

Mrs. Yaeko Nakano, Interview February 18, 1992
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At the first service I attended at Tacoma Buddhist Temple, Mrs. Yaeko Nakano was the organist. It was a special 1992 New Year's Service and included installation of the officers of the Temple. To her surprise, Mrs. Nakano was presented with a special plaque acknowledging her fifty-plus years of service to the Tacoma Buddhist Temple. The following is inscribed on her plaque: "Tacoma Buddhist Temple recognizes with deep appreciation Yaeko Nakano for over fifty years of dedicated service in the development and progress of the Temple's music program and for her original ideas for skits. January 12, 1992."

As this interview with Mrs. Nakano begins, we are in her studio in her home. She has a state-of-the-art, not-even-on-the-market-yet special-order organ, two pianos and a keyboard in her studio. She has taught piano since her later years of high school and even today, at 69 years of age, has 17 students! Mrs. Nakano has more energy than one can imagine. We were looking at some pictures in her studio --

This is February 18, 1992 and my name is Susan Stout and I am a student at the University of Washington Tacoma. I am interviewing Mrs. Yaeko Nakano.

When I came out of camp I started teaching piano. First, you know, I worked out in the fields, the farms and things like that in the Fife valley. I picked strawberries and beans because we had no job.

How old were you then?

Oh, gee, Ken was 3 or 4. I took him out in the fields with me or I left him with my mother during the summer. My husband was working as an oyster opener, shucking oysters in Tacoma. And he went to Purdy to pick up these oysters. I mean there was no job available. You just take whatever.

Was that because you were a Japanese American or was that because there were no jobs?

This was right after the war and nobody would hire a Japanese. And with a child, we just do whatever we can. Many people, of course, knew about the fact that I play [piano] so they began asking me and one by one I began building up my studio. So this is not the first recital but the second. [We were looking at pictures on the wall in her studio.] You know Mrs. Yoshioka, these are her children and this is Elsie Tanaguchi. These are the three Yoshioka girls. This is Maya Nishinaga who was the first, the minister that we had

here before the war. Then he was taken away. Then when he came back, he was in Seattle. So he used to come back and forth to Tacoma too and in his rickety old car he used to come here to pick me up and take me down to Temple. And he would take me back home again. I started that way too after the war playing for funerals.

So did you play for the Temple in Tacoma and Seattle?

No just in Tacoma. But I didn't even have a car so somebody had to come and pick me up. That was his daughter. They moved to Tacoma. So I was getting his business. It was at the Weyerhaeuser Hall at the YWCA. This is my teacher, Helen Congdon. We played a piece together. And this is my mother, I need to tell you about my mother later on. This was taken two years ago. [She pointed to a picture of herself and the Puyallup Valley Teachers group that she belongs to]. I belong to four music organizations; the Washington State Music Association, which is a state organization which is affiliated with the national and there are chapters in the state. I belong to three locally here because I started with the Tacoma Chapter in the 50s. And then those of us who were living in the Puyallup-Fife area became big enough a group that we decided that instead of going clear into Tacoma that we would form our own chapter here. So I am a charter member of the Mt. Rainier Chapter. And then from that came another offshoot which is the Puyallup Valley Chapter. They had certain things they wanted to do that they didn't agree with the Mt. Rainier Chapter and they were a younger bunch of people. And they asked me if I would come along with them. And I told them, "Well, you are a younger bunch, why do you want me?" And they told me that I don't think like the other older ...

You think young.

And I says, well the thing is, I'm doing most of the work here [Mt. Rainier Chapter] because that is my charter and I did work in Tacoma too, but I says, you know, I'm getting old, I cannot do work with you people too. They said it doesn't matter. So I'm a member, but I distinguish myself separately from the other members by saying I am a supporting member. So this is that group [pointing to the picture] and so they sponsor recitals every year so a photographer came in to take pictures of the children in the recital so he says, "I'll take a picture of the teachers." Here's Donna. And so at that time I knew that I was going to celebrate my 50th year of teaching so I asked him, "Will you please take a separate picture of me?" He said, "Of Course I will!" [At that time she showed me that picture taken recently and the picture taken earlier.]

At this time we went into her front room and I noticed the cloth over the door way. Mrs. Nakano explained that it was a Noren.

They usually have this hanging in front of stores, the entrance to the stores. Because in Japan, a lot of them are small momma poppa stores. Each store would specialize in something and they would have these colorful things. Well, in my case when I went to Japan in 1983 at that time I asked them [relatives] what the Nakano Kamon is, the family crest, I wanted my children to know the family crest. This is what it is. It is a keyhole. [It is four overlapping squares.] [Mrs. Nakano showed me a book showing family crests.] This is Hoshide. This was my name before I was married. This is my husband's. That is Kasane Kuginuki. Kasane means over lapping, layers. In everyone of them there is different variations. It's just like in Europe, they have the family crest.

Does the family pick one then?

No it is handed down from generation to generation. That is the reason I didn't know about which one. Originally, the common people didn't have these. It was only the war lords. When they went to battle, they needed something to identify to them which side you were on so they had these banners carrying that lord's crest. And then what the lords did afterwards was, if they were victorious -- and of course, he always tried to get others to join him to make his side larger -- he would reward them.

[Mrs. Nakano situated herself on the couch with a heating pad on her shoulders. This session we would keep short because she was especially tired from the previous week's activities. At this time, we tried to follow the previously typed questions.] What is your full maiden name and your married name and when and where you were born?

My first name is Yaeko. My maiden name is Hoshide. And my last name is Nakano. I was born 1922 and I was actually born in Japan. As I found out later, there is an interesting story why I was born in Japan. My father came from the prefecture of Yamaguchi with two other brothers.

So your father has two other brothers?

That came to the United States. It was a large family. I have the genealogy, we have researched this. He was a youngest and it was a large, large family. There were three brothers that came to Seattle because in Japan the eldest inherits everything. The rest of them, you have to find some way to make a living. Over there it was just the ending of

the feudal days and getting into that Meiji era, the emperor coming back. So many people started emigrating someplace. Many people went to Hawaii, you know they were recruiting workers [for plantations]. They were recruiting railroad workers over here. When my father and two older brothers came here they first went to Seattle and they were still young and they went to night school. And so my father and my uncle, I don't know about the third person, could read and write English. There were many others that were farmers that didn't know English that were working the railroad. My father could read the Reader's Digest and the newspaper. Anyway, I guess the day [came when] he was working at a drugs company, which was called Main Drug Company in Seattle. So then, I don't know for how long he did this. My other uncle became a watchmaker and he repaired watches. So my father then came to Tacoma and he started a drug store.

So he was a pharmacist?

No, not a registered pharmacist. In those days, I don't think it was that. But he had a store in the middle of Japan town in Tacoma and what he did was he knew the Japanese medicines. The folk medicines, the herbs and everything. The Japanese immigrants didn't go to American doctors. They relied on the medicine they knew back home. And that is how he made his living.

The medicine was herbs?

Then, and of course, he had other sundry things. That was my father. Then I think they arranged a marriage between him and my mother who was in Japan. And so he went back to Japan to marry her and brought her back over here.

Was that around 1915? What was the year that they got married?

My oldest brother was born in 1915, So they were married before 1915. Then they came back over here. Then she had my oldest brother Kiyoshi and then my brother that lives in Seattle now, Hideo, then me. These two were born in America. Then evidently my mother went back to visit and she took the two boys and I don't know whether she knew she was pregnant or what. In those days it wasn't a matter of airplane in 9 hours. It was steamship and it's two weeks over and my mother got sick. She got over there and when she was visiting, probably her mother and father -- I don't know too much about that part. She went back to her own village. In Japan it's customary to go back home anyway when you are going to have a child and being in the United States, of course, you can't do that. She decided she was going to wait and have me because she didn't want to come

back again. [While she was pregnant and be sick on the steamship.] Then I was born on August 2, 1922 and as I understand it now, I was born where my uncle's home is now. Up to then I didn't know where I was born exactly. The island is called Oshimagun. Oshima means big island. I found these things out when I went back to Japan. ... When I was applying for my Social Security you have to have your birth certificate and I said, "I don't have a birth certificate!" And so I wrote to my aunt, because by that time I had met her, and I said, "Will you see if there is a birth certificate anyway?" In Japan they register you at your father's home town. She said that was on the other side of the island. So she had my uncle, who at age seventy rides a motorcycle, ... go over to the other side to my father's village and the registrar and I got this piece of paper saying that I was registered there, but it doesn't say where I was born. It doesn't matter where you're born, you are registered under your father's village. And it had my father's and my mother's wedding date. And he had already registered my older brothers and mine came after that.

So that was fun to learn that information.

