

Interviewee: Gloria and Mits Sumiya
Interviewer: Lisa Uyeda
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SEDai PROJECT 

THE JAPANESE CANADIAN LEGACY PROJECT

[Start]

Lisa Uyeda: Is this one on? And this one here. Perfect. So, today is September the 16th, 2010, and this is an interview with Gloria and Mits, and maybe we'll start off with Gloria. Would you like to start off with telling us where and when you were born.

Gloria Sumiya: I was born in in 1925 in a little town- outside of a little town of Courtenay, Vancouver Island. And my parents were dairy farmers, they had leased a 100-acre dairy farm-

LU: Oh wow.

GS: And for the first eight years or so, that's where I was, on this little farm, near the town of Courtenay.

LU: Oh, perfect. Just gonna check the sound of [unclear]-

GS: My voice is ragged, so it may not come through.

LU: Might be- just gonna pause the-

[footage skips]

LU: Okay. So, how long did you stay at the dairy farm? Did you spend all your childhood there and grow up, or-

GS: No, until I was about eight, eight years old, and then we moved into a community- a Japanese community, Royston, and dad found employment working in a sawmill and we moved to a rural area near Cumberland, this place was near Cumberland. On Vancouver Island.

LU: Oh, oh wow. And it was called-?

GS: Pardon?

LU: What was the town called by-

GS: Oh, the town- where- near what we called Cumberland, was the Cumberland area. And our little village was a Japanese-owned village of- Well, rather, it was a sawmill village, and it was Royston.

LU: Oh, Royston.

GS: Royston-

LU: Oh wow.

GS: And it was Roston Lumber Company, and- that had a lot of Japanese men working, and that's where we went. There was a town- little village of Royston, but ours was strictly a sawmill camp. And they had about 50 families or so.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: And then we went to the local rural school, and the older ones went to the Cumberland

High School, a few miles away. So that's where I grew up, in Courtenay and Royston.

LU: So, when you were in Courtenay, were you able to attend Japanese language school, or was that not offered there?

GS: There was just a small number of farmers in Courtenay, maybe about 12 children in all went to the local school. And my dad sort of arranged for a Japanese language school, which we went to after school, and on Saturdays. But that lasted for- only be about 10 years in all, and by the time we left there are- there are so few Japanese families left, and the school was also discontinued. But when you went to Royston, there was a very well attended Japanese language school, because Royston was also the place where you had the Buddhist minister, and so then you had church members going, and they converted the church into a school during school days. And they had Japanese language school there from Grades One 'til maybe high school. Grades One or Two, they call it [chu-do?], and that's where I had my Japanese education as well, after schools. At Courtenay to start with, and then in Royston.

LU: Oh wow. And when you mentioned when you were in Royston there was about 12 children, do you mean 12 children altogether, or just 12 Japanese children?

GS: Oh, this is in Courtenay, when they had about 12 children, 12 children in all of that community of farming, Japanese people. And that lasted when- this was in Courtenay- about 10 years or so, at which time my dad was sort of supervising the whole- teachers and so on. But with diminishing number of Japanese pupils, the school was also discontinued about- Oh, this would be about early 1930s.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: It lasted from about 1925 or so to about 1932 or '3.

LU: Oh wow. And-

GS: So-

LU: What do you know about your family history on why your parents came from Japan, or where did they come from?

GS: Well, during the Meiji regime in Japan, the Japanese farmers found that-

[5 minutes]

GS: Well, dad was from the samurai [?] family, so they owned a piece of land, as well as they had a lot of people working on their estate. But with the Meiji era came in, they found that that couldn't be carried on any longer, and my dad's parents and grandparents found employment working in the offices and that sort of thing, as administrators and so on. And little by little, they had to sell part of their land, and, naturally, they found that was rather difficult, and they were running out of funds, and that was one of the reasons Dad, as the oldest of a family of several children, had thought that he should find his, maybe luck, coming to America. He landed in B.C. [British Columbia] instead, and that was primarily to save his farm, his estate. And start sending back whatever he could earn to pay for the taxes, or whatever, that was imposed by the new government. And so- That's the reason why my dad came. To find employment, and find ways of hanging on to the estate that had to be, you know, had to be looked after, and- Anyhow, they were more or less in a dire position at that time, the whole samurai [?] group, they had to find employment, and they

were not accustomed to doing anything else, and so- But anyhow, that's how they managed to hold onto their piece of land. And Dad stayed in Canada, and he, after four years or so, he got married by proxy to a person he knew back in his hometown, that was Mother. And they had what they called sort of a proxy wedding, she had her wedding ceremony in Japan, and he here, and then he called her, and they start- That was way back in 1920s.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: Early 1920s. So that's how they started, how they came to Can- and they found that they liked Canada, and they had to continue to support their parents until they were on their feet again. And they stayed. They decided to stay, and with the children coming, and they wanted their children to become, you know, people in Canada because at that time, too, living in Japan was quite difficult, especially in the rural areas. So that's the sort of the situation we were.

LU: Oh wow. And do you remember what year your parents were born in?

GS: They were born in the late 1890s, I think. Dad was born about 1895 or '6, somewhere around that, and mother about five or six years later. She was born [?] the last- 1899 or 1900, somewhere around there.

LU: Oh wow. And what part of Japan was it that they came from?

GS: They were from Kumamoto in the Aso Valley, which is a beautiful valley created by the- created by the volcano many hundreds of years ago, and there's a- the village in that- the Aso Valley is about 17, 18 miles long and 12 miles wide, and there are several little villages in that. And both of come from the village, well, the villages in the Aso Valley.

LU: Oh wow. Oh-

GS: And there still is a valley, and the little towns have become quite prosperous, but it's considered- Being in the part of the- left by the volcano, and the farming is very good, and it's a unique place, close to the volcano, which is still erupting, [to Mits] isn't it?

Mits Sumiya: Hm?

GS: The volcano in Aso Valley-

MS: Yeah, it's very impressive.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: We were there visiting her family, and it's a great big bowl. [chuckles] With some- like 17 villages in that bowl.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: So, it's- It was a beautiful piece of land, and we often wonder why they left it, and why they didn't go back.

[10 minutes]

GS: Well, they had their reasons, too, especially with us, you know, we wanted to remain in Canada, and then- So that was the situation.

LU: Mhm.

MS: What impressed me was, one, there are mountains all around, [makes scooping motion with hand] and [there's a?] scooped up section that's quite- very large-

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And Aso Mountain is always, you know, active volcano, so there was always a steam cloud coming out. But they had a beautiful, clear water river. They called it [Shirakawa]. And the source- We went to the source. And it comes bubbling out through the gravel.

LU: Really?

MS: Yeah. And it's a beautiful, clear water.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: You can drink right, you know, it's a dipper there, and you can drink it. And there's little fishes swimming around.

LU: [laughs]

MS: And that just flows right past their house.

LU: Oh wow. What kind of farming did your family do in the village?

GS: Where, in Courtenay?

LU: No, in the- in Japan.

GS: In Japan, well, see, being a mountainous place I don't think they had much good land. I don't think they did- The farming really was their occupation as such. They had a- because- Eventually all of dad's brothers found employment, in Kumamoto City or elsewhere, not as farmers. Some of- there's only the one- the youngest in the family kept up the house, and he did a little bit of farming, but that was not his source of income, really.

LU: Mhm.

GS: So, farming in that area- Maybe some little garden farming, they didn't have anything large. They did have, I think, for the longest while, huge piece of land of bamboo? [looks at Mits]

MS: Yeah, bamboo.

GS: Which they did- they sold the hardwood for, I don't know what purpose, but they had to sell that piece by piece, too, so. So, actually, they- Although they lived in the farming area, their occupation wasn't really farmers, not all of them. They usually went into the city and became, you know, merchants and- this was after- Before then I think they all sort of worked on the farm, and they had a sort of a lord that they worked for, that sort of thing, way, way back. But I don't remember, I don't think they really did any kind of farming as part of their business, not any of my aunt and uncles [unclear], anyhow.

LU: Mhm.

GS: [Their husbands and?] [unclear], they seem to have found some kind of a job in the city.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: Or locally.

LU: Mhm. And the piece of land is still owned in your family today, or-

GS: Pardon?

LU: Is it still owned in your family today?

GS: Oh yes. The estate is owned by-

LU: Oh sorry.

GS: My dad's youngest brother, who-

LU: You might just have to wait, sorry, just let the train pass. [chuckles]

GS: So yes, the family still owns that. So, actually, our cousin is- has that piece of property

now.

LU: Mhm. Oh wow.

GS: So, my parents would say well, they had to work to keep that land in their family, which I think they did. It is still in the family.

LU: I always find it remarkable that families would come to Canada and send money back home, but, you know, would they send Canadian money back home, or how would they get it transferred over into yen?

GS: Well, as far as I know, all through the years, whenever- Well actually, [when he went?]- When we had that farm in Courtenay, I was too small, I have no idea how he sent the money. But when we went to Royston and he'd get his monthly paycheque, he'd- And he'd get that paycheque in cash. He had a bank account, but they were paid- Or, they were paid by cheque, he had a place and at the mills office to get it converted to cash. And then right away he and mother will put aside 20 or 25 dollars from the measly paycheque of, say- less than 100, anyhow, because in those days the pay was so small. And that would be what he will send to Japan, and I think he sent it-

[15 minutes]

GS: I'm sure they sent it- sent cash. And I'm sure they had ways of converting it to Japanese yen in Japan, I'm sure they did. But I don't remember ever having to go to get it converted to Ja- [to Mits] I don't think our banks had Japanese yen much to deal with that, [to Lisa] our small bank, I don't know.

LU: Yeah.

GS: So, it was cash-

MS: My parents, when they sent money to Japan, sent money order.

LU: Oh, money order.

GS: Money order.

MS: Through a- There was a bank, Japanese bank, in Vancouver-

GS: Well, you were Vancouver.

MS: She used to go to that bank and send it from the bank.

LU: Oh.

GS: I sorta think dad sent cash. I'm not sure.

LU: Yeah.

GS: Because I don't ever remember him going to the bank and getting it converted to yen, or having a money order.

LU: Mhm.

MS: They used to call it *kawase*, money order.

GS: At that time, I don't know whether his cheque would've- In the small village in Japan, too, I'm not sure they could have- I have no idea, I'm pretty sure it was cash-

LU: Yeah.

GS: But I could be wrong.

LU: Oh, that's fascinating. [laughs] Oh wow. And in Courtenay, you said that your farm- The farm was a dairy farm?

GS: Yes. It was a dairy farm, with over 100 acres, and they had about two dozen milk cows. And he sold cream to the creamery in Courtenay. And the reason why he couldn't sell milk was- Even those days there was a little bit of resistance to Japanese farms, and the Japanese farmers were not allowed to sell fresh milk to the city. Some other hakujin farmers had that. And so, there were all the Japanese farmers, or- who had any milk to sell, or had a little bit of dairy cows, they had to either make it into cream and- [Powell River?] was somewhere where they would take that, so they had to get it- change the milk to cream, put it in the vats, and- and that way- Well, their income was much less [unclear] by that, as well. There was one farmer, though, the big farmer in those days was the Kishimotos, but they had two farms, one in Courtenay and one in Cumberland.

LU: Oh.

GS: Now, Cumberland didn't have that ruling about, you know, not accepting milk from the Japanese, so he had- he will have the milking done early in Courtenay, and by truck he will take them to Cumberland and sell the milk to Cumberland, you know, he had all these places that had orders for milk, and houses, and all that. And the farm in Cumberland also produced milk, but it was just an excuse that he had milk produced by his farm in Cumberland and so would sell it to the Cumberland people. So anyhow, they got away with selling fresh milk, and the rest of us didn't. So that had to be [unclear], convert it to cream, and then sell the cream. So that, as well was, oh, on a 100-acre farm there would be, we were able to sell some vegetables, potatoes and things of that accord. And then, of course, other things such as pigs, hogs, and beef. But anyhow, it was chiefly a dairy farm, and so he got- He made his income by selling cream.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: So that's what they [?] did for about 10 years, he had this dairy farm.

LU: So, why did he decide to sell the farm and get rid of it?

GS: Well, this farm was- He had it on a lease, he leased that farm. And the lease was up in 10 years, and it was either to lease it for another 10 years or move out. And by that time, one of his reasons was that he wanted the children to have a Japanese education. And the one in Courtenay had been discontinued, and Royston had a Japanese language school, a very well-run Japanese language school. And so did Cumberland. And another thing, too, it was getting rather difficult to run this dairy farm by himself, too. He was- In his 20s and 30s I guess it was fine, but he was now in his 40s.

[20 minutes]

And this was in Depression years, too, and I think it was- Income was very difficult to have all over the place, and there were farms here and there folding up, and I guess Dad thought that, well, instead of leasing the place for about another five or 10 years, he will give up the lease and move to Royston, because there was a job there as a sawmill worker. So, that's where he went.

LU: Oh wow. And do you remember leaving a lot of school friends behind as well in Courtenay, or-

GS: School friends? I was in grade four at that time, and I had lots of good friends, and- not

so many friends that we could invite to our house, because our house was about a mile away from the town, and our neighbours were about half a mile away sort of a thing, and- But at school, yes, we had some friends. And then when we went to Royston, of course, there were a lot of Japanese children there. I think the Royston school, [unclear] a rural school, and about a third of them, almost a half were Japanese children. So, we had a lot of acquaintances among the Japanese community children, and our neighbours we had walked to school with, and they were friends, and we corresponded with them later on. But, you know, we- I think we were too busy most of the time to invite them over for parties and things like that. We had very little of that, even amongst the people we know. In the summer we did go out on picnics and go down to the beach with our hakuji neighbours and people that we had friends in the Royston community. But that was it.

LU: What other sorts of activities would you do when you- Like what other activities or games do you remember playing when you were younger?

GS: As a child?

LU: Mhm.

GS: You know, when I was in Royston- When I was in Courtenay, still I think it was a fairly big school, there was about seven or eight grades in all, and some of the grades had two teachers, or two rooms. And I don't remember the games we played, except the usual games like hopscotch and skipping, and that sort of thing. In Royston, when you went to the rural school, we had to really, really be imaginative and make up our own games, and of course around that time I was grade five, five, and six, and we played a lot of games. We made up games, and we had teams, and the teams played against each other, day after day, week after week, and in the end, we'd have a celebration. It was all done at recess and lunch hour. But even then, games such as marbles and skipping and hopscotch, and playing with the ball. The older ones organized softball, you know, scrumpy [?] kind of thing, and there weren't that many people. But we all had to take part 'cause there were so few, in the rural school there was only about seven or eight in one class, and about 10 in another class. So, we all had to- We couldn't choose a team, we had to be a part of team no matter how poor we were-

LU: [laughs]

GS: Whether we could play or not. And- Oh yeah, we played a lot of games. So, I noticed afterwards when I came to the city that the children don't seem to be able to organize their own games, it was organized by the teachers or adults, or something. To- We played with knives, and with a- [uses fingers to demonstrate size] with a little penknife, played with them, [waves fist through air] how many times we can hit something, and make a little dartboard sort of thing and-

LU: [laughs]

GS: And, you know, we all had a pen knife to play with, and marbles, and things like that.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: [to Mits] What did you do?

