



**Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey -  
Japanese Oral Histories  
1983/146**

Oral interview of  
Percy Masaki

December 9, 1983

**Conducted by Wayne Maeda**

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Wayne Maeda interviewing Percy Masaki for the Sacramento Ethnic Community Survey, December 9, 1983. Percy Masaki is one of the older Niseis who have been born and raised in the Sacramento area. He is one of the first to open up a drive-in market prior to the war. After the war, he became involved in real estate and also an active leader in the Japanese-American Citizen's League.

**Wayne:** Can you tell me when you were born?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yes. I was born in Sacramento, near or just behind the present Coca Cola plant on Stockton Boulevard, August 12, 1910.

**Wayne:** Were you the only child?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yes, I was the only child, although I had a step-brother who was born in Japan. Yeah a step-daughter, I mean step-sister, that's right.

**Wayne:** Were there any other Japanese families in that area?

**Mr. Masaki:** No. Since my father was working for Gerber and he was President of the California National Bank, and his estate was more like a cattle ranch, so therefore, there was no other Japanese living around it.

**Wayne:** And how long did you father stay in that area?

**Mr. Masaki:** He must have stayed about possibly six years before, since my mother came and I was born. Possibly I was two years old when they moved out of there.

**Wayne:** Now where did you move from there?

**Mr. Masaki:** From there we moved to possibly Broderick, Yolo County, on a five acre, five acre piece of truck driving farm.

**Wayne:** And raised?

**Mr. Masaki:** Raised the vegetable like pepper, eggplant, Japanese pumpkin, [hard to hear, counter 025], and cucumbers and stuff like that I think. I was too small to be too much involved in what they were doing.

**Wayne:** Now you were mentioning a language school, they had one in Broderick?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yes. They had a one room, a good size one room school building, and the teacher had her living quarters and they also had a tutor. I remember her name as Takahashi.

**Wayne:** Was there anything else taught besides the language?

**Mr. Masaki:** No, the Japanese language was talked only for one hour after the regular school. I think we went five days or six days a week. That was about it.

**Wayne:** With maybe 10 to 15 students?

**Mr. Masaki:** Possibly, that's about it. About 15 students, possibly, it might have been 20 or 30 that could attend, but the family was not able to pay the tuition, so they kept them home or. I know one family that the father was very well educated, and he was teaching the two sons –

**Wayne:** At home?

**Mr. Masaki:** At home.

**Wayne:** So you stayed in Broderick for about six years?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right.

**Wayne:** And then from there your family moved to Sacramento

**Mr. Masaki:** Sacramento City and my father got tired of not doing too much but he wanted to go back to the farming again. And possibly he was thinking of us, my cousin and I, growing up in town not doing too much won't be a good habit for us, so we went to Riverside area on

Riverside Boulevard on 15 acres on hilly ground. He depended on us to do the plowing and the heavy work because he was possibly around 65 years of age.

**[Counter 50]**

**Wayne:** This would be about 1920 or so?

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, let's see, possibly a little more than that I guess. Possibly I could have been about 15 years, 14 or 15 years old.

**Wayne:** So that would put it about 1924 or 1925?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right.

**Wayne:** Did you have a tractor in those days?

**Mr. Masaki:** No, we never owned a tractor in all of that time. I noticed that the next door had the Fordson Tractor. But we had the horse. And I still remember one horse walked fast, walked real fast and the other horse walked real slow. So we had a hard time plowing with it.

**Wayne:** So you used a team of horses?

**Mr. Masaki:** Team of horses to plow. To cultivate we used one. But when you go too fast when you cultivate it kind of throws the dirt up to high. So it wasn't a good idea to move too fast. But, I think that we bought kind of oddball horses [laughs].

**Wayne:** And did you get a chance to go to any Japanese language schools while you were on that side?

**Mr. Masaki:** No, in Riverside I never got to go to Japanese language school. But, during my ten year, approximate ten years time that we were in Riverside, the Riverside group did come up with a small Japanese school. But I never attended.

**Wayne:** Do you remember where it was located?

**Mr. Masaki:** It was just less than half a mile south of Sutterville Road off Riverside Boulevard. Just, close to the present Portuguese Hall is now there. But the Japanese school was I think torn down during the wartime.

