



Aya Fujii Oral History Interview, September 15, 2015

Title

“An Oregon Stater Interned During World War II”

Date

September 15, 2015

Location

Fujii residence, Portland, Oregon.

Summary

In the interview, Fujii discusses her family background and upbringing in a rural area near Hillsboro, Oregon. In this, she speaks specifically of the importance of Japanese culture in her household, the work that she and her siblings conducted on the family farm, and her memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' subsequent entry into World War II.

A primary focus of the interview is Fujii's memories of her and her family's experiences while interned during the war. In recalling that time period, which spanned more than three years, she describes the family's forced relocation to an assembly point at the Portland Livestock Exposition Center, the conditions at the center, and the family's decision to participate in a farm labor program based in eastern Oregon. She then details the specifics of her life while living in eastern Oregon, noting the work that she and other internees carried out, community life at the camp, and the family's move out of tents and into a former CCC barracks. She likewise notes her social life and progression through high school during the war years, including the circumstances by which she met her future husband.

The session then shifts its attention to Fujii's undergraduate tenure at Oregon State College. In this, Fujii comments on her decision to attend OSC, and discusses her living arrangements while a college student. She reflects on her schooling in Home Economics and speaks in particular of her participation in the activities of the college's home management house, including its use of "practice babies" in training young women to someday be effective mothers. Fujii also shares her thoughts on campus traditions of the era, the influx of GI's following the conclusion of the war, and the comfortable campus environment that recalls from that time.

The remainder of the interview is oriented toward Fujii's life after OSC. As she provides an overview of that time, Fujii makes mention of her work as a dietician, the specific assistance that she provided to Japanese speaking hospital patients, and the evolution of her husband's produce business. The session concludes with notes on family as well as activities in retirement, and Fujii's advice to students of today.

Interviewee

Aya Fujii

Interviewer

Mike Dicianna

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/fujii/>

Transcript

Mike Dicianna: Today is Tuesday, September 15th, 2015, and the Sesquicentennial Oral History Project has the honor of interviewing Aya Iwasaki Fujii; she's a member of the class of 1949. We are in Portland, Oregon at the Russellville Retirement Center. My name is Mike Dicianna, I'm an oral historian for the Special Collections and Archive Research Center. Aya, thank you for sharing your story with the Beaver Nation, this is going to be an epic interview.

We always like to start with a brief biographical sketch of our Beavers, like where were you born and some of your early childhood memories.

Aya Fujii: My name is Aya Iwasaki Fujii and I was born in 1927 in Hillsboro, Oregon. I was the third daughter of eight children and I had three brothers and four sisters. My parents came from Japan and they farmed in Hillsboro.

MD: You said that your father came to America just after the turn of the century?

AF: Right.

MD: And what did he do when he got here?

AF: He came basically like all the other single men, they came over to make money to send back to Japan. However, my father never went back to Japan once he came over, which is very unusual. I don't know why he never went back, because my mother went back several times. He married into my mother's family because they were from the same village actually, so even if she was a "picture bride," I think the families knew each other.

MD: So they finally settled in Hillsboro. Were you just outside of Hillsboro? Was it a rural part of the area?

AF: Yes, it was a rural part. And then they finally – my father must have found this plot of land which was fifty acres, which was not developed, is what it was. And I heard that they dynamited the place to get the stumps out and all that sort of thing.

MD: And what did they raise?

AF: I understand that they started out as a small dairy – well, I don't know if it was a dairy or just had a few cows to milk. And then they went into truck farming and I remember going up, they had tomatoes and peppers and green beans and all that. This was all before the war and I remember stringing the vines for the green beans. Everything was done, basically was labor, farm labor. And then after the war they went into the nursery business.

MD: So when you were growing up, like in elementary school days, did you go to school in Hillsboro?

AF: Yes.

MD: And what was that like?

AF: I remember actually my first day in the first grade. Like every first grader I think I was very nervous, but I remember Taka, my sister, taking me to school. And we sat in one of those desks that had a counter plus one of those seats that kind of molded and you just flipped it up when you were ready to leave, but it was all connected – the desk and the chair was all connected. It was one of those kind of seats. It had the inkwell in the corner.

