

**Interviewee: Laiko Matsubayashi**

**Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda**

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SEDai PROJECT

THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

Lisa Uyeda: Okay. All set.

Laiko Matsubayashi: Okay.

LU: So today is August the 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and this is an interview with Eiko?

LM : Laiko.

LU: Laiko.

LM: Laiko.

LU : Laiko.

LM : I was - Miyaki is my maiden name. I was married to Tom Watanabe. He has since passed away and I remarried to Mickey Matsubayashi. Mickey Matsubayashi, somebody I knew when I was about five years old. [laughing]

LU: Oh really?

LM: Yeah. Nippon Tennis Club. Mickey used to come with his dad to play tennis and my mother used to play tennis too so then, we got to know them. Of course, I never played with Mickey. Mickey was like meh, he's a boy, we don't play with boys. My sister and I were very shy so we never played with him but he always gets mad and says, me and my dad was playing with you guys at the club and I said, yeah and he said, well, Dad never played with us. [laughing] I said well so ha ha ha ha. Always tease him about that. [laughing] I bring it up as often as I can.

LU: [laughing] Yes.

LM: Your dad played with us.

LU: So, would you like to start off by telling us when you were born and where you were born?

LM: [nods] Kay, I was born in Vancouver at 504 Cassiar Street, born at home and that was July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1930. I have a sister Ruby who's born July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1926. That is the extent of the family.

LU: Oh, just two girls?

LM: Just the two girls yep.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Just the two of us. Well, we both went to the same school. Public school, Franklin. She went on because she was four years older so of course.

LU: So you went to Franklin Public School?

LM: Yes.

LU: And where was that?

LM: That's up near the Burnaby boundary line. Yeah, we were just off the road, Cassiar was the one that goes down towards the first bridge that was built across the inlet. We did a lot of playing around down by the inlet.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: My sister did. She was the bookworm. I was the [yancha bozu]. She, well being four years older of course I think, she was just going into high school or she was in

grade nine. She went to Templeton Junior High. I didn't, I was just in grade six when the war started. Yeah and I will always remember that day, that famous day.

LU: What do you remember of that day?

LM: I remember being at home. My mother got a phone call from my dad from the office. He came home early because he usually worked till about nine o'clock. Came home very early and he crept, practically crept into the house. He went and told my mom to come and they went and listened to the radio and it was Japan. I didn't know what it was about. I didn't know even what war was at the time. I remember standing at the back of the room listening to the whispering and you know, kind of gave you the creeps. You don't know what it is but you kind of feel spooked out. I always remember the feeling I had it was so scary. Dad, he wondered what was going to happen to us, whether we would all be sent back. I could hear them talking but I didn't know to what extent this Pearl Harbour thing was. You never think of that. . I remember going to school after. I think I got called into the principal's office and Mr. [Mackelvie? Mckelvey?] said, alright. He says, you report back to me if there's anything about any of the children, you know, whatever.

[5 minutes]

LM: And even then, it didn't even tune into me what he was talking about. Although I was in grade six, I should have known I guess. [laughing]

LU: You were still pretty young though.

LM: But you don't think of anything being bad cause even growing up, all those years of growing up and being called names and things like that but then they called other kids names too so I never ever thought too much about it. It wasn't like it is now, right away you've got the cops after everybody. There was something racial going on but you know, in those days, my mother kind of got strong and she would go into the principal and say, she broke my daughter's umbrella. That's not right. And they said we'll talk to the girl and talk to her parents. And that would be the end of it but my mother was very strong that way. She could speak enough English that she could go and tell him. So what they did was they had the janitor at school. He was sort of delegated to keep an eye out and make sure I wasn't hurt at recess time or whatever. Mr. Cooper, actually after the war started and I went into internment, to Slocan, we still corresponded. He was a very kind, kind man.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Mr. [Mackelvie? Mckelvey?], the school principal, he said just report back to me. I think, there were only about three of us at the public school: [intelligible] Fujiwara, and Richard or Dickie Masuda. It was just three of us in grade six at the time. I think he called them all in individually as far as I know anyway. But I know he called me in because my mother was always in there saying, well they are calling her names again you know and trying to chase her home or something, things like that.

LU: Oh my goodness.

LM: But anyway December 7<sup>th</sup> was, sort of a day when there was lot of panic in the house. When it all started to materialize and so and so got arrested and whatever, there was a lot of whispering around the house.

LU: Oh my goodness. Yeah.

LM: At that time, when the war started, Mio, Mio Ohtake, she was Kadoguchi then. She was my nanny, like she looked after the basics of the house and she moved in with us. She was in Cumberland. She was really nice. She was the best nanny.

[laughing]

LU: How did your sister react to the war?

LM: Well you see this is the thing, it didn't seem important to me because I didn't understand what it was, I suppose. I don't know if she did or not but she, I guess she was affected by the news. I don't know. I really don't know. Cause I didn't, we never discussed it. Probably after I saw my mom and dad whispering and talking, I probably went out on my scooter and played. You know, it's like that when you are a kid. If it doesn't affect you personally or physically, let it go.

LU: When you were growing up, before the war started, did you have a lot of friends that were non-Japanese?

LM: Yeah. [nods] They were all non-Japanese. It was only when we went to Japanese school after school. That's the only thing that I really disliked because I couldn't play with everybody but that was another experience.

LU: How often did you go to Japanese school?

LM: We went everyday after school.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: We took the streetcar and went down to Mio Gakuen. Mickey was there too cause he was living out, I don't know, somewhere in our area. He was at a different school, he was at Hastings Public School, I think.

LU: And did you travel down to Japanese school with your sister?

LM: No because she went- well, for the first little bit, yes. The first year, we did travel together and then, she went to junior high school at Templeton. Once she went to grade seven, four years older than I and I don't think I started Japanese school until about grade three or so, I think.

[10 minutes]

LM: Cause it was a way to travel so nobody to go with. So, I think my mom held us back. After we got off the streetcar, we had to walk down towards the bottom of the road and it was quite a walk.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Yeah, so she held me back. I'm glad she did. I'm glad she did because I didn't like Japanese school. I wanted to play with my friends. [laughing]

LU: Were you able to keep in touch with any of your friends growing up?

LM: Oh yeah certainly yeah.

LU: Even after or during the war?

LM: Yep. Oh yeah, I did.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Corresponded, silly letters.

LU: Did they have any reaction to what was happening with your family?

LM: Not really, no. Mr. Cooper, Frank Cooper who was the janitor and he had been a navy man and he was always sympathetic towards us and my family. I corresponded with him until he got sick and then I heard after that he had passed away but that

was quite a few years, probably until we came to Toronto. That was in '48. We had to stay a little later than most people cause my dad being a dentist. He had to stay. But when there was a fire at the silver mine in Slocan where people were living and the generator was there and the power, we had no power so we couldn't carry on. We did some things but many, so he could run the drill, it was a foot pedal type of thing. I don't know how he got it installed but whatever he did to it, he was doing it but he said, that's too hard work. You know.

LU: Oh my.

LM: Yeah and he had sales reps from when he was in Vancouver that were always, always so kind to him. The one fellow said, he gave my dad some money from the car so my dad didn't turn it in at the manning pool. Remember when everyone had to turn their cars in at the Exhibition grounds. So he said I'll take the car so at least if you come back in a short time, you could have the car back.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: So, he kept the car and in actuality, I would certainly love to be able to contact his family or some sort. Because honestly, I never saw a man who was so kind. He helped my dad in every which way he could and he was the one that told us to lock all our valuables and stuff that we wanted to keep. He said, lock it in one of the rooms and seal it off. The house we put up for rent, right whereas our friend's aunt, a girlfriend of mine, her aunt took the house over for a while and looked after our dogs and the cats. Thinking that maybe we were only going to be gone for six months or something and that the government would let us come back and so they were renting but then she said she was going to have to move because they were gonna put the house up for sale. So, at that time, I forgot what year it was. Must have been a couple of years after the war started.

LM: Mr. Gladys, he said, alright fine I'll go into that room and I'll pack everything up and ship it to you. So he sent it all up [nods] freighted it all up to us in Slocan.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: We were able to keep a lot of things we wanted to keep and a lot of things that were too big to ship. Well of course big pieces of furniture and the Japanese cabinets, we lost all those but kept a lot of the little treasurers, you know mementos. No value to them but [personal?].

LU: Oh my goodness.

LM: Yes. So, we still have stuff from Vancouver days like dishes and things like that.

LU: Oh wow. That's rare.

LM: Yeah. It's nice you know that people felt that way.

[15 minutes]

LM: It's not your fault. You might be Japanese but you didn't start the war. But my dad really thought we were going to be sent back.

LU: So, did you ever get the car back from?

LM: No, no, no. We couldn't have driven in Slocan anyway if we did get it back we had taxi service actually cause he had to go to, well, Dr. Kumagai was away, I think my dad went out to New Denver too. He went away for holiday or something. I think he did Lemon Creek or something once a month. I think something like that so the

ambulance driver, I've forgotten his name, he would come pick my dad up and take him out there.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Yeah. Of course, Popoff and Bay Farm, they all came. They could walk. He was a busy man. I have never been able to determine how many thousands of people he was responsible for. He was the only dentist.

