

Interviewee: Mary Matsui

Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda

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Lisa Uyeda: Perfect. So, this is an interview with Mary on September the 9th, 2010. Would you like to start off by telling us when you were born and where you were born?

Mary Matsui: I was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, September 8th, 1928. Which means I turned 82 yesterday.

LU: Oh, wow! Happy belated birthday.

MM: Thank you. And like all the other- Not like all, but like many other Japanese babies, I was born in a midwife's house, not too far from our home. And how I know that is because a few years later, I attended- My aunt had a baby at the same place.

LU: So, she- was it- It wasn't too far from your home, you said?

MM: Apparently not.

LU: Oh, wow. You know what, it's very rare for babies to be born in hospitals at that time, unless there's complications, so-

MM: [nods head] So, I understand.

LU: You don't find that nowadays though.

MM: Yes. I think there's quite a return to midwifery.

LU: Oh, really? Oh. Let me just fix these right here. Okay. It should be okay. So, what do you know about your family history, your father's side and your mother's side? Do you know where they came from in Japan and the reasons for them coming over?

MM: Yes. And no. I do know that both of my parents came from the Shiga-ken- the Shiga prefecture where the- I think it's near Hikone City. And I think that's north of Kyoto. That's about all I know about there, where they came from. However, I do know that my father came with his father to help build the railroad. And my father was I think, 14 at the time. And I didn't know this until I was well into my forties. When one day I said, "Dad, when did you come to Canada?" And that's when he told me that three months after they arrived, his father was killed in an accident. And I said, "What did you do?" And he said, "I did whatever I had to do to sustain myself." And he said, "I was a houseboy, I became a valet, I did odd jobs, I did everything I could."

LU: Oh wow.

MM: Yes. As for my mother's family, I don't know an awful lot about them except that they came as well from Hikone. And I do know that from a very young- from the time I was very, very young, I always seemed to have a grandfather. Which meant that he must have come over very early with his children. Of whom I- Three children of whom my mother was the eldest. So, I gather. Although I wasn't completely certain, I gather that my mother and father were married in Canada.

[loud background noises]

LU: Sorry, do you mind repeating that? [laughs]

MM: That's funny, isn't it? [laughs]

LU: Oh no.

MM: Is all that recording, you think?

LU: Yeah, it's probably picking it up.

MM: Oh, so you're going to delete all that, aren't you?

LU: I'm going to point this one away from the ceiling more, hopefully now it won't be so bad. Um, okay. Sorry, so you mentioned-

MM: Yes, where was I. That- From the time I was very young, I always had a grandfather. My mother's father. So, he must have come over very early with his three children, of whom my mother was the eldest. And then, there was another daughter and then a son, and which leads me to believe, although I never really did find out for sure, it leads me to believe that my parents were married here. As opposed to in Japan.

LU: Mm-hmm. Oh, wow.

MM: And there was no grandmother. She died. My mother's mother died at 43, presumably from cancer, although the word cancer in those days was never mentioned. Oddly enough, my own mother died at 44.

LU: Oh, wow. Now, did your grandmother pass away in Japan before?

MM: Yes. Mm-hmm.

LU: I wonder why then your grandfather decided to come to Canada with the three children.

[00:05]

MM: Well, I think it was likely because my mother was coming out to marry my father, I think probably it was an opportune time for the family to come. Because that's all there was in that family, was just the grandfather and the three children. I haven't heard of any other relatives.

LU: So, how old was your mother when she came over, then?

MM: Oh, she must have been 19 or 20 when she was married, so she must've been about that age when she came over.

LU: Oh, wow. So, I wonder if then your father might have written back home, and said-

MM: Likely.

LU: Said, "I'm here. I can't get back to Japan," or, "I'd like to stay here and," you know.

MM: Well, I think from the age of 14 to the time he was married, and he was 11 years my mother's senior- So, you know, he was not a- in and out of his 20s, I think he was pushing 30 perhaps when they got married. So, he likely had no desire to return. As a matter of fact, he didn't return until he was 65, I believe.

LU: Oh, wow. Just for a vacation or to visit family?

MM: Well, I think it was a little bit more to it than that. He had become a widower, so I think he had gone back to see if he could find someone to marry.

LU: Oh, my goodness, wow.

MM: And as it turned out, he did.

LU: Yeah? Oh, wow. So, your father, then, must have been in Canada for a little while before he got married. So, was he able to establish his own house or was he just renting? Did he ever mention that to you?

MM: Uh, no, but he did travel an awful lot. I know that he worked in Banff Springs Hotel. He also worked at the Lake Louise Hotel. And he told me that he was a valet there.

LU: Isn't that neat.

MM: I thought so. And in later years when I visited Lake Louise, Chateau Lake Louise, I remember thinking, "Oh yes, my father was here when he was young." That was a long time ago, I guess, eh. Mm-hm.

LU: So, how did his father pass away? You mentioned it was an accident, was it-

MM: That's all I got, was that he was killed in a railroad accident. He didn't seem to want to discuss it further. As for his parents, I don't know anything about the grandmother except that she was still my- my grandmother. My paternal grandmother was still in Japan when the war ended. Or, you know what, maybe it was just before the war ended. Because I remember he got a telegram saying his mother had died. And she must have been quite elderly then.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow.

MM: So, it's interesting that he never did return to see his mother.

LU: Yeah.

MM: Isn't it?

LU: Do you know when your parents were born? Or approximately when they were born?

MM: Oh, I can't give you- Oh dear. Perhaps I should've figured that one out. But certainly, in the 1800s for my father and early 1900s for my mother. Because she died in '47 at the age of 44, so.

LU: Oh, okay, so-

MM: 1903, I guess.

LU: Yeah. Oh, wow. And they- I guess they came over, then, in the 1920s, your mother. When she came over to Canada.

MM: Yes.

LU: And I guess your father in the 1910s, I guess.

MM: Oh, I suppose, yes.

LU: Yeah. Oh, wow.

MM: So, my sister- I'm the youngest of three. Now, my sister was born in 1925, and that must have been at least a couple years after they were married. Then I have a brother who was born in 1927, and then I was born in '28. By Japanese standards, I understand that that's a small family. [laughs]

LU: That is a very small family. From what I know.

MM: Compared to my husband's family, too, you know.

LU: Oh, wow. So, what else do you know about the family history on your father's side? Did they come from a farming family, or-?

MM: Um... I'm not sure. I just know that he was the eldest of, I think, three, he had a brother and a sister.

[00:10]

MM: And the brother died during the war. Apparently.

LU: World War I or World War II?

MM: No. World War II. Oh, excuse me, World War I, leaving a widow. And they were childless. And so, when he expressed a desire to find- [geese honking] [laughs]
Geese.

LU: There's a lot of noises today [laughing].

MM: When he expressed a desire to go back to Japan, we kidded him, I said, "Are you going to look for a wife, dad?" And he said, "Well." And I said, "There's some lovely lady here in Toronto." And he said, "No, no, no," he said. "Not my style." [laughs]. So, off he went to Japan and indeed, he visited his widowed sister-in-law. And asked if she would like to come to Canada. And apparently, she said no, she was very happy, she was where- She taught at a private girl's high school in Kyoto. And I think he had to do some fast talking. Anyways, when he got back, he said, "Mary, would you please write her and ask her if she would like to come out?" So, I wrote her several letters saying you know, that would make my father very happy, and eventually, she agreed. So, two years later, she came out and they were married here.

LU: Oh, wow. Took a few years.

MM: It did. But he'd been alone for ten years, anyways, you know, I'm sure he must have been very lonely. And so, she was- I think she was about 20 years his junior. But she- You know, he treated her very nicely and we were- we treated her very well. I think she was happy to have come. Must have been a bit of a cultural shock, though.

LU: Oh, I can imagine, cause she spent her entire life in Japan.

MM: Exactly. And she had no English whatsoever. And my Japanese was nonexistent, you know, by the time I was in my 20s, I'd lost it all. And my father had to be translator. And gradually, it comes back little by little until towards the end, we were able to converse with her. In very simple Japanese.

LU: So, your father knew English?

MM: Oh, he spoke very good English. Yes. And the reason being he was always amongst people. He was a valet, you know; he was a houseboy, and I think he felt the need to learn English. And when I was little, my understanding is that my mother and father first owned a confectionary store. Yes. I didn't know too much about that. All I do know is that they ended up in the dry-cleaning business in Kitsilano. And I spent all my years there, of course. All my Vancouver years there.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow. So, I wonder if your father ever took lessons for English or if he just picked it up, or-?

MM: Oh, I don't think so.

LU: Oh wow.

MM: I don't think they provided such a service, did they? At the time?

LU: I know some of the missionary ladies would help out- And the churches would help teach English.

MM: Well, you see, our missionary ladies at our church all spoke Japanese. The deaconesses both spoke excellent, beautiful Japanese.

LU: Oh wow.

MM: Yes.

LU: Isn't that fascinating?

MM: It is! You know, come to think of it. I just sort of accepted it at the time, but you know, in retrospect, that's wonderful, isn't it?

LU: Oh, yeah. Oh, wow, I've never heard that before.

MM: Well, I presume they must have spent some time in Japan. Training, perhaps, and learning the language. But, I mean, their accent was, you know, thinking back, it was beautiful.

LU: Yeah. Oh, wow.

MM: And not a moment of hesitation, you know, when greeting people. Whereas if I had to speak Japanese, I'd have to really think about it. How's yours?

LU: Uh, non-existent. [laughs] I don't even know if I'd be able to think about it to say anything. So, yeah, my father doesn't really speak very much for that. He knows, you know, the fun words, and karate words, and typical greetings but that's it. No, that's it. So, yeah.

MM: My stepmother died in 2003, so for the last seven years, there's been no need to speak Japanese, you know. So, again I've lost it.

LU: Yeah. Lately, I've been hearing a lot of it just from being located here. But I don't know, I don't have the ear for it. The Japanese ear. I can't break up the words and-

[00:15]

MM: Well, the syntax is so strange, so.

LU: Yeah.

MM: Mm-hmm. The verb comes at the beginning, and the subject at the end.

LU: It's very different. It's very different, but- So, did you go to Japanese language school when you were younger?

MM: Yes, I did, and I was- I was trying to think how many years it was- It must have been about two or three. I believe I was 12. Or I remember being at Japanese school when I was 12 and I remember having been there a couple years anyways. There were a lot of us there. I remember there was a wooden building down at- way down on First Avenue or something.

LU: And that was in Kitsilano?

MM: That was in Kitsilano, yes.

LU: Do you remember the names of the schools that you went to when you were younger?

MM: Oh, oh- The English schools?

LU: Yes.

MM: Yes. The very first school I went to was Henry Hudson. And I was thinking about that on the way here, and I think it must have been 1-5- grade 1-5- because in those days, there was no kindergarten.

LU: Oh, right.

MM: I went to kindergarten at the church. So, my preschool years were spent at the church. And then, grade six, I went to Lord Tennyson School. And that was quite

memorable for me because of one of the teachers. And then I went to Kitsilano Junior High, and it was when I was in grade eight that the war began. It was 1941.

LU: Oh, wow. So, grade eight, that was pretty young though. So, you mentioned that you had a memorable teacher.

