

**Interviewee: Sue Kai (nee Matsugu)**

**Interviewer: Peter Wakayama**

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THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

**[Start part 1]**

Peter Wakayama: Okay, I think we're going to start, okay? Because, smile, relax, you know. Um, when were you born?

Sue Kai: I was born January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1925, in a small, small town in Alert Bay, British Columbia, which is on the northern tip of Vancouver Island. The people are mostly Native Indians, and there were only three Japanese families: the Kawaguchis, Shintanis, and the Matsugu family [Sue's family].

PW: And, uh, your mother and father came from where?

SK: They're both from Fukuoka-ken, which is in Kyushu, the southern part of Japan.

PW: And why did they come from Japan?

SK: I think they left Japan for a better life in Canada.

PW: And they both came together?

SK: I think my mother came a little later.

PW: Uh, what did your father do there, in Alert Bay?

SK: Oh, the three Japanese men, they were all boat builders, apparently, they were very skilled boat builders.

PW: And so- and then they raised the family? And how many children did they have?

SK: Well, the Matsugu family, I lived there for one year, and Mom moved back, we moved to Vancouver, for better education facilities. And then we moved to Powell Street, which is in the heart of Japantown, "Little Tokyo".

PW: And how old were you then?

SK: One year old. And I was there from one to 17 years old.

PW: So, basically your -

SK: My childhood.

PW: Was in Japantown?

SK: Japantown, "Little Tokyo".

PW: And so, you went to school there?

SK: Yeah. I guess- there's a famous school called Strathcona School, and I would say, maybe 75- most of the students were *niseis* [second generation Japanese Canadian].

PW: And, um, and that's right in Chinatown?

SK: Yeah, that's right, Chinatown.

PW: And how did you like school?

SK: I loved school, I just loved school! The only thing, the first day of school, you have a recess, at recess time you're supposed to go to the bathroom, but I went home [chuckles]. And then my mother, I had to rush back, I was in time for school again. But, see, I didn't speak English then. So I didn't know, the first day they asked me to say "Here", or "Present", and I said, "Hai!" And most of us, we spoke nothing but Japanese, and going to school, that's where we first learned English.

PW: And, um [clears throat], so the public school there, but you started kindergarten?

SK: Oh yes, kindergarten, it was run by the Powell Street United Church- a Japanese Church- run by missionaries. So I learned a bit of English, but we all spoke to each other in Japanese.

PW: And in the Strathcona School, you graduated grade eight?

SK: Grade eight.

PW: And so, were most of your classmates niseis?

SK: Niseis, and quite a few Chinese- actually, mostly Japanese, Chinese, I don't know what the rest were [chuckles].

PW: How were your teachers?

SK: The teachers were wonderful! In those days, the teachers all what you got, old maids, Miss Faringheight, Miss Watson, Miss Harder, and I don't think they were paid too well in those days.

PW: During your childhood, what do you remember about food?

SK: I think I got a good appetite. I ate everything. My mother used to make pork sausage fried with cabbage and rice, that was my favourite. Not much money, we ate supposedly nutritious food, but cheap food, I think.

PW: Did you live in a house in Vancouver?

SK: Yeah, we had a very nice house, and my father was a carpenter, so he'd renovate- we had quite a lovely home, a good house.

PW: But your father was doing carpentry and-

SK: He worked as the millwright, so he built a house with a nice front porch, a garden in the front, a garden in the back, and a wood shed- they call them *maki goya* - and that's where we did the, uh, *mochizuki* [sic?], my father made the *usu* [wood bowl for pounding rice].

PW: And what did your Mom do?

SK: Mom, she was a housewife. Of course, she only spoke Japanese.

PW: Right. And what were some of the recreational activities you did in Vancouver when you were growing up?

SK: Oh, I think we had the happiest time. We would have roller skates, riding a bike, playing marbles, climbing fences, going to Stanley Park, Hastings Park, we just had a happy, happy childhood.

PW: You were close by to the baseball diamond; did you see the Asahis play?

