

**Interviewee: Mary Akiko Kawasaki
(nee Mori)**

Interviewer: Tonya Sutherland

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THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

Content warning: this interview transcript may have content dealing with racism.

Lisa Uyeda: Wonderful. So, today is September 16, 2011, and can you please start off by telling us your full name?

Mary Kawasaki: It's Mary Akiko Kawasaki.

LU: Akiko. And did you have a maiden name as well, or- is Kawasaki your maiden name-

MK: Yes, it was Mori, M-O-R-I, Mori.

LU: Wonderful. And when and where were you born?

MK: Born in Vancouver, in the district of Fairview. And- 1927. July.

LU: July. [laughs] And what do you know about your family history? So-

MK: Well, my dad came to Vancouver, actually, at the age of 14 with his dad in 1897. And he was from Shiga-ken, Japan. And I think he settled right in- I think he went to- what is that now? Not in Vancouver- no, I forgot now. New Westminster. That's where he went. And I think he was fishing with his dad and uncle, and his dad- he was 14, I don't know how old his father was. And then he worked in the sawmill. And every summer, he'd go to- for July and August- I still remember that- he went to Skeena to fish on his boat. And then he'd come back for the rest of the season. But I think he worked at BC [British Columbia] Fur [?] Lumber, and most of the [unclear] had Japanese people, and a lot of the people from India were there, too, I still remember going by the big house, you know, and the smell of butter. I used to tell my mom, "Mom, smells so good." "Don't go near that place!" she said. [chuckles] But they all just had men there, no women, so I guess they couldn't bring them in yet, but the Chinese people [?].

LU: Oh, interesting.

MK: Yeah. Then the war started, but before that, in Grade Seven my dad decided to have his own business and he bought this store, but- I can't remember the name, but it was on Richard [?] and Pender [?] Street. It's a corner store, he sold cigarettes, and chocolates, and candy, and fresh fruit. And it had a- what do you call that? Little café where he sold [unclear] juice and dairy things, you know. Yeah.

LU: Was it called Spences [?] store?

MK: Pardon?

LU: Spences [?]? Spence?

MK: Spences?

LU: Was that the name of the store-

MK: I don't know, all I know is- I don't know what the name of the store was, but when the war started it was terrible, because, well, the regular customers would still come in, but the people walking by would open the door and spit in. And tell these white people, "What are you doing in this Jap store?" you know, kind of a thing. So, they didn't care, they stayed, but then they started to [haul them off?] the store. So [unclear]. So, my dad decided- [it was a whole event?], my mother, two sisters, my brother- yeah. Except me, I was going to school. [chuckles] And they ran the store [?], [it was like?] dairy, milkshakes and things over here, [gestures] over here my brother was cooking the hamburger and stuff. [gestures in another direction] And then over there would be the cigarettes and fruit [?] store, so it was kind of everything. And it was very busy, my dad was very pleased, but then the war started and he decided- and a Chinese couple came to buy it. I think it was 2000 dollars. Because they knew- what was their name? Mr. and Mrs.- I forgot now. They came, and they know that we have to sell, so he [?] got 2000 for it. We got that, anyways. And then we had to go to move back to Fairview, where my sister had a house. So, we stayed with her until we were [told to get out?], but I was in Grade 9, and I didn't have to leave. There was no discrimination at that school. So, we stayed 'til the end of April [?], my friends [Marsha Reynolds?], she was fine, and we just act as if nothing happened, and we stayed 'til the [end of the June?], and then we had to leave in July to go [unclear], I think it was on a train, yeah.

LU: Do you remember, before we talk about the war years, do you remember a little bit more about the store? So, you know, how did your family feel about opening up their own business and-

MK: Well, dad had a store business before, when I was four, apparently, but I don't remember that at all.

[5 minutes]

MK: And my sister that would remember, she died a couple of years ago. And the other sister that's closer to my age, she's lost enough [?], so she can't talk or anything, so her daughter looks after her, yeah. And I have a brother who- five years older than I am, and he was [always working?] in the store with my dad. But I, being the baby of the family, I just went to school and [unclear]. [chuckles]

LU: [chuckles]

MK: So really, I don't know too much, except I remember somebody, after the war was declared, they threw- it was a big picture window, it was a [unclear], see- and so [?] hotels and office buildings. [raises hands on both sides] 'Cause it was only one block north of Granville, which is one of the main streets in Vancouver. And it's just one block up, near Spencers [?] Department Store. So, it was a good location. And- I don't know, I think it was only two years after we bought that the war started. And my dad, before the war he said, "Now I'm gonna have profit," he'd say. And, you know, the war started. And I don't know

[unclear], he didn't want to quit, but my brother and two sisters didn't want to do it anymore, because the customers were all afraid to come in. And they- and guy [?]- the picture window was windows, windows like [?] that, [holds up hands in a semi-circle around her body] and he threw this great big chair into the window, crashed the whole place. The front window. So, we had to sell, yeah.

LU: Did you have to fix the window first?

MK: Oh, right away, yeah. But I don't know exactly how many weeks later that we left, went to live with our [?] sister when the war started, so. I still remember about not being able to go out after nine o'clock at night, you know. But my brother fought for evacuation with the family as a whole unit. And so those people who fought for that- we knew we had to move, right. But then, he fought for the fact that we don't want to separated. And so, my brother fought for that with a bunch of fellas. So, they had to go to the Angler prison camp for [?]- the Germans soldiers were there, held, being held there. But they were differentiated by the fact that they had to wear a- I don't know what it was, a shirt or something, with a big red, [holds hands in front of face to form a circle] big red, [pats back] you know, they call it [hino, you know, hino?] on the backs, so if they start to run away then they'll just shoot them. That's why they did that. Yeah. So, I think my brother was in there two years? We were in Sandon [?] two years, then we had to move out, 'cause it's one of the smaller centres. So, there they all went to New Denver, they went to Greenwood, they went to Slocan, Roseberry. So, we moved out before, 'cause my sisters [are all come out?], they [?] had a job at Roseberry [?] Hall, on Bloor [?] Street. Apparently, it moved to Sheppard, and then it moved up to Steeles or Finch, and now it's come down apparently, I just heard that yesterday from my brother, yeah. So, they worked at Roseberry [?] Hall Catholic Sisters' Residence. And they were helping to serve the residents [that were there], Catholic girls that went to work from there, but- it was a home for them. Mhm, that's where they were, but they both, my two sisters, then they start to find other jobs that were- but at least they had a place to stay for the workers, you know. And then, we went to Hamilton, because we were not allowed to come into Toronto anymore. They said, "That's enough." So, we went to Hamilton, I finished my school there, Eleven and Twelve. And then, it was a [unclear], so we were able to get a job when you graduate, but the principal couldn't find me a job. So, he said, "I'm sorry, Miss Mori, but I can't find you a job." Everybody, three classes had jobs. And I came second from the top, and no job for me. He said, "Sorry, if you stay [?] tomorrow then you have to take the exam again. And you're still not gonna get anywhere," he said. So, I said, "Oh, I'm leaving today." So, I just left. And I found a job on my own at the *Hamilton Spectator* newspaper, I got a job in two weeks.

LU: Wow.

MK: Yeah. So, they didn't even try, I'm afraid.

LU: Mhm.

MK: But there was only four of us Japanese in that whole school.

LU: And what school was this?

[10 minutes]

MK: Hamilton Commerce [?] High. And I know two other girls, but they weren't nice to me so I don't want to mention their names. They didn't want to acknowledge that I was in there. So, when I saw them, I- "Oh, there's somebody else Japanese." And they just turned away, 'cause they were already established, the family was, so I'll never forget that. I've seen them, but I haven't mentioned it, you know, it's the past.

LU: Mhm.

MK: And they were being careful, I think, too. They didn't want, you know-

LU: I think at that time-

MK: Yes.

LU: It was-

MK: But we had a hard time looking for a house, even rooms. Oh yeah, terrible time. It says 'for rent,' and so we knock on the door, and it was, "Sorry, it's taken." And then he'll take the sign out. And as we go by, we walk backwards and the sign's out again. But that was bad, it was bad, but we didn't wanna buy the house, because we wanted to live in Toronto. So, after two years in high school, and six months working for this plumbing [?] company, very nice people, they were so good to me. They were Jewish. They were the only ones that helped us. They know we were hard working so they liked us, you know. So, we came to Toronto, and dad found a house. And I had an awful time looking for a job again. And I'd say, "It's Mary Mori," but that's- sounds good, right? So, when they see me, "Oh, the job's taken," they're looking around. [chuckles] I said, "Well, I'd like to take the test," you know. "No, no, don't bother." Yeah. So, then I finally start to say, because I read in the paper for jobs, right, [unclear] between six and 12, I used to work at the Planters Peanuts, packing peanuts, just to get some extra money, yeah. I did that for about six months. And then daytime, I'm looking for a job. But most of them won't allow it. But then, when I told them I'm Japanese-Canadian, 'cause [I got there for nothing?], Japanese-Canadian, [shrugs] so when I tell them I don't even get an appointment, so. I stopped saying that. [laughs] But I finally found a- what was the name? Canadian- oh, it was an engineering [?] firm. [Brazilian Traction, Light and Power Company?]. And this gentleman, Mr. Malward [?], he said, "Oh [?], let's give you a try," 'cause I had my credentials from the high school. And I [worked in a steno pool?], and I did very well. And the engineers wanted me all the time. Have you been in a steno pool? There's a list, and our names are on there, and engineers comes and takes [the next?] from the top. I'm down here, 'cause I'm still doing somebody else's dictation, but they put their x's, so I didn't have time to go for coffee like the others. And the pool [?], steno pool [?], if you don't have a job you can do whatever you want, read the paper, play cards, and they're all playing cards, going for coffee. I never had a chance. [laughs] So, when there was a job for a secretary, I thought I'd get it, you know. And [Miss Kelly?] said, "No, you didn't get that job." And I said, "Well [?], why not?" And she said, well, the engineers went to her and told her, "You can't take Mary Mori away." 'Cause they want me to-

[shrugs] Well, I quit that day, I said, "Okay, I quit." Well, I said, "Can I get a raise?" And she said, "No, you have to wait 'til September." I said, "Okay. I'm leaving." So, I went on my own and I got some jobs. And then got married. Leaside, he went to Leaside, so I quit the downtown jobs and found a job at Standard Chemical. Javex people. [laughs] And it was walking distance from- we lived in Leaside, [our first home?]. So, that was a nice place, [it was so amazing?]. My son, my first son, got sick with cancer. So, I needed to go see him at the hospital there [?], Wellesley and Jarvis, I think. And [the boy scout mums?] got together, 'cause nobody in Leaside works, the women all stay home and have tea, and I was having a good time. But when that happened, they got a sheet this long with all their names on there, and every day a different lady would bring her [?] car and take you to the hospital. Amazing place, that was. We stayed there 24 years, then we moved away to Finch area.

[15 minutes]

MK: Then we moved to Thornhill, and that's where my husband died. So, I moved to this condo up here, 18 Concord. And one day I thought- I was very lonely there, 'cause my people at my penthouse, they were all working. So, I had nobody, except to say, "Hello," on the elevator. So, I decided to look around, and I saw this ground-breaking place, [I thought?], "I wonder what they're doing," but I never inquired, 'cause it [?] was just ground yet [?]. And then I start looking, and found that this was a seniors' home, so that's how I started [?] coming, haven't regretted it at all, yeah. [chuckles]

LU: And going back, 'cause [?] we've gone through quite a bit there-

MK: Mhm.

