

PART 2 ORAL HISTORY

I had the pleasure of meeting with Tadaye [Teddy] Fujimoto Kawasaki and her two sisters, Yoshiko Fujimoto Sugiyama and Kimi Fujimoto Tanbara at the Kawasaki home in Fircrest, WA on the evening of February 22, 1993. The following transcription results from that interview. In some cases, to simplify the recounting, insignificant exclamations (such as "yes" in concurrence with the speaker's statement) have been edited out without notation.



left to right
Teddy, Yoshiko and Kimi
at the 35th Reunion of
Japanese Language School
students (1977) ...



and
left to right
Yoshiko, Teddy and Kimi
at the 50th Reunion (1992).

**ORAL HISTORY: TADAYE (TEDDY) KAWASAKI, YOSHIKO SUGIYAMA AND
KIMI TANBARA**

Brenda Thank you all very much for being here and taking part in what I consider to be a very valuable historical project of the University of Washington at Tacoma. What we can do is - I will ask a question and you can feel free to jump in. (laughter) Look at [Teddy] she's so nervous - she's zipping her mouth shut already! (laughter) Well, just start with when and where you were born - (laughter) Yoshiko [Teddy's] pointing at you now, you'll have to go first! (laughter)

Yoshiko Well, I was born in Tacoma - you want my birthday? June 16, 1919. I'm the oldest of the three girls.

Brenda What is your earliest childhood memory of Tacoma?

Yoshiko I don't remember, but I was told that when I was a little girl, I ran away with a neighbor's little girl.

Teddy You didn't run away, you went for a walk --

Yoshiko I went for a walk and I was clear down on Eleventh Street bridge I understand - and we lived on 9th and Fawcett.

Brenda Oh, my! And how old were you then?

Yoshiko I must have been about five or so.

Brenda That's quite a walk for a five year old, isn't it?! (laughter) So you lived at 9th and Fawcett then? OK - I can picture in my mind where that would be. And where did you go to school then?

Yoshiko I went to Central [elementary] school, and then McCarver intermediate and Stadium High School. And I went to CPS - it's now University of Puget Sound but it was college then. I was in my last year and I did not get to participate in the graduation ceremony. They sent my diploma to the Pinedale Assembly Center³⁷ and I got it from the camp director.

Brenda So what year would you have graduated - '42? You all went where for internment?

Yoshiko We all went to Pinedale. We were there for about two months, and then we went to a more permanent camp - Tule Lake.³⁸ Then I left from Tule Lake in August of 1943. I went out as a student. I got a clearance for leaving camp and I went to Ann Arbor,

³⁷In May, 1942, because of their perceived threat to national security, virtually all Tacoma Japanese Americans were initially sent to Pinedale Assembly Center, California for later relocation to more permanent internment sites.

³⁸Tule Lake, California Relocation Center is one of ten internment camps scattered throughout remote sections of the country in which Japanese Americans spent approximately three years in captivity.

Michigan.³⁹ Then the rest of the family - Tule Lake became - in quotes - a *disloyal* camp and so the *loyal* people were all dispersed through other camps and my family were sent to Heart Mountain, Wyoming and I guess after a few months [the family] was [all] there.

Brenda How much difference is there between [your and your sister's] ages then?

Yoshiko Two and a half years between Teddy and I, and three years between Teddy and Kimi. Teddy came out to Ann Arbor (to attend the University of Michigan) and few months later - and few months after that [Kimi] came out and she went to school.

Teddy [Kimi] went to Ipsylanti, Michigan - Michigan State, Norman.

Brenda That's a long way from home.

Yoshiko Yes - and our mother was all alone in Heart Mountain - see we had lost our father May of 1941 and Pearl Harbor was December, 1941 so he was spared of all this.

Teddy He was in ill health so if he was taken into camp he would have died. Because the leaders of the community were taken to a difference sort of camp.

Brenda So tell me about you family then - about your family life.

Teddy (To sisters) We were close knit - huh? Very close knit. My father was quite active in the community so we were not able to do much of anything. We have to be good girls!

Brenda Oh, I see. You were very visible so you had to behave yourselves! (laughter)

Teddy Yes! Like [Yoshiko] want to go to dance - you know in those days it was taboo and then Mother would always say "why can't you be like these girls" - and they were bookworms!

All (laughter) Yes! No fun! Wallflowers!

Teddy But they got lax later on in life.

Yoshiko With [Teddy] and [Kimi] they were really -- (laughter)

Brenda Oh, I see - the usual way of being strictest on the older --

Teddy (laughter) Don't believe it!

Yoshiko [Kimi] could do anything!

