6:1 Higaki, Asuko Longitudinal Oral History

1 of 2 (Lillian Roma)

83/115
c

Osaka
Higashi

LONGITUDINAL ORAL HISTORY

OF

LILLIAN NOMA

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MAY 22, 1944

TALK WITH LIBRARIAN LILLIAN NOMA (Milton Sasaki's sister-in-law)

After returning some books entered into conversation with the librarian on the nominations. She proved to be very anti-Daihyo Sha Kai. She came from block 29 where nominations had been made. She told me that it was well known that the agitators had been plotting the Tule Lake trouble even on the train from Jerome. She seemed worried and concerned over the present situation. She does not want the people released from the stockade.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1944

/My next brief chat with Lillian occurred directly after ~~Kai~~ abe, Kunitani, and Tada, along with some of the leaders of the Resegregation Group had been interrogated by the District Attorney of Modoc County for alleged complicity in the murder of Mr. Noma (no relation to Miss Noma)./

TALK WITH GIRL - LILLIAN NOMA

Miss Noma, an anti-status quo girl had also heard about the arrests, but knew no reason for them. In her ward a young man named Hara had been taken and questioned and she also knew that Mr. Tada of block 30 had been taken. I said I wondered if it had anything to do with the Noma killing. She immediately expressed her strong desire that the murderer be caught. She had felt so sorry for Mrs. Noma and the children.

OCTOBER 4, 1944

TALK WITH NISEI GIRL - OLD TULEAN, LILLIAN NOMA

In a discussion on the workings of the trouble-makers in which nothing very much was said on either side, Lillian remarked that there are still people in her block who will not speak to each other because of their year long disagreement on the status-quo question.

/On October 11, I tried to get Miss Noma's reaction to the second Resegregation Petition. She told me:/

Most of the people in block 7 don't seem too enthusiastic about it. But in block 8, I hear there are quite a few strong backers.

DECEMBER 15, 16, 1944

/On December 15, a staff member told me that there had been a serious beating in block 54, and that the police had arrested eleven assailants. I had not yet learned the details of this fracus when I met Lillian and asked her what she knew of it./

TALK WITH NISEI LIBRARIAN - MISS NOMA

All this young woman knew about the beating yesterday was that posters had been put up in the laundries stating that such and such persons had been ganged up on and had suffered slight injury. She had no idea which groups were involved.

FEBRUARY 16, 1945

/I do not remember how I happened to visit Miss Noma at home. I suspect that she invited me./

TALK WITH LILLIAN NOMA - Conservative Nisei Girl

I visited Lillian's home for the first time today and chatted for over an hour with her family. They were, of course, affected by the general tension in camp, and were strongly of the opinion that very little could be done about the Hōkoku. The Hōkoku were going to defy anything that the Department of Justice or the WRA did. Lillian mentioned the rumor about the Hōkoku losing their jobs. Lillian told me several pitiful stories of men who were interned leaving their pregnant wives or their wives and small children [at Tule Lake]. Many people taken in the last pick-up did not want to go. Her mother and an Issei woman friend thereupon began to talk in Japanese. Lillian translated:

Many of the parents are trying to make their sons join the Hōkoku. This is especially in the Manzanar section. One boy has a duck cut and wears zoot suit clothes. His parents are trying to make him join the Hōkoku. He said, 'Golly, I can't do that. How would I look in Santa Fe?'

Lillian also said that it was the old genjyo-iji people who had really formed the Hokoku. They do not bother her, however, because she has nothing to do with them and doesn't talk to them.

FEBRUARY 21, 1945

/When I did not encounter Lillian in the library, I ventured to call at her home./ I found only her sister at home and she told me that her sister would get in touch with me. Today I received the following letter.

2-20-45

Dear Miss Hankey,

My sister told me about your visit.

I am sorry but I am not interested in discussing about

camp affair.

Sincerely yours,

* * * * * * * * * *

/When I interviewed her 36 years later, Lillian obliquely explained why she wrote this letter to me./

February 5, 1982

Dr. Arthur A. Hansen
Department of History
California State University
Fullerton, CA 92634

Dear Art:

I'm sorry that I sent you a copy of my interview with Lillian Noma without including a copy of her brief longitudinal history in Tule Lake. They provide a subtle example of the fear of being thought an inu. I was able to find Lillian only because Taro Tokunage (pseudonym), whose interview with me is not yet transcribed, wrote and told me where she lived.

As ever,

Rosalie H. Wax

cj

LILLIAN NOMA

November 17, 1981

Miss Noma was born in California in 1922.

