

Interviewee: Jean Peasah
Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda
Date: September 17, 2010
Location: Toronto, Canada

Accession Number: 2010-063



THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

Lisa Uyeda: There we go. Perfect. So, today is September 17, 2010, and this is an interview with Jean. Would you like to get started off by telling us when and where you were born, please?

Jean Peasah: Yes, I was born in Vancouver, 1933, that's the year of my birth, and I know I was born at the Vancouver General Hospital-

LU: Oh, wow!

JP: So I have been told.

LU: Not many people are born in the hospital, most people are born at home at that time.

JP: Mhm.

LU: Any reasons on why you might have been born in the hospital?

JP: Well, I think it's because- well, I don't really know, I never really asked, but I think my father went out to work- I'm not quite sure- of course, I guess he had to take some of the [unclear]. In Vancouver there were no relatives around, so I guess he couldn't handle it.

LU: Mhm.

JP: Yeah.

LU: Were you the firstborn child, or do you have older siblings?

JP: No, I have an older brother. I don't know whether you know him, but he's around, he's Arthur Shogo [?] Kobayashi.

LU: Oh, okay. And what year was he born?

JP: He was born in 1929.

LU: And do you have any siblings that are younger than you?

JP: I had one, but he passed away. I had a brother named David who was born in 1935, and he passed away 2001, I believe it was.

LU: Oh wow. Still a long life, though.

JP: Mhm. But he remained in Japan, he didn't come back.

LU: Oh wow. So, you were born in Vancouver General Hospital, and where was your family house [?] in Vancouver?

JP: It was on Cordova [?] Street, right in the middle of Little Tokyo.

LU: What do you remember about growing up in that area?

JP: Well, I- I have recollections of, you know, my mother taking me to go shopping to the shops nearby, the stores, Japanese-run stores. And I had Japanese friends in the neighbourhood, you know, my playmates were mostly Japanese kids. And I think my mother, who [unclear], who married in 1928, I believe, and went to Canada in 1920- maybe it's '27, I'm not quite sure, she didn't have much English anyway, so- but she managed quite

well, because there was a whole Little Tokyo environment there, yeah.

LU: Oh.

JP: And I remember Powell Ground. It's now- it has a different name now, doesn't it?

LU: I think so.

JP: And I remember crossing it with my father when we went for walks and things, yeah.

And there was a Buddhist Church across- sort of kitty-corner from us-

LU: Oh.

JP: A beautiful one, as I can remember. And I remember the streets- Cordova Street has big elm trees lining it, and then, you know, I used to like that, very nice [unclear] shady. Yeah. And I guess- it was very quiet, I think, compared to- well, there won't be that many cars and things, so, you know, the road was quite safe, just walk across. There used to be a family with boys, and the third son was about my age so we were the best of friends. And his mother used to grow beautiful roses, so he and I would go and pinch the petals to make perfume and things like that, so.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And then a Chinese man would come and he'd be selling sweets.

[5 minutes]

JP: I don't what you call it, but it had sesame- I don't think you can buy it [here?] it, it was sort of covered in sesame seeds. And he would ask us if we had poppies in our garden, which I didn't, but I kind of think that he needed it for his opium or something. [laughing] And then we had neighbours. One side was a nice family that helped raise me, I guess, I was forever in their house. The other side was a home for the Buddhist priest. The priest came from Japan, I guess, and they were there, right next door to us, so. And they had a son about my brother's- younger brother's age, so we had to-ing and fro-ing.

LU: Do you remember the names of the families beside you?

JP: Yes, Inamoto [?] on the east side, and on the west- I can't remember off-hand the Buddhist minister's name, but I know their son was called [Marcel-san?]. And then across the street, the Kiyoshitas [?], yeah. And so many of them- I think they were all pretty much Japanese on the other side. Next to the Inamotos [?] there was a Canadian- Mrs. Taylor [?], who used to live there- or, who lived there. And my father used to grow flowers in our front yard that he would tell me to give to, you know, take some to Mrs. Taylor's. I would go and give her the gladioli [?] and- I think it was mostly gladioli [?] and dahlias, yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And she used to be very nice. It was very peaceful, as far as I was concerned, and I left Vancouver when I just turned eight. But I do remember the bedroom had a bay window, and I remember looking out and seeing the sun early in the morning, [wake up and?] seeing the sun and these trees, and I remember thinking how I would like to go further east, [laughs] 'cause it looked so tempting, yeah. I used to have all sorts of dreams, like, periods when I really enjoyed imaging things. And I do remember the school, it was Strathcona [?] Public School.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Right [?]. And I guess we had to cross Hastings to get to- I can't remember the street Strathcona[?] was on, but I ended up to Grade Three. And on the way there was a- on the side of the road there were- there was a raspberry bush, and I remember some days I used to stop, rather than go directly to school, stop and pick raspberries, and sit on the sidewalk you know, the pavement, sit down, it would be a little higher than the road, and watch, watch the traffic go by. Eventually get to school, but sometimes late.

LU: [laughs]

JP: And of course, in those days, I'm told if you were Jap- well, like us, if we didn't speak English at home that- you had to have some kindergarten before you were admitted to public school, English [?] local public school. So, I went to- [unclear], I think its Anglican, and it was located sort of facing Powell Grounds, and I went there, don't know for how long, but at least I had to- we had to graduate from kindergarten, so to speak, before we graduated to Grade One.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah. So then at least we had some idea of English, I guess. So, that was a nice experience, the teachers were all, I guess they were missionaries, Holy cross for kindergarten itself was a mission .

[10 minutes]

LU: Oh wow. [to noise off-screen] I think they're doing roof [?] construction, we'll just wait.

JP: [points upward]

LU: Yeah. [laughs]

JP: So, I remember that, and then of course I remember the Kenjinkai picnics, the church picnics.

LU: Oh! Tell me about that, I've never really heard very much information about them.

JP: My parents come Okayama-ken, and I remember there used to be picnics, I can't say exactly where we went because I was too young, but we would be there, and we'll [?] have the usual races and, you know, three-legged races, sack races, that kind of thing, and enjoy the day.

LU: Oh.

JP: Sunday school, too, organized it. And [?] I remember, vaguely, going to these picnics, I think I remember, vaguely, going to these picnics, I think on a [roofless trolley?]-

LU: Yeah.

JP: That's [?] funny. It's- the memories are all kind of disjointed, but those were the nice times I can remember. And then, when I was in kindergarten, we went to the aviary [?] he teach- it was an outing, and my father happened to have a car so he was conscripted and we got into so many cars, I think, and went to the aviary to watch these beautiful birds, right. That was from kindergarten, yeah. So, it was quite, I think, a busy [?] time there was no time to sit down [?]. It was a very active time, there was always something to do, I think, yeah.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And then my brother, younger brother, was so much- he was- so much, [unclear] we

were only 18 months apart. So, he and I used to- well, I would want to go out and play and he'd tag along. [laughing] Sometimes I wanted to hide. And I used to want to tag along with my older brother, and he's much older- well, he's five years older than me, so he doesn't want the girl coming after him. I remember once or twice they were going to play war or something, and he'd tell me that since I was a girl, that I- this is the army's hospital, so that I was to stay in the hospital and wait for people to come. [chuckling] So I'd be left there, and they'd go off to play. It worked once or twice, after that I caught on to it, I didn't accept- I didn't want to be a nurse anymore.

LU: [laughs]

JP: But you know, women were supposed to- girls were supposed to be nurses in those days. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

JP: Yeah, so.

LU: Oh wow. What other activities would you do when you're playing with your other Japanese friends as well?

JP: The kind of- we used to play jacks; I don't know whether you know- it's these little [makes an 'x' with forefingers] what- I don't think kids play with it anymore.

LU: I think it's the- with the bouncy ball, and the little metal things-

JP: Metal things, yeah. That was very popular. And of course, we played- we used to call it o-nar-I [?], but I don't know the real name. [bounces hand up and down] You kind of bounce a ball and, [you know?], put your leg over, or skip ropes and things. But other than making perfume we used to do a lot of- play house a lot. I remember that, yeah.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And then play with rag dolls, get pieces of- leftover pieces from our individual houses and make quilts and that sort of thing to put the ragdoll in, under [?] or [if this?] was [North Pole?], we needed more, we could scrounge around for more cloths. And played that sort of game. I used to visit with a good friend, the Ari-muths [?], they had daughter called Masako, and she used to be my best friend.

[15 minutes]

JP: And she- when I think about it now, she spoke very good Japanese, and she [used to?] phone, telephone, and we used to make arrangements and- we went to the same kindergarten anyway, but, you know, I used to go and visit her, and she used to come over to my place. I think they ran a boarding house.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And her mother, I can't remember her name, was I believe a classmate of my father's. My father went to Britannia [?] High School in Vancouver, and so did Masako's mother. Yeah.

LU: Oh.

JP: So, there was that connection, too [unclear] but- And I remember, if I went to the- if I went to a birthday party at Masako's, the mother would have things like tail of the donkey, which my mother wouldn't know, you know? [chuckles] 'Cause my mother's purely

Japanese, she didn't have any education in Canada or in Vancouver. Mother was already- she just qualified to be a nurse midwife when she got married, [my mother?], in Japan, so. But I used to say [?] pinning the tail on the donkey was such fun. [chuckles]

LU: [laughs]

JP: So, that was [when I grew up?]. And sometimes we went off to, with older kids, went off to [Stanley Park?]. Yeah. And- and in the summertime, I guess kids love a beach, but I don't remember going there very much, because I was not very well the summer of- when I turned seven. Before that, I don't think my mother let me go unless there was an adult around.

LU: Mhm.

JP: But [I know?] all the kids used to go. I used to envy them. Yeah.

LU: What happened when you were seven and you weren't feeling very well?

JP: I- actually, I had an appendectomy. I shouldn't say it was the whole year, but during the summer. I had an appendectomy just before I turned eight.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And at that time my father was already in Angler internment camp. That's where he was, so it was only my mother. I gave her a very hard time, [if father knew?]. Yeah.

LU: Mhm. Oh wow.

JP: Because of that, we left Vancouver very late. I think most people had already moved out to the ghost towns. But [?] we stayed, and I think it was October '42 where we left.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Vancouver. I remember going to see my mother's family friends in Hastings Park, when they were housed in that [?]- and I felt [?] how awful it was, you know, the stench of the animal [?]- like the- [waves hand in front of face]. I guess because the building was used for livestock, horses and so forth. You could smell it, I felt very bad for people who had to live there.

LU: Oh yeah.

JP: That was a place we used to go, father used to- my parents used to take us to the Pacific [?] [national exhibition?], so I have some disjointed memory of these [?] exhibition, but while the mass evacuation was taking place and we went to visit them it- it left a very strong impression on me. It was terrible, yeah.

LU: Mhm.

