Interviewee: Elsie Toguri
Interviewer: Elizabeth Fujita-Kwan
Date: August 27, 2013
Location:
Accession Number: 2013-035

*Note that this interview contains reference to outdated terminology regarding Inuit and Native peoples from the north and anti-Chinese stereotypes."

[Start interview]

Elsie Toguri: I was born in the hospital. I think it was the Vancouver General Hospital, I'm not sure. And I'm a second Canadian- generation Canadian.
Elizabeth Fujita-Kwan: Perfect. And, uh, you don't have to give them a year if you don't like to, but what's the month and date of your birthday?
ET: February the 13th, 1932.
EFK: Oh! Thank you for that. [chuckles]
ET: I don't like saying that. Okay, now, my parents, my mother was born in Toyama and my father was born in Okayama. [dog barking in the background]
Um, I wasn't quite sure when my father came to Canada, but apparently, he came when he was about 18 or 19. And, uh, my mother came, I'm not sure, [faintly] if I was born in 1932. Well, she was- she came somewhere in between like 1928 and 30, I guess, around that time she came. My father and mother married here in Canada. And, um, when my mother married my father, he had four children, three girls and a boy. They were, they were my half brothers and sisters, but we all lived together as a family without any problems. And I arrived, and then my younger brother arrived. And then just before we moved out to Ontario, my little sister arrived, she was adopted.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: So, we had all kind of age groups in my family. [chuckles] And, to give an example of how, you know, my eldest brother felt about my mother, I, I found a, a portrait of his biological mother once, and I said to him, “Do you want it?” and he said “No, I only have one mother.”
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: So, he regarded my mother as his mother, and I think the sisters did too.
EFK: Yeah, that’s very sweet. Were, were your, I guess, your stepbrothers and sisters, were they- well not step, well-
ET & EFK: half-
EFK: Sorry, [dog barking in background] were they still very young when your parents married?
ET: No, no. They were teenagers.
EFK: Oh, okay.
ET: So there's a, like my- I have one sister, the eldest one, um, she's 93.
EFK: Oh, wow.

ET: So there's about a 13, 14 years difference between us.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: My eldest brother died in 1997, and one of my sisters, Amy, died in 1990, which was the same year that my father died. And my mother died in 1985. [coughs] Now, my mother came to Canada because her uncle, my great-uncle Yasushi Yamazaki was the man who, uh, started the *Tairiku Nippo* newspaper and he wanted to retire to Japan, and he wanted my mother's brother to come and take over the whole thing. But my mother's brother was a journalist. And, um, he graduated, I think from the University of Tokyo and became a journalist. And he refused to come. He didn't, he was more interested in making a career in Japan. So my mother said, "If he doesn't wanna go, I'll come." That's why she came. And after she came and started running the newspaper, she decided that the newspaper needed a headline writer. And she thought that she had heard that my father was a very good writer. And she- and the family story is that she said, "That's why I married him, I needed a good editor for the newspaper." [chuckles]

[0:05]

ET: So that's how he arrived on the scene.
EFK: Oh, wow.
ET: And, the newspaper was a focal point for both- especially for my mother too. I spent a lot of time when I was a kid at the newspaper office. I loved the, the smell of the place, you know, the smell of paper and, and hearing the clank-clank of the printing machines and click-click, you know, they used to put, uh, Japanese characters and they'd have a thing in their hand, and, [stutters] and they'd put, and, it would sound as click-click- click, when they put the, um, characters in, you know. And I remember the place where all the writers- there's about seven of them sitting around this big table on the second floor of the building. And that place was full of cigarette smoke. I remember that. But I loved the place, and as much as I could, I spent a lot of time there. My brother did too. He got into a lot of mischief. I didn't. It doesn't matter who you ask, at that time, when I was a little girl, I was, I was described as a very quiet, sweet child. I think I changed as I grew older. [chuckles] Anyways, so they were busy with the newspaper, my mom and dad. And, my dad, I think he finished high school in Japan, which was quite an accomplishment in those days. And he taught school in his little town there.
[sound of pages flipping]
My mother, I think she finished high school too. And, at that point, her, mother was bringing- well, it was her stepmother who was bringing all these, you know, samples of pictures and trying to get her married off, you know. And she refused to do that. And she went to Tokyo, and became a X-Ray technician. I think both my mom and dad were very, very active in all the community, Japanese community stuff. And my mother, it's funny, 'cause they were both in the, in the newspaper business, right? So people would come, new immigrants would come to the newspaper office and ask for advice, how to get medical attention, this and that and the other thing. And I found out much later, after my mother died, that she also helped a lot of, uh, women

who were being abused by their husbands. She, she planned their escape and sent them back to Japan.
EFK: Oh, wow.
ET: And I met two of these women once in Vancouver. And that's how I found out, because they were holding- my mother had died and they were having a little memorial dinner for her. And, my dad was there, and these women came up to me and hugged me and held my hands and cried and cried. So I said to my father, what did they do that to me for? And he says, "Well, they were thanking you 'cause they can't thank the mother, your mother." 'Cause she helped them escape a very, very, awful marriage where they're being very cruelly treated. So, two of them had little kids, and she got- she planned their escape for them and put them on a boat. I think she paid for their fare, to tell you the truth.
EFK: Yeah.
ET: She was very kind that way. I remember as a child, my house was always full of people. I didn't know that she rescued, you know, um, who didn't have a place to live or something, she'd bring them home. Very interesting life. Anyways, to get to the war.

[0:10]

ET: Before the war, up until that time, I guess I had a happy childhood. At first, 'til I went to school, I always had, there was always *obasan* in the house who looked after me and my brother. And my older sisters were all in high school and that, and they were off on their own activities. But, my oldest brother played tennis and all the girls played tennis. My father played tennis. My younger brother played tennis. I'm the only one that didn't play. My dad took me out to the tennis court one morning and kept me there for about half an hour, and then said to me,-"You go home to mum". We had a good time there. There- there used to be a Nippon Tennis club. Yeah. And, um, I don't know, did you, did you interview Mickey Matsubayashi?
EFK: Yeah, I think Lisa did. Yeah. Lisa definitely did.
ET.: He must have mentioned the Nippon Tennis club, I don't know. But I used to go there, and I, I, I run after loose balls, and every ball I got, I got paid a nickel. And in those days, a nickel, you could buy an ice cream cone, right. And my mother put me- I started piano lessons when I was three. And then she made me take Japanese *odori* lessons which I hated. I wanted to take *kendo,* but my mom said, "No, that was for boys." And I was very, not very happy about that. And she put me into dancing, and ballet and tap dancing, which I didn't like either. The only thing I really liked was the piano. But I spent a lot of time reading. I liked reading. I played a lot by myself, with my cats that I'd dress up and put them in my dog carriage and stuff like that. I had a very happy childhood, I guess.
And then December 7th came, and what I remember of that Sunday. It was a Sunday, I think, the sun was shining, and it must have been cold, cause' my mother was cooking something on the stove, and all the steam was coming up. And my dad was, marching around the house being very angry. And what I could gather, he said, he kept saying in Japanese, "Stupid Japanese, what are they trying to do?" and that was that day. The following day, we had to go to school. And Mickey was our leader, you

see, and we gathered in this empty lot, and there's about three or four of us there.And he told us not to open our mouths, not to say anything. I said, “I couldn't, I couldn’t” you know, I didn't know why. But then I finished school, and I remember my teacher hugging me so tight when school ended. And she said, “I'm so sorry this is all happening to you.” 'Cause by then, people were being moved out to Ghost Towns and stuff. And my mom and dad decided to move to the newspaper building. We left our house.
So that became a period of time when I had to face separation, losses, and goodbyes. My elder brother disappeared one time. One day I woke up and there's no brother. And I asked where he was, and my brother said, “Oh, he had to go away.” You know, all the young, they went to the work camps. Yeah. So that was okay. But during the time, between the time that we left to go to the newspaper office, my mother would wake me up, in the middle of the night, maybe two or three times, and she says, “You have to get up. You have to say goodbye to your father.” And I would come out half asleep, and I would look around and there would be two tall men, one dressed as a Mountie, to take my dad away. So he’ll be gone. [chuckles] And I think I said to my mother, “Is he going to come back?” And my mother said she didn't know. But you know, when you’re ten years old, you know, these things are not really real to you. [coughs]

[0:15]

