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Matsumori, May

Interviews

Mar. 1982

(June Inohara)

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March 2, 1982

JUNE IWOHARA

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Mrs. Iwohara was born in 1926 in Tacoma, Washington.. She was in the 10th grade in high school when she, her parents, and her younger brother were evacuated to the Pinedale Assembly Center. When I asked her if she remembered anything about her life in the Assembly Center, she responded:

It was very very hot. I was not used to that kind of heat. And the one thing I vividly remember is that I had a very good girl friend, and I think she had a nervous breakdown. And because they didn't have facilities to treat her (in the Assembly Center), they tied her down to a mssshall table and I could hear her screaming all through the night and that really bothered me.... She was separated from her family and she was about my age.

RW: Is there anything else you remember?

Ji: It was very crowded. I wasn't used to being with so many Japanese people, because we were in a Caucasian community basically. Although there were a lot of Japanese in Tacoma, we were all scattered. And here we were crowded together like flies. I remember thinking, "I can't stand it."

RW: That is sad. Was there any way your found of coping with it?

Ji: No. I just accepted it. There was nothing else I really could do. I felt sorry for my parents more than myself.

RW: What made you especially feel sorry for your parents?

Ji: Because they had worked so hard all these years. They had sacrificed everything. They had to give up their home and all the furnishings and, of course, the people knew we had to go, so they took advantage of them and just about stole everything.



They got a few dollars for it, but some you just can't buy--they are of sentimental value. And the government took away a lot of their things, you know cameras and gold. My mother had a gold piece that her uncle had given her when she had left Japan and she very honestly gave that up. Oh different little things, you know that meant a lot to her. I just felt sorry for them, I really did. It was very sad being in a camp like that. With no way to get out, we were behind barbed wire fence all around with soldiers at the towers. It was a very bad experience.

RW: It would be very traumatic. I'm so happy I talked to you. You're the first person who mentioned that when people were forced to leave their homes, not only that they lost so much financially, the people took advantage, but they lost things that they really cared for. To which relocation center did you go?

JI: Tule Lake.

RW: You went directly to Tule Lake?

JI: Yes.

RW: And can you remember about how you felt when they told you that you were going to be sent to tule Lake?

JI: Well, I can't remember how I felt. All I know is that I hated being there. I just didn't like it, and then I began to hate Japanese people and mainly because we as human beings are. . . weren't meant to be incarcerated like that, like cattle. Sometimes I felt I was going to lose my mind or something, although I didn't, not then I didn't. There were four of us, my father, my mother, my brother and I in this little tiny room. Of course my mother and dad couldn't sleep together because they didn't want my brother and I to sleep together, so Dad and my brother slept on one side of the room with a sheet tied in between us and then my mother and slept on the other side of the room. And that's the way we were for four years. That's not very normal living, I don't think anyway.

RW: Four years of that! In some of the relocation camps I remember they didn't even have a full partition between families. So anything you said, was heard. Let me ask you this: Which of the experiences in Tule Lake do you recall



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the most strongly? the most vividly?

JI: Oh gee, I really don't know. Just being crowded together. It seemed that there were so many of us and crowded in to such a small area, although the camp itself was very big. But I don't know. . . the living conditions were terrible, that's all I can say. I wouldn't want anyone to have to live like that again. I told my mother next time if I have to go, I'd rather kill myself. I wouldn't want to experience that again and I wouldn't want anyone else to have to go through that kind of experience, especially when you haven't done anything wrong. If you commit a criminal act, then you expect to be punished for it, but when you haven't done anything, just because the color of your skin you are herded into a camp for no reason and no explanation given, no trial, no nothing - then you begin to wonder what kind of country you are living in.

RW: Yes, there was no Japanese American who had done anything wrong and there was no evidence that they were going to.

JI: Right.

RW: And yet this was done. . .

JI: And the Italians and Germans were at war too, and nothing happened to them.

It was just pure racism is what it was. I resent that now as I look back I feel. . .

RW: Do you feel strongly about this injustice?

JI: Oh yes, definitely. I would never want anyone to have to go through that again. And it happened in Germany, but it could happen here again in America I guess, but I would do anything to prevent such a thing happening to anyone.

RW: I Heartily agree with your feelings. Was there anything that happened there at Tule Lake, that made you especially angry or really scared you?

JI: We had some uprisings. There was some militant fellows there. I guess they were angry at the government for putting us in camps. We had a couple of riots, and then the Army sent in troops.

RW: Yes, it was Army rule for a while.

JI. Yes. That was scary, because I was in my teens and very impressionable, and



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that kind of stands out in my mind.

RW: Were you able to go to school at that time?

JI: Oh yes.

RW: Anyway seeing all those soldiers with guns is no fun. What about after the Army left and the people stopped the strike - about 1944 - was there anything that scared you or made you angry?

JI: No, I don't think at the time I was really angry. I don't remember anger. Later as I grew older, and I realized what had happened to us. I didn't realize that this was against the law, and that what had been done unconstitutional. We were law-abiding citizens and I felt that if the government told us to go, then we have to go. It never entered my mind to question the government or question why we were there. We just went because we were told to go and we were always taught to obey the law.

RW: Did your parents feel the same way?

JI: Oh yes, they went because they felt they had to go and they had no intentions of questioning the government or anything. We just kind of went along with it, you know, not realizing that it really wasn't constitutional.

