

**Interviewee: Sachiko Kodama
Takahashi**
Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda
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THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

[Interview Starts]

Lisa Uyeda: This is an interview with Sachi. It's July 12th, 2010. Do you want to start off by telling us where you were born and when you were born?

Sachiko Kodama Takahashi: In Hinatayama, Kagoshima, Japan. I think, 1925, August 18th.

LU: Oh wow. Did you have any siblings that were also born in Japan or were they born in Canada?

ST: I think there were two older, a brother and a sister but I never knew them.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: I don't- I cannot remember being with them at all, at any time.

LU: [nods]

ST: Just that later on, I found out they were my sister and brother.

LU: Wow.

ST: So around the age of three, my mother, my mother, I think, went back to Japan previous to that, with her two children, and then had me over there and then stayed in Japan until, until she was told that her husband in Summerland was ill and that she should come back. That's when she and I arrived in Summerland.

LU: Do you know when your parents first went to Canada?

ST: No, I don't know that at all.

LU: And where were they staying. Summerland, is that in BC [British Columbia]?

ST: Yes.

LU: Oh okay. What was your father doing there?

ST: He was ill at the time, and I never really saw him up and about at all. But, going around that farm, I noticed a huge fence, a wire fence and little black animals in there. I was told that they were mink. He was raising mink at the time.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: And you know, shortly after that, he died and there is a picture of a funeral. I think it's at my house and the frame isn't there at home.

Les Takahashi: [nods]

ST: And that would be spring of 1929. Sometime later, I guess my mother must have married his younger brother, [Shizuka] My guess is that, perhaps December- Around that time, he sold that farm and ended up in Vancouver, Powell Street, in a rooming house. I believe he bought- With the proceeds from that farm, my guess, it's just a guess, he purchased a rooming house on Powell Street. I don't think he managed it well at all. You know, people would come and stay and he neglected to get-get the rent money. That's my theory. During that time, I went to- I was sent to the United Church kindergarten. I don't know the years. Later on I attended the Strathcona School, briefly. And then, at some point, we moved to Marpole.

LU: Where is Marpole?

ST: South Vancouver.

LU: Oh okay.

ST: Near the Fraser River. I don't know what it's called now. I still refer to it as Marpole. It would be 70th Avenue and our house was on Selkirk Street.

LU: Do you remember why you moved to Marpole?

ST: I think my father, because he lost his rooming house, he threw some friends, got a job as a gardener in Marpole. Or at least on the- What I would call Marine Drive, the wealthier area of Marpole. He was a gardener there until the beginning of the war.

LU: When were your siblings born?

ST: Vic was born in 1930 and Cass was born in 1933.

LU: And where were you staying at that time?

ST: Probably at this rooming house.

LU: What do you remember about school? Do you remember any childhood memories?

ST: Very little. You know, I just followed all the other kids. Parents never took us to school, even to register. I just followed the other kids, went to school and came back and- That was it, really.

LT: You once told me a story about how the teacher asked the children, Japanese, to go out in the hall while she talked to the other kids.

ST: Uh, is that Strathcona or is it Marpole?

[5 minutes]

LT: Might have been Marpole because you were older.

ST: Oh.

LT: Maybe nine or ten years old or something.

ST: Must be David Lloyd George School in Marpole then.

LT: Might have been.

ST: I was there- My Marpole life was more stable. Early life in Powell Street, Vancouver was- We just moved from rooming house to rooming house. So we were in different areas quite often.

LT: Do you remember that incident in the school?

ST: No I don't. I wonder why.

LT: You told me that, probably all the Asian kids, probably there were Chinese and Japanese kids, were told to go in the hallway and then after a few minutes you came back to class.

ST: It's possible, you know.

LT: And one of your white friends told you that afterwards, the teacher at school had scolded the white kids because they weren't doing very well and the Japanese kids were doing better. ST: Oh.

LT: Do you remember that?

ST: No, you know, I don't remember that. All-all the Japanese kids were doing better. They were- They used to grade them, first or second in classes. And Martha and I were always competing, and whenever she was number one, she would stick her

tongue out at me. [chuckling] The next grade, the next report time, I would be number one. But- There's John Suzuki in there, he did not do well. He had diphtheria when he was age three or so, so he was never quite up to par. But he was a really nice person. He is still living, he lives in London, Ontario.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: He is an uncle of David Suzuki.

LU: Oh.

ST: The Suzuki fam lived on the same street as I did, in Marpole. I only got to know one of the girls there.

LU: How many Japanese students did you have in your classes with you?

ST: Probably three of us.

LU: Yeah. How big was the class size?

ST: I would say 25, perhaps 20. I found it quite large.

LU: That is a fair sized class.

ST: I thought it was.

LU: Did you ever attend Japanese school?

ST: Briefly [nodding]

LU: When did you attend?

ST: When? I ended in grade three. I just hadn't all time to study that.

LU: Right.

ST: I only went to school about four days a week. By Friday, I was ill. Every Friday. Every night I had asthma, you see. [coughing] By Friday, I needed to have extra sleep and so, I always missed out on the good fun day on Fridays.

LU: Oh no. What would they do for a fun day?

ST: I don't know. [chuckling] I was never there.

LU: Never there?

ST: But I would hear about it, you know. They went out to the park or, they did something like that. They had someone come in and entertain them or talk to them or read a story to them. So things like that, not-not big things.

LU: [nods]

ST: I always missed those days.

LU: And what do you remember about living on Powell Street? Where did you buy your groceries? Buy new shoes?

ST: Powell Street, I don't recall any of that shopping jaunts at all. I remember going into a fabric store and made friends with one of the girls there, daughter of a girl who- The mother was doing sewing, [altering?], she's at the back of the store. But shopping, never did any of that. No, in Marpole, I did help with the shopping. You know, we would run down to the grocery store and pick up a piece of river or something for 50 cents. Another time, my mother would arrange with a fisherman and arrange for me and my friend, my neighbour, Nobuko and I, to go down to the docks on a certain morning, Saturday morning at 6 am, with our wagon and pick up the salmon.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: I would just buy one, my mother would only order one. But now, we would bring back about three. You know, they are big-Full size of a wagon. And they were only 25 cents each. The sockeye salmon.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: You know, our parents salted them and preserved them somehow. [unclear] mother did a lot more with it so they could eat for the next six months on this, three or four fish that she picked up. So that's one incident.

[10 minutes]

LU: She was your neighbour?

ST: Yes, we were friends even after we arrived in Toronto.

LU: Oh.

ST: During the war, I was in New Denver and she was in a place called Slocan City. But she died, I would say about 15 years ago. But her brother, he died about 3 years ago. We were friends, her brother and- There's another brother [coughs], he was [Shie?] Fukumoto, the other one is [Moshi?] Fukumoto. He's quite active at the United Church here in Toronto.

LU: What other childhood memories do you remember of-?

ST: We played in the vacant lot next to our house. Played baseball there.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: We did things like that. One person, [Bobbie ?], was the only one in our block who owned a bicycle or roller skate. All of us learned, using his equipment. We took turns on those equipment. And we'd be going along the road and there would be a hakujin boy sitting on his step and we would ask him to come and join us. He said, "Oh I am not allowed to play with you kids." There were two boys, the same age.

LU: How old do you think that was?

ST: Eight, nine, ten, eleven, that range. They were all in the same- We were actually in the same school, but they were not allowed to associate with us but- At that time, my parents sent me to Marpole United Church. I was there every Sunday. Later on, as I got older [coughs], I joined the CGIT [Canadian Girls In Training]. That was a nice group. You know, the leader was a young lady, I think she's probably in her [mid-80s?] and she was a nice person.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: At that time too, I started to learn piano and got in touch with a piano teacher who was very, very kind. And I did some babysitting for her. She was a very English person. I would eat meals there. I learned lamb cooking or mutton cooking and she used to- What did she do now? She cooked a lot of bacon on a Saturday morning and then she would say, "Soak the toast in fat and serve it." [laughs] Tasted very good but you know, years and years later, I knew it was unhealthy. But that's the sort of thing she gave us.

LU: [nods]

ST: When we were asked to leave Marpole, we were only given a few hours. Notice. And we were asked to bring just a suitcase each.

LU: Oh really?

ST: So then, we had a piano and some furniture. I asked my music teacher, "What I am I going to do?" and she said she would look after the furniture until we got back. So she sent the cottage thing around and took the piano and the dining room suite. Others were left behind in the house.

LU: [nods]

ST: And we packed whatever we could and we left on a truck to- I suppose we were supposed to go to Hastings Park. That would be about April of 1942. And we ended up- My mother and us three kids ended up in Powell Street, rooming house. Oh before that time, my father was sent off to a road camp. I can't remember when, I think it was winter. Maybe January. I can't remember. He just disappeared one day.

LU: Oh wow. Do you remember your mother ever saying anything about where your father went?

