

People's History of the I.E.

Interview Summary

Item Number: 2025.001.004

File Name: 2025.001.0042025.001.004.pt01_Michiko_Yoshimura_Womens-History
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Interviewee:

Michiko Yoshimura

Interviewer:

Kahleia Corpuz and Cathy Gudis

Interview Date:

March 4, 2026

Interview Location:

Riverside, CA

Interview Summary completed by:

Kahleia Corpuz, 2026

Description:

Michiko Yoshimura was born on January 22, 1941 in the San Gabriel Valley before she and her family were incarcerated at Heart Mountain and Tule Lake. After their incarceration, in the early 1950s, her family moved to West Riverside. During this time, her family ran a successful fruit stand which she helped with. Growing up, she brought her sisters to Japanese language classes in Casablanca and attended church events at the Japanese Union Church because it was a central place for the Japanese American community. Michiko graduated from Poly High School and studied education at the University of California, Riverside. At the time, she noted women could only be secretaries, nurses, or teachers. Michiko taught in the Riverside Unified School District for 36 years at three different elementary schools. Oftentimes, at these educational institutions, she was the only Japanese American person in her classes. She noted how she

wanted to blend in and not stand out. She described where different Japanese American farms were and the racial make-up of different parts of the city. Also, she got involved in the Riverside chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) helping with the Sendai Festival, Thanksgiving, and summer picnics. Michiko has maintained the records and photos from her family and has collaborated with the Harada House, UCR, Save Our Chinatown Committee for cultural and historic preservation.

Subject Topic:

- Agriculture
- Americanization
- Asian American
- BIPOC
- Casa Blanca Elementary School
- Chinese Community
- Community Life in Riverside
- Cultural Celebrations
- Discrimination
- Employment
- Farming
- Farmworkers
- Feminism
- Harada House
- Housing
- Immigration
- Internment
- Japanese Americans
- Japanese WWII Incarceration
- Race
- Racial/Ethnic Discrimination
- Racism
- Ranching
- Religion
- Sexism
- University of California, Riverside
- Women

Key Organizations:

- Japanese American Citizens League (Riverside Chapter)

- University of California, Riverside
- Harada House
- Save Our Chinatown Committee

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
West Riverside Elementary School	Riverside (Calif.) / 5671 42nd St, Riverside, CA 92509
Poly High School	Riverside (Calif.) / 5450 Victoria Ave., Riverside, CA 92506
Long Mission Boulevard	Riverside County (Calif.)
Casablanca Elementary School	Riverside (Calif.) / 3060 Madison St, Riverside, CA 92504
Japanese Union Church	Eastside (Riverside, Calif.) / 14th Street
Riverside Unified School District	Riverside County (Calif.)
Gardeners' Association Building	Riverside (Calif.)
Mission Inn	Riverside (Calif.) / 3649 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside, CA 92501

Temporal Coverage:

1940s-2000s (primarily 50s-60s)

Related Materials:

Michiko shared with us a photo of her 3rd grade class in 1964-65 when she taught at Monroe Elementary School. I am unsure if it has been scanned in yet, but it is shown on the video recording of her interview at 46:02. There are 32 students in her class who are all white, and she is the only Japanese American person in the photo in the far right.

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Transcript	00:02:16 - 00:20:42	Early family life, brief mention of incarceration at Tule Lake, family's immigration to the San Gabriel Valley and Riverside
Transcript	00:20:43 - 00:39:46	Japanese language classes at Casablanca, Japanese American community in Riverside (Inabas and Namekatas), Japanese Union Church, and Japanese American farming communities
Transcript	00:39:47 - 00:53:20	Going to school in Riverside, talks about gendered expectations for career aspirations, teaching in Riverside for 36 years
Transcript	00:53:21 - 01:13:59	Community organizing in Riverside, work with the JACL, Sendai Festival, brief mention of the Sister City program, Redress Movement and her family's experience with it
Transcript	01:14:00 - 01:15:47	Observed changes in West Riverside
Transcript	01:15:48 - 01:31:09	Historic preservation work with Sumi Harada, the Harada House, and the Save Our Chinatown Committee, shared the importance of historic preservation
Transcript	01:31:10 - 01:36:45 & the entirety of the second video	Talks about changing societal expectations for women regarding labor and dress code, especially in education

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:00:03] All right, hi. Thanks for talking to us today about your life and memories of living in Riverside. We would like to record and archive this interview to make it available for other people. After the interview, we will send you a copy of the audio and the transcript for you to review. If you would like to remove sections for whatever reason, then you can mark up the transcript so we can make those changes. If at any time afterwards, you wish to remove the recording from the digital archive, you can let us know, and we will take it down. This information is in the permission form which you have a copy of. We know that you were interviewed for other projects pertaining to Riverside history. Some topics we wanted to cover here were what was your life like in Riverside, your family experiences in the region, navigating life as a Japanese American woman, and your work with the JACL, Harada House, UCR, and more. We are also interested in the roles of women in work, business, education, and community building. And if any locations come up in this interview, we would love it if you could share the addresses of these places. If you remember, again, it is completely fine if you cannot. So, we'll just start with introductions.

My name is Kahleia Corpuz, and I am a UCR student documenting histories of the region. Today is Wednesday, March 4th, 2026, and I'm here today in Riverside doing an interview with Michiko, correct?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:01:21] Yes.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:01:21] Yoshimura?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:01:21] Right.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:01:22] Okay. For a People's History of the Inland Empire, first I want to make sure that you are comfortable with me recording this interview, are you?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:01:29] Yes.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:01:30] Awesome. Again, if at any time you want to pause or stop recording, please let me know. So, we'll just start off with some basic introductions: your name, date of birth, your childhood. So, can you please spell your full name, on the tape, as well as your maiden name, and if you are willing to share it, your date of birth.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:01:52] Michiko—is—Yoshimura, M-I-C-H-I K-O. Yoshimura, Y-O S-H-I-M-U-R-A. And, I've never been married, so that is my maiden name.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:02:08] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Awesome, all right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:02:08] Okay, and I was born in January 22nd, 1941.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:02:16] So, I just wanted to get a little bit of your family history. So like, when did your family move to the IE, and from where? Do you know why they came over here? And what other family stories do you know about their life when they first moved here?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:02:32] We moved here—it must have been in the early '50s because I remember going to West Riverside Elementary School—I believe fifth grade. And the reason that my, my family moved here to Riverside is that they had been farming in the San Gabriel—you know, Valley area as farmers.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:03:00] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:03:01] And—you know, we ended up in Riverside because...we were in Heart Mountain internment camp and in Tule Lake, and so, after you know the five—what, four years—like from 1942 to 1945, we were in internment camps, so that after, after the war, we had no place to return. We could not return to the San Gabriel Valley. And so, so from probably—you know—so the next five or six years, my parents were trying to find a way of making a living. You know, we were—I don't know if you could use the word refugees, but

we're sort of like left out. We were left out of camp with no money. And, so we were trying to find, a way of, you know, making a living, you know, starting over again, because my parents were farmers, and so they were—they didn't own property. People who owned property could go back to their, their homes or their farm, and my parents were leasing, and they had sold all their farm equipment, so they had nothing to start with. So, you know, we were probably living in tents and trailers, just trying to exist, you know, for a—for the next four or five years after we left camp. And my father worked for different farmers, and he was working for an Italian farmer that they knew before the war in San Diego. And my father also tried farming in Borrego Springs with his, with his— some of his relatives, but that didn't work out. And so, I think my father received some money, in compensation for some of his— the losses, and that money provided my father the opportunity to start farming again. And so, his—the farmer that he was working for had, had been farming in Riverside, and he had some other friends that he knew that were in this Riverside area, so he decided to—you know—to lease some property, and try farming again, so that's why we moved to Riverside. And I graduated from Poly High School in 1958, and so if I was in the fifth grade—but, probably that would be the early '50s when we moved here.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:05:34] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. If I'm doing my math correctly, and forgive me if I am wrong, so you, in your—from year...1 to 4, you were in, the internment camps?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:05:46] We went into Heart Mountain, Wyoming, an internment camp in 1942, because Pearl Harbor happened in December of '41, and it wasn't until the spring of '42 that the, that the Japanese were interned. And so we were there until 1945 when the—the war ended.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:06:13] Do you yourself have like any memories of—during this time, I know it was fairly like early in your life, or do you have any family stories from that time that you'd be willing to share?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:06:29] I've talked to my, you know, my mother and father, and because I was, maybe one and a half when we went into internment camp? I don't really have any personal memories. It would be, you know, stories my mother, my father, you know told me and pictures that my father had. Well, he had been interested in photography, and he had pictures that, that they had had of camp. And, and, you know, our relatives, when they would get together, they would talk about it. But generally, after the war, it was a matter of trying to get your life back and a matter of, of, you know, existing, you know, finding, you know, a job, you know, making money, trying to get started over again. So, it was a matter of you weren't discussing what had happened to you. It was a matter of survival, trying to, you know, trying to make a living. And then, because it was such a terrible experience, I know for people like my father, the Niseis, they, they prefer not discussing it. So, so those of us—you, you know—because I'm a Sansei, which is third generation, the Niseis who were adults at that time, they really, generally didn't want to discuss it because it's sort of like being—being in prison, and then getting out—you don't discuss your prison years. It, it wasn't something to be proud

