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Interview with Sandi and Fumiko Urabe

Sandi Urabe

Fumiko Urabe

California State University, Monterey Bay

CSUMB Oral History & Community Memory Archive
Chinatown Renewal Project
Interviewee: Sandi Urabe & Fumiko Urabe
Interviewer: Stephanie Arechiga & Adrienne Graham
Date of Interview: October 13, 2009
Duration of Interview: 01:29:37

Adrienne Graham 00:02
This is Adrienne Graham and Stephanie Arechiga and we are interviewing Fumiko Urabe. Is that how you pronounce it? And Sandi Urabe. And the date is October 13, 2009. And we are at Mrs. Urabe's residence on [unclear] Street in Salinas, California. So, the process of this interview is going to be first we're going to start asking informational questions. And then we'll try and go looking for like the stories of what you remember. And then including your experiences with Chinatown in the restoration project. I'm gonna start with interviewing you, Mrs. Urabe, and then Stephanie's gonna interview Sandi. And we do have a release form that you need to sign at the end of this. We've already explained what's on it. And we just need your guys' verbal permission to record this interview.

Fumiko Urabe 01:00
That's fine.

Adrienne Graham 01:03
All right, so let's get started. So where were you born?

Fumiko Urabe 01:07
I was born in Hollister. It's 25 miles, 27 miles from here.

Sandi Urabe 01:16
Do you need her to speak up a little?

Adrienne Graham 01:18
Just a little bit.

Sandi Urabe 01:19
You might have to speak a little louder so they can catch it on the recording. Yeah.

Adrienne Graham 01:29
And when were you born?

Fumiko Urabe 01:31
In Hollister, and I was born May 10, 1919. And I graduated in Hollister, too. 1940 [unclear] 1940 [unclear] 40.

Adrienne Graham 01:54
What about your parents? Where were your parents from?

Fumiko Urabe 01:57
They're from Hiroshima, Japan. And they, my dad came over when he was about 14 and worked on Walnut Grove bridges, and he said—he was talking about that bridge, he said, "That's a bridge I helped build and that's an old, old bridge." And then he did a lot of other work you know when he was through, and then of course he—after that he did—

Sandi Urabe 02:26
He had a store, didn't he?

Fumiko Urabe 02:27
Yeah, he had a store in Hollister. I don't know how many years it was. And then he did some jewelry work. He had a jewelry for a while, that didn't go well either. Then he started farming. And that's what he was doing, mostly. We lived up in [unclear], in Hollister. And he raised the lettuce seed, which at that time, not too many people did. And I remember we were—we had to have a certain way of taking the—hitting the—they let the lettuce grow to a head. And then before they get too big, you had to chop it with the fork like thing. And then the—just the stem came up with the seeds. And then—then they had to cut it and we had a great big canvas where they put the seeds upside down on this canvas. And of course, during that time, the birds came. All the canaries—you should have seen them, picking seeds, you know. And then we—let's see what—he did that for—that and then they had sort of like a factory thing where they took all these seeds. And then it came through this separator type of thing and then into bags [unclear] real big bags this big. And then he went around selling, you know, taking orders for seeds. And that was it for quite a while.

Adrienne Graham 02:40
That's cool.

Fumiko Urabe 03:12
Then we moved to Hollister from [unclear]. And let's see, well, the regular things. Nothing very new.

Adrienne Graham 04:09
What about your mom? What did she do?

Fumiko Urabe 04:10
She was mostly a housewife. You know? They were—in those days, when they were young, there wasn't any Japanese here, so, they had what you call a picture bride. Well, she came as that, but then I asked her, "Did you know him before?" She said yes. She knew him in Japan and she'd seen him, you know, so that I guess she agreed to marry him and she came over this country with her dad. And then after that it was mostly farming and she had to do heavy work.

Sandi Urabe 04:50
She helped in the fields, did she?

Fumiko Urabe 04:52

Mm-hmm, and she had five children. So, we're all still here, as I'm the oldest. I said, "As long as I'm here, you're still able to be here." So, I don't know. Let's see—

Sandi Urabe 05:13
Well, she has a list of questions you can—

Fumiko Urabe 05:16
Yeah.

Adrienne Graham 05:16
That's fine. What was it like growing up in your house with all your brothers and sisters?

Fumiko Urabe 05:23
Well, I remember living in the country, you have a country school. And my parents always made me take our shoes—wear our shoes before we went to school. And then we went up to a little tree, took off our shoes and finished the rest time going to school without our shoes. And Mom and Dad never knew that we went barefoot to school, because everybody else went barefoot to school. So, we did too. And we said, “Why should we wear shoes when everybody do—else doesn't?” So, we really—I really enjoyed my country living, you know. And then my parents never went to town, but once a week or maybe once in two weeks. So, we never ate [unclear] sweets. So, we all had good tooth when we're young. Because in order to eat things, we eat things like pine nuts that grew on the trees, you know, and acorns. And then of course, when we came home, we have an orchard of walnut trees, five of them. And so, we ate mostly walnuts, then if we want something sweet, I went to mom's vegetable garden and dug up carrots. And, you know, why shouldn't I eat like that for something sweet. So, I think in that way, I ate really healthy when I was little, you know? Maybe that's why I'm living so long. It's time I went, I don't know. [laughs] So I don't know, I thought and, of course, in and country, you have a one little school, one room school, and all your grades are in there, first grade, second grade, so like that up to eighth grade. And as we got older, well, I took care of the art department because I liked art things, you know, and I used to have to help the first and second graders do the art part. It's like the—you only have one teacher for all these eight grades. So, you know, she needs help. So we—different students helped with different things, different parts. So, it's interesting. I thought my childhood was very happy. Because I more or less got to do what I want to do. Of course, once mom—my mother—gave us chores to do, and sometime we didn't di—then we get—we got heck for it. You know, we got a spanking for not doing what we're told. So, I think I had a nice happy childhood.

Adrienne Graham 08:04
That's good. What about, like, what kind of chores did you and your siblings have to do around the house?

Fumiko Urabe 08:14
Well, we were always supposed to make our bed. Keep our room clean. Then she—I was the oldest so I was—she gave me chores and make sure that my brothers and sisters did their chores. Well, they never did and every time they didn't do it, I got spanked for it. I was supposed to tell them, make them

do it. So that's how it went on but we all seemed to have enjoyed—you know, when we're little, so country living is really nice for children, I think. I don't know.

Adrienne Graham 08:49
And what kind of games did you guys play? Did you play, like, out in the orchards and—

Fumiko Urabe 08:55
No, at school—at school we—we played like, wintertime, you play mumble—mumble peg, that's you—you had a stick that's about this long and you sharpened it, and then you tried to knock other person's stick down by hitting the ground and—and the point against theirs, so you know, they'll fall over. Things like that. Marbles, we played marbles, you know, shoot marbles. I guess I was more on the tomboy side. So, I did things that I wasn't supposed to do, I guess. Most of them played ha—dolls thing—I couldn't stand those things. Like, if the boys are making sleds, climb—you know—slide down the hill? Well, I was determined to make a better slide than they did, you know? My sled, I put nice metal runners on them, and to go from the top of the hill we came down all right but I said, "Wow, wait, there's a fence." We got to do—there's this one hole, as long as [unclear] steer to the hole, go through it, you know. Well, we did, went through that side, up to the road, and stopped. [Laughter] You know, I did awful crazy things. I did a lot of things. Interesting. But [unclear] that's what I did when I was little.

Adrienne Graham 10:20
What was the main language spoken in your household?

