



**Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey -
Japanese Oral Histories
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Oral interview of
Henry Taketa

January 4, 1984

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Wayne Maeda interviewing Henry Taketa, Attorney at Law, for the Sacramento Ethnic Community Survey, January 4, 1984. Henry was one of the second Niseis in Sacramento to begin practicing law in Sacramento in the late 1930's. He has continued to practice law to the present. He has been one of the active members in the Japanese-American Citizens League, as well as a respected leader in the Japanese community affairs of Sacramento.

Wayne: Please state your date of birth and where you were born?

Mr. Taketa: I was born near Florin in Sacramento County, California. It would be the outskirts of Sacramento, the City of Sacramento.

Wayne: What year do you remember?

Mr. Taketa: The year was January 3, 1913. No, January 5, 1913.

Wayne: How long did your family stay in that particular area?

Mr. Taketa: I think my father settled there back in 1900. My mother joined him in 1907 or thereabouts, after they were married and that was their domicile until 1918, when the Taketa family moved into Sacramento and located their family home on 5th and Capitol, what is now Capitol Avenue, formerly N Street.

Wayne: Do you know why they moved into town?

Mr. Taketa: My dad had a business of selling life insurance as well as farming, and so it was more conducive to his insurance business to be in I think in the city rather than remaining out in the country.

Wayne: Now how many brothers and sisters?

Mr. Taketa: I have one brother, one older brother, and one older sister. My sister, Mai, is the eldest in the family, of the three children.

Wayne: So you started grammar school in the City of Sacramento?

Mr. Taketa: I started grammar school here in the city at Lincoln. Lincoln Grammar School at 4th and 5th at P Street. Whereas my brother and sister, they started their initial grammar school and process at the Enterprise School in the neighborhood of where we lived.

Wayne: That was on Elder Creek wasn't it?

Mr. Taketa: Well we lived on Elder Creek Road but the Enterprise School was located, I think on what they call Orange Avenue, or something like that.

Wayne: Now while you were in Sacramento, did you parents sort of encourage you to go to the Japanese School, the Japanese Language School?

Mr. Taketa: I think most families encouraged that in one way, shape or form. And most of us went to Shakuagawa which was under the auspice of the Buddhist Church in Sacramento.

Wayne: How many years did you attend?

Mr. Taketa: I attended about seven years, after going to your grade school, then after hours, five days a week you went to a one hour, one hour and a half, of Japanese language school.

Wayne: That was everyday? After school?

Mr. Taketa: Five days a week.

Wayne: Do you remember anything that was taught other than language?

Mr. Taketa: Basically it was language.

Wayne: They didn't teach morals or etiquette?

Mr. Taketa: Not that I recall.

Wayne: Anything that might be considered propaganda?

Mr. Taketa: I don't recall. I don't think so, there might have been something in the readers that we used, assigned to each class that might have had some reflections upon Japan because these were Japanese language books published in Japan. And I assume that they were being used in Japan and were brought over here for our purpose. So there might be some taint in terms of teaching, you know, subjects that are more prone to the Japanese of Japan.

Wayne: Did you participate in any organized activity: Baseball, or sumo, or kendo, or anything while you were growing up?

Mr. Taketa: In high school we did. Because everybody played something when they were kids, you know, as compared to today, which is pretty much a sit and watch type of activity, watching a television, watch other people play sports and so forth. In those days, you know, to pass the time you had to do things for yourself, and I think most of us played at least baseball, and then some of us played tennis, and basketball depending upon the season. A few of us played on the high school team whether it was baseball, basketball, or some may have even gotten into track and football.

[Counter 050]

Wayne: Now for high school, you went to Sacramento High?

Mr. Taketa: That's correct, Sacramento High School, after Sutter Junior High.

Wayne: Was that pretty much a mixed student body?

Mr. Taketa: It was primarily a white populated school at that time, with a percentage of Orientals and a percentage of other minorities, but I would imagine if you put the minorities together and it would still be in a very small minority.

Wayne: Did you face any kind of hostilities or feelings of uneasiness?

Mr. Taketa: Not necessarily, but on the whole while you are in school you are pretty much on an integrated level, but when it comes to social even, as it relates to school activities, I think you redefine your place, or status and you socialize more with your own people as compared to the majority of the student body.

Wayne: What kind of impression do you have of Japan Town? Obviously you lived almost right in the center of it.

Mr. Taketa: Well you don't have, as I recall you know, it is not an impression in and of itself, that was a way of life. The Japanese had it's little quarter, the Portuguese had, was on the other side of the railroad tracks. There were very few Colored people, and they were scattered throughout the entire community. So it is hard to say, you know, whether something definitely remained in my mind other than to say that the Japanese people were isolated into somewhat of a

given area. The Chinese people were up on I Street and J Street, and they were on K on down to maybe P Street, between 2nd and 6th Street and then beyond that would be the Portuguese, and the Italian, towards South Side Park. The rest of the community would be maybe lily white.

Wayne: Was there any interaction between the Japanese and the Italians or the Portuguese or?

Mr. Taketa: Not necessarily, not that I recall anything of that nature. Its, after school, you pretty much associated with your own group.

Wayne: And plus if you had to go language school, that brought you right back into the Japanese Community after school.

Mr. Taketa: Well, you were, when you returned home from school you were in the Japanese community per se. There were a few who were in the outlying areas, and then others who came to say Sacramento High who came from the rural areas. Such as the Riverside Park area, Oak Park, even the [hard to hear, counter 084] station area used to bring in students from the, to the high school from that area.

Wayne: Do you remember any celebrations that the Community itself celebrated, as a community?

Mr. Taketa: I think from time to time there would be something, especially in the spring time, you would have the so-called Sacramento Picnic and they were held on the other side of the, in the Broderick area across the river.

Wayne: How many people would attend one of these things?

Mr. Taketa: It is hard to say but then, I think the whole community was represented in terms of attendance.

Wayne: What might you say, five or six hundred?

Mr. Taketa: Oh I would imagine it could be maybe several thousand.

Wayne: Now in your own family, did your family celebrate both Japanese holidays and American holidays?