of. It was something to be ashamed of.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:08:05] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:08:05] You know, so why would you discuss something that you're ashamed of? You don't take pride in it. You know, there had been a terrible war, and you know—you know—a lot of Jap [not derogatory, word cut off]—you know, we, we had family in Japan. They suffered, we suffered. It's not something—I, I know a lot of military people who were in the war, they, they faced some terrible times, and, they simply didn't want to discuss it. And I think it's been lately that people are kind of sorry that they didn't discuss it with the veterans that actually were fighting in the war. And I, I have that regret. I have, I have that regret that I didn't talk to more—more with my mother and father about their experiences. It was just that, something personal like that, it's that you just—you, you don't want to bring it up. And it isn't until later—and I think with myself, it wasn't until much later that I could have an appreciation for what my parents had gone through, and that it wasn't something to be ashamed of. But that takes a long time to develop.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:09:19] Most definitely. Yeah, it's very hard to kind of, get that from your family as well. So right after this, could you kind of speak to how your life was in Riverside—during, like your school years, and just like any stories of—perhaps—any discrimination or anti-Japanese sentiment that, you personally experienced—that again, if you would be willing to share.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:09:56] Well...I was thinking about that question. I really didn't—you know, Riverside at that time in the '50s, and we lived out in the country, you know? We didn't live in the city itself. The Santa Ana River was sort of the dividing line, and we, we called it West Riverside. Now they call it, Rubidoux or, or whatever, and it was kind of a country, you know, with chicken ranches and farms and...you know, Long Mission Boulevard. There was a town in West Riverside, and that was the town that we did our business, you know? We didn't go often into Downtown, Downtown Riverside. And the elementary school that I, you know, I attended—I didn't feel any special prejudice toward me. And, you know, I didn't personally feel any personal prejudice toward me, but it was, you know, we were out in the country and out there, West Riverside in the '50s, everybody was about the same station. There wasn't this separation of the very wealthy and the very poor. And, you know, everybody was sort of within the same boat. And then, you know, people generally had houses. And so, we were probably the poorest people, poorest people out there, you know, and my parents were working hard trying to make a living—you know, growing fruits and vegetables, and sometimes we had to, to make some extra money, we would go picking...boysenberries or raspberries, you know—day laborers—in order to make extra money. I think that, you know there were other Japanese people in that area, and I, I think when it came—You know, because of what we had gone through during the war years, I might not have faced personal prejudice toward me, but I, I knew I was different inside. And no matter what people—how people treated me, I knew that I was different. And it was...if you're a part of a minority, one of the things that you want as you grow up is, do you want to blend in? You want to be just like everybody else. I would never take

a rice ball or a sushi to, to school because you know, you took a sandwich, a bologna sandwich. I would, I, I, I would ever take a, you know, seaweed or a Japanese rice ball, or whatever, because growing up—because we had been in camp and you know, we were here in Riverside, it wasn't a large Japanese group. We were a minority, and as a minority, you want to fit in. So, that was the big goal of my—you know, growing up is I wanted to fit in with everybody. I want to be—but you know looking different, no matter what you do, you don't blend in. You stand out. [Shrugs.] That's just, that's just what it is, but I know other minorities face the same thing. You want to blend in. And it used to bother me that in my school—you know, as my school career, I'd be in the classroom. You know, I would be the only Asian in the group. Maybe at our high—junior high school or whatever, the only other Asians in the groups were relatives and maybe one or two. I mean, we were a true minority. If I didn't show up for—you know, everybody noticed. [Michiko, Cathy, and Kahleia laugh.] My, my goal in school was to blend in to be like everybody else, but that is normal. If you're a minority, you want to blend in. [Shrugs.] But it's—but if you look different, you can't blend in. [Laughs.]

Cathy Gudis: [00:13:57] And was—were your classroom sort of, mixed with other—with Latino students, or other African Americans?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:14:03] Well, where we lived, it was, it was—there weren't that many Blacks in that area, mostly Latinos. There was some Japanese, but, but not that many. So like at the junior high school—you know, maybe like our—my sisters would have been there, but there would be—you know, it was mostly Hispanics. But then—I don't think that Hispanics...felt the problem of being a minority because there's a large clump of them, you know? Or, maybe with the Blacks, but still with the Blacks there was, you know, not as much as the Hispanics. And...and...it, it's just that, at, at the time—and I don't think in Riverside they had the Chinese. It was the Japanese [pen falls] because they were farmers, but we weren't—there weren't very many of them.

Cathy Gudis: [00:14:59] Yeah, yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:15:00] But probably—and, and you know, when I graduated from high school maybe—I think maybe there, maybe one or two other people in my graduating class. So you know, that's being a true minority.

Cathy Gudis: [00:15:14] And how many siblings did you have?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:15:16] I, I have...I, I have four sisters: two older and two younger. And my youngest sister was born in Riverside—she was born in Los Angeles, but we were living in Riverside when she was born.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:15:29] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:15:30] So she's much younger than, that we are, yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [00:15:33] And yeah, so they drove to LA to give birth?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:15:39] Yes, because my mother is an American citizen, but she was—she was raised in Japan because my mother and dad are both Kibei which means that they were born here in the United States, but they went back to Japan where they were raised, and then they returned back to the United States when they were adults. And so, my mother, you know, she had gone to school in Japan, and she didn't speak—she spoke some English, but, you know, her reading and writing was Japanese. Same with my father. Although my father left this country when he was—maybe eight or nine—so he had been in school in the United States, so my father truly was bilingual. Although, his preferred language was Japanese, you know?

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:16:26] So, why would they—what would be the reasoning for...going back to Japan for education?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:16:36] I, I really think what my grandfather—you know, some people come to the United States, and they plan on staying here. Well, with my grandfather, it was—he came here with his wife and had children here, and he planned to make money, and then go back home. And, you know, because of the money he had made in the United States he wouldn't be able to buy more, you know, farmland, and he would be able to live well on the money he had made. He never planned to stay in the United States. In fact—I don't know—maybe my grandfather felt the prejudice because when his oldest daughter, my aunt, was ready to start school, he did not want them starting school in the United States. And so, when his oldest daughter—with my aunt, she was about six or something like that he took the—By that time he had, he had four children. When the oldest was ready to go back to school, he, he took them all back to Japan to be raised by their grandmother. So, you know, and so, I'm sure he felt that this is not where—because my grandfather came to the United States around the turn of the century, because my mother was born here in 1909, and my aunt was born in 1907. So at that time, there was not much—I'm, I'm sure he felt that had his children going to school, that it would be difficult for them to find a place in society at that time.

Cathy Gudis: [00:18:12] Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:18:13] It would have been very difficult, so it was like, make money here, go back [laughs], and, and have your raise—your children educated and raised in Japan.

Cathy Gudis: [00:18:23] So were they—did they arrive in the United States through somewhere else, or, how did they get to LA? What brought them?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:18:30] My, my mother?

Cathy Gudis: [00:18:31] Yeah, your parents, yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:18:32] My, my, my—my uncle—all of my...aunts and uncles were born in the United States, and so when they were adults, you know, they, they had the right to come back to the United States. In fact, my uncle had been farming in...San Gabriel Valley. He went back to Japan to pick up my mother, and bring her back to United States, and—but, she was in—what it called?—immigration detention, because when she came back to the United States, then she had to have a passport or proof of her citizenship. So it—she—I, I know my father talked to me about that. He said that they had to prove that she was born here. Luckily, they had a neighbor, that knew of my mother's birth, and that neighbor had to...sign a paper saying that she knew of my mother's birth. And, and they had to go through this process with immigration to, you know, certify that—her birth. And so, when my mother had to get her passport—but she, she was gonna go back to Japan to visit her family. And so, she needed a passport. And so, even though she was born in the Los Angeles area, she had to apply to Sacramento because her birth was registered in Sacramento.

Cathy Gudis: [00:19:57] Because it was from when she returned, right?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:20:00] Yes, it was, it was done, it was done in—through, Sacramento.

Cathy Gudis: [00:20:04] Right. Right. Yeah, that's interesting. And your grandparents, they came here from what part of Japan?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:20:13] My—Well, my mother—my father's family is from Niigata, Japan, which is in the northern part of Japan, and my mother's family's from Yamaguchi ken, which is in the southern part of Japan, and they met here and married here in the, in the Los Angeles—the San Gabriel Valley area, because my uncles and, and my father's family, they, they were neighbors. Because there was a large community of Japanese farmers in that area.

Cathy Gudis: [00:20:43] Mm-hmm [affirmative], right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:20:45] Yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [00:20:47] Yeah, thank you.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:20:51] So, because there was such a small Japanese American population in Riverside—but you said, when you guys were working on the farm, there were other Japanese American families?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:21:00] Yeah. [inaudible] You know, there was, there was a Japanese community. There were Japanese farmers in that West Riverside area. There were Japanese farmers along Orange Street. There were—you know, the Haradas in the Downtown area. There were Japanese that lived in Casablanca. And there were Japanese that lived on the East Side along, you know, where Mine Okubo's family lived. Casablanca, and there were Japanese farmers in the Arlington area, and then, they had a, a Japanese Union Church, which was sort of the focal point for the—you know, the Japanese community. You know, because the

Japanese and Riverside tended to be Christians, and there wasn't a Buddhist temple here. And they also had a Gardeners' Association in the Casablanca area. In fact, in fact, I think they owned a building there.

Cathy Gudis: [00:22:01] Oh, I have no idea.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:22:04] Uh-huh [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [00:22:04] Now, was the Japanese church—did that, was that still going in the '50s when you were—

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:22:11] —Yes, uh-huh.

Cathy Gudis: [00:22:11] Okay, I wasn't sure about that, okay.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:22:15] You know, you know Mr.—In fact, they had a minister there, and my, my—he, he came out to visit my parents, and then, my, my sisters and I, we were baptized in the Union Church. And I think the Japanese Union Church was sponsored by the Congregationalists and Methodists.

Cathy Gudis: [00:22:34] And that was on the East Side, right?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:22:36] It was on [cross-talk] 11th Street, 11th? 14th Street! 14th, [cross-talk] yeah. 14th, uh-huh [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [00:22:43] Okay, I didn't realize—were you sent to Japanese school?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:22:47] Well, they had a Japanese school, not at the church, but they had Japanese school in Casablanca. Okay, but then, but then, by, by that time I was older, my, my—they tried to start a Japanese language school on Saturdays, there in the Casablanca—that building in Casablanca. I think it used to be a cultural center, and then it became—I, I think it was owned by the, the Gardeners' Association. So there were a group of people, you know, there, there, and...and yes, so that—.

Cathy Gudis: [00:23:24] —So they tried to set up the language school?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:23:27] They, they did have a [cross talk] language school because, because we—we sent my sister there on Saturdays.