MD: You also went to Japanese school?

AF: Yes.

MD: That was all the families in the area?

AF: Yes, there was quite a few, I would say maybe a total of about thirty. And all of the families got together into this old building in Banks, and it was like a big old warehouse type of thing, right next to some railroad tracks. My folks spoke

nothing but Japanese; my dad picked up a little bit. But anyhow, they wanted us to learn Japanese. But we spoke Japanese at home, kind of just picked it up.

[0:05:27]

And so we had a teacher that came from Portland on a Greyhound bus, and she rode from Portland to Hillsboro and got off on the bus. Since we had kind of an old car, we picked her up and drove to Banks which was, I don't know, it must have been at least twenty miles away, but it took us forever to get there. We studied there and coming back was about 3:00, and she got off at the side of the highway again and then went back.

But when we went to the Japanese school, we had to start the fire – it was a big pot-belly stove – and got the place warmed up. We had makeshift desks and stuff, and she taught us all the basic Japanese characters and things like that.

MD: And Japanese history? And the language and culture?

AF: No, I think it was more like alphabets and that sort of thing, I remember that.

MD: So later, after elementary school, you said that you were about thirteen when Pearl Harbor happened.

AF: Right.

MD: At that point, did you have a sense of what was going on? Do you remember the announcement of the attack on Pearl Harbor?

AF: Yes, we were working in the house, it was a Sunday, and I know we had Brussel sprouts, and to this day I can't stand Brussel sprouts. But we were sorting that for the market; my brother used to take all the produce that we had to the market. And we had an old Philco radio, which was quite a thing for us to have at the time, and I remember there was all the popular songs were playing and then all the sudden it stopped. And then they made that announcement. And to me it didn't seem earth-shaking, and I don't know that my parents could understand it either. However, my oldest brother was there, and he was the one that did the translating. But even after that, it did not impact me as much as probably my older sisters.

MD: It was definitely a change for your family because of being Japanese-Americans.

AF: Right.

MD: But the impact of it really didn't sink in.

AF: For me, because I was still on the younger side.

MD: So you still had your farm in the Hillsboro area, but the order came down from President Roosevelt for the evacuation. Tell us about that whole process, like what your parents did, what happened to the farm, that type of thing.

AF: OK. My parents – this was just past the Depression and my parents were able to build this huge house, it was one of the nicest homes on that road, I remember. It was a five bedroom house. And it was almost finished and when the war started we were living – our old house was right next to it and it was a big, one of those old-time farm homes that had square windows and two stories. I remember my parents said even if it isn't finished that we should try to go live in it. So we didn't have new beds or anything, but I remember just going up there and the smell of the new home and the hardwood floors, it was very very nice. So we stayed there for, I would say, three weeks before we were moved.

[0:10:17]

MD: And there was a family that basically took over the farm for you guys?

AF: Yes, it was our neighbors. They had a big dairy and they German – second-generation Germans – and they were very very friendly. And it's kind of ironic that Germany, Italy and Japan were part of the war, you know? We were friends with

them anyhow, but I don't know how it came about that they said they would take over, but I think that my oldest brother was able to negotiate.

MD: Many families, when they left their homes, they left them and they were gone. They weren't able to get them back.

AF: Right, exactly.

MD: So this was kind of a unique situation for your family.

AF: Yes. And a lot of the Japanese families, they might have been renting the places. They brought all of their equipment and stored it into our parents' buildings – we had garages and kind of a warehouse where we kept all the equipment and stuff. So they stored all of their stuff there. And so, like I said, we were one of the fortunate ones, but I think it was my brother's and my dad's foresight that we were able to keep the farm.

MD: Were all the kids living at home?

AF: My sisters and I, but I had two brothers that were drafted in January and March of '42. So it was, when they went off to war, I'm sure my parents were just distraught; it was just a sign of the times, I guess.

MD: So the order came down for all families to move to the center in Portland and that was?

