not very well designed for rooms, so. But then, you need lots of room to have a lot of people in there.
LU: And how long did you stay there for?
KS: Oh, I stayed maybe. Oh, until I got married, so.
LU: And when did you get married?

[01:35]

KS: 1955. So, I must've stayed there five years.
LU: And were you working at that time? Or how did you find a job?
KS: Oh, well, I had lots of friends, so when I first came, I worked with Diamond Taxi as a mechanic. I was a grease monkey, actually. But in Japan, I was working in the motor pool, so I'm familiar with the vehicles.
LU: And how long did you work there for?
KS: Maybe about three or four months. But then my friend was working in a lighting factory. Floors and lighting [motions to the ceiling] factory. And he recommended- hired me in the office. And I didn't know the first thing about an industrial office. All because my friend hired me. And after that, maybe after a year or so, I went to Seabridge Manufacturing, which was operated by Japanese, Art [Takeishi?]. And I was—material control or inventory control.
LU: What did you do there?
KS: Well, inventory control is also experience from Japan, I used to work for Army Depot, so they used to have a supply depot. So, that is the only experience that I had in- as a material control.
LU: And how long did you work there for?
KS: Until 19, around 63 I guess, and Seabridge manufacturer went bankrupt. And that's about the time Japanese radio starts coming in. Japanese cars start to come in. And from Seabridge, I worked for Automatic Radio, which manufactured car radio. And I remember my friend, a Chinese engineer. And I installed the first car radio in Toyota car.
LU: Wow!
KS: Around that time, Toyota used to say everything is made in Japan except car radio, and we used to supply the car radio [laughs].
LU: And you got to install the first one.
KS: Yeah well, like, we used to [unclear] car, so we install a radio and then make it fit the dash. In those days, it's quite simple but now [laughs] you need- Well, they make it so that you can't install just anything in the car.
LU: And how long did you work there for?

KS: Oh, until- Well for that same company, it was maybe 20-25 years since then, I guess. Or ever since, I guess.
LU: So, you retired from there?
KS: No, no when- The Asian industry took over all the Canadian manufacturing, so there is not much work to be done, so that company expanded into what we call bug killer. Electronic bug killer. So, I was [unclear] for that company. But it was more like a family operated. And that company- After overrun by Asian products, so there was not much business in that field [waves hand] and then from there, I was retired, I guess, from the industrial field, and I started working for the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre.

[01:40]

LU: Mm-hm. And you mentioned that in 1955 you were married.
KS: What?
LU: You were married in 1955.
KS: Yes.
LU: And where did you meet your wife?
KS: Oh, well, we used to go to the same Buddhist temple.
LU: Where was it located?
KS: On Bathurst Street. 918 Bathurst Street.
LU: Oh. Is that where you were married?
KS: There? Yes. The Ba—Church of Unity built in that year. And we were around the second or third to get married in that church.
LU: And you mentioned that after you got married, you moved out of your sister's house. Where did you live?
KS: Oh, I lived for about a year in my wife's home. Wife's parent's home. And then my second child was arriving, we bought the house in 48 [unclear]. So, we've been there for over 50 years [chuckles]. And that's the only place we've been.
LU: And how many children did you have?
KS: We have three. Two daughters and one son.
LU: Oh wow. And you mentioned that after you retired-

[tape cuts and a new tape begins]

There we go. We just finished off with talking about your retirement and you retired in 1987. And after you retired, what did you do with all your time?
KS: Well, no, I didn't retire for long, actually- I wasn't actually retired, I just ran out of jobs [laughs]. So, there was an opening for the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, and I put my resume in, and they took me in as a- the director.
LU: Oh, as director of the Cultural Centre. Oh wow. And- So, that was in '87.
KS: Of course it was '87.

