

7.8

7.8 Oda, Thomas & Noriko

# Interviews

1981-1982

pseudonym Ikamu + Kimiko Kurusu

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C.

MRS. YUTAKA ODA

Date: June 17, 1981

2455 Micheltorena St.  
Los Angeles, 90039  
Telephone: 213-661-8725

Born in Japan in 1915

*you know*  
MO: Hello.

*Kuruse*  
RW: Hello, is this Mrs. Oda?

MO: Yes.

RW. You'll be surprised. This is the lady you knew as Rosalie Hankey  
in Tule ~~lake~~ Lake.

MO. Oh, Yes, yes.

NOTES - Born in Japan -

Stunned by news of evacuation - accepted in L.A.

FINE STORY OF TEACHER VISIT MND TABE \*

I relocation Center just went about my business.

receptionist and music for rec. dept.

Complex about segregation because went alone with Yutaka and doesn't  
tell me this.

Tyke Lake DREARY -

again and again - we didn't have anything to do with that.

for report

MRS. YURIKO KURUSU

Mrs. Kurusu lives in Los Angeles. Born in Japan in 1915.

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INTERVIEW

Yuriko Kurusu: Hello?

Rosalie Wax: Hello, is this Mrs. Kurusu?

Yuriko Kurusu: Yes.

Rosalie Wax: You'll be surprised. This is the lady you knew as Rosalie Hankey in Tule Lake.

Yuriko Kurusu: Oh, Yes, yes!

Rosalie Wax: And - I don't know whether you read my book that I sent to Mr. Kato - on Tule Lake - I wonder, after all these years - how are you?

Yuriko Kurusu: Fine, and you?

Rosalie Wax: Oh, I've been doing very well. I'm a retired professor, and the Rockefeller Foundation asked me if I would talk to people who experienced life in Tule Lake, and how this affected them as human beings.

Yuriko Kurusu: Um-hum.

Rosalie Wax: And I wondered if you would be willing to answer the questions, or talk to me about it - and you could remain anonymous - and I'd also be willing to send you the transcript to correct it. So that nothing goes down that you don't want.

Yuriko Kurusu: Well, the thing is - it's so long ago now, that I've forgotten.

Rosalie Wax: Well, let me - if you're willing, and if you have a little time now - let me ask you the questions, and if you've forgotten, why you say so. Is that okay?

Yuriko Kurusu: Okay.

Rosalie Wax: And then if you get tired, or something comes up, why let me know and I'll just call you again sometime - I'll make a date.

Yuriko Kurusu: Um-hum.

Rosalie Wax: Well, first I really should ask - are there any other Japanese Americans you know in Los Angeles or around, who might be willing to talk to me?

Yuriko Kurusu: Well, I think the JACL, would have members who are interested. You know that Redress Committee. I think there would be quite a number of them would like to.

Rosalie Wax: All right. I'll write to them. You don't have any friends, though. . .

Yuriko Kurusu: No, I don't.

Rosalie Wax: Okay. Now let me see. Could you remember - tell me a little about your life before this awful Pearl Harbor struck. You were a young girl then, how would you describe your life?

Yuriko Kurusu: Pleasant.

Rosalie Wax: And were you in school?

Yuriko Kurusu: No, I was out.

RW: Pardon me?

YK: I was teaching.

RW: Oh. What were you teaching?

YK: Music.

RW: And where were you living at the time?

YK: Los Angeles.

RW: Oh, you and me both! (I was living in Berkeley at the time of Pearl Harbor, but I had lived in Los Angeles for many years.)

And how did your parents earn their living?

YK: Oh, my father was a gardener.

RW: And what kind of schooling did you have?

YK: I just went to high school. And then I went to Japan.

RW: And then you went to Japan for a while. And then you taught Japanese music?

YK: Yes.

RW: Oh yes, I remember. . .when I visited you in Tule Lake. (At one of my visits to the Kurusu's at Tule Lake I found Mrs. Kurusu teaching a little girl how to play a harp-like Japanese instrument.) You were an expert.

YK: (pleased) Well, that was years ago.

RW: Well, I guess we must be the same age, anyway, I'm 69 now.

YK: Oh, well, I'm just a few years younger.

RW: If you can think back to that time, do you remember. . .what were your hopes for the future? What kind of life did you hope to have?

YK: Oh, I don't think I never even thought of that.

RW: You didn't think of that?

YK: No.

RW: And, let me see, this is a good time to ask when you were born, and where?

YK: Well, I was born in 1915, but I was born in Japan.

RW: Oh, you were born in Japan?

YK: Let's see - was I three years old. . .something like that.

RW: Three years old, when you came to the U.S.? (no response)

Now I'll get to the stage of the evacuation, the first stages of it, . . .Can you remember how you felt when the Japanese American people were ordered to leave their homes and report to Assembly Centers?

YK: All I can think of was that we were stunned. You know, we were stunned.

RW: You just couldn't believe it? Or am I putting words in your mouth?

YK: (soft laugh) You're not. . .well, I didn't think it was possible, I guess. No.

RW: Are there any incidents or things that happened that come especially to your mind from that time?

YK: No. We lived in an area in which we were accepted.

RW: In Los Angeles?

YK: Um-hum.

RW: And, to which Assembly Center were you sent?

YK: Santa Anita.

RW: And, did you go with your parents?

YK: Um-hum.

RW: And did you have brothers and sisters or did you. . .

YK: Well, I had two sisters.

RW: And are there any experiences in the Assembly Center that you recall strongly?

YK: No.

RW: If anything occurs to you, just interrupt me.

YK: Well, I can't think of any.

RW: Okay. Was there anything you did or other people did in the Assembly Center, that makes you feel good when you think about it today?

YK: Not that I know of.

RW: Anything that made you feel especially sad?

YK: Well, I tell you what, one of my school teachers came to visit us, and at that time, we went to see her - and it was just like a prison type of thing in which you can't even shake hands with them sitting on one side and we were sitting on the other side.

RW: You mean there were bars between you?

YK: No not bars - a table - A long, long table. . .that we couldn't reach across.

RW: (long pause) That's sad. Was there anything made you angry, especially?

YK: No, not angry. But, you'd think - something like sad is, you'd think in a country where there is equality and all - and then just because you're walking along, and you're Japanese - that wasn't a good feeling.

RW: That kind of thing was hard to live with. . .For yourself, how do you think you managed to cope with this experience in the Assembly Centers?

YK: Well, I tell you, I'm easy going.

RW: You did what?

YK: I'm easy going.

RW: You're easy going?

YK: Uh-huh. I try not to have anything bother me.

RW: I see. I'll ask you then - unless you have something more to say?

YK: No.

RW: To which Relocation Camp were you sent?

YK: Gila.

RW: Oh naturally - that's a dumb question. (I met Mrs. Kurusu and her husband when I was at Gila.) Let me see, I visited you there, you know. (pause - no response from YK.) Now let's see, can you remember how you felt when you were told you were going to be sent to a Relocation Camp? To Gila.

YK: No, I think we just accepted it. I knew we wasn't going to stay in that Santa Anita.

RW: You knew they would be sending you someplace?

YK: Um-hum.

RW: Which of your experiences in Gila do you recall most strongly?

YK: No. There isn't anything. (long pause) No. Actually I've forgotten. I don't recall.

RW: Was there anything that really made you angry there?

YK: No. It may be. . . I have recalled, . . . you know the questionnaire the government sent out.

RW: The Military Questionnaire?

YK: Yes. I thought that was putting the Nisei into camp and then asking them questions like that. I thought that was stupid.

RW: That is the prize word for it.

YK: I think. . . it didn't affect me, but I think that was the question that they needn't ask.

RW: Is there anything more you'd like to tell me about it?

(pause). . . Your saying, since you were a Nisei. . .

YK: (interrupts) You see, I was born in Japan, but lived over here.

RW: It was kind of insulting?

YK: Yes, it would be. . . Now, like me, since I didn't have citizenship at the time. . . Well, it didn't concern me. . . I didn't have a difficult choice to make.

RW: You were not a United States citizen yet?

YK: No, not at that time.

RW: Was there anything that you or any of these people did in the Relocation Center that makes you feel good when you think about it?