**Wayne:** Now if you were 14 or 15 then, were you going to high school?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yes. I was going to high school. I remember taking a [hard to hear, counter 078] passenger car and going to Sacramento High. Which is quite a distance, possibly ten miles away.

**Wayne:** Now grammar school you went to grammar school in Broderick?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yes, and I also went to grammar school in Sutterville Road which is close to our farm.

**Wayne:** Do you remember the name of that school?

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, that was, we just to call it the Sutterville Heights. And of course that building is now gone, built up into residential.

**Wayne:** Now after high school, did you still continue to farm at that?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yes, we continued to farm the Riverside until myself and my cousin both graduated from High School. My cousin was about two years younger so after I graduated from high school I farmed an extra three years and then when he graduated, we, my father quit farming because he was also getting old and for about, quitting the farm, my father took myself and my mother to Japan for six months to, more like a vacation. That was about in 1931, that's right.

**[Counter 100]**

**Wayne:** Now this so this would be your first trip to Japan?

**Mr. Masaki:** Oh yes, the first trip for myself to Japan, although my father had gone several times prior in the recent days.

**Wayne:** Do you remember what your first impression of Japan was?

**Mr. Masaki:** Well, first of all, my father always made a connection with a friend who he used to farm together with in Broderick, so therefore, he would find a place to stay close to his place, so we used to go back and forth to our friends, Wakahira's place. They had two daughters. Possibly a little bit younger than I was and we used to go out and kill our time over there, watch, they're were doing the sewing. So they were just about out of high school themselves. And both of them were sewing. So we, I, I was out there and hang around and kill time. [**Mrs. Masaki's** voice in background saying "tell them about that." laughing]

**Mr. Masaki:** Um?

**Mrs. Masaki** in background: Tell them about [hard to hear, counter 115].

**Mr. Masaki:** So recently when we, when I went home to Japan again, about I would say oh five years ago, we went to visit the, I went to visit the girl that I visited 50 years prior. And by golly, she was still sewing. [wife laughs in background]. So she must have sewed for fifty years at least. [all laugh] And, in the meantime she had gone through a lot of grief, the atomic bomb and both of the girls survived but the father and mother had disappeared. And her husband had died in, in the Philippine combat. So she had two daughters and now she has grandchildren.



**Wayne:** So your parents home is in Hiroshima?

**Mr. Masaki:** So, so yeah my parents are from Hiroshima, both of them.

**Wayne:** Do you remember if their marriage was arranged or a picture bride maybe?

**Mr. Masaki:** It may not be a picture bride, but I'm pretty sure it was arranged because when she came to America she brought his adopted son with her. They landed in Vancouver, Canada, British Columbia. And, I think that somebody had gone, went after the two. I think many of them came to Vancouver at that time.

**Wayne:** So that probably would have been around 1906, 1907?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, something like that. Yeah.

**Wayne:** So you spent six months in Japan and then you returned to Sacramento?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah. And at this time um, my brother had the drive-in market going for two years, and I went to work for my brother. And in the meantime, I got married. And a few more years I worked for my brother and when I learned enough, I started my own in North Sacramento.

**[Counter 150]**

**Wayne:** It sounds like you didn't have much time to play baseball or basketball or any of that, social kinds of things.

**Mr. Masaki:** The only thing I can remember is uh, I played a little baseball. I don't know what team, but I know I was playing either Sacramento or, I don't think it was Broderick, I think it was a Sacramento team. We used to play in West Sacramento.

**Wayne:** You mean there was a baseball diamond in West Sacramento?

**Mr. Masaki:** There was a baseball diamond, yeah, in West Sacramento.

**Wayne:** Did the Japanese community have any annual events?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, the, in Broderick they had an annual picnic. And I can still remember how baloney and fresh bread tasted with a soda water.

**Wayne:** Was that the first time you were exposed to a baloney sandwich, huh?

**Mr. Masaki:** Possibly. [**Mrs. Masaki** laughs in background]

**Wayne:** And this would be the entire Japanese community around Sacramento.

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, that was just the Broderick area group picnic.

**Wayne:** How many people do you think?

**Mr. Masaki:** Possibly, there must have been at least 100 people came, because when they have a picnic, Broderick picnic, possibly people from surrounding area came. So I know, I remember that there was a lot of prizes. There was a bicycle race, racing, tire racing, wrestling match, running race, all sorts of races, I remember, and the prizes were pretty nice.

