

Urata5/08/10

Ms. Massuye Urata (1925-) was interviewed on May 8th, 2010, in her Seattle apartment by Ron Inouye and Tohru Saito of Fairbanks. A prominent Wrangell, Alaska, family, the Uratas have been in Alaska for three generations. As the widow of Bob Urata, Ms. Urata relocated to Seattle while her sons Robert and Gilbert continue to live in Juneau and Cordova respectively, and her daughters have relocated outside Alaska. The children are illustrative of how valued education has been in the Urata household.

The purpose of the interview was to document the presence of Japanese national businesses in Alaska. Little documentation currently exists about such corporate presence in Alaska resource use in timber, fisheries, minerals, etc. Because Ms. Urata worked with the *Wrangell Lumber Company* subsequently *Alaska Lumber and Pulp Company*, she has insight not otherwise available about the Japanese companies in Southeast Alaska.

In addition to family and Japanese-American history, this interview provides insight to the relationship of Seattle to Alaska in commerce and social relations, and the historic and continuing isolation of ethnic Alaskans within the territory and state.

Of particularly significance are her early Seattle experiences as the daughter of immigrants strongly tied culturally and socially to Japan prior to and during the unfolding of World War II. Her description of the Hiroshima bombing and immediate aftermath is singular and uniquely descriptive.

This modest woman provides an account of a life lived very fully and with phenomenally diversity.

Ronald K. Inouye

U: Ms. Massuye Urata

RI: Ron Inouye

TS: Tohru Saito

Preliminary chit-chat...

RI: Today is May 8th, 2010. We're in Seattle doing a little interview with Mrs. Urata.

I want to thank you for allowing us to come. Tohru Saito is here as well.

U: You're welcome.

RI: We wanted to learn about your personal history and information about some of the businesses in Alaska since you were there in Wrangell for a number of years.

I know, talking to Tohru, when he was in Sitka several years, there's a lot of - well there had been a Japanese presence for quite a while, but when you start looking into the records, trying to see where they were and what they were doing, it's pretty thin. And what I am hoping to accomplish through this interview is to just get a bit more background about the Japanese investors and what businesses they ran.

Now I do hope too that this will become a public record so that once we're done, I will make copies and get them back to you. And then I would like, if you would agree, to have this put into the University archives in Fairbanks so that other people can access this information. Because I don't think there are many who know this kind of information. The Japanese investments have declined in fisheries as well as in timber...

U: I just only know a little bit.

RI: So I wonder if we first get started by telling me a little bit about yourself and your family? Who are they?

U: I am the second daughter of and Ichimatsu and Tsuneko Kihara.

RI: And when were you born?

U: In 1925.

RI: And you were born where?

U: Here, in Seattle.

We had a house until maybe 2 years ago, at 1451 Main Street. We had a big house on a corner by the *Buddhist Church*; do you know where the *Seattle Buddhist Church* is?

RI: Yes.

U: My father and his friends were instrumental in building that big *Buddhist Church*.

RI: When was that church built?

U: I don't know, I don't know. You could call them up and fine out.

RI: So what about other family members?

U: I have my older sister — you want the names?

RI: Sure.

U: Kayako Shitama and younger sister Etsuko Uota. I had a younger sister, the youngest of the family, but she died in the atomic bomb in Japan. And my brother died a couple of years ago in Japan. He came over with us, and he got married to a Japanese girl but she had American citizenship. Their daughter graduated from the University of Washington, so they went back to Japan because his wife's mother wanted her to come back.

RI: So your parents were the original immigrants to this country?

U: I don't know "original"— no. His two older brothers were here already. That's why my father came when he graduated from It-chu, in Hiroshima -- high school in Hiroshima -- he came over.

RI: And then why did the family go back to Japan?

U: He didn't go back to Japan, not him, he died in Seattle. My brother went back this time. Oh, my father's brother went back because they made money. That was the dream of all the Japanese who came over, to make money and go back to Japan and live like a king. -- that was their dream. And so his 2 brothers went back.

RI: And did they live like kings?

U: Well, they bought at the best stores, in Miyajima, a great big place. The oldest brother did.

RI: Now what about your situation, what happened to you?

U: My father didn't go back.

