

Rose Fujinari

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Question: The first thing I'd like to do is just to get your name on videotape, first and last name.

Answer: Rosie Fujinari.

Question: And what was your maiden name?

Answer: Yatagai

Question: And you were born

Answer: In Seattle.

Question: What was your Dad like? Now you said he worked

Answer: Grand Union Laundry. It was owned by 3 Japanese and he was a deliveryman for them.

Question: Oh, really. All through Seattle.

Answer: Yeah, until the war, uh huh. Up until 1941.

Question: So what

Answer: My mother worked, too. I mean, that was kind of unusual for...

Question: Oh, yeah. What did your Mom do?

Answer: She worked in a sanitary wiper company sewing rags, I think. Yeah. She worked all the time we were going high school, and she was still working when we were evacuated, so I thought. Most of the Issei women didn't go outside of the home unless you had a little grocery store business of their own.

Question: So that was pretty untraditional.

Answer: Yeah. She enjoyed it, though, I think. You know.

Question: Was she a real strong woman, then I assume?

Answer: Yeah. She was.. like when she went to camp, she went out to dig potatoes, and things like that from camp. My father didn't, but my mother did.

Question: Oh really. You Dad didn't, but your Mom did.

Answer: Yeah. Well, my Dad was quite a bit older. You know, I think he was born in 1885, so, and my mother was born in 1897, so that makes 12 years difference. I remember, she was real peppy when the war started. She was full of vim and vigor, so she just wanted to go out and make some money, I guess.

Question: Do you remember was that accepted or did people look down upon her for being so strong?

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Answer: Oh, I think it was nothing unusual, because she worked with a bunch of Issei women like her, you know.

Question: In camp, you mean, or before.

Answer: Oh, before. No I don't think so, because it helped in those days. Nobody had money, we didn't certainly, and what she made helped buy us stuff.

Question: Real different times. Come out of the depression.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Did your grandparents come over also, or just your parents?

Answer: No, just my parents. I never knew my grandparents 'cause I think they were all gone by the time we were born.

Question: How many brothers and sisters did you have? You had a sister.

Answer: Older sister, that's all.

Question: Or, so you're the baby.

Answer: Well.

Question: Those are the best.

Answer: You are too? Spoiled.

Question: So do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor happened?

Answer: Where I was?

Question: Yeah.

Answer: Well, it was Sunday, and I think I was. It's kind of hard to remember, but I was home. I was, oh gee, I was going to school part time and working part time, you know, so when I went back to school, it wasn't, you know, anything, people were nice, and where I was working was like a I guess, like civil service, Youth Administration, and I remember. Do you remember the lady that wrote The Egg and I? Betty McDonald? Well, she worked upstairs, and I remember she was so much fun. She was so much fun. Every chance I got I used to go upstairs and talk to her. She wasn't famous then, you know, she was just working there. I was so thrilled when I found out later that she wrote a bestseller and made a movie and everything.

Question: And you just found her interesting.

Answer: Oh, yeah. She was a ball of fire. Always kidding and laughing and everything. But that's how we were. I was going to school and working part time until I think, Bainbridge evacuated first, but we didn't go to camp until about the end of April from Seattle to Puyallup.

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Question: To Camp Pleasant, Happy. I can't remember what they called it now. They had some name for it that wasn't...

Answer: Camp Harmony.

Question: Harmony. That's right. Yeah. So did you, because Bainbridge went first, were you aware?

Answer: That we had to go? Yeah, we got.. everybody was talking about it. There was curfew and all that, and we got our notice, I think a month or two, couple weeks before to be ready, you know. So I remember I got rid of everything and whatever we could carry. We were told that we could bring only what we could carry, and we had to meet at, I don't know whether you remember, ? , it's on, the Buddhist Church owns that place now, but it's right on that main street, about 18th and Main. WE gathered there for the bus to go to camp. I remember my mother thought we wouldn't be eating, so she cooked chicken and everything and we brought it with us.

