



PACIFIC MOUNTAIN REGION

**Bob Stewart
Archives**

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

Interview with former members of the English-speaking Congregation, Vancouver Japanese United Church

August 20, 2019

Oral History Recording Summary

Interviewee: Vancouver Japanese United Church

Interviewed by: Kimiko Karpoff

Date of Interview: August 20, 2019

Date of Transcription: January 11, 2020

Transcribed by: Victoria McAuley

Auditor of Transcription: Blair Galston

| Time Log (minutes) | Description of Content | Time Log (minutes) | Description of Content |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| 00:01 | Beginning of Interview. Introduction, permission. Information about disbanding and merging with Japanese-speaking congregation. | 22:48 | Joan Fairs (JF) family history with the United Church, including Lemon Creek, Helen Hurd, the Imai family. |
| 02:30 | Jean Kamimura (JK) pre-war church memories | 26:09 | Cherry Blossom Bazaars |
| 05:50 | Sumi Yoshida (SY) early church experiences | 29:28 | Becky Maruno (BM) history with the United Church (including baby band, vacation bible school, and Sunday School) |
| 07:24 | Nisei Fellowship beginnings and Rev. Bartling | 37:19 | Christmas dinners |
| 10:00 | Nisei Fellowship, Gordon Imai, and finding a church space | 40:50 | History of the church building (Current building; use of former building during internment) |
| 16:00 | Relationship between the Nisei and Japanese-speaking congregations | 43:02 | Economic challenges of early postwar congregants, connection to Rev. Shimizu |
| 18:05 | Dorothy Yamamoto (DY) experience at Greenwood, including Grace Namba and Madeleine Bock | 48:43 | The Nisei Fellowship |
| | | 51:08 | Mrs. Tagashira scholarship |
| | | 51:34 | End |

| | Time |
|---|---------------------------|
| <p>KK: It's August the 20th, 2019, and we're at the Vancouver Japanese United Church on Victoria Drive. This is the English-speaking congregants from the Nisei congregation, who are gathered to do some storytelling. And I'm here with:</p> <p>JF: Joan Fairs</p> <p>BM: Becky Maruno</p> <p>SY: Sumi Yoshida</p> <p>DY: Dorothy Yamamoto</p> <p>JK: Jean Kamimura</p> <p>DI: [Rev.] Daebin Im</p> <p>KK: Thank you very much. So, you were just talking about the Nisei congregation. Can you repeat what you were just saying about... You were meeting here until...?</p> <p>BM: The English-speaking congregation was meeting here every Sunday until the end of November, 2017. And we disbanded at that time because our minister then, Judith Stark, had turned 70, and as a requirement of United Church policies, she had to retire and our congregation was getting smaller and fewer people were attending, we thought that was a good time.¹ And since that time, the Japanese-speaking congregation had invited our former members to join them, but because their services were not bilingual, our members were not attending every Sunday. But certainly at special times of the year—Christmas, Easter, memorial services, Keiro-kai—our members came back.</p> <p>And then when Rev. Im was appointed, he kindly is preparing English-speaking services once a month so some former congregants are attending once a month. As far as I know, most people did not go to other churches. One person did, but most are not attending regularly. And we've also had a few funeral and memorial services—not many, just a handful—since we disbanded.</p> <p>KK: Thank you for repeating that. So, I wonder if there is anyone here who carries memories from the old church. Pre-war. [Pause] Just one. Just Jean. Did you have any stories that you wanted to say? You must have been pretty young then.</p> <p>All: [Laughter]</p> | <p>00:01</p> <p>02:30</p> |

¹ More accurately, Judith Stark had turned 70, and as a requirement of United Church policies, her status would technically change to that of Retired Clergy.