Yes ... and that is the first time I knew I had a birth certificate.

Was that the first time you knew your mom's and dad's marriage day?

Yes, because it was on that. And it was all in Japanese.

Can you read Japanese?

Enough to get by, but some of the bigger words, many times I ask my friends or I ask Sensei to translate for me. Especially the official papers and things that are harder to read. So then after I was born there [at my uncle's house] and now they are using it as a store room, because he built [a new home on the side]. And I have a picture of that. He won't let me go in there because he says, "Ah, that's junk in there now." I found out where I was born and he invited me to stay over night there because he says I was born in that house. And then evidently my mother decided because she was breastfeeding me that she would wait until I was through with that and I could walk. I have a passport with my mother and she is carrying me.

So you were in Japan about a year then before you came back?

Yes, I think it was. I think they came back because in 1924, there was no more immigration from Japan. I think we came back in 1924. They told her, "You better get back." Otherwise I would have been stuck over there. But of course, I didn't know that until all these things, you see. Also in 1924, Tokyo had their great big earthquake.

You didn't experience the earthquake did you?

No because we were in Yamaguchi. But we has to go to Tokyo or Yokohama [actually Osaka], I don't know where, to take that steamship. In my mother's old photobook, there are earthquake scenes that, whether she bought them as postcards, or what, I don't know.

The earthquake was in Tokyo but you were over on that island so you didn't experience the earthquake, but it still happened while you were in Japan?

Maybe. I can check the date of that and when I left.

I'm sure your father was very happy to see your mother and you, his new daughter, and his two other sons.

Yes, and shortly after that, my youngest sister was born. So there were four of us. My youngest sister's name is Mutsumi. My youngest sister and oldest brother are now deceased.

Does your brother attend Tacoma Buddhist Temple too?

My oldest brother did in Idaho. He lived in Nampa. That's my oldest one, he's deceased now. He was very faithful in the Buddhist Temple in Idaho. My next brother Hideo married a girl whose family was a strong Baptist, Seattle Baptist Church. So he became a Baptist. And that Baptist Church in Seattle was founded by my uncle in Seattle. He was one of the founders.

You have told me a little about your family. I was curious about your dance at the BCA (Buddhist Churches of America) Convention. How did it go?

The convention was outstanding. And it was really funny, because I had made the story. This is the year of the monkey. You that I make these skits every year. I have researched the proverb of the Three Monkeys. [Then I read the first paragraph of her story The Three Monkeys. It discusses the valuable lesson in the famous proverb of Hear no evil (Kika-Saru), See no evil and Speak no evil (Iwa Saru).] Because I knew that proverb, I

wanted to use the Three Monkeys tale so I have researched the King County Library on 320th and the new Federal Way library and for two months last year I had been researching trying to find the story of the Three Monkeys because I wanted to see how the proverb came about. Well, we looked through Indian folklore, Chinese folklore, Japanese folklore, I worked with the librarian there -- nothing, so...

You made one up!

So I have to make one up! I thought this was a nice proverb to work on, so I made the story up.

May I read that later?

Sure.

Thank you. So did you stay overnight at the Red Lion? (The Red Lion is where the BCA convention was held.)

Yes, and then in the morning we went to the Seattle Buddhist Temple. We heard the lectures there and then after the last closing service, they had box lunches for us. So we ate there and we stopped at Uwajimaya and we came home. So I was tired by the time I came home. But anyway, everybody said it was a great success, our skit. Every chapter is supposed to do something and most of them do the same thing, Japanese dances, Japanese songs and maybe koto. Tacoma [Tacoma Buddhist Temple] has been known for our skits and everybody just looks forward to it all the time so I'm under pressure every year.

So you were really busy with that before! [the convention]

Yes, for two months I've been trying to figure out what to do and I had certain ideas but they won't gel, it won't come together and this is what happens to me all the time. You know, I have ideas and I'm thinking about it constantly and all of a sudden it might come to me in the middle of the night. I think it's just like composers, don't you think? You know, melodies come to them and finally it gels. That seems to happen to me. And all of a sudden, I'm wide awake and I jump out and the whole thing just comes to me. And this one, I couldn't make it gel until one day, Fumi Tanabe, who is the president of our Funjinkai now, she says that she had a carving that her daughter gave her of the Three Monkeys, but it's not only three monkeys, there are four of them. I asked her what is the

fourth one doing? The fourth one looks real droopy. We wondered why it looked like that. It must be because if you See no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil, it's no fun! [Laughter] *I told her I had to go to a meeting so I'd stop by on my way home and I wanted to see that carving so I could see that [the fourth monkey]. Well, once I saw that carving, something came to me like that. And I came home and I was having lunch and the whole thing came to me. So I called her up and I said, "Fumi, I got the skit." She said, "You just left here!"*

[Here we talked about the directions she had given me to her house. Mrs. Nakano had given me the directions in an earlier telephone conversation.] Earlier you told me your son helps you take care of your yard. It is very nice.

During the summer, I have all the vegetables growing. I have my own garden. This almost two acres that we have here with the fruit trees and all. We've lived here since 1951. It was just a small house only to the kitchen and we only had one child at that time. And then after the other two were born, and I had students too and the piano here then. I'm trying to teach and I've got three kids to raise, that's why we added on.

You said your father had the store, what did your mother do?

She stayed home, cooked, sewed, took lunch down to my father because he couldn't leave the store. You know in those days many people lived behind their stores. In our case, we had a house, rented house. My mother, I can still remember her and she had a basket and she'd make the lunch at home and then carry that down to 15th and Broadway.

How far away did you live from the store?

At that time, we were living at 11th and Fawcett.

In about what year was that that she would take his lunch, that was over a period of years?

Yes.

Was your father living there when your mother went to Japan and you were born?

I don't know. I can remember that as being my first house that I can remember.

About how old were you then?

We were going to Central School.

So you were in grade school. Was it mostly Japanese students going to Central?

No.

It was Japanese Americans and other people and then back at home, though, did you have any friends other than Japanese American friends?

Not very much. I mean we more or less stayed by ourselves. The neighbors, sure, they knew us, but actually, maybe at time I didn't notice discrimination as such that much. I didn't start noticing that until I got a little bit older. But you see there was a missionary that the First Baptist Church in Tacoma sponsored and that missionary lady was called Mrs. Wyre. And there was a building at 15th and Fawcett and she had a mission there and she taught English to the Issei ladies and cooking American food. I used to go down there because we were speaking nothing but Japanese at home and then because I played the piano, I began playing the piano for the church services there. And then eventually I got to the point where I was even teaching Bible school.

At the Baptist Church?

At the mission. And so my early experiences were at that Mission and the reason why we go is because she didn't distinguish between Christians or Buddhists or anything. It was that she wanted to work with the Japanese Americans.

So she knew Japanese and she could interpret?

No, I don't think she knew Japanese. She was a white lady. Caucasian lady. But she was just a darling. I can still remember her.

And she would help teach you English by showing you things and saying the name.

Yes, and so that's why my mother picked up English and American cooking.

And did your father help teach your mother English?

I don't know that. My father was just always at the store. The store was open at 10 o'clock in the morning and he never came home until 10 or 11 o'clock.

So you didn't see him very much. So did he have that store up until....

No. During when I was going to high school, there was a depression, junior high, high school time and you know many stores went bankrupt.

So then how did he manage to make a living?

At that time my two older brothers were going to college. One of my brothers was going to UPS. My ... [second] brother was going to UW. We had no money to send them to school. They went up to the cannery in Ketchikan. You have heard many people went up there during the summer in Alaska. Many young men went up there to earn money to college. My brothers did the same thing. And they stayed in somebody's home as a house boy, did their work and went to school.

Did they give money to your father?

No they could barely get by. So what happened then was that in 1940 I graduated. But I think in about 1939, the lady who ran a grocery store wanted to get married -- she was a single lady -- so we had an opportunity to buy that grocery store, I mean when I say buy, you know, buy the stock. That's when we began running the grocery store. So my mother knew I wanted to go to college, but she couldn't afford to do that because my two older brothers were still there [in school] so when I graduated, she said to help in the grocery store and when my two older brothers are through they would come back and help in the grocery store. Then she said we could afford to send me. So I said OK, I'll wait.

How many years did you have to wait?

Two years, but then the war broke out. My brother graduated from the UW, I don't know if my older brother graduated or not. I think he did, but I'm not positive.

What you have been saying about your parents working very hard towards helping to send your brothers and you to school, I read Seichi Konso's article and it sounds very much like the parents worked for the existence for the children to help, them and your parents were no different.