Brenda Is that true Kimi? (laughter)

Teddy We could *never* be late for Japanese School because we used to run from regular public school to Japanese School and [Kimi] could take all her time in going while we -- (laughter) we had perfect attendance, no tardiness!

Kimi Now - let's not get into that! (laughter)

³⁹Students were sometimes granted special permission to continue their studies. Yoshiko attended University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Yoshiko That's why we could not participate in school activities, you know, after-school activities.

Brenda Like sports or clubs, that sort of thing.

Teddy As soon as you were through you just had to dash over --

Yoshiko Because school started at - what - 4:00 ? 4:00 - 6:00 (p.m.)

Brenda I assume there might have been activities in your public high school you might have liked to participate in?

Yoshiko Oh, yes - [Kimi] did. (laughter)

Brenda And you did anyway, Kimi?

Kimi (laughter) Yeah - especially in sports.

Teddy But we couldn't.

Brenda And how did you feel about that?

Teddy I didn't feel anything at that time, but later on --

Brenda As you look back then --

Kimi I think it's mostly because their group were all that way - but when it was our time, all the parents got a little more lenient so my group functioned a little differently.

Yoshiko I think they were becoming Americanized.

Kimi They were really - you know - stay in line, do just exactly as you were told.

Brenda And that's a big change in just a few short years.

All Yes. It is. Right.

Brenda To have that kind of change in heart.

Yoshiko (To sisters) Do think its because our parents kind of gave up going back to Japan?

Kimi Well - it could be, and then I think time was getting better too. You know the deep depression was in the early twenties --

Yoshiko Late twenties, wasn't it?

Brenda I think the crash was in '29.

Kimi And I think as the parents became better situated and became better financially situated too, I think they eased up on us. (laughter)

Brenda They felt a little freer and they allowed you to be freer? (laughter)

Kimi I think everything happened together.

Brenda What did your family do for a living?

Teddy Mother and Dad had the wholesale dry-cleaning shop.

Brenda And was that situated up near where you lived or --

Teddy Well it was 1124 Court 'C' - that was right behind the former Pierce County Medical - it's a parking lot now - see because being aliens they could not buy the building, they

always rented.⁴⁰ And they were established in 1918, and I took over after Dad passed away - in 1941 because I just got out of high school. And then we moved to where we are - were until we retired - at 15th and Broadway. That's our first move - in 1974. So from '18 to '74, except the war time. We leased the business as a going concern and this individual was a Christian. He was going to give it back to us as a going concern - when we came back (from internment). There was nothing, not even a feather or needle. And it was written in the contract. I don't see why our lawyer didn't take care of that, but I guess the sentiment was so bad he figured not to push it. But it was really sad. We had underground system where you could pump up the gas and all that, you know, and it was all torn down.

Brenda So [the business] was physically no longer there?

Teddy See - when we left we were so busy I had to have carts outside the building to put the clothes on because the regulation was that cleaning plants - what was it fire hazard or something - anyway we were one of the oldest wholesale cleaning plants. We couldn't operate when we came back, he built a car shop - a shack - to get our customers. And the Pearl Harbor League posted two people at the end of the block so nobody could come to our place. An elderly lady would bang on our door to tell us to get out of town - it wasn't fun. So there was a Naval intelligence man who used to come - (to sisters) you don't remember this - but because - see we came back as soon as the coast was open to us and the VJ Day was in August and we came back in April - spring of '45 so the sentiment was really bad. People we used to be really friendly with - classmates even - shunned us. Standard Oil, I think used to sell us the cleaning solvent. We had coupons - what do you call? - rations but they wouldn't sell it to us. You know, we had been their customer since 1918, don't forget, and then when we came back they wouldn't sell it to us so Mr. Manley came. Mr. Manley, we didn't know him from Adam, you know, and he came and helped us.

Brenda Now, who is he?

Yoshiko Joseph Manley. He had a big door manufacturing shop - door factory - Washington Door Company, I think it was. They're an old Tacoma family.

Teddy They're Catholic.

Yoshiko (To sisters) They're a big family, aren't they?

Teddy Yeah, Manley's, McNurtney's, Waumbeckman's - they all came to help.

Yoshiko People we didn't know at all came to help us.

⁴⁰Washington State's *Alien Land Law*, passed in 1921, prohibited immigrants from owning property. It was not rescinded until 1966. State of Washington, *Redress! The American Promise*, page 6.