MM: Oh, yes. In grade six. I think there were about six Japanese students in the class, and you know, we were all very bright. And in those days, unfortunately, they used to seat you according to rank. So, the first row, in the very first seat, was the person who stood first in the class. And then in subsequent order, of course. So, the Japanese people- the Japanese students always occupied the first five or six seats, desks, in that first row. And I remember on two occasions, the teacher would send the Japanese students out of the classroom. And then, you know, about ten minutes later, we would come back in, nobody knew what was happening. And, you know, we were quite young, we never guessed what might be happening. And the kids were told- The other children were told not to discuss it with us. And it wasn't until I left Vancouver, and I was corresponding with one of my friends from that grade six class that I discovered he had sent us out and said to the rest of the class, "Don't let the Japanese kids get ahead of you."

LU: Oh, my goodness.

MM: Can you imagine? I remember his name.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: I remember his face. And I was shocked, of course, you know, because I was quite a bit older then. And I don't know whether Roy told you, but I'm a teacher- I was a teacher. And I swore that, as soon as I became a teacher, I would write this man and let him know what I thought. And I was so disappointed: I heard he'd died. [laughs]. You know.

LU: Yeah.

MM: Imagine. And that really- It may not have been an overt case of discrimination, but it was discrimination.

LU: Mm-hm. Certainly. Yeah.

MM: But I must say, that was really one of the rare times when I encountered discrimination of any kind.

LU: Mm-hm. So, did you notice that in going to English school, did you always have at least five or six Japanese students?

MM: Oh yes, there was a lot of us in Kitsilano.

LU: Yeah. Oh, wow. How big were the class sizes? Do you remember?

MM: Oh, maybe 25- I think average 25-30.

LU: Mm-hm.

MM: So yeah, that's about one fifth of the class.

LU: Yeah, that's a large ratio.

MM: Mm-hm. But of course, it's- That kind of ratio is nothing compared to the ratios we have today of our immigrant children.

LU: Mm-hm. So, what do you remember about attending English school when you were younger, and activities you would play, or your friends that you would meet up with?

MM: Oh, they were very happy times. Very, very happy times. I remember one teacher's name at Henry Hudson, Ms. Mackenzie, who was particularly kind.

[00:20]

MM: And, then I don't remember anything until I got to grade six and this Mr. Harper. And then when I went to the junior high school, there was a very kind teacher who- when she learned that I was going to come to Toronto, told me then that high schools in Toronto were not called high schools. They were called collegiates. And that was my introduction to the collegiate.

LU: Oh, wow. What- Sorry, go ahead.

MM: I do remember being part of a cadet group in grade seven at junior high. And I remember also that since the war started, all the Japanese kids- cadets were asked to sit on the grass and watch. Now, that was kind of hurtful. Cause I loved it. But other than that, the school was a very happy time for me.

LU: Do you remember what some of your favourite activities were to do? Or subjects? Or-

MM: Well, we didn't start French until grade seven, but I loved French. I loved languages. I remember doing double-Dutch skipping a lot- an awful lot with my friends. Other than that, it's- I just know that it was a very happy childhood, you know, lots of things to do. We used to go swimming all summer. I mean, all summer.

LU: At the Kitsilano Beach?

MM: Yes. Guess you've heard that name often, have you?

LU: Yes, um, Mrs. Shinkoda mentioned it to me. Her married- or- maiden name was Shin. Comes from the big family- I don't know if you know them. The big Shin family, there was about ten children and they're from Kitsilano as well. Mm-hm.

LU: Really?

MM: Yeah. She's a bit older though. She was early 1920s, if not earlier. 1918 might've been when her older sister was born. But, yeah, she was from there and she had mentioned going to the Kitsilano Beach and everybody would lay their towels out on the logs.

MM: That's right.

LU: And there'd be somebody selling food.

MM: There was a little concession where fish and chips were sold. And the chips were a nickel, and I think the fish might have been 7 cents or something. Of course, we couldn't afford the extra, we always just could afford the chips. But it was a real treat to have that because you know, when you're swimming, you work up a real appetite. But we spent all our days there, and I remember two friends coming, and calling on my sister and me. And the four of us would walk down. And sometimes- Often, we'd take a little lunch with us, a little sandwich, and the chips, of course, would be a treat. And we'd stay there all day. I mean, literally all day. I'd go down at 8:30 and come home at 5.

LU: Oh, my goodness.

MM: And our parents would never worry.

LU: Just in time for dinner.

MM: Yep. Or my parents would sometimes- they'd stay there, they would bring a picnic supper, and they would come down and we would have a picnic supper. After which we'd- My father had a car, which is very nice. After which we'd drive over to the ice cream store.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: And in those days, you could have- They had cones, you see, with the double cone part. And they would pile three scoops on each side. I think that cost maybe seven cents or something. And they had the most incredible flavours. So, you could have six different flavours. And we'd sit there and feed our faces. That was a wonderful memory.

LU: That would take a while to eat.

MM: Oh, yeah. It also kept us quiet [laughs]. But that was really a lovely memory. And I had a great childhood.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh isn't that neat.

MM: So, you asked about other things that we did. I had a lot of friends, with whom I kept in touch during the war. But then, you know, as things happen, you start to lose touch after a while. And I don't know what these people are doing now but they're all my age, and so many of them have probably passed away.

LU: Were they non-Japanese or Japanese?

MM: Mm-hm.

LU: Non-Japanese. What was their reaction to the war, and, um-?

[00:25]

MM: You know, they never said.

LU: Never mentioned it.

MM: Never said.

LU: Did they ever wonder, you know, where are you now, and how is life there?

MM: Oh, they may have, but it was- Everything was sort of on the surface, you know. It's interesting now that you asked that, you know, that they never- We never did discuss it 'cause we were all very young. You know, you don't discuss war things when you're 12 or 13.

LU: You talk about school, or you know, the beach and-

MM: And of course, when we came up to Toronto, you know, it was so far away from Vancouver, that my friends wanted to know what life was like, what the kids were like, and so on.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, isn't that interesting.

MM: It really was interesting. I know that while we were still in Vancouver, many of my friends were taken from their homes and sent to the exhibition grounds, I believe, and they were made to sleep in the stalls, I believe. And I remember one day, visiting one of my friends and gagging at the smell, and wondering how they could stand it. It was really unfortunate that they had to do that. I know that, at the time, my father owned his dry-cleaning business, my parents owned a dry-cleaning business, and when the war started, and we all knew we were going to be relocated away from the coast, my mother had some real estate, which went for a song. And

my father sold his cleaning business to a Chinese fellow. But they had of course, there was the curfew as well, I guess you've heard about that, have you?

LU: Not very much.

MM: Well, I believe curfew was 8 pm, which was quite early. Which effectively precludes all evening activities for Japanese people and gatherings. My sister had a Chinese friend. And she was very friendly. And she used to come and visit, and she could only do that by wearing a badge that said, "I am Chinese."

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: Isn't that interesting? I remember at that time as well, one of my parents always stayed over in the store and the rest of us of course slept in the house a few doors away. And it was my mother's turn to sleep in the store, and she came running over one night, there was a little back lane, saying that her brother and his wife, their 7-month-old baby had died. But of course, there was a curfew, so we couldn't do anything in the evening, and she crept through the laneway at night to come and tell us. And by then, our car had also been confiscated, which meant that we had to walk everywhere or take the streetcar. So, my uncle lived on Fifth Avenue, and I was trying to think how many blocks away that was. It seemed like forever, but I was a kid, then, you know. It was probably five or six blocks away. In an area called Fairview. And that was where the Buddhist people lived. And that was where the Buddhist Church was- one of the Buddhist churches. And I remember we had to walk to the funeral because we had no car. And that's something that- It wasn't difficult for the young people, of course, you know. But how hard it must have been- That's very interesting, eh?

LU: Mm-hm.

MM: I suppose, one could understand a curfew being imposed.

LU: Well, 8 o'clock is very early, though. Yeah, very early. I don't know what I would do if we had a curfew at 8 o'clock.

MM: Oh, well. There was no TV. [laughs] We listened to the radio a lot.

LU: So, did your family have a radio?

MM: Oh, yes, we had a radio and a windup gramophone. That's how old I am.

LU: So, when the curfew was put into place and your car was confiscated, what- Did you have to turn in your radio as well?

[00:30]

MM: No. Because I think the understanding was there that everything would be either sold or disposed of in some form. I know, I have heard so many stories, Lisa, about people who have had to bury their China or silver or jewelry or something in hopes of returning to the family home and unearthing everything after the war.

LU: Oh wow.

MM: I've also heard of- Well, like my father having to sell everything for a song. But it's incredible that when we finally did come to Toronto, we seemed to have some Persian rugs that we had in Vancouver.

LU: Persian rugs?

MM: Yes. I remember we had a couple of small Persian scatter rugs. And they came with us. Furniture, of course, did not. But the silver did. I didn't understand that, but they brought the silver. No china, of course.

LU: Oh, wow. So, did your parents ever talk about them understanding that they would have to leave everything behind? Do you remember them-

MM: Oh, yes. I think they were all sort of resigned to it. I think all of the Japanese were resigned to their- having to leave the coast.

LU: Yeah. Did they ever express their worries about what life would be like in Toronto, or-?

MM: They may have. I don't ever recall hearing them. Being the youngest of three, I think I was sheltered a lot, too. My older siblings may have heard some kind of discussion to that effect, but I never once heard them bitterly complaining.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow.

MM: It's amazing that they sort of roll with the punches, you know, and were able to do what they did. Although I'm sure they felt an awful lot.

LU: Mm-hm. Do you remember any encounters with the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] or the police at the time?

MM: Only one. I was- we were all lined up to be fingerprinted. So, I guess, my prints are on record. I better not do anything [laughs].

LU: So, was that just all your fingers being fingerprinted or was that for the identification cards?

MM: I think it- I recall it was just the thumb.

LU: Oh. Do you remember carrying around an identification card, or-

MM: No.

LU: I guess you would've been too young for that.

MM: Have you heard others mentioned that they had to?

LU: No, no. They always mentioned about going in and getting a card, but they never said-

MM: Oh, well, it could be that my parents did. What-

LU: I think the age was 16 and older, and you had to have a card.

MM: Mm.

LU: Hm.

MM: Well, my sister would have been 16 at the time. And that was another interesting thing: the year prior to the war, my parents were preparing my sister to go to Japan, to stay for a while, and I suppose learn the Japanese ways, you know, the language and the culture, and so on. They even had a trunk packed with clothes. And of course, as soon as the war was announced, that plan had to be shelved. And I often wonder, you know, what would have happened if she had gone. She probably would never come back if she had gone prior to the war.

LU: Who would she have stayed with?

MM: Well, there must've been relatives. And again, it's my mother's side, so I don't know of any relatives there. I just know my father had a sister and a brother. And I do know that I have cousins.

LU: On your father's side?

MM: On my father's side.

LU: Mm-hm. Still in Japan, or-?

MM: I think so. Yes. The last I heard, one was the manager of a bank or something. He did well.

LU: Yeah. Oh jeez. So, I wonder, then, if your parents, in a way, were trying to prepare your family for the war.

[00:35]

LU: Because they must have heard a bit about it on the news or the radio.

MM: You think?

LU: I don't know. I don't know. Do you remember listening to any- or reading about in the newspapers? Or anything on the news, or hearing them talk about the war at all, or-

MM: [shaking head] No.

LU: No. Wow.