ET: So next morning at breakfast, there he would be, back. And then this happened maybe two or three times more. And of course, once the war started, he was not able to publish the newspaper. And he said, they took all the books and stuff out of his office. [dog barking] And, then some of the books that he took, he was laughing. He says, there was about four or five books on flower arranging that they took. 'Cause they couldn't read, right? And, um, I think a lot of things happening that I didn't know, a lot of people would come and go, and they would be talking very softly. And I couldn't hear what they're saying.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And of course, there was curfew. They just suddenly had curfew. So, then we moved, that's, [sound of paper ripping] you know, when I had my dog, Skippy. And my mother says, well, I'm going to give him to a farm, and that made me feel good. But like I told you, just before my mom died, she told me that she put the dog to sleep. And I cried, because that was some of the goodbyes that I had to say, goodbyes to my cat, goodbyes to my dog. And, um, goodbyes to the garden that I had so much fun. We had cherry trees, and I used to always climb up in the cherry tree and read my books up there. And I used to play house from there. I used to hang all my, you know, teacups and stuff on the branches. It was a sad time for me. In fact, I could cry even now.
So we went to the, um, my- the newspaper office was quite a large building, very large. It was funny, we never, my mother never got compensated for the building because a lot of the papers that the government wanted from her, she couldn't get, because it was in Japan. And then of course in Japan, it was after the war, a lot of their documents were destroyed, Right? So she never got compensated for that. But

she once had it, while she was fighting to get the money, she had it assessed. And in 1951, or 1950 or '49, somewhere around there, it was assessed at $7 million, which she never got.
But she was very happy because at first the people who bought it made it into a noodle factory, which she was very upset about. And, um- but right now on that part of that property, they have built a provincial courthouse. Kinda ironic, isn't it?
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: So anyways, there we were in the newspaper office. And, um, of course, we couldn't go to school. But my mother was Roman Catholic. And, she had very close ties to the nuns that lived in that area, district, the Sisters of Atonement, they were called. And she helped them. She was the one that helped them establish a daycare center for Japanese
women. 'Cause, she told them, you know, that she watched all these women going to work with their children. And it wasn't nice to, you know, have to drag their kids. And so she persuaded them to open up the- a lot of things my mom did, nobody knows. She never talked about it. Okay? She went to her grave in 1985, when she died, with all her secrets. She did a lot of really wonderful things to people, which she never talked about. She never talked about what she did. And, but people who she helped would remember what she did, I hope. But she was, uh, my mother was a great lady. She was before her time. Ever since I was small, she taught me that being a woman was something to be proud of. That a woman could do anything, a man could do, only better. And that I was never to be intimidated by men. Let them think that they're God's gift to the world and let them think that. But you do what you have to do and be successful in your own right. She pounded that into me.

[0:20]

EFK: It's very, very- it's not the sort of thing you normally hear for a woman of her time and from, from Japan. And that's incredible.
ET: She says, "Let them think they're, they're handsome and they're smart, and you just do what you have to do." Because she said a woman in, in her opinion, is stronger, more intelligent and, than men. And you have to believe that. She said, she said, "It's nice being a woman. Be proud you're a woman." And you know what she said? [chuckles] "No matter what the men think that they're so good, they can never, they can never give birth to a baby." [laughs]
EFK: That's one thing [incomprehensible]
Yeah. Anyways, there we were in the, the there and they had curfew then. Right. And, um, I don't know why, how they came there, but there were about six young men, kinda staying there, too. My father gave them refuge, I think. one of them was Tommy Shoyama, I remember, he was one of them. And they became the nucleus of the young men that were given permission to publish the New Canadian. Okay. And my dad gave the New Canadian, let them use a lot of the equipment that we had. And, um, I remember one of them, I forget who it was, but I used to spend a lot of time at this one movie theater where they used to have Vaudeville acts too. So I used to go in there and watch, you know. And one time, I came out and there was this, one of the young men waiting for me. He says, "Your mom's mad at you. It's curfew, you

know." I remember that. And then they made these signs that we had to pin to our dresses. And they send us out at night to get cigarettes and stuff. "I am Chinese." [points to her chest] That was fun.
And then we got this dog called Fannie. She- this dog belonged to the mother of one of- Dr. Hori. And Dr. Hori, I think, I am not sure, but I think the newspaper helped to finance his studies. Okay. So the mother wanted my mother to look after her beloved dog Fanny, until she got settled in the Ghost Town and so she could, um, retrieve the dog at that time, right. And there was this big, huge St. Bernard, and my mother was so appalled. This poor dog had, um, eyes that were sticky. She took the dog to the vet, and the vet said, "This dog has not been eating the proper food." Well, of course, this old Mrs. Hori used to give the dog all kinds of things that he, she shouldn't be eating. But I loved that dog. She was so big.
And I used to take her out for walks and, and people used to cross the street, 'cause the big dog, you know. And then, my, [chuckles] I guess Mrs. Hori said she could take the dog. So, I remember my dad and somebody else came to help him. And they made this huge wooden crate to put the dog in [laughs]. I guess the dog got there safe, but I really love Fanny.
Um, and then my mom got me into a Catholic school. So, my brother and I went to this Catholic school. And there was some other Japanese kids there too, if I remember.
But I was only there for a very short time because I think it was October or November that we- we were on the last train to leave Vancouver. I think my father was a resistor. [chuckles] And he helped all these people go to the right, you know, to the right towns, made sure that they're all- and we went to the most pri- primitive camp of all called Roseberry. There was no running water, there's no electricity, and there was all these shacks that- well, wooden houses that we lived in.

[0:25]

And the first night we were- well, for one thing, we- on the train that left, my brother had to go in the ambulance, 'cause he was very, very sick. He had pneumonia. So they took him in an ambulance to put him on the train. And while we were in the train, my mother came to me and opened up my suitcase and took out all my flannel pajamas. I had about three or four pajamas. She says, "I need these." I said, "What for?" And she said, "Well, come and see." So I went to the very back train where there was an old man that was dying, my brother who was sick, and there was a young girl who had just given birth to a baby the night before. And the- she didn't have any diapers. That's what my mother was using my pajamas. And, and people were contributing, you know, other stuff. Of course, we didn't have that many clothes either, 'cause we were only allowed to take a suitcase, right? And I could still remember the Mounties were playing cards.
And for the longest time, every time I saw a Mountie, I felt sick to my stomach. 'Cause all, all the- were, negative stuff about them, right? So there we were, in Roseberry. And um, I think the government allowed us to go to- oh, they, they could open schools. And all my sisters became teachers. And one of my sisters, Amy, was the principal of the school that I was going to. And that school, we used to sit three

to it- we had a desk and there would be three spots, one candle between the three of us, and one book. And we, our fingers would get so cold. We were suffering from frostbite all the time, you know. And, but I don't know, we just, there was a, there was a stove, that you could burn wood in there, but it was still freezing cold.
And we used to have fights over the book. And, one way that we could get a recess was we used to put our pencils through the candle and then the graphite would burn and made this awful smell. So the teacher says, well, we could go outside to the smell [faded speech; chuckles]. And in the summertime was the stamp on the floor. And the skunk would let out one of their, and we could go out, have recess. But, you know, when I was there, it was very difficult for me because it was hard for me to make friends. And, um, and that there was only, only a very small bathhouse there. Very dark bathhouse. And there's only certain hours that the women could go there to have a bath. And of course, you know, it's communal, right? And during one of those times, it was so dark in there, 'cause there's only maybe one or two candles to light the place. My leg touched the hot cauldron and I burnt my leg. And there's no doctor or anything around, eh? But my mother stayed up night after night and she wrapped my leg in snow. I was in terrible pain. And the only thing my mom had was some aspirin. I can remember that. And that was, um, took me two weeks to recover. I remember I don't have a scar.
EFK: Wow.
ET: But it was pretty bad 'cause it was bleeding when I got home. Anyways, that was that. And the house that we lived in, I slept on the top bunk. And I- there was little cracks in the wall. 'Cause as you know, the house warmed up a bit, the, the wood would shrink. I could see outside. And in the moonlight, I could see coyotes out there. And in the morning, my whole body would be covered with snow, 'cause it would come in through the crack, right? And, um, then we got, one time we got, we got oil lamps, which was nice. And then my dad came home with a gas lamp. That was like miracle! It was so bright!