Cathy Gudis: [00:23:34] Ah, got it, yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:23:35] So there was a group, you know, there were a group of Japanese families that decided that they were going to have a Japanese school on Saturdays. And so that operated for a while until, you know—I think Meiko Inaba's son was in that.

Because I was part of the carpool, I would take my sister. I would take the—pick up the Namekata girls. I'd pick up the Inaba, you know, son. There was another family there—Nakayamas[?—the families on the—on our West Side. And I would pick them up and take them to the Japanese school on Saturdays.

Cathy Gudis: [00:24:16] Do you know if that building is still there?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:24:18] Yes it is.

Cathy Gudis: [00:24:19] Oh!

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:24:20] I think it's, it's, it's right on...I think it's right on Lincoln, and I think it's some...Hispanic church. I think they, they sold that building.

Cathy Gudis: [00:24:31] Okay, cool. Yeah, that's really great, okay. Do you remember if women or men taught the language classes?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:24:40] That language school they—it was part of a Japanese language company. They sent a teacher, you know, a teacher was sent. And, at one time, I think there was a gentleman and then another time there was woman, but it was through some kind of Japanese language association, and they sent a teacher.

Cathy Gudis: [00:25:07] I see.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:25:07] And I'm not sure exactly how long it lasted.

Cathy Gudis: [00:25:10] Yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:25:10] Four or five years or something.

Cathy Gudis: [00:25:12] Mm-hmm [affirmative], right. Did you, did you continue to...attend the church? Japanese church?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:25:19] Well, we—my, my parents, you know, sold their produce. And so we did not—we were not—we helped with...supporting the church. We were baptized. We were involved in Easter, Christmas [laughs], but we were not—we didn't attend the services probably because my parents had a fruit stand. And we worked Saturdays and Sundays, and so it was not like we were gonna go to church services on Sundays. And besides my, my mother had a very—my mother and dad are Buddhist. And, you know, that's the way they were—but there was no Buddhist temples in Riverside. And so they're—you know, if somebody passed away, if there was a service, they went into the Buddhist temple in Los Angeles. But then my mother—the community in Riverside, they were Christians, and that's where, you know, Japanese community gathered at that... Japanese Union Church. And so my mother, you know, when the people that ran the church or the language school, they would come talk to my

parents. My parents would— you know, she sent us there because that's where the other Japanese families were going to. And my mother said, "It's all good." She said, "It's all good." [Michiko, Cathy, and Kahleia laugh.]

Cathy Gudis: [00:27:02] Yeah, it worked! [Laughs.] And where, where was the fruit stand?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:27:06] Huh?

Cathy Gudis: [00:27:06] Where was the fruit stand?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:27:08] It was in front of, it was in front of our—my father had about nine acres of property right on...Armstrong Road, and it, it, it, Armstrong Road is— it's Valley, it was Valley Way from the freeway, and then all of a sudden, the road changed to Armstrong Road, and then to—it went over Sierra to go over to Fontana. And so it, it— our farm was about nine acres on Armstrong Road, and my father raised a—you know, [shrugs] tomatoes, strawberries, and then in the wintertime, they raised cabbage and dive[?]. And then he sold his produce to a produce company in Riverside. And then, he tried to send some of his tomatoes and things into Los Angeles, but that was—it was too expensive, you know, to pay for the hauling, and it wasn't worth it. So, over a period of time, my parents found out that it was better for them to try to sell their produce locally, or sell it directly to the public.

Cathy Gudis: [00:28:19] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:28:19] And so that's why my parents were able to stay, you know, to provide for themselves that they grew the fruits and vegetables, and they sold it directly to the public. But it was hard work because they, you know, they picked the fruits and vegetables in the morning, and then they would have to sell it in the afternoon, and then our busiest time was Saturday and Sundays. I mean, my parents worked very hard. I mean they—you know, they hired people to pick the strawberries, and they hired people to help, but they, you know—when you have a small business, if your family does not work, you know, you can't make it. So, everyone in the family, we had to work.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:29:02] So, can you, like kind of talk more about that, working with your family for this family business that you guys were...that you guys were very dedicated to, and like any stories about that time as well?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:29:17] It's not a matter of being dedicated, it's a matter of survival. It was—in any family business, you know, because I noticed it with the Chinese family and their restaurant, everybody works. And in, in a farm, you, you know even my baby sister, five or six years old, you do what you can. You—you know, you stack up the boxes, you put the little strawberry baskets, and you're—you know—I know my sister, from the time she was eight or nine, she was in charge of the fruit stand. We were, you know, my mother, dad, they were picking the fruits and vegetables. I mean, you know, she was 8 or 9 years old, and she was collecting the money.

Cathy Gudis: [00:29:55] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:29:55] So, you know, no matter what, everybody, everybody works because it's a matter of survival and, you know, if the family doesn't work, you can't afford to pay people. You pay people if you have to [shrugs]. So in a family business, it's a matter of everybody working. And so, when people complained about the homework at school, I said, I, I simply couldn't understand it. I said, "You don't know what hard work is."

Cathy Gudis: [00:30:25] And how did you feel about the farm? Like, did you dream of escape or was it, you know?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:30:29] Oh, absolutely! [Kahleia laughs.] You know, my fondest dream as I was growing up was to live in an apartment, you know, and have a sidewalk outside the house and, and, and you know? But then later I discovered that, you know, we didn't have any neighbors. We had the house...later on. My father was able to build a house on the property, and we had all of the space. You could yell and scream and, you know, we didn't have any neighbors, we could—we could walk, because there was a hill and a quarry behind our property. You could walk up there, you know? It's—no, no neighbors to bother you. My father had fruit trees out there. We had these fresh vegetables. At the time I was growing up, I didn't think that was, anything special. But later on, I said—you know, and I dreamed of living in an apartment [laughs] where everything was. [Kahleia and Cathy laugh.] You know, everything was there, and I said, "Now that I think about it, I don't think I'd like to live in an apartment worrying about all your neighbors!"

Cathy Gudis: [00:31:31] Yeah, so he must have moved there. Did he move after 1952, or '54? Do you know when you moved to the, to the farm and—

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:31:42] —[inaudible] Well first my father—

Cathy Gudis: [00:31:44] —Because he was working for someone first, right?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:31:46] No, when we moved to Riverside, my father was—had— was starting his own business, but he wasn't buying the property. [Cross talk.] He was leasing some property first.

Cathy Gudis: [00:31:55] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:31:55] Okay, he was leasing some property, and we were just kind of existing. And then, after a while, he able to buy this nine acres and to build a house. But it was—it, it took some, you know, it took some time.

Cathy Gudis: [00:32:08] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:32:09] Because my, my parents, you know...[shrugs]. They—you know,

they were on the farm until they passed away in about 2000, so they were there 50 years. And I think my parents were able to continue farming, and because of the fact that they had been there for such a long time, that people knew that we were there. And so— and because of quality of my father's tomatoes and strawberries, people made an effort, to come and buy from us.

Cathy Gudis: [00:32:45] So they came to you, you did get significant business from them coming to you?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:32:51] [Nods.] In, in the beginning, [cross talk] my father was selling to other people, but over a period of time, the—we didn't sell to anybody else. We just sold everything we grew at our fruit stand. It was a very simple looking fruit stand, but people, because the prices were good, you know? My father's prices were reasonable. And, and—when people, you know, tasted my father's tomatoes and strawberries, it was— they made an effort to come, and you—nobody bought one tomato, you bought a box of tomatoes because they were fresh. And that's—and I think that's one of the things that developed over a period of time with farmers' markets, and people, making an effort to go to the farm directly. So I always said my father was ahead of his time.

Cathy Gudis: [00:33:44] [Michiko, Kahleia, and Cathy laugh.] Yeah, totally. Right. Right, were there any other—were there other stands on, on that street or in West Riverside?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:33:50] Well, our friends, the Namekatas, they also had a farm across Mission Boulevard, and so, you know, they had, they had a fruit stand in front of their property—the Namekatas, you know? They, they were neighbors of the Inabas. I know the Inabas—the Inabas raised chickens, so they—people bought chickens from them—I mean, eggs from them, and they also bought strawberries. But in that whole area, there was a lot of chicken ranches, so people used to go and get their eggs from—directly from the—from the farmers.

Cathy Gudis: [00:34:26] You mentioned the neighbors to the Inaba family. Can you spell the last name?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:34:31] The Namekatas?

Cathy Gudis: [00:34:31] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:34:31] N-A-M-E-K-A T-A.

Cathy Gudis: [00:34:39] Thank you.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:34:40] And one of the reasons about going to school is...You know, there was one—when I went to high school, there was one high school in all of Riverside, Moreno Valley, Jurupa—at the time, there was no Jurupa Unified School District. It was just

one high school. So I think that made a difference where everybody— rich, poor, no matter what—everybody went to one high school.

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:08] Which high school was it?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:35:10] Poly High School.

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:10] It was Poly? Oh, so the only—right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:35:12] Yeah, there was only one high school [cross talk].
Because—

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:14] —So you from, from West Riverside, and even Moreno Valley went to Poly?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:35:18] Yes.

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:18] I did not realize that.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:35:20] We took a bus.

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:24] Oh.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:35:24] In fact, they—the, the Jurupa School District goes up until Mira Loma, and then, we, we would go all the way to Mira Loma and, you know, pick up the high school students to go into Riverside.

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:37] Okay, right, so you—right—so you, you knew people in this broad area?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:35:43] We all took the bus.

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:44] Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:35:44] That's really interesting.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:35:48] But that was a long time ago.

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:53] Yeah [Cathy, Michiko, and Kahleia laugh.].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:35:53] Because I graduated from high school in '58, and at that time...Ramona had just started. So the people living out in that Arlington area, they—I think, they were the first class—graduating class from Ramona in '58. And I, I—we were on this side. So we went—I graduated from Poly High School, but see, I was right at the, the beginning when they started the second high school, which was Ramona.

Cathy Gudis: [00:36:23] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:36:23] Yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [00:36:26] And did—do you remember any issues, in terms of racial conflicts, at Poly? Because it would have been a very diverse—

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:36:38] —It wasn't that diverse. I don't remember...well but, but with, you know, with the Japanese, there were so few of us. It's not a group.