JP: Things started to change, [you know?], because, I think, when the war started I- Pearl Harbour was in December, and by April my father had been sent to Petawawa first, and after Petawawa moved to Angler.

LU: Oh.

JP: Yeah. At first, Angler-

[20 minutes]

JP: He was originally in Petawawa, and then they moved to Angler. And- so from about April until they moved out in October, it was only our mother who was around. And I remember, you know, having done social work, you're interested- especially me, 'cause I

specialized in children most of the time. I kind of look back on my own childhood and, you know, I can sort of identify things that were quite traumatic. And one of them is the fact that, well, my father being away was in itself a bit traumatic because I knew that mother didn't speak English, and people in the neighbourhood had mostly moved away to camps. And you kind of- that same [?] sense of security that parents provides didn't seem there as much, like for instance, she was very worried of course, too, so she would tell us to be careful and that if anything should happen to her, where we should look for some cash that she's hidden, and that kind of thing. And, with the very best intention, she has to let us know, but at the receiving end, I can- after I grew up, I could feel that this must have been a real, you know, a change in circumstances. Vancouver that was so happy kinda suddenly became not very happy, and we became very conscious of noises around. And then, I've said this before, but when my father was, I guess, [does air quotes] arrested, I guess, they were at the immigration centre, I believe, in Vancouver, and we were allowed to visit just once before they shipped the men east. And I remember going there with mother and my older brother, younger brother, the three of us, and saw dad. And then [unclear]- I can't remember what we talked about, or how the long the visit was, but the reason that I vividly recall is that it was time for him to go, and he got into this elevator, very ancient, you know, like a cage. [raises and lower hands] And the cage- they- he must have been kept down there- the elevator started going down with him inside. And it was kinda hard, but what really hit me was my younger brother said, "Daddy!" you know. So, I remember that. It's obviously a trauma I haven't worked through, but that was very hard, and that was the last we saw of dad until 1946. October, September?

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah, [there was no way?]- maybe September '46, just before going to Japan he was released from Angler and came to Lemon Creek, where we were. So, that was a real trauma, I must say, yeah. [More than anything else?], yeah.

LU: What was it like to see him again in Lemon Creek?

JP: I was shy. I was 13, just turning 13, and, you know, it was no longer a father, it was some strange man kind of feeling, you know, was- I know he's my father, but the- that's all intellectual, emotionally it's kind of hard to place him. And I felt really shy. And I felt I had to be on my best behaviour. [laughs] I think it was hard for him, too, 'cause he missed, you know, when the kids grow up, I think he missed the very interesting part of a child growing up when he was away. 'Cause- but then, you know, he- after going back to Japan to-

[25 minutes]

JP: We went back to our grandmother's place, his mother's home. And he- that was in Okayama, but he had to work, and- so he went Osaka to work, and at that time with the occupation forces as an interpreter [unclear], so he was again not with the family, yeah. So, I feel very badly for him, that the war had really intervened and messed up his life.

LU: Mhm.

JP: 'Cause in Vancouver he had just for [?]- oh, I can't- he was an agent for the Sunlife, at that time they called insurance company, they changed it to assurance [?] company [or

something?]. He had opened an office, just opened an office, and I remember mother going to, you know, clean it, and I remember going with her to help her out, not that I could do anything, but-

LU: [chuckles]

JP: Tagging along, and [dad was sitting?]. I think in his mind, you know, it was a foundation from where he could really function [unclear]. Everything went kaput, I guess, so it [must have been hard for them?]. When I look at dad, I do feel sorry for him in many ways, yeah.

LU: Where was his office located?

JP: I'm not really sure. It's somewhere in Little Tokyo, I think. He- there was a Mr. Nakano [?], Mr. Nakano [?], who had the office, and then eh was, I think, he- he was an employee. I don't know whether he started off as a student helping, but whatever it was, he used to for Mr. Nakano[?]. And then Mr. Nakano[?] passed away, so my father, I believe, took over in the office. But he- I think it was somewhere in Little Tokyo. It's funny, I never even remember exactly.

LU: Mhm. So, was your father always working for the insurance- or, at Sunlife? Or was he working somewhere else before.

JP: He told [?]- I- not that he told [?]- I don't know who told [?], maybe my mother did [?], but I think as a student- well, he finished high school in Japan, commercial [?] high school where he was a, you know, must be around 20, somewhere around there, I'm not quite sure. Actually, my older brother would know, he has a memory like an elephant. But then he wants to learn English, and they [?] first put him in Grade 8, and the- they were all, you know, all too young. Anyway, he got himself into high school, Britannia High School in Vancouver-

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And while he was a student, I was told that he spent one summer fishing- is it? Salmon fishing, or something. I don't think he did any [tree things?], forestry or tree-cutting [unclear] I know- I was told that he tried to earn funds by working during vacation time, yeah. And I don't know whether he went every year while he was in high school or whether it was then [?] that he start to go working with Mr. Nakano [?]-

LU: Mhm.

JP: But as far as I know, fishing and Sunlife was what he did, yeah. I think he did very well, because I remember when I was about five or so, Sunlife- he won some prize and he was invited to Montreal. In those days, from Vancouver to Montreal, that's a real trip, you know, no airplane. I think he came by railway.

LU: Mhm.

JP: He was made a member of what they call [unclear], and then on his way coming home, he came through USA [United States of America].

[30 minutes]

JP: So, he came home with presents for us, little bits and pieces. I know he got me an Indian handicraft, and a great big pencil, and all that kind of thing, I do remember that, he was gone for I guess a couple of weeks, I'm not sure exactly. But- so I guess he was doing quite

well, yeah.

LU: Mhm.

JP: But [I didn't know?]- and I do remember also when war started in Europe, he was selling victory bonds for the war effort. And they used to be- it looked like ice cream cone, with- it was yellow, the cone- you know, that sort of place. And the top where the ice cream usually sits, that's was coloured red, and the pin [?] was about this size. [holds up pinky to demonstrate size] Yeah, he used to have those, handing out, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. And what do you remember the car that he had, do you remember when he first got the car, or?

JP: When my mother married, when they got married, he already had a car, and [he told my mother?] it was very embarrassing because it was, you know, one of those old cars where you're kind of exposed from here up. [Lifts hands from waist to head] He said she said it was really kind of embarrassing to ride it, and- but I do remember- by the time I started getting conscious of it, it wasn't that anymore. But I remember somewhere in the late- I have vivid memory of it, so I must have been at least five, somewhere around there. He got a white-coloured Pontiac. And the Pontiac had the [unclear] Pontiac's head, you know, at the front. These days they don't do that sort of thing. And it had a running board as well-

LU: A running board?

JP: You don't know, I guess, [you know cars?]. [chuckling] [mimes opening a door] The door- there's a little step.

LU: Oh yeah.

JP: On the side, yeah. [And I?] used to sit on it, it was wine-coloured, and the [catchword was?] it was streamlined, you know, [traces curved shape in the air] it was like this, it wasn't like this anymore, [traces boxy shape in the air] it didn't have many corners. It was a nice white colour, Pontiac.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: I remember simply because of the head [?] [unclear] Pontiac, yeah. He always, I think, drove because of his job, you know, when you're trying to talk to people to join you have to- yeah, he used to have [?] quite a few. Once he said he was going to take myself and my younger brother, must have been a Sunday or something. He was going to Port Moody, Port Moody is an area somewhere near Vancouver, I guess. I'm sure it's all built up now. But in those days, he got caught in the mud. [laughs] The car got caught in the mud. And my little brother and I- I shouldn't [be saying all this?], but my little brother and I were sitting in the car, but he hadn't locked the door, so a teenager, I think it would be, came in overalls, and he tried to start the car. And I was feeling very frightened, told him to get out, but he wasn't going to listen to me. So, so we had some very interesting trips.

LU: [laughs]

JP: He did take us to Harrison Hot Springs once, I remember that. White Rock, that area.

LU: Oh wow. And you went to Strathcona [?] Public School, what do you remember about the classes there?

JP: In Grade One I was very quiet, I talk a lot now, but I was very quiet in kindergarten. The teachers, in fact, told my mother that I cried too much, that, you know, [a little thing?] I

would be crying. [chuckles] Anyway, in Grade One there was another Japanese girl, quite a number of Japanese students, people. And Mei-chan [?], Meiko Aoki [?] was one of them. In those days, you know, the desks had holes for inkwell? She put her hand in there and she got caught [?], her wrist. [chuckles]

[35 minutes]

JP: And then I think the school nurse came with hot water and soap to get it out. She didn't cry, but I cried. [laughs] I couldn't [unclear]. And everybody teased me. I cried. I was the only one crying.

LU: [laughs]

JP: I don't know why I cried, I kinda maybe [unclear] thought she cut her hand [or something?]. Yeah, and this- the teachers were quite nice. This teacher, [Joy Naveen?], woman's whatever, WAC [?]- woman's- when the war started, she joined the- I don't know whether- well, she joined the armed forces, so that was- I liked her very much, but that was the end. And then- I'm getting a bit confused; I must have been- I must have done two years in Strathcona [?] rather than three. We- let me see- oh, maybe- anyway, she was very nice and we had projects like learning about the- in those days, we called them Eskimos- and so, you know, we would- one of the projects was to build an- make a little settlement, Eskimo settlement. Get the lock [?] soap, you know, you beat it up, make igloos. Well, she needed something, she asked us if any of us had cups, and I said my mother had tea cups. So, she said "Oh, can we borrow it?" So, I asked my mother, and I took the o-cha(green tea) one, you know, the flatter kind, not this tall kind, and used that.

LU: [laughs]

JP: I really think I was a teacher's pet, I really liked her, and I hung around her. And once or twice, when there were projects, I stayed behind to help. And once or twice my mother came with my younger brother because I hadn't come from school. It was before telephones. Yeah, so I really enjoyed her a lot. And then I had a teacher who was a typical- Miss Blackwell, I think her name was- she was a typical spinster teacher, I think, I really don't know, but I don't think she could have been married. But she was very proper and dressed in black. I liked her too, actually, I liked her, but not warm. Yeah, I tried very hard to be a good girl.

LU: [laughs]

JP: I didn't do very well, but- [laughs] I tried to be a good girl, and the Strathcona [?] school was frightening in the sense that I was told that when there was a flu epidemic in- Spanish Flu epidemic- in 19- what? 1918 or something, around Vancouver, they had used the school basement as a- for people who needed treatment, or whether it was or morgue, or whatever, but you know, kids talk, and the idea was that it had been a morgue. The washroom, toilets were downstairs, and I used it get frightened having to go. It was a vast school, very dark. [laughs] So, that was a bit of a scary experience. Like, kids talk, I'm sure part of it is not true, but that was what the school legend said.

LU: [laughs]

JP: That's [unclear].