Question: That's what I was going to ask, do you remember what you, so your Mom thought you wouldn't eat, so she fixed

Answer: Right away, yeah. You know, vegetables and chicken and we brought, she had. I don't know how she found time to do all that you know.. getting ready.

Question: Parents are amazing.

Answer: Yeah. We stayed in Puyallup for, until September, I think it was of '42. Then we went to Idaho.

Question: 'Cause you were old enough to understand what was going on. A lot of people

Answer: Yeah, oh, of course.

Question: were little children and their parents protected them from it. They almost made it sound like it would be fun, even though the parents didn't know what was going on or where they were going. Do you remember, were you afraid of what was going on or what the feeling was?

Answer: We just were uncertain what.. you know our future was going to be like. All I can think of was, you kind of wonder where we're going and what it was going to be like. 'Cause the trains that took us, you know, they had the blinds down. We couldn't look out. We didn't know where we were going till we got to Idaho.

Question: Huh.

Answer: But I don't remember, maybe it's because we were all together. You know I had my girlfriends there, everybody was, and we weren't that apprehensive, you know. We were just because we felt well there's nothing you can do see so just went along.

Question: Now your Dad was, he was sixty years old, fifty years old so I mean he had to leave everything behind that he'd worked for and your Mother too.

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Answer: Yeah, I think that's what I tell everybody. We were young so we knew that we could build our life after the war but they really had a hard time. You know, they were the ones that suffered cause by the time they came back from the war after they were out of camp they were pretty old and you know it is hard for them to find work. My Dad found a job as a janitor in a building downtown. But it was hard work you know and he wasn't that young anymore I remember. He worked nights in one of those that you go about 7 or 8 o'clock. Come home in the morning, yeah.

Question: Well, that had to be.. and again as I've talked to people just devastating for the parents.

Answer: The parents, yeah, because they weren't young. My Mother went back to work right away too and (Inaudible) between the both of them. See I wasn't in Seattle then, they went back in '45 I think the camp closed, and I was in Chicago with my sister so I stayed there till '47 I think it was and then I came back to Seattle.

Question: Before you left you were in high school, right?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So was your high school, was it, were you in an international community, was it?

Answer: Yeah, yeah. It was... my friends were all Japanese, Chinese, colored and Jewish people. I didn't have any Caucasian and there were some, you know, rich people from Broadmoor and Laurelhurst but we didn't hang around with them so it was just, you know, they were real nice, real nice.

Question: So you didn't see a change in school after Pearl Harbor?

Answer: I remember my algebra teacher. I was taking algebra because I had to take those things to get to school, college. I didn't take those things when I was going... I took business courses. I had to go back and take the foreign language and algebra... my algebra teacher wrote me also and I was corresponding with her till she died cause she was I guess in her sixties when (Inaudible) at that time and she didn't... she got married after that and she lived to be about ninety I think it was (Inaudible).

Question: So, did she correspond with you at camp?

Answer: I remember, yeah, we wrote and she kept... we sent letters back and forth to each other after (Inaudible) after she got married and she lived in, she lived in Olympia for.

Question: Oh really.

Answer: Yeah, and after she got married. But wasn't that nice that after she retired, she got married and lived with her husband for several more years?

Question: Did you know it used to be a law that and I can't remember if Washington had it. I think Washington had it too that if you were a teacher,

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Answer: Yeah.

Question: You couldn't get married.

Answer: Yeah, most of the teachers we had your, not in your era but your era, but our era none of them were married. Isn't that funny?

Question: Yeah.

Answer: Now they just have young teachers with, you know, husbands and children of their own and everything.

Question: Some are husband and wife teaching at the same school.

Answer: Ohh.

Question: Yeah. So..

Answer: My granddaughter has a teacher now in fourth grade and she looks like she's still in her 20's or 30's. She's real cute you know. I tease John we never had teachers that looked like that.

Question: I know ours all looked old to begin with and they really weren't but.