RW: Is there anything that happened there at Tule Lake that really makes you feel good today when you think about it?

JI: No. I can't think of anything.

RW: Did you have any persons who were your friends?

JI: Yes.

RW: And what did you do together?

JI: Oh I had quite a few girlfriends and we used to go dancing. They did have dances for us, and I guess we led as normal a life as we can in a camp. And if I had to go to a camp, I guess I was glad I had to go to a camp while I lived in America, and not in Germany or Russia. I guess they tried their best to help us to lead as normal a life as you can in a controlled environment like that.



RW: Yes, some people really did try to do that.

JI: My parents did. They. . .my father worked on a farm for I guess it was \$16.00 a month.

RW: You're right.

JI: I think we could have taken it a little bit better, I mean you know, hindsight, if we knew we could leave. But we were forced to go there.

RW: Was there anyone at Tule Lake, any person that you respected, that you could go to for advice? Or were you more family oriented?

JI: No, I was more family oriented. . . I was used to going to church on the outside, but I can't remember going to church. My mother took us to church very faithfully while I was outside of camp, but I can't remember really going to church on Sundays while I was in camp. I kind of fell by the wayside. The family structure just kind of fell apart when we went into camp. Things were just not normal at all. We ate in a messhall; we went to a communal latrine; there was no privacy at all.

RW: Is there anything that comes to you spontaneously you'd like to tell me?

JI: Well, it was very dusty and very. . .

RW: Gritty.

✓ JI: Gritty and very dry and very hot in Tule Lake. I remember that because every time there was a dust storm, there'd be layers of sand on the window sill.

My mother and I would have to clear everything off, because of course, the windows. . .those barracks must have been built overnight. There was tarpaper on the outside. Just wood floors and very paper thin walls, and you could hear your next door neighbor, and as I said there wasn't much privacy.

RW: That is true. . . Do you remember when a Japanese American coming back from farm work was shot by a soldier.

JI: Yes, I remember that now.

RW: Mr. Okomoto

JI: Yes



RW: And about a month or so later, there were people beaten up because. . .

JI: I don't know what they did, but I remember that too.

RW: They were suppose to be stool pigeons or inu.

JI: Oh. . .

RW: Do you remember?

JI: Yes.

RW: Then poor Mr. Noma was murdered.

JI: Oh yes. I tried to forget. But I've told my husband lately I've been having nightmares about it. I hadn't had nightmares, but just lately I've been waking up in the middle of the night and wake him up too, and I have nightmares about it. I don't know why. I guess maybe because of reading about it in the PC.

(Pacific Citizen)

RW: Well, it's probably helpful to express it.

JI: Oh yes.

RW: Did you have any contact or did you have. . . What was your opinion of the gradual development of . . . in Japanese they called it the Hō/shi dan, . . .  
They wanted to be segregated or separated from other people? ✓

JI: No, we didn't go along. . . my parents and we didn't go along with that.

RW: I didn't expect you to, but how did you feel about it? Could you tell me?

JI: Well, I don't think I really realized what was going on at the time. I didn't have a feeling one way or another about it, because I was so young. I know my parents were not for it. So I just went along with whatever they were for. My parents were born in Japan, and of course America would not allow them to become citizens, so therefore, they felt their loyalty to Japan, which I agree with whole-heartedly. You're not going to be loyal to a country that's not going to allow you to become a citizen - that doesn't even make sense. So, of course, they said that they loyal to Japan, which I think was the honorable thing to do, under the circumstances. After that, when they came out east, my



June Iwohara - March 2, 1982

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*My Museum*

Lives in Leavittown, Pennsylvania.

June Iwohara: Hello?

Rosalie Wax: Hello, is this Mrs. June Iwohara?

June Iwohara: Yes it is.

Rosalie Wax: This is Professor Rosalie Wax of St. Louis. Miss Nioshi suggested. .said you might be willing to be interviewed. .you see. I was at Tule Lake for a couple of years and did much work there, and now I'm a retired professor and I have this fellowship to interview and get sort of life histories of the people who experienced it. And I've gotten a good number of men, but I also want to talk to women, because they have their view.

June Iwohara: Sure.

Rosalie Wax: And if you had time now I would be very. . .first I should ask were you there after the segregation?

June Iwohara: Yes.

Rosalie Wax: Because those are the people I should talk to.

June Iwohara: I see.

Rosalie Wax: Do you then have any time now?

June Iwohara: Yes, I do.

Rosalie Wax: Oh, that's splendid. If there should be some emergency or anything you want to stop for a while, why you tell me and I can call again.

June Iwohara: Fine.

Rosalie Wax: And feel free not to answer any question. It will all be anonymous; I will use a pseudonym.

June Iwohara: All right.

Rosalie Wax: First I'd like. .I want to thank you. . you sound very gracious and pleasant.

June Iwohara: I hope I can be helpful.

Rosalie Wax: Just speak your mind and. .or tell me anything that comes to you that was an important experience that you think I should know as we go along.

June Iwohara: I see.

Rosalie Wax: First I would like to ask about your life before evacuation. Where were you and how old were you at that time?

June Iwohara: I was born and raised in Tacoma, Washington. I was born May 26, 1926 in Tacoma General Hospital. I lived a very happy life there. I remember Tacoma very fondly and I was there until the war started.

Rosalie Wax: How far then would you have gone in school?

