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Topaz Oral Histories

**Tad Fujita**

TAD FUJITA INTERVIEWED BY SANDRA TAYLOR ON OCTOBER 28, 1987 IN BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA.

ST: Tad, can you tell me a little bit about your family's background.

TF: Okay. Of course, this goes way back almost turn of the century. To make a long, long, ~~long~~ story short, my parents, my father was born in Tokyo in 1881, and my mother was born in Sytown(?) which is a suburb of Tokyo. I don't know too much about the detailed background, but they met at a church in Tokyo.

ST: So they were Christian?

TF: So they were already Christians. No, they were baptized Christians. And my father was twenty-five, my mother was twenty years old, and my father came from a, my grandfather was a <sup>Samurai</sup> ---?--- retainer. It was called a Bafuku(~~?)~~, which is the group that lost to the imperial army, and so they were scattered, and my grandfather went to an outlying area of Tokyo, and then they returned back to Tokyo, and he being the only son felt very responsible that he <sup>wanted to help</sup> ~~probably~~ help his three sisters who were older. And according to tradition the only sole male in the family should support the family, so probably with this in mind ~~to~~ another one of his sponsors in America encouraged him to come to America. My father being probably <sup>a responsible</sup> type thought he would make some quick money by coming abroad where the story was that it was richest

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country. And so without any money, without knowledge of the country where he is going, without any language ability he boarded a ship and came to San Francisco and landed here in 1906. And that was the year of the great fire and earthquake of San Francisco. And being very naive and not knowing what America or what kind of San Francisco was he kept coming anyway. When he landed in San Francisco in 1906 in and all the city was level<sup>ed</sup> it was too late to return, and he thought that he could do something about it. Stayed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. <sup>Toyasaki</sup> ~~Tolasaki~~, and that family was a very strong Christian evangelistic family, and it was through a cousin on Tokyo that they were introduced, and they came to America early before the turn of the century. And they opened up a place like a hostel, and there was about three or four or five families because after the earthquake there was no place to live, and my folks went there. Apparently it was like a nursery <sup>h</sup> were they had these little sheds, and so my father and mother was given one of these little sheds, and then I was born <sup>There</sup>, three years later. How they were able to withhold I don't know, but they landed in 1906 and 1906 I was born in this shed. And life goes on. It's a long story. Life goes on and <sup>Since</sup> they were Christians,

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<sup>they</sup>  
~~They~~ looked for a Christian church right away, and there was a congregation of the Presbyterian church, so at the age of five I still remember going to my first Sunday School. And ever since then I was never converted a Christian, but it just was given to me through my father. For all these years from 1915 when I was about six years old I started going to this church. And then from then on I became church involved, and I attended Sunday school, and I soon became very active in the YMCA which was also--San Francisco in the pre-war days there was a place called Japantown, and it's there today again. It has been rejuvenated, reconstructed, but it was already the heart of the Japanese community, and that's where the two or three Protestant church<sup>es</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>were</sup> two or three Buddhist churches were, one Catholic church, and then there was the YMCA, so our whole community life was involved within that community about a block <sup>[within] (with)</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of each other.</sup> ~~---~~ I would say about 4 by 4, about sixteen city blocks. And so I was raised there in the YMCA and in this church and I soon became a leader. As I grew up into teenager I became involved in church programs, leadership, superintendent of Sunday school up to the war time in 1941. And I vividly remember when I was sitting on the stairway to the church when I heard

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this report of Japan bombing Pearl Harbor in December 7, 1941. Still vivid in my mind. I can see where I was still sitting. We rushed home, and it was about three years earlier that I was married to my wife ~~Yoshi~~ <sup>Yoshii</sup>, beautiful person. I have been married for forty-nine years, and so we had our first son in 1940, and his name is David. And so we took David to Sunday school, he was a year and a half, and then this Pearl Harbor turned our life history into a dilemma. And I was working--I graduated--I went to the high school--first I went to Pacific Heights elementary school. It's in a very prestigious area, but Japantown happened to be right on the border of Pacific Heights. Pacific Heights is where all the hobnob people lived, the bankers and industrialists, ---?--- family, ---?--- family, all famous families. And their children came to the same school I went to in Pacific Heights, and the children of this family came in limousines, and they had this Lord Fontleroy outfit with the bow ties. And then for some reason I was within that district, so my a school <sup>allotted?</sup> ---?--- was Pacific Heights, and I went there with holes in my shoes, and couldn't speak the language because my first language was Japanese. My mother brought me there and she couldn't speak English. But then this

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is how I hobnobbed with the richest group in San Francisco, and even today like the Levi Strauss, the <sup>House?</sup> ---?--- family, Lilianthal family, their children were there, and even today after sixty-five years I still have this friendship with Lilianthals. But coming back to my school days, I went to Pacific Heights, and I went to Poly, Polytechnic, then I went to the University of California, then I graduated in '32 which was at the lowest level of the Depression. Am I doing all right?

ST: Oh, fine, yes. What did you study?

