

Interviewee: Kay (Kiyoshi) Shimizu

Interviewer: Elizabeth Fujita-Kwan

Date: November 5, 2012

Location:

Accession Number: 2012-310

*Note that this interview contains outdated terminology regarding Asian and Indigenous people and a reference to an incident of sexual assault.

[Start Interview]

Elizabeth Fujita-Kwan: All right. So, I believe today is Monday, November the fifth, 2012.

Kay Shimizu: Mm-hm.

EFK: And just for the cameras, could you please state your full name?

KS: It's Kiyoshi Shimizu.

EFK: Okay.

KS: My middle, my, uh, maiden name's Kato.

EFK: Okay. And did you ever have any nicknames when you were growing up?

KS: Yeah. Well, I used to be called all kinds of things, I guess, because, uh, Kiyoshi was a, usually a male name, though it's written in Japanese, it's written quite differently. And, and, uh, there was some difficulty about, uh, naming me Kiyoshi. Actually, I was born, uh, uh, when I was born, I was named Yoshi.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And then my father died before I was born. My mother was pregnant with him when he, uh, contracted TB [Tuberculosis]. And, you know, it was considered then a fatal disease, and he wanted to die in Japan rather than in Canada. And so somehow, they managed to find enough money to send him back to Japan. And when he got to Japan, uh, it was 1917, I guess, and it was a flu epidemic, you know, and he actually died of flu. Um, but he died before I was born. And, um, um, my birth was registered by my mother's aunt who delivered me. Uh, I was born in, uh, Kingcome Inlet [British Columbia], uh, on a, when we lived in a float house. Um, my father was a fisherman. And, uh, you know, the, the, the house would be pulled along by boats to wherever the fishing was good. And I guess that, uh, Kingcome Inlet, that there was a clams cannery, and the women were able to work in the, in the clams cannery. And that's probably why we were there anyways, um, I was named Yoshi. But, uh, you know, uh, when a woman was widowed quite frequently, she, um, married someone within the family, uh, one of the other sons, so as to remain within the same family constellation. Otherwise, she would've had to leave her children, or her children would've gone to, uh, her husband's family. And she would then have been, uh, you know, treated like a, an unmarried woman again. And anyways, there were some complications in that. Well, my, um, father had an older brother who was a logger

who first came to Canada, and that's why he came to Canada. And, uh, so she reluctantly, uh, married. I don't know whether they were actually married or not. But anyways, they, she, uh, stayed with the older brother for the rest of his life.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And, um, when I was 15, I guess I realized that I didn't have a birth certificate. My older sister had one, and, um, the twins who were born to my mother's second husband, and, um, they had birth certificates, but I didn't have one. So I just wrote, you know, I, there was no point in asking my parents to write, but I wrote to the registrar of birth in Victoria to ask if there was a birth certificate that I could get from them, and discovered that, uh, well, uh, I think this was, this happened quite frequently with Japanese families. They weren't properly registered in Canada, but, uh, they asked the consulate, uh, and came up with, uh, someone named Yoshi, who was born on the 16th of February. And the details were so similar to mine that they, they figured it must be my, uh, registration.

[00:05]

KS: But actually, I was born on the 16th of March, and my mother says that she remembers that distinctly because her birthday was on the 6th of March. And I was born after her birthday. However, um, the, um, B.C authorities or the Government of Canada would not accept, uh, the 16th of March as my birthday. And so, you know, I, you changed my birthday back to, um, the 16th of February.

EFK: Oh.

KS: So, I re— for a while there, I had two birthdays, but then I finally resigned myself to, um, being registered to the one that I was registered.

So, I, my birthday became the 16th of February.

EFK: Hm.

KS: I used to say, you know, I could celebrate both birthdays when I was a young, much younger, but I gave it, I gave that up.

EFK: [laughs] It's too bad. And just for the sake of the cameras, what, what year was that again, that you were born?

KS: 1920.

EFK: Hm. That's interesting. So, to this day—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: What day do you celebrate your birthday?

KS: 16th February. [EFK laughs] makes for less confusion.

EFK: [laughs] And just before we go any further, um, do you think you could let me know the full names of both of your parents, your mother and father?

KS: Mm-hm. Yeah, my, uh, mother was called Toyoko.

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: And her maiden name was Makino, and my father was Yoshi Saburo, which means he was the third son. Or the third, yeah, I guess the third. It would be the

third son. Saburo. Um—

EFK: Hm, would you happen to know any approximate birth dates for them?

KS: My mother's was the, uh, 6th of March, but I don't know when my father was born. He was 10 years older than she was.

EFK: Oh, okay.

KS: And my, uh, second, my stepfather was, he was born on the 14th of December, and he was 14 years older than my mother. So he was an older brother who had come to Canada before. My own father.

EFK: Do you know—

KS: He retired, so—

EFK: I'm sorry. Do you know what, um, what brought your, your stepfather to Canada in the first place?

KS: Well, he was the second son, so he didn't inherit the family farm. And so I suppose he was just seeking, um, a place where he could establish himself. And, uh, this was a time when so many people were coming to Canada, you know?

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: He became a logger. And I can't now, unfortunately, um, after the twins were born, they were about a year old. My father slipped and fell down a 200 foot cliff and broke his left leg. And he spent a number of years in hospital. Eventually, the, the broken leg was the bone, and the broken leg was replaced with the silver bar, and he was able to walk around. He used to take us on long walks around Stanley Park. So we were small. So I guess the, uh, silver bar in his, uh, leg really enabled him to at least recover to that extent.

EFK: Hm.

KS: But both my mother and father were avid readers, and they had, uh, a magazine called Kaizo, which is quite an intellectual [pauses] magazine, and they were interested in, uh, left wing ideas.

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: And, uh, what can I say about them?

EFK: Uh, what kind of, um, do you know what kind of educational background they had?