AF: May the 22nd was when Washington County, where we lived, had to move. So by May, all the berries were ripening and all the stuff had been planted before, and so I don't know how many acres of strawberries they had, but our neighbors – those German neighbors – took care of everything. And they got the pickers and took the berries. They probably would have – if my folks had it – they would have had taken it to market, but I think it was all cannery. They took it to the cannery.

MD: So the first stop for all the Japanese families was Portland.

AF: The assembly center.

MD: At the assembly center, which was at one time-

AF: The Portland Livestock Exposition Center.

MD: Which is basically the same spot where the Exposition Center is today, isn't it?

AF: Exactly. And I remember going there when I was maybe in the seventh and eighth grade, and we had one of the fun days to go outside of the school, and we went to see the rodeos. It was, got on the bus and took a sack lunch, and I remember it was a great time. And sitting up in the arenas and watching the cowboys roping the bulls and things like that.

But it was different once we got there. I remember getting off of that Greyhound bus, I remember going to the Forest Grove, where we were all supposed to, and there was just a whole bunch of people there. And all the luggage and the duffle bags, they were all stacked up against the wall. And they had, I don't how many buses were there, but they were Greyhound buses, and I remember them opening up the hutch at the bottom and shoving all that stuff in there. And then we rode on that bus to the assembly center, which was from Forest Grove to Portland, and it was still a lark to me really, when I think back.

I remember getting off and I saw all these Japanese people who we weren't used to seeing, because we were not a community where there were many Japanese.

[0:15:17]

MD: That in itself must have been kind of an eye-opening experience; you didn't realize there was that many.

AF: Right, exactly.

MD: Tell us a little bit about the conditions and your time there at the assembly center.

AF: Well, we were there for just three weeks. And I remember we were assigned this place, they were basically horse stalls is what they were, and we had three of them. I had a brother that just got married in February of '42, so he was just a new groom, and his wife came from quite an influential family from Seattle, so she never knew, in their life, of living on a farm. So they got a stall and then there was two other stalls for my parents and us. And we had to stuff – we got a canvas cot with a kind of a soft foam mattress, I think – but we had to stuff that with straw ourselves and put it on the cot. And the slats where the horses – they were wide slats – but I remember it was all whitewashed and there was hair sticking out from, you know, yeah.

MD: From the horses in there.

AF: And all they had for a door was a cloth, a canvas cloth that just all you had to do was push it aside to walk in and out into the – there was no hallway, it was just wide open spaces. And there was no ceiling because, you know, it was just wide open on top, so you really could hear the music and all the conversation and all the noise that went on, and the babies crying next door. I can remember that.

But then, like I said, we were there for only three weeks, and by then we were able to meet a few friends. And we ate in two shifts and they had a bugle call for the first shift, and I think they gave us like a good hour, and then they had the second shift. But they assigned us whether we were to go on the first or the second shift, and they were at long long tables that were set up. With 3,500 people in there, they had to, yeah. And the food was something that, you know, we just weren't used to. They would have had rice, but a lot of it was like a stew type of thing, and things put over rice, rather than the rice by itself. And then when we had friends we ate with our friends, and our parents were getting kind of worried that we were going astray. And we were all girls, so my two younger sisters, they weren't in their teens yet, but I was at that very vulnerable age. I'm sure they were very worried.

And so, one day there was a call from eastern Oregon, saying that they needed farm laborers, because all the men from eastern Oregon were in the service. They needed help with their onion and sugar beet crop. And so my oldest brother left the camp to see what the situation was like. And so he came back and he thought that it was better than staying there, so we packed up again and rode the train – it was at midnight, I remember that, and we were all crammed into this train and it was midnight, I'm sure.

[0:20:10]

But there was a sentry, a guard, with a gun, stationed right in our train and he had to make sure that – well, of course, we had to pull the shades down, it was night time anyhow. But I don't know how long it took, it must have taken at least three or four hours to get there. And we got off and I can't quite remember how we got from Ontario to Nyssa, but that's when we went to the camp, to the tent camp.

MD: So Oregon came up with its own program. Rather than sending people to the actual internment camps – Minidoka and the one in Colorado – to use folks for emergency farm labor.