We went back to Japan in 1926 with my mother with my 5 siblings to save the fish wholesaler. My father had a fish wholesaler in the waterfront. The waterfront around here was all fish buyers, before; now it's all gone – fish buyers.

RI: You're talking about the public market here in Seattle?

U: Yes, the waterfront. My father had the *Main Fish Company*, waterfront wholesaler.

RI: What was the name of the company?

U: The *Main Fish Company*. And all the fishermen with the boats used to come to the dock and unload the fish. And then my father would box it up and send it to Idaho and Montana, and things like that.

RI: Were there a lot of other Japanese doing that kind of work too?

U: No, no; not that I know of. I don't know.

But my father had lots of Jewish friends ...and my father was the first Japanese to open up the *Main Fish Company*, wholesale on the waterfront because...his Jewish friend played poker on Friday night, told him "I'll sell it to you" or something because he liked my father.

RI: Do you remember that man's name, the Jewish man?

U: No, no, no. Because my father could speak real good English, no accent or anything like that.

RI: And he could play poker.

U: Yes, Friday nights.

RI: So once he had that business what happened?

U: Buy *Main Fish Company*. When the War started, he couldn't — he had to evacuate. He was about the first one that was taken by the *FBI* when the War started because he was a big shot in the Japanese community.

So he went to camp in New Mexico.

RI: Was he at Lordsburg -- Lordsburg, New Mexico?

U: Yeah, he was in New Mexico, and someplace else too, before he was able to come to where my mother was – Hunt, Idaho.

RI: Camp Minidoka.

U; Yes, Hunt, Idaho or someplace [nearby].

RI: So what happened to the rest of the family? You were all evacuated then?

U: To save the *Company* – we had a big house on 1451 Main Street; it's an 8-plex now. Somebody tore the house down and built an 8-plex. We had a good yard – corner property...

RI: So once the War started...

U: No. Before the War started, in 1932... "Hukeiki no toki", during the depression, to save the *Company*, he had my mother take the 5 kids to Japan, and he moved all the workers to the house so he didn't have to pay them too much.

And then my aunt, my father's brother's wife did the cooking for everybody in the house.

RI: That must have been a big *Company* -- lots of workers?

U: Yes, yes. Quite a bit. All Japanese workers, mostly Japanese workers – single. They come from Japan.

So we went to Japan.

RI: How long were you in Japan then?

U: Until 1947. Well, we went to Iogakko (women's high school), and the War started, and we got stuck.

And then my sister... got into Tokyo no Jokoshi, the girls' best school – she was smart. So she didn't want to come back. But my mother came back in '38 and left the kids because my father didn't want to separate the kids, and he wanted a Japanese education [for them].

RI: So they remained there.

U: Yes, my aunt took care of us.

RI: When did you all return?

U: Came back in '47.

RI: And then what happened to you at that point?

U: I was in the atomic bomb, but then I escaped dying – I didn't die.

RI: Do you feel comfortable talking about what that was like?

U: No – it's okay. But my sister never came back, youngest sister never came back.

Every day I went to the town – Hiroshima, and looked for her, but couldn't find her. You couldn't tell who was who anyway because they were charred bodies, lined up. But you couldn't tell their face because it was all black – charred, you know. So I couldn't find her.

But about 2 weeks later a school representative came and told us what happened. Everybody used to go to – I was already working -- but from school she went to factory? [Koino-eki?] Hiroshima's station and then the factory was in another eki [station].

Before she got there, the siren rang so everybody got out of that middle eki station and was coming back through town. And then it dropped. That's what they came and told us.

RI: And where were you when the bomb actually dropped?

U: I was working – Hiroshima has lots of rivers, you know... -- and I was working on the bottom, ship bottom paint company which used to make oxygen tanks, crude oxygen tanks for the pilots. You light it on this side, and then the chemicals burn inside, in the tube, and then oxygen comes out the side – that kind of stuff. I used to work in a chemical lab – an analysis lab [where] I used to work.

RI: So you were away from the area of the bomb?

U: Yes, yes, not in the middle; I was away. But at 8 o'clock I saw just like blue sky and the silver plane go, that dropped the bomb. I was by the door, and I saw the plane go by. And then I turned around and took about 5 steps inside, and then the bomb dropped. But I just got cut over here [pointing to neck], that's all.

