

Museum of History and Industry
Historical Society of Seattle and King County

Transcript

Aki Kurose - taped interview, January 31, 1985
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Side A

This is an interview with Aki Kurose on January 31, 1985.
The interviewer is Lorraine McConaghy for the Museum of
History and Industry.

Q. What was your own perspective on the period before the
war began, before Pearl Harbor?

Kurose Before Pearl Harbor, I felt that I was an
American, so to speak. I look back now, and I can identify
many discriminatory things that did go on. But I was very
naive. I was very happy. I enjoyed going to school and the
whole concept of an American life was very real to me. I
felt I was a part of this country, and I was very proud to be
an American. I was very proud to study the history of the
United States.

Q. Where were you living and where did you go to school?

Kurose I was living in Seattle, in the Central Area,
and I was a student at Garfield High School, and I
participated in the band and other extra curricular
activities.

Q. What plans did you have for your life? Did you have
career plans at that age?

Kurose I wanted to go on to college, and so I was
taking a college preparatory class. Also, I was counseled
into going into the secretarial area. Our counselor felt
that was a very good area for women, as well as when I look
back now, I think she felt this was a good area for Asians.

Q. Did you feel that you were diverted from University
training? Was that the intent of her advice?

Kurose I really don't know, but as I look back, I see
very strongly the kinds of advice that were given to Asian
women - to follow a secretarial career more than to go on to
college. I don't know if it was more sexist in their
thinking, or if it was particularly targeted at Asian women.

Q. Were you aware of any ambivalence in the
Japanese-American community about Japan's adventurism in the
Pacific in the late thirties and early forties, in China and
in the islands?

Kurose I really must say that I was very naive and not
very global in my thinking. I was not focusing in those
areas, or giving them much thought. I would hear some of the
conversation of my parents, talking about Japan and my

relatives, and perhaps a little bit about the international scene. But I really could not reflect back and say that I was very much aware of what was going on.

Q. What was the intellectual climate of the Japanese-American community like? Were there publications? Japanese-language newspapers here in Seattle?

Kurose Yes, there were Japanese language newspapers, and an English section in the Japanese newspapers. Then there was the Japanese-American newspaper, which was all in English, and it was mainly a community oriented newspaper with not much emphasis on news of the world. It was mainly about the community and about the goings-on in it, social activities, and the accomplishments of certain people.

Q. Could you define for the tape the terms "Issei," "Nisei," "Sansei," and "Kibei?"

Kurose Okay, "Issei" means "the first generation," and that's the Japanese people who emigrated to America, and they are considered Issei.

"Nisei" means "the second generation," and that means the children of the Issei group. They are the second generation of the Japanese people in America and those people are usually American citizens by birth.

"Sansei" would be the children of the Nisei, of the Japanese-American citizens - the third generation. "Ichi, ni, san" means "one, two, three"; so issei, nisei, and sansei.

"Kibei" were Japanese-Americans who were born here, but were sent back to Japan to get their education, or they were raised in Japan, or spent some part of their time in Japan, and then returned to the United States. They became identified as a separate group, and also ostracized many times because their background was more traditionally Japanese. From Japan, rather than the United States type of life. You could almost say they were marginal people - they didn't belong in Japan, because when they went over there, they were speaking English.

Q. If they were sent there by their parents for an education, would it have been secondary school? Or college?

Kurose It depends. "Kibei" doesn't necessarily mean they went back for high school, or grade school, or whatever. Once they graduated high school, if they went back to Japan for a college education, I don't think they would be considered kibei. Kibei is mainly for those who spent their childhood over in Japan. Some of them were sent back because of the economic situation, where both parents might need to work, and there was no babysitting.

Also, some of the people that came from Japan had the idea that they would build up their nest egg here, save up enough money to go back and have a real start in life in Japan. I think, at the very beginning, that most of the people were sojourners, or so they thought. And then they found, once they came over here, that they were not able to

raise or save that much money. So they were stuck over here. Or they found that life could be more comfortable here, and so they didn't go back. There were two trains of thought, and many people vacillated back and forth.