[0:30]

But we finally did get water, a tap, you know. Um, and then my mom and dad decided they would try to get permission to go to New Denver. And they rented a house there. They got permission to do that. And it was a little house, but it had a toilet, bathtub, but my father still went to the Japanese bath. [laughter] So we stayed there, and I skipped grade seven, grade eight, and then started high school there with the nuns. And the nuns came and I took piano lessons again. Oh and my mother arranged to have my piano sent to Roseberry for the school, because she started- wanted to start a library in school, and she got threatened by a lot of people saying that she was a traitor to Japan to do all this, and my mother was very upset- "traitor to Japan''. Anyways, that piano came to New Denver too, so I think I was taking grade 7. I was quite advanced in piano, so the nuns arranged that I take my examination, Conservatory of Toronto examination, in Nelson, BC, but I had to get permission from the nuns just to leave. So they gave me permission and, [chuckles] I arrived at the bus station with the nuns, and I had my permit in my hand and there was a Mountie waiting for me and I had to show it to him, and the piano teacher I had -

Sister Camille, she's very emotional kind of person, she would yell at the poor policeman "You should be so ashamed of what you're doing to this poor child of God, you should be on your knees and asking forgiveness from God'.' And I'd be [laughs] dying there. So then we get to Nelson, and there would be this big tall policeman waiting for me, had to show my permit, and the same thing Sister Camille would go into her rant right, and then coming back from Nelson to New Denver, of course the policeman was there again, and the rant would go on again, and then we arrive back in New Denver and I had to show my permit, and the rant. She, she, she, it was half in French and half in English, but she screamed at them, you know the poor policeman, well not so poor I guess, but very embarrassing for him. And then the war ended and, I found it very strange because people ask me, are you gonna go to Japan or are you gonna stay here, I thought that was a weird question to ask me, but I found out later that they had a choice either go East, or go really East to Japan, and my dad and mom said they didn't wanna go to Japan, why would they go to a country that was defeated and.. no food and you know? Why would they go? Even if they wanted to. So, we stayed and we were called "black haired" something or another- "traitors" I guess. Anyways, sometime during that time, my elder sisters and my brothers must have been released from the camp because they all ended up in Toronto. So, my mum and dad, I guess they decided to go to Toronto, so there we went, and we arrived in Toronto.
EFK: Mm, that's incredible.
ET: And after that, I went to high school, I went to Loretto College School on Brunswick Avenue which is Catholic. I got my grade 13, went to university, and I eventually got my Bachelor of Arts, BA, I got a Bachelor of Social Work, and I got a Master of Social Work.

[0:35]

ET: And that's where I met my husband, James Toguri - Jim Toguri and um, and he got his PhD, and we got married, he got his PhD, and he got very- he got two large grants from the government to go study in England, and then we went to Norway. My first baby was born in England and the second in Norway, and after that, we came back to Canada and we went to Ca- Chicago where we stayed over a year, all these three places my husband was doing what's called post-doctoral- whatever, and then he decides maybe we should start earning a living. So we came, I lived in Dollard-des-Ormeaux in Quebec, and that's where my, I guess my third baby was born in Toronto when we came back from Chicago I was pregnant, so I had the baby here in Toronto before we moved to Quebec, and my fourth baby was born in Quebec, and then I had a long space… six years, then I had another baby here, in Toronto. [laughter]
EFK: Aw.
ET: And I started working when I first graduated from university with my master's degree at the Children's Aid Society, and after my children, the youngest one started grade one, I went back to work, part time, and I stayed with Children's Aid for over twenty years after that. And my husband ended up, he was offered a teaching position at U of T, after we stayed in Quebec for four years and um, that's where he

stayed for forty years and, he died in 2003. And he was quite well known in the scientific circles, very well known. And, a lot of his research developed the pacemaker for the heart, for the loonie, which didn't make me very happy, and the toonie. All his research works are in those things. And, I think his greatest achievement was, he attracted, I think, almost 28 scientists from Japan to study with him, and, they all came here. Their first culture shock was to meet a professor like Jim, and the second culture shock was to meet a professor's wife like me. Anyways, because of that, we went to Japan quite often, he was invited to go there, and we travelled a lot, we went to China, Chile...you know, all over, because he had people come to study with him from Russia, from Germany, from everywhere, so my children really grew up at an interesting time because they met people from all over the world, you know. We used to have parties here all the time for the students, and my husband was quite, successful, and he was very well known throughout the world, but you'd never know it if you met him. Like I remember when a professor asked one of my kids what it's like to have a famous father, and they said "Why, he's just dad, he's crabby old dad." So anyways, that's another story.
EFK: Yeah.
ET: So you can ask me any more questions, if you want.
EFK: That's so amazing, I, Lisa had given me, I guess a little bit of a preliminary background on you, but she didn't have too much time to go into detail before she had to go back to school, but you've such a fascinating life, that's so incredible, I didn't realize at first that you were connected to the Aihoshi family, so, because uh, a few months back now, we, Lisa and I together we interviewed Molly and um-

[0:40]

ET: Oh yeah, oh you did eh?
EFK: Yea Susan was there to kind of facilitate, um, so we didn't um, we didn't go too long, and we tried to be mindful of her condition at the minute, but uh, yeah she had a few stories, she mentioned the dog, Fanny actually, so she remembered Fanny. She mentioned a few other things, that are ringing bells in me now as I'm listening to you so. Oh gosh, that's so incredible. [coughing- inaudible]
I don't even know where to sit with that question. Um, I guess, so you mentioned that your father- you kind of remember your father's initial reaction to Pearl Harbour. At least you, you remember him saying some things that day. But did your mother ever say much about it at the time? Did she make much of a comment on it? Do you recall?
ET: I don't remember. All she told me was, I remember I was standing on top of the heat grate in the living room, and she said, this year I cannot give you your birthday party. 'Cause every year I had a party and she used to always get me these beautiful cakes with the little, money inside. And she would invite people, you know, kids over and stuff. No, she, but she, I think did a lot of stuff. Like I think we had a, my dad had a car, my mom. And uh, she got, this friend of a friend who was, uh, something to do with the newspaper too. I can't remember. He was her bus- business manager, or somebody snuck out in the middle of the night and sold it somewhere. 'Cause we weren't allowed to own. And the other thing that I remember during the war, once

we went to New Denver, I don't know where my dad got it, but he had a short-wave radio.
EFK: Oh.
ET: So, I used to listen to the news from Japan and all these couple of two or three men would come to listen to. And then he'd write handwritten kind of news. You know, and, and distribute it and book. [chuckles] And there was a, a priest there. And he was so worried that the, that the Mounties were gonna come and arrest him, that when he knew that the broadcast was on, he'd be walking in front of our house. [chuckles] And, but, he never got caught. No, my mother was quite defiant, I think at the time. I think she shared my father's, you know, and it's funny because my mother's family in Japan. When I went to Japan, I met my- Well my mom took my brother and I, when we were four and five, three and four, I guess to Japan to meet our relatives. I remember only a little bit about it. They thought I was Shirley Temple [chuckles] 'cause my father had my hair curled to curls. But later on, as when I grew up, you know, on one of my trips, well I went with, my mom and dad when my dad got a medal from the, the emperor's medal, yeah. And, I met a lot of the relatives then. And my mom was so mad at me. 'cause when I got off the plane, we were coming down the staircase to meet whoever's meeting us, I said to my mother, "Look at all the Japanese people" and she said, "*Aho!!* [silly] You're in Japan!" And well, I never saw so many all at once. Right? And, I met some of my relatives at the time, and, it was hard to commun- I don't speak that good Japanese. So, but we managed. And her half-sister still is alive in Japan, and I keep coming- Auntie Shizue and she lives in Toyama. And her daughter has the same name as me, Yasuko. And she brought her daughter and came and visited here once.
EFK: Oh wow. And do you, do you remember when about it was that your father got that medal?

