

Regional Oral History Office  
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University of California  
Berkeley, California

Junko Kimura

*This interview series was funded by the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program of the National Park Service, and with the support of individual donors.*

Interview conducted by  
David Dunham and Candice Fukumoto  
in 2014

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Junko Kimura “Japanese American Incarceration / WWII American Home Front Oral History Project” conducted by David Dunham and Candice Fukumoto in 2013-2014, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2015.

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Junko Maida Kimura, 1932, Richmond, California





Junko Kimura, Meriko Maida, and Asako Tokuno



Junko, Asako, and Meriko swimming



Junko home from Violin Lesson



Junko relaxing in the hammock





Junko and Asako outside Maida Family Nursery, Richmond, California

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Interview 1: April 13, 2014

Audio file 1

Dunham: Today is Sunday, April 13, 2014, and we're here in the lovely home of Junko Kimura. We've interviewed your two elder sisters, and we're delighted to come and get your perspective, as well. I'm here with Candice Fukumoto, and I am David Dunham with the Regional Oral History Office. Take it over.

Fukumoto: If we could start with just your full name, date of birth and birth place.

01-00:00:31

Kimura: My full name is Junko Maida Kimura, and date of birth is March 26, 1926.

Fukumoto: So what can you tell us about your parents? What was it like growing up with your parents? What do you remember?

01-00:00:49

Kimura: Well, it was, I think, the usual, although my mother and father had their differences early. She was kind of a tense, nervous person, and he was the opposite. Let's see. I remember when I was not in kindergarten yet; my two sisters were in elementary and I was home. I think I witnessed some rather unpleasant arguments between the two. But they survived the marriage. I guess my mother wasn't up to working too much in the nursery, although she did her share. But I don't know, that seemed to be a regular pattern.

Dunham: What was a typical day like for your mother then?

01-00:02:07

Kimura: Oh, a lot of times she would rest, and she didn't take part too much in the business. But as time went by, she got better, because I guess we were less of a problem for her.

Dunham: As you grew older, you're more independent.

01-00:02:34

Kimura: Yeah, yeah. And she depended on her mother, my grandmother, to help out quite a bit.

Fukumoto: So you felt like it was stressful for your mom?

01-00:02:46

Kimura: Yeah, I think so. I think that kind of shaped my life.

Dunham: How so?

01-00:02:57

Kimura: Well, the stress of it. But it worked out okay.



Fukumoto: I know it was hard times for a lot of people during that time. Just owning a nursery sounds like a lot of work that you have to put in to just survive. And demanding, right?

01-00:03:22

Kimura: Right.

Fukumoto: So what is your earliest memory of working in the nursery? Because I assume all of you had to.

01-00:03:29

Kimura: Well, the first several years when I was growing up, my father had roses. It was a nursery with roses, which didn't make it necessary for us girls to do very much, because it was too dangerous. All these thorns. There just wasn't anything for us to do. But then, I think it was—I'm going to get these numbers wrong—in the mid-thirties he switched to carnations. And that provided many jobs for us, yes. Every summer, we would have to put in time. But of course, we had to go to Japanese school, too, so that cut into that. But we were fortunate in that our dad believed in education. So ten days out of the summer, we would go up near Shasta, because he loved fishing. He was born in a small place in Japan where there were a lot of opportunities to fish, and hunting, whatever. So that's what he loved to do. Then it was relaxing for us, too, a change. We looked forward to those ten days, because in the end of July our Japanese school closed, and we were free to do more work in the nursery. But we weren't made to do a lot of heavy stuff.

Fukumoto: You enjoy the outdoors?

01-00:05:33

Kimura: Yes.

Fukumoto: What kind of things did you do when you went to camp?

01-00:05:37

Kimura: Oh, well, just dabbling, wading. There were very nice Indian hot springs, and they had lined the spring with stones really nice.

Dunham: Are they still like that today, do you know, or they've been commercialized?

01-00:05:59

Kimura: Oh, no. They put the Shasta Dam in, killed it. My father was so mad. So that was really the highlight. And my mother liked to fish, too. But it was hard work for her at first, of course, with me as an infant. I remember they would have a mattress on top of the car. We had this old Auburn. I don't think you ever heard of that car.

Fukumoto: No.

01-00:06:34

Kimura: It was just overloaded with stuff. We were like *Grapes of Wrath*, only a little bit nicer. It was really something. But of course, later on, we didn't have to do all that stuff. We had a big tent that we could sleep in, the five of us. Mother would have to scrub the pots when we got home, because she cooked over a fire. And lugging the water. One time we were fortunate enough to camp right near a spring. Fresh, real spring water. Oooh! It was so nice.

Fukumoto: It's not like that anymore.

01-00:07:27

Kimura: No.

Fukumoto: Did you enjoy school?

01-00:07:35

Kimura: I don't know if you could say enjoyed, but I guess I tolerated it.

Dunham: How about between your Monday-through-Friday school and the Japanese school? What were sort of the different—?

01-00:07:45

Kimura: Oh, I didn't like Japanese school. I used to sneak comic books [in]. I was terrible, yeah. I was a bad girl.

Fukumoto: Was it strict? Was it too strict? It just wasn't engaging and fun?

01-00:08:00

Kimura: Well, I think even then, I was trying not to be Japanese. That idea, I think, subconsciously.

Fukumoto: I know that you grew up with a Japanese population, but did you feel singled out, just being Japanese? Or was there every embarrassment or—?

01-00:08:39

Kimura: No, no, not any of that; but I was the only Japanese in a junior high class, when I went to the seventh. I remember that. In the next grade, there were two girls. It was very sparse. There were not enough people to make a difference, from the view of the Caucasians.

Fukumoto: Right. So who did you mingle with more? Or were they all mixed backgrounds?

01-00:09:16

Kimura: I didn't really mingle very much.

Fukumoto: Shy, a little bit?

01-00:09:19

Kimura:

Yeah. After Japanese school, Saturday, three o'clock, I would go for my music lesson. We didn't go to Sunday school. My folks were Buddhist, and they didn't encourage us to attend church. We started, but I remember when I was about four, my sister says, I was up on the stage at the Christmas program at night. I was supposed to, I think, recite a poem or something. *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* or something. I don't remember that, fortunately. But that was about the last time we attended church.

Fukumoto:

Did you want to keep going to Sunday—?

01-00:10:17

Kimura:

Not really, because I'm lazy. Because we had Japanese school from 8:30 to noon.

Dunham:

What did you do on Sundays then?

01-00:10:27

Kimura:

Read the paper, fight over the comics.

Dunham:

What kind of comics were you reading?

01-00:10:25

Kimura:

Oh, Flash Gordon. My father liked Tarzan, so we had to take the *Oakland Tribune*. Oh, the Katzenjammer Kids. I can't remember any more than that.

Dunham:

Did you go to the movies, as a child?

01-00:10:56

Kimura:

Not too often. Most of the Caucasian kids in the school were fortunate enough to get to go to Saturday matinees a lot of times, but we didn't get to do that very often. But later on, when we were older, we got to go. Like on Thanksgiving Day, after the big meal, somebody would take us to see a movie or something like that.

Dunham:

Do you remember which theater or which movies?

01-00:11:38

Kimura:

We had Fox Theater; and we had a United Artists across, practically, from the Fox; and they had another little theater way down in the part where it's now called Triangle.

Dunham:

The Iron Triangle?

01-00:12:00

Kimura:

Yeah, Iron Triangle.

Dunham:

The other theaters were on Macdonald?

01-00:12:03

Kimura: Yes, on Macdonald. Yeah, they were nice theaters, real nice. They had the usual popcorn, which was very good popcorn, and a candy store right next to it.

Fukumoto: What was your relationship like with your sisters?

01-00:12:23

Kimura: Oh, it was okay. I didn't get along too well with Asako, because being the middle sister, she and I were competitive. Whereas Meriko was—she was actually almost my mother. Yeah, she used to take me shopping or take care of me. So that was fortunate for my mother. She wouldn't have to do a lot of shopping, because Meriko would help out so much. Growing up, then she sort of continued in that role.