AF: Right.

MD: And so it was kind of a unique program. And so you guys were paid and they provided housing, such as it was. And so you guys actually kind of got away from having to go to the actual internment camps. And this was better in ways?

AF: Well, yes. We had a little more freedom, but we lived differently than people that went to the internment camps. They at least had barracks, right? When we arrived finally in Nyssa, we were issued tents, the big tents, and there must have been about a hundred tents all in rows. We were assigned four tents and they had FSA written in big letters on the side and that stood for Farms Security Administration. There was a director there and another bookkeeper or something, plus a big building built for meetings and things, I remember that. But we were on the edge of one of the areas – it was a big area – but our tents were not in the middle of the section, it was on the end. So on the ends of it were the two outhouses, I remember that. So we didn't have to go far to go to the outhouses. But, you know, there was no indoor plumbing. We had showers but it was a communal shower.

MD: And this was at the beginning of summer?

AF: Yeah. We moved in June because we arrived at the assembly center on May 22nd and we stayed there just three weeks. So in June we were in Nyssa.

MD: Ready for the harvest.

AF: No, it was kind of planting. Some of it was really planting and weeding the sugar beets and the onions, I remember that. And that was all very stooped labor, not on your hands and knees.

MD: Did everybody work, all the family? The brothers and sisters, mom and dad and everybody?

AF: Yeah. My sister-in-law took care of my two youngest sisters, because they were young yet. And then my dad and mother and the rest of us all went out in crews, but we weren't all in the same group. My sisters were in a different group and my mother – my dad was with the men's group. So I had to go with my mother and several of the older ladies, because I was too young to be with the older women. So I went with her and thinned beets. And I remember going up and down those rows, thinning beets, but somehow I must have been very slow or whatever because some of the older ladies would go tend the row, go back and pick me up. [laughs]

[0:25:00]

MD: Was it long days? Did they take you out early in the morning?

AF: Yeah, early in the morning and we didn't come back, I'm sure, until close to 4:00 or something like that. And we packed our lunch and I remember taking juice – it wasn't pop, it was juice – and putting it into the irrigation ditch. I remember the water was just running and we would put our drinks in the irrigation ditch.

MD: To keep them somewhat cool.

AF: Yeah, right.

MD: So what was the camp life like in the evenings then? Was it a community?

AF: Well no, everyone kind of had their own, you know – they came back from work and so they probably just had their...and there wasn't that much, maybe the weekends. And there was a place, I think, there was this missionary from Japan but she lived in Gresham. Do you know where Gresham is? She lived in Gresham with some of the – there was a large community in Gresham of Japanese people, and somehow she came to eastern Oregon and formed a little group there. And she had church services, Christian church services, and even all these Buddhist people went to the service and learned all these Christian songs. And that's how we became Christians. She was the real focal point of our lives and she had so much to do with getting people to colleges and she really influenced our lives a lot.

MD: We also talked a little about your sister that was at Oregon State College when the war started. Did she come telling you stories about what it was like when that happened at OSC?

AF: She started in September and the war was December the 7th, so she lost all of her credits then. And then all of them came back; they had to leave.

MD: And her name was?

AF: Kate. Kate Iwasaki.

MD: So you guys ended up moving from the camp in Nyssa to an old CCC camp in Adrian. What prompted that move? Was it a different organization? Or was it still part of the FSA?

AF: It was an old CCC camp and the government moved us; it was about twelve miles south of Nyssa. And we all lived in barracks, but there was this one big building that our family was able to get, and it must have been the headquarters or something, because it was two stories. But in this two story house, we had the bottom floor and another family lived up

above us. And then there was a communal – the same door that we went into our room, this other family got into. So there was three families living in this big house.

MD: Was this when you went into high school?

AF: Yes.

MD: OK, so you actually attended high school in town, in Nyssa?

AF: Right, but we had to ride a bus, I think it must have been ten miles.

MD: So your high school life, what was your high school like being you were basically out in the middle of nowhere in eastern Oregon, but still with this whole – the war going on – was that a different experience?