Mr. Taketa: It was fairly customary, customarily like for instance New Years was more of a Japanese New Years, the way in which the Japanese used to celebrate their holidays. Whereas Christmas, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July, would be the American way. Outside of these given, recognized holidays I don't think there was much celebration such as birthday and [hard to hear, counter 099]. Now the churches may have observed their own traditional observances which brought the congregation together from time to time.

[Counter 100]

Mr. Taketa: But on the broad basis, I think we celebrated holidays as recognized in the United, you know, by the majority of populations, Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years and so forth. Now New Years would have a little more Japanese taint to it, even today, that may be, that would be something that had been carried over from our grandparent's generation. But, primarily in terms of the type of food that we eat, on the particular occasion. So all in all, I think even though the Japanese-Americans were somewhat isolated what they did was pretty much along the line of American tradition.

Wayne: Do you remember any places that were public accommodations where Japanese couldn't get into or use?

Mr. Taketa: That was a way of life at one time. That certain private, say swimming pools, open to the white population may not be open to the Japanese.

Wayne: Would there be a sign or is it just something that everybody understood?

Mr. Taketa: Well, there might, I don't think there was any sign but assuming you sought admission, you might have been rejected at that time. And perhaps by custom you get to know what is available and what is not available.

Wayne: Now during the Depression, I imagine you were still, let's see, you probably already finished high school?

Mr. Taketa: I was just getting, I had just gotten out of high school and going to junior college when the Depression got under way.

Wayne: Do you remember what effect it had on, on your family?

Mr. Taketa: Well it was disastrous to the, for most families in the sense that we were all hard put to make two ends meet. We were involved in farming at the time, as well as my father's selling insurance and he started his insurance business back in 1912, and he would have completed his twentieth year towards his retirement in what they call [hard to hear, counter 129] in 1932. But he could not generate adequate insurance in 1931 and 1932 was a disaster year for him, in terms of having clients to buy insurance, so in a sense he went out and bought insurance for his own people. He paid the first premium to get the history of insurance for his retirement program. And unfortunately, in his situation, he had a type of retirement program was called for, it's called for average of the first fifteen years and worst of the last five years, and 1932 was a disaster year for him, so the only way he could salvage was to buy his, to go out and buy insurance for people who could not afford to buy it themselves.

Wayne: So actually he would pay the maybe the first few premiums and then?

Mr. Taketa: The first premium.

Wayne: And would the client repay him down the road?

Mr. Taketa: No, no, that was a gift, more or less, you know. And as far as farming went, as I vaguely recall, the family with maybe together with a few other growers in the Florin area would ship the cargo of grapes, say to New York, and then when the consignment sale took place back east, they would get a billing from Southern Pacific Company for cost of shipping which was not covered by the price of goods sold. And so, you know, it was really tough going. And a common saying of the time was “starving, knee deep in wheat.” And that was taking place. They used to dump cargos of oranges just to try to hold up the price.

[Counter 150]

Wayne: Do you remember any businesses going under in Japan Town?

Mr. Taketa: I don't recall per se because I was just a student at that time, but I would assume some businesses closed. Because we don't have the procedure of bankruptcy so forth and so on, as you would, uh be more noticeable today. I would very much assume that some businesses had to close down and some farmers had to give up farming for themselves and turn to laboring and that sort of thing. It was a disaster for everybody. So I think on the whole, the Japanese people survived a little better than the others because maybe they learned to live a little more frugally, and got by for a little less than what the other people had to contend with. On the other hand, that the Orientals and many of the other minorities were not privileged to get under such thing as

CCC of the time, Civilian Conservation Corps which came into being, WPA, and that sort of governmental agency relief program.

Wayne: There seemed to be a lot of, like the stores would give their patrons credit, and that seems to have gotten some of the people in the Japanese community by. They could settle their accounts at the end of the year.

Mr. Taketa: I think there was a great deal of trying to help each other. There was a great deal of I think mutual assistance of a kind built into the Japanese-American society at the time.

Wayne: Now at junior college, did you have an idea that you were going to go into law?

Mr. Taketa: That is a kind of a hard thing to say because you know, we were facing Depression and one thing that concerned me was that if I went to a full four years of university, two years of junior college, and two years of university, and then into professional school it would be a heavy financial load on my parents, so I took a short cut. Instead of going into say the University of California or some other school of higher learning, I went from Sacramento Junior College into Hastings Law School. Because the avenue was available to me. But if I went the four year route, I might have maybe chosen say medical, as my chosen profession, rather than law. So it was a short cut, because of the necessity of the time.

Wayne: So were there very many lawyers in the Japanese Community at that time?

Mr. Taketa: There was one. There was Walter Tsukamoto, who came into Sacramento. He was a Sacramentan by, I think he was born in Hawaii, and came to Sacramento as a child and grew up here, went to the local schools, the University of California, Bolt Hall Law School, and then he came back to Sacramento to practice, and I think he entered practice sometime in the later part of the 1920s which would be about 1928 or 1929.

Wayne: So actually before Walter Tsukamoto there weren't any lawyers?

Mr. Taketa: No, he was the first one.

Wayne: I have come across some, you know, pictures of Japanese in these albums and underneath it says lawyer. But I sort of wonder where they got their education, you know, it doesn't say if they are certified.

[Counter 200]

Mr. Taketa: Maybe correspondence school? Or they might have gone to American School so to speak and acquired a sufficient knowledge so that they became interpreters, and they would be a go between a Japanese client and say a Caucasian attorney. Serving as an interpreter to overcome the language ability.

Wayne: So now you went to Hasting Law School and that's a three year program?

Mr. Taketa: From 1932 to 1935.

Wayne: And you came back,

Mr. Taketa: Came back and took my bar, and passed it, the same year as my graduation, and shortly after that went into practice of the law

Wayne: In Sacramento?

Mr. Taketa: Beginning of 1936.

Wayne: So that in Sacramento there were two Nisei lawyers.

Mr. Taketa: Up to World War II.

Wayne: Up to World War II. What kind of cases would you handle? Did they run the gamut or did you specialize in certain kinds of –

Mr. Taketa: Well in those days I think the customary thing for the average attorney would be to be everything to everybody. In other words, whatever that was there, well you would tackle it. Whatever the problem was. Then I think pretty much on the whole society was both socially and politically much more simple than you would find it today. It is another ball game, a new ball game altogether when you compare, going backwards, thirty or forty years in what you have to

experience and face up to today. Everything is sort of a specialty. Even a very minor subject in those days have become highly complicated in terms of political stature, legislation, regulation, environmental impact and that sort of thing.