Dunham: Where would you shop, and what kind of things did you eat?

01-00:13:10

Kimura: We had a little department store on Macdonald Avenue, and there was a Penney's, and a National Dollar Store, and a Montgomery Ward on the side street, little one, and other little shops. Now I've forgotten what you asked.

Dunham: Oh, I was asking, I guess, also about what food. What kinds of things did you eat? Did you eat traditional Japanese foods?

01-00:13:46

Kimura: Yes, at night, we always had Japanese, or Chinese. But mostly Japanese, yeah. And then lunch was always American.

Dunham: So what kinds of things would you be eating for lunch and dinner?

01-00:13:59

Kimura: Oh, well, the usual hamburgers. Meriko used to do a lot of the cooking. The lunches were usually very good because we had people working for us who ate, who boarded, because we had a little house that they stayed in. And the meals were always a full lunch. Yeah, that was good.

Dunham: When you had to start doing the work in the nursery, with the carnations, what was that like? What kind of things were you doing?

01-00:14:42

Kimura: Oh, well, it didn't seem that onerous, should I say. It's de-budding the carnations, pulling grass. I didn't plant anything, but when the seedlings started to grow, then we had to de-bud; remove the buds, so that a single carnation would grow.

Dunham: Yeah. So that's a pretty labor-intensive—



01-00:15:09

Kimura: We had to pull wires all the length of the beds, and then string. So there'd be about four strands of wires, and then we would have to string it. So one person would be there and one person here, and they would work in pairs. Yeah. And then after the carnations were—they had to be changed. I mean the dirt had to be changed in the summer. So we'd have to take the strings off. Oh, that was a drag.

Fukumoto: That does not sound like fun at all.

01-00:16:01

Kimura: Yeah, yeah. And of course, there's always the weeds.

Fukumoto: How old did you start playing the violin? And how were you introduced to the violin?

01-00:16:12

Kimura: Elementary school, fourth grade, they offered us the opportunity to take some kind of instrument. So my sisters played the piano, and I didn't want to play the piano. So just to be different, I said, "Well, I want to play the violin." So my father said, "Well, if you stick to it, then I'll buy you a violin." But until then, we used the school's violin. Since I seemed to stick to it, in the sixth grade, he bought me a little violin. And it graduated; the size would get bigger as I grew and was able to play, stretch my fingers. So when I was fourteen, I quit. I was a bad girl. I wanted to take a cappella choir when I went to high school. So much to my violin instructor's consternation, I said, "I'm going to quit." Because tenth grade, it was getting more difficult in high school. More homework. So a cappella would've been simpler.

But then after a month or so—not even a month—of tenth grade, I had an appendicitis attack. In those days, they made you stay in the hospital two weeks; and then two weeks I was at home. So I was out of school four weeks. So that was that for a cappella. So I was really disappointed. But then December came, Pearl Harbor, so that was that anyway.

Dunham: That was that, yeah.

Fukumoto: Oh. But then you picked it back up.

01-00:18:19

Kimura: What is that?

Fukumoto: The violin.

01-00:18:21

Kimura: Yes, I did, on my own. Well, yeah. I went to a so-called instructor. She was just a violinist who had played a while and was sort of active in the San Francisco Symphony. So I asked her to teach me. So on Saturdays, I would go to Berkeley.

Fukumoto: And at that point, you must've—you've enjoyed it, playing.

01-00:18:50

Kimura: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah.

Fukumoto: So that was kind of your element, your escape, was playing the violin.

01-00:18:53

Kimura: Yes.

Fukumoto: Do you remember some of the pieces that you'd play that you loved? Who were your favorite composers?

01-00:19:03

Kimura: Well, I guess Mendelssohn, his famous E Minor Concerto. But I was just on the brink of getting a little bit better, but then we got—

Fukumoto: Right. Another traumatic experience.

Dunham: What can you tell us about your memories of first hearing about Pearl Harbor?

01-00:19:34

Kimura: Oh. I was in the kitchen, cleaning up, because that was my job on Sunday. My sister and mother would be in the flower house working. So I was cleaning up the breakfast stuff, and this news came on the radio. I always had the radio on. Oh, I rushed into the flower house, which was close. I don't think that it really hit me at that point. But of course, later on it did. But it was a shock. Really a shock.

Fukumoto: So you heard about it. There's probably a sense like, oh, no. Right? What's going to happen?

01-00:20:36

Kimura: Right.

Fukumoto: We understand that you and your parents moved down to Half Moon Bay—

01-00:20:45

Kimura: Yes.

Fukumoto: —while your sisters stayed at the nursery.

01-00:20:47

Kimura: Well, see, the radio report—what was that newscast—one that came on at ten o'clock said that Japanese aliens—or not just Japanese aliens, enemy aliens—had to leave the one—what do they call that?

Dunham: Zone.

01-00:21:23

Kimura:

Zone one? Yeah, something like that. By midnight. Well, panic. Ten o'clock. So we threw things into the car and went to Half Moon Bay. Now, I had no idea that my father had any contact with this man who took us in. This man and his wife helped wayward boys who were referred to them by the Salvation Army. He and his wife were very Christian. Mr. Takahashi and Mrs. Takahashi were such kind people. They had room, because they had all these little houses, like a motel. So we had to go. That's quite a ways. And my Dad—of course, he wasn't that old, but I thought he was. We tore across the bridge and made it. I don't know how. My father must've arranged something with the working men. They took two, was it? Three boys, three working men, and two were brothers. Yeah. Ben and Bill, and Mitts was the other. They were still there with the nursery, and they helped to take care of things. Like when my sisters left, and boarding up the room that they stored things in, hopefully to find them when we got back.

Dunham:

So was it the very same day, you're saying, that you left for—?

01-00:23:27

Kimura:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. That night.

Dunham:

And you did not return then until—?

01-00:23:33

Kimura:

No.

Dunham:

Now, we know that there, in some cases, were searches and whatever, looking for Japanese materials. I think one of your sisters told us a story of your mother burning, destroying—

01-00:23:48

Kimura:

Yeah, she was very fearful.

Dunham:

Was that the same day, as well?

01-00:23:51

Kimura:

Well, that must've been before.

Dunham:

Oh, even before?

01-00:23:56

Kimura:

Because we left. She couldn't do it. Of course, I don't know, because I think I probably went to school. I think I did. Yeah. Despite Pearl Harbor. You know, February.

Dunham:

In Madera, is it?

01-00:24:15

Kimura:

No, no.

Dunham: Not Madera. What's it called? Half Moon Bay?

01-00:24:18

Kimura: Oh, dear. Isn't that terrible?

Dunham: Montara.

01-00:24:24

Kimura: Montara. It's still there, but hardly ever mentioned at all.

Dunham: Yeah. So you went to school in Montara, so you were—

01-00:24:32

Kimura: No, Half Moon Bay.

Dunham: Oh, in Half Moon Bay.

01-00:24:33

Kimura: Half Moon Bay High School.

Dunham: Were there many other Japanese Americans there?

01-00:24:37

Kimura: There was one, two, three families that I know of. One was just a couple, and then one had ten children, and then another family about five. I think the sixth one was in New York. She had a scholarship for piano or something. But it happened that in Half Moon Bay we had more contact with a certain person who was a boyfriend of Asako. I don't know where he heard about her, but he came all the way from Half Moon Bay when she was in high school. She was a senior. So we sort of knew that family, so that was nice. We had contact with somebody.

Dunham: Did you experience others treating you differently after Pearl Harbor?

01-00:25:27

Kimura: No, no. This one family with ten kids had a very good rapport with the high school. One girl was in my class. What was her name? God. Well, anyway, she was a very popular girl, cheerleader type. So it was nice, in that respect. I went on a yellow bus from Montara. They picked me up. But I couldn't take the courses I was taking at Richmond High, unfortunately.