AF: Yeah, but like I say, I was still young and not quite into all of this. The school bus came and eastern Oregon winters were pretty harsh and I know that we had to walk quite a ways to get to the corner where the bus picked us up. And it was so cold that we built a fire right on the corner to keep warm while we were waiting for the bus, so we smelled like smoke once we got on. I remember that. And we got on the bus and then went, and it was – they weren't used to seeing that many Japanese there, because there wasn't very many people there. And so there must have been like – my brothers-in-law went to school there – and there must have been maybe eight or ten of us Japanese there. And we made a few friends, but at lunch time it was just easier to sit together and have lunch, and then get back on the bus and come back.

[0:30:20]

MD: So you went through your entire high school experience, during the war, in Nyssa.

AF: Right. I was a sophomore then, but by the senior year we had more friends and got into more activities and things like that. I do remember this one incident which I wrote about: I had a good friend whose name was Martha Brown, and I think her parents were pretty influential in Nyssa. And we were good friends, and all of the sudden, one day she came and – I think it was on the news and everything – but her brother was killed in the Pacific. And that's what – I mean, she never spoke to me after that. It was pretty traumatic, I remember that. Of course, we had nothing to do with it, but that's what it was.

MD: That's what it was right then, yeah. So you graduated from high school in 1945, did the family stay in eastern Oregon? When did the family move back to Hillsboro?

AF: It was in August when the war ended, right? August 5th or 7th or something like that. And I had already applied to Oregon State and I just assumed that after you finish high school you go to college. So I had all my papers and I don't think it was as stringent as it is now to try and get into college. I think it was in September, and my folks were still there in eastern Oregon. So my folks put me on this, it must have been the train, I guess. But I was the first one in my family to move back into the restricted zone; central Oregon was the restricted area, and Corvallis, of course, being on the west.

I remember taking the train and getting off in Corvallis, taking a taxi, getting over to Waldo Hall, and that's all I knew because my sister went to school, was there before. My mother gave me \$200, put it in a little sack, and pinned it inside my bra. [laughs] When I got off, I had some money, probably in my purse. I never took a taxi in my life before, but I knew I had to tip him. I don't know how much I tipped him, but he dropped me off at Waldo Hall. It was just a brand new experience to me, but there was a few people from Hillsboro that I recognized and that kind of helped. It was maybe a couple of other Japanese girls that were there. But the house mother was exceptionally nice, and I think she had a lot to do with me being comfortable there.

MD: Let's switch gears a little bit and talk about your time at Oregon State College. You got a degree in home economics, was that your original plan? Or did you have a major in mind?

AF: It's funny, my mother would always say to me, "what do you want to do? What do you want to study? What do you want to do when you grow up?" And I couldn't quite explain it to her. I would always just say cooking and sewing and that kind of stuff. So I guess it was just ingrained in me that that's what I was going to be doing. So I began getting very

interested in cooking and then I heard about the Home Economics program. I don't know what my sister was interested in when she went to college. I think when she went back east to college, I really don't even know what she majored in. But anyhow, a couple of my friends went into home ec too, so I just went in there; went into that school.

[0:35:10]

MD: Life in Waldo Hall. Let's talk about Ed – your husband, Ed Fujii. You met him in?

AF: In camp, I met him in camp. He was one of six boys – six or eight boys...six boys, I guess. And I met him probably at some social function. And I actually dated him for eight years, since I met him, and you know how young. [laughs] But I know when we were getting serious my parents said, "you're not getting married until you get a college degree and learn how to drive," in case I had to go home again [laughs] after I met him. And then my senior year, he was drafted. All of his brothers were in the service; there must have been three in the service. He was the second oldest, so he took care of his parents and the farm, so he was the last to be called. And he was called just shortly before the war ended, actually, so he was only in there for about a year.

MD: Where did he grow up?

AF: He grew up in Gresham. And then we were in camp somehow, a group of them decided to go to Brigham Young – Brigham Young of all places. [laughs] And so he was only there probably just a term when he got his draft notice. Then after they got back, and then I was probably a junior or something like that, and then they moved back about the same time as my parents did.