Wayne: Were most of your clients Japanese?

Mr. Taketa: Well I, as I would like to say, in those days very few went outside of your own people so to speak. Now, on occasion you would have a clients who were non-Japanese, but basically the extent of your reach would be to serve those who are of your same ancestry.

Wayne: So probably the litigants would be another Japanese, with another Japanese and so –

Mr. Taketa: If you are involved in litigation. But on the whole, the Japanese have a tendency of resolving their own differences and not reach the point of becoming involved in the filing of legal proofs and that sort of thing. Oh there were from time to time, after all, human beings, we're all human beings and we all have a tendency of being hard headed and not willing to negotiate a settlement so, there would be litigations of one sort or another, but by and large they are, they would be far and in between as compared to the majority of society so to speak.

Wayne: Now by 1936 was the JAACL off the ground in Sacramento?

[Counter 250]

Mr. Taketa: The JACL came off of the ground in 1936 as far as I'm concerned. That's when Jeram Romodo, Goram Romodo, _____, [counter 255] George Takahashi, myself, and some of the others took the JACL movement over so to speak from the old guard and made it into a community-wide organization which flourished then, until the exclusion order during World War II took effect.

Wayne: Now you say the "old guard," so there was a fledgling beginning of JACL earlier?

Mr. Taketa: It was just dormant, let's put it that way. Maybe four or five or six people just carried on the JACL. There might have been a membership much larger than that, certainly, but from the stand point of active interest and participation there might have been at the most eight or ten people. And after we took it over, took over the leadership so to speak, we spread our tentacles to Woodland, and down the river, into all station areas and so forth.

Wayne: So you had a membership drive

Mr. Taketa: On a regional basis.

Wayne: Where there any issues that JACL tackled before the war?

Mr. Taketa: Locally speaking? No. Not very much. We were part of the national organization and we would participate with the national organization, although I would say Walter Tsukamoto who was the executive secretary, I think in 1937-38, 37, and then president in 1938 or 39, he was

representing the JACL as legal counsel in the State Legislature. When there were issues of one type or another, which would be unfavorable to the Japanese or to the Oriental as a whole, and JACL as an organization was taking steps to combat that type of political and discriminatory actions.

Wayne: Do you remember if there was any antagonism from the Issei generation towards the JACL?

Mr. Taketa: There might have been. They might have favored the Japanese association more over the JACL, but they, but I think by and large the Issei generation was very broadminded in terms JACL as representing the hearts and minds of the Japanese-Americans who were born and educated here and in turn, also the organization that represented the best interest of the Japanese people as a whole.

[Counter 300]

Wayne: Now in the following years before the war, did you have any sense that conflict might be eminent with Japan and the United States?

Mr. Taketa: Well, we always understood that Japan and the United States may be in adversary positions. I think part of it is because of Japanese economics, the fact that the Japanese lacked, you know, strength in the, as far as economic [hard to hear] [counter 311] compared to the United States. America was very dominant and the time would come when Japan would be

pushed against the wall and the only result would be maybe a retaliation of some kind. So when you, in retrospect, Pearl Harbor is, is something not beyond your imagination. It might have been invited by the American government so to speak, you know, in terms of political action taken against Japan and to keep Japan subjugated in one way, shape, or form. Especially from imposed imposition of economic embargo and other things. And other restrictions, which in turn, put the noose around the Japanese economy.

Wayne: Do you remember what you were doing on December 7?

Mr. Taketa: I was practicing law. Not on December 7, because that was a Sunday, see. Sally and I had just moved into our new house on December the sixth, on 23rd and S Street. We had just built the house and had moved in that night before. On December 7, well we were having breakfast, Sally's mother called and told Sally to listen to the radio because Japan has attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor. It was hard to believe these things, so you turn the radio on and this was about 7:30 – 8:00 in the morning, and sure enough, you know, there is a repeat after repeat about the Japanese attack on the American Naval Installation at Pearl Harbor. So, that is, that experience is vividly recalled in our own minds. I told Sally, beware, we have to be on our guard because it looks to me like as part of our citizenship we might be uprooted.

[Counter 350]

Wayne: So you already had a sense that something might –

Mr. Taketa: Well I prophesized that it may take place. And Sally, to this very day, to think we recall me, you know, giving her a word of caution.

[Tape one, Side one ends, counter 0-357]

[Tape one, Side two begins, counter 357-719]

Wayne: Now the days following Pearl Harbor, do you remember any of the Japanese leaders being arrested in Sacramento?

Mr. Taketa: It was an everyday event, that somebody would be, that you would hear you know, that somebody was picked up and so forth. I never seen anybody actually being seized by the FBI or other enforcement agency, but the word gets around [coughs] that so and so got picked up, so and so got picked up, so forth and so on, and I would assume that it was a common occurrence in the Sacramento area.

Wayne: Now being a lawyer were you involved in any of those, or did someone call you and say, "hey, I've been arrested by the FBI can you – ?"

Mr. Taketa: Well I would assume that you know, in time of war, when an alien enemy is picked up, the Japanese being an alien enemy, by reason of fact that he was never able to become an American citizen, there is no defense to incarceration. So, no one raises the question, the legal question of whether or not the government was justified in doing this or doing that. It was,

everybody assumed that if you were an enemy alien, you were a Japanese subject and you got picked up, that is the right of the American government in time of war. So it was an accepted proposition. So no one at, you know, going back 40 years or 45 years ago would raise the question of legality of actions by the law enforcement peoples.

Wayne: Now did the curfew order effect your life in any way?

Mr. Taketa: Well, I would imagine it effected everybody's life of those who were of Japanese ancestry. By and large, we were regimented in our teachings to abide by the rules, abide by the law, be good American citizens, and so forth and so on, so on the whole I would imagine most of us observed what was announced to us as the regulation of the time, and curfew was one of them. All though, every now and then I suppose we knowingly or unknowingly made our breaches, infractions of the curfew law.

Wayne: Do you remember when the notices to evacuate first came out?

