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Interview with Dorothy Shirachi

Dorothy Shirachi

California State University, Monterey Bay

CSUMB Oral History & Community Memory Archive
Chinatown Renewal Project
Interviewee: Dorothy Shirachi and Dahria Kianpour
Interviewer: Rebecca Barron
Date of Interview: October 30, 2010
Duration of Interview: 59:33

Rebecca Barron 00:00
Okay, this is Rebecca Barron and Dahria Kianpour, and we are interviewing Dorothy Shirachi. Is that correct?

Dorothy Shirachi 00:08
Shirachi.

Rebecca Barron 00:08
Shirachi. And do we have your consent to conduct this interview? Yes?

Dorothy Shirachi 00:15
Yes.

Rebecca Barron 00:15
Okay. So today we're going to have an interview. It's not a very traditional interview. We're going to ask you fairly broad questions and our aim is to just get your story on your experiences here in Salinas and at Soledad Street, your family's experiences or your experiences during World War II with the internment, and so just feel free to tell us any stories that you have. And we'll just maybe ask questions if there's pauses or if we start to digress a little bit, just to get back on point. Okay?

Dorothy Shirachi 00:50
Okay. Oh, my understanding was—were you gonna ask me—interview me because of the—we had a store on Lake Street?

Rebecca Barron 01:01
Yes, that too.

Dorothy Shirachi 01:02
Not Soledad Street. It was Lake Street.

Rebecca Barron 01:04
Yeah, anything that's Soledad Street or near Soledad Street.

Dorothy Shirachi 01:06
[unclear] I don't have many things to tell—

Rebecca Barron 01:10
About—

Dorothy Shirachi 01:11
—because I was there for such a short time.

Rebecca Barron 01:13
Okay. Well, we'd love to hear about Lake Street [unclear].

Dahria Kianpour 01:16
So, if you want to start off by telling us about your family, in—

Dorothy Shirachi 01:21
My family? I have only one son. That's my family [laughs] and daughter-in-law who just retired as a teacher in Piedmont Elementary School, and I have two granddaughters. One is—she's 32, and she's in New York now. Do you want to hear about what she does or—but [unclear] anyway she works for Price Waterhouse Cooper in New York headquarter as a manager of one of the department. And I have a younger granddaughter who is an engineer, has a master in engineer from UCLA, and she works for Qualcomm in San Diego. So they're both working, and that is my family.

Rebecca Barron 02:39
What about your parents?

Dorothy Shirachi 02:40
My parents passed on, and my husband's parents are gone too. On my side, I have one sister in Chicago, who's turned 90. And I have one brother who's—he's 82. He's an engineer in Cupertino. And a sister-in-law. And that's it. I have nephews and I have—let's see, one—I think I have only one niece. So, that is my family. [laughs] My husband's side, there's a lot of them.

Dahria Kianpour 03:30
And what brought your family to Salinas, and how did—

Dorothy Shirachi 03:34
Who, me? Well, I was raised in a country town. I was born in a country town, in Walnut Grove, California. That's between Sacramento and Stockton. And I went to grammar school there, and then we had—I had to go to high school at a town called Courtland about—maybe ten, fifteen miles away by bus. And then after high school, then I went to San Francisco to business college for a couple years, and I came back. And my father was a tailor, men's tailor—made to measure tailoring— and so I helped him for a while until he—in the summer, it gets so hot in the Sacramento Valley, so he used to come to get away from the heat to Salinas, because he had a relative here. And so he liked the weather, and so one year he goes and builds a little cottage [laughs] in Salinas. And then he added on another room and so forth, and then he started a nursery business, nursery plants and things. So he started—so, I was here for a few years before I got married, running the business for my father. And then I met my husband. And then I was back and forth with [unclear] help my father and his business and then come up here. And then I got married in 1939, in November. So, that's when my husband had a store. So that's why I'm connected to the Lake Street. And so I was there November 8, 19—what did I say? [laughs]

Rebecca Barron 05:46
'34?

