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John Takeuchi Memoir

Takeuchi, John

Interview and memoir

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UIS Alumni Sage Society

John Takeuchi, Sangamon State University's first architect, reminisces about overseeing the physical development of the University from 1970-1976. Takeuchi remembers individuals including SSU President Robert C. Spencer, Dean Collins (engineer), Wally Henderson (Architect), and Dick Williams. Takeuchi discusses his prior professional experience at the University of California Berkley, where he worked as an architect for twenty-two years. Takeuchi also relates his involvement in the architectural planning of the University of Louisville and Virginia Commonwealth University, after his departure from SSU. Takeuchi, along with his companion Gloria Morita since 2001, speak in detail about their experiences as Japanese-Americans during World War II, including racist government policy and their forced evacuation to internment camps. The interviewer is Cheryl Peck, former Director of Public Relations for SSU/UIS.

Interview by Cheryl Peck, 2010

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Narrator: John Takeuchi
Place: California
Date: November 9, 2010
Interviewer: Cheryl Peck

Q. I'm going to start. I'll put this over closer to you. Why don't you say into the recorder your name and what your association was to this University, as we begin?

A. My name is John Takeuchi. I am from California, San Francisco Bay area. And my association with the University, at that time, Sangamon State University and I came in as university architect. I was originally solicited, invited to apply for the position of a university architect from the inception of this campus buildings.

I was not involved with the operation of University as such but construction-wise. The University is two parts. One is the campus, the physical buildings, the physical grounds, landscaping. And the other part is the academic part of the university that I was obviously not involved in. So when I got a letter back in late 1969, I said, "Where in the heck is Sangamon State?"

Along with the invitation from vice president, newly elected, appointed, vice president Jay Sheurman, a letter was also, not a letter but a description of what the university will be by newly-appointed Robert C. Spencer, the first president, what his concept of a university would be. I got that and I think that was the speech that he gave to the chamber of commerce here in town.

What his thoughts were and what a university should be. A university that addressed itself as a public affairs being that it's part of Springfield and Springfield being home of the state capital of the State of Illinois. I took it down to my then supervisor at the University of California where I spent, up to then, some twenty-two years. He says, "That sounds like a place that I should be interested in."

I thought maybe after twenty-two years, I was ready for this kind of assignment, and so I said, "Ok, I'll apply for it." I wrote a one page letter, my resume, submitted it. And over the 1969 holidays, the regents met and they approved my... well I'm sure there were a lot of others from around the country that applied for the position. And they offered it to me with a salary that was somewhat higher than what I was getting.

I discussed it with my wife and she says, "Ok." That would mean leaving her aged parents in Berkeley. But I said, "Well we can always come home, flying back in less than a day and let's go." So we at that time had three children, the first had just gotten out of high school. The other two accompanied me here.

Q. Did you, in that one page letter that you wrote, do you remember something about what it said, about why you wanted this assignment?

A. No (laughs).

Q. Ok.

A. What I said was what I did, what kind of buildings and everything what I thought I said to myself, "What did they want to know?" I don't think I... I stated my qualifications.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. My experience but not to the extent of why I thought, starting out as a new physical planner in a brand new university addressed to public affairs. I don't believe I said anything about that. I think they were looking for... because I really didn't know what a public affairs university was going to be.

Q. Right, exactly.

A. And the kind of relationship it had with the people and with the state and so forth. But they weren't as compared to universities that taught everything from master's atomic energy to engineering to all the liberal arts. I thought public affairs was well, PR. It is public affairs, PR.

Q. Right.

A. And I don't think, I don't recall that I said much about it other than why I was qualified to be part of the staff to do the physical planning of the University campus.

Q. It certainly was a different campus idea than Berkeley, and you'd had experience there, of course, with architectural projects.

A. Uh-huh, which I thought qualified me being that Berkeley was a fully established, mature, campus.

Q. Yes.

A. It was not much more than a hundred years old compared to the Yale's and Harvard's and Princeton's, which is a little bit more but not compared to the universities back in Asia or Europe.

Q. Yes.

A. This is a brand new school, a whole new country.

Q. Exactly. So what happened when you arrived here? What were your first impressions?

A. Well first I came for an interview, and I met with the president and some of the people that were here. Dean Collins was supervising. He was with the Board of Supervisors for Sangamon County. He was, I think, the president and then Wally Henderson was with Ferry & Henderson, large, well known architectural firm in Springfield, IL.

Q. Yes

A. And I forgot who else were on that interview committee. We met at, there's a club in Springfield, Sangamo Club.

Q. Yes, Sangamo Club.

A. Sangamo Club. Over lunch they shot questions at me and then maybe I had some questions of them, too. And they obviously interviewed others that also were vying for the job. Over the holidays I get a telephone call from Mr. Sheurman, Vice-President of Business, that they selected me and would I be interested in coming at a salary of so much.

So I deliberated with my wife and she said, "Ok let's go." That meant pulling stakes. I thought I was going to be working at the Berkeley campus university architect's office the rest of my life.

Q. I see.

A. I said, "Ok, let's go." And I think possibly the fact that going to an unknown place was like the evacuation that forced us to leave our comfortable surroundings after Pearl Harbor. And as Japanese Americans we were forced to because they wouldn't allow us back to California at that time during the war. I worked my way out to New York City and enrolled in NYU and then after that I went to Pratt Institute for they had a curriculum in architecture. Universities with architecture were off limits to Japanese Americans due to GIs attending.

So well maybe that...I know what the east is; I knew what to expect. So I said, "Ok, let's go to Springfield." Springfield at that time as compared to say Berkeley or San Francisco area, was still out here, far away from Chicago or St. Louis. It's a small town. It was something like 98,000 people. I don't know what it is today; it's probably a little bit more now, obviously, and so here I am.

Q. Did you know that you would be here for six years?

A. No.

Q. You had no idea how long it would take.

A. I thought, "I'll get the campus started." Of course there were monies committed by the legislature to get this...they had some studies on long range projections how much it's going to be growing, how many square feet of buildings they would need to be erected. It's not an overnight affair.

Q. Right. So did you have, were you given a lot of leeway in the design ideas, or did they have guidelines? How did that all work?

A. Well the master plan was, again, prepared by a firm in New York City that did the programming, what were the buildings, what the campus and how it was to grow, how fast, how many students and faculty, and how much space it's going to need and so forth. As you can see, no one man or no one person is going to be doing everything from locating where the buildings are going to be, how it's going to be oriented to each other and what's going to be in the building. It takes a lot of input from a lot of sources.

I was notified of the job offer after New Year 1970. I notified the university I would not be able to start until March or April for I had to complete some projects in Berkeley. I should mention that the physical master planning was assigned to Murphy, Downey, Wofford & Richman of St. Louis, Mo.

Q. Yes.

A. As well as how the landscaping, the walks, roadways, parking, the trees, what kind of trees, where it's going to be planted and so forth. It took a lot of consultants. And my job primarily was to, I guess the best way to put it is, see to it that all these other consultants did their job properly and to award contracts, let it out for contracts, bring in all the different contractors to get this place going.

Of course, the bottom line is, how much money do we have? The legislature obviously said, "Here's x dollars here, x million dollars; go to work." They committed themselves to start a new university here in the state capital of Illinois that did not have a university, one of two state capitals in this country that did not have a university.