ST: She didn't know.

LU: Oh she didn't know where-

ST: Some months later, we got a postcard from him. In the meantime, a friend of ours from Nanaimo, she and her four kids, joined us in this small house in Marpole. A few of us stayed there together for several months. It was very, very crowded. Very hard on my mother, I am sure.

LU: Do you think your mother knew that eventually you would have to pack up and go somewhere else?

ST: Yes. I think everybody in Marpole, all the Japanese knew, that was going to happen. But we didn't know where we were going and we didn't know when.

LU: Yes.

ST: In the meantime, we had all been registered with, what color, yellow card and a picture. Every month, we had to go to the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] office in Little Mountain on Oak Street in Vancouver and tell them we were still here.

[15 minutes]

LU: Really?

ST: [nods] We were treated like prisoners, you know, each of us. Anybody over 16 had to do that.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: We were very regimented. About that time, I was in high school by that time. We didn't associate with the other students, hakujin students. Not because- Well, we talked to each other in class but you know, they had been told not to associate with us, Japanese kids. Although one Jewish girl invited me to her house, that was the first and last time. I think once they do that, their parents tell their kids, don't do that again, you know. I went to another girl's home too. Later on, the girl told me, "I am not supposed to play with you anymore." This United Church in Marpole, I was placed in the choir. I used to play the organ occasionally. Eventually my piano teacher said, "You are not to go there anymore. You can't go to the CGIT or the church service. The minister there asked me to ask you not to go there." So I was asked to leave Marpole United Church, in the spring of that 1942. You know, that was very hurtful.

LU: What about your younger siblings? Did they have any problems as well?

ST: Oh I am sure they did. We all did. They were in the junior kindergarten Sunday school. My brother was in a thing called Life Boys. The United Church at that time had something like scouts but they called it Life Boys. He was, of course, asked to leave. My sister may not have been old enough to go. Of course then, we,

occasionally my parents would take us to the [unclear] Japanese United Church once in a while. I think a lot of things just fell apart about that time. We spent a few months in that Powell Street rooming house. Eventually we had to leave because my mother couldn't afford to pay the rent. So we were all shipped off to Hastings Park. I would guess that it was maybe July or August of '42. We were in a huge barn, I think the horses were kept there. I think there were four of us so we were given three cots.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: Or two, two cots and two on top. Four cots. So I was sleeping on top. My brother was on the other top. My sister was at the lower and my mother. We put up blankets between the cots for privacy. You know, hundreds of people were in there in this huge barn. Very, very dusty. And toilet facilities were- It's- I would call it a horse stall, I think. A long trench and we did everything there with everybody else.

LU: What about eating?

ST: Eating, you walked to another mass hall.

LU: [nods]

ST: You know, we had food, rice and usually fish, for lunch. Morning was hard boiled eggs and as many toast as you would like. That was it.

LU: It was the same food every day?

ST: Pretty much.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: There was some boiled vegetable. You know it didn't- Wasn't much that I could really remember. I just remember that it was salmon again. Now, you know, it would be a treat now. But we had salt-salt salmon.

LU: [nods]

ST: And other people, older people, kids who had finished high school, they tried to organize some entertainment. So we had-we did uh- There was a minor kind of entertainment. You know, we would get together in a hall and have some singsong and some quiz. They tried to organize a quiz kind of thing that was on the radio at that time and they would copy that, since we had no radio.

[20 minutes]

ST: At that time, I volunteered to help in the hospital so we had a few hours' training session, me and about three other girls. And learned how to change sheets and change the patients and bathe them. That was interesting. I worked- We worked, I think, between the 4 pm and 11 pm shift, after we finished our several hours of instruction.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: I found it interesting. We were never given anything, you know, important. Just caretaking the older people there.

LU: How long did you do that for?

ST: Not very long. Maybe three months. Let me see, that would be, from September to about November, early November that we were shipped off to New Denver then, on this train.

LU: Why did you switch to New Denver?

ST: We had no choice. He says, “you, you and you go here and you go there.” Our bunch was New Denver. Another bunch at some other point went to Slocan or Tashme or other places. I never heard of those places until much later.

LU: Did you have any communication with your father when you were at Hastings Park?

ST: No, not at all.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: In New Denver, shacks, chez or shacks were not ready so we ended up in a tent in November and I think it snowed the first few weeks we were there.

LU: How were you sleeping inside the tent? Did they give you blankets?

ST: They gave us things on the ground and blankets. They did give us that.

Eventually we got a house and we were told- There were five of us. My father eventually got back to New Denver from his road camp. I can’t remember exactly when he appeared but- He got into this little shack, three-room shack that we were told, we would have one half and another family was coming into the other half and we were to share the kitchen and things. So we were in that place maybe end of November until I left a few years later. Can you stop that? I have to go the bathroom.

LU: Yes, of course.

[recording paused]

LU: So we finished off where you were talking about how you got your house in New Denver and you realized you had to share it with other other family.

ST: Yeah, the other family never turned up so, you know, eventually we sort of spread out.

LU: That’s very fortunate.

ST: It was. I finally got a room of my own. [smiling] Since we had a little extra space, my mother was asked to teach Japanese language classes. So we had about six kids coming in for about two hours every day. It was kind of interesting.

LU: How old were the children?

ST: They were grade- In Japanese language classes, they were maybe grade 3 or grade 4 level. I was to sit in with them and I didn’t do very well. But my sister did really well. My mother kept that up for about three or four years, I think.

LU: Oh wow. What was the house like? Where did the furniture come from?

ST: They were homemade stools. The bed was a shelf. Nailed to the wall with a little leg. It was just a very rough shelf. There was one wide one, two small one and a small one and a small one. So there was one, two three, four, five, [pointing fingers] enough for five in one section.

LU: Did you have to build them all yourself?

ST: Somebody did. They had a group of handy workers. You know, older teenagers and people like my father, they gave them a job and they made those things up very quickly. Very rough work, you know. Just rough timber and the kitchen had just a rough bench and a table. They put in all kinds of shelves but everything was just rough. It was adequate. [coughs]

[25 minutes]

LU: And did you have a stove inside as well?

ST: There was a stove and a sink. Well, there was a sink but- My father eventually built a shelf at the back on the outside of the house so that he could pour water in there every morning or during the day so that we could turn on the tap and have some water in the kitchen. So that was a primitive tap. Every day, every few hours, we had to fill the-, had a bucket and fill the tank or container at the back of the house. So that was another job we had to do. And we had some distance to go to get our water but eventually, every five houses had a tap in their house and they happened to pick our house for a tap, so we just stepped outside and filled our bucket. Of course, lots of other people came to that same spot in our front yard. It was a nice meeting place, you know. You talked to these people when they came. My brother had all his friends come and hang around. [chuckles] He and Cass- Eventually they organized an elementary school. There was none for high school. So I made friends up the street and three of us applied to Victoria School or whatever, Board of Education, for correspondence courses. We were trying to follow these instructions and reading material, and we had nobody to ask. There were few high school grads. But eventually, almost a year later, they organized elementary classes. You know about that, I am sure.

LU: You can tell us a little about it if you remember.

ST: I was one of the people involved in the elementary classes. My sister and my brother were. They organized a summer school for high school grads, to learn to be teachers. If you were grade 11 or 12, you could become one of those teachers. By that time, I was trying to finish my own high school. Eventually I got a job in an office- I think it was 45 dollars a month, just to keep track of people who come and go. Every time a person, a family arrived, they would add the name to the list and I would type that list. When a family left for other parts of Canada or whereabouts, we would eliminate that and type a new sheet. You know, that was about all I did. To type new sheets and file them away. So I did that sort of office job around that time, by the time I finished Grade 11 history and English. You know, my friends and I, three of us sort of passed after eight months of work at it. For help, we finally got some help from the Catholic school, nuns.

LU: Wow.

ST: The regular high school would not even let us get near the place, but this Catholic nun heard about our problem and she said we could come. So we went to their home, their residence. Every morning, we would have about two hours of question and answer period. It was very helpful, I think.

LU: [nods]

ST: During that time, one of the ladies, our student, our friend, decided she would become, join the Catholic church. I forget her name. She became a nun.

LU: Oh.

ST: That was- I kept in touch with her for quite a few years and then I lost contact with her.

LU: How far did you have to travel from New Denver to the residence of the Catholic nuns? Were they close by?

ST: Uh maybe three miles. I don't know. You see, we were in an area called the Orchard. We had to cross a creek to get to the village area. Her church, that Catholic church was just up there so- It was maybe three miles. It's hard to say, I can't remember. We went everywhere by walking and down the street from that Catholic church, there were two or three grocery stores, a post office, a funeral home and a small hotel.

[30 minutes]

LU: Is that where you worked as well? Or did you- Was that where your office was?