LU: And what events and activities were going on at that time at the Cultural Centre?
KS: At that time, it was more Japanese community oriented. So, we had issei day as we have right now, we had Haru Matsuri, we still have Haru Matsuri, and at that time we had Caravan. Caravan is the ethnic culture display, where Japanese would have a Japanese display, the Chinese would have a different display for the Chinese community, Italian might have it, and Scotland might have it, and we used to have a-go around different pavilions. So, this was going on for a long time, and of course the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre, we used to decorate with Japanese decoration and the program would be like more or less Haru Matsuri here and cultural display and- But the building is smaller so and the decoration was mostly homemade. It's not like a video or anything like that in those days [laughs].
LU: So, this was back at the old Centre, 123 Wynford.
KS: Old Centre, yea. My experience at the Japanese Cultural Centre is mostly at the old Centre.
LU: And what other activities would take place?
KS: Well, of course, there was the martial arts and all that, but I didn't take part in any of the actual martial arts or any cultural thing, we just helped in publicizing and all that.

[01:45]

KS: But experience is the same [chuckles]. Now it's better for certain things, so.
LU: And at the old Centre, was it always busy kind of like it is now, or?
KS: [nods head in agreement] Oh yes, it was always busy, yeah. Especially during the evening because in those days, nisei were all working during the daytime and any activity will be in the evening or weekend. But now, all the nisei are retired or past retirement, so actually these are more during the daytime, during the daytime, and the younger activities will be in the evening. So, that's the difference between my time and the present time.
LU: And what are some of your most memorable memories about being the director at the old Centre?
KS: Well, of course, taking part in activities such as Caravan and different festivals such as Haru Matsuri. We used to have Kohaku [Ta-ga-sen?]. Kohaku means red and white. Red is for woman and white is for man. And two teams of men and ladies- A singing contest. We discontinued that Kohaku last year, two years ago was the last time we had it. It started around 1977 and kept on going until we moved over here, and we had to wait for the facilities to be organized and we had it for about two or three more years after that. But last year, we took a break. And I'm not too sure about this year [chuckles]. But the contest in Japan, NHK sponsored the contest that has being going on for a long, long time, every year on New Years Eve. So, we called it Toronto Kohaku.
LU: Did you have New Years celebration at the old Centre?

KS: New Years Celebration? Rather than New Years celebration, we had New Years Eve dance, so that took all the energy out, anyways. But at the old Centre, we often had the New Years lovely party—concert. Japanese concert. And it doesn't necessarily happen on the New Years Day, but sometimes during the early January days they have a [levy?], and we had to provide the atmosphere. They will provide the compliment, but we had to provide the atmosphere. And the facility.
LU: Oh wow. And did you have any big concerts or award ceremonies?
KS: Yes, like, we used to have Haru Matsuri and Akita Matsuri. Haru is spring and Aki is autumn, with Matsuri it's a song festival. So, it's like a concert, mini concert, mostly a Japanese oriented program. So, and then- The spring festival Haru Matsuri- We still continue to have Japanese cultural display, and stage entertainment, and lots of food then too. They used to be- Volunteers used to make their own food to be sold, as compared to these days, where you get professionals to buy the booth and they provide- or, for different organizations to buy a booth and provide their own thing. So, organization-wise, it worked a little differently.
LU: More volunteers.
KS: Pardon?
LU: More volunteers.

[01:50]

KS: Oh, more volunteers, and the- All the proceeds would be towards the Centre.
LU: Oh wow. And I've heard stories before about the nisei women who would come and volunteer here in the kitchen to cook giant buffets or dinners for different events and Caravan, what do you remember about that?
KS: Like I say, all the volunteers used to make their own food, sushi is made by them, tempura is made by them, in fact everything- teriyaki, everything is made by woman's federation, and- All the decorations or things l like this were all made by volunteers. While right now you have [mimes rectangular screen with hands] video big screen [and?] shoot this thing from Japan and that's fine.
LU: Oh wow. And what are some of your other favourite memories from working at the old Centre, how long did you work there for?
KS: Ten years.
LU: Oh wow. And did you have any famous people come in or visit?
KS: Oh, yeah well, we had the prince and princess. I don't remember their names off the top of my he-
LU: When did they visit?
KS: They visited- Oh, well, three or four times during the ten years.
LU: And how did you prepare for them--
KS: Prince Takamado, Takamado is one of them. And the princess who was the sister to the Emperor right now. I think she came. We had to prepare all those things.