Q. Right, Exactly.

A. That's how Sangamon State came about.

Q. So what were the first things that you did, as far as this construction was concerned?

A. Well, first of all, this was all cornfields. Ok, that's obvious.

Q. Yes.

A. And soybeans. But the University, the President was mandated to...this was late 1969, mandated to start classes in the fall semester of 1970. That didn't leave any time to plan the buildings. It takes time to plan a building.

Q. Of course.

A. Not just a year but sometimes two years and then to construct a building it has to go out to bids. A contractor has to be given a couple of years to build these, brick by brick, dig a hole, put some concrete in there and start putting up the steel work, start pouring concrete and so forth. Obviously we didn't have time to do that. I mean, this would not have been done. So the Leland Hotel, Leland Hotel?

Q. That's correct.

A. Leland Hotel, was it?

Q. Uh-huh.

A. It was available; it was half empty. The state had occupied part of the building, converted a lot of those rooms to classrooms. In addition, a lot of the Sunday school classes at one of these churches could also be utilized as classrooms.

Q. Ok.

A. At the same time, the university, there was a cadre here that started calling for invitations for people who were interested in teaching here. So that series of interviews were taking place at that time in the Myers building.

Q. I see.

A. We had offices in the Myers building, which was half empty, too. We occupied most of that; the ground floor was a department store.

Q. Department store, yes. My aunt worked there, yes.

A. So, that's how we got started. So it was a little chaotic, a lot of mistakes were made. Somehow they had enough faculty by that time to teach classes in the Leland hotel as well as the church Sunday school classrooms and also attracted a lot of people that worked in the state government to come here for noon time classes in the city.

Q. Come here you mean? Oh, there?

A. At the Leland hotel, the downtown campus.

Q. So when did you start building the interim buildings?

A. Well that, too, also required hiring architects, the people that did that master plan, St. Louis architects - Murphy Downey Wofford & Richman. And that took them a certain amount of time to start, finish up the drawings, and then go out to bids. So it probably wasn't until the middle of 1970, maybe later, that these interim buildings (so-called interim buildings). They're still here after forty years.

Q. Is that surprising to you?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A. Oh, a lot of campuses around the country, after World War II, they needed expansion, just like that, over night, for all the returning veterans that were missing out on college. Some of them were fighting the war in Japan, I mean in the Pacific as well as in Europe, Italy, Germany and so forth. So they had a lot of catching up to do.

They were coming back to universities and we needed... And other campuses said, "Ok what can we put up as instant buildings here?" Raid all the army camps around this area here. Bring them over, pick them up, bring them over here - cafeterias, dormitories. The University of

California had a mess of those around to provide interim classrooms. Now those buildings also hung around a long time. They were wooden buildings but they served a purpose.

Q. And you notice they've remodeled some of those. Have you been in some of those down there?

A. Not in there but we had a little tour conducted by Dave Barrows, current university architect & physical plant administrator.

Q. Yes.

A. He showed us, and I said I wanted to see my old farm house office.

Q. Ok (laughs)

A. The interim campus buildings and the buildings are still the same, nothing spectacular about it. These buildings are used for different uses. You know what makes this campus what it is?

Q. What?

A. The trees! They were little things like this. They are all mature trees now and the leaves falling.

Q. Isn't that nice?

A. It's nice.

Q. Have you not been here since you left?

A. No, I have been from time to time because I have a daughter living in Bloomington after ISU.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. And she works there, married with two sons.

Q. So you've seen it over the years? You've seen it over the years kind of growing and developing?

A. A couple times.

Q. So it wasn't a complete shock when you walked on campus this time, you've seen it?

A. No, but I have not seen it to the extent that I was able to see with Dave Barrows, not only the new part here but the old campus.

Q. Oh yes, yes.

A. That's a mature campus now.

Q. Indeed.

A. The trees are because forty years are forty years. We've been around for forty years, and we show it. But these trees are mature trees now.

Q. Yes.

A. The leaves are falling and the colors and it's a beautiful campus.

Q. Beautiful campus. It is indeed. We have a wonderful person who takes care of it.

A. It's a she isn't it?

Q. Joan Buckles, is her name. Did you meet her?

A. No, Dave mentioned it. When he mentioned Joan I said, "It's a woman?"

Q. (laughs) Yes, been here for many years.

A. Twenty plus years he tells me.

Q. Yes.

A. The university and everyone else is fortunate that she is able to stay here this long.

Q. Yes.

A. Obviously, she loves working here.

Q. She does indeed. You can see her out there all times of the year working around. She loves it. She does a wonderful job.

A. Yes.

Q. Did your work in California for the University of California at Berkeley have any influence on you as far as what you did here, or was it entirely different?

A. Well obviously it had to. I learned what a university building, what it has to be. Not only it has to be designed specifically for that discipline, each discipline requires different kinds of teaching environments.

Q. Right.

A. Not only that but my learning philosophy was that these buildings are not here for the short term; it's for the long range. It has to stand up even if it has to be, even if furniture has to be made out of cast iron.

Q. That's right.

A. We need to have people trained to think that not only people that put money into this place, but people that actually built this place with their sweat and tears and their devotion to their trade.

Q. That's a very good point.

A. That was my teaching that I learned from the way people acted in an established campus.

Q. Yes. You said back then they had certain criteria for you to follow in the projection of enrollment and that kind of thing. But the projections were quite far off from what actually happened.

A. That's right.

Q. Is that something you would have done differently had the projections been closer to what they ultimately became?

A. Any kind of projections whether it's for political use or whether it's for economic use or every company has to project. New companies, some fail along the way.

Q. But they were really far off.

A. That's what it turned out to be. Now that's based on information that they were given.

Q. Right.

A. It's as simple as that. So we were all not at fault, but we were all participants in maybe providing these consultants data that they based on was a growth pattern of how many college-age students would be on campus here from this area primarily.

Q. Right.

A. As compared to those who said, "I don't want to go to a brand new campus because I want to go to an established campus like Urbana or University of Chicago, or St. Louis, because I want my degree to reflect that university. I don't want a degree that no one knows. Sangamon State? What's that? How long has it been in business? Two years?"

That kind of thinking probably went along and then maybe because of that, longer projections, if they looked at the demographics projections, how many births there are going to be, they could tell. They could do that with some accuracy, but maybe perhaps economics probably also the economy of the country, the economy of the state I'm sure had some bearing on how students came or didn't come.

Q. Exactly.

A. So you have to ask a sociologist or social scientist to answer that kind of question.

Q. Ok. What were some of the special challenges that you faced in those six years? Are there things that stand out in your mind that were really challenging for you about this campus and the work that you did here?

A. Well anytime you start a... very few when you think about it, how many architects or anybody whether that's a president or anybody, will be involved with a brand new, out of the

soybeans, out of the cornfields, start a new campus? It was obviously rough on President Spencer and this was at the time there was a political upheaval taking place throughout the country.

Q. Yes.

A. Remember?

Q. Yes.

A. It started at the University of California, the free speech movement and went all the way through from here to there - Wisconsin, Washington U., University of Illinois, all the way to the campus in Illinois, I mean Kent State in Ohio. A lot of students died there by the National Guard and all the way over to Columbia University. I heard from a faculty that went from Berkeley to Columbia. He was visiting and he says, "Riots were taking place even in Columbia University." The whole country was up in arms.