MD: Back to their home.

AF: Yeah.

MD: And he waited for you to get out of college.

AF: Yeah, well, it was kind of an unwritten statement. We got married a after I graduated.

MD: Sixty-five years ago.

AF: Sixty-five years ago.

MD: Celebrated your sixty-fifth anniversary this last summer. So when you were at Waldo Hall you had a roommate, I suppose. Was she a friend that you made and stayed in contact with?

AF: Well, the roommate at Waldo Hall, I think she's gone now. But the roommate I had at Sackett Hall, I still keep in touch with. She lives in Bend and she's from Junction City. The Gribskovs – have you ever heard of the Gribskovs?

MD: No.

AF: They're an old – what nationality?

MD: Probably Scandinavian, being in Junction City.

AF: Yeah. And so she and I keep in touch, we have lunch when we go to Black Butte in the summertime.

MD: You moved, in your senior year, to the brand new Sackett Hall. What prompted that? Did they just move some of the girls out of Waldo and the seniors had first choice?

AF: I can't remember, but I do remember it was Sackett Hall. I think it was D – there was four, A, B, C, D.

MD: So it was all new and fancy. Did it feel significantly different from the 1907 Waldo?

AF: Yeah.

MD: So it was the top of the line housing for girls.

AF: Oh yeah. Each one of us had a closet and all that kind of stuff.

MD: One of the things that makes you also very unique, being a home economics major, is that you were part of a program – you had one term – where you were part of the home management house, Withycombe House, where you learned cooking and cleaning and laundry and things like that. But you also had what's known as a "practice baby" in today's terms. Tell us about your child that you guys had – how did that work out?

[0:40:00]

AF: It was pretty amazing. I remember when it was my turn to take care of the baby, there was one position that you had to be a host and so you invited some guests, and it was a dinner party going on. And that baby started to cry and I had to leave the table and go upstairs and take care of the baby, and I missed that whole dinner! I remember she wouldn't quiet down. [laughs]

MD: How old was the-

AF: The baby?

MD: Yeah.

AF: It was just an infant; a real infant.

MD: The program began in 1923 and they had these practice babies, and it's kind of a unique experience for the co-eds.

AF: Yeah and all the things we were taught to do, using Q-tips to clean out the ears, you know? Very meticulous. I mean, you don't do that anymore, but I remember the Q-tips, a lot.

MD: Do you remember the baby's name?

AF: No I don't.

MD: Because they usually gave them the last name of the house, Withycombe, or Kent. They would name the baby after the house, yeah. It's kind of a unique part of Home Economics history.

AF: Exactly. But it was a very worthwhile project, let me tell you. I'm sure I raised my kids – it was easier for me. I'm sure it was easier for me to raise my kids. I think that was a very worthwhile project.

MD: You were at Oregon State College at the height of some of the finest traditions. When you were a freshman, did you wear a green ribbon in your hair as a rookess?

AF: Yes, exactly. And I remember going to the football games, I remember this big white chrysanthemum – I don't know whether they had the orange O in there or what – but the streamers. And I was so proud to wear that chrysanthemum, you know, these big mums. And the, what you call it, they burn...

MD: The homecoming fire?

AF: Right.

MD: The rook bonfire. Did you burn your rook ribbon?

AF: I kind of remember that. But I remember the green ribbon, you had to wear it every Wednesday.

MD: Fine traditions. How about homecoming and the large bonfires for homecoming, do you remember those?

AF: Yes I do, because I remember asking Ed to come up. I went to quite a few of those dances; I asked Ed to come. They were formal dances and I had all those programs yet, amazing.

MD: Dance cards?

AF: Dance cards. And I can't imagine me doing all that, you know what I mean? The Mortar Board and the Foresters Ball and all those orchestras, big name orchestras, Charlie Spivak and somebody that sounded like Glenn Miller.

MD: So at Oregon State there was, like I say, these traditions. They're kind of fading away now but you were right in the middle of those. So you were involved with campus life as well as your studies, did you also get involved with any of the committees for dances or things like that? Did you help plan that stuff?