MM: I think I was just too young. You know, I did what I was told and went where I was told. And we ended up here. Yeah. But that was an interesting thing, too, you know, to come to Toronto and not go to the interior B.C. like my friends did. I said goodbye to so many of them. And that there was still quite a few left to say goodbye when we left, but- My father said that it was- He didn't want us to lose any of our education. He wanted there to be a steady transition from Vancouver to Toronto. And so, he arranged for us to- I think there were three families that came out at the time. And it was a four-day, five-night or five-day, four-night terrible trip on the train. Yes, it was just unbearable. For me. You know. Other people seemed to not mind it, but I didn't enjoy it at all. And when we got here- Here is another thing, you know, nobody- Perhaps they were trying to spare the children, I don't know, but, really, nobody told us what to expect when we got here. But when we did, turns out my mother had a cousin who lived here. And one of my father's best friends also lived here. So, we were greeted at the train station by both these people, which was very nice.

LU: So, did you have a house set up already in Toronto that you were going to?

MM: No, it was arranged that we would stay at a hotel for four days, I believe, during which time, my father's friend took him around and arranged for us to rent a flat. It was the upstairs to a house, quite close to the intersection of College and at the University. And I believe there were- It was a living room, and a little anteroom which we used as a kitchen, and a bedroom. Now, there're three children. So, my sister and I shared a bed, while my brother always ended up on the sofa. So, we weren't there very long before my father announced that he had bought a house. And, so, in- It might have been even less than a year having lapsed before we had moved into a house on Collier Street. And that was great because it was still within walking distance to Jarvis Collegiate, where I went for the five years.

LU: Oh wow. I heard that at that time that Japanese people were not allowed to purchase property. But I guess... Maybe it was okay at that point. Or maybe it was after the war that they weren't allowed to purchase property? I can't-

MM: Oh, where did you hear that?

LU: Somebody had mentioned it before in one of their interviews, but I can't-

MM: Perhaps it was difficult to rent because people were so suspicious. Well, you know, people in Toronto really had not been exposed to Japanese people as a group. And so, they looked upon you with huge suspicion, of course. You know, you were here to do something terrible. But this good friend of my father was married to a Scottish lady. Now, that may have had some bearing, that she may have accompanied them. Anyways, we bought a beautiful- Dad bought a beautiful old house on Collier Street. It had five bedrooms. Two of them he added. One of which I took as mine. And a lovely living room and a dining room- a complete dining room and a huge kitchen. And that must have been around '43. And Dad told me in later years that I think he paid 4,200 for the house.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: Well, that was, you know, back in '42, so.

LU: That was huge.

[00:40]

LU: Do you remember it coming already fully furnished or-?

MM: No. And that was another thing- excuse me- that when we moved into this flat, we suddenly had two beds and a sofa and a couple of side chairs and a little wooden table off which we had our meals. And we didn't have a sink. All our water came from the bathroom, from the tub, and the basin. Yeah. We had a- It was a two-burner little stove of some sort and my mother cooked on that. Of course, when we moved into the house, we had a gas stove and an ice box.

LU: An ice box?

MM: An ice box. I remember the first few years that we had that, this fellow used to come down the street in his truck and bring in a huge block of ice and give us a little chips to melt in our mouths. That was a real treat. Funny, things you remember, right?

LU: Yeah, yeah. Usually doesn't come until after you begin thinking about everything, but- So, the bathroom, when you're renting the flat, was it a shared bathroom?

MM: It probably was, you know that was an old house. And I'm sure they didn't have powder room or anything downstairs, I think everybody- And it was a family of five, I believe, living downstairs. A German family.

LU: Oh. Who owned the house?

MM: The German lady.

LU: The German lady did. Hm. Oh, wow. Did any other Japanese live in the area? Did you ever see anybody else?

MM: Oh, we saw a lot of people but not because they lived in the area. Our home very quickly became central station for all the young Japanese who arrived in Toronto. Our home in the flat and our home in the house, as well. And every Sunday, there would be all kinds of young men, usually, young fellows, who would come and

ask my father all kinds of questions about how to find work and how to get around the city, and so on. And I remember every Sunday, there was a huge plate of donuts and cookies, and I've forgotten what it was- what there was to drink. It was likely tea or something. But I remember every Sunday, there was this huge tray of yummys put out for these young people. And I recall later, too, Roy's brother-in-law Kobe, Kobe Hayashi, saying he remembers coming to the house when he first arrived.

LU: Oh, wow. Isn't that neat.

MM: It really was. And I didn't think too much about them. I thought it was a nuisance having all these people traipsing up and down the stairs. But in retrospect, what a great service that was.

LU: Oh, yeah. Your father must have helped out the community a lot.

MM: I think so. Mm-hm.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: My mother was a very social person, too.

LU: So, where was your father working when he first came to Toronto?

MM: He worked for various cleaning stores. He would find jobs here and there. And then, eventually, he and his friend, with whom he'd travelled across Canada, bought a cleaning establishment.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: I think I was- I may have been 16 at the time.

LU: And was your mother working at all, or-?

MM: Mm-hm. My mother was working too. You know, she must have been working as a- She was a dressmaker. So, she must have been working as an alterationist or a dressmaker or something along that line. But she too went out every morning.

LU: Oh, wow. And your older sister and brother, were they going to high school as well?

MM: Yes. Mm-hm. We all went to the same place. Jarvis Collegiate.

LU: What was it like going to Jarvis?

MM: It was wonderful. I loved every minute of it. I was actively involved in the sports program and on the student council and so on. And you know what, little by little, more Japanese students came, and it was a good school. Mm-hm.

LU: Did you find that anybody had a hard time with you attending the school?

MM: I don't think so.

LU: No?

MM: No.

[00:45]

MM: In regard to discrimination, you mean? No. I don't recall.

LU: And everybody being pretty welcoming about it, or-?

MM: I think so. There were a lot of Chinese students there, and we had a lot of Chinese friends.

LU: Oh, wow. How come your family never went to the internment camps and skipped over it?

MM: Well, I think it's because my father felt very strongly about the education aspect of it and he wanted us to continue. And as it turned out, people who did go to the internment camps did have their own schools, didn't they?

LU: But not until afterwards, a year- a year after, I believe.

MM: Oh, is that right?

LU: Yeah.

MM: Well, I corresponded with a lot of my friends. And they all seemed to be having a wonderful time, they would send me these wonderful pictures, you know. Don't know where they are now, or I would've brought them, but wonderful pictures of groups of kids having a great time at a picnic.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: And yet, I never felt that I missed that at all, you know. And I suppose you know that people went to these internment camps according to their religion. You didn't know that? Well, my husband's family went to Sandon, as did my aunt. Her family went because they were Buddhist. Whereas all my friends, since we were all going to the Anglican Church, they all went to- I believe it was Tashme where the minister was.

LU: Oh.

MM: I suppose if I had gone, I probably would have gone to Tashme or some similar place.

LU: Mm-hm. Yeah. No, I remember somebody mentioning- It might've been Roy- mentioning to me that the Buddhist priests went to one place and the other priests went to the other place. And that usually people would go with them because-

MM: I think it was comforting, you know, to- For the older folk, anyway.

LU: Mm-hm. But I never thought that everybody might be going along with them. I thought maybe, you know, just a couple families would follow along, but- Yeah, I never really gave it that much thought.

MM: It's understandable though, isn't it? And when we came to Toronto, we lived quite close- not close to, it was within walking distance to the Art Gallery, behind which was the Grange, behind which was St. George's Church. St. George the martyr. And our family was welcomed there. Very, very nice man, who immediately gave my 16-year-old sister a job during the summer, caring for his children at their cottage, which I thought was wonderful. Got her out of my hair too [laughs]. And I joined the choir there. And went there quite regularly, until we moved. And then, of course, it was difficult to go all that distance. What did I do, did I go to church? No-

LU: No? After you moved?

MM: No, I don't think so. Not until another Japanese Anglican church was established downtown somewhere. And out of the four monthly services, one of them would be in Japanese. Which I thought was wonderful, to cater to those who didn't speak English. But I- In going there, I noticed that they went to all four of them anyways, whether they understood or not. You know, I think they felt the need to be in church.

LU: Mm-hm, mm-hm. To stay involved?

MM: Yes, I think so. You know, they had their after church meetings and lunches and so on, they would share dessert and coffee, and so on. I never stayed, of course. But I

was married at St. George in 1951. And six months later, the church burned down. I said to my husband, "That's kind of prophetic, isn't it?" [laughs]

LU: How did it burn down?

MM: I have no idea. Well, it didn't completely burn down but it was a terrible fire.

LU: Part of it. Yeah. So, I guess they rebuilt it.

MM: Yes they did.

LU: Reconstructed?

MM: Yeah [laughs]. And I remember hearing that the services would be held in the parish hall, and I thought, "Isn't that funny?" Imagine holding church services in the parish hall. People always blamed us, you know [laughs].

[00:50]

LU: It was a lovely old church. Oh, that was so funny.

LU: I guess then your wedding photos would be one of a kind. [laughing]

MM: I suppose! Now that you mention it. [laughing]

LU: The originals. Oh wow.

MM: Yeah. Now my mother, I should tell you, died in '47. When she was 42, she collapsed with a hemorrhage. Cerebral hemorrhage. Now, this is back in 1945. Attime during which doctors really didn't know what to do for stroke patients. We were told to take her home and care for her. Today, you know, they say, "These are three signs of a stroke and if you get to the hospital within the first three hours, the victim- not the victim- the patient can be saved." Not so back in the 40s. And so, she had a massive stroke. Paralyzing down her right side, and of course affecting the left side of her brain which meant she couldn't use her vocal cords. She couldn't make sounds, make words. There was nothing wrong with her mind, however, which made her extremely frustrated, since she couldn't express herself. And so she would try to pick out Japanese words out of a Japanese book and show them to my father. He would try to understand what she was saying, but- It must have been terrible.. Anyways, she eventually got the use of her legs back. And we did walk her back and forth. And you know, I wonder now why it never occurred to us to get her a wheelchair. Of course, it was- probably it was never mentioned- suggested to us. But anyway, she was a very social person. Didn't want anybody to see her in this state, and as a result, nobody did. Not even my sister.

LU: Oh wow.

MM: Yeah, isn't that- Anyways, she died, in bed, on a day when we were all home. Well, the rest of us were home, my sister had been married- got married in the meantime. I was downstairs and doing the laundry and my father came, called me upstairs. And the doctor came, and he said- He wasn't sure what she died of. Likely a heart attack, he said.

LU: Oh, wow. Isn't that something.

MM: Mm-hm. Anyways, I- what was I? 1947, I was 19. But I had cared for her.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow. I guess, it's hard to think of it back that way with the differences in medical technology.

MM: Oh, yes. You know, today, I know of at least two people who have had strokes and who are recovering extremely well.

LU: Oh, wow. I wonder-

MM: Going to therapy, you know, a couple of times a week. And I suppose there are cases where some are more extreme than others, but this one person who lives in our condo has a physiotherapist who comes to his place twice a week. He goes out for therapy twice a week. And he uses a cane- Or, when he's tired, he uses a wheelchair. Now, he has lost the use of one arm, but he does have his voice and he's now using a voice-activated computer. Isn't that great?

LU: Oh, isn't that neat?

MM: Isn't that wonderful? The things that can be done. I have a computer that can read my work out loud.