TF: I studied <sup>d</sup> business administration, but being an oriental, and during the Depression, say there is fifty openings for one job, and I would be at the bottom of the totem pole, so what chance did I have in the industrial firms like banking or shipping or <sup>foreign trade</sup> ---?---. So a friend of mine, <sup>Koshi?</sup> ---?--- Marada, parent's had an import business specializing in gold fish, tropical fish, an <sup>exotic</sup> ~~exhibit~~ fish that came into Japan, and then we distributed that to the local department stores and retail stores. It was a very specialized business and very challenging, and I stayed there for ten years, or less than ten years because we had to evacuate in '42, exactly ten years. And so with this historic <sup>commotion</sup> ~~commission~~, knowing not what to do, what to

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do tomorrow or the next minute, we get the notice to evacuate. Of course, we all know the history what happened. We could just bring what we could carry, and then there was a lot of items that was prohibited, and we tried to eliminate all that. So my wife, Yoshi, and I and my son, David, was a year and a half, the three of us went to this local <sup>language school</sup> ~~---~~ waiting for us. And so we registered there, and we came out with a tag, one of these shipping tags with number on. I don't know the number now. And we boarded a <sup>Greyhound</sup> bus and passed by ~~the~~ Tanforan. Tanforan was the race track at the time.

ST: Yes. What happened to your possessions?

TF: Well, the possessions I had--we belonged to the church, and some of the things I put into the church basement with my parents. Since I was married--my father and my mother lived, and my sister and brother took care of my parents. Since I was married I took care of my wife and my son. So we stored most of it ~~into~~ the church. And since we were just married they were very inexpensive furniture, but then to us it was lifetime possessions. Scraping we only make how much? Seventy-five dollars a month, and my budget for food was a dollar a day for food and a dollar a day for rent, and this is 1941. It is not many years ago,

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so you can appreciate inflation. <sup>A</sup> I dollar a day was our rent which is thirty dollars a month. Today the same apartment probably costs \$700 at least.

ST: Oh, yes.

(collector?)

TF: And then I was a stamp clerk. All my life I was a stamp clerk, <sup>(collector)</sup> and I had a post office clerk that I would usually go quite often to buy stamps, and he said, "Tad, if you have anything that I could store for you I would be glad to do it." And we were very close, and I trusted him, so I gave him all of my new furniture because he said he would take care of it. So I said, "Go ahead and use it if you want." And then my personal possession was stamp collecting, so I had another friend that my wife knew who was the <sup>a</sup>manger for the company, he kept my stamps. And so we parted, and we went down to Tanforan, and we were one of the early ones, so we stayed in barracks, one of the early barracks. I think the barrack <sup>two;</sup> ~~too~~ it was a horse stall. Well, one building had many horse stalls, of course, so we were given one. And I think it rained, it was an early rain. I think it was <sup>i</sup>n April, early rain, and it was muddy, and, oh, we just cried.

ST: Oh, yes. That must have been terribly hard to live with.



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TF: They gave us a canvass bag, a mattress, just a bag, outside was all the horse, the straw for the horse was all piled and we used that to fill our mattress. And we brought it in and there was a partition where the horse stayed in the barn and then there was a partition, and I guess there is a front one where they set the hay, but all that was cleaned, it was whitewashed, but the odor ---?---. That's where we slept for six months from April to October. So the first thing the government administration--there is a lot of detail I am skipping, but the first thing they start to have monitors for each building because everybody is in hysteria and they don't know what to do, and all these rumors are going on, and they needed--that administration up in the office, they won't even come down. They just try to designate a captain for each barrack, and these were called house managers. So I ~~was~~ being older and I am bilingual-- you have got to remember there were about six to eight thousand people there, and it was all divided. Then since the ~~was~~ war started in December, and we were evacuated in April, so that's four months that they had to fix up this Tanforan to make into a city because six thousand to eight thousand is a lot of people. They cleaned up all the horse stalls and

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started building barracks, but the barracks weren't ready yet, and the lumber was all green yet <sup>as time went on</sup> ---?--- it ~~stopped~~ <sup>started</sup> splitting, <sup>as the lumber dried up...</sup> As the green lumber start to dry up it start to split, a lot of spaces <sup>is between</sup> ---?---.

Then the horse stalls there was no privacy because you could almost hear each other all right down the line. And so I was appointed house manager, and I had my own problems, yes I had to take care of the problems of all the other horse stalls. There was about twenty of them and each one has maybe about four--almost a hundred people, and I had to tend to their needs, the ailing and the old people, and so it was--none of this was ever written, I don't think, what the managers had to do--

ST: No, I don't think so.

TF: --to take care of all the needs of other people while I have my own family to take care of, and my mother and father next door, I had to take care of them. And then people come and ask for different <sup>requests</sup> --?---, different needs.

ST: What kinds of things would you have to deal with?

TF: Well, medication, not enough. "I didn't bring this, I didn't bring that. Can you get a hold of that nurse and get it for me." You know all these, I was a runner. So, I won't go into any of the details. It

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takes time. Then there is no organization, and so the first thing we did was to organize the house managers. I forgot the number; say there is about thirty-five to fifty in all these barracks in the whole race track. So every morning at ten o'clock the managers would get together, so each barrack had a number, two, three, four, five, all the way down to say thirty-five. And then we would get there, and then we need an organization so we all voted for a chairman. It was all democratic. So we voted for the chairman, and we had a secretary, we had a little council, and this was a liaison, this was <sup>administrative</sup> ---?---. When I say administration <sup>it's the Caucasian</sup> ---?--- for relocation <sup>WRA (war relocation administration)</sup> administration ---?---. I forgot, forty-five years. I have never thought of this. [Laughter] And so every morning at ten o'clock we get together to listen to what the <sup>Their?</sup> ---?--- needs are.

ST: All the people in barracks.

