

Interviewee: Fumi Kono

Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda

Date: August 25, 2011

Location: Toronto, Canada

Accession Number: 2011-237

[Start interview]

Lisa Uyeda: Here we go. Perfect! So, today is August 25, 2011, and can you please start off by telling us your full name?

Fumi Kono: My name is Fumi Kono.

LU: And when and where you born?

FK: I was born in Vancouver, February the 8th, 1922.

LU: Wonderful. And can you tell us a little bit about your family history, and what your parents' names were, and where they came from in Japan?

FK: My father came from Kuba, Hiroshima, Japan, and my mother came from Shiwa, Hiroshima, Japan.

LU: And what were their names?

FK: Oh, my father's name was Hayato, and my mother's name was Misayo.

LU: And when were their birthdays?

FK: My father's birthday was September 10, 1883. My mother's birthday was January 30th, 1902.

LU: [chuckles] There we go. And what do you know about your parents and the family that they come from? So, starting with your father, did he come from a large family, was he the oldest child? Tell me a little about that.

FK: My father came from a family of four children, and he was the only boy. He had three sisters, two of them were older than him, and one was younger. And they had a farm, but it was a terrace farm, you know, on the mountainside. So, it was very difficult to make a living, and that's why he came to Canada. It was to support the family.

LU: And what do you know about your grandparents on your father's side?

FK: I know very little, except that my father's father died when he was only 13 years old. And then his grandmother- my grandmother had a hard time because, you know, four children and no husband. But he told me that the most scary experience of his life was bringing an oxen to plow the field. They had bought it, but he had to bring it home from another village, and he had to go through the mountain, and it was dark, and he was so scared, he said. He was so frightened at that time; he's never been frightened about anything else.

LU: Wow. And what about your father's educational background?

FK: [chuckling] He didn't like school, he only went to school for six years, and he used to play truant. And a doctor taught him to play *go* in Japan, and he used to go over his place and learn how to play *go*. He loved *go*!

LU: [chuckles]

FK: And when- in Vancouver, when he didn't come home 'til late, I said, "Mom, I saw him at *Taishiro* [?], watching somebody playing *go*!" [laughs] Well, late would be around when I'm coming home from Japanese school.

LU: [laughs] What about your mother's family?

FK: Well, I think when she got married, she only had about eight brothers and sisters, but they ended up with about ten children in the family, and she was the eldest.

LU: What was her educational background?

FK: Her education was grade six, but then when she wanted to quit, she said her father said, "No, no, you keep on." So, she said- she went to grade seven, I think, but she learned to sew Japanese kimonos. So, even now, you know, she can- Well, in Toronto, she could sew Japanese kimono. So that was quite a- and she could make futon, 'cause when she was ill, and I said, "I want to make a futoncover," she helped me, got up and helped me do it, yeah.

LU: What about her parents? Do you know any information about her family?

FK: Yes, her mother's brothers came to the [United] States.

[00:05]

But her mother's husband, when he tried to get in the States, they told her he has glaucoma and sent him back, that's how he ended in Japan. Whereas her mother's brothers were optometrists in the States, in California, Los Angeles.

LU: What was their last name?

FK: Itatani.

LU: Itatani?

FK: Itatani. And I've corresponded with a girl, a niece, but- then she said to come to California and visit us, and I never did. But she did, when my mother and father were going to Japan in 1952, I think, they came from- to California to- no- One was San Jose, and one was Los Angeles- they came to San Francisco to meet them, because they were getting on the boat from San Francisco. And they met them, and that's why they took a picture. [gestures to item out of frame] Yeah.

LU: [chuckles]

FK: So, her brothers are- Her uncles are in that picture.

LU: And when did your parents get married?

FK: [Was it?] 19- 1921. And I was born in 1922.

LU: And where were they married?

FK: They were married in Japan. But I don't have a wedding picture. [chuckles]

LU: And tell me the story on how the two of them met to get married.

FK: Oh, it was just- it wasn't a *miai* [arranged marriage] I guess, because she said that he came to visit her, and he said he wanted- he was going back to Canada and wanted to have a bride- wanted to get married. And so, that's how she met him, and

she thought, "Well, he's a kind person," kind to- not condescending, you know, because she was a [speaking Japanese]. So, she got married. And then she was more adventurous at 19, right? Besides, with all those brothers and sisters- She said everyday she was carrying her younger brothers and sisters and playing, you know, it wasn't easy. And she didn't like farming. [laughs] Well, when we went to internment, we had to farm! Yeah.

LU: So, they came to Canada-

FK: Vancouver.

LU: Vancouver. And do you know where they lived?

FK: Well, you know, first he didn't have a job, so they lived at this rooming house called Tsukamoto's, and he went to work and paid her whatever they were owed. They were so kind.

LU: Was it- Tsukamoto's?

FK: Tsukamoto. T-S-U-

LU: T-S-U-

FK: K-A-M-O-T-O. And there are children living here in Toronto. I think- the daughter is Tsukuda, and she's married to- Tsukuda.

LU: And when your parents first came in there, living in the rooming house, where did your father find a job?

FK: Oh, at a logging camp. And, you know, they were- I think he was a boom man, you know, the logs get stuck, and he goes out on the log and gets them unstuck. And once he fell in the water, he couldn't swim! But when he bobbed up, he got between the logs and was able to save his life. [laughs]

LU: Oh my goodness.

FK: Yes, he said he's like a cat, you know, nine lives. Yeah.

LU: That's a very dangerous job, though.

FK: Very dangerous! You know, boom man. [chuckling] I don't think he stayed there very long. But he said he learned to handle horses, you know, in the logging camp.

LU: And where else did your father work?

FK: Sawmill in Vancouver, he worked at a sawmill. And then he saved enough money to buy a store on Hastings Street, 575. It's a notorious place now. Princess and Hastings, it's called "Prostitute's Corner." [laughs] And I have a picture of that place!

LU: [laughs]

FK: I went to see it, but it's all barred, the store is barred. And the 575 numbers on the stairway- [unclear] Lillooet side, Lillooet side Vancouver is notorious. And see, when they chased us out, there was a Buddhist church down the block, now it's a Christian church.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: I went to see that, too.

LU: And where were you living when you were born? What street-

FK: I have no idea, but it's around- when I was born, I think around Pender Street. But it was a midwife named Mrs. Tanabe who brought us- my sister and myself, we

were all born by a midwife.

LU: Oh wow. Much different.

FK: Yeah, Mother didn't go to the hospital at all, and we were healthy children, so there was no problem.

LU: Mh-hm. What house do you remember growing up in?

FK: Oh, 575.

LU: Hastings?

FK: Hastings Street, yeah. And the other one, I have very vague memories.

LU: Do you need a glass of water, are you ok?

FK: No, I'm fine. I just- it's old age, [laughs] you cough all the time.

LU: [laughs]

FK: It really is.

LU: And what do you remember about growing up at 575 Hastings?

FK: Going to Strathcona School- Oh, going to kindergarten, United Church kindergarten.

LU: Oh.

FK: Because we had to learn English. Excuse me, I think I will get a glass of water.
[stands up]

[camera footage skips, footage resumes mid-conversation at 11:26]

LU: Oh, so-

FK: Casey Oyama [?].

LU: Oh. I know a KC Tsumura. [chuckles]

FK: No, this is Casey Oyama. And she was- she died very young, and we were very close friends, and I would- She'd say, "Come on upstairs," and I'd say, "Why?" [mimes holding a receiver up to her ear] "There's something that you can hear people's voices!" I said, "What?" And, you know, it was a short-wave radio or something, her brother had built it.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: And she had another brother who died early, too. I remember. Yeah. But her name was Hisako. But he never mentioned, Casey never mentioned her, but he married a girl from my class called Shiraka [?]. She had gone to Japan, and her- She had a brother and sister, they died, and she came back to Canada, and was an intern too, and that's how they met, Casey and Sachiko.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: But she doesn't know me at all. We used to- I used to go Strathcona, and then I'd have to walk down to Japanese school, but I didn't- I was too far from Japanese school, so I used to walk with her to her house, and she would go in and have a bite, and then we'd go to school together. But she doesn't remember me. But I do remember her. And now when I see her, she doesn't know me at all. [laughs]
Strange.

LU: What else do you remember about growing up in Vancouver and going to school?

FK: Going to kindergarten, and learning to sing "Jesus Loves Me." [laughs] that's the first song I learned in English, "Jesus Loves Me." But they were very good to us, you know, those missionaries, I think, taught us English. Ms. DeWolfe. I had a kindergarten picture, but I can't find it. [laughs] Lot of things got lost, you know, from when you were moving from Vancouver, internment, and here.

LU: Mm-hm. Did your parents speak English?

FK: Broken English. [laughing] My father would write cheques in English and, you know, it would be misspelt. "Dad, I think you've got it spelt wrong." But my mother, because she had a store, learned to speak some English, she could identify, you know, Sweet Caporal cigarettes and things like that. But she could understand us when we spoke English, but she never spoke English to us, you know.

LU: So, when you communicated with your parents would you-

FK: Japanese English. [laughs] And it was very butchered both ways.

LU: [laughs]

FK: Yeah.

LU: And-

FK: But mostly Japanese, I spoke to my parents in Japanese.

LU: And what else do you remember about going to school?

FK: Oh, the teachers were kind. You know, because these teachers had all Oriental children, they were so kind, and I'd- I'd hear the bell ring, and we were only a block away from Strathcona and Main Street, so she'd be ringing the bell and then say, "Fumi, hurry up!" [laughing] I'd be running up the street. But then we moved to Main Street, and it was much farther, yeah. But the teachers were wonderful, I think, they were so good.

LU: Do you remember some of their names?

FK: Oh yeah.

[00:15]

FK: The Grade One teacher was Ms. Johnson. Then I had Ms. Gross, and all I remember is she had a competition in the school, 'cause there was one girl- I forgot her name, but she was very good in math. She wrote a whole slew of math questions, you know, adding and subtracting, and said, "I'll have a race with you." And do you know that little girl almost won? [laughing] And then I remember the teacher bringing a box of chocolates and giving each one a box of chocolates- a chocolate. Oh, it was delicious. Then we had Ms. MacLean [?], and then we had Ms. Peelsworth[?], and Ms. Barker. And then we went to the seniors' building and we had another Ms. Johnson. I remember her as a very good storyteller, and she just told a story about Niki-niki-rambo [?], a Chinese story, you know, and the little boy died because his name was too long. [chuckles] She was a wonderful storyteller. And then I had Ms.

Clark, and Ms. Doyle, and she was a memorable teacher. She taught math and grammar. We were- She was so strict. But we certainly learned. And then we had Mr. Wiedrick [?]. And I learned that later, because he was German, he lost his job as a teacher and was driving a taxi. And one of my friends said she got on the taxi and recognized him. And said, "Mr. Wiedrick?" "Yeah, I lost my job when the war- " I didn't know that.

LU: Wow, that's incredible, that's shocking.

FK: I didn't know Germans were, you know, discriminated against at all. But she was shocked, too.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: Yeah.

LU: And what about your grade one teacher, when she was trying to pronounce your name?

FK: I don't know, really- and anyway, she said, "Fumie, you don't need the 'e' on the end." I said, "My name is Fumi-e." "Fumi." [laughs] She took the 'e' off! And that's why I'm Fumi with no 'e.'

LU: [chuckles]

FK: She never called me Fumie. Ah well, that's okay. [chuckles] I'm still Fumi and I don't have an English name; everybody tried to pin an English name on me, I said, "I like my name, Fumi, it's nice and short."

LU: And what were some of your favourite activities or classes at school?