- JK: Give my age away!
- All: [Laughter]
- KK: You don't have to give an exact age, but you would have been a preschooler?
- JK: No, I was in grade two. Because it was the uprooting time and we had to move before my father was sent to road camp. So we had to find a place of our own. We found a rooming house on Powell Street. This is why I went to the United Church under Rev. Shimizu because my father knew Rev. Shimizu from 1919.² And he had a connection with him.
- KK: Ah.
- JK: He felt safe leaving us in Vancouver. So I went to Sunday School from April to end of August.
- KK: At the old church. And do you have memories of who were the Sunday school teachers then or anything?
- JK: None whatsoever. All I remember... It was such an upsetting time because my baby brother got sick and so I became head of the household. At the corner of... well, around there, my closest girlfriend was Anglican, so we used to part ways because the Anglican church was on Cordova Street.
- KK: Oh.
- JK: So, you know, my mind [was] all over at the time, so I don't even remember the teacher, I don't remember my schoolmate or church mates or anything. I have much more memory prior to that when I first started going to a Christian church in 1940. That was under your grandfather, [Rev. Jun Kabayama].
- KK: So you started going to a Christian church in 1940?
- JK: Yes.
- KK: Oh, okay.
- JK: But my dad was a Methodist before that.
- KK: Ah.
- JK: So. It was easy for me to convert from what I was exposed to under my grandmother to Christianity. It was a lot easier for me.
- KK: It was pretty similar.

² Jean Kamimura later corrected the date; her father had known Rev. Shimizu since 1921.

| | Time |
|--|-------|
| JK: Mm-hmm. | |
| KK: Okay. And so, did your family then move back to Vancouver? | |
| JK: No. | |
| KK: No. Okay. So what other folks... When did you first connect to what this congregation is now, then? | 05:50 |
| SY: I started before it was formed. So I was baptized by Mr. Mitsui. Tad Mitsui. | |
| KK: So it was a group within... | |
| SY: Yeah. So, that's from the original start I guess. I had to transfer of course. It was under Japanese United Church with Mr. Mitsui, so I had to transfer when this congregation started. Yeah. | |
| KK: Okay, and when about was that? | |
| SY: About '50s, early '50s. | |
| KK: And so you were baptized... | |
| SY: Yeah. | |
| KK: How old would you have been then? | |
| SY: Early 20s. | |
| KK: Okay, so you were baptized as a young woman? | |
| SY: Yeah, I think. | |
| KK: Ah, okay. | |
| SY: My... | |
| KK: It's good to clarify that because in the United Church we do baptize infants. | |
| SY: And I'm from a Buddhist family but I had an uncle who was... I admired him, I liked his way, you know—he was a friend of your dad's. | |
| KK: And he introduced you to the Christian church. | |
| SY: Sort of, yes. | |
| KK: And so what do you remember about what was going on at the church then, when you first started? | |
| SY: We started out by calling ourselves Nisei—what was it? I forget now. | 07:24 |
| Many voices: Fellowship. | |

- BM: Nisei Fellowship.
- KK: Nisei Fellowship.
- SY: Oh, Fellowship. There, that's the word. It went on like that for a while didn't it? And then...
- KK: So it was a group within the larger congregation?
- JK: No it was... Sorry, Sumi.
- SY: We weren't really connected, eh?
- JK: Yes.
- SY: We were sort of free and easy.
- JK: Sumi was away when we all came back to Vancouver in the 1950s.
- KK: Yeah.
- JK: Um, my first steady church attendance was through "Bartie." Rev. Bartie.³
- SY: Bartie. Miss Bartie.
- JK: She was of German extraction and she worked with the Nisei in Alberta. And she knew what discrimination's all about because she was considered German.
- KK: Yes.
- JK: So she really helped Niseis in Alberta.
- SY: She understood us.
- JK: She continued here when she came out to the coast. She did a lot of work in Steveston centre but for us young people who had no family here, we used to meet at her mother's house in Dunbar and that's how we started the youth group.
- KK: So the youth group started meeting at someone's house on Dunbar.
- JK: Yes.
- KK: And so the Nisei Fellowship was a youth group?
- JK: Well, out of that, Rev. McWilliams, who worked with the Japanese in an internment camp, invited us to start Sunday service at First United.
- KK: Okay.

³ "Bartie" was the name that members of the Nisei Fellowship affectionately called Rev. Hedwig Bartling.
Interview with VJUC English-speaking congregation, Aug. 20, 2019

JK: So, a lot of us used to meet at Bartie's house, but she used to cram us all into her Volkswagen...

All: [Laughter]

JK: And drive us to First United to... and if you ever saw her drive, I don't know why we ever got in her car!

All: [Laughter]

JK: She'd talk like this, then she'd be driving, you know?

All: [Laughter]

KK: When you say Volkswagen, like a Volkswagen bug?

JK: Yeah!