YK: No.

RW: Was it a bore, or?

YK: Well, I tell you, I just went about my business, that's it.

RW: You mean you just endured it. . . Is that a way to put it?

YK: Um-hm.

RW: Was there anything happened to you that made you angry?

YK: No.

RW: How do you think you managed to cope with life in Gila?

YK: (long pause) Well (long pause) I think it was because I just did what I was doing - teaching.

RW: Teaching music again?

YK: Um-huh.

RW: Kept busy?

YK: That's right. . . , oh, I didn't do that there. I think I was in the hospital, as a receptionist, and well, that was interesting. . . , that's right, and then, toward the end, the recreation department came and asked if I would teach music.

RW: What did you teach there?

YK: Well, the Japanese music.

RW: Can you remember how you felt when you knew you were going to be sent to Tule Lake.

YK: Well, I didn't like it.

RW: Why not?

YK: Well (long pause) probably because I wasn't, I didn't feel. (?). or that I was disloyal to the U.S., and yet, to be segregated, I thought, . . . well, I didn't want to be, I guess.

RW: Would it be right to say that you felt this was not just or not right?

YK: Well, I wouldn't say that, because. . . We knew we would have to.

RW: You couldn't help yourself?

YK: Uh-huh.

RW: When you knew you were going to Tule Lake, how did you imagine your new life would be there?

YK: Well, I just imagined it would be the same.

RW: And can you remember how you felt when you arrived there?

YK: Oh-h. . . dreary. . . compared to Gila. . . compared to Gila it was a dreary place. Everything was so dark and. . . You know what it (Gila) was like. It was pleasant, with red roofs and white walls. It was pleasant. But Tule was dark.

RW: I thought that myself. And, when you think back about the life in Tule Lake are there any incidents that especially come to your mind? Anything that happened that you especially remember?

YK: Well, I don't remember it that well, but then you know there was that riot. . .

RW: Yes?

YK: Well, actually, I kept to myself, and I wasn't in with these pro-. . . what did they call them? . . .

RW: Well, first of all, in November there was the Daihyo Sha Kai. . . and then later there were the Resegregation people. . .

YK: (pause) Well, we were not with that pro-Japan, or whatever it was.

RW: You mean the strike? . . . There was a demonstration and everything, and you said that. . .

YK: Oh, we didn't have anything to do with that.

RW: And, of course, you weren't members of the Resegregation Group either.

YK: No.

RW: Come to think of it, the. . . I remember that you lived kind of quietly? Did you have any friends in Tule?

YK: Well, in our block, yes.

RW: In your block. Were there any members of your family there, or were you there. . .

YK: No.

RW: Just with Isamu (her husband).

YK: Um. (yes)

RW: You must have been kind of lonely.

YK: Well (long pause). . . no, . . . I suppose we were, . . . (long pause)

RW: But, in time you got to know the folks in your block.

YK: Um. (yes)

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

YK: (long pause) Well, actually. . . at Tule, . . . I didn't know. . . my friends weren't there. No I didn't.

RW: You wouldn't say there was anybody that you'd go to if you had trouble?

YK: You mean when we're in Tule?

RW: Yes. That you'd go to for advice or help?

YK: Oh no.

RW: And here's one I'd like to ask that's different. Was there any person or people in Tule Lake whom you kind of disliked, or who you thought were behaving foolishly?  
YK: Well. . .the pro-Japan, what did they call them?

RW: The first name - the Sokuji Kikoku Hoshi Dan?  
YK: Oh. . .the Hoshi-dan, that's it. I thought they were stupid.

RW: You thought they were stupid?  
YK: Oh, yes.

RW: Could you tell me why, or more about it?  
YK: Well, I guess it's because they were from Japan. . .I couldn't understand them.

RW: They were something.  
YK: Well, I was up there, but I wasn't that pro-Japan.

RW: Were there any people there you were afraid of?  
YK: No, because I didn't mingle with them.

RW: Do you have a little more time?  
YK: Well, just a few minutes, we have to go to a funeral this evening - but if it's not long. . .

RW: I might call you again, if you don't mind. Would that be all right?  
YK: Where are you calling from?

RW: I'm calling from St. Louis. . .I'd like to ask you a few questions about how you felt after leaving Tule Lake, and how your husband got along, and if we don't have time I'll call you again when it's convenient, because you say you have to go to a funeral.  
YK: Well that's this evening.

RW: Well this will only take a little time, maybe ten more minutes.  
Do you remember how you felt when Mr. Okamoto was shot and killed?  
YK: Mr. Okamoto?

RW: He was this young man that the military sentry just shot down.  
YK: Well I couldn't give you anything on that because I don't remember.

RW: Do you remember how you felt when you heard that Mr. Hitomi was murdered?  
YK: (long pause) Well, not exactly, but probably I might have felt that I didn't know that Japanese were capable of doing such a thing.

RW: Yes, it was shocking. After leaving Tule Lake - what did you do after leaving?  
YK: Went to Japan.

RW: And, how long did you stay there?  
YK: I think it was five years.

RW: I think that while you were there, somebody came to me for a recommendation about your coming back, and I gave you and your husband a fine recommendation.  
YK: You gave it to my husband.

RW: Because I knew you were fine people. Now - would you mind telling me why you came back to the United States?  
YK: Well, to tell the truth, actually, we didn't want to go back to Japan.

RW: How was that? If you didn't want to go why did you go?  
YK: That's a good questions. (long pause) I don't think I can tell you that.

RW: I beg your pardon?

YK: I don't think I can answer that. Because I don't really know myself.

RW: I can appreciate. . . I'll just say I understand. But then - why did you return to the United States? (pause) How did it come about?

YK: Well, I guess, it's because we felt it was our home.

RW: That makes sense. . . And since you're back here, could you tell me about some of the interesting parts of your life? What your husband worked at? And whether you have been working?

YK: Well, my husband worked all along - and it's been fine.

RW: He's been happy in his work?

YK: Um-hum.

RW: Do you have any children?

YK: No.

RW: What particular job does he have?

YK: He's in the engineering field.

RW: Is he retired now?

YK: Yes.

RW: In a couple of days I might call and talk to him. You know, I didn't talk to enough women in Tule Lake. In Tule Lake the ladies would often sit quiet. So I'm glad I talked to you. Let's see. Do you often think of Tule Lake, or do you seldom think of it now, or do you try not to think of it?

YK: Well, it's not that we don't try to think about it, we just don't think of it, period. We don't think of Gila either.

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

YK: Oh, I think that is preparing to leave your home. L. A. and going into the Assembly Center, when you were congregated at the church - or whatever it was.

RW: Yes, that was hard.

YK: I think.

RW: And, is there anything that you or other people did in the centers or at Tule Lake that makes you feel good when you think about it today?

YK: (long pause) No, not really, but, the younger kids say: 'Well, why didn't you protest?' And I said, 'No. In those days you didn't.' Wasn't that what it was? Young people are protesting this or that, but nowadays they're doing that.

RW: Well, even in Tule, wasn't there anything at all that was sort of a pleasure? From your teaching? Or did you go to any of the classes?

YK: No. . . . Oh yes, I did, I did. . . . sewing.

RW: Did that make you feel good?

YK: Well, I was learning something.

RW: And now I'd like to ask, is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your experience?

YK: No. There isn't anything.

RW: Is there any question you think I should have asked?

YK: No.

RW: Well, I want to thank you and say it's kind of wonderful to talk again to somebody I haven't seen for so long.

YK: Yes it is. But I know you've been doing well in your work.

RW: Yes, I've been enjoying myself, and I feel I've been a very good teacher.

YK: Good.

RW: And that's helpful to you as you get older. . .and if I do call Isamu, what would be a good time for him?

YK: Well, he's not in right now. But I. . .supposing in the morning about this time I think would fine. . .Not this week, because we have a house guest. . .Well, I mean a relative that's here, for the funeral and he's going to stay here all week.

RW: Next week would be then better.

YK: Yes, it would be.

RW: And so give Isamu my best regards.

YK: Will do.

RW: This has been very helpful to me. And if you hear of any. . .especially Japanese women who were in Tule Lake, would you just drop me a note?