June Iwohara: I remember 10th grade in Stadium High School.

Rosalie Wax: Did you have any plans for the future or were you just sort of enjoying yourself?

June Iwohara: I was just having a great time.

Rosalie Wax: Good. What were your parents doing, how did they earn their living?

June Iwohara: My father started out about 1906 he came to America, and then he worked in various places like in the smelter and lumberyard, I guess it was a lumber



JT: company - maybe like warehouse or something, I'm not sure. And then at the time when they evacuated us, my father had a grocery store.

RW: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

JT: I have one younger brother.

RW: You were the oldest. I guess I'll ask. .can you tell me. .of course you were in high school, but can you tell me how you felt or do you remember how you felt when you heard that the government had announced that the Japanese people were all to be ordered to leave their homes and go to assembly centers?

JT: Well, I don't think I realized the full impact of what was happening to us at the time. It was just like a lark, we were going to get on a train. Although I remember the soldiers with their bayonets and things like that and I guess I wondered why we were all herded into a train and then why my parents had to sell everything - sacrifice, things they had worked for all those years. I guess that ran through my mind, but I was too young to really understand what was happening to us.

RW: You must have been about 15 or 16.

JT: Yes, I think so.

RW: Do you recall anything particular about your life in the. .of course, I should say. . which assembly center did they send you to?

JT: Pinedale Assembly Center.

RW: Pinedale. Do you recall anything about your life in the assembly center?

JT: All I recall about Pinedale is that it was very, very hot. I was not used to that kind of heat. And the one thing I vividly remember is that I had a very good girlfriend, and I think she had a nervous breakdown and because they didn't have facilities to treat her. . apparently they tied her down to a messhall table. .

RW: Oh my.

JT: . .and I could hear her screaming all through the night and that really bothered me.

RW: It's unlikely one would know here, was this breakdown brought on by the evacuation or was she. .

JT: Yes, I understand that it was. She was separated from her family and she was about my age.

RW: What did happen to her?

JT: I really don't know. I understand from the last I heard she was still in a mental institution, but I'm not sure - I kind of lost touch.

RW: I know that the evacuation did separate a lot of people. That's sad. Let me see, is there anything else you remember about living there in the assembly center?

JT: It was very crowded. I wasn't used to being with so many Japanese people, because we were in a Caucasian community basically. And although there were a lot of Japanese in Tacoma, we were all scattered. And here we were crowded together like flies. I remember thinking, I can't stand it. I hated it really, but there was nothing I could do about it.

RW: That is sad, was there any way you found of coping with it? Or did you just. . .

JT: No, I just accepted it, I guess. There was nothing else I really could do. I felt sorry for my parents more than myself. My brother and I were young.

RW: What made you especially feel sorry for your parents?

JT: Oh, well because they had worked so hard all these years. They had to sacrifice everything. They had to give up their home and all the furnishings and of course the people knew we had to go, so they took advantage of them and just about stole everything really.



- JI: They got a few dollars for it, but some things you just can't buy - there are of sentimental value. And the government took away a lot of their things, you know, cameras and gold. My mother had a gold piece that her uncle had given her when she had left Japan and she very honestly gave that up. Oh different little things, you know that meant a lot to her. I just felt sorry for them, I really did. It was very sad being in a camp like that. With no way to get out, we were behind barbed wire fence all around with soldiers at the towers. It was a very bad experience.
- RW: It would be very traumatic. I'm so happy I talked to you. You're the first person who mentioned that when people were forced to leave their homes, not only that they lost so much financially, the people took advantage, but they lost for things that they really cared for. I was putting myself in that place. I'm glad that you mentioned that. That's helpful. Well let me see, to which relocation center did you go?
- JI: Tule Lake.
- RW: You went directly to Tule Lake?
- JI: Yes.
- RW: And can you remember about how you felt when they told you that you were going to be sent to Tule Lake?
- JI: Well, I can't remember how I felt. All I know is that I hated being there. I just didn't like it and then I began to hate Japanese people and mainly because we as human beings are. . . weren't meant to be incarcerated like that, like cattle. Sometimes I felt I was going to lose my mind or something, although I didn't, not then I didn't. There were four of us, my father, my mother, my brother and I in this little tiny room. Of course my mother and dad couldn't sleep together because they didn't want my brother and I to sleep together, so dad and my brother slept on one side of the room with a sheet tied in between us and then mother and I slept on the other side of the room. And that's the way we were for four years. That's not very normal living, I don't think anyway.
- RW: Four years of that! In some of the relocation camps I remember they didn't even have a full partition between families. So anything you said, was heard. Let me ask you this: Which of the experiences in Tule Lake do you recall the most strongly? The most vividly.
- JI: Oh gee, I really don't know. Just being crowded together. It seemed that there were so many of us and crowded into such a small area, although the camp itself was very big. But I don't know. The living conditions were terrible, that's all I can say. I wouldn't want anyone to have to live like that again. I told my mother next time if I have to go, I'd rather kill myself. I wouldn't want to experience that again and I wouldn't want anyone else to have to go through that kind of experience, especially when you haven't done anything wrong. If you commit a criminal act, then you expect to be punished for it, but when you haven't done anything just because the color of your skin you are herded into a camp for no reason and no explanation given, no trial, no judge, no nothing - then you begin to wonder what kind of country you are living in.
- RW: Yes, there was no Japanese American who had done anything wrong and there was no evidence that they were going to.
- JI: Right.
- RW: And yet this was done. . .
- JI: And the Italians and Germans were at war too, and nothing happened to them. It was just pure racism is what it was. I resent that now as I look back I feel. . .
- RW: Do you feel strongly about this injustice?
- JI: Oh yes, definitely. I would never want anyone to have to go through that again. And it happened in Germany, but it could happen here again in America I guess, but I would do anything to prevent such a thing happening to anyone.