[00:10]

KS: Oh, my mother was, uh, was evidently a very good student. She, she had two older brothers who died while they were still quite young. And so, um, I gather she was, uh, quite coddled by her parents. She actually, she was born, um, in Hachijo - Aogashima, which is an island just off Tokyo. And, um, but somewhat isolated from Tokyo. You know, her father was the [Reeve?] at one time. And, um, she evidently was, according to her, to what she talked about her childhood, uh, quite spoiled because, you know, after losing two sons, uh, allowed a fair amount of leeway with her. And, uh, she did very well in school, and she had ambitions to

become a PhD. So, she really was, um, quite an ambitious, uh, her parents too. Um encouraged her, you know, to study. And, uh, and, you know, probably helped a lot because, um, I remember when my, uh, sister started school, we came, uh, when she was, uh, six years old, we left the, um, logging area so she could go to school, move to Vancouver. And, uh, she had a very hard time adjusting to school because she could, she didn't speak any English. And my mother was very smart about that. She, she'd say, uh, don't cry. Uh, teach your little sister everything that you can remember about what you learned at school. And so, by the time I went to school, I could read a grade two reader.

EFK: Oh, wow.

KS: And that helped a grade deal, uh, in my getting started at school.

EFK: Hm.

KS: I was a teacher's interpreter. There were six other Japanese, uh, children in, in my class. And I, I would be the interpreter for, for, for the children who didn't. And yeah, most of them were the first of their family to go to school. And so, you know, they had more Japanese than English, and I was very helpful to the teacher. So, they, they, that, that gave me a, a real head start. I mean, I remember when I, I went to register for school with my mother. The teacher said she can't, she can't be registered until she goes to kindergarten. And all the churches, including the [voters?] church, the American church, the United Church had kindergartens, which they charged a small fee. Um, but they were downtown. You know, we lived out, uh, in the, just off Victoria Drive. Do you know Vancouver at all?

EFK: I'm very quickly learning. [laughs]

KS: Um, well, it's, you know, maybe about a mile away. And, um, it meant that we would have to take the, uh, I guess there were street cars, buses, well, the buses and street cars. And, uh, it was the cost of getting there as well as the fee. And I couldn't afford it. And so, um, when my mother went to register me at, uh, MacDonald's school, which is a Victoria driver, and Hastings, and the teacher said, "well, can't enrol your daughter because she hasn't had any training in English." And I said, "but I can read the grade two reader. I can." And they gave me a grade two reader, and I could read it as well, please, any grade two student. So, they let me in. And I was a teacher's interpreter, did very well at school, of course.

EFK: [chuckles] Mm. I'm sure with that kind of family background, you had to do well.

KS: Yes. Oh, yeah. Yes. My mother would just, you know, if I came home with anything less than an A, she'd say, what's wrong with that land, with that subject, you know?

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: And, uh, in art and music, I didn't do too well. And, uh, I get scolded for bringing A, B or C, but all the others would be A.

EFK: Did you have a favourite subject while you were growing up?

[00:15]

KS: Mm, well, probably it was languages, you know, English, uh, yeah, I, I did very well in school. I won a scholarship to the university.

EFK: Oh, yeah. I was gonna ask a number of questions about that one. Um, before we go any further, sorry, uh, if you don't mind my asking, um—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Could you recount your, your siblings and sort of the birth order of them and their names?

KS: Mm-hm. Yeah. I was the second daughter, and then my mother and her second husband had, uh, twins.

EFK: Oh, okay.

KS: Now, the two boys, um, one of them died when he was 13 months old—

EFK: Oh.

KS: But the other one survived and became, um, Mary's husband, I guess they met at the University of Toronto.

EFK: And, sorry, what was his name? Or what is his name?

KS: His name was Tida. Tida.

EFK: Hm, okay. And I, I heard you mention you had an older sister?

KS: Yes. Her name was Hisa.

EFK: Oh, okay.

KS: She had a, she had a really tough time, but she was very skilled with her hands. And, uh, she couldn't do anything with a piece of cloth, you know, cut patterns. Uh, she'd look at a picture of a dress, and she'd be able to cut a pattern and replicate that dress. She was really quite ingenious with her hands.

EFK: Hm, I've learned that there are a lot of, um, because dress making was a, a pretty big industry for a lot of ladies back then.

KS: Mm-hm. That, uh, yeah. Yeah. My, um, my mother opened a dress making dry cleaning shop. Mainly it was the dress making, and my, my sister was a big help. She was pulled outta school when she was in grade. Uh, she was just starting grade 10. And, uh, because my mother didn't have enough English to be able to cope with people who came and wanted, uh, quite complicated things down, like turning a man's suit into a woman's suit, you know?

EFK: Mm.

KS: This was during the times when, I guess it was probably depression, let's say. I was about 12, and they opened that shop, and we moved out of the, uh, we lived in, in a *nagaya*, a long house where a lot of Japanese families, where six Japanese families shared this rooms in this building. That was quite a nice way of living because, uh, women could go out and there would be always be somebody to mind the children.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And my sister and I were the two oldest in the building, and, uh, we were always asked to mind them.

EFK: Hm.

KS: Uh, when or play, play games with the children. And what was the It was a good time.

EFK: Yeah. Sorry. What was the age gap between yourself and your sister?

KS: Just two years.

EFK: Oh, okay. And what was the gap between yourself and the twins when they came along?

KS: Yeah, they went about three and a half years, I guess.

EFK: Okay. Well, that's pretty good. That's, that's pretty close.

KS: Yeah. Yeah. Well, you see, um, my father died before I was born.

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: And, uh, you know, my mother needed somebody to provide for it. I think that happened to a number of Japanese women, you know, when their husbands died, uh, they married within the same family to keep the children in the same family.