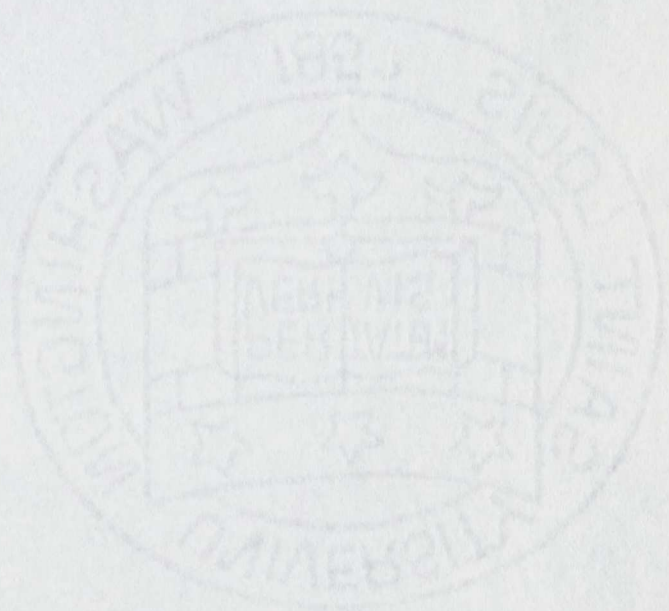
YK: Well, I really don't know anyone. But if I do I will.

RW: I'll keep in touch, and I do thank you again.

YK: That was (?) (Have a nice day?)

RW: Good-bye.

YK: Good-bye.



Mrs. Kurusu, June 17, 1981

1.

MRS. YURIKO KURUSU

~~Kike~~

Lives in ~~Kanagawa~~ Los Angeles

Born in Japan in 1915

~~Yuriko~~

Yuriko Kurusu: Hello?

Rosalie Wax: Hello, is this Mrs. Kurusu?

Yuriko Kurusu: Yes.

Rosalie Wax: You'll be surprised. This is the lady you knew as Rosalie Hankey in Tule Lake.

Yuriko Kurusu: Oh, Yes, ~~yes~~ yes!

RW. And - I don't know whether you read my book that I sent to Mr.

Kato - on Tule Lake - I wonder, after all these years - how are you?

MO: Fine, and you?

RW: Oh, I've been doing very well. I'm a retired professor, and the Rockefeller Foundation asked me if I would talk to people who experienced life in Tule Lake, and how this affected them as human beings.

MO. Um-hum.

RW: And I wondered if you would be willing to answer the questions, or talk to me about it - and you could remain anonymous - and I'd also be willing to send you the transcript to correct it. So that nothing goes down that you don't want.

MO: Well, the thing is - it's so long ago now, that I've forgotten.

RW: Well, let me - if you're willing, and if you have a little time now -

ask you let me answer the questions, and if you've forgotten, why you say so.

~~MO:~~ Is that Okay?

MO: Okay.

RW. And then if you get tired, or something comes up, why let me know and I'll just call you again sometimes, when - I'll make a date.

MO: Um-hum.

RW. Well, first I really should ask - are there any other Japanese Americans you know in Los Angeles or around, who might be willing to talk to me.

MO: Well, I think ~~the~~ the JACL, would have members who are interested. You know that Redress Committee. I think there would be quite a number of them would like to.

RW: All right. I'll write to them. You don't have any friends, though. . .

MO. No, I don't.

RW. ~~OK~~ Okay. Now let me see, Could you remember - tell me a little about your life before this awful Pearl Harbor struck. You were a young girl then, how would you describe your life?

MO: Pleasant.

RW. And where you in school?

MO: No, I was out ~~of school~~ (1.?)

RW: Pardon me?

MO. I was teaching.

RW. Oh. what were you ~~teaching~~ teaching?

full names  
first page -  
Then - YK

no friends  
Tule Lake

60

YK MO: Music.

RW. And where were you living at the time?

YK MO: Los Angeles.

RW. Oh, you and me both! (I was living in Berkeley at the time of Pearl Harbor, but I had ~~lived~~ lived in Los Angeles for many years.)

RW. And how did your parents earn their living?

MO. Oh, my father was a gardener.

RW. And what kind of schooling did you have?

MO: I just ~~went~~ went to ~~high~~ high school.

~~MO~~. And then I went to Japan.

~~RW~~ And then you went to Japan for a while. And then you taught Japanese music?

MO: Yes.

RW. Oh yes, I remember ~~when you were doing~~ <sup>Kurus</sup> ~~(teaching music)~~ when I visited you in Tule Lake. (At one of my visits to the <sup>Kurus</sup> ~~Odas~~ I at Tule Lake I found Mrs. Oda, teaching a little girl how to play the ~~Japanese~~ <sup>Kurus</sup> ~~Samisen~~ -- I believe it's called.) a <sup>Kurus</sup> ~~Yan~~ <sup>Rayp-like</sup> Japanese instrument.)

MO. (pleased) Well, that was years ago.

RW: Well, I guess we must be the same age, anyway, I'm 69 now.

MO. Oh, well, I'm just a few years younger.

RW. If you can think back to that time, do you remember ~~what~~ what were your hopes for the ~~your~~ future? What kind of life did you hope to have?

MO: Oh, I don't think I never even thought of that.

RW. You didn't think of that?

MO. ~~No~~. No.

RW. And, ~~let me~~ let me see, this is a good time ~~to~~ to ask ~~when~~ when you were born, and where?

MO: Well, I was born in 1915, but I was born in Japan.

~~RW~~ Oh you were born in Japan?

MO. Let's see - was I three years old.... something like that.

RW. Three years ~~old~~ old, when you came to the U. S? ~~yes~~ (no response)

~~MO~~ Now I'll get to the stage of the evacuation, the first stages of it, ... Can you remember how you felt ~~when~~ when the ~~government~~ announcement that the Japanese American people would be ordered to leave their homes and report to Assembly Centers? <sup>were</sup>

MO: All I can ~~think~~ think of was that we were stunned. You know, we were stunned.

RW. And ~~anything else~~ You just couldn't ~~believe~~ believe it? Or am I putting words in your mouth?

MO (Soft laugh) ~~well~~ well, you're not... well, I didn't think it was possible, I guess. No.

RW. ~~Are~~ Are there any incidents or things that happened that come especially to your mind from that time?

MO. No. We lived in an area in which we were accepted.

RW. In Los Angeles?

~~MO~~ MO. Um-hum.

RW. And, to which Assembly Center were you sent?

MO. Santa Anita.

RW. And, did you go with your parents?

MO. Um-hum.

RW. And did you have brothers and sisters or did you....

MO. Well, I had two sisters.

RW. And, are there any experiences in the Assembly Center that you recall/ strongly?

MO. No.

RW. If anything occurs to you, just interrupt me.

MO. Well, I can't think of any.

RW. OK. Was there anything you did or other people did in the Assembly Center, that makes you feel good when you think about ~~it~~ it today?

MO: Not that I know of.

MO. Well, I tell you what, one of my school teachers came to visit us, and at that time, we went to see her, - and it was just like a prison type of thing. ~~///~~ ~~///~~ ~~///~~ you can't even shake hands with them sitting on in which

MO. No not bars - a table - A long, long table... that we couldn't reach across.

RE MO. No, not angry. But, you'd think - something like sad is, you'd think in a country where there is equality and all - ~~and~~ and then just ~~because~~ because you're walking along, and you're Japanese - that ~~wasn't a good feeling~~ wasn't a good feeling.

RW. Oh naturally - that's a dumb question. (I met Mrs. Gila and her husband when I was at Gila.) Let me see, I visited you there, you know. (pause - no ~~REP~~ response from BOB) Now let's see, can you remember how you felt when you were told you were going to be sent to a Relocation Camp? To Gila.

MO. No, not at that time.

RW. Was there anything that you or any of these people did in the Relocation Center that makes you ~~xx~~ feel good when you think ~~xxxx~~ about it?

MO: No.

RW. Was it a bore, or ?

MO: Well, I tell you, I just went about my business, that's it.

RW. You mean you just endured it.. Is that a way to put it?

MO. Um-hm.

RW. Was there anything happened to you that made you angry?

MO. No.

