

R= Had come in to see you off.

T= Yeah. But we just waved at them and smiled and we're going on a trip. (laughs) You know, it was nothing.

R= Was there, were there any evidence of Army soldiers at the assembly point?

T= Oh Yeah. All over the assembly center there. You know.

Part two begins here

R= This is tape two of a continuing interview with Taka and Aya and we were discussing your arrival at the Portland Assembly Center. And Taka, what was your first impression of the, when you saw where you had taken a field trip.

T= Well I was aghast. Because of, you know, the numbers of people, that, and having to find out quarters to live in, and orders were just saying do this. You know, you've got to get your, giving us directions of what each of us should do. It was just overwhelming.

R= How about you Aya?

A= It was about the same. We were helped off the bus by the Centries, I remember. And I mean, they were in uniform with a...

T= A bayonet.

A= I can't remember whether they had a rifle or not. But uh, that's probably the first time I remember ever seeing an Army uniform. And, uh, then when we were ushered to where we were to stay, I remember this canvas door. And there was nothing on top. I just remember looking around and thought, you know, I didn't think much about is this where we're going to live? But, like I said it was mass confusion for me. Yeah.

R= Now, Taka you were three years older than your sister. Were you aware of the fact that you were an American citizen, did you have any sense of...

T= Those thoughts didn't occur to me. I just thought, at that time I just knew we had to be there and we were given orders to get settled here. This is going to be your place to live for awhile and so it was very overwhelming in knowing what/how to do it.

R= And that was the most immediate concern.

(Both women murmur agreement)

T= Oh right. How do we do it? And our parents and, they were, I mean from living in a spacious farm and home...(Taka laughs)

R= So, how did you do it for three weeks?

T= Well we, I think we were, it was easier for us. Because right away they had, it was pretty well organized. The people that were there they had people that were doing, mess hall duties, and they had started school, you know, and so these announcements came over the loud speaker all the time, telling us where all the activities were taking place and all that.

A= I think we were probably one of the last groups to go into camp. I don't know when the first groups went but they had already established leaders.

T= Social functions.

A= Leaders and probably people that had to welcome us and told us where to go. They were camp leaders I guess. As far as the Centries, they just kind of ushered us in and that was it.

T= They were, we were surrounded on the outside, by Centries anyway.

R= Can you describe the assembly center to us? How it was laid out? Where were you in the camp?

T= (to Aya) How big was each, I would call them cells. You know, cause it wasn't very big. And like Aya says, it was a canvas door and then we had to go to the latrines and showers, I mean, we had to walk quite a ways to go the these facilities.

A= And they had, as far as meals were concerned, they had this bugler that announced when the first shift was eating and they sounded when it was their time to be over and I can't remember what the bugler's song was, tune was, but I've heard it, every time I hear it, it reminds me of that meal time.

T= Yeah.

A= And I remember eating Vienna sausage. I waitressed for one week I think, and I still have the, uh, my paycheck.

R= Do you, you're coming from a very isolated situation, living on a farm in a community that had very few Japanese Americans, and suddenly you're thrust into a camp with thousands of...How did you react to that?

T= Right! Well as a teenager, well this is not bad.

A= But if you saw you're friends, then it was more fun. You know.

T= Yeah.

R= Did you try to find your friends?

T= Right. I knew a few before you know. But not...

R= Now they basically, hastily but this camp together, right on the dirt where there had been manure and animals and that type of thing. I've heard stories of outbreaks of flies.

(T&A murmur agreement)

T= The stench.

A= The whitewashed walls that had animal hair coming through you know. I remember that.

R= Were there any other sights, sounds or smells that you'll forever remember the Portland facilities?

A= No but you can hear the sound, because they didn't have a roof. It was all open stalls. So you can hear music, you know, and things like that coming through.

T= Absolutely, no hardly any privacy, you know.

R= What was the experience like for you going to the latrine which also was a very impersonal and communal situation?

T= Right very much. Yeah it was just no, no privacy at all. So...

R= Just to back up a little bit before we move to the circumstances of how you ended up in eastern Oregon, your two, two of your brothers were drafted?

T= Right.

R= And when did that occur?

T= Well one was is in January? (To Aya)

A= Something like that.

T= And then one in March. Yeah.

R= And just shortly after Pearl Harbor, which is an upheaval, and two of your brothers are drafted. Where did they go, do you know?

T= They were in Fort Knox, Kentucky and I remember Fort Knox Kentucky and Fort Thomas? And they were together too at one time and then they went to Camp **Shelby** and were shipped out of Camp **Shelby** I think.

R= So they never went to a camp.

T= Oh no.

R= So what was the atmosphere like, do you recall, when they left the farm, the house and home to go?

T= Well it was very sobering you know.

