Interviewee: Harold (Yutaka) Yoneyama
Interviewer: Norm Ibuki
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SEDAI PROJECT
THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

[Start part 1]

Norm Ibuki: Today's Thursday, July 16th, 2009. The interviewer is Norm Ibuki, the videographer is Tak Yano, and the interviewee is Mr. Yutaka Harold Yoneyama.
Harold Yoneyama: Right.
NI: I got everything, right? Right? [chuckles] Who has just written his memoirs, which are titled "An Evacuee's Memoir." Which was published, I guess this spring? [indistinct]
HY: Yeah, the book came out on the 24th of June, 2009, to be exact.
NI: Okay, so we've got it fresh off the press, then, eh?
HY: Fresh off the –
NI: Fresh off the presses. [chuckles] So, Mr. Yoneyama, why write the book now? You're 84 years old, you've gone through a lot. Why write the book now?
HY: Yeah, a lot of people ask me this question. And – My youngest daughter, Norma, who lives up in Aurora [Ontario], came down one day, and I said, "Well, why don't they have lunch?" So I took her over to Weston Golf Club, and we had lunch, and while we were having lunch, she said to me, "Dad, you know, you really haven't told us too much about your childhood. [audio changes] Your upbringing on the farm." So I kind of scratched my head and I said, "Okay. I don't know where to start with this, but I'll start from the first farm, that's where I was born." So I gave her sort of the highlights, and at the conclusion of our lunch, she kind of looked at me, and said, "You know, Dad, you should really document your experiences. I, for one, would like to read it. I'm sure Linda," – who is my older daughter – "Would like to read it, and I'm sure our grandchildren would like to read it." So that was really the initial sort of input from the family's side, and I started to do some research, going over documents that I did have, and lo and behold, one day a flyer came in the mail, and the heading on the flyer was "Anybody Could Write a Memoir." And this kind of opened my eyes, and on the bottom was a picture of a computer. Well, which – as I told you before – I don't have. Anyway, I phoned the phone number that was on there, and I spoke to the instructor, by the name of Gail Dzis, D-Z-I-S, and I told her that I'd received this in the mail, and I was just sort of tinkering with the idea of maybe writing a memoir. So I see the session starts – started in September here towards Christmas –
NI: What year was this? Sorry, what year was this?
HY: Sorry?
NI: What year was this?
HY: What year?
NI: Year.

HY: It should be, what, December of – could it be '03?
NI: '03? Okay.
HY: Might have been '04. Don't hold me to it. But anyway, she said, "It doesn't matter, because I've got two sessions. One starting September and another one starting in January." And she said, "You can start in January," and I said, "Well, are you not halfway through?" And she said, "Well, I'm – you know, this is my 16th year that I'm doing this, so it really doesn't matter where you come into the course." As it turned out, when I first started the class – January 23rd, I think it was – she was just at the point where she was asking her 16 students, "What were you doing at the age of 40?"
NI: Right, yeah.
HY: Well, now you're sitting there scratching your head again, because what was I doing, you know, at the age of 40?
NI: So what were you doing?
HY: So that's what, 1924? Ten –
NI: 64. Yeah.
HY: That's 60 years later, right?
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: So let's see, the European War was on.
NY: Mm-hmm.
HY: In the summer, I was working, partly on the farm and I had a job with the Maybridge Co-op, filling 500-pound barrels of strawberry, which were eventually shipped to England via New Westminister.
NI: So that's at 14, right? Not 40. 14.
HY: No, no. Oh, I'm sorry, yeah. No, that – 1940.
NI: Oh, 1940. Okay, okay. So –
HY: 1940. Yeah, sorry.
NI: Yeah, yeah. That's okay.
HY: Not aged 40, my mistake.
NI: Yeah, no, that's okay. Can we go, like – let's start at the beginning, then. I know your writing teacher wanted you to start at age 40, but – at the beginning. So like, when you're – can you talk a little bit about your father? Who – What was his name, and what year did he come to Canada? What do you remember as being the reason why he came to Canada?
HY: Okay. Yeah, he was born in Japan, in Kanagawa-ken, Kanagawa-ken prefecture. Born in 1887. He immigrated to Canada in 1905. The reason why he came – I really can't answer that, except to say that I guess like every other immigrant, they were looking for something better abroad than what they have back in Japan. But he had enough, whatever you call it, to register himself, and got his Canadian citizenship in 1911.
NI: So shortly after he came?
HY: Shortly after he came. So just prior to World War I, he went back to Japan, married Yone, Y-O-N-E, Katohoka, over there in Japan, and brought her back to Vancouver. But [clears throat] when he got here, when Dad got here back in 1905, [clears throat] he was working at a sawmill in Abbotsford [British Columbia] and

obviously that wasn't to his liking. How he managed to seek employment at Georgia Pharmacy – again, I'm at a loss, but there he was.
NI: You don't normally go from a sawmill to a pharmacy. [chuckles]
HY: That's right, that's right. But anyway, he was there, so when he brought his wife back – by this time, of course, she's living in Vancouver, because he's working at Georgia Pharmacy –
NI: Downtown? Like in – on Powell Street? That area?
HY: Oh, uh –
NI: You don't know.
HY: Georgia Street rings –
NI: Georgia? Okay, okay.
HY: Rings a bell with me. So anyway, that's when my older sister Misao [Yoneyama] was born, 1915, as was Yachiyo [Yoneyama], my second oldest daughter – er, sister – in 1917. I don't know whose idea it was, but they thought maybe she'd buy a farm. Now this is where – was Dad released from Georgia Pharmacy?
NI: Right.
HY: Or did he leave voluntarily?
NI: Right.
HY: I do know that he was dispensing. I also know that he was dispensing without any kind of a certificate.
NI: Okay.
HY: So it could be half of one and half of the other, so to speak. You know, you can't dispense medication without some degree of – or some certificate.
NI: Was, was the owner of Georgia Pharmacy Japanese?
HY: I don't think so. I can't answer that.
NI: Okay.
HY: But I don't think he was. I may be corrected on that.
NI: Okay.
HY: Anyway so, Dad and Mom bought 7 ½ acres in the [little town Haney?]
NI: What year was that?
HY: That was, what, 1915? If I remember right.
NI: I probably have it here. [flips pages]
HY: See what the book says.
NI: 1918?
HY: 1918.
NY: 1918.
HY: Okay. Yeah, it had to be, because of – Yachiyo was born in 1917in Vancouver, so it had to be after that. Okay, 1918. At least I got it right in the book. [chuckles] So anyways – so 1920, my younger of the three sisters, Mitsue [Yoneyama], was born, and then in 1924, yours truly came along. That was four years later.
So the farm itself was – the building was already existing. The front door was sort of at lawn level. The rear door was on a lower level, which meant that we had to have an exterior stairway to get, get access to the rear door. Chicken coops were sort of to the west of the building. The barn was a little northeast. The farm itself, it sloped upwards to the west so on that sloping ground, we had a lot of fruit trees: apples, pears, cherries, and adjacent to that, canes of raspberries, blackberries,

loganberries. And on the flat portion, which was to the north of the, the building, we grew vegetables – lettuce, beets, strawberries, of course. And Dad was great with poultry, with poultry. So he had his own incubator, bought his own incubator, and hatched his own chicks. So it was all kerosene then, it wasn't electric in those days. He managed to incubate his flock of hens, so we had eggs and chicken if you wanted for dinner, there's no problem. And we also had some pigs, so we built a little smokehouse, a little further away, and we made our own bacon.
NI: Oh? Okay.
HY: And you know, we used to chop maple and burnt the smokehouse down a couple of times. [chuckles] Including the bacon. [chuckles]
NI: What – when do your memories of the farm begin? What do you remember doing?
HY: Doing?
NI: Yeah.
HY: I guess as a youngster, really, youngster, there used to be a well – an open well, as a matter of fact – and just to the west of the house, and it couldn't have been any more than 50 feet, if that. And I remember dragging a plank across the open well, and sort of running back and forth, you know, not realizing that if I ever fell –
NI: Right.
HY: Nobody would know and I could drown. Nobody's going to come to you. You just keep doing these things. And then the neighbours – the Teleps on one side, Lamberts on the other side. Teleps had Peter, Mary, Nick, and Steve, and I used to play with Steve quite a bit. And the other neighbour was the Lamberts, who were – their children were a little younger than the Teleps, but there was Laura, Leonard and – can't remember the last boy's name. But anyway, they used to come over and play with me, at our farm. And then a little further away was the [Ibusuzakis?], and Kaney – he's currently living in London [Ontario], I believe.
NI: Okay.
HY: And his younger sister's Yukiko and – who's the brainy one. Well, they're all brainy in that family.
NI: Right.
HY: Oh, gee, can't remember the last one's name. And there was the Arizas, who were on the west side of – the same side that we lived on, Lillooet Road. There's Tak, Isao – I don't know why I have this memory loss on the, on the last ones in the family. [chuckles]
NI: That's okay. [Laughs]
HY: But there's –
NI: But you were all immigrants, right? Like even the Teleps and –
HY: No, the Teleps –
NI: Teleps.
HY: Teleps and Lamberts.
NI: How long had they been before –
HY: The Teleps were there before we came there.
NI: Okay, okay.
HY: I believe the Lamberts came after we – after Dad bought the farm.
NI: Okay, yeah. How well did you guys get along?

HY: No problem.
NI: Like what do you remember about getting along?
HY: No problem.
NI: Yeah?
HY: No problem. We – yeah, we – there was no – we had a fence, but the fence wasn't there, if you know what I mean. If you wanted something, you just walked over and if they weren't there, you'd just take it.
NI: Right.
HY: You know, and you're finished with it, sent – take it back.
NI: Right.
HY: So there's no problem from that standpoint. As a matter of fact –
NI: Yeah?
HY: Lamberte – Mr. Lambert was quite a mechanic, and he used to like building things, and he, he built a wheelbarrow – a wheelbarrow, you know?
NI: Yeah.
HY: There weren't too many trees around that first farm, but the little saplings that we used to cut down, and I used to go and borrow Mr. Lambert's wheelbarrow, to bring 16-inch little saplings back home from the woods [chuckles] to put in the kitchen stove.
NI: Right. Oh, wow.
HY: And when I'm through with it – I remember one day, I forgot to take it back, and the oldest boy, Leonard came back. "Do you – do you have our wheelbarrow?" And I said, "Yeah, I borrowed it and forgot to take it back. Sorry about that!" [chuckles]
NI: So it was congenial, right? So it was always congenial.
HY: Oh, oh – that's –
NI: Yeah.
HY: Oh, yeah.
NI: Yeah.
HY: No problem. It was really great.
NI: Yeah.
HY: But anyway, things moved along, and the well was a little too close to the outhouse, so we decided we'd better dig another well. So we dug, but we didn't know just how the underground – we took a chance and decided to dig north of the existing well, a little further away from the house. And I guess we went down about 8 feet, you know, digging by hand, eh?
NI: Okay.
HY: And it's clay. And you know, you get wet clay, and it has a tendency to collapse if you're not careful. But it was about 8 feet deep, and it would start to hit water. So we came out, and within a week, I guess, the water did come up. And so I – I remember looking at Dad and not really knowing what to say to him, because now what do we do? We can't go down there, because that's going to be our drinking water.
NI: Right.
HY: So we just sort of said, "Okay, that's it." And we built a sort of a, a roof over the open well, so to speak, and I remember Dad sort of cutting a hole in the flooring we put in, and he put an A-frame up and a little wheel at the top, so we could put a rope through it, and send a bucket down and get the, the pail of water up.

NI: Right.
HY: Well by this time, the bathhouse was even closer to the house than the original well was, so I hauled up the water from the well, and –
NI: That was your job?
HY: That was my job.
NI: Yeah.
HY: And I'd pour the two gallons of water in a bigger, three-gallon bucket, and Dad would carry the two buckets and fill up the bathtub.
NI: Oh. Was that a daily ritual that you went through?
HY: It's – well, I guess we changed the bath water every three days?
NI: Okay.
HY: Sometimes, if I would – got a little lazy, it would be a week. And I got told about it by my sisters. [chuckles] But it was my chore to light the fire.
NI: Oh yeah?
HY: Underneath, you know to sort of –
NI: How was that set up, Mr. Yoneyama? Like, how did they set up the – what was the heating system? You know, maybe some details about – was it just a fire under a big metal tub, or was it –
HY: Yeah, yeah. It was just –
NI: That's all it was?
HY: Yeah. We had brickwork, on the siding, fire bricks on the side, and then the bathtub was homemade. It was, you know, three-inch cedar slabs, and they'd be 18 inches. And they'd be one on top of the other, with cotton-bedded fillings to make sure it doesn't leak. Okay?
NI: And what was on the bottom?
HY: The bottom was metal.
NI: Okay.
HY: And that had to be sealed so it wouldn't leak.
NI: Right.
HY: And then on top of that, we had a wooden slat flooring.
NI: Okay, yeah.
HY: Okay? So we can sit on that. And then, just to make sure that the steam didn't escape too fast, we had a light sort of a plywood cover on top, just flat on top.
NI: So like the old Japanese ofuros, right?
HY: Oh yeah, right on.
NI: Yeah. Yeah.
HY: Yeah. Yeah. But that was my job, to light the fire, and sort of get that water boiled to you know, whatever – Dad used to love his, what we call today hot tub.
NI: Hot tub, yeah.
HY: Yeah. Ofuro for Dad was a must before retiring.
NI: Every day?
HY: Every night. Every night, there wasn't a night that he – I really don't remember a night that he missed.
NI: Is that right? Is that right?
HY: So that was my job, to light that fire.

NI: What was the – having lived in Japan, I know there's a certain ritual about it – what was your bathing ritual? You know, my, my image is always that the father went into the bath first, followed by the mom, and then from the eldest child to the youngest. Is that the way it happened in your household, too? Do you remember? That would be a little tough on you, of course, being the youngest.
HY: I can't really say that there was a ritual, in that manner.
NI: Yeah.
HY: I do know that I was in the – the bathtub was there, and then you had the washing there, eh?
NI: Okay.
HY: Before you went in the tub, and that was enclosed in a sort of a small – a shack, as I recall it. Mom would wash me down before I went in the tub –
NI: So she'd have a bucket and a dipper of some sort?
HY: Yeah, well, yeah. She'd have soap and a rag.
NI: Scrub you down.
HY: Scrub me down.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: 'Cause being on the farm, and if it's a nice warm day, you're pretty dusty, you know, so you have to get washed down. But usually my sisters used to come after me.
NI: After you?
HY: After me.
NI: Okay.
HY: Not all the time, but you know –
NI: Right, yeah.
HY: Dad would be the last, because he – especially during the time when the chickens – when Dad wanted to get the chickens to produce more eggs, we used to adjust the lights – this is the first farm when we had electricity – adjust the brightness of the light.
NI: Why? Why would you adjust the brightness?
HY: Well [clears throat] I don't know the why – I guess it lengthens the daylight for them.
NI: Okay.
HY: Instead of – they seem to know when to go to bed, you know, up in the roost. So if you put the lights on, they still think it's daylight and they'll stay up and eat.
NI: Oh, I see.
HY: As soon as you dim the lights down, they all go up in the roost and go to sleep.
NI: Oh, I see.
HY: So Dad, I think he'd be – about 11 o'clock at night, he'd finally turn the lights off in the chicken coops.
NI: Yeah.
HY: And then he would have his bath, so –
NI: Oh, I see. That's late.
HY: Oh, oh yeah. But you know, he'd be up bright and early.
NI: Is that right?
HY: So his day was long.

NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: But I don't ever remember him taking cat naps. [chuckles]
NI: Is that right? [laughter]
HY: During the day.
NI: What, what kind of guy was your dad? Character-wise, what – how would you describe him?
HY: He's congenial. Give you his shirt off his back. Never had a bad word for anybody. He scolded me a lot, but you know, I, I probably deserved it. Oh, he was well-liked, and I used to go with him to buy the chicken feed – this is now a little later in years, because by this time he bought a 1924 Pontiac.
NI: Okay.
HY: And we used to – used to drive about two miles or three miles to the United Co-op feed store, and he'd buy the feed. But I remember going with him and he'd be chatting away with the, the chap behind the desk.
NI: Yeah.
HY: And he'd be having a great time.
NI: How was his English? How was your dad's English?
HY: Broken.
NI: Broken? Yeah.
HY: Yeah, coming back to the days of Georgia Pharmacy, I guess that's where he picked up most of his broken English. But he managed, manage. The people understood. And as a youngster listening to this, you feel like correcting him, but – you know, not in front of other people type of thing, so I just kept quiet. But no, they just acknowledged the fact that he's here, he's a naturalized Canadian. He's doing his best to make a living. He has children and all, going to school. They, they were still in grade school, at that time.
NI: Yeah. Your language at home, was that Japanese?
HY: Mother's was. Well, as was Dad's, I guess, but as far as the siblings – we understood Japanese. We spoke a bit, but – no, no, English was, amongst the siblings.
NI: The siblings, yeah. Yeah.
HY: Dad and Mom, to us – Dad was Japanese-English, Mom was mostly Japanese.
NI: Yeah.
HY: This is what surprised me about Mom, you know? You can tell that she, she certainly wanted her children – and Dad was like this, too – to be educated, but what surprised me was she made absolutely no effort to learn the English language.
NI: Right, right.
HY: And to this day, I, I – I just can't understand that.
NI: But I would imagine her community was the Japanese housewives from Haney, right? And the other Japanese housewives. Would that have been it?
HY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, they'd have the sort of the women's auxiliary, the fujin-kai –
NI: Fujin-kai, yeah.
HY: And they'd meet at the community hall. And, of course it's all Japanese spoken.
NI: Right.
HY: So there was, I guess, no need really to, to learn the English language, to communicate with her neighbours. Other than, you know, Lamberts and Teleps. But

the others around us were – I guess the Yanos, who moved over to – oops –22nd Road and 14th Avenue later on, were neighbours of Ibusuzakis. And the Mikanis used to be – what I call the top of the hill, on the east side of Lillooet Road and 14th Avenue. So – [shrugs] So you didn't need any. And if I – if they wanted something from Teleps or Lambert, you know who went. [chuckles]
NI: Right. [laughter]
HY: There's no point in Mom going, because she's not going to be able to converse with them. And Lambert had a bit of an accent, too. They're – they were of Finnish descent.
NI: Oh, Finnish? Okay.
HY: Finnish descent, eh?
NI: Uh-huh. Yeah.
HY: And I remember Leonard trying to teach me to speak Finnish, you know? Oh, we used to have a great time. I used to respond a bit in Japanese, and he'd kind of look at me. [chuckles]
NI: What about your mom, then? What kind of – what kind of person was your mom?
HY: My mom? Oh, she was hard-nosed. But it was no – was not too much give-and-take with her.
NI: Uh-huh. How so? How so?
HY: Eh?
NI: How – why do you describe her as being hard-nosed?
HY: Well, I guess what she wanted, she got, type of thing. And of course this is where the three sisters sort of stay together and I was on the outside looking in, because Mom would cater to me and you know, the sisters just were sort of kept aside and – but she, she stood her ground. When Mother wanted to get me something, then I got it. And my sisters –
NI: Do you remember any instances? Like when, when that would have occurred?
HY: Well, I guess the first toy that I got, I guess. It wasn't a cheap toy, I guess, in those days, you know. It was a mechanical spring-loaded tractor that I mention in there. [gestures to memoir] [indistinct] I say I got it from Santa Claus, but you know darn well that it's – that's not quite true either. [chuckles]
NI: [laughs] Okay. So what happened? What happened, then?
HY: Well, they – my sisters kind of resented that, you know, and I don't blame them.
NI: Yeah.
HY: And then they were going to go to Vancouver, and I wasn't to go but because of course. I sulked. And they were going to go to Vancouver. They wanted some new clothing, new dresses and so on. And I wanted to go, but they said, "You're not coming." And I sulked, and of course I ended up going. Well, that didn't help, you know, all these things just sort of –
NI: Build up?
HY: Yeah, yeah. And with that four year difference, you can see the [chuckles] clash sort of developing, but Mother was – yeah, far more lenient to me than she was the – to my sisters. Although, this isn't to say that she was not fair with them. Yeah. It must have impressed me, because I, I can still remember that.
NI: Right, right.

HY: You know, if I was treated any other way, I probably wouldn't remember all of this. So I used to take advantage of that, I mean, let's not kid ourselves. We – as youngsters, you have a tendency – especially boys – a tendency to do this sort of thing.
NI: Right. You, you describe yourself as a *yancha.*
HY: You'd better believe it. You better believe it.
NI: Can you elaborate on that a little bit?
HY: Well, yeah, the things that you weren't supposed to do – I did, you know? Yachiyo tells me – and I don't remember doing this – but Yachiyo tells me that we were pitching hay in the barn, to the upper loft, and I guess she must either have done something to irk me or said something that irked me, but I had a pitchfork in my hand, a pointed pitchfork, and I threw it at her. It nailed her right in the calf.
NI: Ooh! Boy. Ooh.
HY: So you know, and then – she got over that, fortunately. And we used to have cedar logs and we'd split them – cedar splits very easily, eh? So half the log was sitting on the ground, and Yat and I were – Yat was sort of a tomboy – and Yat was sort of sitting on the log, and I, I used to wear a cap – you know, just a [holds hands to forehead] –
NI: A ball cap, of some sorts?
HY: No, no. Just a knitted cap.
NI: Like a tuque? Like a tuque. A tuque.
HY: Tuque, yeah. Not even a – a tuque, yeah. Just a flat –
NI: Okay, yeah.
HY: And she'd took that off my head, and she had it in her hand, and she was sitting on the log, and I grabbed it, and as I did that, her thumb somehow got caught on the cedar sliver.
NI: [hisses] Ooh.
HY: And the sliver went right up her thumb here.
NI: Oh god.
HY: You know, she recovered –
NI: So things like that.
HY: She recovered, but talk about being a young child, there's serious episodes of injuring somebody. [chuckles]
NI: What was your relationship with Misao, your eldest sister?
HY: She – it was great, yeah. She was the one that really – despite what Mom was sort of favouring me all the time, she still looked after me. You see in that – you can see in the pictures where you know, Misao and I are standing with the cat. With Mitsue, we were a bit distant. But that was –
NI: She was eight years older than you? Eight years?
HY: Four.
NI: Oh, Misao was only four years older?
HY: Oh, no, sorry, sorry. Yeah. Eight.
NI: Oh, okay.
HY: Mitsue was four. And Yat, she was six. So now I'm starting kindergarten, and I didn't want to go, but Mom dragged me there. We met – I met Rosa Takatsu, Kiyoshi Inouye, and Michael Kansaki – I guess Amy Mitani was there, too? But anyway – On a

rainy day I used to come home, 'cause Mom would be waiting for me. On a sunny day, I'd go off with some of my friends, without coming home first. And I remember throwing my – sort of my lunch bucket at the base of the hydro tower, and go off to play for an hour, and come back, pick it up, go home. But one day, the – a cat was roaming around in the kindergarten yards, and I called it, and it came to me. So I kind of petted it and it sort of rubbed itself up against my leg, and I picked it up and – Very friendly, so I just said, "Well, I'll bring him home." So I tucked it under my sweater and I brought it home, and that became my pet. As well as a collie dog that we just owned. But that was one thing that kind of worried – when I, when I brought the cat home, that you know, I wonder if the dog's going to go after the cat. I say this because one of the other neighbours used to raise rabbits. Okay, and the collie dog used to disappear every now and again. And being on the farm, so who cares where the dog goes? As long as he comes back at night. Not realizing that the dog was going after the rabbits. Until the neighbour came over and said, "You know, what are you going to do about this?" So that's the kind of dog that – it was a good house dog, it really raised me. You know, it knew enough that I, I really shouldn't be wandering up the road. So – and you know – [rubs hands on face] Hanatare, like a little boy. [rolls head around] The collie used to –[makes petting motion on face
NI: Really? Licking it off your face?
HY: Oh, yeah. [chuckles]
NI: Yeah.
HY: Clean off my –
NI: What was your collie's name?
HY: Didn't really have one!
NI: Didn't have a name?
HY: Didn't have a name.
NI: Really? Wow.
HY: Yeah, just – yeah, just called him Collie.
NI: How about the cat?
HY: How many?
NI: No, the cat.
HY: No, same thing. Just a pussycat.
NI: Never named the cat?
HY: I never gave it a name. Nobody gave it a name.
NI: Is that right? Is that right?
HY: Horse was the same. We never had a name.
NI: Is that right? Funny. Wow.
HY: But there – I guess I always loved animals, you know? They – the horse that we had – they, they knew when I was coming to the barn, and they sort of acknowledged me, eh? And I'd have a carrot or two in my hand, and push. And then I'd bring them out, you know, give them water, and give them oats and you know, hay, whatever else. So you get pretty close to them. So when you had to work them on the farm, you really didn't – or I really didn't – have any trouble with them.
NI: Yeah.
HY: Some people, they, you know – they sort of beat the horses, to get them going, and this didn't help.

NI: Yeah. Was – was your Dad a part of the Haney Nokai? Was he, was he a member of that?
HY: Yeah, he was. Yeah. I think he was VP [vice-president] and treasurer? I think that's, that's elaborated in Mr. [Yasutaro Yamaga] diary, which is translated by the late Bill Hashizume. And if I remember reading that, Dad was quite active in the, in the Maple Ridge co-op, the Nokai. But, but what's so interesting about that is – of course, you work all day and you go to a meeting at night. He'd come home – there used to be this little hill on, on Lillooet Road, just to the north of the house, and in those days, it was rather steep. When I went back there in [1986?], it's just a knoll, but you know in those days –
NI: Right.
HY: So – I don't remember Dad really drinking. I don't think he ever drank. But anyway, he must have been tired, and he drove the car, the '24 Pontiac, down the hill and into the ravine. And he didn't get injured, fortunately. The only damage was the broken windshield. But the next day, you know, I'm standing at the top of the hill, as the tow truck came to take the car out of the ravine. So Dad, yeah, worked pretty hard for the Nokai. I don't know why he never ran for president, but I don't remember his name being used – [coughs] excuse me – as the president.
NI: Was, was the Nokai an important part of the community? How important was it to have that like, farmers' organization? For the Japanese, I guess, specifically.
HY: Oh, very. Very, because that was sort of the central gathering point for the Japanese farmers to bring their berries, eh? And this used to be on the wharf, on the north shore of Fraser Valley. At the foot of – I guess it was Best Street. [gestures to object on table]
NI: Oh, it's in here?
HY: The picture on the cover –
NI: Okay. Oh, okay. Yeah.
HY: Is the Haney Central CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] Station. But it was just to the west of that where we had the buildings where all the farmers brought the strawberries. So from that standpoint, the Nokai was central figure, as an agency, as an organization.
NI: How many farmers, Japanese farmers, were in the area? Was it a majority in that area, or –
HY: Yeah, yeah.
NI: It was a majority?
HY: Yeah. Because then later on they branched off into greenhouses. But I guess it must have been about twelve – not that many greenhouses. Yeah, they were primarily berry farmers.
NI: Why – why berries? Why berries?
HY: Well, I guess that was the most marketable product. You know, 'cause I, I still remember – this is now '29? Depression years – start of the Depression years, and I'm, what, five or six years old?
NI: Right.
HY: We picked the lettuce heads before sunrise, and crate them. The crates were about two by three, about 18 inches deep.
NI: Right.

