

Interviewee: Kazue (Kay) Fujiwara

Interviewer: Peter Wakayama

Videographer: Lisa Uyeda

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Lisa Uyeda: Okay.

Kay Fujiwara: My name is Kay Fujiwara, Kay. There I go, I stopped- I'll start again.

Peter Wakayama: It's okay, go ahead.

LU: Okay.

KF: My name is Kay Kazue Toyota Fujiwara. And Tak Toyota is my older brother, and I'd like to share his stories with you today. So, thanks, Peter, for helping me, and Lisa with the camera. I guess we'll get-

PW: Kay, tell us where you were born?

KF: I was born in Duncan, British Columbia, Vancouver Island. And born on a farm, it was a beautiful place for growing up, because we lived in a valley and the earth was black, and we had lots of vegetables, fruit trees, and- we even had a creek running beside our- not too far from the house, although we had a railroad track [for further?] but it was okay, we'd always wave to the people in the caboose, and we had a big wood shed, Dad and Grandpa would chop wood all the time, and Tak used to help. We had chicken coop, barn, and pigs. So, it was a great life because we had the Japanese ofuro, and a big outhouse, with two holes, by the way. It was- the doors were open all the time, so, I don't know, it never seemed to be closed. I would always see somebody sitting there, and it didn't matter, it was all family. [chuckling] So-

PW: Could you tell us about your parents and where they came from?

KF: My parents came from Japan, Fukuoka, but dad and his father came before earlier, and Momma came later and married Dad. So, that's how it happened.

PW: Which part of Fukuoka, which is part of Kyushu, which part of Fukuoka did they come from, do you know?

KF: The northern part, the northern part.

PW: When you were growing up on the farm, what did your dad do?

KF: Oh, Dad did so many different things, my sisters used to say Dad was like an entrepreneur. We'd have people over often and he'd find jobs for them, and this was things he did, and he would- one day he would go out working for another farmer, or- and he'd go fishing- in fact, we all went fishing sometimes- and catch a tub full of perch, it's just wonderful. And with the live shiners [?], and he would just take the fish right away to the camps where the Nikkei people lived, and he would sell them, plus with vegetables, and he just had all kinds of jobs. One time, he came home with bark from trees, and then he put a canvas out, dried it out, and he'd ask all of us to step on it after it got dried up. What's this for? And we'd step on this, [stomps feet on floor] and crush it all up, and he'd sack it and say, "That's cascara [?] bark," he said, "It's medicine." So, he had a job doing that sometimes, or- [laughs]. So it was always different.

PW: Your grandfather was also with you at that time?

KF: Yes, he came with dad. Actually, his wife came later with Momma, probably, and she didn't like farm life, so she just didn't want to stay. So, she went to back to Japan and Grandpa stayed with us.

PW: Tell us about your siblings.

KF: There were 10 of us, so. And Tak was the oldest, and so it was wonderful.

PW: And how many brothers and sisters did you have, of the 10?

KF: I had six sisters and three brothers.

[5 minutes]

PW: So, it was a large family in Duncan.

KF: Mhm.

PW: And so, you grew up, and did you go to school in Duncan?

KF: Mhm, always. Well, I did until I was- just before high school.

PW: And tell us about some of the earlier, early recollections [and years?] of your brother?

KF: Well, this is the- kind of difficult, because I was seven years younger than Tak, and I really didn't know a lot about what he did and how he felt. But I do have a story that he wrote in his later years and he was studying psychology at the University of Calgary, and when he came to visit me, I had- [holds up pages of paper] I'm glad you asked that question because he gave me this, he came to visit and he was very happy and enjoying his psychology classes and he looked healthy, and happy, and anyhow, he said, just before he left, he gave it to me, and after I read it I found- because it's called "The Study of Personality of Self", it's going to- [points down at papers in hand] I would like to rely on reading a little bit for you. Would you like to [unclear]?

PW: Thanks[?].

KF: About his childhood, okay, on page six, the [ball game?]. And he titled this certain part "The Molding of the Personality." [reading] Individuality, ability to risk non-conformity. [To interviewers] I can't understand some of this. [chuckles] [reading] The subject- [to interviewers] he's speaking in the third person narrative. [reading] The subject was first born and much attention was lavished on him, especially the fact- [puts on glasses] Oh, I need glasses, when you get to be 86 your hearing- I have hearing aids on too, by the way. [chuckles] Now, this is a little better. [reading] Especially by the fact that he was male. The atmosphere in infancy was of acceptance and low control. The child was brought up according to old-world Japanese culture customs. He was not punished, rather, a diverse technique was used. He was breastfed, and carried about piggyback-fashion, which created a secure atmosphere for the child. He did not suffer from sibling rivalry, in that there were five sisters before a brother was born to the family. He had the added advantage of having a patient paternal grandfather in the family, who acted as tutor and confidante in the formative years. [to interviewers] And that's how- I'm glad I have this 'cause that's how he felt, and- but on the next page he [wrote up a little bit?] and would probably be in his school days. [I'll read that to you?]. It's about- [reading] The individual suffered considerable rejection in childhood from his peers, due to his lower-class status and ethnic origin, but was able to stand up to this

onslaught due to the secure atmosphere in childhood. In the confused period of adolescence and youth, there was much soul-searching and disappointments. It was only through great determination, value, segregation [?] that he was able to overcome the inferiority complex of this period. [to interviewers] So, I think he really thought about this as he was growing up, and it motivated him to be good and just show them- them meaning the people who classed him as second-class citizens that, you know, he can do just as well as anybody, so.

PW: So, what do you remember of him when he was in Duncan, 'cause he wrote this particular thing while he was in university.

KF: Yes. Well, what I remember, also again when he was having all these hobbies, I didn't know how he got all these things that he brought home. I had- I have a friend, I did a lot of research to try to find people who knew him at that age, and I have stories of two of his friends that told me very interesting stories, so should I go into his hobbies?

[10 minutes]

PW: Sure.

KF: Yeah, his name was Mike Kawabata [?], and he- We didn't have electricity in the younger- in my younger days, and he needed- Well, we had kerosene lamp. But he wanted to do some photography, and because we didn't have electricity, he- it was necessary to have this red lightbulb. Have you ever done photography? Well, you need red lightbulb, you cannot use any light when you're developing the pictures. So, Mike told me that- he was very good friends with Mike, so they knew a lot about each other- and he said that Tak just got a board about seven or eight-foot tall. He made it into a propeller, he hoisted a 25-foot pole up, with a wire coming down to a generator below, and he generated electricity, and that's where he got his red lightbulb. [chuckling] So- but I just wondered- And then, Mike used to receive 25 cents a week for allowance, so he had his father's bike [?]- Well, no, before that, I'll tell you that with this 25 cents they spent 20 cents on matinees, every Saturday they'd go to matinees, 10 cents each. But he had this 5 cents left over, which he gave to Tak. And Tak bought the *Popular Mechanics* magazine for 5 cents, as long as that cover was torn off, so this was where Tak had saved all these magazines, which I used to see in the corner of his room and, yeah, I noticed him reading a lot, too. [chuckles] But that's how he spent, and where did he get all the stuff that- We had radios, we had microphones, loud speakers, and he got- he and Mike used to go to the junk- dump, city dump. [I said?], "Where was the city dump?" He said, "Oh, across the city." He said they double rode [?]. He told me that Tak was bigger so he sat on the seat and pedaled, but he was- so, he sat on the bar. I said, "How did you carry all this stuff?" He said, "A box on the carrier, and a basket on the handles." So, they went to the city dump, which was, he said, across the city, near the river, behind the bushes. And they collected all kinds of stuff, like old batteries, old radios. Brought them home, he said, and Tak could fix them. So, we had gramophones and radios when we were little, and it was really great [chuckles].