Mr. Taketa: I don't recall it exactly. But we knew that it was coming. When the 9066 Executive Order was signed, in mid-February, we knew that the days were numbered in terms of eventually there would be an evacuation order coming through. Then gradually as days went by, the government was taking steps to register the people, prior to the evacuation and getting storage facilities, announcement of storage facilities set up and so I think mentally we were, we were anticipating, although dreading, the day of reckoning so to speak.

Wayne: Now the people of Sacramento were ordered to meet down at the Memorial Auditorium and from there transported to –

Mr. Taketa: by bus.

Wayne: By bus, yes, to Walerga?

Mr. Taketa: Yes, that is right.

Wayne: Do you remember your first impression of Walerga?

[Counter 400]

Mr. Taketa: I don't recall. Although I would say that it was very, very primitive. The sanitary facilities were not completed, the kitchen was just barely operational. The barracks were poorly constructed and insulated, so that, on a windy day you would have a considerable amount of dust coming through the cracks and under the floor, and so forth. And the way you kept the place clean is to sweep the dust right back to the crack in the floor. So they were very, very primitive and it is surprisingly, you know, how people can adjust themselves to even that backward of a condition. I think on the whole, you've got to be real proud of Japanese people for making the best of a real bad situation.

Wayne: How long was your family there?

Mr. Taketa: I think most of us stayed about a month

Wayne: And from there –

Mr. Taketa: And from there by train to Tule Lake. I understand that the people who lived within the city boundaries were all relocated to Walerga at once. And those who were on the outlining districts such as Riverside, Florin, Wall Station, Walnut Grove, North Sacramento, they might have gone to any part different from Walerga.

Wayne: So your father also went to –

Mr. Taketa: Walerga and then to Tule Lake. We didn't, we sort of, you know, maintained our family unity so to speak, both in terms the Taketa's and Sally's side of the family.

Wayne: Now do you have any first impressions of when you saw Tule Lake?

Mr. Taketa: Again, very primitive, although a little more maybe, of a permanent nature than Walerga. Walerga was more or less completed about the time of our departure. In other words, the outhouses were, you know, the old fashioned country style outhouses, until the sewer line came in, but the sewer lines were not functioning until about the time of our departure. Where that at Tule Lake their essentials were at least completed. You had the community baths, you had the community lavatories, lavatory facilities, community mess hall and that sort of thing.

And then in short order, they put up the commissaries for Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalog ordering and then they had a minimal supply of merchandise for sale through the Tule Lake Coop [hard to hear, counter 424], had been set up. On the whole, primitive, but somewhat more complete than Walerga.

Wayne: Now what, you had just built a house right before the war, now what happened to the house and –

Mr. Taketa: We sold the house.

Wayne: You sold the house?

Mr. Taketa: Yes, before our departure for the purpose of, maybe we would have sold the house anyway, but the sale of the house provided us funds with which to make payments on obligations that we owed on some other property. It was sort of prepayment we initiated through the sale of the house.

Wayne: Now the personal belongings you stored somewhere?

Mr. Taketa: We stored privately. At, most of us stored privately at Bekin Storage Company. Most of it was sold, you know, like bedroom furniture and carpeting and that sort of thing. [hard to hear, counter 435]

Wayne: You sold?

Mr. Taketa: Bulky items, and then other things which we thought that we would like to preserve, they went either into Bekin Storage Company into private storage or we stored some articles into private homes of our friends.

Wayne: Now the Bekin Storage facility once you came back, were the things pretty much intact?

Mr. Taketa: In the same condition as we made our delivery.

Wayne: Now how long were you at Tule Lake?

Mr. Taketa: I was there approximately one year, having just beyond one year.

Wayne: And then you were able to get a clearance to leave?

Mr. Taketa: Whereas Sally stayed there just short of one year. Sally moved on to Tule Lake because I didn't know where I stood in the draft and the people came and asked for volunteers out of Tule Lake I was, I think, one of about 100 who took that step and uh, and awaiting for a physical examination and the result of examination and etcetera, etcetera. In the meantime, I sent Sally on, because I didn't want her to get caught short at Tule Lake. If I should, if I had to

go. So I sent her on to Salt Lake City to join her friends, the Nichi family, they had moved from Sacramento to Salt Lake.

[Counter 450]

Wayne: Oh, during that voluntary period?

Mr. Taketa: I think voluntary period. They were old friends, and then eventually they would move on to Cleveland, Ohio, where my brother was, see. He was interning at one of the medical hospitals in Cleveland, Ohio, when the war started. We were prepared to make our ship depending upon if I either going into military service, or if I was rejected then I would eventually join Sally either in Salt Lake or in Cleveland, Ohio. And, so Sally left in I think April, and I left in May. But it took me one month to catch up to Sally, after I got my notice of rejection for health reasons. Even though the military gave us assurance, at least at the time of the volunteers were solicited, that in the event of your rejection for whatever reason, that you would summarily be given a leave out of the relocation center, but it took one month to get my clearance.

Wayne: Oh, to get paperwork through?

Mr. Taketa: Yeah, red tape. And it wasn't a summary, that summary permit you know, it was red tape all over again.

Wayne: Now Tule Lake eventually turned out to be a camp that was in turmoil, but at the time you were there –

Mr. Taketa: Oh we had fracas of a sort,

Wayne: It had already started?

Mr. Taketa: Oh, I wouldn't say it was anything abnormal, but you would find certain frictions developing and the people of Tule Lake would be fractured into different philosophies. And someone could be so, so embittered about the evacuation that they would pick on those who were manifesting loyalty as a sole solution to the problem at the time.

Wayne: Like how?

Mr. Taketa: Like Walter Tsukamoto was more or less forced to leave the place not under guard or anything like that, but I think the better judgment was for him to leave the relocation center as soon as possible and the same thing happened to Tom Yego [spelling?], and I think [hard to hear counter 478] Sakota and one or two other people.

Wayne: Now your parents remained?

Mr. Taketa: They were in Tule Lake for, until the segregation took place, and then they went on to Minidoka.

Wayne: Now so you finally caught with your wife in Salt Lake City or in Cleveland?

Mr. Taketa: In Salt Lake City, and then from there we stayed in Salt Lake City for maybe a week or ten days and then we moved on to Cleveland, Ohio, by train.