Because that's the way they are. If they could get their kids through school, they would be solid citizens and they would be able to get a better job. Because they're just working day and night to provide for us. But we didn't know we were poor. Everybody else was in the same shoe, you know? We didn't have anything, but we made things. My brother

would find wooden boxes and find wheels someplace to put on the box. And we could get blackberries and my mother would make jam with the wild blackberries. I didn't know I was poor.

Right. OK, so you had two older brothers and then you and your sister. What values do you remember your parents emphasizing when you were a child.?

My mother was a big influence in my life. My mother was the eldest in her family. My father was the youngest in his family. So you can imagine my father is quiet. My mother is a go-getter, because you know she was used to that. My mother always loved music. She herself loved gardens. She had a talent for it. But she had no education. She wanted to make sure that we had both of the languages. So my earliest experience is that she sent us to Japanese classical dancing. We went there. The other thing she got and because she had no money, she went to the music stores that were selling pianos and she told them she wanted a piano for her children, because she wanted them to take piano lessons. I think she said she made a deal with the stores that they would give us the piano at a discount of something or other if she could persuade others to buy pianos too. That kind of a deal. Anyway, she bought me a piano, and I took lessons from a lady who used to come around to the houses in those days and my sister took lessons too. So she provided us with piano lessons and Japanese classical dancing lessons and because of the fact that she loved to sing and she couldn't take lessons herself, she used to buy Japanese recordings and she would learn all those old classical songs from the recordings. So she must have had quite a mind for music.

Did you go to the Japanese Language School?

Yes, we did. That was another thing. We went to school until three and then from four o'clock to five-thirty pm to Japanese Language School.

Did you go all through high school?

Yes I did.

And then right after high school, you worked in your father's store for two years.

But before that I worked on Saturdays. I took care of kids in a Japanese family grocery store. They showed me how to make change and this kind of thing too when I was going to junior high school. I also worked at Christmas time where they were selling Japanese

novelty things like you see at Uwajimaya [a Japanese store in Seattle]. And then as I got older, I worked Saturdays in the open air market on Market Street. That whole place was all open from about 13th to 11th. Now there was a mingling of Japanese, Italian, Greeks. There used to be a place called Crystal Palace, there was Rhodes and across the street was Fisher's which became Bon Marche, I think later on. But all around there was sprinklings of Japanese laundries and grocery stores. Our grocery store was on Fawcett across the street from the Senior Citizens place right now. But at that time that corner was very busy. Because the Eagles Hall was right next to it. On the other corner was a Crescent Dance Hall. So you could imagine on the weekends it was really busy. Then across the street on that side was the USO. Below that was the bowling ally. So we kept our grocery store open until eleven or twelve o'clock at night on weekends.

And you worked in the grocery store for those two years. And did you work for your father's grocery store in high school?

Just towards the end and then I graduated in 1940 from high school and worked two years.

Do you have any special experiences you remember in high school? Just before the war, were some people to rude Japanese Americans?

I knew my place and I would never go to an American home unless I was specifically invited. But I know that many other people have never even stepped into an American home. But my mother, you see, was cultivating crysanthemums and she remembered from Japan how you dis-bud it, dis-bud all the sides and get the one big one. So she was doing that and some American people who were interested in crysanthemums, they all used to come to my place and by that time we were living on 19th and Fawcett during my junior high and high school time. I've got to tell you this because the interest is from my mother, I got all this kind of thing about love for plants and things, and that now has gone to my son who is a landscape architect. So this is very interesting how it goes.

So some of the values your mother instilled in you with regard to working the land and working with the crysanthemums and that passed on to you and you passed that on to your son. No wonder your yard looks so nice.

He doesn't do anything here because he says it too late now to uproot all the things. He said, "Mom you guys just did it naturally and that's just fine. Let's just leave it natural instead of making it look professional. My oldest son is Kenichi, Hiroshi and Stan.

Kenichi was born in 1944 in camp in Tule Lake. Hiroshi was born 10 years after that in 1954. Stan was born in 1957.

When you were a teenager and a young woman, what are some things that you did that you think your mother or grandmother might not have ever done? You know how sometimes the next generation does things a little differently.

I clashed with my mother often. With the sons already working out, you know they are living in somebody else's home and going to college, well I'm trying to become like an American girl. And my mother wants me pure and like Japanese. I wanted to go on dates. I used to sneak out. By that time there were soldiers at Ft. Lewis and we used to have dances with them. We had special ones that the Japanese American Citizen League did for the Japanese soldiers. We used to rent halls and just invite the soldiers for a social and dancing. People like us, high school age, we were interested in going to those dances. Well, my mother doesn't think I should go. The soldiers would ask me for a date to go to the movie or whatever. They would stop in at the grocery store at that time. And my younger sister, she can't go out yet so I would tell my sister to watch out so I could sneak out. Course I don't come back home until they are back in the house. This is twelve o'clock and my mother would lock the door from inside so I can't use my key. Well, my bedroom was up on the second floor. I used to throw rock up to the second floor window. And my sister would let me in. My folks were on the other side.

[laughter]

Did your mother ever find out?

I don't know. I really don't know. Because they're tired, you know.

(Side Two, Tape one)

You never knew your grandmother did you?

No, the rest of the family were all in Japan. So the only one that I knew was my uncle that was in Seattle.

When your children were young, what are some things you felt important to instill in them besides the gardening and the love of flowers? Are any of them involved with music?

My son is. But they instill education and the reason for that is because both my husband and I were planning to go to college. My husband wanted to become a doctor and he was working for Mr. and Mrs. Chauncy Baxter in Tacoma in the North End. He went to Stadium High School. He was a school boy there. Baxters were socially and business-wise very well known in Tacoma. He was their house boy and he went to Stadium High School. My husband was very brilliant and he wanted to become a doctor. Mr. Baxter had graduated from Dartmouth College and so he made an application for my husband to go to Dartmouth College.

Did he get to go?

No. You see, although he is one year older than I am, because he was in Japan, he had to come over here and start from Kindergarten. He knew all the sciences. He had all this advanced math. He knew all that already but he couldn't speak English, so he had to start from Kindergarten. He was born in America, but when he was three years old his father died. Then he had an older brother and older sister and a mother. So the only thing she could do was go back to Japan. She can't speak English, she doesn't know anyone. So she took the three children to Japan. My husband was only 3 years old. I found this out later, in Japan his mother had no means of support except an insurance that she got when her husband died. But after that ran out, she had to get married. So she remarried. But the older brother came back to the United States. The older sister got married. Here's my husband, young like that and the person she marries doesn't want my husband so he was shuttled between relatives. So when he was around 14 or 15, he says 16 because that is Japanese age. In Japan when you are born, you are 1, because you are in the womb 9 months. So you're one. So when the next year comes, you're 2. So if you're born December 31, you are one, January 1, you are two. I don't do it this way and I don't think they do it anymore, but that's the way they used to do it. So he told me when he was 16, but he was actually 14, that if he didn't go back to the United States he would be conscripted [in the Japanese Army] ... even though he was born in the United States. So at that age he came to the United States. First he went to live with his sister, I told you the sister was married. She married in Japan, I think she married a man who had American citizenship. They lived in a sawmill town of Onalaska. That's the only person he knew over here and he said he had no money. He borrowed passage way and then came over to his sisters, and that's when he started kindergarten. Then eventually he moved to Tacoma and he went to Jason Lee and that's when he started

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living with the Baxters. and then From Jason Lee he went to Stadium High School. He was going to graduate in 1942.

After he learned the English language, did he progress quickly in school?

As far as all the other subjects, he knew all that. He took Latin because he thought he could learn American language better. All those things he excels. He was a straight A student. But his English was poor.

So when he was 14 here he started Kindergarten and went through and would have graduated in June 1942.

And we left in May.

Did he graduate in the camp?

They sent diplomas to the camp and they had a ceremony there.

Did you go to California right away?

We left here in May. Here is a diary that I kept. And I need to sort this all out. During the war remember they said learn First Aid, so I went and learned First Aid. And I took that with me to Camp because I might need it. Remember I was only 19. I didn't do this for posterity or anything. It was just for myself to say, Hey, this is going to be an adventure, why don't I jot down a few things, you know my thoughts. So this is a personal diary, it is not historical. But my brother in Seattle is a journalist and he was asked if he could write things about the evacuation and he says, "Yaeko, you said you kept a diary. I can't remember a darn thing about what went on. Can I look at your diary a little bit?" I said, "Sure, go ahead." And when he looked at this, he said "You know, Yaeko, I don't remember this at all." He was amazed what I kept.

So you didn't go to Camp Harmony did you?

No, we were sent down to Pinedale which was outside of Fresno.

How many days were you at Pinedale before they sent you to Tule Lake?

It will show you in the diary, because I kept a record up to a certain distance.

OK. I see this is typed, did you have a typewriter?