FK: I liked music. [laughs]. I liked music. I liked most of the classes I had, except art. I was terrible in art. I can't draw, or paint, or anything. But I love looking at art and going to art galleries, I always visit art galleries, like Degas and Van Gogh, I've seen them. I like art. I like museums.

LU: Mh-hm. And how did you become involved with music?

FK: Oh, another girl said- when I was young, she said, "I'm going to a piano lesson, would you like to come and see me?" You know. And this was at the- I think the name was Higashi, he became a famous newspaper editor in- newspaper man in Manchuria for Japan, and he was imprisoned by the Russians. He- Very famous man. Higashi, I think. His father was a Salvation Army man, and at that place the wife was a piano teacher, the Higashi- and she said she was taking piano lessons, so I would sit there. [In one of the pews?] I think, and she would pay. I thought, "Wow! I'd like to learn the piano." So, I went home and told mom, "I want to take piano," said, "We haven't got the money." So, I didn't take any, but a friend of my mother's was a Japanese school teacher in Japan, and she said, "Let her take piano lessons, she'll be able to earn a living." So, my dad and mom talked it over, and she said that Mrs. Nishizaki [unclear], but she wasn't then- I forgot her name before- Her husband was an adopted son, and took this name, and then he went back to Nishizaki, so now I got all of them mixed up. But anyway, she told my mother to- "I know somebody who's taking piano lessons." What was this? Sumi or somebody. So, she introduced me to this piano teacher, Mrs. Bampton [?].

[00:20]

FK: And she was a wonderful person. And I really studied hard, I really studied piano. I was onto Grade 10, I got past it, and then the war started. I was already on my degree, piano pieces, so I couldn't finish it. But this music teacher wrote to me all the time going, "Try to pick up your piano," you know. And she went all over Vancouver looking for a cheap piano that we could afford. And she got one for us and sent it to us in Lillooet.

LU: Oh my goodness.

FK: So, I learned to play the- you know, kept on playing. And she would tell me what to do, and how to improve my music and that. But she never heard me. And then I took my theory exams with Reverend Lindt [?], I had to have a supervisor, who was a United Church minister. And she became very good friends with me, and she supervised my theory exam. And then Mrs. Bampton [?] got in touch with Reverend McClooney [?], and they got in touch with Thomas Shoyama, his family in Kamloops. So, I took my exam in Kamloops. So, I met Tom Shoyama's brother and his parents, and his parents were bakers. And his mother told me, you know, "When you garden, you have to make sure the plants always have lots of water." It's very interesting.

LU: Mh-hm.

FK: But I didn't know their son was in Vancouver university. And then he became a newspaper editor. And he became quite as a deputy minister for Trudeau, was it? Thomas Shoyama, very well-known. Anyway. And during the war- before the war, when they were having big meetings, my father would stand up and say, "You're not supposed to send men- young men with married family and small children to road camp. The young wives and the children need a father, send them together." Kept standing up, and they got so mad at him. They said, "The RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]'s gonna send you to the concentration camp." My father heard about it, got home, took a suitcase, and went to live somewhere else. And the RCMP officer once came over to my house and said, "Where's your dad?" "He's not home." They searched right through the house, under the bed and everything, went to the back door, and there was another RCMP officer. "He's not here," they said. And my father had just come in about a half an hour earlier to pick up more clothes [chuckles]. He just got away.

LU: Oh my-

FK: And then there was so much trouble that they decided to have a self-support. And then my father said, "We're going to self-supporting, 'cause otherwise they'll send me to concentration camp." And I said, "Where did you get the money? We didn't have that much money." He cashed in his insurance. In case he died, they had insurance to cover the family moving to Japan. And he cashed it in, and we got self-supporting. With no water, no electricity. We used to haul water from the tank.

LU: And that was in East Lillooet.

FK: East Lillooet. They had to pump up the water from the Fraser River, and we would have to carry the water in pails and take it home, put it in the barrel, and use it. We had to boil the water 'cause it would be dangerous. We didn't get sick. Some people did. [noise offscreen] That's the postman. They come any hour.

LU: [chuckles]

FK: We used to get them regularly around 9:30, 10:00, now they come at 10 o'clock, 12 o'clock, 5 o'clock. And sometimes- in the morning I find them there [?]. It's not good. [chuckles] Post office is very different than- next door, he works at the post office. He's gone to Slovenia for the summer. [unclear] in a computer.

LU: What was the post office like in Vancouver?

FK: I have no idea. No idea what it was like in Vancouver. I don't think we got much mail. There was nobody to write letters to except to Japan. My mother used to write to Japan.

LU: Mh-hm.

FK: I have a letter from my grandfather written in Japanese to my mother.

LU: Oh wow. [chuckles]

FK: But, you know, that old, and he still had enough education to write a letter.

[00:25]

LU: Before we finish talking about East Lillooet, I know we got distracted there, but let's talk a little bit more about Vancouver first, and-

FK: Vancouver Japanese school?

LU: Yes.

FK: We had a principal at Japanese school. Excellent principal, Mr. [Tsutae] Sato. And he used to keep in touch with the principal at Strathcona Public School. And eventually Mr. Brown was- I think became a superintendent of schools in Vancouver. He was a very kind principal.

LU: Mh-hm. And did you enjoy Japanese school?

FK: Well, I didn't mind it. I mean, I thought it was a lot of work. But I didn't study too hard until I was in grade eight in Japanese school. My- Girl who sat beside me- "Fumi, you study hard- [and you get *yuutousei* [model student]?]." I don't like studying Japanese, but I decided I should, and I got *yuutousei*, too. [laughs] And she is my friend, even now. Yeah.

LU: What were the classes like? Did you go every day after school or-

FK: Every day after school for about- well, first we went right after Strathcona Public School, then later, we went later, about 6:30. And then I went to the Buddhist school, and that was in the evening. I think so. [chuckles] Yeah.

LU: So, you wouldn't get home after school until very late.

FK: Yes.

LU: Mh-hm.

FK: But we didn't mind it, that was natural for everybody, so everybody did it, we

did it. We didn't complain. We thought we had to work too hard. [laughs] But it was no. If everybody else is doing it you don't- you may complain, but you don't mind.

LU: Mh-hm. What about the Chinese community? Did they have a Chinese language school that they-

FK: I have no idea. But Chinese people- you remember- remember men couldn't have wives come from- come over, and they married the girls that were very young. My Chinese- people, the people that were in our class got married very young. But we never kept in touch, but I heard some of them married very young, about 16, 17, they got married, yeah. Well, there were no brides, no women! And that was sad, that was not fair.

LU: And when you went to Strathcona, what other cultural groups were at the school?

FK: Oh-

LU: Was it mostly Japanese students?

FK: Japanese, Chinese, lot of Chinese. And there were some Jewish and Italian. That's what I remember.

LU: [chuckles]

FK: We got along.

LU: Mh-hm. And after Strathcona, what school did you go to?

FK: King Edward High School. And I went to King Edward High School and one of my friends at Cloverdale said she went, but I think it was 20 years later. [laughs] But did you know that King Edward High School burnt down?

LU: Mm?

FK: Yes, it burned- it was wooden, wooden floors and everything. Somebody told me it's not there- It was next to General Hospital in Vancouver. And it burnt down. It was a nice school; I liked all the teachers. But I- first year I took- Oh yeah, at Strathcona, I had- you know, we had to mark in grade eight what subjects we had to take in high school first year. So, my friend was taking commercial, [unclear] Barbara, so I was gonna take commercial, and then the principal said, "You should take the academic," and changed all my courses. [laughs] I didn't tell my dad, but I went- you know, I took academic. And then my father spoke to a friend of his and said, "Girls don't take academic, they don't go to university. Better go take commercial, it's much more useful." So, I had to change back to commercial. But you know, it was wise, because after the war, university education didn't mean anything for Japanese, we had to get jobs as a secretary and things like that. So, it was very useful. You never know- Oh, I resented it! I wanted to go to university. But my father, before he died, he said to me, "I should have sent you to university." I said, "Dad, I wouldn't have gotten married anyway, so what's the difference, right?"

LU: [chuckles]

FK: But I did get my BA [Bachelor of Arts] eventually at Toronto. [laughs] Took a long time, though, when you're teaching and taking night school. Takes a long time. [nodding]

[00:30]

FK: I didn't mind. I did a- I was a very stubborn type of person, so I would keep on studying. And then I cursed myself. [laughing] 5 o'clock I'm writing an essay; I can't write an essay! And some of my essays were pretty bad.

LU: [laughs]

FK: But I passed.

LU: And what were some of your favourite activities to do on the weekends when you weren't in school?

FK: Helping my mum and dad in the store. We didn't play around very much. Except when we were young, we did, we played baseball in the alley, and, you know, played with our neighbours, friends upstairs, you know. But we hardly ever played, we were studying all the time.

LU: Who were some of the people that you played with in the alley?

FK: The Nishino boys. [laughs] Yeah. And the girl, Barbara- sister, Barbara Nishino. But she was called Taeko, and another family friend, Yamashita. She became a Shibata when she married. And her sister was Tomicha [?], and she became a [Sue-ena?], I think. There was a lot of Japanese in the area, you know, the Nishinos [?], and Mashitas [?], and Sushimas [?].

LU: And what do you remember about the store? Can- what was the name of the store?

FK: In Vancouver? The stores we went to?

LU: The store your parents owned.

FK: Oh, we didn't have a name. It was just a confectionary store. You know, we sold cigarettes, candy, and newspapers. I used to read all the newspapers. San Francisco newspaper, Seattle newspaper, New York newspaper. I read everything, all about the Lindbergh kidnapping, and the Gloria Vanderbilt, you know, custody case. I used to know everything. [laughs] And movie stars. And my uncle came to live with us- you know, they were drafting young men, so the grandparents sent my uncle to Vancouver, and he said, "You shouldn't read those magazines. It's not good for you, movie magazines are bad." "Why?" You know, celebrities.

LU: [chuckles]

FK: He was very strict with us. He said, "Don't call him [oji-san?], call him [ni-san?]. [laughing] So, we still call his wife, you know, [shi-chan?].

LU: [chuckles] And how big was the store?

FK: Not very big. But the rooming house the Nishinos had, the rooming house was very big, and then the downstairs we had- my [?] grocery store, and there was a café, a pharmacist, this is under the rooming house, a pharmacist, and there was a dry-cleaner, a shoemaker, and a barbershop. All under that building. And was it ever handy! My sister got sick and the pharmacist- said he was once a doctor, but something happened, he lost his license, so he was a pharmacist- he got in touch

with a head of the general hospital pediatric, and he said, "I'm gonna get that doctor to come and see your sister." She had a problem with her kidney, and the doctor said- Mr. Cuffington [?], or something- "Send her to the hospital right away," and she was there for two weeks. She got well.

LU: Wow.

FK: The pharmacist was very nice guy. I don't know why he lost his license, somebody said he had. But he was very knowledgeable and knew all the- a lot of the doctors. We were just lucky.

LU: Mm-hm. And who else owned some of those stores underneath?

FK: I don't remember, we just used to call them [speaking Japanese]. [laughs] There was a Chinese, and a- well, the pharmacist was hakujin. Chinese, and there was another Japanese man who had a dry-cleaners, a Japanese woman who did the barbershop. I don't remember, but it's very interesting to have all those things, you know, close to us, and on the next block there were cafes, you know, restaurants, they were called cafes. And I didn't know that was a French word.

LU: [chuckles] What else do you remember about some of the stores in Vancouver?

FK: Well, we used to go, 95 cents day in Woodward's.