LU: [laughs] So-

GS: Yeah, we did play. We played hard. We had to study hard, too, but-

LU: And did you spend the rest of your time in Royston until the war came around, or did you move before that?

GS: Once I started high school there was not much, you know, because we had to walk- Really, we had to walk three miles- I'm still talking in miles, I'm not- because that's how we talked- to the high school. So, we'd start off about seven or seven-thirty in the morning

[25 minutes]

GS: And by the time the school bell rang at quarter to nine, we were just about getting ready to get to our classroom.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: And then we had to walk back, and then we'd go to the Japanese language school from five-thirty, or something, five o'clock. So, we don't go home, we didn't go home, we'd go straight to the Japanese language school for a couple of hours and then go home. And we'd get home about eight-thirty or nine o'clock. And then we'd have our quick supper, and then we have homework to do, that used to keep us about 12 o'clock doing homework, and then next morning get up at six-thirty and- So we didn't have much time for playing.

LU: Oh wow. [laughs]

GS: Once I started high school. Except in the summer.

LU: That's a lot of work.

GS: Well, I don't know.

LU: And what high school was it that you attended?

GS: The high school was Cumberland High, and- It was, being in a rural area, it was a small high school, I think it had about five teachers, or six, and a principal. And there must have been about 30 to 40 pupils in each of the grades, grades nine, 10, 11, and 12. We didn't have the Grade 13, not in that area. And that was it, that was where I was when the war broke out.

LU: So, what grade were you in when the war started?

GS: Grade 11.

LU: Grade 11.

GS: Grade 11.

LU: Oh wow. Well, before we start talking about the war, I guess we'll switch over to Mits, and ask you a little bit about your pre-war history. So-

MS: Well-

LU: When and where were you born?

MS: My parents- My father came to Canada in 1905.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Which was, I think, the last- just after the war, the Russo-Japanese war had ended. And he was a second son in a farming- In a farm, they had a farm, farming community, [had a farm?]. He was as a second son, so naturally their system was he would not inherit the farm. So, he thought he'd better go and do [?] somewhere and get some money. So that was one of the reasons. And since the war was over and conscription was over, he was free to travel. So, he came to Canada in 2005- not- 1905. At that time, he was about 20 I think,

'cause he was born in 1885, so I guess he was about 20. And he- I- All I know is what I hear, because I know- My Japanese at the time was very poor, and what was discussed and what I understood to be his history is more of a hearsay [?] and what I got from my mother, who- Fortunately I was able to get a cassette tape of her life story before she passed away.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: So, from that I gather there were certain things, much of my parents' history. So, he came to Canada, and I think he worked as a houseboy for a while. And then after that he got into lumber, logging, lumber business. One of the advantages that he had was that while he was working a houseboy, he learned the language enough to be able to converse. Therefore, when he decided to get into lumber business, he was able to negotiate, do [?] negotiations, most of the negotiations himself. Of course, his knowledge of business and law were very, very limited. But what he did do was, he had a- he had put together a- I think it's a shake, shingle and shake mill, and got a tract of lumber land from the government. [He was?] cutting lumber from that, and making shingles and shakes, and shipping them to Vancouver.

[30 minutes]

LU: Oh wow.

MS: This was- this was one of these places where- Along the coast they had a number of these little camps. Or mills, small mills. And he was very proud of the fact that, at that time, there was only two landings recognized by the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] [unclear] company. And one was [Kog-i-su?], [Kog-i-su?] Landing, another was Sumiya Landing. So, he was quite proud of the fact that he was on the map.

LU: Yeah! [chuckles]

MS: And he was- He made a fairly successful business out of it, and he was shipping- he was also shipping timbers to Japan. But around 19- must be around 1918, the law changed, and you could not ship timbers anymore, it had to be semi-finished lumber.

LU: Oh.

MS: So that stopped them from it [?], 'cause he wasn't going to [unclear] finish his lumbers. But around that- I guess around 1918, 1919, when the war- the Second World War is over [sic], he decided he better get married. So, he- he had a- he purchased the land, because he said there was a story that if you don't have a land, you can't get back to Canada, you have to have property to get back. So, he purchased a land, and then, I think, in 1920, he went to Japan. And it was an arranged marriage. And so, he got married, and then he came back to Canada in 1920, around October, or something, 1920. That's my family history, as far as I know.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: I have more details, but they're- As I say, they're all hearsay, and I'm not sure how accurate they are.

LU: What part of Vancouver was your father purchasing land in? Do you know the area, or-

MS: Well, after he got married, he- See, I was born in a little island, just off North Vancouver. Or West Vancouver. Bowen Island.

LU: Bowen Island.

MS: Yeah.

LU: Oh.

MS: It is like- It's a holiday place, it's like Centre Island in Toronto. So, when people ask me, I say, "Well," I says, "If I tell you Bowen Island, you won't know where it is." But it's a stone's throw from Vancouver, so I always say, "Well, near Vancouver."

LU: Mhm, yes.

MS: And there's- They tell me it was a dark, rainy night, about nine o'clock, Wednesday, November the 22nd, 1922. [laughs]

LU: Oh wow. And I guess you would have been born at home, then, with a midwife, or-

MS: Yes, with a midwife.

LU: Oh wow. Oh wow.

MS: That's also hearsay, I'm no witness to that- [laughs]

LU: Yeah. [laughs]

MS: [unclear] I really don't remember very much 'til I was about three. When I was about three my family moved to Grace Creek, which was- which had a sawmill, I think.

LU: Oh.

MS: Similar to the kind of thing he had, so he was- got a job there. And as far as I now, we were the only Japanese Canadian family living there, all the rest were non- All the rest were whites, Caucasians. And they had a- from what I guess, they had a little school, so [?] I remember the school there.

[35 minutes]

I wasn't in it, but I know that school was there, there was a building, they called that school. And then I think we had a couple of teachers. The only thing I don't really [unclear] is that a couple of my brothers were born there, in Grace Creek. There was a sort of a wooden shack, fairly large wooden shack, uninsulated, with pot belly stove. I sort of remember that. And there was a well.

LU: Oh.

MS: A nice well, and we were always able to get cold water in the summer from the well. There was also a creek running nearby, and this sawmill had a sort of a dock, which was built on a [unclear], these posts were maybe 20 feet high, fairly high posts. And the ships were able to come right in alongside and dock to load and unload the stuff. And I remember that dock well, because my third brother- my second brother, who just passed away, we used to go and play there with my parents, when my parents are, you know, like, on a Sunday or something, they'd take us there, we'd walk around there, play, 'cause it's a nice, flat surface. And I remember he fell off the end of the dock. [chuckles] And my third brother was just crawling stage, wasn't able to walk yet, but he could crawl. And my father telling me, "You hang on to him and don't let him go, and you stay here," 'cause he said, "I gotta go and rescue" his son, you know. So, I remember him taking his boots off, and diving in. And here I was hanging onto this little brother of mine and crying.

LU: [chuckles]

MS: And the neighbour come running over. And figured out that he had- somebody had fallen over, [he had gone after him, or missing?]. And he was saying that he remembered - well, like, my father- Well, my mother was telling me my father used to say that it was quite a long drop, feet first, he went in, and got a hold of my brother, and swam with him to this post, he was hanging onto this post, and hanging on to him. And one of the kids from the mill was out fishing, and he came in with the boat and picked them up. [chuckles]

LU: Oh my goodness!

MS: That's the story-

LU: Oh wow.

MS: So, I remember that story, and sort of remember the dock.

LU: How old was your brother at the time?

MS: Pardon?

LU: How old was your brother at the time?

MS: Well, my second brother was 1924, so he was about three, two and half, three.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Three. Just started walking stage-

LU: Yeah, yeah.

MS: 'Cause I was born in '22, and my brother, third brother, was born in '25, same year as her. [gestures to Gloria] And he was just crawling.

LU: So, were you the oldest child?

MS: Pardon?

LU: Are you the oldest-

MS: Yes.

LU: Child?

MS: Yeah.

LU: And how many siblings do you have?

MS: We had seven siblings, three- no, five boys, one after another, and then two girls.

LU: [chuckling] Oh wow, oh wow.

MS: And right now, there is three of us surviving.

LU: How old was your youngest sister? What year was she born?

MS: My youngest sister was born- Well, she was 1939.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: So, it was a big span.

LU: Mhm. Big age gap.

MS: Yeah.

LU: Oh wow. [chuckles]

MS: What I remember from that point on is- from there, we went to- and I should say that because we had no kids to play with, we [?] were kind of young at Grace Creek to play with neighbour's kid, I guess there was a bit of a language barrier, too.

[40 minutes]

And then, about 1927, my parents moved to O'Brien Bay, because they had a logging spot there. And we basically lived on what's known as a float house, which is a- You get bunch of logs, maybe four or five logs, they put a plank thicking [?] on top, and they have a house and a little bit of a walkway around it. And one of the things Japanese homes had, was they built a little bath, in one corner of that float. And I remember doing that, helping there, because we used to- We had to go and dig up this clay to line the furnace- the area where they burned the wood to heat the bath.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah. It was quite an interesting place, but very small, and we were- We lived in that house, and the immediate surrounds, which was just a flat, you know, planks. And this was floating and anchored offshore. And our communication with the land was a log, chain log, chained together.

LU: Really? [chuckling]

MS: Yeah. And we had- later on, a neighbour of ours gave us a small boat. Rowboat, you know, well, hollowed out log for rowboat. And I used to row that thing around.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And this was when I was about five, I guess, five, six.

LU: Mhm.

MS: I used to row there quite a bit, Usually, I kept well within the distance of the house, so that I could get back. But it was very interesting life. We used to go berry picking, take the boat, row out to some shore, and pick berries. And we used to fish off that boat, and I used to spear crabs, you know, I'd get my second brother to row, and I'd stand on the bow with a pike pole and stab crabs for lunch. [chuckles]

LU: Oh my goodness. [chuckling]

MS: Interesting life. But I guess from today's point of view, we would be considered very deprived children, because we had no other children to communicate with, and we were away from civilization altogether. That was just a community with a number of these houses, and they had a- The logging section was- they had one [docking agent?] and they just went and cut down logs, brought them out. Made [booms?] and shipped them to Vancouver.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah. And the only other thing I remember very distinctly was Clark [?] Bay, which was an Indian community, was our supply center. The boat used to drop all our supplies there. And every now and then we'd take this gasoline boat, [unclear], what they called [unclear], putt-putt. And we'd go and pick up our supplies. And every once in a while, they'd take the children along, and that was a- first time I had an Orange Crush.

LU: Orange Crush! Pop?

MS: Yeah. First time.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: I found it very, very tasty and [unclear]. [chuckling]

LU: [laughing] Yeah.

MS: I remember that Orange Crush.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: But generally speaking, it was a pretty isolated community.

LU: Mhm. So, it that the only place that your family would pick up all their supplies, like groceries-

MS: Yeah, everything that was shipped in, all the supplies were shipped in. And the boat would dock at Alert Is- Alert Bay, and we'd have to go and pick it up.

LU: Oh wow. That's fascinating.

MS: So, basically [?] we got to go out once every third week or fourth week when the boat come in with the supply. Pleasant memories, though. But we learned to walk around on logs.

[45 minutes]

I couldn't swim. But fortunately, I- Anytime I fell off, I managed to hang onto a log and crawl back up.

LU: Oh. [chuckling] Oh yeah, that would be kind of scary-

MS: Yeah.

LU: A little bit-

MS: Well, it didn't bother me at all, because it was just a normal life, as far as I was concerned. Didn't know any better.

LU: Yeah.

MS: And our light was a little coal oil lamp, one coal oil lamp. And there was no radio, television, nothing. And the basic communication with outside was Japanese language paper, which my father subscribed to. And that would come once with the boat and the supply. So, you know. We were pretty isolated.

LU: Mhm. So, when did you- I guess, you didn't start learning English until you went to school.

MS: Actually, when I was- I guess I was about seven, just turning seven or seven, my parents decided that the kids had to go to school. So, they better move to Vancouver. So, we took the steamship and took the- I think [it was?] a day and half, or something, two days. I remember sleeping on the boats twice, two nights. And then came to Vancouver, and he bought a rooming house business, because he said, well- My mother had never worked, so there was something she could sort of- cottage industry for her. And he went to work in the sawmill for a couple years. And then he- because he was a farmer, and he was used to growing things, he went into gardening. He became a gardener- today they call landscape gardeners. And he started- he got a fairly nice business going,

LU: Oh wow.

MS: So, he would do that, and the rest of the family would look after the business at home. So, that's the way we were.

LU: Oh wow. So, what part of Vancouver did you move to and get the boarding house?

MS: Near Main and Georgia [?], which was away from the Japanese community. It was halfway between- It was two main communities. One on the Powell Street, the Japanese center, and one up on Fairview, I think they called it, which was Kitsilano, Fairview, that

area, which was on the north side of False Creek.

LU: Oh.

MS: And we were just halfway in-between. So, we didn't have any Japanese children to play with, basically. And I didn't really- I went to kindergarten, because they said I should get something, idea of what the school is like. So, I went to kindergarten for, I think about three months. And then I started grade one, at which time my knowledge of English was zilch, absolutely no knowledge of English. My knowledge of Japanese was very low because my parents worked all the- like, my father worked all the time. And my mother was not teaching us anything, we just played on our own, mostly. So, we had basically no education in Japanese or English, and certainly no writing skills whatsoever. So, it was a pretty rough start.

LU: Mhm.

MS: I think my grade one teacher was exceptional, in that she managed to keep me interested in schoolwork. I don't know how she did it, because half of the time we couldn't communicate. There was one other person in this class, a girl who was Japanese extraction. And she was bilingual.

LU: Oh?

MS: So, when necessary, she would interpret for me. But then I guess she found out that my Japanese was pretty poor, too.

[50 minutes]

LU: [chuckles] Oh wow. And how long did you stay there for, in-

MS: Well, I- this was Central School- Public School, which was grade one to grade eight. But later, they cut out the grade eight and made it junior public school, so it was grade one to grade six. It was right beside- It was very close to Chinese town, Chinatown. In fact, one street faced the main Chinatown street. So, we got a lot of Chinese students. And anytime there was a snowball fight, or anything like that, the Chinese- because of the Manchurian Affair, used to pick on us. And the only reason we survived was all the non-Chinese, the Caucasians, backed us up. [laughs]

LU: Oh really?

MS: And took part, like [it's in?] a snowball fight, they'd be on our side. [chuckling] Which sort of balanced things out.

LU: Mhm. [laughs]

MS: So, I made friends- All my friends were basically non-Japanese, Caucasians.

LU: Oh wow. And what kind of activities would you do?

MS: Well, in grade one we did very little. Because of language barrier, I didn't know what I was doing. But by the time I got into grade two I started to understand the language, what the instructions teachers were giving, although I used to mix it up quite often. It took 'til- I really had to get to about grade three before I really understood what's going on.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And by that time, we were sort of- Well, we didn't have much time to play, because we walked from home to school, and just got there in time, and soon as school was over, we

went home. So, we didn't have much time to play, really. But the only thing we played was we played marbles. Yeah.