LU: So, going back to Vancouver days again, and a little bit more about your family history. So, you mentioned that your father and-

MK: Well, he went to Japan after he came here. He came here with his dad and his uncle and they were fishing. They made enough money to put a decent floor on their house, they lived in a small village. And so, they made enough money to put a floor into their home. And I don't really know too much, except my dad wanted to get married. And heard of this lady who was sewing men's white[?] shirts, for businessmen in Japan. And her mother always said her children have to have a job. Their own kind of a thing. So, one sister was hairdresser, and my mother told [?] to do sewing. So, she was sewing these men's- they used to call them "[why-shat-su?]," that's 'white shirts,' but they call "[why-shat-su?]." And 'cause my mother spoke nothing but Japanese, so I got to know Japanese. But my dad was very good in English, so he had no trouble.

LU: Where did he learn English?

MK: On his own. But he was very clever, very good in writing, beautiful English writing and everything, but it was- I think it was easy for him. Like, I like languages, so I guess I got that, but mother was very small, she didn't want to leave the house. So, dad saw her making- sewing men's white shirts. So, he told his family that he wants to marry this lady. So, they got married, and next day he left for Canada. And she was with her mother-in-law, who was

a very [laughs] strong woman. And so, her mother said to her- I got to know a lot, my siblings don't know too much, because they were busy working. Whereas when my mother retired, I was still at home, so she would tell me all this, and she said her mother-in-law said, "How come you're not crying?" She said, well, it was the day after they got married, she didn't know him before. [laughs] So she says, "Well, I'll try," she says she tried to cry but no tears would come. She was glad to see him go, she said. [laughs] So when she came to Canada, in Vancouver, on the boat, and she was sick all the way, she said, but she thought- she had heard it [?] was paved with gold in Vancouver. [laughing] So, she saw nothing but carriages, mud flying all over, and it was pouring rain. That's how she remembers coming. But my dad was- what was that now? Not [unclear], what is the word for that? He worked as a stable boy. And so, mother had to step in and do the cooking for the staff. But she's never cooked anything except Japanese food. But she loves cooking, so [she learned to?] [unclear] that's where they started.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: Yeah.

LU: And how old was your father when he went back to Japan to get married?

MK: Well, I would think he'd be about 27 or 26, 'cause they got married at 27, mother was 22.

LU: Oh, so they were five years apart. Oh wow.

MK: Yeah, yeah.

LU: And did she- after they got married and your father came back the next day, how long did she wait to come to Canada?

MK: Just about a week, she said.

LU: Oh, oh wow.

MK: 'Cause they got married in Japan, and then he left the next day. And everybody's crying, and mother-in-law thought she was terrible 'cause she didn't have any tears for her husband. But she said she tried, but it wouldn't come. [laughs]

LU: Yeah.

MK: And they had eight children. Four-year-old, he died, three-year-old, he died, and then next brother was 21, he was sick for seven years. So, a lot of the money had to be sent on him, 'cause they didn't have medical care, right?

[20 minutes]

And he died after seven years. The first one four, he died- she died, and then my brother died at 21. And then my sister lived 'til she was 93, and I had another sister, she died at 89, around there. And then I have a brother who's 88, and my sister who's 87.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: And I'm 84. [laughs] Yeah. So, I'm the fortunate one, actually, yup.

LU: That's a big family.

MK: But I only- I didn't know the first two, of course. But my brother that died at 21, I

remember him very well.

LU: How old were you when he passed away?

MK: 21.

LU: You were 21?

MK: No, no, I was 10.

LU: Right [?].

MK: 10 or 11, there were 10 years' difference.

LU: What do you remember about your brother?

MK: Well, he was- all I remember is his being sick, 'cause he was home a lot, and [unclear] to sit on his lap, and I was scared to sit on his lap, 'cause I really didn't know him that much, 'cause he was always at the hospital here, hospital there, and very sickly. So, he had a friend, I think he's still living, Mr. [Ken Mori?], yeah, [Ken Mori?]. My brother used to say [Mori-cane, Mori-ken?], yeah. So, I think- the one brother's [unclear], the one who's still living, being the last name the same, I kind of remember that. But I don't know- remember any of his other friends, you know. But I was 10 when he died, so yeah.

LU: And you mentioned your father was 14 when he came to Canada-

MK: [nodding] With his uncle.

LU: So, I'm guessing he didn't go to high school, then?

MK: No, no, they only went to Grade Four in Japan, most of them.

LU: Oh, [I see?]-

MK: 'Cause he's the eldest, he has to make a living for the family.

LU: Oh wow. And your mother as well, what was her education background?

MK: I think hers was only Grade Four, too. Most of them in the farm area, they only went to Grade Four. But my dad did his own- studied on his own, but never went to school.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: Mhm.

LU: And did your parents come from large families as well?

MK: My other just had one sister and one brother. My dad was the only boy, and he had three sisters, one, two, three.

LU: Oh wow. That's [unclear]-

MK: But I've never met them. No, one sister was in Vancouver, Takanaka [?], Auntie Takanaka. And she had a daughter and two sons, and they were in Toronto. And they all died, oh, I don't know how many years ago. They were married, so I think they were in their 50s or 60s. And then she died at 80-something, she had some stomach cancer. But I was close to her, and they lived not too far away in Toronto, so we used to- they didn't have children, so, you know, I'd always have them for dinner when I [unclear] family.

LU: And did your parents ever mention why they came to Canada?

MK: No, I don't know, he just came with his dad and his uncle. And- I don't know [when they died?], all I remember is my dad being the eldest. He had to send money to Japan every month until they died. And so that was quite a burden, you know. So, then they died, and

my brother was sick for so long, so they were quite- had to work really hard, yeah. So, he had the burden himself. The other two sisters, the one sister was in Toronto and she died. But I think she was in her 80s, maybe. And the other two, I have no idea, 'cause I never met them at all, but they had children of their own too, yeah.

LU: And what about your mother? You mentioned her reaction to her first, you know, arrival to Canada, but over time how did she feel about moving to Canada? Did she ever mention if it was difficult to leave her friends and family behind?

MK: No, she said anything like that. I think they were just resigned to the fact that they have to get married, and they have to come and do the work. So, she cleaned up houses every day, you know, no vacuum cleaner either, she's on her hands and knees every day.

[25 minutes]

MK: Moving furniture, pianos- 'cause [they all?] worked at rich people's homes. So, they got paid by the day, cash. And so, she goes to a different house every day. It's not like housekeeping here, you know, in this world. In those days, they all had different houses to go to every day, they cleaned the whole house. And they'd go to next house, [and next?]. [And then the reputation?] [unclear] they didn't [?] get to pick the one that they like. And so, she worked hard, you know. And then she had to come home to cook. But my dad, in the sawmill, was only about two blocks away, 'cause we lived on Seventh [?], and the sawmills were on Sixth Avenue, I can't remember the [unclear], between Kennedy[?] and Gremble [?], and that's where all the saw mills are. Now it's beautiful [yacht club?] now, over there. [chuckles] So I don't know where they get their lumber now. But I have thought, "It's too bad my cousin's not here," they- this is my mom's nephew's family, my mother looked after them before she got married and left. But they went to Raymond [?] Alberta, is anybody doing this kind of work?

LU: Oh, not that I'm aware of, not in Alberta.

MK: That's too bad, because they would have a history of their own, 'cause they worked much harder in sugar beet farms. [You'd read that?] every once in a while, in the *New Canadian*. And they had two brothers- three brothers and two sisters. And they would work so hard, you know, but the father- having big boys, he decided that the family should stay together, so they opted for that, and they really [?] paid for it. But then they did well, and start buying their own property, and they did well. But sugar beet- and then they got to be [unclear] cattle farmers, yeah. So, they did very well. But they all passed away in Alberta, the two brothers passed away. And now, Martha [?] and the youngest brother, Lorne [?]- one sister died, so- mother and dad died at about 80 years old. But they're all very well known in that community, where they- they're all Buddhist, and they all had- did things for the church. And my cousin, my mom's nephew, would do all the making the pickles and everything, and give me [?] [unclear], Japanese [unclear], you know, yeah.

LU: Was religion always a big part of your family's life?

MK: Yes, I am still a Buddhist. And I don't go as much as I used to, but I was very active

since I was young. But since I've been here- well, I go with [?] my husband's- is November- but I just can't go anymore. 'Cause I used to drive there, yes. And very active before. And my husband was, too. And my kids were taken to church every Sunday when they were little, but now I don't go and they don't go- but we still go in November, the month that my husband died.

LU: What about when you were growing up in Vancouver?

MK: Oh, we had a- [unclear] church was just a block away. And dad was always there doing all the work, yeah. My mother was a home one [?], she stayed home. Oh, she didn't even left [?] during the week, right? So, weekdays she would- Sunday morning was her time to do the washing, yeah. So, she was a dedicated mother, and my dad was always helping at the church, helping at the school, you know. But then mother said she never had anything that had to be done, he would do everything before he left. So, she couldn't complain. She waited for him every night, knitting, until he came home. [laughs] Never complained, yeah. 'Cause that's the life they figured they have, you know? Yeah, they have no ambitions [in those days?], the women, yeah. But dad was a good, he was a good man. But he loved to make speeches, and he loved to write, and- oh, you'd think he was educated but he wasn't, he was self-taught, from [?] Grade Four, yeah. Beautiful handwriting, yeah.

LU: Wow.

MK: And his English would be, too, beautiful handwriting, yeah. But he had no sisters- he had one sister here, but the other two, I don't know what happened- oh yes. After we moved to Toronto- the one sister's husband was a tailor- no, he used to sell men's clothing. But then, things got bad, so my dad used to buy it and ship it to her. To help bring the business back.

[30 minutes]

MK: So, he was good [?] [unclear], being the eldest son, I guess, he did that.

LU: Mhm.

MK: But I think there was TB [tuberculosis] in the family, 'cause they all kind of died early. So, I [?] used to send- what is that- medicine. It was a wonder drug.

LU: Oh?

MK: There was a name for that.

LU: I'm not sure. I don't think penicillin was invented yet.

MK: No, no, it was something else. And he used to send her by mail [unclear].

LU: Wow.

MK: Yeah. So, he did a lot for her.

LU: Mhm. What do you remember about your house growing up in Vancouver, or- you've moved around a little bit in your [unclear]-

MK: Yes. Well, at the first house that I remember- apparently, I don't remember, but we were in a cabin, we used to [unclear]. And it's like an apartment building, everybody's renting. And mom and dad were on the main floor, and all of us would have just one room,

then the bedroom, and they cooked a little bit in the hallway, kind of- I still remember going there, [unclear] amazing place. Then they had a Japanese bath house in the building at the back, and 'cause we never did that, so I was amazed at that. I don't know how many families- one, two, three, four, maybe eight families there. All have just one room and maybe there's a bedroom, I never went in, mom and dad had a big place, so- but I don't remember a living [?] room. But apparently, I was born there.

LU: Oh.