LU: What about your non-Japanese friends, as well? Did you have a lot of non-Japanese friends in your classes?

JP: I don't think I had any, actually, I don't I had any non-Japanese friends at that time. Too many Japanese, I guess. I think- I have photographs of my class and so forth, but they're mostly Orientals.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

JP: Yeah.

LU: Do you remember any other activities that you would do at the Strathcona [?] school, was there- did you ever celebrate, you know, Victoria Day, May 24th, or-

JP: Right [?], but I really don't remember much, I really don't remember. I'm sure we had May 24th, maybe a Maypole or something.

[40 minutes]

JP: But I don't really remember that part of school. And as I said earlier, I had appendectomy, and in those days, especially- well, partly because I was in- they had to insert rubber tube and things, it was, you know, they sort of said, [you know?], "There's a new medicine called penicillin, if she's lucky she'll make it, but she may not," kind of thing. So, it was a very severe case, mind you, but they kept me in hospital for three weeks.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And when September came around, I wasn't really ready to go back to school yet, but those who went back to school came back and said that the vice-principal had said that Japs shouldn't come to school, or something, they came back very upset, yeah, but. In those days I guess it was quite common.

LU: Yeah.

JP: From a teacher, that is really sad, now.

LU: Mhm.

JP: So, I remember my interactions with the- [class teachers?], but I don't think there were many white kids in my class [anyway?].

LU: Mhm. What about growing up by your family house, and on the street, and- did you have non-Japanese friends there as well, that you would see, or-

JP: I- I can't remember having any [?] friends but Mrs. Taylor, if you could call her friend, but she was probably only [unclear] person [?]. And then, when people started moving out, then white people came in.

LU: Oh, really.

JP: [chuckles] Look [?] at me, "white people came in." How- but what I mean was, you know, there were empty houses, [some of them?] came in, and then there were was a little girl, I can't remember her name, but she was, I think, a year or two younger than me. And I wasn't very kind to her, we would play together but I really was not very kind to her. I was a nasty child, I must admit.

LU: Do you remember saying goodbye to Mrs. Taylor?

JP: No.

LU: When you had to leave?

JP: No, no.

LU: What do you remember about when you heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed? Did your parents tell you, did you- do you remember how you heard about it?

JP: I don't remember- I mean, I don't remember how I found out, I wasn't reading newspapers, but I guess- I'm not sure whether it was my parents or my older brother.

LU: Mhm.

JP: I'm not quite sure. But everybody seemed to know, up and down the street., yeah

LU: Do you remember everyone's reaction? Did you feel worried or frightened that- by the looks of other people? What their reaction was?

JP: [You know?], I don't remember feeling anything drastic, the Japanese people seemed to carry on as they usually did, I don't know whether it's because it was a city [unclear]. It's very hard, I can't remember. But I do know that the neighbour across the street moved out on some- I'm not quite sure, but he was [an occidental family moved in?]. When we were about to leave Vancouver, my mother wanted my older brother to call a taxi so he could go to station, and I think he- because our phone was disconnected by then [?]- and he went, and I think he was told that he wasn't lending [?] a Jap any phone.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah. And he came back furious, my older brother. My mother was very anxious, 'cause we needed a taxi, but my brother wouldn't budge, said he wasn't going to make [?] it. He was so annoyed. And so, my mother-

[45 minutes]

JP: I was eight, just turned eight, my mother turned to me and said, "Would you go to the corner store and make a call?" So, I called. You know, very precocious eight-year-old, but I went and called a taxi. So, there was that sort of atmosphere already, and- other than the vice principal saying, "No Japs are allowed," you know, you started getting all these reactions from the people around.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And people got- Japanese people, of course, got angry, but what can they do? I don't know.

LU: Mhm. Do you remember when your father had to sell his car, or did he sell it, or did he have to turn it in?

JP: He had to turn it in. We had a radio, in those days they were big, you know, the radios. I remember putting a radio in the car and taking it in.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah, taking it in. Well, what is it? I [can barely?] remember. Camera, radios, and cars were prohibited? But my father managed to store things, public storage, you know, where you pay and [?] store things, and when you [?] we were coming to Japan we [?] collected it, the camera was in there, [chuckles] so he must have stored it before all this happened.

LU: Oh yeah.

JP: Yeah, he had- I had a lot of Ohime-sama [?], you know, the Doll Festival dolls. So- and other things- well, mostly Doll Festival dolls, I guess. They put it in storage in Vancouver.

And inside it was also a camera, so he didn't have it with him, but it was there. In those days cameras were very precious.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And his hobby was photography, so.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: So- but he took it in, and it was the Pontiac, if I remember. Yeah, it's kind of sad.

LU: Mhm.

JP: But the whole idea, I think- I don't know whether it's common to [a lot of people?] in this instance, but my parents thought that after some time they'll come back, or at least my mother did. I don't know what- my father was in that- well, you know. [tosses left hand over left shoulder] But my mother, when we were moving out of Vancouver, felt quite confident that she was coming back, so she decided that the good china should not be taken because it could get damaged. [chuckles] You know, so it was crazy!

LU: Oh wow.

JP: I think all the nice things she didn't want damaged, stained. And she said that that was a very temporary thing.

LU: Mhm.

JP: I think people wished for the best, you know, they don't anticipate hardships.

LU: So, what about family photographs, did you-?

JP: I have them.

LU: Oh, you have them still?

JP: Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: I have- my father took photographs, but every birthday he took us to a professional to have our photographs taken. So. Until the war started, until I was eight, I guess. Yeah, eight, the war was already there, but up 'til I was eight I have, you know, 100 days, one year, two years, three years kind of thing.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: People [?] had this real obsessive-compulsive need to keep records, so each child had a leather loose-leaf, small size. And my mother kept a diary for all of us, her first impression, what did we first say, this, that, [unclear], yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And every birthday we had the Chinese [egg sumie?] on our hand and our foot, baby foot [?], made prints on the paper, so that you could- right now I can see how small I was, with the weight, and the height, and this, that, and the other.

LU: Oh wow. [laugh]

JP: And I was glad I went back to Japan, in a sense, 'cause I could read what she had written. If I had stayed in Canada, I wouldn't have been able to read.

[50 minutes]

JP: Yeah, and everything stopped when the war began,

LU: Mhm. Oh wow. So, did you go to Japanese school when you were younger, or-?

JP: Yeah.

LU: Oh! What do you remember when did you start?

JP: [Would have been?] I guess- was I six or seven? I think I did two years, yeah. [unclear]

LU: So, would you go every day after school? Or was it just weekend?

JP: Every day after school, every day after school. I'm not quite sure, 3:30 or 3, or 3:30 or 4, something like that, for a couple of hours.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah. And I have [?] a friend there who came from north Vancouver, yeah. Poor kid, eh? Such a far way to come.

LU: Mhm.

JP: So, we- I learned all the katakanas, and hiraganas, too, I guess, as part of it, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. And would you have time after public school, Strathcona [?], to go home first and then to Japanese school, or did you go right to Japanese school?

JP: Actually, I think from Strathcona to go to Alexander Street, we passed near my house anyways, so I popped in and ate oyatsu[?], got oyatsu [?].

LU: What's oyatsu [?]?

JP: Oyatsu [?], oh, snack.

LU: Oh, what kind of a snack was it?

JP: I don't know, I- well, it could be cookies and stuff like that, but I remember I had this stain [in my?]- I had a little suitcase like [traces rectangular shape in the air] you know, for the Japanese school, and I had stains in it because one day I had popsicle, and the bell rang and I didn't know what to do with it, I put it- [mimes tucking something away] [laughs] And it melted, so there was a stain on my- in my little bag, it wasn't a bag, it was like a suitcase.

LU: [laughs]

JP: Yes, weird things we do. There wasn't really much time to play after school, I don't think. You know, it's- because there were two schools you have to handle.

LU: Mhm:

JP: I think the language school did a good job, but I only went two years. I think it's two years, I'm getting [unclear]- [puts hand to head] my senior moments.

LU: [laughs]

JP: Mhm.

LU: And was the Japanese school on Alexander Street, you said, or was it-?

JP: I think it was Alexander Street, yeah.

LU: Was it an actual school, or was it in somebody's house, or where did you go?

JP: It was a nice school, actual building. I think it- with donations they built it. By the time I got there it was nice.

LU: Oh wow. Must have been a lot of students there, though, how-?

JP: I think so, I'm not quite sure, but there certainly were a lot of kids. And I think it went up [?]- I'm not quite sure, I'm not quite sure how far up it went. Maybe they had the little school as well, I'm not sure. Yeah, my brother would know. But I'm told that people who did finish that school could really write kanji and- you know, quite competent.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: But I didn't go very far, so- I don't think I mastered the hiragana, only the katakana, you know. [It was continued?], although in Lemon Creek we were told that it was not- learning Japanese prohibited, we all went and learned it in Lemon Creek, too.

LU: So, when you left in October 1942, you went right to Lemon Creek, or did you go anywhere else first?

JP: Right to Lemon Creek.

LU: Oh wow. And did you have to share a house with somebody?

JP: Yeah, with another family. There were four of us and four of them, yeah.

[55 minutes]

LU: What was your house like?

JP: [There- what were-?] Tar paper roof, I'm sure the measurement, I have it on record, something that has all these things written somewhere, but it certainly wasn't big. I'm sure the length of the house must have been like this. [gestures around the room] And they had a kitchen in the middle, and one big room, another big room on the other side, that was what it was, but eventually people started- [when you?]- you know, it's very difficult for two families to share a kitchen, that kind of thing, so eventually it was partitioned into two. [chuckles] So, there was one room on the other side and one room on this side, so [it was a one room affair?]. Yeah, and was a little wooden stove for cooking, and another stove for heating, both wood. No electricity at all, and water was coming outside, you had to go quite a ways with your bucket. And the outhouse was also- could be- go about four houses shared the outhouse where you got a toilet, outdoor toilet. And because it was just one room, the other family we shared the house with, they were all girls, three daughters and the mother, the father was also in Angler. But we had two boys, one girl, and mum we had a big double bed- double decker double bed, double bed was- you got to bed, I guess. Mum and I slept downstairs, and the two boys were upstairs.

LU: Mhm.