AF: No, I don't think I did.

MD: One of the other amazing things about you being at Oregon State from 1945 through 1949 is being Japanese-American, you were in the midst of the returning veterans that were there on the GI Bill. Did that have an effect? Was there any problems?

AF: I don't recall that there was. But I do remember there was a big group of them – and I mentioned it in my story, that when I enrolled in one of the English classes that I had missed earlier, I went to the Education Hall where there was English III or whatever it was, and my gosh, I was the only female in that class, and these were all men. And they were not students, they were older men! I was pretty traumatized but I got through it. [laughs]

[0:45:21]

MD: You didn't experience any discrimination? Perhaps everybody was just Beavers there as opposed to Japanese-American versus-

AF: Exactly. I did not experience any of that, you know?

MD: So the Oregon State community is just like it is today and always has been – it's a community.

AF: Yeah. But, I don't know, unless they were – the men had grown up and understood it. I don't know.

MD: So you graduated in 1949 with a degree in home economics, but you specialized in-

AF: Foods and nutrition.

MD: Foods and nutrition as a dietician. That was some special classes for the dietician training, did you have any favorite classes, favorite professors, while you were in that program?

AF: Well, that home management professor was one of my favorite ones. I think she instilled in me a lot. She taught also a class in – I forgot what the name of it was – how to manage a room, I think, with shelves and the measurements, how to measure your shelves so your dishes would fit. Things like that; I kind of remember that.

MD: There was some groundbreaking research at Oregon State in home economics in that area, which made us kind of special, and you were a part of that. So as you graduate and begin a life, did you guys get married right after graduation?

AF: No, it was the following year.

MD: So you began a career?

AF: Yes.

MD: Let's talk about life after Oregon State.

AF: OK, after I graduated and got married, Ed was back on the farm and I did not have a job yet. So I helped him on the farm but that wasn't for me really. I grew up on a farm so I knew what it was like. But they had a big berry farm and I helped out there. Let's see, I got married in 1950 and I think I helped out there for a year, maybe a year and a half. And then I was getting pretty disillusioned and one day I decided – someone mentioned to me, "why don't you try a hospital?"

So I did. I called Providence Hospital and the gal that answered it happened to be the dietician for Waldo Hall, and she knew who I was, and hired me on the spot. Isn't that amazing?

MD: Oh wow.

AF: Her name was Martha Marcella. [laughs] And so that made a very easy – it was an easy transition. So I worked there for about five years and then there was another gal there that was an Oregon State graduate, and she became another good friend of mine, but she died later on. It was a good beginning for my career. And then I raised my three children and, in 1966, after Tammy, my youngest, began school, I thought, "well, I really should get back." By then, one of the dieticians that had retired from Providence called me and asked me what I was doing, and I said, "nothing too much." And she said, "would you be able to help me a couple days a week at Woodland Park Hospital?" Which was a brand new hospital. And so I went and that became a full-time job.

[0:50:13]

MD: And that's where you ended up retiring from?

AF: Right.

MD: You mentioned that one of the things that you did is you actually helped translate with some of the patients.

AF: Yes, because there were a lot of first generation Japanese still in that area, and they would come. There was one Japanese physician that everyone seemed to go to, and he was a physician there. And of course, he knew a lot of Japanese; he was a World War II vet. He and his wife both came and did some translating for the medical problems, and so when he would write orders for me to see somebody, he would write it down on the thing and they would call me. And just the fact that I could speak a little Japanese made them feel more at ease. And I happened to know a lot of their kids so that helped too.

MD: It was old home week. [?]

AF: Yeah, right. And so I had to kind of learn some of, you know, like the calories and the diabetes type of things, so I kind of brushed up on that.

MD: So you worked at Woodland Park until, when did you retire?

AF: In '92 – I worked there about twenty-six years.

MD: During this time, I understand Ed ended going up into a produce business. Was that in Gresham? Or was that here in Portland?

