Jerry Nakata

Tape 1 of 1

Question: The first thing that I'd like to do is just to get your first and last name on tape so I have it, so if you could give me that right now, it would be great.

Answer: Jerry Nakata.

Question: Great. That also lets me set my audio levels. Now your family has been, goes how far back on Bainbridge Island? Quite a ways back, right?

Answer: Well, see my mother had 9 children, and I'm number 8. There's 3 of us living now. So I would say approximately about 1900, maybe a little before. My Dad came over first. And then he was called to duty in Japan, in the 1904 Russian-Japanese War, and then that, I think he married my mother in 1906, and then they came over here after they got married, and my oldest brother was born here on the island.

Question: So your Mom and Dad are Issei, and you're Nisei.

Answer: Yes.

Question: And there were 9 kids.

Answer: Yeah. I had 8 brothers and sisters.

Question: Wow. What did your Dad do? How did he end up….

Answer: Well, see the economy was so bad in that area in Japan where he's from, it was Oshima, an island about 100 miles south of Hiroshima. And the economy was so bad that my Dad took a chance to come over here.
Now he must have been, see, he was, I'm trying to guess his age when he was here. I think he was early 20s, then he worked at the Port Blakely Mill for 20 years until that shut down. And my mother and father started a barbershop and laundry in Winslow, and till this day I don't know how they did it, 'cause their English was very limited, and I don't know where they got the finances to start. 'Course I was born in 1923, so

Question: Do you know where that barbershop was?

Answer: Yeah, you know when you get off the ferry, and it's at the first intersection, signal light there. It would be on the west side of that light. There's a little yellow building sitting there now, and that location where my brothers and sisters were born. That's where he had the business.

Question: Was it, I know a lot times people had businesses that downstairs was a business and upstairs was living quarters, or did they live…

Answer: Well, yeah, we had our bedrooms upstairs, and 'course outdoor plumbing, and I can remember just working hard. Working hard and well, they never thought of vacations in them days, and only time my mother would drop everything is when they, someone mentioned mushroom hunting. That was late fall, and that was, they had mushrooms here on the island at that time, wild mushrooms. That was like the ones they got in Japan. They call them Ponderosas, matsudake is the Japanese word for it. She would drop everything just to go mushroom hunting. 'Cause it was some meaning behind the mushrooms from the Japanese culture.

Question: What was your Dad like? Was he quiet or loud, stern?

Answer: More quiet, and I don't think he completed grade school. He never told me, but my older sisters would talk about it, you know. He was kind of mild. My mother, she was kind of quiet side.

Question: Did they ever go back to Japan, I mean, was your…

Answer: Oh, yes. Well, like I say, he was called in 1904, the Russian War, and I don't know if he got, I don't know if Japan got involved again or not. I think it was the 1904 Russian-Japanese War. Did Japan go to war with China in 19…

Question: I think it was in the 30s I thought, or later, 'cause the China-Russian War was pre-World War I, right before World War I.

Answer: I think he might have gone twice, but my mother went back 19, early 30s, and my youngest brother went. And he was 5 at the time. It was no airlines then. It was all steamships, and I think she was gone about 3 months, and she came back with my cousin. It would be on her side. He was born here, but he was educated in Japan, so, well, he's still living today. He lives in Salt Lake. His name is Joey Akimoto and I would say his age is mid-80s now.

Question: That was fairly common, wasn't it, that someone may be born here but go back to school.

Answer: Yeah. Depends on the family, like we didn't. My parents, I don't think they ever thought of us getting an education over there. 'Course I did go to Japanese school here, after the public schools.

Question: Oh, really. On the island?

Answer: Yeah. On the island.

Question: so who ran the Japanese school then?

Answer: Her name was Mrs. Otaki, and the reason I went is to get out of farm work. And then when sports like basketball, Oh, let's play basketball, and you practice after school's over, so forget Japanese school. But I didn't, I really didn't care to learn Japanese at that time. You know, this was early 30s, late 20s, and 'course the war changed all that. I wish I could speak more fluent Japanese now, but English is my primary language.

Question: Did your Mom and Dad speak Japanese?