Q. How would you describe the economic and social makeup of the Japanese-American community on the eve of war, mentioning those four groups you've described?

Kurose In Seattle, the Japanese community was not affluent, but they were fairly comfortable. They were not homeowners - it was not possible to own a home unless you were a citizen because of the Exclusion Law which forbade Asians to own property. Also, there was the fact that they could not become citizens.

Q. How common was it for them [the Issei] to own property in their children's name?

Kurose There were several people that had property in their children's name because they were not able to buy property in their own name, but I couldn't give you a number percentage. It was not that great.

Q. What were they usually employed in during the late thirties and early forties?

Kurose The Japanese-Americans were mainly in the labor field, clerks, or delivery boys, or domestic work, or factory work. The Isseis were in farm work, or fruit peddlers, or vegetable peddlers. There were quite a few Japanese porters for the railroad.

Q. The Japanese American Citizens League - was that a powerful force in the community?

Kurose I don't think so, though it was the only viable organization, at that time, that had citizens that could go and speak to the powers. The Japanese-American citizens constituency was mainly college graduates and college people. The average age of the Nisei at that time was nineteen to twenty, and it was a very young age. They were the supposed leaders that were to make -

They are often faulted now as having taken a very pseudo patriotic stand, and there is criticism saying that perhaps if it had not been for the JACL, perhaps we would not have had to be interned. I disagree with that, because I feel that that was not the time of dissent and protest. I think dissent and protest came about more in the fifties and sixties.

I don't care what group of people it would have been - it would have been difficult for them to have protested, "No, we will not go," and to fight the evacuation.

It's easy to criticize and say, "You led your group into camp," by saying that "We're going to be patriots and cooperate." That's the criticism that JACL has incurred.

Q. So were the Nisei who were going to be the professional

generation - did they lead in the community, or did the Issei lead in the community?

Kurose Isseis were pretty much in control yet, I believe. But it wasn't that kind of community where the leaders had that much power.

Q. Oftentimes, secondary sources discuss and almost take for granted the strength of the Japanese-American family, and the allegiances within the family. Is that justified?

Kurose I think so. The Japanese families have been very close knit. The camp had a lot of influence on weakening that closeness, because parents naturally lost all power of control, and the family structure was completely destroyed. Families were not able to eat together as one family unit. The barracks were such that you didn't sit around and discuss things, and have a comfortable evening. The barracks were just cots all in a row - it didn't lend to any real family life.

Q. When the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred, it was a Sunday. How did you hear of it?

Kurose I was at church, and when I came home, the radios were all blasting it. My parents were stunned, and they said, "Oh, there's going to be trouble."

Q. Were you living in an area of Japanese-American families, or were you living in an integrated neighborhood?

Kurose I was living in an integrated neighborhood, in an apartment, and most of the tenants in the apartment were Jewish, and a few Japanese families.

Q. Did you yourself see ahead at all what the "trouble" might be, or were you just shocked and stunned?

Kurose I didn't realize the enormity of the situation and the problems I would be incurring until the following day when I went to school. I realized then that I was viewed as an enemy Japanese, and even some of the teachers were saying, "You people bombed Pearl Harbor," and all of a sudden I became Japanese instead of an American that I had thought I was.

Q. Were you afraid?

Kurose Yes, I was afraid, and also very confused, and saddened because of the attitude of friends at school. The whole thing was such a traumatic thing.

Q. You felt yourself to be an American citizen, as you were. In that month of December, I wonder if you recall when the Seattle police collected all the radios and cameras from the Japanese-American community. One thing I've wondered is why did people so readily surrender their property? What was the expectation?

Kurose As I previously said, it was that kind of time where you just didn't question or protest. You thought, "Well, this doesn't seem fair," but you were supposed to do this, and so you went ahead and did this.