Dunham: They were lesser courses?

01-00:26:28

Kimura: Yeah, no French. What else was there missing? Something else.

Dunham: Because it was a more rural school, it was behind, basically?



01-00:26:37

Kimura: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, they didn't have the interest or couldn't afford a teacher, I don't know.

Dunham: What was life like for your parents at that time?

01-00:26:50

Kimura: Well, they just kind of hung around with Mr. and Mrs., I guess, the Takahashis. They didn't do anything.

Dunham: Did they have contact with the nursery in Richmond in any way?

01-00:27:02

Kimura: I think my father was allowed to go back to talk to the bank and stuff like that, to try to get a person to lease our nursery. The government found a man. My sisters probably told you that, about this Chinese person who rented or leased the nursery. He put in the Chinese vegetables, pulled out all the flowers, of course. But my mother never got to go back, of course.

Fukumoto: So you're in Montara, and then you hear of Executive Order 9066, the evacuation of all Japanese Americans. Do you remember that moment?

01-00:27:54

Kimura: No, I don't remember the moment at all.

Fukumoto: But you do remember when your family—

01-00:27:59

Kimura: Oh, yes.

Fukumoto: —relocated to Tanforan?

01-00:28:01

Kimura: Yeah. We had to get immunizations. That, I remember. Smallpox.

Dunham: What do you remember about that?

01-00:28:09

Kimura: Oh, painful. Yeah.

Dunham: Was that at the relocation center or before?

01-00:28:14

Kimura: No, it was at a certain place in Half Moon Bay. At a home, I think. The doctor came, or the nurse or somebody came, and immunized us. Yeah. So that was a series of shots that we got. I've forgotten exactly what shots they were, but it was painful.

Dunham: How did you go to Tanforan, do you remember?

01-00:28:50

Kimura: Bus, a Greyhound. Yeah.

Dunham: What was it like there at first? What are your earliest memories of it?

01-00:29:00

Kimura: Earliest memory?

Dunham: Or any memories.

Fukumoto: Of Tanforan, yeah.

01-00:29:01

Kimura: Yeah, well, seeing all the people there with their one suitcase or two, whatever. Chaos. We all met in the grandstand, I think it was. And then eventually, that part was made into bachelor quarters. We were fortunate enough to go into the barracks, instead of the stalls, the horse stalls. My cousin had to go—cousins who were in Berkeley at the time. Which is strange. They evacuated to Berkeley, and we had to go to—well, we didn't have to go to Half Moon Bay or Montara, but that's where we got a place to stay. But they evacuated all the way to Berkeley. I really don't understand that.

Dunham: Do you remember there being armed guards and that type of thing?

01-00:30:02

Kimura: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. That was not too pleasant.

Fukumoto: So if you remember, were you more angry, were you more shocked? Were you more, "Well, this is what it is?" Do you remember your feelings, your thoughts about the whole process and what was happening to your family?

01-00:30:21

Kimura: Yeah, well, I think I was too, you might say, ignorant, or too—I don't know what it was. How old was I? Sixteen or fifteen? '42.

Dunham: You would've been just turning sixteen, I think.

01-00:30:42

Kimura: Yeah, yeah.

Dunham: Yeah, shortly after.

01-00:30:44

Kimura: Yeah. Naturally, I was resentful. We were as American as anybody else. And of course, my cousin was in the Army. That kind of stuff.

Dunham: In the 442<sup>nd</sup>?

01-00:31:11

Kimura: At first, he was not in the 442<sup>nd</sup>, he was just regular Army, the draft. At the time he was drafted, one of the Hidachi boys was also drafted. So we had a big dinner for them and everything, and sent them off; and then after that, it was Pearl Harbor. Really sad.

Fukumoto: What do you remember about camp life in Topaz? What was your experience like, being sixteen and—?

01-00:31:48

Kimura: Well, I guess I was not the usual. I was not gregarious at all. I guess I stuck around a lot with my older sisters.

Dunham: Did you have school?

01-00:32:03

Kimura: Oh, yeah, high school.

Dunham: So what was school like in camp?

01-00:32:06

Kimura: Well, I would say it was not the best education. When I was taking French, the teacher was from Texas; she was in the Army. Not Army, her husband was one of the Army members of the relocation center. She had taken French at the Sorbonne. So I thought, “Oh, hooray.” Maybe I would get the real French speaking. But naturally, she had this Texas drawl. Didn’t help, you know. After a while, she said, “I can’t teach you any more French.” So then the senior year, I had to take Spanish, so I got all confused. [laughs] Terrible.

Dunham: She stopped teaching French altogether? Or you—

01-00:33:06

Kimura: To me, yeah.

Dunham: —individually? You had surpassed her.

01-00:33:08

Kimura: Yeah. There weren’t too many kids taking academics like that. Of course, chemistry was “ehh.” I got sick a lot. I had colds a lot.

Dunham: Because of the weather?

01-00:33:23

Kimura: I guess, yeah.

Dunham: It got to so cold that you—?

01-00:33:25

Kimura: And then probably just me.

Dunham: But it was a totally different climate. The winters must've been really hard.

01-00:33:30

Kimura: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, it was very—.

Dunham: Did you have adequate coats and kind of clothing for it or—?

01-00:33:37

Kimura: Well, not really.

Dunham: I've heard there was sort of one catalog and everybody got the same—.

01-00:33:42

Kimura: Oh, yeah, Montgomery Ward, Sears.

Dunham: Do you remember getting—?

01-00:33:46

Kimura: Yes, we had to—

Dunham: What was food like at the camp?

01-00:33:53

Kimura: Oh, it was edible. The chefs did as best they could. There were some mess halls that were famous for having a good chef. So we were allowed to go, but I never got to go to those mess halls. That wouldn't have been very—

Dunham: What determined who went to what mess hall?

01-00:34:15

Kimura: Oh, well, it was in the block. The mess hall was within the barracks.  
[comments between them as her microphone is adjusted]

Fukumoto: So you were saying camp life, you weren't so social with the other kids

01-00:34:41

Kimura: No, no, I'm not. Even now, I'm not. It's terrible.

Fukumoto: Well, it's not terrible. Maybe it's just your preference, right? What you're comfortable with. You like to read your comics, like your music, and just not a social butterfly. Sounds like your other sister was a social butterfly.

01-00:35:05

Kimura: Yeah, she's more normal.

Fukumoto: Well, I wouldn't say that.

Dunham: Was there theater and music in the camps, that you remember?



01-00:35:15

Kimura: There might've been. I took lessons in the camp, also. But they had me teaching, which I thought was ridiculous. But I only had one pupil. But I got sixteen dollars.

Dunham: Was there a band?

01-00:35:38

Kimura: I think there was a band of sorts. This young guy. In fact, after a while, at UC Berkeley, he attended, he had a little band there.

Dunham: Was there Japanese traditional music being played at the camps, that you recall?

01-00:35:54

Kimura: I don't know. I don't know.

Fukumoto: So you're in camp, you're going to school, doing your thing. And then you end up applying to Rochester, right? How did that happen?

01-00:36:09

Kimura: Well, I applied to Drake first. Why, I don't know. I don't remember why. I got accepted. But then I got a chance to go to Rochester instead, because of the Eastman School of Music there, which was, at that time, very well known and prominent. Howard Hanson was the president of the school.

Dunham: What was the application process like? Was it connected with the Quakers, the American Friends Service Committee?

01-00:36:48

Kimura: Yeah, yeah.

Dunham: So how did you and/or your sisters connect with them?

01-00:36:55

Kimura: I don't know. My father said—I guess you heard this—that if I didn't get to go, if I didn't get into the school and go, they would have to go with me.

Dunham: Because earlier, I believe Asako had gotten into Drake herself, but your father would not let her go alone. He was worried for her.

01-00:37:27

Kimura: Oh, really?

Dunham: Yeah, I believe so.

01-00:37:30

Kimura: Oh, I don't recall that.