LU: [chuckles]

MS: That was one game that everybody was playing, so we were able to play marbles as well. That's about the only game I remember. Sports- Aside from what was done during school hours, classroom hours, as part of our recreation, we didn't take part in at all.

LU: No? Would you watch the other children play, or-

MS: No, because we weren't around. See, we went- School started at nine, we'd get there about 10 to nine. Maybe five to nine. And as soon as school was over, we headed home.

LU: How far was the walk?

MS: Oh, it wasn't that far. It seemed very long at the time, but nothing like hers. [gestures to Gloria]

LU: [chuckles]

MS: It took us maybe half an hour.

LU: Oh wow. Still quite a ways compared to schools today.

MS: Took us about a half an hour, we weren't rushing, we were just strolling along.

LU: [chuckles]

MS: I remember the first day I went in school, my parents came and got me. Second day, he says, "I guess you know your way." And I said, "Yeah, I think I know my way." So, he made sure I got to the school, but he left me on my own for coming home. Of course, I got totally lost. And I think one of the policemen picked me up, and I knew the house address, that's the only thing I knew. So, I gave him the house address, he puts me on a streetcar, tells the conductor what the address is, and he says, "Make sure" - I guess he told him, "Make sure" I got off there. So, he stops the streetcar in front of the house, points to the house, and says, "There." [chuckling]

LU: That's your house. [laughs]

MS: That's how I got home the first day.

GS: [unclear]

LU: Were you late? Were your parents wondering where you went?

MS: No, they weren't particularly worried, they figured I was taking my time.

LU: Yeah. [laughs] Do you remember the street address- or, the house address, now?

MS: Well, the house no longer exists.

LU: Oh. What was the address?

MS: It was 639 Main Street.

LU: And it's not there anymore?

MS: [shakes head] They just completely redid the whole area-

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Just tore everything down and rebuilt the whole area. It's quite a fashionable area now.

LU: Oh wow.

[55 minute]

MS: It was there- I guess it was there until about 19- maybe 70? Because when I- 70 something? Because when I went there- third time I went to Vancouver, which was about 1972, [turns to Gloria] wasn't it? We made that trip down? Do you remember?

GS: Pardon?

MS: I said, when we made that trip down by car to Vancouver, [unclear] came-

GS: Came from Alaska.

MS: Yeah- no, no.

GS: Oh, you mean when we went across-

MS: Went across-

GS: 1992 or something.

MS: No, no.

GS: Oh '70, '70 something?

MS: '70 something-

GS: '72, yeah-

MS: When we went to Slocan-

GS: That was '72.

MS: [to Lisa] '72-

LU: Oh wow.

MS: It was still there. But it was empty.

GS: Oh yeah, 1972-

MS: And after that, it was- Next time we went, it was gone.

LU: Was that the last house that you stayed in before the war?

MS: Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: That's- we were- I was there from 19- about 1930 to 1942, summer.

LU: Did you ever go to Japanese language school?

MS: I started, but because I started working after school when I was 11, it didn't get anywhere. Just didn't learn anything, so actually, I never went to Japanese school, 'cause I didn't learn anything.

LU: So-

MS: It was a- See, it was five nights a week, and before that I could only go two nights.

LU: Oh.

MS: Okay, so, that meant that I missed most of the lessons, kept falling behind, and after I started working there was no way I could go.

LU: Mhm. Was that your first year of when you started working and going to Japanese school at the same time, or-

MS: No. I was-

LU: Were you in school-

MS: I was 11, so I must have been about second year, second year or so.

LU: Oh wow. Where did you-

MS: 'Cause I got- I got registered very late, for one thing, because I had to get all my English school going first. I guess my parents were not that fussy.

LU: Mhm.

MS: So, I really- I learned all my Japanese in the internment camp.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: POW [prisoner of war] camp, 'cause I was in a POW camp in Ontario.

LU: Mhm. And before we start talking about the war years, did- oh, what was my question? [chuckles] Just escaped right off of my head. Oh, when you were 11, you mentioned that you started working-

MS: [unclear]

LU: Where did you start working and why?

MS: I started working in a bowling alley, setting up pins and stuff like that. Because I figured I had to get enough money to go to university, and I had to start working if I was gonna do that.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah.

LU: What did you want to go to university for, do you remember?

MS: Well, I figured my parents weren't going to leave me any money, so I might as well get an education. Besides, they were always for education, they always said, "You must get education, because we can't give you anything else." And I said yeah, they're probably right, so I should go to university and get a degree, which would give me some standing in the upper [?] world.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: So, I started working and saving money.

LU: Oh wow, isn't that neat.

MS: Yeah.

LU: Gonna check this. Just gonna switch this one here.

GS: Want some water? [hands water bottle to Mits]

LU: Do you remember the name of the bowling alley that you worked at?

MS: I think it was Chapman's Bowling.

LU: Chapman's Bowling, oh wow. Just gonna pause this. [camera noises]

MS: It was still there last time I was there, in Vancouver, it was [some time ago ?].

LU: Okay. So, was it- it was still there and running, or was it just an empty building now?

MS: I'm not sure whether it was running or not, but the building was still there. But they had, you know, changed the appearance quite a bit, 'cause they tore all the top part off.

LU: Oh wow.

[60 minutes]

LU: Did either of your-

MS: So-

LU: Go on.

MS: So, I went six years in Central- Actually, I went only five years 'cause I skipped a grade. On the strength of my math, they let me go up one grade. [chuckles] 'Cause I was older- I was- I guess I wasn't older, but I was getting more mature, and they figured I'd catch up on

the rest, so they- skipped a grade. So, I was there five years. And then I went to Strathcona, which was a senior high school-

LU: Oh!

MS: Senior public school, for two years. Then I went to Vancouver Technical School, and from there I went to University of British Columbia.

LU: And what were you studying at university?

MS: I was studying for- I was gonna be a- I was taking a course that would eventually lead to engineering.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: But the war put a stop to that.

LU: Mhm. So, I guess starting work at 11 years old, you were able to save enough money to go to university.

MS: Yeah. I had enough money to carry through for a couple of years. And then I worked all summer, I used to get a summer job. I worked for the fishing industry, which was pretty good because- The hours were terrible, but pay was pretty good.

LU: Yeah.

MS: In those days, it was pretty good pay.

LU: Oh wow. What kind of jobs would you be doing?

MS: My job basically was sorting out the fish, different kind of fish that came in, and separating them. And also loading and unloading them. But I was the guy that did the final separation, sorting out what category of different fishes came in.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: By looking at the fish, going [unclear], so I can tell all the different fishes.

LU: [laughs]

MS: Yeah. Which was nice.

LU: And it's handy to know, yeah, very useful.

MS: And also, I worked on-like, these packing boats would go out and pick up these fishes from the small little fishing boats. So, I helped in that, too. [That's why I say?] the hours are terrible, because sometimes unloading would take two days, and we'd work right through.

LU: Right through? [gasps]

MS: Right through, right through. Because the boat had to go pick up the rest, and we couldn't leave it sitting there, because it would go bad. So, we had to get rid of it.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: So, we'd work eight hours, like, four-hour shifts. Four hours, then take a break, have our lunch, or our dinner, or whatever, and then go back in.

LU: So, no sleep or anything?

MS: [shakes head] No sleep, anything.

LU: [gasps] Oh wow.

MS: [nodding] Yeah. When they were in, you had to unload the thing, if you're unloading, you unload the thing before you quit. And if they- And also, if you knew there was another boat coming in, you couldn't go home, because you didn't have time to go home and come back. So, we used to sleep in the cannery, up in the loft.

LU: [chuckles] Oh wow.

MS: Because- it was fun, because we had a number of young people, you know, people who were in the last year of high school, or [unclear] start university, or something like that. Along with the ones who regularly worked on- They had that as a steady job. We were just summer employment.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah.

LU: And how old were you at that time?

MS: Pardon?

LU: How old were you at that time?

MS: I started when I was 17, and I was 19, yeah, I was 19 by- The last summer I worked was 19.

LU: So, you worked for two or three summers?

MS: Pardon?

LU: Did you work for two or three summers?

MS: I worked for two summers.

LU: Two summers.

MS: Yeah. Before that, I worked at the bowling alley all through summer. But the pay, you know, money was low. Like, I used to look after the place- Sort of- When the manager wasn't there, I was acting manager. I was 16, 15, 16?

[65 minutes]

LU: Oh wow. [laugh]

MS: 15, 16.

LU: Mhm, oh wow. Were there other students working at the bowling with you, or-

MS: Yeah, there were some other students working, most of them were fairly- well, high school, yeah, high school age. About, oh, 15, 16, 17. And some of them were already out of school altogether and they were still working. But, you know, like, it wasn't that- too [unclear] of a job.

LU: Mhm.

MS: So, if I worked during summer on the fishing, I used to get 51 cents an hour, which was considered very, very good because a typical pay was around 30 cents.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: 30, 35 cents an hour.

LU: And how much would you get at the bowling place?

MS: Bowling place was piecework.

LU: Piecework?

MS: Yeah. Other than the- like, I would get paid an hourly basis for the time that I worked, so simply [?] acted as an assistant or manager, that would be hourly. But that's only at certain times. Most of the time, it's piecework.

LU: Oh.

MS: Yeah. It's the number of- if the customer comes and you're on call, and you're [unclear]

up pins, yeah. It wasn't a- It's not a lot of money, but enough to keep you going.

LU: Mhm. And what about your younger brothers and sisters, were they able to save up and work as well?

MS: My younger brother started working when he was about 13, I guess. And the others started around that age, too, just as they were going into high school, they started working there. I was in grade school-

LU: Were they working at the bowling place as well?

MS: They worked in the bowling place as well. During winter. And most of them got summer jobs, like in the farm, dairy farms, and a lot [?] of sawmills-

LU: Oh.

MS: During the summer. Summer holidays.

LU: Mhm. Oh wow. And your mother, then, was running the boarding- room and board house, and your father was still working at the lumber.

MS: No, he was working- he was-

LU: Or sawmill?

MS: He was working at gardening.

LU: Oh, gardening now, that's right.

MS: He had a whole bunch of clients, so he was pretty busy, yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And when necessary, I used to help. And I had a couple of [unclear]- watering the lawn and, you know, cutting the lawn, and that kind of thing.

LU: Mhm, oh wow. [laughs]

MS: Yeah. See, this only- this only works during the spring, summer, but- Summer, I could [unclear] something, because that's a steady job, you know, [unclear] [pretty well?].

LU: Mhm. Oh wow, that's neat. [laughs] So, did your family own a car to get around, or how did your father get around with all of his tools?

MS: Bicycle.

LU: On a bicycle?

MS: Yeah.

LU: Oh wow!

MS: We had bicycles. All our friends all had bicycles. That was the mode of transportation.

LU: How much were bicycles back then? Do you remember how much they would cost?

MS: [shaking head] No idea, they were pretty cheap, yeah.

LU: Who did you receive your bike from? Or did you purchase one?

MS: We had bikes.

LU: Do you remember who gave them to you? Or-

MS: We bought them.

LU: Oh, you bought them.

MS: Yeah.

LU: Oh neat.

MS: But we- most of the time, we used public transit. Because, for instance, to go to university, I had to get up 5 in the morning and take a streetcar, a bus.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: It was an hour and a half trip.

LU: An hour and a half?

MS: [nodding] We were in Main Street, downtown, and the university was [points upwards] [at a point?] way, way out north, countryside. Right across the town, other end of the town.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: So, there was no way if [we go?] other than public transit.

LU: Mhm.

MS: So, we'd get there- I'd get up 5 in the morning and I'd come back around 7. And then, when we were- when war started and-

[70 minutes]

MS: Like, when I was going to Vancouver Tech, I took Air Force cadet training. I was- I knew Air Force didn't accept Japanese Canadians, but I took air force training because that was- The school decided to do Air Force training, Air Force. Because most of the kids that I knew went to the Air Force, they were already air cadets.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah. They were already air cadets, and they were all going either as a pilot or as a ground crew. But they knew what they were doing, [you know?]. And because of technical training they got, the background, they all qualified for air force.

LU: Oh wow. So how many years did you do that for?

MS: I had- actually, I had- 1939, it started, so '39, '40, '41, '42-. Three years.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And then, after I got to university, I took an officer's training course, which was night- no, they had night training because it was after school, after university courses, that they came in. So, when that happened, I used to get home about 10:30, 11 o'clock.

LU: And then be up at 5:30?

MS: [nodding] Yeah, yeah.

LU: Holy smokes! Wow.

MS: But it was a fun time.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

MS: And we also discussed what we wanna be. [chuckles]

LU: So, what part of engineering did you want to go into in the future?

MS: Well, my physics professor- See, when I was in high school, my high school chemistry teacher got his PhD in nuclear physics, nuclear chemistry physics. We called it radioactive series science. And he used to give- He gave us lectures and talks on multiple [unclear] in that field, so when I was- When I got to university I was very interested in that area. And my physics professor, who was- who I got to know very well was -I think I was, I was the only one who got 100 percent in lab.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Physics labs. So, he was quite interested in me. And he was into- just into nuclear physics. And he was telling me that that's a field that I should really get interested in,

because it was mostly math and physics. And math was my best subject, so.

LU: [chuckles] Oh wow. That's remarkable. [chuckles]

MS: [chuckles]

LU: So, what year were you in, your second or third year when-

MS: Finished my first year.

LU: Finished your first year when the war broke out.

MS: Yeah.

LU: Yeah.

MS: And so that was that.

LU: And what do you remember about the Depression years, do you remember anything about that?

MS: Yeah, Depression years I have some memory, because when I'm going to school, we used to cross this Georgia [?] viaduct, which is a viaduct from my- just north of my home, it carried us over to the other side of the railroad tracks and the creek, False Creek. And during the Depression years, under this False Creek flat, we called it False Creek- there's a False Creek that came in, and they unloaded coal, 'cause there's a coal processing plant right behind our house, and all along that area where there's a flat land, people went and built little cardboard shacks because they had no place to stay.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And we used to look down and see them, all down there. It kept on growing, and growing, and growing. And on weekends, sometimes, we'd go wandering down there and talk to these people.

LU: Really?

MS: Mhm.

LU: What kind of questions would you ask them?

MS: Well, we were interested in why they were there.

LU: Yeah. Do you remember what they said?

[75 minutes]

MS: Not very much. Most of them had very little reason why they should be there, at least in my opinion. But I guess that they were that type, that they- out of job, and they didn't want to look for job, they want to stay in the city, so that's where they ended up. I guess they found out all the other people are going there, and building little cardboard shacks and sort of tent- Didn't have plastic in those days, there was no plastic.

LU: Oh yeah?

MS: So, you couldn't cover anything with plastic. So, the best they can do was use tin cans, tin plates, corrugated material, corrugated tin, corrugated aluminum, and cardboard, and they built a shack. And they used to live there all year round.

LU: Wow, oh wow.