Dorothy Shirachi 05:48
'39.

Rebecca Barron 05:49
'39.

Dorothy Shirachi 05:50
And then in 1940, things didn't look good in this country with Japan and they—I think the government knew that something is happening. So they wanted my brother, who was—took over after I left here, the nursery—my brother to go into the service. So, they tell him to sell the nursery, but he couldn't sell it. It took one year and still he couldn't sell it because people has to be experienced in raising plants in order to be able to buy a nursery or run the business. So finally, my husband and I decided that, well, let's sell part of our partnership with my brother-in-law—grocery store—to him and then let's buy into this nursery, so my brother could go into the service. So that's what we did. So we went to nursery in October, 1941. Then the war started in December 7, 1941. So we—the President, Roosevelt, gave the order that—9066, I think it is—is that we have to evacuate. So in 19—I think it was April, 1942—we were put in a camp in rodeo grounds until July 4. And on July 4, we were put on a train, and we were sent to Poston, Arizona, in the desert where they put up this shack—barracks, I guess you would call. And that's—we were there from 1942 to '43 of the spring. And FBI cleared myself and my husband that we could go out. So normally, I was never out of California, so I worried about going to other places. But my husband was into baseball, and in 1935 he head to Boston, several states, playing ball. So he knew what it is to be in different states. So we said, "Oh, well, let's go out." But then, where should we go? And then we went to Montana and tried to raise sugar beets, and I'm no farmer. I learned how to hold the weeds and all of that. [laughs] And then that fall, our friend from Minneapolis asked us to come over and live with them, find a place. So that's what we did. So we were in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for three years. Then he was inducted into the service, my husband was. So, he went for basic training to Florida. So while he's there, I was in Minneapolis and I had my son. And so we stayed there three years. So he was—he came back from Florida and then he was stationed at Fort Snelling in Minnesota. So he was close by, and then he got—they had to let him out because he was 36 and a half years old when they took him. So 38 is the age that they have to let them out. So he was there for a few years and then he got out, so we came back to California. So that's the story about what we went through with the evacuations. And I don't know what else. We had to work hard for so many years [laughs] to get a home and everything, because we sold our home and everything. We don't know what happened, who bought or anything. I don't know.

Dahria Kianpour 10:16
What was it like in Arizona being at the camp for—

Dorothy Shirachi 10:20
Well, all I remember was we were put in a train. And our husbands—all the husbands were in the baggage section. They didn't have enough seats. They were sitting on little duffel bags and stuff like

that. And when we got there, you know, the climate here is so mild. So it was like 110 or more than that in the desert. So, I passed out. I don't know what happened. Because of the heat, a lot of people passed out. So then, well, somehow I was put in the barrack, I guess, and then we had to get used to living in the barracks. And we go to, what they call latrine, where the toilets are and the showers are there. You have to go there—it's a community thing. Then you have to go to the dining hall—it's a community thing. Then, after two months there, I got a job at a agricultural department in their accounting department. So, I had a job there, but we left early. The following spring we left. So I don't know what happened after that. So, I don't know. Those people that were there—somehow they made them stay until 1945 or something like that, until the end of the war. And they start coming back. But not too many Japanese came back because this place, Salinas was so bad. The discrimination was so bad. I think it was mostly, I think—I don't if I should say this, but they were mostly farmers, strawberry growers and sugar beet growers and all the people. So I think during the war somebody else took over. It was ready to be harvested, and then they had to leave, and so they took over the farms, and the Japanese people [unclear] came back there was no place to farm. But anyway, that was the situation of the people. A lot of people who used to farm came back if they had the land, but they didn't come back if they had to lease the land.

Rebecca Barron 13:04
Why don't we talk about the shop on Lake Street. Do you wanna tell us about that?

Dorothy Shirachi 13:14
The store?

Rebecca Barron 13:21
Yeah.