JP: So, that was in one corner of the room, the other corner of the room had the stove, as I said, and in between was a table. It was sort of very crowded. And there was a- I'd like to call it a closet, but it was like sort of built in, very small and about the size of one tatami mat, and I guess that they could be like this. [traces rectangular shapes in the air] And I remember the first summer- first winter, we went in October, it was very cold. The wood that the houses were made of, very green, so when you burn wood and start heating, you know, they do- they tend to dry, and of course the- there's lots of moisture [on things?]. On the first winter, there were icicles under the bed. Icicles. And what we did- another trauma, I must say, was that in this little closet I had, when I was sick- people used to- in those days, paper cut out dolls were very common. You know, they're portable, and they don't take space, and they're reasonably priced, so I had quite a lot of them, you know, the Dionne quintuplets. [Hedy Lamarr?], [Susan Hayward?], that kind of thing- not Susan Hayward, but anyways. So, these paper cut-out dolls had lots of clothes, and I had made newspaper to kind of- because I had so many, to separate them, you know, this- I don't know whether you've done it, but with origami you can make pouches, and this one was for Shirley

Temple, and this one was for this, that, and the other. And I had to- in this closet, in midwinter, when I went, thinking I was going to play with them, they were all iced. Ice had formed all over, and I couldn't- short of tearing them, I couldn't get them out. And I remember looking at it and feeling very sad. My precious dolls! And they were under the thing, under the ice, that's how cold it was.

LU: Oh my goodness.

JP: This is the closet, very small closet attached to the one room space we had. And then, as time went on people started building extensions, yeah.

[60 minutes]

And we didn't have an extension, but there was- we didn't have a proper extension, but there was a woodshed extending [?]. I had a fight with my mother, and my friend had a fight with her sister, so we both decided we were going to leave home, [laughing] we went to live in the woodshed, [you see?]. Went on top of the wood pile, said, "No, not coming home."

LU: [laughs]

JP: That was not the wintertime, that was warmer climate.

LU: [chuckles] Just going to switch the tape.

JP: I think I'm talking too much.

LU: Oh no, it's perfect!

JP: I'm sorry [unclear].

LU: No, it's wonderful.

[interview breaks at 1:00:43, resumes at 1:01:02]

JP: [Lemon Creek?]was- I think, for my little brother especially, I think when some of the men who were in work [?] camps started coming back, I think he felt very sad- he felt like he was very- he felt abandoned, I think, and he gave his mother a hard time, I think. 'Cause as an adult, he would tell me how- we used to have communal houses, and his friend would come with their dads, and he was at the age where he couldn't come to the ladies' side, 'cause he was, you know, and he'd be alone, and how he felt abandoned. And I think for him it was more traumatic than more sad thing that his father wasn't around. But he used to go fishing sometimes with friends, and you'd see this very short thing carrying lots of fish, you know, stuck on the- literally almost dragging it, [unclear] used to go fishing like that. For me, I think initially being a city kid, and being in the middle of nowhere, quite apart from these things I just talked about, the cold and the ice and whatever [?], it was a new experience. So, in that sense, it was exciting in many ways, I guess, but when you look at it I- it is a very unnatural thing, very unnatural thing, [I think?], and there were frictions amongst people, I think. Unnecessary frictions.

LU: Mhm. It must have been hard to get along with the other family as well, and share the kitchen.

JP: Mhm, right. And that's why, I think, the partition- they had their own stove, we had our own stove kind of thing. And then they didn't have to split the tap because that was outside to begin with. [chuckles] The- for the first while they- the BC [British Columbia]- [let's,

see?]- Security Commission used to give us candles, like [?]- I don't think we paid for it, but one candle a day, one normal sized candle a day, as I remember. And then I think some people started having coal oil lamps, kerosene lamps at some point. And then- I don't know what you call them, the kind you pump up, some people had those, but yeah. So, it meant that, you know, you talk about candles being romantic and all that, it is romantic when you have a nice dinner, but when you're trying to live, do your homework and all that kind of thing, candles really- you have to be very careful, yeah. So, that wasn't a very pleasant-

LU: And you went to school when you were in Lemon Creek?

JP: School, yeah. For the first while they hadn't organized anything.

[65 minutes]

JP: So, when it finally started, they escalated- some kids got promoted, not doing a whole year but got promoted to catch up. SO, I don't think I missed any, but similarly [?] there were- I'm not quite sure how [?] there were- took some time for the school to get organized, public schools. And there weren't teachers, so those young people who volunteered, I think, really did a good job.

LU: Mhm.

JP: They got trained as well during the summer, I think, but, you know, you have these rambunctious kids with no training and try to teach, yeah, it's not an easy job. Yep. And Lemon Creek, we were in the- not in the middle of Lemon Creek, we were around the side. So, it was easy to go into the bush. My friends and I, we used to go into the bush often to play. Yeah. And I guess there were [unclear] two stores, [I believe?], for- I don't know how many people, it's quite a big- it was quite a big place.

LU: Oh wow. And was there other activities you would do when you were in Lemon Creek with the other children, or?

JP: Well, Lemon Creek got the- it was the United Church that was in Lemon Creek. So, I joined the Canadian- CGIT, Canadian Girls in Training, which is the United Church sponsored girls.

LU: Is that like Girl Guides, like Brownies?

JP: [Kind of?], yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: [I used?] to go there, and in the summer, they had summer camp, so we went to- I think it's New Denver, [and our summer camp?]. And of course, there are the school functions. In fact, I remember May Day in Lemon Creek was quite a big thing. And there were, I think they were bigger, everybody made an effort to make it pleasant, so there were lots of things going on, Christmases, and- yeah. But for me it was the CGIT. I guess that's about- organized activities would be that sort of thing.

LU: Mhm.

JP: [unclear] the school, I think, did quite a lot of extracurricular activities in the sense that, I think, you know, it's- you belonged to certain houses within the school, and each house competed with the other. So your house had to train. You[?] learned to march beautifully and play your whatever it is that's going on, you know, you compete. And the other thing

that amazed me as a child I remember thinking, "My goodness," come spring, after the first winter, a lot of people started gardening, yeah. Everybody started gardening.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And the land was very fertile. You threw a potato peel into- you know, you weren't doing compost or anything, there was no garbage collection or anything, so you dug a hole in and you threw- potato peel would sprout and you'd get potatoes, things like that.

LU: [laughs] Oh, so there was no garbage collection?

JP: No.

LU: So, what happened to- everybody would just bury all their garbage, or?

JP: Yeah, yeah. And make bonfires.

LU: Oh, yeah.

JP: If you see a bonfire, you run there with potatoes, so you can toss them in. [I mean?], I cooked most my potato in that. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

[70 minutes]

JP: I think- you know, in those days, compared with the present time, people were more careful with things, they didn't throw things away that much, you know, lots of recycling, reusing. So, I don't think we had that much garbage. That's what I think. [chuckles]

LU: Yeah. [chuckles]

JP: Yeah. So, we had our little plots and planted flowers and things, too.

LU: Just gonna move this one over. [adjusts microphones until 1:10:50] That should be okay.

JP: Yeah. And then we stayed 'til almost the very end of Lemon Creek, lots of people started moving east, east of the Rockies, after the war ended. They started moving so [?] there were lots of empty houses, and I remember, with some of the friends that were still there, we kind of had made our own fort. Made our own club, you know, just go to a neighbouring empty house and you just cut pictures from magazine and paste it and, you know, you do all these things that [?] you think will make it comfortable [unclear]. Have [?] little chats [?], secret chats [?] and things. I remember using the empty house to climb and things, too.

LU: So, I guess none of the houses were locked. Nobody had locks on the houses.

JP: [shakes head 'no'] When people leave, they [leave?], I'm sure [glad to get out?].

LU: Mhm. And what about- did you have any interaction with the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] when you were in Lemon Creek, did you ever see them, or talk to them?

JP: I hadn't spoke- I didn't talk to any of them, [but I?] did see them around, yeah. And in [?] Lemon Creek, I think you needed permission if you were to go out very far. But- I walked- my mother and I, on one occasion, walked to Popoff, I think it was Popoff, we- we didn't go as- well, maybe we went as far as Slokan, we had to walk, there were no buses, as far as I was concerned. I don't know whether my mother got permission, then, or whether that was within the area you were allowed to leave, but anyway, we walked. And no houses, you know, it's really wild bush, you had the highway [?], but it's eight miles or something.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah, eight miles, I think, seven miles or eight miles. And I remember walking with my mother, the two of us. And you have to start really [?] early. [chuckles] And I remember that very clearly. I went to get a perm.

LU: [laughs]

JP: Small kid, I wanted a perm. And my mother gave me a condition [I should fulfill?] if I wanted a perm, so I fulfilled it.

LU: What did you have to do?

JP: I think I had to do- do as expected in school, yeah. And I got my perm anyway. The rumour had it that there would be bears around, and all that kind of thing, so I felt a bit frightened, but anyway, it was a long trip. The Mounties- I think I must have- I'd [?] never seen them in their ceremonial red coat, no, but I was told [?] that that's a Mountie. And he was a fairly old chap, but in ordinary clothes-

[75 minutes]

No, not ordinary clothes, but it certainly wasn't red, and I remember thinking, "But he's not wearing red, how can he be a Mountie?" Yeah.

LU: [chuckles]

JP: They- at the beginning I think they must have been fairly strict, but after a while people went in and out. My younger brother had to go to New Denver for- to the hospital there. I don't know whether they got permission or not, but on that occasion, I think there was an ambulance or a car.

LU: Oh, what did he have to go to New Denver for?

JP: He- at school, you know, the teacher had pussywillow on her desk for decoration, you know, maybe some kid brought it for her. He went and plucked it, put it in his ear. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

JP: So, the doctor- there was no doctor I don't think [unclear], there must have been somebody who did some medic type of thing, but no doctor. They couldn't get it out, so they had to take him to hospital in New Denver. [laughs]

LU: [laughs] And they got it out there, yeah?

JP: [nods] They got it out there, yeah.

LU: [laughs]

JP: And I- I have to ask people, or look at the records, but I remember the first winter a lot of the elderly people, I think, died, it seemed like everybody was dying.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And as a kid I knew [?] it was cold, there was lots of snow. You couldn't see the ground until about April, the snow just stayed.

LU: Wow.

JP: Yeah, it was so cold. And you really didn't get warm when you get in the house, you had to go right by the stove, and- as [?] I say, it was good burning, but the wood you had- want to burn is not dry, so you used the oven to dry the wood that you're going to put into the stove, otherwise it won't burn. It felt very miserable, I think, it felt very sad.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And on top of that, I fell onto a [?] heating stove, burnt myself right along here. [holds up left forearm and traces right hand across it]

LU: Oh my goodness.

JP: So, it gave me a bad impression, I think. [chuckling]

LU: Yeah.

JP: I didn't like them. And I had a morbid fear of fire anyway, it was [unclear]. I must have been about 11 when I first lit my match.

LU: Mhm.

JP: It was cold, that I remember, it was so cold.

LU: What did they do for the funerals when people passed away?

JP: No idea, I have no idea. They must have had some crematorium or something in Slocan. I don't think they had anything in-

LU: Yeah, I don't know.

JP: Maybe they buried them, but I don't think there was any graveyard in Lemon Creek.

LU: Hm.