Cathy Gudis: [00:36:50] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:36:50] In fact, the idea is that you didn't want to clump together. [Cross talk.] It's like we didn't stick together because there were just so few of us. Okay, maybe the, maybe the Hispanics [cross talk], and the—you know, the Blacks, they might— there might have been groups of them, them, but I don't remember—

Cathy Gudis: [00:37:10] —Yeah, you don't remember the conflicts be, you know [cross talk], between white, Black, or Brown. [Cross talk.] I was just curious, just given the fact that there would have been, you know, a lot of people who were Latino, and then small amounts, whether there, there was white-Black or white-Brown conflict that you remember from those years.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:37:31] Well, but you know the '50s are kind of quiet, and it wasn't until, until the '60s. They just started...You weren't aware of it. I'm sure, this feeling of prejudice, or it was there, okay? But, but activism was not...[cross talk] [Shakes head.] You know, you didn't hear it.

Cathy Gudis: [00:37:52] Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, yeah [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:37:52] The prejudice was there, and it's sort of like, because I was talking to Meiko, and we were talking about housing, because in Riverside, I think about this division had to do with real estate, okay? Casablanca for the Hispanics, or the East Side. And I think out in the West Riverside area, it was—well, there was—the Blacks were along, what is it? [Thinks.] Rubidoux Boulevard.

Cathy Gudis: [00:38:26] Yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:38:26] The Black community was in the Rubidoux Boulevard, and maybe in the Downtown area of West Riverside, there was—the Hispanics were there. And then, it, it was—you know, they had the Japanese people in farms. But if, but if, you've got a farm, you know, you don't have quite that...[shrugs]. That subdivision, you know?

Cathy Gudis: [00:38:51] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:38:51] Japanese are a little different because they were farmers, so it's not a cluster of housing. But then I—and like in the '50s, it was—maybe in real estate if you were coming out and you know, you just sort of—the Hispanics lived in a certain area. And you know, the Blacks lived in certain area. I, I don't know. [Cross talk.] Maybe the real estate agent, when you were going to buy a house, they would show you what you could afford, and what would be acceptable. And that's what happened to the Haradas. If Mr. Harada had followed the rules, and he had stayed on the other side of the rail track, no problem, but he decided to buy a house in the Downtown area. I don't think there was a law or anything, I think it was just simply understood.

Cathy Gudis: [00:39:43] Did you know Sumi?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:39:44] Yes, I did.

Cathy Gudis: [00:39:46] And tell me about how you knew her. Well, wait, I should back up a minute. Because we—where did you—so you graduated in 1958. And then, what did you do after high school?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:39:59] My, you know, my father worked very hard, and, he had five daughters, and my father, he, he did not want us after we graduated to end up working in a factory. And, because at the time I graduated from high school, there was a lot of blue collar work available where you could do very well, you know, working for Kaiser Steel. But my father wanted us to get some kind of education or some kind of training. And so, my oldest sister went to, Riverside Community College, where she took the cosmetology class. And so that after she received her certificate in cosmetology, she moved into—she moved to Los Angeles to, [plane flies overhead] stay with my aunt. And then my second sister, she went to Riverside Community College to—they had a two-year nursing college—school that they had just started, and Shio Sasaki, who was a member of Riverside JACL, she was one of the nurses that started that program, and my sister was in the first nursing school, you know, because before that, if you wanted to be a nurse, you had to go four years, and so RCC had the first two-year nursing program. And so she—you know, she, she went there. Well, I don't want to brag, but I was, I was a better student than my sisters, and so then, you know, we were very lucky in Riverside that we had the Riverside Community College was just an excellent, excellent school. I mean [shakes head and shrugs], you know, two years, go to another school, or they had all kinds of programs that they had available. And, so, I, I went to UCR.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:41:52] Oh.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:41:52] And at that time—so I, I started UCR in 1958, and at that time, my father was lucky in that there was no tuition. People don't realize that, you know, for a long time there's no tuition! All I had to do was pay \$9 a year for parking [Kahleia and Cathy laugh], and \$60 a semester for incidental fees, and that included insurance, and that was—and my books—and my biggest expense was books. And so, I know that I would not have been able to go to college except for the fact that, there was no tuition in the, in the public, public

universities. You know, people don't realize that.

Cathy Gudis: [00:42:31] Yes. They don't realize it, especially today.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:42:33] Yeah [laughs]! Very jealous of—

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:42:35] —Well, and then, RCC was practically free!

Cathy Gudis: [00:42:37] Right!

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:42:37] It was free [cross talk], you know? [Cross talk] So that, we—at the time that we were going to school, my sisters and I, the opportunities were good. But it, but of course the fact that we were women, you know, in the '50s and '60s, for women, you're, you're limited as to what your horizon is. Because for an educated woman, you were a teacher. If you were going into business, you were a secretary. Never the vice president, you were the secretary. Okay, and then if you were interested in the medical field, you were a nurse. Never the doctor, the nurse. Okay, so for the five of us, we were following, you know, what was possible for a woman of our time, you know? Teacher. Nurse. Secretary.

Cathy Gudis: [00:43:38] And what was your major at UCR?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:43:40] I was—I first started off in life, life sciences, and then I changed to, social sciences and, you know, education.

Cathy Gudis: [00:43:52] And when you graduated, what did you do?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:43:55] When I graduated, I had a teaching certificate, or I—at that time at UCR, they were changing the education program, where they wanted you to pick up that fifth year, so that, I went into teaching, and luckily I was able to, be hired because they had—at that time there, you know, there were opportunities, and so, they were hiring teachers. In fact, I think that Riverside Unified School District, they would send people in administration to go to the Midwest to do hiring, you know? Because it was—you know the '60s, there [cross talk], there was a lot of building and school—you know, school children. And so then, my advisor at UCR told me to apply in Riverside because he said your chances of being hired would be better if you—you know, you applied to Riverside. So, I, I was hired at Riverside, so I taught in Riverside. I guess from '63 until I retired in 1990— when did I retire? '97? Because I taught for 36 years.

Cathy Gudis: [00:45:10] What did you teach?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:45:11] I taught third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, and sixth grade at three different schools. I started at Monroe Elementary, then I—maybe for 14 years, and then I taught at Hyatt Elementary for 11 years. And then, I finished my teaching career at, Mountain View.

Cathy Gudis: [00:45:33] Okay. When you started, you—was, were there—or in those early years, were you involved at all in the desegregation? Like, how was that impacting you as a teacher?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:45:47] The school that I started with was at, Monroe, and Monroe at that time was a fairly new subdivision, and most of the children—I think [reaches over to find picture] I have a picture of my first class.

Cathy Gudis: [00:45:58] Mm-hmm [affirmative], oh!

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:45:58] Oh! That's so precious!

Cathy Gudis: [00:46:06] [Puts photo up to camera.] Okay, let's see if we can find you.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:46:08] Someone told me everyone in the class is white. [Michiko, Cathy, and Kahleia laugh.]

Cathy Gudis: [00:46:11] Yes, that's right! Yep. Yep, yep. There you go. Seeing you now. [Michiko, Cathy, and Kahleia laugh.]

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:46:21] And, and, I, I, I was worried about how, how I would be treated as a Japanese American teacher. That was a lovely class. I mean, this isn't the first class, but the whole school and the staff and, and, the parents. I don't know what it is about the parents—the parents were lovely people. I had no problem with [shakes head and shrugs]—maybe the principal knew something that I didn't know, but I did not face any prejudice. You know, in the years that I was teaching, except there, I, I, I noticed that there was some ignorance because there was another Japanese family, the Takedas, that, that attended—their children attended that school. And so, I remember one of the Takeda family's Ricky[?]. I was on the playground, and I was, playground duty, and then Ricky[?] came walking by. And one of my students says, "[imitating student] Oh! Ms. Yoshimura, is that your son?" [Michiko and Kahleia laugh.] You see, because there's [cross talk] that—If he's Asian, he's got to be a relative [Michiko and Cathy laugh].

Cathy Gudis: [00:47:25] Right! You were the only Japanese American person they'd met! Oh wow, yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:47:31] Yeah, but that, that would make sense. I mean, it wasn't ever just saying, "Oh, is that your son?"

Cathy Gudis: [00:47:37] Yeah, right [laughs].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:47:41] During those, you said, 36 years of teaching?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:47:44] Yes.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:47:45] How did you kind of see your like, classroom, change, throughout the decades? Because that's quite a long time.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:47:52] You, you saw a lot of, a lot of changing, not in, not in, the students themselves, but society had changed. And, the children, of course, had changed, so you have to change along with them because when I first started, we had a very active PTA because the mothers did not work. The mothers were at home, and they were more involved in, you know, the PTA, volunteering, and helping and the—and in fact, when I first started teaching, the kids used to go home for lunch, because it was a neighborhood walking school. And so the students that lived nearby, they went home for a lunch, and they would come back. And I think lunch was a little bit longer, and then they reduced the lunch. And then later—because I was going through, that segregation where they had closed—was it Lowell? And they had closed...maybe Casablanca. So we had, two, busloads of kids coming in from the East Side to our school. And then, I remember that they were trying to put the Casablanca's students that were coming—being bused to our schools, plus the East Side students on the same bus, and I said, "Whoever is in charge does not understand Hispanics. You do not put, [laughs] Casablanca people, and the East Side people on the same bus." You know, it's a lack of understanding of the cultural behavior of each of the groups. So you have to understand, they may be Hispanics, but they're from different parts of Riverside and, you know, put them together.

Cathy Gudis: [00:49:41] So that was known in the '60s? That's interesting. I thought that it was later that East Side, Latinos in East Side and Latinos in Casablanca.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:49:52] They have a rivalry!

Cathy Gudis: [00:49:53] Yeah, have rivalry! I didn't realize it started so soon.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:49:57] Oh no, everybody has always known that. Everybody!

