

Interviewee: Kei 'KC' Tsumura
Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda
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THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

Lisa Uyeda: Just in case this one doesn't work. Alright and I might have to switch the tape afterwards but I will let you know.

Kei 'KC' Tsumura: I don't think I have much to say.

LU: Oh yeah, you do.

KT: I really don't.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: Nothing.

LU: Well, it's okay, whatever you can tell us, that's fine. Do you want to go by Kei or KC?

KT: Kei.

LU: Okay. This is an interview with Kei on July 20th, 2010 and do you want to start off by telling us when you were born and where you were born?

KT: May 17th, 1930 [coughs] in Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

LU: Did you say 1930?

KT: No.

LU: Well you-

KT: '36. 1930 [pretends to cough]. I was coughing.

LU: [laughs] And Prince Rupert you said?

KT: Yes, Prince Rupert.

LU: And did you grow up there?

KT: No.

LU: No?

KT: I never grew up there.

LU: Were you born in a house or in a hospital?

KT: As far as I know, I was born in a hospital.

LU: In a hospital.

KT: It was prevalent in those days but we had hospitals in Prince I think I was born in a hospital. I am not sure.

LU: So-

KT: I never asked much about my life.

LU: When you were a baby?

KT: To my parents or anything.

LU: And so, you were born in Prince Rupert but did you grow up there?

KT: No.

LU: When did your family move?

KT: The war, the war started. Maybe I was only nine or something. We evacuated from Prince Rupert to- Overnight. Seemed like overnight to Vancouver, Hastings

Park, horse stall you know, in a horse stall where they kept the horses. It was a racing park for horses and that's where we ended up.

LU: And was your whole family with you or was it just your mom?

KT: No, my father- They sent my father to a road camp somewhere. We didn't know where he was. My brothers were sent away because they were older. They were also sent somewhere else. I don't know where they were. I was just a kid, eh, I didn't care. This is, the pathetic part was watching my mother go through all this, you know. My sisters, of course, corresponding. They were very sad. I had never seen them sad before in my life. Really sad, you know. The horse stall in Hastings Park, I enjoyed it as a kid because I thought it was fun, right? So, I would jump off the top of the two-story bed. I could see all the other people in their beds, right? I enjoyed that. But the Hastings Park itself was- The first time I remember eating, we all lined up with a tin plate to get mush. I remember the sound of the mush hitting the tin bowl [sound effect]. It was kind of a shock, you know. But my mother, you know, she-. You have some impressions of your life, the impressions when you were a kid, that you could never forget and that was my mother taking me out to, dragging me out to eat. You know, we were enclosed in barbwire. My mother lifting the barbwire at night and taking me out, [lifting motion] letting me underneath and me escaping underneath. She came after me and because it's Hastings Park in Vancouver, we went across the street and there was a Chinese restaurant there and my mother ordered a bowl of noodles and we shared the noodles together and it was food. And I thought, God, either my mother was crazy or brave, you know? Later years I thought, I've never forgotten that. And she took me back [unclear], we are waiting for the guards to go by. As soon as the guards went by, she took me under, grabbed [lifting motion]. And on top of that, she was a pretty woman, doing this [lifting motion]. Really impressed me, you know, with her courage.

LU: Did you do it quite often? Every?

KT: No, I just remember. I just recall this one time but the one time was enough to show me what kind of person she was, you know. She was a [unclear], she was a great woman, you know and she-

[5 minutes]

KT: My father was away in the road camp, they didn't know where he was. I think the worst part was seeing my sisters and my mother huddled together crying, you know. Because well, all the boys were gone except for me. I was youngest, I was a kid enjoying myself running around. That was sad. Those were little points that I remember. I also recall the trip down from Prince Rupert to Hastings Park, it was cold, very cold wintertime. I remember the train stopping and the family were sitting there and two boys, two young men jumped on the train, came up, and they knew my sister. "Hey, where are you going?" He says. "Well, we are going to the jail." He says, "What for?" "We are Japanese Canadians." They genuinely couldn't believe it, eh.

LU: Oh, they were non-Japanese?

KT: No, they were non-Japanese. They were shocked, you know. This was another thing that caught my imagination. It must be something extraordinary that's happening.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: You know, to my older, my brothers and sisters, they must have gone through a lot, breaking up friendships at that age and school and the future was bleak, everything. And as far as my parents go, all their dreams were probably shattered, their business was taken away. A lot of others' hopes were dashed, I guess. But to me, I was just a kid, I was enjoying it. It didn't penetrate me until late as I grew older and had children.

LU: So, when you were in Hastings Park, were you in the rows of all the bunk beds or were you in separate stalls?

KT: [unclear] The whole family was in one stall with double beds, triple beds. I was on the top of them, of course, jumping up and down, looking around. I could see everybody; it was interesting, you know. I remember, just the food. I've never been, never ate anything out of tin before. The mush hitting the [sound effect]. I guess this is what they do in prison, you know when the prisoners lined up. In later years, we saw the Dickens movie. "More, more food, sir." "More food?" That image stayed with me.

LU: What else do you remember about Hastings Park? Do you remember any games you used to play or do you remember playing with any of the other children?

KT: No. I had a game- The games I played or I had that- I used to have my mother's, you know, needle and thread, single machines. Used to have bobbins that are made of wood. Every time, she would use them, she gave me one. Nice to use these to click together like this in an imaginary game of judo or boxing. Pang pang pang. I had about 30 of them, right? I had numbered each one. It was all an imaginary game so I played with myself, you know. [laughing]

LU: Oh wow. And then what else do you remember about Hastings Park? What about washrooms or bathing or do you remember having a hard time sleeping?

KT: No. Like I said, I was a child so I slept. Everyday was exciting, everyday was new, right? People were crying. Full gambit of emotions. Saw the guards, the guards were Japanese guards, eh. A lot of them wore armbands and they were, I think, our First World War veterans.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: A lot of Japanese Canadians in the First World War. They were chosen to be guards.

LU: Guards for their own people?

[10 minutes]

KT: Yeah, well somebody had to do it. As an aside, your father and I went to Alberta, did he tell you about it?

LU: I don't think so.

KT: We were going to a little town in Alberta, and we went everywhere. Your father's got an inquisitive thing about history, you know.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: He was looking up at this little town in Alberta at the people who died in the First World War and there was a core of them that were Japanese, all Japanese names in this little town. I think your dad brought it up to the historical committee here and said, "Why isn't this done, why isn't something done about this?" I had known about this before but this struck me as strange too but- I think it was the Duke of Edinburgh, Duke of Windsor. He had a ranch there in Alberta and his foreman was a Japanese person.

LU: Oh yeah?

KT: Yeah, he had a- I think he did all the backbreaking for him and he was his, he was his man. He was his-

LU: Oh wow.

KT: So, he was so- Because he had that job maybe, for so many years, he became a devoted monarchist. When the First World War come, he went out and all through that area, he campaigned for all the Japanese people to join the forces in the first World War. I think that's what influenced a lot of the people who went over there and died

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Yeah. A lot of people from that small town, Japanese people in these small towns did die and your father and I discovered this, eh. I know it's in the back of your father's mind. He wants something done on this. Mark is not a guy who's that emotional sometimes but he became very emotional. I thought, you know-

LU: Oh yeah, oh wow.

KT: Which impressed me about your father too.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: Because he hides things. [laughs]

LU: So what happened in Hastings Park with the rest of your family? So your father was gone and a couple of your brothers?

KT: Yeah, couple of brothers were gone. Then, we were sent to, from there, after a brief stay there, to Slocan City, an internment where they brought all the Japanese Canadians and Slocan City was the biggest place in that three, that area. They had Slocan and they had farms where they built houses like in Popoff, Bay Farm, Lemon Creek. They were all clustered together and on the other side was New Denver, Kaslo, Sandon, so forth. But we were in Slocan City and from there, it was a mining town. It was an old mining town, deserted mining town. You know, you see all these pictures of the Klondike. It was dusty and you can almost imagine in your mind's eye, the miners drinking and so forth there. And we found little coins. We took the boards apart of the flooring, we found little coins from that era which was very interesting.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: And as kids, you know, we enjoyed things like that. Then soon, we went to this place called Popoff. It was a cluster of little houses. All the Japanese Canadians went. I think it was built by Japanese Canadians. It was a kind of a settlement, eh. You couldn't run away or anything 'cause mountains are all around ya. That's where we stayed and we lived there for a while.

LU: How long were you in Slocan City for?

KT: Slocan City, I think, not very long, couple of months.

LU: Do you remember what season it was when you went?

KT: It was warm, I think.

LU: Probably spring, summer.

[15 minutes]

KT: Yeah, yeah. But the first winter in Popoff which was- It snowed. It really snowed. It almost, almost covered the houses. I remember that. I remember some of the people had to make a hole in the roof of the house and get out through the roof and walk around.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: As a kid, as a child, you know, I saw my sisters and brothers going into adolescence, you know that growing up. And there were dances and concerts, sort of like that. I was too young for that stuff, but you, you saw all this happening, all of them growing up. As a kid, all I did was swim in the summers, fish in summers, and help my mother in the garden, we went mountain climbing so forth. I really, it was no tragedy for me, you know.