Fumiko Urabe 10:24
Well, my parents, we spoke Japanese at home, but as we got older, they would speak Japanese and ask, we'd answer back in English. And my mother and dad both started taking English, learning English. That's why I have even books where they have started. And my mother, she got to the place where she could speak and understand it. So, her—two or three girlfriends, they'd—when she got older—they always made her go with them because she could speak, you know, get on the bus, tell them where they're gonna go and things like that. And or any place they went she could speak English. So, they always made her do the speaking for them. But she said that we should always learn English. We're in America, we should learn English, besides studying hard, which I hated. [Laughter] But that's how they did, you know, they—that's the main thing they emphasized is education. When you were little, always you have to study hard. You got to have an education. You can't get anywhere there without—

Sandi Urabe 11:39
Didn't grandma and grandpa both become naturalized citizens?

Fumiko Urabe 11:41
Yeah, they did. Eventually. Yeah.

Sandi Urabe 11:45
Because I remember grandpa was really proud of telling people he was a US citizen.

Stephanie Arechiga 11:49
How long did it take? Like, when did he—?

Fumiko Urabe 11:53
No, not that long. Seemed like it. I thought they didn't go to school that long. Because they had already learned quite a bit of English on their own and writing and reading. So, it was a little easier for them than some other people. That's more or less where my life went. [Laughter]

Adrienne Graham 12:17
What about, like, different celebrations? What kind of parties or cele—like holidays did you guys celebrate?

Sandi Urabe 12:26
You mean, like, Japanese holidays or—?

Adrienne Graham 12:29
Any kind of holidays?

Fumiko Urabe 12:30
Yeah, we celebrate the American holidays and the Japanese holidays. You know, like Obon. Well, they did that and they have—then we had community picnics, where all the Japanese within a community went to a park or something, you know, like Toro Park here. You have their picnic. And everybody brings their own lunch and they all have games after that they do. So, it's the same thing with every community, Hollister had theirs. Salinas had theirs. Watsonville had theirs, too. So, it's the same thing, they all did, same type of thing. So, that was always—people look forward to because then they get to visit all their friends from different places. Different towns, they all showed up at your picnic, then you show up at their picnic. So, like that. So, you get to communicate with all your friends. Enjoy the day. And we really did.

Adrienne Graham 13:37
What about your friends? Do you have school friends? Friends that lived close by?

Fumiko Urabe 13:44
Yeah, we—our friends, especially my friends, were people I knew in Seneca. And we all move back to the house or town. And they were still our close friends, you know? But as close friends at that time we associated with most of our Japanese friends, you know. Only time you have community type of friends is high school things or school things, you know, where you go to other types of friends. But I didn't do much until high school. Then of course you went to dances, you know, different towns.

Adrienne Graham 14:29
What were the dances like?

Fumiko Urabe 14:31

Oh, they were rather nice. Like we came to Salinas, and you go there and there are people from all different towns near, you know.

Sandi Urabe 14:40
But they were all Japanese, right? These were Japanese only events.

Fumiko Urabe 14:44
Yeah. So, but like, Salinas I didn't—well, of course I didn't know too much about it until I was married here, you know? My husband, well, my husband opened—he had a fountain, I think, where they sell ice cream and drinks and stuff for a while, but I guess he didn't like that. So, then he went to barber school and became a barber. And that's what he did till he passed away.

Adrienne Graham 15:24
And where did he have his shop?

Fumiko Urabe 15:26
That's in Bridge Street, corner of Bridge and Canaris—it wasn't Canaris?

Sandi Urabe 15:31
No, Lake. It was Lake.

Fumiko Urabe 15:33
Lake Street and Bridge Street.

Sandi Urabe 15:35
But he had two barber shops. So the one pre-World War II was on Lake Street.

Fumiko Urabe 15:43
Yeah.

Sandi Urabe 15:43
And then, after in the 50s, Uncle John built a new complex and then his barbershop moved to the corner of Bridge and Lake—East Lake Street, which was in Chinatown.

Adrienne Graham 15:57
Do you have any memories of, you know, him and his barbershop? When you went to go visit him?

Fumiko Urabe 16:02
Well, only time—only thing I know that on weekends, everybody just came down to visit and talk to each other. Every time you went there, they, all these men sit and talk. And I'm wondering why they went there. And I found they went to see a magazine that you shouldn't, you know, Playboy, Playboy, the guy thing. And they all waited till the weekend for that. So, they all showed up at the shop for that. But, they—another time they just come to visit, didn't get a haircut, just came down to visit with each other, you know? That—I guess they must have got together, "Are you going down?" And then they all

showed up down there just for a visit, you know? Well, if he has customer they'd be come in have, he'd be working, but the rest of them are visiting. So, it was sort of a gathering place for his friends.

Sandi Urabe 16:58
And that his customers were pretty eclectic. You know, he used to brag about the fact that he cut the hair of the superintendent of schools and—

Fumiko Urabe 17:10
Oh, yeah.

Sandi Urabe 17:10
He cut the hair of the county sheriff. And so, he had Caucasian customers, as well as Mexican customers, Chinese customers, Japanese customers, and everybody—it was sort of like a neutral zone, back then. Even though, you know, there was still a lot of racism. And Mom used to take him lunch.

Adrienne Graham 17:35
What kind of lunch would you make him?

Fumiko Urabe 17:36
Oh, it's Japanese—Japanese, some—sometimes, sometimes it'd be sandwiches and things, you know, different things. But one thing he did, I remember, he was quite proud of that. Coach Shaw, when he was coach here in Salinas, he would always call him and ask him if any of the boys that my husband taught whether they're good enough to be first string in high school, you know. He'd mention a certain person. They usually turned up pretty good at high school. So, he did love that because he was teaching coaches, women's basketball and men's basketball. [Unclear] Oh, he—while we're in Denver, he taught girls baseball, community baseball.

Sandi Urabe 18:31
Coaching.

Fumiko Urabe 18:34
Basketball, things like that. He enjoyed sports.

Adrienne Graham 18:41
How did you meet your husband?

Fumiko Urabe 18:43
Well, I knew him before but at that time I didn't think of—anything of him. Then you think, "Oh, different person," you get a different view of a person, you know. When you first meet and when you're in—just out of high school you think, "Oh," but a lot other men, you know, others boys that you think, "Oh, they're much nicer." But you never know who you're gonna marry at that, you know, in the end. You just meet a lot of people when you're young, you know?

Sandi Urabe 19:17
So how did you meet him?

Fumiko Urabe 19:20
First time I actually knew him well as—in—all the old days they have what by [unclear] I don't know that's a—

Sandi Urabe 19:29
Jewish term is Yenta. Like a go-between.

Adrienne Graham 19:33
Okay.

Fumiko Urabe 19:35
They did a lot of that. And so naturally, someone—a parent hears that there—they do that, well, then they come in, they said they want to get—my son wants to marry—would like to marry so and so. Well, then they go to that person. See my parents would go to that person and ask—tell them what—how this person is and whether you want a meeting—he wants to meet your daughter and want to get married. So then they sort of get them together, let them have a date or something to get to know each other. If they like each other, well then you get married. And then they have what's called a go-between on their family side—her girl side and his side, and they—those two meet and discuss everything. Details. Then eventually if it's all right, then they get married.

Sandi Urabe 20:31
Well, it had to do with your family heritage too, like what class—caste you were and—

Fumiko Urabe 20:37
They always recheck clear back to in Japan, see what—whether that family is good family, there's a lot of, well, type of family that you don't want to get married into. Well, they had to check—when they go check everybody's background, ancestry back. Then if everything's all right, and they get married. [Laughter]

Sandi Urabe 20:59
So did Dad ask your mom if he could date you? Was that the way you met him?

Fumiko Urabe 21:07
No, no, no. They knew—sort of knew each other back in Japan. And they—I think they send pictures—just a [unclear] sending pictures of each other, back and forth. You know, he sent her his, and she sent her, you know like that. And then, then they came. She came with her mother and aunt I think, does—

Sandi Urabe 21:34
Who is she?