All: [Laughter]

JF: Kind of like those clowns coming out.

All: [Laughter]

JK: So, that was our first contact with... back to the United Church. From First United, we went to Columbia Street United.

10:00

And in between, it was at First United that we started forming the Nisei group, and in appreciation for letting us use the congregation at church, we used to pay them back by going to Camp Fircom. And we used to clean the cabins for use for the young people to have camp service at Fircom.

KK: Ohhh...

SY: And Gordon Imai started us too.

JK: So Gordon Imai was going to university here and got us going.

SY: We used to gather on Cardero Street, I remember.

JK: A lot of us didn't have family here. You know, the families were still either close by or in the internment camps. So we came out here to go to school to further [our] education. We had to work for our room and board. So Sunday was the only time we all had a common day off. That's how the Nisei Fellowship group started.

KK: Hmm. So when you came, Sumi, it was at the time where the Nisei Fellowship was meeting.

SY: Yes, and as I say, Gordon Imai sort of got us together too, as a church, to begin.

All: [Sounds of agreement.]

KK: And so what kinds of things did you do? You went to service at First United. What other kinds of activities did that group do?

SY: Volleyball at St. Andrew's[-Wesley].

All: [Laughter]

SY: I remember that.

KK: How many people were involved in those days?

JK: Huge!

All: [Laughter]

KK: It was huge?

SY: It was huge.

SY: Oh the Fellowship became large, but at the beginning it was just, I don't know, half a dozen or ten people.

KK: And so, how did that beginning of the Fellowship become what became the Nisei congregation of the church?

12:07

JK: Well, see, we didn't have any money at the time, you know. Not working, etc. So, we could not hire a full-time minister. We all had student ministers. Some of them eventually did become our permanent minister. But as we grew bigger, in between we all got married and had young families, so we kind of scattered. Nisei Fellowship sort of waned itself out and when Gordon came back from Japan, he connected with Steveston United Church, and then he split his time with the Nisei congregation. So, we were able to get our agreement with Renfrew United on First Avenue.

KK: With Renfrew? Okay.

JK: At that time, the Japanese congregation was under Rev. Murata. And they had the regular church. We had the basement. [Laughs]. I hate to say this, but he used to drown us out. And Gordon had a soft voice, you know, and he used to get so irritated because you could see it was done on purpose. And so he decided: "We've got to get out of here," and that's when he started talking to us that perhaps we should get our own place. Because he had just worked with his congregation in Steveston and preached at the church, so he felt that we could do it too. So, it was a lot of hard work on Gordon's part and he got us here [to this point]. So, we all donated money to buy this church.

- KK: From what I'm understanding, then, it was the Nisei congregation that was instrumental actually in the finding of and purchasing of the building that we're in now. In particular.
- JK: And when we were successfully having a congregation here, the Issei decided they wanted to share this church.
- SY: I have to say that, you know, my memory is not that great also, but I'm old now [laughs]. I spent 21 years in Toronto so I didn't want to come and say much. Margaret Eto was very instrumental in getting this started, I think. One of the people, I think, from what I hear with Rev. [unclear]. I wasn't here so I don't want to say too much. I know the very beginning, but I don't know the important middle part.
- KK: So you were here when it was first just the Nisei group.
- SY: Yes, first [started.]
- KK: The Fellowship? And then you left.
- SY: Yeah. 1963 or 4 or something.
- KK: Okay.
- SY:: Didn't come back until '84.
- KK: Came back in '84. Okay. I wonder, what... This is just an interest on my part, I guess: The value of gathering as the Nisei congregation—was it simply around the English language? Or was there something else that differentiated you, or created a bond with the Nisei vs. the Japanese-speaking congregation?
- SY: Yeah, I don't know if we should say too much maybe, but after we came back, there still was sort of discrimination I think
- JK: Yes, we shouldn't say too much.
- SY: You know, it was more comfortable to be with others.
- KK: It was comfortable to be with other people who...
- SY: Other Japanese. Nisei people.
- KK: Nisei people.
- SY: Yeah, for me, anyway.
- KK: Right. I mean, I think that people understand when people gather in a cultural group. There's sort of an understanding that there's a comfort level, that there's shared language, and maybe even other things...
- All: [Sounds of agreement]

16:00

KK: But in this case, particularly in that historical moment, if there were different experiences maybe for people who formed the Nisei congregation vs. the people who remained in the Issei congregation.