LU: Oh, really?

MM: Yes!

LU: Oh. I've never se- People talk about them, but I've never actually seen or used them.

MM: Yeah, I don't use that function, but it's there. I tried it once. And it read what I had written in a sort of a robotic voice, but- Isn't that incredible?

LU: I should see if my laptop has that. That would be neat.

MM: It probably does. I have an Apple. A MacBook Pro, so it has a lot of wonderful functions and apps.

[00:55]

LU: Oh, wow, I'll have to check.

MM: Wouldn't it be great if they could read you a story out loud? Say, that's what I'll do, I'll go get some books- online books read.

LU: Yeah, and it can read out loud too. Or at least that's what I, um- typing up all my thesis and essays then it can read it back to me and I can catch all my grammar mistakes.

MM: There you go. Spell checks are usually quite worthless, you know. Because a lot of them are either British or American, they're certainly not Canadian.

LU: Yes, that's right. It's frustrating.

MM: Now, I seem to have been giving you my life story here, Lisa, in bits and pieces. And jumping from A to E instead of going in logical order.

LU: That's perfect. That's quite alright, that's quite alright. Well, when we're editing the videos for future use, anyways, it's gonna be broken up into tiny segments, so having it jump around is really not a big deal at all. So, yeah.

MM: Well, I have to tell you that as a teenager in Toronto I really had a good time. And as more Japanese young people came, we established a teen club. Which met at the Grange. Which is why I mentioned the Grange. Do you the Grange, behind the AGO? Very old building, which is now accessed through the art gallery. But we had two older Niseis chaperoning us. And seems to me we had cookies and donuts or something like that. And we used to have, I think, a lot of tea dances. Anyways, we

used to dance all afternoon and party. It was a lot of fun. Met a lot of wonderful people there.

LU: And was it mostly just for the Japanese coming over?

MM: It was Japa- It was a Japanese Teen Club. We all probably knew each other from school anyways but we met a lot of other new people as well from other areas of Toronto. It was fun.

LU: Oh, wow. And how often would the teen club get together?

MM: Probably once or twice a month, I know it wasn't every weekend. But we all looked forward to it, it was a really good time. I remember seeing Roy there in uniform one day. And I think to myself, "Aha." [laughing]

LU: Would you have to buy tickets to get in?

MM: No. No, no. Everybody was welcome. And I remember these two older Niseis- I remember thinking of them as ancient, of course, they were probably in their 20s. And they would just stand, arms akimbo like this, all folded [folds arms], and just watch the young ones bouncing around and having a good time. But it was- it was good.

LU: Oh, wow. So, who organized that?

MM: Now, that I couldn't tell you. I just know that we were there and having a good time- And we also used to go to Centre Island on picnics. And we'd all take our bikes, we'd all ride from [unclear] to the ferry, take our bikes across on the ferry, and ride around, and we'd all have picnic lunch. I think we played baseball, or some game. But we were all, say, 16- 15, 16, 17.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: It was wonderful. Yeah, so coming to Toronto was- You know, I always say to Roy, "Hm, had I stayed in Vancouver, I might have married a fisherman." And he always says, "You might have been richer." [laughing]

LU: So, what other activities do you remember about your time spent in Toronto, when you were in high school still? When you weren't getting together with the Japan club- would you- or Japanese Club- would you hang out with your non-Japanese friends, or on weekends, or-?

MM: No. Not an awful lot. I was very active in the school program, of course, but outside of that, I was- I think I was busy. I was always doing something at home. And when my mother became ill, of course, we became that much busier, you know. I couldn't do anything.

LU: Mm-hm. Must have been a lot of chores to do, then.

MM: Oh, yeah, there's always- I had to cook. I was chief cook and bottlewasher.

LU: Oh, wow. So, did you grow a little garden at the house too to help with the vegetables, or-?

MM: No. The garden was very small, and it was very shady, and no one really had a green thumb. But I do remember in Vancouver, there was a little plot of land behind the store. And my oji-san used to come, my grandfather, he'd walk over from his house, where he had his own garden, and he'd tend our garden.

[01:00]

MM: And I remember him growing something called Fuki. Which was a- Have you heard of it? I don't know the English term for it, but it was a wonderful green vegetable. And you just sort of lopped it off at the base and my mom used to cut up into short lengths and we'd boil it in shoyu and soya sauce, and all that sugar, and my, it was good.

LU: Oh, really?

MM: Mm-hm.

LU: Oh, and it was green.

MM: Mm-hm. My family was not, you know- They didn't have green thumbs at all. And as it turned out, neither do I, but...

LU: So, you did all the cooking?

MM: Pretty well.

LU: And did you originally learn that from your mother then, I guess?

MM: I know- When I was 12, I was cooking meals. Because we lived in- behind the store for the better part, until we moved to the house a few doors down, but I would come home, my parents would still be working at the front. My mother doing the alternations and my father pressing and you know, ironing, and so on, or delivering or picking up clothes. And so, it was left to me to start the rice, of course, 'cause that was the staple. Or to be down the street to buy tofu from the tofu place. Or to be down the street and buy some grains, perhaps. And while I didn't make the main part of the meal, I always got a meal started, from the age of 12.

LU: Oh wow.

MM: Yes. So, no, I'm very familiar with the kitchen and that's why to this day, I really dislike cooking.

LU: And so, when you picked up the tofu, was there a tofu factory down a couple of houses or was it-?

MM: No. It was a place where- I don't know whether this lady made tofu or not, because we used to call her the tofu-ya, you know, which is the tofu place. And you'd get these great blocks. [measures out size with hands]

LU: Oh wow.

MM: Mm-hm. For 10 cents. Or maybe five cents. You know, it was very cheap in those days. And that would feed a family of five, you know. And so, we'd cut it up into blocks and grate the ginger and get the soya sauce out. And that was really good.

LU: Just gonna switch this one here. [camera noises] There we go. So, you mentioned you would grate the ginger? For the tofu? And shoyu, and-?

MM: Yes. When you grate the ginger, it becomes sort of a blobby mess. I don't grate it anymore; I just chop it up very fine when I use it myself. But then you pour- You sprinkle that on the tofu and then you put some shoyu on it and it's really, very refreshing.

LU: Oh. I've never thought of that, ever.

MM: Oh, you know, Caucasian people look at that, they think, "Ugh." [laughs]

LU: Well, I love tofu, I eat it probably all day, every day if I could, but-

MM: It's so good for you. I feel so pious when I eat tofu, thinking I'm eating pure protein. Which is so good for you.

LU: Mm-hm, yeah. Usually, I put a little bit of sprinkles on top and that's it, but.

MM: What kind of sprinkles?

LU: Like the little rice sprinkles, the sesame and seaweed flakes and yeah.

MM: Oh, yes, yes, yeah. That's good, though, isn't it?

LU: Oh, yeah. My favourite.

MM: Do you put it on rice too?

LU: Oh, yes.

MM: Oh, yeah [laughing].

LU: Oh, yes, can't have rice without it. But- Have you heard about our cookbook that the Heritage committee has put together? And they're actually gonna publish it, and it should be available hopefully for Christmastime.

MM: Oh, I think I contributed something to it.

LU: Yeah. So, I wanted to ask- We were looking for video clips or, you know, memories of what you remember about family gatherings, or, you know, the smell of cooking, what does it remind you of-

MM: Well, family gatherings, of which we had many- Our house, again, in Vancouver, was the place where the whole family came- My mother's whole family, now. And my aunt and uncle had two children, so that's four. And there were five of us, that's nine.

[01:05]

MM: And my grandfather, that's ten, cause he came, always. And my uncle, who- I think he had just got married, so that's eleven. And my mother would cook turkey dinner for everybody. Or, New Years, everybody would come to the house. And my husband always says how fortunate I was as a kid. I really had a nice childhood. Every- Practically every Sunday during the summer, the cleaner's association would all go on picnics. And somebody would select a spot, sometimes it would be White Rock, another time it would be Cultus Lake, another time it would be Harrison Hot Springs. And I guess the mothers- my mother did- always got up wake up early in the morning, would make sushi. And I know- I remember fanning the rice for her because she said the vinegar solution had to go in when the rice was hot. And I remember fanning and fanning. And there she was, blowing on her hands while she was making it. And I think, "My gosh, what a lot of work that was to go on a picnic." And somebody always brought a huge watermelon, which was then cut up and- Maybe two or three watermelons, which were then cut up and divided among the families. And that was the picnic part. And when the picnic was over, and we'd all gone swimming, and you know, gorged ourselves and so on, had a great time, and the parents, I suppose, had sat around chit chatting, we all ended up at the Chinese restaurant having a Chinese dinner. So, you know, those were wonderful memories. And I remember- Oh yes, I do remember. All those wonderful places to swim and climb. You know- B.C. is such a beautiful place for such activities. So is Ontario, but it was a wonderful childhood. Oh, and every once in a while, my father would organize

a trip to Seattle. And there'd be- We'd have a little cavalcade of cars going to Seattle. And we'd be picked out of our beds about 5 o'clock, in our pajamas. And the first place we stopped at for gas, we'd all change into clothes. And we'd be asleep in the backseat. I don't know how long it takes to drive to Seattle, but it isn't that far, is it?

LU: I don't know.

MM: And here we are, up at the crack of dawn, and oh, that was fun. We used to stay at a hotel called- NP, or P and N, or something. I just remember the letters, N & P. And we used to have to a great time, go shopping. And come home with chocolate bars which were that size, which you know, in my little eyes, that was huge. And I think they were fifteen cents, or something. And I remember wondering if I could smuggle two or three bags across the border. As if it mattered, you know. Oh, those were good times.

LU: So, who would travel with you to Seattle?

MM: All the other- The cleaning establishment people. They were all Japanese. And there were quite a few of them. And there was the West End dry-cleaners association, in which my father was president. And so, the main plant where all the clothes went to be cleaned was very close to our house. And I spent quite a bit of time there going through buttons and things. He'd say, "Don't take any, Mary. You know, because some lady may have been missing a button from her dress." But after a couple of years, he'd say, "Okay, you can have this batch." It was lots of fun. So, as you see, Lisa, from what I tell you, I did have a wonderful childhood. I don't remember an awful lot, but I know it was great.

LU: Yeah, oh, wow. No, lots of memories, though. You do have lots. So, the dry-cleaning business, though, they would send the clothes away to be cleaned at the-?

MM: Mm-hm. They would come back cleaned, and my father would finish them off, because I know we had a huge pressing machine at the front of the store. And we were on Fourth Avenue- Do you know Vancouver at all? Fourth Avenue is one of the main streets, where the streetcar used to rumble by all the time.

[01:10]

MM: And we had a double door, so we had two numbers, 1758, 1760. And glass on one side, glass on the other. My father behind one side and my mother behind the other with her industrial sewing machine. And- My mother's English wasn't all that good. My father's was pretty good, I mean I could hear him talking to the customers. Until one day, my sister and I were sitting in the living room. And I heard him saying, "Which one isn't it?" A customer had come in and asked for her dress to be brought down from the rack above from where they were being stored. He said, not, "Which one is it?" but "Which one isn't it?" And we still laugh about that. But his English was very good. And, you know, he and I always conversed in English.