EFK: Mm-hm. And I don't think I wrote it down here, but, uh, what was your stepfather's name?

KS: His, his name was, um, Yomishi. Yoshi Saburo was my father's name.

EFK: Hm. You mentioned that your mother was born in, uh, Hachijo - Aogashima, I think you said?

KS: Yeah.

EFK: And what about your father's family? Whereabouts are they from?

KS: Oh, Uh, he, they, he came from, uh, Kochiki-ken, which is like where Niko is living.

EFK: Okay.

KS: And how they got together, I wouldn't know, but they must have been some family connection.

[00:20]

EFK: Hm. And was your sister born in Canada or in Japan?

KS: She was born in Canada.

EFK: Okay.

KS: Yeah.

EFK: Okay. I wanted to be clear.

KS: Oh, my mother came to Canada, just, she was married in Japan and then came to Canada immediately.

EFK: Oh.

KS: So, my sister was born, you know, within a year after she married.

EFK: So, you mentioned that your, your mother did a, a dress making and, and sort of dry cleaning business.

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Um, was this during the time that your stepfather was still convalescing from his broken leg, or?

KS: Mm-hm. Yeah.

EFK: Oh, okay. Was he ever able to return to regular work?

KS: No. No.

EFK: [whispers] Oh wow, that's too bad. It must have been, it must have been difficult for your mother, considering she was basically the, well, he, you know, she got workers compensation for a while there. That was fine. Um, because the workers' compensation was, oh God, I can't remember how much it was, but then it, it also was reduced. And when it was reduced, she just couldn't manage on the reduced amount. And that's how she, that's why she started the store.

EFK: Oh.

KS: She worked for, uh, for [unclear] Dress Makings, family first before she started her own store. So she would have some idea of how to go about it. You know, she was, um, she was quite smart.

EFK: Hm.

KS: Then when she started it, she realized that her English wasn't good enough, So my sister was quite young, you know, she was, she was just started grade 10, and she was taken out school to help my mother with the language. Very difficult for, you know, not to have.

EFK: Hm, yeah. Speaking of language, um, did either one of your parents, your, your mother or your stepfather, uh, did they ever go through any English language training or—

KS: No. No. Was it all sort of, that was never offered to—

EFK: Hm.

KS: These days, of course, there's free language classes.

EFK: Hm.

KS: But, uh, they would've had to pay for it, probably, and couldn't afford—

EFK: Could your stepfather speak any English or?

KS: No, he just had to swear words. He going say, Jesus Christ, God damn. And I remember those are the words that we learned.

EFK: And so, for yourself and your siblings, uh, did you normally speak Japanese or English at home?

KS: We spoke Japanese. We went to Japanese school.

EFK: Hm. Okay. That was, yeah, that was my next question. So, uh, where did you go to Japanese school?

KS: We went downtown. So, we had to, uh, um, you know, take, take the, I guess it was a streetcar. Sometimes it was the bus, but we always walked to home. That's probably why we were so healthy. You know, we walked, it was about a mile and a mile and a bit walking home from Japanese school back to, uh, Victoria Drive

and Drive.

EFK: Did you, looking back on it, and do you feel like you liked Japanese school at the time, or you didn't really like it, or?

KS: Well, we had to go. Wasn't any question, no question about liking or not liking, you know.

EFK: Did you ever have much opportunity to play with or spend any time with the other Japanese children?

KS: Well, we had all those children in the long house.

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: But, uh, we would quite often, I have to mind, or, you know, not that we were old enough, really, but, you know, we just, uh, played a lot of games with them.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And, and we lived close enough to the Burrard Inlet to go fishing and clam digging and spend a lot of time with our family digging for clams when it was low tide and shrimp, catching shrimp in high tide. Fishing off the rowboat that my father built.

[00:25]

KS: You know, we had a big garden, we did a lot of gardening. My father knew how to clear land you know, having been a logger.

EFK: Oh.

KS: Yeah, so everybody in the long house had a large garden. We grew a lot of vegetables. Potatoes, tomatoes, all kinds of napa.

EFK: Oh.

KS: Fuki, you remember fuki?

EFK: I don't think I know.

KS: Burdock.

EFK: Oh!

KS: Yeah. And, um, 'cause you can eat it when it's, when the little shoots come up and when, when it matures, you can eat the stock. It must have written off the land of the sea, you know? I mean, the Japanese knew how to make the most of what they had.

EFK: Mm-hm. Would you happen to remember how many families were in that same longhouse with you?

KS: Yeah, there were at least six other families, five or six. And some of them had much larger families than ours. And there were also single men who lived there.

EFK: Hm.

KS: We just arrived from- they were students.

EFK: Were there ever any, like, organized activities that your family might go to?

KS: Um, well, you know, they organized a number of things within the longhouse, for instance, we had, uh, *Mochi Tsuki*, New Years, and, uh, and, uh, most of them went to Buddhist Temple, but we went to, uh, the Anglican Church. And, uh, yeah,

there was little David that I, he was so shy, you know, I had to drag him to school. He was the son of the Anglican minister. His wife and they encouraged me to come and play with him. So, because he had no brothers or sisters, and I guess I, I probably learned a lot of English from him too. And his mother who encouraged me to come and play with him, my sister started school then, then the church was moved, the whole church was moved. And, uh, I, I remember I used to drag David to school because he was so shy. He did mind going to school. But that, that was only for about a year or two. And 'cause the church was then moved and he went to a different school, I lost track of it.

EFK: Do you know, um, so I'm guessing that your parents weren't Anglican before they moved to Canada?

KS: No.

EFK: So, do you know why they chose the Anglican church?

KS: I guess the, maybe the, uh, members of the Anglican Church were more aggressive than the United Church, [EFK laughs] probably recruiting us to go to the, the, their Sunday school.

EFK: Was there any particular reason that your parents might have chosen Anglican as opposed to going, going to a Buddhist church or a temple?