At Tule Lake Miss Noma was employed at the project library. I visited the library occasionally, and we became acquainted. But we had no real conversations until mid-February of 1945, a few days after the Department of Justice had arrested and interned about 650 members of the Resegregation Groups. On February 16, I, for the first time, visited Lillian at her home. Her mother and an Issei woman were present while we talked.

Lillian told me several pitiful stories of men who had been interned, leaving their pregnant wives and children. Many persons taken in this last big pick-up did not wish to go.

Her mother and the Issei woman friend then began to talk in Japanese. Lillian translated: "Many of the parents are trying to make their sons join the Hōkoku. This is especially in the Manzanar section. One boy has a duck cut and wears zoot suit clothes. His parents are trying to make him join the Hōkoku, he says, "Golly, I can't do that. How would I look in Santa Fe?"[1]

I was happy to have been able to make this visit, because I liked Lillian and because I did not have many respondents among the Old Tuleans.

When, a week later, I did not see Lillian at the library, I ventured to call at her home. Her sister answered the door and told me that Lillian was not home but would get in touch with me. On february 21, I received the following letter:

Dear Miss Hankey,

My sister told me about your visit.

I am sorry but I am not interested in discussing camp affair.

Sincerely yours,

---

[1]Fosalie Hankey, Fieldnotes, February 16, 1945

In November of 1981, Mr. Tokunaga wrote to me, giving me Lillian's address. I them wrote to Lillian, describing my project. She did not respond. Thinking it would do no harm to try, I telephoned her and carefully explained what I planned to do. She then told me:

> I've been hesitant writing to you, because of - after all these years- it sort of stirs up some very unhappy memories, plus some nice memories, and of course, I remember you very well, and you always had a cook book. (laughs)

RW: (laughs)

LN: I remember that portion, and I remember that for reasons other than my own I could not be as frank with you as I wanted to in camp, because of parental pressure, you know, not to say too much, and so forth. And I felt guilty that way, because you were most friendly. But that was the reason why I hesitated to write to you

RW: I can really understand how you feel because this happened to me. I've talked now to about 5 of my friends. . .

LN: Oh, have you. . .

RW: And other Japanese American, and it. . . the privacy you don't have to worry about, because I won't put your name on it.

LN: Yes.

RW: But what happened was, as they talked they remembered sad things that they had forgotten, and then when I had finished talking, I did too, after all these 40 years. And I went to my office and I cried. You know, it was. . .so I can see how you feel. But if you had time sometime why we could talk over at least the happy parts, so I could ask you questions and you. . .

LN: What would you like to know? What happened after. . .

RW: What I'd like is a longitudinal history. . .like what you were doing before the war, and then how you felt when you heard that they were going to evacuate the Japanese, and anything you wanted to tell me about your feelings in Tule Lake.

LN: Oh, I see. Well, I tell you. I was just out of school. I had just gotten my job.

RW: How old were you then?

LN: At evacuation time?

RW: Yes.

LN: I must have been 20. I was out of high school, had gotten some other jobs, and meanwhile I had passed my state examination, I was hired by the State of California. I was working in the state capitol.

RW: Oh, my goodness. . .

LN: And I enjoyed it very much, and I hadn't been working there too long, of course when war broke out. . .and I found out coming home from a movie someone told me, "Did you know Pearl Harbor has been bombed?" Well, we thought maybe they were joking, maybe. . .we thought it was just a radio story. We didn't believe it. Well, I went to work and shortly thereafter I received a letter saying that my presence was very upsetting to my co-workers. . .

RW: Oh. . .

LN: . . .Because of my Japanese descent and that hereby they were terminating my employment; that is was most, what is it. . . my co-workers felt uneasy because I was of Japanese descent, etc. and I was hereby being terminated. So that's what happened. Of course, I wanted to go to college, but my mother wanted me to work and thought the boys should go first. You know, I had a brother right behind me. So, she wanted me to work for about a year and help put the money aside to enter him in college first, which I was happy to do. But then my brother was in junior college at the time and shortly thereafter we were relocated into camps. That was the most depressing incident, you know. . .

RW: For you to be fired like that?

LN: Yes.

RW: That's what hurt you the most. I can understand that, my God. . .Which of the

assembly centers did they send you to?

LN: I was in Walerga.

RW: Walerga. Do you recall any experiences from there strongly?

LN: Oh yes.

RW: How you felt, if you want to tell me.

LN: Well, my sister had just given birth to a child.

RW: Oh God!

