

6:10

Kuratori, Singer

Interview

June, 1981

(Joyce Kunitani)

83/115

C

~~June 6, 1981~~

12, 7, 10.

October.

the pregnant
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~~had been engaging in a sit down strike~~ ^{strike} at the Internal
Security Office, insisting that her husband be released from the stockade.
On July 13, I attended a ~~xxx~~ small staff party celebrating Dr. Marvin Opler's
birthday. A messenger arrived with the news that Joyce had been delivered of
a six pound girl. Mr. Robertsen immediately went to the stockade to see
that ~~George~~ George was told about this. ~~But~~ But when Mr. Robertsen
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2.
Mr. Kunitani

He and other ~~XXXXXX~~ "detainees" were finally released thought the effort of Ernest Besig of the American Civil Liberties Union.

From mid-September of 1944 until May of 1945 I had many talks with Mr. Kunitani. He impressed me as being a very scrupulous, sensitive, and intelligent man. I recall that at our first meeting when we discussing the July hunger strike, ^{he} said: "Our motives ~~XXXXXX~~ never was so much our release, but rather to prove our innocence. . . If accused, we wanted proof of our guilt." The information and documents he gave me contributed, in large part, to the extensive and detailed account ~~in~~ of the political events of the period, October 1943 to January 1944, presented in "The Spoilage".

Kunitani

In 1946, Mr. ~~XXXXXX KXXXXXX~~, accompanied by his wife and child, visited me at the University of Chicago. I introduced him to several of my professors. He was shy and diffident and said very little. I did not know what he had left Tule Lake without employment. After he and his wife had settled in a small town in Pennsylvania, we exchanged Christmas cards and

In 1971,
occasional notes. /When my "Doing Fieldwork" was published, I sent him a
copy and he responded with the following letter:

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Dear Folks:

I acknowledge receipt of your book "Doing Fieldwork" with great
appreciation. I came to realize how little we came to really know each
other. Oh, how I wish you had been at Tule Lake from the time the
very first train load of segregants arrived at that miserably
administered compound.

Whether Robertson realized or not, he was the only administration
personnel I had any faith. At least he had decency. Shame that Joe
Kurihara and I never met. We were both to blame for that.

My youngest son and I went to Japan in April with ~~Sixty~~
Joyce's / father. It will be interesting to watch ~~Japan~~ Japan's course
in the world trade. She has to buy raw materials from foreign countries,
and she has to sell finished products all over the world. Therein
lies her problem.

Thanks again for the book. I am enjoying reading it.

Merry Christmas,

George

After I moved to St. Louis in 1973, I wrote George, giving him my new address.
His daughter responded, telling me that he was dying of cancer.

At Tule Lake I did not come to know ~~him~~ Joyce well, in part because so many
much of our conversation dealt with complex political matters or events about
which only George was informed. But I do recall that she was the only Japanese
American who ^{I heard} expressed regret over the death of President Roosevelt.

Talk with Joyce Kunitani, 1981

Joyce Kunitani was born in Placer County, California, on April 17, ;022

INTERVIEW

(Her son Ernie answers the phone and calls her, saying, it's Rosalie Wax.)

Joyce Kunitani: Oh! My Goodnees!

Rosalie Wax: Hello?

SK. Yes?

RW. Hello, here I am, and I would be so happy if you would talk ~~t/t/~~ ~~XXXXXX~~

to me about your life in the camp. ~~if you want to~~

This will be anonymous, if you prefer. And, if you ~~you~~ like, I'll send

you a copy of ~~xxxxx~~ the transcription and you can correct it.

SK KK ~~KKKKKKKKKK~~ (gently) OK.

HW. I want to ~~for~~ feel free and tell you that there's no questions that you have to ~~answer~~ answer. Also I'd be very happy if you tell me any questions I should have asked you. And perhaps I should be more polite and say that I remember our talks in the camp with pleasure. George was a very ~~fine~~ fine man. ~~and~~ ^{He} he helped me a great deal, and ~~he~~ he was an honorable man.

SK: Is this the actual report?

RW: Well, I was given a Fellowship by the Rockefeller Foundation.