LU: Did you ever go apple picking or berry picking?

KT: Sure. Oh yeah, oh yeah. Doukhobours is a Russian, segment of Russia in society called Doukhobours, I guess. They lived there and I don't know whether they liked us very much. They take off their clothes, you know and burn their houses. I was at one burning with a kid that's watching, ladies taking off their clothes and all of the young guys wanted to go watch, eh [unclear]. Gross, very gross, women taking off their clothes and burning their houses. I didn't know the senses for it but they must have had a reason for it. It's a form of protest against the government. And eventually, from there, my brothers ended up in Toronto, he came to Toronto. Two of my brothers came to Toronto and the third one went later on. Eventually, we got out of there and came out east, out east we used to say 'cause that was Ontario. To Meaford, Ontario in the Georgian Bay where my father and my brothers got a job working at the, a boat shop because they were shipbuilders, right? They worked there. We lived there. That was the first time that, we were the only, the first Japanese family in this town, right?

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Such freedom. [unclear] I was lucky again. New sensations, new, new happenings. It was like a live theatre where, if you paid money, it was ten cents, you went to see a movie, a double bill, right? As a kid, I got a newspaper route, I delivered papers and made money.

LU: Did you walk around delivering all the papers-?

KT: I had a bicycle.

LU: - or did you have a bicycle?

KT: I had a bicycle. I made the bicycle by selling things.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: I had my first ice cream sundae, pop. But just before that, just before we got to Meaford, we had to go to a place in northern Ontario. I guess it was a stop gap place, we stayed a few months. It was a German prison camp called Neys Ontario. That was another interesting thing for a kid. You know we found, where they tried to escape

the German prisoners, they were held there, tried to escape- Tunnels, we found tunnels and cans of, tomato cans, very well engineered for air to breathe.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: How clever, how clever the Germans, the prisoners were, making these things. You know, the guard towers, some were decrepit but still standing. You can visualize that. It always reminded me of Hogan's Heroes. Hogan's Heroes was a TV serial that ran a few years ago. It was like a [unclear]. All the Japanese families lived there and that's where I had my first taste of pop, you know. Someone said, "You want a Pepsi?" A friend of mine said, "What's that? Pop? What's that?" I didn't know what pop was, the only candy I knew was cough candy. You know, we bought Smith's cough candies and they were sweet and they were candy.

[20 minutes]

KT: He bought me this pop and [unclear] There I was, on the verge of another great discovery, pop was. From there, we went to Meaford. I got this job, ate my first sundae, ice cream, went to school. I was the only Japanese person there so I was, you know- Small town, Ontario, you had to fight your way through a lot of- And it was after the war so-

LU: Do you remember them ever saying anything to you?

KT: Sure, yeah.

LU: What kind of things did they say?

KT: Dirty Japs are in town or certain things. But when you are young, you get mad fast. That's why I had, I had a temper too. I had a very bad temper but I was tough, yeah. I could beat them. After you beat a few, they stopped calling me things like that. I tried to excel in athletics because that's one field that they were all into. The hockey teams, baseball teams, so forth, running. I tried to be, I tried to become an exception. I thought I, I thought I was good, and I just had a lot of determination, that's all. I played hockey a lot. On the Meaford team, I was the youngest person on the team. [unclear] I think it was called the [Phantom B?] Ontario championships at the time. At the time, we played Owen Sound for the championships. Our game was just before the Montreal Canadians played. [The Son Rookies?] were the farm team of the Montreal Canadians and we played the first game and they were getting ready to come on the ice after, you see. And we went. Our coach brought us into the Montreal team's-

LU: Dressing room?

KT: -dressing room. What a thrill, eh. Richard Bouchard, Kenny Reardon, Buddy O'Connor, these were the people you hear on the radio with Foster Hewitt, eh. All I heard was a strange, a strange language, you know. Hairy people. Really hairy guys, these were the Montreal Canadians, eh. They were very good, they gave us autographs and things like this, you know.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: And greeted us. That was one of the big, big thrills.

LU: How old were you then?

KT: I was in grade- Public school, I don't know, grade five or something, six.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: It was, it was a great time. In that same year, they had a father and son, I think I told you this before. They had a father and son [unclear] banquet held in Meaford, Ontario and the guest was Foster Hewitt. Foster Hewitt was the voice for the Saturday Night in Canada, Hockey Night in Canada. Bill Hewitt was his son and they both came and I was sitting on the main street, we were trying to get a, get to see them. There was a little stand, we were sitting on the stand. Suddenly, Foster Hewitt came up, said, "Hello, boys and girls." We just stood up and looked up in awe at this voice that you heard when you were a kid. He said, "'Till we see you again next year." [unclear] coming downstairs. Shoot, he scores. We were just like this, you know, stunned, eh. [head back in awe] It was like, it was like a- Perhaps for you, it would be like Tom Cruise or something, movie star coming up and talking to you. [laughs] It was- That was, that was a great time.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Yeah. And Meaford was a great place, used to be the capital of the commercial fishing there. A lot of fishing. My love of fishing started there again.

LU: How long were you in Meaford for?

KT: I think about three years.

LU: And your whole family was there with you? Your dad, your mom?

KT: Yes, yes. We were all together.

[25 minutes]

LU: All the siblings and everything?

KT: Yep, yep, all together.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Small town. My older brothers were in Toronto, they had been to Toronto. You know what they say, when you take them out of the farm, Perry, Perry is not the same, small towns, you can't go back to small towns, right?

LU: What was your father doing in Meaford?

KT: He was a shipbuilder. He worked at the [Richardson] Boathouse, Boatbuilders, they designed race boats and speedboats and my brothers all worked there.

Gradually, as the years went by, our brothers went back to Toronto. We all decided to move back to Toronto. Those three years were non-Japanese years. I didn't see a Japanese face except for my family.

LU: Yeah.

KT: Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: When you come out of a place that even if you see a black face, now I have a black son, right. When there is a black person playing baseball against you, you are looking at them very carefully, eh. We are wondering, where did he come from? I remember the first guy I saw was a guy named Smokey Smith. He was a- I played baseball against him, he was a very good player. He talked to me, ["Who are you?"]. I said we were hicks, we were farmers. You know like- After we came to Toronto, we became a little more sophisticated and artists. [Not until then, we were country people?].

LU: Yeah. So, back when you were in, back at the war camps, when you were in Hastings Park and Popoff, when did you get reunited with your father and your brothers?

KT: My father came back one day after a year or so. I still have a picture of him. Seeing my father, he had a cane. He came back with a cane.

LU: Oh my. Did your mother ever have correspondence with him when he was gone?

KT: I don't know. I don't know.

LU: Did you ever figure out where he was?

KT: Just that he was at some road camp.

LU: Yeah. Huh? Oh well.

KT: Well, it's true of all families, I guess. A man of that age sent to road camps and-

LU: And when you left Popoff and-?

KT: Went to Neys Ontario.

LU: Yeah. Do you remember when that was?

KT: No.

LU: Was that when the war had already finished?

KT: Oh yeah, oh yeah. It was- When the war had finished, I think they gave the families the choice to go back to Japan, to which we had never been Or to go out east and we went out east, I guess. And the first place was the German prison camp, Neys Ontario.

LU: Do you remember being one of the first or last families to leave the camps or somewhere in the middle maybe?

KT: Near the end, I think. Near the end. But there was- I understand there are some people still living in that area, Japanese Canadian people.. You know, I'm just so surprised. I went back there many years later to look for my house.

LU: Oh yeah?

KT: Yeah, as a young guy. I saw one house where our house was built. All the houses were crushed down and I swear it was our house but except, I could almost stretch my hands out like this [stretching both arms] and touch the walls in the main house. There were three rooms and- Probably one of the saddest things that happened during those years, the winters and that, my sister caught tuberculosis and she eventually died from it.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Yeah, so that was- If I have something to be angry about. I say, you killed my sister.

LU: Do you remember the winters being very cold?

KT: Oh yeah. [nods]

LU: I've heard stories that there were actually icicles inside.

KT: Sure. Oh yeah.

LU: Do you remember how your mother would try and keep the house warm?

KT: Fire.

LU: Just a fire.

[30 minutes]

KT: Mother kept, I think my mother kept the morale high and my father tough, my father was a tough man. I think the boys were the biggest whiners and my sisters were brave girls too. They were pretty and tough and always happy, sane. Kept everybody else happy. The boys in our house were morose like me. [laughs]

LU: And, did you father ever have a job when you were in the camps? Do you remember him working?

KT: In Popoff? He was, he helped in carpentry, you know building, fixing houses in Popoff itself. I don't know if they got paid or not. It was a community thing. It built public baths, you know, where everybody, the men went to the bathhouse and the women went to another bathhouse. Built outhouses for everybody, right? Halloween time when a lot of the houses were pushed over as a joke.

LU: Really?