LN: It wasn't quite a week, in fact, she had given birth during the hours when we. . . during curfew hours. . .and she preferred to have it with a midwife. . .she thought it would be more economical. It was her first baby, and the baby won't come out. So here, we had to wait until morning until curfew ended before we could rush her to the hospital. And she gave birth to her first child. So that was most traumatic.

RW: This was in Walerga?

LN: No, this was back home just before evacuation.

RW: Just before evacuation.

LN: Right. So here she has this new born baby. We didn't know if she'd have enough milk, we didn't know what kind of food we had. . .

RW: And you only took 2 suitcases, you know. . .

LN: Oh yes. . . and people were coming around buying up our furniture and bicycles for a song. You should have seen the trucks going down the street loaded to the hilt with bicycles they were buying from people, because people didn't know what they could take into camp.

RW: Gosh. . .

LN: So that was very traumatic. And we didn't own our home - we rented. So we stored our funiture with our friend who lived around the corner and while we were. . .from Walerga we went to Tule, our friends said they would be glad

to send some of our things. When they went to the place it was rensacked and taken.

RW: Oh,so you lost everything.

LN: Yes, almost everything, except for what we took in to the camp. Right.

RW: Oh. . . I've got a question here that now sounds a little stupid, but I'm. . . How did you manage to cope with all of these awful things?

LN: How else. . .what else could you do? You had no alternative. Of course, the family was together and rumors abounded, and we did not know what was going to happen. Of course, we were herded like cattle by train to Walerga, and then it was hastily put up barrack affair. When it rained the dirt was red dirt, you leg sank to almost your knees, and they had put up a washroom. . . latrine, which was more or less a barrack type with the holes punched into a plank, back to back - no privacy. And the first week, people had diarrhea because of the change in water perhaps or the food, and we were right by the latrine, you could hear the doors flap back and forth like a shuttlecock all night long.

RW: Oh gosh. . .

LN: And the wood they used was green wood, so as the wood dried, the cracks opened in the floor, and the weeds would be growing up underneath. By the time you got to the doors sweeping your dirt was all gone, it fell into the cracks. (laughs)

RW: Gosh. . .

LN: And then from Walerga we were taken to Tule Lake.

RW: Yes.

LN: And, of course, we weren't prepared for the winters there. We had a pot-bellied stove.

RW: Yeah.

LN: But, I became very ill, and I was. . . .I worked in the circulating library. . .

and they wanted to close it. . . my only source of heat was an electric heater. Even when it snowed--dedicated me--like a fool, I went there. And I got deathly sick, and for that reason I haven't been able to have any children.

RW: Oh. . . poor Lillian. If I had known and if I could have done anthing to feel better, I would have done it. I didn't know you were having all that trouble. . . Did I meet you in the library, or. . .

LN: I forget just where we met.

Lillian now told me that she had been friends with a family "who were UC graduates" and asked if I knew them. "Because they were doing research work. . .and they were sort of ostracized for that. I felt sorry for them." But I did not recognize the name. I then said:

RW: I was going to ask a little more cheerful. . .was there anything that happened in Tule Lake that makes you feel good when you think of it today?

LN: Well, the only. . . The nice experience was that our parents had a little rest from all their toil, and I got to know a lot of people. And the things that we were able to learn, you know, there. But weatherwise it was awful and waterwise it was awful, but. . .

RW: Were you especially bothered by this awful business of calling folks inu and so on?

LN: Oh yes, yes. That's the reason why we hesitated to talk to you people and to this university girl. I felt badly because I thought I was more broad-minded, but our parents were quite disturbed, that anyone associated with them would be called that, and therefore, we were told to. . .I was especially cautioned by my parents to hold my distance. And I felt sorry because I did like this girl, and I knew they were doing research work. . . .In Tule Lake, I associated with them until we heard they were doing research work, and because of the association, my parents didn't want me associated with them, and for other things too, and they left camp, so I didn't get too. . .

RW: They may have been working for Dr. Osler. . .

LN: I think so. I think John was.

RW: And so - people who worked for Dr. Osler were called inu?

LN: Right, right. (laughs)

RW: Even talking to me. . .

LN: Yes, even tlaking to you. . . in my case, I had not gone out socially very much - close knit family with a very. . .I mean under strict discipline, especially mother. And outside of following family orders. . .I didn't have much social life. And for that reason what the parents said was the law. . . I hadn't broadened my horizon, and I had just worked briefly before the war.