Q. Yes, indeed. It was a different climate, wasn't it?

A. Yes. Obviously, the universities were treating all the graduate students, the TA's and others, not too well, and it was time for them to revolt. The only way to do that was to do what they were doing. It's like any country. We had a civil war here not too long ago. People were not afraid and also the revolution, the American Revolution against mother England.

We fought against our own kin folks and not me personally, not my family. But then during the Civil War, I lived in Virginia for some time and they were fighting each other. Brothers and brothers were fighting each other, those that were on the Confederacy and those that were on the Union side.

Q. Yes, terrible.

A. It was a terrible war.

Q. Yes. When you left in 1976 to go to University of Louisville, is that correct? What had happened here at that point as far as the physical campus?

A. What had happened?

Q. Yes.

A. Other than we were all desperately trying to, well interim buildings went up in a few months. But the first building was the Brookens Library.

Q. Yes.

A. Get that built. Putting up stacks in there, so they could house books putting up cubicles, temporary cubicles for offices, faculty offices. It had problems – inadequate sound proofing.

Q. It was a combination of offices.

A. It was a good plan but, as it turns out, well maybe I shouldn't say so, but I'll say it right now, everybody knows it. These little cubicles were not really, they were "homemade cubicles." They were not store bought because, as you can tell by the building it was a hexagonal building, and all the cubicles in turn had to be hexagonal in design and construct one that would fit together nicely. These offices lacked privacy.

Anytime anything like this happens, somebody has to tell the architect what kind of house you want built, how I want to live in that house, how do I want to entertain in the house. Same thing with the University buildings. The administration has to say what those classrooms and what those little offices, how they had to function.

And as far as lighting, ventilation, and the finishes of flooring, that's the architect job. How it needed to function was not spelled out. We were under pressure to get the building online. And the cubicle is something, you've seen a lot of these open cubicles in offices downtown and so forth. It works. It doesn't matter whether you can hear each other. But in a classroom atmosphere like here, you didn't want another student conversation being heard through the partition.

Q. Right, exactly.

A. Being talked to about his grades or her grades by a faculty member. So that wasn't, maybe should have been obvious, but they assumed that maybe that's what these offices should be sound proofed enough. To do that would have cost additional money. Anytime you want something specific in physical facilities, you want carpet instead of tile, you want this kind of lighting instead of just plain fluorescent lighting, you want nice upholstered furniture instead of folding chairs that equates to money. This is all afterthought – the faculty complained but not from the administration.

Q. Exactly.

A. So our architect has to bring his drawings within budget. Otherwise, they won't be able to get the buildings built. So it was one of those things that is part of the obvious instructions, obvious mandate that should be given. But again, not that these specific instructions because after all the people that were here at that time if they were faculty members, they were brand new; they were newly minted PhDs, with not too many, hardly any teaching experience, most of them were brand new faculty members.

Q. That's correct.

A. Some of the administrators were former faculty members from other universities but starting up a new university campus. Not the regents but the state legislature mandated what this university was to be and how it's going to be operated within certain budgetary constraints. Also, I guess the public affairs mandate would be that it would not actually be competing with the SIU people or the Champaign-Urbana people or not too far away the university of... UIS, the....

Q. Illinois State.

A. Illinois State.

Q. That's correct, in Normal.

A. If they brought in other registrars, other administrators from other universities to come and start up, some of them obviously were not higher up people.

Q. Now you left before this building was complete, right?

A. Yes.

Q. But you designed this building – the Public Affairs Center?

A. No.

Q. Oh, you did not?

A. The firm of Ferry & Henderson, local Springfield architects.

Q. Oh, I see. You didn't have anything to do with the design of this building?

A. Not as... I didn't draw this line or I didn't draw this line. I didn't say what kind of window we were going to put in or something. That was the architect that was given the task of putting a building, called the Public Affairs Building, to contain so many classrooms, contain the auditorium, contain the cafeteria spaces, and so forth.

I supervised. I looked over, making sure they followed what the University thought, how the building was to function or their needs. That's where I come in with my experience at a major University, that we need to have these buildings arranged in such a way, the plans and the faculty offices, how they were to be arranged and related to each other and so forth. That was my job to an extent.

Q. And was your job also to decide how that perimeter road would be?

A. No, that's, first of all, the regents hired a master plan architect from St. Louis.

Q. I see.

A. That was before I got there. You need a master plan - how the campus is going to evolve, where the buildings are going to be located, etcetera. At that time we didn't know we were going to have student housing, residence halls.

Q. That's right.

A. But they were all a master plan. A master plan is really a guideline.

Q. Into the future.

A. So you project. You just don't stop at one building. What's going to take place in five years, ten years, fifteen years and so forth. It's as funding became available.

Q. Right.

A. That's the other part of it.

Q. A big part.

A. Essential. Without money you can't hire people. You can't even buy a bucket of concrete. I was actually, I saw myself as coordinating making sure this architect and that architect were all designing in the interest of Sangamon State. We didn't want one architect going way out in this field, not thinking about how it had to mesh with the other buildings.

Q. Yes.

A. And so forth and so forth and so forth. We have, again, a master landscape architect from San Francisco that Murphy, Downey, Wofford & Richman brought in. He laid out all the planting. General plan - not saying this little dot means a certain kind of species or anything. It was - we need some tree masses here; we need some intimate annual growth here and change of color. The maples that are around the ring road, they're supposed to be all nice and red. They're not nice and red yet.

Q. Oh, aren't they?

A. No. He says, I guess they haven't, we haven't had a real cold frost here that would start.

Q. It's been pretty warm this year, this fall.

A. It has been. The whole country.

Q. Yes, yes. So, as you look at the campus today, I'm very interested in your impressions about how the development of the physical plan has... how do you think of it now? Do you think it's well done? There's the Rec Center over here, the University Hall here, the dormitories. What do you think of all that?

A. That's not fair to ask me that kind of a question.

Q. (laughs) Probably not.

A. After I left, the plan was still evolving. Of course, we've had a lot of presidents here, too. Each had their thoughts on how...

A. That's true.

Q. ...and one of the presidents said, "We are not going to complete the full ring road circle." Well, he was the president.

A. Yes, exactly.

Q. The master plan is, not to say, thou shalt do this or thou shalt not do this. It's for a general plan and if you're going to build a building here, it should be in this kind of location. This is like

Brookens is related to... it has the same kind of geometric and exterior architecture that's somewhat compatible. There are some buildings, the color is different. It's not even brick for that matter. Actually, I think in time the buildings are going to change color because nature takes care of that.

Q. Right.

A. That staining and natural staining and the trees are going to cover part of the buildings. Like the interim campus, you can't see the buildings anymore because the trees cover it.

Q. That's exactly right.

A. Nature takes over.

Q. It does indeed and it's taken years for nature to really come up here but it's really happening now.

A. Yes and nature, as a tree matures, in the spring they start coming out. In the summer, it takes on different colors. Then in the fall, some of the trees that were bright green or muted yellow are now golden, various colors and the flaming red. Leave it up to nature and she knows how to paint a picture.