~~RW. AGAIN? Again, I say. Again. I'll make my mind up about this. I'll make my mind up about this.~~

RW. How do you think you managed to cope with life in Gila?

MO. (long pause) Well (long pause) I think it was because I just did what I was doing - teaching.

RW. Teaching music again?

MO. Um-huh

RW. Kept busy?

I think I

MO. That's right,,,...oh...I didn't do that there. ~~I~~ was ~~xxxxxx~~ in the hospital, ~~xxx~~ as a receptionist, and well, that was interesting...

, that's right,

and then, toward the end, the recreation department came and asked if I would teach music.

RW. What did you teach ~~xxxxx~~ there?

MO. Well, the Japanese music.

RW. ~~OK, We'll move on - to life in Tule Lake -~~ Can you remember how you felt when you knew you were going to be sent to Tule Lake.

MO: Well, I didn't like it.

RW. Why not?

MO: Well (long pause) probably because I wasn't, I didn't, feel .. ~~(OOOCC)~~ ( ? ) or that I was disloyal to the U. S. , and yet, to be segregated, I thought, . . . Well, I ~~xxxxx~~ didn't want to be, I guess.

RW. Would it be right to say that you felt ~~xxxxx~~ this was not just or not right?

MO. Well, I wouldn't say that, because . . . .We knew we would have to.

RW. You couldn't help yourself?

MO. ~~Oxxxxx~~ Uh-huh.

RW. When you knew you were going to Tule Lake, how did you imagine your ~~/~~ knew life would be there?

MO. Well, I just imagined it would be the same.

RW. And can you remember how you felt when you arrived there?

MO. Oh-h. .. dreary... compared to Gila/ ~~ixxx~~. .. compared to Gila it was a dreary place. Everything was so dark and.. You know what it ~~/~~ ~~(like)~~ (Gila) was like . It was ~~plexxx~~ pleasant, with red roofs and white walls. It was pleasant. But Tule ~~ixxx~~ was dark.

RW. I thought that myself. And, when you think back about the life in Tule Lake are there any incidents that especially come to your mind? Anything that ~~xxxxx~~ happened that you especially remember?

MO ; Well, I don't remember it that well, but then you know there was that riot. . .

RW. Yes?

MO: Well, actually, I kept to myself, and I wasn't in with these pro-... what did they call them? . . . .

RW. Well, first of all, in November there was the Daihyo ~~xxxx~~ Sha Kai. . . and then later there were the Resegregation people. . .

MO. . . . . (pause) Well , ~~xxx~~ ~~we were~~ not with that pro-Japan, or whatever it was.

RW: You mean the strike? . . There was a demonstration and everything, and you said that....

MO: Oh, we didn't have anything to do with that.

Y K-MO. No.

MO: Well, in our block, ~~X~~ yes.

MO. No.

~~NOX~~ MO: Um. (4/60)

MO: Well (long pause) .,, No,... I suppose we were... (long pause)

MO: Um. (Yes)

MO. (long pause) Well, actually... at Tule,... I didn't know. ... my friends were'nt there. ,,, No, I didn't ~~(?)~~ (?)

MO: You mean when we're in Tule?

MO. Oh no.

MQ: Well... the pro-Japan, what did they call them?

MO. Oh.. the Hogshi-dan, that's it. I thought they were stupid.

MO. Oh, yes.

MO. Well, I guess it's because they were from Japan. . . . I couldn't ~~not~~ understand them.

MO. Well, I was up there, but I wasn't that pro-Japan.

MO. No, because I didn't mingle with them.

MO: Well, just a few minutes, we have to go to a funeral this evening - but if it's not long. . .

MO. Where/you calling from?

✓ hormonal disorders may be caused by an imbalance in the body's hormone levels

MO/ Well that 's this evening.

Do you remember you how you felt when Mr. Okamoto was shot and killed?

RW. He was this young man that the ~~work~~ military sentry just shot down.

RW. Do you remember how you felt when you heard that Mr. Hitomi was murdered?

RW, ~~It~~ Yes, It was shocking. ~~Newsham~~ ~~me~~ ~~see~~ ~~and~~ , , . . After leaving



what it was? Young people are protesting this or that, but nowadays they're doing that.

RW. Well, even in Tule, wasn't there anything at all that was sort of a pleasure? From your teaching? Or did you go to any of the classes?

MO. No. . . . . Oh yes, I did, I did. . . . sewing.

RW. Did that make you feel good?

MO. Well, I was learning something.

RW. And now I'd like to ask, is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your experience?

MO. No. There isn't anything.

MO. No.

MO: Yes it is. But I know you've been doing well in your work.

MO. Good.

MO. Well, he's not in right now. ~~Rockman usually him in the morning.~~

Well, I mean a relative that's here, for the ~~xx~~ funeral and he's going to stay here all week.

MO. Yes, it would be. *Drum*

MO. Will do.

RW. I'll keep in touch, and I do thank you again.

RW. Good-bye.

NO. Good-bye.

YUKAKAXTKKXMASXMA

1.

Date: June 23, 1982

*Unit*  
~~Isamu~~ Isamu Kurusu (pseudonym)  
2455 Michelterena St.  
Los Angeles: 90039  
Telephone: 213-661-8725

Birthdate:

*From Kurusu*  
MK. ~~xxxxxx~~ Hello?

*Rosalie Wax*  
RW. Hello.

MK. This is ~~Thomas Oda~~ Robert Kurusu

RW. Oh, how wonderful! This is Rosalie Wax, and it's been so many years.

MK. That's right.

RW. And, ..

*Dim*  
MK. Nice ~~xxxxxx~~ hear your voice.

RW. I'm ~~glad~~ glad to hear yours. How have you been?

MK. Oh, pretty good so far.

RW. ~~xxxxxx~~ Me, too. I'm holding my own, and as I told your wife, the Rockefeller Foundation gave me a small amount of money and what they would like me to do is talk to the Japanese I ~~xxxxxx~~ knew in Tule Lake and get ~~their~~ a longitudinal history of how they felt, .. and if you have time this morning for a chat, fine, otherwise I could call at another time.

IK. No. I have a few hours this morning.

RW. And since it's long, and if you ~~xxx~~ get tired, you let me know, and then I'll call some other time and finish it, how's that?

IK. (laughs) Ok.

RW. One thing just occurred to me. When I talked to your wife, and I apologize, you know, I've never learned her first name.

IK. (laughs) ~~xxxxxx~~ (Mitsi) Mitsi

RW. When were you and she married?

IK. Huh?

RW. When were you married?

IK. Oh, in '43.

RW. Was it in Gila?

IK. Yes. Gila.

*2*  
RW. First, I'd like to know a little bit about your life before the awful thing of Pearl Harbor? And thinking back to those days, how would you describe your life?

IK. Before the war?

RW. Before the war.

IK. Well, it wasn't all bad, except I was just going to school and studying. That's about it. .. I don't know how I'm supposed to say...

RW. Where were you going to school at that time?

IK. I was at school in Pasadena.

RW. And naturally you were living in Pasadena.

IK. ~~xxxxxx~~ Yes. school boy they called me. .... I was the (?) something like that.

RW. And how did your parents earn their living?

IK. Oh my parents ~~xxxxxx~~ have died a long time ago, mother in American, father in Japan.

RW. So, you were an orphan?

IK. Yeah. Well, mother died, and we went to Japan, I ~~xxxxxx~~ school, and my father went to Japan.

RW. And so, when you were living in Pasadena, you didn't have any parents with you?

IK. No, no.

RW. You were by yourself.

IK. Yeah (laughs).

RW. I guess, kind of, as a school boy, a loner, as they call it.

IK. Yes. I was all alone.

RW. Can you remember what, as a school boy, what were your hopes for the future?

RW. What kind of life did you hope to have?

IK: Well, ~~that was my intention~~ at that that time I ~~wasn't~~ really don't, except ~~xxxx~~ except studying to be some sort of engineer. XXX Though of course I'm troubling because of language problems,. I had hard time.

RW. You had been in Japan so long?

IK: I finished high school and ~~came~~ came over.

RW: Can you tell me from ~~what~~ what age...?

IK. (Interrupts) I was about 18. ~~when~~ when I came over.