ST: No, there was another shack made on our side of the river, creek, where the Japanese men, two men I think, sort of men of the office. People were coming and going and they kept track of who was going, where. If you needed to go out of town to a doctor's place, then you got a permit. But you had to contact the RCMP for the permit and this man would walk over to the RCMP office, get the permit, walk back, then you would have your little permit, go to the bus stop, get on the bus and go to Nelson for your appointment.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: My brother had eye problem so I got a permit, and he and I went to Nelson for a day's visit. Never been to a city. I got the address and so on and then it was lunch. Never been to a restaurant, so two of us were in there, trying to read a menu, not knowing exactly what to do, you know. I think we could have gotten soup and desert but all I ordered was the main dish, whatever it was. Sausage and mashed potatoes, probably.

LU: [laughs]

ST: However, I got my brother to the doctor's office and came back. I think it was [Naruse] He was the optometrist who sent Vic to this specialist for his eye problem. Eventually he got a new pair of glasses, that way. I am not sure who paid for that. So that was my first few months' work. Later on, I was transferred to the RCMP office where I worked for maybe two years.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: Doing the same thing. Making a list of people coming and going. That was it.

LU: Where was the RCMP office located?

ST: Well, the main road through New Denver, going to Revelstoke or down to Slocan City. That was called the Highway. That was just our main road. The RCMP office, just another shack, homemade type of shack. They had their office in there. But where they slept, I think they slept in- There was a hotel in New Denver, I imagine they slept there. I think there were three officers in New Denver, looked after the people there.

LU: Only three?

ST: I would think. I never really saw any more than two at a time.

LU: Yeah. Did you ever go and visit the other camps?

ST: When we had arrived, we went. But not- Maybe only twice, we went to a place called Lemon Creek, spent the day there. That place was a wide open field and not any tree at all, no shade all. But everyone had a garden, a vegetable garden. It was quite well managed. Very neat.

LU: Did you have a vegetable garden as well?

ST: Yes, in New Denver, everyone made a vegetable garden. You know, it was one way to implement your diet. For meat product, I am not sure what we did. We must have added some bacon and pork at some point. But it was vegetarian and we were able to buy rice. And one winter, the trucks did not come through with our bread so we ended up making our own bread.

LU: Really?

ST: I learned how to make bread from other ladies. After one year, I think, every Saturday, I would get the bread started, go to work, come back, and continue with the bread making. It turned out fairly good.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: Every week I made this homemade bread, about three loaves plus a dozen or so buns.

LU: Did you ever make any shoyu or miso?

ST: Somebody did. Somebody must have because we did have some shoyu. What else did we use? Miso. Somebody had miso and so I think all of that sort of thing was shared. [coughs]

[35 minutes]

ST: I think people attempted to make tofu too. I don't know where they got the beans. A lot of people, they were farmers there too, so they brought lots of things with them.

LU: [nods]

ST: Lots of homemade things, you know. Eventually, after a year or so- I think we did very well. Our vegetables were growing and people were starting [odori] lessons. You know, they had all kinds of things organized. And with different ceremonial periods for Japan, they would organize this [bon odori]. I never heard of it before. You know, I grew up in an English sort of area in Marpole, and I associated with a lot of English people, in the United Church and CGIT. So, by the time I got to New Denver, Japanese customs were new to me.

LU: [nods]

ST: You know, my sister took up Japanese dance, that sort of thing, and my brother took up guitar at that point. For me, I didn't have any recreation. I think I made friends and we tried to play Bridge or some sort of card games. That was our entertainment. Eventually they had group organized parties at various, you know, Halloween or Christmas. Things like that began to be organized. Baseball teams and so on.

LU: Did they ever have any theatre shows, or movies, or music nights?

ST: No. Not that I know of. If there was, maybe hakujin kids went but- I don't think we were allowed to go. I think there was a movie theatre, very primitive one but we never saw any movies.

LU: What about bathhouses? Did they have bathhouses for everybody?

ST: Yes, they eventually built a huge bathhouse. I used to go early so, before too many people were there. Eventually mothers would turn up with four, five or six

kids. You know, on the ladies' side. It would be so noisy, so I tried to get there before all these family people came in.

LU: [nods]

ST: While the bath water was cleaned 'cause I think they changed it every day. They would have to because it was one for about three hundred families.

LU: That's a lot of people.

ST: So there would be a man and maybe his helper, cleaning the place every day. So they did keep the place clean.

LU: What else do you remember about living in New Denver?

ST: Oh that's about it. Kids from Vancouver had not had much snow so, you know, New Denver had a lot of snow. Somebody always organized sleigh rides and- Some of us got some ice skates at that point and there was a pond somewhere so we scraped the snow off and did some skating. Learned to do a little bit of simple skating. That was about the only group activities that we had. Of course, the church, the United Church sent the retired [unclear], people like that, to organize churches there. So we had church services and Sunday school. This group of United Church people, they organized picnics. She would cook eggs and things, you know, outdoor and have these little picnics. You know, that sort of social things were organized.

LU: You mentioned before that somebody would always have a camera.

ST: Yes, somebody did. A friend of mine [Yosh Ishii?], I think he owned a camera and he organized- He learned how to develop, do his own development. So he's the one that, as far as I was concerned with most of the pictures, he would give me most of his copies.

LU: [nods]

ST: Yeah, there were a few cameras, not a lot. My own family did not have one.

[40 minutes]

LU: What about radios? I know some people had a couple of radios.

ST: I-I can't, I don't really think- My family did not have one.

LU: Do you remember ordering anything off the Eaton's catalogue?

ST: Yes, we did. I don't know how we did it. We must have mailed it in. You know, we got a lot of our clothing. We would buy material and do our sewing, do our clothes. That way, that was the only way, you know. There were stores there where you could buy clothing if you wished. And there was a drug store, and some of the Japanese friends of mine did get a job as a clerk in the grocery store and in the drug store.

LU: Oh wow. You mentioned before that there was a sewing class.

ST: Oh there was.

LU: Do you want to tell us a little about that? Where it was and how many people?

ST: The only one I remember is one that was private, across the road from my house. I was the only one there, learning how to make a pattern. But actual sewing, I did very little, we had no sewing machine at home. So all I did was learn how to make patterns, and we made patterns. I must have gone to somebody's house to use this sewing machine 'cause I did sew, we did sew most of our clothing. Oh, my mother had a friend who was a professional dressmaker in Vancouver. She had a

little shop going. So when I cut out a fabric, my mother would take it there and get it sewed, put together. So, you know, we had simple clothes made.

LU: When did you decide to leave New Denver?

ST: In the fall of '45, December. I said I really have to go somewhere and do something. I can't just sit here and type list for the RCMP, it's not much of a life. I can't remember who I approached. One of the so-called security people, I said I need to go out-out of New Denver. So then, I guess I approached these people because someone had said I should go there, and I knew who they were. And I said I need to go and they said- Eventually they got me a job in Ontario. I would have to go to Toronto first. Eventually I got a ticket to Toronto in the middle of January, 1946. Usually, two or three people would go at the same time. For me, I was the only one that received the ticket for that day. I had a job with Edith Smith? in Winona, Ontario. I was to go there and be their housekeeper, domestic. So I arrived in Toronto after, what is it, three-day railway trip. And I don't think I ate during the whole time.

LU: Oh my.

ST: I was too nervous to go to the platform and buy things, you know. Anyway, I arrived and Reverend Shimizu met me in Toronto's Union Station and took me to his house. I thought- I said, "I am supposed to go to this other village," and he said, "Well, you can go there eventually." But his wife was in the hospital and he said, "I would appreciate it if you would just come to my house and do a little bit of babysitting." So I did. He had four children, 16 and 14, 10 and 5, the ages were. Two older boys and two girls. So I stayed there and I am not a good housekeep or house person, you know. I didn't know anything about it. I did what I could.

LU: How old were you at that time?

ST: 19.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: Almost 20. Anyway, I-I did the best I could. Eventually I knew that I had to go and get a job somewhere. I needed income. In the meantime, the little girl got sick and the only doctor I knew- Can't remember her name now. She died, recently. Grace, Grace Shimizu got- The doctor didn't come to the house. She said, "I will meet you at the corner of Church and Bloor Street."

[45 minutes]

ST: So I met her at the corner there and described the Grace's problems to her. She had a fever. I had no thermometer but I said, "Her face is very, very hot." And then she said, "Does she have any rash?" and I said, "Yes, she's got a rash on her chest and little bit on her face." So she said, "She's got chickenpox. You must keep her away from school." I think she gave me a prescription. The next day, I bought something and gave it to her. Grace stayed in bed for a week.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: You know, I didn't know what I was to do but I did the best I could, you know. This was a house, a three-story house on Collier Street? I would call it the Rosedale Valley. The place was- Lilly Washimoto and her husband lived there and they let us

use the upper level. They had one bedroom, and Reverend Shimizu, I guess, stayed in the big bedroom with the girls, and the two boys stayed in the attic.