PW: Is there a- when you were growing up, then, with your whole family, what was life like at Duncan?

KF: Duncan had a population of 14,000, probably about 12 Japanese-Canadian families, which wasn't too many, but it was really nice to me and to our parents, it was comforting to have, you know, them around, and so-and they're not too far away, Duncan is just a small city and we were on the outskirts, right on the borderline of the city, so our big house, which was not very nice, because it was very, very old, but it was two-storey, good enough for us, anyhow, the people were friendly and we just got along very well.

PW: So, there were about 12 Japanese-Canadian in Duncan-

KF: Mhm, mhm.

PW: Do you know what they did in Duncan?

KF: Some of them farmed, and a lot of the menfolk would go to logging, or whatever, and I heard that Mike's father used to have a secondhand store.

[15 minutes]

KF: And he- I didn't know that, but that's what he had, I guess for a while, and he said, "Your brother-" no, and Father- oh no, it was my father that drove the truck. He said he used to take him to Victoria to get, you know, get things for him from Victoria.

PW: And were there a lot of nisei kids in Duncan as well, with their family?

KF: Yes, every family had- not as many as we did, but they had, you know, four, five, six children. We did have Japanese school, too, after school.

PW: Oh, you did?

KF: Mhm.

PW: So, you went to public school in Duncan?

KF: Yes.

PW: And then you had Japanese school after school?

KF: After school.

PW: And what were the hours when you went in for Japanese-?

KF: Oh, it was right after school.

PW: Every day?

KF: Every day.

PW: And how much of it did you retain? Quite a bit?

KF: Oh yes, I could still do- I went to Grade Three and a half I think, close to Four. And I can still write all my hiragana and very few kanji. [chuckles] But I used to be able to, you know, write hiragana to my mother if I was away.

PW: Right. Now you said your brother was- went to- he went to high school.

KF: Yes. And he-

PW: In Duncan?

KF: During the Depression, that's when he had to stop in Grade Ten.

PW: Okay. And then what happened after that?

KF: Well, he went to work because my father had a- at that time he owned a logging camp, and he hired about 12 people. And my older sister, she was in her early teens, but she was a very good cook, and she cooked for all those men. I used to see all these black lunchboxes for their lunch that she would pack for lunch, and she'd have the supper ready, and the bath- they had a bath, too, that was ready. And he also had

two huge pool tables for them to play on. [laughing]

PW: And was this logging camp on Vancouver Island?

KF: No, it was in Kapoor, it's closer to Victoria.

PW: Oh, I see.

KF: And it's in southern Vancouver Island.

PW: Okay, but your family still lived in Duncan on the farm?

KF: We always had the farm?

PW: You always lived there as a family.

KF: Yes. And I was visiting one time, in the summertime, and there was lightning, and that's when the mountain very close by started a fire. And it got closer and closer, and I remember vividly that we had to rush to the car, and Tak had a three seater, three seater is like the middle row would fold up to a seat, so there's about ten of us crammed into the car. And then dad had a truck, so the rest of the men went on the truck. At least we were all in safety after that.

PW: So, your father had a logging- he actually had a logging camp, he owned it?

KF: Yeah, he owned it for a while.

PW: Ah, that's amazing.

KF: Yes. And so-

PW: So, how many people would he have employed on that logging [?]-

KF: Well, he only had about 12 work-

PW: Workers?

KF: Yeah, Japanese-Canadian people, they were younger men.

PW: So, how far would it be from Duncan to the camp [unclear], would you say, roughly?

KF: Well, Victoria's about 40 miles, so I guess that place would be close to that, so it just sort of went the other way.

PW: So, it was a bit of a trip to go from home to the logging camp everyday-

KF: Mhm, oh yeah. No, he didn't go every day-

PW: Oh, he didn't?

KF: Oh no, they would stay until the weekend, [and they might come home?]-

PW: Okay, so he stayed at the camp.

KF: Yeah. And dad didn't always go.

PW: Oh, right.

KF: He owned [unclear] it, but-

PW: But somebody else would be running-

KF: Yeah. And dad has a truck so- He used to drive; I don't know how he did because he couldn't read English. [laughing]

PW: Maybe they didn't need licenses in those days.

KF: No, I don't think they did.

PW: Yeah, right. [laughing] Now, is your brother then- Depression came, so he went to work, but when you read that essay about his self, where was he when he wrote that?

KF: Well, he was studying after his successful business, he was able to go back to school.

PW: Oh, this was after, that's right, yes.

KF: Yes, that's the end of the, near the end of his life.

PW: Okay. Are there any other stories about David, from his friends, from his early days that you'd like to talk about?

[20 minutes]

KF: Yes, he had a- Well, my sister had a girlfriend and she was more Tak's- closer to Tak's age. So, both she and Mike are in their 90s now, and I was able to capture some of her stories, and she said that because- she knew Tak quite well, because she used to come to our house all the time for ofuro [?] when she first came to Duncan, they didn't have an ofuro [?], so. So, she said that one day they- Tak used to fix a lot of cars, too, so this time he had a car, but he and Tony, and Pat, and my other sister, Fudge [?]- she's older than me, too- they were on this car, and Pat remembers very well that he had the senbei [?] can on the floor, and it was filled, it had gas in it. And there was a hose at the bottom of the senbei [?] can went through the floor or the car, and that was a gas line. Can you imagine? [laughs] They were so young and carefree. And luckily nothing happened. [laughs]

PW: Were there any stories you'd like to tell? That you got from your friends?
[unclear]

KF: That- in his hobby time?

PW: Yes.

KF: Yeah, I'm- I guess those are kind of the [unclear] things-

PW: The highlights, okay.

KF: [chuckles]

PW: And then, and when you were in Duncan what did you do for recreation?

KF: Oh, I wasn't old enough to go to dances, but Duncan, they did have dances in the Japanese language hall. And as long as they have a chaperone- my father would chaperone, or Pat's- Tomi's friend, Pat, her mother would go sometimes. So, they took turns to chaperone and they often had parties. So, we were [chuckles] not restricted in that kind of way.

PW: What did you do?

KF: Well, I was still young, I used to take tap dancing lessons. I started, but then 25 cents got to be too much, and that's when I quit. Even- I tried to sell vegetables, too, on the street with my wagon and tried to get my- but it was hard. [laughs]

PW: So, were you taking tap dance classes in Duncan?

KF: Mhm.

PW: And that's [unclear]-

KF: My hakujin friend, we started [go together?] and then I had to quit because I couldn't afford it anymore.

PW: Do you still keep in touch with some of your hakujin friends?