RW. You had not ~~been~~ been in the United States before? You were born here weren't you?

IK. Yes, I was born in Sacramento. When ~~my~~ my mother died over here, my ~~father~~ father took us to Japan.

RW. How old were you then?

IK. Oh, I guess about six.

RW.. You said you were born in Sacramento? What was your birthdate?

IK. October 17, 1913.

RW. I asked your wife this, and she said she didn't, and it may be the <sup>same</sup> ~~same~~ /with you. Do you know any other Japanese Americans who were in Tule Lake, who might be willing to talk to me/ now?

IK. Oh, gosh, I don't know. I ~~don't~~ don't have any contact with anybody ~~else~~ else in Tule Lake.

RW. If you do meet anybody, ~~xxxxxxx~~ you know, by chance, I'd appreciate it if you drop me a ~~line~~ <sup>letter</sup>, because I'm having trouble finding folks.

IK. The reason I don't know, because ~~I~~ I don't participate in any kind of organization. I'm just nothing. Not ~~even~~ even church, ~~xxxx~~ or Buddhist members or any other organization.

RW. That was in Tule Lake?

IK. Ever since, ~~xxxxxxx~~ I never, we don't <sup>participate in</sup> any organization.

RW. You were the Block Manager.

IK. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Yes. But there too I just stay away from anybody else, and

when coming back (from Japan to the United States) I promised that I wouldn't take part in anything.

IK. Also, after they, how about Japanese citizenship. I renounced Japanese citizenship ~~(there?)~~.

~~xxxx~~ Well, of course that, ~~was~~ <sup>you</sup> that my partner put me through it. You <sup>wasn't</sup> wasn't really citizenship. <sup>you</sup> know, I'm Japanese. Those days, it was more or less standard procedure for people over here. But that's ... I was just (laughs) my name cannot appear anymore in Japanese - so called so called ~~(family)~~ (family?) registration.

(I am not sure what Mr. Kurusu was trying to ~~say~~ tell me. I know that he renounced his American citizenship at Tule Lake. ~~I suspect that~~ <sup>Perhaps</sup> he was trying to tell me that he ~~renounced his~~ when he returned to the United States he lost his Japanese citizenship.)

RW. Now I'd like to ask a few questions about how you felt during the first stages of the evacuation

YK. Well, those things, you know, everybody else pretty ~~xxxxxx~~ upset about it, because being American citizens. But I guess, after all those years passed away now, now they are thinking that, well, maybe the American government had no choice... Well, suppose we stay outside of the camp. Well, probably, a lot of people will be hurt. I take it... & security reasons ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ (some words unintelligible) But I don't know what would happen if thing happen today. ..I just wonder what one would do, ~~xxxx~~ because people talk as though might be in the human rights nowadays, I really don't know. I like to see ~~xxxxxx~~ myself what the government reaction. . .

RW. Do you mean that you'd like to see today what would be the reaction if they tried to put people in camps?

IK. Yes, I mean, they supposed to .. if anything happened now. I just wonder how they would do it. .. of course, in cases... before the ~~xxxx~~

Isamu Kirusu

8.3a.

war ... they overlooked.. and they didn't (?) human rights and everything.  
I just wondered. ..if ~~I can~~ get out in 15 years, or 5 or 7 years.. I ...  
can't  
some times, world war come. ... I never thought of that, ~~xxxxxx~~ well, I  
was thinking, but, nobody says too much about ~~xxx~~ it.

RW. You were saying, at the time of the evacuation, people weren't talking  
about human rights? everybody

IK. ~~Kinda~~ Kind of too late. All of a sudden, well, ~~xxxxxxx~~ give up  
everything - and leave it behind and go into the camp. I was supposed  
to go into the Army in 1942, but they cancel all my inductions ~~so~~, so, ...  
.. I was supposed to go in the Army in 1942. ... One week prior to my  
induction, I got a notice of "cancellation for your induction".  
So I had no choice, I just took one suitcase, that's it.

RW. Well, that tells me a lot of how it was. I guess you must have ~~been~~  
been sent to Santa Anita Assembly Center?

IK. No, to Tulare.

RW. Is there any experience in the Assembly Center, that you recall very  
strongly? Everybody where

IK. No, I don't recall anything.... I was ~~just~~ so upset, and I was so upset,  
we just didn't know what to do. They ~~wild~~ wonder what they sent to next.  
They have all kind of rumor. another place, but we don't know ~~xxxxxxx~~  
~~xxxxxxx~~ when, exact, and how, ...

RW. Was there anything in the Assembly Centers made you especially sad?

IK. ~~xxxxx~~ No, I don't think ~~of~~ I remember.

RW. Was there anything made you especially angry at the time?

IK. No, I didn't hear anybody saying anything.

RW. I should have told you before, if you would like to be anonymous, ~~if~~  
I won't use your name. Would you prefer that? Or don't you much care?

IK. My name?

RW. Yes.

IK. No, No. just put "somebody" ~~xxxxxx~~

RW. O. K. I'll see to that. .... For yourself, how do you think that you  
managed to cope with these experiences in the Assembly Center, this  
anxiety and rumor? How did you stand it?

IK. ~~xxxxx~~ Oh, ..., no... (laughs).. I ~~xxxxxx~~ don't particularly ~~feel~~ any-  
thing. I just wanted to wait and see. .. I don't have any plan...  
We can't go out... so I got to think, we'll have to ~~xxx~~ stay rather  
some time. (Sentence not clear)

RW. Can you remember how you felt when they told you that you were going to be sent  
to Gila Camp.

IK. Oh. I guess everybody of there because ~~xxxxxx~~ (laugh) ~~they~~ it's a small  
area. They're not excited, but they're anxious to see the ~~xxxxxx~~  
new location. ... They ~~xxxxxx~~ wondered if be sent to a cold place, a hot  
place, ... Gila was hot, but they know it was going to be hot.  
That's the only they they was concerned about, the location particularly.

~~xxxxxx~~ But they find out, after all, Gila was, it's nice,  
~~xxxxxx~~ although hot, compared to Tule Lake. ~~xx~~ It's rather nice.

RW. You found it ~~w~~ a nicer place to live than Tule Lake? Is that it?

IK. Tule Lake was pretty bad, but Gila was ... ~~xxxxxxx~~ it's nice.

RW. Which of the experiences in Gila, was there any particular experiences  
that you recall strongly? Anything that happened there?

IK. Well, you know about.... oh, I guess you don't know about the military  
registration.

RW. I wasn't there at the time, but you can ~~xx~~ tell me, I'd like to hear  
about it.

IK. ~~xxxxxx~~ I was upset by what it did to the camp(?)

RW. I didn't get the last sentence?

IL. I mean, it upset people... oh yes. ...

RW. And do you remember anything about how you felt at that time? At that  
military..

IL. (interrupts) Well, ~~xxxxxx~~ I didn't know what to do myself,

IK. but, .. well, so things were... my.. I supposed to go in the Army but ~~my~~ they cancelled my induction orders, so I just decided to give a negative answer and went to Tule Lake.

RW. It's a sad story.

IK. Um-hum.

RW. I remember that I talked to you just before you went to Tule Lake, and you were very kind and helpful to me, and wrote me a paper, and I want to thank you now.

~~Here's a~~ happier question, possibly, was there anything you or any other people did at Gila, that makes you feel good when you think about it today?

IK. Not particularly make me feel ~~good~~ good, you know,

RW. What made you feel good?

IK. What made me feel good? I don't know. ~~Well~~ Well, at that time, we're either, you know, well, relatives particular, relocate, you know, ~~going outside~~ in other words, going outside, But I just wonder myself, because I hated (several words not clear) anti-Japanese, their feelings at me. So I just decided I better stay here. More ~~safe~~ safe.

That's why other people are going out, but I didn't.

RW. Were you ~~saying~~ saying that it made you ~~feel~~ feel good to see them go out?

IK. I think for some people, it did, Some people volunteered ~~in~~ to the Army.

RW. And are you saying that that made you feel good to see them go out?

IK. I don't know. ~~Ensay~~ ~~unat~~ I thought that I'd rather stay in the camp.

RW. Was there anything that happened there that made you especially angry?

