

Akira Iwasaki
September 15 2010
Washington County Museum

1:30: Akira was born in Farmington, outside of Hillsboro, July 8 1916. He went to Hillsboro schools.

2:30: Akira's family did a lot of vegetable farming, and greenhouse type farming. His dad had a few milking cows and vegetables.

4:19: They changed their crops over time from vegetable farming to ornamentals in the nursery business. The entire family worked on the farm. Akira worked that job until he retired.

6:52: During his school years Akira didn't do many extra-curricular activities. He was the only Japanese American in the school at the time. He felt like he never fit in with the crowd so he didn't really get involved with sports.

8:21: During Akira's school years around 1930's / 40's there were a few Japanese farmers in the area and his activities / center of interests were more with those people in the community vs participating in 'Caucasian relationship.'

9:20: There were some Japanese community activities- New Years was a big event for Japanese people. It was a big one week activity.

10:45: In Japan the new years custom was that prior to the first day of the year they would clean the house and put everything in order. They would also prepare foods- mother would always make many dishes. The first of the year, they weren't supposed to do any labor or anything- you were supposed to relax and enjoy the coming of the year.

12:08: Akira describes Mochi. Mochi making is a traditional new year dish. It's a special rice, very sticky and sweet. Mother would cook the rice, and put it in a bowl and pound it and mash it and make a sticky ball of rice. It's a Japanese delicacy. They also drank Saki. His mom didn't drink but his dad did. His dad even made Saki, and it was something he cherished a lot.

"Were you in school when the war came?"

14:33: Akira was in high school when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. After the war broke out, he joined the army- in 1942. In boot camp Japanese American soldiers were segregated from Caucasian soldiers. He was transferred to Tennessee to an all Japanese unit.

22:19: When Akira came back from Europe he went home to his farm. His German neighbor was sympathetic towards his family and they leased their farm to him to watch over it until they came back.

24:36: Akira didn't socialize with the Caucasian community growing up so he didn't really find any social hostility upon returning home from war.

"What was it like when your kids were growing up?"

26:31: Akira got married in 1951 to his wife Mary, after working a little bit on the farm when he got back. They rose a lot of strawberries, it was an important crop for them. After a few years his brother Art wanted to be more independent, so he branched out and found a place to do some farming on his own.

30:09: Akira talks about the growth of Hillsboro. Farming was pretty stable in the community. When technical industries began to move in, they became the dominant industry activities. It didn't affect Akira's farming activity. It might have even enhanced it to some extent because it brought a lot more people in, more customers for all of his crops.

33:54: Akira talks about his relationships with his brothers.

36:46: Akira talks about the family values his parents instilled in him growing up.

40:56: Akira talks about him and his brother George gradually taking over his father's farm to begin a greenhouse operation. Akira and George carried on as equal partners in their farm after Art split off to start his own greenhouse business. Akira's kids aren't involved in the farming business at all. His daughter has a son who is ten years old.