Q. Yes, she knows how to paint a beautiful picture.

A. Yes, yes indeed.

Q. Does anything surprise you about how the campus looks now other than all the natural growth?

A. Oh, no but my successors, there were others besides Dave Barrows who has been here for some time now.

Q. He has. Dick Williams was the Physical Plant director before Dave. I don't know if you knew him or not.

A. Yes, we started at the same time, about the same. He may have been a month or two before because I came because I came in spring of, in April of 1970. And he was here, he was a local.

Q. Yes.

A. Illinois, Springfield person. His background was landscape architecture.

Q. Yes I knew him well. He still lives in Springfield actually.

A. Rochester, I think, the other side of Springfield.

Q. Yes, that's correct.

A. I was hoping to see him but he's not in town right now.

Q. That's too bad. I'm sure he'd love to see you.

A. Oh yes, I had a talk with him before he left. He went for whatever reason to Florida early this week.

Q. Did you know he wrote a twenty-five year history of the physical development of this campus.?

A. Yes.

Q. You probably have a copy of that.

A. I don't believe I do.

Q. You should have a copy of that. I think you of all people should have a copy of that. It's very well done.

A. I'm sure it was. So he took over.

Q. I think we should have one sent to you. I'll have one sent to you.

A. Please.

Q. Yes.

A. Dick was a, he knew the people here. Not personally but he knew how the state and the city operated. So he had an inside track on how things operated here. After I left, there was another fellow from New Mexico, I believe, McKinley Nance took over after I left.

Q. You mean your...

A. My position

Q. Oh, I see.

A. And then maybe after he left, I don't know, I don't think he stayed here too long.

Q. Did you work through two presidents or was just Spencer still here?

A. President Spencer was the one.

Q. That's right. He stayed for quite a while, yes. Well, you might not want to answer this question but I'm going to ask it anyway. If you were the architect for this campus today, how do you think... have you looked at the master plan? You probably haven't looked at...

A. No, I was going to ask Dave Barrows for a copy of the campus as it stands today, but maybe I'll get a chance to.

Q. Yes, that would be a good idea. I just wondered you would do in terms of...

A. Do anything different? Maybe.

Q. That, perhaps and maybe what you...

A. I would still obviously respect the master plan. I would try not to follow it to the "T" but the general plan, the philosophy of how that plan should be implemented.

Q. Yes.

A. That's my task. I'm not to say what buildings should be built or what departments should be in there. That's up to the president and the faculty and other academic planners. Mine was physical planning.

Q. There's so much ground out here to grow.

A. I know.

Q. Most universities don't have that.

A. 750 acres.

Q. Exactly.

A. Plus including Lincoln Land's 250. There are 1,000 acres. That's a lot of space.

Q. It is.

A. I have to admit I was only able to walk over only a small immediate area. The rest of it was still farmed. Are they still being farmed like that?

Q. Yes they are.

A. Sure.

Q. The current chancellor, who's going to retire very soon, you've met him, Richard Ringeisen?

A. Not yet.

Q. Oh you haven't met him? He is leaving soon after a long tenure as chancellor. One of the things he wanted to do while he was here but because of the economics of it and so forth, he wanted to develop a campus town.

So that students would have within walking distance - places to go like an ice cream parlor, pizza place, a drug store, a movie theater maybe, those kinds of things. He wanted to do it here out on 11th Street so they wouldn't have to use their cars to drive somewhere else.

A. Commercial establishment.

Q. Exactly.

A. A Little main street, downtown.

Q. Right.

A. Sangamon State, UIS, Ok, I thought you were describing the Oxford plan. The University of California in Santa Cruz was based on the Oxford plan. Each discipline was a university in its self.

Q. Really? Oh, like Oxford of course.

A. Yes. You lived there and you studied there and it was a little cohesive town. Each college had its own university town, Berkley is a good example. It is right in downtown. Well, U of I is somewhat there.

Q. Yes, it has a college.

A. It's not integrated. Berkeley, Telegraph Avenue in Berkley goes right into the campus there.

Q. Oh really? That's what he had in mind.

A. So the students could... I should say, today if you want to go downtown, you can get a bar of ice cream right here I'm sure but downstairs. But just to go around and roam around and maybe get some hotdogs or something.

Q. Exactly.

A. Or you can get hotdogs here but anything that you don't have here. So I could understand that because students... but then there are a lot of places like Cornell because Cornell and there's a lot of campuses around the country that is all by itself. I think but still though there are a lot of students who go specifically to those colleges so they don't want any distraction. They want to just go there to study, work, and do what they wanted to do and without any distraction like going to movies or something.

Q. I had never been to Oxford before but I went last year. My brother took me there, and I had no idea there were thirty-seven distinct colleges. It's just amazing.

A. That's what the U.C. [University of California] Santa Cruz campus, which is in the forest, trees. It was donated land. The town of Santa Cruz itself is all the roller coasters, amusement park. It's a fun place to be.

Q. I'll bet.

A. Beaches and so forth.

Q. Yes.

A. The Santa Cruz campus is up on a hill, and you can't walk down there. I'm sure the students work their way down because they want to get into the action, too.

Q. You bet. So are there other things you want to tell me about your experience here, the time you spent here?

A. Well, I was impressed with a couple things. The weather.

Q. You liked the weather?

A. No.

Q. Oh, I was going to say (laughs)

A. No, no, no. I didn't say that.

Q. Oh, Ok (laughs).

A. The weather had a lot to do with how buildings had to be designed and how buildings had to be endured during the inclement weather. The winter weather is hard on building materials and the way the ground heaves, thaws, goes down. Buildings flex and deteriorate the materials. I saw some pavement that was older that had been frozen and split off.

That caught my attention, but the buildings are still holding up. I'm sure if you look closely you might notice that some of the bricks have cracked open now. Dave said they had to replace roofing through campus. That's natural because roofing doesn't last forever.

Q. Right.

A. That's one thing, unless you put in... these are all tar and gravel. The buildings that... if there is such a thing as permanent roofing, its copper roofing. But some of these older that looks like copper because it's green, they're not copper; I don't think they're copper.

Q. Did you know there's some plants that they planted on a, did he tell you that they planted sedum on top of one of the dorms?

A. Oh, is that right?

Q. They call it a green roof.

A. I see, Ok. There are buildings like that sprouting up, literally sprouting up in California.

Q. Are there, yes?

A. Now, the other part that I was impressed with as I grew with this campus - the faculty. The faculty were all fairly young. There were very few matured, older faculty members who would want to come to a new campus like this, untested, untried campus.

There were some that maybe had to move, but most by and large the faculty were all young. They were all dedicated to their cause of starting this new public affairs campus. Some of them actually rebelled against President Spencer.

Q. Yes.

A. A lot of them did.

Q. Yes.

A. For maybe some reason, too. But in fact, one faculty members, one wife, I won't mention the name, she committed suicide because she was so unhappy with the way Bob Spencer was creating this university. Then of course a lot of younger people didn't get tenure here either.

That was hard on them, I knew a couple of them. In fact, there was a husband/wife team here and she was tenured but he wasn't. So that meant he had to leave. It broke up the marriage, I'm sure. So these were all the human interest changes that I was able to see what was going on. Unfortunately, some of these were instances of part of growing up.

