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Interview with
YURI FUKUI
October 19, 1980

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: B. Cecile Mayfield

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OPEN
Yuri K. Fukui
(Signature)
October 19, 1980

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Oral History Collection

Yuri Fukui

Interviewer: Cecile Benson Mayfield

Place of Interview: Irving, Texas

Date: October 19, 1980

Mrs. Mayfield: This is Cecile Benson Mayfield interviewing Yuri Fukui for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 19, 1980, in Irving, Texas. I'm interviewing Mrs. Fukui in order to obtain her recollections concerning the relocation of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

Mrs. Fukui, could you give me some biographical date: your age, birthplace?

Mrs. Fukui: I am now fifty-eight years of age. I was born in 1922 in Oakland, California. Let's see, as far as schooling goes, I finished high school, and I went on to Heald's Business College, which is in Oakland, but I was unable to finish it--details of which you'll get later. Right at the moment, I am a housewife, and I have quite a bit of interest in water-color.

Mrs. Mayfield: And you have children?

Mrs. Fukui: I have children--two of them, both girls. The older one is working at the National Gallery of Art in

Washington, D.C., doing microfiche work. The younger graduated from college this year, and she is presently working for a doctors' associates in Wilmington, Delaware.

Mayfield: Could you tell me something about your early life in California: your childhood and the community you grew up in?

Fukui: Okay. I was raised in Oakland, California. I think we moved around an awful lot in the beginning. I remember this house on Sixth Street very much because this is the house we grew up in. Our neighborhood was pretty much Chinese and Japanese families. There were a few Mexican families on the opposite end. If you went a block or two the other way, there were other Caucasian families. I would say the immediate neighborhood was primarily Asian.

We went to the public schools there, and because of the influx of the immigrants and their children, our classrooms were pretty much a mixture of Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, and Koreans. I don't think I saw a Caucasian in my class until I moved away from Oakland, and that was when I was about ten or eleven years old.

Due to the Depression and my father having lost his job and not having had one for two years, my mother took the initiative and answered an ad in the paper. She went to work as an apprentice of sorts, I guess, for a cleaning man in San Francisco. We stayed there and I

went on through grade school. There, there were more mixtures of just about every nationality you can think of.

From there we moved on to Alameda, California. Alameda was a place where I think the Japanese community was on the opposite end. We did not live in any such community. My mother felt strongly, as we grew older, that it was better to be away from the Japanese community and to learn to grow up as Americans and to be more education-conscious.

I did go to the Sunday School in the center of the Japanese community. It was a Buddhist church. What type of people they were, it's hard to say. They were pretty happy and contained within their own ways of thinking but rather, shall I say, cliquish about outsiders. We were considered outsiders because we came in from the city. It took a long time to make friends with the Nisei group there. I also noticed that there was a division; that is to say, the Nisei who went to the Christian church stayed among themselves, and the Buddhist kids did the same. There were mixtures, sometimes of one thing or another, but on the whole they stuck to their own ways.

My mother at the time felt that it would be better to go to a Christian church than a Buddhist church because

she felt that somehow children who went to the Christian churches seemed to have more incentive, aggressiveness, and would continue their education. Whereas, the Buddhist people seemed to be happy just not caring to strive any more than they have to. They seemed to be happy if they graduated from high school and pursued the jobs their parents had, which were gardening, cooking, waiting on people, and that sort of thing. It doesn't mean that they were not bright. Quite a number of them were outstanding students, but they just didn't particularly care to seek any more advancement for themselves. I don't know if it was the town itself or they just felt that there was no sense in pursuing anything because you don't get jobs anyway.

My mother was very strong that we seek more than what they (my parents) had. We worked very hard going to two schools, that is, the regular school that we had to attend plus one to two-hour sessions attending Japanese school--learning characters, reading literature and history, and in some ways, I guess, to communicate and not to lose the touch and the fact that you are a Japanese descendant.

Mayfield: Your parents were both Issei, were they not?

Fukui: Right, my parents were both Issei. My father was the second son in a family of eight. Being second, you

don't have much of a chance if your family members worked on a farm or lived on a farm or anything to do where you were always bound by space or financial predicaments. My father's oldest brother would eventually inherit everything, and so he decided on his own when he was seventeen years old to seek his own livelihood elsewhere.

He came to this country by way of Mexico. When he was in Mexico, he realized that he couldn't get much of any kind of job because of the language barrier and the lack of training for anything. A few of the women from the church were very kind in teaching him English, grammar, and to communicate. He did mundane types of work, cleaning the chicken coop, work that nowadays you can't think of because they were such lowly labor. It gave him a roof over his head and food. He waited his time out so that he could earn a little bit of money. He wrote to his distant relative who was already in the San Francisco area if he could come on out. His cousin told him that right now there was an awful lot of racial violence; it would be unsafe to come, so wait until you hear from him further. I don't know if it took months or a year, but my father did hear.

So he went to California. How he went out, I really don't know. He got used to the San Francisco area, and then he went down towards the Fresno Valley, the Watsonville

area: anywhere where there happened to be migrant-type working--picking tomatoes, cucumbers, and, perhaps, even grapes. When he managed to have enough money, he moved closer and closer to San Francisco, where he wanted to be.

Let's see, going back to my mother, my mother, too, was a second daughter. She was not particularly interested in getting married right away because she thought she'd like to do a lot of the things the menfolks were able to do. In that particular time, it was pretty impossible to obtain anything she wanted to do. So she made up her mind when she was seventeen--with much pushing from the relatives because she's an old maid--to get married. To get married, she was presented three pictures of men. She was to choose one. She had never seen them or heard of them or anything! She thought that Mr. Kenmotsu, who is my father, would be the one she'd like to be married to. She corresponded with him, and he in turn corresponded with her. Before all this correspondence took place, there were the biashakunin, as they were called--these are the marriage makers.

Then she decided to come to this country. She came here in, I guess, 1920. She said it was a horrible feeling because she left her country and her family to go to a strange land with strange customs and, in addition, to live with a strange man. Somehow, they were able to

adjust pretty well to each other.

My mother worked briefly in a jewelry shop for awhile until the family came. My father at that time worked as a dishwasher or a waiter--I don't know which--at a restaurant in Oakland, California. I had an older brother, but he died very young. Of course, in 1922, I was born.

Mayfield: Can you tell me approximately what you were doing around the time of Pearl Harbor?

Fukui: I was in college at the time of Pearl Harbor. As a matter of fact, I can still see that Sunday. There was a basketball game, and I liked to attend it to support our Alameda Acorns--the boys' basketball group (chuckle). We were sitting there cheering along and so forth, not paying attention to anything, but I noticed in back of the bleachers that there were reverberations. Someone mentioned, "Did you know Pearl Harbor was bombed?" Well, I cared less because what's Pearl Harbor? It didn't occur to me at that time that it would spell out so much happening. Yet I continued to hear one thing or the other, but I would say that most of the kids there listened to it in disbelief. A few said it was pretty serious if that was true because they could come and bomb here--and that was it. I was so intent on watching the game and seeing who won that I didn't particularly care to listen.

As the games were finished and it was time to go

home . . . I had a long walk. I had two-and-a-half miles to walk home from the gymnasium, and it was getting dark. Something made me feel that maybe what they were talking about is quite serious--still not realizing what it all meant!

When I got home my brother was sitting in the corner of the kitchen, saying, "Did you know Pearl Harbor was bombed?" I said, "I heard about it, but I didn't pay any attention, so let's put on the radio and see what it's all about." Of course, my parents said, "No, Japan wouldn't do a thing like that! It's all rumors!" As the night went on, we realized it was true and that things looked pretty bad.