[rumbling sounds overhead]

LU: You know, when we had that earthquake, I was sitting here with Mickey Matsubayashi, and we're doing an interview, and all of a sudden, everything started shaking. And we thought they were doing the roof repairs already. And I'm sitting there, going, "Wow, they're really going at that roof," you know. Everything was shaking, so just- Every time they walk over my ceiling, now, reminds of me of that.

MM: I was driving Roy home from one of the eye surgeries. I was parked at the intersection and the car started to rock sideways, and I said, "Roy, oh, what's that?" And he said, "I don't think it's the car." And the light changed, and I moved on, went to the next light, and of course nothing happened, I said, "Oh, I bet that was an earthquake." And indeed, it was. But it was quite a big one, wasn't it?

LU: Yeah, mm-hm. Five-something.

MM: Yeah, well, we have friends in Ottawa, whom I emailed right away, because the epicenter was just north of Ottawa City. You remember that? She said dishes were broken.

LU: Oh no.

MM: Not a great deal of damage, but still. I guess we were lucky.

LU: Mm-hm. No. With- At our house, in our China cabinet, all the nice dishes, they're all stacked on top of each other cause we have so many and it's such a small cabinet, but some of them are leaning upwards to display. And I just think about that now, if there was ever a rumble, those would be gone.

MM: Are they very good dishes?

LU: They're my mother's dishes, so they mean a lot to her, but we never use them.
[laughs]

MM: I know, we all have those. Well, you know, we- Roy and I moved, years ago, we moved from a 4-bedroom house to the condo that we're in now. And it was only a three and half block move. The downsizing was incredible. We invited all the kids home and said, "Take what you want." They said, "No thanks. We don't have room."

LU: Yeah. Nobody has room anymore.

MM: So, I had a huge garage sale and of course, a lot of it went to Goodwill, Salvation Army.

LU: Oh, wow. Yeah. It's fun to move, but it's very hard. It's a lot of work. I like it, though. I don't mind it.

MM: I think everyone should move once every 10-15 years to get rid of the accumulated junk.

LU: Mm-hm. Just to declutter a little bit. Yeah.

[rumbling overhead]

MM: You know, I've been sitting here watching flocks of geese fly by, too.

LU: Yeah? I can see them in the reflection of my glasses from the sides.

MM: Can you?

LU: I just see dark shadows. Sometimes if I'm sitting here on my computer, it scares me, but yeah. So, I usually just take them off, but- So, I lost track of where we were.

MM: Okay, so, I told you about my childhood and the wonderful picnics we went on.

LU: Oh, we were talking about food.

MM: Oh, yes, that's right, the cookbook.

LU: Yeah. So, are there- When you're cooking, or- Are there any certain smells that you really remember when you were growing up? Or do you have any stories of when you were trying to cook and if you ever burnt anything by accident, or- Any cooking stories?

MM: Oh, yes, well, my aversion to cooking [laughing]. The one thing- Perhaps it's not a smell, so much as a vivid recollection, but shortly after my mother died, my father said he would take a turn at cooking. I said, "Okay, Dad." And he got some cabbage, and some hamburger meat. And some onions and a few other things. And he said, "I'll put them in a bit at a time." In Japanese, that's "junjun". You know. This-

LU: "Junjun"?

[01:15]

MM: "Junjun" means one at a time, you know, this, and then this, and then this next. In sequence. And I remember we all ended up calling it "junjun". And I mentioned it to my husband's family one day, it's that "junjun". "What's that?" But that's what I remember. It's the throwing in of bits and pieces of things after the cabbage and the meat went in. I tried making it for Roy, one day, I don't think it was too successful. He said, "This must have been one of your childhood dishes." [laughing] No, I don't have any strong recollections.

LU: Was your father making- It sounds like a cabbage roll or a sloppy.

MM: Yeah, it was in a frying pan.

LU: Oh, isn't that neat, though.

MM: Yeah, I don't think I'll ever forget that. Yeah. Oh, and then every Sunday- I do remember, every Sunday my father used to make pancakes.

LU: Pancakes.

MM: Yeah. And he'd call out, "They're ready!" And we'd all charge into the kitchen and sit down. Oh my, they were good. But I didn't know until I was quite a bit older that in Vancouver you didn't have maple syrup, you had corn syrup with your pancakes. They didn't grow any maple trees there. As a result, there was no maple syrup. And I remember in my later years, taking maple syrup into B.C. for some of my friends who by then said, "Oh, well, we can get it anywhere." But yeah, I do remember that.

LU: Oh wow.

MM: Great stacks of them too, you know. When you're a kid you can eat a lot.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow, I do love pancakes.

MM: Yep. Every once in a while, we have them at home now, and it brings back memories of the huge stack that my father used to give each of us. He got very good at that, too, flipping them in the air.

LU: Oh, my. So, on Sundays, then, would you also go to church?

MM: Yes, we all went to church. We all went to church, and the minister there was Reverend Gordon Nakayama, whose daughter is Joy Kogawa and whose son is now a minister canon Timothy Nakayama. And his- Mrs. Nakayama, played the piano. And my sister and I had piano lessons from the time we were very young, so I've been- I've played the piano for many years. And I used to want to take over for Mrs.

Nakayama because she wasn't playing the right notes. But of course, I was just a kid. But yes, we went to church every Sunday, I was presumably baptized there as a baby. I remember the Christening, and I was twelve or something. And I remember it very well, the deaconesses there, who spoke excellent Japanese. I remember the old church; it was a wooden frame church. And I remember the steep stairs that we all had to climb to get into the church. And I think about it now, I wonder about the poor old people who couldn't do the stairs. I remember the films that we saw there as children. I don't remember what kind of films they were. I remember the Japanese films that we saw for the older people, and I didn't understand what was happening except I remember crying a lot because the actresses were crying. I remember thinking, "It must be sad. I'll cry." I believe we- The Church also had picnics. Although I don't remember going to them, but I remember there were picnics. I don't remember too many details. But that was the central hub for the Anglicans in the Kitsilano district.

LU: Mm-hmm. Oh, wow.

MM: You know, the Moritsugus, and the Takahashis, and the Takashimas, and the other names that I remember, they all went to church together, and we all grew up together. So, people like Frank Moritsugu, I've known practically all my life.

LU: Oh, really?

MM: Yeah. And his two sisters.

LU: Oh, wow. So, you mentioned though that there were a couple other families that came to Toronto with you? Do you remember who they were?

MM: Yes. One was Mr. & Mrs. Hagino and their family. And Mr. & Mrs. Nikaido and their family.

[01:20]

MM: And the Haginos- Mr. Hagino was a very good friend of my father. And it was with him that he bought his first store. Mr. Hagino and my father were partners.

LU: Oh, wow. And how did your father become president of the dry cleaning association in Vancouver?

MM: I have no idea. I just know that he was always, you know- Maybe it was because he was older, I don't know.

LU: Maybe. Do you know-

MM: He was a very clever man. Very clever with money. I remember that. Also, very tight at times, too, but I suppose that's why he was clever with money.

LU: Do you remember if the Depression years ever-

MM: You know, people always say to me, "You were born during the Depression years. What do you remember?" Nothing. So, we were- I suppose we were either sheltered or things weren't too bad. Knowing my father, it was likely things weren't too bad. I remember we were very comfortable as children. We never lacked for anything, except for the nickel going to the beach [laughs]. He'd say, "That's it for today."

LU: What did you do for toys as well, and did you ever play cards or jacks or-?

MM: Oh, jacks. And Allies.

LU: Allies?

MM: Marbles.

LU: Oh, marbles.

MM: Oh yes, my brother and I used to play outside, with jacks- jacks, all the time. I got very good at that. And my- Outside our property on Fourth Avenue, there was an empty lot, and on the center lot there was a huge boulder. With sort of stepping grooves on it, you know. So, my brother and I would clamber up and jump off the other side. And nearby was a tree that we climbed until it got too big for us to climb, but nobody ever worried. You know, we'd be gone for hours. We also had- We always had a dog, a German shepherd. Which was partly a guard dog for the store. Both dogs were named Rex. One after the other. And oh, they were awful dogs, they would run all over the place and my father would say "He's going to eventually be ran over by a streetcar". But you'd call, stand on the gate, and say, "Rex!" and he would always come back.

LU: Oh wow.

MM: So, it was our job to care for the dog. And we didn't mind, you know, it was fun.

LU: Mm-hm. So, would the dog stay at the house mostly or at the store?

MM: No, no. No- During the night, in the store. But otherwise, outside.

LU: Oh, okay.

MM: You know, in those days, it was okay to let your dog run loose. Not today, but-

LU: Did your father have any problems with the store, or you know, the community in Kitsilano not wanting him to be running the store? Or every- Cause I know in some places in Vancouver there was often vandalism and-

MM: No, there was never any vandalism. We were robbed once, which was why we got the dog in the first place, and which is why someone stayed over in the store every night with the dog. But I can't remember what was taken. Likely money.

Because, you know, probably people didn't want clothing. But that was the only occasion that I remember of anything ever happening to the store or in the store.

LU: Oh, wow. I think you mentioned before that, when your mother was working in the store, she would often- If there was too much money in the till- in the cash register, she would take a little bit out and put it in her apron?

MM: No.

LU: No?

MM: No. That must be somebody else.

LU: Who told me that, then? Oh, jeez. I don't know very many people whose parents owned a store, I'm trying to-

MM: Well, now, interestingly enough, my aunt and uncle had a candy shop.

Downtown somewhere. Cause I know we couldn't walk to it, we had to be taken by car. And my aunt, who lived to be 100, and who died four years ago at the age of 100- You know, when her sister died at 40 wonder. But then, my grandfather, their father, lived to be 96, so there is longevity there.

[01:25]

MM: And my uncle lived to be 90. Anyways, my aunt and uncle had a candy shop. And, till almost the day she died, she would tease me about when I used to come in, she'd say, "Mary, you'd press your little nose up against the glass. And I'd say to you, 'You can have any candy that you want.'" And she said, "It took you forever to select one." Because there was an overchoice. And she said, "Your little nose would be dragging from one end of the case to the other. Couldn't make up your mind." Until my father probably said, "Hurry up." [laughing] Now, I don't remember that, but that's the story that she told me.

LU: Do you remember the types of candy that they had in the store?

MM: No, but I remember the types of candies that were at the store down the street from our store. And oddly enough, we used to call it the matchi-ya because I think that's where we got the matches, you see- don't know what we used the matches for, but- Cigarettes and matches, I think, were sold there. But they had candies, five for a penny, Lisa. Six for a penny, ten for five cents. And this sort of thing. And you'd get a little paper bag. And you wouldn't go for quality, you'd go for quantity at that age. And so, you'd get something you didn't really care for, but you got six of them for a penny, so you'd say, "Six of those, four of these." And it lasted you a whole day. Now, that was really a lot of fun. And I remember my mother, I've told you before, she was a very social person, when people would come in- salespeople would come in, Dad was always too busy. She always dealt with them. And I remember Roy's brother, older brother, who worked for Woodwards, which was a store in Vancouver. And he was a traveling salesman.

LU: It was Woodwards?