Wayne: You stayed there the duration?

Mr. Taketa: We stayed until December of 1944.

Wayne: Did you notice a change in climate in Cleveland? Racial climate?

Mr. Taketa: Well, outside of the evacuation per se, I hardly felt racism as an issue for myself. I think a lot of people felt the same way. If the government did not call the evacuation, the people would have tolerated, there might have been isolated instances of violence and that sort of thing, but by and large, people are much more tolerant than one would want to believe maybe. Even during the evacuation, you know, even proceeding the evacuation we did not, we were not faced with a serious problem of possible violence and that sort of thing. There were one or two cases, sure, I think Mr. Fuji got killed in Sacramento. The Fuji family right, they used to live on O Street. There might have been one or two cases of other violences, but they were so far and in between that you know, it was awfully hard to say we were in jeopardy.

[Counter 500]

Mr. Taketa (continued): I don't think the Japanese-Americans were in jeopardy at any time, except on, in isolated instances. And then in Cleveland, Ohio, we noticed the discrimination more against the Polish people, the Jewish people, the Italians, by the majority [hard to hear counter 506]. With the Japanese-Americans why we were I think more favorably treated than the natives themselves back there.

Wayne: What did you do during this time in Cleveland?

Mr. Taketa: Well in Cleveland, I worked in the war industry, passed my time so to speak, until the [hard to hear counter 510] in December. In the meantime I made my application for a permit to travel back to California. As soon as the end of the issue was resolved, the permit came right away. So we were, in January of 1945, we were on the way home.

Wayne: So you, were you one of the first families to come back to Sacramento or were there?

Mr. Taketa: I would say there must have been three or four families ahead of me. But uh, we were one of the first. I was back here in February of 45.

Wayne: Now since you had sold your home, you didn't have a house to come back to?

Mr. Taketa: No, we had a home to come back to, we were both in that home, our own home. It was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Halliman on 17th Street. They had stored some of our belongings and they welcomed us back. I mean he welcomed us back. Mrs. Halliman was a Japanese

woman and she was in Japan throughout the war, throughout World War II. So Mr. Halliman not only preserved our property for us, but they, he also opened up his home, and we stayed there until they bought a home up in the Arcade district, back in 1946.

Wayne: Now did you have any children at this time?

Mr. Taketa: I had one boy in Cleveland, Ohio, on Christmas Day, 1943.

Wayne: Now when did you start your practice up again?

Mr. Taketa: It was a kind of a slow process, during the early period of 1945, most of my time I think was occupied trying to get the people settled, and so a handful of us including, Mrs. Sue Harada, Dr. Harada's wife, Peter Osuka, [hard to hear counter 535], Mykito, and myself, we, I think were responsible in establishing at least three hostels for return evacuees and then contacting employers, potential employers to see whether or not they would start hiring, or rehiring Japanese people in farms and elsewhere. I think we accomplished, you know, quite a bit in terms of making it a little easier for people to return to Sacramento, and then once they were here to seek their own private housing facilities and places of employment.

Wayne: Do you remember where these hostels were set up?

Mr. Taketa: One was, the first one we set up was in the Methodist Church, in what was formerly the Pastor's quarters in the Methodist Church, and we set up one major one which was located on N Street, between 5th and 6th, and used to be two barracks.

[Counter 550]

Mr. Taketa (continued): Barrack type school buildings, occupied by I think Filipino church, as a Filipino church and they abandoned it, and so we took it over from the owners and conformed to city requirements of having separate lavatory and bathing facilities for men and women. We installed showers and lavatories, set up a kitchen there for preparing food and segregated the women from the children, even though they might have come from one family because all we had was two buildings and with no partitioning inside and so we had, at the time at least, menfolk lived on one side and the women and the children lived on the other side, and allowed them something like two weeks maximum to stay and provide a constant turnover as much as we can to accommodate those that were constantly arriving on a day to day basis.

Wayne: Now these two barracks handled maybe 50-60?

Mr. Taketa: 70 people, and with the Methodist Church, I think we had accommodations for 20, and then the Church of Guadalupe on 7th and T Street, had a classroom across the street and that was a barrack type of school building too, that we provided for more or less for family type occupancy. That is man and wife with young children. That facility may have accommodated of 20 to 25 people. By the time we got through with that then the Buddhist Church got their facility

back and opened the whole school building in the alley for hostel purpose. And then Parkview opened its back room for again, hostel purpose.

Wayne: So this condition, the almost chaotic condition when on for what, six or seven months?

Mr. Taketa: Oh, I would imagine about that long.

Wayne: In the meantime, are you doing all of this without any pay or?

Mr. Taketa: Well there was no [hard to hear counter 586] being your brother's keeper so to speak and it was satisfying work.

Wayne: It was almost like a community activist.

Mr. Taketa: Well, you've got to figure that some of us were, maybe we were activists of the time, although we do things differently, although we did things differently than we would do today. So this was actually rolling up your sleeves and getting the place cleaned up and ready for occupancy. As part of our service, we uh –

Wayne: Was it the JACL group or just –

Mr. Taketa: Just a bunch of us, because the JACL was not reactivated until I think 1946, middle of 46 or later part of 46. And by then the crises was over so to speak. As one of our

major projects we hooked up the telephone and advertised in the newspaper that we had people who were ready to rent a, you know, gardening service, and I advanced \$100 to buy a push mower and a few other odds and ends, you know.

[Counter 600]

Wayne: A push mower, you mean a hand?

Mr. Taketa: Well they, in those days you know, they didn't have a power mower unless you operated on a sizeable estate or something like that. So everybody did their gardening by pushing their mower rather than you know, putt putting it. Although, shortly after that things started to change. But anyway, we advertised and got the gardening movement underway in Sacramento. I think, eventually, it would have come about, but by having the telephone line put in and advertising, I think we got the thing started for a number of people, maybe two or three months before they would have normally gotten underway had they taken it on themselves. So from that standpoint it was, you know, quite productive and then we had people up in Marysville and Live Oak area. Prospective employers were contacted and they would hire one or two and before you know it, why there, you become pretty well wide open for employment of Japanese as menial farm labor now.

Wayne: But still it was work.