Answer: But they were all, what you used to call them Old Maids cause they were strict... they ran around, you know what I mean.

Question: Oh yeah.

Answer: Sour faced and all, so.

Question: What was... so you took the, from Puyallup you were there for a number of months and then you took the train to Idaho. Do you remember getting... is that, you went..?

Answer: Yeah, yeah.

Question: Yeah...Do you remember arriving at the camp there and what you thought when you..?

Answer: My first thought... well it wasn't finished I remember. They were still working on it and water tower and the barracks with a sign. Because there was four of us we weren't given a real big room you know. The people with bigger families... All I remember is that I don't know what my sister, she... Oh yeah, she was helping with a kindergarten there cause they set up camp school right away and everything for the kids and I worked in community activities just to be doing something you know. But oh, and my Mother worked and my Dad worked. You know, we were getting so much a month just to.. pin money.. but I, you know what I remember most about camp that is traumatic for me was one day I had a worst stomach ache and I didn't know what was wrong I went home with me so went home and well they gave me a hot water bottle and put on my stomach and that was the worst thing I could have done cause I had appendicitis. I didn't know it, you know, and by the

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time I got to the camp hospital, it was about ready to burst and so I had to get operated on that night. I still remember that. It was shortly after we came into camp, that same winter of '42. I got a scar to show for it too, a big one. Yeah.

Question: Did... so do you remember the hospital?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Was it that, cause somebody couldn't answer cause they were too young before to tell me.

Answer: We had a hospital.

Question: In, within the compound..?

Answer: Uh huh. They had a theater, it was a canteen like thing, you know they sold, if people had money they could buy candy bars, ice cream and things and they had a hospital. It was a makeshift one you know. I remember the doctor that operated on me, I even remember his name, his name was Dr. Nair And I remember reaching up and hurting so much, I just, you know, the pain. Maybe they didn't have enough painkillers or something but I came out of it alive, which is something. Cause it was really you know... they said that was the worst thing I could have done was put a hot water bottle on. I didn't know that you know.

Question: Yeah, you were lucky.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: It's interesting the little things that you remember cause you remember his name, Dr. Nair, you know.

Answer: Yeah, I remember that... he operated on me.

Question: Now it's... cause you talked about being a family of four so you got a small room.

Answer: Well yeah.

Question: Tell me, what was your house like in Seattle compared to, cause this is some of what the history books leave out is they don't talk about what people left behind.

Answer: Well, we didn't have that much money so we just had a, we were renting a place on (Inaudible) and all we had was a living room, a kitchen and two bedrooms and I shared my bedroom with my sister see and so in camp we shared. Well everybody was in one big room, you know. But see we didn't cook or anything cause the can...mess hall was there and then no bathrooms cause you had to go outside for bathroom and washing and everything like that. I guess that was the hardest part was maybe we were lucky we were young because we didn't have to get up in the middle of the night or anything like that. It must have been hard on the older people.

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Question: Both extremes, yeah, cause the little people and the older people cause I talked to..

Answer: Kids.

Question: Yeah, cause to not only made it far away but thinking of being four or five years old in the middle of the night having to get up and go out where it's dark and go..

Answer: It was kind of far see, you usually had to go, it was centrally located but we were, our barrack was.. Oh yeah, my sister went out to Spokane first so we were given a smaller place to stay you know cause three of us. Then after I left they stayed there because it was just enough for like a double bed, you know. Maybe you probably were told this but they, you know, made tables and stuff like that, chairs and things and people kind of tried to pretty their place up so it'd be livable you know.

Question: That's, I've seen and heard of people..

Answer: Pictures?

Question: Yeah, talk about that because I've seen pictures of what both the Idaho camps and California camp looked like in the beginning and then there was one, Ms. Watanabe was in yesterday and showed where somebody had built this beautiful garden but you saw how it started out as this desert and they really worked again like you said to try and make something out of home out of the tragedy.

Answer: Yeah, and then they grew vegetables, you know, people..

Question: The what?