MM: Yes. I believe so. Either Woodwards or Taylor Spencer. I think it was Woodwards. And he would come with his little brown case, and he'd open it up and he'd have all these marvelous things inside, and I'd stand there and watch. And he'd offer my mother a cigarette. And she would accept one. Now, she didn't inhale or anything, she just made motions. Every once in a while, she'd say, "Oh, so and so is coming today, Mary would you run down and get me some cigarettes?" And you'd get a little package of five, Lisa. I don't recall how much they were, but you know, she might smoke one and offer the rest. But she was the only Japanese mother I knew who even picked up a cigarette. Also, she was [noises overhead]- she was very fashion conscious and wore heels where all my other friends had mothers who wore Oxfords.

LU: Oxfords?

MM: Clunky shoes.

LU: Oh.

MM: She went- Every week, she went to the hairdresser and had her hair done. And in those days, it was called a Marcel, and it was a series of waves, you know, running up and down your back, back of your head. And it looked lovely. She would have that done every- [outside noises]

LU: I think it's just the train.

MM: Oh, is it? Is there a train track here?

LU: Yeah, there's one right behind of us.

MM: Oh, is there? Anyways, she'd have her done. And I remember thinking, my other friends, their mothers all had bobs, you know- buns at the backs of their heads. So, my mother stood out, cause she also wore makeup. She wore lipstick. Which other mothers didn't seem to wear. She always had furs.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: Yeah. So, you know, every picture that I have of my mother, she was always elegantly dressed. And we'd have family photos taken maybe once every two years, and for that, she'd make a new gown. Usually velvet. But exquisite. And new dresses for the girls, of course.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: Yeah. So that was lots of fun. Lots of good memories there, too, you know.

LU: And she would make them all because she was a dressmaker, so-?

MM: Oh, she'd make all the gowns. Oh, she'd be up until the wee hours of the morning, you know, doing this housework. And as a child you never thought about it, of course, you know, who would allow such a thing now. You know.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow. So, did your father smoke cigarettes as well?

MM: My father smoked a pipe. For years and years and years he smoked a pipe.

[01:30]

MM: Clenched between his teeth, I can still see him. And then, something happened with his teeth, it became loose or something and he couldn't clench a pipe anymore, and he turned to cigarettes. But he'd smoke a cigarette like he smoked a pipe. Puffing away on it, you know. You know, [laughing] you don't do that with cigarettes.

LU: Just leave it there and puff away?

MM: Yeah. And then, every Lent he would give up cigarettes. And every Lent he'd gain 10 pounds. Well, we just laughed. However, he finally gave that up too, gave up the smoking. Oh dear. And we were one of the few families in Vancouver with a car, out of necessity because of the business. But we were very lucky. We were taken a lot of places where other people had to either take public transit or walk. So, in that respect, perhaps we were spoiled. I didn't look upon it of course as being spoiled.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, wow. So, what else do you remember about the area growing up in Kitsilano? And you know, you had the dry cleaning business on Fourth Avenue?

MM: Fourth Avenue.

LU: And what was around it and beside it and other stores that you remember?

MM: Well, I remember up the street, that would be going... west, I guess. It was the Kitsilano Theatre about three blocks away. And for ten cents, you could go to the movies. And we often did that, too, on a Saturday. When we were allowed to go to the movies. To see the Tarzan movies.

LU: Tarzan movies?

MM: Oh, yes. Oh, I thought they were marvelous. This is the original Tarzan, you know, Johnny Weissmuller. Oh, I used to think it was marvelous. The other way was Granville Street. Which is the main artery, north and south. And because we always

seemed to be going downhill toward the beach, I always thought we were going south. Till I got married. And Roy said, "No, no, you weren't going south. You were going north." "I was?" He said, "Next time we go to Vancouver-" [laughing]. And indeed, he said, "Just look- see where the mountains are, and that's always north." Now, my mother was a firm believer that Harrison Hot Springs would cure you of many ills. So, whenever we went to Harrison Hot Springs, the rest of us we'd swim around in the pool, sulfur pool at that. And she'd sit in the corner and sort of splash the water on herself, you know. And so, several years back, I said to Roy, "Next time we're in Vancouver, can we go to Harrison Hot Springs?" He said, "Sure." And I went in this little pool, it was the dinkiest little thing you ever saw. Of course, I remembered it as being quite large. And then I looked up, and I said to him, "Mountains." And he said "They've always been there" [laughs]. I had never noticed them before; you know how you just don't see them, the things that are there? But as an adult, I became a rubbernecker, you know, looking around, thinking, "Oh my goodness, look at these mountains." And as we drove through the Rockies on our way from Calgary, Roy and I are skiers, I'd look around and I'd think, "Oh my goodness, look at these mountains, aren't they magnificent?" And he'd say- He would always say, "You know, you grew up amongst these mountains until you moved away." And it's only once you become an adult that you appreciate. But they are magnificent.

LU: Oh, they're very nice. I went out once. Only for four days, but-

MM: Where did you go?

LU: We were just right in the heart of Vancouver. My aunt was working for the Olympics, and so she was out there. And we went and we crashed in her hotel and just walked around town and shopped and- Yeah, it was really nice.

MM: Now, which hotel was that?

LU: It was right by the airport.

MM: Oh, okay.

LU: I can't remember the name of it. No, I'm not-

MM: I thought the Olympics were magnificent.

LU: Oh, yeah. It was really great.

MM: You know, last November, Roy and I were out for four or five days. We just never told anybody we were going. None of our relatives knew. And we did a tour of all the venues.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: So, it was just wonderful, we were up at- in the mountains and saw the new oval where they did the skating.

[01:35]

LU: Oh wow.

MM: Oh, it was beautiful.

LU: We never made it up that far, but- Oh, isn't that neat.

MM: And you know, a lot of these things that I experienced as a child always sit in the back of my mind, but they come to life whenever I go back to Vancouver. For example, one day, I had a best friend who lived in Vancouver, she had since passed away, but she said one day, "Mary, how long has it been since you've been to Capilano Canyon?" Of course, when we were kids, we used to race across the suspension bridge- not suspension, it was- Oh, it was loose bridges, you know that- You know the-

LU: Oh, yeah. Just the Rope bridges?

MM: Yeah, something like that. We used to run across and make it swing back and forth. I stood at one end, and I thought, I wonder if could do it. And I was able to do it, but I remember as child, you know, just running back and forth across that. Now, of course, you have to pay to do it. But we did that too as kids. You know, my family used to go there. I guess as a child, we went to a lot of places. You know, and I talked to Roy about it and discovered he hadn't been to half the places I'd been to. I remember as a family we used to climb Grouse Mountain.

LU: Oh. Really?

MM: My Mother used to do it with a bad heart. She didn't know she had a bad heart then, but we used to climb Grouse Mountain. Now they call it the Grouse Grind. And there's a path, couple of paths laid out, where you time yourself. I guess I couldn't do it now but-

LU: Oh, wow, and how far up did you go?

MM: All the way up to the top.

LU: Wow.

MM: Now there's a gondola that takes you up to the top.

LU: Fancy.

MM: Yes, and a restaurant at the top. But all those places we used to go to as families, you know, and my father was- is great for taking us here and there.

LU: So, was the dry-cleaning business closed on the weekends?

MM: On the Sunday only.

LU: Sunday only. Oh, okay. Oh, wow.

MM: And I remember the telephone that we had in the store. It was one of those with the little round thing that you spoke into, and the little thing that you hung up on[laughing] to disconnect it. And you had an operator. And you had to tell her the number you wanted.

LU: Oh, so there was no dial pad?

MM: No, heavens no, I go back a long way.

LU: Oh, wow. Isn't that neat?

MM: Those are antiques now.

LU: Mm-hm. It's hard to find those.

MM: Well, my sister still has a dial phone. Her grandson said to her, "What's that?" It still works. And she said she likes it. And she knows that it's an antique, I don't know what value it has, but-

LU: I remember we used to have them all the time at my nana's house. And when the power went out, she unplugged one of the phones and gave it to us because it didn't

require any electricity to work. So, if we wanted to call each other, we could call each other.

MM: Oh, really? Really?

LU: Yeah, 'cause it just uses the phone lines. So, that's why they say don't get rid of them if they still work, because- You know, the little cordless ones now- The power goes out, so does your phone.

MM: Mm-hm.

LU: So, yeah, that's what she was saying, "Always use the dial ones." And she had them kicking around the house.

MM: Well, even cell phones are useless because they have to be charged.

LU: Yeah. Mm-hm. Yeah. They only last so long. Yeah. No, that's right.

MM: Well, to finish the story of our coming to Toronto. I think Roy told you how we met. And he was in uniform when we dated. I thought that was very nice. He's such a nice person. And I remember he was at one of these teen dances one Sunday. Did I mention that?

LU: I can't- Yeah?

MM: Yes, I did. Yes, I did. And I think shortly after that, we began dating. The amazing thing was that while I was doing my senior matriculation, that would be grade 13, he was doing his 12 and 13, I believe, at Ryerson Rehab.

[01:40]

MM: He was with rehab school, then, not in university. He did in five months what it took me to do in ten, well, it took ten months for me to finish my senior matric. He got honours.

LU: Oh, wow. He didn't tell me that.

MM: Oh, he wouldn't tell you that. I passed but he got honours in all his subjects. Isn't that incredible? He must have really have studied so hard.

LU: Yes, I remember him saying he studied very hard. But never mentioned the honours part.

MM: No, he wouldn't tell you that. It was honours that got him through university, too. At the end of third year, they said- I think his credits ran out. And there were a quite a few- His was the last veteran's year. Last group of veterans. And apparently, they approached the dean and asked that some concession be made, and he said, "Okay, I'll pick the top ten marks." And Roy's was among them, so he was reinstated again. Yeah. And it was the year- I believe third year was the year they introduced literature to the architecture course. Shakespeare. He used to say to me, "Could you read this for me and write me a synopsis?" [laughs] Which I did. And nobody passed that year- Nobody got honours. Everybody passed but nobody got honours and that's when they chose the top ten and he was among them, so.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh wow.

MM: And I remember at the school where I was teaching at the time, one of the other girls had a boyfriend who was in the same course as Roy, and we were- Each of us was reading the same book for our mates. That was really quite funny. Now,

speaking of teaching, when I was at teacher's college, I was approached by the chairman of the board of education for Forest Hill Village, which in later years was amalgamated into the city of Toronto, but that's the area of Bathurst and Eglinton where mostly Jewish people reside. And there was a very progressive school there called West Prep. West Preparatory School. Actually, there was West Prep, South Prep, North Prep, and the Collegiate. The four of those schools made up Forest Hill Schools. And I was approached and asked if I would come in for an interview. They were looking particularly for other nationalities to come to their school. And that same year, I was hired. Mind you, I had to do some practice teaching there but I was hired, as was an Italian girl and a Polish girl.

LU: Oh wow.

MM: Yes. So, it was a very interesting staff, only one of whom was Jewish. All the rest were non-Jews. So, it was an interesting staff, and it was a wonderful seven years that I taught there.

LU: Where did you teach after that?

MM: Oh, I stayed home for eighteen to bring up two children. And then, one day, I was a little disconcerted with the school system in Etobicoke and I made an appointment with the Director of Education, you know, have a chat with him. Ended up being hired on the spot. He said, "Well, Mary, you come back and fix it." I said, "Oh dear." [laughs] He said, "How old are you?" I said, "44." He said, "Oh, there's a lot of life left in you yet." And I said, "Well, I've been away for so long." I said, "I really need to get back into the classroom and observe for a while." He said, "Oh, we could probably arrange that." And so, it was arranged that I would go to a neighbour's school- neighbourhood school and sit in on a grade four or five class or something. And the next- the morning after I was there, I was called, would I please come and teach. I said, "Where?" And they said, "Well, there's a lady who thought she could do the whole year but she's not well." And this was in September. I ended up being at a school for a whole year. While I was at that school, the kindergarten teacher's husband was principal of a school not too far from where we lived at the time. Actually, a mile away from home. And he phoned and he said, "Would you come and do some senior work at our school?" And I said, "You bet."