KF: Yes, I had four friends that I used to write to, even in later- after I left, and I corresponded- except one girl, she never wrote to me. But about 20 years later, when I met her at a high school reunion, or- no, she wrote to me first and apologized for not writing because she said I guess her father died, and she wrote and she said, "My father never allowed me to write to you."

PW: Oh.

KF: So, there were people that felt badly about us [?]. The girl, you know, she was a

lovely girl and [?] when we played together.

PW: So, did you have both hakujin and nisei [?] friends in Duncan?

KF: Oh yes, I had hakujin friends, right.

PW: When you were in Duncan, what kind of food did you have?

KF: Oh, it's always Japanese food. Always.

PW: Always.

KF: Always. My father would have it three times a day. [laughs]

PW: And what kind of- where would they get some of the ingredients from?

KF: You know, we had stores, we had Japanese people- I don't know how we- I don't remember how we got Japanese-

PW: Probably-

KF: [I guess it came from?] stores from Vancouver.

PW: Stores from Vancouver. Or Victoria, 'cause [there was?]-

KF: Yeah, it was ordered.

PW: Yeah.

KF: In fact, we used to make tofu-

PW: Oh, you made tofu?

KF: Later on, as I was growing up, I remember grandfather and walking around, the beans, the beans would get ground up. Mhm.

PW: What do you remember about your father and mother and grandfather in Duncan?

KF: In what way?

PW: Well, what were they like, how they treated you.

KF: Oh, well we're- they were very- they weren't strict.

[25 minutes]

KF: I don't know they never scolded us if we were late or anything, I don't remember that. We had the freedom to go swimming at the river, ice-cold river, and that's where we learned to swim. And if they had seen what kind of river it was, I don't think they would have allowed it because it was swift and cold, and yet we managed to learn. [laughs] It was fun.

PW: Yeah, I think that's probably true with a lot of the nisei people who were allowed to do that-

KF: I don't know, some families were strict, though.

PW: [laughs]

KF: They didn't allow them to go dancing or things like that. But in Duncan, most everyone was quite carefree.

PW: And what was your grandfather like?

KF: Oh, he was gentle and nice, he was very- gave us advice, if I was having sports day, he would make sure that I ate my egg, and- [laughs]

PW: So, were you active in sports and-

KF: Yeah, very much so.

PW: What kind of sport did you, what did you do?

KF: [mimes running] Oh, I was always- I was very good at running. Because we had a big hill in front of our house, 'cause we were in the valley, the hill was very steep, it

was so steep that they closed it down in the winter and you could sleigh-ride on it. But that hill, I used to challenge myself every day, noon and morning, run it all the way to school and all the way back. So, my legs got pretty strong, and I would win the Junior Championship, the Majorette [?], the Intermediate. Not the Senior, I came second. [laughs]

PW: How far did you go in high school- in school in Duncan?

KF: Me?

PW: Yes, yourself.

KF: Well, I only went to Grade- I was 16, almost 16- yeah, 16 when I was in Grade 11-

PW: Grade 11?

KF: That's when I stopped.

PW: And then the war came.

KF: Mhm.

PW: What was your feeling when that happened, when that news came out?

KF: Well, it was very sad, because I just- when I heard the news and heard the radio saying 'Japs' this and that, it was horrible. I was away from home and I was living with a hakujin family- I was doing domestic because I was getting [?] dance lessons complimentary dance lessons because my teacher wanted me back to school. And because- I didn't stay in Duncan when I was 14, when I was going into high school because we had to move, a highway was going through our house,

PW: Oh, I see.

KF: That's what happened. So, that's where I was, away from home and feeling really bad, and I just told them, I just wanted to go home. Duncan [?]-

PW: Where was that, were you staying, what city?

KF: In Victoria. Because my dance teacher in Duncan had a sister who taught in Victoria.

PW: Right.

KF: So, it's kind of confusing, but that's what happened.

PW: So then, you moved to Victoria to be with the teacher's sister.

KF: Yes. Actually, even in Duncan I only went to dance classes for a short while and I quit. When my teacher found out that I quit because I couldn't afford it she allowed me to come back and take all my lessons. Wonderful people, wonderful people.

PW: So, you were in Victoria when the war came, but your parents were still in Duncan?

KF: No. Actually, by that time they had moved to Paldi, a mill town [?].

PW: Where is that?

KF: [A mill town?] is nine miles north, or northeast, of Duncan. And it's a [mill town?] where a lot of Japanese-Canadians were there, lot of Hindu, Indian people, were there.

PW: Okay. And your father still had the logging camp at the time?

KF: No, no, because of the fire we lost that-

PW: Oh, you lost that with the fire?

KF: We lost that with the fire. We lost- And then we lost the house with the Trans-Canada coming through it.

PW: Oh right.

KF: Mhm.

PW: So, was your family's home and property expropriated?

KF: Oh yes, they just- it was gone completely.

PW: Did you [know a thing about?] [unclear], probably not.

KF: I don't know, I don't know anything about that.

PW: Right, right, right.

KF: So, my brothers, father, uncles, they all built a brand-new house in Paldi. A beautiful two-storey house. That's where they were-

PW: When the war came-

KF: When war broke out, and I came home, that's where

[30 minutes]

PW: And you came home-

KF: [unclear]

PW: And then what happened?

KF: Well, that was wartime, so the cars were confiscated and the cameras, and the radios, and everything except one box. When they came to [unclear] they didn't know it was a radio, it was a homemade thing that Tak made, [laughing] and so we had music 'til we had to leave, we were so lucky that they didn't take it away. But we didn't carry it away. When we had to take [unclear], we just took what we could carry. So, it was, it was like boarding everything else up. The sewing machine, and the dishes, and all they got boarded up. All my costumes, and so- in the hopes that we were coming back.

PW: Was your family all together at that time?

KF: Mhm, all together.

PW: Including your brother?

KF: Yep.

PW: And from there where did you go, where did you go [unclear]?

KF: When we- well, we had to board a bus to go to Chemainus, and then take a ferry across to Hastings Park, Vancouver.

PW: And how long were you there?

KF: We were there for three months and then we had to go on train to somewhere in the west, into the interior of British Columbia. We were very fortunate we were- we moved as a family, whereas many of the families had their menfolk leave to go to camp, or they had to go to sugar beets, and that wasn't very pleasant. And we went into the interior to a ghost town, it wasn't supposed to be a ghost town but it was Slocan, and it was an old mining town that had burned- had a big fire in 1900. But they had some houses and the menfolk from Vancouver went there earlier to fix up some of the older houses for apartments for the people, and then they built Bay Farm [about a mile?], and then Popoff, and then [seven miles?] beyond that was Lemon Creek. So those were the community groups in the camp.

PW: Slocan Valley?

KF: Mhm.

PW: What was your recollection of Hastings Park?

KF: Oh, when you're a kid and you see all these Japanese-Canadian people it's

amazing because, wow, we were free to do what we wanted, we were in the fenced up thing but we were allowed to go into the city, if you had a pass.

PW: Did you have any bad memories of Hastings Park?

KF: Well, Dad got a job right away as a dishwasher and- no. It was okay. Some people complained about the food, but I don't remember getting sick. I did get the mumps, and I was quarantined for a while. [chuckles]

PW: So, this is- your whole family were relocated into the interior to Slocan, was the whole family together as a group?