TF: For instance, well, six thousand divided, you know, into that would be your number, and they represent this whole <sup>mass</sup> ---?---, and we find out their wants and needs are all similar. And then we had a beautiful-- another thing is, one of the most beautiful thing about this, I mean, I have to say it because I experienced it. They are very cooperative, and the

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managers that were selected was almost unanimous by the people living there. And they are all respected businessmen or teachers or educators, a beautiful group of people, all educated, and all self-giving. And many of them were my friends from YMCA, the church, and I knew--they could have easily refused, you know, to become a house manager, but because out of their service, out of their caring--I call it caring love or want to do some service. Now, in church and YMCA this was taught to us to serve people and to help others, and I created that idea, and I am sure many of these people had the same background, and they were there. So they giving up their good time that they could stay with their families two hours a day every day to pacify the people and to alleviate our frustration. So everyday we go to this process and <sup>gradually</sup> ---?--- we became organized and settled and life became--. Of course, number one was eating problems. The government doesn't know what the Japanese people--when I say Japanese about sixty percent are Nisei and about forty percent is from Japan, and their eating habits are different. For instance, for lunchtime they would have a sandwich of bread and a whole <sup>part</sup> ---?--- of cheese, <sup>part of the</sup> ---?--- cheese, and then cold meat, and I forgot hot dogs, and then

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tongues, and brains, and liver and things like that. Now, none of us were used to brains, tongue, or live<sup>r</sup>, and the Isseis don't know what cheese is. And so when we finished dinner, or lunch, or whatever, the cheese is all there. And the young kids love it, so we would bring this back into--not we, but the kids would bring would bring it back to the barracks. They had toasters. I guess this is late in the story, but at first we lined up, <sup>excuse me.</sup> ---?---. We lined up for our meal, and it's a continuous line because by the time we finished breakfast we were lining up for lunch, and by the time we finished that we were lining up for dinner, so there was a constant--so this was one of our big problems. And then we organized a council, a city council, and the house manager ran for the council because he was the most selective person in our group. We had a little campaign, so we put him up <sup>in?</sup> as the council, and the council was, I think, about five, and they represented the house manager and the people's voice. But we were, these house managers was a very critical group because we touched everybody. And then the council more or less <sup>communicated with me</sup> ~~the committee came~~ ~~to see,~~ so after the was chairman voted to the council, I took over as manager. And then in October we start going toward the Topaz and made a schedule.

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We did all of this with the administration, and then this six to eight thousand went to Topaz, and my train was the last one. I closed the camp at Tanforan, locked up the place with the administration, and so that as we boarded the last train I was the captain of the car ---?--- and so with the shades down we pulled out. Of course, that is a story in itself-the life on that train.

ST: Apparently that was very bad.

TF: And then, a funny thing, being train captain I had to be running from train to train also to take care of the needs of these people, and this was forty-five years ago, and a lot of the things that I did, naturally, I forgot because I was excited and I was very--well, when you are excited you forget a lot of things. The impression was intense. But about a couple of years ago I went to Lake Tahoe for a Christian retreat, and there was a couple there that I knew by name, the they came up, and they said, "You know, Tad, I still remember the time you brought a blanket for my wife, <sup>because</sup> she was sick, and you even arrange for her to sleep in a pullman." I don't know if we had a pullman. He called it a pullman, so that she could rest, she was sick, and I had forgotten that act. That act that I did that day was remembered

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forty-five years later, so it made me feel good that it wasn't in vane, you know.

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: And then we arrived in the concentration camp, or Topaz, fifteen miles from Delta, <sup>out in the desert -</sup> Lake Bonneville it used to be--as you know Lake Bonneville was a huge lake, it all became a huge desert there <sup>all</sup> ---?--- alkali <sup>source</sup> ---?---. Of course, the rest we don't know. We were just prisoners and we couldn't raise anything but--just like in the Bible about <sup>?</sup> ---?--- you know, city rising up. By the time we left there three and a half years later there were trees growing, plants growing, and all kinds of industries going <sup>?</sup> ---?---. I mean, that's all <sup>covered anyway.</sup> ---?---. And then since we were the last ones to get to Topaz we stayed way to the end of the city called Block 41-<sup>That's</sup> way on the other end. That's where I settled with my wife and my son, <sup>Davy</sup> and by then, <sup>a boy of three - less than two.</sup> let's see, <sup>too</sup> ---?--- ~~too~~. Then across the way was Dave Tatsuno, and Dave Tatsuno and I--it was a very important name because Dave and I--and then from Washington came a group of caucasians specializing in this type of development. Well, I guess <sup>none</sup> <sub>^</sub> of them experienced, it was the first time, but they all gave it a hand. And so this person specialized in cooperatives, <sup>Emil Sekerak</sup> ~~Elmo Zakarak~~, his name and his wife,

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she was Eleanor at the time they got married later in camp, but Eleanor and <sup>Emil</sup> Elmo. Eleanor was the principal of the school system, and <sup>Emil took care of</sup> Elmo ---?--- the coop with Mr. Hendrick <sup>who was another person</sup> ~~---?--- with another ---?~~. In fact, Mr. Hendrick <sup>Emil</sup> was the chief one and Elmo was an assistant, and so together they started this coop. And so each <sup>city</sup> block had a representative, a coop representative, and a councilman. And they wanted Dave and I to run for it, but we had other ideas that ---?--- that we start a store, a cooperative store because as time went along they had to buy cigarettes and candy and yarns and material, and so they organized a general merchandise store and <sup>a</sup> department store. So Dave being a <sup>proprietor</sup> ~~part~~ of a growing business in San Francisco called Nichi <sup>Bei Busan</sup> ~~B~~---?---, NBC they call it, the father started that at the turn of the century, and they had to close up. So Dave was very experienced in merchandising, and so <sup>Emil</sup> Elmo asked him to start this dry goods store. Now, we had a captive population of eight to ten thousand. I don't even know what the figure is today. They always say ten thousand.