Fumiko Urabe 21:36

My mother.

Sandi Urabe 21:37
Oh.

Fumiko Urabe 21:39
My—he heard that her dad and her uncle—aunt came up when she—they came with brother over to United States. And then of course they got married.

Sandi Urabe 21:52
So how did you meet dad, though? We're back to that question. So, did Dad request to date you? Or—

Fumiko Urabe 22:01
No, no, he came to me brought his—his mother, because she's one of those go-betweens, too, and so that he came and brought her so I met him that way. And they came because of my girlfriend, Katie, that someone wanted to marry her. So, she came at that time. That's how I met my husband, actually, where I knew him a little more, because most of the time you see him with a group of people, you know, basketball playing or something or a dance or something where there's other people. So naturally, there's more than one boy around. So, you're not paying attention to just one person, you know. And so that's how I met him.

Sandi Urabe 22:46
And he started asking you out?

Fumiko Urabe 22:49
Yeah, and then his mother's friend, [name unclear]. I think or [unclear] was her name. She was saying, well, Lloyd wanted to marry me. And that's how they got together— the to go-betweens, you know. Of course, we knew each other by then, you know. So that's what we did then.

Adrienne Graham 23:14
And when did you move to Salinas?

Fumiko Urabe 23:16
Well, when I got married, that's how I came to Salinas. And at that time, I think Japan—Salinas' Japanese community, was considered one of the largest Japanese communities at that time. We had Lake Street was all Japanese stores and things, you know. And then, of course, Chinese had Soledad, which was right near there too. So, and then some of the Japanese had stores on Soledad, too. I don't think that any Chinese had stores on Lake Street, you know. They didn't—it was just mostly all Japanese people. And so, at that time, I remember Salinas was well known. So, there was always big things like dances and things and a lot of people came for those things.

Adrienne Graham 24:14
What kind of stores were on Lake Street and Soledad Street? Do you remember?

Fumiko Urabe 24:19
I know, let's see. There was a garage on the end. There was a bathhouse—a bathhouse next. And [unclear] had, uh, soybean cakes—with tofu. Would you call that, anyhow?

Sandi Urabe 24:35
Tofu.

Fumiko Urabe 24:36
Tofu? Well, they are selling that. And then there was—I know that [unclear] had a novelty store where they sold fig—like that [unclear].

Sandi Urabe 24:50
Oh, figures.

Fumiko Urabe 24:51
Yeah. And silk—silk dresses, some, not too many. That type of thing, you know? Gift type things. I think there was—I think they were on the end—not too sure. Then of course the other side [unclear] had a barbershop and another barber shop on this other side of the street. There's just two of them in that neighborhood.

Sandi Urabe 25:17
Wasn't there a grocery store, too?

Fumiko Urabe 25:19
Yeah, right.

Sandi Urabe 25:20
Because Uncle [unclear] had a grocery store, right? Right. Right next to the barbershop—before the barber shop, rather. So, there's a grocery store—I think the hotel—was the—Lake Hotel always there?

Fumiko Urabe 25:36
At that—at the—early before the war, I think they did have a hotel. Yeah, they had a hotel. It was upstairs. I remember. Room—I guess you call it "rooms." It was above—

Sandi Urabe 25:51
Like a boarding house.

Fumiko Urabe 25:52
Yeah, yeah, that's what it was, boarding house. Yeah. Because mother-in-law did the cooking. So, it was—I guess that's what you call—boarding house—because upstairs where they slept and then they came down for meals. I remember mother-in-law doing that.

Sandi Urabe 26:07

So, there was a laundry too wasn't there? What did the Iwamotos have? Didn't they have a laundry or something?

Fumiko Urabe 26:14
Let's see, what did they have? I don't remember. I know they had a hotel—rooms or something at the corner. I think it was the corner before Main Street. And of course, early days where the hotel is used to be a hall and they used to show Japanese pictures every weekend or something like that. I remember the steps going up. [Unclear] not an elaborate place but big enough to hold people, you know. People used to come quite aways to see the movies because this—this company, a movie company, would come around to each town and show movies and everybody near enough would come see it at that time. I remember taking my parents always to those, so I got to a place where I enjoyed them. [laughs] You do see a lot of things you know and, let's see, of course we had a lot of farmers at that time and big ranches. And they—where they raised the lettuce I guess mostly. So, of course then when the war came, they all went—had to be taken out and then other people did the farming and most of them didn't come back to Salinas, you know. They moved, a lot of them moved. So many people moved to San Jose. And the only one that came back was people that had property at that time here. Otherwise, other people—that's why so many of the Salinas ones moved away. Japanese town disappeared. There are some people still in Chinatown. Most of the people didn't come back to Salinas.

Adrienne Graham 28:12
What were your experiences during the war?

Fumiko Urabe 28:16
Well, we, I guess you know that we were given orders that we had what—was it one month? Yeah, one month.

Sandi Urabe 28:25
Two weeks.

Fumiko Urabe 28:26
Two weeks was it? That an order to get rid of your property, sell everything and get what [unclear]. What happened at that time—you don't—didn't have enough time. You—some people said, “Well, we're gonna store them in these sheds,” which is bad idea because you're gone, and it was broken into, everything gone anyway. The others asked friends to take care of things. Well, most of that was alright. Most people had something they lost, but most of it they got. And then what happened is most—well, I wouldn't say that [unclear] people, but they came to buy everything. So, you had a—say you had a brand-new refrigerator? Well, you just—I don't know how much you paid for it, but they said, "Well, I will buy it for $10" and that's all you got for it—a brand new refrigerator. Other people just give you $5 for a TV, you know, because they knew we had to leave. Otherwise, what you gonna do with these things? So, everything was being sold at nothing, just like nothing and you just might as well give it away instead. So, everybody lost quite a bit.

Sandi Urabe 29:39
Well, you could only take, what, one suitcase?

Fumiko Urabe 29:41
Yeah. And what clothes you have on, so what we did is put on a sweater, jacket, coats, two, three coats, everything, as much as we could on our body. Because we were only allowed one suitcase, each person. So, everything you owned—you just lost everything, because you're only allowed to take one suitcase, and you couldn't put too much in a suitcase. So, what you could you wore everything on your body because you could take what you're wearing, it doesn't make any difference whether you had two, three pants on there. Oh, that's what we did. And you're being allowed only one suitcase no matter how much you want to take in, you couldn't. So, you just lost everything. You figure, well, if you have to go somewhere, you got to keep warm. So, you put those things, you can't go putting, like, kitchen parts or [unclear]. So mostly put in clothes, you know, blankets and things to keep warm, warm clothes, and things. Cause you figure wintertime you need clothes. Summer that you can get by with shorts, something like that, so it wasn't so bad. So, everybody, that we know we better bring a lot of winter things mostly, you know, in suitcase.

Sandi Urabe 30:59
Didn't you go to the rodeo grounds first?

Fumiko Urabe 31:01
Yeah. That's where we were interned—at the rodeo grounds. And those—remember those horses' corrals and stalls? Well, they cleaned those out and made them into rooms. Which isn't—I don't think—I didn't think much. It's just a, you know, wall—thin walls, but they were separated that way. Each one was given one stall—horse stall, you know, that size. Well, they must have smelled great. Well, when they did try to clean as much as they could, you know. So it wasn't that bad. And we all had to go to kitchen to eat every time. So, if you live way down the corner, you got a ways to come up. People that live close to this makes it nice. You could just go there. But—

Sandi Urabe 31:52
How long were you there?