**Wayne:** And did that picnic continue up until the war?

**Mr. Masaki:** I really don't know about that because we left the area early, so I can't remember whether they continued or not but I'm pretty sure that the population didn't decrease so they had the gathering.

**Wayne:** Now once you left the farm and you started working and what was that a fruit stand? Your brother's? You were living in town then.

**Mr. Masaki:** Yes, I was living at 3<sup>rd</sup> and T Street. Where my son was born. That building is still there and the color is the same. [laughs]

**Wayne:** Now was that still part of the Japanese area? Or was that a little farther –

**Mr. Masaki:** I would say that was a Japanese area because there was a lot of Japanese, possibly thinking of buying into the or renting into the people that was working for SP. Those people moved out and the Japanese moved in. There were no Colored people out that way at that time, but Japanese and Italian and Portuguese people are all mixed in there.

**Wayne:** Do you remember if there was a bank?

**Mr. Masaki:** No, there was no bank that I know of. Possibly the closest bank from around our area was in uh, around K Street and L Street. J, K, and L.

[Counter 200]

**Wayne:** So Sumitomo Bank hadn't come in yet then?

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, Sumitomo Bank was, came in after the war. Or was it at 4<sup>th</sup> and L Street, was that a Yokohama Specie Bank or a Sumitomo Bank? [asks **Mrs. Masaki** in the background, she answers "I don't know."] One of them. [I don't know.] But that was the only Japanese bank, and others were the Bank of America, and that was the Bank of Italy that they used to call it. And uh

**Wayne:** Do you know if the Japanese traded there?

**Mr. Masaki:** Bank?

**Wayne:** Uh huh.

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, no, I don't remember too much about Japanese trading at the bank, because I was too young to go back and forth to banks. I remember going to William Miller's bank, I think it was California National Bank at 4<sup>th</sup> and J Street. I remember going in there. And getting balled out for bringing all of the pennies, loose. [he and **Mrs. Masaki** laugh, she says piggy bank] You were supposed to put them into the penny, wrap it up into so many chunks, you know. And if you bring them in and loose, a bunch of pennies, a couple of hundred pennies, they don't like it. That was the first balling out I ever got, going to bank.

**Wayne:** Do you remember if any of the public buildings were off limits to Japanese? Swimming pools or theaters, or?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, even from the time that I was in the Riverside area, the Riverside bath was off limits to Japanese.

**Wayne:** Do you remember where it was located?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, that was at just the entrance of the Southland Park, on the Riverside Boulevard. That was the end of the street car line, and that's where the Jewish Temple is right now. That used to be, that big area used to be a swimming, a swimming pool.

**Wayne:** Did they have a sign or?

**Mr. Masaki:** No, it didn't have any signs.

**Wayne:** You just knew it was off limits?

**Mr. Masaki:** But that was strictly off limits. No Japanese could get in. For that matter, even after the War, close to our home right here was off limits to my brother, until uh, he and some people got together and put the whole thing in the right situation for kids could go swimming.

**Wayne:** You mean out in North, North Sacramento?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right.

**Wayne:** A swimming pool that was off limits? Do you remember any other public accommodations in Sacramento that were restricted?

**[Counter 250]**

**Mr. Masaki:** Oh, let's see, no I don't, I can't think of any.

**Wayne:** Ok, now, you were farming what, during the Depression?

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, during the Depression, [**Mrs. Masaki:** we got married] Yeah, I got married during the Depression, but at the same time I was working for my brother.

**Wayne:** Do you have any memories of what it was like during the Depression?

**Mr. Masaki:** I never felt the Depression. In fact, uh, in some parts of the Depression I did better than the, I did better at making money. Things were cheap and, and for instance for like string beans, which was a possibly, was five cents a pound for to buy. You could buy a fifty pound bag for \$1. The farmer was making nothing, but at the same time, I was I could get better mark up. I was making better money [hard to hear, counter 272]. So at that time uh, part of the Depression time, I think I did very well as far as annual profit, I made pretty good.