A= One of my brother's friends was drafted and he was killed as soon as he got over there. And that really shook everybody up. Yeah.

R= Well tell me, why did your family volunteer for this opportunity to go to a farm labor camp in Eastern Oregon? Give me some background about that.

T= Like I say, there was a plea for farm help at the assembly center and so our oldest brother George went to check it out. And he saw the possibility of much more freedom and even though the camp layout was meager, it was far better than where we were. So the next, they had several groups going, and so as soon as he came back to report that we just all decided to go.

R= Where, did you offer your input on whether that would be a good idea?

T= No, we had no input.

(All laugh)

T= I mean...

A= Our dad, you know, I remember saying that that was no place to raise girls. And like I said before, it was getting to a place where the kids weren't eating with their parents and we just stayed there for three weeks.

R= You could kind of see the handwriting on the walls.

A= Right.

R= Things are already starting to disintegrate and there getting worse, let's go for this.

T= The family structure.

A= So anyhow, I remember riding that train, it was at night, and we had to pull the shades down so nobody could see us.

T= They had sentries walking through the train.

A= Yeah.

R= And, so you arrived, the train took you to the Camp Nissa?

T= The camp. There was a bus waiting for us and they took us to the tent camp.

R= And what did you see when you got there?

T= What did we?

R= What did you see when you got to the?

T= Oh we just saw this camp with nothing but tents in it you know.

A= It was just a wooden platform.

T= A wooden platform. A pot-bellied stove in each one.

A= No, we didn't have it in each one? I think it was just the cooking wasn't it?

T= No, I thought we had a pot-bellied stove.

A= But...

T= Cause we cooked our own meals. We were able to cook our...

A= We had just one tent, was just for eating and cooking. Like I said, at night, you just had this one lightbulb and of course, it just shuttles out and you could just see anything that's happening in there.

T= But uh, the climate is so different from the northwest. It was just so dry and and it was hot so we could lift the tent flaps up to air out and get dust in there and...

R= Right I was going to mention, ask you about dust storms. Wind blows a lot in the desert.

T= Amazingly we got accustomed to it.

R= And what did you have for sleeping facilities, were they cots?

T= Yeah, cots.

A= Yeah the folded up, it was just canvas cots.

R= A mattress?

A= No. (To Taka) I don't think we had mattresses did we? But it was like canvas, I remember it was canvas.

T= I can't remember

A= With wooden legs.

R= And did the whole family reside in one tent?

T= Well no. We lived, see my brother George and his wife, they had a camp. A tent. (To Aya) where did mom and dad?

A= Mom and dad and the I think, maybe the two younger sisters stayed in one tent. And the three of us older ones had a tent. And then one tent for cooking. So among our family we had four.

R= Four tents? So you had your own cooking tent?

A= Cooking and a table in there for eating.

R= And what type of stove did you have and what did it run on? Was it a wood stove?

A= No, no it was coal. (To Taka) Wasn't it coal?

T= Yeah I think it was coal.

A= Coal.

R= So what, in the first few days that you got there, what chores or responsibilities did you have? Did you do any of the cooking?

T= Our sister-in-law did the cooking.

A= Yeah.

T= See, whatever groceries we needed, there was a camp director. And I think they were the ones that took orders, our grocery orders and things. Because we had no way of going, we had no transportation. But then we, the farmers would come and there would be crew bosses. And so the crew bosses would say "Well this farmer needs so many workers". And so we would kind of go where our friends would go and go with them. (Laughs) So in that way it made it, and so all these farmers lined up and like the crew bosses would assign "this farm needs so many workers and this farm..." (To Aya) Isn't that how it went?

A= Well I was too young to go with other kids, I mean, so I had to go with mom. And that was a bunch of old ladies and I was probably the only young one but by then I was a sophomore in high school age. And...

T= (to Aya) See Dorothy and Rose never did...

A= They never had to work. So my sister-in-law took care of them back at the tent.

T= Yeah.

R= Right. You go to Portland in May and then by June you're out in the camp, the labor camp, so you're there during the summer. There's no school. Was there any type of security? Fences or Centries or anything?

T= No.

A= No but I'm sure there were strict rules. I remember going to movies, just the camp people could go to the movies certain hour.

R= Movies where?

T= At the theater.

A= At the theater.

T= In Ontario.

A= I remember, the midnight movies! It started at midnight?

R= You went?

A= You came home at two, three o'clock in the morning you know? I remember that very clearly.

R= So obviously no curfew.

T= No because see it was not Zone I and Zone II. We were in the Zone III I think. There was given more freedom.

R= Tell me a little bit more about your experiences going out to these farms and how you were treated, what the work was like. What you got paid? If you can recall?