RI: You got cut on the neck?

U: Yes, right here [pointing to neck].

RI: Was there a huge explosion?

U: Oh yes, yes.

RI: ...and glass was flying obviously?

U: Yes.

RI: Were there people injured where you were?

U: No, because I was by myself in this lab. Maybe there was one other person, but I don't know what happened. They didn't get hurt.

RI: How many miles away was the place where...?

U: I can't tell, maybe 3 miles, 2 to 3 miles from the center.

RI: How did that affect the family?

U: My sister didn't come home. So that day we went to an abandoned airport nearby – everybody went over there. Lots of people used to work in this factory to make oxygen tanks. Everybody went to this abandoned airport nearby, and waited all day and watched the town burn – all day.

And then it burned, and then by 5 o'clock -- this company had had juku, a kind of vacation juku in Itsuka-ichi -- do you know Hiroshima? – western side of Hiroshima.

Do you know Miyajima? About half way there from Hiroshima koi? We had a juku there, vacation place. So everybody was going to go there. So we went there. I used to live in western side of Hiroshima so I went home.

And then, Byohu (paper wall) had a hole in it, you know Byohu made of paper?

And the rouka (hall) was...

RI: Shifted?

U: Yes, shifted, and things like that. But then we could live there.

RI: Were other members of your family affected?

U: No. My sister used to work in the western side of Mitsubishi juko...juke, anyway, so she went home right away. And my brother was on night shift, so he took a bus to Hiroshima station and then came home and sat down in front of the American-made radio. Then the bomb dropped. So he wasn't hurt.

My sister, younger sister didn't come home. So I went and looked for her all over the place.

RI: It must have been, very... stressful for you..

U: Every day, every day.

RI: What have been the long-term effects of that atomic bomb?

U: Well, I can't tell you because I'm so lucky, I didn't get it; in fact I just had a cut. I'm still 85, and I'm still living. I don't think I have any effects (Laughter). I do think if I died of cancer I'd be happy -- (laughter) lived until 85.

And then I went every day, and afterwards I went to Hiroshima every day to look for my sister. And afterwards you hear about so many people dying, get sick and die. Yes! How did I escape that?

RI: Maybe you were breathing the right kind of oxygen (Laughter).

U: I just can't believe it. It's kind of a miracle, isn't it?

RI: A good miracle – things are working out?

U: Yes, yes. I can't believe it; I'm still kicking (laughter).

But my sister, younger sister -- over 6 are still living too – my oldest sister wasn't there. not in Hiroshima, but she came home right after, the next day. And my youngest sister still... but my brother passed away last year [2009] but not from – he smoked so he had cancer, not from atomic bomb.

RI: So when did you come back to the U.S.?

U: U.S.? 1947.

RI: And what did you start doing?

U: I went to *Broadway High School* to learn English (laughter) – didn't know any English. "This was a dog", that's all. "This is a cat" – that's all we know.

RI: Were there a lot of other people like you?

U: Foreign class? Yes.

RI: But from Japan were there many?

U: Yes. yes. Oh yes.

RI: Were the hundreds of them?

U: Well, I don't know because I was sick every day, sea sick every day. So I just stayed in the bunk bed. There were a lot from China who came, Chinese who came back too, and we were on the bottom [deck] of the ship, in bunk beds.

My sister used to get us oranges; we didn't eat anything. We just threw it up every day. Do you know what we threw up?

RI: Bile? There was nothing in your stomach.

U: No - mushi [insects].

RI: Really?

U: Yes (laughter). In Japan do you know what kind of fertilizer they used?

RI: Night soil?

U: Oh yes. In a can, you throw up.

RI: My goodness, that's a very interesting story (laughter).

U: ...[unclear]

RI: What happened once you got back to Seattle?

U: Well, no, we arrived in San Francisco. My mother and father were back in Seattle, living in the house - got their house back - came to San Francisco to come and get us.

RI: Did you come up then?

U: And then he drove us back up to Seattle.

RI: And then the house and everything was back to where it was before? And that's when you started back to school then?

U: Yes, went to learn English.

RI: Did it take a long time?

U: Oh, yes.

RI: You must have spoken Japanese at home then?

U: Oh yes.