RW: You know, now I'm going off my interview, but I enjoy talking to you. What many Americans who aren't Japanese don't realize is that the Supreme Court decision gave the army the power to take any of us away from our homes.

JI: I didn't realize that.

RW: When I tell people here about that, they won't believe me. So I have to get out the book. And I just wish more Americans were aware of that. And then perhaps we could take steps that it wouldn't happen.

JI: Right.

RW: I heartily agree with your feelings. Was there anything that happened there at Tule Lake, that made you especially angry or really scared you?

JI: We had some uprisings. There was some militant fellows there. I guess they were angry at the government for putting us in camp. We had a couple of riots and then the army sent in troops.

RW: Yes, it was army rule for a while.

JI: Yes. That was scary, because I was in my teens and very impressionable and that kind of stands out in my mind.

RW: Were you able to go to school at that time?

JI: Oh yes.

RW: Anyway seeing all those soldiers with guns is no fun. What about after the army left and the people stopped the strike, and the later period, now I'm getting up to about 1944 - was there anything later that scared you or made you angry?

JI: No, I don't think at the time I was really angry. I don't remember anger. Later as I grew older and I realized what had happened to us. I didn't realize that this was against the law, and that what had been done unconstitutional. We were law-abiding citizens and I felt that if the government told us to go, then we have to go. It never entered my mind to question the government or question why we were there. We just went because we were told to go and we were always taught to obey the law.

RW: Did your parents feel the same way?

JI: Oh yes, they went because they felt they had to go and they had no intentions of questioning the government or anything. We just kind of went along with it, you know, not realizing that it really wasn't constitutional.

RW: Is there anything that happened there at Tule Lake that really makes you feel good today when you think about it?

JI: No. I can't think of anything.

RW: Did you have any persons who were your friends?

JI: Yes.

RW: And what did you do together?

JI: Oh I had quite a few girlfriends and we used to go dancing. They did have dances for us and I guess we led as normal a life as we can in a camp. And if I had to go a camp, I guess I was glad I had to go to a camp while I lived in America, and not in Germany or Russia. I guess they tried their best to help us to lead as normal a life as you can in a controlled environment like that.

RW: Yes, some people really did try to do that.

JI: My parents did. They. my father worked on a farm for I guess it was \$16.00 a month.



RW: You're right. If you were a doctor, you got \$19.00, big deal. Oh gosh. I was there from February, 1944 till May of 1945.

JI: Oh really.

RW: I was doing field work for the University of California study.

JI: Oh I see.

RW: It is part of my life too. I can never forget. I wasn't. I often told myself when I felt so low or in despair, 'Well you're here by your own choice, you can leave, but the Japanese Americans can't leave.'

JI: I think we could have taken it a little bit better, I mean you know, hindsight, if we knew we could leave. But we were forced to go there.

RW: Was there any one at Tule Lake, any person that you respected, that you could go to for advice? Or were you more family oriented?

JI: No, I was more family oriented. . . I was use to going to church on the outside, but I can't remember going to church. My mother took us to church very faithfully while I was outside of camp, but I can't remember really going to church on Sundays while I was in camp.

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JI: Gritty and very dry and very hot in Tule Lake. I remember that because every time there was a dust storm, there'd be layers of sand on the window sill. My mother and I would have to clear everything off, because of course, the windows. . those barracks must have been built overnight. There was tar paper on the outside. Just wood floors and very paper thin walls and you could hear your next door neighbor, and as I said there wasn't much privacy.

RW: That is true. . . Do you remember when a Japanese American coming back from farm work was shot by a soldier.

JI: Yes, I remember that now.

RW: Mr. Okomoto.

JI: Yes.

RW: And about a month or so later, there were people beaten up because. . .

JI: I don't know what they did, but I remember that too.

RW: They were suppose to be stool pigeons or inu.

JI: Oh. . .

RW: Do you remember?

JI: Yes.

RW: As I was working there, I wasn't sure, how should I put it, if they were stool

JI: ~~Right~~ pigeons or. . .



RW: Then poor Mr. Noma was murdered.

JI: Oh yes. I tried to forget. But I've told my husband lately I've been having nightmares about it. I hadn't had nightmares, but just lately I've been waking up in the middle of the night and wake him up too and I have nightmares about it. I don't know why. I guess maybe because of reading about it in the PC. [Pacific Citizen]

RW: Well, it's probably helpful to express it and get it out of your system.

JI: Oh yes.

RW: Did you have any contact or did you have. .what was your opinion of the gradual development of. . .in Japanese they called it the Ho:shi dan, which was. .They wanted to be segregated or separated from other people?

JI: No, we didn't go along. .my parents and we didn't go along with that.

RW: I didn't expect you to, but how did you feel about it? Could you tell me?