LU: And how did you get ready for their visit?
KS: The money?
LU: How would you get ready? How would you prepare?
KS: Oh, well, we used to work together with the consulate, so whatever they wanted to do we will prepare the- Like, putting the flags up and prepared the stage. And if there's a bar to be made, we used to have a volunteer bartender and all that [laughs]. But there was a- Food was made by a caterer but nisei helped out the caterers. Things like that.
LU: So, you were able to meet them.
KS: Sorry?
LU: You met them. When they came and visited. You were able to greet them when they were here?
KS: Oh, yes. We used to have a reception at the old Cultural Centre sponsored by [begins to count on fingers] the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, the JCCC, and Shokokai, the businessmen from Japan, and JCCA. Not the NJCA, because the NJCA is after, so. So, we used to get together and provide reception. And we used to get maybe two or 300 people in the old building.
LU: Oh wow. And how many members were there at the time?
KS: Oh, we always had, in the old Centre, we used to have about three to 4,000 at all times. I say the whole time because they were required to be a member to take martial arts and different things, so once they are finished with that some of them continue to be a member, and some of them will just forget about it and be on their own, so. But we used to have three to four thousand in that category.
LU: Did you have anyone that was non-Japanese who would come to the Centre?
KS: Oh, yes, like in martial arts and taking cultural program. Half of them are- Half or more are non-Japanese, so.
LU: Oh wow. So, they're just interested in the- I guess in the cultural background. Oh, isn't that neat, oh wow.

[01:55]

LU: And what other stories do you have about the old Centre?
KS: Well, the old Centre sometimes the air conditioning- air conditioning is operated by water coolant, so the water starts dripping down, things like this [chuckles]. And the old water system- The pipe burst, and all the basement starts flooding. Things like this but there are present occasions too. Like, the backyard was designed just for- as a backyard, but we used to have several weddings there. Japanese weddings. And then, there was a tea house on the west side, where we had a Chinese marrying a German, in Japanese style wedding. Things like this that you hardly see anywhere else. So, the event is maybe not as refined, but nevertheless, I think we had a nice experience.
LU: Oh wow. It seemed very busy when you were there!

KS: Oh, yeah, it was alright.
LU: And after you finished at the Cultural Centre, did you retire then?
KS: After that I retired, yeah.
LU: And at the same time of your placement at the Cultural Centre in the 80s, redress also took place. And what were your feelings towards redress?
KS: Redress? Oh, well, actually, I wasn't too politically involved, so I didn't take part and then they didn't ask me to volunteer or anything.
LU: So, I'm just gonna pause for a second. [cut in video] So, you weren't actively involved, but your wife and brother were involved with redress.
KS: Yeah, my brother, frankly, is different from me, so he's still active in that kind of thing.
LU: What do you know about some of the roles that they played in redress?
KS: Well, of course, not that I wasn't there, they went to Ottawa to protest, things like this. I didn't go, but I took [interest?]. And when they start taking registration and all that, my wife used to help my brother-in-law, who is very active in that field, in helping in the registration and application and whatnot. And when they asked me to publicize, then I'll publicize whatever they wanted to. Things like this. But I never took part as the leader. But right now, I- We are really grateful for their effort.
LU: And there was also group meetings that they would have for the redress committee. Did your brother and your wife attend those meetings as well?
KS: My wife, I don't think my wife went to any meetings too much, but my brother used to attend. I'm not too sure how much involvement he was in, but I know he was involved in more than I [unclear].
LU: Oh wow, and-
KS: My brother-in-law was actually a real leader in that group.
LU: Oh, who was your brother-in-law?
KS: Frank—Harry Yonekura is my brother-in-law.