KS: No, I don't think there was any reason why.

EFK: Oh.

KS: Probably the, uh, I you consider just a little bit more persuasive or something. Maybe it was just convenient, you know? Oh, they, I know they established a little mission fairly close to where we lived. And, uh, when we went there, we didn't have to go downtown.

EFK: Hm.

KS: So that's probably why we were, we became, we went to church, and once in a while we'd go downtown to the Holy Cross Mission on [unclear].

[00:30]

EFK: Were either of your parents particularly religious, do you think?

KS: No, they remained Buddhists. [EFK laughs] I know that, uh, when, uh, my father died, you know, there was a Buddhist service in Toronto. And so, for my mother, that's what was also a Buddhist.

EFK: So, I guess maybe they went to the Anglican Church.

KS: Um, they didn't go to the Anglican Church. We, we were sent there.

EFK: Yeah. Yeah. As a, and I guess the idea was that it was beneficial for the children to go.

KS: Yeah. Yeah.

EFK: Okay.

KS: Our English would be reinforced.

EFK: Hm. Yeah. And, uh, what about home life? Did you normally eat Japanese food at home, or Western food, or?

KS: Yeah, mostly Japanese food.

EFK: Hm.

KS: Well, there's vegetables from the garden and the fish and the clams and the, oh, oh, I hated cleans. We had so much of it. But yeah, the shrimps were good.

EFK: And in terms of, um, Japanese food stuffs, like *shoyu* or rice or things like that?

KS: Uh, I guess, did your parents normally go out shopping for those things or, Well, you know, they had what they called *bento san*, you know, um, what's the equivalent here. But anyways, uh, they would come to the, all the homes and take orders. And so those essentials, and then they would be deliveries, so didn't have to go downtown to.

EFK: Hm. And, uh, in terms of when you did start going to, to regular school.

Um, were there a lot of other Japanese children at school, or was it mostly Caucasian or?

KS: Yeah, there weren't as many as there would've been. You know, we lived down on Powell Street, um, but, uh, there would be a handful, you know, maybe six or seven.

EFK: Hm. And were they all children that you, you knew from outside of school or maybe from language school?

KS: We, you'd meet them at, uh, English school as well. Go to Japanese school.

EFK: Um, did you find that outside of the children that lived in the longhouse with you?

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Um, did you have much occasion to play with or spend time with the other non-Japanese children?

KS: Yeah, there was a, there was a family that lived next door to the longhouse.

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: And, uh, they had a daughter who was about my age, who they were called. They came from, they came from England originally, and then lived in New Zealand, and then from New Zealand, moved to Canada. And, uh, they just had the one daughter. So she, uh, had, she had no playmates unless you played with us. [laughs] So she, uh, spent a lot of time with us, and we, and oh, they had, they had a set of the "Book of Knowledge."

EFK: Oh.

KS: And she never looked at, but, uh, their mother let me read the "Book of Knowledge." I would be allowed to go into their, uh, living room where they kept them. They, uh, and I spent a lot of time reading their "Book of Knowledge." I must have read them. One, two, right. Two right through them. The mother was very kind to me, and I realized that, I guess she realized I, I influence on her daughter, and, uh, I would write it and influence Margaret very much. She was, she was not a book type.

EFK: You said her name was Margaret?

KS: Yeah.

EFK: Hm.

KS: Margaret, gosh, long since I've thought about her.

EFK: So I'm wondering, um, it's a different situation in every household in terms of who your neighbours are.

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Um, for some people they might have been a bit isolated from the Japanese community. Um, but it sounds like in your, in your instance, because you lived in the longhouse—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: There were other Japanese families right, nearby.

KS: Yeah.

EFK: Um, in that case, do you think your parents had much rhyme or reason to either have business with or socialize with non-Japanese people?

[00:35]

KS: Oh, I did. I don't think they had any real close friends. People who are not Japanese.

EFK: And this is a very general question, but, um, do you think your parents, do you think they were happy with the choice that they made to come to Canada? Do you think they ever regretted leaving Japan?

KS: No, I don't think that there was any, there were any regrets. Uh, they just accepted, you know, what, like brought them, I guess, you know, I can't remember her mother and my mother saying, you know, that she wanted to be in Japan.

EFK: Hm. Was there ever any correspondence between your parents and Japan?

KS: Yeah, occasionally. I mean, whenever, whenever she received a gift of some kind, you know, what she thought her family in Japan might enjoy. We didn't share in that gift. You know, they got sent to Japan immediately. Um, we didn't even see what was in the parcel. [EFK laughs] So I guess that was her way of staying in touch with, send them these gifts, which she couldn't afford to buy for them. You know, she would send on to Japan.

EFK: Between yourself and your sister and your, your brother—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Um, who do you think had the best Japanese?

KS: Oh, my sister. Yeah, 'cause then, you know, she could, she could always interpret to my parents what was happening. And, uh, I always had my head in a book. So, I, but, you know, my parents bought, um, the, uh, the Daily Province or the Vancouver Sun, whichever paper they, they could get. I don't know whether they just picked them up, picked them off the street, or, you know, somebody had discarded it. And so, they brought it. But we, we did, uh, subscribe to them later

on. I know. And then it was my job to convey to my father, particularly who, who'd be able to catch some phrases, you know, from, from the newspaper to give him some idea what the story would've been. Oh, I hated that.

EFK: Why do you think you hated it?

KS: Well, because I, I wouldn't understand, you know?

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: What it was all about. And then I'd try and tell my father—

EFK: What was going on.?

KS: Yeah.

EFK: Yeah. About— hm. Do you think, um, I know your parents were surrounded by quite a number of Japanese people living in the longhouse.