As time went on, at school I would, of course, feel a little sensitive about it because I am an American but I am of Japanese descent. These are things which sometimes you never know which way kids could react. The school was very good. We had a meeting, in case things happen here that could be very unpleasant--these are not the exact words, and I don't remember them--to arouse us to be ready for self-defense and what we should do and shouldn't do. I volunteered. We were all unanimous that I pitch in and so forth and so on, but that was to man the telephone and things like that. Until I was told that because I am what I am, there were certain

areas where I could just not help out at all. I remember the class, and the kids were very upset and said, "Why is she discriminated against? She is just as American as we are, and she is willing to help." Rules were rules, and I bowed out rather than to embarrass the kids more. I just said, "Maybe it's just as well," or I made some kind of poor excuse and got out of it.

I noticed many of my good friends were volunteering to go into the Marines and the Air Force. All of a sudden, it seemed like the classrooms were just completely disrupted. It was a peculiar feeling--sadness, perhaps, and, in a way, frustration, too.

Going to and from college on the bus, you feel a quiet as you get on, like, people are looking you over and wondering without saying anything. A couple of times, there were nasty cracks, but the one I remember who actually stood firm and helped me out was a sailor. He felt that people should just shut up and leave me alone.

Mayfield: This was an incident on the bus?

Fukui: This was an incident on the bus. It was easy to say, "You, Jap, get off of here! You don't belong here! You ought to go back where you came from!" It was very unpleasant. I was used to that because we were meeting that no matter where you go. You can't say much because

you realize it's your parents' country. Yet you know that for them you fear, because what is going to happen? We're Americans so we're okay, but what do you do with parents who could not be naturalized because of the Gentleman's Agreement?

They felt sort of destined, my parents, that we would be separated, and when we are separated, I should remember to contact her relations in case something happened to them. They felt certain that we were Americans, and nothing could happen to us, but they would be (removed). I said, "Oh, no, Mom, that can't be! I don't believe that!" But then again, I said the same thing about Pearl Harbor, and it happened. So I had to be more serious about the whole situation. Night after night, my mother indoctrinated me to memorize--not leave any notes but memorize--her relations and my father's in case they were incapacitated or they died during the years or whatever. They just didn't know the future at all. And that was my job, because I was the oldest.

While going through all this, we noticed that the (cleaning) business started to slow down. It was very difficult to keep it going because people would be afraid to come, although they had been our customers for a long time. It seemed to them, I guess, that they were supporting an enemy. There were a few who came.

I remember this Portuguese man my father used to call "John Cho-Cho." He was not a well-to-do man--he was quite poor. He came at night, after nine o'clock, rapped on the door and said, "Here's some money; you can buy a loaf of bread to eat. I know your business has gone down." He had tears in his eyes. My father is not one to cry or anything, but he was deeply touched. He said, "My goodness, here he is barely able to feed his own kids, and he was thinking about us. But I couldn't take it because I felt we could manage. So I gave him back the money and said, 'your thoughts about us are sufficient.'" There were some, of course, who came just to say hateful things, but we couldn't say anything.

Mayfield: What would you say the attitude of the Japanese-American community was at this time?

Fukui: You know, we lived away from the Japanese community at this time, but once this Pearl Harbor incident started, the tone of everything, even at church, was--shall I say--pretty subdued. The thing was, of course, to have faith and to have the family compactness. Boys would be going off to war, and we must support it and to look at it all "American." I remember that very much.

That was December, and by January things were getting pretty bad. Somewhere along the line here, I think

there were proclamations involving Issei and Nisei that said that all Japanese cannot go beyond a certain limit. The police department called for contraband, and so we all went to the police stations. We didn't have guns or knives, but we had to turn in our hammer, hatchet, flashlights, cameras--anything that looked like it could be dangerous. Our name and number were put on these articles and left at the police station. So we were absolutely helpless if someone came to really be rude!

However, we continued to go ahead with the business. I was quite concerned because how are we going to live and what are we going to do if this business slows down to a stop? There just was no alternative. It was a time to think of many, many things with no hope really as restrictions came about.

We lived in Alameda, which is an island, and there was an airbase on it. The base came after we moved, but that didn't make any difference. We moved there and it was a strategic area, so we had to move out within forty-eight hours.

We told my sister who was in San Francisco going to school to stay there and live with her relatives living there. My brother would stay with my parents. I would move out to another friend in East Oakland so that I could continue to go to college and finish

if I could. I had only three months to go, and a paper. So that I did; I moved out.

At that time I knew my parents had made a telephone call to a Mr. Yuasa and asked for help--if they could move out to that direction. I think that most of the Issei felt that even if they had to move out, the closer they moved away, this could be temporary. It would be less expensive to move back to your former abode again.

My father felt then that if there is a cabin open, as this Mr. Yuasa said, he'll go down there. My mother, father, and my brother took what little possessions they had left. The rest, incidentally, were taken by everybody. It was pathetic. Some of these very aggressive people would come. Some of your things that you know are antiques--five cents a chair! If we got ten dollars out of whatever we owned, I'd be surprised.

So they took off and got down there. Mr. Yuasa met them and said, "My boss said no Japs allowed. You can't stay here. In fact, I have to move out, too. Even if the cabins are empty, he will not have anyone staying here, or he's going to shoot!"

So my parents had no choice; they had to go somewhere. So they went up and down, looking for a place to stay. They just couldn't find anything because those who had

to move out from the strategic areas in forty-eight hours already got a place. My folks unfortunately were ousted, so they had no place to go.

They came back up near the Alameda area. They knew a friend out in Mount Eden. It's a farming community. They asked if they could stay there. The man said, "No, because we have no place." My mother actually begged; she didn't care if it was a barn. Well, they got a barn, and they stayed there.

Meanwhile, I didn't know where they were. I couldn't study anymore because I was concerned about their not reaching their destination and not knowing where they went to. My studies started to go downhill. I stayed, I think, two more weeks. When I heard that my parents were relocated in Mount Eden, I got in touch with them.

I saw the hovel they were living in! I could not believe it! There were rats scampering all over the dirt floor--no water, no anything. It was just really a shed, lean-to of-a-barn that they were living in. But they felt at least they could stay there until they could find a more permanent abode.

I felt that this is a time that a family had to be close. I quit school and talked it over with the director. He said that I should be able to come back and finish if I so desired, but he could not possibly do it by

correspondence because I was so close to finishing. So we said our goodbyes, and I left for Mount Eden. I got a ride by hook or crook and got there.

My parents stayed there from February until May (1942). It was kind of rough for them. My sister, too, decided that rather than worrying about what's going to happen, it's better to come home. The five of us stayed there. There were nights when the room my sister and I shared . . . I swear there were two hundred mice on our bed. It was just awful!

There was a Filipino farm hand on the opposite end. He would occasionally have a feast with his friends. As you know the Japanese attacked the Philippines, too, and they were pretty nasty to the Philippine people. Well, these people, I don't know whether they had intentions to scare us or what, but they decided to do a lot of barbecuing and such of pigs that they skewered from head to whatever right over a spit, right in front of us! They taunted us such that my sister and I were petrified of what they would do.

It wasn't easy--those months that we were away. Oh, golly! There was always fear, not knowing and not being able to do anything about it. That's the sad part. We weren't hurt, though. It was just the fear that we had within ourselves because of the unknown and the fact that

the noose, so to speak, is closing in on us.