Q. Right.

A. As I was growing up and even President Spencer probably learned a lot, too.

Q. I'm sure he did. I think it was a very difficult time. In addition, they were not teaching freshman.

A. That's right.

Q. These new faculty...

A. Upper division, senior colleges I think they called them, senior institution?

Q. Yes. It was hard for me because as a Public Relations Director here it was very hard to make people understand before we became a full four year university in 2001, make them understand what exactly this was all about, this upper division university. Some people thought it was a community college. Well, it wasn't a community college obviously. It was hard to get people to understand exactly what it was we did here.

A. This was not the only senior institution.

Q. No, that's right.

A. There were a couple of them in California, Washington and Tennessee. It was an experimental thing and somebody came up with this idea of having a senior, upper division university.

Q. Yes to absorb all of those.

A. Those that were coming from over there and over there and community colleges.

Q. Yes.

A. I'm glad this became a full-fledged four year and then some. Are they awarding doctorates here?

Q. I'm sorry?

A. Are they awarding doctorate degrees here yet?

Q. They have. They offer one doctorate degree in public administration.

A. Ok. In time as it matures, they need the faculty who can administer that kind of curriculum.

Q. Yes, exactly. Do you have other recollections about the people here back then? That's very interesting. You said the faculty and all the kind of things that happened, everything was so new and innovative.

A. I'm sure the faculty probably, students weren't coming in like it was supposed to.

Q. Right.

A. And I'm sure a lot of the faculty probably wondered how long they were going to be able to stay here. But some of them that had some entrepreneurial bent hired themselves out to different universities back out here that needed people like them. So when I was occupying that house, that farmhouse.

Q. Oh, did you live there?

A. No, that was my office.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. Along with Physical Plant James Duda was in charge of Physical Plant. A lot of the faculty would come over there to take out the cars to drive over to some campus out of the area. I knew one of them pretty well and in fact all these young "Turks" wanted to get a hand in starting their own university. Once I came here, I think for the fifteenth, twenty-fifth anniversary.

Q. Oh, did you come then?

A. Yes and a lot of them said, "I'm the president of a university now. How about that?"

Q. Yes.

A. They were part of a start-up of a new university and thought maybe they could try their hands at it too (laughs)! But three of them came up and said I'm the president of a university. I said, "Wow."

Q. Yes.

A. So these were students that really were dedicated. This was their lifelong job to teach and also be part of a university administration.

Q. What about the community? Did you get the sense that the community... What do you think the community thought of Sangamon State University in those early years? Did you get a sense of that?

A. No because I was not home most of the time, other than I have a neighbor. We're going to have dinner with them. My neighbor, former neighbor, they're still living there.

Q. Oh.

A. We got to know them well. From my perception, the townspeople, they wanted a university here and I can't think of the attorney that was instrumental in, I should remember him. He was a real, dedicated townspeople who actually was primarily interested in having a university here. I think he had a lot to do with getting the state legislature to create a university here.

I remember when, I can't remember his name again, maybe you could? He was in charge of, what was his... he was a Frenchman and he taught acting, playwriting, and so forth. We didn't have a theater at that time but guess what? He went up to the town, capital square and performed, had his students perform there.

Q. Very Interesting.

A. I think by the time this building got finished, I've read that they were having these travelling shows that were coming here, which the townspeople were able to participate in and come here to enjoy the entertainment that Springfield lacked. You don't have to go to St. Louis or Chicago to take in a "Broadway show."

Q. Yes, yes.

A. So I'm sure the townspeople were waiting for this university to get to a point where they could come and participate. Not only to come and take a course or maybe get an advanced degree, but also to see what's going on and participate in making this place work.

Q. Yes.

A. Indeed, also it's not necessarily that close to the city but you heard of the term "town and gown?"

Q. Exactly.

A. Now this may happen but again, the people here and the people over there I'm sure are also... in fact, when I came for my interview, President Spencer had involved the townspeople, they were part of my interviewing panel.

Then even after the interview, I don't recall her name, but she was the wife of one of the president of one of the banks, not the Marine bank but another bank. She took me around for sightseeing of Springfield just in case I was appointed.

So President Spencer got the townspeople really involved, and I'm sure he kept going to a lot of their meetings and explaining what he was doing to get this place started. Again, this place didn't happen overnight. This is only thirty, forty years, but it is forty short years compared to the main campus. I don't think you call that the main campus or this is not the branch campus.

Q. Right.

A. This is Sangamon State that is part of, is under the same administration. The foundation here is part of the U of I foundation. So that makes sense.

Q. Yes. That happened in 1995 when the transition took place.

A. How did Sangamon State become part of the University of Illinois?

Q. The Board of Higher Education decided to dissolve all these boards they were overseeing.

A. It was a third party that said, "In order for you to survive you've got to be part of this."

Q. Exactly, so they decided to put Sangamon State University with the University of Illinois as a third campus with a distinct mission.

A. Rather than SIU.

Q. Exactly, exactly. And some of the other universities, there are twelve public universities in the state and some of them got their own individual boards. But we, Sangamon State University, became a part of U of I, which I personally think was a very good move.

A. Besides it's more geographically more related to the Champaign- Urbana campus.

Q. Right, yes.

A. Rather than Edwardsville or what's the main campus of SIU?

Q. Carbondale.

A. Carbondale.

Q. Yes, yes.

A. That's another country down there.

Q. It is exactly. It is a different country.

A. As compared to those kinds of universities up in the Chicago area.

Q. That's right.

A. This is all out here, way downstate.

Q. That's right. They think we're southerners (laughs).

A. Yes. (laughs)

Q. Did you enjoy your years here?

A. Yes.

Q. And then you went to Louisville, Kentucky?

A. Yes.

Q. And what did you do there?

A. Same thing.

Q. So you helped them plan but was that university there already in existence?

A. No.

Q. It wasn't a brand new, out of the cornfields kind of?

A. No.

Q. No.

A. There was a president who was really instrumental in overseeing a large infusion of money. University of Louisville was originally a private college, a small one. And then it became, when it became part of the state system. Basketball is big in Kentucky.

Q. Yes indeed.

A. The University of Kentucky was... what was his name? Rupp was his name, they named the arena after Rupp. The University of Louisville didn't want to be second fiddle to the University of Kentucky. They brought in Denny Crum, from UCLA who was the shining graduate under John Wooden, who just passed away I think. But UCLA had championships over the years. Denny Crum made UL, University of Louisville, a basketball champion, too. National champion but not only that, but the University of Louisville had also an engineering school, also a medical school.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. It was a full-fledged small university, so I did what I was doing back in Berkeley and also here. We didn't have that many buildings under my belt at SSU. But when I went to Kentucky, we were doing an art building. We were doing a music building, which I worked on in Berkeley. I was carrying part of what I knew that I was hired to do. I was working through a lot of people, too, at that place. Every University is distinct. I mean, it's made up of different kind of people

and not only that, but the people in that area there they have a different... we're all the same in a way but we come from different backgrounds, don't we?

Q. Yes, indeed.

A. So that is, I think, governs how some campuses here and elsewhere evolve.

Q. Yes.

A. President Spencer himself was a University of Chicago graduate, and he went to the University of Rhode Island.

Q. Oh, did he? I don't remember that.

A. Then he was, I think, dean of students there. I think maybe I didn't know him then, but one time I think it was the President of Rhode Island University came to Berkeley to look around. I was assigned to, no he was at Pratt Institute, I think, where I graduated.