[0:45]

ET: I can't remember. My [stutters] my husband did too. Oh. And his medal is much higher. He got the second highest medal apparently, according to the Japanese people. Awarded to foreign for somebody foreign [background noise]. That was so funny, that time my husband got the medal. When my father got the medal, I had to wait in the bus. They wouldn't let me come up. But at my husband's medal ceremony, I could, uh, we all lined up all the, the medal recipients were who were mostly men. There was one woman, I think she was from the States, I think? One of- anyways, the women had to line up too. Well, I was the only one that wasn't wearing a Japanese *kimono*. Right. And they kept shoving me and shoving until I was on the very edge of the, you know, the, but you know what, when we got into this building where the emperor was gonna come out, we had to turn around. And when we turned around, I was right in the front row. [laughs] And, and when the emperor passed, I swear he smiled at me because I was the only one not wearing. So, he must have known I was foreign. Right.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: He was tiny! very short, very skinny. And he was smiling and waving and haha you, I shouldn't say it-

EFK: But you got at the end.
ET: Yeah, I got in the front row.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: That was, yeah.
EFK: That's Incredible. So, I'm assuming your father was, uh, given that award based on his work with the paper? Or was it for something else in specific?
ET: I guess paper and the community work.
EFK: Okay. Wow. Gosh.
ET: My, my husband too got the medal and, it was quite a ceremony.
ET: So. Interesting. Wow. Do you, um, I guess looking back on, obviously you were, you know, compared to maybe some of the other n*isei*- you were a little bit on the younger side, uh, when you went into the camps. But from what you can recall of your life before going into the camps, what do you think you maybe you missed the most or that you regretted the most about having to leave your life in, in Vancouver?
ET: I told you, saying goodbye to my dog, my cats and my house, where I grew up. You know, I was happy there. That was my only regret that I had to give up my dog, give up my cats, and leave the house. And that was sad. I, I don't remember that I had really, really close friends. There was people that lived next door to us, but the girl there, Phyllis, she was much older. She about three or four years older than me. And, and there was a young boy that same age as my younger brother. So the, the friends that I associated were mostly boys.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: I didn't have- the one girl that I, I wouldn't call was a good friend, but I, my mom used to take me there to play with her. It was, she died recently.
Reiko Miyake?
EFK: Oh, okay. Yeah.
ET: But my mom was good friends with her mother, so she used to take me out there to play with Reiko, but I didn't have a real good girlfriend. The only friends I had were my animals. [both laugh]
EFK: Oh. Well, one thing I was a little bit surprised to hear was, um, that your mom was a Roman Catholic.
ET: Oh yeah. That's another funny story too.
EFK: Yeah
ET: There was, she was a Methodist apparently. I don't know. I think she was a Methodist. I don't know, my mother was, well Tommy said she's of course a crazy woman. [dog barking in background, ET laughing]
Well, she was, but she went to a reception for the Methodist bishop. But by mistake, she went to the Roman Catholic Bishop's reception and got interested in Roman Catholicism. And that's when she became Catholic. She was very devout. [dog barking]
EFK: Oh. Do you know if that, [dog barking] I guess that devoutness in her religion, was it something that she always felt like even when she was in Japan before she moved to Canada?
ET: I don't know.
EFK: Yeah. It's definitely interesting.
ET: I wish I had talked to her more about, you know, her life in Japan.

[0:50]

But when I went there, just I guess after I went, I was there with my husband a couple times and I met, I, every time I went, I went to see her sister. And her sister said to me that, "to not to forget that, my mother and her, you know, that that side of the [family] is *bushi*." And I said, "what the hell is *bushi*?" Samurai class. So my mother told me that her grandfather was a *samurai*, but they, they got did away with that class. Right. So he had to teach, rich family's sons- the, what do you call it you know, *kendo* and all this stuff.
EFK: Oh, okay.
ET: You know, martial arts. So that's what he did. And, and my, her father became the chief of police of Toyama province. So my dad used to say that my mother had this very sometimes arrogant way of talking, which is the *samurai* coming out in her. [ET laughs]
EFK: Mm-hm. Oh, that's so interesting.
ET: Um, when your, when your mother decided that she wanted to come over this way, since her brother wasn't interested in the paper, do you know if she received much pushback from her own family? Like whether it was her own parents or any siblings or?
ET: No, I think that whatever my mother did, nobody said anything. They're scared of her. 'Cause I mean, she left her family home, turned down all these perspective suitors and went to Tokyo where there was a friend. She said she knew there was a friend, family friend there who helped her train- go into training for being an X-ray technician.
EFK: Yeah. Yeah. Your [paper tearing] mom sounds like quite the pioneer.
ET: She was, she was quite a woman. I think most people did not realize how, what kind of a person she was. You know, because she never boasted about anything and whatever she did to help people, she kept quiet. I know a lot of things that she told me, a lot of things. And she went to her grave. It's funny because some of the things [dog barks] I remember quite a [stutters], even when I was a little girl, my bedroom was say here [shows with hand gesture] and the living room was like there [next to initial hand-gesture]. So, if the doors were open, I could hear what was going on in the living room. And a lot of times, I would hear a woman coming, like one woman in particular, and I could hear her crying and crying and crying. And I said to my mother next day, "why was she crying so much?" She says, "oh, she's just unhappy." But I found out she was being abused by her husband and she was very unhappy. And she came to talk to my mother.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And, it's funny 'cause she was a mother of a, *nisei* person that became quite famous who wrote about his father and mother and I read it and [chuckles] Oh God!
EFK: [laughs] What were the things you find out?
ET: If you knew the truth. Right? Yeah. But those things, my mother never, never, yeah. Never talked about there are a lot of secrets that she kept.
ET: Mm-hm.

EFK: And then the ones that she kept secrets about think they're so good. Right? So I look at some of them and think, you know, if you only knew what I know.
EFK: And that she was very discreet, which is probably why so many people went to her. ET: Yeah.
EFK: Yeah.
ET: She was quite a woman. She, she really was my grandchildren, my children, really loved her. She used to do the, the whatever dance was in, in fashion, she'd try and dance with them. And, and, you know, she was quite lots of fun. And, my youngest son, Joel, he really was very fond of her because, he came long after, so he was almost like an only child. So wherever I went, he was there. My mother used to say he is like my purse. [giggles] And we used to go to the Japanese store and, and he loved that, you know, the, fish eggs and they're very expensive. Right? And there'd be a jar of it and he'd be standing there looking at it.

[0:55]

ET: And my mother's like, "Oh my God. Get it for him." And so, you know, I, I got to know a lot of Japanese, traditions. Like for instance, the girls, girls, girl's day and New Year's. And, I, and I, I learned through my mother some of the old-fashioned Japanese, um, ideas of what a wife should be, which she disagreed with. And, I still have the dolls. I think you, did you see them?
EFK: Yeah, I saw a few of them. Yeah.
ET: And, and my mother used to say, you know, at midnight they all come alive and they'll dance. So I used to watch you watch you watch and never got that. But we used to have a special New Year's food. And for my girls' day, we used to make what I called *ohagi*, they're like *mochi* with the, the bean, beans covered.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: [coughs] And mother used to be horrified 'cause my sisters would make them and they would be like huge ones like this [gestures]. Yeah. A lot of the Japanese traditions I know like in, in like the New Year's, my dad said that they always hung a fish outside the door.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And the more prosperous you were, the kind of fish that you hung showed that you were prosperous.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: I kind of remember where my mother lived when she took me when I was about four or five. I still remember vaguely the house that she lived in. And it was quite a large, piece of land. And there was a house where my grandmother lived. And, then there's two other houses where people were living in, like rental. So it was quite a large place. I also went to, this was later on when I grew up and I was there on one of my visits with Jim, where I went to the grave of my mother's family. And I was quite impressed 'cause there's a big huge stone monument. And, and then there would, there was a gate around it, like a- not a gate- but a fence around it. And, my, my aunt said to me that there were six generations buried there. So that's what, 600 years or something? I don't know. And um, 'cause I said to my mom, when we went to Japan, I said, "If you die in Japan, mom, well what do you want me to do?" She said, "I don't

wanna be buried in Japan." She wanted me buried in Canada. I said, well, maybe I'll have to get you cremated then and bring her ashes back. And then when they asked me, "what do you want to declare? I could say my mother." [laughs] So we had a good laugh over that.
EFK: Sound like she had a good sense of humour.
ET: You have to laugh. You know, both my mom and dad had good senses of humor. My father was a little bit, he could never, he, he did some, he was always on up here [gestures], not down, not didn't have his feet on the ground most of the time. But I love my dad. I went to all the hockey games with him. He loved hockey.
EFK: Oh.
ET: And the first thing he did when he came to Canada to Ontario was to buy seasons tickets at the Maple Leaf Gardens. And we've had them since 1948.
EFJK: Oh my gosh.
ET: We still have them.
EFK: Oh wow.
ET: He was, and you know, he used to go to these funerals, right. For, the evening funerals they used to have for, Japanese people in the Buddhist church or somewhere. He used to always put ear plug in his ear and, and a small radio. I said, "Dad, you can't do that." He says, "Nobody knows. They think I'm deaf. I've got a hearing aid in my ear." It's terrible.
[1:00:00]
ET: And he was very, very- and he liked baseball. So he took me to, I think he took me a lot because I was more easier to control than my brother, I guess.
EFK: [laughs], So I'm just gonna switch the tape for a second here.
[jump in footage]
EFK: There we go. Okay. This one. Okay. I think so. Perfect. Okay. So let's see. Yeah, there's just a, just a few questions probably that I might wanna go over.
ET: Okay.
EFK: But you've definitely done a fantastic job of hitting all the, the big points. [giggles] So it's kind of funny. Sometimes I feel like, oh, people, people end up doing my job for me. They're so fantastically good at telling their own story. [chuckles] Makes it easy. But let's see. Oh, this is kind of a general question, but, seeing as how your, your mom was, uh, more on the religious side, um, than not, I guess how would you feel religion ended up playing into the lives of the rest of your family over time? Did it, did it ever end up meaning a big, a great deal or did you feel any attachment to say like the Buddhist church or anything like that? Or?
ET: Well, [pauses] I don't know. I, I'm still Catholic. I even went with my friend to the Buddhist church to learn about Buddhism [coughs repeatedly].
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Um- [starts coughing repeatedly]
EFK: Oh, It's all right. Yeah. No, it's okay. You're, you're welcome to get it out.
ET: God.
EFK: No, it's not a problem.
ET: I'm going to have to get a-
EFK: Oh yeah, no, of course. Of course.
ET: Oh, I can't stop coughing.