Cathy Gudis: [00:49:59] No but—yeah, so, so in those years of the '40s and '50s when there were those—I've seen pictures of ball games, right, and there were different teams. So when they played together, I've seen newspaper accounts of a lot of fights breaking out.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:50:19] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [00:50:20] So that was like—that continued—that was. [Cross talk.] It wasn't just then culminating—it was that—wasn't then, you know, because I know the gang activities of later. Even then, okay! Yeah, the buses, that's where it would be problematic. That's for sure.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:50:38] You know, you know, putting the, the two groups on one bus, and then, out on the playground, you would—in the classroom, you know you have things under control, but on the playground, this rivalry would break out with these fights. And, you know once we had the—you know, several buses coming in from—because they

were trying to integrate, you know, the school. It made it difficult because the, the, the parents from the East Side and from Casablanca—I think we had more students from the, from the East Side. It's that they didn't feel comfortable in the school. So you had, you really have to make an effort to try to communicate with the parents if the—you know— child was having difficulty. So I'm, I'm hoping that the new school that they opened in Casablaca will help that because, you know, you can't help your students unless you have parental support. And so, I'm, I'm, I'm hoping that with the new, new, new Casablanca school being opened up there, in the middle of the community, that the school will have more support in helping the students and more participation, you know, from the families there.

Cathy Gudis: [00:51:54] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So there wasn't—at that time, the parents were more loath to participate in the PTA?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:52:01] It was difficult because they didn't feel, that comfortable. And besides that, geographically, you know, because I remember I was having a difficulty with a child, and I wanted to talk to the parents, and I had difficulty having the parent come in. Well, one day, you know, I, I, you know, I, I said, "I'm gonna go, and drive over to your mother's house and talk to her." And maybe, you know, I probably shouldn't have done that, but then [laughs], I wanted to discuss with the mother about his difficulties in school, you know? But, you know things have changed, where, you—things are different [laughs].

Cathy Gudis: [00:52:39] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yep.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:52:41] Yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [00:52:41] Yeah, now we wouldn't do it. I do remember though I, I taught junior high for a brief bit at Hollenbeck Junior High School in Boyle Heights, and, the people who were longtime teachers at the school—so they knew a lot of the families—they would go to the homes. And so when I started, I remember them taking me—

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:53:04] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [00:53:05] —To the homes. And they said, that's the only way you're going to really be able to, you know, help some, some of the, you know, some of the, some of the students. So, and yeah, I can't imagine, people doing that today. [Kahleia laughs.]

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:53:18] Going to—

Cathy Gudis: [00:53:19] —going to people's homes.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:53:20] I remember at one time the school district was encouraging teachers to go visit, the families, you know, go—which is really the best thing. You need to know the family situation [cross talk] in order to find out what, what difficulty that child is having. Because, you know, you're trying to get him to do his homework, but, you know,

if you don't know—well, maybe, maybe they don't have a place to live. You don't know whether they're having difficulty with getting enough food to eat—mother— maybe dad is in jail, who knows? Unless you know the family situation, it's rather difficult to help the child because you just can't assume that he goes home, he has dinner, mother and dad put him to bed. You don't know the situation. Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:54:11] Forgive me if my information is wrong, but you are the JACL Riverside Chapter President, correct?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:54:19] I'm a, I'm a charter member, because after the—the church closed down, there wasn't a —a group, because you know, there wasn't a group or an organization where other Japanese Americans could gather around, you know, before, it was sort of the church. And some other places where there are more Japanese Americans, you know, they had a, a cultural center where people could, you know, gather, you know, get together. And so, there were, some Japanese Americans who had come to Riverside when, UCR, became a university and not just the Citrus Experiment Station, and there were a lot of Japanese Americans who, you know, worked at UCR in the, in the agricultural department, but also, you know, one of the founders of Riverside JACL, Junji Kunamoto, was in the chemistry department. And, and, and so they—there was someone called Ed [?] Bituma[?], and he had been, rather active, in JACL. And so then he, he joined with other Niseis, you know, those who had been in the 442nd, you know...college educated, you know, men and families. And they started, you know, they decided to start this Japanese American Citizens League, which is a national organization, and they wanted to have a Riverside chapter. So that in... Oh, I'm not sure what year it was. '68? Something like that. It's been over 50 years. Well, then, they started the, the Riverside chapter Japanese American Citizens League, and then, we have been going since, you know, over 50, over 50 years, and so, that, that's the organization that, the Japanese Americans have kind of gathered around, and we sort of inherited, when the Union Church...sold their property. They gave some of the money to Riverside JACL and, and, and, and Sumi, and I think William Takano, they were sort of the treasurers of the group, and so, they realized that JACL was kind of, continuing some of the activities because the, the Japanese community had a—you know, they used to have a summer picnic. That was one of the things that they—you know, they did a summer picnic. And so we kind of carried on with that. And, they used to have—the community used to have a big Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving dinner.

Cathy Gudis: [00:57:24] Oh, all together?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:57:25] [Nods] Yeah. And, and so, we, we continued that for a while. And then, one of the activities that they started was the Sendai Festival, you know, trying to have Japanese culture. And then, we had Japanese food, and that lasted a while, but, but I don't think that the health department would let us do some of the things that we did [Kahleia and Michiko laugh].

Cathy Gudis: [00:57:50] [Laughs] Like what? Was it—what kind of food—I mean, I'm sure it was around the food prep!

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:57:54] Well, we, we would bring the barbecue out there, we would make teriyaki sticks, and we had, we had, tempura, and you have to have hot boiling oil. [Laughs.].

Cathy Gudis: [00:57:08] Yeah [laughs].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:58:08] So we, we did the Sendai Festival for a long time, but, but like a lot of organizations, now we're down to, you know, we're, we're—we have, we have maybe 80 members, but then of the 80 members, maybe we only have about, less than 10 people that are really that active, but that's, that's we're just kind of aging out.

Cathy Gudis: [00:58:28] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:58:29] And, and, and, and it's probably, you know, those of us who have continued with the organization, we haven't reached out to the younger people. Because I think a lot of younger people, because I—periodically, I hear from them, and they're, they're, reaching out to, you know, to join along with others in Japanese culture, because I know the, the Redlands, Cultural Center, you know, the Riverside Japanese Cultural Center. You know, they're trying to start a cultural center there in Redlands. We've had them come and speak.

Cathy Gudis: [00:59:06] And so that would—do you think that—so that be serving the larger region?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:59:09] Right, [cross talk] because we call ourselves the Riverside JACL, but we had, members from Corona, we had a couple members from Redlands.

Cathy Gudis: [00:59:17] Right. And where do you meet?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:59:21] We meet in people's houses [cross talk] we don't have— we're, we're—see that's one of the problems, you like the—I think the Redlands Community Center they, you know—he—they're karate teachers, and so they have a building, which they—it started with the karate classes with our organization or, at time—at one time you know we had the Japanese Union Church. But, but, you know, we don't have—we used to meet in people's houses, or we would...go to the library or something. It's, it's, it's difficult, you know? The bigger community centers like in, in San Fernando Valley and East San Gabriel, they have a Japanese Community Center where people gather.

Cathy Gudis: [00:59:05] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:00:05] And it's a little bit easier to be visible.

Cathy Gudis: [01:00:09] Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:00:10] Yeah, so it's a little difficult.

Cathy Gudis: [01:00:10] Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:00:14] Just a quick thing, where was the Japanese Cultural Center that you were talking about?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:00:18] In Redlands?

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:00:19] Oh, in Redlands. That's where it was?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:00:21] It's called the Redlands...I'm not—It's...somewhere in the middle of Redlands. It's a Redlands Community Center, Cultural Center.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:00:32] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:00:33] They've, they've just started recently.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:00:35] There was—there wasn't a Japanese—was—there was a Japanese cultural center in Riverside, or no?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:00:41] No, no. In Riverside, there was the Japanese Union Church, and then there was...the, Gardeners' Association building, in Casablanca, and that's where they had the Japanese language school. And then, they also used to show movies there, because that was a building that was owned by the Gardeners' Association, and—but I don't think we ever—JACL, ever used that building. And because I know when they sold that building, the person in charge, Mr. Muramota, they, they gave, gave Riverside JACL a certain amount of money. Because they wanted whatever money that they made, in the sale of that building, and they wanted to disperse it to Japanese groups.

Cathy Gudis: [01:01:32] Right. And so, that must mean that the, Japanese Union Church, closed, sometime in the '60s—I mean was sold some time in, some time in the '60s, or closed some time in the '60s, right? Because it was before, the money went to, JACL?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:01:49] Yes, so it might have been kind of in the '60s some time, or maybe a little later.

Cathy Gudis: [01:01:54] Yeah, yeah. Right.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:02:58] With the JACL, has the make-up been, like kind of, a mixture of men and women, or like, one gender group was the majority, or, or...

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:02:11] Well, it started with the, the families, and the—you know, the, the, the men were the ones organizing, and the wives were the ones helping. And then, the families were involved, because they had a junior JACL, but the people—and then, and then, you know, like Sumi was on the board, and then, Doris Higa. She was a treasurer, and so then,

you know, I, I, I was a member, but it was generally a group of men, you know, like Dr. Ganogta[?], Junji Kumamoto, Ed Mitoma...[shrugs] William Takano, you know, Willie Takano there...you know, they were like, they were the ones who were sort of running it.

Cathy Gudis: [01:03:04] Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:03:06] How did you get involved with the JACL?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:03:07] Huh?