- Teddy Mr. Jet from Shell - he's the one who helped us - through Mr. Manley. (Motioning to wall) That's the picture that Mr. Manley gave us. It was Fumi Kimura's⁴¹ first painting. And she was just starting and she didn't have the money to use for framing. Mr. Manley helped her. And that was the first picture she really liked so she gave it to Mr. Manley. And when he passed away Mrs. Manley thought it would go well with our building and business, so she brought it to us - so it's very precious to me. I guess Fumi wouldn't like to see it because she's so much better now.
- Brenda And what did these people do for you - you say they helped you?
- Teddy Well, they bring their clothes and they tell their friends to bring theirs, and gradually we got busy again - by word of mouth.
- Brenda They just tried to support you in your business --
- Teddy And then gradually our old customers would come - you know - after they thought it was safe, I guess, but we'll never forget them. Maureen still writes to us - [the Manley's] youngest daughter. Mr. Manley passed away and Mrs. Manley is in a nursing home in Denver. We try to keep track of them.
- Brenda And your business operated there until you retired?
- Teddy Well - urban renewal, you know, when they have to clear that place out and they were tearing down Crystal Palace and all that. They made us move, so we had that property on 15th and Broadway so we built there - that was in '74 until '90, we worked until 1990. Well we retired end of 1990, but we worked until March or April of 1991 because people didn't know we have retired and they kept coming in so we kept open for that.
- Brenda Just so you could tell everyone gradually!
- Teddy (laughter) We had the sign up for many months but they don't see it, you know! About half a year I had it up but they don't see it!
- Brenda They chose not to see it maybe, huh?
- Teddy (laughter) We had very loyal customers.
- Brenda Can you tell me something about what the Japanese-American community was like in the years before the war?
- Teddy Very close knit - just like a family. Because of our principal⁴² I think, you know. (To sisters) don't you think they had a lot to do with it?
- Yoshiko Oh, I think so.
- Brenda What was it that he did, or what activities did he encourage?

⁴¹Kimura is a gifted Japanese American artist whose distinctive work adorned the cover of the 35th Reunion booklet of the Japanese Language School.

⁴²Masato Yamasaki, with his wife, Kuni, founded and operated the Japanese Language School.

Yoshiko Well - in Japanese School we did not learn math because that we learned in regular school. He more or less, or reading and writing was the main [subjects], but equally importantly was he tried to convey to us the culture of our heritage, and I think it was through the Japanese School that we learned how to respect our parents, our elders, and how to behave in public. I think [he] was really a wonderful teacher that took extra time. He would rotate from room to room and give us lectures on different things every day - maybe about ten minutes.

Teddy I know we used to be scared of him. (laughter) Whenever he would come in we would just - (sits sharply upright).

Yoshiko But he always stressed our allegiance is supposed to be American.

All Yes, U.S. first. American, he always stressed that so much.

Brenda And his name was --

Yoshiko Yamasaki.

Brenda What kinds of activities do you remember taking part in?

Yoshiko Well every fall - early winter - each year we would put on a program, the whole school would participate in the program and that was one way of making revenue, I guess.

Teddy I think we sold tickets.

Yoshiko Yeah, we have this program put on by all the students and that was one of the most important, uh --

Brenda And that was open to the community?

Yoshiko Um hmm. But [the Yamasaki's] were wonderful. Their daughter comes once a year to Tacoma. We have more fun with her!

Brenda Now, I had understood that your family had some part in the building of the school, or operation of the school.

Yoshiko [Father] was the head of the parents for quite a while, and I think he relinquished his position a couple of years before the war because of his ill health. But for many years he was quite active in the - PTA I guess you could call it.

Brenda Was your mother involved in the school - did she teach or --

Yoshiko No - huh uh --

Brenda Then how did your family come to own the property?

Teddy Well - when we first came back after the war, a few of the elders got together. They decided to sell it because there weren't enough people back this way. Most of them had relocated elsewhere because they didn't have any home to come back to. Most of the business people lived behind their businesses - right? - not too many, well there weren't too many left to start the Japanese School here. We did have classes in there for our

kids just a short time and then they moved it to the Church with the Yamasaki's - the other Yamasaki's - but it didn't last because there weren't enough students.

Brenda So it was - the school was discontinued not so much because no one wanted the school but there weren't enough students left?

Teddy Yes - and not only that, I think they wouldn't have the teachers - the faculty --

Brenda Because they didn't come back.

Yoshiko No -- Our principal died in one of those camps.⁴³ Not the camps that we were in but one of the others.

Brenda How long did you attend the school?

Teddy Twelve years? Twelve years.

Yoshiko It was just an hour and a half to two hours five days a week.

Brenda (To Teddy) So you started in first grade?

Yoshiko I went to Kindergarten.

Kimi The kindergarten teacher was a Caucasian, and the purpose of her being there was to help us so that our transition into the public school would be easier because we all spoke our mother tongue as Japanese. So in order to make that transition from a Japanese speaking group to English we had kindergarten by a Caucasian.