LU: For all those camps?

LM: Yeah, for three sections. He would go out once a month to Lemon Creek. I think it was once a month or every three weeks or something.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: He had a lot of people he was looking after. On Sundays, he would look after hakujin people that would come to him. Nuns would come. Course there was a little bit of confrontation there too. Cause they said, my dad was making money on the side. Well, 50 cents for an extraction I think, for a dentist, wasn't making money on the side.

LU: No. So, I guess, when people came to visit your father, they had to pay him or was it covered by the government?

LM: You know, I really truly do not remember how it worked there. I think the Commissions, I think the Security Commission or whatever I think that was all looked after as far as I know. I don't remember too much about that part of the business and how those accommodations and whatever were given to us. I don't remember, because he used his own equipment, I remember that. He had shipped, his secondary, he had two operating rooms in Vancouver, and one was with the older equipment. I think, the new equipment that he had purchased, the same sales rep, Ash Temple or somewhere, he took it all back cause it wasn't that old.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Yeah he had just purchased it before the war. So I think he, they took it all back for him. So he brought the secondary unit up. Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Funny how it goes.

LU: Where was your dad's office in Vancouver?

LM: Right at the corner of Hastings and Main, opposite the big library.

LU: Oh. So, that's a little bit ways from your house though, wasn't it?

LM: It was just one streetcar ride, just down Hastings.

LU: Oh wow. Was he busy in Vancouver?

LM: Yes. [laughs] We didn't see too much of him because after he finished, he would do all of his own lab work, doing dentures and things. He made everything himself.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Even when we came to Toronto, he was still doing his own lab work.

LU: Did he have an assistant at all when he was in Vancouver?

LM: Not not that kind of assistant, he had a nurse.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Well, I guess, my dad was very lucky. When he came from Slocan to Toronto, he had started studying already. He said, he had to take a test to get a license to practice there and dad, he was studying. He was collecting books like crazy and studying. Then, he made an inquiry as to how difficult it would be for him to get a license.

[20 minutes]

LM: They said, well you don't need a license because when he arrived in Vancouver to go down to Chicago to go to school and take his, I think, it was a general surgery that he was going down to get, another degree or whatever it was and he wasn't allowed to go. They said that he couldn't go and this was from the Japanese gang that was in Vancouver. So, he was, he was very upset apparently at the time cause he said, and he never forgave them for it. Afterwards, when he heard that he didn't need to get a license because he had come across at that time because he didn't want to pay the gang money to go across the border, he came to Toronto. He took a summer course here and when he took the summer course, that got him a license to practice. So it was a good thing in a way. My dad always said, well, I guess, in a way, it was a good thing. But in a way it was kind of awful that it happened that way. But from here, from Toronto, he went down to Chicago and got his other degree, whatever it was, and went back to Vancouver. He was going to go back to Japan and Dr., I think his name was [Nomira?]. I think he's also associated with the Asahi Baseball club. I think he was the one. He says, I'm getting older, why don't you stay in Vancouver? You can practice here, you know, with me and take over from me. So my dad stayed and everybody started tried to fix him up with somebody. He was good friends with Reverend Shimizu. I guess, he was not Reverend yet at that time. I don't know. That Shimizu was always trying to convert him to Christianity. [laughing] The two of them were always arguing. I just remember that part of it. He says, ah, he wants me to convert. Eventually, he did get baptized.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: [laughing] Yes, he did. That was funny.

LU: Was he Buddhist before that?

LM: I have no idea actually. My dad was the most unreligious person in the world.

LU: Reverend Shimizu was the one who introduced your mother and father together?

LM: Well, I don't really know. I know there was a lot of pressure on him and I think, I really don't know which person was the one who kept pushing him one way or the other. After my mum arrived in Vancouver when she was 16 she went well, my grandmother decided, well, my grandmother was Ms. Shibuya at the time. She had Shibuya Shoten on Powell Street and she had married Mr. Nakazawa. They ran the store together more or less.<sup>1</sup>

LU: What was in the store?

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<sup>1</sup> S. Shibuya & Co. Clothing at 374 Powell Street, Vancouver. According to *the Historic Japanese Canadian District Paueru-Gai Map Guide* (2018), "Designed by architect William F. Gardiner for owner David Sanguinetti, this building has seen an eclectic mix of uses, including rental rooms known as the Sun Rooms (1913-1941), the Sun Theatre (1912-1918), various light industries, offices and retail businesses. Sono Nakazawa became the owner in 1919 and moved her clothing store into the building after some renovations. She helped to style young 'picture brides' in western-style clothing."

LM: It was dried goods. Dried goods but sort of like mini department store. They had little wheels, toys, and they had ladies' fashion. My grandma did dressmaking and alterations in the back and Mr. Nakazawa, my grandfather, he did the books more or less. My uncle, Harry Shibuya, he was in the store, sort of managing the store so to speak. Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Many of the relatives were working there and things like that. I don't know who belonged to who or anything like that.

LU: Your mother came over with your grandmother?

LM: No, Granny left her in Japan. Ms. Nakazawa or Ms. Shibuya, she left my mom in Japan because she didn't know what she was up against when she came to Canada.

[25 minutes]

LM: She arrived here. Truly, I don't know if she came with a friend or how this all materialized. That part was never ever made clear to me but granny came and she I guess, opened the store.

LU: So, do you know if she called for her afterwards to come over?

LM: Yeah. [nods]

LU: Oh. Did she have any other siblings? Your mother?

LM: Yes, she has Harry Shibuya, her brother, then after my grandmother got remarried to Mr. Nakazawa then, there was Bessy. Bessy was another, another younger sister.

LU: Oh wow. Bessy was born in Vancouver?

LM: Uh uh. [nods]

LU: What about Harry?

LM: Harry was born in Vancouver I think. I think he was. That I don't know but I assume that he was. As far as Mr. Shibuya, I think that he was also a [merchant?] marine or whatever they call those people in the old days but he was navy man.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: As far as I know.

LU: Do you know anything else about the family history on your mother's side? What part of Japan they came from or the family line of work?

LM: Well, I think she was, I think she grew up in Yokohama so I guess she was born there. On her birth certificate it says Yokohama and I guess that's because it was a shipping, seaport. Maybe that's how it all came about with my granny, being sort of sold, I suppose because I do recall, I still have diamonds and things that she had, that she gave to my mom. What kind of sea captain he was, whether they were maybe pirates. I know that they were great gamblers, that I know. I remember my mother saying that they got word that Mr. Shibuya, this is way after. They had word that he was killed or he died. They said he died of a heart attack. My mom always said, oh, I wonder [laughs] because she never knew either. Her mother never told her about the beginnings of her whole life or anything. Never talked about.

LU: Your grandmother came from a big family, you said?

LM: I think so. There were quite a few boys in the family, I think. I'm not too certain about that part of it.

LU: Do you know when your mother was born or a year range maybe?

LM: I have it somewhere but anyway, when she passed away, she was about 80 something so I don't know.

LU: When did she pass away?

LM: I should have brought my book because in that book I have all the years, my dad's birth and whatever.

LU: Oh, that's okay.

LM: Yeah.

LU: Do you remember what year she passed away in?

LM: Oh yeah. Jeez what year would that have been. She looked after my dad for a long time. I haven't any idea. 1990 something. Oh I'm sorry I didn't bring that book. It was sitting on the sofa beside me. I was looking up names for the Slocan Reunion. It's coming up, October, October the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

LU: October the 2<sup>nd</sup>. So, I guess, she didn't see the redress?

LM: Oh yes, she was still alive for redress. Yes she was. My father was gone but she was still around for the redress. She was not well but she was alive.

LU: Do you remember her reaction to the redress or?

[30 minutes]

LM: She said it was too late cause, my dad, well I don't know, my dad he was always so bitter about the whole thing. ] Who knows he may have told them to take it and stuff it. [laughs] You know? I know he was upset. No question.

LU: What about your father's family history? Do you know a little bit about where in Japan or?

LM: No, my father, well, he has, he had two sisters. One was living in Tokyo and one was living in Canada also. So, they moved down to the States at one point. I don't know what year it was, was probably early 30s, 1930 something. I do recall when they said, oh they were moving. They were closing they had a restaurant in Vancouver for a short while. They decided they were going to go to New Jersey. Now don't ask me. I don't know why. I think they had a friend who had a restaurant I think when they went down there. So, they moved to New York City after a while, I think when he retired or something, Mr. Kashiwa his name was. Amy Kashiwa, she married a fellow who was a Swiss or something. Anywho, she has now moved back with her daughter and gone to Washington. She is living down in Washington State and the other sister, I don't know where she is. They're, also, their son is living in Canada but then the nephew was [an alps?] Amy is an [ounce?] [alphs?] and then Kashiwa, he was a skier from Old Forks, New York. He was in the Olympics one year for the United States. Henry Junior. I know he is living somewhere in Denver, I guess. I think he is still probably instructing new skiers. I think he is anyway.

LU: Oh wow. So, did they experience the internment camps in the United States or?

LM: I think because they were already on the East coast, they weren't moved anywhere. I think they were fine. Yeah.