SK: All the time, it was only two blocks away. I would go all the time, and stand on sometimes maybe Powell Street, sometimes I'd stand on Cordova Street, sometimes on Jackson, and sometimes right by the pitcher's plate.

PW: So, were you a baseball fan in those days?

SK: Yes and no, I guess [chuckles]. I just liked to watch, like Frank Shiraishi, George Shishido, Ken Kutsukake, Roy Yamamura, they were sharp, and they, could they ever run, and steal bases.

PW: And what was your recollection about radios and records?

SK: Well, we got our first record- it's a kind of a record [where] you have to wind it up, enough for the one record to fill, and near the end it would go "grrr" [chuckles].

PW: And you used to listen to the radio?

SK: Yeah. Some of the programs, I've forgot now. The radio- we didn't have T.V.- and radio and phonograph. We just seemed to have fun with little things.

PW: Yeah, you went to Stanley Park often?

SK: Quite often.

PW: And you swam?

SK: Yeah, except, we went to Kitsilano Beach. That's where we swam a lot. A lot of niseis went there, and we'd buy chips for ten cents; they were the best chips with vinegar and ketchup and salt and pepper.

PW: What do you remember about the Woodward's department store?

SK: Well, do I ever know that. Once a month, they call it the "99 cent day", and a lot of people- I had to take a day off, half a day from school- and my mother would buy all of our running shoes for 99 cents, and then we'd take a big tin and fill it up, it's called, peanut butter, I think it was 9 cents a pound, at Woodward's, all the Japanese went there. And we used to lug everything home.

PW: At your home, um, in terms of what they had for cooking, what kind of stove and, you know, icebox or something, what did-

SK: We didn't even have an icebox; we had a little, what'cha [sic] call it, room at the back, and then for a stove, we had a wood stove and a gas stove.

PW: And so, how was the house heated?

SK: With a wood stove, which is rather dangerous; quite often, you'd see all kinds of sparks from different chimneys. Not everybody had furnaces in those days.

**[End of Part 1]**

**[Start Part 2, nothing to record]**

**[Start Part 3]**

PW: Um, so after Strathcona, you went on to high school, tell us about that.

SK: Okay. I went to a school called Fairview High School, and that was the first time- they were all *hakujin* [non-Japanese], except for a few Japanese, and it was a very

good school, and we learned shorthand, typing, bookkeeping, math, and English, and that's when we had to go by streetcar, we couldn't walk, and the streetcar tickets were four for a quarter, and that was a lot of money in those days. Then, for lunchtime, we'd take sandwich, but once a week on a Friday, we'd go to a fish and chips store. Boy, for ten cents, fish and chips and meat pie, and all the nisei, when we'd get together, we'd have a good time. And, I went there for two years, then I transferred to Grandview High School, because it was closer to home, and I was able to walk. And that's where I went for [grades] eleven and twelve, and I graduated from Grandview High in 1942, the year of the evacuation.

PW: And, um, in terms of the climate in Vancouver, how was the climate in Vancouver in those days?

SK: You know, when you're small, you think everybody else's climate is like Vancouver, the scenery is beautiful with the ocean and there was always mud, I didn't even own a pair of boots until I came to Toronto.

PW: How were girls supposed to behave in your days?

SK: Oh, my mother would say I'm a "timba", which is "tomboy". She would say, if I'm good, I'm "Sumi-chan", but if I'm bad, it's "Sumiko". And she said, "You've got to be *otonashi*, like a girl". And, that was not too good for me [chuckles].

PW: How did you get along with your brothers and sisters?

SK: We got along very well. Well, actually, I came from a lovely family, and I happened to be the middle, I've got an older brother and sister and a younger, I was the middle child. I'd get along very well.

PW: Um, you had some special days, you know, Japanese special days, tell us what you did for New Year's or *Shogatsu*.