They said, so-and-so is coming here, "Will you show him around?" So I went to the airport, picked them up, and showed him around the campus and maybe that word got back to Rhode Island. That's where President Spencer was and when I said "I knew so-and-so," and he said, "Oh did you know him?" That helped.

Q. Yes it does.

A. It's a small world but it helps.

Q. Indeed. And then you went to Virginia?

A. Commonwealth.

Q. Commonwealth.

A. I just stayed there a short while.

Q. And then? What happened after 1982? You left there in 1982? You were only there in 1981 and 1982?

A. Oh, you mean I left the University.

Q. Right.

A. But I didn't leave Richmond, no. I thought maybe it was time for me to... I had problems with the administration. So I said, "Ok, time for me to leave." So I just left. Then my wife passed away in Richmond, too. So Richmond was... I liked the University of Louisville in Kentucky and Richmond, Virginia was also the former Confederate capital of the United States.

Q. Yes.

A. And both Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln came from that part of the country.

Q. Yes, that's right.

A. They both became president of their... United States President. Lincoln became President of the United States and northern forces. Jefferson Davis became President of the Confederacy. Both capitals were a hundred miles apart, and they were born a hundred miles within each other, too. So I became interested in the Civil War.

Q. Oh I'm sure, yes.

A. Because it took place right in that part of the country and they're still fighting each other. They well, not physically but they don't trust the Yankees down there (laughs).

Q. It goes on (laughs).

A. But because... well, they're all gone now, but they still remember when granddaddy, now it would be great-great-granddaddy and so forth. It passes on.

Q. Exactly, through their family lineage.

A. Yes and I remember one of my neighbors.

Q. It's in their blood.

A. Yes, they know what that the north had devastated the south, southern places. And then they will say, "I lived in one part of Richmond where there was a church there and Lee was one on side and Grant was on the other side, his forces. They were lobbing shells at each other but none of them fell on this church that's in the neighborhood where I lived."

But then you see the south really treasures all these battlegrounds. They're all sacred ground. This is where so-and-so lost his life. This is where so-and-so and so forth. And the forts, they're all covered with trees now, but they're sacred ground.

Q. And so you decided though to go back to California.

A. That's when my wife passed away, and I thought I should go home.

Q. So you consider California your home then?

A. Yes.

Q. Oh, you were born in California weren't you? Alameda.

A. Yes.

Q. I see, Ok. Yes, yes. Do you want to talk a little, just a little bit about what happened to you during World War II? Is that something you?

A. Oh. Both of us were talking. (John Takeuchi's friend, Gloria Morita, enters the room) Come in, come down.

Q. Yes, please.

A. We talked about that all morning in two classes.

Q. Yes.

A. And I have a lot of stuff here that I used for...

(Someone knocks on a door)

Q. Yes?

(A door opens. A third person begins speaking, off microphone)

A. (reacting to third speaker) Oh, we left our clothes in that...

Q. (to third person) Thanks, Jeannie.

A. Oh, that's Jeannie?

Q. Yes, that's Jeannie.

(Jeannie speaks again, off microphone.)

Q. Thank you.

Jeannie: Bye and if you get a ticket remember to bring it back to me Saturday.

A. Do you still have...

Q. Oh, yes, we're doing well.

(Door closes)

Q. We could take maybe five minutes or so because I know you're probably getting tired.

Tape stops and begins again

A. What do you want me to talk about? During the internment?

Q. Yes

A. You don't want me to talk about Japan bombing Pearl Harbor?

Q. No, no, about your own personal experience and what happened to both of you [referring to John's friend – Gloria Morita], during that period.

A. You ought to leave a copy of what you read. Do you have a copy? Do you have access to a Xerox machine or something?

(Gloria Morita begins speaking.) No. I can give you a copy.

Q. Oh, good, yes.

JT. Well, first of all, both of us, I've known her for about ten years or so. We met in a writing class the same day 9/11 took place.

Q. Is that right?

JT. Yes and I was going to Berkeley driving from my home in Walnut Creek.

Q. And that's how you met? Oh, great.

GM. Now this a story that I read, one of my stories.

Q. Oh, thank you very much.

GM. This is a brief outline of what they talked about, discrimination, and I just did a brief outline.

Q. Very good, thank you.

GM. We talked about.

JT. When we heard... There's a poster that I brought here, copy of it that was posted after Pearl Harbor. Our Government says it was a sneak attack. It probably was. They didn't say, "We're going to bomb you." But they knew it was coming. They had to. Because almost days after, well, hours and hours after Pearl Harbor, all the so-called prominent people in our Japanese-America community throughout the whole Pacific coast were rounded up. They knew who to round up?

GM. Including my father-in-law. December 7th.

JT. That's the kind of thing you don't read about in textbooks.

Q. Sure, exactly, exactly.

JT. And this poster says, "Under the command of the western defense command, people living in such-and-such an area, they were all throughout, different posters, different cities had different markings on it and from here on, on such-and-such a date, aliens and non-aliens. Guess who the non-aliens were? U.S. born American citizens. The government had people, believe it or not they had people in the government that run these things. They create all these things; they had to be.

Q. Of course, right.

JT. It didn't come about all by itself. President Roosevelt didn't write this thing. He was the president at that time. We were told to get ready, pack, bring along your utensils, packing up clothes. We didn't know where we were going and bring only what you could carry. Within a matter of 24 hours, people on Bainbridge Island, Washington; those at Terminal Island near Los Angeles were fisherman. That was a pretty strategic, sensitive area. People on Bainbridge Island close to the Bremerton Naval Base in the Seattle area, they were given almost overnight to get out and be rounded up.

We were all taken south to San Francisco, California, people in our part of the San Francisco Bay area were taken to Tanforan Race Track, which was a... what's there at racetracks? Horse stalls. People were put into horse stalls. They were white washed but still smelly. They had enough time to build some temporary plywood buildings. Floorboards were dirt, no concrete foundations, of course, but built right on the ground. Floorboards were green lumber. By the time we left, grass was growing through the floorboards, in between (laughs,) and we were sleeping on straw-filled mattresses.

Q. And who was with you?

JT. The whole family.

Q. So who did that consist of?

JT. My father and mother and five of us kids.

Q. Wow.

JT. Yes, all in one room, twenty by twenty. But after the first day, this was still right in town. It's now a shopping center, but on the other side of the fence, they had guard towers. You could hear people on the other side. You could see them looking in. There were several thousand of us in one place. All over the country, all of the fairgrounds were occupied by Japanese-Americans.

Q. How did you eat?

JT. Well, they created mess halls. I don't know what you wrote about in that story there but the latrines, the latrines were all located in one place. It had to be hard on elderly people and people with babies.

Q. Of course.

JT. We were relocated to other camps in Wyoming and Utah, cold winters. It's cold here, too, but walking through the snow to use the restroom facilities in the middle of the night.

Q. How did you mother and father respond to that?

JT. You know what? All the Issei, the first generation people, they used the term "Shikata ga nai," can't be helped. Can't be helped, this is what we have to pay for being Japanese.

