Oral History Center
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Lori Matsumura

Lori Matsumura: Intergenerational Impacts from Japanese American World War II Prison Camps

Japanese American Intergenerational Narratives Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Roger Eardley-Pryor
in 2022

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Lori Matsumura with her dog, Fuzzy, at Stevenson Ranch, California, summer 2023.

Abstract

Lori Matsumura is a Sansei for whom the legacy and events of her family's unjust incarceration at Manzanar and Tule Lake during World War II continues to impact her life in the twenty-first century. Matsumura, the youngest of four siblings, was born in July 1970 in Santa Monica, California, where her father worked as a gardener after his own father's unexpected death at Manzanar in 1945. In 1982, soon after Matsumura turned twelve, her mother, then forty-eight, died suddenly. Matsumura attended grade school and high school in Santa Monica and has lived her entire life in the Los Angeles area. Prior to World War II, Matsumura's maternal family lived in Stockton, California, where they ran a hotel. Matsumura's paternal family emigrated from Japan in the early twentieth century and settled in the Santa Monica Canyons near Los Angeles. During World War II, when both her parents were young, they and their families were forcibly removed from their homes and incarcerated without due process by the US government in mass detention camps in remote areas of California. Her mother's family eventually went to Tule Lake, and her father's family went to Manzanar. In July 1945, Matsumura's grandfather Giichi Matsumura died while hiking high in the mountains above Manzanar, just weeks prior before he, his wife, and their four young children were to be released from Manzanar. Giichi's body remained some ten-thousand feet atop Mount Williamson until late 2019 when two hikers rediscovered his remains. The Inyo County Sheriff's Office retrieved the remains, and in collaboration with National Park Service Rangers at the Manzanar National Historic Site, they contacted Matsumura, whose DNA test confirmed a match with her grandfather. During the COVID pandemic of 2020, Matsumura and her siblings eventually laid their grandfather to rest alongside his wife in Woodlawn Cemetery in Santa Monica. Matsumura has several family mementos and heirlooms, including photographs, a ring, and her father's artwork as a young man, some of which she shared during this interview. In this oral history, Matsumura discusses all of the above, including her family's experiences before, during, and after their wartime incarcerations; her own life in Los Angeles, including during the 1992 LA Riots; her experiences visiting Japan as a young girl; and her experiences both of the rediscovery of her grandfather's remains in the mountains above Manzanar and her efforts in 2021 to stop the sale on eBay of artwork her family created while incarcerated in Manzanar.

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Project History

After the entrance of the United States into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, which mandated the forced removal of Japanese Americans from their homes on the West Coast into incarceration camps inland for the duration of the war. This unjust incarceration uprooted families, disrupted businesses, and dispersed communities—impacting generations of Japanese Americans.

The Japanese American Intergenerational Narratives Oral History Project documents and disseminates the ways in which intergenerational trauma and healing occurred after the United States government's incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. These interviews examine and compare how private memory, creative expression, place, and public interpretation intersect at sites of incarceration.

Initial interviews in this project focus on the Manzanar and Topaz prison camps in California and Utah, respectively, and pose a comparison through the lens of place, popular culture, and collective memory. How does memory graft differently on different sites? What gets remembered about these sites, and by whom? How does memory differ across generations? Has interpretive work around these sites provided intergenerational catharsis for families of those incarcerated? Does geography and popular culture matter in the healing process?

Exploring narratives of healing as a through line, these interviews of descendants of World War II incarceration investigate the impact of different types of healing, how this informs collective memory, and how these narratives change across generations.

This oral history project began in 2021 with generous funding from the National Park Service's Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant. Most of the early interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Interview 1: March 8, 2022

01-00:00:00
Eardley-Pryor: Today is March 8, 2022. This is interview session number one with Lori Matsumura as a part of the Japanese American Intergeneration Narrative Project. My name is Roger Eardley-Pryor from the Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. And Lori, can you tell me where you are located today?

01-00:00:23
Matsumura: I'm located in Stevenson Ranch, California.

01-00:00:27
Eardley-Pryor: Great, and I'm in Santa Rosa, California. We are recording this interview over Zoom. Thank you so much for sharing your stories here, and for making the time and the preparation to share these stories as well.

01-00:00:37
Matsumura: You're welcome. It's my pleasure.

01-00:00:40
Eardley-Pryor: My pleasure, too. To begin, can you share your birthdate and where you were born?

01-00:00:47
Matsumura: Yes, my name is Lori Matsumura, and my birthdate is July 23, 1970. I was born in Santa Monica, California.

01-00:00:57
Eardley-Pryor: We will unfurl some really remarkable family stories of yours, but can you just tell us who were the people in your family that you were born to?

01-00:01:06
Matsumura: I was born to Masaru Matsumura and Kyoko Murano.

01-00:01:12
Eardley-Pryor: Great. And any siblings of yours?

01-00:01:15
Matsumura: My siblings are: the oldest is Clyde, after that is Wayne, then Lisa, and me. I'm the youngest.

01-00:01:25
Eardley-Pryor: All right, great. So three siblings, and your mom and dad. Before we get into too much depth about sharing family stories, I'd like to have a brief discussion and hear from you your thoughts on terminology and language, particularly around camps, since that will be a part of what you'll share today. Growing up, what was the terminology you learned in terms of what happened during World War II to your family?

01-00:01:53
Matsumura: Growing up, the terminology that our family used was “internment camps.” That's how we always referred to them. But I've heard different terminology, like concentration camps, or relocation prison. But I always thought of using the terminology “concentration camps” as very strong, because I think of Hitler and the Jewish people and Auschwitz, and how many of them passed away there, how they were killed. And granted, yes, the Japanese and Japanese Americans were in these [American prison] camps, but we weren't killed per se, but you know, our property—it was a horrible experience for them. That's why I try to be delicate when using the terminology.

01-00:02:46
Eardley-Pryor: All right. What terminology would you like to use together today?

01-00:02:51
Matsumura: Probably prison camps, yeah.

01-00:02:54
Eardley-Pryor: Okay, great. Before we dive into stories about the [prison camps], maybe you can share some of the deeper stories about your family, starting with your maternal side, the Murano family. What do you know about their experience of immigration to the United States?

01-00:03:11
Matsumura: I don't know much about their immigration, but I do have a story of how my grandparents met. My grandfather, Tadaki Murano, was supposed to get married through a matchmaker. And the matchmaker found someone, but she had tuberculosis and could not come to the United States. So he said, “Well what about your daughter?” So that's how he met my grandmother, Kikue, whose maiden name is Hirato.

01-00:03:47
Eardley-Pryor: That's a wild story. Do you know around when it was that they met or were introduced?

01-00:03:53
Matsumura: I don't know when this happened. I know that my grandfather was already in California, and my grandmother, I think she moved from the Kumamoto Prefecture to California to be with him. And from there, they had twelve kids.

01-00:04:17
Eardley-Pryor: That's a big family.

01-00:04:19
Matsumura: It is a very large family. I know there are so many stories about what happened when they were sent to Gila [River prison camp], and then to Tule Lake [prison camp]. As for pre-war stories, I believe that my grandfather owned a hotel—not the land, but he owned the hotel. It was called the Hotel Palace, which is no longer there, in Stockton, California. He was a “no-no boy.” Even before the Japanese were taken away, he was sent to Tule Lake.

01-00:05:07
Eardley-Pryor: Before the prison camps?

01-00:05:10
Matsumura: Before everyone else went.

01-00:05:11
Eardley-Pryor: Before everyone else, he was taken early, your grandfather?

01-00:05:13
Matsumura: Yes, yes, he was taken away from his family. So my grandmother was left to raise, at the time, eleven kids by herself. And that must have been really tough. I can't imagine.

01-00:05:30
Eardley-Pryor: Wow. Have you heard any of the stories of what your grandmother Kikue's experience was when your grandfather was taken away? Do you know any of what they did, or where they lived, or how they got by?

01-00:05:45
Matsumura: Well, he had the hotel, and I believe she worked at a cannery or she did agricultural work, like at a farm. And other than that, I know that before the war, they sent their three eldest daughters to Japan. I guess they sent them to a school so they could become good wives to their husbands when they married. They learned things like manners, and tea ceremonies, and flower arranging. Two of my aunts came back, but the oldest one stayed behind in Japan. I think she was there for about eight months in Japan, and she took the last ship right before Pearl Harbor. She had dual citizenship, and when she was on her way back, she had to choose between her Japanese citizenship or her US citizenship. And she chose the US because everyone was here, her mom and dad and siblings. I know that she was at sea for a few days because the US government wouldn't let them dock in Hawaii. She said she felt the ship moving one way, and the moving back, and then going out, and it just kept moving back and forth, because they weren't sure what to do with the people on the ship. Finally, yes, they allowed them to dock, and then shortly after, Pearl Harbor happened.

01-00:07:27
Eardley-Pryor: Wow. Wow, so she was in Japan while Japan was still at war, but not with the United States, and then she left Japan just before Pearl Harbor?

01-00:07:37
Matsumura: Yes.

01-00:07:38
Eardley-Pryor: What's your memory of hearing that story? When did you learn that, and how?

01-00:07:43
Matsumura: I learned it because I decided that it would be interesting to do a family video with my aunts and uncles, because they were all getting older, and I wanted to

hear these stories before they passed away. So we did a family oral history project. That's where I learned of that story.

01-00:08:11
Eardley-Pryor: When did you do that project?

01-00:08:13
Matsumura: It must have been when I was, maybe—I'm fifty-one now, so maybe about fifteen or twenty years ago.

01-00:08:23
Eardley-Pryor: That's amazing.

01-00:08:24
Matsumura: Yeah, must have been. Or maybe ten? I'd have to look at the date, but it's been a while.

01-00:08:30
Eardley-Pryor: Sometime in the past ten or fifteen years?

01-00:08:33
Matsumura: Yes. And granted, a lot of people have passed away since then, but I'm glad I have it. It makes me so sad to hear those stories about their struggles and what they went through.

01-00:08:49
Eardley-Pryor: Do you remember what it was that inspired you at that time? What was happening in your life around ten or fifteen years ago that you said, "This is the time to capture these families' stories?"

01-00:09:00
Matsumura: At family reunions or weddings, we would always say, "Someone should record the aunts and uncles to have that on film, to document it." And my boyfriend works in entertainment, so he has the equipment. He was able to help us because he knows editing. So that's how it happened.

01-00:09:23
Eardley-Pryor: That's great. Tell me about your mother. You mentioned her mom and dad, and their experience—that her father was taken away. When was your mother born, or how old was she around this time that her father was taken?

01-00:00:48
Matsumura: She was about eight years old when her dad was taken. And I do have a memory here [a letter] that she wrote to her dad in prison. She wrote it on their hotel stationery. He worked at the Hotel Palace. It says, "Dear Father, I am so glad that you sent me an Easter card. And thank you very much. I was very happy because you sent me a pretty card. Your daughter, Kyoko Murano." This is dated April 6, 1942, and on it is stamped "Detained Alien, Enemy Mail." It was examined by the US government before he could get it.

And this is what it looks like, this is the stamp. [*holding letter up to record on video*]

01-00:10:32
Eardley-Pryor: That's incredible. And how do you have that amazing letter?

01-00:10:37
Matsumura: Well, there's two trunks of family letters and mementos. My cousin has it. And right now, she's preparing to make copies for the families and put it in some kind of chronological order for us, which is nice. She had found this, and I happened to look at it and say, "Oh, it's from my mom." I was so happy to see this. She was born in 1934, and this is dated 1942, so she was very young. And I don't know, it really—it makes me sad. But I cherish things from my mom because she passed away at such a young age.

01-00:11:28
Eardley-Pryor: What a beautiful thing to have. What a treasure. And what a horrible thing to have happened at the same time, that she's writing to her father who's been imprisoned.

01-00:11:35
Matsumura: Yes. Yes.

01-00:11:37
Eardley-Pryor: And they sent it from the hotel that your family had or worked at. Do you know what happened to that hotel?

01-00:11:45
Matsumura: When the war started, the family was ordered out. I think it got looted, and just got destroyed. It's no longer there. I don't know what's there now. But it was on 125 East Lafayette Street in Stockton, California. So I guess I can Google that.

01-00:12:12
Eardley-Pryor: In this big family, you mentioned that your mom was one of twelve, eventually. Where did your mom fall into the order there?

01-00:12:20
Matsumura: Well, I can name all my uncles and aunts.

01-00:12:24
Eardley-Pryor: Oh really, can you?

01-00:12:26
Matsumura: Let's see, okay, so the oldest is Auntie Alice. Then it's my Auntie Machan, Masako; then my Uncle Roy, who was probably named after my grandfather Roy Tadaki; and then I have Auntie Shiz; then Auntie Take; and then my Uncle Fred; and Auntie Waka; Auntie Yas; my mom, Kyoko; and then Uncle Sharky; Uncle Kachi; and then my Aunt Pat Tsuruko.

01-00:13:12
Eardley-Pryor: Wow, so your mom was fourth youngest of the twelve?

01-00:13:15
Matsumura: Yes, fourth-youngest.

01-00:13:18
Eardley-Pryor: Wow, amazing. Do you know anything about, or do you remember any stories that family told or that she told, about their life in Stockton, pre-World War II?

01-00:13:30
Matsumura: Well, I talked to the youngest sibling, Aunt Pat, quite often. And she remembers that, while growing up, they didn't have much money, having twelve kids. And my grandmother was the only one working in the family, because after the war, my grandfather was sick and he couldn't work. But he was always involved with the kids. She remembers, when growing up, that her friends would come over, and he would always tell them their Japanese name, things like that. She said she never knew she was poor, because she always had a nickel in her pocket to buy candy. She seemed like she had a very happy childhood, which is very good to hear.

01-00:14:21
Eardley-Pryor: Are there any other family stories that you want to share from pre-war times of life in Stockton, or even connections about going—you mentioned that some aunts went back to Japan for education. Is there anything else you want to share from the pre-war years in your maternal family side?

01-00:14:37
Matsumura: I'm not sure about too many pre-war stories, only about how my grandmother and grandfather met.

01-00:14:54
Eardley-Pryor: Maybe we can move into what happened particularly with your family in the prison camps that were established during World War II by the federal government. What stories came out of these [family video] oral histories with all of these aunts and uncles? And what stories do you remember hearing your mother tell you about what happened to her family?

01-00:15:13
Matsumura: Well, my mother passed away when I was twelve, so we didn't really discuss the internment camps and what happened. My aunt [Pat], who I did speak to every night before she passed away, she was born in camp, so she doesn't have many stories because she was just a baby. But I know from the video that because they have such a large family, they were allowed to have not just one portion of a room, but they had a double room, and they separated it through a sheet and some blankets. That's how they were able to get some privacy between parents and kids.

And I do know that my Auntie Alice, she met her husband in Tule Lake. I guess she worked in the kitchen, and Uncle Dick, he drove produce. He would deliver the refrigerated produce, and that's how they met. One day they decided, "We're going to get married." But she wasn't allowed to leave camp, so they had to hide the luggage in the dirt underneath the house. She said that a lot of people had little, not tunnels, but they dug holes into the dirt because it was cooler, and that's where they could store some food and things like that. So she stored her luggage there. And one day they took off, and they got married in Arizona by the justice of the peace. And because they weren't allowed to be out at night, they had to find a [prison] camp to go into. So they went to the camp that his family was at. And then they went to Chicago. And that's how she got out of camp.

01-00:17:19
Eardley-Pryor: That's incredible. Did she stay in Chicago? What was her trajectory?

01-00:17:24
Matsumura: She stayed in Chicago.

01-00:17:28
Eardley-Pryor: Wow. You had mentioned your grandfather was listed as a "no-no boy," and even before that, he was taken before the rest of the incarcerations even happened. Do you have any sense of why it was that your grandfather, Roy Tadaki was taken ahead of time, before the camps were established, before the evacuation orders had been forced upon Japanese Americans?

01-00:17:56
Matsumura: Yes, Tadaki was taken ahead of time because the government felt that he was a threat. That's why he was taken away to prison.

01-00:18:07
Eardley-Pryor: He was brought to Tule Lake, but you said that your mother's family—at the time, eleven kids and your grandmother—were sent elsewhere.

01-00:18:14
Matsumura: Well, first they went to Gila, because it was an assembly center, and then they got moved to Tule Lake. And shortly after, I believe my grandfather got released, and he joined the family. But I know that when he was released, my Auntie Take said that she remembers he was really thin, just like all bones, and it was terrible. It was really sad.

01-00:18:45
Eardley-Pryor: What happened with your family's experience once they were rejoined in Tule Lake? Do you know any more stories? Your one aunt was able to marry and somehow find herself in the Midwest. Any other stories that have come up through family narratives about their in-camp experiences?

01-00:19:06
Matsumura: They didn't mention too many stories on the video about in-camp experiences, just about how my aunt got caught on the last ship from Japan, and about how

she got married. Other than that, I mean, it's strange because when I talk to them, it seems like that's just how it was. It doesn't seem like they held any grudges, or I don't hear any anger in their voice. Sadness, yes, but anger, no. And I can't imagine not holding that anger with me after I've been treated like that, and having everything taken away. You know, they lost everything, and had to build it back up again. And my grandfather was very big on education, so everyone went to school, and they did well. I know, from this [wartime] experience, that they fought and they made it.

01-00:20:21
Eardley-Pryor: The feelings that come up for you in learning these stories and in sharing these stories, where are you at in your experience of this knowledge?

01-00:20:34
Matsumura: Where I'm at? At first, it angers me to know about what happened. When hearing these stories at a younger age, you'd think of it as not as bleak as how it really was. Because both sides of my family, they painted a picture of [the prison camps], as "Oh, we went to school, and we had friends, and we played games." You know? But when I visited Manzanar and saw how bleak it was, that completely changed the way I thought about it. It just makes me angry to hear about how they were treated.

01-00:21:20
Eardley-Pryor: There was a story you had mentioned to me before about a ring. Your grandmother had some sort of ring, your maternal grandmother. What's the story around this family ring?

01-00:21:31
Matsumura: Yes, so my grandfather Tadaki promised Kikue a diamond ring. And they were in camp, so they had to order it from a Sears catalog. And from the one that he bought originally, she wanted a different style. So she had him send the ring back, and they had to do some correspondence with Sears Roebuck at the time. And each time it came, the government would read the letters. But she owed a little bit more money because the ring she chose was eight dollars more, and there were letters back and forth. I actually have the ring right now. This is in the original box [*shows Sears Roebuck box on video recording*]. This is from the Sears catalog. I believe the ring was worth one hundred, the ring that she originally got was a hundred dollars. And the new ring was, I believe it's like a hundred and eight dollars. So she owed a little bit more.

01-00:22:38
Eardley-Pryor: I can see you looking through papers. You have receipts of all this?

01-00:22:41
Matsumura: I do have receipts of everything, yes. I have receipts and correspondence from Sears Roebuck about this ring. I can show you the ring right now. It's so cute. [*shows ring on video recording*]. It's a little diamond ring. She wore this, and she never took it off. She wore it all the time. She loved it so.

01-00:23:08
Eardley-Pryor: And it was shipped to her in Tule Lake?

01-00:23:11
Matsumura: Yes, yes. I guess that's how they received goods. It was from the Sears Roebuck catalog. It was a big deal to be able to order things from Sears Roebuck.

01-00:23:22
Eardley-Pryor: What significance does that ring hold for you? What meaning does it have?

01-00:23:27
Matsumura: Well, just to know that she wore this every day, and how much she loved this ring, and that it was from my grandfather, it holds a lot of—I mean, it's my family heirloom to pass along. I just think it's very special. It's very special.