ST: Yes. It was that, I think, at the height.

TF: Eight to ten. And so we have a captive clientele of eight thousand people, and so the general



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merchandise, of course, we would figure <sup>cigarettes and</sup> ~~in~~ some candy and small things, and over here was gardening. So Dave was the manager, and he asked me to become assistant, because I had <sup>some</sup> ~~the~~ business training but nothing in department stores. And so we didn't go into <sup>The</sup> politics. I always wanted the word politics, especially councilmen and the coop representative. See the coop representative from each block would get together, and to raise capital they had to solicit all the households, and it was only five dollars. But we find out that every family, you know, eight thousand is quite a capital. And so that went into the two coop stores, and it was our capitalization. <sup>- it was our \$40 worth.</sup> I ~~forgot what the stock was.~~ Then as I said being from San Francisco, the majority from San Francisco, of course, outlying areas too, but many business <sup>all</sup> professions were there. All the businessmen there, bankers were there, teachers, medical doctors were there. Oh, it was a beautiful setup. I think we were very fortunate. And so even the coop council represented by the <sup>businessmen</sup> ---?--- bankers, so we had a very <sup>promoted? [oriented]</sup> profit ---?--- organization because every purchase we got a rebate, cash rebate. And I forgot the details, but everything was <sup>intricate</sup> integrate. Of course, the city government because we got it published. But I don't

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think there's too many things--like the church, we had a federation of various denominations--the Buddhists, the Catholics, the Protestants. And the school system, as you know <sup>was elite?</sup> ---?--- so I won't go into any of that. But coming back to the department store, we had about fifteen employees. And so Dave and I were mostly buyers, and then we had a department head. We had a shoe department, we had a clothing department, a yarn department, and there was all miscellaneous, and we had managers for each one. Then we had an office manager because Dave and I would be out most of the time, and then, of course, we would come in and make reports to the coop council.

ST: Yes. Now, where did you do the buying?

TF: This is interesting. I am glad you asked because when we first went there the government anticipated us coming, and so they quickly ordered the necessities like boots, mackinaws, hats, underwear, socks, I guess. They treated us like we were prisoners. We were. [Laughter] We were prisoners because we were surrounded by, you know, wires and, you know, which we already know.

ST: Yes.

TF: So Dave and I had <sup>them</sup> ~~them~~ delivered. I mean, they were in the warehouse already. The government ordered it,

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shipped it to Utah, I mean, to Delta, went into our warehouse, and then, of course, we had--what do you call them, now, transportation. There was a terminology for that. They took care of <sup>delivered</sup> ---?---

ST: Oh, yes. So did you go into Delta.

TF: Motorpool.

ST: Motorpool, yes. Did you go into Delta to select merchandise or anything like that?

TF: No. Like I say the government shipped it.

ST: The government took care of that.

TF: Already shipped it to the warehouse, and then the motorpool, the transportation was delivered, and then we opened it up. Okay, let's take stocking<sup>s</sup>, size ten, twelve, thirteen. Well, nobody can wear those. Our sizes are six, seven, and eights. And then the shirts, mackinaw<sup>s</sup>, let's say it's size forty, forty-four, and our sizes are thirty-four. And hats are size eight, you know, and ours is mostly six and seven. So they are not usable.

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: So, the first thing we did was to go out buying. I mean, by the time we reported to Washington it would take another month of delivery, so the first thing Dave and I did was to go to Salt Lake, ZCMI. And also these things already distributed. I forgot the

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details.

ST: Sure.

TF: But we all had a ---?--- mackinaw, you know, for the winter and boots and all that all oversized. Maybe we kept it or we had to--it was silly anyway. So we rushed to ZCMI and started credit. I don't know how we started credit. Probably the coop had a pretty good account <sup>with ZC</sup> ---?---. All the finances--the only thing we did was to buy, and we knew exactly where are the ---?--- exactly the right size and the right patterns and the right, you know, whatever. So in the meantime as they were adjusting the ladies had time on hand. Of course, we all had to participate in the government because we had our councils, liaisons, ---?---. But the ladies served in the kitchens <sup>as waitresses,</sup> ---?--- teaching, well, whatever in administration work. But my position was the coop, and I was the assistant manager. I got the top grade <sup>Wages</sup> ---?--- twenty-one dollars. Sixteen, nineteen, and twenty-one.

ST: Twenty-one, yes.

TF: So all the doctors, we were professions ---?---. And the strangest thing, maybe this depicts the nature of the Japanese. I am American at heart and I had been educated in America and I am an American, but my face is Japanese and my name is Japanese, and I think the

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nature of Japanese--I feel this way--there is some of that nature in us, and the reason I say this is because, you know, we get paid twenty-one dollars a month. That's how much a day, you know. How much an hour is it, I don't know, two bits an hour. But we never thought that way. Our job was a job. We would get there at eight in the morning, and all the girls are there, and we opened up the store, people lined outside.