 Certainly, no one was really happy about it, and they thought it was very unfair, but nevertheless you complied.

Q. Do you recall that event, bringing those things into the police station?

Kurose I have a slight recollection, but I really can't ...

Q. Well, I just wondered if there were any provisions made for returning the items?

Kurose I don't recall getting anything back, but we didn't own any real fabulous cameras or radios. The main thing they were looking for was short-wave radios, trying to see if we were guilty of espionage or sabotage.

Q. It seems to me that this was a time of rumor, in every aspect of Seattle, whoever you were. Was that true in your community as well?

Kurose Oh, yes!

 We immediately became suspect, and we became very paranoid. In my situation, the FBI came to my house to observe and check out the man across the street who had some connection with the consulate. It was a real uncomfortable and frightening thing. The rumors were that they were going to be locked up, that they were going to be sent away - we didn't know if they would encounter physical harm. We just didn't know what to think.

Q. Was the idea of relocation bandied about as a rumor from the beginning?

Kurose Well, we thought our parents were in jeopardy because they were not citizens. As citizens, we would possibly be left behind, and because of our age we were frightened. Also, we wondered what would be happening to us.

 My brother was a university student. My parents looked up to him to be the leader of the family, and someone to be responsible. If they were taken, he would be taking care of us. They felt that he would be able to manage.

 Nevertheless, we were all panic stricken because we didn't know what would happen to us.

Q. Did you go on with your life? I feel as though I would have wanted to withdraw from school because of the ... How was the atmosphere? Did it get worse or better after those first days?

Kurose It was uncomfortable. The whole community, the

whole society was full of rumors, and the situation at school was the same way. But we continued to attend school and, after the sorting out of who was going to remain your friend and who wasn't, life went on as usual. But still anticipating that something would happen to us. It became more and more evident that we were being regarded as enemies rather than citizens of the United States.

Q. How did it begin? What did happen?

Kurose Well, a curfew was imposed on us, and we were not able to go out after dark. Naturally, we were frightened of being arrested and so we observed the laws carefully and rigidly. I know my husband, who was my brother's best friend, would come and visit, and if it got late, my parents would say, "You must stay and spend the night here because we don't want you to be out in the street, or you might be incarcerated."

It felt like there was no privacy any more. You felt like the walls had ears. We were very frightened as to what we could discuss or say.

Q. The coastal corridor was, I think, defined before relocation began, did any Japanese-Americans voluntarily move out of the corridor to friends in eastern Washington?

Kurose Yes, people who had friends, or had some opportunities to work in eastern Washington or eastern Oregon did move and relocate in those areas so they would not have to go to camp.

Because of the shortage of time and also because of the economic situation, many people could not. I also think that people were reluctant to pick up and go to another unknown place not knowing what might happen.

Q. When the decision was made to move the Japanese-Americans who could not leave, there was an assembly center in Puyallup. Did you go there?

Kurose Yes.

Q. How did you pack? What was the journey like?

Kurose Well, we were told we could carry only two things, and we could take only what we could carry in our two hands. So naturally we planned to pack as much as we could in two pieces of luggage. We had never gone traveling before, and we didn't own any suitcases or anything. So my folks went down and purchased some cheap luggage for us - I still have the suitcase that I took. It's very little! I'm surprised they didn't buy anything larger. I guess they thought that was as much as we could probably handle. The suitcase is made out of thin plywood, with a little cloth inside. The outside has some paper pasted around it to make it look like leather. And that's what I carried.

My brother immediately made up stencils to put our name across the suitcases.

Q. What did you pack? Did you bring a doll - you were still young enough.

Kurose No, I don't know why. We just put in as much of our clothing as we could.

Q. Did you take any precious family things?

Kurose No, we really didn't. We left everything behind.