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: But do you think they ever felt a bit isolated considering their English capability wasn't very strong in terms of trying to communicate with, you know, the non-Japanese aspect of their home, basically? I mean, it's interesting that your father, uh, took a subscription to the newspaper, even though he himself couldn't read it.

KS: Yeah. Yeah. He felt it was for the good of the children. Um, they, they had, um, associations with people who were quite left wing in their thinking, you know? And so, they had people in who, who discussed these ideas. Uh, I remember my sister and I used to make fudge on these occasions, so, you know, I, we could contribute something to the refreshments afterward, um,

EFK: and do,

KS: but, but they were people who, who really liked to, uh, uh, discuss with their friends, you know, ideas that political ideas, they were very left wing.

EFK: Yeah. Uh, that's very, um—

KS: It was kind of unusual, I think.

EFK: Yeah.

[00:40]

EFK: These-

KS: They, they subscribed to rather difficult political magazines from Japan. Kaizo was one of them. Kaizo was a- what would be the equivalent, a Canadian forum, I guess Canadian forum was the CCF magazine that came out.

EFK: The individuals that they would meet with—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Were these friends or neighbours, or?

KS: No, they would be people from all, all over Japanese. And a lot of them were younger, you know, than they, uh, she, it, there was a place in that long house for single men. And we lived on the ground floor where those single men, that, and that may have been part the reason why there were these younger people in, in this group. I, I don't know how it came about. But anyways, um, [coughs] they

had these meetings and, well, it was actually was a bed sitting with my parents, had a kind of modified, uh, you know, bed that got hidden away.

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: What they call them.

EFK: I can't think of the word, but I know what you're talking about.

KS: Yeah. Yeah. And that was the learning woman. That's where they held these meetings. But I can remember these meetings that went on until midnight.

EFK: Hm.

KS: Because we had a bedroom right next door to, to our, my sister and I.

EFK: How do you think your parents managed to meet these different people who had similar political views?

KS: I don't know. You know, they, uh, they were part of, uh, a group that started a co-op store on Powell Street.

EFK: Hm.

KS: In Japanese town. They were, I think part of the group had started the [*Minshu?*], you know, which was the People's Daily. It was more of a left-wing paper than the [unclear].

EFK: Um, hm.

KS: And they were engaged in the fishermen to form a union. And my parents were quite progressive in their, particularly my father. You know, he was useful to him because he didn't, he didn't still work and go around and talk to people.

EFK: Mm-hm. You had mentioned the, um, the educational background that your mom had had, but, uh—

KS: Yeah. She wanted to become a PhD.

EFK: Yeah. What was the Ph— a PhD in? What do you know? [chuckles]

KS: I have No idea.

EFK: Yeah. Yeah. And what about.

KS: No, she, uh, she had done very well in school and, uh, I don't know how much formal education she had, but for a woman, I think probably, I dunno, I dunno how far she went.

EFK: Hm.

KS: For her to, to even consider being a PhD, she must have had some higher education than just doing—

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: Public school or elementary school, at least high school education.

EFK: Yeah. Yeah. And, uh, what about your stepfather? Do you know what kind of—

KS: He didn't have as much education, and she did, she used to write, um, articles for the [*Minshu?*], you know, the most liberal, the Japanese papers, occasionally, write an article, I don't know what those articles were.

EFK: So, so in general, um—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: I guess if you had to, in looking back on your childhood, are there any particularly fond memories that you, that kind of spring to mind about your years living in the longhouse and playing with the other children and—

[00:45]

KS: Well, we used to go, uh, as a family, you know, um, my father insisted that we'd go on walks around Stanley Park once a month. He was able to, we went, you know, we would go clam digging.

EFK: Hm.

KS: Shrimp fishing. We did a lot of things as a family, just, just by ourselves that would interest the other families. I remember when we went clam digging and be the middle of the night, you know, when the tide was low. And, and then we'd share all the clams with the other family. God, I hated clams [EFK laughs] so much of it.

EFK: Sometimes too much of a good thing isn't a good thing. Yeah.

KS: Yeah. That's right. And I think the other families enjoyed the sharing at least.

EFK: Hm. It's interesting that your father, it sounds like your father was very focused on having family time together.

KS: Yeah. Yeah. He, he was, he, he was, he was a good father.

EFK: Hm.

KS: Yeah. And I found him very helpful when I wanted to get away from the family at, at the time of the evacuation, you know, after I got my, um, social work diploma and the, uh, B.C Security Commission to work for, at first, you know, they said I was betraying the community by working with the government. And I, I just felt I should at least give it a try. You know, people needed somebody to act as a liaison between the government and the, those who were being moved into these ghost towns. And, uh, I thought I was gonna have to break up with my family.

EFK: Hm.

KS: My father, at least, you know, was saying, well, she has to live her own life. He came down to the train, gave me some money to get at least, uh, be able to live for a month—

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: Without any, you know, because he knew him and they paid to be in a month. Um, my mother was quiet, since I remember it was quite expensive. I can remember that, um, when I wanted to get married, uh, my mother said, "no," her older sister haven't got any prospects yet. She gotta wait until sister gets married. My father said, "Well she isn't going to meet anybody [unclear], so I think you should let her go.:" So, you know, there were times when he was a big help.

EFK: Hm. Interesting. He sounds like he's, um, maybe not your typical stoic

Japanese man, if I might put it that way.

KS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. He was, he was a good man.

EFK: So, I guess my next series of questions is about, um, how it was that you came about to attend U-UBC [University of British Columbia].

KS: Well, I won a scholarship.

EFK: Yeah.

KS: Why wouldn't I go to take, take advantage of the scholarship?

EFK: Um, did you always—

KS: And I went to, uh, well, when, when my mother opened the shop, you know, we lived behind the store. My father, uh, managed to fix so something, you know, so that we could somehow, uh, live in the back of the store and, uh, what happened. Um, so, so I went to Kitsilano High School, and I'd been at Temple Junior High School before that. And we moved to back of the store. I transferred to Kitsilano High School. And when I was at Kitsilano High School, I won the award for the best student in each grade, in grade nine to grade 12.