ST: What kind of quarters were you in? Where did you set up?

TF: You mean the store?

ST: Yes.

TF: Well, you know the pictures of those barracks, they are all uniform, so it is right in the center of the town, I think, <sup>in</sup> of Block 20 across the street, but I forgot. There are two barracks there, so instead of people living there, that was our store.

ST: The whole barracks.

TF: Yeah, the whole barracks. In other words, it is all standard, so we utilized, or manipulated the uses of the barrack <sup>to our</sup> ---?--- usage.

ST: Yes.

TF: So like in a canteen I forgot how that <sup>was called</sup> ---?---. We called it a canteen, general merchandise. The dry

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goods there was, like I said, the shoe department, material. What I started to say, the ladies had time on hand besides their work, like in evening or weekend, so they all went into knitting and making clothes. So two of our biggest shelving was yarns and material, bolts, huge bolts.

ST: Of cloth, yes.

TF: We bought them by bolts. And then we'd get a shipment from ZCMI. We went to St. Louis and New York. We traveled quite a bit because everything is rationed and you can't get anything, it is all rationed. And then our credit problem, you know, they can't trust us in a concentration camp. How are they going to pay it, so we were up against the wall. But Dave was a good buyer, and he knew just what he wanted. We were very fortunate. And so as these shipments come in rumor--rumor is the fastest thing in the camp. The rumor is that the yarn is coming in and have just spread<sup>s</sup> around. Next morning there are long lines -- maybe a hundred, two hundred ladies all lined up. We opened the thing and it is just a madhouse, and then it's all gone. Well, not right away but in a few days, and then we wait till the next shipment. There is a constant, constant ---<sup>?</sup>--- the knitting, beautiful knitting. You know, we had the artifacts

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shows and some of these ---?---. Oh yes, like in the  
general department store, canteen, saws for woodwork,  
lapidary machines. A lot of that came in from--or  
things we know we couldn't handle because of the high  
prices range like sewing, lapidary machines. We went  
to ---?--- to pick up precious stones. They would  
bring that in and people walk around the desert to  
pick up thunder stone and rocks and ---?---. You know  
how they are. They look just like ordinary rock,  
thunder stones. They are just like plain rocks, but  
we would bring them home, and we would get this  
lapidary cutter, open it up and it is jeweled. So we  
had all kinds of hobbies, woodwork, knitting,  
clothing.

ST: Uh huh. Well, lapidary machines must have been very  
expensive.

TF: Maybe they formed a lapidary club because the ---?---  
rich people there ---?--- knitting and so on, you  
know. Even machine ---?--- Sears Roebuck. Sears  
Roebuck and Montgomery ---?---.

ST: Yes. How does your wife get along in the camp?

TF: She was busy with David. David was two, three, four,  
five. And in the meantime my second son--you know,  
when we were in Tanforan, besides immediate needs, we  
talked about rumors and then a lot of humor.

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ST: Oh, yes.

TF: And I think it was a good philosophy that we had humor too. One of the humor was sex life. You know, house managers all have the advantage. All kinds of rumor about complaints that the sex life is zero, and to this day, I don't know, but they say that the government in order to prevent this type of activity threw in salt peter in cookies.

ST: Oh, no.

TF: Now, I have never read anything about this, but this I know from actual conversation, and we talked about it. And so, of course, we were there only six months, so we don't know <sup>if people conceived or not</sup> ---?---. But then we went into camp, Topaz, and they say they lifted that ban, and then people became prolific again. And we were there three and a half years, so they say after a year or two there was sort of a baby boom, and my <sup>child?</sup> ---?--- was one of them. My second son was born there. And another came about the discussion, there was one block, and it just happened that <sup>nothing but</sup> ---?--- boys were born. One after another boys were <sup>born?</sup> ---?---. Mine was a boy. In this particular block they rushed to the hospital and come back with a boy. Dave had a boy. And then there was one family, he lives in Berkeley right now, he is eighty-eight now, he had four daughters when he went



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into camp, and he says, "I'm not going to have any more. I'm forty-four. ---?--- all girls." Although he would be <sup>issei - in</sup> Japan he wanted a son. And then they said <sup>we come to the dining hall</sup> ---?--- all these weaknesses <sup>of so and so...</sup> ---?---. "You know, if you <sup>conceive</sup> ~~complete~~ now it is going to be a boy sure. Look at the statistics. It is almost ninety percent, maybe ninety-nine. You can't go wrong." And so anyway, the story goes that finally his wife would be pregnant, and all kinds of money--well, it can't be money because they are almost sure it is going to be a boy. Nancy came back and the whole-- <sup>thing was locked and...</sup>

[END OF SIDE ONE]

TF: A little humor there.

ST: Well, I have often thought it must have been terribly difficult with no privacy and your children all around you to engage in marital relations.

TF: Yeah, it's just one barracks, you know, one barracks, and, of course, it's pretty Jerico because the Jerico--you know the Wall of Jerico, you know, blanket.

ST: Oh, a blanket, yes.

TF: It's a partition.

ST: Yes.

TF: And even then the partitions were sheet wall.

ST: Oh, sheet rock.

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TF: Sheet rock. I just forgot the terminology. You could <sup>hear,</sup> ~~year,~~ you know.

ST: Oh, yeah.

TF: But then they fixed it up very nice, made it homey. My father was very clever. He made a set of drawers, you know. In fact my brother still uses it. He was very clever, made furniture and shelving, and artifacts, a lot of artifacts, his hobby.