T= Well I think our crew bosses got the pay and doled it out. We would go out in open trucks and stand for miles and going to the farm, at that time I thought, when I think about it, I think "My gosh, we road miles in an open truck", going to the farm, and either hoeing beans, hard labor! Believe me! But with your friends it's not as hard. (laughs)

A= But they closed the schools in October for the potato harvest, I mean they closed the school for at least two weeks. Everybody harvested the potatoes. And to me that was the hardest job in the world.

T= Oh gosh, you talk about...

A= You put this big belt on with hooks and sacks in the back you know like twenty sacks and you get paid by the sack. And these sacks were like sixty pounds of potatoes and you put it like this and you pull up the sack and you stand it (motions lifting sack) so the truck can come by and pick it up you know. I can't imagine we did that. (laughs)

T= We worked hard.

A= Uh huh. Yeah. But...

R= What did you have in terms of bathrooms, was it sort of a communal bathroom situation in the camp too?

T= Yeah but not as, not just, I think there was flush toilets.

A= At the tent there was two latrines right out. I mean you could smell the chemical that they used. Then we had big outdoor covered...

T= Showers.

A= Covered showers. But the men had to go in at one time and then the women another time. And they were scheduled. But I remember just pulling this string. You're on the platform with slats and you pull this string.

T= To get the water?

A= To get the water. But you had to hold onto to keep the water going.

R= And to clean yourself. Boy, some interesting challenges. You were, your family, amongst hundreds of other Japanese Americans really had a very unique situation that you have sort of this, interesting exemption from the camp experience.

T= Right.

R= That not many other people...

T= Not in, like the relocation camps.

R= Right.

T= Right. It's relocation but not...

R= People were sent to the relocation camps and then they were allowed to leave later on.

T= Right. Right.

R= You went directly from the assembly center.

T&A= Right.

R= And to a much, what seemed like a much greater degree of freedom. And so you had these expectations when you were in the assembly center, how did they, did they match the experience you had in the tent camp early on, match your expectations for freedom? Life always presents interesting challenges.

T= Right. Well we, not knowing what to expect, it was...

A= But I think we probably met our lifelong friends at that period.

T= Yeah.

A= Uh huh. Because the friends we met in those years, have become one of our best friends. Mh hmm.

R= And can you describe to me, was there a sense of community in this tent camp?

T= There was.

R= Organized events?

T= They had social...it was more after we moved into the barracks that they had more of social activities and at that time we had a little, I wrote in there, this little missionary lady that, you know, she wanted to make sure that we were getting good...

A= Religious training.

T= Well religious as well as social issues. She tried to see that we. The welfare of the people.

R= That you were treated well?

T= Right, right.

R= So she was, as you might call it these days, an advocate for?

T= Right. See, she had just returned, a Caucasian lady, just returned from Japan as a missionary, and so she spoke Japanese. And, uh, she was not a very elderly woman, but she was grey haired and just a real loving lady, that just took in, she wanted to have all the ladies meet. Whether they were Buddhist or whatever. And she would teach them crafts. And so there wasn't anyone there that we knew that would have gathered them for the Buddhist faith. But she, through these efforts she got us interested in Christianity. And she started having church services, and we didn't know a thing about Christianity, because we didn't have that upbringing. But through her, you know, we all became Christians. She has really been an important, you know, lady in our lives.

R= What was her name?

T= Azalea Peet. And uh...

R= And you mentioned that she really helped out the Isei.

T= Right. You know.

R= Language issues.

T= Uh huh, uh huh. But uh...

R= Anybody else that kinds of stands out? You mentioned special friends?

T= Well there were, you know, the Quakers were such advocates for the Japanese. But I don't remember any particular, maybe other people in the camp had ties with the Quaker group, but we had another minister from Idaho that helped me get into the College of Idaho, cause I just finished, then I enrolled in the College of Idaho but I can't remember what his name was.

A= (to Taka) You mean Reverend Shaver?

T= Reverend Shaver, yeah. So and there, he helped us, but I don't know who else, a lot of my friends that went onto college.

R= How far was the camp from Nisa?

A= About twelve miles?

T= Yeah. Something like that.

R= So in those first months that you were there, you spent time in the camp, or the town, you said went, you would go to the movies on occasion. What was the response, the local response...

T= The Caucasians?

R= The Caucasian community in Nisa to this camp?

T= Well there were a lot of, uh, discrimination.

A= Yeah I think, I remember one instance, one of my friends, and then her brother was killed, and after that it was, I mean, she just really ignored me, you know,, but you could tell she was very upset. It was a brother that just got out of high school. But the teachers were pretty nice, you know, they were more tolerant. We didn't develop a lot of Caucasian friends because there was quite a group of Japanese going to the same school. So we kind of had, you know, lunch together and that kind of stuff. We probably should have mixed more, but it was more comfortable.