Fumiko Urabe 31:53
I don't think we're more than a month, maybe not even that much. Because they said they had orders that we had to go to take, by train, go to—we went to Arizona, Poston. But at that time, I remember that the train they had to have black curtains. Black, it's all black, you know. They couldn't see out. No light. So you went that way. And they said, "Don't over drink" or something, I remember, I thought, "Oh, then I better not give Roger too much water," you know. And then when I got there, he was dehydrated. And he got sick and so he had to be taken to Poston One. We were in Poston Two, and they were—the hospital and what not were Poston One because that's the one they established first. So, it had hospital and different things there. So, people that got sick from Poston Two had to be taken by the army trucks to Poston One. So, they took him, and good thing my mother was living in Poston One so she went to see him. I couldn't get over. They would let us move, unless we had a pass or something to get over all the time. But, and of course, he was small so mostly I was at my own barracks or, you know, because, you know, you have to clean house and do the diapers and the washing and everything. So, everybody said, "What did you do? Did you enjoy this that? We had this and that?" I said, "No, I was just at home,"

[unclear] and you know I didn't have anything, just housework to do and washing to do and what not, ironing to do and things of that sort, you know? So, I didn't—but only thing I remember is going to movies. They had movies, and you had to walk over this field, and they had a sort of deep—deep, oh, I would say like a ditch, or you know, rounded dip, and you sat on the ground around the outside, they a movie down here so everybody can see it. And we had—I don't know if it was every week or every other week they had—

Sandi Urabe 34:12
American movies or—? You didn't stay in the camp very long, did you?

Fumiko Urabe 34:13
Mmm-hmm. No, I didn't even stay a year. We moved to—we went out as a couple—housework. So we went to —was it Deerfield, Chicago? Not Chicago. Deerfield—let's see. Chicago—

Sandi Urabe 34:18
Illinois.

Fumiko Urabe 34:19
Yeah.

Sandi Urabe 34:32
Near Chicago.

Fumiko Urabe 34:38
Yeah. Well, we were in Deerfield, which is a little country, away from Chicago. So, when we went to town, the big town, we were going along, and on this train, and then made a stop and you know how Chicago is? Do you know how it is? The trains are—I guess you call them trains; it goes right around the houses. And when you go by them, you could see right into someone's home, and they'd be sitting be the window. And when a Black lady said, "Where are you folks, white folks going?" And I looked around, there's no white folks. [laughs] And then the same thing, I went in and talked at store, and we talked English like everybody else. And they said, "No, you can't be, your—you don't have glasses and buck teeth." [laughs] You know, how cartoons were made, a long time ago? Well, that's what they thought. I couldn't believe it. And every time you—we—took Roger, my son, into a store, they all came around, "Look at the little Japanese boy," they said. "Doesn't he look cute?" And everybody had a funny idea what we looked like. And they thought we didn't know how to speak English. And we can talk better than they could. They couldn't get over it. They just, I thought, "In this day and age, why don't people know what Japanese look like? Or what they talk about or anything?" And they didn't. They wouldn't believe you're Japanese. It's amazing what people back East thought. They don't know—

Sandi Urabe 36:11
How did you find this job?

Fumiko Urabe 36:14

Through—I don't know, some kind of agency there. And the government says that you can go out at that time, you know. And so, then they—they have a list of different places. And you call up, and then you find out—you tell these people that you'd like to do this one or that one. And so, if it's okay with the other side, and then you are able to leave camp. So, before the year was over, we went into Chicago. Deerfield.

Sandi Urabe 36:45
How long were you there?

Fumiko Urabe 36:50
I don't think we were there too long. My husband didn't like housework as a couple, you know. And I helped inside, and he's supposed to do gardening. He doesn't know anything about it. [laughs] So, I don't know, not even three months, I guess. He said, "I don't like this. So, let's—I'm gonna quit," he said. So, I finished out—he moved—he went to Chicago.

Sandi Urabe 37:16
He went to Denver.

Fumiko Urabe 37:16
I mean, no, we went Chicago first. He did anyway, stayed at the YMCA. Yeah. YMCA. He stayed there. And then later, when I finished out the contract with these people, then I went up, and I stayed at a hostel run by Bethel, or the Jewish—Jewish hotel place where they let people stay. And so, I went there and I helped this lady cook, you know, so we'd get up around five o'clock in the morning. And did I—first thing I thought I never saw such big cockroaches—this big. You put the light on they're scampering all over, you know. I thought, "God, what are these things!?" And we found they were cockroaches. And this lady said, "Oh, they're all over, forget 'em." And so, we had to go down and boil big pots of prunes. I remember that first thing was big pots of prunes. And then there was cereal, very big pots of cereal for breakfast for these people, you know. It's always around five o'clock, we'd get up and get this thing—breakfast ready. And those were really some experiences. You know, I never did such thing in big quantities like this, great big pots of things. But, and then, of course, everyone in the hostel has to sign up, whether they're gonna be home for lunch or not lunch. But then once over lunch, then we—she has—had a make a menu for the day, you know what—for lunch and dinner. I used to help her that way and that paid for my rent.

Sandi Urabe 38:54
So, how long did you live here?

Fumiko Urabe 38:56
I don't think it was very long because by that time Jack was in Denver, Jack [unclear], that used to be a partner of my husband, barbershop. So, he called and said, "Let's open a barbershop in Denver." And my husband said, "Oh, sure." He says "Let's do that." So, we had to give up there and went to Denver. And as soon as I got to Denver, I see here [unclear] running as loud as anything out in the street. I said, "Gee, I thought they were supposed to be quiet. This is war time." [laughs] and I said "Oh my gosh, is there that many people here?" you know, and we went around visiting people, and they had—Jack had

found a place for the barbershop, so they opened a barbershop again in Denver. And that's another thing I found in Denver the c—no, what's it called? Is not the flea, what's the—bugs—bed bugs.

Sandi Urabe 39:00
Bed bugs? Lice?

Fumiko Urabe 39:05
The flat one—little flat one?

Sandi Urabe 40:03
Yeah, bed bugs.

Fumiko Urabe 40:08
Yeah. Well, I didn't know there was such a thing. And the first night I went to bed at a neighbor, a friend of ours, says come to her place, she has rooms upstairs that you can stay at, so we stayed there until we found place. But we didn't stay too long, maybe a week or so. And—but the first night, my eyes are practically closed, I got bite marks all over. I couldn't figure what was doing it and once went down and I told her, she said you had cockroaches we're going to have to put in a—oh, bedroo—bed bugs. And she said get—we're going to get tin and put water in it on the bed so the bedbugs wouldn't come up. Well, what the bed bugs are smarter than that they climb up the wall, get on top of you and then drop. And I didn't know that either. I had a lot of crazy experiences. And we stayed there. We got used to Denver's pretty [unclear] and then we moved to a hotel—a room in a hotel, which had kitchen facilities. So we call—he called his brother and family out. And we took a whole bottom floor that had a kitchen. We stayed there quite a while. She was born there in Denver.

Sandi Urabe 41:32
So how long did you live in Denver? Like years?

Fumiko Urabe 41:34
No? Maybe? Two or three years? Oh, two, must been about two, because the war ended. Then—

Sandi Urabe 41:44
45.

Fumiko Urabe 41:44
Yeah, so we—two or three years, I guess. She was born there, and then California was opened up, so we—see—well, who started? Who was the one that came home—I mean—two of them came back. No. He wasn't one that came back first. Oh, Eva and, was it David—

Sandi Urabe 42:14
Sumi.

Fumiko Urabe 42:15

No, it wasn't Sumi—-anyhow, three of them came back on the car. And what—when they came back to Salinas they see sign in the grocery store "We do not want Japanese back" in that all store. Course those people that had that were nice after that, but at that time, they said they didn't want anyone back here. They really had a hard time finding a restaurant that will let them eat at that place. But eventually, as years went by, and it got back to normal, but it took, like, quite a while.

Adrienne Graham 42:56
What year did you come back to Salinas?