Q. Oh. (Sighs)

JT. I think that's the way... I don't think I ever heard my father and mother talking about having to give up all these things that we had because there were people who lost a lot money wise. This was the time when we were just growing up, not out of college yet but be in a position to help out.

Those who were out of college obviously couldn't get jobs because they were Japs. Some decided they might as well go to Japan and become doctors, and those that were in business couldn't get jobs in American companies. That was before Japan became an economic power themselves after the war.

Q. Yes.

JT. I should say that whether it's Germany or Japan, they all embraced their conquerors, the United States of America. They did whatever USA said you should do. And the Korean War didn't hurt either when the U.S. says, "Japan, would you help us produce certain things so we could go fight in the south in Korea, South Korea?"

Q. Yes.

JT. I or Morita don't have an ounce of resentment of what happened to us or what we experienced. We don't.

Q. And why is that?

JT. We were too young. I was nineteen but really young and naïve. And I personally didn't lose anything other than a couple years of not being able to attend college. But my younger brothers, they all stayed in camp for the duration of the war.

Q. And how long was that?

JT. Well, 1942 until after Hiroshima bombing, atomic bombing, three and half to four years. It depends on when they went in.

Q. Yes, Yes.

GM. Let me add to that. My parents lost. Like John says, I personally did not lose.

JT. That's a story there, their farm.

GM. Yes, but then so much good came about as a result of it. I met my husband. I have four lovely children. I wouldn't have them if not for that.

Q. Where did you meet your husband?

GM. In Chicago.

JT. She relocated to Chicago.

Q. I see.

JT. We were given clearance to leave. In other words, she answered a loyalty question properly.

Q. I see.

JT. She would foreswear allegiance against the Emperor of Japan, things like that. The U.S. asking U.S. citizens to do something like that. It's asinine!

Q. Oh. (sighs)

JT. People in government would ask questions like that and asking our parents who were not allowed to become naturalized citizens here to foreswear allegiance to Japan. They would be people without a country.

Q. Yes indeed, that's right.

GM. I did that selfishly because I wanted to get out of camp.

Q. And where were you interned?

GM. I was in Tule Lake, just below the Oregon border in California.

Q. Oh, I see.

GM. And that was the only way to get out. And so I...

JT. The irony of that, excuse me but there's two camps in California. Manzanar in southern California on the other side of, what's that big mountain? Mount Whitney, almost on the Nevada side, desert. And then up in Tule Lake, up near Oregon. Both are in California, which is supposed to be not permissible for Japanese-Americans to be in that state. They had a concentration camp right in the state of California. Can you imagine? (laughs)

Q. But you have no resentments, either one of you?

JT. No.

GM. When I read...

JT. Not even when I was there. My only concern was, what's going to happen to us?

Q. Yes, of course.

GM. When I think about it though, I always think that it was wrong.

Q. Of course.

JT. About what?

GM. It was wrong.

A. Oh, yes.

GM. It was definitely wrong.

Q. Oh, gosh.

GM. But then we left it behind. We put it behind us, and we had a life. He had a good life.

JT. There was obviously some that revolted against what the country had done to them. Because they had... not because they had a lot to lose but they were denied due process. Simple as that.

All of a sudden we became enemies, and we were not to be trusted. We were dangerous and the guards, who were up in the guard towers, supposedly had their guns trained on people like us instead of protecting us from any demonstration from outside.

GM. The barbed wire fencing around us was faced towards the camp, rather than face out. They say it was to protect us. If it was to protect us, then the fencing should have been facing out (laughs).

Q. Exactly (laughs). You didn't believe that. You couldn't have believed that.

GM. But that is the way it was.

JT. We were not really, we didn't dare get close to the fence. One old man, who was hard of hearing, got too close to the fence. One of the guards in the guard tower said, "Get away, stay away." But he shot him anyway and killed him.

There was no way, even if the man was able to get through the fence, not over or under, desert extended hundreds of miles away. The guard was told that we were dangerous people. So he shot him, killed him.

Q. Oh. (sighs)

JT. If you don't believe me it's documented.

Q. Oh, I believe you. Have you ever seen these depictions in the movies or on television about what happened? Do you think they're accurate?

GM. Yes.

Q. Are they?

GM. Yes, they are. There's so much documentation.

Q. Yes, indeed.

A. And there's a lot of stuff on the internet, too. Just open it up and type in the term Japanese-Americans. then on the other hand talking about the government, Smithsonian Institution is part of the government. They have been doing a fantastic job. That exhibit on that, what's the name of the exhibit? "For a more perfect nation" to deal with the constitution, a fantastic display.

That's been going on for more (they probably keep changing it, too) than twenty or thirty years now. And now a new exhibit has started up in the last month. It was in the Smithsonian Magazine about the Art of Gaman. Art is, the Gaman was to while away the time. A lot of the parents made little artifacts and they collected that, and it's in an exhibit in Washington D.C. right now. And Gaman, this word is to persevere, simple word; it's persevere. It can't be helped.

As far as our parents, some of them stayed there the whole duration because there was no place to go. Some of them, the kids said, "We can't leave mom and dad in the camps there; let's take them out." They brought them to Chicago. Chicago, the severe, inclement weather during the winter was hard on them.

Q. I bet

JT. Old folks had no experience in... they didn't have any clothing, heavy clothing. So everybody suffered to some extent.

Q. Yes. How do you think it might have changed you?

JT. Oh it obviously changed us a lot.

Q. Yes.

GM. I think we can really relate to what's happening to the people from, like people from Iran.

Q. Yes

GM. When we think of the Muslims, we can relate to what's happening to them because of what happened to us; it's the same thing.

Q. Of course, yes.

JT. Not only for the people outside this country but for the blacks and the Indians. Indians are still, we call them reservations, but they're still concentration camps.

Q. Yes, isn't that awful?

JT. Why are we letting them live there? No one has questioned that. I'm sure they have but through Indian Affairs, they have a pretty tight hold on them.

Q. Yes, exactly. You have greater empathy is what you're saying for people who are treated wrongly and badly?

JT. The Indians and the blacks especially they didn't come here on their own; they were brought in chains and made slaves. They weren't allowed to become... Remember the Dred Scott decision down in St. Louis?

Q. Yes.

JT. He won every time but they said something like Negroes aren't supposed to become, they're not supposed to become human beings. We don't want people like that becoming citizens and being able to vote. That may be my words, but that's how I read into what happened.

Q. Is this a true statement that most of the Japanese-Americans who were interned had been born in America? Is that correct?

JT. Yes.

GM. Yes, like us.

Q. Yes, exactly, they hadn't been born in Japan?

GM. No.

Q. Not that that would have been a good reason to imprison them but most of them were born in America.

A. Yes. All American born interred were U.S. citizens.

GM. But I think the positive about this whole thing is that it has forced us to integrate. Like if the Indians, if you close the reservations, I know it's very difficult. We went through it all, but you're forced to integrate. It takes time, but I think it will be for the positive. But of course, with the Indian situation it's different.

JT. You don't just go tomorrow and say, we're kicking you out.

GM. That's right.

JT. They have to be brainwashed and retrained. I don't know what they're doing right now, but one of the scholarship students that we met today, his father works in Minnesota at an Indian reservation, not for the government but for the Baptist Church. He told me a few things that I didn't know about the reservations.