LU: Oh wow. Do you know anything else about your father's history or when he might have been born?

LM: No because I didn't bring the, I'm sorry.



LU: It's okay.

LM: But he was born in Japan, of course. The one sister, she had two sons and as far as I know, I think they are both gone now too. She was, her husband, Mr. Hugo, was stock. He was in stocks, heavy into stocks and financier. What do they call them? I think when that big crash came, he lost a lot.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Yeah because I think, I believe they would be considered millionaires but she, her claim was that he lost almost everything. I thought oh yeah sure. I think they were still pretty well off. I don't think she was suffering. I think he was heartbroken or something I don't know. I think he died soon after.

LU: Oh wow.

[35 minutes]

LU: So, when your father first came to Vancouver, did he already know he wanted to be a dentist or?

LM: Yes, he had already graduated. He was on scholarship from Tokyo.

LU: So, he must have been at least a little bit older when he came to Vancouver.

LM: He still would have been in his 20s, wouldn't he?

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Now that I think about it, I'm thinking his sister may have been already here perhaps, in Vancouver, you know. Maybe that was why he came through Vancouver and then going down to the States where he was going to do the postgrad. That's what I would assume anyway. I was all of 10, 11 years old. You aren't too, you know, clued into everything.

LU: Yeah. What else do you remember about growing up in Vancouver?

LM: Growing up in Vancouver was, I liked to play. That was my big thing was playing. Scooters and wagons. I still keep in touch with the girl and her family that was living across the street from us. They were an Italian family and the father was a singing waiter at the Hotel Vancouver. I always remember that. Used to bring back lots of table favours and things, you know. Anyway, they would always give me something. They were always so kind to me. We kept in touch all through the war and after the war. We still correspond and talk on the phone once in a while.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Remembering, reminiscing. [laughs] Other than that, I remember well because I liked to do so many things like skates was my big thing, then when my mom bought me a small bike. Oh my god, I was in heaven. [laughs] It was one with teenie weenie wheels on it but it was a two-wheeler wasn't a tricycle. It was a bike. Always remember that. Of course, we lived near the exhibition grounds. It was close for us when all the people started to get in the manning pool there. So, Mio Ohtake Kadaguchi, their family came from Cumberland, once they came to the exhibition grounds there, I used to take my skates and then her brother, I guess, Bob Kadoguchi, would get me a permit so I could come in to skate with his sister.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: So I would take my sister's skates. I would go down and go in and skate with Sumi. You know, before that, I mean I really don't remember too much about what

we did because by the time we finished Japanese school, you know, you just go home and have supper. I never really play too much with the neighbour kids. Not only that but I guess it's a funny thing but it's not discrimination in a sense that you would remember but when you think back. If you want to do it by today's standards, I suppose you would say that all my school friends or kids my age, when three kids would go to play in the house and I would stay on the veranda. So, big deal. I would just run off, go and get my skates and play. You know it's really funny but back then, it wasn't considered bad, I guess.

LU: Yeah.

LM: I mean, if you did that to a child today, it would be let's go for psychoanalysis. You know what I mean? But it wasn't that bad. So, you aren't included, fine, go do something else.

LU: Yep.

[40 minutes]

LU: Was it Hastings Park into the grounds there?

LM: [nods]

LU: You had to get a permit to go inside and play or?

LM: Yeah I think so. If I remember, I had a little slip of paper that Nio gave me and Nio said give it to them at the gate. I do recall that part of it. Then, I would go hunt for Sumi and go skating around the park.

LU: What do you remember about what you saw in the park?

LM: What I recall was the mess hall. Sumi said to me, well, it's lunchtime so maybe you should go and have lunch. But I was so scared to go in there because it was rows and rows of tables. I mean I was even scared to go in and get her because of the fact that there were all the bunk beds and blankets were hanging off on the bunk beds. It was quite a scene especially when they had taken all the seats out of the forum. There were beds all lined up. I don't remember much of the detail of it. But I do know it was kind of scary in a way. But then I was so innocent, never thought anything of it.

LU: Yeah.

LM: You should be taken aback, going oh my god but I don't think it came out like that, not to my mind. So simple I was, I guess, dumb.

LU: How long would you go there to play?

LM: Just a couple of hours, about three hours or something like that then I'd go home. When the war started, of course, everybody started to come into town. We had, my mother put beds in the dining room and whatever and people were sleeping all over the place. I know that, I think, we had the Yamanaka's came in from Prince Rupert. They became friends with my mum because of my mother going out to Prince Rupert with Aiko Saita, the singer. Because she had a recital up there. She kept in touch with Ms. Yamanaka so we had, I can't remember if we had, I know that I went down to sleep with Mio in her little wee cubbyhole room, closet room practically. I guess they put the twin beds together and I think, [Mitchi?] and Emily, Emery I guess they call her now, and my sister, I think they shared the twin beds upstairs. There was a guest room and I don't know who was sleeping in there. I don't

remember. But then in the dining room, we had another bed. I think that was Hiro Yamanaka's wife, Masako? She was in the dining room I think. Cause he was working at the ex- like the manning pool.

LU: Oh, what was he doing?

LM: He was. He spoke Japanese and English. I think he was helping there. As I suspect, I think Bob Kadaguchi was too. I don't know who was sleeping in the living room. I don't remember.

LU: So everybody who was staying in the house, were they family friends or was it arranged?

LM: [nods] Yes, family friends, mostly Yamanka's. I'm not sure but I don't think any of the Kadoguchi's stayed with us. But they may have, I'm not sure. There were people all over the house. [laughs].

LU: Yeah. Was it because Hastings Park was too full?

LM: No, it wasn't. It was just that they got special permission to stay outside. I don't know how it was arranged but anyway it was and they were allowed to stay with us. Once they were shipped out, I don't think my mother took anyone else in because we had to get prepared too to leave.

[45 minutes]

LM: So then, we left. I think that was in August, I think. Just around the same time I guess as Mickey and his family. So, we moved in August. In August, that would be 1942. We left and that was a very sad day for me though because I had to leave all my animals.

[phone ringing]

LU: Oh, I wonder if they are.

LM: Yeah, had to leave the babies.

LU: Yeah.

LM: That was the saddest part.

LU: You had a dog and a couple cats?

LM: Yes, two cats and a dog. But the lady who took over the house said she would look over but she did write us letters. They had to put the dog down. Because after we left, we didn't take him, we didn't ask permission to take him to Slokan because he was already suffering from arthritis. So- [phone ringing] should you take it?

LU: I don't know. That's usually Peter's phone but I don't know if they are trying to reach me. Maybe I'll just stop for one moment.

[video cuts to a new portion of the interview]

LU: There we go. What do you remember about your family house in Vancouver? It sounds like it was a very big house. Do you remember how many bedrooms and what it looked like or?

LM: Three bedrooms on the second floor. My sister and I had the best room because we could look out from the big, there was a like a big bay window, I suppose if you want to call it that. If you look out you can see the park. We could see way down, right to well, right down to the valley there. You could see, one of the schools, the technical school. It was fairly recently built at that time. It was, I think, that's where I was headed to go to school. Cause my dad said, you are very artistic and I don't

know if you should go and do something that's sort of, I don't think you would be very good at chemistry or anything like that. He said, why don't you become, there's a new thing called interior decorating [laughs] why don't you try something like that? I think I was headed towards the technical school. I liked it because it was close, just had to go down the hill and a ways. Anyway, actually, I sort of kept on that vein all along, of course until December, I was still in sort of design field if you want to call it design field. Yeah.

LU: Was your mother working at all in the Vancouver days?

LM: [shakes head] No.

LU: Or she would just stay at home and looked after everyone?

LM: [shakes head] No. She was always busy. Don't ask me what she was doing I don't know. She was always taking sewing classes, you know, learning how to embroider. She was always doing something. [intelligible] I don't think she was the president of the ladies' auxiliary or whatever it was called at that time but I think she was very active, I want to say.

LU: Oh. Do you know anything about that club or what activities they would do? Cause I never heard of it before.

LM: you mean [speaking japanese] like the bazaar? They used to have a bazaar that I remember. It was a nice bazaar from what I remember.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Once in a while, when the mood turns right, I am still in touch with [Hidako Oake?], her father was the principal of the school. We correspond every once in a while. She's such a great writer.

[50 minutes]

LM: She writes these beautiful letters to me and gets little awful letters from me. [laughs]. She's very, well she's a good writer. I think she was a school teacher too. Anyways, she writes beautiful letters.

LU: You mentioned that your family was a little bit delayed in going to Slocan?

LM: Well, they had to wait. It took quite a few weeks for my dad's equipment to get to Slocan and they didn't have a place for us to stay at that time. So they told us finally, they said well your house is ready so my dad said, well, okay then. So, we left and if I remember, oh god, I wish I could remember the day we left. Anyway, we got there. There was no house ready.

LU: Oh my goodness. So where did you stay?