Yoshiko I remember she used to come on Saturdays - Mrs. Snyder.

Kimi I thought the older classes went on Saturdays.

Yoshiko We used to go to Saturday school to learn English. The older Nisei's⁴⁴ - we call ourselves *Nisei's* - older than I - they were asked to help our principal. I don't know how he picked those students but they were asked to come Saturday and meet with any of us who had any problems in public school, whether it be in arithmetic or reading or whatever --

Teddy Gee - I remember Saturday school.

Yoshiko That was where we boned up on whatever we needed in public school, and it was really wonderful. I had Nakayama Sacha. I remember her at school.

Brenda Do you have friends from Japanese Language School that are still in the area?

Teddy Yes - but not too many. Let's see --

Yoshiko It's just a handful now.

Brenda And you talked of people not coming back. Where did people go instead of coming back here?

⁴³ Masato Yamasaki died in a Justice Department Camp near Missoula, Montana, separated from his family.

⁴⁴ Nisei is the Japanese term for the first born generation of Japanese immigrant parents. They are U.S. citizens.

All A lot of them went to L.A., all over California, Chicago, New York, and in the Great Lakes area, Denver, Salt Lake.

Teddy They have their own Tacoma reunions. There's more in those areas than here. And when we have reunions there's just a skeleton.

Brenda It's seems like the attendance at this last one --

Yoshiko Oh, they all love to come back home, you know, it's their home.

Teddy We tell them to have the reunion someplace else - but it wouldn't be the reunion unless it's here!

Brenda Do you have a memory of a time with some girlfriends at a particularly happy time at school - that you can think of - that just comes to mind?

Kimi We used to have undokai - undokai means exercise.

Yoshiko Like a school picnic every year - it's an annual affair - and we'd get divided into red group and white group and --

Teddy We had relays and throwing bean bags into baskets.

Kimi We had all kinds of stuff.

Brenda Was that on the property there or --

Yoshiko No - it was out at south Tacoma --

Brenda Like Spanaway?

Yoshiko No - do you know where on South Tacoma Way - where Yen Chin Restaurant is now, because all around on South Tacoma Way there they used to have vegetable stands - open markets where Cattins Restaurant and Honda of Tacoma [are today]. All that was just meadow. There was nothing there. And we used to have open market stand all along that street. Yen Chin - there was nothing like that along there!

Brenda Did most of the Japanese-Americans live in the area in central Tacoma?

All (Nodding in agreement)

Brenda That was really the center of the community, wasn't it?

Teddy Um hmm. Broadway, Fawcett, Tippon Avenue.

Kimi Because you know we didn't rely on automobiles then, so we had to walk. Well it's not just us, it's the way the whole world was at that time.

Brenda You [stayed] within your own community.

Kimi It's too bad it's not like that anymore, because it's not safe anymore.

Teddy There were some families living on the Tide Flats you call it, they used to - young kids used to walk home from Japanese School --

Yoshiko On the other side of the waterway.

Brenda And walk all that way by themselves.

Kimi We had one schoolteacher that lived over there too.

Brenda Did you ever think, "Gee I wish I didn't have to go to [Japanese Language] school - after school?"

Teddy It was just accepted.

Kimi I think you just grew up that way, you know? You just fall into it. It was the thing to do. Everybody did it so --

Teddy It means that everybody goes doesn't mean that everybody studies! (laughter)

Brenda Oh, of course! (laughter) See, I misunderstood that! So let's talk about that - the social aspect of the schooling...a lot of it was just that this was where you came to meet your friends?

Kimi Of course, people above always study, you know, like [Yoshiko] and the rest older ones (laughter) but --

Teddy See we didn't have flunking or passing, you know, that grading system, so everyone gradually went up.

Brenda Your work wasn't graded - it was really just for the experience of it --

Teddy Well, we didn't have --

Yoshiko Oh, I was graded - we had graduation day and then first prize, second, third --

Teddy We were recognized - top student got number one and second and third. The first three, I think, in each level, they were honored with a diploma, and of course our dad would be sitting on the platform (laughter) you know --

Brenda You're covering your eyes, Kimi? (laughter)

Teddy [Yoshiko] and I would - fortunately we would march up and receive our diploma and my father would be sitting there and "I wonder if this year Kimi would come up?" (laughter)

Kimi (laughter) And guess what? (laughter)

Yoshiko And we should say too this wasn't a free school. It was - there was tuition.

Brenda Right - let's talk about that a little bit because that's one of the questions I had - how it funded itself and so on - because you had a whole faculty and a principal you supported.