LU: How long did you stay there for?

ST: Several months. Because in the meantime, Reverend Shimizu's wife was ill and she was in the hospital all that time. And I said I am gonna have to move out. In fact, I made- I did move out to one bedroom place on Church Street at Bloor [Riverson?]. Old house and they were renting out rooms at 8 dollars a week. So I went there and I got a job on Parliament Street, just doing filing work. I moved for a few weeks and they asked me to come back to the house because his wife was still ill. The kids were missing me and they needed somebody because Reverend Shimizu had to go and do his church duties. So I was there and looked after the kids. I can't remember if I kept the job or not. At any rate, church ladies said it was not right for me to stay with Reverend Shimizu, you know. It doesn't look right. So then, the church ladies found another place for me to stay. Their name was Ohi, o-h-i, I've never seen, come across them since. But I went to their home. It would be Woodbine and Gerald area.

LU: Oh yes.

ST: I stayed with them for about two weeks. Reverend Shimizu then asked for me to come back. He said, "Don't worry about the church ladies." You know, they are gossiping, just wasn't right for a lady to stay with Reverend Shimizu. I went back anyway because the girls, Grace and Dorothy, wanted me back. So I stayed with them for quite a while, until I got a job-The first job I got was on Parliament Street in a rug cleaning place and they were very nice people. I eventually kept looking for different jobs, and I got one at United Church of Canada on 299 Queen Street, which is now a TV station, I think.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: That apparently was called Ryerson Press. I stayed there for several years. In the church office. That was a nice period. During that time, I met this Reverend Cooper. Talking to him, I said, "I need to finish my high school, that's something I need to do." So then, he suggested that I correspond with Bellevue School or Alma College and I wrote to both. I got applications forms from both of them and I made the applications to both. And Bellevue School was both boys and girls. Alma College was just for girls. Reverend Cooper said it might be better for me to go to Alma College. So I wrote to them and said I am coming to your school. So this is summer of 1947. I think, in the last week of August, Reverend Shimizu drove me to Alma College so I could register and move in. So, you know, he was very kind at that time. By that time, he had married Hide Hiyoro While I was working at 299 Queen Street, he married this lady. She was one of the first registered school teachers in BC. So he married her then. I can't remember the year, probably 19- Spring of 1947.

[50 minutes]

LU: When you were in Toronto and going around to all these different jobs, did you come across any difficulties trying to find jobs or-?

ST: Yes.

LU: -People turning you away?

ST: Yes. One job that I thought I had, I turned up on Monday morning. This was a Jewish stationary store, and I had received an affirmative saying that I got the job on Saturday. So, Monday, I turned up, went to the office to find out where I was to go. And he said, "I am sorry but we've changed our mind. We are not hiring you." I said, "Why?" He said, "Other staff members don't want you."

LU: Oh wow.

ST: So I just walked out and went to a different place. I think at that point, I got the job at Parliament Street for a few months and then I got a job at United Church of Canada. That turned out to be a much better spot.

LU: Right. When you were doing everyday activities, taking streetcars or going grocery shopping, did you experience any negative-?

ST: Shopping, yes. You know, you stand in line. Eventually, you [brighten?] up, you think, oh I am not getting waited on, they are picking up people behind me. So I'd go up and ask the girl, "It's my turn." She says, "Go over there and wait." I had caught the picture and I would walk out then, of course.

LU: Yes.

ST: I think I ended up in the Jewish stores or- No, Chinese were not good either.

LU: Oh really?

ST: They became much better when they realized that we had some money. But the Jewish people were very kind. Except for that one stationary building. I think the boss was ready to hire me but the other clerks were not.

LU: Did you work for any other Jewish companies?

ST: No. I worked for an Armenian company in-between- In between Alma College school years, I worked for an Armenian carpet cleaning place. They were good, they were very kind. They had faced discrimination themselves, so they were aware of what I was facing.

LU: You mentioned previously that you were supposed to go to this Smith's house?

ST: Oh yes. I delayed it so much by staying with Shimizu's. I think Reverend Shimizu probably- I think, they were- Let's say, I was supposed to go there by February. Well, this would be the summer, and I was still at Shimizu's place off and on. He, he must have done something about it. That Smith's company sent back all my luggage to the Shimizu's family home.

LU: Oh they had all your luggage?

ST: Yeah. My luggage had been sent from New Denver to them, and I had just arrived with one little suitcase.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: That was all. When that big chest arrived at Shimizu's, I thought, oh, I don't have a job now.

LU: Oh yeah.

ST: It was just as well a domestic job. I think sometime during that summer, I did get that United Church job. In the meantime, I went to- Shimizu took me to the Metropolitan United Church where there was a group of niseis meeting. I did not get a good reception. So, somehow I went to Carlton Street United Church. They had a young people's group there. Now, they were really, really happy to see me, so made me feel good so I joined them. Kept up with them. I made a few friends there that I

kept in touch for the next 50 years. That's sort of in between all the other comings and goings. Might have been good to work for Eddie Smith's, [jam place?].

[55 minutes]

LU: Tell us a little bit about Alma College, when you first started going there?

ST: Yeah, we were- I was given a room- In a little building behind the college, there was a small room. Other girls were in the lower level, two in a room. For some reason, they gave me a private room and another home. I don't know why. Maybe because Reverend Cooper had helped me make the application and also Reverend Shimizu had ridden me there, maybe I got better bookings. Anyway, I was- we got- that first week, or two before the school began, all of us were asked to clean the dining room. So we cleaned the inside of the windows and then went outside to clean the windows. Cleaned all of the area in the dining room. And then we were told eventually what we were to do. So I was told to wait in this room. That was a private room for the Dean of the ladies- I don't know, it seemed like a special privileged dining room. I was to wait on this one table. Other girls had two or three tables to wait on. It was really a heavy job, carrying the trays around but- I had the really easy job in that one room. Just handing out the plates and then the bread and so on. I learned a little bit about waiting on tables. Oh yeah, we had a short lesson on how to put things down on the left-hand side and other things on the right-hand side and how to clear the table, and so on.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: It was an interesting period. I got to know the other waitresses. You know, they were all local girls. I think there were three other Japanese girls.

LU: What was the classes like?

ST: Classes, we dashed up to our classes. We always missed the first period. They were good. I think the Japanese kids did fairly well. They were taking business courses, [? and typing], that sort of thing. I was into matriculation, which was a little bit harder. I didn't do well, but I kept it up anyway and did the best could.

LU: Do you want to explain a little bit about the course?

ST: The course?

LU: Yeah, what were you doing exactly?

ST: I was in Grade 12 English and Grade 12 History. Grade 9 Mathematics and Grade 10 Chemistry. Those were the subjects-There was French in there somewhere too, which I didn't do very well. I went to the regular classes with the Grade 9 kids, I was much older than them, and then I was with the Chemistry class, Grade 10. With my own age group, it was History and English. Those were the two I had finished previously. But at the same time though, I was older than the other kids. You know, I was 20 by that time, the other kids were 16.

LU: How long were you in college for?

ST: Just two years.

LU: What kind of activities did you do on the weekends when you weren't in school?

ST: Not very much. We wandered around the town of St. Thomas. We went to school on Saturdays as well. Sunday and Monday was our day off. By the time we roamed around the town on Monday, all the other kids were in school. Sunday, we went to

church. You know, there was very little activity. We visited home occasionally but really, there was no activity, I would say. We just bucked around and we picked up- We tried to do little bit of tennis if we could borrow the equipment.

LU: Did you continue playing piano at all? Did anybody have piano there?

ST: I did. They suggested that I do the piano. I was only Grade 5 at that time, and not playing for about three years in New Denver, I was way, way behind. But they said I could pick it up. I did Grade 5,6,7, made all in the two years.

LU: Oh wow.

[60 minutes]

ST: It meant a lot of work, and I had to take up theory as well. But you know, they were very, very helpful. During the second year of Alma College, they put me into a private home with other girls, other paying students. I shared a room with seven other girls in that one cottage. I shared a room with a girl, a lady with whom I kept in touch ever since then, until now. She just passed away recently. There's another girl that I kept in touch with and I still keep in touch with, that was in the same house.

LU: Just going to switch the tape quickly.

LT: Remember what you told me about the tea party? Taking turns?

ST: Oh Sunday. After we were in the cottage. I was one of the regular students.

LT: Yeah.

LT: So were all the Japanese girls in the school, it sounded like they were sponsored.

ST: No, I am not sure.

LT: Did they serve as-?

ST: They had waitressing jobs. See, for my second year, I did not do any waitressing job. I was given a bursary and I- They gave me an after-school job in their tuck shop. You know, the regular school students would come and buy chocolate bars or pick up their laundry. So I was considered a regular student at that point.