SK: New Year's is a day- it seems for days and days- all the mothers, they're busy cleaning the house, making *gochiso* [meal], and New Year's Day, I can't believe it; the women stay home, and the men come in groups of five, sit down- and my family's not for drinking- but they would eat all the sushi, you know, it was a lot of fun, I enjoyed it, and we would play some Japanese, what do you call them, bean bags, and *kaduta*, a Japanese game. It was really a Japanese holiday.

PW: Did the fathers go around to the different homes?

SK: Yeah. And some of the people, the young people, some of them liked to drink. And then they got kind of boisterous, but it was kind of fun.

PW: And what about the boys' and girls' festivals, did you celebrate that?

SK: No, not too much; in those days, March the 3<sup>rd</sup> was girls' day, and May the 5<sup>th</sup> was boys' day. But we didn't do anything special, but some people used to decorate their house with different dolls. But we didn't.

PW: And then you had *mochitsuki*, too?

SK: Which is a- well, because my family owned a *usu*, it seemed to me all the people on my block came to my backyard, *makigoya*. It's very scary, because the two men

are hitting that thing, and my poor mother putting her hands - and our job was to balls, different shapes.

PW: December the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, was Pearl Harbour. What happened with you?

SK: I'll never, ever forget that day. It was Sunday- Sunday's the day we all used to go to church- and it was early in the morning, I can't remember, seven or eight o'clock, people are going, running back and forth, acting kind of crazy and [gasps], "Pearl Harbour's bombed!". Pearl Harbour? I'd never even- some place like Palm Beach or Pearl Harbour, and then, slowly by slowly, more people- they were talking in Japanese, I don't know "bakutan", I wasn't sure what "bakutan" was, but it was "bomb". And then by night time, [gasps], "Oh my god, they took so-and-so away, they took so-and-so away, they took all the community leaders," but everything is like rumours, rumours, rumours; and then, I think by that night, the next day, no school Monday, then the curfew, and then, if you're a Japanese, you can't go out, and it was utter confusion. And then, they confiscate our wages and this and that, everything was rumour, rumour, rumour.

PW: What happened to your Dad?

SK: My Dad, he was okay for a while. But then, the following year, he had to go to a camp. At that time, the isseis are in their forties and fifties, and most of us were teenagers. So, the parents are young, so the men over eighteen, every single man over eighteen, they all went to different camps in the interior of B.C.

PW: How did you feel when it happened?

SK: Well, I was so confused, I-

PW: You were how old, then?

SK: I was, uh, sixteen, seventeen. Pearl Harbour happened when I was sixteen. And it's very hard to communicate between Japanese and English, and rumours and...

PW: Yeah. Um, then, since you were living in Vancouver, you didn't have to go to Hastings Park?

SK: No, fortunately.

PW: So, then, but then you had to evacuate.

SK: Yeah. But then my cousins who live in Alert Bay, they were in Hastings Park, under the worst conditions possible.

PW: Did you go and visit your cousins in Hastings Park?

SK: No, no. They told us not to go.

PW: Then you were evacuated to where?

SK: A place called Kaslo, B.C.

PW: And which members of the family?

SK: It's only my mother and father, for the time being. And then, I'm the oldest, and my younger brother and sister. Eighteen and over, if you're a man, you have to go to camp. So, the people there are women and children.

PW: So then your family moved to the "Kaslo Hotel".

SK: Yes.

PW: Describe that situation.

SK: It's the south area of Kaslo, actually, Kaslo, I think, was the best evacuation centre; it was an old mining town, and the people who lived there, they welcomed us- well, even for financial reasons, they wanted to make money on the Japanese, but they treated us very well. The Kaslo Hotel was a three-storey building, and I was on the second floor. On one floor, there's one stove, for twenty families. So you can just imagine, at mealtime, the mothers had to cook, and unless you watch your pot, somebody's going to put it out [chuckles]. But I stayed away from the kitchen, I left it up to the *isseis* [first generation Japanese Canadian], the mothers. But, it was fun- I mean, when you're sixteen, seventeen, it was fun; we didn't have to worry the way our parents worried.

PW: And, as for food, where and how did they get the food?