SY: Mostly language I guess, but...

JK: Well, there were a lot of differences in opinion too.

All: [Sounds of agreement]

KK: Language and opinion, right? Okay.

BM: Dorothy, when did you start getting involved?

18:05

DY: Well, my story goes way back [to] Greenwood. And that was Grace Namba. When we were interned in [Greenwood], the interior, that's where the United Church helped us get into the public schools. Because we weren't allowed in the public schools, and the people from the United Church got us in. And so my family went to the United Church there.

And then, of course, when we were able to get back to the coast, we didn't have a church in Ucluelet where we moved to. And then when I came back here, my sister was working at First United Church as a secretary there, and so she got married there at the First United Church. And then we were right near Renfrew United Church so my brother got married there, I got married there, but it wasn't under the Japanese United Church, it was the minister that was there, Rev. Richmond.

And then, once my children came, that's when I started with the... Grace Namba took us in for baby band. And that was in about 1974. We started in the upstairs room and we had a preschool group.

KK: Hm.

DY: And then we started going to church and Sunday school and my children ended up being Sunday school teachers as well. So they went a long way to church from the time they were age three or four. Sheila was only a year-and-a-half; I remember bringing the playpen and she would be sitting in the playpen while the others were participating. And then we got involved with the bazaars and what have you. So, church life was quite important for my family. And my husband was Anglican, but he came to this church too.

KK: Hm.

DY: Because the children were baptized here by Rev. Imai, I think. But I can't remember the dates when they were baptized, they were just about seven—1977 or something like that. Somewhere around there. Yeah.

And so we go a long ways with the United Church just because they helped us when we were in need. My family believes in keeping up with the people who supported us when we needed it. It's the same with my father, he went back fishing to Ucluelet. And of course, he had nothing because we lost everything to go to the interior. So, the B.C. Packers invested in a boat for him to start fishing. So he sold his fish to B.C. Packers all the time because he appreciated the fact that they helped when he started. That's [why] I and a lot of my family have come to this church, and they've been married (the children). Pamela and my sister's kids were married here too.

I remember Miss Bock, too. I don't know, [do] you remember Miss Bock?

JK: Yes.

DY: Yeah, she was one of the Sunday school teachers in [Greenwood].

JK: Miss Ryan... You don't remember Esther Ryan?

KK: Miss Bock?

DY: Bock.

KK: Do you know her first name?

DY: Madeleine Bock.

KK: Madeleine Bock. So she was a Sunday school teacher in Greenwood...

DY: Well, she was a missionary...

KK: And here?

DY: Greenwood, anyway. I knew her in Greenwood.

KK: Oh, okay.

KK: Not here.

DY: No.

KK: Oh, okay.

DY: But Miss Namba came back here from the east and she... and that's when we started back.

KK: And you attended this congregation until it...

DY: It folded, yeah.

KK: Disbanded.

DY: Yeah.

- KK: Wow.
- JK: I might add a footnote on it. Greenwood was one of the internment camps that was either United or Catholic.
- DY: Yeah.
- KK: Oh, okay.
- JF: Can I give my little bit history from before I came to Vancouver? 22:48
- KK: Sure, yes please!
- JF: So, my family was quite well-known in Vancouver before the war: the Uno family. And they had a corner store in Fairview and one of my uncles [was] actually murdered in a home back there, and another uncle was an Asahi player. And there have been big newspaper stories and there's someone writing a book of the family from that time.
- But anyway, I was born in Montreal because, after the war when they couldn't come back to the coast, [the family] went to Montreal and my parents met there. So, I guess during internment, my mother got involved with the United Church. Miss Helen Hurd was one of the missionaries and I think she had a real close bond because she has a couple of watercolour paintings from there that say "Dear Yaeko," and you know, "Best Wishes from Helen Hurd".
- So in Montreal, I went to the Japanese/English United Church with the Japanese people. I went all through Sunday school, got all these perfect attendance pins and...
- All: [Laughter]
- DY: I remember those.
- JF: And I knew Imai there, and when we came here and the Imais were here too... of course we almost felt like family and (...what else was I going to say?) So, I continued here from 1969 and then was a Sunday school teacher in the, I guess, early '70s? And I was married here by Rev. Imai in 1977. So first I was saying, "Oh I don't have that much history," and then I'm going, "I guess I do have 50 years here!"
- All: [Laughter]
- JF: So, yeah, and I'm still here.
- All: [Laughter]
- JF: Still making manju and helping reading the [scripture] passages once a month at the service. So... that's it in a nutshell.