Answer: Oh, yeah, they spoke Japanese to us, but us siblings would answer half and half. They would understand. I grew up, you know, in the barbershop, and 99% was Caucasian trade, so I grew up with white kids, more so than Japanese kids on the island. I don't know how many families. I think there was about 300 Japanese there on the island, and evacuation says there were 227 that left Bainbridge, 'course some of them, like my brother was in the service. He wasn't evacuated, and then there's some that voluntarily left inland. They had a choice of doing that if things were, you know, available to them. Like Junko Harui.

Question: That's right. He went to Moses Lake.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So when you went to school, was it a pretty even mix of Caucasian and Japanese?

Answer: My class, 1941, was the last class that had Japanese kids graduate. There was 8 of us. 'Course in '42, '43, '44, '45, that's when we were gone, and 'course I think they did receive the diploma while they were in camp from Bainbridge.

Question: Did they prior to, and again, you were just a kid growing up like any other kid, but prior to Pearl Harbor, was there awareness that you were Japanese-American? Or people talk about color blindness. I don't know.

Answer: Growing up, like I said, I had more Caucasian kids as friends. I probably thought I was white, yellow on the inside. But when Pearl Harbor happened, that was an odd feeling. I was at the golf course and my cousin came by and he says, Hey, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. First thing I said, well, there was my brother and 2 other kids, all Nisei, playing, and it was early afternoon, and I said, Where's Pearl Harbor. I never heard of it. He says, Hawaii, but I did hear of Dutch Harbor in Alaska. There was talk at that time they were coming over to Alaska. But then I came home, and everybody was listening to the radio, and I was through high school, see, 'cause Pearl Harbor was December 7, and I graduated in June, 7 months earlier, in '41, so I worked in my brother's meat market and grocery store with my other brother. And I gotta tell you this story. In, I think it was March or February when the FBI came and raided all the Japanese homes, and I was working for my brother at the time. It was mid-week, I think. I can't exactly remember the date, but my oldest brother says, Go back and get the lunch, 'cause my sister-in-law, my brother's wife had the lunch ready and it was about a mile away. So I went, and it was close to 12, and I was ready to leave with the lunch, and the FBI come up the driveway and they wouldn't let me go until they search the whole house. That was about 4 hours later. They were very polite, the FBI, and they found, of course, a lot of things Japanese, of course, like my father had his uniform that he fought in 1904, and he was very nervous, 'cause at that time, when they rounded up Japanese, families that had dynamite to clear land, they took them away to concentration camp in Montana. I think that's what happened to Frank's Dad, and Nob and Art's Dad, and I forget who else, but my Dad was really nervous. But we didn't clear the land, 'cause our land was already cleared, and 'course he had this Japanese Army uniform, and being in the Japanese Army in 1900, he thought right away he'd be taken away, but they didn't take him to Montana. And then when they were going through the house, they found my brother's shotgun, and shotgun shells, and I says, it's not mine it's my other brother's that worked the grocery store, so I escorted them, after going through all the rooms, I escorted them down to the market one mile away, and one of the FBI agents asked my brother, What's this shotgun, and the shotgun shells for. Well, he loved to hunt pheasants. I don't know if he had a rifle, but he had a .22 for hunting purposes, so he tells the FBI, he says, Why should I turn against this country when I'm drafted in the U.S. Army. I remember being there. I heard that remark.

Question: So did they go away and leave him along then, or

Answer: Oh, yeah. They just wanted to question my brothers and all the Japanese artifacts my Dad had and stuff, you know.

Question: You said they were polite.

Answer: Yeah, I mean professional to me. They weren't rude.

Question: They didn't come and try to intimidate or

Answer: No, I didn't get that feeling. I didn't get that feeling. No, to me that's the first impression I got. They weren't pushy, or

Question: Doing their job.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So do you remember your Dad's, I mean, once you'd heard about Pearl Harbor and figured out where it was, 'cause nowadays everybody knows, but then, like you said, nobody, do you remember what the family feeling was?

Answer: Oh, very nervous, very nervous, 'cause hey, we have the face of the enemy. My own very personal opinion of that evacuation because of my face. We resemble the enemy. That's the only reason, even when we're citizens. It was an odd feeling leaving, you know, you leave your friends and stuff, and you lose your freedom, but I can remember boarding the ferryboat. It was right across the bay from where the ferry dock is now in Eagle Harbor, I'd say about 11 o'clock, 11:30, and I can distinctly getting on the ferry, and I can remember a couple underclassman kids, Caucasian kids, rowed across the harbor to see us off, and those kids darned near got expelled from school for doing that, taking that action, but one of the kids says, I don't give a damn, and there was couple other kids that saw us off at Coleman Dock. You know where Coleman Dock is? Railroad train that picked us up there, and I can still remember a couple of the kids I went to school with, underclassman, we were takin' off, they were following the train down. And that fellow got drafted in the Army and fought the Japanese in South Pacific, but his feeling was, he was still our friend. He says, I mean, these guys are my friends. I did fight the Japanese, but that was a different deal.