SK: The food, because there was a grocery store, a meat store and a grocery store. We didn't have to worry about food. We got these, um, "food tickets". Coupons.

PW: And, since they didn't have ice boxes or refrigerators, they'd go shopping every day?

SK: Almost every day, just across the road.

PW: And so, they cooked in a kind of common stove area, but then, did you eat in your room?

SK: In our room. And the room was about nine feet by twelve feet, and for three years, we ate, and slept, and we did everything in that room. And there's a double bunk bed, and the mattress was straw, and then, my mother and father sleep downstairs, and my sister and me climb up the stairs, we did that for three years.

PW: And your brother wasn't there, though?

SK: No. My brother, because he's a boy, he had to live in a dormitory, and he just came back for his meal. Because they didn't want brothers and sisters, unless you're a little young.

PW: Right. And so, the dining table where you sat, was in the room itself?

SK: Yeah.

PW: So it was very tight.

SK: Very tight [chuckles].

PW: Then, because you were - and your Dad, what did he do in Kaslo?

SK: He was a carpenter. He was in demand, because there was so much to be done, they have to do this and fix this, build chairs and tables, he was in real demand. But, then they sent him out to the interior of B.C. for the railway, I think. But then they brought him back.

PW: And, um, you were seventeen years old, you were a graduate of high school, then I guess you were recruited to teach in the school system in there?

SK: Yes, and Hide Hyodo at that time. I said, "I don't want to teach," because I was only seventeen at the time, I'm too young, but she's very, what's the word, persuasive. So, I started, and those three years were the most interesting, I'm glad I taught school. I taught grade three, four, five, and six, as a combination. And, now, when I see those kids- not kids [chuckles], they're now 75, and they have all done so well. And they're still very good to me.

PW: And, you taught for how many years?

SK: Three years.

PW: And what did you do about supplies and-

SK: Supplies [were] mostly from the B.C. Security Commission; and then, when we first taught, it was all volunteer, and then, before you know, after a couple of months, we got a paycheck of \$15 a month, I thought "Boy, that's a lot of money!" So, my mother saved it for me, and a little later, we got a raise and \$30 a month! I thought, "Wow, I've never heard of \$30 a month!" And the third year, I got \$45 a month. So when we moved to Toronto, that money was the down payment on our house, \$5500. Unbelievable, isn't it?

PW: How was the curriculum established? You know, what to teach and that.

SK: Well, it was all the B.C. Security Commission, they had a curriculum. I think they had the same curriculum for every Ghost Town [internment camps].

PW: Did you go to the New Denver teacher's conference?

SK: Yeah, I went in 1943 and 1944. I didn't go in '45, because I was on the way to Toronto.

PW: Yeah, I believe they had three conferences.

SK: It was a wonderful time to learn and meet people.

PW: Then, you also were fairly active- there's quite a bit of church activities, can you tell us about some of the church activities?

SK: In Kaslo?

PW: In Kaslo?

SK: We were very, very fortunate, beautiful church- I think called St. Andrews Church, and the church people, they couldn't do enough for us, they were so kind, and I think the reason why we were so lucky is because Rick Shimizu's family lived in Kaslo, and if it wasn't for that kind of connection, but anyway, they had kindergarten, Sunday school- I taught Sunday school for a couple years- and the young people, they were just so wonderful to the Japanese. I'll never, ever forget their kindness.

PW: You were seventeen, you're kind of in the almost early adult, late teen years, what kind of activities did you do?

SK: Oh, I'm telling you, I had a few boyfriends, and we used to have dances, oh, boy- not the kind of dance, where, well, not cheek-to-cheek, either- we had lovely dances, almost every Saturday. A lot of the parents, they were very what you call it, not

narrow-minded, strict, "I'm not going to let my daughter go dancing". But then, my mother, "You're a teacher, you've got to be very careful, your reputation's at stake." But I guess I behaved, [be]cause she let me go [chuckles].

PW: And, you also got mail, to some degree, right?