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: Yeah, they are very--I guess I am prejudice<sup>d</sup>, but they are very <sup>pretty</sup> ---?--- carving, woodwork, knitting, painting. Probably any population of eight thousand people you are bound to find talented <sup>skilled ones.</sup> ---?---

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: But we thought we were endowed with a lot of talent.

ST: Uh huh. Was all of your family together in the same barracks, or were you split up around the camp?

TF: Yeah, my parents were--they were one of the early ones to come. I was the last one to come <sup>in - from some</sup> ---?--- miles apart. Well, the city was a mile square wasn't it? So I suppose it was a mile. And the lifestyle of most of <sup>center</sup> ---?--- anyway, I mean the block, anyway. And I might throw this in, our first Christmas we went there about October, I think, from November to December first Christmas. We didn't know what was

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going to happen. In the meantime a car came from the eastern coast. The Quakers got together and they assembled hundreds of toys, used toys, new toys, mostly used toys out of charity, and they boxed it, wrapped it individually, and then they boxed it and then shipped it and sent to ten camps. When we got our share <sup>Some</sup> ~~it~~ came to Topaz. And they distributed--do you have a book by Reverend Suzuki?

ST: Yes, I do.

TF: I think he wrote about it. He wrote a book on ministry of, well, ministry.

ST: Yeah, in the camps.

TF: Which included the Buddhists and the Christians. And they did a tremendous job in concern for the people, went out of their way, <sup>attend our</sup> ---?--- ~~our~~ service and to help <sup>with the needy?</sup> them ---?--- and then like Christmas the distribution of gifts. And so at Block 41 I was elected Santa Claus, and so with all these gifts from Quakers--I say the Quakers because they are fundamentally the backbone of this movement. And so I got into my costume. I don't know where the costume came from. Maybe I made it up, and then I distributed the toys, and we had a party with cake. And then my son got a little--I gave one to Steve and he was about two by then, and he opened the package, and it was a boy

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scout knife. I still remember it--broken boy scout, you know, two-year-old kid. And on it was a name. It said Mrs. Crocker, I even remember it--Mrs. Barbara Crocker of Fitch berg, Massachusetts. Very distinct. And the address was on it. So the first thing I did the next day was write a letter of thanks to Mrs. Crocker, and she acknowledged. And then in the spring David caught this bronchial pneumonia, and we rushed him to the hospital, and he was in intensive care in an oxygen tent. And then I got a message from Delta, you know, up there at the grocery store. I got a message that they want to deliver some fresh oranges for David. I don't know how all this happened so fast, but it was from Mrs. Crocker.

ST: Oh, my word.

TF: She must have phoned into Delta, contacted this grocery, and rushed some fresh orange because I guess the rumor is that fresh fruit is very scarce in camp. And so I remember that fresh orange and I ---?--- it to David. But he recovered, and then this correspondence kept back and forth.

ST: Well, it's nice there were some good people on the outside to help. How did you feel that his hospital care was? Was the hospital a good place?

TF: Oh, yeah. The best professionals, all the best

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doctors there were. We were very pleased with it. I mean, the facilities are inadequate, but instead of complaining they did the best thing. After all, they are dealing with people, not <sup>machines?</sup> ---?---. We got the best ---?---. Maybe I will just continue on with this Mrs. Crocker. Well, as times went along, we got back home and bought a home in Berkeley. As soon as she found out where we lived and that we bought a house, she sent some furniture.

ST: Oh, my.

TF: ---?--- and every Christmas ---?---. So I said I have got to meet her, and so as time goes along David met a girl from New York <sup>she sent a Christmas tree.</sup> ---?--- <sup>[Hers]</sup> in his thirties now, you know. And so he met this girl in New York and went back to New York for the wedding. And so Yoshi and I went, stayed in New York, and then I was thinking we ought to go to Boston. So we went up to Boston and rented a car, went to <sup>Fitch</sup> ---berg, and they were owners of a paper mill, very wealthy people. Everybody in <sup>Fitch</sup> berg knew, and she had a little cottage. She had a beautiful home, and down the roadway about two blocks we had a little cottage that went way back to revolutionary days, and it was just a possession of love. And she said, "You can stay as long as you want." We were there only a couple of days, but it

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was on the 4th of July, and we stayed there in the cute little house that goes way back. We met Mrs. Crocker and had dinner.

ST: Oh, how nice. It must have been very exciting to meet her after all those years.

TF: And then to show you how God moves in mysterious ways, we moved to Berkeley. Is this <sup>all right</sup> ~~alright~~ talking?

ST: Surely, yes.

TF: We moved to Berkeley and bought a house <sup>in Thousand Oaks.</sup> ---?---. Mrs. Crocker wrote one day and she said, "You know, now that you are in Berkeley, I have a favorite aunt living in Berkeley, so it is about time I visited her and at the same time to visit you. And so she came to Berkeley and I knew the schedule but I wasn't--she said, "I am all taken care of <sup>The schedule</sup> ---?---." But one day she knocked at the door and there she was. "Mrs. Crocker, how did you get here." She says, "Well, my aunt lives around the corner." You know this big America. She is <sup>in</sup> on Boston, never been to California, and so she always knew about the aunt, and she just lived around the corner. And I thought this is God's-  
--?---<sup>magical.</sup>.

ST: Yeah, oh, that's amazing.