**Wayne:** Ok, now so did you meet your wife, was that arranged or was that?

**Mr. Masaki:** Well my wife was connected with my, my cousin's marriage to uh, their to her cousin. So, we knew each other so that I was going to my cousin's place and I used to see her so. We knew each other, and yet again uh, it was still a [**Mrs. Masaki** in background: Nakodo] Yeah a –

**Wayne:** You had a go between.

**Mr. Masaki:** Go between, yeah.

**Wayne:** What year was, did you get married?

**Mr. Masaki:** 1932. [**Mrs. Masaki** agrees]. It was at the peak of the Depression time.

**Wayne:** And you continued to live on 3<sup>rd</sup> and T Street?

**Mr. Masaki:** Let's see [**Mrs. Masaki** says uh huh], yeah that's right we were still living in, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> and T Street. Yeah.

**Wayne:** And any children?

[Counter 300]

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah we had one, one child at 3<sup>rd</sup> and T. And then we moved in a year or two to 17<sup>th</sup> and 2424 17<sup>th</sup> Street where Allstate Savings is now. We moved to that area about a block or so away from the fruit stand that my brother owned. So I can go back and forth walking. We paid a little more rent there but uh, the convenience and a better house. So my mother, my father and mother lived together and watched the kids.

**Wayne:** Now then you must have had another one?

**Mr. Masaki:** Oh, we had number two boy, Harry Masaki. And, my father was more than happy to take care of them because they had nothing else to do, but take care of the yard and kids.



**Wayne:** So when did you open up the fruit stand in North Sacramento?

**Mr. Masaki:** Well let's see, the North Sacramento first fruit stand we opened up in 1936, uh? Something like that. I was possibly, Yeah, I was 26 years old at that time. Possibly the youngest Nisei to venture into some sort of business like that I think. [he laughs].

**Wayne:** Now what, what made you decide on the North Sacramento area?

**Mr. Masaki:** Well it so happened that the promoter came up with a plan and everything else to make a beautiful North Sacramento market here. And for us to be a fruit and vegetable concession operator. So, that's the opportunity we took. But it all, again it came from my brother's lead that he was getting information on all the operation that was being offered to the people. My brother used to be or was a manager of State Ice Company. And he kinda held, kind of weight, he held weight pretty good, because he was able to speak English very well.

**[Counter 350]**

**Wayne:** So that was about 1935 or 36 that you opened up in North Sacramento?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, in 1936 I opened up.

**Wayne:** And after that you opened up the larger market?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right. In about 1939 I opened up a complete market.

**Wayne:** Do you remember how many workers you had?

**Mr. Masaki:** I had, my count, I think we had about 11 people working between the two in the butcher, and about four in the fruit stand and the grocery, I think I had about 11 people working.

**[Tape one, side one ends] [counter 1-364]**

**[Tape one, side two begins] [counter 364-727]**

**Wayne:** Would you say you had one of the largest markets?

**Mr. Masaki:** I would think that this particular market was at that time, for those days, was a fairly good size and as far as Japanese-American operating, I think that this was one of the, the only one that I know being operated by a Japanese-American. Catering to Caucasian only. Because we didn't have any Japanese trade nearby.

**Wayne:** So you opened the store about 1938-39?

**Mr. Masaki:** 39, yeah.

**Wayne:** Do you remember what an annual gross was about?

**Mr. Masaki:** I can't remember too well, but we weren't making too much at the beginning. Because, the cash roll was not that good because everything we made, we were buying more goods. So, I must have had some money in the bank, but my bank account was going down by \$3000, \$4000 a year.

**Wayne:** Was that pretty much a cash and carry, or did you give credit to some of the people in the neighborhood?

**Mr. Masaki:** I would say 99% was cash and carry. There was no credit. There were some credit but that was very few. Credit was too troublesome, and it wasn't worth the [hard to hear, counter 390].

**Wayne:** So you stocked everything from can goods to vegetables to liquor?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, meat. Fresh meat.

**Wayne:** Now, was the meat market kind of a concession?

**Mr. Masaki:** No. Uh, the meat market was owned by myself. I borrowed equipment, and I hired a union butcher.

**Wayne:** Do you remember what the wages were in those days?

**Mr. Masaki:** In those days, I really don't know, but the meat market wasn't so profitable. Although the volume was big, but the labor was high. I noticed that it wasn't that profitable. The grocery made some money, but a big, the new market really takes a possibly a couple of years before they can start showing any profit and we didn't get that much time. Because when we started in it 1939 and by the end of 1941 we had Pearl Harbor. So after that, everything went haywire.