MK: Yes. But the one I remember is the house a block away from the church. It was a big house, and two storey, [traces wide circle with hand] and a big green grass there. We used to take [unclear] to play tennis [if it was like not a lawn?]. And then there was a fence there, and then beyond that there was a big dog house, police dog. And then, past that is all vegetables growing [?]. And there's a gate, all the way, that goes down to the back, too. And I remember- I didn't have to do anything, but we had a hardwood floor, and I would get a ride on the big stick with [unclear]. And I'd sit there, my brother has to push me. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MK: And all the easy things, I was a very lucky person. So- my sister had to help mother, and my brother did all the lumber stuff, 'cause it's all wood stove. But we had a fireplace in living room, but that was just for guests. So- and we had a piano, so I'd be able to play piano, but that was always closed and kind of dark, and I didn't like to go unless my dad was coming with me. [chuckles] But he had a friend, Mr. Macray [?], [Joe Macray?], and he did all the legal work for my dad. I don't know how he got to know him; all I know is Mr. Macray [?]. And he's the one that [arranged everything?] for my dad, yeah. So, the BC Fur, and then there's another, Alberta Fur sawmill [?]. [holds up hands together] They're together like that, on Sixth Avenue. That, I remember, but I really- my brother- no, he never worked there, he went to high school, so I don't know. But the war started and put an end to everything, so. And when we had to- 'cause we sold the house to have a restaurant, right? So then when we had to come out to go live with my sister. So, that [must have been her life?]. I still remember, when we were moving, you know, we can only take one suitcase. But my sister's basement had a room, kind of a storage room. And so, all the good things, they put it in. I still remember, they put it in, [traces shapes in the air with hands] looks like two by six, or whatever you call it, big board, this way and this way, and then some more, bang, bang, bang. I remember seeing all good stuff that he [?] couldn't have- 'cause we thought we'd go back. We didn't know it was gonna be permanent, you know. Yeah, I still- I can still see their [?] house. Course, I was going to Grade Nine then, you know.

LU: Mhm. And you mentioned you had vegetables growing in your garden in the back-

MK: Mhm.

LU: And what would you have grown? Who did the cooking, or-

MK: My mother did the cooking, but I remember the white- [traces long shape with hands] we call it daikon, it's a radish, and spinach, and lettuce. All that stuff. It was a huge

backyard, yup. And then dad, when he came home from fishing, he'd be salting all this huge salmon. I used to watch him sitting there, you know.

[35 minutes]

MK: [chuckling] I didn't like the smell. I remember that. But everybody else was- my sisters- I don't know if it's summer time or what, but they used to work at the cannery, two of my sisters. One sister's already married, so the two younger ones, I remember they're walking, I don't know where the cannery was. 'Cause we lived at five blocks north of city hall, on Seventh Avenue, city hall. Tenth Avenue, Eleventh Avenue. And so, I still remember my sister coming home from that fishery or cannery, what do you call it. Oh, they stunk! Oh, it was terrible. So, they'd come home and take a shower, and hair and everything. But I never have to do anything, 'cause I was the [?] baby. [chuckles] But I still remember, didn't want them to come near me. [laughs] All I did was eat and be waited up, 'cause I was always sick. Always sick, sick, sick.

LU: Oh, really?

MK: Chickenpox, measles, everything. Whatever there was going, I would get it. And my sisters- we'd sleep together in the one bed, two of us, and they never got anything from me. But they still had to stay away from school, after I'd come back after school, they'd have to stay home. Quarantine. They don't even do that now. So, they used to get mad at me, just because you'd [?] have to stay home, 'cause they liked school, yeah.

LU: Did you like school as well?

MK: I was always sick; I missed a lot. And I was just told- how many years ago I had my back operation at Sunnybrook? And he said- I've always been told that I've- that I have- what do they call that? I've had TB, but- I haven't had TB, but there's scar tissue on the X-rays. And the last time I went for my back operation, which is about 15, 12 years ago, the doctor at Sunnybrook said- I said, "I have scar tissue." "No, no, you've had TB," he said. Well, he said, "When would that be?" I said, "I don't know," I was never told that I had it. But all that time that I was sick, I think I must have had something like that. But they said, "No, you haven't got- this is scar tissue," shows me on the X-ray, "this means you've had it." So, that's because I was- and the school nurse always told me, we had a note to take home, "This child needs to be in bed by seven." And no one else had to, but I had to. So, I think I was, had a bit of a [unclear] my brother, 'cause I was with him, 'cause I was still at home, yeah. So, that I remember. So, I was always sick, but nobody got it from me. We went to Sandon and nobody got TB the whole house, there's five people in the whole- five families in one house. And when [?] we went back to BC, there was a museum in Sandon. And the house we lived in was the mayor's house. No wonder, it was nice. But then there's five families. Me, my mom, and dad, and my two sisters, and one sister whose husband went to camp, and then they had a child. So, seven of us on the main floor, besides my brother- my dad's sister and her husband, and her daughter. And then then her husband's at camp. And then upstairs was the Kitagawa and Mochizuki [?] family. They had kids, and they had the upstairs. But

we had a flush toilet. It's not like the other camps. And- but we had an outside john as well, 'cause so many living there. And then they built a Japanese tub for the whole house- no, just not us, our house, the next door was Matsui's [?] after that, Hoita's [?] and Koga's [?], and they had their certain hours to come take a shower- take a bath, a real Japanese tub.

LU: Oh, there were certain hours that you could go?

MK: Mhm. The men get to use it first. Always. Whereas the big relocation camps, they had a separate one- well, there's thousands of people, right. Whereas with us, there's only 50 [?] people, maybe. So, the men have to use it. And then women are after. [chuckles] 'Cause you wash up before you go in, so it's not- doesn't sound as bad really. [chuckles] So, I remember that.

[40 minutes]

MK: We were only there two years. But the people who stayed after we evacuation started to go to somewhere else, they had to mingle in with others who were already established in the camp, you know. So, it was hard for them, I'm sure. But my dad had the foresight to come out- but a lot of them didn't want to come out, they didn't know what it was like. Well, we all figured it's going to be discriminatory anyways, right? But it's much better here. In those days, you couldn't even go to university, the men. No, they wouldn't let you go to UBC [University of British Columbia]. And then you come, you can go to U of T [University of Toronto], they're not as bad. Well, it was bad enough, 'cause we couldn't find a place to rent. It was bad. And we were told- we rented a house in Leaside- in Hamilton- "Don't you dare talk outside of [your room?]." [holds finger to lips] [You'd have to go?] "Shh," and we whispered all the time. His lady didn't like to hear us. And we were quiet. You know, we're all, like, girls. My brother was in relocation camp. So, [holds fingers to lips] [we whispered?], and we couldn't have company. So, we finally found a whole house to rent. And so that was nice, you know. But then we didn't have a living room- we had a living room, but no dining room, dining room was [unclear] [so we'd?] have a bedroom. And then upstairs, there was another family there, big family, yeah. So, that was pretty hard. But there was a club that we joined. So-ed [?], or something like that. It's for niseis, and we got together and had dances there, and stuff like that.

LU: And who would organize that, the club- or how many people would be in the club?

MK: Oh, I don't know really, I would think maybe 40, yeah. And some were going to McMaster university. But we were still Grade Nine, I guess- no, no, Grade 11, 12, yeah, 13. But then I came to Toronto, so- and then they have the JCCC [Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre] here. So, it was nice, yeah.

LU: And what sort of activities or clubs were there in Vancouver-

MK: [I used to?] dance-

LU: Oh, [unclear]-

MK: [unclear] and dances.

LU: But when you were a child growing up in Vancouver, what-

MK: [nodding] Mhm.

LU: What would you do for fun on the weekends, when you didn't have school, or family get-togethers?

MK: Well, Saturdays we still had to go to Japanese school. And Japanese school after school, from five to six. We'd go to entry [?] school, and then we'd have a snack, and then we'd go to Japanese school. And then we'd come home and have supper. So, it was- I don't remember- of course, I'm at that age where I didn't care, I guess. But I don't think there was anything- oh, we went- oh, the fellas used to- my brother- they used to go to play baseball on Sundays after church. So, you [?] can go and watch them, that's about it, you know? Yeah.

LU: Were you able to go swimming, or hiking, or-

MK: No, no. [shakes head]

LU: [What are?]-

MK: We could go to the Kitsilano beach, which is [?]- I don't know if that's east or west of [where we were?]. But I didn't like that water, so I'd just sit there, by the water, and let my feet get wet, that's about it. [laughs]

LU: [laughs] And did you have any childhood friends that you remember?

MK: Yes, but they're all gone, except my one sister-in-law. All the rest died, I don't know what happened, but they all died. Well, they didn't all die because some got married, but my Japanese school boys, three of them died. Two- one of the them went to Japan, very clever boy, [Nobby Asano?], he went to university in Kyoto, it was very well-known, I used to know the name. He used to go there, and then he- apparently, he- well, I heard he committed suicide jumping from a tree [?]. But he was- we used to correspond. And then when I got engaged, I thought [that's nothing to do with it?]. But he wouldn't answer anymore. And so, he died. And the other boy, he died in Toronto [?], the first day back from relocation camp to here. And he died of a ruptured appendix. And he was a very nice fellow, but his family- he had about six, seven or eight in the family- but I think he was forced to go, and he was my age, you know.

[45 minutes]

MK: [I think?] he would be 16, 17- it's all- the first day here, he was a walking outside and injured appendix, ruptured by the time he [?] got to a hospital. And there's another boy, Kobayashi, but I don't know what happened to him. I remember Toshiko's brother was my age, and I thought he wasn't- oh, they went to Japan, with the Redress thing. And- not Redress, repatriation, I think it was called. And he died in Japan. So, I have one friend here that's still- no, two: Joan and my sister [Ah-kay?]. All the rest passed away early.

LU: And what other memories do you have about your childhood days growing up in Vancouver? Whether it's-

MK: I didn't find it hard because I'm the baby of the family, and [?] I didn't go through any hardship. I still remember, for Christmas, my mother knitting a sweater. And I can hardly wait 'til she finishes. [laughs] And we didn't- I don't think- I had a dog, but I never thought-

I always said to my mum, "If I get a dog." Mom says, "I never ask for anything," 'Cause she says, "If I have a dog, I would like a black dog." [And she said?], "Well, I don't want to buy a black dog." [laughs] I said, "Well, I don't want one unless it's a black dog" I said, I don't know why. I've always- when I see one in the story, and [I said?] to her, "I'd like that dog." "No!" my mother says. [laughing] So, actually, we just played rope, skipping rope, and hopscotch. That's what we did, nothing else. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MK: And in high school, I was too bus studying every day. Studying, because you had to get top marks, according to my dad. "Don't come home unless you're top!"

LU: Oh.

MK: So, in Hamilton I really studied.

LU: Was he very strict?

MK: Very strict. He really believed in education because he didn't have any, and he worked for his. And so, in Hamilton- I could have gone on to university, but I didn't wanna. I just- I didn't like school at all, 'cause I had to be number one, not number two or three, my dad used to say. So, I really studied. Studied, studied, studied. So, I didn't enjoy high school, you know. But yeah, I had it easy, you can't compare life with what I went through, 'cause I had it very easy.