Q. Packed up, or just as it was?

Kurose We packed them up and boxed them and left them behind. Fortunately, we were able to leave them in the apartment, and we had a student who was a university student with my brother and who offered to take care of our things for us, and stay in the apartment. That was very lucky for us.

In the meanwhile, during the war, the man who was to take care of the property had neglected to pay the taxes, and the building was up for sale for delinquent taxes. My brother was a G.I. at that time, and because of his status as a G.I. and because the building was in his name, the Red Cross was able to come to the rescue. So my parents did not lose the property.

Q. Do you remember what your parents' expectation was about returning? Was it clear in everyone's mind that this was going to be for the duration of the war?

Kurose Yes, they planned to return [afterwards], and they did. Because of the fact that my brother was in the U.S. Army, the property was safe, but my parents had to spend a lot of time and money paying back and picking up the pieces, because they had a lot of delinquent taxes to take care of. And so they made payments on them for years.

Q. Did many of your friends go with you on the same day, or were there lots of staggered departures?

Kurose Yes, they did. We went by neighborhoods, by areas, and so everybody in our immediate neighborhood left at the same time on a bus to Puyallup.

Q. Who was in charge of the move? Was it soldiers?

Kurose Yes, and the most shocking thing was that the barracks were just thrown together with knotholes. It was a long barrack, and the rooms were 9' by 12'. I'm not sure they were even that large. There was one little pot-bellied stove in the center. Oh, wait a minute! In Puyallup, I don't know if there was a stove - I can't remember.

Q. That's where the fairground is today?

Kurose Some of the people had to stay in the animals' stalls that were cleaned up. We were in the parking lot.

Q. What was the atmosphere on leaving Seattle? Were people resigned, or tearful, or angry, or frightened, or was it a mixture?

Kurose It was a very tearful situation for me, I remember. I just couldn't hold back my tears. I thought, "Wow, I have to leave my home, and go to a great unknown." I was frightened.

And we were herded like cattle. It was just such a different way of being dealt with. We received numbers, and when we arrived at the camp, we had to line up and get our mats and our bags for mattresses. We had to stuff these canvas bags with hay, and that was to be our mattress. And we had these army cots. Everything was so bleak and so public. You felt like you were completely stripped of your privacy. And Japanese families raised their children to be quite modest and for us to have to go to a public latrine was very difficult and embarrassing. It was a little outhouse with holes lined up where you were sitting...

Side B

Kurose Many of us felt embarrassed to go into the outhouse - they called it the latrine.

Q. Were the showers on that communal basis as well?

Kurose Yes, and all it was were these spouts that came out of the wall and everybody was to share the shower.

Q. What was the dining like? Did you all eat together, or did you have your separate families?

Kurose No, we could not eat as a separate family. It was rows of tables, and we had to stand in line with a plate to get the food. It was first-come, first-served. Many of the adults were recruited to work in the kitchens. My father was a cook, so he had to be behind the stoves; my mother was a dishwasher. She had to work in the kitchen to help serve and wash the dishes. So we had to stand in line and eat by ourselves, and not with the family.

Q. What sort of food was it?

Kurose It was supposed to be Army food. We were used to a very different kind of diet, and we thought it was pretty awful.

Later on, we found out that one of the men who was supposed to be in charge of the food had bought inferior food and had confiscated some of the funds. Not only was the food inferior, and the diet not so desirable, it was also compounded by the fact that somebody had tampered with what was supposed to be ours and made it even worse.

Q. The Puyallup Assembly Center was the center for what area? Did it include more than Seattle?

Kurose Yes, the little towns like Fife and Sumner and Puyallup had many Japanese farmers.

Q. Bainbridge Island?

Kurose Bainbridge Island was the first group to go and I'm not sure if Bainbridge Island was in those camps or not. I think some were sent to California.

Q. How long were you at the assembly center?

Kurose We were there two and a half to three months. Though I may be mistaken.