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:03:07] How did you get involved with the JACL?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:03:12] I think that—well, I was teaching at that time, and I think they were—when they started JACL, they were just, asking around people who were interested in, and because I'm a teacher, and, you know, it's sort of like, oh, okay. And I—my, my parents had, you know, sent my sister to Japanese language school. I was...aware of the people that were organizing it. It's only natural that I, I, I would follow through, because my pop—my parents were, you know, involved with the Union Church, and he— they sent us to the church. You know, like the Fujimotos, were also part of the starting of the—you know, JACL...because there was really nothing in, in town, and...so...so people that were, you know, involved, like the Fujimotos, the Endos[?], you know...the Takanos— it was just only natural that people—those were the people who were, were involved in the Union Church and the Gardeners' Association. They would also be involved because they were looking for, a place to kind of, gather together.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:04:34] You guys did a lot of work during—well have been doing a lot of work...Did you—It's completely fine if it's not. Did you ever experience, like, backlash to any of these events, like, or any of the work that the JACL was doing during this time?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:04:51] Not really.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:04:52] Okay.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:04:53] But, but, it's, it's, it's because—you know, the the first...the first 10 years or so after the war, it was a matter of, of trying to, regain your steps, and then people, you know...people did not want to make waves because things had been so bad with internment. Alright, and...and then...you didn't—because it had been such a brutal war, you just didn't wanna bring up too much. It was hard to be proud of your culture because, you know, as I was saying, I just wanted to, blend in, lay low, and it was hard to, take pride in your culture. And it wasn't until later when, you heard words like Suzuki. And Honda. And Toyota...that you, could take pride in your culture. Even though I'm an American, you know, Japan is my mother country, and it was sort of, the first few years kind of living, just trying to...find, okay, you know what are you and who are you. You know, for, I'm an American, but I have family in Japan. You're trying to find your particular spot. And you want to take pride in

your culture, but it's hard when you hear about all those brutal stories, you know? So, so what do you, what do you do about those brutal stories about what happened during the war? But I had to say to myself, "Well, I—you know, I am an American. I didn't have anything to do with that!" Although, it's like, you try to understand your culture and where you came from as to how the people in Japan could have done those things. And...but at the same time, you wanna take pride in your, culture. So, you know, later on when Japan's economic situation improved, and then you heard Japanese words like Toyota, Honda, Suzuki, you could say, "Oh, you know, okay, I, I, I can be proud—you know, proud of these things." And so—and you know, growing up in Riverside, there was always the Chinese restaurant, but you never saw a Japanese restaurant. The Japanese restaurant, you'd have to go into Los Angeles to Little Tokyo, or you'd had to go to Gardena, where there were, a lot of Japanese. And—but, but, but, you know my—we had a fish man that came out, once a week to, sell, you know, fish, fresh fish. The fish man would come out, and he would stop at different places in Riverside to sell Japanese, things. And—but, you know, my parents would have to go into Little Tokyo to get any, anything, you know, that they, they wanted to buy. They bought their clothes, and, you know, they, they would go shopping in Little, Little Tokyo. There's nothing out here in Riverside except the Chinese restaurant. And I remember somebody tried to start a Japanese restaurant, but at that time sushi, or chopped-up raw fish. But now, it's like, you know, sashimi, sushi, just... But it's a mixture of cultures now. And then...remember I was talking about being educated? When you see an Asian, you don't say—When I was growing up, is that if you were an Asian, you were Chinese. That was it [laughs]. You were Chinese, but now when you see an Asian, you know, Vietnamese, Thai, you know, Japanese, Chinese. You know, for us, Japanese, we have kind of disappeared because we're a very small group because we don't have a lot of immigration coming into this country. I mean, you have large groups of Koreans, you have large groups of Vietnamese for different reasons. But, you know, after World War II, you didn't have Japanese [cross talk] coming into the United States.

Cathy Gudis: [01:09:03] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:09:03] So that, you know [shrugs], there was no more immigration.

Cathy Gudis: [01:09:05] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:09:06] But lately, there have been new Japanese coming in. They're called, they're called Shin Isseis, new Isseis. But they're different, because they're very modern. You know, the Issei is the first generation coming in around the 1900s. And now, you're having Japanese coming into the, the United States. But now, they're called Shin Isseis. Shin means new, and Issei—new first generation, you know? But they're quite different.

Cathy Gudis: [01:09:31] Right. Yeah. So did the festival, like the Sendai Festival, do you remember when that, roughly might have started? Because it was with the, with the JACL, you organized it.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:09:43] Probably from the beginning, [cross talk] or like in the '60s, or maybe less than 10 years or so.

Cathy Gudis: [01:09:49] Yeah. And then the Sister City program, how did that relate to all of—

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:09:53] —Well, a lot of, a lot of the, women in the group [shrugs], you know, they, they volunteered with the Sister City program. You know, like, I know Dali Elgata[?] and, you know, Sumi, and they were involved in the Sister City program.

Cathy Gudis: [01:10:08] What made that, happen or significant or, you know, a thing to do, the Sister City?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:10:18] Well I think before JACL, I think, the Sister City program, was probably the one [hits table for emphasis] Japanese thing, you know. And, Mrs. Halverson[?], who was kind of the founder of the Sister City program, she was, she was good friends with the Japanese community. And it was sort of...you know...It's sort of like, you know, like Frank Miller of the Mission Inn, he was very fond of Japanese culture, and Mrs. Halverson, you know, with the Sister City program, she, she was very, fond of Japanese culture and, you know, and so, and so, a lot of people in the Japanese community were involved in the Sister City program. But because the JACL is, is, Japanese culture, but it's also—works in civil, civil rights, you know?

Cathy Gudis: [01:11:20] Were there notable, civil rights activities that you recall?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:11:24] Well, the main one that the JACL is involved in is, is, redress, you know?

Cathy Gudis: [01:11:31] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:11:31] That was one of the big projects with the JACL is, you know, achieving redress where we received a letter of apology for internment, and then, each of us received \$20,000—tax free—and, and that really helped. And, and—because I remember when it was brought up as a proposal, at a convention in Salt Lake City where they were talking about, redress. And everybody said, "Oh, you know, that's...that's impossible." And—but it took a good 10, 11 years because everybody was saying, and people in JACL, some of them said, "No, we don't, we don't need money, we—you know, and then they said—then some people say, "No, we should have the money, because you can, you can have an apology, but you need, you need, you know, you need the [hits table for emphasis] money there." So, it was, it was a long project for 10, 11 years to, get that redress as a civil liberties act. It was in 1988, or something like that. And, and my parents, and that \$20,000, it came at a good time because, '88, so that was, a good 40, 45 years after internment, and by that time, so many of the people in camp had passed on.

Cathy Gudis: [01:12:56] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:12:56] And I think my parents were in their 80s because that redress money was given to the oldest people. It was given out during, you know, the first year, the oldest, and the next one, next, next year. And so by that time, my parents are in their 80s, and it was important to them because all of a sudden, they had this lump sum of money. And it gave them a chance to breathe, like they had money, you know, that they, that they could enjoy because they were living on their social security, and then, they had the farm. And my father—you know, he [shrugs]—you know, they weren't wealthy or anything, but they were just, you know, doing okay with their social security and whatever money they could make out of a farm. And that 20,000, just gave them, a cushion. It gave them a chance to breathe, that they had this money there to help them.

Cathy Gудis: [01:13:54] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And they stayed out, out at the farm—

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:13:59] —Until, until my father passed away, and then we sold it.

Cathy Gудis: [01:14:02] And then, so when you moved to Riverside, did you move to this house?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:14:06] [Nods] Yeah, uh-huh.

Cathy Gудis: [01:14:06] Oh, in '63?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:14:09] Not in—in '63?

Cathy Gудis: [01:14:11] When you were working—when you got your job?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:14:13] No, I—.

Cathy Gудis: [01:14:13] Or '61?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:14:16] —I lived with my parents on the farm until they passed away.

Cathy Gудis: [01:14:19] Oh, I see. I see.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:14:20] And then we moved, we moved into this house...I bought this house, with my mother, and—because my dad had passed away by, by that time my mother—my mother was—could not care for herself, so I was taking care of her.

Cathy Gудis: [01:14:39] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:14:40] And then after a while, it was like I was working, taking care of my mother. Then I had my health problems, and so I retired in—I retired in, I think, '97 or '98.

Cathy Gudis: [01:14:55] And then, you moved here in 2001?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:14:58] Ah [thinks].

Cathy Gudis: [01:14:59] Roughly?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:15:00] Yeah, I think, I think we—we stayed off the farm for a while, yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [01:15:05] Yeah. How did that area of West Riverside change?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:15:07] You wouldn't recognize it. It's, it's—the property that my parents had owned, it's, house after house after house. And all that area has got housing on both sides, and I think there's just, maybe there's a farm or ranch—there's a couple of—of open areas that are still left, but they're all—it's all houses, and then, there was a quarry behind our property, and now, it's a, it's a golf course.

Cathy Gudis: [01:15:48] Right. When did you start getting—were you involved, in talking with Sumi, about her—because I'm thinking about your role with the Harada House, when did that start? Was it, with your—through your friendship or knowledge or interactions with Sumi, or, were you privy to those conversations early on?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:16:10] Well, well, you know, I knew the story about the Harada House, and I had, I had visited, you know, Sumi. I'd been in her, her alma[?], and she was a charter member, so she was, you know, she was active. And, because I—you know, I—everyone knew the the story of the Harada House. And I remember when, Mark Rawitsch came and interviewed Sumi, and Sumi was kind of a prickly person. And, she either liked you, or she didn't like you for some reason. She really became very fond of Mark, you know, and then I, I, I knew about the paper that he wrote, when he, was a student at UCR, and I said, "Oh my goodness, you know, that's wonderful that he wrote that, you know, he wrote, that paper." And then, over a period of time, you know, that he developed it into the book, but then I—you know, being a teacher and knowing Sumi, and, you know, having met Harold. You know, I knew about that house, and—because I've seen so many, places that, have stories to tell, but they—you know, that's a very simple home that so much has been lost. And—because, you know, it's not like a, a mansion that you'd—for some reason, preserve it—it's a simple house. And because of Sumi, and the fact that she saved everything, and she changed nothing—because I remember talking to someone, about, the house. Maybe it was Lisa Massengill[?], I'm not sure who. But she—she was telling me that when she went into the house, she felt like she was... What is it? Lord Carnarvon, the person that found, King Tut's tomb?

Cathy Gudis: [01:18:00] Right [laughs]!

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:18:01] She told me that it was like going in, because nothing had

changed, in all those years that Sumi had lived in that house, and especially, you know, after the war years, nothing had changed! And I—and we were always after Sumi for, you know, adding this, fixing that, you know, get rid of this, get rid that, and she just... She kept everything, she changed nothing. And so...when I, I talked to—maybe it was Lisa, maybe it somebody else, and they were saying that, the Harada House is special because it's, it's in a time warp.