Fumiko Urabe 43:03
You were just a baby. So—

Sandi Urabe 43:05
Maybe '46? '46 or '47?

Fumiko Urabe 43:09
Somewhere in there, I guess because she was just a baby when I came. [Unclear] get on the train and come back. And to this day, I can't remember—it seemed like we stopped in the middle of a lake. I don't know. [Unclear] goes through the Salt Lake, maybe, Salt Lake. I think that's where we went through before we came back. I don't know. It was a long trip. We went to Nevada, I know. That's where I asked them and why are we stopping here and they said they had to wait for the other motor come up to pick us and take us down or take us up, you know.

Sandi Urabe 43:53
Engine, you mean.

Fumiko Urabe 43:53
Engine, yeah engine draining because they can only use one. I think they had to have three. So, they always had to wait for the other one to come back from work to pick up this group and come down over the hill. Things like that. So, I had a lot of experience, I would imagine. [Laughs] All kinds of things happening.

Sandi Urabe 44:20
So, when did Dad open up his barbershop then right after you guys got back?

Fumiko Urabe 44:32
I know they eventually opened up.

Sandi Urabe 44:35
Because you lived—you lived with grandma first, right?

Fumiko Urabe 44:37
Yeah.

Sandi Urabe 44:38
We lived on Lake Street.

Fumiko Urabe 44:39
And then we lived—after that you got—when all came back and for a while. And then we stayed at the housing project right around the corner. You know those buildings on the side of the housing [unclear] street and so we're able to find one that upstairs and downstairs so we stayed there a while.

Sandi Urabe 45:03
Then you moved to California Street.

Fumiko Urabe 45:06
Yeah, I think that's the next place. When things got better all around, everybody started moving back. So—

Stephanie Arechiga 45:15
So, you had a barbershop before the war and then again after, did you sell the property or—

Fumiko Urabe 45:24
No, my brother-in-law owned the whole block up to—and [unclear], he owned the other half, [unclear] up to Main Street, and the Urabe's owned this part, I guess, down to Bridge Street. So, one, two—the house—Grandmother had a house there, there was a barbershop and a grocery store, and then my mother-in-law's house, and the barbershop. Then they built a barbershop in the house. It was one—supposed to be a bedroom or something that we cut it out and made it into a barbershop, he had a barbershop in the house here. And then, of course, there used to be a hall there. But they eventually tore that down and made the hotel. But that's later on, too. So—

Adrienne Graham 46:26
Did you ever go on to Soledad Street?

Fumiko Urabe 46:31
I used to visit but actually I didn't go too often down that side.

Adrienne Graham 46:38
Where would you go visit?

Fumiko Urabe 46:40
They used to have a Japanese restaurant and there—and they had pool halls. And well they did on Lake Street to they had a pool hall. But I don't remember—there's a hotel, too, on that side. I don't know what the others were. I know they had a lot of restaurants and bars, things like that. So—

Sandi Urabe 47:10
I think, too, what happened back then is the Buddhist temple was always on California Street. So, the Japanese kind of kept to California Street and Lake Street. And there was always a cultural animosity

between the Chinese and the Japanese. And so even though their homes and everything are all pretty close, they stay pretty separate.

Fumiko Urabe 47:36
Yeah, that's right. The Chinese had Lake—Soledad Street. They were all on that street. And Japanese were all on Lake Street. But they call it "Oriental Town" or "Asian Town" or something. But I think they call it Chinatown, mostly, huh? Call it Chinatown because that was where—Chinese were there first, I guess. I'm not sure. But—but it wasn't—real—I think it was more or less quite gay and loud. You know, everybody was happy in those days before the war.

Sandi Urabe 48:12
There were a lot of gambling halls on Soledad. Pool halls, and brothels. And so women weren't supposed to really go on that street.

Fumiko Urabe 48:28
Yeah, I guess that's why we never went down that side. Too much.

Stephanie Arechiga 48:36
Do you remember the first time you ever went to Soledad Street, like what you thought of everything that was going on?

Fumiko Urabe 48:44
I didn't go on Soledad Street very often. But there was a lot of people, you know, so you just thought of these Chinese on that street. Then, of course, all the ones who are Japanese on this side. So I don't really remember ever mingling and having social things together. No. You always want your own [unclear] and your own friends on this drive. These people stayed together too. You didn't mingle or, say, have a party where both went to the party. We didn't do any of that as far as I can remember. So—

Sandi Urabe 49:29
Did you ever—I know that you interviewed Mae Sakasegawa, and she and I actually worked on a map of Chinatown. And listed on that map all the names of the businesses that were on Soledad, California, Lake, Market Street. So she has a map of that, if you're interested.

Fumiko Urabe 49:51
[Unclear] the books be out. We're hoping to get it finished this year, but I don't know. It'll have everything about Chinatown and people that lived here before the war.

Adrienne Graham 50:03
Yeah, we have the—this for the revitalization project. So, have you been helping with that at all or—

Fumiko Urabe 50:10
Well, not much. But it—that book—that is not in detail too much writing because we want to make it very enjoyable for people, so it's mostly pictures with like a description of one page. So, it'll be easy for

people to read, you know. You don't have to go through pages and pages of stuff. It's mostly pictures. So, it's gonna be quite easy to read and enjoy, I think.

Sandi Urabe 50:41
It's like a photo album.

Fumiko Urabe 50:43
More that way.

Adrienne Graham 50:46
So both like Chinatown and Lake Street, the whole area there? And who is the author?

Sandi Urabe 50:53
Mae Sakasegawa.

Fumiko Urabe 50:54
Well, the JACL—

Sandi Urabe 50:54
Yeah, it's a senior—the JACL senior group. So, they're all Nisei groups. And it's been an ongoing project for about eight years, I guess, or 10 years.

Fumiko Urabe 50:57
Maybe more. [Unclear] done a long time ago, and they, like Harry and that group, Tar, they're the ones that said they're gonna do it. And they never did. So, it kept going on and on and no one's doing it and finally the seniors—we do up to senior group, and then they said, "You people take over." That's where it ended up and so we finally got it together.

Sandi Urabe 51:35
There's two books being written. One is this photo album, which is very pictorial, oral history type thing. But there is a more definitive group that's being done by the Japanese American Citizens League that is being written by a professional writer, and it goes in great detail, and it's a lot of writing, and it goes into the history of this area, etc. And so, if you contacted the Salinas JACL, they're the ones who are sponsoring that more definitive project. And I think this photo album only goes up to World War Two, and it stops. So, it's really about the Issei, the first-generation Japanese, and some Nisei stories, but the JACL project is to present day. So that book includes the story about the flower—Japanese flower growers, and Tanimura's vegetable empire and all those kinds of things. So, you might want to look into that, too.

Fumiko Urabe 52:37
It'll be in the library, because we're donating our book too, and they will too. So, it'll be in the library.

Stephanie Arechiga 52:47
Do you know when it's due to come out?

Sandi Urabe 52:50
I think the photo album is in its final stages. It's been proofed right now and edited for any grammatical errors and trying to make sure the pages are, you know, matching and the graphs and so forth. And so, it should be out in a few months.

Fumiko Urabe 53:09
That'll give you more detail of early Japanese here.

Sandi Urabe 53:13
Yeah. And Mae Sakasegawa is the person who's sort of heading that project up. And I think you've already talked to her, so you must have her in your files.

Adrienne Graham 53:21
Yeah, Rina probably knows how to contact her.

Stephanie Arechiga 53:23
I'm going to start interviewing you now. Well, we already know where your family came from. I want to know where did you live when you came back to Salinas?

Sandi Urabe 53:40
Well, actually, I was born in Colorado, because my mother and father were living there for a while. And then when I was an infant, we came to Salinas. So, my memories are really being grown. And you know, I grew up here.