Q. That's a long enough time to develop something of a structure in the camp. Did you govern yourselves?

Kurose There were community leaders that met and then had meetings with us. We organized some community singing sessions, and they would have informational meetings, and social activities to keep us occupied.

The most shocking thing was the barbed wire fences around the camp and a guard tower with soldiers pointing a gun at us. It was a very demeaning and frightening situation. You immediately sensed that we were not there for our protection because if it were for our protection, why would the guns be pointed at us?

The whole aspect of the family structure being completely dissipated and the fact that we felt so dehumanized - that was the hardest part.

Q. What camp were you sent to eventually?

Kurose I was sent to Minidoka in Idaho. When we arrived, it was very dusty and it was way out in the deserts of Idaho. It was a very desolate, very sad welcome. It was a very sad arrival to a barren place.

The barracks just had black tarpaper tacked on it. They hadn't been completed and they never were completed.

Q. Did you arrive in the summer?

Kurose The fall.

Q. Does it get very cold there in the winter?

Kurose Oh, it got very, very cold. We were not accustomed to that kind of weather. The summer was very, very hot. When we arrived, it was hot. The winter became very, very cold and we only had that one little pot-bellied stove in the center of the barracks. We had to go about a block away for the washroom and bathroom facilities. It was not a pleasant situation.

Q. Had any of the people that you knew been segregated out to other camps by this time? To Tule Lake or Manzanar?

Kurose Some went to Tule Lake, and we kept hearing rumors that people had said they would repatriate, go back to Japan or be sent back. All kinds of rumors, and it was hard to separate the truth from the rumors.

 We heard about the outbreaks at Tule Lake. There seemed to be more violence and more protesting going on down in Tule Lake but Idaho was fairly calm as far as outbursts and such. We never had any outbursts or visible protests.

Q. Was there a camp newspaper at Minidoka?

Kurose Yes, and soon there was a camp newspaper called the Minidoka Irrigator, and it had news about the camp. A little co-op was formed where we could go and buy things.

 Some people did get passes go to out to Twin Falls or to the farm areas nearby to become seasonal farm laborers. Some people were able to go to Twin Falls to go shopping and I don't know how.

Q. I wonder what the reception was for people who went out to do that farm labor.

Kurose Oh, the labor practices were very discriminatory. They gave cheaper wages to the Japanese-Americans that went out of the camps, and there was inferior housing and lodging. There was definitely differential treatment.

Q. Were you too young to have to sign or decide about the renunciation pledge and loyalty pledges that came through?

Kurose The women were not as involved emotionally or physically in signing those pledges because when the fellows signed the question, "Are you willing to denounce the emperor of Japan and denounce all allegiance to the emperor?", that was just one thing. The other was, "Will you volunteer into the services?" Well, although there were women WACS and so forth, it just didn't affect us as much as it did the fellows.

 There was recruiting going on among the fellows for the Army, and my brother volunteered to go to the Army. My husband did not. My husband's brother was a University of Washington graduate, in 1940 or just before the war. Although he was an honor student, and offered a scholarship at MIT as an aeronautical engineering student, when the different companies came to interview him, once they found out he was a Japanese-American, he was not offered a job. Dr. Sieg, who was the president of the university, suggested to him that he go to Japan and work. Dr. Sieg was my husband's father's customer - my husband's father was a fruit and vegetable peddler, and he had Dr. Sieg as a customer. And Dr. Sieg befriended him and helped him find a job for my brother-in-law. Well, unfortunately he went and he was recruited for the Japanese army once the war broke out, and he was immediately sent to the Philippines and was killed in the war.

 My in-laws were adamant about the fact that

they didn't want my husband to volunteer because they said, "Here we've lost one son in the war already, and you'll be on the other side." So he wrote, "If I am called, I will go, but I will not volunteer to be in the Army." He was called not too long after that, but he had told his parents that he would not volunteer, but if he were called, he would certainly go.