KF: Yes.

PW: Which is very unusual, 'cause that didn't always happen to everybody, did it?

KF: Yes, that's true, that's what I said, we were lucky, we were lucky.

PW: Do you know why?

KF: Why we [unclear]?

PW: Yeah.

KF: Well, most of the- they didn't take the menfolk from the island as much as they took- they took the menfolk maybe from the mainland, I don't know, to road camps and that. But from Slocan they- some of the menfolk had to leave if they didn't have jobs or something. Although they were very busy in beginning building for the different groups.

PW: And so, you were in Slocan, and you had- where in Slocan did you live?

KF: Well, first we had to stay in tents until- we went in about July, but we had to stay there until November. But Tak was very independent, he went to the commissioner's office and asked if he could be independent and not get help from the government, and so he went to a local person and rented a flat so that he could start a business, which is his amateur photographer, wanting to become a professional. He would, he- I don't know how he did it, but they allowed him to do that.

[35 minutes]

And the landlord was very nice, he said, "You can use my kitchen anytime you want to," so it just worked out. He started very small, but- just developing pictures. The homemade- it was a box made out of wood. And I used to see him at- the thing goes up and down, and that was his enlarger, and he made it homemade [chuckles].

PW: So, it was very inventive, actually.

KF: Very, very, very. And I think I have to thank Mike for giving him that nickel to buy those magazines. [laughs]

PW: How old would he have been when he started his own business?

KF: When?

PW: When he went to [unclear].

KF: Let's see, I was 17 by that time, so, and he's seven years older.

PW: So, he was 24.

KF: Yeah.

PW: Yeah. When you went to Slocan, did you continue your schooling?

KF: Well, I didn't have- they didn't have at first, but they did have the nuns teach high school first, and I had a job myself because Tak asked me to work for him-

PW: Okay.

KF: And I learned to retouch all the black and white pictures, and sometimes I helped him in the dark room, so. And later he bought me a box of oil paints, and I taught myself how to paint photographs.

PW: Oh, right.

KF: So, it was good that I learned right there, because when I went- later, I had a job, full time job, painting portraits. [chuckles] For a while.

PW: What do you remember- what about where you lived in Slocan, when you- after the tenth [?]?

KF: Oh, after the tenth [?], well it- we- being a big family, we received two houses and an outhouse to share, so. So, it was okay, because we had the kitchen in the big house, they're all double bunks. The only thing was, it was very hard on my grandfather. So, he wasn't well the first winter, and he died in in the spring. So, we lost him. He was quite healthy until then.

PW: How old would he have been when he passed away, do you remember?

KF: He was- he was close to his 90s, he was in his 80s, I think. Yeah.

PW: And in Slocan, you were working for your brother. What kind of other activities did you do in Slocan?

KF: Oh, it was full of activities. We made the best of a bad situation. We formed clubs- in fact, we were called the SMC group, a bunch of girls, Slocan Music Club. And Tak had a lot of helpers, and he, he had, you know, made his loud speakers and all this stuff, so we held dances, concerts, drama club that we formed. There was a tennis court, if you had racquets, to play with, and so. And of course, we had this beautiful Slocan Lake to swim in, and climb, climb the mountains, and- Oh, it was- it was just a resort place, I found it absolutely- in fact, my father loved it so much he wanted to retire there.

PW: [unclear] Camp Valley is a beautiful-

KF: It is.

PW: Part of BC [British Columbia], isn't it?

KF: Mhm.

PW: Yeah. Do you recall your mom and dad talking about what happened to them at all?

KF: No, and- you mean- when?

PW: Well, we know they lost everything in BC, and they did [?] [unclear].

KF: Oh, well, I've never heard them complain about anything-

PW: Never complained.

KF: No. Well, it was an act of nature for the camp, and I wasn't there when they moved, I was in Victoria by that time because they asked me to start school, you know, my teachers really wanted me to continue. [chuckles]

PW: So that's why you still- that's why you're so good at [tap dancing] and painting-

KF: Well-

PW: All your physical activities. From a young age.

[40 minutes]

KF: Well, I think- yeah, I think it's good to be physical. And I was very fortunate to

receive all those lessons, I was so grateful. And after the war, I felt so bad leaving without being able to pay them back, but when Redress came, I was so happy. I was able to give back.

PW: In Slocan, what were- you described some of your recreational activities, what about all your friends and all the people that you met in Slocan.

KF: Well, they're the same. We just enjoyed each other's company and did everything together.

PW: And after, then, Slocan, what did you do?

KF: I'll tell- [just a minute?]- before that, I'll tell you there's a letter I received from somebody who worked with Tak, if you don't mind. [pulls out paper]

PW: Yes.

KF: And he wrote to me, and he said it best, so I'd like to- he wrote about Tak and his name is Roy Kurita- lot of other fellows worked [?] too, and they gave me letters, but I'll just read one. And- [reading] Tak Toyota was my mentor in Slocan. After over 6 decades, my admiration for him has not diminished, even with the passage of time I still remember him very fondly. [to interviewer] See, I'll [unclear] it, I'll go on.

[reading] Tak took pictures of my family during a memorial service for my sister. We were a little short of full amount [?], we owed Tak, so I promised him I will give him balance as soon as I can. Instead, he offered me a job around his studio and radio shop to do odd jobs. And one day, he was tied up with something and he was supposed to go to Lemon Creek to show his movie- [to interviewer] like, he even showed movies, so- [reading] He asked me to go instead, and he said, "This is fine." I knew how to rig the projector- [to interviewer] 'cause he was taught by Tak. To set up the mirrors, 'cause it was such a funny shaped-room, it wasn't a solid room, he had to angle the projector [into a mirror?]. And he knew how to do that, but he says [reading] "How was I going to get to Lemon Creek," he said. "No problem," Tak said. He gave him the three-minute lesson to drive his car, and- he had never driven a car in his life before, he said. He sent me off to Lemon Creek with all the equipment I needed. I never told Tak, but, you know, I drove to Lemon Creek and back all in second gear. I was too bloody scared to put the car into third gear, just in case I couldn't get from third to second, but I made it back and forth to Lemon Creek [chuckles]. And so- he had some more stories, can I go on?

PW: Yeah, absolutely.

KF: He said [reading] Tak taught me to enlarge photos, dabble in the radio and all the other stuff he had, from projectors to PA systems. Tak was this kind of a guy, he said. One night he was showing a movie *Going My Way* with Bing Crosby playing the role of Catholic priest in a lower-class parish. I was going to the Catholic school in Slocan in those days, and all the nuns who were teachers came en masse to see this film. They all lined up just like the other people, and you have to see this picture. They were all in their black nun habits. Quite a sight, he said. Tak either saw or heard about them, and he came down from the projection room, escorted them to their seats past this long line up, and- with no charge. [chuckles] He said, yeah, so anyhow there's one more story- or a couple more. Is it okay?

PW: No [?], please.