HY: And we put them on the side of the road for the trucker to come and pick it up. But this one morning, it never showed up. So they were all thrown back.
NI: Right.
HY: And we never really had that kind of a problem with, with berries. If they weren't edible as – then, you know, we'd convert that into jam, eh? So it was not really wasted, so to speak, as was the lettuce heads. So it's sort of a stable, durable product, in terms of farm product.
NI: Yeah, yeah. What was the cycle of berry picking? Like, were the strawberries – what was first to come out – second – yeah.
HY: Yeah. We used to look forward to the 24th of May.
NI: Okay. May 2-4 weekend. Yeah, okay.
HY: For, for the first sort of strawberry to ripen. And from there on it was, you know, peak in June and finished by the end of June, type of thing, and then the other products would start coming in, rasp –
NI: Did they come in any kind of sequence? Any type of sequence?
HY: Overlap. Yeah, a bit of a sequence.
NI: Yeah. So what would come after the strawberries?
HY: Well in our case, it would be the raspberries.
NI: Raspberries, okay.
HY: Okay, and then the blackberries, and loganberries. So by the time we got to the second farm, we only had strawberries and a little bit of raspberries, but no loganberries, no blackberries. Because we had a spring on the second farm, we tried to grow some celery, with lots of water, but it takes a lot of work. It's not like planting a strawberry plant and letting it grow.
NI: Yeah. The strawberry picking was a big ritual, right? Amongst nisei. 'Cause my – I know my Mom talks about going strawberry picking, and picking – and being a good picker, right? That was a big deal back then, right?
HY: Back-breaking, big deal. [chuckles]
NI: Back-breaking. How did you do it? What did you have to do to –
HY: Well, you have to take the stem, eh?
NI: Okay.
HY: And you know, some people were able to pick the stem and use the one hand.
NI: Snap the –
HY: But if you did that, you, you could squash the berries. So you had to use two hands, berry in one hand and break the stem with the other, that type of thing. So it was time-consuming. Back-breaking, to say the least. And in the sun, it was hot.
NI: Right. Mostly kids would do it, like high school kids? Who would do that?
HY: Well, we – we never did hire anybody to harvest the berries. We did it within the family, and that's where my sisters sort of did the berry picking. I used to –
NI: You wouldn't – you wouldn't do any berry picking?
HY: Well, mainly because – I used to, and I'd be – we'd have trays, and one, two, three, four, eight small baskets.
NI: Court baskets?
HY: And a tray.
NI: Court baskets, or –

HY: Yeah, little wee court baskets. There'd be eight of those in a tray, and I'd bring the tray in, and I'd put it beside the other trays, and the tray I brought in would be all white berries, not red berries. So Dad would look at this and he'd sort of [sucks teeth] give me a little swat over the head because – "What are you doing here? How come you can't pick red berries? You're picking white berries!" And raspberry time, the same thing. You know, I can't find the red raspberries, it's all green raspberries. So this is when I – when Dad sort of scolded me rather harshly, I took off to the swimming pool, and ever since then – and by this time, I guess I was, what, going 12? I got a job at the co-op. Talk about the School Act, you know, not being able to work until 16. [chuckles]
NI: Yeah. How old were you when you worked for the co-op?
HY: Oh, I think – because I started to drive when I was 12, about 12 when I started to – and so now this is 3 o'clock in the afternoon, we'd work at – Tony Katsuno and Art Sakomoto, and myself, we'd all work at the co-op, and – and the farmers would bring in the – what we called the Dunlop Janets. The fact that they developed a real strawberry that was just suited for jam-making. And Mr. Yamaga and Mr. Yoshida and Mr. Brooks, the – Briggs, rather – the bookkeeper for the co-op, recognized that they had to do something for the farmers, otherwise they're gonna overproduce. We can't get rid of them, they're going to go bankrupt. So I don't know who had the brainwave to send some Dunlop strawberries over to the UK, over to England. And the response was favourable. So now we immediately started to get the farmers to bring all their straw – Dunlop strawberries, and we'd hire the girls – women, to call them on a conveyor, and we'd fill the, the 500-pound barrel, a wooden barrel, and we'd put sulfur dioxide, two gallons of sulfur dioxide on every 500 pounds of, of net. Dunlop strawberries, the sulfur dioxide was primarily to sort of retain the shape – what are you – what are you going to use a strawberry that's – [gestures with hand]
NI: Mush? Right.
HY: Under the bottom. Plus it sort of turned the red strawberries to white temporarily, and once it got to the destination they'd wash it off, the colour would come back.
NI: Oh, I see.
HY: Not to the full extent, of course. If you take the redness out – I guess, the theory being that – it's like, green strawberries would probably retain the shape better than red ones, you know? I don't know, I'm just guessing that one. But – so you know, the co-op was very – it was part of, part of the farmers' work life, if you want to put it that way.
NI: The co-op is – the co-op is for all the farmers in Haney, right?
HY: Yep. Yep, yep, yep.
NI: Not just the Japanese.
HY: Yep. That's right. Yep.
NI: So how would the co-op work, then? I, I don't know much about co-ops.
HY: Well [clears throat] I don't either, really. All I remember is each farmer was issued a number, and I think our number was "M" for "Mary 78." And we used to stamp that on, on the edge of the crates or boxes. And we took them to the co-op, then Mr. Yoshida would put them on the scale and we knew – they knew roughly the tare weight. So they take the tare weight off, and give us some seeds for the net, and

then we got paid for whatever they got rid of. And I just made enough, you know, profit, to keep that co-op going. There may have been some – initially, there must have been – has – there must have been some money put in by the farmers, to get that thing started. Once they got it started, of course, it wasn't too much trouble.
NI: Yeah. Was it a good life, like, a farming life back then? Like were the farmers doing okay? You know.
HY: Oh, yeah. Yeah. You know, because – when you stop and think –
NI: Yeah.
HY: 30 – I guess – let's see – 43, 8 – so Misao would be going into university about 1935? '36?
NI: Okay.
HY: It takes 8 years for a medical student. So you know, we were able to – Dad was able to support Misao in residence.
NI: Right. Wow.
HY: Which isn't like living at home. And then Yachiyo went in two years after that. Same university, same residence, but in dentistry. So financially speaking, to answer your question –
NI: That's a lot of money.
HY: The farm life wasn't really that bad. To be able to do that. Yeah, so – and of course the poultry farm, both farms – we brought all the poultry from the first farm. And chickens, you know, at night they're asleep, so to speak, so we'd grab them and put them in the crate, take them over to the new farm. So the eggs helped Dad quite a bit, by selling them.
NI: Yeah, yeah. Going back, a little bit, I guess – because Misao went to Japan for – how many years of her education did she go?
HY: Yeah, there's, there's Mother and Dad again. Sort of saying to themselves, "Well, they should learn Japanese." So I guess she was, what – Mitsue was born 1920 so – and she went too, as a baby – she'd be 19, 21, I would think? The three of them –
NI: All three sisters? Were in Japan?
HY: Taken, yeah.[Nods] Were taken back, I believe. They weren't sent back, I think they were taken back. And they, they stayed with their aunt, who is my mother's sister – I don't know which one it was – until they had that big earthquake, eh? In Japan.
NI: Oh, the [Great Kanto ?] earthquake, yeah.
HY: 1923, Ja – Tokyo and Yokohama? And of course, once that happened – I can still remember Misao telling us that she literally jumped into a bamboo bush so she wouldn't be dropped into the, you know, opening that was created by the earthquake.
NI: Wow. Wow.
HY: And you know, I'm sort of shocked to – how come bamboos trees don't – apparently their root is such –
NI: She's a smart girl.
HY: But I – I don't know – anyway, they were sent back to Haney. 1924 I guess, so they're there for what, three years? Little over three years.

NI: Yeah. Did – what did they say about that experience? Did they ever resent that, having to go to Japan? You know, because some of those kika-nisei were – didn't really appreciate that, right? So –
HY: [thinking mouth noises]
NI: How was their Japanese? Does your – Misao's Japanese is pretty good, right?
HY: Yeah, Misao's Ja – as a matter of fact, she won the oratorical contents – contest for Haney, speaking Japanese. And that was, what, 1935? So that was, you know – 1924, eh? 11 years after, she, she won the oratory. So yeah, she benefitted, from that standpoint. I don't think Yat – and I think Mitsue was just a little too young to really get any benefit from that excursion to Japan. But I didn't go, I wasn't sent – so that's another rubbing point.
NI: Yeah, yeah. Right. [chuckles] Why weren't you sent?
HY: Eh?
NI: Why weren't you sent?
HY: Well, a) I wasn't born.
NI: Right. No, but even after you're born, why didn't your parents send you out to Japan?
HY: Well, I guess enough was enough. If you know what I mean.
NI: Yeah.
HY: I think they hear enough – the parents heard enough from my three sisters, that – "Don't ever do that again," sort of, I think.
NI: Yeah, yeah. So they –
HY: Because I don't think it was –
NI: Oh you have to – new tape? Okay, yeah.
HY: It wasn't that comfortable, if you know what I mean. You're living with your aunt, it's not your – your own home. You have to go to a Japanese school. You really couldn't play. You had to be – you know, you're under the thumb –
NI: Expected to be Japanese, right? That's the problem.
HY: Okay. So I may be wrong in what I'm saying to you, Norm, but from what I hear, they sure didn't want to be sent back. And I guess the –
NI: Being the boy that you –
HY: Yeah, they wanted – well, let's not kid ourselves, I don't think Mom really wanted to lose sight of me. [chuckles]
NI: You're right. Okay, okay. Probably a good place to change the –
HY: Spoiled – spoiled brat that I was.
NI: Spoiled – at least you're honest! We'll change the tape now.

[End of part 1]
[Start part 2]

NI: Was there anything, Mr. Yoneyama, that you wanted to talk about that we didn't talk about, like in the first part? Like – basically, talking about life on the farm, the relationships with your sisters and your parents?
HY: This is sort of up to school age?

NI: Yeah, kind of up to school age. Because I think from now we'll kind of get into, like –
HY: This could be a bit of overlap, you know.
NI: That's fine. Oh, that's fine. But was there anything you wanted to talk about, like, before – I don't know, about your sisters or your parents? Just anything that you felt was important, you know, to include in this.
HY: You know, it's the whole story. We're going to finish and I'm going to say, "Gee, I wish I told Norm this!" [laughs]
NI: [Laughs] Well, well – we're going to get together again. Don't worry about that.
HY: Nothing comes to mind, Norm, you know. This – this is – I guess as one gets older – that is, going to school, things change, and –but up to that point, there really – I suppose the only thing that I could mention is when I was in kindergarten, and when Dad used to sort of plow the fields, and to level the furrows, we'd have a harrow, which was a piece of equipment with steel teeth hanging down, and the horse would drag this harrow up and down, back and forth, and north and south, east and west, type of thing, to prepare the arable land for spring planting. But in the process of doing this, he used me as a ballast. So you know, how heavy can you be when you're just a youngster? But anyway, I guess it was efficient, so Dad put a lettuce box on top of the harrow, and rolled up some feed sacks, and I'd sit on the feed sacks – which was in the box – and that was enough sort of ballast to, to give it the results that, that Dad was looking for.
NI: Right, right, right.
HY: The only thing he had to be very careful about was to make sure that the horse didn't make a sudden [sucks teeth] turn, otherwise the whole harrow would tip.
NI: Right, right, right, right. Did accidents happen back then?
HY: Sorry?
NI: What kind of accidents happened back then? Because I'm sure they happened, right, so – [coughs] Farms, like things happen all the time, right?
HY: I suppose the only – we didn't have machinery, you know, in terms of power-operated machinery.
NI: Right, right.
HY: Okay, so – other farmers may have, but we certainly a) couldn't afford it. The only accident I suppose is – is when I was helping my uncle bucking logs. No, actually. No – I guess it was – yeah, the logs were already in the woodshed, and on a rainy day, I'd cut them in little 16-inch lengths, ready for chopping for the kitchen stove, but the only accident I remember is sawing that log and all of a sudden, the – the saw would sort of bind, and I wasn't hanging on to the handle long enough – hard enough, and the handle'd slip off and you know, I cut myself right across here. [gestures to arm]
NI: Ooh. You can still see the scar.
HY: Yeah, yeah. It's a good thing I didn't cut the vein, but you can still see the scar there. Other than that – tomfoolery accidents that I mentioned, about the pitchfork – [chuckles]But no, accidents were – they were not work-related, really, except this. A lot of other things, like – you know, falling and cutting yourself with a piece of glass, but work-related accidents – not on our farm. There may have been on other farms. I guess the only accident we had was [chuckles] the car accident with Dad. He – he

drove the car in a ravine, and when we were moving the chickens from one farm to the other, he – again, you know, you're working all day, and midnight you're pretty tired. And I could just see Dad loading the, the, the car with crates of chickens, and you know, there'd be a box behind his back. [holds hands above head] And of course, with the movement, and the roads weren't as smooth as they are today. And he'd hit a bump and this crate would probably move back, and he's trying to fix it. [gestures behind head and to his right] And in the meantime, the car's going off the road, and I'm watching this – and I can see Dad driving along, and all of a sudden [waves hands in front of him] the headlights are bobbling, and I said to my mother, "I think Dad just went off the road." [chuckles] But nothing serious, you know. I went to help him, we got the car back on the – on the road, and we finished moving the, the chickens to the new form.
NI: So what was life like for your mom, then? Like, what was she doing on a daily basis?
HY: Oh, god. Busy, busy, busy. Every – she was out in the field.
Ni: Yeah. Okay. So she was picking and –
HY: Yeah. Weeding, eh? And fertilizing – what needed watering, she'd have buckets of water, oh yeah. She was never idle. The chicken coops had to be looked after, too, and this is I guess one of the reasons why – quote – yobiyose – end of quote – which was mother's younger brother.
NI: So yobiyose is when you call somebody from Japan in this, right? To help out on the farm.
HY: Right, yep. Yep, yep, yep. So – Yeah, he –
NI: So when did he come to help you? By – what age were you by that time?
HY: I should know. It's in the book there. I can't remember just what year it was.
NI: But anyways, he came anyways, right?
HY: Yeah, he came. It was not too long after the Depression, somewhere in there.
NI: Okay.
HY: So he obviously helped out quite a bit. Yeah, I was just starting public school.
NI: Okay.
HY: When he was here, so – '24, I'd be what, six? I was born in November, so you know, I was a late starter. Those born before September got in. November – so we had to wait a year, type of thing. So I'd be, what, six? '24 – that sounds like about 1930 that he came over, because I was just starting school. But he'd clean out the chicken coops daily, in the morning, before breakfast, which was a sore thing that was – it's all labour. All labour, right?
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: And I suppose –
NI: What was his name?
HY: Takeo.
NI: Takeo?
HY: T,A,K,E,O Kataoka. My mom's younger brother. So he certainly helped Mom and Dad.
NI: Of course – your uncle, right? That's your uncle.
HY: That's my uncle. That's right.
NI: Did you have a good relationship with your uncle?

HY: Yeah, oh yeah. You know, work-wise, I learned a lot from him. Even though, you know, age-wise and physically, we're totally different.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: But yeah, he used to you know, collect the eggs in chicken coops and clean them at night, and oh yeah, yeah.
NI: I guess it was a – about the time when you bought – got the second farm, right?
HY: Yeah, that'd be, what, 19 – yeah, it'd be a little earlier than that. He came – he came – we were still on the first farm, because I still remember the whole family, the six of us, used to sleep on the second floor.
NI: Oh yeah?
HY: In beds. When my uncle came, then Mom made up a room for him on the main floor, and then eventually we fixed up the bunk house, which was to the west of the house, and we equipped the bunk house with a bed, pot-belly stove – electricity was there, so it was no problem. So I guess 1939, we got the second farm so – but no electricity in the new farm, I mean. So that was a real challenge.
NI: Right, right. In winter time – real tough, eh?
HY: Yeah, because come dusk, now you have to fill up all the lanterns with kerosene.
NI: Right.
HY: And you know, for the house, you've got to have the – I've forgotten what the name of the lamp, but it was a brighter lamp, and it wasn't kerosene-fed, it was alcohol. Again, that was my chore, to not only light the bath fire, but make sure that the lanterns and the lamps were – and I talk about that in the book.
NI: Oh, filled?
HY: But yeah, that was now beyond the questions you were asking.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: Way after, you know. But the school is – the kindergarten – Miss [DeWoolf?] and then, because we're – well, I shouldn't say, because – We went to Alexander Robinson School, which was east of where we lived, but on the south – sorry, north – side of Dewdney Trunk Road, and I remember Miss Bell – as a matter of fact, originally I had the picture of our grade 3 class, and I don't know why I took it out. I took it out, and I was looking for it the other night, and I don't know where I put it. [chuckles] But yeah, I used to walk to work, eh?
NI: Oh, walk to school?
HY: Oh, walk to school, rather.
NI: How long would it take you?
HY: Well, it was about 40 minutes. A little over two miles, I guess.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: But our neighbour – I come back to my neighbour again – Peter Telep, who used to have a Model T Ford, and he sort of converted the body of it to a, the shape of a racing car. And he used to work at the saw mill in Webster's Corners. And he used to leave the house, his house, about 7:30, quarter to eight. And so I'd get up early in the morning, and, and I'd get to the top of the hill that I referred to, where Dad went and drove the car into the ravine, and I'd wait for Peter to come out from the driveway.
NI: Right.