01-00:23:47
Eardley-Pryor: When the war came to a conclusion in 1945 in the summer, and camps were closing, what happened to your family, to your mother's family?

01-00:24:00
Matsumura: They decided to go back to Stockton to start again. I believe my grandfather's brother went first, and then they followed. I have a photo of all twelve kids, and my grandmother and grandfather. [*shows photograph on video recording*].

01-00:24:28
Eardley-Pryor: That's an incredible photograph. Where's your mother in there?

01-00:24:32
Matsumura: My mom is right here.

01-00:24:40
Eardley-Pryor: Wow, what a huge family.

01-00:24:42
Matsumura: Yes, it is quite a large family.

01-00:24:46
Eardley-Pryor: You mentioned that even before the incarcerations happened—and your grandfather being taken early, and then the family sent to Tule Lake—that it was not an extravagant existence for them. In the wake of the war, and the loss of property that happened, and the imprisonment, and now even another baby added, who was your Aunt Pat born in Tule Lake—how did they get by?

01-00:25:14
Matsumura: Good question. You know, the oldest kids went to work, and they would send money home to help. And by the time my aunt [Pat], the youngest, was growing up, a lot of her siblings were already done with school and working, so they would contribute to the family. It was just close-knit, where they would help each other.

01-00:25:42
Eardley-Pryor: Did most of that family stay around the Stockton area?

01-00:25:46
Matsumura: No—well, in Northern California. They moved out of Stockton. Then we kind of divided between northern Cal and southern California. But some have moved on since then, even to Hawaii or different areas. I have so many cousins, it's quite a large group of us.

01-00:26:08
Eardley-Pryor: Are you still in good contact with that part of the family, with that huge family on your mom's side?

01-00:26:13
Matsumura: My two cousins, one who actually was very close to me, they are so generous of their time to organize a Murano reunion once every few years. So yes, I do see them once in a while.

01-00:26:33
Eardley-Pryor: That's really great. What was your mom's trajectory after the war? She goes into camp at the beginning of the war, she's an eight-year-old girl writing that letter to her dad who had been imprisoned. And then a few years later, she's still a pretty young child. What was your mom's trajectory before you arrived into the world in 1970?

01-00:26:56
Matsumura: My mom, Kyoko, went on to finish high school in Stockton, and she went on to nursing school. She became a nurse, and then she moved to Los Angeles to work with a doctor. It was there she met my dad.

01-00:27:16
Eardley-Pryor: Great. Maybe this is an opportunity for us to transition to talking about paternal family? And then we'll find the time where they meet. Does that sound good to you?

01-00:27:25
Matsumura: Yes, that sounds good.

01-00:27:26
Eardley-Pryor: All right, so for the paternal Matsumura family, how far back does your knowledge of family stories go on this side of the family?

01-00:27:35
Matsumura: With my dad's side, I know that my great-grandfather Katsuzo first went to Alaska, and then he moved to Santa Monica. He settled in the Santa Monica Canyons. And my grandmother, her name is Ito Kikue, and my grandfather is Giichi Matsumura. I believe they got married in Japan, and they settled in the Santa Monica Canyons. I believe, according to a book, that they are one of the first Japanese settlers in the Santa Monica Canyons. They lived in a little adobe hut that the Marquez family had owned, they [the Marquez family]

owned the big house, and they [my grandparents] lived in the little adobe hut. And the Marquez family, they are very well-known in Santa Monica. I believe they are the first settlers of the Santa Monica Canyon. That's where and that's how it started.

01-00:28:59
Eardley-Pryor: What I heard you say was that your great-grandfather was who emigrated from Japan and immigrated into the United States, first to Alaska, then to the Santa Monica area. And that your grandfather Giichi would have been born here in California?

01-00:29:15
Matsumura: No, he was born in Japan, I believe, according to his birth certificate or some certificate. And that's where he met my grandmother. My grandmother's family, they owned a jewelry store in Kyoto that made jewelry for geishas, I believe. And yeah, so she moved out here.

01-00:29:52
Eardley-Pryor: Oh wow, okay. So your grandfather Giichi, and your grandmother Ito, they were both born in Japan, and also immigrated to California?

01-00:30:01
Matsumura: Yes, yes. They were born in Japan.

01-00:30:04
Eardley-Pryor: And do you know around what time they came to live in California? Like what era, early twentieth century, early teens?

01-00:30:12
Matsumura: I have it. Let's see, she married Giichi in 1923. But I don't know what year they immigrated to the US. But my dad was born here, and my dad was born in, nineteen—? [Laughter] Let's see.

01-00:30:45
Eardley-Pryor: Actually, I have a note here from our previous discussions. You looked this up already, you told me—

01-00:30:50
Matsumura: Nineteen twenty-five, January thirteenth. My dad was born January 13, 1925.

01-00:30:56
Eardley-Pryor: Oh, that's great. And you had mentioned that your grandparents had married just a couple years before that, and then they were living in this adobe hut, or adobe home, renting it from the Marquez family in Santa Monica Canyon?

01-00:31:09
Matsumura: Yes, yes.

01-00:31:11
Eardley-Pryor: Great. Your father was the firstborn. He had siblings though. Who were his siblings?

01-00:31:21
Matsumura: Okay, yes, my dad is the oldest, Masaru Matsumura. Then the next is Tsutomo, and then Uwao, and then one girl, Kazue.

01-00:31:33
Eardley-Pryor: Great. And they were all born between—you said your father was born in 1925. And Kazue, I have a note I think from before, that she was born in 1935.

01-00:31:44
Matsumura: Yes.

01-00:31:45
Eardley-Pryor: So all of these kids were born about ten years or so after your grandparents met and married.

01-00:31:50
Matsumura: Yes.

01-00:31:51
Eardley-Pryor: What stories do you know about their lives in the Santa Monica Canyons, prior to World War II?

01-00:31:57
Matsumura: I know that they lived in this little adobe hut, and they didn't even have electricity. I know that they had friends, and they went to school. My dad went to a little red schoolhouse in the Santa Monica Canyons, and I think it's still there to this day. And he also went to junior high school in Santa Monica—not the same one I attended, but another one. Then he went to Santa Monica High School, "Samohi," which is the same high school I went to. And I do have, from grammar school, I do have some of his artwork that he did. One of them, which spoke to me, is a picture that he drew in grade school of Santa. [*shows drawing on video*] And the Santa is Japanese, or looks Asian. It looks like he loved to draw because we have a lot of his artwork. He was very creative.

01-00:32:59
Eardley-Pryor: That's a great drawing, I love it.

01-00:33:03
Matsumura: Yeah, even in junior high school, I have something where he pounded metal and made a bracelet with the design in it. He did woodwork. In camp, he carved birds and made brooches. He was very artistic.

01-00:33:23
Eardley-Pryor: Yeah, that's really neat. Was that artistic side also something that you knew about your grandparents? Did he get that from them? Or was that just something he developed on his own?

01-00:33:33
Matsumura: I believe it was from them. My grandmother was very artistic, and my grandfather as well. My grandmother started taking Sumi-e lessons, I think in her seventies or eighties. She was quite good. And my grandfather, while in Manzanar, he would escape to paint the scenery of the mountains.

01-00:34:00
Eardley-Pryor: How is it that you have these records, these drawings of your father's at such a young age, in the wake of what happened to his family being sent to these prison camps?

01-00:34:10
Matsumura: Yes, that is a question that I have, too. I wonder. I'm thinking maybe the Marquez family kept it for them? Because we had quite a lot of things from pre-war, even down to Japanese plates that were my grandmother's. She did tea ceremonies, so we have her tea set and a lot of mementos from Japan. We had a big trunk, and it had all their things inside. Unfortunately, I don't have those things anymore. But I was able to salvage some stuff that was kept at my dad's house.

01-00:34:54
Eardley-Pryor: Wow, that's really neat. I have a note that in 1942 around that time your father, Masaru—who went by the name Mas.

01-00:35:05
Matsumura: Yes, or Mack.

01-00:35:07
Eardley-Pryor: Or Mack—what's that?

01-00:35:08
Matsumura: Mack, too.

01-00:35:09
Eardley-Pryor: Mack was a nickname?

01-00:35:11
Matsumura: Well, he was a gardener, and I guess his customers in the Beverly Hills area or Santa Monica would call him Mack, because it was easier for them to say.

01-00:35:25
Eardley-Pryor: Yeah, that sounds like a white Americanization of a name, doesn't it?

01-00:35:29
Matsumura: I didn't want to say that, but yes. [laughs]

01-00:35:32
Eardley-Pryor: So your father, Mas, was around seventeen in 1942, so the high school that you attended was where he was attending at that time, where he's taken from. And the family is sent where?

01-00:35:46
Matsumura: The family was sent to Manzanar right before my dad could graduate from Santa Monica High School. They were sent to Manzanar, and he finished up high school in camp and received his diploma there. That was really tough, because in camp, he's taken away from what he knows, and his friends, and his school. And he's at an age where you're just learning what you want to do in life, and he loved art. I know that he wanted to do set design. He loved to draw and design things. But that was taken away from him. Yeah.

01-00:36:33
Eardley-Pryor: What happened with the family, your maternal [I meant to say paternal] family, the Matsumura family, after being sent to Manzanar? You mentioned your father finished high school there. What was the family experience with siblings and your grandparents?

01-00:36:49
Matsumura: I'm sorry, you mean paternal?

01-00:36:51
Eardley-Pryor: Yes, I'm sorry, your paternal family.

01-00:36:54
Matsumura: I know that on my dad's side, it was a little different than my mom, because when my father's family went to Manzanar, his father died in camp. They had this fishing group, a group of fishermen that would escape through the barbed wires and go fishing. And one day he [my grandfather Giichi Matsumura] wanted to go along. But he wanted to paint, and he broke off from the group, and he died on Mount Williamson. I know that was hard for my dad because now he's faced with being the oldest son, and he had to take care of the family. He had to think of a way to make money to support them. He knew gardening from his dad, so that's what he did when the camp got out. Because this [death of his father] happened shortly before the war ended.

01-00:37:50
Eardley-Pryor: The story of your grandfather's death, Giichi's death in the mountains on Mount Williamson, did you know that story as a child growing up? Or was that something you learned later?

01-00:38:01
Matsumura: I did know of that story. My grandmother would tell me. And she actually had a photo of him buried, and my Aunt Kazue would say, “No, don't show that to her,” because I was quite young. And so I did know the story of what happened, and how they lost their father, my grandfather. But yeah, it was just—you know, you think in your mind, “Oh my god, that's terrible.” But it didn't quite hit me until later in life when they discovered the bones—when they *re*discovered the bones and brought it down. And my—okay, I'm sorry, I'm going too far, because I think I can talk about that later. I'm sorry. [laughter]

01-00:38:52
Eardley-Pryor: Sure. No, don't worry, you don't need to be sorry about it. It's as these stories come and as you're thinking of it. That experience happens in 2019, the rediscovery of Giichi's body, so we could cover that when we do it chronologically. Do you want to tell the story of what happened with Giichi now, if you know any of the context for it? Or do you want to wait until later?

01-00:39:13
Matsumura: I can wait until later. I mean, unfortunately, I don't know much about him. Giichi worked in the kitchen in Manzanar, because we have an old photo of him in a cook's apron and everything. Other than that, I don't really know much about my grandfather. My dad doesn't talk about camp life, he's very quiet about it.

01-00:39:42
Eardley-Pryor: When your grandfather died, when Giichi passed away, your father was about twenty, as you said. And suddenly, now, as the oldest child, the oldest male, without a father, he has these three siblings and his mother. That all happens at the very end of the incarcerations in Manzanar. Giichi passed away in 1945, in the summer of '45, at the same time that the atomic bombs were being dropped on Japan and a hundred thousand people were annihilated instantaneously, right at the time that your father's family is then released from Manzanar. What happened next? You mentioned your father became a gardener. What was their trajectory out of Manzanar? Where did they go, and what were the next steps for them?

01-00:40:33
Matsumura: After the war, when they were released, they decided to go back to Santa Monica and rebuild their life. And my grandmother, she needed to earn money as well. She became a housekeeper, and my dad became a gardener. And that must have been really hard because you're facing racism, and you lose everything you had—they even had to get rid of the car that they had before the war. You just have to start from the very beginning again. And I think my dad's more bitter because of what happened to his father, and what he had taken away. I don't know, but if given the choice, I don't think he would be a gardener. I think he would maybe go into art or do something else. But he was forced to find work and feed the family.

01-00:41:36
Eardley-Pryor: You mentioned how your father went into gardening to help support his family, the same way that his father, Giichi, your grandfather, had as a gardener in the Santa Monica area. And you also grew up in Santa Monica. What was the story of how your parents met? You mentioned your mother had come down to LA as a nurse, shortly after the war, probably by the late forties, early fifties, I would think. When was the time that your parents met, and how did they meet?

01-00:42:11
Matsumura: They met on a blind date. And I know that my dad and mom were dating other people at the time, I don't know how serious it was. But they met on a blind date, and that was it. They got married and settled in Santa Monica. My dad bought a house in Santa Monica, and right across the street is where his mom, my grandmother Ito, lived with Kazue. So they had that connection, where we lived very close to each other.

01-00:42:49
Eardley-Pryor: That's great. Your father bought a home across the street from his mother's home, where his sister, your aunt lived?

01-00:42:55
Matsumura: Yes.

01-00:42:56
Eardley-Pryor: And is that the home you grew up in?

01-00:42:58
Matsumura: Yes. We still have it to this day.

01-00:43:02
Eardley-Pryor: That's wonderful. You mentioned you have three siblings, Clyde, Wayne, Lisa, and then you are the youngest, born in 1970. Clyde—I have a date here—was born in the late fifties. So the children were all born pretty much around the late fifties up through 1970 for you. What are your memories of childhood and growing up as a little girl in Santa Monica? And what was your family experience like?

01-00:43:32
Matsumura: Growing up in Santa Monica was great. There was a lot of diversity. We played a lot. We had a lot of friends on the block. And it was at a time where you used to ride your bike and skateboard, and you stayed out until the sun went down, and all the moms were on the porch calling their kids to come in for dinnertime. That's the way I grew up. Climbing trees, a lot of playtime outside, which is nice.

I knew we were poor growing up. There was the six of us in the whole family, and we lived in a two-bedroom house with one bathroom. While growing up, you don't realize how tiny that is until you become an adult. And then you walk in like "Wow, this place is very small." But that's what we did. The boys would have one room, the girls would have the other, and my parents would sleep on a pullout bed in the living room. It was fun growing up during that time. We had a house, and we had a yard. We didn't seem poor because we had bikes and toys. It was a lot of fun.

And before I was born, on my mother's side, the youngest one, Pat—my Auntie Pat—actually lived in the back in a little house. She went to UCLA [University of California Los Angeles], so she was living on the same lot as

we were. She would organize these games for all the neighborhood kids and give out prizes. It was a lot of fun. It was a great childhood.

01-00:45:29
Eardley-Pryor: That's sounds like you had really neat family connections. You had your maternal aunt, your mom's sister, living on the same property as you and your siblings. And your [paternal] grandmother was across the street, with your aunt also across the street.

01-00:45:45
Matsumura: Yes, my aunt [Pat] lived in the back of the house before I was born, it was long before. But growing up, I had my grandmother across the street. My grandmother was such a great cook. Oh, her food was always so good. I would go over her house to eat dinner. Sorry mom! I don't know if that hurt my mom's feelings. But I would run over there, because they would get the Santa Monica paper called *The Outlook*, and we would get *The Los Angeles Times*, and we would swap papers. When I would bring the paper and swap it, my grandmother would say, "Oh, come eat." She always had food. "Come eat." So I would have dinner there.

01-00:46:34
Eardley-Pryor: Wow, that's awesome. You mentioned diversity in Santa Monica. But it's also California, and it's the United States, and racism is a reality and a fact throughout this nation, of course. I'm wondering what experiences your family told, or that you experienced as a young girl in this area, particularly after the post-war period, but through your childhood in the 1970s?

01-00:47:03
Matsumura: In the post-war period, my youngest aunt on my dad's side, Kazue, she said she used to get chased home from school for being Japanese after the war. My dad never mentioned anything about racism. When I was growing up in Santa Monica, I didn't experience racism until I was older. I felt I was American. You know? I didn't really—I knew I was Japanese, but I identify more with being a California girl. My grandmother spoke Japanese and broken English, but we communicated through hand gestures. My grandmother did organize some things like Children's Day, or Girl's Day, Boy's Day. But we would celebrate all the regular holidays, like Easter and Christmas. While going to school, I learned Spanish, so I didn't know anything else. That was the norm for me.

01-00:48:18
Eardley-Pryor: You showed that wonderful drawing that your father had done of Santa Claus, an Asian Santa Claus. What role did religion play in your life growing up, if at all?

01-00:48:29
Matsumura: We were actually Buddhist. My grandmother practiced Zen Buddhism. But we would still celebrate all the holidays. And once in a while with my friends, I would go to church with them. But religion wasn't really practiced in our

family. When we had funerals, we would go to the [Buddhist] temple. But growing up, we observed all the regular holidays that my friends did.

01-00:49:03
Eardley-Pryor: The traditional American holidays?

01-00:49:05
Matsumura: Traditional American holidays.

01-00:49:06
Eardley-Pryor: You mentioned there were some traditional Japanese holidays as well, like Girl's day, Boy's day. Were there any other particularly Japanese traditional ceremonies that maybe your grandmother or your family participated in that you remember as a child?

01-00:49:19
Matsumura: Yes. On New Year's Day, my grandmother would prepare a very nice Japanese meal. And we'd have dried fish, and ozōni soup, and mochi. Part of the traditional Japanese meal was sake, and she'd make me drink sake for luck. And we'd have long noodles. So, yes, in that way, we did. That was something we looked forward to every New Year's because of all the gotso, which is what we called the food. She would spend a lot of time in the kitchen doing that for us. That was nice.

01-00:50:04
Eardley-Pryor: That sounds like a special thing to share with family.

01-00:50:07
Matsumura: Yes, it was very special. We didn't continue that tradition. I think it's become too Americanized for us now. Whereas now, New Year's is a party or something, but not Japanese style.

01-00:50:23
Eardley-Pryor: You mentioned that your grandmother was such a chef, such a cook. Were the meals that she prepared typically Japanese-style food, or was it more California-style food?

01-00:50:36
Matsumura: Oh, she told me as best she could that when she was younger, before the war in the Santa Monica Canyon, she learned about different herbs and different things from the Marquez family. So not only did she cook Japanese food, but another one of my favorites that she cooked was roast chicken and tacos. She would cook really good tacos. Anything—spaghetti—she could cook anything, and it would come out so tasty. She was really good. So it was all kinds of food.

01-00:51:11
Eardley-Pryor: That's awesome. Was cooking something that your family did together?

01-00:51:20
Matsumura: No. My mom didn't really cook. I mean, she cooked dinner for us, but it wasn't her thing. She would cook, and my dad would do the grocery shopping. It was kind of a tradeoff. But later in life, after my dad retired, he started cooking. I didn't realize that my dad knew how to cook. And I'm thinking, "After all these years of mom's cooking, you knew how to cook like this, and you never did it for us?" He said "Oh, because I didn't have time, I'm tired, I work all day," which was true. But he was a good cook as well. So it's a possibility it could run on that side of the family.

01-00:52:01
Eardley-Pryor: That's great. You had told me before in a pre-interview discussion about something called Nikkei Hall in Santa Monica. What was that?

01-00:52:11
Matsumura: Nikkei Hall, we'd call it Nikkei Kai. It was a Japanese community center. And it started post-war in my grandmother's house, because they wanted a meeting place where they could get together and talk about things and learn from each other. It was just like a support community for themselves, for the Japanese and Japanese Americans. So that started in my grandmother's house, and then eventually they bought a place in Santa Monica. And while growing up, we would go there for Christmas, where we would have a Japanese Santa Claus and he'd pass out toys for us. I remember those days, and it was nice. It was like a little meeting center for them. It was a good community. It was nice.