RI: So school was for English.

U: Mrs. McGilligan, and who was the other one -- teacher? Very nice, very good teacher.

RI: You finished school then at *Broadway [High School]*?

U: Well, and then we took math, chemistry. They were nothing -- we already knew it. Only the English [was lacking].

After we good pretty at English class we learned driver's ed. -- that's English -- went through the book. I went to take a chemistry class and math class and things like that.

RI: And you graduated then?

U: Yes.

RI: And then what did you do?

U: From *Broadway High School*. And then, I guess, I got married in 1950, met my husband. [We] used to go to dances. The Dance is where you met people -- boys meet girls, and girls meet...

RI: Who sponsored the dance?

U: Nisei, what is it? "Balido"? or something; there was a University Japanese girls' club [called] "The Ba-Leader" or something. My sister, my oldest sister, she knew English, and she already went to Jokoshi (Japanese women's high school) in Japan. So she just -- The English teacher at *Broadway High School* told her to go to University because she already knew English; she worked for an American occupation Army in Japan because she knew English. So she went to University. There was a dance, and I met my husband.

RI: Who was he, your husband?

U: Bob Urata...

RI: ...Tell me the history of his family.

U: His family? They're from the southern tip of Kagoshima -- Ibusuki-gun... Ibusuki Akana? I used to remember... I went over there one time, "hakamairi" to visit the grave, when I was in Japan. And his mother was from there. I guess they were well to do merchants family [during those days at the southern tip of Manshu]... -- Manchuria. What was the port's name? Anyway, they used to do commerce? work.

RI: When did they come to this country?

U: I don't know; maybe 1900s, around there. I don't know.

RI: Then did they go up to Alaska directly or did they spend time here?

U: Oh no. His [Picture bride marriage] I guess – she was... Her family was a well to do family, but ... she was under her older brother's control. They made her marry this guy – Urata, Gyotaro. And she came over...I don't know...he must have gone back to Japan and married her, and left her there. And he came back to Alaska, he went to Alaska and Yukon gold mining. He didn't find any gold. So he went to work for this banker and cooked for him.

RI: Do you know with which bank?

U: No, no. I don't know anything like that.

But anyway she got pregnant after she got married and had a baby girl. But her brother wouldn't let her bring the baby girl when she came over to America.

RI: Why?

U: I guess he had a funny idea – America doesn't have any baby stuff, or I don't know – old fashioned ideas, I guess.

RI: So he was trying to protect this...

U: Baby, I guess. Yes.

So the baby was raised in Japan with her cousin. So my sister-in-law passed away now, but she has a bad feeling about being raised in a family like that because her cousin got all the nice kimono and everything, but she got the hand-me-downs all the time, and she really resented it, I think.

She never met her own mother or father, because they never went back. So the uncle thought if she married a Japanese guy that was going to Canada, maybe there would be a chance to meet the parents. So she was married to this Canadian-Japanese and came to Canada. But they never met.

RI: That's too bad.

U: Yes. So she worked very, very hard all her life. When they finally met, they didn't get along... I had married and went to Alaska, and then had a baby. My first son, she came over from Canada to help me because I had his mother-in-law and father-in-law living with me. So she came over with her 2 boys to help out.

They didn't get along; they're the same type of strong characters, so they didn't get along at all.

RI: But you had a chance to interact with her?

U: I don't know what I did, but she helped me with the baby and the in-laws.

RI: It was probably good to have had that help... Did you ever have any more contact after that?

U: Yes. My oldest son when – they lived in Canada, Ontario Canada. My oldest son went to Northwestern [University in Evanston, IL]. In those days we didn't have money to let him come home for Thanksgiving or Christmas...so he went to Canada to auntie's place.

They had 2 boys older than Bob, "Bobby" my son. He really had a good time and liked them.

RI: That worked out then.

U: Yes, yes. Well, now sister was very nice to him, when she came to visit – help me when I have a party.

RI: Tell me a little bit about what happened once you two were married. When you were first married, where were you and what were you doing?

U: We got married, and then went to honeymoon to Victoria, Vancouver [Canada] or some place, Vancouver, I think. We were not very rich those days (laughter). He was a fisherman. Then... we took a steamboat to Alaska.