Dunham: That's what I think had occurred. Because you would've been still in high school, so probably not yet college age, but she had applied—I think, if I have that right. We'll confirm that.

01-00:37:44

Kimura: Well, she has a vivid imagination, I think, because I don't recall that.

Dunham: Well, maybe I misheard it. Maybe it was relative to you. We can clarify that. But again, the application process. Were there sort of college counselors who you met with?

01-00:38:04

Kimura: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. They had a counselor. But she was a camp inmate.

Dunham: So a Japanese American?

01-00:38:21

Kimura: Yes. Yes. I can't remember her name now. It was June something, but I can't remember.

Fukumoto: So that must've been huge. You're already pretty shy, you apply, you go all the way to Rochester. That's huge, at a time when you're in camp. What was that like for you?

01-00:38:40

Kimura: Yeah. I was very apprehensive. Especially when we stopped in Chicago to change trains, and to get into the taxi. There were several servicemen and we were kind of—but they didn't bat an eye. Just another passenger, right? Three of us. So I thought, I'm surprised. We stayed at the YMCA in Chicago, which was strange, also. But that was like a hotel.

Dunham: Well, why? What was strange about it?

01-00:39:36

Kimura: Not the YW, the YMCA.

Dunham: Were there many other women there?

01-00:39:41

Kimura: I think so; I'm not sure. I didn't see many people.

Dunham: Was it strange just because it was a novel, new experience for you? Or was there anything unusual that happened while you were there?

01-00:39:56

Kimura: Nothing unusual. So my sister said that we had so much money that we could—they provided some money to be able to stay there in Chicago. So we were there two nights, I think it was. Yeah.

Dunham: Did you go out in Chicago then?

01-00:40:19

Kimura: Yeah. Yes.

Dunham: What do you remember about Chicago?

01-00:40:22

Kimura: Very busy. And very windy. I think it was on State Street, but I'm not sure. It was terribly windy, as you know. Windy City.

Dunham: What time of year is this?

01-00:40:37

Kimura: Summer.

Dunham: This is before fall semester?

01-00:40:39

Kimura: Yeah, yeah, July. It was July. And hot, hot, hot.

Dunham: Did you go to any restaurants or clubs?

01-00:40:46

Kimura: Yes, we did. Yes, we did. We got the best food. Oh! After the camp food. Oh, that was really a wonderful meal. That was memorable.

Dunham: Do you remember where you went or what you had?

01-00:40:59

Kimura: No. Well, I think it was a steak. I had teeth then. [laughs] Let's see.

Dunham: Well, it must've also just been, well, literally liberating to be out on your own.

01-00:41:13

Kimura: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Dunham: To have the freedom to do that.

01-00:41:17

Kimura: Really, yeah. And then we got on the train after that, to Rochester. A man from the WRA [War Relocation Authority] greeted us and took us to the YWCA, where we stayed for a while. I worked at the baby food cannery, Clapp's Baby Food cannery, until the school started. Of course, I went to the school and was interviewed by the president. She was very pleasant. But I was quite lost, because it was all so different.

Dunham: It was a female president of the university?

01-00:42:08

Kimura: Yes. Yes. Her first name was Janet, but I don't remember her last name.

Dunham: It wasn't a woman's college, though?

01-00:42:16

Kimura: Oh, yes. There was two campuses there in town; that was the women's. And then the men's was away. That's where Strong Memorial Hospital is. Have you heard of it, Strong Memorial?

Fukumoto: I have not.

01-00:42:34

Kimura: You haven't.

Dunham: You mentioned the man greeting you at the train station, from the War Relocation Authority. So what was that interaction like? They were helping coordinate your travel and—?

01-00:42:46

Kimura: Yes, they did. They had something to do with it, I'm sure. Meriko would take care of everything. Poor Meriko. No wonder she's so bent over.

Dunham: Did they do any follow-up with you while you were at school, the WRA? Or once you were there, were you kind of on your own?

01-00:43:09

Kimura: I think we were kind of on our own. I'm not sure.

Dunham: Were there other Japanese Americans at the school?

01-00:43:14

Kimura: Yes, yes. A few. I remember one girl who didn't want to have anything to do with me. Because that whole idea of Japanese clinging together, right?

Dunham: Was there a formal Japanese student club or anything then?

01-00:43:37

Kimura: No. Oh, no. Not enough.

Dunham: And the other Japanese students, where had they come from?

01-00:43:42

Kimura: Well, one was from—oh, I don't know where she was from, but she stayed in a co-op dorm. Another one stayed with a reverend and his family, as a schoolgirl. And then I got a job with another family as a schoolgirl, taking care of the eight-year-old brat, who had two sisters.

Dunham: You didn't have to take care of the sisters?

01-00:44:15

Kimura: Oh! No. They were sub-teen or teen. Yeah, older.

Dunham: Oh, they were old enough they could've been doing it.

01-00:44:23

Kimura: Yeah. This woman, the mother, had inherited wealth, and her husband was a lawyer. I remember Mrs. Remington, she reminded me of Helen Hayes, kind of.

Dunham: This was the family?

01-00:44:48

Kimura: Yeah, the family. She kind of acted almost like an actress.

Dunham: Like a prima donna?

01-00:45:02

Kimura: Yeah.

Dunham: So the eight-year-old wasn't the only brat, maybe?

01-00:45:07

Kimura: I don't know. She wasn't that bad, considering her background, wealth, and all that.

Fukumoto: So did you enjoy going to school in Rochester?

01-00:45:21

Kimura: I don't know.

Fukumoto: Or was it hard? Was it lonely?

01-00:45:25

Kimura: It was hard because after—let's see, when was it? I contracted mumps from one of the kids. I was nineteen, and it was painful, and I was out of school for three weeks. So that was toward the end of the semester. I got an incomplete in PE, which we had to take for three years there. My other grades weren't that bad. I was moaning over the fact that I got a D in something, and the lady I worked for in the summer, after school, was a Wellesley graduate, and she says, "Oh, that's nothing; a D is nothing." Oh! Well, coming from high school, to get a D—oh! It's terrible. But then I couldn't help it. Three weeks out of college is too much.

Dunham: I'm curious, because you had more than your fair share of health challenges, I'm wondering your perspective of healthcare through those periods. So back in Richmond, you mentioned the appendicitis, right? As a child. But then being in the camps, you said you got sick quite a bit. What was healthcare like in the camp? And then how about in Rochester? Could you maybe give a sketch of—?

01-00:46:59

Kimura: Well, at home, it was fine.

Dunham: You were hospitalized, you said, for the weeks. Which hospital was that?

01-00:47:08

Kimura: That was Albany Hospital. I don't know if that still exists. It used to be on Solano. I think it was Solano. Yeah, my father and mother both had appendicitis. Not at the same time. So they were aware of—but that was four weeks out of high school, the first year at high school, and that was not good.

Dunham: Well, what was health care like in the camps?

01-00:47:43

Kimura: Oh, I didn't have to experience anything, other than staying home from school.

Dunham: So you didn't have to go see a nurse or a doctor?

01-00:47:54

Kimura: I don't think I did, no.

Dunham: Had you heard of other people—?

01-00:47:58

Kimura: Having problems?

Dunham: Experiences with health care.

01-00:48:02

Kimura: No. Asako, she had her appendix out. I think it was sufficient, considering.

Dunham: Yeah. Well, we've heard mixed things. And then sometimes there were real challenges, in terms of staffing and—

01-00:48:20

Kimura: Yeah. I think if you were lucky, you got a really good doctor or nurses.

Dunham: Well, how about in Rochester, then, your experience when you got the mumps?

01-00:48:34

Kimura: My employer provided the doctor.

Dunham: The family?

01-00:48:38

Kimura: Yeah.

Dunham: I know you said you were shy, but I'm curious. You're a teenage girl in the camp, and then in Rochester. Did you do any dating at the time?

01-00:48:54

Kimura: No. No, I didn't.

Dunham: Were you aware of others back at the camps dating? What was social life—?