[00:35]

FK: We used to go every Monday, I think, 'cause there was a 95 cents sale. We used to go there, and my music teacher lived near a department store called David Spencer, and every time I went to the music lesson- not every time, but often, I used to take a can, and then go to the Spencer store, and they would make peanut butter. And I would take the peanut butter home, and we would have a fresh bread with peanut butter. Boy, did we ever like it! [laughs] It was a treat.

LU: [chuckles] When you were growing up at home, what were some of the foods that you would eat?

FK: I think very- Oh, we ate a lot of bologna. [laughs] 'Cause it was in the store. So, we had bologna sandwich and- I love bologna, even now. Oh, we could anything we want, you know, because it was in the store, bring it in and just eat it. We had a fridge- it was an icebox. A person used to bring a big block of ice, put it in the icebox, and then water would drip down, we'd take it out. So, we had milk, you know, butter and everything. You know, all the food available. We had potatoes and onions, we sold those, so. [shrugs] And there was a Japanese fish market, used to send people and take orders, and then they would bring the order. So, meat and things like that were brought. Or fish, fresh fish cut up, sashimi and that, they would deliver it that day. It was very handy.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: I remember that, Chucky [?] Fish Market.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: Yeah, it was quite a- it was not bad at all. I don't feel it was a bad life at all, nor a

difficult childhood.

LU: And what other stores do you remember in Vancouver?

FK: I think there was a 50-cent store, I guess it's a Woolworth? 'Cause Woodward's, and Woolworth's, 50 cent store was another. But I remember the- Barbara- the owner of the store had a daughter named Barbara; she got married so often.

[laughs] Well, with her- a wealthy heiress, right?

LU: [laughs]

FK: Well, I read all these magazines, right? [laughs]

LU: [laughs] And what about some of the clothing stores, do you remember any clothing stores?

FK: Well, we went to Woolworth's.

LU: That was a clothing store?

FK: We used to buy material and make clothing. When I was 13, I went to sewing school, Mrs. Matsuzaki. And she was- the building she had was a Heaps [?] Japanese Buddhist Church, and they had bought it, and made it into a sewing school, the Matsuzaki's. And I went there during the summer from the time I was 13, 'cause I had to make clothes for the family. And I learned to sew there. And then later on, I started going when I finished high school, started going to Mrs. Kita, another sewing teacher, actually very good. Learned more about sewing, too. It was an interesting- lot of girls learned sewing and had jobs as dressmakers, yeah.

LU: And how many siblings did you have, or do you have?

FK: Four. Four sisters. And when my father got the fifth one, somebody said to him, "Oh, you poor guy, no boys." And my father said, "They're healthy, and that's fine with me. I had only three sisters, so what do you expect?" [chuckles]

LU: [chuckles]

FK: It wasn't bad.

LU: Mm-hm. And- but you would make all the clothes for them?

FK: Sisters, yeah.

LU: That's incredible.

FK: Well, I enjoyed it. [points at something off-screen] I've got a picture of my uncle's wedding, and I made the clothes for all my sisters. My mother and sisters, yeah.

LU: Did your mother and father just work at the store?

FK: Yeah. But my father was very prominent in the community, and we- they had an organization so that all the grocery stores got together, they called it BC Purchasers, BC Purchasers. And they would go to the wholesalers and ask them to give them- if we buy, all of us buy from you, special discount.

[00:40]

FK: But when my father was negotiating, he had to take a man, Wakabayashi, I think his name was, 'cause he could speak Japanese and English, and then they would negotiate. And he got the discounts. And this was a good, or- Japanese co-operated,

they all co-operated.

LU: So, who initiated the BC Purchasers?

FK: I have no idea. Somebody must have been smart. But he became the president of that for several years.

LU: Your father did?

FK: [nodding, points to picture off-screen] Yeah, and then that's why we have the picture they gave to him when, you know, when somebody else took over. But my father was- He didn't go to church very much in Vancouver, he had no time, but when he came to Toronto, he became one of the heads of the Toronto Buddhist Church.

LU: Mm-hm. So, the BC Purchasers organization, did it- when did it end?

FK: Oh, when the war started. They had to give whatever fund was left, they gave it- they had asked the nisei to look after the fund. And the nisei was George Tanaka. And he was a baseball player. And when he wanted the job, people on- the Asahi baseball team was well-known, and a lot of people who worked at BC Purchasers belonged to the Asahi team. They got jobs, you know, delivering. And he wanted a job, but the other people said, "Well, he's got only one hand!" My father said, "He's got only-" - he lost his hand in a sawmill accident. But George Tanaka was a pitcher for the Asahi. "Anybody who can pitch for the Asahi should be able to work in this- in the BC Purchasers." He got a job.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: And when my father died, at the wake, you know, the *tsuya*, Mr. Tanaka stood there and stood there and wouldn't move for a long time. I said to my mother, "Why the man- who's the man standing there?" and she told me the story. Amazing.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: And he was a good pitcher. [laughs] We used to go to the ball game with newspaper. And on the hard ground we would sit and watch the Asahi play. I still like baseball. [laughs] My mother liked baseball.

LU: What was the excitement of the crowd like when you were watching the baseball games?

FK: Oh, we always clapped for the Asahi, and hakujin people started doing it, too, because they could steal bases. They couldn't hit home runs, but they were good at stealing, you know.

LU: [chuckles]

FK: I like baseball. [laughs]

LU: And when the Asahis would have a baseball game, was there a fee to go watch them, or tickets?

FK: No, no, no, everything's free. And then after the baseball game the Asahi players went to Shimada's, there was a store and they served a lot of pop and some milkshakes, and they got a free drink. [laughs] And that- their daughter was the one who was in my class.

LU: Oh wow. [laughs]

FK: I remember a lot of things about them, you know, but I can't remember what I ate yesterday. [laughs] Terrible.

LU: And your house at 575 Hastings, where the store was, did it have electricity, running water, and washroom?

FK: Oh, of course, we had everything! Yeah, we had washroom.

LU: What about the *ofuro*, the Japanese bath?

FK: We didn't have any *ofuro*, you know. We went to a Japanese bath. And one of the owners of the bath said, "Oh, don't you remember me?" I said, "No." They said, "You used to come to our Japanese bath." Five cents, and they gave us a towel, and we- five cents. Everything was five cents, right? We went to a movie, star movie, at Star Theatre, five cents. [chuckles]

LU: How often would you go to a movie?

FK: Oh, only at special times, we couldn't afford five cents. [chuckles] Christmas. Or New Years.

LU: And would you celebrate Christmas?

FK: We always did, celebrated Christmas. My father said, "We're Canadian," so- Easter, he always bought an Easter egg- he's a Buddhist but he's a Canadian. We celebrated all- Christmas, and Easter, and everything.

LU: What would you do for your Christmas celebrations in Vancouver?

[00:45]

FK: Oh, we made- well, in Vancouver, probably turkey- chicken. But then I learned to make turkey at the- when I was in Hamilton, or Ancaster.

LU: Would you have a Christmas tree or decorations?

FK: Oh yes, everything. We had a Christmas tree.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: And I still have decorations from the first Christmas tree.

LU: Really.

FK: Oh yeah. It looks shabby, but- [laughs] I always put it up, I had a Christmas tree. But this- nowadays I don't buy the real one, I buy- I have the artificial. And every year I think, "This will probably be the last time." [laughs]

LU: The Christmas ornaments, were they all handmade?

FK: [shakes head] Oh no, they were not handmade. But very breakable. They're interesting.

LU: And what about New Year's, what would you do to celebrate New Year's?

FK: We had Japanese- we had everything, sashimi and onigiri, my mother made sashimi- makizushi after 12 o'clock at night. She would have to close the door, and then she would make these things.

LU: She'd be up all night making-

FK: Oh, of course. [laughs] She never complained! And then we'd invite, you know, all the people in Japanese- they didn't have cars, they walked around and come- and

you know, Japanese, they keep pouring the sake? And I said, "Mum, you better stop pouring it, I think he's already drunk." [laughing] And my mother said, "Don't worry, Dad'll take him home," because my father couldn't drink. He didn't drink very much.

LU: No?

FK: If they were very drunk, he would take them home. No taxi. [laughs]

LU: Did your family have a car or a vehicle?

FK: No, we didn't ever have a- we never had a car. We went by streetcar or walked everywhere. It was good for us.

LU: What about a bicycle?

FK: I never learned to ride; I tried in Lillooet, but I fell down, so I quit. [chuckles] I never learned to ride a bicycle.

LU: And do you remember your first car ride?

FK: No. But we had a taxi, you know, Yama Taxi in Vancouver. If we needed a taxi he would take us anywhere, you know.

LU: And where would you go where you would need a taxi?

FK: Probably to the hospital. [laughing] That's about it. I don't remember getting in his taxi very often. But I think when we- my mother went to Japan and we had to pick her up, because of the luggage, we had a taxi, you know. And when my sister was three, she went to Japan with my mother and started speaking Japanese with a Hiroshima dialect. It was amazing!

LU: Oh wow. And did your mother go back to Japan often?

FK: Well, she went six times in all. Because she had a lot of brothers and sisters, they would really welcome her. And my sister- my mother's sister used to write, you know, "It was so nice to see you and walk around and remember things."

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: But when my mother died in 2004, two of her sisters, younger sisters, both died the same year.

LU: Wow. Did your mother ever mention if it was difficult to leave her family in Japan?

FK: No. She was glad to- [chuckling] Well, when you have so many brothers and sisters and were looking after them and farming. She says it wasn't hard. [laughing] I don't think she ever regretted it. But then she went back so often. They really welcomed her, you know.

LU: At that time, would she travel by boat?

FK: Yes. It took a long time.

LU: And did you ever go to Japan?

FK: Yes, I went twice. In 1963 with my parents, and then 1970, Expo, I took my niece and nephew.

LU: What was it like seeing Japan for the first time?

FK: I thought it was very interesting. When we went in '63, my sister and I went with our parents, and we went all over. But I found Kyoto fascinating. So, when my mother and father were staying in Hiroshima, we went back to Kyoto. I saw a lot

more things, you know- oh, we saw everything in Kyoto, we really enjoyed it.

LU: And what was it like to go to Japan and see, you know, all these Japanese people, and all speaking different dialects, and was it difficult?

[00:50]

FK: No, it wasn't difficult because we went to Japanese school. We could- but I thought Tokyo people spoke a little differently, you know, because then we went to Hiroshima- "Oh yeah, they talk like my mom and dad!" [laughing] Hiroshima-ben [Hiroshima dialect]. They talk more slowly, they said, "Hiroshima people are very slow."

LU: [chuckles] And- I had another question about Japan, but I can't- Oh, when you were there visiting Japan, did other people recognize that you were not from Japan?

FK: Oh yes. They called us , foreigners, because- I said, "How do you- why do you call us foreigners?" "You walk differently." [shakes head, chuckling] I don't know.

LU: Oh.

FK: I didn't think so. And some people thought we were Hawaiians, you know. No, we're Canadian Japanese.

LU: [laughs]

KF: And some people were surprised we could speak Japanese, too, you know, but it's okay.

LU: Mm-hm. And going back to Vancouver now, before we start talking about the war years, were there any other stories or favourite memories that you have about growing up in Vancouver? Family trips anywhere, or-

FK: Well, Japanese school used to have picnics, at Lynn Valley. I remember there was a bridge, and I used to look at it and I was so scared, but finally I started crossing the bridge, Lynn Valley Main Canyon. I was so scared. [laughing] My good- I hate heights!

LU: [laughs] And who would go on these picnics, just the students, or-

FK: Students of- after a certain age. The first ones were probably- the younger ones went to a park in Vancouver. But I remember going to Lynn Valley, you know, and the bridge. It was fun.