K: Tak did all the official pictures of the schools, the various group community activities, funerals, weddings, Tak supplied the PA system for all the many dances

we had in Slokan. Even at beach parties, Tak rigged up his PA system so that it ran off his car battery, and in ghost town the only entertainment- [to interviewer] well, he had, that's what he says- [reading] dances and occasional movies.

[45 minutes]

KF: [His service?] was cherished, but because he came late maybe he didn't have the concerts that we used to have- Ida -[?] left in '45, and he came around that time. And he didn't see all the stuff we did before that. Apparently, he was a self- he's talking about Tak now [?]- he was a self-made man. He did not have much formal education, but he knew, and what he did not know he found out. He read the magazine *Popular Mechanics Popular Science* from cover to cover. Said [?], "What a guy!" How did he sweet talk his way into running a studio with cameras and the whole bit when the Japanese communities were not even allowed to have a simple box camera? "What a guy!" he says. How did he sweet talk his way into running a radio shop with all the equipment needed when a Japanese-Canadian were not allowed to have any radios? Even a crystal set was frowned upon. What a guy! How did he sweet talk his way into getting a vehicle- [to interviewer] And by that time he had a little money, so he got this Pontiac. Before that, you should see what he had, and he fixed it. [reading] When all the Japanese-Canadians had their vehicles confiscated, sold as scrap, or at scrap prices. [chuckles] He had to get gas for that car with gas severely rationed. He says, "Quite a guy, quite a guy, what a genius." And he said, "I pay tribute to him, even to this day, for his entrepreneurship, but I pay tribute to him because Tak was a man among men." [laughs] End [?] Roy Kurita [?]. [to interviewer] Isn't that a great letter?

PW: That's a wonderful tribute to your brother.

KF: Yeah, yeah, I just love the way he wrote it. [laughs]

PW: Yeah, so, did you spend time with him- I know you worked for him- how much time did you spend with him [in Slokan?]?

KF: Well, I [saw him?] every day that I could.

PW: Yeah.

KF: And there's people that came in to have photographs taken every day, especially during that time when the people were leaving, they wanted to give the photos and exchange, so hundreds of people would just have little pictures taken of themselves.

PW: Right. I guess that was very common in- especially when they were departing for the east?

KF: Yes. A lot of them left early, in fact a lot of his friends in the beginning that worked with him were university students and they left early, mhm.

PW: And then, did Tak- what- continue the story with Tak, what else did he do besides his running all those activities that were mentioned in the- ?

KF: Well, he didn't have that much time, although he enjoyed the beach parties and we had a lot of parties. We had barbeque parties and- and he participated in everything, even with our drama club, he would get right into the play with us. So- and he operated the projectors all the time for this and that, or the lighting for the concerts, we had the concerts, odori, and talent shows and fashions shows, and it was all- he was busy. We went mountain climbing together, you know, as a group.

[chuckles]

PW: So, there was tons of activities, actually, that you all did in those days.

KF: There was a lot to do, in fact, I even studied dress designing by a woman who knew- who used to teach it, probably in Vancouver. So, I learned a lot about how to make your own pattern for clothing and things like that. And we knitted, we knitted socks and sweaters, I knitted a full sweater. [chuckles]

PW: Where did people get your supplies from?

KF: Eaton's catalogue.

PW: And where did the- some of the Japanese supplies come from, do you remember?

KF: I don't know, but we did have rice.

PW: And shoyu.

KF: Yes.

PW: And miso.

KF: And we had stores-

PW: You had store in Slocan.

KF: Yes. My sister used to work in the grocery store. So.

PW: So, then the war ended, then tell us the story after the war ended.

KF: Oh, the- well, we were- oh yes, that was 1945, we had a choice.

[50 minutes]

KF: Naturally, we wanted to go east of the Rockies. But Tak was allowed to stay, he could stay wherever he wanted to in British Columbia. So, he- by 1946 he was married, we were already east, and he was married and he went for a honeymoon looking for a place and stayed in Creston for the honeymoon.

PW: Oh, right.

KF: But we went east. My sister came first to find out what the situation was, and they didn't allow any more people in Toronto at the time. But the farmers in St. Catharines wanted big families for vegetables and fruit trees. So anyhow, we had a farmer, Mr. Trigano [?] in St. Catharines waiting for us, and he had that little house for us, and so we were very lucky.

PW: So, then Tak actually- Tak went to Creston, then, from Slocan?

KF: Yes, in '46. And we were- we left in '45, and we were settled by that time.

PW: And then, maybe we'll continue with Tak and we'll go back to you, can you tell us about his career in Creston?

KF: Oh, he started off a small business, which was a repair store, like, he knew how to fix toasters and all that stuff, so it was an electrical- a small appliance repair shop. And got bigger and bigger, and he went into furnishing, selling furnishing and appliances. Big appliances, so that that's where he started. And he was so involved with so many things, but he was very, very happy to become a member of the Kiwanis [?] Club, which he did in the beginning. So, he enjoyed the company of the friends in the club and, you know, his wife was able to enjoy them, too. He had so many things- [looking down at papers] could I read some of it to you?

PW: Yes, please.

KF: He was- for six years he was chairman of the, of the Blossom Festival they have,

lasting for a whole week. And he was busy all the time. Then he would- he started the Teen Towns, they would have teenage dances every Friday night, and things like that. They were- he started the Battle of the Band, which was huge, huge. It's a small town; so small that they didn't even have a mayor at that time, but he organized this- the Battle of Bands, they came from Kaslo, and Trio [?], and Nelson, and 1500 teenagers would be there to watch the competition. He would MC, and I remember that he told me that the group that won used to start- started off in his basement, practicing. So, he was very good with the young people, too, but he was also with the city council and- [looking at papers] I can't find my notes. What did I do with it? Yeah [unclear]- just have to have a pause 'til I find it. [I thought?]-

PW: [unclear]

KF: [It's okay?]. Some of the other things were- he held- he was first to start these talent shows, and every year it went on. And one of them- the sixth annual one, I saw a little news clipping many years ago- but when his daughter was five years old, she sang a song with her girlfriend, and they won the grand prize [chuckles]. And they sang, they were so cute, I think I have photographs of them.

[55 minutes]

KF: They- and he also organized- they used to- [looking at papers] darn. I guess you can stop the camera- no, wait, don't, it's okay, I'll find it. Yeah, he was chairman of the Kiwanis Club for a long time. And when he was with the Kiwanis Club, he became a lieutenant governor, which he was- they covered the western lore [?] of British Columbia and Idaho and Washington, so that was kind of nice, he was pretty proud of that. So those are a lot of things- there's so many things he did. And people were very, very happy that he came to live there.

PW: Didn't he have another store in another city?

KF: Well yes, his business grew to the point that he had four large retail home furnishing appliance stores in the area, and- starting off with Creston, he had Cranbrook [?], Fernie [?], and Golden, Golden was a little more farther north. So, he- his [?] business was very good, and at that time he was around 71 when he decided to retire. And he was confident in getting the manager, handing over the management to his eldest son Ron, and he decided to complete his dream that he wanted to finish high school, which he did, and he went to a college in Alberta and he did that in six months, and he got into- he really wanted to go into medicine, but they wouldn't accept him because of his age, so he chose psychology and that's when he was into it. Loving it, and that's when he wrote [unclear] and it was on a weekend in February in 17- 19- what was it?- 1973, that he didn't feel well. And he decided to see his doctor in Creston, and that's quite a long drive home, but he did it every weekend, taking furniture, and that's what he did, he took the furniture to the Creston, and went to see the doctor several times, he died suddenly, he just had a congested lung, and his heart wouldn't take it, so. It was so sad because he was healthy, and I don't know-

PW: And he still was a fairly young age, right? I mean, he would be in his [unclear]-

KF: 56, 56.