R= Were there other forms, that the discrimination took, not being served at certain locations?

T= Well I don't know, I don't recall, but I've heard stories, when going into town you mean? I think there was but we didn't experience it.

A= Yeah well you know, like Sits was saying that her brother was in the army and he was eventually killed, but she went into get her hair done and she was told "We don't serve Japs here" and she really put up a fight.

R= This was in Nisa?

A= This was in Ontario which is right next to Nisa. Uh huh.

R= Is Ontario the larger of the two communities?

A= Ontario is, uh huh.

T=Oh yeah. Nisa is just a small town, but Ontario is...

A= There was a lot of Japanese settled there and they were instrumental in building the museum there. I don't know if you've ever heard of Treasure Valley Museum and uh, they have a lot of artifacts, Japanese artifacts and stuff in there.

R= Right and you brought up a good point, the original Japanese families they moved into that Ontario and Nisa area.

A= This was before the war too.

T= Right right.

R= Before the war. What type of contact did you have, were they supportive?

T&A= Very much.

R= What ways?

T= Well they just, they wanted to make us feel welcome and they would do anything for us because we were confined and they wanted, in fact, one family, didn't live very far from the camp, and they opened their homes and they said "do you want to have a social event?" and they were just very...Oh yeah they were very cordial.

R= Was there a Buddhist church in that community?

T= There was but they, there was a Buddhist church there, but we didn't, I don't think anyone from camp attended, I mean, during the tent camp it was still very chaotic and I think that was not in their agenda (laughs).

R= There was a situation that developed where members of the tent camp tried to negotiate getting electricity to the tent camp. Are you familiar with that?

T= You mean before we?

R= Before you left to go to the C.C.C. camp there was protests or some nature to get electricity supplied to the tent camp.

T= Oh.

R= Just mentioned here that Japanese Americans that were accustomed to better living conditions wanted the electricity, sugar beet companies in the town of Nisa arranged for the wiring.

T= Oh Oh. Well that I didn't know.

R= Apparently some of the local people felt that was beyond what Japanese Americans were pushy about, making demands, and there was some resentment about that situation that developed. But you don't remember...

T= Well we don't know the politics of that but I just know we had to move out of tent camps at that time cause it was getting cold, we couldn't withstand the weather if we continued to live there and so.

R= Before we get into that, were there any Japanese Americans at the tent camp that worked at the sugar beet factory in Nisa? Was that a source of employment?

T&A= I don't think so.

R= It was strictly farm labor.

T= Right it was strictly farm labor.

R= And that particular part of Oregon, Malaher county was the one that was suffering this emergency situation?

T= Right, right.

R= They were able to press upon the W.R.A. and president that this was an extraordinary situation and that's how things came to be. Do you know if you were paid, were you paid by the, I believe, it was the Amalgamated Sugar company that sort of, wanted people to come out and work in that tent camp.

T= Well that probably, like I say was...

A= They probably did. I'm sure they had a lot to do with it. Because there weren't any able bodied men to do that.

T= Like I say, we don't know the politics of all that business end.

R= How were you treated by the farmers, where, whose land that you worked on?

T= Well we, not any different.

A= I think it was...

T= I mean, hey, they wanted to get their crops (laughs) taken care of.

A= Well I remember, this is an incident that happened to my husband, and he was, he went out to a farm where they thinned sugar beets and they said that one row was like a mile long and you could only go up once, by mid-morning and then come back and your day was over. But they were getting paid very low wages and so they had a strike.

T= Sit down strike.

A= Sit down strike and so they just sat down by the edge of the ditch until the farmer told them to get back to work and they said they were going to quit. And I guess they reconsidered and paid them a little more. Yeah, to get the job done.

R= So there was a little bit of...yeah...of trying to prove...

A= Yeah but they were young kids, eighteen, nineteen years old, you know, that protested.

R= They didn't want to be taken advantage of.

T= Yeah, taken advantage of.

R= And there was no union. You have to stand up for yourself.

A= Well if you couldn't get the job done they would suffer so. Yeah. I remember taking lunches and cold drinks and putting them in the running irrigation, running water to keep your beverages cold.

R= Yeah, how hot was it out there?

A= It was hot. It was dry hot heat.

T= Yeah it was not as, you don't feel the intenseness like you do on the west coast, cause we have that moist heat. And so the dry heat we got accustomed to it, you know. Even though it's hot, it's different.

R= So yeah falls coming, it's getting cooler and so they moved you to this C.C.C. camp in Adrian. And where was Adrian in respect to the tent camp?

A= It was south of Nisa. About twelve miles under.

T= Yeah.

R= And can you describe the camp to us? Was it just long rows of barracks?