RI: Do you remember what the boat was named?

U: No, but I got seasick every night; didn't eat anything. Bob used to eat my part, I think.

RI: Why were you going North? Why did you go North?

U: Because that's where he lived. He's from Wrangell, Alaska.

RI: So you had to go back to his place.

U: Yes, because he was a fisherman. He came to University of Washington after the fishing season ended, and then went back in April, spring quarter. I don't think he took spring quarter.

And he used to take everything : geology, oceanography, forestry. He didn't have any major, he didn't take English (laughter). He used to take everything he wanted. But it all came in handy because he went to work for a sawmill. He went to work for a sawmill, and...eventually Japanese bought it – Japanese bought the sawmill. Seiji Takahashi ?– have you heard that name? – that's a famous name in Seattle; he's the biggest businessman in those days. Seiji Takahashi? bought the sawmill so Bob knew him, and so he hired Bob for watchman. Then it became...started cutting lumber, and eventually Japanese [Nationals] bought it.

RI: What is the original name of that sawmill?

U: I don't know, I don't remember.

RI: And then what did it eventually turn into?

U: *Alaska Lumber and Pulp*. By then they bought, had Sitka's pulp mill.

RI: So they already had *Sitka Pulp*?

U: No, *Wrangell Lumber* came first.

RI: So what years would that have been?

U: I had to work, when Mari was 10, so Mari was born in 1956, so in 1966 I went to work. What did you ask me?

RI: When did they purchase *Alaska Lumber*?

U: About 1965-1966, I guess.

RI: So you were one of the first employees then?

U: No, not really. Somebody quit at the sawmill, so Bob said, "Do you want to go to work?" Because my youngest daughter was 10; she came home the same time as my oldest daughter - 3 o'clock - so I thought it was okay to go to work because Mari came home the same time Aimee did. Aimee's the oldest daughter, she's just like a little mommy (laughter). So I went to work.

RI: How long did you work for them?

U: For 15 or 16 years, 15 years ...after that I retired.

RI: What happened during the period that you were working for them? Did business grow?

U: Oh yes.

RI: Why?

U: We used to have 3 ships coming from Japan in a month, when it was good. Three ships, fully loaded with logs for lumber.

RI: And they would take then...

U: To Japan.

RI: They took raw timber?

U: No, cut - cut lumber.

RI: Was it dimensional lumber?

U: Yes, yes. Cut lumber to Japan because Japan was building those days. Tokyo was just wiped out, no houses. Then they used the lumber to build houses.

RI: Who were the people working in the company in Wrangell? Were they local folks or ?

U: Yes, local folks.

RI: How many people were involved?

U: Sometimes we had 2 shifts, night shift too. About 90, maybe.

RI: So that was even?

What was the feeling about harvesting lumber at that point?

U: Okay. In those days, we had too much rotten, going to rot, lumber.

RI: So a similar thing was happening in Sitka then?

U: No, Sitka was a pulp mill...I don't know too much about it, but they had a pulp mill. We used to send the little, skinny logs, I think, to the pulp mill, and they made pulp.

RI: And that got made into stock for other kinds of things?

U: Yes, rayon.

RI: Were there other Japanese involved in the operation in Wrangell?

U: Other Japanese? Well, my husband's older brother was a millwright.

RI: What was his name?

U: Jack. His son Jacky worked there too; he didn't go to college.

RI: Are they still alive and in Wrangell?

U: Jacky is, but Jack passed away.

RI: Approximately when?

U: Bob died first, 1986, I think. Jack died, maybe 1990, I don't know, I don't remember.

RI: What did you do when you were working there?

U: Oh, everything. I was really good if I should say so [laughter].

RI: So did you run the office, or were you...

U: No, no. I'm math oriented, I'm not language oriented. We're all math and science oriented.

We didn't have a computer in those days; everything was done by hand.

RI: You still wanted to do all that?

U: Yes. We used to make up a payroll with about 4 or 5 papers, make pages.

RI: That's quite a number of people to have to keep tabs on too if they work for you that long.

U: Yes..

RI: What percent of Wrangell was working with the lumber?

U: Well, just about everybody.

RI: If they weren't fishing, they were working in lumber?

Did you have people who would work both; whenever there were fishing opportunities they'd be fishing, and then they'd sort of fill in?