Dorothy Shirachi 13:23
I don't know too much about it. It was a partnership, so I can't say anything. Yeah, I just leave it up to them what they do. So we just—I just helped. In those days, things were so cheap. As you saw in the picture, these are, like, you know, [unclear] a meal cost around maybe twenty or thirty cents or something like that. Things were very cheaper. See this fifteen cent [unclear] of the vegetable, twenty-five cents. That's how cheap things were compared to now. And this is in 1930—let's see, he opened in 1932, I think, or something, a grocery store and it was a first—so we are second-generation. We are called Nisei, and our parents are called issei because they're first, and in Japanese, ichi is first, and we are ni—we are nisei. So, he was the first nisei, with his brother-in-law, started a grocery store. So we had lot of young people come and patronize our store, and they were doing good. But it just so happened that there was this [unclear] reasons that we felt that there was a war coming, that we have to help our brother go into the service, so we just left. So, and then of course they had to dissolve everything when they had to go into the camp—families [unclear]. So everybody had to go into the camp—a hundred sixty thousand people or something like that. So, I cannot help much about that story about—Mei, did you interview Mei?

Dahria Kianpour 15:48
No, we didn't.

Dorothy Shirachi 15:52
She was, like, eleven, twelve, thirteen years old.

Dahria Kianpour 15:58
So, what did you do while your husband was doing the store? What would you do, like, regularly?

Dorothy Shirachi 16:08
I had to sew clothes for Mei and her sister. [laughs] Nothing too good. I didn't have [unclear] so I just had to do something to kill time, and I [unclear] going to the store and [unclear]. So I'd go in the back and I would do sewing. I make a candy-striped dress with a white pinafore [laughs], something like that. I used to make my neighbors, their little girl, a dress. You know, the skirt with the velvet [unclear] and things like that. [laughs]

Dahria Kianpour 16:59
Was the community, like, really—what was it like when you were there, for you?

Dorothy Shirachi 17:05
When they had a—I can't remember [unclear] about the three years before I got married. We came to visit Salinas that time. They had this Big Rodeo Week, and then there was a big hall there, some association hall, and there were [unclear]—different district have lot of children, Japanese children, so they were putting on a program. I don't remember what kind of program it was. But anyway, so I can't remember—they asked me to teach how to dance these kids [laughs] a Japanese dance, and I remember teaching them. I remember coming to high school one time, and they asked me to teach the PE class the Japanese dance for some occasion at the hotel they were having, and I remember teaching them. I did that between visiting—when I used to visit the relative. Those were people that was about almost the same age, a year younger than me. I don't know who told who to the high school about myself. So, I don't have much experience about living on that Lake Street, because it was only about two years. And the rest of the time I only did nursery until graduation.

Rebecca Barron 18:58
What was it like working at the nursery?

Dorothy Shirachi 19:01
Oh, it was okay. [unclear] plants. Only, I have to study botanical name of all the different plants. You have to line up the plants in order to sell, and then you have to put two tags on the front plant: the botanical name and the common name. So, when you have something—you don't have something like that, but most of the plants that—is [unclear]—and then if it's a fir or tree or anything, every plant has a botanical name, so I have to study that. So you put two tags on each [unclear] plants. So that was the job [unclear] get rid of it, you know, at the end. We had to—when we [unclear], we had to transfer one let house. Do you know what a let house is? It's a let like this, and there's space between. And we had to transfer one to the River Road to Mr. Rianda's ranch, and then store leftovers in there during the wartime. Mrs. Rianda took care of all the plants. But we couldn't get—we had too many stocks. It was something—you have to get rid of everything in the house. I mean, furniture, and all you could carry

was one-foot locker—they call it foot locker. That's all you could carry. We had to leave a lot of things. But we had friends that would take care of some of our good clothes and stuff, so it was nice. It's not a good story, but a sad story. But that's what happened. [laughs]

Rebecca Barron 21:23
Do you have any fond memories from working at the nursery?