KK: Wow. Joan, where did your family... You lived in Vancouver and then where were you during the war?

JF: I'm a baby boomer.

KK: Where was your family?

JF: During the war? In Lemon Creek and New Denver.

KK: Lemon Creek and New Denver. And you were born after the war.

JF: Yeah.

KK: Right, right. Wow. Making manju. What do you do with all this manju that you make?

JF: We're having a bazaar at the end of September.

26:09

KK: Ah. So the bazaar is actually a memory that I have of this congregation. It was a big piece of what happened here. Yes?

JF: Still is.

DY: Biggest fundraiser.

JF: Yeah.

KK: So tell me about the advent of the bazaar.

BM: I can't remember when it started. But in its heyday, I mean, you know, we'd have hundreds of people who came through. But it was a really big endeavor. Some people... I remember Keiko Goto who was an instrumental part of our church from—what?—I would think the '60s to when she passed away in the '90s. She was a nurse at Vancouver General Hospital, but she was on all kinds of... She was a board member, Sunday school teacher; she did everything here. But she would actually take a week of her holidays—the week preceding the bazaar—to come. And at that time they were making the udon noodles by hand, and homemade, so she would be doing that, helping with the manju... We had all kinds of things. Chizu Uchida, who unfortunately passed away a few years ago, she and a group of a few people—it was called the Spring Sakura Bazaar...?

DY: Cherry blossom...

BM: Cherry Blossom Bazaar! They would cut out little pieces of paper, dye it pink...

JK: Dye it...

BM: And they would get old branches and they would replicate the cherry blossoms and sell them as a fundraiser and they were so popular. But it

was very painstaking work. Can you imagine trying to make these little cherry blossom petals? Yeah! But it was a big, big deal back then. And we'd have silent auctions, a White Elephant, the thrift sales, and...

JK: Our udon became very, very popular, thanks to Becky's mother, and...

BM: ...and father.

JK: And the men-folk, they would pound the dough in a garbage bag. And they would stomp on it.

BM: Oh I remember that.

JK: Remember that?

KK: To make the udon.

Many: Yeah.

JK: It's too much of a big batch, you know, so...

KK: To knead by hand, yeah.

JK: Yeah, so the men-folk... [demonstrates stomping]

BM: The men take it out and they put it through the pasta machines to cut it. And then they'd boil it. And then they would bag them. And so the next day, the day of the Bazaar, they were all stacked up just ready to be rewarmed.

SY: Her mother was one of the mainstays, boiling our chicken every year. Making our soup or the foundation for the udon.

All: [Sounds of agreement]

SY: Her mother used to be here every Sunday for over—every day we can say...

BM: "Frances will be here."

SY: "Frances will be here."

BM: The social coordinator.

SY: [We] depended on her.

BM: My parents were married by Rev. McWilliams in, I think, 1952, and I was born in 1953, so my mum—neither of them were involved in the church before then at all. My dad was in Alberta during the war so he wasn't interned anywhere, but my mum and her mother and my aunt were in Rosebery and Tashme. And my grandpa was sent to Angler in Ontario.

My earliest memory of the church was, I think, at Columbia or Fraserview and the only memories I have were not of Sunday school, but

29:28

a Christmas party, because my dad played Santa. He was Santa Claus, and I can still remember the boy's name, and my dad said to him, "Oh, what do you want for Christmas?" And he said, "A BB gun!" And all my sisters and I—and we were only, I'm sure, seven and eight, that early elementary school age—we kept saying, "Well, that was funny!" And we'd talk about it, so I remember it. That's the only memory I have is of that Christmas party, my dad being Santa Claus.

All: [Laughter]

SY: Important!