KT: Well, it was one of the jobs that they fixed up. The daily life was a full [sprint?], living in-, happened in Popoff. Even as a young child, I experienced it. People drowning in the little river. I remember when, the first dead person I saw was a person named Alan [Toujin?]. His uncle, I think, was the Reverend [Toujin?], bishop for the Toronto Buddhist Church. He drowned and all the men went down the river looking for his body and somebody found it and brought him out. I remember all the water gushed out of his mouth and they, you know, tried to revive him but he died. He was a friend of ours too so it did- First touch with death, eh. You always remember the first-

[recording's sound stopped from 32:26 to 36:59]

Lisa Uyeda: [unclear]

Kei 'KC' Tsumura: Yeah but still, you know, I was inquisitive of it. I wanted to see things like that.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: How the body looked on the-. Alan, his brother was a friend of mine. I remember a guy from town, one of the Caucasian guys from town, came up to my friend, Alan and says, "Don't cry, I'll give you a dollar." Alan says, "No, keep it, I want my brother back." I remember this. I thought it was a noble thing he said.

LU: Oh yeah. Oh wow. Do you remember going to the bathhouses?

KT: Sure.

LU: Yeah?

KT: I remember doing a bad thing there, too.

LU: What did you do?

KT: I don't think I've told anybody. I even lied to my parents that I did it. I didn't like some of the older men there. They had their problems, eh. So, I got tacks, tacks and I laid it where they sat, you know. One guy was walking over. He started stepping all over the tacks. He started yelling and cursing. I was laughing and, you know, I turned around. I didn't do it. I lied, you know. So, you know, you enjoy strange things.

LU: Yeah. [laughing] That's funny. And we didn't talk about your father and what he was doing before the war started.

KT: He was a shipbuilder. He opened up, in Prince Rupert, a place called Cow's Bay. He owned part of it. There were many Japanese Canadian issei shipbuilders there. Matsumotos and so forth, I don't know the other names. They all built ships. Some of my- My wife, she found on the internet, boats built by my father still for sale. Can you imagine that? Wooden boats made by the [Kai?] boatyards. That was my father's.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: It amazed me that they were still afloat. It was in Prince Rupert.

LU: So, he started out in Cow's Bay and then I guess at the beginning of the war.

KT: Yeah. At the- Before the war began, they did that. Just recently, last week, I don't know who it was but I got a CD of songs of Prince Rupert. Somebody sent it to me.

[40 minutes]

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: Heard that I was from Prince Rupert. So on rainy days- Prince Rupert has the most rain of any city in Canada and I guess, the songs were gloomy to say the least and it was all about Prince Rupert, eh, these people living in Prince Rupert. It was very interesting.

LU: Oh yeah. So, your father sold all the boats before the war started?

KT: Well-

LU: Or were they taken away?

KT: Overnight. My father would take an order and then he built. Take an order and then he built. You know, when you are given 24 hours or something to give your lifetime, life's work away, sell and get out, right? Not a lot of time. It was almost unheard of in Canada, was done to the Japanese Canadians. The second generation, the nisei generation. I'm the, I came at the tail end of it, I guess. You see, even the Sansei children were children. When I talk to them, they say their parents never talked about the evacuation. There's something about them. Well, you know, I think it was such a shock, eh. Once they were accepted. They grow up being accepted and then overnight, something happens and they are suddenly the enemy. Yeah, it was such a shock that they had a hard time getting over it. It formed their personality.

LU: Yeah.

KT: There were a lot of great Japanese Canadian people. I think there were- It was a noble. They had their own strange things but they were great people. Japanese Canadians are great people.

LU: What do you remember about your parents and where they came from Japan or what do you know about that?

KT: My father came from Wakayama-ken. Yeah, and my- He came here for a while and he went back to get a wife. He went back to Wakayama-ken and got my mother. And they came to- My mother came to Victoria, British Columbia. [unclear] She was a housemaid, maid in a house and my father came to see her one day to see how she was doing and he broke a vase in this person's house. They got so frightened they ran away from the house. But they made their way. My father, I mean, couldn't defeat him and then, he adapted. So, he started his own shipyard business. He used to love, love the three things that Japanese used to love: Rolex watch, Ronson lighter,

and what was the other one? The Dak shoes. Yeah. He, he had them all. He would be working on the garden with my mother. He'd have his nice pair of Dak shoes on and I'd be looking at the Dak shoes and his wristwatch. He had the best. That was his, you know, way of- My mother used to admire that, too. She said [unclear]. It was a good time. They were both younger. I think I have a picture I showed you of them working out in the garden. I thought that just captured the good times that they had together. I could see them. When that picture was taken. I took that picture, I think. They were both talking, murmuring, you know like, smiling, and talking. It was a happy time after all that they had been through. It was good for them.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: Yeah, it was good for them.

LU: Where was that picture taken?

KT: That was taken in Delta, British Columbia where we had our shipyards.

LU: After Meaford, where did you go again?

KT: Toronto.

LU: Toronto and your whole family went or-?

KT: Yep.

LU: When did your father go back to BC?

KT: He bought a house on where the Central Tech is now, right around the corner.

[45 minutes]

KT: That's where I went to high school. He went, they decided to go back, try it again after the war. They went back and built that- They bought a piece of land there, when the land was still cheap. Waterfront property off the Fraser River, seven acres of land, right on the waterfront. They built the Deltaga Boat Works there, they made a great success out of it. Great success. My brother, my brother was a naval architect and the others were very hardworking. I did the first part too. I helped build but they stuck to it, I didn't. I wanted to go back to Toronto again. I wanted to see the world. I was interested in karate then. No one knew much about karate. It was still unheard of almost. I heard about it and wanted to learn it because all I did was judo and kendo, martial arts but I wanted to learn karate. So, I went back to Toronto, nobody there to teach it but I met somebody from Japan. I forget his name. He had studied karate at Japanese university. At the time, I was writing. I got a job at the New Canadian. I tried to make it a part-time job because it entailed printing, writing, and the whole works. Everybody had their favourites. I just worked there. Then, I got a job with the Toronto Star Weekly. I met a nice man there who became my boss. His name was Gardiner. Canadian Weekly, I wrote for the Canadian Weekly and- And I just decided I wanted to follow, you know when you are young, you follow different fads, eh. I don't know if you do or not. The Beat Generation. Have you heard of? I was briefly hippie.[laughs] I wanted to see what, what made them [think?]. They were my generation, they were the thinkers of my generation. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and so forth. So I- The place was in San Francisco. I used to drive cars from Toronto, Oshawa Jane factory to Vancouver and back. I did about 25 times, going across Canada. They pay you, you drive a brand-new car over there. So, I- That's a great job. I took the job [unclear]. And eventually, I ended up in San

Francisco where I wanted to, wanted to live. I didn't find the Beat Generation there, they had all gone away. It was before the hippy, the hippies.

LU: So, when you first went back with your father and was helping out in the shipping business.

KT: Yep.

LU: You were finished with high school by then?

KT: Yep. I came back and took night lessons at the University of Toronto, night classes at U of T.

LU: What were you studying?

KT: Literature and composition. I took a lot of summer courses all over the- The writers' colleges had these retreats. I tried it all.

LU: So, did you come back by yourself and the rest of your family stayed there?

KT: Yep, by myself.

LU: Did you have any siblings in Toronto still?

KT: [shakes head] No, just by myself.

LU: Just by yourself. And did they all stay in Vancouver for the rest of their life?

KT: Yep. They all married there, had their children there. I see them all. No, I haven't. I really haven't seen all my nephews and nieces.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Never- I'm the kind of the black sheep of the family. I never go back to see them. Doesn't say I don't think about them, [unclear]. I am just not that built that way. I see more of my wife's relatives. I've seen their life change and so forth and follow them in Quebec. And then with others-

[50 minutes]

KT: I like the French Canadians because they didn't like the English. [unclear] As always, all kinda people in all groups, you know.. I traveled to Europe. I had a friend that taught karate, too in Amsterdam, Holland. I went to Holland first.

LU: How old were you?

KT: Oh, I was just in my 20s something. I wanted to stay in Holland because life was so good there. It was so free and- I got to coach the Canadian team at the World Championships in Paris, France in 1972. So I went there again to Holland but the tournament was in Paris, France. So, I took, we got a car and we did the Europe trip, you know, all through Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy, stopping off here and there. Carousing there and carousing there, finally got to Paris. Champs-Élysées. I see the guy with a karategi on, he's an American guy. I said, "Hey." [unclear], he says. "I'm with Canada, I'm the Canadian team, the coach. "You are the guy they are looking for," he says, "They're looking for you. Everybody's looking for you." I said, "Oh I am sorry, I'll be there tomorrow morning." These were the World Championships. All the countries in the world are competing. It's held at the Stade de Coubertin, the Coubertin stadium in Paris, you know. Coubertin, have you heard of, Coubertin is the founder of modern day Olympics, eh, named after him.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: And I went there expecting this world championship. There was no sign or anything for the world championships. Oh, it's in the basement.

LU: In the basement?

KT: It was held in the basement, the world championship. You know, it was the strangest tournament. But it was still-

LU: How old were you when you started karate?