Dorothy Shirachi 21:29
Well, I had to get rid of it. Fond memories, not too much, because it was such a short time. But I had a dog, which I really didn't realize that I was attached to the dog. This doctor, he was in Salinas, had a litter of cocker spaniel. [unclear] and he gave one to my husband. So I had that, and when it was time for me to leave, [unclear] came over and she said that she would take good care—she found out somehow that I had a dog and would like to get rid of—have to get rid of it. So, she said she'll take good care of it and everything. And after she came back—and I thought I was pretty strong, but after she came and she took the dog, I cried. I didn't think I'd cry. That surprised me, that I cried and cried. I got so attached to the dog. Even now, I have pictures.

Dahria Kianpour 22:35
Did you and your husband practice any religion? Or do you practice any religion?

Dorothy Shirachi 22:40
Mm-hmm.

Dahria Kianpour 22:41
Which one?

Dorothy Shirachi 22:43
Christian. I'm Christian.

Rebecca Barron 22:44
You are? Have you always been Christian?

Dorothy Shirachi 22:48
No, my folks, in the town of Walnut Grove—it's a country town, so they didn't have Buddhist church over there. They were allowed on [unclear]—all the district was divided in—well, it's going too much [unclear] [Dahria laughs]. But there were Japanese—mostly were Shinto, which is they have a god that they worship. And then it's Buddhist that a lot of them are. And Christian was really persecuted in Japan before—they had to live like underground things, you know, in Japan. So, they just have to follow the family tradition of Buddhism or Shintoism. I guess when they come to this country, they're—in our town, we didn't have a Buddhist church. And my father, he sent me to Methodist Church, and I grew up until I'm about 16, yeah, in the Methodist Church and going to clubs and getting to learn nursing and all kinds of things that—they had a good program. They even showed you how to eat American food, you know, because most of the parents are Japanese so they had—they served Japanese food and you used chopstick and stuff like that. But at the church, they will have—I think it was the [unclear] carrots

as the meat, and then they have a potato and vegetable, and then they would show us how to use the utensil, you know, left and right and all that thing, because our parents couldn't show us in the beginning. So we learned a lot of things and I [unclear] nice time with the Girl Reserves and things like that. And I got my junior Red Cross certificate. I still have it some place. [laughs] So that I really learned. But then the Buddhist church came up. And then my father says that, well, Buddhists from parents the tradition in Japan and everything. So he wanted me to go—I cried. I said, no, I didn't want to go. [laughs] But I [unclear] that I shall obey my parents, so I went. So I studied a little bit about it. So I know what difference between the religion, but they're all alike. And after that, well, of course, then I got married. So I joined over here at the Presbyterian Church. So that's where I am—a member till now. And I enjoy my years at church, because I got involved in so many things, like, you know, redecorating the church because it was such an old church. And the—they had a choir before [unclear]—I don't know what happened, but then I reorganize that thing. So, even if there's two people there now, still, they do have choir. So we have some kind of program, and it keeps on going. But now I don't go anywhere now. I'm still a member over there.

Dahria Kianpour 26:54
Did you spend a lot of your time there, like, while your husband was working with the shop and stuff? Is that, like, part of what kept you busy during that time?

Dorothy Shirachi 27:03
Oh, for myself? Oh, no, I am an accountant. Okay, when these people—I worked at various office in Main Street, the insurance company. And I kept these safe open in the morning, have to close it and all that. I used to do that for insurance and real estate companies. And then this flower people came in to this in 19—1970, 60s, 67, 60—some place around there. And they came in, they started the flower business. So I had about seven accounts that I serviced that kept me going. I used to work until two o'clock in the morning. [laughs] So I did that until I would say about 80 years old. So, that was the end of my career of doing things. But I really helped them out. And there's one lady that is really—couldn't thank me enough to this day. That's amazing. Family, the whole family comes in to help me do thing and you get something to do at the house. The son will come and do it for me. And it's—it was really a reward [unclear]. [unclear] one family was like that to the end. Even now when there's some food sales [unclear] get food sales and send it to me. I have it delivered to me here. [laughs] So that's what my profession was. So I kept busy. Now we're here, I'm busy too. [laughs]

Rebecca Barron 29:16
Did you spend a lot of time in Japantown here or did you, like, go around the area?