Cathy Gudis: [01:18:40] [Laughs.].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:18:40] And so much—you know, because, I'm at a stage right now where I'm getting rid of things, and I don't know, because you know these pictures that I was showing you, I had saved them. But then some of the pictures, we just, we—I ripped them out of photograph albums my dad had. We used to draw on some of these [laughs] pictures. [Michiko and Cathy laugh.] You, you can see some of the pictures have been destroyed! So, it usually takes someone, in a family to find them, put them together, because so much has been lost. And then, that's what makes the Harada House...you know, how special. It's the story of one family. And then the family is special because of Harold, because of Sumi, and they were, community leaders, you know, from the, from the beginning. And Sumi—and probably, Sumi is the person that kind of saved everything.

Cathy Gudis: [01:19:36] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:19:36] If she had decided not to live there, and she had moved, the house wouldn't be there, it would be gone.

Cathy Gudis: [01:19:44] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:19:44] And, and the problem with the Harada House is that it's, it's in terrible condition. But it's—whatever is left of the building is there. The story is there, and any Japanese American family, their story is in the Harada House. Because when you read that book, *The House on Lemon Street*—

Cathy Gudis: [01:20:05] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:20:06] —I, I can take my story, and I can see the parts of it, are similar to the Harada family. And because, you know, it's a story of the, Japanese American experience, you know, from the 1900s until 2000, and the actual things are there. It isn't just a, a monument that's there.

Cathy Gudis: [01:20:29] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:20:29] The actual place is there, and I think that's important. [Nods.]

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:20:35] Why did you—like why do you personally think this—that this, is, important to, like, preserve these particular, histories? Like, what do envision future generations potentially doing with these, contributions, or your contributions to historic, and cultural preservation?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:20:57] Well, when you get older, you...you, you realize that everybody's story is, important because I know that I've changed my mind where I always felt I'm, I'm not important, I'm just the farmer's daughter. You know, I just picked strawberries, I went to school, but, after you've lived 80 years, you find that, you know, everybody's story is special, everybody's stories are different. And there's been so much, work lately with oral histories, because it's one thing to, read letters that people have written or read books about someone, but to actually, hear them, to see them...it's special. And, I think that history is—nothing is, completely, you know—one person's story today is similar to the story of somebody 100 years ago. You know, during wartime, people suffer, people go through, you know, growing up pains. And so, what you went through, is similar to somebody that happened, you know, 100 years ago because, I'm sure, there have been other groups that have been interned [laughs], like today.

Cathy Gudis: [01:22:17] Exactly [Kahleia and Cathy laugh].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:22:19] Today—and so, you may think that your story—well, so maybe my story about being interned and being thought of as un-American, maybe that's, similar to somebody today [hits table for emphasis]—

Cathy Gudis: [01:22:32] Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:22:32] —that they feel like they're an American, but they're treated like they're outsiders. So, I, I think that's, that's important that a Japanese American story, our internment, and the fact that we were American citizens, but because of what you look like, you are different, you're not an American. Because that, that really bothers me that, what you look like determines what you are, because...my hairdresser is from Canada. She's Canadian. And, when I, I was talking to her, I thought she was an American! So I found out, she was a green card Canadian, and she kept—she had not become a citizen because she was thinking of maybe going back to, Ontario, Canada, where her family is, and she was thinking that maybe later she might go back. So, she had never gotten her citizenship...certificate, but she had kept a green card. And I said, "If you put the two of us together, they'd say, she's an American, although, she's got a green card, and I'm an American citizen by birth, and I've lived here all my life, but they would not think of me as an American." So that used to bother me, my [hits table for emphasis] hairdresser, who's got a [hits table for emphasis] green card, and there's me [hits table for emphasis] with an American citizen, and...you know, they would think that I'm the non citizen, so, I think that's one of the things that people need to—don't judge people on what they look like. And, and I think, that's important where—you know, now, when you see somebody, you have to—if you see someone that looks different, you have listen to them speak, and then when you listen to the speak, you realize, okay, is this somebody who started

in another country and came here? Or if they speak just like you, maybe they're an American, you know, you just, you don't know. You have to listen to them to find out what their story is.

Cathy Gudis: [01:24:16] And even, listening to voice, you don't know because—.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:24:20] No, no, no!

Cathy Gudis: [01:24:20] Yeah, right? Like they could be—could have been born here—.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:24:24] Yes.

Cathy Gudis: [01:24:24] —you know? But, I mean, even my parents, my parents' first language wasn't English, so, you know, they—I'm sure sounded different [laughs].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:24:33] So, it's just that you, you have to be careful about judging people, you know? By, you know, judging—not judge people by what they look like, you know. But I think that's true nowadays because, on television, on—in the movies you see—you don't—everybody, everybody doesn't look the same, you know? There's, there's more of a variety, which I think it's important for people to see, in films, on television, in books, people that look different, you know? And we can all be Americans, or, you know, but, you know, we look different, so—I, I, I think, that is an important lesson.

Cathy Gudis: [01:25:12] Yeah [laughs]. Yeah, we were going to ask, yeah, about a message like that, so that's really, that's perfect. Can I just, one interruption here, because I know time is wearing on. I really liked when you said that buildings have stories to tell, and that the Harada House is an exceptional one because of the family that lived there all that time. It became a time capsule. Can you think of other buildings that, you think—maybe—I mean, I don't know, of any that rise to the level of the Harada House because of, the longevity and the collection. And I was lucky enough to go inside, before everything was taken out, of the Harada House, so I could see it, and go upstairs, and see that nothing had changed.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:25:59] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:25:59] But are there other, places, that, that you think, ought to be preserved or, or—and not necessarily buildings, but maybe locations, even, that might be a way—a hook or an anchor—to be able to tell, tell a story?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:26:21] I'm not sure except, you know...Save Our Chinatown committee [cross talk]. There's, there's a walking, there's a walking tour of Downtown Riverside, and that, I think the, museum has given, you know?

Cathy Gudis: [01:26:41] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:26:41] There's a walking tour—.

Cathy Gudis: [01:26:41] Yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:26:42] —and, I've taken—I've worked with Save Our Chinatown Committee [cross talk] on that, on the walk. And then, it's sort of like, you know, the Mission Inn has got stories, but the Mission Inn also has stories of Japanese Americans too, you know, with Frank Miller. And in fact, there's—it's, it's on Main Street, and, that location on the tour is where, the Japanese Americans, had to, collect, in order to get onto the bus, to take them to post it. And there's a, there's a, I think, a photograph of—from the, from the newspaper where this is the location of where everyone had to meet, and, get on the bus, and then the Mission Inn is in the background. So really, the Mission Inn is kind of the middle—in the middle of the town. And, you know, there's the Harada House, but then, I know that Sumi had pictures of, of Frank Miller, you know, inviting, the Japanese community and kimonos to go to there, to the Mission Inn, and I remember, Harold telling me that, you know, for them, because they, you know, lived in that house to—I, I know that, Sumi had her, funeral reception. Because she was a member of the Congregational Church.

Cathy Gudis: [01:28:08] Mm-hmm, yeah [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:28:08] And after the service in the Congregational Church, we went to the Mission Inn to have her reception. And, I, I remember Harold telling me that, for the Haradas, to have, have something, a reception, a dinner at the Mission Inn was sort of the ultimate, you know? Because in Riverside, the Mission Inn was, you know, the best place, the best restaurant, the best hotel, you know? The Mission Inn has gone through its ups and down but—

Cathy Gudis: [01:28:38] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:28:39] —but for the Haradas—.

Cathy Gudis: [01:28:40] Yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:28:40] —the Mission Inn was, was very important. And, and also...you know, his—Frank Miller's interest, interest in the, in, in...Asia and Japan. I think that was important. And, and I think there are locations in that Downtown area, like I was telling you that, where the community, you know, gathered. And I think also, the Washington restaurant where the Haradas, had their restaurant, it's located there. So, that down—that whole Downtown area, I, I think, completes the story of the Harada House.

Cathy Gudis: [01:29:18] Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, yeah, yeah [affirmative]. We have, we have pretty detailed maps with the, households of, East Side, and a few other locations, like Casablanca, not outside of city border boundaries, but within the city borders. I'll have to show you the map one day! Each of the locations is sort of just marked on a map, so you could see, geographically.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:29:41] Well, and then one of the things, I don't think people realize how many Japanese were living in the Casablanca area.

Cathy Gudis: [01:29:46] Yeah, yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:29:49] Casablanca was an important Japanese area, where a lot of Japanese families lived, you know? Because I told you that's where that—

Cathy Gudis: [01:29:59] Yeah, the Gardeners' Association, yeah!

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:30:03] They had the building there.

Cathy Gudis: [01:30:04] Yeah, yeah, yeah, right. Yeah, I mean, the—from the census, you know, we, we've got everything up through the 1940s, and you can compare that in the '50s, and you know, in the recent census, that, the, the newest one that came out that's household level, 1950, they're not.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:30:21] No.

Cathy Gudis: [01:30:21] They didn't return to those [cross talk] locations right because they, yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:30:25] Because, because—before the war, there were several Japanese families living there.

Cathy Gudis: [01:30:31] Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:30:32] Okay, after the war, it, it, it became Hispanic.

Cathy Gudis: [01:30:37] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:30:38] Probably, probably, the people living there, I'm not sure that they own the property.

Cathy Gudis: [01:30:41] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:30:42] Because they wouldn't have built that building, unless there was a community there.

Cathy Gudis: [01:30:47] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:30:47] But then, I was talking to somebody else about before the war and after the war. It's, it's like, a lot of the people living here before the war did not return.

Cathy Gudis: [01:30:59] Right, [cross talk] exactly, they did not return. Yeah, and that,

yeah, right, right.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:31:04] Any more questions?

Cathy Gudis: [01:31:04] Mm-hmm [negative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:31:09] Okay, cool. I just wanted to wrap up our bases. Is there anything else you would like to share, or can you think of anything, that we should have asked you about?