LU: Did you ever go to Stanley Park?

FK: Oh yes, we went. My dad used to take us to Stanley Park a lot. We used to see the cherry blossoms; we used to take pictures of the cherry blossoms. I've got pictures of dad- we were standing underneath the cherry blossoms. We went there all the time, to Stanley Park. It was easy, 'cause you could get on the streetcar, and it would just take you right to Stanley Park.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: It was handy. It was our treat to go to Stanley Park and Kitsilano Beach. And the treat at the Kitsilano Beach was potato chips. Oh, I loved it. [laughs]

LU: And would you go swimming? Did you learn how to swim?

FK: I didn't really learn how- well, I used to dog paddle. Because at Maclean Park in Vancouver was a playground, and there was a pool, and we used to just swim around. But there was no instructor or anything, and it wasn't very deep. So, we got wet, and then one day I went to get my clothes on, they were all gone! [laughing] Somebody had stolen all my clothes!

LU: Really?

FK: Yeah. I remember that. Holy cow. Well, people steal things in those days, right, because they were poor.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: I remember when my sister was going to kindergarten, I made a coat, a nice coat with a fur collar. She wore it to kindergarten once, and it was in the church cloakroom. It was stolen. I was so angry! [chuckling] But somebody had come in the church, and while we were in the kindergarten- the children were in the kindergarten, they took off with the coat. I have no idea. So, I know now that church is not the- even in church, people steal things, 'cause I heard in Calgary, one of the Buddhist church, people stole all their coats!

LU: Wow.

FK: And I heard *hakujin* people telling me that, you know, in church, you put the purse down, and their purse disappeared. You know, it's incredible what kind of people could steal. [shakes head]

LU: Was religion always a big part of your life?

FK: It wasn't. We had a Buddhist altar. A man had made- a friend of ours, Akasaka-san, had made the Buddhist altar. I still have it downstairs, the homemade altar. But when we went to Japan in 1963, we bought an altar, a really nice one. [points behind her] This is what I have here. But it was very expensive to send it, to ship it.

[00:55]

LU: Were your parents Buddhist?

FK: Yes. My- they were all Buddhist. My sister was Buddhist, the one that passed away, but I don't think her family is. In fact, I don't think- I think her husband is atheist or agnostic, or something. [chuckling]

LU: [chuckles] But you're still very active now with the Buddhist church?

FK: I'm not active now, but I used to be. I used to volunteer at the kindergarten at the Buddhist church, and I used to teach choir, and I used to teach seniors' choir, and I played the organ at the Buddhist church. Not anymore, [chuckling] now I can't do anything!

LU: Did you have a choir when you were in school in Vancouver?

FK: Oh, any choir there was around, I didn't care what it was, I would join the choir. And I remember they set up this- a nisei choir, and we used to sing at the United Church, and we were practicing in the United Church, but I was a Buddhist. And one of the little fellas said to me, "Fumi, we're Buddhist and we're singing in the United

Church.” And I said, “I don’t care, I’m singing.” [laughs] We used to sing hymns and that for the United Church, too. But we used to sing other songs. And the Conductor was Tats Sanmiya, he was a very good conductor. He was- at UBC [University of British Columbia], he was a principal actor in Mikado [?]. Very good musician, [unclear] a good conductor, too.

LU: Mm-hm. [chuckles]

FK: Choirs I love. [laughs] But I’m not a performer, you know. I play the piano, but only for myself. I still play the piano downstairs.

LU: Did you ever go see plays or theatre when you were in Vancouver?

FK: No, we never saw a play or anything. But here, I’ve been to a lot of things, ‘cause I like musicals, and operas, and ballets. I’ve been to ballet for 30 years. I love ballet. I went to see Billy Elliot, excellent ballet.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: And the principal- the children that played Billy Elliot were incredible. This man- this boy was 13, Marcus Pei, P-E-I, I said, “That boy is a ballet dancer.” Sure enough, he belongs to Canadian National Ballet.

LU: [laughs] Did you ever have dance lessons when you were a kid growing up?

FK: No, my father forbade me to dance. [laughs] He says, “It’s not nice.” Holy cow. [laughs]

LU: What about school dances?

FK: I never went to one. We were too busy going to Japanese school and everything, we never went to them. At Strathcona, when we graduated grade eight, we had made our own dresses and wore it for own graduation. You know how elaborate they are now. [chuckles]

LU: Mm-hm. And did you go to high school in-

FK: Yeah, I went to King Edward-

LU: King Edward, that’s right.

FK: And graduated there. And that was it.

LU: And did you have a graduation dance, or?

FK: No, they had it, but we never attended, no. There were a lot of- when I look at my graduation yearbook, I see all the Japanese boys in the same grade, and I never said hello to any of them. [laughs] Never! And until I graduated, and I looked at the book- hey, Ken Hori was in my class, even. But I never said hello to him.

LU: [laughs]

FK: Oh, that’s funny.

LU: Mm-hm. Just gonna check these ones. Okay. Just gonna pause.

[camera footage skips, recording resumes mid-sentence]

FK: [unclear], I haven’t thrown anything away. [laughing]

LU: [laughing]

FK: Oh dear.

LU: [camera clicking] Okay, here we go. And so- I believe we left off just talking about Vancouver, and when you were in Vancouver and the war started to take

place all around the world, and- 1939, was it, when the war in the other countries began- since you were always reading the newspaper, do you remember reading about the war?

FK: Yeah, but I wasn't worried about. I didn't think we'd have to be evacuated. Never thought anything of it. Until- the Chinese people kind of, you know, looked down on us after a while, you know, because of the war. 'Cause Japan was going into China causing a lot of problems.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: The atmosphere changed.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: Oh well.

[01:00]

LU: What about Pearl Harbor, the days leading up to Pearl Harbor?

FK: Oh, I was at my friend's. And this friend had a rooming house, we used to take our sheets, and they would send it in with the laundry, and I went to pick it up. And we were on the radio, and they said, "Pearl Harbor, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, it's going to be a war." [gasps] I ran home, you know, "Japan's at war!" Yeah, I was scared then. But then it faded away, you know. Nothing happened for a while.

LU: What was your family's reaction to the news?

FU: I don't think anything- nothing, you know, we didn't think anything could happen to us, that's why we weren't worried. Until they start having these meetings, big Japanese group had meetings, and we have to co-operate. And my father said, "Look,"- these people were leaders in the Japanese community. Thomas Shoyama, his family's in Kamloops, he's not worried. And the other people are not married, they have no family, they're not worried. But the people who are worried are the younger isseis, who had the young children, and he said, "Somebody has to stand up for it." And he got into trouble. [chuckles]

LU: What about curfews and blackouts, what do you remember about those times?

FU: I don't remember anything about the blackouts. You know, I don't remember closing the store because of the blackout.

LU: What were the hours of the store?

FU: Well, my mother got up at six, opened the store. My father- they both stayed up 'til 12 and closed it, 18 hours. So, my other used to take a nap in the afternoon, you know, my sisters and I would take turns helping in the store. We didn't have that big of a business, so- but we had all the food we wanted, so no problem.

LU: Mm-hm. And what about after Pearl Harbor, was the atmosphere different in the store? Did you lose customers, or-

FK: Oh yes, definitely. It really changed. Fewer customers, you know, you could tell.

LU: Really.

FK: Oh yes. Some people didn't have anything to do with it. But a lot of people were

Italian in our neighbourhood. And they came. They weren't worried. And they didn't get evacuated. [chuckles] Yeah.

LU: Did you lose producers of products that you would order and sell at your store, or was ordering your supplies okay?

FK: Well, you know, we couldn't get anything from the wholesales. I used to go and pick up stuff, buy stuff at the cheaper stores and bring it into the- [chuckles] try and [graduate the stock that got plated?] and we had to close it. And when I- my father wasn't there and I had to sell the store, and I went to several organizations to try and sell it, you know, they wouldn't handle it. And then a lady who said she would buy it. So, I went to her place, and she bought it. Just for the- I think she wanted the stuff that was in the store, not to have a business. I think they closed the store right away.

LU: So, there was till merchandise inside the store when you sold it?

FK: There was still some in the store, yeah. That's why she bought it. 250 dollars.

LU: For the whole store?

FK: Whole thing. Well, I'm sure she sold the counters and everything, right? That's where she got the money, she made money on it. 'Cause we had to leave all those things. And chesterfields and that, we had- the BC Purchasers had a place, and I think a lot of them were taken there, but we never got anything back. [chuckles] I think people looted it. We didn't get anything back, you know.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: But, you know, when your family's together you don't worry. That's the only thing.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: Nobody's hurt, so.

LU: So, when your father was standing up for keeping the families together, where did he go to stay when the RCM- when he heard word that-

FK: Should I tell you? [laugh] He went to stay at Miyake's [?]. And he was a member of- worked at the Japanese consulate. He knew everything that was going on. So, he went to stay there. So, that was good. We were close friends.

LU: That must have been quite scary, though, having the RCMP come and search your house.

FK: Oh yeah. Oh no, I wasn't scared, I was so mad at him! I was talking to him, and I said, "How dare you come and get my father? He didn't do anything wrong," you know. Oh, he says, [shrugging] "Can't help it." He wasn't a nasty person, no.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: And the RCMP that used to check our identification, they were all nice.

[01:05]

FK: I didn't meet anyone that was nasty or mean, no.

LU: When you had to go get your identification cards, where did you go to get them?

FK: I have no idea. I don't know when I- I know we took some pictures at the back alley, we took these pictures for the- and then took it somewhere and then got it-fingerprinted- we weren't scared, really. You know, when you have a family together, you're not scared.

LU: What would happen if you didn't have your identification card with you?

FK: Go to jail! Oh yes, people would go to jail.

LU: Really? That's incredible. And what about packing up all your belongings to take with you?

FK: Oh, I kept burning things in the stove, you know, we said, "Oh, we don't need these," and I'm so sorry that I threw a lot of things away that I wanted, that later on-but, you know, we couldn't take everything.

LU: Was it just papers that you were burning, or-

FK: Yeah, documents and papers and things like that, and we would throw it away. A lot of things went missing, but I have a lot of things that I thought I had thrown away.

LU: Mm-hm. What are some of the times that you did bring with you?

FK: Oh, my graduate- high school yearbook, and things like that. Had a lot of pictures of graduation. I thought I had quite a few things. I have my sister's kindergarten graduation picture, but I can't find my own! [chuckles]

LU: What about other family photographs, were you able to bring those with you?

FK: Oh yes. I have quite a few photographs from Vancouver. Well, not really didn't-we had those dumb box cameras, we didn't take that many pictures. I still have a box camera downstairs. [chuckling]

LU: [gasps] Do you?

FK: [nods]

LU: Oh my goodness.

FK: I've got Asian [?] things, right? Oh yeah, I have to throw those things away.

LU: Oh no, those are treasures now!

FK: [laugh] Old box camera.

LU: [laughs] Well, if you don't want your box camera anymore, our archives at the Centre would be happy to have them. [laughs]

FK: [laughs] Well, that's what my sister said. You know, when I die, my nieces and nephews were not- they've got a lot of their own treasures, [gestures at items offscreen] Japanese dolls- "Donate it to the Centre," she said, "And they sell it if they don't want it, you know." They have these special sales, and that." 'Cause these dolls were *hakata-ningyo*, they're very nice dolls.

LU: They're very nice.

FK: [gesturing] And these are dancing dolls, special dances. They were given to us. And those scrolls, sumi-e, you know there are sumi-e.

LU: Mm-hm, they're beautiful. I can't remember my question that I had asked.