SK: Hardly any. Because, when I did get mail, it was censored, it's all black or cut out. And then, of course, in that time, I think postage was about four cents, I hardly got any mail. But we didn't know where everybody went in our neighbourhood- you know how, I found out later on, in "The New Canadian", so-and-so went to [gasps] "Oh, is that where they went?" We lost contact with everybody.

PW: Now, "The New Canadian" newspaper was in Kaslo, tell us about what they were doing there.

SK: It so happened, "The New Canadian" office was in between Kaslo town - and I couldn't miss it, I passed it every day, back and forth. And they were wonderful, I got to know Tom Shoyama, and Noji Mata, because I went to school with Noji, and I knew Junjin, and they really worked hard under hard circumstances.

PW: And what did you think of Tom Shoyama, you knew him quite well?

SK: Yeah, I thought he was great; as a matter of fact, my husband's sister got married on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1943- He, Tom Shoyama, was the best man, and I still have the wedding picture. He was a nice guy.

PW: So, in 1945, in the spring, the family decided to move out east. How was that experience, travelling across Canada?

SK: Oh, it was really awful, because, the war was still on, and my sister and I were not very keen about travelling, and the train was full of soldiers, all smoking, and I couldn't stand it and spent most of the time in the washroom, bringing up, and finally my father said, "Can you please stop smoking, because my daughters are so sick," so they stopped. But, it was terrible [chuckles]. I think it was four nights and three days, I can't remember, we sat up.

PW: Was it the old wooden train seats?

SK: It was hard as can be. I think we had baloney sandwiches, I can't remember.

PW: And then you came to Toronto?

SK: Yep.

PW: And did anybody meet you there?

SK: Yeah, I had a few relatives. And we were supposed to go to a place called Summerville, it was like a hostel. And when we got there, they said, "The place you're supposed to go, something happened, so you've got to Chatham." So, we ended up in Chatham.

PW: So, you took the train again from Toronto to Chatham? Now, that train has got nice upholstery [chuckles].

SK: But, of course this is 1945, and Chatham was okay, we had a nice bungalow, but to get a job was another thing.



PW: Who did your Dad work for?

SK: He worked for Mr. Reid).

PW And what did he do there?

SK: He was a millwright there. But he was allergic to all the seed, so after a while, we decided to come to Toronto, because my cousins, the Kawaguchi's, they lived in Toronto, we stayed with them for a while.

PW: And were there many Japanese families in Chatham at the time you people were there?

SK: No, not too many- the Takahashis, the Moritas, and the Todas, and a few Fujis, but not too many.

PW: What other activities did you do in Chatham?

SK: In Chatham? They had a United Church, and we had a bowling club. We used to get together once in a while.

PW: Did you mix with the hakujin people very much?

SK: Not too much, when you're working five and a half days, but our neighbours were very kind to us.

PW: Tell me about your experience at the laundry.

SK: I'll never live through that again. I think I got up around five thirty- 6 o'clock in the morning, and the neighbour, the owner of the Laundromat, picked me up, and we worked from seven o'clock in the morning until twelve, one hour for lunch, come back from one until six. And then, on Saturday, again, just the morning. And I earned 35 cents an hour. And it was awful. Men's shirts, we had to do one shirt a minute. The shirts would be soaking wet, one would do the collars and the next person did the sleeves and the yoke, and the next person did the back, one person did the folding, but anyway, at the end of one night, you'd see sixty shirts hanging.

**[End of Part 3]**

**[Start Part 4] [27:28]**

PW: So, in 1946, your family decided to move to Toronto, what was the reason for moving to Toronto?

SK: Well, we had a hard time getting into Toronto, they said "You have to" - I don't know what happened, Mr. Truman or - I think Eiji Yatabe was working there too, Oh, I got a job, the man's job, he went to Mr. Truman and said, "I am a very qualified seed analyst and secretary, they need me very badly," that's how I got it.

PW: And your whole family moved to Toronto? And then what did your father do during that time?

SK: He got, because he was a carpenter, he got a job with the [Yolese?] Furniture Company, at Yonge and Bloor, somewhere. And he worked there for years and years, they just loved him, even doing furniture.