KT: I boxed first. I left, I did judo for a while and-

LU: And you started out when you were younger?

KT: I started boxing. I wanted to become a boxer.

LU: Yeah.

KT: My teacher was a man named Tom Sims, he was a big boxer. He was our coach as I joined the boxing team. I wanted to box. I loved boxing. It was my first love. I love hockey, too [unclear] but boxing, gradually evolved into karate. I met somebody from Japan at the University of Toronto. He was studying as a pianist, he was from a famous university, [unclear] university. [unclear] practicing karate. So, I practiced karate for a while.

LU: How old were you then?

KT: Geez, 21.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: I practiced for quite a few years and all the Canadian people started getting interested in karate. But I said, to really learn karate, you have to go to Japan so I decided to take the big deep and go and live in Japan.

LU: And when was that?

KT: 1968, I think. 1968.

LU: How long did you live there for?

KT: About a year, over a year, I lived in the [dojo] right on the floor. Those days, there was no air conditioning or anything. They took me in at the headquarters of Itosu-kai. I stuck it out. When I went there, I weighed 185 pounds solid. When I left, I was in great shape, I weighed 145 pounds. [laughs]

LU: Oh wow.

KT: And I ate like three or four times a day. I ate a lot but still, you know.

LU: Sounds like Daniel.

KT: Yeah, remember when Daniel went, he was- and he came back. I don't know, maybe it's psychological, eh. You're in a different country and you're always aware of things. Your mental energy is used up but actually you are in training every day. It was a great experience.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Yeah, it was a great experience.

LU: Wow.

[55 minutes]

KT: I got to meet a lot of people, made a lot of lifetime Japanese friends that I still have today.

LU: Did you go to Japanese school at all when you were younger?

KT: Yeah. In the camp, I went to Japanese school. Very funny thing is, you know, the primary reader in the camp, I used to memorize the poems. [speaks in Japanese] To cheat, I'd memorize it phonetically. When it got to bemy turn to read, I sat up and

[unclear] [speaks in Japanese] with great emotion. [laughs] "He's very good, very good," you know. But I was just doing it phonetically but I learned to read, read a little bit but I really- Japanese, I spoke to my mother and my father in Japanese all the time, we never spoke English. When I went to Japan, for the first month, I was in a daze from speaking English all the time but when you are forced to eat and go to a restaurant and talk to people, your old Japanese comes back, you know. Gradually by six months into it, I was able to speak Japanese.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: It all came back. It was pretty fun. Young then and had a great time.

LU: I think you had an example before about asking where the movies were or something.

KT: Oh yeah, you remember that? I guess in my father's days, it was [ginto?], the word [ginto?] means sliding pictures, it was before the movies. And [aga?], I think it was [aga?], I even forget it. With movies now-. So I asked them, my teacher, whether I could go to the [ginto?]. He said, "The where? [laughing] Sliding pictures?" He couldn't understand it. Well, I mentioned the name of the movie. "Oh, [aga?]." So, he calls the whole family downstairs to have a great laugh. "Say that again, Tsumura." Okay, I said, "[aga?]." They say, "Oh, he speaks old Japanese." They call it, you know how the-

LU: Archaic?

KT: Archaic. The way the English knights used to speak, thou art, how art thou, [laughing] I guess it sounded like that. But I gradually got the idioms, the modern idioms, you know. I learned to swear and talk with everybody street. So It was fun. All in all, it was, it's, you know, it's a summation of how you've done. I just learnt it as it came, you know. I've been lucky and blessed by that, I had a great mother, great father. I can't imagine them raising five children in that time and they did, you know. My brothers and sisters were great to me even though I was one hell of a kid, too. But I'm sure I did a lot that they didn't approve of. I never went to jail yet. I went to jail once but that was, that was just for lark. I don't have a record or anything. You know, they have all come by individually to see me, to talk to me, to see what- And the nephews and aunts, the nephews and nieces, they have all been inquisitive of it, they come to Toronto, to come to see me. Because I can't explain it, I can't explain the things I did, right? I went all over the world. I went to Ireland, for example, 14 times. [unclear] I was going to buy a house in Ireland, live in Ireland but [unclear] 'cause that's a boring country right now. And I'll-, different, different countries, yeah.

LU: When you were in Japan for about a year and a half?

KT: Yeah. First time.

LU: And then you came back to Toronto?

KT: Yeah, I had a great determination when I came back to Toronto. I was going to live in one room, have my tatami, where I sleep, cooking and all that. I could live simply with that cause I was used to that now, eh.

LU: Yeah.

[60 minutes]

KT: So, I had determined that's the way I was going to be and I enjoyed it. I could sleep well, clear my mind. Got back into Toronto life again, right? Buying things, wanting things, clothes and fashion, you know. You get caught up in everything else and [unclear]. I was living in the penthouse apartment on Lakeshore, you know. So it all [failed, eh?]. That's when you are younger.

LU: And where were you working at the time when you came back?

KT: I worked at a lot of places. I was teaching karate a lot and I was working at the New Canadian. I worked there. If you want to know how many years I worked at New Canadian, look at the back issues. I think I was the longest English editor they had ever had.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Not that I worked that hard but, part-time job almost. I also worked for about eight years at [Blocked Out?] magazine in Los Angeles, California.

LU: You went to Los Angeles?

KT: No, I was a Canadian editor.

LU: Freelancing?

KT: Yeah, Canadian editor.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: And a few other things at home.

LU: What kind of work did you do at the New Canadian at the time?

KT: I was the editor, English side.

LU: Did you ever have to do, I think you mentioned before, you would have to make the print copies?

KT: Yeah. Oh, yeah, did the whole works. You know, after the linotype, the printing of the paper itself, and the setup, the layout. I did a lot. Now, they don't have to do any of that, they do it by computer, right? Passe. What I did was-

LU: So, you would have to go and lay out all the articles?

KT: Yes. In the steel type, you know, the type. [unclear] Make sure all the writing, and then wait 'til the printing finishes. It was a long job, and I got paid the sum of 200 dollars a month. I had to work other jobs, I had to make it a part-time job, right? 'Cause I was spendthrift. 200 dollars. [laughs]

LU: Oh wow. And you were just back and forth part-time for a long time?

KT: Yep, and I did a lot of writing. I did a lot of writing.

LU: What kind of things did you write about? What are some that you remember?

KT: Articles. I didn't like articles. I thought it was, that was just for the money, eh.

LU: Do more columns then?

KT: Yeah but that was just for money, too. Yeah. I always wanted to write something for myself. I did it, I still have it but- I don't know, you know, when you are young, you have romantic ideas about writing and stuff like this. Now you are happier when you don't have ambitions like that.

LU: Did you ever try writing any books or novels?

KT: Yeah, I tried.

LU: Oh wow. What else did you do other than working part-time at the New Canadian?

KT: Taught karate.

LU: You had just those two jobs?

KT: Two long jobs everyday [unclear] but I did anything that made money. Tried to make money. I tried to do interviews like you do. [laughs]

LU: [laughing] Let me switch this one.

KT: I think the greatest time that I became involved with the Japanese community when I was going to Central Tech. When I started high school there, I met a lot of good Japanese Canadian friends, eh. They are lifetime friends. It's like, George Takahashi, Dr. George Takahashi, he passed away in August, my best friend. Henry Morishita, Sam Hayashi, they were very good guys, they are my buddies, yeah. I started to learn about Japanese Canadian people, right? Because I was away from Japanese people in my formative years.

[65 minutes]

KT: They taught me a lot about Japanese Canadians, me being Japanese Canadian.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: Yeah, they are good guys, wonderful people. Tom Saito. Girls, too. But I never did end up with too many Japanese girls. I don't think they liked me. [laughs] I was too wild.

LU: So in Toronto, when you went back and were living on your own, were you going to any of the Toronto Japanese Canadian, like I know sometimes they had dances or community gatherings?

KT: Yes, at one time, we used to go to, there was a club called , [Ruxo Cratic?]. It was down in Chinatown. The guy who was collecting it was Sid Ikeda, I remember him. He was there, always on the committee. He's always on a committee, eh? [laughs] We weren't exactly the most social people. We wrecked things and we disturbed the dances. I don't think we were very welcomed there but-. They made things happen nicely, you know. Organized dances for everybody. I just, I was on the periphery of everything, you know. I just saw, I looked and-

LU: Did you ever, I know you mentioned before, going to the religion side that you remember seeing your mother doing Buddhist prayers? Was religion ever a big part of-?KT: Yeah. I used to see my mother chanting in that, you know, she had a little box with written [unclear], in the [fuda] or whatever. She would do that every night and it became monotonous. But I realized that it was a form of calming her down. She did it every night religiously. It was one of the memories I had of her. She was a great woman. She was- I was lucky to have a mother like that.

LU: What about your father, was he ever religious? Was he Buddhist as well?

KT: Well, my father was a [funny?] man. He wasn't extraordinarily religious or anything, but he followed the crowd, you know. One day, he got sick. He never got sick before, something happened to him, he got sick. Then, he came back, a week later, a week or two later from the hospital. He had promised my mother he would go to church. The church that my mother went to was- You know the writer, Joy Kogawa? Her father was a canon at the Anglican Church. You know the writer, Joy Kogawa?