Question: It's interesting, 'Cause you're the first one that I've talked to that really remembers going down to the boat. And pictures are silent. I mean, I've seen pictures, and there are people, but it doesn't tell me what the mood was. Were people quiet?

Answer: Very solemn to me, and the classmates, the Caucasian classmates.. a lot of.. I didn't know who was there 'cause there was a barricade. We couldn't even shake hands to say good-bye, and I have one classmate…our class of '41, probably the closest class that graduated high school, we still have reunions, every year. That's how close we were. There was about 50 kids, about 37 of us left, and we had a big reunion in '61, 60 years, and that's where Osada, gave prospective on 9066, that's what his contribution was to our class. Very intelligent man, and I think what he wrote should be in the classrooms, just like Gina Clinton's is (inaudible) her life.

Question: She was Caucasian, right?

Answer: Right. But here on Bainbridge was very unique. We're very close-knit community, and I would say when I was a kid, probably 2,000 people overall. And a little better than 10% were Japanese.

Question: I wonder why, 'cause you touched on it exactly from what I've been learning, Bainbridge was unique.

Answer: Right.

Question: I mean, you had, and I always get his name mixed up, but

Answer: Woodward?

Question: Right.

Answer: Oh, yeah. That, you know, some of them ask, How did you, how were you treated when the ban lifted for us to come back? When the ban lifted I was in Chicago. I hopped a plane and came right home. That's what Bainbridge meant to me. 'Cause this is my roots. This is where I grew up, and a lot of things I didn't know Woodward did on our behalf, and some of my Caucasian friends, you know, that support me. I had to be very grateful for that, looking back now, after 60 years.
Woodward, how many people would do that, what he did? He didn't know very many Japanese. You know, it was anti-feeling group that was really against Woodward. Loss of subscriptions, advertising, and some of the start to burn the house down, and all this stuff I hear after I got back, so I tell you. I'm very grateful, and then the family's been in business here. And the people that, Japanese people that have a business or profession like Kimoto and Junko, you know, doing well. Doing well.

Question: Did you family face, you talked about how they tried to burn the newspaperman's house down, did your family face things like that on the island after Pearl?

Answer: I didn't. Mainly because of Woodward. And I hear other communities like Kent, Hood River, they were very anti, very anti, 'course there was a big population of Japanese in Puyallup and Kent, so there was quite a bit of anti feelings. I didn't experience that on Bainbridge, 'cause I can remember my closest friend I went to school with, Ray Moran, he met me at the ferry dock, on the other side. I remember that distinctly. Those things, you know, I remember the good things that the Caucasians did for me and my family. I have to be very grateful for that.

Question: When you left, your father was roughly how old?

Answer: When the evacuation, or…

Question: Yeah.

Answer: He died in 1954, when he was 80, so he was, what 60? Around there.

Question: What happened to the barbershop when you left?

Answer: Well, it was no longer a barbershop. My brother built that building that sits there now. Meat market and grocery store, in 1939, or 1940. And then when the war came, we had to all leave, and he had his business run with couple friends. But I didn't know the business transaction 'cause I was only teenager. Right before the ban lifted, he sold it, sold the property and all, thinking that we wouldn't come back. But he did get his business back. I mean, I joined him 1947 Seattle, small grocery store, and then 1952 he says, I got a chance to get my business back. Not the property, so he jumped on it. And then in '57, they'd incorporated together with my other brother and a family friend named Ed Loverich. They were real close to our family. In fact, during the war, they took care of our personal stuff. The Loverichs', and in '57, my 2 brothers and Loverich merged and formed the Town and Country operation, which still exists. So Bainbridge has been very special.