[00:50]

KS: And, um, but I was surprised when, uh, grade 12 and, um, uh, we were very fortunate to live on, on the side of Elma Road that was part of Vancouver instead of the other side, which is part of Kerrisdale. Because, uh, someone in Kerrisdale got 0.1 10th more than I did. She won a scholarship for that area. But I won it for the city of Vancouver because I just happened to live on the right side of, down the road, left side of it was, anyways, you know, they, they couldn't stop me from going to university. Uh, I was very fortunate I wanted to become a librarian. Now, the reason why I wanted to become a librarian was when I was eight years old, I discovered the library at the corner of Maine and Hastings. It was near the Japanese school, school, and I found that I could take out four books every time I went to the library. As long as I returned them four books I'd borrowed the week before. But, you know, those librarians never spoke to me.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And I was too shy to, you know, speak to them. Of course. And, you know, those, those books were not like children's books. They were, you know, like written by Thackeray, Sir Walter Scott, Dickens And so all I could do was start at the As and go through, through all the books, I went from A to Z—

KS: Hm.

EFK: And the librarians never spoke to me. So I said to myself, "if I could be a librarian, I would help a child like me to pick more books," 'cause sometimes I take the books on when I just split the page pages, you know, I understand what they were about. I mean, they were, they were not children's books. They were just, you know, well, some of them were, some of them were quite good. But, um, but not to have the librarians still, you know, this book would be appropriate for you to read.

EFK: Hm.

KS: So I'd pick four books in order as a very orderly child. That's why I got through the "Book of Knowledge," too. I read the first one before I read the last one.

EFK: Do you think there was any reason that they didn't speak with you? All those trips that you made to the library?

KS: I dunno. I think they felt, oh, this child doesn't need my attention.

EFK: Hm.

KS: I don't think they spoke to any of the kids. And they, and it wasn't like the way the children's, uh, library is these days. I mean, I took my kids to the Children's library in Ottawa when they were small. Do you remember that?

[sentence redacted from 00:53:28 to 00:53:33]

KS: And, you know, the librarians were very helpful, you know, choosing, helping the kids choose the books. And, uh, anyways, uh, when I went to university and, uh, uh, I worked with the reference librarian, she, for 50 cents an hour, 10 hours a week, uh, I, I could, I could do things for the reference librarian. And, uh, the, uh, reference librarian was in her second year. She said, if you really want to be a librarian, you have to go to school at University of Manitoba, or, University of Toronto and, uh, seems to me you're gonna need a bursary or scholarship of some kind to get there. And she wrote to them and asked, you know, whether it might be possible. They wrote back and said, "Um, we don't take Orientals, Native Indians, or Jewish." I was really shocked. And I thought, "Oh my God, what I do now?"

[00:55]

KS: Um, I think she found me quite useful. I used to look up stuff for teachers and for graduate students for those in their third or fourth years.

EFK: Hm.

KS: You know, Ms. Smith going, asked me to follow up, when they requested information about certain subjects. Oh, I was really upset, I couldn't people consider doing, you know, going, even if I could afford to. And so in my third and fourth years, I was really, uh, puzzled as to how, I might continue my studies. And so I just took a lot of terms subject, just like more English and sociology and psychology. And, uh, somehow got my BA [Bachelor of Arts]. And then when I got my BA, I thought, well, what could I do with it? And it occurred to me that I might become a social worker. And, uh, the university at that time I was in, in second year, I think, in providing a social work program with a diploma. You had to be a graduate before you could apply. So I went to see the, uh, admissions officer, and she said, oh, there's no way we can find a placement for you. You know, you have to, you have to go. We had to have two placements with a social agency, a

practicum. And, uh, he said, there's must, the social agency will take you. And I said, but there must be, there must be some way. Anyways, that's when I had, I really had the experience of a lifetime. Um, I accidentally met J.S Woodsworth. He was founder of CCF [Cooperative Commonwealth Federation], and he was a pacifist. And, uh, evidently, he had a stroke. Uh, anyways, you know, I used to, uh, work in the shop on the weekends. And, uh, that weekend I was shortening a coat for a minister's daughter. And when I finished doing that, I had to deliver it to minister's family. When I got there, we, she opened the door, but J.S Woodsworth was, I didn't know it J.S Woodsworth anyways, was this elderly man. And he said, oh, yes, they do about it. And, uh, his wife would pay for it. And then he said, "By the way, are you Japanese?" And I said, yeah, he was. And he said, have you got a few minutes to spare? I'd like to hear how the Japanese community is getting along, because this was 1941. And he invited me. I said, "Oh, yeah," I, you know, I could tell that he was genuinely interested. So I, I accepted his invitation to chat with him for a while. And, you know, at first I didn't recognize them, but as we began to, uh, talk, I realized that it had to be J.S Woodsworth. So I said, "oh, I, I really, I think I know who you are." I, I belonged when I was in high school. My friends belong to the CCYM, which is the Youth Movement, [coughs] the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, CCF, which was forerunner for the New Democrats. And, um, I began to think it might be J.S Woodsworth. Anyways, his wife came in at that point and said that he was upsetting himself because he was, he was getting, you know, he was excited as I was. Anyways, uh, he, he said he wanted to ask further questions on me, and, would she brings the cup of tea.

[01:00]

KS: And I said, I stayed there long enough, maybe I was tiring him. He said, "Talk some more. "And so I said, "You know, you've gotta be J.S. he was so pleased that I recognized him," and I told him I was so excited about that. Talked some more. And I told him about the troubles I was having getting into this program at the university. And, uh, he just, he didn't tell me what to do, you know, but he made me think about what I could do.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And so, uh, two days ago, I thought, so I, I guess I spent most of Sunday thinking about what I might do.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And on, um, I, I need to go to the bathroom.