**[Counter 400]**

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

**Mr. Masaki:** Either I was close, fairly close to the radio, but when I heard about the bombs, it really shocked me. I didn't know what to do.

**Wayne:** So before December 7, you didn't have any idea that maybe they might be some trouble with the United States and Japan?

**Mr. Masaki:** Not in that particular fashion, but I felt that the President Roosevelt was [hard to hear] made a trip to President Roosevelt and so Roosevelt says "no." I felt that it could be a big trouble, could be a war. Because, we're just like tightening a rope around their neck. Saying, I think the gasoline I think they embargoed and the boycott of the even at the store, they boycotted the Japanese goods.

**Wayne:** And was there any family discussion as to what might happen to the Japanese in Sacramento?

**Mr. Masaki:** That was, never came to my mind.

**Wayne:** So actually, there wasn't anything until the notices came out to evacuate?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right. So, immediately after Pearl Harbor, the bank pulled all of our assets, and that went very, for a very short time and we weren't able to pay the bill.

**Wayne:** Did they pull the assets of even Nisei?

**Mr. Masaki:** Oh, yes. They pulled everything. But they didn't freeze it too long. We had to pay the wages, the merchandise purchased so they, the manager, Mr. Koko, told me that, it won't be long, and don't worry about it. And, it wasn't too long that they unfroze it and everything was alright.

**Wayne:** Do you remember when you, when the Japanese were given notice? That they had to move?

**Mr. Masaki:** That I don't know exactly, but I know they put on the curfew and it became more [hard to hear, counter 431] and all of that, by the notice. But I didn't know exactly when the

notice was given. But I know that the notice was given to exactly by April the 10<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> of 1942, I know I can remember that because we have to get out by April something.

**Wayne:** And then where did the Japanese gather?

**Mr. Masaki:** We all gathered at the Memorial Hall on 16<sup>th</sup> and, 15<sup>th</sup> and I and J. By 15<sup>th</sup>, I and J. I know, I remember loading up over there and we were taken to Walerga. No sun was shining on a slightly rainy day.

**Wayne:** Now Walerga is located what, near?

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, Ma

**Wayne:** McClellan AFB.

**Mr. Masaki:** McClellan AFB, and those barracks were crudely built with big [hard to hear] and our mattress was made of straw and put into the bag. [**Mrs. Masaki:** We made our own, it was raining, laughs.]

**Wayne:** Now how long did you stay there?

[Counter 450]

**Mr. Masaki:** We stayed there about a month, and by June something, the first part of June, we were in Tule Lake. We were put on to the train with all the curtains pulled, we can't look outside and we were shipped to Tule Lake. And, when we got there, that was kind of a monstrous place to see, there was so much barracks lined up together. So we were assigned block 27, the Sacramento people, and some other block. We had 250 people to a ward, and uh there were so many wards to a canteen.

**Wayne:** And were the Sacramento group one of the first ones to arrive?

**Mr. Masaki:** We were about in the middle of the situation you see. By the time we got there, I think there were Washington people, and some other people that were there. And block 27 seemed to be a, just about in the center of the whole project. And after we got in they did more barracks for others to come in.

**Wayne:** So once you arrived in camp and got settled were you assigned a job? Or did you have any duties in the camp?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, once we got in the camps, of course, naturally they want someone to represent the block, for the district, to the council, so somehow I got roped in to be a council member and I had an assistant council member as Fred Owa [spelling? Counter 472] of Sacramento, and I also was assigned a warehouse job.