U: Fishing, there's a season. So when there's no fishing season, maybe some fishermen would work for the mill. I'm sure.

RI: Were you getting lot of out-of-town to come up to work like people from the Northwest -- Oregon and Washington people?

U: The "sawyer" or a "filer", they all came from Oregon, Washington. Those skilled persons. And other things like an "edger", Jacky used to be an "edger", he learned to do that. But all the main "filer" and "sawyer" and those people all came from Oregon.

RI: Did they stay?

U: Oh yes.

RI: And have they remained there?

U: No, not really. I think they went back. Most of them went back, I think, when the mill was no longer.

RI: So these were very specific skills...and the "sawyer" would actually be the one who...

U: Yes.

RI: And then the other people would sharpen...

U: Yes, the "filer" ... And some other people too, the "trimmer" ...I don't remember, those people came from Oregon.

RI: And then all of the ship loading and that kind of thing, activity was done by...

U: Longshoremen. My husband belonged to the Longshoremen's Union too, and he worked for the Mill office, he used to be a purchasing agent – buy things, purchase things, parts.

RI: Now what were the differences in regulations when you were shipping things to Japan? Did you have to go through particular shipping companies in order to accommodate that or were there Japanese ships coming here?

U: I don't know how it went. But when the Japanese ship used to come, we used to have a sukiyaki party.

RI: Was there any conflict from the American people who worked on ships concerned about union labor or anything like that?

U: No. I don't think so. They were making money so what's to complain? Otherwise, regular people didn't have a job, but people who didn't have a job came to load the ship – had a job, a good paying job too.

RI: Were there a lot of parties and that kind of thing when the Japanese would come to town?

U: Not Japanese come to town...about 10 families lived in Wrangell that worked for the sawmill.

RI: And what were their jobs?

U: The office jobs.

RI: So they were working with you, essentially?

U: Right, they were upstairs, all the Japanese were upstairs, and the hakujin [Caucasians] were downstairs – mill manager, purchasing agent, and *Forest Service*, Forest Dept. – they had to buy the logs.

RI: And what was happening upstairs?

U: His dad [Tohru Saito's dad] (laughter)

RI: What did you think was happening upstairs?

U: They sent the shipping paper – how much lumber and logs went to Japan, had to let them know.

RI: So it was more technical...

U: Office work, office work.

RI: Do you think that the Japanese were pickier about what the quality of the materials– the logs – were, and they had to be done a certain way?

U: I don't know, I don't know. I don't think so.

RI: It was probably just to keep the paperwork flowing. In both directions.

Did the Japanese families integrate very well into Wrangell?

U: Oh yes.

RI: Socialize...

U: Oh yes. They went to school (laughter) Ask him [to Tohru] you went to school didn't you?

TS: Yes, yes.

U: What grade, until?

TS: First grade but then I went to Sitka after that.

U: And then went to Sitka Schools? Until what?

TS: Fifth grade. You were there for quite a while.

U: So you're perfect in English...

TS: I think so (laughter).

U: Bilingual.

RI: What about the other families though that were in Wrangell? Did any of them stay, or did they move once the company lost its business?

TS: I heard they have a reunion, an annual get together.

U: Yes, some stayed.

RI: Are they living in Alaska, or they living in Seattle?

U: Here [Seattle].

RI: How often is your reunion?

U: Once a year.

RI: You're hooked up to the microphone.

[TS retrieves a photograph of former Japanese employees of the Wrangell sawmill who gather annually in Seattle.]

U: [Up there, toward the back is a photograph...]

TS: [Describing individuals in the photograph] Here is President Miyagi-san. I thought I might call him if I have time.

U: He works for a Canadian seafood company; they live in Mill Creek, a little north of here, and then he commutes.

RI: I think it's interesting that there's this whole infrastructure of Japanese people here...who still maintain the connections.

U: Yes. Wealthier, we go eat Japanese food (laughter).

TS: Shimoda-san might be a good person to talk to who's here. He lives in Seattle, he was in the Seattle office for a long...

U: [Viewing photograph} He lives in Bellevue, I think.

RI: I think it would be interesting now to starting looking to see what may have been recorded about that here in Seattle, because there are a number of oral history projects...