Lillian then told me that at Tule Lake she had been obliged to have an operation for a cystic tumor. "They decided I had an adhesion trouble from childhood, and then with this library work, my ovaries were damaged." I expressed sympathy and then asked:

RW: Did you go to any of the classes or did your parents keep you. . .

LN: Well, I attended some classes. Oh, I did get married in camp and because of my operation, you know, the Japanese, the rumors abound. I had a tumor. the rumors abound that I had been 3 months pregnant or something and Dr. Miyamoto said that I should not worry about it. But my future in-laws took up that rumor, and they believed it, which was very unfortunate. So I had a miserable, you know, in-law situation there. Because my husband insisted on marrying me. He said he knew I was a virgin. . .I was a virgin when I got married. But. . .

RW: That must have been hard for you. . . When did you leave Tule Lake?

LN: The second operation took place in, let's see. . .ah, 1945, December, the last day, December 31st. I was operated on. So I was bedridden for a while.

RW: That was 1945?

LN: Right, December 31st. So I couldn't be moved for a while, and when I left in

'46, they were closing up the camp, and I was moved by pullman. I went to . . . as far as New York City.

RW: Oh, you and your husband?

LN: Yes.

RW: Oh good.

LN: We went to New York City, but of course, I could find a job, but he was promised a job which never materialized. That was WRA, they wanted you to get out of camp. . .

RW: War Relocation Authority?

LN: War Relocation, WRA yes. What he was promised didn't materialize.

RW: And he was promised a job and left, and then it didn't materialize. In New York, my gosh. What did you do then?

LN: Well, I found an office job right away, but what could he do with a Japanese college education - he became a bus boy. He did lapidary work for a while and that was dying out, so he did restaurant and bus boy work. And then, he checked around with the Japanese Buddhist Temple and he found they wanted domestic work. I wasn't feeling well yet from my operation and the fact that I couldn't have children you know, was a psychological. . .emotional thing.

RW: Nobody can understand, who hasn't suffered it.

LN: So we took domestic work and went to Fall River, Massachusetts. And the work was too heavy. I had to cook for a family of 5 children and a couple, and they brought home a mother from an insane asylum. And then the children were college students who would bring home guests. So since my brothers had relocated to _____, we came here because my parents were here.

RW: Yeah.

LN: And then my marriage didn't work out, and I was divorced.

RW: Oh.

LN: After seven years I remarried and I have been married for the past 20 years.

I have worked as a secretary all these years. This is my 35th year. Thirty-five years I could retire, but my husband is talking about taking an early retirement and if he retires and then. . . I'm now the secretary to the superintendent and they're trying to relieve him of his position, so when he goes I don't know whether I'll stay or. . .

RW: Well, (pause) . . .I'll ask another question. This is a wierdo. Looking back, what was the most helpful thing you learned about your fellow human beings through all this experience, would you say?

LN: Oh golly, I don't know.

RW: Well then, we'll just skip that. . .

LN: Because I noticed when war started my classmated stopped talking to me; on the street they didn't even see me. The saw right through me. And then trying to find a place to live. Why, if you were a Japanese, the vacancy sign didn't mean anything. But on the whole, I think people have been kind, especially the ethnic groups.

RW: And which ethnic groups especially have been. . .?

LN: _____ is a mixture. I've made many Irish friends, Slovenian friends, Slovenians and Bohemians.

RW: Oh, Lillian, I had no idea of the torment you had been going through there, and I'm sorry to have put you through the ordeal of telling me. But I think it well be useful for people to know. I feel very strongly that at least the American government should apologize to the Japanese American citizens like you. . .

LN: I think it is only decent. . .as I said, I remember you fondly.

RW: You remember me fondly. Oh that makes me feel so good.

LN: Yes I can just picture you striding by with a big fat cookbook under your arm (laughs).

RW: All I can say is, "God bless you."

LN: And God bless you too, and I'm sorry I didn't respond when Taro wrote to

me. . . even now, people. . . just because of your oriental features you're not considered an American.

RW: Well, by me you are. (laughs)

LN: (laughs) Well, that's the way it goes.

LONGITUDINAL ORAL HISTORY OF LILLIAN NOMA

[I met Miss Noma because she was employed as librarian at Tule Lake. She was a very shy young woman and I gathered that she and her family were very conservative,]

I had my first brief talk with Lillian a few days after the residents had refused the Administration's to cooperate with plans to establish a permanent Representative Committee.]

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After returning some books entered into conversation with the librarian on the nominations. She proved to be very anti-Daihyo Sha Kai. She came from block 29 where nominations had been made. She told me that it was well known that the agitators had been plotting the Tule Lake trouble even on the train from Jerome. She seemed worried and concerned over the present situation. She does not want the people released from the stockade.