01-00:53:10
Eardley-Pryor: I love that you have good memories of a Japanese Santa Claus, and you also have that drawing that your dad did as a little boy.

01-00:53:16
Matsumura: I think that's why it speaks to me, because it brings back that memory of the Nikkei Kai. It was recently sold, the building was recently sold. But they will have a memorial plaque, because that's where they started this little community center.

01-00:53:35
Eardley-Pryor: That's great. Do you mind if we take a pause for a second?

01-00:53:39
Matsumura: No, not at all. Okay, I'm going to get water.

[pause in recording]

01-00:53:45
Eardley-Pryor: Thank you, Lori. Of the family stories you have and these incredible documents and records that you have, are there other family stories that you want to share, or anything you have to show for today that you'd like to put on camera?

01-00:53:56
Matsumura: Well, I do, actually. I found an old photo, which is rare, of my dad and his family. This was taken July 6, 1947, so it's right after the war [*shows photograph on video*]. And it shows all the siblings, everyone except for his father who passed away in Manzanar. I thought that was a rare photo because I had not been able to find a photo of all the siblings with their mom and grandfather.

01-00:54:31
Eardley-Pryor: The sound, just audio-wise, the sound gets a little bit funky whenever you lean that way. If it's directly in front, you sound great

01-00:54:39
Matsumura: Oh, okay. Okay.

01-00:54:40
Eardley-Pryor: Oh yeah, that's perfect. So that photo is amazing. Who all is in there? Can you point out to who's who?

01-00:54:45
Matsumura: Of course. Let's see, I have my great grandfather, and he's known as Gechan, that's great-grandfather. I don't know his name, because that's what we always called him. And then, this little lady, that's my grandmother, Ito. And here is the youngest, Kazue. And here is Masaru, my dad, the oldest. And this is Uwao, and Tsutomo. I should have probably said that in order, I'm sorry.

01-00:55:35
Eardley-Pryor: And that's your dad's grandfather there in the photo?

01-00:55:42
Matsumura: Yes. Yes, he was also in Manzanar. He's the one who settled in Alaska first, but then moved to the Santa Monica Canyon.

01-00:55:09
Eardley-Pryor: Oh, okay. So as your dad was growing up in Santa Monica Canyon, his grandfather was there too?

01-00:56:00
Matsumura: Wait, I'm sorry, let me just think for a second. This is my grandfather's dad.

01-00:56:13
Eardley-Pryor: Giichi's dad?

01-00:56:14
Matsumura: Giichi's dad, yes. And from what I know, he was really stern. When my mom and dad were first married, and my aunt, my mom's sister lived in the back, they used to play cards a lot. They used to play canasta or gin rummy, and they used to play for pennies. And when they saw he was coming across the street, for some reason, they had to clean it all up and hide it. And later, my aunt said, “But I don't know why we weren't allowed to do that. We were just playing.” For some reason they got nervous, and then they would hide all

what they were doing. So yeah, he was very strict. But I know that when their firstborn boy, when my brother was born, from what I heard, he [Gechan] used to walk miles and miles just to buy him this chocolate candy, and it was in the shape of a racecar. And when he gave it to my brother, all he [my brother] did was tear open the paper and just eat it. He'd shove the candy in his mouth, but he didn't even play with the car part of it. But I think he [Gechan] had a soft spot for my oldest brother, Clyde.

01-00:57:36
Eardley-Pryor: That's a sweet story. Where did that grandfather live when you were a child?

01-00:57:41
Matsumura: He was living in the house with them. But my aunt, Kazue—

01-00:57:47
Eardley-Pryor: Like across the street?

01-00:57:48
Matsumura: Across the street, yes, he was living with them. But Kazue, the youngest, all she said about him was that he was really strict. And that's all she would ever say. So I don't really know much about him because he passed away before I was born. I never got to meet him. But yeah, from my aunt, she said that he was very stern. He was very big in the Japanese community.

01-00:58:23
Eardley-Pryor: In what way? What do you mean?

01-00:58:25
Matsumura: I think he was well-known, and he would help a lot of people. Because in one video—I have to find it and send it to you—there's a Japanese man who grew up in Santa Monica, and he was talking about the Nikkei Hall. He even showed a picture, and my family was in it, my grandmother and my Gechan. You were able to phone in, to Zoom in and ask a question. I asked him if he knew my grandfather, and he goes, "Oh yeah. When I first moved here, he helped my family with cleaning out the yard and making everything nice. He was very well-known in the community." So that was kind of neat to hear that.

01-00:59:14
Eardley-Pryor: That's really lovely.

01-00:59:15
Matsumura: Yes, but all I knew about him from my aunt was he was very strict.

01-00:59:25
Eardley-Pryor: And he lived with Kazue and your grandmother Ito?

01-00:59:28
Matsumura: Yes. Yes, he lived with them.

01-00:59:32
Eardley-Pryor: Do you know how it was that your family were able to have these houses across the street from each other in Santa Monica?

01-00:59:40
Matsumura: Well, it wasn't right after the war. That's just—they wanted to stay in Santa Monica, and that's where they bought their home. I know that it was really tough back then, because my dad was a gardener, and his mom was a housekeeper. And I know that my dad helped buy her home as well. He was very good at saving. While growing up, I remember always having on the table all these packets of ketchup, or all the free stuff. I'd say, "Dad, just toss it. We have a bottle of it. Why do you want all these condiments, or plastic forks?" And I realized when I was older that it was because he grew up during the Depression. He didn't like to waste, and that was wasteful to throw out perfectly good ketchup packets, or soy sauce packets, or forks when you can use them. He wasn't a hoarder by any means, but this is why he saved those things, because he grew up during that time. And when you grow up in an adobe hut, and then you get sent to camp, and then you come out and you have to work and you don't have much money, then of course, this is your mindset. This is what you're going to do. He didn't like to spend money. He was a minimalist, that what you would call it now. He was very minimal about things.

01-01:01:21
Eardley-Pryor: Did you ever see any of the work he did as a gardener? Did you visit any of the homes that you knew he helped take care of, any of the properties?

01-01:02:29
Matsumura: No. I know that my brothers used to go and help him once in a while, and they would see. They were really nice homes in the canyon. And recently, because of news articles [about my grandfather], one of his customers actually wrote me a letter because she recognized his name. Like, "Oh yeah, Mack used to garden for us." But no, I never got to visit.

Growing up, we didn't have money, and we didn't take any fancy vacations. But one thing we did on Sundays is, as kids we would pile into my dad's car, and we would go for a typical Sunday drive. And he used to drive by the places he would take care of. But growing up, when I got older, he didn't do that so much. We would just take a drive through the mountains, just an hour or two, and maybe pick up donuts. Sunday was my mom's cooking day off, and I remember we would order takeout. It was either Pioneer Chicken, back then—what was that slogan? I have to think about it. There was a slogan about not cooking and ordering chicken tonight. So that's what we did. My mom didn't have to cook, that was her day off. I found out later that when my dad did cook, my mom wasn't happy because he would dirty every single pot and pan, and she would have to do the dishes. That's why she's like, "No, I'll cook," because it was a little bit neater, because my dad would utilize everything. But one thing he could do so well was barbecue. On

Thanksgiving, he would smoke a turkey for hours. Oh, it was so good. That's one thing I really remember him doing. Yeah, it was nice.

01-01:03:36
Eardley-Pryor: Sundays sound like really special times with your family.

01-01:03:37
Matsumura: Yeah, it was, it was a lot of fun. I just saw our family as an average, normal family who did things like that. But when it became time to take vacations, he would always say, "We can't, because there's not enough money." For the vacations we took, my mom didn't drive a car, so my aunt—her sister, the youngest—she would drive us to Stockton to visit our cousins, things like that. Maybe we'd go to Solvang, or Hearst Castle. Those were the types of vacations. One thing I do remember from growing up is they would always take me to the amusement parks. That was my fun. We would go to Disneyland, Magic Mountain, Knott's Berry Farm, Marineland when that was still there, and the Japanese Deer Park. There was also a park behind the Budweiser factory in the valley, and we would do that. So that's one thing we would do every year. I could look forward to going to the amusement parks.

01-01:04:25
Eardley-Pryor: What are your memories of some of those park experiences, the different parks that you went to?

01-01:04:52
Matsumura: Oh gosh, I think that's why I love rollercoasters so much. Not only am I the youngest, but I'm also the shortest. It took me years just to be able to ride those rollercoasters because I was so small for my age. But when I did, my dad would ride with me, and I loved it. I still love them to this day. That's what I remember, was riding the Revolution with my dad. It was a lot of fun at Magic Mountain.

01-01:05:23
Eardley-Pryor: That's a great memory. What were the kind of stories and entertainment that you liked as a little girl?

01-01:05:31
Matsumura: As a little girl, one memory I have, a vivid memory, is when I would have to stay home from school because I was sick. Not that I was sick all the time, but those were so fun for me. My mom would let me stay in pajamas all day, of course. I'd be in bed, and she'd come in with a tray with soup or whatever. I'd have this tiny black-and-white TV, and I would watch *Brady Bunch*, and *My Favorite Martian*, and *Green Acres*. And every once in a while, she'd come in and turn my pillow over so I'd get the cool side of the pillow if I had a fever. Those were things that I remember of how she took care of me. I loved it. And in the winter, we would have this floor heater, and it had grates. When I took a bath, she would warm up the towel for me, so when I got out it was warm, because we didn't have central heating in our air. We're from Santa Monica, it doesn't get that hot. Those were the memories I have. But growing up, if I

think about it, sometimes I could remember wrong. So I wonder if my memories could be from photos and what I hear from them rather than, "Do I truly remember?" But being sick and some of those, those are my true memories I have.

01-01:07:10
Eardley-Pryor: You mentioned photos. I think you told me you have a photograph of your mother as a young woman?

01-01:07:16
Matsumura: Yes, I do, when she was at nursing school. This was taken in the summer of 1949. Here she is [*shows photograph on video recording*].

01-01:07:24
Eardley-Pryor: That's a great picture. Where is that in California?

01-01:07:29
Matsumura: This is in Stockton, California.

01-01:07:32
Eardley-Pryor: What a great photograph.

01-01:07:37
Matsumura: It's nice. We have old letters and all kinds of memories from both sides of the family. My mom kept everything, apparently. I don't know how she packed so much in that tiny little house, but she kept from birthday cards to letters written from Japan or telegrams. And we have photo books. She was so organized with the photos. She'd write the year and who was in them. It's funny because we have photos of baby books of all of us. But when it came time to me, I think she was tired, because there aren't that many photos. Because if you have all those kids—but yeah, we each had a photo book. It's just nice that she preserved these memories so well. I try and do it for my niece and nephews. But now, instead of actual photo books, you have it digital, so it's easier. Hopefully I can digitize everything.

01-01:08:49
Eardley-Pryor: Your mother worked as a nurse. Did she work throughout your childhood, or was she taking care of these four kids at home?

01-01:08:57
Matsumura: My mom was a stay-at-home mom. She didn't start working until I got older, maybe ten. She got a job with the radiology department at St. John's Hospital. She didn't drive a car, but around that time, she got her license and she bought a car with my oldest brother. I remember one time, she asked my brother for a ride to work, and he refused. He said, "No, you have to drive yourself." She's like, "I don't want to drive." He's like, "No, you have to drive yourself. I'll go with you." So of course, I'm so young, I'm like, "I want to go, too." So I jump in the car, and she drives herself to work, and he got so mad because she left the parking brake on the whole time on the new car, and I was just [laughter]. I remember driving back. I was little—I was not little, but I was maybe nine

or ten, and my older brother let me drive a little bit on the street while sitting on his lap. I was driving the car.

I remember her talking one time about how being a housewife, she didn't have very many friends. So she made a good friend with one of my schoolmate's mother, and they both ended up working at St. John's Hospital together, which is nice. You know, it's hard for me sometimes, at a young age, to think of my parents or elders as people with a real life, or real feelings, or real experiences. They were always on a pedestal, like "Oh, they know everything." But really, they're people. And I realized that late.

01-01:10:53

Eardley-Pryor: You've mentioned that the grandfather who lived across the street, your great-grandfather was known as being stern. You mentioned that your father was taciturn and he didn't say much, particularly after [Manzanar] camp. How would you characterize your grandmother Ito? What was she like as a person? You mentioned that even talking to her was sort of in broken English. What was she like as a person in your memory?

01-01:12:21

Matsumura: My grandmother was so outgoing. She was very friendly, very social, and that surprises me. Because this is a habit I do, too—and I know growing up that my dad and his family did—that when someone comes to the door, everyone hides. It's like, well why don't we do this? Just because I saw my—I'm not social. So anyways, my grandmother, we call her Bachan, and everyone on the block knew her and called her Bachan, so she was like everybody's grandmother. She was really a lot of fun. When we would take trips to downtown LA, my aunt drove, the youngest daughter, but she didn't drive on the freeways, so we would take surface streets to downtown LA. And she [my grandmother] always had candy in her purse for me. She was always bringing out candy, "Oh, do you want candy?" She was very nurturing. And she died at 103 years old. I know that when she was in bed, she used to tap the bed, like "Come sit with me." Yeah, she was a lot of fun. We would play cards, we would play Chinese checkers, and she would play with me. I would sleep over at her house, and she'd feed me a lot of good food. It was a nice environment, very nice.

01-01:14:00

Eardley-Pryor: What was your aunt—your grandmother's youngest daughter, Kazue, who lived with her and helped take care of her until she was 103—what was Kazue like?

01-01:14:14

Matsumura: She was actually very different. I think she was quiet. When I was a kid, a lot of things were hidden from me. But now that I'm grown, I find out more about her, and she's different. She was very simple. And she was quiet, she wasn't social. I noticed that in all the pictures, she never smiled. She never smiled. I tried to find, even at my mom and dad's wedding, they have a group picture,

and she's just sitting there, she doesn't smile. I didn't realize this growing up. I didn't notice these things as a child. But now that I'm an adult, I'm like, "Why isn't she ever smiling?" She never really smiled, but she never got married. She claims she had to take care of her mom, and that's why she couldn't get married. Once in a while, there'd be a Japanese man that would come around. I believe my grandmother was trying to set her up with this man, because my grandmother wanted her to live her life, to have kids, to get married, to have these experiences, because my grandmother didn't want her stuck taking care of her. But she [Kazue] just didn't have the gumption to go out there and live her life. She was very comfortable with where she was at in life, and so that's what she did. When my grandmother got older, we would all chip in to help take care of her. I remember going to doctor visits with my grandmother and things like that, and cooking or just going over there to help her. But my aunt, she never got married. Which is just sad in a way. I wish she would have lived her life more.

01-01:15:25
Eardley-Pryor: Share with me a little bit more about your mother. What was she like as a person?

01-01:15:33
Matsumura: My mom, she was the one in the family, to me, she was very nurturing. And I know that my mom wanted at least twelve kids. And my dad would say, "Oh no, that's too many," and I would hear them joke about it once in a while. Growing up, my dad was very reserved. My mom would hug me, but we weren't a hugging family. My mom was, but you know, when she passed on—we're not affectionate. And I know that it follows me to this day, because I'm not a hugger. Growing up, I don't remember seeing my parents with any physical contact, which is odd to me. I don't even think I saw them dancing. I know when my dad was young, he was into music. And he was very hip, from the pictures, he had the hairstyle. But no, as adults, we weren't a very affectionate family.

01-01:16:50
Eardley-Pryor: You mentioned how your grandfather on your dad's side, Giichi, passed away at the very end of camp [in Manzanar] and your father had to take on this responsibility as the oldest surviving male member of the family. How much do you think that experience shaped who your dad became?

01-01:17:08
Matsumura: Oh, I think a lot, definitely. That shaped my dad with his personality a lot, I'm sure. Because he has the stress of finding a job right away, putting food on the table, putting a roof over their head. And he was young, he hadn't even been able to enjoy his youth, so to speak. In his twenties and thirties, he had to always do that. And then he got married, and what happens is he has to take care of us. And on a gardener's salary, I don't know how he was able to have this house in Santa Monica, and feed us, and clothe us. So I'm sure he has this

responsibility for a long time. I think that shaped the way he is—the way he was.

01-01:18:03

Eardley-Pryor: You'd shared that your mother kept such great records, and you have some of these incredible heirlooms now. One of the things you mentioned were letters from Japan. I'm curious about if either side of your family, maternal or paternal, what kind of relationship there was to whatever family or connections were back in Japan.

01-01:18:24

Matsumura: Oh, these are actually letters from Japan. My grandmother on my dad's side, his mom, Ito, and Kazue would travel to Japan to visit their family. So they would write letters back. And what's funny is that some of the letters my grandmother would write, they're in Japanese, but my parents didn't speak Japanese. So I'm wondering who read it to them. I have no idea what these letters say. We just have letters from, on my mom's side, one of her brothers. Uncle Sharky was in the military, and he wrote letters back and forth with my mom. And my mom was close to one of her sisters, and they would write letters back and forth. Some of the letters though—my Auntie Yas passed away shortly before my mom. But I know in some of the letters, I was so sad because she talked about how she was throwing up a lot of blood, and how she had to have a blood transfusion. Reading these letters now, I'm like, "What happened? Why?" Seeing these letters, some of them are fun to read, but some of them are so heart-breaking. It's really sad.

01-01:19:55

Eardley-Pryor: That makes me curious about how, with your thoughts about childhood and—you had mentioned some of the things your family kept from you because you were young. It made me curious about what those were, and then how you feel about things now as you're learning more of these stories and reading these kinds of letters.

01-01:20:14

Matsumura: Yes, things were kept from me as a child growing up. Because I was close to my grandmother, I would go over there every day to visit my grandmother and my aunt. But I didn't realize how my aunt wanted money because she stopped working. I don't know why, but she stopped working. She said she had to take care of her mom, and she would ask for money from the siblings. And they were like, "Well, why don't you work?" So things like that, I had no idea what was happening because they wouldn't tell me. I was one of the youngest ones. I had no idea what was going on. But hearing stories now from my aunt who is my uncle's wife, you know, it's just, things kind of click, like "Oh." And that makes me really think now about how I had such a good childhood. But how much was shielded from me growing up? Which is, I was happy, because I enjoyed my childhood, so the adults didn't share those things. It wasn't known. I know that my dad and his brother, Tsutomo—Tsutomo lived in Venice [Beach], so he would come over, and they would exchange *Car and*

Driver and *Motor Trend* magazines. And whenever I came home—I'd hang out with my friends, and I'd come home—and they would be sitting on a couch, but they don't talk. They'd just be sitting there reading the magazines. It was just so odd. And I'm thinking, "Why don't you guys talk to each other?" They were just a very quiet family. It was very, very quiet.

01-01:22:12

Eardley-Pryor: With that side of your family being so quiet, and your mom being more nurturing, and you mentioned your grandmother being this sort of social creature, this woman who was known all throughout the neighborhood—how did that play out in your sibling relationships?

01-01:22:29

Matsumura: Well, growing up, of course we fight and everything like that. But as adults, we're all fine with each other. As you know, right now, I'm currently living with the oldest brother and taking care of his two kids. We're a very sarcastic family, and we don't hug or express our love, but we all get along. Like when we go to the reunions, on my mom's side, it's just all they do, all I hear my aunts do is laugh. They play Hana at the table or some kind of card game, and they tell stories, and I could just hear laughing, Even at funerals, because that's the time where they would see each other, I just remember they all were very loud and very happy, [laughter] which is nice. Which is quite different than my dad's side. So it was a lot of fun to visit my mom's side.