01-00:49:03

Kimura: Yeah, there was a lot of that; normal stuff. But as I said before, I kind of stuck with my sisters' group. So I was not as flighty as some of the young girls my age. I think. I think it aged me.

Dunham: Because your sisters were older, so you were more mature.

01-00:49:37

Kimura: Yeah, so the fellows that hung around Asako were—. So that was my—what do you call that?

Fukumoto: Experience?

01-00:49:48

Kimura: Yeah.

Dunham: Did you see your sisters much when you were at Rochester, in school?

01-00:49:56

Kimura: Not really. Asako stayed with Meriko and she helped babysit, for the board and room. Meriko was the cook, housekeeper, babysitter, whatever. So we would get together on her day off, as much as possible, and she'd take me to lunch, which was nice. We went to a nice Italian restaurant. And sometimes had dinner. So I was very fortunate, because she was really nice to me.

Fukumoto: Yeah, she took really good care of you.

01-00:50:37

Kimura: Yeah.

Dunham: Did you have correspondence with your parents, at that time?

01-00:50:41

Kimura: [laughs] I'm ashamed to say, not very much. No, very, very little. I could write the simple alphabet, and I would try. I think Meriko did it all.

Dunham: So language was a barrier there.

01-00:50:59

Kimura: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, no internet.

Fukumoto: Right, yeah. So that would be hard. But you can do basic Japanese conversation.

01-00:51:15

Kimura: Yeah, basic, yeah.

Fukumoto: Right, but that would be a challenge.

Dunham: That summer job at the baby food company, what were you doing for them?

01-00:51:25

Kimura: Just peeling potatoes. Not potatoes, peeling stuff. Just grungy work.

Dunham: How did you get both your jobs, that one and the job with the family?

01-00:51:37

Kimura: The family, the girl had the job before me was the secretary for the WRA man, and she wanted to leave that job, the—

Dunham: The caregiver job.

01-00:51:52

Kimura: Yeah. Because she had this nicer job with the government. So she recommended that I—or she told me to take the job. If I passed the interview, of course.

Dunham: And the baby food job? Do you remember how you got that one?

01-00:52:16

Kimura: Gee. It must be the employment office. I don't know. I can't remember. Because I wasn't trained for anything.

Dunham: So the war is going on. What are your feelings? We can talk maybe a little more about the camp. We might take a break in a minute, but I'm curious. Did you keep abreast of the war? How did you get your news? What were your feelings? You admitted the feelings of resentment, given you guys were Americans and all of this. So how are you feeling, as all of this is going on? Your time in the camps, then being at school. Your parents are still incarcerated.

01-00:53:03

Kimura: I guess I tried to be as normal as possible. This nice Italian girl at the cannery invited me for diner. I think she was curious about everything. They couldn't get over the fact that I was going to go to school, because in New York State, you had to pay a lot of money to go to school, public school, because you had to buy your books and all that stuff. So these girls had to work from when they were very young, fifteen, sixteen. Maybe earlier, I don't know.

Dunham: How did you have the funding for school then?

01-00:53:52

Kimura: A scholarship. The National—what did they call that?—Student Relocation Council.



Fukumoto: How many years were you at Rochester?

01-00:54:09

Kimura: Oh, just the one year.

Fukumoto: Just one year.

01-00:54:11

Kimura: When the war was over, my father said, "Come home." So that was it.

Dunham: Before we go there, you mentioned meeting with the president of the University. What was that conversation like, do you recall?

01-00:54:29

Kimura: No, I think she just welcomed me and wished me well, I guess. And the freshman advisor, whom I didn't care that much for, but anyway—.

Dunham: Why was that?

01-00:54:44

Kimura: I don't know, she seemed not as sincere as—oh, well.

Dunham: Do you think she may have had some prejudice towards you?

01-00:54:56

Kimura: I don't really know. Maybe she was—she rode a bicycle around.

Dunham: In your travels there or while being in Rochester, did you encounter, notice any prejudice?

01-00:55:11

Kimura: No, I was very fortunate in that. I remember I went to my sister's employer's dentist, when I needed dental work, and he happened to be a violinist when he was younger. So I had my violin with me when I went to him, and he said, "Can I try playing your violin?" So he did. I thought, oh, my goodness. He had such strong fingers. Oh, my gosh. Yeah, that was funny.

Dunham: What was playing music like at University of Rochester?

01-00:55:52

Kimura: Well, I didn't get that far. I was taking violin lessons and stuff, with a teacher, but I was not a full-time music student. That's what's kind of bad.

Dunham: That's what you aspired to, but then you got sick and—

01-00:56:11

Kimura: Yeah.

Dunham: Well, let's take a break. This tape's about finished. And then maybe we'll chat a little more.

## Audio file 2

Dunham: This is tape two, on April 13, 2014, with Junko Kimura. I had a couple other questions maybe about the camps, before we moved on to sort of what happened after Rochester. What do you remember about the loyalty questionnaire?

02-00:00:34

Kimura: I remember all the brouhaha and all the turmoil, yeah.

Dunham: What do you remember about the brouhaha?

02-00:00:39

Kimura: Well, so many people were upset about it. Not having any brothers, I guess I wasn't that concerned. Wasn't that terrible? But it was certainly unfair, the way they worded it. Yeah, twenty-seven and twenty-eight was it? Or something like that.

Dunham: Do you remember discussions or debates within—?

02-00:01:09

Kimura: Oh, yeah, they had fights over it. There was one woman who was really vociferous. She had sons, of course. She would really be vocal. Almost hysterical. There was a lot of that kind of thing. It was really a lot of tension. Then the guys, the No-No Boys—oh.

Dunham: So do you remember a number of the No-No Boys having to leave the camp then, particularly?

02-00:02:00

Kimura: Gee, I don't. I don't remember.

Dunham: What about just related, kind of the military recruitment and/or patriotism, or news of the war you got in the camp? Or how else did you get news?

02-00:02:13

Kimura: Radio. Radio, mainly.

Dunham: Did you get newspapers, as well?

02-00:02:17

Kimura: I don't think so.

Dunham: You had a community radio, or you had your own private radio?

02-00:02:23

Kimura: No, just—yeah—a little radio. At first, all six of us were in the one room. I guess it wasn't much bigger than this, for sure. Then the next-door apartment was for couples, and they moved out, so the girls got to go over there. So the

old folks were in here. Three there, and three there. Our room was not very big. It had no bathroom, of course, and all that stuff.

Dunham: Having the different space is an interesting question. A lot of people have discussed sort of the different reality in the camp for Issei, versus Nisei. What's your perspective on that, of how it was for your generation versus how it was for your parents? And was it your grandmother who was the sixth person with you?

02-00:03:19

Kimura: No, my grandfather.

Dunham: Grandfather, excuse me. So for him and your parents, versus for you three.

02-00:03:26

Kimura: Well, I think for the parents, some of them were able to finally stop working. So it was a relaxing time, in a sense. They could talk among each other and—. Whereas before, they were more isolated. But at the same time, it was hard because they'd have to go to the latrine for everything. It wasn't very private.

Dunham: So was that more uncomfortable for the older generation, then, to deal with that?

02-00:04:11

Kimura: I think so, yeah.

Dunham: Things like bathing and such. How was it for you?

02-00:04:17

Kimura: Well, it wasn't that bad for us. For me, I didn't think.

Dunham: I know you didn't have any boys in the family, but do you remember recruitment or presentations or that type of thing?

02-00:04:31

Kimura: Yeah, they had a man come in. A man who was in the Air Force. Very rare for a Nisei to be—he was from Omaha originally. I think Omaha, Nebraska. What was his name? Anyway, when he came, some people were very unhappy. Well, I could understand why; he came to recruit. But we had no trouble, like they might've down South, in a camp like Manzanar or somewhere like that, Poston.

Dunham: I *had* heard of a shooting incident, though, that happened, I believe, in '43, with a fatality.

02-00:05:25

Kimura: An old man.