JI: Well, I don't think I really realized what was going on at the time. I didn't have a feeling one way or another about it, because I was so young. I know my parents were not for it. So I just went along with whatever they were for.

RW: I suppose the same would hold for later when they had the renunciation of citizenship and then these people. . the Ho:koku Seinen dan made so much noise, that you just avoided it, is that. .

JI: My parents were born in Japan, and of course America would not allow them to become citizens, so therefore, they felt their loyalty to Japan, which I agree with whole heartedly. You're not going to be loyal to a country that's not going to allow you to become a citizen - that doesn't even make sense. So of course they said that they were loyal to Japan, which I think was the honorable thing to do, under the circumstances. After that, when they came out east, my father became a citizen of America purely for employment purposes. But my mother still remains an alien as far as America is concerned because she feels that she was born and raised in Japan, she's a Japanese citizen and she wants to remain such. And I agree with her especially after what happened to us. She feels that if something like that should happen again and my brother and I not be here, well she would rather be in Japan. Although she wouldn't voluntarily go there now.

RW: Are your parents still alive?

JI: My father died when he was 93, a couple of years ago. My mother is 80 and she lives with us.

RW: I've got to respect your mother.

JI: Yes, I do too. Because she was in the minority of course and she was called names and called baka, which means stupid.

RW: . . .fool.

JI: Yes, fool, for doing what they did.

RW: What did they do that somebody call them this?

JI: Well, when the time came, I guess if you renounce the Japanese citizenship, you are allowed to leave camp. And my parents refused to do this. So all their friends, so-called friends, they left and in leaving one of their friends turned around and called them a fool. But my parents had never regretted doing what they did. They felt that they did the honorable thing.

RW: You and they eventually were allowed to leave camp?

JI: We were about the last ones to leave.

RW: I see. And you left with your parents.

JI: Yes.



RW: That must have been good to be together.

JI: Oh yes.

RW: I have had such sad stories to record of parents and children. . .

JI: Being separated. . .

RW: being separated or having very hard feelings, which I want to write up for the Rockefeller Foundation. I've learned many sorrowful things I didn't know before even though I saw much of it while I was there. But yours is very interesting. Of all the experiences you had there during the evacuation or maybe Tule Lake, which is do you feel affected you the most deeply?

JI: I think being herded together with all those Japanese people, you know, I think when you are incarcerated like that the worst comes out. Do you know what I mean? Not the best, because it isn't a normal - I don't think God made us to live like that. I think God made us to live free. I think it brought the worst out of them. For a long time I actually hated Japanese people, isn't that awful to say.

RW: Well, no, it is honest if it is so. I'm not, how should I say. . .

JI: I said to my mother when we came out East, I said, 'Oh, I'm so glad, we're away from California, where there are so many Japanese. I don't want to live near Japanese.' So in that respect, I kind of look at the positive side of evacuation and I try to say it wasn't all bad - there was a reason for it. I firmly believe in God and I believe that God had a plan and purpose for my life. And I believe that part of the purpose and plan was for me to go to camp. And because of that, I didn't go back to Japan and I'm certainly very happy. I'm very happy in my marriage and I have a wonderful daughter and my mother is still living and we are a very happy family. I believe that God ordained it to be that way. He ordained for me to be in camp too and perhaps if we hadn't gone to camp, maybe something terrible could have happened to us. because there was prejudice. So I kind of look at it positively now and I say, 'Thank you God for bringing me through it.' And I had a nervous breakdown though, I have to tell you that.

RW: When did that happen?

JI: Oh gee, this happened when we moved to Leavittown, I guess it was 1952 when my daughter was about two years old.

RW: And do you think that is related to your camp traumas?

JI: I think so, yes.

RW: I can appreciate that. I found out that during these interviews, many scary and tragic things that I've repressed - come back and I wasn't a Japanese American. But it was just so terrible. I have here a question that you may have answered, you've anticipated me: I was going to ask in looking back, was there anything happened to you at Tule Lake, that helped you to become a wiser or better person?

JI: I think I learned to be more tolerant of people. I think it taught me that. Not to judge a person too quickly.

RW: I felt that what you told me before about how you resolved it for yourself, your acceptance that this was something that God had planned for you and you lived through it and He helped you - that was wise. Now let me see, can you tell what you did right after you left Tule Lake?

JI: We came on a train all the way across the country. I remember my parents would look out the window and we saw beautiful sights of America and we finally came Lakewood, New Jersey. And I remember a Mr. Monday, who was from the government, who was very, very nice and I'll never forget him. And I hope to see him in heaven someday. But anyway he was a wonderful person. He was very kind to my parents and myself and we were located on a poultry farm in Lakewood, New Jersey.



RW: and your father worked there? What did you do? I guess you went to school I imagine.  
JI: No, well I went to work for a doctor in New York City, because I had graduated high school in camp.

RW: Of course, yes. What would you think were the highpoints or significant points of your life since you've left Tule Lake?

JI: Well, going to nursing school and getting married and having a daughter. And having my mother here with me. My father was here with us too until he died. He died here in our home. I was glad of that because I didn't want it to be in a hospital. So that's it.

RW: Looking back today, what part of your experience is still the hardest to bear?

JI: Well, I can't say. I don't remember anything that is hard to bear, I think God helped me through all of it and I don't. I wouldn't want to go through it again, but I think I'm stronger in my faith because of all the experiences I've had and God made me strong each time something happened to me. It just strengthened my faith in him more, because at one time I trusted man and I realized man is not to be trusted. And therefore I had to trust some higher being, somebody higher than man.