LU: I think, yeah.

KT: Well, her father was her canon, canon, the preacher. They went there. My dad promised my mother that he would go to church. So, this one Sunday morning, we

were all outside waiting, smoking, the boys and my brothers. And he came out, he had this long coat on, a homburg hat and nice shine Dak shoes on. He's taking my mother out. He looks at us, he says, "What are you looking at?" "Nothing, nothing." Then, he went to church. I think it lasted [recording's sound stopped from 32:26 to 32:27] and then he was back to his old self again.

LU: Where was that?

KT: That was in Delta, British Columbia.

LU: So, this was after?

KT: Yeah. Religion didn't play such a large part in our family. I don't know why. My mother was religious. My family, especially me-

[70 minutes]

KT: Maybe later life when I met some, some priests, taught some priests karate. Catholic priests, and one became black belt, two, I think two became black belts.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: It kind of changed my way of thinking a bit, learned a lot. When you are young and have too much freedom, you go crazy, eh. You do everything, everything. But you get older, you realize how crazy it was. And you see your own children like that, you know, going through the same things, eh. That's why I can't blame my kids, when they get into trouble. I can't, I can't, just get uppity and say, "You don't do that. [You don't do craziest things by yourself?]" Okay, alright. Papa's too lenient. I swear at them, that's all. Because I did the same thing.

LU: How old were you when you first got married?

KT: Too young.

LU: Too young?

KT: I don't even remember. You know, it's a strange, it's a strange thing. For the life of me, honestly, I can't, I think it's 22, 3.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: At that age, me being 23 was the wildest, youngest, craziest kid ever to get married. She bought me a sports car, she bought a penthouse apartment. She bought it for me so I thought I'd better get married.

LU: Oh wow. How did you meet her?

KT: I don't know. I don't know. LU: It wasn't an arranged marriage, was it?

KT: No! Not at all. I think her parents were kind of famous Japanese Canadians that came to Montreal. But she- I don't think they liked me very much either. But she was- At the time, you know, we got along together. You know how it is, eh. What we should have done is live together.

LU: So, you didn't live together at all?

KT: No, we did live together but we should have lived together before we got married.

LU: Before getting married.

KT: Yeah, yeah. Then we would have gotten sick of each other then taken off, right? That's how [unclear]. All the legal things. At the time, she was very nice. She was very good to me. But I don't remember, I don't even think.

LU: Were you married for very long?

KT: No.

LU: Just a couple of years?

KT: Not even that, I don't think. You know, I can't remember. I'm kind of a channel memory. When I want to forget something, I compartmentalize it and it goes out. Some people can do that, unpleasant things that they do to others, too. Forget about it, I am like that.

LU: A lot of other people have done that especially with the war years, too so, it's not hard to do.

KT: That's not very nice, I guess. Maybe it's good to remember everything but-

LU: And then afterwards, when did you meet [Therese?], your wife now?

KT: Oh, that was, 40, 38 years, -7 years ago. Yeah, I met her through another lady. We were talking and this girl came along. She was a model, eh? French Canadian model. Pretty girl, always dressed nicely. Treasures herself. We went looking for her father, too together once. Searched all graves, all over the place. We found some very treasured things, you know, very, very treasured things. We don't discuss this with others. She's a strong woman. [Therese?] is a very strong woman. She's overcome a lot of things. Many things. I couldn't do it. What she's overcome. She's strong and she's demure. Gone through the full sprint of living high and she was a model at one time, her mother was a model, very successful model, petite model. They went all over the place for it. And she settled in Toronto and I met her.

[75 minutes]

LU: Oh, you met her in Toronto?

KT: Sure.

LU: Oh yeah. Did you ever go to Montreal and live in Montreal for a while?

KT: Sure. Oh yeah. I bought a house in Montreal, outside of Montreal.

LU: Oh, when was that?

KT: I don't know. Everything's a blur.

LU: Is this when you were with Therese?

KT: Yep, yep.

LU: Is this where you started your family together or before you were even married?

KT: Yeah, we had a family. Daniel came and we thought, I better get him into the French culture. Daniel and Martin were both French-speaking, eh. I knew they learned English off the streets but I wanted them to learn French. Japanese was out of the question. [laughs] Every summer, we went to our house in Montreal, outside of Montreal and we would spend the whole summer there. Come back to French school, all French school here in Toronto. First language was French. I think it was a good, good idea.

LU: So, did you learn French as well?

KT: No. I know how to swear, talk back, and things like that.

LU: Do you understand it when they speak?

KT: I understand a lot of it. They think I don't. It's a secret.

LU: I won't tell them.

KT: Yeah. You'll notice when they are together, when they want to speak of something, they will start speaking in French. Quickly, right? But I know. Therese

was good for me. She was- I would say she settled me down. She's very patient with me, just like my mother was patient with me, my sister was patient with me.

[coughs]

LU: Are you okay?

KT: Yeah.

LU: Oh, I think I remember you telling me a story about-

KT: Probably lying.

LU: Probably lying?

KT: Yeah, probably lied to you.

LU: When you were packing up and getting ready to leave for the camps-

KT: Yep. Cars.

LU: You wanted to take your cars.

KT: Yeah, I remember telling you that, you know why? 'Cause I knew you were probably going to mention it.

LU: Well, let's talk about it.

KU: I saw the reaction on your face when I first told you. Yeah, it was a silver racing car, toy car. We were supposed to be packing at night to leave. I got this car. I had a bunch of other cars, I was going to put them in this box. My sister said, "No, just take one. Just take your favourite. We'll be back to get them." "We will be back?" "Oh yes, it won't be long, we'll be back." So, I just took one.

LU: Just the one and did you have it with you all throughout the camps?

KT: No.

LU: What happened to it?

KT: Somebody stole it.

LU: When did they steal it? In Hastings Park?

KT: I don't know.

LU: Oh wow. I guess, it just vanished.

KT: It just vanished like everything.

LU: Oh yeah. Well, at least you tried.

KT: Well, you know. It's like material things, eh. I wasn't hurt by it. I, very, I don't, I relish things for the moment but I don't say how I should keep this, this, you know. If it's gone, it's gone. [coughs]

LU: Do you want to talk about your brother and his speedboats?

KT: Yep. They are [unclear]. He was a naval architect, excuse me. [coughing]

Smoking too many cigars.

LU: Take your time.

[80 minutes]

KT: You know, I got your dad addicted to cigars too.

LU: I know.

KT: But he's got good taste in cigars.

LU: Oh he does. Have you seen his collection?

KT: He smokes the best. I say, "Mark, where-" Every time, he surprises me with one and says, "This is the latest one."

LU: Which brother was this?

KT: His name was Johnny, his Japanese name was [Teiji]. Still alive and he was a naval architect. Studied I guess [unclear]. Father of the PT boat. He was one of those Japanese guys that don't speak about themselves too much, eh. He should take more credit .He should be, have the most credit for making [unclear] the success that he made it.

LU: That was your father's company?

KT: Yeah, my father's. Yeah, he took over when my father got older, eh. He made it a success. I think it was due to the phantom thrush, it was a V bottom boat. Up until then, they were round hulls that, when they raced to the fishing grounds that would push through the waves. The V bottom would cut through the waves and [makes hand motion] went up like this, fast. Later on, he fixed that up to be a bit more seaworthy, made it, called the round V [unclear]. So he was very successful.

LU: And you have a picture?

KT: Yes. It's called, that's the Phantom Thrush. He was a numerologist, my brother. He was fascinated with numerology so he wrote his name, the Phantom Thrush. Was a nice name.

LU: Oh wow. And after that, everybody started to come and see this boat?

KT: People all over, different marine journals from the States. Actually, I think the lull effect was when my brothers and father worked for, they came to Meaford first to work for the Richardson Boat Works , they designed fancy boats. He got his ideas from there too, you know. To make it more sports worthy rather than tugboats that were pushed. It was a very nice design. I went on the trial run, it was beautiful.

LU: Cutting over the waves, are you?

KT: Oh, yeah, yeah. It was fast, you know. You have to be at the grounds, fishing grounds at a certain time, eh, when you start fishing. You see the boats. [moves hand from left to right] Once it goes fast, [unclear].

LU: Oh, that's why everybody was excited.

KT: Yeah, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. Did your dad ever go into fishing as well or did he just stick to building boats?

KT: He just did it as a hobby.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: I was a commercial fisherman, too for a while. He would just do it for a hobby. He was a shipbuilder. He did it for a hobby. He would be out there smoking his pipe and making sure we were kept out of trouble. Once, I remember very vividly that we had this drink, this famous gay guy in town that lived on the river. He had this party, we all went to it. He made this potato liquor.

LU: Okay.