T= There were barracks and the structure that we lived in housed, it was had two stories, so our family had the largest apartment and there were...

A= And another family lived upstairs and another family, you went in the same door, the main door, and they went and had a private room. So there was three of us living in this big house. Or building.

R= And the building had, was it equipped with bathroom facilities and kitchen?

A= No, that was still outside.

T= Yeah we still had to...

A= Outside.

R= Was it, sounds like it would be a significant improvement over the tent camp?

T= Well yeah, at least we had more warmth and...

A= We still burned coal on the coal stove, they delivered the coal when you wanted it. But there were big chunks I remember, and we had to break it apart to put it in the stove. I remember that. And to take a shower you had to...

T= Walk out.

A= Walk awhile to take a shower.

R= And was the whole tent camp removed to the Adrian camp?

T= Yeah because I think they closed down the tents.

R= They just completely closed it down.

T= Then they had a social, one barrack that was called a canteen and that's where they had the dances and the church services.

R= So did the missionary, Azalea Peet, did she follow you over there? And did she continue to organize and make life a little more bearable for you?

T= Yes. Right.

A= She had not a mobile home, but what would you call it? I remember this kind of oval shape.

T= Quansit.

A= Quansit hut like type thing she lived in.

R= And so who ran the C.C. camp? Was it the same people who ran the farm administration?

T= Yeah I think so. I think it was the farm security.

R= And those were Caucasians I assume?

T= Yeah.

R= And no evidences of any military police or security around the camp?

T= No.

R= How difficult was this part of your experience for your parents? Or was it?

T= Well I think it was, I think they were tolerating it, I mean they weren't, I mean its just like "this is what we have to do", I don't think they were...I don't know...I mean, this is what's expected of us, so, just didn't want to make waves or anything, I mean they're not that kind of people anyway.

R= So during the wintertime there wasn't that much, was there still farm labor work to be done?

T&A= Right.

R= What would you do during the wintertime Taka?

T= Well the first winter, I enrolled at the college in mid-winter, January. So I went off to college and my sister, Kate, she also went to College of Idaho too, and so we stayed in the dorm.

R= And where was the College of Idaho?

T= In Caldwell. And, see there was this other reverend that helped us so there was a group of us that went to the College of Idaho. And I don't know how we ever got there.

A= You know, it's amazing, when we think back, all during this time, there was three of us that went to college during the war, and to this day I can't imagine how they could have, our parents afforded it. My sister went all the way back to Minnesota and Taka went to, I mean she graduated from Pacific University, and I started Oregon State. During the war.

R= During the war.

A= Right after the war, the war ended in August of '45 and I started in September of '45. From camp.

R= From camp. I don't know if there were any scholarships or any type of financial aid involved.

T&A= No.

A= But it's amazing how we were able to go and never questioned where the money came from but we were expected to go onto school.

R= And did you, at that particular time in your life have any specific career goals or aspirations of what you wanted to do with your life?

T= Well I majored in sociology , but you know, I thought, I used to belong to the YWCA camps and so that was probably why I majored in that.

A= I went onto the School of Home Economics in Oregon State at that time was one of the top home economics school, and I became a food nutrition person and worked in Portland.

R= What was it like going to college in Caldwell?

T= On that campus they had the ROTC and so there were, it was very active college at that time, in that way with the military. But, there was quite a few Japanese that went there too. And so...it was... (laughs)...I wasn't a very good student but I...it was...

R= And so how did it feel, what was it like to be leaving your family and heading over to college?

T= Another adventure that, yeah it was, a part of growing up.

A= Of course it was much more cheaper then, but then it was big money for the parents. Yeah.

T= Gosh I remember...

A= I worked while I went to school, in the kitchen and doing dishes and things like that.

T= Gosh I remember it was like \$69.00 a semester for a credit or something like that you know.

R= Aya, so you were in the C.C.C. camp with the rest of the family, and shortly there after you made another move and settled on a farmer's land and arranged a sharecropping situation, can you talk a little bit about that?

A= Yeah, we sharecropped with a family called the Fishers I think. And there was another Japanese family that also sharecropped with them. The Kitos. And we lived next door to each other. And they raised onions and sugar beets and we went out to work on their farm. And I don't know what the money end of it was, but I remember one day, we went out and there was a truck that came in, the farmer brought in a truck, and there was all these German P.O.W.s on there to help harvest the crops. And I thought, "Oh my gosh, isn't that ironic?" They were all sitting on this big open truck and I'm sure there was a guard there, but they were all young and blonde, good looking young men. We found out they were P.O.W.s. Isn't that amazing?

T= They were eating watermelons, down to the, almost to the skin. I remember they were treated to a watermelon.