LU: I had another question for you but it's gone now, so if I think of it I'll come back to it, but- just trying to think now, it was something about Vancouver, but- so, what was your mother like, what was her personality like?

MK: Very quiet. And all she did was- she sewed all our clothes. And I don't remember ever her scolding me, 'cause she said I'm the easiest child to bring up, she said I never asked for anything. I could have, she said, because they [?] were no longer paying- giving money to Japan, and my brother was gone, so they didn't have the medical bills. But I was always happy with what I have, she said. So, I was very easy to bring, except I was always sick. Always sick, [unclear], I remember that.

LU: You mentioned that you celebrated Christmas, did you always celebrate Christmas, as far as you can remember?

MK: Oh yes, we always had a Christmas tree. But it was always clothes, it wasn't toys, no, no. It was just clothes. But happy to get that, we'd [?] be happy to get- I never wanted anything. [laughs and points to head] Not too clever up here, maybe. No.

LU: What other holidays or special events do you remember celebrating?

MK: Oh yes. Well, in Vancouver days- I don't know if we- but [?] New Year's, we lived a block from the church. So, everybody who- everybody walked, nobody had a car, I think there were two cars in the whole community. Everybody else took the bus and streetcar, not even buses, [there was?] all streetcars. But we always got to church New Year's Day at 9 o'clock. And then we'd- they walk by our house, 'cause there's nobody going to our church block before us, so they all- and then my mother cooked for New Year's Day, for all day, people would come in to drink and to eat.

[50 minutes]

MK: And so, they all dropped in, even my friends would drop in before they went home. And mother would have this- she loved to cook; she was an amazing cook. And that's all I remember, actually. Or, [I had?] one man who always got sick at our house, and I used to hate to see him come. If I see him coming in the door- you know, nobody locked the door in those days- you see him coming- I know his name, but I don't want to mention it, [chuckles] 'cause I think he's gone now, but he was always sick. He was [?] allergic. He shouldn't be drinking. But then nobody drove, so it didn't matter, I guess. I [?] had no idea where he lived. But every New Year's Day I'd see him, and I'd be just terrified of him. [laughs] But my mother would cook from the day before, and then we always had to have udon, noodles, on New Year's Eve to have a long life. That's what noodles meant. So, that's all I remember. And then this white mochi, you know what that is?

LU: The pounded rice?

MK: Yes. And- it used to stick with me. And so, I'd have to cut it up with chopsticks like this, put sugar and soy sauce on it, and then I'd be able to- otherwise, I'd choke all the time. But I had to have that with miso soup in the morning. And udon at night, after 12 o'clock.

LU: After 12 o'clock at night?

MK: 'Cause it's the end of the year and long life, so we have udon. Mother would cook fresh udon for that.

LU: She'd make the noodles [and everything?]?

MK: Oh yes. [nods]

LU: Wow.

MK: She loved to cook, she could cook anything, actually. So, when she gets invited up [?], she's always wondering about how to do it differently, or should she do it the same, and- very competitive, my mother was. You'd never know, because it's only with the food. And the sewing has to be perfect, you know, 'cause that's all she did before she was married, yeah. So, I remember her making me plaid skirts with beautiful pleating on them. And I'm the only one she did that for, apparently [?]. So, my sisters didn't like it, apparently [?], I don't know. [chuckles]

LU: [laughs]

MK: So, I was one of the luckiest in the family, being the baby. But then I was always sick. But now I'm the healthiest one. You never know!

LU: Mhm.

MK: You never know.

LU: And- you would have been really quite small during the Depression years, but do you remember anything about the 1930s and the Depression years? Did it seem to impact your family?

MK: No, I really don't. I was born in 1927. The Depression came in 1929. But I have a friend who said, "I remember-" she said she remembers going next door to find- if she can do any

work for them for money. But no, I never went through that. Life was glorious and easy, as far as I was concerned.

LU: Mhm.

MK: But I'm sure my sisters and- they were all- [they know?] what Depression was like. I have no clue.

LU: And what about the time leading up to the war? Did you notice that the community changed, or the atmosphere towards Japanese people [?]-

MK: Well, on our block- all the Japanese seemed to be in the same are, whereas our block, we were the only Japanese. They were all white people, next door was Jewish, across the street were [?] the German family. But we all had big houses, and lots of space, so that we [?] really didn't get to know. 'Cause they weren't my age. So, I didn't know- and the man next door had a huge property, and he was selling chickens, that's all I remember. We used to go and buy chicken. And he would just knock their head a bit, and then mother would bring it home. And I'd have to go with her. And I don't wanna look at it. She comes home and she puts a match on the fur, so to burn it off a bit. But she plucked all the furs- the feather off. But I really didn't know if he [?] had children, even, yeah. But the next block had a- one, two, three Japanese family. But nobody was- oh, one girl was my age. She went to Japan. Some [?] went to see her on the Japan trip. And I phoned her to say I- you know, because we used to correspond. And she was my age, too. She- I felt so sorry for her, she didn't seem to go to high school, or even- I don't think she went to Grade Seven or Eight.

[55 minutes]

MK: And a very nice girl, but she used to stutter, so she stayed home mostly. But then she went to Japan and got married, and married a wonderful man, and we went to see him. I remember my husband got to like him, and [unclear]- but that's just the once, and then that's it, you know. And then he died early, and then she died early. In fact, she had a daughter and a son, but that's the only one I kept in touch with, you know, yeah. Her name was O-ha-she [?], but I can't remember what her parents' name was. But he was from Japan, and living in Japan, and the war started, and- his mother had two sons, my girlfriend's husband- and the war ended the day he was going in. And he said my mother came to make sure. "I want my son." 'Cause she had already lost a son in [?] the war, before it ended. So, her husband didn't have to go in, 'cause war ended then.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: But he was a delightful man, we really enjoyed him. And she wasn't stuttering or anything, just like that, [snaps fingers] after she met him. Isn't that nice?

LU: Oh wow. [laughs]

MK: But that's the only one- she's the only one that I [?] corresponded with. And so, I wasn't interested in Japan at all. But I did go in 1987, I think, my husband and I went. But I didn't even go see my family, 'cause my dad had given his house to his nephew. But my husband was there from- he went to Japan at 7, he came back at 14. And so, he [unclear] wanted [?]

his family, and so we saw them.

LU: And where was his family from?

MK: [Shiga-ken?]. Not the same village from my family, but it's within 20 minutes or something by car, yeah.

LU: Do you remember your first car ride?

MK: Car ride, what do you mean by car ride?

LU: Well, you mentioned before that your family didn't have a car.

MK: Yes. And I- I got sick. I get sick in a car, and I still do. Unless [?] the driver is very smooth, I get- if somebody drives like that, [makes a jerking motion with her upper body] I need to get at out, yeah [?], for sure. But if I'm driving- I drove for 62 years. If I'm driving, I never get sick. Mine is from my eyes, apparently.

LU: Oh.

MK: So, if I look at- my husband would say, "Oh, look at something for me." Within, what, half a minute, I'm sick. But if I bring it up here and look, [holds hands up in front of eyes] I don't get sick. So, I couldn't look at maps for him, you know. So, my 10-year-old son, he used to sit in the front, 'cause we used to go to Florida all the time, every winter. And so, he used to- at 10 years-old he tells his dad what his map says. [chuckles] Oh, yeah.

LU: Oh wow, that's incredible.

MK: Yeah. He's still living, he's- how old is he? 56, I think, [the one that used to be?]- My oldest one died at 10, the firstborn. He died at 10, leukemia. And the next one was- he was six already, and he's living in Toronto. And then Kent, and then Robert, he's the youngest. But he's 54, I think, something like that. Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: I'm lucky, yeah.

LU: So, when you were in Vancouver you'd walk around everywhere to get to places, and would you take the streetcar? Did you have a bicycle?

MK: Yes. We had to go up- we lived on the Seventh [?]. We had to go Eight, Ninth Avenue, Ninth Avenue there was a streetcar that goes right downtown. That's what we used to take. But then, you see, I used to get sick so we had to get off before we'd get there. And my dad would always bring his white- you know, no Kleenex in those days- he'd bring all this beautiful white handkerchief that mother could wash and iron, and he'd have it all ready for me. But then, before I'd really get sick, I'd want to get off, so we'd get off and I'm fine, I don't get sick, as long as I had the fresh air. So even now I'm very- it's just that if I don't sit in the front I don't wanna go on the bus. So yesterday was a tour from here for the Grand River whatever. And I'm not interested, 'cause I don't want to go on the [unclear]. So, they said they had a nice time, yeah. [chuckles] But bus, if I can get in the front seat, I don't get sick.

LU: Mhm.

MK: Yeah.

LU: That sounds like me [?]-

MK: But if I'm driving, I'm fine.

[60 minutes]

LU: Yes, yes. Oh wow.

MK: [laughs]

LU: And so, did you remember a time when- it may have been your first car ride, or do you remember- 'cause nowadays, for us, our first car ride is literally when we're born, we're coming home from the hospital. So, I know my grandparents, when they were growing up, they were maybe around 12 or 4 by the time they were able to go into a car.

MK: Mhm.

LU: And actually [go into a car?].

MK: Yeah, well, during the war, before the war, people [that we knew?] that had a car was my dad's cousin, who had a fish market in Vancouver. And I didn't like to go in his car 'cause it smells like fish. [laughs] And he had a rumble seat car?

LU: What's a rumble seat car?

MK: Pardon?

LU: What is a rumble seat car?

MK: Oh, it's like a trunk, but it opens, and then you sit there. So outside of the car- it's [?] a rumble seat.

LU: [laughs] Just gonna pause for a minute here, and switch this tape. [camera sounds] I didn't realize it was so close already. [camera sounds]

[interview resumes at 1:01:39]

LU: Okay, wonderful. [laughs] Sorry. And now, leading up to the war years, did you- do you remember hearing on the news, or in the newspapers, or the radio that, you know the war had started-

MK: Oh yes.

LU: What was your reaction to that?

MK: well, I was just terrified, because we didn't know what's gonna happen to us, but- I was still going to school, in Grade Nine, and we weren't [?] told to get out. But my Japanese friends who lived in Japantown, that was announced, they had to go home. Oh, you didn't hear that?

LU: I've heard little bits before [?]-

MK: Apparently the whole, like, Strathcona [?] area, it's downtown, Japantown [unclear]. And the whole school was, what, 60, 70 percent Japanese? So, they all had to go home. Whereas we stayed 'til the end of the school year, nobody said anything. So, I mean, my school was King Edward, and my class- 'cause you [?] changed classes- there was only one Chinese boy and me, whereas two, three blocks away, on [?] the same area, was a commerce [?] school. And it was all the people from downtown, Japantown, even, used to

walk to this school. And so, they were told to get out the first day.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: Whereas my girlfriend Dots [?], she said, "How come you're not home?" And I said, "Well, nobody [?] said we had to go home." And I had this friend, Margaery [?] Weaver, and she never acted any differently, so we just finished the whole year. End of May.

LU: Did any of the other students say anything?

MK: No, nothing. Not a thing. But the school two blocks away where [?]- a lot of the Japanese girls [?] were there, they were told to go home, yeah.

LU: So, what do you remember about Pearl Harbor, and where were you when you first heard of the news?