IK. Oh, not particularly, of course, only thing.. hate and racism .... (not clear).. talk about it quite a while, but. .

RW. How did you manage to cope with these experiences? What did you tell yourself? Where did you get the strength?

IK. (laughs) Well ~~MI~~ I was probably strengthened (?) but I don't know today. Well of course, most of the people who were put in the camp still want to serve, but ~~under~~ under the circumstances, a lot of people, under the circumstances, they just wondered. That's what I think. ~~... they~~ ~~take me in the Army~~ ~~... here~~ ~~Same~~ here.... I don't see why they don't take me in the Army, then all problems is solved, but I was come into the camp.... and here comes the Military ~~Registration~~ Registration, I think (not clear) ..... Well, it's a pretty good experience... ~~I mean~~ I mean, I don't know myself, well, how the (government?) feels at that ~~time~~ time. They put the people in the camp, ~~and the passport~~ ~~sort of a push?~~

RW. Can you remember how you felt when you were told that you were going to be sent to Tule Lake to be segregated?

IK. Well, I know (response unintelligible but appears to have said that he expected it.)

RW. And can you remember how you felt when you arrived at Tule Lake? When you ~~saw~~ saw it?

IK. Well, that just - I thought - "My God this place is really something, ... Gila's in a bright nice field, but, Tule Lake is a kind of ~~thick~~ ~~thick~~ Aaaaaaagh (disgusted exclamation). It was sad. Well, we were able to manage.

RW. Are you telling me that you started with sad looking ....

IK. (Interrupts) Yes. ... Well be got used to it... whether it's good or bad, they offer no choice. We got to take it. ... We just made ourselves ( ? )

RW. When you think back on your life in Tule Lake are there any things that happened that happened that come especially to your mind?

IK. Yes. I guess, you remember those kind of riots.

R.W. yes.

IK: The November riot, yes. ... That was awful. I don't like to see that think happen, you know, but/nothing we were able to do, but. . . of course.

I find out( ? ) it's kind of wild .

RW. I never asked you, did you go to the demonstration?

IK. Oh no, ~~not these places~~.

RW. And from what your wife told me, you didn't have any relatives, there you were just you and your wife. . .

IK. Oh, yes, no relatives, just wife and I. So we just kept quiet and I was block manager and we're supposed to not participate anything . Stay ~~neutral~~ neutral, So I just ~~xxxxxx~~ kept quiet myself.

RW. Were there any person or persons in Tule Lake who you could say were your friends?

IK. ~~xxxxxx~~ (Unintelligible)

RW. You say, you don't ~~xxxxxx~~ know?

IL. Only thing, people go out, but I lost all contact since.

(I did not perceive that Mr. K. had misunderstood my question - I was speaking in the past tense and he answered ~~about~~ in the present.) So I don't know where they is now.

RW. Just the people in your block.. I would have been glad to be your friends, but it was so tough in the block I couldn't ~~xx~~ even visit you very often.

IK. Yeah, I/~~xxxxxx~~ you came a lot, you .... you came over my office, you know,

few times. But I know that pretty difficult to, you know, come.

RW. It was sometimes trouble, what with people being scared of being called inu and so on.

IK. Yeah, yeah, that's why I just watch myself, I don't want people to call me inu. ~~xxx~~ It was really quite an experience-- I don't call it trouble.... ~~xx~~ but more problems, you know.

RW. Here's a nice question. ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~What~~ there any person at Tule Lake whom you very much respected? ~~Where~~

IK. Gosh. (long pause)

RW/ A person to whom you could go for advice?

IK. For me?

RW. Yes.

IK. Well, after the incident that happened before, I can't trusted too much people. .. When I was block manager, I had it pretty tough, because you know, how people were, I was afraid to talk because he might ~~xx~~ tell somebody else. I was afraid. I just keep quiet for a while. But actually, not too many people that could be trusted. Even people at work, they don't/trust me either, so that's no good.

think

RW. That's a very valuable and true statement, you made there, and I thank you for it. Because that's how it was.

IK. ~~xxxxxx~~ Situations is pretty bad that time. Only ~~thing~~ keep ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~Keep with (S)xxxxxx~~ (Unintelligible)

RW. I could, but I don't think this is a polite question. You can tell me how you feel about it. Were there any persons in Tule Lake whom you really disapproved of, or disliked?

IK. (Laughs) Well, some of the guys I don't know, but I don't particularly have in my mind that I don't like it. It's pretty hard to ~~(strong?)~~ ~~(strong?)~~ about it on opinions to that time, so ~~xxxxxx~~

RW. I won't ask the question, "Was there ~~xxxxxx~~ anybody you were afraid of?" because everybody was afraid that if you said the wrong thing, somebody would call you inu.

IK. Mes.

RW. Could you tell ~~xxxx~~ me when you left Tule Lake, in what month?

IK. ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~(xxxxxx)~~ ~~(xxxxxx)~~ see now... in December, I think. I think about .. now let's

360

391

(strong?)

Insert at A ~~xWhinla~~ (While Mr. Kurusu was in Japan, I was asked by

~~xxgovernmental~~ a governmental agency, perhaps the Department of Immigration,

to write a statement about whether or not I thought he was a security ~~xxx~~

risk. Since he had been one of the most quiet and conservative people I

knew at Tule Lake I had no~~x~~ hesitation about writing a very ~~xxxxxx~~

positive letter. When he and his wife returned to the U. S., he sent me

a lovely sake pitcher and cups.)

- that
- IK. I think ~~book~~... let's see now... in December, I think.
- RW. In December, you went to Japan? ~~yes~~
- IK. Forty-five, yes. ~~(1945)~~
- RW. ~~Explain~~ Do you remember about how you felt, when you left?
- IK. Well, kind of confused, actually... Well, I don't want to go... but. seems to me that .. not exactly best, but I thought go see what, anyhow.
- RW. Did you feel at all that you were forced or obliged to go to Japan?
- IK. Well, We didn't get treated well ~~??~~...
- RW. I gather that you thought you'd take a chance on it?
- IK. Yes. Well, more or less, I took a chance, and so, after I reached Japan, I guess, I see that how we were treated, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~(in Japan?)~~... Actually, ~~??~~ wasn't so bad.
- RW. Did you have ~~xxx~~ relatives there, in Japan?
- IK. No, no, no.
- RW. And you were there about five years. Could you tell me how you decided to come back to the United States?
- IK. ~~Oh, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~When~~. Oh, maybe about a year.
- RW. And what was it made you decide to come back?
- IK. When?
- RW. No, I mean why?
- IK. ~~Oh~~ Oh, oh. Well I ~~guess~~ guess conditions so, ~~but~~ But I thought it was ~~xx~~ - you know - ~~xxxxxx~~ I thought - it takes us a long times to settle down. So, it's better to go back once. So that's why I started working on that thing. If I stayed, the job would be - kicked you out to work for Army. He said, ~~interested~~ interested in taking a job, ~~employment~~, in private company? ~~are you~~
- RW. In Japan, you were working for the Army?
- IK. Yes.
- RW. And you would prefer to come back to the United States and get private employment?
- IK. Yes.
- RW. And, ~~let~~ me see.....
- IK. ~~Explain~~ So I didn't participate in anything Japanese, It was, ~~(?)~~ you, know, American. Army (?) anything.
- RW. Well, I'm very glad you came back.
- IK. Well, I'm appreciate you, your help me quite a bit too... Really, your ~~work~~ work for us ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ is helpful a great deal. I still have that copy. . . . It was submitted to the (?), ~~←~~ A.
- RW. And I still have these nice cups you sent me. I was glad to be able to help. You deserved it.
- IK. That's what I appreciate. ~~xx~~ Because I came back to the United States, and living there, pretty nice, I mean, behaving myself.
- RW. I hate to change the subject to a painful one, but I'll just ask you this, and you say what you feel. Having been at Tule Lake, I know you must have had a number of painful experiences. If you look back on all of these experiences, which, ~~xxxxxx~~ would you say, was the most painful?
- IK. Well, the only thing, Tule Lake is a (?) Ever since we got to Tule Lake we had quite a problem. You know, block manager has a lot of headaches. But the most difficult time is the time of the incident ~~(xxxxxx)~~ (Farm accident, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ strike.) And ~~xxx~~ all sort of organizations, after organization, and those people doing other things. That's the only time I have a difficult time.
- RW. You mean the organization that called itself the Hoopsi-dan?
- IK. Oh. (laughs) Yes. You know, I don't know how people ~~study~~ (becomes unintelligible)
- RW. Can you talk a little bit louder? I'm not hearing you again.
- IK. Well, I mean, they was young, and inexperienced, it was a mistake, they did a lot of things in the camp, -- and so that ~~xxxx~~ mistake,

IK. probably it was ~~then~~ after (they) went to Japan, ~~Tokuzumwan~~, That was, that time was really, not only me, but ~~222~~ most people had a difficult time.<sup>1</sup>  
Even Tule Lake, people divided (not clear) I feel like that --- not exactly peaceful, but not ~~too~~ much, such an experience, excited(?) anyway. ~~70~~

RW. Looking back, was there anything that happened to you at Tule Lake that ~~helped~~ helped you to become a wiser or a better person?