EFK: Oh, yeah. We'll, we'll take a pause there. It's a good point to pause actually.

KS: Yeah. [camera cuts then restarts]

EFK: There we go. Okay. So, when we stopped talking, we had been talking about, um, your meeting with Woodsworth.

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: And, uh, just sort of the tail end of it there. So, um, towards the end of it, do you recall any, any specific thing coming of it? You said that you had mentioned the trouble that you had in applying to different things, and he, he gave you some suggestions on it.

KS: No, no, he didn't. He, it was just that he made me think about what I might do.

EFK: Okay.

KS: Um, so all day Sunday, I thought about what I might do in order to get the university to, um, accommodate me. And so on Monday, I, uh, went to the Council of Social Agencies as it was called in and asked to speak to the secretary and, uh, now I had a previous contact with this person. Her name was Marjorie Bradford. I can't remember what the previous contact was. But anyways, uh, when I presented my problem to her, she said, "Well, let me think now, there's the TB [tuberculosis] Social Service, and there's Margaret Johnson, whom I'm sure would be pleased to have a Japanese speaking student to work with her. Um, they have, uh, so many Japanese people who, uh, who could use someone who speaks Japanese to help. And then there's, um, Margaret, uh, oh, what was her name? I thought I'd never forget her, because she was a wonderful person at the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] and the YWCA has just hired a Chinese graduate in physical education from the University of Toronto. And, uh, "I'm sure she might consider taking on a student like you. So why don't you go make appointments with both Margarets and see what comes out?" So I did, I, I saw Margaret, uh, what did I say? Margaret? What was her name? Why did we say? And, uh, she said, oh, she'd be happy to take me on. And she was certainly a distressed at what the university had done, turning me away. And, um, then, you know, Pearl Harbour happened and I couldn't get out at night. And I had been with Margaret, uh, and the YWCA working with business girls in the evening, and I couldn't get out to continue working with them. So she said, "Well, see why I can't have you working with the children in the grand." And they had a sub, uh, kind of, uh, another YWCA, uh, spot in the, at the Grandview, oh, I dunno what was called. But anyway, she said, "I could send you out there on Saturdays, and if you work all day Saturday, that would be equivalent to what the field work, uh, that you're required to do would be equivalent to."

[01:05]

KS: So, I said, "Fine." So, I started going out there on Saturdays, and the university accepted it as equivalent to what, uh, I might have, uh, done with the, uh, business girls in the union. And, uh, so that, that, that was one, one thing settled. And Margaret, uh, Johnson, at the TB Social Service was overwhelmed with having a Japanese speak student with her know, the university didn't even think of, of, uh, exploring these possibilities. Anyways, uh, the university took me in, well, then they only started moving these families, separating the men from their families and all the problems that arose because of that. And so, uh, what

happened then? Oh, yeah. Um, they appointed, uh, Amy Lee, who was the head of Social Services for the city of Vancouver to set up a program of helping families whose, you know, who are having difficulties in there. And the male members of the family were separated from them and, uh, uh, asked her to work out some kind of way of helping these families. So she came to the university and said, "Let me have that student who speaks Japanese." At that point, you know, I was speaking Japanese quite well, and, uh, so I was assigned to work with her. And they said that, uh, the work I did when qualified me for a field work placement. Uh, so I went to work with Amy Lee, and she sent me out to Kaslo. And, uh, you know, there wasn't very much I could do except to just listen to the tales of all that, uh, all these families had, whose husbands and, uh, older sons were, were, were taken away from them.

But, uh, at least, uh, you know what it did was the two months of Kaslo qualified me for the field work that I needed to do with the course. And then there was a summer session to go. And, uh, the agreement was that I would be allowed to go to the summer school, and I was the only Japanese Canadian student on the campus of the University of British Columbia that summer of 1942. And at the end of it, uh, they were ready to give me my diploma for completing that course. Uh, oh, those are the days, you know, I couldn't go at night. They had a, they had a beach party at the end of the, of the summer session. And, uh, one of, one of the, one of— there were two boys in the class, and he went, and they were both in the army, but they were to do some kind of social service work as army officers, I guess. Anyways, one of them had a car, and he suggested that he could come and pick me up and, and hide me under a blanket to get me to the beach party. So I went up to the beach party, had a great time. I mean, everybody was so, you know, so sympathetic to my plight, but, uh, really quite, quite an occasion. Anyways, the, uh, university wouldn't allow me to attend the convocation at which, uh, all those, uh, students received some kind of a diploma. They, they mailed me in the diploma, and I lost it, you know, and all the moves that I made after I received that anyways, they finally gave it to me, mailed me a second copy, and I now have something that says that I completed the course as first class honours.

EFK: Yeah. I've got a series of questions now. So, let's see. So, when Pearl Harbour first happened—

[01:10]

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Um, I presume you were still living at home with your family?

KS: Yeah.

EFK: Okay.

KS: Yeah.

EFK: And, um, do you recall your parents ever saying anything or, or remarking on, on Pearl Harbour at all? Are there reactions to it?

KS: Yeah, I think my father thought that Japan was very foolish to attack, uh, the United States. Uh, he was sure that, uh, the war would be over very soon, and that we would all be allowed to stay where we were.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And, uh, we were, uh, he built boxes for each one of us so that we could put our precious, uh, material in those boxes. And then he put, put them up in, in the attic. I, I know I had a, I had won an oratorical contest, I guess the previous year, the JCCL [Japanese Canadian Citizens' League] in Victoria. Uh, and, uh, my, my, uh, my cup was in that, in, in that box along with all kinds of pictures, you know, and my, uh, earlier days, particularly those, there was, there was somebody who was a photographer among the students. There were a lot of university pictures in there. So we put all those boxes, and all those boxes were then given to the, uh, custodian of enemy alien property.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And the cup was resurrected and used at another, oratorical contest after the war was over. I remember it being mentioned in the New Canadian.