RW: To which church do you belong?

JI: Baptist.

SIDE 2

RW: Okay, it should be functioning now and I'm sorry to interrupt. Could you go on?

JI: I think I remember being baptized back in Tacoma when I was about six years old. But then I didn't grow, you know, as far as my spiritual life went because I don't know why, I didn't grow too much. I went to Sunday school, I don't know, it was the thing to do. My mother took us to Sunday school and church. Then of course in camp, as I said we didn't, I don't think we went to church. I don't really remember attending church. And after the camp experience, well my life was so busy, I didn't think much of going to church or anything. But now our whole life is revolved around church. Our family would be lost without our church life, because all our friends belong to the church; our whole life centers around church and church activities. It means a great deal to us.

RW: Do you live where there are a number of Japanese Americans also who are baptists or are you. . .

JI: Oh no, we're the only members in our church. There is another girl, that's right, I forgot about Margaret. Her name is Margaret Borowich, she's Japanese and she is a member of our church too.

RW: Well, then I'd like to ask is there anything else you'd like to tell me that I've overlooked?

JI: Only that I wouldn't want to go through that experience. . . In a way I'm grateful that I went through it because it strengthened my faith and I would do anything to prevent it from happening to other people.

RW: Good for you.

JI: I would sacrifice my life if I had too. I mean if I thought it was going to happen to my daughter or anyone else, I don't care who it is, you know, I don't care if they are purple or what color they are or anything, I would be willing to give my life to prevent it from happening again.

RW: I'm so glad I talked to you. It's a wonderful statement, Mrs. Iwohara. I'm really shaken by that.

JI: I mean it. I am sincere about it. It wasn't a good experience and I don't think anyone should. . . I understand more now about prisoners in a jail.



RW: Oh yes. Many of the same things that happened to prisoners happened there. I was going to ask if you know anyone else who experienced this Tule Lake experience like yourself and would be willing to talk to me. Of course sometimes it's better even if I talk to them and explain it myself. If you would give me their names or addresses or phone numbers. If you want to call me, if you hear of anyone who was in Tule Lake, call me collect.

JI: All right. Could you give me your name please.

RW: My name is Rosalie Wax and the telephone number is \_\_\_\_\_

JI: You want someone who has been at Tule Lake.

RW: Yes.

JI: I see.

RW: That's what I'm especially concentrating on.

JI: I see. There aren't too many people out here, I don't think from Tule Lake. There are some in Chicago that I know. You want to talk to women more than men, is that right?

RW: Well, I'd be happy to talk to both.

JI: I see.

RW: I found I had too many men, so, but I'm about evened out now.

JI: I don't know whether. . my brother is very shy and introverted and if he'd be willing to or not, we are going to go visit him Easter time, but I'll speak to him about it.

RW: All right.

JI: And if he is willing I'll have him call you.

RW: That's very kind. Ask him to call and I'll explain it in detail, because it's helpful to people to express these things.

JI: I think it would be helpful especially to him, because he is so introverted. But I would have to ask him first.

RW: Exactly, yes. And the other thing is, I might call you again for a short talk if you don't mind.

JI: I don't mind at all. It was nice talking to you because I kind of feel relieved. I've never expressed anything. I had seen a psychiatrist when I had my nervous breakdown; of course I went to a psychiatrist for a long time, but I was never able to bring it out in words and maybe when they gave me shock treatments and everything and they were giving me drugs, I might have, I don't know. You'd have to look at my doctor's records. I don't know what I said of course, but this is the first time that I've really ever talked to anybody about it.

RW: This is the first time?

JI: Oh yes. I've never talked about camp experience to my husband even. I never felt the need to do it. I've never done it, but it feels good now. I feel so relieved having done it. I really appreciate your calling. Well, I should really pay you \$50.00 an hours. (laughs)

RW: (laughs)

JI: You'd probably get more than that, but. . .just listening to me. I should pay you.

RW: Some of the things that you've said are so wonderful and insightful and because I think they are truly honest. They rarely come out in an interview. And so this will give me added insights. . .because I even have a guilt about this too, you know.

JI: Oh well, you shouldn't because the people, most people out here didn't even. .don't even know what I'm talking about until they saw 'Farewell to Manzanar.'



RW: *What I've noticed often is that after an interview, people, Japanese Americans have told me that ideas have come to them and they wish they had told me. So that's why I do second interviews. New things may come to you that you want to tell me. Okay, this has been a lovely experience and let me say, may God continue to take care of you.*

JI: *Thank you very much and it was nice talking to you. Thank you for calling. Good bye.*

RW: *Good bye, Thank you.*



*Mary Matamoros*

Longitudinal History

June Iwohara

Second Interview

March 12, 1982



June Iwohara: *Hello?*

Rosalie Wax: *Hello, is this Mrs. Iwohara?*

June Iwohara: *Yes it is.*

Rosalie Wax: *This is Professor Wax whom you talked to last month.*

June Iwohara: *Oh yes.*

Rosalie Wax: *And I said I would call you back, if you have time this morning.*

June Iwohara: *Yes.*

Rosalie Wax: *And ask you a few questions. I did want to say at first how much I enjoyed our talk.*