PW: And how long were you at that, us as a seed analyst

SK: About 5 years, cause I did some secretary work.

PW: Now, in 1947, you met a nice, handsome young man [Sam Kai, Sue's husband], tell us about that.

SK: He chased after me! [Chuckles].

PW: So that's when you started going out with Sam Kai?

SK: Yes.

PW: And when were you married?

SK: Right away! No [chuckles]- a half a year, we got engaged, half a year later, I got married. And people that I was pregnant, but I wasn't [laughs, waves hand] just kidding.

PW: So, tell us about your wedding day.

SK: It was a beautiful, it was a cold day, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1948, and, can you imagine, right at Dundas and Spadina, Church of All Nations, not one guest had a car, so they came by TTC. And there were two weddings that day, Matt Matsui, who owned the bicycle shop, I think he got married maybe at one o'clock, and I got married at three o'clock. We had the same organist, Mary Nishikawa. [chuckles]

PW: And then you had your reception at - ?

SK: Lychee Garden.

PW: So everybody used to have receptions at Chinese restaurants.

SK: Yeah, [Kwan Cha?]. I think Kwan Cha was two dollars. The other one, I think Lychee Gardens, they wanted two and a quarter, but I [redacted].

PW: And then you went on your honeymoon?

SK: Yeah, to Niagara Falls, seven people in the car, what do you call them, you drive,

PW: Rental Cars.

SK: and they dropped us off at Brock Hotel [chuckles].

PW: Then other Japanese Canadians were coming into Toronto at that time.

SK: [Nods] Of course, quite a bit coming in.

PW: And were you involved with the church? Because church seems to have been a big part of your life.

SK: Yeah. Well, not right away. For a while Reverend Shimizu said, "Go to your neighbourhood church." But that doesn't work. Because, Japanese, they want to stick together. I forgot the exact year, 19 whatever, when the church was established, Sam [Kai, Sue's husband] and I were, what you call, we were there at the very beginning. And my son, Brian, born in '53, I think he's gone to church almost every Sunday for forever [chuckles]!

PW: And what about some of the...did you meet with a lot of the Japanese Canadian families and friends in Toronto, while you were working?

SK: Yeah.

PW: Tell us something about your working experience.

SK: I worked for one company, it's called the Facelle Dominion Company [now part of Royale, called Dominion Cellulose], it's quite a large company, I don't know how many employees there were, 300, 400 on Weston Road, near Lawrence, the company that made bathroom tissue, facial tissue, diapers, and during that time, I was the only girl, Japanese girl in the office, but there was one man, Tom Maikawa was an engineer, he worked there, we both worked for them; he worked thirteen years, and I worked for twenty-five, until I retired. It was a good company, very good company.

PW: So you enjoyed working there?

SK: I enjoyed it, I started as an executive secretary, and I kind of worked myself up to management, so, I did very well.

PW: So, I heard you were getting paid more than some of the male people-

SK: Oh, yeah. 1960, the males, they were making \$48 a week, and I started at \$75, which was a lot of money in those days. And I can start going, "Guess what I'm making?" And three months later, they raised my paycheck, \$82.50, and when it went up to that, I just couldn't believe the money I was making [chuckles].

PW: And tell me some of your activities, like going camping and some of the recreational things that you did.

SK: We had a lot of friends. We used to go camping with the Saishos, anybody with a lot of boys, we seemed to have friends with boys, we had a lot of fun going camping. And then, of course, as the kids got older, we used to go to Hawaii quite a bit, Europe and Japan, and Cape Cod, we've been back and forth across Canada, from Atlantic Ocean to Pacific, about three times, because my daughter-in-law comes from, was born in Newfoundland.

PW: Then Sam got ill...tell us a bit about your experience during that period.

SK: He was ill, he was in and out of hospital I don't know how many times. He had mastoids, he had ulcers, he had something on his bladder, he had an aneurysm, if I didn't drive I don't know what I would have done, it seemed I was going to emergency I don't know how many times. And then, in 2002, he was in the nursing home for nine months, and he finally died of pneumonia.