TF: Look at the probability. But so those are some of the human interest stories of my-- <sup>mine</sup>. I haven't shown any

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bitterness about my experience. To me it's all beautiful memories, you know. It may be some people won't like this, but--

ST: Oh, I think that people responded in different ways, and I found the Christians I talked to came through with a lot of faith and confidence and good will.

TF: The people that made life worth living because <sup>[after]</sup> three and a half years and I went out to Chicago to teach-  
~~---?---~~ <sup>during wartime</sup> to teach.

ST: Oh, now, you left the camp to go to teach?

TF: Well, mainly for income. <sup>For work?</sup> ---?--- our savings are almost gone and they charged us <sup>awful</sup> ---?--- we had no <sup>uniforms?</sup> ---?--- and camp was only <sup>\$21.</sup> \$28. We worked for seasonal work in a short season, you know, like Provo. I went to Provo and I worked for a Mormon. <sup>That was an experience...</sup> ---?---

ST: I was wondering. I heard that people that went to Provo had a pretty bad time.

TF: Not me.

ST: Oh, you didn't.

TF: Well, we worked hard, and I worked with my brother-in-law. I forgot its name, Orem. Is there a little town called Orem.

ST: Orem, yes. <sup>[his name]?</sup>

TF: I wish I knew ---?---. He was a <sup>real</sup> ~~knew~~ Mormon and we worked for sixty cents an hour, but then we told him,

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we <sup>said,</sup> says, "You know, you pay sixty cents an hour and it doesn't matter <sup>if</sup> ~~is~~ I pick one bushel or two bushels?" "No," he says, "you just do your work and I will pay sixty cents an hour." And I talked with my brother-in law, I said, "You know, this is crazy. You sit there all day and not pick anything and still get sixty cents." Of course, we picked a few. I said, "You know, this is wartime and you need production." I said, "Back home in California we would never do this." I said, "If I picked one bushel--." No, then, we figured how much a bushel I could pick in one hour taking it easy. I forgot, but let's say ten bushels. And I said, "Mr. so-and-so, in one hour we could pick twenty bushels if you give us piece work."

ST: Yeah, surely.

TF: So, he figured it out. He said, "I will make money, and you will make more money." And so instead of sixty cents--I forgot. My memory--

ST: Oh, yes, but you were ---?---

TF: So we tripled our money, he made money, more money because of production. And this rumor went around the ranch, and, honestly, people came to watch us as if we were ruining the trees, but we were just picking fast--I mean normally fast. And we picked ---?---, we lined it up, and they are impressed. So they wrote



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back and they start piecework instead of hourly, and so we all did that.

ST: How wonderful.

TF: And then there is one experience, though, with another camp. All of the workers got into a dining room. We were all in together. <sup>Must have been?</sup> ---?--- a big ranch. And then came a truck there and they start shooting.

ST: Oh.

TF: You know, instinct is terrific. It has never happened to us, so we knew that there are crazy people out there, so consciously we were prepared. And when we heard that fire we all hit that ground at once. We were under the dining, <sup>table</sup> and then the truck went by and no one was hurt. It came right through the screen door. I remember the screen door, and they shot right through. That was the closest thing I ---?---. But this Mormon he was good to us, and you could get all the food you want to eat. And to prove it he took us to his storage room, a little back yard storage bar, and all the fruits are lined up--peaches and blueberries, you know, all lined up. And he said, this isn't for us. This is for our neighbors, you know, whoever wants it can have it and <sup>?</sup> ---?--- <sup>[in case of</sup> famine, and I guess the old Mormon religion about famine from way back.

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ST: Yes.

TF: Those are--I am just spitting out the nicer things.

ST: Well, tell me the other things too.

TF: I went out back, you know, to Chicago and northwest and taught Japanese.

ST: Oh, you taught Japanese.

TF: As you know most of the GI Nisei went to Fort <sup>Stubbing?</sup> ---?---  
- and <sup>Savage</sup> ---?--- and all that. Well, there the--well, there were Niseis at--well, I'm a typical Nisei. Language ability was almost, not nil, but it was just one to ten being taught. You would see about two or three.

ST: Japanese language, yeah.

TF: Conversation is maybe five.

ST: Yes.

TF: But reading and writing is very <sup>down too.</sup> ---?---

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: Well, this is a bunch that <sup>?</sup> ---?---. They tried to pick up the language, than <sup>e</sup> they went back to Japan as <sup>the</sup> Occupation.

ST: Yes.

TF: But then, for each--they have officer<sup>s</sup>, a major or lieutenant officer because these fellows just GI.

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: Because there were majors and colonels there too but

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not many but the whole civil government that went to Japan, you know like banking and highways and post offices--

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: --led by all these higher officers. So around then were ten, twenty or thirty GI's to help. So I was teaching these army officers conversation, not reading and writing because they had to interrogate the people.

ST: Yes.

TF: And they was to help with the GIs there <sup>to practice</sup> ---?--- reading and writing ---?---. I was amazed at the ability of these officers because in six months they could get up there and give a valedictory speech in Japanese.

ST: My word, were they Nisei?

TF: No, caucasians.

ST: Caucasians.

TF: Mostly officers. In fact they <sup>were Caucasians</sup> ~~all took it~~ because the Japanese officers were busy, you see, ---?---.

ST: Oh, yeah.

TF: ---?--- But these are the latecomers. You had to learn the languages in a short time, six month period. Navy and army schools are all over ---?--- all over ---?---

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ST: How long did you do that?