[02:00]

KS: He was very active and very- took action as one of the leaders.
LU: Ok. And just going back now to a few questions that I forgot to touch on earlier, but when you were growing up in Cumberland, and even when you moved to Lemon Creek and then to Japan, how did your family celebrate special occasions such as holidays, Christmas, New Years, birthdays?
KS: Well, we didn't have any birthday parties. I don't remember having any birthday party as myself. Especially me being 24, I'm always corresponding here [unclear words, motions hands in the air and laughs and falters]. But I don't remember having any birthday party as a family.
LU: So, what did you do for Christmas?
KS: Christmas, I'm not too sure. All I remember as a child is that we used to hang stockings on the front door [motions with hands] and there used to be a doorway, so

we would hang it up. And we used to be in the bedroom next to it. When I was old enough to don't bother with those stockings and all that, I was in bed sleeping and my older sister and my mother said, "Oh Kunio is old enough, I don't think he need to do the-" So, I start- I start crying [laughs]. Most kinds of things I remember was the- So, as far as Christmas was concerned, if we had stockings full of Italian chocolate and things like that then we were happy.
LU: And did you have a Christmas tree or decorations?
KS: I don't remember having a Christmas tree. Not in Cumberland anyway.
LU: And what about Christmas dinner?
KS: No [shakes head]. No. In fact, we didn't have too much Western style food, so we mostly ate Japanese food.
LU: Oh. Now, what about New Years? 'Cause usually New Years is a big tradition.
KS: Oh, yeah, New Years we used to go to a Japanese school to have a ceremony. And then we used to go around houses, friends' houses, to greet and say happy new year. And then- Well, we were too young to partake in any food and things like that, but our parents used to get *sake* and *kampai* and all that and go around houses.
LU: And did both your parents go around the houses, or just the father?
KS: Well, just the fathers, I guess.
LU: So, did you go with your father?
KS: Not every time, I don't recall going with my father.
LU: And who stayed at home?
KS: My mother. All the women used to stay home.
LU: And would you see her preparing all the food for New Years?
KS: Well, my mother used to prepare everything, I don't think she ever bought anything. Well, raw things she bought, but I don't think she bought any cooked things.
LU: What are some of your favourite dishes that you would eat for New Years?
KS: Well, as far as New Years is concerned, we used to make lots of mochi, you know. Three or four family get together and make mochi. Make about two or 300 pound- Within the four or five families we must make about 100 pounds each. So, that used to be our New Years celebration. Not that we did it on New Years Day, but maybe a few days ahead.
LU: And how did you make mochi?
KS: Oh, we used to pound them. And they used to steam it, steam the rice, and we used to pound it. Three people with a mallet [demonstrates pounding].

[02:05]

KS: Say in those days there were a lot stronger, you know all tough guys [flexes arms] so they used to go pow pow pow pow [imitates pounding with his hands]. So, like I say, making three or 400 pounds doesn't seem much but in just pounding, so it would take all day. Right now, you just put in the machine and it just-