Q. In Minidoka, were classes organized, could you continue your schooling?

Kurose Yes, but the whole atmosphere of the schools was different. Before the war, most of the student were pretty conscientious students, and you didn't see too much truancy and misbehaving in the classroom. But in the camps, it was a totally disrupted atmosphere. It was not like a regular school. The physical plant was so different that you didn't feel like you were in school.

Q. Were your instructors Japanese-American?

Kurose Some were Japanese-American, and some instructors were hired by the government and sent into the camps.

I did not attend school in camp because I graduated, and then I went out of camp to seek employment and continue to go to school. I had planned to go to the university, but I went out as domestic help to Salt Lake City thinking I would attend the University of Utah. I found out that the people that hired me as domestic help had no intention of having me go to school during the daytime. They had decided I was only to go to school in the evenings.

When I found that out, I attended business college and completed it. By then, it seemed that they were easing up on the regulations and my family applied to come back to Seattle and we were granted permission to come back. The complete ban was lifted and we were the first family to come back.

And then I continued my college education after I returned.

Q. Going back to the camp, Michi Weglyn (Years of Infamy) talks about an increasing Japanization in the camps. Did you see that at Minidoka, or didn't it happen there?

Kurose I didn't see it that much in the camp. I didn't feel that there was that kind of feeling about going back to the Japanese culture. In fact, there was a lot of denial and almost resentment of being Japanese. I think a lot of the resentment was targeted toward the parents, though it was certainly no fault of their's. We almost felt, "Shucks! We're just here because we were born Japanese."

I really, at that time, was not very philosophical or thinking in those terms. My main recollection of camp, thinking of the pleasant aspects of it, was that the American Friends Service Committee sent a lot of books to camp, and it was exciting to be able to go and check out books.

The American Friends Service Committee sent maternity packages, and baby layettes to the camp, and I remember some of the pregnant women being so elated over the fact that they had new layettes for their babies.

I was very much influenced at that time by the Quakers, feeling, "Wow, these are people that really care and are really coming out to help."

Q. Did you have any contact with people from the Caucasian community?

Kurose Yes, I still remember Mary Jo Forsell who was my classmate in high school, who continually wrote to me. Her parents were very kind and they visited me in Puyallup one time. And that was really exciting.

There was this Chinese girl, Mamie Chinn, who also visited us and she became a very close friend of the Japanese people. People are still remembering her as someone who came to visit us and bring us gifts. She gave us a real boost in our morale, and there weren't too many people that came.

Q. What was your opinion of the staff?

Kurose Truly, at that time, I heard the names of the staff people but I really wasn't thinking in terms of their leadership. A lot of things that I recollect are in terms of retrospect now, but at that time I wasn't thinking too much about leadership.

Q. When you went into Salt Lake City to work as a domestic for that family, it sounds as though you were being victimized to an extent. Was your pay at a lower rate than...?

Kurose Yes, I didn't get any money.(laughing)

Q. Oh, you didn't get any money! Well!

Kurose I was to use the man's streetcar pass. I felt like it really wasn't legal, but he said, "Use my commuter's pass to go downtown." So I had his streetcar pass.

Q. How were you able to pay your tuition?

Kurose My parents.

Q. So they essentially had your services for free.

Kurose Well, plus room and board. And I had my streetcar fare.

Q. What reception did you get from the good people of Salt Lake City?

Kurose I only really at the very beginning communicated with the other Japanese-Americans that relocated there. We spent a lot of time going to the movies and to

church, and stayed pretty much among ourselves. The other association I had with the white community was at the school, and then relating to my position as domestic help.

And I'm sure I was not the best domestic help because I was not used to working as a domestic.

I remember I was asked to wash potatoes. I just dumped the whole bag of potatoes in the sink and the lady was completely aghast. I still don't know how she expected me to wash potatoes. She said, "Oh! You don't even know how to wash potatoes!" And to this day, I don't know how I was supposed to wash the potatoes. But it appalled her that I had dumped the whole thing in the sink. (laughing)

Q. Were you under any kind of surveillance? Did you have to check in occasionally?

Kurose No, the only thing that hung very heavily over our heads was that if we did not successfully work out in the domestic situation, we could be sent back to camp. That threat was always there.