Yoshiko I don't know how much it was.

Kimi I don't know either.

Teddy No, I really don't know. At [the reunion] in '77 I found out that my dad was paying tuition for other people. They came up to me and told me about it. See our parents never talked about people, so after they passed - we're finding out more things.

Brenda And he just *did* that for people in your community?

Teddy That's what I hear - I have no proof, but all these people were the younger Issei's,⁴⁵ but they were the ones telling me this.

Yoshiko Oh, and another thing we did was during the summer vacation we would have outing.

Kimi Saturdays.

Yoshiko Was it Saturdays? I don't remember which day of the week it was but we would - well the first outing I remember was Dash Point - you know Dash Point? There is a nice sandy beach and we used to - I think the principal would ask a man who drove a truck, an open truck, a regular truck that you haul lumber or firewood in - and he would put benches on there for the school kids to sit and that's how we went. We didn't have buses.

Brenda And did you go to different locations each week or --

Yoshiko No - we went to Dash Point and then we changed to --

Teddy They didn't want us there anymore - that's why we changed.

Yoshiko Yeah - there was discrimination there - so we changed to Owens Park - that was the last. But they were fun! You know, we packed our lunches and it was really nice.

Teddy And some of the students weren't able to go because their family --

Yoshiko Well did we have to pay to go?

Teddy No - I don't think so but because they have to work or something. I'm finding that our now - we were very fortunate.

Yoshiko Well, Mom always went with us.

Teddy We have been very fortunate to have good parents.

Brenda How did you feel to see your school used in the way it was during war time?

Teddy It was used as a storage place.

Brenda I know that at the time when they first began registering Japanese-Americans that they used it as a registration center.⁴⁶

Yoshiko Used before evacuation - we had registration there.

Teddy It's no fun having a tag on you - with a number on it.

Brenda How did that whole thing work?

Yoshiko I think the Japanese American Citizen's League more or less was in charge of all the registration⁴⁷ and --

Teddy Didn't we get inoculated? (nods from Yoshiko and Kimi)

⁴⁵Issei is the Japanese term for the first generation (native) Japanese who immigrate America.

⁴⁶Tacoma New Tribune articles beginning May 13, 1942, announced the School as the chosen location. See Part 5, pages 7-9.

⁴⁷An article in the May 14, 1942 edition of Tacoma News Tribune, "Last Japs Registering", cites government representatives' praise of the League for their assistance. See Part 5, page 10.

Kimi I don't remember what kinds. And I know we were finger-printed too.

Yoshiko I ran the finger-print deal. (exclamations) Everybody helped, you know.

Teddy I didn't like that.

Yoshiko Well it had to be done, you know.

Kimi Well, see they choose Japanese School mainly - not because of anything other than the fact that it was a good meeting place for the people. I think that was the only reason. (agreement from others) If it hadn't been there it would have been the Church. Gee, that seems like a long time ago, huh?

Yoshiko Oh, yeah.

Teddy I still see it - can't you see it.? I can still see it.

Brenda How many students went to school there?

Teddy At the peak - three hundred.

Brenda You mentioned the Church - what church? Did your family attend church?

Teddy Um hmm - we went to the Buddhist Church. My dad was, you know, very active. [The current] reverend's father was the minister at the time the church was built. He was still a bachelor and he used to come over to our place. We used to live across the street - across the street from the Buddhist Church. I saw that building go up! (laughter)

Brenda Did most people go to church?

Teddy I think so - if it wasn't the Buddhist Church it was the Methodist Church.

Brenda Oh, the Japanese Methodist Church? [Our students] have done histories of both those churches. It seems to me - I know from my childhood - that church for me was sort of a social -- (agreement from all)

Teddy Especially for the Japanese, I think, because we weren't accepted anyplace else and at the time -- well [Yoshiko] went to the Y[WCA] once and she couldn't get in so --

Brenda Was this *before* wartime or *during* wartime?

All No - before.

Brenda So these prejudices were always there?

Teddy Even in school.

Yoshiko You know, we were seated - at a certain side of the room - all of us gathered.

Brenda In public school? And this was long before the war? Why do you suppose that German-Americans --

Teddy Oh, you can't tell them apart from --

Kimi Physically you can't.

Teddy Just like you can't tell the Japanese from the Chinese.

Yoshiko So, you know, the Chinese people were wearing tags - "I am Chinese."