Dunham: Two incidents. Yeah, a sixty-three-year-old, James Hatsuaki Wakasa. And that after that, there was a change in sort of security, actually sort of reducing, I think, the intensity of the guns' presence, if anything. Do you remember anything about that?

02-00:05:41

Kimura: Well, I just remember in Topaz the old man who had gone for a walk out of the area. He was deaf, and he didn't hear the order, I think, to not venture. They shot him, I think. Yeah.

Dunham: Before leaving for Rochester, were you able to ever leave the camp, and/or did you have visitors?

02-00:06:10

Kimura: We didn't have any visitors in Topaz. We got to go to a little store in the delta, I think the little town right outside of Topaz—not right outside, but you know—to get a pair of shoes, or something funny, for graduation. I don't know. I think that's the only time I got to go out. Oh, and then once a bunch of us from high school, we had to go and plant sets of green onions or something like that. Strange. Plant.

Dunham: Outside?

02-00:07:04

Kimura: Yeah. I don't remember what—.

Dunham: What about in the camp? Were you involved at all with agriculture or planting or nursery-type stuff?

02-00:07:09

Kimura: No, no. I know my father worked in the chicken farm or whatever that was called.

Dunham: How was that for him, do you know?

02-00:07:21

Kimura: I guess he didn't mind it at all. I don't know. I never heard him complain.

Dunham: Were you aware at the time that there were free Japanese living in Utah, outside the camps?

02-00:07:34

Kimura: Yeah, yeah.

Dunham: It's a strange thing, in a way, right?

02-00:07:39

Kimura: I know.

Dunham: You're there incarcerated, and yet there are Japanese—

02-00:07:44  
Kimura: Exactly.

Dunham: We've interviewed a woman whose father was working in a defense industry plant outside of Salt Lake City. So it's—

02-00:07:52  
Kimura: Weird, huh?

Dunham: Yeah, absolutely.

02-00:07:54  
Kimura: There were Nisei who worked in a defense plant. Bausch and Lomb had something to do with armaments or something; I don't know what it was, but whatever. They had Nisei working there.

Dunham: Where was that?

02-00:08:12  
Kimura: In Rochester.

Dunham: When you went there. So did you meet up with them?

02-00:08:25  
Kimura: No.

Dunham: How did you hear of that?

02-00:08:18  
Kimura: I don't know how.

Dunham: Is there anything else about the camp experience, your time there, that you want to share with us?

02-00:08:38  
Kimura: Well, winter was really bad, with all the slush and stuff like that. We would have to go pretty far, from our block to the co-op, to buy little things.

Dunham: What was heating like?

02-00:08:59  
Kimura: Oh, we had the potbelly Ben Franklin stove, which we had fuel for. I don't remember what kind. It must've been wood, huh? Not coal. I don't think coal.

Dunham: What about movies at the camp? Did you have movie screenings?

02-00:09:18  
Kimura: Oh, yes, we did. We did. Saturday night, they would have a movie.

Dunham: What kind of movies were these, American or Japanese or both?

02-00:09:26  
Kimura: American, mostly American.

Dunham: Did you ever have Japanese films?

02-00:09:31  
Kimura: I don't think so.

Dunham: When you went to Rochester, did you ever get to go to the movies?

02-00:09:38  
Kimura: Once in a blue moon, I think we did, I did.

Dunham: Did they have the newsreels and/or cartoons?

Fukumoto: Depicting wartime or Japanese?

02-00:09:50  
Kimura: I think they had—.

Dunham: Yeah. I'm particularly curious, Candice mentioned, because there were the very dehumanizing cartoons, depicting Japanese—

02-00:09:58  
Kimura: Ah. Oh, yeah. I see what you mean.

Dunham: And so I just wondered if you ever saw that, and if so, what that was like to see.

02-00:10:04  
Kimura: No, I don't think so. I think they would've made an impression. I don't believe, yeah.

Fukumoto: So if you don't mind, if we can move forward. So after Rochester, your father wants you to come back to Richmond. But that's just you and your older sister who went back to right, is that right?

02-00:10:34  
Kimura: Right.

Fukumoto: So what was that experience like, going back to Richmond after Rochester?

02-00:10:41  
Kimura: Well, it was nice to get back. We landed in Richmond, on the train. It was a beautiful morning, and it was clear, and San Francisco was, oh, just—it was a very nice experience, at just that point. But then after we got back—in the meantime, my father had gotten—well, when they got back, they said that the house was such a mess. They had to wash the walls down with a hose. But by the time we got back, he had had wallpaper put up. I don't know how he

managed that, but he did. Things were pretty much getting back to normal, by the time we got back.

Dunham: When was this? Do you know about when this was?

02-00:11:46

Kimura: In '45. October. Meriko and I got back in October; they got back in July.

Dunham: So you left school in the spring?

02-00:11:58

Kimura: No, after summer.

Dunham: You were there the full year, but you had just—in the summer, did you—?

02-00:12:07

Kimura: I went to work for this reverend and his wife. They had a place in Long Island they had just bought. It was in Shelter Island. At the end of Long Island, there's a little island called Shelter Island. It's at the end; there's a bay around it. You could only get there by ferry. Because I had had mumps and I was really pretty weak yet, so they didn't think I should try to get a job doing any menial labor. So I went as an assistant housekeeper or something. But they had two adopted boys. They were an older couple, and the younger boy was fourteen, and the older boy was seventeen. But they were no problem. They weren't a problem at all. Then I didn't have any real contact with them, except the younger boy, he was able to play bridge with. He played bridge. I didn't really do much work. It was very low key, because it was a summer place. It was very new for them.

Dunham: Did you get to explore Long Island or visit New York City?

02-00:13:49

Kimura: Well, now, my family friend from Richmond, one of the Kawai girls, the oldest one, was a very good artist, and she worked in New York City. So I was able to go to New York City, because coming over from Rochester, Reverend Burr and his wife had to stop at Skaneateles. Have you heard of that place? It's the home of a famous general; I can't remember his name now. But anyway, they had to pick up a sailboat for their seventeen-year-old boy. It was going to be a birthday present, a sailboat. So in the meantime, traveling with a trailer like that, they lost my bag with my shoes in it. In those days, you had to have a shoe coupon, a ration coupon. So then Mrs. Burr gave me her ration coupon, so I could buy some shoes. So my friend Mary invited me to stay with her one weekend in New York City. So I was allowed to go.

Fukumoto: That was fun.

02-00:15:16

Kimura: It was the old railroad, Long Island Railroad. That was really nice. She treated me so nicely. Treated me to a Broadway show and a movie and dinners.

Dunham: Do you remember either the movie or the show you saw?

02-00:15:39

Kimura: The movie? Oh, at Radio City Music Hall. I don't remember anything other than the girls, and one girl goofing. That was really something. But the play was—Nanette Fabray was in it. Oh, dear. The Broadway show, I have that—

Dunham: Oh, yeah, the playbill?

02-00:16:06

Kimura: Yeah. Oh, well.

Dunham: Yeah, okay. What kind of artist was your friend?

02-00:16:11

Kimura: She used to do illustrations for a professor at Berkeley, of internal organs and everything. All kinds of things.

Dunham: What was her name?

02-00:16:24

Kimura: But of course, that probably wasn't her desire. Her name was Mary Kawai, Mary Chie Kawai. But none of the Kawais are around here. They're almost all gone, I guess. No, wait a minute, there's two left, but they have each dementia or something like that, so they don't—they see us and they—

Fukumoto: Don't remember, yeah.

02-00:16:51

Kimura: Blank, yeah. It's sad.

Dunham: Was it on your way home from Rochester, that you visited your sister in Minnesota?

02-00:16:59

Kimura: Yes. St. Paul.

Dunham: What was that like? She was there because her husband was in the Military Intelligence [Language] School?

02-00:17:04

Kimura: Right, yeah.

Dunham: Okay. So what was that experience—?

02-00:17:07

Kimura: Oh, that was fun. We got to eat all this wonderful ice cream. You know Minnesota. Got fat. I'd never been that fat in my life.