FK: [laughs]

LU: Oh, items that you brought with you. So, did you have a lot of clothes that you

were able to bring with you, or pots and pans, cutlery? What were you able to bring with you?

FK: Not much of anything, no. Not much pots and pans or anything. And my father had bought a woodstove in Vancouver, and somehow, we had a woodstove in the kitchen and made wonderful bread and cakes. They were good.

LU: So, you were able to bring the woodstove to East Lillooet?

FK: I don't know, but it was there when I got there. [laughs] I don't know whether he bought it in Lillooet or whether he had sent- he certainly didn't send very much. And we didn't have much clothes in those days, very few clothes.

LU: What about a sewing machine?

FK: We brought it. Sewing machine we brought, 'cause I know I used it in Lillooet, yeah.

LU: What are some of the other big items that you had left behind or brought with you?

FK: We didn't bring very much. Very little.

LU: So, when you were planning to go to East Lillooet, did you know what to expect when you would get there?

FK: [laughing] No. We didn't know we were gonna live in tar-papered shacks. But it wasn't bad. We had a bedroom and a kitchen, living room, that's it. You know, all we did was play cards at night, no entertainment. We couldn't go to town to see movies or anything.

LU: Did they take away your radios or cameras?

FK: Oh, everything. They took away everything. But- maybe not the camera, 'cause I have a box camera.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: I think people snuck these cameras and that, but there was no film, right? But some people had- one of the girls' fathers had a pharmacy, and I think he had done films, so, you know, he gave us some film to- so, we have a few pictures of Lillooet.

[01:10]

LU: Oh wow. There aren't very many photographs of Lillooet.

FK: No.

LU: No.

FK: And we had a chicken coop. Chicken coop, and I used to get up at six and feed the chicken. We had a lot of chicken.

LU: Really?

FK: Yeah, I used to feed them. So, we had fresh eggs and chicken. The first time my father killed a chicken, I said, "You can't kill her!" [laughs] "Well, what are you going to eat?" I was feeding it every day, you know. Oh gosh, and- We had a goat.

[laughing] My mother and Mr.- [laughing] the drugstore man- anyway, they bought a goat. And the- and the goat had a baby goat! And my mother says, "Oh no," 'cause

they had it tied up in the hill, and took it down to the field to feed. We used to get the milk. And they made the most wonderful baked butter biscuits, very rich. [laughs] Then we had to give it away, or give- sell it to a farmer, or something. We didn't keep the goat. [laughs] Oh, we went- then the men started the tomato farming. So, we had tomato farming, and the young people went picking tomatoes. And we had this huge bucket, we used to pick it and put in the bucket. And I think most of these farms were owned by Chinese, too. And they said, "You're the best workers." They had these Native Indians. They would work for a while, get the pay, and disappeared for a while. [chuckles] But, you know, I don't- I think the Indians were mistreated, that's why they were like that. [chuckling] They were paying them back. And there was an article in one of- one of my things about Lillooet this newspaper reporter from Vancouver came to see our- the- you know, East Lillooet. They were surprised at how well-kept it was, and how clean- and we had huge sun- it was very hot, we had sunflowers grew up over the window, very big. She said, you know, they said it was amazing how the Japanese kept their homes nice. [chuckles]

LU: Mm-hm, that's incredible.

FK: Chicken coop all over the place! [laughing] And our outhouse was way up on a hill! We had to go up on a hill to go to the washroom. But our one- they said our outhouse was the cleanest, 'cause they're from the city, and the children wouldn't bear to stand the stench, so they had built it of wood and very deep. Put lye on it. And the mothers went over, cleaned it all the time. So, it was nice.

LU: Mm-hm. [chuckles]

FK: So, we had to go to an outhouse. Hot water from the tank. We did it. I went down to the river once and took a clothes boiler. Put water in, and was climbing [?], and my hand stuck to the metal, right? It was so cold. [chuckles] Oh my goodness, that's dangerous, yeah.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh my goodness.

FK: What an experience, eh? For a city person.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: I don't know, but we learned a lot, we learned a lot. It was good.

LU: What about bath?

FK: Oh, we had somebody- you know there were carpenters and all kind of people? So, the carpenter came and a built an *ofuro*. We had an *ofuro*, a Japanese-type *ofuro*. And you put the fire underneath. Well, we didn't have much water, right? So, we got the water, then used it for a long time, then it started to stink. [laughs] But we never wasted the water, yeah. We had drinking water though, later on. They got from I think the city or something, this boy used to deliver drinking water and charge us a certain amount, yeah. We used to buy the water, clean our water, we managed.

LU: What other fruits or vegetables would be growing around in the area?

FK: Oh, everything! Lillooet was wonderful for growing things. We grew watermelons, cantaloupes. Yeah, it was hot, very hot.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: Very- my sister used to go and water the garden, but I never went out to water. [laughs] She liked gardening; she still likes gardening. I love gardening now, but you know, it's nice to be outside.

LU: Mm-hm. And was there a store where you could buy groceries?

FK: Well, the city had a store- the town had a store. And two people used to come twice a week and take orders, and then somebody would deliver.

LU: Oh.

FK: That's how we got things from the store.

LU: And were certain items rationed at that time?

FK: Oh, lots of things were rationed! Sugar and certain things, you know? I think lots of things were rationed. My- the music teacher wrote to me, you know, all the things that were rationed.

[01:15]

FK: Gasoline was rationed; people couldn't go out on the town because no gas. [laughs] It's very interesting to read the letters, how times changed, you know, during the war.

LU: Mm-hm, oh wow. And what about sweet treats or candies for children or-

FK: Well, the store, you could buy some from the store if you want. But it's only at Hallowe'en, we would make *manju* and things, and the children would come around. It's nice. They- the children enjoyed their- you know, staying in Lillooet. It was lots of fun 'cause of the hill side, they would toboggan down the hill, across the highway and down farther. There was a highway, but very rarely there was a car.

LU: Oh my goodness.

FK: [laughs] Oh boy. And you know when the highway is a- Fraser River, and like, if you misstep, you're down the river. When you're driving, and then- I said, "Gee," you know, we used to be scared to look over, like the side of the truck, could see right down.

LU: [gasps] My goodness.

FK: [shakes head]

LU: What about Japanese food? Were you able to get rice or shoyu? Miso, tofu?

FK: I'm sure we did, 'cause we had rice. And the shoyu- I don't know about shoyu, but there was somebody who made tofu and *age* in the village. And I told the man- the mother, "Do you make tofu in Vancouver?" And she said, "Are you kidding? It's hard, hard work," she says, "It's very hard work." [shakes head]

LU: Oh wow. What was your first impression when you saw Lillooet? And how did you go from Vancouver?

FK: Well, we went to Squamish. So, I must have gone by boat to Squamish. And from Squamish we went on railway, and up to Lillooet. And when we got there, it was night, and the men were with lanterns, [mimes holding up a lantern] to come and greet us.

LU: Really?

FK: Kerosene lanterns.

LU: Were there already other Japanese families there?

FK: Oh yes, there were other- 'cause we went in August, I guess, and earlier people had gone. There were a lot of people there already.

LU: That's a long time between Pearl Harbor and August?

FK: August of 1942? Yeah, quite a bit.

LU: And how come there was such a long delay between-

FK: Because Vancouver people were sent later; other people were sent first. You know, the Island, and the Prince Rupert area, they were sent to Stanley- Hastings Park and then shipped out earlier. And that's why when they got to their destination, they had no houses. They slept in tents, some of the people.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh wow. And did you have to share a house with another family?

FK: No, we didn't- we built our own house, so each person had his own house.

LU: Oh, you had built your own house?

FK: Oh yeah. The government wouldn't do anything for us. But in the wintertime, I was so cold- we'd see the icicles on the window inside the house. [chuckles] Yeah.

LU: Oh my goodness. And how would you stay warm in the winter?

FK: Oh, we wore everything we had to bed. [laughs] Pajamas, and stockings, and sweaters, and everything. That's how we kept warm.

LU: Oh my goodness.

FK: And it was- supposed to have been one of the coldest winters, and the hottest summer we got. And in the summertime, we had a basement, we would go down to the basement.

LU: Oh, you had dug out a basement?

FK: Big basement downstairs. Well, no freezer or anything, had to put in the basement. And you know, when I went to Lillooet for a visit, long after, the house wasn't there, but they had built another house right on the same spot. And there were trailers- apparently, it's developed now, that area, East Lillooet area. And they've got a new bridge, I think.

LU: Wow, that's fascinating.

FK: Four miles to Lillooet. And I used to walk there, sometimes. There's no transportation, I walked there to take an exam. I walked back, and my mother would make *manju*, and come and have my sisters meet me. Yeah. No, we weren't scared.

LU: Did you ever have interactions with the RCMP or BC Security, that kind of thing?

FK: Well, they came to the school, and we had to say ident- you know, get stamped. That we were still there. [chuckles]

LU: Oh my goodness. Did they have a station set up, though? Where they would stay?

FK: Well, they would do it at the school.

LU: Hm, wow.

FK: We built our own school. And we opened it March the 3rd, 1943.

[01:20]

FK: And they asked me to teach, and my- they said, "We can't pay you much." And my dad said, "You don't have to pay her anything." [laughing] They said, "Okay, we'll give her five dollars a month." But they upped the pay right away, you know. After I taught for a while. But I taught 'til '46. I enjoyed it so much.

LU: And who was teaching with you?

FK: Hideo Hiraki, and he comes to the Centre a lot, and Dorothy Okuma, the three of us taught. But before that, they had a school in a tent. But I never taught there, but somebody who- a pupil who wrote, reminiscing about that, said that I was in the tent, and I never was. [laughs] How your memory can be different, you know? But she was very young.

LU: Mm-hm. And how long did you teach there for?

FK: Well, 1943 to '46. But one summer, we taught for six weeks, summer. Because we wanted the children to catch up, you know, from- we just taught from March, so we wanted to finish the year, so we did. But we got these correspondence courses from Victoria. They were excellent. Very good courses, I thought. I thought they were good.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: And the Reverend- Reverend Lindsay got us an organ. And I used to play the organ, and we would sing. So, I taught a lot of songs to the children. It was fun, you know. We put on a play, Christmas Carol. [laughing] Oh, it was funny. We made a chicken out of a paper bag. And you know what, I had a class, very few pupil, four or five pupils in each class, and among them, this one class, one's a doctor, one's a dentist, and one went to university and her daughter is a writer- McAllister. So, you know, they did well, some, but- it's not me, it's the high school, they- later on, they could go to high school. And they remember their high school teachers better than their public-school teachers, and they used to bike to high school from Lillooet, four miles, they used to bike.

LU: Wow.

FK: Every day.

LU: That's far, my goodness.

FK: Four miles, yeah.

LU: Mm-hm. Wow.

FK: [chuckling] But an experience, quite an experience.

LU: Where did all the school supplies come from?

FK: I don't know, I think we bought them. I know the only library we had, we had the Book of Knowledge. [laughs] Those were the only books we had. We didn't have much books. I don't know how we got the regular textbooks, though. We used mostly correspond- and when I had to write tests, I didn't have a typewriter. And I would go to Tanakas, and then I would type these tests with carbon paper and make three or four copies every time. And the lady always served me a cup of tea

afterwards. They were so kind. And I met the son, and I said, "My, your mom and dad were kind." They were so good to us.

LU: How many families were in East Lillooet?

FK: I have no- I think it was about- quite a few- we had- about 300 people were there, yeah. Well, there was a Haney side where- farmers from Haney were on one side. And the farmers- Steveston people and the city people were on the other side. And when we were gonna build the school, a lot of people said, "They're not gonna- War's not gonna last long, we don't want to contribute to the school." When we got the school built, some of them started sending their children to the school.