IK. Well, ~~not~~ one thing I learned a lot of .. I mean, I had more experience, in dealing with all sort of ~~people~~ a people, and, so I

learned that too. One man, he was a block manager, he left to go to another camp or something. When the director appointed me to be ~~block~~ block manager I told him (the block manager) I don't want it.

He said to me, Isamu Kurusu, you didn't

learn this thing in any ~~university~~ university or college, so ...he told me, this is good human engineering. He says, although you are young, so why don't you take this job? So I never forget, he was an old man, but he told me that the world is human engineering. So, ever since .... that was a good experience, I learned about the people.

And under those circumstances, how to deal with the ( ? )

~~And~~ And also, I know (learned) myself, how to speak, and to what, and what not to say, to stay alive, you know. ~~And~~

It wasn't that bad, ~~in~~ in that line, you know.

RW. And I guess you'd say that you learned a lot about your fellow human beings?

IK. Yes. (laughs)

RW. I was going to ask what was the most helpful thing you learned, but, ..

IK. ~~That~~ Well, that's the thing I really learned.

RW. Now let's see, I've already asked you about your time in Japan, so . . . .

IK. ~~Well~~ Well, Japan was pretty bad, for a while. So, one thing I learned ~~in Japan~~ Japan is ( ? ) country. I said myself, well, probably Japan made a mistake by starting a war, like that, .... we can't afford to lose.

RW. Could you tell me something about your life after you came back to the United States. What jobs you've got, and whether you've been happy and enjoyed it?

IK. ~~Yeah~~ Yeah. We were happy, My wife's citizenship ~~was~~ naturalized,

That make her citizenship now, so ~~xxxx~~ wife and I ~~be~~ be happy, now.

RW. And, did you get work right away?

IK Yes, ~~xxxxxx~~ I have a ~~hard~~ time, but two months later, ~~xxxx~~ I found a job, and so, well, actually, no ~~xxxxxx~~ one has -- ever in Americas, going to school, this and that, I mean ever since I came over to the United States, actually, no one has given me a bad time. No one <sup>said, you know</sup> called me, ~~xxxxxx~~ bad, or said, "You was a Jap", or something, they never called me right at my face. Everybody, at <sup>S</sup>schools, everybody tried to help me out. So I have nothing against American people, generally speaking, is really nice. I don't think that particularly,.... of course there is still a little bit of resentment at ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ this condition, but (not clear) Americans just can't help it.

Also, these people came over here to build America, so naturally, I (unintelligible) but I get used to now. With the World War, you know, the white people don't like the Japanese, ~~and~~ Japanese don't like Americans, some other people, but through the war,---- and, after the war, came back to America, I learned that American ~~xxxx~~ people who I liked, ~~that's~~ that's the reason I'm able to find a job., find employment, because people help me out.

RW. What's one of the nicest things that happened to you since you came back?

IK. Well, the nicest thing is, people helping to the job. I was wondering myself, you know, whether to find or get some job or not, but somehow people helped me. When I was looking for a job, the company I want to -- I forget his ~~xxx~~ name ---I told him I was looking for a job and that I was experienced, and he <sup>let</sup> said, "Yeah, you must have a rough time. And I said, "Yes, I have a ~~dreadful (dreadful) (very xxxxxx)~~ dreadful time, Okay?" Then he referred <sup>me</sup> to some of the name - probably personnel / manager, or somebody like that, who sent me to the right person, Then, thought, ~~xxxxxx~~ that person, I able to find a job. So, it was really nice of them.

RW/. And you have been working as an engineer ever since?

IK No, I started in a barroom, and from that I came up to human design and engineering too. And I appreciate very much of these things that people nice enough to help, regardless of past experience.

~~there~~

(At this point the tape ran out//. I remarked on this, but Mr. Kurusu kept talking as if he ~~xxx~~ had not heard me, repeating the points he had made about being helped in finding employment. I myself was very tired, and suggested that we stop for the time being. ~~xx~~ I did ask him whether ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ he wished ~~xx~~ me to use his name or not have (I ~~xxx~~/found ~~xxx~~ in previous interviews that ~~xxxxxxx~~ "XXXXXXXXXX" ~~xxxxx~~ respondents do not seem to understand "anonymus".)

~~and he~~ said ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ very emphatically: "No name. No name." I told him I would not use his name.

Mr. Isamu Kurusu ~~xxxx~~ SECON D INTERVIEW \*  
February 23, 1982  
Born in Sacramento, California, 1913  
Now lives in Los Angeles.

IK: Hello?

RW: Hello, is <sup>this</sup> Mr. Kurusu?

IK: Yes.

RW: This is Rosalie Wax from St. Louis, who..you talked to me several months ago.

IK: Oh, Rosalie Wax.

RW: And if you are not busy, I was just going to ask you a couple more questions, but if you are I could call another time.

IK: No, it's okay.

RW: It's okay to do that?

IK: Yeah.

RW: All right. What I did find with quite a number of people - they told me or wrote to me after I had talked to them, they thought of interesting or important things that they wished they had told me. And I just <sup>wondered</sup> ~~wanted to know~~ if anything had occurred to you that you wanted to tell me.

IK: Oh, not particularly now. You asked quite a number of things - the reason why I came back. Why I told you <sup>that</sup> because I could do better over here than in Japan, that's one reason. But <sup>second</sup> ~~another~~ reason is family too. I got to think of my wife, my wife's family is over here. That's another thing.

RW: Well, I'm glad you said that because some people I've talked to, the whole experience really kind of split up their families, and so that did not happen to you then.

IK: No, see, of course, my family is all gone. We had <sup>very</sup> ~~un-~~fortunate family circumstances, But my wife's side family is all together. They grew up all family together, so I was the only one who break up the family when we left for Japan.

It bothered me. I didn't hear that for a while, but <sup>?</sup> ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~.

maybe, family should get together. So, of course, I'm fine, but my wife's side is over here.

RW: Your wife's family is here and that's very nice. That's one of the questions.

IK: So that's why I said <sup>maybe</sup> if we have a chance to coming back I say take that chance and come home. So that's the reason. I had several offers from Japanese company, but I didn't take that. Cause once I do that, why, you know, we have to pulling out.

RW: You could have stayed either place then? Either in Japan or the United States?

IK: Yes, I could stay in Japan, but my wife always says that America is my country, my home. That's the same here, I was born here, I went to school here and people treat me pretty nice, so I guess, not only I don't like Japan, but that's another reason, but maybe I better come home and get the family together. Because my sister is here and their kids over here too, that's the reason. I made a mistake in going back to Japan, but ..so that's the reason I decided to..I talked things over with my wife and might as well go home while we have the chance. If America gives you a chance to come back..

RW: That makes very good sense. ~~I was..this is quite a different question that as a person who wants to..how should I say, this is a problem for me..Several people I've talked to had brothers, especially..<sup>you</sup> brothers who repatriated and came back and I say, well, <sup>would</sup> they wouldn't mind if I interviewed them?~~ But they tell me, always, "Oh no, they wouldn't want to talk to you." ~~And so the question that this raised,~~ Of course I have talked to some people who have come back, like

yourself, but the question that I thought I would ask my friends is - What reason would it be..I can think of a lot of reasons why they might not want to talk to me, but if you thought about it, what reasons would you suggest?