KXXKX

JK: I see.

R. W: Would you like to tell me anything about your life before you went into the ~~Rukunabin~~~~Antars~~ relocation centers?

J. K. Oh, my goodness. I was just a ~~XXXXXX~~ school girl.

RW: You were really carefree?

JK: Right!

RW: And was there any . . .

JK: (interrupts) And I ~~xxxk~~ didn't really get cares until the No-No (Military Registration) came up, and you had to make a decision.
that happened

RW: Was there anything/in the Assembly Centers that makes you feel good today
when you think about it?

JK: Ummm. . (pause) I really like to forget the past. . . ,bygone is bygone. . .

4a.
~~JOYCE KUNITANI~~

Joyce Kunitani was born in Lewis, California, in 1922. When I asked her if she would care to tell me ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ anything about her life before the evacuation, she replied, "Oh my goodness, I was just a school girl."

R. Wax: What grade were you in?

J. Kunitani: ~~I was just a school girl.~~ Oh, I was out. I had just gone to Sacramento Junior College, but I had dropped out.

R. Wax: What were your hopes for the future?

J. Kunitani: What I did was ~~xxxx~~ apply for a nursing job. A Navy nurse. . . But they wouldn't let me in.

R. Wax: They wouldn't let you in?

J. Kunitani: (meaningfully and with emphasis) Not in 1941.

* * * * *

R. Wax: Can you tell me how you felt when you heard the government

announcement that the Japanese people were ordered to leave their homes and report to Assembly Centers?

J. Kunitani: (~~xxxxx~~ laughs softly) I was a Chinese for a while. (laughs)

And then I figured I was breaking the law, so I thought as well . . . (laughs)

R. Wax: You figured you might as well...?

J. Kunitani: Yeah. . . .

R. Wax: ~~Arummmmmmm~~ To which Assembly Center were you sent?

J. Kunitani: Santa Anita/

R. Wax: Are there any experiences in Santa Anita that you recall very strongly?

J. Kunitani: (long pause) Nope. . . I was really carefree.

RW: You said you were carefree?

JK: Ummm. . . (pause) I really like to forget the past. . . hygiene is hygiene.

I tried to introduce the subject of ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ life in the Relocation Center, but ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ Mrs. Kunitani began to talk about ~~xxxx~~ "The Redress", ~~xxxx~~ saying that some people were "really strong when they report. ~~w/~~ "Whew!", but that she would "like to forgive the government and forget about it."

She then told me that she had met George in the Assembly Center, "I had a crush on him," and that they had both been sent to the Jerome Relocation Center. I then said:

RW: It must have been in Jerome that they had this No-No business. . the Military Questionnaire.

JK: ~~xxxxxx~~ Um-hum. . (long pause) Well, I certainly didn't want to answer it.

I wanted to ignore it. I figured that I was safe because I was a citizen/ (laughs).

R.W.: Your feeling was that you didn't want to answer it?

JK: That it didn't pertain to me at all. . . But it did... So I didn't know what to do. . I left it blank. I refused to answer.

RW: For yourself, how did you manage to cope with this experience?

JK: I came out on the good end.

RW: Good for you.

JK: And my children. .

~~They've all gone through college, and they're all making a nice~~

living. I got nothing to complain, you know, nothing to ~~xx~~ complain about it. . . Four grandchildren! . . My daughter was in New York for two years.

RW: That's wonderful. . .

~~Now~~ Now let me see. . can you remember how you felt when you knew that you were going to Tule Lake?

SK: That's the one. . . my family was in Tule Lake.

RW: Then you were really happy about it?

SK: Yes. . . I was looking forward to it.

RW: And after you got there - are there any incidents that come to your mind that you'd like to tell me about?

SK: I think ~~xx~~ "The Spoilage" (The book by Thomas and Nishimoto) covered it ~~xxxx~~ pretty good.

RW: Ø Good for you for reading it. Of course, you also have the book I wrote.

JF: Um-hum/ Yes. the "Fieldwork". I enjoyed reading it. My children ~~my~~ enjoyed that.