KT: Liquor made of potato, he called it potato champagne. We all drank it. We all drank too much and all the guys I was- Well, you know, they were straight guys, eh. We just went there to drink.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: We drank and drank about [unclear]. We went back. I don't know how I got back but I got back to my house. It was a Sunday, my mother wanted me to drive her to somewhere. So, we went by this house. It was, you know high tide and low tide? At this time, it was low tide, this person's house was on stilts, eh.

[85 minutes]

KT: My mother says, "What happened to the house?" The windows are broken, the furniture is thrown out, all the stuff was thrown out and into the mud of the low tide. "Wow, there must have been a big party here," I said to my mom. "Yeah, vandals, vandals must have done that. I hear there are a lot of vandals around." I said, "Yeah, mama."

LU: [laughing] It was you guys?

KT: Yeah. I was bad.

LU: [laughing] Oh wow.

KT: Once, we have these floating islands outside. I was coming back from a party on my boat. I was steering and going fast. And suddenly, I hit an island. My boat went on the island, almost ground itself. Oh, I'm on an island, I can't move around. I jumped out of the cabin and I propped up the boat. I had to wait for tide to come up. As I am waiting there, taking a long time, you know, getting over potato champagne. And I see my dad, dad's boat coming up. Oh rescued, he's going to pull me out. He comes out. [making an engine noise] I could see his face, he looks at me like this. He knows my boat. He knows my-He gives me a look like this, looks in front, keeps going, doesn't stop, goes home. [laughs]

LU: [laughing] Is that the boat that you have a picture of?

KT: Yeah.

LU: Is that the one?

KT: Yep.

LU: And you said you built half?

KT: My brother's company, they chopped it in half and put an end to it 'cause the other half was-, it was an old boat. They made it stronger, bigger.

LU: Where did you buy it from?

KT: I don't know where I bought it from. It had a straight new drive motor, a straight drive motor. [unclear] Had a reduction gear. When they hit fast water, the prop keeps moving, eh. Say when you are thrown out of the water and the wave, it freewheels [sound effect] you know like something is going to explode. It hits the water like boom. I once made it into the Gulf of Georgia into the Fraser. You know, the Fraser is coming this way and the Gulf river is coming this way and meets like this [claps hands], it's a very bad place. Everybody was kind of staying outside. I thought I'd drive home. I got going. I hit this thing, the windows in the wheelhouse cracked and broke, cut my hands. The buoy was tossed in the air. The apex of the wave, it would be out[raising both arms] and your propeller, because it was a straight drive, would spin [sound effect] and then when it hit the water, it would boom and stop the water. Oh, it was such a- Nearly didn't make it back. But made it back alright.

LU: Just broken glass everywhere?

KT: It was fun. Probably kill me now if I did but then it was fun, eh.

LU: Oh wow. When did you start to become active with the Centre?

KT: Oh, that's another things of contention. I started at the Japanese Cultural Centre in 1963, one year before the completion of the Centre.

LU: At the old building?

KT: Yeah, at the old building. One year before it was finished, I started the first karate class there.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: I was trying to remember that, make sure I told you that. That would be 47 years I've been with the Centre.

LU: Oh wow.

[90 minutes]

KT: I don't think there's anybody here, even Sid wasn't here 47 years. Even- I don't know if anybody-

LU: I don't know I'll find out.

KT: Yeah, yeah. Everybody claims to be here the longest but I was here. I started the first karate club, first martial arts club at the Japanese Cultural Centre before judo, aikido, all of them. Yeah. So we moved the club here- I remember going to meetings and Sam Hagino [unclear] was one of the original founders. First president. Bob Kadoguchi, I believe he was the president then. I can't believe it, have I been here every week for 47 years? I can't believe it, you know.

LU: Oh wow, that's amazing.

KT: [laughing] If I had to do it all over again, hell, I would never do it. [laughing] I had nothing else to do, I guess.

LU: How long were you training in karate before you started becoming a teacher and teaching?

KT: Ok. I started as a kid in judo. My father was a judo teacher. I also did kendo as he taught kendo. So I got into those two things. But because I had to, all my brothers got into it. I would rather be playing hockey, eh. I loved hockey and I love baseball.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: To ameliorate my father and people, you know, I took up boxing because I loved boxing. I got into a good club, I got a good coach. I loved boxing, you know. I gotta hit hard but I hit hard too. I loved boxing. It was- I think the two greatest guys in our Japanese Canadian committee was Frank Hatashita. A lot of people hated him but I loved Frank Hatashita. He taught us all about how to teach martial art in Canada, you know.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: He was a great man. I know a lot of people hate him because he was such a success, you know. But he was a great guy. Also, another guy was [Mac Miya, Mac Miyashita?]. I thought he was a great salesman too. [unclear] I don't think many Japanese liked them, but they were both great guys. There were the- If I had to pick two guys, you know, Japanese sports, I would pick those two, Frank Hatashita and Mac Miyashita, Mac Miya. He had to call himself, Mac Miya. They were good friends.

LU: His real last name is Miyashita?

KT: Yeah but he had to be called Mac Miya.

LU: Why did he shorten it?

KT: I don't know.

LU: Just easier to say.

KT: Maybe he didn't like the last part, Miya-sshita. [laughs]

LU: [laughing]

KT: I don't know.

LU: Oh wow. So, when was the first year when you started teaching-?

KT: Karate?

LU: Yeah.

KT: We started the club in 1963.

LU: But here at the centre?

KT: Yeah.

LU: Did you teach before that?

KT: Yeah, we had a club but we were all participants with my friend from Japan, from [unclear] University. Harry, his name was Harry. And then I had a Itosu-kai], one of the originally Itosu-kai guys, your dad and I practiced, come to Canada. He stayed at my club. He says, "This is Canadian karate, is not real karate." We practiced with him every day. How different it is, how, you know, how different it must be in Japan, you know, the attitude towards karate, yeah? So, I decided I better, I gotta go to Japan and see what's there, to live in the [dojo].

LU: Yeah.

KT: You know, most people are arm-chair martial artists, eh. They sit and talk about how great they were in judo, how great kendo or something like that. But to actually go to live in the [dojo] is a different thing.

LU: Yeah.

[95 minutes]

KU: I wanted to do that so I did. All the money I had, I took it to Japan.

LU: You were living in Toronto so did you just sell your house or were you renting at the time?

KT: I was renting.

LU: Oh, so that was easy.

LU: Yeah, yeah. But you know, I was always a new car guy, always had a new car, never saved my money. But I had to save my money for Japan. I took it all, spent it all over there. And it was cheap there. I could eat for 30 cents.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: The Canadian dollar was worth a lot then. So it got me far. [unclear] I was taken in by the Sakagami Family. They were karate people there. Father accepted me as one of his guys, you know. I had to follow, had to carry the bags when he went all the- He went to teach at all the universities. Osaka, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, all the places in Tokyo, you know. I followed him. I was his bag man, [laughs] I learned a lot from that too, just being with these people. His son was very nice. His son was my age. We became friends, eh. His father died and his son took over. He was, he was, he really modernized our system of karate. Yeah, Sadaaki, He may be here next month by the way.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: He's been here quite a few times at the Centre, eh. But you know, the Centre has never recognized him. You know who has recognized him, the Indian tribe in Perry Sound.

LU: Oh really?

KT: Made him a chief. They made his son a chief too. Big ceremonies. But at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, I don't know what the hell it is. I don't know. [shaking head]

LU: Maybe they don't know enough about him yet.

KT: The groups, the first people that were here, we knew about, they appreciated and knew about him. I'm not about to want to change. When I was younger, I would shout and rave and say, Listen, this guy is. It's not the baloney you've been hearing from a lot of people. Let me tell you something. But I don't, I don't. It's always the time. Time will tell, you know. Your father, when he was a kid, he was a boy scout, right? And he came to me. There was a trip to Japan that I had done a TV series on called Karate-do. [13 weeks series I did?]. It was for Ontario television, education, Ontario educational TV and I made 16,000 dollars on that at the time which is a lot of money, right

LU: How did you get into that?

KT: I was a writer, eh so-. I wrote 13 scripts. Originally, it was 21. They reduced it. [it's about 13, we can only afford to?].

LU: So, you were a writer for this TV show?

KT: [nods] Yeah, I did.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: I made enough money that I could send the team to Japan. \$13,000 was, I had \$16,000, yeah \$16,000. It was, it was big money in those days. Today, it's nothing but it was big money in those days. So I could send the whole team in. I talked to your , your dad and he said, "Oh, I'd love to go." "Have you ever been to Japan, Mark?" "No," he said, "Oh yeah, I'd like to go." And couple weeks later he said, "Oh I can't go." I said, "Why?" He said, "I've gotta go to a jamboree." I said, "What?" He said, "A jamboree. It's a boy scout thing." I said, "Okay." I always remind him of that every time.

[100 minutes]

LU: How old was he then?

KT: Quite young.

LU: Like early teens?

KT: Yeah, early teens.

LU: Poor guy.

KT: I think, he didn't want to go to the jamboree, he wanted to go to Japan.

LU: Oh yeah. Who wouldn't? [redacted]

What about, just to get a little back on track again, what is this I have written down here about the Japanese Canadian TV show that's on every week and spoke a mix of Japanese and English?