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TALK WITH ~~KIBEI~~ GIRL - ~~ASOKO HIGAKI~~ LILLIAN NOMA

Miss ~~Higaki~~ NOMA, a ~~Kibei~~ anti-status quo girl had also heard HARA about the arrests, but knew no reason for them. In her ward a young man named ~~Makihara~~ had been taken and questioned and she also knew that Mr. ~~Tsuda~~ of block 30 had been taken. I said I wondered if it had anything to do with the ~~Hitomi~~ killing. She immediately expressed her strong desire that the murderer be caught. She had felt so sorry for Mrs. ~~Hitomi~~ NOMA and the children. TADA NOMA

OCTOBER 4. 1944

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In a discussion on Lillian the workings of the trouble-makers in which nothing very much was said on either side, ~~Asako~~ remarked that there are still people in her block who will not speak to each other because of their year long disagreement on the status-quo question.

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"Mos t of the people in block 7 don't seem too enthusiastic about it. But in block 8, I hear there are ~~a~~/ quite a few strong backers."

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TALK WITH ~~ASAKO HIKAGI~~ - conservative ~~Niki~~ Nisei girl - ~~Akitzuki's mother-in-law~~

Lillian Noma

I visited ~~Asako~~ Lillian's home for the first time today and chatted for over an hour with her family. They were, of course, affected by the general tension in camp, and were strongly of the opinion that very little could be done about the Hokoku. The Hokoku were going to defy anything that the Department of Justice or the WRA did. ~~Asako also~~ Lillian mentioned the rumor about the Hokoku losing their jobs. ~~(One thing is certain, the diehl in the world~~ genuine conservatives of Tule, are not rushing madly into the ~~arms of the Hokoku. In fact, I'm inclined to believe that the stories~~ of the rush for membership are somewhat exaggerated. The people who are in danger of being pulled into the Hokoku ranks are the folks who were inclined toward the idea or those utterly blinded by panic.) ~~Asako~~ Lillian told me several pitiful stories of men who were interned leaving their pregnant wives or their wives and small children [at Tule Lake]. Many people taken in the last big pick-up did not want to go. Her mother and an Issei woman friend thereupon began to talk in Japanese. ~~Asako~~ Lillian translated: ~~Mmmmmmmmm~~

"Many of the parents are trying to make their sons join the Hokoku. This is especially in the Manzanar section. One boy ~~is~~ has a duck cut and wears zoot suit clothes. His parents are trying to make him join the Hokoku. He says, "Golly, I can't do that. How would I look in Santa Fe?"

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CORRECTIONS - pp. 18 - 31

p. 18 - Sorry - Should be Seigi-iin

pg 41 - You must have ~~mmmmmmmmm~~ misunderstood my ~~xxxxx~~ correction. This paragraph is not verbatim and it should be stretched across the page, just as the next one

~~Mat~~ Met ~~xmmmmmmmm~~ Akitzyki today -- If not ~~it~~ clear - ask me.

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1. Rosalie Hankey, Fieldnotes, Feb. 16, 1945

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LN: What would you like to know? What happened after. . . ~~When did you leave camp?~~

RW: I left about May, 1945.
LN: Oh, I see.

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RW: ~~And what they really want. . . the Rockefeller. . .~~ is longitudinal history. . . like what you were doing ~~beforehand, how you felt~~ before the war, and then how you felt when you heard that they were going to evacuate the Japanese, and anything you wanted to tell me about your feelings in Tule Lake, ~~and then sort of a long life story, life history thing is what they want.~~
LN: Oh, I see. Well, I tell you. I was just out of school. I had just gotten my job.

RW: How old were you then?
LN: At evacuation time?

RW: Yes. . .
~~LN: Would that have been '42?~~

~~RW: Yes, early '42.~~ . .
LN: I must have been 20.

RW: Twenty. . .
LN: Right. I was out of high school, had gotten some other jobs and meanwhile I had passed my state examination, I was hired by the State of California. I was working in the state capitol.

RW: Oh, my goodness. . .
LN: And I enjoyed it very much and I hadn't been working there too long, of course when war broke out. . . and I found that out coming home from a movie someone told me, "Did you know Pearl Harbor has been bombed?" Well, we thought maybe they were joking, maybe. . . we thought it was just a radio story. We didn't believe it. Well, I went to work and shortly thereafter I received a letter saying that my presence was very upsetting to my co-workers. . .