I scribbled these all on pieces of paper on the train. My brother, because he was already working at the newspaper in Seattle, in the Japanese newspaper, one of the most precious things to him was that typewriter. We were only allowed one suitcase a piece. But he took his typewriter. So he was married by that time. He had that in his room and so I kept all these scraps of paper and so I would go over there and type so I could keep a record better instead of all the scraps of paper. But this first day is very interesting, you should read that so you will understand. [I read the first day's account here.] We were anxious, yet I had never ridden on a train. I had never been out of the state of Washington. So we were scared and excited at the same time.

Did someone take care of your dad's grocery store?

They leased to somebody. No I don't know the details, because I was only 19. I guess they leased it and supposedly he was supposed to send us monthly payments. But once you are in camp, you can't keep track. He never sent us money. We didn't know what was going on. We can't go back out to check it. When we came back -- it was nothing. He just disappeared. We don't know when, nothing. There were a lot of things that went on. My mother struggled very much to keep the family together. She said the family is the most important. We've got to keep the family together. But when you are in camp like that and things happen, the things that happened in our family, it did scatter and that's another very emotional part.

I'm sure that was very difficult because family was so important. Did you eat the meals with your family at Tule Lake, or did you have some other friends that you ate with?

When we were in camp, it was just like the Army, because the Army took over. The first thing we were told was to put straw in the ticking.

And those were your mattresses.

And we had Army camp cots. And then we were told to go to the mess hall to eat. And we stood out in that hot sun. You know we left here in May and you know how cold it is. Get down there in Fresno and it's over 90 degrees and I'm telling you some people were fainting. But because of that first day's experience of trying to get food and waiting in line, my mother told me and my sister, "Work in the mess hall." "At least," she says "I'll know you two will get fed."

What did your father do?

My father, I can't remember what he did in Pinedale. When we got into Tule Lake, he started to work in the mess hall too. In Pinedale, I worked in the mess hall and that is where I met my husband. He was working as a dishwasher. And then at the end of feeding two or three shifts of feeding the people at the mess hall, the crew would get together and eat and we paired off that way. But we didn't eat together because I was a waitress. I didn't eat with my parents. My sister kept on working in the mess hall. Later on they were going to form a recreation department and they said that if there was anybody who can teach piano or direct a choir [they] could apply to the recreation department. So I applied and I did get a job. So I went from a mess hall worker which was \$8 a month to a professional. There were three levels. There was the laborers, the middle class office workers, then the professionals who were doctors, you know, that kind profession. The salaries were \$8, \$10, \$12. At Tule Lake, it was \$12, \$16 and \$19. People that worked in the mess halls, and that is hard work, they were considered laborers.

So you taught piano?

Yes, and arranged recitals and musical programs.

What did you do between leaving Tule Lake and coming here in 1951?

I left Tule Lake in 1946. We were one of the last ones to leave Tule Lake. And that's because my husband was a "No - No" boy. By that time, my sister and her husband had repatriated back to Japan. My brother had gone to Minidoka. My husband, we stayed in Tule Lake because, "We want to go back to Japan." He wanted to go back to Japan because he wanted to find his mother. And then Ken was born in Camp. And I said, "I'll go wherever you are going to go." So we all signed papers to go back to Japan. But when the war turned out the way it was, I told my husband, "What are you going to do if we go to Japan? We have no property, you don't even know if your mother is living." He's the youngest son, so there's no property. "I said, what are we going to do?" and he said, "I don't know." I said, "Then why do we go back to Japan? At least if we stay here, we are familiar with the English language. We can go back to Tacoma, at least we are familiar with Tacoma." And he changed his mind. He says, "You're right."

At a certain deadline, everybody else had to get out. We didn't know where we were going to go, but he had an older brother who had already left and he had gone to Nebraska and he was working for Armour Sheep Company, they were raising sheep in

Nebraska. So he wrote to us and said, "If you have no place to come, come over here. At least I can get you a job with Armour." So we decided to go over there. But in the meantime, I could get out with my son [Ken], but he [my husband] couldn't get out because he was still hung up with this "No - No" thing. So by that time my mother and father had come back to Tacoma from Minidoka and there was no housing available, so [they] were living in the Japanese School. So I came out with Ken from Tule Lake and stayed with my folks at the Japanese School. There were rooms in the school and we had pot-bellied stoves. By the time I got there, there were no more rooms available. All the rooms were taken. So I was living on top of the stage and they had a piano there, so I was very fortunate, see I got a piano there. So we closed the curtain there. When my husband got cleared, he came to Tacoma then the three of us went to Nebraska. Now when you leave camp, you know that we have no money. When you leave camp they gave you \$3 a day for meals on the train and they gave us each \$25 to get started. We left camp with \$75 and train fare and \$3 a day for meals.

What was the first thing you did when you got to Nebraska?

We got to Nebraska and of course we had no idea what we were getting into. His brother said, "I can get you a job at Armour." We got to Nebraska in three days on the train. The rickety old train. And we got there and we found out that the Armour company had a camp. But it was worse than even the camp in Tule Lake. It's like a migrant workers cabin, latrine in the middle, no running water inside the cabin. But the worst thing was where we went was that it wasn't all Japanese, the Japanese keep their place clean, latrines and things. When we got there we found Mexicans, Indians and Japanese. We go to the latrine and the place filthy. So at that time his older brother was living with a Mexican woman and he had two children and he got us a cabin next to them, no heat, no running water, nothing. Well, I was devastated. My son Ken had a hernia. I asked, "Where's the nearest doctor?" the answer, "There's no doctor." I said, "Where's the nearest hospital?" The answer, "There's no hospital." And I told my husband, "What are we going to do here?" Because you know, we needed a doctor for my son's hernia. Well, we stayed there, I think three days and I said, "Well, if you can get a job there, we will make it. But I do want a doctor for Ken." And my husband talked to his brother and he said, "You know, he just can't live like this." And then my husband said he wanted to go back to Tacoma. Well, we had no money. We borrowed \$100 from his brother to get back to Tacoma. We were flat broke.

Who was running the Japanese Language School at the time?

The principal and his wife were running the school before the war. During the war the principal died. His wife came back over here, but there was no Japanese School. She came back because the building was there. And so then she opened up the rooms for anybody else who had no house to come back to.

So was the building paid for before the war?

I don't know.

How long did you have to stay there then?

We stayed there and my husband started working for the oyster company. He didn't know anything about it, but at least it was piecemeal. They taught him. And that was how he got started. Because other people wouldn't hire him. In fact, even the Baxters with the plumbing company and his wife wanted George to work in there, she thought she could get her husband to give work to George there. He couldn't because there were other workers. They didn't want a Japanese. So Mr. Baxter would tell my husband, "You can come and help me in the yard and things like that." This was before he got this oyster business.

And is that when you started working in the fields?

No. I didn't do that until I came over here. The reason why we moved out to Fife was there was a Japanese family that my folks used to know that had a house here in Fife. They had gone to Los Angeles and so the house was vacant. My folks were good friends with them. They asked them to come out to Fife and rent that house so there would be somebody there. And so that's why I came with my folks to Fife. And we lived in that house and rented it. They had no money and we had no money, so we shared the expenses. And that's when my dad and my mother started working on the farms and my husband kept on with the oyster company and I started on farms here picking beans and other things.

You took your son with you or your mother would take care of him?

Yes.

And then you earned enough money to put down some money on this place? (Her home on Johnson Road.)

At that time, we couldn't afford anything. We couldn't even afford a \$10,000 home. The down payment we had to have was \$1,500 and we had saved \$1,500 for a down payment, but we had nothing for furnishings, nothing! We had no curtains on the windows.

Did your mother and father stay in the other house?

By that time, they [the owners] wanted to sell the house, so we found another house a couple doors away and my folks decided to buy that. Until then, of course you know with the Alien Land Law, you couldn't buy property. After the war they changed that so they could buy property. But I think they put it in my brother's name to buy the property. But because they had no money and we had no money, they wanted us to come and live with them in that house. Well, we were living with them for a while, because that way we could make the payments, with their farm work and my farm work and those kinds of things, we were making the payments. So actually my mother was very upset with me because you know, I wanted to get my own house. She was very upset with me when I wanted to move over here. She said, "How are we going to make the payments on this house?"

Did they manage OK?

Yes, I think they managed OK, but she was very upset with me. I said, "Mom, you know I can't live with you forever. I've got a child and husband. I've got to have some place too." So with the \$1,500 down payment we moved in here.

So that was another way, that it was a little bit different for your mother than for you. A long time ago in Japan, didn't a lot of the family live together?