Question: Do you remember hearing about the evacuation order; hearing that.. how you hear that your family's going to have to shut everything down and they're going to send you some…

Answer: Well, it was, I think only one week to get everything in order. But see, I was a teenager. I didn't have no responsibilities. I think I had a bicycle, and then I made a kayak when I was in high school. And when I came home, I looked for it, but, so it was… All the business matters, family matters, my oldest brother took care, you know. He raised us.

Question: Do you remember what you took?

Answer: What I took? Just my clothes. That's it. I didn't have anything else. I can't remember taking my yearbook, high school yearbook or anything like that. I think I had a letterman's sweater I wore, but all that is gone now, 'cause I just couldn't get rid of it fast enough. I wish I'd kept them now.

Question: So when you left Bainbridge, you went to Seattle, and then took the train to…

Answer: I didn't know where we were going to go. I remember pulling the blinds down on the train during the night, and I can distinctly remember the soldiers from New Jersey. And what was kind of unique to me was their Jersey accent. I never heard it before, and they were in tears when we left. And I think they were surprised we spoke good English. That was my feeling, not at the time, but later on, 'cause we conversed with them real well. They treated us real well on the trip down to Manzanar. I remember singing songs with them on the train and things like that.

Question: Do you remember what song?

Answer: What was popular in them days. I can't remember. Some song you sing when you're a boy scout along the fire. Campfire, I forget what it was.

Question: So they, it sounds like there was a human connection.

Answer: Oh, sure. That's what I say how special Bainbridge was. How unique it was. I never had the anti-feeling, you know, being of different culture, but I hear a lot of good things after I got back, what the people did for us. They didn't know, of course, it was at war, and it was hysteria, and I imagine, well, there was anti-feelings. I heard later on that probably someone said, Well, let's get rid of them,

'cause there was hysteria. See, like my brother, he lost his business. But he kept the property and the house, and losing the business. He wasn't bitter.

Question: Really?

Answer: He wasn't bitter, 'cause that his livelihood and he took care of us siblings, and father and mother. So my brother, you know, like I say, those things I never heard till I got back.

Question: Do you remember arriving at the camp?

Answer: Yeah. I remember getting off the bus, and I can distinctly remember the second day, how windy and dusty it was, 'cause there was this regular floor, and they had these shiplap 2 x 4s and there was cracks in them, and when they had the dust storm, the whole room in the barrack would just fill up. I can distinctly remember that.

Question: 'Cause it was just a desert basically.

Answer: Yeah. But the evenings were cool. My Dad liked the weather there, 'cause he had a shrapnel wound that he had in 1904, and he would always have pain there, but the warm weather, it didn't bother him. And we were one of the families that didn't move from Manzanar to Minedoka.

Question: Oh, you didn't?

Answer: No. I can't, 'cause I wasn't there, I was gone. I left camp after a year and a half, but I think the reason that my Dad and my mother stayed because the weather. We didn't have that kind of weather up here. That was my understanding, that they liked the weather and felt pretty good about it.

Question: So you left camp when?

Answer: '43. See I was there, we evacuated in March of '42, we got down there April 1st, and I stayed through that summer into winter, and then the government wanted... There was a shortage of labor in farm labor camp because of the war, so we got clearance to go to Idaho, a group of us to harvest their sugar beets, potatoes, and onions. I think we were gone at least a month. And the, I experienced some interesting things in Idaho, 'cause I don't think there was hardly any Japanese in Idaho. I can remember one family we worked for. They were natives of Burley, Idaho, and we worked for them for a while, and there was some pretty interesting experiences in Idaho.

Question: When you say interesting…..

Answer: Interesting? Well, a lot of these young kids, they never saw a Japanese before. I can remember going to the theater, the (inaudible) Idaho. We would go after work, or evening. I would go with 3 or 4 Japanese kids from California, the camp we come out of. And as we got into the theater and sat down, the lights were still on dimly, and when they shut down and the movie was ready to start, I heard one... somebody back in the back row says, God, they got sideburns. Them days, the Japanese were known for their rice-bowl haircuts? You heard that expression. I never forget that. Kids, Geez, they got sideburns. And the group I

was with, as a group they're strong. We called them Zoot Suiters. You heard of that expression? And they had thick black hair and greased down, and I was with about 3 of those, 'cause we were in the same camp, and when we left the theater, there was a group of white kids in a convertible. I don't know if they were throwing things, but they made some slur remarks, and these other kids, they were ready to take them on, you know.

Question: the 3 of you against….