IK: Why they don't want to talk to you, huh?

RW: Yeah.

IK: Oh gee, that's kind a..I don't know why they don't want to talk to you or interview. I can't figure out that one. Some Japanese it kind of pays to I mean talk face to face, but I really don't know..

RW: I had thought that they might be afraid or they might still feel sad or <sup>very</sup> distressed, that they wouldn't go back and talk <sup>about</sup> ~~over~~ it. But then, on the other hand, one man made a very interesting suggestion, ~~why I asked him about it,~~ He said, "well, perhaps they ~~went both,~~ they were <sup>K</sup>kibeis, they went to Japan and they still, how should I say. they've spent so many years there, they still don't know how to speak English very well, and so they are bashful." Does that strike you as possible?

IK: I guess there is quite a number of people like that still over here now, a number of Kibeis, but can't speak English too well, but I myself is a Kibei too..

RW: But you speak English very fluently.

IK: I guess the times made me change. I don't particularly see anything against government, American people or anything, but,, I completely forgot about all about this incident that took place for last many years. We have quite a number of friends, but when we get together, we never talk about those things. We never talk about camp like or why we did this, or why doing

this and that. We never discuss anything. Nobody brings up the subject.

RW: It's kind of dropped or put..how should I say, behind one.

IK: Those things, I don't know, maybe, because of the long period of time, that feeling just fade away, so nobody seems to care, or to mention anything. Once in a while those things..evacuation things come out in local newspaper, other than that I don't particularly feel anything like thatJust because they put us in the camp, you know, we still grudge against, but I don't have those kind of feelings. Because after we came back <sup>we worked together</sup> ~~enjoying~~ company for many years and during that time I learned quite a bit about the people, so my feelings just fade away. I don't feel anything, you know, <sup>ah</sup> ~~all~~ well, that's gone long time ago, past history, why mention about anything. Some people still grudge against, but I don't think you gain anything to bring out the subject - raise your voice, argue back and forth, I don't think we gain anything. Instead we got to do our best now and in the future, that's how I feel.

RW: There is something else that I would like your opinion of what some people have told me: Some of the..this is men especially, when I've talked to them, they speak of the camp years as lost years, the years they spent in camp, would you feel that way about the years?

IK: Lost?

RW: Lost, yes.

IK: Well, maybe so, but pretty hard to take those things. Maybe

we lost time, but after we came out of camp, everybody had a pretty good chance to recovery. Probably lost <sup>four-five</sup> ~~about 4-5~~ years, but they have opportunity to do earning, or make a better living.

So they had their chance after the war.

RW: ~~to do it~~. Do you feel that you worked especially hard in your life to make up for your years in camp?

IK: <sup>yes,</sup> I guess some of the people I heard back from camp to just say to you, some older people, they work hard, they try to catch up to the rest of the people. But, I guess, right now, they had it pretty good. Like good example is me, spent <sup>four-five</sup> ~~4-5~~ years in Japan. After came back, of course I say if I work hard, <sup>yes, I work hard, but</sup> ~~was~~ able to have opportunity to do myself better.

RW: I would agree.

IK: I don't think much that I lost time. Of course, yes you lost time, but we have <sup>a</sup> good chance to recovery myself, ~~and~~ able to make a decent living right now.

RW: I'm very grateful to you, <sup>he</sup> ~~because~~ I like to check and get different opinions. Then I will be able to say that some people feel this way, but on the other hand, some people feel that way and you know..

IK: Another thing before the war, lot of people finished good university, college, profession, but has to find employment. Some people left for Japan for good. But after the war is over, the things have completely changed, I mean 180° turn around. Everybody had a good chance to work and went to school and second, third and fourth generation become professional man, like a doctor, dentist, <sup>lawyers</sup> ~~engineer~~, scientist and they able to hold pretty good <sup>positions</sup> ~~(211)~~ in <sup>the</sup> public service and company, all those things, so I think <sup>that</sup> they fared pretty good.

That's what I'm concerned myself.

RW: Well this is interesting. I think you've really answered the next question, which was: ~~whether you feel about yourself,~~ if you think of yourself and your sense of stability and security, do you feel that the camp experience left you with a sense of insecurity and even damage? ~~to you or to the younger generation,~~ but I think you've said that you feel the other way.

IK: <sup>Well, I'd guess</sup> During camp I ~~think~~ <sup>guess</sup> everybody is kind of insecurity and worry about future. But I guess time they came out of camp, everybody kind of scared to come out and do, you know, But some of the people of course worry about coming out of camp to community, But I guess that's the reason they work hard and establish themselves again. That's why, like me, when I went to Japan I made a big mistake, But right after war, <sup>+</sup>try to find a job which I like to do I guess, Pretty hard to do it, I suppose.

RW: Well, few people including me go through life without making <sup>some</sup> big mistakes. It's part of life.

IK: Again, quite a number of people was still, not exactly grudge against America, But they feel a little upset, But I don't feel too much like that. I may, just I concern, but I don't know how some of the people, I don't know, but at present time I don't particularly feel - dumb, strong feeling, I don't have any now.

RW: You feel that, you don't have any, how should I say, sort of feeling of insecurity or damage ~~left to you~~ now?

IK: No, I don't think so. I don't feel that too much. Well, come to think of it, of course it's bad, those <sup>three and a half</sup> ~~12~~ years, but to me, it's a good experience, bad experience too, but you

learn something.

RW: Like you told me last time, the position you had of being block manager was very helpful and you learned there.

IK: I tried to make peace and not try to stir up any trouble. <sup>the same way.</sup> That's way I still feel, I try to maintain the peace. That's my idea. To live peacefully. Even Japan too, when we went to Japan, it's pretty bad there, but we learn how the country are, how the people behaving, living at that time. Of course we were young, made many mistakes, but we learn through my mistake and meet all kind of people at that time.

RW: Since you mentioned ~~that~~ your life in Japan, some people have told me that when they went to Japan, they weren't really accepted by the Japanese in Japan, that the Japanese would say "you're Americans."

IK: Yes, I think I feel the same way. They treat you *a little bit* different I guess. We were ~~Japanese~~ all right, but ideas and the way they act and everything, a little bit different. It takes a long time to get use to. Blend in with their customs.

RW: I wondered if you had experienced that at all when you were in Japan, that you were not considered a Japanese in Japan or didn't you have that experience?

IK: No, they treat me pretty well. Of course, they know that we are second generation over here, but they don't I mean, it's <sup>not</sup> so bad, they were fairly nice to us.

RW: You and your wife both spoke Japanese well and..

IK: Some people wonder why we came back. <sup>Laugh</sup> Most said, *Hyun*

~~Couldn't~~<sup>why not</sup> you stay over there? yeah, but why do you want to come back for?" Some people just wonder why we back here, you know.

~~RW: That's nice, I'm glad to hear..~~

~~IK:~~ Some people tried to..nice enough to help us, so I didn't have any bad feelings.

RW: That's very nice.

IK: So anything I thought My gosh, the war like that, once you start it, cold war to hot war, never can not afford to lose the war, we can not afford of have a war either.

Was pretty bad that time I remember.

RW: Yes, it must have been very bad in Japan right after the war.

IK: Now it looks so good.

RW: ..not enough food and everything like that.

IK: That's why people act just like animal. I notice when we have nothing to eat and nothing to wear, no place to stay, you know how people behave, just like a wild animal - they fight each other for survival I suppose.

RW: Well, I don't want to keep you any longer. I'm very grateful to you and if you don't mind if I get puzzled about something again, why I'll consult you, would that be all right? Cause..

IK: Pretty busy to put all the information together, huh?

RW: Oh yes, and I've talken to quite a number of people and so I'll have, how should I say, I have an obligation slightly like the Japanese to write a good and honest report on this.

IK: So I was able to find a job, I worked all those years in engineering company and so I told you I was able to design, I worked as a scenic designer for many years, so I started fine. I retired <sup>Two</sup> years ago.

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RW: ~~okay~~, Give my kind regards to your wife then and thank you for your help. Thank you very much.

IK: Thank you.

RW: It's been a pleasure. Good bye

IK: Good bye.

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