Since Mrs. Kunitani did not seem to want ~~xxxxxx~~ to talk about incidents at Tule Lake I ~~xxxx~~ asked her:

RW: Was there ~~xx~~ any person at Tule Lake whom you very much respected?

JK: Admired, ... admired... ~~ME~~ Mrs. Abe.

RW: What was it that you admired about her?

JK: Oh-h-h. She was a minister's wife . . She was a Nisei, so we get along better, you know . . there's no gap.

RW: And did you see a good deal of her?

JK: Yes/

RW: You could call her your friend?

JK: Um-hum.

RW: That must have been a big help in camp to have a friend/

JK: A very close friend. . we were or less stick together because they were both in the stockade - they were both hiding, and got their plans.

~~(Both Reverend Abe and Mr. Kuratomi were leaders of the Daiho Sxx~~

~~She Kain ~~xxxxxx~~ and both were imprisoned in the stockade.)~~

~~*****~~

R. Wax: As you look on your life at Tule Lake, which experiences have affected you most deeply?

J. Kunitani: Ah - you have the fighting spirit - ~~IX~~ that's what the Americans have - the fighting spirit inside of them - like you're not docile like the Japanese women supposed to be. Something special, you're ~~xxxxxx~~ going to stand up for it.

R. Wax: Are you talking about yourself?

J. Kunitani: (decisively) Yes! You got the spirit now. If I had not been at Tule Lake, I'd ~~xxxxxxx~~ probably be like ~~xxx~~ any Japanese

woman ~~xxxx~~ now, Hai hai (Yes, Yes), to the master, and you know how.

R. Wax: You feel that Tule Lake helped you get this fighting spirit?

J. Kunitani: Yes. If my boss doesn't treat me like he should. Then I stand up for it. . Let him know!

RW: Good for you. Me too.

JK: Let him know!

~~XXXXXXXX~~

RW : One must take care of oneself, I always say.

JK: (chuckles appreciatively)

RW: Now let me see . . . having been at Tule Lake

I knew you must have had a number of painful experiences, Looking

back at what happened at Tule Lake, which was ~~xxxx~~ the most painful?

S. Kunitani: Oh. . . the most ~~xxxxxxx~~ painful one. The day of discharge (from

the ~~xxxxxxx~~ hospital) when Yuri was born, we went to the fence, and my husband came to the fence, and we were visiting, ~~xxxxxx~~. . . And - I guess it was an MP ~~xxxxxx~~ - came and dragged me and an MP came and dragged him away. . . it was painful.

RWE You mean the police came and dragged you away. Oh dear.

JK: It's nothing. It really isn't. But it was painful at the time. But now I look at it, I can laugh.

RW: I think I know what you mean - but at the time. . .

JK: It was painful.

RW: Are there any other experiences you'd like to tell me about?

JK: I pursued some courses that I never would of if I weren't in camp.

Flower arrangement. . . and there were so many ~~xxx~~ crafts, Japanese

crafts in America. . . there were these that would carve wood and

make tigers just out of a block of wood.

RW: Beautiful. I know some people gave me these ~~xxxxxxx~~ beautiful shell

flowers. I still have them.

JK: Oh yes! Shell flowers.

R. Wax: Was there anything that happened to you at Tule Lake that helped you to become a ~~xxx~~ wiser or a better person?

J. Kunitani: (long pause) The experience^{nce} definitely made you wiser. Most of them.

R. Wax: In what way?

S. Kunitani* (assertively) That - they won't be put in a camp the next time. (Very assertively) That there will not be a second time. . . Definitely!

R.W., I'm glad to hear you say that You know,

~~R. Wax:~~ I had to leave Tule Lake on May 1945 and I know very little about what happened to the people from that time until they left Tule Lake, and looking back....

J. Kunitani: (Interruets)

JK: My husband didn't get involved, once he was released.

RW: I see.

JK: No. . . They wanted him to be a chairman again, he said No. And we just led a normal life after that. . . after he was released.

RW: And this was. . .

JK: Oh, it was in August.

RW: Yes. I was thinking of the next year, just before you left Tule Lake, if there was anything that happened then. . . (long pause, no response) He visited me in Chicago, I know.