U: [Looking at photo] They live in Seattle too. He has a condo in Seattle, Kimura-san. She lives here too. He lives here too, and they live here too. He lives in Bellevue. They all live here.

RI: You're fortunate you have groups that get together.

I wonder if we could get back to talking about your immediate family? We had you married and then all of a sudden you're running this business. I want to find out about your kids.

U: My kids?

I have 5 kids (laughter). The doctor made us stop it. I didn't know anything about s-e-x; I came from Japan. Before we left Japan we heard ? did it too; we were so shocked? But he had 5 or 6 kids.

RI: Tell me about your kids.

U: My kids? There's Bob - Bobby -- Robert. He's a doctor [physician].

RI: He practices in Juneau?

U: Yes, he lives in Juneau. He has a clinic for 9 doctors. When you go to Juneau, you look him up. He has a big, new complex.

RI: I know people who dearly love him because he's such a good doctor for families...

U: Where did you hear?

RI: I have sources (laughter).

U: Yes, he is a real nice guy.

RI: And he's one of the people who has adopted technology too, and they really do appreciate that. They can get consultations here in Seattle using equipment that's in Alaska.

U: He is a real nice guy.

And then my second one, Gilbert. He wasn't going to get up in the middle of the night and deliver babies so he became a dentist (laughter).

RI: And where does he practice?

U: Cordova. And he goes Bristol Bay fishing. He has a little gill net boat "Kiha" It's not "Kihara" because it would be too much like Japanese, so it's "Kiha" (laughter). He goes seining, he has a seiner too; he has somebody else take the boat and go seining.

Then Aimee, "A - I - M - E - E", Aimee is a Chojo [eldest daughter]; she lives in Friday Harbor [WA]. She's a physical therapist by education, but she doesn't do physical therapy. She went to Fiji for a physical therapist hospital - for *Peace Corps* when she was young. She has 4 girls; they're all grown up. But she lives in Friday Harbor.

And Nami - everybody is in the medical field, you know - so she went to *Tufts University* [Boston, MA] to become a registered dietitian. She worked for *Virginia Mason Hospital* [Seattle, WA] for a couple of years but that wasn't her thing. Her thing is math, so she went to *Yale Management School* and became an MBA. That's what she does now.

RI: Is she here in Seattle?

U: She lives in Bothel [Wa}.

RI: So everyone's close by then.

U: Yes.

Then my youngest, Mari lives in Eugene, Oregon. She's an R.N. [registered nurse] by education, but she doesn't work. Her husband makes enough money, I guess. Her husband is a maxil-facial...

RI: Specialist?

U: Yes. [Reconstruction after accidents, etc.]

RI: Now where were all the kids raised?

U: In Wrangell. Of course, they all went to *Wrangell High School*.

Bobby went to *Northwestern*, Gilbert went to [*University of*] *Oregon*, Aimee went to [*University of*] *Washington* in physical therapy, Nami went to Davis, *University of*

California Davis, then went to *Tufts* and then *Yale*. Mari went to [*University of*]
Oregon.

RI: You certainly have very well educated kids. Did you push education?

U: Well, that was the thing to do. I didn't push it, but they all knew they had to do it.

RI: Then what was your husband's viewpoint on education?

U: Oh, the same.

RI: Do you think the kids were competitive at all, trying to make sure that they did go to school and not shame the family or be left behind?

U: I don't think they especially thought anything like that, but they knew they had to go to college and get an education. I guess they got it from the way they were raised.

RI: Then how long did you remain in Wrangell?

U: Until 1990, I think. I sold my house.

Well, nobody was in Wrangell. None of my kids were in Wrangell. So I thought there was no use staying in Wrangell. So I sold my house. [Sold it for what I can get.]

TS: I visited you, your house – 1989-1990, somewhere in there. I visited your house [inaudible] – that was the last time. You were cleaning up the house, getting ready to sell the house.

U: About '90 wasn't it?

RI: What are your reminiscences about living in Wrangell and raising a family there?

U: It was a good place to raise the family, I think. Everybody knew everybody; they [children] couldn't get into any mischief because everybody knew everybody.

RI: What were the limitations of living in Wrangell?

U: Japanese food, always had to be sent from Seattle. Have a long ways -- they sent it on a steamship.