LU: So, what else do you remember for special occasions when you were growing up? Did you get to celebrate anything else?
KS: Well, like graduation. Every grade you graduate and then you graduate into high school. That used to be one of the highlights.
LU: And what about other celebrations, such as maybe the emperor's birthday or-
KS: Birthdays, I'm not too sure, but New Years eve we used to take rifles and shotguns and [makes gunshot noise, and mimes shooting a rifle into the air].
LU: Really?
KS: Not just firecrackers- firecrackers, too, like I said, I put it in my pocket. But we used to get rifles and shotguns and go [imitates shooting gun].
LU: Oh wow.
KS: That's all I remember because everyone's in the country, so, everybody's got rifles and shotguns, so.
LU: Did you go hunting?
KS: Oh yea. I didn't but older men, they used to catch the deer and-
LU: Oh interesting! And one last question. Now, you mentioned before that you're Buddhist, but was religion always a big part of your family life?
KS: Not that much. Not that I know of. We didn't take any rituals during the day or when we go to [Royston?], of course, there's a ritual, but other than that, we didn't have any ritual. All we knew was that we were more Buddhist than-Within 30 or 40 families, I would say 25 were Buddhist and five were not Buddhist. But there's no-Everyone used to get together, they assumed the Buddhist community.
LU: And did you have a Buddhist church you could go to?
KS: No, our community didn't have a Buddhist church or a minister but in Royston, which is around three or four miles away. Royston lumbermill company, we used to have a Buddhist minister living there, and he used to come to Cumberland to teach Japanese language from grade 7 to grade 12, I guess.
LU: And do you have any other memories that you remember either about family history, or growing up, or the war days that you want to share before we finish?
KS: Well, I got- In Cumberland, I've never met them, but Yoshi Kuni used to be our next-door neighbor, and Yoshi Kuni is through second marriage, his mother used to be married to Saita. And Saita had two children, one boy and one lady. And Saita Aiko is a very well-known soprano singer, turned out to be. Well, she studied in Canada and then Italy or someplace where sopranos are headed, and she was a well-known soprano singer in Japan. She used to go to entertain the Japanese army people and all that, so. And then there was a doctor who was also nisei who went back to Japan and got conscripted and went to war in the Chinese conflict where he was killed in action.

[02:10]

So, those things I remember.

LU: Oh wow. And how do you feel now about the younger generations of Japanese Canadians?
KS: Well, I don't think we have a Japanese Canadian younger generation [laughs].
LU: And what do you think about sharing the history with them?
KS: Well, actually, they haven't asked, and we haven't talked to them too much about that. LU: Mm-hm. Do you think it's important for them to learn about it?
KS: Well, they should. But these days, they have their own lives, so. Now, if they're living in our own house, it might be a little bit different but they're all living in different houses now and they're independent.
LU: And if there is something that you could share with them and if you could tell them one thing, what would you tell them?
KS: Well, I would say, regardless of what, they still are Japanese, and the Japanese thinking is not 100 percent but there's a lot of good things in Japanese thinking.
LU: Wonderful, well thank you very much! I think we're all finished here, thank you!

[video cuts and camera starts again]

KS: You people might have mentioned about internment camp, I'm not too sure.
LU: About Angler? Just a little bit.
KS: Just a little bit, right?
LU: Yeah, there's not too many left.
KS: Cause sure there were maybe 25-30 and they'll be in the 90s and [motions with hands for emphasis].
LU: That's right. And so, what do you know about- about- What was the gentleman's name again?
KS: Eichi. E-I-C-H-I. Yoshikuni.
LU: And what happened to Eichi?
KS: Eichi used to be next door to us in Cumberland. And that family had four brothers, as Yoshikuni. And two other half-brothers and sisters. One is Saita and the other is a doctor, and the other is Saita Aiko, she is a very famous soprano singer who studied in Canada and then went to Japan. And she used to take part in entertaining the Japanese army. And Eichi is the eldest of the sons, who used to be a very- leadership type of person in Cumberland. I remember saying that he used to be quite strong and short-tempered, so they used to get into fights, and he was getting beat up. So, his younger [two?] brothers came to help him. And that's how close the family was. As I said he was short tempered, but he was very strong and quite intelligent, very intelligent. When the war started and everyone was being relocated, he was one of the prominent persons to oppose the government on that principle. And when- Of course, those people got sent to internment camp. Not just road camp but to Angler and the so-called prisoner of war camps. And he was still quite adamant in his protest.

[02:15]

And during camp, he took Judo as a hobby, and he was *sandan,* third-degree black belt and one of the things that not too many people mention is that he was one of the persons who was confined in solitary confinement, and I believe it was in [unclear] camp from Angler. And he stayed there, and he survived, and he went back. Actually, he was really admired by everybody. And that's what I remember, him, and he was my idol.
LU: Oh wow, thank you.

[End]