By then, I guess, from twenty-five miles, it became a ten-mile radius. So we brought what we could and decided to save the money that we had left. Then orders started to come through that we will be put into an assembly center. (Tape turned off)

Mayfield: You were just ready to tell me about your move into the assembly center. This is around May?

Fukui: A little earlier than May. Notices came about that Japanese and their descendants would be moved into some kind of center. Before this became official, the news went around that was horrendous. They said that men and women would be separated. Anyhow, when it became official, we knew that there would be many centers that we would be sent to.

Ours turned out to be Tanforan Assembly Center, which is located in San Bruno, California. The date was set. I think a few busloads went, maybe in a day's time--I don't remember. We had to collect a suitcase for each member of the family, a blanket, a fork, spoon, and knife, cup and a plate, all of enamel, to take with us and clothing just enough for two weeks, that is, change of clothing. Let's see, I think that was it.

I remember going into town to shop for just exactly the kind of thing we thought we would be using or needing.

We got everything together. Whatever little belongings we had, we left it behind. The man we rented that barn from also had an owner. He was of German descent and well into the eighties. He said he would store all of our stuff in his barn and would keep it in good faith. I think he meant it, and he did. That man, I remember, was in tears because he said that he'll never see us again because he's too old. He was sorry that this kind of thing happened, and he was hopeful that we'd come back soon.

We gathered everything together, and our bus time came. We took off from somewhere--I can't remember; it was not Mount Eden--but perhaps it was Hayward. A big bus came, and a number of us got on it, and we took that ride across the bridge and so forth down to San Bruno.

I remember reminiscing in the bus that I just can't believe this is happening. We will be leaving all our stomping grounds, and it will be a long, long time before we get to come back again. To think that we have to go to a center with all the mixtures of Japanese-Americans when I've been so used to growing up with a lot of Caucasian friends. So it was a time to reminisce an awful lot--that short ride to our destination.

When we got there, I couldn't believe the sight that greeted me: barbed wire fences all around, soldiers with

bayonets, and a sort of stall set up in the front where you have to all go through before you could be assigned to your barracks. There were a lot of people already there. Some of them we knew, and quite a number we didn't know.

Going back a bit, I remember before going to camp, we had to get typhoid fever shots. Of course, we got deathly sick from the effects of the shots. Once in, they gave you a number of other shots and a sort of a cursory physical exam. Then they gave you your own number plus the family number. Then you were assigned your barracks. I think ours was forty-four or something like that. It took so long to process that. Then they had to check all your baggage to make sure you didn't carry anything dangerous.

Mayfield: Do you remember your number? Your citizen number?

Fukui: Oh, yes, I know it was barracks forty-four, and I was 21480. I do not remember my family number.

Then we proceeded through tall grasses, and I noticed that in back of us there were a lot of dirty-looking horse stalls. People came in and out of those. There was a huge racetrack in the center. People seemed pretty happy and gay and had sort of a devil-may-care attitude. Well, we were toward the north side and could see the San Bruno Mountains outside, way up there. And I thought, "Well, at least we're going into a better section."

Our barracks were recently built and very much like army barracks. It smelled of clean wood. It was just one room for the five of us who will have to sleep in it. It was empty, and the studs were exposed. There was nothing covered, but it gave you a ledge to put things on (chuckle).

Mayfield: About how big a room was it?

Fukui: I would say that perhaps it was 14-by-27 or 23. Of course, with my imagination I might find it was bigger-looking. I remember there was nothing in there at all other than the belongings we brought in.

We were told that we'd get our frame for the bed, but we'd have to make our own mattress. I said, "How do you make your own mattress?" "Well, you have to go out into the field out there where there is a bunch of straw. We'll give you the cloth covering." So my father and my brother went out there to stuff straw into the cotton--whatever you call it--covering, I guess. They lugged five of them home. Then my mother sewed up the ends, and we placed them on the cot, and that was to be our bed. Pillow, we did not have. We had to round out whatever possessions we had inside of something and use it as a pillow. Whether we got a pillow later on or not, I don't remember.

Then we realized that we hadn't eaten a thing since

the night before. My sister and I went out to the main building where there were hundreds of people waiting in line to get food. By the time we got in--people would cut in and so forth--the line became longer, and we were way back again. By the time I got there, there was just a rotten old apple; I mean, it was a bruised apple, and that was all we had. I took the apple and brought it home, thinking, "How am I going to divide that into five for dinner?" They just weren't set up to feed all of us at that time. You had to go to the main dining room, and there were always people who didn't consider others even in a camp like that. If they're hungry enough or they felt like taking the whole thing, they didn't think of us who were way back and didn't get the chance to have our share.

So I decided, "To heck with all this! I'm not even going to bother to go and eat." I was very angry! I was angry because I couldn't finish college! I was angry because we were displaced! I was angry because even among your own people, they seemed so selfish--and to be locked up with them! I just could not see that kind of living and be sane about it. I decided I would sit home and mope. I really did. I was provoked about being chained to a situation that I had nothing to do with. I started to write. I kept up, however, my schooling the

best I could.

I did something I got scolded for, but I haven't been sorry. Instead of carrying most of the clothes, like I should have, I snuck in my photo album of the whole family, in case we got separated. When it came to clothing, we did exactly what those instructions told us to do--a number of us did--but there were some who came in truckloads, and they lived like kings and queens in their barracks. We didn't; we really lived with the bare necessities because we were so honest, I guess.

Then in a day or two, bit by bit, they were beginning to announce that we would have to help ourselves or else this assembly center won't run. They were designating jobs and openings. The professionals were getting nineteen dollars a month, and these included doctors, dentists, optometrists--any professional individual. The median range, sixteen dollars, would be the semiprofessionals or what the felt that you deserved. The regular jobs, like being a waitress, server, or running around dispatching things would be nine dollars a month. That was set.

I decided that I didn't want any of that (chuckle). I stayed in the barracks and stayed to myself, trying to reason things out. My sister, however, went immediately out and grabbed a job as a waitress and worked in Mess Ten, which was our designated eating area.

Oh, I guess it took me a little while, but I, too, decided to go out to work. I started as a waitress, too, because all the other sixteen-dollar-a-month jobs were taken. It was very nice. It kept you busy. You met people and you worked hard because you were really helping the people within--keeping their morale up. That's what I did while staying in Tanforan.

Gradually, I got so used to it that it wasn't bad at all. In fact, it was quite a contrast from living in the barn. That barracks really looked comfortable and great, though empty. There were no rats and other things that you just don't like to live with.

These barracks, however, had no ceilings. There were five rooms. The two ends were rooms to accomodate five people. The one in the middle, I think, was for four people. The "sandwiched" ones were for couples or something like that. You could hear everybody. If somebody snored, you could hear everybody. If they had a fight, you could hear them. Naturally, we tended to keep our voices low because it just didn't seem right to have everybody else know what you're doing or what you're saying. There was no privacy, for sure.

Of course, bathing was a factor. It wasn't easy to go out into the open and just do your personals or whatever you had to do. It took me quite awhile to adjust to that,

but you do adjust. I guess it's just like anyone going into the army and going through the green period (chuckle) of getting adjusted to no privacy and everybody doing their own thing wherever, whatever.

Mayfield: Did you have showers or bathtubs--for the women?