The oldest son was supposed to take care of the family. But my younger brother said to my older brother, "You are the oldest son, you are the head of the family. If you get drafted and get killed you won't be able to take care of our parents. You go out and work in the sugar field. That way you are exempt [from United States' draft] cause they needed farmers." My oldest brother went out to Montana to the sugar fields. And my next brother Hideo, the one living in Seattle, said "I will do the volunteering in the Army, it doesn't matter whether I get killed." So he did, he got drafted. He was with the OSS, which is the forerunner of the CIA. He was in the secret service. He worked behind the scenes. He wa like a spy. He was not with that batallion...

The 442? [The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, an all-Nisei fighting outfit. (Nisei means a second-generation citizen born of immigrant Japanese parents.)]

No, he was sent to a special school, like the CIA.

So he was part of the group that helped break the code? Was he in part of that group?

I don't know. He was working with the news paper in Seattle. His is a different story. He was commander for the Nisei vets over there. For a long time he would not say what he did. But he was in India, Burma, behind the lines and he was translating for the captured enemy. So he could have been shot from either side.

Very risky.

Then right after Hiroshima was bombed, that group was sent immediately to Hiroshima. He was in Hiroshima just a few days after it was bombed.

Was he bothered by the radiation?

I don't know. He told me afterwards -- Hiroshima is very close to our island -- he said he snuck out of there because he wanted to see how his relatives were, because remember he stayed in Japan for a while. He wanted to go see them. He snuck over there without leave.

Did they catch him?

I don't know what excuse he made but he made an excuse that he was working on something or other. He said they were absolutely shocked when he got there. Here comes a Japanese-looking Japanese in an American uniform and these people are scared. He goes to try to find his relatives and everybody is scared to death of him. But he finally found them and he said he took his ration can and gave it to them and his cigarettes.

They had no money and food? Is that because the government broke down after Hiroshima?

Oh sure. But when they found out who he was, they welcomed him. But at first they were scared. They ran away from him.

I'm sure that was the last person they wanted to see, was an American. [For the next few minutes, Mrs. Nakano and I went through a couple pages of her scrap book.]

[END SIDE TWO OF TAPE ONE]

[Interview with Mrs. Nakano February 25, 1992.] *I started teaching [piano] during the latter part of my high school years because my teacher at that time said if you teach, you will learn more, even when you are taking lesson.*

Isn't that exactly what Mr. Kosai was saying? He said don't think that you are giving someone else the advantage, that he's going to get the better grade. It's going to help you [by teaching others].

That's what she told me, it would help you even more. Her name was Helen Congdon. That's why I started teaching , although I knew that I wasn't ready, you know. But then she said, like now, we encourage student teachers. And I encourage my students to do the same kind of thing. If you have the chance to teach, teach, because you will learn even more. I knew that I would be doing my 50th year [of teaching] in 1990.

[Mrs. Nakano showed me her invitation to her 50th anniversary of teaching invitation.]

How many people did you invite?

Well I invited the whole church in a separate way, because I couldn't afford to send this out to everybody. So I had a blanket invitation to the Buddhist Temple. I had a blanket invitation to all my music teachers. But these were sent to those who were no longer taking lessons from me and would have no way of knowing.

It was held at the Temple?

Yes, and there was a reason for that. I could have hired any other church or hall, but I told you that the Buddhist Temple was home to me and so even if I have to bring in a grand piano -- which I did -- I wanted it in the Temple. I told the Reverend, "May I use the hall?" And he was thrilled. We used the main Hondo because we have an organ there too. We had just gotten that new organ. And so I wanted to use the organ too and I'll show you. I wanted to have the reception down in the basement.

And so the special placque you got from the Temple--

It has nothing to do with that, because it has nothing to do with the Temple itself. It was my special wish because the Temple is home to me. Here is the program. At this golden anniversary, what I wanted to do was to divide it into three parts. My present students played first. Then I invited some of my former pupils who had gone on in music. I sent them a special invitation, "Will you please play if you can?" Now some of them are, of course, scattered so that couldn't do it. But five people responded. [At this time, Mrs. Nakano and I were looking at the pictures in her book of the anniversary program. She pointed to one.]

And she is living in Vancouver, Washington right now, but her folks are still up here. This is Patricia. She is now married and teaching in public schools. And and Teresa Mizukami, the flutest, she said OK. There were only three teachers.

Did you play the piano while she played the flute?

Yes, I have the whole thing taped. I practiced then, right now I'm -- Then I asked some of my teacher friends who are my good friends. And then, of course, not everybody could make it, the program would get too long. So I tried to diversify it by asking Grace Moe, she's Mt. Rainier Chapter and she played the organ. Mrs. Tomiko Tillotson is a Japanese lady that I met more or less recently but she belongs to the Tacoma Chapter and so I asked her. And Jane McKee Johnson is a friend from McKee Piano and Organ. She's been just wonderful to me. And so I asked her to play the organ. She's very well known. I asked Bernice Lettenmaier, who I knew from Tacoma and the Mt. Rainier Chapter and now she lives in Federal Way. She recently had an operation for cancer. She played a duet with me. And Donna Sasaki was my MC. And of course she and I were on the organ and piano. I got the Yamaha Grand from Clinton's.

So they delivered it for you?

Yes, I paid the delivery charges. But they said they won't charge me rent. Because ordinarily you would have to pay rent and then the delivery charges, but they said, "We know you." And I said, "Well, I will pay the moving charges." Because they have to hire somebody to do that.

Was it the same company that your mother would encourage others to buy from?

I don't know that now because that was when I was a child. But because of what my mother did -- again, you see that influence. I have always all my life gone to different

piano companies and made my self known. Of course they knew me because they had workshops and I was always attending the workshops, so they all know me. The person that I really worked with the most was Jane McKee Johnson. But of course, I had known Clintons from even before the war. The father there already had Clinton's Music Store on Tacoma Avenue. Then I had Aki Yotsuuye take these pictures for me. So that's Donna giving the welcome speech.

I didn't realize you could close those curtains.

Right, because it is not a Buddhist affair, so the shrine was closed. He was up in the balcony taking pictures. This one, the Puyallup Valley Chapter, she read a real funny poem. This is Grace Moe, from Puyallup. You see now this is the old window at that time. You see we didn't have the new stained window.

So the new windows were put in recently?

Yes, for our 75th (anniversary). This is Tomiko Tillotson, the teacher. This is Donna and I playing together. Than afterwards I have students stay behind so we could all take a picture. These are my students now. Some of them have graduated. This is Reverend's son. He is still taking lessons.

Do you think he's aspiring to be a Buddhist minister?

In Japan, it's usually the son that takes over. Over here some of them are and some are not.

He is so involved though (with the Temple), I wonder if he wants to?

He is the most marvelous. He's just marvelous.

He was so caring.

That is what he is, he's very caring.

I noticed that Sunday especially. He didn't get upset, you know, things didn't go exactly they way maybe he expected, but he just smoothed them over nicely.

He is a very caring person. [Pointing to new pictures.] Then these are my pupils that came back. Then with the teachers, my friends who played. This is Jane McKee Johnson. She is now, her hands shake so she doesn't play out professionally anymore. I

think she still plays at Pizza and Pipes, though. I asked the parents of my pupils and my friends and they all pitched in [with the food]. I ordered a cake. It was already cut by the time I got downstairs. It took time to take the pictures, so in the meantime, everybody else was down there. And they said, "Gee, I sorry." Yeah, I said, "That's fine." These are my three sons, Stan, Ken and Hiroshi. But do you see how my sons support me by coming [to my fiftieth anniversary celebration of teaching piano]. All my sons live in Seattle. He lives in West Seattle, he lives on Queen Anne Hill. So then I had a table of awards and pictures and recital programs. ... These are my former pupils. And I received many flowers. My brother came too from Seattle.

He's a journalist.

He's retired now. This is my son's wife. They just got married a week before [my anniversary program]. Her name is Nancy. That is their wedding picture [pointing to another picture] and that's their daughter. She's a Phillipino. Isn't that cute, when you get a mixture of Japanese and Phillipino. My grandchildren are all -- we are a united nations! I call them the Rainbow children, because Ciana is half Japanese, half Phillipine. Maya is half Caucasian and half Japanese. My oldest grandson Ben -- he says he's Japanese -- he's half Japanese. His mother's side is Italian, he's 1/4 Italian. And on his grandfather's side, I think he's English, Scottish. The rest of these are former students. He now is an architect, Jim Merritt [of Merritt-Pardini]. ... They have an office right by where the University campus is going to be. He's very well known in Tacoma. These are former students.

There's Gail Asai. She used to teach at Northwood. Now does she go to the Buddhist Temple?

Yes. She's been raised there. I played for her wedding. In fact I used to play for every wedding and every funeral.

And so you don't any more?