HY: And he'd pick me up and he'd take me to the school, sort of drop me off, and of course I'd be there by 8, and nobody's around yet, so I had to wait for all the kids to come in.
NI: What time did school start back then?
HY: 9.
NI: 9?
HY: 9. Yeah.
NI: Okay, yeah.
HY: Yeah, the only heating system we had was a pot-belly stove, you know, on the second floor of the school, eh?
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: On a real cold morning, they used to provide hot chocolate – hot cocoa for us.
NI: Is that right? Is that right?
HY: Yeah.
NI: The teachers would prepare that, or –
HY: Eh?
NI: One of the teachers would prepare that?
HY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
NI: Wow.
HY: So it was – was almost like a family school, eh?
NI: Yeah. How many classes would you have? Grades –
HY: 1, 2, 3 – 4, I believe, plus manual training for – oh, wait a minute. Wait a minute, it could have been – no, no, hold on, that's the junior grades. No, they went – because manual training was 7 and 8.
NI: Right.
HY: Yeah. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, yeah. What happened – I guess – Miss Bell was the 3rd grade teacher, Miss Jones, 3rd and 4th, and then I guess, I was going into – 5 or the 6 – grade 7, I guess. We unfortunately – the community had a lot of students with tuberculosis.
NI: Ohh.
HY: And Mom got a little worried about this, and she made an application for me to transfer from Alexander Robinson School to the Haney Central School.
NI: Okay.
HY: So for grade 7, I went to Haney Central. But the, the interesting part of this is – back to Alexander Robinson School, grade 5 and 6 was taught by Mr. Hector Roland Ferguson. He used to have great big hands and he must've been about 5'10, maybe 6 feet. But he was a real strict teacher, real no-nonsense kind of teacher. And I used to love talking. So you know, I'd get [sucks teeth] over the back of the head. And I used to wear one of those pilot, air pilot hats. [holds hand up to forehead]
NI: Oh yeah?
HY: With goggles.
NI: Oh yeah, yeah.
HY: And I didn't take my clothing to the – my hat to the cloakroom, I used to leave it by the side of my desk, and he'd come along and he'd sort of give me another whack, you know. "Take the hat into the cloakroom." And then one day, this girl behind me –

her name was Winnie Grant – you know, you can't forget this – she jabbed a hat pin in the – in the – in my rump, and of course I let out a big yelp.
NI: Right.
HY: And Hector come along and he just rapped me right over the knuckles with a brass –
NI: Oh, is that right?
HY: Oh my god, yeah. I guess – and he used to love throwing chalks.
NI: Oh yeah? Yeah.
HY: Yeah, and to this day, it surprised me that he really didn't hit anybody in the face. And well I guess that was for talking, but anyway – the reason I mention this – when Mom moved me over to Haney Central, who's my homeroom teacher? Hector Rolland Ferguson. So he looked at me, I looked at him. We didn't say anything. But oh no, he was, he was – he mellowed a bit, and I was now grade 7, so I'm a little better student. So I guess I remember – my first, my first encounter with him was a math equation that he put on the board and I couldn't read whatever it was, and I sort of asked what he was writing on the board. I must've said something, and he turned back to me and he said, "What's that you said, Yutaka?" And I just said, "Skip it!" And he got a – I thought, "Whoops, I really shouldn't have said that." But I put my head down. He kept going, nothing happened. But anyway, he also taught physical education. So in the, in the – in the agricultural building, which was owned by the Haney community, we used to have our physical education there during rainy, rainy days. And for whatever reason, Mr. Ferguson put all the – I call them black-haired students, which obviously you what I'm referring to. Into one group, and I just came out and said, "Why do you put all the black-haired students in one group?"
NI: Right, right. Right. What did he say?
HY: Nothing. I just got a glare. So you know, when you stop and think now, it was a little bit of a problem that we faced.
NI: Right.
HY: Even then, when they does – when teachers do these things.
NI: Why would he do that, though? I don't understand.
HY: I don't understand either. This is why I asked him. Never got an answer. So anyway, I passed grade 7, and grade 8 was Mr. Lowden, the principal, and Hector Roland – Hector Roland was still grade 7 teacher, but – and then when I was in grade 8 – the grade 9 and 10 – well, I guess the whole, you know – Grade 13 was same matri – first year – equivalent with first year of university.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: A five-year course in those days. Decided they needed a new school. So they went on strike, the students went on strike. And I was in grade 8, and the high school and the Haney Central Public School were sort of adjacent. And the grade 8 students decided we'll walk out in sympathy with the older students, so we went out on strike and walked the rural roads, and it was effective.
NI: Uh-huh. So what happened?
HY: We got a new school.
NI: [laugher] Wow.
HY: Yeah. We got a new school.
NI: Yeah.

HY: So at that point, of course, when I was finished grade 8 and we're, we're – the grade 8 students, we're now – read to move in to grade 9, but the school wasn't finished yet, the new school. Maple Ridge Junior-Senior High School, it was going to be called. It was started, but wasn't complete enough to occupy.
NI: Right, right.
HY: So they bussed all of us – all of us meaning the grade 9 students. By this time, grade 9 was now students from not just Haney, but Hammond, Webster's Corners, Whonnock, Ruskin, Pitt Meadows – and the Haney people were all bussed [clears throat] to Hammond, which was about – the school was about three miles west of Haney.
NI: Oh, I see. Okay.
HY: Our principal there [chuckles] was a gentleman by the name of Marvin Smith, Marvin Smith. And it's kind of interesting because we had the two girls from Webster's Corners – there were – Webster's Corners was sort of a miniature Finland.
NI: Oh, okay.
HY: A lot of Finnish girls.
NI: Finnish girls.
HY: Yeah, and there was one girl by the name of [Ronil ?], we used to call her Loony, and the other girl was Eleanor Rajala. And they decided that Loony's going to sit in front of me, and Eleanor's going to sit behind me. And in those days, the Hammond school was equipped with desks fastened to the floor.
NI: Okay, okay.
HY: So you're sitting in the desk, on your own seat. The desk behind you was on a piano hinge, so the student sitting behind you had to lift the desk top to get at her books.
NI: Oh, right, right. Okay.
HY: So one day, Eleanor decided she'd lift the desktop and just let it go. And of course it [cracking noise, gestures to back of head] hit me on the back of the head, and I yelped. So Reverend Smith, the principal, kind of turned around and we didn't know who he was looking at. Unfortunately, he was sort of cross-eyed.
NI: Right, right.
HY: So I'm looking at Eleanor, and Loony's looking at me. So you know, the principal finally said, "You, Yutaka! I'm looking at you! What's all the fuss going on?" Well, I didn't want to say anything, I just – so anyway, the shenanigans kept going, and he finally separated us, thank goodness. So we were able to do some studies, but Eleanor kept shooting – making slingshots out of rubber bands and shooting paper darts, and one day she put – we used to have ordinary pens, eh, with pen nibs?
NI: Okay. Yeah. Oh, for the fountain pens, you're talking about?
HY: No, this is just ordinary – you dip your pen – in the inkwell. And she used to break the end of the pen nib and put a piece of paper in there.
NI: Oh, as a – like a –
HY: No, no, and then she used the elastic band and snap it.
NI: Okay.
HY: So that, that the paper became the tail and the point became the –
NI: [laughs] So it would actually jab you, though?

HY: Well, it comes flying across the room. And one came [chuckles] awfully close to the principal, and he turned around, and Eleanor finally owned up to the fact that she was doing it. Well, he was pretty lenient with her. If I'd have been doing it, I'm sure I would have been either expelled or – but anyway, she just said if – and he just said to her, "If you don't behave, you'll – you'll get a detention." Whatever he said. But that quietened down so anyway, by this time, June is now around, and report time, and –
NI: Is this grade 8? Is this grade 8?
HY: No, grade 9.
NI: That was grade 9.
HY: Sorry, sorry. Yeah, grade 9 in Hammond.
NI: Okay, okay.
HY: Okay, grade 9 in Hammond. And our room teacher was a teacher by the name of Miss Ruby Kerr, who used to ride the three miles from Haney to Hammond on her bicycle. And, and, and, and the bus driver would sort of catch up to her and we'd lower the windows and we'd sort of jeer Ruby along on the ride. [chuckles]
NI: Of course, of course.
HY: But anyway, coming back to the – June, on report card days, and of course being a Yoneyama, I just assumed the cards were being doled out alphabetically. I sat and sat, and Ys came up. My name wasn't called and everybody's gone but me. So Ruby looked at the principal and asked Mr. Smith, "How come Yutaka didn't get his report?" And he kind of looked at me and he said – so I walked up to the front of the room, and he said, "I want you to write 'I will not disturb the class' 100 times on the blackboard."
NI: You were one of those students, eh?
HY: So –
NI: Okay, I know what kind of student you are.
HY: There's, there's the real troublemakers, scot-free [chuckles] and there I am, the victim in more ways than one, having to write the, the thing on the blackboard 100 times. So anyway, I passed grade 9.
NI: Right.
HY: The only drawback was that I had to walk home, which was now, I don't know, almost 7 miles.
NI: 7 miles, wow.
HY: Which – well, in those days, walking wasn't –
NI: What kind of student were you?
HY: Eh?
NI: What kind of student were you, academically?
HY: Academically?
NI: Yeah.
HY: Well, just above average, I guess.
NI: Yeah?
HY: Just above average. Nothing – nothing brilliant.
NI: Yeah, yeah. What – what subjects were you good at? Like, what were your strongest subjects?
HY: Well, amazingly, the foreign languages!

NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: And –
NI: Which would be? You would have been studying French, at the time?
HY: Latin and French. Latin and French.
NI: Latin and French, yeah.
HY: Yeah. But, you know, do I speak French now? The answer's no. But – yeah. Algebra wasn't too bad. Algebra wasn't too bad, 'cause – anyway, that's, that's another story. When I got into Edmonton but – grade 9 now, report cards are out. We're out for the summer. The – Maple Rigge Junior-Senior High School is not finished but ready for occupancy, so now I went to grade 10, and we have a whole new list of – batch of teachers coming in. I guess Mr. Cecil Bloyce, Mr. Draper, and Miss Poole, our French teacher; Miss Mold, our Latin teacher – oh, just, just – I forgot to mention. Miss Mold also in grade 9, handled our sports, and I used to play a lot of basketball. And by that time, I had my driver's licence, eh? So Miss Mold made arrangements to play grade 9 students in New Westminster.
NI: How far was that away from where you guys were?
HY: Oh, that would be, what – it'd be a little closer than it was to Vancouver, so it'd be 22, 23 miles.
NI: Okay, so a haul then.
HY: It was still, you know – in those days, roads being what they were –
NI: Yeah.
HY: It's not like going from Toronto to Hamilton. But – so I said, "Well okay, I'll offer to drive four." And some of the others took the other players, and a couple of parents brought some spectators. But we played in New Westminster – two games. Won the first, lost the second. It wasn't bad, but you know, but it was quite an experience in grade 9, going offshore, so to speak, to play at another school.
NI: Right. Well, they must have had a lot of niseis playing at their school too, right?
HY: Where? New –
NI: In New Westminster.
HY: You know – strange – I really can't answer you, in terms of were there any Japanese on that team.
NI: Yeah. There must have been.
HY: Must've been, but I can't give you a name.
NI: Must have been.
HY: I can't – I can't picture one. So –
NI: Yeah, yeah. How about your team itself? Were there other, like, Japanese guys on your team?
HY: Not on the team, no.
NI: You were the only one?
HY: I was the only one, yeah.
NI: Oh, okay.
HY: Yeah, yeah. So anyways, so back onto grade 10. We get back and Mr. Welland was the, was the principal, Miss Poole was the French teacher, and then we decided – or – or somebody decided – that we should have a yearbook. Yearbook, eh?
NI: Right, right.

HY: So they solicited and they, amongst the students, appointed or elected or whatever they did, and I was asked to be the sports writer. And Miss Poole was not too hesitant, she just said, "Surely, you could have picked somebody more competent to be a sports editor."
NI: Right, right.
HY: But I just handled the boys' section and Ruth Rich handled the girls' section. But anyway, I joined a photography club, not realizing that my nemesis – the principal from the Hammond school, Marvin Smith – was the sort of board member. And they wanted me to be the vice-president of this photography club. So I said, "Okay, I will." But we got along well. So by the time we did the Annual, the name of the yearbook, we got all the photographs by – from the photography club members, and managed to do the write-up on the sports events. Published our first Annual. But by – the European front, I guess, started September 1st, 1939?
NI: So – okay, so you're talking about the war now.
HY: But it affected the high school, which is why I –
NI: How did it affect the high school?
HY: Well, it – in many ways, I guess. First of all – let me go back to the farm, because as soon as the London Blitz started, the strawberries that were being sent to England via New Westminster – the embargo was on, because the British ports were being bombed. So now all the strawberries were dry-docked in New Westminster. And Mr. Yoshida, the, the production manager – I guess it wold be the summer of the following year, he asked myself and my – one of my friends at, N – Nayuki Okazaki, we used to call him N. Mr. Yoshida wanted the two of us to go with him to New Westminster to open up all these 500-pound berries and fill them with more strawberries and more sulfur dioxide, before they were sent over, overseas. I don't know that if the shipload got there, because I don't remember getting paid for that. [chuckles]
NI: Right. Right, right, right.
HY: But coming back to school now – now, you know, now the, the paper drive starts, eh? The Victory Bonds.War certificates. So now our concentration is sort of shifted from studies to not just preparing annuals, but –
NI: Raising money.
HY: Raising money, collecting newspapers. So if you ask the question, "How did it affect you at school?" So anyway, we, we continued. I was still active in sports. I won the running broad jump at 16'9 or something.
NI: Wow.
HY: Of course, there was other taller boys who could've probably won it, had they participated. But –
NI: Were a lot of these guys signing up to join the army, I guess, at that time? Like, the high school kids? Like, that's what I imagine, like some of the older kids.
HY: Yeah, there were – out of, out of the class, I don't remember anybody really leaving the class to join up.
NI: Yeah.
HY: At age 16, you know, you'd be – no, I don't – oh, wait a minute, yeah, Air Force. Air Force, yeah.
NI: Okay.