LM: Well, they said, we can put you up across the river in this house. So, the Yamanaka's stayed with us and we had four beds, cots, in what was the house's living room and the Yamanaka's had what was I suppose their dining room at that time. There was no kitchen so we had to go back into town, Slocan City, so to speak and go to the mess hall. Mr. [Shikatani?] would make us meals after everybody was finished. Cause you see they used to feed the bachelor men. They had a mess hall room for them. Once they were finished, then we would go in and have our dinner, or lunch, or whatever.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: That was for quite a long time actually. Finally, they said, well, the house that we had delegated for you was going to be given to Dr. Kami Takahara because it was nice and close to the hospital so we said, that was fine. That is the house where Mickey and his family moved into temporarily.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Yeah yeah just temporarily. The crazy thing is that it was just full of bed bugs. They had to do all kinds of things to try and get rid of them. So we didn't move there. We moved in behind Graham's store, which was right in the city. My dad's office was just like half a block, down the lane and half a block away. Our house was actually better since we were close to shopping.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: So it was uh. But I recall, I remember my mom and dad, I think Mr. Yamanaka already had a job [at the store?] since he was in the grocery business in Prince Rupert. I remember them going on strike. They said, okay fine. The commissioner at the time was Mr. Hartley I think. I remember the name. Mr. Hartley's car was there, parked in front of the offices. So, my mum and dad, I don't know who else was with them, all sat on the car, in front of the car, said we not moving, we're not moving until we have proper accommodations and whatever. That's when they started to rush around. I think I mentioned my dad's equipment arrived and he was busy.

LU: Oh wow. Did the Yamanaka family stay with you in your house or did they find their own?

LM: No, they didn't. I'm trying to remember. They may have stayed at the house that we temporarily occupied. They might have stayed there I can't really remember. Isn't that funny I don't remember where they were? I think they stayed at that house and fixed it up.

[55 minutes]

LM: It was really funny cause there was no bathroom there. So, Mr. Yamanake said well so he went downstairs to the basement and was just doing. The basement was like a- and so he dug a hole in the soil there and made a bathroom down there.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: We had no running water. We had to go down a few houses to where, I guess it was the Akagi's had the first house down there, a row of about six houses, I think, in a row there. We used to use their bathroom sometimes. We had to get water from them too and then just for washing dishes and stuff, we would go down to the river and pick up water.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: It was pretty primitive, I must say.

LU: Very.

LM: I had no idea. Just happy go-lucky. I got a new bike too. Unfortunately, well, I guess the bike must have come in as our baggage. When we got there, the bike arrived shortly after. I never got to ride the bike that much. The two Yamanaka girls were always with it.

LU: Oh.

LM: Used to have to try to be first so they wouldn't take the bike on me [laughs].

LU: But it was your bike?

LM: But they were older.

LU: Yep, yep.

LM: You were supposed to have respect you know.

LU: Yeah. So what was the house like once you finally moved into your own house?

LM: It was a nice house, a little bungalow.

LU: Was it just one bedroom or two?

LM: There was a teeny room off the kitchen and then adjoining it was another room. It was basically three bedrooms.

LU: Did you have to share with another family?

LM: No.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: We had a living room, then there was a kitchen, that was all. Little cottage, I guess.

LU: What was it like during the winter season when it was cold?

LM: Winter was cold. Mind you, they put a stove in. It was the one that most of the houses in Bay Farm had. It was just a warming thing, it was like an oil drum almost. They hooked that up. So we had the cooking stove but we had this thing that just heats immediately. You put paper and kindling and stuff in it.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: We had that. That was for the whole house. The pipes went up and I remember a pipe went right across our living room and then I guess that was it. It was cold a lot of times, especially in the morning. Well yeah and there was a bathroom. There was no toilet or anything. There was a bathtub, and I believe there was, I can't remember if there was a sink in it or not. I just remember a bathtub was there.

LU: In your house?

LM: Yeah inside. The bathroom was outside. The toilets were outside. A two hole, a two seater outside. . That was cold. Some mornings, there was frost on the seat.

LU: Oh wow. That was lucky, though not having to share a bathtub with anyone else.

LM: We didn't use it.

LU: No?

LM: It wasn't hooked up or anything. We didn't use it. We went to the ofuro, the ofuro bath.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: That was another experience believe me. I never had any experience like that before. I didn't know people bathed together.

LU: So, in your Vancouver house, you never bathed together like that?

[60 minutes]

LM: No, no Vancouver was separate, we had our own bathrooms.

LU: Oh wow. Just going to switch this tape here.

[noise of LU switching tapes]

So, did you go to school right away once you got to Slocan or did you have to wait a while?

LM: We had to wait. That was the nice thing about it. We had no school for, I guess, it was the first year almost.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Yeah. Then the school was built and again. I think I was in grade seven. I took seven and eight. Grade nine, I went to the Catholic High and grade 10, I transferred over to the Anglican School. Yeah. I don't know. I always laughed and said, I think that the nuns must have known there was no way they were going to convert me. [laughing] They were always nice to me. They must have known. They could feel it, that I was never going to be converted. But I sat in, I do remember in grade nine, I sat in the middle of the room so all the notes that everybody was passing back and forth. The girls you know. They would always pass it and I was always the one that would get caught passing the notes. [laughing] I was always kept after school. I thought, maybe I should leave this school before I get expelled. [laughing] When we had the Catholic High School reunion, I told the sisters I was always being caught passing the notes and I figured I should transfer over to the Anglican school before I got expelled. I would be the only Japanese girl that got expelled. She thought, I was so funny. She said, oh, we would never do that to you. I said, oh yeah.

LU: Did your sister go to high school as well and complete her high school?

LM: No she did not. She didn't stay in Slocan very long. When the [Mirackis?] moved to Toronto, they moved quite early because they had, Mr. [Miracki?] went to work. I don't know what he was at the time. Ralph Day, I think he was a commissioner, TCC Commissioner, at the time. Whatever it was. He had an important position here and Mr. [Miracki?] got a job as his house man and chauffeur. So he came, he was offered a job, so he came here. Mrs. [Miracki?] was the housekeeper. They came to Toronto very early. Because they were in Toronto, my mother said well fine, maybe Ruby could go to school here cause she was losing too much time. She went to [Malton College on Brew Bloor[?] Street?]. First year, she was in res, I think. The [Mirackis] had bought a house by then so and so I think she went to live with them.

LU: Were the [Mirackis] family friends or?

LM: Yes they were. Yeah. In Vancouver, Mr. [Miracki?] had the New Pier Café, that was on Main Street, I think.

LU: The New Pier?

LM: Café.

LU: Oh café. Oh wow.

LM: He was very helpful when we got the house behind the store. Mr. [Miracki?] put all the fencing up. He did so much for the family, you had no idea.

LU: When did you get a house behind the store?

[65 minutes]

LM: Well, that was after my mom and dad went on strike. They said, well, your house is ready. We've rushed and got a house for you.

LU: Oh right that was in Slocan.

LM: Well, it was kind of raw but anyway it was house.

LU: Whatever happened to your friend that you would go play with in Hastings Park?

LM: Oh Sumi? I have no idea where Sumi is. She married and I don't know.

LU: Did she go to Slocan with you as well or did she end up in one of the other camps?

LM: No no gosh I don't know, I don't know where they went to. It's the whole Kadoguchi family I guess, where did they go? I don't really know, I can't remember. [laughing] Lost touch.

LU: Oh wow. So, what else do you remember about days in Slocan?

LM: Oh, well lots of things like, suddenly you have got nothing but Japanese people as friends. That was new to me. Although I went to Japanese school, it wasn't like friends friends. We had very close contact once we moved to Slocan. All I can remember is that first winter or the second winter whatever it be, we didn't have proper winter clothing. I remember that and I remember the snow being up to my waist and going well I guess when we started going to school, I remember that we had to go along a highway, I guess. I guess it was plowed but on the other hand, I have the sneaking suspicion we had to practically wade through the snow. I'm not sure. I just remember it being waist high.

LU: Oh my goodness.

LM: Yeah. And I didn't have. My mother had, she brought materials that my grandma had given her so she had some materials. I think she she had Sumi make me a snow suit and it was made out of some kind of woolly fabric. So you can imagine the lovely snow sticking on the woolly fabric right, not like the fabrics they have today.

[laughs] I remember that. I guess they order snow boots for me so I could walk. Oh yeah, the person who made the snow suit for me was Sumi Hayashi. She became Yamamoto. She made my snow suit, my first snow suit. [laughing]

LU: After school, would you go play in the snow or was it too cold? Like you know like how kids go out now and toboggan or build forts.

LM: No we didn't have toboggans, we didn't have skates, we didn't have sleighs or anything. I don't know, I guess we did something I don't know what. Later on, they would flood the one tennis court that was up by the old fellow's hall. I remember there was a skating rink there and I tried to learn how to skate but it was a pretty bumpy skating rink. Eventually, my dad said, why don't we try making a rink here? So we tried making a rink. It was pretty bumpy also. We did a lot of falling down.

LU: Where did you get the ice skates from?

LM: Well from the catalogue.

LU: Oh, the Eaton's catalogue.

LM: The Eaton's catalogue. Mr. [Makazawa?] had separated from his wife so he was living in Slocan City. He was living with us for a little while at the house. But my mother said [don't worry?]. She was not close to him at all because you know he was her step-father.

[70 minutes]

LM: He was not the kind of person you could get really close to. So, she arranged for him to have a room just down the way. So he lived there. He bought me my first skates.