I don't as much as I used to now. Because now there is Donna too. The weddings and funerals, before when I was the only one, naturally, I was always asked. I was never hired by the church. It was always volunteer. So nowadays, if a family knows Donna's side better, they will ask her. If they know me better, they will ask me.

There's Barbara Harden. Does she go to the Temple?

No, she's a Methodist. These are teachers. He's a minister [of Our Beautiful Saviour Lutheran Church, Rev. Riveness]. Their older daughter came to me and I [now] have the younger. Two Chinese girls, they've been with me for about 6 or 7 years now. -- She played. She was my pupil. That's her mother and father. She [her mother] teaches piano too. It's funny how even if their mothers are teaching. She [the mother] especially says, they cannot get along. But I taught all three of mine. And there were arguments and things.

There are the Dekeysers. He built a house right behind me.

Yes. Now see this family is very amazing to me. Because he came to me and asked me to teach him. Of course, then, his kids were all small. He says, "I want my children to be able to play the piano." But he says, "Unless, I do it myself first, I don't know what they are going through." He says, "I will take lessons before." And he did. He came. He was very faithful. ... Then the oldest one came to me and now I have ... [the second one].

Jonathan is Lindsey's, my daughter's, age and they go to school together.

Oh! Small world isn't it? I was amazed at how many people came and those who couldn't come, I have a box of cards. I had a guest book there and the people who came signed.

So that's 50 years! That is a long time for teaching isn't it?!

But like I say, I started in high school and then when I went to camp, I was able to get into the recreation department. Came out here again and started working in the fields and that kind of thing and then, like I told you, people asked me to teach them and I gradually got to the place where I didn't have to work out in the fields.

I bet you were happy about that. A lot of times people put in 20 years at a job and they can retire! But you've made it a lifetime thing. [Mrs. Nakano got a phone call here. She said it was an adult student whose car was "dead" and would not be able to make the lesson today.]

My adult students, I tell them, "Come when you can."

[Here we talked a little about her fees, but she preferred to not discuss this on tape.] Is there anything else you wanted to tell me about your employment? I realize that some

people had a hard getting employment and you did even for a while after the war, all you could get was field work. But then after your name was known about teaching piano, I don't think it mattered whether you were Japanese or whatever because you were so good and you loved it.

I loved it and I never had to advertise. How I got well known, too, is the fact that at Fife Schools where my children were going, they started asking if I would accompany or do things for the class. So I went down there. And then my sons all took band and so the music director at Fife High School, Mr. Fletchner, started asking me if I would play and accompany the students and things like that. Then they asked me if I would play for the Daffodil Coronation and by that time, I knew Jane McKee Johnson and she used to bring down the organ for me so they could have organ music. So I did that for quite a few times. Then Mr. Fletchner started asking me if I would play for the commencements and the graduation exercises. And so because of that, my name was well known. You know people in the valley all started knowing me. And the rest was all word of mouth. I started playing for the graduation and coronation because the first years the band was large enough, so even though you take the graduates out, the band could still play for the graduation exercises. But it got so that the band got so small that if you took the seniors out, there was nobody left in the band! And that was when Mr. Fletchner asked me if I would play the Pomp and Circumstance. Before that I think I even accompanied singers or whatever in the graduation exercise, but I didn't play the Pomp and Circumstance. So when he didn't have enough members, he would ask me to play. If he had enough members, then the band played.

You said your husband stopped working at the oyster company and then worked for the fish company.

Right under the 11th Street bridge was the Marush Fish Company. He was a Yugoslavian. He had a son named Mark. My husband loved Mark. And my husband and Mark got along real well. And the father was the one who started the company. So he had the last word in everything. So then the two of them, my husband and Mark, knew Mark's father was getting older and would retire pretty soon and so my husband kept on working because between the two of them -- they got along so well -- Mark said, "When my dad retires" it would be the two of them. So he patiently waited. But what happened one year was the son died!

I'm sure that was unexpected!

Unexpected! So then my husband said there was no future for him here.

And so he quit the Marush Company?

Yes. He worked there for 10 years. He quit in the year my youngest son was born, 1957. Then for three months he didn't have any work. He went out and answered ads and he had no work. Finally somebody told him that Albertsons is going to build a store in the University Place. And Albertsons liked to train their own managers. And they liked Japanese for the produce. So he went over there and they hired them as third man. He didn't know anything about produce but he was just happy to get a job. From then on he went to second man then to the manger's position. [Here is when we went into the hallway and looked at a photograph of Mr. Nakano.] This is when they were advertising, "It's Joe Albertson's supermarket, but the Produce Department is mine!" He retired from being manager in 1983 after 25 years.

[I noticed a plaque with his name on it as Yoshihiro.]

George is not his given name.

You know Mr. Takemura. He said that when he was young his sisters encouraged him to get a simple name because his name was Shoji. His nick name is Tom.

We all had names that were too hard for the average person to pronounce so that's why many of them went to American names, yes. And I went by Yaeko all the way except in high school when I was workin on the Lincoln News, I went by Peggy at that time. But I reverted right back to Yaeko.

So then the people in high school knew you as Peggy?

Maybe for a couple years, there. I took that as kind of a nick name so it would be easier because I was working on the newspaper.

Do you want to talk now about Buddhism? I see you have a shrine. What kinds of things do you do at home with regard to the Buddhist religion.

Whenever I make rice, I would always put it on. Nowadays, I don't make rice every day.

But you used to make rice every day?

Yes. That is one of the customs. The first thing you do is offer rice.

OK, that is what Mr. Miki does, too, for the Temple.

Other places, they place food, but always special times I will pull this [a tray in the shrine] out and put food on it or if I bake something I will offer it. My mother just loved persimmons. [Mrs. Nakano showed me her supply of incense. She also showed me pictures of family members who are now deceased. We had walked away from the tape recorder and it is difficult to hear the conversation. We talked about her brother's son [who is one of the children his brother had when Mrs. Nakano and her husband went to Nebraska after the war]. The nephew was strongly interested in his heritage. Mrs. Nakano's brother's first marriage ended and he remarried. The nephew came from California and visited with Mrs. Nakano and her family here in Washington state. Mrs. Nakano showed me the two last Lotto tickets that Mr. Nakano bought. They are dated Saturday, October 25, 1986. That is the day he died. She explained that she keeps things. They are momentos. I finally moved the recorder closer --] This is the graveside of my mother's and father's [in Sumner]. You see, this is the only Bonsai [in Sumner cemetery]. When my father died, I told you about my mother how she was, she planted pine trees very small and shaped it and so now I do. Well my sons help me too now to keep it up. We shape it. [The picture was of May, 1991.] My sons come, that's another tradition we keep. On Memorial Day and on Obon, we always go to the cemetery and the Buddhist Temple. [Obon is celebrated in July and is a time to remember and honor all those who have passed on before us.] They come. We go to both my mother and my father (their gravesites) and then my husband. Those are the traditions that I keep up.

So those are some traditions that they do in Japan too?

Yes and our Temple does it here too so they keep that up. I went to Japan after my husband died. You see I bought this, this is a wisteria. The Jodo Shinshu's crest is the wisteria and that's another reason why I have that wisteria outside here [we went to the kitchen window and looked outside at the wisteria trees and out of hearing distance of the recorder].

When does the wisteria bloom?

In May. And that's is when we have ... [Shinran Shonin Day - Wisteria Day]. ... Hoonko, that's in January. Yes that's founder's day. Oh, you should come when we have Hanamatsuri, birth of Buddha [in April]. Now that one is worth taping! [Mrs. Nakano

showed me a glass that was given to her and a letter opener on which both had the wisteria crest. They were from the Tacoma Buddhist Temple for members at Temple anniversaries. We went back to the pictures of the May, 1991 visit to the cemetery. We talked about the words on the stone.] [On my husband's] *I put Namu Amida Butsu.*

And Namu Amida Butsu --

You are repeating the name. With my mother and father's grave, I had nothing to do with what's on here because naturally I yielded to my brother. I wanted to do something like this [Namu Amida Butsu] but you know I didn't say anything. And so here it says, "Rest in Peace." which to me didn't mean as much. But I decided OK, this one I have nothing to say about it [mother's and father's] but this one [husband] I will have something to say about it. Nakano is the Japanese surname. The reason I did that is because he was raised in Japan.

So some things that have changed for you then, is you don't put rice on there [the shrine] everyday and you don't put fruit in there.

I will have it on there on certain times. Today, I don't happen to have it. But that's what I use this for on certain times. Also on the shrine, I have my mother and father, their Buddhist name. They give them a Buddhist name when they die. My father's is on this side [the right side] and my mother's is on that side [left]. When my brother died in Ontario [Oregon], I asked the minister down there to please make me one extra [which shows the Buddhist name and] the date that they died. All that information is there.