Fukui: Yes, fortunately, they were separated that way. The "johns" were back-to-back. Some had doors and some did not. It was pretty open. The "johns" were in one section, and the bathing and washing areas were in another section. The showers were such as a big round disk on the top. You pulled a chain and the water flooded out right on top of you in full force--usually cold. Sometimes it ran out. Also, there was a trough in the same area where you could wash your own dishes as you came back from the mess hall. What I learned to do to have that privacy was to get up at 3:30 in the morning. I'd take a cold shower (chuckle) because there was no warm water, brush my teeth or whatever else, and I'd be ready for the day.

My sister and I felt that it was a good thing that we worked in the mess hall because, when there were leftovers or if there was something that might be good, we'd always have something to take home to my brother and my parents. It made life a little easier as we adjusted to this kind of living and started to make friends.

We were all in the same boat, and we did the best we could.

They had community activities--all kinds. In a way it was like having a weekend every single day--as they established and set up the movie theaters, the dances, and even a temporary library where you could go and listen to symphonies and that type of enjoyable moment. This is where I met George. He was also in the same area and was working in the kitchen like I was. We became quite good friends.

Tanforan was going great--if anyone had taken pictures of the Japanese gardens and many of the things they made by hand! They couldn't really have much of anything else. It was amazing: the talent that just came out from Issei and Nisei--mostly Issei, I would say. We would go out to look at all of these things. They'd have contests sometimes: who had the best front yard or the back yard or whatever. Everybody was out there to better really everything within their allowances.

Then they set up canteens where one could finally purchase candy bars and a few extra luxuries that we just didn't have until they opened such up. Of course, we realized the war was on. We certainly would be the last to get any kind of luxury. But that we did get some of. We had to buy it, of course, with the money that we earned

because we were not given it.

Then either Sears, Roebuck or Montgomery Ward donated clothing. I don't know where they picked the clothing out, but at any rate we did get something extra to wear. We were told to pick clothing just for two weeks, and that was no two weeks! So we had to start to look to catalogs or anything so we'd have a little bit more clothes to wear.

We left Tanforan in September (1942). Now there the rumor started that was pretty rampant: that was that things were so bad outside that it's a good possibility that we would definitely be separated--the Issei from the Nisei, men from women, too. They were talking about that men would be castrated and the women would be sterilized. It's amazing. I don't know who starts the rumor, but when it becomes a rumor, you feel it's got to have a foundation where it starts. You do have fear. "Could they possibly go that far?" You really just don't know.

Mayfield: Did you ever have an opportunity to get news from the outside? Did you have newspapers and things like that?

Fukui: No, in fact it's funny. Once we got put away, no one really came to see us. The saddest thing, I felt, was the mixed marriages. Some of them volunteered to go in with the family. Those who didn't were on the outside.

What I really feel very badly about were the animals.

Many had to be put to death because they couldn't bring them into camp. Many of them gave them to other people and things like that. There were beautiful dogs. I think that for the rest of my life I'll always think about that. There just weren't any places that one could keep these dogs. They felt that rather than the dog being left here and there and not knowing, or possibly killed by a car, many of them just put them to death.

We ourselves had cats. I can still sometimes think about it. We left a sack with food in it and just left the cat out there. I could see it come running toward the bus, not wanting to be left behind. Sure, you cry, but you turn your face away and just hope for the best-- that somebody will be kind to the animals. The other three, we gave away. They were prettier cats, but the one we kept to the very last was not. Still, it was a living creature. My mother said she just couldn't possibly wring its neck and kill it. We just left the food and hoped that being out on the farm, it could survive.

Getting back to the dogs and cats of other people, it was, I know, a very, very, sad thing. Some of the people who were on the outside would bring the animals, and there were really tearful partings. It was kind of hard.

Mayfield: And once inside Tanforan, you were never allowed out again?

Fukui: No, you were not allowed out--even if somebody died! I think there were a few exceptions. For serious illness, I think they were taken out to whatever hospital it was--very, very limited. When you were in the assembly center, you were contained within, and unless you had a signed and countersigned order and everything else, you couldn't get out. Most of us, though, didn't have anything pressing where we had to be out. We just never fought it. At least, we in my family did not; we had no occasion to.

We stayed there until we left for Topaz, Utah. By then there were ten relocation centers assembled, and we were designated to go there. A few of the people volunteered to go ahead to clean up and set things up so that it wouldn't be such a hardship. It was going to be quite different from the assembly center.

We were kind of sad to give up Tanforan Assembly Center because it seemed like--what shall I say--everyday might be the last day. You enjoyed it to the hilt. That's the way it was spent.

We left by train for Delta, Utah. I remember stopping in Salt Lake City once. Then getting on down to Delta, we stopped there. Then we took the bus from Delta to Topaz. That was the dustiest ride we ever had. The dust was alkaline, and it just sifts right through everything.

When we got there, I was amazed at the row of barracks-- much better made than the ones we lived in in Tanforan. But it looked so cold. Here again, there were barbed wire fences with towers on all four corners, and, of course, with guards again. I don't know if they had bayonets or not, but they certainly had rifles.

Mayfield: What were you allowed to take with you?

Fukui: By then, we took whatever we had. We had then accumulated a few more things but still enough that each of us could carry our own, though--maybe a duffle bag or something like that per person.

When we got there, I don't think we went through any physical or anything else like that. We were just assigned the room, shall I say, that we were to be in. Then a guide took us because there were at that time, I think, forty-two barracks. They were just spread out. We were in 612 B. There were so many rows of barracks and an eating area where the seatings were all pretty much arranged. Across from the eating area was a contained bathroom area, wash area. They actually had two bathtubs, I think that was it. It was certainly made more on a permanent basis. We did have more winter in Utah, too, so they were prepared for it.

Mayfield: When you checked in, did they inspect your luggage again or put you through any kind of processing at all?

Fukui: No, I don't think they did this time. They just assumed that we were okay. You know, it's funny but I just don't remember that part. I do remember that there was a Boy Scout band playing there to greet us. I remember they were covered with dust to the point where I wondered if we were going to look like that all the time! "Oh, my gosh, this is going to be terrible!" I wasn't too happy with Topaz because I realized the atmosphere was different, and the people I had gotten to know would be dispersed in all directions.

Anyway, we got into our room. It was finished off, at least. We had a sliding glass window, a potbellied stove with a coal bin on the outside, which they would fill for you so that you could warm up the inside of the house and so on, and a closet space. I would say it must have been about twenty-four inches wide, but we didn't have much, anyway, so that was enough.

Here everything was laid out in advance. The dining area and the food was set up so we didn't have to go through the hunger stages like we did in Tanforan. Everybody just seemed to have known the routine or had gotten used to it--very orderly--and we had no problems. It was just getting down to routine, but knowing that we might be there for a long, long time.

When we got to Topaz, it was much better organized

in all ways. They had jobs set up already. This time, instead of getting the salaries that we received in Tanforan, I think they upped it. I have to retract what I said at Tanforan; I think that might have been a little lower. Let me check that out. I do know that in Topaz, the salaries were hiked up just a little bit more. Instead, anyone having a good high school education and having gone to college were given better jobs. The waitresses and that sort of thing were people who had no training and didn't mind taking it. Because of my business background, they said I could work with the mimeograph machine.

Since they didn't have a place set off, the post office, the mimeographing, the typewriters and a repairman were all in the same room in the barracks. It was fun because, if I didn't have enough work to do, I could help out with the post office. Eventually, they gave me a room, and I headed the mimeographing department, which gave me a supervisor's pay which was almost equivalent to a doctor's pay--simply because of my becoming supervisor.

Mayfield: Do you remember how much it was?