Stephanie Arechiga 53:56
Where in Salinas, though?

Sandi Urabe 53:57
Oh, we've lived in several places. One was on California Street, sort of across the street from the Buddhist temple. And that was some property that my uncle had. And part of the story that my mom was telling you was the reason in Japanese cultures, the oldest son inherits everything. And my dad was not the oldest son. So, my uncle was the one who inherited all the land and so forth. And at one time, there was a park in Salinas called Urabe Park. And my grandfather had deeded the land over to the city. And during World War Two because it was a Japanese name, they changed the name to Schneider Park. And then in the '80s, there was a movement in Salinas to change it back to you Urabe Park. So, it was Urabe Park again for a while and then my uncle, who's sort of like seen as the titular head of the family, gave the land—not gave the land, but told the city that they could do what they wanted with the park property. So, I don't even think the park's there anymore.

Fumiko Urabe 55:12
No.

Sandi Urabe 55:12

I think the park is gone because they built over it or something.

Fumiko Urabe 55:15
Yeah, because we had—if we were gonna keep it there, they said you had to put in, you know, improvements, put in slides and different things for the park. And Uncle decided no, he didn't want to bother with that.

Sandi Urabe 55:31
So anyway, so we—I grew up in—until I was about, from 1945 'til about 1950, we lived on California Street, and then we moved to the west side of town and moved to a house on Alexander Street. And we lived there for another five years. And then my mom and dad built a house just around the corner. And so, we moved in—so I lived on Anne Street until I moved away from home.

Stephanie Arechiga 56:08
How was your school?

Sandi Urabe 56:13
I'm not sure what I—what are you asking?

Adrienne Graham 56:16
Like, how—were you changing schools a lot because you moved or were you still at the same school?

Sandi Urabe 56:22
No, I only changed school once when I was in kindergarten, when we moved from California to the west side of town. But after that, because the homes were so close, I never changed schools after that. You know, and I do remember, when I was very young, there was a lot of racism still in Salinas, partly because a lot of the men in Salinas participated in the Bataan Death March. So, there was a lot of anti-Japanese sentiment in Salinas. And so, people would throw rocks at our cars, and yell at us and so forth. And I kind of remember that when I was very young. And even as I got older, the social life between myself and my friends in high school, for example, or junior high school, they were very separate. So, I went to school with Caucasian people, and Chinese and so forth. But I didn't socialize with them. My social life was 100% Japanese until I was, like, in high school, and my best girlfriend was Chinese. And so, I went to a lot of Chinese events. But even then, that was frowned upon. Because Japanese and Chinese even in the '60s weren't supposed to mingle. You know, I wasn't supposed to date Chinese boys or Filipino boys or white boys. Mom, right, mom? [Laughs] Because we weren't, you know, we just didn't mingle. And partly that's because of World War Two, you know, the Japanese thought they were safer if they just sort of kept to themselves. And so, there's a big differentiation in Japanese cultures in the Japanese American culture. So, my brother who was born prior to World War Two has a Japanese middle name. So, his name is Roger Takeshi Urabe. But if you were born after the war, they wanted us to be American, you know, so we didn't, we weren't bilingual. My middle name is Sue. I was a campfire girl, bluebird, campfire girl—did—there all the things to make us very American. And that's a, you know, a result of World War Two. And their fear that America did not see Japanese Americans as being very loyal. So, my childhood and so forth, although it was very integrated. I mean, I went to public schools and so forth, was sort of a schism so I had one life in a very integrated

environment and then my social life and my family life and church and everything was a Ja—was Presbyterian Church, but it was all Japanese. So outside of school, my life was very Japanese oriented.

Stephanie Arechiga 59:17
Do you remember any, like, good days at school or any bad days? Like what would be a good day for you at school?

Sandi Urabe 59:31
I, you know, school was okay for me. I mean, I was—I don't have any special memory of a great day or any special memory of a bad day. It was—maybe you're too young and so it's all very clear to you, but now it's kind of all a blur to me. I don't really—you know, and I participated in sports and I had a social life and I had girlfriends, and we had slumber parties, you know, all those kinds of things, but I don't—I don't remember like any one event.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:00:06
Your home, like, do you remember your favorite dinner? Your favorite TV show or favorite movie, even?

Sandi Urabe 1:00:12
It kind of depends upon what time of the year you're talking, I mean, what era you're talking about, you know? Because TV was pretty new when I was young, so I don't think we had a TV until like the 50s.

Fumiko Urabe 1:00:35
We had one of the first ones.

Sandi Urabe 1:00:38
Black and white. So back in those days, there weren't a lot of stations. There was, like, the Arthur Godfrey show and Buffalo Bill and Howdy Doody, you know, those kinds of shows? They weren't too great. And the Lawrence Welk Show, I remember, you know, a lot of people would watch those kinds of things. It wasn't until the series came along. And I probably was in high school by then. And I used to watch Star Trek, I Spy, those kinds of films.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:01:26
Favorite movie? Do you remember?

Sandi Urabe 1:01:29
Probably the movie I remember most from my childhood was Around the World in 80 Days. It was like a big deal back then. They had just come out with this thing called Cinema Scope. So up until then, you know, you watch movies, and they were all square. And then they came up with this wide screen thing sort of like these HD TVs now, the ones that are so cool. So, Around the World in 80 Days was one of the first films to be filmed on this wide screen. So, I can remember that.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:02:02
Who did you go to the movies with—your friends, family?

Sandi Urabe 1:02:05
I think I saw Around the World in 80 Days with my aunt and uncle. Auntie Dorothy and Uncle Joe, I think. Did you go to that?

Fumiko Urabe 1:02:17
I don't remember. A little bit too far for me.

Sandi Urabe 1:02:21
I remember we had to go up to San Francisco to watch it. That's why I—you know, I mean, it was such a special movie. But most of the time I went to the movies with my parents or I went with kids, my friends because back in those days you could go to the movies for a quarter. So, you know, as you get older and you're obviously then—by then I was driving. I had a car—I had—I was driving my brother's car because he had gotten drafted and was in the military. So, he left his car. So back in those days, I had a '57 Chevy that I got to drive. Pretty cool. So, you know, we were pretty independent. And, are either of you from Salinas? Salinas used to be one of the coolest places to drive Main. So, if you remember the movie American Graffiti, etcetera, that kids were driving their cars up and down this main street hanging out at Mel's Drive-in and those kinds of things. Those were the things I did. So, it was a very American experience except my, you know, other than my school activities like that on school nights, dragging Main or whatever, telling my mother I was at the library. My weekends were very Asian. We were very Japanese.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:02:40
Lucky you. [laughs] What were your household chores that you would do?

Sandi Urabe 1:03:55
Well, in Japa—in the Japanese culture, boys are prized children. So, and girls were—we did the housework. So, I remember having to do all the household chores. I clean my brother's room. I clean my own room. I change the sheets. I clean the bathrooms. Mom and I would go through and do the spring cleaning, mop and wax floors. I had to iron sheets. Back in those days, they didn't have permanent press. You had to iron sheets. I remember I had to iron my dad's boxer shorts.

Fumiko Urabe 1:04:38
And then we got that iron roller.

Sandi Urabe 1:04:41
Oh, yeah. I never did that. You did that. Yeah.

Fumiko Urabe 1:04:44
But the sheets don't fold them [unclear].

Sandi Urabe 1:04:47
So, the boys, their chore was to mow the lawn, empty the garbage, and the three of us took turns doing the dishes. That's all they did. I thought that was very unfair. [laughter] But, you know, and girls were meant—that's what we were supposed to do. We were supposed to do housework. So, I did that. And

then Mom was working most of my childhood. Initially, when I was really young, in an elementary school, she cleaned houses. And then she went to night school and she got her bookkeeping certificate. So, then she started doing bookkeeping for a drugstore downtown. And so, she would work until, like, 5:00 or 5:30. And so I would go home and I'd start dinner. And so that was also my chore.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:05:46
What do you remember about your father's barbershop?