LU: Oh wow.



LM: I think they were all of three dollars or something like that from the catalogue.

LU: Would have been a lot of money at that time though?

LM: I think so.

LU: If 50 cents for an extraction was too much, three dollars for a pair of skates was quite expensive.

LM: Well that's what I remember I seem to recall it was something like three dollars. But anyway It was a fun time. Then, I learned how to swim too in Slocan. So that was another thing I learned.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: I never would have learned how to swim if I was living in Vancouver although my grandmother had a little cabin in West Vancouver right on the water but we never went in to swim. I wore a bathing suit but I didn't go into swim I was just playing on the shore.

LU: Oh my goodness.

LM: But I had to, everybody else learned how to swim cause I guess most of the kids were downtown Slocan City I guess. I guess many of them were swimming before they came they came to Slocan cause they were good swimmers.

LU: Where was it that you swimming? Was it a lake?

LM: Yes Slocan Lake. Our house was just up the street from the lake. Yeah, not even a block away, I guess. It was just within sight. Yeah and I spent a lot of time down there in the summer trying to learn how to swim.

LU: Oh yes.

LM: Funny. I think my sister, I guess I said I was learning how to swim and she sent me a belt. In those days, it was like a life belt so I could stay above water instead of sinking. I remember her sending me one of those. I think she sent me a bathing suit too.

LU: Oh wow and she was sending it from Toronto?

LM: No. Yeah, she was sending it from Toronto. I used to go down and practice with water wings as I call them.

LU: Were you ever able to leave Slocan and go to the other?

LM: Yes, and eventually yes we did. My dad kept applying once he knew he could practice in Toronto. My sister was already here, finished school working. So, he just kept asking if we could leave. They just kept saying no not while we have people here, you cannot leave. He just kept applying and they just kept saying no. Then, somebody set fire or something happened at silver mines. There was one building there housing people. I think it must have been fairly empty by that time because people were moving out in droves. There was a fire in the generating plant there so, of course, the electricity stopped. We had no electricity so then, my father said well, he can't work without power. He was able to do certain things but certainly not, couldn't use the drill. Finally, they got this little thing that he could use his foot and generate to make the drill go but it was never strong enough to do all the things it was supposed to do. He gave up and said, I can't work like this. They said, what could we say? They said go. He closed up shop and that was in 1940- I was in grade ten. 1940-

[75 minutes]

LM: When did the war end? It was 1948, wasn't it? We left the end of 47 or beginning of 48. Could have been the beginning of 48 when we left.

LU: Was it wintertime you were leaving?

LM: No, it was around June or something like that.

LU: Oh wow. You had mentioned before that your father was one of the only dentists in all the internment camps. He was in charge of Slocan-

LM: Bay Farm, Popoff. The occasional, once or twice a month, he used to go to Lemon Creek. I think it was once a month he went to Lemon Creek. If it was an emergency, they would drive him in with the ambulance. Once I think he went to New Denver to fill in for Dr.[unclear]. I think that was only the wartime. He said, enough is enough.

LU: Very busy. Do you remember your trip from Slocan to Toronto?

LM: We came direct. There was a layover in Winnipeg, I believe.

LU: On a plane or a train?

LM: No, train.

LU: Oh, you said layover, I think airplanes.

LM: Because I don't know why, they said, oh we got time. I remember going to have a dinner or lunch or something in Winnipeg I think. It could have been in the train station probably. Good likelihood it was in the train station. I just remember it was horrible. I had raw broccoli and something. I remember giving it to my mum, saying you eat it. I would have eaten it now. [laughs] But at that time, I was like, raw broccoli. Personally, I think it was slightly cooked but I said it was raw. Always remember that.

LU: Did you have any contact with the RCMP at all when you were in Slocan or did you hardly see them?

LM: We were so vicious, you know, a bunch a bad people there. They had I think one officer there [laughs]. They said, looking after thousands of people with one officer. Bad bunch that we were. When we first went there, there were several, about three of them, I think. I think near the end, I only remember one being around at any time.

LU: Do you remember him walking around checking on everybody? Or what would he do?

LM: I have no idea. I don't think he did anything. I never saw him. [laughs]. I guess near the end I must say though when people were getting trains and truckloads were coming in from New Denver and Kaslo, wherever to get on the trains to go out east or whatever, at that time, the RCMP people, whoever he was, he was taking movies.

LU: Movies?

LM: I would think if there were any movies. I guess, the archives in Ottawa probably have for the records.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: I took a few pictures. We weren't supposed to have cameras. I took a few pictures of people leaving, that sort of thing. When the man sent all the things from Vancouver to us, my dad's cameras, they all came.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: We had a little movie camera and whatever.

LU: What about radios or whatever?

[80 minutes]

LM: Well, we had one we kept hidden. And it was, we had it hidden behind the kitchen cabinet and we used to listen to that. There was another one in the living room, a big one. I don't know if he gave it away maybe. he certainly didn't take it to where they were collecting everything. My dad was not that kind of person. He was very defiant on certain things. Couldn't believe it what they were doing.

LU: Do you remember listening to the radio when you were in Slocan?

LM: Oh yeah.

LU: Would you listen to the news or music?

LM: Yeah, I think once we were there, I guess it was alright to have it since we were away from the coast. I do recall we had this little funny wooden radio. I think, we had a record player too, an electric one. Gramophone.

LU: Oh yeah.

LM: We had that. I don't know where we got it from but we did have that. That was about as far [as we had?] [laughing] Oh yeah and we shipped from somewhere, we had a refrigerator.

LU: Oh?

LM: Yeah, we had a refrigerator in the house. The guys nearly killed themselves bringing it into the house.

LU: Was it a big, tall one or?

LM: Yeah, it was one of the old ones that weighted three thousand pounds and it wouldn't stay put on the floor because it was an old cottage or something. So I don't know some people came and they put wood underneath it and then I think, they screwed the refrigerator onto that so that it would stay put or else it kept vibrating and bumps across the floor. We were lucky to have a refrigerator. Most people didn't have have.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Learned a lot of things in Slocan. Having Japanese friends. Baking bread. All kinds of things like that. It was really quite an amazing experience. You know when people say I feels so bad for you but do you know I thoroughly enjoyed being in that environment with the water was just a block away. You don't think about all those fancy things like I do today if somebody said to kids ok we're shipping you out somewhere. What would they do, they can't live without their computers or whatever. We did just fine. I think most of us did. They put up swings for us. We played with the swings. And swimming and whatever else. It wasn't that much of a hardship for kids. I think the parents probably were devastated but we didn't certainly know that.

LU: Do you remember seeing your parents having a difficult time adjusting? How did they react to-?

LM: Well they were young yet. When you think back, they were in their 30s. If you think back that far I would say, well I don't think it was an enjoyment for them but certainly an interesting experience if nothing else. Certainly, learned how to make due with things that we didn't have. I remember they would say, oh, they are

bringing bananas or something. We would all line up outside where the truck would come in. They would dole out two or three bananas to each person.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: We had to pay for it but they were cheap. Thirty cents apiece unlike what it is now. Used to line up for- What else did we have to line up for? Of course, my mother, we didn't eat that much rice and so a lot of people that did eat rice would exchange coupons with my mom so that they could have more rice.

[85 minutes]

LU: Oh wow.

LM: It was things like that going on. They would give her the coupon for the sugar instead.

LU: So, the coupons were for rations?

LM: Yes, everything was rationed. Sugar and rice, things that were basically imported I guess were rationed. I can't remember all the other things that were rationed. She would exchange, yeah sugar and rice coupons.

LU: What about for vegetables or?

LM: Vegetables were readily available. They were quite because the Doukhobors, you have to remember the Doukhobors were there and they would bring produce.

LU: Who are the Doukhobors?

LM: Doukhobors? They were Russians. They were white Russians originally, I think. They have a no-kill, theirs is a no kill grouping and so they wouldn't go to war and so they fled to other parts of the country. I guess, cause I guess somewhere, they were put in prison for not going to war. I don't know what the history is there but they have a no kill policy.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: When my dad used to work on their teeth of course on the weekends, of course, on Sunday he would work, they would have their teeth extracted and whatever else they expected him to do for them. They would pay him with live chickens cause they didn't want to kill them. So, we ended up, in the little cottage that we had, with quite a large size chicken coop of which we didn't know how to kill chickens either and I wouldn't allow them. We had quite a coop there for a while. Mr. Manaka said, we'll try. This one is sick, we'll try. He killed the one chicken. Then, he said, oh. He killed a few others cause my mother thought that each hen needed a rooster and so when the Doukhobors she came along one day and my mother was buying some produce from her. She looked over and my mother wondered what she was looking at. She sees all the roosters and she says, no, no, no. One boy for all the [gestures]. She says oh, not one for one? No. Then, we had to get rid of the roosters. Ms. Manaka says, you've been feeding the chickens leftovers, rice and stuff, you can't eat the meat. Eventually, we got rid of them all. I don't know, somehow we got rid of them.

LU: Did you keep them in the house with you?