[chuckles] You know, I thought, "Oh, that's funny."

LU: Oh wow. It's interesting to see how everything can develop with so little when you're-

FK: Oh yeah.

LU: When you have to.

FK: You make do with everything. We grew a lot of things, we enjoyed fruits and vegetables, so. We didn't starve; we had chicken. We had good food. Healthy food, right. And the children were very active. There's nothing else do, but they biked around, all of them. And they played baseball. And one of the men who started the ball team was Koichi Kaminishi, he was part of the Asahi baseball team, a younger member. So- and he still plays baseball, I think in Kamloops. [chuckles] Yeah.

[01:25]

LU: And what would you do with your spare time when you had a free moment?

FK: Nothing. [chuckles] I had no spare time, I was teaching school and practicing my piano. My sisters were working, doing housework. You know, after a while, Mr. Yasura, who was a coordinator for everything, he spoke English, came from [unclear]. So, he got in, you know, he talked to people in the town, and people- there was one teacher- was he a principal or something? They had five children. So, they needed someone to do the housework, so my sister went to do housework.

LU: Oh.

FK: So, two of my sisters were doing housework.

LU: And would they live at those houses while they were there?

FK: Yes. They had to live there. So, they came home on weekends, and I would bake things, and we would play cards, you know, went to one of the Careys [?] place and we would play cards. I learned to play cards, but I hate card games, [laughs] I always lost. I still don't like cards.

LU: [laughs] What types of games would you play?

FK: Canasta. We played a lot of canasta.

LU: Oh, I don't know that game.

FK: [laughing] I don't either. My- [points at object offscreen] that nephew says, "Why

don't you learn to play poker? I got a book, *Poker for Idiots*." [shakes head] I couldn't understand it. [laughs] I can't play poker either. But it's very popular now.

LU: Mm-hm. [laughs]

FK: I'm not a card shark.

LU: And what about your other two sisters? Did they work or stay at home?

FK: Well, two sisters were young, they were still in public school.

LU: Oh, really?

FK: Yeah.

LU: Oh, they're that young.

FK: They were young, they were quite far apart.

LU: Mm-hm. And what about your parents, what were they doing with their time?

FK: Farming. [laughs] Farming. They did farming, you know. A lot of time in the summer- wintertime, noting to do, so they would- somebody had a short-wave radio, and you would hear news about Japan. And they said, "We need one." I said, "Go on," [waves hand] 'cause we got the newspaper from Vancouver, and we would read the newspaper. My dad and I would disagree because he heard the short-wave news. [shakes head]

LU: Did your parents expect the war to go on as long as it did?

FK: Oh no, I don't think so. I don't think anybody expected it to go on so long. No, it was all unexpected, but they all were willing to cope. They didn't grumble about anything.

LU: Were there any problems with East Lillooet that were-

FK: Oh, they wouldn't let us into town for a while, right? We couldn't go to the movie or anything. But later on, we were good business, so they allowed us to go to the movie. [chuckles]

LU: What about the interactions of the RCMP or the BC Security? Other than meeting with them at the school to check in-

FK: Oh, no problem.

LU: No problem?

FK: [shaking head] No problem at all. The police were nice, you know. And the people became very fond of us because it was good business, right? We always paid for everything cash.

LU: So, East Lillooet was a self-supporting location-

FK: Yes.

LU: How much would it cost to stay there?

FK: Nothing, because we made our own vegetables and everything. We paid our- we didn't have to pay anything- apparently, they leased the land from a farmer, okay, so I don't know what that would cost.

LU: Mm-hm, oh my goodness.

FK: [chuckles]

LU: And did your parents work in order to make a little bit of money? Or did they just-

FK: Well, they had to farm, that's all. There was no other job.

LU: Oh my goodness.

FK: [chuckles]

LU: It's incredible how different it is.

FK: Oh yeah, it's hard to believe, isn't it?

LU: Mm-hm. Were you able to order items through the Eaton's catalogue or-

FK: Oh yes! We loved the Eaton's catalogue! That was the only- we'd go through and buy things. It was wonderful.

LU: [chuckles] And when the war was coming to an end, did you know that you would be leaving soon, or did you-

FK: I think the police told us that we'd either have to go to Japan or go out East. And we were scared. But we decided we'll go East. My father said, "These children don't speak Japanese very well, we wouldn't- they wouldn't be accepted. So, we stayed."

LU: Did a lot of families in East Lillooet go out East, or got to Japan, do you know?

FK: Well, some people did go to Japan. I remember one girl, she was going to Japan, going on the boat or something, and she wrote me a letter from there, you know, she said, "I'm gonna miss you so much."

[01:30]

And she went to Japan, and she had to work on the railway, you know, the ties and everything, oh, she had to work hard. And then she made a- met a soldier, got married to him, came back to Canada. But I never met her again. She didn't try to seek me out. I didn't even know she was here.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: But her husband went to the Redress rally, and somebody told me he was her husband.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: I was sad that I never met her again, you know. But her brother was [Jack Kawaguchi?], Kawaguchi, he went to Japan and became a doctor. I've never seen him again. But he wrote to us when he came out East first, he was going to university- to the three sisters. [laughs] Oh gee.

LU: And did you- your family was still in Japan during the war years?

FK: No- oh-

LU: Well, you're not- well, I guess your parents' siblings. [unclear]

FK: My parents' siblings are all in Japan.

LU: Mm-hm. And were you able to correspond with them at all.

FK: No. Never talked. And the letters we used to wrote to my music teacher, letters were censored, everything's censored. I got the, you know, envelope with the censor on it. They opened everything.

LU: My goodness. Was your music teacher still in Vancouver at the time?

FK: Oh yeah. Oh, she was in Vancouver, and she wrote to me. Wonderful teacher. I

kept in touch with her for a long time, but the last letter she wrote, she said, "My hands are so sore," and everything. I'm sure she had a stroke, but her family never let me know that she had passed away, so I didn't know. But I knew that she was not well.

LU: Mm-hm, oh wow.

FK: I met her, though. She went to Europe- I think her son was playing, he was pianist, and he accompanied people, became quite well-known. But she came to visit him, and then she was going to drop in in Toronto. Oh, and once she came, and I invited her for dinner, yeah. I was so glad I did, yeah. But the next time she came she said she couldn't stop in, so she was sorry.

LU: Mnhm. Was she- it sounds like she was only a few years older than you.

FK: No, she was much- she had white hair when I met her the first time. But I don't know- some people get white hair so early. But I think it was her second marriage, because she always called her husband Mr. Bampton[?]. [chuckling] But I have a picture of him in his uniform, and I don't think he ever went overseas, but he stayed in Vancouver, or Hastings Park, or wherever else they sent him. And- to train people. And his son, Derek, became quite a well-known musician, and he accompanied singers. And he accompanied Maureen Forrester, who was a well-known singer.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: I've got a picture of her husband and his son.

LU: What other memories do you have of East Lillooet? What are some of your fond memories of spending time there?

FK: Well, we went- I learned to dance. [laughs] I learned to dance. We had a gramophone, and we put on some dance- and I learned some popular songs, I had never sung popular songs. And then we went down to the beach near the Fraser River, and the- some of the boys were swimming, but the Fraser is treacherous, you know. But we had fun.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: Those were the fun times! [laughs] I got pictures of the boys, you know, fooling around.

LU: And who brought the music?

FK: Pardon?

LU: Where did the music come from? Who brought the music?

FK: Oh, some people had the records, and they brought it from Vancouver, on the record player, right? I still- you know, a few years ago the record players were very popular because they were reviving these- I bought one of them, my nephew bought it for me. And I have only used it once. [laughs] And I've got so many records, classical music. They're all downstairs, you know, they- I don't know what they're- 78, or what. Record player.

LU: Oh wow. [laughs]

FK: I got lots of old stuff.

LU: And when your family was preparing to leave East Lillooet, how did you prepare, and where did you decide to go out Lillooet?

FK: Well, we came out first, we were in Ancaster.

[01:35]

FK: And then we did housework. Then we moved to Hamilton, and we were working in the garment industry. And we had a friend, the Yamashitas, we stayed there for a while. And then my father came up to see what it was like. And he came to Hamilton, Montreal, and Toronto, and he said, "They told me that Toronto's the best place for jobs." So, he decided to come to Toronto.

LU: And when did you leave East Lillooet?

FK: I left in '46. My sister and I came to do housework, and my parents left in '48.

LU: And how long were you doing housework for in Ancaster?

FK: Six months. We- that was- we had- that was a limit. But we were not gonna stay there. [laughs] Six months was enough. But you know, every experience is good for you. You learn something. And I learned to cook turkey. [laughs]

LU: You mentioned before that you've never done housework before that.

FK: [chuckling] I never did any housework. We just cleaned the house and, you know, wiped the floors or something, that's about it. Didn't do anything.

LU: Mm-hm. And were there children that you would have to look after?

FK: No, no children. They were all married, and they were married to very wealthy families. Their sons and their daughter were very- because when the daughter was having a child, she came to her mother's place, and they had a nurse come and look after the baby and everything, so. [shakes head] They were very wealthy.

LU: Mm-hm. How much were you paid for being a house-girl?

FK: I think it was 50 dollars for room and board and housework, yeah.

LU: Oh, for the month? That's quite good.

FK: For the month, yeah. I think so, I'm not quite sure. [laughing] I can't be sure.

LU: Mm-hm. And which sister was it that went with you?

FK: The second sister. She and I were close, you know, we're close in age, year and a half apart, so we came together. [laughing] And at first, we were so homesick, we had a single bed, we slept together. And then there's a- you know, there's another room with a bed so we'll sleep separately. We were homesick.

LU: Well, it's quite far away from East Lillooet.

FK: [nodding] Oh, yes, very far away.

LU: Were you able to correspond with your parents from your [unclear]?

FK: Oh yes. [nodding] We wrote to each other.

LU: What was your parents' reaction to the separation?

FK: Oh, I don't think they minded because they- we didn't want to go to Japan. So, they knew there was no other alternative. [shakes head]

LU: Mm-hm. And when you went to Hamilton, what did you do in Hamilton?

FK: Oh, I worked in the garment industry. And I met a lot of issei women who were very kind to us, very nice women. They brought me shoyu, you know, would bring to the factory or rice or something, they told us where we could buy them and everything. Oh, they were kind people.

LU: And was it difficult to find a job and room and board when you left Ancaster to go to Hamilton?

FK: No, because we had friends in Hamilton, and they were working at the garment factory, so they, you know, they introduced us, and we got jobs. My sister- Was it in Hamilton? She worked for the, I think T. C. Richardson, it was a brokerage. She didn't work in the garment industry; she worked as a secretary.

LU: Oh. And where did you find room and board?

FK: This friend, Yamashitas, said there was a place where you could get- rent rooms. We didn't stay there very long, 'cause as some of the- one of the rooms was empty, we went to Yamashitas; we stayed there. They were so kind. Really- the mother was really kind. And we knew them in Vancouver, so they were really kind.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: But- it's too bad, I used to correspond with their daughter for a long time but recently she's moved to Macassa Lodge, and I haven't heard from her. [shakes head]

LU: Mm-hm. And how long did you stay in Hamilton for?

FK: 'Til 1948.

LU: And that's when your parents went to-

FK: Came- they came- my dad and I got a house on Lansdowne, 804 Lansdowne, near Bloor. Near the- across from the car bar. Very noisy area. But it was a three-storey house, and when we bought the house, we rented the second storey.