HY: But that was Jimmy Harris, a – Jimmy Harris, he was the younger brother of Bill Harris. Bill Harris used to be the Scout leader, when I joined the Scouts when I was aged 11. But his brother, Jimmy Harris, joined the Air Force. There were three brothers. Richard and Allan joined the Air Force, but I don't remember anybody joining the army. Now, Richard – Allan was one grade ahead of me. Richard was two grades ahead of me. Jim Harris was – I think he may have been in grade 12 or grade 13, but the reason that comes to mind is – they used to train – I guess it was the single-engine Harvards, the training planes. And he used to come back to Haney, in the plane, and he used to make a power dive underneath the power line.
NI: Wow!
HY: And oh boy, that – I don't know. I guess somebody caught up to him, because you know, he did it maybe twice, and that was the end of that.
NI: Yeah, yeah. What was the age of enlistment, anyways? Was it 16?
HY: 16.
NI: 16, yeah.
HY: Yeah, because in – in 1940, the national registration came about for all residents in Canada over the age of 16.
NI: Okay. Okay.
HY: And this was done under the Mobilization Act.
NI: Okay.
HY: So the mobilization was obviously –who were all our 16 year olds and older, and the exemption, of course were those that were in prison, and those under 16 obviously, but –
NI: Right, right. What happened to the Japanese, then?
HY: Eh?
NI: Because obviously there were Japanese Canadians, like – like yourself. What happened to you?
HY: We were registered, under the National.
NI: You were on the list?
HY: Yeah, on the National, yeah, Registration. Yeah, 1940, August 1940.
NI: Yeah.
HY: So now, that takes me just about to –
NI: Almost up to evacuation.
HY: Almost, yeah. There's a couple of incidents there that – what is that? It was after Pearl Harbour?
NI: Yeah.
HY: What I was going to was that after Pearl Harbour, about – yeah. I remember when the European front started, and, and Canada supported Britain, in defense of the – Great Britain and so on, and we used to have stickers for the windshields that said, "There will always be an England." So a lot of us put the stickers –
NI: On the cars.
HY: On our cars, you know.
NI: Okay. Yeah.
HY: And – so anyway, after the August 1940 National Registration, came the re-registration of the Japanese Canadians.
NI: When did that happen?

HY: Just prior to Pearl Harbour.
NI: Okay.
HY: Okay, so that'd be 1941.
NI: '41. Yep, yep.
HY: Somewhere –
NI: What – what was the point of a re-registra – of Japanese Canadians? What was that about, 'cause that was before Pearl Harbour, so we should have been on board, right? So –
HY: I think the, the – I have to say – I think, I, I, I really don't know the answer.
NI: Right.
HY: Except to say that – don't forget Japan was sort of bothering Manchuria.
NI: Right.
HY: Starting about 1931.
NI: Right.
HY: And I guess Japan declared war on China, Manchuria, 1937.
NI: Okay.
HY: In the meantime, we had a lot of Japanese immigrants registered as naturalized Canadians and fishing off the west coast.
NI: Right, right.
HY: The B.C. politicians – B.C. and all the federal members of British Columbia deeply concerned with all the fishing boats, up and down this – the rivers, up and down the west coast. "What are these – are they really fishing? Or what are they doing?" Sort of – and I think probably that may have triggered, "We better start finding out where these people are."
NI: Right, right.
HY: That's only a guess.
NI: Yeah. Did – do you remember anything around that same time in Haney? Like, was – because the, the Japanese army in Manchuria and throughout the – you know, southeastern Asia, they were – the expansion was – the expansion was quite alarming at that time.
HY: Yep.
NI: Was that affecting you guys, like on your farm in Haney, too? Like, were the, the locals getting kind of caught up in the hysteria as well?
HY: Not – the, the politicians were not, not as the Japanese – they just sort of took it as, "Well, it's – it's part of life, I guess."
NI: In their stride.
HY: Yeah, in their stride. But the interesting point here is that Reeve Solomon Salem of Haney, in his Haney councilage, called a meeting of all the residents of Haney –
NI: Including the Japanese?
HY: Well, yeah, including the Japanese.
NI: Including Japanese, yeah.
HY: Not too many went to this meeting.
NI: Okay.
HY: But it was held in this agricultural hall that I mentioned earlier, about doing the physical education – it's a night meeting, and the subject was, "In the event of an attack, what preparation do we need to make?"

NI: Okay, right.
HY: So I guess I must've gone to maybe three meetings? Doesn't matter the number, and on my last meeting, they decided to turn the lights down, and somebody escorted me out of the meeting.
NI: They escorted you out of the meeting?
HY: They escorted me out of the meeting. At which point I said to myself, "[Tilt?], I guess I'm considered one of 'them', not considered one of 'us'."
NI: Right, right.
HY: So that was the last meeting I, I attended, eh.
NI: So were you the only Japanese at the meeting at that time? The third –
HY: Yeah, yeah.
NI: The third –
HY: Yeah, yeah. I was – 'cause I don't remember anyone else being escorted out.
NI: Right. Yeah, yeah.
HY: So anyway, I sort of hung my head and said, "Oh, gee." Went back to school the next day, and, and some of the students that were there really didn't talk about it. Really didn't say anything about it.
NI: But of course, everybody knew. Of course, everybody knew.
HY: Everybody knew, but they sort of – this, this – I suppose I was fortunate, in a sense that, you know, having been elected as sports editor, being vice-president of the photory – photography club, so they knew who I was.
NI: Right, right.
HY: So anyways, they didn't say anything, which I was kind of pleased that nobody mentioned it.
NI: What about in high school? Did anything happen that you remember at high school? Were, you know, you were starting to be pushed, you know, kind of to the side, you know, recognized as somebody who's not part of the, you know, the – you know, the high school community any longer.
HY: Not really.
NI: No?
HY: There's only the – the same Richard Trethewey [clears throat], he was a Britisher out and out, including his accent. Nothing offensive. I guess, you know, schoolboys – high school boys are high school boys.
NI: Right, right.
HY: And he loved the debate, he loved the challenge, and he used to question me. "Why don't you go back to Japan?" I says, "Well, what the hell? I was born here."
NI: Right, right.
HY: I says, "That's like me telling – Why don't you go back to England, where you came from?" You know, so we used to get into a bit of a verbal argument, but nothing, you know, and –
NI: What about your parents, though? Like, did they – like, were you aware of anything happening at like, at a higher level, like, as far as the, the Haney nokai? Were, were things happening at that level, too?
HY: Not prior to Pearl Harbour.
NI: Right. Okay.
HY: Everything was, you know, quite normal.

NI: Right, right.
HY: The only – 'cause the European front was a sensitive area, eh, at that time.
NI: Right.
HY: And of course, everybody knew about the Japanese aggression in Manchuria, but it was, you know, 3000 miles away type of thing, so they weren't too alarmed – as far as the Japanese people were concerned.
NI: But what about amongst the Europeans? Because there was, there was stuff happening amongst Europeans, you know, in Europe of course. Like, did – was that affecting how the – locals looked upon each other? Like if you were, for example, German, you know, did people – were you aware of anything happening amongst the locals towards the German immigrants to Canada, or –
HY: [Shakes head]
NI: No, not so much. Or the Italians?
HY: Not, not –
NI: Yeah.
HY: No, I – I never really sensed anything like that. Even you know, even against the Chinese or the Japanese, there was – we were all sort of farmers, side by side, and that was it.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: But you know, it's – it's kind of interesting, though – I guess it's about that time when – '39, Dad – we decided to enlarge our residence, our home, on the second farm. And you know, it's community spirit, eh, when something like that happens, the neighbours all pitch in, you know. And there's a gentleman, a widower by the name of Mr. Soita, who used to be the same ken as Dad and Mom, and he used to come – he used to live oh, about five miles over. He was a neighbour of Mr. Yasutori Yamaga, who lived way out, Dewdney Trunk and – south of Dewdney Trunk, and – but he used to come over once a month for a haircut from Dad.
NI: Oh yeah?
HY: So he'd come over, and he'd help us. Being a widower and being, being the *kenjinkai*, he'd stay for dinner. And I used to enjoy driving him home, you know.
NI: Oh yeah, yeah.
HY: Because I'm just a little kid with the new licence, and you know, proud as a peacock, driving him home. So anyway, when Dad decided to expand the chicken coop, my uncle, Dad, and myself – not that I could help that much, but at least I was able to carry the lumber that they wanted, type of thing – and Dad got wondering why Mr. Soita never showed up. And he got talking to my uncle and he was talking to me. "Have you seen Mr. Soita?" So we decided we should call him, and I went, "Oh, now that you mention it, no," I said. "Gee. He should be – he's long overdue for his haircut."
NI: Right, right.
HY: So Dad decided that well, we better go and see. So I drove Dad over to Soita's residence, and it used to be a ravine between the road and his home. Parked the car at the side of the ravine, walked across the bridge. Tried the door and it opened, so we walked in, and we called his name. And it was just a three-room, you know –
NI: So no kids, right? He had no kids?

HY: No. No, no. So we snooped around, so to speak, and we saw – found a suitcase that was sort of cut open. And we opened it, and his clothing – so that's strange. This – this doesn't look right. So Dad decided he'd better phone one of his other kenjin, Mr. Tsuyuki, which he did, and then Mr. Tsuyuki came, and we sort of – "Well, what do we do here? So well, we'd better try and find him." So anyway, I don't know what made them look around the farm, but they started to look, and Dad was the one that sort of walked over some branches and leaves, and it was sort of soft underfoot, and lo and behold, there he was. Buried.
NI: Oh, wow. So somebody killed him?
HY: Somebody killed him.
NI: Oh my goodness.
HY: So as soon as we found out it was Mr. Soita, of course we reported that. But now, how do you solve – character references, the war was now starting, the European was – front was on. The – Pearl Harbour wasn't quite there yet.
NI: Right.
HY: But by the time Pearl Harbour started, in 1942, you know, when the – when King made the announcement that all the Japanese nationals are going to be [makes noise] evacuated. Then the character references that we're looking for to solve Mr. Soita's alleged murder was –
NI: So nothing happened?
HY: Nothing happened.
NI: Is that right?
HY: Nothing happened, see. So that was one of the tragedies that, that sort of sticks in my mind, 'cause I still remember – I guess it was the summer, because when they found the body, I was still working at the co-op, and we be finished about 3 o'clock in the morning, eh?
NI: Right, right.
HY: This is after we – by this time it'd be late June, early July. Where – the other types of strawberry were coming and these were being shipped to the Prairies, in the refrigerated CPR boxcars. So we finished loading that at about three in the morning, and I used to ride my bike, and all of a sudden, you know, the one night – I don't know if they – if you remember these. They talk about the *yurei* in Japan, about the ghost floating around?
NI: Oh, yeah? Sure, yeah.
HY: And I'm riding my bike, and all I can see is this damn thing floating around in front of me. [chuckles]
NI: Well, that's really weird.
HY: You know? And I closed my eyes, and it would still be there. Well, the second night I really froze. I, I – it, it really had me scared. And by this time, Art Sakomoto was also on that, you know – he used to drive his car, a half-ton truck. So I said to Art, "Hey, do me a favour, Art. Do you want to ride me home tonight?" I really didn't explain why, but – so he said, "Yeah, I'll ride you home." So anyway, he took me home, and I asked – thanked him the next day again, and I said, "You know –" And he said to me, "When I left you, I went to the Alouette River, just around the corner from where you live. I didn't realize you had such a – rapids there, and the swimming pool." So I said, "Yeah, that was our – that was our swimming hole there."

NI: Yeah.
HY: But anyway, so coming back to Soita's alleged murder – no, nothing was solved.
NI: Nothing happened, eh?
HY: Nothing solved. A lot of people asked, you know, that question, but –
NI: Yeah, and after the war? Like, did anything – like, did anybody pursue that at all?
HY: [Shakes head] Not really.
NI: No?
HY: Not really. The only person that could've would have been Mr. Tsuyuki, I guess, 'cause he went back to B.C.
NI: This is Mr. Tsuyuki who did the film, right? The movies?
HY: Oh no, that's, that's a different Tsuyuki. That's a different Tsuyuki.
NI: Okay, yeah.
HY: That was Kaizo, I guess. This one was T – T – I don't know what the T stood for, but he was you know, a berry farmer. He was one of the ones that moved on to doing greenhouse cucumbers, tomatoes, and –
NI: Wow, that's quite advanced, I guess.
HY: Yeah, yeah. So if anybody could have pursued that, it could've been him. Geographically-speaking, he was now close to the murder scene, whereas Dad was in Edmonton, and then – and by this time Dad wasn't feeling that well. But anyway, so those were the – sort of grade 10, grade 9, grade 10.
NI: You told me earlier, though, about – like, was it when you were in elementary school, or middle school, when you had the Japanese kids and the, the hakujin kids, they had separate entrances or – did you tell me anything like that? Like, there was some kind of segregation happening with the students. The – during the – at lunch time, or –
HY: Not, not in Haney.
NI: No? Nothing happened like that?
HY: Nothing, nothing in Haney. [chuckles] The only – the only thing was that I said to you earlier, that Mr. Ferguson put all the black-haired – the students in one group, during the Phys Ed.
NI: Right, right. Yeah. That was –
HY: But nothing in terms of separate entrances, no. We were –
NI: Integrated, I guess.
HY: Yeah. As Jean Nikaido – who's now Mrs. Jean Goto, of the [indistinct], you interviewed her. But when I had lunch with her, about four years back, she – her name, Jean Nikaido – and she said to me, "When you were at school, you know, you didn't have any Japanese friends. You were all – all your friends were *hakujins* [non-Japanese]." She used to tell me.
NI: Oh, is that right? Okay.
HY: Yeah. I don't –
NI: Is that true? Is that true?
HY: It is true, yeah.
NI: Yeah.
HY: And I don't know – somehow I, I managed to sort of have all hakujin friends, even to this day.
NI: Yeah, yeah. Was that a conscious thing?