But the other Japanese girls were continuing to do their waitressing job and so on. But I kept in touch with them.

LU: What were you saying about the tea party?

ST: Oh, Sunday, after I became a regular student. Every Sunday, there would be tea. This would be- There would be a church service, a short church service. I can't remember if it was just on Sunday or every day. Church service at 7 and at the end, we would have a tea party. They would mention student's name as, this girl is pouring tea and the other girl is doing the cream and sugar. And it was very, very formal. The girls who were training, us students, would go up to the people who were sitting around the drawing room and ask, "Would you like milk, cream or sugar in your tea and how many lumps?" Then she would go back and tell the lady, "A cup of tea," and walk over there and get two lumps, and go back to the lady. Another girl would pick up the goodies and walk around with it. It was extremely formal.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: And you know, there would be- You are encouraged to talk about something or anything. So there had to be some conversation. [laughs] These are girls who are 16, 17 or 18. Kids who were usually, I would say, somewhat spoiled with, having things

their own way, but they were asked to be very formal for this evening. There were a couple of girls from South America who were older, and they had been through this formal life. They were there to learn English.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: So there was quite a mixture, there was quite a few girls from Cuba as well. Around that time, there was a problem with Cuba. The rich girls were sent to Canada to get away from the turmoil that was there. Various times, the parents would come and visit their girls. So girls from Cuba were dark skinned and they didn't mix with the other white girls, and I think, it was not the dark girl's fault, you know. It was the others- The South Americans didn't like them and the English girls here didn't, Canadians girls did not like them. But I found them really, very nice. Eventually found that they were extremely wealthy girls. The three girls were there at the same time. Those are the only black girls that I remember. Anyway, they were part of the tea party. We all learned how to walk around, pass the tea around, pass the goodies around and try to talk about whatever they were doing, you know. "How was your horse, were you riding today?" [laughs]

[65 minutes]

LU: Did you go horseback riding often?

ST: No, never.

LU: No?

ST: No, that would be dangerous try, if you didn't know. There were some girls who already had riding lessons at home anyway.

LU: When did you finish at Alma College? When did you graduate?

ST: June of 1949. I think there's pictures there about the graduation things.

LU: Did you ever have any communication with your family? What happened to them once you left New Denver?

ST: Oh I-I- We didn't phone but you know, there were school holidays, I had to find a place to go to. At some point, I think I went to Guelph to visit my father there and my sister. Another time I would go to Toronto. My parents were separated by this time, and she had a room in Toronto and I would go and stay with her 'cause none of us wanted to actually stay at the college. Other Japanese girls, they had families to go back to. One girl I know, Katie, she had- Her home was in St. Thomas. Of course she just had to walk down the street to her parents' home. [laughs] Other girls, they stayed with their sisters. They usually had a sister in Toronto or Hamilton or Kitchener. They would go there by bus and stay there during the school holidays. So we were all scattered on school vacations.

LU: Do you remember when your parents went to, or when your father went to Guelph and when your mother went to Toronto?

ST: I would say, summer of 1947. They were- All of them were in New Denver. I got a letter- I had- By this time, I was staying with the Shimizus I got a letter saying my mother and the two kids were in- I've forgotten the name. Northern Ontario. My father, on his own, had gone off to Guelph, Ontario. That's when I found out they had separated at that point. Their divorce was not final but- My dad kept coming from Guelph on weekends to try to find a job, a better job. So I would have to take time- I

guess, about that time, I was working for the United Church of Canada, the head office. So I had to take time off to see him at the bus station and go with him to a place where he had made an appointment for an interview, and go with him and help him with his interview. He was offered a really nice job at some point. A private home on Scarborough Bluffs. There was a Japanese family already there, but he was going to leave so this man said, "We need another gardener and we are offering you and your family a house." So I thought, that's great and told dad, "Take it." Then my dad turned it down. He said, "The Japanese family is still there, I can't shove him out. I said, "Well, he's leaving. He's been given another home in Scarborough, so you are not turning him out. The owner of the estate is turning him out. They've come to an agreement." I said, "You can take that job." Well, my dad would not take it. So he went back to Guelph and I went back to work, my regular job. Then another six weeks or two months later, he says he's got another job application. So I take time off, take him to- this time, to the Guild Inn. He was going to be given a place to stay there. So that's it, he would take the job and he- My brother, by that time, had come to Toronto, moved in with my mother. Cass was roaming, she didn't know where to go. She was only, I think, 13. Vic was 16. He wanted to finish high school too. So we were, you know, really, really mixed up family at that point.

LU: You mentioned your father was working in Guelph at the sanatorium, and your sister was there for a little while as well. What were they doing there?

[70 minutes]

ST: Trying to attend school. They were in school in Guelph, town itself.

LU: Was your bother there as well?

ST: Yes. The two. My father placed him with a family as a houseboy, I suppose. He was- After school, he was to do whatever that was necessary for the home and do his homework. During the day, go to school. He didn't- I don't think he- He didn't feel at home at school. He did not do any of his school work and he was not comfortable in the- home, the English home. He had never helped around the house. When he was asked to do different things around the house, he had no idea what he was to do. I think. Eventually, he just left that family. I think, if he had stayed, they would have taken good care of him but he left and went to Toronto where my mother was staying in one room and he just moved in with her. My sister, she did the same thing eventually. No, she went with my father to Guelph, to Guild Inn. I remember visiting her. She stayed in a little room while my dad worked in the garden. Eventually she would go to school but, it was a long way. Guild Inn is on Scarborough Bluffs, quite far from the main highway, and there was no car. There was a- She would have to travel about three miles to get to the highway to catch a bus. I don't know how she managed but- She eventually, I think, moved in with my mother and she attended Harbord Collegiate. My brother, he tried to go to Jarvis Collegiate, but he was not a good student and he didn't, never ever did his homework. It was too bad because while he was in Marpole or New Denver, his grades were in the 100s, you know. Really doing well, they were very easy marks. So when he went to Jarvis Collegiate, he was lost. Eventually dropped out and he worked at the- There's a well-known shoe store, an expensive shoe factory. He worked there for a while. I've forgotten the

name of this. However, Cass kept [unclear]. Eventually my dad wanted to buy a house and he did buy a house. Us three kids and him moved to this house in Scarborough. I guess he had enough to make a down payment. I think the house was about 8000 dollars.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: In 1949, I imagine. We moved in there. By that time, yeah in 1949, I had finished Alma College, come to Toronto, searched around for a job, and I got a job in a legal office. That's where I worked at the time my- We bought this house in Scarborough. I looked after the house and managed the finances for that. Cass went to one of the high schools in Scarborough.

LU: What about your mother? Where was she?

ST: She stayed in her little room in the city, downtown area.

LU: Did she work at all?

ST: She worked, she had to work. She found a job, through a friend, through the church, she found a job in a factory, a knitting factory where they knitted sweaters, and she was given the job of making button holes.

LU: Oh.

ST: She was not, you know- She had never worked in any kind of factory. She had been a Japanese language school teacher. For a short while but mainly, she stayed at home. She worked at 45 cents an hour, she told me.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: One of the Spadina things. That same factory moved to- Not exactly, would have been North York?

LT: Yeah. It was North York, Dufferin and-

ST: It was called the [Peertax?] Knitting Company. She continued with the same job of button hole. She became good at it and her salary, of course, went up a bit by bit. She stayed there until she retired, at the age of 79, 78 or so, she worked until then. But she, she told them that she was born in 1911, she was actually born in 1901.

LU & LT: [laughs]

[75 minutes]

ST: So they assumed- She looked younger. They kept paying her CPP [Canada Pension Plan]. I realized that, she was actually more than 65. I said, "You've got to apply for your OAS." She didn't want to because she had this job, and she needed the job. So I made the application anyway and found that, she had missed about four years of her OAS [Old Age Security]. When I made the application, I phoned the Ottawa. In those days, you could get a direct phone to a person. Told them that my mother had missed her birth year, and she missed about three years, almost four years of her OAS. Well, he back tracked her date and gave it back, gave her back whole years' OAS so that was a big help. And she continued working.

LU: [laughs]

ST: So you know, you come across some kind people.

LU: [nods] Where was your mother born in Japan?

ST: Would it be Hinatayama, isn't it?

LT: Yeah

ST: Yeah, same place as I was.

LU: What about your father? Do you remember where he was born?

ST: I don't know.

LT: Well, they were both from Kagoshima.

ST: Yeah, all of us are from Kagoshima. Of course, my stepfather too.

LU: Do you remember when he was born?

ST: He died in 1929, when he was 43. So you could work your way back. [laughs]

LU: Oh wow. [laughs]

ST: Sometime in the 1800s. Latter part of 1800s. The two brothers, there's about 20 years difference between the two. Minoru was at 43 and his younger brother was 23, I believe.

LU: Wow.

ST: And there's about five siblings, in between the two. There were six boys in that family with one girl in Kodama family.