June Iwohara: *I enjoyed it too.*

Rosalie Wax: *Good.*

June Iwohara: *I told you I should have paid you because when I went to the psychiatrist, you know, I had to pay him. (laughs)*

Rosalie Wax: *(laughs)*

June Iwohara: *I should really pay you for this.*

Rosalie Wax: *Well, I feel adequately repaid because, I'll put it this way, many of the interviews I have are very difficult and I'm often really depressed after them. But somehow after talking to you, it lifted my spirits and I thought that this is a good work, so you see I'm repaid deeply.*

June Iwohara: *Oh, I'm glad you feel that way then.*

Rosalie Wax: *I had wondered if anything had occurred to you that you thought of that you felt you should have told me.*

June Iwohara: *Well, you know I never mentioned my parents. But I guess I feel most sorry for our parents, because of what they had to go through. We younger people, we were able to, you know, get our education, because my parents worked so hard. But my father when he was 60 I guess, he had to start all over again, you know. Because he lost everything. He was 65 actually when he had to start all over again. And that's why I don't have much patience with the young people today, you know, who want the government to give them everything, you know. And they say, we don't want to work for this and that; the government owes us this and that, because my parents came over here and they didn't speak the language very well, but they were willing to work hard. If my parents who came over here didn't know the language and they worked hard, they were able to accumulate a little something for themselves and their children. Then I feel the young people today. That's why I'm not too sympathetic with the welfare program, let me put it that way. For those who are very ill or aged and unable to take care of themselves, that is. or the mentally retarded, who are unable to work and support themselves, I'm all for that. But to give welfare out just helter skelter to everybody and cut incentive, it angers me because I think of my parents. My parents went to camp for four years, lost everything.*

Rosalie Wax: *I remember you did mention that. You know some people I've talked to, the camp experience seemed to help strengthen their families and for others it really broke up the families in a very sad way. What would you say happened in your case?*

June Iwohara: *I think it strengthened ours. I really do, because of my mother's faith in God and father's willingness to work. I think it brought us closer together.*



RW: That is very nice. And then as you think back over what you have achieved in your lifetime, in what way would you say has the camp experience helped you and in what way would you say the camp experience hurt you?

JI: Well, as far as the camp experience goes, for a long time I was very resentful, not at the government, but at Japanese people. And I never quite understood this, but now I do, because we were thrown together, all the Japanese together and we were like animals. We came more or less like animals. Because we lost our freedom and I at the time I don't think we realized what we were going through. And so when we came out of the camps, I told my mother, I never wanted to live in a Japanese community ever again. And so when my parents came out East, I was very happy, because there wasn't a Japanese person within a mile from us. And even to this day, I we belong to the Japanese American Citizens League which is a wonderful organization, and we support it whole-heartedly, but we don't go to any of their activities, because it is all oriented toward the Japanese, and we are in our church now and all our friends are Caucasians and now of course I don't feel that way anymore.

RW: Thinking back to camp, was there anything specific that you would say helped to stimulate. .

JI: . . .this feeling against?

RW: this feeling.

JI: Well, for instance, my brother is very placid, he is a kind of meek and mild person. And because my mother wanted to send us to a Christian Sunday school. And he was Buddhist, he came from a Buddhist background, they kind of persecuted my brother, you know. Like he would be coming home from school with his school papers and they would grab them away from him and tore it up and my brother would come home crying, you know.

RW: Now let me get this straight. Was your brother, was it because he was a Buddhist or because he was a Christian?

JI: Because he was a Christian.

RW: Then the other children would kind of torment and tease him about this, is that right?

JI: Yes, and also, my parents are very, not liberal, but very understanding and they wanted us to go to an American school and learn English language, whereas these people were Japan oriented and they felt that my parents should not be sending us to learn English and therefore, we. . .I didn't feel it so much, but my brother more than myself, who felt this persecution because he was going to public school and they kept their children home. I guess they intended to go back to Japan or something, I don't know what their motives were.

RW: Well, if it is a help to you, I can say there are a few people I've talked to in camp, well, they don't express this openly as you do - they make it clear that even in camp they just sort of lived an isolated life.

JI: Yes.

RW: They kept to themselves.

JI: Yes, we did.

RW: And that might be part of this phenomenon; you're the first person who brought it out openly. Of course, as you were young, you might not know, that in Tule Lake it was often dangerous to speak your mind.

JI: Oh yes, because we were told there were spies; one for the government and we really don't know. I guess there were people there who were watching us from the government, I don't really know any of that. I was having a good time, more or less. Right, because, I was too young to realize what was going on. I know that my father went to work. He went to work on the farm for 16 dollars a month and he brought back any vegetables he could bring back for us, because the food was very atrocious, you know in camp. I



JI: understand that too, because I'm sure the people outside of camp, you know during the war there was rationing and they suffered too, so I don't feel that we were. .in fact, I often told my mother that since I had to be in a camp, I'm glad it was in America and not in Germany.

RW: Oh golly!

JI: Gee, I bet in Germany if I were a Jewish person, look at the persecution they went through, that's nothing compared to what we went through and so therefore I'm grateful that, you know, if I had to go to camp, that it was here in America.

RW: There's another kind of complex question that has come up as I've talked to these people, it does seem to me as if people. .some people are not so much bitter as. . instead, as they express it, they have suffered a very severe wrong in being put in camps as citizens. And they have never gotten justice.