How long have you had this shrine? Were you able to keep this --

This shrine, my mother asked -- let's see, by that time my sister and her husband were in America, but he was going back and forth to Japan for his work. So my brother-in-law found something in Japan and so he had it shipped over. So it was in her home, so after my mother died, this is one of the things I wanted. My brother in Seattle, I told you is Baptist and my oldest brother, at that time was living in Idaho (I wouldn't have given it to him anyway). My brother in Seattle said, "Yaeko took care of mom and dad and she will be the one who will be taking care of the cemetery," because I am the only close one here, so he said I should keep it. My sister didn't have a Buddhist service. Her ashes are in Japan. Her husband wanted it that way. She died in 1988. They didn't go to church or anything. So she asked the Sister [Catholic] at the hospital [to conduct the service]. They are not Catholic, but the hospital was Catholic. The services were in Portland. But

I still keep it here. This is my shrine to my deceased. [She pointed to a shelf.] I keep the pictures here. This is Miroka who is a Coming Buddha.

What does that mean?

They say that Buddha -- Buddha doesn't mean a person. Buddhists as you know believe in rebirth. You always advance more and more.

Is that like reincarnation?

Yes, but reincarnation doesn't mean you come back as a pig or a monkey. It's a higher form of life. So they believe that when there is a time of need, when the world really needs a great leader that another Buddha will be born. They were enumerable Buddhists before and there will be enumerable Buddhists after. In our lifetime, it is the Sakyamuni Buddhist in India. This is Miroku Buddha, the Coming Buddha. And we are not talking about next year. We are talking about eons and eons of time.

So the one in India now, is he in the form of a person?

He was born as a person, but he wasn't born as a Buddha. He was born as another king. We don't worship him in the way that you do Christ. But anyway, in our Sect, we don't worship the Sakyamuni Buddhist so much as Amida Buddha. And Amida Buddha is not a person.

[END SIDE ONE OF TAPE TWO]

My mother didn't discriminate. She went to the Methodist church, helped them, she went to the Konkokyo and to the Tenrikyo, which are more or less like Shinto. And we also went to the Baptist church. She helped everywhere. And that's where I get this idea that it doesn't matter which church you go to. And that's the reason why I have played in the Baptist Church, I have played in the Methodist Church, I have played in Catholic churches for weddings. In those places, music is more important than whether it is a certain church. And when I am asked by my students or my friends to play in their church, I feel very honored. And so I do the same thing. When my mother goes and cooks, we went to all those churches, and so I have seen all the different kinds of services.

I like that idea about not excluding, you know. It's like with the Christian religion if you are not Christian, you are not going to Heaven. The exclusion there is just so alienating. That's the part I don't like about it.

Again, see I told you how my mother was so influential in the way I act nowadays too. It's funny because I vowed to myself, "I'll never become like my mother!" There were so many conflicting things about her. And as I get older and older, "My gosh, Mom, you are still influencing me!" Even if I didn't want to, I'm getting more and more like her.

Do you find it in the way you collect things, or the way you prepare food, or the way you work in your garden, or your interest in music?

All that, you know, she influenced me. Now on the other hand, my dad was very influential. My dad was quiet and he taught me patience. He and I communicated very very well. [Here is where I turned off the tape and we had a private conversation.] I went first to Japan in 1970 with a Boy Scout group. The whole family went. Then in 1983, my husband and I went with the Temple. And that time we stayed after the tour so that we spent one week with his side of the family and another week with my side of the family -- supposedly -- I got the short end of it! But anyway, that's when he said he was going to retire because the kind of work he was doing, produce manager for Albertson, by that time he got a month's vacation. But they would never let a manager take more than two weeks at a time. So he said he would semi-retire so that he could get his full month off. The tour was two weeks and we wanted to say one week at his side and one week my side. That was in 1983. Then in 1989, I went with a California group and that one I went to Taiwan and Japan. At that time, I stayed, again, afterwards and I spent ten days with my Aunt and that's where I met more of my cousins and everybody else and I found both my father's -- what they call Honke -- the family home and my mother's Honke. I found the graves and I learned more about my ancestors. Then in '91, the Temple decided to make this trip back again for the 400 year memorial service for one of the founders. And so we went for that and then we took the trip afterwards. That's when I went with Stan [her son]. We stayed a week behind and visited some relatives. You have the privilege of staying or coming back with the tour, or having an extended tour. You see so in each case, then it has been connected with the Temple except that one time.

Did you ever teach the Dharma school?

Yes, I have taught over 25 years. When the Temple first started in again, I started teaching.

So the Temple started [after the war] around 1946?

Yes, it must have been around that time when we started coming back. I know I came back in '45 with Ken and my husband couldn't come out with me, so then he finally came in the Spring. I stayed with my folks in Tacoma and then when it was OK for him to leave, he joined me in Tacoma and then we went to Nebraska and then we came back so I think it was about '46. So I started around '46 as organist and then Dharma school. I always had the boys. Then when Stan graduated, I was quite ill and that's when I decided I wouldn't teach Dharma school anymore. I helped out with things, but I wasn't taking a class [to teach] anymore. So from '46 to '75 [she taught Dharma School -- the Buddhist Sunday School].

If you were to talk to someone who knew nothing about Buddhism, what are some of the things you teach the children at Dharma School.

At the time I was teaching Dharma School -- and my kids were going to Dharma School, we had many students. So the service was not like it is now. Sunday School was Sunday School. And then we taught. The adults had another service starting from one or two o'clock in the afternoon. So many times, I would be playing for the Sunday School, teaching the Dharma School and then come home and have lunch and I would go back again for the special services for the adults too! Many many times I have spent the whole day at the Temple.

Is it because there are fewer in the Sangha? [Buddhist brotherhood. Fellow Buddhists.]

There are fewer people in the Sangha now. And that's the reason why now they have combined it this way.

When did people start not coming?

Because the Issei generation died down. You can count on your fingers -- there's no male left -- you don't even need two hands. So now we have combined it that way and that's the reason the Reverend would sometimes speak in Japanese and speak in English and we are very fortunate that he can do that kind of thing.

So do you think that when these Issei ladies die, he will only give the service in English?

But we have people from Japan too, that were raised in Japan too. As long as we can have a bi-lingual minister, I hope he will keep it up. Remember when I said last Sunday that to me the Japanese Gatha -- the words that are in Japanese are more meaningful to me?

Yes.

That's because I was raised that way and the Japanese language -- I'm not saying I was real good, because I was taught over here -- but I know the meaning of it and to me it has much more meaning than the English Gathas. [Gatha: Sanskrit term meaning verse. Buddhist songs sung during services.] Now they are trying to have more English Gathas that are written by Japanese or people who are Buddhist. So we would get a little more Buddhist meaning into it. Many of the songs that are in English were actually written by Christian ministers and many of them are sung just like a Christian hymn. The reason why is because the Japanese people immigrated to Hawaii earlier than they did to the United States and at that time, the Buddhist Temple missionaries and they had no songs in English for the Nisei [second-generation citizen born of immigrant Japanese parents]. And so I think they commissioned some musicians from the Christian temple. So the words are kind of Buddistic but the music --

OK, I can foresee that the music 10 years or 20 years down the road -- they will be more Japanese oriented. More and more Japanese people are writing the Gathas.

And we are going to get more of this, they will revise the Gatha Book. In fact the lady has sent me a draft and has asked my opinion of the music so I am working on that too. This lady knows me from before. She is the mother of Reverend Iwamura who is teaching at Evergreen. He's a son of a minister and he decided he was more academically inclined so he is teaching. His mother is a daughter of a minister. And she was married to a minister so I have known her through other sources. And of course, they do all this work closer to San Francisco in Oakland. She sent me this letter and asked me what I thought about it.

So right after the war, were there a lot of people coming back to this area?

It wasn't like before.

Less than before, but more than now?

Yes, then like my children all graduated from high school and they went to colleges someplace else, many of them haven't returned. And so we don't have the children, you know? And so it [the membership] got smaller and smaller and smaller. Now Reverend Yukawa has attracted a lot of new members because he is so good. Once they visit the Temple and they see how he is -- we have lots of new members that are not from what we see connected with the Temple from long long time ago. He's attracting more Caucasian people too.

Mr. Bush and his wife. And I saw another woman there Sunday. Has she been going there very long?