BM: My family has different connections with the United Church in that our family home was two blocks away from this St. Luke's church. This used to be St. Luke's church. So I grew up on Victoria Drive, as did my siblings. And we started Sunday school here at St. Luke's, so I would have been, let's see, probably elementary... Oh no, no, I went to kindergarten at Brewer's Park across the street when I was four, so we must have bought that house in about 1955 or so. I started Sunday school here, my siblings and I went through Cubs and Scouts and Explorers, C.G.I.T.... and we all did that here and we came to Sunday services here.

And... can't really remember my dad so much coming to church on Sundays but my mum would bring us. I don't know why I can't remember if my dad came or not, but then later on, my dad was a core member of the Japanese-speaking United Church. He was 15 years older than my mum but he still spoke [English]. He was born in Canada. He was born in Steveston actually, so for both him and my mum who was born near Prince Rupert, English was actually their first language. So my dad was involved with the Japanese United Church and my mum was involved with the English-speaking church.

And I can remember going to, let me see, first of all in the '60s, I remember Miss Namba did have Baby Band because she would come—and there was five of us in our family—she would pick us up, my mum, and other people in her car. And I remember telling this story at her funeral service here, how there'd be like 10 people in the car. And we'd be sitting on top of each other in the back so there'd be maybe four sitting and then four more sitting on top and three or four... You didn't have seatbelts back then or anything, but all of a sudden—and this reminds me of Jean's story—we would all just pile out of this car, like, yeah! It was crazy.

JK: She would talk and drive at the same time.

All: [Sounds of agreement and laughter]

| | Time |
|---|-------|
| SY: Bartie's car. | |
| BM: Yeah. I can't really remember where the baby... No, I think I was old... I didn't go to baby band; my younger sisters and brothers went, but I remember us piling in to go to church (Sunday school) and also Vacation Bible School. | 33:48 |
| My mum taught Vacation Bible School. I remember Mary Seki teaching. Probably, I don't know who else, because it would have been during the weekday and it was held for two weeks at Renfrew United Church. So I can remember some Japanese kids coming who really weren't a part of the Sunday school regulars but it was vacation and their families wanted the kids doing something. So it was actually quite large, but I can remember the crafts that we made at Vacation Bible School. And then we would run to a park; there's a park right there—can't remember the name of it—but it's two blocks down the street from Renfrew United Church. And we'd play there, then come back for more activities, so I remember that. | |
| I remember going to Renfrew United Church with my dad because that's when the Japanese-speaking members met and Rev. Mitsui was a minister there. And I remember Rev. Mitsui taking a group of us—we were teenagers, pre-teens—to Camp Fircom a couple of years in a row and that was a real highlight. | |
| And I also remember the English-speaking people meeting at Renfrew United Church and Miss Namba asking me—I would have been in grade 10 or so—to play the piano for them. Because there wasn't an organ; we were downstairs and the organ was upstairs. So the Japanese-speaking [congregation] was upstairs, we were downstairs, [and] I played the piano for the Sunday school kids on that. I can remember that. And let's see, I think it was 1969 when Tak Komiyama was called by the English speaking [congregation] to be the minister. And he and his family lived just down the street on 27 th and his oldest daughter was the same age as I was. We went to Gladstone High School together, but unfortunately Mr. Komiyama had a sudden heart attack just after he came and [he] passed away. So, I think it was around '69 or '70. And then, I'm trying to think if... | |
| JK: That's when Gordon came. | |
| BM: When Gordon came, because I think this church was bought in '71, I'm... | |
| JK: About '72. | |

- BM: Yeah, so I'm not really sure about the date. Around then. And then the two congregations both started meeting here. But my dad went to the Japanese-[speaking congregation] and my mum went to the...
- All: [Chatter]
- BM: They had separate ministers; they had separate boards. So only during the joint services did they get together.
- KK: Becky, what is your family name?
- BM: Miyashita.
- KK: Miyashita.
- BM: Yes.
- JF: Can I say something else about Christmas?
- KK: Yes.
- JF: You remember the Christmas dinners we used to have?
- All: [Sounds of agreement and excitement]
- JF: It was a big job.
- SY: Every year.
- JF: But it was so nice! And then, again, other people who didn't usually come to church did come for the dinners.
- BM: Oh, that was a big, big deal, the Christmas dinners.
- KK: So Joan, say something just as context for those dinners. Was it on Christmas Day, or was it a...?
- BM: No, never.
- JF: Maybe a week or so before.
- BM: Oh, at least.
- DY: Early December I think, usually.
- BM: And, I mean, it's not like it's a sellout—oh, I shouldn't use the word “sellout”, but we put in as many chairs as we were able to. We could've filled up more people in the hall...
- SY: Over 100 usually.
- BM: Yeah, but we were only limited by the chairs we had and also I guess the fire regulations, about 100. But there would be people who would volunteer to make the turkeys. You'd need at least five or six turkeys. I can remember that Chizu Uchida always made a turkey and Lillian