01-01:23:39

Eardley-Pryor: I like hearing these stories that you paint of this broader family and how it shaped your childhood. Are there any other childhood memories from your life that you want to share? You mentioned the amusement parks, and it sounds like a lot of freedom and playing outside, and just really, community engagement as a kid. Anything else from your elementary school years that you'd like to share?

01-01:23:59

Matsumura: Well, I know that I was lucky enough to be able to walk to school, from grammar school, junior high, and high school. But when I was in grammar school, my mom was afraid to let me walk by myself until I became like maybe fifth or sixth grade. Because I was so small for my age, she thought I would get kidnapped. But yeah, my mom, she loved kids. And so I think, with that being said, it was a lot of fun. And even baking, I remember baking with her. She'd teach me how to bake, and I'd get to lick the spoon. Nowadays you can't do that because of egg. But you know, things like that. She was just a lot of fun. And then, I found out she taught Sunday school, which I had no idea. I saw certificates of appreciation because she taught, of all things, like a Buddhist Sunday school. And she never brought up religion, or talked about religion with me. So I wonder, "Why didn't you?" Okay, I just find that very surprising, that I had no idea.

01-01:25:16
Eardley-Pryor: On those Sundays, when you were a little girl growing up, did your family ever go to temple beyond funeral services, or any other events?

01-01:25:24
Matsumura: No, but my grandmother on my dad's side, across the street, she would meditate every day. And the way she meditated is she'd write Japanese lines and lines—I don't know what they said because it was in Japanese. We'd also have a *hotokesan*. It was like a little shrine with Buddha, and she'd do a little fruit offering, and she'd light the incense and pray. But I never did that. She would do that at home, but she didn't teach me. She never talked about religion at all, and we never went to temple on Sundays or did that. But I would see her doing it, especially with meditating. I was so interested in "What are you writing?," and about the meditation. But yeah, I was so young.

01-01:26:36
Eardley-Pryor: With not learning Japanese, it seems like a very common experience among families, after several generations, of not learning whatever the mother tongue was of whoever immigrated. Was that something that was discussed in your family, or was it not even an option if you wanted to learn Japanese? Were you interested in this, or was it just not really ever on the table?

01-01:27:02
Matsumura: Not really on the table. I know that the Issei—my grandmother's generation, Issei—I would think about it, and you know it's sad because I don't have anyone to ask anymore. But I thought, did she not want the Nisei, which is my dad's generation, to speak Japanese because of being sent to Manzanar and having to show that you are an American? Is that why they didn't speak Japanese at home? I've always wondered that, but I never did find out the reason why. But my dad spoke a little bit of Japanese, and I know my mom went to Japanese school growing up after the war, or even pre-war. But they didn't speak Japanese with us. We would know little words here and there, like my dad would say, "Oh, you're *yakamashii*," meaning I'm too loud. Or how, "You're *urusai*," meaning, oh you're so troublesome. I know little words here and there, but speaking fluent? No.

01-01:28:13
Eardley-Pryor: I noticed your email has *urusai* in it.

01-01:28:15
Matsumura: [laughs] Yes, because I'm *urusai*, yeah.

01-01:28:20
Eardley-Pryor: That's great. And while you were growing up, you were learning Spanish, you mentioned.

01-01:28:26
Matsumura: Yes. At Will Rogers Elementary School, we had a chance to have a bilingual class, and they would teach things both in English and in Spanish. I remember we had to take a test, and the teacher at the one-on-one test would say, "The

pencil is where? The *lapiz* is—," you know, "What's pencil?" And for some reason, I knew these little words here and there. So my mom said, "Oh, that's good for you. You go in that class." So I ended up in the bilingual class, learning both. Ask me now if I remember much of it? No. I mean, I did travel to—maybe ten years ago—I traveled to Guatemala, and my Spanish did come in handy. I knew little things just to get by, so it was nice.

01-01:29:23

Eardley-Pryor: I'm imagining this world of Santa Monica in the 1970s that you're growing up in, up until the early 1980s. The seventies often is characterized as a difficult time. I mean, the economy was not great, and I'm thinking how you mentioned your family was tight with finances. But that was never a part of your experience at this time?

01-01:29:45

Matsumura: Well in the seventies, the thing I remember hearing about is the big earthquake. I remember hearing about my mom holding me in the doorframe. But what I would truly remember more is the eighties and nineties, that's my time. In the seventies, I was just so young then. But my mom had credit cards, and after she passed away, my dad had to pay off some of those cards. I remember he was complaining like, "What did she buy with all this big amount of credit cards?" Because my dad was the saver in the family, and my mom had to buy the clothes and everything. I remember when I was little, we used to go to the Santa Monica Promenade, and we used to go to Woolworths. We used to take the bus to Woolworths, and a treat would be to sit at the counter, and I'd have a Coca Cola and a side of fries. And that was—little things. Those little things are the good memories, I realize.

01-01:30:58

Eardley-Pryor: You mentioned that your mother passed away. I have the note that you were twelve when she died. What are your memories of that experience of her passing?

01-01:31:09

Matsumura: It was—you know, I think I shut it off from myself. Because when she died, it happened just like that, just like the blink of an eye.

01-01:31:19

Eardley-Pryor: How did she pass away?

01-01:31:20

Matsumura: She went to the hospital. I remember when I was going—she said she had to have some minor liquid removed from her knee. But then, I think it was some medication that didn't agree with her, and she had a hard time breathing. When my dad saw her in that state when he came home from work, he took her immediately to the hospital. Why no one called 911 before that, I have no idea. I was so young. And then she died at the hospital. So my memory of that whole time is a little bit hazy, because I think I just pretty much blocked it off. I remember, my dad's a widow now with four kids to raise, and he's the one

who makes the money, so he has to go to work. But I guess he was faced with all these problems, and I even remember, he didn't know how to handle it. I even went to school the next day, in like this daze of, you know, just like, "Oh." And when I told my friends, because we would walk to school together, they went to the back room and told their mom, and their mom was like, "Just pretend, just act normal." So it was all just kind of a blur during that time.

01-01:32:47
Eardley-Pryor: I can't even imagine losing your mother at age twelve. How did things change in your family, in the wake of that?

01-01:32:59
Matsumura: You know, Wayne used to be the one to cook for me and do my laundry, because I was still young—not really, but okay, young-ish. And we just continued on. What else can we do? We just had to keep moving forward. But I do remember, back then we had phone books. I would go through the phonebook, and I saw the name, her name, Kyoko Matsumura in the phonebook. And I thought, I used to think to myself, "Is this mom? Did she run away from us? Were we too much to handle?" Because what are the chances of having the same name of Kyoko Matsumura in the phone book? And later, when I was in my twenties, one of my best friends went to Northridge, she was in a sorority, and she met the Matsumura that was in Santa Monica. She's not related to us, but her name is named Kyoko Matsumura. So, it just all kind of fell into place, "Oh, you're the one who I used to see in the phonebook." And she said growing up, all the teachers—because there are four of us [Matsumuras]—in high school they would ask, "You, are you another one?" And she's like, "No, I'm not their sister." But all through high school, she said they would ask her, "Are you another Matsumura, with those others?" And she's like, "No."

01-01:34:33
Eardley-Pryor: I imagine being a twelve-year-old little girl and wanting to call that number.

01-01:34:38
Matsumura: Yes, I was so tempted, but I never did, no. No. But I would see it and was like, "Is that my mom?" But I knew it wasn't. But I would have the hope it would be, but it's not.

01-01:34:52
Eardley-Pryor: You've told me in the past that your sense of self is often [split between] the time before your mother passed, and then your life after the point when your mother passed.

01-01:35:04
Matsumura: Yes.

01-01:35:06
Eardley-Pryor: So, I'm wondering if this is a time for us to pause before we move into next week's second interview session. But is there's anything else you want to share about that experience of your mother passing, before we break?

01-01:35:20
Matsumura: Yes. My mom died at the age of forty-eight. And I know that growing up, I would always, around that age, I'd always wonder, "Okay, am I going to live past my mom?" That was always some kind of number for me, before my age was forty-eight. I'm fifty-one now. But I think my sister did that also, without discussing it with each other like "Oh, are we going to live older than our mom?" Which is sad. But yeah, both of us did. All right. That would be one thing we would always think about.

01-01:36:07
Eardley-Pryor: Is there anything else you want to share, family stories, or of youth, childhood?

01-01:36:12
Matsumura: Childhood? Well, I mean I'm a product of the eighties and nineties, so [laughter]. We were too poor to have cable TV, so I would go over to my friend's house to watch MTV [Music Television], things like that. So yeah, it was just a lot of fun. It was a great time. The Olympics were in LA, so we had a lot of people from out of town. And certain things were just so, so carefree. We weren't looking at our devices, and we weren't—we actually socialized, and we actually met up and hung out. Whereas I think kids nowadays, it's all social media and all devices. Like if I go to a restaurant now, I could see a whole family on their cell phones. Whereas when we went to a restaurant, we actually talked to each other, which is quite different.

01-01:37:13
Eardley-Pryor: Well, let's pause today.

01-01:37:15
Matsumura: Okay.

01-01:37:16
Eardley-Pryor: We'll pick up and review stories of the 1980s and your life onward from there.

01-01:37:19
Matsumura: Okay. Sounds good.

01-01:37:21
Eardley-Pryor: Thank you so much for today.

01-01:37:22
Matsumura: Oh, thank you. Okay. Okay.

01-01:37:24
Eardley-Pryor:: Bye-bye.

01-01:37:25
Matsumura: Bye.

Interview 2: March 15, 2022

02-00:00:02
Eardley-Pryor: Today is Tuesday, March 15, 2022. My name is Roger Eardley-Pryor from the Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library at the University of California Berkeley. This is interview session number two with Lori Matsumura as a part of the Japanese American Intergenerational Narratives Project. Lori, it's great to see you again. How are you?

02-00:00:19
Matsumura: Thank you, I'm good. How are you?

02-00:00:21
Eardley-Pryor: Very good, it's been a wild week, but a good week. Can you remind me where you're located please?

02-00:00:27
Matsumura: Right now I'm located in Stevenson Ranch, California.

02-00:00:31
Eardley-Pryor: Right. And I am located currently in Sonoma County in Santa Rosa, California. We are recording over Zoom. For the past year—shoot, for the past two years, we've been saying, "recording over Zoom because of the pandemic," and that's still kind of true, but also, things are getting a lot better, right?

02-00:00:47
Matsumura: Yes, yes.

02-00:00:48
Eardley-Pryor: You mentioned that your niece and nephew are now back in school with masks optional.

02-00:00:54
Matsumura: Yes. They decided to wear the mask, but yes, it's optional.

02-00:00:58
Eardley-Pryor: That's cool, good for them. That makes my heart happy. In our last session, we covered a lot of background family stories and then also your childhood. Are there any stories, anything that has come up in the past week since our previous interview that you wanted to share of childhood stories?

02-00:01:17
Matsumura: No, I think I shared a lot of the stories.

02-00:01:21
Eardley-Pryor: You shared great stories. Where we ended last time was a pretty traumatic moment of your mother's passing when you were just twelve.

02-00:01:31
Matsumura: Yes.

02-00:01:32
Eardley-Pryor: You had told me previously, and I think also on the record, what a hazy time that was in your memory. And you mentioned to me one time that you felt like you went into a shell. Can you talk a little bit more about what you mean by that at that time? After losing your mother at age twelve, the nurturer of the family, as you'd said, what did going into a shell mean for you, and for how you moved forward from that?

02-00:02:00
Matsumura: What I mean by going into a shell is, I just withdrew, didn't want to socialize much. I was pretty much just alone, and I felt like I was abandoned, in a way. As you mentioned, my mom was the nurturer of the family and my dad worked a lot. My brother Wayne, who is the second-oldest, he's the one who took care of me from then on, because I was the youngest. He went to UCLA at the time, and I know that he would make sure to be home, or he would cook me breakfast. I was old enough to make my lunch, but he would do the laundry for the family, wash the dishes. So he took over as caring for us, well, because my dad worked so much as a gardener. It was just a time in my life where at twelve years old, you're hitting puberty, and things are happening, and you just feel kind of lost not having anyone to talk to.

02-00:03:14
Eardley-Pryor: What could you do with that, with all those feelings? Did you have an outlet for where to go?

02-00:03:19
Matsumura: I didn't. That's why I held it all inside until later in life. So, that's what I mean by I was in a shell.

02-00:03:30
Eardley-Pryor: You had shared that, at some point soon after your mother's passing, there was a family trip to visit Japan. What was that experience?

02-00:03:43
Matsumura: Well, my grandmother and aunt decided, since I was one of the youngest grandkid and my mom just passed away, that they would take me to Japan to kind of get away from things here in LA. So in, well it was '88, like maybe '89 or '90, we went to Japan.

02-00:04:12
Eardley-Pryor: Wait, if your mom passed away in '82, this was like—

02-00:04:16
Matsumura: Oh '82, sorry, oh gosh. Okay, yes. Dates.

02-00:04:20
Eardley-Pryor: I'm just trying to get—were you a girl, or were you in your twenties?

02-00:04:24
Matsumura: So it must have been the following year, or even before then.

02-00:04:27
Eardley-Pryor: Oh, like right after?

02-00:04:29
Matsumura: Yes. We traveled to Japan—but of course, we had my mom's funeral and everything—but this was after it settled a little bit that they took me to Japan. And I had to get permission because school was in session, so I left school, and I did my homework before I left to make up the time. I was traveling with my grandmother and my aunt Kazue on my dad's side, which is her daughter. We got to fly on Japan Airlines, and they thought I was much younger than what I was. So we were able to be one of the first to board off the plane because they thought I was a child, and they said with an elderly person, so they let us have a little bit more time to deplane. And it was interesting. I mean, I'd never been on a plane before, especially that long of a trip. It was exciting, but yet, I didn't want to go. I was kind of forced to go. I just didn't feel like traveling. I remember, I didn't feel like going to travel, and maybe that might sound ungrateful. But when you lose your mom, you don't, you don't feel like doing that yet.

02-00:05:57
So we went to visit, we stayed with my grandmother's sister in Kyoto. First we hit Tokyo, which was, wow, that's a busy city, full of lights and pachinko parlors, but I was too young to do that. We stayed at a hotel, and I even have pictures of me dressed in a kimono to eat food. When we traveled to Kyoto on the train, I met my grandmother's sister. They're so cute, they're so small. So now I know why I'm short. And she was just so kind. Every morning, my favorite thing she would make was these little cucumber sandwiches, just cucumber and bread with the crust cut off, and we'd have green tea. That would be my breakfast. It was the best thing ever. She was very, very nice. Everyone was great.

02-00:06:52
But I do remember when we went to visit some of the shrines in Kyoto, school was in session. And when the kids from Japan would see me, they'd know—I'm sure they had an idea I was Japanese, but I wasn't Japanese from Japan. I know some of them would point and laugh. And now I realize because I had nail polish, and things like that aren't done with the kids at school They're not allowed to have that, or have their hair done a certain way, or wear certain things. But me coming from California, it's quite different, it's more laid back. So some of them would point at me and laugh, and I just felt very self-conscious when I was there. I think one of them, if I remember, someone came up to me and started speaking Japanese. I don't know Japanese, so I just stood there. And the way they looked at me was so shameful. I thought, “Oh gosh, this is not good.” And it was, I like, “Okay, fine, that's just how it is.”

02-00:08:14
But it was interesting. It was an interesting trip to go from somewhere where it's more diverse, to going somewhere where it's all Asians. I didn't think

about it before going. But at the time, I'd look around thinking, “Oh my gosh, everyone's Asian.” It was just a strange environment and a strange feeling to me to see that, because it's something I'm not used to.

02-00:08:45

Eardley-Pryor: One of the themes, I feel, in this project is a sense of belonging, and where does belonging happen. It sounds to me like being in this environment in western Japan felt very clear that, “This is not a place I belong.”

02-00:09:01

Matsumura: Right, right. I didn't feel—I did feel like a tourist, and I felt more at home, of course, in California where there's more diversity. Now that I think about it, it's nice to grow up in an environment where lots of different people come together. I realize that I'm happy where I am.

02-00:09:27

Eardley-Pryor: We have talked [in pre-interview discussions] about all this other international travel that you've done, like recently, like going to South America and to Europe. But I've never heard you say you ever went back to Japan. Have you?

02-00:09:40

Matsumura: No, I haven't been back to Japan, even though I would love to go during cherry blossom season. Hopefully that's something that I can do in the future. But it reminds me of, with my boyfriend, the first time we went to Paris. This tourist there—I believe she was a tourist—ran up to me, and she was Japanese. She was frantic, and she was just speaking Japanese to me, and asking—I think, she needed money maybe, I think from the little bits of Japanese that I know. And I just calmly said to her, which my boyfriend laughs to this day, “Nihongo wakaranai,” which is the best way for me to say, “I don't know Japanese.” And the look on her, she's like [gasps], like, “What?!” And then she, “ugh,” and then she went, “ah,” and then she ran off to ask someone else. And my boyfriend, Thomas, thought that was so funny, because I'm looking at her like I don't know what she's saying, and the look on my face must have been confusion. And she's frantic, talking with her hands and everything, and I was like, “I'm sorry.” And she just ran off. But sometimes things like this happen.

02-00:11:11

Eardley-Pryor: I was wondering if not going back to Japan was a conscious choice, because of this experience when you were twelve or thirteen.

02-00:11:19

Matsumura: Oh no, not at all. Regardless of some experiences I had, I love Japan. I love it. It's just so beautiful. Everyone was so nice, and the food was amazing. It's a beautiful place, it's a beautiful country, and I would love to go back. But traveling to Japan is very expensive. So that's something I'd have to save for in order to do again.

02-00:11:53
Eardley-Pryor: Yes, for sure. What are some of your memories of your grandmother Ito being in Japan? I remember the stories you shared in the last session that she spoke Japanese, with kind of broken English in your conversations. But she spent the majority of her life, almost all of her life, here in California. What was it like being with her and seeing her in Japan talking with these relatives, and her being in this Japanese-language environment?

02-00:12:24
Matsumura: Seeing my grandmother in Japan was so great, because I had never seen her so animated. She was completely in her environment being with her sisters and her family. She was sleeping on a futon, which is the thick, heavy blanket, and she was right at home. She was so happy. It was nice to see that. It was like she had never left. She seemed to just fit right back in, even though I don't know what her life was before, but it was natural for her, so natural.

02-00:13:12
Eardley-Pryor: It's an interesting contrast, too, that you felt so awkward—like here's this California girl, you, being dropped into this environment—and then your grandmother feeling so natural, and you being like, "What are we doing here?"

02-00:13:25
Matsumura: [laughs] And that was nice, because she was proud to introduce me to the family. It's sad now that I don't know anyone. If I were to go back to Japan, I don't think I could contact anyone. And a lot of people have passed away, even the girl that was a little older than me, she passed away as well. And I have no way to contact them, because when I went, it was before computers and cell phones and things like that. You would have to sit down and actually write a letter. So it's unfortunate that I don't know anyone, I don't have any contacts anymore to visit. But that wouldn't stop me from visiting.

02-00:14:12
Eardley-Pryor: It sounds like the intention for your grandmother and for your aunt Kazue to help bring you out of this difficult emotional space in the wake of your mother's death in LA, and to go on this trip, that it didn't quite have that effect for you.

02-00:14:28
Matsumura: No, because, I mean, I lost my mom. That was such a big impact on my life, that a trip wouldn't solve the problem. Although it was nice being there, it wouldn't. I still grieve.