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:31:24] You know, you're talking about after, after, after the war, one of the main things that I've noticed in my life—because I'm a single woman is—how things have changed for women. Because, as I was telling you, you know...I started working in the '60s, but I was growing up in the '50s. And, the opportunities for women was so limited. As I told you, for educated women, you were either a teacher, a nurse, or a secretary. And, I remember seeing, when I was teaching school, a lady, that was a telephone pole worker. She came, and she was climbing [laughs] up, telephone poles. And I said, "Who would ever believe, a woman, climbing a telephone pole?" And I said, I said, "The sky's unlimited!" Now, now, women don't have to think about being a secretary! They can be the boss. They can be the CEO. And so when I see these women, in important positions, I said, "Well, when I was growing up, it was not possible. It was not possible." You know, if you were a secretary, you may be, the office manager, but you weren't considered the office manager, you were the secretary. And so, in, in my lifetime, I've, I've seen, a lot of changes. But one of the main changes that has really affected me is the opening of so many opportunities for women. And, I, I think that's a big change in—you know, from the '50s to, you know, 2000. I think that's important. It, it, it can be good, and it can be bad. Because the, the other problem is that, that in teaching, one of the things that I've seen problems—difficulty in is child care. If you have women in, in business, I feel sorry for the women today. They have to—you know, it's too bad they have to make a choice between their families and their, you know, her job, you know? So it's, it's good, and, I don't want to use the word bad. They're difficult choices to be made [shrugs]. Difficult choices to be made, but that's one of the big things that I've seen this. The opportunity for women has really expanded.

Cathy Gudis: [01:33:46] Do you have any recollections if in the, school system, teachers, were urged to leave when they got pregnant? You know, when you were working there.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:34:01] I think it was just taken for granted that you—because, because that's one of the changes that I, I saw that before, you know, you—I, I was—I'm sure every school district had their policy, and I'm not sure what the policy was, but you did not see pregnant women walking around. And so, I think by the time you showed, you know, [shrugs] you know, but I, I don't know what the policy, the policy was, but that's one of the difficulties that you have your job, okay? But you're still pregnant, and so, you know, you have to make your decision, but that's, that's very difficult, but, but that's one of the things that, that doesn't bother people there where you have, pregnant women—they're definitely pregnant, and

they're still working, and so it's up to them to just—I think it's now their decision, isn't it? How long they want to go?

Cathy Gudis: [01:34:52] Mm-hmm, yeah [affirmative]. Yeah, yeah, big changes, yeah, yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:34:59] But any time, any 50-year period, don't you think that you're going to see changes? So I'm, I—it's hard to imagine what we're going to see in the next 50 years, you know?

Cathy Gudis: [01:35:11] Well, also because in some ways, I think we've been looking at, like we could see that change in the 50 years, but from the '80s, till today, we're seeing so many—we've seen so many rollbacks recently—.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:35:28] Yes.

Cathy Gudis: [01:35:29] —that it feels like, we're, back in, in a much earlier period. Maybe not the '50s, '60s, or even '70s, but like I've been just scratching my head, trying to think of, where—how far back the roll, roll—you know, these, these rollbacks, both in attitude, that's put forward, by the government, and, rollbacks like Roe v. Wade, and things like that.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:36:00] Well, don't you think that in history, there's a time of expansion, and then there's expansion—there's a time when you fall back, it's forward, then back—.

Cathy Gudis: [01:36:14] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:36:14] —forward, and back? Because in history, everything is not just forward, forward, forward. It's like, expansion, and then kind of time to, to kind of digest it, or forward. Maybe, you know, three steps forward, two steps back, or one step back [laughs].

Cathy Gudis: [01:36:31] Exactly, yeah, I think some of us are just feeling, the feeling, like maybe we're taking more steps back than we [Michiko, Cathy, and Kahleia laugh] had hoped. But, yeah [laughs], well, thank you so much for talking to us.

Michiko Yoshimura: [01:36:44] You're welcome.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:36:44] Yes, thank you.

Cathy Gudis: [01:36:45] And I, I, I know that we're gonna have more questions, when we, transcribe this.

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Michiko Yoshimura: [00:00:03] Probably...Yeah, something like that where we were not—when pantsuits first came out, you could wear a pantsuit, but you can't wear pants. It had to be pantsuit. You know? So...

Cathy Gudis: [00:00:12] Right. Yes, definitely. I, I cannot imagine wearing hose every day [laughs]. Much less a dress every day! [Cross talk.] I'm wearing a dress now, but I'm wearing sneakers [laughs].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:00:23] When I first started teaching school, I thought pantyhose were the greatest invention in history because before that, we wore girdle and hosiery. You remember hosiery?

Cathy Gudis: [00:00:36] [Shakes head].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:00:37] You had—you know, hosiery, you have to have a garter. [Cathy groans.] To hold them up!

Cathy Gudis: [00:00:41] What? That's just—

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:00:43] Okay, so you have to wear a girdle—and hosiery because you know—okay, so when they invented panty hose, I said, "Oh my God, now I don't have to wear that girdle, [Kahleia laughs] you know, to hold up your hose. And—and then you can just pull it on.

Cathy Gudis: [00:01:00] Yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:01:00] And now, now people think that pantyhose are torture. I said, "Oh, you don't know what it was like when you had to have a garter."

Cathy Gudis: [00:01:07] Yeah! [Cathy, Kahleia, and Michiko laugh.] Definitely.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:01:12] And to teach? In hose?.

Cathy Gudis: [00:01:14] In hose, and yeah, also nice shoes? [Cross talk.] Heels.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:01:18] Oh my god, I don't know how I—well, you know, you're young, you can—yeah, it's a—because—but the other—but you know talking about forward and back. Okay, it was nice to go forward and be able to dress more casually, but then the other end is that they got too casual. [Kahleia laughs.] See, because I really do think—I'm for uniforms, because there is something about...being dressed for school where it's like this is school clothes. You behave this way in school. If you're too casual, then you don't take it seriously. You see what—you see what—

Cathy Gudis: [00:01:54] —Yeah, there's definitely a swing, in the charter schools and other schools—maybe even the regular public schools to uniforms. [To Kahleia] Did you have a

uniform?

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:02:04] I had uniforms in elementary, but it was a discussion whether or not we would keep them. But I think most—at least from my understanding, I think a lot of elementary schools, even public schools, are just doing it as well.

Cathy Gudis: [00:02:21] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:02:21] The easy thing about uniforms, everybody knows, [cross talk] because the difficulty is—you, you—because I know going to—being a teacher, we had—you know, you didn't wear, you didn't wear spaghetti straps, you didn't work short shorts. Okay, so then you try to enforce this school dress code.

Cathy Gudis: [00:02:44] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:02:44] All right, and then, then you have parents. "[imitating a parent] You're not telling me that I, I just bought this new outfit from [laughs and cross talk]—

Cathy Gudis: [00:02:50] Right, yeah [laughs].

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:02:50] —[imitating a parent] You got to tell me she can't wear it?!" [Kahleia and Cathy laugh.] And you know, it's so, it's so, it's sort of between—you know, you would think common sense, you know? Because I, I taught sixth grade, and then for—you know, we didn't call it graduation or a ceremony. I would tell the kids, "You can wear a t-shirt. Okay, but, but let's have a little common sense. Nothing with blood and guts. [Kahleia laughs.] You know, have a little common sense." Okay, blood and guts, it's a [inaudible][Kahleia and Michiko laugh]—I'm say, I say, "Okay, this is a ceremony."—

Cathy Gudis: [00:03:23] Right.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:03:24] —"Have a little common sense [cross talk] about what's appropriate."

Cathy Gudis: [00:03:26] Yes, yes.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:03:27] To some people, appropriate doesn't mean anything.

Cathy Gudis: [00:03:29] Well, I do remember—I probably shouldn't share this on tape, but I do remember my daughter, wearing a tube top, [Michiko laughs], and we didn't realize it because she was wearing a jacket over it [cross talk] and so, the jacket didn't [Michiko laughs]—I mean, it was fancy looking [cross talk] because it had like, you know, it was like kind of silver spangle. But it—she was like a tube top to her graduation! I would have worried that it would fall, like, while she was walking across the stage [cross talk], but it was too late by the time we got

there. You know [laughs]?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:04:02] So, so there's something nice about a uniform.

Cathy Gudis: [00:04:05] Yes.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:04:05] Okay, so that—no argument [inaudible] about what's appropriate [cross talk], what's not appropriate.

Cathy Gudis: [00:04:10] Yeah, yeah, yeah. [Cross talk.] It's also kind of a class leveler, you know?

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:04:15] Yeah, I think where, you don't, you don't have to worry about—

Cathy Gudis: [00:04:16] Yeah, I'm not wearing the right brand name.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:04:19] Yeah, yeah, yeah because brand name and all those things are important to children.

Cathy Gudis: [00:04:23] Yes.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:04:23] Because I remember a friend of mine, we were talking about going to Kmart or something, and she says, "[imitating her friend] Well, my kids won't go into Kmart. They stay in the car because they're embarrassed to be caught in— Target, okay, but not Kmart. And I said [laughs], I said, "It's, it's important." So, so, so, so if, so if, if it's...uniform, there's no, there's [cross talk] argument about it, okay? [Cross talk.] Everybody wears the same thing. And I think there is something to be said that, for that.

Cathy Gudis: [00:04:53] Yeah, I do too. Yeah. [Cross talk.] Yeah, my kids had uniforms because Catholic—my daughter went to Catholic high school, and so there's a uniform there.

Michiko Yoshimura: [00:05:01] Well, but then I know in certain, certain countries like Africa, they wear uniforms because some of them don't have very good clothes, you know, and so that kind of levels everybody, where, you know, everybody wears a uniform, so there's something to be said for it.

Cathy Gudis: [00:05:15] Yeah. [Points to class photo.] Although, that's an awfully cute photo with all their little dresses [Cathy, Michiko, and Kahleia laugh]! Wow, well thank you!