[Interview cuts/pauses]

EFK: For some families, uh, religion became a really big part of their, of their lives. Whether it's because they got involved with, you know, United Church or Anglican or, um, you know, the Buddhist church. Those tend to be the big three. But, um, it's a little bit unusual to meet someone from a, a background where someone was Roman Catholic, which is why I was kind of interested to hear about whether that filtered down to her own kids or even her husband or, you know, whether it was mostly her that just ended up being Roman Catholic or?
ET: I don't know. It just was part of my, our life, I guess my family, my eldest brother was not, but my sisters all became Catholic sort of.
EFK: [giggles] Okay.
ET: And, uh, my brother and I both went to Catholic schools.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And, there was a Japanese Catholic community here in Toronto. That, um, I was part, like quite active in that for a while. But then I got married and stuff and-
EFK: Yeah. You got busy. Yeah.
ET: Yeah.
EFK: Do you, um, I guess, what about your father in that case? Did he ever seem to bend any?
ET: He finally became Catholic. There was a priest from Japan and he liked the priest 'cause he was Japanese, so he decided he'd get baptized. [laughs]
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Not that he cared. [laughs] It was, it, it was a, a, a big part of our family, but not, not fanatically.
EFK: Okay. Yeah. It sort of gave maybe like a framework for education or-
ET: Mm-hm.
EFK: Or that sort of thing [ET nods] Yeah. That makes sense. I guess that, that leads me into another question now that I think about it. In your home, was it mostly English that got used or was it Japanese or a mix of the two or?
ET: Mix. My mother spoke Japanese to me. And, um, I guess when I was really small, I only spoke Japanese, but, but you see, my sisters were all speaking English, so I guess it was a mixture. And I remember, [coughs] When we came to Toronto and they, my mom and dad began their newspaper. Okay. People would phone in Japanese. So my mom used to write in *Romaji* in what my responses when they asked where they were and stuff like that. So I had this whole list of answers to give.
EFK: Mm-hm. Did you, did you ever feel any degree of comfort with Japanese? [1:05:00]
ET: Pardon?
EFK: Did you ever feel any degree of comfort with Japanese using it? Did you always feel like, oh, I don't feel very comfortable using it, or?
ET: I never felt comfortable using Japanese. I felt more comfortable using French to tell you the truth. The Japanese is a funny language. You know, there's some words that you use to be polite and some not polite. And you have to know the difference.
EFK: For French, was it mostly through school and then eventually living in Quebec

or ET: Yeah, both. You know, I took French all through university, and I don't know, [gulps] I haven't kept it up.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: But my mother was so mad at me because I said to her one day, I think I'll enroll in a Chinese language class. “What for? She says, “you can't even speak Japanese.” And I said, “yes I could speak Japanese.” And she let me listen to this record of the Hawaiian people talking Japanese. And I said, “Oh, is that funny?” [laughs] Because, you know, they spoke with a real funny accent. She says, “Why are you laughing? That's how you sound.” I said, “Oh, okay” [laughs]
EFK: [laughs] Oh gosh.
ET: I guess my conversation with my mother were, were very simplistic things.
EFK: Mm-hm, did she, um, usually did she speak Japanese and you would answer in English kind of a thing?
ET: Yeah.
EFK: Okay, do you know if your parents, um, how comfortable with English either of your parents were or? My dad was pretty, was so-so. My mother was so-so. She, [chuckles] she spoke English. She thought she was, but, and people understood her, like we used to tease her, you know, she liked, like she, she couldn't say Bathurst “basust,” you know?
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Uh, and what was that, the one thing that she used to buy these, these, uh, buns at the store? Um, what were they called? But anyway, she used her
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: They knew what she wanted, so-
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: She was okay. She understood more than she spoke, I think.
EFK: Yeah. Sounds like she got, yeah. It's usually how it kind of works, right. You, you eventually get into your rhythm of- yeah, you can get by.
ET: Of course my dad, you know, but they both read, they were like, the reading of English was very good.
EFK: Mm-hm. Yeah. Mm-hm. This is, this is a question that might have no answer, but looking back at your time in both Roseberry and New Denver, are there any, I guess, happier memories that come to mind? Or just experiences or things that you can look back on that might have been a, you know, not to sound trite, but a little bit of a silver lining, I guess.
ET: Well, in Roseberry, I had a lot of fun with some of my friends. We used to go out early in the morning and go into the forest with a bag of salt because somebody told us that if you, if you could pour salt on the deer's tail, that you can tame them. So we used to walk around [chuckles] and, and, and we'd find the droppings of the deer and say, “Oh, that looks fresh. There must be a deer somewhere out there.” And we did, that quite a bit. And, um, they, we used to make, um, bonfires and, and roast potatoes in Roseberry. And, and people, they would talk, talk, ghost stories. And one of the things was that if you see a light in the sky after dark, that's a soul. [hand gestures] And I know one time we were out tobogganing down this hill and we looked up and we could see this light bobbing down the mountain. Oh, we said that we, they called him Hinotama. Yeah. So we all ran home. We found out that that was

Mr. Somebody or another who checked the waterline and he had a lantern. [laughs] And then we used to go watch movies in Roseberry. We'd walk four miles to New Denver and then coming home late at night, you know, there'd be a whole crowd of us. We could hear the cougars, um, howling or whatever. Scary.
[1:10:00]
ET: And my dad would come on his bike to meet us and I said to my father, "What would you have done if a cougar came and attacked you?" And he said, "I don't know, probably faint." I said, you weren't much of a defense for us. But that was good going to the movies. And um, there, there was an ice cream parlour there. It was called Bozen's Hall, I think that's what it was. In fact, I can't remember a bit. But by that time, like in Rosebury, my sisters, Amy was the principal. Um, Molly and Tommy went to New Denver to teach. Didn't Molly say that?
EFK: I think I recall her saying that one. Yeah. Yeah. It was a bit of like a jigsaw puzzle that we were trying to put together when we were talking to her. So yeah, I remember. ET: Well we were, we were, um, I can't say that we were unhappy family. I think we were, um, Sundays was always tennis day. So they all went to play tennis except me. But I went up to the tennis court, you know, to chase, chase after loose balls. And my dad played tennis. My brother, my oldest brother became junior champion of BC once.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: I think, he was very good. And the day that he had to play, we all had to be very, very quiet. We couldn't talk. [pauses] And he was very fussy. Even when, in Toronto, when they used to play and I used to go watch him, he says, don't, you have to wear white when you come to, you don't wear anything else, wear whites.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: But I used to have a lot of fun with my brother 'cause we used to put bets on who was gonna win the Wimbledon and this and that, you know?
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Oh. I mean, it's funny. But my eldest brother, I have very fond memories of him. You know, I don't know why, but he really liked me, I think. 'cause when I was in New Denver, I wanted this one book called "Emily of New Moon" by Montgomery.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And I wrote him a letter and he sent it to me. I was so happy.
EFK: Oh, that's sweet. You know, I'm sure, 'cause you've mentioned it a few times, but just so I have things clear, um, your eldest brother's name was-
ET: Tom.
EFK: So, okay. So he was Tom. Okay.
ET: Did Molly talk about Tom?
EFK: She did talk about a number of her siblings. I think it was a little difficult for her to, to get a few things sort of straight. Um, Susan hopped out wherever she could. I'd have to go over all my notes again. But she did have a pretty good recollection of um, I think her, maybe the time before the camps and then a little bit in the camps. And then it was a little more difficult for her to recall stuff after that. But yeah-
ET: I don't remember about Molly's. She went to work on a strawberry farm. I remember that. Did she say that to you?
EFK: She mentioned about that. Yeah.