Dorothy Shirachi 29:25
Japantown existed before the war. Okay, there's none after the war here. So, if he's going to Japantown—well, my granddaughter when she comes, she'll take me to San Jose, Japantown, to do shopping. But I don't shop that much. You know, you could buy almost any Japanese thing in the supermarket now here. So, there's only one Japanese store here.

Rebecca Barron 29:55
Before the war, though, did you go around Japantown? Before the war, did you—

Dorothy Shirachi 30:07
Well, we had the store [unclear]. We carried things. I used to go there to buy grocery over there, but I didn't go beyond the street. I hardly went on the Soledad Street, Chinese [unclear], because they have gambling places and restaurants. So I hardly went there. I didn't—I don't know much about it. But Japantown, they had Japanese drugstores and they had two other stores and dry goods stores and all kinds of things, but I didn't go much to—I wasn't there that long enough to, you know, look around and see what's around.

Dahria Kianpour 31:06
So you said you met your husband in Salinas? Was he born in Salinas or—

Dorothy Shirachi 31:11
Yes, he was born in what is now [unclear]. He was born in Redfern Ranch, where his father used to farm sheep, because the issei, the first generation of people that came to this country, there was a law that said that they cannot marry other nationality, Caucasians. They cannot buy land. So if you cannot buy land, you cannot buy a home. So if you buy a home, they will be leased, and they will give you a hundred years to lease or something like that, because your house is gonna sit on that land. So a lot of people didn't—wasn't able to buy a home, so they rented. So that's—all of them are like that until right after the war. They changed that. I was just reading about it someplace. So he born there, and then his father raised tomatoes and things like that. And I think he was—he said that he was taking—it was horse and buggy days. And it was a narrow road. You know, it wasn't paved roads or anything like that. From Salinas to Monterey, he would take it to the Cannery. You know where Cannery Row is? And they were using his tomato to put it in the sardine cans—you know, with the tomato sauce in it. They make the tomato salsa, they pack the sardine. That's what they were making at that time. It takes a whole day to go with that buggy to Monterey and come back. On those days, every few months, [unclear] moves as fast because of this transportation business. So that's where he was born, and then he went to school here, and then the family could lease the land only so many years. So when the lease is up, they had to look for another land to farm. So, they move here, move there, here and there, and then finally came to that point that they were moving to—it's in Monterey County but they call it Pajaro, near Watsonville, across the river there. So that's when he went to country school there where the teacher taught all classes. One teacher to teach all the classes, things like that. And then, when he finished grammar school, then he was able to go into Watsonville city and go to the city school. So that's why he went to school in Watsonville. And then he was playing ball [unclear]. While he was in the country, I guess he was practicing throwing rocks at the cans and stuff like that. So he would concentrate, you know, on one thing and he'd do it. So he got to be a really good pitcher, I understand. So they all knew, people in California, they knew who he was, you know, the Japanese people knew. And so he was asked to go to different places to play with their team. So he has a good experience in baseball until, you know, until, let's see, ten years ago. So I got it all here, what he had to do. I listed it all here so I have some copy—everybody ask me, so I have to have a copy of it, of what he has done. So he really excelled in pitching. He was asked to go to—what's [unclear] record now—is in 1928, I think it was 1928, I think he was—let's see, yeah in 1928 he was—went to Japan with the Stockton—you know where Stockton is?—Stockton baseball team, start picking some of the good players in California, and then they formed a team and then they went to Japan. And the level that they—no airplane at that time. So they have to go in a boat. So it took 14 days for them to be on the boat. So