You see, now that I am not connected with the Dharma School so much, I don't keep track as much. Also the fact that there are times that I don't feel very good. Before that when Donna first came here, she wouldn't play because she came from another Temple and so I kept on playing. But when she started coming regular, because Daniel was born, I says, "Donna, why don't you start playing for Sunday School?" I said, "I'll play for the adult service, you play for the Sunday School." ... [Here we talked a little about when Mrs. Nakano played unexpectedly at the Temple. She thought Donna Sasaki was going to play this certain Sunday.] ... I can't play for a service unless, you know --

Given it some thought ahead of time --

Yes, because I don't go to the Temple without thinking what kind of Gatha I am going to use. And I need to be in a calm and reverent mood to play, and when all of a sudden I'm asked to play, I'm not ready. I think it's partly because of my age now too, I can't handle stress as well as when I was younger and like I say, I wasn't expecting it and all of a sudden, you are asked to play like that and I'm not ready -- I need to be in a certain state of mind in order to play well.

When they have the Bon Odori in July, is it as festive as it has been in the past?

Oh yes. Again because the Tacoma Temple doesn't have as many members who are willing to dance, we now go to three different places. Tacoma always does it first then we go to Seattle after that. And Seattle times it always for the Sea Fair and then we go to White River. Now there's a fourth place, Olympia JACL, sponsors Japan night.

When you went back to the Japanese Language School, the building, after the war, did you notice that down stairs there were a lot of books and things from the School?

Someone bought the old school in 1989 or 1990 and a lot of those books were still there but rodents got into them and vandals got into them. Do you know why someone didn't

--

I don't know what happened. [Here we looked at some pictures.] This is Reverend Yukawa's father.

Was he the minister?

Yes, that's when my brothers were going. At that time I was quite young so I wasn't going to the Temple particularly. [At this time, Mrs. Nakano was looking for some of her school work from the Japanese Language School.] This is the last house, it was at 19th and Fawcett. It's a vacant corner. On the corner is the Methodist Church. This is a clipping of when the head minister, who we call the Gomonshu, in Japan would be like the Pope for the Catholics. [Here we looked at the 1950 picture of the Hanamatsuri which is held in April. And we looked at a convention picture of 1950.] I'm in here, my husband's in here. You see all the different faces. Now at that time I led the choir for all the different places. [We looked at more pictures.] As I understand, when the Japanese School was in danger of [being lost], Mrs. Fujimoto bought that place. And that's Kawasaki's who live across the street, their mother bought the place. Her mother did. And then somebody else has bought that recently. And the mother bought that because she didn't want that going into some other outside hands. She didn't buy it for an investment or anything like that.

What interested me most was the University of Washington and the Washington State Historical Society has boxes and boxes of what they could salvage.

Oh, is that right? I'm glad that somebody has it. This [looking at another picture] is 1940. It's different now. I belonged to the YBA, Young Women's Buddhist Association and I think this was Young Men's Buddhist Association. We had two different groups. This is Reverend Pratt they were talking about. This is Reverend Nishinaga and his wife. Mrs. Fujimoto's daughter is here, this is Teddy. The rest has not come back.

Now if you could say anything about Reverend Pratt, what would you have said?

[Reverend Pratt was an English woman. She was a minister at Tacoma Buddhist Temple from early 1930s to early 1980s. She taught Dharma School and delivered sermons in English to the Sangha.]

Reverend Pratt and I were very close. They didn't say anything about me visiting her, you remember? Well, I stopped in too. Reverend Pratt and I started the boys' Sunday School because when we first started the Sunday School, we could get the girls into a class but the boys, nobody could handle the boys, my son included! And so she said, Yaeko, will you help? I said, OK, since it was my son. And we formed a group so that it would be fun for the boys. And in order to do that you needed to take them out and form a club. We formed a Sunday School Class and we called it the Bussei Cubs and I took those boys swimming and I took them to basketball games just to keep them coming. And then I organized the first basketball game between Tacoma and Seattle and that has kept on going all this time. But I was the first one who organized that. And then my husband became president of the Sonenkai, which was a young married group and through that we did a lot of workshops and we did special things and so my husband really worked hard to get these workshops and so we were very close with Reverend Pratt. Then the other thing is they were talking about the Sangha classes for the Boy Scouts -- Ken, by that time was older when they had the Boy Scouts -- my two younger sons went and went through the Sangha class and of course, I went too. And so I went four years. Not only that, since I had known her from childhood too, before the war, I was close with them and her daughter and her husband. Her husband was a concert violinist. He played in the Symphony in England before they came over here. He knew I was a musician too so he would take me downstairs and show me [his studio] and listen to [music] and so I was very close with that family, but in a different way than the others did. She [Rev. Pratt] was very very good to us.

And she helped translate from Japanese to English [so they could understand the sutra chanting]. [Here we reviewed some of our previous conversation.] On Market Street, between 11th and 13th, you mentioned that the Greeks would come and Japanese and Italians.

It was just like Japan Town in Seattle. Japan Town in Seattle was interesting too because over there, you see, everybody had their stores or their produce all outside and Seattle as you know was a baseball town at that time. Nobody had television, they all had the radios on. And the place was all Chinese or Japanese, all the stores there. Well, you could walk from block to block and not miss an inning of the baseball game! Now in Tacoma, it wasn't as packed as Seattle. But there was definitely a Japan Town. So Broadway and Market and Commerce. [Here we looked at a map of Tacoma.] Between 19th over to here to probably 11th. [Here the phone rang.]

I read an article that referred to the "Red Light" area of Japan Town--

It wasn't that they were run by Japanese, it was just that they were in Japan Town area. The amusing thing is that when we are young, we don't know what it is. All we knew that there were these very fancy made up ladies sitting. Then as we got older, my mother told me, "Never go into those homes!" And I said, "Well, what's the matter?" Well, she didn't explain to me what's the matter. It wasn't until I got older that I knew what it was.

Where was it?

Oh, Gad. In those days we walked the streets freely. We didn't worry about anything. Oh, I can tell you there were houses here and there [laughter]. The houses were right next to the side walk and I could mention about five different places that even now I can clearly see! The other thing is that my dad's drug store, he sold perfume. They came in to buy the perfume. I think he had those perfumes especially because they congregated around there too. And he would have these big flasks of perfume and he would pour into a smaller flask. They used to come into the store, so that's how I knew. [laughter] It was wide open. It wasn't illegal then. That's in my childhood.

Now, where is Central School? Is it still there?

Oh, yes, it's still there. Now it's the main office of the administration for the Tacoma School District. It is on Tacoma Avenue and 7th.

So you had to walk to that school and then you would go to the Japanese Language School after school.

Then when I was living at 19th, I went to Lincoln High School. My Junior High School was here, McCarver. The Japanese people all went there because we all lived right in here, so we all went to Central School and we all went to McCarver and maybe a few went to Jason Lee. But a majority of us went to McCarver. And then 19th was the splitting point to go to Stadium High School or Lincoln High School. I had a choice of going to Stadium or Lincoln because I was right on the border but I chose Lincoln. I graduated in 1940. [Here we talked about some things that she didn't want recorded.]

Over her life span, Mrs. Nakano has experienced much change. The most recent change in her life was the passing away of her husband, George (Yoshihiro) in 1986. For the first month afterwards, she was kept very busy by friends taking her here and there for

meals or shopping trips. Soon though these outings slowed down considerably in number and she had extra time to finally deal with George's absence. It was a sad time. She confided her feelings to a good friend who had had a similar experience. Mrs. Nakano knew of a group of widowed women in Seattle who got together regularly and encourage one another. Also speakers came to the meetings to inform them on a variety of concerns. Mrs. Nakano decided it would be a good idea to start a group in Tacoma. At first a small group of widowed women from Tacoma Buddhist Temple and Japanese Methodist Church got together. It later developed to include singles and divorces persons, including men. They have one man in their group now.

At first, in 1989, Mrs. Nakano was the volunteer chairperson. She sought the advice of Rev. Yukawa. His advice included a suggestion for the name of the group: Sunflower. This non-profit organization is independent of the JAACL (Japanese American Citizens League) but the JAACL is an umbrella organization for the club. In 1990, first elections were held and Mrs. Nakano was elected chairperson. The officers hold their positions for two years. So this year, she's looking forward to being in a less-demanding position.

She has organized trips for the group like the one to LaConnor to see the tulips and to Portland, Oregon to Washington Park. She has scheduled professional people to advise the group. A person came to talk about estate planning and another came and discussed insurance options.

Mrs. Nakano still plays organ for the Temple, sharing duties with Mrs. Donna Sasaki and Ref. Yukawa's wife, Mrs. Yukawa. She keeps in touch with her brother, three sons and their families who are also very interested in her welfare and happiness. She is presently teaching piano to 17 students from grade school age to adult.

I am so very happy I met Mrs. Yaeko Nakano. Her faithfulness to Buddhism and approach to life has had a profound affect on me.

Susan Stout

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Doing Community History, Winter, 1992, TLS US 437

Professor Michael Honey