Q. It sounds as though, back in the camp, kids who were a couple of years younger than you, had perhaps the hardest time of all. Is that accurate?

Kurose Yes, I think so. They may have outwardly enjoyed themselves dancing and having lots of freedom just walking around the camp, but the resentment shows now. As you talk to them, the anger that they went through seems to have been very severe.

Just yesterday, I was talking with my girlfriend about our camp experiences and how her siblings felt. She was saying that her younger brother talks about how angry he was in camp. She said that she always thought that he was happy, but he just related to her the other day how angry and miserable he was because life was so different.

Q. It would seem as though a generation of radicalized young people could so easily have come out of that experience, but it didn't, did it?

Kurose No. Well, people are just beginning to come out. Sociologists and psychologists are now saying that the pain was so deep that we kept it locked in for a long time and now that we're able to talk about it, it's going to be a lot easier on us. The pain was very, very deep, and we were so afraid and paranoid about being again suspected of disloyalty that they made pseudo patriots of many of the Japanese-Americans, and very conservative people.

Q. When you returned to Seattle with your family, as the very first Japanese-American family to return, what was your reception here?

Kurose The Quakers and Reverend Andrews were there to meet us, and it was very nice. Our former friends greeted us and, generally, it was not too bad.

But as soon as we got to the corner drugstore,

we were asked not to come in. In fact, they had put up big signs, "No Japs Allowed," and there was name-calling. It became very uncomfortable.

We were only given \$25.00 plus the train fare to come back, so we immediately needed some employment. So we all went out into the employment field and found out things weren't that easy.

Q. Did your father get a job?

Kurose Yes, he went back to the railroad. He was a railroad worker. He was a porter at the station, and they offered him his job back.

It was unfortunate, because that meant they were going to replace the black porters that had come in. That created some problems, also.

Q. I think that most Seattle Japanese-Americans did not return.

Kurose Many did not. My in-laws would never come back. It was just too painful for them. The experience of camp life, and having lost their son - just the memories were too hard.

My sister-in-law has never returned to Seattle. She doesn't even want to visit.

Q. Where did they go?

Kurose My husband's family relocated to Chicago after camp. They found employment and made a life for themselves out there. My father-in-law was very happy. He worked in the produce section of National Tea, which was a chain store like Safeway or A & P.

Q. Was there a shakeup in the reestablished Japanese-American community? Were you old enough to know whether the same people who were able to control community opinion in 1941 returned, or was there a complete shakeup?

Kurose Well, some of them returned. JACL made a slow returning, but they soon became more the spokesman. They certainly don't represent everybody, but they did take on some of the leadership role.

Q. In terms of "What does it all mean?", what did you think internment and relocation were intended to accomplish, and do you think it succeeded?

Kurose I think it was a very racist kind of act. If anything, it certainly succeeded in pointing out that war hysteria allowed constitutional rights to be violated, and allowed just about anything to go. The underlying cause was racism, but they used the war to justify the racist acts in the name of defense and security.

Q. Would you then say that there was no justification in terms of espionage or sabotage?

Kurose Absolutely. And it doesn't make sense, because in Hawaii where the majority of the people were Japanese-Americans and also [despite] the proximity to Japan, they had no camps or incarceration. It would have tied up their labor, and the cities would have collapsed.

Q. There was no case of espionage ever proven against any Japanese-American, citizen or not, throughout the war here.

Kurose That is right. Now, we're finding out that there were a lot of lies, and a lot of evidence hidden that proved we were not disloyal. Right now, this is what the Gordon Hirabayashi case is all about. They've come up with new evidence to show that incarceration was absolutely wrong and unnecessary.