**Wayne:** Do you remember what the pay was?

**Mr. Masaki:** The pay was \$19 a month. And I also was the first person to be appointed as a Master Steward, someone who can read and write English. The cooks were all Issei and they couldn't all read or write. So therefore, I was the first steward in there in the whole camp area. And eventually, every mess hall had stewards. But they stewards were not were nothing because still the whole mess hall was governed by the Issei who gave the steward the order. Not the order was given to the cook, but the vice versa. [laughs]

**Wayne:** Now how long did you stay at Tule Lake?

**Mr. Masaki:** Tule Lake? We stayed about less than six months I guess. Because by the end of the year we were out of the camp. We were the first family to get out of the camps. The first and that is the very first family to get out of the camp. And we had to get out on our own. We had to pay out, we had to hire an escort, wherever, if we were going to Utah, the escort would have to come after us and take us by train. And we have to pay all of the expenses, including the escort's. So that's how we, my family of seven, and my brother's family of six, there were fifteen of us, uh, all we needed was one escort. We paid the escort the \$7 a day to get us and bring us back to Brigham City. My cousin's married into family first.

**[Counter 500]**

**Wayne:** Now were, were you active in the JCL right before the war?



**Mr. Masaki:** I had just become a member after Dr. Miramoto, General Miramoto and my cousin, Hinoda [spelling? counter 503] came to my store and I think the membership was \$3 a year. So that is the time I got in 1938. But after that I wasn't approached anymore, from the camp to here and there we weren't a member, until I came back.

**Wayne:** Now you moved to Utah, did you start farming or?

**Mr. Masaki:** When I moved to Utah, well I worked on the, Mr. Opontata's [spelling ? counter 510] ranch a little bit. Tapping a beat, sugar beat. And going out to other farm and prune the fruits, pick apple, in fact, I don't know what time of year, but I remember picking a cherry out there. So actually, I didn't farm for myself, but I guess I was a laborer. And later, I, we went to cannery, and my wife went to a knitting mill.

**Wayne:** And this was all in Utah?

**Mr. Masaki:** All in Utah.

**Mrs. Masaki:** That's where we moved to Brigham City.

**Mr. Masaki:** Ogden, Utah.

**Mrs. Masaki:** Ogden. We only stayed during the wintertime, because we couldn't move. And we didn't have a car. But we had to hire the same fellow, the President of Spreckel's Sugar. The

same fellow that came after us at the camp, to get our car, and it was in a big warehouse. To get our car, and we towed our car back. And then we moved to Ogden. We had to buy the house.

**Wayne:** So you were there for maybe, four years?

**Mrs. Masaki:** Four years.

**Wayne:** Four years, and then that was what? When the war ended?

**Mrs. Masaki:** Yes, and then they announced that, for us to come back. We came back in 45?  
Wasn't it? [she asks her husband.]

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, about 1945.

**Wayne:** Now, you already had a house in Sacramento?

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, this house here.

**Wayne:** So you had something to come back to?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right.

**Wayne:** Now the store you had sold?

**Mr. Masaki:** Sold, we had sold.

**Mrs. Masaki:** To the Chinese.

**Mr. Masaki:** Possibly I could have bought it back, but I didn't want to get into it anymore. It was too much all day, and so forth, it was hard on our feet you know. So, it's good that I change.

**Wayne:** Now what was Sacramento like when you returned?

**Mr. Masaki:** Well it was no different from the time that we left. Uh, we didn't encounter any opposition. Uh, in fact, I think our friends were very friendly about it.

**Mrs. Masaki:** Fisher, Mr. Fisher over North Sacramento [hard to hear, counter 541]

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah?

**Mrs. Masaki:** Came to greet us.

**Mr. Masaki:** So we didn't have any problems coming back. Only the people that stayed in our place uh, didn't move out and neither did they pay the rent. They gave us some grief, but I think you have to expect something like that.

**Wayne:** So now once you got back to Sacramento you had to find something to do?

**[Counter 550]**

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah. So we went to my brother-in-law, my wife's brother and he had a connection out at the ranch so we went to Hawk's Ranch, Poole Ranch, Grape Ranch, and also on my own we, my cousin and I, went to the vineyard and did the various, kind of odd jobs for a short time. And in the meantime we got a job in town through Joseph Magnin. So when they opened the Joseph Magnin, opened in Sacramento, we were the first ones that got the job there. Through the San Francisco office.

**Wayne:** So you worked for Joseph Magnin's as a salesperson?

**Mrs. Masaki:** Uh oh.

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, my wife was a seamstress, and I was a shipping clerk. So we didn't get much of a title to a job, but, it was something to do. And, in the meantime I learned the insurance and the real estate and studied on it, and gradually, I got out of the Joseph Magnin's.