RW: Oh ~~my goodness~~. . .
LN: . . .because of my Japanese descent and that hereby they were terminating my employment; that is was most, what is it. . . my co-workers felt uneasy because I was of Japanese descent, etc. and I was hereby being terminated. So that's what happened. Of course, I wanted to go to college, but my mother wanted me to work and thought the boys should go first. You know, I had a brother right behind me. So, she wanted me to work for about a year and help put the money aside to enter him in college first, which I was happy to do. But then my brother was in junior college at the time and shortly thereafter we were relocated into camps. That was the most depressing incident, you know. . .

RW: *For you to be fired like that?*
LN: *Yes.*

RW: *That's what hurt you the most. I can understand that, my God. . . . . Which of the assembly centers did they send you to?*
LN: *I was in Walerga.*

RW: *Walerga. Do you recall any experiences from there strongly?*
LN: *Oh yes.*

RW: *How you felt, if you want to tell me.*
LN: *Well, my sister had just given birth to a child.*

RW: *Oh, God!*
LN: *It wasn't quite a week, in fact, she had given birth during the hours when we. . . during curfew hours. . . and she preferred to have it with a midwife. . . she thought it would be more economical. It was her first baby; it was a big baby, and the baby won't come out. So here, we had to wait until morning until curfew ended before we could rush her to the hospital. And she gave birth to her first child. So that was most traumatic.*

RW: *This was in Walerga?*
LN: *No, this was back home just before evacuation.*

RW: *Just before evacuation.*
LN: *Right. So here she has this new born baby.*

RW: *New born baby.*
LN: *We didn't know if she'd have enough milk, we didn't know what kind of food we had. . .*

RW: *And you only took 2 suitcases, you know. . .*
LN: *Oh yes. . . and then from then. . . We heard we were going to be sent to a desolate area, so we brought, we were told that we would need our tin plates and tin cups, you know, the rumors abounded plentiful at the time.*

RW: *Yes.*
LN: *So, mother had equipped all of us with tin plates with tin cups and we all had boots because we heard that there were snakes.*

RW: *Oh my gosh, was this in Walerga or in Tule Lake?*
LN: *No, this was in Sacramento before we were evacuated to Walerga.*

RW: *. . .to Walerga.*
LN: *And here sister had just given birth to a baby and people were coming around buying up our furniture and bicycles for a song. You should have seen the trucks going down the street loaded to the hilt with bicycles they were buying from people, because people didn't know what they could take into the camp.*

RW: *Gosh. . .*
LN: *So that was very traumatic.*

RW: *Oh that was very. . .*
LN: *And people coming in and trying to buy your furniture for nothing. . .*

RW: *. . .for nothing.*
LN: *Right.*

RW: *That happened. . . I know that happened. Gee, I. . . oh excuse me, did you want to say something?*

LN: And we didn't own our home - we rented. So we stored our furniture with our friend who lived around the corner and while we were. . . from Walerga we went to Tule, our friends said they would be glad to send us some of our things. When they went to the place it was ransacked and taken.

RW: Oh, so you lost everything.
LN: Yes, almost everything, except for what we took in to the camp. Right.

RW: Oh. . . I've got a question here that now sounds a little stupid, but I'm. . . or kind of insulting. How did you manage to cope with all of these awful things?
LN: How else. . . what else could you do? You had no alternative. Of course, the family was together and rumors abounded and we did not know what was going to happen. Of course, we were herded like cattle by train to Walerga and then it was hastily put up barrack affair. When it rained the dirt was red dirt, your leg sank to almost your knees, and they had put up a washroom. . . latrine, which was more or less a barrack type with the holes punched into a plank, back to back - no privacy. And the first week, people had diarrhea because of the change in water perhaps or the food and we were right by the latrine you could hear the doors flap back and forth like a shuttlecock all night long.

RW: Oh gosh. . .
LN: And the wood they used was green wood, so as the wood dried, the cracks opened in the floor and the weeds would be growing up underneath. By the time you got to the doors sweeping, why your dirt was all gone, it fell into the cracks. (laughs)

RW: Gosh. . .
LN: And then from Walerga we were taken to Tule.

RW: Yes.
LN: And of course we weren't prepared for the winters there. We had a pot bellied stove.

RW: Yeah.
LN: But, I became very ill and I was. . . .I worked in the circulating library. . . and they wanted to close it. . . my only source of heat was an electric heater. Even when it snowed -- dedicated me -- like a fool I went there. And I got deathly sick and for that reason I haven't been able to have any children.