HY: No.
NI: Or like – you didn't want to hang out with the nisei kids?
HY: No. No, not really.
NI: Yeah.
HY: It didn't – if, I suppose, when you ask me that question – you never know when you're a youngster, and now I'm going back to when I'm five and six, and you know, Dad used to drive my sisters to Vancouver to shop and I'd go along with them. And we used to – Dad used to park his car at one of the Japanese service stations – I think, and opposite that was the Yama Taxi. But his countryman, by the name of Mr. Akiyama, T. Akiyama, who used to be a [*kanna moriya*?], he used to have a sheet metal work and so they used to have a big house, you know, a shop in the front, on Powell Street, and an alley at the back, extended all the way back. So they had all kinds of room so we – during the Vancouver Exhibition, I used to stay there and go to the Exhibition. But anyway, this one day, I'm out playing with – now let's see here, there's Minoru-chan, Fumi-chan, Joe, Kay, Hiroshi, and Maeko, who was the Akiyama family. So I used to play with Hiroshi and Kay, and this one day, we went out on Powell Street, and there used to be a corner convenience store. And I remember some boys, and they knew that I was not from the neighbourhood. So they found out that I was from the country.
NI: Right.
HY: "Oh, *inaka* [countryside] boy!" Well, that was fine, and then they asked me, "What ken are you?" In Japanese, eh?
HY: Well, I didn't know. I didn't know what ken my parents were. Well, talk about being ostracized! And – and oh, here's, you know, someone that doesn't know his prefecture, or he doesn't know what ken he comes from. And I sort of said to myself, "I'm not too sure I'm – should be around here with these boys."
NI: These are nisei kids, right?
HY: Nisei – It's all, it's all Japanese boys, yeah, Japanese Canadian boys. All my age old, and you know, Kay and Hiroshi used to play with these guys. But Kay and Hiroshi – I don't know where they were. I went with them, but – but then I decided to come back. I don't know where they were. [chuckles] And I said to myself then that – "Whoops, I'm not too sure about this." Now whether that had any influence, who knows.
NI: Did your – did your parents encourage integration? Like did they encourage you – they said, "Ah, you should – you know, you should be more Canadian, like these guys?" Or no?
HY: Not really. Not really, no. He – he really didn't make any distinction.
NI: Right, right.
HY: He spoke to [housing ?], but you know, you really didn't know whether he was being pretentious. No, he was just absolutely normal.
NI: But your sisters, I guess, their – their friends at university were mostly hakujin.
HY: Yeah.
NI: I guess. Right.
HY: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.
NI: Were you influenced by that at all? See all these smart girls from university, right? I mean –

HY: Well, I suppose when you – when you ask me that question, it, it's – I guess back in 1938, when Misao's friends – I guess it was Joe Ballantyne, and Iris Admondson, Florence Pym from Vancouver, they all came out to Maple Ridge and they pitched a tent, camped for a week.
NI: Right, right.
HY: And they came at night, in the evening, and I knew they were coming 'cause of Misao – they wrote to Misao and said, "We're, we're coming out to Maple Ridge Park." So I went to the park looking for them, and I found them. And they were pitching tent and of course they used their headlights on the car but didn't keep the motor running so by the time they finished pitching tent, the battery's gone.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: So next morning, I sort of helped them get their car started and brought them some berries and so on. And so in those days, yeah, Misao's friends – as you said, were all hakujin. And I got to know them, but that – that – and later on, as we go on, you'll, you'll recognize the name Iris Admonson because I, I refer to her again, back in Toronto. But we'll come to that. I don't want to jump the gun on this one. So I suppose we were influenced, somewhat.
NI: Yeah. Pretty much. Did you have like – like, did you have a negative image? Like, what was your image of Japan?
HY: Of Japan?
NI: Of Japan, as a young nisei guy. You know, were you – did you think that – ah, you know – because, at that time, Japan was, was certainly not a superpower. You know, it was quite backwards in a lot of ways, and you know, the image of Japan at that time was really like, the Emperor, probably and – maybe samurai, and very traditional culture. What – did you have that kind –
HY: It was cheap.
NI: It was cheap?
HY: Cheap toys.
NI: Yeah.
HY: You'd play with it once and it'd break.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: That I remember. I suppose the – what – you know, this is – what you –

[End of part 2]
[Start part 3]

NI: No, this next point's really good, though. I think it's really –
TY: You're recording.
NI: Oh, we're on again?
HY: Yep.
NI: Yeah, so the, the last point was just – we were talking about Japan's expansion into southeast Asia, and being a young nisei guy, you know, seeing the word Jap, you know, in every second headline, and how that made you feel, you know, personally. When your – when your family – you know, you're considering – hi, hi – you consider yourself a Canadian, at this point, right? And then all of a sudden, the word

– you know, the word Jap is put in your face every day, and – and it was relentless, I'm sure.
HY: Yep. Having said that, to me it's, it's – my recollection here is that the Chinese were no better, eh?
NI: What do you –
HY: They were called chinks.
NI: Okay.
HY: Okay?
NI: But they were on the Canadian side, though. That was the thing.
HY: But they were still chinks.
NI: Right.
HY: And, and the blacks of today were all niggers.
NI: They were called niggers back then?
HY: All niggers, okay?
NI: Yeah.
HY: And, and you really didn't appreciate that it would – chinks and niggers were, in today's environment, taboo. So the word Jap, just – it hit me here. [gestures to chest]
NI: Yeah.
HY: When you first heard it. But after reading it so often, and hearing it so often, it really didn't – so you know, your response is, "Well, I'm Canadian-born."
NI: Right, right.
HY: And if that's what you want to call me, it's not okay, but you know –
NI: But I, I guess from that point, especially, you're being seen as non-Canadian at that point, right?
HY: At that point.
NI: Yeah, you're –
HY: I would have to assume that, yeah. Although as, as I said earlier, you know, my – the people I chummed around with were all hakujin.
NI: Right.
HY: And – well yeah, as a matter of fact, some of them kept talking to me as a – not as a person of Japanese ancestry. They'd say, "The Japs did it again."
NI: Right.
HY: And, okay, it sort of – [chuckles]
NI: Yeah, because you're a high school kid. You're a high school kid when this was happening.
HY: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I, I don't – I may have shown it, in my face, but I sort of accepted the fact that if that's it, that's it, 'cause I'm not – because I think at that point, if you challenge, you're in trouble.
NI: Right. Why? Why are you in trouble?
HY: You're a) physically outnumbered.
NI: Right.
HY: You're, you're starting sort of a gangland feud by challenging somebody.
NI: Right, right.
HY: 'Cause if somebody else picks this up, you know which side they're going to be on.
NI: Right, right. So you're aware of that, though. You're aware of that.

HY: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. You, you learn these things pretty fast without being hit over the head with it.
NI: Yeah. Were – are there nisei getting in trouble about that?
HY: No.
NI: They, they weren't speaking out about it?
HY: No, no, no.
NI: No?
HY: No, they weren't speaking out. They weren't getting in any trouble. But I guess, having associated with the hakujin more than the niseis, I guess I was exposed to this more than some of the others who had, you know, Japanese friends. I'm not saying that the others didn't have hakujin friends, don't get me wrong. All I'm saying is my association with the hakujin was a lot higher than, than that of the niseis.
NI: Right.
HY: Although I used to go to the community hall to watch movies, when Mr. Kaizo Tsuzuki used to come down and did the, the silent movies, and –
NI: Oh, so you were there?
HY: He'd be the – oh, yeah.
NI: You were there.
HY: Oh yeah. So I'd be, I'd be there, listening and watching.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: And, and being of Dad's same kenjin, Dad and Mr. Tsuzuki used to get together, and of course I'm there and I'd be listening, and they did a lot of war stories, too.
NI: Yeah, do – how was it for your sisters? Did they talk about their experiences? Like being, you know, university students, or you know, just being girls. Were the – they being picked on for being Japanese girls, or – did you ever hear anything from them? Because they were a lot older, right, so –
HY: Not really, 'cause I think – when I was in grade 8, Mitsue was in grade 12.
NI: Right.
HY: And her school was physically sort of adjacent. But I can't remember – I don't remember hearing Mitsue or Yachiyo – well, Yat was gone. Misao was gone. [indistinct] going to university, University of Alberta.
NI: Yeah.
HY: They may have experienced something in their earlier years, but they never spoke about it.
NI: Right.
HY: Mitsue certainly did not make any mention of it.
NI: Right, right. So I don't know.
NI: How did they end up at the University of Alberta, anyways? Rather than UBC [University of British Columbia]?
HY: Well, the – I guess UBC did – I was going to say, did not have a medical program. I may be wrong on that. Obviously, Alberta had a better – it's like today, you go to Toronto, or do you go to McMaster, you know?
NI: Right, right.
HY: McMaster's the hands-on and Toronto's the academic. So I guess that sort of difference even existed in those days, and they, they chose University of Alberta's,

probably being a better – you'd become a better practitioner graduating from U of A than UBC.
NI: Oh, I see.
HY: No other explanation.
NI: Right, right. Okay, okay. Because I wasn't sure if there, there's a medical program at UBC, either.
HY: At that time – I can't answer that.
NI: Yeah. Let's go – okay, let's take us up to like, the internment time. So when the evacuation order was issued, what was – how did – you said your dad took it really hard, right? That was tough. It's got to be tough for every – anybody who had to go through that.
HY: Yeah, December 7th, '41 –
NI: Pearl Harbour.
HY: Yep. And then February, the Prime Minister announced that, you know, victory's sort of the foremost importance, but we'll be looking after the Japanese nationals. And I guess, soon after that, February whatever it was – date it was – the B.C. Security Commission was established. And what's interesting about that is the – they had – the three members of the commission was Taylor, Shirras, and Mead. So if you take the first two letters of Taylor, T-A, first two letters of Shirras, S-H, first two letters of Mead, M-E – put it together and what do you get?
NI: Tashme.
HY: Tashme. Right?
NI: Right, which of course became the internment camp.
HY: Which is the – yeah. 14-Mile Ranch or whatever they used to call it. So that was done in – I guess the same month the, the first bunch of nationals were sent out. My uncle Takeo and Pat Adachi's – you know, the author of "Asahi Baseball"? Her father, Mr. Iwachi Kawashira – Kawashiri, Mr. Makoto Gika, and my uncle's friend, another – another Mr. Tsuyuki – both of whom worked for CPR when they came to Toronto, but that's another issue. They were sent to – I think it's in the book. Lem – Lempriere?
NI: Oh, Lempriere. Yeah, I remember the name.
HY: Yeah, yeah. That's the road camp, eh? So that was in February –
NI: February '42?
HY: '42.
NI: So almost immediately, they were sent out?
HY: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.
NI: Why were they targeted?
HY: Being nationals.
NI: Oh, they were Japanese nationals. Okay.
HY: Nationals, yeah.
NI: Okay.
HY: So in the meantime, the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] came out and – to Haney and said, "Okay, you can either go to the sugar beets, go to the interior housing, go to work camps, or you can go on a special permit."
NI: Right. Right.

HY: So the sugar beets was Alberta, Winnipeg – for some reason – I guess Saskatchewan was a wheat province. [chuckles]
NI: Yeah, that makes sense.
HY: I don't remember Saskatchewan being in there.
NI: No, I don't remember Saskatchewan, either.
HY: And Ontario.
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: Should I go to the interior housing? You know, I guess that meant Kaslo, Slocan, New Denver, Tashme – internment camps. I guess – I, I – I guess there were a couple in Ontario –
NI: Well, they were more the POW [prisoner of war] though, right? Like Angler and Petawawa –
HY: Yeah, yeah.
NI: They were more POW camps, yeah.
HY: And then what's – what's a special permit? Sort of question, I asked, for the RCMP. Well, you –
NI: Self-supporting, and – yeah.
HY: Yeah. So they, they explained that, you know, there's a farm called the R. D. Ranch, in south Edmonton, which is 8 miles south of the city of Edmonton, because – and I wasn't aware at that time, but all the cities, you know, across Canada had a ban on – accepting Japanese. Especially as students, eh? If you're prepared to work, they accepted you, and I went through that problem and I'll explain that later on – but yeah, in '42, we decided to take the, the dispersal policy, the special permit.
NI: Right, right.
HY: And gamble and go from a berry farm to a cow dairy farm.
NI: Dairy farm. Hello – at least they rhyme.
HY: Yes, they rhyme. That's what all – so in the meantime – this is still spring and you know, Yachiyo and Misao are still at university – Dad and Mum's and me, our concern was –
NI: Yeah, yeah. Paying for the tuition.
HY: How to – yeah, how do you pay for their residence? How do you – so we managed to speak to the authorities, so to speak, and let us –
NI: B.C. Security Commission, I guess.
HY: Yeah, let us stay on the second farm to finish harvesting the crop, on the basis that at the conclusion of that harvesting period, we would be willing to go to Mission [British Columbia] to pick hops.
NI: Right.
HY: Well, so we went to Mission to pick hops. In the meantime, before – prior to going – doing that, Mitsue was now going to first year UBC.
NI: Okay.
HY: And she was boarding with Dr. Shimokura, the medical practitioner of Vancouver. So we had to make a decision, what do we do with Mitsue? And we decided that Mitsue should go with Dr. Shimokura to Tashme if Dr. Shimokura would have her. The answer was, "Yes, she can come with us." So Mitsue went with Dr. Shimokura. Mom and Dad and I went to Mission, picked hops, and I guess it was the 6th of October – somewhere in there – the Security Commission gave us our

notice to go to Matsqui, board the CNR [Canadian National Rail] train to go to south of Edmonton.
NI: This is in '42, then? October of '42.
HY: Should be October of 1942, yeah.
NI: Right, okay.
HY: Prior to that, I, I – hops season was just about over – I enrolled at the Mission Junior-Senior High School. Well, that didn't last too long. [chuckles]
NI: What happened?
HY: They said, "You're not supposed to be here." Simple as that. [chuckles] But anyway, the Tashme notice was obviously incorrect, so we signed up for the R. D. Ranch. And the Commission sent us a new slip, sending us to south Edmonton. So there we are, on the day coach going to the south Edmonton. We assumed Mitsue was in good hands, so we sort of forgot about her – not, you know – but physically speaking. But the, the amount of baggage that – luggage we could take was limited to about 150 pounds. Why I wanted to take my bicycle, I'll never know to this day, but I did.
NI: 'Cause by that time, you're 18?
HY: Yeah. I wanted to take my – you know, that's heavy, in terms of – with a limitation of 150 pounds. But in a way, I was kind of glad that I did – which will come later, but – so anyway, we get to south Edmonton. The RCMP is – I was going to say waiting for us, but that's really not a good term to use, but they escorted us to the – Mr. P. H. Ashby's farm, otherwise known as the R. D. Ranch, and –
NI: Why – do you know why R. D.? Do you – did you ever know why it was called the R. D. Ranch?
HY: R. D. Ranch? No, I do not. No.
NI: Okay.
HY: We didn't even stay there long enough to – [chuckles] So anyway, we got introduced to the Ashby family, Mr. and Mrs., and I believe there were two daughters. I don't remember their names. But it didn't take Mr. Ashby too long to put us to work.
NI: Yeah.
HY: He showed us to our stone-walled residence, heated by a pot-belly stove, and that was our cooking stove and our heating stove. It was about 500 yards east of Ashby's main residence, so Dad was doing the, the chores and I was bringing hay into the loft.
NI: Right.
HY: And then I had to report to the RCMP so that's when the bike came in. So I cranked 8 miles to the city, to the barracks, and I met Sergeant Philip Keeler, the sergeant of Intelligence. And he made me at home, didn't treat me as though it's a requirement that I had to report to the RCMP. And so he asked me, you know, where I was from and why did you choose Edmonton, south Edmonton, why did you choose the Ashby farm. So I said, "Well, I have two sisters at University of Alberta. They're in the – I think it was called the Athabasca – Assiniboine residence." Strange Indian names, eh?
NI: Yeah, yeah.