JK: Uh-huh. (no response)

~~I excluded that~~ ^{It was clear} decided at this point that Mrs. Kunitani did not wish to talk about this period. /
of camp life.

June 6, 1981

JOYCE KUNITANI 1

la
Baby

Joyce Kunitatani is the wife of one of the most important leaders of the October-November uprising at Tule Lake. George Kunitani served as chairman of the Negotiating Committee of the Daihyo Sha Kai (People's Representative Body).

On November 13, the Army declared martial law and began to arrest

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

In the camp period

Thinking back today, on what happened in the camps and on what you did when you were in the camps, how do you feel about ~~yourz~~ the way you acted -- are you pleased with yourself or are you critical of yourself?

In what way would you change the way you behaved when you were in the camps?

Effect of the camps

Family

For some people, the camp experience helped to strengthen their families; for other people, the camp experience helped to break up their families.. What happened in your case?

never report + return - not free to me?

Government

Most of the people I have talked with have swung back and forth ~~very far~~ in their attitudes toward the U.S. GOvernment. How was your faith in the US Government affected by your internment experience?

Life & career

As you think back over what you ~~achieved~~ in your life time, ~~has~~ ~~the camp experience helped youz~~ in what way did the camp experience help you and in what way did the camp experience hurt you?

Some people think of the ~~campz~~ years they spent in camp as "lost years" Do you feel that way about those years?

Do you feel that you have ~~had~~ to work especially hard in your life in order to make up for the years spent in the camps?

As you think about yourself and your sense of stability and security, do you feel that the camp experience left you with a sense of insecurity and even damage? *To this day?*

Singer Kuratomi-

- p. 1 - Husband was a fighter and would fight for redress
I'm just the opposite - let- bygones be bygones.
- p. 2 - applied for ~~xxxxing~~ Navy nurse but rejected - in 1941 -
- p. 4 - when heard ~~xx~~ about proposed evacuation posed as a Chinese for a while.
was really carefree at Santa Anita
Didn't get cares until NO-co came up and you had to make
a decision..

Mom and Dad lost quite a bit but I didn't lose anything
I like to forgive the government and forget about it.

- p. 5 - Complex intrigue of how she stayed with George -
Military questionnaire - wanted to ignore it - figured I
was safe because I was a ~~xxx~~ citizen.
- 6 ambivalent - and so I left it blank.

I came out on the good end - children - nice living etc.
Tule Lake - My family was at Tule Lake. Really happy about it
Looking forward to it - (This is common in ~~int~~ other int.
see if Thomas and Nish. and Opler emphasize it sufficiently.

7. supported by Mrs. Kai
when men hidign - was the toughest period.
8. Indicates did not hate - Co-op leaders - had been raised with them
in Sacramento.
pities the poor fellow (Hitomi)
9. Most painful - with Baby and soldier.
- 10 - Joy in classes - flower arrangement - Japanese crafts -
very enthusiastic.

Nice answer to wise -- that they ~~xxxx~~ won't be put in a camp the
next time - There will not be a second time!

11. Philadelphia - and job.
Significant - she don't have any highpoints - her husband did -
describes house -
12. But you have a recurrence in your sleep. .. a nightmare - like
my husband being dragged about.

Tells about children etc. on p. 12.

Good question, - 11

504 Ross St.
Hematoma
Condersport, Pa. 16915

714.
area code

~~Ernie~~
Ernie 274-9827

~~Ruby~~
Ruby - 274-9715
Wesley 9715

Send questions first - perhaps not - see how people like it -

~~Nikki mention~~

zzNames - Try it - before end - names and addresses of other people at Tule Lake -

Put a notice in any papers read by Japanese Americans?

Nikki mention dxrbrother, Yuzuru at Michingan - telephone -

1 - 415 - 235 - 818 2

318 - 721 - 6898

Anonymous? -

Finished - 536

QUESTIONS FOR SINGER

Little recorder fell off phone did not get very end of interview

~~Like xxxxxx~~

~~xxxxxxx~~

~~xxxxxxx~~

~~xxxxxxx~~

You told me number of things George had ~~be~~ been or had done in the community of Cowdersport? - Membership accomplishments - Could you tell me again -

You yourself were working -- could you tell me what you do?