LM: No, they were in a pen in the back outside. Course they had eggs. We never ate the eggs either. Maybe someone else was coming in, taking the eggs. I have no idea what they were doing. Because people were all over the place. We had such a big yard that a lot of the people were making their vegetables. My mother always said, I

wish they'd asked permission before making gardens all over the place. But that's what they did like you're not using it. So they used it. So [shrugs] that's the way it was.

LU: Oh wow.

[90 minutes]

LM: Making veggies on our property.

LU: Oh my goodness.

LM: Yep.

LU: Trying to think, what about other activities with friends or through the schools like dances or Mayday I think it was called?

LM: Mayday. Yeah, they did that at Pine Crescent school in Bay Farm. Yeah, they did. We had little groups. Broke up into groups, alpha, gamma, you know whatever they were called. Then, we had cheerleaders and we had marching. I think if I'm not mistaken, I do believe the RCMP said that we shouldn't be doing marching drills. There had been a complaint or something.

LU: Oh.

LM: So I think we had to stop as far as I know. Within the Japanese themselves, there were people that, there were a couple of people I think that were very conscious of upsetting the BC Security Commission. So anything that they thought was a little bit off-limits, they would report it right away. I think the RCMP told them there had been a complaint, maybe they shouldn't be doing marching drills or something.

LU: Would you be attending the dances?

LM: We had lots of good parties. Halloween party and we had spooks and that would be Raymond [Moriyama's?] group with Raymond and Peter [Kirita?] and Glen Komo, those fellas they were always go, go go. They would dream up all these crazy things for parties.

LU: So, they would organize everything?

LM: Yeah that's right, everybody brought something to eat. We'd pool it together. We had lunch or dinner or whatever it be. We had fun at Pine Crescent school. We had more fun there at Pine Crescent school than we went to the Catholic high school. Because I think we were all sort of respectful of the nuns and whatever, I suppose. I don't know. They did have one midnight mass and my mother and I went. There were a lot of people there. My mother said, oh, she was not too impressed either. She said, oh. I guess only because she had never grown up with Catholic people. She says they were, the priest is drinking wine and what about the other people? To be perfectly honest, Japanese people, too many were not Catholic right? Buddhist was a big one.

LU: Yeah, it was a pretty big mix of everything.

LM: A majority, I guess, must have been Buddhist, I guess. Anyways, it was nice for them to have a school like that and build a unit so that we could all go to school. It was really good.

LU: Did you ever participate in school plays or did they have them?

LM: At Pine Crescent, we did. We had a really good time. The teachers were all young. Unbeknownst to us, they were probably just anywhere from three to eight years older than us [laughs].

[95 minutes]

LM: When you think about it, some were still even studying correspondence courses from what I understand.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: There were no high schools so they were taking correspondence courses. Some had finished high school I suppose. But when you think about it we were 10, 11, 12, they were probably 18, 19.

LU: Oh my goodness.

LM: When you think of it that way, I said to Kaz Hamazaki, I said, Kaz, I said we used to call you Mr. Hamazaki when we were in school. He said, yeah. I said, how old were you when you were teaching? He said, I think he said he was 18. You mean to tell me I was 12 and you were 18 and we were calling you Mr. Hamazaki. I should have realized. It embarrasses me when you call me Mr. Hamazaki. I'll call you Kaz now [laughs] He was actually, he was a very good teacher.

LU: Did you have a favourite subject when you were in school?

LM: Nope.

LU: [laughing] English? Math? Didn't matter?

LM: Certainly not math. Perhaps English, I liked English.

LU: I think there was a Slocan Sewing club. Did you ever hear about that or were you part of that?

LM: [shakes head]

LU: So when did you first learn how to sew?

LM: Probably when I was first in Slocan at some point. If I'm not mistaken, I think Ms. [Muraki?] being a dressmaker, maybe she but I know that in Slocan, I did a little bit of sewing. It was really when I came to Toronto that we had homemaking courses. That's grade ten. That's when I started sewing my clothes and things like that. But I wasn't that much interested in it even though I went into the sewing business in later years. Didn't particularly like sewing myself. [laughing]

LU: So, what about your trip to Toronto, was your house already arranged by the BC Commission or who put it all together?

LM: My mother came out here to make sure my sister got settled in alright. I think after her first year here, I think my mother came out again and she bought the house.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: So, we were living Timothy Eaton Church when we first came here. It's right on St Clair Avenue near Avenue Road. When she bought that house, there was already Dr. Nishikawa, Fred Nishikawa a few doors down from us. When my mother bought the house apparently, the man next door was also a dentist, I believe it is, or doctor. The man next door and the doctor at the end of the street, right at the end of Poplar Plains and St. Clair, I think that she objected to the fact that there was going to be another Jap moving in. They went around looking for signatures requesting that we

not be allowed to move in because there was already a doctor that they were trying to get rid of. They were trying to get rid of Dr. Nishikawa. They didn't like the fact he was already there. There was a lot going on at that time.

LU: Did you end up moving into the house though?

LM: Yep. We moved in.

LU: Kept the house?

[100 minutes]

LM: Yep, we moved in there. Dr. Coin was a very funny man. He would come out maybe once or twice a day and he would spit on the window at the back. Because in those days the houses were pretty close, it was just that pathway going between the houses. And he would come on his back veranda and he would spit on our sunroom window. So then he would also let his dog out and his dog would come and do a number on our lawn. Never did it on his lawn. Came across and did it on our lawn. So my dad says, well this is payback time. So he said were going to gather all the dog poo on the lawn. And he says go put it in a box, and leave it on his doorstep. I believe my dad did do that because soon after, we also found out that Dr. Coin was dying. He was cancerous. And his son was very nice. His son was a broker or something, really nice man. And his wife was so nice after the doctor passed away. Invited my mother over for tea and whatever. It was so strange. When people get used to, it really is okay. I really don't understand that sort of thinking but however he was a racist. What are you going to do about it? Couldn't help himself.

LU: Were any of the other neighbours strong like this?

LM: Oh no. They were all great. They were great.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: And then Ms. [Gucha?], that was the name of the person at the end of the street that was so against us moving in that she told everybody to when it came time that they were going to make a condo or apartment building where we were, where the people were buying up all the houses. She was very upset because she said, everybody is selling out and they're selling to Jewish people. And that is not right. We can't have that. I don't know why she was like that but anyways she was the first one to move out [Laughter] and we were all laughing. She's the first one to move out.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Anyways as it turns out, we did sell eventually cause my dad had a stroke and when he had a second stroke, he was not able to work anymore. My mother said maybe we should move and get out of the area and move somewhere quiet. So, we moved out to Victoria Village.

LU: When was that?

LM: Gee, I don't know. I don't know what year it was.

LU: No?

LM: It was after dad's second stroke.

LU: How long did you stay in that first house in Toronto?

LM: We were there for a good number of years. It'd be 15 or 18 years, I think. We were there a long time.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Yeah, [counting]. It'd be about 15 years I think.

LU: You mentioned that your sister got married when you were still living in that house?

LM: Yes, she did.

LU: And who did she marry?

LM: She married Luke Tanabe.

LU: Mickey was telling me about him.

LM: He just passed away recently. But they got married, they lived at the house for quite a long time until they bought their own house out in Don Mills, which was just being developed then. By that time, she had two kids. She was expecting another one so they moved.

[105 minutes]

LU: When you first came to Toronto, were you continuing school or did you-?

LM: Yes, I did. And then they said "well, seeing that you haven't had all the courses that we teach for grade 10 - maybe and you're still pretty young". He said "you were in the country school type of thing". I said "well yes, we had one typewriter". He says "well you know I think you'd be smart rather than going in ahead to 11, why don't you do 10 over again". I said "that's just fine with me cause I had no idea about business machines or anything like that. I took grade 10 again when I got here, which was fine with me. It was a whole new thing, experience of having 20-25 typewriters ongoing at the same time in the one room. I really enjoyed my high school days here. I went to Northern and I know even at that school, there was just one particular teacher who was so I don't know, she was so everything. The girls that befriended me they sort of said "what is it with her?" I said, I don't know.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: So what they did was that - these girls were all popular girls you know. They said, okay fine. When it came time to pick the basketball team, I being the smallest, thinnest and the smallest of all of them, they would always pick me to be on the team. The volleyball team, the basketball team, the baseball team. [laughing] You could just almost see her fizzle, you know, this teacher. I think it was in grade 12 she was - we had a health test. And I know I did well on the test but she looked up and said, oh, I counted yours, you got, you didn't make it.

LU: Oh.

LM: You should have seen the girls that were always sticking up for me. I think they went up afterwards and spoke to her. Because the next class we had, she said oh I'd counted incorrectly yes you've passed. It was really funny, she was like that all the time. They could never figure it out. She was always referring to me as you. She would never say my name. I tried to do payback too. So I think, one of the swim classes we had, she said, alright everybody "Stand up against the edge of the pool here we're going to do some exercise" or something like that. So I was treading water and she said "you, stand up". So, I stood up and went down under. I could hear her right through the water saying "get that girl, get that girl!". And I thought that was so funny. After we went to the lockers afterwards, just screaming with laughter



cause - Did you really? Did you know what you were doing? I said "You better believe I did".

LU: She said, stand up.