A= Yeah. But, let's see, I can't remember the year that we went to sharecropping but we must have been there a good...

T= I don't know cause I was at school but then we came home after.

A= A good year. But we lived in this house. I remember this bed that we had. It was just made out of slats, with a mattress on it.

T= We had an experience with bed bugs.

A= Nothing but bed bugs on there. I remember my dad used to pour kerosene into those slats to kill those bed bugs. (shudders)

T= Couldn't imagine bed bugs.

R= This farm, that you stayed at, was it outside of Ontario?

A= It was between Ontario and Nisa. It was called Cairo junction, was the name of the little area.

R= As far as you know, was your situation, other people's situation where families would hire out to private farmers in the area? Were there other Japanese families that did that?

A= Yeah, because when we start talking about remembering back when, we said "You mean, you were out there then?" People came from camp from the relocation camps and helped harvest. Then they went back. Uh huh. That's how they, cause we were so surprised that some of our friends were in Ontario and harvested peaches and things like that and it was kind of astonishing that we never met there but later on you know. It was quite an experience and then when we came back home, let's see, in 1945, I remember coming home for Thanksgiving that was my first time back and I couldn't remember getting back to the house. You know, it's been three years and things had changed. And uh, my boyfriend at the time, who's my husband now, picked me up at the Greyhound depot and brought me home. And we came down this Canyon Road, which is just the two lane highway and we passed the marker and we went into the city of Hillsboro, and we didn't live that far in yet, we backtracked and finally found the house. It was Thanksgiving.

(Taka laughs)

R = Well that's appropriate. So, yeah, that was another very positive experience for you during this time you met your husband in the tent camp, was that were you first met him? Tell us a little bit about him.

A= Yeah. Well I met him in camp, at the tent camp.

R= How did you guys meet?

A= Well social. Social things and then we just went together and then he went into the Army. He was only in there a year, just a little over a year. He never went overseas. And I went onto

college and I know my mother said "You can't get married until you learn how to drive and graduate from college". I think she told me to learn how to drive so after I got married I could come home. (laughs) Anyhow, so after I graduated from college I got married. But, um...

(long pause)

R= There was another interesting community around the Ontario/Nisa area where there was a group of **Basques**.

A= Right.

R= Did you have any contact with them at all?

A= They raised sheep and they run their cattle through the town, I mean everything really comes to a stand still. And it's really something. I mean all the dust, the animals create... (to Taka) Do you remember them going through this?

T= I don't.

A= Oh yeah, that's a big **basque** population out that way. And they herd their sheep through the town and no way can you get around them you know, until they pass through.

R= So your family, your two brothers who were in the military, you mentioned they came back to the farm on furlough to check on things?

T= Right.

R= Did they ever have a chance to visit you while you were at the camps?

T= Yes.

R= Where? Which one did they?

T= They never came to the tent but they came to Adrian you know.

R= And so how did they feel about seeing you out there?

T= Well they were, I'm sure they felt, we never really asked them.

A= Well my brother Art and I wrote to the Hillsboro paper how, he says I'm serving in the Army and my parents and family are in this camp. How could this be? It was kind of a letter; that he was just so frustrated, and I remember cutting it out and saving it. And he can't remember even mailing that letter but that's how he felt. And he wrote to the editor.

R= This is during the war?

T&A= Yeah.

A= And I think he sent pictures, a lot of things were censored, the letters he sent home, but on the pictures that he took, he would write on the back "this is the name of this person." But it really told us where he was kind of, you know. (to Taka) Do you remember that?

T= Yeah he wrote in...

A= He wrote in English but he wrote like, the person in this picture, this is his name, but that wasn't what it was, he kind of told us where he was in France.

T= He wrote in his very elementary Japanese.

(T&A laugh)

R= And the fact that they were serving in the military, well for other folks that were in the war relocation centers, there was bitterness, why are your sons serving while we're in this camp type of thing. But of course it was also a source of pride to for the parents that their sons were serving their country. Being where you were, you weren't exposed to any type of a loyalty questionnaire, which really divided those camps.

T= Yeah. I know. There were some in the evacuations centers there were a lot of disloyal groups.

R= So later on you ran into Japanese Americans who had been in these camps, sometimes called concentration camps.

T= Oh yeah.

R= How do you, in hearing what their experiences were, and you sharing your experience, how do you, how does that put your experience in context, to what they had to go through?

T= Well there's a lot of similarities. Yeah lots of similarities. In, you mean (to Richard) from the evacuation camps or our camp? In evacuation you mean? Well ours, there wasn't that much of a similarity cause they were in large groups and had to go to the mess halls and all that. And we had our own family unit.

R= And most importantly, you preserved that.

T= Right; right. Yes.

R= You didn't see the disintegration.