JI: Right, I feel this way. Oh yes, definitely. Because, you know, I'll say to myself, "If I had not gone to camp, maybe I would have been murdered or persecuted, but according to the Constitution of the United States, we Niseis were born and reared here. So therefore we are citizens and they had no reason to put us in camp." And I feel definitely they were wrong. Now as far as the money goes, my past is my past, do you feel that you should be reimbursed? I said, "Yes I do feel we should be reimbursed," I said, "but financially I said there. .you could give me the entire state of California and it wouldn't give me my four years back. I said you could give me all the money in the world and it wouldn't give me my four years back." But I would, yes I would like some money back, that would help a little bit sure, it would help my mother. My father is dead now, but it would help my mother, who lives with me. But more than that, I would like it in the history books. I would like the American government to say that they are sorry that there was a wrong that was committed.

RW: That justice has never been balanced or righted, yes. This is one of the insights that's coming very strong now as I talk to people. So, I'm happy that you corroborate it. And so you would agree, that these four years could really be seen as lost years?

JI: Oh yes. Had I not had my faith in God, I'm afraid I would have ended up in a mental institution, for the rest of my life. Because of those four years I spent in camp. I'm almost positive of that.

RW: Do you feel at all that you had to work especially hard in your life in order to make up for those four lost years?

JI: No, not any harder than any other person who wants to make something of themselves. I don't think I had to work any harder. I haven't felt the prejudice out here in the East Coast. If I had to live out in the West Coast, I might have, you know, and I would of had to work harder, but no, . .

RW: Not in the East Coast.

JI: No.

RW: Here's a question I think you've answered, but you can enlarge on it - you know you are a very intelligent person. You'd make a good interviewer. This question says: do you feel that the camp experience left you with a sense of insecurity and even damage?

JI: Oh yes, definitely. Because I used to be a very happy and outgoing person. This is what my mother tells me and I remember living in Tacoma, I loved it there, I really did. And then when I came out East, I became very introverted. I told my mother I didn't want to get married; I wanted to be a nurse and devote myself, you know, and I got very introverted and then of course, I had my nervous breakdown and I attribute all this to my four years in camp, I really do.

RW: Well, that's the end of my second talk. I mean I've gotten to the end of these questions, so I'll say goodbye and thank you. You've helped me very much.

JI: Thank you.



Jane Iwohara

June Iwohara was 15 years old when she, ~~xxx~~ her parents, and her brother were evacuated from Washington. About her life in Tule Lake she ~~xxxxxx~~ said: ~~xxxxxx~~

I hated being there. . I began to hate Japanese people and mainly because we, as human beings, weren't meant to be incarcerated like that - like cattle. Sometimes I felt I was going to lose my mind.

She and her parents were ~~the~~ among the last people to leave Tule Lake, because, according to Mrs. Iwohara, her parents refused to renounce their Japanese citizenship.

We came by train all the way across the country. I remember my parents would look out the window and we saw beautiful sights of America and we finally came to Lakewood, New Jersey. And I remember a Mr. Monday, who was from the government, who was very, very nice and I'll never forget him. I hope to see him in heaven someday. He was very kind to my parents and myself and we were located on a poultry farm in Lakewood, New Jersey. . .

I went to work for a doctor in New York City, because I had graduated high school in camp.

RW: What would you ~~xx~~ think were the highpoints or significant points of your life since you've left Tule Lake?

MI: Well, going to nursing school and getting married and having a daughter. And having my mother with me. My father was here with us too until he died. He died here in our home. I was glad of that because I didn't want it to be in a hospital.

RW: Looking back today, what part of your experience is still the hardest to bear?

MI: Well, I can't say. . I don't remember anything that is hard to bear. I think god helped me through all of it and. . I wouldn't want to go through it again. But I'm stronger in my faith because of all the experiences I've had. And God made me strong each time



something happened to me. Because at one time I trusted man and I realized man is not ~~xxx~~ to be trusted. And therefore I had to trust some higher being, somebody higher than man. ... Now our whole life revolves around ~~xxx~~ church. Our family would be lost without our church life, because all our friends belong to the ~~xxx~~ church. Our whole life centers around church and church activities. . .

And I had a nervous breakdown though. I have to tell you that.

RW: When did that happen?

JI: Oh gee, this happened when we moved to \_\_\_\_\_, I guess it was 1952 when my daughter was about two years old.

RW: Do you think it was related to your camp traumas?

JI: I think so. Yes.

~~IzdizdzmbzaskzMrsanIwoharanfon~~

✓ I did not think it proper to ask Mrs. Iwohara about her nervous breakdown, but she herself spoke of it again when we were saying our farewells:

It was nice talking to you because I kind of feel relieved. I've never expressed anything. I had seen a psychiatrist when I had my nervous breakdown. Of course I went to a psychiatrist for a long time, but I was never able to bring it out in words. Maybe when they gave me shock treatments and everything and they were giving me drugs, ~~I might have~~. I don't know. . But this is the first time I've really ever talked to anybody about it.

RW: This is the first time?

JI: Oh Yes. I've never talked about camp experience to my husband even. I never felt the need to do it. I've never done it, but it feels good now. I feel so relieved<sup>e</sup> having done it. I really appreciate your ~~xx~~ calling. Well, I should really pay you ~~XXXXXX~~ \$50.00 an hour. (laughs)