AF: In Portland. He worked with his brothers until in his seventies, but you know how brothers are – there's too many of them and they all have families. And so he was able to – a friend of his had this produce market and he was wholesale produce. Ed called him, I'm sure, and in a few years he retired and Ed got the business. Then in 1990, I think, he sold his business to another Italian fellow. Ed should have sold the name but he didn't, so it still goes by Fujii Produce. Isn't that amazing?

MD: Fujii Produce, but run by an Italian.

AF: Right! His name is Pianobe. [laughs] Just a very nice fellow.

MD: So your retirement years, when you guys retired, did you travel? Did you just enjoy life?

AF: Yeah, we did. We were both golfers and we went to Arizona and southern California. We went to Hawaii because I have a son there. Until two years ago, we used to go every other year to Hawaii. It's getting a little more harder.

MD: Let's talk about your kids. That's one of the things that I always like to get the full story of our alumni and part of that is where their kids went and how their kids did. So you have three children?

AF: I have three, and Scott is the one that went to Oregon State, and he now lives in Hawaii, and he works for the Bank of Hawaii. You were mentioning earlier that they have these little Rotary Clubs and things, well he went to Japan a lot – he was in Japan for three years on bank-related business – and he was in Hiroshima and he met this girl, much younger than he was, and married her about, they must be married about eight years. She's quite a bit younger, no children. But he lives in Honolulu.

Then Becky is a born and raised Duck.

MD: Well, there's always those throwbacks in the family. [laughs]

AF: And she has a daughter, Mioko, who lives in Mississippi. She went through the Teach for America program, are you familiar with that?

[0:55:09]

MD: Yeah, I have a friend that did that.

AF: She went to Whitman, she graduated magna cum laude – very smart gal – and she had choices of going to New York City and somewhere else, Arizona, and Mississippi. So she chose Mississippi and she went through and just got her master's, and just got a brand new job. So she's working for the school district as a speech pathologist. And she got newly engaged and she's engaged to an African-American, which we thought, "well, you know." But we've met him a couple times, a very nice fellow, and he's either a vice-principal or something of a high school. Very nice guy. They're getting married around the fourth of July next year in Portland.

MD: And so your third child was?

AF: Tammy, and she's a Beaver, and she lives in Bellevue, Washington. And she works in marketing.

MD: So the majority of them have become Beavers.

AF: Yeah, and she has a son. She's divorced but she's living with another fellow from Nova Scotia, and her son goes to the University of Denver, he's a sophomore there.

MD: So you guys have settled here at Russellville, but you also lived at another facility before that.

AF: Called Summerplace, it's a retirement community for seniors. We lived there for ten years – a lovely place. I'm sure there are several other places like that where they're homes.

MD: And then you moved here to Russellville in?

AF: Just over a year ago. The kids wanted us to – I mean, with us getting older and worrying about health and stuff like that, and meals. We thoroughly enjoy it. And I can tell that Ed is slowing down quite a bit, because coming from a farm and to Summerplace, he had a little garden that he used to putter around in. But now he doesn't have anything and he does not participate in anything, so it's kind of hard. So the kids come here, I swear, every other week. And it's a long distance from Eugene and from Bellevue, they take turns coming up.

MD: So you had an interesting and eventful life, and it was influenced by Oregon State. One of the things that I always like to let my alumni do is impart some nuggets of knowledge, final thoughts, to the Beaver Nation who will be viewing this oral history. What does being a Beaver mean to you?

AF: Well I think it's laid a foundation for me that education is important. And I think that I found my life enriched by what I learned there. And my work, I'm sure that that had a lot to do with my education there. And I'm sure that my children, I don't think that there's any question that they were not going to go on to further education, I think it was just common knowledge.

MD: And it was all instilled in you early.

AF: From our parents, yeah. Because education has always been an important part of, I think, the Japanese people.

MD: Well ma'am, you have been a joy to learn your story. On behalf of the Sesquicentennial Oral History program, we thank you for participating. Your story of hardship and being a Beaver in kind of a strange after-the-war time is unique to our collection. And we officially thank you.

AF: You're welcome. It was interesting and I was happy to share it with you.

[1:00:31]