ET: And then my mother bought her- my mother is very good to Molly when I think about it. She bought her a brand-new bicycle and I was so mad 'cause my mother wouldn't buy me one.
EFK: Mm-hm. Things you remember, huh? Oh! you know, before I before I forget. So in speaking about tennis and, and sports and things, it's really interesting that your dad was so into hockey.
ET: Oh yeah. Even when we lived in Vancouver, I can remember him taking me to see a hockey game and I'd be sitting on his knee.
EFK: Do you- was he, was your father in general much of a sportsman? Like he just liked sports in general?
ET: He just liked sport. He liked tennis and, um, baseball.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Hockey. Yeah. Baseball he liked too. 'Cause he, I went with him a couple of times in Toronto and I saw that famous guy, the first Black guy that, oh, what was his name? I can't Remember his name.
EFK: Was it Jackie or Jackie Robinson?

[1:15:00]

ET: Jackie Robinson. Yeah, he says you have to come and watch him. Oh. And I thought, what for? But I did. I went and I guess I saw Jackie Robinson. 'Cause I used to sometimes take a book with me. And when baseball game got boring, I'd read. My dad used to be so mad at me. I, but I saw Jackie Robinson. I could say that.
EFK: Yeah. I think usually when I hear people, um, at the time being into sports, it's usually, you know, baseball or the Asahi or something like that. It's just a little bit less common to hear about people being as much into hockey. I think at that time, like before the war, maybe because Vancouver's just warmer and it was a little, a little harder to have natural ice springs. I don't know.
ET: I can't ever remember Molly or Tommy being interested in hockey as much as my dad. But Amy was, and I think he, she went to a couple games with him, but she was, you know, it was funny 'cause uh, when I came back to Canada, um, no. When I came back from Montreal and we started living here, well, that's Canada, right. Anyways, my kids went to the hockey games with my broth- with my father. And he, they used to come back and say, “Mom, they knew all our names. They knew how old we were.” And because, see, there was a group of them who were season ticket holders. They, they used to meet for dinner before the season and after, you know, and I guess my dad used to, uh, pass around pictures of his grandchildren. And they used to go to the games with him. And in those days, I used to take them to the subway station and put them on the subway. And I said, just make sure you see a father and a kid with a, you know, maple leaf something on and just follow them. I could never do that now. And they meet my dad, you know, in front of Maple Leaf Gardens. I mean, you could never do that now.
EFK: Mm-hm. That's so, wow. I can't believe they're, you said since 1948, your friend he had.
ET: Mm-hm.
EFK: Gosh. That's incredible. You, you'd think the Maple Leafs would, honour him

with something. [laughs]
ET: Well, he saw them win the last Stanley Cup.
EFK: Oh, wow.
ET: Which was in 19- oh, it was over 40 years ago.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: I think it was, was it '67? I think 60 something.
EFK: I can't remember.
ET: It's such a long time. But, um, he was very avid about hockey. And all my kids play hockey and my grandchildren play hockey now. I have seven grandchildren. My eldest son Robert and his wife and three kids, they live in England. And I go there once a year to see them. Of course, he was born in England so he has dual citizenship. But at first, you know, they, they, they kept their interest in hockey. But it's gone now. The eldest boy, um, who is my son's stepson, really, he has no interest in hockey anymore. He's 22. And the 15-year-old is, uh, crazy about football, soccer, you know. And then the 13-year-old is into rugby. Very good rugby player. So the soccer is like hockey in England, you know. Yeah, so I go there once a year at Easter time.
EFK: Oh, that's a nice time to go.
ET: Because they're, they have two weeks off. From school.
EFK: Yeah. It's definitely a different environment over there for sports and for holidays like that one.
ET: And my brother lives, uh, Alfred lives in Vancouver.
EFK: Oh, okay.
ET: And he and his wife have five kids too. But they had one girl. I didn't have any girls. And he has property, um, uh, like a little, like a house at Whistler.
EFK: Mm-hm. Wow.
ET: And I haven't been there for a while, but it's a beautiful place- Whistler.
EFK: Mm gosh. I would love to go. I've never been out west, and it's-

[1:20:00]

ET: Well, you should go.
EFK: Yeah. At this point, it's my biggest up until now, regret that I haven't gone. So I really want to go.
ET: I think I'll be going to see him towards the end of this month sometime.
EFK: Mm-hm, yeah. Well, your, your birth is coming up soon. Should treat yourself to something. That's what I'd like to do every year. Yeah.
ET: You have to treat yourself, right?
EFK: Yeah.
ET: I'm thinking of treating myself to a Roots handbag. I haven't bought one now for about four years.
EFK: Oh.
ET: But the trouble with the purses that you buy from Roots, they never wear out. Yeah. Never wear out. I had a yeah.
EFK: [laughing] Issue like that too.
ET: I've got three of them that I bought years ago and they still look like new.

EFK: I guess that's a good thing. Means good quality.
ET: Well, you pay a lot, eh? Yeah. Almost 300 bucks more. It's crazy
EFK: Mm-hm. Oh, you know, there was one thing I, I guess I didn't, we didn't talk too specifically about, do you remember hearing about the end of the war? Like when war-
ET: Yeah. Um, it was a bright summer day I remember. And, um, the church bell rings and we all had to gather at this Anglican church where the bells were ringing and we had to join hands and sing "O Canada." And I remember my mother got really mad at me 'cause I ran home to get something and she wanted me to do something. And I said, "I can't, I haven't got time right now". And she really got mad at me. "Don't you know what happened today?" And I said, "what?" "It's the end of the war. Japan was defeated" she said. "So what?" I said, then she got really mad.
EFK: Mm-hm. Do you think at the time it probably just hadn't really sunk in what that meant for your family?
ET: Mm-hm?
EFK: Do maybe, do you think at the time it just hadn't like sunk in too much about what was going on?
ET: No, that whole thing didn't affect me. It's like some stranger having big wars somewhere, you know?
EFK: Yeah.
ET: And the only way it affected me was I had to move.
EFK: Do you, I guess upon hearing of the end of the war, did your parents talk much about that? Or did you hear other kids talking about, about the end of the war and how they felt about it? Or was it just something that kids kind of went along with and said, oh, okay, time to move again?
ET: The, the only conversation I heard was whether you had the, you know, you had to either go east or go to Japan. There's a lot of talking about that. And if I said, if I told, you know, what they, they would, my people at school would say, "Well, what are you gonna do? You going to stay or go?"
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And I said, "stay." And they used to say, well, you're, uh, they called me black haired something or another.
EFK: Mm-hm. I guess, did you know a lot of other kids who were, whose families were going to go?
ET: Yeah. But didn't mean much to me. I thought, well, if they wanna go to Japan, that's their, that's, that's their decision. Mm-hm.
EFK: Yeah. I mean, did your parent, do you know if your parents ever entertained the thought of going there?
ET: No. No. Never. Like even my dad, when I took, went, went back with him. Uh, and my mother, when he got the medal, he said, "This is not my country anymore."
EFK: Do you think, um, ah, there's so many. It, it's so interesting how with the older generation, there are lots of things that, you know, um, many, many of the *nisei,* almost most of the *nisei*, I would say probably just never had the opportunity to really ask their parents about, um, maybe how they felt like, you know, mentally, emotionally, whatever, uh, about their sense of identity, especially at the end of the war when people were making them choose where to go.

ET: You know, that's something that's funny. I grew up without ever thinking about that I'm Japanese and that I'm different. My mother and father never talked about that. They said, “You, you are what you are. And, um, some people are white, some people are red, some people are yellow, and you happen to be Japanese.” That's how I, it was, I grew up like that.
EFK: Mm.
ET: And, and, uh, if there's any discrimination, my mother said I had to fight it. Because I remember once after the war started, she was walking on the street, coming home, and some kids threw rocks at her and she called the police.

[1:25:00]

EFK: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.
ET: Now not very many Japanese people would do that, right? No, she did. She called the police.
EFK: That's pretty gutsy.
ET: And I don't think if I was discriminated against, I didn't, it was not blatant discrimination. 'Cause I can remember, I, I applied to work with the juvenile court and the guy that interviewed me said, “You have very good qualifications, but you know, the people that you go, you would have to work with are very antagonistic and hostile people. So maybe it's not the place for you.” That's the saying. You might get, you know
EFK: Discriminated against.
ET: But I worked at Children's Aid and I had, I've met him because I had a lot to do with the juvenile court. Right. He says, “Oh, you got a job with the Children's Aid, eh?” Yeah. I said, “I'm working with very hostile, aggressive people.” And, uh, the only other time where I felt the little incidents, like, you know, I was going throughout through a checkout once at The Bay and um, the check person was yelling, “Did you know this is no return? It’s the last-” shouting, I said, “Who are you talking to?” And she, “Oh, you speak English?” So I said, “You're no kidding, do you?” 'Cause she had an accent. See, I said, “I don't think you speak English. I do.” And then another time when I really was angry, not angry, but a little bit annoyed, was, uh, when Jim became a staff professor at U of T, his professor's wife wanted me to join the professor's wife's group, which I wasn't very happy about. But she made me go to all these things. And at one meeting, this old, old lady looked at me and she says, “You know,” she says, “it's fascinating the more I look at you and the more I see you, you become so Canadian.” I said, “well, I am.”
EFK: [faintly] I've always been Canadian. Yeah.
ET: But I passed it off. And then another one said to me, “But where do you come from? Where do you really come from?” And I thought, okay, alright. “You know what? I'm Inuit. I come from up north. My mother and father are Eskimo” I said, that'll shut her up.
EFK: Oh yeah.
ET: 'Cause they're bothering me. 'cause I thought if they're stupid like that, then that's, let them, I mean, didn't hurt. It is not going make me even less a person. You know?