JP: Slocan had- Slocan is a real ghost town, you know, they had these old buildings from bygone days. So, they may have had something- Lemon Creek was a totally new settlement, they just cut down the forest, and put up these shacks, so no matter which way you turned there was nothing old.

LU: Mhm. And you mentioned that there's two stores in Lemon Creek. Were they just general stores, or-

JP: General stores, yeah.

LU: What do you remember that you could buy from there?

JP: Bread, bread, yes. And- I don't think there was much choice, but mostly food stuff, grocery type of thing, I think. I remember hearing one day that there was a shortage of bread or something like that, and my friend and I were in the bush near the highway, and we saw this great big box of bread, which must have toppled off in transportation. And I remember thinking, "Oh, there's the bread." [chuckles] But it was all soggy.

LU: Oh.

JP: [They had bread?]. I remember when we first went to Lemon Creek the Doukhobors- I don't know whether you know Doukhobors-

[80 minutes]

LU: I've heard the name.

JP: They're the Russian emigres [?]. They used to live quite a ways away, but in the general area. We used to buy milk from them. And then- and we were told that it's not pasteurized, so you can't buy milk from them. So, then I think we started buying from the grocery. So, they must have had that. In those days, things like- tea and coffee were rationed, or was it only in Vancouver? Tea, coffee, sugar. They were on ration.

LU: Oh yeah.

JP: There must've been ways of buying those things, too, and it turns out that things like clothing, they must have had some. But I do remember we used to order from Eaton's

catalogue, yeah, they used to have catalogues and they [?] would order.

LU: Do you remember what items you would order? Or was it mostly [?] clothes?

JP: Like snow suits [?], and shoes, and- because of my father's job, you know, there was some income coming in, and we didn't qualify for the relief- most people got relief. Halfway we did, but at the beginning we didn't. And my friends would get shoes and clothes from the Commission, yeah. I wanted it badly, too. School stuff, too, I think, was supplied, yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: But that's a kid's memory, I don't know what else, but- because there was no way you could get an income. You know, you're just dumped there.

LU: Mhm.

JP: Unless you work for- the odd person who could work for the Security Commission Office, or maybe the teachers, I don't know whether they were paid or what, but there was absolutely no way you could earn money.

LU: Mhm.

JP: So, you have to have somebody- some means of being given pencils and paper to work with, yeah, and clothing. But if you really wanted something nice you had to order from Eaton's [?].

LU: So, your mother wasn't working at all, I guess.

JP: [shakes head 'no']

LU: There was nowhere to work.

JP: No job. Well, she was doing- she was teaching people how to make crepe flowers and- in those days, you used crepe paper making all kind of nice flowers, actually. Yeah, not just roses, but irises, and all kinds of things . Doing flower arrangements.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And people are very ingenious. You don't have the haji [?] in the bowl for forage [?], what they did, I remember my father- my mother coming home, somebody had made it for her, maybe she bought it, I don't know, but a piece of wood like this, [holds up hands to show the shapes] two decker, the top, of course, you know, flower arrangements, and then the middle- the first- like, the top, and there's another one here. Both have cans, old cans, tin cans, so it would hold water. It's all kinda- you know, somebody's-

LU: Carved it, I guess?

JP: Yeah, carved insides so that you could put the tin there, and then the bottom- so, it was really quite nice, if you [?]- you know, big things like balsam trees and things, [very nice?].

LU: Oh yeah.

JP: And I remember there was something that we picked to make tea, [dry it?] and make tea, and they used to use green gauge [?] [unclear]- I can't find it here, a small food like this call green gauge [?], they used to make umeboshi, you know, umeboshi is that pickled plum, red one. They'd make that. They used to make all kinds of things, it's really amazing. So, they were quite busy, I guess.

[85 minutes]

JP: Kept themselves busy.

LU: Do you remember your mother cooking as well, or-?

JP: [nods]

LU: Did she make miso or the rice, any Japanese foods?

JP: Rice, rice, I think, was bought. While in Lemon Creek, Sweden and Switzerland were neutral countries, and I remember one occasion, maybe there's [?] more than once, but we had a ration of miso, yeah. It was one of these countries, maybe Switzerland or Sweden, it was given to us.

LU: Mhm.

JP: Because it's very difficult to make miso, yeah. Shoyu and things, too. I think it must have come with that, too.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

JP: Yeah, miso- I don't remember her making miso at all, I think it had to be somehow gotten. Maybe they got it from somewhere Chinese, or maybe somebody did get something. People are very wise. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

JP: And, [as I say?], you know, I went to learn Japanese with a nice old gentleman, yeah. And polished up on my hiragana, but very reluctantly. [laughs]

LU: Was that every day after school, or on weekends, or-?

JP: I can't remember, must have been something like once a week.

LU: And what was his name? Do you remember?

JP: [Tateishi?][Tateishi?]

LU: [Tateishi?].

JP: Yeah, he was an elderly gentleman, his family was very young. He was- but I think he was a real Japanese, to the marrow of his bones.

LU: [laughs]

JP: Right, very strict, yeah.

LU: And were there other students that would go and learn as well?

JP: [nods]

LU: How many would he teach altogether?

JP: I don't know, we'd sit around table, about five? Six or something.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: He'd be looking for his glasses when it's up here. [touches forehead] [laughs] I remember him fondly, yeah.

LU: [laughs] It's a loud train. We'll just let it pass [for a moment?].

JP: [nods] I- it was really interesting that people came from all over to Lemon Creek, you know, and so there were all kinds of ho-gen [?], all kinds of dialogue, Japanese dialogue.

LU: Oh.

JP: Yeah- dialect, sorry, dialect. So, I remember learning quite a lot of interesting Japanese then. School- even at school, I think, we spoke Japanese, I think. We were expected to speak English, perhaps, but with friends we were speaking real mixture. I think people in high school may have been speaking to each other in English, but in lower, primary school I

remember “Me store ani-ki-no [?]” kind of language, “I’m going to the store, me store ani-ki-no [?],” yeah. And then you had people from Wakayama speaking their Japanese, people from Shiga prefecture speaking their Japanese, you [?] pick up all kinds of- people from Okayama, like myself, speaking Okayama Japanese, so it was really quite colourful. Yeah. LU: [laughs] Oh wow. I never knew that it would be- like, I knew there was different dialects, but I never actually thought of how it would impact on the different internment camps as well, so yeah. So, did your mother speak any English at all, or did- I think you mentioned just basic-

[90 minutes]

JP: She didn’t speak any English. She could read- or, I should say, for instance, in the newspaper, in Vancouver, in the newspaper, if it says that Woodworth’s [?] is- Simpson’s, Hudson’s Bay, whatever, is having a sale, she wants to buy something, you know, she would find that it’s on sale and she’d go and she’d do her shopping. But most of the things that she needed daily, groceries and things, she can just pick up an order from one of the Japanese stores like- what did they call them? Union [?] or whatever, you know, Japanese stores. I don’t think she really needed to learn English, unfortunately. But when we were young- when we were small, she used to go to the Holy Cross Mission, who had English language classes in the evening once a week.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: We didn’t want her to go, we wanted her to stay, and she have to make effort to convince us to let her go. [laughs]

LU: [laughs] Oh wow.

JP: She had some- in Japan, medicine- in Japan [unclear] the country, they sent out scholars to various countries to, you know, import things. For something like the armed forces, they went to Germany. For medicine, they went to Germany. For law they went to wherever, you know, they kind of did that, and my mother knew a bit of German.

LU: Oh.

JP: At least the vocabulary. More than she knew English. And I remember teasing her about the different pronunciations some words, yeah.

LU: [chuckles]

JP: She’ll say, “Gummy [?],” and I’ll say, “No, it’s vitamin.”

LU: Oh. [laughs]

JP: Right. But she never did, and- but in Japan, she was learning again, over the radio, because she wanted to speak in English with her grandchildren.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah, so she was really doing it until she died, right.

LU: When did she pass away?

JP: In 1974, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. And what about your father, when did he pass away?

JP: ‘81, 1981, yeah.

LU: Mhm. We never really talked a bit about their family histories. So, was your father- you

mentioned he- did he come from a big family, or- was he the oldest?

JP: No- actually, his father, my grandfather, went to the Russo-Japanese war, it must have been early in the 20th century, very early.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And after that he came to, I think, first Hawai'i, and then to Canada, I'm not sure of the dates. And he- and then he eventually went back to Japan, but anyway. So, his wife is the grandmother I lived with after [they went back to Japan?]. Anyway, they had my father and an aunt and uncle, yeah, so my father is one of three. His youngest brother died in Okinawa [?], the war. And the middle one was my aunt, who was a teacher. I've only met her once, I think, 'cause she lived in Kyushu.

LU: Oh wow. Do you know when your father was born?

JP: 1899.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: He [?] was a turn of the century, yeah. He finished high school, commercial high school, in Okayama City.

[95 minutes]

JP: And then wanted to go to Canada, I think his father, my grandfather, must have been around at that time. I'm not quite sure whether there had been friends, or whatever, but so he chose to go to Vancouver, my father, yeah. And then, well, he had a family, [we were born?]. My uncle who died in Okinawa, his family is looking after the family, or was when I was there, I don't know who's taken over now. But my grandmother and grandfather retired, that's a funny way of putting it, but they gave the family profession, everything, to the uncle's family. And they moved down to the next village, I guess, in those days. Yeah, so when we went home from Canada, we went to stay with aunt- this grandmother in their retirement, where they had built for retirement, the house they had built for retirement, yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: So, it isn't a big family. My mother comes from a family with five girls, five daughters, or something.

LU: No boys?

JP: No boys, yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah. And the oldest sister inherited the family. And she had sons, so I had male cousins, so I think they're okay now.

LU: So, did- was her husband adopted into the family?

JP: [nods]

LU: And took on the last name?

JP: [nods]

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah.

LU: What was your maiden last name?

JP: Who, me? Kobayashi. Kobayashi, but not the usual Kobayashi, it's furu-i [?], meaning 'old.' Old, it's not- usually, the Kobayashi, the 'ko' is small, like small forest. 'Ayashi' is forest. And Kobayashi is usually small forest. But mine is 'old' forest.

LU: Old forest. [laughs]

JP: Yeah, it's very unusual. I used to be Miss Old Forest, yeah.

LU: [laughs] And was it your father who went to Hawai'i first?

JP: [shakes head 'no'] My grandfather.

LU: Oh, your grandfather. Do you know why he went to Hawai'i?

JP: I'm not really sure. [unclear] it must have been after he- he was conscripted for the Russo-Japanese War, and maybe after the war. I don't know. [chuckling] Maybe wanderlust, I don't know, or maybe money, I don't know.

LU: Yeah.

JP: It could be, finances. He was the first son, who had to look after the family. And my grandmother was saying that she had a tough time when she got married, because of her [?] mother-in-law kind of thing. I think it's a family that's been going on and on for quite a long time, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. And I guess your grandfather returned to Japan, or? After Hawai'i.