TF: About six months.

ST: Six months.

TF: They called me in.

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: ---?--- the evening was over ---?---

ST: Yes, yes.

TF: And the American <sup>strategy</sup> ---?--- impressed me. It was all scheduled. You know, it was a big war. <sup>All scheduled</sup> In fact, there were two officer from the chemical department. I think they were both Jewish, very <sup>intelligent</sup> ~~talented~~. Well, here, you know, I felt very prejudice <sup>d</sup> by the American people, the government. And we had been through all this, you know, <sup>just</sup> ---?--- herded into camps as enemy aliens, and I reflect and I think about the Germans and the Italians that were left behind ---?---

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: Then I come into this teaching class, and I see these two Jewish fellows and there is prejudice among them.

ST: Oh, really.

TF: Yeah, very obvious prejudice, but they are very intelligent so they could hold their own.

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: And the reason I still remember those two is--

[Interruption, another person entered]

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XX: Well, how goes the session?

TF: Well, we are just about finished. You know, they didn't know what they were studying in their research, but they say that they just came close with a weapon. They didn't know what it was. Maybe they knew, but he couldn't disclose it. They said they had come up one ~~day~~ <sup>when I say they</sup> ~~you know~~, the government had come across with a weapon ~~---~~ <sup>that is going to bring this war to an end.</sup> ~~---~~.

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: I remember that. This was '45 at the closing of the war. I remember that distinctly. You see, I have all these documentations, you know, about my schooling days, my classes and so on ~~---~~ <sup>?</sup> ~~---~~.

ST: Oh, yeah. So were you out of the camp then when the war actually ended?

TF: What?

ST: Were you outside of the camp?

TF: I went out for six months. No, when the war ended?

ST: Yes.

TF: Then I came back--here, again, rumors again. The rumors were that the camps were going to close up with this acceleration. You know, the European war was over and I was going to go over there and finish that, but it was very tentative. So I went back to camp and heard this rumor. At first I went out there

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to find out if I should bring my family out to Chicago, but I decided against it. I didn't like the city, so I thought would go back ~~and go back~~ to California and take the risk, which I did. And so the camp started closing up, and I took my family back to California, and I went to Quaker hospital <sup>a</sup> <sup>in Los Altos,</sup> ---?---

ST: It must have been hard to find a place to stay.

TF: Yeah, no ---?--- still prejudice going. My wife experienced something horrible <sup>but we managed that.</sup> ---?---

ST: What happened to her.

TF: Well, we were unwelcome. I remember that we had to find a <sup>?</sup> ---?--- rent from the <sup>curfew?</sup> ---?---. The people were waiting for us. We weren't welcome. Then we went to Los Altos where the Quakers took us in. We stayed there for a while <sup>?</sup> ---?---. I remember <sup>?</sup> ---?---. There was still no homes, no jobs, worked in a factory---?---. Borrowed money, no money, borrowed money to buy a house, <sup>we had</sup> ---?--- transportation for bus pass for travel, no car.

ST: No car.

TF: But, anyway, <sup>?</sup> ---?---.

ST: Well, is there--?

TF: All the time, like you said, we had this faith that when we come back--

ST: Yeah.

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TF: And here is another mysterious thing that happened, during the depression my mother, bless her heart, said, "You know, no matter how poor we are, always put aside so many percent, you know, even if it is nickels and dimes." <sup>Put it in the bank,</sup> Which I did, so during the depression I saved about \$500. In the meantime, Japan was at war already with the, you know, the southeast, and there was booming over there in the stock market. And my mother being Japanese had faith in this kind of money. So she says, "Why don't you buy one, buy a bond?" And it was a good price, so I bought a bond for \$500. That was a savings.

ST: That's an American savings bond?

TF: No, Japanese.

ST: Japanese savings bond.

TF: It was a municipal bond.

ST: Oh, yes.

TF: Electrical bond. And my mother said, "If that company fails, Japan will fail." You know, just like U.S. Steel.

ST: Sure, yeah.

TF: And I listened to my mother because <sup>she was influential</sup> ----?----. But I bought it, then the war started, and then Japan is demolished, you know, and everything is wiped out. So I just forgot about that. I said, "Oh, here it is

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down the sink," you know. And then I came back, I still had that bond someplace, and then Japan started to reconstruct, rehabilitate, and the first thing that had to function or get organized was electricity, you know, to have power for their industry, people. And so in order for them to recapitalize, they had to make good on the old bonds.

ST: Oh, yes. So you got your money after all.

TF: I got my money back.

ST: Oh, for heavens sakes.

TF: It was a miracle. Here I thought it was gone because the company is gone, but that is the story about that electrical. It's called Tokyo Electric Company. And so that money was my house down payment.

ST: Oh, for heavens sakes. Oh, well that was amazing.

TF: And the house at that time was \$7,000.

ST: Yes.

TF: <sup>Down payment</sup> ---?--- Then I <sup>That's all of that story.</sup> ---?---

ST: Well, you have had some wonderful experiences, and you have given me some information I--

TF: I mean, I don't think I covered what you wanted.

ST: Well, no, you did.

TF: I was waiting for you to ask questions. I will be happy to answer some more questions.

ST: Well, yeah.



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TF: Before I forget I am going to take your address down.

Is that <sup>all</sup> right?

ST: Surely, I forgot to bring my card.

TF: Sandra--

[END OF INTERVIEW]