MS: And they didn't have any social safety net. They didn't have any unemployment insurance. We had no- They had some sort of relief system, where desperate people would get some meal tickets. But very little social support, that's why they lived there. And then

later on, after the Depression really got bad and then started to get slightly better, they cleared out the slum, and they gave them some social security money so they can find a place to eat and find a place to stay.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: But they must have had hundreds of people living out there. It started out by people living under the bridge, which was sheltered- Under this viaduct, it was sheltered from rain. So, that's where they started. And then they expanded out in both directions.

LU: Oh wow. See, it's hard to think back at a time where plastic wasn't so-

MS: There was no plastic.

LU: Available, like it is today. It's everywhere.

MS: The only thing that was available at the time was cellophane [?], cellophane [?], and that was a nitrate, very dangerous material because it burned like crazy.

LU: Yeah.

MS: That was the only material- flexible material, and they never made any sheets or anything with it.

LU: Oh wow. Those poor people, all year round in rains, you know, little bit of snow, oh wow.

MS: [nodding] If they were lucky, they were able to get these rubberized canvas. But that was expensive, they couldn't buy it.

LU: Wow.

MS: If they were lucky, they could latch [?] onto some of those.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And other thing they used to use is a cut up inner tubes of a car's tires, automobile tires.

LU: Oh yeah.

MS: And use them for shelter.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And they'd lay them up- [makes overlapping gesture with hands] kind of gives you bit of shelter-

LU: Oh wow, kind of like shingles, yeah.

MS: Yeah. They were very, yeah, innovative.

LU: I guess they would have to be, too. They'd come up with some really-

MS: And another thing, the cannery used to throw these fish heads away, 'cause they had no use for it. So under the cannery there'd be a big pit- not a pit, a catch basin, where these things land. And then eventually they put them into a [unclear], tow 'em off, dump 'em. They used to get these fish heads and cook them and eat them. [chuckles]

LU: [laughs] Oh wow.

MS: Yeah, yeah, [fry it?] in tin cans, get these fish heads, put 'em in there and eat them. Yeah.

LU: Wow. I guess it's better than nothing, mhm.

MS: Yes. And the other thing they had there was- There was a great big blackberry patch, and we used to go there and pick blackberries.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And they were there, but they didn't pick blackberries.

LU: Oh?

MS: No, there were all kinds of blackberries. That's what I remember about Depression years.

LU: Yeah.

MS: Other than that, you know, money was very tight, eh, and we really had to watch our expenditures.

[80 minutes]

MS: Other thing I remember, like, to repair a shoe, we found out if we get an old tire, and cut up the tire, and use it and hammer it on for sole, it made excellent soles.

LU: [chuckling]

MS: So, a lot of people did that.

LU: Yeah, oh wow. You wouldn't see that today, though.

MS: No.

LU: No, yeah.

MS: People are not that innovative these days.

LU: Mhm, mhm. Oh wow. [laughs] Was there anything else that you remember about the pre-war years? Any other fond memories you can think of, or-

MS: Not really.

LU: What about, you know, family gatherings, and holidays or New Year's, Christmas- Did you celebrate Christmas?

MS: We didn't have family gatherings because we were the only family, we had no relatives. We had no- We had no real relatives. We had people from the same village living about a couple of miles away, but we never got together.

LU: Yeah.

MS: So, we never had a so-called family gathering [unclear]. We had our Christmas, New Years, and stuff, just the one family, within ourselves.

LU: Mhm.

MS: Mother would do the cooking and-

LU: Did you always celebrate Christmas?

MS: Yeah, we always celebrated- Ever since about, oh, must have been about grade two, we started celebrating Christmas. Because we- I brought home- I did a Christmas- It was a holiday for school, and it was a big holiday, so we taught Christmas, teachers, taught Christmas. First year, I didn't know what Christmas was. The second year I knew what Christmas was, so we started having Christmas.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And after that it became a tradition. New Year's was always a tradition with my family because my parents celebrated it. But Christmas- I don't know when we started cooking turkey, must have been when in maybe Grade Seven or Eight, we started cooking turkey for Christmas.

LU: Oh. [laughs]

MS: Because, I guess, we hear [unclear] literature [?] that Christmas turkey, [unclear] turkey was a thing.

LU: [laughs] Oh wow.

MS: So, from then on, we used to have turkey for Christmas.

LU: Oh wow, [laughs], that's fascinating. What about other- birthdays, or?

MS: We didn't do much for birthdays- Actually, I don't think we ever did- never celebrated, bothered celebrating birthdays, we had too many of them. [chuckles]

LU: Yeah. [laughs]

MS: So, it was just another day.

LU: Oh wow. The- Have you heard about- The Heritage committee is put together the cookbook, have you heard about the cookbook we're coming out with, *Just Add Shoyu?*

GS: I heard about it, I haven't purchased the book, I know they have all kinds of interesting family inventions and discoveries and all that-

LU: Yeah.

GS: Yeah, I'd like to get a book but I know I haven't seen any.

LU: No, we haven't- it hasn't been printed yet-

GS: Oh, it hasn't been-

LU: No, it's still in editing, actually.

GS: Oh.

LU: It's almost done.

GS: I know they were asking for contributions and just didn't get around to putting in a couple of things that might've been invented by these mothers of long ago.

LU: Yeah, yeah.

MS: [pointing to Gloria] Actually, they put together a cookbook for the Buddhist church.

LU: Oh, that's right, I've heard about the cookbook!

MS: [nodding] Yeah.

GS: There have been a couple of-

MS: Couple of them.

GS: A lot of the recipes there were something that had been developed by the parents and by themselves- But when I heard about this one that the Centre [was working on, I thought, "Well, that's interesting, I should, you know, find out more contributors-" But never seem to have found time, to even talk about it. And Theresa was mentioning it to us, but- so I'm waiting for the book, then, to come out, and I'll certainly look at it.

LU: Yeah. No, hopefully it comes out- We're hoping around Christmas-

GS: Oh, really? That'll be a nice gift.

LU: But it might be just after, yeah, you might have to postpone the gift and say, "It's coming!"

GS: [laughs] Oh, that's good.

LU: "It just hasn't been printed yet," so. [laughs]

[85 minutes]

LU: But we were hoping that we could find, you know, people who would be willing to talk about if they have any memories about, you know, their parents' cooking or the smell of certain foods-

GS: Oh, yes, we have a few. , [points to Mits] he has one, and I have one recipe that the family, [points to Mits] and you have one, too, which we, amongst ourselves, put together once in a while, you remember this- But yes, I think practically every has family favourites that they've improved on, or added to, or whatever, and- that would be interesting.

LU: Mhm. [to Gloria] What do you remember about your family favourites?

GS: Well, it's called dango-jiru, and it's made of beef or beef stock with little bits of beef, and you put in all the vegetables, but the- and end up with a little bit of a dumpling sort of a thing. And it's like a stew, only it's based with some kind of a fish seasoning, which all the parents used to just love, *iriko* type of thing. And- but this was done with the beef, which we liked. And it's like a stew with soy sauce seasoning, too, and you could just pour over the rice to eat it, and [unclear] like stew. So that's the one that we sort of have in our family that we talk about. And another is- When we used to come home from the English school and run off to Japanese school, and in between we had to have something because we- Our supper won't be 'til about eight-thirty after we got back from Japanese language school. So, mother would, you know, fry some bacon and onion, and potatoes, and get it nicely fried in butter. And then she'd parboil cabbage leaves, and then she'd- we'd have like a wrap, cabbage leaf wrap with that. And then we'd- she'd put in a- We didn't have wax paper in those days, I'm sure there was- but in some brown wrapping paper, and she'd hand it to us, so we just ran from school, drop our English books, pick up our Japanese school bag, and take one of those, and run to school eating it on the way-

LU: [laughs]

GS: That's another one that I remember. [to Mits] What do you remember?

LU: [laughing] Oh wow.

MS: Yeah. Our favourite was a form of a pot pie that my father learned when he was helping the cook, camp cook. And it was very tasty. My sister still makes it occasionally. I've tried, I haven't done it for a long time, though. It's very much like a mincemeat pie, only it has actual mince beef, beef, you know, lean beef minced in there, and it's usually about that thick. [holds up fingers to show thickness]

LU: Oh. [chuckling]

MS: And it's a meal in itself.

LU: Mhm. Oh wow.

MS: Yeah. And I used to like it nice and cold. [laughs]

LU: [laughs] Do you remember your dad cooking?

MS: He didn't, very- He didn't cook very much.

LU: Yeah.

MS: That was the only thing that he had, and most of the time my mother or I cooked it. We put it together and cooked it. He just told us what to put in.

LU: [laughs] Oh wow.

MS: Yeah, my mother used to make the crust, and I used to make the filling for it, you know.

And since there was a big family, we got a pot about- [stacks hands on top of each other] that size pot, to make it in there, mix it in there, pack it in a frying pan.

LU: Oh wow. [chuckles] Are there any- When you're even cooking now, or if you walk into a restaurant, or- Are there any smells that remind you of something from-

GS: *Takuwan* smell. [chuckling]

LU: Yeah. [chuckling]

GS: I think every family had a vat or big pot where they [maybe stored?] *takuwan*, which is a- like a pickle, you know, the have you had the yellow radish, the white radish? Daikon pickle.

LU: Yup, daikon.

GS: Oh, that used to just smell the whole place, yeah.

MS: [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

GS: Nowadays, you know, they've got it so well-packed that it doesn't, you know, that if you buy it, it's okay. But when we first came to Toronto people were, you know, these Japanese stores would buy these *takuwan*.

[90 minutes]

GS: And they'd have it wrapped, and they'd be so embarrassed to come home on the streetcar because people would be looking at say, "What's that smell" sort of a-

MS: [laughing]

GS: Nowadays you can go to these places and it's nicely wrapped, you can't even have a [unclear], which is [unclear]. But, you know, but when they were being made in the homes, and practically every home had these bamboo, [moves hands to make a circular shape] you know, cartons, and you put in these- you make that, and that was- That's a smell that I think everyone remembers from back then. [looks at Mits]

MS: Yeah. Another thing we used to do that we- that I rather liked was, we used to fish these little shiners, [holds up two index fingers to show lengths] about yea long, four inches long, maybe five inches long. And bring 'em home, and then cut them. And then cut off the head and then gut them, and then we'd bake them, [just till they're very crisp?]- then we would get it into this *suribachi* which is like a bowl with a, you know- [makes circular motion with fingers].

GS: Grinding.

MS: For grinding, and we'd grind these, you know, we'd grind these down, and then we'd mix it with water and- actually, stock, we'd make a- We'd get a stock, and we'd put this into a stock and boil it, and then pour it over the rice. [chuckles] And it was very tasty, I'm telling you. Wasn't fishy, it was very tasty.

LU: Oh wow. [chuckling] I don't know if that would be one of my favourites.

MS: [laughs]

GS: [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MS: I thought it very tasty.

GS: Also remember- see, we had a lot of blackberries, and mother would make pots of blackberry jam. And then she was stirring that, you know, there would be the smell of blackberry jam. And that, I remember. [Often, she'd?] - she'd put them in these mason jars, and we had them for the whole winter. Jam. Blackberry jam. Other than that I can't remember too much of anything.

MS: That was something, that fish was- It was different. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

MS: It was different.

LU: And what about now, when you sit down and you're having, you know, New Year's dinner with your family, and you smell everything-

GS: Oh yeah. Yeah, a lot of the things we have when- Well, what I learned from mother, we sort of carry it on, of course, 'cause we can get all the ingredients. But a lot of times in those days they had to make their own ingredients, you know, you had to. But we follow the tradition, I make up practically most of the things in the Japanese- and then we've learned- some [?] have had workshop, and we've learned some more. And- but even in the Japanese way of cooking, it has changed a lot. What we do is the old, old method that we learned from Mother from 100 years ago. And nowadays they do things so differently, too. But yeah, we do have a tradition on New Year's. [points to Mits] I cook and you help sometimes, and that's it. [chuckles] Japanese New Year's.

LU: Oh wow. [chuckles] So, does the smell of food usually bring back fond family memories and family gatherings and-

GS: Hm, when we get together for family, we talk about it. I don't know whether we- I don't think we could duplicate the kind of- the scent, or even the taste of we remember. It's never the same. [laughing] It used to taste so good, and we'd think we made it the same, but it doesn't taste quite as the same. However, yeah, we do have, but fewer and fewer, because we don't eat as much, we don't eat the kind of heavy food that we used to in those days. Our tastes have, you know, really become quite also. But we do love these little Japanese foods, [nishime] and- type of things that they used to cook in certain ways.

LU: Mhm, oh wow. [chuckles] There's always lots of memories when it comes to food.

[laughs] Lot of people always remember quite a bit, so, yeah. Did your- Did you want to take a break at all?

[95 minutes]

GS: No, I was just wondering, how about your time with us, you know-

LU: Oh, I'm okay, I'm not restricted at all. But if you-

GS: We're okay.

LU: You're okay for now?

GS: We seem to be have been? gone on and on, and wandered away, too, and all that, so [unclear]-

MS: [chuckling]

LU: No, that's perfect!

GS: It's not too descript [?] or anything?

LU: No, just what we're looking for.

MS: [to Gloria] Well, [unclear]

LU: [laughing]

GS: [unclear]

MS: [They have to cut and fit to make a story]-

GS: [mimes a large stack of papers]

LU: [to Gloria] Did your family have a car as well, when you were growing up?

GS: No, we didn't. We had buggy, horse and buggy.

LU: A horse and buggy!

GS: Horse and buggy for going into town and, you know, like a buggy with one horse. And then, of course, at the farm dad had horses for the farming part. But no, we didn't own a car. Hard- Not too many people that we knew owned a car. It was going to town on a horse and buggy and, of course, bicycles.

LU: Do you remember your first car ride?

GS: I guess I must have been about six or seven. Our neighbour- not our neighbour, but people that we knew who used to visit us often, they had a car. And they didn't have any children, and he used to have a car, he used to go first to the sawmill and work there as a sort of a mechanic. But they had relatives in Duncan, you know, which is a city about 60 or 70 miles down south, and in Victoria, which is even further. And he'd come and pick us up- oh, it was even before that, I think I might have been about four or so, he would take us out and we'd go to picnics and, And go to visit Elk Falls, which is a place up [unclear] and things like that. So, I do remember they were the old model T, type of cars that he had. And I still remember how he used to go to the back and sort of crank it up and get it to move. That was- So, it must have been in the late 20s when I had a ride in somebody else's car, but we didn't have much opportunity for that. [to Mits] Did you?

MS: Hm?

GS: Ride a car?

MS: Well, my first ride in a car was driving this open back Model T that the Vancouver Tech school had. And we were allowed to, you know, [with someone along, too?] allowed to learn how to drive on it. It was a little stick shift, and clutch. [nodding]

GS: [to Mits] Well, you didn't have-

MS: It was open, it was open vehicle, they had stripped the back off. So, we got in there and we learned to drive.

GS: You didn't have to have cars, 'cause you had streetcars and all that-

MS: [nodding] Yeah, we had streetcars, there was really no need for- No need really for a car-

GS: Well, with us it was walk or horse and buggy. [chuckles]

MS: But that was the first car that I ever got into and drove.