PW: But you had both retired in your early sixties, so you travelled, and did a lot together.

SK: Yeah. And I think retirement was the best time; you do what you want to do, and that's when we started to volunteer. My husband and I, we volunteered at the Humber Memorial Hospital, and I volunteered at school, where my children went years ago, I volunteered for the Cancer Society, I did a lot of volunteering.

PW: Did you get involved with the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre?

SK: Not too much, I guess because of the distance, we lived way out in the west end, and I didn't like driving on the 401 and Don Valley, but I did go to Wynford Seniors, I did that for about ten years, in the 1990's

PW: And you were very active in the United Church, too.

SK: Quite active.

PW: What were some of the activities that you did?

SK: I was the editor for ten years, I was involved in United Church Women. We had a lot of neighbours, close neighbours; we lived with the same neighbours for about 45 years. So I'm still in touch with all my neighbours.

PW: And then, in terms of the Redress Movement, tell me how you felt about the redress movement.

SK: Well, in principle, I think it's a wonderful idea, and I'm glad that some of the money went to the Redress Foundation, and I think a lot of people donated the money, or it helped their family. And, um, in principle I think it's really good, because now I think of the whole evacuation as maybe a blessing in disguise, and I think it's good for the children, that it's been finalized. [waves hand] That's not the right word.

PW: Were you for it, because, in Toronto, there was, you know, various factions and opinions about redress; what were your feelings and Sam's?

SK: I thought, if it weren't for the young, the sansei, I don't think we would have got it, and people say, "What do they know about it?" But because if it wasn't for the sansei, we wouldn't have got the redress, I don't think.

PW: But you were for what they finally agreed to, because there were various options of trying to settle that thing.

SK: It wasn't very easy, especially after forty years. And it's very unfortunate that the isseis who deserve it, they were gone. And, well, I'm glad we got it, but I think a lot of us have donated the money.

PW: How is your feeling about your Mom and Dad? Because I think they played a fairly large influence on your life.

SK: Well, I think they had a tough time. But I think they did a good job raising the niseis, and I think the niseis have done a good job raising the sanseis, and the sanseis, from what I hear, they're all very good Canadians. And there's 90% intermarriage.

PW: what do you feel about the future of - [interruption]

**[End of part 4]**

**[Start part 5]**

PW: So, you got sick, after Sam died. And that was a pretty tough period for you, right? Tell us about that period.

SK: Two years ago, After Sam died, well, I wanted to be independent. I drove, I went everywhere, and I stayed friends with everybody, and I did the volunteer work, and I think I took oil painting, line dancing, but then, unfortunately, two years later, I had

breast cancer. And the breast cancer itself wasn't too bad, it was the chemotherapy, and then the oncologist said, "I've never seen anybody with so much problems with chemo." And I was getting injections, I was in and out of the hospital, getting blood transfusions, and then they finally said, I was supposed to be scheduled for 12 series, 12 chemo therapies, but they said, "She just can't take it anymore." So we stopped at eight [chemotherapy], and then I was really sick, but some, after I came to Yee Hong, like a miracle, I got better. It's just unbelievable. But, after I came here, I was still having a few problems, I got blood clots, they had to rush me to the hospital, I got skin rashes, I had panic attacks, but, slowly by slowly, the people here- the chaplain was very good to me, and the whole staff, they were so kind and understanding, that I got better. I can't believe it myself. And then, five years, I just got a phone call not too long ago, "I can't believe that you're so well, five years ago you were so sick." I had people from the church come every day to make me supper, I had people like Ruby Shikaze, Grace Omoto, can you imagine, all these people came every day to look after me. Especially my sister-in-law, Mimi Kai, she was there every morning from eight o'clock until the evening, to make sure I was well. But, I'm better! I'm a breast cancer survivor.

PW: Yeah, it's amazing that you were so sick, and yet, looking at you today, you would never know that you had that terrible experience.