Dunham: I obviously love ice cream. What was so special about this ice cream? I've never been.

02-00:17:25

Kimura: Oh, Minnesota is famous for dairy. Yeah, I had to pin my skirt. Oh!

Dunham: I guess I better never go.

Fukumoto: Oh, no. We better miss that trip to Minnesota.

02-00:17:36

Kimura: Yes. Stick to yogurt.

Dunham: Wow, ice cream in Minnesota. It was summertime, too, right? So that helped.

02-00:17:43

Kimura: Yes, it was September. No, end of September.

Dunham: Oh, September, okay.

Fukumoto: But still, perfect time.

02-00:17:50

Kimura: I think it was the end of September, because we got home in October. It's got to be.

Dunham: So you were there for a while?

02-00:17:57

Kimura: We were there a few days, yeah. So we were given a stipend of so much to travel back, yeah, from the WRA. So that was good.

Fukumoto: So what did you do when you reached Richmond? Did you work? Did you just get adjusted back to Richmond life?

02-00:18:22

Kimura: Yeah, just trying to—yeah. We had no car, at that point.

Dunham: Did you immediately see that Richmond had transformed incredibly?

02-00:18:37

Kimura: Oh, well, I experienced that after Pearl Harbor. Because when I went back to school in January, there were no seats available, almost, in the school. And there were a lot of black people, which we had never experienced seeing, almost, because we didn't spend that much time in downtown Richmond. We would've seen more, because Pullman, the train company, has quarters in there, and the Santa Fe Railway, and the other one—oh, anyway; Union Pacific, I guess—were down there, and it's a lot of people. A lot of blacks were being employed by them. But we never saw them in school. I never saw a black person in my time in Richmond schools, other than after Pearl Harbor.

Dunham: Okay. So you were in the Richmond schools in January.

02-00:19:51  
Kimura: Oh, yeah.

Dunham: You hadn't yet gone to the Half Moon Bay area.

02-00:19:53  
Kimura: No, no. We went to school, yeah.

Dunham: So it was sometime January, February, that you went?

02-00:19:59  
Kimura: February, yeah. February 19.

Dunham: And they were also from the South, predominantly.

02-00:20:07  
Kimura: Probably. And then of course, a lot of white people.

Dunham: Right, also coming from the South, yeah, to work in the shipyards.

02-00:20:11  
Kimura: Okies, we called them. Yeah.

Dunham: What was that like, with all these new students then, and different races? Were there tensions around that?

02-00:20:20  
Kimura: I didn't notice tensions, but the crowding was definitely—

Dunham: It was just really crowded.

02-00:20:27  
Kimura: Yeah. Yeah.

Dunham: Did that affect things outside of school, even getting back in January, how crowded it was and all these new folks?

02-00:20:35  
Kimura: I don't remember that.

Dunham: You mentioned when we were in between tapes, having watchdogs at the nursery. That was for security then?

02-00:20:48  
Kimura: Yes.

Dunham: Was there ever vandalism or incidents at the nursery?

02-00:20:52

Kimura: No, no.

Dunham: But that was a concern—

02-00:20:55

Kimura: Yeah.

Dunham: —that there could be, just as a businessman. So you're back in Richmond. I guess it's begun to go back down a little, but it had grown from 20,000 to 120,000 during the peak of the war. What else did you notice when you got back?

02-00:21:18

Kimura: Well, the lack of availability of a car was very noticeable. My mother, when we weren't home yet, she would have to walk all the way to the store. The closest store was quite a few blocks away for her. But other than that—and the buses were very crowded. I don't remember. And then in October, I started working. Asako and I both started jobs. Let's see, did she get back in time? I guess she was. I think we went together to the employment office. Isn't that terrible? I can't remember. And of course, she did better than I, by typing. I couldn't type very well. She had had a job that you have to type, so she was a lot more efficient, proficient, whatever the word is.

Dunham: So what job did you get?

02-00:22:37

Kimura: So I got a job as a typist. I can't believe that, but anyway, I did. Clerk typist. So I did more clerical stuff, for the government. And she worked for IRS, investigative, typing. So she got a grade two and I was a grade one.

Fukumoto: But at least you got a job, right?

02-00:23:02

Kimura: Yeah, I got a job. They had a couple of other Japanese girls there.

Dunham: Were there more Japanese in Richmond when you returned?

02-00:23:14

Kimura: Yes, because they had federal housing for them. The camps closing, they had to have a place to put them. So they had federal housing right between El Cerrito and Richmond. You know where the—no, you wouldn't know. Del Norte BART, that area. Whole bunch of them.

Dunham: Had that been wartime housing then, that was converted to—?

02-00:23:40

Kimura: I think that was. I think that was some kind of housing, federal housing.

Dunham: But you were back at your previous home.

02-00:23:52

Kimura: Yes.

Dunham:

Your father had cleaned it up. So what had it been? You said he had leased to a—?

02-00:23:57

Kimura: Chinese man.

Dunham:

Then what happened upon return, for the property and the business?

02-00:24:04

Kimura: Well, he must've started right in, getting it back into shape.

Fukumoto:

So you started growing carnations again?

02-00:24:13

Kimura: Yeah, yeah.

Fukumoto:

And how long did that stay, the carnation business? You guys return in 1945.

02-00:24:24

Kimura: He left in '61.

Fukumoto:

That was after your—

02-00:24:31

Kimura: My mother passed away.

Fukumoto:

—mother passed away, and then he went back to Japan.

02-00:24:36

Kimura: Yeah. Yeah. And Meriko came to stay with us. So she was here for thirty years with us. Thirty years from Carquinez. We used to live in El Cerrito, up there in the hills.

Dunham:

Was that hard, when your father left?

02-00:24:58

Kimura: Well, I guess it was, for her anyway. She went to Heald College for a while, to try to get some skills. But she was already forty, I think. Something like that. Yeah, it was hard on her. But she was very helpful. My husband did not want me to go back to work, when we had our first child.

Dunham:

You told us earlier, off camera, about how you met your husband. Can you tell us that story? I know it had to do with the I House [International House].

02-00:25:40

Kimura: Well, you know the JCL, right? They had a district council meeting in the Bay Area. And my friend invited my husband, so that he could get acquainted with

some of the people in this area, to go to the district council meeting. She asked me why don't I go and help register. I don't know if she had an ulterior motive, she was setting me up. But anyway, so that's how I met him, at that council meeting. They had a dinner. So I think we sat near each other somewhere. Then they had a dance, and that's where I first—we had two dances, I think.

Dunham: Had you been involved with the JCL then, upon your return?

02-00:26:43

Kimura: I guess. Well, I was kind of helping. They had some kind of thing where they had us go and help some of the Isseis with some kind of—what was it? A questionnaire or something. Something to do with a survey of something to do with the government. I think Meriko and I both helped with that. Why Meriko didn't go to the district council—she was saying, “How come I didn't go?” I said, “I don't know.”

Fukumoto: What year was this, when you met your husband?

02-00:27:28

Kimura: What year? '51. '51.

Fukumoto: So then you dated, and then you got married—

02-00:27:37

Kimura: In '52, April. We just finished our anniversary, come to think of it, sixth of April. What does that make it? '52 and what is this year, '14?

Dunham: Oh, '14, yeah, so sixty-two years, is that right? It would be sixty-two, yeah.

Fukumoto: That's fantastic.

Dunham: So your husband, you mentioned, is from Kauai.

02-00:28:10

Kimura: Yes.

Dunham: So was he in Kauai during the war years?

02-00:28:13

Kimura: When Pearl Harbor happened, they were playing baseball, practicing baseball. In Hawaii, it's good that they have these senior leagues, and seniors got to play. So he was all of twenty-three, or maybe twenty-four, when that happened. It was about eight-something, Pearl Harbor. They all, oh, my gosh. But he was in Kauai, so it wasn't like Daniel Inouye; he was right there.