Answer: In Idaho, this was after I got back to camp in '43, winter. '42, 'scuse me, stayed through that winter after I got back from Idaho, and then I went back to Idaho where my sister and brother-in-law were in Caldwell. And we worked for a family named Dean, a Christian family. And they were real close, even way after the war they, after we got back, came back home, they would come visit us. And they never experienced any dealings with Japanese, but I worked with a crew of Japanese guys, my brother-in-law was a crew boss and another guy, like I say, they were 15 years older than us teenagers, and there was 6 or 7 of us Japanese worked for the Dean family, but they treated us royally.

Question: So when you left the camp in California to go to a job, did you have to check in and check out, or

Answer: Well, you had to have a special pass.

Question: Here's a job assignment, and

Answer: Yeah, where you're gonna go. Let us know if, what's your destination. Yeah. We had to do that. And I worked in Idaho for a year, then I went to Chicago. Worked in the Mushroom Plant, and then that's when the war ended, '45?

Question: It always seems interesting, I mean that whole kind of confusion of all this. 'Cause it's like, ok, first of all, well, we need to evacuate. We're going to put them in these camps, and we're going to put guns pointing in at them to protect them, ha-ha. But oh, well, we need workers, so we'll give you a pass and you had to check out, but, so there was this, like you said, the hysteria, but it was, lack of reasoning to a lot of it.

Answer: Yeah. The only reason was our appearance, resemblance to the enemy. I guess the term you use today is racial profiling. I never heard that expression before. I didn't know what racism meant. I never experienced racism on the island, like I say, I grew up with a lot of white kids, and …In fact, very few of us left on the island, we still get together. That's what's very unique about Bainbridge.

Question: Did you, you said in your graduating class there were how many Japanese?

Answer: There were 8 of those Niseis'.

Question: did all of you end up together at the, start out in the camp in California, or people went different ways?

Answer: Yeah. Yeah, we did.

Question: And then from there some came up to Idaho to the camp.

Answer: Yeah. And some of them, actually , we got clearance that we weren't a threat to the country, some of them went to college, went to farm work.

Question: So could they start college before the war was over or did they have to wait till the war was over?

Answer: No, that depends on, like my class, my cousin who wrote the Executive Order, he was going to University of Washington before Pearl Harbor, and he would commute. Another interesting story about him was when the war broke out and there was curfew on us. We had to be in by 8 o'clock, at home, and not to hit the streets, between 8 and 6, I think, we were under curfew, and but he was attending the University of Washington his freshman year, and the curfew went up and the war started and he wanted to come home. He was commuting. He couldn't get on the ferry, because he didn't have his citizenship papers. And he would… f you want to interview someone, he would be a very interesting guy to interview. He lives in Michigan.

Question: Oh, really?

Answer: Very educated man.

Question: So to get on the ferry, they were checking…

Answer: Well, being Japanese. Being the enemy in the eyes of society. In fact, one of the kids that stopped him went to school with him. I forgot, he had to stay in Seattle to get his papers straightened out. That's the story he told me. That wasn't too long ago, the story he told me. There's an awful lot of interesting stories. Like one person, there's 120,000 different stories if you want to hear about the evacuation.

Question: Did, was it harder on your parents, do you think, than it was on the kids?

Answer: I really don't know. I think so. I think, yeah, I would say so, but I think they felt like I did, being Japanese and we're a visible minority. You know, you spot us right away. I think truly Bainbridge was their home, 'cause the story I year, when the Japanese came over here in the late 1800s, early 1900s, their intentions was make money, go back, which didn't happen, even Hawaii, because they did well here and had probably more freedom.

Question: So made money and stayed.

Answer: Yeah, and raise 9 children and first thing they did was put us through school.

Question: Wow, so when the war ended, did your parents come back to the Island, too?

Answer: Oh, yeah. Everybody did, yeah. Let's see, that was in '45, then my mother died in '49. She died young. I think she was only about 62. There was quite a difference in my Dad and mother's age.

Question: Oh, is that right?

Answer: Yeah. I forgot what it was, 13 years, but yeah. They were very grateful to live on Bainbridge, I'm sure.

Question: Now you still had relatives, were your grandparents alive in Japan at this time?

Answer: I didn't know them.

Question: You didn't know them.