SK: And then, it was in 2004, in March, and in November, Brian and I, we went to the family doctor for our flu shot, and the doctor said, "How come you're taking so many pills, you're taking morphine?" So, anyway, he was just absolutely shocked. And then he called someone and said, "How can a woman so vibrant get so sick? I don't think she should be taking all this morphine." Then, gradually, I got better. But, for one year, I suffered, I'll never, ever get chemotherapy again. But, fortunately, I'm all well.

PW: So, is it in remission actually, now?

SK: It's in remission. And then, this year, in May I went to the oncologist, and the oncologist said, "Sue, I don't want to see you again, because you've been cancer-free for five years, and you're the most remarkable person," so, I'm okay now.

PW: What do you think about the future of the Nikkei population, the Japanese Canadian population?

SK: Well, I'm kind of concerned, because even at our church, the average age of the congregation, I'd say between 75 to 85 [years old], some of them are ninety, so can you imagine in ten years' time, a lot of us won't be here, and there's hardly any young people, except for a handful, who could take over. Even Yee Hong, the most residents you have are nisei, so, in a couple years' time, maybe, I don't know, maybe the sanseis will be coming here [chuckles]. Or the young niseis.

PW: So you see the same problem at church, because it's, well the [Japanese Canadian Cultural] Centre, too, I suppose.

SK: Same thing, I can remember in the 1960s when we moved to Coral Gable Drive, somebody from the Centre came and asked for a donation- at that time we were having a struggle meeting the mortgage payment. They're doing well right now, as you know, the volunteers are mostly nisei; once the niseis go, I don't think the sansei will be able to carry on. Unless the, what do you call the people from Japan?

PW: The *ijusha*.

SK Yeah, the *ijusha* take over. It's not just a Japanese problem, everybody, every school, church, any organization.

PW: Yeah, I think it's important to get the younger generation involved but there are still some signs that some of the younger ones are starting to take interest. Because, at a certain time, you're busy with your life and your career, but then at a certain point in time, you kind of get to where you're trying to think about what you want to do with the later years. And some of them are starting to think about the heritage, their parents, their grandparents, and what they did and trying to get their stories. And that's why, you know, we need to capture the stories now, while we're still alive, because I think that Japanese Canadians went through- especially the niseis- went through a very traumatic period- isseis, even more difficult, but, I mean, the stories are, there aren't that many isseis left, so, niseis are still here and some of them are still vibrant and have got terrific memory, such as you, so, we've got to capture stories.

SK: Well I'm glad that Peter's here today, I think we need more people like Peter, because in ten years' time, the stories will all be forgotten, and it's got to be, well as you say, in the computers or written. So, we need more Peter Wakayamas [chuckles]. And he's only in his seventies, that's young. He's still in diapers, I think.

PW: One last question, having you read your life story in that very detailed book that you keep, what made you do that? Because, I've never seen a book so detailed in terms of dates, names, all that. Is that your nature, is that because of your training, or what?

SK: It's my nature, I'm what you call- not "nosy", but "curious". I like to know what's going on.

PW: And how do you keep that record like that? I mean, just reading your book, it's so amazing. You have all these people, and the dates, and what you did, I mean -

SK: Well, I guess I really wrote it for my two sons, and for my five grandchildren. I've got two grandsons and three granddaughters, and I thought for their sake, I want them to know what *Bachan* went through.

PW: Do you think they would publish a book, about your story? Because nowadays they can do that.

SK: They might, my one granddaughter, she's 21 now, she'll be graduating from McMaster in April, in nursing, and one time she went to high school, and made a speech, "This is what my *Bachan* went through." So, every now and then, and they're

aware of racism, and then my daughter-in-law and my son, they both shaved their heads to fight for AIDS, and they're very aware of racism. So maybe, one of them might write a book, I'm not quite sure. But they're very interested in the evacuation.

PW: Okay, well, thank you very much, Sue, it's been a great pleasure to talk with you.

SK: Well, thank you very much. If I knew I was going to be, I would have worn a pretty blouse. [waves hand] Just kidding.

**[End of interview]**