37:19

Kadota made a turkey, and I don't know who the... Others did, and then other people would volunteer to come to make the potatoes and gravy here and that. Others would volunteer to do decorations, set the tables, you know, for 100.

And then we had games, we had entertainment; I can remember those skits. Margaret Eto was very good. She wrote some skits that were so funny with her and people like Tosh Seki and Sumi in them and, oh yeah, yeah! That was another highlight.

Then we did have more social things. I think in the '90s, we had games night. Remember games night? Where we would have card games set up or the kids would have, I don't know, some things. Right?

JF: I didn't come so I...

BM: Oh, you didn't come! Oh, I thought maybe your [family] would come, but we did have Whist, and...

JK: Whist night.

BM: And then my mum, I think a lot of people would remember... My mum's 96 and she is still alive.

All: [Laughter and indistinct chatter]

BM: You all saw her on Saturday at McDonalds, but she [used to organize] a bus trip in May...

SY: Oh yeah!

BM: Early May, and it was really, really popular. Mostly women, but a few men would go along.

SY: Every year.

BM: Every May, she would contact the bus company, Maverick Tours, and they would have a one-day trek somewhere. So it might be to Harrison Hot Springs, or a few were across the border, to, I don't know, Skagit Valley or...

All: [Sounds of agreement]

JF: One time we went to visit the Imais, because they were just over the border.

BM: And then she'd arranged so that they would go somewhere for lunch at some restaurant so people would meet here—I don't know what time, I never went—but seven or eight in the morning? Hop on the bus, get back here at what time? Six at night or something. And people were

| | Time |
|---|-------|
| always encouraging her to do that. So she did it for many years; I don't know [how many]. | |
| All: [Sounds of agreement] | |
| BM: Yeah, the bus trip in May. That was very popular, too. | |
| DI: I went to the Powell Street Festival this month and then, I thought that that building and <i>that</i> building were the same, but [they're] different... | 40:50 |
| BM: Yes. | |
| DI: And so, I [asked], "When did you build this building"? And they said, "Forty years ago." | |
| BM: Yeah. | |
| DI: So they re-built/replaced that church building. And I was looking for the panel [display] and I found that they put pictures [of the] church buildings, and they have an explanation about that. | |
| BM: Oh. | |
| DI: So, I took a picture from the panel display at the church—at the Buddhist temple | |
| All: [Sounds of acknowledgement] | |
| DI: And then, [was] it last December 8 th that the United Church gave the compensation to this church? And then George... | |
| KK: Takashima? | |
| DI: Yeah! He made a speech with his certificate of the kindergarten. | |
| All: [Sounds of acknowledgement] | |
| DI: And it's [a very interesting] story. We posted that story on the church Facebook. He went to that church building and then he went to the preschool or kindergarten, and without the certificate, he couldn't go to public school. He has the only certificate [from] that time and he showed all the people. [Speaking to JK:] We're talking about the previous church. Do you have a memory, or do you know that story? | |
| JK: I don't have too much memory of that. I know what it looked like after we got back. | 43:02 |
| DI: Oh. | |
| JK: It was more like a storage. | |
| DI: Had you been to the church before the camp? | |
| JK: Yes. | |