JP: Mhm, very early, yeah. Very early. By the time we were around [?], he was [no more?] in Canada. So, must have been in the- before 1920, I think he went back.

LU: Mhm. So, when did your father come to-

JP: That, I'm not really sure. It must have been- I think he graduate- well, I don't know. Somehow, 1918 is in my head, well, that's when he came, which would make him 20 years old, but seems like it's- or whether 1918 is the year he graduated from Britannia High School. I don't know, somehow- maybe- somewhere around there, anyway.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: He was already working with Sunlife when he went back to Japan and married. So, maybe 1918 was the time when he went to Canada [unclear].

LU: Yeah.

JP: It's a sad part of it, you know, because we never really- he was never around when we were growing up.

[100 minutes]

JP: So, all these little bits and pieces [you don't get?] together, it comes out in conversation, but- what I know of is sort of usually through my mother.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And he was a meticulous diarist. He had these great big diary, every year he wrote, every day [?] I think he wrote his diary.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And when we had to leave Vancouver, he- according to my mother, he wrote to my mother to say that she had to burn it, his diaries, except for this year and that year, and so forth. So, mom got the- you had to get the permission from the fire station, or the police station before you burnt a bonfire. 'Cause she did, and made a bonfire out of his diaries,

yeah.

LU: Oh my goodness.

JP: And it was kinda sad, I think. If it was around [unclear]- and he was also- when he came back from Angler, he had things [?], which I think the Japanese Canadian Museum would have liked to get their hands on. He was one of the hut [?] leaders at Angler, and so- I remember him saying that if Japan had won the war that he had this pair of slippers that was made at Angler, leather ones- you know, [lays hands together] leather, bound together and stitched. [unclear] inside that would have been documented, [like, to show?], had Japan won. But because it didn't- [train passes]

LU: Oh, we'll just wait, sorry. I know it's kind of loud. Okay, sorry.

JP: Because Japan did not win, he was wearing the sandals, but- slippers, yeah. And I know [when I was trying to?]- when he passed away, I went to close the house, and I was looking through his papers, and there was a letter from UBC [University of British Columbia] asking for material, and he chose not to do anything about it. But then I thought- at that time, I really kind of thought, you know, maybe I should, maybe I shouldn't. I kind of pondered [?] over, but I felt like, if he didn't want to that, important as it is, things that might- maybe I won't do it. So, I didn't do anything about it, but I regret it, in some ways, I regret it. But- on the other hand, if that's his wish, [I didn't want?] to go against it.

LU: Mhm. And-

JP: And also, the other thing was, at that time, when he passed away and I was closing down the house, I had to go back to- I think at that point- Nigeria, and I was a bit upset about that, too. So, I didn't- I didn't want to do anything that would complicate issues [?].

LU: So, what happened to the information that he had?

JP: My aunt, [auntie, took to destroy?] what needs to be destroyed. Yeah, so I think it's been destroyed.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: [Everything Japan?], yeah. They used to, I think- you know, he was writing from Angler, and I know that you were limited in terms of how many letters, postcards you could send out, and he- I was told by mother that he used to use other single guys' quota. And so sometimes the letter would come in his hand, but with a different name [unclear].

LU: Oh. [laughs]

JP: But anyway, they had to use codes, like talking about people leaving Angler, you know, young people especially, giving up the fight kind of feeling, I think he felt. And talking about birds leaving the cage, something of that sort, you know.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And I don't think- I think sometimes they were censored with black ink. But they get smart [?], after a year, you get wise.

[105 minutes]

JP: You know, how to kind of evade censorship and so forth, I think.

LU: Mhm.

JP: But he used to write to us every birthday. I remember writing to him that my brothers

were being mean to me. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

JP: Yeah, and he wrote back saying- advising us.

LU: [laughs] Probably to behave, and-

JP: Yeah, [unclear], yes. I think war is terrible. War is terrible, right [?].

LU: Mhm. And I guess- what happened to all those letters?

JP: I've kept one, myself, I kept them [?]- I've been travelling so much that I seem to shed [?] it as I go along. But I think the others, they go the way anything [?] goes, I guess, yeah.

LU: Mhm.

JP: I've kept one, I don't know why I kept it, but- I don't know where it is now, I know it's in the house somewhere.

LU: Mhm.

JP: I've kept one.

LU: Yeah. That's been one of the things that we've noticed, is a lot of information is being destroyed and, you know, it doesn't seem important, but to our archives it's very important.

JP: [nodding] Mhm, yeah.

LU: So, it's always interesting to see if anything is still around or not, but a lot of it is being lost.

JP: And especially for- you see, [I mean?] if we were- if we were still in Little Tokyo, I'm sure there are a lot- lots of information would be up in the attic-

LU: Oh yeah.

JP: Or in the basement, or so forth, it wouldn't be- but we've been uprooted so many times, the Japanese-Canadians, and you really have to- unless it's something from the mental illness of hoarding, or you have so much foresight to be able to, you know, distinguish what will be important. I think the natural tendency is to discard everything, because today and tomorrow is so much more important, you're struggling to make ends meet, you're struggling to make a life for yourself-

LU: Yeah.

JP: So, oftentimes what gets shedded off would be, yeah, would be things like old letters [and everything?]. I think we are lucky that- at least, I'm lucky that I have my photographs and things, but, you know, even that, it has now turned yellow. [laughs]

LU: Yeah, mhm.

JP: Yeah, it's very [?] sad, but- and that's why if you live in the same house for generations, you know, you may find something that would be really good for the archive.

LU: Mhm. Your father's family in Japan, what- were they farmers, or what did they do?

JP: They were farmers. Originally, yeah. They were farmers.

LU: Oh. And what about your-

JP: But by the time I got to my grandmother- my grandparents, they weren't- they were not farmers, they were in retirement, so. But they had little garden.

LU: Oh wow. Do you know what they would farm, or?

JP: The original- it would be rice, rice farm, yeah, rice. I think what- it's a two-crop area, so one crop would be rice, and the other crop would be some oats, barely, wheat, whatever,

one of those, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. Would they have a garden as well for vegetables, or?

JP: I think so, yeah. I think so, yeah. For everyday vegetables I think, yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: My grandmother had [unclear] as well. My mother's family, they were also- they also did farming, but they did, I think, silk worms, silk worms for, you know, to make silk.

LU: Oh.

JP: Yeah. Until fairly recently.

[110 minutes]

JP: No, I shouldn't say that, until the war era. And that's why their house is enormous [?], where they had kept up silk worms, feeding them and so forth during the season, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. [laughs]

JP: Yeah.

LU: Oh wow. And was your mother the middle child, or youngest, or where did she [rank?]?

JP: [unclear] I think she was second from last, must have been number five- four. One, two, three, four, yeah.

LU: And when was she born?

JP: 1906.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah, 1906. Or seven, sorry, 1907. I said six, and my older brother said [?] seven. So, I have to change [but always forget] 1907.

LU: [laughs] So when the war ended, and you're in Lemon Creek, who decided to go back to Japan?

JP: My father.

LU: Your father?

JP: He stuck- he was in Angler until the very end, and then, I think, coming back to where we were, these hardcore people I don't know how many there were, but they stopped in places like Moose Jaw, gradually came down to Lemon Creek, and- on the understanding that we were going to leave on the next ship to Japan, so.

LU: Mhm.

JP: He wasn't in Lemon Creek very long, maybe a couple of weeks at most before we went to Vancouver. To board the ship that took us back to Japan, yeah.

LU: What [?]-

JP: I think it was one of the last ships.

LU: Oh wow. What was your father wearing when he came to Lemon Creek? Did they give him clothes to wear, or was he wearing those jump- the thing or outfit still?

JP: [shakes head 'no'] Not that- he- it was civvies, I think, I can't- maybe it was something that he had when he got arrested. [chuckles]

LU: Maybe.

JP: I don't know, but it was- [unclear], and it was a white shirt, [I remember?]. They were in the back of a big truck. There were- he wasn't alone, there were maybe several men that [?]

were coming, I think.

LU: Oh.

JP: I think they were all coming from the same place. And he jumped off of the back of the truck, yeah.

LU: Did he see you right away, and see your family right away, or?

JP: Yeah, I guess so.

LU: Yeah. [laughs]

JP: [I guess so?].

LU: I've heard stories before that when families are reunited, since the time apart was so long, you would see the father going up to everybody and saying, "Hi, I'm so-and-so, are you my family?" And "No, okay," to the next person.

JP: [chuckles] Yeah.

LU: And so-

JP: What happened was, I think- I remember the- I remember the truck coming right near our house, when he got off. So, maybe- he knew the address, so I guess that's how he came right to the house.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And I met him- my older brother met him. Mother, too. I think the three of us were out there. And then my younger brother- I think, if I remember correctly, he was coming home from fishing or something. And he came walking, you know, he was in the distance, came. Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And I don't even remember whether we knew he was coming that day or not, I can't remember, but I [kinda feel?] we must've known he would be coming any day.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And my older brother had to make the boxes and things for our luggage to bring- to come to Japan. Yeah, so, my older brother really had to be the father to us for quite a long time.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And I'm sure he felt relieved when his dad came.

LU: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

JP: It's an awful to ask for a young boy, huh?

LU: Mhm. 'Cause he was only a few years older than yourself. Five [?]?

JP: He-s- what, how many? He's like about five years older.

LU: Mhm.

JP: He was 18, I was 13, I think, [when we?] eventually went home, yeah.

LU: Mhm.

[115 minutes]

JP: When I say home, I mean Japan. [chuckles] Home is here, now. I didn't really- well, so, I- can I jump?

LU: Oh yeah, of course.

JP: I didn't really want to come to Canada. My older brother wanted to come to Canada after going back to Japan, and my younger brother, too, wanted to come back, but I was quite okay in Japan, I didn't really think I wanted to come. My older brother joined the Canadian Forces in [unclear], and was, I think- it was the [Korean] war, so the Canadian troops were there, and he came back to Canada with them. My younger brother, in the early 60s he decided he wanted to see whatever it's like in Canada before he really made up his mind. He came and he stayed for about a year, he didn't like it, so he went back to Japan.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And I wasn't at all interested, but I started working with developmentally delayed kids in a home for delayed kids in [unclear]. Anyway, and I felt like I was just sort of giving everything out constantly without being fed anything. I'm talking in very abstract terms. And I needed some feeding. And I thought the best bet was social work, so that's when I wanted to come to Canada to do the social work, yeah. And my initial plan was after that I would go back to Japan and work, but I met my husband while I was here, so I did go back, but not stay. I did go back to Japan, only for about 10 months and I left. So, my- I left for Africa, my attraction to Canada wasn't [all that?]. I felt like- I must say, I felt a bit upset about the way I was treated.