Answer: The vegetables... people then grew them.

Question: Did they grow them inside the?

Answer: Yeah, wherever there was land available. I don't know, I didn't stay in camp that long so afterwards they started you know they had a lot of things going on I guess the kids they went to school. They used to have contests and all of that

Question: Huh.

Answer: Dances.

Question: Oh really? So..

Answer: When the, you know when the volunteers from camp, Japanese volunteers, they came back for leave from Mississippi you know or Camp Shelby and we used to have USO, we used to call them USO dances for the, you know soldiers before they left. I remember that.

Question: So there was still romance in the camps? Even though there's this tragedy happened, "normal" life didn't stop. Boys were boys and girls were girls and..

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Answer: Yeah, that's right.

Question: They were interested in these young gentlemen in uniform coming back and..

Answer: Oh yeah, I'm sure a lot of romances started in camp and then they got married after probably, met in camp, you know, in school or whatever.

Question: Did you go to some of the dances, to the USO dances?

Answer: Yeah, we worked for the community activities so we'd make sandwiches and stuff to drink and you know just kind of, just keep, you know, it was something for the boys to do before they came to see their family before they went overseas, see, so.. I didn't know my husband or anything like that then cause I never.. He was in Colorado so it's funny.

Question: Huh. Did they have bands at the dances or was it recorded music?

Answer: Recorded music. I remember ballroom dancing like that, that era of the dance there.

Question: Do you remember any of the songs? Is there a song that..?

Answer: Oh yeah, a lot of songs... all those old songs they used to sing "White Cliffs of Dover" and oh, (Inaudible). And that's what I like to hear those olden songs cause kind of interesting.

Question: From that time..

Answer: Not like these modern noisy, not like you I don't like those things.

Question: And I'll bet you're parents said the same thing... said, Oh those kids with their jitterbug music, Oh.. Huh.. So you didn't stay too long in camp then?

Answer: No. I didn't stay, cause we went to Chicago. I left, I still remember when we went by... my girlfriend and I went by bus. It was so.. I didn't sleep one wink and I said, no more. I'm never gonna take a bus again cross country like that you know. So when I came back from Chicago to Seattle I took the train; it was way better. Even in those days trains weren't bad; they had sleeping places and eating, you know.

Question: And you could walk on them; that's what I liked, versus a bus, sitting.

Answer: Yeah, that's right.

Question: So, why Chicago or?

Answer: My sister was there.

Question: Did they just, could you just say well I just want to leave and go to Chicago or did you have to?

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Answer: Yeah, you could go anywhere that wasn't on the coast, inland, and we I guess my sister was there and she got married there and so I thought well, what I did, I did stay with my sister. There were six girls; we stayed, you know, in apartment together. Imagine six girls.

Question: Oh.

Answer: I don't know how we got along but anyway I stayed there. Then towards the end right before I came to Seattle I went back to my sister's place, apartment, and rented a room right near her, in her apartment, till I came home. I know why, because one of the, there were three sisters with us and their parents were coming to live with them so there wouldn't be enough room so I moved out.

Question: Were you going to school?

Answer: I was working as a, it's called House of Vision... you know, optical place and then I didn't have enough money to go to school so I was going night school to get, I don't know if you know Chicago, but it was right in downtown called the YMCA College. I don't think they still have it anymore and I was taking courses there and those days Chicago wasn't bad. You know, you could come home 10 o'clock, 10:30 at night alone and it was safe. Now, you know.. So I just took some courses there.

Question: Did you face some prejudice and discrimination?

Answer: Over there, in Chicago?

Question: Both on the bus there and in Chicago?

Answer: Chicago was very... I don't remember any discrimination. I worked for this company was called House of Vision and they were, it was owned by Jewish family and they were real nice and my boss, immediate boss wasn't Jewish but you know what they used to make contact lenses and that was the beginning of contact lenses and nobody even heard of it so I got a pair there while I was working there and I wore it in my wedding picture. Cause I had real bad glasses on, you know thick glasses and it's nothing like this now you know, they were great big things and you couldn't wear long, couple of hours and then you had to take them off.