[01:45]

MM: And that's where I was for another twenty years.

LU: What school was that?

MM: Parklawn.

LU: Oh, Parklawn. Oh.

MM: Do you know it?

LU: It's- Yeah. My grandparents live right in that area.

MM: Is that right? Where?

LU: Yeah. They live, I guess, Bloor and- I guess just West of Jane Street, really. In the Bloor West area. Right by your-

MM: Prince Edward? Around there?

LU: Uh, just east of Prince Edward. Cause I know you're at Prince Edward.

MM: Well, we're east- Yeah, we're east of Prince Edward now, we're at the Old Mills, so. But we used to be really close to Prince Edward.

LU: They're off of Brule Street, I think?

MM: Ok. Champ Brule?

LU: Yeah.

MM: Brule Street.

LU: Brule Terrace.

MM: Brule Terrace, okay, I know where it is.

LU: Yep. Right there.

MM: Nice area.

LU: Yeah, yeah. They've had that house for a very long time.

MM: Well, it was a mile to school, but I drove every day because I had all these books and- as you take home every night. Well, you know. And I loved every minute of it. It was wonderful.

LU: And you're teaching at the senior years, or-?

MM: I was at this Middle school.

LU: Middle school, mm.

MM: Grade eight. Wonderful group. Wonderful age group. Hormone City, we used to call it. You know, the boys in the classroom, you know they're six feet tall, and they'd always look at my feet and say, "How come your feet are so small Mrs. Matsui?" And I'd say, "Well, my mother bounded them when I was a child." "Eh?" [laughs] So, we'd have a discussion on Chinese and how they used to bind the women's feet. For beauty. "Really?" They said. But it was fun, I loved that age group. And when I first started teaching that age group, my son was just going into high school, which is why I agreed to teach full-time. And I said to the boys, "You know, I have one just like you at home. So, don't tell me anything I don't know." And I do believe, Lisa, that when I graduated from teacher's college- I'm trying to remember what year that was- I was the first Japanese Canadian to teach in Toronto. Or to graduate from teacher's college in Toronto. And of course, since then there have been hundreds.

LU: Mm-hm. 'Cause somebody has to be first. Yeah. Oh, wow, That's fascinating.

MM: It was lots of fun. I really enjoyed what I did.

LU: Mm-hm. And so, after you finished your education at Jarvis, did you just go right into teacher's college, or-?

MM: Right into teacher's college.

LU: Oh. Did you have any hard times getting in, or they were-?

MM: No.

LU: No? It was okay?

MM: No, there was a career seminar in our school at Jarvis one day and I remember thinking, "Oh, that sounds like an interesting thing to do." Until then, I had always wanted to be a doctor. It didn't seem to be in the- in my future, so, I thought, "Well, perhaps I could be a good teacher." And I think- I hope I contributed something; I really enjoyed it. I loved it. You know how some people hate to go to work? I used to go to work, you know, with great anticipation every morning. Roy said he never

knew anybody who wanted to go to work like I did. And it was hard work. It was a lot of work, but it was good. As a matter of fact, a student who is now in her 40s found me on Facebook.

LU: Oh, wow.

MM: She married another student who was in the same class. And I remember thinking, "Gosh, nothing is a secret anymore if you're on Facebook. Anybody can find you." [laughs] But since then, I've had a couple of others find me too, students.

LU: Oh, that's the whole reason for Facebook. It's great.

MM: I suppose. It's a social network, isn't it?

LU: Yeah, yeah. No. You never know who you'll find on Facebook, but-

MM: Mm-hm. Well, I don't- I don't go looking for people but I- It was a very pleasant surprise when, you know, these young people hit me up and said, "Well, I'm almost 40 now." I had you when you were 14 or 15. [laughs] Oh dear.

LU: Oh, wow. And when you were teaching in the schools, did you ever have any of the students come and ask you, you know, about the Japanese history, or-?

[01:50]

MM: Never.

LU: No, nothing of-? 'Cause I guess at that age, grade 8, they don't learn about World War II until high school. In history classes.

MM: Well, it's interesting, you know, because I think recently there was a move onto include this aspect of the history of the Japanese Canadian relocation from the West Coast into the Canadian history books. And I have a- we have a granddaughter who is 16. And this past year, she took Canadian History, and she said, "Yes, indeed, it was in the book." And so, isn't that good? And our daughter, who- Like most kids when they're growing up, what do they care what their parents did, you know- Has recently been expressing a great desire to find out more. And Roy and I have both been laboriously writing our memoirs. And although I'm finished, he's still slugging his way through. They can hardly wait to read them. So, Roy mentioned to our daughter about this three-day seminar, upcoming seminar in November. And she expressed a great desire to participate. [overhead noises] So, he registered her so she'll come.

LU: Mm-hm. Oh, I saw that. No, it's gonna be exciting. No, I'm looking forward to it.

MM: Oh, I remember, too, you know, Roy's sisters, Yone and Kiyo. Yone, in particular- I don't think she ever told her kids about the war experiences, like- Except for Sandra. Her daughter, Sandra, who is a lawyer in the West Coast. She was really active in the redress. She was a key figure, I believe. Sandra Kobayashi.

LU: Oh, wow. Yeah. Yeah, no, I'm pretty sure she was.

MM: Yes, 'cause I know her pictures in with- was it Mulroney, I guess, eh. Mm-hm. And was it Art Miki and his brother- Was it Art Miki, who was-

LU: Art Miki?

MM: Yes. Mm-hm.

LU: Did you ever participate in the redress?

MM: No.

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

MM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, we knew all about it and we followed it with great interest. And we were- This was very interesting. When- I believe it was- I'm trying to remember how much we each got. Um.

LU: 21-

MM: 21,000, was it? Yes. A very good friend of mine phoned me and told me that she resented the fact that each of us was getting. So, I asked her if she knew the history of the war years of the Japanese Canadians. No, she wasn't aware. So, I filled her in, gave her a short history lesson. And she soon backed off. See, they don't know, so- Essentially, it's ignorance. Or disinterest.

LU: Yes. Mm-hm. Oh, wow.

MM: Interesting, eh.

LU: That is interesting. Yeah.

MM: I was quite surprised, she was a very good friend of mine, you know. I guess she felt comfortable to happen to express her dismay.

[loud overheard noises]

LU: Oh, this is terrible.

MM: That's not too bad, actually. Could be worse.

LU: It could be worse. If it was worse, I think we would have had to find-

MM: A quieter spot.

LU: Downstairs, maybe. Away from the roof.

MM: Can you block out that kind of noise on your tape? Can you erase that or delete it, or-?

LU: I'm not sure. There are certain programs that we can get for editing the tapes, and I think on which one we get depends on whether you can eliminate sounds and not video, or whether you have to eliminate all of it together. So, I'm not really sure. Yeah.

MM: Well, anyways, I think I brought you up to date. It's like I said to you on the telephone, I don't know that I have an awful lot to contribute.

LU: No, yeah, lots of memories. That was great. I have just a few more questions though. What do you remember about when the Japanese Canadians received the right to vote?

MM: That was- What year was it? '49, was it?

LU: I believe so.

MM: I only remember my father telling me that I could vote. No, that wasn't it- I remember him telling me I was old enough to have a drink [laughs]. I remember saying, "Well, Dad, I'm old enough to vote." No, I don't recall it too much except that I did exercise my right to vote.

[01:55]

MM: I always did. The only time I abstained was when Bob Rae, who was- Was he premier, I think? He was running. And the teachers were so upset with his platform. And I said- went to the voting school, and I said, "I'm here. Please take my name off

your list.” And I abstained. Oh, I think I must’ve been the very first person that they’d ever encountered. But our beef essentially was that Bob Rae wanted to freeze teacher salaries for three years. Those were called the Rae Days. I had just- Oh, I was gonna say I had just retired, I hadn’t just retired. Anyways, we all abstained. All teachers were told to abstain. However, he still did get in. But it was terrible for our first-year teachers, you know. Couldn’t make any progress. I was at the end of my salary schedule but all those young people who were- every year they would get their annual increases, of course their salaries were frozen for three years.

LU: Oh, jeez.

MM: But no. As far as voting is concerned and the Japanese right to vote, I don’t recall too much about it.

LU: Hm. What else did I want to ask? Oh. How old was your father when he passed away?

MM: Dad was 90.

LU: 90. And how did he pass away?

MM: He had pharyngeal cancer, throat cancer. Presumably from all the pipe-smoking and cigarettes that he puffed on.

LU: Cigarette puffs. Oh, wow. But still, that’s a very long time.

MM: Oh, yes.

LU: Very long time.

MM: Mm-hm. And I think his mother must have been 85, I think, when she died, when we got the news in Toronto that she had passed away. So, yes, there’s longevity on both sides. My grandfather, my maternal grandfather at 90 whatever, my aunt at 100, my uncle at 90, my poor mother at 44, and then my father at 90. And my stepmother passed away in 2003 at the age of 90 as well. The lady who came from Japan to marry him.

LU: Right. It must be lifestyle, too, on why the Japanese people live so long, as well as genetics, but- Gosh, we do live a long time.

MM: Well, you’ve heard recently, or read recently in the paper about this man who is purportedly 113 years old, one of the oldest living Japanese. And the authorities wanted to go and interview him, and his wife had been cashing his pension cheques for 30 years. He had been dead for 30 years [laughing]. His mummified body was found in the bed.

LU: Oh, my goodness. Isn’t that interesting.

MM: So, they think there may have been a lot of centenarians in similar situations. And I always say to Roy, I don’t mind getting old, but I don’t want to be old and incapacitated. So, we do what we can to live healthy lives. I think I told you we’re both still skiing, so.

LU: Yes! That’s impressive. I can’t ski.

MM: It is. I think so. Well, I had a hip replacement last June. A year ago, June. And I said to the surgeon who came and put his initial on my hip the morning of the surgery and he said, “Any last words?” I said, “Yes. Can I still ski?” And he said, [counts on fingers], “Yeah, don’t fall.” And he said, “You can ski on one condition.” I said, “What’s that?” And he said, “Send me a postcard.” So, you know, we’ve both

been skiing for so long that we've been used to skiing expert slopes. But this past winter, Roy kept me right off the expert slopes and made me write a postcard to the surgeon. So, we were talking about skiing recently and said, [unclear] "How much longer do you think we can do this?" And he said, "As long as you want to, I guess."
LU: Yeah.

[02:00]

MM: And you know what, our skiing expeditions consist of, you know, have breakfast, drive out to- this is usually just North of Quebec City, twenty-minute drive to this beautiful little resort. And we have about, oh, maybe half a dozen leisurely runs down this long slope. And then we go and have lunch, leisurely lunch somewhere, come back to Quebec City and browse and shop and look around, you know. That's our ski trip.

LU: That sounds amazing.

MM: It is, it's wonderful.

LU: Mm-hm. How long have you been doing this for?