they got seasick and everything, some of the people. But anyway, he went to—they went to Hawaii for just stopover, and from there on they pick a couple of people for the team and they went to Japan—and they went to Japan and Korea. And they were gonna go to Manchuria, but they had the Manchuria incident. They were having problem [unclear] so they couldn't go. So they just went Korea and they came back to Japan and they play with all-Japanese university teams. They didn't have pro teams in Japan at that time. The following—the year after he went, they started Tokyo pro, [unclear], whatever they call it. But at that time getting so—they sort of introduced baseball to Japan, like. And so at that time, he was there for I think about three, two months or something like that. I have it here [pages rustling]—March 15 to July 19, 1928. That's a long time ago. So he went there and then he played for Los Angeles, something market team. During the summer he went there. He played, and then he played for Gonzales team and—oh, and then he played for—every one that he played, they won. So he has a good record [laughs] because they won. See, I think he—then after that, he went to—he was invited to national Wichita—national semi-pro tournament at Wichita, Kansas. It just so happened to be that there was a first national—it continued on. At that time, that was the first time that they were invited, so they went. So they went on a seven month—seven states tour to end up in Wichita, and they played with Satchel Paige. You don't know—you have never heard because you're a younger generation. But he was a colored player, one of the best player that was there, and he would talk about that when he throws the ball, the ball goes—you can't even see it. [laughs] And people swing after the ball passed. [laughs] That's how fast he was. He always would talk about that. And then there—well, he got famous afterwards and there—he was recognized at the Hall of Fame too—Paige and Robinson and thing like that. But anyway, he went there for baseball, then he was invited to Hall of Fame in New York. And then he was invited to Hall of Fame in Tokyo. That was the last one, in 1999. He was invited, so we went to Japan. So that's about his story, about career. He was a landscape—state licensed landscape architect, whatever you call it. So that's—he retired on that. But he lived to 101. [laughs] That's a long time to live.

Rebecca Barron 41:08
Yeah. Did you ever get to see him play?

Dorothy Shirachi 41:14
Mm-hmm. I used to go see him, because everybody talk about him. [Rebecca and Dahria laugh] Even in different towns, they say, "Oh he's going to be in [unclear]." Everybody go watch him play. You don't know who he is or anything, but then you go and play. Because that was a pastime for a lot of Japanese people. And somehow, they never got help from the government or anything. You know, everybody passed the hat and they throw the money in, and with their money, they seem to have, you know, kept on doing another thing for the team and like that. They find a way to make a goal out of it. But nowadays, it's different.

Dahria Kianpour 42:12
So, how long did he play for or what was the—how many years was it?

Dorothy Shirachi 42:15
He played for—from 1930—let's see, he started, oh, 1926. 1926 is when he graduated high school, Watsonville. So from 1913 to 1920, I think it was in Watsonville, and then he was playing in high school

off and on, different position. And then from 19—after graduation in 1923 he came back to Salinas. Then he helped form the community baseball team too. And then—'26 to '36 or something like that.

Dahria Kianpour 43:15
So the community baseball team, that was around Salinas?

Dorothy Shirachi 43:18
Mm-hmm. They had this four-county—coast counties. It includes Watsonville and Salinas, Monterey. And I don't know what—I don't know what the fourth county was. They would have a—in a league. And they played each other.

Rebecca Barron 43:54
Did you say that he served in the military for a really short period of time?

Dorothy Shirachi 43:58
Yeah. 1944 to '46.

Rebecca Barron 44:05
Do you know what he did?