MK: Oh, that's when we had that store. That's all [?] I remember, really. You know. But then we got out- I don't know how many weeks we stayed. But my brother and my sister didn't want to stay anymore, whereas my dad, he just finished saying, "This, from now on, is profit." 'Cause after we moved in, six months later we moved to another- next door neighbour was a Jewish store, and it was empty. So, we went in there while they fixed the place up the way my dad wanted it. So then, when that was over [?] we moved in, and he said, "Now we're gonna make our own money," then [?] the war started, yeah.

LU: So-

MK: But I didn't feel any discrimination. I had to go on the bus to go back to my public school, 'cause this was in downtown business section. So, I had to go on the bus. And my teacher, Grade Seven teacher, was going on the same bus as me. So, it was kind of nice having Mr. [Toe-racks?] go with me, you know. And then we lived in the next building-

[65 minutes]

MK: [raises hands so fingertips are touching] There's the school next door, my dad's store, [picks up booklet from the table beside her and points to pages] and then there's a laneway, and then there's another building. So, we go- come out of the store, come out, and then there's a door- we had to go upstairs. And that's where we lived. But I don't think we had a kitchen [?]- well, I guess we did, but I had to do nothing, so I really don't know too much. Any my sister would know everything but now she- she has Alzheimer's, though [?] I think, even with Alzheimer's, they remember things of the past day, but I think she's past that now, so, [shrugs] yeah.

LU: Do you remember some of the items that you had to leave behind, or that-

MK: [shakes head] No, I just don't- we all took it to my mom's- my sister's house. No, I have no idea.

LU: Did you know where you would be going?

MK: Oh yes, we- well my dad picked Sandon. And I wouldn't say all, but a lot of the Sandon people were Buddhists. 'Cause we had a minister there, Reverend Tsuji, mhm. So- but it closed within about two and a half years, I think, but we left at two years, two and a half. And so, [you mean?], it didn't feel, you know, as if we had to move again kind of a thing. But

I remember everybody saying, "You only have one suitcase per person." So, it must have been terrible for mother. But I had no recollection of how sad it was.

LU: Were you- do you remember if you were able to take any dishes with you, or-

MK: Yes, we must have taken it, 'cause it- in Hamilton we had Japanese noodle [?], and then Japanese dishes. So, we took enough for the daily things, but not for parties or anything. And anything we had to buy, Sandon had one grocery store, and one big shop kind of a place. And then post office was there from before, because it was thriving silversmith [?] town, Sandon was. But when [?] we were there, there might have been one house that house hakujin. And they were kinda finishing up the silversmith's [?] mill up in the hill, or- by the time we all came, it was gone. But then in the TV it said that Sandon was a thriving place for people from all over the world, and lots of customers from Japan. That was a shock when I read that- I saw that on TV. [chuckles] And that was only, say- I was living in the condo, didn't see it 'til then. So, whoever the writer was found out about it, I guess.

LU: I heard there was a brothel in Sandon.

MK: Yes.

LU: Was there?

MK: Yes.

LU: Oh.

MK: It was in the style, in the TV- where I was- I think I was at the condo, I don't think I was- [unclear], yes.

LU: And do you know anything about it, or who-

MK: [shakes head]

LU: I wasn't sure if there was Japanese people working there or not, but-

MK: Well, they came from Japan, working.

LU: Oh.

MK: Yeah, women. So maybe the men were coming, too, who knows. But why from all the way from Japan? But all over the world, they used to come, it was very well-know.

LU: Oh.

MK: Because it was a railway section, to come, and then you didn't go farther, that's it. You have to go back again. And so that's how it got be known, I guess. So, it was mentioned- more than New Denver, they talked about Sandon. 'Cause there were hotels [?] and things still there. And when we moved in, that hotel was for single men who didn't have family, they often [?] stayed there, mhm.

LU: Oh. And what would- you were there for two years, so did you go to school when you were there, or-

MK: I went to Grade 10. And- 'cause we didn't have real teachers.

LU: So, who were the teachers?

MK: Oh, people who'd been through high school, [more or less?]. And then there's a public school, one store, I think it was, made into a school. And the people who had finished Grade 12 would be teaching. [chuckles]

LU: Were they Japanese?

MK: Oh yes.

LU: Oh.

[70 minutes]

MK: But the- our high school, it was Catholic nuns from Quebec. And they really never taught before, either. So, the tall nun- the boys are so mean- oh, she's a horseface. And the chubby little nun was- they called her cow face. Oh, they were so- and they were the nicest teachers. And they lived just up the hill from us in Sandon. After 9:30 we would [?] hear them on the sleigh, sled coming down, wooden [?] sled, I don't know where they got it from, [raises hand and makes sliding down motion] 'cause they're screaming, 'cause it comes down, and our house is here, [raises other hand] and then you have to go the other way, and they're screaming, having a great time. And always after 9:30, so there's no children around. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MK: They were the nicest teachers; at least, ours was. I don't know about the [unclear].

LU: Do you remember some of the other teachers in Sandon?

MK: With us, it's nothing but Catholic sisters. But the Hemny [?] girls- [Yai-ko Hemny?] and Aiko Hemny [?], they're from Victoria. And Aiko, she was working at the Commissions office. But [Yai-ko?] was the older sister, and she taught- what did she teach, French? Or [unclear] or something. And then they moved to Montreal, so that was the end of that, yeah. But the Catholic sisters were trying to teach us typing, they've never typed before. We didn't have typewriters. [puts piece of paper on lap] It's a piece of paper with keys on there, and we have to type it up [?]. [laughs] That's what we did. [laughs] But I enjoyed it, even. I really liked that they were so nice.

LU: Good.

MK: And [they did?] teach us more French songs, 'cause it was so boring, we'd say, and sometimes we could hear them singing. So, I said, "That's what I want to learn, the French song." So, we ended up saying, "No, no, we don't [want any?], we just wanna know singing." So, the nuns were so nice, and I got to learn the French songs, yeah. And they're [?] from Quebec somewhere, I forgot the name, a small town. But they all went back when we left. They're amazing, but the boys called 'cow face' and 'horseface.' I hope they never found that out. [laughs]

LU: Did they teach you a little bit of French as well?

MK: Yes, but most of it got to be our singing. I loved it, you know, yeah.

LU: So, what would you do when you weren't in school and you had spare time? Were there activities or-

MK: Well, I was too young to go dancing, but apparently they did. But I wasn't interested, so- but my sister would sneak out, and I wouldn't tell on her, you know.

LU: [laughs]

MK: "Don't tell dad!" I said, "No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't!" [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MK: So, apparently [unclear] in the gymnasium- oh, we played basketball, a bunch of us, and I loved that. And then at night time, 'cause I'm home, but my sister used to sneak out. [laughing] "Don't tell dad!" she'd say. Yeah, there wasn't much boys, 'cause, you know, there's-well, her future husband was there, he was teaching a public school, Grade Seven, Seven, Eight.

LU: Oh.

MK: And she got to know him, then she married him. Suzuki. David's uncle. [laughs] Yeah. So, they did have enough boys, I guess. I never was interested, so I [never went to see who was going?], 'cause I didn't know how to dance, anyways. I didn't know how to dance 'til I met my husband, I just wasn't interested. I was very immature. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MK: Yeah, yeah.

LU: Was David Suzuki in Sandon as well, or-

MK: He was in Slocan as a child.

LU: Oh, in Slocan.

MK: But he had the- his brother- his dad was the eldest, I think, yeah. And he was- oh, what was his name now? But he went back from London- all the [unclear] people was in London- but his dad went to Vancouver and lived on the island. And my brother-in-law seemed [?] somehow, he wants to be on the island, so he bought property there, and they moved from London, Ontario to the island. We bought some property, but I wouldn't say "okay" to my husband, so he just bought it anyways. So, he sold it because I wasn't- my kids are here, why would I want to go there? And my sister, too, she didn't want to go. But he said, "I don't care, I'm going anyways." So, then she went with him, and that was a big mistake for her. She changed completely, yeah. It was too much of a shock. I mean, she had four kids, all in Ontario, her husband said, "I'm going anyways," so [she decided to go?].

[75 minutes]

And then they stayed there, well, eight, nine years. They finally came back, and she was much happier. But I don't think he liked it, but he finally- yeah, after he got sick in his 80s he finally sold the property, I guess he had desires to go back, maybe. 'Cause he- the Suzukis love the outdoors, yeah. David's father, Al [?] is the oldest, and my brother-in-law was the second youngest, and they really got along nicely on the island. So, the brother was able to be with his siblings, whereas the others, I think they all died in London, Ontario. The one that was- there's still the youngest lady [?] in London, but the oldest one died, I think last year or two years ago, yeah. But now my sister can travel, 'cause she's living with her daughter who's a lawyer, was a lawyer. And about David's age. So, I think David's father, on the island, way up north of the island- there's a ferry that goes across with the Natives on it, [the India Natives?], and I think they even have a property there, so I think that's where he

goes for recluse [?] and all that. But his father's gone now, so I don't know. But I think he still has a place there; they really like the outdoors. But their mother never did. So- but she passed away early, in her 60s. And I think she was [unclear], who had a florist in Vancouver, on Powell [?] Street.

LU: Oh, neat.

MK: Yeah, but I don't know how many siblings David has. He has a twin sister, I think, in Toronto. So, I don't know if she's- I think she's still living, you know, I don't know [unclear].

LU: And what other sports do you remember in Sandon? Did-

MK: Just basketball-

LU: The boys forget [?] to-

MK: But we had our baseball diamond that we used to watch- I never played 'cause my eyes are bad, I can't see the balls. And then in high school in Hamilton you weren't allowed to play baseball or softball with glasses on. That's a school rule. So, when I'd take it off, I can't see a thing. So, my teacher said, "Well, you take score in the dirt." And then for that I got points that I- 'cause you had to have- everybody has to do it, but I can play basketball 'cause it's big, but baseball, I can't see it, 'cause she won't allow it. But now we have those athletic glasses, but in those days we didn't. [laughs]

LU: [laughs] And what-

MK: And then I played tennis after I met my husband.

LU: Oh.

MK: But I was never that good, 'cause my eyes are bad, eh? But he loved it, so I got to do that. But I loved to watch tennis on TV. I wouldn't want to anything if the tennis was on. Competition.

LU: Mhm.

MK: Yeah. But we did a lot of ballroom together, and that I love. I still do, but there's nobody to dance with. [chuckles]

LU: And what about in the wintertime in Sandon, what were the winters like?

MK: Oh, the snow was so clean and fresh there. And you can hear the snow packing as you walk. You can really hear it, it was- [raises hand] and the stars were as if you could go and pick it, it's so clean. 'Cause that railway up to Sandon was the steepest in Canada, apparently. That's what we were told, yeah. But I don't know what the boys did, actually. Just baseball, that's it. [Most of the time?], I didn't hear anybody [going skiing?] because it's all occupied with people, you can't ski. Although my sister's husband made skis for my oldest sister's son, who was five. And she made him, 'cause he was a carpenter, made skis for going down [?], but he wasn't allowed to do that in the daytime 'cause it's too dangerous, 'cause it's too dangerous, 'cause we're [?] using that every day, to go down to school, go down to shop, we all have to take that road. [It's not road?]- street, I guess, yeah.