GS: I had a car ride before you did, then. [chuckles]

MS: Yeah, I'm sure you did. 'Cause this was in high school, Tech.

LU: Oh wow. Can't learn how to drive in high school now. [chuckling] Probably wouldn't let you. Oh wow. Any other fond memories that you remember about the pre-war days, before

we start talking about the war years?

GS: You know, the thing is, I'm sure we had lots of accidents and all that, so I mean- but at our age, you know, in our 80s, we sorta remember only the fun part, the nice part, and all the, you know, miserable days, you sort of, [shrugs] you've forgotten. But anyhow, yeah. Every now and then I think, "Oh, remember that?" Do you remember doing this, or saying this, or having- but then they come and go, and I can't remember any huge incidents.

LU: Mhm.

MS: Yup. That's the problem, memory-

LU: [chuckles]

MS: [unclear], memory fades.

GS: My parents, though, they used to use a lot of the older Japanese tradition and bring it into home, different kind of celebration, or certain days.

[100 minutes]

GS: They'd talk about it and- So we'd hear about those stories, folk stories as well, and songs, we grew up with that. And mother used to- Mother had a real nice singing voice, and she'd sing all of these songs- So we knew a lot of these little children's songs before even, you know, understood what they meant, or before you could speak any of the languages. It's mostly Japanese at home, until my sisters went to school. I do remember one thing which is kind of funny- we only spoke Japanese until we started school. My older sister started school, she came home with learning a little English, and my second sister went. And then one day, we were playing outside, and we were playing in the mud, and then she said, she says to me, "[te-ga-tal-i?]." And then the other sister said, "Yeah, you've got dirty hands." And that's the first time I heard 'dirty hands.' And then my other sister says, "That means you have your [speaking Japanese]," you know. And then my other sister said, "Yeah, you have dirty hands, you're a dirty-hand girl, you're a little girl with dirty hands." And that stuck in my mind. I went home and I told Mother, says, "What is dirty hands?" And then she looked at me, she says, "That's your hands," she says, "Your hands are dirty." So, the first word I think I remember in English that I remember my- is that my hands are dirty.

[laughs] And my sister used to kid me every now and then, "You got dirty hands, you have dirty hands," and-

LU: [laughs]

GS: That's how I learned my English, little by little, one word at a time. [laughing] Before we went to school.

LU: [laughing]

GS: That's about-

LU: Oh wow. How many siblings were in your family, I don't think I asked.

GS: Well, there were seven, sort of opposite in number, we had five girls and two boys. Four girls, two boys, and then a girl. [gesture to Mits] In his instance, it was five boys and then two girls, and then-

LU: Oh wow. [chuckles] And are you the- I guess the-

GS: I'm the third in the family.

LU: Third, oh wow. Right in the middle. [chuckles]

GS: I do remember my sister saying- I didn't like school, I just had a very, very terrible time going to school, I loved playing at home, and I used to follow my dad on his, you know, on his farm work, you know, go out with him on his wagon and play in the barn, and that's what I liked. Then when I started going to school, I didn't like school, I cried every day for a whole month. And my sister had to- two of my sisters had to drag me into school-

MS: [chuckling]

GS: And I had a wonderful grade one teacher. After the first month, one day, and I was crying and sobbing away in a cloakroom, taking my coat off. And then all of a sudden, I heard beside me and big "bang" and I looked, and there she was with her yardstick banging on the radiator, and she says, "Sayoko, stop crying right now!" And I- that stopped me suddenly. I looked at her, and then she took my hands, took me to a seat, "This is your seat, you sit there, no more crying." Then from that day I started to listen, and I became the best pupil in the class at the end of the year. [chuckling] I got awards here and that, and in the end, I was able to tell stories, and it was- She would tell me to go to different class and tell the story, and- which I did, I loved school. But my sisters used to always kid me. "You didn't like school. You cried every day for a whole month." Because still remember having to just drag me to school for the whole month of September. [chuckling] And then they'd kid me, because in the end I ended up being a teacher, and that was what I did for the rest of my life. And here I was, I was gonna be a dropout in kindergarten. [everybody laughs] If they hadn't pulled me into school. But I remember I- this teacher we had, she was so good, she understood the Japanese. She had a Japanese person as a friend. And if it hadn't been for her, you know, I think I would have dropped out in Grade Six or Seven, or whenever I was just in high school.

LU: Mhm. [laughs]

GS: So, there I was.

LU: Oh wow. What do you remember about the day when you first heard about the war?

GS: Well, you know, we were in a community- We didn't have a radio in our family, others did, I think they heard.

[105 minutes]

GS: And our daily paper was a local paper, they used to get *Vancouver Daily News*, or something, but that didn't come until a few days later. So, the first time I heard about this I was in Grade 11, and I walked into school at nine o'clock, and they were talking about it. And the first thing our principal did, he gathered us all in the auditorium after, you know, that very first day, and he said that this is what he had heard, that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor, and US is at war, which would mean that eventually Canada would be involved somehow. And he said, "But there are a lot of people from- whose parents are Japanese in this school, and I don't want any of you to say anything or be nasty to them. They are Canadians, and they are pupils in this school." That's the kind of lecture he gave to everybody on that very first day. And he was [Victor Marnelli?], he was an Italian, and at the end of that year, with half the members of the school being, almost, being Japanese, you

know, the school was just diminished, it was such a small number, he joined the army, too, and enlisted. But I remember that first- so that- So, for the rest of the few weeks that we went to school before we were, you know, evacuated, we had very little problem with any of our classmates. They sort of understood that it wasn't our fault, but, you know- and they were- We had a neighbour who was so very, you know, concerned, and she'd get up in the town meetings, and they had lots of those, and say what a horrible thing they're doing to the Japanese-Canadians. And I think she was one of the only one in the community brave enough to speak up when everyone else was- But anyhow, in our community, I don't remember from the hakujin community having any kind of discriminatory reactions or talk of- Couple of our neighbours on our road sort of, you know, they- they still talked to us, but they weren't as friendly, you know, we used to be running in and out their house, but we sort of stopped that, too. But they didn't say anything to us, it was just sort of- what they might have said behind, but- [chuckles] It didn't last long because in a few months we were out of there anyhow, so. [turns to Mits] [Do you remember anything well?]? So, discrimination from them directly, I don't remember-

LU: What a-

GS: But the community itself was said [?], "Okay, we gotta get rid of them, this is what the government says," and that was it. But personally, I don't remember that.

LU: Mhm.

GS: Except my brother remembers our neighbour, who was newly arrived there, they were Czechoslovakians, and they said, "We got treated the same way in Europe, and now it's your turn to be, you know, treated this way." And he'd come- Yeah, we had to get rid of- because we had a little bit of- When we moved into Royston we had a 50-acre farm, and we had chickens, we had to get rid of all our chickens, I think we made them into chicken roasts, most of them. And then the pigs, we had to get rid of that, and but- So the farmers nearby would come by and say, "Okay, we'll take that off your hands," and they'd pay a small price for whatever. But this guy would come and say, "Hey, I could take your chickens away when you leave, anyhow." So, we made sure that we didn't have any chicken left! But the other things that- I think that he managed to sort of even- thought he was doing us a favour by taking away our calf and heifer, and that sort of thing. But except for him- he was the one that sort of overly said it was discriminate [?] or- Our other neighbours, you know, sort of didn't talk as much, but they weren't nasty to us either. I just- Well, they couldn't add to what was being done to us anyhow, so- [chuckles]

LU: How much notice did they give you before-

GS: Hm?

LU: How much notice did they give you before you had to leave?

GS: Pearl Harbor was December. In January, we started hearing about maybe, you know, this is what they're doing in the States that would happen here, too. End of January we found that, oh yeah, it's pretty certain that they'll remove, and then beginning- or rather, end of March, Dad was taken to a- he was sent to road camp.

[110 minutes]

GS: So, that was end of March that's when we, quit going to school because we knew that- We were told, you know, get ready. So, we start, you know, getting rid of things, packing up things, you know, whatever. We all thought we were gonna come back, so a lot of our things we left with our neighbours, who said they could put them in our barn or we would keep them in our attic, and so on. And then that's when- So, from about January we knew we were going to be moving. In the end of March, we were certain, and then we started getting ready. And then finally when the time came for us that we had to go, was beginning of June. So, we had about two or three months to sort of get ready. So, we stopped going to school, too, [and all that?].

LU: Do you remember the items that you had packed to take with you?

GS: Well, we were allowed only one suitcase and one, you know, pack, which you bought- canvas bag or something. And so, what we packed were mostly things, you know, clothing, our old clothing, and things like that. And then we- We packaged in boxes and left with our neighbours things like pots and pans and books, and whatever furniture that we had, we gave it to our neighbours anyhow. We couldn't take any pots and pans because the amount of things we could take was- You know, we just couldn't carry the things. But they were placed in boxes- it was sent when we went to the ghost towns afterwards. So, it was- [turns to Mits] I think in one of those bags that the [unclear].

MS: Hm?

GS: You know, it was the bags that we had to, like- Not a backpack that we had-

MS: Duffel bag.

GS: Yeah, that. We would take one of those as something that could carry in her hands.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: So, lot of things- So most of the things we carried in was what we could wear. Shoes, and clothing, and jackets. And things such as blankets and all that we had to leave behind. And they issued us very, very coarse blankets and straw mattresses once we got to the place, but- We were limited to what we can take. Some of the things we thought were important we buried, but I think they just rotted away.

LU: Do you remember the types of things you buried?

GS: I think- See, I wasn't there when they did that, I was still going to school, high school. My brother says that they buried- See, we had a picture of King George, it was [unclear], King George. And then the Prince of Wales, we had a picture of him, too. And then our Japanese Emperor and Empress, too. We just put them all in the box and covered it up and buried that. And I think mother buried some of her Japanese dishes that were- that were more used as decorative items, ceramics. And I think maybe she also buried some of- some sake, used to make [sho-chu?], you know, we used to make- I guess that was against the rule but we all did. And she buried a couple of those, very, very strong. And other things, I don't know, I think they were mementos she knew she couldn't take. But it was just a little box, so that's what she- We buried them, and we thought maybe we would dig it up, and we asked our neighbour if they would- But of course, we hadn't left any mark when we buried them, couldn't find it. But I think there was mostly like family album and pictures and that sort of thing.

LU: That were buried? Family albums?

GS: That were buried, yeah. It wasn't anything, wasn't any- We didn't have any treasure as such, because when they came, they left whatever, you know, in Japan. And we didn't have- We didn't have anything like that. Heirlooms, or anything like that, I don't think.

LU: Where was the house that you had buried these items at?

GS: Oh, that house?

LU: Yeah.

GS: Well, Dad when he left, left Courtenay dairy, he bought a 50-acre piece of land that had a house, sort of a wooden house built. And so that was our- It was our house. And eventually the custodian took it over.

[115 minutes]

GS: Taxes weren't paid on it, I guess, and they sold it. But the deed was still in dad's hands, so they sent whatever was left from the sale, which they practically gave away because, [shrugs] in those days if they sold anything to anybody really, you know, asked for it, and- So that was our house. When you went to see it years and years later, they had made it- made the house into sort of a studio, and then they built a house beside it, big house. That place is still [unclear], that whole house is still- decorated and, you know, dressed up a bit, is still there. So, that was over 50, 60 years ago.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: And it's still there, the old house is still standing.

LU: What's the address, do you remember-

GS: Hm?

LU: Do you remember the address?

GS: Well, it was rural route, a rural route number. So, they just went by such and such a house rural route, you know, our name. That's the way- 'Cause in those days, even in those rural houses, they put the box, or whatever, post box up in the front, you just have the name, they didn't have a number- It has a number now. I think the last time it had a number, but in those days, it was just [Sato?] rural number three, or something like that.

LU: Oh wow. Oh, that's neat. Yeah, I just- I recently found out maybe two weeks ago that people used to bury their items in the backyards of their houses-

GS: Mhm.

LU: You know, it's just- I also studied archaeology at school, so I'm fascinated about digging in the dirt for some reason, so. [laughs]

GS: Yeah. Well, you know they say that even some of the things the- the [time?]- even if they bury it with a covering or packaging that they think will last, it doesn't. I think what we buried all had become turned into dust long ago.

MS: 'Cause you didn't use jars.

GS: Or we didn't bury in the right place.

MS: Glass lasts.

GS: No, we didn't bury anything in the glass.

MS: You gotta bury it in glass. Glass or ceramic.

LU: Mhm. The ceramics would probably have lasted though, those dishes are probably still there.

GS: [unclear]

MS: [nodding] Yes, yes.

LU: Yeah, those would be interesting to find, they can go in a museum, mhm.

GS: So, our neighbour, you know, we said we'd buried some things there, and there were some- I think Mother had some things in there that she wanted. So, we drew the map of the place that said, "It's beside that tree," well, I guess that tree was no longer there.

MS: [laughs]

GS: "Beside these chicken houses," all the chicken house had long gone. So, there was no other real landmark that they could go by. So, they said they dug in the place where they thought it- And when we went, we couldn't even find the place. Was it- It was behind the barn, but the barn wasn't there, we can't say so many feet from here. No, we didn't leave any kind of- that kind of a landmark. We just thought that we'll come back in about two or three months, or maybe a- in less than a year, we'll know exactly where it is.

LU: Yeah.

GS: Never happened.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: So, there we are.

LU: [laughs]

MS: You were optimists. [chuckles]

LU: Yeah. [chuckles]

GS: I could say that we had a real big, important heirloom in there but no, that wasn't it.

LU: [laughs]

MS: I knew I was not coming back, period.

GS: You did?

MS: Yeah.

GS: Gee, we thought we were coming back.

MS: I had no intention.

GS: You had no- Oh, I see-

MS: No intention.

GS: Even if you had a chance, you wouldn't have gone back, eh?

MS: [shakes head] No Commercially it was not viable.

GS: In our area, in Cumberland area, not one family went back where they- to live. Actually, the person who went back there, a lot of people who went back to Courtenay and Cumberland, but they were the ones who were not there at the time of evacuation. They were the ones who came and found a job there, or they, you know, there are a lot of Japanese living there now. But the ones who live there, not one of them went back.

LU: Oh wow. Let's switch this one here.

MS: [to Gloria] [We're three up?].

LU: [laughs] Oh, I'm well prepared, don't worry.

[camera sounds]

LU: Sure, you're okay, did you wanna take a break at all? Or you're- How're you two doing?

GS: What-

MS: I think I'll take a little-

[footage skips, interview resumes]

LU: Okay, so we left off talking about what you remembered about when you first heard about the war years, and where did your family get relocated to?

[120 minutes]

LU: You mentioned your father had to go to a work camp.