RI: Who would do that? Was there a company?

U: Yes. *North Coast Importing Company* [In Portland Company?] They used to be here; they're not any more, but they used to send me a box of nappa [Japanese cabbage] even, [placed into a big barrel] to make tsukemono (pickled vegetables).

RI: Was that true of all the other Japanese families? The other Japanese families did the same thing? They ordered from...

U: Other Japanese families – my brother-in-law's family. No she's Nisei [second generation U.S. born} girl; she didn't do that. I like to eat tsukemono (laughter).

RI: What about other long-term relationships with Japanese families in Wrangell area?

U: There's only one, Bob's older brother Jack's family that's all. Then this man married – I know 2 men married Indian ladies.

RI: Who were they?

U: Miyasaki – Miyasato, yes. And then Eyon, "E -- Y - O - N".

RI: Why is that name "Eyon"? Is that a Japanese name?

U: I don't think so. I'm not sure where it came from, but just because he married an Indian woman, maybe he didn't want a Japanese name? I don't know, I don't know.

RI: I've seen that name several times. But I've never figured it out what the relationship was? Now were these people fishermen or what did they do to make a living?

U: I think he – the son was John Eyon, and I think he moved. What did he do? He wasn't a fisherman. Maybe he worked at the mill? I'm not sure.

RI: What about Miyasato?

U: Miyasato, I know the daughter. I don't what she did either. I wasn't close to them.

RI: What about other Asian groups in Wrangell? Were there any Chinese or Koreans or Filipinos?

U: There must be some Filipinos, but they're not married – they're married to Indian ladies. I don't know others.

RI: Did you have any contact with the other Japanese in parts of Southeast or the Kimuras in Anchorage?

U: No, not really. I never went to Anchorage. Just the Kainos in Petersburg. That's about all.

RI: Were there any occasions for people to try and get together? Japanese people?

U: Not really. We weren't that Japanese-Japanese. Hakujiin [Caucasian] friends, not enough Japanese, and we weren't that close to Miyasato or anybody like that.

Maybe because I couldn't speak too much English?

RI: I think the major population of Japanese would have been in Ketchikan... I know a lot of the people heading north would always stop over in Ketchikan, and they'd go meet the Ohashis and the Tatsudas.

U: Just my brother-in-law's family -- Jack and Ann—I used to be close. Ann taught me how to make apple pie and things like that.

RI: Tasty things.

Is there any sense of being tied to any of the Alaska people now that you're living in Seattle? Is there any gathering or do they ever except for your work associated group, get together?

U: Sure, we get together. Wrangell's people get together once a year. This neighbor's daughter, Michelle Burd ?, comes to get me when we have lunch at the airport restaurant, I forgot the name of it. So I see people who used to live in Wrangell.

RI: You should be getting our former governor pretty soon because I think he's moved back to Wrangell, Frank Murkowski.

U: He moved back to Wrangell?

RI: I heard he did. ? So maybe he'll show up.

U: ... Lisa Murkowski and Mari, my youngest daughter were in the same class.

RI: It would good for her to go visit Lisa in Washington, D.C.

U: ... When Mr. Murkowski took us to the Senate Dining Room... when we went to Washington -- my older sister lives in Maryland -- and we went to see her. She took us to the dining room.

RI: Did you have their famous...

U: Chicken (laughter)

RI: And sometimes their navy bean soup is very good too (laughter).

Have you ever been interviewed before? Is there a record someplace where we could look up information about you, in a situation like this?

U: I don't know.

RI: Because I know there are a lot of oral history projects that have been done, and I think you guys are very unique in the kinds of experiences you've had. And that's why I'm glad we have this interview.

U: I don't remember. Sorry.

RI: I appreciate your allowing us to talk like this.

U: You're welcome.

RI: And I think this whole business of how we document Japanese part of history -- well there's not much work has been done on it as far as I can determine. And particularly for fisheries and for timber. And I hope maybe we can get a little bit of

that, and I think Tohru is a real key in that too since his family was involved and knew some of the principals. That's indirectly the way you learn about these things.

I appreciate very much your spending time with us. What we'll do is we'll make a copy of your interview and make sure you get copies back.. Thank you.

U: You're welcome.

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