Mr. Taketa: Well, at least it was something for them to do. And that would give them a breathing spell, a place to stay possibly, if they had facilities, and then once you have a little time then to adjust yourself you can start looking for more permanent quarters and different employment. Transition was, you know, was somewhat uneventful. I don't think there was a real concern for the physical safety.

Wayne: Now when did you start to notice Japan Town starting to revive, you know, the grocery stores open and?

Mr. Taketa: Well actually it never revived. There was some semblance, but not as it was before World War II. Because other nationalities infiltrated in with Japanese. Japanese was pretty solid at one time. Now maybe even after the Japanese returned and they say we have reached the point of status quo so to speak, maybe half of the population would be non-Japanese, where as pre-war it used to be say 99% Japanese, now it is down to 50%. And of course with the redevelopment that brought about the demise of the so-called Japan Town in Sacramento for all purposes, and we have, there is little or no, there is nothing left today.

Wayne: Before we get into redevelopment, now in 1952, Walter-McCarran Act was pass where the Isseis could now become naturalized. Was the JACL or yourself involved at that time in trying to –

Mr. Taketa: Well I think the JACL was instrumental in seeing that the Walter-McCarran Act was ultimately passed by Congress and then the implementation, to different local levels became

pretty much a JACL undertaken. And in Sacramento JACL took the lead in both establishing classes for the alien, you know, Japanese who understood very little or no English, which in turn made it very difficult, unless you have bilingual instructors. So we had persons like Jill Niadow and myself and a few of the others giving timely lectures on American history, American political science sufficient enough to answer questions [hard to hear counter 670] for the naturalization.

Wayne: Do you remember how many eventually got their citizenship during that period?

Mr. Taketa: We were, we were installing people by the hundreds. So I don't know, it is kind of hard for me to say. But I would imagine in the course of the years, maybe several thousand got naturalized. A good percent of our having Japanese parents were naturalized. A good percent. In spite of the fact that they would say, you know, being in their late 60s and early 70s, "I can't remember anything, it's awfully hard to, you know, study like if you were a young person and retain and so forth, but in the end they knew more American history than I think most of us has ever [hard to hear counter 685] down in our lifetime.

Wayne: Well the decade of the 50s were sort of easy for the Japanese-Americans. It seems like not to many, the press didn't pay too much attention to us, the anti-Asian hostility had been

Mr. Taketa: Well, there were movements you know, by politicians hoping to, who had hoped to make say Japanese issue a feather in their cap and that sort of thing. The Alien Land Law was still in effect, so there would be appropriation measures submitted in the State Legislature

[Counter 700]

Mr. Taketa: for enforcement of the Alien Land Law, and so we were on constant vigil to see that if something like that came up we would try to utilize our capabilities in terms of combating that time of legislation and I think we did, the JACL through some of us, was very, very successful. But, these are far, situations far and in between. Most of it was for the better. The evacuation claim back even though very nominal was for the better. Yeah, we criticize the fact that it was ten cents on the dollar, or five cents on the dollar, but be that as it may, in some countries it was nothing on the dollar.

[Tape one, side two ends, counter 357-719]

[Tape two begins, counter 0]

Mr. Taketa: (speaking started before tape begins) you know, there were politicians who were still prejudiced to the point where if they thought that by taking the leadership in proposing a measure which would provide additional funds with which to enforce the Alien Land Law, for instances, would make them a popular politician, they would initiate proposals and I think back in 1953 or 54 it was done. We had to take an affirmative action ourselves to try to overcome that. In the process, we were able to educate a few people, such as Mr. Chuck [hard to hear counter 5] who was a flag waving, super patriot, you know, that spoke no good of the Japanese people as a whole. Although, he, as an individual, he was a very fine, friendly individual person.

But when we convinced him that he was wrong and he stood before the Legislature and he being an Assemblyman himself, and at the very crucial moment said “Mr. Lawry and I used to be buddy-buddies on this particular subject, but we have now come to a parting of the ways because I have realized how wrong I was with the or my impression of the Japanese people. They have really earned their keeps by loyalty and sacrifice during World War II” and then he went on and gave a little background why, as to reasons why he now was convinced that this measure was wrong and he asked his colleagues to vote against the appropriation, etc., etc. You could have heard a pin drop. The vote was taken, we were about three, about five votes ahead. The Chair [could not hear counter 21] what do you call him? There is a name for that.

Wayne: Speaker?

Mr. Taketa: Well they don't call them speaker I think here, but anyway, whoever was Chairing the Assembly at the time, called for a recess after the vote was taken. And then on the second hearing we were still about three votes ahead and at that time, the Attorney General, I don't recall his name, was on the floor of the Assembly trying to urge some of the Assembly people who had voted negatively, against the appropriation measure to try to turn them around, and on the third, after the second recess, and on the third vote, after they marshaled a few more Assembly members, the presence of a few more Assembly members, the vote switched so that we lost, and the appropriation went through. But the newspaper reporters had observed this taking place, the Attorney General on the floor, the constitutional directed officer trying to twist the arms of the Legislatures, you know, as one and then why was it necessary to go through three processes of voting on the same thing when there was a quorum to begin with. So the newspaper

came out and said “What’s the deal? Why incriminate the Japanese people with this political harassment?” Inquisition of a sort, and that sort of thing. Because the newspaper played it, played it so aggressively, kicking the Japanese people around was no longer going to continue to be a political football. Although we lost the legal battle, in terms of the third vote on the same subject matter, we won a moral victory. I think, to me, that was a turning point, as far as the State Legislature was concerned.

Wayne: Now that bill was concerning what?

Mr. Taketa: Appropriation of something like \$100,000 to the Attorney General for the enforcement of the Alien Land Law. This was a hidden, hidden subject that we had to pull out of the Assembly, after the Assembly had voted once. Oh, the Senate had voted favorably for it, and it had gone to the Assembly floor with a “do pass” recommend of the Committee, and that is when we noticed it, see. So through a mutual friend we had the Chairman of the particular committee, the Ways and Means Committee, pull that thing back for further hearings. And after the hearing took place in the Committee, it went down to the floor of the Assembly with “do not pass” recommendation.