HY: So he sort of nodded his head and, "Yes, I know all about them." So I said to myself, "I must tell him about my – Mitsue." So I said "Well, I have a third sister who's four years older, and he's – she's in Tashme with a doctor with whom she boarded while she was going to first year, University of British Columbia." So that was sort of in the conversation there, and I said, "Okay, well, I'll report in another month." So I'm riding back, and I'm going along White Avenue, and I see a high school. So I stop, and I sort of look at it, and I went in and asked what grades they were – so 10, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Alberta's four years, B.C. was five years.
So the next morning, instead of going to work, I rode back and registered at the school. And the teacher sort of asked me the credits I had in British Columbia, and I told her, and she said, "I think you better go back to grade 10." So I said, "Well, that's fair enough, you know, as long as I get into school." Not realizing that this was in part of the city. So before the end of the day, I was [makes noise] [mimes grabbing the back of his neck] literally – no, literally grabbed by the neck, scruff of the neck here, and – "Get back on the farm and stay there!"
NI: By who? Who did that to you?
HY: I wish I knew. I wish I knew.
NI: Probably an RCMP officer, right?
HY: He wasn't uniformed.
NI: No? Okay. Okay.
HY: Wasn't uniformed. And anyway, so I went back. Never did find out. So on the next reporting day, I, I told this to Sergeant Keeler, and he said, "Yes, I know all about it." But I didn't ask – Who that gentleman was. I was thankful that I was still reporting. You know, I could've been dead in the street, for all – you never know. 'Cause way back in – in Mission, they had curfew. We couldn't go out after dark. That happened in Haney, as a matter of fact, when Solomon Salem was reeve and all of a sudden, just before Pearl Harbour, there was curfew, and we lost our licence on the car, and everything else. So anyway, so that was Alberta, and –
NI: But – how did your parents deal with this? Like, being moved – and like, the other thing that occurs to me is, if your sisters are at the University of Alberta, did you see them very often?
HY: No.
NI: Not at all?
HY: No, no. They couldn't come in.
NI: Oh, they had –
HY: They had no way of coming in to see us.
NI: Why not?
HY: Well, they could have taken a bus, I suppose. Vancouver, you could walk eight miles.
NI: Right, right. So you never saw them?
HY: Not, not at – not in the residence.
NI: Is that right?
HY: Dad and Mom never saw them. I saw them, because I was – I rode my bike. I think I saw them once. On the day that I reported, I dropped into – and I think Yachiyo came out once. I don't know – I don't know the name. Silk [Linamies and interior ?]. It's a store that was run by – in Edmonton, it was run by Mr. Inouye.

NI: Oh, okay.
HY: And his son Fred [Inouye].
NI: So they were there before the war, then?
HY: Oh yeah.
NI: They opened this place –
HY: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah. It was one of those – yeah.
NI: So as you told me earlier, there was a Japanese community before the war, right?
HY: In Edmonton?
NI: In Edmonton, yeah.
HY: Not –
NI: Prior to the war.
HY: Yeah. There's Mr. Inouye, Mr. – Mr. and Mrs. Nakamura, who were the barbers, and Saito's – Yurahara's rented a rooming house, and Grandma Yurahara. There might have been a couple of more, and, and some of the others.
NI: So – so for them, like, there was no restrictions on their movement, right?
HY: Oh no, no, no.
NI: They were just free to go? Come and go as they pleased.
HY: Oh yeah, there was just those who were literally evacuated from the 100-mile zone.
NI: You guys had all the restrictions placed on you, right?
HY: Yep.
NI: Okay.
HY: See, the interesting part is, there was no restriction on students – I'll come back to Misao in –
NI: Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah.
HY: No restrictions on the medical-related students going to university.
NI: Okay, so they were special category?
HY: Well, I guess they needed –
NI: Doctors, eh?
HY: Doctors. So if you're enrolled as a medical student, you go to school. If you're an engineer – I applied for – of Japanese ancestry, sorry, your application will be "reconsidered."
NI: Oh, I see.
HY: Those of Japanese ancestry had to be in the province prior to Pearl Harbour.
NI: Right, right, right.
HY: Okay? So Dad and Mum really never saw Yat or Misao while they were in residence.
NI: In Alberta?
HY: In Alberta, yeah. In Alberta. Yachiyo came out and I believe it was Fred Inouye, the son of [Sugurena ?] Inouye, who brought her out to see Dad and Mom on the farm, once. So anyway, I, I'm still reporting to the RCMP, and I said to Sergeant Keeler, "You know, I must continue my education, sir." And see, Arthur Yurahara, who's the son of Mr. Yurahara, obviously, and the grandson of Mrs. Yurahara, I believe, came to B.C. to Mr. Yumaga's farm in 1939. And I met Arthur. And I said to myself, "Gee whiz, he's from Edmonton. I should follow this up." So I – on my day that I reported, actually, I rode around and found out where the Yuraharas lived, and

I tracked down Arthur and I said, "Do you remember me?" So we got talking about Edmon – I said, "What school do you go to?" He said, "Victoria High." I said, "Where's that?" So he told me, "It's just up 101st Street, just south of the airport." So I said, "Okay, thanks." And I said, "Your dad runs a rooming house. Do you suppose I could rent a room?" And word came back that, well, Mrs. Yurahara – and I used to call her Grandma Yurahara – also has a small rooming house, and she's got a couple of rooms up on the second floor, so I went there and I told her – I think introduced myself, and I said, "You know, Arthur came to see us, or he came to Haney back in '39 and I got to know him, and I just checked with him. He sort of referred me to you –you here, and the reason I'm here is I'd like to get back to school, but I've got to have somewhere to stay." "Is it possible that I could rent one of your rooms?" And she said, "Oh, by all means." So with this, I raced back to the – Sergeant Keeler and I said, "You know, if I can get back to school – you know, I've found a room with Grandma Yurahara." And I said, "If it's at all possible, I'd like to get into Victoria High School." I didn't say why, but – so I said, "What do I do here?" And he said, "Well, the city of Edmonton won't accept you." "So leave it with me. I'll speak to Mr. Archibald," who was the B.C. Security Commission rep in Lethbridge. And he did this for me, and I, you know – when I got back, the sanction was given. I was able to move in to Yurahara's second floor, one room. And I went back to the farm, and said to Dad – and I looked at him and he didn't look that well. He's losing weight and – He's popping pills and I said, "What are you doing, Dad?" He said, "I've got a headache."
NI: Oh, boy.
HY: So anyway, I went back, and I, I went to the barracks and I, I spoke to the sergeant. I said, "I've got a bit of a problem here. My Dad doesn't look that well. He looks sickly. He doesn't – he's losing colour. Is there any chance I can move Dad and Mom with me into Yurahara's building?" Fortunately, the ground floor was vacated by the tenants, so there was room. So I suppose the sergeant must have spoken to the Premier – Aberhart at the time – and also the mayor, forgotten his name, and I was able to bring Dad and Mom.
NI: So they didn't have to work on the farm any longer?
HY: Well –
NI: What was the r –
HY: No, this was – this was – sorry, I –
NI: No, no. It's okay.
HY: Yeah, they – prior to all this happening, Ashby, after Dad and Mom were working there for a month or two, issued a statement, and the statement read that after deductions, Dad and Mom owed Mr. Ashby X number of dollars. Well, I took that to the sergeant, and the sergeant sent out Corporal Krauss, and Corporal Krauss said there'd be some action taken. So within the week, Dad and Mom were moved to another dairy farm. Closer to the city. And it was there that I visited Dad and Mom, after they were relocated. All I know is that he was – so now I had them move in with me to Yurahara, from the new dairy farm, but – so they only stayed there for probably a week, two weeks at the most.
Ni: How could they possibly owe the owners of the farm money?
HY: Well –
NI: What was that story? That's bizarre.

HY: Well, the only – the only conclusion I can come to is Ashby thought we were POW. Slave labourers.
NI: Oh, I see.
HY: And you know, we shouldn't be paying them, they should be paying us for the satisfaction of giving them employment.
NI: Right, right.
HY: No other reason. I can't – Sergeant Keeler didn't want to pursue that. "Your parents are out of there, drop it." Because Ashby used to be one of these, who used to write in the Edmonton Journal –
NI: Oh, I see. Okay.
HY: Okay?
NI: Was he in the letters, letters to the editor, right? So –
HY: And I'm in there.
NI: Oh, you are, too?
HY: But it doesn't mention my name, fortunately.
NI: What did you say?
HY: Well, I didn't react, I didn't respond. The letter was that – "We have to speak of evacuated – a Jap family."
NI: Right, yep.
HY: "The son won't even bring wood into their home to heat the house. He's now gone from the farm. We don't know where he is." And I'm reading this, and I'm saying to myself, "That sounds like me!" [chuckles] Especially when it's signed by Mr. P. H. Ashby. So anyway, I don't mention it to the sergeant, he doesn't talk to me about it –
NI: I'm sure he knows about it, though.
HY: Well.
NI: Of course, yeah.
HY: That's right. I'm sure he does.
NI: Yeah.
HY: Yeah. So anyway, there we are, and I get into grade 11. Well, when I got into the, the high school on Whyte Avenue, it was November of '42, and by the time I got into Victoria High School, it was January of '43.
NI: Okay, okay.
HY: Okay? And that's when I had this little [sucks teeth] with Mr. Dobson –
NI: Oh, the – the Chinese girl?
HY: And, and Amy Fong, who sort of got a little obnoxious and asked me, "You know, don't you feel guilty when – when all the people are bombed, over in the islands?"
NI: Right, right.
HY: And I chose not to ignore it, so I said, "Well, I'm a Canadian. You know, I don't condone Japanese aggression, but war is war." And Miss Howard, the English teacher, wanted us to read a book and do a oral report. I didn't have time to get a book, so I picked up a magazine and I read an interesting article on Madame Curie. So I gave a report on that, and at the conclusion of my oral presentation, she turned her back to me and said, "You shouldn't be in school, you should be out working!" Well –
NI: Yeah. I suppose –

HY: You know, the other students – I, I didn't know whether I should try and leave the room, but I looked around the room and other students sort of had their heads bowed, and I took that to be a degree of sympathy. And anyway, as it turned out, it was a degree of sympathy and when I got to know the students, you know, through sports and coaching the girls softball team, they felt, well, offended by Amy Fong and Miss Howard's comments. But anyway, that was January, and then I got thinking about – Mr. Six –Hicks, H-I-C-K-S, the principal of Victoria High School, was the only one that was really helpful.
NI: How so?
HY: Really helpful. He sent away for my transcript to Victoria. Got the transcript. My average wasn't that great –
NI: What kind of student were you?
HY: Well, I was about a 67% average student, which wasn't –
NI: Okay. Not very good.
HY: That's right, okay? But he looked at it and he said, "I'll give you a credit for Latin, French, algebra, week on trigonometry, and week on dynamics and statics." We didn't have that, dynamics and statics, in B.C. But anyway, he fitted me in, and I sacrificed my lunch hour 'cause I had to have 112 credits to get from grade 11 to grade 12.
NI: Oh, I see. Yeah.
HY: So I did part of my trig and did three days of psychology, to give me three credits, three extra credits to bring me from 109 to 112.
NI: Oh, I see.
HY: Which I needed to graduate to get into grade 12. So I did that, and I – I don't think I really passed, I think Mr. Hicks [chuckles] put me through. In the meantime, while I'm taking a psychology course – Dr. Willis, who was the [society?] psychology teacher, and also our wrestling instructor – gave each of us the Ishihara colour blind test. Okay?
NI: Oh, yeah.
HY: So we all take that, and Dr. Willis said, "You're a Protan!" I said, "What's a Protan?" "Well, you're colour-blind in red and green." And then I suddenly realized that okay, there's my answer to why I'm picking white strawberries and green raspberries!
NI: All those years, eh? Ahh. Yeah.
HY: Okay?
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: So anyway, that was – and then, January – get – finishing grade 11. What do we do with Mitsue? So I reported again to –
NI: She's, she's in Tashme, during this time, right?
HY: She's in Tashme. I think one of the conditions that, that Archibald set down – I don't know this, 'cause I didn't get it from the, the sergeant – I think I, I was required to continue to report and that you know, if I'm to move, I have to get permission. But anyway, I went to the sergeant and I said, "I'd like to bring the family together." '43, now, Misao is now interning at Toronto, Women's College Hospital.
NI: Okay. Yep.
HY: Yachiyo is now a dentist.

NI: In Toronto?
HY: No, in Lamont.
NI: Which is in Alberta?
HY: Alberta.
NI: Okay.
HY: It's about 40 miles east of Edmonton. And so – sergeant – I asked the sergeant, "What's the best procedure here to bring Mitsue back with us?"
NI: Right, right. Yeah, yeah.
HY: And his curt response was, "Well, for political reasons, you'll have to stay out of the city." So in the meantime – the Yurahara boarding house, one room for Dad and Mom, and one room for myself was sort of getting kind of crowded. And I decided to look for other quarters –
NI: Outside of the city limits, right?
HY: No, no, this is still inside the city.
NI: Oh, okay, right.
HY: I found a place, and – in the meantime, Sergeant Keeler said to me, "What I'll do for you, for your dad, is I'll let him build a just full room – you know, bungalow – on my property." "And with a different address." So I said, "Gee, that's – you know, hoo boy, that's really helpful. I don't know how to thank you." And at that point, he looked at me, and he said, "You know, I'm going to start calling you Harold from here on in." "This Yutaka kind of bothers me." Or whatever words he used.
NI: How did he come up with Harold?
HY: So I shrugged and said, "Yeah, okay."
NI: How – but – why Harold?
HY: I don't know! Well, his, his – P. H. Keeler, his – Phillip Harold Keeler.
NI: Oh, I see. Okay.
HY: I don't know.
NI: Maybe, maybe.
HY: Maybe. Maybe, yeah, maybe. So anyway, I shrugged my shoulders and said okay, and I said to myself, "Well gee, I'd better get my birth certificate changed around." So back in '51, I, I –
NI: Officially changed it.
HY: We'll go to that later on – but in the meantime, the sergeant said, "Well, you're military age. Why don't you join up?" So I said, "Well, I like the navy."
NI: Yeah, yeah.
HY: Not realizing the Canadian government weren't accepting those of Japanese ancestry during those days. So he said, "Well, I'll – I'll do what I can for you, to get you accepted into the Royal Navy as an NCO, as a non-commissioned officer."
NI: Ohh. Non-commissioned officer.
HY: Okay?
NI: Yep. Yep.
HY: And what the duty would be, who knows?
NI: Right, right.
HY: But – so that was the end of that conversation, type of thing
NI: This was in '43?
HY: '43, yeah.