Fukui: I think it was nineteen dollars. It was fun because I took care of everything: the news . . . any kind of written thing that came out we were responsible for it--little excerpts, advertisements. It had to be thought out and planned differently.

Mayfield: Was this news that the evacuees got together--camp news, that sort of thing?

Fukui: That's right. Different barrack areas would have news; whereas in Tanforan, I don't know who took care of that. There must have been one, too, but I do not know because I was not in that area. I tended to stay within our own area because there was enough work to be done there.

Mayfield: Did it have a name--like a newspaper--or was it more a bulletin?

Fukui: Well, it was bulletins like the type of things that schools would put out. We didn't have anything fancier than the mimeograph machine, and there was just the one, and it was running full capacity at almost all times. It was typed by "whoever," and the stencils were given to me, which I ran, and some of the girls stapled them. They were ready for whoever came to claim them.

Then I got bored with this mimeographing and just setting up, even though there was a lot of responsibility involved in it. I wanted to go back into stenography. So I thought I'd like to work with Miss Toftee and another fellow--I can't remember his name. He was, I think, in the army. She was a government worker. Frank Touhy . . . now it comes to me (chuckle).

I did take an awful lot. Then they realized that I liked to keep on doing things. So when the time came that

photographs had to be taken of individuals which were affixed to the War Relocation Authority card, I was responsible for it. My work was varied, responsible, and it was loads of fun. Actually, I received less money to do stenography work. I maybe should have stayed on getting the higher pay, but to me it was more important to get the experience which I wanted. I just felt that I had nowhere else to go with the mimeographing. I'm glad because that branched me out into more different people. Even within the camp, there were an awful lot of people. I'm sure there were twelve hundred or so. Topaz was a pretty big center.

Mayfield: What kind of treatment did you get from your working with the WRA people?

Fukui: Very nice. I had no problems with any of them. You know, they were very dedicated; they almost seemed to have the Quaker instinct, although they were not. Everyone that I worked with was very nice--helpful and very dedicated. They did their best to stimulate you so that somehow you might be able to use it later on, although that "later on" part was not in the workings then.

Mayfield: You began to feel hopeful, then, as you adjusted to Topaz?

Fukui: At least that I was using what I ought to be using instead of just slinging hash, so to speak. It was much more fun.

They also tried to stimulate you to do a little bit more and how to react to a lot of things, too. At least I found it so with Miss Atwater. She was great. I think she was one of the few women that I worked for who was one of the easiest to work with. Toffee was okay, too, but she was a little bit harder to work with because she was more fussy. All in all, though, I have no complaints about those people that I worked with--the names that I have mentioned--because they were very, very good to me and to most of us who were there, too, in this particular group. This was called the "Leave Office."

I feel as though I have skipped quite a span here. Anyway, by the time we settled down and things seemed pretty smooth, along comes Lee Tracy, the movie star--he was in a high capacity in the army--to recruit volunteers for the United States Army. There was a big "to-do" about that, and I could see both sides. Quite a number volunteered; of course, quite a number were killed.

Mayfield: Does this have to do with the registration order when questions 27 and 28 caused so much dissension?

Fukui: Right, right. That comes into it, too. It took me awhile to answer it, too, because I felt strongly that it just was not a fair reason. You couldn't voice it at that time, but I felt that it was unfair to be pushed

around into a concentration camp. We were tried without really being guilty! I don't think any other group has ever gotten this. I just felt in this day and age . . . two or three hundred years back, I could see things not going our way, but when it's now, I just felt that I can't possibly want to answer that "yes"--either question 27 or 28. I worked on it and worked on it and felt, "Gee, if our boys are going and dying, then they've been able to give up and think this is the only way." I have to say they were really quite foresighted in many ways. So I talked it over with my parents. My parents were really not sure quite how they felt about it; they felt they can't go to the extremes like some of the other people did--becoming violent about it. Finally, we just came to the resolution that we should put "yes"--the whole family--and that is what we did.

Somewhere along the line they were looking for volunteers--you wouldn't get paid extra for this at all--who speak Japanese to sift out those the government felt may be unpatriotic. There was a lot of problem on that. Lots of the people faked it, saying, "no," they don't know Japanese.

How they got wind of me, I don't know. Working in the Leave Office, they talked to me, and I said, "Yes, I do know it, but I don't think I want to do that. What

right have I got to separate people?" They said, "Well, would you do it for us because we need somebody?" I thought about it. I went home and talked to my parents, and my parents said "No! The Caucasians don't understand the platform of some of these people. They don't understand, if the kids vote 'no,' the reasons for it." Quite a number of the kids who said "no" did so because of their parents. There is a saying we always go by--I go by it still--it is oyakoko, meaning to do the best that you can for your parents. It is your responsibility. It is a very strong feeling, and I knew exactly what my mother meant. Yet I thought I could be of help this way. Maybe I could make them understand what this means when there is that kind of a leaning.

So I did. There were some that really were rabble-rousers. I talked with them first and laid it all out. Still they felt, no, they couldn't do it.

Mayfield: These were the people who had definitely signed "no."

Fukui: Yes, that's right, and they were going to Tule Lake, where the disloyal people would be placed. In other words, these people were being brought out to make it so that we could eventually become released as we got cleared.

Mayfield: Were they mostly young people you saw that had said "no?"

Fukui: Quite a number. Some did it because they felt Japan would win. Some, because they felt this country gave us a rotten

deal, anyhow, said, "Why should I have to do anything about it? I am going back." There were a few who felt they wanted to be here because it's their country, but their parents are old, and the parents want to go back, and they felt, "I can't let them go back alone." Some were the only son, and they felt that somebody would have to take care of them, so they'd have to go. Well, you can't call that disloyal!

Finally, I came across this one boy I grew up with. I knew he was a very sensitive, quiet boy. His parents, however, were quite old. He, of course, signed "no," hoping that even though they signed "no," that they could switch them so they wouldn't have to be sent off there. He said his parents wanted to go back to Japan, and he was the only child, so he had to go. No matter what I said to him or how I said it to him, he could not say "yes." I tried to explain this to the leave officers, his reasons for this, that he was not disloyal. (They said), "It has to be answered 'yes' or 'no.' There is no in-between." I said, "Couldn't you in his case say these are his reasons?" They said, "It wouldn't stand up."

I got so provoked because I could not help this boy. I quit. I said, "I'm sorry. It just goes against my grain. I want to help people and straighten them out. Here I have to draw a line because I don't think there's

a full understanding of that term that most of us were brought up with." They said, "Well, you have it. Why can't you?" I said, "My parents aren't interested in going back to Japan, but if they were and if they had no one to take care of them, and I'm the only one, then I would have to because that's my duty--to see that my parents are taken care of." I said, "Fortunately, my parents are not going back. We plan to stick it out here for as long as we can." So that was it. I quit.

In due time, I decided that maybe it's high time I think about going out, too. So I applied for leave clearance. I think it was in May. They said I could go. When you are put behind a fence for such a long, long time, and for reasons that are kind of scary, you wonder how it's going to be outside.

First, even if you get your leave clearance--I've forgotten what group it was, but I believe it was the employment agency--they would ask you, "Where are you going?" We couldn't go beyond Cleveland even then, unless you had an exceptional clearance. So I said, "Chicago." My sister was already there. I thought somewhere there would be fine. They said, "Fine, there's a hostel there run by Quakers. You can stay there two weeks, and within that time you have to find a job and a place to live."