Dorothy Shirachi 44:07
Yes. He was a technician. What he did was he served in the military intelligence service. You have to learn all this military thing. So he [unclear] in school, is where Fort Snelling was there. So he served there, and the funny part is when he was supposed to go, to be sent to oversea, he came in the afternoon and he packed up, and he tell me that they're going to send him oversea. Then 10:30 at night, the light goes on my porch and I go, "What's going on?" You know, 10:30 at night. Then he come back, and I said, "What happened?" Then he said, "Somebody replaced me." And then another thing that was funny for me was that something else was going on, and they were supposed to send [unclear] and somebody replaced him. And the reason was, I figured it out— how come? He's old, because he's close to 38. [laughs] They had to let him out. They know he's married and he has a family. [laughs] So, I guess those Japanese people, they said, "Oh, tell the upper officer that I wanna go." You know, so then they'll take him out, because he's so old and they have to let him out in two years or three years. So that's what must be happening, I figure. So every time he has to go someplace, they just—so he never got to go overseas, you know. [laughs] It was so funny. I couldn't figure out in the beginning, but I guess they figure, okay, he's a nice guy, he's got family. And it was hard for him when he was having basic training, because they're all young—18, 19, 20s. So here was—he was in the 30-something, [laughs] trying to keep up with those young people.

Rebecca Barron 46:30
Did they ask him to join, or did he want to—

Dorothy Shirachi 46:33
No, they got—it's a bad story but he was classified as—when the war started, they classified him as—all these Japanese boys—as enemy alien. [unclear] they call it, enemy alien, because they didn't know

they could trust them. They said they can't trust those people. So they're not gonna take them. Then, all of a sudden, as the war went on, they were classified [unclear]. So when we were in Minneapolis, he was classified as a [unclear] in March, I think. And then he was already enlisted Reserve Corps. They had him in there. And then that—that was March, April—and then by July, he was taken. So they worked fast. I think the local Selective Service probably. There, you know, there was a time when they didn't want their sons to go to war, and Selective Service have to produce so many to go and all this. So we have a friend, Henry [unclear]—he was older than my husband, and he was sent oversea and he fell off the jeep or something and he got disabled. But they do this—they take all these old people in to fill the quota. So, now it's happened, but [unclear], so they [unclear] you out. So, well, then you had to start thinking about what to do. But now things have been working good. Everything has been good, like, for us afterwards. But that was a good experience in a way, because you're young. You could do it. When you were younger you could do anything. When you're old you can't do a lot of things. So do the things when you're young.

Rebecca Barron 49:05
Do you have any other stories from growing up that you'd like to share with us?

Dorothy Shirachi 49:11
I got a lot of stories, but I don't know [laughs] [unclear] going to tell it. [laughs]

Dahria Kianpour 49:17
Do you have any more in your interview guides?

Rebecca Barron 49:20
I had one, but I forgot. But—

Dahria Kianpour 49:33
What's the time on the—

Rebecca Barron 49:38
52:10.

Dahria Kianpour 49:38
It's up to you guys. Do you wanna—

Rebecca Barron 49:41
I had a [unclear] but it was late. Oh, was it—the hostility, like, was that hard at first, like—

Dahria Kianpour 50:01
After World War II?

Rebecca Barron 50:02
Yeah, like, being moved.