**Wayne:** How long did you work there?

**Mr. Masaki:** At Joseph Magnin's it was a short time too. Possibly a year or two at the most.

**Mrs. Masaki:** Yeah, I worked exactly one year. And then I opened my own dressmaking in here. His parents were getting too old and I can't go to work, so I opened up a dressmaking. And then he stayed at Joseph Magnin and the meantime he was selling life insurance and I think you were what, selling life insurance about two years, two to three years?

**Wayne:** So he became an independent agent?

**Mrs. Masaki:** Yeah.

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, later I became a broker. I operated from 4<sup>th</sup> and N Street. Before Sumitomo Bank took over the bottom. I was at, on the one end of the building. When Sumitomo Bank wanted to come in, and they wanted to enlarge the place, I had to move upstairs. Sumitomo [hard to hear, counter 581] me to move out by then, so I took the upstairs. Soon we relocated, and I was located at the real estate office from there.

**Wayne:** Now most of your cliental, were they Japanese?

**Mr. Masaki:** Uh, yes, mostly Japanese, some Caucasian, but mostly Japanese. But a lack of experience, in this kind of a real estate business you have to be in it a long time to know your business well. Because of that, because of the lack of knowledge, I would say that I lost 90% of my customers and sold to 10% of them. Yet it was enough to support the family and three, two, or three, [hard to hear, counter 585] little risky, at one time. [Mr. Masaki laughs]

**Wayne:** Now were there other real estate, Japanese-American real estate agents besides yourself?

**[Counter 600]**

**Mr. Masaki:** Yes, there were. I would say we Niagawa was there. Puakowa was there. Puakowa. Tokofuji and Puakowa were working with me at the beginning. So there were several, there were six people there.

**Wayne:** Now after the war, let's say in the 1950s were there some areas in Sacramento where Japanese couldn't buy homes?

**Mr. Masaki:** I would think so, in 1950. Yeah. But the government was getting stronger and stronger against such kind of practice. I noticed that including the Southland subdivision, in the back of the zoo, was the first one that opened. It opened by Chan, Louie Chan, became the first owner. He opened that big area for home sites and mind you that they were open by Chinese, but they were restricted to, only to the Caucasians. Yet they reserved for themselves the best spots on the subdivision. But they didn't sell it to Japanese or to the Black people. So there was still discrimination at that time.

**Wayne:** Now you are, by this time, your children are of college age?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right.

**Wayne:** Which university did they attend?

**Mr. Masaki:** Number one went to Ann Arbor, Michigan, [University of Michigan at Ann Arbor] because a friend of ours, Dr. Kalahara who was out there during the war time and found that the Ann Arbor, Michigan, was a real nice school. He came back and told us to send our son to Michigan. So only, when my boy applied for Michigan and various schools, he got accepted into Michigan. So uh, we sent the first one to Michigan for four years and when he graduated, the other one wanted to go

**Mrs. Masaki:** Eight years.

**[Counter 650]**

**Mr. Masaki:** Well, for four years in Michigan and number two was four years younger so by that time he had put in for the Michigan because we wanted to give them the same school so we don't want the young one to think he was sent to a cheaper school or something that was not comparable with Michigan. So we wanted to send him to the school so that something like that won't come up. So therefore, we applied, he applied to Michigan and he didn't get any answer so during the graduation time of the number one boy, I went to the Dean of Dentistry and the Dean got the file out and found out that there was one subject lacking to be accepted into Michigan. So I called my boy right here at home in Sacramento, from Michigan that if he would

take that one subject during the summer course, that the Michigan would accept him. So that was done and he was and the boy went to Michigan for four years or two years or whatever.

**Mrs. Masaki:** Two, because he went to Berkeley [University of California at Berkeley].

**Mr. Masaki:** Yeah, he was in Berkeley for two years.

**Mrs. Masaki:** Two years in Berkeley, and two years in Ann Arbor.

**Mr. Masaki:** So in 1962, I think my number two boy graduated from Ann Arbor, Michigan.

**Wayne:** Now one became an M.D. and the other one became a dentist?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right.