T= Right, right. Yes.

R= Even though, you know, a couple of sisters went to college and your brothers were serving, you still had sort of the core, you didn't see the same type of thing happening in the camps you were at.

T= Right.

R= Um, kind of wanted to ask you about how you feel your experience shaped the rest of your life?

T= Well it made us realize the injustice that was inflicted on us.

A= I think I've become more tolerant of other races and other people so when I hear of the Muslims and the Latinos getting persecuted I just really feel for them. When the Muslims started coming over here and they started being treated so badly I thought "Oh my gosh, you know they're going through what we just did". I'm sure I feel much more tolerant of people.

R= Do you have any thoughts about that Taka?

T= Well I feel the same way. It just really makes you, you know, appreciate your freedom.

A= And I think our kids are very interested in this, our generation, you probably heard this before, that we never speak about these things until just lately. And now our kids are just beginning to find out what's been happening. And so every time they see something in the books or on T.V. they email to me thinking it's something of interest. And I've kept lots of things on the war and the relocation.

R= So what prompted you to recently share your stories with your children?

A= Well I think when you get together with seniors and you talk about what happened during the war. It becomes something you kind of want to remember and pass on to your kids. So...

T= A legacy.

A= So I think this is a real good thing what you're doing.

R= Just stepping, just a little bit back to the resettlement aspect of your life, Hillsboro, you sort of painted Hillsboro as a pretty tolerant community, even after the war broke out. Was it such when you came back? How did you feel? Did you feel welcome? Did you feel, other than being gone for three years...

Camera Operator = Can we pause on that note for a moment?

R= This is tape three of a continuing interview with Taka and Aya about their experiences during World War II and we were just getting into the issue of resettlement in Hillsboro and how were you received and what your feelings were about returning to actually your home?

T= Well, frankly, I don't recall any discrimination but I think I've heard from my brothers and dad that they were faced with some discrimination, but I don't think it was as bad in Hillsboro as there were so few of us Japanese originally. Anyway so as far as I know I don't think they had that.

A= I don't think as much as like, you might have heard Hood River. Have you heard of Hood River? And Gresham was another place, my husband was from Gresham, and they had a lot of incidents that happened. But like she said, in Hillsboro, I think our parents were law abiding, not ravel rousers, they didn't run into any trouble. We were fortunate that way. Yeah.

(long pause)

R= Now did the rest of your family return? When did the two brothers return from the war?

T= Gosh I don't remember when they returned.

A= (to Taka) When we returned to Hillsboro?

T= No, Arthur and Ikey returned to. I don't remember when they were discharged.

A= Art was in the lost battalion, you might have heard that, and he was injured. And I ask my brother Ike were you there and he says he was in different, uh tanks or something, so he was farther back, so he was never in that...

T= Active?

A= Rifle. Like my brother Art was. But they met several times together in France. But it must have been very hard to have two sons overseas, uh, but we weren't the only family, other families that had the same situation. And remember when they had the gold stars and the blue stars, yeah.

R= Did you have that?

A= Yeah I remember.

T= We remember having a blue star.

A= Yeah and the blue star you'd hung in the window, yeah.

R= And where did you have those, at the labor camp?

A= Um...

R= Or the C.C.C. camp?

T= Yeah I think we did.

R= So when you came back to the farm, what condition was it in? Had it been kept pretty well by the neighbor as far as you could tell?

T= Well I didn't come back from Idaho until January and they were already settled. So I think it was OK. They didn't say anything that was, uh...

A= But I remember this missionary came when she made a visit to the west coast, she went on the house to check on it. And she said everything was in good order.

T= Oh.

R= Was that Ms. Peet?

A= Yes Ms. Peet.

R= And then just give us just a brief sketch of what you did with the rest of your life Taka?

T= Well I finished at college and then I went to work for the YWCA and then for a short while and then I worked for the Japanese Americans citizens league's office in Portland and then I got married. And then my husband owned a small grocery store with his dad and I helped him for

about five years when he had major stomach surgery and had to quit and so I had one daughter shortly after we got married. And then I went to work for, when my husband had to have his stomach surgery and we had to sell the store, I worked for the Portland Public Schools and then after working for the school district, that was from '55-'65, about ten years, in the mean while I had another daughter who was ill with bone cancer and she passed away. So I went back to school and got teaching credentials and went on to teaching for fifteen years. Uh huh. And then my husband passed away while I was teaching. He died at 57. So.

R= Aya, how about you?