MM: Oh, fifty years. You mean the skiing part?

LU: Yeah, yeah.

MM: Yes. I believe I was 32, maybe 33. I remember the first time I was to be included in the ski trip. Now, this was Roy's office staff who talked him into trying it. And he had so much fun he said I should go along too. And I remember that year, our son got mumps. He was just a little fella then. And I remember the doctor saying, "Skiing? Mary, you'd better stay home and look after your baby. But Roy, you'd better go because I don't want you to get mumps." [laughing] So, that was my introduction to skiing. But yes, it's been a wonderful thing to do. People hate the winter, and we love it.

LU: I like the winter.

MM: Do you?

LU: I don't like driving in it.

MM: No, no.

LU: But I like it. Yeah, I like it.

MM: What do you drive?

LU: Just a small little toy car, it's one of the Hyundai Accents. It's just a small, little car. Actually, I've had it now for about eight years.

MM: Well, is it- Is that front-wheel drive?

LU: Yes. I believe it is.

MM: Oh, then, that's safer in the snow, isn't it.

LU: Mm-hm, and it's standard too so it's much easier.

MM: Oh, yes.

LU: I don't think I'll ever drive an automatic car again in the winter because it's hard.

MM: Well, I believe it was 1979 when Roy got his real first sports car with standard transmission. And I had to learn on standard transmission when I was young. And I was really afraid to try it because there has to be a lot of coordination with your gas, brake, and clutch. But I got quite used to it, and subsequent cars were all standard

transmission. Until this last one. And I said, "Now that I'm getting older, I don't wanna shift gears anymore." So, now we have an automatic, but- Our daughter learned on standard and has always driven standard, all her adult life.

LU: Mm-hm. It's good to know. It really is.

MM: And I know that I've been in spots where one year I had- we were in Tremblant. And we were with friends, sharing this chalet. [camera noises] Oh, no. Turn it off now, this is just- yeah. And it had snowed 24 inches overnight. My friend had to call CAA to pull her out. And I just put it in gear, and I went up the hill very slowly. And Roy came along, he said, "Oh my goodness," he said. "I was worried that I might have to do that." But it's wonderful, just put it in first or second gear and just crawl up.

LU: Yeah, you just put, put, put. Yeah.

MM: It was really, really good.

LU: I find automatic cars can't do it.

MM: No, no.

LU: They automatically just want to switch gears, isn't it? Yeah.

MM: So, we do take our car skiing but you know, you go into the ski resorts, or if you go into a big city they're always plowed anyways. And now it's a big car too, so- Although the small cars are good, in and out of the snow. You know, we always had a Mazda or an Infiniti. Some Japanese car. Yeah.

LU: I think mine is Korean.

MM: Oh, that's okay too.

LU: Korean car.

MM: We had a Subaru. And I used to watch other people struggling away, you know, I'd just put it into gear, and off I'd go. Yeah, it was fun watching. Anyways, have I told you enough, Lisa?

LU: I think so, let me-

MM: It's not very interesting, is it?

LU: No, it is. Of course it is. Let's see. See, I go through these questions so often that I just kinda- I always think that I've asked them already, but sometimes I haven't.

MM: Well, I was looking at that yellow sheet while I was waiting for you. It had some good questions on there to trigger my memory.

[02:05]

LU: Oh, yeah. Yeah. There was one spelling mistake, but that was okay. The very first question had a typo in it. But that was okay. No, I think we talked about everything. Was there anything else that you want to share that you could remember? [paper shuffling]

MM: I think- I remember my grandfather- As a child, I remember my grandfather working in the lumbermills.

LU: Oh. Let's put the tape in for that one.

MM: Oh, no, no, no. No, no, no, no-

LU: Are you sure? But it's such a good memory.

MM: Oh, yes. And he used to say- People used to laugh at him- Oh, this reminds me of another story, but- They used to laugh at- he used to take takuan sandwiches. You know what takuan is?

LU: No.

MM: It's that smelly Japanese pickle.

LU: Oh, the-

MM: Yellow.

LU: The daikon?

MM: Yes.

LU: You can make sandwiches out of that?

MM: I guess so, he took them anyways. I remember in grade seven, my mother said- I don't know whether she made my lunch, maybe it was grade six. We used to have chow mein sandwiches.

LU: Mm.

MM: And you know what, Lisa? Yummy. Really good. And my friend Alana Moles, that was her name Alana Moles, leaned over and she said, "What is that?" And I said, "Oh, it's chow mein sandwiches." "Chow mein sandwiches? Ew." And I looked at hers, and I said, "But Alana, what are you eating?" And she said, "Pickled beets." I said, "Oh..." [laughing]. So, it's all what you're used to. But those chow mein sandwiches were good.

LU: I think it's in the cookbook.

MM: Oh, is it?

LU: I think so. Yeah. I think so. Because I remember in June, for nostalgia night, the big buffet dinner we had, everything was made from the cookbook. And they had chow mein sandwiches there. They were good.

MM: So, I wasn't unusual then. Somebody else had it, eh? And I better- I think Roy's father told him a story about his sandwiches too. I forgot what it was, but they used to laugh at him as well. And then, that's all I know about my grandfather working. After that, as far as I was concerned, he never worked.

LU: Oh, wow. Isn't that interesting.

MM: Mm-hm. And I remember when I was- it was 1949, this aunt, whose baby died in Vancouver during the war, had another child. And then, she had two children. And she had ovarian cancer. She died at the age of 34.

LU: Oh, wow. That's young.

MM: Now, again, that's, you know, in the late 40s. I don't suppose they did a lot for her- They did radiation. I don't think there was much chemo even, I think it was strictly radiation.

LU: Oh, wow. Even ovarian cancer now, though, the odds are not good.

MM: Is that right?

LU: Yeah, it's still a high ratio of not making it. So.

MM: Mm-hm. Well, we used to think, you know, that my side of the family might be okay cancer wise but then we thought about this grandmother whose death, whose cause of death we never knew, we just knew she died at 43. My sister and I just assumed it must have been cancer. But then my father died of throat cancer, but then we put that down to smoking, so. But, you know, 90 is a ripe old age, Lisa.

Regardless- And we had a doctor who always said, "Something will get you, Mary. You know, something will get you in the end."

LU: It will be one way or the other. I guess, but-

MM: It would be nice if you could just sort of go to sleep.

LU: I recall my father saying that's how his grandmother, my great baachan, passed away. Then again, I was really young, so he might've just told me that, but I remember him saying she just went to bed and didn't wake up, so. I don't know.

MM: Well, yeah, but you don't just die, do you, Lisa? You have to die of something.

LU: Something. Something stops.

MM: I have a friend who got up one morning and she said to her husband-a Chinese friend- she said to her husband, "You stay in bed. You know. 'Cause I know you gotta get up and go play tennis."

[02:10]

MM: He was 82. And he used to play tennis with Fred Sunahara. Do you know that guy?

LU: Oh. Yeah, mm-hm.

MM: And they had been tennis partners for years, it seems. I didn't know this. We knew them separately and then discovered this fact about each other. And so, Larry stayed in bed and Laura went down to prepare breakfast and she came up to wake him up and he was gone. And I said, "What a wonderful way to go." Until somebody said, "He may have had a massive heart attack." But it's- you know, it's almost as if he'd gone to sleep and didn't wake up.

LU: Yeah, yeah. Oh, wow. At least he's in bed too.

MM: Yes. It's a shock, though, too, to survivors. That kind of death. And yet, you know, when you think about it, would you really want someone to suffer. You know. Just put me out of my misery is what I tell my kids. Oh dear.

LU: Well, I always talk about- 'cause I always go over to Momiji. Quite often now. And I love that building, absolutely love that building.

MM: You know, I retired in 1993. Which was the year I turned 65, and I said to Roy, I don't want a birthday party. But I want to celebrate the fact that I finished my teaching career and am going to have my 65th birthday. And he said, "Let's have a gathering of friends." So, we gathered all the friends from his work, and all the friends from school, and teaching and so on. We had a massive party in the atrium. And Mr. Ishii, who now does all the catering for the Centre here, used to have- run the restaurant there. And we asked him to prepare the food and it was magnificent. We had sushi and wine all afternoon. It was really, really nice. Sunshine through the glass, you know, and everybody said, "What a gorgeous building." Of course, it was quite new then, too. The bamboo trees were still pretty good.

LU: Mm-hm, mm-hm. No, it's a beautiful building. I always say, when I'm old enough to get into that building, I want to be in there.

MM: Really?

LU: Yeah, oh, yeah.

MM: I always say to Roy, "Would you like to go there?" "No thanks."

LU: No, he doesn't want to?

MM: No.

LU: Oh. Maybe 'cause he designed it.

MM: I don't know what it is. He asked me and I said, "Well, if it weren't in Scarborough."

LU: Yeah. It is a little far, especially when you're used to being in the Old Mill area.

MM: Yeah. Well, you know, it's so easy for me to be downtown. And go to the museum, go the art gallery. You know, just hop on the subway. It's easy for me to get onto the 400 if I want to go north. 427 if I want to go to north. And most of our friends seem to live either in the city or West End. But my whole family lives in Scarborough.

LU: So far.

MM: Everybody. My sister is over at Victoria Park. And I went- Actually, Pharmacy and Eglinton. My aunt was over at Ellesmere and something or another. Her son and daughter-in-law are still there. Both my cousins are Scarbarians. And as a result, we only see each other at weddings and funerals. And more funerals now lately than weddings.

LU: I don't know what it is about Scarborough but it's just- It's so hard to get to. I think that's just what it is.

MM: Is that what it is?

LU: I think so. It's a very difficult commute, what I find anyways.

MM: Well, when my sister- My sister was ill for a while there. And I'd promised I would come up once a week to sit with her. I did that for a whole year. And that was in 1994, I believe. And the traffic wasn't really too bad then, but I always had to make sure that I left by 2:30 otherwise I'd be stuck in traffic going down the parkway. Or, along the highway.

LU: Oh, yeah. There's so many cars now on the road, that it's just very congested and there's only really the Don Valley Parkway to get up to Scarborough. Well, I guess you could take the 401.

MM: Yes, it would either be the 401- I'd often take the 401 as opposed to the Gardiner, because getting to the Gardiner, you have to go all the way south and then across and up. But Roy always says it's easier that way because to go up 401, you gotta go all the way up and across. But going to Momiji is so far, too, you know.

LU: It's not bad when I'm here. Cause then it's only 20 minutes up Eglinton. But it's still- Or 15. But it's still- All the stoplights. And always tons of cars. Doesn't matter what time.

[02:15]

MM: At least there's not an awful lot of road construction, is there?

LU: No, no, not that I've noticed.

MM: Not like the West End of the City and the central part of the City. You can't get anywhere without- Coming out of our building this morning, made a left turn onto Bloor Street. Right away, we were- The Humber Bridge is being renovated. This way and that way, you know, zigzag over the bridge. And get to south of Kingsway and it

stops. Go, stop, go, stop, go all the way down to the Gardiner and then stop and go all the way along until I got to Jameson. We were shovelled over again to the right because of the bridge construction.

LU: Isn't it aggravating?

MM: It is. But I left early enough. And I got here and phoned Roy. He said, "You're here already?" Anyways, Lisa, I am going to go downstairs and see what the food is like down there. Can I treat you to lunch?