PW: That's really young.

KF: Mhm.

PW: That's really young.

KF: And so- his family was ages 15 to 26, I think, around that time. And he had a grandson by that time.

PW: But you he was 50- he was 76-

KF: 76. Well, when he- it was 1973.

PW: But how old was he then? By [that time?]?

KF: He died when he was 56. That's the age that he passed away.

PW: At 56, okay.

KF: Yeah. He was born in 1917.

PW: Okay, okay.

KF: Is that right? Mathematically?

PW: Yeah, [unclear].

KF: Yeah, so that's [unclear]-

PW: So, he was a great entrepreneur, a businessman.

KF: Yes.

PW: A great community leader.

KF: Yes, oh yes.

PW: And participated in all his community-

KF: One of the things I forgot to tell you was he was- they had fire with their recreation hall, and they really needed this 180,000 dollars, they just couldn't get it wherever, and he had the idea that we could do it, and he formed this committee, or there was this committee and he had each one of the committee members to just go to every house.

[60 minutes]

KF: And they had their list, and request 200 dollars from each family. And- which they got, and they managed to get that. [chuckles] The amount they needed for this recreation hall.

PW: Do you know why he chose that particular town when he went around looking after his [unclear]-

KF: Oh yes, after they got married he did travel around and looked around and it was a beautiful valley, and so that's where he chose. He just wanted to go into a nice little home with a pleasant neighbourhood, and that's what he chose. And I think he just- his wish was to be accepted by the people, just- he didn't- he knew that he might be discriminated, but he wasn't, and it was wartime.

PW: Yes.

KF: They still-

PW: Yes, it was still-

KF: Even in St. Catharines, when we went there, the papers said terrible things. "Get the Japs out of here bodily," and things like that, so. No, [we had that?].

PW: Did you go and visit him very often after?

KF: My mother did.

PW: Okay.

KF: My mother did- I did see him when we passed through, we drove through there.

But he sent my mother fare to go whichever way she wanted to, plane or train, and my mother- after my father passed away, we thought she would be lost, but somehow she started getting about in Toronto, even, by herself. So, we figured she'd be able to take a plane as long as somebody picked her up at the other end. And that's what she did every summer.

PW: Wow.

KF: Because she loved gardening. Tak loved gardening, but he let mother do it when she got there. [laughing]

PW: Now back to your story. After Slocan, the family moved to St. Catharine's. Can you tell us about that? That period.

KF: Oh yeah. There were two other Japanese families there, in the same farm. And Mr. Trigano [?] was a very, very nice man, and dad and he got along very well. We worked the farm when it's asparagus time, and we worked the farm to pick peaches. They had a packing house, too. It was a big farm. So, whenever there was work we all did it, we helped.

PW: So, the whole family, your brothers and your sisters, were they [unclear]-

KF: Well, not all of us, because I was the oldest by that time, because Tomi was married with a child, and so she could- had gone to another place to live. But- in the east- and my sister Fudge had wanted to study fashion design, so she went to Montreal, and from- yeah. So, she was there while the rest of us were helping on the farm.

PW: And how long did you stay in St. Catharine's?

KF: I only stayed there two, a little over two years.

PW: But your parents would stay there, when did your parents move?

KF: Oh, they came- they moved out of St. Catharine's a few years after that, yeah. They came to Toronto.

PW: And there was a lot of- still a lot of discrimination when you came to St. Catharine's?

KF: No, we didn't feel it-

PW: You didn't feel it-

KF: We didn't even know that they felt that way, but I read-

PW: Read the papers.

KF: Read it after. And saw these things that were said, "Get them," you know, the paper said, they were on Trigano [?] farm, and things like that, so. But the people were so friendly around there, the children, we got along well with them and- and never felt any discrimination at all.

PW: There were quite a few Japanese-Canadian families that moved into St. Catharines area [unclear]-

KF: In that area, Niagara area, there was quite a few because the farmers needed them. Or- that's where they went, yeah.

PW: And then after St. Catharines you came to Toronto?

KF: Mhm, after St. Catharines. I happened to know- meet Ozzie in Slocan, and he used to come and visit by boat to [unclear]. [laughs]

[65 minutes]

KF: And so, we managed to keep the fire burning.

PW: So, he knew your husband and [unclear] in Slocan?

KF: That's where we met. But we were just friends-

PW: Friends at that time. And then the romance bloomed, [chuckling] he courted you-

KF: Yeah.

PW: And you came to Toronto. Is that where you were married?

KF: That's right.

PW: And what did you do in Toronto?

KF: Oh, so many things. Because I didn't have very much education, but I managed because I sewed, I was very good in school, I used to get A in sewing and home economics, so I went into sewing first, in the factories, and we used to do the army pants first, and then I went into ladies' wear after. But in Toronto it was great 'cause we played tennis with a group of Japanese-Canadian people, and I went to the Y to swim, and I took up swimming. I used to be in the club there.

PW: And you raised a family.

KF: Well, they didn't come 'til four years after we were married. We had to save some money. [laughs] We didn't even- in fact, when they did come, we didn't get a house until just after the second child.

PW: And how many children do you have?

KF: I have three. So, I'm very lucky, two girls and a boy.

PW: And now, you have been very active at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre.

KF: Mhm, here and there. [chuckles]

PW: [chuckles] But you were also- you were also in [?] graphics, too, is that- if I remember- were you at graphics?

KF: Oh-

PW: I mean, you had a varied career, tell us some of your varied career.

KF: Well, I just- I could say I bluffed my way through.

PW: Whatever you did [unclear] many, many things. Tell us some about what you did.

KF: Oh, I did drafting for a while, only for a small company, but that was at night, when the children were small. But I did- ah, I did so many things. I guess if you get paid that's- it's a job, isn't it?

PW: Yes, it is. [chuckles]

KF: [chuckling] Yes, I was a swimmer, I never had swimming lessons but when I came to Toronto, they had to test me, and they put me into seniors right away. And I used to- I taught myself how to dive in Slocan, we used to cliff dive. And I taught myself how to dive and after I became- I took a course to become an instructor, and so I was teaching in Scarborough for the Scarborough Parks and Recreation at all the different schools, and that was when the children were in school, I taught at nights. And I took a course- yes [?], and once I had to teach diving. I said, "I don't know how to teach, I've never been taught to really teach." They said, "Well, you're the best diver in this group of five," and they said, "You're gonna be the teacher," so I bought books. How can you learn by that? I went to phone Don Webbs [?], he was the national coach for Canada. Can you imagine, I had the nerve to? I said, "Don," I said- I gave him the situation, he says, he said, "Come on down to Leaside pool on Monday

nights.” And here I am, diving between a Canadian champion and a Chicago champion. And he takes me to- and he just, every time I did a dive, he only told me one mistake, and the next time he’d tell me a different one. So, I learned to springboard dive the proper way, [laughing] at least, and that’s when I was able to teach for my classes, so. So, a month went by, and I said, “What do I owe you, Don?” And he says, “Nothing.” [laughs] Isn’t that nice? People have been giving me free rides all the time. Even when dancing, I couldn’t take lessons. And I- there was- I was teaching fitness by that time, when the kids were small, so. I didn’t have a full-time job yet, I just had bits and pieces of teaching this and that. So, I was teaching fitness, and there was an actress in my class, and she said, “Oh, they’re hiring dancers, Oriental dancers.” I said, “I don’t do Oriental dancing, I’ve done Japanese, a little bit.” “Oh, go anyhow!” She forced me to go. [laughs] They were auditioning for Chinese dancers, and so I got to do that.