LU: And what about tobogganing or sledding, did any-

MK: Yes. On our slope- 'cause my brother-in-law used to make it, for the kids, you know.

LU: Oh.

MK: 'Cause he'd have to find the lumber, that's the rouble, you know. And only the one truck-

[80 minutes]

Tak [Kumuro?] was the one that drove that truck. There's only one truck that goes into New Denver, and Tak was the driver. And his best friend is my brother-in-law, so they used to go [unclear]. But we walked, three girls, we were teenagers, how old would be? 15, 16 years old. We walked to Sandon and- up in the hill. Screaming, because they say there's bears around. [laughs] So we'd scream and talk. And then coming home- by the time we got there, we had to rest. Our feet were full of blisters. Oh, we didn't have good shoes like we have here now [?], running shoes. So, we had to take it off, and then look for a stream where we could soak it, and- And then we came home on the railroad track, which is much easier. So, we did that. We took a sandwich, all of us. And then we did berry-picking, huckleberry picking. Amazing berries, they're not blueberries, they're red. 'Cause of course I didn't know how to cook, I didn't care. My sisters made huckleberry pies, huckleberry jams, just plain huckleberry [served in a bowl, that used to be something?]. And we used to be able to sell it, but we'd use all of ours for the jam and everything. But this [Ed Tsuji?], he's in Toronto, he was the best one. He made a box to put all of the berries in, and he came down [unclear], and he would sell it to people. Yeah. He's still living, he's my age, yeah. He's the last one I think, yeah. So- and then it's five miles up to the top, you know, to get the huckleberries.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: And by [unclear] we'd get down, it's getting, you know, it's jumping up and down. [laughs] But us, we would make pies and jams, you know. So, when my sisters left after a year, we didn't have homemade bread and homemade jam or anything, [laughs] so we managed.

LU: Did you ever go out searching for anything else to pick, like mushrooms or-

MK: My mother knew exactly where to pick Maitake, and she- so little that she wouldn't tell anybody, because they don't want to damage, that's the whole trouble. And so, she'd look for a tree, and she knew where the hump [?] was, and so she'd say [unclear] by herself. She'd say, "Come with me," so I didn't like, 'cause I'm always worried about the bears coming out, 'cause there is, you know. Yeah, brown bears, I think they were.

LU: Did you ever go with her?

MK: Once, and I didn't want to go- I was a scaredy-cat. Didn't want to go. [laughing]

LU: Was it far?

MK: So, she'd go by herself. It's about three, four miles up [?], in the- nothing, just a path. But then, you can't stay on the path, you have to go in, out of the way to look. And of course, I'd only pick the big ones, mum says [?], "Oh no, pick it all up." [laughs] So after they were gone I had to go, but I never did like country, so I didn't- I wasn't much a- you know.

LU: And what would [?] your mother use the mushrooms for, and cook with them? 'Cause

I've heard they're special mushrooms, they have a very nice flavour.

MK: Yes. Oh, [mata-kay-ko-han?], that's [?] rice, you put a- the [raw ones?], the small piece, in the rice as you're cooking it. Then you don't want to eat anything else, that's it. That's the main course. You could just smell it.

LU: Yeah.

MK: Yeah. So, after we came here, some people used to back there, but they won't tell you exactly where because they don't want it all trampled over. And so then, some hakujin people found out, and they want to have it. But they don't look after it for the next seedling [?], you know? Yeah, so they don't want to tell anybody. So, they- Thunder Bay apparently has them. So then- they won't tell you where it is either, but I think when they go back somebody's trampled all over it. Just terrible mess, but [unclear]-

LU: Did your mother ever tell you about how to ensure that the seeds will continue on? Is there a certain way to pick the mushrooms?

MK: Yeah, certain way, but I have never- [wasn't there?]- I'm just not good in anything like that. I hated- in that area where there's not civilization, I loved the city. And that's why I picked this. [gestures to the room] Right on the road. I love the city, I never liked the- my husband liked the farm, [shakes head] fishing and that, but- I went for 28 years, but I never liked it. Just the thought 'I have to go this weekend' would make me sick. But when I get there, I'm fine.

[85 minutes]

MK: And when I come home, I'm so happy. So, he used to go by himself, but he didn't- when he retired he wanted me to come up, so I used to go. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MK: My kids are all city folks, too.

LU: Mhm. And do you have any other [?] memories about Sandon? Any stories that you want to share?

MK: No, I really don't know too much, 'cause I'm a scaredy-cat, I'd rather stay home. I really didn't do too much, didn't got to dances. And I used to hear- there's a little logging camp, in between New Denver and Sandon, and people used to go there, and they- I don't know what they did there, but I used to think that not nice girls would go there, [shrugging] or something, I had no idea about anything about sex, [laughing] so I really don't know too much. I never went to the dances, I only studied, I guess, that's all really. I think I sewed a bit, I started to sew a little bit, but- no, I didn't mind leaving [?] it at all.

LU: And who taught you how to sew?

MK: Oh, mother. But then I went to Grade 11 and 12 in Hamilton, and so they had sewing lessons, and that's I started to make all my clothes, my wedding gown, my jackets, my suits, my coats [?], made everything. 'Cause mother always made it, [I guess?]. So, I think we all sewed. [nodding]

LU: What do you remember about going to New Denver, and did you take the train from

Sandon to New Denver, or-

MK: No, we walked.

LU: When you moved? Or- didn't you leave Sandon and move to New Denver -unclear]-

MK: No, no, we came straight to Hamilton.

LU: Oh, okay.

MK: Some people did, but just when it started my father said, "Let's get out of here," and be with the girls, the other three sisters were out here. So, we went to Hamilton. And he worked at- I forgot the- Building Materials, I think the name of the factory. And all he had to do was watch the thermometer for the machines, [lifts hand and mimes turning a dial] when they got to be too long or too warm he- he'd just have to sit and do that. [mimes turning dial] The Japanese nisei girls got him the job. So, to leave that and come to Toronto was hard for him, I think. But he really wanted to come to Toronto, so. And the church would be here, too. Hamilton didn't have Buddhist church, so.

LU: And do you remember the date, or month, or year that you moved from Sandon to Hamilton?

MK: Well, we were there two years, so it would be 1942 we had to go to the camp, it'd be. And then '44, and then '45, '46, I guess, I finished school and came to Toronto.

LU: So, 1945, you would have still been in Hamilton when the war ended.

MK: [nodding] Oh, I thought it was a wonderful town, because all you have to do is walk down- our house was- is all flat, right? In Hamilton. And then the mountains there. [gestures] And we were right at the first- last house, row of houses, before the mountain.

LU: Do you remember the address?

MK: 4 Stanley [-] I can't remember the- I don't know, I think 170-4 Stanley [-], or 70? [unclear] what I said, horizontal street, not going up like. [raises hand] No, I don't know. Yeah, my brother was there. He went to a- from an internment camp he went to- as long as they can get a job somewhere as group, they were able to come out of the prisoners of war camp, that's where he was. And so, with the Nishino [-] boys, they all went to the Hamilton [unclear] hospital, yes. And that way they got a job there, so they can come out. If you don't have a job to come out, you don't- you can't- you have to stay there. And so, it was all listed, I think, so decided, the three brothers and my brother, they call came to Hamilton sanitarium, to the closest sanitarium, and they worked in the kitchen as bakers and cooks. Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: But he wouldn't bake for us. "I don't know how to bake a pie," he says, [chuckling] he only remembers- so he won't even try, so he wasn't a baker, I guess, or a cook. And then they started that dry cleaning business, that's what he did in Toronto until he retired and sold it.

LU: [Oh, in Toronto?]. And where was the business, what was it called?

[90 minutes]

MK: It was called Adelphi [?] Cleaners, on Lawrence and Warden. On Lawrence Avenue, east of Warden. 'Cause don't know how many years were there, but they were all beginning to retire, and so- they all went into the dry cleaning and made a very good reputation. Anybody [done by?] Japanese cleaning, they would bring it.

LU: Oh.

MK: So then, the immigrants from India were all buying these businesses, so they sold it.

LU: And you mentioned before that the Jewish community really helped you out.

MK: Oh yes [?], as far as jobs? They would take you. And living quarters.

LU: Really?

MK: Renting they would allow, because they know what discrimination, they've been through discrimination, yeah.

LU: So, when you came out to Toronto, is that- did they help you in Toronto as well, or was that mostly in Hamilton?

MK: No, Toronto too! Oh yes. And there was no discrimination as far as where to buy, like in Vancouver, but here- of course it was- all [?] lived around the Jewish community, we bought a house- we rented a house. So, we lived at Spadina and College, was all Jewish homes. And my dad's house was a [10 major street?]. So, a couple of years ago I wanted to go see what it looked like. [shakes head] It's all torn down.

LU: Oh, really?

MK: Yeah, 'cause Brunswick Hospital was enlarging, so- and dad's house was the only one that was single, and all the rest were attached kind of thing. So, my dad's house was left longer than the rest, rest were all torn down to make parking space for the hospital [unclear].

LU: Oh wow.

MK: Yeah.

LU: And when did you meet your husband and where did you meet your husband?

MK: I met him at the [unclear], at the church, too [?].

LU: In Toronto?

MK: Mhm, yep. And his family, they weren't [one for?]- what should I say- going to church. They were Buddhist, but they weren't church-goers, 'cause they always had a store in Vancouver, right in Japantown, one of the major streets was Powell Street, and I think his mom and dad had a store, Cordova [?] and Powell.

LU: Oh.

MK: Yeah. [holds hands up in the shape of a "T"] The corner store was fruit and vegetables, and candies, and some groceries, too. That's where he was born in [unclear]- where was he born? On the island, actually. And [?] went to Japan when he was seven.

LU: I have a very small map here-

MK: Cordova [?] and Powell, corner. It's very well-known, it's been there- and one of the last stores to close when the war started. Because the mother was having hysterectomy and couldn't be moved, so they all stayed until she came out. The they moved to Slocan.

LU: Oh wow. Cordova [?] and Powell Street on the map here, this is 1941, shows that they're running parallel to each other.

MK: Oh, is that right?

LU: Yeah.

MK: Well, maybe I'm wrong. Cordova [?] and-

LU: Was it on Powell-

MK: Well, Powell, right. It was on Powell-

LU: It was on Powell Street-

MK: And-see, that's- at least, I never knew him then, so don't really know. Right on Japantown.

LU: And [it would be?]-

MK: What are the names of the other streets are on there? [leans forward] It's-

LU: Main Street-

MK: Closer to the water than Granville, it's closer to the water.

LU: There's Main Street, Gore Street, Dunlevy [?]-

MK: I think Gore-

LU: Jackson [?], and Princess-

MK: Powell and Gore.

LU: Kawasaki Confectionary?

MK: Yeah, yeah. [laughs]

LU: 300 Powell Street.

MK: Oh, okay.

LU: [laughs]

MK: And they were the last ones to move to Slocan, because of mother-in-law, my mother-in-law was in the hospital with a hysterectomy. And so, things were more established when my husband went, but his uncle was one of the head carpenter guys, so he was able to get them in [?], and get him a job.

LU: Oh. Who- what was his uncle's name?

MK: Kawasaki, [Shigeru], [Shige-oh?]- [Shigeru].

LU: Oh.