[01:40]

FK: There was a- Iwabuchi [?], this guy who gave us the ballet, ballet dancer-

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: He was living there, but he worked at night. So, he came home during the day and slept, and we were- nobody was home. And there was a Kawaguchi, and they rented the bedroom and a kitchen. So, you know, that's how you paid a mortgage and everything.

LU: Was it expensive to buy the house?

FK: 7000 dollars. On Lansdowne.

LU: That's a lot of money at that time.

FK: [laughs] Oh yeah. With this house, when we bought it, it was 20,000.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: But I've renovated a lot, and cleaned up, and removed, and repaved, and- you know. If you buy a house, you have to take care of it.

LU: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And when you were in Toronto, living at Lansdowne, what was the Japanese community like? Was everyone dispersed, were you all together?

FK: No, we had built the Buddhist Church. And my father went around and collected donations so they could build a church. And some of his friends were not Buddhist, but he said, "Listen, we don't have a community centre. You can use it." So, they contributed. So, a lot of Christians contributed to it. And later on, I met one of my friends, and she was doing haiku. She was a Christian, but she had a haiku club at the Buddhist church. It's amazing, everybody used it until they built the centre.

LU: Is it the same location now, for the Buddhist church?

FK: No, the Buddhist church was on Bathurst.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: And now they're on Sheppard and Allen.

LU: Oh, so they moved.

FK: Oh, they did. They had to move because Bathurst was becoming deteriorated. And I- I didn't want to, because it was so easy to get to, but- you know, Sheppard and Allen is much more difficult. But it's a nice church.

LU: What happened to that church?

FK: I think some kind of a- some kind of an activist group or something, bought it, somebody wealthy bought it. I don't know what it looks like now, though. It was built very nicely, they had a little rock garden and everything, but I think they got rid of that and changed the church, too.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: Everything changes; it has to.

LU: And where is the church located now?

FK: Sheppard and Allen. Near the subway station.

LU: Oh wow. And what about getting together with other Japanese individuals? What else would take place at the Buddhist church?

FK: Bazaars, eh.

LU: Bazaars, oh, tell me a little about the bazaars.

FK: My mother used to work at a brassiere factory. And some of these women were Christians and that. And all these women would go to each other's bazaar: Anglican bazaar, United Church bazaar, Buddhist Church. It's nice, lot of friends.

LU: Mm-hm. What about for some of the younger ones, as well, or individuals your age in their 20s, what would you do for entertainment to get together?

FK: They had a club at the church, you know. *Bukkyo Seinen Kai* [?] [Young Buddhist's Association]. My sister's group, which was much younger, they had a club called Club [A-mi?]. And I think they had dances and things, too, I don't know.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: And the Japanese community used to have- go to the Ukrainian hall and have dances.

LU: Oh really?

FK: Yeah.

LU: And did you ever go to the dances?

FK: Yeah, and I was a wallflower. [laughs] I couldn't dance for beans! I remember- I

hate dances!

LU: Were a lot of people there?

FK: Oh yes. You know, there was nowhere else to go and have entertainment, so they went to the dances. [chuckles]

LU: Mm-hm. [chuckles] Was it just the Japanese community or was there anyone else?

FK: No, just Japanese, just Japanese. It was a very integrated community.

LU: Mm-hm, oh wow.

FK: [laughs] I think that was the only kind of fun that we had at that time, you know. And then the Cultural Centre was built, and it was nice, there were other different kinds of things that went on, you know.

LU: Mm-hm. Do you remember when they started the Cultural Centre?

FK: I don't remember when.

[01:45]

FK: But I remember they had Pioneer Day, and they would give- [laughs] what are you doing? And my mother used to want to go to that. So, I used to drive her to the Centre. And each person from the Japanese Council got a bottle of sake. The council used to give each individual- over a certain age a bottle of sake. She loved going there. [laughs]

LU: And I think- is that similar to issei day?

FK: Yes, yes.

LU: What they have now? Mm-hm, oh wow. Did you take part in the Cultural Centre for any other activities?

FK: No, I didn't. I never did. I just went to those some of the things they had, you know, any entertainment.

LU: Mm-hm. What about, I guess, your sisters in Toronto? Where were they working?

FK: Well, I think my sister was working for a mining company. She was a secretary, I think, at that company. And my- both sisters were. I'm not very sure, though, where they worked. But it was a good company, they had good jobs.

LU: Did any of them go to university?

FK: Well, later on, we all went to university, all of us. We took courses and then- One of the sisters started going quite late, but then she finished university and went into teacher's- [OISE? [Ontario Institute for Studies in Education]], and then she went to high school teach.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: We all became nurses and teachers.

LU: That's incredible.

FK: Well, we did it 'cause we persevered. I think that's the most important asset, perseverance.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: Don't get discouraged. [chuckles] As they say, if you fall down seven times, get up eight times, then you're okay.

LU: [chuckles]

FK: That's a good motto. But my mother's motto is, "Life is uncertain. Death is certain. Live each day to the fullest."

LU: That's incredible-

FK: Live each day to the fullest, that's all you've got.

LU: Mm-hm. Well, she lived to be 102-

FK: [laughs]

LU: She must know something. [laughs]

FK: When the doctor told her, "You have a bit of diabetes, you better stop eating anything sweet," and she said, "Why should I stop now? I'm gonna enjoy myself." But she didn't eat a lot of sweets, she didn't eat candy or anything. She liked *manju* once in a while, that's it.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: She did alright. Japanese people like vegetables anyway. A lot of stir-fries, yeah.

LU: Mm-hm, that's right. [chuckles] And your house on 804 Lansdowne, how long did you live there for?

FK: 10 years.

LU: 10 years, wow. And did you always rent out the house when you were there?

FK: No, not always. Later on, we didn't. Oh, my sister came to live there. After she got married, she lived there. And then we sold the house, and then we came here. And at first, we thought we'd like to live around Jane because it's closer, and then we couldn't find anything we liked, so farther and farther West. [nods] Then we got this. We got this house, a few houses up, we came to look at the house, and this house was for private sale. So, I asked the owner, you know, "Why are you selling it privately?" And he said, "Well I have a job at Toronto Hydro, but they moved me to Oakville, I have to buy another house. So, I'm selling it." But he couldn't sell it through an agent, so privately, he sold it to me. But, you know, it was \$20,000, which wasn't bad. I sold it- that's the house for \$20,000, [came here?]. And as soon as I put the sign up for sale, somebody nearby said, "I've been eyeing your house for a long time." Sold it right away.

LU: Really? [gasps]

FK: [nodding] He liked that house so much. But it was a semi-detached, but with a garage at the back. He liked that.

LU: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

FK: Yeah.

LU: [laughs]

FK: It worked out well.

LU: Mm-hm. And so, when you were in Toronto and- Well, when you were in Hamilton, let's just go back a little bit, when you were in Hamilton, how long did you

stay there for? It was, I think two-

FK: Two years.

LU: Two years, yeah. And what was the Japanese community like in Hamilton?

FK: I don't know whether I was so involved. Oh yes, there was a United Church. The nisei group or something had a meeting.

[01:50]

FK: And I remember meeting somebody who was- you know she became- Inouye, she became the- she married a *hakujin*, too. She did CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Company], something to do with CBC-

LU: Margaret.

FK: Ha! Yeah. Margaret Inouye. She came, and she was going to McMaster, and she gave a talk or something. And I don't remember the talk, but I was impressed with the way she talked. Oh, I thought, "She's a very smart girl. She was. [laughs]

LU: Mm-hm, very successful.

FK: [nodding] Yeah, very successful, right. And her sister comes to the Buddhist Church. She has a sister- two sisters that come to the Buddhist Church, they're very active.

LU: Mm-hm, oh wow.

FK: [chuckles] You know, a lot of odd people here and there, and you've met them earlier.

LU: When you were in Hamilton, and living there, were there certain nights when you would be able to get together with other friends?

FK: I'm sure we did, I'm sure we did. But I can't remember too much.

LU: I would imagine that coming from-

FK: -I think we had dances, we had dances, but where we danced, I can't remember. I remember dancing with one guy, what a dancer! [laughs] You know how when they lead so well, I could just follow, you see. But I don't remember his name or anything.

LU: [chuckles] Oh wow.

FK: [chuckles]

LU: And when you were in Toronto, when you first came and you bought the house on Lansdowne, where were you working?

FK: Oh, I went to work at- first I was working at this garment factory, and I met a lot of issei people, too, there, and then I started working for the Bellack brothers, the chemical manufacturers.

LU: The Bellack brothers?

FK: B-E-L-L-A-C-K, Bellack brothers, chemical factory. On 1 Croft Street. And it's now a townhouse location.

LU: Was that the Jewish brothers you were talking about?

FK: Yes. Nine years I worked for them, and I learned a lot about the Holocaust. Very- And the accountant that came, one of my men who was checking the accounts, he

said to me, "I was in the Canadian Airforce." And the other guy said to me, "You know what happened to me?" [holds out forearm] And he showed me his arm, and his arm had numbers on it. And I said, "What happened?" And he said, "My parents were all sent to Auschwitz." But he was at the age where he could work or something. They put a number on him, and he had to work.

LU: Like a burn, a branding?

FK: Yes, branded, he can't get it off, ever. Forever, he said. I was so surprised; I saw the numbers.

LU: Oh my goodness.

FK: What they wouldn't do to another human being.

LU: And I have a neighbour who was German, very nice person, we used to have chats all the time over the fence. And he was in Lithuania, his father was an engineer. And when the war started, he had to go back to Germany, drafted in the army, and sent to Russia. They lost the war, and he had to walk back. And he- [unclear] Dresden, they started bombing- "Gee whiz! I'm gonna die here!" But he didn't. Then he went to England. And his wife had a sister in England, she was Italian. They met, and they married, and they lived there. But her husband died. But you know, amazing.

LU: Wow, mm-hm. You never know who your neighbours are gonna be.

FK: Never. Very odd, very odd.

LU: Mm-hm. And so, you worked for the Bellack brothers for nine years, and what were you doing?

FK: Secretary.

LU: Secretary.

FK: I typed- What do you call, one girl Friday? I did everything, you know, filing, and typing out invoices, and writing letters. But it was nice 'cause these men were so kind, and very interesting. And they loved opera. Always sang arias from opera, and I learned to love opera. And they said, "You go to the opera. The Metropolitan Opera is coming to Maple Leaf Gardens." I said, "I've never heard opera before." "Go!" So, I went to see it, [shakes head] I fell in love with opera. [laughs] They were always humming these tunes, so it was familiar to me, and I thought, "Oh, opera's nice, Mr. Bellack." [laughs] It was nice.

LU: Mm-hm. [chuckles]

FK: I've taken my mother to see an opera. She- we went to see *Madame Butterfly* with Aiko Saito; she came to Toronto.

[1:55]

She was a singer, nisei singer. She had gone to Japan. [shakes head, smiling] I went with Mom to operas, and ballets, and movies- lots of movies.

LU: And after you worked for the Bellack brothers for nine years, then where did you go?

FK: Teacher's college. And then I became a teacher at Keele Street School. And I worked there for 10 years. And I- [points at something offscreen] that girl, Joanna Stellar [?] and I were very good friends. She taught there for 10 years. And then when I left, she said, "I'm gonna go to Europe." You know these military personnel had an international school for the children, so they can, you know, learn the curriculum from Canada. So, she taught there, and she said it was wonderful. In the summer she would travel all over Europe. And she also said, "I went to Indonesia," where her father was one of the officials. And she would invite us for dinner, and she would treat us to Indonesian dinner. And she died with breast cancer. And a sister, several years later, wrote to me. And she said, "It's so lonely. My brother died; my parents are dead. I'm the only one left."

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: It's so sad.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: Yeah.

LU: Just gonna pause here for a moment.