Answer: No. I'm sure they were. When I went to visit them, visit my Dad's town in 1980, my nephew and his wife and my wife and I, it was small island, and I remember seeing photographs of my great-grandfather, and them visit my mother's residence, and then my cousin, he's still, I have one cousin there now. He's a little younger than I am. He's been retired quite a few years, and he met us and. 'Course the language barrier was a little, 'course my wife, she's second generation Japanese. She was born here, and she can converse pretty well.

Question: So she was your translator. If I remember right, you said your father's town was close to Hiroshima?

Answer: Yeah, about an hour's drive south of Hiroshima. At that time, from the mainland to their island was by boat, and now they have a bridge there. It's probably been there 15 years, 20 years maybe.

Question: Did you ever have a conversation with your Dad about the bombing, 'cause that was close to his relatives?

Answer: No, never did, but I forgot, it was the first trip or second trip my wife went over. We went to visit her cousin in Hiroshima, and the first thing they did was take us to where they bombed Hiroshima, the main part. The buildings are still there, and then we went through this exhibit building, which is pretty gruesome. It was unbearable to see that. And that's the first thing that she did, take us there to look at it. And I didn't know this until I got back, but my wife, she told her sister about it in Portland. She was born here on the island. She's 4 or 5 years older than my wife. Right away, she says they were trying to blame us, 'cause we were Americans but still Japanese. I didn't get that feeling, but I can remember my second trip when my son got married in '89, his wife is from Japan and the wedding was over there, and after the wedding I took my second son and then my wife and I went down to Hiroshima, and I remember my kid, name is Rick, he met a Caucasian kid who was going to college there in Hiroshima, and I think he was from the Midwest, so he struck up a conversation with him. And he says, he stayed in a small apartment or house in Hiroshima. He says he got up one morning and there was a bunch of rubbish in front of his door. Blaming him for the bombing. He had nothing to do with the war. He was only a teenager going to college there. That was pretty interesting, but I didn't get that feeling that they blamed me because I'm American. I guess there was some of that feeling, but when I went to Hawaii on that same trip, at that time a lot of Japanese owned businesses, you know. They bombed Pearl Harbor, but they tried to buy it after Second World War. Went into this Japanese kind of gift shop, like, and there was a Japanese gal there from Japan. She spoke a

little English and she spotted us from, struck up a conversation. She knew what happened to the Niseis here, went to camp. She apologized for that. For Japanese actions that happened to us. That was interesting. She said I'm sorry what happened to you and what Japan did to Hawaii. So those things in life I remember. There's some negative stuff, but I just look at more the positive side, like all the friends I was grateful here on the island. Especially the man, Woodward, my real hero. The kids I grew up with that. You know, I talked about our class, how close we were. Osada, the fellow who wrote this Executive Order, we had our class reunion at a family over here on the island. It was about 30 of us and about 15 classmates, and he got up and talked about the evacuation. At that time, I didn't know how my classmates felt about the evacuation, but he opened it all up, so we got closer to our Caucasian classmates. How they felt and…I didn't ask him, Hey you supported me or were you glad? I didn't know, but most of them I think they're real sorry that it happened. I really do. But some of them, Hey, this was war! That's why I always gotta repeat Woodward, what he did.

Question: That's where, when you say This is war, it comes into play a lot of times when you discuss whether the bomb should have been dropped or shouldn't have been dropped and everybody's different views on it. Some people answer it, This was war, and some people answer it, They saved more lives, and some people answer it, It took a lot of lives, civilian's lives.

Answer: War is hell on everybody, but it was an odd feeling when I left, being Japanese and taken away to camp. Well, it was really second-class citizens. It was an odd feeling, but I repeat myself, these friends that stuck up their neck for me. Those things I'm very grateful for.

Question: Which I think that, I mean, I like your attitude, people can choose to look at the negative or look at the positive, and you're a person who looks at the positive side of life, and

Answer: I did.

Question: Things happen and

Answer: There's some humor, too. Especially when the Issei, the first generation that didn't know English, they came to the island, they'd go to, they were farmers. You remember, I don't know if you know how they planted strawberries.

Question: huh, uh

Answer: Well, they all cleared land by horse. They'd cultivate it and smooth the area out where you want to build strawberries, and somebody'd go down with a huge rake and mark the lines, and you punch holes in them to plant the strawberries by hand. So this one Japanese guy goes to the hardware store. They're called PBs, right? So he says, I want a PP. They guy takes him to the bathroom. And that's a true story. So there's a lot of humor stuff. English, see, they couldn't communicate well, but they understood, but to explain themselves. Like me, they'll talk to me in Japanese, but to explain myself in Japanese is difficult. I can do the rough way.