NI: ’43.
HY: ’43. Yeah.
NI: Okay.
HY: Okay, and I gave the sergeant the, the board feet that I need for the little bungalow on his property, and the sergeant would phone the lumber yard and the lumber would be delivered.
NI: So your – but your dad was paying for the construction of the bungalow, right? He was paying for it.
HY: I can’t answer that.
NI: Okay. Why not? [laughter]
HY: I’m not too sure that he accepted the money. He didn’t want any record of this happening.
NI: This is Sergeant Keeler? He didn’t want any record of this?
HY: Okay. Mind you, there was record of, of lumber being delivered and so on.
NI: Did you pay for it, though?
HY: Eh?
NI: Did you pay for the lumber?
HY: He did.
NI: Sergeant Keeler paid for the lumber?
HY: Now, whether Dad paid him back –
NI: What about the labour? Who paid?
HY: Well, the labour was just Dad, Keeler, and Mr. Nakamura.
NI: Oh, I see! Okay.
HY: We didn’t have a carpenter, we didn’t have hard labour.
NI: Oh, so you made it yourself?
HY: Yeah. Keeler, myself, Dad, and I remember Mr. Nakamura helping out.
NI: Okay, wow. That’s a – that’s an interesting story.
HY: So in terms of paying for the lumber – Knowing Dad – He would offer.
NI: Right. Of course.
HY: Okay?
NI: Yeah.
HY: Whether the sergeant accepted or not –
NI: You don’t know.
HY: I don’t know, and the answer probably is that he did not.
NI: Why don’t – why – why is that your feeling?
HY: Why is that my feeling?
NI: Yeah.
HY: Well, he was looking after some POWs on his farm.
NI: Okay. Japanese?
HY: No.
NI: Of what – of what ancestry?
HY: Nope, no, no, no.
NI: German?
HY: Germans, Russians.
NI: Okay.
HY: Doukhobors.

NI: Yep.
HY: They'd bring them out and put them on the farm. Some were – had leg chains.
NI: Really?
HY: They'd be working on his farm on the other side.
NI: Oh, okay.
HY: And although we built on his property, there was enough timber growing and the address is totally different.
NI: Oh, I see. Okay.
HY: So really, nobody suspected that this was going on. Other than to say that the, the Keelers were doing this type of thing. So it made me wonder, you know, when I saw this. I made no mention of it, I never questioned Keeler.
NI: Right.
HY: All I saw was leg chains and a work gang.
NI: What about [at his workplace?] Yeah, that would – had to be so strange.
HY: About four or five of them, and I wouldn't go, go anywhere near them. You know, I, I could see them dragging this thing. But nothing – they'd, they'd be brought in the morning, sent back at night, and obviously they're –
NI: Wow.
HY: Anyway, so we got that done. In the meantime, Mitsue was allowed to come to this farm.
NI: To join you. Yep, yep.
HY: [nods] But because it wasn't finished yet, and I had, by this time, found bigger quarters. So Dad and Mom, Mitsue and I sort of moved into the bigger quarters until the bungalow was finished.
NI: Oh, I see.
HY: Because Misao was gone, Yachiyo was gone. Yat came to the bungalow once a month or something. So in – when I graduated from grade 12 in '44, I started to make applications for university entrance. You know, right across Canada. And each university sent a reply back saying that because – if you're of Japanese ancestry, we have to – can't accept your application. And those who were accepted were those who were in the province prior to Pearl Harbour. Same response right across, [carried?] from the registrar. So anyway, I, I got a job with Poole Construction. Couldn't go to university, so what are you going to do? Poole Construction was a American company. I guess that was just before I graduated, must have been after grade 11, because – forgotten his name. It's in the book, I think.
NI: This is in '44, then? '44?
HY: This – this episode might have been '43.
NI: Okay.
HY: Summer of '43. Mr. Coulter was our physics teacher, who was a timekeeper for Poole Construction.
NI: Mr. Koto?
HY: Coulter. C-O-U-L-T-E-R.
NI: Oh, not – okay, okay. Not a Japanese guy.
HY: No, no, no, no.
NI: Okay.

HY: He approached me and said, "I'm afraid I have to release you." I said, "Why? I'm doing my work. I'm unloading bags of cement from the boxcar, hot and sweaty." And you know, he said, "Poole Construction is an American firm. Their policy is not to hire those of Japanese ancestry." Well, now what are you going to do? So I said, "Okay, if you feel that you're doing the right thing, as my physics teacher." [chuckles] So I accepted that and applied at the Northwestern Utilities, which was the gas company, same as what Consumer's Gas was – is, in Toronto. No, I guess it was after grade 12, 'cause I – my schoolmate Vern David, grade 12, and I were handed shovels and digging trenches to put the gas lines in from the alley to the back of new houses. So we did that, and in 1945, I started to apply again. Same result, eh? But Edmonton, as you're probably aware, by November, gets pretty cold. And the frost would be four or five feet, and you couldn't dig anymore. So we'd be laid off as labourers for the gas company. So that's when I approached the provincial hatcheries, which is just south of Victoria High School. And Mr. Robinson – "Well, do you know anything about soldering?" So I said, "Well, I can learn." So he gave me a job – this is just prior to the the egg season, coming in for hatching in the incubators. So I fixed up all the drain pans and so on, and did the general cleanup, and when the eggs start coming in, we started to load them on the trays and put them in the incubators, you know, rotate them and do all these things. And that lasted from November through to spring, and then I'd go back to the gas company and –
NI: Oh, I see. So like that.
HY: And you know, as strange as it may seem, I reported to a Mr. Dollahan, John Dollahan. And he put me on a – what they call a pipe cleaning machine, and it was a noisy operation, electric motor operated. Anywhere from a 1/2 inch pipe in diameter to a 2 ½ inch pipe diameter, 20 feet long.
NI: Wow.
HY: And the thing was on a screw gear, two, two stationary screw gears, and a, a third moveable, so it actually –
NI: Oh, so that –
HY: So that winds the pipe through. And Noisy as hell, and I think that's where part of my [points at ears] industrial deafness originated. I can't prove it, but – anyway. I keep saying that.
NI: What were your – so like, through your Edmonton years then, like once your parents didn't have to work, like on the dairy farm, what – what was your dad doing? And what was your mom doing? What were they doing on a daily basis? Nothing?
HY: They didn't – yeah, they weren't working.
NI: No?
HY: See, again, this is why I have to tip my hat to Keeler. There they are – I'm there too, I'm working.
NI: Yeah, you're working.
HY: I'm okay.
NI: Of course, yeah.
HY: Dad and Mom were – were just in the house.
NI: How old – how old was your Dad at this time?
HY: Eh?

NI: Like, in the '40s?
HY: Sorry?
NI: In the mid – in the mid-1940s, how old was your father at that time?
HY: Well, he was born in 1887, so –
NI: Late 50s, then, I guess. Yeah, so – and your Mom was a little younger, I guess.
HY: Yeah. A little younger, yeah.
NI: Yeah. But how were they holding up through all this? Because you were busy, and your sisters were busy, but you know, they were – yeah, kind of tucked away in this nice little bungalow, right? So –
HY: Compared to what they went through on the dairy farm with Mr. Ashby – This was heaven. Even though all they were doing was stoking coal in the stove to keep warm, helping sort of clear the area, so they can maybe plant some flowers and maybe some vegetables, if, if the sergeant would allow them.
NI: Right. Do – do you think it had anything to do with your sisters all being doctors? Like, do you think that had any bearing on how, you know – how your parents were treated? It just occurs to me.
HY: It didn't hurt them. It didn't hurt them.
HY: Whether it helped them or not, I, I can't answer that. It didn't hurt them. Because Keeler, Sergeant Keeler, was 100% behind me, as far as my education was concerned. You know, why did he appeal to Archibald, B.C. Security Commission? I didn't ask – ask – well, I guess in effect I asked him. But I didn't go to the extent of making the appeal. He's the one that offered. : And he's the one that got me into Victoria High.
NI: Right, right. So your, your "pedigree" was there, right? Yeah, I think that was probably part of it.
HY: Yeah, so – yeah. Yeah, it didn't hurt.
NI: Yeah.
HY: Now, you may be right, it may have been because of –
NI: Your sisters, yeah.
HY: Yep, yep.
NI: Interesting.
HY: But it wasn't – it sure didn't hurt them.
NI: Yeah.
HY: Dad and Mom, that is.
NI: How about your mom? How did she deal with the Edmonton phase of her life? Did she deal with it fairly well?
HY: Well, she got to know the Nakamura family, eh?
NI: Okay.
HY: And Mrs. Nakamura was one of these outgoing – to the point that everybody was her friend. So if she'd recognize that someone's in trouble, you know, they'd –she'd invite them to their home and, and you know, so –
NI: And your mom was free to go to her home? Like, the Nakamura's family home? She could go?
HY: She could – yeah, she could go, yeah. Not permanently, but as a visit.
NI: For a visit, yeah.
HY: For a visit.

NI: Yeah, yeah. Okay.
HY: And they used to play, you know, karuta – karuta. [chuckles]
NI: Karuta, yeah. I know what karuta is.
HY: But when I worked for the, for the Ashbys, Mr. Robinson must have taken a fancy to me because he sort of threw the – he had a brand-new Studebaker and he kind of threw the keys at me and – so I'm [audio cuts out] "What am I to do with this?" He said, "Well, you can take your chicks to the CN station." So I said, "Yeah, gladly." So you know, the chicks – as they hatched, we'd feed them until they were three weeks, and some people would come in looking for three-week-old chicks. And they'd sort of buy it right there instead of going through the stores, or – and honest as I was, I came out one day 'cause somebody was looking for a three-week-old chicks, and we'd all sold out. I'd delivered everything the night before to the station, and I blurted out, "The only thing we have are two-week-old chicks." And Mr. Robinson said, "Well, go to the further – far corner." "There should be rack full of three-week-old chicks there." Well, it just dawned on me that that wasn't the right thing to say. [chuckles] Who knows the difference between a two-week-old chick and a three-week-old chick? [laughs]
NI: Oh, that's funny.
HY: He never – he never said anything to me about it. He knew that I picked it up. So – but anyway, so now, '45, I'm reapplying again. The University of Toronto wrote back and said, "There's still the situation in the main campus in Toronto, however, we are going to open up a new division called Ajax."
HY: NI: Ajax. Yeah.
HY: Which was the munitions plant set up by the federal government during the war years. So the total complex would be – oh hell, had about 6,000 students, so depending on what your application is like, we'll let you know – October.
NI: And at that time in '45, there were still restrictions on Japanese Canadians living in Toronto, right?
HY: Oh yeah, that – they went through right until 1948.
NI: Right, right. So –
HY: Right until '49.
NI: What was the specific restriction? If you were of Japanese descent, then –
HY: The city of Toronto, again –
Put the ban in 1942. They never lifted that. So if – the condition was, if I finished – it started in January. And you finished in August. In Ajax, in 1946. And you start in September. And you finish in April. Okay? '47, your third year is now back in Toronto. But we don't know whether we can – you could be accepted.
NI: Because?
HY: Of the ban. But the city –
NI: So, what was the ban –
HY: As a student –
NI: As a student. Right. As a student, I could not live in the city. As a labourer, I could work in the city. If you're a doctor or a dentist, you had no problem. If you're a student, you could not come into the city. If you're the same student reporting as a labourer – : You can work. So in the summertime, you know, I'd work in the city. But I couldn't go to school.

NI: Even if you were a university student? Is that right, eh?
HY: So that was the condition.
NI: Wow.
HY: Okay. But in the meantime, January '46, I was fortunate to be selected by the other resident students in house 70. These houses were in the shape of U, U-shaped, and we had two to a room and there'd be some 70 of us in one unit. I was selected as the sports representative for that house. For – so I attended all the sports meetings.
NI: Despite –
HY: And, and the sports director, by the name of [Balfortan?], Jim Fowler, and the administrative secretary was Miss Helen Puckering. They put together some kind of a program – a program and being January, basketball was the big thing.
NI: Right, right.
HY: So they wanted each house rep. And I was representing house 730. Put together a basketball team. So we were – I was fortunate, in as much as I had Stu Bates, Ed – Ed Harvey, Murray Rosen, [West Hall?], myself, Paul Mills, and two others. And we cleaned up. We – yeah, we won every game.
NI: Oh, is that right, eh?
HY: And [Balfourtan?] said – Mr. [Balfortan?] said to me, "You know, are you willing to teach team – that's the B team for the University of Toronto?" So I told him, "Let me ask the boys." So the boys said, "Yeah, we'll go." 'Course that was April. The main campus was finished, eh? So that didn't materialize. But in the meantime, he also arranged for a two-game series with the University of Guelph. So we – he rented a bus for us and we went to Guelph. And that – he didn't show up. Well, I shouldn't have put it that way. He had – Mr. Hort – [Balfortan ?] had other commitments. So he couldn't join us on the bus to go to Guelph. So that left me [gestures to shoulder] as coach. [audio cuts out] And players – well, the amount of coaching I knew about basketball – well, you could fit a thimble full. We won the first game and lost the second game. But that was quite an experience, and yeah, so that helped me a lot, in terms of getting to know the students and being recognized by the students. And then in July of 1946, they, they had a sports conference type of thing in Ajax and they brought in a speaker from – Mr. Monsoon, I think his name was, from Queen's University, to be the dinner speaker. Mr. J. H Gillies was the Ajax division coordinator. He presented the – what do you call – the Sidney Sniff – Sidney Smith – University of Toronto –
HY: HY: NI: Lots of time, I think we're [indistinct]
HY: Trophy.
NI: Yeah.
HY: So he presented to me, as the house 730 rep, as being -- whatever they call it. That was, you know, sort of an ego-booster for me, if – if you know what I mean.
NI: Yeah. Well, maybe next time we get together, we'll maybe start – we'll talk more about the U of T years, and maybe Toronto.
HY: Yep. Yep.
NI: I think that's – and maybe we can talk a little bit more about like, the internment years, but I think we've basically – we've – we're at a good point right now, I think, so –
HY: Okay.

[End of interview]