Had meant to ask you if you could ~~xxxxxxx~~ tell me names and addresses of any other people who were at Tule Lake who might not mind talking to me? Especially women?

If not - keep in mind and write me -- ask around for me?

Would you mind if send you a list of people I knew at Tule Lake? - Write me if you have any ideas how I might be able to get in touch with them? *Miss Nakano Tokyo?*

*When you met ~~xxxxxxx~~ and ~~xxxxxxx~~ -
how you felt when people talking
about him and the Co-op?*

- not clear on type -

*Were there ever any Japanese you were
afraid of?*

SINGER --

~~Following~~

some people ~~at first~~ I've talked to find that after the talk they think of ~~this thing that they would like to have~~ things that they wish to have experience that they would like to tell me. Some even called ~~me~~ me and told me -

Did you think of anything ~~you~~ you'd like to tell me -- ?

Tell me again about honors - George received -- things he had done for community --

Like again to hear what your children are going --

your parents George's parents

One thing I've always wondered -

Terrible time when George and other men were hiding -
George told me he wasn't caught because he knew they soldiers
rejected women --

Could you tell me ~~that~~ what really happened?

Ask if tired -

A few other questions --

George's parents - in a sister?

314-721-6848.

June 16, 1981

Singer Kuratomi
609 So. Main
Coudersport, PA 16916

Dear Singer:

I have been trying to reach some other of my old friends who helped me while I was at Tule Lake but I have had no success. I felt sad about this, but then I thought, "I'll write to Singer and that will make me feel better."

First of all, I'd like to ask you if you could give me the names and location of any people you know who were at Tule Lake and who might be willing to talk to me about how they feel about their experiences today.

I would especially like to talk to women, because I did not talk to enough women while I was in camp. (As you know, the ladies usually let the men do all the talking.) All I would need to know is their name and the city or town where they now live. But if you know their telephone numbers, great!

I would like to talk to May Iwohara again. She was Mr. Akitsuki's secretary and was married at Tule Lake, but I don't know her husband's name. I'd also like to talk to Mitzi Nakano, who had been a councilwoman at Topaz. She tried very hard to start a group for the young women in camp, and I felt she really had courage. Have you any idea where they might be?

I suspect that it may not be possible to find May or Mitzi, but I would also be happy to get the views of women I did not know (at Tule) because they could probably tell me much that I do not know.

I'm enclosing a stamped self-addressed envelope for your use. Hope they don't raise the postage rate tomorrow. Anyway, it was lovely talking to you and I'll keep in touch.

Your Admiring friend,

Rosalie H. Wax

P.S. I do feel better

INTERVIEW WITH SINGER KURATOMI

Date: June 6, 1981

EEEE Recorded by telephone

Wife of George Kuratomi (deceased)

609 So. Main

Coudersport, PA 16915

Telephone - Son, Ernie 814-274-9827

Son, Wesley 814-274- 9715

Born, Placer County, Calif. April 17, 1922

Son Ernie calls her/ to phone.

Ernie: Rosalie Wax.

SK; Oh! My Goodness!

RW. Hello?

DEAR FOLKS:

I ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF YOUR BOOK
"DOING FIELD WORK" WITH GREAT APPRECIATION.
I CAME TO REALIZE HOW LITTLE WE CAME TO
REALLY KNOW EACH OTHER. OH HOW I WISH YOU
HAD BEEN AT TULE LAKE FROM THE TIME THE
VERY FIRST TRAIN LOAD OF SEGREGANTS
ARRIVED AT THE MISERABLY ADMINISTERED
CONCUND.

WHETHER ROBERTSON REALIZED OR NOT,
HE WAS THE ONLY ADMINISTRATION PERSONNEL
I HAD ANY FAITH. AT LEAST HE HAD DEGENCY.
SHAME THAT JOE KARIHARA & I NEVER MET. WE
WERE BOTH TO BLAME FOR THAT.