02-00:14:58
Eardley-Pryor: When you came back from this trip, and you were back into life in Santa Monica, where was it that you were going to school?

02-00:15:08
Matsumura: I was going to John Adams Middle School. I went back to going to my classes, just going through the motions, I would say.

02-00:15:22
Eardley-Pryor: Yeah. What are your memories of middle school? Mine are traumatic. [laughs]

02-00:15:28
Matsumura: As I said, it's all such a blur after my mom passed away. I mean, I went to classes, I did my work, I did what I was supposed to. And then I went to high school. I went to Santa Monica High School, yeah.

02-00:15:47
Eardley-Pryor: What are some of the memories of that time in high school for you?

02-00:15:52
Matsumura: It was, wow. It was scary, because you're going to a large school. The amount of students going there, you're like a little fish now in this big ocean of people. High school was just normal. I wasn't with the popular kids, but I did have friends. I just had fun, yeah, which was very normal. I took classes, and I did ditch—which, for whoever is watching, is not good

02-00:16:27
Eardley-Pryor: What would you do?

02-00:16:28
Matsumura: I went from school to go home just to rest, I guess, just to hang out. It's funny. What did I do when I did that? Because it's not like I had cell phones and things like that to occupy my time. But I think I used to go home and watch TV. Not that I was into any soap operas, but it was more like daytime TV with what was on then, Montel Williams. I would watch that kind of stuff, or old sitcoms, and eat.

02-00:17:05
Eardley-Pryor: You shared this really sweet memory in our last session of you and your mom on days that you were sick. How you would get to stay home, and she was there to help take care of you and turn your pillow onto the cool side, and you would watch old reruns on black-and-white TV. I could see you coming home in high school, kind of craving that space just for yourself, that home comfort. This was in the period that you were in high school, so like 1984 to 1988. In terms of pop culture, what are some of the things you were into?

02-00:17:39
Matsumura: Well, we didn't have money, so I would go over to my friend's house and watch their cable TV with them. Actually, I felt like another member of their family because I would go over their house a lot and sleep over. Their dad worked at UCLA, and he would take us swimming at the pool and then out for pizza. It was a lot of fun. What I remember that is watching MTV videos and going to Blockbusters and renting movies. It was just, to me, normal kid stuff. If you ask kids now, they would think that would be boring. But MTV was great. You listened to the music, and it was so new to us. And then to see videos about it, it was a lot of fun. It was MTV when they used to play music videos.

02-00:18:33
Eardley-Pryor: Right, before it was all reality television. That's great. I think you had mentioned to me that you could always walk, not only from home to school, but you could walk to the beach.

02-00:18:47
Matsumura: Yes. Yes, I would walk to the beach. When my mom was still living, she would make my older sister take me sometimes when she went out to the beach to hang out with her friends. We would even walk to Venice. We used our feet a lot. We didn't take the bus, we would walk. And the funny part is that I don't even like the beach, even though I lived close, because I cannot stand sand, because it gets in everything. I'd rather go to a pool than the beach, but the beach was right there. Even with school, I was in art class, and we had one of our finals at the beach where we got to draw something. And I remember, "Oh, I have to sit in the sand." [laughs] It was just like it was torture, because I don't like sand.

02-00:19:41
Eardley-Pryor: What were some of the classes that you liked, if any?

02-00:19:45
Matsumura: Gosh [laughs], I think driver's ed was fun because he would take us on PCH [Pacific Coast Highway] through the nice homes. That was a lot of fun. And art, I loved taking art class, which was weird because I think it skipped a generation for me to be a good artist. I'm thinking—yeah, I mean I didn't really care for school much. I did have one teacher that stood out, and it was a history class. I forgot his name though. But he traveled all around the world, and he would bring in the photos of when he went to the pyramids, and that was interesting. I think then that started and planted a seed for me to want to see things, to travel, to see what's out there, by seeing his pictures. I thought that was pretty cool.

02-00:20:57
Eardley-Pryor: I want to ask about how the World War II Japanese American prison camps appeared in your education. Was it ever brought up in history classes, or in anything else in your schooling?

02-00:21:11
Matsumura: Unfortunately no, it wasn't really brought up. That was the sad part, because yes, even as kids, we learned history, but it was the kind of history they wanted us to learn. They didn't talk about some of the racial issues that the US has had. I only knew about the internment camps because of my family. But other than that, in junior high school, we had a lady who survived one of the concentration camps [in Nazi Germany], and that had such an impact. But it seemed like I was taught like a glossed-over version of history. When I got older, then I would read. I read a lot. My mom loved to read, and so I think I got that from her. But no, we didn't talk about that [incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II].

02-00:22:13
Eardley-Pryor: When you would learn about it, it was all through family stories?

02-00:22:17
Matsumura: Yes, yes.

02-00:22:19
Eardley-Pryor: And who told those stories? How as it that you learned?

02-00:22:23
Matsumura: I learned about the internment camps through my aunts and uncles, and about their experiences of what happened. It wouldn't be from one particular person, it would be bits and pieces from both sides of the family. And from my dad's sister, because I went over to their house pretty much every day. I'd hear bits and pieces from her as well about life in camp. So that's how I knew about it.

02-00:22:57
Eardley-Pryor: Did you and your siblings ever talk about it?

02-00:23:00
Matsumura: No, it wasn't—because my dad was so quiet, and so he didn't discuss camp life unless we asked him or hounded him. He didn't discuss it, which is unfortunate because he's gone now. Now I have so many questions I wish I would have brought up. I'm thinking, "Oh, I should have taped it, and I should have done this." But almost everyone's gone now. I was thinking, maybe the best thing to do would start to preserve the stories from their kids, and videotape their stories, so it doesn't get lost and it stays. And the next generation, they'll have as much as they can have, because we haven't taped it or talked about it. But just to preserve what's left, I think is important.

02-00:24:00
Eardley-Pryor: If you could ask your dad about his experiences, or any of the family members that have passed, what are some of the things you would want to ask about?

02-00:24:10
Matsumura: I think the thing I would most want to know is his feelings about it, because he never—he wasn't a person who shared his feelings. So, I would want to dive into that more, not just about occurrences, but how he felt. That's what I'm missing, is how he felt about the whole thing, about what happened. I don't even know if he would even do that with me to this day, because that's not what he does. Even when my mom passed away, I've never seen him cry, ever. He holds everything inside. I wonder if it's that [Nisei] generation that does that, because I don't think our generation [Sansei], the third generation, does that. But I don't remember seeing his emotions. He must be good at poker, because he was very straightforward. Of course he would smile, but he would not share his feelings. And he wasn't a hugging, affectionate kind of person. He was just very quiet, very reserved. Which is odd because his mom wasn't like that. My grandmother was the opposite.

02-00:25:44
Eardley-Pryor: Do you have any sense about what his dad was like as a person?

02-00:24:48
Matsumura: Yeah, I wonder. I have no idea what Giichi was like. One time, I did ask my aunt. She said because he passed away when she was young that she doesn't have many memories of him, because it was a traumatic time when he disappeared. So, no, I don't. And that's something I would like to ask my dad as well, like "How was your family life growing up in an adobe hut in the Santa Monica Canyons with no electricity?" I would joke with my dad and say, "So when you were born, the dinosaurs were on this earth. Did you have one for a pet?" It was a joke. Or, "When you were born, how was it when they discovered fire, or built the wheel?" He'd know it was a joke, and he'd laugh. But I do wonder how it was when he was growing up living in the Canyons.

02-00:26:52
Eardley-Pryor: Another event that I wanted to ask about with regard to history and to this particularly American history is the Redress bill, the civil rights legislation passed in 1988 [Civil Liberties Act of 1988], and then this nominal reparation that goes to survivors of the prison camps from World War II. What are your memories of that happening? You were like eighteen, and my sense of politics when I was eighteen was absolute zero. But I'm wondering if there's any memory of this being discussed or happening within your family?

02-00:27:32
Matsumura: Not really. My dad of course, he did get the money. Another example is from our high school, Santa Monica High School. He got taken out right before he was to graduate, he missed his senior year. And years later, they recognized these men and women who got sent to the internment camp, prison camps. I know at that time he didn't go the ceremony. He was upset, he was mad. "Because what's the point now?" He would say, "It's too late. It's already happened. So you're going to give me a diploma, but I already earned my diploma from Manzanar." To him, I'm thinking he would have the same feeling as for Redress, "Okay, you're going to give me some money. But look at all that we have lost, and all that you have taken away from us. Some businesses, everything was taken from them. So you're trying to push, give money. But it's more than just money. It's more than about money." You can't throw money at something to make it better. I think that, in the US, we do that a lot. And I think that people, they think you can throw money at somebody, "Oh yeah, it's forgotten now, everything's good." But that's not the case, because you still have those feelings what you went through and the hardships, and you can't give that back. You can't give time back. So that's my take on it. I don't think my dad would be too far off from that, I have a feeling.

02-00:29:27
Eardley-Pryor: One of the themes on this project is a question about healing, and whether healing is possible, and if so, how that could happen. I imagine, but I don't know, if the intention around Redress was trying to move towards some sense

of healing. I'm wondering what you think about healing from this wound that happened to the Japanese American community, and to your family in particular. Is healing possible from that?

02-00:30:02

Matsumura: Healing, it's so personal, I think. It's such a personal experience for healing, that you'd have to—yeah. They say time heals all wounds. But if that wound is deep, there's going to be scar. And if you look at that scar, it's going to bring back those emotions and those feelings. So, a person has to find a way to deal with it on their own, in their own way. I don't know how. But I'm sure yes, it is possible, but you can't forget. And forgiveness, you have to forgive for yourself, in order to move on. I don't know if my dad—yeah, I would love to ask my dad, "Do you forgive? Have you moved on?"

02-00:31:00

Eardley-Pryor: What do you think he'd say?

02-00:31:01

Matsumura: I don't know what he'd say. His experience was more difficult, because he had to work and support the family, so I don't know how deep of a scar that is for him. So I'm not sure, because he's his own person. I can't answer his answer on what he would think.

02-00:31:29

Eardley-Pryor: With what happened to his dad, to your grandfather Giichi, I'm thinking about blame and responsibility, and how forgiveness for oneself and to another, a lot of it has to do with the context of what happened, and who it happened to, and who was responsible for that happening. I'm wondering where you're at, and where maybe you would conjecture your father's thoughts about the responsibility for Giichi's death.

02-00:32:12

Matsumura: Well, I don't know, I can't really answer for my dad. But in regards to Giichi, he's the one who decided to escape to draw the landscape, and regrettably, he was caught in some storm, just out of the blue. What I'm upset about mostly is about the people that were in camp in the first place. Why? They were Americans. Yeah, some of them are Japanese, but they moved here for a better life. And this is what you do to people? I just think that's completely wrong. So I don't know, that's a hard answer.

02-00:33:15

Eardley-Pryor: I have this sense from the ways that you've framed some of the people in your family, and particularly the sides of your family, that on your mother's side that is such a big family, that the women were the storytellers.

02-00:33:32

Matsumura: Yes.

02-00:33:33
Eardley-Pryor: And I get the sense from your father's side, especially the men on that side, that there's a lot of silence. They're not the storytellers.

02-00:33:44
Matsumura: Right, they're very quiet. But in all fairness, on my mom's side, I did make a video from my mom's side of the family about their life and what happened. And my uncle, who I think they've all passed away except for one, but he was too young to remember anything. So, I think he would have a lot of stories, but yeah, I made the video too late to include them.

02-00:34:23
Eardley-Pryor: I'm thinking about people who are forthcoming with their storytelling, that it's not like it's something that needs to be clawed out of them, but it's a part of being how they are and interacting with each other. I don't know if this is the right framing, or if I'm even thinking about this right with the women storytellers and the taciturn men. But around this theme of healing and forgiveness or whatever—really, healing is more I'm interested in—what do you think that does? Is there a role that storytelling and talking about things has to play in healing, as opposed to the silence?

02-00:35:01
Matsumura: Oh yes, definitely. I think talking about it and sharing the stories, I think that has a lot to do with healing, is sharing your stories. And my mom's side, my mom and her sisters would all get together and laugh. Yeah, I think that's healing. Because they can talk about it. It's time for them to share, and you don't hold it inside, and you're able to get it out. So I think that's a healing process right there.

02-00:35:40
Eardley-Pryor: On your own life process, and still trying to come to terms with your mother's passing, I'm thinking about you as this young woman in high school and thinking about what were the next steps. Once high school was done, what were you thinking would be the next steps for you?

02-00:35:58
Matsumura: After high school, I was working and going to community college. But as a young adult, you want things. You want a car, you want to be able to drive. You want to hang out with friends and go to parties or clubs. And what does that mean? You have to earn money. I wanted to work and earn money. It's hard because I don't know if anyone led me. I pretty much had to decide things for myself. I didn't have someone like a mentor, or somebody guiding me in a certain path, like "Okay, in the long run, going to college is better." But, no, I did what was best for me at the time, and okay, that's what I did.

02-00:36:55
Eardley-Pryor: I remember how, I can't remember which side of the family it was, but the women were sent—this was like early twentieth century, and women went back pre-war, pre-World War II, went back for training in Japan of how to be

proper wives, with ikebana and tea ceremonies. And I'm thinking about how your brothers both went to college and your father helped pay for that, but you and your sister, the education was not paid for. I'm wondering about gender dynamics, and what do you think that has to do with education.

02-00:37:35

Matsumura: I think that has to do with the way the older generation thinks. Of course, my dad thinks differently. He's not as modern as I would like him to be, although I don't hold a grudge against him. He was a gardener raising a family, and that's what he could do. That was that. I think it's old-world mentality.

02-00:38:10

Eardley-Pryor: From the late '80s through the '90s, what were the things that you were doing, when you were working and then being able to do with the income you had earned?

02-00:38:22

Matsumura: Oh gosh. I had a car—did I have a car? Yes, I think I did. But it was just hanging out with friends, just having fun, being a typical young adult. I think that so much of my life was spent mourning my mother that when I was older, in my twenties, that's when I rebelled and I went out and I just kind of lived my life.

02-00:38:51

Eardley-Pryor: Yes. What was LA like, or Santa Monica, or wherever it was that you were living in the Los Angeles area—what was it like in the 1990s?

02-00:39:00

Matsumura: In the '90s, gosh, I would go out to clubs a lot. Even sometimes when my friend would call the house, my dad would say, “Oh, she's not home today.” I pretty much lived out of the trunk of my car. I had a lot of fun. I would go out and just party. But good thing I was allergic to alcohol. I didn't do anything too wild. Yeah, I just had a lot of fun. What really stands out in my mind was in '92 with the LA riots. My goodness.

02-00:39:37

Eardley-Pryor: What was your experience?

02-00:39:39

Matsumura: Not experience, I was actually in South Central with my friends. I remember the verdict was read for Rodney King, and we were listening to a radio station. And they started posting that there's problems in the streets. Well, because my friend went to Northridge and she's the one who drove, she's like, “Oh, I better get back to the dorms.” I'm like, “Okay.” So we hop in her little car, and as we're driving, I noticed that a man is chasing after our car with some kind of heavy weapon. He sees her, she's African American, and me and my friend are in the back seat, and I'm Asian and my friend's Caucasian. So he's running after the car with something, and we're screaming. We're young, we've never dealt with this. So she's like, “Hide!” And I'm like, okay!” It's a little small

Corolla. So luckily, we had jackets and stuff in the back. So we ducked in the back, and we put the blankets and everything over us so no one would know we were in the car. And her being African American in this area, it was safer for her, plus she was the driver. So she even at one point had to drive on the sidewalk just to get on the freeway. We knew what was happening because she was screaming, "I gotta go on the sidewalk, I don't care, I'm driving on the sidewalk!" And when I kind of peeked out, because I had to see what was going on, there was people running in the street. I looked back and one of the businesses was on fire. I just felt like I was in a war zone. The fact that I had to hide, and she had to drive on the sidewalk just to get on a freeway, in my twenties, it was really scary. I felt like I was caught right in the middle of it. So during that, when a few days have passed, no one was going to work. Everyone was afraid to leave their house, and businesses were closing, and people were getting robbed. I remember the Korean store owners. On the news I would see them on the roofs with guns to protect their businesses. I thought, "How can this be? How could—we're in '92, how could this happen? And how could nothing happen to these police officers? Because they were acquitted. And I understand yes, the anger that they were feeling.

02-00:42:49

But it was, I think, a couple of weeks later. I had to go with my friend to the airport, she had to pick up her cousin. She's like, "Please come with me, I don't want to go by myself." And I go, "Are you sure she's able to land?" She's like, "Yeah, she says she can come here." So we drove to LAX. And seeing tanks on the street and the military in uniform, it's just surreal, like where are we? Is this Los Angeles? And I was thinking, "I never want to see this ever again." You know, because growing up in the '80s, nothing like that happened. It was just fun and carefree. But seeing this is just kind of like, whoa, like, take a step back here. This is really real. It was just too real, how things can change, just like that, in an instant.

02-00:43:52

Eardley-Pryor: How did your experience in LA change as a result of—or, in the wake of the riots? Living in LA, how was it different?

02-00:44:00

Matsumura: Well, it wasn't much different for me. Because growing up in Santa Monica, yes it was diverse. It was horrible, but after things calmed down, for me it just kind of went back to normal, where I was working and going out and having fun. Seeing that at the time, it was horrible, and it wasn't real to me. But afterwards, things started to go back to normal. But it wasn't until this—I mean, I know racism exists. I know, I used to see it. Even working in West LA, I would see the police harass fruit vendors, I mean really harass them, these people who are trying to make a living. That used to anger me thinking, "Why? There's other things going on. Why are you harassing this poor man selling fruit trying to feed his family?" Seeing things like this just really upset me. It still upsets me, seeing how one person can take advantage of another

because of race or status or money. That really makes me mad. Are you on mute?

02-00:45:34
Eardley-Pryor: I was, just so there's no background noise. But I want to ask, I want to follow up on that and ask about your own experiences of racism.

02-00:45:44
Matsumura: Yes, I've experienced racism. I worked for a dental office and he was Middle-Eastern. We would have customers, all different types of races. I remember one time this older Caucasian man came in, and he pretty much said, it was on Pearl Harbor, he's looking at me like, it's all your fault. And you know, yes he's a customer, I have to be nice, but thinking, "How was Pearl Harbor my fault? Did my family go? We were sent to camp." I've experienced racism where I was with someone of a different race than myself and I would be called a sellout. There was another person—I mean, it just happens where I used to answer the phones and talk to the patients. When they come in, some of them would say, "Wow, your English is so good! Where did you go to school? How did you get rid of your accent?" I said, "I'm from California. I'm from the US." Things like that would floor me, that people would think this way. And it's like, look at what year it is. This is really sad.

02-00:47:14
Eardley-Pryor: You had shared with me that in 1994, there was the Northridge earthquake, just a couple years after this harrowing experience of riots that you just shared. What was the earthquake experience like for you?

02-00:47:30
Matsumura: Oh, the earthquake, yes. My friend was living in Northridge at the time, one of my best friends. And I remember, the freeway collapsed, part of the freeway, and people died, went over the edge. Luckily our house in Santa Monica was intact. There was only a little crack in the chimney. We lucked out. But I was at my boyfriend's house at the time, and I got stuck there because of all the problems in the streets. I couldn't go home, even though I needed to. In listening to what my friend went through, where she thought a burglar had come in, and she's walking in the middle where it happened, she's walking, and she noticed the whole plate of the glass, it just cracked and collapsed. She's lucky the whole building didn't collapse. So, going through that and seeing how people had to rebuild, that was sad. I'm thinking, "God, we just had the LA riots, and now the Northridge earthquake. What's next? Life is too short. This is really not good." A lot of things were happening during that time.