Question: It's interesting, because history may have romanticized it, and I'm not sure, because I wasn't there at that time, where now with all the political correctness, I feel we've gone to such a extreme that it doesn't allow sometimes

people to be people. I mean, like you said, that's a funny story, where nowadays, somebody might say, Oh, you're making fun of that person because…. well, no, it's just a

Answer: No, to me that's humorous.

Question: Yeah.

Answer: To me, yeah. So, I tell you, war changed everybody. Changed everybody's lives. I think I got closer to my family, friends.

Question: Is it, when 9/11 happened, a lot of people said, It's going to be the Pearl Harbor of this generation. Did you feel similar things?

Answer: Well, I felt for the people, the Muslims or Arabian people in this country. Right away I thought of them. A lot of them are citizens like me. But, I think the President put it pretty wisely that use a lot of common sense, and some of these politicians mention our experience since Pearl Harbor, so, I can relate to what they're going through, but I don't know if they'd be set up camps or not. Frank could tell you this story. During the Arabian crisis, when was it, 19, Middle East Crisis?

Question: Early 90s, late 80s.

Answer: I think the government was going to set aside a camp for so many thousand people in them days, and when Frank has his presentations, maybe you know this, but he's been doing it for about 10 years. Very interesting about our, slide presentation about his family, Bainbridge in general, during the war, after the war and all this stuff, and I remember one kid asking, I think this was about a 5th grade class. A kid asked Frank. Frank was only 2 years old at the time of the war. A kid asked him, How did you feel when you bombed Pearl Harbor? I mean, and one kid asked me, Which side was I on? It was pretty interesting.

Question: What did you answer?

Answer: I said, I was born here. See, they're looking at my face, being Japanese, right?

Question: Yeah.

Answer: So, it caught me off guard. I says, My father and mother was born in Japan, they raised us, came over here, they loved it, and I was born here. So I'm a citizen, I told him. And those kids are very candid. Very candid, asked Frank which side were you on. How did you feel when you bombed Pearl Harbor?

Question: That's why it gets, again, like you said, it's a visible difference is what makes you stand out.

Answer: Right.

Question: Nobody asked me about, my full name Karl Gustav Schmidt, nobody says, How did you feel about putting all those people through those concentration camps? They don't ask me that every day? They don't even look at my name and

say that. Where, here you are, you were an American citizen. You are an American citizen.

Answer: Well, a lot of them don't know that.

Question: Well, I know that, but the assumptions that get made, you know.

Answer: Yeah. It's interesting, but you know, all this evacuation bit on our part what we experienced. It didn't really come to light until our kids got old enough to understand what went on. My kids didn't know I was evacuated. We never talked about it. And my daughter, she's 40-something, other 2 kids are, one is 52 and I never talked about it with my family, my wife and I, about our experience, but they saw this documentary an TV, Farewell to Manzanar. It was probably in the 80s, and my daughter saw that. She says, You mean to tell me this happened on Bainbridge? See, all these 3rd, 4th generation bring this to light. And like this regress, redress? This was brought in by the 3rd generation Japanese. Brought to light and extended to Congress and passed along, and I think it was Nixon signed the bill. Nixon? No. Who was the President then that signed the bill?

Question: I'm trying to remember who did sign it, if it was George Bush.

Answer: well, he's the one who signed the letter of apology, but the President that signed the bill was Reagan. That's right.

Question: So Reagan signed the bill and Bush signed the actual apology. Yeah.

Answer: I mean, America, where else can this happen? Evacuate you and you get a letter of apology? You think other countries do that? Now like here these vets that survived the Bataan march in Pearl Harbor and all that, now they want an apology from the Japanese government. But I think, I seen the TV the other night. Price you pay for war, or Price of Freedom, or something like that. It was about the European Theater of operation and the Far East. Both sides, enemy sides and American sides, their opinion. There's one kamikaze pilot in Japan, he's still living, and he sends, he's one of the guys that bombed Pearl Harbor, and he's very apologetic now, and I think he sends flowers every month for his actions. Just like this gal from Hawaii that apologized to me, my wife, for what happened to me. For Japan's actions. Why did Japan, why did they try to conquer America? Because the resources? They had to depend on the imports, so they bombed the biggest country in the world!