At that time, I thought, "Two weeks, that's easy,"

although I wasn't too sure, either, because I have never worked, really, outside of my family's business--not for anyone else. I wasn't confident about the fact that I might be able to find something on my own--in a strange place yet. But I decided I'd leave, and I left, I think, in August, 1943 for Chicago.

Before doing so, my mother felt I should go with someone, so I took another friend who also wanted to go. Together we left for Chicago. It was our first experience in seeing that drab, dirty water, which I couldn't believe were rivers, because I was so used to seeing the clear, clean blue of the Pacific and the lakes around Tahoe. I really thought, "My golly, where are we going to? It's so dirty-looking out this way!"

We got there, and I assumed that someone was going to pick us up at the station. Nobody came. I called the hostel and was told to take the taxi or whatever and get to such-and-such Beldon. We got our luggage together, and my girlfriend and I got to Beldon.

We realized that the boys were downstairs, and the girls were upstairs. There were charts where each person must help each day, whatever it happens to be. It was pretty much run by most of us who came in.

We got the run-down from the people who ran it--Bob Fort and his wife. They were quite young then. I would

say they were in their late twenties. They pretty much told us what to expect, where to go, when to be home, because dinner would be about then. We paid a dollar a day.

When we left Topaz, we did get some money. I can't remember what it was, though, but it wasn't too much.

We went to the employment agency. Of course, they would send us out to an awful lot of places. Most of them paid between eighty and a hundred dollars a month. Of course, in those days, I guess that wasn't too bad, but eighty dollars was kind of low. We couldn't live on it. I found one for \$125 a month, and I decided I'd go and look at it. It was way, way out in the trucking area--a place called Glider Trailer Company. I worked there for about a year as a receptionist and then eventually handling the trailers that go from city to city and keeping tabs on the men as they delivered and so forth. It was sort of a bookkeeping-type of job. It was fun.

Mayfield: What kind of a reaction did you find, once you'd left Topaz, to you or your situation? Did you find sympathy or any resentment from Caucasians?

Fukui: We were told not to talk about it! We were told not to talk about camp life or where you came from and not to use any army talk, like, calling a bathroom or toilet the "latrine." It was not to be done!

Mayfield: You were told that by the WRA officials?

Fukui: Right! Right! We just didn't say too much. If they asked me, of course, I didn't lie. I would say where we were from. There weren't too many people who looked at you cock-eyed like we faced in California. They seemed to mind their own business. Some of them would say, "It's a damn shame that you were caught, and you're Americans, too!" The reception was different.

In California, they said, "Well, they all ought to be sent back. We don't want them here. I don't know why in the heck we have to have them here in the first place. They're no good."

No, I didn't meet anything like that. It was easy and people minded their own business. I had no trouble going into any restaurants. People didn't look at us like we were crazy, and they served you and whatever. We went to theaters and mixed with anyone who happened to be in the crowd--there were a lot of soldiers. I never felt out of place. We were able to find apartments. It's funny. Here we are, being put behind for what our parents are, and yet when we'd look for things, they say, "I'd rather have you as a roomer because I know that Japanese people are so polite, so honest, and so clean." You know the, the . . .

Mayfield: The irony?

Fukui: The irony of it all! Honestly! (Laughter) They would say, "We prefer you over some of the others because we know that you're honest. We don't feel that there'll be trouble here."

Usually, you found that the German descent people-- the Polish, the Slavic people--were quite open to us. Those who were second generation of their country seemed to understand the situation we were in and were very good about it.

Mayfield: I am going to take you back to Topaz for a minute. Could you describe the medical care you received or the facilities they had available for you?

Fukui: Sure! Oh, dear, it was sort of a slipshod setup, even at Topaz. The doctors were good, but they didn't have the equipment and updated things.

Mayfield: They had a hospital building, didn't they?

Fukui: Yes, they eventually did. Until then, gosh, births were performed in the washroom. The women had nothing given them--nothing whatsoever, no matter what kind of a birth it was. It was awfully rough on some of those women who had problems.

Mayfield: They weren't allowed out of Topaz for any reason?

Fukui: Oh, no! Everything was performed and done within the compound. I do recall some people who did lose babies and who felt they wouldn't have if they had had the

proper care--more updated care. I don't remember too much about the medical part because I was young and didn't require much of anything.

I did, though, volunteer to have a physical exam before I left because I wanted to make sure I didn't catch TB or something like that. There was a closeness of so many people, some of whom you didn't know what they had, although I'm sure they were carefully checked. It was just the idea of it. For me it was adequate.

I never had my teeth cleaned. I don't know if there was a dentist. He might have looked at them if you had problems, but I do know they weren't keen on having your teeth cleaned every six months or anything like that. I was not aware of it. Consequently, when I got out of the centers, I had twenty-four cavities! It took me about a year to have them all filled, fixed, what-have-you. But the hospital was much more adequate at Topaz than it was at Tanforan. They had a little bit more.

Then, too, there was a Caucasian administrator at the head. I don't know his name anymore. I remembered it at one time. The reason why I recalled this (man) is because in April, 1943, an old gentleman who was deaf went to walk his dog. By the way in Topaz you could bring your animals if you did have them.

Some, of course, did recall their animals, but not all did.

Mayfield: Would this be James Wakasa?

Fukui: Yes, that's right. See, that's another thing I wanted to give you. I have his funeral program. He was shot in the back. He didn't hear the call because he was deaf! Dr. Goto, in the autopsy, said he was shot in the back. He was told to hush it! It'd be altered a bit. I think he stood firm on it. There was a big "to-do" about it. I admired him for his having the courage of his conviction. He did whatever he had to do. He was not looked upon, shall I say, by the administrator as behaving the way he should.

Meanwhile, there was a big "to-do" because the people didn't like this administrator. He was taken out by the WRA and replaced by someone else. Also, he did a lot of politicking.

This gentleman's funeral was an unusual one. I think the whole community was in an uproar--saddened--because he had to be shot. Evidently, he was a very, very nice person--a type of man who would not hurt anyone. He was elderly, too. You couldn't buy flowers. No one could afford them. Somehow, someone got the mothers together, and they made flowers from paper. Some of the funeral standing-wreaths and so forth were just gorgeous! I have never seen anything like it! There were hundreds

of flowers in his memory. I did attend. It was all in Japanese. I felt that all of us should be there in this case. It was done without much fanfare.

When it was finished, they decided not to have soldiers with guns on the tower anymore. Then they took the barbed wire fences down, and eventually it got so that we could walk out, as long as we came back before sundown. You know, you could get lost because Topaz was out in the desert area. By that time, by army truck we could go out to certain areas and have picnics and things like that.

Here again, the people, because it was a more permanent place, could send for a hammer, a saw, and that sort of thing from their friends, original home, or a catalog. They did marvelous creative work--furniture, you name it. They used to go wandering around the desert, looking for tumbleweeds or anything they could find and make something of it. I think there is a book out on that. It came out in the 1950's--all the art work of the relocation centers. It was almost a race as to who could outdo who in creative work. It opened up an awful lot of areas for those who remained. Of course, I don't know anything after August because I was out.

My parents stayed on until the center was ready to close. My brother, of course, was inducted into the army,

so he was gone. My folks left for Chicago in 1945, I believe. Of course, by that time, I wasn't in Chicago. I lived in Chicago only between (August) 1943 and September, 1944. I got married and George and I stayed on in the East.

Looking back on the camp days, I guess I went into it very bitter because I was just at the crest of really attaining the many things that could become useful tools for me. Our parents, too, were just reaching the plateau where they could finally buy a home. The fact is that we had moved so often, and each time you move you lose something. I just felt that did it! It was very upsetting to me!