02-00:48:58:
Eardley-Pryor: Yes, it's an eventful decade. At the end of that decade, with the turn of the millennium and the Bush v. Gore election, and then really soon after, in 2001, 9/11 happens. It's another historic moment, kind of a turning point in United States history, I think. What are your memories and experiences of 9/11?

02-00:49:23:

Matsumura: Yes, I think everyone can remember where they were at, what they were doing on 9/11. I remember getting ready for work. I was listening to KROQ, which is alternative music. And I although I was hearing it, what was happening, but I was getting ready, so I wasn't truly paying attention. And I'm thinking, they do pranks and stuff [on that radio station]. I thought "God, that's a really sick prank. How could they do this? That's not funny." And my sister calls me from San Francisco and she's like, "Are you watching the news?" I'm like, "No." She goes, "Turn on the news." So I turn on the TV, and it turns out it's really happening. I'm sitting there glued, and I can't move. I know I have to go to work, but the scene in front of me, I felt like, "Is this really happening?" And I know that my sister's husband was supposed to be in New York, so I'm glad she called because I would have been really worried. But all those people. I remember when I first turned on the news, I'd see the building, and you'd see like flutters of what I thought were paper coming down. And then I find out they were actually people. That horrified me that my brain's going to think it's paper, because I can't imagine bodies, people jumping off. That was just—. I think that me and my aunt, and everyone at that time, we were glued to the TV.

02-00:51:20

My aunt and my two brothers were supposed to go on a cruise, and they had to fly to London. The airspace was still closed, and when it did open, their ticket was for later. So when it did open, they were one of the, I don't know, not the first, but it was very shortly after that it was open. My aunt lost her passport, and she had to get an emergency passport to meet up with them. But she mentioned that when they were in London, everybody was so kind and so nice and showed a lot of empathy for what was happening in the US. It was good, but that was such a, wow, a sad time. I felt bad because when I did go to work, we worked near the VA hospital. The building was close, you could see it. And patients would cancel because they didn't want to come to the building. Part of me thinks, okay, because my boss was from the Middle East, thinking, "What's going to happen with him? How is he feeling right now?" You know, I never asked him. But I can't imagine trying to work and be pleasant and provide some service to people after seeing what was going on.

02-00:53:00

Eardley-Pryor: I think historians will often say there was that time right after 9/11 where, for America, there was so much world empathy and wanting to help or support. "How can we help Americans through this moment?" But then, it seemed to be squandered pretty quickly within a couple of years, with the US invasion in Iraq and especially the "War on Terror," and particularly the castigations that happened against Muslim Americans, like the dentist that you were working with. I guess I'm wondering, was the experience that happened to your family on your mind amidst the War on Terror that was happening, and especially the aspersions that were cast against Muslims?

02-00:53:48
Matsumura: Yes. Because everyone was against Muslims, and not everyone is bad from a certain group. I was thinking, "What is the US going to do now?," and thinking about what we went through. I don't want that to happen to any other group, ever. Yeah definitely, that was on my mind, the racism that's going to come out of this, the hatred.

02-00:54:23
Eardley-Pryor: Did you see it play out in the dental office that you were working in?

02-00:54:27
Matsumura: No, no. Luckily no, everybody was great. Everyone was very nice, sympathetic. Between their time in the dental chair, they would be in our backroom watching TV with us. In some ways, maybe that brought me and the patients together more. When there's a crisis, some people get more closer and more nice. I didn't see any, and I didn't experience any racism or anything personally.

02-00:55:07
Eardley-Pryor: That's nice to hear. You had mentioned to me today that you and your boyfriend have been together now for about twenty years, so that you met around this time. I'm just wondering what's your experience of meeting your boyfriend?

02-00:55:20
Matsumura: Oh, well we actually met at that dental office. See I was in the thirties when I met him, so I was gone from that dental office later. I mean, on and off for thirty years. He's from Norway. I had no idea, because the way he speaks, there's no accent, it is just as if he was from California. So I don't know, it's a regular relationship, nothing out of the ordinary. But I did travel with him to go to visit his family. And that was an experience, because being Asian, I stuck out like a sore thumb in his little community. People would look at me. They have a small Thai community and a market. So when they saw me, they started speaking Thai. It was just kind of funny, because I don't know. When I spoke to his family, I was like the token Asian person in his family. But when I spoke, I'm from California. And sometimes other people like store owners would look at me like, "Wow, your English is really good." Again, okay, I'm from California. I think in ways, I don't know how, but you can tell a person if they were born in, not from where they originate, you can tell the Japanese from Japanese-American in some ways. It's just a little bit different. We might look similar, but our mannerisms, the way we talk, the way we hold ourselves can be a little bit different. They were amazed, "Wow, she has really good English."

02-00:57:24
Eardley-Pryor: Like yeah, "I'm an American." [laughs]

02-00:57:28
Matsumura: Here's my passport.

02-00:57:31
Eardley-Pryor: Do you think your boyfriend—being Norwegian but living in the US—has a different perspective on life in the United States?

02-00:57:40
Matsumura: Oh, we talk a little bit about that. I mean, he's in Norway right now. He got stuck during COVID. Certain things, I think, he's gotten too used to being in the US, and in a way a little spoiled, because they pay a high amount of their taxes from their salary. Also one thing I noticed when I went to visit, and now he's starting to notice, is the customer service. The US provides such nice customer service. Also, I come from a food family, and the food here, because of the diversity, is so much better. I think he misses a lot of the food here, and the culture, and the things to do. So I believe he wants to come back soon.

02-00:58:46
Eardley-Pryor: We've been talking about big, historic events, and often the context of racism in the United States. And so I want to ask about the 2016 election between Hillary Clinton vs. Donald Trump. What are your memories of that?

02-00:59:03
Matsumura: When he first said he was running, when Trump said he was running, I thought it was a joke. I never thought in a million years, because he did that TV show—what was that TV show called?

02-00:59:17
Eardley-Pryor: *The Apprentice*.

02-00:59:17
Matsumura: *The Apprentice*—that this reality person would be running to be president. You think of the President of the United States, on high caliber, and then there's Trump. It shocked me. I never thought in a million years that he would actually win. I thought for us, we would be getting the first female president. I had no idea he would win. Just the sheer shock of that, and the disappointment. I was really, really disappointed that he won.

02-01:00:03
Eardley-Pryor: Did you see a change in the United States or in the way people engage with one another in Los Angeles?

02-01:00:11
Matsumura: I'm sorry?

02-01:00:12
Eardley-Pryor: Did you a see a change in your experience in LA? In the wake of the election, in the years that ensued, and during his leadership, and the rhetoric that happened around his leadership, did you see a change at all?

02-01:00:27
Matsumura: Oh yeah, definitely, especially around racism and being female. Because you know, he was so slimy, his character. He would say that whole thing with the

Billy Bush. And what disappointed me is that females would just scoff it off, "Oh yeah, it's locker room talk." No, really, does your husband talk like that in the locker room? If so, I'd reevaluate your marriage here, who you're with, because that is not okay. What he said, his verbal vomit, was horrible. And women of all people would make excuses for him. And that's so disappointing. They would be in love with this man who was so—and you knew he was racist. You knew he was. God, he was just awful. He was horrible. And I think he was a danger.

02-01:01:46
Eardley-Pryor: In what way? What do you mean?

02-01:01:48
Matsumura: You know, especially not following advice from certain leaders, or from his own cabinet, and firing, I mean how many people did he fire just to hire someone else because they didn't follow the way he wanted it? It's really bad. I thought maybe—I'm hoping history won't repeat itself. But now I don't know, I question everything. Because I never thought—I'm Asian, but how the US is still so, there's so much racism here in the US that even—okay, I'll give an example. One time, I was traveling with my boyfriend, and we had a problem with the flight. We wanted to get bumped up, we wanted to pay to go to first class. Or business class, we don't say that anymore, business class. And we were standing at the counter. I was there first, and he came up later, quite later. But who did they help? Him. You know? Now, I was in my forties, I'm not going to be so quiet, and I said to them, "Why didn't you help me? I was standing here way before this man." I didn't tell them I knew him. Because that really pissed me off. And things like that happen a lot, where even at a bar, they'll ask him, "What do you want to drink?" And I'm like, "Am I invisible here?" So things like that really, just little things I notice here and there. But yeah, I know that racism still exists. We have a long way to go, because I don't know if we can heal our country anytime soon, especially when there's people like Donald Trump, which just brings it out in people, for hatred. He brings out hatred. That's really sad.

02-01:04:02
Eardley-Pryor: Mind if we take a pause?

02-01:04:03
Matsumura: Yeah, sure.

[pause in recording]

02-01:04:09
Eardley-Pryor: So Lori, I want to ask about 2018. That was the year that you turned forty-eight. In your last interview session, you shared how you spent a lot of your life wondering if you'd get to that point, you and your sister, because that was the age that your mother was when she passed. What was that forty-eight birthday experience like for you?

02-01:04:30

Matsumura: Although I don't remember what I did on my forty-eighth birthday, I do remember thinking, "Wow, this is the age that my mom passed away." She passed away on October 25. And when I look in the mirror, "Is this how my mom would have looked?" Or going through certain physical changes, if this is how my mom would've—? And I thought, I'm now living longer than my mom, first of all. How would she be when she gets older? Because right now, I'm caring for my niece and nephew because their parents work long hours at the hospital. I know that if my mom were alive, she would want to do that. So some of me thinks, I feel kind of sad for my niece and nephew, because they don't have her around. I think she would have been a really fun grandmother. So I try and be a fun aunt. I don't know if that's working. But yes, the forty-eighth birthday, all these things I think about, about my mom and what she would have been, or how she was.

02-01:06:10

Eardley-Pryor: When you're channeling your mom, what are some of the ways you do that?

02-01:06:16

Matsumura: What's interesting is that once in a while I dreamt about her. Although I think I only had one dream about her right after she passed. But one thing that does happen, and I don't know how to explain this, but I could be in the car or at some store, or I could just be anywhere, and I'll get a whiff of her perfume. It's so wild. When I smell it, it's like this honeysuckle-type smell. It's not anything I would wear, but it's my mom. It doesn't scare me. It only brings comfort. But yes, that happens, where I get a smell of her perfume out of nowhere. And it's random times, in a random moment. It's very bizarre.

02-01:07:16

Eardley-Pryor: What are the emotions that come up?

02-01:07:19

Matsumura: It gives me a smile. It just makes me happy to have that.

02-01:07:28

Eardley-Pryor: That same year of 2018 is also when your Aunt Kazue passes away, shortly after she conducted an oral history with Rose Masters, a National Park Service Ranger and oral historian through the Manzanar National Historic Site. What was that experience of Kazue's death like for you? I mean, you'd grown up with your aunt across the street as a big part of your life for so much of your childhood.

02-01:07:53

Matsumura: When my aunt got older, she kind of pulled away from the family. Plus, I wasn't living across the street anymore. I'd moved on to live somewhere else, although I would go visit her when I was in Santa Monica visiting my dad. I would go every weekend. My brother and I would go do the shopping, like at Target or Costco or to the outlets, just something to get out of the house. After she did her oral history, after the video was released, I would ask her

questions, and she wouldn't remember, or she'd answer them in a way that I thought, "Oh, is she getting dementia?" And that worried me because my dad had been living with dementia for many years. Before, I thought, "Oh, my aunt would know." But she was getting to have memory loss.

02-01:08:56
Eardley-Pryor: I remember you shared that your Aunt Kazue was taking care of your grandmother Ito, and your grandmother passed away at like 103 years old?

02-01:09:06
Matsumura: Yes.

02-01:09:08
Eardley-Pryor: What were your memories of her [Ito] in her final years?

02-01:09:12
Matsumura: My grandmother did not have dementia. She had a very clear mind. In her final years, I remember she was aware of what was going on, but she didn't have the physical power to move the way she would normally move. So she'd be lying in bed a lot. I would go visit her, and she'd tap the bed next to her and say, "Come sit with me," which I would do. It was more like a happy silence, where you can be with somebody, you don't have to talk, but you're there.

02-01:09:55
Eardley-Pryor: You'd shared that your father was experiencing dementia through his final years, and I have a note that he passed away in July of 2019. What were those last years with him like? I believe you said you were going to visit every weekend to help care for him. What are your memories and experiences of his final years?

02-01:10:19
Matsumura: That's hard because the dementia took him away from us a long time ago. So in his final years, he just wouldn't remember. Sometimes he wouldn't remember me. But he would always remember Wayne, because Wayne still lived in the house and took care of him pretty much all the time. But as far as my dad goes, he'd have his good days and bad days. If you mentioned cooking—he must have been stressed about always thinking what to cook for the family, like any parent, "What am I going to feed him for dinner?"—because if you brought up dinner, he'd be like, "Oh yeah, what do you guys want to eat for dinner? I have to feed you kids," without remembering that I don't live there anymore. His mind wasn't there. I don't think anyone would want to live this way, because it's not living. Right? You're a prisoner in your body. So I felt bad for him. After all his struggles of adolescence and the war and taking care of the family, now he gets dementia. It's really sad.

Another thing that makes me sad is, his two brothers and his sister died kind of close together. They all died close to each other, timewise. But the fact that they never got the closure with their father [Giichi]. Eventually, closure did happen. But I think having my grandfather's body buried next to his wife, my

grandmother, is when everything came full circle. It was unfortunate that Giichi's kids couldn't see that. That's very unfortunate.

02-01:12:39
Eardley-Pryor: What do you mean by full circle, that things came full circle?

02-01:12:43
Matsumura: Because when my dad and his siblings passed away, and my aunt and my grandmother, he [Giichi] was on some mountain that we didn't have access to. And the fact that we brought him home and buried him next to his wife in Santa Monica, it just comes full circle where that family—okay, everything's now in the box, and it's settled. It's unfortunate they couldn't see that, knowing what happened in the end with their dad. I wonder if they have closure. I don't know.

02-01:13:31
Eardley-Pryor: With all this life passing—from your father, your grandmother, your aunt, your uncles on your dad's side—all within this pretty short timeframe, I'm wondering how you were dealing with that. How were you handling the passing of those generations?

02-01:13:52
Matsumura: Well, after losing everyone like that, I was dealing with Giichi's body and the DNA test, and driving back and forth from Manzanar, and asking the family what they wanted to do, thinking how we were going to pay. Everything was just a lot to deal with. And I was in a lawsuit. I think I was just running on adrenaline. So, I was tired. I was really tired. And I'm still tired because I still have this project of the build going on [trying to build apartments on the family's plot of land in Santa Monica]. Every day, I go to bed worrying, and I wake up worrying. It's a very stressful time. So, I'm still dealing with it.

02-01:14:57
Eardley-Pryor: Maybe we can lean into some of the specifics that happened throughout this, about what's causing this ongoing stress—from the pandemic to family stuff to the attempt to build on your family property. When your father passed, what became of the home?

02-01:15:20
Matsumura: We have a living trust, and my brother is still living there. So nothing became of it. We didn't decide to sell or anything.

02-01:15:31
Eardley-Pryor: This is your brother Wayne?

02-01:15:33
Matsumura: Yes, Wayne.

02-01:15:34
Eardley-Pryor: And Wayne, if I'm remembering right, was also the brother who came and helped take care of you when you were a little girl right after your mother passed?

02-01:15:41
Matsumura: Yes, yes. He's the caregiver of the family. But yes, Wayne still lived there. So, of course, we're not going to discuss selling or doing anything that would uproot him. So in regards to the property, we would just leave it as is. And then Thomas [my boyfriend] and I thought, "Wouldn't it be great to build a little"—it started out as a tiny home, when tiny homes were popular. We thought "What if we do a tiny home?" But Santa Monica doesn't allow a tiny home. Then we thought, "Okay, let's do an add-on to the house and fix it up, and then we can live there too," because rent is becoming quite high in Santa Monica. Then we realized, "Okay, it's just too difficult." So we met up with a contractor who was helping us deal with all of this, and he knows our budget. We decided, "Okay, let's go big." We decided, "Let's think if we can build an apartment, rent it, and then go from there. That would be great." So that's what we're in the process of.

02-01:16:57
But then COVID hit, and it pretty much shut everything down. It's put a lot of stress on us monetarily and having everything put hold, because we cleared out the house. Everything's gone. So we need this next phase of the build to happen. It's become such a burden that every day I think, "Did I make the right decision?" Because if something were to happen to the family home, I would feel very guilty. That would just not sit well with me. So yes, it's a very stressful situation. And I was in a lawsuit, and that was a very stressful situation.

And after all this, my dad passed away, and other family members. Now my aunt on my mom's side, who used to live in the back of the house, she passed away unexpectedly. I think, "Now all the older people that I was connected to have passed away." With my aunt, I talked to her on a daily basis, we always spoke on the phone every day. I don't know what we talked about, but it was fun. We would talk every day, so I was closest to her. She was like a mom, but then she became a friend when I got older.

02-01:18:32
Eardley-Pryor: This is your aunt Pat?

02-01:18:34
Matsumura: Yes, Pat. So, a lot of things were happening right then. With eBay selling my dad's artwork, which I don't know how that even happened, or how the person even has it. Everything is just like, "Oh my goodness." This has to slow down at some point. I'm just waiting for it to slow down and things start to fall into place. And COVID. COVID happened.

02-01:19:06
Eardley-Pryor: COVID. Well, I want to step into a particular moment when you received this phone call from the Sheriff's Department in Inyo County, California. Sergeant Nate Derr calls you in October of 2019, when it was just a couple months after your father had passed. What happened with that? What's your memory of that call and feelings about it?

02-01:19:32
Matsumura: I remember I was sitting on my bed, and first he left a voicemail: "This is Sergeant Derr from the Inyo County Sheriff's Department." When I called him back, he gently said, "Well, we discovered a body." And I'm thinking it had to do with the lawsuit, right? I'm thinking, "What happened? I don't know anything, what's going on?" And then after he talks a little more, I'm like, "Oh." Because when you're from the West Side [of California], you only deal with the West Side. Inyo County's like a whole other life to me, a whole other area. My mind wasn't there yet, I wasn't quite thinking. But when he mentioned it, I'm like, "Giichi." And then, "Okay. This is very interesting."

So he [Sergeant Derr] wanted to get my DNA to see if there was a match. I feel bad because he didn't want any of this going public until they knew for sure what was happening. But of course, I think the hikers who found Giichi's remains posted it on some social media, so people were calling or wanting to know more. But we were supposed to be quiet about the whole thing. That was sad. I can't say they "discovered" [Giichi's remains] because we knew where he was at. He'd already been found by the botanist [Mary DeDecker in September 1945]. I would say he was "rediscovered." The difference now is that they have the means to take him off the mountain.

At first, with the hikers it's like, "Why did you have to disrupt his grave and do this? Someone's buried there. You're not supposed to go poking around here." Then I was upset. But you have to find a way to heal yourself with it. So if I think about it now, yes, they were able to get his body flown off the mountain. Okay. Now he's at home. He's at rest. That's the part that makes me happy, that he's buried next to his wife. That's how I find closure.

02-01:22:09
Eardley-Pryor: Why was it that Sergeant Nate Derr from Inyo County Sheriff's Department called you?

02-01:22:15
Matsumura: Because I had called Rose Masters [National Park Service Ranger and oral historian at Manzanar National Historic Site] who did the interview with my aunt. I left my name and number with her. So by chance, that's who they had as a contact. That's how it came to me.

02-01:22:34
Eardley-Pryor: Because Kazue had passed away.

02-01:22:36
Matsumura: And I had called Rose Masters about the video [of Kazue's oral history], so my name was connected with that. When I went to Manzanar, they knew about the story, and they knew Kazue because they interviewed her. So just by chance, they had my contact information.