MY YOUNGEST SON AND I WENT TO JAPAN IN
APRIL WITH SINGER'S FATHER. IT WILL BE INTERESTING
TO WATCH JAPAN'S COURSE IN THE WORLD TRADE. SHE HAS
TO BUY RAW MATERIALS FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES, AND
SHE HAS TO SELL FINISHED PRODUCTS ALL OVER THE
WORLD. THEREIN LIES HER PROBLEMS.

THANKS AGAIN FOR THE BOOK. I AM ENJOYING
READING IT.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

George

To wish you
a joyous Christmas
and happiness throughout
the coming year

SINGER AND GEORGE KURATOMI

to me - and this will be anonymous if you prefer, talk to me about
the camp, or, I'll send you a transfer of what I've written and ~~xxxx~~
you can correct it.

JOYCE KUNITANI
June 6, 1981

Joyce Kunitani is the wife of one of the most important leaders of the October-November uprising at Tule Lake. George Kunitani served as chairman of the Negotiating Committee of the Daihyo Sha Kai (People's Representative Body).

On November 13, the Army declared martial law and began to arrest the Negotiating Committee and other leaders of the Daihyo Sha Kai, confining them in a stockade. Mr. Kunitani, Reverend Abe, and three other leaders managed to go into hiding. After many attempts to continue negotiations, the hiding men, on December 1, gave themselves up to FBI. They were confined in a separate stockade in two tents which, at this time of year were very cold quarters. Kunitani was imprisoned in the stockade from eight months, that is, until August 1944.

In July of 1944, I heard that the pregnant Joyce Kunitani had been engaging in a sit down strike at the Internal Security Office, insisting that her husband be released from the stockade. On July 13, I attended a small staff party celebrating Dr. Marvin Opler's birthday. A messenger arrived with the news that Joyce had been delivered of a six pound girl. Mr. Robertson immediately went to the stockade to see that George was told about this. But when Mr. Robertson returned to the party he told us that the guard at the stockade had refused to tell George because "it wasn't important enough."

Mr. Kunitani and other "detainees" were finally released through the efforts of Ernest Bosig of the American Civil Liberties Union.

From mid-September of 1944 until May of 1945 I had many talks with Mr. Kunitani. He impressed me as being a very scrupulous, sensitive, and intelligent man. I recall that at our first meeting when we were discussing the July hunger strike, he said, "Our motive never was so much our release, but rather to prove our innocence. . . If accused, we wanted proof of our guilt." The information and documents he gave me contributed, in large part, to the extensive and detailed account of the political events of the period, October 1943 to January 1944, presented in "The Spoilage."

In 1946, Mr. Kunitani, accompanied by his wife and child, visited me at the University of Chicago. I introduced him to several of my professors. He was shy and diffident and said very little. I did not know that he had left Tule Lake without employment. After he and his wife had settled in a small town in Pennsylvania, we exchanged Christmas cards and occasional notes. In 1971, when my "Doing Fieldwork" was published, I sent him a copy and he responded with the following letter:

Dear Folks:

I acknowledge receipt of your book "Doing Fieldwork" with great appreciation. I came to realize how little we came to really know each other. Oh, how I wish you had been at Tule Lake from the time the very first train load of segregants arrived at that miserably administered compound.

Whether Robertson realized or not, he was the only administration personnel I had any faith. At least he had decency. Shame that Joe Kurihara and I never met. We were both to blame for that.

My youngest son and I went to Japan in April with Joyce's father. It will be interesting to watch Japan's course in the world trade. She has to buy raw materials from foreign countries, and she has to sell finished products all over the world. Therein lies her problem.

Thanks again for the book. I am enjoying reading it.

Merry Christmas,

George

After I moved to St. Louis in 1973, I wrote George, giving him my new address. His daughter responded, telling me that he was dying of cancer.

At Tule Lake I did not come to know Joyce well, in part because so many of our conversations dealt with complex political matters or events about which only George was informed. But I do recall that she was the only Japanese American who I heard express regret over the death of President Roosevelt.

Joyce Kunitani was born in Plaser County, California, on April 17, 1922.

INTERVIEW

(Her son, Ernie, answers the phone and calls her, saying, it's Rosalie Wax.)

JK: Oh! My Goodness!

RW: Hello?