Teddy Maybe we should have done it too. (laughter)

- Brenda Tell me about some of your church activities. There must be some overlap between school and church - right?
- Teddy Spring vacation was always time to practice for _____. We had a program April 8th or near that time - that's Buddha's birthday - and it would always fall on Easter time, huh? So we used to have a program on that time. We'd practice our program during that time. And we had conventions and we had picnics too. And we had clubs - boy's club, girl's club, young adult's club and all that, and then the young adults used to have conventions where they had dances. They went to different chapters - Spokane, Seattle, White River, Ontario, Portland.
- Yoshiko Before the war Ontario was not in it. It was mostly social.
- Teddy It has to be - we have to make our own social things because of discrimination against us.
- Kimi Well it's not just discrimination but I think - you know like the Swiss people have the Swiss Hall, and the Germans have their own and the Jewish people have their own - I mean it's just that similar people attract each other and so that's I think part of it too. You feel more comfortable with the same.
- Brenda And I would assume the Buddhist Church stood vacant in the way that the Japanese School did over the time of the war.
- Teddy They stored things there too. A lot of people didn't have homes to store their belongings.
- Brenda While they were gone?
- Teddy Uh huh. And then when the coast was open to the Japanese a lot of the people stayed there like a hostel - the Japanese School and the Church.
- Brenda Oh they did? I didn't know that.
- Kimi They didn't have any place to go.
- Teddy We were fortunate - we had the house. Dad had bought it in '29 - well I mean aliens couldn't buy it, you know, but he had our attorney as a proxy and gave it back to [Yoshiko] because she was Nisei. We were lucky we had an honest attorney, because I hear in California a lot of them didn't get it back - they used [the attorneys] as proxy and they never got it back. So we were fortunate. I think the people in California went through more than we did in the Northwest. The sentiment wasn't that bad in the Northwest like in California. That's why I think the evacuation came about - because of the Californians, isn't it? That's what they say.

- Kimi It's really hard to say why the evacuation came about. Certainly I don't think it was to protect us.⁴⁸
- Yoshiko Economics. At least that's the way I look at it.
- Brenda Elaborate on that for me.
- Yoshiko Well, because around here it's not so much so - but in California there were a lot of large land owners, and that was a good way to get their land back.
- Brenda So it was used as an excuse.
- Yoshiko That's the way a lot of people think - to get their property.
- Teddy Yeah - our loss is little compared to theirs. They lost acres and acres.
- Kimi I think they were situated there earlier than in the Northwest, and so they expanded much further.
- Teddy Some people couldn't even harvest their [crops] and so they lost everything they had expected to gain that year.
- Kimi A lot of hardships that went on that we don't know about. One fellow in Yakima where his harvest - one morning he got up and all his trees were sawed off!
- Yoshiko Like the Terminal Island where a lot of fishing (is done) - they were only given twenty-four hours to leave and the people were wanting material things were waiting for them to leave because they didn't have any way to selling it or storing it or anything. So they really lost a lot.
- Teddy We were lucky to have a house. We stored everything in the attic - and they put a government seal on and it wasn't broken. We had a panel delivery truck, and Mom said she would load it and our driver would take it to the dump and he said there were people lined up there to pick up the things that we had. So I'm sure our toys and everything went to - We still have a wicker _____ that we found in the attic and that's our tea set -- (points to cabinet).
- Yoshiko It's a Noritake.
- Teddy So we were one of the fortunate ones, you know.
- Brenda You mentioned the time of registration. I don't very much about how all that worked.
- Yoshiko I can't remember too much, (to sisters) can you?
- Teddy You mean for the evacuation? I think I just went up there, then went back to work.
- Yoshiko Did we take pictures then? No pictures?
- Teddy No - I just remember being inoculated and finger-printed. We got our tags.

⁴⁸A lame, but frequently cited justification of Executive order 9066, which called for the evacuation and internment, was the protection of Japanese Americans from violence against them. *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, United States, December, 1982., pages 86-89.