Q. Do you know other people who were interred like the two of you were? Do you know other people in California now who were interred like the two of you?

GM. Yes.

JT. Thousands of them.

Q. They're still living? What are their views in generally speaking?

JT. It is mixed.

GM. Yes, I think they feel the same way I did. Now my bother has passed away, my older brother. But I think that he on the other hand would have felt differently because he is one of those who protested that this is wrong.

And he was in Tule Lake, which was a concentration camp for northern California people at the beginning. Later Tule Lake was segregated, and those people who were protesting were sent from other camps to Tule Lake. Those people who signed yes, yes on this on this oath thing were sent to other camps.

Q. Ahh.

JT. Tule Lake was supposed to be for... some were put in stockades and they weren't treated well at all. All the things you read about all these prisons and prisoner's wards and so forth but they had a right to protest and they were treated badly. Some were sent to Japan, but they were able to come back and have their citizenship reinstated again.

So that's all well documented. The thing that I think, well, you probably know, but a lot of people volunteered from camp and a lot of them were drafted and formed this 442nd regimental combat team made up of Japanese-Americans.

These were all segregated, along with the 100th infantry and artillery. And then they were the most highly decorated and suffered the most casualties than any other troops in the whole U.S. Army, with their relatives and parents in concentration camps. Can you imagine that? I can't. I can't believe that. too.

Q. No, no.

JT. But it happened.

GM. My parents stayed to, not all the way to the end before the closing but close to it. The reason they stayed was because my brother stayed. They couldn't leave, leaving my brother there.

Q. So you could leave if you gave this oath?

GM. Yes, that was at the beginning. But later when they were closing the camp, all those who signed yes, yes, could leave. They could even go... the only ones that could leave at the time I left and at the time John left were those who had a job to go to, or a school to go to.

Q. Oh, I see.

GM. But later everybody could leave. They could go off.

JT. They were literally kicked out (laughs).

Q. It's mindboggling.

JT. In fact they were forced out.

Q. First they were forced in; then they were forced out (laughs).

GM. Right, but my parents just couldn't leave my brother who could not get clearance.

Q. I see.

JT. You know we're close to time. We have to be out at our hotel at 6 o'clock. Oh, it's not 6 o'clock yet. Ok, we've got time.

GM. I think you're a volunteer aren't you?

Q. Yes, and I'm enjoying this very much.

JT. (sound of shuffling papers) If you want to follow up on this kind of thing, when I was here in the 1970, we didn't know any other Japanese family in Springfield.

Q. Is that right, yes?

JT. But if you go up to Chicago, there is a lot of them. If you want to have contacts, the Japanese-American Citizens League. One of my granddaughters is very active up there now and she could even come down and talk about these things, too. But read about it, but this is not one of the happiest, productive parts of American history.

Q. No, certainly not.

JT. Because not too many people know about... people didn't know about blacks until blacks demanded that we institute black studies at these universities. It took a long time coming.

Q. It did.

JT. Not that they have free reign but if they ever will, jobs and other social status. Guess who's in the White House right now (laughs).

Q. (laughs)

JT. Think about that.

Q. Yes.

JT. Amazing.

Q. It is amazing.

JT. Yes.

GM. I feel that for every step forward that the civil rights movement has brought and the African-Americans, the rest of us minorities take a step forward.

Q. Yes.

GM. So I'm really grateful toward the African-Americans and the civil rights movement.

Q. Yes, that's a very good point, yes indeed. Well, I've really enjoyed talking to both of you. You've been very open and candid, and I think this will be awfully good information for our archives. I personally have enjoyed this discussion very much. Thank you so much.

JT. It does us good to talk about it, too. Because we had, not that we were suppressing it but we didn't tell our kids, no more than the Jews talk about their... those that were able to survive. There's still quite a few here in this country, too, but we don't talk about it.

There was no need to talk about it. But in a way, in spite of the fact that there's a lot of literature on the subject now hearing from people like Gloria or myself, it's really one sided. Oral history is always one sided. Sometimes the wrong information is passed on.

Even in one of my brother's little oral history on the family, those that are... our parents are all gone now. Hearing what my brother said about the family, I don't know where they got all that information. But from my standpoint, that's not right. So anybody who does oral history, I mean write autobiographies, they have to really have it corroborated by other sources.

Q. Right.

JT. And so it's hard to say this is the gospel truth.

Q. But it's your own personal recollections that are the most interesting.

JT. Yes but I have to keep telling myself, too. That's seventy years ago now that this took place and that I don't remember everything. And some of it that I think I remember, is probably not, maybe we mix things up.

Q. Well we all have selective memory don't we?

JT. Yes.

Q. Yes.

GM. Yes, go ahead and finish.

JT. No, I'm finished.

GM. I guess this is a chapter in our lives that we are not proud of. We never talked about it. My husband and I never talked about it to our children. But every time a new book was published, my husband went out and bought it. He was so busy with his work that he didn't have time to read them, but he bought the books and he put them on a shelf that we had. He put them on a shelf that we had.

One day, my son, who was, I think it was his senior year, possibly junior year in high school, spotted the books and he got interested in it. He read every single one of them, and he did a report in his high school. He turned it in, and the teacher didn't believe him.

Q. Oh, no. (gasps)

GM. She said that that was fiction.

Q. Oh my gosh!

GM. She didn't know about it.

JT. There are people who say the holocaust was only a figment of imagination.

Q. Exactly.

JT. Can you believe it?

Q. That's what I was thinking when you, I was thinking the very same thing, yes. It's outrageous to think that people wouldn't believe that. But I have a question. Did your son when he was reading all these books...

[Sound of papers ruffling; brief interlude]

JT. Please accept these. These were made by Morita (pressed flower greeting cards made by GM.)

Q. Oh, thank you very much. These are beautiful. Thank you. That's lovely.

GM. That's a nice one, the second one.

Q. These are gorgeous.

JT. Gloria picked these flowers.

Q. You made these yourself?

GM. Right, they're all real flowers and leaves. They're pressed flowers, and it's a hobby of mine. I don't sell them. I have workshops with the church members, and we sell them at our bazaars.

Q. They're absolutely beautiful; thank you so much.

GM. My daughter, she's a physician's assistant, but her hobby is artwork. She paints and she goes to festivals like the Solano Stroll where they close off all the streets. They have them here too, the festivals?

Q. Yes.

GM. She has a booth and she sells her things. And I give her my things, and she sells them for her children's college education (laughs).

Q. It's such delicate work.

GM. It's a very easy process if you think about it (laughs).

Q. But it's just lovely.

GM. I've had some two-year-olds doing them. They slap the flowers on.

Q. (laughs)

GM. (laughs) And then of course they can't get the covering on, and so I help them with that. They show it, "Mommy look what I made."

Q. (laughs)

JT. She goes around picking petals and putting them in old telephone books to press them down.

Q. Yes.

JT. And then arranges them and gets that plastic and irons it on. That's it.

Q. Just beautiful.

JT. I know, isn't it?

Q. It is. It's so lovely.

GM. We had a work shop at John's, the Rossmoor Community Center. We did a workshop there one day at one of their clubs and they're all adults and they had a good time.

End of Interview

1 hour 37 minutes 48 seconds