JK: Yes?

RW: Hello, here I am, and I would be so happy if you would talk to me about your life in the camp. This will be anonymous, if you prefer. And, if you like, I'll send you a copy of the transcription and you can correct it.

JK: (gently) OK.

RW: There's no questions that you have to answer. Also I'd be very happy if you tell me any questions I should have asked you. And perhaps I should be more polite and say that I remember our talks in the camp with pleasure. George was a very fine man. He helped me a great deal. He was an honorable man.

JK: Is this the actual report?

RW: Well, I was given a fellowship by the Rockefeller Foundation.

JK: I see.

RW: Would you like to tell me anything about your life before you went into the re-^{you} e went
location centers?

JK: Oh, my goodness. I was just a school girl.

RW: What grade were you in?

JK: Oh, I was out. I had just gone to Sacramento Junior College, but I had dropped out.

RW: What were your hopes for the future?

JK: What I did was apply for a nursing job. A Navy nurse. . . But they wouldn't let me in.

RW: They wouldn't let your in?

JK: (meaningfully and with emphasis) Not in 1941.

RW: Can you tell me how you felt when you heard the government announcement that the Japanese people were ordered to leave their homes and report to Assembly Centers?

JK: (laughs softly) I was a Chinese for a while. (laughs) And then I figured I was breaking the law, so I thought as well. . . (laughs)

RW: You figured you might as well. . .

JK: Yeah. . .

RW: To which Assembly Center were you sent?

JK: Santa Anita.

RW: Are there any experiences in Santa Anita that you recall very strongly?

JK: (long pause) Nope. . . I was really carefree.

RW: You were really carefree?

JK: Right!

RW: And was there any. . .

JK: (interrupts) And I didn't really get cares until the No-No (Military Registration) came up, and you had to make a decision.

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She then told me that she had met George in the Assembly Center, "I had a crush on him," and that they had both been sent to the Jerome Relocation Center. I then said:

RW: It must have been in Jerome that they had this No-No business. . . the Military Questionnaire.

JK: Um-hum. . . (long pause) Well, I certainly didn't want to answer it. I wanted

to ignore it. I figured that I was safe because I was a citizen (laughs).

RW: Your feeling was that you didn't want to answer it?

JK: That it didn't pertain to me at all. . . But it did. . . So I didn't know what to do. . . I left it blank. I refused to answer.

RW: For yourself, how did you manage to cope with this experience?

JK: I came out on the good end.

RW: Good for you.

JK: And my children. . . They've all gone through college, and they're all making a nice living. I got nothing to complain about it. . . Four grandchildren! . . . My daughter was in New York for two years.

RW: That's wonderful. . . Now let me see. . . can you remember how you felt when you knew that you were going to Tule Lake?

JK: That's the one. . . my family was in Tule Lake.

RW: Then you were really happy about it?

JK: Yes. . . I was looking forward to it.

RW: And after you got there - are there any incidents that come to your mind that you'd like to tell me about?

JK: I think "The Spoilage" (The book by Thomas and Nishimoto) covered it pretty good.

RW: Good for you for reading it. Of course, you also have the book I wrote.

JK: Um-hum. Yes. The "Fieldwork." I enjoyed reading it. My children enjoyed that. Since Mrs. Kunitani did not seem to want to talk about incidents at Tule Lake I asked her:

RW: Was there any person at Tule Lake whom you very much respected?

JK: Admired, . . . admired. . . Mrs. Abe.

RW: What was it that you admired about her?

JK: Oh-h-h. She was a minister's wife. . . She was a Nisei, so we got along better, you know . . . there's no gap.

RW: And did you see a great deal of her?

JK: Yes.

RW: You could call her your friend?

JK: Um-hum.

RW: That must have been a big help in camp to have a friend.

JK: A very close friend. . .we more or less stick together because they were both in the stockade - they were both hiding, and got their plans.

RW: As you look on you life at Tule Lake, which experiences have affected you most deeply?

JK: Ah - you have the fighting spirit - that's what the Americans have - the fighting spirit inside of them - like you're not docile like the Japanese women are supposed to be. Something special, you're going to stand up for it.