[camera noises, footage skips]

LU: There we go. So just a few more questions and- when you were teaching at Keele Street school for 10 years, and before that, when you went to teacher's college, were you working while you were studying, or did you just go to teacher's college?

FK: No, no, I just went to teacher's college. And you know, it's so funny. I was with a lot of girls that were 17, 18 years old, and we became friends. And I was- so, when I was going to teacher's college, I went to the director of education, I said, "You know, I want to go to teacher's college, do you think I'm too old?" "Well," he said, "You don't look old, so go for it." I said, "Okay! I'm going for it." And one of the girls that used to pick me up, she lived in- Mississauga or Oakville? She drove, she was 17, she drove a car. And she would pick me up. And I would meet at her at Dundas and where you curve down to go down to Gardiner. I would stay there, and she would pick me up.

LU: [laughs]

FK: Imagine now, staying there to get picked up! I'd walk over there in the morning, Lois would pick me up, and we would go to teacher's college. Did that for two years.

LU: And what year did you graduate?

FK: Well, I was nine- started in '57- '59. And all these people were young, but I got along with them very well.

LU: And after you taught at Keele Street for- after you taught at Keele Street school for 10 years- or, during that time, I should say, what were some of your most memorable memories from that time?

FK: [laughs] My principal, Dr.- doctor, Mr. Derek [?], he was very interested in science. And he used to have things downstairs, and one day his wife said, "I went downstairs," and she grabbed a jar, and a snake came out of it! [laughing] He was such an interesting science- he taught at the Toronto School for Science, you know,

outdoor or something on Centre Island. He taught there, and he came to our school- but he was really interested in science, and he was a very nice principal, very nice. I've had lots of nice principals, I'm lucky.

LU: And after you taught at Keele Street school, where- what happened next?

FK: Then I went to a primary specialist, another teacher's college, to learn about smaller children, younger children. But I had two friends at teacher's college- um, Keele: Joanna Stellar [?] and Ms. Martin. And we were good friends. Ms. Martin was 10 years older than me, and Jo was 10 years younger. And they're both gone.

LU: Wow.

FK: Yeah, they both passed away. And I have a lovely letter from Ms. Martin's daughter, who was- I don't know what her name was- no, Jane Martin. And she's an artist. And she has her artwork in the gallery, all over the country.

LU: Oh wow.

FK: Jane Martin. [shakes head]

LU: And after you went to the primary specialist school, what year did you graduate from there?

FK: It was a year later. '59?

[02:00]

LU: So, I guess- [clears throat]

FK: It was in '59. That was teacher's college.

LU: That was teacher's college.

FK: And then '59 to '69. And then I took a year to go to primary specialist, and then '70, I started. Indian Road.

LU: Indian Road, mm-hm.

FK: Indian Road Crescent School.

LU: And how long did you teach there for?

FK: Until 1987. So, 17 years?

LU: Mm-hm. And is that when you retired?

FK: '87.

LU: '87, mm-hm. And in the 1980s, that's the same timeframe as the Redress-

FK: Yes.

LU: And what do you remember, or what were your feelings towards Redress?

FK: Oh, I was all for Redress.

LU: And-

FK: I-

LU: And when did Redress, or the conversation about Redress, start to take place?

FK: Well, they used to have meetings, you know. And some people opposed Redress because they don't want to stir up the trouble. And other people were for it. But Art Miki was the one who gave talks. We should support it. And I remember going to the United Church, and Keo [unclear]- no, Hide Hyodo says to come on upstairs or

somewhere, because the church people don't agree with us. The United Church people didn't- nobody agreed with us, but, you know, this certain group was very staunchly for Redress and- I always went to those Redress meetings.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: [chuckles] That's why I-

LU: How often did you have Redress meetings?

FK: I have no idea. If it was announced in the paper, I would go. And then you'd hear all of the arguments for and against. It's very interesting.

LU: It seems like-

FK: [points finger] But you know one thing? When we got the Redress, those people who were against, were one of the first to go to the talk about Redress. And I thought- we couldn't even get in! We supported it and we couldn't get into the hall. I don't know where the hall- I think high school, one of the high schools, they had a meeting that they had announced that we could get the Redress. [shakes head] And I thought, "That guy was so opposed to it, but he's here!" [chuckles]

LU: it seems that there's a lot of discussion for and against Redress.

FK: That's right. There was a lot of things in the paper, and I clipped out a lot of things, too, about the Redress, too. 'Cause I was all for it. You know, I mean we were abused, really, because- and the thing that really amazes me is the person who started this anti-Oriental thing was a Christian minister. His son was a son of a minister, but he was really against the Japanese, send them all to Japan. And I thought, "You're a Christian, for heaven's sakes!"

LU: Do you remember the name of the-

FK: Wilson, I think. Wilson.

LU: I've never heard of him.

FK: I've never forgotten it because I would read in the paper about, you know, his tirade against the Japanese. Oh yeah. And then when he died, they said he wasn't a bit sorry[?]- it was good for them, because they would have had to, you know, be abused by the people which stayed in Vancouver. I don't know, [chuckles, shaking head] they have an excuse for everything.

LU: What was the discrimination and prejudice like in Vancouver when you were growing up, do you remember?

FK: No, I don't remember- 'cause we were in an Oriental school, Japanese, Chinese. We weren't discriminated against, teachers were wonderful. We were very lucky.

LU: Was there any problems at the store? Was there vandalism or-

FK: Well, after. After, there was a rooming house on top. Somebody threw a cigarette butt on our awning and started a fire. [nods] Really. And then the window- glass broke in front of the window. Yeah. But we got the firemen in time, and some Japanese boys who were running away from the law, they were supposed to be sent to a concentration- camp. Wouldn't go, so they were running away. They came and put plywood up instead of the glass. That's how we sold the house. We didn't fix anything because what was the use? We were being chased out. But I knew

somebody upstairs had thrown- that's what the firemen said, it was probably from a cigarette.

LU: Wow.

FK: That was a prejudice I encountered.

LU: What about in Hamilton, or Ancaster, or Toronto?

FK: No. I didn't feel anything. [shakes head]

[02:05]

LU: And during the times of Redress, from what I understand, is that it went on for a few years before it was achieved.

FK: Oh yeah. Long time, yeah.

LU: And what was your feeling towards that? What- were you becoming discouraged at all, or did it-

FK: No, I wasn't discouraged, because people like Art Miki were so- and he was so articulate. Very articulate. I thought he was such a good speaker.

LU: Motivational?

FK: [nods] Mm-hm, yeah. And Hide Hyodo was all for it, too, you know. Very kind.

LU: Mm-hm. When you went to Ottawa to go rally, tell me about your feelings about going and-

FK: Exciting! It was very exciting. I was thrilled that we would be part of it. Very exciting.

LU: How many people went?

FK: I have no idea, but there was a lot of people. And we carried banners and went to Parliament Hill. And then they had David Suzuki as a speaker. And the people that supported us! You know, one of the sisters, what's her name now? Sister something. She was good, very. They all spoke. There was a lot of people that were supporting us now at that time. Yeah, it was good.

LU: What were some of the sayings that were on the banners?

FK: [laughing] Oh, I don't know, but I clipped out the newspaper things, you know? "Time for justice," or things like that, you know. It was good, I thought. I was proud.

LU: How long did you have to rally for?

FK: Oh no, I think it was a couple days, and we stayed at a hotel. And the hotel- we stayed on the hall [?] side, because these people were renting us- the French were very supportive of us, and they rented the rooms to us very cheaply. They were very supportive. But they said they'd been prejudiced, too.

LU: My goodness. That would be a very exciting time, but-

FK: Oh, it was! You know, you were so excited. You were caught up in it. Because *hakujin* people were beginning to support us. We said, "We have a chance."

LU: Now, for rallying, could anyone go? Or did they have to be-

FK: Oh yes, anybody could go. And some people couldn't go because they were working, they gave donations in support of it.

LU: That's incredible. Mm-hm, oh my goodness.

FK: [laughs] It was exciting.

LU: What was the reaction from the government when you were there rallying?

FK: I don't think they were too interested at that time. You know, I think, personally, that when Reagan gave the Redress to the Americans, Mulroney decided that he was gonna follow through, because they were both Irish. And I remember going- the saying, "Irish eyes are smiling." He was very friendly with Reagan. And as soon as he did it, he did it, too. It's not because I think he was so sympathetic. But now the Japanese think the conservative was more supportive. But I don't think Trudeau was too interested in it. But the Japanese government thanked him or something.

[laughs] I said, "He had nothing to do with it." Trudeau was a funny minister. Very brilliant, but very odd in some ways.

LU: And after you rallied in Ottawa, and you came back to Toronto, what was the reaction like from the rest of the Japanese community? Were some people happy you went, were some people angry-

FK: Well, some people were not happy. You know, you're stirring up something that we want to forget.

LU: Was it mostly the niseis and sanseis that went or were there a lot of-

FK: Oh, you know sanseis were supportive- I think isseis were a little timid about it, you know. Because they've been through so much.

LU: Mm-hm. And were your parents- your mother was still here to see Redress.

FK: Mm-hm.

LU: And your father, he had passed away already, I believe?

FK: No, he'd passed away.

LU: Mm-hm. What was your mother's reaction to Redress?

FK: She thought it was a good idea.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: [chuckles]

LU: And how long after the rally did Redress go through?

FK: I don't know. Not very long, though. Not very long. Very soon, I think. And I got the letter that the government sent us, you know, apology. I should get everything together more, [chuckles] I'm not organized. I've got things here, there, everywhere.

LU: So, what was the process, the letter came in the mail and did-

FK: And we got the money, too. Like-

[02:10]

LU: Did you have to get it through the mail, or to pick it up?

FK: I think I got it through the mail. My mom was so pleased. And she decided to give some money to her sister and everybody. And I spent the money all on the redecorating the house. [laughs]

LU: And what about- I've heard before that you had to register to receive your

Redress.

FK: We probably did. I don't remember though. And people in Japan who were niseis, you know, who had to go back, they got Redress, too.

LU: Mm-hm. And what about, you know, those who were born internment camps? And what was the cut-off date to receive Redress?

FK: I have no idea. But I know somebody- one of my cousins heard that she didn't get Redress. Now, when was she born, though? Quite late, I guess, eh. So, she didn't get it. Her mother said, "I'm going to give you part of mine," so she gave it to her youngest daughter. So, there was a cut-off date somewhere.

LU: Mm-hm. And do you feel that the official apology has made a difference towards the Japanese community?

FK: I'm sure it did, I'm sure it did. I don't- I hope that kind of thing won't happen again, yeah.

LU: Mm-hm.

FK: You know, prejudice can start so easily.

LU: Mm-hm. And you mentioned before that- or from the newspaper article you showed me, where you were doing odori dancing.

FK: Pardon?

LU: When you were doing the odori dancing.

FK: Oh yeah, we used to do odori dancing like bon odori. I loved bon odori, but I don't do it, I can't. [laughs]

LU: Where did you learn odori dancing?

FK: Buddhist church.

LU: Here in Toronto?

FK: [nods]

LU: And how long did you dance for?

FK: I danced 'til 1989, I think. And then I stopped.

LU: Hm. [chuckles] Were there any other stories or comments that you wanted to make before we finished up?

FK: No, not really. [laughing] I think you've asked me a lot- I think I've talked more than I should.

LU: [laughs]

FK: To tell you the truth.

LU: Well, thank you very much.

FK: You're welcome.

LU: I can't think of any other questions, but if I do, I'll let you know. But thank you again.

FK: You're welcome. And I'm gonna try and make that book one of these days, or else. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

[End interview]