RW: Oh. . . poor Lillian. Well, I'm going to take that name out, but this is just my own. . . I feel for you, my God. Oh, I lost a baby too and. . .
LN: Oh, did you?

RW: Yes, and I know you never get over it.
LN: Yes. . . You have any?

RW: No, I got married late and it was my only chance.
LN: Oh, dear. . .

RW: But, I have a nice husband and I have had very good happy work.
LN: Oh, that's good.

RW: That has been happy but, gee, I didn't know. . . when we would meet in Tule. . . gosh, if I could have done anything to make you feel better, I would have done it. But because I didn't know you were having all that trouble. . . Did I meet you in the library or. . . I remember I talked with you quite a number of times.
LN: Yes. Well, I forgot just where we met. I used to help teach English. I don't know if it was there. I don't think it was in the library. I think that was towards the end.

If I had known and if I could have done anything to feel better, I would have done it. I didn't know you were having all that trouble. /;/ . . . Did I meet you in the library, or. .

LN: I forget just where we met.

Lillian now told me that she had been been friends with a family "who were UC graduates"and asked if I knew them. "Because they were doing research work. . and they were sort of ostracized for that. I felt sorry for them." But I did not recognize the name. I then said:

RW: *I was going to ask a little more cheerful. . . Was there anything that happened in Tule Lake that makes you feel good when you think of it today?*

LN: *Well, the only. . . The nice experience was that our parents had a little rest from all their toil, and I got to know a lot of people. And the things that we were able to learn, you know, there. But weatherwise is was awful and waterwise it was awful, but. . .*

RW: *Were you especially bothered by this awful business of people calling folks inu and so on?*

LN: *Oh yes, yes. That's the reason why we hesitated to talk to you people and to this university girl. I felt badly because I thought I was more broad-minded, but our parents were quite disturbed, that anyone associated with them would be called that, and therefore, we were told to. . . I was especially cautioned by my parents to hold my distance. And I felt sorry because I did like this girl, and I knew they were doing research work.*

. . . In Tule Lake I associated with them until we heard they were doing research work and because of the association, my parents didn't want me associated with them, and for other things too, and they left camp, so I didn't get to. . .

RW: They may have been working for Dr. Osler . . .

LN. I think so. I think John was.

RW: And so - people who worked for Dr. Osler were called inu?

LM: Right, right. (laughs)

RW: Even talking to me . . .

LN: Yes, even talking to you. . . in my case, I had not gone out socially very much - close knit family with a very . . . I mean under strict discipline, especially mother. And out side of following family orders. . I didn't have much social life. And for that reason what the parents said was the law. . . I hadn't broadened my horizon and I had just worked briefly before the war.

Lillian then told me ~~xxx~~ that ~~xxxxxxxx~~ at Tule Lake she had been obliged to have an operation for a cystic ~~xxxxxx~~"~~Thxxxxxxxxx~~ tumor. "They decided I has an adhesion trouble from shildhood and then with this library work, my ovaries were damaged." I expressed my sympathy and then asked:

RW: Did you go to any of the classes or did your parents keep you. .

RW: What were you operated on in Tule Lake?
LN: Well, after that first. . . they decided I had had ashesion trouble from childhood and then with this library work, my ovaries were damaged. They thought the cold had damaged my ovaries, and Dr. Miyamoto lived right next door. They thought they could save part of my ovaries, which they tried to, but by subsequent operation I had to have the rest of it removed.

RW: Gee. . .
LN: I had developed a cystic tumor someplace.

RW: And you were so young.
LN: Yes. I was. . .

RW: When were you born? What is your birthdate?
LN: Oh, I'm 1922, I'm 59 going on 60 in February.

RW: Well, I'm 70 and kind of chipper (laughter).
LN: I'm not too far from you. (laughs)

RW: Let's see, is there anything else that you would like to tell me about Tule Lake? Did you enjoy. . . was there anything at all that you really enjoyed there? doing?
LN: Well. . .

RW: Did you go to any of the classes or did your parents keep you. . .
LN: Well, I attended some classes. Oh, I did get married in camp and because of my operation, you know, the Japanese, the rumors abound. I had a tumor. The rumors abound that I had been 3 months pregnant or something and Dr. Miyamoto said that I should not worry about it. But my future in-laws took up that rumor and they believed it, which was very unfortunate. So I had a miserable, you know, in-law situation there. Because my husband insisted on marrying me. He said he knew I was a virgin. . . I was a virgin when I got married. But. . .

RW: That must have been hard for you. . . . something happier. . .
LN: And then I got, well, I did like the scenery, let's say that way. I did enjoy teaching English to my first generation group, that I enjoyed. But weather - not much.