[Counter 50]

Mr. Taketa: So we won in the Committee, but lost on the floor on the third vote. After that because the Attorney General was really panned for what he did in playing politics on the floor of the Assembly, and then the Assembly itself, taking three votes on the same subject, [Mr.

Taketa pounds on table for emphasis] you know, after re-passing, re-passing, and then on the third try, you know, they win, I mean that the proponents of the measure win. The Attorney General of the State of California and the legal representative of the JACL came to an agreement that there would be no more escheat cases filed. All cases pending will be suspended. The matter of the Alien Land Law will be resolved in the court, awaiting the decision of the court on the Fujii, [spelling of court case people counter 65]. Test cases which were filed.

Wayne: The Supreme Court eventually overturned

Mr. Taketa: The California Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional and the Attorney General of the State of California saw fit not to appeal it to the Supreme Court. So it became a dead law. This goes back in the mid 50s. So these were, you know, trying years, but at the same time every step of the way I think the Japanese-Americans and their parents were coming into their own. Through the effort of the JACL leadership, and they have no acquired a few friends, you know, outside of the JACL movement and so forth. The ACLU played a great part in these things.

Wayne: The mid fifties were about the time when the idea of redevelopment started.

Mr. Taketa: For the local communities, yeah.

Wayne: Do you remember the discussion that centered around it? I mean how did the city decide to redevelop this particular area?

Mr. Taketa: Well it was a political thing. Like in most communities where redevelopment is initiated. It is a political thing, to try to use political decisions for the purpose of revitalizing the “so-called slum areas” and who but the Japanese and the Chinese and the Black and the Mexican would live in the slum area. So in a sense, we said we were opposed to it, from the stand point of the hardship of being dislocated again. Because there would be very little compensation in the process of being moved. The property owners were protected, because they got their value so to speak of property which would be bought up by the City of Sacramento through the Redevelopment Agency. But as far as people who were operating say a grocery store or hotel, all they may have gotten were moving costs of some kind, so –

Wayne: So there were some community opposition?

Mr. Taketa: Oh, there was opposition. We opposed it on the basis that we went through evacuation or relocation once, and we know the hardship more than anybody else, and we opposed it on those grounds. But, it was again –

Wayne: Pretty hard to fight City Hall?

Mr. Taketa: Things that are happening throughout the country, it wasn't only in Sacramento. That redevelopment was in the process of making and then we realized too, that even those who were able to establish themselves, especially the Issei who were able to establish themselves in hotels, little grocery stores, fish market, restaurants, etc., that once they moved, once they had

what they had up, they would be too old to start all over again. So it would be a demise of what we called Japan Town. And not that we grieve about it, but we would have maybe preferred to

[Counter 100]

Mr. Taketa: have them live their fruitful, productive life, you know, go through the normal course and then terminated when they were about ready to retire. But I think the retirement was, the evacuation itself was a disaster in terms of the older people, because they were reaching the point beyond the prime of their lives, and then when they came back and some were able to start, and when I say some, maybe ten or fifteen or twenty percent of those who were in business or in trade of one kind or another for themselves were able to resume their occupation and then had to give it up a second time with the redevelopment, I think that was the end of the line. There was no place out to go any way.

Wayne: Now how did the concentration of a few businesses on 10th Street develop? Was that a conscious decision by some merchants to relocate in the –

Mr. Taketa: Now when you talk about concentration of some businesses, well there are only about four or five and that's, that may be a normal transition of some kind, or transformation from one location to another.

Wayne: But you don't remember a discussion where people thought, "well maybe we can start a Japan Town somewhere else?"

Mr. Taketa: Well there was, I think there was some people who thought it, that may become sort of a nucleus of a Japan Town, but it, I don't think, most of us were convinced of that point. It would provide some needs, you know, in terms of Japanese merchandising and eateries, but beyond that we felt that the whole thing was a demise of, the redevelopment was a demise of the Japan, the concept of any Japan Town in Sacramento.

Wayne: Now looking back, was there anything positive that came out of redevelopment and dispersion of the Japanese community?

Mr. Taketa: Well, the only thing noticeable would be was, in my estimation, was an earlier demise of those business people who were reaching, you know, reaching a point beyond there so-called prime of their lives. There were quite a number if Isseis so to speak who were still in their mid-sixties or say early sixties or you know thereabouts see, and given another ten years maybe would have been very fruitful to them in terms of active employment and making a living and that sort of thing. But to have that abruptly cut off, very few I think would be able to justify going out of their way to resume the type of occupation for as long as they had.

Wayne: Well even now though you can, a person can almost conduct their entire business within a Japanese community, you know from insurance man to optometrist to physician to lawyer to –

Mr. Taketa: Well, I wouldn't say that. Some might have more clientele or more patients or more customers who are of Japanese origins, but I think there is the tendency for non-Japanese patronage too.

Wayne: Oh, yeah, but I'm saying that if a person wanted to he could, he or she could, you know, I could have all my needs met within the Japanese community.

Mr. Taketa: Oh your needs might be met within the Japanese community, but from the standpoint of those who are giving service or selling merchandise, dependency upon the Japanese alone would be a catastrophe. For today, even Japanese objects are sold beyond the Japanese people. Japanese restaurants, I don't mean, occidental food, you know, western food, but strictly Japanese food, maybe 50% of your patrons are non-Japanese.

Wayne: Maybe more.

Mr. Taketa: Maybe in some locations, it's 90% non-Japanese. Whereas in others it might be say 50-50, or that sort of thing. But the dependency upon Japanese as, as a source for your income in terms of servicing, service or merchandizing I think is a thing of the past. That went out of the window at the end of World War II.

[Counter 150]

Wayne: Now during the sixties with the civil rights movement that the Blacks were struggling through, what kind of an effect do you think that that had on the Japanese community on a whole?

Mr. Taketa: Nothing. I don't think it had any effect except to maybe instill young people with the concept of equality of humans, among individuals and maybe become apart of the movement which would bring about a betterment for, hopefully for everybody so to speak. But in a sense you have to go backwards to and say maybe the Japanese Americans who were evacuated and forced to fight for their lives so to speak, may have been the forerunner of what of the Black movement and the other movements that have followed. In other words the Black had to fight for themselves. They could not rely upon the goodness of the great, great majority to be their salvation and I think that the Japanese Americans may have proved that long before the Black even got under way. That you had to take, face up to the problem within the system itself and even if you have to sacrifice, your sacrifice will eventually pay off.