GS: Mhm. Well, in beginning of June we were all moved from Vancouver Community Centre in Hastings Park. Now, I guess the conditions of Hastings Park have been- over and over, and the situation is exactly as people describe it, Hastings Park. And I was in Hastings Park for three months- two and a half months, and then from there we relocated to Sandon, which was an old silver and zinc mining abandoned ghost town. And about 1000 of the Japanese Canadians, primarily Buddhist members, went to Sandon. And then that stayed open for two years, and by that time many of the evacuees from other centres had moved out east. And so, there were vacancies in New Denver and Slocan, and so on. And my family moved to Slocan City, and I moved to New Denver and started to do the ghost town teaching there. So, that's about- sums up what I did in the ghost towns.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: Sandon for two years, New Denver one year. And then from there, I went to join my family in Bay Farm, and I stayed there one year teaching, and then I came out east.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: So- but those episodes are all- been documented by different people, Hastings Park situation, Sandon, and so on.

LU: What do you remember about Hastings Park, though?

GS: Hastings Park was- the living conditions, I guess, that's been mentioned a lot. We were placed into the horse stalls. All I remember was in the park where was our sleeping quarters, they had these horse stalls on either side, and, you know, a little sort of a walkway, cement, and they put double beds- double decker beds in the aisles. And the ones who were there early, the ones from Victoria and ones from Skeena area, they got the choice horse stalls, where they had two walls, maybe another one, and they could- They had a little more privacy than those of us who came later, we had the- We had to sleep in these double bed that was placed in the aisles. And so, the first thing they did- One of the first thing was we had to go and get our mattress, which we had to fill- these canvas mattresses- with straw- We had to fill it ourselves, and take it to our bunk beds, and that was our mattress. And they issued us a blanket each for- So, they're the army blankets, the [grading, the?] rough blankets, so we were given one of those. So, we got those, and then we had to bring our own sheets, so that was okay. So, I remember, the first thing we did was- Our living quarter was two double decker beds, 'cause there was eight of us- Dad was in the road camp, so mother and seven of us, seven kids. So, we put our blankets, we used all our blankets to cover all around the double-deckers. And the two- My two brothers, they had to

sleep in the top bunk. Well, they couldn't cover themselves, and they said they had a great time looking around, seeing all the other people getting dressed and undressed. And my younger brother- Well, younger than I- One of them was 12 years old. And he was at the age when he says, "Hey, look at all those girls!" You know. And- so that's where they- And we tried to find a place in-between the blankets, hidden, and it was difficult because that was the only privacy we had, behind those army blankets that we strung up to give us a little bit of privacy. And that's where we had to change and whatever. Our bath was- They had the *ofuro*, you know, they built that, so we could go there. Our washroom was in some part of the building, and, you know, it was these washrooms and [unclear]. Just a little door, swing door. And you could see the feet of people from each of these different, you know, cubicles.

[125 minutes]

GS: It was not that private. You just sort of managed to hide your- the top of- 'cause you could see the toilet seats, and you could see from- [raises arm to gesture] If you stand up there, you could see the top of our heads from these doors. It was-

LU: Oh wow.

GS: You know, it was not very private at all. But- So we had to sort of live through that sort of thing. But that's what I remember- And the food was- Well, there were a couple of times that the whole group decided to go on a hunger strike and not eat the food because they felt it was inadequate, which- I guess they did the best they could- I don't know, maybe a toast? Some- They had hardboiled egg in the morning, and a bowl of porridge, which was really, I found, very unappetizing. That was about it for breakfast, I don't know what they had for lunch, but we had to line up in front of the mess hall, they gave us a little tin plate, which we had to rinse out ourselves, and take home and bring it back the next day. Line up- And the entrance to the mess hall was close to one of the roads outside the Hastings Park, and you'd see all these people in their cars looking, you know, slowing down the cars, looking at us lined up with our tin plates, pointing us at us- and I guess they knew who we were- and laughing at us. I remember that. My sister, my younger sister, refused to go to the mess hall. She just absolutely refused to eat. So, we'd bring her something home, you know, maybe if there was a hardboiled egg and a piece of toast, to our little bunk house, bunk area. But I remember there were- for a time, she just says she's not gonna go and eat. I think it would traumatize her to be out there-

LU: Mhm.

GS: So, that was- it was like that.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: We had to do our laundry, but with so many hundred people, hundreds of people, all wanting to wash at the same time we had to line up, and then we had to hang our clothes on the lines. And then we had to wait 'til it dried, because I don't think they had a dish- I mean a drying- didn't have a dryer. We had a washing machine, but some of us had to use, you know, scrub it ourselves. I think- But the nicest part was that they used to have entertainment every now and then, people would use that arena and put on shows, you know. The members themselves, they had- a group tried to- They were very good that way,

Japanese people, if they are in situations like that, make the best of it, and- So we had entertainment. And for those of us who were still in high school they had university students who were in the park, and they came and coached us in correspondence, we got- We were able to apply for correspondence and get our names in, and- So there was a certain time of the day in the morning where we could go to this arena and get into our little group and say, "I need some help," in science, or math, or whatever, and the university students were there to help us in that. And then, we'd do our papers. So, those were the good parts of it, but I was there for only two months. By that time, they had opened Sandon. I think Kaslo was one of the first places open for the evacuees. And then Sandon, and then after that some of the other places that they had to build these huts, the little cabins, Popoff, Bay Farm, Lemon Creek, they came later in the year. Sandon was an old mining town, all vacant houses, and so they put electricity in the houses and they made it ready for us, and- so that was- that was the sort of situation. But I think everyone who's gone through, the ghost town, remembers. If they've gone through Hastings Park, whatever they say about Hastings Park is so true. It was horrible. And the ghost town, well, we made the best of it. I think in the end a lot of the young people, they had fun in the ghost town.

[130 minutes]

GS: Amongst people, they had schools to go to, and they were- They had high schools that the church members put up, volunteered and ran, and they got- they managed. Ones who really suffered were the ones who were in the middle of their high school years and couldn't finish, either being in a certain place at a certain time, or gone- the evacuations places where the high school was not available, and they- Or they found that the family needed them to work 'cause they were in their mid-teens. They missed out finishing high school. And quite often you'd say, you know, "I wish we had a couple of years to finish high school" and they would have done this, this, and that. They were the ones who, I think, really lost out, the ones who could not finish high school, even- but had to go to work to help out the family.

LU: Mhm. And you finished yours by correspondence.

GS: Yeah, well, I started correspondence, I had- They gave us Grade 11, the school-

LU: Oh.

GS: Gave us Grade- so, I took Grade 12 by correspondence and went into New Denver. And in Sandon, they had night school for those taking correspondence. And here, too, the high school teacher- university students who were there, until they were evacuated, they helped us out in our courses. And I went to New Denver to write our exams. So, I got my Grade 12 that way. In BC [British Columbia], they didn't have Grade 13 in a lot of places, I took [?] - got [?] my Grade 13 until after I came to Ontario. But-

LU: Oh.

GS: Yes, I got my high school by correspondence. And then when I finished the Grade 12 course, they asked me to go in for teaching at the ghost town schools. So, that's what I did for a couple of years.

LU: Oh wow. And-

GS: So, that was my ghost town years.

LU: And where in Sandon were you staying, 'cause I know- Wasn't there the main strip, and then there was kind of a mountain side?

GS: Yes, that's right. There were- The main strip had houses on both sides of that Carpenter Creek, which was bordered without- with wooden planks to make into a street. And that was a river that was the main street. [uses fingertip to trace street layout] Now, they had mountain- They had houses up the mountain, you had to go up this way and that way. I wasn't up in the mountain part, I was in the main street, one of the- was in a number four building in the middle of the main street, which was formerly a hotel? [Wasn't just?]- they had, in the olden, early 1900s when it was a thriving mining town, they had all these rooming houses and hotels, and the building we lived in was one of the smaller hotels. It had several rooms on the second floor and a kitchen, and then the lower floor, they had a fairly huge kitchen, and then rooms and meeting areas and that sort of thing.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: So, I was- it was one of these old houses, which already had electricity.

LU: Oh.

GS: So, we didn't- So, when you're in Sandon, most of us had electricity. Ones who had- who had to live in these newly built tarpaper shacks in Slocan- the City was okay, but- Bay Farm, Popoff, and Lemon Creek, they had to use coal lamps or gas lamps.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

GS: So. Very primitive way of living, but-

LU: So, were-

GS: Hm?

LU: Did your father stay in the work camps the entire time, or did he meet you?

GS: Oh, by that time I think the ruling in the road camps was if you're a family man, if the family is in any of these centres, they can go back to the family, join the family. Because this- Kinzie Tanaka, who was a person in the- He was sent to the road camp, too. He had written an article to the government saying it's bad on their moral, their- If you're going to expect them to do the kind of work on the road camp you have to let them join the family, or give them access to joining the family, or communicating with the family, otherwise the whole thing is going to fail, you know, the road camp is-

LU: Yeah.

GS: So, I think his letter was one of the main reasons they decided that okay, the married people with families in the ghost towns can go back. So, my dad came back to the- came to join us in Sandon, in summer. He went there in March, to the ghost- to the road camp.

[135 minutes]

GS: And in summer, he was able to join us in Sandon, because we were already settled in Sandon at that time.

LU: And-

GS: So, that was it.

LU: And did he go back to road camp after?

GS: No.

LU: Or did he stay there?

GS: He was released from the road camp. So, he was in the road camp maybe about four or five months. Some people stayed in the road camps for a couple of years, I think. According to- who is it? Yon Shimizu's book [The Exiles, 1993], he wrote something. But lot of these married people with families were allowed to join their families in these ghost towns, and Dad was one of them. So, he joined us in Sandon in the summer of '42, that's where we were- that's where he stayed with the family, right through.

LU: Oh wow. So, was he working when he came to Sandon, or your mother?

GS: Well, in the road camp I guess they were paid about, what? 22 cents an hour, or something? Well, they were paid a certain- maybe about 40 or 45, I don't know what it was, very small amount. Half of it went to, you know, their keep, rent [?] and board. And so, what he was able to send home was maybe about 22 cents an hour, which he got, and that was [unclear]. Now, when he went to Sandon, the Commission found a job for him. Since he knew how to handle horses, he was given charge of a couple of teams of horses and a wagon, and he'd be delivering the wood to all the houses. That was his job in Sandon, with the team of horses. And there were only about two people in the camp who had experience of, you know, handling horses, and dad was one, so he had that job of being, you know, driving his team of horses on a wagon and delivering wood, you know, to all these houses all over. Which- I guess there were people out there cutting wood, too, that was one of the jobs, but yeah, he had a job when he was in- Now, when he went to Slocan City after two years at Sandon- I'm not sure what he did, but they, you know- The Commission had some kind of a job for most of the men. If they didn't, they were sent out East. They were told- They gave the jobs to married men, or older people. The younger ones were denied jobs, saying, "Go out East."

LU: Oh.

GS: Yeah, the younger ones, if they were- if there were any young people- so, towards the end none of the ghost towns had very few, you know, eligible man, they had all gone East or they were already married-

LU: Yeah.

GS: And living in the ghost towns doing some other jobs.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: But the jobs were, you know, there was things like cutting wood in the- or firefighting was another big job that they had to do every now and then, go out firefighting, or they- they had different jobs that the Commission had for the people.

LU: How many Japanese people or families were in Sandon?

GS: Well-

LU: 'Cause it wasn't very big, was it?

GS: Sandon, I don't know about families, but the total number of people was just slightly less than 1000-

LU: Wow.

GS: Counting, you know, children and- women and children. That was one of the smaller

places. And it was about 10 miles from the nearest town, which was New Denver. And things had to be, you know, taken there by truck or by, you know, by the rail. It was- I think it was difficult for the Commission, Security Commission, being able to keep it up, so after two years they closed the camp.

LU: Oh. Yeah, I was always wondering why people had moved from Sandon into Slocan City, and moved into the other camps, but I guess that makes sense that they had to close it down.

GS: Well, see the Commission and the government kept on saying, "Move out East," you know, "Find jobs out East," and- Otherwise, you know, sign to go to Japan. [That was?], "If you don't sign to go to Japan, we know that you want to stay in Canada, okay, get out of the ghost towns and find a job out East." Because once you found a job out East, they no longer had to make sure that we were, you know, looked after in the ghost towns. So, a lot of people, especially the younger ones, came out East.

[140 minutes]

GS: And by 1943, towards the end of '43, a lot of the ghost towns had vacancies in there, you know, in those huts, and those place because the families had moved out East.

LU: Mhm.

GS: And so that left places opened in Slocan City, Bay Farm, Popoff and Lemon Creek, New Denver. And so, the first place they closed was Sandon. And then they said, "Okay, there's houses left that you can go to in New Denver, Slocan City," and they just said, "You can go here, you can go there. Oh, you have a family of so many? Well, there's a place where you can go." So, in that way our family went to Slocan City. And then, shortly after that, I think, Kaslo closed. It was similar situation to Sandon, and the old buildings were used as places for the Japanese Canadians to live. And- Kaslo was closed now, too. And then after that, once the war was over, from end of '45 to beginning of '46, Roseberry closed, and then Bay Farm, Slocan City. And then people- They kept New Denver open because the ones that were going to Japan sort of gathered- must have been New Denver or Tashme, one of those places. [looks at Mits] I think New Denver was the place, because if they were not gonna go out East, they closed the ghost towns and put them all in one spot, and I think New Denver was the last place. And from there, I think they started moving into Japan, the ones who had signed to go to Japan.

LU: Yeah, oh wow.

GS: And that was towards the end of 1945, and throughout half of 1946. And New Denver was open for another whole year, from the schools. And then after that they closed the schools and anyone who lived in New Denver went to the local schools, they were- so that would be 1947. By that time, a great number were out East. And then the ones who didn't find a place out east, the Commission found them Neys camp- [northern Ontario, east of Thunder Bay]

LU: Neys camp?

GS: Neys hostel, and a few hundred people were placed in Neys hostel. They were the ones who could not find- who want to stay in Canada but could not find a place in Ontario or

Quebec, and about 400 people were placed in the Neys hostel. And then from there they tried to find places for them to go. But a lot of them had family, small children, and by that time, too, even the farms in Ontario were not asking for any people to- and then they weren't able to come into the cities without a job.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: So, they were left in the hostel in Neys, and the Commission was still looking after them, and so they had these former schoolteachers to teach them at this hostel. There were about four or five of them. And then when they closed the hostel- and a great number then moved to the pulp camps in northern Ontario, forming camps like Camp 72, Camp 76, and all that, pulp wood cutting camps. They asked the teachers [will go, some?] teachers to teach there as a continuation from the BC ghost towns. And that was okay for about a year, or a year and a half, when they decided if they're going to have these camps, in Ontario, it has to come under the Ontario system of, you know, schools. And so, in 1947, yeah, in 1947 these two camps were considered Ontario, under the Ontario school system. So, that meant they had to hire Ontario qualified teachers.

LU: Oh.

GS: And at that time all the ones who were ghost town teachers, who were teaching in the camps, they had to resign, of course, because they didn't have the Ontario teaching certificates.

[145 minutes]

GS: And this one camp that had the schoolchildren, which was Camp 72, they hired two Ontario-qualified teachers because that was the rule, they had to hire qualified teachers. But those two teachers, having to go to a place like Camp 72, all Japanese children from grades one to eight, about 50 of them there, so two teachers, one in the junior and one in the senior-

LU: Oh wow.

GS: Just couldn't get along with the children, the kids hated the teachers- And you can't blame those kids, because all they knew were the ghost town, Japanese teachers-

LU: Yeah.