RW: No, the weather was terrible. I remember I'd freeze. . . how cold I'd get when I'd go around walking and visiting. I was going to ask. . . when did you leave Tule Lake?
LN: The second operation took place in, let's see. . . ah, 1945, December, the last day, December 31st. I was operated on. So I was bed-ridden for a while.

RW: That was 1945?
LN: Right, December 31st. So I couldn't be moved for a while and when I left in '46, they were closing up the camp, and I was moved by pullman. I went to. . . as far as New York City.

RW: Oh, you and your husband?
LN: Yes.

RW: Oh good.
LN: We went to New York City, but of course, I could find a job, but he was promised a job, which never materialized. That was WRA, they wanted you to get out of camp. . .

RW: War Relocation Authority?
LN: War Relocation, WRA yes. What he was promised didn't materialize.

RW: And he was promised a job and left, and then it didn't materialize. In New York, my gosh. What did you do then?

LN: Well, I found an office job right away, but what could he do with a Japanese college education - he became a bus boy. He did lapidary work for a while and that was dying out, so he did restaurant and bus boy work. And then, he checked around with the Japanese Buddhist Temple and he found they wanted domestic work. I wasn't feeling well yet from my operation and the fact that I couldn't have children you know, was a psychological. . . emotional thing.

RW: Nobody can understand, who hasn't suffered it.

LN: So we took domestic work and went to Fall River, Massachusetts. And the work was too heavy. I had to cook for a family of 5 children and a couple and they brought home a mother from an insane asylum. And then the children were college students who would bring home guests. So since my brothers had relocated to Cleveland, we came here because my parents were here.

RW: Yeah.

LN: And then my marriage didn't work out, and I was divorced.

RW: Oh.

LN: After 7 years I remarried and I have been married for the past 20 years.

RW: So now you're married to Mr. Idemoto, for 20 years to Mr. Idemoto. Well, that's nice. That things worked out. What does your present husband do now?

LN: He's an engineer.

RW: An engineer? Good.

LN: I have worked as a secretary all these years. This is my 35th year.

RW: And you're still working?

LN: I'm still working.

RW: Good for you, just like me (laughs).

LN: Thirty-five years I could retire, but my husband is talking about taking an early retirement and if he retires and then. . . I'm now the secretary to the superintendent and they're trying to relieve him of his position, so when he goes I don't know whether I'll stay or. . .

RW: Well, (pause) . . .I'll ask another question. Looking. . . This is a wierdo. Looking back, what was the most helpful thing you learned about your fellow human beings through all this experience, would you say?

LN: Oh golly, I don't know.

RW: Well then, we'll just skip that. . .

LN: Because I noticed when war started my classmates stopped talking to me; on the street they didn't even see me. They saw right through me. And then trying to find a place to live. Why, if you were a Japanese, the vacancy sign didn't mean anything. But on the whole, I think people have been kind, especially the ethnic groups.

RW: Yes, and this is in Cincinnati?

LN: Cleveland. . .

RW: Pardon me, in Cleveland.

LN: Right.

RW: And which ethnic groups especially have been. . .?

LN: Cleveland is a mixture. I've made many Irish friends, Slovenian friends, Slovenians and Bohemians.

RW: Oh, Lillian, I had no idea of the torment you had been going through there, and I'm sorry to have put you through the ordeal of telling me. But I think it will be useful for people to know. I feel very strongly that at least the American government should apologize to the Japanese American citizens like you. . .

LN: I think it is only decent. . . as I said, I remember you fondly.
RW: You remember me fondly. Oh that makes me feel so good.

LN: Yes, I can just picture you striding by with a big fat cookbook under your arm (laughs).

RW: All I can say is, "God bless you."
LN: And God bless you too, and I'm sorry I didn't respond when Taro wrote to me.. .even now, people. . . just because of your oriental features your not considered an American.

RW: Well, by me you are. (laughs)
LN: (laughs) Well, that's the way it goes.

RW: *And he was promised a job and left, and then it didn't materialize. In New York, my gosh. What did you do then?*

LN: *Well, I found an office job right away, but what did he do with a Japanese college education - he became a bus boy. He did lapidary work for a while and that was dying out, so he did restaurant and bus boy work. And then, he checked around with the Japanese Buddhist Temple and he found they wanted domestic work. I wasn't feeling well yet from my operation and the fact that I couldn't have children you know, was a psychological. . . emotional thing.*

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RW: *Yeah.*

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RW: *Oh.*

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