KT: You mean, you mean the show that this lady had-

LU: Susan.

KT: [Susan Tsuji?]?

LU: Yeah.

KT: Yeah, she had a show, I just forget the title of it but-

LU: What do you remember about it?

KT: Well, it was the first Japanese Canadian show. She hosted it and I think she produced or- Her husband was the one that produced it and directed it. It was all about Japanese Canadians, right. It was good.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: It was good. Her English wasn't perfect. She spoke with a typical issei accent, which was great, great for the show. It was great, it was precisely what was needed. I think she did a great job. I enjoyed it. She was a good, nice person and she brought the Red and White show. I don't know if you've ever seen it. Every year in Japan, they have what's called [Uta Gassen], something [Uta Gassen], New Year's show. All the top entertainers appear on it, it's like four hours. It's still on today. She used to bring that in, you know and get all the commercials and all of the-. She used to present it.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Yeah, in Toronto for all the people here.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Yeah, it was good.

LU: And on the TV show, what kind of things did they talk about? Was it like a comedy against Japanese Canadians?

KT: No. It's singers or topics of interest, you know. You know like what the Japanese Canadians are doing and things like this, cooking.

LU: Like community news?

KT: Like community news, yeah. Things that I suppose, interested her and-

LU: Oh wow.

KT: And it interested Japanese Canadians, you know. They had different interests. It was good, it was good. I liked it.

[105 minutes]

LU: And then, who was Mr. [Emozuki]??

KT: Mr. T. [Emozuki?] was my boss. He was the publisher of the New Canadian.

LU: How long was he your boss for?

KT: All the time I was at the New Canadian. Yeah, he was a great guy. He was an issei man but he was, he was a man who- A lot of people hated him too, eh because he was straight, straight up, shot straight, straight-shooter. He called it what it was without pulling punches. [I think?] he was a great guy.

LU: Was he kind of like your mentor for the New Canadian?

KT: Yeah, yeah. He taught me a lot of things about being, being a man, eh. He taught me how to deal with attitudes and- Somebody would come in, somebody who had a great reputation. He is- [laughs] T was [mumbles] and I realized, [hm, let me give it a second thought?]. He was another armchair guy, you know. He dirtied his hands and he just talked about things.

LU: Was he working for the New Canadian during the war?

KT: Yes, he was.

LU: Do you remember? Do you remember him saying anything about his experience like, why did they choose not to shut down the New Canadian?

KT: There was one paper that was allowed [and New Canadian?]. Everybody takes, everybody feels that they were the one that kept New Canadian alive. Everyone likes to take credit for the New Canadian. [mumbles] New Canadian, this, this this. People like T kept it going. There was no money, eh. There was no money.

LU: Yeah.

KT: He was a great guy. His daughter moved to Montreal, I think. Yeah. But he was a great man.

LU: Did he ever have any problems with the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and you know what he was publishing?

KT: Nope. I think they allowed it. They had to have news about where the Japanese were going and what was happening to, you know, the diaspora of the Japanese population in Canada. Someone had to know and the paper just contributed to that.

LU: Do you know where he was working? Like was he in the camps working?

KT: I think he worked wherever the New Canadian went, Vancouver, I guess to Winnipeg or whatever, and Toronto. Yeah, yeah. I have good memories of him, he was a great man.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: Yeah, he was a great guy.

LU: So, was the New Canadian just mostly all Japanese community news or did you ever publish anything else?

KT: No, anything you could get. Ridiculously, it was published twice a week.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: There was only one person in the English section, did the printing, writing. So, he stole everything and put it together. There was no romance. People wrote about the romance of it. There was really no romance, man. People were getting 175-200 bucks a month, 50 bucks a week, is it? You had to have, you had to survive. It was like side money, right?

LU: How big was the English section?

KT: Half of it.

LU: Half and they only had one person working on the English side?

KT: Yeah.

LU: How many people working on the Japanese side?

KT: There was about three or four.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: Two writers and a publisher and two guys, two or three people doing the printing.

LU: So that was when they did the layout in the printing?

KT: Yeah, the Japanese print was done by hand, eh. English print was done by Linotype, lead [sound effect], and print presses. It was very primitive.

LU: Oh wow.

[110 minutes]

KT: By today's standards. My gosh, young people, you have computers, you can do the layout on the computer. Must be wonderful and easy, just learn a few basic, basic rules and express your creativity on it.

LU: Well, it can be a little complicated sometimes.

KT: Yeah? Reduce your type, you can enlarge it, I mean just with a touch of a button we had, do the whole thing over again.

LU: Oh my goodness, oh wow. I'm trying to think if I have anything else to ask you.

KT: How about you growing up?

LU: No, no, no. This interview is about you. [laughs]

KT: [laughs]

LU: Let me ask you: how about you growing up?

KT: I don't think I have-

LU: When did you, did you live in Steveston?

KT: Yes, Steveston.

LU: Steveston.

KT: Sure.

LU: When was that?

KT: Long time ago.

LU: Was that when you were, before the war or after the war?

KT: No. After the war, I went down there. And Steveston was really the capital, the Japanese Canadian capital, eh.

LU: Yeah.

KT: Where all the fisherman lived. My dad lived there for a while. But the real place we lived was in Dalton, it's not too far from Steveston up the river. Fraser River is a large river and people earned their living, a lot of Japanese Canadians earned their living off the Fraser River, you know, logging, [unclear], gillnetting, fishing, fixing nets, working in the canneries, [mumbles] made the livelihood for all the Japanese families.

LU: You were living in there when you were helping your dad with starting up the company?

KT: Yep.

LU: What was the Japanese Canadian community like at that time? Because it was just after the war-

KT: Yeah.

LU: -and people just started coming back.

KT: Yeah. We had a lot of Japanese Canadian veterans from the war that went back there. [Buck Suzuki?], my brother-in-law, they were all Canadian soldiers, eh. So it wasn't that bad but there was always that underlying thing.

LU: Was there was still that anti-?

KT: Sure, of course. It happened in British Columbia, right?

LU: Right.

KT: But now it's changed, eh. Like Nelson Mandela, you have to forget things and that's the only way everybody is going to be, feel good about themselves too. You got to make the people who made the mistake of, of calling you a 'dirty Jap', get out of here or something. You got to make them feel good too, eh. Once they feel good, you have won them over and the next generation will be easier.

LU: I think they said yellow bellies.

KT: Oh, everything. [unclear] and Japs. At one time, it used to so offend me. I got into so many fights over Japs this. All you had to do was beat them up. The Japanese Canadian guys were, I think the issei generation were tough guys. We never, we never took a back seat. Guys, I know, guys I knew. That's why other people, bullies would keep away from us. That meant a lot to the people, eh. You know those- Have you seen the story of samurai? The magnificent Seven, you've never seen that?

LU: No.

KT: Akira Kurosawa's classic. You've never seen, you've never seen that, eh? Well, it was the story of the samurai. When the samurai are wanted, the samurai lives by their weapons, eh. They are [adulated?] and say, Thank you, thank you. But when the peace time comes, they represent the bad things, eh so they want them out, right. That's just like the guys who defend, soldiers are like that, right?. The soldiers are wanted when they are going to protect you, right? But after we want peace, we want soldiers out.

[115 minutes]

LU: Yeah, yeah. Do you ever remember experiencing any other anti-Japanese feelings and discrimination?

KT: Sure.

LU: What about in Toronto?

KT: Yeah, some but Toronto was a more cosmopolitan place but Meaford was not. Only Japanese family there but I won all my battles.

LU: Did people ever look at you and go, what are you?

KT: No, they knew what I was. News got around. Farmers used to come. We lived on Main, the Main Street in Meaford. The farmers on Saturday night would come around to look at the house with the Japs.

LU: Oh really?

KT: Oh yeah.

LU: So drive by like-?

KT: It's a drive by.

LU: -entertainment?

KT: Wasn't shooting but- Just a drive by. Once, one fight I got in school, he was a big guy. I don't know what happened, he said something like [unclear] my uncle or something fought in the war [mumbling]. So I grabbed him, threw him. There was a wire, eh. I threw him in the wire [sound effect] and he knocked himself out. The other guys were like, "You must kill him." I said, "I don't care." I turned. The principal of the school was standing right there. His name was M. J. Snider. I remember he was, he was a modern guy, you know. He called me in the office.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: He says, "What was that you did? Judo?" He says that. I said, "I-I don't know." He said, "He said something to you, didn't he?" I said, "Well, I am not going to talk out of school, you know." He said, "I know you play hockey and box." He said, "I have trust in you."

LU: And he said what?

KT: I have trust in what you say, you know. He said, "Don't take anything from these guys. You have your own- You're in a battle by yourself. You have to do it by yourself but I know you can do it." I said, "Thank you." No strap, nothing at the time. [laughs]

LU: Did you get the strap usually?

KT: Yep.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: You never got the strap?

LU: No, no.

KT: Where have you been all your life?

LU: I've never seen anyone get the strap before.

KT: We used to get the strap in public school.

LU: Oh really.