LU: Did they all stay in Japan or did anybody else-?

ST: As far as I know, yes. Everyone stayed in Japan except Minoru and Shizuka. The two were the only ones. The older brother did not want to share his property with his siblings, so he made sure- At least the two of them went to Canada and the other four were married off to the ladies.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: So they did not keep their Kodama family name. They were given- You know, they had to accept the young ladies' name. So I never knew- I could never identify my cousins because they all had different names.

LU: That's right.

ST: Different surnames. Had they all been- Kodama, it would be easy to keep in track, keep in track with them. But actually, I never really met any of them, anyway.

LT: You met, you met Hideo Kodama.

ST: Oh yeah.

LT: He must have been the son of the oldest brother.

ST: I believe so. He ended up in Osaka. He didn't stay in Kagoshima. And he came to Toronto, as well. That's the only uncle. Would he be an uncle?

LT: I thought he was your cousin.

ST: Cousin. Okay, cousin. Yeah, would have been my [unclear] cousin or Minoru's brother's son, I suppose.

LT: Yes.

LU: Were your parents only speaking Japanese or did they know some English to get by?

ST: Mainly Japanese, although I encouraged them to speak English. I said, "If you are going to stay in Canada, speak English." I speak English all the time. In my early years, I spoke only Japanese, you know. By the time I went into Grade 1, I knew no English.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: But I picked it up reasonably fast.

LU: So getting back to, after graduating from Alma College and you worked at the legal-

ST: For a short while, yes.

LU: And where did you go from there?

ST: I was married in June of 1951 so I didn't really work. I only worked about a year.

LU: Oh, to get back to Alma College, do you want to tell us about the dances?

ST: In the old fashioned style, where you- Each girl had a little card and you passed it around to- Or, the boys would come up to sign your card. That would be the time that you would dance with them. So that was the old-fashioned way. They had a small- I think there was a small band, and everybody was very, very formal. I can't recall how we walked in. I don't know what we did. I think there was a photo session.

LU: [laughs]

[80 minutes]

ST: And we walked around and talked to each other and tried to get introduced to the girls' friends. You know, these were boys who were shipped in from another private school. Some of them had boyfriends so they had their boyfriends come in. But most of them were students and a lot of them didn't know each other that well.

LU: [nods]

ST: A little bit awkward, but you know, they were used to that kind of life. I was not.

LU: [nods]

ST: I didn't make too much small talk, at that point. And Shoji, of course, was not. You know, he had been to university and he had just graduated, not made too many friends at that point. So we were both friendless. [chuckles]

LU: [chuckles]

ST: Wandered around in that formal setting, you know, not really knowing what to do. But we knew a few foxtrot steps and that's about all we did. They didn't play much of anything anyway, you know. They did a couple of slow waltz, some foxtrots. What kind of music were in at that point? Anyway.

LU: I am not sure.

LT: Do you want to look at the card and see? [flipping through cards]

LU: Oh yes. The card would have some names.

ST: Yeah, there are few names.

LT: Let's see if we can find them.

ST: The girls with whom I stayed in the room. They made sure they- the girls introduced me to their current escort. So then they were sort of forced to dance with me a little bit.

LU: Oh that's a different one.

LT: This is the senior prom and they named songs, February Fantasy, March Mist, April Overture. Doesn't tell you what kind of dance they are.

ST: I think I attended two dances with Shoji in that spring.

LT: At the senior prom though, you danced with Ken Morizugu, Harve Morizugu, and Sam Yamada.

ST: Oh yeah. They were very nice boys.

LT: Let's see if we can find the other one.

ST: Sam Yamada's parents were, the father was a Salvation Army person. At the time of the war, the Salvation Army dropped so his salary just stopped.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: This young man was attending university, and of course, he couldn't go any further. I think he attended maybe the first two years on scholarship. Later on, he could not afford to go. I don't know what happened to him. He had two younger brothers, there were three brothers in that family. They were bright enough to get scholarships at Western, but I don't know what happened to them.

LU: Did the other card have anything?

LT: It says, Snowball. I guess that's when you start the dance.

ST: [nods]

LT: Doesn't say much in terms of what types of dance. They have names like Christmas Crackers, [Point?], Santa's Waltz, Sleigh Ride, Tom Pudding, Jack Frost, Tinsels, and Evergreen. Eight dances and then there was supper. And then there are six more dances after supper.

ST: Oh.

LT: So-

ST: None of those music-

LT: I don't know that they are song titles. I don't recognize them anyway.

ST: Yeah.

LT: And you have- Oh I know, you have the names of your friends, your girlfriends at the school, beside the boys' names on the dance card. So beside [John Thompson], you have Liz.

ST: Oh yeah.

[85 minutes]

LT: Beside [Chuck Dickman?], you have Sally.

ST: Oh.

LT: Molly Barns, Carol. So they must be the escorts for the other girls.

ST: Yes, I guess so. Says that they were girls I knew. They were forced to dance with me. [laughs]

LU & LT: [laughs]

LU: What about that picture you had where you are trying to learn how to line dance? Do you remember that? Where was that one? I think it was in Toronto.

ST: No it was- What was the dance? Near the end of the album.

LT: [nods]

ST: Not a line dance, it's the-

LU: Or square dance.

ST: Square dance.

LT: Oh right, square dance.

ST: That was YMCA. That put on square dance things and you could go to it every week, if you wish. But if you don't know how to do it, then you would sign up for a lesson, and that's where we signed up for.

LU: Who did you sign with?

ST: Oh. [Kayawama?] I forget his first name. Albert?

LT: I don't know. Let's see if I can find a picture. Yeah, there was a large picture.

ST: [nods] A large picture. I thought it was a loose picture.

LT: [continues searching in the album] It was. Might be in the other album actually. Oh here. [hands a card to LU]

LU: Thanks. In the meantime, do you want to tell us how you met Shoji Where you met him?

ST: Oh just by dropping in to see [Kasey?] and [Sachi Oyama?] who were living in Toronto.

LU: Oh here it is.

ST: I've forgotten the names of these different streets. This is a couple I knew in New Denver, before they were married. I was friends with each of them, separately.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: They were married in New Denver.

LU: [nods]

ST: I took pictures of them. Oh I must have had a camera by that time. I bought a simple box camera so I took pictures of them. I was not at their- I was at their wedding at the church but not at the reception. Eventually they moved to Winnipeg where he had a job as a New Canadian editor. In January of '46, I stopped off in Winnipeg for one day. I spent a day with them and I continued onto Toronto.

LU: [nods]

ST: In Toronto- they eventually moved to Toronto. When I had time, I dropped in to see them. Shoji, he was a student in Winnipeg so that's how he met the [Oyama's]. Of course, not knowing anybody in Toronto, same as me, he dropped by to see the [Oyama's] and we happened to be there one day in the evening at the same time. That's how we got acquainted.

LU: And you took a bus back together you said?

ST: We just took a streetcar back to where we were living. At that time, I had dropped in to live with my mother. She had just one room on Euclid and College. And Shoji was staying in a boarding house on Ashdale, I think that's the name of the street. Gerald and somewhere, I can't remember.

LT: You went to a New Year's Eve party with him.

ST: Was that 1948? Or '49?

LT: Well, on the back here, it says, December 31, 1948.

ST: 1948?

LT: Yeah, there's a group picture. [Sachi Oyama?] is in one of the pictures.

ST: Surely after I met him, this Sachi said to me, "Phone me about a few days later," and said, will I be a blind date for a friend of theirs coming in from Winnipeg. Oh, Montreal. I said, "I don't have a dress to wear." I said, "I loaned my best dress to my friend in St. Thomas. I left it with her." She kept phoning me, two or three times the same evening. Finally, I said- Well, okay, so around 10 pm, in a taxi, they came to pick me up, and I was sort of in a business type dress, you know. I went to this party, what was it put on by? Some-

[90 minutes]

LT: I am not sure.

ST: Nisei. Some nisei group-

LT: Probably. You have a very nice dress. I don't know if you remember-

ST: Is that the same party?

LT: Yeah. [hands over the picture] you wore a black top and lace-

ST: Oh no, this is Alma College.

LT: But that was, that was December 31st, 1948.

ST: Really?

LT: [nods] And in the same dress-

ST: I never had-

LT: -you posed with a picture, in a picture with Sachi.

ST: Oh, isn't that strange. That first dance I went to, I really didn't have a long dress.

LT: Maybe that wasn't the first one.

ST: I don't think- I think this is 1949, rather than '48.

LT: Oh. This one, yeah, this one says December 31st, 1948, Toronto but I don't know if that's your handwriting. Might be-

ST: I don't think it is. Because that first dance I went to, I wore a short dress, a business like dress. That's all I had.

LU: So you didn't know it was him until you arrived at the dance?