**Wayne:** Now what happened to the third?

**Mr. Masaki:** The third one was a girl and she wanted to go to med school, but we felt that the woman going through med school, was a waste of money, actually. So we suggested to her to do something else, and she finally was convinced with Physical Therapy purpose and after graduating that I think she went one extra year to be a, got the Masters degree in Physical Therapist. So uh, she didn't get to go to Michigan. She was talked out of it. [he laughs]



**Wayne:** Now in the mid 50s there was a whole redevelopment of the downtown area?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right.

**Wayne:** Now do you still have your offices in Japan Town?

**Mr. Masaki:** Right. I was still sitting there and looking at the building come up in the front of us, the big shopping center, uh shopping, the Safeway store and the parking area and something else, a restaurant, and the Crocker National Bank also was coming up. So I was watching all of that while I still had the office on 4<sup>th</sup> and N Street.

**[Counter 700]**

**Wayne:** Now when did you have to move out?

**Mr. Masaki:** Well, the piano factory building was to be torn down. I moved out about a year or two earlier. See the property I sold to another person was on the Riverside Boulevard, where I am now.

**Wayne:** I noticed that the, some of the Japanese businesses relocated around 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Near what we call Japan Town. Was that a decision they made, or did that just accidentally happen that way?

**Mr. Masaki:** Well, I think the Buddhist church was there already or was to be there or built, so therefore, Japan Town came fairly close, or the closest they could come because of zoning. The 10<sup>th</sup> Street was commercial, and 11<sup>th</sup> is not. So therefore, 10<sup>th</sup> became Japan Town. They couldn't get out of that area because there was no other piece of property. So there was an awful lot here and there and they were commercial.

**Wayne:** What do you think Japan Town will be like in oh, another 10 or 15 years?

**Mr. Masaki:** I don't think it will change to much in 10 or 15 years. But I don't think it will be any bigger. Because 9<sup>th</sup> Street is not commercial and the younger people are moving out. And as the time goes by, hopefully other Asian people might buy into the Japanese area and maybe, and it may become Korea Town. Who knows? Or Vietnamese Town. So it may change a little bit.

**[End of Tape one, Side two, Counter 364-727]**

**[Beginning of Tape two, Side one, Counter 0-42]**

**Wayne:** Do you think the next generation will work just as hard as the Nisei?

**Mr. Masaki:** Well as Sansei, Sansei comes in, I think they learn the easiness of various generations, that the Nisei not working as hard as the Issei. I'm pretty sure, that the Sansei will

be lazier than the previous generations, and gradually, I am hoping that they're will be a greater than Nisei, but I have a slight doubt that they will be.

**Mrs. Masaki:** I think Sansei is all right the, Yonsei is the one. Because Sansei is our son, our sons ages are all aggressive. State workers, professionals.

**Wayne:** So you think maybe with the Yonsei,

**Mrs. Masaki:** Yonsei might be different.

**Wayne:** They have it made so they might not have to [hard to hear, counter 09] as much.

**Mrs. Masaki:** No. Although we're lucky that our Yonsei is alright. Our oldest granddaughter is 24. She graduated from UCLA and she sent herself to school in UCLA and also she is working now at Hughes Aircraft as a Financial Analyst. She is a girl. And she is thinking of going to graduate school next year.

**Wayne:** What about like JACL? Do you think that will continue in the next 10 to 20 years?

**Mrs. Masaki:** No.

**Mr. Masaki:** I would think that the JACL might be loosing it's momentum because there is no pressing subject that has come up. I think like redress, I don't know whether this is going to be

good or bad, but uh, there is not enough enthusiasm behind it. If we should lose out, that is if we don't get monetary compensation on this redress, I think there will be a lot of hope lost by younger JACL'ers. So I just wonder if JACL might be getting weaker because integration of the, in marriage situation, weakens the tie of JACL quite a bit.

**Wayne:** Actually that redress might create some, well it has already created some hard feelings towards the Japanese from various groups. Actually if we do get the money it may create even more problems.

**Mr. Masaki:** That is true, because I noticed an article in the Pacific Citizen about the Filipino talking about the, already about the redress compensation, I noticed that this particular Filipino who wrote quite a bit into the Pacific Citizen is not in favor of the Japanese getting a redress compensation. So therefore, I noticed there is some negative feelings as you say, come up from getting the money.

**Wayne:** Well, thank you very much.

**Mr. Masaki:** Ok.

**[End of Tape two, Counter 0-42]**

**[Interview ends]**