EFK: Mm-hm. Yeah. I mean, even to this day, I know myself or other friends who are Canadian, born, Canadian raised, but maybe don't look Caucasian. You get asked that question all the time still. And you-
ET: Say, where are you really from? Yeah.
EFK: Yeah. They say, where are you from? And they don't expect me to say Pickering. They expect me to say Japan or somewhere else. Right.
ET: I tell them I come from up North Inuit, Inuit. Um, If I could remember some of the, those cities up there, which I can never remember half the time. So the best thing is I'm Inuit.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Well, what's wrong with being Inuit?
EFK: No, nothing at all. Yeah. Why is it tell something fun and interesting? Yeah. Let me just double check these. Yeah, they're perfectly fine. Okay. Good. Um, let's see. Oh, before the war happened though, do you recall anyone ever, I guess anyone in your family, including yourself or your parents, um, experiencing any prejudice, like before the war happened?
ET: Not that I remember. I mean, at that age, I would know what prejudice was anyway, so, I don't think my mother ever, but she, she'd fight back.
EFK: Good way to be. Mm-hm. Let's see. So I have just two other questions then for you. Uh, and they're pretty general, so you can answer them however you like. But, uh, the first question is, uh, usually I like to ask interviewees, uh, what does it mean to you to be Japanese Canadian? But I think in thinking about that question more, I've also thought maybe I should change the question a bit.

[1:30:00]

EFK: So, um, since there's lots of young *nikkei*, or some kind of Japanese background Canadian kids like me, um, who are almost even now still just learning about what happened to the community several decades ago. Um, is there any kind of, I don't know, example or lesson or just something that you'd wanna pass on as a means of talking about, you know, the, the shared background of having ancestors from Japan? Like what it meant to you to, to have this kind of family history or?
ET: You know, it's a funny thing. Uh, I never thought of it that way. I always thought that, that was me. I come from this, the family. That's the family I come from. This is the, these are the parents I had. And this is me and I. And I don't think that I, you know, bend towards one culture, the other. It's just there. And just because I'm Japanese doesn't mean that. What does that mean? I'm not real Japanese. I'm not, I can't say I'm Japanese 'cause I'm not like my dad, you know, I said to him, "I'm gonna make you *oden* dad". "No." He said, "you're not Japanese, so don't make it. Only the Japanese can make real good *oden*." And I thought, how true? I am not Japanese. I'm not Japanese. The way I think, the way I feel, um, the way I act. I'm not Japanese. And then what is Canadian? The Canadian is the, that's how I was brought up. I went to school, you know?
EFK: Yeah.
ET: What is a real Canadian? I don't know. But I'm not Japanese. I don't consider myself, I don't think like Japanese, like the Ja- 'cause all those Japanese people that

came to study with Jim, it was really funny because we were so, um, poles apart the way we think about things, our philosophy of life, what we value, was so different. Very different. And they even said to me, the people from Japan, you're not Japanese. 'Cause I'm not. You have to be born in Japan and grow up in a Japanese culture and, and go to school in Japan to become- I didn't have that. I, I don't know. I don't think like a Japanese, they think differently. Their values are different. And um, so sometimes I'd look at some of the young people that want to become very Japanese, you know, once they reach a certain age, you know. And I think, listen, buster, you will never become Japanese. Never, never, never. I mean, part of me, I know the Japanese traditions, I like the food. Um, uh, I know, well, I guess it's food. [chuckles]
EFK: It's a big part. It's always a big part of it, right?
ET: Yeah. Yeah. But I know a little bit about New Year's celebrations and girls' celebrations. I know something about the life in Japan, uh, even, you know, and the hierarchy. I found that out. They have very, it's like England, they have, and I found out professors are [raises hand] doctors are lower. Yeah. I was so surprised. I said, "why doctors?" They said "Because they do dirty work." I said, "Oh God." So when Jim went there, it's like Christ has arrived, you know? And my mother used to say, "You are going to Japan. You're a professor's wife. Sit there, smile, say thank you, and don't say anything and be very quiet. Don't open your mouth." And I thought, so I went to all these banquets and on the way there, my, Jim would say, "don't forget what your mother said. Don't open your mouth." So I'd sit there and smile and, you know, but then, well, they came to my house and stuff and I got to know them really well.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: So I could be me.
EFK: Mm-hm, mm-hm.
ET: And I know a lot of them say, "Oh, you never say that in Japan."
EFK: Yeah. Okay. A lot of different expectations, right? Yeah.

[1:35:00]

ET: There is a lot of like, mannerisms, the way you act, the way you talk.
EFK: Um, do you think that any of the, um, I would call them easier to translate, like food or other like holidays and traditions, stuff like that? Do you feel, um, any, I guess desire, I won't say obligation, but desire to pass those sorts of things on to your kids or grandkids?
ET: Some of it like *mochi*, every year, I, I said it's getting worse and worse and worse. I make tons of *mochi* and my grandchildren come and help me. And you should see some are big [hand gestures] some are small- I don't care. But we have a *mochi* making day. They love *mochi*. And I said, you gotta learn to do this 'cause when I'm dead, you are gonna have to do it. You know? But of all the Japanese things, I think *mochi* is the one that I have- I would like to them to remember. Nothing else. Like, I mean, I, you could see I got a lot of Japanese stuff.
EFK: It's beautiful though. You've got a great collection.
ET: A lot of it were gifts, you know?
EFK: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

ET: And, and some of the stuff, uh, belonged to my mother, so I got a lot of junk. I don't know. And then my, my husband had a lot of Chinese students to people from China. Uh, when, um, the Chinese government allowed their scientists and stuff to leave China to study. Um, I can't remember how long ago that was, but one the government of Canada asked Jim and some of the professors that he knew to take one of the scientists. So he was given some, this guy and his name was Dr. Pu, and I told my guys, when he comes and I introduce you to him, if you crack one smile, you're gonna be grounded for life. [laughs] Mr. Poop. But it was funny 'cause we went to the reception that they had for these newly arrived Chinese people. And my friend, another wife of another, the professor that was good friends with me, she asked, she says, "Let's pick out the Secret Service people." And there's one, there's one you could tell, you know-
EFK: I'm, I'm sure they were as much as they tried to blend, and they did not.
ET: Because most of the people there were academics. And academics do not dress very nicely. So these, uh, secret service people were in their black suits, a tie. And the professors, some of them were in turtlenecks, and, you know, they did not dress- academic people are not dressy people. They're all dressed weirdly. So you could tell. But that was interesting. And he, and one time he came over and cooked, um, um, a meal for us. But the first time when he came, my youngest son, Joel, he must've been around five then, so this is about 30 years ago. Okay. He had the dog. I couldn't find him. And I found, finally found him in the bedroom. He was under the bed holding the dog. I said, "What are you doing there?" he said "Oh, that Chinese guy's here, and they eat dogs". I said, "Don't be silly, he's not gonna kill your dog". So, I made him come out and I came into the kitchen and there's this other Chinese guy that was from Taiwan. He's marching up and down. I said, "What's wrong with you?" He says, "You know, that he's from, he's from, uh, mainland China." He says, "I got, I've got family there too." I said, "For God's sakes, there's no politics here. Go in there. Otherwise go home," I told him. So, he came in and they became very good friends, you know?
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And then Joel in the meantime says to me, in a rather loud voice, "Mommy, how come he's not red?" I said, "Joel shhh." "Well, you said he was from Red China, so how come he's not red?" Oh, God, that was really interesting. The Chinese- you know, I need to have to go every weekend to Ottawa to be, um, you know-
EFK: Kind of to be checked in on. Right?
ET: Yeah, and also get retraining, get the message, you know? Mm-hm. And then the ones from Russia was another funny one. We went to their apartment. They had the TV on so loud, I could hardly hear anybody talk. I said, "Why is the TV on so loud?" And the guy next to the student next to me said, "Mrs. They're being tapped. That's what we have." Okay. I just for God's sakes. [chuckles]