Question: That just hurts me to think about them.

Answer: Yeah, that's the way it was.

Question: Huh, wow, so you... did you, could you stay in contact with your parents...did you write back?

Answer: Yeah, oh yeah.

Question: So they knew what, where you were and you were safe and..

Answer: I had to write to them all the time and in Japanese.. that's hard, but I did. And, my Mother naturally, my Mother and I looked forward to, you know, letters because they had a regular post office and everything, delivery lady. And when we came back to Seattle, when I came back to Seattle, they already had a

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little apartment rented so I stayed with them till we got enough money. In those days you could get a house for \$7,000... isn't that something?

Question: You wish you bought a bunch of them back then..

Answer: Yeah, no kidding. But then nobody had money though. Even then, you know it was hard.

Question: You couldn't even buy a car for that today..

Answer: I know.

Question: Even a bed almost with... So did your... so you wrote your parents in Japanese then?

Answer: Uh huh.

Question: Which is interesting because we've talked to some people... I talked to, I lose track of names, but her Mother sat her down one day and she said, You will not speak Japanese ever again.

Answer: Really..

Question: Because she was afraid of..

Answer: What people..

Question: the prejudice. Yeah. And that was it... just stopped and said, No writing, no speaking and she was afraid of her going back to school. She was, I think she was sixteen, seventeen so she was going back to high school, and her Mother was trying to protect her from what she thought would happen.

Answer: Oh, I see.

Question: But yet you, you conversed with your parents and..

Answer: Oh yeah..

Question: Okay.

Answer: We didn't have... they didn't have a phone or anything to, you know to call but, so I used to just write, my sister and I in Japanese.

Question: Huh.

Answer: I guess it kind of came in handy cause before the war we went to school you know to learn how. Still, I still write Japanese letters to my cousins in Japan.

Question: Oh wow.

Answer: Yeah. Not very good though, real dirty looking Japanese but at least they can read it.

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Question: When you came home did you ever to Seattle, did you ever talk with your parents about what had happened at the camps or was that something that just kind of got put behind and you went on with life?

Answer: Yeah, we, it was one phase of life I guess and they were so busy working and we just went ahead with our life, yeah. We didn't, they made friends there in camp cause you know they were all stuck together, people that they didn't know before the war. So they knew a lot of people because of camp, new friends and things like that. They kept in touch with and everything but I don't know, I guess..

Question: You never heard if your Mom or Dad were bitter about what happened or..

Answer: They never said anything to me, no. I think it's one of those things that they said well their parents started it and what made them think they could win the war. They were real bitter about Japanese people, how stupid the leaders were, you know, because they're the ones that started this so they never said anything about why they had to go to camp or, you know. I think it, being Japanese, they figured, well that's what they had to do if they had to do it..

Question: Oh, do you think it could happen again?

Answer: You mean?

Question: Something like that?

Answer: Oh I don't think so, except maybe.. It's so, everybody's you know right now the last so many years that the people been talking about it and everything, you mean like the Arabs? I don't think so.

Question: Yes, whoever, if we were to go to a full war again, if the U.S. Government would pick a certain group of people that... bald guys or blonde haired people or Germans or Italians, do you think that they would ever?

Answer: I don't think so; I hope not. I really don't.

Question: When you went to camp, you talked about your Mom bringing food cause she thought you weren't gonna eat right away. Do you remember what you brought? Did you get to choose what you wanted to bring with you?

Answer: I think I just had whatever we could carry, clothes, you know and stuff, nothing much because I think my Mother even stuck in some pots and pans you know that.. I know she did; I know she did. But, all I can remember was my sister and I, all our clothes, winter clothes, summer clothes and things like that. You couldn't carry much you know it was too heavy so, and we figured we didn't really know how long we'd be gone but wherever we were we figured maybe we could buy whatever we had to buy.