KT: I remember this guy who became a great fiddler, [Neil?], a buddy of mine. He talked something and in retrospect, I think about the teachers that gave the strap, eh. If I see them, if I see them now, I would think what weak people they were, you know. [Unclear] standing there and the thing turning you red.

LU: How many times would they whack you?

KT: Well, one time or six times he got whacked.

LU: Oh wow.

KT: He came back, you know, like this.

LU: Ouch. Oh my. Well, is there anything else you would like to add?

KT: Nothing.

LU: No? Quick answer. Anything else you want to say about karate or-?

KT: Karate is another story, it's a whole life. This was just a talk that we had, that's all. I didn't say anything important. I didn't say we reading about Japanese Canadians, how they were and how they are but I am glad, I am proud that I am a Japanese Canadian.

LU: Is it important to you to find your history and your ancestors?

KT: My ancestors but not my history. Not my personal history in Canada. I lived it and I know [unclear]. People are the same. All, all kinda people, all people are the same, good or bad. I work on a theory that, the best person whether you wear a white collar or a preacher, you go from one end, you could swing a pendulum, swing from one end right to the opposite end. You could be the worst person in the world and the best person in the world. You could be a saint, you could be the worst sinner in the world.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: You know everybody does that. If they are honest enough, they will say, it was me. That's a human being, right.

LU: Yeah.

[120 minutes]

KT: We are all animals, eh. We all have our instincts.

LU: Did we talk about your parents and their life in Japan?

KT: No.

LU: Well, let me switch the tape quickly and we will talk about, just quickly about what you know-

KT: You never told me anything about your parents.

LU: My parents? I don't know anything about them.

KT: Yes, you do.

LU: You know more about my dad than I do.

KT: Yeah. How about your grandparents?

LU: Oh, they don't really talk about it. Well, I had an interview with [Jii-chan] already and he was in Lemon Creek.

KT: Yeah, he was in Lemon Creek.

LU: So was [Baa-chan], I think. But my white side, I don't know anything about my white side, I know they came from PEI [Prince Edward Island].

KT: You know, you remind me of my, of my nieces, my nephews. They are all from all over too, eh.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: Yeah.

LU: Well, that's the thing, we are all mixed now-

KT: Yeah, which is good.

LU: -which is really hard.

KT: Which is good though. You guys have got the best of both worlds. You really do. You're lucky. You're lucky.

LU: Well, it's hard in a way too though.

KT: Is it hard?

LU: You lose a lot of your own history. Like other than just starting to work here, I didn't know anything about my Japanese history. [redacted] So, what about your parents? They were from?

KT: Wakayama-ken. LU: In Japan. Is that on the big island or one of the little ones?

KT: I think it's down, down south. It's near Kyoto, Kyoto, Osaka way. I'll tell you a story. My mother's, my mother's brother, when I went to Japan the first time, he gave me his card, I told you this before. I was in Japan for a while. One day, I came across this card and I showed it to my teacher. I said, "This is my-." "Wow," he says. This guy, he was the mayor of Yokohama. Big city, Yokohama is 20 million. Big city. He was the mayor. So he says, [Sagami] says, "I'll contact him, he'll want to meet you because you are foreign." I said, "Okay." He came back. He came back and said, "Oh it's kind of awkward," he says. He died last year.

LU: Oh no.

KT: Oh, I was a year late. He says, "Do you want to meet the family?" I said, "I don't care. Sure, I'll meet the family." "It's awkward too," he says. He's got two families. He had a mistress and family and a wife and family. A lot of people in Japan who are in that position in Japan have a mistress and a wife. They each had families, eh. So I said, "I don't want to offend anybody." If I go there and don't go there, you know. So I said, "No, I don't think I want to meet them." I just let it go at that. But I went back to, came back to Canada, the first thing I told my mother. You know my mother was sweet. You know she was, she was so sweet, eh. I said, "Mama, your brother, your brother, you never told me he had two wives." She's all flustered [hand motion]. She says, "The health, the real wife has, her health was not very good so he had to have

another wife.” [laughing] It was, it was funny. If you knew my mother, you would laugh. Almost like a TV character, eh.

[125 minutes]

LU: So, the mistress and her children, did they carry the same last name as him?

KT: Yeah, they had a candy store, too. A big candy store.

LU: Oh that’s good.

KT: I didn’t see it, I didn’t go see it because they didn’t want me. Anyway, I had other-, I had a lot of things to do in Japan. I had my own things to do so-. But I’m still going to go. You remember Fumi Sakai?

LU: Fumi? Yeah.

KT: Fumi Sakai. Yeah, she you remember. Well, she’s from that area.

LU: Hi. Are you looking for-?

New person: Is there a meeting here?

LU: I’m not sure.

NP: Let me just check my cell.

LU: What’s the meeting for?

KT: I don’t know. I’m supposed to meet Peter Wakayama.

LU: Oh yeah, then it’s probably in here.

NP: Still here?

LU: Yeah, we are doing an interview, thanks. So?

KT: Ok. Fumi Sakai is from that area so she says to me, she asked me where I was from.

LU: Do you want to just close the door, maybe? Thanks, we’ll only a few minutes longer.

KT: [closes the door] Okay. Fumi Sakai.

LU: So-

KT: Go back. You know Fumi Sakai?

LU: Yeah, yep.

KT: She says, she never approaches you directly with a question, where you from? After she got used to me and- She figured out and says, “Where do your parents come from?” I said, “Wakayama-ken.” She couldn’t believe it, her parents were from Wakayama-ken, too.

LU: Oh yeah?

KT: And they were in the same clan one time. [Sakagami], we are samurai clan, eh. We are in the samurai clan. My people were in the same clan, we were in the same clan together one time. And I asked Fumi, “Are you, your people are Waka-?” “Yeah.” “Which one?” “I don’t know, Wakayama City.” I didn’t know what part. She says, “We are going to someday get together, we are going to go down there and we are going to investigate my family.”

LU: Yeah.

KT: My sister-in-law, who is also from Wakayama-ken, married my brother. She went back and she came back, and she said she saw the book, the family book in which all the descendants are written, some of my clan, you know. And then she says, “I was looking for swords, family swords.” I don’t think- But they were really,

really supposed to have gone to my father because he was the oldest of his family at one time. But they've gone-, I don't know where they've gone now. I wanted to get them, the family swords [unclear]. Fumi still hasn't forgotten them. Last time she said, "Someday we are still going to do that, we are going to go to Wakayama-ken and find out." It would be interesting.

LU: Yeah. So, both your mother and your father were from the same clan?

KT: Yes.

LU: And was your mother's side from the clan as well?

KT: Yeah, I haven't made that- I think, maybe my father was kind of a peasant. I don't know. But my mother was-

LU: So, your mother was the samurai side?

KT: Yeah, I think- But I think they were both. One was a higher samurai than the other. I don't know. I would never say that to my father anyway.

LU: Oh no, not a big man like that. So, your grandparents then?

KT: I never, I've never met them.

LU: No? Do you know anything about them? What they did for a living? Did they have a farm or-?

KT: Yes, they had- As a matter of fact, the farm belonged to my father. It was, it was, you know, he was the oldest son but he had, he had never- So he went back with my mother one year before they died, passed away. He signed to, he officially signed it away to his next brother or something.

LU: Oh yeah.

KT: Yeah, that was the address that I showed you on the-

LU: Piece of paper?

KT: Piece of paper. That's what, when I go back, he's my contact there, you see.

[130 minutes]

LU: Oh wow. What else do you remember or have learned about your family history in Japan?

KT: Well, my father had grey eyes, almost blue.

LU: Really?

KT: Yeah, which amazes everybody but I closed his eyes when he died and I could still remember that, very vividly. I knew that when he [wasn't?] alive, when I closed his eyes, you know like this [hand motion], they were blue eyes.

LU: When did he pass away?

KT: He passed away oh many years ago.

LU: Just old age?

KT: Yeah, well, hard living, you know. When I got the call at the newspapers, New Canadian, the phone was there and you know how your instincts. Oh, my father died. And I hadn't heard from him in years, eh. It was my sister, "Got bad news for you, you better hurry back, father is dying." Next thing you know, we had a watch at the hospital. All the brothers took turns. He died on my watch. He looked at me, eh, and then [pause] and he died.

LU: Could he talk at all?

KT: No.

LU: Yeah.

KT: You know I closed his eyes. I never closed a dead person's eyes before, but I noticed that they were like.

KT: I always knew they were grey blue, eh and it's unusual.

LU: Yeah, he must have been fairly young.

KT: No.

LU: 70s? Do you remember when he was born roughly? Or your mother?

KT: No, I wasn't very close. I wasn't attentive as a child.

LU: Well, you were pretty young though.

KT: Some people know exact dates of-. I have trouble remembering my wife's birthday. [laughs]

LU: Don't tell her that.

KT: [laughing] Oh, I do.

LU: [laughing] I do. Alrighty, well, it's two minutes to seven.

KT: Sorry it hasn't been too eventful.

LU: No. It was perfect, it was great. Let me turn these off.

[Interview ends]