[70 minutes]

KF: I was- got into the group, and when CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Company] went across Canada to choose ethnic groups all across- different things for the Queen, because the Queen [Elizabeth II] was coming. So. [laughs] When they came to Toronto, the Chinese did their practice, and we got chosen out of- for Chinese dancing. So, that’s when I did Chinese dancing. I had just come back from Mexico, I think, ‘cause I- I was chosen to dance for Canada, folk dancing, that’s why I had to learn Chinese dancing, and they, they- this was free also, I didn’t have to pay for this. Whatever I do is free, it seems like. [laughing] So, they were choosing people, people to represent Canada for the Olympics in Mexico. And were to perform all around Mexico, in the different little towns, for nine days. [laughs] Or, no, we were there for two weeks, I think, in fact, longer than that. So, when I came back, I said to Mrs. Lum [?], who was gonna send us to dance with the Queen, I said, “I can’t go, I just came back, I can’t leave my children again.” Now, my oldest was about 15, so it wasn’t too bad. [laughing] So, I went, with three children with Ozzie like [?] [unclear]. And I said, “No, I can’t go,” and she said, “Well, if your children- if I put them in the dance, will you go?” So, I got to dance for the Queen with kids dancing, too. [laughing] So, that [all the?] fun things I’ve done in my life, and then later I- I was a fashion stylist, or product stylist. It could be anything that the photographer shot- wants to shoot. So, it could be anything from beds, drapes, shirts, clothing-
LU [?]: [unclear]

KF: Especially clothing, that’s what I liked to do.

PW: So, you’re really multi-talented, actually [?].

KF: Yeah, like-

PW: Tell us- tell us about the time you skydived.

KF: We were holidaying in Cuba, and- how old was I? I was close to 70, I think. And I’ve always wanted to skydive and take lessons in Toronto, and every time I went to work and asked somebody, “Would you go with me?” Nobody wanted to go, “My wife won’t let me,” or whatever. But I was so- and then I saw this sign in the lobby: “Tandem jump,” which is, you don’t have to have lessons. And I went upstairs to Ozzie to ask, and he gave me his blessing, so off I went. [laughing] And it was the

most thrilling thing to- to- I- it wasn't jumping headfirst. It was like you scuba dive, and you- like, going backwards, [spreads arms] and then he rolls you over, but I'm in front of him, and you're freefalling for- for 40 to 45 seconds, straight down!

[laughing] And after I stopped screaming, it was so quiet. And so beautiful, and then he just operated it, so you just turned around, all the way down, we went slowly to the bottom. And he landed me right on the beach, and I was- I was at. And they all gave [a big hand?]. And so, I was like a celebrity- I was the only Asian person in that group, so.

PW: [Probably the one lady that?]- [laughing]

KF: Yeah! [laughing]

PW: [That age as well?]. [laughing]

KF: And, so I- they did take a film of me, but I didn't have a- they didn't have a camera. All I wanted was a picture. But they said the camera was broken, but the video's okay, so I had to have a video. But the man at the bottom, he took a- he was from France, he says, "I took a beautiful picture of you." I said, "Oh, I'd love to have it." He says, "I will send it to you." And he- he did, and at the time he said, "Oh, you must come to visit me in France, in the vineyards." [laughs] So.

PW: [laughing] You should still go.

KF: [laughing] But he did send me a picture of- just as I was landing.

PW: Right.

KF: So, it's good.

PW: Would you like to say anything more about your brother?

KF: Oh, yes. My brother. What- you're good to keep asking me questions, you're very good, Peter.

[75 minutes]

LU: Did you have a story about your brother cutting out little articles from the mechanics magazines and putting it up in the outhouse?

KF: No, he didn't do that. He- we, we had paper on the wall all the time. It could be the paper from the [orange juice?] or the Eaton's catalogue papers, but they would be on the walls because we didn't have the right paper to use. In those days. [laughs]

PW: Yes, I- there's- when you have outhouses, you use whatever paper you can find.

KF: [laughs]

PW: If it was magazines or something you had to scrunch it, 'cause they're all [unclear]-

KF: Yeah. All rumpled and crumpled.

PW: So, it would feel softer for the wiping.

KF: Mhm.

PW: Is there anything else you want to say about your brother?

KF: No, that IPW:

We covered everything that you'd like to say?

KF: I think we have, I'm pretty proud of him, and- yeah. Wish he was here, but- he would be in his 90s now.

PW: Right, yeah. Well, couple more questions, Kay. I mean, we have- you went

through the- the Depression, and even through the evacuation and all that, how do you feel about that experience in your life, of that period?

KF: The period of?

PW: You know, the evacuation, when your parents lost their property, and you had to go into the interior. How did you feel, any comments about what happened during that period of our Nikkei history? Do you have any comments about that?

KF: Well, because it was Japan bombing the Americans, our good neighbour, we felt bad that it was Japan. And I think we just moved and did whatever we were told to do. We didn't argue that [?], fight back, it just felt- and that's how I think our parents might have felt, I don't know, I never asked them, but they never- even when we had the choice to go to Japan, they just loved this county, and they wouldn't think of going back. My father loved this county. I know, he said so, and.

PW: Have you ever gone back, have you ever gone to Japan?

KF: Oh yes, I visited twice-

PW: Twice.

KF: Very nice, back to the hometown where-

PW: So, do you still have relatives there?

KF: Mhm. Yes, we keep in touch.

PW: Keep in touch, nice.

KF: Yeah.

[Conversation redacted from 1:18:10 to 1:19:10]

PW: Well, we're talking about you, so that's why I volunteer to do all the things I do, especially to keep the Nikkei history.

KF: Mhm.

PW: And record that, and do as much as we can to keep the history, because that is so important-

KF: Mhm.

PW: In our own history, which is, you know, not a very long time in time period, as such. And I think our parents, and people like you, have gone through enormous change in their lives and our lives, in a very short time, and look how far we've come through all that. So, I think it's important that the people, the Nikkei community, in whatever diluted fashion it become-

KF: Mhm.

PW: Is still retained. Because it's still important, I feel-

KF: Yes.

PW: An important part of our history-

KF: Mhm.

[80 minutes]

PW: Our background, how we became what we are.

KF: Yeah, yeah.