- Yoshiko It was close to evacuation time, wasn't it? I wonder how they assigned berths and all? Some people had sleeping --
- Teddy You mean on the train?
- Yoshiko I remember helping in that car. And then at [the 1977] reunion this young - he's not young anymore - but this person came up to me and says he wanted to always thank me for the care I gave him on the train. And I had forgotten all about him. (laughter) And I was so embarrassed. He's a Ph.D. in engineering or something and he had broke his leg just before evacuation and so he was in a cast and he got a berth and apparently I helped him!
- Brenda The photographs that are in the newspaper of that time in 1942 have smiling [Japanese] people waving good-bye and the newspaper captions says things about cheerful Japanese going off.⁴⁹
- Teddy We didn't see it (laughter) --
- Brenda Tell me about that, because reading it all these years later it seems absurd. Tell me what that was like for you.
- Teddy (laughter) I can't remember it!
- Yoshiko Well, I had one of my professors in history - Dr. Wilkenson - from CPU, he and an entourage of classmates came down and --
- Teddy Union Station? Is that where we left from?
- Brenda Yes - that's actually mentioned in one of the articles I read - that students had come down to see their friends away. Those were some of your friends then?
- Teddy The only thing I remember is our neighbor leaning on the -- Mrs. Alvey was elderly, she was just crying and crying. She knew that she probably wouldn't see us again, you know. And the funny thing is, one morning Mother got up - was it in Heart Mountain? I think it was in Heart Mountain. [She said] "Gee, it's funny - Mrs. Alvey came and she opened the door and she came in." And it was a dream - and we got a letter that she passed on. Isn't that funny? "She came in to the door," she said. Oh, she was so close to us. We'd been there since '29 so --
- Brenda How did wartime and the whole process of internment particularly effect women in your community?
- Yoshiko Well, all the Issei men - Issei's are our parents - those who were active in the community were picked up right after Pearl Harbor and sent to a - really a concentration camp.

⁴⁹This is a reference to the front page photos of Tacoma News Tribune's May 16, 1942 edition, which pictures the departure of many Japanese Americans from Tacoma's Union Station. See Part 5, page 12.

- Brenda Where was this?
- Yoshiko Well they had various places like Missoula, Montana, Lordsburg, New Mexico - gee, those are the only two names that come to mind. But they were handled entirely different from us - from the Nisei. They don't - the men folks - don't talk about it. And I understand that when the family asks the father what was it like or what happened, they ask them not to ask. They just want to forget it. So it must have been very, very unpleasant. I know for a fact that a couple of our family friends came back to Tule Lake and they just cried and cried. And it's really hard to see a man cry.
- Brenda So here are women seeing their husbands carted away --
- Yoshiko And they come back so different! It depends on who came to these homes to pick up the man, for some of them were very nasty, I understand.
- Teddy We were lucky, you know. The FBI [came to] the business and they were supposed to search the house you know, so I says "I'll go home now and open the house" and he says "Oh no that's not necessary." So there were nice people too. They know that we weren't dangerous at all!
- Yoshiko Gosh - Mrs. _____ was telling me that the FBI men that came to their house wanted to know where her husband's uniforms were and where his saber was. But he had told his wife to burn everything - she didn't want to burn everything but he told her --
- Teddy That's because in Japan it was compulsory - they have to go into the service. It was not by choice, so naturally when they came over here they formed a club and all those people that were in the club were taken. Just like the Vets over here, you know.
- Yoshiko You know, in a way this internment of us, [for] the ladies without their spouses - sort of helped each other out. I know it helped my mother. She had just lost Dad and she was with all these ladies who were without husbands too, so it helped her get over some of that.
- Teddy Yeah, when the war started, Mom used to worry because we're all girls and the war, and we're supposed to be evacuated and she's wondering what's going to happen to us because you hear of atrocities and all that, you know. She used to sit up at night and not be able to sleep. She was telling us that. Of course being younger, we don't worry as much about circumstance, but Mom had the responsibility to take care of us.
- Yoshiko Mrs. Alvey - the oldest daughter is the same age as Kimi. They were running a grocery store and she didn't know that much about running a business and she was just lost, you know. And that's what most of the Issei ladies had to face. Hardship that we don't understand.

- Teddy The _____. He was taken, wasn't he? And the mother wasn't too well, so they were instructed that if there was any question to come over to our family because we were older - they were younger.
- Yoshiko Gee - in those days I was twenty-one then, but when I think back I must have been very selfish or something! I never thought about other people. I was just so occupied with our family.
- Teddy I think you get that way.
- Yoshiko I never even considered helping - even offering help. It's terrible to be that way! When I think back - I thought well, gosh!
- Teddy Well, we had decisions to make, too - what to do with the house, what to do with the shop - we didn't know what to do.
- Brenda And it must have been particularly difficult, too, for Issei women who were used to having very, very strong support by their husbands - not used to having to worry about these details --
- All Sure! Oh, Yes! That's right.
- Brenda We talked a little bit about after the war, and people coming back, and how the Japanese Language School served as a hostel --
- Teddy Um hmm - as a hostel, then Mrs. Yamasaki⁵⁰ came back. She lived there, too, until she passed away. And then - we stayed there some too.
- Brenda Oh, did you? There were many families staying there?
- Kimi You mean right after the war? Oh yes - there were quite a few families who used the classrooms. But I don't know for how long. We were so busy there we just always did our own thing.
- Brenda Now did you come back and go to school? (all affirm) [Kimi] would have been at UPS. And they tried to reopen [Japanese Language School] but there just weren't --
- Kimi No - they just used one room and just on Saturdays, but then after that it was used as judo, dojo, karate and --
- Brenda Yeah, that area has sort of been abandoned. (all affirm)
- Teddy Mother only bought it for sentimental reasons because somebody else was going to buy it - so she made me buy it (laughter) so I guess it was for the good, now that I think about it, because the University will take it off my hands now.
- Brenda When did you buy the School?
- Teddy Right after the war. I wonder how we had the money?