LM: Stand up, I stood up. That's the way it goes. I never forgot that cause the girls were just killing. God, she was terrible but they would do that too for basketball and knew it was just, she would just-.

LU: She was the gym teacher, I guess?

LM: Yes, she was the phys. ed.

LU: Did you have her all throughout 10, 11, and 12?

LM: Yeah, I did. The other teacher was nice. There were two phys. ed teachers.

[110 minutes]

LM: The other teacher, she was very pretty, very nice. She never referred to me as you. This one, oh my goodness. I couldn't figure out. I wanted to ask her, what did I ever do to you?

LU: Yeah. Did it ever get easier by grade 12 or was she still just as bad?

LM: No, she was just the same. Yeah, that's why the girls used to select me all the time just to get her goat. [laughing]

LU: Oh wow.

LM: That was really, but then of course - I was used to it.

LU: Were there any other Japanese students?

LM: Yes, later on, there was another girl that came. I think she joined us in about grade 11 or 12, maybe.

LU: Did she have a hard time fitting in as well?

LM: I don't think so. I don't know. I never paid attention.

LU: What happened after high school? What did you go on to do?

LM: After high school, I worked at [Gridlas?] Furniture Store. But when I started there, they were doing all kinds of-. They did the whole interior of a house. They did all the upholstery, they did cabinetry, the draperies, upholstering, the whole thing. I was working in the office and so, it was sort of in charge of liaison between the workers and the office, getting payroll things together and whatever. Got to know a lot of them because of the contact. All I did was tell them their office hours.

[intelligible] did all the rest of it. That's how I started to get into the drapery end of it. Cause I used to eat my lunch up in the drapery room. The lady there was a very nice lady. She used to talk to me about what they were doing and whatever. That was interesting to me because I was working with fabric and stuff like that. And then the upholstery shop was in the same area so I got to know a lot of the upholsters too.

LU: Did you have a hard time finding that job?

LM: No, not at all.

LU: Just went and applied?

LM: Well I think there was an ad in the paper for office help or something or whatever. I went in and got the job just like that. The office manager was a South African man. Very, very nice. He didn't have any of those, you know. Later on, when I got promoted to run the gift shop there, they opened a gift shop. They delegated me to be - to run the shop. That was fine but it was very funny cause one day,

[intelligible]'s wife came in and I was very impressed. Ms. Redpath, She introduced me. This is my little lotus blossom. I could see Ms. looking a little embarrassed. So I said "How do you do?" and there was no accent or anything like that. So she shook hands with me. "Nice to meet you, my dear". But it was funny cause then another day, I remember it was the Minister from I think it would be – maybe Kingsway, Lambton, wherever it was the Redpath's used to have the church they went to out that way. And he was in and of course Mr. Redpath - He introduced us. He said "Oh, she's working here."

[115 minutes]

LM: It was still the same old thing you know of. The first thing this minister says is "oh well, where are you from?" and I said "what do you mean? I was born in Vancouver and I'm Canadian". And he said "oh no no, I don't mean that". He says "where are you from? Let's put it this way, where are your parents from?". I said "oh well, they are also Canadian but originally from Japan, is that what you wanted to know?". [Laughter] By that time, I was pretty good at putting people on the spot. So I just said "oh you mean like, yeah they're from Japan". "Oh" he says "that's what I wanted to know" he says. "So you are Japanese Canadian?" and I said "that's correct". We had those kind of ins and outs.

LU: How long did you work there for?

LM: I was there for about five years maybe. Then, I went on to work with – after that I went to work with Budd Sugarman. He's an interior decorator. And I went to work with him – for oh gosh. I don't know for how many years. I was there for a long time.

LU: What would you do there?

LM: Well, I was doing everything there. Mostly lying for him but really, he was an excellent interior designer, interior decorator, he really was. Good style, good colors, good everything and he had such a good clientele, following.

LU: Would he put all the designs together and you would help either sew them or?

LM: No, I did no sewing. I was doing all the office work and that sort of thing. He did everything.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: He really was a good designer.

LU: After you worked there, where did you work after that?

LM: Then, from there, I went- John Manuel who was another interior decorator. Budd Sugarman took John in as a co-worker, assistant, whatever you want to call them. John has or had a wonderful feelings for interior design too. He was really good They worked for a while and then, John went off on his own. I was sort of, he said come and help us out. When I went over to help him, I was helping him a bit and then I also was working for another interior decorator named Clive Kahn. He has since passed away too. So, all of them are gone. He wanted to open a sewing room in the bottom, on the lower levels. So I said "well, okay. I'll do the best I can" you know type of thing. We got that organized alright. So we were making draperies for his client but also started working for other designers too. So we were doing that. I left there and then I was sort of half working for John and trying to up my own place. So eventually - Clive moved to California. So I was setting up my own place. So I set up

the sewing room just down the street on Barrymore. I became – I don't think I was a work room then, I think I was still Lucy custom shop or something like that. I was sewing for John basically and then I took on a few other decorators but from there, I moved to Davenport Road and set up there.

[120 minutes]

LM: I got bigger and bigger, actually bigger than what I wanted. But however, from there and then I moved down to Dupont Street. That got as big as it could get. Then it was just down. Actually, it was just last year I think, 2008 over 2009 I think business started to go really poorly. The old really established decorators were all retiring or had moved away.

LU: Yeah.

LM: So it was sort of like independent home decorators. There weren't many really established decorators. And not only that, I think business in itself started to go downhill. I could see the handwriting on the walls so I decided to call it quits. Then, my daughter decided to go off on her own too. So she's got a couple of decorators that are working with her. But by the same token, it's hard to get people to work. There are no workers, people don't sew anymore. I don't know what they are doing but they certainly aren't doing custom sewing. They're working out of their homes or something, I don't know which route its going but certainly sewing isn't on the top of the list for most people, most women.

LU: So, how old were you when you opened up your first shop?

LM: About 33, 34. Something like that.

LU: Were you living at home still or had you already met your first husband?

LM: No, no. I was not living - I had my own place.

LU: When did you meet your first husband?

LM: Oh, gosh, I don't know.

LU: Do you remember how old you were?

LM: It was at an age where my parents were getting a little edgy. Must have been about 27 or so. I think there was a lot of pressure on me to get married.

LU: Did you know him beforehand or did you meet him in Toronto?

LM: No, I met him in Toronto. I'm trying to think back where did I meet him.

LU: Well it wouldn't have been school.

LM: It must have been a dance or something like that.

LU: Oh. Have to- [tape clicking]. You said it must have been a dance or something like that?

LM: Maybe something like that. I really don't remember.

LU: Was there a lot of Japanese people in the community in Toronto about that time or when you first started working?

LM: Oh I think so. Yeah, there were a lot of people. Cause I was working at Redpath's and wherever else and a lot of people – a lot of people were already here. Cause I remember one summer working at when I was going to school, I think one summer went and I worked at Rose mark's brassieres, they had the first French uplift brazier with banding below and lacing at the back. Very popular, they were. I remember working there. Most of the ladies that were sewing in there were all Japanese.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Oh yeah. I would say yes, there were a lot of Japanese here. You just had to go to the dances, it was like going back to Slocan. All Japanese, lots of them.

LU: Who put together the dances?

[125 minutes]

LM: I don't know. I just used to go and have a good time.

LU: Where would they be? Was there one place that would always have them at?

LM: They always used to have dances at, no, that was Slocan. It was College and Spadina and it was also the Labour Lyceum. I guess it was on Spadina and there was one on College, and I don't know if it was Ukrainian or something. But we used to have big dances in there, they were nice.

LU: Was it a Ukrainian church?

LM: No, I think it was, it could have been a union hall or something like that. I don't remember, I don't remember the name of the place but I see it when I drive by it. The church too, the churches had dances at the odd time like you know Metropolitan United Church. We would go and the badminton club, they would have a dance or a party. There used to be teenage dances at St. Stevens Hall or one of the churches, it was right on a street called Stephanie or something like that just off McCaul.

LU: I'm not sure.

LM: We used to have dances there. As a matter of fact I think we played badminton in there too. And then there was St. Christopher house of course. We didn't have dances there but the Japanese boys used to play basketball. Because I remember going to see a couple of games.

LU: Where would you hear about the dances? How did you know there was going to be a dance coming up?

LM: I don't know. Someone would always phone, I guess. I think it was almost every Saturday night or almost every other Saturday night. At this place on Stephanie Street and McCaul area. I think it was almost every other week or every week if I'm not mistaken. Teen club. We used to call it - It was called TNT. It was Toronto Nisei Teen club or something.

LU: Oh wow. Would they teach you how to dance there?

LM: Oh no. We got to hold the guys. The guys got to hold the girls. Met a lot of people that way too. It was a good time to get together. You never saw them. If you went to Central Tech, I guess, you see a lot of Japanese kids there. Where I was, could count on half a hand how many Japanese people.

LU: Were people allowed to bring non-Japanese people to the dance?

LM: [nods] Yep. Sure.

LU: So, when did you get married?

LM: I don't know. Actually, I don't know what year it was.

LU: Do you know how old you were?

LM: I think I must have been about 27 when I got married the first time. Something like that.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: I don't remember.