ST: No I did not. Well, I had met him briefly, you know, at [Oyama's?] home.

LU: [nods]

ST: I didn't know- The girl that he was with, and this young man from Montreal. I forget his name now. However, afterwards, we ended up in a Chinese restaurant and that's where we got more acquainted, you know. We were talking and- The girl that my husband, Shoji took, she was in a very sour mood the whole evening.

LU: Oh so he didn't go as your blind date.

ST: [shaking head] No.

LU: The other gentleman was.

ST: Yes. He didn't- Shoji didn't know me that well, you know. He just met me for a few hours. And I had not planned to go to the dance anyway. But the [Oyamas?] had decided, since this friend of theirs was coming from Montreal, they decided to do something with him. They would go to dance with him, if I would only go. So I-I got persuaded and went. It was a nice evening.

LU: [nods]

ST: Shoji's friend was so annoyed, she was just sour the whole time. She didn't say a word to anybody. [chuckles] I never got to know her at all. Sachi and I just doing the talking. Shoji didn't say very much.

LU: Really? That's very impressive. He's usually the talkative one, isn't he?

ST: He- He has a monologue, yeah. He talks a lot but it's not something I could respond to, when he talks.

LU: [laughs]

LT: Remember that practical joke that Cass and Vic played around you when you came home one night from work?

ST: Oh, Shoji and I came in from a movie and we can't afford to go to a restaurant so we dropped into Scarborough's house. I was gonna beat up some egg and make a toasted egg sandwich or something. I had broken another egg in there and tried to

beat it up and the other round thing wouldn't beat up. I eventually looked at it and it was apricot. [smiling]

LU & LT: [laughing]

ST: Cass and Vic knew that. [Sammy] trying to beat up the apricots and the egg. [laughing]

LU<: [laughing]

ST: So I fished out the fruit onto another dish, broke another egg, beat up the thing. I ended up making the sandwich and it turned out okay, kind of a- There was some sweet flavour to it.

LU<: [laughing]

ST: And then we had apricots for dessert so, you know, it was okay. He didn't complain. I don't think he knew what I did.

LU<: [laughing]

ST: But the other two did.

LU: Oh that's funny.

LT: There's a group picture. It looks like everybody who attended this party on December 31st, 1948. [hands the picture to ST] You and dad look like you are on a well-established date.

[95 minutes]

ST: [looking at the picture] We went- The same house that the [Oyama's] lived in, in the upper level. The lower level people on New Year's Eve that day had a party. So the [Oyama's] said to me, why don't I come with Shoji So I did. Since then, I met quite a few people here. [Koto Adachi]

LT: She's in that picture?

ST: Yeah, she is. [hands back the picture]

LT: Oh, maybe in the back row.

ST: Oh. And the home that we visited- The owner of the home was a couple called [Izumi]

LU: [nods]

LT: Yeah. A happy bunch of niseis.

ST: Yes. It's the first time I really came across our group of, you know, fairly heavy drinkers. There was about four or five of the men who were really drinking a lot. Trying to persuade the girls to drink. But at that point, the girls didn't drink much, except maybe one or two. And then not very much, anyway. Yeah, that was the first New Year's Eve house party that I went to.

LU: [nods]

ST: Probably the last.

LT: Look like a lot of fun.

ST: It was. A lot of noise.

LU: [nods]

ST: [Kasey] and Sachi, in their bedroom, we threw all our coats. When it was time to go home, had to go into their darkened bedroom, the two of them were in bed, sleeping, and we picked up our coats and crept out.

LU & LT: [laughing]

LT: Oh yeah?

ST: Yeah. I don't think it was that late. You know, 1 or 2 a.m.

LU: [nods]

ST: The streetcars were still running.

LU: [nods]

ST: Yeah, all of us used streetcars then. Maybe there was one couple with a car.

LU: Oh wow.

STL There were very few parties around that time. All of us were struggling.

LU: I was told before that in Toronto, they had a lot of organizations to bring all the niseis together. Did you ever attend any?

ST: I don't think so. I tried joining some of the young people's groups. But once I was married, I was just out of these social party things.

LU: When did you and Shoji get married again?

ST: June of 1951.

LU: Where did you first live together?

ST: On Sterling Road, wasn't it? [asks LT] Do you remember the number, the house number?

LT: Something like-

ST: 228 or?

LT: Yeah.

ST: 228, something like that. Just south of Bloor Street, and we lived there for three years, I believe.

LU: At this time, where were you working?

ST: I only worked for this lawyer, the legal office, and you know, I became pregnant. After three months, I couldn't work. On my way to work, I would get off the streetcar and vomit onto the side walk. You know, I vomited every day for nine months.

LU: Oh no.

ST: I just felt like I couldn't sit there and take dictation, or typing, or answer the phone and jump up every 15 minutes to run to the bathroom. So I finally, after three months of marriage, I told the lawyer that I can't really work, I can't, I just can't deal with this, vomiting all the time. For both pregnancies, I vomited about for nine months. Even the day that the kids were born.

LU: Oh wow.

ST: Never gained much weight. [pointing to LT] But you were six pounds anyway, weren't you? [laughing] You don't remember that?

LT: No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't know that.

ST: You were six pound something.

LU: [nods]

ST: And [Howard] was about the same size.

LU: So you never went back to work after that? Just stayed home?

ST: No I did not. No. It was impossible to get babysitters or caretakers. My in-laws were living with us and she definitely said, "I am not looking after your child." We couldn't go out for social life either.

[100 minutes]

LU: You mentioned before that you had moved into a different house, closer to Etobicoke or Mississauga, was it?

ST: From Sterling Road, we went to Etobicoke.

LU: Etobicoke.

ST: It was a very beginning of a subdivision there. So it was quite primitive. You know, unpaved road, no telephone. What else did we not have? Postal, postal delivery, none of that.

LT: Bus service.

ST: No bus service, that's right.

LU: But there was a cow? I remember Les mentioning a cow. [laughing]

LT: There were farms all around.

ST: Yeah, we were in the middle of a farm. I think our area was an orchard. Just north of us, there was a farm. I don't think I took the time to see any farm things.

LU: What about your brother and sister at this point? Where were they staying?

ST: They were- Vic was working at that time. Cass was in high school. She was in Scarborough. She got married about the same- the same year that I got married. In the fall.

LU: [nods]

ST: So they moved into that Scarborough house. At that point, my brother and sister were still living there. But she made it a little difficult so Vic moved out and moved in with his mother, with our mother at that point.

LU: And she was still in Toronto?

ST: Yes. She's always stayed in Toronto. She arrived in Toronto and- At some point, when she first came to Toronto in 1947, the summer of 1947, I was living in this one room on Church Street, south of Bloor Street, and she moved in with me. Eventually my brother turned up. He and his friends turned up in this one room. They keep doing that, until I left for Alma College that summer, late summer. My mother stayed in that same room, and I think my brother stayed there and my sister was probably there too.

LU: Did you ever go visit Japan?

ST: Not then. Not 'til 1970. It was a very, very interesting trip. I enjoyed all of it. The only regret was that, we had a commercial tour of the whole place and it was really nice. That was only 14 days but we were in Japan for six weeks. We stayed at my sister-in-law's house, for the next three weeks. I said, "We should go to Kagoshima." Everyday Shoji would say okay. Never made the move. I said, "We could just go on the train and stay at a hotel." I don't think he knew what to do. He should have gone to- I should have gone to a travel agent but- You know in the country, in Maibara, you had to speak Japanese.

LU: [nods]

ST: He couldn't do that. But I don't think he knew what to do or how to go about it. We had come to Japan with the JTV help, and everything was organized for us. When we arrived in- After the tour was over, we arrived in Maibara Village and stayed at his sister's house. [Stomu?], you know, at that time, just started working in Tokyo. He helped get the ticket and all sorts of things for us. Without help like that, I guess Shoji didn't know what to do. So we ended up three weeks- I felt sorry for my [speaks Japanese] What would she be? [asking LT] [Taiko?'s] daughter-in-law?

LT: Yes.

ST: She was doing all the housework, cooking, everything else. And Shoji was having a really relaxing time. He just sat at the table and talked to his sister all day. And I was totally bored. We used to go out for a walk a bit.

LU: What were the houses like at that time?

ST: House was a beautiful house. Quite a large house. The ground floor, very roomy. You could draw the walls together and break it up into four or five rooms. At some point, if you had a lot of people there, she would just open it up. At the back porch, she would open it up and you could see the formal gardens in the back. And if you go up, walk a little bit, there would be a little house. They said that was their mother-in-law's house.

LU: Oh wow.

[105 minutes]

ST: Her mother-in-law stayed with her for a while. By the time we got there, she was gone but- Later on, when [Taiko?] got older, she moved into that house. But then, the last time we saw her, 1998, she was bedridden so she was staying in the main house, in the main room. Just off the kitchen, there was a room.