A= Let's see after we, I got married in 1950, and my husband was, he was one of six boys in this family, and they were all into farming, and so right after we got married in the fall, I started to work at a hospital. I helped at the farm a little bit but I thought to myself, "Gosh, I went to school for four years and I didn't want to go back to farming" so I applied at the Portland hospital and I worked there for a couple of years after my son was born and then after my daughter was born I worked for a little bit longer and then I stayed home to take care of the kids but in the meantime I had to work on the farm too. And then later on, about ten years later, after that, our last daughter was born, and I thought, I needed something to do after she went to school and I started to work at another hospital and I worked there until I retired.

T= She was a dietician. (laughs)

A= So and then I retired in 92 and went into all the senior activities.

R= Are you active in the Japanese American community in Portland?

A= Yeah.

T= We're more active in our church.

R= Is that the Methodist (?)

T= Yeah.

R= So aren't you celebrating your hundredth anniversary or something like that?

T= A what?

R= The hundredth anniversary of the Methodist church.

T= Oh yeah It's over a hundred.

A= A hundred and ten? Was it more than a hundred? I don't know.

T= Yeah it's about a hundred and ten know. It's one of the oldest.

R= So how did bother of you feel about the efforts that created the redress and reparations?

T= Well that was certainly, well, we certainly thank the people that worked on it. It was long overdue and it wasn't half as much as what we did. Very appreciative of it.

A= It was the parents that should have gotten it. They were gone by then.

T= That's right, it was the parents that should have gotten it.

R= Now, have you, have you ever returned to the site of some of these experiences that you around in **Nisa** and Ontario, you mentioned that you made some good friends.

T= Oh yeah.

A= The camps are no longer there but we go back to visit our friends, that's where one of our best friends is there from. And I feel to me that's a second, the best memories I have growing up.

R= Have you been to a pilgrimage at one of the other camps at all? Either one of you?

T= Like **Minidoka**?

R= **Minidoka** or...

T= I've been to **Minidoka**, gone on a pilgrimage, but I've also been there, during the war.

R= So if your family hadn't gone out and volunteered for this unique situation in eastern Oregon, you would have ended up at **Minidoka**?

T= Right. That's right. True.

A= I had no desire to even visit. Yeah.

T= Well I thought, I had the opportunity to go visit and I thought it would be interesting to see what it was like.

R= And as far as you know there's never been any reunion of the tent city.

T= No. No. We've never had a reunion.

R= And roughly, the numbers I've seen are somewhere around four hundred Japanese Americans were sent there.

T= Uh huh.

R= I guess, final question, based on your experiences during the war time, being removed, and you know, these upheavals and confusions going on in your life, do you have any advice or insights for young people today, that you'd like to share?

T= Well, I'd say it's important to preserve your leg, you know, your legacy, and believe in, you know, what is always true in your heart.

A= Be tolerant of other races, um, and just remember what happened so it wont ever happen again.

R= Kind of following up on that question, both of you were, in your teenage years when this happened.

T= Yes.

R= You know, like you said Taka, you were so kind of confused about what we needed to do, you know, we're at the assembly center, we really have time to think about the injustice of it all.

T= Right. Time to think about it.

R= But now you've had quite a few years to reflect on it, so how would you look at it today? Would you look at it differently? How does it look to you sixty-eight years later?

T= Well, whether justice was served then, well I, I think that, well I'm kind of, well I knew that what I know now, that I didn't then, was that it was the wrong thing. Definitely.

A= We probably weren't up on a lot of things. You know, because of the language barrier too, our folks probably didn't talk about this kind of thing.

T= Well they were not the kind to make waves on any incidents that would...

R= Is there any other stories or reminisces you'd like to share before we complete our interview? Something that we haven't touched on?

T= I don't have any.

A= No. But it's, I'm thoroughly interested in this kind of history. And, um, I hope my kids can take from it and pass it on to their own kids.

R= Well on behalf of Mark and myself, and the National Parks Service, I want to thank you so very much for the time you've shared and your precious stories.

A= Your welcome.

T= Thank you. Very much.

A= Thank you.

Tags

Agricultural laborers – History, Agriculture, Agriculture—History, Armed forces, Armed forces—Officers, Beaverton, Brothers and Sisters, Buildings, Child agricultural laborers, children, Cities and towns – United States—History—20th Century, Civic centers, College campuses, Communities—Oregon—History, Community and college, Daughters, Delivery of goods, Education, Electricity, Eugene, Families, Gresham, Grocery shopping, Hillsboro, Historic buildings, Historic sites, Hood River, Households, Houses, Japan, Japanese Americans, Labor—Unites States, Local government, local history, local transit, Missionaries, Movies, Museums, Nuclear families, Nurseries, Oregon, Oregon—history, Outdoor recreation, Pearl Harbor, Picnics, Portland, Railroad, Religion, Rites and ceremonies, Second World War, 1939-1945, Soldier, Sons, Strawberries, Students, Students—Social life and customs, Women, Women agricultural laborers, Women—employment, Work