02-01:22:59
Eardley-Pryor: And that's what the process was? They wanted you to come out to Manzanar?

02-01:23:04
Matsumura: Yes, to take a DNA swab.

02-01:23:09
Eardley-Pryor: What was it that the DNA swab was intended to do?

02-01:23:12
Matsumura: To see if the remains matched with my DNA, to test the DNA to see if it was family. I just knew it was. Sometimes you just know inside, you have an intuition. I just had a feeling.

02-01:23:32
Eardley-Pryor: I had to look up where Inyo County was. And then, in hearing that Giichi's remains were removed from Mount Williamson, in my mind, I was like "Oh, Mount Williamson, some mountain." But this is a gigantic mountain.

02-01:23:49
Matsumura: Yes, yes. Okay, so first of all, I'm driving, I've never been to Manzanar, I never did a pilgrimage. So I'm driving to Manzanar, and my boyfriend's with me. And the whole time I'm thinking, "So is this what it was like taking the train?" Because it's a long drive from Stevenson Ranch, even longer from Santa Monica. In my mind, I'm thinking, "Is this what they saw? Of course, now, on some of it they have a few more shops along the way, some stands. But it was so isolated, so desolate. Yes, it was wild because in my mind, when I first saw the watchtower, when I went to Manzanar—you hear about it from stories, or you see pictures or photos—but to see it in person was more monumental than what I had thought.

When they pointed out the mountain that he hiked, I looked at that gigantic mountain and thought, "How did he do that?" He hiked up so high, they couldn't bring his remains down. How? He must have been a very strong man to do that, and determined. My dad, he was very physically fit, but then also had dementia. He used to do body building. He did weightlifting, so he was really healthy and fit. And he ate healthy, he drank aloe vera, cod liver. He was very healthy. But his mind wasn't healthy. But I'm thinking, "I wonder if he got working out and being healthy from his dad?" Because no way physically could you have climbed—that's really tough, without equipment, no special equipment.

02-01:26:06
Eardley-Pryor: Right, he just was bringing his paints to go paint in the mountains.

02-01:26:11

Matsumura: But when I went to view his remains, they found fishing wire, a little pocketknife, some little things. I mean his shoes were just regular, and they probably did not have a lot of cushion like we have now. He was hiking in regular street clothes, up that high.

02-01:26:33

Eardley-Pryor: The Williamson bowl, where I know he was laid to rest in 1945, is like 12,000 feet high. The Mount Williamson peak is 14,300-some feet high. It's one of the tallest peaks in all of the lower United States. And to think that he was climbing up there. I can understand how in August of '45, a freak snowstorm blows in, and he's just stuck up there.

Also, in how all this unfolded, I think about your poor grandmother, Ito. All the context of what happened to him in this moment in 1945 strikes me in such a way. That it was just weeks before the war in the Pacific ended, and just before, finally, the US federal government declared, "We're not going to imprison these Japanese-Americans here for no reason. We're not going to imprison people. People can go home to whatever life you can try to scrape together after having all your family's property taken." What it was like for your grandmother to have her husband just disappear in the midst of these striking changes—with four kids, and the war ending, and atomic bombs being dropped on Japan that week. What impact did that have on her?

02-01:28:00

Matsumura: I wish I could have asked her. Again, I know facts, but how was she feeling? That type of insight, I'm so interested to know. She used to keep a diary, and this diary was from the time she took the boat here to the US. But that diary's no longer available to me. But wow, what a wealth of information. She even kept—gosh, my grandmother, I don't know, I don't think she was a hoarder, but she kept old magazines of important times of the US. I remember looking at those articles. I didn't read them because, at eleven or ten years old, you're not going to do that. But I remember seeing them. Now I'm thinking, "Wow, I wonder what those said?" All the memories she had. And what was she thinking? Because your husband dies and you're left with kids, and now you have to go find somewhere to live. But you don't have anything, because the only thing you could bring with you was the stuff you could carry. Now what? That's why I think they're such a strong generation, because they survived that.

02-01:29:38

Eardley-Pryor: Share with me about that experience of you visiting Manzanar, and visiting Inyo County at the sheriff's office. What was that experience for you—not just the drive out, but actually being there? What were some of the realizations and feelings that you were going through?

02-01:29:55

Matsumura: Mostly I was like in the zone of thinking, "Is this what they saw?" I know they didn't travel in the car, it was by train. I was questioning how much of it was same as when they went.

But then I hit Manzanar. It was so isolated, so dusty. I have really bad allergies, my allergies were going crazy. It was so dirty and dusty and isolated, and the weather, and so many weeds, and like, scratchy. I just can't imagine how could they build their life there, and shield the kids from this hatred, and try and get some sense of normalcy in this area that they were thrown in. I don't know how they did it. For me, I was so sad. Because you hear about it, but you don't truly know. They're going to tell me, "Oh yeah, we went to school in Manzanar. And we played basketball, and we had a baseball team." But okay, so in my mind I'm thinking "Oh, you did this and that, so it was kind of normal." But no. When you go there—you picture the environment, it is not a friendly environment. That's what got me.

02-01:31:49

Eardley-Pryor: What was your experience at the sheriff's department? What was that interaction like?

02-01:31:56

Matsumura: The sheriff's department. I went there and someone, another sheriff, took my DNA. It was just a swab. We talked a little bit, and then we went on our way to Manzanar. It wasn't any big hoopla. There was only him in that office, so it was very small. It was fast and easy.

02-01:32:23

Eardley-Pryor: What was your experience when the news broke about the rediscovery of Giichi's remains? I found a press release from January 3 of 2020 that the Inyo County Sheriff's Department did in conjunction with Manzanar Historic Site to kind of say, here's the story of what happened, and what we know about Giichi. And then there all this news coverage, like in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the AP Press all coming to you and saying, "Tell us about what happened." What was that experience like for you?

02-01:32:56

Matsumura: Yeah, the news even reached Norway. One of Thomas's family members saw it and said, "Is this Lori?" And he was like, "Yeah." That was pretty wild to know that it even reached another country. And yeah, all these press releases were out. I kind of talked to my aunt about the whole thing, my mom's sister. And I've come to the conclusion that I had no idea that my dad's side of the family was so interesting. Because growing up, you think "Oh yeah, that's my dad's family." But listening to the stories and finding more about them that I had no idea. It was interesting—nothing ever happened growing up, it was very quiet. Nothing ever happened. You know? I just grew up, played, that was it. But now, there was all this stuff coming out about the family.

On one hand, it's sad, because I wish my dad was around to experience this, in a not-dementia frame of mind. I wish he was healthy. But at the same time, I was happy because I want people to know about this, and to share it, and to have it be out there. Knowledge is power. So as long as people know what happened—I don't want history to repeat. So, I think this is important. If anybody wants to hear this story, I'm willing to share this story with them, and talk about it, because it needs to be out there. People need to be aware of what happened.

02-01:34:56

Eardley-Pryor: I know that you went back to Manzanar various times. It was not just a one-time visit. You had to return. How were your return visits different from that first visit for you?

02-01:35:09

Matsumura: The return visit was very different, because I actually got to view the remains. It was me, and my brother, and my niece. My nephew couldn't make it, he was so upset. But we went to the viewing of the bones. What was so nice, what they did was, they set it out so it was in order of how the body is. I was so surprised that so many remains were intact, the bones. So many bones were still there. Maybe a small bone of the foot was missing, but pretty much all his remains were there. And they even found his shoes, his leather shoes, part of the belt buckle, some buttons that were on his shirt, fishing wire, a pen, and an old army knife-type thing. We did a little prayer over the body. Then we brought the fishing wire and everything, and we donated that to the Manzanar museum so anybody who's interested can go view those, if they ever have them out for public viewing. Because they would get calls about Giichi's remains, I thought people would want to see.

02-01:36:41

Eardley-Pryor: What was that experience like, with your brother and niece being a part of it this time, on this other visit? Why was it more of a collective family thing? And how did that make it different for you?

02-01:36:54

Matsumura: Well, the nice thing is my nephew got to meet up with us later that day, so he got to see something. It was great because I wanted the kids to see and to experience and to know what their ancestors went through. So it was good for them. And they got to visit the museum and see how they lived, because they saw how the barracks used to look like, and what was there. I'm glad they got to experience that.

02-01:37:23

Eardley-Pryor: What was their reaction?

02-01:37:25

Matsumura: Sadness. Because it's much different than having—I always tell them, “When I grew up, we didn't have iPads, or cell phones, and no social apps and things like that. And they wondered, “So what did you do?” [laughs] I tell them,

"When I was growing up, the answering machine was invented, and the cordless telephone, that was the big tech thing I had." They just can't get over it, like "What did you do?" I worry about this generation because the way they socialize is through the phone and texting. I wish that they would get more one-on-one. Yes, so I wanted them to see how their grandfather lived, and what he had to experience. It's good for them to see that, because not everything is so convenient, like now. They need to know that. They need to know the hardships that our family went through so they can have this nice life.

02-01:38:44

Eardley-Pryor: Shortly after that visit when you were there with your brother and niece and other family members, within weeks, the whole world shuts down—at least in the United States and California, in March of 2020. What was the COVID experience like for you and your family?

02-01:39:04

Matsumura: Wow. I live with my older brother right now during the build [constructing apartments on the family's land in Santa Monica], and both him and his wife are in the medical industry. So it was always, "Oh god, I don't want to bring it home to you guys and the kids." Everything was really, "wash your hands," and "be careful." It was scary because people were dying. Hundreds and thousands. I didn't want anything to happen to the kids. And school shut down, and anything of a normal life was gone. They couldn't play with their friends. And Zoom classes. The schools had to work out how to do the Zoom classes, so they lost all that chunk of time learning stuff. I'm sure at first, for the kids, it was exciting because "no school!" And they don't quite understand, they're kids, you know? "We don't have to go to school today. We get to play!" They don't quite understand the scope of it. But I'm hoping because their parents are in the health industry that we're a little bit overprotective of them.

I don't even know what is normal anymore. What will returning to normal mean? What are we going to take away from this? Will masks be more—in Asia they wear masks. Are we going to do that here when someone gets a cold? Are we going to have to get vaccines for the rest of our lives, like the flu shot? Is it going to keep mutating to something worse? We don't know what the new normal is yet. And that's a scary thought. Like how traveling has changed since 9/11, right? The way we travel's not the same as we traveled before, with all the TSA. I wonder what we're going to take away from COVID that's going to remain the new normal.

02-01:41:11

Eardley-Pryor: That year, 2020, was wild. The pandemic, the 2020 election, Donald Trump again, him trying to maintain the US presidency. In California, insane wildfires. Climate change is hitting in a way that is much more visceral and visual and real than the sort of abstract way it had been in previous decades. In

the midst of all that, you were also trying to decide what was going to happen with Giichi's remains. What was it that you were going through with that?

02-01:41:50
Matsumura: Well, my biggest thought was, "Okay, I have to organize here." And, "What was coming up first? What did I have to deal with?" One of the things I had to deal with fast was Giichi's remains, because we couldn't just let it sit in the air like that. We had him cremated, because the choice was cremation or bring him home in a baby casket. And I don't want his remains in the back of my car in a baby casket. So I said "Okay, definitely cremation."

The next step was thinking, what will we do? And yes, we could have scattered his ashes in Manzanar. But my aunt Pat said to me, "I think you guys need to bring him home. Who would want to be scattered in a place that held him prisoner? He would want to be with his family." So her and Wayne were very adamant about having me somehow get the remains buried in Santa Monica.

02-01:43:08
Eardley-Pryor: Was this something that was also talked about with other family members? Like Clyde and Lisa, were they also involved in some of these discussions?

02-01:43:14
Matsumura: Yes, they were involved. And some people were kind of quiet, like "Oh, whatever you do, it's okay." It's true, he should be at home with his wife and children. Because at that gravesite that we buried him in is my grandmother and her daughter, Kazue. They are in that same plot. So, it was quite fitting to put him next to her. And what's odd, the next day, I believe was his birthday. My brother noticed that. He's like, "Look at the date on that. It's his birthday tomorrow. Whoa, that's wild." And because of COVID, there was a limit on the amount of people we could have there. Because of COVID, we had to have been a small gathering. So it was very quiet.

02-01:44:18
Eardley-Pryor: Yeah, I see that the date of the burial ceremony in Woodlawn Cemetery where Giichi's remains were buried next to his wife, Ito, was December 21 in 2020. And my memory of the 2020 winter is this huge spike [in COVID cases]. There was a lull for a bit of time, and then wintertime came, and the number of [COVID] infections were rising in that winter of 2020. What was the service like? What choice did you make about how to go about the ceremony?

02-01:44:51
Matsumura: Because he was Buddhist and my family belong to a certain Buddhist temple in Los Angeles, we contacted them, and they can perform a very small service. The monk brought in a piece of paper from when they did the original service in Manzanar, which was pretty wild that they would have a record of that—I cannot read it, because it's in Japanese—but he had that on file. He was very nice. He told me it was an honor to do his service. Let's see, what I

can remember? Because my other uncle was just buried there, he passed away. My dad was just buried. So I was getting to know Woodlawn very well.

02-01:45:50
Eardley-Pryor: What's the feeling for you of going to visit a cemetery like that?

02-01:45:57
Matsumura: When I go and visit, I know that my ancestors are buried there. One thing about my mom's burial—she was cremated—was later on, there was a lawsuit because her remains were cremated with other bodies, so I don't even know whose ashes are there right now. Of course, that's my mom's plot. But to me, I think you can honor a person from anywhere, from your home, from a park, anywhere you think about them. So I don't really go often. Once in a while, I'll visit the cemetery with the kids, because we bring them there. But I don't really go. It's just strange to think what was once my mom is now there, my grandmother is now there, a lot of family members there.

02-01:47:01
Eardley-Pryor: You talked earlier about bringing Giichi's remains to be buried next to Ito, and how that brought things full circle and provided a sense of closure for you. Can you talk a little bit more about the closure aspects? What closed?

02-01:47:19
Matsumura: What closed is that his body was brought down from the mountains, and we were able to put him to rest with his wife. We knew he was there, and we know what happened. So to have that, where he's not on that mountain anymore and we know where he's at, for me puts closure on what happened to him, his experience. And for me, I'm his granddaughter, I never met him. What makes it sad is that his kids couldn't experience that closure. And that angers me, because why were they even there in the first place? And then that brings me into thinking about Manzanar, and government, and putting them there. They shouldn't have been there in the first place.

02-01:48:33
Eardley-Pryor: I read somewhere—I can't remember, in one of the many articles that came up about your grandfather's experience in the wake of being rediscovered, or maybe it was Kazue's oral history—somebody had described your grandfather as “the ghost of Manzanar.” I wonder what your thoughts are on that?

02-01:48:56
Matsumura: You know, that's what my aunt thinks, “He's the ghost of Manzanar.” I don't know if that's true, but that's what she said. That whole ghost thing, I don't really—I just know his story and what happened. But being the ghost of Manzanar? I don't really dwell on that too much.

02-01:49:23
Eardley-Pryor: There was another story I remember reading about his burial ceremony in December of 2020. It mentioned that when Giichi was discovered the first time [in September 1945] by the botanist in Williamson Bowl, that some

family members went up to bury him, to wrap him in a sheet that your grandmother provided for them. And they took some of his hair and nail clippings and brought that down. And when Ito passed away at 103 years old, she was buried with some of his clippings and hair. And then you returned his ashes all these years later. In some ways, to me, that was like a "Wow, that's coming full circle, too."

Do you mind if we pause for a second?

02-01:50:16
Matsumura: No, not at all.

[pause in recording]

02-01:50:21
Eardley-Pryor: Lori, I want to ask about in spring of 2021—like a few months after the closing and the ceremony for Giichi's rediscovered remains—there was an experience you had with an eBay auction involving your father's artwork.

02-01:50:38
Matsumura: Yes.

02-01:50:49
Eardley-Pryor: Artwork that he did as a young man, as like an eighteen-year-old kid, while imprisoned at Manzanar. What's the experience you had with this eBay auction? How did it come into your world, and what happened with it?

02-01:50:56
Matsumura: Well, it was wild. I was contacted by this lady Nancy, who I met through this Giichi situation.

02-01:51:10
Eardley-Pryor: Is this Nancy Ukai?

02-01:51:11
Matsumura: Yes.

02-01:51:12
Eardley-Pryor: Oh, I love Nancy.

02-01:51:13
Matsumura: So out of the blue, she contacts me and says, "Are these your dad's drawings?" And was it Nancy? I'm trying to think, my mind is a little cloudy. So she directed me to the eBay website, and I was looking through these items. The art was signed by "Matsumura." I'm like, "Yeah, [that's my father's art], but why is it on eBay?" So, we'd go back and forth about these drawings on eBay. All of a sudden, she's like, "Can you join us in our meeting with the eBay representatives to try and get these items taken offline, and future items?" These are prominent Japanese [American] activists, and here I am thinking, "What am I going to do? How am I going to contribute? I can't even

put two sentences together sometimes." I think "Okay, but anything to help. I'm willing to do it."

The eBay meeting happens on Zoom because of COVID. I introduce myself, and I tell them, "I believe those are my dad's artwork, and I don't think they should be sold on eBay without the consent of his family." And they took them down. I was like, "Whoa." You know? That was that. And in the future, they would try and find a way to check the provenance and not have things sold—not just Japanese work, but maybe African American work, or anything that you can't tie it back to the family. Why is it on there? But yeah, that whole time, I though "Okay, is this something else that I'm going to have to, not deal with, but another situation that I will have to think about how to handle?"

But to be honest, the Japanese community, they're so great, and they're so helpful, and their guidance has been so fantastic. I can't praise them enough, because they've been so wonderful in helping me deal with all of these situations. They really do come together to be there for you.

02-01:54:10
Eardley-Pryor: What do you mean by guidance?

02-01:54:12
Matsumura: Guidance on when this happened, how to approach it, giving me ideas, and asking me if I want to do anything in the first place. Because maybe I might say, "I'm tired, I can't handle it." But they say, "Whatever you want to do, we'll help you. We'll be there, too. We have the resources." They have attorneys, I'm sure, who can help them find their way through the situation. That's the way they help guide me through all these situations that come up.

02-01:54:55
Eardley-Pryor: When you first went to that eBay auction site and were clicking through these images, what were your feelings and thoughts about that at that time?

02-01:55:07
Matsumura: At that time, first I was thinking, "Are these my dad's?," because my dad's not the only artist in Manzanar. But his name was on them. Seeing his name on it, and then comparing signatures, his writing, to other artifacts that we have. Then my cousin saying, "Oh, I vaguely remember seeing those." But then I'm thinking, "How did it come into the hands of someone else?" I don't know. My first thought is more accusing, but then I have to think, "Well, maybe he didn't know." I have to always step outside of the box and think of it from someone else's point of view, or maybe find another angle. I'm trying to be better about that, to not to be so accusing and to think, "What could have happened here? How did this happen?" After all this, it just made me angry to have our family's things in the hands of someone else. How did it become in the hands of someone else?

02-01:56:32
Eardley-Pryor: What do you think about people selling this artwork that was made while imprisoned, while family members were imprisoned?

02-01:56:45
Matsumura: What do I think? I think it's wrong, unless the family wants to do it for some reason or another. It's up to them. It's up to the individual person. But for me—for instance, I'll show you, my dad made pins in Manzanar, birch pins. I have some of them here. Because, this shows his work. He had these pins here [*shows on video recording a broach pin of a small bird, hard-carved from wood and intricately painted*].

02-01:57:22
Eardley-Pryor: Oh pins, yeah, I see. They're beautiful. The color, they're amazing.