Sandi Urabe 1:05:49
It was mostly a male bastion. I, you know, I was rarely there because women did—women didn't hang out at barbershops. It was all a guy thing. And like my mom said, it was—some of it was for the magazines, but I think it was just a place for men to hang out. And men didn't go to hair salons like they do now. They all went to a barbershop. And so, my dad had, you know, he had Playboy, but he also had Sports Illustrated. And then for the kids that would come into haircuts, the boys, he would have all these comic books. And so, the boys would always go there to read the comic books as well. So, a lot of what I remember about my dad's barber shop is not firsthand information. But when my dad was dying, he died of cancer. And so, he was sick for several months. He had visitors all the time, day in and day out, people would come to see him and a lot of them were his previous customers. And they would come in and they would tell stories about what they remember about coming to his barbershop. And don't you remember this? Don't you remember that? And so, I remember Dirigo is the—strawberry, right? They, all the boys, apparently, there were like four boys in that family. And all the boys came to my dad for haircuts. And so, one of the boys came by to see my dad when he was sick. And he was saying, “Yeah, I remember when I, I broke my—I was playing football, and I broke my leg. And I couldn't move. And I was in a body cast. But I needed to have a haircut. So, my dad drove me down to your barber shop. And I just stuck my head out the car window and your dad came out and cut my hair." You know, things like that. And my dad would volunteer and he would go into hospitals to cut hair for elderly people or people who were in there for a long time and couldn't get—they couldn't leave to get their hair cut. So my dad would go to the hospital and cut hair. So, he did a lot of things like that. And he—he cut hair until the day, I mean, until he was too sick to go to the barbershop. So, he—even after he sold his barbershop, he rented a chair from somebody else, the last few years. And so, one day a week he would cut hair and his old buddies, and he never had new customers, but all the guys who only wanted Lloyd to cut their hair and they would go into my dad to get his—get their hair cut. And he—half the men who were in his barbershop weren't there to get a haircut. They were just there to talk and so they would all go out to lunch. And so, he had all these haunts, you know, like one of the places is Rosita's Armory, which is on Salinas Street and it's been there 1000 years. Well, it's a Mexican restaurant. And so, all these guys would go there. And there used to be a little cafe on Main Street, a little hole in the wall kind of place. So, there were like these haunts that they all went to, and so they'd come to my dad's barbershop around 11:00, 11:30, and then they all go to lunch someplace and have long lunches and my dad would come back and cut hair in the afternoon. So, it was kind of like a general store kind of thing in the old west days where men would just sit around, smoke their cigarettes, pipes or whatever, and talk about politics and sports, and women probably. Oh, another thing was after China—after World War Two and Chinatown changed. And it was being more populated by brothels and bars. And a lot of Mexicans would buy bars and cocktail lounges and so forth in that area. In fact, I gave your teacher the name of a girlfriend who teaches at Foothill and her dad owned one of the

cocktail lounges. It was on—it was on Lake Street actually. And, but anyway, prostitutes would hang out in front of my dad's barbershop from probably around, maybe the '60s on. And he and, you know, he got to know some of them, I guess, because they were always in front of his barbershop. So, you know, you go get your hair cut, and there'd be these women there, you know, with real short shorts and boots. Hanging out by his barber shop. And so, he really towards the end—he didn't have like new customers, these were all kind of like customers he had for 30 years.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:11:21
Were you—did you ever go to Soledad Street?

Sandi Urabe 1:11:25
Only to one place. The Republic—Republic— what was it called? Cafe? Yeah, yeah. It was a Chinese restaurant. And it was owned by the Ahtyes, a brother and his two sisters. And so, it was like one of the favorite Chinese restaurants in the area from like, the '40s on through. I think they didn't close until the '60s or '70s? And so, for years, that was the only place. I never really—I remember one time my cousin, Thai. She took me and I think my brother, and maybe my cousin, and we—she—Soledad that was not a street you were supposed to go to. It was very dangerous. And we were told that you can get shot there and stabbed there, etc. So, we weren't supposed to go on to Soledad Street, but one night, she said, "Okay, get in your car, lock the doors, and we'll drive down Soledad Street." And that was seen as like a very dangerous thing to do. And so, my memory of that was, you know, it was a lot of people. And I remember it was well lit. There were—a lot of noise and music going on and so forth, but it wasn't really like Chinatown at that point. I think I was in high school. So, we're talking about early 60s. But that's really my only memory. When we lived on California Street in the early '50s, there was a, you know, I remember kind of, I wasn't supposed to, but I remember wandering up and down California Street. And because there were several other Japanese families that lived on that street, but I was never allowed to kind of go on to Soledad Street. There used to be a Chinese market on the corner. So, when I walked to school, we used to stop at the Chinese market and get candy or something. But we never ventured, like, into Soledad Street because it was after the war and it really wasn't a Chinese community anymore.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:13:56
Do you remember any jobs that you used to have?

Sandi Urabe 1:14:06
I had a lot of part-time jobs when I was young, and I went to Hartnell College for two years. So, while I was there I worked at Kinney Shoes as a cashier. I packed squid one summer at U.S. Freezer.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:14:27
How was that experience?

Sandi Urabe 1:14:30
It—actually it was one of the better educational experiences of my life. A girlfriend of mine, her mother worked there, and so she got us this summer job there, and it paid better than anything else, and so we said, "Okay." So, you get—you had to wear rubber boots, rubber apron, hairnet—real cute—and rubber

gloves. And you would stand along this assembly line and all the squid would come down and your job was to pull the squid off and put them in, place them into a box, put fat ones on the top, and then put the box on another conveyor belt that sent them off to be frozen. Well, we were just high school, we were college kids at that time, and there was three of us who were doing this. And they would never let us at the front of the line where you could pick off the fat squid. So, you're down here at the end, where all the small ones are there. So that meant you had to work harder, because it took more to fill a box up and so forth. And it was hard to find the fat ones to put at the top. And so, while you're doing this, these women who are way older, would talk all day long about their husbands. How you could tell the size of a man's penis by looking at his hands, who had the best husband, you know, who was the best lover, and I mean, they would talk about all these things. And here we are kind of these naive, college kids, freshman, just all ears, you know, listening to all this while these women were talking about all this stuff to each other, they weren't talking to us. And they would get into these arguments. And what they would do to sort of insult the other woman was when you put your box up on this upper conveyor belt, because it's all wet, right? You slap the box on there. And obviously it would splash the water on her face. They get into these kinds of arguments, verbal arguments and start slapping on these conveyor belts. That was pretty interesting. So, I did that for one summer. I tried cutting carrots in one of these sheds. And I got blisters on top of blisters. And like I told mom, I think after like the third day, "I'm not going back." This is not worth it—my back hurt, my feet hurt, my hands were full of blisters. And it was just you know, the carrots would come down the belt, and our job was to take these knives and cut the tops off. And I guess they went—they went farther down because I know that somebody chopped—some machine chopped them up, and then they get boiled and cooked, and then frozen. And I—for a long time I couldn't eat cooked carrots because, you know, that smell. So, I did that for a little while and I left. And so, then I got a job at a electronics technology company and I was making circuit boards. And that was a summer job as well. So, I did a lot of those kinds of summer jobs kind of thing. And then after I got my—I did two years in Hartnell and then I went to UC Santa Cruz. And I was in the very first class there. So, I was a transfer student. So, I graduated after two years. And so, we were the very first graduating class from UC Santa Cruz. So, I was back there when they were trailers, [unclear], and so forth. And after that, I worked at the Santa Cruz Sentinel, the newspaper there. I was engaged to be married and I broke off the engagement. And so, then I thought, great now I have to go to work. And so, I thought, what do you do with a bachelor's degree in English literature. So, then I apply for this job to work at the Sentinel, and my job was to take classified ads over the phone, so you'd wear these headsets. House for sale, charming cottage, fixer upper, you know. So, I did that for a year, and I thought, "I don't think I could do this for the rest of my life." So, I decided to go back to school and I went to San Francisco State to get my teaching credential. I did not like teachers. I did not want to be a teacher because I never had a teacher who was inspirational. I've had pretty mediocre teachers, even in college. There was no teacher that inspired me to think, "Oh yeah, I want to be just like that person." But I thought teaching might be better than this. So, I went to San Francisco State. It was during the strikes and riots of late '60s, during the Vietnam War and all of that. And so that was a very educational experience for me. My dad said that if he ever saw me on TV rioting, he would yank me out of school. So, after that I taught, I got my teaching credential, and I taught at Seaside High School. And I taught there for three years. And then I went on to get a master's degree in educational psychology from CSU—back in those days it was called CSU Hayward, and I was working for an educational research company, and it was called the Behavioral Sciences Institute. I worked for them for two years. And a job came up at the Monterey County Office of Education to run a project for the Department of Labor.