GS: And then they had these Caucasian teachers who had no idea of what to do in the camp. They hated the camp life, which was so primitive, too. And after one month they just up and quit, they just walked off, they say, "We can't teach here." And so, there was this one school, which was under the Ontario system of school, without teachers, and they sent out- they put on an ad, but no one applied. And then they went back to the BC Security Commissions and said, "If you can find any teachers"- and so they said, "Okay, how many of the BC teachers who had taught in these- in Ontario, are left who can teach?" But there was one who said that she'll go back, and she had been a principal in a ghost town-

LU: Oh wow.

GS: And I was one of them who taught with her, in New Denver, that is. And she asked me, "Are you doing anything important?" I said, "No, not really." I was working in a hat factory then. And she says, "Would you like to come up and teach with me in Neys." And I- She told

me, and I said, "Okay." And so, she and I went to teach in this camp. And they were so happy to see us. And they were so happy to see the school going back [on its foot?] again. But at the end of that year, the camp was gonna close anyhow. So, we were there one year. And at that time, you know, with that school, for that one year because it was an Ontario school, and so we had all these different papers with qualifications and everything. Although I didn't have Ontario certificate, they said- They accepted us as temporary teachers. And then when that camp closed, they said, "You better get yourself an Ontario certificate, because, you know, you'd like to- we'd like you to continue teaching somewhere." So, I enrolled in the Ontario teaching college, and I got the Ontario certificate, that's what I- But anyhow, that was a kind of funny situation that got me back into the teaching, but-

LU: Mhm.

GS: But- anyways. That's my- the story of my- how I got into Ontario teaching.

LU: So, you said you were teaching in New Denver, did you leave your family in Slocan City, or-

GS: Oh yeah, well, my family went straight from Sandon to Slocan City-

LU: Okay.

GS: Well, I didn't go to Slocan City because it was the beginning of the summer, I went straight to New Denver, and they had us- those of us, you know, 'cause they wanted me to go to summer school there. And in summer school they had us sleeping in these- In New Denver, the schools were these tarpaper shacks that they had for living, you know, houses for all the others. Each one of those, there was about eight or nine of them, converted to school.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: School. Grade one had its own, you know. And it was these three-room shack, which was converted into one big school for each class. So, during the day, when we were taking the summer course, that was our, you know, bunkhouse. That was, you know, the schools became our bunkhouse, and we slept there.

LU: Oh wow.

GS: And we went to the local school, which they allowed the Commission to use as our school for teachers. So, we went there for our lessons, and then we came back to the New Denver orchard, you know, into our bunkhouses. Now, with school, with the bunkhouses- they became schoolhouses again. And those of us who were out of towners had to find lodgings somewhere else, which we did. But-

[150 minutes]

GS: So, I didn't go to Slocan City until after- I mean, I used to visit my parents, but to live until my year in New Denver was over, and then I left New Denver and applied to teach in Bay Farm, which was walking distance from Slocan City [unclear].

LU: Oh yeah.

GS: So, I was in Slocan City and teaching in Bay Farm for almost the whole of next year. Then I came out East.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

GS: Yeah, I became a- I was a housemaid when I first came to Toronto.

LU: Do you mind if we just pause for a minute?

[footage skips forward]

LU: Wonderful. So, [chuckles] Mits-

MS: Yeah.

LU: What do you remember about when you first heard about the war?

MS: It was- as I say, we didn't have a radio either. But our friends all had radios. And I think it was Sunday morning. We got a call on the telephone, saying that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor.

LU: Who did you get the phone call from?

MS: A person named- I think it was Louis Suzuki, Joy [?] Suzuki's brother. He's a big [?] friend of mine, just passed away last year.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: A few years ago, last year. They were a good friend of ours, and he called and say that Japan had just bombed Pearl Harbor. It was in the- on the radio. That's how I found out.

LU: What was your reaction?

MS: My reaction? Bit shocked, but not really that much, because it- the way things were moving, I was pretty sure there was gonna be a war. And Japan has a precedent of attacking without warning. They did the same with the Russo-Japanese War, they attacked [unclear] and [unclear] without warning. So, it's not uncommon that they would have done something like that. Didn't surprise me that much, I thought that ABCD encirclement would certainly precipitate something very drastic, because no country is gonna go down without a fight, and so it wasn't- it was a shock, but not that big a shock.

LU: Mhm. So, you were just in your first year of university-

MS: Mhm.

LU: And what was the reaction of everybody else around you?

MS: Pretty quiet. The first thing we noticed when I got back from the weekend, you know, was a notice saying that the Japanese Canadian were to turn their uniforms in.

LU: School uniforms?

MS: Yeah- no, no. Army uniforms.

LU: Oh, army uniforms. 'Cause you were in the cadets.

MS: Yeah, 'cause we were in- like, we were in the cadets, eh? We were training for Officer's training, so we had regular uniform and there was a notice up, [said turn?] the uniform in. But I wasn't- I was in the common- not in the common room area on Monday, so I turned up in uniform on Tuesday, expecting that something would be announced officially. And a news- *Herald* reporter wanted to take a picture of me, you know, with the uniform and the big [unclear] coat thrown over my shoulder, and he gave me a full-size picture in the paper, and a statement that, like I said, we're not there to be trouble, you know. And I think the quote from Colonel Shrum [Gordon Shrum], who was in charge of the training, was that

they didn't want to see any Japs [sic] in uniform on the campus. Now, he knew damn well, all of us on the campus were niseis, Canadian-born. But that was his statement, that was [the only thing that came up?].

LU: Mhm.

MS: So, we turned in our uniform.

LU: How many niseis were there?

MS: Quite a few.

[155 minutes]

MS: In the armed [?] services. I have a list of all the people that were there.

LU: Oh, do you?

MS: I guess- must be about 30 or so.

LU: Oh wow. Would you mind if we made a copy of the list?

MS: Yeah, I'll send you a copy.

LU: Okay. Yeah, that would be great for the archives.

MS: It came from the archives of the University of British Columbia. I

LU: Oh wow, oh wow.

MS: I have a fair amount of documentation of theirs.

LU: Yeah?

MS: [nods] 'Cause I was- you know, I used to give talks to the school kids on war years and the fact that some of us were sent to a POW [prisoner of war] camp, which is not- POWs are not intended for Canadians. They were for enemy soldiers, enemy aliens.

LU: Mhm

MS: And we were sent to a POW camp. So, it was quite an experience. So, I do give talks, used to give talks to school students and things like that, just to let them know that these things can happen in a democratic country.

LU: [shuffling papers] Sorry. So- and you turned in your uniform?

MS: Mhm.

LU: What was the reaction of everybody when you were turning it in, what about all the other-

MS: Very little reaction.

LU: What [?]-

MS: Because the environment was not conducive to any reaction on our part or their part. The general attitude- our attitude- niseis attitude was, "Okay, this is war. We'll try to comply with whatever they say," because War Measure Act was in place.

LU: Mhm.

MS: And unfortunately, not too many realized what War Measure Act meant. Some of us did, because we were interested, and we had some knowledge of it. And having joining the [COTC?], we were aware of the BNA [British North America] Act. BNA Act, which spelled out- [phone ringing]

LU: Oh, sorry.

[phone rings, Lisa answers off-screen. Interview resumes at 2:39:04]

LU: Sorry. So, what was the reaction of the other niseis having to hand in their uniforms, too, did-

MS: They were- we were all disappointed.

LU: Yeah.

MS: Because we- when we joined the armed forces for officer's training, we had sworn our allegiance to the King. See, there was no Canadian citizenship. That came in about '49 or something.

LU: Mhm.

MS: We were all British subjects, 'kay, and we owed our allegiance to the Crown.

LU: Right.

MS: So, we've- we were- we've done everything that we could to pledge our loyalty to this country. And we thought that, you know, it wasn't really a fair thing to do, but with the War Measures, they had the right to do it.

[160 minutes]

LU: Mhm.

MS: You can- they can do what they want, pretty well. And so, what we wanted was we wanted to finish the year. And that, they agreed to. For instance, all the professors, standard rule was, if the doors are closed, you don't come in. You're late. You don't come in. We had- we were excused from that, we were exempted. They said, "Anytime you get here, you can get in." Because curfew was on.

LU: Right.

MS: 'Kay, we were not supposed to be out after dark or before dawn. Well, I totally ignored that because I had to get on the streetcar and get to school, you know, university, on time. My Chinese friend says, "Want a button?" The Chinese wore these buttons, he said, "I'll get you one if you want one." I said, "No, I don't want one!" [chuckles] "They're gonna catch me, they're gonna catch me, but I'm gonna defy it!" And so, that was one exception that they all made, 'cause the- and if we had to go home early because of curfew, we were excused. We never did, we stayed. [chuckles]

LU: Well yeah, because, you know, you've paid the tuition, and you've paid for that education.

MS: Yeah, yeah. And so, other than that, there was no [unclear] back [?], except that those of us who were in the military training, officer's training, our training ceased as of that day. We turned the uniform in, we're excused.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah. That differentiated us from the treatment that we got at the Vancouver Technical School. When the war broke out in Europe, Second World War, '39, the big question came up, apparently what do we with these Japanese-Canadians? Because they're a part of the Axis. And the school ruling was, treat them exactly like the rest of the Canadians. That's why I was able to join the Air Cadet training. But at university level, that was different. And I think that, to a large degree, reflects on who was in command at the time. I think Gerald Stewart was in command of the Pacific [?] corps, and Colonel Shrum was the- in command

of the militia for the university.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

MS: Yeah. And it's amazing that that same Colonel Shrum became the chancellor of Simon Fraser.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Oh, when I was joining it was interesting, because he was the one that swore me in. And I put down my religion 'Buddhist' and he had a Bible. So, we had a discussion on how we were gonna go about this thing. Because, I told him, I said, "Bible doesn't mean anything to me when I'm swearing," you know.

LU: Mhm.

MS: So, we agreed that we'll do without the Bible, just raise my hand. [chuckles]

LU: [laughs] Oh wow. So, was religion always a big part of your family, though, growing up? Was your-

MS: [shakes head] No, it was not a part of me, except that- because there was a line saying 'religion,' and my family religion was Buddhist, I put down 'Buddhist.'

LU: Right.

MS: Although, during my high school years, in fact, even from the latter part of public school, I did go to Christian church.

LU: Oh.

MS: Yeah. My rationale for that was I'm living in a Western Christian society, I'd better know something about it, if I'm going to be in that society. So, I went to Christian church, and I took Bible classes- lessons, Bible lessons. I was in this cups [?], for [?] [unclear] Christians group. I was still going to Buddhist church- temples, but I thought I'd better do that, because if I don't, I'd be somewhat handicapped in not knowing what the general society expects.

[165 minutes]

LU: Mhm, mhm.

MS: But they- they did recognize that, when I was swearing in, the Bible wasn't appropriate.

LU: [chuckles]

MS: Which somewhat surprised me at the time. But after that, you know, all that training, everything, ceased as far as the Japanese Canadians were concerned. They were excused.

LU: Mhm.

MS: They did give us deferment from going to a road camp-

LU: Oh.

MS: Until graduation for that year, the term was finished for the year. And that meant that I got three deferrals.

LU: Oh wow. So, you were able to complete your first year.

MS: For- yeah. For that year, complete that year. And couple of my professors made it a point of sitting down with me and telling me, "Continue going to school." Which I ignored.

[chuckles]

LU: [laughs]

GS: Spent four years in the- in the internment. [to Lisa] You know, Lisa, we're taking such a lot of your time, I guess you missed your lunch period and everything? [chuckles]

LU: I'm okay! Are you folks okay, though, or?

GS: No, no, we're okay, [gestures] but you're-

LU: No, I'm fine.

GS: You're- having gone without much sleep and all that, you know-

LU: No, I'm okay. [laughs]

GS: [And you're taping?] both of us, which means double time and all that. I thought, you know, we could cut off anywhere.

LU: No, no-

MS: So basically, what happened was that after the deferral, I had to report. And when I reported they said, "Well, you're going to road camp." I said, "No." They said, "Why not?" And I said, "I'm- I was born here, I swore my allegiance to the Crown. I see no reason why I should even be moved."

LU: Mhm.

MS: So, we had a little discussion, and then they said, "Okay, we have a place for guys like you." [chuckles]

LU: So, who were you speaking to?

MS: Someone from the Commission.

LU: Oh.

MS: So, they were civilian authorities, part of civilian authority. I think they were part of the RCMP [Royal Mounted Police] group.

LU: Mhm.

MS: Can't say that for sure, I don't know whether they were RCMP or just someone from the Commission that was looking after placing Japanese-Canadians. But anyway, he says, "Well, we got a place for guys like you." [chuckles] So, they put me into a cage-

LU: Into a cage?

MS: Yeah, they had a steel mesh cage, you know, iron mesh, iron cage. And they- Mounties, you know, put me in the cage, and then got a car and took me to the immigration building in downtown Vancouver, and they turned me over to the military.

LU: So, you never went back to your room at the-

MS: Nope.

LU: Or, your house-

MS: I didn't go back to the house. I never went to Hastings Park, never went inside Hastings Park. They took me straight to immigration building and turned me over to the army.

LU: Mhm.

MS: The army sergeant says, "Well, you're a prisoner of war now." I said, "How can I be a prisoner of war in Canada when I'm born here and I lived here and I'm Canadian?"

LU: Yeah.

MS: I said- he says, "Well," he says, "War Measures Act, you're enemy armed personnel." I

said, "I'm not armed." I had this little pistol ornament, which I had on a keychain with a watch. He says, "You're armed." [laughs]

LU: [laughing] Really?

MS: Anyway, he made sure there was nothing in there.

LU: Yeah, yeah.

MS: Cocked the thing and discharged it, made sure that nothing in there. And that's the way I ended up in the immigration building.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Where we were kept for about a month and a half.

LU: In the immigration building?

MS: Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Under military guard.

[170 minutes]

LU: What was the living arrangements like, how did they house you?

MS: They had one floor; one floor was taken over for those of us who were to be sent over to the POW camp. And we were given one mattress and one blanket. That was it.

LU: Clothes?

MS: Whatever we were wearing.

LU: Really.

MS: No, there were no- You just went in as you are, you were given a blanket and a mattress and a place to sleep on the floor, and that was it.

LU: What about washrooms, or to have a bathroom, or-

MS: There were washrooms-

LU: Yeah.

MS: There was a washroom, bathroom. But no shower facility or anything. And that's where we stayed for a month and a half.

LU: So, a month and a half of no showering or anything-

MS: In the clothes we were wearing, no showers. And we were given two meals.

LU: A day?

MS: Mhm. The main meal was dinner, which was a bowl of rice with two pieces- [makes a square shape with hands] two cubes about that big of meat, in a stew stock poured over the rice. That was the main meal. And then we had the one brunch.

LU: And what was brunch?

MS: Far as I can remember, it was a toast, cold toast, and I think it was tea. Cold toast and tea.

LU: That's it?

MS: Mhm.

LU: That's all you would eat?

MS: Mhm.

LU: [gasps]

MS: This was the standard army fare, you know, this was POW fare, [unclear].