In a way you gain something that no one else can possess. I don't know what that something is; I can't explain it. But it is an experience. In some ways, perhaps, it was good. It makes you become more tolerant. I hope that it doesn't have to happen to anyone else--be they black, white, brown, or whatever. It's not a good thing.

In the long run, I feel that in displacing people like that--perhaps participating in the war, if you were a soldier or sailor, also--life seemed to be shortened. I don't know if it was stress or what, but looking at things now, I find that Nisei are dying off faster--much faster--

than the Issei. Yes, there were many younger Issei dying, but there's a lot living into their eighties and nineties. I find that among George's and my friends, a number have already gone. They have gone in their thirties, forties, fifties. It's not any real fact, really, but the way I look at it, does it have something to do with it? I really don't know.

Mayfield: Although this isn't on the same point, there has been a good deal written about the Issei-Nisei conflicts during this period. I wonder if you noticed any of that conflict between the two generations during your time in the relocation centers?

Fukui: I don't know about other families. Perhaps there were because I could hear some families fighting, but over what, I don't remember anymore. In our family I think I had my rebellious stage when I was sixteen, so that was before camp days. Because of the fear and the thought that we have to stick it out together the best we could, and the discipline I have received from my parents, I don't think I have had that much conflict.

Mayfield: Then maybe it drew your family closer together?

Fukui: Yes. I had fears, and I was hoping for the best: that my parents would survive and that everybody would be okay. In other words, I wanted to do what would keep my parents happiest and still retain my own individual ways. It wasn't

easy, but I felt that was the best way. Had I stayed on in camp, it might have been different.

Mayfield: I thought perhaps, from some of the things I've read, that the Nisei were somewhat impatient. Some were bitter. And the attitude was that the Issei were counseling more of a resignation, more of a patience, toward the relocation move.

Fukui: Yes. In fact, there is one word, and I use it a lot, too. It's shigata ga nai--"it can't be helped." They took that attitude. It's kind of hard when you look at it. Some Issei have done very well, especially those who have returned to California. Now again, there's my bitter feeling. I've been kicked out once; I'll be damned if I'll go back for a second kick!

It took me until 1969 to put foot in California. I refused to go because of the unhappiness I experienced. Once there I realized how much things have changed. Whatever I held in my mind, it did not exist anymore. Whoever you knew was scattered to the winds. They're not all there; they're everywhere. Everything, the skyline, really looked good to me.

I feel that most of the Issei came because of an economic situation in Japan. Surely, a number came from poor families where it was really dawn to dusk and maybe longer work--backbreaking work. They came here

looking for the opportunities. Most of them were picture-bride people. I'm sure some were stuck with terribly cruel men and ne'er-do-wells. My parents, at least, got along quite well together. Oh, they had their problems, too, at one time or the other. Yet they survived and gave us a fairly good life. At least they thought education was the only way to pull yourself out and up.

Mayfield: Did you see any evidence of that attitude continuing at Topaz in the schools?

Fukui: Yes, some of the schools had government-sponsored teachers. Quite a number of them were picked among the Nisei--those who might have been qualified to be teachers--and certainly there were Nisei aides. There was a high school. George's younger sister graduated from Topaz High School. I don't know if their lessons were up to par, but I'm sure they couldn't be too far down either. The kids as a whole were pretty bright.

There is a stimulus to study because you don't want to be the dodo. That's pretty much the way most Nisei grew up. I cannot vouch for the Sansei; that part I do not know. But it was the parents constantly saying, "Don't put shame to yourself. It's bad enough to be called a Jap. You have to be better. If a Caucasian gets ten dollars an hour, for you to get that ten dollars

an hour, you have to be able to do twice as well, or you won't be recognized." This is the way we were brought up, and we tried to be better without being aggressive.

If you go back to the Buddhists and the Christians, even to this day, I would say the Christian people are more aggressive. Buddhists, I think, are sort of on the wane; it's coming to that point. Their way of thinking is, "You don't have to stick to it if you don't want to." I mean, that's the impression that is made. I don't know. That sounds sort of sticky, right there (laughter).

Mayfield: I wanted to ask you, before we leave Topaz, do you remember the council or government with the block representatives? Did you go to any of those meetings?

Fukui: No, I didn't with the exception of a few times where it involved us, like, the question 27 and 28 and the volunteering of boys into service and something in regard to how it would affect us. Those things we did go to but not too many. There were block managers, but we tried sometimes to work around him and not bother him. Sometimes it could be resolved without it being brought up on the board. I must say on the whole, sure, there were ups and downs, and there was bickering and so forth, but people managed pretty well on the whole. I can't think of anything else right at the moment to add to Topaz.

Mayfield: Did you see any crime or perhaps juvenile delinquency

during your camp time?

Fukui: No. You know, it's funny. I think the Chinese also do this and may still in some families. As a whole, to do anything like stealing or whatever else is bringing shame to the family name. They sort of just didn't do that sort of thing. There were some who were out and out "fast"--I'll leave that to your imagination. At that time, when they said "fast," they meant out of the ordinary. Very few people did that sort of thing. At Tanforan, I don't think there was any crime. There was no liquor on the premises--the same in Topaz. There might have been some fights.

Yes, in regard to answers (to questions 27 and 28) there were problems. For translators, they threw vile bombs at your window and that sort of thing. It could have been bad. My mother wouldn't let me sleep near the window for fear that if they knew what I did, I would be a target for it because I was helping the U.S. government, which was not true! I was just trying to iron out the differences between a person and his responsibility and for the government to understand why he's doing what he is. I could not judge; I refused to do that!

Mayfield: There was a good deal of confusion over those questions. Also, I recall that if the Issei, who were designated enemy aliens, had answered "yes" to question 27, they

would have been essentially without a country, since they would have had to have given up their Japanese rights as well.

Fukui: Yes, that's right! You know it's funny. I don't think that came up much because to them they wanted to be with their children. That's more important. Because they're raised here, they stay here. Maybe some did think about the facet that they'd lose everything. I'm sure they did.

Mayfield: Then the only misunderstandings you were dealing with were those explaining why a young person had answered "no"?

Fukui: Yes, because it was his duty to his parents. It's something you just can't measure! It was so hard for the government worker to understand that! I know that there were lots of arguments, like, "Why are you trying to answer 'yes'? Look at you! You're not American! You're shoved in this little place! Still you're going to fight for it? You're a damned fool!" I knew that kind of conversation was all over the place! This is where the block members could help, and yet some of them were "pro," too. We got together and talked it out. Some of them felt, even if they talked it out, they're not going to tell anybody what they're going to do because they were afraid of reprisals from whoever happens to be the stronger of the group.

Another time when we had problems was when we had people come in from Hawaii. We thought the Hawaiian-Japanese people were a little different. They had a different way of talking and so forth. I don't know why they were sent there.

Mayfield: Do you know how many there were?

Fukui: I have no idea, but it was near the very end of my stay that they came in. Then there were a lot of fights. It was maybe the fact that we were all contained within, and we had so much space, and then some other group comes in, a group that was more aggressive. I don't know why they came or whether they were Nisei or what. I have no idea. I never heard too much more about those people after that, so maybe they just melted in and that was it.

Mayfield: When you had complaints, were you able to voice them freely to the officials?