LU: You mentioned you had a daughter.

LM: Yeah, I have a son. Who's - He's 50. I have a daughter, she's a few years younger.

LU: And they grew up in Toronto as well?

LM: Yep.

LU: And then you met Mickey when your first husband had passed away?

LM: No, I was divorced and it was quite a few years later. I was single for probably 12 years or so.

[130 minutes]

LM: Mickey and I have been married now for about 20 years. It was after his wife passed away.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: Yep. Yeah Ethel.

LU: Oh wow. And you mentioned before the Nippon Tennis Club. What do you know about the history of that? Do you know how it was established or how many people went?

LM: I don't know. Mickey should know better, because he was doing research on it at some point. I was seven maybe, maybe around seven years old or eight years old. I remember Mr. Matsubayashi and Mr. Takanaka and Mr. Wasaki they were like, the older people there I guess, by comparison to the young people there. They used to play go, go, go, stop or something like that. [Unclear] He never played with me [Laughter]. So, that I remember. And my mother, my mother, I guess, wasn't the best player in the world but then, when they went to other clubs to play competitively. I would suspect they had to have ladies with them. So there was my mum and there was Hiyodo Shimizu, Reverend Shimizu's wife. There were a couple of other ladies there. I don't remember the other ladies that were there. But I do know that they - Oh Chiki and Nagizawa was playing at that time. I remember her but other than that, I don't remember anybody. I have to go back and look at the pictures.

LU: Were there a lot of younger children playing there as well or mostly old?

LM: Just us, my sister and I.

LU: And Mickey when he was around.

LM: And once in a while Mickey was there but not that often. I really only knew about him because we all went to Mio Gakuen together, you know at the same time. Know a lot of people from Japanese school. Know the names, we didn't chum with them or anything because we had to go on the streetcar and go home but I think the boys had fun together. I'm sure that they did cause they were all sort of going to the same public school too, I suspect. I'm not sure, I think.

LU: Do you remember when the Japanese Canadians receive the right to vote? Do you remember that time or hearing about it on the news?

LM: I remember hearing about it but I don't know what year it was.

LU: I think it was-. No, I can't remember what year it was.

LM: Quite a few years after the war.

LU: Early 50s, I think.

LM: Have to go back and check out those books. Pile of books.

LU: What do you remember about that time though? Do you remember your parents talking about having the right to vote?

LM: No, I think it was probably not long after that that my father finally took out citizenship.

LU: Oh wow. I guess he would have been considered a naturalized Canadian from that point.

LM: I guess, I don't know. Yeah, I think it was after that that he took out. He said "okay well then fine we could be Canadian citizen". [laughing]

LU: Do you remember during the war years carrying around little identification cards?

LM: Yes, Yeah. I still have mine. The RCMP officer, when I came to Toronto and turned 16, I wanted to get one for a keepsake.

[135 minutes]

LM: So, I had a picture taken and I went down and he said, well, you know- He took my thumbprint and whatever. He did fingerprinting. He said "the war is basically over so you don't really have to do this". I said "yes but I would like a souvenir". And he said "gotcha" so he put the seal on it for me.

LU: Oh wow. And do you still have your parent's cards as well?

LM: I think I passed all of that on to my sister. One of her daughters is trying to do a family tree.

LU: Oh yeah.

LM: So we - I have contact with a Dr. Hosokawa cause he loves doing it. It's like a hobby of his. He loves doing this tracing back. So I said "well I'm going to give you a really hard one to do". He said "oh no, no, that's okay, I want to try". He did Mickey's without Mickey asking him, he did a wee bit for Mickey. And said that your great whatever. And he had quite a bit done without even knowing Mickey's dad's real name and stuff like that. So, Anyway. He said "No, he'd be glad to do what he could". I said "oh you are going to have fun". So anyway, my niece has started gathering information for this thing. She's even, she's so silly. She wants to go and have a what do you all it D-

LU: DNA testing?

LM: [nods] DNA testing to see if maybe she could find something out about my mother. I said "well, do you think it can be done? I mean, how would-?" She said "if you do a DNA for mom, her mom, the sister of mine". I don't have anything, I can't even say I've got grandma's old hairbrush or anything anymore. There's nothing around of hers. She said "I think that's alright. I think they can do DNA testing that way". I said "well, good luck, good luck".

LU: Yeah.

LM: She says "I'm just going to try". So anyway Mariko is going to do what she can I guess. But Dr. Hosokawa said, yeah sure. I think Mariko is going to Japan in the fall, I think. Cause she - so she teaches some kind of yoga kind of a thing and she's also a dancer. I don't know if she incorporates the two. She gets called from Poland and whatever. She's based in Montreal now but she goes to Poland and a few other little areas. They call her and ask her to come and give seminars and whatever. She's

teaching to do all these different yoga things or whatever it is that she's doing. I say "you'll have to show me one day what you are doing cause I haven't got a clue".

LU: Have you ever been to Japan?

LM: No, never. I really had no desire to go to Japan. At one time in my life, I thought it would be fun to go to Honolulu. But, my real love is that – well, not anymore but I mean, it was to go to Scotland. I don't know what it was, it was just something that interests me. I don't care about England, Scotland really intrigues me. I was thinking, I'll go when the festival is on. Then I thought, I don't want to travel anymore.

LU: Have you been outside of Canada before?

LM: Just down in the States. You know I'm - I don't have the desire to really. Some people want to go everywhere – Mexico, let's to South America. I don't really feel like it. I don't know what it is.

[140 minutes]

LM: There's no desire in me to go and travel. In fact, I dislike it very much. I've been to New York probably 15 times you know. And I have fun every time I go. It's such a great experience, to go and see all the jazz clubs. They got so much going on there.

But now, we got it here so why do I have to go? You know it's true isn't it, we got everything going on here. I've been to California and whatever. I don't find those places as exciting as going to New York City. New York City is like A1. [laughing]

LU: I think. What about the redress? Were you ever active in the redress at all?

LM: Was I ever?

LU: Were you ever active in the redress?

LM: No, was not.

LU: Do you remember reading about it in the news?

LM: Yeah, sure.

LU: What do you remember about the redress times? If you were speaking to somebody who never knew about the redress, what would you tell them?

LM: I don't know, what would I tell them? The government gave us pittance.

[Laughter]

LU: How long did redress carry out for, fighting for the redress? Do you know how long it went on?

LM: I have no idea, no idea whatsoever. I know I have the book at home. [Laughter] It's a really funny thing. I wasn't that much, I didn't really care about it that much. It wasn't important to me. I just really felt sorry that they didn't do it early enough that the people that really suffered were repaid. And it seems a shame too that it was such a small amount. I mean, how can you give back to people like my dad who worked so hard? He really gave everything of himself. There were a lot of people like him, I mean I'm not saying he's the only one. There were a lot of people who gave a lot. It just seems a shame they weren't compensated while they were alive and that the compensation wasn't just a wee bit more generous for them. I don't think it was that important for us. I didn't lose. I gained a lot of friends, and it gave me experience, and lots of adventure. It was a lot that happened. I think it taught me a lot about human nature and how cruel people can be. Gotta keep your wits about you.

LU: What do you think it would have been like if you stayed in Vancouver growing up? Do you think you would have still went into the same profession for work?

LM: More than likely I would think. Might have been more architectural than interior. On that same token, I think I would still be in something to do artistically. Yeah. Cause see, when I was in Vancouver, we were having the house fixed up. This was a few years before the war started so I was probably 10 - nine, 10. And my dad was getting the house stuccoed over cause it was a farmhouse. He said the new thing was getting stucco put on the house and they used to put all those glass - broken glass beads into the stucco. So, he selected a whitish color and we had blue and white clear glass thrown into the stucco. While he was getting that organized, he said, why don't you design the steps? They used to come straight down but I said, why can't we have a curved staircase going out so that when we hit the bottom of the stairs we are already at the corner of the street?

[145 minutes]

LM: So he said, that sounds good. So, he kind of had it drawn up and we had the house made up like that. That's what made him think I guess that I was - I should be sort of in that kind of field. That was the way it was. I used to do things like that. I actually, I met the man who is now living in California. I met him at one of the dues at the center. Mr. Winnow, and I said, oh you know, your dad did all the carpentry for the curved staircase at our house. He said "oh, did he? Somewhere in the back of my mind, I remember him talking about making a curved staircase". I said "well yeah cause I remember, I think you came with him once or twice when he was working at the house". He said - he says "maybe I did, I don't remember". Anyways, it's really quite funny see people - to meet people from years and years ago. It had to be about at that time even it was about 45 years.

LU: Oh wow.

LM: How time flies.

LU: Did you ever have any nicknames growing up? I know some people had nicknames.

LM: Toothpick.

LU: Toothpick, oh?

LM: Cause I was always underweight [laughing] and little. They used to call me toothpick, chopsticks, anything to do with being little and skinny, beanpole. I was Beanpole for a while.

LU: Beanpole? I think that's it for all my questions.

LM: Okay.

LU: Thank you very much. Did you have any other stories or memories you want to share or you could think of?

LM: No, I think I talked about everything.

LU: Well, thank you very much.

LM: Thank you.

[Interview ends]