02-01:57:25
Matsumura: They have little pins in the back. He made these. And I even have a duck. [*shows on video recording several more intricately painted and hand-carved bird pins*]

02-01:57:36
Eardley-Pryor: Oh wow. God, those are great.

02-01:57:40
Matsumura: I have these stored away.

02-01:57:45
Eardley-Pryor: They're so vibrant and detailed.

02-01:57:49
Matsumura: I guess that he was learning to carve. He used to make toys, little wooden toys [*shows on video recording an interlinked chain entirely carved from wood]*

02-01:57:59
Eardley-Pryor: He carved a wooden chain?

02-01:58:01
Matsumura: Yes. And he has another one, there's like little balls in them. [*shows on video recording a hand-held wooden toy with small wooden spheres that roll freely inside a wooden container*].

02-01:58:07
Eardley-Pryor: Oh my goodness, that's so intricate.

02-01:58:10
Matsumura: Yes. This was him passing the time. [*shows on video recording another hand-carved wooden toy with both an interlinked chain and a wooden container with small wood spheres inside that roll freely*]

02-01:58:20
Eardley-Pryor: I've never seen anything like that before. That's incredible.

02-01:58:23
Matsumura: He was really good.

02-01:58:15
Eardley-Pryor: He carved them wood?

02-01:58:26
Matsumura: Yes, yes, from wood that they found in Manzanar. But if you have these things that your family made while they were a prisoner, these things are a part of their life at a time when it was hard. They made these beautiful things, and it probably made them happy to make it. So why would you want to sell it? And if you were to see these things being sold that your family did while in prison, of course, I wouldn't understand how it could not make you angry to see that. These are family artifacts that you're not going to find anywhere. To know that your ancestors did all this during that time, I just can't imagine selling it because it's worth more than money. These are your family's. They show how they coped with their problems in there. I think it's worth more than money.

02-01:59:50
Eardley-Pryor: How is it that you have those incredible artifacts of your dad's art from Manzanar, those carvings?

02-01:59:58
Matsumura: They must have brought it back with them when they left camp. That's how. They were able to bring it back, probably packed it away.

02-02:00:07
Eardley-Pryor: Did he ever talk about his artwork and that stuff he made? For him to have that, to carry that with him, and to hold onto that for his whole life so that you now have it—it must have meant something meaningful to him, I would think. Did he ever talk about that?

02-02:00:20
Matsumura: No. He goes, “Oh, this is what I did in camp. This is what I learned to do to pass the time.” That's how he talked, like “Oh yeah, that's just something I did.” For me it's like, “Wow, you made that!?” I remember one time when I was young, I said, “I want to learn how to carve.” He goes, “Okay, practice on this bar of soap.” He gave me a bar of soap and this carving thing. It was Irish Spring soap. I'm like, “No, this is too difficult.” He didn't brag about himself. He didn't say, “Oh, this is what I did.” He was more matter-of-fact in how he told me.

02-02:01:03
Eardley-Pryor: You also shared that amazing drawing of Santa that he did when he was like five, as a little boy. Do you have any other art that your father did?

02-02:01:12
Matsumura: Yes, we do have some. He did airbrush. The thing about my dad was, I think he could do anything. He did woodwork, he worked with metal, he made

bracelets, he painted, he did airbrushing, he drew with sketching. He did all different types of art. Not just one type, but so many different ones. I just think that's amazing.

02-02:01:48
Eardley-Pryor: Whatever became of the art being sold on eBay that your dad did?

02-02:01:54
Matsumura: I don't have it. I don't know what happened. I don't have access. It's no longer on eBay, it got taken down. But I was not able to obtain that artwork.

02-02:02:10
Eardley-Pryor: So the auction was stopped. But no recompense to that?

02-02:02:14
Matsumura: No.

02-02:02:17
Eardley-Pryor: What do you wish would happen with that?

02-02:02:20
Matsumura: I would wish I could get it returned. Yes, my dad did those drawings. But there's so much more to him than just those drawings. I have my memories of him, and other things—okay, it makes me sad. But if it's out of my hands, I can't really dwell on that situation. I just have to move on.

02-02:02:53
Eardley-Pryor: Your grandfather of course was also enthralled with art, and bringing paints up to Mount Williamson. Do you have any of his artwork?

02-02:02:02
Matsumura: I do. I do have some. It's packed away right now, but yes, I do. My sister has some as well, and my cousin who lives in Vegas, she has artwork. I think that that whole family was a family of artists, because he could draw, and my grandmother, she did sumi-e in her eighties. And my aunt Kazue, I don't have it handy, but she did a lot of drawing. She was really good. My sister can draw. Clyde, the oldest, does woodwork and can build things. I'm more into crafting. So I think maybe each of us got a little bit of something from the art side of our family.

02-02:03:46
Eardley-Pryor: We're wrapping up at the end of your interview here. And so, I want to move to asking about reflections and legacy. When you think back about all the experiences that have happened in your life, in light of what happened to your family being incarcerated, what are the ways that you think that those incarcerations have rippled and echoed through your experience of life?

02-02:04:26
Matsumura: In my younger years, it didn't really affect me as much. But now that I'm older and can understand more, I guess it doesn't take much for something like that

to happen and for people to turn. Just like with cancel culture, it doesn't take much for an incident to happen and it's going to snowball into a huge problem. I just don't want to see anybody from any race being isolated like that. I don't want the US to ever think that's a good idea. For me now, the effect it's had is for me to want to share the story. I want to tell anybody who's willing to listen so that people know the past. It's so important for people to know. And in the age of being on your device and social media—I can't say it's for all young kids, because I've experienced problems with older people too who have fought in the war with Pearl Harbor—we all have to live together and understand. If we don't, then this is a huge problem. We need to show more empathy, and just heal ourselves so that we can heal others by being aware. I don't know how I can put it in a different way. But we have to overcome what we have in order for us to—we don't know what someone is going through or what their family went through. I think that all immigrants that have come to the US have struggled or experienced racism, or had to deal with hardship. And if we want more understanding to that, then hopefully we can all get along better as a society.

02-02:06:58
Eardley-Pryor: That's beautiful. Thank you for being so forthcoming in sharing your family's experience and especially your experience. It's been a pleasure to be a part of this interview experience with you. Thank you.

02-02:07:09
Matsumura: You're welcome. How was I chosen? I'm just curious. Is it because of Giichi?

02-02:07:19
Eardley-Pryor: Yeah, I think that is—I'm trying to remember.

02-02:07:22
Matsumura: I think Nancy?

02-02:07:25
Eardley-Pryor: Maybe through Nancy [Ukai]? I think it might have been Nancy who said, "If you don't know about this, look at this article. Here's somebody that's connected to Manzanar who has a story to tell."

02-02:07:35
Matsumura: Nice. Okay.

02-02:07:38
Eardley-Pryor: Thank you for sharing your story.

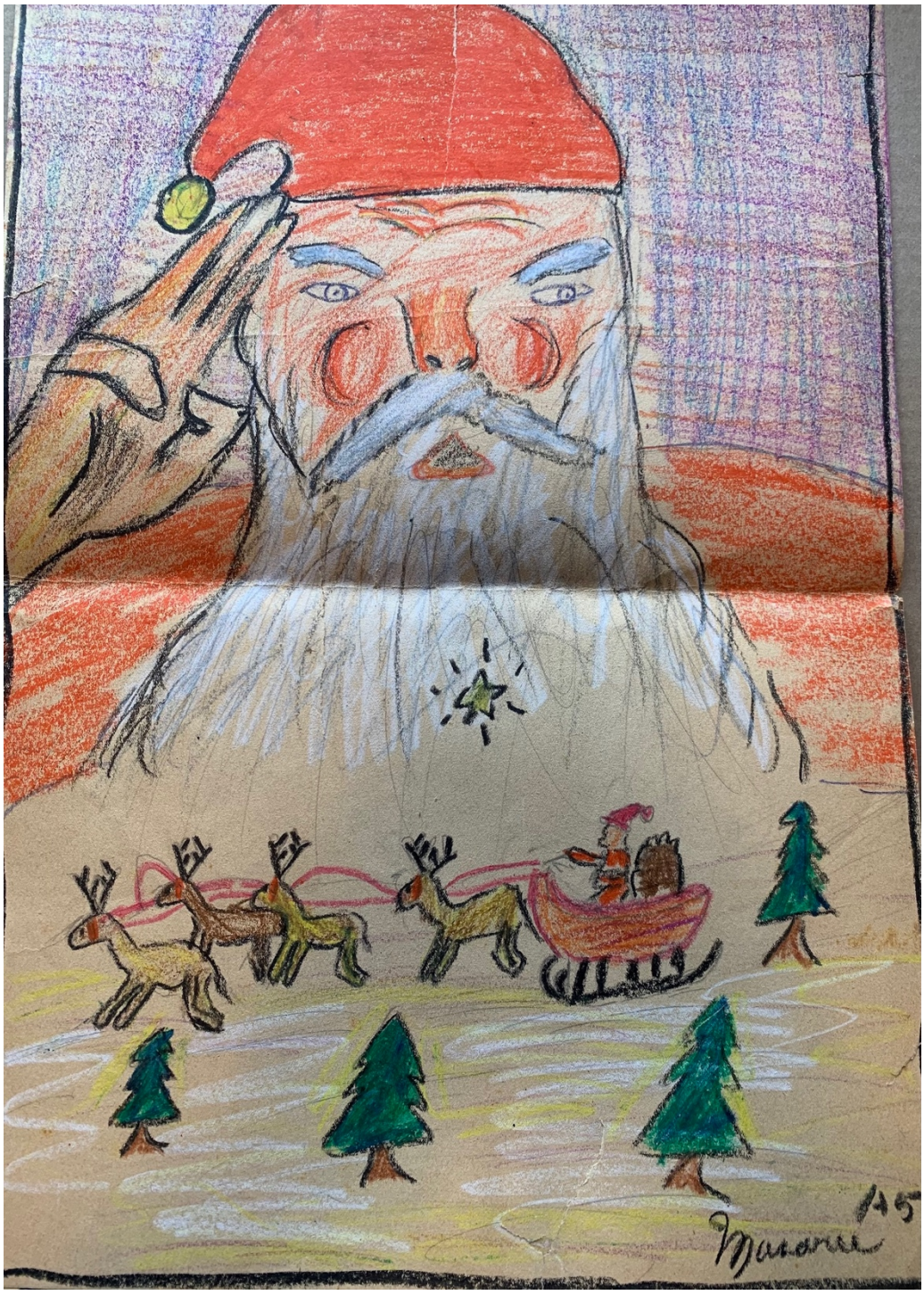
02-02:07:41
Matsumura: Oh no, thank you for letting me.

02-02:07:43
Eardley-Pryor: It's my pleasure. Thank you. I'm going to stop recording here.

02-02:07:48
Matsumura: Okay.

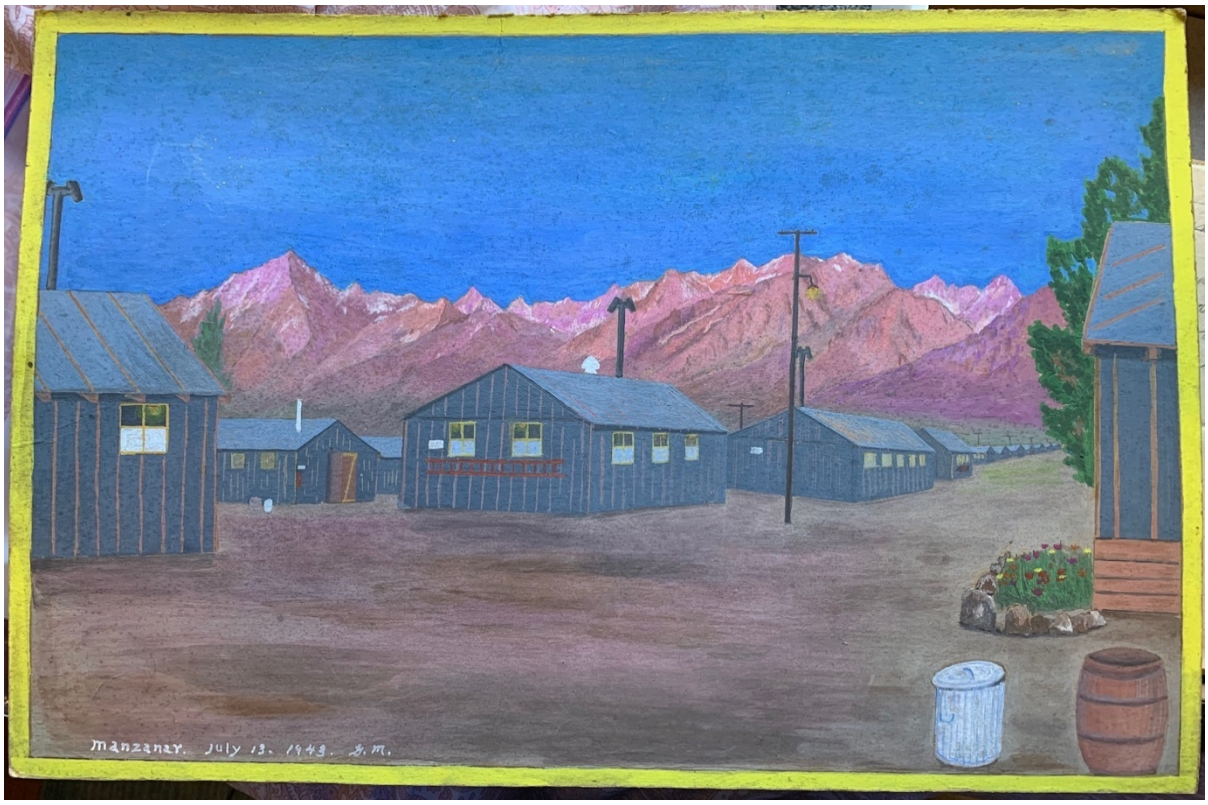
[End of Interview]

Appendix: Images courtesy of Lori Matsumura



Drawing of a possibly Asian-appearing Santa Claus by Masaru Matsumura,
the father of Lori Matsumura, from when he was a child in Santa Monica, California, circa 1935.

Final photograph of Giichi Matsumura, grandfather of Lori Matsumura, taken at Manzanar prison camp in California, where he likely worked in one of the mess halls, circa 1943.



Painting of Manzanar prison camp in California by Giichi Matsumura, grandfather of Lori Matsumura, painted while he was imprisoned there with his family, July 7, 1943.

Watercolor painting of Manzanar prison camp in California by Giichi Matsumura, grandfather of Lori Matsumura, painted shortly before his death in the Sierra Nevada mountains depicted in his painting, circa 1944.

Hard carved and painted wooden bird pins by Masaru Matsumura, the father of Lori Matsumura, made while he and his family were incarcerated at Manzanar prison camp shortly before his father's disappearance and death, circa 1944.

Lori Matsumura celebrating Girl's Day with her brother Wayne in the background at their paternal grandmother's house in Santa Monica, California, circa 1977.

Masaru Matsumura, father of Lori Matsumura, then 88 years old,
in Santa Monica, California, 2013.

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Joint News Release: Inyo County Sheriff and Manzanar National Historic Site

For Immediate Release

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REMAINS DISCOVERED NEAR MT. WILLIAMSON
DNA Results

INYO COUNTY, CA. January 3, 2020- On October 7, 2019, two hikers discovered human remains near the far side of the "Williamson Bowl", above the sixth lake on Mount Williamson. Several attempts were made to recover the remains; however winter weather hampered recovery operations until October 16 when the remains were transported to the Inyo County Coroner.

Identification has been determined by the Department of Justice through DNA to be Giichi Matsumura. The Manzanar National Historic Site was instrumental in piecing together Mr. Matsumura's story through detailed historical archived data.

On July 29, 1945, two and a half months before his family would be released from Manzanar War Relocation Center – a camp where the US government incarcerated over 11,000 Japanese Americans during World War II – forty-six year old Giichi Matsumura joined a group of fishermen setting out for the high mountain lakes of the nearby Sierra Nevada. Several days later, on August 2, Mr. Matsumura separated from the group of fisherman near the Williamson Bowl so he could paint and sketch, a hobby he had taken up at Manzanar. A storm suddenly moved into the area and after it subsided, the fishing group was unable to locate Mr. Matsumura. They hiked back down to the camp, hoping that he had already descended. Unfortunately, they found that he had not returned to Manzanar.

After his disappearance, friends and family organized search parties with the permission of the War Relocation Authority (WRA), but their efforts were unsuccessful. In a 2018 oral history, Mr. Matsumura's daughter Kazue, who was ten years old when her father disappeared, shared with National Park Service staff that her mother, Ito, "was really scared… I felt sorry for my mom, you know. She couldn't eat or anything… And her hair, it turned white when we couldn't find him. She had black hair and it turned white all of a sudden."

On September 3, 1945, Mary and Paul DeDecker from nearby Independence, CA, located Mr. Matsumura's body near Sixth Lake in the Williamson Bowl. On September 6, Manzanar's Project Director Ralph P. Merritt authorized a party of six to hike to the area in order to bury Mr. Matsumura. Ito Matsumura sent a sheet with the burial party to cover her husband's body. "They had to leave him there," Kazue said. "But you know, you couldn't bring him down from there because it's too high." After he was laid to rest in the Williamson Bowl, the Buddhist Church held a funeral for him at Manzanar.

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One month later, the Matsumura family left Manzanar to return to Santa Monica, where they had lived before the US Army forced them to leave their home in 1942. Now a single parent, Ito had to rely on other family members to share their house with her and her four children, Masaru, Tsutomu, Uwao, and Kazue. "She had to have…two or three jobs in order to feed us all and get us going," recalled Kazue. "She worked really hard. That's why I took care of my mom until she died… She sacrificed for us, so I sacrificed for her."

At the request of Ito, the family returned to Manzanar a few times after the war. During these visits, they lamented not being able to visit Giichi's grave. "That was very hard," Kazue remembered, "because it's so high and we can't get up there. And to this day, it seems like he's not passed away. It seems like he's gone someplace, because I didn't see his body."

According to Manzanar Superintendent Bernadette Johnson, the memories associated with Mr. Matsumura's death in the Sierra Nevada had been recounted for decades by many people who were involved in the search and burial. His burial location was even included in the Manzanar section of Cemeteries of the Eastern Sierra and in several NPS publications and exhibits. "We have always wanted to respect his family's privacy for the tragedy they endured near the end of their three year incarceration, being so close to leaving camp. After 74 years, we were quite shocked when we heard about a hiker finding his grave a few months ago, and we hope that his family will have some closure and peace now that a positive identification has been made by the Inyo County Sheriff's Office," she said.

Historical records and personal recollections indicate that early on, people occasionally snuck out of the camp to go fishing or pursue other activities. However, by the time Mr. Matsumura and the fishing party ventured out, the government's exclusion orders had been lifted and Japanese Americans were able to leave camp. The Matsumuras, like many families incarcerated during the war, had no home or business to return to and so they continued living in Manzanar until the government shut the camp down permanently on November 21, 1945. At Manzanar National Historic Site, the National Park Service preserves stories of the Japanese American incarceration, and cares for related historic and cultural resources. The public is reminded that these important historic resources are federally protected and should not be disturbed.

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Press Release by Inyo County Sheriff's Office and Manzanar National Historic Site about Giichi Matsumura, grandfather of Lori Matsumura, and the rediscovery of his remains, January 3, 2020.

Lori Matsumura (left) with her brothers Wayne (center) and Clyde (left)
visiting Manzanar prison camp in California in 2020.

Block 18 is where the US government imprisoned their paternal family,
including their father, Masaru Matsumura, and his siblings;
their grandparents, Giichi and Ito Matsumura;
and their great grandfather Katsuzo Matsumura.