Dunham: So beside from playing baseball that day, what was he doing as a young man?

02-00:29:01  
Kimura: At that point, he was employed as a carpenter, helping this—what do you call them, contractor? Build homes.

Dunham: Did he continue with that work through the war, or did that his course?

02-00:29:18  
Kimura: No, no, he eventually volunteered for the 442<sup>nd</sup>, the following year, '43.

Dunham: Did he share much of that experience with you?

02-00:29:30  
Kimura: No, not too much.

Dunham: No. Yeah, a lot of people don't talk about the war.

02-00:29:33  
Kimura: Yeah.

Dunham: But they lost a lot of their peers.

02-00:29:40  
Kimura: Of course, we went for a few reunions; but as time went by, we didn't go because we couldn't afford it, number one.

Dunham: Did he ever say anything of knowing of any people in Hawaii who had been incarcerated? Because although it wasn't common, somewhat like how right away some folks were rounded up here, the quote/unquote "community leaders".

02-00:30:02  
Kimura: Right, right.

Fukumoto: Like leaders.

Dunham: There were some people. There's a new documentary that discusses that, the camps in Hawaii.

02-00:30:12  
Kimura: He never talked about it, but he mentioned once or twice, I think, about some of the Buddhist priests and so forth. Like in Richmond, too, the FBI took in a lot of guys that you couldn't believe that they would be worth picking up. It's really incredible. Couldn't believe it.

Dunham: When you were in camp and during the war, did you have any idea where some of those folks who were picked up right away were?

02-00:30:48  
Kimura: Well, most of them were released before they even got incarcerated, really. Old Mr. Adachi was one of them, and Honda and {Beda?}. I don't know,

quite a few. But they were Oshima. Because they were active in their Ken, the province group that they would form here. Yeah. But my father stopped being active, after he stopped going to the flower market, because the flower market, he had someone pick up his flowers, rather than going to San Francisco. So he stopped being active, and I think that kind of saved him, I don't know.

Dunham: There was one woman who we interviewed whose father was taken right away, and she didn't know where he was all through the war.

02-00:31:42  
Kimura:

Just terrible.

Dunham: They had no contact. Her mother was really distraught all through camp.

02-00:31:49  
Kimura:

Oh, that's terrible.

Fukumoto:

It was very hard.

02-00:31:54  
Kimura:

The kind that passed away, in Heart Mountain or wherever they were. Yeah, my friend's father died in one of those places, because he was a Buddhist—what do you call them, bishop or something? I don't know. Yeah.

Dunham: So with there being a lot more Japanese—we talked about you being involved with the JCL some, but in the immediate community, you were more, then, connected with sort of the Japanese-American community after the war, would you say?

02-00:32:32  
Kimura:

Not necessarily. Not really.

Dunham: What was your community then? Was it more diverse, sort of your friends and colleagues?

02-00:32:38  
Kimura:

Well, not really. Right now it's more diverse because of my music group, but it has shrunk. We're all getting old.

Dunham: When did you resume playing the violin?

02-00:32:55  
Kimura:

Oh, shortly after we got back, after earning a little bit of money.

Dunham: Yeah, yeah. So you took lessons, and then when did you join a group?

02-00:33:10  
Kimura:

Well, I got into the UC Berkeley Symphony, the very last row. [they laugh] Second violin.

Dunham: Still.

Fukumoto: Hey, but at least you're still in it.

02-00:33:24

Kimura: No, no, not anymore. Now we have a little club in Richmond.

Dunham: How long were you in the UC Berkeley Symphony?

02-00:33:32

Kimura: Oh, not very long, because I got married, and that was it. He had no interest in music or that kind of thing, so that was that.

Dunham: So did you not play at all for some time?

02-00:33:48

Kimura: Yeah. Kept it a deep, dark secret. [laughs] No.

Dunham: But did you miss it?

02-00:33:54

Kimura: Yeah, kind of.

Dunham: Yeah. When did you resume working for the government? Because you did have a long career, right?

02-00:34:03

Kimura: Oh, no. Just thirteen years. I quit when Mark was born, '59.

Fukumoto: So then you devoted yourself to caretaking for your kids and—?

02-00:34:19

Kimura: Yeah, my husband did not want me to work.

Dunham: Was there anything else you'd like to add today?

02-00:34:38

Kimura: No, not really.

Dunham: Reflecting back, I'm thinking about just what your perspective was on the war experience, particularly with how Japanese Americans were treated—which obviously varied, depending on what part of the country you were in, or in Hawaii, to some extent. But certainly, you experienced a very harsh interruption and incarceration in your life. So looking back, how do you think of that?

02-00:35:11

Kimura: Well, I don't really like to dwell on it, really. I think I'd like to forget it. It's too bad that they didn't start these oral histories long ago.



Dunham: Well, fortunately, there are some others that were done. But part of it was the very thing you just mentioned, difficulty discussing it and not wanting to dwell on it.

02-00:35:46

Kimura: Yeah, just like the soldiers and sailors and whatever.

Dunham: Yeah. Because it's a traumatic experience, so it can be hard to talk about. But it's important that this history be carried forward. It did make me think, when you talked about you and Meriko doing the surveys of the Issei. Do you recall what that was focused on?

02-00:36:06

Kimura: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to think of.

Dunham: Oh, you were trying to remember the subjects.

02-00:36:09

Kimura: Yeah.

Dunham: Did it have to do with returning from the camps?

02-00:36:12

Kimura: Oh, I think it was trying to get them to inventory their losses. I think that was it.

Fukumoto: Was that during the reparations, then? Like in the eighties, or earlier?

Dunham: This was much earlier.

02-00:36:26

Kimura: Yeah, it had to be back in the '45, '46 era, I think. Maybe I'm wrong. Yeah, it might be, maybe, closer to '50.

Dunham: Yeah. But before you met your husband.

02-00:36:42

Kimura: Yeah, yeah.

Dunham: What about for your family? What would be the inventory of losses? Do you have a sense of that?

02-00:36:50

Kimura: Oh, no. No. I know the room that they put all the stuff in was all gone.

Dunham: Do you remember, in interviewing the Issei, how they were doing or what their return sort of was like?

02-00:37:20

Kimura: Oh, not really.

Dunham: I was just curious, in case you had any memories of that. I know your father introduced a love of the outdoors to you. Did you continue, through your life, to spend time in nature? Not so much? Your husband from Kauai wasn't a big fan of the outdoors?

02-00:37:44

Kimura: No. No. He liked to play tennis. Somehow, a bunch of guys got him involved in tennis.

Dunham: Did you play?

02-00:37:58

Kimura: Yeah, I could play. Not well, but—

Dunham: Well, it's fun. Did you continue to play bridge?

02-00:38:05

Kimura: Yeah. Well, we learned bridge in camp. It was terrible bridge. We played Culbertson, which nobody heard of before, Culbertson bridge. That was before Goren. Goren was a later method. Much easier. [Ely] Culbertson would assign values like one-fourth—all kinds of fractions. That was just too much for me. But I would struggle for the cause.

Fukumoto: It sounds horrible. Right.

02-00:38:45

Kimura: But with Charles Goren, he had very reasonable values to a card. One, two, three, whatever. Oh, boy. So that made it much simpler, and so I could cope with that. But it's a good game.

Dunham: I've only heard the one, two, three, four points. I've never heard of fractions.

02-00:39:10

Kimura: Yeah, in Goren.

Fukumoto: It sounds horrible.

02-00:39:13

Kimura: Yeah, it was horrible. Exactly, yeah. Maybe it was a teaching thing, but not for me.

Fukumoto: Maybe. Oh, that does not sound like fun.

02-00:39:26

Kimura: No.

Dunham: Were there any last questions that you had, Candice?

Fukumoto: No. Thank you, this is—

02-00:39:32

Kimura: Forever hold your peace.

Fukumoto: No, this was really a wonderful interview. Thank you so much for your time.

Dunham: Yeah, thank you. Thank you very much. We'll close there.

[End of interview]