Dorothy Shirachi 50:05
Well, see, depends on the person. Some say—I must be a little bit different [unclear]. I mean, nowadays, people say, "You amaze me. You amaze me." Because I don't have no bitterness. I have to—if I tell you the story about what I had to do when I was in Montana, you would think, wow, gosh, a little body like that doing a thing like that. But it was all an experience, which is really good for a person to do—go through that experience. And, you know, when you're young, I will suggest to do anything when you're young. But when you get old, it is hard. But some people are bitter about this, and I never have been. It was a nice experience for me. When I went to Montana from California—farming, I didn't know much about farming because I was raised—my father was in business ever since I was three years old. He was in this tailoring business. So I didn't know that I was that young when he started his business. I found that out about 20 years ago. I came up on some document, and I saw that. But when I left here and went to Montana, we went with a group of Japanese people who was in camp, and they were placed in different place in Montana farms. And we had a pretty good place compared to the rest—the rest of the people were, like, have to stay in hen coop, chicken coop, you know. And so they go to the place, it's nothing but chickens in there. And you're supposed to be sitting right next to it. And so they said—my friend was a dentist. I think he had a wife and two daughters, and said, "I can't let my family stay in a place like that." So we moved in to the hotel in Glasgow, Montana. And then he comes back to the War Relocation Authority, is the one that was doing all this. So they told them that we cannot live in, you know, something like that with the animals. So we were able to find a place in Glasgow, Montana, where the Cotton family, Mr. And Mrs. Cotton and all the family, were much better living place. So my sister was with her relatives, and they got Mrs. Cotton—Mr. and Mrs. Cotton just recently built a new home, so their old home, they worked in there. Where we live was about half a mile away, and we live in a house. There's counter there, but no running water, and then no—outhouse, it's outhouse. You know what outhouse is, outside? And stove is wood stove. We have to learn to put wood in that, and so what I had to do was, I have to use the axe and chop the wood and use that for our burning wood stove, and on the side of the wood stove is a little container where there's water in there, so they'll be hot water to use. If you wanna bathe, you have to take a sponge bath. And if you have a child to bathe, you have to use that, and water. And the water—there's no running water, so what I had to go was—about half a block away, there's a well, so I'd pump the well into the bucket, have two bucket, and then I have my in-law, my father-in-law, mother-in-law come—we have a barrel on the wagon. So we drive that there and then we would put this water into the barrel. And this is a bucket like that—you know how many time it takes to fill that barrel. And I would pump that thing, and then we would fill it, and then we would bring it to my in-law's house, and when I was there and another house, and it was, you know, really doing things the hard way. But that's what they used to do before, long time ago. People around here used to do that before too at one time. So it was just that they were about 50 years behind them, Salinas farmers were doing, living. So I went through that. I had to learn how to bake. So we tried to bake cookies in there. The temperature, you know—there's no temperature gauge or anything like that. And I don't know, that was a good experience for me, I thought to myself, because I didn't stay there during the winter. We left in Thanksgiving time, we left there. So if I had to stay after that, maybe it was hectic, because you get snowbound and you can't go out. So you have to have food. So what those people do is they dehydrate all their vegetables and stuff during the summer. And then they put meat and things in the jar, can it, and they store in the cellar. And then when they are snowbound, they have to eat that two, three weeks or whatever they're bound, snowbound for. So I feel that, well, that was a great experience. I could talk about it. And I thought, oh, then you appreciate the

old time, what they did, and that [unclear]. This is, like, maybe 50 years behind them—California farming. And I could see that. And then all this, and I learned how to dehydrate vegetables, how they do it, and the people were nice. They teach you. Those people, they're in mid-western states. They're very nice people. And I learned that part. I really treasured that part that I learned. You have—and you can go—see, there's no refrigerator like this, because there's no electricity in the house. It's in [unclear]. You see in the pictures, you know, movies, [laughs] just like that. I told—I'm glad I went through that. And I want my son to go through that, you know, thing— learn how to do—work in a strawberry with a backache, you have to squat down and do all that. But we didn't get a chance for him to find a farmer that could hire him. [laughs] But I did all that. So I think I gained so much. I understand working people. When I raise my son, I always tell him, "You have to respect these people." They're working—they don't want to work in a field like that. But somebody have to raise things so we could have something to eat, and you have to respect those people. They want to go—don't work, and they want to do this, and they want to go to high school. They can go because they'll have some reasons. Everybody can't be the same in a way. So, it's the way you look at it. So every—now, people tell me, "How come your son's so [unclear]." They tell me, but I don't know. They say—I think young, they tell me, that I think young, but maybe that's it. So your mind open up to more things that you want to learn. And I learned because I gain. Even if I don't use it, I have it in me. Nobody could take it away from me. It's in there. So, if you have a chance, learn it. You could use it. When the time arrives, you could use it. [laughs] I don't know if I could answer all your questions. I got sidetracked. [laughs]

Rebecca Barron 59:29
Thank you so much.

Dahria Kianpour 59:31
Yeah, thanks a lot.