EFK: And what about your mother considering what an intelligent woman she was? Did she ever remark on what was going on, or?

KS: Well, she certainly didn't want me to go and work at the ghost town, thought I would betray our people—

EFK: I guess at that point, your parents hadn't been relocated somewhere, or had they, or?

KS: No, they, no, they, people in Vancouver remained there until sometime in October.

EFK: Okay.

KS: So, uh, you know, I could have stayed with them complication, um, but I wasn't allowed to do that. And, uh, when I decided that I would, oh, well, the arrangement was that I would continue to work with, with them for another six months, four months, six months, something like that. I can't remember the exact number of months I committed myself for it. And, uh, and when that, when that term was over, I, I left to ghost town. I went to, uh, Toronto, and then tried to find a way of surviving -

EFK: Hm.

KS: In the Toronto area.

EFK: So where, um, I guess during, once your family was, uh, forced to relocate

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Uh, what, what happened with your family?

KS: Well, they, uh, they, they, they went to New Denver.

EFK: Okay.

KS: And they were given special privileges because I worked for the government. By that time, you know my mother was reconciled but, uh, they, you know, all

these little shacks had three rooms. The middle one was, uh, you know, the kitchen and, uh, had the stove and table. Then the, the two bedrooms on either side. One of their bedrooms was reserved for, uh, Hideo Hyodo, who was the teacher, you know, set up, um, makeshift, uh, school rooms for the children who needed some kind of guidance and working with her.

[01:15]

KS: Well, they, they, they were given correspondence courses and needed some, uh, guidance. And so, Hide would have to travel from town to town, you know, supervising the, uh, high school graduates, university students and coached these kids. So, she stayed, you know, with my family. So that room was reserved for her. But my sister shared the room. She, she slept there, my brother who was 17, so he wasn't sent to, uh, the road camp. Uh, he slept, I guess, in the same room as my parents. And she shared the, uh, bedroom with her, so at least got, got a little bit more room, you know.

EFK: Hm.

KS: And then my sister and my mother evidently started classes in sewing.

EFK: Hm.

KS: Helping, uh, the women and the girls. June Takahashi says she learned how to sew from my sister. Did you know that?

[Conversation redacted from 1:16:41 to 1:16:47]

EFK: Oh, wow. So, by the time your family got to New Denver—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Um, were you already in Toronto at that point, or were you still in Kaslo?

KS: No, I was, I was, I went back to live with them while I went to summer school.

EFK: Oh, okay. Okay.

KS: But yeah, my mother was reconciled to my working for the government by that time.

EFK: Mm-hm. So, did your family then, um, did they spend the duration of the war in New Denver, or did they eventually move us?

KS: No, they eventually moved to Toronto.

EFK: Okay.

KS: So that my brother could go to university.

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: You know, he, he was just on the verge, I guess, of, uh, graduating from high school.

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: And I think he had to go for a year to get his grade 13 high school in Toronto before he couldn't go to university. And then he got to university, that's where he met his wife.

EFK: So, in terms of timeline—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Um, when was it that you ended up moving out east to Toronto? Was it with your family or on your own?

KS: I was on my own. Okay. That's what I, I remember RCA, uh, Royal Canadian Air Force guy sitting next to me tried to, uh, molest me, and I screamed, and I called the conductor and said, "I'm having trouble with a guy then sitting the seat next to me, you know?"

EFK: Oh, gosh.

KS: Really. We were traveling, you know, in those days the trains were packed and I was by myself. Well, I actually had a child that I had to drop off at Lethbridge, so I was fine until Lethbridge. So this guy got on at Lethbridge, I thought, how am I ever going to get away from it? So screaming was the only thing I could think of. And the conductor came and, and he was put off the train, and the conductor found another carriage for me. I thought I'd never get across Canada without some kind of trouble.

EFK: Oh man.

KS: Yeah.

EFK: Yeah. So what year would that have been at that point, do you think?

KS: Let me think.

EFK: Mm-hm. [camera moving noises]

KS: Yeah, I went to, I went to all these towns to set up welfare offices.

[1:20]

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: Well, must have been—

EFK: Would that have been about 43 or earlier or later, or? [camera moving noises]

KS: Probably was 43.

EFK: Hm. That would make sense.

KS: Yeah.

EFK: And as for your family—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: I guess they moved to New Denver in the fall of 42?

KS: Yeah.

EFK: Okay.

KS: Yeah.

EFK: So do you remember how long you might have been in Toronto before your family joined you?

KS: Well, I, I got, I, I had this live-in job. Let's see. I went out to Farm Service camp where I had to, I was a kitchen assistant. I had to get up at five in the morning.

EFK: Oh my.

KS: So it must been the year after.

EFK: So about 44, do you think?

KS: Oh, oh. After the farm service in the fall, I went to work at University Settlement House. Now, that was a live-in job, you know?

EFK: Mm-hm.

KS: I was Children's Aid and,

EFK: Hm.

KS: So see, I got married in 44.

EFK: Hm. Yeah. Actually that brings me to a good point then. So—

KS: Mm-hm.

EFK: Do you mind if I ask a few questions then about, about your, your late husband?

KS: Mm-hm. Happy to.

EFK: Yeah. So, uh, first of all, do you remember how you met him or when you met him?

KS: Yeah, he was in his last year at, uh, UBC when I entered UBC.

EFK: Hm. And was it like a mutual friend or a school activity that you, you think you might have met him through, or?

KS: No, he was just a student and I was a student too. And we had a Japanese student's school.

EFK: Hm.

[Conversation redacted from 1:21:24 to 1:22:48]

[End Interview]