Fukui: Yes, yes. You could go straight up to whoever . . . if I had problems in the Leave Office, it wouldn't have occurred to me to just keep quiet. I'd just go right up to the head, who was Mr. Touhy, and just say what was wrong or how can I go about it? If he didn't find an answer for me or if he felt that he couldn't help me, he would suggest I go to so-and-so. He was pretty good.

Mayfield: You said a minute ago that the fellow who was the commander of Topaz was not well-liked.

Fukui: Yes, Dr. Boardman! He was the head of the hospital. He was not too well-liked because, I guess, he was politicking too much on both sides, which is not good. So he was ousted. Then, too, Dr. Goto was put on "trial"--quote, unquote--but I think he got reinstated. Everything seemed to work out after that, so I guess it was okay.

Mayfield: One other thing . . . are you getting tired?

Fukui: No, I'm not. I'm just thinking.

Mayfield: I am curious about the social life. I know you worked during the day on the paper and the stenography work. What did you do to fill up your time in the evenings? Did you ever go to the community center or to the movies? Did you stay with your family?

Fukui: Let's see, what did I do? Well, we didn't have any automatic washers and that sort of thing. Every other night or so, I'd have to go and wash and get my things ready. That was part of my time. It took longer to eat because you had to wait in line, wash your utensils, and then come home. Then it was waiting in line to get a shower facility. So the waiting time took more time than the doing.

For recreation they had community activities in each block. There could be quite a number of things going. There were movies playing in each block--different ones, too. Sometimes I would go to the movies. Other times

they would have talent shows, and that was a big thing! At other times I would just go for walks--from block to block and just visit because Topaz was a bigger, spread-out place, and most of the people I got to know at the camp at Tanforan were spread out all over the place. Since I got to know a few engineering friends, they had the advantage of taking the trucks out because they were going out to do something, and many times we'd go out on picnics. I got to see a lot of the area there--quite a number of nice nooks and corners that were really beautiful with running water and that sort of thing.

Mayfield: Did you ever go into the nearby towns?

Fukui: Occasionally, you could go into town if you could get a ride. In the beginning it was restricted, but, of course, the longer you stayed there, the more everything became open. Yes, we used to go into Delta--a very, very small town--to maybe have a soda or buy a few things at the drugstore--something you could not find in camp--and just to get away and have a good time. I remember seeing a movie there once. I think I went to Delta twice or three times during my short stay in Topaz, and that was about it. Other times it was pretty much staying within and going around there.

You know, they did set up churches there, too--all denominations. I went to a Buddhist church a couple of

times, but it just didn't have the impact that it had when we were back home.

There were marriages there, too, sometimes held within the area. I don't know what they did; I imagine they ordered from the outside. Sometimes they were given leaves to go wherever they could within a reasonable area.

Mayfield: Do you remember about when the WRA changed from a philosophy of keeping you in to trying to get you all going out?

Fukui: Yes, I think it was pretty much after the boys volunteered and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team was formed. I don't know, but something just seemed to have opened up.

Another thing, too, I forgot to say, is when we got into Topaz in September and all the assembly centers were closed, then they started to ask for volunteers because they needed people desperately to top sugar beets. This was in October of 1942. A number of boys volunteered, and it was a hard job. Most Nisei boys that went were city boys, but they learned to handle this certain type of knife to top the beets. They did whatever they could and ran out the season by having topped all the beets in Utah. They got paid for that, though.

Then they asked for volunteers to go turkey plucking in Spanish Fork and American Fork, Utah. A number of the

girls and boys volunteered for that kind of a job, which was not easy.

Then there were a variety of jobs because they were just short of men at that time because of the war. When the local farmers were desperate, they asked for help. Then the block managers would ask who could volunteer, and they'd all go out by the truckloads, and they'd come back. Some of them stayed in that area, and then they came back. George did quite a bit of work like that. So opportunities of that sort of thing were open to people if they would accept it.

As time went on, they noticed that the boys and girls were very hard workers; and they just kept some of those jobs open, and some of them went there and stayed on. They got enough money to come back and apply for leave. Then, of course, those who had exceptionally high grades applied for going out to school. They were able to if their leave clearance came through; they had to have sponsors. Many started to go out that way.

I've forgot just when they started to open up so we could go and really leave the center, but I'd say it ties in with the boys volunteering and the government working it through so that there was an opening whereby the people could become more self-supporting. How many were left behind? I'm sure it was mostly the older people until

their children settled somewhere and called them out or whatever the situation. They were all mixed and varied.

I could tell you only my side of the story here. Because there's been such a long time between happenings, I've kind of forgotten. It's not that you intend to, but it all becomes like a dream, and you wonder if it really ever happened (laughter).

Mayfield: You have covered quite well your feelings about the experience you went through. Do you have a concern that the Sansei will understand your story and your feelings?

Fukui: You know, it's funny and rather strange. Sansei on the West Coast react more violently: "Why? Why in the world did you allow it to happen? Why did you go? I wouldn't have gone! I would have put up a big fight!" Well, you can say that now, but if you placed yourself in the situation we were in, where there were no openings for us, we had no choice. You do what you're told. Otherwise, there would have been blood shed for sure! They resent it. As I read, I could see it's not only the reaction of my children, but the reactions of almost all Sansei.

The Sansei that I had at the seminar at Princeton University, one became extremely violent toward me! He said, "We asked for it because all we seemed to want to do is to pick out the best type of work, professional work, and we didn't want to mix with the crowd and share their

feelings and get to understand them and they would understand you. It's no wonder you got put in a situation like that!"

And I said, "Well, that's not true! You have to figure, unless you worked for yourself, sometimes you couldn't get a job! You could have a Ph.D. and be working in a grocery store because at that time, it just was not open. So at least you could keep your brains up; at least you felt you had the knowledge. Sometimes you were not allowed to use it. So many people felt that if they had that capability, why not become a lawyer, a doctor, a dentist? It isn't because it's the only way to go!"

I talked it out with him: "It was an entirely different situation. You could say it now because it's all open for you. At that time, there was so much pressure and a lot of discrimination. It wasn't easy." I faced that same discrimination in Connecticut. I could not get a job at the University of Connecticut in one area--simply because of my being me. I can't think of anything else.

Mayfield: This was what period of time?

Fukui: In 1944. There was still a war going on. I couldn't find a place to live. Of course, we were just married then, too, and I guess we were the early ones, and for student and wife--and an undergrad at that--it was impossible to find a place to stay. There were no such setups!

So we stayed with a professor and his wife. When they had a party, I did most of the helping. One English professor and his wife said they were hesitant to come. When they came, they had to look into our rooms to see what we might have. And they said, "Well, they're like any other people." They couldn't understand why the professor and his wife would allow us to stay. They were afraid that we would stab them in the back, I guess, while they were asleep. I thought, "These are learned people! They just don't seem to be very open." There were barriers.

I did meet a wonderful man. He was Jewish. He had a very strong leaning for openness. He gave me a job. I stayed with him for five years and did a lot of genetical work with him. He taught me--the old German way. Through him, I learned an awful lot about what some people face and how to cope with it and understand.

Heavens, we were on the black issue way back then! Because Marshall Field's paper used to come out with many of the mistreatments of the blacks in the South, like, pouring kerosene into a little ten-year-old girl's mouth--all these things you couldn't believe people could do! We used to write, and he would send money to them to help out and so forth. I think he taught me a lot about being more tolerant. So for me, I think the experience was worth it.

Mayfield: Well, since we're both getting tired, why don't we call a halt, and we can schedule perhaps a second interview to cover anything that's been overlooked or if you want to add something after you've seen the transcript?

Fukui: Good, that's it.