LU: Mhm.

JP: Rather precocious kid in some ways, you know, but it didn't sit well with me. And when [?] I was leaving Canada, going on the boat, you know, I was going up the gangplank- the gangplank was such a way that there was a little- I think it went like this, [raises hand on an incline] and then it went like that, [raises level hand] so there was a flat place there, when I was going up that- Miss Austen was one of our [?] missionaries that helped us at the kindergarten we went to, Holy Cross Mission. My mother stopped me and said, "Miss Austen is here to say goodbye." I just ignored everything, I just walked right up, and it's been on my mind since. I felt very badly. It wasn't that I didn't want to say goodbye to Miss Austen, but somehow- it's not that I didn't hear my mother, I heard her very well, but I just had it, I thought. Poor Miss Austen, she's my younger brother's godmother and I really love her. I used to, anyway. She's one of the- very precious person in our young lives, but I didn't say goodbye or anything. I just walked up.

LU: Well, with the war years it's a lot of hardship on somebody, and, you know, just knowing that you're leaving the country and going to Japan, you know, it's something to look forward to.

JP: Right.

LU: It's just- it's understandable to just not wanna have anything to do with Canada anymore for the moment.

JP: As I say, unlike my brothers, [I was?], and I think I remain kind of antagonistic towards Canada. Until when I was a university [?] student, you know- Tippet and Richardson, the moving people, the movers in Canada, I don't know whether you noticed, it's a very big moving company. Mr. Tippet and his wife came on a visit to Japan when I was a university student, and the office called me and said, you know, "We've got a request for somebody who could be an interpreter for these people from Canada."

[120 minutes]

JP: "Why don't you go, you know, it would be a nice part-time job." [chuckles] "And it's only going to be for, what? Three weeks or something at most." So, I said, "Okay."

LU: Mhm.

JP: And I went around parts of Japan with them, and they were fantastic people. And I began to feel a little warmer towards Canada. He was the- with Rotary Club, and he was also the chair of YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] at that time.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: [unclear] the president, Toronto. Anyway, he was such a nice person, yeah. And it made me feel quite different after that. I became a bit more neutral about Canada.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And I guess, you know, when I came to do my social work, I think if I hadn't met the Tippets, I may not have done social work in Toronto. I didn't feel the pull that much.

LU: Mhm.

JP: But because I met them, I liked them, and my brother, older brother, was here, too. That was a big thing, too.

LU: Just gonna- sorry- switch the tape a second.

[interview resumes at 2:02:08]

JP: Anyway, when I came, I felt warmer towards Canada. I came, and it was nice to seeing my brother, living with him for a while, and my sister-in-law, his wife. And their young son. But I somehow felt like I really couldn't settle. So, I was very- the initial plan was to go home anyway, back to Japan, and I had a leave of absence from my job, so I really need to go back. But, you know, there was a part of me thinking, "If it's okay, I'll stay in Canada." But I didn't really feel like it was okay, I'll stay in Canada. It was like- I think it's this hyphenate Canadian that bothers me. You know? [chuckles]

LU: [chuckles]

JP: In Japan, you're- you think you're Japanese, but somehow, you're not quite. And here, I think ethnicity- I think this multicultural, this diversity kind of emphasis opened it up a bit, but I felt, in the early 60s, that, you know, I'm a Canadian, but I'm treated more like, you know, a non-Canadian- not quite a non-Canadian but, you know, it seems like my Japanese is more important to people than my being Canadian, kind of feeling. More important, not in a good sense, necessarily, but sometimes, you know, you people started the war kind of thing. [laughs] So, I wasn't really- in my scheming mind, I didn't think I wanted to stay in Canada as much- so much that I would want to, what? Abrogate my contract to go back after studying. [laughs] Anyway, it was funny . So, I- and in Japan, too, in many ways I had the usual difficulty trying to adjust, and all that kind of thing. So, I wasn't really feeling 100% Japanese. But then I met my husband, and I went to live in Ghana. That was okay by me, because I didn't expect to be treated [well over there?], I expected to be treated like a [does air quotations] Ghanian, and that okay. It was, to me, very cut and dry. [Then I started thinking?] whether this is- was this one of the reasons why I married somebody who was not a Canadian, not a Japanese. [laughs]

[125 minutes]

JP: That's really?] funny.

LU: What was his background, where was he from?

JP: He's West African.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah.

LU: So, when you were- your first trip back to Canada, you were staying with your brother, did you end up going back to Japan for a little while after?

JP: [nods]

LU: How long did you stay in Japan for?

JP: I- 10 months. Yeah. When I came here to do my social work I stayed for, all told, about five years.

LU: Wow.

JP: Two and a half of them studying, and then the remainder was to work. I worked with the Children's Aid there, as well. Thought [?] I should get some practice, as well. And then went back to Japan for about 10 months. And then went to Ghana, West Africa, yeah.

LU: And did you know your husband already-

JP: I met him in-

LU: From that [?] time spent in Canada?

JP: I met him in Canada, yeah. So, we met at the- what? A principals' conference. They were having it in Orillia, lake [?] [unclear] or something. And I was told by the Consul General's Office to go and talk about how they teach ethics [?] in Japan. [chuckles] Do I know? But anyways. [laughs] And he was given the same direction by his High Commissioner [?] in Ottawa, so we were both there at the same time, that's how we met, yeah.

LU: And did you get married before-

JP: No, after I went to Ghana.

LU: After you went to Ghana, oh wow.

JP: But I had travelled there before, on my way going back from Canada to Japan. I had- I decided to go around you know, Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, [straight to?] Japan. So, I went and stayed in Ghana for a while.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And that was when I decided, "Maybe you better get married." [chuckles] Yeah.

LU: Oh wow. So, what was it like when you first went back-

JP: To Japan?

LU: Yeah. What was the boat trip like, do you remember? Or-

JP: Yeah, boat trip.

LU: Or- before we talk about that, sorry, you mentioned that your father had storage, and he had stored some of your belongings.

JP: [nods]

LU: You had picked it up before going back to Japan.

JP: Before going back to Japan, yeah.

LU: Do you remember doing that, or?

JP: Well, the thing came. The box came. Because [I say?] it was mostly doll festival dolls [?]. Maybe some photographs, I can't remember, but the box came before we left for Japan.

LU: Oh, so Lemon Creek-

JP: Came to Lemon Creek before we left. So, yeah. And it was a long trip on a liberty [?] boat. I'm sure you heard about the- their flat-bottomed troop carriers, flat-bottomed boat.

LU: Oh.

JP: I can't remember the name. I think it was Marine [?] Falcon. I used to remember, but I can't remember the name. But it was a liberty [?] boat, [raises hands in a rocking motion] so, you know, this is what happens if you got a flat-bottomed boat.

LU: Yeah.

JP: It was very rough going, but I didn't get seasick. Everybody seemed to get seasick. But it didn't- motion sickness didn't bother me too much. So, I remember looking after some kids- you know the thing, the suitcases go 'shoop, shoop.' [sweeps hands back and forth]

LU: [laughs]

JP: It's [?] terrible. And we landed in a place called Kurihama [?], I think it used to be a naval port. Or was it a [Yokusukai?]- whatever it is, you [?] saw the bow of sunken ships sticking up at the port.

LU: Really?

JP: Yeah. And then people were hungry, and I think they were used to having ships come in from North America. We couldn't- we were- we couldn't go up onto the top deck because a lot of them were servicemen's wives and things. Servicemen- when I say servicemen, I mean the occupation forces, Americans. They were on the top. As well as the-

[130 minutes]

JP: Mrs. Vining [?], who was coming as the English tutor for the present emperor, he was then a crown prince. So, there was a bit of a hullabaloo, but anyway, the workers, the longshoreman and people who work on the docks, were waiting for things to be thrown. Like oranges, and anything edible, and they would scamper [?] to pick it up. It was very sad, in my mind.

LU: Mhm.

JP: You know, and I- I don't know- it bothers me- anyways. So, that was my first impression of Japan, this bow sticking up, and people scampering to pick up things that were thrown at them from- not from us, but the people up. [points upwards] I guess they felt they were helping the poor.

LU: Mhm.

JP: Poor, poor people of Japan, which is true, because people were hungry.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: It's almost like you're treating people like dogs.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And after that we went to a place called Kurihama [?] where- which used to be a navy base, I think. And they had this great big long houses- houses, log [?] buildings, we saw tatami for the first time. "Hey, hey don't get [unclear], take your shoe off!"

LU: [chuckles]

JP: And then somebody went to see- went to the washroom, and came back running, [and said?], "It's a hole. In the ground." [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

JP: "You have to squat." All this was [?] new, yeah. Because the Japanese toilet, you do squat. And then somebody went to buy- went shopping, and came back and said how expensive things were. And they sorted us out by prefecture [unclear]. The food they gave us-

LU: Oh, sorry.

JP: The food had lots of weevils [?] and things in it, worms and things in it, yeah.

LU: Oh.

JP: The rice, I mean, yeah. It's been stored a long time, I think. So that was my impression. Not very good, is it? And then when we got on the train some went south, some went north, and, you know, you had to strategize, I guess, after certain- this car may be cut off, will be cut off, or something, you had to strategize. My father was doing all that, and in the meantime, mum and the three kids, we didn't know where to go. We were standing on the platform for dad to come and, you know, forget about us, look after us. [laughs] [unclear] She [?] wasn't- he likes looking after people. And I remember one GI came, and he had this- G.I. meaning real [?] American soldier-

LU: Oh, like-

JP: American [?]. And he really got angry at us, well, at least that's what I thought, you know. "Get inside, get inside," kind of thing. He had this bayonet-looking thing. And so that was another scary thing that I experienced. That time he came, and we sat down and we chugged along. And then, quite near where we- quite near where my grandmother's house is, Himeji- he went out and bought some figs and persimmon at the station, because we'd never seen in our life any fig or persimmon. He bought it, and then there were these, lot of these kids with- homeless kids, I think, they look homeless, anyway. And before dad could give it to us these kids were around him, asking him for some, you know. And that was sad, too, 'cause you see these kids, they're obviously hungry, and, you know. Furoji [?], they're called furoji [?]. So, we met them for the first time on the- when we would [change at himeji?]-

LU: Mhm.

[135 minutes]

JP: And gradually finally the [unclear] at grandmother's house. So, that was a long journey from Japan, Canada to Japan.

LU: Mhm. How big was the house that your grandparents were living in?