Wayne: Well some people have said that uh, as a result of the civil rights movement Japanese have been able to advance much further in certain areas like becoming principals of schools or moving to department heads in the civil service.

Mr. Taketa: Well I think these are basically part of the whole. In other words, what was one condition back in 1940, is something that we had to face with; in 1950, we faced with something else, a changing tide, a changing concept of human beings looked upon as individuals rather than by race or ancestry; into the 1970s and in the early eighties, the human values are pretty much

recognized in terms of the individual. And so sure, I'm sure, the Black movement may have had betterment for everybody, but basically for the Black, the recognition of the Black as an active force within the so called society that we live in. But I think the Japanese Americans have earned their niche in a social system so to speak as a result of the evacuation in World War II.

Wayne: What are your themes on the current redress and reparations? Do you think its –

Mr. Taketa: I have no quarrel with them. I have no quarrel one iota on whether it is \$10,000 or \$20,000 –

Wayne: You don't think it is opening a can of worms?

Mr. Taketa: or \$50,000. I have no quarrel. I don't think the country, asking the country to pay some form of indemnity is, I don't think it is wrong from the word go. I think there is a moral

[Counter 200]

Mr. Taketa: and a legal obligation for a wrong which was done and I don't think you can suppress that, that principal by merely saying that while if it is good for the Japanese than what about the Black and what about the Chicanos and what about the Indians and so forth and so on. They have their problem and they, and if they have and if they were injured in the same way that we were injured they should ask for it.

Wayne: You don't think uh, by going through the process of redress and reparation it may create a sort of a backlash, maybe –

Mr. Taketa: Well if it creates a backlash its because, the human element comes into the picture. The great White majority and maybe some of the other minorities may feel that “why should they sacrifice” you know for the wrong of their ancestors so to speak, but we're talking about the government of the United States has the responsibility of undoing a wrong which was deliberately committed and more and more as the truth seems to spawn from hidden documents that there was a conspiracy, there was a hold back, it was a deliberate thing, more than one based upon reasonable judgment of the time. More and more you feel that they were out to exterminate the Japanese American or destroy the Japanese Americans to the point where you become almost a third class citizen. And this is where I feel that in spite of what we had to, what the Japanese Americans had to contend with. The way they responded was most admirable and beyond the criticism of anybody. And so when we ask for what is ours, or what is just, I don't think we should hesitate one iota. And admission of wrong I think is first in order, and some form of redress within the capability, you know, financial capability of the United States. I'm not saying \$20,000 is a good figure, because I think \$20,000 in and of itself is a, it may not be, you know, fully compensatory, see. Depending upon the individual too. Babes in arm I don't think was harmed, except if it might have an indirect stigma of a sort that you were evacuated with your parents and that sort of thing, and then like some people said “gee they had a wonderful time in the relocation center, it was all song and dance see.” And so, but then what about the person who had to take the babe in arms or who were the fathers and mothers of grown children? They

could be compensated two times, three times, \$20,000 and still feel that they have not been, that they are not adequately redressed.

Wayne: Well looking down the road, 10, 20 years, what do you think the Japanese community will be like?

[Counter 250]

Mr. Taketa: I think we will become so diluted to intermarriage, one thing, and then the Japanese Americans gradually becoming a part of the major society that we lose our identity. Like my sons, I think they're, they're more of the major society than the minority society like I am. I think we get lost in the, we will be lost in the major society and become a part of the major society and very few people will identify today that you are, that you look like an Oriental rather than saying uh, rather than recognizing you as a Japanese American. We're an American so to speak.

Wayne: Exactly what we are talking about may be an extinction of a subculture or –

Mr. Taketa: I think so, and Japanese Americans you know, Japanese people by ancestry, as long as they continue the same trend, will be in the middle or upper echelon of that major society in terms of economics and in possibly even the social level.

Wayne: And so, 20, 25 years down the road there might not be a role for JACL as such? It would have to –

Mr. Taketa: Except to maintain a certain say identity of ones' ancestry, and that is simply for a cultural purpose rather than for economic or political reasons. And then of course we might still want to identify, our children may want to still identify themselves in terms of whence their ancestors came from, and I don't mean Japan per se, but what part of Japan, just for biographical reasons, interested in their roots so to speak. So my kids, know a little of our background, so to speak, but one of these days they are going to start asking the question: "Where in Japan did their grandfather and grandmother come from?" Because now they think in terms of internationalism. If they should visit Japan they would want to see the home of their ancestors or visit the community from whence their ancestors came.

Wayne: Do you see the dilution as inevitable?

[Counter 300]

Mr. Taketa: I think there is no stopping it. We still may have the churches which will maintain a certain semblance of identity and it may be a good thing, you know. I think we should, it's a tragedy when we loose the goodness that have been given to us by our parents and our grandparents and so forth and we handing them down to our children. But, as time will pass, I think that would dilute too. Some may become much more proficient than we are, even today. Because they will make it their avocation so to speak to learn what made, what were the good

things of in which the Japanese people would represent or have contributed to, you know, the rest of the world so to speak. They may, but they will be far and in between and it will be sort of an educational process of one kind or another. So, uh, we are on the decline as a ethnic element, I think we will gradually become diffused and become part of an infusion to the majority society. Like my kids, my grandchildren are more, well they look more American because, they are, you know, Eurasian, and they talk a little about things Japanese because we try to instill that and I think the parents will try to create that interest while they are still going to school, but the question is whether or not they would perpetuate that type of interest on their own, once they are, once they become adults, you know, and look out for themselves. But all for the good, all for the good, I think this is part of advancement. Molding with the change of time.

Wayne: Now if you had any advice to give to the, let's say to your grandchildren, what might that be?

Mr. Taketa: Well, be Americans first, and then try to maintain a little of their heritage if that is possible, so that they can identify themselves as receiving the goodness of America, the western

[Counter 350]

Mr. Taketa: world, and goodness of part of their ancestry, which would be Japanese. These are hard challenges because trying to be something, trying to be more than, more than one, you know, whole is a very difficult proposition.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1, Counter 358 and end of interview]