Question: So what's your view then? Do you think that Japan owes an apology to the soldiers like the Bataan death march and some of the prisoner camps?

Answer: Well, it would be nice, but then, yeah. It would be, and I think the, like I say, the program the other day, this Japanese soldier, he's very apologetic.

Question: Because he met the bugler, this is the gentleman that met the bugler, right? I mean, here you had 2 perspective of 2 human beings who both were doing what they believed was right and now 60-some years later, the come together to say…

Answer: That was pretty heartwarming. I really was. 'Course then you hear, like I say, there's thousands of stories. There's interesting stories about the

Holocaust. In fact, John Fujinara that you interviewed? I don't know if he told you this story. He volunteered for the Navy. Did he tell you that story?

Question: And the letter that he got?

Answer: Letter he got. Red letters, says We don't accept Japs….. he wished he'd kept that letter. But then he did volunteer for the 442. He got in but then he changed and went to the Air Force, and then he witnessed the liberation of the Jews at Dachau where this certain group of Japanese that liberated the Jewish people there and he can remember how stench the odor was, these prisoners that are just skin and bones. He told me that story. Maybe he told you the same.

Question: You know, it was interesting, because he left me, in fact I was just reading it. He left me what he had written, and when we talked, he didn't, we didn't talk a lot about his service time. I don't think he wanted to.

Answer: Yeah. Yeah. I think a lot of them feel that way. But there, you know, I still, there was this curator named Eric Sol, I don't know if he's living now, but he knows something about the 442 100th Battalion, and I got this piece at home, the long letter where he spoke in front of thousand of people. He posed the question, he starts off, if you were a citizen and lost your rights, lost your home, lost your personal, and you got incarcerated, would you volunteer for the U.S. Army? And I think what he said, out of 6,000 people he talked to, he says, probably about 6 raised their hands. And then he goes on and tells about the heroics of the 100th and the 442.

Question: Did you go to the dedication of the….

Answer: Yeah, that was a month ago.

Question: What did that mean to you?

Answer: That was pretty powerful, specially Senator Inouye Being there. 'Course he's the 100th Battalion, and he lost part his right arm, and yeah. That was powerful. In fact, all those people who got up and spoke their piece, especially this Jewish guy. His name is Alde..? Something. The family used to own Longacres racing. And he was a powerful speaker. He spoke about being Jewish at the University of Washington and trying to get accepted in this house, and he says, No we don't allow Jews here, and things like that. No, I wouldn't want to live any place else except Bainbridge. We never would think of living here now, if it wasn't for my folks settling here. We're all born and raised here and the family has a business. And I remember my nephew, he had 6 grocery stores, which the family still has. He was the president, and I remember him telling me that grandpa, my Dad would say, if you want to make money in America, go into business for yourself. But,

Question: Which is really interesting because, one: it shows the pride of your father, but who would also say that, after having done that, having had his citizenship taken away, but still…

Answer: Well, see, my Dad and my mother never got their citizenship.

Question: Oh, that's right.

Answer: I don't know if they ever thought about it. "Course the Japanese nationals that lived in this country couldn't get their citizenship until '53. I remember this distinctly, because I was in Reno and got in a cab and I was with this Caucasian guy. I remember this cab driver says, You know, he looked at me, he says in Reno, till 1953, you guys weren't allowed on the street. You and the blacks in Reno, but you could get into the casinos. I remember him distinctly saying that. I didn't know that.

Question: Well, they seem to take your money, but stay off our streets.

Answer: I didn't know that. I don't know if it's true or not. I can go on and on and on. But what you guys are doing now, there isn't too many of us Nisei left. If my older brother and sisters are still around and if they wanted to be in it, you'd get a lot more information than I would. This is my own experience and my opinions and my feelings at the time.

Question: But you know what, that's what's most important to us, because that's what we're looking at is everybody's personal feelings, because the history books don't tell us that. First of all, the history books have left out some chapters of history, but also that history books do not tell us the personal view, because again, it's either romanticized or dramatized history, in the fact that people think that everyday things didn't happen. We interviewed a gentleman, I think it was Shig Honda that we interviewed from Olympia, and she said, You gotta understand

End of Tape