So, I did that for three years, and was a project supervisor for these projects down in Gonzalez. And I worked with migrant labor children. And we set up a project where they could go to work after school. And but, it wasn't, back in those days, the kind of jobs that kids had were sweeping floors or working in county offices or schools, while our project was to allow them to work in private industry. So, they worked for attorneys, architects, factories, body shops, auto repair, bakeries, wherever we could find a job and the federal government, the Department of Labor, paid their salaries. So, it was to give them a sense of occupations that they might want to consider. And so, I did that for several years. And then I went on to Foothill College, which was my last job. And so, I worked for Foothill College for 27 years. And was eventually the vice president. Quick and Dirty. [laughs]

Stephanie Arechiga 1:21:35
Gonna kind of be jumping around here, but how would you—how would you describe any celebrations that your family would have when you were younger?

Sandi Urabe 1:21:48
When I was a child, because the Japanese community was so tight knit, I remember getting gifts from everybody. I would get little gifts from family friends. You know, nowadays, you typically just get gifts for your family. But back then I remember getting all these little gifts, little purses and so forth from all these family friends. And then we had—a big Japanese holiday is New Year's Day. And so, my father's mother would have a Japanese feast. And the typical way that this work was that the women cook for three days. Making all these Japanese delicacies that were only served on New Year's Day, and you were supposed to eat certain foods, you ate one thing for good health, and another thing for wealth, and another thing for happiness, etc. And so, there were these traditional things that you're supposed to eat. So, we would go to my grandmother's house to eat there. And then we would go to her mother's house to eat there. And what the—what happens is, it's the women who do all the cooking. And so, mom always had a plate of food at our house as well. And the men didn't do anything. Their job was to go from house to house and drink sake and eat food and greet the new year with—they greet their new friends and toast to the new year. And the woman didn't get to leave their home. Right? I don't remember.

Fumiko Urabe 1:23:25
Yeah.

Sandi Urabe 1:23:26
Except for our own family thing.

Fumiko Urabe 1:23:27
Waiting for the friends to come by.

Sandi Urabe 1:23:29
Yeah. And so the women did all the work. And the men would just drink sake and drink, you know, go from home to home. So that was kind of a big Japanese holiday. And then when I was young, she talked about these community picnics very much like American community picnics, you have the three-legged races and everyone will play bingo where you put beans on numbers and those kinds of things.

And so, there were those kinds of events. But the—and the Japanese, and I think all cultures do, and your cultures probably did as well, is you started mish-mashing American culture with your Japanese culture. And so, we would celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas and Easter and all these other holidays. But you fix the food a little differently, you know. So, we would have ham but we might have rice with that ham. So, but, but mostly it was a pretty American upbringing, except for New Year's Day.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:24:40
Was English your primary language spoken at home?

Sandi Urabe 1:24:43
Yes. I think after the war, my parents wanted, you know, mom and dad wanted me to grow up to be American. And so, we didn't speak Japanese at home. When my dad and mom spoke Japanese it was because they didn't want us to understand what they were saying. And so it wasn't something that we were encouraged to do at home. And I can even remember sometimes mom would tell me, "Don't tell people what you eat." Because when we—when I was young, and this was elementary school—soy sauce, which is like a real American, almost a very American condiment now, back in those days, they called it bug juice. And people thought we ate fish heads. And I mean, it was just really weird stuff. And so, mom used to say, don't tell people what we eat. And so it was very much, you know, to—the idea was to be very American.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:25:48
Did you ever learn Japanese?

Sandi Urabe 1:25:51
No, except for a few words, you know, like, the—it was, like, words that would tell us we were being bad. Or, you know, you learn the simple ones, like, hello, goodbye, thank you, you're welcome, those kinds of things, but to speak in a sentence—I never learned how to do that. And I always thought, "Oh, when I retire, I'll take a class and learn how to speak Japanese." But now my memory is so bad I wouldn't remember.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:26:21
What about religious celebrations?

Sandi Urabe 1:26:25
My dad was Buddhist, and so he—there was an Obon festival at the Buddhist temple, and so we would go to that, but we were raised in a Japanese Presbyterian Church. And so, the holidays that—the religious holidays that we celebrated were all Christian holidays. So, they weren't—it was kind of strange, and I don't know why. It was because I think she was raised Methodist, right? Weren't you raised Methodist?

Fumiko Urabe 1:26:57
Yeah, but more or less has to do with the war.

Sandi Urabe 1:27:01

They wanted us to be American.

Fumiko Urabe 1:27:02
So we went to Christian church first, then as things settled down, we went back in to the Buddhist church.

Sandi Urabe 1:27:09
She did. I don't do any church now. Is that about it?

Stephanie Arechiga 1:27:25
Yeah, I think?

Fumiko Urabe 1:27:27
Yeah.

Sandi Urabe 1:27:28
Okay. Yeah, I don't know if we were able to tell you very much but—

Adrienne Graham 1:27:34
You told us plenty.

Fumiko Urabe 1:27:37
Plenty of things that I shouldn't say, maybe. [laughs] Okay. Anyway, thank you.

Adrienne Graham 1:27:43
Thank you. I was wondering if you guys had—maybe have any pictures that we might be able to scan and use like as a reference.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:27:54
I actually have a camera, if you don't mind me taking a picture.

Sandi Urabe 1:27:58
Oh, a picture of us?

Fumiko Urabe 1:28:02
It's up to you.

Sandi Urabe 1:28:05
She doesn't want to be photographed.

Fumiko Urabe 1:28:06
I'm not a very good picture taker. I hate taking pictures. It doesn't make any difference, maybe.

Sandi Urabe 1:28:17

You want to take your glasses off? She fell the other day, and so her glasses are broken.

Stephanie Arechiga 1:28:28
If you don't feel comfortable with letting us borrow pictures, I'm pretty sure I can just take a picture of the picture.

Sandi Urabe 1:28:35
Well, I don't know. Do you need a formal picture or a—?

Stephanie Arechiga 1:28:39
Just any, a family picture, right?

Adrienne Graham 1:28:43
Anything you're comfortable letting us use.

Sandi Urabe 1:28:50
Oh, here's a picture of Mom, do you need a current picture or what?

Adrienne Graham 1:28:54
Nope, just any, you know, family photos.

Sandi Urabe 1:28:58
Oh, a family photo. Oh, my goodness.

Fumiko Urabe 1:29:02
The other one.

Sandi Urabe 1:29:04
This one? Oh, my goodness, you're pretty young here.