RW: Are you talking about yourself?

JK: (decisively) Yes! You got the spirit now. If I had not been at Tule Lake, I'd probably be like any Japanese woman now, Hai hai (Yes, Yes), to the master, and you know how.

RW: You feel that Tule Lake helped you get this fighting spirit?

JK: Yes. If my boss doesn't treat me like he should. Then I stand up for it. . .
Let him know!

RW: Good for you. Me too.

JK: Let him know!

RW: One must take care of oneself, I always say.

JK: (Chuckles appreciatively).

RW: Now let me see . . .having been at Tule Lake I know you must have had a number of painful experiences. Looking back at what happened at Tule Lake, which was the most painful?

JK: Oh. . .the most painful one. The day of discharge from the hospital when Yuri was born, we went to the fence, and my husband came to the fence, and we were visiting, . . .and - I guess it was an MP - came and dragged me and an MP came

and dragged him away. . .It was painful.

RW: You mean the police came and dragged you away. Oh dear.

JK: It's nothing. It really isn't. But it was painful at the time. But now I look at it, I can laugh.

RW: I think I know what you mean - but at the time. . .

JK: It was painful.

RW: Are there any other experiences you'd like to tell me about?

JK: I pursued some courses that I never would of if I weren't in camp. Flower arrangement. . .and there were so many crafts, Japanese crafts in America. . .There were those that would carve wood and make tigers just out of a block of wood.

RW: Beautiful. I know some people gave me these beautiful shell flowers. I still have them.

JK: Oh yes! Shell flowers.

RW: Was there anything that happened to you at Tule Lake that helped you to become a wiser or a better person?

JK: (long pause) The experience definitely made you wiser. Most of them.

RW: In what way?

JK: (assertively) That - they won't be put in a camp the next time. (Very assertively) That there will not be a second time. . . Definitely!

RW: I'm glad to hear you say that. . .You know, I had to leave Tule Lake in May 1945, and I know little about what happened to the people from that time until they left Tule Lake, and looking back. . .

JK: (Interrupts) My husband didn't get involved, once he was released.

RW: I see.

JK: No. . .They wanted him to be a chairman again, he said No. And we just led a normal life after that. . .after he was released.

RW: And this was. . .

JK: Oh, it was in August.

RW: Yes. I was thinking of the next year, just before you left Tule Lake, if there was anything that happened then. . . (long pause, no response) He visited me in Chicago, I know.

JK: Uh-huh. (no response)

It was clear that Mrs. Kunitani did not wish to talk about this period of camp life.

RW: Now let me see - This is - uh - could you tell me what you did right after you left Tule Lake?

JK: We stayed at Philadelphia hostel. It's not there anymore, but we stayed there six months.

RW: Six months?

JK: Uh-huh. We'd visit employment offices every day, and finally this job came up, farm manager in a farm.

RW: And, since then, would you care to tell me about any of the high points in your life?

JK: Since then? . . . I don't have any high points. . . My husband did. He got a citation for this and a citation for that.

RW: For what, particularly?

JK: He was very community minded. . . that would be George.

RW: I'm so happy to hear that, because you must have had a happy life there.

JK: The house is full of plaques (giggles) and trophies (laughs).

RW: I'm going to ask you, do you often think of Tule Lake, do your children think of Tule Lake, or do you try not to think of it, and I'll bet your answer is that you just don't think about it?

JK: No. . . I don't think about it.

RW: It's not something that you look back on. . .

JK: (interrupts) But you do have re-occurrence in your sleep.

RW: You do have in your sleep. Could you tell me about that?

JK: Well, it's usually a nightmare. . . (laughs nervously) like my husband being

dragged away. u-h-h-h-h (groan) but that's cowardly.

RW: But it's human. . .

(At this point the recording plug fell off the earphone and I, being inexperienced, did not notice it. But Mrs. Kunitani told me with pride about how well her children were doing. One lives in New York and two in California. She particularly emphasized the honors that her husband had received during his life in _____ for his apparently ceaseless community activities. "The house is filled with plaques." He had served on many committees for improvement in the community and he had played an important role in obtaining a park for the children.)