[1:40:00]

So, you know, my life with Jim was very interesting. I met very interesting people. So, when you asked that about J- being Japanese, I don't think that has ever occurred to any of my kids. If I ask them that question, they'd say, "What are you asking me

that for? I am what I am."
EFK: Mm-hm. Yeah. You mean, I think if, uh, well, I mean, my, my personal opinion is just that if more people could understand that I think, then you wouldn't have things like internment happen.
ET: Yeah. Because, you know, I have lots of friends whose background is Ukrainian, Polish, German, um, Chinese, and, um, I don't think of them as Ukrainian people. I mean, half Ukrainian, they're Ukrainian. They, they're there, [stutters] they're Margaret.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Margaret is Margaret. You know, and it's interesting. So, you know, one of them, uh, has very strong Scottish, and we talk about that. But, uh, to me, she's Scottish. Happens to have Scottish relatives or whatever. But, um, I don't consider her as a Scottish person. It's Margaret.
EFK: Agreed.
ET: Do you, do you feel that way or do you feel Japanese?
EFK: No, I would definitely never call myself Japanese.
ET: Mm-hm.
EFK: The only time I would answer that is if they were asking me where my ancestors came from. Yeah. Then I would. But yeah, I mean, I guess it's a mixed bag for everyone in terms of – hm, whether it's how their parents brought them up or what their experiences were and all that kind of stuff. But yeah, I think it's something that, um- [phone rings] oh, if you want, you can, if you have to grab that, you can.
ET: No
EFK: Let it go? Okay.
ET: I think it's long distance, so it's one of those.
EFK: Oh, that's why it's- oh, okay.
ET: Yeah. It's one of those tele-
EFK: Telemarketing kind of. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I think for, I guess maybe especially for the younger generation who really didn't hear much about, or at least didn't, weren't very educated on, you know, what happened with internment and things like that. Uh, because they're trying to give some kind of meaning or focus or something, attention to that having happened to their ancestors or their community or what they feel to be their community, right. Um, I think in, in that the people who have been sort of reaching out to that part of the community history, they've been questioning themselves more about, you know, what it means to be quote unquote "something."
ET: It's a good question though.
EFK: Yeah. 'Cause at the same time, I ask myself what it means to be Canadian, and it's not like there's an easy question.
ET: Yeah.
EFK: Yeah, no. Easy answer for that either. So, yeah. Yeah. I think, I think for anyone who's a visible minority or something like that, it's, you might have more experience than people asking you just 'cause you happen to look a little different, so.
ET: Yeah so, but my, all my grandchildren are what I call, my mother used to call *hanbun- hanbun*.
EFK: Oh yeah. I think one of the words I hear more commonly used, which I think

came out of Hawaii, was *Hapa*. So I know a lot of young people are okay with using that word to just mean half.
ET: *Hanbun-hanbun*? Yeah. Half and half. Same meaning. Yeah. Yeah. Half Dutch, half English, half Portuguese.
EFK: Mm-hm. Yeah. I think I heard some kind of statistic that for the Japanese community, we are the, amongst the different, like obvious minority groups in Canada we're the one with the highest intermarriage rate.
ET: Intermarriage.
EFK: Yeah. So I think that's probably evidence of a lot of things. Maybe a little bit history, maybe a little bit. All kinds of stuff. I mean, we're one of the oldest communities in Canada, period.
ET: But, well, I know the Portuguese, they're, they really value their heri- their culture. EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: So, my grandson, I said, "What can you say in Portuguese?" "Nothing." I said, "Yes, you can". He won't, he will not. He'll, he, he speaks French quite well.
[1:45:00]
ET: Um, but, uh, Portuguese is- he won't. Mm-hm.
EFT: Yeah. I think it-
ET: I think it because it, it makes him different. Yeah. Whereas the other ones who have Dutch, they, they, they don't know very much Dutch, but the mother doesn't know that much Dutch either. But, um, they're very proud of the fact that one of them knows how to say "mosquito" in Dutch and the other group, their, uh, mother is English, so.
EFK: Mm-hm. It's funny how, at least to me in history, maybe until much of, up until the 20th century, you know, most cultures very like value everyone being kind of the same. You know, like all Japanese people are Japanese or all Americans are American or just kind of nationality and things like that are really important. And then, you know, in the last maybe only few decades is it-
ET: Doesn't really matter.
EFK: Yeah. Doesn't matter. Or, or for that matter-
ET: Skin color matters. Yeah. For Blacks, you know? Yeah.
EFK: It tends to be-
ET: In the States-
EFK: - pointed out, that kind of thing. Yeah. But yeah, difference is becoming less of a bad thing, I think. And it's why some people are starting to question their own backgrounds and things like that, but-
ET: You know, I don't think, I don't consider myself really, no, I'm not Japanese. Yeah. I HAVE Japanese parents, but-
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Uh, and I know some little bit about Japanese culture, but I don't think like them, I don't share their values.
EFK: Uh-hm. Your cultural upbringing was Canadian, so-
ET: Well, my mother always brought me up to consider myself a person, you know? [both chuckle]
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And a woman, she was very adamant about that. She says, be proud you're a

woman. EFK: Yeah. No, that's, that's honestly kind of for me, I would say honestly kind of inspirational, just because I don't- you know, I never got to meet my own grandparents. And my dad used to tell me all these stories all the time about, uh, Nana Fujita and, and uh, it sounds like she was a very headstrong kind of lady. [giggles]
ET: Maybe she was, my mother liked, uh, uh, Toya's mother because she was educated. [EFK giggles] She, she finished high school, which was really something in Japan at that time.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: So, my mom says "I like talking to her 'cause she's sensible," which means she's educated.
EFK: Okay [giggling] Yeah. It was definitely a little bit uncommon at the time
ET: Yeah.
EFK: In Japan. But, yeah. So just before I run outta tape on this one, I've got my very last question. Um, and this one is extremely broad. What do you feel you're most proud of?
ET: What I'm most proud of?
EFK: Yeah. More than likely these kinds of tapes end up being seen by family members and maybe researchers. But if it's family members that might take a look at it, then what do you think you-
ET: What made me- what makes me most proud?
EFK: Yeah.
ET: I guess so-
ET: That I survived.
EFK: Mm-hm [giggles]
ET: I've survived everything. You know, my childhood, my next year, you know, the years after the war and everything I've survived. I've survived. Um, sorrow and disappointment. I've survived life. And, uh, at this point in time, my greatest joys are my grandchildren and my dogs. And, uh, to have survived for 80 years is an accomplishment.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: To me, you know?
EFK: Um, Absolutely. That's pretty much it.
ET: They survived my crazy family and yeah. I, I, it was a rather unusual family.
EFK: Mm-hm, Yeah. Yeah. It definitely sounds like a, a perfect answer. [giggles] Alright, well, I think for the most part, you've pretty much covered the, the questions that I, I thought I'd like to cover with you. You're very thorough. It made it very easy. Um, let me think though. I- oh, eventually what will happen is I will put all this onto a DVD. You should be able to watch so that you can review it and tell me if there's something you don't like.
ET: Yeah, I know, because I, I got one for Tomi [laughs].

[1:50:00]

EFK: [laughs] Mm.
ET: Right. That was the most fun one. Tomi, she, you know, she, she's describing how

my father stayed up at night waiting for her. She never stayed up waiting for her [laughing]. He was waiting for me, but I didn't say anything.
EFK: [laughing]
ET: I mean, that means what she remembers. She, you know, but I'm very fond of my eldest sister. I've, [phone rings] I've been her caregiver now for eight years, so-
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: And she's in a long-term, uh, long-term care home. Yeah. And she's happy. She's a very happy person.
EFK: That's the most-
ET: You know what, there are many people in this world like Tomi, she's very happy about everything. She's very, uh, sociable. She likes people. And you know, it's not very many people like that.
EFK: Mm-hm.
ET: Never complains.
EFK: Yeah. Does she, didn't she just have, um-
ET: No, she's not gonna be 93 this year.
EFK: Okay. Yeah. I was trying to remember her age now. 'Cause Lisa showed me a couple of the files. I didn't see her interview tapes yet, but she showed me that.

[someone yells “mamma” in background]

ET: Yes. 93 last week. Oh, okay. I better go.
EFK: Yeah, No, of course. Gosh. Yeah. Let me cut that.

[Interview ends]