MK: Very well known, very clever man, the uncle. But they didn't come in to Toronto, they went to Windsor, Ontario.

[95 minutes]

LU: Oh really?

MK: And raised four children, all with degrees. One's a doctor, the other one's into [?] pollution expert engineer, and the other two girls, they both went to university but they married engineers, one's a mechanical engineer, the other one married a [unclear] mechanical engineer. And they're in Detroit.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: They didn't stay in Windsor. But mother and dad stayed there. Dad was my husband's father's brother. He- I can't remember, he died in his 80s. Very clever man, very, very clever. And the wife died, she was 90-something. We went to the funeral, yeah.

LU: Where were they during the war years? [unclear]

MK: Where was he? I don't know where he lived. When he came to Toronto for all the weddings, they always came to my place, the two sisters [unclear], [laughs] the brother, like, uncle's wife, and my husband's father's wife, they didn't get along. So, they always came to my place, 'cause I knew the uncle, and I knew the aunt from Vancouver days. So, they always came to stay at our place until the wedding. [laughs]

LU: And where was your husband during the war years, do you know?

MK: Slocan-

LU: Oh, Slocan-

MK: [Third Avenue?].

LU: Oh.

MK: But I didn't know them then. I just met him in Toronto. But I think they had the whole house, because they had three girls and two boys, and mom and dad., yeah.

LU: So, you met your husband in a church in [?]-

MK: Toronto.

LU: In Toronto. And do you remember what year, or how old you were?

MK: Well, I married at 22, 'cause I think I was 20. And- yeah, got married at 22, and my husband was 27. Went to New York for our honeymoon, yeah, for five days

[sounds cuts out from 1:37:17 to 1:37:19]

but no more money left. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MK: Then we got married, but we lived on my pay and kept his to put in the bank, so we had a house in two and a half years, yeah. And we bought it in Leaside, yeah. That was a good deal. In those days, it was 6000 dollars for the house.

LU: Wow [?].

MK: And the nice houses across the street. Ours was semi, which is all we can afford. Across the street, the single ones, and they had to pay 4000 more, we didn't have that 4000. But it was a wonderful time in Leaside. My kids all wanted to go back to buy, but they were all a 1,00,000 dollars, for small bungalow. So, they all live somewhere else, but they- not together, they didn't know the other was looking for a house in Leaside. But they couldn't afford it. The cheapest was 850,000, and they couldn't afford that. They never asked me for money, anything. No car [?]- we never had to buy- well, my husband wasn't [unclear]. A lot of the niseis bought cars for their kids, my husband says, "No." Nobody helped him, he did it on his own. But I said, "They'll make a mistake." "That's good for them!" he used to say. So, they all did it on their own, they never asked for money or loan or anything.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: So, they all got good jobs, yeah. So, I'm glad my husband was like that, yeah. He said

nobody helped him, they gotta work. So, they never had a car, never asked for a car, never bought them a car. But they had money in no time, somehow. And he always said, "You can't have money to buy a car, you gotta have the insurance money," he used to tell them. So, they- we never had to tell them [?]- so many nisieis, they all got the insurance for them, and cars for them and everything- oh yeah! You know, mind you, things were cheaper then, but still, pays were cheaper, right? No, we never did that, so.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: So. [chuckling] I'm lucky that way. My husband was an amazing man. [chuckling] So good to me, so kind. My mother says, "[speaking Japanese]," she says. That means it's too good, you have to be thankful.

LU: [laughs]

MK: And she said I'm the only daughter that didn't have to work after the children came. They all went to work. Four kids, the other one had five kids, they all had to work. Soon as- they don't even wait for a month; they have to go to work. And I never did, so.

[100 minutes]

My mother just loved my husband. [laughs] And he loved my mother, too. More than his own. [laughing]. 'Cause my mother was a good cook. I don't know what happened to me.

LU: [laughs]

MK: You know, she knows why I didn't get to be a good cook, do you know what she said? 'Cause my husband never complains. If he doesn't complain, you're not gonna get better. So, she used to tell him, "Complain, Complain!" "No, no, everything's fine," he always said. [laughing] That's why I never improved, [shrugs] he was so happy, amazing couple, we were. We loved each other so much, yeah. So, we're lucky to find that, you know.

LU: Mhm.

MK: 'Cause my other sisters were- [raises hands waggles fingers] you know, having problems.

LU: So, after- or, you met him at the church, but how long- was the church always there, I'm guessing that the Toronto Buddhist Church wasn't there for a long period of time. Do you know when, when the church [unclear]-

MK: Well, we were on 134 Huron Street. It was a house. And my dad and a lot of people gave a lot of money to start [unclear], oh yes, [it's all personal?]- well, [raises arm to gesture] Cultural Centre, too, my mom and dad, they all, you know, they all donated a lot, more than young people nowadays, yeah. And they knew how to save. They made so little, but they knew how to save. You don't go out to eat, you know, everything's always at home, yeah. So, Bathurst Street. 134 Huron, and then before you know it, they'd raised enough money to- not from the government, ever, it's all people's donation. And then we went to the one that- Sheppard, that's the last one. Yeah.

LU: Oh wow. So, when- the first one on Huron Street, it was just a house.

MK: It's the house.

LU: How many people would go?

MK: I can't remember if it's a semi, I think it was a semi.

LU: And is that the location where you met your husband, or was it-

MK: Yeah, no, we didn't even have that. It was on College Street. It was a- [not a Massey Hall?], but something like that kind of a name. And a rental, we used to rent that, and then raised money [to buy 134 Huron?]. And then after that was 918 Bathurst Street.

LU: Oh wow. That's a lot of work to get a church up and running and established-

MK: Yes, it is. Yep.

LU: Were there a lot of people helping out with that, do you know?

MK: Oh, there must have been, I really don't know. But my dad was [running there?], yeah.

LU: Oh. And when the Cultural Centre started, when they started having the idea of a Cultural Centre and raising funds in 50s, at that time a lot of families were still- you know, it wasn't far after the war years-

MK: No.

LU: So, a lot of them were still trying to-

MK: Oh yes, [unclear]-

LU: Make due.

MK: [unclear] canvassed all over, all the Japanese couples, you know, mum and dad, they were still living, but they died soon after, [you know?].

LU: Did they go canvassing around as well, or-

MK: No, the younger people did. But they got more money from the isseis, you know? Yeah. 'Cause they're

the ones that have the money and [care for, yeah?], you know.

LU: Was it important for your parents to have a cultural centre-

MK: Oh yes. At least my dad, because my mother does- whatever my dad do, my mother does. That's the old one, not the new one. [They're gone by then?], but. [nods] But I'm sure they had trouble raising the money to start with. Once it's built, then they could have all these things going on, but I'm sure they had to rely a lot on the isseis. I know my dad donated, yeah.

LU: Yeah. I don't remember the Cultural- the first Cultural Centre too much, I remember little bits here and there of it, but I remember-

MK: We [?] were more active there, because we were younger, but every time I help them, next day I'm sick. So, my husband always says, "You're not going to help next year." And then it comes, and I'm helping, and I'm sick again. I don't- I'm not as healthy as I look, 'cause I've always been fat, you know, but I'm always sick after. Now that I'm in this age and that I do help on the Saturday, but I can't help Friday night and Saturday, you know. I help in the white elephant and [unclear] elephant, things like that. If I do anymore than I'm sick the next day, you know.

LU: Do you remember some of the early days of the Cultural Centre, and- I've heard stories

before that since they didn't have anything in the kitchen, people would bring their own cooking utensils.

[105 minutes]

MK: Oh yes. And then I used to chop the onions, 'cause I used to wear contacts, doesn't bother you chopping the onions. I said, "Oh, give me all the onions!" And I used to chop a whole bag [?].

LU: Really?

MK: Never bothered me, 'cause I had contacts on, isn't that amazing? Didn't bother me at all, yeah. So, I used to go make- help make sushi, you know. Roll it, you know. I loved rolling it. So, somebody else cooks it, and then they have all the goo [?] there. So, they tell you how many- [holds up five fingers] it's supposed to be five always, but sometimes you only had three, and it looked awful. [chuckles] My husband used to help, not the preparation, but during the Bazaar they cooked chicken on the barbeque, but they used to put it in the over first to bake it a little bit, and then it comes out to the men, who are out there, the barbeque, and they're browning them, you know. [chuckles] Oh, we did a lot of that, yeah. But he never saw the new one. He died in 19- 2001, so he never saw the new one.

LU: Just before.

MK: Yeah.

LU: How old was he when he passed away?

MK: 79, that's too young.

LU: That's young.

MK: Yeah. He got cancer. And it was called pheochromocytoma [?], and that's a bad one. Apparently, there's no help. They said, "Don't bother going to the doctor, don't go to Boston, don't go anywhere." So, he went in the hospital finally, and he never was one to complain, so I had no idea if he had pain or anything, he would never show [?]. And when we went to the hospital, he was gone in three weeks, yeah. He got so thin; it was terrible. But I went every day, eight in the morning 'til eight at night, so he finally said, "I want you to come at seven in the morning." So, I used to go from seven in the morning until seven at night, or [?] seven-thirty, eight o'clock, but I used to go, yeah. And my middle son, he used to come late, so he took me home. Or sometimes we'd go out to eat, 'cause all that time I'm not eating. And I finally got a private nurse for him, at nighttime, [you see?], he seems to be falling because I think he's going to the washroom but- and the nurses don't come, so he has to go kind of a thing. So, twice he hurt his back and hurt his head, so then thought [?] oh my gosh, what am I doing, I'm [?] going to get him a private nurse. And then he said that- I said, "You want to come home?" and he said, "Yes." So, I asked the nurse, great big Black man, oh, the nicest giant, you know, such a soft face. Wasn't that dark, you know. And, I said, "Would you come to our house? And I'll pay you there." "Oh, sure." But the doctor says, "No, you're not taking home. 'Cause you're gonna be in the hospital with him." And he died that night. So, I think they knew he was gonna go. 'Cause his blood sugar went to zero and one [?]. I don't

know what it's supposed to be. But it's zero and one, he says, "No, you're not taking him home." So, he died- that was Monday morning, he died Monday night at 10:40, yeah. SO, I was kinda glad for him, 'cause he never complains, you know, yeah. He was an amazing man; I hope the kids get to be as good as he does. He was, you know, yeah.

LU: Mhm. What other- you mentioned you would always do ballroom dancing together-

MK: Mhm.

LU: And tennis. Would he help out at the Cultural Centre as well with some events, or did [unclear]-

MK: No, he wasn't one for that as much, yeah. He was more private, and liked the private life more, so he used to work at the dances, yes, but that's all.

LU: I remember someone mentioning that Mrs. Una [?] would teach the ballroom dancing, is that where [unclear] lessons-

MK: Oh yes, she was good in ballroom as well as Japanese, both. She was so musical. And she always used to come to me and say, "Mary, I love watching you do it," she says. I say, "I don't even know what I'm doing." [chuckles] 'Cause I never took lessons from her. But she knows that I love it, and she was always so nice to me. Some people complain about it, but I had no trouble with her. She was really amazing. And I [unclear], ballroom or Japanese, she was so into it. And I used to enjoy her. She said, "I'm so glad you tell me, people don't always tell me." I say, "Well, when I feel something, I say. I never say something that I don't mean," I tell. "Oh, I can tell that," she says. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MK: But she always comes to pat me when I'm trying, you know. [pats herself on the shoulder]

[110 minutes]

MK: Yeah, she was an amazing lady, yeah. She had a bit of a problem, though [?], I don't want to hear about it, honestly [?]. 'Cause I thought she was a good teacher. Yeah. I don't know what the problem was, but I don't want to hear about problems. [laughs]

LU: And what other events- I've heard stories about- was it Caravan?