LU: Yeah.

MS: And I guess they just didn't have the facilities for looking after a bunch of us.

LU: How many people were in there?

MS: I think we had- By the time we were shipped out we had about 60, 70, in that one floor. [makes sweeping motion with hand] It was just, you know, laid right out.

LU: Just one big open floor?

MS: One [big open?] floor, everything was completely covered with blankets. And then you had to walk between everyone if you wanted to go anywhere.

LU: [gasps]

MS: During the daytime, the ones in the middle moved it off to the side. So, we could have a place to walk around.

LU: Mhm, mhm.

MS: And that's what it was.

LU: What would you do while you were there?

MS: Nothing. Couldn't do anything. We couldn't go out, we couldn't communicate.

LU: Mhm.

MS: Our communications were completely cut off.

GS: [to Mits] Would the families come out to visit?

MS: No.

LU: Did your family know where you were?

MS: Oh yeah. They knew- well, they knew because people had seen me, seen us, you know. And also, the fact that- well, they- see, they kept- There was no official visiting. But the immigration building is right in the middle- you know, in this harbour part of the city. And there's streets and sidewalks and everything all around. So, the families would come up there and shout at- you know. And the windows are open so you can hear them, and you talk to them. You can, you know, there's no official visit, but they can come from the street and holler.

LU: Yeah.

MS: Yeah. But you can't send anything in because we were second floor, I think we were second- second or third floor, we were up. But we could throw things down between the bars. [chuckles]

LU: What are you gonna throw down, though? [laughs]

MS: Well, some people used to throw notes down.

LU: Oh.

MS: Yeah, you write notes on the toilet paper and throw it down. [chuckles]

LU: Oh my goodness.

MS: Yeah.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: But it was an interesting place. Very poorly organized, because there was no organization at all. Neither amongst ourselves or the groups that were guarding us.

LU: Yeah.

MS: They just threw us in there and left us there.

LU: So how many people were there to guard you?

[175 minutes]

LU: If there was about 60ish-

MS: I have no idea how many where- 'cause there was a- the immigration building is a big building, and guards were on a different floor.

LU: Oh.

MS: They didn't need to guard us, because we were, like, in the immigration with bars on the window. Doors were barred. And there was nowhere to go.

LU: Yeah.

MS: The whole floor is secured.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah. It's an interesting experience.

LU: Mhm.

MS: And after about a month and a half they put us on these railroad coach, you know, hardwood, hard wood bench, and shipped us out to Angler.

LU: How long was the drive?

MS: I think it was about three and half days or so. Three and a half, four days.

LU: And did they stop, give you breaks, or-

MS: [shakes head] Just kept on going.

LU: Food, nothing?

MS: No, they just kept on going. We were- I think we were given sandwiches.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And the- you know, like, train didn't stop, because the first train contained the guards, soldiers. So, every time the train slowed down or stopped, the guard had to get out and guard, both sides of the train, make sure nobody escapes.

LU: [chuckles]

MS: Because we were treated exactly like a POW. IN fact, we were treated exactly like German POW, because these people had experience with the German prisoners of war, they'd been at war for two years. So, you know. And the BC- Going through the Rocky Mountains didn't impress me at all at that time. We didn't see much, for one thing, I think it was dark when we went through the mountains. The only- And going through the prairies didn't make any impression, just flat land and, you know, you see a little building coming up, it grows bigger, and then it goes down and dies away at the other horizon. The one thing that I remember from that trip was we went- We entered Kenora, Ontario, and it was nighttime, and they were lit up. You know, like a tourist year, tourist time? The stations were all lit up, and people were standing around, and here's the soldiers running out to the side the station to make- shoving everyone back. [chuckling] But it was a very beautiful town, you know, with the lights on. Because we were used to blackouts.

LU: Oh yeah.

MS: See, since the war broke out, Vancouver is in blackout, had to be blacked out. We had to black out everything.

LU: Really?

MS: All the windows had to be covered-

LU: I didn't know that.

MS: Skylights had to be covered. A blackout or whatever was it, I think, yeah.

LU: Why?

MS: I guess they thought that they could be bombed. [chuckles]

LU: Maybe.

MS: So, they set up a blackout. I think it was in place for maybe a month or two? Maybe more.

LU: Mhm.

MS: Then they sort of backed off. But Kenora was beautifully lit up.

LU: Yeah, oh wow. So, what would you do to pass the time if you weren't- like did anybody have-

MS: On the train? There was nothing, [shrugs] you just sat.

LU: Yeah.

MS: Couldn't move, you know, guards wouldn't let you move.

LU: Did you talk, or-

MS: Yeah, you could talk with the people behind you-

LU: Yeah.

MS: In front of you, but basically you were stuck in that little- There was a guard placed at each end of the car so that, you know, you were pretty well told not to move around.

LU: Mhm.

MS: There's a pretty hard sleeping bench.

LU: Oh yeah. Oh wow. And then did- Would people sing to pass time, or did you hear a lot of people singing?

MS: Nope. They were- Most of them were just dozing away.

LU: Mhm.

MS: Well, we'd been in the immigration building for about a month and a half, eh, so we were kind of tired, and we didn't have any plans or anything because we just- Guards were there, and they said, "Do as you're told. Stay put."

LU: So, what would you do in the immigration to pass the time?

MS: Virtually, just did nothing.

[180 minutes]

MS: Wasted our time.

LU: Just sat and talked, or-

MS: Yeah, there was no books, there was no reading material. There's not much you could do.

LU: Nobody had a deck of cards to play card games or some-

MS: I guess there might have been some, but we didn't.

LU: Yeah.

MS: And you know, like little groups. Like, if you're stuck in this corner, then forms a little group there. If you're stuck in the middle around here, that forms a little group. Depends on where your mattress is.

LU: Right, mhm.

MS: Because you can't move around too much. Just isn't that much space.

LU: Mhm.

MS: So, you're sort of stuck with your neighbours.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And the group I was stuck with, we didn't do anything. We just talked a bit.

LU: Just gonna switch this one. That was close. [camera noises] So-

MS: Actually, it was a big waste of time in there.

LU: Yeah. [laughs]

MS: There's no [unclear], there's no sport, you couldn't do anything, just- there's no space to do anything. So, we just talked about various things, and- not even philosophical.

LU: Yeah. [chuckles]

MS: Yeah, just idle talk.

LU: Oh wow. Did you meet a lot of friends there, though, that you've managed to stay in touch over the years, or?

MS: [shakes head] No. We- when we- see, actually that was very temporary, we knew that was going to be very temporary. But we knew that once we got to Angler, they're gonna be a more permanent situation. And depending on where you got assigned at Angler, you did start making friends. Like, I was in three- hut 3B, and that was mostly from- people from Steveston.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah. They were mostly people from Steveston. There were some- I think there were maybe two issei, two issei, maybe three in the bunch, in the whole hut.

LU: Hm.

MS: Until the road camp guys came in, and with that we probably increased our- I think there was about 70 of us in that one hut. And these are, you know, regular army hut. And I think we ended up without about maybe eight or 10 isseis.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: No, they were- Of the isseis, I guess three were bilingual. And the rest were mostly- Japanese speaking, seven [?] Japanese-speaking.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah.

LU: So, were you able to converse with them, though, you Japanese was okay, or?

MS: Well, [holds up paper] I've got it written up here, what it was like, but that's what I used as a guide for talking, and giving out the- I give out a handout for lectures. But what surprised me was that the operating- the ones that were there ahead of us, we were the second ones there. The group that was there ahead of us were mostly niseis, 20s and 30s. And it really surprised me that operating language of the camp was Japanese. Because the

niseis that I knew didn't speak Japanese. [chuckling] You know, like, George Suzuki and Louis, they didn't speak any Japanese worth talking about. They may be able to say, "Hello," and that's about it. And some of the others that I knew, they didn't speak Japanese- We all spoke English.

LU: Mhm.

[185 minutes]

MS: In our daily communication we were- always spoke English. So it really shocked me that the camp was- operating language was Japanese, and all these niseis were there.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

MS: And since my Japanese were, you know, very, very rudimentary, in fact, almost non-existent, it took me a year before I can really understand what was- what they were saying and what going on.

LU: Mhm. Well, did anyone tell them that, you know- speak both English and Japanese because most of us are English, or-

MS: No, they were- They had set up their language as Japanese.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: And I guess as far the guards were concerned, that was normal because they thought they were prisoners of war.

LU: Mhm, mhm.

MS: In fact, they asked me where I got captured. [laughs]

LU: Captured?

MS: Yeah, because I was- they noticed that I was one of the few who spoke English in our conversation. So, they wanted to know where I was captured and how I learned my English. [chuckles]

LU: [chuckles] Were they shocked when you told them that, you know, you were Canadian-born and-

MS: Yeah, well it's- one of them were really shocked, saying, "What the hell are you doing here?" He says, "Why aren't you out there fighting the Germans." [chuckling]

LU: Oh wow. So, what was it like living in the bunkhouses and-

MS: It- it was interesting, different. As, I say, for the first year it was pretty difficult, 'cause I really didn't understand the language, and they were not the kind of people that I was used to associating with. But you get used to these things, and fortunately I've, you know, the next bunk over was a nisei who was fairly bilingual. His Japanese was excellent, I found out, but his English was passable, so we could converse.

LU: Who was that?

MS: Guy by the name of Ted- [Wani Ted Suji?], went to Vancouver after the- settled in Vancouver after the war.

LU: Oh.

MS: After the camp had closed and all that. He used to be a fisherman. Had got his fishing license back, and then opened up a fish store, which his wife ran while he was out fishing.

LU: [chuckles]

MS: So he- but he was a very interesting man, I really liked the guy. He helped me with my Japanese quite a bit.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

MS: Yeah. In fact, I helped him with his English and he helped me with the Japanese, which worked out very well.

LU: Yeah. So what else was it like in the bunkhouses, where were the washrooms and bathhouses, and-

MS: Yeah. [reaches for papers Gloria is examining] I have a layout of the bunkhouse-

LU: Oh.

MS: This was typical bunkhouse. [passes papers to Lisa, which she examines off-camera]

That's the way it was.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: I did that from memory, but I think they're pretty accurate.

LU: What's the ablution area?

MS: Ablution area? That's where you wash.

LU: Oh.

MS: Wash your hands and face. Sink, big communal sink with a bunch of faucets.

LU: Oh wow. So how many- so, it's a double tier bunk bed-

MS: On both sides.

LU: On both sides. So-

MS: On both sides.

LU: So, you could only fit eight, or-

MS: Hm?

LU: How many people would you be able to fit?

MS: Well, it- We had at times as many as 70 in each of those huts, each, you know, like each side of the hut. So, there was- Actually, there was four huts. Sleeping quarters.

LU: Mhm.

MS: And at one time, for I think a period of short- maybe day, or so- we had 740 some-odd people in there.

LU: Wow.

[190 minutes]

MS: And then I think the next day they shipped some out, so it went down. It would- Average sat around 300 and- you know, maybe 400, somewhere around there typically.

LU: That's a lot.

MS: But it was a POW, it was a prisoner of war camp, where they had the Germans.

LU: So, Germans were there, too?

MS: Germans were there before us.

LU: So, they weren't there when you were there?

MS: They weren't there- Well, some of them were there, but they weren't there because they wanted to be, they were there because they're ill or something, they had to be transferred.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: By the time- that's the first group. By the time we got there, there were no Germans there at all.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

MS: But the reason they kicked the Germans out is they had dug a tunnel to escape.

LU: Did they? [laughing]

MS: Yeah. They dug a tunnel.

LU: Where?

MS: Yeah, right through. Right from one of the bunkhouses, right through, under the wire, you know, the barbed wire fences and all that? To the other side.

LU: Were they successful?

MS: No.

LU: No.

MS: As far as I know, no one escaped, no one really escaped. They all got- Those that got out got captured. But they- from what I understand, and this is strictly hearsay, is that the guards knew they were breaking through.

LU: Mhm.

MS: Because they had an idea they had a tunnel, and they had a rough idea of where they were coming out.

LU: Mhm, oh wow.

MS: They couldn't find- they couldn't locate the entrance to the tunnel.

LU: Do you know where it was?

MS: It was under one of the huts.

LU: It was under a hut?

MS: Yeah-

LU: Oh.

MS: They started- they had- I think they had something like- they moved a stove or something to get under, and then put the stove back over it again-

LU: [chuckling]

MS: So, they couldn't find it.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: But from what- From hearsay, the guards were telling me that they had a pretty good idea because they disturbed the sand. See, they built the camp on a sandy knoll, just sliced the top off and built it. It's sand, they wanted it sandy because sand shifts. So, if you dig a tunnel, it collapses unless you brace everything. And even if it didn't collapse, you can- they put stovepipes, so- like they had a double fence, barbed wire fence, about 10 feet apart. And the guards would patrol in between these fences-

LU: Oh.

MS: And they had stovepipe buried with sands in it. And if they disturbed the sand, the sand in the stovepipe goes down.

LU: Oh, isn't that neat.

MS: Yeah. And so apparently, they had no idea where the tunnel was going, but then these

are all hearsay. I don't know what actually, you know, how accurate these were. Guards would tell you stories.

LU: Mhm.

MS: That they think are true.

LU: Mhm. Oh wow.

MS: Or they embellished something that they've heard.

LU: Mhm. Now what about- someone- I've heard before that there used to be roll call in the morning.

MS: Yup.

LU: Every morning? What-

MS: There were roll calls twice a day.

LU: Twice a day?

MS: POWs, they treated us exactly- The orders were POW orders. We were treated exactly like any other foreign enemy soldiers. So, there were roll calls in the morning, roll calls in the afternoon.

LU: Wow.

MS: You know, you - everybody goes outside and lines up. And that's another thing, half of the guys didn't know how to line up properly, they had never had a military training.

LU: How were you supposed to line up in-

MS: Well, you're supposed to line up in the normal fashion as a parade, military parade grounds.

LU: Did it go in order of names, or anything like that? Just line up?

MS: No, they just- Each hut lined up in front of a hut. And you were supposed to keep your position relative to your number-

GS: [to Mits] You got some pictures.

MS: Hm?

GS: You got some pictures.

MS: Yeah.

LU: You have pictures!

MS: Well, they're common-

GS: [to Lisa] Yeah, I've got them, somewhere, and I put them together. [unclear]

LU: I've never- oh yes please, I've never-

GS: [to Mits] You got them lined up.

MS: Hm?

GS: You got them lined up [unclear].

MS: Yeah, I [unclear].

GS: It's so far away that you can hardly see, it's a small picture.

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Yeah, she- We were not allowed cameras.

LU: Yeah.

MS: So, the only picture we could get were the ones that the guards took. And they took these pictures because they were different, but the cameras in those days are, you know,

not that great-

LU: Mhm.

MS: So, they're, you know, out of focus, but they're- [unclear]- [Mits gets up and walks out of frame] but there is some- this is the stuff that I carried around, when I give these talks-

LU: Oh wow.

MS: Because it has all the stuff in it.

LU: [chuckles]

GS: [stands up] [I think you-?].

[End]