PW: So, I think that's important. And I think it's important that people like you, that we capture your stories, because, you know, it's a very key component of people's

lives that happened in this time period, so that's why volunteering is important, recording what Lisa's doing right now is very, very important.

KF: Yeah, yeah.

PW: 'Cause once they're gone, we're gone. It's gone.

KF: It's true.

PW: And you can read books and- but I think it's important that the audiovisual-

KF: Mhm.

PW: Recordings are kept, because that's when you actually see what people felt like, what they experienced. In their own words. And when [?] it's your brother, or yourself, or your parents-

KF: Mhm.

PW: That's an important part of what the Centre is trying to do, especially the heritage group and archives, so. What about the next generation, like your kids, how do you feel? 'Cause [we see?]- you know that many of our Nikkei community are marrying outside their own group-

KF: Mhm.

PW: And it's getting diluted by half [?], by quarter-

KF: That's true, it is.

PW: But you know what I feel, and I don't know how you feel, Kay, is that there are people who are beginning to, now, focus on their background-

KF: Their roots.

PW: And what their forefathers went through, their parents, grandparents, and parents, aunts and uncles. And I think that's- there is now, I feel, a real interest growing in the Nikkei history. How do you feel? Do you feel that at all?

KF: I don't know if I feel it in my family, 'cause the [unclear]- so, I just- I know when I said, "Well, I may as well throw all these pictures out," but no, they want me to save those pictures but, but.

PW: No, I think it's important that those pictures are kept and your story is kept, because there'll come a time, I think-

KF: Yeah.

PW: But they'll want to know.

KF: Mhm.

PW: What did my parents go through, what did my grandparents go through?

KF: Yes. That's right.

PW: If you don't have any of that, then their history is gone.

KF: That's right. [unclear] that was one of my regrets [?], not asking the questions to my mother and father [unclear]-

PW: And I think we all feel that, that, you know, there was a time when we all wanted to assimilate into, you know, the Canadian society-

KF: This what were forced to do, [to assimilate?]-

PW: Forced to do that, and that's [why we'd say?], okay, well, you don't, that's why we haven't congregated into a Japantown or-

KF: No.

PW: Into little communities within the bigger metropolitan area.

KF: Mhm, that's right.

PW: We're all scattered, and that was a deliberate situation that the Japanese-

Canadians went through, 'cause that- what happened in BC [British Columbia] didn't want to be [unclear] again, so- which is, in a way, [chuckling] totally the other way, I think, to some degree.

KF: Mhm.

PW: But you know. Yeah, so I think you've lived a full- and still are gonna live a full life, 'cause you are so active, you are so talented-

KF: [laughs]

PW: It's wonderful to have a person like that in our community.

KF: Oh, thank you very much. I- to do this, I found it very, very exciting to find people that I didn't even know, hardly, and tell me the stories of my brother, it was wonderful, too. Otherwise, I wouldn't have known some of the stories about my brother, you have to- you have to really go after it.

PW: Well, I think that's what these kind of interview or research-

KF: It [unclear]-

PW: Gets you to do things that you don't even think about-

KF: [I know?].

PW: Or know about, comes out, out of the woodwork-

KF: Yeah, you find them.

PW: Yeah. And I think that's the exciting part of what's happening, especially with the heritage committee-

KF: Yeah.

PW: These stories, like we're doing the archiving now, and they're looking at the pictures, and they have to do the details, and then you find all sorts of things that comes out using these photographs-

KF: Yeah.

PW: Which are buried in our storage area.

KF: Uh huh. [looking at camera] You can turn that off [unclear].

PW: No, it's important that we keeping talking.

KF: Oh. [laughs]

LU: [laughs]

PW: [The dialogue?]. But thank you so much, Kay, it's been wonderful to hear your story again.

KF: Well, thank you both very much for having me, and having my brother's story told, and-

PW: I hope we captured everything, unless there's something else you want to ask?

[85 minutes]

KF: I would just like to thank people like Frank Moritsugu to help- He helped me with many hours putting this sort of together for me, and I really appreciate him, and the people who helped me with their stories, like Mike Kobada [?], and Pat Subochi [unclear], and Roy Kurita [?], Min Nagahara, and Mark Honkawa [?], he wrote to me, too, his stories are very similar with Min's, so I just gave [?] the one letter today. But I appreciate the help that I received, and thank you.

PW: Okay.

[camera sounds, footage jumps]

KF: In 1946, Tak married Betty Umakoshi, and they had their wedding in Popoff hall, and I just wish we could have been there, but-he- so on the- they were allowed to stay in BC [British Columbia] after they got married, so they went searching for a place in the interior of British Columbia, and they found this beautiful in Creston. So, that's where they honeymooned, and decided to go back there after they packed up again, and that's all. So, you cut me off. [holds hand in front of face and closes fist]

LU: [chuckling] Cut there?

[camera sounds]

KF: So, after 33 years, of Tak's death, Tak's- After 33 years after Tak died, the people of Creston remembered, and especially the ambassadors, they were the ones who wanted to reunite, and have- and honour my brother, Tak Toyota. They planned this in a park, in the summer evening, and they wanted to- they represented the family- Tak's family with this beautiful plaque, and that [unclear] with Tak's picture, and honouring- they were gonna put the names of all the other people who were honoured. So, there were hundreds of people that went, too, with their fond memories of the band playing the old favourites, and they had a great time, and the band played, but they also had one of the singers that won the talent shows that Tak had, he MCed. And the winner was Pat Zee [?], at the time she was only 10 years-old, and she sang the same song that she sang when she was little, and she sang so beautifully, but she- I guess her memories went back to those days and she just couldn't finish it, and she just jumped off the stage and went to hug my sister, sister-in-law, Betty, and yeah, it was very moving, I think. So, I don't know, I guess that's okay?

[camera sounds, footage jumps]

PW: Okay, yes.

KF: Tak's first business in Creston was this- a small electrical appliance repair shop, and this is what Tak loved to do, 'cause he could fix a lot of things, and he stayed there for a while, with the shop. But at the same time, he had lots of schoolchildren come after school to work. And one of them was Gary Weimar [?], who learned from Tak some of the way business ran, and he had become president of Westinghouse [?] Canada, so- but he attributes his, well, his knowledge to the roots that he had in Creston, and he remembers the time that Tak was the first man to bring cable television into Creston area.

[90 minutes]

KF: Plus, he was the first man in the whole of the interior of British Columbia [looks down at paper in lap] I could read this better, [reaches down] oh darn, I forgot my glasses. [unclear]

LU: We'll pause it.

[camera sounds, footage jumps]

LU: Okay.

KF: [looking at paper] So, Gary lived in the rural Creston area, and he said, [reading] "the key influence during his teenage years was Tak Toyota, owner of the electric

appliance [?] shop, and he worked part-time after school. Tak-" Oh, I'm repeating myself.

PW: It's okay.

LU: That's okay.

KF: So, he learned a lot about running business and customer services, and he really looked, he noticed that Tak really looked after his costumers. I wanted to tell you that many of the students worked for Tak, and all four of his children did, too, and at one time or another, and I guess his son Ron stayed with him the longest, 'cause he was really quite interested, and later Ron became mayor of Creston. [chuckles] And in fact, he did run his business after Tak passed away for a long, long time.