MK: Yes. Oh, yes, we always helped at the Caravan. It was- and the men helped, too, you know. So, it was nice.

LU: But what- what was Caravan, and how long would it go on for, and-

MK: I can't remember, I'm forgetting so much now. I don't know if it went on for a week or not. To me, it seemed like just a few days. Like, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, [and then?]

Monday's a holiday. Then they stopped that, so it made it much easier. 'Cause we're all getting to the age where it's too much for us. And the young people are working. You know, yeah.

LU: Yeah, they stopped Caravan-

MK: [But it seems?] Caravan was more at the old Culture Centre. But now they have- November, is it? The Asian-

LU: Road to Asia.

MK: Yeah, yeah. So, I always go and watch.

LU: Is that similar to Caravan, or- what was the difference between the two?

MK: It's more like a caravan than a bazaar, or anything like that. But they still have food, if I remember correctly. You know, I used to bake and everything, but I don't wanna cook and bake, so that's why I came in here. [chuckles] Yeah.

LU: I remember that- now it may have issei day-

MK: Yes.

LU: Did they always have issei day, or-

MK: Every year.

LU: Since it opened?

MK: Oh yes. And then, I have two new girls here, so I get them going now. So usually my friend, me and Masoka [?], she helps- she drives. So, she lives down Victoria Park, south of Eglinton, so she always pops in here and she picks us up. So, this Thursday night, I think- or is it next Thursday night, there's a big Japanese movie, and we intend to go, but now- we have movies here, so I'm not that anxious to go there. [laughs] You know. But I think she wants to. So then, I asked if the other two girls would come too, so.

LU: Oh, they have movies on Thursday night as well.

MK: No, it's usually Sunday night, there's nothing much on Sunday, so it's nice to have it. [picks up papers beside her] But I can't remember how often move night- [opens paper and holds it up] This is our calendar.

LU: Oh, they keep you very busy, I must say.

MK: Oh, so busy!

LU: [laughs]

MK: [examines calendar] So today I'm missing- oh, they're having a- today's Friday, right?

LU: Yes, yes, Friday.

MK: This afternoon was ice cream cone and sundaes with Ashley-

LU: Oh! [laughs]

MK: So that- but I don't need that, that's at 3:15. Mah-jong, which I've never done, that's at 3:30, and 4:30 is the happy hour for drinks. I never drink. And a doubles pool [?], which I usually join. 4:30, happy hour and doubles pool [?].

LU: And doubles pool?

MK: Yeah. But like couples, not just one and two, two, two, and we play- four people could play.

LU: Oh.

MK: So, I usually do that. So, I play pool every day after lunch and supper.

LU: Mhm.

MK: But my girl- my partner, she's gone away to her friend, so I haven't played today after lunch. But after supper, usually this- Eileen Devante [?], she and I play, yeah. So, anybody- visitors who come in, "Girls playing pool?" they're saying. [laughs] You don't see the men

playing much. Oh [?], they're much older, and they're not able to stand on their feet. Whereas June [?] and I are one of the more spry ones, although she's- don't mention her name, she's 91, but looks like 80 or 70.

LU: Wow.

MK: Amazing. [taps temple] Sharp and oh, so athletic. So, we play pool every day after lunch and after supper.

LU: [laughs]

MK: But she's gone for the weekend now. So probably Eileen will play with me. 'Cause I don't want to come up here after supper and just sit here and watch TV. So, I always try to have a partner to play pool. [chuckles]

LU: That's nice. And I think- just gonna double check my notes here and make sure I didn't forget anything, or-

MK: It would be nice if I can go and play pool at 4:30.

LU: Yeah.

MK: But check your notes.

[115 minutes]

LU: Mhm. And what about Redress? Do you remember when Redress took place in the 80s, and-

MK: Yes, I do.

LU: Were you active with it at all.

MK: No, I was just helping [?]- maybe I was still working, what was the year?

LU: Well, 1988 was when it was signed, but a few years prior to that is when [unclear] leading up to it-

MK: No, I didn't help. No, I didn't help. I don't think so. I went to the meetings, yes, but I wasn't in charge of anything.

LU: What would they do at the meetings?

MK: Well, getting opinions, you know, so really very- what is the word? Sedentary, it wasn't really active, you know. And I wasn't used to [do things?], maybe I was still working. 'Cause I did work for most of my life, just after- before I retired, I started to do ore voluntary work, yeah.

LU: Were the opinions about Redress really diverse-

MK: Apparently there was some controversy with certain groups, but I didn't get involved in that.

LU: Oh.

MK: Some of them thought that it's insulting, that they should go against [?] the government asking for money, something like that. So, I didn't want to get involved, because I felt that we lost a lot, because of the Redress, you know. I thought we should, but I didn't ever express my feelings, 'cause I wasn't into politics, right? I didn't like that. My husband didn't like that [unclear], so I didn't.

LU: But you were able to receive the Redress because you were-

MK: Yes, yes. So, we paid off our mortgage, yeah.

LU: Oh, that's wonderful.

MK: Some people- a lot of people gave- divided it with their children. No, my husband does believe in that, he says, "They gotta make their own." And so, we just paid off our mortgage, so it's nice.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: 'Cause they lost their business, his mom and dad. And my mom and dad, too, so.

LU: That's right.

MK: Yeah, and my sister lost two houses, you know.

LU: And your parents passed away before Redress took place?

MK: Yes, before. [So, they didn't?]- but two of my nieces who were that age limit, they were in there, so two of my nieces got it, [or three, really?], but my kids weren't born, so.

LU: Mhm, oh wow. Just wanna check everything here. I think that's everything-

MK: Oh good.

LU: That I can think of, if I think of anything else I can always stop back-

MK: [unclear]

LU: Yeah, stop back in, and I think, I think that's it. Do you think that your children are interested in learning about the Japanese-Canadian history? Do they know about-

MK: I don't think so.

LU: Do they know about your history?

MK: Not that much. My oldest son is the only one who's ever asked. 'Cause he's older, he's 55 or 6, or something like. '63, he was born in, so what would that make him?

LU: Oh, I don't know. [laughs]

MK: [laughs] 1980 [?], 93 [?], so he's about 40 maybe, something like that. So, he's interested about what I'm going to be doing with you, because he's always been telling me, "Write it down, write it down," and I said, "No, I don't want to write it down." "That's a shame," he said. So, when I told him that you're coming regarding that, he was quite happy that I'm doing.

LU: Oh good. Do you have grandchildren?

MK: I just have the one.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: Yeah. She's 20. The other two don't want children. And she's 25, I think.

LU: Oh, my age! Same age as me.

MK: So, she's in Ajax, so we don't get to see her at all, yeah.

LU: Do you think that she would be interested in learning a bit more about the Japanese-Canadian story-

MK: No, I don't think so.

LU: No [?]?

MK: My two younger ones are not interested period. But Don hopes that this could be in

writing so that he could keep it as a record, you know. 'Cause he wants to know, he used to ask me, "Why don't you do something, write it down." And I said, "No, I don't want to."

[laughs]

LU: What we found in my family, and with my grandparents, it wasn't 'til I was older that I heard anything about what had happened, and, you know, I [?] was actually in history class in Grade 10 and-

MK: I thought they weren't doing that at all 'cause some schools did-

LU: Oh yes, yes, actually-

MK: But most of them didn't.

LU: Yeah, we made an agreement with the Toronto District School Board that they-

MK: [unclear]

LU: It will be covered in the schools, because that's where I heard it, and [unclear]-

[120 minutes]

MK: My friends in Leaside, they have no idea what I went through.

LU: Yeah.

MK: We just didn't want to talk about it.

LU: And that's the thing, you know, I'm worried, personally, that the stories are gonna be lost and forgotten-

MK: Yes.

LU: And, you know, it could happen again to a different cultural group-

MK: [nodding] Yes, another group.

LU: Yeah, yeah. So, I'm worried, really worried that [unclear]-

MK: Well, it was a shame with us, especially, because we tried to mix in and- and tried to be like a real Canadian, but some of those that are coming are not, they want to bring their ideas here, and change everything else, like in the school system. They don't want God Save the Queen or O Canada. That's frightening. I get all kinds of emails. "Stick up for this Canada," you know, don't let that happen, you know. 'Cause we never did, we- right away we got into- my folks- my mother had beautiful lace top and high, high shoes and everything, you know, whereas they don't wanna, they still want- oh, the neighbour across the street before- my kids were little. And she wore a sari to dig up the weeds. So, one day she says, "Oh, are you going to Fairview [?]" I said, "Yes, I'm going." "Can I have a ride?" she said. I said, "Sure." So, we were close to Fairview Mall, but I drove. And then she's telling me all about this complaining about discrimination. Well, did I ever let on! It just came pouring out. I said, "You don't know how good you're having it. We couldn't even rent a room, and we're born here," I said to her. "And we wore Canadian clothes," I said to her. She never spoke to me after that. 'Cause she still has to have a sari on! Her children weren't, the children wore ordinary clothes, and they're very nice- a girl and a boy, and they used to go to school, and they're little, too. But she'd- [unclear], weeding, and she has a sari on. I said, "You don't do that here. You came to Canada, you got to go by the Canadian customs. She

never said a word after that, but she poured it on, complaining about discrimination. So, I told her what I went through, I said, "You didn't go through anything compared to what-" And her husband is a- he's a doctor in a he works at an office down in a- government office, so he's got a doctorate, and he's quite Western, but she doesn't mix, because she's at home, right. So, after that she never asked for a ride. [laughs]

LU: I've heard it was very hard for Japanese-Canadians to become doctors in the pre-war days, [and even?]-

MK: Oh yeah, well, in Vancouver you couldn't even get into U of T [University of Toronto].

LU: Or UBC [University of British Columbia].

MK: UBC. Whereas they came to Ontario, no problem, because there was more mixture by then. But oh, it was very discriminating. People- well, they say it came from Ottawa, like Mackenzie King and everything, yeah.

LU: Yeah. Oh, interesting.

MK: So, they used to say, my mom and dad used to say to my brother and my older sister, "You don't have to go to high school." You know, "Boys do, but you don't." And even boys couldn't get into university, they wouldn't let them. They always looked [?] past them.

LU: Oh wow.

MK: And in Toronto, no problem. It's a much better place. So, it's a good thing we had to move out, actually.

LU: Did provide an opportunity [?]-

MK: Because we probably would have stayed, facing all this discrimination. But then, when I moved away, they didn't- my friend was fine, you know, she- we never talked about anything. [Margaery Reynolds?], I still remember her. [chuckles]

LU: I'm gonna have to stop there, sorry.

MK: Oh, I-

LU: My tape is running low.

MK: I can go to my class, yeah.

LU: You gotta go anyways. [laughs] Wonderful, so let me just turn these ones off here, I'll pack up quickly.

[Interview ends]