JP: My grandfather had- was already gone, so my grandmother was living alone. And it was really built just for the two of them, as a retirement place. So, it was very- it was one front room and one back room, and then one side room, and then one where you eat, dining room. When I say that it sounds massive, but it isn't, it's a very tiny house, and very nice, nice tiles, white walls, tile roof, and [unclear], but very pretty. Nice garden, but not that big. And then there was- attached onto the side was my- what my mother called Keshobeya [?],

and then that was where you- when you wanted to take your bath, you- what is- dressing room, I guess. And then, the toilets, [unclear] [and then we had?] the toilets, and then the bathroom at the far end. So, I think the tatami rooms were four, at that place, yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Four, four tatami rooms. And then the rest were wooden floors. And then the kitchen itself was on the side. The kitchen was second [?] floor, I think, yeah [?].

LU: So, did everybody all sleep together in one room, or were you able to-

JP: [shakes head 'no'] We slept separate, well, not separately, we- how did we sleep? I can't remember. We must [?]- well, my grandmother slept in the front room, and I think I slept with her at the beginning, when my father was around. He was around only a short time, and then he went to Osaka. But after he went to Osaka, I think my older brother must have slept on the side room, yeah.

LU: Mhm.

JP: Yeah, and then I don't think I slept with grandmother all throughout, I [unclear]. There must have been three of us in one room. But my older brother left soon, too.

LU: Mhm.

JP: He left to go to university, so there were just the three of us. And at that time, I think I moved into the side room.

LU: What was he studying at the university?

JP: Foreign languages, Russian, yeah.

LU: And did you to school as well?

JP: I think we were lucky, because our father had been able find a job. I think a lot of people who went home to Japan, isseis, unless they had some property, you know, that they can work on, or they can sell thing [?] [unclear], they didn't really have much bargaining power, and this is why a lot of the young niseis who went with them had to go and work.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And I think we were lucky because our father worked, so he was able to put my brothers through university, and myself and my younger brother as well, yeah.

LU: Oh wow. And then you stayed- so what year was it when you first came back to Canada?

JP: I came back to do social work in 1960.

LU: And what year was it when you first went to Japan.

JP: '46, yeah.

LU: '46, oh wow. Was there anyone in Japan that kind of had a little bit of hostility or discrimination against the Japanese-Canadians who decided to come back?

[140 minutes]

LU: Did you experience any of that?

JP: Yeah, I think so, because it was right after the 'kill the Yankee and the British,' you know. These were people, even in the villages, they were trained to use bamboo as spears and all that, get rid of them kind of thing.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah, it was terrible in that sense, 'cause the whole country, it was, you know, fight to the last person kind of atmosphere, [unclear] it was quite soon after that that we landed, so. But personally, I don't think it affected me very much. They- Canada wasn't known much, it's America, [chuckles] [they would say?] America. And- but there weren't that many people who went to America from where my family came, so. And at that time there were millions of people coming back from Manchuria, Korea, you know people, because- who lost everything. In dire straits, and they would be living with relatives, and-

LU: Mhm.

JP: So, I guess we were just one of the bunch, yeah.

LU: How was your Japanese when you first went to Japan.

JP: Oh, that was quite another story.

LU: [laughs]

JP: In spite of my favourite teacher in Vancouver it wasn't very good. I don't think I knew very much kanji, but I was lucky because I had a very good teacher. I think I've been always blessed with good teachers. I had a lady teacher named Kobayashi, she was married, and I think she was a mother already. She was my homeroom teacher, in other words, she was my classroom [?] teacher. And the whole education system had been revolutionized and I was in the first year of the- first year of the new junior high school system. And this poor lady got me in her class. And [it would be?] Grade Seven [if it goes?] properly.

LU: Mhm.

JP: I would have been in Grade Seven here, Canada, if I hadn't left. And she literally took me by the hand and gave me the textbook, called grade 3 textbook. And she went through all the kanji with me.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah, almost every day. So, by the end of the second term, first term [unclear], second term, I had caught up, pretty much, yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: And it's simply because she was so helpful. She got me started, you know, she didn't have to [unclear] me throughout, but she got me started, so that at the end of the second term I felt like I got caught up in reading.

LU: Mhm.

JP: Understanding is a bit different. I remember a science exam, one [?] very early on, and then it had- it had a question, I couldn't read the kanji. And teacher- so I asked the teacher. And he said, "It's typhoon [?]." But I didn't have a clue as to what typhoon [?] was, you know, because I didn't live in the county, I didn't know the typhoon- you live in Canada, how are you supposed to know what typhoon means?

LU: Mhm.

JP: Typhoon is another- typhoon is another word- the origin [?] is Japanese. And this science question had to do with typhoon. He told me how to read it, but just reading doesn't make sense, [laughs] 'cause I don't know.

LU: Yeah.

JP: So, there was a bit of that kind of trouble, but by the end of the second term I think I felt

like I caught up.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And I was a year older than my cousins anyway. 'Cause I- I lost a year.

LU: That's right. Oh wow.

JP: Yeah. So, still a lot of the war time remnants of the [war time?] education. Once I got into Mrs. Kobayashi's class under the new system, it was okay.

[145 minutes]

JP: But until the new system started, they decided I should, perhaps, attend the old system for a while. And I think it was during that time that I took- the class had to do agriculture.

So, I planted rice, I harvested rice.

LU: [laughs]

JP: Yeah.

LU: Did your friends at school ever ask you about Canada, and what it was like to live there?

JP: Yeah, some of them- they were very interested, but of course, calling it America.

LU: Right.

JP: I remember one point, one girl asking me if the ground, you know- what the- if the ground was the same colour.

LU: [laughs]

JP: "Some places are redder than other, aren't they?" Kind of thing, yeah. Some very- it- when I started university, and they- you know, I had went to the [medical clinic?] and the idea was, "Where were you born?" And I said, "Canada," And this guy, he was a year ahead of us and he was doing- he was helping out at the clinic [?], says, "Where?" I said, "Canada." He said, "What prefecture is that?" [laughs]

JP: [laughs] He didn't know. So, I said, "North America, Canada, in North America," and then he got it.

LU: [laughs]

JP: But now, if you say 'Canada' in Japan they will all know, but in those days they didn't.

LU: Yeah. Oh wow. [chuckles] What prefecture? [laughs] Oh wow.

JP: But it was- for my BA [Bachelor of Arts] I did a little survey on Japanese-Canadians who went back Japan. I don't know where I've put it now, but anyway. So, to administer questionnaire I went and visited some of my friends from Canada, or people who had been in Canada who were in Japan, very limited sample.

LU: Mhm.

JP: So, I picked [?] some of them, yeah. Most of the ones I met have come back to Japan- come back to Canada, so yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Some of them are still in Japan, but most of them. I think if I had elderly parents at that time, and I had to be responsible for them I wouldn't- you know, people can't come back, I guess. Some friends have stayed on that score.

LU: Mhm. Oh wow.

JP: And then I- because I went to Africa, I came to Canada for good in 1984.

LU: Oh wow.

JP: Yeah, so I've been here, what? 20- 36 years, now.

LU: And back when Redress was started, did you hear about it on the news, or-

JP: I was here.

LU: Mhm.

JP: I was here then [?], yeah.

LU: Oh wow. What do you remember about Redress?

JP: You know, actually, I- what do I remember about it? I knew that there were lots of people working hard on it, and I think my brother [unclear] involved in one way or the other, but I- I was very much on the periphery, yeah. I don't think I- I don't think I had given it much thought. I guess [is the?]-

LU: Mhm.

JP: I had just come from Nigeria, and Redress was '80?

LU: '88.

JP: '88. Yeah. I had come from Nigeria, I guess. And took me about four months, no, four- took me about half a year, a good half a year, to find a job.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And then, I was a single parent for a while, 'cause my husband was in Papua New Guinea.

LU: Oh, was he?

JP: So, I was sort of trying to weather the culture shock [and everything?].

[150 minutes]

JP: So, I really didn't have too much, any [?] extracurricular activity, I guess.

LU: Mhm.

JP: But I did read about it, and heard about it. I think I-no. I had sort of dissociated myself from the Japanese community, and it was only in '98, after I retired from the Children's Aid, that I became more active in- with the Japanese community, because I started to associate myself with Japanese social services, yeah.

LU: Mhm.

JP: And so, I guess, you know, I'm very grateful to the good work that people have done, but I haven't really, really made much effort. Which is bad, but under the circumstances, I suppose I wouldn't have been much use anyway, yeah.

LU: So, how many children did you have?

JP: I only have one, yeah.

LU: One, oh wow. And what was your husband doing Papua New Guinea?

JP: He was doing research. He- we- I guess there- it was- well, Ghana had a military coup, we lived in Ghana for a long, long time. It was very unstable, and when he got a sabbatical, he was teaching university, and he got a sabbatical, he decided to go to Nigeria.

LU: Mhm.

JP: When it was my turn to get the sabbatical, I joined him. But Nigeria was so dangerous, scary.

LU: Yeah.

JP: So, I decided I wasn't going to raise my kid in that environment, because there were so many- we got three cars stolen, people were trying to get into the house, and all that kind of thing. So, I decided to- we decided to come to Canada, because Ghana was not very stable, and he- anyway. It wasn't very- things were so very difficult. So- but- so, we were- I wanted to- we wanted to come to Canada. But you can't sponsor a person unless you're from- in Canada, yeah.

LU: Wow.

JP: And I couldn't get him in unless I came here and became a sponsor. And so that's why I brought- our son came with me, we came first. And sponsor- put the sponsorship papers in, and he decided to take a research position in Papua New Guinea.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

JP: Yeah, so that's why he was there, waiting for the papers to go through. And it took a long time, but it did- he did manage to get here eventually.

LU: [chuckles] Oh wow. But you've received your Redress?

JP: I did, yes.

LU: Okay. Oh wow. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to share with us, or-

JP: Yeah. I'm so glad that Sedai Project is, you know, I'm very grateful for the effort that is being made, and I realize that it's very important. And as I said early, you know, if there's anything I could help with, as long as I don't have attended conferences by computer.

[chuckles]

LU: [laughs]

JP: [I can manage?]- if I can manage, I'd be very glad to help.

LU: Mhm.

JP: I hope you will be able to interview lots and lots of people.

LU: Yes, I hope so, too. [laughs]

JP: How many people have you interviewed?

LU: I think in total we have 58, but I'll have to double count, 'cause I've had a few- a few last week, so I have to double check my numbers.

[155 minutes]

LU: But myself, I've interviewed probably close 40 by now.

JP: Good for you.

LU: Yeah. [laughs]

JP: Sounds like you're doing a lot of interviewing, yeah.

LU: Yes, yes, I am, mhm. Yeah.

JP: If there's any way to help, [I shall be?], you know-

LU: Wonderful!

JP: [points offscreen] These are the things that put me off, I mean, if I could manage them, I'd be glad to be interviewing people, but I can't [unclear].

LU: [laughing]

JP: Pressing many [?] buttons, it scares me. [laughs]

LU: Yeah. [laughs]

JP: Yeah.

LU: I know. Well, wonderful, well thank you very much.

JP: Thank you very-

[End of interview]