⁵⁰Kuni Yamasaki was the first teacher at the Japanese Language School.

- Yoshiko It wasn't *right* after the war. I don't think it was in our possession when Mrs. Yamasaki was still living.
- Teddy But it was ours when you [Kimi] were staying there. It was '52? No '53, so we must have bought it before that.
- Kimi But see we came back in - what - '46? '45. She must have bought in maybe '51.
- Brenda And did you folks ever use the School then - was it leased out?
- Teddy Just the top floor or the basement too... [Then we tried to sell, but Loren Ezell⁵¹ defaulted on the loan and we had to pay off all the liens before we could get it back.]
- Brenda And he was the one who gathered up all those --
- Teddy Uh huh - he wasn't supposed to touch certain things, you know. I asked him to leave one room the way it was. But he didn't do that either. See there were a whole room of desks screwed onto the floor - it was just the way we left it. I want that left, you know - and then he sold it at auction or whatever. What is that antique place on Pacific Avenue?
- Brenda Well how do you feel about the [University] owning that property now?
- Yoshiko I think it great. It's going to cost quite a bit to renovate it, you know - which I don't know if they'll go through or not. If it doesn't go through they said they would put a marker so to make sure that people know that the Japanese School was there, and then they said they would have a place where there would make sure the history of the Japanese School would be designated someplace in the building if there should be a building there next.
- Teddy I think it's great. I talked to the daughter⁵² about it and she's real happy about it, because the way it is now to renovate it, they say it's gonna cost about a million. If they can do it, great - but that's a very big *if*.
- Brenda The community has been very supportive of maintaining the building - the *building*.
- Teddy Yes, I know - I couldn't understand it. We wanted it torn down. I think if the Japanese community had wanted it left I would have heard of it at the reunions, you know. Nobody spoke up! So I think it's up to me, and I talked to several former students they have no objections. Because it's such an eyesore.
- Brenda And the process of memory doesn't need that building, does it?
- Teddy Yeah, and it's a shame because the [Buddhist] Church, the Japanese School - they were built by the Issei people without any help of the community! So if it was in a better condition - I think I've paid my respects. To bring it up to code is just too much!

⁵¹Ezell purchased the School from the Kawasaki's in 1984. He defaulted on the loan in 1989.

⁵²The Yamasaki's youngest daughter, Yoshiko (called Yoshi), who resides in Japan.

Brenda How have you've seen a change in the Japanese-American community in Tacoma in these past decades since the war?

Yoshiko The former Tacomans - there aren't that many left. They've all done well -

Brenda Have you seen a change in the way the Japanese are perceived in this community?

Kimi [Some people didn't want us in the neighborhood. We wanted to build a house on N. Yakima.] This was back in '59 that we built the house. And you know how people react when a different color comes into a neighborhood. They think their own property values are bound to decrease. Isn't that the usual concept of people? They think about their own property first. What it might mean if a person of another race might come in and that might be the start. That's the only reason I could think of because they didn't know us, so how can you be against somebody you don't know?

Brenda So they must have been using some other means to judge you.

All Yeah. Um hmm. Just color, that's all.

Kimi But we didn't have any trouble.

Brenda How did their objections manifest themselves?

Kimi Well we didn't know about it for years! But [George] wanted to join the tennis club - that's where the objection was too. But there are just a few very narrow-minded people.

Teddy Even among Japanese there are bad ones, too, so - they can be any nationality, right? (laughter)

Brenda I won't ask you to name any names.

Teddy (laughter) I can't think of *any*! (laughter)

Kimi People don't like changes sometimes. They want things to continue the way things are. But it's different now. A lot of things they teach you at school, I think too - that people are all the same.

Teddy And then there's that law now too - [forbidding] discrimination. Well, it depends on what kind of people they are, with a law even --

Kimi Well, I think it's just that people are changing for the better - I hope.

Brenda Well, there's [some more] diversity in [communities].

Kimi Yes - and I think television has opened our eyes that people all over the world are the same, and people couldn't travel that much to get to know people. But I think now we get to feel as if we know more about other cultures. It's in education. And it's better - better for our children. The opportunities are open. For the Nisei - we could only work in our parents business, we were always told to keep quiet. Even our children tell us to speak up!...