Question: So you were kind of like a teenage girl of today or even a teenage boy today, clothes and style was still important to a certain extent.

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Answer: I remember bringing... couldn't bring anything big like we sold our piano and the things that we couldn't take with us. We didn't have that much anyway. We were poor. And my dog, we gave it to our neighbor to take care of, stuff like that.

Question: That's, I've heard stories of people that came in and took advantage of the fact that people being evacuated and one family had just bought a new wash machine and that was so exciting for them. And you know the Father had paid a \$100 or \$200, whatever the price and somebody came and said you know \$5, you know so people came, some people came in and took advantage of the situation.

Answer: Oh, I'm sure they did, yeah. People that had a lot lost a lot and people that were lucky had someone, you know, taking care of their property I guess. But we didn't own our house see so we, we didn't lose our house because we never owned it. We didn't have enough money.

Question: Do you remember... cause you talked about going to school and you had Chinese friends and Jewish friends and African American friends, do you remember any of the friends saying goodbye to you or coming over and, or just was it one day you were at school and..

Answer: Well, we knew we were going to camp, so we told them goodbye, you know, and they, I remember showing the people at work, you know, it was just the, I was showing them my new outfit and called it my evacuation outfit. They were laughing about... you know, we just said goodbye and that's it I think.

Question: So nobody really, it sounds like nobody really understood what was going on..

Answer: They knew that we had to go so there was just one of those things, you know. Yeah and it just... I don't know, but maybe Bainbridge was different cause they were close knit. Cause you know Seattle was so big and spread out and some people went to different schools in different areas and we staggered evacuation too. Certain times that we were given time and date and place to meet cause Camp Harmony had areas, four areas, A, B, C and D, you know. And we couldn't see each other in different areas unless we got a pass to go there you know.

Question: Do you remember... I've heard the people from Bainbridge talking about having a tag.

Answer: Tag, yeah.

Question: Do you remember having it?

Answer: Oh yeah, everybody had a tag, dog tag.

Question: They said it had the family number on it and then it might have some other information and..

Answer: Uh huh.

Question: Wow.. Have your children; are your children aware that you were in the camps? Have they ever asked or..?

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Answer: Oh, they know. I mean, you know, I'm sure they.. I mean I don't know if they learned it at school but we know we talked some about it and more and more it's coming out now, but then when all this came out I don't know I guess to them they think it's long ago thing and never happen again you know. I hope not. My granddaughter is aware of things because she asks us and especially my husband questions, you know.

Question: Oh, she does.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Oh that's good.

Answer: And she wrote an essay called "He Met the Challenge" and he wrote about evacuation and how he went to camp and how, I mean, how we, they went to Colorado and how they were, along the way, people didn't want to sell them food or drink because they were Japanese, you know from California to Colorado, and how he got education after the war and he inspired me. And so I thought it was so cute you know. You see she's ten now so she understands a lot of things I think, Memorial Day and things like that.

Question: Boy that's good she's asking because some of this has been left out of the history books.

Answer: Oh yeah.

Question: You know, it's not, it's starting to be taught now but a lot of it wasn't taught. You know I think that the American government felt embarrassed by it. A lot of Japanese people that were evacuated didn't want to talk about it for whatever reasons and then it, it was getting lost from history. And it's a, you know, a sad part of history but I think that it's important that we understand it for two reasons. I think that one, so it's not forgotten so people understand what families went through but also in hopes that it won't be repeated.

Answer: Yeah, I know.

Question: Cause it... unfortunately you know it's interesting because we started this project about four years ago so I always ask could it happen again? Well before 911 I got a set of answers and after what happened back East different because there was some people saying, Oh we need to round up anybody that looks, you know, and it was.

Answer: (Inaudible)

Question: Can't do it, you know. Anybody that even looked like they were from that area you know. Well, no I'm sorry but that gentleman was from India, you know. It's like they just randomly went out and harassed businesses and so. Well, thank you very much.