LT: So it was a very traditional Japanese house?

ST: Oh very much. Just like my house.

LT: In Hinatayama?

ST: Hm?

LT: You mean in Hinatayama?

ST: No. [chuckles] Right now, where we are living-

LT: No, no, I mean, physically.

ST: Oh physically.

LT: Yeah, wood frame, shoji, tatami.

ST: Oh yes, yes. The upper level had the same idea of closing off the rooms so you had a number of rooms. And at the back, you would walk out, and there would be a bathhouse, and then a toilet and then a storage area. You know, they had quite a large plot. But every inch of it was, not just left open, you know. Either it was a walk, a paved walk, or a garden, or a rock garden, you know. If you walked out at the back, you would go to the right, and there would be a laundry facility. At that point, she had a fairly modern laundry machine.

LT: [nods]

LT: And the street was right by the front door.

ST: Yes. You had to peak out very carefully because you know, the cars would be passing about six inches from you.

LU: Oh my goodness.

ST: There was a little, six inch bit from the door, and there would be a highway, a road.

LU: Oh geez.

ST: That street was their main street. Across the road, small road, would be shops. People would live behind the shop or upstairs. In this particular house, beside this front door, was a little rice mill, and they ground rice. That's the same job that

Shoji's father had in Vancouver. Milling rice. So this Taiko's husband ran that also. Rice mill at that time. But in 1970 though, they had disbanded. They had not done any rice milling, it was now his TV substation. He was running commercials from his office. What was his name? [Hiromu?]? [Hiromu?].

LT: Oh that was his son. [Hiromu?] was [Taiko's] stepson.

ST: Yeah, yeah. [Taiko's] husband was not working- He was retired by the time I first met him.

LT: [nods]

ST: Up to that point, he had been running a rice mill. But I can't see him doing any work like that. I don't think he actually worked- I think he had a brother or a sibling who actually worked or hired men who worked at their rice mill. He himself, I think, may have been the mayor or something for that village.

LT: [nods]

ST: Yeah, his son- By the time we got there, he was dealing with JTV, is that the-? No.

LT: You mean-

ST: NHK

LT: NHK?

ST: NHK. Dealing with all the commercials. And he had hundreds of commercials. You know, they would contact him to show a certain kind of commercial at a certain time. That would be his job.

LU: Oh wow. You had mentioned at the beginning that your father ran a mink farm.

ST: Yes, but I never really saw it in action, you know. I never talked to him, he was ill, and I was three years old. I was told later that it was a mink farm. When I went back to Summerland three years ago, I said to a friend there who had been on the farm next to us. I said, "There was a mink farm, wasn't there?" Of course, he was only three years at that time. He said, "I don't know." [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

[110 minutes]

ST: Too bad that- He had an older sister, a sister who was same age as me. No, maybe a year older. She would have been good to inquire.

LU: [nods] Do you know what the family line of work was in Japan before your father came to Canada? Was it farming as well?

ST: No I don't think so. I don't think they were-

LT: I think they were bureaucrats.

ST: I don't think they- I don't think we- I was never on a farm in Kagoshima at all. My mother said her grandparents were priests. Not the Buddhist priests but the other-

LT: Shinto?

ST: Yeah. But that was grandparents.

LT: [nods]

ST: Her father and siblings, I think they worked on some railway.

LT: At one time, I remember you telling me how grandma and her brother worked in a train station in Taiwan.

ST: That's what my mother told me. That he worked on the train stations.

LT: So her brother was a station master-

ST: I suppose

LT: -and she worked alongside him.

ST: I don't know if she did or not. Did she? Anyway, [Masaki's] father also worked on the railway.

LT: [nods] That was the [Baba] family.

ST: I don't know a great deal about her early life.

LT: [nods]

ST: You could always ask Yoko. I don't know what she would remember. That's the only contact I have in Kagoshima now. [Yoko Hirase?]. I don't think she was [unclear] but her grandmother was my mother's sister. Yoko's grandmother. Yeah. So we keep in touch with her now.

LU: [nods]

ST: And your kids have met this Yoko and her husband?

LT: Yep.

ST: I don't know, what else can I tell you?

LU: I don't know, I am trying to think of more questions. Do you have any other memories that you remember?

ST: I don't think so.

LT: Well, dad had an interesting story about how, after the war ended, how the American occupation, government forbade the absentee landlords.

ST: Oh yes.

LT: Because grandpa owned farmland in Shiga, he had to hand it over to his nephew, dad's cousin. So, one of the other losses that grandpa suffered during the war was not only losing- In addition to losing his rice mill business in Vancouver, he also lost farmland and [timber rights?] in Japan.

ST: I think he had quite a lot of property.

LT: But, the only way to have avoided that would have been if dad had gone back to Japan, after the war. He didn't want to do that.

ST: No. It would have worked out alright. He keeps saying he's not a farmer. I said, "Well, you could learn or you could hire somebody." You know, deal with the rice patties. Later on, you know, they were using machinery anyway.

LU: [nods]

LT: Then you wouldn't have met him.

ST: No. [smiling]

LU: [laughing]

ST: No, but he handed over the property after we were married.

LT: Oh that happened after?

ST Yes.

LT: Oh.

ST: Yeah, it was in the mid-50s, 1950s when they said you had to deal with your land yourself. Until then, it was just left there.

LT: [nods]

ST: Yeah, his father at that point, about 1955 or 56, I think, mentioned that to Shoji. At that point, Shoji didn't want to go back. He has just started his job and become established here so- But it might have worked out. You would have been born in Japan. [smiling]

LT: Yeah.

ST: Brought up in Japan. [smiling]

[115 minutes]

ST: And then come back to Canada as a Canadian. You know, lots of people have done that. Lots of people in New Denver and Slocan and so on, were encouraged to go back to Japan. Things didn't work out well for their children, you know. They couldn't- What's the word?

LT: Well, if they were born in Canada, it would be difficult for them to adjust to life in Japan.

ST: It was. Besides, they were not welcomed there. You know, they were war torn and so on. They had no food.

LU: Do you have any friends that went back?

ST: Yes, yes. Only one of them corresponded with me. And then, about 10, 15 years later, she stopped writing to me. No, her letters to me were always- [phone rings] Buy me this and buy me that.

LT: Remember when you were looking for a house in Etobicoke?

ST: [nods]

LT: You asked about looking in a certain part of Etobicoke.

ST: Oh yeah. Thorn-They call it [Thorncrest] I don't know if it still is.

LT: Oh wait [unclear]

LU: [hangs up] Sorry, he's like, "Are you interviewing somebody?" He's like, "Oh I am already off the line!" [laughing]

ST: He just mentioned that, when we were- When Shoji and I were looking for a home, a new home, the real estate person said, "There's a certain area that I can't take you into." That was Islington and Eglinton area.

LU: Oh really?

ST: He or she just said it's just a forbidden area for ethnic people. They didn't have Chinese, blacks, anything.

LU: [nods]

ST: Even now, when you drive through and see the names, it's really British area.

LU: Certainly.

ST: Although some of the doctors I've come across live in that area.

LU: Oh wow. I didn't know that.

ST: There were little enclaves like that in Toronto, here and there, where they did not sell houses to coloured people and the immigrants. Even though we were not immigrants, we were DPs, displaced persons.

LU: Oh wow.

LT: It was also the time you couldn't cross the borders. Where were you going?

ST: Let's see, we were-

LT: Going to Boston?

ST: We were- We were in [unclear] something? We tried to cross- Close to Kinston area, we drove across-

LU: Do you remember what year it was?

ST: 1951. Probably. The first year we got a car. Yeah, the summer. That summer- We had a short holiday, I think. We tried to cross and uh. As a married- You know, married to a Canadian, I thought I might be alright, but the border people, the American side said, no I couldn't. So we came back. In 1953, I applied for my Canadian citizenship papers.

[120 minutes]

ST: At that point, I went with my mother. I thought- She said my birth year was 1926 so that's what I am registered as. So all my legal papers, and driver's license and OHIP [Ontario Health Insurance Plan] and everything else is 1926. I never bothered to change it because- A bit of nuisance to do that. Although- Years later, when we were applying for the OAS, Shoji wrote to Japan, Kagoshima village, to get my papers. He interpreted as 1925, so that's what I go by now.

LU: Yeah.

ST: You know, she- My mother didn't know how to translate the Japanese system to the Canadian system.

LU: Pretty close though. Only off by one year.

ST: Oh yeah, it's one year. The date's right, August 18th. So, would that be enough? I think.

LU: I think so.

ST: I think so.

LU: Wonderful. Did you have any other-

ST: Suggestions?

LT: That's all I can think of now.

LU: [nods]

LT: I guess you want to copy some of these photos.

LU: Perfect.

ST: Would you be doing the copying here?

LU: Yep. We can do them here. There's quite a few.

[Interview ends]