- DI: You were there?
- JK: I went to Sunday school there.
- DI: At that church?
- JK: Yes.
- DI: Oh!
- JK: So after we got back, it was under the ownership of First United. It was more like a storage there. It wasn't used as a church.
- DI: It wasn't used as a church.
- JK: No. A lot of the parishioners [had] thought the church was safe, so they [had] stored a lot of things up in the attic. But, after [they] got the church functioning again, young people—we weren't quite in a group yet, so there were a lot of kids who were of the Buddhist background—we were just happy to be see each other. Because, you know, we didn't have anybody here. So a group of us all met at First United and we would have social hour there. After we were at First United, we'd have social hours.
- DI: Is it closed? Did the First United Church close that church building?
- JK: Apparently, the First United purchased...
- DI: No but I mean, First United Church itself...
- DY: Yeah, it's within two blocks...
- KK: Yeah, it's walking distance.
- JK: Because First United is right on Hastings and Gore. Just a short two blocks down.
- DI: Oh, very close.
- KK: So Jean, what happened to the goods that people had stored in that building?
- JK: We don't know.
- KK: Okay.
- JK: It was left in really bad shape when we came back in the '50s.
- KK: So people had stored their goods there.
- JK: A lot of them did.
- KK: But the goods were maybe not there when they returned.

45:22

JK: I don't think... Because you know, the pews and everything, we couldn't see it when we got back. Maybe that section was closed off or something. You know, we had badminton clubs and things like that. It wasn't a proper place; it was really run down.

KK: Right, so you could still gather for some...

JK: Yes, we could gather for social things.

KK: Social things. But not for worship.

JK: Because we went to First United. So, before Renfrew, a lot of people got married at First United. Then we'd go to Chinatown for the reception. W.K. Gardens and Bamboo Terrace. Whereas when we were really, really poor, we couldn't even afford transit at 15 cents a ride. We used to go to Japantown... 46:12

KK: You'd go to where?

JK: Powell Street. The Chinese had taken over and [there used to be a] restaurant there, and we would get ramen for 35 cents a bowl.

All: [Laughter]

DY: 35 cents.

DI: Ramen.

JK: A lot of us didn't have any money and parents to support us. So you couldn't even afford the 15 cent transit, so we used to walk, you know. Just so that we can all get together. 35 cents of ramen was all we could afford.

All: [Laughter]

JK: So you know, it bonded us; a lot of us made good friends. So you tell your kids that, they're going to laugh.

All: [Laughter]

JK: I think that I used to tell my dad... because he loved baseball so much that, from Point Grey, he would walk to Powell grounds to play ball because he couldn't afford transit. And he used to use the railway trestle to take a shortcut, you know, that trestle that's still there. And I said to Dad, "My gosh, that's wear and tear on your shoes. Isn't it more expensive to buy shoes?" That rationale, I don't think, came into the picture at that time. So, yeah, my relationship goes way back to my father.

There's quite an interesting record kept at Union College on Dr. Rev. Shimizu.

KK: So, is that your father?

JK: No, no.

KK: No.

JK: He was a minister at 1942...

KK: Rev. Shimizu?

JK: Yeah, 1927-1942.

KK: So even now, it sounds like the connection that started way—how many years ago with the Nisei Fellowship? 48:43

SY: Early '50s.

BM: The '50s.

KK: In the '50s.

SY: Yeah.

JK: '53, '5...

SY: Almost 70 years?

KK: 53? So 70 years...

SY: Almost 70 years.

KK: Years ago is still important in people's lives.

JK: Yeah, I think a lot of us learned—what would you say?—quiet dedication. We did a lot of things without other people knowing. One of the earlier ones that we did as a Fellowship was we used to take food and we would go to Essondale mental hospital in New Westminster and spend a day there because there were quite a few Japanese Canadian patients there. And there was one girl in particular that Keiko Goto took a special interest in because she was a nurse. And it continued. And this was one of the things that we worked with some of the long-time Issei group. (I'm not talking about the new immigrants but old timers.) And that was Mrs. Inyoue, Mrs. Tagashira. And we would take Japanese food to Essondale.

All: [Sounds of acknowledgement]

JK: We did those things silently. We never asked for publicity. Just your own feeling of giving. And so a lot of us continue doing volunteer work. So, I think I see Frances more often at the hospital than...

BM: At Holy Family? Because you volunteer there.

JK: I volunteer there.

| | Time |
|---|-------|
| DI: At the hospital. | |
| JK: The hospital where Frances is. Try to catch her when she's having lunch. But, yes, it's one of those good deeds that... | |
| DY: Mrs. Tagashira had a scholarship. | 51:08 |
| JK: Yes, she established the Mrs. Tagashira scholarship. | |
| DY: My daughter received one. | |
| JK: She was really, really committed to the United Church because she was widowed very young; two children, and the church helped her immensely and she was forever paying her gratitude. | |
| [End] | 51:33 |